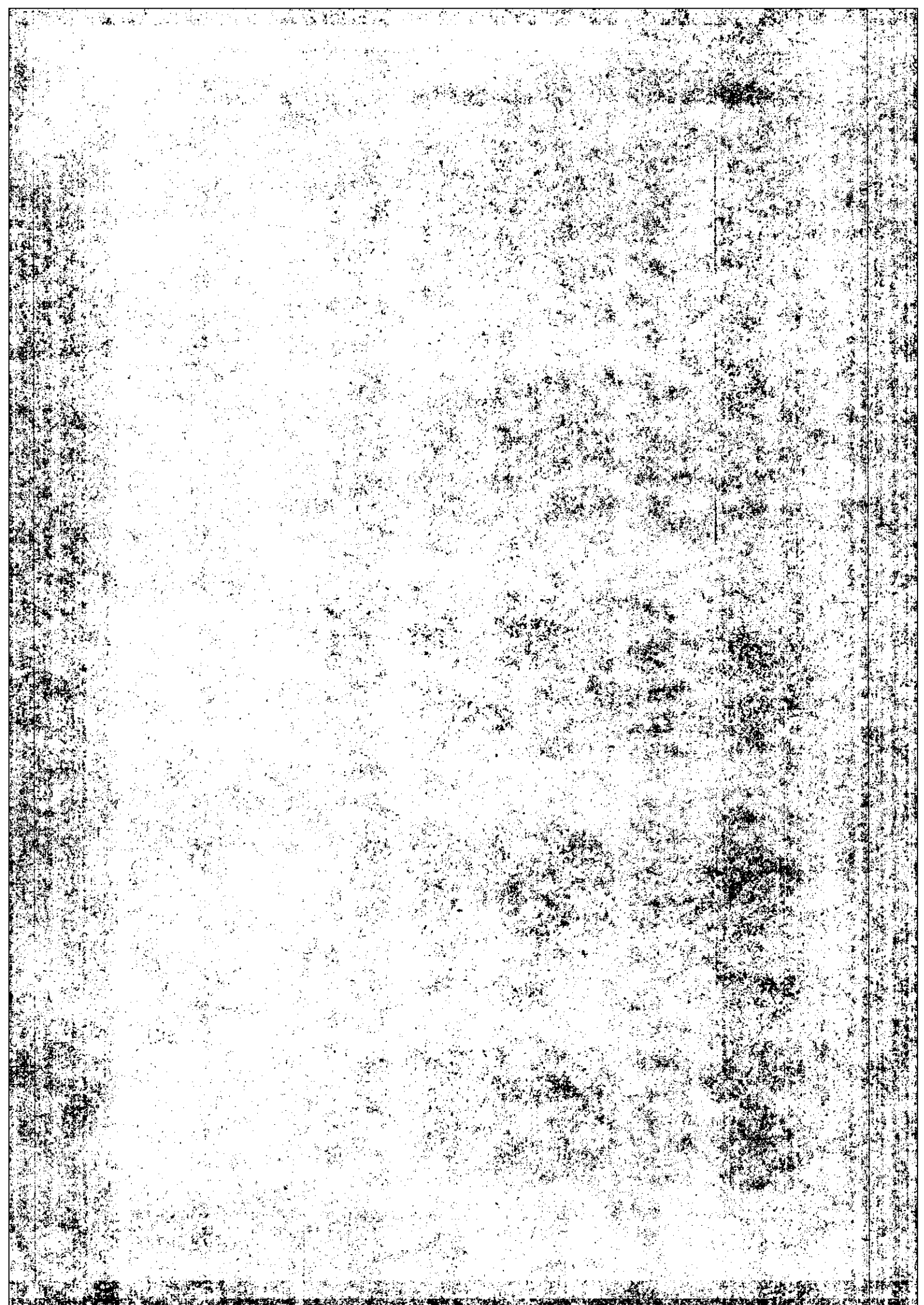


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CHAIRMAN'S THOUGHTS AND NOTES

BEN HELFGOTT

It does not seem possible that only four months remains before we shall commemorate the 50th anniversary of our Liberation on Sunday 30 April 1995. Inevitably, my thoughts turn to a parallel time span fifty years ago – the four months leading up to the end of the war in the spring of 1945.

As the momentum of the Nazi defeat gathered pace, the final denouement of the tragedy of the Jewish people was being played out in the concentration camps and on the death marches in Germany and Czechoslovakia. In retrospect, it is difficult to comprehend how anyone could have survived such inhuman and unbearable conditions. For over five years we had experienced the most unimaginable suffering, cruelty, and atrocities. We had survived the bombings; the random killings; the periodic round-ups; the filthy conditions in the Ghettos; the hunger; the constant fear; the typhoid epidemics; the selections and deportations to the gas chambers; the harsh regimen in the labour camps....and we thought that we had reached the limits of our endurance.

However, the conditions under which we lived and the treatment to which we were subject during the last few months of the war defied human imagination. The little that was left of our civilised life was completely stripped from us, and we were literally reduced to the animal level – but without the care that human beings normally bestow on their pets. We were subjected to long hours of hard and tedious work; lacking protective and warm clothing we were freezing to death; we were infested and eaten up by bugs and lice; worst of all, we were steadily becoming demented as a result of the starvation rations. The acquisition of a piece of bread or an extra plate of soup was our main preoccupation. The war was coming to an end, yet our persecutors, even in defeat, had not had their fill of us. Relentlessly and pitilessly, they exacted a great toll on us, shooting those who collapsed along the way from hunger, cold, thirst, or sheer exhaustion. It was not surprising that the few who had, so far, evaded death through sheer luck or by dint of perseverance, were also dwindling away.

Liberation found us in a stupor and in a state of utter exhaustion and emaciation. But then our lives had to begin anew....

Our President, Martin Gilbert, has just completed a book entitled *The Day the War Ended* which will be published at the end of April 1995. In his inimitable way, he lets hundreds of eye-witnesses, survivors, army personnel, former prisoners-of-war, civilians, Jewish and non-Jewish relate their experiences and the impact it made on them when the concentration camps were opened. The book is much more, though, since it takes into account all aspects of war as it affected many nationalities. I believe it will have a profound effect on all those who will read it, especially the post-war generation.

A short while ago I sent a note to all our members informing them that Martin was about to write a book about our Society. He is

delighted by the response and will be writing to everybody who has submitted his/her contribution. He would, however, be enormously grateful to hear from anyone who has not yet written to him with the recollections of their childhood, the war years, their journey to Britain and their early years in England. As well as hearing from those in Britain, Martin would appreciate any letter from those in Israel, the United States of America, Canada, and elsewhere. The book will be published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Preparations for our 1995 are well advanced and you will find included in the Journal details of the following:

Hotel accommodation and prices in London.

Flights to Israel and hotel accommodation and prices in Israel.

Preliminary programme in Israel.

A list of names of those who have made a contribution to the Sefer Torah.

Advertisement for our Brochure.

The proceeds from our Brochure will be donated to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. As you well know, it is an institution close to our hearts and it is fitting that on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of our Liberation, it should receive our most enthusiastic support. I very much hope that you will respond most generously to this appeal.

During our tour in Israel, there will be a reception for us when we shall present to the Chairman of Yad Vashem a cheque in the name of the survivors.

Many of our members are planning to come from abroad, and the excitement here is mounting. We look forward to being together, both in London and in Israel, on this historic occasion.

* * * *

PAST AND PRESENT

EXTRACT FROM THE BIOGRAPHY OF K ROMAN

K Z MIELEC

Ken came to England from Italy as a youth in 1946. He has written a manuscript about his wartime experiences, from which this article is extracted. He is a member of our Society and regularly attends our reunions.

At the time of the liquidation of the Gorlice Ghetto on 14 August 1942, sixty of the inhabitants assembled in the market square were selected to work in the sawmill. That was Gorlice, our first *Arbeitslager* (Labour camp). For the 'Gorlice sixty', our leader and mentor was Professor Janek Blech. He was our father figure who cared for our well-being. His stature and impeccable German were even respected by the camp commandant, and this resulted in us having the best treatment in any of the ensuing camps. By December, we were moved to another sawmill in Mushyna where conditions deteriorated. In the spring of 1943, we were then taken to Mielec.

Mielec was a larger camp within the grounds of a pre-war aircraft construction company. The factory covered a large area, large enough to contain a number of pre-fabricated barrack huts with a barbed wire perimeter fence. The 'Gorlice sixty' were put together in one barrack hut. Sleeping in three-tiered bunk beds was an improvement on the last camp. The 'Gorlice mob', as we came to be called, were softly spoken, refined, and markedly different from the other inmates of this camp. In their crude way, they resented us as snobs. Significantly, one of the *Ordnungsdienst* (security police) put his nephew in amongst us, hopefully to develop a cultured outlook in him.

The head of the *Ordnungsdienst* was Henek Friedmann, disliked by all of us since he only favoured and gave privileges to those within his orbit. Also hated, but with an element of fear, was the older of the two doctors, Dr Birn. His red round face showed a choleric temper, and his loud coarse speech betrayed this even more. He treated all inmates with contempt, and consequently all those who fell sick were afraid of being treated by him. There had been an outbreak of typhus in the camp before we arrived, one which he had treated to the satisfaction of the *Obersturmführer* by containing it. Rumour had it that he had been ruthless in despatching the infected without mercy, to be taken out and shot.

The Managing Director of the Aircraft Establishment was a German named Kleiner Mayer. On the days of inspection, he was usually accompanied by high-ranking officials from the Luftwaffe. On those occasions, we were especially nervous in case any fault should be found. All errors and omissions were construed as deliberate sabotage, which was punishable by death. I recall that an inmate accidentally drilled a one or two millimetres out of line on a wing

section on which he and his companions were working. The Gestapo was sent for, and the seven of them were taken out and shot. Incidents like this ensured that every workman watched his companions closely to prevent mistakes from happening. Naturally, mistakes happened because we were largely unskilled labour. The only training we received was for two hours. After that, we were expected to produce perfect work. Failure to do so would result in death. It was the rule of fear.

Behind that rule of fear loomed the larger fear of the KL - *Konzentrationslager* (concentration camp) - rumours of which filtered through to the factory. The names of Belsen, Auschwitz, Plaszow, each place getting near to us, and the terminal *Vernichtungslager* (extermination camp) struck terror in most hearts and led to a feeling of hopelessness which engendered desperation. On 12 July 1943, the leader of the 'Gorlice mob' and nine of his closest friends escaped from the camp. News of the breakout spread like wildfire: 'Professor Blech has gone and with him his brother, Karol Blech, Oskar Geller, Wilek Geller, Siunek Freier, Zygmunt Pister, Symcha Binder, Baruch Land, and Szymek Szturc'. What had made them do it? Had they picked up information about the way things were going that prompted such a desperate act? How did they manage it? Was there someone inside or out who was in the know who had helped them?

No sooner had we absorbed the news of their flight than hearsay informed us of their recapture and summary execution on 13 July. The swiftness of their discovery suggested betrayal, even an elaborate plan by which someone inside the camp removed responsible Jewish leadership and continuing opposition. We had known nothing of their plans. The news came as a severe blow, for now we had lost a loved and respected father, a mentor whom we believed would stand up for us and see justice done, whose cleverness was our protection.

While we despaired, Commandant Friedmann and his henchmen expressed delight at this turn of events. Yet if things were getting worse for us, they were also getting worse for the Germans. They were being harassed by the Polish resistance, the eastern front against the Russians was proving difficult to hold, and Allied bombers were even beginning to threaten our compound which had become a 'zone of risk'. To deal with these threats, the authorities decided to take cover, transferring certain operations to the deep salt mines at Wieliczka. We knew nothing of this, beyond what rumour suggested. In the meantime, life in Mielec continued as usual, though not for long.

* *

FINDING BREAD
A GLIMPSE OF THE FIRST FEW DAYS
OF GERMAN OCCUPATION IN LODZ -
TYPICAL OF THE POLISH EXPERIENCE AT THE TIME

MICHAEL ETKIND

There was no choice: he would have to try to buy some bread. He would have taken the risk of going out without the armband on his sleeve, but if the caretaker had seen him leaving without it on, he would almost certainly tell the Germans further down the street. And then those other Poles, who lived across the street and knew him by sight, if they saw him would almost certainly report his 'crime'. The rewards were so tempting, he could almost smell them in the sickly fearful pit of his stomach - a pound of ham, a bottle of vodka!

So he kept his armband on. That artefact which had become a badge of shame and humiliation, the *Jude* with its gothic script, the star that could be seen even from a hundred yards away, marking him out, and drawing attention to his face, to his existence even.

He crept across the road to the baker's shop which was just two blocks away. He slunk from gate to gate along the fence, trying to make himself small, to be unnoticed. He had almost concealed his face: his collar was up, which helped, while his scarf was around his neck. His heart was pounding. A few yards away was the queue, the habitual line of patient, weary people outside the bakery. His heart was now pounding so loudly he was convinced the others would hear it, that they would turn around and look at him. But before he could lose himself inside the queue, two passing German soldiers saw his sleeve. They took him roughly by the shoulder and ordered him to march into a nearby yard. Some twenty men were assembled there. They were being forced to climb into the back of a truck. With kicks and blows, curses and vulgar jokes, the soldier squeezed the cowering men together, making room for another ten or twelve. The truck pulled off. Nobody spoke. Nobody looked into the other's eyes.

'It can't be real', thought Sam, 'it's a hallucination induced by hunger. A nightmare. I'll wake up and eat something'. The past eight weeks had been a nightmare, which he tried not to remember the details of. It had made no sense at all: the bombs, the panic, the total collapse. Within six days, the town had been overrun. The Polish army had been totally destroyed, and then the onset of terror: the anti-Jewish laws. Each day more orders were pasted on the wall, and each day more people shot, more taken away to be hung, more that disappeared without a trace. All schools were closed, there was a lack of food, queues for everything, and a dusk till dawn curfew imposed. The speed with which each new blow succeeded the previous one made life feel completely unreal.

The truck slowed down and stopped. '*Raus, Raus! Alle Juden Raus!*'. They were inside a clearing in a wood. 'Begin to dig, and *schnell!*'. Again, the barked orders. More kicks and blows with rifle butts. Sam grabbed a spade and did as he was told. The earth was hard at first, with the roots and stones all mixed together, but later on it gave somewhat. The trench was now waist deep, and it was getting dark.

