

זהו מקום החרפה להשמיד
שבו נרצחו כחצי מיליון
בנות ובנים - ילדים
בני חמש, ששה, שבע
ועד ילדי חמש

**THIS IS THE SITE OF THE SLAUGHTER
OF ABOUT 500 000 VICTIMS
OF THE BELZEC DEATH CAMP
FOR THE MURDER OF JEWS
WHO WERE KILLED BETWEEN
FEBRUARY AND DECEMBER 1942
BY NAZI GERMANY**

**EARTH DO NOT COVER MY BLOOD;
LET THERE BE NO RESTING
PLACE FOR MY OUTCRY!
JOB 16:18**

SEE PAGE 21

BELZEC: FINALLY LAID TO REST

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wish the '45 Aid every success

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CHAIRMAN'S *comments*

Who of us in our wildest imagination would have believed that fifty-nine years after our liberation and fifty-six years after the rebirth of the State of Israel, we would have to focus our minds once again on anti-Semitism around the world. It seems paradoxical that at a time when Jews are enjoying so much freedom and prosperity with equal rights and opportunities with all other citizens that the "old cancer" of anti-Semitism should be rearing its ugly head again. In spite of a falling Jewish population in this country, the emphasis on Jewish education has never been greater. There are more Jewish schools now than ever before. Jewish contribution to the social, cultural, artistic and economic life is, in proportion to their numbers, far higher than the average of the population. Yet their concern for their safety and future is real. Undisguised anti-Semitism in the Western world continues to be nurtured both by secular and religious bodies and by the Left as well as the Right. In Britain the number of anti-Semitic incidents rose by 75% in the first quarter of the last year and four Jewish cemeteries and three synagogues have been attacked and covered in swastikas and excrement. The Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks received a letter telling him to leave Britain, saying "What Hitler did will seem like a wet week-end in Blackpool".

Anti-Zionism has become a subterfuge for anti-Semitism. The present conflict between Israel and the Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza is fuelling a new Judeophobia. It needs to be stressed that present day anti-Semitism, although serious, in no way compares with the conditions that prevailed in Europe in the 1930s. Islamic Fundamentalism is the main anti-Semitic danger today, as it is, indeed, a danger to our civilisation. In recent years it has become increasingly apparent that the anti-Semitic virus has taken root in the body politic of Islam to an unprecedented degree. The Jews are portrayed in Arab cartoons as demons and murderers, as a hateful, loathsome people to be feared and avoided. They are invariably seen as

the origin of all evil and corruption conspiring to take over the world. Judaism itself is presented as a sinister, immoral religion, based on cabals and blood rituals, while Zionists are systematically equated with or identified as criminals, racists or Nazis. The aim is not simply to de-legitimise Israel as a Jewish State and national entity in the Middle East, but to dehumanise Judaism and the Jewish people as such.

It is not surprising that the promise of a reward in heaven and the constant propaganda and exhortation to kill the infidels has resulted in the creation of a volunteer army of suicide bombers who are threatening not only the State of Israel but also the stability of the world. Unfortunately, far too many statesmen are hiding their heads in the sand. They do not understand the impending danger or perhaps they do not want to understand. Fortunately, President Bush, as well as our Prime Minister, Tony Blair, do understand. They also understand the Israeli predicament.

There are too many people in England and in the Western World who, influenced by the biased media, believe that if only Israel would be more conciliatory, all the problems in the Middle East would be solved. They ignore all the efforts that previous Israeli governments, especially that of Rabin, Peres and Barak, have made to achieve peace. If, by a miracle, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were to be solved, the threat from Muslim fundamentalism would still be looming large on our horizon and it would need urgent attention. The German people in the 1930s found it convenient to ignore where the consequences of Hitler's racist policies would lead. It started with the Jews but, in the end, fifty million people were killed, including seven million Germans, the loss of a large part of Eastern Germany and the expulsion of about five million Germans from these territories.

In a recent article published in the Sunday Times, Michael Portillo wrote "When we show strength, we make ourselves safer, and when we are hesitant, we increase our vulnerability. Terrorist leaders who are themselves rich and who shelter in repressive regimes that impoverish their people

are using their people's sufferings as an excuse for their atrocities. The Israelis have a grim advantage over the rest of us. Their enemies have no doubt that their objective is to destroy Israel. Without that clarity, it would be difficult for a democracy to take measures needed to win. Americans after September 11th believed that Al Queda's mission was to harm the United States in every conceivable way. The Europeans are not so convinced that the terrorist threat is mortal! Israel understands that its enemies respect only strength. To provide the best conditions for peace, Israel has to convince the Palestinian leadership that terrorism will not succeed and to eliminate all options except negotiations."

It is most upsetting that there are many Jews who publically condemn, sometimes viciously, the Israeli government that was elected to defend her citizens. The Israeli government, of course, like every other government, is not beyond criticism, but it needs to be measured against the damage it can do. Their criticism, very often, gives ammunition to our enemies and undermines the existence of the State of Israel. They mean well but their action is not much different from the way some Jews behaved in the Ghettos and concentration camps when they collaborated with the Nazis. At least, they collaborated with the hope that their lives would be spared. Those who criticise Jews today do not understand how the Jews were despised and humiliated when there was no Jewish State. If Israel were to be overwhelmed by her enemies, the consequences for the Diaspora Jews would be equally catastrophic. At such a critical time in our history, the need for our unity in support of Israel has never been greater. We, the survivors, understand what can happen to a divided people. We know that Israel's security guarantees our security and we must do everything possible to transmit this message especially to those who were fortunate not to experience the life in the Galut and its consequences.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy New Year.

THE '45 AID SOCIETY AND THE BONDS OF INTIMACY

Reuven Sherman

Reuven is the husband of Judith Sherman and is a regular contributor to our Journal.

Intimacy is described as being close to another or others, sharing deeply held personal feelings, secrets and experiences. We think of it as a bonding with a spouse, children, or friends. It can be a long-lasting relationship or even a moment shared with a stranger. It can be mutual, or one person sharing with a good, sympathetic listener. The opposites of intimacy and closeness are alienation, separation, or distance.

For 60 years the Society has been playing a vital role in the lives of its members and friends by building and sustaining bonds of intimacy among them. As one who "married" into the Society 50 years ago, I both experience and observe this crucial bonding.

The original members were torn from their homes and families at an early age - suffered dehumanising tortures of body and spirit - were subjected to every effort to render them alienated and isolated. You came to England alone, aged youths, with your pain, and hopes for the future. You found one another in the hostels and places like the Primrose Club. You shared mostly unspoken grief and memories with a word, a nod, the name of a camp.

This individually different, yet shared past, created powerful bonds, further reinforced by the shared experience of being strangers in a strange land with a strange language and culture, and finally sealed by the fact that you had all somehow survived. In these circumstances you discovered common cause and understanding with one another. In turn these evolved into two of the vital elements of intimacy; trust and a

feeling of safety in the group. Sibling-like bonds formed and you were helpful to and protective of one another.

The group acquired an identity of its own. Being a member of the group helped to confer a much needed individual identity on each member along with a sense of belonging somewhere in this world. Here, at least, you are somebody - a somebody with a past, present, and future. This helped to provide a foundation on which each of you could build and go forward with some confidence knowing that the group is with you. The group becomes an extended family of brother and sisterhood with the common purpose of supporting and launching its members in the larger society.

As the members go off into that larger society, they make a decision to "formalise their group into an official adult organisation, the '45 Aid Society. The Society keeps faith with its origins by continuing to nurture the bonds of brother and sisterhood across time and geographic distances. Though most of you have created families of your own, the Society remains an extended family, always there, always offering closeness and intimacy. International Reunions, regular meetings of the society and sub-groups within it, and this magazine are part of that project. The Society reaches out to members in need and many come together to celebrate personal and family simchos. There is a vibrant collective celebration of life. And all feel proud of the accomplishments of every individual member.

It is historically very important to recognise the role of the group and

the Society in the ultimate success and accomplishments of the members and the help it extend to the larger community in the tradition of its own history. We carry this legacy into our own families and can see it with our children, grandchildren and beyond. It is particularly worthy of pride that this group was not formed by any outside agency. It was self-created.

Of course there are also issues in intimate relationships. We are all different. We are different in styles, tastes, goals, interests, education, occupation, the influences of the cultures among which we live, the roles we choose to assume, the changes that take place within us as a result of growth and development (and yes, decline). We even have different languages of intimacy and loving. What is close for me may be either suffocating or much too distant for you. My sense of privacy may be your sense of being excluded. My drive for action and change may upset your wish for stability and peace. Misunderstandings and miscommunication can also cause difficulties. Such differences often initiate conflict. Conflict may produce greater distance.

So it is in the Society. There are differences and conflicts among individuals and sub-groups. But as in most reasonably functioning families, we accept, work around, or resolve the differences. The importance of the group, our history together, and its personal value to each of us transcends the differences.

I feel personally fortunate to be welcomed as an adopted member of this group.

FOR THE MARTYRED ARTISTS

Translated by Alfred Huberman from Yiddish

Alfred came to England with the Windermere group and, due to ill health, stayed in the sanatoria at Papworth, Ashford & Quare Mead. He subsequently settled in Brighton where he and his wife Shirley now live.

Whilst visiting the Jewish Museum in Paris, I came across this foreword, written by Marc Chagall in 1951, to the book entitled "Our Tortured Artists" by Hirsh Fenster. My 'French' niece

succeeded in getting a copy for me.

Marc Chagall's Yiddish is so beautiful, it appealed to me and I thought it would be interesting reading for the Boys.

Marc Chagall escaped from France

to the USA in 1942. When he returned to Europe in 1945, most of his contemporary artists had perished. Since he had survived, his feelings of guilt come through in his writing.

OUR TORTURED ARTISTS

Hirsh Fenster
With a foreword by Marc Chagall
Paris 1951

For the Martyred Artists

Did I know them all?

Have I been to their studios?

Have I seen their art from near or afar?

And now I withdraw from myself, from my years and go to their unknown tomb.

They call me, they drag me into their graves

Send the innocent to the guilty.

They question me:

Where were you? - I ran away...

They were led to the death baths where they savoured the taste of their sweat.

Sometimes they saw the light from their unpainted canvases.

They counted the unlived years which they guarded and waited to achieve their dreams -

Restless sleepers.

They searched their heads for the children's corner, where the moon, surrounded by stars promised them a bright future

Young love in dark rooms, on grass, on hills and dales, The cut down fruit, drenched in milk, sprinkled with flowers, which promised them paradise.

The hand of their mother, Her eyes bid them farewell at the station, to a distance place.

I see how they drag themselves, now in rags, bare footed on silent roads.

The brothers of Israels, Pissarro and Modigliani, our brothers.

Leading them, roped together are the sons of Durer, Cranach and Holbein - to death in the crematoria.

How can I, how should I shed tears?

They have been soaked for a long time with the salt from my eyes.

They turned them into dry ash, making me lose my last hope.

Where should I cry? As everyday I hear them tearing out the last board from my roof.

When I am exhausted from fighting a war for the piece of earth, on which I remain standing and in which I will later be laid to rest.

I see the fire, the smoke and gas which begins to rise to the blue sky and turns to black clouds.

I see the torn out hair and teeth.

They cover me in an angry hue.

I stand in a desert amid mountains of boats, clothes, ash and rubble and whisper kaddish.

And as I stand like this - I visualise the painted David with his harp in his hand. He wants to help me cry and play chapters of psalms.

Behind him, emerges our Moses and says: "Fear for no one and rest in peace", until he will, once more carve out new commandments for a new world. The last spark is extinguished, the last soul vanishes.

It becomes quiet, as before a fresh deluge.

I rise and say my goodbyes to you.

I take the road to the new house of prayer and light a candle to your painting.

Marc Chagall, Paris 1951

The last time Ben and Arza were in Miami and we all got together, Ben asked Manny if he would write about his life experiences for our Journal. Manny said it would be very difficult for him as he gets extremely upset when he recounts his early years. When Fay and I came to London for David and Olive's anniversary celebration, Ben asked again if I would talk to Manny about sharing his narrative.

Manny said he could not do it. However, he gave me a copy of an interview that he had given to someone when he was in Quare Mead. As it was in German, I had it translated, but when Manny and I read the transcript we decided to disregard it. He then agreed that he would give me the pertinent dates and places if I would write it as an article. So, here are the basic facts. I am limited in my ability to tell his "story". I recognise that I cannot aptly depict the suffering that he and his family endured and witnessed. The following is a brief biography of Mendel (Manny) Preter.

Manny was born on October 7, 1927 in a little town called Czemernikasz near Lublin, Poland. He was the oldest of five children, having had two brothers and two sisters. His father had a rope-making business. They also leased land from a farmer on which they used to grow vegetables that they would sell. His childhood was typical of a Jewish boy from the Shetl: School, Cheder and helping his parents as much as he could. His childhood is full of happy memories.

His father was called up to the Polish army just before the war broke out, only to return home after four weeks following the German occupation that changed everything. The Jews of his little town experienced the same humiliations, depredations, and mistreatments as all Jews under the German boot. There was no longer a school to attend. The synagogues and Torahs were all burned.

Manny says that from 1940 into 1941 things were hard, but bearable. His mother bartered anything of value to secure what little food she could for the family. In January 1942 Manny went to work on a farm run by the SS under a Polish manager. This farm had a distillery where they made alcohol from potatoes. Manny

MENDEL PRETER'S STORY

Moniek Goldberg

Moniek came to England with the Windermere group and emigrated to the United States in 1948. He has been a regular contributor to this Journal from its inception.

persuaded the Polish manager to let his father and brother come to the farm by bribing him with their rope-making equipment.

In September 1942, his mother, two sisters and youngest brother were taken away to Treblinka. From May 1943 through July 1943, Manny, his father and his brother were in Majdanek.

To many of us (survivors) there are many traumatic events that have stood out and stayed with us, causing repeated nightmares. Manny is no exception. In Majdanek his younger brother died and Manny ended up in hospital. One day the SS came into the hospital whereupon they were all ordered to stand naked. One by one, they were asked questions "What is your number?" "Are you Jewish?" They all knew what it meant if your number was written down. Manny's number was written down. After the SS left, Manny broke down and started to cry, only to pass out. A Czech doctor took pity on him and with the help of a Polish doctor, they arranged to switch his number with a man that had died. The next day he was discharged under the dead man's number and returned to his barrack where he was reunited with his father. Soon after that they took him and his father to Skarszysko where they stayed from July 1943 to July 1944 working in work C. His father died September 1943.

The Russian front was moving closer and in July 1944 they closed Skarszysko and sent them to Czenstchowa. In December 1944 they took them on wagons to Buchenwald. At the end of March 1945 Manny was on that infamous transport to Theresienstadt.

May 8 1945, Manny was liberated. Manny was very ill and could hardly

walk. Together with Huberman and some others he was put into the hospital right away. He barely caught the train that was taking us to Prague, given his limited ability to walk. Fortunately, the train was delayed and he came with us to Windermere.

Manny was taken to the hospital in Windermere where he stayed until January 1946. From January 1946 until July 1946 Manny was in Ashford Sanatorium. From July 1946 through February 1950 Manny was in Alton Hospital (special T.B. bone unit). In February 1950 Manny was in Quare Mead until they closed it up.

I would like to insert here what Sister Eve Kahn Minden writes about Manny in her book, "Road Back". "Dear Elisabeth, real joy pervaded the house. Mendel has arrived! After years of separation because of the need for special treatment in the T.B. unit in Alton, he has joined our group again. It was like a reunion of brothers. He is a little boy 5ft nothing, I suppose, but his big permanent smile gives him his height. He had to retire to his room after his strenuous journey, but when I came in he was all smiles again. He shares a room with Arthur and Ernest and is not alone in case of need. His gait is not perfect yet, but he is not worried. What a pleasant whiff that young man spreads around. No wonder they were looking forward so much to having him around."

Manny came to London and went to Pitman's College where he learned bookkeeping and general office work. He was only allowed to do this on a part-time basis, as he still needed a lot of rest.

Manny got a job with an accounting firm where he worked for twelve years. He migrated to California to be near his in-laws where he lived for eight months. In January 1965 he came to Miami, Florida, where he had a very responsible position as Controller at the Jewish Home for the Aged for many years. Before he retired, he trained his son Barry to take his job. Manny has since returned to part-time work as he became very bored with retirement.

I did not know Manny in England. We met Manny in the early 70s when the late Szaja and Sala Newton, Aron

and Evelyn Zylberszac and Fay and I took a holiday together to Miami. Aron introduced him to us. When we moved to Miami in 1977, Manny became like a member of our family. At that time, his children, Barry and Michelle, were in their early teens, and Fay made sure that Manny and

family joined us for holidays and social occasions.

Our children and grandchildren, who are in Miami, have grown to love him very much. Manny is indeed an exceptional fellow. He is always ready to do anything for any of his friends. If anybody needs a

ride, Manny is always there. Sister Eva's said, "he is five foot nothing," but to me, he is 10ft at least, he has to be, how else could he house that great big heart of his?

Moniek Goldberg
June 20, 2004

The greatest of all moments - the realisation that my war was over, my life spared, and that now I dare look ahead beyond a present which had held me captive; look forward to a future when I could live without fear, hunger or privation - that moment, alas, I could not hold. It simply slipped away from me and that profoundly desired freedom did not come about. Instead I was exposed to a new reality I was not equipped to deal with; a growing state of melancholy and withdrawal held me in its grip so that, traumatised in my innermost being, I let life toss me hither and thither. My will, engaged as it had been entirely towards surviving an unpredictable and utterly ruthless present, continued to function in a similar mode and, for what now seems to have lasted a lifetime, I engaged in a never-ending struggle simply to cope, with no sense of achievement or completion. People and events, came and passed like a dream, somehow at one remove. Life took place somewhere 'over the other side' and I watched: detached, bemused, depressed.

Into this gloomy space entered an overpowering sense of loss of everything that ever had meaning for me. The so long held-back memories came flooding wave on wave, overwhelming me, drowning me in a dark pit of inconsolable grief. To add to this misery, or perhaps as a consequence thereof, my survival felt like treachery towards my family who had been exterminated.

Why spare me? Why should I have been forever separated from my brother during that gruesome night on the railway platform in Auschwitz, after we had been herded out from the cattle trucks, spared simply by being screamed at to turn back and follow not him who was destined for the gas chambers, but those earmarked for the labour camps. My blond hair and blue eyes

SURVIVING SURVIVAL

The Way It Felt

Otto Grünfeld

Otto came to England with the Windermere group. Throughout his life his interests have centred on music and psychology, the former being the basis to his professional life as a teacher, the latter a springboard to counselling. He is married and the father of five children. He has lived for the last forty years in North Yorkshire, England.

chosen in preference to dark hair and brown eyes, and, above all, the glasses: that hallmark of the despised Jewish intellectual. But who was chosen?

Now my existence was lived in no-man's-land. Alienation is a state of darkness which shuns the light, obscures vision; a malady which filches away meaning. I might have prayed to God, but I had no such helpmate. Upon this self-contained miasmic state forces came to play which I would have absorbed, but remained unconscious of the power of a kind look, a caring act, an encouraging word, quiet empathy and, most importantly, an undemonstrative acceptance. My hungry being must have sucked it all in like a babe on its mother's milk - greedily oblivious.

The picture I present so far is incomplete. A victim is not really an empty vessel waiting to be filled with the milk of human kindness, meekly receptive; at least not in my case. I admit, sadly, of less innocent sentiments; for in my immature and limited awareness I tended to wallow

in non-ceasing criticism of others, without good reason. Was it a form of compensation, a projection of pent-up feelings of resentment? Did my former humiliation stir up pride requiring revenge? Not enough of this inner process became apparent to prevent people occasionally remarking: "Why don't you ever say you hate them?"

No! I felt as though a play, enacted on a stage, had gone horribly wrong, the incredible drama invading the auditorium, the audience becoming helpless puppets manipulated by macabre forces. The whole business progressed irrespective of the judgement and will of the individual's present. In such a scenario, whom does one point one's finger at?

But beneath my cynicism another and far more fundamental substratum exerted its influence which I can only describe as my realm of the sacred. I, the unbeliever, held on to an undisclosable powerful belief which called me to worship at an altar of disaster, a shrine of death. Many taboos I kept as guardian of this sanctum for the expiation of the cardinal sin of survival: 'Thou shalt not allow life to seduce you!' they commanded. 'Thou shalt not find joy; thou shalt reject love! Thou shalt remain a visitor, wherever you are, unwanted and unworthy! And thou shalt keep this holy place inviolate until the end of thy days!'

What an amazing and formidable defence system erected against the vital sources of existence! My fixation, rigid and yet unconscious, disallowed any form of genuine commitment to present reality, since all values and meaning were secreted away in an unretrievable past. Thus, during the many years of drifting I hurt many a tender heart, repulsed kindness and concern; in short, remained insensitive towards others.

The work of love continued, though, relentlessly nibbling at the foundations of my defences.

