



JOURNAL



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the first time
after 53 years**

see page 38

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CHAIRMAN'S Comments

This year marked the 55th anniversary of our arrival in England, which we celebrated with great zest and enjoyment.

When we cast our minds back to the time of our liberation, we recall how we were in a state of utter emaciation and exhaustion. The formative years of our early adolescence, normally spent in a happy family environment, was almost non-existent. Instead, our lives had been completely and violently shattered. It took us a while to awaken from over five and a half years of nightmare.

As long as we were struggling for survival and had lived from hour to hour, we had not entertained any thoughts of the enormity of our loss or about our future. Now, it gradually began to dawn upon us that we were, at last, free and that freedom meant a complete readjustment. But how could we readjust without either a home or family support? We suddenly realised that we were alone. Those who had hoped that some family members may have survived attempted to return to their respective home towns and a few emotional and unexpected reunions took place. However, for the vast majority it was a disappointing and painful experience. Most did not find a single member of their immediate or extended families. In addition, the local population showed great hostility and the denudation and anguish was felt acutely by all.

Those who remembered that they had families abroad, especially in the U.S.A., were keen to join them. However, the majority either did not have any family in the world or were not aware of their existence. Palestine was therefore the desired place for most of us. We felt that the Jewish people had been kicked around for far too long and that the solution to the Jewish problem in the Diaspora was a Jewish State. But the gates to Palestine were closed to us. During this period of trial and tribulation an announcement was made that a thousand children under the age of sixteen would be admitted to Britain under the auspices of the Central British

Fund, now World Jewish Relief. Thus, on the 14th August fifty-five years ago, the first group of three hundred arrived in Crosby-on-Eden, to be followed by others over a period of eight months.

The story of our survival, our arrival in England, our recuperation and rehabilitation, life in hostels, The Primrose Jewish Youth Club and the '45 Aid Society was told by our President, Sir Martin Gilbert, in "The Boys, Triumph Over Adversity". In this issue of our Journal, The Chief Rabbi, Dr Jonathan Sacks, in his Rosh Hashana Message, refers to the '45 Aid Society and the profound impact our members have made on him. We feel humble and recognise that our faith and determination in rebuilding our lives exemplifies the suffering and persecution of the Jewish people throughout the ages and their attempt to re-establish themselves to ensure continuity.

It is important to acknowledge that our return to normality was to a large extent achieved through the generosity and care extended to us by Britain and especially the Jewish Community. We owe a great debt to the late Leonard G. Montefiore, Elaine Blond, Lola Hahn-Warburg, Oscar Friedmann and many others whose help and advice was much appreciated.

It is, however, the establishment of the '45 Aid Society that held us together and provided us with the opportunity to continue as a cohesive group. This point is borne out in a letter, which is published in this issue, from one of our members, Jake Fersztand, who lives in Berne, Switzerland. He states: "With the passage of time it becomes clear to me that the value of belonging to a group like 'The Boys' cannot be over-emphasised, in spite of the diversity of the interests of the individual members". Another member, who lives in New Jersey, U.S.A., Judith Sherman, who joined us this year for our reunion in Israel, also writes in this issue: "The Reunion has confirmed my feeling that I

missed a lot by not being involved with the '45 Group over the years". Barbara Barnett, too, writes of the influence we had on her. She and her late husband Richard introduced many of us to music appreciation during the Primrose days. She has continued to be a close friend.

The '45 Aid Society has also given us a public profile, a collective voice and evinced to the community at large how we came through our trauma with dignity and independence. In addition to our members in England, we keep in touch with those who live abroad, in Israel, U.S.A., Canada and in other parts of the world. We offer help, whether material or moral to our members in times of need and represent them at executive and committee level in all organisations concerned with their welfare.

In spite of the fact that we have diligently pursued our careers, we have always been conscious of our legacy and our responsibility to preserve the memory of those who perished in the Shoah. It is with pride that I recall that our Society has been active for many years in promoting Holocaust education and remembrance – long before other institutions dealing with these matters came into being. We encouraged young people to participate in Holocaust essay competitions; in 1976 we established the annual Montefiore Memorial Lecture. In 1978 we helped to establish the Holocaust Fellowship at the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate

Jewish studies. For many years, our members have talked to groups of students and school-children about their experiences and the lessons to be learned and in 1981 we arranged a rota at the East End Auschwitz Exhibition for this purpose. We established the Oscar Joseph Holocaust Award and promoted books and exhibitions as well as organised public lectures on subjects relating to the Holocaust.

Our members have achieved success in most spheres of economic and social activity, but our great source of pride and joy are our children. They have received higher education and many of them are in the professions, academia, technology, journalism, management, business and commerce and other fields. Now, our grandchildren, too, are following in their footsteps.

Looking back over the past fifty-five years we can say with gratitude that Britain has been good to us, it gave us the opportunity to integrate and to develop our potential. We in turn can be proud of the fact that we have made a positive contribution to the Jewish community and to society at large. However, we cannot escape the fact that we still grieve for the loss of six million souls murdered for no reason other than the fact that they were Jews. The world will never know what their contribution to civilisation might have been.

Ben Helfgott



Celebrating the 55th Anniversary of our arrival in England.

CHIEF RABBI'S ROSH HASHANA MESSAGE

In June this year the Queen opened the new Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum. It was an impressive ceremony, but a few weeks earlier Elaine and I had been there on a yet more moving occasion. Then, the people present were not the dignitaries of Anglo-Jewry but the survivors of the concentration camps, members of the '45 Group for whom the Shoah is more than history. It is personal memory.

It was a sombre but strangely uplifting experience. Whenever I've had the privilege of meeting this group I've always been struck by their tenacious hold on life. I can't begin to understand the inner strength it takes to be a survivor, but it is awe-inspiring, and it prompts a question.

People ask many questions about the Holocaust. Where was G-d? Where was man? How could it have happened? But one set of questions is rarely if ever asked. How did the survivors survive, knowing what they knew, seeing what they saw? How did the Jewish people survive? And not merely survive but accomplish some of the most astonishing achievements of our four thousand year history – building the State of Israel, fighting its wars, rescuing threatened Jewries throughout the world, and reconstructing communities, schools and yeshivot, so that today the Jewish people lives again and the sound of Torah is heard again. From where did Jews find the strength to do these things?

Who can know? Perhaps every story is different. But I sense something momentous beneath the surface of these events. The only word that does justice to it is faith – not conventional faith, not Malmonides' Thirteen Principles, but something that lies almost too deep for words. I call it faith in life itself.

What a strange idea. Faith in life? Doesn't everything that lives seek to continue? Isn't the desire for life the most basic of all drives? Yes and no. It is for simple organisms. But human beings are blessed and cursed with imagination. There are things that can deaden or destroy our appetite for life. Not all are as harsh as the Holocaust. They can be quite simple – the belief that nothing we can do will make a difference, that life has no overarching meaning, that we are the random products of genetic mutation, that we are cosmic dust on the surface of infinity. A culture can lose its appetite for life. It happens when most people, most of the time, seek a succession of modes of forgetfulness – work, consuming, the pursuit of pleasure, a succession of moments in which we make ourselves too busy to ask the most fundamental question, Why are we here?, because we suspect it has no answer.

Jews and Judaism survived because we never lost our appetite for life. Much of Judaism is about holding life in your hands – waking, eating, drinking – and making a blessing over it. Much of the rest – tzedakah and gemillat chassadim – is about making life a blessing for other people. And because life is full of risk and failure, Jews are not optimists. We know only too well that the world is full of conflict and hate. But to be a Jew – to know that we have free will, that we can change, that we can apologise and forgive and begin again – is never to lose hope. Judaism is about sanctifying life and having faith in it. And there are times – that evening spent with the survivors was one – when that faith is little less than awesome.

That is the meaning of those simple, but perhaps not so simple, words: "Remember us for life, O King who delights in life, and write us in the book of life, for Your sake, O God of life".

Wishing you, your families and the Jewish people a ketivah vechatimah tovah.

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
Rosh Hashanah 5761

PAST AND PRESENT

Some personal reflections - your influence on my life

By Barbara Barnett

Dear Friends,

Your editor has asked me to think back over the years since first we met and share some of my recollections with you. This mental exercise has provoked all sorts of random incidents, information and impressions to come tumbling back into my mind. With some difficulty I have attempted to make some sort of sense of them.

My first knowledge of your existence was in the winter of 1946. Someone, I do not recall who, approached me at Lauderdale Road Synagogue and asked if I would visit young survivors of the Camps who had just reached London. He made the same request on the same occasion to Richard Barnett, then simply a family friend. I demurred initially. I had recently returned from 5 years in Canada, first at school then in the Royal Canadian Air Force. I was an undergraduate on a Social Science course at LSE. What had I to offer? Richard, 16 years my senior, was an excellent linguist, widely travelled and a gifted historian. He had been on active service in RAF Intelligence in the Middle East. He suggested we visit the Shelter together and find out more. That decision had a profound impact on the rest of our lives.

We learned some facts: that the British government had agreed to offer 1,000 child survivors, under 16 years old, temporary visas to the UK. The proviso was that the Jewish community took full responsibility for them until they were rehabilitated overseas, and ensured that none became a financial liability on the state. The Jewish Refugee Committee had accepted this undertaking and then set up the CCC, the Committee for the Care of Children from the Camps, with Leonard Montefiore in the chair. No-one more caring,

capable and discerning could have been selected for that sensitive position.

Richard and I introduced ourselves at the Jews' Temporary Shelter in the East End of London. There we met the boys in one dormitory and the girls in another, the rooms crammed with beds separated by small lockers. It was strangely quiet, the only sound occasional humming or snatches of song. We went round shaking hands in an attempt to make some contact. The language barrier was formidable. Richard decided it would be unacceptable to you to speak in German.

You were all teenagers, mostly from that part of Hungary that had been Czechoslovakia. You had chosen to come here as a first step to aliyah – or to joining relatives elsewhere. You spent your first few months at the Shelter in Mansell Street. I wonder what impression it made on you! It was a typically Victorian institution, solidly built but gaunt and forbidding. There you were surrounded by rows of shabby terraced houses and tenement buildings dotted with derelict bomb sites, scars from World War II. This is the area where refugees and impoverished immigrants had arrived from the London Docks during centuries past and in the last hundred years or so Jewish groups had also settled and established their own synagogues, schools and community centres there. The London Blitz was Hitler's attempt to demoralise the people and flatten the city. Both aims failed. The people relocated and the city was slowly recovering when you arrived.

We were told you needed help and encouragement in learning the language, introductions to local Jewish families and guidance in

adapting to living in London. We were at a loss. How could we get to know you when there seemed no point of contact? I was ashamed of my ignorance of Jewish life in the Diaspora; or even about Palestine. There were no Zionist Youth Groups in our community. Slowly some information had reached us in Canada about the concentration camps but only after D-Day came ghastly reports of the findings by Allied forces. My cousin died from a disease caught in that task - he was 19.

Once you people had mastered some English - and how rapidly you did so! - Richard invited a few at a time to spend an evening drawing and painting at his flat in Shepherd's Market. Wilfred Sloane, his RAF colleague, a gifted artist, provided paper, brushes and paint to be used freely; and Richard played classical records in the background. Of course, I produced refreshments, but they must have been very simple as we still had strict rationing. We never knew who would turn up on these occasions. It took some time before you trusted us. Magda and her cousin Rosina were among the first to do so.

The next stage found you reaching major decisions. The CBF counsellors worked with you one by one to discover your ambitions and lead you through what options they could find; to study and make up for lost schooling, to learn a trade, or to find a job. There were limits. The British economy had been drained by the war and you were competing for work and training alongside ex-servicemen. Many of you were disappointed with what was available. Later on, when Artur Poznanski had a rough time, Richard helped him find more congenial work; they came together as you would guess through their enjoyment of music.

As decisions were reached, lodgings were sought for each of you, usually a room in a private house with a Jewish landlady. This meant you would be isolated, living alone, or sometimes with a friend, and losing the firm support and deep-rooted solidarity that had built up with the others. No-one else could be expected to understand what you had been through or what your life once was. So the Primrose Club was established in Belsize Park to provide a meeting place and a social centre. It proved a brilliant idea that was developed by Yogi Mayer, the very experienced and indefatigable leader, to become an outstanding success. You flocked there from your widely

scattered digs. Every evening offered a growing variety of activities; there was a canteen and a small hostel. You were expected to sign up for some regular group, otherwise you could come and go as you liked. You excelled in sports. At inter-club competitions Primrose teams became famous. Locally-born young people applied to join and Yogi encouraged this.

We came to meet you there regularly. Richard brought records and introduced musical appreciation sessions. These became very popular. For some it was a first discovery of classical music, a newly found leisure pursuit with strong appeal; while for others powerful memories were evoked of music enjoyed in their childhood homes before all hell was let loose. Through art and music, people can find expression without any language barrier. Once that barrier disappeared I had added weekly play-reading; and later on we performed Emlyn Williams' grim tale, *Night Must Fall* at St Peter's Church Hall in Belsize Square. Do you remember Chaim Liss as the leading man? Hugo Gryn took part too; I came to know him well over the years. Nowadays art and music and drama are recognised as valued outlets for self-expression. We did not know that then.

In June 1947, I was required to decide where to focus my studies. With Richard's encouragement I applied for professional training in Child Welfare. My involvement with you had made a profound impact on me and contributed to my making this choice. I have worked in and around this field, here and in Israel, ever since. It was only when I started to live and work in Israel in 1974 and came to know Jewish people from far and wide that I realised how unusual was Anglo-Jewry, and how very strange and hard it must have been for you to adapt to life in London.

Richard and I had become engaged in November 1947 and married in July 1948. Our activities with you all had led to our spending more and more time together. The Girls announced that they were responsible for our marriage and there was some truth in that! Once we had our own home, first in Belsize Park, then higher up the hill, we were able to welcome a few of you there, often to share our Friday evenings. A few names and a few occasions I remember well, but I plead with those people and happenings omitted here to accept my apologies and know that I have warm feelings for you all. So many of you I

continue to meet at '45 Aid Society gatherings and lectures and on other occasions are familiar from those early days, like Michael Etkind, Roman Halter, Jerry Herzberg and Koppel Kendal; but I have reached an age when, to my great embarrassment, names frequently escape me.

Magda came to tell us she was leaving for New York with her cousin Rosina and her husband Sam, another of the Boys, and their baby daughter. We arranged to hold a farewell party for her and her friends. The day came. Lots of people arrived we hadn't ever met before; it was her landlady with numerous members of her family.

Abie Herman dropped in quite often until his untimely death. He would play the piano, share a meal, tell us about his properties and purchases and advise us on how to renovate our house. I keep in touch with two of his children, Marilyn, wherever she happens to be, and Geoffrey and his wife and baby in Jerusalem.

My part at the Primrose Club had ceased on the birth of our first baby in December 1951. The twins, Colin and Robert, arrived two years later. When Bertha Fischer (now Betty Weiss) left on *aliyah* she passed on her treasured doll to Celia, our little girl, who cherished it throughout her childhood. We called the doll "Bertha". You can read the real Bertha's story as she told it to me in this issue.

Richard stayed involved and some years on became chair of the Primrose Club Management Committee. Their meetings were in our house. Then came a blow; the lease expired on the Belsize Park properties. The CBF said the Club would be closed. The CCC's function in rehabilitating your group was reaching an end, for most of you were nearing independence. Their funds, always tight, had to be focussed on their main functions. But Richard was adamant that the Club must stay open. It was The Boys' sole meeting place. There you provided each other with mutual support unavailable elsewhere. So he saw to it that the Club continued to function on a part-time basis at St. Peter's Hall till a new plan was made. Eventually the Finchley Road premises were taken on and the Club was again a flourishing concern. Local youngsters were keen to join. The new leaders were Sol and Thelma Marcus for, by then, Yogi Mayer had moved on to Brady Club. He knew you could now manage your own lives. With his great

wisdom, sensitivity and understanding he had played a major part in your personal development.

A fresh chapter was written when, as adults by then, you founded the '45 Aid Society - with Ben at the helm as he has been ever since. What an achievement! You created a self-help group for mutual assistance among you, now young adults, struggling to maintain your independence, coping with numerous ups and downs at work, with difficult landlords, with personal relationships. Some would say this was a normal picture. The huge difference was you had no family to fall back on as had your British contemporaries. But you had - and continue to have - the '45 Aid Society as your family. Inevitably, as in every family, there have been, and still are, squabbles and disagreements and sibling rivalry. I do hope recent heated disagreements between old friends will simmer down. Such is life in the best of human society. And, after all, you are mere humans like the rest of us!

There came a time, after most of you were married, when you had stable jobs, businesses and careers and reached a more settled period. Your partners were then, and are now, a great strength, a marvellous support. Those who had had no wartime experience akin to yours quickly learned that any demands from The Boys took precedence even over theirs - that loyalty and solidarity among The Boys was paramount.

As you all matured so, too, did the '45 Aid Society. Suddenly (or so it seemed to me), a role reversal took place. You were contributing, and generously, to charities in Britain and in Israel - while always retaining responsibility and concern for each other. You are active on numerous relevant bodies. Ben and others have been in the forefront of negotiations for reparations and in numerous other educational and memorial activities. And Ben moved from being a recipient of the CBF, as you all were at first, to become its Treasurer. Special mention must be made of the garden dedicated to the Six Million in Hyde Park, your support for Beth Shalom, that very special memorial, and the development of the new Imperial War Museum exhibition.

The greatest pride of all, the true measure of your accomplishments, lies surely in the achievements of your children. It is overtly evident how you have led them to take full advantage of educational

opportunities and career openings and provided every encouragement to do so - along avenues you were denied but dearly wished to enter. Their levels of success speak for you. And now you are enriching your lives through those of your grandchildren.

Professor Shamai Davidson of Shalvata Hospital in Israel was specially interested and deeply concerned in your welfare. Was it he who noticed how so many of your children, far more than in their peer group, are actively concerned with Human Rights issues? Your generation has entrusted them to keep alive knowledge of what the Nazi machine attempted to do, how far it went, the atrocities that were committed that took six draining years by the Allies to extinguish. It is a heavy commitment. The International Holocaust Survivors Gathering in July had as its sub-title: Remembering for the Future. The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide. In one of the small discussion groups on that day it was one of The Boys who said it all: our duty is to fight for universal Human Rights.

I feel privileged to be a member of your Society and to have shared some of your joys and sorrows. Your strengths and achievements provide living evidence to the rest of us that good can triumph over evil.

Post Script,

My most recent involvement with child survivors continues today. It happened like this. Bertha's sister-in-law, Lily Peleg, introduced to me Olga Solomon, a Mengele twin and another Slovakian child survivor. Since then I have been slowly tracing members of her group and collecting their stories. They were the last to be brought by Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld from Europe before the Iron Curtain dropped. They came from Bratislava and, like some of you, via Prague to these shores in 1948. The majority spent up to a year at Clonyn Castle in southern Ireland before dispersing to Israel, North America and Britain. They had their very first reunion in 1998. By then we had found addresses for about half the original 148. Should you happen to come across anyone from this group, do refer them to me.

Recollections

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST 1945 - GOING FORWARD

By Michael Novice M.Sc Ph.D (Majer Sosnowicz)

I have the dubious privilege of having had a full measure of the Second World War. The War started for me on Friday, September 1st 1939, and ended only with my liberation on May 8th 1945, the very day of the end of the war, the capitulation of Germany to the Allies, when I was liberated by the Russian Army in Terezin (Theresienstadt).

Since my intention is to reminisce on post war years, I will simply summarise my war experiences by the following notes:

I lived with my family in Warsaw from birth (1927) until 1941. The last two years included misery and starvation in the Ghetto. Soon after the start of the bombing of Warsaw our block of apartments at 18, Zamenhof Street was damaged and we had to live with a cracked external wall for the rest of our stay in Warsaw. From 1941 I lived with relatives in Ostrowiec until the town's deportation in 1943. In Ostrowiec I worked at the local iron works, the Herman Goring Eisenhutte. The ironworks existed in that town for many years, but was renamed by the Germans. Because the product they made was of importance to the German war machinery, a group of us were allowed to stay after the town deportation. I continued to work in Ostrowiec until 1944.

Briefly, the rest of my war experience was as follows:

- Mid-1944 I was transported from Ostrowiec to Auschwitz/Buna Fabrik.
- January 1945, after liquidation of Auschwitz, transported to Buchenwald.

- End of April 1945, transported to Terezin.
- May 8th 1945, liberated at Terezin by the Russian Army.

After the liberation, while still in Terezin, I was taken to a local hospital for treatment of pleurisy and treated by Russian military doctors. On release from the hospital my attention was drawn to a group of survivors who were qualified to go to England because of their young age. I became part of a group of 732 youngsters who went to Windermere in the English Lake District.

Soon after my arrival at Windermere, while playing a game of soccer, I felt unwell. The local resident camp doctor diagnosed my illness as tuberculosis (TB) and arranged for my transportation to a sanatorium. On arrival at Westmoreland Sanatorium, north of Windermere, I met two other boys from the Windermere camp, Marcus Kloiz and Sam Dresner. There we received good care by nurses and doctors. In particular, I remember a kind Irish nurse and a doctor-in-charge. If my recollection, after 54 years, is correct, the doctor was Jewish, Dr Frankel, from Vienna. Dr Frankel wore a grey goatee beard and always wore a white coat, stethoscope and had great sympathy for us. Speaking in German, he consoled us by comparing our lot with that of the biblical figure of Job (or Iyyov in Hebrew). At that time my knowledge of the suffering of Job was scant, since my formal education stopped at age 12, so I was not really sure what he was trying to tell us.

In the spring of 1946, the Committee for the Care of the Children from the Concentration Camps (C.C.C.C.), who were responsible for us, arranged for Marcus, Sam and myself to be transferred to the Sanatorium in Ashford, Kent. There, a larger group of sick boys and girls from the Windermere transport were already being treated.

In that sanatorium I met a kind and devoted lady, Sister Maria Simon, who became a friend, mentor and great help to me for many years. Her origins were from Germany. It was she who introduced me to the music of Johannes Brahms, her special affection. Sister Maria was assisted by several people, some of whom were also holocaust survivors, known as counsellors, but who were older than most of the boys. Among these was Erna Regent who, after leaving England for Israel and subsequently for the USA, continued her friendship with me for the next 48 years. Sadly, she died in 1995 at the age of 75, leaving children and grandchildren.

While in Ashford we received lessons in English and other subjects by a resident teacher whose name was, I believe, Mr Engelhart. We affectionately dubbed him 'Mr Teacher'. I still have a photograph of him with a group of boys on a bus outing from Ashford to Folkestone or Dover where he took us periodically, both places being easily accessible by bus.

In 1946, the group from Ashford was transferred to an old mansion house in the village of Ugly, identified by the Post Office as: 'Near Bishops

Stortford' in the county of Hertfordshire. The mansion was known as *Quare Mead* and was converted to a convalescent home for our use.

Sister Maria continued to be in charge at *Quare Mead* for the next two years. The responsibility for food preparation was in the hands of a couple whose name escapes me after all these years, but I do know that they were a well-educated pair from Germany. They were succeeded by Mr and Mrs Binder. The cooking was done on a big coal-burning oven-range because there was no connection to gas mains, nor was there a major supply of electricity.

Bob, a local Englishman, was a maintenance man who had the duty of maintaining the batteries that operated our electric lights. This series of batteries eventually became obsolete when we were connected to the supply grid. Bob also acted as driver and gardener. Where gas was needed we used 'calor gas', which was supplied in big bottles. 'Max', an older holocaust survivor, worked as a general factotum. Additionally, there was Mr Lapidus, who helped us 'get on our feet'. Mr Lapidus was a teacher who hailed from Dublin, Ireland, and succeeded Mr Engelhart. He inspired many of us to educate ourselves and to develop interests and make a place for ourselves in society. One of the things I remember about him was that occasionally, when he took us to the movies in Bishops Stortford, the movies ended after the last bus had departed for Ugly. Mr Lapidus solved our dilemma of getting home by leading us on a five-mile walk! His special art was to play the piano beautifully without referring to musical notes. Although Tzvi was not a holocaust survivor, he did need *Quare Mead* to recuperate from some illness. He had a Leica camera with which he took pictures, which he developed and printed himself on the premises. These photos provided us with records of places and faces from *Quare Mead* as mementos.

In 1949, Eva Minden took over Sister Maria's duties. Some twenty years later she wrote a book on our life in *Quare Mead* - *The Road Back*, by Eva Kahn-Minden. (This book is available from Michael Novice, 2280 Elkhorn Court, San Jose, CA 95125, USA).

As could be predicted, the C.C.C.C. had limited financial means and expected the healthy boys to start making a living for themselves as soon as possible. However, the residents of *Quare Mead* were expected to find employment only after the doctor had discharged them as fit to work.

There was a spiritual leader who came to visit *Quare Mead* periodically, Rabbi Eli Munk of Golders Green, London. During one of his visits he suggested to me that I continue my formal education with a view of taking my 'matriculation'. Sister Maria reinforced this suggestion. I decided to take their advice. It so happened that at that time I heard of another one of 'our boys' who had just passed that same exam successfully, Jerry Herzberg. Although I had never met Jerry, his achievement gave me much encouragement. Later, when we both lived in Belsize Park, we became good friends, a friendship that continues to this day.

Because, for medical reasons, I had to stay in *Quare Mead*, this study could only be undertaken by a correspondence course. I decided to present myself for the matriculation in January 1948 and, since I started the course in spring of 1947, I had only nine months to complete the course, an intensive nine months of study. English and Mathematics were compulsory, Polish, German and Physics were elective subjects, which completed the requirements of five subjects by the University of London. Since I was not yet familiar with the language, there was no 'study room' in *Quare Mead*, and the general ambience of the place was more geared to play than study. I found it quite hard to concentrate. An additional obstacle to concentration was the Holocaust was still so recent and still so much on my mind. Fortunately, the grounds were large and even in the social rooms I could sometimes isolate myself to study. Despite these obstacles, I passed the matriculation exam at first attempt, and continued with my studies for the Bachelors, Masters, and eventually Ph.D. degree.

The period of my matriculation exams still have vivid memories for me. To get to London, where the exams were

held, Mr Lapidus accompanied me on the trip. We arrived at the Primrose Club where we stayed for several nights by arrangements made by Sister Maria with Mr Yogi Mayer, who was in charge of the Primrose Club.

To get to the Halls of Imperial College where the exams were administered, we took the London Underground. Waiting there for the doors to open and the exams to start made my heart flutter with apprehension. Finally, the moment came, the doors opened and a surge of two hundred or more candidates entered the great hall. Many were still clutching pieces of paper with last minute notes which they thought might prove helpful in passing the exam. Each of us was directed to a numbered desk and given instructions on how to complete the papers. Pencils and scrap paper were provided in addition to the exam paper, because the candidate was permitted no materials relevant to an exam into the exam hall, in order to avoid cheating. Exams were held from 9am - 12 noon and from 2 - 5pm and continued for several days until all five subjects were covered.

To celebrate the completion of the exams, Sister Maria and Mr Lapidus took me to the Albert Hall to hear a concert of Brahms' *Violin Concerto* played by Yehudi Menuhin. While the concert marked the end of the exams, it was not the end of my apprehension. In England these exam results were not published for about six weeks or so, and thus, for that period of time I was constantly 'on spilkies' (pins).

Passing the matriculation exams gave me the interest to continue studying towards a profession. This required financial aid for which I had to apply to the JRC, via Mr Oscar Friedmann and Mr Leonard Montefiore for final approval. Mr Montefiore, affectionately known as 'Monty' was a very philanthropic person and very kind to us boys. He gave me the required permission to continue my studies, which I did, with the help of the JRC, at less than £2 per week, through my Bachelors degree. There were many other kind people who looked out for our welfare. More details on this subject can be found in Martin Gilbert's book *The Boys*.

My first paying job, in 1952, signified financial independence, a status that the C.C.C. welcomed. Further studies for an M.Sc. and Ph.D. Were completed while working. My first working position was in London. This was followed by a job in Chelmsford, Essex, then by a job in Bromley, Kent.

From there we moved to the United States in 1964, the time of the famous 'Brain Drain'. Our family, consisting of Ruth Minden (Eva's sister), whom I married in 1954, and our three children, Judith, Miriam and David, were brought to Elmira in upstate New York by Westinghouse Corporation. We lived in Elmira for twelve years. In 1975 my work took me to San Jose, California, where we still live, now in the 'state of' retirement after forty-one years of gainful work. In 1993 I retired and continue to live in the pleasant surroundings of San Jose, the 'Capital of the Silicone Valley'. We are fortunate to have the time and means to visit our three married children living on the East Coast quite frequently, and to enjoy our 'baker's dozen' grandchildren. Quite a change from life in Buna!

The grandchildren in turn are fortunate to experience, and play with, grandparents and know what it is to have this privilege, which our own children did not have.

We live a contented life, involved in communal work for our synagogue and wherever else we can be helpful.

Our thanks go to the Almighty for the great blessings he has bestowed on me in the second part of my life.

**Our tormentors
bragged that their
evil empire would
endure for
1,000 years**

But

**In our loneliness
He remembered us
And released us from
our tormentors
Give thanks to
Hashem, for his
kindness endures
forever
Psalm 136**

Hurry up or we'll never get to PLOTSK!

By Joan Freedman J.P.

Joan's family originally came from Gombin in the 19th Century and has been involved with the Michael Sobell Centre and Jewish Care.

In these days of small houses and 2+2 nuclear families, it is unusual to live quite far from one's grandparents. I was more fortunate. From the moment I was born, I lived next door to, and later in the same house as, my Grandma. She was short and stout with grey hair coiled into a bun. Her skin was very fair and she had wonderful blue eyes - genetically these are still popping up in my children and even some of my grandchildren. She sat crocheting or knitting and while she did this she told us stories.

She had come at the age of 20 or so from a small Polish village between Warsaw and Plotsk called Gombin. She told us about the village, about her journey from there bringing her old mother and two younger sisters to live in London where her brothers had been for a couple of years. I asked her why she left Poland (around 1884). She replied that she knew there was no future for her there. These stories she told me in the 1930s, before we knew what the Nazis would do to our fellow Jews in Poland. She had much perception. She talked about life in the village and I was immediately curious to know more.

She mentioned once that sometimes where she lived had been Poland and at times it was under Russian Rule - potted history. She knew that she had had two young uncles taken from their beds to the Russian army and I presume that these family memories and economic pressures, particularly on Jewish artisans, had encouraged her brothers, who were tailors, to leave and try to make a living in England. My grandfather was born in Gombin too, and although I don't think they knew each other until they met in London - he, too, was a tailor who came to London and went to his landsleit (fellow townsman) to find work - one or other of her brothers. I never knew him because he died just

after my parents were married in 1922 and I only know what my mother told me about her adored father. We have photographs and he was a fine figure of a man, towering over his little wife.

So I grew up always wanting to go to Poland to see Gombin. I read a lot about Poland - Isaac Bashevis Singer's books and later a wonderful book called 'Konin' by Theodore Richmond. As I read it I was sure that the village he described must have been similar to Gombin, only later did I discover the interior of the Synagogue he described was very similar to the renowned wooden Gombin Shul built in 1710 and destroyed by the Nazis in 1941. The Rabbi had said it would never burn down, the Nazis made sure that, along with its Jews, it was eradicated.

About two and a half years ago, my son Jeremy told me that he and Gill were going to Lvov with a party from his Shul to visit the Lvov community, with whom his Synagogue was twinned. He added that he wanted his parents to come too. I asked why, when our own Shul was twinned with another town. He told me that to get to Lvov we had to go through Warsaw where we were to stay overnight. Offering me what appeared to be a sugar candy, he added "and you and I will go and find Gombin, your Grandmother's village".

That, in effect, is what we did, with the help of a taxi driver from Warsaw who knew the area and spoke English.

We travelled about 30 miles from Warsaw along a straight, flat route through agricultural land. It was a grim winter day, the many trees were all bare, silhouetted against the sky. The thought occurred to me that in summer it would look quite different. Napoleon allegedly slept one night in Gombin. This appeared to be a straight Napoleonic road.

Suddenly by the side I saw a

little wooden house, the first shtetl house I had ever seen. The taxi stopped and I knew I was coming to my Grandma's Poland.

We soon turned off by the road sign to Gombin. Previously, I had noticed a sign to Konin in another direction. The excitement grew. We turned into this little market town with a modern church, a little square with houses that bore dates in the 19th century and I knew I was looking at houses my grandparents would have seen. The market place was easy to spot - what would pass for a Town Hall was there too, and we went in to make enquiries. The taxi driver, with the help of the old maps that we had with us, asked for the Jewish quarter. We found by a little river a great empty space surrounded by a border of streets with old wooden houses. We wandered round the square where the beautiful wooden Synagogue had stood and remarked at the desolation - only an old man on crutches who shouted at us and a dog who barked - Jeremy remarked that even the dogs were anti-Semites.

We found signs that mezuzot had been on the door posts of the houses, because the screw holes at slanted angles remained. This, then, was where the Jews lived. We knew that at one time there had been as many as 3,000 Jews here - more indeed than their gentile neighbours.

I asked myself why such prime land so near the town centre had been left undeveloped for so long, fifty years after the Holocaust? There were many answers in my head - superstition, fear after terrible things had taken place and also that there was no money around to develop a war torn area.

We hadn't a lot of time, but decided that perhaps we would try and find the cemetery. Our driver asked an old man who

pointed down the road and said "by the Catholic cemetery", which surprised me a little.

We set off and drove for what seemed miles past the school houses. After a while I commented that this couldn't be right. They used to carry the coffins and the distance was too great. We saw no other cars on the journey, only horse drawn carts.

This was possibly how my Grandma had travelled when she went to visit her grandmother in Warsaw as a little girl. She was sent there when the winters were hard, because her grandmother was a sausage maker and there was always food in her house. Grandma (Feiga Ita) had to earn her keep and she, at 5 years old, had to babysit in the 'Big House'. So young was she that she fell asleep on the job, cuddling her charge's doll.

We found the Catholic cemetery, but there was no sign of a Jewish one - only a big field surrounded by the woods. We returned to the town and studied the map carefully. There was another road and down it we went. A much shorter route that took us back to the same spot by the Catholic cemetery. This was more likely to be the road used by the Jews when carrying the coffins.

Jeremy climbed up a little hill and thought he saw something in the distance. We wandered down and found a few lichen-covered stones that had sufficient Hebrew letters to show they were matzevot (gravestones). One had a Magen David. Then it was time to leave because we might miss the connection to Lvov before Shabbat. The rest of the party waiting for us in the hotel were convinced we would be too late, but amid much cheering we returned just in time.

I never imagined we would return to Gombin again. However, fate deemed otherwise.

When we were back in London, Purim was nearly upon us and as usual Jeremy was reading the Megillah at a friend's house where we met up with our landsman from Gombin, Jeffrey Greenwood. He mentioned that he had been contacted by a Professor from San Diego who was on his way to Gombin from England where he had been attending a conference. Jeffrey was on his way to New York, could we possibly entertain him?

This was the very beginning for all of us, but in particular, Jeremy. Leon Zamosc was full of enthusiasm, had done much research on his father's village and collected many articles, postcards and photographs of life in pre-war Gombin. He knew of the devastation to the cemetery by the Nazis. He knew and had documentation of the terrible end to Jewish life in Gombin. He was determined to get the cemetery fenced in to save it from becoming either a rubbish dump, or a football pitch and, above all, to rescue the matzevot which had been taken out by the Germans to build roads, kerbstones and even a bridge.

This, then, set a path for him and also for Ada Holtzman in Israel whose father was living there then (although he has since died), one of the few remaining survivors. He was a member of Hashomer Hatzair. Together with Mindy Prosperi, President of the Gombin Society of the USA, they were working on a project to protect what was left, to honour those ancestors buried in the cemetery and to erect a memorial to those who perished in Chelmno, or died in working parties in areas surrounding Gombin during the Holocaust.

I don't remember how many times Jeremy went back and forth to Gombin or, indeed, how many times the others did. I only know that vast amounts of information were collected and collated from the town of Gombin with the help of many local officials who made their records available - often written in Russian. Gradually a picture emerged of what life had been like in the 19th century and into the first half of the 20th century. On every visit someone returned a piece of a gravestone. The American school master, Jerry Temanson, and his wife helped by providing not only translations, but lodgings in their own pretty and com-

fortable home. He gave advice and his knowledge of local historians and archaeologists was immensely helpful to Jeremy and the others.

What I do know is that this August a tremendous gathering of Gombin descendants and expatriates from all over the world, some 50+ in number, gathered to spend a Shabbat in Warsaw and hold a service in the Nosyk Synagogue in the Warsaw ghetto area. They ate Friday night dinner and Shabbat lunch together. Above all, they exchanged information, background material as to why they were there and what had motivated them to come.

After Shabbat we attended a concert in the theatre of the last King of Poland's Palace and heard a Chopin recital. Was it the same Polish rulers who could encourage a Chopin that also hated their Jews and encouraged Pogroms? The noblemen often had Jews to manage their estates. They were not above taking their daughters and brides for 'mon-seigneur rights'.

I must not forget that Jews lived in Poland for 5-600 years in which it became a great centre for Jewish learning. It was not altogether a bad life. Gombin was the birthplace of a famous Rabbi known as the Magen Avraham.

On Sunday our tour began in earnest. Everyone piled into one coach. We visited a museum and met with Polish archaeologists who had devoted their lives to recording the dreadful details of the Holocaust, collecting the Jewish artefacts they had found (candlesticks, silver Torah fittings - photographs - all the things one would expect to find in a Jewish museum anywhere in the world. There was, however, something sad and ghoulish when you know these were the treasures of people brutally murdered. In fact, the Polish archaeologist herself presented a particularly mournful appearance. I asked her at one point later in the day when we visited a tiny museum at Chelmno - the concentration camp where so many, including the Gombiners, were killed - why it was necessary to still go on looking for pieces of clothing, children's teeth and other remnants. She replied "to bear witness". However, I think 50 or more years on we know that the Holocaust existed and those who still choose to deny it will not be convinced that these

grim findings are genuine.

Living testimony from those who saw with their own eyes, however, is quite different and needs to be recorded before it is too late to obtain it from very old witnesses. It is a sacred duty to do so.

We arrived at Konin in the pouring rain to visit the mass graves of the Gombiners who had been taken there to join Nazi working parties. The grave was alongside a Polish mass grave and both were beautifully tended by the Catholics of the Church. We had with us a Chazan from Poland who, in the pouring rain, recited the Kol Moleh Rachamin prayers. We did not know how long it was since this had happened or what was the likelihood of it ever happening again.

When these poor souls were shot there was a Rabbi in the working party who recorded their names and placed them in a bottle in the original grave. Later, the Jews were made to re-bury them in the Catholic cemetery. Because of the bottle, the names of the souls were known and were read out in the pouring rain by Ada. When my cousin and I heard three times our family surname, Tyber, being read out, this indeed personalised the Holocaust for me. I did not know the cousins who had perished, but I knew that but for the grace of G-d and my grandparents go I.

We drove to a restaurant in the pine forests where some ate lunch and the rest of us picnicked on the kosher salmon and cheese bagels we had brought with the rest of the food from London. My hat off to Hermolis - but why such a large quantity of food - we Jews are always over fed!

Then we went to what remains of Chelmno, destroyed by the Nazis as they left at the end of the war. We learnt it was probably the first concentration camp in Poland to be built. It was here that the gassing techniques were perfected.

Only here did I notice a Polish sneer and a jeer. Three young 'yobs' wandered in to see what we were up to. After a while they slouched off again with imbecilic smiles on their faces.

We had with us all the time a company making a video of everywhere we visited. They attracted attention and people came to see what we were doing. They had every right to and we had nothing to hide.

The Polish press were there too. The police were a little worried, but were discreetly with us in cars whenever we were in the open air.

We then went into the pine forest at Rzuchow - the whole country here seemed filled with pines and wonderful silver birches to where a large clearing had been made to house numerous mass graves of people of various ethnic groups and religions. Still affected by Chelmno, I did not want to get off the coach. However, I did, and I was later glad to have done so. By the Jewish graves two or three monuments had been erected for the Jews of various Polish towns.

We came to unveil a monument to those from Gombin, a moving hauntingly beautiful ceremony with the Chazan which moved us all to tears. That day everything had had that effect, which is not surprising. The three or four youngsters who were with us were visibly moved. Clive, aged 10, was carrying the Israeli flag that Ada had given him, which gave him something to feel proud about. You can see the flag, if not the flag bearer, in all the photographs.

Wearily, emotionally drained, we wandered towards the coach. Jeremy called out "come on - or we'll never get to Plotsk" - the title of my essay.

Plotsk - most of us had heard of it, but it sounded like part of a joke, along with Minsk and Pinsk. Somebody remarked that her grandmother often called her grandfather a Gombiner and she had thought it was a swear word!

Plotsk is a really big industrial city on a very large river, the Vistula, and very attractive too. The hotel, with views across the river, was rustic and furnished in pine wood. Quite charming - which the staff were not. We were late and they were going home at 10pm. We had asked them to heat our kosher food, which they grudgingly did. When I was told how poor they were, and how little they earned, I could understand their resentment of well-heeled foreigners. No, I don't think it was anti-Semitism.

On Monday we were all raring to go.

We knew that it was the month of Ellul and one should visit cemeteries - I think we had fulfilled that Mitzvah by the end of our trip. It was lovely, however, to hear the men

praying together in the hotel before breakfast and the young boy from Jerusalem just past bar mitzvah blowing the Shofar - a sound probably very familiar in Plotsk at one time, but now rather rare, if at all, I suspect.

Now we were going back to Gombin. This time we met up with the local historian who told us much of the history of the town. Now we had living testimony. There was Yitzhak, now from Tel Aviv, who had escaped from Gombin as the Germans approached. He went to Russia then to the Urals where he worked in mines and, finally, to Israel. He remembered everything about the people of Gombin and spent his time chatting in Polish to the old women who had gathered to see what was going on. They had many friends in common and they remembered the Jewish doctor, the Jewish dentist and, indeed, the Jewish photographer. Many photos were being carried about by people in our party as well as the Poles and these generated much talk, helped by the three young interpreters trained by Jerry, the school master.

The star of the day for me was the beautiful old man, with bright blue eyes and fair skin, who had been a young boy when the Germans came. When they were going to commit atrocities against the Jews they forced the villagers back to their homes so as not to have witnesses, but Kazimeez hid in the bushes and saw it all. Compare with Josephus watching the Romans in Palestine. He also described how the Catholic Church was pulled down and the priest taken to Chelmno. The Nazis cleverly used a Jewish working party to destroy the Church.

One night a Nazi was shot. He described how the whole village was brought out to witness that 10 Polish men were taken to the Church wall and shot there in revenge.

We broke up into small groups and wandered through the village - Isaac spoke to everyone and suddenly with a great shout he saw his grandparents' shtetl, still standing. Not exactly a des. 3-bed mod. Con., but home to him.

All the Polish old women showed us where the Shul had been. Obviously they remembered it as a remarkable building in the middle of the low built pretty little town.

We decided to take a look at the Jewish cemetery to check it

out before the afternoon ceremony.

It was quite overwhelming to see what had been a large field on a winter day transformed by a wire fence and gateposts. There in the middle was a monument containing fragments of recovered matzevot. Every time Jeremy had visited Gombin somebody or other brought a piece of a stone which had been in their backyard for 50+ years. In this manner two of the stones were given to the American lady who was walking with the two young boys in our party; one was so big it took the coach to fetch it and four men to carry it. It happened to be the grave stone of a young boy which was meaningful for our young boys.

We met a man there who told us he had been at school 'over there' with many Jewish boys. He recited off a list of names - some of which were family names of people in our party.