'Undress, but *schnell!*', came the order now. More blows and kicks. A shot rang out. The naked men lined up along the trench. Another truck arrived, its headlights blinded Sam. He tried to say something to the man next to him: did he understand what was happening to them? But the man could not hear him, he was reciting something, his lips moving in prayer. The angry rattle of a gun exploded in a burst near to him, another burst, and died. The tree tops swayed and span.

* *

TWO POEMS

MICHAEL ETKIND

WAS THERE A CRIME?

Was there a cause, effect
and all the rest; progression of events
we might have halted in its path?

Was it because we erred, or sinned,
because we turned our gaze inside,
afraid to see the truth in front of us.
Was it a trial to test our faith,
or was it fate's unfeeling gaze?

Was there a crime before the crime,
and then a payment for the crime?

WHY I?

You who survived
while so many died,
how many times you have asked: Why I?

Oh yes, you were smart,
you were young, you were brave.
You took chances at times, and
at times you obeyed.
You smuggled, you stole
(not from inmates of course),
and you slaved when compelled, or
did nothing at all.
On *Appeal* you stood tall
and expanded your chest,
so you always went right,
and were never sent left.
And you never thought deep,
and you never did cry,
and you never succumbed,
and you never asked why –
only later it seems.

But so many who died
 did exactly the same,
 yet they did not survive.
 But were killed in the end.

So the question remains
 with no answer in sight,
 and will puzzle your brain
 and confront you at night.
 And will churn in your mind
 till the end of your time.

★ ★

WHERE THERE IS LIFE THERE IS HOPE

JACK HECHT

Jack came with the Southampton
 group and contributes from time
 to time to our journal.

Man is a warring creature and in the wake of his aggression he leave tragedies: broken families, refugees, displaced persons. Some time ago I wrote about my two brothers who could have fitted into any of those categories. They had remained with me for all of the war until the death march. We were just outside Munich when it was decided that as they could walk no further, they should follow the call to climb on to the trucks. They were never seen again. Other prisoners said that everyone had been shot – but had they? I fantasised. Maybe they had pretended to be dead – perhaps they ran into the forests and had even found a hide-out.

Anything but death.

Eventually, after liberation, I came to England. Like my friends, I too was asked if I had any relations, anywhere, no matter how remote. The months passed and someone in New York believed me to be his cousin. It took several letters to convince him otherwise.

Another 'cousin' wrote from Palestine, but to no avail. Meanwhile, I was endeavouring to find my brother and sisters over there. At last, we made contact almost at the same time as my name was given out on the radio bulletins. To receive a letter from my brother was wonderful, but he wanted to know if Schmuel Avrum and Israel were alive. I told him my account of events and we both agreed that where there is hope there is life.

Then, one day, my brother received a telephone call from Jerusalem. A man spoke of two young boys in his care. Their parents had been called Joseph and Hannah, just like ours. My brother held his breath – the boys' names were Schmuel Avrum and Israel. A meeting was arranged and Moshe and Batya packed food for the journey from Rehovot, and of course for the boys.

They set off from the farm on their horse and cart. At last, they reached their destination and their host gestured them to wait in a room. The door then opened and two very young boys appeared. They had big brown eye - they were religious boys, just like the family. They stepped towards Moshe - he hugged them, but could only say: 'they are not my brothers'. The boys were far too young and bore little resemblance. They eagerly accepted the gifts of food, and there was a sad farewell.

To this day, it is a mystery as to how they could have the exact names of my brothers and uncannily those of my parents. Perhaps they had been given new identities? Who knows? One thing is for sure, that they were the epitome of life and hope.

* * * *

HERE AND NOW

THE BONDS OF WINDERMERE

MICHAEL (MAIER) PERLMUTTER

From Windermere, the author was sent to Ashford sanatorium to recover from pneumonia. From there he proceeded to the Finchley Road Hostel with four other Windermere boys to provide reinforcement for the religious element among the Southampton boys who were the 'aboriginals' of that hostel.

The chains of contact forged by the 'boys of Windermere', and all the other safe havens, provided by the benefactors of the Jewish Community of England, should be and are unbreakable:

Ask any of the boys - they will readily agree.

The connection is profound and permanent.

Hundreds of teenage boys and girls plucked out of the jaws of turmoil and despair, to a life of normalcy, can forge such bonds.

We all know the story. If you are reading these lines, it is because you were there. Only the details change. So, if I may, I would like to relate to you some of the details in my life.

Windermere was born in 1945. I was reborn then, and the promise of England was a dream to a teenage boy who no longer believed that he could believe in dreams. But it happened. Some 300 boys and girls became human beings once more, with attachments and connections, and

friendships we swore would never die. Mostly, they never did. But because of my need to touch someone of my family, I left England for America where my brother waited.

That was in 1951. Some of us went to Israel, some to the United States of America, others to Canada, and some to yet other places. Most, however, remained in England. And time went by.

I married, raised a family, and earned a living: but never forgot.

The pull of friendships formed in the past took us to England in 1985 to celebrate together the 40th anniversary of our liberation. What a glorious experience that was, stirring and tearful. That event again solidified our bonds. It was as though we had never left each other, my friends of Windermere and me.

The magnetic pull of my friends remains as strong as ever, so when I retired, I decided to go back to England and visit with some of them. Hettie and Alec Ward made our stay a pure delight. We also had the opportunity to meet many other boys whose hospitality was overwhelmingly generous. We went on to Israel, where again we experienced the joy of spending time with David and Zena Herszkowitz, and Rachael and Haim Liss. Mordechai and Rachael Levinstein arranged a special party in our honour and invited some twenty-five of our boys. This kind of bonding can only be attributed, I feel, to our common determination always to consider each other as family.

My home is now in a retirement community, so that the pressures of business no longer sit so heavily on my shoulders. I play bridge and golf, entertain, and have even gone fishing, besides making new good friends. There are over 1,000 families in this community, none of who have been where we have.

Though I do not forget, I have no pressing need to dwell on that dark period in our lives.

I am now looking forward with great fervour to being with you again next year to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our re-birth.

* *

IT SEEMS LIKE ONLY YESTERDAY....

H GOLDE

H Golde came with the Windermere group. He lived in the Stamford Hill Hostel, also becoming leading goalkeeper in the first Primrose Club football team. He left early for the United States of America, where he now lives.

It seems like only yesterday....I was a little boy in the town of Plock, Poland, where I lived with my family. At an early age, I knew I was different. I had been born a Jew, and people hated me.

It seems like only yesterday....I was eleven years old when the war broke out and the nightmare began. I always say that at the age of eleven I became an adult and five years later I became an old man. That is because of what I and countless others like me have seen and were forced to live through. Most people will never experience what we did, even if they live to a very old age.

It seems like only yesterday....five years of hunger, filth, degradation and abuse of the worst kind. Five years of facing death every moment of the day and night, and worst of all, fear of the unknown. Some days I would think that maybe, I would wake up and be back home with my family and that it would be over, but that never happened. The nightmare just went on and on. Would it never end? One camp after another: Poland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, eight in all. I couldn't believe I was still alive with people all around me dying, one after another, but still I lived. I wondered why. Many times I thought the people who were dying were better off....no more hunger, no more fear, no more struggle to survive for them, but I was still going.

There were times when I was ready to give up and I told myself: 'who needs this stinking life? It is not even a life, it's a human misery of the worst kind....give up, it's no use, in the end they will kill you, they will kill all of us, give up, give up'. But at the last moment, a feeling would come over me and I would think: 'where there's life, there's hope', and so I went on. Every morning when I awoke, I wondered if this was going to be the last one, would I make it through the day, what would the day hold for me....stay alive, stay alive! What a challenge, but day after day I survived.

It seems like only yesterday....liberation, the Russians, the end of the war and the nightmare. But people were still dying. How ironic, for they were not dying from hunger now but from too much good food. I was free, but did not know how to use my freedom. Now what? For five years I had been told what to do, where to go, how and when to act, but now nobody was telling me anything. It was scary for I realised that I was all alone in this world, and still only a kid. What would I do....where would I go? The Russians put a few of us in a children's home, and soon there were two hundred of us boys and

girls in Teresienstadt, Czechoslovakia. We became a family, all in the same boat, orphans of the war, survivors of hell with a lost childhood, but with so much wisdom that someday would be used for all mankind.

It seems like only yesterday....they took us from the hell of war to the heaven of England. It was wonderful summer in Windermere, the Lake District of Westmoreland. And then to hostels in London, the Primrose Club....we were human beings again and life was beautiful. The closeness of all the boys and girls was fantastic. I remember seven wonderful years in England, my marriage, the birth of my first son, and then emigration to the United States of America.

It seems like only yesterday....New York! I was told I would find gold in the streets. Ha! I would hate to tell you what you find in the streets of New York. I became an entrepreneur. I did everything, from working in the sweat shops of the garment district to driving a cab, to selling pre-cut homes and selling land in Florida, owning a tavern in Wisconsin, where I now live, and to politics. I have worked and travelled all over this beautiful land and have seen a lot. I am retired now, and hope to travel again.

It seems like only yesterday....but it has been nearly fifty years since the end of the war. Where have all those years gone? I wrote a book which I hope to publish soon. Twenty years ago I began to tell my story about the Holocaust, and continue to do so: to grade schools up to college campuses, to service clubs and other organisations, in fact to anyone who will listen. Above all, it is most gratifying to talk to the kids, especially with the message I tell about prejudice, bigotry, and love versus hate. Everyone of us should tell his/her story over and over again to the children, they are the new generation. They are our future leaders and soon they will go into the world. If they remember only a part of our story, especially the part about hate and prejudice, then they will never allow it to happen again. But if people do not remember, I feel another Holocaust could happen at anytime to anybody in this world.

See you all next year in London!

* *

THE MONTREAL MASTERS WORLD SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS

SUSIE M HALTER

Susie's indefatigable efforts in swimming are of great encouragement to us all.

In July 1994, when I returned from Montreal where the Masters World Swimming Championships had been held, I mentioned my participation in this big event to Ben, our Chairman, and he asked me to write about it.

What immediately springs to mind is that each time I take part in competitions, friends invariably say, 'bring back some medals!'. When leaving for Montreal, I felt that if I came back with even a single medal I would be thrilled. There were 3,400 master swimmers competing, ranging from the age of 25 to 100. Yes, there was even a man from the United States of America who was 100 years old. There were also several in the 95-99 age group. In the Masters competition, we swim in 5-year bands. At present, I belong to the 65-69 age group. We are quite open about our ages, which in any case are published in the competition programmes.

In my age group there were as many as seventy competitors. In order to reduce the number of entries, we were allowed to swim in five events only. We were placed in heats according to the time we submitted at the time of entry, i.e. six months before the championships were held. The slowest heat was the first one. I was allocated the fastest heat in the 50m and 200m freestyle, and the second fastest heat in the 50m and 100m backstroke, and in the 100m freestyle.

I won my heats in the backstroke events in the second fastest heats, and by winning by a faster time than the slowest in the faster heats, I gained ninth and tenth place in these events. That meant I had won two medals, since the first ten winners get medals in these championships.

The next day, however, I had to contend with twelfth place in the 100m freestyle. Whilst I could have done a lot better, it is true to say that I could also have done far worse, given the excellent competition from other swimmers I had to contend with.

The following day I really had a good chance in the 50m freestyle since I was in the fastest heat. However, I fell to pieces and 'blew it'. Bad strokes and bad timing meant that I only achieved sixteenth place. I could only blame myself, although I knew that the outside lane was the slowest one. But I decided that the following day, even swimming in the outside lane, I would be among the fastest in the 200m freestyle - in the race which had brought me a silver medal last year in Sindelfingen in the European Championships. After the start and swimming with long measured strokes, I saw a Japanese next to me. As I pulled ahead of her, I thought I could beat her. I could not see any of the others, but looking at the electronic scoreboard after the finish I realised that not only did I beat the Japanese competitor next to me but also an American on the other side. In that heat I gained another medal, this time an eighth place.

From all this you might gather that it is not so easy to gain those medals. I was more than satisfied with the outcome of my efforts, winning three medals in the face of such fierce international competition.

What makes these swimming races so interesting, apart from the actual competition, is meeting people from all over the world. I know quite a number of people from Israel, Hungary, and most of the British masters, in addition to swimmer from my own age group.

As a venue, Montreal was wonderful. The Olympic stadium was beautiful and easily reached by the Metro. When the swimming was over, I took a

coach and visited Quebec, the only walled city in North America. From there, I took the coach to Tadoussac in northern Quebec Province. Whale watching was the object of my visit, and it was an unforgettable experience. The trip, lasting five and a half hours by coach, was well worth the effort.

Swimming is a sport I can recommend to everybody, even without participation in competitions. The main thing is to enjoy using all one's muscles, which gives a great deal of satisfaction after each session. I am still on the Campbell and arthritis diet - no coffee, tea, bread and sugar - and hope to carry on for a while yet.

Since writing about Montreal, I was invited to the Hungarian Masters' Swimming Championships in Gyula, Hungary, near the Romanian border. I readily accepted since the time coincided with my father's *Yahrzeit*. I went to the cemetery with some trepidation as I was warned not to go by myself. As it happened, no one could go with me and so I took the tram to the Rakoskereszturi, Jewish cemetery. There was no need for any trepidation on my part. Within minutes of my arrival, I was told where my father's grave was. I was even taken to it by car. The grave was overgrown, and I was in somewhat of an emotional state. I returned a few days later, after my swimming race, to find that the tomb had been cleaned up and all was well. So it was in the swimming race where I won a gold in both races, the 50m. freestyle and backstroke.

Whilst in Hungary, I also visited the Holocaust Exhibition in the Castle in Budapest with my cousin. The well presented exhibition evoked many memories of the awful times we had gone through. There were quite a few visitors to the exhibition, most, I believe, were gentiles. Will this exhibition serve as a lesson for the future?

* *

BEFORE AND AFTER: ROMAN'S CONTINUING SAGA

ROMAN HALTER

How, after forty-eight years, I found Abramek Sztajer who was hidden with me and Josef Szwajcer by Mr & Mrs Kurt Fuchs in the spring of 1945.

At the beginning of March 1945, about two weeks after the Allied bombing of Dresden, the SS death-marched us in a southerly direction. Our group consisted of about 500 men and women, Jewish slave-ammunition workers. As we marched, we felt our end was near. We shared the premonition that eventually we would be taken to some ravine where the SS would shoot us.