Acquaintances, friends, later on my new family (and who knows what other influences) became donors of potions which in course of time began to take effect, facilitating gradual healing. It is my experience that unconditional and spontaneous loving, caring and compassion, simple and ego-free, unhampered by tribal, national or creedal ties, duty-free, become the guides leading out

of darkness into light. Such loving, I believe, is the stuff of life itself: not an extra, a luxury, but the one vital link to our future.

Defences, like mine were, can be breached - not at one go of course, not by persuasion either; the acting agent is man, call him or her your neighbour... However, the inner determination to hold on to resentment and, or, a dogged persistence in

rejecting the present reality in favour of a total fixation on the past, will indeed resist any offerings of love, allowing destructive forces to increase their hold and take over not only the person, but communities and society at large. Are not past and recent events testimony to age-old phenomenon of hate, bursting out over and over again with insane ferocity?

The implications of life's sacredness are many, and they relate to some divine, some spiritual, some cosmic agency which brought it about and keeps it in continuous existence. For that reason venerating life means, at the same time, venerating this Source, Originator, Creator. By the same token, it also means venerating the life of others.

The view I take involves total submission to a greater cause of which I am a minute, but not unimportant, link. My view is not particularly religious, neither does it lean on science, for reasons given below.

No special insight is required to realise that religion, on the whole, is giving way to an all-pervading scientific orientation amounting to a belief system, a gradual shift from spiritual and mystical grounds, held by religions, to the impressive world of science which includes theories of the origins and subsequent evolution of life, with man at its pinnacle. Scientific theories, moreover, strongly support the hypothesis of chance events which brought about life and consciousness.

So now we have two opposing perceptions about life. One assumes it is God-given, as is espoused by religion; the other that life is the result of chance. Besides, the protagonists on either side of the divide will, to some extent at least, enter into collusion with their anathema, resulting in the religious person making concessions to science, the scientist - overtly or covertly - clinging to aspects of a religious connotation. The effect of ambivalence of this kind is hardly beneficial to existential security. Adding to the confusion it is noticeable how many people will muddle spirituality with religion, and religion with the church. Since there is such widespread vagueness in this sphere, with

SURVIVING SURVIVAL

A Personal Perspective

Otto Grünfeld

My sanity, call it equanimity, or call it balance: they all depend largely on two premises I hold, namely, that all life is sacred; that I am chosen as trustee of my life and the life of others.

its extremist wing of orthodox dogmatism loudly proclaiming its 'truths', the man or woman searching for meaning is forever sliding on shifting ground, his or her desire to find answers leading to realms scientific; for these realms abound with alluring statements of facts. On the other side, the scientist, deep down, may become sceptical of the endless strings of theories, often one in contradiction to another, never a definitive answer in sight. The lurking sense of another reality behind his materialist propositions will offer a much-needed balance which, of course, cannot be seriously included in his official pronouncements.

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The time has come to say with strong emphasis: the answers to all the important questions on our existence, the whence? Wherefore? Whither? Can only be answered by: we do not know! Even daring to say: we cannot know! To me this would be an honest admission. However, we can - and do - intuit, draw insights from what we see and what we experience. To be sure, none of this will constitute proof; but then, do we need to look for proofs? We have suffered the rigidities of doc-

trine and dogma, are easy prey to reductionism and denial; are we not ready for a new approach, open and positive? If our hunch is, or our intuition prompts us to believe, that there is more to our existence than meets the eye, or is revealed by electronic microscopes, test tubes, telescopes, mathematical formulae, etc., then we begin to tread the path leading to some awe-inspiring revelations and humbling realisations. We need not be seers, or gurus, or holy men, to be struck by the infinite variety of living things, the apparent infinity of the macro and micro worlds, the mysterious presence of consciousness, in bacteria, beetles, you and me; the infinite progression of changes brought about by consciousness within time, perhaps within a timeless cosmic consciousness.

None of this leads us to total knowledge; nor does it lead to an apprehension of the Course. Faced with the phenomena whose inner essence remains hidden, beyond our limited perceptions, we but shudder, thrill, and stand in awe. And so we are bound to make a choice, not necessarily a conscious choice, between accepting purpose in our existence, or opting to believe in chance. The sages of old put it in mythological terms, speaking of 'God the Creator', emphasising the vital need to contemplate existence in terms of a divine Source. We rightly disbelieve the story, but the message it contains we ignore at our peril. For Purpose is integral to a continuing creation event, whilst Chance inevitably leads to chaos and disintegration.

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I refer back to the title of my writing. We - all of us - are survivors, our different past experiences more or less traumatic. Contrary to logic the

greater the survivor's trauma, the harder surviving becomes. The assumption that a catastrophic past experience should engender an increase of motivation and fuller engagement in life, entering more joyfully in a new and promising present, becoming more deeply involved in activities, relationships, in work and society generally, is, sadly, a misconception. Over and over again we meet the victims of disaster, persecution and other tragedies who seem to have lost their zest for life, lost interest and motivation, remaining aloof in their own inner world in dissociation, emptiness, greyness, depression. Far from being joyful, the occasional mask of humour and laughter hides a barren scape and an obstinate preoccupation with the past. Indeed, the past becomes the only *raison d'être* of their existence, the sanctity of the NOW being sacrificed for a sanctity of a PAST, to which the present must remain subservient. Idolatry of the past is decidedly not the same as profound respect for, and responsibility to, the past. Memory, this agent of the past, is given to us for a reason; but memory should not become the sole arbiter of the present. For memory is only one of the conditioning factors which make up the NOW, and has its rightful place. I fear, for many of us - and no doubt I was one of them - memory has been, and is, an autocratic dictator broaching no opposition, usurping the present to such an extent as to render it almost sterile.

"I have lost all - there is nothing to live for", or

"There is no God - a merciful God would not have allowed this to happen to me", or

"I have no feeling, the world is grey...", and a variety of similar negative expressions coming from the heart.

It is surprising, then, that a psyche fixated on the past, the dead past now worshipped and brought back to life, will devalue the experience of the present to the point of meaninglessness? To survive survival, I will, firstly, affirm Purpose in creation against the reductionist view of chance; secondly, affirm that Purpose, as a reality, presumes an

Originator (or Source) which gives it Meaning; thirdly affirm that Originator, Source, Creator, Ultimate Reality, God, place all existence within the realm of the Sacred.

I believe that surviving survival depends on the affirmation of the sacredness of existence and of life, of which we are a part, all of us, good and bad; and this affirmation is in the NOW rather than the past, the NOW rather than the future. For the truly realised NOW redeems the past. Only then can we plead, in cathartic revival, for a way forward, releasing survival from its notorious guilt and render it a blessing. To me it seems that the survivor of the grossest misfortune tends to journey in reverse, believing that to dwell in the past, re-opening the wounds of the past, is an honourable and holy duty.

There is another factor to consider. It is a well-known psychological dynamic of human behaviour to assign fault to others. In little things I will blame you for having broken a glass, for were you not standing in my way; had you not caused my inattention? etc. In larger issues the blame is directed further. Dreadful, outrageous crimes which were committed throughout history, are occurring at the present time, with sickening frequency. Whilst the historian will point to the human causes of these events, the victim of injustice and hate will, in the end, blame God. Is that a possible reason why, since God is believed to be the giver of life, a way of blaming God is to cut off one's attachment to life by retreating into the past, engaging in self-damaging compulsions, even terminating life altogether. The Jewish Holocaust survivor may point his accusing finger at Hitler, but, ultimately, he is pointing his finger at his God.

"How, in Thy mercy, could you have allowed this to happen?!"

Or, more pointedly still:

"The world and man Thou hast created, Thou created them imperfectly!!"

The first accusation implies a critique of the power of God, the second type of accusation is a critique of God's wisdom. Both types of accusation lead inevitably to a turning away from the vision of

creation as a fundamentally spiritual event, opening the floodgates to despair.

Supposing that creation is not a regimented affair, directed from on high, but a free giving and sustaining blessing to the world, in which all creatures go through a process of learning and loving in order to grow into responsive and responsible maturity; in which, moreover, certain omissions and transgressions of these two conditions result in inescapable consequences? Is then, within this context, a critique of the Divine justified? Man, just like you and I, can turn to evil, or condone it. Not God, but man was responsible for the catastrophe of the Holocaust; and man must continue to ponder on the enormity of it, the profound depth of depravity which allowed it to take place. In contrast, our ability to be responsive and responsible, elsewhere termed compassion, is a gift given us through the agency of consciousness, and its by-product, conscience, to respond and act for the good of all. But the reverse of these two gifts results, eventually, in crimes against creatures and persons, crimes against races and nations, crimes against humanity and the whole created world.

A free gift is not an 'article' the true Giver intends to manipulate. It is we who are under obligation to honour it and fulfil its potential. Seen from this perspective, history appears more like a curse than a blessing, highlighting, as it does, the greed, brutality and powerlust of man in his devious dealings. Of course, this is an incomplete picture on account of the fact that millions and millions of compassionate individuals are less frequently documented, most times not noticed or forgotten. Even so, the scenario presenting itself to us could not be more grim, the gifts bestowed on us not more grossly abused. Remorselessly, the gift of responsiveness and responsibility extends beyond me toward all mankind. In that sense it seems to become a burden, especially when my ego stands on guard. Yet the free gift of divine dispensation is not mine only, it is universal, but tending, within my frail individuality, to be 'watered down' so to speak, becoming selective, parochial, partisan, constricted by the force of

prejudice. And thus emerges the image of the struggling human identified by the famous words... the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak... which I am tempted to amend to: the spirit is given but seldom consummated; equally, there stands the image of a struggling humanity forever enmeshed in hates and conflicts.

The great task, it follows, begins NOW, with ME. The path leads beyond the ME to US, in the reality of the PRESENT. I would almost say DESPITE THE PAST, seeing the task as a journey out of darkness into light. The mission is personal to start with; it must become global if mankind is to survive. The onus lies, without any doubt, on us, not on God, to put our house in order. We

were, we are, given the tools, not to fashion an image of God, but to fashion man in the image of God, that is, to realise our true potential, to become, as it were, 'divinised'.

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From what has been said above the conclusion might be drawn that I advocate, if not a denial, but a distancing from the past, that, in a sense, the past is best put aside, the NEW fully engaged in. Nothing could be more mistaken. Although we have met - and ourselves been that way inclined - those veterans and victims who keep silent with regard to their past suffering, or cover their pain under a blanket of casualness, an understandable and

frequent defence, in itself it is an opting out of a responsibility of paramount importance. To be a survivor of shattering events, be they personal or global, involves shouldering the burden of being a witness as well as a mourner; one who remembers and recalls what has happened, one who mourns and honours those who perished.

But those who, from political or racial motives, insist on denying the cruel realities of the past must surely be condemned as either just gullible ignoramuses, puerile phantasists, or evil liars. The sacred will triumph. The sacred had been tainted by man who consistently committed sacrilege; but man, try as he might, has no power to vanquish it.

In the 1930s, my Mamma ran a dressmaking atelier. It was, really, a workroom, but "atelier" is such a splendid word...

The Cjankiewicz family was one of Cracow's best known and most respected military families. They lived, the parents and their two grown-up children, a son - Piotrus, and a daughter - Olenka, in Plac Jabonowskich - a lovely square almost directly opposite the Jagiellonian University. Mme Cjankiewicz and Mlle Olenka were Mamma's clients. When and by whom they were recommended to Mamma I do not know, but there was true trust and great liking on both sides. We were, all, particularly fond of Olenka. She was then, just before the outbreak of war, in her twenties. A golden-haired, fair-complexioned, maybe a little plump, young lady whose smooth cheeks dimpled when she smiled. Olenka was charming. We knew that she would marry soon. Marry very well.

We had no telephone... and although I was only nine years old, I knew Cracow well. I quite often acted as a messenger for Mamma who would quickly pen a few words on thick, starchy letter-paper in her small, neat handwriting, sign it with a little flourish, fold the sheet in half and slip it into an envelope. This time it was addressed to Mme C. and in the left-hand corner, boldly, she had written "By Hand".

Sometimes, Mme C. herself opened the door. A lady to her

A MILITARY FAMILY

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.

finger-tips - she was exquisitely mannered and genuinely well-disposed towards all living creatures including her Jewish dressmaker's small daughter. Her smile was so friendly and warm. She would invite me to "come in". I have retained a misty impression of an over-furnished, over-laden room dominated by a large claret-coloured velvet sofa. The light, softened by fine lace curtains, streamed in through two tall windows. I was always offered a bonbon from a round porcelain dish...

In 1939, when war had broken out, and Germany had invaded Poland, apart from the terrible humiliation of being a vanquished, defeated nation, we fell upon very

lean, very hard times economically. Mamma's elegant Cracow clientele almost immediately found themselves in straitened circumstances, burdened with problems, anxiety and suffering... There was no sewing, no work for Mamma to do. The charming, smiling ladies did not require Mamma's services. A new frock, a new outfit was the very last thing on their minds. They, like everybody else, were feeling the pinch in everyday life. We all knew that the military families had been particularly hard hit in the very first days, very first weeks of the war. Their men - the fathers, husbands, some had been called up even before the word "War" was in circulation. Major Cjankiewicz had been called up, as had Piotrus - the married son, as had Olenka's fiancé...

It seems strange to me now, in the year 2004, strange and, with hindsight, presumptuous, that we, the Jews, could for a moment have believed that it was within our power to bring solace, to offer spiritual comfort, to assuage distress... but it took time to lose the natural reflexes of freedom. Mamma and I went to call upon the three ladies with a small posy of fresh flowers. How pleased they were to see us, how graciously they received us. Young Mme C. now lived with her mother and sister-in-law. We stayed a while...

It was Mamma who had made the young Mme C.'s long, white wedding dress. It was cut on the bias - a phrase I liked very much, "na

ukos..." It was considered, I remember, very elegant, very sophisticated. When Mamma was working on it, the whole dress was hardly ever entirely exposed. It reposed in a white, fine linen reticule, and only the part which was actually "under construction" would be cautiously drawn out. The sleeves were long and slim and had no cuff, but ended in a triangular point which went over the wrist and, lightly, on to the hand itself. Mamma, swaddled in white, hemming, almost invisibly, the wrist edge and the point and only the lowest part of the sleeve peeping out of the reticule... When the bride-to-be came for a fitting a double white sheet was spread over the rug to protect the hem of the dress.

No news was ever received from either the Major or from Olenka's fiancé. They disappeared without trace. In the early winter of 1940, a miracle took place. Piotrus, all skin and bone and in rags, came back, from a German Prisoner-of-War camp on Polish soil, to his wife, mother and sister. I remember Mme C. describing the scene to Mamma: "He walked into the room early one morning, we could hardly recognise him.... Lidka (his wife) was still in her dressing gown... He does not stop coughing.... Day and night, he does not stop..."

We did not see the Cjankiewicz ladies for quite some time, but one day, in 1940, Mme C., the mother, did call on Mamma. She was invited to sit in our best, most comfortable chair. Her frock was hanging loosely, limply on her once pleasantly feminine frame... anxiety, uncertainty, heart-ache... Mamma and she talked quietly for a while. And then Mme C. said: You know that lovely "Fabrics and Trimmings" shop in Plac Szczepanski, you know, the one you recommended me to... Well, both the shop and its owner, Mrs Emmer, that helpful lady, have gone, disappeared from one day to the next... Mamma knew. There were very few Jewish shops left in Cracow. Mamma and Mrs Emmer had known each other for many years and a mutually fruitful arrangement had existed between them. Mamma recommended the lady clients, the owner invited Mamma, from time to time, to choose a coupon of fabric for herself - gratis. That was how Jewish Cracow functioned.

Mme C. explained that Olenka was very downcast, almost despondent these days. She thought that a pretty new frock might restore her spirits, put a smile back on her face... Could Mamma obtain some nice fabric? "Silk? A lovely new summer frock, that might help... Can I leave it all to you? The fabric, the accessories.... Olenka wants something simple.... she likes navy-blue, maybe with a light floral pattern... might be nice..."

The very next day Mamma and I set off for Kazimierz, the pre-war Jewish Quarter. Kazimierz - with its specific odours, colours, with its wealth and its poverty, its inhabitants. That exotic gallery is still to be found, alas not in the flesh, but in paint... Chagall, Gortlieb, Behrman have rendered them so faithfully, alive, as they once were.... Now, in 1940, there was a tick, grey pall suspended over Kazimierz. Another year? Two? In the streets there was no sign of the dark-garbed, long-bearded, round-hatted Orthodox Jews - The German's favourites... They had learnt, much to their cost, that it was wisest not to set foot out-of-doors. Still, at communal prayer-time, the bravest, the most religiously ardent of them could be seen standing in the doorway, vainly attempting to render themselves invisible, whilst assessing, warily, the lie of the land - Could one make it to the Synagogue without being targeted? And if the streets presented no visible danger, they would scuttle, scurry along, their white stockings peeping from under long black kaftans... to praise the Creator... Here and there a beshawled old woman would pass by as swiftly as her swollen legs would allow... Even the children, and Kazimierz was teeming with children - pale-faced boys, their heads covered with yarmulkas, little girls with sing-song voices, their dark pigtailed, too heavy to fly in the air, threaded with coloured ribbons, were quiet, subdued. The liveliness, the chanting games, the strong, resonant voices raised in bargaining, in haggling, in drawing attention to fine merchandise, were stilled. Fear had stilled them.

We made for Dietle Street, a main artery cutting right across Kazimierz. We entered a cavernous, dark tene-ment - the air yeasty, sour with

human exhalations. Mamma knocked at a door. We heard the very faintest click of the "Judas" shutter and we knew we were being appraised from within. A wizened, little old lady, bewigged and bespectacled, opened the door. We sat down at her kitchen table and whilst Mamma explained why we had come, what we wished to purchase, the old lady listened, but continued, her mortar between her knees, to grind some substance, pleasantly smelling of cinnamon, with her pestle. In the end she left off grinding and said: "I'll see what I can find..." Mamma whispered to me: "They had one of the best shops here, in Kazimierz, wonderfully stocked with high quality merchandise..." The old lady's treasures must have been cunningly hidden for it was a while before she came back bearing three bolts of silk fabric. All three were lovely, but I knew that Mamma had made up her mind straightaway, although she gave the impression of pondering, hesitating. I understood. I was already familiar with the twists and turns of the buying and selling protocol.

Mamma chose a length of navy-blue silk lightly scattered with small delicate turquoise and pale-yellow flowers. The old lady said: "I like it too, it used to sell very well..." She then pulled out a long drawer in the kitchen dresser. It was divided into square containers. Mamma found in them all the accessories she needed: navy-blue sewing silk, shoulder pads, petersham ribbon, a long zip-fastener and a neat mother-of-pearl buckle. A few minutes spent in cordial bargaining, and we walked away with a nicely tied parcel around which the old lady had placed several out-of-date newspaper sheets "so as not to attract attention..."

I have not forgotten the little old lady and have wondered, many times in the intervening years: Did they find her hiding place? And where did her wig and spectacles end up? And who came into the possession of her mortar and pestle?

Both Mme C. and Olenka liked the fabric very much, and the former exclaimed: "What a dainty buckle! Mother-of-pearl, hmmm..."

Mamma made Olenka a simple, but elegant summer frock; a lightly flared skirt, a square neckline - to show off her smooth, white neck.

Olenka stood in front of the looking-glass very pleased with her own reflection. And it "called up that spot of joy in her cheek..."

In the summer of 1943, long after my family had perished, long after my world had been "liquidated" - I use this verb advisedly, for I learnt to combine it, then, with my people and our "assets" - harmless people, modest assets. I found myself in a small village - Nogila - not far from Cracow, in the service of a farming family. A lowly servant, a general dogsbody, but chiefly, now that summer was here in full flight, to drive the cow, twice-a-day, out to pasture. The cow, a docile animal, grazed peacefully. The grass was so green and fresh. I would sit under a tree and spin my thoughts - pre-war, war-time, and, as a treat, as a luxury, daring post-war thoughts... "What if I survived?"

One day I noticed a large white patch hooked onto the grassy knoll. I gathered it up. A newspaper! A double sheet! It was the "Krakauer Zeitung" - come on the wings of the breeze? A war-time newspaper published under rigorous German control for the consumption of the local Polish population. I had not seen, I had not read the printed

word, of which I was so fond, for a long time. Tenderly, I smoothed out the tatty pages. A newspaper! The sacred printed word! I knew nothing about the progress of the war. Military movements, campaigns, advances, retreats - nothing! But I remembered the terrible "downturn" in people's hopes when, in June 1941, Germany invaded Russia... The Jews could talk of nothing else. The tears welled up in people's eyes, coursed down their cheeks.... Bereft of all hope, the Jews wept openly. A deep, black depression descended upon the Jews - like a wave upon wave of devouring locusts.... I still did not understand, except that they were winning the war, that it was bad for us, Jews. And now this newspaper described a place, in Russia, called "Katyn Forest" where the victorious German armies, so they said, had come upon, had discovered, had disinterred the tragic, grisly contents of human mass-graves - the remains of the Polish Army Officers Corps... The language, the imagery in which this terrible evidence, this heinous act of murder was described could not have been more gory, more horrific... They, the Germans, with their clean hands, clear consciences, delicate sensibili-

ties" gave full vent to a deep sense of outrage, of horror...