When we had been on the coach travelling to Plotsk, Ada, who had spent a whole day sorting fragments, read out a list of names she had deciphered. One member of our party let out a great shout as he heard the name of one of his brothers (he had never seen him as he was born later). He told us that his father had gone to Uruguay to work - there were many restrictions at that time imposed by the Polish government to stop Jews working in their trades. His mother, his sister and their little brother, aged 8, had stayed in Gombin. The little boy died from an infectious disease. When his father received this news by letter, he wrote to his wife to leave Poland with her daughter and come to him. They travelled to the Jews Temporary Shelter in London to wait six months for a boat going to South America. When we arrived at the cemetery that Monday morning and saw all the fragments mounted on a stone monument he found his brother's matzeva - written in Yiddish. We cried with him as he explained that this little boy "not yet 8 years old", as it said on the stone in Yiddish, had saved the whole family from the Holocaust.

In the afternoon we all attended the official dedication. Many speeches and Kol Moleh Rachamin recited beautifully by the Chazan once more. I looked up and the clouds had cleared - the sun shone down from a perfect blue sky -

Heaven was blessing us I said, with my arm around my granddaughter (of the bright blue eyes).

Many of the villagers (mostly elderly women) had come to the dedication with many an eye moist with tears as the town's Mayor made his speech in Polish. Wreaths were laid at the foot of the monument. Without the help of the Mayor and his Council none of this could have happened. The Mayor was adamant that the cemetery would be respected and cared for.

We heard a description of what Jews have to do when consecrating a piece of land as a cemetery, which was quite fascinating - this came from a Rabbi, I think.

We heard from Mr and Mrs Nissenbaum of Nis Koshier Vodka fame who has made it his life's work, together with his generosity, to rescue many old Polish cemeteries from oblivion.

We acknowledged our debt to the 'righteous gentile' - a woman from the village who had taken two Jewish girls at great risk to herself and her family and saved their lives. She looked a very lovely lady.

We left the ceremony and wandered past the great oak trees which I think I heard it said had been planted there when the cemetery was first acquired. I wanted to see once again the old lichen covered matzevot we had first seen. Obviously too big to be easily moved. It was much harder to see anything because in summer the undergrowth was prolific and hid much from view.

I think if we had come for the first time to Gombin some ten years later than we did, we would not have found the gravestones at all. Although others had been there before us and we knew of its existence, the matzevot would have been submerged completely in the undergrowth.

We returned to Gombin once more that evening to a special reception in the Firemen's Hall. Tired, but happy, we spoke once more to the villagers - more reminiscences. A plaque was presented to the Gombin Land Lovers Association.

Once more we returned to Plotsk. The next day we walked through its market and looked at the people. Chic young people, tired looking older folk and not too many

smiling faces. Life is quite hard for most of them, I suspect. Many had lost homes and property in the war years and were only just going to demand reparations from the Germans. One man had told us this in Warsaw, when Isaac was present to translate. The man had said that the Jews are much better organised. Even now, there was something to envy in the actions of the remnants of the Holocaust!

I am aware that not all Poles were good and that many of them hated the Jews. I am also aware that people are people in the final analysis and have more in common than divides them. What did we, and in particular what did I, achieve on that fantastic trip? A feeling that we had left our ancestors' graves in a more dignified state than when we first saw them and that we had honoured their memories; that for the first time I saw and learnt, first hand, a little of the terrible suffering caused by the Holocaust to my people and relatives.

Indeed we know it must never happen again - but has it really stopped the terrible outbreaks of racial hatred? In Africa we still find tribal wars, in Kosova - different religions destroy each other and latterly East Timor - to say nothing of the Far East, Cambodia, Vietnam, etc. Jews and Arabs, will peace last? And, nearer to home, Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, no nearer to living in harmony in that beautiful little country than they ever did.

I remembered a short walk we took the last day into the woods near Gombin to see an "Art Centre". It turned out to be a place where a number of wood carvers worked, producing from the pine tree trunks great wooden figures. It reminded me of Michelangelo looking at a slab of Carrara marble and seeing the form inside. The children were encouraged to try their hand at carving and thoroughly enjoyed it. So beautiful and peaceful a scene in this remote wood, near a lake.

How could some of the people of this same country cause such suffering to others over the centuries?

Yet they have within them such capacity for the arts, music and indeed, architecture, much of it destroyed in the last war.

What lesson shall we derive?

In the 1940s, Jewish youth across German-occupied Poland pared down their academic ambitions and spiritual aspirations. The realm of education, from the basic to the higher, became forbidden territory to them. The Occupying Power had ejected, had banished Jewish pupils and students from both the State and Private Education sectors. They thus turned their eyes and minds towards the acquisition of humble, everyday skills.

There was an earnest quest for apprenticeships in Cracow. To become equipped with solid, useful skills was every Jewish youngster's desire and goal. One had to be realistic. To be useful to and wanted by the German War Effort, the German War Industry, made one feel needed, secure. There was no question, at that stage, of life and death. The year was only 1940. Missed years of schooling would be made up; interrupted studies could be resumed when the war was over. One would just have to apply oneself with greater diligence to make up for time lost. So one would be a little behind in age, but that was no cause for despair said the elders in their infinite sagacity. We had no conception, there was no hint in our immediate surroundings, of Germany's ultimate plans for us - Jews.

In the second year of the Occupation, my Mamma, who was a fine, accomplished needlewoman, was approached by a friend asking if she would be willing to take on an apprentice; a young Jewish girl. Sixteen-year-old Hania Meier lived with her parents and younger sister, Ada, in Olsza - a suburb no distance at all from the Officers' Village where we lived.

Hania came every day at eight o'clock in the morning and sat on a wooden stool sewing till six o'clock in the evening. It was an important aspect of the training to become accustomed to a long and arduous working day. Punctuality too was very much part of the rigorous self-discipline required.

In those days garment seams were hand-finished in a neat hem-stitch so that they would not fray. Hania, who liked sewing and was good at it, started her apprenticeship working on the seams. It was a long, dull day, but she took it in her stride.

She had a short lunch-break. The only one she had. The tea-break had never been heard of

ADA MEIER

By Janina Fischler Martinho

Janina lived in the Krakow Ghetto from where she escaped at the time of its final liquidation in March 1943. She survived the war in hiding. Her story is told in her book "Have You Seen My Little Sister?". Like many others who did not come to England with the "Boys", she joined our society in recent years. She is a regular contributor to our journal.

and nobody offered, nobody expected a cup of tea in the course of the working day. Hania brought a sandwich for her lunch; two thin slices of dark bread closely adhering to each other. I could not tell what she had between them, although I wondered... When I knew her better, I plucked up courage and asked: "Hania, what does your Mamma put in your sandwich?" She smiled and replied: "Nothing, but she makes it look like a sandwich. She is very sad, and a little ashamed, not to be able to put something on the bread. Pressing the two slices together, she thinks, it looks as if she had..."

Hania, not taking her eyes off her work, her hands busily hem-stitching a seam or a hem, would talk about her family. They were her world. A close-knit, devoted family, they made up in love and tenderness what they lacked in material comfort and security.

She came from a strictly Orthodox family. Her father, she told us, was a Talmud scholar who had never been able to provide for his family, however modestly. Her mother, very resourceful and hard-working, was truly a tower of strength. She took in washing. Nobody could wash and iron a white Sabbath table-cloth as beautifully as she did. Up to the war, said Hania, she had cooked for an elderly widower who was strictly kosher. She was the only one whom he would trust to prepare his food. But with the coming of the war, the elderly gentleman had left Cracow and that steady source of income had dried up. But the person Hania loved most in the world was Ada, her younger sister.

Ada was a cripple, Hania told us. She had been born

with a malformed foot. The left leg was encased, from babyhood, in a heavy metal caliper splint. Ada, like myself, was ten years old in 1940.

Hania was pleasant to listen to and to look at. She had dark eyes and smooth dark hair. Her features were regular and she had a warm, pretty smile. She was quite small and slight in build, but healthy and bubbling with vivacity and merriment. She was a bit of a live-wire, in fact. She had attended a Polish State school, much to her father's grief, where she had been happy and well liked. She spoke Polish very nicely without a trace of a Yiddish intonation.

By and by I came to know her parents and little Ada. I went to Olsza often. In the early 1940s there was a sizeable Jewish community there. It counted among its members my paternal grandmother and other close relations of ours. I visited them regularly.

Hania's father was a well-known figure in the streets of Olsza, if only because of his great height and powerful build. He wore a short fair beard which glittered as if threaded with gold. His golden side-locks were discreetly tucked out of sight under the rim of his peaked cap. He seemed absent-minded and totally divorced from all things earthly. He was permanently conducting, so Hania told us, inner learned dialogue with his Maker. The expression on his face was kindly, but lofty, ethereal. He was so tall he did not see little people like me. How he managed to make even the most meagre contribution towards the maintenance of his family puzzled us all. I recognised him for the dreamer he was, for I was already, at the age of ten, a down-to-earth realist, or so I thought...

I took to calling on Hania's mother and little Ada. Mrs Meier was a rare human being. There was not an unkind bone in her body. She radiated true goodness and sincerity. One could not help liking and respecting her. Hania resembled her mother in looks. Mrs Meier must have been a pretty woman once but, although not yet forty years old, she was already worn out and scarred by the harshness of life. She was small and slight and always wore the same clean and neat navy-blue frock with tiny white polka dots.

Ada and I became friends and I was granted free admission to their home, as it were. Ada, who was virtually housebound, was small, pale and delicate. She had Jewish eyes. Large brown eyes filled with sorrow and gravity far beyond her age. She invariably greeted me with the words: "Yasia! What have you been doing? Tell me!" She found the descriptions of my to-ings and fro-ings entertaining. She thought my numerous relations interesting. She wanted to hear about my brothers, Joseph and Baruch. "What is it like to have two brothers, one big, one small? What games do you play? Hania says you read books. Hania says you know poems off by heart. Tell me..."

Ada never complained. Only the dark shadows around her eyes and the sickly pallor of her face made me understand... Hania told us that when she was in pain, their father would scoop her up and cradling, rocking her in his arms, he would pace up and down the room to soothe her, to comfort her. He chanted the psalms to her to help her fall asleep.

By March 1941 the Cracow Ghetto had come into existence and although the Jews living in the suburbs were not yet obliged to move into it, Mr Meier wanted to be with his people, the body of his people. He believed that conditions for both prayer and study were more congenial, more readily available in the Ghetto. Day and night he yearned for the Ghetto. It tantalised him. It beckoned to him. It swam before his eyes like a mirage. What a blessing it would be to find himself in the Ghetto among his own. Not to be a stranger in a foreign land - which Olsza, a suburb of his home-town, was. Only in the Ghetto could he be himself; feel he belonged, believe he had come home. He would cease to be an intruder in a Christian preserve...

His wife and daughters loved him too much to deny him his dearest wish.

The Meier family moved to the Ghetto in the early summer of 1941, when it was not quite as overcrowded as it would become in the months to come. They were allocated a room in an old lodging house in Wegierska Street. It was decent; quite spacious with a large window. Mr Meier felt a new man. "Here, amidst our own, we can breathe freely. Be ourselves. We are safe. Praise be to The Almighty".

I visited the family in Wegierska Street only once. I was invited to stay the night so that Ada could catch up on all my news. We were both eleven years old. Ada was very pleased to see me, and her mother could not do enough to make me feel welcome. What has remained most vividly in my memory of that visit - is the bed linen. I slept on a little tuckered bed. Mrs Meier made it up with fresh, crisp, fragrant linen. Lavender-scented it was. I understood only too well the effort, the toil it required to achieve that standard of perfection in the Ghetto, in a room with no running water and no place to hang out one's washing to dry. It was Mrs Meier's way of showing me her affection, of saying: "You are Ada's friend". I have never forgotten her warm hospitality.

The Meier family survived the June 1942 Aktion intact. Joseph and I were orphaned. The Aktion terminated, the Ghetto was reduced in size. Roughly, half its original terrain was re-claimed. The top of Wegierska Street, where the Meier family lived, fell fallow. They were relocated to the ill-fated Lvovska Street.

I ran into Hania in the Ghetto streets just once between the June and October 1942 Aktions, but it was not the same Hania. Life was being sapped out of her. She told me she belonged to the Women's Cleaning Battalion; a labour contingent assigned to cleaning Wehrmacht barracks. They scrubbed floors, polished windows, scoured the kitchen ranges and cauldrons. They washed and disinfected the lavatories and wash-rooms. It was hard work. She was only just coping. And they were sharing their room in Lvovska Street with a godless, inconsiderate family who ate pork and left bones and scraps around, knowing perfectly well that the Meiers were strictly kosher. Ada was poorly...

The 28th of October 1942 Aktion, sprung upon us without any preamble or hint of warning, resulted in thousands of the Ghetto inhabitants being deported to their death.

Lvovska Street and the adjoining roads, which were the main target of the Aktion, became a ghost-town - their inhabitants, almost without exception, having been consigned to "The East..."

In the days after the Aktion the Ghetto grapevine accounted for every family, every individual lost. The final tally - six thousand. A bone-chilling whimper, a fearful cry ran along the crumbling, moss-covered walls - six thousand. It rose from damp, mould-infested cellar to cold, rain-dripping attic - six thousand. It slid into dark, airless hovels and cramped, drab rooms - six thousand. It travelled along desolate, blood-stained streets - six thousand...

The Meiers? All four. The Sonnenscheins. Three generations of the Weinreb family - mother, daughter and two grandchildren. Old Mrs Zelinger and her middle-aged daughter, an Arbeitsamt clerk who chose to share her mother's fate - an unsung heroine. Twelve-year old Irena Zuckerman, who hoped to find her mother, "resettled" in June, out there. The painter, Ralf Immerglüh, and his wife Sara. Nineteen-year old Joseph Fischer. Sixteen-year old Henryk Birner. Twenty-year old Barbara Reich. The Order couple with their three-year old son, Olek. Thirty-four-year old Bronia Kunstlinger with her three children aged eleven, nine and five...

Six thousand human beings had been gathered in the Umschlagplatz and marched from there under the SS guards' watchful eyes to the cattle-trucks at Plaszow railway station. Ada could only hobble a few steps at a time... Was she tossed into a lorry, like a parcel, with the invalids, the infirm, the aged - those physically too frail to make it on foot? Was she flung, like an inanimate object, into the cattle-truck with total strangers? Or did her father, a giant of a man, carry his twelve-year old daughter, a mere slip of a girl, in his arms all the way to Plaszow and enter the cattle-truck cuddling Ada up to him?

I like to believe the latter.

August 2000

My friend BENJAMIN

By Sam Dresner

Sam came to England with the Windermere Group. As he was suffering from tuberculosis, he was taken from Windermere to Westmoreland Sanatorium just a few days after his arrival. He was subsequently transferred to Ashford Quaremead Sanatoriums where he stayed till the early fifties. He went to art school and now lives in London as an artist with his wife and family.

Everybody called him Moszek, but only I knew his real name was Benjamin. He came from a small village near Skarzysko. He had arrived in Verk C in 1942, a fortnight before me. I was fifteen and Benjamin sixteen and a head taller than me. We slept in the same barrack.

We both qualified as "old timers", as anybody who survived the first six weeks was called. By then we had both been there nearly two years and the still wore the same clothes in which we arrived. Although our clothes were in complete tatters, Benjamin somehow managed to look elegant.

He wore a beige paper-bag (from the chemicals used in the factory) underneath his torn shirt, which somehow blended with it, so that one did not see the holes in the shirt unless you looked closely, and a black jacket, very torn but repaired with bits of wire around which he wore a wide brown belt. The best feature was his hat, a Polish, navy-blue, four-cornered hat with a shiny peak which he wore askew at a very rakish angle. The whole effect was of someone stylish and tough. From underneath that impressive hat looked out a thin long face with big baby-like blue eyes. The patches of lemon yellow on his face (left-overs from working with Picrin) exaggerated the unusual light-blueness of his eyes.

He was always energetic and moving about, full of optimism and cheerfulness. Everybody liked Benjamin, even the Poles among whom we worked in Halles 53/54.

When I lost my father in 1943, I fell ill and nearly gave

up. Benjamin, through his cheerfulness and care, gave me back the will to live. He also became very protective of me.

Benjamin never spoke about his family. I don't even know his surname but, from some comments and hints he gave, I understood that they all perished in the "action" before he came to Skarzysko. I knew he had no relatives left.

In spite of his efforts, his sartorial style did not impress the Wachmeister before whom we appeared as he sat behind a little window making marks against our names.

One day before the deportation, they called out our names. Benjamin said "come on, we will be going by train while the others will have to walk". Honest and trusting Benjamin.

To this day I don't know why I did not follow him. He was my hero, and I always followed his advice and when he said we will be going by train, I believed him and yet I hid myself.

That night we found out that the people who responded to the call and others who were selected later were shot at the Surzelnica, a clearing in the woods used for trying out the munitions and shooting the slave-labourers who fell ill and could not work.

Lately, I have been thinking about Benjamin a lot and wonder what he would have become had he survived.

N.B. It is strange that I remember Benjamin so vividly after so many years. If I close my eyes I can see him standing there in front of me, tall, erect, and in colour, and yet I cannot recall the receptacle from which I ate my soup every day.

I turned my head to have a last look at the camp, my abode for the last six months.

And I remembered.

I remembered the long hours of hard work at the building site, in all weathers, without shelter.

I remembered the heavy weight of the sacks of cement on my shoulders, the dangerous task of lifting and carrying railway sleepers.

And, above all, the persistent hunger.

I also remembered the people who came forward to help me without having been asked -

Mr Abramski - my father's tailor.

Moniek Finkelstein from Poddzbie.

Szlamek - an orphan in the Lodz Ghetto (my parents looked after him).

Mr Ickowicz - a patron of my parent's restaurant.

And the anonymous British Prisoner of War - when we went without food after the bombing at the Buna, he offered me a sandwich and a pear.

Without the help of these good people, I probably would not have survived Auschwitz!

It was still dark; ahead of me, I could just discern the stooped figures of my fellow inmates turning in a westerly direction. Soon, I joined them on the main road.

We marched in silence.

The SS guards seemed excited. They were driving us faster and faster. Those who could not keep up, they shot. Or anyone who faltered.

The march must have lasted over two days. We suffered many casualties.

Our immediate destination was Gleiwitz Concentration Camp.

As soon as we arrived there, we were locked in barracks for the next few days, after which we were marched to a railhead and continued our journey in open wagons, standing, compressed like sardines.



Mordechai Topel

THE LAST STAGE

By Salek Benedikt

The evacuation of the Monowitz-Buna (Auschwitz III) Concentration Camp took place on the night of 17-18 January 1945

At night, the train would stop and we were ordered to remove the dead.

Occasionally, bread would be thrown in.

Within the first week, the elements caused more deaths than starvation. Soon, there was enough room in the wagon for all of us to sit. It was snowing most of the time. We huddled together, trying to get some heat from each other.

The train was also stopping at concentration camps en-route. We could hear wagons being uncoupled at the rear and prisoners being marched off.

The wagon I was in was close to the locomotive and we travelled the whole distance to Oranienburg, Sachsenhausen.

The Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp was full to overflowing. We were accommodated in the adjacent Heinkel Werke.

After reveille the following morning, we were led to an empty hangar. There I spotted Kazio, my bunk mate from Buna Monowitz. We were both happy to meet again and decided to stick together.

Soon, we were ordered to register. Our files got lost in transit, we were told.

A queue was formed in front of a trestle-table at which an SS officer presided, helped by two capos.

Whilst waiting our turn, Kazio met an acquaintance of his father. He advised us to register as being under sixteen years old. He did not give us a reason. "Just do it" he said. We did.



Moishe Kusmiński

It was not long afterwards that we were divided into several groups to be transported to other camps.

I was in a group destined to be sent to Flossenbürg Concentration Camp.

At this stage I was separated from Kazio.

FLOSSENBURG

On arrival, the first "port of call" was the bath house, with the regulatory showers. The Auschwitz III striped uniform was replaced by a civilian jacket and trousers. The jacket had a large 'KL' painted on the back. The clothes bore no "häftling" number or "tell-tale" triangles.

At nightfall, a capo ordered two of us to follow him to our night's accommodation.

We marched past the brothel and the disinfection building. "Next turning to the left", the capo called. Before getting there, we could smell the reek of burning flesh. I was familiar with it from my stay in Birkenau.

We turned into a blind-alley. On the left, below a barbed wire fence, there were several pits. In the darkness, we could see the smouldering embers. The nauseating stench enveloped us.

On the right hand side stood a low, long wooden building with a door at either end. Across the bottom of the alley stood a wooden fence, screening a latrine and washroom.

We entered the barrack by the door at the far end.



Salek Benedikt

A tall, broad-shouldered man, dressed in Russian military uniform, greeted the capo. After conferring for a while, the Russian gestured to an empty bunk. We eagerly threw ourselves onto the bunk and soon fell asleep.

In the morning, after roll-call, we received a portion of bread and a thin slice of liver sausage, also a bowlful of a hot, brownish liquid.

I noted that most of the inmates of this barrack wore at least one garment of Russian military origin.

The mid-day meal was dished out at the entrance to the barrack. The food had to be consumed indoors and nobody was allowed out until the distribution was over.

I looked in astonishment at the contents of the bowl. I had just received a bowlful of solid boiled potatoes and carrots.

A dream come true.

Before I started to eat, I inserted the spoon and watched in wonderment. It stood upright, all on its own.

When I had nearly finished eating, I spotted a Russian getting up from his bunk and lift the bar from the door at the other end of the barrack. He pushed the door ajar, looked out and disappeared outside. Realising what he was up to, I licked my bowl clean and followed in his footsteps. I was lucky, nobody noticed, and I received a second lot of potatoes and carrots. Had I been caught, I would most likely have finished up in one of the pits outside.

The capo returned in the afternoon and announced that we were to join the Children's Barrack.

The Children's Barrack was the first one on entering the camp. The man in charge was probably the oldest prisoner I had encountered in the camps. Of medium height, bow-legged and topped with a mop of wavy, grey hair, he wore the green triangle of a criminal.

He ordered one of his underlings to find us a bunk. My companion and I were separated.

I joined a young Yugoslav on a top bunk. Surprisingly, we could make ourselves understood to each other in our respective language.

The Yugoslav told me of the privileges we enjoyed in this barrack; among them, some extra food and exemption from being sent to "Auserkommando", though we had to perform work inside the camp.

I soon joined a detail, carrying clothing from the disinfection building to a warehouse up a hill. We reached it via a narrow path, in single file.

We were guarded by a member of the Volksturm, an elderly man, carrying a rifle of World War II vintage. He was bringing up the rear, constantly intoning "Granseschrift, Granseschrift".

Once we reached the warehouse, he ordered us to drop the bundles onto the floor and search all the pockets of the garments. Any money we found, he said, belonged to him. He then turned his back to us and cupped his palms behind his back.

As soon as he turned his back to us, I promptly stripped off the shabby jacket I wore and put on the best one in my bundle (I was liberated still wearing it).

I felt comfortable in the barrack. My strength started to improve after the ordeal of the last few months. I even acquired a false sense of security. Then, one morning after roll-call, the barrack capo announced that he had something to tell us. It had come to his notice, he said, that there were Jews in his barrack - lousy, stinking, Hungarian Jews. They were a source of disease and epidemics. He intended to take measures to prevent this happening.

All Jews would have to move to the bunks facing the windows. The windows would stay open all night. Since there were not enough bunks by the window, Jews would sleep three to a bunk. This would keep them warm. All blankets would be withdrawn.

He also decreed that we would have to be the first to leave the barrack in the morning.

He was waiting by the door, wielding a truncheon in his hand and hitting everyone over the head as we left.

Needless to say, we got very little sleep. The non-Jewish inmates of the barrack also turned on us.

Fortunately, the capo thought of a more drastic measure. He decided to get rid of us.

We were each given the number of the barrack to report to. It was with great trepidation that I approached the barrack. There were already some ex-inmates of the Children's Barrack waiting outside. I joined them. Eventually we were about ten.

The Barrack capo emerged

and surveyed us, then told us to gather round him.

He made a short speech. "Now you are my children. I will be looking after you, well. But you must obey every command of mine, unquestionably" (or something to that effect). He then told us to go to the washroom where a barber would shave our heads. We must wash ourselves very well with the soap he provided. Afterwards he would inspect us.

When I entered the washroom, I saw a naked body lying on the floor. Nothing unusual, but the face looked familiar. I bent down to have a closer look. It was my school-friend, Lajzerowicz. I had last met him in Szydlowiec in 1941.

The capo inspected our hands and heads. Satisfied, he told us that we would not have to do any work and at meal-times we would be the first to receive the soup.

It was unbelievable, after what had happened in the other barrack. But better was still to come.

The following day, after the mid-day soup, the capo invited us to his quarters. There were low chairs (similar to ones you see at shive) arranged in a semi-circle. He ordered us to sit down. That's where I first met Mojsze Kusmierski and Mordechaj Topel. A fiddler arrived and gave a concert for our benefit. It was like living through a surrealistic experience.

Then came the day when all Jews were ordered to step out of rank. An SS officer announced that we were to be evacuated to Dachau - tomorrow.

Once again, we boarded cattle wagons and set out for our new destination.

We had only travelled a short distance when Allied planes attacked.

After the air-raid we resumed the journey, only to be attacked again. This time, we sustained casualties. The engine received a hit and we had to continue the journey on foot. As on the march to Gleiwitz, many people were too weak to continue and were shot. We spent most nights sleeping on the bare ground. Food was quite sparse and every day more people were being murdered by the SS guards.

Liberation came all of a sudden. One moment we were marching, being bullied by the SS men, the next, they were gone.

The date was 27 April 1945.

JADWIGA GUTT, nee Peiper

By Witold Gutt

Witold Gutt D.Sc., Ph.D., M.Sc., C.Chem., FRSC., FCS., came to England with the Southampton group in November 1945 and lived in the Finchley Road Hostel. He was Senior Principal Scientific Officer and Head of Materials Division at the Building Research Establishment of the Department of the Environment. He is now a consultant in chemistry and Chairman of the British Standards Institution Technical Committee of Cement and Lime.

It is extremely difficult for me to write about my mother, Jadwiga Gutt (nee Peiper), who died in Auschwitz. She was incomparably the most important person in my life until we were separated in a dramatic incident in the Przemysl ghetto, and I shall return to this after I have sketched the events that led to this most important turning point in my life. Later, when I met my wife Rita, she has taken this place of the most important person in my life.

I will now return to the beginning.

The Peipers were already long established in Krakow when in 1775 Wiktor Peiperles gave his house to the School Brotherhood. This is recorded in Majer Balaban's 'History of the Jews in Krakow 1304-1868' pp 510-650, where he notes that even earlier, by 1757, the Brotherhood was already in possession of a house given by Mojzesz Aronowicz Peiperles.

The name Peiperles was at some later time abbreviated to Peiper.

However, the most eminent members of the family came of later generations. The best-known was Jadwiga's cousin, Tadeusz Peiper, the poet and writer who was born on 3rd May 1891. His biography, 'U Podstaw Awangardy' Tadeusz Peiper Pisarz i Teoretyk, by Stanislaw Jaworski was published in Krakow by Wydawnictwo Literackie in 1968.

Tadeusz's father, Abraham Marek Peiper, was a brother to Leon Peiper, my mother's father.

Dr Leon Peiper was a leading advocate, and writer on interpretation of Polish law. He was born in Krakow in 1864 and died in Przemysl in 1940 during the Russian occupation. His most important work was

in his fifteen books which interpreted and explained legislation. These commentaries became the standard works used both by practising lawyers and by students. One of these books, 'Komentarz do Kodesku Postepowania Karnego' Krakow 1933, published by Leon Frommer, was given to me after the war and it is a valued memento of my grandfather who had a great influence on my outlook and education. I have seen articles published in Poland well after the war that refer to his books and use his views.

My mother and I lived in his house at 6 Ratuszowa Street, Przemysl. The top floor of seven rooms was the private residence and the second floor was used for Dr Peiper's legal practice, assisted by his son Michal. In the apartment, there was a substantial collection of paintings, including a notable 'Rejtan na Sejmie' which was a copy of the famous painting by Jan Matejko (1838-93) showing a member of the Sejm, Rejtan, prostrate at the entrance to the Sejm, symbolically trying to prevent the entry of Russian troops during one of the partitions of Poland. The house was furnished with Persian carpets, silver and furniture imported from Vienna, and my grandmother had a considerable collection of jewellery. Grandfather had an extensive library of books housed in glass-fronted wooden bookcases, and from these books I was introduced to Slowacki, Mickiewicz, Sienkiewicz and Tolstoy. More importantly, there was also his library of law texts which made him self-sufficient in reference sources. In 1941 I moved his books - by many journeys with a wheelbarrow - to the house of a neighbouring Polish lawyer, Dr Jozef Dobrzanski, where they

were kept safe until the end of the war. While engaged in this task, I was stopped by a Polish policeman. I feared that I was in trouble but, to my relief, he said, 'It's alright, I know what you are doing. You are moving Dr Peiper's library. Carry on.'

From the age of five onward, I sat at my grandfather's dinner table and listened to discussions on law and politics - and also learned table manners. Whenever his comments or views were mentioned in the legal journals, he showed and explained them to me. Judges and advocates from Lwow and Krakow travelled to Przemysl to consult Leon Peiper on specific points of law and he appeared in Courts throughout Poland. He was also consulted by the Polish Government regarding drafting of legislation. Some of his work was conducted in Krakow, where he was also an examiner in the Jagellonian University and where his works were published. Every morning he got up at 5am and worked at his writing before starting the day's work in his practice.

It was from my grandfather that I acquired the idea that I should be a scholar of some kind, and in this way my grandfather became my role model.

While it is perhaps surprising that he never returned to Krakow but chose to remain in Przemysl, yet by doing so he unknowingly contributed to my survival. As a result, my mother and I remained in what later became the Russian occupied area of Poland rather than the German part until the Germans returned across the San in 1941. Therefore, she and I had two more years together, she had two more years of life, and I being two years older when the Germans attacked the Russians and took Przemysl, had a better chance of staying alive in the ghetto and then in the camps.

My mother Jadwiga, always known as Wisia, was born on 1st May 1896. She was the youngest child of Leon Peiper and his wife Ida, and she had three older brothers and one sister.

She had wished to go to University and train as a teacher, but this was denied her since the education of her brothers was given priority. Two of her brothers, Edward and Michal, became lawyers and the third brother, Stanislaw, became a judge and was awarded the Polish Kryz Zaslugi for his work in Sambor. He was my mother's most loved brother and my favourite uncle. On his



Jadwiga Gutt nee Peiper

visits to Przemysl to consult Leon Peiper he spared some time for me, brought me presents and we walked together in the Zamek park.

Wisia was educated to gymnasium level and spoke French and German as well as Polish. She was also a gifted pianist, and her grand piano was kept in her father's house where every year on 1st May a party was held to celebrate her birthday.

During the time of the Austro-Hungarian empire Przemysl was an important fortress and before and during the first World War the town was defended by a large garrison of Austrian troops.

At the age of sixteen Wisia met an Austrian officer from Vienna, Baron Harold Goldschmidt, who was stationed in Przemysl. They fell in love and became engaged to be married. Tragically, Harold contracted typhoid and died in Przemysl, where he is buried. He was still in his early twenties. Wisia was devastated and remained unmarried for a long time. She told me about her tragic love story and I went with her when she visited Harold's grave.

During the First World War Przemysl was under siege and then occupied by the Imperial Russian Army. Before the siege civilians were urged to leave where possible, and my mother, with her sister Camilla and my grandparents, spent three years in Vienna, while the three brothers were at the front as

officers in the Austrian army. Wisia enjoyed the grandeur of the capital, the opera and museums, the Hofburg and the Belvedere, and she saw the Emperor Franz Josef riding by in his carriage.

On returning with her parents to Przemysl after the war, and ten years after the death of Harold, Wisia married my father, Abraham Gutt, an architect, and I was their only child. Abraham Gutt's mother was sister to Hinde Bergner and so my parents' marriage provided a link between the Peiper and the Bergner families.

The Yiddish writer and poet Zygmunt Bergner, who wrote under the name of Melech Ravitch, was Hinde's son; and Ravitch's son Yosel Bergner is the well-known Israeli painter.

Hinde Bergner died in the Holocaust; Ravitch, however, had the foresight to take his wife and children to Australia before the war.

During the years between the two World Wars, my mother, while regretting that she had no formal profession, worked for charities, and brought me up. She decided to send me to an ordinary Polish school rather than the private 'Hebrew' school attended by the other children of Jewish middle-class families and where the educational standards were better. She felt that I should be among the Christian Poles and learn to deal with any abuse. Specifically, she said, 'If anyone call you a Jew in an abusive way, then hit him'. I carried out

this instruction on my first day at school and progressively established a regime in my class where no abuse was tolerated. I did not speak Yiddish, only Polish perfected by my conversations with my grandfather, so I was able to shame the potential abusers in the class by being better than they were in Polish and Polish literature.

As the clouds gathered in the late nineteen-thirties, there was much talk of leaving the country, but nothing could be done for there was nowhere to go. At the outbreak of war in September 1939 disaster came quickly. During the brief but disastrous period of the first German occupation of Przemysl in 1939, my father was murdered by the Gestapo on 19th September with a group of selected professionals on a list; I have described this in the previous issue of our Journal (Sept. 1999).

Under the Molotov Pact of 1939, the Germans drew back across the San, which became a border between the Russian and the German occupied parts of Poland. For us, there followed a period of relative calm 1939-41 under Russian occupation. During this time, Wisia obtained work as a cashier and accountant for a bakery co-operative. She enjoyed this 'real' work. While she worked, I went to school and learned Russian. We were also taught other subjects in Russian.

Under the Russian occupation we had to give up all but two rooms of our large apartment at 6 Ratuszowa St. The other rooms were requisitioned for Russian officers and their families. However, despite shortages of food, fuel, medicines and other essentials, life under the Russians was tolerable provided you were not classified as a 'capitalist enemy of the people'. The casualty in the family under these criteria was my uncle, Stanislaw Peiper. He was a judge and, despite petitions from the Poles in Sambor where he was a popular judge, he was arrested and never seen again. As a child of twelve, I was not directly in trouble, and with my mother and grandparents lived through this period in conditions which were incomparably better than what was to follow.

My grandfather, Leon Peiper, continued to write and to learn Russian and English until he fell ill. Mercifully, he died peacefully at the age of seventy-six in his own house during this period. His funeral was attended by many

mourners, Jewish and non-Jewish, and I, as the only male member of the family who could be present, read Kaddish.

On June 22 1941, the Germans attacked the Russians and returned across the San. The menace was evident immediately, for Jews were beaten up on the streets, arrested and disappeared. A ghetto was soon established where my mother, grandmother and I were allocated one room. But even before this, my mother appreciated the likely outcome and, guessing correctly that anyone able to work would improve his chances of survival, she found work for me, then thirteen, in the Wehrmacht workshop as an electrician's mate.

In June 1942, my grandmother, Ida Peiper, was taken away from the ghetto in the first 'action', to die in Belzec.

Since my mother worked in the ghetto on food distribution, she was able to obtain the Gestapo stamp which enabled both her and me to avoid the second 'action' later in 1942. We remained together in the ghetto until I was taken away to the concentration camp at Plaszow/Krakow with a group of craftsmen intended for work on the houses of German officers in Plaszow.

The event of separation from my mother was sudden and dramatic, never to be forgotten. It had been one of my ambitions to provide my mother with electric light in our room, and the only way this could be done was by an illegal connection to the street lighting installation in the ghetto. On 1st August 1943, I persuaded one of the senior electricians with whom I worked to come with me to make this connection. We did this, and on our return to the workshop we found the workers in a panic. The ghetto commander Schwammberger (later notorious and sentenced to life imprisonment in Germany in 1992) had arrived with a group of SS and was going through the building.

Only my senior, Horowitz, and I were in the workshop, the others were hiding in the lavatories. Schwammberger told us to go with the SS. Horowitz asked to be allowed to take his tools but was told to leave them. However, he managed to take his certificates of proof that he was qualified as an electrician. We were taken to join a line of men already assembled in front of the workshop building where a lorry was waiting. Someone ran to find my mother. We were

ordered onto the lorry and as it was moving away, I saw my mother for the last time. She was running toward the ghetto commander and I saw her in the distance. She was pleading for me to remain with her in the ghetto, but was refused. The lorry was driven to Tarnow where we spent the night in a locked cellar prison, on the way to Plaszow.

I never saw my mother again.

Later, I heard that on the liquidation of the ghetto, she was taken to Szebnie camp, from where she managed to send me two letters. On the closure of Szebnie, she was taken to Auschwitz and died there in November 1943.

My grandmother, Ida Peiper, died in Belzec following the first action in the Przemysl ghetto in 1942.

My mother's sister Camilla, her husband Karol Felix, their daughter Lucia and their two sons died in one of the actions in Lwow.

Michal Peiper died in the Janowska camp in Lwow, his wife Stega died somewhere in the Holocaust.

Stanislaw Peiper, being a judge, was arrested by the Russians and never seen again. His wife Sidonie was lost later in the Holocaust.

The survivors of the Peiper family are three of my cousins:

Anna Peiper, daughter of Michal. She passed for a Christian and worked as a parlour-maid for a Polish family.

Urszula Peiper, daughter of Stanislaw. As a small child she was hidden.

Both Anna and Urszula now live in Israel. They married and have children and grandchildren.

Edward Peiper, the half-Jewish son of my mother's oldest brother Edward. Before the war the young Edward had become a regular officer in the Polish Army. He escaped first to France and then to England, reaching the rank of Major in the British Army. After the war he emigrated to Canada where he married and had two sons, one of whom has become a pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

I am the other remaining survivor. Rita and I met as students and we married in 1952. We have a son and a daughter and four grandchildren. Rita is a physician and psychiatrist and has taken a particular interest in the problems of survivors.

KRAKOW PLASZOW

Here, so near to the city of Copernicus
Civilisation has been suspended

Goeth roams the camp
You can be shot before his breakfast.

On 'Hujowa' Gorka daily executions occur.
I witnessed them, here
And in 'Pizdowa'dip,
Near the brush factory
Where I looked after the motors for the Mongol
Until he hit me on the head with a hammer.

Untersturmfuhrer John shoots people at random
From the watch-towers.

The arbitrary rule of terror is a return to the Dark Ages
When the Mongols invaded Krakow,
And with an arrow silenced the sentinel trumpeter
In St. Mary's spire.

Schutzhaftlagerfuhrer Chilowicz
In civilian clothes and trilby, appears urbane
But Finkelstein and his OD men wear uniforms and use whips.
They are a stain on Jewish history.
They live in comfort and have conjugal rights.

I am 15, an electrician's mate, sent on repair jobs,
I witness what goes on, everywhere,
Including the villas of Goeth and John.
You don't kill an electrician if you want your lamps repaired.

An electrical fault causes a fire in the barracks.
Machauf and the other seniors are called to account.
Goeth's dogs savage them, but they survive, very brave.
Some will take revenge later, when we are liberated in Dachau.

After the fire, we electricians work day and night
To make the electrics safe in this city of Hell.
We are forced to electrify the perimeter fences.

On cold day a selection occurs on the camp parade ground,
We stand naked before the chief doctor.
He wears a grand fur-lined coat.
He sets some aside, and the rest go to Auschwitz.
Even old Wnuczek, Goeth's dentist, goes to his death.

Being young, I survive.
There are moments of humanity,
When I work in the Wachkaserne a soldier gives me the remainder of his supper.

In 44 the Hungarian Jews arrive.
They are even worse off than us. I give them some of my rations.

After a year, 43-44, a stroke of luck.
I am sent with the other electricians to work in Alsace.
We leave in a truck,
Shunted for seven days across Europe we stop briefly at Birkenau,
We pass Prague, and wash our hands at Nuremberg.
Then we arrive at Strassbourg, bound for the Vosges and Natzweiler.

Witold Henryk Gutt
29.11.99

Ex-prisoner no. 7535, Plaszow

HEART OF DARKNESS

High on a mountain in the Vosges forest,
Natzweiler camp.
The approach to the Champ du Feu is enchanting among the trees and vistas.

Inside, sinister clean streets between low barracks.
What goes on here? Experiments on Jews, shaming medical science.

The Scandinavian prisoners are hopeful and safe.
They will survive and Red Cross parcels will help them.

There is no work and we wait.
In the afternoons the 'Musselmen' walk in slow circles on the parade ground before
Their imminent death from exhaustion.
They are like the chained and emaciated black prisoners in 'Heart of Darkness'.
Conrad understood such horrors could happen. His vision pre-dates these events.

We are examined by 'friendly' doctors. For what purpose?

Amazingly, after a week the intended itinerary rolls,
And we leave by train for the commando at Neckarelz
To work as electricians in the aircraft factory
Inside a sandstone quarry.

The Neckar is beautiful
Barges move slowly in the calm water between the hills.

Soon the red-tailed American fighter planes will be overhead, flying low
They recognise us and do not fire.

The promise of survival is in the air in the summer of 44.
But much is still to come before the Americans shoot their way into Dachau.

Witold Henryk Gutt
27.11.99

Ex-prisoner 22441 Natzweiler.

DACHAU, April 1945

This is where it all began,
'Arbeits macht Frei'.
Many have died here.

The big barracks have circular wash-basins, and water,
but there is no food and we are starving.

We walk about in the small space in front of our barracks and wait.

Unexpectedly, tinned food is given out to be used on a journey.
We suspect the worst, a death march, so we eat the food and wait.

Suddenly there is gun fire.
We climb over the gates to the main concourse leading to the parade ground.
There are soldiers in green firing at the SS in their towers.
They are Americans, some speak Polish.
It is unbelievable, we are free.

The gun fire continues, some prisoners fall, dead within seconds of survival,
Trying to overcome the SS without weapons.

Horowitz and I share the moment of liberation.
I think of my mother, and he of his wife whom we left together in Przemysl ghetto.

Later our fears that they were murdered are confirmed.
We must cry first, and then move forward.

This is what we do.

Witold Henryk Gutt,
28.11.99

Ex-prisoner no. 147597 Dachau.

THE DEATH OF LEYZER THE CANDY MAKER, MY FATHER

By Michael Permuter

Michael came to England with the Windermere Group in August 1945. He lived in the Finchley Road Hostel and later emigrated to The United States, where he now lives.

I was a little boy in 1939.

Life was good. My father owned and operated a candy factory producing chocolates, pastries and sweets of every kind. By today's measure, it was a small business, but in the town of Opatow, in Poland, in the year 1939, it was a very substantial business.

The success of my father's enterprise permitted our family an enviable status in town, as much status as a Jewish family in a Polish town could get. Then, with little warning, the 3rd Reich slashed through Poland with the speed and destructive force of a tornado! And nothing was ever the same... The German army soon made their presence felt. Curfews were ordered and Jews were limited in their movements around town. One of the Germans' favourite pastimes was to close off a street from both ends and pick up all the Jews who were caught in the web to use as slave labour.

My brother, eighteen years old, Moishe, was returning home from an errand when the street was blocked off and Moishe became another stolen Jew to be abducted to a slave labour camp. It was a long,

bitter year, filled with pain and utter despair. I saw him again when I, too, became a slave in the Skarzysko ammunition factory.

Severe restrictions were imposed on Jewish businesses and the larger enterprises had German overseers installed, ostensibly to monitor production. My father's factory was one of the first to be taken over by a "Treuhandler", and it soon became evident that he intended to take complete control of the business. My father, being aware of the consequences of such an action, sunk into a deep state of depression. We expected the worse, and the worst did happen!

One night there was a cruel and relentless banging on the door. All of us, my father, mother, grandmother, my sister and myself were frozen with fear. The pounding on the door obliterated all sound and thought and conjured up images of unspeakable horror. Suddenly the door flew open and four men in black uniforms with SS insignia on their collars and red armbands with the black swastika, tore into the room, big black pistols in hand as though they expected to encounter

dangerous animals on the other side of the door. Laughing and pointing, one of the men approached my father, "Bist du der grose fabrikant" and, before he could answer, he was struck across his face with a club and my father went down like a sack of rice, blood pooling around his head and my mother, screaming with terror, was kicked down on top of him. My sister and I clung to my grandmother as though she could protect us.