On the second night of the march, I was amongst a few who escaped. Abramek Sztajer, Josef Szwajcer and I ended up in a village about 7 km from Dresden called Oberporitz where Mr Kurt Fuchs and his wife

Hertha took us in. We were sheltered by them throughout March and April of that year. Russian troops entered Oberporitz on 4 May 1945, and two days after liberation, on 6 May, I made my way back to Chodecz, my home town in Poland. Szwajcer and Sztajer stayed on in Oberporitz.

When the villagers of Oberporitz learned that the family Fuchs had sheltered three Jews, they decided to do away with the Jews and their German hosts as well.

On 12 May 1945, Kurt Fuchs and Adam Sztajer were taken out into a field where they were beaten and then shot. At that time, Sztajer was elsewhere, while Mrs Hertha Fuchs was visiting her neighbours.

'When I heard the shots', she told me, 'I knew that my lovely Kurt was dying. So I ran out into the field and took his head into my lap. He tried to speak, to say something to me....Sztajer lay dead. Those who murdered my husband and Sztajer were just walking away. One of them said, "we can get her now too", but they just walked away'.

After forty-seven years, Mrs Fuchs and I found one another. Last May I went to Oberporitz to visit her. She is eighty-five years of age, still clear in mind but weak in body. We talked about her life all alone, how she managed under the communists, and about the many things which have happened during the past forty-seven years. Naturally, we talked mostly about the march, of the events of April and May 1945, about her beloved Kurt, and of Szwajcer and Sztajer. I found Mrs Fuchs' recall quite amazing. She remembered that I was born on 7 July 1927, and that Sztajer's birth had been on 10 July 1914.

'Please, Roman, try to find Sztajer. I have a feeling that he is alive'. I promised her to do so. That was well over a year ago. With the help of others, I began looking for him, first of all in Israel. In Israel, however, some people have changed their surnames to Hebrew-sounding names, and those Sztajers, Shteiers, and Steirs were not the ones that I wanted to find. Perhaps, I thought, he ended up in the United States of America or in Canada? I then wrote to Elie Wiesel, whom I had met a couple of times, and told him my story and asked him to help me to find Sztajer.

Elie Wiesel wrote to the Federation of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. They have records of almost all Holocaust survivors who live in North America. Receiving a letter from him, they sprang into action and sent me a list of names. I began making telephone calls to many cities in America and Canada. I spoke to Sztajers and Steers and Stairs, but to no avail. None of them were the person I was looking for.

When I was almost on the point of giving up, a contact through Yad Vashem in Jerusalem put me in touch with Benjamin Lasman who lives in Jerusalem. We were together in the Lodz ghetto, Auschwitz, Stutthof, and Dresden. Benjamin and his wife were coming to London for a holiday, so we met and talked again, mainly about the past. Did he, I asked, remember Abramek Sztajer? Yes, he did. Abraham Sztajer, he told me, is his second cousin. 'No, no', he corrected himself, 'a cousin twice removed'.

When Benjamin Lasman returned to Jerusalem, he telephoned my son Ardyn and gave him the Tel-Aviv address and telephone number of Abramek Sztajer, who now calls himself by another name. A week ago I spoke with Sztajer on the telephone. We talked in a rather rusty Polish, interspersed with a word of Yiddish here and there. He did not remember me until I told him that I am that Romek who was adopted by the Leo Chimowicz family in 1942 when during the Szpera I escaped and my mother was taken away to Chelmno. Then he said, 'Oi, Romek der Klapsedra!'. We talked more. He was astonished to learn that Mrs Fuchs remembered all our dates of birth.

By the time you read this, I shall have been in Israel during the autumn, and one of the first people whom I shall visit, after my children and grandchildren of course, will be Abramek Sztajer.

In our next newsletter, I hope to be able to tell you about my meeting with him and how he managed to save his life in Oberporitz in those days immediately after the war.

* *

BILONG NOTBILONG

MICHAEL HONEY

Michael, Founder Member and Past Chairman of the Education & Culture Sub-Committee of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, came with the Windermere group. But since his father lived already in the United Kingdom, Michael joined him soon after our arrival.

I have chosen the title in Pidgin as it represents better than the English, 'Belong Don't Belong'. In Czech, the Patrim Nepatrim is even better, but I am writing for the 45s and most of you have Polish as your original language. Pidgin languages are characterised by small vocabularies and the lack of words can be considerably enhanced by the concept bilong. For almost anything belongs to something else, and so it is with people.

Now that we are nearly fifty years on from our liberation, I often ponder whether our life now represents reality. Or was reality there in the German concentration camps? As subsequent abuses of human rights took place in Russia, Uganda, Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Haiti I was shaken. For I, too, was a victim of such abuse. But that stark reality continues for many others. From the perspective of a life at peace and in security, the Holocaust experience appears surreal. Yet thoughts about its evil are particularly brought into focus because I remember with some of my fellow victims.

I attended two memorial meetings last summer in the Czech Republic, one of which was the meeting of room No. 5 called 'Dror' in the *Jugendheim* L.417 in Theresienstadt, 'Dror' being known as the Zionist room. The name had been chosen because our Madrich Shmudla explained that the Hebrew word for the bird swallow also means freedom. We plastered the emblem, the outline of a swallow, on the walls of our room and had it sown on our football shirts because the whole *Jugendheim* used to have a regular football league. When the Germans asked, we said that we were the swallows, a subtle secret for us because of the Hebrew meaning of the word. Such was our naive resistance to being subjugated. Some of us are now better Hebraists and we know Hebrew better than our Madrichim knew it then. We know that the word 'Dror' does mean freedom, but the bird in question is not the graceful swallow but the cheeky sparrow.

We swallows - excuse me, sparrows - have met several times in the last few years. Each of us were Czech Jews interned in Theresienstadt at various times during 1942 and up to September 1943. Some of us then experienced Auschwitz and other camps. One of the sparrows came with us to Windermere. Given that he was taller and went with the men from Auschwitz, he is not a Birkenau boy. But he marched from Schwarzheide during the death marches towards the end of the war back to Theresienstadt before he was liberated. He completed, so to speak, a Holocaust 'grand tour'.

The other memorial meeting was that of the 'Birkenau Boys'. This was a group of boys selected on 6 July 1944 in the *Familienlager* in Auschwitz-Birkenau who, for some unknown reason, were not killed with the rest of the *Familienlager* internees who were liquidated on the nights of 9 and 10 July 1944. I belong to each of these groups, and we arranged for the meetings to be combined and so held at the same time. When the various group photographs were being taken, several of the participants were offended when told they did not belong to this or the other group.

I am writing in your journal because I belong, and do not belong to your group. When I returned to Czechoslovakia in July 1945, I began searching for the address of my father. I knew that he had been in England during the war and that it was intended that we - the rest of the family - should join him there. Due to delays in the issuing of visas, we were unable to leave Czechoslovakia and so became stuck in the mire which became the Holocaust.

From one of the 'Dror' boys, therefore, I learned that a transport of children was due to go to England during 1945, and I quickly concluded that the best thing would be to join such a transport. I could always worry afterwards about establishing my father's address in England. Eventually, someone told me to ask at the Ministry of the Interior in Prague. The Ministry occupied a large building on Karlovo Náměstí, where I enquired in almost every room if anyone knew who was organising a transport of children to England. At that time the whole building was in a hopeless muddle, and people in adjacent rooms did not even know what the officials in the rooms next to them were doing.

It was a Kafkaesque situation writ large. I worked my way round the top floor and was half-way around the floor below when I walked into the room of Victor Fischl. He is now the writer Avigdor Dagan. When I

told him what I wanted, he asked who I was and I told him my name, Misa Honigwachs. To my delight, he said that he knew my father in London and that he himself had just returned to Prague, together with the Czech government which had returned to Czechoslovakia from its wartime exile in London. He told me that it was his wife, Stella, who really knew my father well from before the war. He said that somewhere on his desk he had a letter from my father. His desk was a heap of papers in terrible disorder. He looked for about ten minutes, but eventually gave up. He took my Prague address, and said that he would write to his wife in London who could then tell my father about me. Most importantly, he said he knew about the transport of children to England, and that he would see to it that I would join these children. I went to see him about twice every week and learned that the transport had to wait because the planes which would bring the Czech Air Force back to Prague from England would then take the children on their way back. I spent a month waiting in Prague and joined you all at the Ruzyně airfield to board the Lancaster bombers which were to transport us to England.

Through my interest in genealogy, one of our younger children contacted me to help search for some data of Theresienstadt registrations. Quite incidentally, I came across a paper entitled 'An Experiment in Group Upbringing', published in *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, Volume IV (International University Press, New York). A reprint of the paper can be found at the Anna Freud Clinic Library in London. The paper evokes the arrival of us, the 45s, in Windermere in 1945. I now see that the camp in Windermere was organised and directed by a Mr Oscar Friedman, an associate member of the British Psycho-Analytic Society, and a Miss Alice Goldberger, a superintendent of the Hampstead Nurseries during the Second World War.

I found this article quite upsetting, mainly because there were only a few very small children who came to England from Theresienstadt on 15 August 1945. We were all mostly about 16-years old. Instead of arranging adoptions in the quickest way possible for these few tiny tots, the people in charge of the welfare of the 45s kept these very young children in an orphanage type home. Was the Jewish community not in a position to organise a dozen or so adoptions? The people responsible for our welfare were Freudian psycho-analysts who placed the children under a type of looking glass observation (p. 128 of the above volume) in what were basically orphanages.

It is pointless to discuss some of the errors of detail in the data for several of the children. Interestingly, in the post-war period the writers do not wish to use the German language name 'Theresienstadt' and introduce the Czech 'Terezín', but they misspell the name throughout the paper. Terezín is also in Bohemia, not Moravia (Note 1, p. 127 of the above volume).

Most importantly, however, the writers did not understand that the Terezín ghetto was not a concentration camp but that it was a whole town requisitioned by the Germans for their own purposes (Note 2, p. 127). Within the confines of the ghetto, one hardly ever saw a German soldier. Internal administration was entirely in Jewish hands. The Germans took care to demonstrate to the Jews of the ghetto that they were interned for the duration of the war. We who were 'interned' in Theresienstadt accepted this ruling of the government in place in the

same way that many German Jews also accepted internment in England which happened after 1939. The Jews obey governments in place, for we have the Talmudic rule that 'Dinah DeMalchutah Dinah' ('the law of the land is the law'). From the point of view of the Holocaust, this was all part of the fiction and bluff by the Germans so that masses of people would submit to being transported east, again in the belief that they were to be interned elsewhere in order not to overcrowd Theresienstadt. It is a poignant comparison that some German Jews were similarly shipped to Australia by the British authorities, obviously also without resistance. The crime of the Germans is greater by the degree of premeditation and planning associated with the Holocaust. By the time we reached Auschwitz and the like, we were lost.

To return to Theresienstadt, the administration of the ghetto was led by a Jewish *Ältestenrat* (Jewish Council). All matters concerning children and youth were dealt with by a *Jugendälteste* who was a member of this council of elders. In Theresienstadt, there were many *Jugendheime* where children were housed and led by Madrichim from the age of about eight. These children were also segregated by sexes. Younger children were also housed in such *Jugendheime*. The young groups of children were looked after by a nurse who was called, in German, the *Beträuerin* (we used to colloquialise it into the Czech as *Betrojerka*). The Jewish youth and child leadership policy was to create an atmosphere of resident schools with lessons and activities to keep children busy and, as much as possible, to avoid any of the adult worries affecting them.

This policy was highly successful because our education and welfare was in the hands of experienced educators, nurses and the like. There are many child survivors of Theresienstadt who all attest to the success of this quite remarkable policy. The children were to be saved for a better future. The article in question does not seem to have any idea of this. In a section entitled 'Fear Based on Memories' (p. 160), the writers insert their imagined fears of concentration camps and foist them onto these three-year old tots who, if anything, were better cared for by Jewish nurses in Theresienstadt than the older children as described above. The article describes German guard dogs, quite inconsequentially a fear of feathers, and vans to the gas chambers. There were not dogs, feathers, vans or anything like that which these tots could have experienced in Theresienstadt, which was not a concentration camp.

It seems to be an unfortunate quirk of history that in Windermere and afterwards we were to be looked after by 'Freudian psychoanalysts' who were trained to discern everything in accordance with Freudian theory, which at that time was prevalent. They were, it seems, quite incapable of any other form of analysis. There is, therefore, a basic misunderstanding by the writers of the article in question which I now perceive to be misguided.

I recall a personal and similar misunderstanding upon our arrival in Windermere. Most of the 300 children were aged about 16, as I was, while there were only a few younger children. I was taken straight to a hospital. I had sores full of puss on my ear-lobes, and my neck, and most uncomfortably on my behind and seat. I only spent one night there because the next morning, I was called to a head nurse, possibly Miss Alice Goldberger. She tried to impress me with her

kindness and started asking all kinds of involved and what I considered to be silly questions. I perceived her kindness to be quite false. After a while, I had to ask the purpose of her questioning. She then continued about my family and those who had been lost, and that she had some news for me. Eventually, I had to ask her to be more direct. I explained that for more than a year I had been alone in quite difficult and traumatic circumstances, that she could not possibly and no longer have any news that could upset or be a worry to me, and that could she possibly stop pussyfooting any more and get to the point. She then told me that my father was waiting for me in the next room.

That silly interrogation lengthened by half an hour the separation of five and a half years already endured by my father and myself. At that time, the fact that I had a family link to a living person, that I belonged, was even more important to me than all the sores I was then burdened with. Because of her own ideas of fear, trauma and psychology, the nurse had subjected my father and his son to yet another period of waiting when we had both been looking desperately forward to being reunited with each other. She did it because of her goodness, and it is such goodness which is also exhibited in the article being discussed. I was so much more fortunate than most of you to have found and entered a family home. I do not understand that the Jewish community did not seem to understand this simple need in 1945. Some of the *Kinder* who came in 1939 and, in our eyes, had escaped the Holocaust, nevertheless had the same problem with the Jewish community because not enough was done for them as well in that regard.

It was sad for me to see at the meetings last summer that some of the 'Birkenau Boys' have only now begun to examine their identity as Jews. One source of gladness for me is that I never had that problem, even in the camps. Life often takes funny turns, although I must admit that I would have preferred not to have had the links and belonged to Dror, the Birkenau Boys, and the 45s.

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A MAN WITH A MISSION

JACK KEGAN

Jack has been a regular contributor to our Journal in recent years. His continuous efforts to keep alive the memory of his people from Nowogrodek is a shining example to us all.