These officers, the cream, the pride of Poland's army, were murdered on Stalin's orders... so they said... A list of names followed, for the officers, fully clothed, had their identity papers, family letters and photographs, diaries, log and record books... on them...

The list, arranged in alphabetical order - published, I believe, in instalments - was long. Having read columns "A" and "B", some way down the page I found column "C". Some way down column "C" I found Major Cjankiewicz... I still did not understand the enormity of the statistics, why, for what reasons, by whom...? I did not have the background necessary to such understanding...

I knew though, instinctively, that the Cjankiewicz family, in their home in Plac Jabonowskich, must be grief-stricken - that I understood very well, and my heart went out to them, for I, too, carried great sorrow within me.

The family have long been dead now. Olenka never married. She kept her promise; she waited for the man she loved, but he did not come back from the war...

My home town is Poznan which before the war had the reputation, with some justification, of being very antisemitic. There was a saying that if a Jew goes to Poznan, he returns unrecognisable, which sounds better in Polish:

**GDY ZYD JEDZIE DO POZNANIA
WRACA NIE DO POZNANIA.**

I was a little surprised when another Jewish survivor from Poznan, Bronek Bergman, last year sent me a copy of a letter from Danuta and Lech Muszynski informing me of a possible reunion of Jews who lived in Poznan before the war. I agreed to participate. Ten Jewish survivors expressed some interest in coming but only two turned up. Bronek and myself.

The hotel in Poznan was of very high standard. I arrived there in the evening and on the following morning Danuta and Lech called

MY VISIT TO POZNAN

**Jerry Herszberg
(March 2004)**

Jerzy came to England with the Windermere group and lived in the Loughton and Belsize Park hostels. He is a brilliant mathematician and taught for many years at the University of London.



Jerry Herszberg with Mayor of Poznan.

at the hotel offering guidance and transport. They are the joint authors of the book "The Jewish Cemetery in Lodz" and they are also the authors of a second book on the new Cemetery. They both proved most helpful - unobtrusive when the situation required but in matters practical Danuta saved me from foolish purchases as my luggage was temporarily mislaid.

Our first organised function was a restaurant dinner, at Bronek's invitation. There I met one Jewish person now living in Poznan and feeling very much at home there although he is in fact a Holocaust survivor. Perhaps I should add that, so far, he did not receive any compensation. There were also representatives of the Polish-Israeli Friendship Society based in Poznan.

Our next event was a meeting with the President of Poznan, Wejciech Szczesny Kaczmarek (no need to pronounce it!) And the Vice-President Ryszard Olszewski. The highlight came with a traditional

toast to our mutual friendship drunk in a very strong Polish vodka.

Our next dinner was at the invitation of Robert D. Gamble, President of "Media Rodzina (family) of Poznan, Inc.". On that occasion I was delighted to meet a fellow mathematician, Professor Jerzy Albrycht, with whom I was able to talk about many mutual acquaintances in the world of mathematics.

Our later meeting with many members of the Polish-Israeli Friendship Society at which Bronek and I were the guests of honour, was the scene of a very friendly discussion which we both enjoyed. Bronek actually met a lady who remembered him as a child.

I was also asked to appear, with Bronek, on Mr Gamble's radio programme to answer various questions asked by local people. As I had less experience in it than Bronek, I gave only brief answers but the lady in charge was very anxious to get my views on what opportunities I had had to associate with pre-war neighbours and what experiences I had had of antisemitism. I was also photographed in front of the house where I used to live before the war by

Zbigniew Pakula, a reporter working for the Poznan newspaper (Gazeta Poznańska).

When the official programme was over, I was invited by Danuta and Lech to spend the Sunday with them. This proved most enjoyable and very moving. The Nazis destroyed the Jewish cemetery but the Poles have managed to retrieve some of the gravestones which they carefully transferred to a small town, Miloslowo. I was taken there and was very moved to discover that this had happened. My father died just before the war and, although he had no stone, I am glad to know that so many of the headstones have been restored.

Later that day I was shown a gate with a Hebrew inscription, carefully preserved. A further drive and I saw a stone with Jewish writing on it. Lech proved better at reading it, but I was better at understanding, so between us we somehow managed to puzzle it out in part. We then took a walk in the forest, followed by a drive round the countryside for a visit to a small castle of Kornik with beautiful furniture and pictures. Finally, we enjoyed another very good meal. I

found the restaurants to be of a very high standard and the food very satisfactory, both in quality and quantity. My hosts were very caring and most generous.

On my return to London, whilst waiting in the crowded Poznan airport lounge, Lech surprised me. Danuta had had to go to work. Lech came to wish me a happy journey and on behalf of them both, Lech gave me a warm handshake - a touching gesture which I shall remember for a long time.

At Heathrow, while I was waiting for my luggage, a lady addressed me in Polish and asked me in a friendly way, about my visit. When I told her that I stayed six days in Poznan she said with some surprise: "But you are a Jew." I look Italian to English people, but Jewish to the Poles. When I told her how much I enjoyed my visit, her face brightened up and she said: "I shall now walk, as a Pole, with great pride."

I found the visit very moving, very enjoyable, and I wish to express my sincere thanks to the organisers, but especially to Danuta and Lech who started out as my guides and ended up as much valued friends.

May Their Memory Be Blessed

My gratitude to Itzhak Reichebaum for his help in writing this article. Itzhak and his brother Adulek of Blessed Memory were put on one of the trucks near the railway station.

His father showed resourcefulness and at the last moment took both of them off the truck and thus saved their lives.

Itzak stayed in the Blizin camp and later on in Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen and Mathausen. He was liberated on the 4th May 1945 in the Gunskirchen in Austria by the 71st Infantry Division of the American Army.

★ ★ ★

The events of the Shoah are an integral part of Jewish History, the most horrific chapter in which human cruelty has reached new peaks, such cruelty which has been unknown to us hitherto, the likes of which has not happened throughout history.

WHAT HAPPENED TO US CONTINUES TO LIVE WITHIN US FOREVER

Ruta Krieger-Horowicz

Ruta was born in Piotrkow Tryb. She was in the Piotrkow Ghetto, in hiding or in various concentration camps. After the war she settled in Israel with her mother. She is very close to a number of our members in Israel. She resisted talking or writing about her experiences until very recently.

Here, the dangerous combination of modern technology and racial and tyrannical regimes found their expression which has no revulsion towards any means to wipe out the Jewish people from the face of the

earth and to execute the Final Solution according to Nazi style. Murder has become a profession. Even today, almost 60 years after the furnaces have ceased to operate, new and poisonous antisemitism spreads against the Jewish people in Europe - anti-Semitism which compares the State of Israel and its Army to the Nazi thugs.

Many large groups of Germans are prepared neither to listen nor to discuss the events of the Shoah, claiming that they are not responsible for crimes which were executed so many years ago.

The Shoah, however, happened in "humanitarian and cultured Europe" which raises its eyes to high heavens in self-righteousness and moralises to us Jews who still continue to be burnt and bombed.

Buses are being exploded in our streets and their passengers being burnt alive. In places which are buzzing with human activity, our youth are being burnt; our children are being murdered and slaughtered on peaceful roads and babies in their cots.

In retrospect, I wish to re-tell about a traumatic event which happened in Piotrkow at the end of July 1943, an event which forever will remain engraved on the hearts of us all. The memory burns inside me like flaming fire and does not give me respite. I wish to record this story about the murder of the children.

At that time, in the month of July 1943, the "Block" was about to be liquidated, part of the people were just about to be housed next to the Kara glass factory and another part were going to be lodged in the Bugaj factory. Families with children, however, were about to be sent to the work camp of Blizin.

The lists were compiled rapidly, parents were given false promises of the good condition that their children would receive in this camp. The parents wished to believe; did they have any alternative? But to everyone's regret, this terrible lie was soon discovered.

Near the railway station of Piotrkow a children's selection had been carried out in utmost cruelty. The children were torn away from their parents. Amongst heart-breaking screaming, people were compressed into rail cattle wagons and the crying and shouting children

were loaded on to army trucks and were brought to the area of the station. It is impossible to describe the horror and despair of the parents during their journey to the camp of Blizin, leaving their children behind to their bitter fate.

The unfortunate children were brought into an isolated place in the town where they stayed for a few days. One cold and rainy day the children were taken outside the town where a pit was dug for all of them to be buried together. German soldiers with musical instruments played beautiful tunes on trumpets and drums, while the half naked children were ordered to dance before these inhuman people.

To the sweet sounds of the music, the soldiers opened fire and the children collapsed while still half alive into the common grave. Many hours afterwards, the earth above these young victims trembled as if the lives which had been terminated prematurely with such immense cruelty were protesting against this gross injustice.

This chapter is no doubt, one of the most horrific in the history of Piotrkow and will remain forever in the memory of every one who was in the ghetto at the time and who survived the Holocaust.

Below are the names of the four children who were murdered in that incident.

HENIK STASHEVSKY
ASTOSIA DUNEVITCH
MOSHE FINKOSHVITZ
FELUSH FINKOSHVITZ

How strange and mysterious are the ways of fate even in such cruel events. In the days when the journey to Blizin was organised, Rifka, the sister of Henik Stashevsky, got high fever. Following the advice of her aunt, Eva Gilda, Rifka's mother decided not to join that transport to Blizin.

From that time onwards, Rifka was inseparable from her aunt Eva; their route took them from Bugaj via Ravensbruck until they reached Bergen-Belsen, where they were liberated by the allies.

Rifka, at the time of her liberation, was only seven years old. Today she is the Director of Manuscript and Archives in the National Library in Jerusalem.

One and a half million Jewish children were murdered by the Nazis. Every child who was murdered was a whole world with great potential for the future. They were lost to us and to the Jewish people.

Back in February 1943, four months after my escape from the Warsaw Ghetto at the age of nineteen, my father, who lived in hiding on the Aryan side of Warsaw, suggested to me to see Mr Holka, one of his customers from before the war, and ask him for help in finding me work. With an Aryan appearance, I had a reasonable chance to survive under a new Christian identity, but without being seen to be employed I would find it impossible to find a place to live without raising suspicions.

Next day, from a tram stop in Okopowa Street, close to the Powazki Cemetery in the Stawki area of Warsaw, I took a short walk to Mlocińska Street. I might have been in the country; it was an area of low buildings and sheds standing on their own plots of land. Some of them, squalid and neglected, evidently served as workshops. In these rural surroundings, I found it hard to believe that I was only a few hundred yards away from the Ghetto

EDMUND HOLKA

By Jerzy Lando
(January 2004)

Jerzy Lando's book "Saved by my Face" was published about three years ago and has enjoyed considerable success.

On December 12, 2002, Edmund Holka, a Polish Christian was posthumously awarded the title of Righteous Amongst the Nations for helping Jews under the Nazi occupation. I was one of those he helped. I shall describe what he did to deserve such honour and give an account of the award ceremony that took place in my native town, Lodz, during the inauguration of the forthcoming 60th anniversary of the last days of the Lodz ghetto.

wall and almost next to the infamous Umschlagplatz, from where tens of thousands of Jews had recently been transported to Treblinka. 14 Mlocińska Street was a sprawling single storey corner building. A narrow, shabby entrance door led to a lobby serving as a waiting room, large enough to accommodate a table and two chairs. The door-plate on another door on the left said "Kancelaria, or Office". Full of apprehension, I knocked on a small window above it, and a young man came out.

'Could I see Mr Edmund Holka? I am Stegan Wojtyla. Mr Jakub Lando suggested I should come and see him.' The young man went back to the office and a tall, slim gentleman of aristocratic appearance, in his early fifties, with greying hair and bright deeply set blue eyes, came out. 'I am Edmund Holka. What can I do for you?' Without waiting for a reply, he ushered me into the office, most of it taken by a massive oak desk. On one side, close to the only window,

sat a swarthy man, who said "Dziendobry, good day" in a strong foreign accent and the young man who had let me in. "Do you mind leaving us on our own for a few minutes?" Mr Holka asked, turning towards his companions and, when we were alone, he was ready to hear me. He asked me to sit down. "You can speak now. This was my son Janusz and my very close friend and partner, Fritz."

"My real name is Jerzy Lando," I said, almost in a whisper, "but I managed to get a Kennkarte in the name of Stegan Wojtyla. Here it is." I pulled it out of my pocket, as if I did not think that he would believe me without seeing it. "My father is safe and sends his best regards." My words must have sounded hackneyed in the circumstances. "I escaped from the Ghetto in October. I need a job. I can speak and write German. I have secretarial qualifications and good experience in book-keeping and general office work. I do need a job." I repeated the words but tried to sound as if I had many alternatives. I could not banish from my mind the thought that if Mr Holka granted my request he would be exposing himself to mortal danger. A Pole guilty of knowingly helping a Jew was punished with the death penalty. I was a leper.

He looked straight into my face and replied after a short hesitation "Yes, I will offer you a job. We can do here with a cashier and a reliable clerk. But nobody except myself must know your real name. You can start tomorrow if you wish, when I shall sort out your salary." "You are very kind," I resorted to another platitude, hardly believing my luck and trying hard to hide my joy. Was it all a dream?

★ ★ ★

Sixty-one years have passed since, but it was only a few years ago, when I was collecting material for my book "Saved By My Face" that I read the following account by Edmund Holka's son, Janusz, of some of the events of the years 1939 - 1944 concerning his father, of which I knew nothing:

"My father, Edmund Holka, a businessman, was born in 1890 and lived in Gniezno, where from 1914 till 1939 he owned a wholesale textile firm. In October 1939, at the beginning of the German occupation,



2nd on the left: President of the City of London, 3rd from left: Janusz Holka, 4th from left: another recipient of Yad Vashem medal.

his business was confiscated by the German authorities. In March 1940, he was expelled from Gniezno to the General-Gouvernement, where he settled with his family in Warsaw. In the spring of 1940, he established the Warsaw Recycled Raw Material Centre, that he ran until 1944, the year of the Warsaw Uprising. After the Uprising he went to live in Piotrków Trybunalski and in February 1945, having crossed the Soviet-German frontline, he returned to Gniezno. He died in 1972. In spring 1940, after arriving in Warsaw, he got in touch with a group of Jews who suggested a joint business venture for the collection and sale of waste materials for recycling. The partners were Mr Fajwlowicz (Jewish), Mr Hersz Gezundheit (Jewish), Mr Edmund Holka (Christian), Mr Roman Polirsztok (Jewish), Mr "Fritz" Tugenthat (Jewish). Edmund Holka and Fritz were full-time working partners right to the end, while the others were sleeping partners for much of the time. The business was located in Warsaw, first at ul. Okopowa 76 and then at ul. Młocińska 14. Initially, for a while, the office staff consisted of Ben, Janusz Holka, "Inzynier" (I don't remember his full name), Zenon Rychlik. In early 1943, Jerzy Lando joined it. The manual work was done at first by a group of Jews from the Ghetto. From the time the Ghetto was sealed off until its final liquidation, they were being brought from there each day. At some stage non-Jewish workers had to be employed. This arrangement provided a chance for smuggling Jews to the Aryan side of Warsaw. From 1942 the firm was loosely connected with the German firm Rohstoffzentrale GmbH in Warsaw.

The Centre ceased to exist in August 1944 at the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising. Throughout the firm's existence Edmund Holka regularly shared the profits with all his sleeping partners, most of them in hiding, thus providing them with means of survival.

Roman Polirsztok was brought daily to work from the Ghetto, while his wife Lusia and son remained in the Ghetto. In the Centre he was in charge of finances and organisation. He was the key confidential partner of Edmund Holka. One day, in August 1942 (one month into the liquidation of the Ghetto) Edmund Holka went home at al. Jasna for lunch. As soon as he arrived he received a phone call from the Ghetto informing him that the family Polirsztok were detained at the Umschlagplatz. He immediately made his way there, though I cannot tell how he got there. When he arrived, the Polirsztoks were already inside a railway wagon. Edmund Holka, who could speak German like a native, approached the commandant of the Umschlagplatz to intervene on behalf of Roman Polirsztok, arguing that the man was an indispensable specialist in his firm. He presented documents from the Warsaw District and from the German firm, Rohstoffzentrale Warschau, (once sorted, the firm's produce, raw materials, were regularly shipped to Germany). Following Edmund Holka's intervention, the German ordered Roman Polirsztok to be let out of the wagon, but the latter would not leave without his wife and son. Further arguments followed, until the commandant was persuaded to allow the whole family to leave the train just before it departed. The following day

the whole Polirsztok family arrived at the warehouse at Młocińska Street as part of the group of Jewish workers. Roman Polirsztok went back to the Ghetto each day, but Lusia and her son remained outside the Ghetto. Thanks to Edmund Holka's acquaintance with Father Krauze of the Priests' and Missionaries' Rest Home in Marki near Warsaw, Lusia and her son were allowed to stay in Marki till May 1943, when they left to live with friends at ul. Jagiellońska in Warsaw-Praga. Roman Polirsztok, meanwhile, did not turn up for work as usual one day in February or March 1943. He had been deported and perished, probably in Sobibor. None of Edmund Holka's interventions produced any results.

Lusia Polirsztok and her son survived the occupation. In 1947 they left for France and made their home in Nice. Lusia changed her name from Polirsztok to Szepietowska. She maintained contact by correspondence with Edmund Holka till 1972. Ben, who was Jewish, perished in 1942 in Treblinka, "Fritz" Tugenthat, Jewish, who came from Bielska Biala and lived throughout the war on the Aryan side of Warsaw, survived. I met him in the years 1946-47. "Inzner", a former officer in the pre-war Polish Forces, survived the war. I was in touch with him in the years 1946-48, Zenon Rychlik - Jewish - a lawyer, survived the war. I met him in 1946-47. He wore the uniform of an officer in the UB (Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Department of Security). Mr Fajwlowicz with his family lived in hiding on the Aryan side from 1941 onwards. After the war he emigrated to Paris. Hersz Gezundheit and his family survived in hiding from 1942 and eventually emigrated to France."

On seeing Janusz's account, I submitted it to the Yad Vashem and eventually received a long awaited invitation from the Israeli Embassy in Warsaw to attend on October 2nd 2003 the award of the Yad Vashem medal to Edmund Holka's family in Lodz where his son lives at present and where I was born. A Christian friend collected me and my wife from the Warsaw airport and on the following day we made our way to Lodz in his car. We were passing close to the Lodz Jewish cemetery and I took the opportunity to visit the graves of my grandparents, both of whom had died in the Lodz Ghetto in 1941. During the years from 1892 to 1939,

in this largest Jewish cemetery in Europe, spread over 105 acres some 180,000 people were buried. The first burials took place in an area specially designated for the victims of a cholera epidemic. Some 43,000 people died in the Lodz Ghetto and were buried along Bracka Street in the undeveloped areas of the cemetery, called the Ghetto field.

At 5 pm in the magnificent hall of mirrors of the Poznański Palace - now a museum - the representative of the Israeli ambassador delivered a moving speech in which she explained to the audience the meaning of "The Righteous amongst Nations". She underlined the debt of gratitude owed to them by the State of Israel and by all Jews. Two Poles who ignored all risks to save Jewish lives were going to be honoured today, one of them Edmund Holka. She handed his Yad Vashem medal to his son, Janusz.

The hall was packed with people. For this and the day's other events many dignitaries and representatives of Clergy, of the civil and state authorities and armed forces were invited by the President of the City of Lodz. "Today we must return to the memory of the tragic events of the war affecting the Jews. This is enough. We need no other reasons" - spoke Jerzy Kropiwnicki. Those that were present were to remember children who met their death in the Lodz Ghetto from starvation, cold and exhaustion, those who perished in Chelmno-on-Ner, in Auschwitz and other death camps, and the few who survived with their memories branded for ever by those tragic events.

Across the rain-soaked courtyard, in the adjoining, now disused ghost of a cotton mill, a concert "Children of the Lodz Ghetto", a projection of an animated film, "The Last Generation" and presentation of the exhibition, "The Legend of the Children of the Lodz Ghetto" took place. I found my way to the cast factory hall in the dark; the presentation had already started, and I had great difficulty in finding an empty chair. An audio-visual with a live orchestra and choir graphically depicted in words, music, and pictures, the gruesome images accompanied by deafening drum beat, close-ups of faces of starving youngsters, scenes of parents forced to deliver for deportation their own children under the age of 10. When,

at the end, the lights came on, I was surprised to see that the place was crowded with hundreds of Polish schoolchildren. They were learning the fate of the Jewish children in the Ghetto and the Ghetto's history.

They heard that the Nazis started the establishment of a separate area for Jews in the district of Baluty in February 1940. (I was "lucky" to have been deported with my parents from Lodz to Cracow in December 1939). The Ghetto was sealed off and isolated from the rest of the city on April 30. It was one of the most hermetically closed and guarded ghettos in Poland. During five years, more than 200,000 Jews passed through the Litzmannstadt Ghetto (the Germans' new name for Lodz) that included inhabitants of town and villages of the region and of Western and Central Europe, including Prague, Vienna and Berlin. The Lodz Ghetto was a gigantic labour camp where clothing, footwear, blankets, uniforms and even underwear to satisfy the needs of the Reich, were manufactured. Not only adults but also children were working. In 1942 the Germans went ahead with transporting Jews to the death camp in Chelmno-on-Ner, starting with criminals and then the unemployed, the aged, the sick, but also children who were referred to as 'surplus elements, because not working'. In July - August 1944, the remnants of the Jews in the Lodz Ghetto, nearly 70,000, were deported to Auschwitz. Of those, between five and seven thousand people survived the war. On 29 August 2004, the 60th anniversary of the liquidation will be commemorated in Lodz.

