Annual reunion May 2001: Harry Balsam Krulik Wilder and Stuart Eizenstat, see page 32
THOUGHTS ABOUT HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Tony Blair P.M.

THOSE WHO HAVE BROUGHT US YOM HA'SHOA COMMEMORATION

Yisroel AnnuAL ON YOM HA'SHOA, SUNDAY SPEECH GIVEN BY

Judith Sherman Page

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY IN SALLGITTER

Anita Lasker Walfisch Page

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Rudzinski Page

SECTION III
HERE AND NOW

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Tony Blair P.M.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Witold Gut

REFLECTIONS ON HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

David Cesarani

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY IN SALZGITTER

Ania Lasker-Waitzsch

THOUGHTS ABOUT HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Ania Lasker-Waitzsch

SPEECH BY THE CHIEF RABBI, PROFESSOR JONATHAN SACKS ON YOM HASHOAH, SUNDAY 22ND APRIL 2001

Yom Hashoah Commemoration at Beth Shalom

Paul, Rudi & Rachel Oppenheimer

SPEECH GIVEN BY FIELD MARSHAL LORD BRAMALL KG., OBE., O.C., J.P.

ADDRESS GIVEN BY STUART EIGENSTAD AT THE ANNUAL REUNION OF THE 45 450 SOCIETY - HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

May 6, 2001

SECTION IV
MONTEFIORI MEMORIAL LECTURE CELEBRATING LIFE - A COMMENT ON THE MONTEFIORI MEMORIAL LECTURE

by Ramsay Homa

SECTION V
SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION

SPEECH BY NAOMI Gryn ON THE OCCASION LAUNCH OF THE BOOK "CHASING SHADOWS" AT THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

Naomi Gry

OUT OF THE SHADOWS REPRINTED FROM THE JERUSALEM POST MAGAZINE

Aloma Halper

MY GRANDFATHER

Dami Richman

SECTION VI
OBITUARIES

ESTHER BURGERMAN

MOSHE MALENICKY

SECTION VII
MEMBERS' NEWS

Compiled by Ruby Friedman

SECTION VIII
NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS IN MANCHESTER

Compiled by Louise Elliott

SECTION IX
FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SECTION X
ANNUAL OSCAR JOSEPH HOLOCAUST AWARDS

Page 3
Page 36
Page 36
Page 36
Page 36
Page 36
Page 37
Page 38
Page 39
Page 40
Page 42
Page 43
Page 45
Page 46
Page 48
Page 49
Page 50
Page 53
Page 53
Page 54
Page 54
Page 54
Page 55
Page 56
Page 56
During the first thirteen years of the existence of our Society we kept in touch with our members via a Newsletter, which was issued whenever it was necessary to do so, and it was not until 1976 that our first Journal was published. Thus the Journal continued to perform the functions hitherto performed by the Newsletter i.e., conveying members news as well as providing an opportunity for our members to write about their experiences during the war and other matters relating to the activities of our Society. We felt that our experiences should be remembered, not because they were our experiences, but because they were of a kind that should not fall into oblivion with the passage of time.

Although our Journal was published once a year, the contributions from our members were initial not readily forthcoming. This was due mainly to their pre-occupation in carving out their careers and raising their families. There were, also, many who found it difficult to describe their experiences. They preferred to ignore and even to suppress their recollections. It was not until their retirement and especially the publication in 1996 of “The Boys” by our President, Sir Martin Gilbert, that they decided to write their stories.

We are publishing two articles “But for a stroke of sickle fate”, one by William Samuelson PhD and one by Jacob Guttenbaum PhD. Both could have come to England in August 1945 but they were not encouraged otherwise. In their articles they explain how it happened that the former finished up in the States and the latter in Poland. It is almost inevitable that they are known to some of our members as their paths may have crossed in different concentration camps.

As our children were growing up we encouraged them to send in their contributions to the Journal and over the years some have responded, but we would welcome a wider range of contributions. We publish a poignant speech given by Naomi Gryn at the launch of her book “Chasing Shadows”, at the Imperial War Museum and we recently read her interview in Jewish Magazine Aloma Halters interview of Naomi Gryn. There is also a touching account “My Grandfather”, by Darren Richman, Zigī & Jeannette Shipper's grandson.

Although the Journal was established by our Members for our Members we always welcomed articles from friends and well-wishers and from those whose contribution is of interest to our members. I would like to draw your attention to the Prime Minister’s address on the Holocaust Memorial Day 27th January 2001 and to the importance he attaches to the Holocaust “as a reminder, particularly to young people, that events of the Second World War must never be repeated”. Also, Professor David Cesarani’s “Reflections on the Holocaust Memorial Day”.

We have also included a speech given by Field Marshal Lord Bramall KG, GCB, OBE, MC, JP, on the occasion of the presentation of the International Council of Christians and Jews of the Interfaith Medallion. He was our guest of honour at our Re-union in 1997 and was the driving force in putting on the permanent Holocaust Exhibition. His thoughts are very profound.

This year at our Re-union we honoured Stuart E. Eizenstat, the former Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of the Treasury, who played a leading role in bringing to a successful conclusion the Forced and Slave Labour negotiations. The speech which he made on this occasion is also included and hopefully will be read with great interest.

The article by Rafael F. Scharf is of a soul-searching nature and our readers will find it most stimulating. The publication last year of Jan Gross’s “neighbours” where he describes the massacre of about 1,000 Jews on July 10th 1941 in Jedwabne by their Polish neighbours, with whom they had lived together for hundreds of years, sparked unprecedented controversy in Poland. For over a year the argument went unchallenged and unexamined. On this day, most of the present inhabitants of Jedwabne find it difficult to reconcile themselves to this fact. Many Poles, too, were shocked and appalled by this massacre was carried out by Poles and put the blame on the Germans. However, there are also many who have expressed contrition and regret. We include two speeches, one by the President of Poland, Mr. Alexander Kwasnieski, and one by Professor Shevah Weiss, the Ambassador of Israel to Poland, made in Jedwabne on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the massacre.

Usually we publish the Leonard & Missie Memorial lecture but, due to unforeseen circumstances, it will have to be published next year. This year’s lecture was delivered by the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Professor Jonathan Sacks and it was based on his book “Celebrating Life”. We have, however, published an appreciation of the lecture by Ramsay Homa, who is no stranger to our Society.

We were privileged not only to survive the Holocaust but also to witness the phoenix-like renewal of the State of Israel in three years after our liberation. Our ancestors have prayed for two thousand years for this event to take place. Since her independence in 1948 the Jewish population in Israel has grown from 600,000 to almost 5 million. Before the War, Palestine, as it was then, was considered an arid and barren land and the thought that it would absorb five million people would have been considered with derision. Today Israel is not only self-sufficient in food but it is also exporting agricultural products.

The problem of refugees, a problem which has become a major pre-occupation in the Western World, is paradoxically no longer a Jewish refugee problem. Before the Second World War, the word refugee was synonymous with being Jewish. Today, there are no Jewish refugees, nor are there likely to be in the foreseeable future, because, if Jews ever feel threatened or are not welcome wherever they live, there is always a home for them in Israel. We are joined in a common destiny with the people of Israel. Our fate is inextricably bound with them. We must not forget what it was like for a Jew before the creation of a State of Israel. We were persecuted, despised and humiliated. We were at the mercy of other people. Our commitment to Israel must never falter. What happens to the people of Israel must inevitably affect us. Many of our members and their families live there, some of our children live there; most of us have families and a large number of friends who live there. Israel’s security guarantees our security.

The people of Israel crave for peace, but not at a price that would eventually lead to its destruction. The Oslo accords in 1993 stipulated that all future disagreements between Israel and the Palestinians will be resolved by negotiations and in spite of many hiccups that have occurred, it seemed that the two people will in the end reach a common viavendi. Unfortunately, the failure of the Peace summit at Camp David in September 2000 and the subsequent unleashing of the intifada, and Arafat’s right to dispel this cherished hope by rejecting the far-reaching concession made by Barak, Arafat has shown that the Oslo accords were only a means towards accepting his absoluts end i.e., the eventual elimination of the State of Israel. Even if Israel were to abandon the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza and withdraw to the pre-1967 lines, it would not satisfy Arafat as by demanding the return to Israel of four million Palestinians he has clearly indicated his intentions. In addition, since his return to the West Bank and Gaza in 1993, Arafat has continued promoting and prescribing school books which incite racial hatred, religious intolerance and outright genocide. It is from such an indoctrination that the breeding ground of suicide bombings emanates.

The people of Israel have experienced many crises during their short statehood and this is probably one of their worst. Anxiety and uncertainty remains, but it is hope rather than despondency that has sustained the Jewish people throughout the ages. At the same time, they must continue to be firm, vigilant and strong. This is a time for the people in Israel, as well as Jews in the diaspora, to be united. We cannot afford the luxury of disunity because the very existence of the State of Israel is at stake.

Wishing you and your family a very happy and healthy New Year.
ROSH HASHANAH MESSAGE FROM JO WAGERMAN OBE, PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWISH COMMUNITIES

Dear Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to write this Rosh Hashanah message to you in the second year of my Presidency of the Board of Deputies.

This has been a difficult and challenging year for the community. The issue that has dominated the Jewish community this year has been the armed uprising in Israel. The media hostility to Israel is of grave concern. The Board of Deputies has made every effort to respond to the worst excesses of the British media. It has been painful to witness the bias against Israel. Nevertheless, we have overturned the Government and the media to take a more balanced approach to the current Middle East conflict. Altering the public’s perception of Israel is a cause of great concern. The conference is supposed to be a generic conference about racism with no specific references. However, there is a move by Arab states to hijack the conference and connect Zionism with racism. This resolution was originally passed at the UN General Assembly on November 10, 1975 and was eventually expunged in 1991. We are acting to head off this challenge to delegitimise the State of Israel and to downplay the Holocaust. The Board has recently met with our Jewish NGOs and letters have been written to every European Ambassador and the new Foreign Secretary. Our thoughts, as always, are with Israel in this distressing period.

We are disappointed that the High Court has failed to uphold the exclusion order on Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. Louis Farrakhan has long espoused racist and anti-Semitic beliefs. Nevertheless, he is an influence in the United States and has made every effort to respond to the worst excesses of the British media. It has been painful to witness the bias against Israel. Nevertheless, we have overturned the Government and the media to take a more balanced approach to the current Middle East conflict. Altering the public’s perception of Israel is of grave concern. The conference is supposed to be a generic conference about racism with no specific references. However, there is a move by Arab states to hijack the conference and connect Zionism with racism. This resolution was originally passed at the UN General Assembly on November 10, 1975 and was eventually expunged in 1991. We are acting to head off this challenge to delegitimise the State of Israel and to downplay the Holocaust. The Board has recently met with our Jewish NGOs and letters have been written to every European Ambassador and the new Foreign Secretary. Our thoughts, as always, are with Israel in this distressing period.

This year we witnessed the first Holocaust Memorial Day. The Board was one of groups that participated in the Home Office planning for the day. The national ceremony brought together victims of genocides from all over the world to share their stories and to educate. This was a resounding success with the extremely moving national ceremony placing its emphasis on educating the younger generation about the dangers of hatred and intolerance. The Holocaust Memorial Day this year enabled us to share our experiences as a community with other ethnic minorities.

There are many Jewish schools and centres of learning and more opportunity to travel and study than ever before. Our children have never been so well educated in their religious traditions, or so comfortable with the Hebrew language. We have given back to the British society as a result of this with more Jewish musicians, actors, painters and writers than ever before. Our culture is wider and richer; we must continue to provide our children with the knowledge and strength to continue this trend for the Jewish community of Britain.

We have worked together as a community on a number of issues, putting aside our differences and showing respect for the good of everyone. This is seen on many occasions, including the Yom HaTzma’ut celebrations and the campaign for peace in Israel. These are just two examples of where leaders of religious organisations and lay leaders meet to discuss issues of common concern.

I have had the privilege to serve the Jewish community as President for just over a year. Without the young leaders of the community to carry on our work we will not be in a position to see our work through. It is imperative that we encourage the leaders of tomorrow to engage in the business of the community today. This is a challenge that I take into my second year and ask for your help in achieving this. Serving the Jewish community is a privilege that can be shared by so many more.

L’Shana Tova Tikatevu

Jo Wagerman OBE

President

Rosh Hashanah 5762

PAST AND PRESENT

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS

IN RHENS DORF

By David Herman

David came from Prague in the winter of 1946 with “The Boys” from Buchenwald. 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.

I sink into a dream. I do not know if I am asleep or just hallucinating. I am back at home, I promise my parents that I will be good and will not fight with my sister and brothers. It is Friday night, Erev Shabat. I can smell my favourite food, chicken soup and paprika chicken with dumplings. We all sit at the table. We have three guests for supper; one is Meir Tzitz the town’s fool, and then there is Mendel and Dudi, students from out of town. I am herding, jumping up and down at the synagogue to come to our home for supper. The children all laugh at Meir, but he is very serious. I can taste the food. It seems that nothing has changed. Life in the camp is only a dream, a performance on a stage, everything is as it was and we are all together again as a family.

I dream of dogs barking, I hear shouting and screaming. Suddenly the lights are switched on, the tune is 4am. The SS are all lined up in front of us. Behind them is a young boy in a prison uniform; his face is pale, his mouth is open, and he is saying something, but I cannot hear him. He is wearing the prison uniform, his hands are tied behind his back, his eyes are closed, and he is not speaking. The SS are all shouting, "Taus raus, mach das - when the lights are switched on, the tune is 4am. The SS are all lined up in front of us. Behind them is a young boy in a prison uniform; his face is pale, his mouth is open, and he is saying something, but I cannot hear him. He is wearing the prison uniform, his hands are tied behind his back, his eyes are closed, and he is not speaking. The SS are all shouting, "Taus raus, mach das -
A GLIMPSE INTO MY EXPERIENCES IN PLASZOW

By Harry Balsam

Harry came to England with the Windermere group. He lived in the Loughton and Belstone Park hostels. He is the Vice-Chairman of our Society.

I was one of the lucky ones.

The Commandant of the camp, a Russian by the name of Muller, picked me out of around 350 men and 35 boys between the ages of 12-14. He told me that I was to be his Purger (Boot cleaner). The remainder of the boys he said, would be shot. He told me that I could have one boy with me. I was petrified and not thinking clearly. I told him that all the boys were my friends and cousins. He shouted back to me “One boy only - I said”. The first name that came to my mind in a panic was Moniek Rosenthal. He was called out and told to stand beside me. The remaining boys were crying and screaming. He told us that small boys would be of no use to him as he needed men to work and help build the direct railway line from Cracow to Berlin.

After keeping the men and boys standing for about two hours on the Aprl-Platz (Roll Call Ground), he decided not to shoot any of them but to transfer them to another camp called Prokocim, which was about three miles away.

We were surrounded by the guards with他们的 guns pointing us ready to fire.

Rosenbaum and I stayed behind in Plaszow with the other men. Rosenbaum worked in the camp whilst I worked only for Muller cleaning and polishing his boots. When Commandant Muller was not around, I spent my time walking around the camp. I used to go into the kitchen and take out as much food as I wanted for friends and people I knew. One such person was a boy called Pome boy, with whom I became very friendly. He was already in Plaszow when I arrived. Other such people were the elders of my town who were helping me in my barmitzvah.

This incident in Plaszow Slave Labour Camp sometime in September 1942.

I am not aware of any other boy being Barmitzved in a camp.

After a few months of being Commandant of Plaszow, Muller was promoted to a higher rank and put in charge of the complete Cracow Ghetto and surrounding towns, including the main Plaszow Concentration Camp. This included Prokocim and Beznaw camps. I was with him most of the time, even on his visits to the different camps.

Muller had suitcases filled with diamonds, watches, gold coins and bank notes all of which had been confiscated from Jews when they arrived in the camps.

If something was found with items of value after being searched, they were shot on the spot without any hesitation. This happened in front of me on many occasions. Killing Jews in that way was a normal everyday occurrence.

After working for Muller for several months, he trusted me enough to give me access to all his treasures, which were hidden under his beds in various rooms, including my room which adjoined his, outside his bedroom.

He gave me a pass enabling me to go about freely. I used to go to Cracow on a bicycle to buy cigarettes and spirits for him or to visit market. These were often used by Muller whilst entertaining his friends, both male and female, as well as SS and Gestapo officers whom he brought from the main headquarters in Cracow.

Several such frequent visitors were the SS Oberfuehrer, Sherner, SS Hauptsattmfuhrer Amon Goeth and Dr Hassar, Gestapo officers Herman Heinrich and Wilhem Kunde. Goeth was to succeed Muller as Commandant of the Plaszow Concentration Camp. Sherner, Hassar, Heinrich, Kunde and Kruger between them controlled the entire deportation and extermination of millions of Jews in Poland.

I used to go two or three times a week to the Cracow Ghetto to visit people I knew who were still living there. I never had to wear a yellow star on my arm reading ‘Jude’ (JEW) as everyone else did. If a Jew was caught not wearing the yellow star, they were immediately executed.

On one such occasion, the railway police stopped a young girl of about 15 years old, about to board the train at Plaszow Station. Her name was Christine. Upon interrogating her, she broke down and denied being a Jew. When she turned she was brought before the Commandant of Plaszow to be executed for the crime of not wearing the “Yellow Star”. I helped to hide him from the Commandant at the gate of the camp when she arrived. Muller personally took charge of the situation, leaving the two railway police behind at the
main entrance. He marched her to the rear of the block, which was the execution ground of the camp. He then returned to the railway station. I thanked Muller for his compassion in not shooting the girl. He told me that they would be back for me tomorrow as he was very proud of our group. His compassion in not shooting the girl was the last selection of the Jews of Tarnow. We were then marched to the train station where the wagons were waiting for us. The SS guards were hitting out, beating and shooting anyone not marching quick enough. I kept on telling the guards that I shouldn't be amongst the group, I was beaten on my head with the butt of a rifle many times. I kept on telling them, and the more I did, the more I was beaten over the head. I shouted that I should be with Commandant Muller in the Plaszow. All to no avail. However, as I was being hurried with everyone into one of the wagons on the train, my luck changed. SS Hapssturmfurhrer Hassar recognised me and called me off the train. He asked me if I was Balzam the Fitzer of Commandant Muller? I screamed 'Yes'. In sheer delight, he told me the whole story. One hour later I was on my way back to Plaszow. After that episode I never returned to Tarnow. The entire transport that night from Tarnow went straight to Auschwitz Extermination Camp. Nobody from that transport ever returned from Auschwitz. That was the last of the "Jews of Tarnow".

1. Moniek Rosenbaum also survived the war and came to England with our group in 1945. He now lives in Jerusalem and is the last I heard of him he had ten children.

2. In August 1945 we came together to England with three hundred and thirty-two other boys and girls. In 1946, Pomeranc left London for Palestine to fight for War of Independence. One year later he returned to London where we lived together again right up until he got married. Pomeranc worked very hard helping to bring up his two children, Denise and Stephen, whom he adore. He was as very proud to see them both qualify as solicitors before unfortunatley dying of cancer in 1983. His memory will always live on.

3. Christine also survived the war, ending up in the USA, marrying an American businessman. In 1960 she came to England specially to see me with her husband, as she had heard that I had survived the war and was living in London. She could not thank me enough for saving her life.

I REMEMBER

By William Himmelfarb

William came to England with the Windermere group in August 1945. He emigrated to the U.S.A. towards the end of the ‘40s. He lives in the Bronx and keeps in close touch with our members.

My name is William Himmelfarb. I, too, came to England with the Windermere group on August 14th 1945. After a short stay, I was sent to live in Manchester with fifteen other friends, in a Bnei Akiva Hostel. The five years that I spent in England were great. While attending evening school in 1948, I wrote this essay.

"Life in England has given me a new start for the future. To understand it, one has to compare it with the life in other parts of the world. I was born in a small town (Kosczykow, Poland). In 1912 I was torn away from my family and friends by the Nazis. The years I have spent in the camps or, as I call it, Hitler's Hell, with the impressions which were left in my memory, what my parents told me. I still have faint memories of the life and customs in my homeland. When in England with little expectaion, I entered a new country with a future. I was put in an orphanage home with fifteen other boys. The staff were my parents and the boys were my brothers. I could feel something fresh had come to me. At the hostel I found recreation, education, etc. After a few years the hostel gave me feelings as a free human being. I noticed that the English people were very loyal to the Queen and Government. I found peace to friends and kind. I will always bear in my mind the good impression which I gained in this country (England). Therefore, my heart is full of gratitude to the Jewish Committee and the country for the chance of a new life and a new beginning."

End of essay.

I left England in 1950 for the United States and I made my home in New York. I served in the U.S. Army during the Korean war and after the war became a U.S. citizen. I married a wonderful woman (Ruth). We raised a family, a son and a daughter. I also have two beautiful grandchildren. Life has been good to us and we give thanks to the good Lord for our achievements.

MEMORIES

By Yisroel Rudzinski

Yisroel came to England with the Windermere group and studied at the Yeshivah in Gateshead. He is a committee member of our Society and it was his inspiration that resulted in the Society commissioning a Sefer Torah and in erecting memorial plaques of our parents at the Borehamwood and Elsere Synagogue.

N
ormally, as time goes by things get forgotten, but lately just the opposite is happening to me. I start to remember things from the past, and this usually happens at a time of Simica - either the wedding of a grandchild or a Bris of a great-grandson - both of which we have celebrated recently.

A few days before the wedding of my granddaughter, I phoned my friend Moshele to enquire after him and, at the same time, I mentioned the wedding and if he'd like to come I'd be delighted to see him. He came with his wife - well, words cannot describe his emotion; he was standing and crying and thinking back to our days in the concentration camp Staryzsko Kamienna and Schleiben, those dreadful times, and here I was standing under the Chupa marrying off a grandchild. Never in our wildest dreams did we think that this would ever happen to us.

As you probably know, I come from Pierchio. We were fortunate that there were two factories in our town that employed young boys, thus enabling more boys to survive than from many other towns. Among the survivors of our town is the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Lau. The Radoszycer Rebbe lived in Pierchio. He was fortunate that he did not survive the war. He was taken from Schleiben to Buchenwald and died there. Two of his daughters did survive. One died soon after the war and the other one married a well-known writer, Reb Yechiel Granstein, who lives in Israel. Unfortunately, this daughter passed away a few years ago.
They have one son living in Bene Berak who holds and important position in Missisquoi Synagogue (in the presence of Seder Torah, Tefillin and Mezuozos by special computer).

From Piotrkow I was sent to Skarzysko, together with the Rebbe’s sister, a carpet of flowers. They were hidden in the ghetto with her family, and elderly mother, two daughters, a son-in-law and himself. One of the daughters went out from her hiding place and she was caught and put with a group to be sent to Skarzysko. When the Rebbe heard this he came from the hidden place for his daughter. When the Germans saw him they said “We have been waiting for you for a long time.” When his pleading did no help, he said “Then we all go together”, and so the whole family went to Skarzysko. I travelled in the same lorry with my parents intending to describe the conditions on our arrival in Skarzysko, that would take a whole book. The next day we were marched to the ammunition factory and the Germans started to select people - those who had a trade either working with wood or iron were sent to a different department. The young boys, 16, were sent to another side. I myself was thinking, young boys are not of much use to them and as I was tall I stayed with the grown-ups. As we had no trade, we were given the hardest job making the shells for underwater mines. The Rebbe was amongst us. We carried as best we could, working twelve hours a day with very little food, getting weaker day by day. But the way, the young boys were sent to work in Work C where they filled the mines with gunpowder and explosives and within a couple of weeks they became yellow and died from inhaling the poisonous fumes. The Rebbe’s mother and son-in-law died from typhoid soon after arrival. Coming back to my remembrance, our day started at 7 in the morning till 7 in the evening. At 12 noon we had a half-hour break when we got a ladle of soup, which was just like a cup of warm water and if you found a bit of potato in it you were lucky. The days were very cold and we managed to find a petrol barrel and some wood. We lit a fire and warmed ourselves. The Rebbe was amongst us. Although he was in the same bitter position as we were, he started to talk to us and give us encouragement. “Yidden,” he said, “Don’t worry. G-d is only trying you. You will see that one day we shall come out of here and have families, children and grandchildren.” I was 16½ years old, had a swollen body from malnutrition and was listening to the Rebbe’s words and started to become happy with my lot - after all the Rebbe said so.

I am happy to say that the Rebbe’s words became a reality. I now have, thank G-d, a bunch of grandchildren and great-grandchildren of whom are living in Israel. When I come to Israel, my grandchildren and I usually enjoy a Shabbos together and on one such occasion recently I remembered the Rebbe’s blessing. We were in Bene Berak one Friday evening and whilst sitting at the Shabbos table I suggested to my grandchildren that we visit the Rebbe’s son-in-law and family the following Shabbos morning. After davening we met together and went to the house of the Rebbe’s grandson. He was sitting together with his father and family. I told them of this story and showed them that this book is living proof of the Rebbe’s blessing. Reb Yisroel Chokel of Radoszyc of blessed memory.

I ONCE SAW AN APPLE IN RAVENSBURC

This article consists of extracts from a presentation given at Princeton University on the subject “The Terroir of History.”

Judith Sherman, November 2000

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

I wrote this a long time ago. Karpus in Auschwitz eight - perhaps as much as nine. I tease him around our kitchen table. Did anyone want to care to was strong enough to touch his pale hair when gas was filling? and his breathing. I want to be here and help him breathe and postpone dying. I do not want to die until he does and - - -

A biographical memory.

A brook runs through the centre of the main street. On each side is an alley of acacia trees - providing elegance and shade. On Shabbats afternoons we strike back and forth, hack and forth along this pathway. Wearing our best and noting everyone else’s best. Everyone knows everyone - guests too. Shabbos preparations started on Wednesday with a seriousness of purpose and no short cuts. So now after prayers, meals and nap time we “schpatzir” (promenade). Predictably and peacefully.

And the river! The river on the south side of the meadow: such a meadow - a carpet of wild flowers. The river runs this path. We splash and run in the river. My brother, sister, cousins, all the village population.

Somewhere in Czechoslovakia you can still find this place. I did - again. After Auschwitz and Germany, London and Jerusalem and the USA. After marriage, children and grandchildren. I went back.

The house not there the plum trees in the garden recognize me.

And then terror. I am about nine years old. I wake up at night to have a rifle with bayonet pointed at my face. The German soldier says “du kannst ja ruhig schlafen - wir wissen dass ihr alle Juden sind.” (You can sleep peacefully. We know that you are all Jews.) At this point my parents and relatives are standing undressed in the hallway with rifles pointed at them. Other soldiers are rampaging through the house. Later I hear my mother say “Shoot us or leave us alone!” How does she dare? Eventually they leave. I am in a state of shock, because of her words; probably because it is not time to shoot Jews in Czechoslovakia yet - though it is in Poland. This is in 1939. This German troop is on the way to complete the occupation of Poland.

I have heard it said, with surprise or with contempt, that Jews went to their death without resistance. In spite of overwhelming power on their side and none on ours, there was resistance and usually at tremendous cost. In my family there was a decision, a determination, to resist. All of us. Some of us. Somebody. My parents arrange for us children to be smuggled across the Czechoslovak border into Hungary which this time is still safe for Jews. They pay peasants to take us across the border at night and deliver us to my aunt - father’s sister - in Kassau. (Now that I have children I am filled with the anguish of sending one’s children into risky, dangerous situations because the alternative is definitely worse. Parents choose dangerous uncertainty because

It is not I who should be telling this story. Because this is the Holocaust story - the final solution story. The goal of the final solution is the killing of every Jew in the German sphere of influence. The Holocaust has an impact on me - I bled, I bled, but I survive. My brother Karpus, age 9, gassed in Auschwitz should be here to tell what that “final” means - to be gassed. My mother, Iona, dies in a transit camp in Raudszy. She should be here telling. Eite, my father, 43, dies of starvation in concentration camp Sachsenhausen. An hour and a half out of Berlin, the capital of the Third Reich. He survives labour camps and hiding and is captured when the Russians are already liberating Czechoslovakia. He holds out until a day or two after the liberation of the camp, as does his brother, Moshe. They spend all their prewar and war years together and die in Sachsenhausen. I do know something of starvation, but not all of what they did. And the others too, should be here telling, cousins, aunts, neighbours, baker, shoemaker - almost everyone, every Jew I know until age 14 and the many whom I do not know in life, but see in their death in Ravensbruck.

My memory of Karpus is my most intense and the most vulnerable. He goes into Auschwitz gas with his nine year old cousin Yidu and Yidu’s grandparents, both in their 80’s. Yidu’s mother, Teneke, who is with them, is sent to the other side and dies in Auschwitz later.
We spent a year in Kassau, a small eastern town. Shortly after we finally join the group is shoved into a small barrack. They push the floor is silent, no one says a word. The food and water are minimal and uncomfortable. They are unable to do anything, but in the other blocks, physical disability is not an excuse, just a reason for shooting or gassing. But I have an image from there that I cannot erase or weaken. It is in my eyes, in my skin. Off the corridor leading to the wash room is a room. It is small and crowded with "det varnacht" (with the crazies). I think there are no banks in there and not enough blankets. When they are taken out, some are already too weak to shout, fight, cry. They are kept in there until taken to be killed. I know not what constitutes madness in Ravensbruck -- crying too much for a lost child, getting into a squabble with a watchman, taking a potato, or standing in the wrong room. The Gestapo interrogations...
watch how hard each tries to keep her baby alive. Regina, at the fence, says my “baby died.” Regina looks empty and worn. She does not cry. She can’t cry. I do not cry. I do not cry much in Ravensbruck. But this is a time for crying. For smashing up the world. For ripping bark off trees and putting it onto beds. I do not ask her did you place the baby on the cold wash room floor - how long before they took her? Did you have a chance to keep her warm in? Did you watch? These questions I still have. Some intensities do not leave you. The other baby dies also.

After the evening soup, the women in their blunt discuss recipes - for poppy seed cake, challah for Shabbat bread. They do not talk of family back home, just food back home. It is easier. Better. Better after our marriage and arrival in America, Reuven and I are invited to a wedding. I sit next to a man and when upon his invitation talk to me from Kurima - he says “I know you - I was with your father in Sachsenhausen. He always spoke of the family Friday evenings - for in hard times. I even know where at table you were sitting.” My father was in Sachsenhausen, one half hour from Ravensbruck. We did, of course, not know of each other’s presence. At this time of hunger we connected through family food - 30 kilometers and a world apart.

From this part of the camp you can see Lake Schwedte. Beautifully calm waters with two swans on it and trees. I say to myself yes there is a world out there - peaceful, lovely, no one to worry about. Then when I revisit Ravensbruck 30 years later I learn that the ashes from the nearby crematoria were dumped into this lake. I place flowers in honor of those I knew and for those who have no one to place a flower for them.

It is April, 1945. We expect the war to end. We expect President Roosevelt to save us. We all believe in him. It is fortunate we do not know at the time how uninvolved he is with saving us. Where would our hopes have gone? Germans who go for first ending the war before taking any measures to save us is so late for so many of us. We are given a Red Cross package and told we are to eat the food. We are matched out of the camp five to a row, SS guards and dogs on either side. Long, long convoys. It is rumoured the SS guards get lots of food and the Germans do not want us to fall into enemy hands. We march all day and I am again grateful for my shoes. In the evenings we stay in a field and eat from our Red Cross package - powdered milk, canned meat, beans, cheese and biscuits. Such a new experience - to spend half an hour to have food to spend time on. We are not used to such food any more. Many get sick and some die. But for now we eat. We march for days. We do not get more. Women who cannot keep up, slow down or collapse and are shot. At first we turn around at every shot. Later less - and then we just march on robot-like. We have to keep to the side - the road is crowded with tanks, army trucks, soldiers retreating from the front, civilians running from the Russians. The end is clearly in sight. What of our end? The guards and their dogs stay with us. And then we wake up on a farm one morning and the SS are gone and Russian soldiers are there - We are free.

Someone slaughters a cow and my aunt brings asparagus from somewhere. We eat. Some dancing starts. Someone pours a bottle. We walk into the nearby town and stay in an old hotel. The faces in those hotel mirrors need re-introductions - to ourselves. Other survivors arrive. I do not know when exactly I begin to see myself as a survivor rather than a Haftling - victim, but it is energizing - a life job.