Reaching Britain after the war was a marvellous moment in my life. I'd escaped from Nazi-occupied Byelorussia, then part of Stalin's Russia, and was fortunate to be alive. I had no idea when I reached London that some of the men who had persecuted me in concentration camps and Jewish ghettos in Byelorussia were fellow refugees who had

secretly slipped into Britain to begin a new life. These uniformed thugs volunteered to help the Nazis after they occupied my country in June 1941. Many played a central role in Hitler's genocide policy against Jew and Slav alike.

After Germany's collapse, many SS-controlled para-military policemen reached Britain, many wearing Free Polish uniforms hastily put on in the dying weeks of the war. Despite MI5 and Special Branch checks in displaced person's camps in Germany and at British ports, these pro-Nazis fooled their former enemies into believing they were genuine Allied soldiers.

The *Sunday Express* investigation has recently tracked down such war criminals living comfortably in the United Kingdom and highlighted a major scandal. Whitehall set up a war crimes unit in the late 1980s after the Simon Wiesenthal organisation in Los Angeles handed the Home Office a list of war criminals living here. The House of Commons then introduced the War Crimes Act in 1991, allowing British citizens to be prosecuted for atrocities committed abroad.

Since then millions of pounds of taxpayer's money has been spent by dedicated Scotland Yard detectives gathering evidence from witnesses all over the world. They believe they have enough evidence to successfully prosecute a handful of men. But so far nobody has been arrested or charged.

Last month I spent a week in the former Soviet Union, visiting some of the places where I was a prisoner. I even met a guard from the camp where I was an inmate. After the war he was convicted of war crimes and spent ten years in a Siberian jail. He said he was lucky not to have been executed. Yet he couldn't understand why fellow war criminals who had fled to Britain had not faced trial. Or why Britain had let such men into the country in the first place.

Such men, he added, were sometimes high-ranking Byelorussian SS men and still walking free in the United Kingdom. Outwardly respectable members of their communities but their crimes unknown to neighbours and friends. This guard explained that you could not rise in the ranks unless you participated in mass killings. First killing the Jews and, when that was finished, turning against the rest of the civilian population.

From 1941 until the end of the war, 90% of the Jewish population in Byelorussia was murdered. I went with the guard to the former concentration camp at Kolditsevo. It was used to hold local farmers and their families before they were killed. He confirmed that most of their killers escaped when the Germans fled.

Today, witnesses questioned by British detectives in Byelorussia and other parts of eastern Europe which Hitler occupied, find it difficult to understand by Britain's investigation is taking so long. There is a growing suspicion that the authorities here have no stomach to bring war criminals to trial.

The idea that some of these men live here in Britain is to me ironic, unjust and wrong. Such monsters have never faced their accusers, punishment or shame. I was a young boy when the Germans arrived in Byelorussia. At first my family was restricted to the Jewish ghetto

in the town. Conditions were hard and worsened day-by-day. We faced the near-certain prospect of death and torture. Food was scarce. We had to scavenge for everything. Such terror came not only from the Germans but from the local people who had joined the paramilitary police. These became the ears and eyes of the Germans. They were cruel and did their every bidding, however brutal. They also profited by stealing everything from their victims.

Before they were murdered, my family was moved from our ghetto to a work camp. There, Byelorussian collaborators had the power of life or death over every prisoner. I was the only survivor of my family. Today I'm still looking for justice. Not revenge. There are still witnesses willing to testify.

Time, of course, is not on the side of justice.

[this article originally appeared in the *Sunday Express*, 30 June 1994]

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MUKACEVO JEWS AMONG US

DAVID HERMAN

David came to England in March 1946 from Prague. He stayed in Montfort Hall near Nelson-Colne in Lancashire. He subsequently came to London where he lived in the Nightingale Hostel until the beginning of 1947. He is a very active and popular member of our Society and a member of our Committee.

Mukacevo, Czechoslovakia (now Ukraine) is close to the Carpathian mountains, in a beautiful valley surrounded by forests. Before the war it had a population of approximately 36,000, of which nearly 20,000 were Jews. The language spoken by Jews was mostly Yiddish. Due to the mixture of different ethnic groups in the area, most Jews also spoke Czech, Hungarian, Ukrainian, and German. The Mukacevo Rabbi was well known throughout the region (even overseas), and he had a very large following (Chasidim). There was also a strong Zionist influence with a Hebrew gymnasium, but this was not supported by the Chasidim because they were anti-Zionist. The gymnasium was also attended by Jewish students from outside the area.

Between 1938 and 1942 many of the students from the Hebrew gymnasium left for Palestine and were founder members of several Kibutzim. In the middle of 1943, the Jews of Mukacevo were herded into two small ghettos where they were kept in overcrowded and terrible conditions until early 1944 when the ghettos were liquidated and all the Jews taken to two brick factories. There they were loaded onto cattle

trucks and sent to Auschwitz. The few who survived the camps have settled in many different countries.

NAME	FIRST OR MAIDEN NAME	PLACE OF ORIGIN. MUKACEVO & SURROUNDING AREAS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA	PRESENT PLACE OF RESIDENCE/ DECEASED
Brody	Simon	"	U.S.A.
Feldman	Alzbeta	"	Israel
Feuerstein	Herman	"	U.S.A.
Gross	Samuel	"	Israel
Herman	David	"	England
Herman	Abraham	"	Deceased
Herskovic	Israel	"	England
Halpert	Oscar	"	Canada
Hoffman	Meir	"	Canada
Josef	Marketa	"	Israel
Kraus	Paula	"	U.S.A.
Klein	Josef	"	U.S.A.
Lampert	Martin	"	England
Walter	Serena/ Lampert	"	Deceased
Lebovic	Josef	"	Israel/ U.S.A.
Lipschitz	Desider	"	England
Lipschitz	Euzen	"	U.S.A.
Mendelovic	Lilly	"	
Mendelovic	Ruzena	"	
(both left the train in Antwerp)			
Mermelstein	Simon	"	U.S.A.
Mermelstein	Vilna	"	England
Rosenberg	William	"	U.S.A.
Solomon	Tibor	"	U.S.A.
Spiegel	Eugen	"	U.S.A.
Stern	Elsa	"	U.S.A.
Stern	Eva	"	U.S.A.
Stern	Herman	"	U.S.A.
Stern	Meier	"	Israel
Sunog	Ernest	"	U.S.A.
Svimmer	Chaim	"	Canada
Tannenbaum	Vilem	"	U.S.A.
Teichman	Mendel	"	England
Zelovic	Herman	"	U.S.A.
Zelovic	Vilem	"	U.S.A.
Lerner	Etel/Zelovic	"	England

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CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

THE LAST CAREFREE DAYS OF MY CHILDHOOD

ESTHER BRUNSTEIN ZYLBERBERG

Esther is the sister of Perec Zylberberg, liberated in Belsen and then sent to Sweden before joining her brother in the United Kingdom.

Some of my friends born in England often raise their eyebrows in an expression of amazement and disbelief when I tell them of my happy childhood in pre-war Poland. 'How was it possible', they ask, 'to be happy in a country that was so hostile to its Jewish population?'.

Of course, there is no counter-argument to established fact. It is sadly true that, as Jews, we were persecuted and discriminated against, and I still painfully remember many a jibe in my own direction. However, if as a child one was blessed with a loving home, intelligent and understanding parents who took time to listen and talk to their children, above all explaining everything, it compensated for the ills of the world outside.

I was born in Lodz into an enlightened, liberal working-class family. I was the youngest of three siblings, the elder ones being my brothers David and Perec. In no small measure, they contributed to my feeling of being secure and protected.

My parents, Philip and Sarah Zylberberg, were members of the Bund, a Jewish Socialist organisation. Mother also belonged to the YAF, the *Yiddisheh Arbiter Froyen*, Jewish Working Women. Father was very actively involved in the trade union movement, and was a one-time official in the Textile Workers' Union. Both mother and father had many interests outside the home.

Our two-roomed apartment was, indeed, a happy place, forever buzzing and alive with all kinds of activities. Lodz is not renowned as a 'beautiful' city, though to be fair it had some interesting streets and buildings. It was built-up somewhat haphazardly from around the 1820s to become the largest and most important textile centre in Poland, universally referred to as 'Little Manchester'. The entire population numbered around 750k,000, one-third of whom were Jews.

By that very token, there was a great diversity in Jewish life in the town. There, in that city of tall chimneys, incessantly belching out great clouds of smoke into the blue skies, began my golden childhood. From the age of three or four, I attended the *Grosser Kindergarten*, and, on reaching school age, I was enrolled in the secular Yiddish Vladimir Medem School.

Grosser and Medem were famous Bundist leaders who became legends in their own lifetimes. Mede, in fact, was the son of an assimilated

Jewish doctor, a captain in the Russian army. His parents had him baptised at birth into the Russian Orthodox Church. He discovered his roots during his student days and found himself naturally drawn to the Jewish community. His was a great intellect, and he was a man of crystal-clear character who devoted his entire life to the oppressed and under-privileged Jewish working masses.

I am forever grateful for having had this particular background which, from early childhood, imbued me with a love of humanity at large, and in particular a love and pride in my own origins. Those ideals are still embedded deep within me. Yiddish language, tradition, and culture are paramount to my existence. I may even say that I drew strength from it in the darkest days of our common past.

In those far off days, I was a very happy, carefree little girl, enjoying many friends while school was an extension of my home. Its teaching, inspired by idealism, opened up for us wide horizons in an otherwise poor material existence.

Lodz did not have much to offer children of working class families. There was little greenery or open space to play in. A day out with my class or parents in one of the few parks was a real bonus, greeted with great enthusiasm and joy. As I was very fond of gymnastics, my parents enrolled me in a very good Jewish sports club, *Morgenstern* (Morning Star). Once a week I would walk from my school on Cegielniana to Wolczansk Street to attend two-hourly sessions of delightful activities. Once a year the club would give a display of gymnastics in the biggest park in Lodz, Helenow Park. Helenow had very extensive grounds, and hosted many cultural activities such as open-air concerts throughout the summer.

Long summer school holidays were not easy for children or their parents to cope with in the sticky, smoke-filled air of Lodz. To alleviate the plight of some children whose parents could not afford any holidays at all, our school would sometimes organise outings into the nearby countryside.

Often, part of our own holidays were spent with grandfather in my mother's home town of Dobrzyn. There we would also meet up with family members who lived nearby. Most summers, I would also spend a month on a camp holiday organised by TOZ, a Jewish institution devoted to child care and welfare.

I was particularly happy and pleased with myself in the summer of 1939. I had done well in my examinations, and was enjoying camp life in the countryside near Lodz. There were quite a few children amongst us who hailed from Germany. They and their parents had been expelled from Germany because of their Polish origins. Sad though it was for them, for us children it was added excitement for we engaged in teaching them Polish. In turn, we learned a smattering of German from them.

It was there in Wisniowa Gora that we children were informed, on Thursday 31 August 1939, that war was imminent, and that the camp was to be disbanded the next day. On Friday 1 September, we said goodbye to our friends and teachers in the hope of meeting up again at the TOZ camp the following summer. Little did we suspect that by the summer of 1940 the life we knew and loved would be in ruins, and that

by then most of us would be incarcerated in different ghettos and camps.

The memories of that last, golden summer are still vivid in my mind, and I cherish them as the last carefree days of my childhood.

* * * *

' YOUTH ' REMEMBERED

THE MIRACLE IN MY LIFE

MORRIS FRENKEL

Morris and his wife came to England separately and are members of our Society.

I was born in Lodz, Poland, and lived there with my family before the war, and then in the wartime Ghetto. The Ghetto was evacuated in 1944. As I was the eldest of three, my mother made me wear long trousers. She said they would make me look older, like a man.

When we arrived in Auschwitz, I was selected for work details with other men, perhaps due to my mother's foresight. My family, on the other hand, went straight to the gas chambers.

I was left on my own - but I survived Auschwitz.

On 18 January 1945 the camp was evacuated and we started on the long death march. When we travelled, we did so in open cattle trucks. During this evacuation, we stopped in Gross-Rosen at a camp for Polish prisoners-of-war. When they saw us arriving, they called out, 'the dirty Jews are here'. The following day we were taken to the station from where we travelled on to Dachau.

In April 1945, they called all the Jews to report at the main gate. We were told that we would journey to Switzerland, and there be exchanged for German prisoners-of-war. This, of course, turned out not to be true. Instead, we were taken to Innsbruck, from which we had to march up the mountains to a small village. There, the SS and the Mayor with other villagers talked all night while we were left standing outside the town hall. The following morning we were marched down from the mountain to the station, from where we returned to Dachau. As the railway line had been damaged by bombing, the SS took us to a forest where we stayed all day and night. During the night, however, the SS ran away. We were left on our own and decided to spread out in the forest in small groups until American soldiers arrived a few days later. Quite suddenly we were free.

Later, we found out from the Mayor of the village that the SS had intended to kill us on the mountain and dispose of our bodies. But

the Mayor and the villagers had not allowed this to happen because of their fear of the approaching Americans.

This is part of my life's story, a part which still seems a miracle to me.

* * * *

EIGHTEENTH LEONARD MONTEFIORE MEMORIAL LECTURE

THE RISE AND FALL OF HUNGARIAN JEWRY (1867-1938)

ROBERT S WISTRICH

This is a summary of the eighteenth Leonard Montefiore Memorial Lecture delivered at the Stern Hall, West London Synagogue, London W1, by Robert S Wistrich, *Jewish Chronicle* Professor of Jewish Studies, University College, London.

Hungarian Jewry in the period from its emancipation until the First World War experienced a kind of 'Golden Age'. Its population rose from 83,000 at the end of the 18th century to 408,000 in 1869, and a high point of 910,000 on the eve of the First World War. It represented the most dynamic, upwardly mobile, and entrepreneurially successful segment of the Hungarian population in the post-emancipation 'Age of Dualism' when Greater Hungary was itself a multi-ethnic society within a larger multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The Magyar ruling class, the landowning aristocracy (which was politically dominant) concluded a *de facto* alliance with the Jews, the most literate and urban element in the society, to economically modernise the country. Hungarian Jews fulfilled the role of a missing middle class and through their assimilation, they helped bolster the position of the ethnic Magyars (about 50% of the population) against the many ethnic minorities - Slovaks, Rumanians, Germans, Croats, Serbs, Ukrainians etc. - some of whom had separatist or national aspirations of their own. The Hungarian Jews were loyal patriotic citizens, ideally suited to this role, and the rapidity of their economic and cultural ascent was dizzying.