The next day I visited the Jewish Community offices in Pomorska Street. They looked pristine, with impressive facilities, offices, rest rooms, a canteen for the members, many newly arrived, ostensibly happy to live amongst their non-Jewish neighbours. Mr Keller explained that at the time of the Iraqi crisis, Poland was probably the only country where no anti-war or anti-Israeli demonstrations took place.

I was glad I made the visit to Poland. Both my wife and myself came back emotionally drained, but Henry Fieldings' words seemed appropriate for our visit. "When I'm not thank'd at all, I'm thank'd enough. I've done my duty and I've done no more."

This is the very last moment to remember the events of the Lodz Ghetto, whilst those who were of it, who passed through it, are still alive. Wrangling, elbowing, have no place here. Please, do not ask, therefore, how this one, or that one reacted towards this project at its inception - says Jerzy Kropiwnicki....

Piotr Lipiński is speaking to the Mayor of Lodz, the Chairman of the ZchN-U.

Piotr Lipiński: The city of Lodz has been bearing in mind, for a number of months now, the 60th anniversary of the liquidation of the Ghetto, and it is being said in town that you, sir, are holding talks about the Jews with sincere willingness and singular knowledge. When did the Chairman of the ZchN-U become interested in the Lodz Jews?

Jerzy Kropiwnicki: A year ago, before the Referendum on the European Union, the Minister, Władysław Bartoszewski, arrived in Lodz. He asked me to turn my full attention towards the preparations for the 60th anniversary of the liquidation of the Lodz Ghetto, in August 2004. His first argument considered it a challenge that those who survived the ghetto are now in their seventies and eighties. Many wish to be present in person at the Commemoration services and this will, in all likelihood, be the last and the greatest journey of their lives. The second argument is that it will be, most probably, the only international remembrance ceremony relating to World War II. The West wishes to forget; the memorial and commemoration services in 1995 covering the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War were, for many people in the West, the final closing of that chapter. Only Poland accords the various successive anniversaries remembrance and dignity.

PL: Were you already, earlier, familiar with the history of the Lodz Ghetto?

In perfect candour - only vaguely. I knew that there had been one, that the Jewish Community had been sizeable. I knew the name of Chaim Mordechai Rumkowski, that he was the Judenrat leader in the Ghetto, pretty much everybody in Lodz knows his name. But that was the extent of my knowledge.

TO SCREAM WITH THE VICTIM: 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIQUIDATION OF THE LODZ GHETTO

**Piotr Lipiński,
Jerzy Kropiwnicki**

Piotr Lipiński interviewed Jerzy Kropiwnicki, the Mayor of Lodz and Chairman of the right wing United Christian National Party (NchN-U). The interview took place in April 2004 and was printed in "Kultura" the weekly Polish Paper

**Translated by
Janina Fischler Martinho**

PL: When you were strolling about Lodz's "Bałuty area" did you know, did you sense that it was in that very neighbourhood that the Ghetto came into being?

No, and I did not know something else, which is worse. About a year ago, I was speaking to a representative of the Jewish Community and I learnt from him that Lodz is deemed to be the most anti-Semitic city globally. The walls here are smeared with anti-Semitic graffiti. I have seen such slogans in Paris, in Strasbourg and in various German towns, but that justifies nothing. At one time the City Council maintained that these acts of hooliganism were the outcome of social conditions. It is the City Council's role to condemn and fight such attitudes. The Jews are aware that there is a change. They noticed that I took part in scrubbing the walls clean.... Vandalism, simply, receives zero tolerance. There is another, even more dramatic problem in Lodz; we walk over, we drive over, human remains. Many years ago a block of flats was put up on the land of a Jewish cemetery. A street corner also abuts onto that land...

PL: Can nothing be done about these two problems?

Nothing. At times children playing in the courtyards dig up fragments of human remains. I want to sort this matter out, if only symbolically - that is, rebuild a section of the cemetery wall. I want a decent job done by the 60th anniversary.

To approach and carry out the preparations for the 60th anniversary properly, I have made sure I knew what work had been done before I took up office. Ten years ago, under the auspices of my friend, Grzegorz Paka, the 50th anniversary was commemorated, but somewhat privately, discreetly.... A plaque was affixed, but nobody knew exactly where.... At the same time, I realised how sizeable the Jewish Community in Lodz had been. In 1933, it accounted for one third of the inhabitants of Lodz - 250,000 people! A very large proportion!!! It has not even entered the consciousness of the people among whom I live today - a large, vibrant community was obliterated.... I have concluded that I carry the burden of duty, a duty which was unfulfilled by my predecessors. To begin with, I had to explain, to make clear to the City population, what my concerns are.... And not only to those who showed opposition, but to the Jews as well. For the latter, it was, of course, a positive move, but unexpected!

PL: How many people opposed?

I am unable to answer that, but I will outline the problem and I will share my thoughts, plans, ideas, equally, with my supporters and those who opposed me - the detractors.

PL: How did you set about convincing them?

I came to the conclusion that it was fruitless to compare the wrongs and the losses. If someone began to measure, to weigh the suffering of the Poles and Jews during World War II, I would say that we are talking at cross-purposes. That from behind the barbed-wire Jews were being deported to extermination camps. Outside the barbed-wire lived the citizens of Lodz. I understand that here, in Lodz, life was harsher than elsewhere, because 24% of the population here was German. Both Władysław Bartoszewski and Jan

Nowak-Jeziorański told me that when, during the war, one came to Lodz, it was wisest not to remain overnight, for one of the tenants in the building was bound to inform the police. Here, it was not possible to carry out the same secret negotiations as in other Polish cities. Nonetheless, the question always remains "how was the local population, who lived here, acting towards those behind the barbed-wire?" What could they do, how could they help, when neighbours, friends of long-standing and from the school-room were being seized, arrested, vanishing without trace...? I have given a great deal of thought to the position of the witness of the crime - one thinks of the two sides the killer and the victim. It is seldom that we are aware of the presence of third person - namely, the witness. In Lodz - the criminals, the killers were the Germans - the victims - the Jews. And the witnesses those who were not isolated, penned in the Ghetto - in this case - first and foremost, the Polish people. In murder the role of the killer and the victim, for all time, clearly delineated. The killer selects his victims, the method and the tools of the crime. But the witness faces an ineluctable moral obligation. With the recognition, the evaluation of the murder, the witness may choose to remain silent, as does the murderer, or he may choose to scream with the victim. And when I reached that conclusion, I decided that there is no need to ponder further. Silence is morally unacceptable. In a crime of this magnitude and horror the witness must scream with the victim.

PL: THE VOICE OF THE VICTIMS CAN ONLY RARELY BE HEARD - BY FAR THE MAJORITY OF THE LODZ GHETTO JEWS WERE MURDERED.

When the German army began to retreat from Lodz, 830 Jews were still left in the Ghetto - the workers of the Cleaning and Sanitation Brigade. All were "liquidated", but the front-line had moved forward more swiftly than had been foreseen. From amongst those trapped in the Ghetto, 10 - 12 people had survived. The last transport departed on 29th August - the Russian troops were then about twelve kilometres from Lodz. Of the ghettos on Polish soil, the Lodz Ghetto is the best documented. Most of the transport lists have been salvaged; it is known from

where a person being despatched in a transport came to the Lodz Ghetto. Many material artefacts have been preserved. The Germans did not burn down the Ghetto buildings - only the tenements around it were demolished so as to form a dividing passage between the Ghetto and the rest of the city. The railway station building has also remained, as have the spur-line, the ramp.... The rails still bear the imprint: "Krupp 1939".

PL: THE LAST STOP EN ROUTE TO DEATH - FROM HERE TRANSPORTS WERE DESPATCHED TO EXTERMINATION CAMPS.

This station, named Radegaast, is the most important site for the Jewish people. Other important objects, around which there will be marches, are the buildings in the very body of the Ghetto; and, of course, the cemetery, the largest functional Jewish necropolis in Europe. The cemetery was a simple enough matter. The Nissenbaum Foundation has authority to administer within its precincts, although the City of Lodz has for some years now made a contribution towards its maintenance, but we are not involved in its administration. The cemetery is the responsibility of the Jewish Administration. I have given instructions, however, for the roads leading to it to be neat and tidy, for the paving to be nice and even, for the surfaces to be smoothed out, but no asphalt or concrete is to be laid. I have further given instructions for greenery to be arranged in such a way as to camouflage the 200 metre long avenue leading to a nearby estate; to give it an aspect of solemnity, gravity... The station presented more of a challenge. I felt that it needed more than for the building to be given a coat of fresh paint. I do not wish that the day after the ceremonies, on the 30th August, we should feel that it is all over and done... I want these old people to leave here with peaceful minds knowing that when they, too, have gone, it will not fall into disrepair, become abandoned or erased from human memory. The station has to be reconstructed in such a manner that it is the most poignant monument, a memorial dedicated to that which took place here, then, in those days....

I lacked confidence in these matters. I do not have Jewish roots.

I might not have the necessary sensitivity. Last year at Katyn, I understood that the emotional frontier between the Poles and the Russians is virtually impassable. We were not able to understand each other concerning the memorial. The feelings, the emotions displayed were very deep. Offence was caused, even though the other side did not mean to be ill-intentioned or offensive.

PL: Were there great outbursts of emotion on both sides?

On the side of the Poles. The Russians felt slighted, because the Poles would not accept their design for the monument which was, indeed, beautiful and poetic. I am not being ironical! In their minds, it was to be a monument dedicated to the nameless victims of the Soviet Totalitarian regime. Even though the NKVD had been committing atrocities, murder in those killing fields long before and long after the execution of the Polish officers. At the base of the monument there were to be religious and national insignia. Then a kind of springboard and a parabolically curved wide ribbon flying towards the skies. They believed it to be the correct symbolism. They wanted it to be gigantic, permanently lit up. They could not comprehend why we, the Poles, insisted that it need not be so large, but that there must be a flat wall, on which there will be engraved the names of the once living men, at the base of which flowers may be placed, candles may be lit. We were able to convince them that an altar must be erected at which mass can be said, but they did not understand that a wall with names, so wholly "unmonumental" is, for us, Poles, so important. I was afraid that I, too, might have an idea, a concept - something which the Jewish side would find unacceptable. I have, therefore, recruited Czesław Bielecki, who describes himself as a "Polish-Jew" - uttering both these words with pride. He understands both sensitivities - Polish and Jewish.

PL: How did people view your activities - people who associated you chiefly with the post of Chairman of the ŻchN-U

You know, there are moral obligations which I see as perfectly natural

and they have never interfered with my membership of the ZchN-U. I take as my example Pope John Paul II. His conduct no longer surprises anyone today.

PL: And colleagues from the ZchN-U?

Accepted, straightaway. I went to them and told them what I have just told you. Only I spoke for a few hours. I explained what it all means and what difficulties we are facing, what the moral choice is. And that, really, a decent human being does not have a choice in this situation.

PL: And the supporters of Radio Maryja?

I have convinced them too. Just like the Local Council. A year ago, when I embarked on this project, I was not certain if I would succeed in getting it passed through the Local Council. Actually, I was only certain of a few votes from the members of the Lodz Citizens' Association, because I had thrashed it out with them, but 6 votes out of 43 is on the meagre side.... But when it came to voting to commit the City to support the marches, I received a full complement of votes. Thus, today, I tend somewhat reluctantly, to remember what went on before, in the past, and those who were anti. I have been able to convince them all that this matter is not a subject of political controversy. That we, all of us, have no choice but to bear witness. The 60th anniversary is the very last opportunity when we can still do something positive for those still alive....

If we adopt this attitude, then there is no point in, no reason for splitting hairs, nor for pettiness. I ask you, therefore, please, refrain from asking me about what the attitude of so-and-so may have been, at the beginning, towards this undertaking...

PL: Does your experience bear out the fact that lack of goodwill towards the Jews is the result of little, or no, knowledge of their history?

I have not considered that point. I have not had the time. Time is of the essence. And one step at a time. I have to prioritise. Is my project going to be accepted by the Public Indigence Office? Fortunately, it has

gone through. But it took half a year. Well, when the memorial column has been erected, the tunnel, the station built, when the cattle-truck has been positioned on the siding - then what should its interior look like?

PL: During this last year, thinking of the role of the witness, have you identified, emotionally, with the victim's tragedy?

I am very cautious. If I enter that territory, I might blunder, I might cause offence. It is a most delicate subject. I wanted to have information/direction notices placed (at various points of the trajectory) in Polish, Hebrew, English and German languages. I made enquiries via the Internet through which I have been in touch with the Jewish community. I have received e-mails, altogether 250, from Brazil, from Toronto, from Israel, from Western Europe. They ask: "Why is there no Yiddish?" Marek Edelman himself has been in touch - he is being telephoned from Paris to take action in this matter. I mention this, as the last time he rang me was fifteen years ago. It appears that it is very important for the Jewish community to have Yiddish. They lived, loved, died within the cultural framework of the Yiddish tongue. It is their mother-tongue. No point in squabbling. Yiddish it will be, and that's that.

And then came a second wave, not through the e-mail, but in private conversations. Does the German language have to appear on the information/direction notice boards? It seemed to me that yes, it does. If only to inform young Germans of what their daddies and grand-daddies practised here. But I was told that such information should be confined to special guide books. On public notices, however, which will be worded in solemn, respectful language, we should use Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish and English. That will be enough. German, for them, is a language of misery, crime, tragedy. That is how they remember it.

PL: There is one aspect in the history of the Litzmanstadt Ghetto which torments me in particular; have you considered, sir, how those Jewish parents, whom the Germans forced to hand over their children, felt?

This is the gravest, most painful consideration - emotionally and intellectually. For the question is,

when the survival of a nation, of a people is at stake, how much ground may one cede in order to ensure that survival? Even though one has the very best intentions. Chaim Mordechai Rumkowski said, when the Germans demanded that the children be surrendered: "Only yesterday I drew up a register of children up to the age of nine years. I wanted, at least, to save the older children... I have managed to rescue the children from the age of nine up... May this be a solace in your suffering..." As for the sick, the infirm, those in poor health, "there are many patients who maybe only have days, maybe weeks, to live... You attempt to keep them alive at the cost of undermining your own health. We give our bread, our meagre ration of sugar, our small piece of meat... And what is the outcome? It is of no benefit to them, but it endangers our health, leads to illness.... We must sacrifice them in order that those in health, who want and can live, may endure!"

I am familiar with Rumkowski's fate. In the end, he did not receive the promised Aryan credentials, nor was a cosy nest set up for him - such measures and comforts would have turned him into a scoundrel and a collaborator. He was deported to Auschwitz - true, in a first class carriage - not knowing what awaited him at the end of the journey. He was certain, right up to the end, that his approach of convincing the Germans of the Jews' usefulness in the Third Reich's Armaments War Effort, was sensible. He believed that this way he would save a goodly number of Jewish lives. I do not know how a man whose nation, whose people are destined for extermination should conduct himself - one who is seeking a method, a means to save, at least, a handful of them? Where does one draw the line beyond which one must not venture? It is hard even to imagine how one would act under those circumstances. We are familiar, from history, from literature with such beautiful stories; a ship is sinking, there are not enough life-boats... for everyone... A decision is reached; women and children first. It is an impulse of the instinct of self-preservation. I do not even want to think of finding myself ever in such straits. Only the Jews themselves can judge Rumkowski.

PL: There were 250,000 Jews in Lodz.

How many are there now?

There are about 350 registered at the Jewish Council.

PL: Are you not apprehensive about anti-Semitic demonstrations during the marches?

It is an odd thing. I was warned at first that I must reckon with this

probability. My mind refused to accept it and it is all crystal clear - really, there is no choice. Up to now I have not encountered any such manifestations, nor any signs of hatred, none whatever.

PL: Taking the "business" of the Jews to the people, did you not fear loss of popularity amongst your supporters?

You are not the first to put that question to me. I have only one answer: there are obligations which must be fulfilled. And the price? One will have to pay it... or not... I am doing all I can to win the public over, to convert it to my point of view.

Translated by Janina Fischler-Martinho, Croydon 2004

I first stepped foot on the site of the former Nazi death camp at Belzec in 1974. For many years I have returned annually and paid my respects to the innocent men, women and children that lay beneath my feet. As I walked the perimeter I could not imagine what those poor people went through during those pitiful and fateful months between March and December 1942.

It is well known that for many decades the site of the former death camp has been contentious due to the neglect and failure by local authorities to respect the enormous significance of what happened here. On the many occasions I have visited the site small bone remnants could be found on the surface having been exposed by the elements over the years.

I was in Belzec between 1977 and 2001 as a guest of the Polish archaeological team when a scientific forensic examination discovered 33 mass graves. The point of this exercise was to avoid intruding on the mass graves area when the memorial was built. This was done under the watchful eye of the Rabbi of Warsaw Michael Schudrich. A photographic record of the memorial building progress can be seen on our web site www.deathcamps.org

On the morning of 3rd June 2004 five coaches left central Warsaw flanked by police cars with blue lights and sirens wailing. It occurred to me that this was not so much a security precaution but an exercise to ensure that we arrived in Belzec on time. It is a 4 - 5 hour drive from Warsaw to cover the 130 miles to Belzec. I travelled in one coach with a group of relatives and holocaust survivors from America. Several families gave me their memories as to how Belzec has affected them. Some had escaped the onslaught and had lost their nearest and dearest to the Nazis' final solution'. Two elderly

BELZEC: FINALLY LAID TO REST

Robin O'Neill

Robin is a former CID Officer. He took his MA at University College, London, under Sir Martin Gilbert. He is in the process of completing his PhD - Jews In Galicia - Transportations to Belzec. He took part in two archaeological investigations which were carried out between 1997/8 at the site of Belzec extermination camp and his report appeared in our Journal issue number 22 - Autumn 1998.

ladies related to me how they had jumped the train and fled under Aryan identity to Germany but were betrayed and sent to Auschwitz. Annie showed me her number: 38330 with a triangle (political prisoner) clearly visible on her arm, perhaps her Jewish identity had been preserved. To have escaped Belzec and Auschwitz is remarkable. Our own Helen Goldman, now living in Sutton, also escaped by this method and lived to record the events of 1942 when as a young girl she jumped from a Belzec transport to freedom and safety.

Arriving on the outskirts of Belzec on time, we viewed the arriving helicopters transporting the President's men. Once collected together the procession proceeded into the former death camp site which had been prepared with platform and microphones, television screens, rows of chairs and many security personnel.

The ceremony was attended by 500 invited guests and relatives

who had travelled from all over the world, plus about 500 local people who attended to pay their respects. Leading the dignitaries was the Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski and an entourage of political, religious, and civil personages. The two hour ceremony, broadcast live in Poland, incorporated speeches from Ambassadors, Dr Reinhard Scheppe (Germany), David Peleg (Israel) and Christopher R Hill (America).

Flanked by 400 Israeli army personnel, the Polish President reminded us all and stated: 'This whole Jewish universe of Galicia was wiped off the map and buried in this grave'. Then, led by the President and in small groups, a walk of remembrance commenced. On entering the memorial site the walkway cuts into the hillside descending 30 feet below ground, then rising via steep steps to another walkway and exit. The exit path is lined with memorial stones depicting towns from where the Jews were transported. It is estimated that no less than 600,000 Jews were murdered here between March and December 1942.

The ceremony was a grand political occasion but for me the most moving part of this ceremony was not at the memorial site but the overwhelming greetings our procession of coaches received on entering Belzec village. For over 30 years I have always detected some indifference by the local population of Ukrainians and Poles to the demise of the Jewish people in the camp. To a man, woman and child the whole village had turned out in their Sunday best and stood respectfully on the roadside. Factories, shops and all other means of daily life came to an abrupt halt to pay respect to the Jewish people entering their village for their day of memory and perhaps, final reconciliation.

KURIMA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1942

Judith Sherman

Judith (nee Stern) lived with her younger sister Miriam in Weir Courtney and in Lingfield House. She studied Social Science at the L.S.E. and later emigrated to the U.S.A., where she lives with her husband Reuven in New Jersey. In recent years she has been lecturing on the Holocaust.

Evka's Request

There are only a handful of Jewish families left in the village. My friend Evka's family is for the next transport. Evka comes by with a request.

"As soon as we get there, I will send our new address to you so you can send us Papa's letters," she says.

"I will," I reply. "But why don't you send the address to him directly?"

She looks hurt. "Papa is used to writing to this address."

"Promise you will check for his letter every day at the post office. I told them to give it to you." I promise.

Evka badly wants Papa's letters and she is equally concerned that they not be sent back to him, lest he stop writing.