The tall one knocked us down with a crack across our knees and proceeded kicking us with his shiny black boots. The Nazis then took their clubs and methodically started to destroy all the furniture and anything breakable in the house. They then approached my father, still lying on the floor, and kicked him several times and callously commanded him to get up. He was dragged out of the house into their car and driven away into the night. We later found out that he was taken to the prison in Ostrowiec. Two weeks later he was taken out to the yard, lined up against the wall and shot to death!!

My father was a very special man. It was the custom in our small town for everyone to have a nickname; my father was known as "Leyzer Karzacz" - "one who gives", "the generous one", and those in need always knew that my father would never let them down. It was a rare Shabas that Leyzer failed to bring home some needy Guests from the Shitbel.

My father was busy at the factory or travelling on business most of the time. However, Friday evenings was the time when he would always take me and my brother by the hand and we went to the "Shitbel" together.

Sometimes he would put me on his lap and I would gather in the aroma of the after-shave lotion that Maylech, the barber, put on his face.

I lost my father at a very young age - he was forty-one years old when he was killed - and every memory that I have becomes that much more precious. During my time in the camps, the memory of my father would somehow break through and at times when I had much to terrorize me, his memory would come over me, calm me down and make me warm.

BERTHA FISCHER'S STORY

Barbara Barnett and her late husband, Richard, regularly visited The Primrose Club and were responsible for organising music appreciation and cultural activities at the club. This contribution to The Journal was sent to us by Barbara with the following introduction.

"Several old friends keep me in touch with your activities. So does your Journal. It has become an amazingly interesting publication. What a change from those days when you scarcely had enough material to keep it going! Here is a contribution from one of your girls; she hopes you will accept it for the next edition.

"Bertha Fischer (Betty Weiss today) is one of my oldest friends. Over the last two years I have taken down her story, and sent her a couple of drafts. Here now at last is the final version. She has checked it and asked me to send it to you. It is her wish that you publish it. I hope you will agree to do so. Let me know if you want me to do any further work on it. I have tried to convey Betty's style; she has retained a remarkable command of English though she seldom uses it these days".

Bertha Fischer's Story

We lived in the small town of Rachov in the Carpathian mountains, then in the Republic of Czechoslovakia. Now it belongs to Ruthenia, a part of the Ukraine. Before the Second World War it had a population of about 13,000, and one third of it was Jewish. It was a place full of life as I remember it and so cheerful - until the war came. My father imported goods from abroad. He supplied the whole vicinity with groceries; tea, coffee, sugar and so on, and with building materials. He was a leading member of the Jewish community. We lived in a house by the river and my paternal grandparents lived near by. My mother's parents were much older; when her father died, his widow was taken in by my father's parents. That was a great success and she lived very happily with them.

My aunt, who today lives in Haifa, told me this extraordinary tale about her grandfather. He had died and his body was lying on his bed. Candles were lit and the burial awaited. Suddenly he woke up! It seems he had been in a deep coma!

They found a red mark on his foot as if from a blow. He told the following story: he was "on the other side". A big scale was weighing his good deeds against his bad ones. Someone came and put a cow on the scales, and the good deed dropped right down. An angel came and hit him hard, "You are not ready to come here yet," he said, "We are sending you back!" And he lived several more years...

We always celebrated the Sabbath and the Holy Days within our own immediate family - even for *Seder* Night; but one of us children would go to the grandparents to ask the four questions. There were no guests unless there were strangers at synagogue. Then they would be included. Our Sabbath meals followed tradition. On the eve of *Shabat* there was carp, and soup. For *Shabat* lunch we had *cholent* and for the third meal the rest of the carp with noodles, meat in a tomato sauce and compote. Later we would have apples.

The entire Jewish community followed traditional practices; no-one was agnostic then. There were three big synagogues. My father wore a *streimel* and *kaftan* on *Shabat*. The Rabbi, as elsewhere in those days, played a big role in our everyday lives (years later he settled in B'nai B'rach). The better off families looked after the less well off. We were a happy lot.

We children, both girls and boys, attended the local gymnasium (high school). It was a big secular school with quite good standards. (Some years ago I went back to visit Rachov and introduced myself to present staff and children there). The school had a good library. Both my parents had their own books and read widely. That was how my mother relaxed (she also went to the cinema; the film was changed twice a week and she had a season ticket, much to the surprise of others in the local Jewish community). All of us read a lot. Books were always what I wanted as presents and I exchanged books with my friends. We kept them in

drawers. Only religious books, beautifully bound, were kept on open shelves. My first book was about a Czech giant in the hills, a folk tale; and we enjoyed Czech fairy tales by a famous Czech authoress. There were wonderful stories written by Carl May. He wrote in the first person about adventures all over the world. When I learned he wrote from prison and had not travelled at all, I was so disappointed! We read, too, translations of many great classics, including Dickens: *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Little Dorrit*. I remember learning about the life of Mozart without knowing his music.

At the end of the school day all of us Jewish children went to *Cheder*. At *Cheder* we girls were taught to read and write - but only in Hebrew. We learned how to pray - but without understanding the language. We learned by heart the daily services and those on *Shabat*; but there was no translation in our prayer books. We learned the Bible stories and about the festivals and the customs involved. The rules of *kashrut* we came to know from our parents; but we learned nothing about the bees and the birds!

In 1944 German troops occupied our town. All had to be accommodated; we were allocated several soldiers. It was *Pesach* and we sat down to *Seder* on both nights with those Germans sleeping in the next room. So we kept our voices low. Our father as head of our community was called to the Town Hall at 6am the next day. He was instructed that all Jews must come with their belongings to the schoolhouse to await further orders. There we stayed for a week or two; later we were crowded into cattle trucks and taken to Mateszalka. This had become a huge ghetto. Many Jewish communities in the region had been brought there. The cemetery was used as a camp site and at night we had to lie on the ground in pouring rain. I shall never forget it; our bedding was soaked, mother was crying, father was helpless. There was no shelter anywhere.

When war began, my father had been forced to hand over his business to Hungarians, and so for the past four years we had been left very short of cash. Now father was accused by the police of not giving up all his money when ordered to do so by the Germans. He and my eldest brother Eli were brutally kicked by those police, back and forth, in front of mother, my sister and me. We were unable to intervene. Father and Eli were separated and interned.

Mother pleaded to stay with us, her two young daughters. We moved into a loft in Maieszalka with several other families. We had some food. Then, after two months we were ordered to go to the cemetery again. Cattle trucks took us to Auschwitz. There Mengele was directing people, right and left. Celia and I were sent to the left, mother to the right. She tried to take Celia with her but Mengele stopped her. Then we saw Father and Eli running by from a different wagon. They called out "Where is mother"? We told them she went away, that we heard she had gone to an old people's camp. Father was crying bitterly. He seemed to know the worst. We never saw him again.

We were given bromides to make us docile; we just did as we were told. We were doped and only wanted to sleep. From then till we were liberated menstruation stopped. I was fourteen.

Two months later we were counted and commandeered to go to a Labour Camp. Celia, very small at twelve years old, was sent to one side with cripples and elderly people. At that time I did not believe the crematorium story. Later we heard about it from others who had been involved in building it. I was determined; where Celia goes, I go. So I stood by her. There were two other young children and I saw an older woman pull them with her to be counted at the roll call. So I did the same, pulling us both into line with those due for the Labour Camp. That move saved us.

We went to Gieslingen, near Stuttgart. It was an enormous ammunition factory making Wurttenberger metal fabric for pistols. It was a peculiar feeling; that we were making munitions that could be used against us and our people. We were guarded by Jewish *capos*; and we worked on twelve hour shifts, either day or night. Celia became ill and unable to work;

but the *capo* had taken a liking to her. She was a gentle, a Sudean German. She took her to the camp hospital, looked after her and kept her there. (Later on she wanted to adopt her, though of course we would not hear of it).

It was *Yom Kippur*. The whole camp decided to fast. We hoped that would lead to our release. I was on night shift and I, too, fasted. We returned to the barracks, terribly hungry to find that the SS had taken our food away. Every day we would queue, block by block, with our bowls. We were so hungry. It reminded me of *Oliver Twist*. So, like him, I went and queued a second time. We all had to wear little caps. That was a factory requirement; and as we all had shaven heads, we all looked alike. However, after a few days someone recognised me - in the queue for a second time. I got an awful beating. Never did I try that again.

One evening a heavily pregnant woman was put in our block. There were shouts and cries during the night. A baby was born but lived only a day or two. Both disappeared. We never heard of them again.

After Christmas there were bombing raids. The factory ran out of materials. So we were again pushed into cattle trucks. This time we were taken to Munchen Aloach near Dachau. During the two months we spent there there was no work and little food. Everyone talked about cooking and recipes. It was utterly demoralizing.

My sister had stayed in the camp hospital with the same *capo* looking after her. I loved her very much and cried bitterly when we were separated, not knowing if we would ever meet again. I went alone when our women's group was marched off, with no idea where we were going. After a while, some 2000 Russian men were added to our contingent. There were Russian prisoners-of-war from Dachau. Back and forth we were marched between the Russian and American lines. (I heard later they had intended to shoot us all but the SS wanted to protect their own skins by then so avoided adding to their record of brutal activities). There was little food.

Suddenly we realised all our SS guards had disappeared, fearful of capture by the allies. They had run into the woods. We were on our own. We were FREE. That was an unforgettable moment. Then American troops arrived. At first they thought our train was carrying troops and started firing. When

we realised they must be allies, we jumped off the train so that they could see we were not German troops but camp survivors. We threw ourselves at the US soldiers and hugged and kissed them. An American Rabbi appeared. He told us we were going to a castle where we would be fed and cared for because, he warned us, a lot of SS men were hiding in the woods and we must be protected.

Next morning the POW's and all of us went a bit wild. For a few days we searched houses vacated by fleeing Germans. We looked for clothes, shoes; we had none and were covered with lice. We went looting, taking what we could, smashing what was left, letting off steam. All I wanted was a comb, a fine one, and some clothes. I so much wanted to clean myself up, to bring myself back to some normality. Those clothes I kept for a long time afterwards; the only pants I had found were torn so I was careful not to lift my skirt.

We were taken to a very large barracks, last used by the SS, in Landsberg, a place made famous because Hitler was living there when he wrote "*Mein Kampf*". When we arrived, every block was occupied by a different nationality; Polish, Russian, Czech. We spent two months in the Jewish block. We had all starved for so long and here was food in plenty; sardines, meat loaves, sweets. We started to eat. For some it was too much for them. They could not digest the rich diet; others were too weak to cope at all and died. We shared Red Cross parcels.

Our immediate priority was to make contacts, to seek any news of family and friends. So, together with partisans and released prisoners-of-war, we Jews decided to find our way towards our home towns. I reached Pilsen and then Prague, searching all the time for any news, any at all. I found no-one; but I heard that my brother Eli was very ill in hospital. Some said he had died.

Word came that the Jewish Refugee Committee was giving out money in Bratislava. So I went there. I slept alongside men and women from all walks of life on straw mattresses in school halls; we were given food and a few clothes. We registered at their Information Centre where all of us were seeking news through a massive grapevine. That is how my brother Joseph heard I had

survived. He had come from Rumania, heard I was in Budapest and now came to fetch me. He had found Celia. They were living in Rumania. Now he sent me to join her, escorted by a friend of his, while he went to find Eli. In Prague he bumped into a man from Rachov who had seen Eli. Eli had asked him to make contact with his family; and he directed Joseph to the hospital. That same friend later became chairman of the Rachov Survivor Group in Israel. Joseph found Eli very weak and bed-bound; he had pleurisy and water on the lungs. He had been very confused and needed long medical treatment. Never did he ever talk afterwards about his experiences in Buchenwald Concentration Camp.

Joseph found a house for us all about 3km from Theresienstadt in Bohemia. Eli joined us there when he was sufficiently recovered. He even found a piano for us - so typical of him! We were there until December 1945. All sorts of stories were being told. We heard how many Czechs were openly becoming communists. We wanted none of it. While visiting Prague, Eli heard about children's transports going to Britain. He put down my name and Celia's. A month later a telegram told us to be in Prague in two days' time. That was the last occasion I saw my handsome brother, Joseph. He saw us off from Prague.

We flew from Prague Airport to Prestwick, Scotland in January 1946. We were placed at Polton House, a farm school in Midlothian. It was a beautiful mansion with lovely grounds. Mary, Queen of Scots, was said to have been imprisoned in the Lodge at one time. We were there for about a year learning English, going to school in the village and discovering how to get on with each other. Many of us have stayed friends till today. Our Scottish teacher was Mr Harboth who had graduated from Heidelberg. He taught us arithmetic and the British currency system, weights and measures. From there, we joined the group in Bedford; they were preparing to go to Israel. Others went to London hostels. Lots of them went on to the States.

At the Bedford Hostel every one of us was interviewed and offered advice about how to plan for our future. That was where Hugo Gryn decided to go to High School. Every one of us had to decide what they wanted

to do. My choice was to be a mechanical engineer; so I worked as an acetylene welder learning the trade at ORT. I wanted to do something different, and not be a typist like most of the other girls.

From there we all were found lodgings in London. My sister and I had a room with the Whitman family in Stoke Newington for a short time; that was my first experience of coping with landlords. But no-one accepted a female welder! So I found a place in a factory in Tottenham. Eli was bombarding me with letters: '... there is no future in this sort of work. Learn a profession, try a laboratory job...' So the JRC (Jewish Refugee Committee) found me a place in a dental laboratory. There I met Mayer Stern (who later on founded the Stern Gallery in Tel Aviv). He had trained as a dental technician and advised me to do so, too.

So that is what I did. I registered to study at the Borough Polytechnic and completed a five years' apprenticeship; but after all that I found it very hard to find a job. I was advised to become a dental assistant. This I achieved and worked in a dental surgery for a year - until I emigrated to Israel.

During those years in London, the Primrose Club offered the only way we could keep in touch with each other. There I attended a pottery class, and I joined a musical appreciation group with Dr Barnett. This opened a new world for me. I had no previous knowledge of classical music; for it was not known in a religious family. He taught us a lot. He got us to read about various operas and come and tell the others the stories. And to this day I enjoy classical music and singing.

In 1953 I decided to join my brother Eli in Israel. But I was not going to miss the Queen's Coronation celebrations in London on June 2! After that event my friend Rose Laskier and I left for Israel; and we went via Paris so as to enjoy on the way the 14th of July festivities. I had learned about the French Revolution as a child. My mother had given me a book about Madam Rolande.

My brother Eli had studied electronics in Paris. Then, in 1948, he went to Israel where he joined the Haganah and fought in the War of Independence. He was an instructor in the Israel Air Force. He became an expert in

his field and was a founder of Elbit electronics where he worked for the rest of his life.

Joseph also went to Palestine. I heard how he swam ashore with someone on his back, the two of them reaching there as illegal immigrants. He settled later on in Australia and my sister Celia joined him there in 1952.

My first need was to learn the language. For without Hebrew, I could not get a job. It was a difficult time. I had got to the point of trying to borrow the money to travel back to England. But my brother, Eli, bitterly disappointed, said he would not help me to leave and I must study Hebrew. He registered me at the *Ulpan* on Kibbutz Shefaim. There I learned *Ivrit* and worked in the fields. But it was an Anglo-Saxon group. We talked far too much English, only a little Hebrew; but we had a good time. Despite that, I acquired a good grounding in the language and made friends. From then on I was able to hold my own in Israel.

I came to live in Tel Aviv in the Anglo-Saxon Hostel and started job-hunting. While doing so I met Arieh and eventually we married. We had a similar background and a deep understanding and appreciation of each other. He was a survivor, too. It was a hard time for both of us. When we married I was penniless. With my last seven *lir* I bought a lighter for Arieh. He still has it. Years later I heard that my aunt had toured round our relatives, telling them I was an orphan, had nothing and it was a *mitzva* to contribute. So everybody gave us money. In the early days we lived with Arieh's brother and ate at my mother-in-law's place. Arieh had his own dental lab but no savings. Then I found work as a dental assistant and worked till my first baby was born; we called him Reuben. Dana arrived five years later.

In 1954 the *Soknut* gave us a house in Ramat Chen. It was the first real home of my own. And there we are still living today. Our daughter and her children live on the upper floor. Our apartment is beneath it. It has grown with us. Arieh, who is an accomplished artist, now has his studio in the garden that he has nurtured, a garden that has become more beautiful with every passing year.

Bertha Fischer Spring, 2000
(Now Mrs Betty Weiss)

RAY OF HOPE

Biographical episode from Auschwitz to
Concentration Camp Rhemsdorf 1945
And finally to freedom at Therezenstadt

Written by Victor Brietburg

This is a further instalment of Victor's biographical notes. Victor came to England with the Windermere Group and then lived in the Cardross Hostel in Scotland. He emigrated to The States in the late 40s and kept in touch with us throughout the whole period. He is actively engaged in Holocaust education and is held in high esteem by the education authorities in New Jersey.

This story is about the three of us, Adek Wasercier, Julek Zylberger, and me. Adek was my partner in Auschwitz and Julek became my partner in Rheinsdorf. We were all friends and we have stayed together since we left Auschwitz January 15, 1945. Whatever happened to one affected all of us. Even though we were always together, each one of us has his own recollections, and there are no two identical stories. After the liberation of May 8th 1945, the three of us went to England together.

The Road to Buchenwald Germany January 1945

On January 15th 1945 we marched out of Buda, which was one of the enclaves of Auschwitz. There were two barracks, which housed about two hundred inmates in each. Hungarians occupied one and the other one had a mixture of political prisoners.

It began on the morning of January 15th. We were told to get ready to be evacuated from Buda. For three months I had been working on a pig farm. The SS officer ordered us to slaughter all the pigs before we left. This was a huge undertaking as we were a group of

only fifteen workers and there were over a hundred pigs to slaughter. The Germans didn't want to leave anything behind for the Russians. This was one of the hardest things for me to do because I had never killed any animal before. Towards the evening we were finished, and in our bloodstained clothes we were ordered to march. We were rushed because we had to catch up with the other inmates from Buda. As we were marching, the temperature began to drop and, as if this was not enough, it also started to snow. Sometime during the night we caught up with our group, who were sleeping in an abandoned wooden stall.

Our Kapo told us that we were going to sleep in the barn nearby. When we walked into the barn, it was filled to capacity. Our group, who came late, had no place to lie down, so we had to sleep wherever we could. We certainly could not sleep outdoors, because we would have frozen to death. I looked around to find a place to lie down; I noticed a heavy beam above. That is where I slept for what was left of the night. Next morning at dawn, we were reassembled, counted and again ordered to march. I was tired from the night before and smelled from the blood, which had started to turn brown on my clothes. I caught

up with Julek and Adek, and just having them near me gave me support to go on. We had light clothing and a single blanket, which was the only thing we had to protect ourselves from the freezing winter cold and snow. We continuously heard the popping of gunshots and every time we heard one, we knew that another human being just made it to heaven, because surely we were in hell. I don't remember whether we got any food that day, but we survived.

Late on the third day we finally came to a railroad station. We were surrounded by SS soldiers and their dogs. They laughed as their dogs attempted to bite us. There were several groups of inmates from other camps. As we passed one of those groups, I heard my name being called. I turned around and from a distance I saw my uncle Moses waving at me. That little wave invigorated me; at least there was another person from our family alive. I waved back and with tears in my eyes, I yelled back to him that I was doing fine. I hope I was able to inspire and invigorate him the same way as he did me.

I really do not know where this station was. Maybe it was Katowitz. We were put in open iron, coal trains and by the time we arrived at Buchenwald, half the train inmates had frozen to death. What was hard for us to take while we were travelling through many German cities and passing under the bridges, was the people spitting down on us. They must have seen the dead bodies on one side and on the other side a pitiful bunch of half-alive, frozen skeletal human beings. We were huddled together with our blankets, which we took from the dead. We were lucky that when we arrived in Buchenwald none of us had to go through a selection because most of us would not have passed. In Buchenwald they didn't know what to do with us. We were put in a barrack with three hundred people. There were not enough sleeping bunks for everyone and some of us had to sleep on the ground. In the morning we got our 200 grams of bread, a small piece of margarine and some ersatz coffee. In the evening we got a little watered-down soup with three small pieces of potatoes floating on top of it. We spent our twenty-four hours in the barracks with nothing to do. There were rows of barracks and between barracks there were cattle wires. We were

allowed to walk around within the perimeter of our barrack and though able to communicate, we were not allowed to cross.

Hungry, bored, walking around, I heard someone calling my name. I turned around and I saw Motek Lefkowitz, a childhood friend of mine. Both of us were overcome with emotion, each one thought that the other one was dead. "Are you hungry?", he asked me. "If you are, I can give you some food every day". He explained to me that he had landed a job in a soup kitchen and if I would look in a designated area at night, I would find some bread and some other things. At night I sneaked out and near the gate I found a parcel of food. This lasted about a week and then I heard that he was sent out from Buchenwald. I truly can say that he saved my life with the extra food I got from him. Through the years I thought about him and what he did for me. In 1995, when I met him in England and reminded him about his helping me out, he did not remember anything about it.

The road to Rhemsdorf, Germany: end of January 1945

We arrived at Rhemsdorf around noon. The first thing we noticed was that the prisoners were working with gloves. We also noticed the slime of oil all around us. It did not take us too long to find out where the oil was coming from. We saw storage sheds had blown up and oil was still trickling from them. A little further on we saw the devastation from the bombing that must have occurred a couple of days before. We were assigned to a barrack and we were given bunk beds to sleep in. It was all over like it was in Birkenau (Auschwitz); each bunk bed had five inmates and they were three rows high. Unlike Auschwitz, the barracks were filthy. Around six o'clock we were called outside for the evening roll call. We waited for the other inmates to arrive. To our surprise, when they showed up, we noticed that what we thought were gloves on their hands was dirt mixed with oil sludge. Rhemsdorf was a huge chemical industrial complex. They were able to extract from coal gas. Also unbeknown to me, there were other chemicals

manufactured. Within a couple of days, we were as dirty as they were. The water was rationed and with the little water we were able to obtain, we had to wash our laundry and ourselves.

In Auschwitz we had to wash up when we came back from work and if one was caught dirty, the whole block paid the consequences. We had two sets of uniforms and we continually wore one and the other set we had washed and hung up to dry. In the morning we once again washed and then we went to be counted; we called this the "Apel".

But Rhemsdorf was not the same. We went to sleep dirty and woke up dirty. The bed bugs and the lice had a field day with our bodies. The food ration was the same as it was in Buchenwald, but this time we had to work for it. We were working in the midst of the German civilian workers. They saw our wretched bodies and sunken eyes, which were begging for some food, but none of them volunteered to give us any. We did not mind the bombings. We knew the war was winding down and this time it was in our favour. When we heard the sirens we knew that we were going to be hit, but we didn't care. Gazing up to the sky, we saw wave after wave of planes coming in our direction. We were put in a gorge where we were kept till the bombing was over. How beautiful were those planes, like eagles high in the sky with white vapour trailing.

We heard that if you worked certain jobs you were given some soup for lunch. It didn't take too long before Julek and I were able to push ourselves in. What I didn't know was that I was going to become an expert in digging out unexploded bombs. It was dangerous, but that extra soup was a lifesaver. Sometimes those bombs were as much as eight feet down. First, we had to dig around them and always the tip of the bomb was the deepest end. For the last couple of weeks all we had was rain and around most of the time the lower part of the bomb was immersed in water. Maybe Julek and I were lucky because neither one of us got killed. Sometimes the bomb broke in half and the yellow powder got wet and that eliminated explosions. When it got dark, we dragged ourselves back to the barracks half alive. After the appel (counting us), we got our litre of soup. You would think that we would rest, but we started to talk about how we

outwitted the Germans and some of us were even able to organise some extra food. Due to the rain and, to our dismay, the Allies had not bombed our complex for the last couple of days. Once again, my unexpected luck played a role that saved my life and that of Julek and, later in Marienbad, Adek's as well.

As I was standing in line to go to work, I was pushed back three lines behind Julek and I was left behind. Whoever was left over was assigned to clean bricks from bombed out buildings. While we were working, I started to whistle when I noticed that an SS officer was observing me and smiling. He looked different; his hair was grey and his face was not as stern. He motioned me to follow him. He stopped and asked me if I spoke German. Without any hesitation, I said "yavol" (yes). He took me to a hut and he told me to take care of it. I looked around and I noticed a couple of SS soldiers at a long table sitting around and reading newspapers. At the same time, I also noticed a shelf above the table lined with canteens. I immediately knew I had hit the jackpot. The voice of the officer jarred my mind; this is the SS mess hall and there was another room around the corner where the French prisoners of war had their meals. Finally, he showed me his office and told me what he expected of me.

I was left alone and I also felt very uneasy with the SS around me. What a dump that hut was. Immediately I knew what I had to do; a lot of soap, water and some paint to brighten up the place. The next day I found out that the officer was a Major. I started to work on his office first. Within a couple of days I had his office spotless. Then I asked certain SS soldiers not to wash their canteens in cold water, I would clean them. When I was finished with them, they looked like they were new. Within two weeks I had approximately twenty canteens, and most of them had some food left over in them. As time passed, I began to feel at ease with everyone. But not for one minute did I forget where my place was and who I was.

I knew that I had to play their game. I never wore my hat inside the hut, therefore I did not have to take it off for them. I kept myself spotless. I shaved off every hair on my body and organised another set of uniforms, which I kept in the hut.

The SS Major must have been in his 60s and most probably obtained his rank during the First World War. Working there I got to know many German SS. In the next hut there were some French prisoners-of-war. Whenever they received packages of food from the Red Cross, they shared some with me. In turn, I shared it with Yulek. Adek also had some position with a capo and was able to obtain some food for himself.

At times there were some high-ranking officers sitting around at the table discussing their war stories. Normally, I brought some ersatz coffee or schnapps, and they just chattered away around me as though I didn't exist. At the same time, I tried to stay out of harm's way. Many times the Major engaged me in some conversations regarding my being there. He asked me where I was born? How much schooling I had had? Where had I learned to speak the German language? Most of the time I told him what he wanted to hear. At one of these chats at the table, one of the officers asked me in a half-drunk tone, "Hei, Victor, wo ist deine familie?" (Where is your family?) I am not a hero, but I was choking at that point. I blurted out about the Ghetto, Auschwitz, how I found out what happened to my mother, brother and my sister, and about all the children who had perished in the gas chambers. I felt this would be my way for them to hear that none of them will be able in the future to deny that they did not know, because I felt I may never have another opportunity to face a German again.

I must have spoken for about half an hour. Finally, the drunken officer quietly said, "Das is genug" (that is enough). There was a silence; I was seventeen years old and choking up my feelings in my throat, but I was not about to show them the tears in my eyes. I walked out of the hut. All my memories, pain and guilt from Auschwitz resurfaced. It still hurts. Today I wonder how I had the guts and dared to stand up and face up to them. Personally, I think it must have been temporary insanity, but I did it.

There were many things I did. But if I had gotten caught, the consequences would have been my own; I did not have to worry about my family. When I was born, I was told I was born with a gold spoon in my hand.

Is that why I am here? But I cannot explain a lot of things, including working at the SS hut. Even today, the sight of my little sister and the rest of the family never leave my mind.

The Major lived in the nearby city and used to go home for the weekends. Something changed in the major. Was it finally the realization that Germany was losing the war? Or did he, for the first time, hear about Auschwitz? When he would come back from the weekends, he would ask me how I felt and, to top it off, he brought back some home cooked food. It wasn't much, but it carried me forward for another day.

A week before we had to be evacuated from Rhemsdorf, the Major asked me whether I would visit him after the war. I never thought that a German would ever put a question like that to me, nor did I want to answer. Yes, he was trying to be nice to me, but he was wearing the SS uniform with plenty of medals, and if our roads would have crossed again and if I had the resources, I would have most probably killed him. Could I have done it? I don't know. A couple of days later we were all evacuated from Rhemsdorf and I never saw the Major again.

In mid-April, as the allies were approaching Rhemsdorf, we were once again put on open cattle trains and evacuated. We took our blankets and provisions for one day. They selected eighty prisoners for each open cattle truck. It was April, not January like the last time, and this time we were a little better prepared. One of the Germans who knew me, ordered me to create a corner where he would sleep and guard us. Yulek, Adek and I created the corner and that was also our place to sleep. While everybody was packed in, we at least were able to sleep in comfort. The train was moving south and it was weaving through the mountains, continuously climbing higher and higher. Most of the prisoners were young like myself; at this age one could survive the conditions we lived in.

Finally, the train stopped at the railroad station and on the sign was written, "Welcome to Marianbad". It was Czechoslovakia. The air was pure and cold, and this was the famous spa that was well-known throughout all Europe. The whistle blew and all the SS stepped off and lined themselves around the train.

None of us knew what would happen next. We were watching them for their next move. I don't know why there was no fear in us. Maybe because we were young and we also felt that the allies were all around us.

First they fed the SS and then they told us to disembark from our trains. Under the watchful observation of our guards we were given our first and only meal for the day. For the next couple of days we were allowed to walk around the trains and mingle with each other. What helped us is that I knew some of the Germans and this gave me the opportunity to organise some food. Even in the middle of April the nights were horrendous. Most of the guys were starving. The cold and the frost was unbearable, but we hoped that we would be liberated here soon. The Allies surrounded us, but we didn't know which allies. We knew that it was a matter of days or hours and we would be free, therefore we were cautious not to do anything foolish.

An unforgettable episode A Spoon full of Sugar

There was a young, red-headed Ukrainian SS guard and every once in a while we would engage in conversation. He was one of the German SS guards who came to report to the Major for whom I was working. He also was assigned to guard a certain section where the concentration camp inmates were working. He was most probably two years older than I was and had some college education. And now he was guarding our supply train. Once he asked me whether I missed the Major. Of course I said that I did, but I didn't mean it. I think it was the third day at Marienbad when I happened to walk towards him and I noticed that he was watching somebody under the supply train.

There was a young Hungarian boy who I had befriended in Auschwitz. He always smiled and greeted me. Whenever I was able to help him, I did. Just as I had lost my family in Birkenau, so had he. All of us tried to protect our youngsters wherever we could, especially when there were selections to work; they always were put in the back so that they could stand on their toes to make them look a little bit taller. I noticed that he was under our supply train and

trying to scoop up something into his hat, whatever it was that was trickling down on to the railroad tracks. It looked like sugar. I also noticed that the Ukrainian was also eyeing him. What was he doing under there? He should have known better. The Ukrainian removed his rifle from his back; my heart stopped. I was walking towards the SS guard, hoping that he would start to talk to me and forget about the kid, but he ordered me to go back. I wanted to call to him to run away, but it was too late. The SS guard called the boy over. When he did, the guard looked into his hat; he must have seen what he had in it. I heard the young boy pleading with him, but to no avail.

Somehow I already knew what the outcome was going to be. Next, he led him into the forest and I heard a shot. In my short life I saw thousands of people die, what was so special about him? Was it that he was the same age as my brother would have been? He had in his hat a spoonful of sugar. Did he have to die for that? Didn't God know that he was the last of his family? For six years he fought to survive, only to die three weeks before the end of the war. What is life all about? He was only fourteen years old. Where was the Almighty, to permit things like this to happen? Fifty-five years have passed since then, but the haunting memory of this young boy keeps lingering in my mind. Why?

At Yom Hashoa I always light a candle for him and for the other victims of the holocaust. I also made a promise, that if I ever would write, I would mention this young boy who became another victim of the holocaust. He wanted to live, but his life was shortened on the top of the beautiful mountain called Marienbad.

I don't remember his name any more, but I know it is my duty to remember him. Because if I don't, it will be as though he never even existed.

Ghetto Therezenstadt

We marched all the way from Marienbad where we thought for sure that we were going to be liberated. The allies were all around us, but at the last minute the Germans were able to get us back onto the trains. It seems they had found another escape route. As the train was descending the

mountain, we noticed that planes were coming directly toward us. Before we could respond, the train engine was bombed and we were strafed from all sides with machine guns. The allied planes mistook us for a German army movement. I don't remember how I cleared or jumped from the train. All I remember is trying to dodge bullets all around me. Julek, Adek and I found ourselves in the forest. I read in the newspaper many years later that we lost over six hundred inmates at that time. We were free; we were escaping into the forest with the hope that we might encounter some allied soldiers.

Our faces were torn by the branches of the young trees, but we didn't feel any pain. We were free, we were exhilarated, we jumped through streams and we were bubbling with excitement. "Did you, did you see?" we kept repeating over and over again. We ran for about five or six hours and were getting tired. Finally we came upon a valley and from the distance we saw that there were three houses. We needed help to get out of the forest and we were also hungry. Julek decided to go down and fetch some food and clothes. We were observing Julek walking down into the valley and entering the first house. He disappeared behind the door. It took quite a while until we became annoyed at him. Jokingly, I said "Julek must be having a nice meal down there". We were ready to join him when we noticed that the door opened up and Julek came out with his hands up. nobody had to explain to us what it meant: he got caught.

We were ready to run away, because there was nothing we could have done for him. We felt we must save our own lives. We turned around and saw two Hitler's youths aiming their submachine guns at us. We raised our hands above our heads. We knew what it meant; we most probably were going to be shot unless we did something. Like in the Ghetto when I was caught and escaped, I felt that I would have to do something. I could not convey my thought to Julek or Adek. Meanwhile, we were turned over to an old soldier carrying a rifle, which must have been from the French revolution. There was the possibility one of us was going to be killed, but not all three of us. We saw a village in the distance and Julek decided to engage the German in conversation. With

a pleading voice Julek begged the German to let us go. We explained that if any harm came to us, he would be held responsible. He motioned for us to sit down. He took out a piece of bread and cheese from his knapsack and told us to share it with each other. We sat down and it didn't take us long to finish it off.

We looked at the soldier. He must have been in his sixties. We decided once again to plead for our lives. All he was able to tell us that he was ordered to deliver us to the local SS command. We concluded that if he had delivered us to the authorities, we most probably would be shot.

As we were trudging along, I noticed that a German officer was approaching us. He offered a cigarette to the old soldier and then they were talking for a while. We didn't hear what was said, but I recognised that he was the officer who asked me what happened to my family.

For a while I thought that he would take pleasure in finishing the job himself. He turned towards me and asked what I was doing here. I explained to him that when the planes strafed us we jumped from the train and ran into the nearest forest to save our lives and we got lost. The officer turned around to the soldier and explained that he himself would turn us in to the proper authorities. He looked tired and run down.

We stopped at the nearest stream and washed ourselves and we all rested for a while. When we started to walk again, I asked him if he wanted me to carry his pack. He seemed to trust me, nodding yes. As we were walking in front of him, I decided to engage him in conversation. Very cautiously, I asked him whether he realised that he was now in Czechoslovakia? Also, if we walk and talk to him, we might protect him from the partisans. He looked frightened and kept looking around. I thanked him for saving our lives. I was sure that I gave him something to think about. He really was as much in danger from the partisans as we were if he turned us in to the authorities. At that point, Adek and Julek closed ranks with me and we all started to talk. He even smiled, but we really didn't know what was on his mind. Somehow he knew where to walk because a little later we caught up with what was left of our train transport. He spoke to another officer and then he came over to us and told us that he would

pick us up in the morning. In all honesty, I didn't know what was on his mind. If he was going to kill us, he had had every chance to do so. The only thing I could think of was that he was as scared as we were. If I am taking too much credit for our luck, it is because Adek, Julek and I were compatible as a team. The next morning at dawn, he was standing near the gate waiting for us. As I am writing this episode, everything seems to be so clear, I can see Adek, Julek, the German officer and myself the way we were fifty-five years ago. I can describe the two Hitler youths with their guns pointing at us. I can describe the rocks which we hid behind, looking at the house that Julek walked out of with his hands high above his head.

I don't remember how many days we walked, but when we walked with the officer we were able to organise some extra food. I don't even remember whether Julek and Adek were walking with me every day. I remember that during the last two days of our march, the officer disappeared and we never saw him again. It seems that a day before we arrived at Lietmeritz (a couple of kilometres before Theresenstadt) we went through a small village, but I don't remember its name. At that time we must have looked awful. Many of us didn't have any shoes and some of us had to help others to walk. Some of them were beyond help; they looked like they were walking skeletons. We didn't want to lose any more people because we all felt that we were coming to a destination. Life became so very precious. At the same time, we tried to muster courage with whatever we had left in us. Every Passover in the Haggadah we read how God supplied manna for the Israelites in the desert. Well, another miracle happened in this little village. From the opened windows loaves of bread were flying out towards us. We scrambled for it. Julek caught one and immediately hid it in his jacket and laid down on the ground like he was sick until we came to him. Julek shared the bread with us, and we survived another day.

One week later we arrived in the Theresenstadt Ghetto. I cannot honestly say how long or what distance we walked, whether we walked a week or six days. All I know is that we marched, and after each day was over, wherever they told us to lay down to sleep, we slept and were thankful that another

day had passed and we were still alive. We all felt that liberation might be within hours. But how many times did we think the same way?

When we walked into Theresenstadt, the sight of women and children was too much. Most of us were hardened by our circumstances and we thought that nothing could touch us. But seeing children once again was just too much. We thought that we would never see another Jewish child alive. As we arrived into Theresenstadt, some people came to welcome us. We were not in the mood to be welcomed because the night before we slept outdoors and we were tired and hungry. They divided us and put us on the top of a fortification. Women came with some bread which they tried to distribute. I don't know what they were thinking? Did they think that we were normal or civilized? That we were going to stay orderly in line? There were people over there that hadn't eaten for the last two days. Some of the guys jumped onto the women to get the bread and they barely escaped with their lives. Julek jumped into the centre and the only thing I saw of him was his legs. It might seem funny now, but then it was a matter of life. We didn't need that piece of bread, but we might need it for tomorrow. Adek and I jumped in and pulled Julek out by his legs while he still was clutching a piece of bread. While we were pulling Julek, two people were fighting for a piece of bread; they both stumbled down from the fortification and got killed, eight days before the end of the war. Julek shared the piece of bread with us. Before the day was over, we were put in a building with twenty-five other people and we were thankful once again. We survived this day. If anybody who reads this article was in Theresenstadt, the building in which we were staying was the Hamburger Kasse.

Liberation May 8th 1945

Within ten days of our arrival in Theresenstadt, on May 8th 1945, I heard a commotion. The Russians are here! That day I didn't feel so well. I had a slight case of dysentery and I had just come out of the bathroom. When I heard the news I felt a little dizzy. I was holding on to the post and trying to formulate in my own mind what I had just heard; I closed my eyes. What does it mean? Am I a human being again? Does it

mean I can go to sleep and not be afraid? Does it mean that I just might have enough to eat and not go to sleep hungry? I didn't jump for joy. Six years of slavery and now I am free. Free for what? Just as I was standing paralysed in Birkenau, the same feeling overcame my whole being. Yes, I am alive, and I won, and I survived. But what a hollow victory it was. I was not weak but neither was I strong. I was in much better shape than most of the others. The first thing I was going to do was to find some food and get well. Then I was going to go back to Lodz to see if maybe someone from my family had survived. But for now I decided to go and meet the Russians.

June 1945 I came back from Poland and I closed that gate of no return to Poland for ever. (Read Return to Lodz episode)

"How old are you?" I was put this question from an investigator from the British Jewish Joint Committee. They came to Theresenstadt to look for young holocaust survivors. The Home Office limited the age to sixteen. I knew what to say, "Sir, I am sixteen years old".

The Road to England...

I was already briefed before I was interviewed to lie about my age. I was born May 8th and I was exactly eighteen years old, but the hair on my head was cut off for health reasons and I venture to say that I must have been weighing about a hundred pounds. It was very easy to mistake me for a fourteen-year-old.

Julek and Adek also signed up to go to England and we all were waiting to be accepted. We were checked medically and ready to leave at any time. At the end of July we were told to get ready to leave.

The Russians also wanted us to go to Russia. The Russian commander of Theresenstadt had a very sweet carrot for us, a promise of entrance and free education to the University of Moscow. The night before we were to leave for Prague, a Russian officer came to our room and tried for the last time to persuade us to go to Russia. After he saw that he was not succeeding with us, he commented, "You suffered, we suffered, we also liberated you, and within five years you are going to come back and fight us". We were appalled. "We will never fight you. You liberated us and we will never forget it". We were just tired of commissars and besides, England promised us

the same package and also at a future date we would be transferred to Palestine.

We all felt a little twinge of guilt - they fought and some of them died trying to liberate us. They treated us well and took care of our sick. I remember May 8th when the liberation forces of Russia surrounded Theresenstadt. The nightmares of the last six years were over. Immediately I ran out to meet the Russians. When I saw soldiers on a tank I tried to catch up, but I was not strong enough to continue. For a moment the tank stopped and one of the soldiers stretched out his hand and lifted me up onto the top of the tank. I grabbed him and gave him a hug, and with tears in my eyes and in his, he whispered very quietly "a Yid?" He must have noticed the yellow and red star with my number on my concentration camp uniform.

It is fifty-five years later and I can describe the soldier. His face was dirty, not shaven, his eyes were bloodshot from smoke which was seeping in, and he also smelled; most probably he had not changed his clothes for some time. While I was riding on the tank he gave me some dark bread with butter and once again very quietly he said, "Shalom". The tank stopped. I got off wondering why he had whispered the first and second greeting. Is it anti-semitism? Slowly mulling over with my thought, I wobbled back to Theresenstadt. It did not take long before food started to flow into Theresenstadt, and with it came the typhus, dysentery and tuberculosis, and once again death made its entrance. The Russians gathered all the youngsters to a central place with better quarters and better food. Within four weeks we started to feel like ourselves. Some of us departed to our home countries to look for families and survivors.

We got our passports from the Russians with a stipulation, that we go to England as students and then we will leave for Palestine. That is how our passports were stamped. The next day we left Theresenstadt for Prague with uncertainty; we felt that the Russians did help us, and now we were leaving them. We arrived at the airport and there were five four-engine bombers from the British Air Force. The last time I saw them was over Rhemsdorf when they were bombing the oil installation where I was working. How we cheered them, never giving a thought that we might also get killed.

The excitement started to build up in all of us. I was never near planes and now I was going to go to England in one of them. I touched the plane like a precious gem given to a child. Those were the shining eagles in the blue sky with the white vapour trailing. Somehow, we never gave a thought that we were going to a country with a foreign language. I felt that I was leaving the horrors of the war behind me. I felt that I was going to a country that had so gallantly fought and sacrificed their own lives to defeat the Nazi hordes.

An English pilot spoke to us in German and asked us to board the planes. As we were walking up to board the plane, we noticed that there was a crowd of people who had come to see us off. I heard a commotion. I turned around to see what was happening. I noticed that one of our girls was screaming and running down towards the crowd of people. For a minute we all were stunned. In that crowd this girl found her mother and sister who she had believed were killed. There was not a dry eye among the crowd or among us. Ten minutes later we would have been up in the air flying and these three people would have missed each other. I don't remember whether the girl went with us or she remained in Prague.

As the plane taxied down the runway, a silence fell upon us. We were finally leaving the part of Europe which we were familiar with and now we were going to a new world.

We will have to learn a strange language. What did they expect from us? Are they expecting fourteen-year-old children? There were so many questions going through my mind. I didn't feel as confident as Julek; I admired him and his confidence. He was one year younger than I was. When we were in Prague, he insisted that we go to the opera. What did I know about opera, or museums; he was far more advanced in these areas than I was, but I eventually caught up.