The Jews came to dominate whole sectors of the Hungarian economy before 1914 - in commerce, industry, banking, and the free professions. They played an outstanding role in the modern, avant-gardist, western-oriented culture of Hungary, especially in Budapest where there were over 200,000 Jews by the turn of the century - almost a quarter of the population in the capital of Hungary. Despite their pre-eminent role and the social discrimination which persisted

at the top levels of Hungarian society, antisemitism was relatively weak in comparison with Russia, Rumania, neighbouring Germany and Austria, or even France at the end of the 19th century. There was the blood-libel scandal of Tisza-Eszlar (1882), and a short-lived antisemitic movement which had some success in the 1880s but the Liberal government of Kalman Tisza firmly suppressed any violent excesses against Jews. The Roman Catholic clergy was hostile and there was nationalist resentment against the 'Magyarising' Jews among ethnic minorities, but during this period political antisemitism was generally seen as hostile to the interests of the Hungarian State.

The situation dramatically changed for the worse after 1918. As a result of the Trianon Treaty, Hungary in the wake of the First World War lost 70% of its territory and 60% of its population. The Jewish population was reduced to half its size through this territorial amputation but was now the most visible minority in the country. In an economically deteriorating climate of increased unemployment and competition for scarce resources, the Jews were seen as undesirable competitors by an emerging Hungarian middle class. The atmosphere of national humiliation changed the character of Hungarian nationalism - which had previously been liberal and open - to one which was much more exclusivist, ethnic, and even racist in character.

This was exacerbated by the role which Jews had played in the short-lived Communist dictatorship of 1918-19. The 'Red Terror' led by Bela Kun (a Transylvanian Jew) - which had a disproportionate number of persons of Jewish origin in its government - transformed the attitude of many Hungarians to the Jewish community. The equation of Jews with Bolshevism was to have a disastrous effect in the 1920s and 1930s, even though most Hungarian Jews were loyal, patriotic, and had nothing to do with Communism.

Radical right-wing and fascist movements grew, especially in the 1930s, and antisemitism became a central feature of their programmes and policies. After 1933, the example of Nazi Germany also exercised a fatal attraction, especially for Hungarian nationalists determined to regain lost territories. For a time, Jews were still able in this period to maintain their positions in the economy and cultural life, but the writing was already on the wall.

By 1938, even before the Holocaust period set in, the emancipation and the Hungarian-Jewish symbiosis which had once seemed so promising and brilliantly successful, had been unravelled. The seeds of this development were evident already in the *numerus clausus* legislation introduced in 1920, after the 'White Terror' and pogroms that followed the defeat of the Communist dictatorship. In 1938, much more far-reaching anti-Jewish legislation was introduced by the Hungarian government, while waiting in the wings were even more violent populist and fascist movements which would gain their opportunity in 1944 to wreak terrible violence against the Jewish population following the German invasion.

Hungary, which in the late 19th century had seemed like a paradise for Jews, had turned into a nightmare less than fifty years later.

★ ★ ★ ★

FROM THE SECOND GENERATION

SIX POEMS

ALOMA HALTER

Aloma is the daughter of Susie and Roman Halter. She lives in Jerusalem, and is a regular contributor to the *Jerusalem Post* as well as other journals, including our own.

THE CAPER BUSHES

Those whose soul-thirst brings them to the Wall
may be blunted to the flowering of the caper this
month,
now that it's Av and all the deeds
and misdeeds of the past year are almost formed
almost ripe
like the buds and thorns of this bush,
ready for plucking and pickling
in small glass jars.

As if each tight-folded bud
contains a reply from God –
unopenable but preserved.

★

THE NOTES

After hours,
with the floodlights off
before the next Shabbat next fast,
will God find time
to read all the notes in the Wall?

Or still folded, spikey
and white-bloomed
are they turned into those bushes
the caper bushes with the white flowers
clinging with the tenacity of despair
mainly above the women's section of the Wall
the women who press their lips to the stone,
even as their hands feel out crevices
for words to root.

★

THE NOISE

Isn't God deafened by the noise at the Wall?
 Everyone talking at once! Demanding attention
 with prayers, with notes,
 they wail and they moan, they chant and they cry.
 No rest from unceasing petitions,
 No let up from the clamour of entreaty.

Every few months
 the Ministry of Religious Affairs
 sends people to collect the notes fallen from the
 Wall,
 (and loosen those in accessible cracks,
 to make room for more).

So the tumult ceases;
 the pile is taken away, buried with respect:
 countless entreaties are cut-off mid-sentence.
 Until, from under the earth
 that noise – again.

★

STAINED GLASS

The blues in my father's stained glass
 are more constant than his eyes
 which lost their colour
 on the day he saw.

Cerulean, cobalt, aquamarine;
 with relief he turns to metal structures
 whose heavy permanence
 outstays the brittleness of bone
 or bayoneted flesh.
 The red, the unforgettable red.

His spirit,
 from memory's black anchorage,
 soars like glass from its leading;
 flights of blue pull away
 from the tendons of despair.

Sometimes the clear fragments of his life
 – stained glass –
 filter light from a world
 I have not known,
 cannot see through.

★

WITNESS (for my father)

When he speaks of what he saw
 my father's blue eyes
 lose their colour.

A look unseeing,
 hopeless as an open mouth.

Child
 turned witness
 staring, rapt,
 lost to the world.

The sky's blue
 bereft
 of any surviving cloud
 and falling
 into a vortex of the unseeing
 has more colour.

*

SURVIVORS

Black and white notices
 outside my house: a neighbour
 died last night and his daughter waits
 in the shuttered room.
 Morning,
 the Ninth of Av.
 The glint of sunshine
 probes the asphalt like a tuning fork.

On the way to work
 I notice a short-cut:
 a grid of light and shade
 falls on the road ahead.
 But people are out in summer clothes,
 the streets full of survivors.

* *

THE NUMBER

ELLI WOHLGELERNTER

Elli is the husband of Aloma Halter, and writes for the *Jerusalem Post*.

Last week, for the first time in a while, I saw a man with a number on his forearm. For a moment I felt like a child – I wanted to go up to him and touch it, to run my fingers over the blue dye, pinch that part of the skin to check if it was real. I stopped myself from staring.

'He's got a number', we would say as kids, identifying without further explanation that we were talking about a survivor of Auschwitz. Once it was a common enough sight on the streets of New York as it was in Israel. But now the numbers are fading: in ten years' time most of them will be gone. And then what?

The number. Numbers. That is what we shall be left with. Memories of forearms with numbers, and the data of numbers killed. That is what we, the generation born after the war, will inherit: no collective memory of a thriving, pre-war ghetto life, no first-hand account of life/death in Treblinka, just the memory of other people's memory.

Children of survivors call themselves 'The Second Generation', or '2G' for short. They understand all too well the legacy passed on to them to pass on to others. In truth, all of us under fifty are 2Gs. We are all one generation removed from the crematoria, all of us intermediaries for the Six Million. That is a responsibility we must all share, for events happening now demand it.

There is a curious phenomenon that has occurred in recent years, two situations that may or may not be linked. One is the increasing number of survivors who have decided to speak about their past, who have agreed to be taped, on audio-tape or even on video. Why now? Perhaps they have finally been able to liberate themselves from the truth they have suppressed all these years. Or perhaps it is the growing need to tell all before it is too late, one last final shriek at the world: 'It happened! It happened! I was there!'.

At the same time, the voices of Holocaust revisionists have also increased, and not just the uneducated crackpots, although these still exist and continue to multiply. One example can be seen in American campus newspapers, which are filled with advertisements from organisations like the 'Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust' which claim that it – the Holocaust – did not happen and that gas chambers did not exist.

But it is not just the fringe that is making noise. Not long ago, the head of the Austrian Engineers and Architects Association announced that after careful study, he concluded that the Holocaust could not have happened. The Zyklon-B gas, he determined, could not have killed as many people as claimed, and the cremation of such huge numbers of

bodies would have been impossible, given that the crematoria were not large enough to handle such a volume.

Not a crackpot but the President of the Austrian Engineers and Architects Association! Could his living in Austria have caused him to be affected by that home-grown disorder that afflicted the former president of his country, Waldheimer's disease - you get old and you then forget that you were a Nazi?! And why now? Are the revisionists gearing up for future battles, knowing that soon there will no longer be any more eye-witness survivors to refute them?

The result of this increase in denying and confirming is an obscene cacophony of shouting between survivors and revisionists: 'It happened' - 'it did not' - 'it happened' - 'it did not'.

In twenty years' time, however, when most survivors will have gone, the revisionists will still be here and in greater numbers than ever. And that is when our legacy will be brought to bear, when it will be our job to answer back.

Yad Vashem is currently gathering new information from heretofore secret Soviet archives, which will undoubtedly yield new and exact evidence. To the revisionists this won't matter since it will simply be more documentation to refute. They will just scream more loudly.

But the fear here is that the new evidence will prove that some of the numbers used until now will have been false. And we shall be back to the numbers game. 'Was it six million killed, or 5.5 million? See, the Jews were lying all this time. How do we know they're not lying about the whole of it?'. We shall be hearing this well into the twenty-first century.

I have always wondered why survivors with numbers did not have them erased. One reason, perhaps, is that they needed to keep them for evidence, to show revisionists - without saying a word - that it was true, that this was how Jews were processed.

When they are gone, I hope we will be able to speak in their name as loudly as they did.

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STUDENT SECTION

'THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE HOLOCAUST'

ANDREW CHARLESWORTH

A field course entitled 'The Geography of the Holocaust' was innovated at the University of Liverpool in 1990 by Mr Andrew Charlesworth, now Reader in Human Geography at C & G. this was the first time in the world that the subject of the Holocaust had been taught within the syllabus of a geography degree. What is more, this

course was unique in Holocaust studies in that it was the first to have included a field-based component in eastern Europe.

In total, 88 students took the course over the four courses that were run at Liverpool. All of them were non-Jewish. On all four occasions, we were accompanied, emotionally supported and taught for part of the time in Poland, by Ben Helfgott, a Holocaust survivor, a retired businessman and chairperson of the British Yad Vashem Committee.

The places visited over the four courses have included pre-war Jewish districts, settlements, cemeteries, and the sites of the wartime ghettos in Warsaw, Krakow, Lodz, Lublin, and Piotrkow in Poland, and Lvov in the Ukraine; slave labour camps at Piotrkow and Plasow in Poland, and Janowska in the Ukraine; and the death camps of Majdanek, Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor, and Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. The time spent in Poland and the Ukraine was ten days on each occasion.

On the Liverpool course, students showed tremendous commitment to this course, both in terms of the effort they put into the course and their achievement levels. In certain years, over half of the students on the course gained their best performance in one element of this course. In 1994, half the group were awarded a first-class mark for their project. The impact of the course on the students went well beyond measurable indices and intellectual achievement. As Rabbi Dr Sidney Brichto commented after a reunion of the students, 'an added dimension had been given to their lives which raised them above the commonality of humanity'.

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THE LOVE OF A FOREST. A PERSONAL VIEW OF THE SHOAH

RICHARD GOODALL

The author of this article, Richard Goodall, is one of the students who was awarded a first-class mark for 'The Geography of the Holocaust' project at the University of Liverpool. Apart from the scholarship, it is also an example of the impact such a course has made on the minds of those who have undertaken this study and when travelling in the areas where the atrocities took place, thus being confronted with the reality of this terrible tragedy.

Beginnings and Ends

This is the twelfth first sentence I have written. Usually a confident writer, I have been unhappy with all my previous beginnings, and I'm not full of hope for this one. I will persist as

far as is possible, however, for hope and persistence are appropriate to the subject.

My difficulty in beginning is a reflection of a deep confusion concerning the nature of the ending. What is my goal; what is my point; to where do I lead, to where does this lead? I am a young, white, middle-class, male gentile. I was born in 1971 in Derby, was brought up in suburban Essex and Nottinghamshire commuter villages, am relatively intelligent, but find myself burdened by the sickeningly complex mix of ideological, intellectual, sociological and psychological baggage that seems to be the product of my times. As such I feel unworthy, unqualified and incapable of writing anything of any value. This nihilism is also appropriate to the subject, and I am trying my hardest to affirm its subservience to the force of hope.

What goal, what end, might I move towards? I could follow the example of Mr Thomas Gradgrind, who begins Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* with the following advice:

'Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, Sir!'

I could relate the Facts of the Shoah, objectively, without interpretation, in order that the reader may know what happened. I could thus be a disseminator of knowledge. Indeed, isn't this the simplest, most pure, least contrived exercise I could perform?

No, no, no, Mr Gradgrind, a hundred times no! All Facts are selected and presented subjectively, always. If I suggested that I was relating the truth, the whole and nothing but, I would be lying. I would be presenting an individual interpretation of certain specific events, which I felt to be significant. My definition of significance, and hence my selection of events, would be the result of what contemporary theorists call my 'series'. Thus is the totality of my past influences, in their complexity, and the nature of my future agenda, which is usually vague and disguised (although not necessarily malevolently) and is the result of the past influences. In short, claiming to relate the Facts is a means with an undeclared end, and as such would be a very problematic way to proceed, and one which I do not wish to pursue.

Perhaps I could be more open, declare my intentions, my agenda, my opinion, and make some point or other, with reference to the Facts. I could blame X and Y, exonerate P and Q, and attack A for her blatant prejudice in reviewing the actions of B. I might be out to show that the Germans should never be trusted, or that nationality is meaningless, or that Communism is the only viable economic and political system, or that the Jews must have a state of their own forever, or that dictatorship is bad, or that humans are fundamentally bad, or that humans are fundamentally good, and so on

and so forth. Rather than discovering the bare Facts and interpreting them objectively, as Mr Gradgrind would have us do, and which as I have noted is impossible, the 'objective moralist' first takes his stance, and then uses (or rather abuses) the Facts to press home his point. This is fitting the means to a declared and dominant end, and as such is, also, a method I do not wish to pursue.

However, I do believe I have an end, and I would like to declare it. I want to do what I can to teach people, persuade people, influence people; to change a number of things. I want people to stop judging others, especially by such superficial means as race, skin colour, gender, nationality, residential location or physical attributes. I want people to relinquish or control their desire to dominate other people for their own benefit (I already here the cries of hypocrite and I have no answer), whether through dominance of physique, personality, intellectual ability, or economic or social position. The Shoah was amongst other things an horrific culmination of these two traits, and it demands an horrific reassessment of the ways we customarily live our lives under their influence.

I wish to shock the reader, get through to her, imbue her with terror, disgust, distress, anger, and a realisation that superficial judging of others and social domination have had terrible consequences, but are traits to which we are desensitised. The Shoah has the power to resensitise us to the evil of these traits, and I am trying here to create some of that power in the mind of the reader.