Papa's letters come only about two to three times a year. Her father left for America seven years ago. Then the plan was that he would send for the family as soon as he saved up the

fares. Evka was five and her brother Isaac three when he left. In every letter he states the tickets will arrive "soon." Every letter brings hope and disappointment. Evka knows him by the one coloured photograph he sent. It is in a silver-plated frame on a small lace coloured table. Out of hurt and frustration her mother turns the photograph face down when Evka leaves for school - then, on her return from school, Evka rights it. This regular ritual is never discussed. They are sweetly protective of each other whilst from far away America Papa keeps the hurt and hopes alive. Maternal grandparents keep the family fed.

I pick up one letter from the post office, but receive no forwarding address. Evka must not have an address.

At what point are the letters no longer delivered? No longer written? What does he make of this - that papa in America whose photograph in Kurima moves from upright to downright to upright.

PRESOV GESTAPO PRISON, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1944

Judith Sherman

Your years a tale

I recognize you
who passed through
and left your marks
on these prison walls

Your years a tale
of harmonica sounds
of planted corn
mended shoes

you carried little ones
across the brook
you prayed - you whistled
fixed the roofs and lit the lamps
made bread - made wine
danced and teased
drank buttermilk

fear not, fear not
may these walls rot
ere I forget your
years, your tales

You who come here
after me recount
my tale my years
my brevity.

DEPORTATIONS, 1942

Judith Sherman

The town crier announces deportations will take place. The language used is "resettlement to the East." More information is not provided, except for the luggage allowed - one suitcase per person. The deportations are by categories. Young people, men, families with no exemptions and on.

Szuri lives with her grandmother. Just the two of them. Her parents died several years ago. Szuri is twelve. Her grandmother - I do not

know - but she seems very old and frail. Szuri and grandmother are among the first families to be deported. I am there to - to - to be there. We do not say goodbye because we do not yet comprehend what deportation is. Szuri stands in the small front room fingering the needle-point picture on the wall. Her mother made it. The frame is oval and not very large, but Szuri has no room in her suitcase. "It will be here after the war," she says, stroking it gently. She leaves to help her

grandmother down the steps and into the waiting truck.

Very shortly after, village people loot the house. A villager looks at the needle-point picture, and then throws it onto the heap on the floor with the other no longer valued items. The glass shatters and the frame breaks. He takes with him the coffee pot and umbrella. I stand hidden behind the drapes and cry - for Szuri, because she is not here to do her own crying.

Close call.

My aunt Ella is working in the Siemens factory, manufacturing parts for German armaments. When I, aged fourteen, am miraculously released from Revier, the T.B. hospital, I am allowed to join her. Conditions in this sub-camp are better, perhaps because Siemens prisoners work in close contact with German civilians. But the slightest infraction in the factory is seen as sabotage resulting in severe punishment, death, and quick replacement.

Appell here is shorter, the soup is thicker. However, the toilets are outside. I go there during my first night and from the watchtower the guard shouts, "Halt! Halt!" I run - he shoots. I keep running and he keeps shooting. I cannot see the bullets but hear and smell them all around me. When I manage to get back into the barrack everyone is awake, awakened by the noise outside.

The Blockälteste, dressed in a housecoat, grabs me as I enter and yells, "Are you mad to go out there? How can they keep a watch on you in the dark, you stupid Jew!" She does

RAVENSBRÜCK: SIEMAN'S SUBCAMP

Judith Sherman

not put on the light and orders everyone back into their bunks, schnell! Me she drags to my bunk, pushes me up onto the second tier and quickly covers me with the blanket I share with my bunkmates.

"Macht alles normal! Alles normal!" she keeps whispering anxiously and angrily up and down along the row of bunks.

She is terrified and furious. If they come in to investigate the shooting, my behaviour will be seen, or will certainly be assumed to be, an attempt to escape. Nothing enrages them more than escapes. The Blockälteste will be held responsible for my behaviour and she and the whole block will be punished. Punishment... they have a prescribed repertoire.

As for me... attempted escapees are publicly hanged or shot after torture in the punishment bunker. Age is no protection.

Since I am on the bunk above

Ella's, she is not aware of my absence until my return when I am being "tucked" in by the Blockälteste.

Soon Ella whispers, "tomorrow I will show you where the urine bucket is." That will be good. In the dark we stay indoors without lavatories. It is winter. It gets dark early. When I wake up during that night I see Ella standing and watching me, shaking her head, covering me.

I should be worrying about hanging and shooting and torture and the pain caused others, and all I can think of is how does the Blockälteste manage to have a housecoat? She is the first and only woman I see in Ravensbrück wearing a housecoat. My thoughts will not move beyond this topic. I have been wrapped in a housecoat before. I know of that. A noose around my neck, a bullet into my body... my mind refuses...

The night passes without anyone investigating. The Blockälteste says nothing more to me and sometimes she gives me soup from the bottom.

I work out this scenario: she owes her life to my fast running and is grateful. When I am not totally on the edge, I indulge in heroic fantasies ... at least survival fantasies.

I am writing these words trying to recall events so unbelievable my concentration wanders... Here I sit surrounded by beauty and colour. Around me a garden of lovely flowers, majestic cypress trees, umbrella pines, delicious honeysuckle - so quiet and tranquil. Did I really live through these times I will try to describe now? Yes, I did!

In this account, I shall omit all misery of my life in the Warsaw Ghetto since November 1940 and start with July 22nd 1942 - the declaration of the Final Solution. The beginning of the end.

As we got up that morning and, as always, glanced through the windows at the world outside - literally, since we had a wall on Swietojerska Street that divided the Ghetto from the Aryan Warsaw, the pavement on the other side with normal life activities, clean children, people going to work - life! But our side, the side of poverty, hunger, the tragic side that in the mornings

MY LAST EIGHT MONTHS IN THE WARSAW GHETTO

Edyta Klein-Smith

Edyta and her mother survived on the Aryan side and after the war went to the U.S.A. She has lived with her husband Tom in England for many years and is a valued member of our Society.

contained many dead bodies barely covered with papers, to be collected later in the day, our side has changed this morning of July 22nd. It was early, well before the curfew ended. The street was full of Polish police, rows of Germans and on the wall and

exits black uniformed Ukrainians all with weapons at the ready. The Jewish police also in large numbers were near the buildings, near the gates of the buildings which just opened as if for another Ghetto day, every man armed with a truncheon. Walls were plastered with proclamations in German and Polish languages, stating that only people with special passes and jobs valued by the Germans could stay in the Ghetto. Others were destined for resettlement in the East. We had not yet heard the word Treblinka. How to find a valuable job? Where to go? Where to hide? The tenants of a large apartment in which we had a room huddled in a long corridor, crying, hugging each other and whispering. All that was very strange to me since before it was always just a polite 'Good morning'. I grew up very quickly.

The deportations started immediately. The Jewish police had to deliver to the departure point, The

Umschlagplatz, 6,000 people a day; within two days, the number was increased to 10,000 a day, and more. Some poor and hungry volunteered because the Germans promised food on departure. The first victims were patients in hospitals, orphanages, and old people. My paternal grandparents came to say goodbye, and to see me for the last time. They were told that the block in which they lived would be evacuated the next morning. Hot July, blue skies - on the street complete pandemonium. People scurrying back and forth, avoiding being caught, trying to get a pass for a German-owned factory. Many small so-called shops opened up, employing people. Three large factories already existed - Toejbens, Schultz and Brushmakers. For the first couple of weeks we were still allowed to live in our Ghetto flat in which our small family of four had lived for 20 months. We clung to the miserable normality which was slipping away. My uncle Jozef, through connections and bribery, was employed by the Schultz shop and had a pass, an Ausweis - a Lebenskarte as we called it. One down, three to go. The 'Action' was raging. Sometimes as many as 13,000 a day were deported. The landlord of our Ghetto flat became a foreman in the tailoring department of Toejbens' shop. He was a professional tailor. He tried to employ people who owned sewing machines. He took my mother into his department and now she had the card of life!

At the beginning of August, the walls were tightening up. The fortunate exempted from immediate deportation had to live near factories, or the Jewish Council or Jewish police blocks. The rest of the Ghetto, called wild, was off-limits. But thousands of people were hiding in special camouflaged places - attics, basements, etc.

The Action continued. Every few streets one or two open lorries with German gendarmes, carbines, and even machine guns, waited to fill it up for transport. The catching, struggling, round-up and beating of people were left to the Jewish police. The final blows were left for the Germans. All the stores and food supplies ceased to exist. The thriving

black market which kept the Ghetto alive for 20 months just stopped. I don't remember eating any meals the first days of the Action. Again, through bribery and protection, my stepfather, Stanislaw, became employed in a shoemaker's department of Toejbens. Another card of life! We had to move nearer the Toejbens factory to a miserable, rat-infected place. The workers had to be inside the gates at 6 o'clock in the morning. My parents with their Ausweisses (passes) and the help of the Jewish police smuggled me inside the factory gate every morning in the tailoring department. My mother was finishing buttonholes of boys' clothing, all in thin blue fabric. Some days she ironed, patched and cleaned uniforms. She worked at the table approximately four feet long and three feet wide with the unfinished merchandise under the table. That was my hiding place. I was lying between the boys' clothing or uniforms at my mother's feet for twelve hours daily until the 6 pm whistle, when everyone ran to the courtyard to collect a bowl of watery soup. But that routine was too peaceful. That first big Action continued until mid-September and deported about 310,000 people. Even the cards of life were not safe. Selections started inside the factories. Mid-August my young wonderful uncle Jozef was taken from Schultz's factory. Thousands of people caught and brought to the Umschlagplatz were literally shoved into the cattle wagons. A Jewish policeman, a friend who was also a pharmacist, and before the war employed by my grandfather, tried frantically to pull uncle Jozef out of the transport. He was not successful. That evening he told us what happened. It was a terrible blow. At first we were timidly uncertain that such a place as Treblinka could exist; but as the name was more and more whispered by the Ghetto inmates, our hopes of survival diminished.

The Toejbens also started selections. Whatever one reads and knows, one cannot imagine the feeling of standing in front of a tall, handsome, impeccably gloved hand, which, if moved to the left, indicated the inmate had to sit on the pavement or road, ready for

transport. If to the right, the inmate had to remain standing and was marched back into the factory in a group. We were always facing selection in rows of five. At one section, standing in the row with my parents, I realised that we had no chance for three out of five to survive the selection. In a second I pushed my mother to the front and my stepfather to the back. Strange people automatically stepped in their place to keep the row of five. We passed the selection. Did I hasten anybody's final moment? Who knows, but I do think about it.

Blockades of whole sections, empty buildings and continuous rain of feathers - where did all the feathers come from?

Our Toejbens shop was located on Leszno Street, in what was once a gymnasium. One hot and sunny morning towards the end of August, a Nazi director, Herr Bauch, called everyone to the courtyard. He said that it was common knowledge that children were hiding in the premises. 'It prevents parents from doing their best and hampers the productivity needed for the Reich.' The nice man arranged for nurses to accompany the transport to an open space for the children to play in the fresh air and a kettle of porridge to eat. All under the threat of death - down in ten minutes. Thirty or so children from different departments came down, including myself. I was just about to join the group at the gate when a boy I knew stopped me. 'Come, come with me!' He knew his way around this old school, and soon we were safely hidden in the attic. When we heard the whistle at 6 pm we came down and joined the others in the queue for soup. Everyone realised that the children were not coming back. Mothers were hitting their heads on the walls, some screamed, some stayed deadly quiet. When I walked up to my mother, she had a wild bewildered look. Without a word or looking at anyone, she grabbed me and ran through the factory gates to our hovel. No soup that evening. After that tragedy it was impossible to hide in the shop. No-one was allowed to stay in the living quarters. All the doors had to be left open, and the Germans continuously checked the buildings.

For a couple of days I moved from place to place. My poor mother was in constant hysteria. Without telling my parents, I decided to go to Herr Bauch's office, the same Herr Bauch who a few days before sent the children to their death, and personally ask him to issue me with an Ausweis. His office was on the ground floor, guarded by the German police. With my nicest smile, I told them that I wanted to see Herr Director Bauch. Unbelievably, they let me and, even more unbelievably, with an even sweeter smile, I informed Bauch that my mother worked in the tailoring department, that I was very skilled in tailoring, and could I please have an Ausweis? His secretary issued one on the spot. I now had my own card of life, and my own bowl of watery soup in the evening.

Selections continued. Miraculously, we hung on. More and more often in the evenings the Germans would have an open lorry waiting for the Jewish police to fill it up with people rushing to their hovels from work to eat their soup and have a few hours of rest. In many cases, the Ausweisses (passes) did not help. One time the three of us running home realised that the street was blocked by lorries at both ends. In the Ghetto slang, we called this 'in the kettle'. No way out. My stepfather had a cousin living in a building next to where we stopped. The cousin had a very ingenious hiding place. My stepfather, Stanislaw, knew it. We ran up the steps, knocked and were let in just at the last moment. In the very narrow space stood about a dozen people. The outside was perfectly camouflaged. A young woman was holding a baby, who started to cry. Without a word the young mother opened the wall and threw her baby out. No-one stopped her. We all wanted to live. The Germans shot the child. The Action over, we went home.

A few days later, in an almost identical situation, caught 'in a kettle' by myself, I did not know which way to run. A Jewish policeman on a bicycle just scooped me up and protecting me with his back drove me out of the 'kettle'. The Germans were shooting. It all happened very

fast. I knew the young man. In the winter of 1941 there was a small ice-skating rink in the ghetto. Both of us, being good skaters, had spent some time together enjoying these moments.

Before we left the Ghetto for good, we managed to escape many 'kettle' situations. The Ukrainians were always shooting for fun, and the Nazi monster nicknamed Frankenstein was looking for victims.

Dirty, undernourished, and lice-infested, I became very sick, with a high temperature. A strange yellow colour covered all of me, including my eyes, nails and even my gums. I had yellow jaundice, a miserable and contagious disease. My parents dressed me and carried me inside the Toejbens gates. No-one was allowed to stay home. We struggled in this fashion for two days but I did not care then if I lived or died. I begged my parents to leave me. They covered me with blankets, threw some old clothing over the bed, and I stayed that way until I heard at different times each day the Germans checking the rooms, poking beds with their guns, moving to the next building. The toilet was frightening to use since the rats sitting on the pipe seemed to be waiting for me. Miraculously, my parents did not get infected, and within 10 days I was much better and back at Toejbens. No doctor or medication!

Through all the Final Solution, the worst day in my memory was September 6th. By that time, at least half the population had disappeared. The rest were told to gather together in a couple of streets which were once inhabited by the very poor. People crowded into empty buildings, sat on the pavements everywhere. We were waiting for the main selection. Only the ones with the card of life would be allowed to pass. The ones without the card of life would try to knock down a weaker person and take their card. In these tragic moments, we were losing our sense of morality. In the meantime, the Jewish police were helping the SS to keep all the thousands of people sitting. The blows were coming from all sides. One SS officer on a horse was beating

people with a whip. This whip had an iron ball on the end. My mother was struck on the side of her head. This was catastrophic, since sick or wounded would never pass the selection. In a panic I somehow managed to wrap her up in a scarf. We had to hold up our Ausweisses (passes) high over our heads in our right hand. At the end of the street, more SS, more police, more open lorries. The bosses of each factory were present but did not want everyone back. With my parents I moved towards the Toejbens group. We passed!

I estimate that after that day there were less than a hundred thousand people left. About half that number were in the factories and Jewish police; a hospital still existed, groups of people were working outside the Ghetto, doing dirty jobs, sorting rotten vegetables, working on the railways, etc. There were day and night shifts. The rest were so-called 'wilds', hiding wherever they could. We existed in misery near our shop. In mid-January 1943 the Jewish underground killed the Jewish chief of police, had a few skirmishes and a few Germans were killed. Our shop was a separate world. We just heard about it. Early in March, yet another meeting with Walter Toejbens at the courtyard. After endless selections, 'kettles', diseases, we were a small group of a few thousand. He called us his faithful workers. He decided to move the factory to Poniatowa within the next couple of weeks. Lots of fresh air and good country food were promised. Amazingly, with all our Ghetto deprivations, some telephones were working. My mother got in touch with friends on the Aryan side. They said that mother and I could get help and false documents but that they could not risk helping a man. Bribing the guards who watched the commando workers assigned to sorting out rotten potatoes outside the Ghetto walls, mother and I left. Toejbens did take his faithful workers to Poniatowa. They were made to dig their own graves on November 4th 1943, and then were all shot. One victim was Stanislaw. Mother and I, who had both already left the Ghetto, watched from the outside as the Warsaw Ghetto burned. Part of us died with the others....

WHERE WAS GOD IN AUSCHWITZ...?

Michael Etkind

Michael came to England with the Windermere Group and lived at the Cardross Hostel in Scotland. He is a poet of high standing and was dubbed by our President, Martin Gilbert, as the Society's poet. He has been a frequent contributor to our Journal.

Was it a test
We had to undergo
Like that of Job
Long long ago
To see if our faith survived
The chamber filled with Zyklon B...
Six million tests...?

Of course we prayed
When Satan closed the door
And darkness fell
(A drowning man will clutch at straw)

... and so they died
Your Name upon their lips
Your very Name

But where were You
when Children fed the flame...?

ON BUCHENWALD

Michael Etkind

Oh Buchenwald - why should I forget you
You were my destiny
Can he who's never seen you know
what man's nature is
And he who was not in you and never
felt your blows
What does he know of freedom
who only freedom knows
Oh Buchenwald - my past
Who cursed your fertile soil -
your sky above
Who put a spell upon your tall
majestic trees
Who's sown the seeds that grew
that poison plant

Oh Buchenwald - my ever present
past
You've robbed me of my youth
destroyed my faith
You've left me stranded and alone
And taught me how to look at men
stripped to their naked
bones

Oh Buchenwald - you graveyard
of a million dreams.

REVENGE? - PILZEN MAY 1945

Michael Etkind

Ah yes - revenge
How many times I swore
To take it
When the war would end
But was I sober when I swore
Or drunk with hate

But then when freedom came
I gave them water
From a well
The Russian soldiers looked
They shook my hand
And then I saw the tears in their eyes
As they embraced me
One by one
I walked away without a word

If I could recreate
The way I felt
On that May afternoon...
That peace... that thoughtless
Unexpected unpremeditated bliss
That weightless walk on air
That calm
That glimpse of paradise

It did not last
A motor bike revved up
Beneath the mount on which I lay
And brought me down to earth

That timeless moment did not last.

Not long ago - as a matter of fact, this last March 20th 2004 - I had the opportunity to celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of David and Olive Herman. At that get-together, I met some of the London Boys and Girls whom I had met as a result of coming to England in 1946. The celebration inspired me to contribute to this year's journal, and tell my story of survival and my time in England. Without exaggeration, I must say that when I became one of the 100 boys and girls that were chosen for the last group out of Prague to London, it was probably one of the happiest days in my life. It was about 15 months after my liberation and I was very uncertain of what the future would bring for me.

WHAT IT TOOK TO SURVIVE

Steve (Shimi) Mermelstein

Steve came to England in June 1946 with the Czech/Hungarian boys. He lived in the shelter in the East End. He subsequently emigrated to the States and now lives in Los Angeles.

I was born in a small village called Zsdenyova in the Carpathian Mountains of what was then Czechoslovakia. We were a family of ten children, five boys and five girls. I was the youngest. My father owned

a lumber mill, a general store, and the police station that he built next to our house. We were quite comfortable, but it came with hard work on my father's part. In 1933 and 1934, two of my brothers and one sister made Aliya to what was then Palestine. It broke my mother's heart to part with them, especially my oldest brother Arje whom she adored; after all he was the first-born.

David and Bella also were great Zionists and determined to help build the State of Israel. All three are gone now, but they left a wonderful, large family, which currently consists of over 50 members. In 1937, my mother unexpectedly died of meningitis and we were all devastated at the loss. I was 8 years old.

In 1938, Hitler divided Czechoslovakia and our part became

Hungary. Up until then I was attending Czech school. After that, however, my father enrolled me into the Russian school instead of the Hungarian one. Life for the Jews was getting worse. My father's store and lumber mill were gone, because Jews could not own a business; however, he managed to make a living as a lumber contractor delivering lumber to different countries and larger cities in Hungary.

During this time, three of my sisters - Sari, Esti, and Cili - left and moved to Budapest. At the end of 1941, my sister Esti came home for Rosh Hashanah and asked my father to let me go with her to Budapest, where the three sisters would take care of me. By then, my father had remarried and was not in favour of me leaving. But in the end he agreed that there was no future in the small village of Zsdenyova, and he let me go.

When I came to Budapest, it was my first experience in a big city. My favourite thing was to switch the lights on and off, run the water faucet, and flush the toilet. We had none of those luxuries where I came from. In Budapest I attended school, and worked as a delivery boy in a store that made ladies' clothes. Although when I came to Budapest I could not speak the language at all, in a very short time I became fluent in Hungarian. In 1942, my brother Kalvin also came to Budapest. The only one that remained with my father was Bennet and my sister Hudje. Her husband had been taken away to labour camp, and she had a 3-year old girl. Until 1943 my life was not threatened, even though it was scary, to say the least, to be a Jew. New laws would come out daily against the Jews, restricting our lives, and ordering us to wear a yellow Magen David.