I am back in Kurima. The people who see me have such a look of surprise - less I think at my scrawny appearance than that I appear at all. It is as though our time there has passed. We are out of order. Cousins Elza and Mella arrive too and then sister Mirjam. We wait for our fathers. Somehow we know already that our mother and brothers are killed. Our fathers do not come. I am sent to the Tatry Mountains for recuperation. The British government has agreed to allow 1000 youth survivors into Great Britain. Just over half that number can be found. We go to England under the auspices of the Central British Fund. Because my sister is only eight we are sent to a children’s home in the country. It is a home for the youngest Holocaust survivors. Several of the children from age four have Auschwitz tattoo numbers on their arms. They are Mengele’s twins. Dr. Mengele performed medical experiments to see how he can improve German fertility rates and ensure blue-eyed babies for the Fatherland.

SS man - what do you tell my children? Do you say obedience is the law - the law is loyalty - us? We liberators? Do you have nightmares with the boots polished of stains under your bed? Do you tell your children the children who stained your boots? Do you have nightmares?

Yes - to this day I am affected by the Holocaust. I have been fortunate and have had a full life since those times. Family, friends, education, work, fun. I also live on two tracks - always. I am home and I am there - when I have a shower; when I eat potatoes; when I am hungry - when I am not hungry. When I sneeze - I think in hiding that would be a cry-away. If an infant cries - would this baby have to be smothered to save the others in hiding? Would there be milk? Water? A mother? I do not fast on Yom Kippur, but do attend services. I do not wear striped clothing. I own sturdy boots. I do not turn off bad news on T.V. - because the bad news should be heard by someone in supermarkets - I do not select fruit or vegetables. I just take these from the top. I cannot engage in selections because of Auschwitz rejections - because of Mengele.

Parents. Because in traumatic separations in their own lives some survivors have difficulty letting go of their children. My reaction is the opposite. I have not spoken about the Holocaust to my family. But I did have a very definite intent to encourage our three children to “make it out there” - my own model for survival. And also very deliberately provided “good moments” - for warmth in hard times. Some good words too from some good poems. And a mother they can stand up to! My biggest accomplishment!!

And death. I want an un-Auschwitz funeral - visibility in death. Concreteness. Rituals. Witnesses. Markers - a gravestone. A defiant-in-your-face Mengele death. After a lot of searching, at my request, Reuven and I bought twelve cemetery plots, just for the two of us. Maximum space - concreteness. On a hill - under a poplar tree - with view. I ask my favourite Rabbi to make the eulogy - she agrees. I am confident in my good friend also agrees to speak. This puts a smile on my face. I want words spoken by people who pay attention. This is already somewhat bizarre but logical to me. A solid death with all the trappings.

God was so much part of my Kurima existence as the colour of my eyes. He was there because he was never not there. Shabbat preparations, Kashrut, Hebrew school, the meadow, our plum trees. My cousin and I slip anonymous envelopes with money under needy doors. No-one but God is to see us. In the wagon train I make an oath - if we do not go to Auschwitz after that I do not remember addressing God. I do not remember. All the power in Ravensbruck is concentrated in SS hands. They rule so totally. No one seems more powerful, only President Roosevelt, and he is so slow - What I associate with God is absent - ??? People help each other - that often makes a life and death difference. Does God help? How? Every survivor thinks she survives by some miracle. But every survivor could as easily not have survived - like most, not have survived. Chance. Luck. The margin is so minimal.

I believe in God - I do not know how not to. But if He cannot be there with us in Auschwitz - cannot intervene - Is He vulnerable? Embarrassed? Please not a bystander. Is He a God for Kurima, not for Auschwitz? Have things changed in heaven as they have on earth? How should we see you, God?

November 16th 2000

YOU ARE INVITED TO MY FUNERAL

You are invited to my funeral to remember my Auschwitz funeral. Attire optional - no stripes please. Come nearer, come nearer and attest that beneath this poplar tree this season-marking-poplar-tree in this pleasant ground chosen and paid for - with space reserved nearby for husband to join in timely manner for company and closeness - attest people, that Yehudit the person Yehudit - Yehudit the Jew - is according to custom here buried. You come too, Lord. (were you too embarrassed to attend in Auschwitz?) You come too, Lord. And bless and smile. Not! Not smile! Just be.

Yehudit Sherman
I n Poznań, the small provincial Polish town where I was born, children played many games using bundles of real bank-notes and piles of coins. Naturally we were not so affluent as to be able to play with real money; the cash we used was authentic but obsolete. Successive foreign governments of Polish territories left a plethora of currencies rendered worthless by raging inflation. The cost of a postage stamp, for example, would be thousands of Russian rubles or German marks. In any event, all notes and coins became unusable and were discarded when Poland gained independence, and the Polish złoty became legal tender.

We children hardly cared that our play treasures had no value in the adult world. We were elated to discover these hoards of intrinsically worthless money whilst playing hide-and-seek in the cluttered attics of tenement blocks. It was such great fun for us to raid the old coffers and chests of drawers stored there and emerge millionaires. Within a short time I had managed to acquire an old Gladstone bag and several big boxes full of old bank notes and coins. These cluttered up my toy cupboard and I had nowhere to keep any more. Eventually, running out of the games we could play with old money, I became bored and started searching for other treasures.

My interest and curiosity were aroused when, picking among some abandoned boxes, I came across postage stamps on old envelopes. Through ignorance I must have damaged many good stamps through trying to tear them off. "Stamps?" responded my father Władysław, from whom I had sought advice. "Well, I used to collect them and now you can collect them too." I still did not know why stamps were collected but I was fascinated by their varied designs, colours and inscriptions. At first I kept my stamp collection in a disused cigar box. Failing to create a game we could play with them, I merely continued to collect and swap duplicates with friends.

It was not until my ninth birthday in 1936, that my father, noting my unceasing passion for collecting stamps, gave me his much prized collection. On handing to me the old Russian album in which it was housed, he explained to me the importance of retaining each item in good condition. My real initiation into the world of serious philately was when my father demonstrated the careful removal of stamps from an envelope using steam and warm water. I was delighted to see how smoothly and undamaged they slid from the paper and, later, to witness them being affixed to the album page with special, gummed hinges. These were rather expensive, however, so I made my own by cutting up strips of ordinary gummed paper.

Initially, I was interested mainly in stamps from countries of which I had never heard, or whose names sounded odd to me. Togo, Cameroon, Chile or Dahomey for instance, were places from which mail was unlikely to arrive in Wielun, the town to which we had moved. I scoured through an old world atlas to discover where these countries were situated. Not only was such an exercise great fun, it also helped my knowledge of geography. Collecting stamps opened up for me a small window into the exotic locations which, previously, I had not even imagined existed.

Later, however, I could not find in my atlas. I was enlightened when my father explained that, for example, Bayern was in fact Bavaria, a province of Germany; that Helvetia was Switzerland, and a stamp without the name of any country was from England. Then there were the mysterious stamps with writing or signs I could not decipher. These were a real challenge to my imagination. Much later I discovered a booklet on stamp collecting which introduced me to the mysteries of watermarks and perforations. I became a very keen philatelist.

My father's album, which contained a few old and rare specimens among many common-place stamps, became the nucleus of my own collection. My pocket money was wholly insufficient for me to buy stamps; nevertheless, my collection continued to expand. This was mainly due to acquisitions from the exchange of other collectible items: photographs of film stars, pictures of wild life and cigarette cards. Swapping duplicates with other boys, petting all friends of my parents for stamps from their mail and asking for stamps for my birthday presents, were other means of filling my album.

Without access to a catalogue I had no idea of rarity or the commercial value of my collection. I was not particularly concerned about my ignorance in this respect, for I grew to love all my stamps. Whenever anyone showed the slightest interest in my album, I was proud and eager to display my treasures from so many lands. Little did I suspect that one day, in appalling circumstances, my stamp collection would be instrumental in saving my life and helping me and my brother Jerzy to survive the Holocaust.

***

Constantly on the lookout for opportunities for exchange, I liked to keep the entire collection with me wherever I was away from home. This proved to be extremely fortunate for me. The collection accompanied me when, shortly before the German invasion of Poland in 1939, the family went to stay with my grandparents in Poznań, a large town farther away from the German border than Wielun. The political situation was tense and my father, mother Ferri, two younger brothers Jerzyk and Tadzio and I were glad to be moving.

Unfortunately, Poznań was also bombarded and we hid in villages to avoid the worst of it. After a few weeks, when German forces occupied Poznań and most other Polish territory, father left his two younger sons with their grandparents, to return to Wielun with mother and me. I made my own decision to leave behind in Poznań my beloved stamp collection, safely locked away in my father's leather briefcase. It was a heartbreaking decision to make but I knew it was sensible in the perilous circumstances. The only time I brought back to my home town was an exercise book filled with duplicates for swapping with friends.

On return to Wielun we found to our dismay that, during the first few weeks of the war, our apartment had been ransacked. It had been stripped of everything of value and was now occupied by some Volksdeutsche, German ethnic Poles who had accepted German nationality. Most of our possessions had disappeared, either confiscated by the German Occupation Authorities or stolen with their tacit approval.

My camera, bicycle, model train, fountain pens, toy soldiers, books and many games and toys vanished, together with our family heirlooms, jewellery, gold coins, silver and furniture. Even our family photographs and holiday snaps had been looted. In the circumstances, we held on to our few remaining belongings, even when we learned subsequently that they were in the possession of our Volksdeutsche neighbours. Nor could my father withdraw any money from our bank, which left us virtually destitute. Naturally, my parents were devastated.

By comparison the loss of my personal items, though painful, was insignificant. The
only consolation for my own deprivation was the thought that my stamp collection was safe in Poland. At this time the collection attained in my consciousness a position far beyond that of a mere hobby. It became almost a mystical symbol of my past, my happy childhood, my united family, my warm home life... in a word, normality.

With difficulty, my father found us somewhere to reside. Although living through a period of dreadful upheaval there were happy impressions for me in the field of philately. This was a time when many new, interesting varieties were issued by the postal authorities. German stamps were overprinted for use in Poland and Polish stamps were overprinted in German. To my disappointment however I discovered that very few boys were keen to exchange duplicates with me. For most part this was due to the German influence under which many Polish youths, formerly my friends had fallen. They had now become violently antisemitic and avoided all amicable contact with their Jewish contemporaries.

The few Jewish youngsters who still remained in town had either lost their collections during the earlier German bombing and artillery bombardment, or had completely lost interest in philately. This was hardly surprising as, under the new German regulations, the entire social life and the atmosphere in Wielun had been utterly transformed. Even walking in the street became hazardous for a Jew, easily identified by his yellow star and in my case also by the prominent Jewish cap which languages I was quite literate. These activities which naturally involved meeting parents, increased my opportunities to collect current postal issues. I felt no inhibitions in asking the Polish parents, even those who still remained in town had, to give me the envelopes from their correspondence which they would normally discard. Occasionally I was able to persuade one of my Polish pupils to go to the post office (perhaps a Jewish boy) to buy for me a whole set of a new commemorative issue with some of the money I earned teaching.

Although I was a child, it was difficult for me to move freely in the streets. The growing problem of avoiding the constant round-ups for forced, unpaid work, which everybody tried to evade at all costs. One day I was caught in a brawl for workers. I was taken to the German police station, where Jews were assigned to various hard labour tasks around the town. Fortunately this happened during the relatively early days of the occupation. At first the German officers encountered were of the Einsatztruppen killing squads. The German officer in charge spotted an envelope with one of the attractive new issues protruding from my pocket. He pulled it out and gazed at his find with great interest. Seizing the opportunity which presented itself, I said: "Please sir, you may have the stamp if you like it" and I added quickly, "I have a few more stamps from the same set at home which I shall be happy to fetch for you, if you allow me to go." Obviously a philatelist, he readily agreed. A small sacrifice, I thought, as I hurried home for the stamps, and a German officer who was also a keen stamp collector might prove a useful acquaintance." I was more than content to avoid a day of hard labour, under the supervision of a brutal Polish foreman, happy to torment the Jews in his charge. The incident at the police station made me aware for the first time that my stamps had a practical value.

The persecution of the Jewish population in Wielun intensified daily. The Jewish Council seemed ineffectual in stopping the jaws of the Nazi vins tightening around our community. In time, each family was ordered to surrender all its possessions, including valuables, stocks and even businesses. Every Jewish male, apart from very young children, was required to register for forced, hard manual labour. Shortly afterwards every Jew was compelled to resettle in an open ghetto on one side of the town. My mother and I had to move yet again. This time to an apartment which we had to share with two other families.

Bad as it was, the situation in Wielun deteriorated considerably during the autumn of 1941. The uncertainty of our fate became even harder to bear when, without any warning, several Jews caught in the street were deported, allegedly to a labour camp. A few weeks later I saw men running in great panic trying to hide wherever they could, outside the houses pursuing German police. Through the grapevine, we heard that ten Jewish men were to be taken hostage in place of unknown others accused of alleged kosher slaughter of a cow. Some women, frantic to find a hiding place for their men, put up a ladder and helped them to climb into an inaccessible attic that had no floorboards. I was allowed to assist them. We stayed there for some hours, laying on single beam rafters in utter silence, while down below German police were searching for men with growing frustration. Within hours, many Jews had been caught. Ten of those seized, although innocent of the alleged offence, were hanged publicly in the market square without a trial. All other Jews caught in the round up had to watch the execution and some, under threat of joining the victims, were compelled to assist the executioners. The gruesome event left little doubt in our minds what the future held for us.

Without prior warnings, mass deportations of Jews in Wielun began during the following winter. Every street in the ghetto was blocked off by the SS. Men, women and children were chased screaming out of the houses. Terrified Jews ran from rifle butts and by sharp prods by fixed bayonets, the terrified Jews were herded into large black vans parked outside the buildings.

I was fourteen years old at the time. Although small for my age, I was very agile. My agility stood me in good stead when I was captured by the SS outside the house where we lived. Instinctively, in fear of my life, I refused to climb sheepishly into the back of the van. Instead I dropped to the ground, dived between the legs of the SS man who stood with his feet apart and vaulted over a high wooden fence behind him.

Luckily the orchard into which I had dashed myself was covered with a deep, soft blanket of snow. The SS troopers, either too busy with the job in hand, or, perhaps unable to climb easily over the fence, did not follow. Maybe they thought I would be too small to chase one small boy, so they fired their rifles randomly in the general direction of my escape. I ran as fast as I could across the snow covered field beyond the orchard. Exhausted, I came finally to a spot partially filled with snow. Guided by instinct I jumped into the hollow and remained there for the rest of the day, trembling with cold and fear. As I lay there, concealed from view and hoping to avoid discovery, the realisation that I was not playing a game and that my life was at stake, shook me profoundly. Luckily there was no pursuit, but it was nonetheless a narrow escape.

As soon as dusk fell, I hastened cautiously to the Polish section of Wielun by a roundabout route. With some trepidation I knocked on the door of the family of one of our Polish pupils. They assured me that the vans had departed and that the ghetto was clear of the SS. My mother's well-being had filled my mind throughout the day; now I set about looking for her. Eventually I found her in the house of a sympathetic Volksdeutsche family, whose son was my mother's pupil. No sooner did she see me than she hugged me tightly, tears streaming down her face. Distressed and disoriented after a German night in a toilet in the Polish section of the town, my mother had become distraught with worry about me. The friendly German woman who had taken her in
clearly knew what this deportation was about, but refused to discuss it. I have no idea about our well-being, the woman urged us to flee Wielun while we could. She believed Jews would be safer across the border, in the General Government of Poland, where Piotrkow (which had been annexed to the Greater German Reich). She gave us the name and address of a Pole who lived a couple of miles outside our town. He owned a Polish sleigh and might be a price help us to escape. Though we did not even suspect that the black vans were mobile gas chambers, or that the destination of the evacuated Jews was the death camp at Chelmno, my mother and I heeded the woman’s advice.

Offering our deepest thanks we left the woman’s house, not wishing to place her in any further peril for harbouring us. We returned to our room in the „ghetto”, donated as many garments as we could reasonably wear and collected a few essentials. For me, these had to include my secondary stamp collection, which I wrapped carefully into a small flat bundle and carried between the two shirts I was wearing. We could not take much with us on the journey. We had been warred that it would involve a lengthy trek through the winter countryside and be smuggled across the German border.

The Polish sleigh driver demanded an exorbitant price for the rickety sleigh and his two shins (or “horses” as we called them). He decided we could walk to Piotrkow, which was well past midnight.

As we approached Piotrkow, we entered a carriage which happened to be occupied by five German soldiers. Despite the trepidation we felt, we were determined to play our part. As the train rumbled through the night, we remained very polite and moved quickly to make space for a good-looking woman and her young son. As soon as the train pulled out of the station, I took a harmonica out of my mouse pocket and began to play. The soldiers enjoyed the music and hummed or sang with me of the current tunes I was able to offer them.

Time elapsed in a strangely surreal yet not unpleasant way. The seemingly congenial atmosphere was greatly enhanced by the fact that no one came into our compart- ment to check either our baggage or our identities. Even several SS inspectors walked by without entering, probably thinking we were family or friends of the soldiers. When the train arrived at Piotrkow, we wished the soldiers a pleasant journey and left them with a deep sigh of relief.

My mother and I mingled with the crowds in the Polish section of the town, anxious not to draw attention to ourselves. Eventually we succeeded in slipping into the ghetto by joining a column of workers returning from their factory shift. The joy of our reunion with my father, brothers and other family members, after such a long separation was incredible. It should have been a celebration, but with food and money in short supply we had to content with just being together again. The hardships and tensions of the journey now over, mother and I could relax a little and relate all the details of our escape from Wielun. Now I could finally rescue my bundle of stamps from between my shirts and unite them joyfully with my main collection, still safely stored in my father’s leather briefcase.

Once again the now combined collection of stamps became my main preoccupation. My troubles seemingly behind me in Wielun, I was impatient to reclaim my album and to add to it the interesting items I had prouly acquired despite the many dangers and difficulties. However the state of comparative tranquillity which prevailed in the Piotrkow ghetto did not endure for long. News from other ghettos and the continuing deportations of Jews were soon superseded by rumours and then by fearful information that similar action in Piotrkow was imminent. Talk had it that only those in safe jobs, more specifically worked deemed essential for the German war effort, would be allowed to remain behind. At the cost of what was left of my mother’s jewellery, my father bribed an official with work for Jerzyk and me.

The jobs were in Hortensia glassworks which supplied the Wehrmacht with bottles and jars. Not long after we started work, official confirmation of the impending deportations threw the whole population of the ghetto into a panic to secure employment in any German-owned industries. In October 1942 all Jewish workers employed in the glassworks Hortensia and its sister factory, Kara, were ordered to report with some essential belongings to remain encamped on the sites of the factories during the deportations from the Piotrkow ghetto. We were allowed to bring with us anything we could carry on our shoulders. Mother rolled up a blanket for me and packed my best suit and some other articles into a rucksack. Likewise, she packed a rucksack for Jerzyk. In my naivety and felling once again alone in a distant new town, I, too, was allowed only for the safety of the rucksack which contained my stamp collection. After brief good-byes I left with my brother to join the ranks of the deportees, the factory workers. Because of my father’s employment in the administration of the ghetto, I felt confident about the welfare and security of my parents and Jadzio. I expected to be reunited with them within a few days.

During our days at the factory camp we were fully occupied by work and acclimatising to our new living conditions. My main preoccupation, stamp collection was often on my mind; mostly though I left it untouched, only occasionally checking that my treasure was safe and intact in the cramped corner allotted to me. Isolated and fairly secure in the camp I was totally oblivious to the cataclysmic tragedy which engulfed the inhabitants of the ghetto. I was too young and immature to grasp, or even imagine, the enormity of the events taking place a short distance away and from which we were protected. On 22nd October 1942, the deportations completed, we were ordered to return to the ghetto.

To my consternation, the ghetto area had contracted since we last had been there. The place appeared utterly alien, condensed as it was to a few of the most derelict and dilapidated streets in the shabby part of Piotrkow. Later we referred to this compacted living area as The Little Ghetto, or The Block. Soon after I returned to the town, having left Jerzyk working his shift at Hortensia, I was approached by a member of the Jewish militia. Apparently bribed by my parents, he handed me a crumpled scrap of paper, obviously scribbled hastily in pencil by my mother. As I began to read, my legs weakened and buckled under me. The sudden realisation that my parents and Jadzio had been deported shook me like a thunderbolt. Stunned by this horrific news and overcome by unfathomable grief, I collapsed.
onto a large stone. As I lay prostrate, in a mind numbing state of shock and disbelief, all other worries receded into the distance.

Many minutes passed before I could move or even think straight. Eventually, I dragged myself into a sitting position, but my deep sorrow was accentuated by the sensation of helplessness and abandonment. Staring with disdain at my few possessions, including the leather briefcase with my stamp collection, I thought with muted desperation of the implications of my bitter plight.

No parents, no home, no money and Jerzyk to look after... how am I going to cope?

Sitting on the stone, uncontrollable sobs wracking my body, I struggled to think of a way out of my predicament. From time to time, peering through the mist of tears clouding my eyes, I re-read my mother’s farewell note. “We are being taken. May God help you, Arthur. We cannot do anything more for you, and whatever may happen, look after Jerzyk. He is but a child and has got no one else, so be his brother and parent... Goodbye.”

The heartbreaking poignant of my mother’s words tugged at my confused emotions. “I’ll try. Yes, I’ll try”, I kept repeating to myself, “but how?” I felt so lonely and helpless. How could I look after my brother when I could barely take care of myself. My brain could hardly accept the fact of being torn from a large family—parents, grandparents, my youngest brother, uncles and aunts. I was alone and in a turmoil but glad that Jerzyk was safe and as yet unaware, working his shift at Horsten-Ja.

There on the stone, sitting bowed in anguish and despondently contemplating my many problems, I was found by my two aunts. Miraculously, they had slipped through the SS dragnet. Aunt Sabina and her two children were escaping to their father’s farm in the copper-mining area. Aunt Hanna was our S.S. number assigned to her by the barbed wire fence adjoining the main gate of The Block and amidst several ruined houses was a site which had been completely cleared of rubble. It formed a sort of passage into a yard, which was in the process of demolition, there stood a single, timber-framed latrine without its front door. The befouled wooden seat was always besieged by a swarm of green flies. This sodl sight remains imprinted on my memory; every day I had to pass it on the way to work. At the time, it seemed aptly symbolic of The Block and our existence—unpleasant and precarious existence within it.

The entire area of The Little Ghetto was overrun by rats, mice and other vermin. For us, the plague of bedbugs was a constant companion. Only a few nights after arriving in our attic accommodation, we were covered by red, itchy spots. These seeped blood and turned septic when scratched. We could not sleep, our bodies covered from rubbing the tormenting and infected bites, and hardly slept for more than one hour at a time, even on transferring from the bed to one of the chairs. One morning, after a sleepless night in a chair in the attic, Jerzyk fell asleep during a short break on the shop floor at Horsten-Ja. He was thrashed by an irate Polish foreman. “Please do something about the bedbugs, Arthur,” he pleaded with me later that day, “or they will be the cause of our downfall even before the Germans.” We endured long hours of hard labour, shortage of food and harassment by the Jewish militia. The bedbugs were the last straw, turning our lives in The Block into a nightmarish hell. During the brief moments of respite, we wondered and what passed for rest, Shima and I discussed the bug problem and how we might deal with it. At first we thought that the vermin could be eradicated by pouring boiling gas, which would kill us as well; or by fire, which would probably set the building ablaze. Then it occurred to me that boiling water might serve the purpose. I was promised to help us by boiling the water in their kitchen. The morning after I had the idea, on return from the night shift, about three years older than me, introduced himself when we first met in the attic. I was utterly stricken by his abrupt manner. He had come in. Perceiving that I was in an emotionally charged state, he refrained from speaking to me for several minutes.

I can guess how you feel”, he said finally. “I have been through this myself. You know we are in the same boat. I am called Shimmon, but my nickname is Shima... my brother’s name is Lazar. It was not our choice to live in this tiny garret, but we have to make it. So, pull yourself together and let’s talk about it. First, we must clean it up and divide the space in the wardrobe drawers. Then we should agree on our respective duties for the future. Rest assured that we will respect your personal rights if you will respect ours.”

He waited patiently and in silence while I regained my composure. “I am Arthur and my brother’s name is Jerzyk,” I responded and continued, “You are right, of course, Shima, if I can call you that.” He nodded and I went on, “At present, I am unable to care about anything. I realise that I have to face the facts, but I need a little more time to come to terms with the situation.” Shortly afterwards, we both set to work cleaning and dusting the room, and shaking out the beds. We had to carry the water in a bucket, from the tap in the yard all the way up the narrow stairs to the top landing of the building. When the job had been completed, I emptied the contents of my rucksack. I had brought suit only the wardrobe and put the other articles in one of the drawers. The briefcase containing my stamps I placed on top of the wardrobe. “Be sure to tell your brother to keep his hands off this case”, I warned Shima. “It’s my precious stamp collection. I treasure it greatly. Jerzyk apart, it’s all I have left to remind me of my home and family,” I understated. Shima looked sympathecally. “We have our own keepsakes to remind us of happier days” he confided, adding quickly, “we must learn to trust each other. There is no one else left.” We stood there, in silence, with Shima and Lazar became our good friends.

The Block was situated in the southern part of Pieckow. Many of the buildings in the compound were in a sorry state, having been damaged by the German bombing at the start of the war. Over 3000 Jewish men, women and children, from all walks of life were penned up in undignified squalor. The requirements of privacy or hygiene had steadily deteriorated. There was not enough food and the tenementments in better condition than most had been assigned to members of the Jewish Council and their families and to the communal kitchen. At last, the bare interior of the block was the refuge of the Jewish youth, mostly the youngest sons, who had escaped from the extermination camps and survived through their parents’ intervention. The Block was the euphemism used by the SS...
Shimba and I sat about collecting firewood from the heaps of rubble piled up around bent, tattered, and torn clothing. We carried the wood and several buckets of water to my aunts’ kitchen. Our next task was to scrape and strip the paper and loose emulsion paint from the walls. This was not very easy when our equipment consisted of old and rusty kitchen utensils. To be able to sleep sat in the midst of the resettled pests with rapid and rusty kitchen utensils. To be able to sleep dead vermin. We were now distinctly sweet.

Then we splashed the bucketloads of boiling water onto the walls, floor, beds, and mattresses, which took over a week to dry out. The stench of our watery onslaught were staggering. Countless bugs and other insects floated in the water, swishing against the walls. Shimba and I mopped them up into an old washing bowl covering our noses against the distinctly sweet stench of the dead vermin. We were now able to sleep in our beds virtually un molested for over two weeks. Before the bugs reappeared and we had to repeat the process.

Gradually we settled down to the peculiar routine of work at Hontensja and existence in the “Block.” Occasionally, I would take the briefcase down from the wardrobe and look through my stamp collection; it brought back nostalgic memories of my home and family. But even then, but gazing at the pages of my stamps made me very sad and downhearted. During this period my aunts were of great help and comfort to us. Sometimes they washed our clothes; and, generally, they monitored our standard of hygiene, so far as we could attain them. This assisted us to maintain a certain discipline, which boosted our morale. Some evenings, before going to bed, the consoled myself by playing tunes on my harmonica.

The Germans frequently rounded up innocent Jews in the ghettos for execution. The SS and their auxiliary橡ubbed every major victory, or marked every defeat, with random selections for the firing squad. They even slaughtered victims as reprisal for their adherence to certain Jews. We were told the Jewish Council was totally ineffective in its attempts to prevent these atrocities. Although we were physically exhausted by our strenuous work efforts, nervous, knifed-edge tension kept us awake at nights. Fear of being the next victim prompted constant vigilance and alertness. We were ready to run or hide at the slightest hint of an Aktion although we tried to pretend that we knew nothing. This was not very easy when our equipment consisted of old and rusty kitchen utensils.

The Block was plagued by frequent searches for the so-called illegal. These were Jews who had evaded deportation by remaining undiscovered in the Ghetto. Meanwhile, there was an organized programme which had returned to The Little Ghetto to merge with the remaining Jews, hoping to avoid arrest. Hunted by the SS, police and militia, the illegal led a perilous existence. Unable to register legitimately for safe employment, they could not obtain ration cards and were forced to buy food at exorbitant prices on the black market. They were desperate to avoid detection and to acquire some shelter. This objective was difficult to attain because anyone caught harbouring illegals faced instant execution by pistol shot. Because of the swift and final punishment awaiting those found assisting them, very few fugitives succeeded in gaining legitimacy, by employment in one of the factories either through influence or bribery. One of the conclusions that we lived in the Block on borrowed time. Although we were careful to avoid falling foul of the authorities, we had little trust in them. Realisation had dawned that the Little Ghetto was merely a temporary haven for its remaining Jews; and that our fate depended not on our good conduct, but on the whim of the Nazis. Our uselessness to the German war economy won us our transient existence; but we harboured few misconceptions about our likely destiny. We were captives in the lair of a wild and unpredictable animal, helplessly waiting to see which one of us it would devour for its next meal. The Damocles’ sword, of what we later learned to be Hitler’s infamous Final Solution, hung constantly and dangerously above our heads. Only with my harmonica, or my stamps and the dreams of faraway places from which they had once come, could I momentarily from my living hell.

Due to the German army’s growing demand for sheets of armour plate glass, many unskilled employees from the Hontensja works were transferred to the Kara factory that winter. The aim was to construct a huge new furnace to meet the increased production requirements. It was my misfortune to be selected for transfer to Kara to work on this new building project. The work squad to which I was assigned did not have their work had been especially to excavate the foundations and erect the furnace. The management insisted that our task was an urgent priority; and that we had to work on the organised equipment available to assist the team, the work was murderous hard. Under the supervision of Polish and German overseers, only too eager to use their power over the defenceless, and often weak Jews, we were chased, punched, kicked, whipped and generally abused. Our group had so many daily casualties that we compared ourselves to the gladiators in ancient Rome. To mark that comparison we named the assignment “The Circus.”

Being unable to lift a mortar full of “Octopus” (an old wooden box measuring approximately one cubic metre with a long pole on either side for carrying it), I was one of the first casualties. Literally, I was kicked out of the building with the expression, “It only to be melted down for soap,” a grim allusion to the rumoured by-products of the crematoria in the death camps. The loss of employment in the glass works, for which my parents paid so heavily, was a bitter blow to me. It could have sealed my fate for without a legitimate job, I would have been declared an illegal, suffering the consequences that that status implied.

Apart from my uncle Emaest, I had a few other influential friends in the administration, people who knew my parents well. Fortunately, they were concerned at my situation and helped me to secure approved work at the Belchlitelle, a Special Orders Group employed by the SS to clear houses in the Wola Ghetto. One day when I was involved collecting the goods left behind by the deported Jews and sorting them for dispatch to Germany.

Disposing of the remnants of the Jewish families was a heart-breaking operation; but the ever present threat to our own lives hardened us against the luxury of sentimentality. Each day as we worked through the ghettos dwellings, we could barely believe that their former inhabitants had perished. Countless books, diaries, photographs and memorabilia were thrown onto bonfires.

Mountains of bedding, clothing, furniture, utensils, tools and personal effects were sorted and loaded on lorries for transportation to Germany. We neither knew nor cared whether any of these goods were appropriated by the local inhabitants. Personally, I found nothing of any great value concealed in the many unoccupied rooms which I searched, though I did manage to “organise” (that was our word for “steal”) some items of clothing for Jerzyk and myself. I did not consider it a crime, or morally wrong, to take these pathetic items. It was more an act of defiance and a small recompense for the possessions plundered from my family. But it was a dangerous pursuit. As we worked through the buildings, we were watched constantly and searched frequently. The police and militia, the possession of an organised article faced immediate and public execution. One young Jewess was shot in front of the whole work group when a pair of stockings, was discovered in her coat pocket. A young Jew was shot in the street for trying to smuggle a few potatoes hidden in a pillow case through the gate into The Block. Despite threat of arrest, I always went on the flash, to search for any useful commodities with a firm belief that I had more right to them than the Nazis; and in the happy knowledge that I was depriving them of their use.

The day I came across an exercise book crammed with stamps I could not resist the temptation. Carefully I concealed it inside my shirt and smuggled it out of the Block. I spent a few happy hours in the attic examining my serendipitous find; then added it to my existing collection in the briefcase. On another occasion I exchanged my small shabby saucepan, hitched peremptorily to my trouser belt, for an organised newer and larger one, which had a capacity of one and a half litres. This newer pot, though cumbersome to carry, proved very useful. Because a ladle full of soup, which was our daily ration, hardly covered the bottom of it, the foreman dishing it up usually for the chance to admire it. I was thinking he had short-changed me. I did not mind if this procedure caused some mirth among the German guards, who called me the little worker with the big pot. Eventually, I was named the “Jewish对应” for their sarcasm. Although the work at Belchlitelle was hard, I feared nonetheless that it was destined not to last for long.
To avoid the dangerous implications of redundancy, I would need eventually to find employment in one of the large local industries.