My thoughts were about my future. Yes, we were free now, but to whom were we going to turn? None of us had any family. I knew I had two aunts in America, but where? I did not know their full names, or which part of New York they lived. I would try to solve it once I was in England. A little time elapsed; I noticed that we were over Germany. I looked out from the small window in the plane and I noticed the

devastation of the town we had just passed by. The walls were still standing, but everything else was gutted. The streets were obliterated with ruins from falling bricks that once were a building. I did not feel sorry for the people below. They had brought it upon themselves. But until I saw it, I never realised how bad it was. I guess they have to thank Adolf Hitler for that.

This was the Third Reich, which was supposed to have lasted a thousand years. How many innocent children on both sides died. Well, Herr Hitler, you did not succeed. And if you had succeeded with us, would you have closed the concentration camps? Would everybody have lived in a Jew-less Europe and been happy? I don't think so. You would have found another victim and sold them to your people as a different form of a Jew, even though they were a Pole or a Russian or maybe an Englishman. So what was this all about? Were the Jews the ruin of Germany? How could they? The Jews in Germany consisted of less than one percent of the total population. How could a country with all the intellectuals that Germany possessed turn back to the Stone Age?

It got uncomfortably cold. We were wearing light clothes and we must have been flying about ten thousand feet up in the air and the plane was pressurised. Many of us did not feel so well. I was too excited to be sick. After a while I saw the flaps coming down and we landed in Holland. We all disembarked and started to look around. It seemed our plane was the last one and I noticed that our boys already organised some bicycles and were riding around the airport. After a while, we boarded the planes and once again we were up in the air. But this time the altitude was much lower, and at that point I must have fallen asleep. Suddenly, I was jarred from my thoughts. One of the pilots came out from the cockpit with an announcement.

"Attention, please look out of your windows; and welcome to England."

If anybody can add or wants to use this article, they are welcome, but must get written permission from me. The next article will be Auschwitz. Victorsb@aol.com

In June my wife and I celebrated our ruby wedding anniversary. Going back 60 years under German Occupation, my family were fighting for survival.

I was born in a village called Struzowska about two kilometres from the nearest town called Gorlice. The village was a kilometre from the main Gorlice-Tarnow Road. To get to our home you had to pass a school and cross a small bridge over a river. My father met my mother in Gorlice, which was a garrison town.

My family consisted of my father, mother, sister, myself and my twin brother, who was fifteen minutes older than me. My sister was five years older than us.

My father was a Corporal in the Austrian Army for four years. His father was a publican in Mencina. He had five sons and four daughters, out of which my father was the only one to be called up into the Austrian Army in 1914. He served as a Corporal in many battles until 1918 when the First World War ended. My father was a Guard of Honour at Kaiser Franz Josef's funeral in Vienna. On his release from the Austrian Army in 1918, he was travelling home by train when he was stopped by Polish Legionnaires who forced him to enrol into the Polish Army, with whom he served until 1921, fighting the Bolsheviks. Before 1914 my father had to flee from his home to escape Pogroms.

After seven years fighting in the First World War and the Bolsheviks, my father married and settled down, making shoes for shops in Gorlice. My mother helped him get orders from shops. He spent three years in Tarnov learning to be a shoemaker. We lived in a house where my parents, together with their children, occupied the back of the house and where my father had his workshop. My aunt and grandfather occupied the front of the house where they lived and my aunt ran a grocery shop. My grandfather was a cattle trader and had a small farm with one cow. My grandfather owned the large house.

Anti-semitism was rampant in Poland. The local youths were afraid of my father, who was an ex-soldier. If there was any trouble, my father used to chase them with his belt. If there was any trouble in my aunt's shop, my father used to be called.

My brother and I went to school in Gorlice because the local school was too anti-semitic. We used to walk through fields to the main road to avoid that

THE RABBI'S ROOF THAT SAVED MY LIFE

By Zisha (Jack) Schwimmer

Jack came to England with the Windermere Group on the 14th August 1945. He suffered from tuberculosis and he stayed for a number of years at Ashford and Quaremead Sanatoriums. He now lives with his family in London.

school whose pupils threw stones at us if they saw us pass. At school, people shouted 'Hitler will come for you' at us. In the morning we attended school, in the afternoon we went to Cheder. Because of the distance from home, my mother used to bring us lunch to the Cheder during her business travels into town.

Saturday morning we used to go to the main synagogue in town. In the afternoon we used to visit relatives. My father was very good at talking about his experiences in different battles he had fought in the First World War and his experiences as a soldier. He always liked to tell us about it. In the summer we sometimes used to go for walks up the mountains on Saturday afternoons where we could see the town below. It was a beautiful sight; we lived in a valley with mountains and forests all around us.

War was on the horizon. We could see German war planes passing on the way to bomb a large oil refinery which was situated on the other side of town. They of course did not bomb it, they did not have to, they wanted it intact for themselves. Rumours were going around that the Germans were going to draft all males of military age, including Jews, into the Army to fight for them. My father, an ex-soldier, was a prime target. All this turned out to be not true. My father set out by foot towards the East, walking over two hundred kilometres to escape the Germans, ending up near Lvov, which is now part of the Ukraine. It was a dangerous and exhausting journey and with the Ukrainians being very anti-semitic, he could not go further. He decided to turn back. The morning after my father left the village, which was in the Polish part of the Ukraine, the Soviet Army arrived and occupied the village. If he had stayed one more day in the village, he would not have been able to return home.

On his way back, he was captured by the Germans and

interned. He managed to escape and swam a large river to return home. Together with my mother, we were terribly worried about him during the month he was away and were absolutely relieved and delighted to have him back. Without him I would not have survived the War.

During my father's absence in the East a man came into my aunt's shop and told her he had seen troops marching down the main road. They told him they were the French Army come to help defeat the Germans. We all, of course, knew that could not be true. The German Army of Occupation had arrived.

At first the Germans left us alone. When my father returned, he continued with his trade though things were getting more and more difficult. All Jewish children were expelled from State School which was a lovely large new school in Gorlice. Jewish children were moved to a building where we attended school and learned some Ivrit. Things were getting too dangerous; after some time they closed the Jewish school.

There was an illegal Shabat morning service in Gorlice which was held under the noses of the Germans and where my brother and I had our Barmitzvah, which means we were just called up.

One day German police arrived in our home and took away all leathers and with it my father's livelihood. He was not allowed to practice as shoemaker any more.

Life had to go on. My father turned to milk delivery six days a week. Every day, except Saturday, my brother and I used to take it in turn to go with our father, leaving home about 2.30 in the morning, to climb up the mountains to the farms to collect the milk, carrying it in milk cans on the way back home; in the winter we used to walk knee deep in snow. Later in the day we used to carry the milk into town to deliver to Jewish homes, walking through fields as much as we could to

avoid being stopped by German police as it was illegal for any Jew to trade in anything.

One day I was walking on my own with a can of milk when I was stopped near Gorlice by German Gendarmes who asked me what I was carrying. I was taken to German Police Headquarters and interviewed. I thought I had had it! I pleaded with them that I did not know that delivering milk was against the law. They eventually let me go minus the milk. My brother and I were the only ones to deliver the milk, as it was too dangerous for my father or sister to do it.

One day, at the beginning of winter 1941/42, a lorry of German soldiers arrived. They gave us fifteen minutes to leave our home. They of course did not tell us where they were taking us. We ended up in a small town about ten miles from Gorlice. They gave us a room in the house of the Rabbi of the town. Each room had a family living in it. There were five in our family. For six months we lived in this room. The town had one main street, which is where we lived. On our side of the road there were fields going down to a railway line. Most of the time we stayed there, there were rumours of deportation taking place. In most towns where all Jews were dragged from their homes by Ukrainian and German SS, some were taken by lorries to forests to be shot and the rest were sent to extermination camps.

One morning, at the beginning of the summer of 1942, we woke up hearing a lot of commotion. We got up to look through the window and we saw lots of lorries with Ukrainian and German SS. The Ukrainians were more brutal than the Germans - that is why the Germans used them. My father said that the coming German evacuation of the Jews had begun in the town. My father told us to dress quickly. So did other families in the town. My family ran

downstairs; that is, my father Meir, my mother Ester Liba, my sister Rachel, my twin brother Chaim and myself. We ran to the back of the house through the back door into the back garden. We saw lots of Jews run down the valley towards the railway line. My family got separated and I never saw my twin brother again!

What we did not see was that there were a lot of Ukrainian guards below. As I ran down the hill towards the railway line, I was caught by a Ukrainian SS man in dark uniform threatening to shoot me with a rifle. As I pleaded with him not to shoot me, he got hold of a Jewish woman with a small baby in her arms who lived in the same house as us. That split second while his attention was disturbed I managed to slip away. I ran for my life up the hill to the Rabbi's house. I heard afterwards that my twin brother disappeared during that commotion, never to be seen alive again. The rest of the family, realising what was happening, managed to run back into the house we were staying in, run up the stairs and hide in the attic. I was frightened out of my wits on my own, so I entered the house, ran up the stairs to the loft, through the roof door and got onto the roof.

I managed to hide on the roof, laying flat and supported by the gutter from falling down to the ground. After laying on the roof for a while, I realised the rest of the family were hiding in the attic, as I could hear their voices. Unknown to me at the time there were other people from the house hiding there. During the day German SS guards kept coming into the house searching for Jews. I heard them finding a woman with a baby. I heard the baby cry, then it stopped. They killed it by throwing it at the wall. The mother was hysterical being taken away. They found some people in the loft but, luckily, they did not find those hiding in the attic or me.

All day long as I lay on the roof, I could hear the rattle of machine guns as Jews were rounded up into lorries and driven into forests to be shot. Others were sent to death camps. All day I could hear Jews pleading with their captors to let them go and German SS screaming at them to hurry up - 'aber laus du Schweine, Jude!'

At sunset the whole sky seemed to be going round in circles as I lay motionless on the roof supported by the gutter. As nightfall came the noise of machine guns seemed

to quieten down. So did the rounding up of Jews, so I fell asleep. I dreamt I was sleeping in bed and I needed to go to the toilet. As I attempted to sit up I lost my balance and at the same time realised where I was as I woke up. It was too late for me to regain balance, so I held onto the gutter with my hand and let go.

It was a miracle I did not get killed, the house had two floors plus the attic in the loft, the ground below was cemented. As I fell on the cement, I twisted my left ankle. My face was cut and bleeding all over, but miraculously there were no bones broken.

I knew my family was hiding in the attic so I banged on the back door. After a while my father heard my banging and shouting to let me in. Although it was quiet, it was still very dangerous. I could hardly walk, so my father helped me up the stairs into the loft. When I got into the attic my family could hardly recognise me as my face was covered in blood. After my father washed my face, the bleeding stopped. It was then that I found out my twin brother was missing. My family were relieved to see me alive. Up to then both their twin sons were missing. They were astounded when I told them that I hid all day on the roof and at my miraculous escape from death.

I could hardly believe my ears when I heard my father say that we had all got to get away into the country in a couple of hours and find a suitable forest to hide in. I foolishly thought that I would be able to stay in the house at least a few days. I said to my father that I could not walk as I could not stand on my left ankle which was twisted and swollen, but my father said "I will find you a stick to help you walk. It is too dangerous to stay here". I respected his judgement and listened to his advice as my father was a soldier in the First World War and used to tell us about all sorts of dangerous situations he had managed to get out of.

About 2am, just before we left, my father helped me down the stairs to the back of the house. We passed through the back door into the backyard. My father found me a stick from a tree branch and we walked silently, the four of us, my father, mother, sister and I, down the hill towards the railway line. We crossed it and walked into the country through fields. After the horrible scenes we had heard the day before from dawn to nightfall, a great silence seemed to have fallen on the area. We were all scared out of our wits.

I was too terrified to worry about the pain in my leg as I limped along with the support of a branch stick. My mother was very worried about me, but there was nothing she could do. We walked through the fields until we came to the nearest forest where we could find a suitable place to lay down on the grass and rest. To lessen the danger of us being caught by the German Gestapo, we were on the move all the time, resting at different places and moving from one forest to another every few days. We felt like animals on the run. Often we heard voices of Nazi patrols searching the forests for any Jews who might be hiding there.

My sister Rachel, who was five years older than me and did not look Jewish, was chosen by my father to go to the nearest farms outside the forest we happened to be in to buy food, so we had some food to eat while we were hiding in the forests. She was a very brave girl to do it without being caught. We were all worried stiff when she left us to go on these trips and relieved to see her come back safe. Without her heroics I do not know where we would have found food to survive. It was not a lot, but enough to keep us alive.

For a whole month we hid in different forests; as we moved from one forest to another, we got nearer to our original home. One day as we walked in the forest we bumped into two people. Behold! They were my grandfather and my aunt. We were all overcome with emotion. We could hardly believe our eyes at meeting my grandfather and aunt in the middle of a forest. After we were forced out of our home, we did not know what happened to them. Here, miraculously, we were reunited again. It was a miracle we bumped into each other. We had a lot to talk about. Apparently, they were moved to a different place after the Germans forced them out of their home. When the deportation came they managed to run away and hide in forests like we did.

Unfortunately, our meeting was short-lived. A Pole betrayed us to the Germans.

About a week after we met my grandfather and aunt in the forest and after a month in hiding in different forests, we were all resting on the grass at the bottom of a hill when we suddenly saw two Germans walking down the hill towards us. One was in the uniform of a German Gendarmere and the other was a Gestapo in plain clothes. One cannot imagine our feeling when we saw them

coming towards us. We were absolutely terrified. As they approached us, one had a revolver in his hand. We thought he was going to shoot us. They asked us what we were doing there. We pleaded with them that we ran away because we were scared. The Gestapo guy asked us to take our clothes off. We thought they were going to shoot us, so we pleaded with them not to shoot us. My father thought of everything. When we first came into the forest he gave me all the savings we had to hide in my pocket. When the Germans ordered us to strip, I did not take my clothes off and by a miracle they did not notice. They searched everybody's clothes but did not take any notice of me. They ordered us to dress, then marched us up the hill.

When we came to the top of the hill we saw the Pole who had betrayed us to the Germans. We, of course, could not do anything. They marched us through villages like criminals until we arrived in Gorlice, the town I went to school in. The Jewish Ghetto was in an entirely different part of town from where it was before the deportation. They marched us into the Jewish Centre. My father and I were separated from the rest of the family. We were put in a separate camp in the Ghetto. The rest of the family were to stay in the Ghetto. The Germans must have known the fate that was awaiting the Jewish people in the Ghetto.

During our four days stay in the camp, a rumour went around that all people in the camp were going to be sent to a labour camp. After four days, sure enough, we were marched out of the camp to the railway station. My mother and sister were among those lining the street to watch us being marched to the station. My mother called me to join her but the guards would not allow it. Little did we know that we were going to be the lucky ones and those remaining in the Ghetto, including the rest of my family, had a fate awaiting them far worse than us. Little did my father know that this was going to be the last time we were going to see the rest of the family alive, apart from my brother who disappeared a month earlier during the deportation.

So started three years of hell in six different camps, including Buchenwald. My father survived the war and died in London at the grand age of ninety. He not only suffered in the Second World War but also had a bad time in the First World War.

Recollections

APRIL 1945 - APRIL 1947

By Esther Brunstein

When the 15th April - the longed for day of Liberation - finally arrived in Belsen, I was in a state of delirium, unconsciously struggling to conquer the deadly disease of typhus, which had already claimed thousands before me. I was totally unaware of the great drama being played out around me... To this day I feel I have been cheated and robbed of this historic experience by missing out on the exhilaration of the moment of deliverance.

When I regained consciousness I was too weak and bewildered and almost devoid of emotion. At the first sight of food, however, I burst out crying. I was no longer hungry. My dream of eating and eating until being satiated to the point of bursting had also been denied me.

After some weeks of being cared for by our Liberators, the British Army, in makeshift hospitals, I regained some physical strength. Soon after, I found myself, together with many inmates, on a transport by boat to Sweden. I spent the night in the port city of Lübeck in a state of great excitement, but also trepidation as I did not know what the future held for me. The UNRRA (United Nations Rehabilitation and Relief Authority) were taking our personal details in an effort to link us up with relatives abroad. The man who interviewed me was a certain Mr Newman who spoke fluent Yiddish. I gave him the names of my uncles in Buenos Aires and London, and the names of my father's close friends from the Bund (the Jewish Socialist Movement in Poland) of which my father was an active member. To his and my great

astonishment he knew them all. It appeared that he worked closely with them on the American Jewish Labour Committee. Later I learned that it was the most organised movement bringing aid to the Jewish people in Europe. (Some readers may be interested to know that a film about their work - "They were not silent" is due to be screened at the Sternberg Centre on May 7th).

Mr Newman proved to be an efficient worker, for soon after arriving in Sweden I established contact with my uncles and the friends in New York. Being in touch with family and friends helped to lift the feeling of desolation. It was through these friends that I had the great privilege to become closely acquainted with a remarkable human being, in fact the most colourful character I have ever met. His name was Paul Olberg, then a man in his sixties, a Bundist of long standing. (I was very impressed that in his youth, as a budding journalist, he travelled hundreds of miles to interview Leo Tolstoy and had an inscribed photograph of him on his desk). Paul Olberg gave up an important and, probably, lucrative position as the deputy editor of the daily newspaper 'Socialdemokraten' and chose to put himself in the service of Survivors and the Jewish Labour Committee - in fact, he became the official mediator between the two sides.

It was Paul Olberg who one day called me from Stockholm with the news that my brother Perec had survived. An overflow of, until then, pent up emotions welled up in me and, not being able to cope, I passed out with the receiver in my hand. So embedded is this memory within me that when-

ever I reconstruct it I become seventeen years old again and fully relive the emotional experience.

My first abode in Sweden was a makeshift quarantine centre in Malmo. After three weeks I was pronounced "fit" and sent to a beautiful region in central Sweden. I was reunited there with two close friends from the Ghetto - Judy and her mother, Mala. I clung to them like a leech, I so badly needed their friendship and support which they gave in abundance. Life seemed to hold promise again. In those far off days I was full of hope that I would be reunited with my darling dad and my brothers, Perec and David. Perec survived. Unfortunately, and to my eternal grief, dad and David, a blonde, handsome, blue-eyed youth of twenty, did not survive. They lie in the mass graves on the cursed soil soaked in Jewish blood.

After six months of convalescence, regaining a physical shape of a normal seventeen year old, a new and meaningful life awaited me. Paul Olberg, through his connections in Government circles, managed to secure a beautiful mansion for about 45 Survivors, mainly prewar Bundists. Its location was in the small pretty village of Malarbaden, near the bigger town of Eskilstuna - a known metal centre in Sweden. It was a godsend to all of us. We turned it into a little 'autonomous republic' and tried to live by the ideals instilled in us in childhood. We called the place our Socialist Home. An atmosphere of solidarity and camaraderie prevailed at all times. We organised cultural activities by inviting speakers to talk on various subjects. Poetry readings and musical events

also took place. We all did our best to face up to reality and somehow come to terms with our losses (more than half a century on the process continues). I fully participated in all activities. It helped to numb the pain. Looking back, I realise that our moods dramatically alternated between elation and deep depression. However, being together in a friendly circle of kindred spirits made us feel safe. We did not have to recount our experiences as we understood each other. I daresay that good professional counselling would undoubtedly have benefited us at the time, but this was 1945 and the emphasis was on one's physical well-being and not emotional damage.

After some months we had to leave our beautiful sanctuary. We were rehoused in Eskilstuna where most of us obtained some kind of employment. I was unable to work - suffering from many ill-effects of the war. I was sent back to Malarbaden, now functioning as a convalescent home, under medical supervision. I tried to see Paul Olberg in Stockholm as often as possible - he was a source of great spiritual strength for me.

Perec and I wrote to each other regularly, both of us longing to be together again. One would have thought that no obstacles would be put in the way of reuniting remnants of families - but not so. England was not forthcoming and I had to wait two years before I was given a special permit to come to London as a domestic worker.

The blissful moment of our reunion was on April 7th 1947 when the boat I was on reached the shores of Tilbury.

CHILDREN FROM NAZI CAMP - ARRIVAL IN LAKELAND

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Learning English.

Personal contact with some of the results of the Nazi concentration camp system has been experienced by a number of Lakeland people this week in connection with the arrival at Trouback Bridge of three hundred Jewish children from the Theresienstadt concentration camp near Prague. The children are ages from three years to sixteen years, and many of them were born in the camp, while the most terrible feature, apart from the dire effects of malnutrition, is that the parents of almost all the three hundred cannot be traced, being either dead or having been banished to other parts of formerly Nazi controlled Europe. After daily postponements extending over a week, the party was flown from Prague to Carlisle by R.A.F. Stirlings on Tuesday and travelled on to Windermere by motor coaches, the last coach arriving at shortly before 1a.m. on Wednesday. They are being accommodated in the Welfare Centre attached to Sort Bros aircraft factory at Calgarth, and the Knoll, Bowness has been taken over as an annexe.

German Cruelty

British public opinion was deeply stirred when the news came through of the cruelties inflicted by the Germans on Jews and others in the concentration camps. The three hundred children who arrived at Calgarth this week are among those who survived those cruelties and escaped death from gas and burning, and have now been removed to ideal surroundings for rest and recuperation. It is a grim fact that few children survived the Nazi persecution, as the majority under the age of sixteen were exterminated because they were not strong enough to work and had little labour value. It may be rightly assumed therefore, that the children now at Calgarth are physically tough, for all those aged between fourteen and sixteen were made to work twelve hours a day in German war factories with beatings more plentiful than food. The dehydrated food and the beatings have both left their mark.



On tour in the Lake District.

In the next few months they will live in an Orthodox Jewish Establishment with a Rabbi in charge. Jewish food and customs and their own doctor, nurses, teacher and child welfare workers. They will be taught English, have some training in agriculture, hand-crafts and general education, after which they will find permanent homes overseas in Palestine or the Dominions, and particularly Australia. By special permission of the Home Office children with near relatives in Britain were included in the party, and as soon as the necessary formalities are concluded they will go to these homes.

Peace Scenes

At the Carlisle aerodrome the children were met by Miss Joan Stiebel and Mr L Montefiore representing the Jewish Refugee Committee. Miss Bertha Bracey (The Society of Friends Committee for Refugee and Aliens), Mrs Barash (Regional Council for Refugees) and Mrs Eric Crewdson. Kendal the local representative in Cumberland and Westmorland, who has done wonderful work

in connection with Refugees throughout the war, and undertook her biggest job making the local arrangements for this latest reception. On leaving the giant planes the children were fed by the Carlisle W.V.S. at the N.A.A.F.I. canteen attached to the aerodrome and received gifts of apples and tomatoes. The fleet of motor coaches left Carlisle at intervals and there was a scene of great activity as they arrived at Calgarth from 8p.m. onwards. Although they had been isolated over three weeks before evacuation, the children were subjected to a thorough medical inspection at Calgarth, and this was not completed until after 3a.m. Dr J F Dow, County Medical Officer of Health, Dr Pearce of the Ministry of Health and Mr Eric Crewdson, Chairman of the Public Health Committee of Westmorland County Council were present, and the Medical Inspection was supervised by Dr Dow.

On Wednesday the children showed keen interest in their new home and the older boys and girls were delighted when they saw the Victory bonfires twinkling in the distance after darkness had fallen.



The football team of the Alton Hostle.

HERE AND NOW

DER BLINDE

By Kitty Hart-Moxon

After the war, Kitty Hart came to England, together with her mother, to join relatives. She is a survivor of Auschwitz, where she worked in The Sonderkommando. Her experiences are well documented in a film made by the BBC entitled "Kitty Returns to Auschwitz". She has been tireless in her commitment to talking to schools, students and the public at large.

It all started with a telephone call - this was one day in mid-1980. The caller was an official from the German Embassy in London. He said "Does the name Gotfried Weise mean anything to you?" My reply was that I had never heard of this name and I said that I could not help him. However, he asked me if I could come to the Embassy nonetheless, for a discussion, as he was requested to do by the High Court in Wuppertal.

I agreed and duly appeared, where I was interviewed or, more accurately, interrogated, by the Embassy lawyer. He wanted precise details: how long was I in Auschwitz, where did I work, did I work in the Effektenkammer - the so-called "Kanada Kommando". If so, how long did I work in this Kommando and what was the nature of my work. Could I describe the section of Auschwitz where Kanada was situated.

All my answers were recorded by a stenographer. He then produced an album of photographs and asked if there was any face that I remembered. There were pictures of SS officers in uniform and men and women in civilian clothes. As I flicked through the pages, much to my surprise, I had no difficulty in recognising the same person on several pages. I

said to the lawyer "I know this face belongs to a man who was on duty in the "Kanada" throughout the eight months that I worked there". The lawyer asked if I could recall a name. I said that I thought the name was Wunsch. At that point, he closed the album, looked at me for quite some time and eventually, to my amazement, said: "Mrs Hart, you have just identified Gotfried Weise." He also wanted to know if the description Der Blinde meant anything. It suddenly came to me - of course, this was the nickname invented by the "Kanada" prisoners because this SS Unterscharführer had a glass eye and I remembered he was also called by the Polish word "Ślepy".

Up to that point I did not know the reason for my interview, but it did occur to me that they might be searching for witnesses and so, on my return home, I telephoned Simon Wiesenthal who told me that Gotfried Weise was indeed on his list of wanted war criminals.

Nothing happened for almost two years. Then one day I received a subpoena from the High Court in Wuppertal to attend the trial of Gotfried Weise.

I was to learn that there were more than sixty witnesses from many parts of the world who were to testify for the prosecution.

Evidence was collected from each one separately. In some cases, the whole Court travelled to their country. The witnesses were completely unknown to each other and no contact had been permitted between witnesses to avoid collusion.

My own time in Court was rather unpleasant. I was cross-examined for seven hours, both by the prosecution and the defence. I had to dispense with the court interpreter who paraphrased my words, so that I preferred to give evidence in German. My credibility was repeatedly tested. For example, they wanted detailed description of the construction of the "Kanada" huts! Later - to my amazement, my film "Return to Auschwitz" was shown in part on a large screen and I was asked to point out further details.

I easily recognised Weise in Court. He himself remained silent. I soon realised that as this was probably the last of the major War Crimes trials in Germany, in some respects it was meant to be a show and educational trial. For example, the Court room was packed to bursting with students from schools throughout Germany, there was wide television and press coverage.

It was ironic that the wrong name of Wunsch that I had

given at the Embassy in London actually belongs to an SS officer who gave evidence for the defence, but in doing so he inadvertently confirmed that his colleague Weise had actually worked in the "Kanada" - something which Weise had denied in his affidavit.

We, who worked in the "Kanada", all knew that Weise had committed daily murders, some the most gratuitously sadistic in that many of his victims were in any case condemned to die, waiting outside the gas chambers to be herded inside. The newspaper cuttings record how, for instance, he picked up small children by their legs and then smashed them against the crematorium wall in front of their mothers.

One of his favourite tricks was his "William Tell" act. He would make a prisoner, or often a child, put a tin on his head so he could shoot if off until he missed - with fatal results.

He was, however, charged with six specific murders and eventually convicted of only five, and given the life sentence. There was one particularly bestial act which was confirmed by many witnesses, when a small boy had begged for water outside the crematorium. Weise saw the child drink from a bottle thrown over to him. He threw the child into the air and impaled it on his bayonet.

Throughout the duration of the two year trial, Weise was allowed out on bail of DM3000,000. When the verdict was pronounced the police went to collect him, only to find that he had disappeared.

The circumstances of his recapture was bizarre. Interpol was at first unsuccessful, but then Weise settled the matter by having a stroke while in hiding in Switzerland. The hospital authorities were suspicious of his identity, which led to his recapture and he was returned to Germany by helicopter to serve the life sentence.

ALL GOOD MEN COME TO THE AID OF TEEN HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

Marilyn H Karfeld

The introduction and the two articles which are reprinted from the New Jersey Jewish Newspaper Group were sent by Alec Ward (Abram Warszaw) who came to England in November 1945 with the Southampton Group. He lived in the Freshwater Hostel in Finchley NW3 and he was one of the twelve about whom this article is written.

In May 1945 a group of twelve Jewish youngsters were liberated by the American forces from Mauthausen Concentration Camp in Austria. I was amongst that group.

The Americans took us by truck to Regensburg near Munich in Bavaria, where an American Jewish soldier by the name of Julius Abrams found us

four German families to look after us. He provided food and wonderful fatherly care for us and co-opted another Jewish soldier by the name of Jack Kleinman who was equally extremely kind and helpful to us. The older boys of the group worked for the American army in the kitchen and also brought home food for us younger ones. Julius Abrams and Jack

Kleinman were men sent from heaven whom we all adored. I shall treasure the memory of my association with them as long as I live.

The group scattered and live in America and Israel. I am the only one living in England. We have been keeping in touch as a family over the years and one member of the group, Henry Frankel, visits us regularly from

America. We consider him a dear brother.

We lost contact with Julius and Jack in 1946 and it was not till recently that one of the group traced them on the Internet.

What follows are two articles about the reunion which took place between Julius, Jack and some of the group recently.

Memorial Day

ALL GOOD MEN COME TO THE AID OF TEEN HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

Clevelanders help Jewish refugees stranded in Germany after the war.

Marilyn H Karfeld - Staff Reporter

World War II ended over 50 years ago, but for Jack (Yank) Kleinman of Beachwood, now 73, the veil of time dissolved recently when he met a Jewish man he had once helped feed and clothe in Germany.

After VE Day in May 1945, Kleinman was transferred from his tank destroyer unit to the military police and was sent to Regensburg, Germany.

There he met a group of 11 Polish Jewish refugees, teens and young adults, who were wandering around that part of Germany, haphazardly cared for by Allied government units.

Their parents had all died in labor and concentration camps.

Caring for these Holocaust survivors, and others who passed through Regensburg that summer and fall, became a passion for Kleinman. A fellow Clevelander, Julius Abrams, had already found housing for the young people and was providing food and comfort (See CJN, April 17). He enlisted Kleinman in the cause.

One of the Regensburg refugees, Gershen, who now calls himself Gene and lives in Baltimore, tracked down Abrams and visited him in April. For over 50 years,

Gene, now 67, has held on to photographs of his army saviors, Abrams and Kleinman.

"I appropriated clothing, bedding and furniture from the Army," recalls Kleinman of his part in aiding the refugees. "If a guy left a shirt on a bed, I'd take it. We stole a table and chairs and walked out of the barracks with them."

He remembers frequently stealing food, hiding it in the liner covering his steel MP helmet. He once carried a can of condensed milk in his pocket only to discover the can leaked and milk ran into his shoe.

Kleinman was not alone in his mission to care for these Jewish refugees. His parents, and the parents of his best buddies from Cleveland, were part of the effort.

While in junior high, 15 friends had formed a boys' club called The Algamen, an acronym of All Good Men. The Algamen stayed together through high school, and when the boys enlisted in the service, their parents, who hardly knew each other, decided to keep the club going.

HOMEFRONT

'WE WERE LIKE A FAMILY'

Area survivors travel to Cleveland for reunion with soldiers who helped them

Gayle Horwitz

They were only teenagers in 1945, but each had witnessed horrors most people would not dream of in a lifetime. Alone and frightened in a German displaced persons camp, a dozen young Polish Jews were shepherd to safety by an American GI they still call their "angel." After more than five decades, they came face to face again with their old friend, and each other, over the weekend for an emotional reunion here.

Five of the original "Regensburg 12," as they called themselves, travelled from New Jersey, California, and Baltimore to see former GI Julius Abrams, 85, at his Beachwood, Ohio, home for a weekend of remembrance and gratitude. Last Friday night they presented him with a plaque in front of the congregation of his synagogue. B'nai Jeshurun, in recognition of his role in saving their lives.

Most of the survivors have kept in touch, but it was only recently that the group located Abrams. His kindness, the survivors say, enabled them to get back on their feet after the loss of their families and the devastation of their own lives inside the concentration camps. Today ten of the original dozen are alive. Six live in the United States, three in Israel, and one in London.

Though Samuel Bergman, 74, is a thriving Los Angeles resident today, he was a skeletal 19-year-old when Abrams found him, hospitalized after eating a full loaf of bread provided by the Allied soldiers. His friend and fellow survivor of Mauthausen concentration camp, Gene Kamer, 68, now of Baltimore, weighed only 60 pounds at the age of 14. Both were naked and on their way to the gas chambers when the camp was liberated.

Abrams began speaking to the young survivors he met, who were clearly in desperate need of food, clothing and shelter. In Yiddish, the language of his parents and grandparents, Russian immigrants to Cleveland. They were grateful for the help, but initially taken aback both by his fluent language and imposing manner.

"He was so gorgeous, we thought he was a movie star," says I'aye Gewertzman, 80, of Manalapan, N.J. "When Julie" - Abrams' nickname - found us girls, we looked awful. We were bald and we had no clothes, but he saw us as people. He loved us like daughters."

Soon Abrams, a military policeman stationed with the U.S. Eighth Army, was able to acquire housing for his young Polish charges, survivors of Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen,

Mauthausen, and other concentration camps. He moved them into an apartment and then to a villa where he visited daily with whatever supplies he could muster.

For almost a year, the dozen young people lived together, depending on Abrams for support. He often brought other Jewish soldiers to visit and pass news of other survivors on to the teenagers.

"We were like a family," he remembers. "They were just such lovely people. Every day when I'd get off work, I'd run to see them. We'd joke and laugh. I loved to kibitz with them, I remember them being such a happy bunch."

Abrams helped protect dozens of Jews, but says the youngsters always stood out as special.

Jack "Yank" Kleinman, 74, also of Beachwood, Ohio, helped keep the supplies coming to the Regensburg 12 and other needy Jews nearby. Also a military policeman, he remembers visiting the young people with Abrams and quickly growing attached to them.

"I tried to bring them some humour when I came to see them," he said. "It was an honour to help them, but I didn't even think twice about it."

Kleinman appealed for help wherever he could find it. The response from relatives and friends back home was the most overwhelming. A group of his friends' parents, calling themselves the Algas and Algas (an acronym for All Good Moms and Pops), sent packages filled with necessities almost daily. Kleinman pilfered whatever he could from the army in secret. Frequently, he stuffed food into his helmet from the mess hall and concealed it beneath his helmet liner. He also managed to grab army-issue clothes and blankets the girls sewed into dresses.

"The problem was, the kids couldn't wear the clothes outside because the army would know they were stolen," says Kleinman. "They were really cracking down and raiding the houses of the refugees." He solved the problem by altering the clothes with dye sent from home.

Finally, Abrams and Kleinman received orders to return home. And one by one, the young refugees also found new homes abroad. But before they separated, the 12 pooled their GI cigarettes and other items to pay a silversmith for his services. They bought Abrams a silver bracelet with all of their names, and his, inscribed upon it. On the back it reads, "Sincerely yours, the beloved Jewish 12."

For over 50 years, the bracelet is all the man has had linking him to his young Polish friends. Shortly after the war, he moved into a new home in this city and never received the letters the teenagers sent him at his old address. Always wondering what became of them, Abrams and his daughter Louise wrote to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in search of information earlier this year. Three months ago the museum's Registry of Holocaust Survivors furnished him with the location of Gewertzman and another woman from the original 12, Anna Rozen, 73, of Passaic.

Meanwhile, Kamer's son tracked down Abrams using the Internet. Abrams reached the women in New Jersey who, in turn, told a third original survivor, Henry Frankel, 74, of North Bergen, N.J. Frankel, who kept in close contact with almost all of the group over the years, including those abroad, spread the word that their dear GI was still alive and wanted to see them.

"It was like thinking that someone you love is dead and then finding out he came back to life," said Bergman. "It was amazing! It was the best feeling in the world." So with excitement around the world, plans were made for a reunion.

The whirlwind weekend brought back many emotional memories for the survivors and for Abrams and Kleinman. Besides presenting Abrams with a plaque, the group also gave Kleinman a framed certificate at Park Synagogue here on Saturday morning. Afterwards, they all spent the day together, eventually having dinner in the Chagrin Falls area of this city and enjoying a few precious minutes out of the glare of the media spotlight. Their touching reunion was the lead story on two network newscasts and graced the front page of the city paper.

"It was out of this world, heavenly to see everyone," said Rozen. "We were like children again. I can't express how it felt, except to say that a miracle happened here. I know we will always be in touch for the rest of our lives."

Abrams' only regret, he says, is that they found each other so late. "It's just a shame that so many years have passed. This weekend we were just like we used to be, such a close-knit family," he says. "I will always cherish them."

As the last of the Regensburg 12 headed home over the weekend, they left Julius Abrams with one request.

"Promise you won't forget us," they told me. But of course I never will," he says.

BELSEN

55 YEARS LATER

Anita Laskier-Walfisch

Anita was deported from her home town of Breslaw - now Wroclaw - to Auschwitz where, as an inmate, she played the cello in the camp orchestra. Later she was sent to Bergen-Belsen where she was liberated. She came to England in 1946 and three years later she became a founder member of the English Chamber Orchestra, in which she still plays. She published her biography "Inherit The Truth 1939 - 1945". She is a supportive member of our Society and she has been a regular contributor to our Journal.

The phone rang. It was Violette from Paris: "...was I coming to Belsen on the 12th April. They are having a five day long programme for the 55th anniversary of the liberation..." [Violette played the violin in the women's orchestra in Birkenau. We stayed together until the liberation in Belsen and have remained firm friends.]

I had not heard anything about the planned commemoration and was a little surprised. However, I understand now that invitations went out to organisations rather than individuals. In France, for example, there is an association of former inmates of Belsen. Here we do not have such an organisation. I am mentioning this for the benefit of those former Belsen prisoners who may feel that they should have been invited.

My friend Violette must have pulled a string or two, because a few days after her phone call I had an invitation. By that time it was rather late and I had to be back in London and miss the actual ceremony which took place on Sunday 16th April in the Gedenkstätte. However, the whole undertaking was of such magnitude that it certainly deserves a description.

On April 12th a number of people with cars were waiting at Hanover Airport all day for the arrivals of guests from USA, Canada, Israel and France in order to take them to the hotel in Hanover.

The hotel was excellent and by the time we had dinner

there, I had met up with several of my old friends.

There was a kosher and a non-kosher arrangement for the meals.

The next day we boarded several buses and went to the 'Gedenkstätte'. Dr Rahe, the director of the museum, outlined what is happening now and what is planned for the future of this place. We then had time to walk around at leisure, and I went to see the 'Jugendworkcamp'. This is a project initiated by Niedersachsen. It is called: SPUREN SUCHEN-SPUREN SICHERN. Twice a year young people of all nationalities meet in Belsen for a period of time, working in the archives and trying to find traces of the actual camp, care for the artifacts they discover and generally clean and care for the traces they find. The background to this undertaking is to work against Xenophobia, right-extremism and anti-democratic tendencies, etc. A most commendable enterprise, especially as it takes place on the territory of this infamous place itself, rather than in a classroom.

We were all taken to lunch at the Stadthaus Bergen, and it was a very good lunch indeed. This was followed by a number of speeches.

Professor Dr Eberhard Köhl spoke about the book he wrote on the history of Bergen-Belsen. I have got this book. It is very informative and I have learnt a lot of things one does not know when one is an inmate. The next day we were taken to the cemetery of the DP Camp.

There was a service, reading of psalms and a wreath laid by Dov Zelmanowicz. Rabbi Assaria, formerly Helfgott, was there. I was shocked when I saw him. He is very ill and it must have been a great effort for him to participate at this function. The service was also attended by a great many non-Jewish Poles.

We had time before lunch to look around the old DP camp and refresh memories. I had forgotten how big it was and, of course, it looks very well cared for now. Lunch was at the Officers Club. I remembered it well. It looks unchanged. It was there, during a dance, that I fixed up my somewhat illicit departure from the camp whilst dancing with Captain Alexander. This lunch was rather chaotic. A lot of noise, long queues, but somehow everyone managed to get something to eat, although many more people were there than anticipated. This was followed by another session of speeches and a showing of slides of pictures taken during the five years of the existence of the DP camp. They form an exhibition called 'Rebirth After Liberation: The Bergen Belsen Displaced Persons Camp 1945 - 1950'. This exhibition is housed in America and is the brainchild of Jossel Rosensaft's family.

It could have been interesting had the pictures on the screen not been too small to be visible and the whole session much too long.

Another address by Dr Rahe - also relating to the history of the DP camp - had to be abandoned because it got too late. It was Friday and we had to be back in Hanover for the service in the Synagogue, followed by a reception and dinner given by the representatives of the Jewish community.

I have to confess that I did not attend this event, but have a second-hand description of it. It was again heavily over-subscribed. There was hardly any room to move. The notable thing was that the entire Polish non-Jewish group attended the service and also the dinner. I am told that the atmosphere was really great. There was a lot of singing. Polish songs, Jewish songs... everybody joined in. All deep-seated animosities and mistrust seemed to have been suspended. Hallelujah!

Mr Wiedemann from the Niedersächsische Landeszentrale, the organisers of this event, told me that there is a problem with the Torah the Hanover congregation had promised to send to the hotel

for a separate service for people who, for various reasons, could not go to the Synagogue but did want a morning service. At the last moment he had been let down, but had managed with great difficulty to organise another one. However, when it arrived it was declared 'not kosher'. I have since asked two Rabbis, (one of them Louis Jacobs) what exactly can make a Torah 'not kosher'. The answer was: if, for example, a word was missing!! (No comment.)

I forgot to mention that I was approached after the service on Friday morning at the cemetery by one of the young people who run the Youth work camp and asked if I would be prepared to give a talk to them on Saturday. Of course I agreed. I was collected from the hotel and taken to Belsen. The session took place in the cinema of the Gedenkstätte and there were some 60 youngsters of all nationalities - Israelis, Germans, Russians, French, Lithuanians, etc. Some of them could understand English, some German. I rather hastily said that I could do my own translation but, after a few sentences, I got into such a muddle with languages that a young German who spoke very good English did the translations for me. It was a very worthwhile session. Many questions were asked and since we found ourselves at the very place where one of the horrors with which we are all familiar took place, it all took on a special meaning. They asked me if I would come again. Of course I would. After all, speaking to young people is what it is all about now.

On that Saturday evening 1,000 candles were lit at the Ramp where we arrived. This was organised by all the Christian congregations of Bergen and the environment. By then I was on my way to the airport, but I am told by my friends that it was a most impressive event, in spite of the somewhat erratic weather conditions.

The actual commemoration of the liberation of Belsen took place on the following Sunday, 16th April. 400 umbrellas and youngsters with towels to dry the seats if necessary were kept in readiness. Luckily, this was not needed, but I heard that it was very cold and a bit lengthy with many speeches. Kaddish was said at the Jewish memorial.

The whole event was most impressive. One must hand it to them, this post-Holocaust generation really does try.

MY RETURN TO AUSCHWITZ WITH MY FAMILY

By David Herman

David came from Prague in the winter of 1946 with the "Boys" from Ruthenia. He was born in Mukacevo and his family owned a brick factory. He and his wife Olive have two sons and two daughters, three of whom are married and have grandchildren. They have been very active and generous supporters of our Society from its inception.

It was the third day of Pesach, early in the morning of 1944. There was a lot of noise and shouting in the ghetto in Mukacevo. Everybody was to be ready packed and lined up in the street within half an hour. You were allowed to take only one bag or case with you. In the street the SS and the Hungarian Nyilas (Fascists) Police with guns and dogs were ready. There were thousands of people - men, women, children, old people, mothers with their babies, all lined up. I remember some of the local people in town lining the route jeering and shouting abuse at us, clapping when the SS were beating us. These were the same people we had lived with in our town for many generations. They could not wait for us to leave the ghetto; at times they moved into our homes even before we had time to get out.

We were marched five kilometres to the Herman brick factory. Many of the elderly collapsed on the way, some died. In the factory we were packed into huge kilns sleeping on the bare floor, guarded day and night. After about a week, a long freight train arrived. We were told we were being taken East to work on farms. We were also told there would be plenty of food. We were loaded into cattle trucks, packed very tightly, no room to move or sit down, the trucks were locked from the outside, very little air or light, we were given no food or water, we had no facilities.