After moving to Budapest, I went home every Passover to be with my father but, in 1944, as I was going to the railroad station, I met a friend who had just come from the Carpathians and asked me where I was going. I told him that I was going home for Passover. He put his hand on my chest and said that I better not go because they had just gathered all the Jews in the Carpathians, and were shipping them to Poland. We did not know it was Auschwitz. Needless to say, I

promptly returned to my sister's apartment and felt lucky that I had run into this friend, otherwise I would have wound up in Auschwitz. This was my first lucky break on the road to survival. There were other lucky breaks as well. On October 15, 1944, I was taken away to a labour camp near Budapest, but because I was working for a few weeks in a fur factory that made coats for the Hungarian army, my oldest sister Sari was able to get me out of there after 5 days by bribing a Hungarian officer. My three sisters all worked in hospitals. Sari, the oldest, worked in the Jewish hospital that the Germans took over, and Esti and Cili worked in the relocated Jewish hospital under the protection of the Swedish Red Cross and the help of Raoul Wallenberg. During those 5 days, we had very little to eat. One day as we were marching to work in the morning, I decided to run into a bakery and buy a loaf of bread. I still had some money with me. When the guards were on the other side of our column, I ran into the bakery, put the money on the counter, grabbed a loaf of bread, put it under my overcoat, and was back in line within 45 seconds. It was daring, but I was hungry and decided to take a chance.

About two weeks after I came back from the 5-day labour camp, my sister Cili, who was a nurse, decided to get me into the hospital as a patient. This was a very risky undertaking, because even though by some unexplained miracle, the Jews of Budapest were spared deportation as a whole, they were picked up on the streets one by one and shipped by the hundreds to Austria or Germany. As my sister Cili was coming to take me to the hospital, she was picked up and put into a holding area, which was a yard in an apartment building where there were stores on the ground floor. One of the storekeepers allowed her to make a phone call to my oldest sister Sari who was now working in the original Jewish hospital taken over by the Germans. Cili told her that if she wanted to see her again, she needed to go to the head cook, Maria, whose boyfriend was a German officer, and do something. The officer sent a soldier on a bicycle to the address where Cili was being held and literally plucked her out of the line as

they were ready to march them to the railroad station. When she appeared at the apartment with this German soldier I was shocked and scared. She calmed me down and told me to pack up a few clothing items and that this soldier would escort us to the hospital. As a reward, my sister gave him my brother's harmonica and his clothing in case he eventually would want to change his uniform into civilian clothes. The war was coming to an end but not the danger for the Jews. Once in the hospital with my sister, I felt much safer.

The winter of 1944 was very harsh and cold. We had no warm water, very little to eat, and slept on the floor on a straw mattress. There was not a day that I was not afraid of dying. A lot of people had died in the hospital and were stacked up like lumber in the yard. They could not be buried because there was fighting in Budapest and there was too much snow. Because the corpses were frozen outside in below zero weather, there was no health hazard. It just so happened that one of my best friends, Willie Rosenberg, whom you all know from London, was also saved in the same hospital with the help of his sister.

Finally, on January 10th 1945, the Russian Army liberated us. After a few days, my sister Cili and I decided to go home to the Carpathians. Since trains were not running, we wound up in a Russian repatriation camp about 60 miles from Budapest. The food was wholesome and cooked by the Russian army women. Six weeks later, we finally left for home. It was just before Passover 1945, and we spent it with our only surviving aunt who was then 45 years old. By some miracle she survived Auschwitz. We found out that the rest of our family did not survive it. My father, stepmother, grandmother, and one sister Hudje with her 3-year old daughter Reizale died in Auschwitz. My sister, Hudje could have survived if she had given up her baby. But she chose not to.

We were very lucky that nine of the ten children survived, which was unusual. We always thought that our mother was watching over us from above. There are only 3 left now, Cili, Bennet, and I. The rest of 1945 and the first five months of 1946 were spent between Munkacs, Budapest, and Prague. I did black-

marketeering and wondered where to emigrate to out of that wretched part of the world where anti-Semitism never really stopped. When I found out about the English transport it was in the week of Passover 1943. After many anxious days I was chosen to go with the group out of Prague. As you all know, this became our new family. The bond that I made then with some of our group and other groups have lasted to this day. It would be too much to write in detail about my experiences in London. All I can say is that it was an education to live there, learn the language, work in the garment industry, and become a patternmaker in ladies' clothes.

Since most of my family was moving to the United States, I decided to do the same. In December 1950 I left Southampton for New York on the Queen Elizabeth I. When I arrived in the U.S.A. I missed my friends in London, and it took me a while to get used to the new life. I finished studying pattern making at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York in June 1955, and got a job in Buffalo, New York. It was a very important step in my life, because by moving to Buffalo I was able to meet a wonderful girl, Ella, who came to the U.S.A. with her family in 1948. She was born in Lvov, Poland, in 1940, given to a gentile family in order to survive the war, and reclaimed by her surviving parents in 1945 after the war. We got engaged in April 1959 and married

September 20th 1959. Our first daughter Sandy was born in Buffalo in 1960.

Even though I had a good job and was earning well above average wages, my aim was to go into business with my two older brothers, Bennet and Calvin. After many attempts, we were finally reunited in Los Angeles in 1961. We started our garment business with 12 rented sewing machines, which grew to 200 of our own by the time we sold our business in 1979. We had become very well known in the garment industry as one of the best contractors of ladies' sportswear.

When my brother Calvin unexpectedly passed away in 1978 at a very young age, Bennet and I decided to sell the factory and concentrate on the real estate market. We have been doing it to this day and, thank God, quite successfully.

In Los Angeles, my family grew to 4 daughters, with the arrivals of Elaine, Suzanne, and Elisa. In 1975, when the youngest was not quite 7 years old, Lila passed away at the very young age of 34. It was a blow to the whole family. She was able to overcome the Nazis, but lost her battle with cancer, a battle she had fought for 5 years. For 12 years I stayed single, concentrating on bringing up the children and running a business. Life was difficult, but I had no choice other than to do the best that I could.

Fortunately, in 1982, I met Marsha who also had two daughters, Helaine

and Karen. We were married in 1987 (the children were either going to college or had their own homes). I always say that I have only wanted to marry twice in my life, when I met Ella, and when I met Marsha. In both cases it was love at first sight. It turns out that Marsha's family first came to the U.S.A. in the latter part of the 1880s from the Ukraine. Her parents were born in America. I felt very lucky to have met her. She brought my life back to normal. Between us, we have six daughters and six grandchildren. My youngest daughter, Elisa, has one boy and two girls, and Marsha's oldest daughter, Helaine, has three girls.

The Holocaust did not leave me without scars. Because of the harsh conditions under which I lived during the war, I most likely had rheumatic fever that damaged my aortic valve. It had to be replaced in 1983 with a porcine valve, and in 1992 with a mechanical valve. Thank God it works fine and I am able to have a normal life. Next year will be the 60th reunion of our group and we hope to attend. It is very important that we let the younger generations know what happened to us during the Holocaust. My oldest daughter, Sandy, is a high school teacher and for the past 15 years she has invited me to her classes to tell my story of survival.

We all have stories to tell which are an important part of our lives. This is my story, and I tell it in memory of my family who did not survive.

EMBARKATION OF FLIGHTS TO THE UK BY 'THE BOYS' WAS FILMED

Suzanne Bardgett

Project Director, Holocaust Exhibition at The Imperial War Museum

Readers will be now almost certainly have heard of the screening at the Annual Dinner of original film footage showing the departure of some of 'The Boys' by Stirling aircraft from Czechoslovakia in August 1945. The 'surfacing' of this film in the Imperial War Museum's Film Archive is due to the good memory of Sir Martin Gilbert, who told film director Herb Krosney that he had seen such a clip in a German television documentary,

and to Paul Sargent, Deputy Keeper of Film, who, once alerted, found the section of film. The dope sheets completed by the RAF film cameraman suggest that the departure of the young refugees was recorded almost by accident. The principal story was to have been the story of the Czech Air Force's return to the base, but bad weather caused their arrival to be delayed, and the cameraman's attention was caught instead by the arrival at the aerodrome of a mysterious group of

children, with travel bags packed, bound for the U.K.

It is only today - with the benefit of all that has been written and told about 'The Boys' - that the full significance of this sequence can be appreciated.

Members of the '45 Aid Society wishing to purchase the video may do so by sending a cheque for £20 (includes postage and VAT) to Matthew Lee, Film Archive, Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ.

ADDRESS BY CHIEF RABBI DR JONATHAN SACKS HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY - BELFAST 27 JANUARY 2004

In the beginning, we read: "And God formed man from the dust of the earth, and breathed into him the breath of life" - to teach us that when we do good, we are little lower than the angels. But when we do evil, we are dust, lower than the beasts.

Tonight we have remembered two dark nights of evil, when humanity descended into the depths of hell.

Which of us will forget 9/11 when 3,000 people were murdered on a single day?

During the Holocaust, on average, 3,000 people were murdered every day, 365 days of the year, for five and a half years.

And in Rwanda, in the spring of 1994, three times as many, for 100 days.

How do we begin to imagine evil on such a scale?

The only answer is to think of individuals. Each of the victims was a human being like you and me, with hopes for the future, fears, dreams. Every one of them was like us.

And evil happens when we forget that other people - whose faith or way of life is different from ours - are still people like us. And their deaths are no less evil because they happened long ago or far away.

Three things connect Rwanda and the Holocaust.

Those who died were killed not because they did anything but simply because they were born into the wrong religion, the wrong tribe, because they were different, because someone said, they're not like us.

Secondly, in both cases genocide became possible because for years, people were taught to see other people as less than human. The Jews were vermin. The Tutsis were inyenzi, cockroaches. They weren't just demonized, they were dehumanized, so that people could believe that killing was a kind of decontamination.

And thirdly, people knew in advance what was going to happen. In 1939 Hitler had been in power for

six years, making no secret of his plans. In Rwanda months, years beforehand, people had been warning of the bloodshed to come. And the world wasn't listening.

People sometimes ask me: "where was G-d in the Holocaust?" But the real question is: "where was humanity?"

G-d was in a voice that has been speaking since man first walked on earth. In the words, "Thou shalt not kill." In the words, "Do not oppress a stranger." In the words, "Your brother's blood cries to me from the ground."

G-d wasn't silent in the Holocaust. G-d wasn't silent in Rwanda. But when G-d speaks and we don't listen, even G-d can't save us from ourselves.

And still we aren't listening.

Throughout the world today preachers of hate are still pouring out their poison, demonizing their opponents, inciting their followers to violence. Even today the world is silent while the viruses of anti-Semitism, racism xenophobia mutate and claim their victims one by one.

Which is why we must never forget what happened if we are to prevent a happening again. How? By telling the story, as we've done tonight.

By remembering how people like Mary Blewitt have worked with the survivors, helping them rebuild their shattered lives.

Above all, by teaching our children that it doesn't have to be this way. That one who isn't in my image is still in G-d's image. That humanity lives in the face of a stranger. That difference doesn't threaten, but enlarges the world.

Our children are capable of great courage, every act of courage gives birth to hope, and hope has the power to defeat hate.

Let us honour the memory of those who died by teaching our children to honour life and never to forget that the people who are not like us, are still people, like us.

★ ★ ★

The Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks delivered the following two speeches at the Europe Against Anti-Semitism conference in Brussels on Thursday 19th February:

Keynote Speech - "The Greatest Weapon of Mass Destruction"
Closing Remarks - "If not Now, When?"

Keynote Speech - "The Greatest Weapon of Mass Destruction"

Since 9/11, there is a phrase we have heard repeatedly: weapons of mass destruction. The greatest force of mass destruction, however, is not anthrax or sarin gas, not chemical, biological or even nuclear weapons. It lives in the human heart, and its name is hate. The techniques and technologies may be new, but the problem is as old as time.

It follows that when all the wars are fought, all the laws passed and all the policies pursued, a problem will remain; a spiritual problem, a sickness of the soul. That demands a spiritual, even a religious response. But here we face a dilemma. In history, nothing has been a greater force for love than religion, yet nothing has been a greater force for hate. Religion is like fire. It warms, but it also burns; and we are the guardians of the flame.

How is it that after more than fifty years of Holocaust education, anti-racist legislation, human rights declarations and interfaith dialogue, we are still, in Europe, in 2004, talking about anti-Semitism? To understand this we must first understand what anti-Semitism is.

It is not a coherent belief. In the 19th century, Jews were hated because they were rich and because they were poor; because they were capitalists and because they were Communists; because they kept to themselves and because they got everywhere and controlled everything; because they were faithful to ancient beliefs, and because

they were rootless cosmopolitans, believing nothing.

Anti-Semitism is not a belief but a virus. The human body has a powerful defence against viruses, the immune system. How then does a virus defeat an immune system? By mutating. In our time that is what is happening to anti-Semitism. It is mutating in such a way as to defeat the most powerful immune system ever created in Western civilisation; the effort, after the Holocaust, to make racism taboo.

How has it done so? By attacking Israel rather than Jews; by demonising it and blaming it for all the troubles of the world. It is then able to turn the whole system, created to protect Jews, into a weapon with which to attack Jews. Accuse Israel (and by implication Jews everywhere) of racism, apartheid and ethnic cleansing, and you are then able to say: if you are against these things, then you must be against Israel and Jews. By this demonic mutation, the ancient virus is able to infect the minds of otherwise good and decent people. It is an outrage and a blasphemy.

Who is protesting? Jews. That is why I turn to my Christian and Muslim friends and say, with all the power my inadequate voice can convey: Jews must not be left to fight anti-Semitism alone. The victim cannot cure the crime. It is not the one who is hated, but the one who hates, who needs to change. Just as Muslims should not be left to fight Islamophobia alone, just as Christians must not be left to face persecution alone, so Jews must not be left to fight anti-Semitism alone.

Anti-Semitism is not the only, but it is in the oldest, longest and most virulent racism in European history. Why were Jews hated? Because they were different. Because, in Christian Europe, they were not Christians. Because in the Islamic Middle East, they were not Muslims. Anti-Semitism is dislike of the unlike, fear of the stranger, suspicion of the one who is not like me.

That is why, in the opening chapter of the Hebrew Bible, God declares that He has made man in His own image: to teach us that one who is not in my image is still in God's image. Though his language is not my mine, his colour not mine, his religion not mine, still he is in God's image. That is the most powerful antidote to hate ever created.

Therefore we as Jews say to our Christian and Muslim brothers and sisters: we worship the same God, the God of Abraham. We are part of the same family. For heaven's sake, let us fight hate together and remove the weapon of mass destruction that still lives in, and destroys, the human heart.

Closing Remarks - "If Not Now, When?"

The Jews of Europe loved Europe. They lived here for a thousand years, in some places, 2,000 years. They loved its languages, its literature, its landscapes. Whenever they could, they enriched its arts and sciences, business and industry, politics and civil life. They helped make the Europe of modern times. In philosophy, Wittgenstein. In literature, Heine, Proust and Kafka. In music, Mahler and Schoenberg. In sociology, Durkheim. In anthropology, Levi Strauss. In physics, Einstein. In economics, David Ricardo. In art, Modigliani, Chagall, Soutine. They loved Europe, and that love was betrayed.

Think only of the words Europe's treatment of the Jews added to the vocabulary of mankind: exile, expulsion, inquisition, auto-da-fé, ghetto, program - and the word for which there is no word: Holocaust. That suffering runs like a blood-red stain through the pages of European history.

But we do not look back on those years with hate. After 2,010 years of slavery and attempted genocide in ancient Egypt, Moses commanded the Israelites, "Do not hate an Egyptian, for you were strangers in his land." Why did Moses say this? Because you cannot build a free society or create a free people on the basis of hate. Hate is a prison, the prison of the past. Had Moses allowed the Israelites to hate their former enemies, he would have taken the Israelites out of Egypt but he would not have taken Egypt out of the Israelites. To be free you have to let go of hate.

Therefore we look to the future, not the past. But the signs are not good. Today throughout Europe Jews wait anxiously for the next news of a synagogue vandalised, a cemetery desecrated, a Jewish school set on fire, Jews attacked in the streets.

In April 2002, spending the Passover in Italy, I was walking with a French couple through Florence

when they received a phone call from their son saying: "Mum, Dad, we have to leave France, it's not safe for us here any more". The next morning I opened *La Stampa* to see a cartoon of baby Jesus in a crib surrounded by Israeli soldiers pointing a machine gun at the child, and underneath, the caption: "they are crucifying me again." Weeks later my own daughter came back from an anti-globalisation rally that quickly turned into an attack on Israel and Jews, and said to me with tears in her eyes: "Dad, they hate us". This is no way for Europe to write its future.

I do not wish to exaggerate. This is not 1942 or 1938 or 1933. But seeds are being planted that one day will bear fruits of pure poison. They are coming from the anti-globalisation left, the far right and the Muslim street. They are coming from other parts of the world, spread by email, satellite television and the internet, using inflammatory images and incendiary speech. Tens of millions of children are being taught that alone among nations, Israel has no right to exist and that all the troubles of the world are the work of Jews. All the old myths, from the Blood Libel to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion are being recycled - and this after more than 50 years of saying "Never again." Three ideologies dominated Europe in the 20th century. Fascism came and went. Communism came and went. Anti-Semitism came and stayed. What would future generations say if the political and religious leaders of Europe saw all this and did nothing? The English writer Thomas Hardy once said: "The resolution to avoid evil is seldom framed till the evil is so advanced as to make avoidance impossible". Let it not be said of us that we saw the tiny flame but did not put it out until it became a raging fire.

Therefore, we, the Jews of Europe, say this. We will fight Islamophobia. But you as Muslims must fight Judeophobia. We will fight for the right of Christians throughout the world to live without fear. But we ask you, the Christian churches, to fight for the right of Jews to live as Jews without fear.

And to the political leaders we say: Anti-Semitism does physical harm to Jews, but it does spiritual harm to the very soul of Europe. For the sake of heaven and humanity, take a stand - for if we do not do it, who will? And if not now, when?

Solly Irving, a Jewish Holocaust survivor, spent four days with us at the end of January. This was Solly's fourth visit and this year he spoke to nine different school groups, addressed a university gathering and attended two evening sessions, including a moving evening at The Religious and Cultural Resource Centre on 27th January, Holocaust Day itself. We are very grateful to Solly and are mindful of just how precious and unique this opportunity was.

As I travelled around with Solly, I was deeply moved by the way pupils and staff listened in silence to extracts from his story which he often entitles, "Destined to Survive". Questions, sensitively put, gave Solly further opportunity to respond to particular aspects and often extremely painful experiences. Solly was parted from his parents and four sisters in 1942 when he was just eleven years old. He never saw them again.

Solly told groups of youngsters that in the future he hoped that they would continue to be "witnesses" for the survivors whose numbers continue to dwindle with the passing of each year. This is a major task when we consider that already there are those who dispute the facts and scale of the genocide during the Holocaust years.

On one occasion after a school visit, Solly asked me how I felt about

PAST REALITY AND FUTURE HOPES

Jonathan Marshall The Director of the Plymouth Religious and Cultural Resource Centre reflects on the visit of a Holocaust survivor to Plymouth

(Copy of article sent to local newspaper 12.2.04)

being with him and hearing talk after talk of details regarding the most unimaginable inhumanity. I found myself responding fairly immediately. These visits are certainly at the heart of what the Centre is for. I cannot

begin to imagine the utter desolation and pain that Solly has endured, the inhumanity that he has witnessed. But here in Plymouth he talks of future hopes and the possibility of a better world. How can we possibly ignore him and those like him who have also survived terrors beyond imagination? It seems to me that the only real hope for the future comes out of the possibility of learning from the depths of man's inhumanity and somehow recreating an even greater depth of humanity. This is the deepest need today as it was in the past. Education in its widest and most real sense is vital. Another Holocaust survivor, who went on to become a head teacher in America, said "Reading, writing, arithmetic are only important if they serve to make our children more human..."



Solly Irving "Past Reality and Future Hope"

Yesterday in synagogue, reading the sedra of Shmini, a scene I have read so many times, suddenly caught me unawares: "And it came to pass on the eighth day." It should have been the day of days, the moment for which the Israelites had been preparing for months - the consecration of the *mishkan*, the inauguration of the sanctuary, the first collective house of God. And at the very height of the celebrations, tragedy struck. Two of Aaron's four sons died. In the midst of joy, grief.

Moses tries to comfort his brother: *Hu asher diber Hashem: Bikrovai ekadesh*. "This is that what God meant when he said: Amongst those closest to me I will be sanctified." Your children died because they were holy. They died at *Kiddush hashem*. Aaron, my brother, don't give up now. I know your heart is broken. So is my mine: Didn't we think, you and I, that our troubles were behind

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Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks

us, that after all we suffered in Egypt, finally we were safe and free. And now this? Aaron, I beg you. Don't give up. Don't lose faith. Don't despair."

And what did Aaron reply? *Vayidom Aharon*. Nothing. Not a word. *Vayidom Adharon*. Aaron was silent. There is a grief too deep for words.