Within a much shorter time than I had hoped, my fearful expectations of redundancy proved to be justified. I was among the first to be given the opportunity to find legal employment as quickly as possible. I did not want to follow in the fateful footsteps of those who, like myself, had been found too weak or injured to be shot by the Nazi guards and who had failed to find alternative work. They had been herded, together with many other unfortunates and illegals, into the local synagogue in unspeakably atrocious conditions. They were compelled to sleep on bare noorboards, and thousands of them had no access to any sanitary facilities. Of the 520 persons imprisoned in the building, very few gained release through efforts of influential relatives and friends or by means of bribery. Escape was impossible.

Three weeks after their incarceration, on 19th December 1942, twenty volunteers were selected from among those who had worked up to a point in the factories. They were led to a glade in a forest outside a village called Ralow. Here they were ordered to dig anti-tank trenches. Glad to have been given the opportunity to get away from the squalor of the synagogue prison, they worked vigorously. As a reward for completing the task quickly, the twenty men were lined up, many being challenged and screened in the trenches. Unknowingly they had dug their own graves.

Next day the 20th December 1942 at dawn, all Jews remaining in the synagogue were marched to the same glade. They were forced to undress in the freezing weather, continuously terrorised by bayonets and rifle butts. Then they were lined up in groups, many of them separated from their families, and the trenches excavated the previous day. In the confusion of the massacre six or seven Jews, some wounded, managed to escape into the forest. I met one of the fugitives a few months later, when I was lucky enough to be employed at the Di-Fi timberworks in the suburb of Bugaj. He was a very pale and strangely hairless boy, about fourteen or fifteen years old, with large, staring blue eyes. He told me how, only slightly wounded, he manoeuvred himself on top of a pile of bleeding corpses.

Covered with piles of leaves and chunks of frozen earth and barely able to breathe, he remained virtually motionless until nightfall. Under cover of darkness he crawled out and dragged himself back to The Block. The president of the Jewish Administration took pity on him and assumed position by enrolling him for employment at "Di-Fi." I will never forget the boy's unusual appearance, doubtless brought about by the dreadful trauma he had endured.

In my attic room in The Block, I trembled whenever I pondered how closely I had come to being one of those "illegals" herded into the synagogue. At such times I clutched the stamp collection which had now become a unique symbol of a normal life, to which I knew not if and when I would return.

On the 12th of March 1943, the night shift workers had been prevented from proceeding to their jobs. We were all confined to The Block without any reason being given. During the night The Little Ghetto was surrounded by SS troops, Ukrainian guards and Polish special police. At dawn Jewish militiamen were marched in to pack all our belongings and assemble at the main gate. I helped Jerzyk to pack his rucksack, then, somewhat intuitively, I dressed in my best suit and put on my shabby, nondescript overcoat. I then packed my own rucksack and took the briefcase with my stamp collection from the top of the wardrobe. Sharma and Laser also prepared to help us. The crowd proved to be too large for the main gate. The guards lost no time chasing us through the gate towards the waiting trucks, propelling us with kicks, punches and blows from the sides. Bouts and screeches of "Schnell, schnell!" (Hurry, hurry!).

Swept away by the tide of panic-stricken people, I weaved and ducked to avoid the gauntlet of violence like a hunted animal desperate to evade a predator. Judging by this sample display by our guards, I thought cynically that the camp awaiting us must be a paradise on earth, with its residents being amok.

My mind struggled desperately to find a solution to this apparently hopeless situation. In any event, the deportation meant for me a heart-wrenching parting from my younger brother, perhaps for ever!

On reaching the trucks, men ahead of me began climbing in. Some distance farther down the road I could see Mr. Pressos, the Gestapo chief and senior SS officers, chatting amiably with the Gestapo chief and senior SS officers. An audacious idea flashed into my head and I sprang into action at once.

DODGING the men waiting to be hauled into the trucks, I took off my rucksack and overcoat and threw them into one of the rows of vehicles, seemingly preparing to follow. Instead, uncomprehendingly I was given away articles and relatively well dressed in my smart suit. I started to walk calmly towards the Gestapo chief, Mr. President. Holding the leather briefcase containing my stamp collection, and adopting an air of confidence and importance, I passed unchallenged between the guards. It helped that I was moving in a direction away from the apparent safety of the main gate towards The Block and towards the group of local top brass. With a deep and respectful bow, I addressed Mr. President in faultless German. My hurriedly formed intention was to plead with him to allow me to remain with my younger brother.

Pointing at the President, sir... I began but, before I could utter another word, the head of the Jewish Council must have guessed my purpose. Obviously uninterested in what I had to say and angered that I had interrupted his conversation, the President slapped my face and summarily dismissed me with a curt command, (Vegi] "go away"). As if on cue, the Gestapo chief rushed forward, his action and extended their arms to wave me away. They did not realise that they were sending me not only in the direction of the trucks, but also towards the main gate of The Little Ghetto. I bowed again and, behind the backs of the guards pushing the unfortunate deportees on to the trucks, I walked nonchalantly up to the gate. The situation was of course very important looking briefcase under my arm and an aura of impertinent assurance, I afforded an excellent impression of a messenger acting on orders of the Gestapo and SS officers accompanying the President.

Ignoring the Jewish militia, I approached the German guards: "Machen sie auf, bitte" [Open the doors, please] I repeated in a tone of polite firmness. The soldiers looked perplexed. Although there was no doubt that they had witnessed me, only a minute before, speaking to the President and the officers with him, they were reluctant to permit me to enter The Block.

Knowing that this charade could continue for much longer, and growing increasingly more desperate by the second, I played my last trump card. I raised my briefcase and pointed to it, as if to imply the importance of its contents.
The following day I reported for work as if nothing had happened. Nobody said a word to me about the events of the previous day. I had got away with my escape unscathed. Keen to return to the few essential articles I had lost when hurling my rucksack onto the top of the pile of trousers, a shirt, some underwear and a rucksack. In addition I found a one hundred złoty note which had been screwed up hidden inside a box of matches. This was a miraculous discovery; the money would have been sufficient to buy four loaves of bread on the black market. For the time being I held on to that bank note, it made me feel like a rich man.

Two weeks later we learned through the grapevine that the Jews taken on that Friday, the 13th of March, had been transported to a slave labour camp leading the munitions factory in Skarżysko. Most of them had been assigned to the department manufacturing explosives for marine mines. The work involved handling poisonous chemicals without any protective clothing, gloves or masks. One of the chemicals used, a picric acid compound, caused a yellowing of the skin and made the slightest touch very painful. If the skin was touched or inhaled for lengthy periods it led to general debility and, ultimately, a painful death. According to reports of a handful of survivors, the average turnover time of the entire workforce in the department was four months. At the end of this time span the workers were examined by a German doctor. Those men considered beyond redemption were pronounced unfit for further duties and eliminated. I often shudder to think that I would probably have been one of them.

Eventually the ghost town that was the former ghetto of Piotrków was cleared of all worthwhile goods and traces of its former inhabitants. This meant the end of work at Befehlslöcke and also heralded the closure of The Block, which was finally abandoned and demolished in August 1943. All Jewish workers at the Horczenka and Kara glassworks were ordered to encamp again on the factory sites. Jews employed at the Di-Fi timberworks set up camp within its boundary. All other Jewish workers were transported to labour camps in nearby Błizin, Pionki and Ostrówiec.

Some of the men engaged at Befehlslöcke who claimed to be skilled craftsmen joined managed to secure assignment to the Di-Fi timberworks. Unable to gain acceptance for a return to the glassworks, I considered myself fortunate to be sent to Di-Fi. The suburb of Bugaj was only a few miles away from Horczenka and Jerzyk. Both my aunts Ernst and Josephine and their children were sent to the camp in Błizin.

On the day I was forced to part from Jerzyk I advised him to return to volunteer and never, under any circumstances whatsoever, to trust the Nazis. There was some comfort in observing that my brother was maturing rapidly and becoming adept at the art of transfers. Recalling my mother’s final note to me and, mindful of my responsibility as his guardian, I gave Jerzyk my best suit. Although it did not fit him exactly, it could, if necessary, be sold or bartered for food. I also gave him the 100 złoty note which had found together with what I considered my most cherished possession, a music box, to help him to cope from virtually certain death in Skarżysko, the leather briefcase containing my collection of stamps. “May it be of as much benefit to you, Jerzyk, as it had been to me,” I said. He did not have to make this sacrifice for his sake and to meet my mother’s last wish. There was nothing more I could do for him.

** **

**AUTHOR’S POSTSCRIPT**

By a stroke of pure chance I found Jerzyk in Theresienstadt in May 1943 soon after Germany’s defeat. He had given me the entire collection of stamps to a very influential person who, in gratitude, gave him daily a slice of bread and protected him from random selections for executions and, for as long as possible, transfers to other camps. Eventually, however, all the Jewish workers at Horczenka were transferred to another camp in Czechoslovakia, and from there to the notorious A concentrations at Buchenwald. At least my stamp collection had helped Jerzyk to endure the difficult time he had spent in Piotrków. Had he not disposed of it for some returned value, it would have been confiscated when his personal belongings were seized in Buchenwald. As the allied armies approached the infamous camp, Jerzyk was among other relief workers and entertainers sent to Theresienstadt. I had also been sent to Buchenwald, but I was assigned to other camps in 1944 before Jerzyk’s arrival there. In each successive camp the conditions became worse, the work harder and the SS guards more sadistically brutal. During the final months of the war, at the last camp, Flossenbürg, to Mauthausen, and after fourteen days in a sealed cattle truck, I managed to wriggle out of the small window hole and jump to the side. For four hours the time the train was climbing through the hilly region of Czechoslovakia. The guards on the train fired at me and I was hit and wounded in my right thigh. Nevertheless I escaped into a nearby hamlet outside. After a painful struggle, I managed to crawl to a village, where I was taken in by friendly Czech partisans, hidden in a barn and given medical treatment.

Even after the liberation, the Jews in Theresienstadt, an old fortress town, were kept in strict quarantine. To enter the town, I had to sit on its barred wire perimeter fence, wedge across a moat and crawl through sewers. Throughout these efforts I was limping heavily, my leg wound not having completely healed. But it was all worth it to be with Jerzyk again. In August 1945, with many other youngsters from Theresienstadt, we were flown to England in the belly of a Superfortress. After a period of adjustment, during which I learned English I found employment in a factory. With money saved from my first pay packet, I visited the nearest philatelic shop. The urge was strong in me to resume collecting stamps. The renewed hobby gave me a sense of continuity with my early life in Poland and assisted me in returning to normalcy. To this day, I am a keen philatelist, but, whenever I open one of my many albums, the memories come flooding back. Aunt Sabina, with one of her sons, Vyzhchak, survived the war. Until her death, she lived in Israel and would often send me some of that country’s magnificent pictorial issues. I decided to live with any petty gains. Jerzyk settled in Gateshead-upon-Tyne. In gratitude for the benefits he derived from my first stamp collection, he frequently sent me new issues on first day covers. Jerzyk died in May 1995. After his death we discovered that he began to collect British first day covers.

**NOTE**

Aspects of my life story have been included in Sir Martin Gilbert’s book “The Boys: Triumph Over Adversity.”
The time has come to write and tell my story about the Holocaust. No doubt what I am about to tell you, you would have heard many times before. Nevertheless, the tragedy that happened to our people in Europe must never be forgotten and, for the few of us who had the luck to survive and are still here today, our duty is to tell everybody what happened and to educate both the younger generation and those people who deny the Holocaust.

Life in Poland before the war was never all milk and honey, anti-Semitism had its problems, but the Jewish people lived there for generations and somehow had got used to it and so when gentiles called us names, we didn’t take much notice. Most of the time we lived in peace and had some good friends. However, when the German army invaded Poland in September 1939, my family had to leave Lodz and move to the Jewish district in Warsaw. We lived in a hostel in Manchester. He spent a few months in a hibbitz in Thaxted and in 1948 went to fight for Israel’s independence. He returned to England in 1950. He was a successful businessman and is a member of the Committee of the 45 Aid Society.

I remember the winter of 1939 was freezing cold, as we breathed, icicles were forming on our lips. They left us in Lancut. We could go anywhere but not back to Lodz. My parents wanted to cross the border to Russia. However, the Jewish woman smuggler wanted too much money to take all six of us across, so my parents decided instead to go to my mother’s cousin in Krakow.

There was no joy for the Jewish people in Krakow, and by early December 1939 we were back in Warsaw where my father, grandfather and great-grandfather were born. At last, we stayed with my father’s sister for a few weeks until we found a place for ourselves on Smocza Street No. 5. During the first few months of 1940, life in Warsaw was bearable. Jewish people could still trade freely. We had a Jewish district, but not a ghetto.

By May 1940 Warsaw’s Jewish population was increasing rapidly; people came to Warsaw by the thousands with nowhere to live and conditions were getting worse day by day. I remember at the beginning of September 1940 Chaim Rumkowski, the leader of the Lodz ghetto, came to Warsaw telling us how good the Lodz ghetto was. There were Jewish police and Jewish shops - in fact, everything was Jewish. However, when asked why people were dying by the hundreds, he did not answer.

Beginning in October 1940 and finishing before the Jewish New Year, all Jewish people living outside the Jewish district had to leave home and move to the Jewish district. Likewise, all Polish people living in the Jewish district had to leave home and move to the Polish district. Can you imagine the chaos? People didn’t know where to go, they did not have anywhere to go, they were people without a hope.

I remember going home with my father after the Neveh’s service on Yom Kipper. We stood by the wall being erected and my father said to me “Chaim, they are closing us in”. This was the thought we all dreaded. On the 14th or 15th November 1940 the Warsaw ghetto was closed and we were all trapped. Nobody could see that what Chaim Rumkowski said was true - all Jews together. We did have Jewish policemen and the Jewish police had big batons and some used them too often. Some of them became ‘big boys’
of the ghetto. Every day was a nightmare and every night was hell. We did not have enough food, and the people were freezing and little children with bare feet were crying in the streets and begging for food. More and more people were coming into the ghetto from other towns, people lay down and didn't move. The smell of death was all around. We started smuggling food by running out with other boys through Okopowa Street to the Christian side to get whatever we could. Most of the time it was bread and potatoes. I had a long coat with a thick lining and long pockets, we used to stuff them as much as we possibly could and get back to the ghetto. Many times we got caught by the German guards, the Polish police or Jewish people, and they were taken from us. We were beaten and lashed but we did it again and again until all routes were closed. I became 'streetwise' and got to know all the corners of the ghetto.

My father died on the 9th May 1941. He was only 46 years old. At the beginning we cried, then we were happy, because he still had a proper funeral and was buried one to a grave. Some people were buried four and five to a grave. The people who were received in the ghetto were not enough to feed five people, so my little brother Leek and I decided to run out of the ghetto for good; this way my mother and sisters would have our rations. When we got out we ran and ran. We didn't stop until we reached the end of the ghetto and ended up in Sobiętnie Jerzory. There we stayed with a Polish farmer, one or two days at a time, and looked after the cows. We were not allowed to sleep in the house or in the barn, so we slept outside like dogs.

We used to beg for food from the Polish farmers and every time cross ourselves and say the Catholic prayer before we got something to eat. Once or twice we went back to the Warsaw ghetto to tell my mother where we were, then ran out again to Sobiętnie - we were not scared.

In September, my mother, who did not look very Jewish, got out of the ghetto and joined us in Sobiętnie. Sobiętnie was a very small Jewish Shetl, three or four kilometres from Otwock. My mother told us that my sister Hadassa died in the ghetto of starvation and my elder sister Sara got a job sewing uniforms for the Germans. My mother wanted us to go to Staszow to her sister as they did not have a ghetto there yet. We split up. I went first, and I never saw them again.

I walked for fourteen days until I reached Staszow. I didn't know the way and sometimes got lost. I got to Radom where I was picked up by a Polish policeman and thrown into the ghetto. I stayed there overnight and when I ran out in the morning to go to my uncle and aunt, I was shot in my right leg. I couldn't feel a thing. I was lucky. When I got to my uncle and aunt, my leg was so swollen they had to cut my boot off my leg. I was full of lice. I had typhoid and ended up in hospital. I stayed with my uncle until the end of 1942 when the Germans liquidated Staszow.

Right before the liquidation many Jewish people started to hide in order not to be taken away on the transport. My uncle and aunt used to have a rannery which had large wooden vats. There were large enough to hide in and so we hid there. My cousin Yosef, who was older than me, worked in the workshop for the Germans, I do not know what happened to them. A few days after the vat, my uncle asked me to go out and find out if all was clear. I was picked up by the Germans and was sent away to an ammunition factory in Kielce. This was the first camp I was sent to. I worked for Hasag Ltd which was all slave labour. Later on we got to know that all people coming out from hiding were taken to the liquidation point.

I worked for Hasag until the summer of 1944. Conditions in the camps were not as glorious as depicted in the film 'Schindler's List'. People were being murdered by the thousands and every day you lived was a bonus day.

From the beginning I worked in the camp kitchen as I was too small to work in the factory. I had a cart in which I brought wood shavings for the kitchen and many other articles needed in the camp. I was also asked to do the washing for the camp Commandant, his name was Shlitch. He had a villa on top of a hill so he could see all around him. One day whilst collecting his washing I noticed a big stack of potatoes on the main road. I decided that on the way back I would help myself to some of them. Of course, when you are hungry and young you take risks. I asked friends of mine, Yankel Ajenberg and Myer Bomsztik to help load the cart full of potatoes we got caught, as Shlitch could see what we got up to. Yankel and Myer were ten lashes each and being the leader, got twenty lashes. For days we slept on our stomachs as none of us could lay on our backs - we were lucky he did not shoot us. The following day the whole camp had to stand to attention and for someone to pass my pass to work in the kitchen was taken away and I was sent to work in the ammunition factory.

To write everything in detail of what happened in the camp we will take pages and pages. The few of us who survived can talk about it for days on end and wonder why it happened just because we were born Jews and lived in Europe.

As the Russians were advancing, Kielce labour camp was abandoned and we were taken to Przedborszcz, to dig out tank ditches to stop the advancing Russian army, after which we were taken to Czestochowa to work again in the ammunition factory. In January 1945 we left Czestochowa by transport to Buchenwald. Hundreds of Jewish men and women were taken to Buchenwald by one little Ukrainian soldier boy. His rifle was bigger than he was. We could have all run away, but where to? If the Germans did not get us, the Poles would. They used to sell a Jew to the Germans for a bottle of Vodka or for a kilo of sugar. As we walked to the main gate of Buchenwald a cold shiver passed through my body. We were standing in the heat of the sun, until we were processed just like cattle. After we had a shower we had to run through a very long tunnel - every one of us had one thought in mind. Some of the older people were saying the last prayer. I and three friends, Yankel Ajenberg, Myer Bomsztik and Shmuel Rozegarden all stayed together, we looked at each other and not one word passed our lips.

Again we were searched. We had to bend down - they were looking for gold and jewellery. We got dressed in the Buchenwald clothes, everyone of us got a number and a triangle. There were no more names. We had a red triangle with a yellow triangle forming a six pointed star.

Buchenwald was a hell created by the SS. The work was hard and I worked in a stone quarry for a short time and later in Weinmar, clearing away bombed houses.

I left Buchenwald on the 9th April 1945. I remember walking out of the gates. It was a lovely sunny day; there were thousands of us being taken to the transport. There were not supposed to be any Jews on that transport. They thought they had killed all of us in the two previous transports. We lived on the aerca leaves from the trees and it took us four weeks to get to Theresienstadt, arriving on the 7th May 1945.

I was liberated by the Russians on the 9th May 1945. When the war ended we were given 48 hours free time to do to the Germans whatever we wanted. We could have killed the S.S. but it was not in our blood to kill.

Soon after the war we came to England, I think we were the first transport of 300 boys and girls to arrive in Windemere. Our Madrichim did not know how to handle us. Mr Freedman and Rabbi Weiss were two wonderful people. Indeed, all the people who looked after us deserved the highest regard from us all, though I will point out Miss Trudie (she was a nurse in our block) and Israel Cohen, our Madrich, I will never forget them. Our fate brought them together, they married and now live in Israel.

The German religious hostel in Liverpool and although it was run by Bloomsbury House, it was associated with the Mizrahy movement. After two months I left the hostel and went on a Hashkbara to Thaxted Kibbutz. There we worked half days on the farm and half days in the hostel. I was together with Moshe Rosenberg, Maediach Lewenstein, Meillachaim Freikorn, Arje Szwez and Juda Avner, ex-Israel Ambassador to the U.K.

In 1948, I went to Israel and joined the army and returned to England in 1949 where I met Artia, a beautiful girl from Manchester, and we were married in 1950.

A new chapter and a new beginning. We brought up two lovely sons, Michael and Elton, and gave them a good education. They married Linda and Caron and they gave us lovely grandchildren. Daniel, Katie, Samantha and Georgia.

So Hitler and the Nazis did not succeed in their quest to destroy us and the Holocaust was another chapter in our history. But something far worse than the Holocaust will be if we ever forget it.
THE SURVIVOR’S DILEMMA
Michael Etkind

Michael came to England with the Windermere group. He lived in the Carcross 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.

Dare I become a spokesman for the millions dead and bear witness to the crimes I saw...?

Would I do justice to their plight - their pain - their fear...

And could I ever grasp and comprehend the perpetrators’ twisted minds - their thoughtlessness?

Would I be able to describe those sights and sounds - give credence to the terror that prevailed - that held us in its grip...

Will I find words that measure to the task...

But... if I don’t... who will?

The Nazis who kept records of some of their crimes - The killers who took photos of their hideous deeds...

If I do not add to the historian’s maps, statistics, dates, and to the snapshots which the Germans took - their souvenirs, will not the Truth remain more incomplete - less real?

And if I don’t discuss the horrors of my past, will my nightmares return to haunt me in the night?

THOSE WHO HAVE BROUGHT US TO THESE LUCKY SHORES
Michael Etkind

Those who have brought us to these lucky shores
Thought that our psyche was harmed by the war
That our Weltanschauung was not like their own
That it has been distorted by the sights that we saw.

They might have been right - we were boisterous and rude
Demanding defiant one could say - uncouth
We have slaved and obeyed for year after year
And we felt that at last it was time to rebel.

We have lost our past - our childhood was gone
We were hungry for love - felt abandoned - alone
Yet we laughed - sang and joked - like young people still do
But inside we still grieved for the life we once knew.

We still are as we were - very little has changed
Yet the camps left their mark even time can’t erase.

JERUSALEM - APRIL 2001
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.

A small group of “pilgrims” bound for The Holy Land gathered at Heathrow Airport under the banner “Love for Israel”. The pilgrims came from all walks of life - a retired bank manager and his wife from Morden, a maths teacher from Wales, a mother of three from Yorkshire, a young lady, personal assistant to a London Archbishop, from Shepherds Bush... About fifty middle-aged and elderly ladies and gentlemen of leisure and ample means - all infirm, all imbued with true love for Israel. I, the only Eastern European and Holocaust survivor, was tagged on to this motley crew at the invitation of The Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary of Darmstadt, Germany.

How did I come to be of the party?

In November 1998, I had the honour to be invited to take part in a commemoration service held in memory of and as a sign of penitence for, the expulsion of the Jews from York in 1298. I was then asked to address The House as a Holocaust survivor, as a representative of those who had perished in it.

After the ceremony, Sister Pista, a German nun, came over to speak to me. Weeping, she embraced me. I, too, put my arms around her and our tears mingled. Sister Pista and I have been in touch ever since and it was she who, with her Order’s concurrence, invited me to be the Holocaust representative at “Confronting the Past”, a conference held in Israel, just outside Jerusalem at Ramat Rachel, from the 16th to the 21st April, 2003.

I had never been to Israel before, but I well remember the greetings we, as a family, exchanged on the Shabbat and holy days “Next year in Jerusalem...” It was not given to my Dear Ones to realise this wish, this greeting, so that I was even more conscious of my bereavement there, in Jerusalem, than I normally am... I cannot discuss here the entire Convention proceedings... I bring out, however, my own contribution to it, as well as one or two salient points and the audience’s, as well as my own, reaction to them.

On the 18th April it was my turn to address the audience of 1,500 people. They had come from all over the globe - as near as Tel Aviv and as far as Brazil - to add their voices to the Act of Repentance, to express their deep sorrow.

Roughly, about two-thirds of those present had come from Germany. The Germans were mostly young people who were born well after the war and whose grandparents would have been actively involved in the war.

I did not feel at all intimidated. I spoke freely... I spoke about my background and my family, about the Cracow Jewish community... About the terrible war years - the Cracow Ghetto, the loss of my family, the annihilation of my people... the pain, the grief, my unquenchable desire to live... I finished with an image which haunts me still...

By May 1944, the Germans were losing the war. The Allies were to land in Normandy any day... At the Plaszow Concentration Camp the last handful of Jewish children is being gathered up, whilst their unsuspecting mothers, parents, are standing to attention in the Appelplatz.

The loud-speakers are discharging sentimental dance music. The children are quietly wheeled away to the cattle trucks waiting on the camp rail spur-line - destination Auschwitz... The audience wept, as I have done!!! Still do!!!

The last person to speak at the Conference that day was one of the nuns - a Canadian by birth. She chose to remember the 1939 Elyvan Conference.

I had first read about the Elyvan Conference many years ago. A description by Golda Meir - who was the Palestine representative to the Conference - the total incredulity, bewilderment and pain at the delegate’s negative response towards European
THE HIDE AND SEEK CHILDREN

CHILD SURVIVORS FROM SLOVAKIA:
Summary for a lecture in London 2001

By Barbara Barnett, M.Phil

Barbara and her husband Richard took a great interest in our members at the Primrose club. Their musical appreciation sessions were very popular. Barbara continues to take an interest in our Society and is a most welcome member.

Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld had many achievements. He was religious leader of the Adass community, established under his father but probably he is best remembered as the founder of the London Jewish Day School Movement. Less widely known was his one-man stand to save Jews in the "Nats." He found ways against all odds for many hundreds to escape to Britain until the declaration of war cut contact. When the war ended, Rabbi Schonfeld recognised that surviving and exhausted relatives were in no condition to take adequate care of children. Far less could they provide any Jewish stimulus or education, missing long since.

So he offered for children a safe haven in Britain, pending plans for their future. Any parents or relatives in promise that children would receive good care and education in a traditional Jewish environment, but as soon as the adults had sufficiently recovered their health and found a place to settle, they would be re-united. For orphaned children, he would take full responsibility and make plans for their future. His offer was quickly taken up, the opportunity recognised although it entailed another devastating separation of unknown length. He returned again and again to retrieve from the prevailing chaos children severely debilitated by years of horrific conditions and bereft of any Jewish life.

There were numerous problems. A place in promising homes, children could receive good care and education in a traditional Jewish environment, but as soon as the adults had sufficiently recovered their health and found a place to settle, they would be re-united. For orphaned children, he would take full responsibility and make plans for their future. His offer was quickly taken up, the opportunity recognised although it entailed another devastating separation of unknown length. He returned again and again to retrieve from the prevailing chaos children severely debilitated by years of horrific conditions and bereft of any Jewish life. There were numerous problems. A place in promising homes, children could receive good care and education in a traditional Jewish environment, but as soon as the adults had sufficiently recovered their health and found a place to settle, they would be re-united. For orphaned children, he would take full responsibility and make plans for their future. His offer was quickly taken up, the opportunity recognised although it entailed another devastating separation of unknown length. He returned again and again to retrieve from the prevailing chaos children severely debilitated by years of horrific conditions and bereft of any Jewish life.
The rest stayed in London. All were cared for and helped to recuperate while plans were made for their future by Rabbi Schneidman in collaboration with their parents or any other relatives surviving. Slowly and with much difficulty over decision-making, the children were dispersed. Clonyn Castle Children's Home closed a year or so later; the last 25 children stayed on in Dublin a bit longer but by December 1949 none were left in Eire. At least one third of the 148 joined relatives - in Israel, in the States, and in Canada, a few returned to Europe. The rest were placed with orthodox foster families, in hostels or were old enough to take rooms in London. Many attended the Hasmonaean or Agviloor Schools. Several older boys studied at Yeshivo in Gateshead, Sunderland and Staines or in London at the school of the Schneider Yeshiva. When their studies were completed many moved on to join relatives or friends.

It was in 1996 that Anna Nussbaum, one of the group who settled in London, suggested a Reunion be planned to mark the fifty years since the group reached London. By chance I became involved in its organisation. Addresses were eventually traced for about half the original group; and about half of these took part in the Reunion. This was held over three days in London and in Manchester in April 1998. The next day some of us flew to Dublin and visited Clonyn Castle; it was a fascinating week-end and although only a small number took part, many brought their spouse, some brought their children. and all became engrossed with each other, recalling episodes in the past and discovering how others had fared during the past half century!

I collected and distributed at the Reunion some twenty personal stories and added material related to the group's history. It was also an opportunity to hear more reminiscences, encourage others to write their own or to take up my offer to do so for them. The idea has arisen that perhaps this story and these recollections should, with the permission of contributors, be published. More accounts have been written since the Reunion and others have been promised. Attempts are continuing to make contact with those members of the group or their relatives who we as yet have failed to trace. Only then will this story be complete.

Manchester Holocaust survivor has returned to his birthplace for the first time

A Manchester Holocaust survivor has returned to his birthplace for the first time.

The emotional return of Mayer Bomsztyk (72) to the once-thriving Polish town of Sztaszow where the vast majority of its 6,000 Jews perished will be screened on this Sunday's Songs of Praise on BBC1 (5.30pm).

The BBC initially approached Rabbi Y Y Rubinstein for a suitable candidate. Rabbi Rubinstein asked Mayer: "Do you know a survivor ready to go?"

Without hesitation he replied: "Yes me lets go for it.

Mayer told me: "I wanted to go but I didn't want to go. Who did he pick me? I never dreamt I would myself."

"Friends would come back and ask when I was going. Every Friday night my family would ask the same question."

"Talking about it was one thing but the reality is different."

Mayer, accompanied by his wife Lily, daughter Jackie Field, son Warren, granddaughter Nicola Field (16) and grandson Joshua Bomsztyk (13) will be watched by an estimated three million people on Sunday.

The 30-minute programme on the theme of remembrance will keep returning to the experiences of the Bomsztyk family. There is also a two-minute talk by the Chief Rabbi, Professor Jonathan Sacks.

The family visited the apartment building where Mayer was raised. It overlooked the town square where thousands of the town's Jews were lined up for deportation to the camps.

Jackie told me: "We stood in the cellar where Dad hid for two weeks before the Germans came. We were seeing the location of the stories we grew up with."

By November 1942, the town and the majority of its ultra-Orthodox citizens had been liquidated.

The family visited the cemetery but most of the graves had been looted for use as paving stones. Now only 10 stones remain in the cemetery to represent a minyan. There is also a monument over a mass grave.

Another Manchester survivor, Jack Asenberg, has put up a gravestone in memory of his family who also lived in the town.

The family are filmed in the cemetery reciting their legacy to remember the horrors of the Holocaust and pass it on to future generations.

Jackie told me that her father escaped his fate by being sent to work in the Hassag munitions factory in Kielce in 1944.

After the munitions factory he was sent to Buchenwald before being liberated from Theresienstadt. Sadly, both his parents and his brother perished.

Mayer said: "My house had been rebuilt a few times but it was basically the same."

"I spoke to a few Poles and they all said how good they were to the Jews."

"We were a Chassidic Jewish community. There was a shool and plenty of shitekhs (prayer houses). The centre of town was all Jewish."

"On Friday afternoon and Shabbat all the shops were closed and on Shabbat afternoon all the Jews were in their best clothes. It was like Northumberland Street, Salford. At least in Krawow I found 110 Jews left, here there were none."

A visit to his old school evoked more bitter memories. He still remembers the taunts of stone-throwing antisemites.

But not all memories are bad. He spoke of a "poor but enjoyable" upbringing. His father ran a leather shop in the square. Other Jews worked as shoemakers, joiners or water carriers.

But all this rich life has vanished without trace. Mayer added: "I visited Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre and saw a rose garden of remembrance but in my village there was nothing."