On 28th April 1999, early in the morning when I flew out of Luton airport with my family, I was apprehensive. How would I react on my return to Birkenau after fifty-five years?

When we landed in Krakow, Poland, I felt uneasy. On the

coach to Auschwitz my wife and children were very concerned about me because I was very quiet. Walking through the museum in Auschwitz I, the shoes, the artificial limbs, the spectacles, the suitcases we carried, the cooking utensils my mother packed into our bags so that it would all be kosher when we arrived on the farm, it was all as I remembered it.

When we arrived in Birkenau everything seemed familiar to me. In my head I began to hear the train I was travelling in; standing on the railway tracks where we arrived all those years ago, I closed my eyes - suddenly it all came back to me, the terrible noise, the screeching of the wheels, the whistle blowing, the stench and stifling heat inside the train, the teenage mother standing next to me holding on tightly to her little baby who is screaming, the mother crying bitterly, she has no milk to feed her starving baby, looking on at her desperation, I have tears running down my face, I cannot help her, I can do nothing being locked up in a cage. I am helpless.

After six days, stopping and re-starting, the train finally came to a stop. It was 3am in the morning. There was a deadly silence. I heard the doors being unlocked, then slid open. Outside it was pitch black, the air was fresh. Suddenly powerful spotlights were switched on. I was blinded by these lights. When I started to regain my vision, I realised the train was surrounded by a large number of SS men all with guns pointing at us and holding on to big and vicious dogs barking.

Pandemonium broke out. Men, women and children were

all screaming and crying, nobody wanted to get off the train. The noise was excruciating. Suddenly a large group of men in striped uniforms appeared (these were called the sonder commandos). Holding clubs and whips in their hands, they mounted the train screaming and beating us, shouting "Rous, rous, schnell, schnell". They threw us out of the wagons without our luggage, saying "You are now in Auschwitz, Birkenau. Where you are going you won't be needing anything. The only way out of here is through the chimney".

We were herded into lines like cattle, then sorted by the SS officers. I was in complete shock. Separated from most of my family and friends, I was in despair. I just followed the line of men in front of me. We were marched to an open space where our heads were shaved. We were forced to take all our clothes off, including our shoes, all our possessions were loaded onto trucks and taken away. We were then given very thin pyjama-like striped uniforms and wooden clogs, our name was replaced by a number which was sewn onto the jacket. We were marched into large wooden barracks with hundreds of bunks from floor to ceiling.

I am lying on a top bunk, I can see through holes under the roof of the huge crematorium. I see thick smoke belching out from the tall chimney. I can see the sonder commandos pulling carts full of naked dead bodies, throwing the bodies into the open pits, then pouring lime over the bodies. I can see a group of very smartly dressed SS officers walking briskly, followed by some civilians. They stopped in front of the pits, they are having a discussion, pointing at the pits, the crematorium and railway tracks. The discussion continues for some time, then they are shaking hands, saluting each other. It looks to me like they are congratulating themselves for work well done. It all seemed so unreal and unbelievable. My Father, Mother, uncles, aunts, cousins, second cousins and friends, I never saw them die. Maybe now I am nearer to accepting that they really are dead.

I am glad that my wife and children accompanied me. They had a view through the window of my past and the tragic loss of the family they never knew. I find it is now easier for me to talk to them openly about what happened during the war years and for them to understand my feelings.

TRAGEDY IN NEW YORK

By Herman Rosenblatt

Herman came to England with the Windermere Group in August 1945. He lived in the Ascot Hostel and later emigrated to The United States. He now lives in New York.

Yesterday I received the '45 Aid Society Journal, Issue 21. After reading all the heart-warming and heart-breaking stories, I felt compelled to write to you in the hope that you will include this in the next Journal.

I was born in Pruszcz in Poland. When I was one year old, the family moved to a town called Bydgoszcz. In 1939, when I was just ten years old, the war broke out and we went to Wolburz where my uncle lived. We were in the ghetto until 1942 when we were sent to the Piotrkow Ghetto. It was there that I was separated from my mother, who was deported to Treblinka in October 1942. In November 1944, I was sent to Buchenwald. Ben was on that same transport. From Buchenwald we were sent to Schlieben and later to Theresienstadt, where my three brothers and I were liberated by the Russians.

My brother Isidor (acting as a Madrich) came to Windermere with "The Boys". I was sent to the Ascot Hostel and later went to the O.R.T. School.

This is the background to what happened - I would like to write about what happened next.

After I emigrated to the USA - and even in England - I wanted to forget the past, as though it never happened! I wanted to start as I had been born in 1945. It was very hard to forget being with all the boys and having the closeness with them like they were my brothers for what we went through they could not be closer. But here in America it was easier to forget the past as though it never happened. I was drafted into the American

Army and it became easier to forget but, in reality, one could never forget what we went through! After I got married and had my two children, I didn't want to tell them of the horrors that I went through during the war, I didn't want to recall all the horrible stories from the war and, most of all, I didn't want them to feel sorry for me.

I had an electrical contracting business in New York and my son was in the business with me. In 1992 there was a robbery in my business and my son and I got shot. I saw my son laying on the floor and the whole war flashed before my eyes. I managed to drag myself to the telephone and called the emergency service. We were taken to the hospital. As I was lying in the emergency room, the doctor came over and said "You are going to the operating room". "How is my son?" I asked. He did not answer me. All the anger that was built up in me was ready to explode. As they wheeled me to the operating room, I was thinking of the ordeals I had been through during the Second World War, the most horrible time, and now it was to end like this!! As they administered the anaesthetic, my mother appeared and she said "Everything will be OK, but you must tell your story".

After the operation, as I came round from the anaesthesia, I looked around trying to see my son. When the doctor came over to me and said "What were you talking about in the operating room?" I did not understand. I said to him "How is my son?" He looked at me and said "Your son is paralysed from the waist down." I became very depressed. My

anger grew even stronger. I still wanted to forget the past, but could not!!

In 1995, when we had the reunion in London and in Israel, I met my long time friend, Sidney Finkel, who I had not seen for many years. I was very happy to see him and his wife. He told me that he speaks publically about the Holocaust. I then asked him all kinds of questions.

When I got back to America from Israel, I thought about what Sidney Finkel told me and what my mother said to me in the operating room.

I then started to talk and tell my story in my Synagogue. It was hard at first but as my talks went on and I spoke to different organisations, it became easier and the anger that had been building up in me for so many years started to ease.

Now I am one of the speakers for the Holocaust Research Center, and also other organisations.

In February 1997 I had open heart surgery and again my mother appeared and said "You will be OK and I am glad that you are telling your story."

In September 1997, my brother Sam (who lives in Florida) and I went to France to see our brother after his wife passed away. My brother Abraham and I took an afternoon rest after the funeral. We woke up at the same time and Abraham turned to me and said "I want to tell you the dream I had". Without him telling me what the dream was about, I said "Our father came and said not to worry." He looked at me and said "How did you know?"

I believe that our parents are with us to guide us.

SAWONIUK

Witold Gutt

Witold Gutt, D.Sc., Ph.D., M.Sc., C.Chem., FRSC., FCS., came to England with the Southampton Group in November 1945 and lived in the Finchley Road Hostel. He was Senior Principal Scientific Officer and Head of Materials Division at the Building Research Establishment of the Department of the Environment. He is now a consultant in Chemistry and Chairman of The British Standard Institution Technical Committee of Cement & Lime.

Sawoniuk was given two life sentences in April 1999 after being convicted at The Old Bailey of murdering Jews in Nazi-occupied Belarus. The court was told that he murdered two Jewish men and a woman and ordered fifteen Jewish women to strip and face an open grave before killing them with a machine-gun.

Mr Justice Potts had written that "an earlier release would defeat the purpose of the War Crimes Act and the object of the trial" (The Times 25.6.99 p. 15).

I was very concerned to read in the same article in The Times that The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, has stated that he believes that the convicted war criminal should be offered hope of eventual release, stating also that retribution must be moderated when delayed for nearly sixty years and visited on a man approaching the age of eighty.

Sawoniuk's solicitor has begun appeal proceedings.

I wrote to the Editor of The Times (letter attached) which was acknowledged but not published.

Editor, The Times
1 Pennington Street
London E1 9XN

25th June 1999

Dear Sir,
Since both my parents were murdered by the Nazis - father shot by the Gestapo in Przemysl in September 1939, mother died in Auschwitz in 1943 - I owe it to them to protest at the views of Lord Bingham on Sawoniuk. ('Hope of release for war criminal,' The Times 25.6.99 p.15)

The fact that in the case of Sawoniuk retribution was delayed for 60 years is no reason for his release, as it merely means that he got away with his

crime for a long time, living in comfort.

Moreover, deterrence of similar crimes in Kosovo and elsewhere would be assisted by the knowledge that lasting retribution may come even after a long time.

Yours faithfully,

Witold Gutt
Prisoner - 1943-45
Plaszow, No. 7535
Natzweiler, No. 22441
Dachau, No. 147597

The Times 25th June 1999, p.15

HOPE OF RELEASE FOR WAR CRIMINAL

By Frances Gibb, Legal Correspondent

The Lord Chief Justice yesterday took the unprecedented step of publicly explaining why he believes Anthony Sawoniuk, the convicted war criminal, should be offered hope of eventual release.

The move by Lord Bingham of Cornhill came after a BBC report that he was at odds with the trial judge over how long Sawoniuk, 78, should serve in jail. Mr Justice Potts had recommended to the Home Secretary that Sawoniuk should never be freed.

Lord Bingham, whose views are also taken into account when a life prisoner's jail term is determined, said that the retribution element of a sentence must be moderated.

Sawoniuk was given two life sentences in April after being convicted at the Old Bailey of murdering Jews in Nazi-occupied Belarus. The court was told that he murdered two

Jewish men and a woman and ordered 15 Jewish women to strip and face an open grave before killing them with a machine gun.

BBC News, which said that it had obtained details of the sentencing recommendation, said Mr Justice Potts had written that "an earlier release would defeat the purpose of the War Crimes Act and the object of the trial".

Lord Bingham said yesterday: "The judge's view is plainly a tenable, and perhaps preferable, approach to this unique case, and he has had the experience of living with these harrowing facts for weeks. An alternative approach, to which I myself incline, is that general deterrence has little part in this sentence and retribution must be moderated when delayed for nearly 60 years and visited on a man approaching the age of 80". Sawoniuk's solicitor has begun appeal proceedings.

THE PAST HAS CAUGHT UP

By Rafael (Schlamek) Winogrodzki

Rafael (Ray) came to England with the Windermere Group. He subsequently lived in the Loughton & Belsize Park hostels. He and his wife Sheila have been strong supporters of our Society and their daughter Karen and her husband Robert have for many years attended our reunions.

I would like to share my wonderful story with all of you about something that happened during the war years.

I met two brothers in the ghetto in Piotrkow and their names were Wilek and Roman Samelson. We worked together in the glass factory Hortensia and we were together through the other camps until we ended up in Buchenwald. The three of us were always eating, sleeping and working together. We stood together on Apell-Platz until the day came when we had a selection when Roman's number and my number were called, but not Wilek. That was when we decided to change my jacket and number with Wilek so he could be together with his brother Roman. That was the last time we saw each other in Buchenwald in 1945.

Wilek was trying to find me to say thank you for changing the jacket and number all those

years ago. One day he read a book called "Holocaust Journey" by Martin Gilbert and also the book "The Boys" which had a photograph in it of when I was a boy.

Wilek then finally obtained my address from Ben Giladi from New York, U.S.A., who is the editor of a journal called "The Voice of Piotrkow Survivors". After fifty-five years of not knowing whether they had survived the war, you can imagine my surprise and joy when in June 2000 this year I received a letter from Wilek, who lives in Texas along with his brother Roman. It was just a wonderful feeling to hear that they were both well.

On the same day that I received Wilek's letter, that evening I telephoned him in Texas and we re-introduced ourselves again after fifty-five years. We spoke for a long time and it was a strange feeling as though it was only yesterday

that we had last seen each other.

The only thing that seems strange to me is that the last time we had spoken it was in Polish and now we were both speaking in English. Since then we have exchanged letters and photographs of ourselves and our families.

From the letter that I received from Wilek, he states that he was sent from Buchenwald to Colditz with his brother Roman. When eventually they were liberated by the Americans, they went to Germany and were re-united with their father. From Germany they all went to America where he studied for a PhD and is now a professor, lecturer and writer.

I am very proud that my little friend Wilek has achieved so much in the past years and is still continuing some of his work.

LEOPOLD INFELD: HOPE LOST, HOPE REGAINED*

By Theo Richmond

Theo Richmond's book "Konin: A Quest" received great acclaim when it was published in Britain five years ago. It won the "Jewish Quarterly 1996 non fiction award as well as the Royal Society of Literature's William Heinemann prize". The New York Times selected it as a Notable Book of the Year. "Konin" has been translated into Hebrew, German, Italian and Dutch.

First may I explain how it is that I, a non-scientist who never knew or worked with, or studied under Leopold Infeld, come to be taking part in this symposium. My fascination with him sprang in the first instance not from his achievements as a scientist - although without them I would probably not have been aware of his existence - but from the fact that he spent two years of his life as a young man in a town called Konin situated about midway between Lodz and Poznan. At that time Konin was a small market town pleasantly positioned on the river Warta, distinguished for nothing in particular, much like hundreds of other such towns in rural Poland. Before Infeld went there, it is almost certain that he would not have heard of the place. Nor would I but for the fact that my mother and father came from Konin, where their families had lived for generations. They emigrated to England just before the First World War and married in London, where I was born. As a child I heard the name of this town repeated again and again whenever my parents talked to others about the world they had left behind and its people, almost all of whom in later years were to perish in the Nazi ghettos and concentration camps.

Now leap forward to the 1960s when a committee of Konin Jews in Israel decided to publish privately a book honouring the memory of the Jewish community which had lived there for 500 years until it was annihilated as part of the Final Solution [1]. I subscribed to the publication, and one day, in 1968, the heavy, blue-bound volume arrived. Alas, I could not read it because it was

written almost entirely in Yiddish and Hebrew, but I was able to look at the many illustrations. On p.260, there was a head-and-shoulders photograph of a man, probably in his late fifties, with a forceful face, strong-jawed - one might say almost pugilistic. This was my first encounter with Leopold Infeld.

Move forward again, this time to 1987, when I embarked on a book of my own about this faraway place of which I knew virtually nothing except that it was an important part of my family's past. I borrowed money to cover my travel and research expenses, and devoted the next seven years to writing this book, a history of the Jewish community of Konin and its everyday life [2].

Although Infeld was not a Koniner, I devoted a lengthy chapter to him on account of his connection with the community, and because the more I found out about him, the more intrigued I became. In the course of my journeys in search of Konin's past, I met elderly men and women in Britain, Israel and America who had attended his school when he was their headmaster. In their old age they still remembered him warmly as a person and as a teacher. They recalled their pride as adults on hearing that their former headmaster was now working in America with the great Albert Einstein. As schoolchildren in Konin, they had not been aware of Infeld's consuming unhappiness, indeed despair, while he was in their midst.

Leopold Infeld's achievements as a scientist are well known to this gathering. The ground I wish to cover is perhaps less familiar - his family background, his early life,

and especially the time he spent in Konin. He arrived there in 1922 at the age of 24. The town at that time had a total population of around 11,000, of whom roughly a quarter were Jews. They had invited him to Konin to be the new headmaster of the Jewish co-educational gymnasium. He had no experience as a schoolmaster, let alone as a headmaster. It was his first permanent job, and he held it for two years - years of disappointment and desperation, cut off from the social and intellectual life he had known and loved in Kraków. He never forgot this low period in his life. Years later, when he was in the United States working with Einstein, he wrote in his memoir, *Quest: The Evolution of a Scientist*: "There is still a name in my memory which has always remained a symbol of lost hopes: it is Konin" [3].

Why was it such a potent symbol of hopelessness? To answer this question we must go back to the early years of this century, and in particular to Kraków's Jewish quarter, Kazimierz. Tourists there today bring away kitsch souvenirs in the form of carvings of rabbis wrapped in prayer shawls, tailors sitting cross-legged, peddlers selling their wares and other figures from the world of the great Yiddish writers such as Sholem Alechem, I.L. Peretz, and Isaac Bashevis Singer. This was the world that Leopold Infeld was born into, an insalubrious world of narrow streets and alleyways and overcrowded tenement buildings. Someone I know who grew up there in the 1930s has described it as "dark, dank, fetid".

Infeld's father, Salomon was a leather merchant, a member of the middle class in what was

in the main an impoverished society. Occupying an upstairs apartment in one of the best streets of Kazimierz, ul. Krakowska, [4] the Infeld family thought themselves "superior to the inhabitants of the inner ghetto" [5]. Nevertheless, the young Ludwik - as Leopold was then known - slept each night on a sofa in a room which he shared with two sisters, an arrangement which continued until he was eighteen. During the day the family lived and ate their meals in the same room.

Infeld developed early on an intense dislike for his grandfather and the language which he spoke - Yiddish. This was the language the young boy heard all around him as he grew up in the Jewish quarter of Kraków. His father's business dealings were conducted in Yiddish and it was spoken at home. He was familiar too with the sound of biblical Hebrew. His father was a religious man who prayed in the synagogue each morning before breakfast. It was the norm then for Jewish boys to commence religious school - *cheder* - when they were five or even four years old. Learning was by rote. The teachers were strict disciplinarians adept at instilling God's word with the help of a whip or a stick. Ludwik was not the only Jewish child to rebel against his daily incarceration in a gloomy, airless room. It would have been particularly insufferable for a child such as he was, endowed with a high I.Q., and a questioning mind. He described the experience as being "plunged in a hopeless ocean of boredom" [6].

As he grew up, Infeld felt a growing desire to distance himself from the "misery of ghetto life, its poverty and lack of opportunity" [7]. For centuries that world had remained secure in its religious traditions and beliefs. But in the last quarter of the 19th century it increasingly felt the influence of secularism coming from the West. Zionism, socialism, communism and other isms were replacing religion with new certainties. The young were beginning to break away from the ways of their fathers, and wanted to escape from a world they found stifling, illiberal and without hope. Some dreamed of building a new Zionist society in the Holy Land. Others emigrated to America and western Europe. It is likely that Infeld, in his desire to escape, in his distaste for ghetto life, was blind to many of its

virtues, failed to appreciate the richness and splendour of the Yiddish language and its literature.

Perhaps he also failed to realise that his own love of learning, desire for knowledge, urge to enquire, analyse, theorise and discover, owed something to his Jewish heritage, which placed a high value on such cerebral activities, albeit within a religious context. He wanted to break away from the world and the values of his parents, as the younger generation has often felt the urge to do.

One escape route was via a university education. This meant attending a school which prepared pupils for university entrance - in other words, a high-school, a gymnasium. Salomon Infeld rejected the idea. He wanted his son to follow him into the family business and sent him, against the boy's will, to a commercial school. Undeterred, Infeld obtained textbooks, mastered new subjects on his own, including Latin, and against all the odds passed the formidable oral and written *matura* exams with first-class honours. His father must have agreed, however reluctantly, to his enrolling at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. He graduated with honours, and a few years later, in 1921, he received his PhD at the same university. It was a solemn and elaborate ceremony, and I have often wondered if his parents were present on this occasion and how they felt. He does not say. We do learn from him that his was the first doctorate in theoretical physics to be awarded in independent Poland, Infeld's hopes were high. The escape door was open at last - the door to research, academic life, eventually a professorship. Eagerly he awaited offers of the university post he was sure would come his way.

None came and Infeld had not the slightest doubt why: he was certain it was because he was a Jew. "It was at the universities", he writes, "that anti-Semitic and reactionary slogans sank in most deeply" [8]. The careers of Jewish writers, poets and artists - working for themselves rather than as employees within institutions or in public service - were not hampered in this way. During the period between the two World Wars some of Poland's most gifted and admired literary figures were Jewish and, like Infeld, secular Jews who embraced Polish culture as their own and

contributed hugely to it. The brilliant poets Julian Tuwim and Bolesław Leśmian are two examples. But it was more difficult for those who wished to advance within institutions such as the universities. The constitution of the new Poland guaranteed minority rights, but in reality discrimination was still practised even if not openly admitted as such.

The historian Ezra Mendelsohn, who has written on the situation of the Jews in Poland between the wars, is one of the most fair-minded commentators on this thorny subject. He does not hold to the view that the history of the Jews in inter-war Poland was a tale of unmitigated woe. Indeed, he recognises that "we [the Jews] owe a debt to Polish freedom" which "allowed the Jews in the 1920s and 1930s to participate in politics, open schools, and write as they pleased" [9]. At the same time, he points out that inter-war Poland "excluded them from first-class membership in the state" [10]. There were a few Jewish academics who rose to eminence between the wars - men such as Hugo Steinhaus, founder of a school of analytical mathematics, who taught at Lwów University, and Ludwik Krzywicki, the greatly respected sociologist of the University of Warsaw. The professor of Roman Law at Kraków University, Raphael Taubenschlag, was Jewish. Clearly, the situation varied from faculty to faculty. Jewish professionals were prominent in the fields of medicine and law, and when anti-Semitism in the universities expressed itself openly during the 1930s, leading to the so-called "ghetto benches" and brutal acts of violence, it came more from the students than from the academics, some of whom - members of the liberal intelligentsia - honourably supported their Jewish students.

But to return to Infeld, there was, as I have said, no doubt in his mind about the cause of his rejection. If he was right, what an irony that the man who wished to escape from his Jewish world, now found himself spurned by those unwilling to accept him into their world. Whether other factors might have played a part - such as rumours that he had Communist leanings - is a matter for speculation [11]. Also, it has to be said that Infeld himself admitted - with characteristic self-awareness - that perhaps he sometimes saw anti-Semitism where it did not exist.

But whether or not anti-Semitism was the sole cause of his failure to find a university post, the fact remains that his hopes were shattered. Bleak reality banished what he called "the once glorious dream" [12].

Finding a teaching post in a Jewish school was not readily available to him either. As he wrote: "To the Polish world I was a Jew. To the Polish Jews I was not sufficiently Jewish" [13]. It is to the credit of the Konin community that he was Jewish enough for them. There was a relatively progressive and enlightened community, generally free of religious fanaticism. Before the First World War it had been situated close to the German frontier and therefore more open to western influence than communities further to the east. But Infeld felt like someone who had been sentenced to exile for life. "While I was there", he wrote, "my world was divided into two parts: isolated Konin in which, I thought, I should probably die, and the rest of the world which I should never see" [14].

The hate he had felt towards his ghetto surroundings in Kraków as a boy was now directed at Konin, where he walked through the alien streets, "cut off from everything he held dear" [15]. He hated the small-town provincialism. He hated the people with whom he felt nothing in common. His beloved sister Bronia joined him in Konin, where she worked as a teacher in a Jewish elementary school. But he was lonely. There were no cafés where he could gossip and laugh with soul mates, and flirt with the opposite sex, as he had done in Kraków. He lived in a muddy street close to the river. The sanitary arrangements had changed little since the middle ages. "Our outhouse was about 220 yards from the house. I still remember my visits there at night with a candle in my hand and despair in my heart" [16].

His pupils proved to be bright and receptive. It had been admirably ambitious if unrealistic of such a small community to establish its own gymnasium. The school had opened its doors in 1918 in cramped and inadequate accommodation. The teaching staff included other Ph.Ds, men and women who, like Infeld, were there through necessity rather than choice, who were underpaid and victims of the raging inflation of the early 1920s. The staff worked in a disgruntled, acrimonious atmosphere to keep the school

going on slender resources. Infeld hated having to make speeches to parent gatherings, begging for donations. In these conditions it is hardly surprising that teachers did not stay long. Infeld was the fourth headmaster in four years. He has described his feelings of utter dejection when, at the end of each day, he went back to his lodgings. "When I returned home", he wrote, "I could not bear to look at my scientific books, collected during years of study. I did not believe that I would ever open one of them again in my life" [17].

When he finally left Konin in 1924, he must have felt like a man released from prison. He left to become a physics teacher in a Jewish gymnasium for girls. This was hardly the fulfilment of his hopes, but it did offer one consolation: it took him to Warsaw. In all, he spent almost eight years as a schoolteacher. One cannot help thinking that these years might have held back his development as a scientist. I hardly need to point out here, that mathematicians and physicists generally produce their best, most original work at an early age. Infeld himself was aware of this.

He refers to these years as "The best years in the life of any scientist, the years in which imagination reaches its peak. Those years were gone" [18]. The whole of quantum physics was developed during what he calls his "provincial sleep" [19].

It was not until he was 31 that he stepped onto the first rung of the academic ladder, when he was appointed to a "senior assistantship" in theoretical physics at Poland's second oldest university, Lwów. This was thanks to the support he received from Stanisław Loria, Jewish by birth, who was professor of experimental physics at the University. Infeld regarded the job as one suitable "for a graduate student or for a young man who had just taken a doctor's degree" [20]. But at least he was set on his chosen path. He wrote: "Everything was changed, everything seemed beautiful and full of hope" [21]. (It is interesting to note how many times the word "hope" appears in his autobiographical writings). Infeld was subsequently promoted to docent - or reader.

Hope gained in one direction was, tragically, lost in another. Halina, the girl he had fallen in love with in 1928 and married, died four years later from a harrowing and protracted wasting disease. Eryk Infeld, writing about his

father, has said: "There can be no doubt about her being the great love of his early life" [22]. Infeld goes on to refer to "how tragic the first half of my father's life was" [23]. A son Infeld had had by a previous marriage died in his early twenties. Later, Infeld's sisters, one of whom - Bronia - he greatly loved, perished in the Holocaust.

In 1933, crushed by grief after Halina's death, unable to work and desperate to get away from Lwów, Infeld gratefully accepted a Rockefeller Foundation Grant and went to Cambridge. He had a number of friendly and prosperous relatives living in England (who had Anglicised their surname to Infeld), and he used to stay with them in London during Cambridge vacations. He incurred a certain degree of displeasure among some of his older relatives when he eloped with one of his English cousins and married her, a marriage which was not a success. Last year I traced two of Infeld's British kinsmen, who were small boys when Ludwik, as they still call him, stayed with them at their home in Hampstead. He joined the Infeld family on seaside holidays, and Gerald Infeld has recalled for me an image of his Polish cousin at that time. While he - Gerald - and his brother played on the beach, making sand castles, he was aware of Ludwik sitting in a deck chair nearby with an expression of intense concentration, covering sheet upon sheet of paper with mysterious marks and squiggles.

I doubt that Infeld, who relished every moment of his year at Cambridge, thought about Konin at this time; or when he returned to Lwów. But later, in America, when the Fascist cloud over Europe was growing darker, he received regular reminders of Konin in the mail, "letters from my old pupils, begging me to help them emigrate to this country... invariably sent by registered mail, full of pathos, sent by men and women who, for the price of a postage stamp, bought hope [that word again] for a few weeks, waiting for an answer which in most cases buried this hope" [24]. Infeld, who himself had known what it was to cherish hopes and to have them dashed, was able to feel for these desperate people in Konin, not knowing then that they were doomed to die in unspeakable ways.

Before he left Poland to take up his grant from the Institute

for Advanced Studies in Princeton, achieved with Einstein's help, Infeld walked through Krakow for the last time and describes the experience in one of the most touching passages in *Quest*. Some of the hate he once felt for the Jewish environment into which he had been born was now tinged with sadness and sympathy:

I wandered through the ghetto of my town. On a summer morning the voices of Jewish boys singing in chorus the words of the Torah reached me through the open window of the school. There may be among them someone who hates this place as I hated it and who dreams of going to a gymnasium. I went nearer. The school windows were open, the first-floor windows of a dreary house. I smelt the foul air of the room. It was the same air, the same smell of onions and potatoes, which I had smelled over thirty years before. I saw the tired, thin, badly nourished faces with burning dark eyes and for the first time in my life I was conscious of a touch of poetry in this sad ghetto scene [25].

He left for America in 1936, relieved to get away from the racial tensions in Poland and the "air saturated by hate which darkened the sun and shadowed all my days! Away from the endless talks of the Jewish problem, from whispers of the still darker future and of lost hope" [26]. Before he went to Princeton, he had said to a colleague that he could not bear the feeling of being unwanted. Many other Polish Jews shared that feeling. In Infeld's case, embracing assimilationism as he did, committed to Polish rather than Jewish culture, the sense of being discriminated against as a second-class citizen became a cause of intense bitterness. To quote Professor Mendelsohn again, this sense of being denied equal status "led by the late 1930s to a widespread feeling among Polish Jews, and especially among the youth, that they had no future in Poland, and that they were trapped" [27]. Infeld could see no future for himself in Polish academia. He had failed to be given the professorship he felt he deserved.

How different things were when, in 1950, he decided that he and his American wife Helen, whom he had married in 1939, and their two children would remain in Poland. Once

unwanted in the land of his birth, he was now given a hero's welcome. In 1951 he began work on creating the Institute for Theoretical Physics in Warsaw. His life and scientific achievements during the years that followed I leave to others to deal with. Whatever his successes in North America, he had always missed Europe, and his native land. He was deeply attached to Polish poetry and literature. When he wrote *Quest* and had reason to fear he might never see Poland again, he expressed his longing for "the Polish fields and meadows, for the air smelling of flowers and hay, for vistas and sounds which can never be found elsewhere. I will never forget my country" [28].

One day in 1963 Infeld decided to visit Konin, the town he had once wanted to wipe from his memory. In 1922, he must have arrived there in a droshky along country lanes (there was no railway station in Konin at that time), dreading the life that lay ahead of him. Now, almost forty years later, he drove into the town in a limousine as an eminent guest of honour. Konin was fast developing as a new industrial city, but Infeld's memories were with the old Konin he had once known. He wrote about this visit in an essay published in a collection called *Sketches from the Past*, [29] and it was this essay which the Konin Memorial Book Committee in Israel decided to include in their book accompanied by the photograph I mentioned at the start. The book was published in 1968, the year of his death. I wonder how he would have felt at seeing his words translated into Yiddish, a language he had viewed with such distaste as a boy.

Writing about Konin as a man of 65, he portrayed the town in a softer, kinder light than he had in *Quest*. He does not speak of primitive outhouses or street without pavements. He informs the reader twice that Konin is "situated picturesquely on the bank of the River Warta" [30]. No mention of Konin as a symbol of lost hopes. Of the incessant in-fighting among his fellow teachers, not a word. He praises his pupils for the love with which they responded to their teachers. Even the school governors now appear in a human light. He recalls the day when, faced with yet another financial crisis at the school and at the end of his tether, he summoned a meeting of the governors to tender his resigna-

tion. Perhaps anticipating what he was planning to do, the governors unusually but astutely turned up that night armed with several bottles of vodka. The meeting ended with everyone, including Infeld, becoming uproariously drunk. One member of the board began dancing with a bottle on his head. Infeld joined in, was violently sick, and staggered home supported on the arms of two of the governors. He was still the headmaster of the Jewish gymnasium.

By 1963 the memory of those wasted years in Konin seems to have lost its sting. Moreover, he was burdened with a knowledge he did not possess when he wrote *Quest*. Then, he was writing about a community he wanted to forget. Now he was remembering a community that had been exterminated. The people from whom he once felt distanced had been systematically annihilated, his two sisters among them. I quote from my book:

... the change that must have struck Infeld most powerfully of all when he walked round the old streets he once knew was the absence of Jews. They had vanished. Of all the teachers at the school, only he had survived. The children he once taught were a lost generation. 'I have tried to find out', he wrote, 'what happened to my best pupils. What happened to Bulka, extremely intelligent; what happened to Lewin, the best in mathematics; what happened to Weinstein, the most promising poet? Always the same answer: murdered, murdered, murdered' [31].

Infeld must have been aware of how kind destiny had been in taking him to Princeton and Toronto rather than Treblinka.

Infeld was an assimilated Jew. Whatever sense of Jewish identity he possessed had been foisted on him by the non-Jewish world. I can't help feeling that the timing of his death was in one respect fortunate. He died just a few months before a wave of government-inspired anti-Semitism swept through Poland in 1968, with purges in the universities as well as political life, driving most of the Jews in Poland who had survived the Holocaust out of the country. Might Infeld, who was no apparatchik and who had openly expressed views that were not always to the liking of the regime, might he too have

fallen victim, finding himself again unwanted in his native land, his hopes dashed once more? As it is, he died without that experience, and if today he could observe the distinguished international assembly of scientists gathered here to celebrate the centenary of his birth, if he were to know how the Institute of Theoretical Physics in Warsaw has flourished, he would surely feel that his hopes had not been in vain.

* This lecture was delivered by Theo Richmond at a conference held in Warsaw in June 1998 to mark the centenary of the birth of the eminent Polish-Jewish physicist Leopold Infeld, chief collaborator of Albert Einstein. The centennial celebration was attended by leading physicists from around the world. Theo Richmond is the author of the award-winning book "Konin: A Quest."

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- [3] Leopold Infeld, *Quest: The Evolution of a Scientist*, London, 1941, p.300. Hereafter, *Quest*.
- [4] The house, No. 9, still stands today.
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- [10] Ezra Mendelsohn, *Interwar Poland: good or bad for the Jews?* In *The Jews in Poland*, (Eds) Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jackimczyk & Antony Polonsky, Oxford 1986, p.139.
- [11] When Infeld applied for a docentship at Lwów University in 1930, some of those who opposed his appointment passed on rumours that he was a Communist. See *Quest*, pp.150-151.
- [12] *Quest*, p.99.
- [13] *Quest*, p.99.
- [14] *Quest*, p.300.
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- [25] *Quest*, p.214.
- [26] *Quest*, pp.211-212
- [27] Mendelsohn op.cit., p.139..
- [28] *Quest*, p.215.
- [29] Leopold Infeld, *Konin in Szkice z Przeszlosci* Warsaw, 1964, later published in English as *Sketches from the Past*, translated by Helen Infeld, in *Why I Left Canada*, pp.113-187.
- [30] Leopold Infeld, *Konin in Szkice z Przeszlosci* Warsaw, 1964, later published in English as *Sketches from the Past*, translated by Helen Infeld, in *Why I Left Canada*, pp.131,132.
- [31] *Konin*, p.117. The quoted passage is from *Why I Left Canada*, p.135.

ENJOYABLE AND INSPIRING TRIP TO ISRAEL

By Joseph Finklestone OBE

Joe was only nineteen years old when, as a reporter of "The Carlisle Recorder" he witnessed and reported the arrival of the first group of three hundred of the "Boys" at Crosby on Eden. He and his wife Hadassah have been closely associated with us and are Honorary Members of our Society.

When Ben Helfgott suggested to me early in May 2000 that my wife, Hadassah, and I should consider joining the holiday trip to Israel being arranged by the '45 Aid Society, I was immediately struck by the idea. It seemed so right. A few words with Hadassah confirmed the decision. Having been born in Jerusalem and a seventh generation Sabra, Hadassah is always enthusiastic about being in Israel. Her reaction was "What a great idea!" I almost immediately rang Ben to tell him that we were joining the group. Even he was surprised by the speed of our response.

This holiday trip was to prove one of the most inspiring that Hadassah and I had ever experienced in Israel. Since 1945, when I first met them on arrival in this country near Carlisle, I have regularly described the joys, the sorrows and the achievements of the Boys. Hadassah and I consider it a privilege to be honorary members of the '45. We have participated in numerous events, some joyful and some sad. We consider ourselves to be part of the group. Our expectations for the latest venture, which was to have its sad moments, too, were truly fulfilled.

Meticulously arranged by the '45 leadership, the wishes of all the members, material and spiritual, appeared to be attended to and the holiday was to become a truly memorable one. I had wondered how many of the Boys would be able to join the trip and I had even expressed some concern. But there was no need to worry. When we arrived at Heathrow Airport, we could see that there was a very considerable contingent present, everyone keenly looking forward to the trip.

Almost immediately after arrival late at night at the huge David Inter-Continental Hotel on the Tel Aviv seafront, we were all preparing for the next day's celebration, for the next day was Israel Independence Day, no less! And there was to

be the reunion a day later bringing together all the Boys - and girls who are proud to be called the Boys - in Britain and Israel.

Normally when in Israel on Independence Day, Hadassah and I are invited to Government receptions but somehow we did not feel deprived. The commemoration and reunion by the Boys made us feel truly thankful and elated. The Israeli Boys, it was very clear, feel themselves part of the British group.

The warmth with which members greeted one another was such that I was deeply moved. I have attended nearly all the reunions, but this reunion in Israel seemed to have a special depth and significance. The words of welcome by the representative of the Israeli Boys were apt. Ben, as expected, responded splendidly.

The trip to the Western Wall and the Yad Vashem Memorial brought forth much intense emotion. On the way we went off the normal route from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. We travelled on the famous Burma Road, built during the 1948 War of Independence as an alternative route to Jerusalem as the Arabs were besieging the Jewish population and were blockading the regular road from Tel Aviv. We visited the JNF and B'nai B'Brith forests and had an opportunity to admire the magnificent sculptures depicting Jewish history in its glory and tragedy. These sculptures are overwhelming in their power and it was difficult to leave them. Many, if not most of the Boys, saw them for the first time. I cannot understand why those who arrange tours to Jerusalem do not always give visitors a chance to be inspired by these sculptures. They deserve to be much better known.

The Western Wall invariably arouses deep feelings within me - and sometimes tears, too. I was certain that every one of us felt deeply about this direct link with our national and religious past.

Yad Vashem was a surprise for many of us. There are new buildings which are to be used not only to commemorate the tragic past but to study the lessons of the Holocaust as a warning for the future.

For me personally there was another major surprise. When we visited the sites commemorating the destroyed communities, I naturally searched for Chelm, my home town in Poland. Chelm is, of course, famous in Jewish folklore and is mentioned in Sir Martin Gilbert's latest book, "Never Again", as well as, extensively, in his "Holocaust Journey". I felt really sad that whereas the Boys could point at the names of their home towns, I could not find Chelm mentioned anywhere. This seemed exceedingly strange. Fortunately, I persevered and suddenly the word CHELM loomed out. It was a very moving moment. I felt disappointed that I did not have a camera with me. Luckily, Alec Ward was nearby and readily agreed to take a photograph of the scene. This is now a precious photograph.

For sheer enjoyment the one-day trip to the Carmel and the Golan Heights was particularly notable. Everyone was so keen to join the trip that the large bus proved insufficient and another vehicle had to be added. Moshe Rosenberg proved a very knowledgeable guide.

While for us the visit to the Kibbutz Afikim was highly enjoyable, for Mala Tribich, Ben's sister, it was also highly gratifying and emotional. She met for the first time for over fifty years her teacher in Sweden where she was taken after leaving Germany.

"I had heard that my teacher, Lonia, was now living at the kibbutz", Mala recalls. "It was a very great surprise because I did not even know that she had gone to Israel and was still alive. In fact, she still teaches today. Our meeting was just lovely. She told me that she would have recognised me at any time. I certainly recognised her. It was just joy that we could meet after such a long time."



Mala Tribich and her teacher Lonia reunited after 53 years.

Travelling through the Carmel area, we saw well-ordered Arab villages, which remained after the wars. Druse villages and small towns are always picturesque, although toilet facilities could be improved. In one small town we had a chance to buy huge hats which certainly provided protection from the hot sun.

We were made aware of how vulnerable Israel is to attack and wondered how she survived the invasion of Arab armies. We were close to the frontier and could imagine thousands of Arab troops marching, intent on conquest. It was there that the famous Palmach elite troops trained and later gained renowned victories.

Travelling through the Golan Heights, the immensity of the sacrifice that the Israeli Government was prepared to make for the sake of peace with Syria again became vividly apparent. These mountain ranges form a formidable obstacle in any war. They were captured at great cost by some of Israel's bravest soldiers and defended with much heroism in the Yom Kippur War. And the Golan kibbutzim are among the finest established since the Six-Day War.

It was truly wonderful to look down from the heights of the Golan. Below us was the Kinneret, the Sea of Galilee, which is not only a place of beauty, but provides Israel with fish and water. In fact, Israel relies for much of its water supplies on the Kinneret and there is anxiety when the level drops. I cannot see any Israel government ever agreeing to giving up control to the Syrians of this beautiful stretch of water.

Back in Tel Aviv, a high spot of the entire holiday trip was the barbecue arranged by Ana and Ray Jackson in their garden in Tel Aviv. It was a truly memorable occasion. One felt part of a loving family on a specially festive occasion. Everyone was smiling, talking, joking, embracing – and eating! Jackson, as he is known to the Boys, has prospered greatly and everyone is glad about this. Seeing him one could understand why he is so popular – and so successful.

Warm thanks are due to Krulik Wilder, Ben, Harry Balsam and all the other members of the Committee for arranging a trip which will for ever be in our memories. Krulik was his usual colourful self and always busy using his video camera. I look forward to seeing his varied output. The film will relive a feast of truly wonderful experiences.

THE REUNION IN ISRAEL

Judith Sherman (nee Stern) lived with her younger sister Miriam in Weir Courtney. She studied Social Science at the L.S.F. and later emigrated to the U.S.A., where she lives with her husband Reuben in New Jersey.

Hinei ma tov u ma nayim shevet achim gam yachad.

How pleasant indeed to sit upon the shores of the Mediterranean in the land of Israel at this millenium reunion.

What of this reunion?

Our roots are in Europe, our first meeting point in England, our gathering in Israel. We came from families of caring and tradition, which elevated us. We came from that place of horror which left its mark upon us. Our common language is now English. England took us in – not soon enough and not enough of us. But in the Spring of 1945 England shared with us its food rations, restructured our messed up lives with friendship, education, and opportunities. We are grateful. The talk among reunion members invariably reverted to Windermere and the Primrose Club. Those were pleasant commonalities. The green of England is the absolute against which all other greens are measured.

The Reunion

How grand it was at this reunion to smell the picnic fires celebrating Yom Ha atzmaut – the birth of Israel. The beach walk to Jaffa with friends not seen in ten, twenty, fifty years. The ease of companionship based on old commonalities and genuine current curiosity. Those Israeli breakfasts! Together we went to Yad Vashem and sought out our hometowns' names on the pillars of the Valley of the Communities – a pilgrimage into memories. Together we went to the Wall in Jerusalem and together we bought our local crop of dates in the Gallil grocery shop at Yardenit.

And our guides! Our guides were literally "one-of-us" now living in Israel. They showed us Tel Aviv, the Old Burma Road to Jerusalem, the Gallil, the Golan. They showed these things knowingly and lovingly.



Party at the home of Ann and Ray Jackson.

This group of survivors was originally united around the Holocaust. We moved on to "normalcy," to life's joys and concerns with strands of the original theme woven in. And with an ongoing bias of Tikun Olam – of making this world a better place.

This reunion in this year of the millenium made us a gift of a new commonality. We witnessed this group of survivors – ourselves – in our own land of Israel.

Hinei ma tov –

Thank you organisers.

Judith Sherman

In a separate letter, Judith stated – The reunion has confirmed my feeling that I missed a lot by not being involved with this group, 'The Boys', over the years.



Some of the Boys mainly from the Loughton Hostel with Fay Nachmani who was one of their Madrichim.



On the Golan.



At the Valley of the Lost Communities at Yad Veshem.

MILLENNIUM WOODS

By Judith Sherman

In this millennium year
I would like to see a summer wood
I would like to see a summer wood and
not worry
"Is it deep enough - dense enough
To hide me?"

In this millennium year
I say
It is now far enough - late enough
to live here now:
So let the shower be just that
And the railway tracks
Potatoes too - see they are plentiful.
But how do you disconnect
from Kzet Ravensbruck?

I am old in this year of two thousand
but my soul - my soul
is peopled with parents
who are younger than my children.
My brother will forever be eight.

I wish for a cemetery with gravestones
with the name of - with the name of -
with the name of -
Lord, it would help
if you would light some candles
say Kaddish -
they would appreciate that
me too
you too - perhaps?