That is our grief today.

Didn't the Jews of Europe believe that their troubles were behind them, that after all they had suffered for a thousand years, at last they were

safe and free? Didn't they believe everything they read and heard, that now at last there was an age of enlightenment, of rationality, high culture, liberty and equality. And at the very height of those hopes came the nightmare, a hell on earth our imagination still struggles to begin to understand.

Three and a half years ago our world was changed by 9/11 in which 3,000 people were killed on a single day. During the Shoa, on average 3,000 Jews were killed a day, every day of every week of every month for five and a half years. *Vayidom Aharon*. There are no words. Just grief and memory and tears.

How the Jews of Europe loved Europe. They had lived in it for a thousand years, in some places, 2,000 years. They loved its languages, its literature, its landscapes. They enriched every aspect of its life. They helped make the



Some survivors and their grandchildren lighting memorial candles on Yom Hashoah 2004

Europe of modern times. They loved Europe, and that love was betrayed.

Bacho tivkeh balayla

There are nights when I hear their weeping.

Vedimata al lecheya

The tears on their cheeks.

Ein lah menachem mikol ohaveha

Among all who loved them, there is none who can bring comfort.

Kol reyeha bagdu vah

Their friends betrayed them.

Hayu lah la-oyevim

They became their enemies.

And as long as there are Jews on the face of the earth, we will remember. We will remember the young, the old, the weak, the frail, the children, 1½ million of them, whose only crime was to have a Jewish grandparent, whose only crime was to be born.

We will remember the *chassidei umot olam*, the righteous gentiles, who showed that evil is not inevitable, that with courage we can rise against it.

This year, the sixtieth anniversary of the destruction of Hungarian Jewry, we remember especially Raoul Wallenberg, the hero who saved thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of lives among the Jews of Budapest, the man who died in obscurity, the hero without a grave, of whom we say in the words of Isaiah: we will give you -

"A memorial and the name better than sons and daughters, an everlasting name that will never be forgotten."

And we will remember the survivors. In all the 13 years I have been Chief Rabbi, when people ask me who have been the greatest people I have met, my answer is not the statesmen or politicians, not the religious leaders or academics, but the Holocaust survivors. Every one of them is a hero. Not only did they

have the courage to survive, knowing what they knew, seeing what they saw. They had the greater courage to tell the story so that the world would not forget. And they had the yet greater courage to do so not in anger or rage or desire for revenge, but in the name of life and humanity and tolerance and peace. How they had - and have - that courage, I do not know, but I find it awe-inspiring. One day they will be seen to stand among the giants of the human spirit.

And now we must turn our eyes to the future. For 13 years you have given me the privilege of speaking at these gatherings - and it has been a privilege. But with every privilege comes responsibility, and the next generation must now shoulder that responsibility. That is my call today.

Those like me, born after the Shoa, believed the world when it said, "Never again". We believed that after the greatest crime of man against man, people would learn; that after the death of 6 million Jews, anti-Semitism itself would die.

It hasn't.

Today throughout Europe, synagogues are vandalised, Jewish cemeteries are desecrated, Jewish schools set on fire. Terror still seeks Jewish victims. Jews die. Anti-Semitism lives.

People say, we exaggerate. We don't. We do not say that today is 1944 or 1933 over again. But we do say that a terrible hate is being born - and let it not be said of us that we saw it as a tiny flame and did nothing until it became a raging fire.

People say it is not anti-Semitism. It is anti-Zionism, criticism of Israel. And yea, it is different from the anti-Semitism of the past. No new hate is exactly like the old. Viruses mutate. That's what helps them survive.

But the psychological mechanism is the same - the scapegoating,

blaming the troubles of the world on a convenient target. And Jews, whether in the Diaspora or Israel, as individuals or as a nation, are always a convenient target, because we are small, vulnerable, because we are different.

And though the language is different, the results are the same. As Amos Oz said: in the 1930s, anti-Semites said, "Jews in Palestine." Today they say, "Jews out of Palestine." They don't want us to be here. They don't want us to be there. They don't want us to be.

Therefore I say to my generation and our children's generation: those who died in the Shoa have left us a sacred responsibility. What they died for, we must live for: the right to be Jews without fear.

We will fight this battle in three ways. First, we will fight hatred in all its forms, whoever preaches it, and whoever it is directed against.

Second, we will seek allies, among Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, among people of conscience, whatever their colour, whatever their creed. Let me say with all the power my inadequate voice can convey: *Jews must not be left to fight anti-Semitism alone.* The victim cannot cure the crime. It is not the one who is hated, but the one who hates, who needs to change. Just as Muslims must not be left to fight Islamophobia alone, just as Christians must not be left to face persecution alone, so Jews must not be left to fight anti-Semitism alone.

Third, we will fight in the name of the sanctity of human life, in the name of the one thing in the universe on which God has set his image: humanity itself.

Therefore we say to all those who practice terror in the name of God, who call murder, martyrdom, who take hate and call it holy: that is not the God of Abraham, the God Jews, Christians and Muslims worship, the God whose name is peace, the God who commands us to love the stranger, the God who shed tears when his children shed blood in his name.

And we say to you, the survivors: we will not let you down. We will not rest until your message is heard, until the flames of hate are extinguished, until your candle of memory lights the way to a world that honours life. May the God of life give us the strength to sanctify, dignify and cherish life. Amen.

THREE SPEECHES DELIVERED BY 17 YEAR OLD STUDENTS OF IMMANUEL COLLEGE

Abigail Ifield

Last December, I embarked on a journey which proved to be one of the hardest things I have ever had to do in my life - I went to Poland.

I knew this was something I needed to do in my life. I felt it important that I should go, in order to remember all those who perished in Poland - and also in order to pass on the story of the Holocaust to my children, so that it should never be forgotten.

Therefore, when the forms for the school trip came out, it seemed like an ideal opportunity to go.

The first few days of the trip were spent in Krakow. We arrived during daylight hours - and so the first thing we did after leaving the airport was to walk around some of the streets of Krakow. The experience was surreal. My father had told me that this is where my great-grandparents were from, and so my head was filled with the thought "I'm walking where my great-grandparents walked." Many other people in my group also had ancestors from Krakow, and we all shared the same feelings of strangeness at being there, where they had once lived. It felt as though we had gone back in time - to another era of history. We could have been a part of those photographs that we had seen so often of Jews on the streets of Poland - especially as everything around us was grey, just like a black-and-white photograph.

In 1933, thousands of Jews lived in Krakow, and there was a large community there. However, when we went back, there was barely a handful of Jews - about 9 or 10 we were told. The drastic change in numbers that had occurred was chilling - a whole community wiped out.

As our journey in Poland continued, we heard of more and more whole communities that had been annihilated. The Nazis had completely destroyed Jewish life - whole generations of people,

numbers so huge that they are inconceivable. Even now, after having been to the concentration camps and all the deserted towns, the numbers are still incomprehensible.

Being in Poland was an immense struggle for everyone there - we've all read the poems, been to the museums, seen the films - but the emotions felt then pale in comparison to being in those places oneself. One of the hardest aspects I personally had to cope with was how deceiving the place was. One day, about halfway through the trip, we went to Tycochín. Tycochín was a Jewish town that we were told had once been one of the most thriving towns in Poland, as it was on a riverbank, and so good for trade. However, when the railway became an important part of trade, the Rabbi, who was the leader of the town, didn't like the idea of change - in typical Jewish style, he wanted to keep hold of traditions - and so the town was no longer to the foreground of the trade market. Nevertheless, there was still a large Jewish community living there.

When we arrived, we went into a beautifully decorated shul. There were prayers illustrated on the walls. We sang and danced in the shul, creating a "ruach" (an atmosphere) in a place where Jewish voices would once have been heard every day - we sang every single tune we could think of to the words on the walls.

We then got back on to the coaches and drove for around 10 - 15 minutes. Outside, deep blankets of snow covered the landscape through which we were passing. There was sunlight on the fields that had filtered through the clouds. Everywhere seemed peaceful and tranquil.

When we got off the coaches, we were standing at the entrance to the woods. When I looked up, all I could see were tall trees, way above my head - each tree was slightly bent, which allowed a delicate coating of soft snow to remain where it had fallen, on the side of their trunks. These lines of white snow stretched

up the trunk of every tree. Above our heads the sun was shining on the leaves, and the sky was blue. The place seemed perfect. We started walking through the forest - and then we came to a clearing. Three large round pits, with yartzheit candles around their edges. I felt horror flooding through me. This beautiful forest had suddenly turned into a place of cruelty. I felt deceived and betrayed - how could such a picturesque place be the scene of so much murder.

That moment of shock is one I will never forget - that moment when I realised what had really taken place where I was standing. I felt disgusted with myself at ever thinking the place was beautiful. The most tragic thing was it probably had been beautiful at one time - and then it was destroyed by the Nazis, just as they destroyed everything else.

Whilst I was in Poland, I could not shake off the feelings of loss. Everywhere we went, the vastness of what had been lost followed us. Even if we had gone to Poland just for the sake of one person who had died, we would have grieved for that loss. But everywhere we went - the waste of life was immense. The faces that I had seen in pictures of Jews, and people from other ethnic groups, seemed to stretch away endlessly, into a never-ending horizon.

It seemed that everywhere we went, the horror was never-ending. In Auschwitz, as I stood "davening" (praying) in the watchtower, the camp stretched before me as far as the eye could see. Standing at the entrance to the camp, I looked straight ahead of me down the train track - the rails seemed to extend infinitely into the distance. Standing by the boundaries that separated different parts of the camp, all I could see was an endless amount of barbed wire, and endless concrete bollards. To the right and the left, before me and behind me, the area was vast.

And there was nothing alive. We were the only things that moved. It was cold outside, but there was no

wind that shook the leaves on trees, or blew through the grass to create movement. There were no animals to be seen on the landscape. It felt like time had stopped still. I only saw one bird in the sky the whole time we were there.

In the past, if I have ever been standing in a place where perhaps someone famous has stood, or something wonderful has happened, I have become ecstatic with the thought of it. But standing in those places, where murderous men had stood, and terrible things had taken place, my feelings were at the other end of the spectrum. I never thought I would be affected in that way - but it is impossible to remain passive when you look around and realise just exactly where you are standing.

The strangest thing about this journey through the horrors of the past was that throughout everything we saw, my belief in Hashem, the Almighty, never wavered - if anything, I felt even gladder that I was Jewish. I expected to start doubting Him or disbelieving in Him - but nothing like that happened. There will always be the question of "why did He let this happen?" I have read many papers and theories that have tried to answer this question, yet, even though I ached with pain at what I was seeing, I still felt proud to be Jewish.

On the last day of the trip to Poland, my group visited a Jewish school in Warsaw. It was a few days before Chanukah, so we took with us dreidel and chanukiah-making kits to help them celebrate Chanukah. We did activities with the kids all day long - and they loved us being there.

Being in the school and seeing so many Jewish children in Poland, made the trip end on an upbeat. We had shared with them a day of such happiness - even though we were only there for a day, we had all created a strong bond with each other - and it really felt as though we were bringing some Jewish life back to Poland.

Although to be in Poland was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do, I also feel that it was one of the most important. There are so many people out there in the world today telling lies about the Holocaust - claiming it never happened, and that the Jews made it up, etc., etc.

Therefore, I think it is important

that everyone make this visit - not just Jews, but also everyone else in the world. What disgusts me the most is that even after all these horrors have happened, there is still persecution going on in the world of different people. Yet I believe that if everyone makes the same journey that my teachers, my friends and I made, it is impossible to then want to do anything BUT strive for peace, and makes sure these horrors never ever happen again.

Joseph Skelker

During our trip to Poland we visited many places where atrocious acts of violence took place. One such place was Zebilitowska Gura, where deep in the forest were two sets of mass graves. In one are the bodies of leading political and cultural figures capable of rallying Polish resistance against the Nazi occupiers and in the other are hundreds of Jewish children. These graves had been dug by Polish boy scouts as their last action in this world. We visited a grave site in the Lupochowa Forest, where all the Jewish residents of the nearby small town, Tekocin, were marched and shot row by row into a collection of mass graves. And, of course, we visited the camps where millions were ruthlessly murdered.

For my generation the two phrases most associated with the Holocaust are "Never Forget" and "Never Again." Perhaps it is because of this that one of the things that struck me most in Poland was the graffiti on the memorials. To me the graffiti shows indifference; it shows that after only 60 years there is a failure to take the lessons of the Holocaust seriously. At Tarnov all that remains of the main synagogue is the imposing Bimah, the platform from which the services are led. It is covered in bird droppings and graffiti. I also saw graffiti, the tell-tale evidence of indifference to the events that occurred in both Auschwitz and Plaszow.

At Plaszow, I was struck by the existence of two memorials, the larger one erected as a memorial for the non-Jewish victims and the second later memorial for the Jewish victims. From the visits to Auschwitz I and Maidanek it is clear that there is ethnic and national conflict even in

commemorating the events. If national and ethnic groups claim the Holocaust as their tragedy and not a human tragedy, if we are arguing over who it happened to as opposed to being appalled that it happened, what hope is there of preventing future evil? Visitors will only graffit a monument if they feel that what it commemorates is of no relevance to them.

Those of us who went to Poland had a lesson on the importance of freedom and tolerance. We returned with a heightened awareness of their fragility in the world today. In this country there is a reluctance to accept outsiders, shown in the current debate about immigration. In Europe racially motivated attacks are on the increase. Extreme religious and political ideologies are fragmenting societies and increasing hatred. In this context the rallying cries of "Never forget" and "Never again" are more important and more distant than ever.

The truth is that the world after the Holocaust denies its lessons. Political opposition is ruthlessly crushed in many parts of the world, in, for example, Zimbabwe, Burma and China. There have been savage ethnic killings in Rwanda and the Balkans. The slaughter in both Cambodia and Rwanda has been on a scale to justify the use of the word Holocaust. It is not unthinkable to imagine an occurrence like that at Zebilitowska Gura in any continent of the world today.

The lessons to be learnt from the tragedy do not belong to any one group of people but to humanity. The greatest obstacle to their being learnt is the absence of shared responsibility. The two greatest teachings in Judaism are "Love thy neighbour as thyself" and the fact that human kind is created in the image of G-d. The purpose of commemorating the Holocaust is to ensure that these lessons are learnt.

During the trip to Poland we were spoken to by a Catholic woman called Paulina. Paulina was 16 years old during the Nazi's occupation of Poland. When she spoke to us she told how she and her family put their lives at risk by saving Jews in the suburb of Krakow where they lived. The danger they ran arose because they were reacting to events on their doorstep. We have got to see

the world and its problems as if they are happening on our doorstep.

After my visit I read Edward Bond's poem 'If'. Bond argues that Auschwitz could have been located in any country where the culture dehumanised individuals, even in England. In his last stanza he imagines how the smoke could have drifted over the green hills of the Home Counties. I have come back from Poland convinced of the truth of the last four lines of his poem.

"Our culture makes us barbarians
It does not allow us to live
humanely
We must create a new culture
Or cease to be human.

Yom Ha-shoah Speech Naomi Grant

As a student of Immanuel College, I have had access to an education that communicates the scale and horror of the Holocaust. My grandmother is also a survivor and has often spoken about her experiences and the tragedy that befell her family. Despite this connection, however, before the Poland trip, I had no understanding of what the word "horror" entailed, finding it almost impossible to translate the enormity of genocide into something tangible and real.

Our visit to Poland took us to camps such as Majdanek and Auschwitz where we saw articles of clothing, shoes, and other belongings of those who perished. The anonymity and inhumanity was overwhelming. Nevertheless, I felt there was a conflict between the need to display these objects for the sake of education, and the responsibility to maintain the dignity of those who died. It seemed disrespectful to exhibit these items in a museum environment where they run the risk of becoming historical artefacts rather than personal possessions.

In a similar way, I felt that the concept of a display was problematic in itself. In Auschwitz 1, a pile of shoes lay scattered on a ramp behind a glass wall. Such a presentational device was effective in eliciting a response, but it has the potential to

trivialise the Holocaust and make it into a showpiece. In contrast with this, Majdanek used no such tools and shoes were left untouched in their original surroundings. For me, this had a much greater effect because it was indisputable evidence that allowed me to make a connection between the place and the event. I felt there was a danger in taking articles out of their original context because there is the possibility of alienating their meaning and therefore limiting their significance.

There is a further problem. From a purely practical point of view, leaving items exposed to the elements means that they will decompose. In years to come, therefore, these items will not exist. One is forced to make a decision between prioritising their preservation or providing the public with an accurate display. I came to support the position of the former, since the multiple messages of the Holocaust exist not just for immediately forthcoming generations, but for all generations.

In trying to gather my thoughts on what I saw, I concluded that the only way to truly honour memory is to educate. It was only through seeing that I began to grasp the extent of what I saw and relate to it through the medium of an experience. I learnt to appreciate the importance of adopting both personal and communal responsibility and the need to be active in our response to injustice or evil political dogma.

Finally, I now feel a desire to return to Auschwitz and Majdanek, just as one would to visit any grave. I belong to a generation that is fortunate enough to speak to survivors, fortunate enough to hear first hand accounts of the events that occurred; and fortunate enough to see the camps as they once were. This is an experience that my children may not have. It was important for me to visit Poland so that this connection will remain alive when there are no more survivors. If I return to Auschwitz, I continue my relationship with the place and its history. In this way, the victims of the Holocaust can be remembered as people rather than as casualty figures.

IF...?

Michael Etkind

If Hitler had invaded Britain, which he almost did, sites would have been found for concentration camps. The British police would have assisted in the rounding up of Jews, communists, and other "undesirables"... An "Auschwitz" would have been built on England's green and pleasant land. Neighbours would have informed on neighbours, and the "Board of Deputies" would have submitted lists. Another "Rumkowski" would have emerged to claim that he should be "Der Aelteste der Juden"... A "Czeriakow" would have committed suicide rather than comply and make lists "Na Wysiedlenie"... (for deportation) Those trying to fight would be silenced by "Common Sense" - Telling them that hundreds of innocent victims would be executed for every German killed; and, when ninety per cent of the ghetto population had disappeared, an heroic uprising would have taken place. The "Never Again" would have had to wait until the Americans liberated Britain, and the Russians overrun the whole of Germany and the rest of Europe..

All this would have taken place, if Churchill did not refuse to "negotiate" with Hitler.

SEFTON MEMORIAL PROJECT ON 14TH JANUARY 2004

Louise Elliott

There were twenty of us who went by coach to Troutbeck, Windermere. What I understand happened was that Unison, who are campaigning against racism, anti-Semitism, bullying etc., had arranged to make a big event to publicise their aims. The leader of the Cumbrian branch of Unison (Mark Collins) was dealing with the project. He went on a trip to Auschwitz and there he met Arek Hersh who was taking a party of school children to the Camp (something he does at least three times a year). Naturally, they got talking and Arek told Mark about The Boys who went to Windermere and if he wanted to know more he should read Martin Gilbert's book "The Boys". Mark wanted to know if any of The Boys who were in Windermere were alive and he confirmed this and said if he wanted to know any more he should contact me. Mark came back to England, bought the book, and was enthralled to find that a group of The Boys went to Windermere and he set about finding the place where they stayed in their huts. He found that the huts had, of course, by then been demolished and in its place The Lakes School had been erected. With the permission of the Head Teacher, Mrs Julie Christie, it was agreed that a commemorative plaque could be erected in the foyer of the School and the project took place. Mark contacted me and, in turn, I wrote to our Manchester Members and found out who wanted to attend this momentous occasion. Many calls and e-mails ensued and then Mark told me that they could only accommodate 20 persons as the hall would only hold 170 people. He also said that ITV and BBC would be at the dedication service. There were only 8 of the Windermere boys who were able to attend, with and without partners, so we had one 2nd Generation - Jacky Field (Mayer Bomszyk's daughter), David Arnold (2nd generation and President of the Manchester & Salford Communal Council) and a very good friend of Arek's (known to all the Boys) made up the numbers.

When we arrived at the Lakes School, the foyer was packed and

we were made very welcome by the dignitaries and the people there, which included an elderly woman who, when she was 11 years old, waved the coaches in when they arrived at the Camp and remembered the day very well. There was a short speech from Mark, from Mr Nigel Flanagan, who was a co-director of the project, and the Head Teacher. Canon Dr Richard Pratt read from verses in English and Mayer Hersh read them in Hebrew. The plaque was unveiled by Arek Hersh. After this, we were all invited to refreshments in the school. Ike Alterman and his partner have a beautiful home on the lakeside and invited all our party there for refreshments and we spent a couple of hours reminiscing, and old photographs were passed around. Shortly before 6 pm our coach arrived to take us to the Windermere Hydro where there was a reception followed by dinner. For our benefit they had put on a vegetarian meal and also fillet of salmon. The meal was beautiful, the company was wonderful, and the evening progressed beautifully. There were 13 speeches and after a welcome by Mark, Cannon Dr Richard Pratt said grace. After dinner, Mark spoke again. Mr James Cropper, Lord Lieutenant of Cumbria, Mr Frank Hont, Unison North West Regional Secretary, Councillor Mike Ash, Cumbria County Council, Mr Paul Moore, Head of Children & Families Social Services, the head Teacher of The Lakes School, Mrs Julie Gilchrist, Mr Glen Williams, Chairman of Sefton Holocaust Memorial Project, Mr Nigel Flanagan, Co-ordinator of Sefton Holocaust Memorial Project, Arek Hersh, and Mayer Hersh, with a closing address by Mark Clifford.