BBC Religious Programming producer John Forrest said: "We are seeing a person who has suffered loss of close family, a survivor with an incredible story who wanted to pass on this story to his children and grandchildren.

"We wanted to help to provide some sort of realistic human angle to the tragedy of the Holocaust when so much has been said."

He added: "It was exciting to see someone of strong faith and how it has fuelled his experience. As an observant Christian I felt a unity with an observant Jew."

As to Holocaust Memorial Day itself, Mayer added: "Of course it's a good idea. Ours was the worst tragedy and still we didn't learn. We have to keep up with the message. Only education will stop it happening again."

Nicola, who recounted her experiences to fellow Yavneh pupils in today's Holocaust Memorial Day assembly, said: "I have always felt the need to pass on the message.

"Now I can picture better what happened to my grandpa. Father. Five formers learn about the Shoah in History GCSE but they do not learn enough."

She was saddened by her visit to Staszow Museum. "There was a little trace of the Jews in the town," she said. "A tiny room in the museum was devoted to the Jews. It doesn't explain what happened to them. Everything just stopped in 1942."

Warren will tell Stenecourt members about his experiences on Shabbat. The Holocaust Memorial Day Service in central London tomorrow will be broadcast on BBC2.
William obtained a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature & Philosophy. He has written many books, both fact and fiction. His latest manuscript "WARING AND HOPE: NAZI MURDER OF EUROPEAN JEWRY" will be published in the year 2002.

**But for a Stroke of Fickle Fate (1)**

By William Samelson, Ph.D.

Witkiewicz soon after Liberation April 1945.

We all piled out of the barracks in the wee hours of the morning. It promised to be another freezing day in Buchenwald. The caps called the inmates' numbers in a sort of monologue, while we shuffled from one foot to the other to avoid frostbite. Any person who hadn't had the good fortune to wear the Dutch wooden "clappers" will fail to fathom the discomfort.

Our ears were peeled, though freezing in the brisk winter wind, eyes blurry, dazzled by lack of sleep and perpetual exhaustion. Not to hear one's number called and not to uter a loud response resulted in severe repercussions. We all knew the punishment for such a cardinal omission. So we listened attentively, unwilling to antagonize our wardens who only meant to elicit our response.

Thousands upon thousands of enfeebled men, known in their derisive appellation commonly as musaics, crowded the vast expanse of the Appellplatz. The three of us Priotkow boys huddled as closely as we could, as if to share the heat of our bodies for some mutual comfort. The three were my brother Roman, Szlamek Winogradowi, and myself, Wilek. I looked at their faces and I spied concern. What if after all the trials we had endured together from the very beginning of the Nazi inflicted churban, we now be separated? A routine call of inmate numbers meant another transport for parts unknown. Whether it meant life or death was a toss-up.

Through the darkness of my present condition, I glanced back into the happier times of my seemingly distant childhood. So may friends called my life then. Friendship was to become a very precious commodity in times of need and adversity. Many have perished due to the treachery of false friends. Others have survived supported by the devotion and random acts of the kindness performed by strangers.

A kaleidoscope of memories sailed through my mind's eye. How we shared our fate with Szlamek and other local boys at the Priotkow ghetto while working on the local Hortensia glassworks and immediately following a beatific moustache (I now knew all the earmarks of my grandfather Srulko; his moustache bristled in dialogue). We peered out of the small aperture in the wall to observe my grandfather Srulko's well-manicured handlebar moustache bristled with silver and gray, and his blue eyes shone with the usual humour when we engaged in dialogue.

This was not the time for idle conversations. He was silent and I had no recourse other than to conduct a solitary monologue. "Why have the Jews been treated so poorly throughout the ages?" I asked and quickly responded to my own question. I thought that the final answer is that there is no answer. Evil is not logical. Hatred does not sit down and carefully calculate, then choose its means to accomplish its goal. My grandfather's reaction, and I thought there was a whimsical sign of approbation in the mischievous sparkle of his eyes.

Weather, the part of your body facing the furnace developed heat blisters, while those exposed to the raging blizzard would suffer frostbite.

We carried on, buoyed by mutual words of encouragement and cheered by shared moments of triumph over adversity. We engaged in dark humour during these rare intervals from horror when things were "not as bad as they could have been."

Over the course of time, we fantasized about joint endeavours we would undertake "someday when all this was over," if only fate allowed us to succeed in our ongoing battle for survival. Yes, those were the modest dreams we shared of mutual togetherness in the imagined future, even when the time would come to form new liaisons, have families of our own children and grandchildren... if only fate would favour us...

The first threat of separation struck with the impending liquidation of the Priotkow ghetto. Our lives were thrown into turmoil. Deep down we had known all along that our temporary safety under the umbrella of labour at the Hortensia could not last. What with all the "Umsiedlung" ("resettlement") activities in progress - most of them to the killing factory at Treblinka - we had sensed that our day would come. Yet when that day arrived, we tried so very hard to push it into the subconscious, to block out the reality of another disaster, to live with the illusion that all this was only a surreal world of some bizarre alien imaginings.

The 650 remaining slave labourers of the Hortensia and Kora factories and their families were assembled at the railroad tracks. A row of freight cars waited there for us. "Where to?" was the question on everyone's trembling lips, and in the minds of those who were unable to speak, silenced by unspeakable grief and the panic that gripped their hearts. It was now November 1944, and we stood facing deportation. It was one of those dreary days in whose course nothing good ever happens, full of dark clouds hovering above, ready to burst, as if in concert with the sinister activities.

We were packed like animals into the stench of the overcrowded cavernous cattle car - over ninety people - and each tried to guess our destination.

"We're going to our deaths!" lamented the pessimists.

"Don't be a fool," another admonished. "The Nazis need us more than ever to toll for them inside their *lagerland* while most of them are off in the pursuit of the Compensation." He sounded the optimist with an undertone of humour in his voice. Under normal circumstances, the remark might have elicited laughter. But this was not the time for laughter.

Fact was, the uncertainty of what lay ahead for us was well nigh as tortuous as the journey itself. The convoy made numerous stops, some to pick up provisions for the guards; others to replenish firewood and water for the engine. On occasions, stops were intended to offer the "passengers" relief. At all stops regardless of purpose, we tried to guess the area and the direction of the journey. The three of us huddled in the corner, as day became night and then day again. On several occasions, we peered out of the small aperture above us hoping to recognize the surroundings, but what we saw was only wooded countryside; there were no railway stations, no towns, and no people to talk to. We shared what food and drink we had brought along from Piotrkow, and we were comforted with the knowledge of saying together.

Not to lose track of time, we carved markers in the wall to indicate each dawn. We were on the way almost for two days and three nights. Sleep was restless, and listening to the sound of steel beating against steel reminded one of some strange, sinister music to accompany the dimly lit nightmare. Thus, I dozed off, only to be visited by my alter ego of times past, saw my grandfather Srulko; his well-manicured handlebar moustache bristled with silver and gray, and his blue eyes shone with the usual humour when we engaged in dialogue.

This was not the time for idle conversations. He was silent and I had no recourse other than to conduct a solitary monologue. "Why have the Jews been treated so poorly throughout the ages?" I asked and quickly responded to my own question. I thought that the final answer is that there is no answer. Evil is not logical. Hatred does not sit down and carefully calculate, then choose its means to accomplish its goal. My grandfather's reaction, and I thought there was a whimsical sign of approbation in the mischievous sparkle of his eyes.
Suddenly, jolted by the loud collision of the braking wagons, I woke.

Szlamek peered out of the small "window." In the deep obscurity of the night, guards rushed from wagon to wagon. A dim light illuminated what seemed a platform at a railway station. More freight trains stood idly nearby.

"Czeszchowa!" Someone shouted from the other end of the car. "We are in the city of the Holy Virgin Mary!" the voice commanded.

The sliding doors opened suddenly, and the disoriented, exhausted, passengers disgorged from the car's entrails into the cordon of the waiting Ukrainian surrogate SS militia. Filled into ranks of six, we marched under close scrutiny into the hilly area by the cordon of the waiting Ukrainian surrogate SS militia. The steel gale. What had begun small on us. Steel marched under close scrutiny wrought iron sign into mild initiation by us.

As we struggled inside, we guided as a relatively special smell of the molten steel lava toward us. Czeszchowa Steel Mill announced a large wrought iron sign above the steel gate. As we all struggled inside, we guided as a relatively special smell of the molten steel lava toward us.

The capo called out the numbers. Those called made an effort to respond in as loud a voice as their ailing lungs were able to muster and were parceled past the formation. Two familiar numbers sounded. Szlamek responded to the first and Roman to the second. A few more numbers followed, and then it was our turn. I was stunned. I looked from Roman to Szlamek and then up to heaven and again at the two of them. There was a certain indescribable feeling in the pit of my emaciated stomach, but my tongue seemed paralysed. At the thought of imminent separation from Roman and Szlamek I panicked. It was a paralyzing of despair. I did not call all the others to face the uncertain future alone was unthinkable.

Memories of a lifetime travelled through my despairing mind, a victory of sorts over the Nazis. Was our success coming to an end? Suddenly, I felt Szlamek's hands on my shoulders. "Quickly, give me your jacket." He kissed. I released it into his hands and he gave me his to wear. "Go with Roman! You belong together!" These were the last words I heard my dear friend whisper before we marched off in formation to the waiting boxcars. There was no time for goodbyes; to thank him for the supreme sacrifice he had just performed in a wink of an eye. I knew this was our cheat fate in having exchanged identies? I couldn't help but wonder. Szlamek was in my thoughts throughout our journey. I wanted to weep, but there were no tears left to moisten my eyes.

Colditz was a satellite camp of Buchenwald. Once there, we learned yet another trade; that of working replacement parts, which fashioned triggering devices for the anti-tank gun called Panzerfaust. The Allied front was quickly approaching. Another deportation. The Allies had released us. We were not going to wait for the Allies to liberate us. We were going to make our own victory of sorts over the Nazis. Was our success coming to an end? Suddenly, I felt Szlamek's hands on my shoulders. "Quickly, give me your jacket." He kissed. I released it into his hands and he gave me his to wear. "Go with Roman! You belong together!" These were the last words I heard my dear friend whisper before we marched off in formation to the waiting boxcars. There was no time for goodbyes; to thank him for the supreme sacrifice he had just performed in a wink of an eye. I knew this was our cheat fate in having exchanged identies? I couldn't help but wonder. Szlamek was in my thoughts throughout our journey. I wanted to weep, but there were no tears left to moisten my eyes.

Colditz was a satellite camp of Buchenwald. Once there, we learned yet another trade; that of working replacement parts, which fashioned triggering devices for the anti-tank gun called Panzerfaust. The Allied front was quickly approaching. Another deportation. The Allies had released us. We were not going to wait for the Allies to liberate us. We were going to make our own victory of sorts over the Nazis. Was our success coming to an end? Suddenly, I felt Szlamek's hands on my shoulders. "Quickly, give me your jacket." He kissed. I released it into his hands and he gave me his to wear. "Go with Roman! You belong together!" These were the last words I heard my dear friend whisper before we marched off in formation to the waiting boxcars. There was no time for goodbyes; to thank him for the supreme sacrifice he had just performed in a wink of an eye. I knew this was our cheat fate in having exchanged identies? I couldn't help but wonder. Szlamek was in my thoughts throughout our journey. I wanted to weep, but there were no tears left to moisten my eyes.

Colditz was a satellite camp of Buchenwald. Once there, we learned yet another trade; that of working replacement parts, which fashioned triggering devices for the anti-tank gun called Panzerfaust. The Allied front was quickly approaching. Another deportation. The Allies had released us. We were not going to wait for the Allies to liberate us. We were going to make our own victory of sorts over the Nazis. Was our success coming to an end? Suddenly, I felt Szlamek's hands on my shoulders. "Quickly, give me your jacket." He kissed. I released it into his hands and he gave me his to wear. "Go with Roman! You belong together!" These were the last words I heard my dear friend whisper before we marched off in formation to the waiting boxcars. There was no time for goodbyes; to thank him for the supreme sacrifice he had just performed in a wink of an eye. I knew this was our cheat fate in having exchanged identies? I couldn't help but wonder. Szlamek was in my thoughts throughout our journey. I wanted to weep, but there were no tears left to moisten my eyes.

Colditz was a satellite camp of Buchenwald. Once there, we learned yet another trade; that of working replacement parts, which fashioned triggering devices for the anti-tank gun called Panzerfaust. The Allied front was quickly approaching. Another deportation. The Allies had released us. We were not going to wait for the Allies to liberate us. We were going to make our own victory of sorts over the Nazis. Was our success coming to an end? Suddenly, I felt Szlamek's hands on my shoulders. "Quickly, give me your jacket." He kissed. I released it into his hands and he gave me his to wear. "Go with Roman! You belong together!" These were the last words I heard my dear friend whisper before we marched off in formation to the waiting boxcars. There was no time for goodbyes; to thank him for the supreme sacrifice he had just performed in a wink of an eye. I knew this was our cheat fate in having exchanged identies? I couldn't help but wonder. Szlamek was in my thoughts throughout our journey. I wanted to weep, but there were no tears left to moisten my eyes.

Colditz was a satellite camp of Buchenwald. Once there, we learned yet another trade; that of working replacement parts, which fashioned triggering devices for the anti-tank gun called Panzerfaust. The Allied front was quickly approaching. Another deportation. The Allies had released us. We were not going to wait for the Allies to liberate us. We were going to make our own victory of sorts over the Nazis. Was our success coming to an end? Suddenly, I felt Szlamek's hands on my shoulders. "Quickly, give me your jacket." He kissed. I released it into his hands and he gave me his to wear. "Go with Roman! You belong together!" These were the last words I heard my dear friend whisper before we marched off in formation to the waiting boxcars. There was no time for goodbyes; to thank him for the supreme sacrifice he had just performed in a wink of an eye. I knew this was our cheat fate in having exchanged identies? I couldn't help but wonder. Szlamek was in my thoughts throughout our journey. I wanted to weep, but there were no tears left to moisten my eyes.
I was ready for all sorts of changes. But I was also certain that in the midst of all the turbulence I never felt intimidated, alone, defeated, or small. I rebelled against being a pawn of history. No, I wasn’t going to join the death march from our camp to the Baltic. I wondered what had happened to the Piotrkow boys whom we left behind in Buchenwald. Were they still alive? I hoped with all of my heart they were. Rumours had it that we were to march to a place the Gestapo wished us to die. No one knew what that place was or if we would arise. Our prayers were answered, for it was at dawn the next day we were liberated by a small US Army detachment.

The road to physical recovery was slow. But the very moment I was freed from the shackles of slavery, I had begun the search for Szlamek, in the hope that he had not paid with his life for the great task he had done on my behalf, that Appellplatz in Buchenwald. Over the course of the next 40 years, I kept up my search, never giving up the hope of finally reaching him and finding that to find him I would also find the rest of the Piotrkow boys. It was all to no avail. How was I to know that he had changed his name to R.S. Wino? There was no word of movement beneath, and the International Red Cross of one survivor named R.S. Wino.

One day, in my research work at the Mazal Holocaust Library, I came upon Martin Gilbert’s book “The Boys.” And there, as big as life, one of the enclosed illustrations presented the youthful photo of my dear friend Szlamek Winogradzki and Ben Helfgott. It was a shock to me. We had come a full cycle. Quickly, I wrote a letter. Szlamek responded by ringing me up as soon as he received my telephone number. His voice sounded as calm and confident as I had remembered it from those days many years ago in times of grave crises. We talked as if it were only yesterday when we parted. This happy reality is testimony to the phenomenon of brotherly love that does not cease with the passage of time and in the abyss of space.

What might have happened had I been more confident in my own ability to reach Theresienstadt by surmounting the obstacles of the death march from Auschwitz to that city as the first of “The Boys” that came to England with the Windermere Group in August 1945. Well...what if? We might have been spared the suspense of “The Boys.” When we were on the road and so near, what if I might have failed to...? Oh, but for a stroke of fickle fate...?

Jakub Guttenbaum
Helenowek - Poland August 1945.

I first heard about the ‘45 Aid Society from Felik Scharf in 1992. He told me that many of the members were liberated in Theresienstadt in May 1945 and subsequently came to England. He talked about their achievements and extolled the work of the Society. He mentioned Ben Helfgott, but the name did not mean anything to me.

I was very interested to learn about the Society for two reasons. Firstly, I, too, a sixteen year old boy, was liberated in Theresienstadt after having been two years in concentration camps and among those who went to England were my comrades in adversity about whose post-war fate I was completely oblivious.

Secondly, I was at the time of meeting Felik Scharf, the Chairman of the newly-established association in Poland, “Children of the Holocaust” and the knowledge of similar organisations abroad with many years’ experience was of great interest to me. Felik promised to put me in touch with Ben and, knowing how passionate I was, that he would keep his word.

I did not have to wait long; as in April 1993, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto, I received news that Ben Helfgott was in the Forum Hotel in Warsaw and was anxious to contact me. I phoned him immediately and we arranged to meet in the hotel lobby. When we arrived, he was swarmed by Jews from abroad who had come especially to participate in the commemoration.

Jakub Guttenbaum

I was very apprehensive that I might not recognise among such a throng of people a man unknown to me. I looked for Ben Helfgott, walking briskly towards me. His face was strangely familiar to me. He, too, recognised me immediately. We fell into each other’s arms and I was welcomed.

During our meetings I enquired about “the boys” who had come to England with the Society. Ben sent me Martin Gilbert’s book “The Boys”, which I read with great interest.

Since that time, I have been in constant touch with Ben and we meet sometimes during his short trips to Warsaw. He told me much about the members of the ‘45 Aid Society in history. Ben sent me Martin Gilbert’s book “The Boys”, which I read with great interest.

During our meetings I enquired about “the boys” who had come to England with the Society. Ben sent me Martin Gilbert’s book “The Boys”, which I read with great interest.

Since that time, I have been in constant touch with Ben and we meet sometimes during his short trips to Warsaw. He told me much about the members of the ‘45 Aid Society in history. Ben sent me Martin Gilbert’s book “The Boys”, which I read with great interest.
typhus

Skarzysko or Czestochowa.

SS-Gahzen who squashed as tightly as

survived occupied days, when we had bll, we

Skarz,sko.


cruelty of Ltlfonatel)

He Warsaw Ghetto younger hrolher, had to move we received you

younger, was 51ill

many of

He went l0

The

Poland. At

began.

I, with my

was

were

were

What

The

us

I

medical help was limited to cleaning the

did

a Belgian and he arrested

in

Majdanek, there the

I, with my

the

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

Kowel

where many

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to

I was deported to
Tonight we remember the Holocaust's victims and we honour the survivors, some of whom are with us here. It was to Britain, amongst other places, that they came to rebuild their lives. Their memories have become part of our memories, our history. Tonight we have heard stories of horror, suffering and great courage. Of industrial might harnessed to evil and of the resilience of human spirit. Of course, history is littered with instances of people's inhumanity towards one another. What made the Holocaust so frightening was its goal, its unimaginable scale and its wickedness in attempting to use false science to further human destruction. Each step humanity takes is the product of a struggle between good and evil. We know both exist in our nature.

The Holocaust was the greatest act of collective evil the world has ever known. It is to reaffirm the triumph of good over that evil that we remember it. We remember it so as we do not forget what the human race at its worst can do. We also remember it so as we learn how it happened and never believe, in our folly, that it could not happen again. Indeed, in some parts of our world it has happened recently. The appalling reality of the Holocaust caused a profound crisis in human civilisation. But I believe it also marked a turning point in European and human history. That is, it served as a catalyst for the reconstruction of our continent founded on the values of democracy, liberty, equality, opportunity.

Today we gather to light candles and bear witness in remembrance. Because the passing of time makes it more vital than ever to remember the Holocaust and try to learn its lessons. I hope and believe Western Europe has learned the lessons of its past. Yet across the world, and closer to home, we still see the same forces of racism, extreme nationalism and bigotry actively at work today. Cambodia, Rwanda and the Balkans prove that hate-mongers and tyrants persist in their conviction that race, religion, disability or sexuality make some people's lives worth less than others. But the Holocaust's deep scar on our history means that we cannot escape the responsibility to oppose genocide today.

So the Holocaust continues to be of fundamental importance and relevance to each new generation. A reminder, particularly to young people, that the events of the Second World War must never again be repeated. In remembering the Holocaust and its victims, we reaffirm the kind of society that we all believe in. A democratic, just and tolerant society. A society where everyone's worth is respected, regardless of their creed or skin colour. A society where each of us demonstrates, by our word and actions, our commitment to values of humanity and compassion. A society that has the courage to confront prejudice and persecution. That is our hope and that is why the Holocaust deserves this permanent place in our collective memory.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Remembering Genocides, lessons for the future, Westminster Central Hall, 27.1.01

A personal view

By Witold Gutt

Witold Gutt D.Sc., 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.

The first memory is of the schoolchildren singing, and acting as guides to those eminent people who were lighting candles. The children, graceful, strong and beautiful, provided hope in this event which was overwhelming by the catalogue of horrors that were near to unbearable for me, as a survivor, to relive.

The report by Richard Dimbleby of his findings in Belsen immediately after liberation was too harrowingly to watch, most effective in his description and selection of incidents, but revealing happenings straight from Hell which had occurred, we must remind the reader, in cultured Germany where some of the greatest music, literature, and philosophy were created with Jewish participation.

The Prime Minister was right to single out for 'Shindler's List' the incident when a normal conversation between Goeth and his mistress, in Plaszow camp, is followed by the arbitrary murder of a Jewish prisoner.
REFLECTIONS ON
HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

David Cesarani, University of Southampton

David Cesarani is Professor of Modern Jewish History. He is a broadcaster and writer on the Holocaust, Zionism and the Jews of Britain.

The decision to hold Holocaust Memorial Day was announced by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in January 2000, on the occasion of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust. Speaking at the concurrent opening of the Anne Frank Exhibition in Westminster, Blair said: 'The Holocaust and the lessons it teaches us for our time, must never be forgotten. As the Holocaust survivors age and the few remaining eyewitnesses become more and more our duty to take up the mantle and tell each new generation what happened, and what could happen again. As we fight to build a multi-racial Britain, the painful memory of the typhoid epidemic in Dachau following our liberation there by the Americans on 29 April 1945. Many of those newly liberated died, and many were emaciated and too starved to eat the food provided by the American Army.

The presence at the Memorial meeting of the highest in the land - the Prince of Wales, the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Home Secretary, the Cardinal, the Archbishop of Canterbury, added strength to the occasion. The Chief Rabbi spoke well, and the Cantor, Moshe Haschel, and his Ne'mannah Singers deserve praise for their rendering of El Male Rachamin.

The horrors of Cambodia, Rwanda and Sarajevo without doubt deserve the attention given to them. 'Ubuphufuyi' by Cecile Kayirembwa was beautiful as well as sad and was sung by Cecile with great feeling. The lighting of the candles at the end, while 'I believe in the sun' was sung by the children was faultlessly arranged, like a mosaic. The presence of the camp survivors in the audience added validity to the occasion. Ben Helfgott thanked the Government for creating the Memorial Day.

Aspects that could have been mentioned somewhere are the long-term effects of the Holocaust on some of the survivors and the damage to some members of the second generation.

A frequently heard objection was that the day screened out the victims of Soviet oppression. Some critics in the press wondered why the UK needed such a day at all. Others, taking their cue from the American critic, Peter Novick, wondered whether something as extreme as the Holocaust could teach any useful lessons for today. Ex-servicemen were perturbed by the possible confusion between Remembrance Day and Holocaust Remembrance Day.

In the run-up to 27 January 2001, most of these criticisms were answered. The successful opening of the Imperial War Museum, the Holocaust Exhibition demonstrated the relevance of the Holocaust to people in Britain and showed how sensitive education about the subject included the fate of non-Jewish victims of Nazi racial biological policies. When defenders of HMD pointed out the scale of Jewish suffering, the specific role of anti-Semitism rooted in Christianity, and the uniquely modern combination of racism, eugenics and social engineering implemented by the state, criticism from other groups subsided. Sadly, due to the persistence of racism in Britain, the antics of Jorg Haider, and the occurrence of state-sanctioned mass murder and 'ethnic cleansing' in the Balkans, it was easily shown that the Nazi persecution and mass murder of the Jews was a recent event which would horrified pertinent to society in Britain and present-day Europe.

To ensure the relevance of the day and demonstrate its inclusivity, the Home Office added a 'strap line' to all material about the event. It became 'Holocaust Memorial Day, Remembering Genocides. Lessons for the Future.' By highlighting in the nation's ceremony and the Education pack the vast slaughters of humanity if Cambodia, Bosnia and Rwanda it was intended to show that the Holocaust could serve as a basis for commemo-
HOLocaust Memorial Day in Salzgitter

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.

When the first Holocaust Day's commemoration took place in England at Central Hall, Westminster, on the 27th January, I was invited to Salzgitter. I had never heard of this place.

Salzgitter is yet another concentration camp one does not normally hear or speak much about but it is said that there was a bus ride from Hanover, where I had been invited to a conference that lasted for three days.

The conference was attended by a lot of psychologists and psychiatrists and was all about the 'evil in humans,... What's new?'

Whilst I appreciated the thoughts behind it all and the immense efforts made by the organisers, I thought it was a bit of a waste of time.

My visit to Salzgitter, by contrast, was extremely worthwhile. It was a relatively small camp situated near Salzgitter, a tiny place in the middle of nowhere. I cannot even find it on the map. It was a place I knew little about. Wadersloh setzt Zechen - Hände reichen statt Fauste recken was the sign I saw and Aktionswoche gegen Fremdenfeindlichkeit und Gewalt the phrase below it.

What I witnessed there gave me a lot of hope. My contribution was framed with some musical offerings which made it seem unsuitable to be followed by questions from the audience. So it was arranged that I should go to the local high school and talk to the students. I encouraged them to ask any questions that came to their mind. It was a lively, intelligent and, I felt, worthy of a quickie question and answer session, and I had the definite feeling that I was able to contribute to their understanding of the shameful inheritance they are lumbered with. None of these young people ever met a Jew before in their lives!

In the afternoon a group of schoolchildren performed a play. It consisted of sketches, all of them highlighting the dangers of neo-Nazi activities, hatred and mistrust of anything and everybody foreign, and last, but by no means least, the Holocaust. It could so...
Some of the 'Boys' of the Bedford Hostel in 1946.

The 'Boys' Madrihim in Darleth House, Scotland in 1946.

easily have been kitsch. It wasn't. It was moving to see these youngsters so concerned with the past and the future.

A few days later I went to Berlin to a book launch.

My childhood friend, Konrad Latte, and his parents had left Breslau one day before the last transport of Jews was sent to the east, took a train in Berlin and tried to survive there. It is a long story that ended in the well-known disaster for the parents, but Konrad survived, thanks to unbelievable ingenuity and an amazing number of German people who helped him and hid him. One of them, a well-known composer, even gave him his own identity papers.

Whilst in Berlin, I took the opportunity to visit the Jewish Museum. It is closed at the moment because the air-conditioning needs to be improved before it opens to the public. I managed to get a 'private viewing' and I must say this is an extraordinary building. It is not planned as a museum dedicated specifically to the Holocaust, but to Jewish life in Berlin 'before'. But even in its empty state, one cannot escape the feeling that nothing can ever be taken for granted. This building is like a 'Song without Words'.

At the home of Victor Breitburg.

L/R: Paul Gast, Alec Walter (Adek Wassercier), Victor Breitburg & Herman Rosenblatt.

L/R: Stanley Faull (Falinower), Ruby Friedman (our Secretary) & Alfred Huberman at the opening of the permanent Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum May 2000.

November 7 2000.
Election USA at the voting station Chappaqua New York.
10 years old Kimberley & 13 years old Jeremy - grandchildren of Paul and Idyth Gast of Florida.
THOUGHTS ABOUT HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Anita Laskier Walfisch

Friends, before I begin my words this morning on the Shoah, let me just express on our behalf our shock and grief at the latest tragedy in Israel, the bomb this morning in Israel in which two people were killed and many injured. To the families of the dead and the injured, we say our grief is yours. We are with you in this time of tragedy, as we will always be with the people of Israel in the tough times, as well as in the good times.

To those extremists on the other side who are attempting to murder not just people, but the very hope of peace itself, we say that you are destroying not just a tragedy and a travesty, but just to our people but also to yours. It is your children and ours who are seeing their hope destroyed and in many cases, not just hope, too much blood has been shed and too much pain has been endured. Let our tears bring us together, not drive us apart.

And let us, for the sake of our children and our children's children, and for our faith, finally realise that the time has come to make peace, for there is no other way.

Friends, just over a year ago, on the 27th day of January, Mr. Justice Gray handed down a momentous judgement in the case brought against Deborah Lipstadt by the revisionist historian David Irving. That judgement was a landmark victory in the fight against Holocaust denial and a warning against all those who claim that the greatest single crime of man against mankind didn't happen - never was. And what a ridiculous fact it is that not only did six million of our brothers and sisters die in that greatest destruction but that ever since we have had to fight for that fact to be acknowledged and known and carved in the chronicles of mankind.

We now know that Deborah Lipstadt won that case but in the weeks of waiting for the verdict, she didn't know, she didn't know. And, as the case closed and the court went into recess, Deborah found herself in shul and suddenly, as she tells the story herself, she realised that this was no ordinary Shabbus, it was, in fact, Shabbos Hagadol, the Shabbos in which we are commanded to remember the destruction. And therefore I say to all of you that Neve Tzedek, the community in which we are gathered today, another nation that attempted to destroy our people, the Amalekites. Deborah Lipstadt has told us that the realisation that this is not just a single Shabbos, April just before Shabbos Hagadol, came as a sign from Heaven that what she was doing was right and necessary and it would succeed - Zahir, remember, dear friends, all families, you know, all those you know, killed. Sometimes, surviving can be the hardest thing of all. The Shabbos that we remember, the Shabbos that we celebrate, the Shabbos that we have lost.

And therefore I say to all of you that Neve Tzedek, the community in which we are gathered today, another nation that attempted to destroy our people, the Amalekites. Deborah Lipstadt has told us that the realisation that this is not just a single Shabbos, April just before Shabbos Hagadol, came as a sign from Heaven that what she was doing was right and necessary and it would succeed - Zahir, remember, dear friends, all families, you know, all those you know, killed. Sometimes, surviving can be the hardest thing of all. The Shabbos that we remember, the Shabbos that we celebrate, the Shabbos that we have lost.

And therefore I say to all of you that Neve Tzedek, the community in which we are gathered today, another nation that attempted to destroy our people, the Amalekites. Deborah Lipstadt has told us that the realisation that this is not just a single Shabbos, April just before Shabbos Hagadol, came as a sign from Heaven that what she was doing was right and necessary and it would succeed - Zahir, remember, dear friends, all families, you know, all those you know, killed. Sometimes, surviving can be the hardest thing of all. The Shabbos that we remember, the Shabbos that we celebrate, the Shabbos that we have lost.
Speech given by Field Marshal Lord Bramall KG., GCB., OBE., MC., JP.
on the occasion of the presentation to him by the International Council of Christians and Jews of the Interfaith Gold Medallion

The award was made in recognition of Lord Bramall’s exceptional contribution to the improvement of understanding between faith and his personal involvement as the former Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Imperial War Museum in the setting up of the permanent Holocaust Exhibition. He and Lady Bramall were honoured by our Society at our Anniversary Reunion in May 1997.

Sir Sigmund, Lady Baronesse Boothroyd, Ladies and Gentlemen,
I feel deeply honoured that the International Council of Christians and Jews should have decided to present me with this Interfaith Gold Medallion; honoured, but extremely humble about my deserving this award, particularly in the company of such a distinguished past recipient and in the wake of so many very distinguished people.

I certainly have always tried wherever I have been in the world to foster good relations and above all mutual respect between different faiths. And together with many others, I have never failed to be impressed by the remarkable concentration of genius amongst the Jewish people, or indeed to realise and appreciate how much the Christian religion owes, for its roots and history, to Judaism. So my motivation is real enough; although there must be so very many others who have done so much more for, and had so much greater influence over, the improvement of understanding between our faiths, than I have.

But I realise that (as you have said) you have done me this singular honour because of my determination in getting the Holocaust Exhibition in the Imperial War Museum, started and off the ground, that awful (and for various reasons unique) crime against humanity, during World War II, known generally as the Holocaust, which includes tyranny, persecution, depraved brutality and coldly calculated genocide of over 6 million Jews must never be forgotten by future generations.