In this millennium year
I will also plant a garden
visit Barcelona and Jerusalem
swim with grandchildren
survivorship territory -
multiple residences
lived in simultaneously -
this place/that other place.

World - I have a question in this millennium year -
two thousand years of ethnic cleansing -
who is clean?

In this millennium year
I wish for us to see
the Summer Woods.

THE HOLOCAUST EXHIBITION

6th June 2000

Imperial War Museum, London

Aubrey Rose C.B.E.

Aubrey Rose is an ardent supporter of our Society. Not only was he a Vice-President of The Board of Deputies of British Jews, but he was an original member of The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and is involved in several other commonwealth organisations and spent five years as a commissioner of The Commission for Racial Equality. He was recently granted an Honorary degree of Doctor of Law by the University of North London.

I sat next to a woman whose mother had been incarcerated in a German concentration camp in 1935. "In 1935!" I exclaimed. "Yes", she replied, "in 1935".

The writing was on the wall, just two years after that malevolent barbarian Hitler became Chancellor. Yet the world closed its eyes, did not want to know. One man, who was to prove to be the world's saviour, Winston Churchill, did.

We sat in the main hall of the Imperial Museum in South London, surrounded by the imposing weapons of war of the 20th century, biplanes, mono-planes, tanks, artillery, rockets, everything that reeked of death and destruction. Yet here we were, sitting, standing, quietly, peacefully, to witness the opening of this visual testimony to the most horrible deed in human history.

There have been many, many terrible deeds before

1940 and since 1945. History is littered with mass murder, a "register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind", Edward Gibbon's description, whilst, according to Hobbes, "the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

These generalisations are persuasive, but not true. There are great gleams of self-sacrifice, sheer goodness, compassion and hope, interspersed among the darker shadows. Yet every so often a madness erupts, a mindless, atavistic brutality. It was a German philosopher, claimed as their inspiration by the Nazis, who declared, "not only the wisdom of centuries breaks out in us, but also their madness. Dangerous it is to be an heir." Nietzsche eventually went mad.

There have been many, many horrors. Crusades and Catholic Inquisition, Turkish slaughter of Armenians, Communist mass murder of

kulaks in the Soviet Union and 'running dogs' in China, Rwanda, Sudan, Cambodia, the list goes on. Wartime Japanese were no angels, but never in history has there been a systematic, efficient, scientific attempt to slaughter a whole race of people in cold blood as the Germans sought to do in the last terrible world war.

And it was, in Europe, so-called home of culture and civilisation, that this genocide took place, emanating from a misguided nation who, in 80 years, had launched five separate wars against its peaceful neighbours.

The woman sitting beside me, with her parents, had somehow escaped from Germany in 1939, just in time. They were the lucky few. They had come as refugees, true refugees. They were followed in 1945 and thereafter by the Kindertransport youngsters and the 'survivors'. That word 'survivors' rang out repeatedly during the afternoon.

The Exhibition was a tribute to the memory of the slain, as well as confirmation of the horror they had lived through to those who had survived. One man, old, bearded, bent, told me, "I am a survivor", just as if he was giving me his name and address.

What could I say? This was how he saw himself, this was his label. Had my parents not left Eastern Europe when they did, I could have been that man, or I could have been just a memory, a name on a long list of those who had perished.

It is difficult to explain why, well over half-a-century since that nightmare, the Holocaust has come so much to the fore in the public mind. Perhaps for 50 years the sensitivity of the world was numbed by the shock that the nation which had produced Goethe and Beethoven, could also produce a breed of vicious savages, moral barbarians, armed with advanced, sophisticated equipment.

We rose as the Queen, dressed in royal blue hat and coat, short, steady, upright, passed between assembled dignitaries, before inspecting the Holocaust Exhibition and Education Centre. Her husband and the Duke of Kent, President of the Imperial War Museum, accompanied her, leading a host of noted persons, government ministers, religious leaders, philanthropists, academi-

cians and those involved in this four-year project, which had now come to fruition.

I knew many of them, spoke to many of them. Next to me was the Duke of Devonshire, of Chatsworth fame, a man totally natural and unaffected, a man firm in his support of the Jewish people and of Israel, the result, he told me, of his own father's convictions, linked to parental admiration of Chaim Weizmann.

A moving recital of music followed, given by a survivor, Anita Lasker-Wallfisch - she survived because of her cello - the barbarians had a use for music - her son Raphael, and his son Simon, three generations of cellists. How many other cellists, violinists, composers, musicians, I pondered, had sunk, forgotten and unfulfilled, themselves and generations never to be born, sucked into the abyss of German Nazism?

The Nazi phenomenon - not confined to Germany alone - was the emergence of the animal in man, when worst instincts came to the fore and were given free rein. Civilisation, true civilisation, is the channelling of those instincts into socially acceptable forms, from which there can gradually develop acceptance and practice of basic human rights, and the higher demands of the human spirit.

The Museum's Chairman, Professor O'Neill, and Chris Smith (was he christened 'Chris?'), a Minister, spoke, but the really telling words came from a survivor, Esther Brunstein, level-headed, calm, and hence infinitely moving, especially when stating "I have not as yet returned from the longest funeral procession." For her, and those who experienced and who remembered, since 1940, there has been nothing but a never-ending funeral procession.

The Queen unveiled a plaque, and moved slowly, very slowly, between lines of people, talking to them, quietly, with that sane, uncanny sense of equilibrium and calm, which induced the remark from a distinguished colleague that this was 'a very English occasion'. And so it was, dignified, understated, no fancy finery in words, just the sense of giving sincere expression to the depth of feeling and of sober remembrance, a muted recognition of the frailty of our veneer of civilisation.

We were invited to visit the Exhibition - I had been connected briefly with its early development three or four years ago, whilst holding a particular communal office - but I decided to observe the pictures, photographs and artefacts by myself on another quieter day. I doubt, however, even then, that I could cope with the enormity of the crime that had been committed, this brazen attempt to tear the heart out of God's creation.

We emerged from the museum into the bright sunlight. Slowly the Queen's car moved through the beautifully-tended, rose-filled gardens. On either side of her stood crowds of excited school children, parents, teachers, visitors, staff, waving furiously Union and English flags, cheering and cheering, at the tops of their voices, this unpretentious monarch, symbol of common sense, decency, and freedom.

I hope these children, and all children, will learn from this Exhibition how easily that freedom can slip away, if there is no vigilance. I hope too they will never have to face in their

lives the horrors that plagued the dreams and the nights of the survivors, tragedies symbolised by a very different kind of leader, "the embodiment of many forms of soul-destroying evil", as Churchill described him.

Whilst we return to our daily routine, our ordinary cares, always seemingly so important, this Exhibition should provide us with a due sense of proportion and understanding of the past, gratitude for our present, as well as a glow of admiration for the courage of those who resisted evil. Martin Gilbert's book on the Holocaust, linked to today's occasion, has in its title the words 'Never Again'. 'Never again' must echo in the hearts and minds of each individual if mankind is to stumble forward to a future free from fear.

There is no certainty otherwise that 'never again' will become a reality and not just a pious hope. This Exhibition is one expression of that hope that people will eventually learn the bitter and biting lesson of the past.

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SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE HOLOCAUST EXHIBITION AT THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM, LONDON

By Esther Brunstein

Esther was liberated in Bergen-Belsen from where she was sent to Sweden. She joined her brother, Perec Zylberberg, in England in 1947. She writes and talks eloquently about her experiences.

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellencies, Chief Rabbi, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Survivors

I feel greatly moved at being accorded the honour of addressing this distinguished audience on this very special day.

I am overcome by emotion as so many painful memories abound. I find myself transported back into a time when I lived on another planet where evil reigned supreme. Yet it was in the middle of a civilized and cultured Europe.

Back in 1995, I took part in a television programme in which Professor David Cesarani raised the question, "Should Britain have a permanent Holocaust Exhibition?" Little did I think that five years on, the project would be complete and that I would play a part in it.

When you see the Exhibition you will find that its opening section recalls the vanished world of European Jewry, their pulsating life, so rich in substance, shape and

colour, which was completely wiped out - and the world left the poorer for it. I am happy that glimpses of their culture are recorded here.

The Exhibition goes on to tell the story of occupation, Ghettos, camps and extermination of Jews, Gypsies and other minorities. No need for me to add anything except a few

words about our determination to survive against all odds, and tell the tale. Scholars have listed over thirty places where there was active Jewish resistance. Just to survive one day in the camps and Ghettos and retain a sense of human values was, in itself, an act of resistance. The Warsaw Ghetto uprising was the first organised

armed revolt against Nazi tyranny. Those who fought have written an heroic chapter in Jewish and world history, for it was a fight to preserve human dignity.

We Holocaust Survivors whose lives were miraculously spared, are eye-witnesses to a world which became temporarily unhinged, and we are duty-bound to speak out and to remember all who suffered and perished under Nazi rule.

Yet atrocities go on in the world today and the tragedy is that we still have not learnt our lesson from the past.

This Exhibition is all about learning. It is about being vigilant and shouting loudly enough to make sure that the words "never again" do not become a hollow slogan.

As for me, I am forever in my heart silently attending memorial services for my dear ones. To quote a line from a Yiddish poem:

I have not as yet returned from the longest funeral procession.

6 June 2000



Survivors lighting the Memorial Candles at our Reunion on the 7th May at the Imperial War Museum.



A group of our members at the official opening of the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum.



IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

THE HOLOCAUST EXHIBITION
AND SOUTH-WEST WING,
WHICH COMPLETES THE
REDEVELOPMENT OF THE
MUSEUM BEGUN IN 1986,
WERE OPENED ON
6 JUNE 2000 BY

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

The case concerning "David Irving versus Prof. Deborah Lipstadt and Penguin Books" commenced at the High Court in London on Tuesday 11 January 2000; but it was only some days and a few sessions later that I first entered this imposing building and made my way to Court No. 73. This is a modern courtroom where you are sitting very near an array of wigged barristers, lawyers and researchers. On the right-hand side several rows of blue chairs are reserved for the Press.

Richard Rampton QC represented Penguin Books and Professor Lipstadt (the Defendants) - David Irving represented himself. Richard Rampton is a quietly spoken man, his voice hardly above a whisper.

Two or three minutes before the proceedings start, David Irving arrives. This was the first time I had seen this man - a rather bulky, imposing but intimidating figure with a strong voice. He wore a dark pin-striped suit and was clearly enjoying the limelight. He stood erect and had the habit of flicking his fingers with his hand to his side. He tries to give the impression he was being sued and was the defendant in the case whereas, of course, it was the reverse.

I attended the court on most days. It became an obsession and I felt I had to be there. Some people present at the start of the trial found the proceedings too upsetting and they did not return.

The proceedings were quite relaxed. I was observing David Irving very closely and my dislike of him grew. He constantly tried to portray himself as a beleaguered man fighting a Jewish conspiracy which was trying to destroy him. His constant denial of the events which I witnessed some fifty-five years ago sickened me. He suggested the Jews themselves were responsible for Auschwitz.

This is not the time of place to recall in detail the daily proceedings of the case. Many thousands of words have been written and spoken already. However, it is worth recording the grotesque nature of certain of the discussions which took place. For instance, that the amount of gas needed to kill a human was less than that required to kill a louse, or how much coal was needed to burn a corpse or cadaver, one of Irving's favourite words and one

RE THE DAVID IRVING COURT CASE

By Michael Lee

Michael was in the Lodz Ghetto and after his liberation he was brought to England by his family. He and his wife Ivy have been members of our Society for many years.

which sent a shiver down my spine. There were the obscene jokes about the Holocaust survivors and his views on women and black people and the racist poem written for his young daughter.

In a speech which Irving made on 19 September 1992 concerning the reading of the news on TV, he said "... we should have a dinner-jacketed gentleman reading the important news, followed by a lady reading the less important news, followed by Trevor Macdonald giving us all the latest news about the muggings and the drug busts...". At this point I noticed that Janet, the usher, whose facial expression was usually impassive, looked across the Court at David Irving with a wry smile in disbelief of what she was hearing. Did this include her as well!

When Irving was being cross-examined and was cornered over some detail, he would try to wheedle his way out of the situation. In a video shown to the Court, he was seen at a meeting raising his arm in a Nazi salute. When questioned, he said he was raising and lowering his arm to calm the crowd. It was at a moment such as this that I could imagine him dressed in uniform, standing on a balcony and addressing the crowd below - a menacing figure who could sound plausible to the uninformed. He has an answer to everything with his smooth tongue.

On the other hand, however, when he was cross-examining a

witness and felt he had scored a point, he would look round the Court and to the Press in particular, seeking their approval. Much of what Irving said was not relevant to the case and there were times when the Judge rebuked him and on one occasion threatened to impose a time-limit.

He told Mr Justice Gray that there had been "no meaningful research" into the Holocaust until his book 'Hitler's War' in 1997. "Far from being a 'Holocaust-denier' my work has directly increased historical research into, and understanding of the Holocaust", he said.

On the whole, David Irving conducted himself with self-assurance, but there was an occasion late one afternoon whilst being cross-examined by Mr Rampton, when he looked tired and was clearly rattled. The Judge asked him if he would like to adjourn to the next day, but Irving declined.

The proceedings in Court seemed to be an ordeal for Professor Lipstadt - the stress she was under must have been intense. During the course of the trial I was contacted by two Americans, one a writer, the other a lawyer, who stated they had important information which might be useful to the defence. I passed this on to Professor Lipstadt and after the trial I received a letter of thanks from her.

There were periods when one had the opportunity of speaking to Mr Rampton. At the end of the day's hearing, he could be seen smoking a ciga-

rette in the corridor. "Bad for my chest but it keeps my brain working" he remarked. He was emotionally drained such was the effect this case was having on him - a man with so many years experience. Referring to Irving, he said "This man makes me sick."

Mr Rampton, describing David Irving's 'Holocaust-denial' as a case of 'fraud', said it had originated with "a piece of so-called scientific research" - The Leuchter Report - which was meant to disprove the existence of gas-chambers at Auschwitz and which was subsequently discredited. It was said in court that "... he (Irving) has prostituted his talent, which is considerable, in the interests of the restoration of a neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic ideology." At one point Mr Rampton said to Irving "Are you suggesting that Hitler was one of the great philo-Semites?"

After the closing speeches by Richard Rampton QC and David Irving, we had to wait over a week for Mr Charles Gray's Judgement.

On Tuesday 11 April, a bleak cold day, I arrived at the Court at 8.30am and there were already some twenty people waiting. By now I knew most of them by sight, having seen them regularly in the Court. I also knew who were Irving's supporters. On one occasion I spoke to one of them whilst queuing next to him. I told him that I had lost in the Holocaust thirty members of my immediate family. His reply was: "But you are alive!" The sarcastic smile on his face left no doubt about his frame of mind. So I realised, painfully, that to talk to people of this kind is just a waste of time.

By 9 o'clock we were ushered to the foot of the stairs leading to Court No. 36 where the verdict was to be announced. We still had an hour to wait. The crowd was a mixture of well-known people, writers, journalists and a sprinkling of Holocaust survivors. Deep in our hearts we knew that Irving could not win this case, yet there was great anxiety that the Judge might find for him on a point of law. At 10 o'clock we entered the Court, this time sitting high up in the gallery.

I watched Mr Rampton intently. He appeared to have a slight spring to his walk. We knew he had advance knowledge of the Judgement and I

was looking for some sign in his manner which might indicate things were going in our favour.

When David Irving arrived in Court he was not wearing his jacket and I wondered why not. It transpired that someone had thrown an egg at him.

Mr Justice Gray commenced reading a summary of his Judgement. At first he was saying some complimentary things about David Irving's skill as a researcher, and my heart sank. As he read on, his condemnation of the Plaintiff as an anti-Semite, a racist, a falsifier of history and Holocaust denier became clear. We were looking at each other with expressions of relief and delight and raising our thumbs.

After the verdict, David Irving was heard to remark that Mr Rampton would be looking for 'his pound of flesh' but he (Irving) was made of sterner stuff.

Journalists from all over the world were in Court on the final day to hear the verdict. The London based correspondent from the German paper 'Die Welt' interviewed me and a comprehensive article subsequently appeared in that paper referring to my interview. It was suggested to me that the Jewish community had not shown as great an interest in the case as might have been expected. Sadly, I had to agree. In contrast I was told that in Germany the case had aroused a great deal of public interest.

Present at the Court was my friend and neighbour Carlo Cavicchioli, an Italian journalist. His report of the trial appeared in the Italian journal 'Diario'. During the course of the trial I became friendly with a freelance journalist, Heather World. She interviewed me and subsequently wrote an article about the case which appeared on the Internet.

The downside of this case is that it has given David Irving a great deal of publicity for his pernicious and repugnant views. It is a sad indictment that after over half a century, we still have to be vigilant and this case is a sobering reminder of just how vigilant we still need to be.

A shortened version of this article appeared recently in "Perspective" the Journal of the Holocaust Centre, Beth Shalom.

THE JUSTICE OF RE-INCARNATION

By Michael Etkind

Michael came to England with the Windermere Group. He lived in the Cardross Hostel and later studied architecture. He has been a regular contributor to our journal and was dubbed by our President, Sir Martin Gilbert, as the poet of our Society.

The butcher will become the hapless calf
in all his future lives
The murderer – the victim of his crimes
The thief will then be mugged and robbed
of all his worldly goods

And Hitler will be gassed
six million times

And Justice will proclaim – Mine shall be done
in heaven and on earth.

A rabbi has suggested that the six million Nazi victims might have been re-incarnated in order to atone for crimes committed in their previous lives.

RABBI OVADIA YOSEF'S STATEMENT - THE LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Aubrey Rose CBE

The recent statement by a rabbi that the Holocaust arose from sinfulness of the Jewish people involved is not merely idiotic, but dangerous. His subsequent part retraction is meaningless, since made as a result of protest and pressure.

The original view remains and needs to be examined. What is sin? What are its components? For example, if marriage is the union for life of a man and a woman and sexual intercourse by one of them with another person is sin, then consider the consequences.

Those Muslims or others with more than one wife are sinning. This definition would include the Patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, as well as Kings David and Solomon. Are they all sinners?

When Jesus told the woman who committed adultery 'go and sin no more', did he enquire whether the man involved had also committed adultery?

If, in Biblical and Islamic terms the man takes a woman to wife and disposes of her by divorce, is that sinning? Can a woman in those traditions do exactly the same? If not, is sin not linked to inequality between

the rights of men and women? And is that inequality a form of sin?

Jacob told a lie to his father Isaac, and appears to have deceived also his brother Esau and father-in-law Laban. How sinful was Jacob whose name became Israel?

Jacob also is supposed to have behaved dishonestly, with his mother's help, having taken something valuable from his brother. Was this theft? Is theft sin? What degree of sin is involved, what level?

What Abraham told the Egyptians, and others, that Sarah was his sister, was this lying, telling an untruth? Is lying a sin? How sinful was Abraham?

When Paul refers to the wages of sin being death, what on earth does he mean? How much sin, and what kind of sin, results in death? And what does death mean in the light of the Pharisaic belief in the survival of the soul? It is all very well to hold up placards 'the wages of sin is death'. It sounds apocalyptic but it is meaningless unless defined.

When the children of Israel worshipped 'other gods' was that sinful? Israel's God believed so, and afflicted them. When other

peoples worshipped 'other gods', was that sinful? When the Greeks and Romans turned emperors into gods, was that sinful? When a Christian or Moslem called someone who honestly held beliefs different from theirs 'infidels' and murdered them, who was sinning?

Now you can define sin by specific words and acts. You can say those words and acts are contrary to our accepted standards of ethics and morality and amount to a form of sin. The Jewish Day of Atonement is full of descriptions of sins and requests for pardon. The Christian who calls out 'Repent (or believe) and your sins will be forgiven' a strange notion – never defines 'sin'.

Peculiarly enough we understand sin intuitively, possibly because the sin reacts on the sinner as well as on others. The little spark of conscience, that godly spark in us, reacts to acts of sinfulness by us, even when we are not aware of it.

Were the Germans and others who participated in the Holocaust sinners? Our answer at once is, of course they were! Why? Because they were destroying life, God's greatest gift to us. They were destroying

habes and children who were not even aware of what sin was all about, what the word meant.

The rabbi was therefore talking nonsense, dangerous nonsense, because he was accusing six million people, including over one million children, of causing others to murder them because they sinned. Just expand that idea to other acts of history. The Native Americans were guilty and so lost out to the Europeans who came to America. The tribes of Central and South America were terrible sinners and so the Spaniards were justified in slaughtering them. The poor Armenians sinned so much that the Turks killed them. The Chinese sinned so that the Japanese persecuted and tortured them.

There is no end to this line of logic, and it is dangerous madness because it almost justifies the real sinners, the real murderers, by making the victims the cause of the terrible happenings. When the Black Death plague in the 14th century destroyed one-third of Europe's population, was any sin involved? The rabbi's answer would be interesting.

And he should also be more specific, as should 'the wages of sin' man. How much sin tips one over into death or its equivalent, 30%, 49%, 51%? Is there any measure? Are some sins more sinful than others? For example, where in the balance sheet of sin comes theft, adultery, robbery, assault, deception, forgery, murder, spreading of disease, nuclear waste, AIDS, environmental pollution of sea, land and air?

Now, all these may be bad acts, sinful, but how much sin is attributable to each? If the Nazi-enslaved 1,000 Slavs, burnt a French or Czech village, destroyed Molde and Kirkenes, towns in Norway, how do these acts rate in the measure of sinfulness to the destruction of people by gassing in concentration camps?

And what about the destruction of 100,000 souls in Hiroshima in one hour? Was that caused by the sins of the residents of that city? What does the rabbi say?

He should not merely apologise for his irreverent and irreligious statement, he should begin to answer the questions I have raised. He should also examine his own mentality and how he arrived at such a sinful conclusion.

SCATTERED THOUGHTS ON A BIG THEME

By Rafael F. Scharf

Rafael F. Scharf was born in Cracow and came to England in 1938. He served in the British Army during the Second World War and by the end of it was a member of a war crimes investigations unit. He has written and lectured extensively and most poignantly about the vanished world of Polish Jewry. He was a co-founder of the Jewish Quarterly, as well as of the Institute of Polish Jewish Studies in Oxford.

One of the issues which perpetually clouds our horizon in the Polish-Jewish discussion about the role and behaviour of the Poles with regard to their Jewish co-citizens during and after the last war. I know there are many amongst us who are very critical and unforgiving and who even hold it against me and some of my friends that we bother to give our time to these matters. No doubt they have their reasons for adopting such a position. I understand it but cannot share it. I think there is a case to examine. I would like all voices to be heard, truth however painful to be spoken, a view to be formed which gives due weight to historical circumstances and to human nature, balanced and just to all sides.

I know my weakness as a party arguing the case: I was not there at the time. But I have given the matter a great deal of thought, have read most of the relevant evidence. Moreover, "not having been there at the time" might give a distance and a sense of proportion which is not a disadvantage. And further: my Mother survived the war on the strength of her "Aryan papers" and her so-called "good looks" (lack of semitic features), living with a Polish family who were not aware of her "deception", observing the scene and the behaviour of her hosts and neighbours, being – on occasions – subject to blackmail. At the end of the war I fetched her from Poland and she lived with me and my family for another ten years. During that time I spent endless hours with her, by her bedside

late into the night, listening to her stories which she relived in a kind of wide-eyed nightmare. This was for her, I thought, a sort of therapy and it gave me a sense of immediacy, I often felt and feel as if I was there – in Poland during the war.

I was recently given to read a letter which Lord and Lady Belhaven have circulated among some people of note, among them the Secretary of State for Education and Sir Sigmund Sternberg, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Institute of Polish-Jewish Studies. The writers of the letter are incensed and feel moved to protest in the strongest terms against a slur on the Polish nation which occurs on pages 58 and 60 in a book which is used by school to prepare for GCSE. The book is 'The Twentieth Century World' by Neil de Marco and Richard Radway. The offensive phrase runs: "There were many others in Europe who helped Hitler in his campaign of mass-murder, including Poles, Ukrainians and those Vichy French who worked with the Nazis after France was invaded by Germany in 1940" – one could argue that this wording implies that all Poles, as against some French were helping Hitler.

The book – says Lord Belhaven – distorts almost all the historical facts of the period. "It does not mention the fact that from 1939 until 1945 the Polish nation suffered an unprecedented martyrdom, or that both inside and outside Poland Poles, in huge numbers, resisted and fought against Hitler and his regime. Nor do the authors say that in German-

occupied Poland, it was a capital offence to give any help – even a slice of bread – to a Jew but that, in spite of this, many Poles risked their lives and that of their families, to help and hide Jews."

This is perfectly true. One must be scrupulously cautious when forming judgement on human behaviour in circumstances which in saner times defy imagination. Before casting a stone it's as well to pause and think what one would have done oneself.

The other allegation, if there be such in the book, which Lord Belhaven rightly condemns, is the one that the death-camps were set up on Polish soil, rather than elsewhere, because the Germans felt that it would be safe to do so, that the local population would not be hostile, would not rise in anger against this monstrous outrage against humanity. This argument has been raised before on various occasions and has been completely rebutted, once and for all, we thought. No thinking person should give it any credence. For the Germans the location was merely a matter of logistics. They built the camps on Polish soil because that is where the majority of their intended victims lived. In any event, the Germans were not in the least concerned with the feelings or the reaction of the local population. Nothing more need be said in a serious discussion on this topic.

Lord Belhaven's protest at some passages of de Marco and Radway's book is justified but misdirected. The book is one of

many on the subject, some better, some not so good, published no doubt with the hope that it will be taken up by some teachers and thus make a profit for authors and publisher. The book carries no stamp of approval of the Ministry of Education, in fact such stamp of approval does not exist. It is up to individual teachers to pick up and learn from and use as aids those books which appear to them worthy. The Secretary of State for Education plays no part in this, has no influence over what is written in this or that book, he could not withdraw or ban it, correct or retract it – as Lord Belhaven demands. It seems, in fact, that being published by a small little known publisher it will have very limited sales and the hue-and-cry raised looks a little like a sledgehammer cracking a nut.

Let me clear up another small misunderstanding. Lord Belhaven, fearing that we may not be sufficiently well informed about these matters concerning Poland, refers us to Professor Norman Davies, as the authority who will clarify all doubts. He is not aware that reference to Professor Davies would not well serve in this case. Professor Davies is an eminent historian and accomplished writer, very highly regarded in Poland. His history of Poland "God's Playground" is in wide circulation there, permanently on the best-seller list. I count him among my friends, with whom I have my differences on a number of matters of principle. He is seen by many respected Jewish scholars as not being sensitive to the Jewish problems in Poland and they contest his views on many issues. My quarrel with him concerns a passage in his last magnum opus "Europe". On page 707 he writes:

"A view might be entertained that the Nazi gas-chambers reflected a 'humanitarian approach': akin to that of a well-regulated abattoir. If the inmates had to die, it is better that they die quickly rather than in protracted agony or from cold or starvation. In practice, there is ample evidence that the operation of the Nazi death-camps was accompanied by gratuitous bestiality".

I do not understand how he could have written a sentence like this, but even apart from that he would not be accepted as an arbiter in matters of the Holocaust.

Equally one must not lose sight of the darker side of Polish behaviour during and after the war.

One of the most shameful incidents was the pogrom in Kielce. After the war about 200 former Jewish inhabitants, those who had survived in hiding, in the USSR and in the Nazi camps, went back to Kielce. Their attempt to reconstruct the shreds of Jewish communal life and, possibly, to recover their property, aroused hostility amongst some of the Poles who opened a vituperative campaign against them which, on the 4th July 1946, culminated in an armed pogrom against the defenceless Jews (their few pistols having been confiscated from them by the police the day before) - 42 were murdered, many injured. In Polish apologetics, whilst the facts are not denied, the event is often described as a "provocation by the Security Services". Whatever the motives, whatever the organised or the spontaneous forces behind it, I do not see that this diminishes or alters Polish guilt or shame. I believe that this is recognised by the local population and there is an annual ceremony of contrition and reconciliation.

"Kielce" sounded the alarm loud and clear. Many survivors decided that there was no future for them in Poland and turned their backs on that country. Needless to say, wherever they ultimately landed, they have not turned into ambassadors of good will. Those who decided to stay behind, either because they had nowhere else to go or because they are, despite everything, deeply attached to Poland, wanting to live there and make their contribution to what they see as their country, do so with their eyes open. We can only admire them and wish them well. One can think that in some way they fulfill a historical mission. Since there are only few Jews in Poland - we do not even have reliable statistics but we talk about, say, 20,000 (from a pre-war community of three and a half million) - there is no real platform of friction and in that sense this is not "a Jewish problem". There is, however, "a Polish problem" here. All serious and well-meaning people who are searching for the truth, then and now, will have to acquaint themselves with their unvarnished past, face it squarely, see to what degree they themselves feel 'answerable'. Only thus can

we hope to make progress and build bridges to mutual understanding.

Until recently 'Kielce' played a big role in the ongoing accounts of rights and wrongs, but now an event is presented to us which dwarfs 'Kielce' in its horror and meaning. Why this is presented to the public only now, virtually 60 years after the event I do not know - I have not heard of it till now, there is no mention of it in Encyclopaedia Judaica. The story is told in minute and irrefutable detail by Jan Gross, Professor of Political Studies at New York University, author of many books and a recognised expert in Polish studies. The book, published in Poland, in Polish, is entitled: "Siedzi" ("Neighbours") and it describes an event which took place in the little town JEDWABNE near Lomza, north-east of Warsaw.

I shall quote some passages from the eye-witness evidence given by Szmul Wassersztajn, one of the very few survivors of the pogrom, to the Jewish Historical Commission in Bialystok on 5th April 1945. Subsequently he gave evidence in the trial of the participants in the pogrom in front of a Polish court in 1949. I shall spare you some of the more gory and sickening details.

Szmul Wassersztajn stated in evidence: "In Jedwabne, until the outbreak of war, lived 1,600 Jews, of whom only 7, hidden by the Polish woman, Wyrzykowska, survived the pogrom. On Monday evening, 23 June 1941, the Germans entered the town. On the 25th, home-grown bandits, from the local population, started the pogrom. Two peasants accompanied the bandits robbing Jewish dwellings playing the accordion and the clarinet, to drown the noise of the crying women and children. I saw with my own eyes how Chajcia Waserstein, 53 years old, Jakub Kac, 73 years old and Krawiecki Eliaz were murdered. Jakub Kac was hit with bricks, Krawiecki was stabbed with knives... That very day I saw the following scene: Kubrzejka Chaja, 28 years old, and Binsztajn Basia, 26 years old, both with babies in their arms, seeing what was happening, ran together towards the pond to drown together rather than fall into the hands of the bandits. They threw the babies into the water and drowned them. Binsztajn Baska jumped and sank immediately, whilst Kubrzejka Chaja somehow couldn't manage it. The hooligans who gathered around

the pond made a game of it, advising her to lie on the water face down to drown quicker. Seeing that the babies were already dead, she thrust herself in the water more energetically and drowned.

Next day the priest tried to persuade them to stop the pogrom, explaining that the German authorities would themselves settle the matter. The pogrom indeed halted. But from that day the local merchants refused to sell Jews food products, making their position ever more difficult. In the meantime, rumour spread that the Germans would soon issue an order to kill all the Jews in town.

Such an order was issued by the Germans on the 10th July 1941. The order was given by the Germans, but the Polish hooligans took it up and carried it out by the most horrific means - after beating and torturing their victims they burnt all Jews alive in a barn... The whole town was surrounded by guards so that no-one could escape, all the Jews were formed into ranks of fours, the ninety-year old rabbi and the ritual slaughterer at the head, they were given a red flag to carry and were driven, singing, to the barn. On the way they were beaten mercilessly. Some Jews tried to defend themselves but they could not. Bloodied and wounded they were pushed into the barn. The barn was soaked in petrol and set on fire... 1,460 Jews died in that barn.

This whole story is thoroughly documented, some of the witnesses are still alive and the recollection of it is vivid in Jedwabne among all generations. Painful as it is, we must not avert our eyes from it, for this is also a part of the reality with which we must come to terms.

Wyrzykowska, the woman living close to Jedwabne who saved 7 Jews, was hounded out of town. She had been threatened and her life had been made intolerable by her "neighbours". She now lives in Chicago.

On 8th January 1949 the police in Jedwabne arrested 15 perpetrators of the pogrom in preparation for the trial. Among them, mainly peasants and workers, there were two shoemakers, a builder, a carpenter, a watchmaker, two locksmiths, a postman, a messenger. Among them, fathers of families, with many children - one father of seven, one of four, one of two, some fatherless.

The youngest was 27 years old, the oldest 64. "Ordinary people" Gross called them, referring to the now famous study by Christopher Browning "Ordinary Men: Reserve Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland", describing how people recruited from "ordinary" families in Hamburg, fathers and husbands, could and did very quickly descend, under the influence of their peer-group and some judicious brain-washing into committing most horrific atrocities.

I have read the book – out of a sense of duty. It makes such painful reading that few will be able to persist to the end. English translation will appear in the U.S. early next year and will, I foresee, have wide-spread repercussions. The Polish-Jewish debate, which has a specific acrimony in the U.S. will have to take this into account and it will not make those relations better – but there is no escape from it.

We have a long way to go, but – as the Chinese say – even the longest road begins with the first step. There are some hopeful signs and we want to note and encourage them. A very important event took place in Poland a few weeks ago. A "letter" was issued by "the Council of the Polish Episcopate in matters of religious dialogue on the occasion of the Great Jubilee in the year 2000" (sounds a mouthful – Polish Catholic Church for short). It is worth studying line by line, as clearly it has been formulated with enormous care and awareness of its effect in the Church and outside. I shall quote some selected passages:

"Our thoughts turn in the first place towards the Jews because we are linked to them with many deep bonds... The Jewish religion is not for us something external but something very close to us (John Paul II's homily in the Great Synagogue in Rome, 13.IV.1986). The Catholic Church seeks continually ways of reconciliation with the Jewish people who have been challenged by God and remain the object of His love... The Church in Poland, in the person of its Primate, has asked for forgiveness for the attitude of those amongst us who treat with disrespect people of other religions or who tolerate antisemitism. We believe that sons and daughters of the Catholic Church in Poland will

undertake, individually in their conscience and together in their community of believers, that specific act of self-examination.

"Over the history and identity of contemporary Jewry there weighs the drama of the Holocaust. The murder of millions of men, women and children was planned and carried out by the German Nazis in occupied Poland, in territory governed by the Germans. Looking back on it from the perspective of years we realise even more poignantly that unspeakable drama of the Jewish people... The generation of participants and witnesses of World War II and the Holocaust is vanishing beyond retrieval. It is therefore imperative to record suitably and faithfully the memory of what has happened and pass it on to the next generation. In the spirit of atonement one must remain aware that together with the noble attitudes of those who saved many Jewish lives, there are also our sins from that period: indifference or hostility towards Jews.

"One must make every effort to rebuild and deepen Christian solidarity with the Jewish people, so that nowhere and never would similar tragedy happen. One must also effectively overcome all manifestations of anti-Jewishness and anti-Judaism (i.e. hostility caused by the wrongly understood teaching of the Church) and anti-semitism (i.e. hatred caused by nationalistic or racist motives), which do exist among Christians. We expect that "anti-Polonism" will be overcome with equal determination.

"Antisemitism – like antichristianism – is a sin and as such, like all other forms of racism, stands condemned. These things have been revealed to us, above all, by the pilgrimage of John Paul II to the Holy Land in this Jubilee Year. Its deepest meaning permits us to cherish the hope that both, Christians and Jews, can courageously step on a road pointed out by the Pope in his speech in Yad Vashem: "Let's build a new future, where there will be no place for any anti-Jewish feelings among the Christians and no anti-Christian feelings among the

Jews, but rather there will reign mutual respect demanded of those who worship One God and Master and see in Abraham our common Father-in-Faith".

There is more, much more. The letter will be widely quoted and discussed. One of the leading Polish papers in its analysis and interpretation of this document calls it "too cautious". "Is it necessary when mentioning the Holocaust immediately to link it to 'anti-Polonism'?" These phenomena, says the writer, are not comparable. And is it necessary to mention in this context "anti-Christianism"?

I do not expect miracles. John Paul II already performed many and the conservatives in the Vatican will extract their revenge for these concessions (see below). Considering the age-long and entrenched anti-Judaic tradition of the Catholic Church, in theory and practice, one has to realise the difficulty John Paul II and his allies had in trying to change course – because that's what it amounts to. I never thought that I would see this and I think we should come out to meet it with open mind and heart.

The Christian congregations in Poland will have this message mediated through their parish priests – this is the crunch. Would that many of them are able and willing to act in the spirit of the Letter, to make a difference. Let us pray.

To a Jew the Cross was often associated with persecution and oppression – this is a tremendous symbolic barrier. I recall, as a boy, living in the Polish town of Krakow before the war, in a mixed community, predominantly Jewish but cheek-by-jowl with the non-Jewish majority: when a lad from the neighbourhood wanted for some reason to drive me away, he would not usually resort to a stick or a stone but would use a subtler method: would set his index-fingers in a sign of a cross and would push them under my nose – he knew I would turn my face away and run. This aversion lasted a long time, I am ashamed to admit that I am not entirely free from it even now.

One was exposed to these traumas in one's daily life. On a prominent street-corner in Krakow, where I was likely to brush against it every day, on the outside wall of a church there was a shrine – three large crosses, Jesus in the centre, a

large naked figure nailed either side of him, nails sticking out, blood oozing from open wounds... I would cross the street and look the other way – I found the iconography nauseating.

Once, during a session of the military training in secondary school, the whole company was taken to church to attend service during a national holiday. At one moment during the service the congregation knelt. I, and a few of my Jewish colleagues stood – it felt very cold and uncomfortable. A voice, maybe more than one, hissed from behind: "On your knees, you son-of-a-bitch!" I can hear it now.

There is a long way to go... We do not understand each other – it is fruitless to discuss who understands whom less. I am unable to grasp the basic tenets of Christian dogma, for I cannot conceive what they mean.

Pope John II, the Pope who in the whole history of the Papacy came closest to the Jewish community, has the other day "beatified" (i.e. "Set on the road to sainthood") one of his predecessors, Pius IX, one of the most antisemitic Popes (and this is saying something). The British Roman Catholic weekly "The Tablet" calls it "a beatification too far". He herded Jews into the ghetto. In 1858 he ordered the kidnapping of Edgardo Levi-Mortara, a Jewish boy aged 6, because some years before a nurse, fearing for his soul, baptised him secretly. He kept him forcefully in the Vatican and raised him as a Christian. Edgardo became Pius IX's personal ward and his family never saw him again. Which road to sainthood?

The Vatican has postponed the proposed "beatification" of Pope Pius XII, the "Hitler's Pope", the one who did not find a word of condemnation for the Holocaust.

John Paul II, since his election in 1978 has beatified or canonised more than 1,200 candidates, more than all his 20th century predecessors combined. No doubt in due course he will enter the saintly ranks himself and with more merit than many those elevated by him. But I have it on good authority that it is thought most unlikely that there will be another "Polish Pope" in the foreseeable future.

MONTEFIORE MEMORIAL LECTURE

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MEMORIAL LECTURE

THE HOLOCAUST IS NEWS (NOT THEN - NOW)

David Cesarani

David Cesarani is Professor Modern Jewish History at Southampton University and Director of The Institute of Contemporary History and Wiener Library. He has published widely on the Holocaust, Zionism and The Jews in Britain.

It is hardly newsworthy, least of all before such an audience, to remark that stories deriving from the Holocaust have regularly dominated the world's news media over the last decade. One need only think of the response to 'Schindler's List' in 1993-4; the intense coverage of the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in January 1995; the saga concerning Switzerland and so-called 'Nazi gold' from 1996 through 1998; the reporting of issues connected with compensation for slave labour or the restitution of artworks looted by the Nazis. Alongside these major stories have been on-going reports about war criminals and war crimes trials in various countries, controversies over memorialisation of the Holocaust, not least the Stockholm Conference in January 2000 and the debate over the establishment of a Holocaust Memorial Day for Britain, and a succession of dramatic discoveries in archives in the former Soviet Union, the USA, Britain, and France. Most recently, the Irving trial has generated acres of news coverage centred on the history of the Holocaust.

Nor is it particularly original to observe that it was not always like this. The Nazis war against the Jews received extensive media attention in the last months of the Second World War when the concentration camps in Poland and western Europe were overrun and survivors were liberated. Respectable amounts of press attention were accorded to the first war crimes trials, too. But that interest waned. Except in certain specific circumstances, usually within a local context, during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s the fate of the Jews under Nazi rule was rarely a major news story. The question of reparations preoc-

cupied Germans and Israelis in the 1950s and the 'Kasztner case' held the headlines in Israel for months.¹ But until the seizure and trial of Adolf Eichmann in May 1960-1, the destruction of Europe's Jews was relegated firmly to the realms of history and memory. It was an event in the past, closed, and therefore not of present interest.

That began to change with the Eichmann trial. As the American cultural historian, Jeffrey Shandler, has remarked, it was one of the first truly global news events and one in which television news had a leading part. What Shandler fails to note is that the impact of the trial was amplified by a cluster of national and internationally newsworthy events that overlapped and intermingled with cultural explorations on the same theme.

In 1959, prior to the abduction of Eichmann, the film version of the Broadway play 'The Diary of Anne Frank' opened around the world. By chance, the feature film version of 'Judgement at Nuremberg' was released in the US in 1961 and made its way around the world. In 1963 Hannah Arendt published her account and meditations on the case, 'Eichmann in Jerusalem', which triggered an enormous controversy inside the Jewish world and amongst scholars. It was quickly followed by the trial in Frankfurt, West Germany, of SS guards from Auschwitz, between December 1963 and August 1965. The judicial processes in Jerusalem and Frankfurt helped to generate two important cultural confrontations with Nazism and the 'Final Solution': Rolf Hochhuth's play 'The Deputy' (1964) and Peter Weiss's 'The Investigation' (1965) - a stage version of Eichmann's actual trial.

The conjunction of news stories and cultural happenings would come to typify the pattern by which the Holocaust, now existing as a monolithic event known by that name, would be replayed time and again in the present. Here we have in prototype form the chief characteristics of the Holocaust as news.

It begins with a major, sudden, and sensational happening, but one that can be set against a background that gives journalists and audiences some familiarity with the core subject matter. It is focussed on a courtroom and a trial: a concentrated, accessible, and intrinsically dramatic format. It is mediated by the print and electronic media and transformed, not by accident but by design, into a global 'media event'. This, in turn, stimulates cultural representations of the event itself or themes which it opens up. These representations become controversial and newsworthy in their own right. And so the media-news cycle goes whirling on, confirming in the minds of news editors that the subject matter is inherently newsworthy and priming the reception for future stories in the same genre. Finally, amongst the audience for these news and cultural representations are young people in higher education or on the cusp of careers as journalists who imbibe the message that the Holocaust is news. The process is thus transmitted across the generations.

However, it was and is not self-evident that the Nazi torment of the Jews should have become or remain a news item. The narrative which has just been presented begs the question of why the mass murder of the Jews should have been considered interesting when, for 15 years, it had been a mere absence on the news agenda of the world's press agencies and newspapers. Nor does this account explain why, after a period of attention, the Jewish catastrophe was relegated to low status as a news story until the late 1970s.

To find an answer to this conundrum it helps to draw on media studies to analyse and understand what constitutes 'news'. We can then look at the form and timing characteristic of Holocaust-related issues and events that become news. This will tell us something about the development of awareness and understanding about the Nazi persecution and mass murder of the Jews since 1945 and its

impact on society, politics and culture. But a sharper appreciation of what makes news will also illustrate the dangers which exist when the Holocaust becomes a news story.