I have an end, and I seem to be breaking away from my first sentence blues, but without means I am unable to begin the journey. I have already criticised and rejected the method of the 'objective moralist', whereby I abuse the Facts claiming that 'they speak for themselves' in supporting my argument, when in fact (!) they are speaking for me. So, then, how am I to convey the power of the Shoah?

Perhaps Dickens can help us. Here Sissy Jupe, daughter of a travelling circus clown, is corrected by Mr Bounderby ('the gentleman'), a close friend of Gradgrind, in the classroom where Gradgrind made his demand for Facts only minutes before:

'Girl number twenty', said the gentleman, smiling in the calm strength of knowledge.

Sissy blushed, and stood up.

'So you would carpet your room - or your husband's room, if you were a grown woman, and had a husband - with representations of flowers, would you?', said the gentleman. 'Why would you?'

'If you please, Sir, I am very fond of flowers', returned the girl.

'And is that why you would put tables and chairs upon them, and have people walking over them with heavy boots?'

'It wouldn't hurt them, Sir. They wouldn't crush and wither, if you please, Sir. They would be the pictures of what was very pretty and pleasant, and I would fancy - '

'Ay, ay, ay! But you musn't fancy', cried the gentleman, quite elated by coming so happily to his point. 'That's it! You are never to fancy'.

'You are not Cecilia Jupe', Thomas Gradgrind solemnly repeated, 'to do anything of that kind'. 'Fact, fact, fact!', said the gentleman. And 'Fact, fact, fact!', repeated Thomas Gradgrind'.

After this lecture, Gradgrind and the gentleman Bounderby watch as their model teacher Mr McChoakumchild begins to create model people from the wayward children in the classroom, filling the dear little vessels with pure Fact:

'He went to work in this preparatory lesson, not unlike Morgiana in the Forty Thieves: looking into all the vessels ranged before him, one after another, to see what they contained. Say, good McChoakumchild. When from thy boiling store, thou shalt fill each jar brim full by-and-by, dost thou think that thou wilt always kill outright the robber Fancy lurking within - or sometimes only maim him and distort him!'

What I offer to the reader is my Fancy; no matter that it be maimed and distorted by the boiling liquid of Fact that has coursed through my veins and flooded into the corners of my soul. Fancy - and the free use of metaphor and analogy and irony and contrast and conflict and juxtaposition and emotion - is the means by which I will journey towards my end: the demonstration that 'cherish life, nurture hope' and 'love thy neighbour' are not only great timeless morals but are major milestones on that greater Journey, the search for Truth.

The Journey.

Without journeys there are no places, without places there are no journeys.

I wrote the short piece of prose below whilst being driven through the Polish countryside, from Kazimierz Dolny, via Chelm, to Sobibor. It is self-explanatory and sets the tone for what shall follow:

- As we travelled through the gentle images of small farm life, past old women hoeing small soil beds, past old men planting seeds deep with a wooden stick, past children playing carelessly in the jumble of the small yard, past tractors, horses, satellite dishes, breeze-blocks, well-proportioned churches, prancing chickens, litter dumps, marshy bogs and small bonfires; as we headed towards Sobibor; the world of images outside the window looked up at me, saw us pass, and continued its life as before. All it saw was an antiseptic bus, transient and alien, a fleeting, irrelevant apparition in white.

But what of the crime? did this world of images dismiss as easily the trains full of condemned people that crossed their lands and left their lives? Were they aware of who it was, crossing their paths so briefly, and why they were there? Further, what were the thoughts of the people in the trains, whose freedoms had gradually been curtailed, whose feelings had been denied, whose actions had become ordered, whose daily lives had been planned by others, whose very independence as human beings had been torn from them, and whose existence was finally to be taken forever upon arrival at Sobibor? Could these people see the images outside - or were their eyes turned inwards, into the carriages, to each other, or into themselves?

Furthermore, did the Germans assigned to operate the camp, designated as racially pure, chosen as instruments to serve the sickening bestial, inhuman ideologies of a nation transfigured into a twisted, mutated state of statehood; did those people muse smugly on the second-rate Polish existence that flashed through the train windows? Or were their minds elsewhere: troubled by the work ahead, perhaps, proud to be chosen but unsure of the scale and nature of the work and their ability to perform; or maybe thinking kindly of the loved ones back home, the tough, rosy-cheeked little girl, and the tiny, dependent baby boy, and the dutiful, beautiful wife doing her bit sewing socks for the Fatherland?

The Forest

If you go down to the woods today....

The last few kilometres of the journey, before our arrival at Sobibor, were through a rich, mostly coniferous, forest. The forest was well established and an integral part of the landscape, although pogrom-like coppicing, occasional, like thunder, assuaged the local population.

I thought, at the time, about the word 'forest', which derives from the Latin *fores*, meaning alien (in a negative sense), the root, also, of the word 'foreign'. The word developed this usage in pre-modern Europe when forests were perceived as dark places, hostile, dangerous, haunted. To the modernist European, however, forests were just fuel, or were obstacles to progress, to be cleared so that the land may be used more productively. To the late twentieth century, anti-modernist European, forests are a refuge from destruction, from the man-made world, from the alienating city. They are natural places, that can remind us of our animal roots, and soothe our corrupted Western souls.

For the 250,000 Jews murdered in a clearing in this forest, it was no refuge, no obstacle to progress. At first, from the train, they may have seen it as a pleasant place in which to work, to labour, until this temporary madness would pass and their lives could return to normal. But such hope was cruelly extinguished as they were beaten out of the trains and into the gas chambers. The forest became a symbol of darkness, hostility and danger; but to a degree inconceivable to the peasant of the Middle Ages. His superstitious fears were as nothing compared to the terror that paralysed the hearts of the Jews as they were felled with an efficiency no lumberjack could match. If it was not haunted before the Shoah, the clearing and the forest around it is now one of the most haunting places on earth.

Ironically, to the 300 prisoners who escaped in October 1943, having overpowered and killed some of their SS oppressors, the forest was a refuge. Into its depths they fled, but even with the help of local Polish farmers, only fifty survived.

To the Nazi ideology, on the other hand, the clearing and all it represented was a potent symbol of progress, whilst the forest was a cloak, a disguise from the eyes of the weak-willed, overly sensitive Aryans over the Channel and across the Atlantic, who should have

praised the Nazis for their services to humanity but who were more likely to condemn them.

Belzec is today also wooded. Young trees are present on the site, becoming older and more dense away from the entrance, and becoming a thick wood on the other side of the rear perimeter fence. Some of these trees were planted by the Nazis to again act as a cloak, to hide their murder. But hide from whom? One assumes from those images outside the train and bus windows, from the local populations, the bystanders. I wonder to myself how much the local populations really knew, and the powerful image of the young boy, drawing his finger across his throat, springs into my mind. Used by both Lanzmann and Spielberg, the image begs the question of the complicity of the locals, by knowledge with inaction.

The boy's grinning face and gruesome action might also have evoked question, confusion, doubt in the minds of those necessary workers being transported to their new labour activity. What did the boy mean? the Germans need us to work. They can't win the war without us. We are safe.

The persistence of life, hope opposing the cavernous chasm of death-by-hate, again holds up its dear, delicate, beautiful face.

On a hilly mound not far from the site of Janowska Street 139, the Nazi's eerily titled work and death camp on the outskirts of L'viv, young trees grow. Taking root in The Sands, they obscure the site of mass burial from the eyes of those who might search today. Papering over the cracks in human history, the trees are rejuvenating the area, rewriting the text of the landscape.

Plunging the bloody knife, weighed down with stones, to the bottom of some deep river. Meticulously wiping clean the finger-marked door handle. Rinsing out the poisoned chalice. Burning the car-hire VISA receipts. Nature does her work with single-mindedness, making no moral judgements, taking no notice of the strange meanings attached to parts of her body by humans. Nature creeps back, to fill the place of death with life, with singing birds, with a shy-bold, scampering rabbit.

The question is whether the life is turned sour by its association with this place - whether its fecundity is a sick joke in the midst of this place of terror - or whether the death and terror is shown to be an aberration, a lapse, a mutant deviation, from the true course of life and hope which eventually conquers death. But the death of the innocents wasn't conquered. It was real and done and their lives were gone. The ordinariness of the tree-life seems to pale into insignificance by the extraordinariness of the murders. How do we, how should we, view this juxtaposition of trees and corpses?

Wood

....and I don't have a wooden heart

The forest surrounding the Sobibor clearing was, as I mentioned, coppiced, and the harvested wood was stacked in the ghetto-clearing. Lengths of timber, hacked out of the rich forest, were stacked in piles, concentrated here, ready to be transported to wherever they could be put to work.

One of the uses might be replacing worn-out sleepers on railway lines. What a job - bearing the weight of those locomotives hour after hour, day after day, week after week, year after year! And what a burden - carrying hundreds of thousands of condemned people to and fro, or rather to, not fro.

Sleepers. An odd term. Do we suppose they have the potential to awaken? If they awoke now, what could they tell us? Would they be ignorant?: 'Really? That's terrible. We had no idea. I'd have woken earlier if I'd known'. Would they be helpless?: 'Oh yes, we knew alright, but what could we do, what could anyone do?'. Would they be failures?: 'We tried, we really tried, but we were simply unable to stop it happening'. How would we define them: as perpetrators, bystanders, or victims? Or as all three?

The piles of stacked timber at Sobibor were a cause of distress to many members of our group. On this site of terror and death, on soil waterlogged with the blood of thousands upon thousands of innocent human beings, is a commercial woodyard. But why the distress? A number of people are earning a living here, their children presumably have something to eat. Here, in this place of death, is life. Here we re-encounter the problem of juxtaposing life and Nazi murder. Does the death transfigure and sour and nullify the life now present, or does that life triumph over the death? Or is the life too banal to occur in the same place as the horrific murderous death?

I also saw a woodyard at Belzec, and a railway line with its sleeping witnesses. But Majdanek was not served directly by rail - the station in Lublin was a couple of kilometres from the camp. Neither was Majdanek the site of a woodyard. Paradoxically, much of it was built from the labouring forests, from wood put to work for the Nazis.

The watchtowers and barracks were wooden. Does this denote their temporary nature, as perceived by the builders? The 'job' was seen as a temporary one - a *judenfrei* Europe was not an interminable struggle but a realisable and for the most part realised goal of the malignant Master-race. These temporary structures are now preserved, however inauthentically, as a museum of the Shoah. One frame of that short but indescribably horrific film-reel has been captured and retained to act as an insight into the whole sick film.

The wooden *Bad und Desinfektion* I was where the innocent humans were gassed. The first, experimental gas chamber was wooden and the door leaked. Killing took longer, reducing efficiency, so concrete was used for the three later gas chambers at the far end of the building. The materials of pre-modernity did not meet the extreme construction needs of Nazi modernity; concrete did.

The artificiality of man-made materials is stunningly employed in a sculpture in one of the preserved SS barracks. Four figures, three of them stumbling, walking forwards, one of them fallen, all with unnatural bodies of wire and straining plaster, with their heads bowed and with huge clump-dragging feet; represent the march of the living corpses from the train station to meet their deaths in the camp. I was moved and very disturbed by the figures. I would like to present the prose that I wrote at the time, as I did in *The Journey*:

- The people in our group look away from the figures in the centre to the photographs on the walls, and are disturbed by the agony, emotion, and despair of the figures behind them; and then they look, but can't for long, and look away again, embarrassed. Stunning, stunningly powerful, powerfully frightening.

The garish national flags at the end of the building mean nothing, the colours bright and meaningless in comparison with the dreadful grey, the wiry, agony-full figures, almost dead, just alive, with only terrible death ahead. A terrible death to which they stagger with their last ounces of energy, hoping that soup and bread and shelter might finally have come their way. Easily tricked into hoping, and using the strength of hope to march-stumble to a terrible murder they know nothing about until the lights go out and the gas crystals explode and their eyes begin to run and scorch and their skin becomes itchy and sore and burns like whitest fire and their breathing shortens and becomes torment and the terrifying screams of pain and realisation fill their ears and minds and then re-echo from their gasping mouths.

Before me, the figures still stand in their falling. To what demeaning levels, what depths of despair, what lowest point of human existence, were these innocents brought on this march, before their death? Only to be sifted for gold. Their greatest physical remains to be their crudely chopped hair, the mattresses of soldiers, the socks of sailors. These items, all that remain of that intense, deepest most scandalous, most devastating march of agony and despair. That agony and despair owes its existence to the magnificent hope that kept the innocents alive. It permitted them to reach those deepest levels of humanity without giving in, giving it up, dying. And the real horror is that this glorious hope was snuffed out as easily as a candle-flame, killed with the click of fingers, the nod of a head. All that agony, representing the magnificent hope, became meaningless, meaning nothing, and hope and life are vanquished, and we cry.

And still, at the end, the resplendent flags of state, benevolently watching over the tormented figures, reminding us that the state persists despite the citizen's death and because of that we must never fear. What cocksure arrogance! What injustice! The figures will stand, in their falling, far longer than the happy flags. They will stand their last stand, their interminable stand, their eternal agonistic torment, and the hope and life in the agony will never fall. -

Reader, I find it difficult to return seamlessly to the narrative after these quite powerful words. In order to continue I must shatter the emotion you might be feeling. I hope these few words cushion the blow somewhat. A short break might put you in a mood more ready to continue.

Wood. Concrete. Wire and plaster.

Leather. Three of the barracks contained between them 80,000 pairs of leather shoes. This provided a tangible and overwhelming sense of numbers. There was also a very tangible stench, which was overpowering where dim lights and few sounds deadened the other senses. Once could almost smell the numbers of murdered people.

Natural leather, within natural wood, making one of the most unnatural creations I have ever sensed, representing the sick, unnatural, inhuman actions of those loving husbands and fathers who knew what they were doing, but knew not what they were doing. Forgive them, Lord? Forgive them? How does one do that....?

A tour of materials returns us to wood. Some timber was not used for sleepers, or for barracks or watchtowers, or for any type of construction. At Janowska Street 139 wood fuelled the pyres that reached the heavens, burning the shot, the beaten, the gassed, that had fallen foul of the arbitrary ideologies of Nazism. Wooden grates formed the foundations of many fires, and between the gaps, into the holes, fell the burnt remains.

Paper

I have in my hand....