Particularly never forgotten, because students of human nature will realise only too well how, under certain circumstances and pressures on political climates, these ghastly manifestations of envy, hate, cruelty and indifference can so easily come to the fore or be stirred up. And we can only hope for the future that our religious faiths and common belief in God and the goodness of God will always remain to foster respect for fellow human beings, and indeed constitute powerful influences in calming down and reversing such evil thoughts whenever and wherever they start to emerge, and certainly never, never do anything to inflame them.

We all have to learn from history and as a young soldier who suddenly came across the horrors of Bergen-Belsen in 1945, that learning came very quickly. And indeed this is where, as Robert Crawford, the Director General, has just said, the permanent Holocaust Exhibition (a museum within a museum) has such a large part to play for future generations who have never lived through these things and need to have history properly and honestly presented to them. And this must particularly apply in this country where we now have a Holocaust Memorial Day and where, quite rightly, the Holocaust is on the school curriculum.

But my initiative (with the encouragement of the last Director General Dr Alan Borg) of getting the political support and putting the funding in place, so that the Holocaust Exhibition could get under way, would have been to no avail, if it had not been for the brilliant way that Suzanne Bardges, with the help of her team and under the overall direction of Robert Crawford, the Museum’s Director General, and after nearly four years of the most intense research, was able to get the whole true story presented in its proper historical context, factually, without undue sentiment, and drawing heavily on the experiences and records of witnesses and survivors. All done in a way...
ADDRESS GIVEN BY STUART EZENSTAT AT THE ANNUAL REUNION OF THE '45 AID SOCIETY- HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

May 6, 2001

Stuart Eizenstat was Deputy Secretary of the US Department of the Treasury and represented the US government in all the negotiations that he describes in the following article. Many of those who participated in the negotiations made an important contribution but without the perseverance, tact, patience and sagacity of Mr Eizenstat, it is doubtful whether these intricate and arduous negotiations would have been brought to a successful conclusion. It was indeed a great privilege to honour him at our 56th anniversary of our liberation reunion and to express our appreciation and gratitude for the indispensable role he has played in these negotiations.

I am delighted to be here for several reasons. Each of you is, himself and herself, an inspiration. Your courage, your ability to survive under almost impossible circumstances; your ability to rebuild a shattered and painful younger life into productive citizens, your capacity to pass on your faith, to your children and to your grandchildren is critically important. Your tenacity underscores the spirit of the Jewish people. I don't want to sum up some 5,000 years of history but, in some respects, the most amazing thing about 5,000 years of Jewish history is simply that we are here. That we have survived the destruction of two temples, the exiles of 2,000 years and I have to say that without question the Holocaust was as much a catastrophe for our people as the first and second temples. And yet we are here, I am moved beyond words. I am honoured to be here at the 56th anniversary of your liberation.

The Holocaust was very personal to you. I have to say that, like most American Jews, I have grown late to the recognition that it has happened. If you look at the educational materials in American schools - and, if I may say so, I think this is true even here in European schools - you will not find a reference to the Holocaust - nowhere. Book on World War II, but of the Holocaust there is a footnote, at most. It was not a part of my life growing up, and, although, I fear that I have too many of your grandchildren, who were killed in the Holocaust. I visited their village just a few years ago. But let me tell you how I came to it because when I did make it come, it came very hard and had a permanent impact on my life and through me, perhaps on the lives of others.

I am full of emotion because of the history of the '45 Aid Society and what you represent. Martin Gilbert has been a friend, a family friend, a personal friend and colleague for many decades. He turns out books at a rate that some of us can only read. The depth and scholarship of his work is really remarkable and since he has been President, with my President, President Clinton, our President, I can still say I know a President.

I have also moved because of Ben Heffmann. Ben and I first met at the London Gold Conference in 1997, sponsored by your government, and I will talk about that in a minute. I announced with Foreign Secretary Robin Cook the Nazi Persecution Relief Fund. Ben and I then met at the World Gold Conference in our Holocaust Assets in December 1998. Then we negotiated this seemingly difficult German negotiation which was one of four which I have been involved in - the Swiss, the German, the Austrians, and the French negotiations. And Ben was always a voice of strength for the Holocaust survivors. It was also a voice of reason. I am grateful for Ben's wisdom and dedication. Ben, may you go on from strength to strength - you are a wonderful inspiration for me.

In 1988 I was then really a kid, I was working on the Vice Presidential Hubert Humphrey presidential campaign - running against Richard Nixon, and I worked with Arthur Morse. Arthur Morse wrote the first of a dramatic set of books that other authors then took up. The book was called "Why Six Million Died." It was a chronicle of what the Holocaust Administration knew about the Holocaust and failed to act on. It was an unbelievable shock - you know, Jews worshipped Franklin Roosevelt. He was almost a deity for many American Jews. There was a joke that American Jews of that generation believed in three things: "die velt, yemen velt, and Roosevelt." It was a shock it was to learn that Roosevelt had known of the Holocaust and had failed to act upon it.

Let me then move you forward from 1968 to 1978 when I was President Carter's Chief Domestic Adviser in the White House. I sent him a memo recommending the creation of the Washington Holocaust Memorial, which was chaired by Elie Wiesel, to provide an appropriate memorial to the Holocaust victims. That became the Holocaust Memorial, which was now one of the most visited sites in Washington. Two-thirds of the visitors are not Jews, so what Schoolchildren pour in from all over the country.

In 1979 - one year later after that memo, the Iranian Revolution occurred. The Shah falls, and 2,000 years of Jewish history in Iran, are at risk. Jews flee the radical revolution. They get into transit sites in Rome and elsewhere in Europe and they are looking for visas to get into the United States because our immigration people who, in some respects, had not changed their mentality from the 1930s, wanted to send them back to the Iran. They had no basis to come to the United States because at that time we were not prepared to declare them refugees, which requires a well-founded fear of persecution. They could not come as students, they did not have visas' permits, they did not have green cards. What would happen? So a delegation came to see me in the White House with the recognition of Arthur Morse and what the Roosevelt administration had not done, I said to myself "We can't let this happen" and I called President Carter for the first, and I think the only time that a President has ever found this, to redelegate a visitor's visa. And we let 50,000 Iranian Jews come in with a visitor's visa. A visitor's visa requires you go back after 60 or 90 days when your visit is over. But the
redefinition of the President was that they did not have to return to Iran until the status quo was restored. And today they are now citizens of the U.S. living in Los Angeles and elsewhere.

I then left the White House and entered private law practice. I was Ambassador to the European Union in Brussels. I got a call early in 1993 from Richard Holmbrook - that may be distress of many of you know - he became U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. At that time he was Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs. And so I said:

There are now a whole host of new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, the former Iron Curtain countries, and there is a lot of Jewish property - synagogues, cemeteries, community centres, schools - that were confiscated by the Nazis and nationalised by the Communists. If you will be willing to take on a special assignment as a special envoy to encourage those governments to return to them to the Jewish community. And I am aware of the advice of my entire staff, who said "you do not have time. You have a full time job," I decided to take this, and this became a six-year part of my life. Just let me try to give you just a few pieces of that. Because what became obvious as I went through this was that the Holocaust was not only the greatest destruction, the crushing of human life and human rights, perhaps of all time. It was also the greatest theft of all time. Businesses, apartments, jewellery, gold teeth, art, insurance policies - all stolen. So I started with property restitution, and let me just give you an example of many of these - give you a precis of what we found. I went to twelve Central European countries over the course of seven years - and some of them on several occasions - to encourage the new democracies to return to the re-emerging Jewish communities for the physical infrastructure they would need to rebuild Jewish life in those countries, and I coined a phrase that these were the "double victims" of the two tragedies of World War II, Nazism and Communism, and that they had survived both. For fifty years after the destruction of the Holocaust, they were used as slave and forced labour. Yet, here they were, albeit with the exception of Hungary and the Ukraine and Russia, in twelve countries, Poland ten thousand from 3.5 million, Lithuania, five thousand from two hundred and twenty thousand, and so forth. And yet, they were here. They wanted to rebuild their Jewish life. And my job was to get them back the property to prove that they belonged there, and then if they could not use it all, to sell to have money to support their progress. And I have to tell you, one of the greatest inspirations and sources of pride was going to see these re-emerging Jewish communities, struggling to rebuild their life in what had been very dire and hostile soil, having to go to first and secondary schools in Hungary. There are Jewish newspapers, there are Jewish Museums, and in Bratislava, where the whole Jewish community was killed on a good day, Chez David, a wonderful Kosher Jewish restaurant. There is a Jewish camp in Hungary, supported by the Lauder Foundation, two thousand kids last summer, adult education. It is a true inspiration. As this property restitution was gaining momentum, June 21st 1995, a front page story of the Wall Street Journal about the fact that there were dormant bank accounts in Swiss banks. And it turned out that Holocaust victims had put their money to protect it from the onslaught of Hitler's forces. For 30 years heirs of those people had been unable to find out what had happened to the bank accounts. So I went to Basle, Switzerland, early in 1996 and met with the Swiss Bank Association. They said: "We read the article ourselves and we looked at it ourselves. I am here to tell you that we have found 775 accounts with about 30 billion dollars and we are going to repay it all." That's it. It's done. To make a long story short, we appointed an independent commission, headed by Michel B.Multatuli, Chairman of the Federal Reserve System. After three years of auditing by three international firms, at a cost to the Swiss banks of 300 million dollars, there were not some 775, there were 54,000 accounts. And, under the agreement that was reached, the banks agreed to pay 10 times the face value of the accounts, take into account the passage of time, interest over that period of time. And then I helped mediate class action settlement for 1.25 billion dollars that will not only pay nominal account holders and their families but will provide monies to Holocaust survivors and their families, 25 percent of assets lost and then put into Swiss Banks, and to refugees, but for those tens of thousands who were blocked at the border, they likely able to recover from this fund.

In the Swiss situation, we turn history into action. I chaired a government report in May 1997 and in that report we documented that 4 billion dollars of gold was stolen by the Swiss banks during World War II, and that some of it had been returned through the Swiss National Bank, which laundered the money and gave the Swiss the right to demand the in my view, they needed to buy raw materials to finance the war effort. But we made another discovery and that is, included in that looted gold was victim gold, which was smelted down by the DeGussa Company into gold bars. This gave them a false marking from the victim, and they then sold it. We got it from its inventory. They then went to the Swiss National Bank. After the war over 337 tons of that gold had been collected by Allied troops and given to the ten countries from which it was stolen. And, remarkably, we found that fifty years later there was still seven tons of gold left. Because we found out that some of that gold was victim gold, we went to those ten countries and said to them: "Look, over the years you have actually gotten only your gold, you have gotten victim gold." And we got those countries, all but Albania, 9 out of 10, to agree to defer getting their gold and put it into The Nazi Persecution Relief Fund.

As we were getting the Swiss negotiations concluded, we came to look at the German situation. Now Germany. We learned - which was no secret to you because I have talked to Ben and to a number of you tonight who were forced slave labourers. But we found out that there were 12 million forced and slave labourers and that the way in which the Germans had used such a large standing army, they emplaced the farms and factories of working age men and used these forced labourers from Russia, from the Ukraine, from Poland, as well as from other countries, as well as the Jews. The difference was that the Jewish slave labourers whose cause Ben so ably represented in the negotiations, the accounts were being worked to death. It was an alternative form of extermination. The forced workers, mostly Catholic non-Jews, were an asset of the State. They were the way in which the German economy was being run. And after very difficult negotiations, we agreed on 10 billion dollars, 4 billion for Catholic workers, 5 billion for non-Catholic workers. We allocated that money among different countries to slave and forced labourers between Jews and non-Jews. They have a fund for those who were subjected to medical experimentation. We have an insurance fund for those who had German insurance policies. And for those whose property was Aryansied, they can also claim cause of our agreement. They can also claim anything with Austria on January 17. Three days before the end of the Administration, I concluded the Austrian negotiations for war reparations - for labour, property and insurance. Then two days before the end of the Administration, on January 18, we finished with our negotiations with the French banks and the French government.

Let me tell you about two other pieces which I found that you would like in insurance and art. What happened with insurance was that in many counties - France was an example, Austria was another example - huge fines were levied on the Jewish community. There was one billion French franc levy on the Jewish community. Where was that money going to? Well, a large part of it came from having to go and cash their life insurance policies. You have a certain cash surrender value out to pay these fines. After the war, for others with insurance policies, if there were beneficiaries left - a child, grandchild, spouse - they would go to the insurance company and say: "My father, my grandmother, relative was killed and I believe he had an insurance policy with you. Now can you please pay it?" They were treated the same way the Swiss banks treated people looking for their bank accounts - in fact, go away, for fifty years. Now we have set up under the former Secretary of State, Larry Eagleburger, a Commission on Holocaust Era Claims. Five European insurers, Generali, AXA, Zurich, Allianz, and Winterthur, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to pay claims, also with ten times the value of the insurance policy. Art - Ben was delegate at the Washington Conference December 18, 1998, we developed what are called the Washington Principles. The Head of the Metropolitan Museum - Mr. Phillips de Montebello, said that the art world has been forever changed by the Washington Principles. The art world is a very secretive world. You buy a painting, you often do not even know the questions of where you got it from. Now, under the Washington Principles, museums in 40 countries who are participating are going to use their inventories and if there are art works of questionable ownership, posting it on a Website and giving the painting back to
their original owners. Let me just give you a few examples of what has happened. The eight largest museums in the United States, the Metropolitan, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, National Gallery in Washington, the Cleveland Museum of Art, have gone through their inventories and primarily they found almost two thousand paintings with gaps in their ownership. They have been posted on their Web site so people can claim them. In France, a thousand paintings have been posted on their Web site. The same is being done in Poland, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands. The National Gallery just a couple of weeks ago returned a famous painting, a Picasso called "Landscape". Let me give you my favourite story. The State Museum of North Carolina, in Raleigh, had a painting called "Mary Cassatt's Child, a French Landscape" by a medieval German painter called Lucas Cranach the Elder. And lo and behold, it turns out that two of the grandnieces of a Jewish Viennese physician, who were the grandnieces of Jews, had stored negatives of these paintings that were stolen so that Hitler would be able to review them for what he hoped to see in a "Museum of a Dead Race". In fact, experts determined it was the same painting. The museum had only 600,000 dollars in their whole acquisition budget. The painting was several million dollars. The two sisters were so taken by the positive attitude of the museum in North Carolina, that they accepted $600,000 to leave the painting in the museum. This is happening all over the United States. And it's happening in Germany, in Denmark. In your other museums are going through their inventories and also finding lost art. Unfortunately, a lot of the families who owned the art agreed to wipe it out. And what the French are doing in that situation is that after a claim period nobody claims the lost art, it will go back on exhibit, but with the insignia saying "This was stolen from an unknown Jewish family", which itself is a historical landmark.

And I want to close by the following: As important as the eight billion dollars and the art remains, I think it is even more important that the last memory of the Holocaust should not be money, it should be memory and lessons. Ben has just come from France, where he says they have done over the paintings from the ones of two museums and listened to the radio and heard a poll that indicated that two-thirds of Swedish school-age children either had not heard of the Holocaust or thought that it had never happened. So, in the course of a few months, he had two historians put together a booklet called "Know Thy Children". One million copies were distributed to the homes of a country of 9 million people. They say there are more copies of that than the Bible are bibles in Sweden. And videos were prepared, teacher training techniques. Then the Swedes said "Look, we're doing this. How can we let's see if we can do this around the world" - and they created this 10-country task force - the UK is one, the US, Germany, Poland, and others - that is, the task force promoting Holocaust education worldwide. Yad Vashem is the advisor. The task force has an outreach programme to Argentina. This will give a lasting memory, a lasting impression. Not just look back to what happened, but why it happened? Why when the rule of law breaks down? What happens when intolerance is allowed to go unchecked? What happens when countries sit at international lines and do nothing? And, last, let me suggest that what has been done over the last 6 or 7 years in this enterprise is part, I think, of a broader enterprise, even with human rights. Why did NATO intervene in Kosovo and Bosnia? I can tell you for a fact that Secretary of State Albright pressured Secretary of State then - because of her background, said "We are not going to have another ethnic cleansing on the European continent in this century." It was belated; it should have come earlier; but it came. There are now two UN war tribunals, one for the former Yugoslavia on one for the Balkans, using Nuremberg principles. There is an evolving international law standard in countries like Chile. Who, are I'm confident using that against Pincheos. Korean comfort women are now suing Japanese companies and the Japanese government. Americans are now raising it in respect of slavery - very difficult issues. But it is all part and parcel of the fact that the Holocaust has never been integrated into our consciousness. This will have an everlasting impact and I think that the most important thing I can say to those of you who are working in the field - that's the field of "Girl" - by the way, you would never have been called The Boys in today's politically correct world, because I've learned some of you were also girls, but I know it is also the girls who are the spouses - perhaps your suffering and your tragedy, but also your courage, your perseverance, will not have been in vain, that it will inspire generations yet to come to make this world a better world, a more tolerant world, a world less forgiving of discrimination. And if that happens, then what you have done and what the 45 Aid Society exemplifies, will have a lasting historical impact.

Perusing the articles in the last Journal, I came across the one written by Barbara Barnett. In her "Recollections of the Primrose Club" she mentioned that her husband Richard helped me to find more congenial employment. It triggered off in my memory a scenario, which was not that simple, and made me ruminate about my early days in London, the efforts to insinuate myself into a semblance of normal life. Like most of "The Boys" psychologically attuned to the struggle to survive, there was no clear idea of what to do and how to progress in the rather strange environment into which we surfaced, or what was really available to us in this land of relative freedom. To clarify the situation, I have to regress to the time when I decided to pursue a career in music, or to be more

Professor Ivor Warnem of Trinity College of Music Within a short time the Committee decided that, owing to shortage of funds, I had to commence work and the best job they could find for me was in the optics industry. This involved grinding lenses or making spectacles. Just then I was headhunted by a company of Vietnamese singers, who were rehearsing production of the opera Fledermaus in English. They thought I was very well suited for the role of the Italian Singer and offered me the part. I was delighted. Whether or not I was ready for the stage, it seemed to be an excellent launch of my musical career, not to be missed. Assiduously I studied and gradually learnt my part in English with a very genuine foreign accent, which I was assured was in character for the portrayal of this role. I religiously attended

**In Search of a Career**

Arthur Poznański

Arthur came to England with the Windermere group. He later stayed for a short period in a hostel in Manchester and then moved to London where he lived in the Nightingale Road hostel. He is a regular contributor to our Journal.

I had no accurate - singing, I do not think that those in charge of us, looking realistically at the prospects of my success in this field, were delighted with my decision. However, I explained that music, which had helped me to survive and to retain, at least partially, my sanity was my true passion. They agreed to help me with the first stages of my tuition, on condition that I got a job in order to earn my living. With my head still in the books and assuming that in the free world everything was possible. I said I should like to get employment as a dental technician. There were, however, no such openings available. We have to recall the fact that the political and economic conditions in the early 1950s were vastly different from the ones of today. When every alien asylum seeker, once admitted, is housed and supported, the story is different. They had been very politely informed of the conditions for aliens (like myself) laid down by the government of those days. Any of us was welcome to work in this country but only in colonies, as domestic help or in industry. In the meantime, I began to study singing and music under

---

34
newly acquired skill, I decided to seek a new job.

After interminable hours at various employment offices, I was offered a job in a newly established factory at Park Royal. At the time I was living in Clapton. The daily journey would have taken me two hours by several buses and trolleybuses. Transfer tickets facilitated the journey. Every morning I had to commence work at 7:30. After an hour or so, he said, "No, but everybody else did."

Hearing this, I turned around. The entire workforce was standing there gaping open-mouthed, listening, all work abandoned. They did not applaud as, thoroughly infuriated, I followed the manager to the office. If he expected me to beg for forgiveness and reinstatement, he was disappointed. I took my earnings to date and dismissal papers and left with a loud expostulation.

Left with no alternatives, I commenced work in a small factory where metal spectacle frames were being produced. The work was pleasant and not difficult. Most of the frames were covered with gold-filled wire. My weekly earnings of five pounds barely covered my living expenses. In the meantime I continued to study music and singing in my spare time and at the weekends. Within a short time at work, I acquired expertise in producing and soldering the bridge pieces. Yet the accurate and artistic handling of the gold-filled wire was slow and, as the only expert who had mastered the art in this small factory, I could not produce the bridges fast enough. To encourage me to speed up my work, the manager put me on piece-work. No more wages; I was to be paid according to the amount of my output. I worked really hard, ignoring or cutting out all breaks, and soon I was earning between seven and eight pounds per week and was able to save some money in a post office account. The other workers became envious and complained. The manager decided to cut my wages, insisting that having proved my ability to produce the increased amount without any monetary incentive. Confident in my

and background tone of the motors, I started singing "La donna e mobile", not realising that this raised up my voice to its full volume. I finished with a long top B when I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was the manager. "Come with me to the office," he said, the wording to work I asked why. "You are sacked," he said. "Why?" I asked again. "Because you are singing," he replied. "But I was just singing," I argued. "No," he blurted. "But everybody else did." Hearing this, I turned around. The entire workforce was standing there gaping open-mouthed, listening, all work abandoned. They did not applaud as, thoroughly infuriated, I followed the manager to the office. If he expected me to beg for forgiveness and reinstatement, he was disappointed. I took my earnings to date and dismissal papers and left with a loud expostulation.

Further processing. The degrading plant was the worst job in the factory. The solvents (trichlorethylene) used were toxic and made me feel dizzy. After a month or two of this work, afraid of the serious health risk, I asked for a transfer. Affecting the hinges to the spectacles, my production was tedious but easy and not hazardous. Alongside others, I worked at a long bench, but nobody spoke to me during working hours. I felt quite alone and isolated. At the end of the working day, most of the employees adjourned to the nearest pub. My failure to join them in drinking may have been at least partially the cause of their resentment. They avoided speaking to me even during luncheon, and deliberately excluded me from the circle. I did not know why I had been sent to Coventry. My immediate aim at the factory was to acquire as much expertise as possible at the various stages of producing the spectacles as I could, which might improve my chances of promotion. Of course, earning my living in order to be able to study singing was the most important consideration. With this in mind, I decided to quietly suffer the humiliations I had to endure at the factory. Music and singing were what my career kept me from spending my evenings in the pub. After a day's work I obviously preferred to take myself to the Primrose Club, where I could practise at the piano.

Having spent some time filing and sandpapering the rough edges of the plastic frames, either in the factory or at my home, I decided to apply for a new job. I did not want to take myself to the Primrose Club, where I could practise at the piano.

The manager seemed to me genuinely concerned and sincere and meant well, but, to be honest, not knowing his professional or social Standing, I was very doubtful that he could help me.

At about that time a slender young woman called Barbara appeared at the club to join Richard in his efforts to imbue members of the club with love of culture. With her new-found fortune, she approached me saying that Richard had some news for me. When we met again, she said that one of her friends, a solicitor with offices in Pall Mall, had offered me a job in his firm if he found me suitable and willing to accept his terms. After an interview with both partners of the firm, he offered me a job as filing clerk with prospects of promotion if and when I proved myself capable. "Observe, read, ask questions and learn," advised my new principal. I did, and also took evening courses in litigation procedure and bookkeeping run by the Law Society. In time I was promoted to outdoor clerk, involving daily visits to the County Courts and all divisions of the High Court. My knowledge of the language, as well as understanding of the legal jargon, grew rapidly. Finally, when my principal stopped correcting my letters, I was promoted to the position of litigation clerk. The job did not set me on the way to making a fortune. On the contrary, I had to start at a greatly reduced weekly wage with rises coming very slowly, but a smile returned to my face.

I was working in congenial surroundings, and I found the legal and pleasant colleagues ready to help and advise. Incidentally, regarding a work permit, I discovered that having a powerful firm of solicitors to support you had a distinct advantage. An official summons to the head office of the Ministry of Labour in Whitehall brought me to meeting the chief clerk, who told me he did not think I was "so highly connected" and presented me with a cancellation of the conditions restricting my employment in this country.

I was working in congenial surroundings, and I found the legal and pleasant colleagues ready to help and advise. Incidentally, regarding a work permit, I discovered that having a powerful firm of solicitors to support you had a distinct advantage. An official summons to the head office of the Ministry of Labour in Whitehall brought me to meeting the chief clerk, who told me he did not think I was "so highly connected" and presented me with a cancellation of the conditions restricting my employment in this country.

My singing also improved to the extent that I was able to join some operatic societies in order to gain more experience. Soon I was engaged to sing professional operas, with other societies, but these as yet were few and isolated occasions. Now I had to await another opportunity to present itself, which would allow me to change my career again and take up singing as my profession. But until then, though impeccable, I was not unhappy with my bohemian way of life. Thanks to Richard Barnett, my circumstances greatly changed completely. I owe him a debt of gratitude, which shall not be forgotten.
SEPTEMBER SONG
Witold Gutt

Witold Gutt D.Sc., Ph.D., M.Sc., C.Chem., FRSC, PCS., 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.

SEPTEMBER is the cruellest month, mixing memories and desire.*

The summer kept the memories as they are, this feeling on the Samburgen, but here they come, invasion of Prezmysl, arrest of father and his murder by the Gestapo on the 9th.

How to reconcile these with September birthdays of oneself and the children?

Krakow, a city of culture for the millennium year books, Wawel, the Trumpeter's interrupted call, and the Lady with the Ermine.

But memories of Pisarz, the poet, lived in Krakow by the Jagellonian University; further, Wislawa Szymborska was born in Warszawa on 9th December 1923.

What is the Jagellonian University for a University published her literary works in 1968, which at the end of 1970 was re-discovered Peiper's writings, and the thought of this 'worker of the imagination' had a renewed effect on the formation of 'Nowa Fala' (New Wave).

Zawada's book constitutes a fresh reappraisal of Peiper's contribution and an implicit acknowledgement of a Jewish contribution to the development of Polish culture.

Some Jewish writers are mentioned, either implicitly or explicitly as such, e.g. Bruno Schulz, Julian Tuvin, and the Yiddish writers Isaac Bashevis Singer and his brother J J Singer. I recommend the book, which is very well produced, beautifully illustrated and contains a lot of information about Polish literary history between the wars.

Witold Henryk Gutt
June 2001

* with acknowledgement to T.S. Eliot, 'The Wasteland' 1922

In my article about my mother Jadwiga Gutt (née Peiper) (Journal no 24 Autumn 2000 pl4) I referred briefly to the life of a Jewish poet, novelist and literary critic who was born on 3rd May 1891 in Krakow and died in Warsaw on 9th October 1969 at the age of 79.

He spent the Second World War in Russia, and his post-war biography 'U Podstaw Linie' (Living Lines) published by Wydawnictwo Literackie in 1979, is given a prominent figure in Montparnasse as one of the leading artists in the School of Paris which at that time included Modigliani, Soutine and Chagall.

Tadeusz attended Gymnasium in Krakow and studied at the Jagellonian University; further, in 1914 and 1920 he lived in Spain where he became familiar with the literature and dramatic works of that country. During this period he began to work on his acclaimed novel about Columbus, 'Krysztof Kolumb. Odkrywca', which, however, was not completed and published until 1940 by Spoldzenie Wydawnicze.

After the First World War Peiper returned to Poland and lived in Krakow, the city which is at the heart of his most important work, his poetry and critical writings published between the wars. In particular during this period he published the collection of poetry entitled 'Zywe Linie' (Living Lines) in 1924, 'Na Przyklad : Poem Aktualny' (For example, a Poem of Reality) in 1931 and Poemary in 1935. His theoretical works 'Nowy 1st Tredy' (New Movements and Trends) were the bible of the contemporary avant-garde. It built the foundations and provided the inspiration for the influence of the West to reach Polish poetry, drama and the visual arts.

The reason for this article at the present time is the publication in the year 2000 in Wrocław of a book by Andrzej Zawada published by Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie entitled 'Dwudziestolecie Literackie'. This book deals with important developments in Polish culture and literature in the years 1918-1939, and the third chapter, entitled 'Robocery Wyobraźni' (Workers of the Imagination) is devoted to the work and contribution of Tadeusz Peiper. Throughout the rest of the book there are many other references to the central role played by Peiper after his return to Poland in 1921.

This deals with his decision to reform Polish poetry and reach understanding with groups of young writers. He co-operated in the production of a journal called Nowa Sztuka (New Art), and wrote Zwrotnica (Switch) which in theoretical terms was an important intellectual catalyst in Polish cultural life.

Zawada says that Peiper saw himself chiefly as a 'Builder' and that the key to his theory was intellectual discipline. He wanted to ensure a proper connection between life and literature. He felt that in a deep sense literature is always realistic. Zawada points out that Peiper argued that 'the skill of the world had changed', and that Western civilisation had entered a new phase and a new quality because of industrialisation.

In '3 Razym Peiper speaks of 'Miasto, Masa, Maszyna' (the City, the Masses and Machines). The artist, he felt, had to take note of these great changes, emphasising masses of people rather than the individual. The city is the natural centre of the masses, and literature should abandon rural sentiments which were so strong in Poland. It should build its new ethos according to the model of the architecture of a new city, and the importance of machines was to be recognised. Between the 1940s and 1960s his work was almost forgotten, but then the young generation of poets re-discovered Peiper's writings of the 1920s, and the thoughts of this 'worker of the imagination' had a renewed effect on the formation of 'Nowa Fala' (New Wave).

Zawada's book constitutes a fresh reappraisal of Peiper's contribution and an implicit acknowledgement of a Jewish contribution to the development of Polish culture.

Other Jewish writers are mentioned, either implicitly or explicitly as such, e.g. Bruno Schulz, Julian Tuvin, and the Yiddish writers Isaac Bashevis Singer and his brother J J Singer. I recommend the book, which is very well produced, beautifully illustrated and contains a lot of information about Polish literary history between the wars.

Witold Henryk Gutt
June 2001

AIR-raid ON RIM 1945
Witold Gutt

We are filling in the holes the American bombers had made at Rim Airport.

Suddenly the bombers return.

All hell breaks loose the Germans try to take off in their fighter planes.

American pilots descend on parachutes planes burn.

We run, no longer caring at the guards firings to stop us.

Some prisoners are killed by shrapnel.

We reach a village and risk our lives asking for food at back doors.

Some carrots are given.

The raid is over and we return slowly.

Escape seems to be impossible. Where would we go?

SECOND/THIRD GENERATION
Witold Gutt

They may be proud or resentful it varies.

Some wish to escape from this inheritance at all costs they feel the sadness overwhelming and seek escape in Eastern religions.

Buddhism is in revolt against Samsara and offers eventual enlightenment and Nirvana which ends reincarnation and hence all pain.

My grand-daughter aged 12 told her teacher ‘my grand-dad was in a concentration camp, he escaped!’

‘No-one escaped’ said the teacher, but it is enough for me that the child is proud not ashamed, it lessens the pain.

Witold Henryk Gutt ex-prisoner Dachau No. 147597 May 2001
As a Holocaust survivor from Poland, I promised myself, after the liberation at Theresienstadt, that I shall never step on Polish soil again. (1) I had nobody to go back to, and (2) due to the suffering I encountered at the hands of the Christian students and the teachers of "Hibbutzenu" who said to me three months before the war, "Hitler is coming after you".

But then, in January of this year, I heard about "The March of The Living". I joined some of the Holocaust survivors from my building and we attended several meetings. The organisation was trying to recruit as many survivors as possible, to inspire the teenagers joining the march. The group was made up of teenagers as well as adults and they treated us - the survivors - as VIPs. I have been very active in The Holocaust Documentation Center of Miami since its inception. Since the law was passed in Florida that all students have to learn about the Holocaust, I have never refused, when asked, to join as many survivors as we could gather, to speak to the hundreds of students from elementary schools; high schools and colleges. As the meetings progressed, I met the appointment Bus-Captain in charge of my group. After enquiring of her how many times she had been on The March of The Living, I was told this was going to be her 8th trip. I was very inspired. I felt an obligation to be part of the team. Many of the adults came on the march with their teenage children. Our group of 383 from Miami and the suburbs consisted of over 300 teenagers, about 50 parents, nurses, doctors, psychiatrists and psychologists: the rest were the devoted leaders, who used their previous experiences to guide us and bring the march to a successful conclusion.