II

News does not simply exist. According to the leading British media theorist John Hartley, "news is a social institution and a cultural discourse which exists and has meaning only in relation to other institutions and discourses operating at the same time." It relies on shared language and common understanding of images. It is presented by institutions that have vested interests, that operate in a legal, political, commercial, cultural, and social field of forces. As Hartley writes: "Events don't get into the news simply by happening, no matter how frantically. They too must fit in with what is already there... Events need to be known and recognised, coming from a known and trusted - and preferably 'representative' - source. To win inclusion in any particular news, they must fulfil a certain number of criteria: in short, they must be newsworthy."

The conditions which render an event newsworthy have been identified by John Galtung and Mari Ruge. They need to be either sudden and dramatic, or build up over a period of time with plenty of warning. Events need to achieve a certain scale to be noticed and reported. It needs to be clear what they are about: anything too complex will defy packaging as news. The events in question must have relevance and meaning to news-gatherers: something deemed meaningless and irrelevant will be ignored. To be meaningful there must be some cultural connection, a framework of shared references. In Mark Fishman's words: "News workers must have ways of seeing meaningful chunks of activity in the happenings going on around them. They must have ways of delimiting the boundaries of events.... Events are interpreted phenomena, things organised in thought, talk, and action. People employ schemes of interpretation to carve events out of the stream of experience."

Partly as a consequence of this, news accentuates anything which is deemed meaningful prior to an event occurring. Not everything that happens as part of an event is reported or given prominence: it has

to conform to a pre-existing agenda and it has to be explained in ways that are familiar. Once something has begun to happen as a news story it will continue to be covered: it becomes a 'running story'. But when and how it appears will depend on what else is deemed newsworthy. A minor foreign event can be given priority if most other news on a given news day is domestic. Even so, every news story has to have value and this is derived from a pre-existing hierarchy which attaches special importance to elite nations and individuals. To work as news, a story has to have a human face or human interest. Finally, 'Bad news is good news.' An eruption of activity with unpleasant consequences which affects people with whom we can identify is a perfect story.³

We can now use these criteria to explain how elements of the Nazi past have become the present concern of news editors. Holocaust stories are frequently triggered by a move against a war criminal followed by a trial and a conviction. They often begin with claims made against persons or states (claims for justice, restitution, or compensation), build to a conference that discusses these issues, and end with a trumpeted settlement. Recently the element of unexpectedness has come from the discovery of documents in archives or the publication of an article or book proffering a new line of thinking. Occasionally a controversial speech may substitute for a publication.

These events are newsworthy because they are intrinsically big. By their nature Holocaust stories are international. They almost always involve Jews in one country, who once lived somewhere else, making claims against another state or people of a different nationality. They ineluctably suck in the countries involved in the Second World War. The moral standing of the respective parties in the story is usually unambiguous: since the Holocaust has become a 'moral paradigm', a 'touchstone' for determining good and evil it is a desirable news item, with clear cut 'goodies' and 'baddies'.⁴

The issues presented by the Holocaust are not only of international concern, they are perceived as inherently meaningful and relevant. The presence of many Jews in the news agencies gives Holocaust

stories an immediacy and relevance that other events lack. (Imagine how it would have affected the coverage of events in central Africa in 1996 if many of the staff of CBS, Reuters, the BBC, and CNN were Rwandans...). To the descendants of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, the children and grandchildren of refugees from Nazis, camp survivors, or liberators, Holocaust stories need little introduction or promotion. Nor is their appeal restricted to these discreet groups. The Nazi assault upon the Jews raises fundamental questions about the abuse and protection of human and civil rights, the practice of Christianity, racism, eugenics and other matters of universal concern.

In this sense stories from the Nazi era tend to fit with and confirm existing moral and political values. They are read and replayed to prove what we already know about ourselves and our societies. No-one covers a story about a Nazi war criminal, for example, to show that they were charming and gentle or a perfect example for today of good citizenship. Because the Nazi past shows the present in a good light, it is little surprise that Nazi news stories run and run. They may apparently erupt out of nowhere, like the issue of Switzerland and 'Nazi gold', but once launched they meet the criteria for a richly satisfying, continuing story. Above all, they refer to an elite group - the Jews, and are usually relevant to the privileged circle of states that matter in world affairs.

The Jewish victims who are usually articulate, mostly respectable, and 'like us', enable the story to be personalised in the most effective way, although it must be noted that in a quite recent development the perpetrators have also taken the limelight in a number of TV and cinema documentaries.⁵ The availability of eye-witnesses lends the dark epic of the Holocaust a human interest dimension that makes it seductive for news programmers. Finally, it is a compelling story because it is the ultimate in 'bad news' - but with a twist. It has, perversely and only in the mediated world of news, a happy ending.

News stories about the Holocaust necessarily locate evil in the past. The fact that the event itself is over (although a few, comparatively minor loose ends remain to be tied up) means that Holocaust

stories by definition achieve closure on the past. Since the human interest is almost always provided by survivors, the implicit message is all about surmounting pain, suffering, loss, and adversity. Post-Holocaust stories are usually about seeking and achieving recognition, justice, reparation, compensation, or remembrance. These stories thereby confirm the essential goodness of contemporary society and politics. Even if the story concerns a struggle for justice - such as the survivors of slave labour fighting for compensation from the German corporations that once exploited them - there are still two sides, one of which is good. And this is usually the point of view from which the struggle is reported. The reporting of Holocaust-era issues has the effect of confirming the established values of the society to which it is directed.

The magnitude of the Holocaust and the 'radical evil' it illustrates also has the effect of marginalizing lesser emanations of inhumanity. The violation of human rights, the vicious treatment of asylum seekers, the niggardly approach to immigration and immigrants, the persistence of racism, the exploitation of labour, the amorality of capital, all of which disfigure most modern societies, nevertheless seem mere peccadilloes when compared to the exploits of the Third Reich, in a similar way the identification of far right politics with the Nazis supplies an alibi for centre-right parties that adopt analogous policies but without the trappings of fascism. For example, a self-righteous editorial in the London Daily Telegraph last year urged the centre parties in Austria to challenge Jörg Haider's policies on immigration, although that paper has been advocating restrictions on asylum and immigration that would not have been out of place in the platform of the Austrian Freedom Party. But Haider has expressed sympathy with elements of Nazism whereas the Daily Telegraph has not, which in its eyes presumably makes all the difference.⁶

III

If these criteria of newsworthiness help to explain how events become news, how can we account for the uneven rhythm with which Nazi-era stories have punctuated the news since 1945? Many post-Holocaust

events occurred, but few were deemed sufficiently clear cut, relevant, or consonant with dominant values to merit status as news. Some stories might have featured at national level, but few were big enough to become global media events. One reason was that the Jews were not an elite group and Israel, though a significant world presence, was not an elite nation. Above all, the Cold War set the parameters of what was meaningful - with devastating effect on the appreciation of post-Holocaust issues.

The late 1940s and the 1950s, when the events of 1933-45 appeared to have become a closed history book, were the coldest years of the Cold War. Stories that drew attention to the unsavoury past of states in the western alliance were shunned. In West Germany to point out that politicians had a Nazi past was to risk being denounced as pro-Soviet.⁷ In Britain and the United States, East Europeans who had collaborated with the Nazis in the war against the Soviet Union were welcomed as intelligence assets. They were depicted as refugees from Soviet totalitarianism who deserved sympathy rather than hostility. Those who queried their presence in the western democracies were marginalised as unrepresentative, non-authoritative, and dissonant voices.⁸

This was also an era when Jews in France, Britain, and North America, were overcoming the last great wave of anti-semitism and breaking down the last barriers against assimilation, escaping from the metaphorical ghetto. There was little desire to accentuate their particularism, least of all when being a Jew was commonly associated with being a Communist. Peter Novick is correct in his analysis of the place of the Holocaust in American life in the post-war era when he argues that it had low priority for Jews and Gentiles. Jews did not want to appear as vengeful or as victims by perpetuating the record of their suffering. They wanted to share in the ebullience of the post-war era, with the survivors exemplifying the 'can do' mentality of the times. If the Holocaust had any meaning for non-Jews, it was a universal one: the evil of Nazism was subsumed under the heading of totalitarianism, blurring the differences between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. This illusion mainly went unchallenged: Jews did not

want to appear unpatriotic by appearing to turn opinion against an ally of the United States in its fight against Communism. In Novick's words, during the 1950s 'The Holocaust had an awkward specificity, and it was the "wrong atrocity" for contemporary purposes'.¹¹

Novick's analysis holds true for other countries in the free world.¹² If events require meaningfulness, relevance, consonance with dominant values, and resonance with elites to become newsworthy, then the soil was not fertile for growing Holocaust news stories.

This started to change in the 1960s. Although the Cold War remained intense, a spirit of political liberalisation quickened on both sides of the Atlantic. The rise of the New Left, the increased tolerance of dissent, and a critical, anti-establishment mood amongst the young created an 'opening for the exploration of a troubled and contentious past. An incentive to embark on self-criticism came from the rash of attacks on Jewish targets by neo-Nazis in Germany and Britain from 1959 to 1962. The temporary vogue for the far right engendered an interest in its historic antecedents. Taken together, these developments made conditions more favourable for the construction of Holocaust-related news stories. Most important, from 1959 to 1965 an unprecedented constellation of national and international events came into alignment.¹³ However, this benign configuration proved transitory. As the events moved out of line, the critical mass needed to sustain a 'running story' was lost. The 20th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the liberation of the camps in 1965 passed without any sustained interest by the news media.¹⁴

The 30th anniversary of the end of the war was no more notable for any major media interest in the Holocaust, but conditions were becoming more favourable. In the United States, the agenda setter for global news, the Jewish population had become wealthy, politically strong, and self-confident. The Six Day War had galvanised the community. Confronted by the possibility that Israel would be left isolated and vulnerable to annihilation, American Jewish leaders resolved never again to lack the funds, muscle, or resolve to defend their people in Israel or anywhere else. The

campaign for Soviet Jews grew out of this mood, as did the self-examination of what went wrong during the Nazi years. This assertiveness was fortified by the experience of the Yom Kippur War, although that in itself would not have changed the general climate of opinion and made it receptive to the news treatment of Holocaust-era issues.¹⁵

Deeper forces were now at work within America and American Jewry. The myth of the melting pot was evaporating and ethnicity was emerging as a legitimate vehicle for self-identification and group mobilisation. Ethnic self-awareness inevitably led to a scrutiny of roots, or origins. In a country formed of migrants and refugees from poverty or oppression, living alongside the descendants of slaves imported from Africa, this soon became a competitive celebration of victimhood. American Jews discovered in the Holocaust a powerful adhesive myth and a counter argument against rampant assimilation. More controversially, Peter Novick has detected a 'massive investment by Jewish communal organisations in promoting 'Holocaust consciousness' in order to foster Jewish group solidarity, deter anti-semitism, neutralise anti-Zionism, and solidify support for Israel'.¹⁶

Some of these trends made possible the conception, production, and subsequent success of the 1978 NBC television mini-series 'Holocaust'. They were also responsible for the first steps towards a US national Holocaust memorial.¹⁷ Once Hollywood and the major American television networks, not to mention politicians, had discovered the viability of the Holocaust as a story, its news value was all but guaranteed. But news needs events as much as events need to be newsworthy. The pursuit of Nazi-era war criminals, politics, and the ebb and flow of the Cold War provided these events.

In Germany and France new historical research in the 1970s shed light on the Third Reich and its agents. This stimulated the determination to bring war criminals to justice. So great was the popular response to the broadcast of 'Holocaust' that the West German government scrapped the statute of limitations applying to Nazi-era crimes of murder and genocide. In France, increased awareness about the culpability of the Vichy regime for the deportation of Jews from France led to

public pressure on the government to prosecute Klaus Barbie, the first of a string of high-profile cases (not all of which reached court) including Paul Touvier, Renj Bousquet, Maurice Papon, and Alois Brunner.¹⁸

Heightened sensitivity about the Holocaust and Nazi crimes accounts for the controversy that surrounded President Reagan's visit to Bitburg in May 1985. Ironically, the controversy was attributable to the East-West conflict that had done so much in the past to dampen awareness of the Holocaust. The 'new Cold War' initiated by Ronald Reagan in the early 1980s prompted the US President to visit West Germany to strengthen relations with a key European ally, the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, who was determined to normalise his country's past, included in the President's schedule a visit to a Second World War era cemetery at Bitburg where Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS men were interred. The intention was for the two leaders to symbolically lay the past to rest; Reagan's agreement to this gesture was a quid pro quo for continued German support within NATO. But the resulting uproar became a global 'media event'.¹⁹

Since 1985, an unprecedented confluence of anniversaries, events and cultural occasions have ensured a steady flow of Holocaust-related stories. Yet the events in themselves cannot explain their representation as news: these were events that met the criteria of newsworthiness. The conclusion of the Cold War was central to this process. In a complex variety of ways, the winding down of superpower conflict and the eventual collapse of the Soviet imperium increased the scope for Holocaust issues and events to become news.

The 50th anniversary of the end of the war and the liberation of the camps was bound to be a media occasion, but the fall of the Iron Curtain transformed its possibilities. In 1995 the world's media descended on Auschwitz in a manner that would not have been possible in 1985. Survivors gave testimony at the camp sites in scenes that were supercharged by the coupling of occasion with location. The potency of the place was immeasurably increased because the camp and the nearby city of Cracow had been transformed into Hollywood film locations by 'Schindler's List'. It was also the

site of struggles over history and memory of the Holocaust, symbolised by the controversy over the erection of crosses and the establishment of a Carmelite Convent at Auschwitz, that had featured as a news story from 1989 to 1993. Spielberg's film and the convent saga, too, would not have been likely without the change of regime in Poland.

The collapse of Communism also allowed western researchers into formerly closed archives. This facilitated the pursuit and prosecution of Nazi-era war criminals and produced a number of courtroom dramas on which the media feasted. Furthermore, with the dematerialisation of the Red menace, western countries relaxed the restrictions on access to their own archives. Previously secret intelligence material was declassified, enabling a series of sensational discoveries.²⁰ These archival finds were a story in themselves, but they made possible campaigns for justice that were an even bigger story. In late 1995, the World Jewish Congress launched its struggle against the Swiss Bankers Association for the recovery of heirless accounts attributable to Holocaust victims but held by Swiss banks since 1945. This was a global story par excellence and culminated in two international conferences - in London in 1997 and Washington in 1998 - that brought together the representatives and the press corps of 40 nations.²¹

The effect of seeing the past intrude into the present was compounded by events in Europe and further afield that made the present ever more resemble the past. The Iraqi aggression against Kuwait, the conflict in Bosnia, the genocide in Rwanda, and the Kosovo crisis all led to accusations of war criminality and calls for Nuremberg-style reckonings. They also prompted, rightly or wrongly, the drawing of parallels with the Holocaust, and, rightly or wrongly, the Holocaust was invoked as a rationale for international intervention.²²

Events which trace their lineage to the Holocaust have thus acquired news value not only because they are consonant with values which we all share with respect to the Nazi genocide, but because the fate of the Jews seems to be echoed in contemporary events. The past has become consonant with the present in a way that was not the case in the 1950s

when it could be said with confidence that genocide was a thing of the past, a closed book. But if the Holocaust has now become a news fixture, is this a good thing?

IV

First, let us look at the benefits. The appearance of Holocaust-related stories in the newspapers, TV and radio news programmes, as well as film documentaries all contribute to public education about the Holocaust and raise historical awareness. They are a gift to school teachers because these news reports have an immediacy, relevance, and urgency that history lacks. News is also a shared experience: big stories are discussed at home with parents and amongst peer groups.²¹

Certain types of commonly occurring Holocaust-era stories are particularly useful. For example, war crimes prosecutions. One of the first historical issues raised by the Nazi war crimes question is the identity of the perpetrators. In Canada, Australia, Britain and the USA, although they were dubbed 'Nazis' the alleged perpetrators were almost universally of East European origin. This takes the public beyond the notion that all perpetrators were black uniformed Germans and exposes the patterns of collaboration in occupied Europe. The absence of Nazi ideology as a motivating factor in most of these cases removes a convenient explanation and alibi for the perpetrators. The evasion of justice by the collaborators invites inquiry into Allied attitudes towards Nazi war crimes and Nazi accomplices; what was, and was not done, to bring them to justice, and why. The Papon case revealed aspects of the occupation and the liberation in French history and memory.

The so-called 'Nazi gold' issue highlighted the Nazis' economic war against the Jews and the role of non-belligerent and neutral states which processed the looted assets. Questions around the restitution of property and looted art, and compensation for slave labour serve to show up the wider economic dimensions of the Holocaust. The aryanization of businesses in the Reich and in occupied countries illustrate how the Nazis' economic war against the Jews, like mass murder, also required extensive collaboration. The buying and selling Jewish property in Amsterdam or Salonika helped

cement relations between the Germans and their associates of crime. Thus news reports on these topics can demonstrate that complicity in genocide was even more widely distributed than previously thought.

V

Yet the reincarnation of the Holocaust as a topical item is fraught with perils. The media is often fascinated with the Nazi era for the wrong reasons. Susan Sontag, Alvin Rosenfeld, and Saul Friedlander have shown that much of the interest is a sort of Nazi kitsch: voyeuristic, sensational and shallow.²² The hegemony of the image over the content of a TV news story accentuates these dangers. Rarely is a Holocaust-related story on TV or in the print media unaccompanied by footage or stills of swaggering Nazis, swastika imagery, and, above all, piles of corpses, usually naked. Even if the motive is pure, the effect is decidedly counter-productive.

Barbie Zelizer has persuasively argued that the 'atrocities photographs' of the Second World War provided the template for all later photo-reportage of mass murder, leading to the blurring of temporal boundaries. Images of the Einsatzgruppen massacres and the concentration camps literally came to prefigure the killing fields of Cambodia, Bosnia, and Rwanda. Expressing concern about the consequences, Zelizer comments, 'Their recycled appearance in the discussion of contemporary atrocities constitutes a backdrop for depiction that neutralises much of the potential response to other ravages against humanity.' The repetition of images of atrocity has not only habituated the public to atrocities but diminished them.²³

The recycling of these representations has had another effect. Desensitisation to the sight of atrocities has extended backwards: it has dulled the appreciation of what was the archetype itself. Endlessly repeated monochrome newsreel and stills of anonymous corpses has dissipated their shock value, their capacity to move us. We have become as inured to past atrocity as much as to their contemporary rivals. Perhaps this is why there is now a vogue for colour footage of the Second World War, although it is hard to see how that will compete with the garish horrors of the nightly news and the Sunday magazine.²⁴

If the images are problematic, the written or verbal content can be even worse. Reporters, sub-editors and editors are prone to make silly errors which can seriously mislead the public.

For example, in June 1999 a story was constructed from the 'discovery' of the original manuscript of the Nuremberg Laws in the Huntington Library in San Marino, southern California. The *Guardian* headlined the story 'Holocaust Blueprint Unearthed'. According to the reporter, Michael Ellison, it was 'The original document that provided the blueprint for the Holocaust...' that had been 'drawn up over the weekend in 1935 at a meeting of the Reichstag.'²⁵ At best, this is 'intentionalism' writ large, but even the most rigid intentionalist would acknowledge that there were many more essential steps between the Nuremberg decrees and the 'Final Solution'. Ellison repeats the myth that the laws were drawn up in a hurry, obscuring the fact that Nazi race laws had been in place for over two years and that officials in the Interior Ministry, led by Hans Globke, had for some time been working on legislation to systematise regulations covering the position of the Jews in the Reich. The notion that the laws were drawn up by the Reichstag just shows basic ignorance on the part of the writer or editor of the piece.

Lack of knowledge helps to explain the extraordinary proclivity for stories about the 'discovery' of documents that really don't tell us anything new. Most notoriously, when the 'Nazi gold' story broke in 1996, no-one seemed to know that six years earlier a perfectly good book on the subject had been published by Arthur L. Smith which used the very sources which were now being trumpeted as 'new'.²⁶

Of course, there have been some genuine archival discoveries, especially in the Moscow archives. Nevertheless, none of these finds has challenged the basic outline history of the Holocaust. Yet for the news media this is not the point. The newsworthiness of an event in which a document is 'discovered' does not rest solely on the significance of its content; the fact that it is 'previously unseen' or 'newly declassified' is enough to give it news value. Such stories are driven as much by the novelty of the documentation as by what the documents actually tell us about the past. It may be old

hat to historians, but since journalists know precious little history, it is exciting to them. The result is sound and fury, signifying - well, not a lot. Years of uproar over declassified intelligence material have fuelled an intense, but essentially sterile, re-enactment of the discussion first aired in the late 1970s over who knew about the 'Final Solution', what, when, how they found out, and what they did (or did not do) about it.²⁷

The sensationalism of the new can alight on arguments as much as artefacts. Daniel Goldhagen's *'Hitler's Willing Executioners'* (1996) presented little, relative to its bulk and other existing scholarship, that was substantively original; but the tone and nature of his argument was fresh and this, with the help of some calculated public relations activity, helped to create yet another global 'media event'. The consequences of this are yet to be felt, but Goldhagen's success has probably not assisted the chances of serious, original research reaching a wide audience. Instead, it has set a premium on polemic.²⁸

By its nature, news sensationalises. It also selects and abbreviates, with the effect that it trivialises. When survivors are called on to comment about events, they are reduced to the indignity of a soundbite and are often left flustered or wounded. Exceptions can be made to this rule. Disproportionate attention is paid to the experiences and antecedents of elite persons, such as the flurry stirred by Madeleine Albright's 'revelation' that her parents had fled the Nazis. Stephen Spielberg's valuable, but also problematic, project to videotape survivors of the Holocaust enjoys lavish media attention while other, equally worthy efforts languish in obscurity.

Spielberg's success does not derive only from his elite status and pre-eminence as a 'mediacrat'. It is also a tribute to the redemptive message purveyed by his feature films and documentaries on Second World War themes, and which guides the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. Because this upbeat message conforms to wider cultural values, Holocaust-related events that are associated with Spielberg acquire newsworthiness. The media world wants *'Schindler's List'* and Benigni's *'Life is Beautiful'*, rather than Lanzmann's *'Shoah'* or Kjell Grede's unrelentingly bleak, but

unjustly neglected "Good Evening, Mr Wallenberg."

The desire for a redemptive interpretation of the Holocaust and confirmation that society has progressed from that barbarism also means that news value attaches to elite persons from the past, heroic figures such as Raul Wallenberg. By contrast, dissonant figures such as Szymuel Zygielbojm whose story runs against the grain of the preferred narrative are consigned to oblivion. While it is understandable and laudable that brave men and women should be celebrated in the present, it is worrying when discordant evidence that such personalities were not plaster saints is marginalised or when 'failures' are utterly forgotten.

Finally, the news media thrive on bad things happening. Stories are routinely structured in terms of a crisis or a conflict. When this is applied to Holocaust-related events and issues, it results in the depiction of Jews pitted against Swiss banks, German corporations, recalcitrant East European regimes shielding war criminals, the Roman Catholic Church. Jews are positioned by the stories in which they are part players as litigious, adversarial, aggressive, vengeful, and obsessed with the past. This is bad enough, but these are not just individual Jews. They are representative, authoritative, and powerful - the elite of an elite. And they speak for organisations that have a global purview, otherwise they would not have a locus standi in the disputes in question. In other words, the stories that have most recently typified the Holocaust as news have generated an image of a powerful international Jewry driven by revenge, and demanding vast sums of money as the only acceptable recompense.

I have one final caveat based on the experience of the Irving trial. The news media pride themselves on being impartial and neutral. During a libel case they are obliged to report both sides fairly. Unlike a war crimes trial, the issue in a trial revolving around Holocaust denial is not whether particular events occurred within the context of the Holocaust, but whether the Holocaust occurred at all. As a result of the Irving - v - Lipstadt trial, the Holocaust deniers have received more news coverage and reached more people than would ever have been possible through the medium of their own miserable publications and garish web sites.

If these are the costs, are the benefits commensurable? It is hard to say. The reproduction of the Holocaust as news can assist Holocaust education. It certainly raised awareness of the Holocaust and gives some consolation to those who fear that it may be forgotten. But there are serious penalties to pay in the form of sensationali-

sation, trivialisation, and bowdlerisation. The Holocaust has become just another news story, instantly forgotten; the repetition of words and the images in danger of draining them of their power. To work as news stories, the protagonists in Holocaust-related stories are forced to conform to certain stereotypes which

in this specific case cannot avoid echoing negative Jewish stereotypes. Since the news media help to shape the perception of reality, to which news stories must in turn conform to have meaning and relevance, this is a sobering thought. Are we paying too heavy a price to have the Holocaust in the news?

1. See Ronald Zweig, *German Reparations and the Jewish World* (Boulder, Col., 1987) and Yehiam Weiz, 'Political Dimensions of Holocaust Memory in Israel' in R Wistrich and D Ohana (eds) *The Shaping of Israeli Identity* (London, 1995), pp. 129-145.
2. Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches. Televising the Holocaust* (New York, 1999), p. xviii.
3. John Hartley, *Understanding the News* (London [1982] 1995 edn), pp. 8-9, 75-6 and passim.
4. Hartley, *Understanding the News* pp. 76-79. See also, Mark Fishman, 'News and Nonevents. Making the Visible Invisible' in Berkovitz (ed), *Social Meanings of News*, pp. 211-2.
5. Hartley, *Understanding the News* pp. 76-79.
6. Shandler, *While America Watches*, pp. 211-45. See also Yehuda Bauer.
7. See Claude Lanzmann's 'Shoah', 'The Nazis: a warning from history' (BBC, 1998), 'The War of the Century' (BBC, 1999), 'The Last Days' (Shoah Foundation, 1998).
8. *Daily Telegraph*, 5 October 1999.
9. Robert Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley, forthcoming); Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory* (1998).
10. David Cesarani, *Justice Delayed* (London, 1992), pp. 119-22, 180-186. See also Christopher Simpson, *Blowback* (London, 1988), Tom Bower, *The Paperclip Conspiracy* (London, 1988) and *Blind Eye to Murder* (1997 edn); Mark Aarons, *Sanctuary, Nazi Fugitives in Australia* (Victoria, 1989).
11. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York, 1999), pp. 85, 101, 108-117.
12. See David Wyman (ed.) *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Baltimore, 1996) and Judith Miller, *One by One by One...* (New York, 1990).
13. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 127-32.
14. For the lacklustre commemorations in the UK, see Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 252-3 and Vicki Nash, 'The Council of Christians and Jews and Responses to the Holocaust in Britain', MA dissertation, University of Southampton, pp. 31-43.
15. David Wyman, 'The United States' in Wyman (ed.). *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, pp. 726-8; Edward Linenthal, *Preserving Memory* (New York, 1995), pp. 8-15. Five years later, Holocaust survivors who were emerging as a vocal force in communal organisations were electrified by the appearance of neo-Nazis in Skokie and the debate over whether or not to ban their activity.
16. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 151-60.
17. Shandler, *While America Watches*, pp. 155-67 on the origins and impact of 'Holocaust'; Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, pp. 17-20 on the US Holocaust memorial.
18. See David Weinberg, 'France', in Wyman (ed.) *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, pp. 30-2, 36-8.
19. Shandler, *While America Watches*, pp. 204-9. Richard Lvan's, *In Hitler's Shadow* (London 1989), pp. 16-18; Geoffrey Hartman, *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington, 1986).
20. See Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets* (New York, 1999).
21. See Tom Bower, *Nazi Gold* (London, 1997), Adam Lebor, *Hitler's Secret Banker* (London, 1997), Gregg Rickman, *Swiss Banks and Jewish Souls* (New York, 1999).
22. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 247-57; Yehuda Bauer, *Yad Vashem Quarterly Magazine*, vol 14 (Summer 1999), pp. 12-13.
23. Hartley, *Understanding the News*, pp. 7-10.
24. Susan Sontag, 'Fascinating Fascism' in *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York, 1980), pp. 73-108; Alvin Rosenfeld, *Imagining Hitler* (Bloomington, 1985); Saul Friedlander, *Reflections on Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death* (New York, 1985).
25. Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget, Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago, 1998), pp. 202-20.
26. See 'The Second World War in Colour' (ITV, 1999); 'War of the Century' (BBC, 1999).
27. *Guardian*, 28 June 1998.
28. Arthur Smith, *Hitler's Gold* (Oxford, 1989; 2nd ed. 1997).
29. See Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret* (London, 1980), Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Oxford, 1979), Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (London, 1979), Breitman, *Official Secrets*. A recent example of this trend is an article by Barbara Rogers in *History Today*, in October 1999, claiming that the minutes of a meeting between American Jewish leaders and president Roosevelt on 8 December 1942 prove the Allies knew about 'Auschwitz' years earlier than previously thought. The memo has been used by historians for years; it is cited by David Wyman in his *The Abandonment of the Jews* (New York, 1984). Rogers discovered in the PRO that a copy had reached the Foreign Office, but this is hardly significant. Nor does it actually mention Auschwitz, which is the case for British decrypts discovered by Breitman for mid-1942. The memo actually mentions Oswiecim, a minor but important detail. Despite this, the story was given almost an entire page in the *Independent*, 2 October 1999.
30. See editor's introduction to Robert Shandley (ed.), *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate* (Minneapolis, 1998), pp. 1-28. See also the contributions by Avraham Barkai, Yisrael Gutman, Goetz Aly, and Raul Hilberg in *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol 26 (1998). The controversy around and 'success' of William Rubinstein. *The Myth of Rescue* (London, 1997) is another illustration of this phenomena.

SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION

MONICA GAST STAUBER

Monica is the daughter of Paul and Edith Gast. (Bolek Gastfreund). Paul is one of the Windermere Boys. He lived in the Loughton and Belsize Park Hostel. He emigrated to the States to join his relatives and later fought in the Korean War. He now lives in Florida.

Note from the author...

The attached essay was written in 1975 as part of a college entrance requirement. My father has kept a copy in his archives all these years, not only because his daughter wrote it, but also because of its timelessness. He has asked my permission to reprint it in order to share its value with others. I hope that this essay written by a seventeen-year-old can impart some wisdom to those forty-something-year-old parents of today.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A FAMILY RELATIONSHIP

By Monica S. Gast

Upon meeting my family, one can readily notice the close relationship between my parents and me. One reason for my family's constant devotion to each other is sensed through the question I am often asked, "What is it like being an only child?" Because we are a small family, I feel we tend to stick close to each other. Each member sees the other as a link of a chain hoping to create a family circle. One link looks to the other for guidance and support for the next strand in life. I see my family as all I have in a sense, because if anything should ever happen to either of my parents I have no other family that could ever replace or share the loss of them.

Another facet of my life which influences a close knit relationship is my background. Similarly, my father is an only child, but due to the time period in which he grew up, both his parents were senselessly killed in the Holocaust. As many other children of this time, he was alone, without anyone to turn to. But, he is luckier than most, he is here today to build a family and teach them to appreciate what he was not able to have. Even though, he stresses a strong bond of interdependence within the family, he also imposes the need to be independent, so as to survive situations, similar to his previous experience, which we hope will never occur again.

Consequently, I value a close relationship highly. Such relationships within the family teach one various desirable qualities which the psychology of a family is concerned with. Mainly the problems and adjustments of human beings living in society. The following quote demonstrates the possible outcome of a good family upbringing:

"If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn. If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.

If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to have confidence.

If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness, he learns to have justice.

If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world."

Through the example and discipline of parents, children learn to behave in socially acceptable ways. Children become human by interacting with other human beings. Their first and most lasting associations are with their parents. Today it is imperative to bring up children who are tolerant and feel at home with all kinds of people. Families

teach respect for others in day to day interaction. They express disapproval of thoughtless name-calling by children, teach children to look beyond clothes, skin, colour and race, at another person to see the kind of person he is and encourage their children to be friendly with other children from different backgrounds. An important element lacking in society today, is communication. The way a child communicates determines how he will solve his problems as an adult. It is through communication that a child gets information about the world, responds to life, and reacts to others. The family must encourage a child, "Your child's earliest communication can 'set' him for life." Yet, getting through to each other is much more than speaking and listening. It involves being able to feel with other persons, in ways that give a sense of sharing a common experience.

By far the most significant element given by a family is love. Children need to be wanted, they need to feel that they belong to a family. Moreover, children need to be loved and know it. Some years ago, a study was taken of girls and boys from kindergarten through high school, chosen by their teachers as well adjusted, came from many different kinds of families and were brought up under various types of discipline. The one thing they all had in common was that they were loved and knew it.

Such families also dictate open expression of feelings, thoughts, and ideas. Similarly, children need chances to talk without fear of punishment or shame, so as to develop a sense of confidence in their lives.

However, there are endless factors which contribute to a good family relationship aside from the one previously mentioned. For example, a child should know that his parents are doing the best they can, and vice versa. Furthermore, a child must learn through mistakes as well as successes rather than emphasise his failures. The family also should stick together and help one another. Moreover, a family has to have something to believe in and work for together.

In conclusion, I feel that my background has caused me to warrant a close family relationship. It has also made me respect and become more tolerant of people. In addition, it has instilled in me the need to be confident and independent, but neither cold or indifferent in today's society.

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MY GRANDPA

By Marc Wilder

Marc is the son of Martin and Mandy Wilder and the grandson of Gloria and Krulik. He is 15 years old. He received an A+ for this essay.

As a young boy I was always quite curious. I had a passion for exploring and asking questions, even at the age of four or five. Sometimes I would spend hours asking questions driving my parents to despair.

One Friday my family went to my Grandparents for our traditional Friday night dinner as was customary.

The meal went on as normal until my inquisitive mind kicked into gear and I began to ask questions to my Grandpa. I asked him about his parents and his sister and why I had never met them. However, unlike when I normally asked him questions, he gave me no response. Instead of him giving me intelligent answers he just sat in his chair, at the top of the table and looked like a broken man. By this time the general conversation around the table had stopped and all eyes were on my Grandpa. None of us had ever known any real details of my Grandpa's childhood and family. His eyes filled up with tears and he left the room.

He decided, a couple of hours later, that after fifty years he would finally tell us all the story of his life. My Grandpa sat back down and began to recall, in detail, the answers to questions we had all wanted to know for years.

He started by telling us that he lived in Poland in a town called Piotrkow. He told us he had a sister called Barbara and then began to tell us the real story. It really began in 1939 when the German forces attacked Poland. My Grandpa recalled that the first two days could be described as frightening, horrendous, scary and chaotic. He told us of how he and his family like most if not all the Jews in Piotrkow were hiding in cellars and basements praying for their lives. My Grandpa's family tried to flee to the East along with some others but very soon the Germans caught up with them and they were forced to return to Piotrkow.

When they returned it was like a different place. The Jews were being treated very badly and every Jew who was twelve

years or older had to wear yellow armbands with the Star of David on it. My Grandpa being only ten was much more affected by the fact that Jews were no longer allowed in school.

My Grandpa took a short break from speaking. He was completely focussed in his mind of how and when the events happened even though he was just a small boy at the time and that for so many years he had tried to push it out of his mind. My family and I were gripped and not one of us moved an inch.

He told us that he now lived in a ghetto where all Jews were forced to live. His father was no longer allowed to go to the market and make a living. So at the age of ten my Grandpa was forced to smuggle cigarettes into the ghetto, which he sold for a profit on the streets to help raise a little money for food. He told us that once six Gestapo (secret policemen working for the Nazis) caught him selling his cigarettes. He was positive that they would shoot him but instead they stood around him in a circle and kicked him over and over again until he was unconscious, laughing loudly as they did so.

I looked over at my brother who was ten at the time and I tried to envisage grown men doing that to him. I can remember that it made me wonder how the world could have let this travesty occur and what evil humans are capable of.

My Grandpa once again picked up the story. He told us that to avoid being rounded up and taken away with many other Jews, his father managed to get himself and my Grandfather a job in a glass factory, which provided a small wage and a little extra food for the family.

For a short time, for the Jews in Poland, things stayed the same. However, then the situation started to worsen. Anyone without a job was almost definitely going to be taken away by the Nazis. Many people without jobs tried desperately to hide away but the soldiers always found them.

My Grandpa sobbed as he explained that this is what happened to his mother and sister. This had clearly left a terrible scar on my Grandpa's life and he was finding it very difficult to continue. For a short while he put his head in his hands and sobbed. Every single member of my family had tears running down their faces.

Soon he somehow managed to pull himself together and carry on with his story. He told us that every person who was rounded up was sent to the Treblinka extermination camp. All the Jews who were sent there were executed. Eventually, over 2,000 were left in a very small ghetto.

After working in the glass factory for about two years, my Grandpa and his father were put on a train and taken to a concentration camp called Buchenwald. He was sixteen and it was Christmas day. They were scared and freezing cold. They were both given jobs at the camp: my Grandpa's was in the kitchens. This was extremely lucky as he could steal extra food for him and his father. After a few weeks they became separated and this was especially hard for my Grandpa as despite everything he had been through he had always had his father with him to help and guide him and he could not imagine surviving one day without him, but somehow he did. At the end of March 1945 he saw a man who slightly resembled his father. He looked a lot like him but was just a mere skeleton of a man. On approaching him he realised it was in fact his father but on the brink of death. He stole a lot more food in an attempt to save his father; his efforts kept him alive for a little longer.

After a few months the war was finally coming to an end. However, the Germans knew that many American troops were on their way to liberate the concentration camps. So the Germans took the healthier Jews and put them on a train in an attempt to keep them from being found by the Americans. My Grandpa took his father to the gates but was told to leave him there as he was going to die anyway. At this stage my great Grandfather could not even walk.

This, amazingly, was the first and only time that my Grandpa seemed bitter. He was not bitter of the Germans but of fate and its cruel ways. After years of cruelty and hardship not seen by mankind before they were finally free, the gateway to liberation was open and even though they had suffered together they could not be free together. As my Grandpa says

"It just was not his fate to live".

The people from Buchenwald were herded up like cattle and put on the train. He told us that the journey lasted many days and every morning they would see who was alive and they would throw the dead people off to make more room for themselves. After what seemed like an eternity Russian soldiers liberated the train and the 'nightmare' train journey was finally at an end. It came at an especially needy time for my Grandpa as he had contracted a disease called Typhus and he was able to spend the next four weeks in hospital. As he told us of the liberation we could see that a huge weight had been lifted from his shoulders. At the time he must have had elation and great joy. Although bad memories would stay with him, he was free! We could see in his eyes that he was happy to tell this part of his life, he sat in his chair and spoke, almost with a smile on his face.

On the fourteenth of August 1945 a British charity paid for twelve Lancaster Bombers to fly from Prague carrying all the young survivors that they could find from the concentration camps. They were going to Windermere in the Lake District where they stayed for about three months.

It was "sheer heaven" as the luxuries that were available to them, they had never seen before, such as the cinema and the opportunity to go to the nearby lake and take out a boat. Also, they had things which they had not owned for years like a clean bed or what they considered to be an endless supply of food and most of all, the security of staying alive.

My Grandpa, along with every single other person in the hostel was under seventeen years old. This was very important as it meant that they were at an age where they could forget about the horrendous times that they had been through in the past five years. However, if they were, say, thirty-five and although they had survived the war, they would have most probably lost a child. This would have been almost impossible to get over.

Next some of the "Boys" (as they were known) were taken to a hostel in Scotland called Cardross. Memories of Cardross remind me my Grandpa, were some of the happiest of his life. It was a very lively place where he spent time learning English, making friends and putting his bad memories at the back of his mind.

As if the world war was not enough for my Grandpa, he went with some friends to Israel and joined the Israeli army. He

fought in the Battle of Independence, which Israel won. It was after this that he came to live in London.

He got a job as a watch repairer, earning a pathetic wage of £5 a week. However, he worked his way up and eventually in 1951, with a partner, opened a watch repair business. His partner left and the company was all his. He introduced jewellery into the company and he was the boss. He worked very long hours; seven days a week for many years and the company soon became successful. He met his wife, Gloria (my Grandmother) in 1952 and they were married in 1953. That was the story of my Grandpa's life.

He sat back in his seat with a satisfied look on his face. He had told us what had been bottled up inside him for so many decades. He was pleased to have that huge burden lifted from him. The rest of the family, however, was different, everyone crying and smiling at the same time. Sadness for the hardship and losses, happiness for the survival of the head of our family. If it weren't for my Grandpa surviving half the family wouldn't even be there.

Years on I think to myself, how comes some people can survive through the cruellest of fates when others cannot? Obviously part of the reason that my Grandpa survived the war was due to luck but I also believe that there is something else. For example, when he came to England with no money, no family, and no belongings and couldn't even speak English. Yet he went on to have three children, three grandchildren, a large house, a loving wife and a very successful business, which he still has a part in. I do not think you can do that just with a bit of luck. I think that there is something in his personality which gives him the strongest will in the world to survive.

Also, you would think that after going through what my Grandpa went through, he would be a cold, bitter old man. However, this could not be further from the truth. He is kind and generous, but the most amazing thing about him is that he is one of the most forgiving people I have ever met. Even now when someone double-crosses him in business he doesn't stay angry for more than a day or two.

My Grandpa is one of the cleverest, most strong-willed people I have ever met and will be someone I admire and give the utmost respect to till the day I die.

09.09.2000

THE HOLOCAUST INDUSTRY; REFLECTIONS ON THE EXPLOITATION OF JEWISH SUFFERING – BY NORMAN FINKELSTEIN

Review by Professor
David Cesarani

David Cesarani is Professor of Modern Jewish History at the University of Southampton and Director-Designate of the new AHRB Centre for the Study of Jewish/Non-Jewish Relations. He is currently writing a book about the legacy of the Holocaust. This review is a longer version of one which first appeared in the "Times Higher" on 4 August 2000.

The controversy generated by Norman Finkelstein's short, vitriolic polemic against the 'Holocaust industry' has generated more heat than light. Few reviewers or profile writers have challenged the factual basis of his assertions. However, close examination reveals that Finkelstein is not only guilty of hyperbole: his argument, flimsy as it is, rests on the misinterpretation of history and questionable use of sources.

Finkelstein argues that prior to 1967 the Nazi persecution and mass murder of the Jews "barely figured in American life." Only a "handful of books and films touched on the subject". The event we know today as "the Holocaust" was actually a cultural construction engineered by 'American Jewish elites' after Israel's victory in the Six Day War of June 1967. Once Israel became a regional superpower useful for US interests, American Jews felt emboldened to defend its conduct as an occupier of Palestinian land. Finkelstein argues that they manipulated sympathy for Jewish suffering under the Nazis to shield Israel from criticism.

At the same time, he claims, they used "the Holocaust" to "defend their corporate and class interests" at home. When Black Americans challenged Jews for jobs or called for affirmative action, "Jewish elites" labelled this anti-Jewish and summoned abhorrence of Nazism to fortify their privileges. Although he never explains the mechanics by which it was effected, some Jewish scholars obligingly produced a dogmatic version of "the Holocaust" that supplied the "elites" with a suitable version of the past.

Citing a handful of writers and historians, Finkelstein identifies two chief elements of this dogma. First, that the Holocaust was the climax of a singularly irrational hatred of Jews and, second, that it was a unique event. He decrees that most Holocaust literature and historical studies are "worthless as scholarship... if not sheer fraud". But they are useful to support claims for compensation, which he describes as no more than a "shakedown". He protests that while genuine Holocaust survivors like his parents received paltry sums, Jewish organisations, bureaucrats, and assorted lawyers lined their pockets from the campaigns against Swiss banks, German corporations, and East European governments. The "Holocaust industry has become an outright extortion industry... [the] greatest robbery in mankind."

This is powerful stuff, but it's wrong. In order to accentuate the prominence of "the Holocaust" after 1967, and by implication its artificiality, Finkelstein exaggerates its previous "absence" and completely misconstrues its later salience.