The coppiced forests, the labouring ghetto wood-piles, meet their thinnest, most emaciated state in paper. Put to work to operate the systematic murder of millions, most paper was used, then destroyed. Some, considered more important, was retained for longer periods. At the end of the war some records fell into the hands of the Allies, to bear witness to the greatest crime humanity has ever performed.

Disproven in a spectacular way by subsequent events, the prophecy 'Peace in our time!' has haunted Chamberlain way beyond the grave. It demonstrates, however, the widespread belief in the power of paperwork, and also the inconsistent degree of importance and power attached to paper by the Nazis. Documents were binding when it suited them, meaningless when it did not.

In *Shoah*, Lanzmann talks to Raul Hilberg about a piece of paper. Hilberg holds a *Fahrplanordnung* (literally, travel order) from the *Deutsche Reichsbahn*, the German State Railway. This details a special train, leaving Czestochowa at 16.48H on 30 September 1942, and arriving at Treblinka at 11.24H on 31 September. There are 50 freight cars, and Hilberg gives a conservative estimate that 2,500 Jews were transported thus. The document also shows the return trip, which leaves Treblinka at 15.59H on 31 September (a turn-around time of four-and-a-half hours) with the designation *Leerzug* (empty train): to, but not fro. The piece of paper is a death certificate, shared by two-and-a-half thousand innocent human beings.

Almost every Jew in Nazi-occupied territory, from Vichy France to the Russian Front, was accounted for by paperwork. Their lives, labours, movements and murders were planned meticulously by a frighteningly organised bureaucracy. *Schindler's List*, as its title implies, highlights this strong bureaucratic element in the Nazi murders. Yitzak Stern is on a list of people bound for Auschwitz, he is on the train, there is no arguing with the list, the list is scripture, unalterable, God-given. Only a threat to the promotion prospects of the two administrators creates the power to get Stern off the train. Even then, Schindler has to sign for him.

Schindler's own list, presented to Amon Goeth as a statement of those needed for Schindler's new factory in his home town of Zwittau in Austria, is a list of those Jews to be bought by the most powerful paper, money, and hence saved from transport to Auschwitz. And it is

an error in some paperwork that causes one of the trains bound for Zwittau to end up in Auschwitz, and the killing of all but forty of the women.

You have in your own hand, here, another piece of paper, another of the endless reams that have been and will continue to be written about the Shoah. As I searched for ends at the beginning, I told how pointless and worthless I felt another piece of paper would be, especially one written by me, amidst the forest that is the literature of the Shoah. But if I can add only a small twig to that forest, if I can help in only a small way to build some living, breathing written memorial, I have done something.

Ash

Dear reader! It rests with you and me, whether, in our two fields of action, similar things shall be or not. Let them be! We shall sit with lighter bosoms on the hearth, to see the ashes of our fires turn grey and cold.

I had not realised, when I sued Dickens' *Hard Times* earlier, that its last paragraph held so much resonance and pregnant relevance. It is good fortune, or fate, or something holy, depending upon your outlook. Out of context, as it is, the quote can mean too much. I leave that up to you, but ask you also to read it in context, some other time.

Ash is the final state of the forest. And that which represents and that which is represented here converge in the actuality of substance. As I stood on the rim of the great dome at Majdanek, filled as it was with the ashen remains of thousands of human beings, I could hear in the air, from the wind, those choked screams echoing around and around in the concrete gas chambers. The screams became louder and louder and louder until they were everything, and I was filled to the brim, exploding with the sound, bursting with the terror. I filled up, as I stood on that rim, with the last ashes of a great forest piled before me.

And as the intensity of feeling began to weep slowly away I thought that we should take these ashes and scatter them across the camps, across Majdanek, across Belzec, across Sobibor, across Janowska Street, across those we never saw, and let forests grow from the ashes, grow mighty on these sites of death. We should let life spring up from the terrible ashy soil, so that life may reign here forever; but not ordinary life, not banality. Rather, special life, life from those ashes, a sky-soaring phoenix, that we might remember death and life together, and see the murder for what it was, a vast, terrible taking of life and hope.

★ ★ ★ ★

BOOK REVIEW

BEN HELFGOTT

member

Adina Blady Szwajger, *I Reader Nothing More. The Warsaw Children's Hospital and the Jewish Resistance* (London: Collins Harrill, 1990. £7.99 pbk.

This book is a powerful testimony by one who survived as a dignified human being, despite her experiences under the Nazis, and who for over forty years resisted writing about them. She felt 'that what had happened wasn't something to be written about or read', and she hoped that by being silent she would forget which would therefore enable her to live a 'normal' life. However, she did not forget, and as the years passed she became increasingly aware that indeed she did have something significant to add to the number of memoirs already published about the Warsaw Ghetto. Her resolve not to write was broken when she became ill a few years ago (she died in February 1993), and as a result we are enriched by her contribution, *I Reader member Nothing More.*

When war broke out in September 1939, Adina was aged twenty-two and studying at the Faculty of Medicine at Warsaw University. In March 1940, she joined a Children's Hospital and was assigned to the ward of internal diseases as an assistant where she worked until 22 April 1943. Her description of the conditions in the hospital are heart-rending. I quote just one of her numerous accounts: 'on the bunks lay skeletons of children or swollen lumps. Only their eyes were alive. Until you have seen such eyes, the face of a staring child with its gaping black hole for a mouth and its wrinkled, parchment-like skin, you don't know what life can be like'.

Nurses and doctors worked ten to twelve hours a day, not giving in to despair. To keep their calorie intake above the fatal minimum, they drank a glass of raw spirits each morning. In addition to their daily duties the doctors carried out scientific research into the effects of starvation and methods of treatment. Their findings were miraculously saved and published by the J.D.C. (Joint) in Warsaw in 1946 under the title, *Maladie de Famine*. The last research meeting of the group took place in July 1942 when the deportation began. A week later, most of these taking part in these meetings were no longer alive. At one stage during the deportations, sometime in August 1942, when Adina found life unbearable she took an overdose of luminal with half a bottle of vodka. Fortunately, she was found by her friends in time to save her life.

Adina was a member of Z.O.B. (Jewish Fighting Organisation), and when the Warsaw Ghetto uprising began in April 1943 she was persuaded to leave the Ghetto by the leadership who believed she would serve the cause better from the outside. with her Aryan looks and impeccable Polish accent she could move freely and undetected among the gentiles. At first, during the uprising, she helped to smuggle weapons to the combatants in the Ghetto and in the rescue of the fighters when all was lost. Later on, she became a courier for the underground, finding shelter for those who were betrayed and constantly on the move. On a regular basis, she also distributed

funds which were somehow supplied from the J.D.C. and, when necessary, identity papers for those in hiding.

Inevitably, she had many narrow escapes. On one occasion when she was accosted by one of the many informers, extortionists, and blackmailers who loitered in the streets of Warsaw, she went up to a policeman and complained that the man was pestering her and asked him to check the man's documents. After examining the identity papers of them both and not detecting that hers was false, the policeman cautioned the informer who was confounded by Adina's impudence. Adina sums up the miserable existence on the Aryan side as one of terror—terror in the street and terror at home. One never knew who was a friend and who was a foe. Betrayal was all pervasive.

For the rest of her life, Adina seemed to have been plagued by the fact that she gave morphine to sick children in order to avoid sending them away in cattle trucks to Treblinka. There was also the case when she gave a lethal injection to a helpless but conscious old woman. Later on, when she lived as an Aryan in Warsaw, she had to put to death a Jewish girl who had gone mad from distress and who was endangering the others who were hiding in the same house. Although she tried to rationalise that she did it of necessity, nevertheless, she continued to agonise over it, questioning her right to practice in her profession as a doctor. For a long time after the war, she would hardly see anyone who came to visit her and she always felt different from everybody else.

In her memory, those few who risked their lives to help others loom far larger than those who have tarnished and degraded humanity. The book, therefore, is a fitting tribute to the nobility of her spirit.

* * * *

LETTERS

From Frank Farkas:

Following on from my open letter in *Journal* No. 16, I am very pleased to see that after some soul searching and open discussion, the majority view was accepted and it has been agreed to join the Holocaust Centre.

I am sure that most of the Forty-Five members will feel much more comfortable and at ease in participating in the many activities and facilities that the Centre has to offer. There is also, of course, the added advantage of being able to arrange our Committee Meetings and Socials whenever possible. Naturally, if any of the other groups would want to join in any of our Socials, they would be welcomed.

I feel that I should also add that when we were discussing the pros and cons as to whether we should join the Centre, it was felt by some members that we might lose our independence. It has again been proved that the 45's uniqueness in terms of personal relationship, comradeship etc. could never be broken or severed, because we are

like a large family who quite often disagree on certain points but retain our emotional bonds.

In conclusion, I feel that our joining with the Holocaust Centre will be of mutual benefit to all concerned. It will enhance our causes, especially as the name itself states and stands for we are: 'Holocaust Survivors'.

* *

From Mark (Maniek) Stern:

6332 Phillips Avenue. Pittsburgh PA 15217. 9 August 1994.

Dear Fellow Survivors,

I am anxious for all of us who are survivors of Mielec and wear a KL on our right arm to have a reunion. I understand there will be a special fiftieth anniversary commemoration in Miami Beach on 12 February 1995 at the Fountainbleau Hotel, and hope that we can take advantage of this occasion to get together and celebrate our liberation which took place in April 1945.

I am trying to gather a list of 'KL' people like ourselves and hope you can help me by forwarding the names and addresses of any others you might still be in touch with. I hope to organise a meeting for all of us in Miami during the gathering mentioned above. If you are interested in going, please call the American Gathering on 212-239-4230 and let them know so they can send the necessary information when it becomes available. Also, please let me know as soon as possible if you will be attending.

The following is a list of survivors to whom this letter has been despatched:

Ben Bergman	132 Presidents Lane, Quincy MA 02169
Joseph Braun	2251 Sigouin, St Laurent, Que. H4R 1L6, Canada
Hyman Galitzer	66-31 Burns Street, Forest Hills, NY 11374
Norman Infeld	407 Elwood Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15235-4805
Joseph Korzenik	16 W. Normandy Dr. West Hartford, CT 06107
Leonard Lerer	57-23 246th Place, Little Neck, NY 11362
Abe Markowicz	83 Bainton Rd. West Hartford, CT 06117
Nathan Monn	105-58 Flatlands 7, Brooklyn, NY 11236
Kenneth Roman	80 Bidwell Gardens, New Southgate, London N11 2AU
Jack Sittsamer	1029 Welfer Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15217-2650
Phillip Treitman	8041 Kilpatrick, Skokie, IL 60076.

I look forward to hearing from all of you. My telephone number is 412-421-8677 if you would like to call.

* *

From Moniek Goldberg:

To the Editor.

You saw fit to headline the article I wrote in the last *Journal* as 'How Far May Jews in the Diaspora Criticise Israel'. I guess that, as Editor, it is your prerogative to put any heading on an article as you see fit. But let me say that it would be highly presumptuous of me to tell other people what they should or should not criticise. It was not the criticism to which I objected. My objection was to Rabbi Gryn's comparison of Israeli actions in deporting the Hamas terrorists to the actions of the Serbian butchers.

Rabbi Gryn, in his reply, claims that he was quoted out of context. He goes on to say that he found having members of Hamas 'blindfolded, handcuffed, and herded on a bus disturbing and inexcusable'. I respect the Rabbi's sensibilities, but I repeat my question: Does that warrant comparison of the Israelis to the Serbian butchers and rapists? I think not. And this is the crux of the matter: the comparison. It was unjustifiable by any scale of fairness. Rabbi Gryn, in his reply, completely avoids the issue. The question still remain, 'out of context or not, did he make that comparison?

* *

Reply by Kurt Klappholz:

Since I edited the issue of our *Journal* in which Moniek Goldberg's article appeared, I should say publicly that I made a mistake in giving it the title I did. No doubt, he would have criticised anyone, not only a Jew, who made the comparison he thinks Rabbi Hugo Gryn made. The moral of this story is: when you submit a piece to our *Journal*, provide your own title.

* *

Observation by Ben Helfgott:

I have spoken to Rabbi Hugo Gryn about this matter, and he wishes it to be known that at no time has he compared the Israeli action in deporting Hamas terrorists to the actions of the Serbian butchers. Indeed, he could never contemplate such a comparison.

* * * *

OBITUARY NOTICES

LEO ROBESON (LAIB ROSENSTRAUCH)

Leo Robeson (Laib Rosenstrauch) died in London on 4 July 1994.

Born in Lodz, his parents were close friends of my family. Leo was my childhood friend. When the war broke out, he was attending Szwajcera Jewish Gimnazium.

Having lost his father and most of his immediate family soon after the Germans entered Lodz, he and his mother were incarcerated in the Lodz Ghetto. When the Ghetto was liquidated in 1944, he was deported to Auschwitz and thence to Gleiwitz.

After the liberation, Leo returned to Lodz, hoping to find some survivors of his family, sadly without success. He then joined a group of young people leaving for Italy with the intention of reaching Palestine. After a wait of eighteen months, he decided to join his uncle in London.

Leo arrived in England in 1947. We met at a Primrose Club dance. It was he who recognised me at once and our mutual joy knew no bounds. Since I was separated from my family before the establishment of the Ghetto, Leo was able to tell me how my family fared during this period as he used to see them quite often. We never tired of recollecting childhood experiences and life in Lodz before the war.

Leo's passion was classical music, in particular opera. He had a good voice and would sometimes sing arias in Italian, a language he spoke fairly fluently. However, his greatest love was his family and friends to whom he was devoted. Leo married Pauline Levy, they had one daughter, two sons, and four grandchildren. He will be greatly missed.

Salek Benedikt

Editor: The 45' Society extends to Leo Rosen's family its most sincere condolences.

* *

We are very saddened to report the passing away in Miami of Zenek Schwartzberg.

The passing away is also reported, in London, of Sztasiek Brustein, husband of Esther and brother-in-law of Perez Zylberberg; and in Gateshead, David Denderowicz.

The Society's deep condolences go out to all members of their families at this time of great sorrow.

* * * *

MEMBERS' NEWS

CONGRATULATIONS

Special congratulations are extended to our President, Martin Gilbert, CBE, and Rabbi Hugo Gryn, CBE, for having been invited by the President of Israel, Ezer Weizman, to participate in the President's conference on the future of the Jews in the Diaspora.

* *

BIRTHS

Mazel tov to our members who have become Grandparents.