The Trip

After three months of meetings, study sessions and guidance about the trip by the leaders of the march, which was to take place in Poland and Israel, we were ready. On April 17, 2000, we met at Miami Airport and boarded an El Al plane for our journey to Warsaw. Our arrival was late because of a flight delay. Nevertheless, we started our tour with a visit to the Warsaw ghetto and the next morning we toured old synagogues and cemeteries. In the afternoon, we took buses to the railroad station and travelled to Cracow. We travelled by bus to Treblinka, Majdanek, Birkenau and Auschwitz. From Auschwitz, about 5,500 people from all over the world took part in the famous march. I was among the 1,000 survivors that I was incarcerated, but when I looked at the shoes, hair, glasses and talismans, I thought of my family - all of whom were annihilated there. We also visited the old famous Jewish area, the ghetto and many famous old synagogues and cemeteries. We travelled to the old Lublin Yeshiva, which is now used as a school. We visited a famous tomb in Toczyn. A group of us went with the Polish guide to the Wavel Castle and church. Some of the Poles appeared to resent us being there. We rose at 5:45am after only six hours sleep to attend a prayer service of either Reform, Conservative or Orthodox. After breakfast, we boarded the buses for a full day's schedule. We were supplied with large bottles of water and urged to drink a lot. I was surprised in Birkenau when I saw a large supply of green bottles of natural spring mineral water from my home town of Krynica. Road travel in Poland was very good and our Polish guide spoke very good English. The teenagers on our bus were very well behaved and compassionate. Most of them were the age of our two oldest grandchildren and the eldest of whom will turn 17 in June this year.

Steve Pomerantz was very helpful to me throughout the entire trip. His help with my luggage in and out of hotels, airports and especially his help with my back pack on the march from Auschwitz to Birkenau, was much appreciated.

The Guide and the Guard in Poland

Our guide in Poland was helpful to our captain, Sharon Horowitz, but did not work well with our Polish guard Kristoff, who was very efficient. She would disappear as soon as we arrived at the hotels. The only one Kristoff could communicate with was me. He was concerned about the things that were left inside the bus and in the cargo hold. He searched me out and asked me to go with him through the buses; he did not want to do it alone in order to avoid being accused of theft. I was glad to be of service, but I was afraid to take them into the hotel and was also happy to be useful when we made a pit-stop. The Polish anti-semitic kiosk owner was accusing people of taking ice-cream, soda and other merchandise without paying for it. Then, he asked to be paid in Polish money. I ran around to the bus drivers, guards and guides to change dollars into zlotys. When I noticed that he was taking 5 zlotys for a 2½ zloty bottle of soda, without giving any change, I stepped in and told everybody not to buy anything without my supervision. I bought nothing for myself, but I made sure that he did not take advantage of anybody. At another stop, I was able to help Sandy when he tried to buy a book for a friend. I helped to get him some Polish money to complete the transaction.

Although I spent three years in nine concentration camps - six of them in Poland - the ones we visited - Treblinka, Majdanek, Birkenau and Auschwitz - were not among them. When I toured those places, I knew that my mother, brothers, uncles and cousins were annihilated there. When I looked at the hair, shoes and talismans exhibited there, I visualised my family in those places.

The hotels in Poland were good. In Israel, Hotel Hatzairnitz in Tiberias was clean, nice and good. Hotel Windmill in Jerusalem was very disappointing.

My friends and relatives in Israel tried to get in touch with me on Wednesday, but they were told that I was not registered there. Eventually, I got in touch with my friend from England whom I had not seen since 1948 when he left for Palestine to fight for the land of Israel. He told me that he had tried to get in touch with me, but was told that I was not there.

In Israel I visited many of the places that I had not seen during our guided tour visits in 1971 and 1978. We had a wonderful Israeli guide and guard.

I was fortunate enough to be in good health. In the year 2002, if I am still in good health and I am called upon to join the march, I'll be happy to be part of the team.

Your friend
David Birgenicht

From Poland to the Land of Israel

May 7th 2000

We left Cracow at 3:30am and arrived in Tel Aviv at 7:30am. No sleep. At 9am the buses took us to Jerusalem. We spent a couple of hours at The Kotel (Wailing Wall). Later, the buses took us to Ben Yehuda street, where we spent free time, mostly shopping and eating Israeli foods. I bought a Taltis for my grand-daughter Michele, whose Bat Mitzvah we shall celebrate on June 10th in Buffalo, N.Y. After lunch we left for Tiberias, to Hotel Tatzmaut. After unloading and dinner, followed by a sharing session (discussion of what we had accomplished), we were given the privilege of 7 hours sleep. The normal was 5½ - 6 hours sleep.

May 8th 2000

We left the hotel, kept our date with our famous 104 bus, and travelled from the Lower Galilee to Upper Gallli. Our Israeli guide, Esther, lives in this area and told us the inhabitants of the area consist of Arabs, Christians and Jews. They all live in peace. There are many olive trees growing in the area - a symbol of peace. From there, the camp of our buses travelled to Zefat. We visited a couple of old synagogues. Then we had an hour to ourselves to go shopping in the narrow streets, from small kiosks, stores and art galleries. Some people bought art, jewellery and other items. I bought only postcards to put into my album. We left Zefat for a 2 hour drive to the short "Holocaust March". Ladies used the portable toilets, while the men "watered the woods". A short time later, we landed in a Druze village. We feasted on "Druze food", with plenty of it, followed by a dessert similar to "Baklava". Lunch was followed by a lecture given by a Druze minister who spoke in excellent English. He explained that the Druze people have their own religion and live with their parents until they get married, with the youngest married couple taking care of their parents. They believe in re-incarnation.
They do not want their own country. They are happy to be part of Israel and serve in the Israeli Army, just like any Israeli. It was very interesting. Esther, our Israeli guide, was with us in Poland and learned first-hand about the concentration camps and gas chambers and crematoriums.

We returned to the Hotel Hatzmaut in Tiberias. After dinner, Joe Sachs (another survivor) and I were called to the front to celebrate our rebirth. We were both liberated on May 8th 1945.

We went on the lawn in front of the hotel for the start of Yom Hazikaron - the evening and next day - when all of Israel stops to mourn the “Fallen Soldiers” in all Israel wars. Our Israeli guides and armed security guards cautioned their fallen comrades. Then we left for our rooms to pack for the next day’s trip to Jerusalem.

May 9th 2000

We arose at 6am, put our luggage, and “conservative morning services” with 90 other people, ate a good breakfast and left for the Golan Museum, where we also attended ceremonies by the army. About 1,000 people gathered at any time. Now we were on our way to Jerusalem. We drove along Yamin Namer and the Jordan river, which empties into the Dead Sea. On the other side of Yamin Namer, we saw the Golan Heights. Eventually, we arrived at the “Windmill Hotel” in Jerusalem.

My luggage was carried to my room for me (as it had been throughout the trip). After dinner we did a trip to a city called Maale Adumim (30,000 inhabitants), where we spent 3 hours. We joined an ongoing celebration of Yom Hatzmaut - the 52nd anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. It starts in the evening and continues all of the next day. There was a large stage, with continuous singing and dancing by famous Israeli groups.

May 10th - Yom Ha’atzmaut

We left for Caravia. I had been there in 1971 and 1978. At that time, we just saw the wall structure and the amphitheatre, which was impressive. Now there are stores and restaurants and still more building in progress. After a while, we walked over to an area in the wide-open spaces. There were tables and chairs, with food stalls where 5,500 people were to be fed. The weather was co-operating and the atmosphere and friendship was very enjoyable. There was plenty of food for everyone, including ices for dessert. After we had finished the meal, we walked over to the amphitheatre, where we took our seats for the concert. The concert lasted three hours, with singers, dancers, and beautiful costumes. Then came a group called “Al Simchas”. They sang up a storm and rocked to the music. About 500 teenagers got on the stage, dancing and rocking with the music.

May 11th 2000

I called my friend, Zvi Brand, with whom I had lived in Stamford Hill and attended the O.R.T. School. I had not seen him since 1948 when he left for Palestine to fight in the War of Independence. I took three buses, enjoyed the sights, and arrived at his apartment before he returned from his part-time job, selling communication. His wife in English and Yiddish until Zvi arrived at 1pm. At 6.30pm we left for the reunion, which took place at David Intercontinental Hotel, where I met some of “The Boys” from the reunion in 1992, when we travelled to England after a 42-year absence. I also met many of “The Boys” who, like Zvi, had left England in 1948.

Friday May 12th 2000

We walked through the old section of Jerusalem with our guide telling us about the history of the area and its surroundings. In the evening, after dinner, we drove with our reserved buses to the theatre. There were a lot of Chasidim, young and old. We prayed with our own group; we were considered outsiders by the others. We were told before we started that we would have to walk back because of Shabbat. The walking was not bad until we had to climb 228 steps in order to get to the hotel!!!

Saturday May 13th 2000

After breakfast, I joined a group of teenagers and adults from the Marchers and we walked to attend services at Temple Michal Schlomo. When we returned, we had lunch and packed for our return trip to Florida. We left for the airport at 9.30. After an all-night flight, we arrived in Miami at 10.30 Sunday morning.

It was a good experience. I hope that I am capable to join the next March of The Living.

A MEMORABLE DAY - 22ND MARCH 2001

By Hettie Ward

Hettie has not only been a dedicated wife to Alec, she has also been a staunch supporter of our Society.

Just before Ben was leaving for Poland he telephoned to ask whether Alec would give a talk to some prisoners at Lincoln Prison in two weeks time. For reasons best known to Alec he agreed. Ben gave him the telephone number of the Chaplain and asked him to telephone to make arrangements. During these two weeks a rapport began with Alan Duce, the Chaplain, and ourselves. It was explained that Alec was a talk group of men who were on remand for serious offences, or who had already received long sentences. This group was called ALPS which stands for Anticipating Long-term Prison Survival.

At the beginning Alan wanted Alec to go alone to Lincoln but Alec refused point blank unless I was able to accompany him. After discussion with the Governor Alan was able to tell us that tickets would be sent for the two of us. So, with some trepidation, Alec and I set out at 5.15a.m. on this very cold, grey Thursday to catch the 6.45 train from Kings Cross to Lincoln.

We did not have very kind thoughts of Ben at that time in the morning, I can assure you! We were in good time and settled into our reserved seats. We watched the countryside pass by (no animals of any kind in sight due to frost and wind) passing through Stevenage, Peterborough, Grantham (Margaret Thatcher’s birthplace) and on to Newark where we changed trains for Lincoln.

We were met by Alan (a kindly man) who took us in his car to the prison, pointing out various landmarks on the way. Arriving at the prison, the prison gates were knocked loudly on the gate, which was immediately opened by a prison officer. We entered a courtyard with a big gate at the end guarded by an armed prison officer. We had to show our bus passes with our photographs to the security officer working behind the high window of the security office. Alan introduced me to the prison officer. We had to show our bus passes with our photographs to the security officer working behind the high window of the security office. Alan introduced me to the prison officer. We had to show our bus passes with our photographs to the security officer working behind the high window of the security office. Alan introduced me to the prison officer. We had to show our bus passes with our photographs to the security officer working behind the high window of the security office. Alan introduced me to the prison officer. We had to show our bus passes with our photographs to the security officer working behind the high window of the security office.
understanding the jews

rafael f scharf

rafael e. scharf was born in cracow and came to england in 1939. 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 jews quarterly, as well as of the institute of polish jews studies in oxford.

the holocaust is the dominant and omnipresent event in my consciousness. i do understand why the author of this discourse is puzzled and would like to learn more about us, from us. non-jews, with few exceptions, know little about jews and judaism. this is certainly true of the poles. during their age-long cohabitation, the poles had a good chance, if they had the will, to learn something authentic about their jewish neighbors. but they had no desire to do so. they were more interested in the general feeling of superiority, prejudice and contempt, suspicion of some sinister secret.

the fact that christianity had its roots in judaism, that jesus was a jew and - what was even more incomprehensible - that virgin mary, the queen of poland, as she was called, was judaism, created some Internal unease. an average pole would have been amazed to hear that on the neighbouring street there flourished a civilisation with its own language, literature, philosophy, music, its own ethos.

i shall give a precise and quote from this article. the author is perplexed, in the first place, by this thought: how this desert tribe, dispersed throughout the world, persecuted as no other, survived through the ages, whilst great empires — the assyrian, the greek, the roman have gone under and perished. during the last 2000 years jews have been expelled from virtually every european country. they have been kicked out from russia, six times, out of france four times. they were massacred by the babylonians, the romans, the crusaders, most recently the germans. the holocaust was no solitary event. it has a long and appalling lineage. where they were not expelled or massacred they were being vilified and herded into ghettos or into reservations such as the pale of settlement in russia, blamed for everything from the death of christ to the black death. theirs is surely the most astonishing story of survival against all the odds in the whole of human history.

they have not merely survived, they have flourished. "there are only about 13 million of us" - says ed koehl, three times mayor of new york. "that is less than a third of one percent of the world's population, and yet coming from the loins of the jewish people, you have jesus, the prophets, freud, marx, einstein - the seminal thinkers of the modern world, not to mention 116 jewish nobel prize winners". the spiritual power of jewish ideas has been overwhelming. they have given the other monotheistic religions a catalogue of priceless gifts. they gave christians and muslims the notion of one god who is
not only the Creator of the Universe but also the God who spoke to Moses from the "mouth of a fire, still, holy voice" of conscience. They gave Christians the basis of their moral law in the shape of the Ten Commandments. They gave us the idea of the day of rest. The Pope was not uttering some divine exclamation when he called them "our revered elder brethren."

But how did they manage to survive? And how are they faring now that the Holocaust is over and the survivors are, to put it mildly, still a minority? How far are they still marked by the scars of history of such relentless vilification?

Victor Raskin, a man as close as anybody to the very core of the establishment in Great Britain, when asked whether he felt that at some stage the Jews might have to move from the country where they are now, he answered: "We of course don't want to leave. But how can we sit in the sun and have our feet in the snow?"

"The crucial factor in the survival of Judaism was the genius of the rabbis of old. In the long centuries after the Babylonian exile 2,500 years ago, they succeeded in creating a "shoe-proof" survival capsule for a religion whose followers had no firm land base and from the moment the Emperor Constantine became Christian were forbidden to swell the ranks of any other group. They had to create a survival mechanism that will enable our people to keep their faith and identity in the diaspora.

That involved a way of life "astonishing in its completeness". They did not want to live in the ghettos but they did want to be separate and different because their very survival depended on it. Otherwise they would have been swamped by the hostile majority cultures that surrounded them. The rabbis made sure that this did not happen. The Jews were told, through the dietary laws of kosher, the laws of marriage, and what was not. That, in itself, put an immense social barrier between themselves and non-Jews. They were told in the minutest detail how they should dress. They were told that every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after birth. And when they were brought in touch with the ten commandments of Moses, they were given no fewer than 613 "mitzvoth" to observe. The first "mitzva" was "to be fruitful and multiply" and that was why in the Jewish oral law there is no permitted sexual intercourse between a married man and woman who are not Jewish. The command to "be fruitful and multiply" is not a "mitzva". There was a virtual universal literacy from the time of Jesus. The lifestyle seemed far superior to any of the alternatives. So why would Jews want to start mixing with the barbarians?

The rabbinic tradition that enabled the Jews to survive is enshrined in the vast series of volumes that make up the Talmud, a key part of the Jewish Holy Writ. *Studying the Talmud* - says Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, a great Jewish scholar who is translating it from the original Aramaic into both Hebrew and English - "is the nearest thing we have to a Holy Communion. It is an act by which we are united to God."

Rabbinic Judaism was predicated on an "I will, you will, I won't, you won't" kind of millennia-old minimal morality which kept itself apart from the rest of society. It was not designed to cope with the sort of open society we have got now. In an open society you must, if you fall in love with a non-Jewish girl he meets at the university, what happens? What happens is that a huge proportion of Jewish youngsters in both Britain and America are now marrying out of the faith.

As a result, it has shrunk so dramatically in both countries - that many Jews fear for its future. Can Judaism, they wonder, survive tolerance and liberalism as successfully as it survived persecution?

"If we don't check the decline" - says Norman Lamm, President of the Yeshiva University in New York - "the story of the Jewish people could come to an end". Such are the voices of some of the Jewish leaders: "You can fight an enemy who persecutes you, but how can you fight a friend? They are killing us with kindness. Assassination is inexcusable and we shall lose our historical identity."

The statistics certainly look ominous. In America six out of ten Jews are marrying out. In Great Britain it is as many as two thirds - a massive, demographic devastation. In the fingers the Jewish community in Great Britain counted 450,000 souls, today it counts 260,000. In America they represent 2 percent of the population, half of what they represented 40 years ago. The Orthodoxy, Jews exclaim, in a crisis is upon us because many Jews "do not take their Jewishness seriously. The anti-Semitism obviously got it wrong. Instead of persecuting the Jews, which only one sort of upheaval can perpetuate Jewish identity, what they should have done was to embrace us".

The Jewish community is certainly not going to boost its numbers significantly by conversion, since joining its ranks is made incredibly difficult. Judaism is not and has never been a proselytising religion. "The religious element is the easy bit" - says Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain. "The risk, the plight of becoming Jewish is joining a people who have known a huge amount of suffering down the centuries. You have to ask yourself very seriously: do I want to be a part of that people? Because it is going to affect your children and grandchildren".

Jonathan Sacks confesses that he is sometimes driven to deep despair by his own community's lack of charity to itself. The Orthodoxy, he says, are "the chief executive of the Liberal Jews can be impassioned about the rights of the Palestinian, or the division is unbridgeable. This hostility is a greater threat to the future of the State of Israel than anything from the Arab world."

The rifts between the various factions in the Church of England seem, by comparison, no more than a hairline fracture. In the eyes of the Orthodoxy the "Liberal" and the "Reform" Jews strike at the very foundations of the Jewish faith. They bend the commandments to suit their convenience - this is immoral and undermines the whole system.

In Israel the Ultra-orthodox do not serve in the Army because that involves "secularisation" and the fact that men and women serve together runs counter to their way of life. Their spiritual leaders who encourage this demand that contact with the outside world could undermine that authority. Countering the approach that it is immoral to not share the burden of defence and rely on others to defend the state, is the claim that the study of the Torah provides as effective, or even more effective a defence than the Army.

The massive cost of maintaining the religious schools funded from the Exchequer and the Orthodox, as a political party which tips the balance of power, extracts this cost from the Exchequer to the last drop. There are more pupils in the "yeshiboths" in Israel than there were before the war in those schools in Poland and Lithuania. One might suspect that many of these students devote themselves to those studies in order to avoid marrying out of the faith. The majority see in this the fulfillment of a great ideal. It is one more cause of friction and resentment from the outside. An unprejudiced observer is driven to the melancholy conclusion that this is no longer one nation but a community at war with itself like no other (the Irish? the Poles?)

When one tries to form a view on these matters it is important to remember that when one talks of conflicts in other parts of the world - and, sadly, they abound - they are mainly about power, about money, about land, about its very existence, its outcome literally a matter of life and death.

A few hundred settlers, mainly from the United States, surrounded by millions of Palestinians are pitted against the Israeli Army. The Army is sometimes inclined to over-react against the excesses of Palestinian terrorism. This seriously affects Israel's standing. It loses a good deal of sympathy and support - the sentiments which were the pillars of its existence and growth.

When Israel was founded" - says one of the leaders - "we exchanged the anguish of powerlessness for the anguish of power. Israel is the testing ground to see if we can live by the Torah now that we have power. Power is potentially corrupting and we can go on being seen as an occupying force for ever. It corrupts us and saps our strength. We didn't come here to dominate other people. Israel was supposed to be a healthy alter-
My aunt Sheva was a girl of nineteen when she disappeared from our home in Lvov. She was my mother's younger sister and my special friend. She would tell me fairy stories; I got to know these so well that I would join in the telling.

Sheva was a pretty girl with blue eyes and blonde hair. Although her manner was quiet, before the outbreak of war, she had many friends with whom she would go camping in the woods outside her home town of Oswiecim.

In the autumn of 1939, we were living in Lvov in the Jewish ghetto under Russian occupation. Our home was in rooms on the top floor of an old house. In addition to my mother and me, and my aunt Sheva, our family included my mother's parents, then in their forties, my mother's brother and his wife, and their two children.

I do not remember what food we had during this period, but I do recall that I often ate porridge made with water.

From my point of view as a child, we seemed to live a normal life. My grandfather was in business with my uncle. We could go out each day, but there was a curfew at night.

On one occasion, my mother took me for a haircut. As I had behaved well at the barbers, my mother bought me a toy, a paper windmill on a stick (wiatrak) which revolved quickly in the slightest breeze.

Later that day, my mother had a photograph taken of me to send to my father. As she addressed the envelope to the Chief Rabbi, Jerusalem, Palestine. Amazingly, the photograph arrived safely and my father eventually received it. This was the only contact between my parents from September 1939 until they met again in November 1945.

We share the house with several other families, all of us using the kitchen and what other facilities there were. I cannot remember ever seeing a room other than the one where I slept in a cot while my mother slept beside me on the floor on a straw mattress. This room was also used as a living room by my family. So I could see and hear much of what went on.

From time to time, a group of Russian soldiers would come to the house for what we called a "revisita" - an inspection. In reality, they came to see what we could steal.

One afternoon when my grandfather and Sheva were sitting with me in our room, the others having gone out, three Russian soldiers came to the house. We could hear them as they went through the building, shouting and making a lot of noise.

Immediately Sheva lifted me up and placed me in the cot, making sure I had my doll and her clothes to play with. She then checked to see if the small parcel of jewellery was safe under my mattress next to the wall. This was the usual place, indeed the only place for hiding valuables or cash.

Whenever we had intruders, my mother would say to me, "Go on, cry!" Then she would tell the intruders, "The child has scarlatina. Keep away! It's very catching!" And she would point to my face, normally quite free of spots.

On this occasion, I was already too old to cry when the soldiers came bursting through the door. My grandfather left the room, returning immediately with food of some kind to give to the men.

The soldiers looked around, opening some drawers and lifting the cloth on the table. Then one of them noticed Sheva and said, "Ladna dziewczynka!" in Polish, meaning "Lovely girl!"

Sheva became most agitated and frightened, but she tried to smile and moved into a corner of the room to get as far away as possible from them.

They began to cluster around her, very excited, talking to her in Russian, touching her hair. Sheemoji.cowered with fear and was crying quietly when they led her out of the room. My grandfather had been trying to intervene and now ran after them, trying to hold onto Sheva to prevent her from leaving, but he was easily pushed away.

My grandfather began to groan and cry, swaying back and forth in pain, with me in his arms for comfort. When my mother and grandmother returned, as soon as they realised that Sheva had really been taken away, from us, they began to scream and wail, focussing their anger on my grandfather who was weeping helplessly.

"You should have gone with them!" they cried. And taken the child too! Had we not been at home, we would all have gone and Sheva would be safe."

Over the next few weeks, they went through the streets, calling her name. They knocked on doors to ask about her. They went to the Russian military headquarters to enquire about her. They scoured the area until late each night, ignoring the curfew.

Finally, after a long time, we were forced to accept that a great tragedy had befallen us; Sheva, my poor beautiful young aunt had been taken from us for ever.

My mother would often speak about her. Now there are only two other people who remember her.
RABBI MAJOR BARUCH STEINBERG
Henrietta Kelly

Baruch Steinberg, my father's brother, was the Chief Rabbi of the Polish Forces in the period between the two World Wars. He was a career soldier and chaplain to the Jewish soldiers, holding the rank of Major.

In September 1939, he was taken prisoner by the invading Russian army and held, together with other Polish officers, in three camps, Starobielsk, Kotielok and Orsha now in the forest of Katyn.

In the spring of 1940, in Starobielsk, he was executed by the Russian secret service, together with the Catholic priests, Alexandrowicz. He was only forty-one years old and as yet unmarried.

His tragic and premature death took place as part of the atrocity in the forest of Katyn when the Russian Army murdered 15,000 Polish officers with the intention of depriving the Polishing people of their leadership, both spiritual and military.

Until recently, little was known about this tragic event. The Russians who for a long time had blamed the Germans, have now finally admitted their guilt. That admission has opened up the possibility of research into this sad period of Jewish and Polish history.

The American historian, Dr Simon Schochet who has undertaken extensive research into this subject, has estimated that in the three camps the number of Jewish officers murdered was about 800.

In his paper "An attempt to identify the Polish Jewish prisoners in Katyn", which was part of the Holocaust Studies Programme at the Yeshiva University, Dr Schochet writes that these officers were professional men, doctors, lawyers, engineers, pharmacists and journalists.

He goes on to say, "When they served in the army, their religious rights, observance of Jewish holidays, prayer times, etc., were honoured, and they were ministered to by their chaplains, who were rabbis with full officiary rank. In this respect, their religious rights were equal to the ones afforded the Polish Christian soldiers. In many units, which were stationed near large Jewish communities, Jewish soldiers even had access to kosher food."

"Baruch Steinberg, this remarkable man" in Dr Schochet's words, was born into a family of rabbis, serving various communities in east Galicia, now in the Ukraine. His father, the communal rabbi of Przemyslany, a small near Lvov, had five sons, four of them rabbis and one a doctor, and three daughters who were active in the business world. Like all his younger siblings, Baruch was raised by his older sisters on the death of their mother.

For his Torah studies, he learnt with his father and older brothers. He also studied philosophy at the University of Lvov. As a learned rabbi on the one hand, and as a well educated Polish officer on the other, he was uniquely qualified to act in a representative role at official government functions.

The last news from Baruch was a letter to his brother, Moshe, asking him to send him a raincoat and rubber overshoes. Moshe's letters in reply were returned marked "Unknown". News of Baruch's death reached my father in the Middle East in 1941.

How ironic that those members of my father's family who survived the Shoah did so deep in Russia, having been deported by the Soviet army, whereas Baruch died a martyr's death at the hands of the Soviets as a Polish officer in the woods of Katyn.

A LONG WEIGHT
This article was written by Ben Helfgott and appeared in The Jewish Chronicle.

I recently went to the Ukraine as part of a small group representing the Claims Conference. We were there to observe the administration of Hesed - a network of community centres in the Ukraine supported by the American Joint Distribution Committee, World Jewish Relief, and others, including the Claims Conference, and staffed by volunteers.

The Hesed programme aims to revive Jewish life and strengthen communal identity, while answering to the basic needs of local residents.

The elderly Jews are the most vulnerable, living as they do well below subsistence level. Their savings were wiped out by inflation and they receive a pension of between 10 and 20 US dollars per month. Without the meals and food packages from Hesed, they would go hungry.

They live in apartments that beggar description. These people, for the most part, belonged to the professional and managerial class under the Communists. Their dignity and bearing are remarkable given the conditions in which they live. They never could have imagined that this would be their lot in their old age.

On the evening of our arrival, we were briefed by the director of Hesed. The course of his talk, he spoke about a man in desperate straits who had come to see him. The man said he had been a Soviet Union and World Champion weightlifter.

"In which sport?" I asked. "Weightlifting," was the reply - "my own sport.

"What was his name?" I enquired.

"Mazur," came the reply.

I told the director that this meant nothing to me. I knew of no weightlifting champion by that name.

The director said he would investigate the case a little further.

The following morning, when we met at the Kiev Hesed Avot Centre, the largest in the welfare organisation network, the director told me he had made a mistake. The name of the former champion was Pinchas Kirshon, and the director had arranged for us to meet at the centre.

I recognised the name instantly. I had met Kirshon (though he was not known as Pinchas then) in the summer of 1955 at the World Festival of Youth in Warsaw. He was, indeed, the featherweight weightlifting champion of both the USSR and the world. I struck up a warm friendship with him during my stay in Warsaw, but had not seen him since. He never appeared.

Picture taken at the World Festival of Youth, Warsaw August 1955 from left: Pinchas Kirshon, Ben Helfgott & Ivan Rybak.

Kiev October 2000 Pinchas Kirshon & Ben Helfgott.
at subsequent international championships.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Soviet weightlifters were among the best in the world—indeed, often any of the USSR's top three lifters in any weight class could have been world champions. Kirshon was a genuinely outstanding competitor.

I had often thought about him, and wondered where he happened to be. I never imagined we would meet under these circumstances. I was excited at the prospect of renewing our acquaintance.

When he arrived, we gazed at each other. We hadn't met for 45 years. In those days, we were both 23 years old. He weighed 132 lbs; I weighed 148. Now, he was a 168 lbs; I was around 180 lbs.

I had lost most of my hair, but he still had most of his, and looking at him, I could see traces of the young face which had encountered all those years ago. Still, I probably would not have recognised him had I passed him in the street.

I told him where we'd met and mentioned some of the members and officials of the Soviet weightlifting team who had been with us in Warsaw. His face lit up and he exclaimed, "Of course I remember you!"

It was a moving moment, not only for the two of us but also for my colleagues from the Claims Conference and for the Hesed volunteers and officials who happened to be present. Kirshon recalled when he had met, and said he had always remembered me. I guess because I had given him a Phillips electric shaver.

We spent some time together, and talked about how, in the past few years, his economic situation had worsened. His savings were wiped out by inflation in the early 1980s and, although he was reasonably fit, he could not work, as he had to look after his chronically ailing wife.

I thought of how, as a boy of 15 at the end of the war, I had been caught up in the pogroms in Theresienstadt. I was one of a group of a few hundred youngsters and there was talk that our liberators were prepared to take us to the USSR to give us the opportunity to make a fresh start in our lives. Fortunately, the British authorities also offered to admit us to Britain. I was offered with alacrity. I could not help wondering what would have happened if the British offer had not been forthcoming.

I have gone to the USSR— and might now be living under similar conditions to those of my old friend Pinchas Krishon. I have been drawn up with names of local Poles against whom the Jews had a grudge. My sister narrowly escaped the same fate by being absent, at the time of the assault on the "Jewish house" where they had all stayed together. In the end, however, I was Bricked. Incidentally, some of the 42 Kielce victims were also from Ostrowiec, including my childhood friend Bela Gertner whom I knew well as one of a handful of young survivors in my town. She had gone to nearby Kielce for Hachshara training prior to her departure to begin a new life in Eretz Israel. Bela was the sole survivor of her entire family. The day she was to leave, her mother had disappeared. The liberation was a cruel twist of fate. A more obscene crime is hard to imagine.

My sister had several more narrow escapes at the hands of the Poles. On one occasion, she was denounced by her concierge and ended up in the infamous Aleja Szucha Gestapo headquarters in Warsaw in 1943, from where she miraculously emerged. The Gestapo officer ordered her release in spite of the condemnation by the Polish interpreter during her interrogation. The Germans often went by the book, my sister had good papers and the "Aryan" looks to match. But the Pole knew better—they had an intuitive sense of perception.

Felix states provocatively that "Before casting a stone, it's as well to pause and think what one would have done had one been in its place. This example from the Gospels is, in this instance, both insensitive and hypothetical. One may deduce from this that we would have acted no better than the Polish and it also implies that we would have committed similar wrongs, had roles been reversed. The contentment is not about what the Poles failed to do, but rather about what they did.

The fact that several thousand righteous Poles were justly honoured in Jerusalem does not mitigate the ugly deeds perpetrated by countless other Poles who set about denouncing, blackmailing and actively assisting the Nazis in purging their country of its Jews. And worst of all, after the liberation, they still did not have in their hearts to show any compassion to the small remnant and again set about to finish where Hitler had left off. And not just in Kielce, which is often cited, but all over Poland where no town was free of attacks against returnees. Some were even pushed out of speeding trains to stop them reaching their former homes. In my own town, Ostrowiec, including my child- fend regarding their shameful past.

However, the Jews are not longer of any use to them, they butchered them in a most gruesome manner, running them through with pitchforks. Then, several heads were dumped against the Lager fence in a grisly display of hatred to the Jews and their headless, lacerated bodies were ditched either side of the road.

As the Ostrowiec Lager was being liquidated ahead of the Russian advance at the end of July 1944, my sister's fiancé Shaul Rapaport managed to escape. As he was making his way across town, he was recognised by local people who first beat him mercilessly and then dragged him to the Gestapo where he was murdered. The streets of Poland were not safe for Jews, not so much because of the Germans but because of the Poles. The Germans were gullible enough to believe that Jews were only to be found in ghettos, but many Jews were indistinguishable from Poles anyway.

Earlier in 1943, several young men from our ghetto made contact with a Polish resistance group operating in the area. Each was required to pay a hefty sum for the privilege of joining this partisan unit and also towards
the purchase of their arms. On the designated day, they were guided to an underground bunker in a wood. Having first handed over their money, ostensibly in exchange for guns, they were then treacherously killed by being blown up with hand grenades tossed through the open door of the bunker and were thus entombed in their dugout. Another cousin of mine, Meier Berman, was amongst them.