Between 1946 and 1966, East European Jews and survivors in New York campaigned for a memorial to the victims of Nazi mass murder. In 1947, 15,000 people attended a ground breaking ceremony; the memorial was endorsed by the mayor and city officials. The project only foundered because the Nazi genocide was "the wrong atrocity" to recall at a time when the USSR was America's bete noir and West Germany its emerging protégé.

However, Nazi crimes and Jewish suffering were not forgotten. Throughout the 1950s the major US television networks broadcast live plays on what we would understand as Holocaust themes.

According to cultural historian Jeffrey Shandler, they were shown at the rate of one every year and were written by such major playwrights as Paddy Chayefsky. A spate of feature films appeared including "The Young Lions" (1958), "The Diary of Anne Frank" (1959), "Exodus" (1960), "Judgment at Nuremberg" (1961), and "The Pawnbroker" (1965) which invoked the plight of Jews under Nazism.

While there may have been only a "handful of books" about Nazism (understandable since few documentary sources were initially available), a small avalanche of publications appeared dealing with its roots. They included *Essays on Anti-Semitism* edited by Koppel Pinson (1946), Paul Massing, *Rehearsal for Destruction* (1949), *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), by Theodor Adorno and others, *The Dynamics of Prejudice* (1950) by Bruno Bettelheim and Morris Janowitz, *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder* (1950) by Nathan Ackerman and Marie Jahoda, Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), and Eva Reichmann's, *Hostages of Civilisation* (1952). Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* appeared in 1961 and Fritz Stern published *The Politics of Cultural Despair* in 1964. Some of these publications universalised the Jewish catastrophe while others treated it as singular. But the notion that Nazi anti-semitism was peculiarly irrational was already present in studies such as Joshua Trachtenberg's *The Devil and the Jews* (1943) and Norman Cohn's *Warrant for Genocide* (1967).

In 1961-2, the trial of Adolf Eichmann became one of the first global media events. Even Finkelstein recalls his mother watching it on TV. Millions of other Americans did likewise. A Gallup poll in 1962 showed that 87 per cent of the US public had read or heard of the trial and 71 per cent agreed that the world should be reminded of Nazi crimes. Finkelstein produces evidence from 1957 and 1961 that Jewish thinkers were uninterested in recent tragic history, but after Arendt's controversial articles about Eichmann appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1963 almost every American Jewish intellectual had something to say on the matter, including George Mosse, Louis Harap, Norman Podhoretz, Alfred Kazin, Daniel Bell, Leon Abel and Midge Decter.

Finkelstein is equally mistaken about the salience and the role of 'the Holocaust' in the defence of Israel after 1967. Even if this was its intended purpose, it failed miserably. Israel and its supporters in Washington failed to block the sale of F-15 fighters to the Saudis in 1975 or 1978. The pro-Israel lobby couldn't thwart the Camp David Agreement in 1978 or the consequent withdrawal from Sinai. It failed to block the sale of AIWACs (airborne early warning system) to Saudi Arabia in 1981.

Israel may have received vastly increased US financial, diplomatic and military support since 1967, but this had nothing to do with history and everything to do with contemporary American interests. Moreover, the funds Israel received were often intended to smooth the way to Israeli concessions and withdrawals - a pattern evident in the latest wrangling at Camp David.

The US government promoted Holocaust memorialisation for the same reasons. Mark Siegel, former adviser on Jewish affairs to President Carter, admitted that the decision to establish the President's Commission on the Holocaust, which led directly to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum [USHMM], was intended to appease American Jews alienated by Carter's perceived pro-Arab policy. In other words, the prominence of the Holocaust and its function in relation to Israel signified Jewish and Israeli weakness rather than the other way around, as Finkelstein alleges.

More troubling than questionable interpretation, Finkelstein takes issue with matters of fact. He claims that Jews have falsified the number of concentration camps survivors and slave labourers in order to extort money from the Germans and the Swiss. Here, too he is misled.

Finkelstein's chief source is an exhibition brochure from the USHMM. This publication uses figures for the camp population given by Himmler in early 1945 and estimates for the number liberated in May 1945. However, tens of thousands of Jewish survivors were liberated before January 1945, in Romania, Poland and Hungary. In the last months of the Third Reich not even Himmler knew exactly who was where. By mid-1944 Buchenwald alone had 82 sub-camps, some with as few as 80 slave workers, others up to 11,000. There were over 800 Aussen-

kommandos and Juedische Zwangsarbeitslager. At the war's end thousands of Jews were freed from small, ephemeral labour camps and temporary barracks adjoining factories in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. For many of these appalling locations barely a place name or factory address survives.

Had he wanted to, Finkelstein could have obtained an authoritative estimate of survivor numbers. He asserts on the basis of a rule-of-thumb calculation that there are only 25,000 survivors, whereas the German government, the Jewish Claims Conference, and the Israeli Ministry of Finance are between them paying pensions to at least 175,000 survivors, all of whom have to undergo exhaustive checks. None of these organisations will support an individual receiving assistance from one of the others.

Finkelstein also alleges on the basis of a 'personal communication' from a German parliamentarian, as against the mass of published accounts, that the Jewish organisations receiving reparations from Germany have cheated. He claims that under the Luxembourg Agreement between Israel, the Jewish Claims Conference (representing the Diaspora), and West German, \$120 million out of a total of \$450 million in reparations was set aside for the Claims Conference to award to individuals. He alleges that the Conference misused this for communities or to help Jews migrating from Eastern Europe and Arab lands to resettle in Israel.

In fact, 75 per cent of the funds given to the Claims Conference were used for relief projects in Eastern Europe. Large sums were used to assist Jews to emigrate from inhospitable countries devastated by German occupation, which was hardly an illegitimate use of funds. Not a cent went directly to Jews from the Arab world. To put it charitably, Finkelstein misreads Ronald Zweig's history of the Claims Conference which notes that the influx of German reparations money allowed the main American Jewish relief agency, the JDC or Joint, to use elsewhere the resources it would otherwise have deployed in Europe.

Most remarkably, in his relentless quest to find the Jews guilty of malfeasance Finkelstein absolves the Swiss banks of serious misconduct towards Holocaust survivors

and depicts them as victims of a Jewish terror campaign. To support this amazing argument he quotes a statement from the authoritative Report of the Independent Committee of Eminent Persons that "there was no evidence of systematic discrimination, obstruction of access, misappropriation, or violation of document retention requirements of Swiss law."

Indeed, but the report states on the same page that the auditors working for the Committee "confirmed evidence of questionable and deceitful actions by some individual banks in the handling of accounts of victims, including the withholding of information from Holocaust victims or their heirs about their accounts, inappropriate closing of accounts, failure to keep adequate records, many cases of insensitivity to the efforts of victims or heirs of victims to claim dormant or closed accounts, and a general lack of diligence - even active resistance - in response to private and official inquiries about dormant accounts". This indictment fully justified the campaign that was necessary to wrest compensation from initially unapologetic and obdurate Swiss banks.

Selective quotation such as this and other misuse of evidence undermine the credibility of Finkelstein's polemic. Any serious points it raises, and there are a few, are contaminated by what looks like a personal vendetta against the "American Jewish elites". Memory of the Holocaust has been abused and misused, but this book is part of the problem rather than its cure. It is less about the Holocaust and more an attack on Zionism which projects a conspiracy theory on the Jewish people as a whole.

SURVIVING THE HOLOCAUST WITH THE RUSSIAN JEWISH PARTISANS - BY JACK KAGAN AND DOV COHEN

Review by Tamara
Vershetskaya
Curator of the
Museum of History
and Regional Studies
in Navahrudak

Jack is a committee member of our Society and has been a frequent contributor to our Journal. His book "Surviving the Holocaust with Russian Jewish Partisans" was published and reviewed in our Journal in 1997. It was translated into Belarussian in 1996 and we are therefore publishing this review by Tamara from a Belarussian standpoint. This should be of great interest and pride to our members.

The book "Surviving the Holocaust with the Russian Jewish Partisans" by Jack Kagan and Dov Cohen published by Vallentine Mitchell, London, Portland, OR in 1998 was translated into Belarussian - the native language of most of the inhabitants in and around the ancient Belarussian town of Navahrudak where the events described in the book take place. The Belarussian edition was launched by the printing house "Medisoni" in Minsk in 1999.

The book is unique in many respects and has a special significance for restoring the historical truth because it presents the narration of the two survivors from Navahrudak about the events which deprived them of their homeland and resulted in everlasting pain.

"The manner in which it is done wins readers' hearts. Photo and archival documents included in the book make it extremely important not only for a wide circle of readers but for scientific researchers as well" - this is how the book was characterised by the researchers from the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences in Minsk when the Belarussian version was presented first in Navahrudak and then in the Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Minsk at the end of June 1999.

Both the authors of the book left Navahrudak in September 1945. Their whole families, including their parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, remained in this land forever. The tragedy called the Holocaust crossed out the memory about their happy and

cloudless childhood. For almost fifty years painful memory kept Mr Kagan away from his birthplace. When in 1991 he came back to Navahrudak – the name of the town in Belarussian transcription is very close to Jewish Navaredok – he met here one more disappointment, a very deep if not a tragic one. In the course of fifty years of Soviet power – since 1944 Navahrudak was in the Soviet Union – not only the memory about the Jews-victims of the fascist occupational regime but the very memory about the prominent Jewish community of Navahrudak itself which had existed here for about five hundred years and entered the history of world Jewry was almost completely wiped off the face of the earth.

Titanic work was undertaken by Mr Kagan in order to collect the dispersed colourful mosaic of Navahrudak when Jews comprised 63% of the total population, when Hebrew and Yiddish were as often heard in the streets of the town as Belarussian and Polish. It was he who inspired and contributed greatly to the research carried out by the workers of the Museum of History and Regional Studies in Navahrudak, in the course of which the history of the pre-war Jewish community of Navahrudak and the activity of the unique partisan detachment under Tuvia Belski's command were restored. It is on his initiative and at his cost that new memorials were erected on the place of massacres and the museum exhibitions were created in the Museum of History and Regional Studies in Navahrudak and the Imperial War Museum in London. More than that, he started a tradition to yearly organise visits of survivors, together with their children and grandchildren, to the land where they came from. The timid attitude of the older generation to "their Navaredok", their unprecedented love to it and the impression it produces on the youngsters who see it for the first time is very significant to those who live in Navahrudak today. It is a good lesson of what a person who knows and values his roots can do.

I personally don't know any other book describing war events either in Russian or Belarussian producing such a strong impression as this book does and I don't know any other person born in Navahrudak who did so much to revive the history of the town and to revert it to those who must remember it.

CORRESPONDENCE

A LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

Jake Fersztand

Jake came to England with the Windermere Group. He lived in the Cardross hostel in Scotland. He later came to London where he studied structural engineering. A few years after he married his Swiss wife Erica they decided to move to Berne, Switzerland where they are still living. Jake has played a major part in the construction of one of the bridges that span the Rhine in Berne.

On the rare occasions I speak to Ben on the 'phone, he has urged me to make a contribution to the Journal, until now without success.

However, what better opportunity is there to put pen to paper than the unique occasion of his having been awarded the M.B.E. My hearty congratulations Ben!

I don't know on how many of our members this or a similar distinction has already been bestowed, but, at the risk of sounding soppy, I must admit that I was very moved at one of the "Boys" being received by the Queen in order to be honoured in such a way.

As for my contribution, well, I decided to tell you something about myself.

For the many who don't remember me as Jake or Jakob, they used to call me SKUK; a nickname that goes back to pre-war Kozenice, where I lived with my parents and younger sister Margie, who now lives part of the year in Detroit and part in Dearfield Beach, Florida.

My Shoah past is not very different from that of many of the "Boys" although each one's experiences were unique. I was one of the very few fortunate ones to have found my mother and sister alive afterwards. My father was deported in 1942, probably to Treblinka; that was the last time we saw him. At the outbreak of war in September 1939 I was supposed to start elementary school in Kozenice: the war put an end to that.

My stations in brief were: The Ghetto in Kozenice, HASAG - Skarzysko and Czeszochowa, Buchenwald and from there the train transport to Terezin between the 3rd of April until 6th May 1945.

Any of the "Boys" who were on that transport will certainly

remember the over-salted soup that was given to us one night after a long spell without food, and will not have forgotten the many who died that night, all those who could not resist eating it.

I saved that soup till the following day, diluted it with water and grass and was protected by some of the Russian POWs while trying to recook it. They saved me from the many hungry who had had nothing to eat that day and could have been tempted to grab it from me.

"Le Grand Voyage" is the original title of a book written by the well-known author Jorge Semprun, former Buchenwald inmate, who, after the death of Franco, was appointed Spanish Minister of Culture in the Cabinet of Felipe Gonzalez.

Semprun, a young Spanish Catholic, lived with his family in France after Franco seized power; later he worked with the French resistance, was caught by the Germans and sent on a transport to Buchenwald.

"Le Grand Voyage" describes his transport to Buchenwald, recounting among other things, an identical experience – the handing out of over-salted soup to hungry prisoners, with the same deadly consequences for those who ate it that night on our transport.

This seems to have been one of the less known killing methods of the Germans, extermination through salt.

When my memory drifts back to those terrible days in Skarzysko, one of my vivid recollections is of Moishe Nuruman who worked there as Fuhrmann. He was transporting food for the Ukrainian guards with a horse-drawn cart, a life-saving job in those days.

Also I, about 11 years old at the time, had a job that was the envy of many. My task was to

open and shut the entrance gate for the in and outgoing vehicles at the German headquarters and konsum, a place where the Polish workers at the Hasag ammunition factory collected their food allocations.

Each time a car with German personnel came up to the gate, I had to open it. I was terrified at the consequences of being asked my age. But when Moishe the Fuhrmann appeared with his horse and cart, it was as if the sun started shining – we were both all smiles.

During the few daily breaks I was able to take from attending the gate, I managed to scrounge some odd bits of food which I shared with my mother and sister at the camp. I remember my mother telling me, "without these extras we would starve".

My other recollection of Moishe is a couple of years later, when, at the end of 1944 at the camp of Czeszochowa, I was rounded up and put into a closed cattle truck with many others on the way to Buchenwald.

It was the first time I found myself alone. I was despondent. Moishe was the only one I knew in that cattle truck. He consoled me and urged me to stop crying; he pacified me by promising to help me find my mother and sister.

In August 1945 I was brought to Windermere with the rest of the "Boys", lived in Ascot and from there I was taken to the Hill Street hostel in Glasgow, where I went to school.

Later, I studied and qualified as a Structural Engineer and worked in my profession in London where I met and married my Swiss wife Erika. It is perhaps a coincidence that in 1959 I landed of all places in Switzerland, but probably a fluke of fate that I stayed.

At first I found it hard to reconcile the way of life, customs, habits and values I had acquired in Britain, with those in Switzerland. I had a strong feeling at the beginning of my stay here that I should move on.

Nevertheless, I founded a family, grew roots, and having spent most of my professional life here, I feel at home.

The basic facts in connection with the official wartime policy of the Swiss authorities towards Jews trying to enter the country during the last war are well presented in a recent documentary film "Closed Country" and should not be missed by anyone interested in Switzerland's war-time record in dealing with Jews desperate to save their lives.

A book well worth reading about the treatment by the Swiss of those who had the luck to save their lives in Switzerland, "Wartime Work Camps in Switzerland", is a collection of letters from Jewish refugees allowed into the country during the Shoah. For most or part of their stay they were interned in these camps and either stayed in the country or moved elsewhere after the war in 1945.

The longer I think about it, the more it becomes clear to me that the value of belonging to a group like the "Boys" cannot be over-emphasised, in spite of the diversity of the interests of the individual members.

I am convinced that in spite of numerous squabbles, differences and at times disappointments, many of our members drew strength from the group that would not have been possible to acquire elsewhere; the group, especially at the outset, and for many years to follow, acted as a catalyst for many on the way to success in different spheres of life.

Many of the friendships that were forged in the span of time have not only proved durable, as can be seen on private occasions, at reunions and on trips to Israel, etc., but also partly replace the damaged roots of long ago.

About four years ago, a group of Holocaust survivors came into being in Zurich for the first time in fifty years after the Shoah.

At the initial meeting about thirty people from all over Switzerland, men and women, all getting on in age, turned up looking for something they couldn't really define.

Gradually more and more people from different walks of life started dropping in and,

as time went by, about two hundred registered with the group. It became clear that many of those present had an insatiable desire to talk to others with the same past. Despite the fact that many present had succeeded in building a good life for themselves and integrated well in their communities, they were searching for a link to the past among people with a similar background.

It seemed that only among those did they feel themselves understood, as no others, not even close family could replace that missing link.

The only one among us in this group whose name became known worldwide is Benjamin Wilkomirski, the author of "Fragments", a Holocaust imposter, who fraudulently pretended to be a survivor, on whom many literary honours and prizes were bestowed all over the world. He has now been uncovered and may have to face trial. He achieved success by false pretences, cheated his readers and misused our group, whose membership he acquired by lies and as a cover-up for his true biography.

Over the years I have found it important not to lose contact with the '45 Aid Society. From time to time I visited friends in London, attended some of the reunions and joined the "Boys" in Tel-Aviv on the 50th Anniversary of Israel's Independence. On that journey, meeting people I haven't seen for ages who turned up from the UK, USA, Canada, and some who had made their home in Israel, was a great pleasure to me.

Apart from the numerous unexpected encounters and excursions to various parts of the country, the crowning of the trip to Israel was the Gala Dinner in Tel-Aviv, in the presence of Reuma Weizman and her husband, President Weizman.

But the most moving moment that evening for me was the encounter with Dr Groak. When we shook hands, the words "TY MLUVIS CFSKI JAK STARY CECH" (You talk Czech like an old Czech) suddenly rang in my ears: that was the sentence he uttered to me fifty-five years ago in Terezin.

What above all I so much appreciate and enjoy are the individual contacts sustained over the years with those whom I stay with and meet on my visits to London, and who on rare occasions drop in on me on their way to a holiday in Europe.

ERIC HITTER

9 November 1999

Dear Mr Wilder,

I received from my friend Victor Greenberg (Kushi) the last journal of this year, I am delighted to read the articles. I am one of the Southampton boys and found myself on the photo printed on the cover page.

I stayed in the Finchley Road hostel for a few years, then married a Belgian girl, Fay Hirschman; after living a couple of years in London where my first baby girl Marilyn was born, we moved to Antwerp. I entered the diamond trade and have been active in this branch ever since. We had two more children, my son Alan is a successful lawyer in Brussels, Edith settled down in Israel.

At present, I am retired but remain a member in the diamond exchange where I was decorated for my services in the trade. I would like to join the '45 Aid Society as a member. Please find check of \$25 enclosed.

Hoping to hear from you, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Eric Hitter

FAY & MONIEK GOLDBERG

February 21, 2000

Dear Friends,

Last March Fay and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. We would like to thank all our friends who managed to come as well as those who sent their good wishes.

We especially want to thank Gloria Wilder for her sentiments and for putting them in our journal.

Words cannot express how we feel about Krulik making the video both at the party and at our house the following day. I am sure many of you know from experience that on an occasion like this the people involved remember very few details of the actual event, more so in this case as it was also our granddaughter's Bat Mitzvah party. So, you can imagine how we felt and how grateful we are to him for making the video of our friends and family at the lunch that we had at our house. We have already had occasion to view it a number of times and enjoyed it very much.

Again, thank you Krulik and Gloria.

Fay & Moniek.



The Goldbergs Golden Wedding celebration

OBITUARIES

EDITH KAUFMAN – JADZIA BALZAM

We are dedicating this in memory of Edith (Jadzia Balzam) Kaufman by her dear friends Bela (Snwaick), Kirzner, Esther (Kohn) Lesniak, Sheila (Fajerman) Wolfman, Sala (Hochszpigel) Katz, Blinka (Korman) Lipski and Blima (Wurzel) Urbas, who came to England in August 1945 with the Windermere group, and later lived with Edith in the same hostel in Manchester for several years until we parted for different parts of the world, but always being in touch. Just about a year ago, we met Edith, her husband Morris and son Garry in Miami, Florida, where we had a wonderful reunion. As a matter of fact, we have her with her family on a video which my husband Ruben filmed of everyone in Sala Katz's home in Pompano.

Edith, Roma, Bela and I had a special bond. We shared the same birthday date on March 15th and all through the years we exchanged birthday wishes as well as Rosh Hashana greetings, up-dating each other about our families.

She was very proud of her two sons and one grandson and was happily married to Morris for many years.

Edith's untimely passing was a shock to all of us. We shall miss her very much and may her memory be a blessing to her family as well as her brother Moniek Balzam and to all her friends who treasured her friendship.



KURT KLAPPHOLZ

By Ramsay Homa

If medals were awarded for courage and fortitude in the face of adversity in health as they are on the field of battle, Kurt Klappholz, who died peacefully on 17 February 2000, would have had a solemn and glorious posthumous investiture. Instead, some 200 persons, colleagues from the London School of Economics, compatriot survivors from the '45 Aid Society, his family, relatives and a wide circle of friends gathered in London on 5 March to bid a dignified and fond farewell to a brave and accomplished man.

Born on 17 June 1927 in Bielsko-Biala, Poland, near its border with Czechoslovakia, the only child of liberally minded and educated parents who perished in the Holocaust, Kurt was a survivor of Auschwitz. Shortly after liberation he was found to be suffering from diabetes which, on several occasions, caused concern to his family and personal injury to himself. It is possible that this affliction resulted or developed prematurely from his concentration camp experiences but in any event, as a precocious rationalist tinged with a paradoxical streak of optimism and only too aware of the uncertainty of life's duration, Kurt devoted his energies to the full in exploiting and enjoying any and every opportunity that crossed his path.

Arriving in England in late 1945 under the aegis of the Central British Fund, he lost no time in making up for his lack of experience in a tightly packed educational and social calendar. His ravenous and enquiring mind devoured English, mathematics and the other curricular subjects necessary to matriculate in June 1947 and, a month later, to sail through a competitive entrance examination for a coveted place at the London School of Economics. Graduating in 1950 with a first class honours degree, he gained two years' teaching experience at an American university before returning to London to assume an invited position as Lecturer in Economics at his alma mater.

In spite of this overriding commitment to academia, Kurt was not the man to allow anything or anyone to interfere with the busy and varied social life of a bachelor, and his continental charm, good looks, winning smile and a ready repartee were his constant and reliable allies in achieving that goal.

An episode in early life was an object lesson in tolerance. Notwithstanding the bestial treatment he had suffered at Nazi hands, Kurt's values were given effect in his first meaningful act after liberation in April 1945. Wandering westwards with a fellow survivor towards freedom and uncertainty after three years of

balancing constantly and precariously on a knife-edge between survival and death, in Kurt's own words:

"We met an American lieutenant and two soldiers who had picked up two SS men - I think they had been guards in the concentration camp. The American lieutenant immediately recognised us as having been camp prisoners. He pointed at the two SS men and said we could beat them up - they had already been beaten up by the Americans - and that we could take revenge on them. I told the lieutenant that I was far too weak to try to beat up an SS man and, moreover, even if he were lying defenceless on the ground, I would not wish to beat him... I felt grateful that my father had brought me up in this way."

With this incredible reply, Kurt displayed an innate human decency that some might say verged on the divine, although he would have rejected even the possibility of this concept. In fact, his temporary physical exhaustion was only incidental to the underlying depth of feeling that prompted his response, as can be seen when, several months later, he and about twenty other survivors were being cared for in an absorption centre at Wintershill Hall in Hampshire, and a discussion took place. It focussed on the contemporary Nuremberg trials, and one young man, representing the views of most of those present, resolutely declared:

"The English are too soft. All know the Nazis are murderers. Why do the English give them a trial and try to save them? The Germans laugh at the English and the Americans because they are so soft."

Nearly all his companions nodded in agreement. "Kill every Nazi twice", someone shouted, but Kurt looked distressed and said earnestly:

"If the English kill them without trial, all other Germans will feel that the English are no better than Nazis themselves. Then they will give up hope, and maybe another Hitler will find it a good time to come to power."

This, like all Kurt's utterances, was a carefully considered and consciously developed thought. Some thirty years later, he expanded on his humanitarian views in an article commemorating the anniversary of his and his fellow-survivors' liberation:

"We have no alternative but to live with the memory of lives gratuitously and wickedly destroyed. Each of us has to decide how to cope with these memories, for which time does not seem to be the proverbial healer."

There then followed what was the guiding principle, the essence of Kurt's philosophy of life, expressed to other members of the '45 Aid Society of which he was an active participant:

[We should not] "bear grudges against, or feel hatred towards individual people merely because they are members of a particular group, for example Germans. Had we succumbed to such feelings, we would have provided our erstwhile persecutors with an entirely gratuitous victory, for we would have adopted their attitudes. Our own history testifies to the fact that we did not succumb in this way. This is one of the victories our persecutors did not achieve. There is no escaping the fact [that celebrating the anniversary of our liberation]... always was and always will be an occasion for reliving the most painful memories and for saying a uniquely bitter Kaddish."

Although a self-confessed atheist, Kurt always maintained a secular Jewish identity. Indeed, the greater number of his friends were Jewish and a lingering smile would sometimes display either an inner warmth of pleasure or, rationalist that he was, perhaps an embarrassed recognition of inconsistency when recounting recollections of a childhood association with Jewish tradition. He was among the kindest of men, modest, tolerant, fair-minded to a fault and always meaningfully concerned with the welfare of others. An ardent conversationalist (his telephone bills were legendary) he was always ready and eager to embark on any polemical discussion, especially if it concerned politics, economics or religion and was confined to rational parameters. Within the limits of his means he was a bon vivant, ever relishing good food, fine wine, well-styled clothes and risqué jokes but, above all, he was stimulated by the intellectual challenge, his many friends and the atmosphere at LSE where he ultimately retired as Reader Emeritus in Economics.

He and his wife Gwyneth spent many good years together. He loved and concerned himself with the welfare of their two sons; he was proud and impressed with the three grandsons that David had given him; and he lived to see and enjoy a fourth from Adam who cared for him so devotedly in the last five years of his life.

These undeservedly tortured years began quite suddenly and unexpectedly with the first of several strokes in January 1995. Nevertheless, in spite of an acute awareness of the slow but relentless decline of his physical prowess and mental faculties, he endured the accelerating distress with unequalled stoicism until, in January of this year, a final stroke brought his suffering to a merciful end.

Kurt's Hebrew name, given at birth, was Shlomo, derived from the Hebrew word for peace. He lived up to this name: peace, tolerance and a respect for human dignity were the watchwords of his life and we, who knew and loved him, are the richer for it. May his soul too, rest in eternal peace.



MEMORIES OF KURT KLAPPHOLZ

By Witold Gutt

Kurt and I were together at Wintershill Hall, where the Southampton group was received late in 1945. His knowledge of English made him the spokesman when the Press or various researchers came to inspect us. He tried to include me in outings at Bishop's Waltham with local girls. I remember my difficulties in communicating with them in English, but he tried to assure them that when I spoke Polish I was really quite intelligent and interesting.

It was an exciting period, the first taste of real freedom away from Germany. We debated with Leonard Montefiore, and I asked him why the world did not speak out against the Holocaust earlier. He replied, 'die Welt war muede von protestieren.'

At the Finchley Road hostel Kurt and I slept in the same room with three others. It was difficult to wake Kurt in the mornings! We enjoyed our new life, eagerly learning English, mathematics, and some English history. We walked around London and often went to the local cinema.

He joined me in the disputes we had with the local committee that ran the hostel, who wanted all of us to be orthodox. We did not give up our views but a civilised compromise was reached with the help of the late Oscar Friedman, although we, 'the rebels', left the hostel before it was closed. Despite these problems, the hostel became a meeting place for local Jewish youth, and the lounge was crowded at weekends. Of course girls came, and Kurt, handsome and charming, was very popular with them.

Kurt and I soon discussed possible careers. We were both inclined to academic interests but it seemed too much to expect finance in such a direction, in our circumstances. Kurt went to work in a photographic studio and was also thinking of training in hotel management. At first, unable to obtain funds for studies from the Jewish Refugee Committee, I was helped by Doris Katz, who had been one of the managers at Wintershill Hall. She collected £30 to give me a chance to prepare for London Matriculation at the University Tutorial College in Great Russell Street. This private initiative encouraged the Jewish Refugee Committee to pay for Kurt to join me there.

Following this course, we both obtained Matriculation; thereafter I turned to Chemistry and Kurt to Economics, so beginning his brilliant career in that subject at the LSE. There he was encouraged by Professor, later Lord Lionel Robbins, who recognised Kurt's talents. Kurt obtained a First Class Honours degree and soon after went to the USA to lecture for some years at the Columbia University, and our contact was interrupted thereby. However, on his return in the early 1950s, he came to see me and we resumed our friendship quickly. By then I was married to Rita and he often visited us in our flat in Maida Vale. Around that time Rita and I attended evening gatherings at his flat in Kidderpore Gardens where erudite discussions took place, and the guests included such important academics from the LSE as Alan Day and Professor Peacock.

In due course he introduced us to Gwyneth and later both of them were frequent visitors at our house in Hampstead, and came to know our children well. At our dinner parties Kurt's incisive contributions to discussions were much admired by our other friends who, when invited, often asked if Kurt would be coming.

We were invited to the wedding of Kurt and Gwyneth, held at the house of Martin and Eva Goldenberger, where our old mentor Dr 'Ginger' Friedmann was also among the guests.

Over the years Kurt and I discussed various issues, especially Holocaust topics and Polish and Jewish history, often in long telephone conversations.

In 1990 Kurt attended the wedding of our daughter Caroline, where I introduced him as my oldest friend.

When he became the warden of Rosebery Hall, he invited me periodically to have lunch with him there, which gave us an opportunity for reminiscences and discussions. It was evident that he enjoyed his work as warden and was popular with staff and students alike. On my last visit there he was preparing for a presentation relating to the Holocaust, to be given that afternoon to a German delegation visiting the House of Commons. We discussed what could be said and I know that the event went very well.

Kurt's academic achievements were fully recognised by his peers, and by the LSE where he became a Reader. However, he told me, during these visits to Rosebery Hall, that he could have done even more in his work if it were not for the effects of the Holocaust. It should be remembered that despite 'The Boys' Triumph over Adversity' few of us remain wholly unscathed by our war experiences. The answer to the question 'Have you forgiven the Nazis?' often asked by worthy and well-meaning people should for this, among other reasons, always in my opinion be 'no'.

When Kurt's major illness came, Rita and I visited him at the Middlesex Hospital, when his mind was still pretty sharp despite the stroke. Once more we reminisced about various events in better times. At the 50 year Reunion of 'The Boys' we shared a table with Gwyneth and Kurt and their sons Adam and David, whose outstanding devotion to their father is widely admired.

I was deeply saddened by his death, but will remember our friendship, the many enjoyable occasions that we shared, and the discussions illuminated by his intellect. I end with a quotation. 'My mind moves upon silence and Aeneid VI'



ABOUT KURT (Klappholz)

By Harry Fox

Harry Fox came to England with the Windermere Group and lived in the Loughton and Belsize Park Hostels.

When I was in Belsize Park Hostel, I visited the "Boys" at the Finchley Road Hostel and met Kurt there. Later, two of our children went to the same school and we met often, and our boys became friends. We were also together on the '45 Committee.

When, after a distinguished academic career, he became Warden of an L.S.E. Hall of Residence, we found he was living just around the corner from my factory. We had some highly enjoyable lunches together, and many discussions. When I left, I always felt good. Kurt had that all too rare gift of making everybody feel important. He never talked down to anybody. I am richer through knowing him.



RENATE JAYSON (NEE LOSSAU)

- died 30th April 2000

By Robert Jayson

Renate was born in Konigsberg, Germany, the eldest of five children having two brothers and two sisters; the eldest brother pre-deceased her.

She came to this country in 1945 having survived her internment in a German concentration camp. They were all sent to Windermere to be rehabilitated and from there Renate came to a girls' hostel in Herne Hill, London.

She started her training as a dressmaker, at which she excelled and, in due course, qualified as a couture dressmaker working in the West End of London, counting among her clients well-known personalities in show business.

She met her husband Robert (Bobby) in 1951 and they were married at Golders Green Synagogue in June 1953. They had one son, Michael.

She was a true Aishis Chayil. She was very house-proud and she always kept a beautiful home. She was a very keen gardener who would spend many hours "getting lost" in her garden. She found gardening very therapeutic and it certainly was reflected in the colourful garden.

Renate was always very willing to help others and consequently she became a volunteer at a Jewish Day Centre in Hendon, especially for those who suffered from Alzheimer. She started a flower-arranging class at the day centre, having had the flowers donated by a kind greengrocer in Hendon.

Her husband, son, three grandchildren, who gave her much "nachas", sisters and brother survive her.

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ALF KIRSZBERG

By Alec Ward

Alf Kirszberg sadly passed away on Friday, 15th September 2000. He was a very likeable and well-respected member of our Society. He forged life-long friendships with many of our Boys in the camps and in England.

He was the youngest boy of a large family of brothers, half-brothers and half-sisters. Alf spent the war years in two Ghettos, slave labour and concentration camps in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Germany. He was the only member of his entire family to survive the Holocaust and one of six survivors of the Jewish community of our home town Magnuszew, in Poland.

Alf came to England with the Windermere group in August 1945. He married Celia Flaum in 1952 and was a devoted and loving husband until her death in 1975 when he was left to raise two young daughters, Elaine and Maxine. Alf was a good caring father who dedicated himself to his family. He was fortunate to see his two daughters happily married and developed a close bond with his two sons-in-law, Geoffrey and Steve. Celia was also one of a large family who loved and respected Alf.

He very proudly considered the Boys to be his side of the family and their home was always wide open to them. He was an excellent cook and their hospitality and friendship knew no bounds.

Alf was a hardworking, modest and respectful person with a wonderful, dry sense of humour. He was always willing to help others. In 1948 he went to Israel as a volunteer with Mahal and bravely fought in the War of Independence. He was in Israel for one year.

In the last three years of his life, due to his deteriorating state of health, he was a resident of Lady Sarah Cohen House, where he was extremely popular with and well loved by all the staff who cared for him.

On a personal note, I feel heartbroken to have lost a very dear friend who was like a brother. We both grew up together, attended the same Cheder and his older brothers were close friends of my father. He was the last link I had left from my childhood.

Alf will be sorely missed by his dear family and by all who knew him.

MEMBERS NEWS 2000

Compiled by Ruby Friedman

We are delighted and proud to inform those of you who do not already know of the honour bestowed upon our Chairman Ben Helfgott who was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in June of this year. We are so pleased that the work on various projects within the community with which he has been involved over many years has received recognition. We send to Ben and his family our sincere congratulations and hope that he will be given the health and strength to continue with this most valuable work for many years to come.

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COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

Unofficial translation

Commission on former partisans and members of the underground organisations of the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945 under the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus

6 April 2000
No 38/205-281

To Mr. J. Kagan

Dear Mr. Jack Kagan!

Commission on former partisans and members of the underground organisations of the Great Patriotic war 1941-1945 under the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus warmly congratulate you as an active participant of the Partisan movement in Belarus during the years of the Great Patriotic War with 55th anniversary of Victory day over the Nazis Germany. The grateful Belarusian nation will never forget those people who with weapon in their arms have defended the right for living for Belarusians and made their contribution in the great victory over the Nazis invasion.

On behalf of the veterans of the Second World War please accept hearty congratulations on the occasion of awarding you with the Memorable Sign 'The Partisan of Belarus'. We wish you good health, happy longevity and welfare.

Yours sincerely,
N.I. Zhuravlev
Chairman of the Commission

We congratulate Jack on receiving this award and are proud of his achievements.



Jack receiving his award from the Ambassador of Belarus

BIRTHS

- Valerie and Chaim Kohn a grandson Simcha Zecharia born to Frimette and Gabi.
- Tina and Victor Greenberg a granddaughter Amy Rivka born to Janie and Alan and a granddaughter born to Naomi and Peter.
- Mina and Peter Jay a great-grandson Joshua born to their granddaughter Sharon and Mark.
- Vivienne and Kopel Kendall a grandson Eliot born to Tania and Jeffrey.
- Betty and Louis Heimfeld a granddaughter Rebecca born to Leona and Rod.
- Jack Klajman and granddaughter Kathryn Ellen born to Patricia and Irving.
- Milly and Monty Graham a grandson James Nathan born to Helen and Elliot.
- Anna and Ray Jackson a granddaughter Ronny born to Ruth and Oren.

- Rene and the late Oscar Lister a grandson Joshua born to Madelaine and Frankie.
- Anita Wiernik and the late Danny Wiernik two great-grandsons born to Karen and Leon, son of Belinda and Toby Cohen.
- Thea and Isroel Rudzinski are delighted to announce the birth of four great-grandchildren.
- Steve and the late Julie Pearl a grandson Benjamin born to Claire and Laurie.

We extend our sincere congratulations to you all and may you have many years of pleasure and nachus from your grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



ENGAGEMENTS

- Betty Kuszer daughter Rivka to Warren Greenwood. Rivka is the daughter of the late Simcha Binim (Ben) Kuszer.
- Maureen and Jack Hecht on the engagement of their son Sammy to Kim.
- Doreen and Harry Wajchandler on the engagement of their granddaughter Melanie to Grant Sackwild, daughter of Sandra and Leslie.



MARRIAGES

- Harry Fox - many congratulations on the marriage of your daughter Tania to Rudy.
- Maureen and Jack Hecht - mazel tov on the marriage of your son Sammy to Kim in California.



BARMITZVAH

- Taube and Mayer Cornell - mazel tov on the barmitzvah of your grandson Paul Gilbert son of Maralyn and Martin.
- Jeanette and Zigi Shipper - mazel tov on the barmitzvah of your grandson Adrian.
- Michelle Pomerance - mazel tov on the barmitzvah of your grandson Adam son of Denise Pearlman and the grandson of the late Izzak Pomerance.



Many congratulations to Estelle and Jack Schwimmer on your 40th Wedding Anniversary.



GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

- Thea and Isroel Rudzinski
- Iby and Nussi Rosenberg

- Doreen and Harry Wajchandler
- Charlotte and Salek Benedikt

May you all be blessed with many more happy and healthy years together.



DEATHS

It is with deep regret that we announce the passing away during the past year of some of our members. We extend our deepest sympathy to their families.

- Danny Muench
- Moishe Diamond
- Kurt Klappholz
- Renata Jayson
- Alf Kirsberg
- Edith Kaufman (nee Balsam) in Canada
- Gene Spiegel in America

To Steve Pearl we send our condolences on the loss of his brother Chaim in Israel.



SECOND GENERATION NEWS

Congratulations to Dr Gerald Kaye MD FRCP who has become a Consultant International Cardiologist/Electrophysiologist Honorary Clinical Lecturer. Gerald is the son of Sally and Henry Kaye. Gerald does a lot of research in the field of cardiology and his findings have been accepted in America. He was presented with an award for his research in October of this year.



THIRD GENERATION NEWS

Congratulations to Melanie Wajchandler who has graduated with a BA Honours degree in languages. Melanie is the granddaughter of Doreen and Harry Wajchandler and the daughter of Sandra and Leslie.

Congratulations to Katie Shane on gaining 3A star 4A and 3B in the GCSE examination. Katie is the granddaughter of Anita and Charles Shane and the daughter of Linda and Michael.

Congratulations to Samantha on gaining 4 A levels in languages. Samantha is the granddaughter of Gertie and Alf Wolreich.

Congratulations to J J Spiro on his achievements in the world of athletics. He performed wonderfully well in the 13-14 year-old group. At the Maccabi Games in Birmingham he won 5 Gold medals, 2 Silver and 1 Bronze. In America at Cincinnati he won 2 Gold and 2 Silver and in New York 3 Gold, 2 Silver and 2 Bronze. Justin is the grandson of Pauline and Harry Spiro and the son of Lannis and Gary.

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS IN MANCHESTER

Compiled by Louise Elliott

BIRTHS

- February 2000: Grandson to Edna and Charlie Igielman born to their son Farrell and his wife.
- March 2000: Grandson for Pinkus and Susan Kurnedz born to their son Jeremy and his wife.
- July 2000: Grandson to Sam and Elaine Walshaw born to their son Darren and his wife.
- July 2000: Granddaughter to Jack and Rhona Aizenberg born to their daughter Debbie and her husband.

BARMITZVAH

- November 1999: Congratulations to Edward Nathan, grandson of Alice and the late Joe Rubinstein and the son of their daughter and son-in-law Rosalind and Robert Nathan.
- April 2000: Peter Richard Elliott, the grandson of Louise and Herbert Elliott, the son of their son and daughter-in-law Steven and Linda Elliott.

BAT CHAYIL

- January 2000: Dalia Nelson, the granddaughter of Mendel and the late Marie Beale, the daughter of their daughter and son-in-law Tania and Simon Nelson.
- February 2000: Lauren Golding, the granddaughter of Maurice and Marita Golding, daughter of their son Jonathan and his wife Lesley.
- June 2000: Danielle, granddaughter of Ike and the late Myra Alterman, the daughter of their daughter Fionn and Simon.



BIRTHDAYS

- October 1999: Herbert Elliott attained the age of 75 years.
- August 2000: Hannah Gardner attained the age of 70 years.

Birthday greetings from us all.



GOLDEN WEDDINGS

- February 2000: Adash and Zena Bulwa
- August 2000: Sam and Hannah Gardner



In December 1999 Mayer Hersh was honoured by the local authority, Bury Council, for the wonderful Holocaust work he does on his visits to schools and institutions. In Leeds, Arek Hersh is doing similar work and taking parties to Poland for conducted tours. We hope they both keep well and are able to carry on this rewarding work for a very long time.



On May 2nd 2000 we had the customary Yom HaShoah a gathering at the New Century Hall in Manchester and this was well attended. The presentations were, as usual, very well done and moving. Unfortunately, the occasion coincided with the March of the Living and a considerable amount of the younger generation were therefore missing.



For their Golden Weddings both the Bulwas and Gardners invited members of the Society to join them in the Shabbat Service and a very good Kiddush thereafter.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

YOM HA'SHOAH

The communal Yom Ha'shoah Commemoration will take place on Sunday 22nd April at 11am at the Logan Hall, Bedford Way, London EC1.



2001 REUNION OF OUR SOCIETY

The 56th Anniversary of our reunion will take place on Sunday 6th May 2001 at The Florence Michaels Hall, St John's Wood Synagogue, St John's Wood, London NW8.

As always, we appeal to our members to support us by placing an advert in our souvenir brochure to be published by the Society. Please contact:-

Harry Balsam
40 Marsh Lane
Mill Hill
London NW7
Tel. 020-8959 6517 (home)
020-7372 3662 (office)



FUND FROM THE CLAIMS CONFERENCE FOR THE ASSISTANCE OF NEEDY SURVIVORS

We want to remind you that funds are still available from the money given to us by the Claims Conference.

The money is for those of our members on low income who need assistance with medical or health aids which are not available on the National Health Service and which they themselves cannot afford to purchase. Items that come within this category are such things as dentures, lenses, hearing aids, orthopaedic devices and various other items.

Applications should be sent to Ruby Friedman, 37 Salmon Street, London NW9.



GERMAN RETIREMENT PENSION

All survivors who have been granted a pension based on the recognition of their wartime years in the Warthegau Ghettos can now apply for an increased pension based on their "Unemployment Periods" after the war from May 1945 to December 1949.

For full details they should consult their legal representative either here or in Germany.

Eli Ered is ready to answer telephone enquiries, regardless of who has represented them up to now. His telephone number is 020 7628 2921.



THE ANNUAL OSCAR JOSEPH HOLOCAUST AWARDS

The '45 Aid Society offers up to two Awards of £600 each to assist successful candidates to participate in the Holocaust Seminar at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, which is held from 28th June to 21st July 2001. The overall cost of participation is about £1,000.

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 CV and other details, not later than 5th March 2001 to:

Ruby Friedman
37 Salmon Street
London
NW9 8PP

BBK

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

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London
N12 8LY*

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