Floris & Abe Dichter	a Grand-daughter, Savyon Tzvia, born to Sarah & Mark.
Carol & Frank Farkas	a Grandson, Jack, born to Emma & Allan.
Moric Friedman	a Grandson, Ryan Mitchell, born to Mireille & Brent.
Tina & Victor Greenberg	a Grandson, Samuel Nathan, born to Jane & Alan.
Alfred & Shirley Huberman	a Grandson, born to Susan & Maurice.
Barbara & Jack Kagan	a Grand-daughter, Tamara, born to Debbie & Nigel.
Rene Lister	a Grandson, Adam Oliver, born to Madelaine & Frankie.
Helen & Josel Moskowitz	a Grandson, Samuel Ben Zion, born to Evelyn & Romi.
Margaret & Harry Olmer	a Grand-daughter, Charlotte Francesca, born to Ellie & Phillip.
Michelle Pomerance	a Grand-daughter, Abigail, born to Lisa & Steven.
Pauline & Harry Spiro	a Grandson, Benjamin Robert, born to Rosalind & Leslie.
Miriam & Emil Stein	a Grand-daughter, born to Rosalynd & Richard.
Sara & Menachem Wakstock	a Granddaughter, Inbar, in Israel.

* *

BARMITZVAH

Rene Lister, mazeltov on the Barmitzvah of your Grandson, David, son of Pamela & Steven.

Gertie & Alf Wolreich, mazeltov on the Barmitzvah of your Grand-daughter.

* *

ENGAGEMENTS

Ivy & Michael Lee, mazeltov on the engagement of your daughter, Dvora, to Chris.

Pauline & Harry Balsam, mazeltov on the engagement of your son, Colin, to Amanda.

* *

MARRIAGES

Rifka & Jack Rubinfeld, mazeltov on the marriage of your son, Ilan, to Dolcy.

Hettie & Alec Ward, mazeltov, on the marriage of your daughter, Lyla, to Barend Velleman.

Jeanette & Zigi Shipper, mazeltov on the marriage of your daughter, Lorraine, to Paul.

Sala Newton & Josef Katz, sincere mazeltov on the occasion of your marriage.

* *

RUBY WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Sincere best wishes to the following members who have in recent months celebrated 40 years of marriage:

Carol & Frank Farkas.

Olive & David Herman.

Joan & Jack Bajer.

Sheila & Gary Wino.

* *

MEMBERS' NEWS

Mendel Pretter has retired.

Paul Gast had an operation to remove a kidney and is making good progress.

Moishe Nurtman underwent a hip replacement operation.

* *

ACHIEVEMENTS

Estelle & Jack Schwimmer's son, Gary, graduated from Reading University in Politics and International Relations.

* *

NEWS FROM OUR MANCHESTER MEMBERS

BIRTHS

Mazeltoy to our members who have become Grandparents.

Izek Alterman	a Grandson, born to his daughter, Fione.
Lily & Mayer Bomsztyk	a Grand-daughter, born to Amanda & Brian.
Adash & Zena Bulwa	a Grand-daughter, born to their daughter, Frances.
Marita & Maurice Golding	a Grandson, born to Jonathan & his wife.
Marita & Maurice Golding	another Grandson, born to Warren & his wife.
Arek & Jean Hersh	a Grand-daughter.
Blanche & Sam Laskier	a Grand-daughter, born to their daughter, Gillian.
Eunice & Jerry Parker	a Grand-daughter, born to their daughter, Michelle.
Hynda Sommer	a Grand-daughter, born to her daughter, Stephanie.

* *

BARMITZVAH

Hannah & Sam Gardner, mazeltov on the Barmitzvah of your Grandson, Daniel, son of Maralyn & Harris Turgel.

* *

BIRTHDAYS

1993:

February	Charlie Igielman
March	Pinky Kurnedz
March	Jack Aizenberg
July	Martin Wertheim

- all of whom happily reached the grand 'young' age of 65.

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ENGAGEMENTS

April 1994	Estelle, daughter of Hannah & Sam Gardner.
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* *

MARRIAGES

August 1993 Farrell, son of Charlie & Edna Igielman.
 October 1993 Simon, son of Mendel & Marie Beale.
 January 1994 Debby, daughter of Jack & Rhona Aizenberg
 October 1994 Estelle, daughter of Sam & Hannah Gardner.

* *

EVENTS

April 1994. A very well attended Yom Ha'Shoah event at the Manchester Town Hall, with four men and two women from the *Kindertransport* lighting symbolic candles. Six survivors began the event by recounting their poignant story of the Holocaust experience, and the presentation continued in each case by a member of the Stage 89 Theatre Group with a child of similar age at the time of the event.

10 May 1994. The customary service of Commemoration at Steincourt Shule, followed by a very enjoyable reunion party at the home of Mayer and Lily Bomszyk on 11 May. Then, it was agreed that on the fiftieth anniversary of the Liberation, no party would be held in London but that as many members as possible should try to join the London commemorations on that memorable occasion.

* * * *

FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

'VOICES FROM THE SHOAH'. TESTIMONIES OF THE HOLOCAUST

An evening organised by the Young Yad Vashem Committee, among whom are members of the Second Generation. This event, therefore, will be of particular interest for our Second Generation, and will be held on:

SUNDAY 15 JANUARY 1995

STERN HALL
 WEST LONDON SYNAGOGUE
 33 SEYMOUR PLACE
 LONDON W1H 6AT

* *

COMMEMORATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF
AUSCHWITZ

This special meeting, to be held on:

SUNDAY, 29 JANUARY 1995

3 PM IN THE LOGAN HALL,
BEDFORD WAY, LONDON WC1

will be addressed by the following:

Lord Alan Bullock, the biographer of Adolf Hitler.

As a Special Guest from Russia, General Petrenko,
one of those in the Red Army who liberated
Auschwitz.

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, who for one year played in
the Auschwitz womens' orchestra, the
Mädchenorchester.

Rabbi Hugo Gryn, himself a survivor of Auschwitz.

* *

COMMEMORATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF BELSEN

There are two events which members should note:

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY AND THE WIENER LIBRARY

This has convened an important international conference, The
Liberation of Belsen, the details of which are:

SUNDAY 9 & MONDAY 10 APRIL 1995

HARKNESS HALL, BIRKBECK COLLEGE,
MALET STREET, LONDON WC1

9.30am - 6.00pm

SUNDAY 9th APRIL:

THE HISTORY OF BELSEN

Dr Eberhard Kolb:

Belsen as part of the KZ System

Dr John P Fox:

Belsen in the 'Final Solution'

Professor Richard Breitman:

Himmler and the Belsen Negotiations

INSIDE BELSEN

Survivor's testimony:

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch

HISTORIANS:Dr Thomas Rathe:

Faith and Survival in Belsen

Professor M R D Foot:

British Prisoners in Belsen

MONDAY, 10th APRIL:**THE LIBERATION****Eyewitness:**Rev. Leslie Hardman**HISTORIANS:**Dr Annette Wieviorka:

French Internees and British Liberators

Ian Kemp:

The Liberation of Belsen as seen by British Soldiers

AFTERMATH AND MEMORYDr Joanna Reilly:

Britain and Belsen. An Overview

Dr Hagit Lavsky:

Jewish Politics in the Belsen-DP Camp, 1945-1950

Dr Tony Kushner:

The Memory of Belsen

Bill Williams:

The Testimony of Belsen Survivors

CONCLUSIONRabbi Hugo Gryn

Programme may be subject to alteration

Organised by the Institute of Contemporary History
and Wiener Library in association with the Parkes
Library in the Hartley Institute, University of
Southampton

Registration Fee: £15.00

Concessions for Friends of the Wiener Library,
students, senior citizens, and the unwaged: £10.00
Coffee/tea and a bagel lunch will be provided on
both days

For details and registration form please write to:
the Conference Secretary, Wiener Library,
4 Devonshire Street, London W1N 2BH

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

This function will be held on:

TUESDAY, 11 APRIL 1995

6 PM AT THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM
LAMBETH ROAD, LONDON SE1 6HZ

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YOM HA'SHOAH

In 1995, Yom Ha'Shoah falls on 27 April. On that day, commemorations will take place in Synagogues, clubs, and organisations etc. However, the gathering at the Holocaust Memorial, The Dell, Hyde Park, London, will take place on Sunday 30 April 1995 at 11 am.

Yom Ha'Shoah is always a special day for us, but it is hoped that as 1995 is the 50th anniversary of our Liberation every effort will be made by our fraternity to attend in force.

* *

1995 REUNION AND OUR SOCIETY'S BROCHURE

On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of our Liberation, there will be a Grand Re-Union of the *'45 Aid Society* on:

SUNDAY 30 APRIL 1995

ROYAL LANCASTER HOTEL
LANCASTER TERRACE
LONDON W2

Since the proceeds are in support of Yad Vashem - Jerusalem, we appeal to our members to support us by placing advertisements in the Souvenir Brochure to be published by the Society. Please contact:

Brochure Chairman Harry Balsam, 40 Marsh Lane,
Mill Hill, London NW7.
Telephone: 081-959-617 (Home)
071-723-4822 (Office).

Co-Chairmen

Jack Kagan & Freddie Knoller.

Diamond Page	£500.00
Gold Page	£250.00
Silver Page	£150.00
Full Page	£100.00
Half Page	£ 75.00
Quarter Page	£ 40.00
Children's Name	£ 10.00

* *

THE ANNUAL OSCAR JOSEPH HOLOCAUST AWARDS

The '45 Aid Society offers up to three Awards of £600.00 each to assist successful candidates to participate in the Holocaust Seminar at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, which is held for three weeks in July 1995. The overall cost of participation is about £1,000.00.

Applications are invited from men and women under the age of 35 who have a strong interest in Holocaust studies and a record of communal involvement. After their return, successful candidates will be expected to take a positive role in educational and youth work activities so as to convey to others what they learned and gained from their participation in the summer seminar at Yad Vashem. However, before applying for these Awards, candidates should obtain permission from Yad Vashem to participate in the seminar.

Those interested should write, enclosing their C.V. and other details, not later than 31 February 1995 to:

Ruby Dreihorn
37 Salmon Street
London NW9

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REPORT ON THE SUMMER SEMINAR AT YAD VASHEM -

JERUSALEM 1994

TRICIA WERMUTH

Tricia is the daughter of Henry Wermuth. Henry is a member of our Society, and has written a most moving account of his experiences in a book entitled, *Breathe Deeply My Son*, which was published in 1993 in the Library of Holocaust Testimonies (Vallentine Mitchell, London). She attended the 1994 summer seminar at Yad Vashem with support from an Oscar Joseph Holocaust Award.

Before I begin with my analysis on the seminar for educators on the Holocaust at Yad Vashem, I feel I must first explain why I wished to attend it. I have a direct link with the subject of the Holocaust since my father is a survivor of several camps. However, my interest goes further and deeper than the emotional side of the topic. Since teaching Holocaust Studies informally to the Sixth Form at the J.F.S. comprehensive school in London, I realised several facts. First, on the personal side, I realised that for myself, I needed to learn how to separate emotional feelings from the intellectual task at hand. Second, I experienced great dissatisfaction with the various

methodologies available for teaching the Holocaust. I felt, therefore, there was a void within the pedagogical curriculum of Holocaust Studies which needed to be filled.

For these reasons, I applied for the 'Annual Oscar Joseph Holocaust Award'. Receiving it enabled me to confront these issues at first hand. My report deals with how I perceived the teaching which participants at the Yad Vashem seminar received, as well as the subject matter itself. In addition, I share my inner personal thoughts as a result of having attended the Yad Vashem seminar.

The style of teaching at the Yad Vashem seminar was mainly by lectures. Often, however, a lecture would be followed by a discussion led by one of the seminar participants. The speakers themselves consisted of some of the greatest Holocaust minds in Israel. Each participant at the seminar was fortunate, therefore, to be exposed to their intellect. The topics covered in the seminar ranged from Nazi ideology and politics leading to the Final Solution of the Jewish Question; to life in the ghettos; religious and theological responses to the Shoah; as well as ways in which the deniers of the Holocaust might be dealt with. These are only some of the many key topics which were dealt with in great depth. In addition to the intense programme pursued each day at Yad Vashem, optional evening seminars were offered to those interested in pedagogical theory and practice.

This agenda offered me the basic skills of teaching the Holocaust, and confirmed my main reasons for attending the seminar: teaching the subject of the Holocaust in a way that would make it something of personal significance to students. Issues such as content, materials, and methodology were discussed at length in order to assess the best and most productive ways of providing knowledge for students.

The course also gave each individual participant an idea of the various types of problems they were likely to encounter in the classroom as a teacher of the Holocaust. For example, students might even question whether the Holocaust actually took place. Another issue discussed was how to deal with the child of a Nazi appearing at a school to give a talk. These and similar kinds of predicament were examined in preparation for gaining the kind of teaching skill required for dealing with this important subject.

Discussions also took place on what kind of materials to teach to different age groups. As future educators, we realised that we cannot teach the entire topic. However, any information passed on is bound to create an awareness of the subject and to provide the student or pupil with an introduction to a lifetime of learning.

Earlier in this report I mentioned that I wished to declare something of the personal benefits I reaped from the seminar. The mere fact that I was amongst a group of people as deeply involved as myself in the subject of the Holocaust, even though their reasons for doing so were probably different from mine, was a unique experience in itself. Automatically, this created a special bond between the members of the group. It was also brought even closer together by the constant sharing of idea, thoughts, and emotions.

As a child of a survivor, I left for Israel with many questions - but returned home with my mind filled to the brim with many more. That

was because of my search for a deeper understanding of the Holocaust. I realised, of course, that there are no easy answers or, in some respects, no answers at all. One must accept the past, one cannot undo it. Yet hopefully, by teaching the past and in particular the special subject of the Holocaust, and indeed in facing our history, we can create a world of tolerance. After all, the Holocaust contains within it any number of issues for thinking individuals to deal with and to help them and others create a better world of humanity.

At the beginning of our study of the Holocaust, we examined how Germans perceived the Jews in their midst, and how this understanding led to their massacre of the innocents. This was followed by an important discussion of how the Jews perceived their own predicament and the Germans' intentions - and how this understanding led to particular Jewish responses. However, I have also learnt how these questions must be extended to show how the next generations comprehend the entire matrix of events. For as the differing perceptions of the perpetrators and victims directly influenced their actions, I find that our own understanding and remembrance of these phenomena now lead directly to our responses to the world around us. It is my duty, therefore, to help preserve the memory of mankind's enslavement to a brutish living hell, by teaching our future generations this self-enquiry into how to live and respond to the world after the Holocaust.