There was another similar atrocity in Poland against an even larger group, also deceitfully killed in cold blood. They had fallen into the hands of a murderous Arno Krajowa gang who were viciously anti-Jewish. Incredibly, one Sholome Zwiegman survived the execution and, feigning death, managed to make his way back to the bunker and, after closing the door, screamed to the public, "They lied in their garage and, feigning death, they would open fresh wounds in Polish-Jewish acrimony."

I would have thought there is no time limit on publishing the truth, however embarrassing it may be to some.

Felix is also surprised that he had not heard of the Jedwabne atrocity before. Many crimes are forgotten because dead witnesses cannot speak and these would have only been known to the people of that area in the first place. It is certainly not in the Poles' interests to bring their ignominious deeds to public attention. Only recently, I myself have become aware of another Polish outrage which I am pretty certain Felix would not have heard of either. In the summer of 1941, the Polish Army was nearing the Vistula, the villagers of Masow and Myniek, near Deblick, fell upon and massacred 64 frail and pitiful camp prisoners, who had escaped from a moving train speeding west towards Czestochowa.

It is significant that the murder-mans Jedwabne pogrom occurred early in July 1941, soon after the Germans entered Russian-occupied Poland and long before the decision had been taken to implement the Final Solution. Pogroms swept easily through all Jewish areas, but the Germans arrived there in the summer of 1941. Apart from Jedwabne, these took place in Grajewo, Radziwilow, Wasosz all in the region of the Second Polish Republic. If the Poles had not murdered or burnt alive by their neighbours. The Jedwabne Poles asked the Germans for guns to 'do the job' which was refused. Ironically, some Jews of Jedwabne, writes Jan Gross, survived because they happened to be at the German gendarmerie at the time of the massacre and others ran to the Germans for protection. Even the Germans recoiled in disgust at this horrific butchery. Their role was limited to taking photographs for propaganda purposes to depict how Poles treated their Jews! According to Jan Gross, a stone inscription was erected in Jedwabne during the Communist era, which propagated the false and absurd idea that 1600 Jedwabne Jews were murdered by the Nazis. A different stone inscription was erected then again after 1989, in post-Communist Poland, which is even more significant. This refers only to the memory of 180 people, including 2 priests, who were murdered in the district between 1939 and 1956 by the NKVD, the Nazis and Polish secret police. It entirely ignores the massacre of the Jews by their own government. Is the idea that the new Poland some would have us embrace?

This brings me to the main subject of the 'Big Theme' as to why the Germans built all the death-camps on the Polish side of the border. Felix maintains the that reason was simply a question of logistics and proven beyond doubt... And to corroborate this theory, he says it was where the majority of the victims lived. How can this be right when in fact, only half of the six million were Polish Jews! His argument does not stand up to close scrutiny... The Poles did not do things willy-nilly and without careful planning. Surely, it would have been far more efficient (something the Germans approved of) to have placed mass-murder facilities in other countries. One could, however, concede that Auschwitz was strategically situated, but it only accounted for less than one quarter of the victims. Why have millions of victims cross the whole of Europe, thereby diverting much needed rolling-stock from the war effort? The Nazis had ready available facilities within Germany from before the war and all that was needed was the instalation of crematoria. Or why not the odd camp in other countries, for example, in Poland? If logistics were the primary reason, it makes no sense at all to transport German and western European Jewry to Poland or, for instance, send Dutch Jews to distant Sobibor in eastern Poland? This is poor logistics. No, the real reason cannot be just logistics. The fact is, Hitler and his henchmen did not want the death-camps on German soil nor anywhere else in western Europe. Contrary to the usual school of thought, it has been established that Hitler's opinion, with a few exceptions, was to exterminate all Jews in Europe, and that is precisely what the Nazis were able to do when the local population was subdued to public opinion. The stench from the crematoria and the red sky at night, evident for miles around, could not have been kept secret from the population within the Reich for long, but in Poland it would not matter. This may rankle the Poles, but the fact remains that Poland was chosen as the killing ground.

Felix Scharl is wide off the mark again when he says "the Germans were not in the least concerned with the feelings or the reaction of the local population". He is certainly right in relation to Poland and that is precisely why Hitler built the death-camps, whereas in the Baltic countries (with the exception of the Baltic countries where local people initially assisted in the massacres) were crimes committed openly as they were in Poland. German Aktion all over Poland, people were shot in the streets by the tens of thousands, in full view of the local population. The
A REPLY TO THE ARTICLE BY RUBIN KATZ

From Jerzy Lando

Jerzy was born in Lodz and during the war lived in the Lodz ghetto, Warsaw ghetto and then on the Arany side. His book "Saved By My Face" is due to be published.

I am a survivor of the Holocaust. With my par- ents I found myself in the Warsaw Ghetto in the late autumn of 1940. By the time I escaped from it in September 1942, two months after the start of the liquidation of the Ghetto, some 80% of its population were already deported to the death camps. From then onwards I lived under false papers on the "Aryan side" and this is how I survived. My father and most of my family and friends did not survive the slaughter and I would not be surprised to hear that my father was a victim of denunciation by a Pole. The purpose of this article is not a desire to whitewash the Poles or to deny Polish anti-Semitism. I just want to place the events the author describes in the right perspective. I also want to reject his self-assumed role as a spokesman for the Polish Jewish community. It is not for him to say what "we" owe to the victims of the Nazis, nor is it up to him to choose the time when the bridges between the Jews and the Poles will be rebuilt.

The controversy over the role of the Poles in assisting the Nazis to destroy the entire Jewish community will run for as long as the remaining survivors are alive. There is hardly a survivor who has not concluded, at least once, that "smolcownik" - a Polish blackmailer. They were people at the margin of society, the criminals and the morally weak, looking for a quick buck. There were also the Jews-haters. To Mr Rubin Katz it was "clearly evident that the vast majority of Poles were grateful to Germans for ridding their homes of Jews from Jews". This was not evident to me. What an irresponsible and inflammatory use of the words "majority" and "evidently"! I happened to spend this morning as an onlooker at the Highgate Magistrates Court and found that all those I saw accused of selling drugs were Jews. Did I conclude that the vast majority of drug dealers are Jews? No, because I had conjured up in my imagination.

In spite of the good offices of some well-meaning people who seek to mend fences and wipe the face of Poland, in my opinion and that of many visitors to Poland, the rank and file has not changed much in the last fifty years.

The Poles are proud that they were the only people in occupied Europe who did not co-operate with the German occupiers. Who among them is a greater crime? The illiterate men inspired, like the generations before them, by the teaching of the Church who taught them that Jews had crucified Christ and had been using Christian blood for Passover matzos, who then kill the Jews with their own hands, or the highly cultured politicians like General Petain and his many Vichy henchmen, that contended with one stroke of pen tens of thousands of Jews for death? In her recently published book Long Shadows Anna Paris tells us that many French Jews were murdered in a death camp located in the French soil. What supports your statement that "Nazis" chose Poland as an "ideal killing ground?" It was the French and not Polish policemen that delivered volumes of thousands of Jews to the Germans, knowing that they would be sent to their deaths. Would that make France deserve the author's epithet as an "ideal killing ground"? As for the controversy over the erection of a plaque to commemorate the butcher, the French and Jews in Jedwabne, Mr Katz might ponder on the plaque in memory of the Jews who handed over to the Germans by the French having been placed inside an old fur factory in Vichy that nobody ever visits (as described in the recent BBC programme on Vichy France). The author's bias leads him to an illogical answer to what he calls the main subject of Felix's article: "why did the Germans build the death camps on Polish soil"? He won't accept the simple fact that there was no greater concentration of Jews anywhere in Europe than in Poland - over 10% of the country's population - and that Poland was home to over 40% of European Jewry. Mr Katz prefers to think that Hitler was so concerned about the German public opinion, that he decided to erect concentration camps in Poland, where nobody but the heartless Poles would know anything about their existence. He ought to be ashamed, since there were hundreds of thousands of Germans living and serving within the pre-war Polish borders, capable of sending the Germans had no inhibitions or constraints there whatsoever. It was a situation, however, that the vast majority of Poles were grateful to them for ridding their country of its Jews and it also gave them an opportunity to enrich themselves by taking part in the exploitation of the Poles, by widespread plunder and by taking over so-called "leerower" properties.

In post-communist Poland, however, has heaped upon ex-members of the Armia Krajowa. The present Government even has the gall to chutzpah to seek the extradition of some Jews from Israel and England who may have had a hand in the prosecution of nationalist elements who in earlier times were probably also guilty of killing Jews. These officials whom they now wish to put on trial, were after all part of their own former administration and judiciary, comprising countless Poles, but of course they would change their tune with a few Jews. Would the present Polish administration be equally intent on taking steps to indict Poles who had a hand in the killing of Jews during and after the war? Perhaps they would consider putting on trial two notorious wartime Polish policemen in Ostrowiec, Kazacznik and Bomblem, who guided German police and death-camp units to likely hiding places, resulting in many Jews being flushed out of their hide-outs and shot on the spot. I also have a testimony, I recorded when in Poland, from an honest and scrupulous woman in Ostrowiec, naming a local forest ranger who deceitfully had a house signed "Poles" in payment for hiding a Jewish family he later murdered. He still lives in that house in full knowledge and maybe even with tacit approval of my comrade. The dear old woman referred sardonically to such people as Nasze Polacy, our Poles.

I found myself in Warsaw with my older sister during the uprising August 1944. We had been seized and were being escorted at gunpoint by Waffen-SS guards, out of the Warsaw inferno, but this time as "free Polacks" in hundreds of others. We passed the vicinity of Wola where the streets were littered with leaflets. The Germans warned us not to pick them up, but the bold caption in Polish caught our eyes and I could not resist doing so. My sister and I were shocked to the core by what we read:

CITIZENS OF WARSAW!
We are fighting for a FREE POLAND
A Poland without Germans, Jews and Russians

I quickly threw away the leaflet without reading any further, but it was Poland being bledding and Warsaw was dying. The uprising was being crushed ruthlessly and the capital levelled to the ground. This really was the Poles' darkest hour and yet they thought it imperitive to denigrate the Jews, even though they were fully aware that by then virtually all of Polish Jewry had been wiped out. And worse still, they had rounded up and killed some Jews taking part in the uprising. Others found on as coverts Jews and died in the rubble of Warsaw as unknown Poles. I know all along about this hardly known, atrocious crime and I am pleased to see that, at last, Jan Gross mentioned it in his book.

At the behest of my children who were to replace my steps, we went on a reluctant trip to Poland in 1992. The people I came across in my hometown adopted a hostile and even aggressive attitude. It was then we tried to turn an interest. Furthermore, when I approached the Municipality for some information, I was told that all records had been destroyed during the war, but a non-Jew managed to obtain for me what I requested.

I would like to finish on a lighter note which is, nevertheless, rather illuminating. During a visit to Poland, I took my family to a brickyard in Ostrowiec. I approached the gatekeeper and asked him for permission to go inside which he, rather reluctantly, granted. I could easily, knowing the complex well, find my way in and out again unseen, as I did during the war. The astonished gatekeeper immediately phoned the director for instructions. I could not of course hear what the director was asking, but the gatekeeper's reply in Polish was: "No, he has no heart, No Sir, he looks quite normal and is dressed like a Pole". The Kierownik then personally appeared at the gatehouse to meet me... I suppose to see for himself the Lieber had conjured up in his imagination.

In spite of the good offices of some well-meaning people who seek to mend fences and wipe the face of Poland, in my opinion and that of many visitors to Poland, the rank and file has not changed much in the last fifty years.
horrific news to the Fatherland.
What about the concentration camps in Neuengamme, Ravensbruck, Sachsenhausen, Belsen, Grossrossen, Mittelbau-dora, Buchenwald, Flossenbek, Dachau, Stuthof, Mauthausen being located right from the birth of the Nazi regime in the heart of Germany and Austria? Was their existence and the savage treatment of their inmates hidden from the German people? Felix Sharf’s invitation to think what one would have done oneself under the circumstances prevailing in Poland is not insensitive, as the author chooses to call it. Would the author put his own and his family’s lives at risk by helping a fugitive Pole pleading for shelter? This may be a “hypothetical question” (to use the author’s words), but most relevant to his assessment of Poles.

The author dismisses any reference to over five thousand “righteous Poles” (as compared with only 327 Germans) honoured by Yad Vashem for risking their lives to save the Jews. I personally owe my life to four such Poles and I only succeeded to get two honoured in this way. For every Jew that survived there were a hundred that did not. None of the dead wrote to Yad Vashem and most survivors never bothered to write about the “Righteous Gentiles” to whom they owed their lives. For every one Pole honoured in Yad Vashem there must be many more that are not represented there.

As for the post-communist Poland where I spent at least nine months over a period of four years from 1993 to 1997 working in a professional capacity, I recall two events, in strong contrast with the author’s unfortunate experience.

During the commemoration in April 1993 of the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto rising, I heard in the Nozyk Synagogue the Archbishop of Warsaw. In purple robe, a purple skullcap covering his head, his face exuding warmth and sympathy, he said: “As Catholics, we must understand the meaning of this event for us and for the future generations. We must pray to God that we may draw the right conclusions and the lesson we have learned is that we have all been blessed together as the sons of Abraham so that we shall become a source of blessing for others.” He recited a Psalm: ‘... As I walk and look I see that no one cares for me, no one asks about me, I call for help but no one listens. Hear my cries, save me from those that persecute me and are stronger than I.’ He ended with the words: ‘To all those present here I say Shalom, my words of respect.

In Ostrowiec Swietokrzyski, the frequently quoted background of the author’s gruesome narrative, I was privileged to visit in 1996 an exhibition in the local museum that depicted in photographs, writings and artifacts the prewar history of the Jewish population of the town and its valuable contribution to the local community. It was organised by Poles.

I suggest Mr Katz should try to come to terms with his own and what he knows of his friends’ painful experiences at the hands of the Poles. Unless he is a historian in search of truth for truth’s sake, he might be better off not to delve into further revelations of atrocities that took place more than half a century ago. They will only stoke the fire of his bitterness without helping anybody. May I also suggest that he should at least avoid provoking countless human beings to get at each other’s throats, in order to gratify his predilections. This is particularly important, when the two peoples are embarking on a journey of reconciliation. How will such incitement help anybody? And ascribing prejudices to Felix sounds like pot calling kettle black.

ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND
MR ALEKSANDER KWAŚNIEWSKI
JEDWABNE, 10 JULY 2001

Dear Ambassador of Israel,
Dear Rabbi Baker,
Dear Representatives of Jewish Milieu,
Dear Mr. Mayor,
Dear Residents of Jedwabne,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Countrymen!

Sixty years ago, on 10 July 1941, crime was committed against Jews on this land, at that time conquered and occupied by the Nazi Germany.
This was a dreadful day.
A day of hatred and cruelty.

We know much about this crime, though not yet everything.
Maybe we will never learn the whole truth.
But this has not prevented us from being here today.
To speak in an open voice.
We know enough to stand here in truth - facing pain, cry and suffering of those who were murdered here;
Face to face with the victims’ families who are here today;
Before the judgement of our own conscience.

This was a particularly cruel crime.

It is justified by nothing.
Among the victims, among the burned there were women, there were children.
Petrifying cry of people closed in the barn and burned alive continues to haunt the memory of those who witnessed the crime.

The victims were helpless and defenceless.
The criminals had a sense of being unpunished since German occupants incited them to such acts.

We know with all the certainty that Poles were among the oppressors and assassins.
We cannot have any doubts - here in Jedwabne citizens of the Republic of Poland died from the hands of other citizens of the Republic of Poland.
It is people to people, neighbours to neighbours who forged such destiny.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
At that time - sixty years ago - Poland was to be wiped off from the map of Europe.
There were no Polish authorities in Jedwabne.
The Polish state was unable to protect its citizens against the crime committed with the Nazi permission, at Nazi inspiration.
But the Republic of Poland should persist in the Polish hearts and mind.
And the standards of a civilised state, the state with ages-old traditions of tolerance and amicable co-existence of nations and religions were binding and should be binding on its citizens.

Those who took part in the bloody campaign, beat, killed and set fire - committed crime not only against their Jewish neighbours. They are also guilty towards the Republic of Poland, its great history and glorious traditions.

Ladies and Gentlemen
We are standing on a tormented land. The name Jedwabne, by a tragic ordain of fate had become for its today's citizens a byword recalling to human memory the ghosts of fratricide.

It is not only in Jedwabne that superstitious prejudice was enkindled into the murderous flame of hatred in the "furnace era."

Death, grief and suffering of the Jews from Jedwabne, from Radzilow and other localities; all these painful events which cast a gloomy shadow on Poland's history are the responsibility of the perpetrators and instigators. We cannot speak of collective responsibility burdening with guilt the citizens of any other locality or the entire nation.

Every man is responsible only for his own acts. The sons do not inherit the sins of the fathers. But can we say: that was long ago, they were different?

The nation is a community. Community of individuals, community of generations. And this is why we have to look the truth in the eye. Any truth.

And say: it was, it happened. Our conscience will be clear if memories of those days will for ever evoke awe and moral indignation.

We are here to make a collective self-examination. We are paying tribute to the victims and we are saying - never again.

Let us all be the citizens of Jedwabne today. Let us feel what they felt. Let us remain with them in a common sense of grievance, despair, shame and solidarity. Cain could have killed Abel anywhere. Any community could have been tried in the same way. The trial of evil, but also of good. Of meanness and nobility.

Righteous is the one who was able to demonstrate compassion in the face of human suffering. How many Poles - also inhabitants of the neighbourhood also residents of Jedwabne - deserve to be called righteous! Let us recall all of them today with greatest gratitude and with highest respect.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
Thanks to the great nation-wide debate regarding this crime committed in 1941, much has changed in our lives in the year 2001, the first year of the new millennium. Today's Poland has courage to look into the eyes of the truth about a nightmare which darkened one of the chapters in its history.

We have become aware of the responsibility for our attitude towards the dark pages in our history. We have understood that a disservice is done to the nation by those renouncing the past such attitude leads to a moral self-destruction.

We, who have gathered here, with all the people in our country who have clear and sensitive conscience, with the lay and religious moral authorities consolidating our adherence to basic values, paying homage to the memory of the murdered and most deeply deploiring the despicable perpetrators of the crime, give expression to our pain and shame, we manifest our determination to learn the truth courage to overcome, the evil past firm will of understanding and agreement.

For this crime we should beg the souls of the dead and their families for forgiveness. This is why today, as the citizen and as the President of the Republic of Poland, I beg pardon. I beg pardon in my own name and in the name of those Poles whose conscience is shattered by that crime.

In the name of those who believe that one cannot be proud of the glory of Polish history without feeling, at the same time, pain and shame for the evil done by Poles to others.

Dear Gathered,
I wish with all my heart that I wish with all my heart that the name of this village not only evokes memories of the crime but that it acts as a signal for self-examination and becomes a venue for reconciliation.

Polish bishops prayed on 27 May "for all those who harbour animosity and resentment towards the Jewish nation that they accept a change in their hearts with good grace". These words express only too well the feelings of a great part of the Poles.

May, then this change occur. Let us spare not effort for it!

The tragedy which took place here cannot be annihilated. Evil cannot be wiped out; suffering cannot be forgotten.

The truth about what happened will not redress what happened. The truth is not so potent. But only truth - even the most aching and painful - will allow to purify the wounds of the memory.

This is the hope that we cherish.

This is what we are here for today. We are saying today the words of sorrow and pain, not only because this is a must for human decency, but not only because others expect us to, not because it will be a compensation for the murdered, not because the world is listening.

We are saying these words because this is what we feel. Because we ourselves. need them most of all. We are doing it too.

To be better, stronger with moral strength, free from prejudice, animosities and hatred. To respect and to love men.

To turn a wrong into a right.
C lose your eyes, and try and imagine this place as it was more than sixty years ago. The sun was shining, the market square was bustling, the carriages tied to the horses and the children playing in the market place. Jedwabne - this beautiful town, where Poles and Jews lived together. Jedwabne was, so typical of the Poland of those days - a colourful and alluring world, and a place where Polish and Yiddish were almost interchangeable.

This reality - this era of Jewish life came to an abrupt and shocking end, on a tragic summer's day, exactly sixty years ago. People who lived together with the Jews of Jedwabne, these people, who had survived the Holocaust, those who had emerged "in changeable," as they were called in Yiddish, were also of other barns where Jews lived together indistinguishably from the local barn, before slaughtering and burning them alive. It is this fact which makes this event so utterly brutal, shocking, painful and distressing.

I, Professor Shevach Weiss, Israel's Ambassador to Poland, was, of course, aghast at the brave actions of their Polish neighbours - courageous and noble people.

I have come here to this valley of tears, in order to severely condemn this evil massacre, and in order to emphasise the fact that no-one will be able to bring our victims back to life. I know that there will never be many courageous Poles who, out of a sense of historic justice, have taken it upon themselves to research this appalling event. I am certain that when the research and investigation is completed, the memorial stone here will contain the full truth of what happened in Jedwabne, terrible though it may be. In this way, justice will finally be done to the victims of Jedwabne.

In this very place and at this particular time, I would like to make an appeal to all fair-minded and decent people throughout the world, and especially to the young generation of Poland and Jedwabne, specifically, let us campaign together and act with determination against any manifestation of anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, evil and cruelty. In this way, we will be able to build a better world, where the sanctity of life and individual freedom are sacrosanct.

May God help us in this noble mission.

THE SPEECH OF PROFESSOR SHEVAH WEISS AMBASSADOR OF ISRAEL TO POLAND

10 July, Jedwabne

The Honourable President, The Honourable Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen.

This speech is an attempt to reflect the sorrow and the resurrection of the spirit of the Polish people, who, as was the case with the Jews of Jedwabne, lived together. These people, who had actually walked through a closer and more fundamental experience of life and its deep philosophical and religious aspects, lived to tell the story of their experiences. They were survivors of the Holocaust, the most terrible event in human history.

I have come here today, on behalf of the State of Israel - a country which represents a rebirth and renewal as well as a reflection of the fortitude of the Jewish people. Living among us also are Holocaust survivors whose lives were saved as a result of the brave actions of their Polish neighbours - courageous and noble people.

I have come here to this valley of tears, in order to severely condemn this evil massacre, and in order to emphasise the fact that no-one will be able to bring our victims back to life. I know that there will never be any courageous Poles who, out of a sense of historic justice, have taken it upon themselves to research this appalling event. I am certain that when the research and investigation is completed, the memorial stone here will contain the full truth of what happened in Jedwabne, terrible though it may be. In this way, justice will finally be done to the victims of Jedwabne.

In this very place and at this particular time, I would like to make an appeal to all fair-minded and decent people throughout the world, and especially to the young generation of Poland and Jedwabne, specifically, let us campaign together and act with determination against any manifestation of anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, evil and cruelty. In this way, we will be able to build a better world, where the sanctity of life and individual freedom are sacrosanct.

May God help us in this noble mission.

CELEBRATING LIFE - A COMMENT ON THE MONTEFIORE MEMORIAL LECTURE

By Ramsay Homa

Last March, the annual Montefiore Memorial Lecture was given by the Chief Rabbi, Dr Jonathan Sacks, to a well-attended gathering of survivors, their families and friends, at the Hendon Synagogue. It was introduced by his Honour Judge Israel Finestone. The Chief Rabbi's topic was the title of his latest book, "Celebrating Life".

It is about an occasion when I was at the audience of survivors on the celebration of life and its sources of happiness. Dr Sacks had almost certainly faced something of a dilemma. On the one hand, all survivors had actually walked through the valley of the shadow of death - and lived! - 'celebrating life' must surely have a particularly positive resonance for them. Fortunately, not within the experience of the rest of us. On the other hand, notwithstanding their incredible courage and resilience, there remained the delicate and unanswerable issue of unhealed wounds; most of these same survivors had been torn from parents and childhood; had endured years, even decades of horror and hardship, and all the while shouldering the burden of that discomfiting and unanswerable question, "Where was God?" What might 'celebrating life' mean to them?

But just as a problem actually existed, it evaporated with Dr Sacks's opening remarks. By confiding to his audience that his book had emerged "in response to my mother's persistence that I please write something she can understand," the tone was set for an engaging discourse on happiness and how and where it might touch our lives.

It was no surprise to learn that the proffered route was through a clearer and deeper commitment to faith, for the surprise was that the Chief Rabbi focussed primarily not on faith as in religion or God, but on faith in one's fellow man. And although he made a tangential reference to Scripture showing that whereas God's first reaction on creating man was that for man to be alone was not good, this was really in the nature of a professional aside. Pragmatically, said Dr Sacks, living alone or aloof with market-stimulated props of fast cars and designer clothes was no substitute for the warmth of human friendship from which spring both momentarily and lasting forms of happiness.

In a relaxed manner, punctuated with intentionally exaggerated bursts of stentorian speech, Dr Sacks embarked on a series of verbally painted events, mainly from his personal experience, to illustrate a theme which, with its legendary fluency and an unexpected repertoire of jokes and humour, won him the rapt attention of the audience.

He proposed that happiness was essentially derived from the giving of oneself, from not taking events or the actions of others for granted; for making commitments and sticking to them. Achieving this, he went on, might involve considerable introspection and sometimes a thorough realignment of values, but if this resulted in friendship and trust being shown to others, and gratitude, when due, being articulated as an overt manifestation of appreciation, it would not only produce a sense of inner contentment but also result in reciprocity and the mutuality of a relationship as a potential fountain of happiness.

It was a philosophy that rekindled memories of Rousseau's Social Contract and more recently, Amitai Etzioni's culture of Communitarianism, but Dr Sacks offered an additional dimension: that real personal relationships evincing a faith built on trust, an understanding of the needs of others and the expression of thanks for even simple acts of kindness, let alone to God for the gift of life, lead not only to a higher level of happiness but ultimately to the awareness of an inner spiritual dimension.

The Chief Rabbi did not speak to, but rather with the audience, composed mainly of survivors and their offspring, that figuratively embraced and took him to its collective heart. He came across as the man he is presented, intellectually impressive, warm, caring, spiritual, and in terms of Jewish stereotypes, quite unique, because while his broad approach to scholarship and the quest for knowledge were seemingly fuelled by Rabbi Sampson Raphael Hirsch's doctrine of "Torah im Derech Erez" - the pursuit of both Jewish and secular learning - he imbues depth and reality in the spirit and spirituality that flow from Lubavitch, whose philosophy actually fours on secular study.

It may be that these two contradictory yet paradoxically complementary sources of energy, one directing the mind and the other the soul, can cause discomfort and consternation when inadvertently blended to an imperfect mixture, but certainly last March such an eventuality was not in evidence. The Chief Rabbi's meaning indeed, though light-hearted in presentation, was refreshing, stimulating and thought-provoking.

I came away from the gathering with a few disconnected lines from Rudyard Kipling, (a pity he was such an anti-semite), flitting in and out of my mind: "...walk with kings, nor lose the common touch..." All men count with dignity, Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet. Last we forget..." I felt a warm and pleasant surge of body and soul; not exactly happiness, but rather celebrating life!
SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION

I

SPEECH BY NĀOMI GRYN ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE BOOK "CHASING SHADOWS" AT THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

Naomi is a writer and film producer and is the daughter of Jacky and the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn.

him sad - like the painful rift which erupted amongst Jews in Britain after he died and the apparent collapse of the peace process in the Middle East. But other changes would have given him great pleasure - particularly the arrival of three new grandsons (Zaki, was born just as this paperback edition was going to the typesetters and I held up production until the last possible moment so that his name could be included in the Acknowledgements along with his four cousins!)

Fifteen years later, having ensured that the film we made together for Channel Four in 1989 reached as wide an audience as possible, with the book publication of "Chasing Shadows" in paperback - a bargain at £6.99! - my job is nearly done. Actually tonight feels rather like my leaving party and I am confident that my father's account is finally in responsible hands.

Of course there was a time when the Holocaust was perceived as a paradox of mostly Jewish interest. Then, in 1995, the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz was commemorated in Britain with considerable public attention. In my mind, that's when the Holocaust belatedly began its formal integration into British consciousness as the universal story of how, under the cover of war, one group of people had senselessly murdered another group, while the rest of the world stood by and did almost nothing. The Holocaust is an awful bloodstain on European history and we all have to come to terms with it.

It was the same year that I first heard about the permanent Holocaust exhibition that was going to be installed here at the Imperial War Museum. My father was asked to join its advisory committee and I went with him to see the exhibition that launched the project. There have been a number of events since his death in 1996 which would have made of choosing who will go to the gas chambers and who will be deemed fit to serve the German war effort as a slave labourer and thus enter the lottery for survival.

Frozen in time, the tiny figures progress towards a stairway that descends into a gas chamber. Disembodied voices describe the chaotic scene that greeted new arrivals to Auschwitz. I was suddenly aware of my father again, recounting how, as he got off the train in Birkenau, he was approached by a man dressed in striped pyjamas whom he thought might be an inmate from a local lunatic asylum. The man spoke in Yiddish: "You're eighteen and you have a trade". By the time my father reached the selection table, he had prepared his lie. He claimed that he was nineteen and that he was a carpenter and joiner. On the side of the sculpture the same story is repeated in text, thanking for posterity the nameless prisoner whose courageous act saved my father's life.

As I reached the end of the exhibition - where Stephen Rubin has lovingly dedicated a statuette of Raoul Wallenberg to my father - I found myself wishing that I'd been at an exhibition about the history of comedy perhaps, listening to my dad telling some of his favourite jokes. I wouldn't have complained even if I'd heard the punch lines a million times before. Instead, his recollection of how he'd once seen grown men throwing live babies into ovens burns through my head like a poison. I would gladly expunge such images from collective memory, but amnesia is not a viable option.

The spectacles of David Irving flaunting his ugly brand of race hatred through the Royal Courts of Justice last year - and claiming that the Nazi's systematic murder of Jews was a Jewish conspiracy - is still fresh in everyone's mind. Unanimously the British press reported the judge's ruling on the Irving trial as a victory against bigotry, but in a tasteless parody of fascist slogans from the 1930s, newspaper headlines about anti-Semitism in Britain have become blantly xenophobic. Since the dead can only scream in silence, regrettably, the testimony of
firsthand witnesses about the catastrophic consequences of racism still needs to be heard.

I have here my father's centerfold, a signed picture, endorsed by the Immigration Office in Preston on 19th February 1946 when he was just 15 years old but had already been to hell and back. He is Minister of Labour and National Service, and that he emigrates from the U.K. at the earliest opportunity." On page 10 it reports that Hugo was leaving (or America on 28th November 1950.) He was on his way to Cincinnati to train for the rabbinate and only attempted to acquire British citizenship in 1992 when he was made a Commander of the British Empire. Since then, he returned to Britain as rabbi of the West London Synagogue. I once every time I read about the detention centres in which creative men and women languish unproductively while our Home Office determines who may stay and who must go. I like to think that immigrants like my father and the rest of the group of child survivors with whom he came to Britain are the best evidence that newcomers are often motivated to become exemplary citizens. In a speech made to Jewish Council for Racial Equality on asylum not long before his death, he candidly admitted: "How you are to people to whom you owe nothing is a signal. It is the critical signal that we give to our young, and I hope and pray that this test we shall not fail." The thoughtful, often diverting video loops which navigate visitors through the exhibition were made by James Barker and Annie Dodds. They wanted to include archive recordings of my father's book but the interview he had filmed with other Holocaust survivors. Luckily they were able to use clips from a programme my father made in 1995, part of a series made for the Foreign Office about immigrants who have made a success of their lives in Britain. They also unearthed a programme made for BBC TV’s "Light of Experience" in 1978 which they shared with me. It brought back vivid memories of how, as a wayward teenager, I had announced that I wanted to work in broadcasting. Religious broadcasting, actually. A few weeks later, eager to encourage this newfound ambition, my father brought me with him to the BBC's studios in White City for the recording. I sat with the technicians while he spoke publicly for the first time about his family's deportation to Auschwitz, both of us unaware that twenty years later I would use some of his script to complete 'Chasing Shadows'. This is how the book begins in "Chasing Shadows":

In the Book of Exodus, when the Children of Israel left Egypt after a long period of degradation, the Passover Service was instituted with the injunction that 'of that day you shall tell your children. Well, we who are older are trying to say something to you who are younger and it is this: that you are now comfortable in your home and not condemned to being slave labourers. And you can read any book that you like and not one ordered by a propaganda minister. That you can worship where and how you like. Which is to say that you have freedom to think on your own without government. Live your own life. But there are still so many prisons. Of poverty and of ignorance, of loneliness and being abandoned, of political tyrannies and religious fanaticism, bars around people made of racism, wounds inflicted by the bars of intolerance and bigotry - all of them betrayals of humanity. Human rights are either the rights of all men or else they become a meaningless facade for a bankrupt conscience. Civil liberties are an empty slogan unless they guarantee every citizen freedom of opportunity to work where his talents best suit him, to live wherever he may choose and to retain equal partnership in the brotherhood of man.

Those who survive a tragedy such as the Holocaust cannot keep silent, but must do everything in their power to testify to the world, that the life is the gift of God, and that it is sacred. I created a family. I have devoted my energy to the building up of my people. I also became and remain a kind of ethical nuisance. Wherever there is renunciation or mortification, regardless of colour or creed, I consider it morally my territory and their cause is my cause. Bigots, racists and fanatics are my personal enemies and I intend to do battle with them until they become civilized decent people, if needs be for the rest of my life.

Time is short and the task is urgent. Evil is real. So is good. There is a choice. And we are not so much chosen as elected. Life is holy. All life. Mine and yours. And that of those who came before us and the life of those after us.

Naomi Gryn 2001

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Aloma Halter

Aloma is the daughter of Susie and Roman Halter. She is a journalist and this article appeared in The Jerusalem Post earlier in the year.

N a m o G r y n s e t s h e r i g h a g a r e s s t h e d i s p l a y w i n d o w of a bookstore in London's chic Marylebone High Street. She's waif-like, somewhere between 18 and 22, surrounded by philosophy books at the London School of Economics, and she dreams of becoming a filmmaker, an author, a broadcaster. Gryn studies the display. The entire window is taken up with one book. Chasing Shadows. It is a Holocaust memoir with a difference, begun by her survivor father and completed posthumously by his daughter. Published by Viking Penguin, it first appeared in February 2000, when the libel trial between Holocaust denier David Irving and historian Deborah Lipstadt was at its height. Now, after five printings and the book selling out last August, the paperback edition has appeared.

From the book's cover, the byline of Gryn's 40-year-old daughter, the self who compiled and edited, checked facts and compiled footnotes - to material from the 60 boxes of notes and lectures and jottings and drafts left by her father - looks back at the young Naomi, as it tells a "You did it. Na. We did it." Father and daughter. An exceptional team.

Chasing Shadows is the memoir of the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn, one of Britain's best-loved figures, whose popularity reached far beyond Anglo-Jewry. Upon his death in August 1996, many were to call him "the people's rabbi." Born in the Carpathian town of Berehovo in 1913 and deported to Auschwitz at the age of 15, Gryn survived the Holocaust. He went on to the US to train for the rabbinate, and eventually became the pastoral rabbi of a large congregation, the West London Synagogue, and flagships of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain. Besides being widely known for his interfaith work, Gryn was a frequent guest on TV talk shows and round tables, and a hugely popular panelist on The Moral Maze, a BBC radio programme which commanded wide audiences.

Chasing Shadows was an overnight success. The New Statesman hailed it as "not only an important historical document but a moving memoir of a people who were only convincing case for a belief in God that I have ever read." The Evening Standard wrote: "This book is an essential witness to the horrors of the 20th century and to the resilience of the human spirit." Gryn had survived his experience of the Holocaust with the belief that the reason he had to "spend much of my time working for better understanding between religious groups is partly because I know that you can only be safe and secure in a society that practices tolerance, cherishes harmony and can celebrate difference."

Naomi Gryn has worked widely in radio and television - as director, broadcaster, researcher, producer and presenter since a number of years ran her own production company, See More Productions. She enabled the recording of her father's story - on film, in the BBC programme putting it out of the shadows and bringing it to the light. And the father enriched his daughter with his legacy, a central theme that he had selected and focused her professional creativity: the exploration of religious themes and ethical issues.

A glance at the list of Gryn's film productions gives insight into how important the Jewish perspective has been to her: The Sabbath Bride; The Star; The Castle & The Butterfly; The History of the Jews of Prague; The Lodz Ghetto; The Flight of the Jews from the Soviet Union. Gryn's themes, however, have not been exclusively Jewish, and she is proud of films she has made for Channel 4: Jesus Before Christ and Xmas in New York. Without Gryn, knowledge of the early part of her father's life - a life that touched so many that, upon his death, volunteers had to be recruited by the family to help open the thousands of letters of condolence - would have gained that extra dimension. The chemistry they shared, even in a family that is exceptionally close, was special.

Although the filmmaker had been an active ally of his father's all along, his sisters also supported him in their own ways. Her older sister, Gabby, named after her father's 10-year-old brother, who was sent to the gas chambers; and their younger sister, Rachelle, collaborated with their father and Nel Productions. Their brother, David, began with a painter and completed several haunting
Naomi, the second child, resembles Gryn, not only physically but also in terms of personality and psyche. They shared the same garrulous enjoyment of - and ease in being with - other people; an irreverent sense of humour; and the same easy, unstrained conversations.

In 1989 - when the filmmaker was just 30 - she persuaded her father to return to his hometown, Bolehovo - now in Ukraine - to make a documentary about his childhood.

"When we hit on the title Chasing Shadows," says the young filmmaker, "it held great resonance for us both. My mission was to give shape to the swirling shadows of my father's past, which are part of my shadow also. I think he would have wanted that to be the title of his book.

"What we wanted to show in this documentary," she continues, "was in contrast to what the shadows become associated with the Holocaust - the mass graves and the mounds of rotting corpses. My father and I wanted to give the film a different sense. As we peeped into what was destroyed in the Shoah, the life and the culture that had disappeared forever.

"This was a two-year period when I became integrated with him on some level," explains Gryn. "We had both been upset at how much material had to be left out of the film, even as we were in the course of trimming down our film into a 52-minute programme for Channel 4. I managed to obtain for my father a publishing deal with Collins Brown but he never signed it. It wasn't just because of his amazing workload and being so busy and pressured; but I think he just couldn't bring himself to relive the horrors of Auschwitz and beyond.

"Ironically, it was also sent to Tony Lacey (subsequently Naomi Gryn's publisher) at Penguin, who passed on it in December 1989.

She describes the chain of events thus: "I was in the office of Sir Martin Sacks - the renowned historian Sir Martin Gilbert on a research project. 'I felt that somehow these coincidences were orchestrated by my father from beyond the grave,' he said. The question of the book was on the table and we were discussing it.

"Gryn's life is fuelled by great enthusiasm and passions. While she's scathing about some of the bigots and racists who call themselves rabbis in Israel.

Chasing Shadows appeared at the time of her father's Irving trial last year. Many newspapers were quick to point to the importance of the appearance of such a memoir at this particular time. The book was another Penguin author - Deborah Lipstadt. The Daily Telegraph, for example, advised: 'This book should have wide distribution as possible, it highlights the danger of revisionists accounts of the Holocaust, and throws into relief the reality of individual suffering in ethnic cleansing.

"Gryn produces the album, which is at hand because she's currently collaborating with the renowned historian Sir Martin Gilbert on a research project. 'I felt that somehow these coincidences were orchestrated by my father from beyond the grave,' he said. The question of the book was on the table and we were discussing it.

"Gryn's life is fuelled by great enthusiasm and passions. While she's scathing about some of the bigots and racists who call themselves rabbis in Israel.

Chasing Shadows appeared at the time of her father's Irving trial last year. Many newspapers were quick to point to the importance of the appearance of such a memoir at this particular time. The book was another Penguin author - Deborah Lipstadt. The Daily Telegraph, for example, advised: 'This book should have wide distribution as possible, it highlights the danger of revisionists accounts of the Holocaust, and throws into relief the reality of individual suffering in ethnic cleansing.

"Gryn comments, "What Irving was gunning for during the trial was that, scientifically, you couldn't exterminate an entire family of people in such a short time. However, the transport from my father's hometown of Bolehovo was well-documented. There are even fragments of it in the Auschwitz Album.

"Gryn produces the album, which is at hand because she's currently collaborating with the renowned historian Sir Martin Gilbert on a research project. 'I felt that somehow these coincidences were orchestrated by my father from beyond the grave,' he said. The question of the book was on the table and we were discussing it.

"Gryn's life is fuelled by great enthusiasm and passions. While she's scathing about some of the bigots and racists who call themselves rabbis in Israel.

Chasing Shadows appeared at the time of her father's Irving trial last year. Many newspapers were quick to point to the importance of the appearance of such a memoir at this particular time. The book was another Penguin author - Deborah Lipstadt. The Daily Telegraph, for example, advised: 'This book should have wide distribution as possible, it highlights the danger of revisionists accounts of the Holocaust, and throws into relief the reality of individual suffering in ethnic cleansing.

"Gryn comments, "What Irving was gunning for during the trial was that, scientifically, you couldn't exterminate an entire family of people in such a short time. However, the transport from my father's hometown of Bolehovo was well-documented. There are even fragments of it in the Auschwitz Album.

"Gryn produces the album, which is at hand because she's currently collaborating with the renowned historian Sir Martin Gilbert on a research project. 'I felt that somehow these coincidences were orchestrated by my father from beyond the grave,' he said. The question of the book was on the table and we were discussing it.

"Gryn's life is fuelled by great enthusiasm and passions. While she's scathing about some of the bigots and racists who call themselves rabbis in Israel.

Chasing Shadows appeared at the time of her father's Irving trial last year. Many newspapers were quick to point to the importance of the appearance of such a memoir at this particular time. The book was another Penguin author - Deborah Lipstadt. The Daily Telegraph, for example, advised: 'This book should have wide distribution as possible, it highlights the danger of revisionists accounts of the Holocaust, and throws into relief the reality of individual suffering in ethnic cleansing.

"Gryn comments, "What Irving was gunning for during the trial was that, scientifically, you couldn't exterminate an entire family of people in such a short time. However, the transport from my father's hometown of Bolehovo was well-documented. There are even fragments of it in the Auschwitz Album.

"Gryn produces the album, which is at hand because she's currently collaborating with the renowned historian Sir Martin Gilbert on a research project. 'I felt that somehow these coincidences were orchestrated by my father from beyond the grave,' he said. The question of the book was on the table and we were discussing it.

"Gryn's life is fuelled by great enthusiasm and passions. While she's scathing about some of the bigots and racists who call themselves rabbis in Israel.

Chasing Shadows appeared at the time of her father's Irving trial last year. Many newspapers were quick to point to the importance of the appearance of such a memoir at this particular time. The book was another Penguin author - Deborah Lipstadt. The Daily Telegraph, for example, advised: 'This book should have wide distribution as possible, it highlights the danger of revisionists accounts of the Holocaust, and throws into relief the reality of individual suffering in ethnic cleansing.

"Gryn comments, "What Irving was gunning for during the trial was that, scientifically, you couldn't exterminate an entire family of people in such a short time. However, the transport from my father's hometown of Bolehovo was well-documented. There are even fragments of it in the Auschwitz Album.

"Gryn produces the album, which is at hand because she's currently collaborating with the renowned historian Sir Martin Gilbert on a research project. 'I felt that somehow these coincidences were orchestrated by my father from beyond the grave,' he said. The question of the book was on the table and we were discussing it.

"Gryn's life is fuelled by great enthusiasm and passions. While she's scathing about some of the bigots and racists who call themselves rabbis in Israel.

Chasing Shadows appeared at the time of her father's Irving trial last year. Many newspapers were quick to point to the importance of the appearance of such a memoir at this particular time. The book was another Penguin author - Deborah Lipstadt. The Daily Telegraph, for example, advised: 'This book should have wide distribution as possible, it highlights the danger of revisionists accounts of the Holocaust, and throws into relief the reality of individual suffering in ethnic cleansing.

"Gryn comments, "What Irving was gunning for during the trial was that, scientifically, you couldn't exterminate an entire family of people in such a short time. However, the transport from my father's hometown of Bolehovo was well-documented. There are even fragments of it in the Auschwitz Album.

"Gryn produces the album, which is at hand because she's currently collaborating with the renowned historian Sir Martin Gilbert on a research project. 'I felt that somehow these coincidences were orchestrated by my father from beyond the grave,' he said. The question of the book was on the table and we were discussing it.

"Gryn's life is fuelled by great enthusiasm and passions. While she's scathing about some of the bigots and racists who call themselves rabbis in Israel.

Chasing Shadows appeared at the time of her father's Irving trial last year. Many newspapers were quick to point to the importance of the appearance of such a memoir at this particular time. The book was another Penguin author - Deborah Lipstadt. The Daily Telegraph, for example, advised: 'This book should have wide distribution as possible, it highlights the danger of revisionists accounts of the Holocaust, and throws into relief the reality of individual suffering in ethnic cleansing.
never lie, and answer as best as he could. But in 1978, a significant change took place for him. That year was the year he first saw Holocaust-denial literature which shocked him so much that he decided to talk about the Shoah publicly for a BBC programme called "In the Light of Experience."

"At that time," says Gryn, "I was in the troughs of a splendid teenage rebellion, and the things I most enjoyed were algebra, smoking pot and hanging out with grubby guitarists from Glasgow. My father was hugely relieved when I announced that I wanted to "go into broadcasting!"

To encourage this new-found ambition, he invited me to come with him to this recording and I sat upstairs with the technicians as he was making the programme, and for the first time when it wasn't just the family around him, heard him talk about my grandmother being deported. Little did I guess that 20 years later I'd be using material from that programme to complete the book."

This key anecdote in their lives contains all; their close relationship; Gryn finding it easiest to share his experience with his daughter there, as he later would tell his granddaughter in the film Chasing Shadows, the fact that she didn't only listen passively, but chose to actively carry on her testimony.

Eva Gryn survived with her father throughout the war. They pretended to be cousins and the senior Gryn was able to look out for and help his son in various ways. This was a rare story of survival; most survivors were left completely alone. But not much is heard about Gryn's mother, Bella, in these accounts.

"Her other son, my uncle Gaby," says Naomi, "was taken from her and sent to the gas chambers and she was sent to do slave labour. Meanwhile she didn't know that her older boy and her husband were together throughout the war. Both my grandmother and late father spoke of the pain of not being able to go back to Berchovo and meet there."

Naomi notes that when her grandmother saw Hugo walking alone from the train station, she understood that her husband had died.

"And the most courageous thing she ever did was to encourage her son, my father, to tell the story."

So, aged 13, my father went to Prague to resume his education. The Soviet border had come down in the autumn of 1945 and all of Eastern Europe. Even that my father smuggled his mother into Czechoslovakia and took her to Karlovy Vary where she had a couple of surviving brothers.

"My father then made his way to England, with the other children living with a number of relatives. The British Central Fund taught English, given an education and generally helped. Meanwhile, his mother remarried and lived with his new husband in Czechoslovakia."

Soon, because of Communism, they were cut off in Eastern Europe and they couldn't see one another for years. Bella was only given permission to come to England for my parents' wedding in 1957, a month after they were married and by then, both my parents had already left for America, so there was no point. Later my gracious, gorgeous mother, Jacqueline Selby, travelled with her own dad to visit Bella on the way to Hugo's first pulpit, in Bombay."

About the success of the book, Gryn says: "There are such important issues at stake. There are people, quite a lot of people, to regard each other with mutual respect. And rejection can feel like a judgment against the value of Jewish life. The worst thing that could have happened would have been if the book had been ignored, if it had just sunk into oblivion."

Sometimes, when people experience the film with the subject of the Holocaust, you feel a little despotic, as if they're too disinterested to hear my father's stories. It wasn't entirely unsympathetic. The Holocaust is difficult to 'sell': it's not sexy, it's not fun - it's hard. After the book launch, for example, an Irish Catholic mother, who has himself experienced some of the dire consequences of racism and armed conflict, told me: 'Don't take this the wrong way'. I think the man would stop talking about the Holocaust, and that it just became part of the school curriculum instead."

Gryn remarks that "Penguin have been magnificent about supporting the paperback," and the British newspapers are full of adverts for Chasing Shadows. Irish Catholic & a full house whenever on the book daily. There wasn't a particularly moment of juncture when she decided to take the Holocaust "on board," it was simply "because I always enjoyed being with my father and the things he was involved in always fascinated me. He was such good fun, that it was quite a pity that I didn't yet in order to have the pleasure, I suppose; that's how I came to shoulder some of his Shosh baggage."

"There are days, when a big episode happens, like an earthquake or fire, or like the Oklahoma bombing, a team of councillors is sent to debrief the victims, and then need to be 'debriefed' themselves, relieved of the trauma absorbed from their clients."

In Shoah families, there are children who help to 'debrief' a parent or the parents, and then themselves need debriefing. Well, we Shoah survivors have often found creative outlets to debrief ourselves, which is what happened to me, in a way, with the book, it was part of the process of healing after the trauma of my father's death."

Gryn suffered quite a trauma herself in 1994, when she drove in a car crash in Israel.

"I'm lucky to have survived, even though the recovery period seemed to go on forever. But one of the things that most offended me about this accident was how the insurance company's defence tried to use the fact of my being the daughter of a survivor to exploit me."

"I must have been unbalanced and unstable before the accident - so the dumping of this truck-load of oranges on my head and neck has little to do with the blinding headaches and the various head and neck injuries I sustained from the collision."

The "appalling" term "Second Generation" for children of Holocaust survivors makes me squirm," says Gryn. "Increasingly, people are looking to the children of the survivors, who are now reaching middle age, to somehow act as a continuation of their parents' stories."

The way I see it is that being "Second Generation" simply means that we have a duty, inasmuch as we can, to help our parents have their voice heard - if that's what we want, and we should decide for ourselves."

"As I passed him he said something like: 'Are you lucky?' As I opened the front door, the dialogue was closed by the officer. Outside, I took a deep breath. I was glad to be out again. It was inexplicable, but I felt very relieved."

"I thought, that if any soap was given to the children, and only two people were supervising their showers. When we showered, there had been a whole army of barbers and other assistants washing around the place. Very curious! Going back to the shower, I went round the other side, and the other side had no windows either. There were piles of clothing and even what seemed to me ashes of burnt clothing. All the time the chimney smoked. Black smoke came gushing out with an occasional shot of red flame. It was not so bad during the sunshine, but at night..."

"Back on the square everything seemed normal - that is, if the word 'normal' could be applied to anything that happened in Auschwitz. Dad was still talking to the Police [with whom he had been talking when Hugo first slipped away], but he looked quite agonised."

The account of the gas chamber experience was not, however, the most harrowing part of the book for her. The time that is most difficult for me was when I downloaded an account from the Internet by Major Cameron Coffman, one of my father's American
MY GRANDFATHER

Darren Richman

Darren is the son of Michelle and Marcus Richman and the grandson of Jeanette and Zigi Shipper.

He wrote this article when he was thirteen years old. He is now sixteen, studies at Merchant Taylors and has just sat for his G.C.S.E. examination. We wish him good luck.

I t was just a Sunday like any other. Having read the newspaper, my father escorted us over to my grandparents, us being my brother and I. I rang the bell five times, as one is inclined to at such an early age and eventually my grandmother answered the door. Having debated about whether we were wearing vests and complained about the poor weather, she took our coats and we went inside. My memory is not perfect, it is just that my grandmother has greeted us that way for as long as I can remember. We then proceeded to devour our Sunday brunch, including the Leek and Potato Broth which I so despised, yet drank to avoid rudeness.

The meal was over and we had all diligently wiped our faces, it all began. I recall my grandmother whispering to my grandfather something about, "tell him now". My grandfather, named Zigi, only nodded and began in his strong Polish accent: "Come here Darren and sit on my knee. Right, I suppose it would not be right if you did not know about your own roots!"

My grandfather never continued his tale, he never needed to. His words had such an impact on my life. I do not even think he could foresee it. Since then, when I read about oppression in a text book, it is not merely the past and therefore not important. I think of my grandfather carrying the crates some nights when I am laying awake in bed. When I complain about having fish for dinner, I recall how he, and many others, would have nothing. As I grew and learned more about persecution, I realised how fortunate I am to have all four Jewish grandparents alive and well. Then I think of how many other grandparents there could have been who never even saw their fifteenth birthday. Other days, I simply try and count up to six million. I get tired but I realise the sheer multitude of Jews that were killed during the Holocaust. Due to this experience, my personal identity changed in a great many ways. I no longer stand any racism of any kind. I know that black people, American Indians along with many other races have also faced oppression. I am hardly strong, but when faced with racist taunts, I will stand up for myself and feel double my size. As grandpa told me that story, I recall a lone tear trickling down his cheek. I cannot be sure whether that was due to the tragedy of the events he was depicting, or the fact that my face remained expressionless. I wish I could tell him now that if the latter is the case, I was far from untouched, merely amazed and that now, every time I remember his past, it does bring tears to my eyes.

OBITUARIES

ESTHER BURGERMAN

Geoff Burgerman

My mother was born into a happy, hard-working family in Zdumsk Wola, Poland, on 28th November 1927. She was joined almost immediately by another baby girl, Gerti, and later a younger brother completed the family.

Her father worked at transporting cloth between towns and although times were not easy and money was in short supply, there was never any friction or arguments in the Greenspan household.

Then, as we all know, the world went mad and life was never the same again.

But before the war, my mother met a handsome young man from Lodz who, like her, had seen all his family apart from a sister, wiped out. In 1940, Esther married Moniek Burgerman and a year later I arrived. Five years later, brother Darren arrived.

Do I really need to state what a wonderful, caring, loving, considerate and wise woman my mother was? Those who knew her can confirm all this - and more - is true.

Everyone loved Estie.

The last few years were cruel to my mother. Hadn't she suffered enough? But she never complained because God had provided "her profit in life" - Ben, Jon, Robert, Stacey and Alex her grandchildren, who she loved with a fierce passion. She was also proud of her daughters-in-law Shelley and my wife Lynda (also born on 28th November) and how their marriages, like hers, were strong, stable and loving.

We must all pull together now. My Dad, Aunt Gerti, Stephen and myself. We must find the strength and courage my mum showed, not only when living through the war but in later years, but also when she was a little girl amongst all that horror and destruction.

She will always be with us and we will love her forever.

who knew her can confirm all this - and more - is true.

Everyone loved Estie.

The last few years were cruel to my mother. Hadn't she suffered enough? But she never complained because God had provided "her profit in life" - Ben, Jon, Robert, Stacey and Alex her grandchildren, who she loved with a fierce passion. She was also proud of her daughters-in-law Shelley and my wife Lynda (also born on 28th November) and how their marriages, like hers, were strong, stable and loving.

We must all pull together now. My Dad, Aunt Gerti, Stephen and myself. We must find the strength and courage my mum showed, not only when living through the war but in later years, but also when she was a little girl amongst all that horror and destruction.

She will always be with us and we will love her forever.

who knew her can confirm all this - and more - is true.
OBITUARIES

MOSHE MALENICKY

Written in memory of my Daddy, Moshe Malenicky, an enormous achiever, a success and 'My Hero'.

With love from his daughter
Angela

M y father was known and admired by many people in his community and, indeed, throughout the world for his charity, for his foresightfulness and above all, for his tenacious will. He was, and indeed is, the living embodiment of the word 'character'. You would imagine, therefore, that writing about such a man would be an easy task, yet when asked to write something about him, I was, for quite a while, utterly overwhelmed.

To many in the '45 Aid Society, the story of my father's early life will be a familiar one. Most know, or will have heard about the boy, the eldest son of the bakers of Piotrkow with three sisters, a brother and both his parents brutally ripped away to the gas chambers of Treblinka. Above all, many will remember my father for his enterprising spirit and resourcefulness that helped him and others survive. Of making a fire and bartering for flour to make matzalach, of finding a way to wheel and deal for any goods he could lay his hands on: above all, his single-minded pursuit of staying alive.

Indeed, this constant struggle to ensure he had enough food and water permeated every facet of my father's life. Following on from this, his astonishing successes, both as a caterer and property owner, were born out of a relentless, often inhuman energy. He had an almost crazed determination to ensure that he and his family would never go hungry, this ambition no doubt driven by showing the world, his family and, most poignantly, the Nazis, that he could not only survive and succeed but flourish.

These harsh lessons he learnt as a child were passed down to my sister and I. We were, from the cradle, imbued with a sense of the importance of being strong and single-minded in order to survive, often at a great emotional cost. Indeed, as a child and through to adulthood, the lessons my father taught me feeling confused and ambivalent. On the one hand I looked up with protective pride at the achievement of this great survival hero, on the other, I was often angry at his inability to express emotions like other daddies, often rendering me feeling cold and guilty. Any semblance of closely guarded praise was more valuable to me than any jewel, and a compliment would lift me up into the stratosphere. It was not until recently, I came to understand father's lessons, luckily before he died. For he was teaching me about being strong at any cost, about only saying something if you really meant it, of the importance of pursuing your own goals and dreams; above all he was teaching me about survival.

The night before my father died at home, I think of the faces of those standing around his death bed. To my sister and her husband, my husband, to his four grandsons and a granddaughter, to my mother, his wife of almost fifty years, and I am consumed by an overwhelming warmth. Because, for all his talk of survival, for all his material success, he achieved, quite undeliberately, a success far beyond survival. Through his lessons he managed to engender the unquestioned loyalty, love and respect of his children, his grandchildren and all generations who come to hear his story.

MEMBERS NEWS 2001

Compiled by Ruby Friedman

Yiddish Culture Clubs in Israel
February 2, 2001

Mr Menahem Waksztok
15 Ha-Atzmaut Street
Ashkelon

Dear Mr Waksztok:

I was very pleased to read of your nomination as an Honorary Member of the Israel Travel Agency Association for your contribution to the development of tourism in Israel with special emphasis on Ashkelon where you were a pioneer in this vital economic sector of the city - a place mentioned some eighteen times in the Bible, and known for having played an important role in the history of the Ancient Middle East.

Ashkelon, under the administration of Mayor Benny Yakin, has become the 'Pearl of the South' and your tourist office, Ashkelontours, served as the "Naoshon" of tourism in the area. New agencies have been added during the years, but your place as a Holocaust survivor who re-established himself with his young family as a central figure in the cultural and economic development of the city will never be doubted. Your important work of retelling the story of the Holocaust to the new generations of citizens is a central part of your personal history. We have also enjoyed your support and activities on behalf of the Yiddish Culture Club of Ashkelon.

Raphael Blumenfeld
Chairperson of the Yiddish Culture Clubs in Israel

Congratulations to Jack Klajman on the publication of his book "Out Of The Ghetto" in which he describes his experiences during the war. Jack came to England with the Southampton group in November 1945. He lived in a hostel in Northampton and later moved to London from where he was taken with about fifty other "boys and girls" to Canada by the Canadian Jewish Congress. Jack and his wife Sonia live in London, Ontario. They have four children and Jack is a successful businessman.

Congratulations to Isay Hahn on the publication of his book "A Life Sentence Of Memories" Konin, Auschwitz, London where he, too, describes his war-time experiences. Isay came to England with Dr Shonfeld's group. At first he lived with his aunt, but soon moved out of her home. He married his wife Lena in 1947. They live in London and have a son, Stanley, and a daughter, Helen.

Both books were published by Valentina Mitchell, which set up a special project in 1993 under the umbrella of The Library of Holocaust Testimonies. To date, the list includes twenty-one titles, with seven more in the pipeline.

BIRTHS:

- Nehama & Geoffrey Herman mazeltov on the birth of your daughter Hava. Geoffrey is the son of the late Abe Herman.
- Tina & Victor Greenberg mazeltov on the birth of a grandson Zachary George born to Deborah and David.
- Margaret & Harry Olmer mazeltov on the birth of a grandson James Gideon born to Pauline & Jonathan.
- Millie & Moshe Graham mazeltov on the birth of a granddaughter Honour Lauren born to Lisa & Stuart.
- Sara & Jan Goldberger mazeltov on the birth of a grandson Orr born to Cilli & Dotan.
- Sonia & Jack Klajman from Canada mazeltov on the birth of a
granddaughter: Nadine Sarah born to Norah and Ed.
- Jeff and the late Edith Freedman from Florida mazeltov on the birth of a grandson Taylor Joshua born to Rachel and Kerry.
- Thea & Israel Rudzinski mazeltov on the birth of a great grandson.
- Johnny Guiman mazeltov on the birth of a great granddaughter.
- Yehudit Ray mazeltov on the birth of a grandson.
- Sala Newton-Katz mazeltov on the birth of a great-grandson born to Sara & Fred, daughter of Janet & Dennis and the granddaughter of the late Benny Newton. With our apologies for the late announcement.
- Valerie Geddy mazeltov on the birth of a granddaughter Leila Star born to Madeleine & Steven. Madeleine is the daughter of the late Leo Geddy.
- Valerie & Chaim Kohn mazeltov on the birth of a granddaughter Mastal Naomi, born to Frimette and Gabi.

BARMITZVAH: Mazeltov to:
- Edith & Paul Gast on the batmitzvah of their grandson Jeremy son of Monica & John.
- Shirley & Joe Zeller on the batmitzvah of their grandson Bradley son of Howard.
- Gloria & Krulik Wider on the batmitzvah of their grandson Max son of Mandy & Martin.
- Joan & Jack Bajer on the batmitzvah of their grandson Jamie son of Maryse & David.

BATMITZVAH: Mazeltov to:
- Jasmine & Michael Bandel on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Lauren daughter of Gaynor & Daniel.
- Shirley & Joe Zeller on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Jessica daughter of Gail.
- Kitty & Koppel Dessau on the joint batmitzvah of their daughter-in-law Carol and their granddaughter Heather wife and daughter of Stephen.
- Marian & Myer Stern mazeltov on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Kalia daughter of Lelia & David.
- Olive & David Herman on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Klug daughter of Rosalind & Geoff.
- Betty & Charlie Lewkowitz on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Liana daughter of Eve & Howard.
- Taunya & Mayer Cornell on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Victoria Shoshana daughter of Marilyn & Martin.

ENGAGEMENTS:
- Wendy & Lipa Tepper mazeltov on the engagement of their son Justin to Stacey.
- Fay & Moniek Goldberg mazeltov on the engagement of their granddaughter. Gertie Finkelstein mazeltov on the engagement of her granddaughter Deborah daughter of Elisabeth and Lionel and granddaughter of the late Issy Finkelstein.
- Solly Irving mazeltov on the engagement of his granddaughter Hazel to Gary. Hazel is the daughter of the late Sandra Irving.
- Beatty Pollack mazeltov on the engagement of her granddaughter Tami to Ira, daughter of Simmy and Menachem.
- Tami is the granddaughter of the late Baruch Pollack.

MARRIAGES:
- Mazeltov to Theo & Israel Rudzinski on the marriage of their granddaughter.
- Mazeltov to Doreen and Harry Wajchander on the marriage of their granddaughter Melanie to Grant, daughter of Susan and Leslie.
- Mazeltov to Solly Irving on the marriage of his daughter Hazel (daughter of the late Sandra Irving) to Gary.

GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES:
- Anita & Charles Shaine
- Sam & Sonja Freiman
- Mary & Bob Obuchowski
- Betty & Charlie Lewkowicz
- Sincere congratulations and may you all share many more happy and healthy years together.

DEATHS:
- Our sincere sympathy to Helen Lazar on the death of her husband Mel.
- To Sybil Van Der Veld on the passing of her son David.
- To Pauline & Harry Balsam on the passing of Pauline's father.
- To Sender Riseman on the loss of his wife Frieda.
- To Jack Hecht and Marlin Hecht on the loss of their brother in Israel.
- To Monty Burgerman and family on the loss of his wife Esse, sister of Gentie Wolretch.
- To Lottie Mallenicki and family on the passing of Moshe.
- To Moric Friedman on the loss of his sister in Israel.

2ND AND 3RD GENERATION ACHIEVEMENTS:
Congratulations to Laura Friedman on gaining a 2.1 BA Honours degree in Media Production Management. Laura is the daughter of Moric and the step-daughter of Ruby Friedman.

Congratulations to Anne Rothmann granddaughter of Helen Lazar who graduated from High School and will be attending Santa Cruz University in California.

NEWS FROM MANCHESTER

Compiled by Louise Elliot

Our members and the second and third generation were invited to Beth Shalom and although we circularised our members, we had such a poor response that it was insufficient to hire transport to take us to Nottingham. I know that many people have already visited Beth Shalom, but it would have been very nice if we could have gone with our families. This sort of apathy is very sad.

Mayer Hersh continues to visit schools etc., and talks to teachers and pupils and is very well thought of by everyone with whom he comes into contact.

If I have missed anyone out it is their own fault if they do not report events to me, but those of you who have done so I have mentioned, and those I haven’t who have had celebrations, we wish you a hearty Mazeltov.