Our coach took us safely back to Manchester and we arrived home at about 1 pm. We all had a most memorable day, which I don't think any of us will forget and especially the warm atmosphere which existed between The Boys and all the others present.

There was a small article about the event in the Jewish Chronicle, as well as a photo of Herbert, who attended the Kindertransport exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in Manchester.

Yom HaAtzmaut

Judith Sherman - April 28, 2004

Ancient among the nations
we witness your rebirth,
like a magnet you draw us
land of our ancestors

Your pull solders our yearnings,
we arrive on the Magic Carpet
of winged metal
and make the mountains sing.

Operation Moses,
Moses in the Promised Land -
awe among the cypresses
cedars, rocks, and rattlesnakes

Crowded boats - floating holes
made room for more
one more, three, four, all,
Chaver, here take my hand

Come behold
your land
your land
Your land

From bondage we come for
connection,
from lands of plenty
to fill the soul -
shevet achim gam yachad

We come for unbranded stars
and sandal-footed children,
for the pink stone of Jerusalem
inviting the Sun into shelter

Wail no more you Wailing Wall
we shall fill your crevices with
laughing
words of praise and God will smile
and say anew "Behold it is good"

Israel, how great your task -
make peace amidst the roar of war,
Lord, grant safety to her defenders,
wisdom to her counselors

We rebuilt Jerusalem
we made the desert green,
now help us, Lord,
abide in peaceful habitations,

In safe dwellings
and let gladness
be found
therein.

Some time ago I answered a questionnaire sent to me by Kate Forde, who was doing a dissertation on the validity of art as documentation of the Holocaust, titled "The Lie of Truth". In her dissertation Kate Forde makes some poignant points about the trivialisation of the Holocaust by the mass media. She also raises the question "can any information be delivered in an objective manner or is it only possible to really know the truth if we have experienced events at first hand?"

QUESTIONNAIRE

KF: Do you feel that historians and people investigating the Holocaust could learn a lot from these drawings? Why?

SD: Not really, as there is plenty of data and descriptions of the camps. But as there were no photographers in these places, it probably helps visually to fire-start the imagination.

KF: Why do you think artwork was made in the camps? For example as document, as remembrance, as hope, etc?

SD: Partly as documentation or remembrance, but I think the main motivation was as a form of resistance and as a form of defiance, as it meant the risk of losing your life if found out.

KF: How accurately do these primary drawings and paintings demonstrate the living conditions in the camps? How were they different?

SD: They are as accurate as far as the artist's skill allows. In the examples enclosed they are quite factual and typical of scenes seen daily. I happened to find myself in 'the little camp' in Buchenwald towards the end of the war, in the enclosed drawing by Auguste Favier the scene is typical but by 1945 they removed the tables and put more bunks in the block I was in. The camp was extremely overcrowded as they evacuated camps in the East and brought them to Buchenwald. In spite of the overcrowding Buchenwald, in comparison to the other

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE VALIDITY OF ART AS DOCUMENTATION OF THE HOLOCAUST

Sam Dresner

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

concentration camps, was to me and my fellow prisoners like a holiday.

KF: How much exaggeration do you feel they contain? Or can anything applying to the Holocaust be seen as exaggerated?

SD: I have never yet seen primary drawings of conditions in the camps which were exaggerated. If anything, they were limited in what one can describe in a drawing.

KF: Do you feel that art could help bring the events that took place to the forefront, and make the Holocaust more accessible to the younger generations? Or do you feel there is a danger that artists could exploit what happened in order to draw attention to their work?

SD: Art could definitely make the Holocaust accessible to the younger generations; at the same time there will always be artists who will exploit the Holocaust to draw attention to their work. As I know, there are some now who banalize it without being aware that they are doing so.

KF: Do you feel that talking about 'art of the Holocaust'

could be seen as trivialising what happened?

SD: Art can never be trivialising. Talk can be sometimes.

KF: Do you think it is necessary to be involved on both an intellectual and an emotional level in order to truly understand the extent of the horror? Or do you feel that facts in textbooks adequately explain events?

SD: Facts in textbooks don't mean very much unless one is emotionally involved. One has to have some kind of empathy with the victims; to be able to relate that this victim could be you, your father, brother, mother or sister. Otherwise the date is meaningless.

KF: Do you feel that due to their ambiguity, secondary sources could be seen as less informative and true as primary sources? If so, why?

SD: Secondary sources are definitely less informative and true but they can have a stronger impact on the imagination and sensibilities than descriptive primary sources, if the artist succeeds in his expression of his vision.

KF: Have you seen either of the films 'Schindler's List' or 'Life is Beautiful'? If yes, do you feel that these films dilute the narrative to make the horror easier to bear? If so, how great is the element of truth?

SD: I have seen 'Schindler's List'. I don't feel that the narrative was diluted to make the horror easier to bear. It is more likely that it was diluted to fit within a certain time limit and have a stronger impact.

KF: Do you agree with Jean Amery when she states 'only those who were sacrificed to the Nazis' logic of destruction can truly understand its horrors'?

SD: Not quite. I don't think anybody can understand the horrors. I have read a lot of books on the Holocaust and there is not a day that I don't think about it, but I still don't understand.

The European Union ran into a lot of trouble. It has a body called EUMC, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. EUMC reported on anti-Semitism in the EU in 2002 and 2003, "the largest report ever done on anti-Semitism in Europe", based on data from its network in 15 countries.

The excellent Director of EUMC, Beate Winkler, stated, "these reports are a clear indication of the seriousness with which the European Union takes the subject of anti-Semitism and our determination to tackle it". The outgoing Chairman of EUMC, Bob Purkiss, a devoted fighter against racism, confirmed this view.

But the EU dragged its feet, its cold feet, and had to be pushed into publication. Why? I quote from The Sunday Telegraph (23rd November 2003)

"The 112 page survey found that many anti-Semitic incidents were carried out by Muslims and pro-Palestinian groups. According to reports officials admitted a 'political decision' was taken not to publish partly because of fears that it would increase hostility towards Muslims."

I thought appeasement ended in 1939!

Bob Purkiss was not to be moved and confirmed that EUMC, "an independent body of quality and integrity" would continue its study.

One newspaper stated that the report was shelved after it was found that Muslims and Palestinian groups were behind many of the incidents.

There was outrage at the attempt to stifle the report. However, eventually, in March 2004, it was issued, together with the views of members of Jewish communities. So some progress has been made, but the aura of Munich 1938 hangs over Brussels.

What of the EUMC? Created in 1997, it is based in Vienna with a staff of 31. It has a Management Board of independent experts. Next year, 2005, it will become the EU's Human Rights Agency, with an even bigger task, as the Union expands to 25 states.

The published report states "this is the first large scale attempt to

ONE SMALL STEP FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

Aubrey Rose CBE., D.UNIV.

Aubrey Rose is a lawyer of great distinction and has played an active role in many fields. He was a Senior Vice President of the Board of Deputies; he was an original member of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative; he set up and chaired a working party on the environment, which led to his book Judaism and Ecology. He spent five years as a Commissioner of the Commission for Racial Equality. He is a co-Chairman of the Indian Jewish Association, a Trustee of various charitable trusts and he is Deputy Chairman of the British Caribbean Association.

measure the scope of the problem" based on a systematic computation of data.

Detailing anti-Semitic incidents country by country, those with the lowest incidents were Ireland, Luxemburg, Portugal and Finland. Belgium had a marked increase, including a fire-bombing of Jewish property. Germany showed an increase, particularly in incitement and propaganda. A worrying trend in the Netherlands and Denmark was "the increasing dissemination of anti-Semitic material on the Internet".

The UK showed 350 reported incidents in 2002, including attacks on synagogues and cemeteries, but France, as any visitor to urban suburbs can confirm, showed "a significant rise in anti-Semitic violent incidents and threats, including many assaults and attacks on Jewish property".

While there appears to have been fewer physical assaults in Greece, Austria, Italy and Spain, there exists, particularly in the first three countries, a kind of "popular anti-Semitism" in all their dealings. There is even a "large section of the Greek public subscribing to conspiracy theories of Jewish world domination".

Good heavens, there are more people in Greater Cairo or Mexico City than there are Jews in the whole wide world, Israel and USA included. World domination indeed! This is a people who have lost one-third of its number in living memory through a villainous, barbaric German attempt at world domination!

Such is the madness of media-addicted and indoctrinated populations. I need not add that the Israel government still has not the faintest idea of the vital importance of public relations, even though it has a first-rate case. Rising to that challenge would help all Jewish communities.

There is no doubt that, leaving aside the perennially racist Right and the morally myopic Left, the increase in anti-Semitic racism can be laid at the door of Muslims, Muslim-backed states and agencies.

The EU has been too frightened to admit this, but truth will always out.

It is a problem not merely for Jews, but also for the peace-loving, non-racist Muslims, usually of an older generation. How are they going to live in peace with all other minorities, not merely with Jews? How will they express their loyalty and allegiance, as Jews have always done, to the countries in which they live?

EUMC set out clear guidelines which redounds to the independent experts credit. I was interviewed for nearly 3 hours by two such experts, Victor Weitzel (of Luxemburg), and Dr Magdalena Srodq (of Warsaw University), both patient and perceptive people. I was impressed by their thoroughness.

The Report sets out eight specific courses of action, from a common criminal law to examination of school text books, all positive and practical procedures.

The one crucial and overwhelming need is to educate young Muslims as to their duty living in a free democratic society. They must also learn the terrible consequences of the racist mentality which afflicts so many of them.

The EU has a major but vital task ahead. Can it overcome itself, its own fears, show courage, and rise to the challenge it now faces?

April 2004.

Bernard Shaw, when asked whether he thought there was life on other planets, replied, "Yes, and Earth is their lunatic asylum". A recent letter to me by a woman of some distinction referred to our world of "organised schizophrenia". David Bellamy, that outstanding conservationist, told a newspaper years ago that what he feared most was "an expanding population with exploding material desires". What he feared has come to pass.

These thoughts occurred to me as I watched thousands of young Muslim males marching or parading through streets, often holding aloft guns, shouting slogans of hate, burning flags, with a mass fervour that bore resemblance to rituals of the Hitler Youth, if not of the whole despicable Nazi movement.

What is it about young males? We saw similar explosions in Britain's inner cities in the 1980s when disaffected young men of Afro-Caribbean background brought violence to city streets. Even the 'poll tax' demonstrations of the early 1990s erupted in violence, young white males being then the main disturbers of the peace.

What is happening today to young Muslim males worldwide must be of great concern to their older generation. Among the latter I have many friends, devout, hard-working, peace-loving people, who appreciate the benefits of living in our free, democratic country. But, as a Muslim peer recently stated publicly, these people are frightened to speak out in view of the militancy and hatred of a highly vocal younger generation.

What has happened throughout Africa in the last four decades is

THE YOUNG ONES, MALES ESPECIALLY

Aubrey Rose CBE., D.UNIV

horrifying, young men slicing off the limbs of others, the Rwanda nightmare, racism and slavery in the Sudan, which I believe prompted Dr George Carey's recent remarks about the failure of Islam in the last few centuries, compared to earlier creative periods. In Sri Lanka the Tamil tigers have indoctrinated young teenagers, even recruiting them as suicide bombers.

Is it, as Professor Bellamy suggests, simply the inevitable result of an out-of-control population explosion? Is it a frustration at lack of material progress - The Economist recently itemised the appalling poverty and illiteracy in so many Arab lands?

Is it a reaction against forms of colonialism, but then most former colonies have been independent for over 40 years?

Is it linked, and many will pooh-pooh the idea, to the polluted nature of our food, not such a remote proposition in view of trials in American prisons, where a dietary change produced an amazing reduction in prison violence.

Is there the influence of alcohol with some, the frustration at the banning of alcohol in others? Is it an excess of testosterone, a macho display? Muslim women are notable by their absence. It is the men who rant and rave like inebriated football fans - think of male football supporters on the rampage in European cities.

I have been involved in Jewish marches, but there has been no hate, no aggression. Thousands marched

in support of the Soviet Refuseniks, but never a hint of violence. And among the older generation of my Muslim friends, my Afro-Caribbean friends, my Indian friends, there is nothing but courtesy and peacefulness.

We may not understand yet the overwhelming visual impact of television and the media. One film can stir up all kinds of passion. There is the copybook effect too. To understand the present outburst among young Muslim males it would be well worth studying Elias Canetti's works on the psychology of groups and crowds.

Those who lived in Germany in the 1930s will see parallels between the Nazi exploitation of the young and Muslim clerics who incite against Jews, Americans, Crusaders (why can't they be honest and say Christians?) as well as Hindus. Even words such as Holy War (the thousand-year Reich), martyrs. (Nazi use of teenagers in 1944-5), the slogans (Ein Volk...) The banners, the perversion of media and visual propaganda, all these show parallels that are now part of a work-wide confrontation that can erupt anywhere, Iraq, Algeria, Morocco, even on streets in British cities.

I think of the kindly devout Muslim homeopath, the learned Muslim lawyer, the constructive, pleasant Muslim businesswoman, and how they must feel when the world 'Islamic' become synonymous with 'terrorist'.

I just hope these good people can overcome the seeds of destruction among many of their young which, unless overcome, will bring forth bitter fruits of death and destruction.

April 2004.

On a cold January night when the Germans marched into Poland, all the Jews of my home town in Jeziorno were driven out of their homes. Anyone who resisted or made any commotion was shot there and then. We were taken to the Warsaw Ghetto.

In the Ghetto, I scrambled out each day and went back to the village to get food for the family. Once I was caught in my village and narrowly escaped being shot, so my father decided not to continue my going for food. Instead he told me to get out of

SAM FREIMAN'S STORY

Sam came to England with the Windermere Group and subsequently stayed in the Ascot Hostel. He has been an active and popular member of our Committee for many years.

the Ghetto and not to come back. I was to go to my uncle who lived near Jeziorno. When I arrived, I found that they too had been driven out of their homes by the Germans.

I kept moving from village to village, knocking on doors and singing for my supper. I sang old folk songs I had learned at school and because I had a good voice and people felt sorry for me, they would give me scraps to eat.

I slept in the fields seeking shelter under trees or whatever was around. To this day I sing and write songs but I never forget those awful days of my youth in Poland.

One of my most vivid memories, apart from having to leave my family, is of the day my two uncles were

hanged in front of me in Skarzisko Camp. They were shoemakers by trade and had dared to take a few scraps of leather while mending the belts of the machines in the German factory. They were killed as an example to the others. It was terrible. I saw them hang a few steps away from me and I could do nothing about it. It still haunts me. The rest of my family died in the gas chambers, but I have never been able to find out where. I didn't want to leave them but I had no choice - my father wanted me to survive.

I was in concentration camps in Skarzisko Kamienne for two and a half years; Buchenwald for three months, and the Schlieben, working on Panzerfausten's anti-tank

rockets. Finally, I went to Theresin Concentration Camp in Czechoslovakia where I was liberated by the Russians.

I was offered the choice of making a life in Britain or Palestine and, being a Jew, Palestine was my first option, but that was where everyone wanted to go, so I was sent to my second choice - Britain. From the moment I arrived in Windermere, I was glad that I had come to Britain. I stayed in the hostel for many months as I adjusted and was shown nothing but kindness by the hostel staff.

Eventually, a friend of a friend recommended me for a job with a furrier as a fur cutter. I worked in many different jobs over the years. I

met my wife at the Primrose Club and we married when she was seventeen and I was twenty-two. We bought a lovely house in Kew Gardens and when we were told it had been a guest house, we made it into one again. That is how we became hoteliers.

My life has been good and I have my close extended family with "The Boys". I always felt the need to rediscover my roots so I went back to my old school in Poland and traced my registration records and reports. It gave me a sense of where I had come from and has helped to give me inner peace. The awful memories will never go away but this has helped me. I have been able to come to terms with my past.

Finding Bella

During my most recent visit to Israel, I went, not for the first time, to Yad Vashem, trying to find out if anyone from my home town, Jezornia, had survived. This time, however, I had very good help from a friend who works there. Today there is much more data, now stored on computers. This time, we began with the name of my shtetl, Jeziorna.

Suddenly, among the "Pages of Testimony" I noticed the familiar names Winograd and Rozenzweig, our local Rabbi and the shamas! Their respective daughters had entered their parents and siblings' names.

Without much hope, I decided that I had nothing to lose, so I would write to the address given by the Bella Winograd Pelzman now

MY LOST WORLD RECOVERED FROM THE PAST

Solomon (Sam) Freiman

Sam lost all his family and until very recently did not even have any contact with people from his hometown as he thought that they were all killed in the Shoa. He still has no photographs of his family and they exist only in his memory.

resident in the U.S.A., near my wife's cousin in New Jersey. Even so, I wasn't hopeful, as so many things could have happened since the testimony was given. After all, people move, die, etc., so I was most

surprised and excited one Friday to receive a call from someone in America who said that she was the daughter of Bella Pelzman (nee Winograd) saying that her mother would love to speak to me. Then a most excited lady spoke and we were in conversation for a very long time.

She told me that she had known my mother very well and that my mother had been very kind to her and her friend, who now lived in New York. She described my home, shop and kitchen; my brothers and sisters and myself as a boy, almost Bar mitzvah, who just ran in and out. She was also a friend of my aunt, my father's youngest sister. We had many long talks by telephone after that. I curtailed my stay in Israel and brought forward a planned visit to the U.S.A.

I have since visited Toms River and met Bella following a short visit to the Rabbi's daughter in New York whom I hope to get to know better. Bella was so excited and made my wife and me so welcome that we are going to stay with her over the weekend. Coincidentally, she is a good friend of the sister of Mick Zwirek with whom I was in Skarzisko Werk B. I don't know how Gerty (Mick's sister) never mentioned in all these years that she had a friend who was from Jezornia.

Through them I discovered a Moshe Haiven who lives in Haifa and was a student of my grandfather, who was known to him as "Moshele Melamad" and taught him his Bar mitzvah, after which he became a Yeshiva student in Warsaw.



Sam Freiman with Bella Winograd Pelzman.

The weekend together

Finally, we met Bella and found that she was a really wonderful person with a really happy family who all loved to take care of each other. Five sons and a daughter, all devoted to their mother and can't do enough for her. We spent an interesting afternoon getting to know her family and then arranged to stay for Shabbat. Friday was great. Children, daughters-in-law and grandchildren seemed to pour in through the door and just make themselves at home.

Next morning we went to Schul. Even my wife Sonja consented to attend the service and enjoyed it. We were asked to tell our story to the entire congregation. First Bella spoke, telling the tale from her side, then I spoke about how we found her on the computer at Yad Vashem and hope to keep in touch for as long as we can.

Bella's story

Bella Winograd survived the Holocaust as 'Marianna Soroczinska'. She exchanged work papers with the daughter of a Polish farmer known to her as a neighbour who wanted to keep his daughter at home. Bella tells us that the Germans could not distinguish between Poles and Jews easily and she was blonde, spoke good Polish and knew all the Polish church prayers. The Poles, however, would have known she was Jewish and exposed her. By going to work in Germany as a housemaid, she was able to keep the act up. Later, when her employer was sent to work at Auschwitz, it became far more difficult to continue the pretence. There was the daily smell from the cremation ovens and she had to keep her tears in her heart and not let them show.

A comment from wife Sonja

I am pleased that there is someone, if not a relative, for Sam to share his memories with and even to expand them as Bella's recollections of his parents, especially of his mother, are all good ones. Let us hope that for as many years as possible we have now found someone with whom to keep in touch.

G-D AT THE WHEEL

David Turek

David came to England with the Windermere group and lived in the Stamford Hill Hostel. He is in the diamond business with his son Jeremy and travels often to Israel.

Little did we know when we arose that morning in Israel that we would actually see the hand of fate guide us through what turned out to be a deeply meaningful and entirely memorable day.

While there is really no such thing as a regular day in Israel, this one started out normally enough. I had left early to go to work while Anna enjoyed a more leisurely breakfast. Despite the seasonal vagaries of the weather in mid-February she then decided to take a short stroll. Making steady progress, she had just reached the corner of Hayarkon and Frischman streets when a vehicle screeched to a reluctant halt in front of her. The red traffic light at the junction may have discouraged immediate progress for the vehicle though that is rarely the case in Israel! While it is fair to say that Anna is somewhat less eagle-eyed than she was 50 years ago, she noticed something unusual about this vehicle and for some unknown reason was immediately drawn towards it.

What was immediately clear was that the vehicle in question was an ambulance. What was not immediately clear was why it said "Holocaust Survivors" on the side of it. Now that Anna's curiosity was really piqued, she subjected the whole vehicle to closer inspection and soon realised that she was standing before the ambulance donated to Magen David Adom by the '45 Aid Society! In her excitement she banged on the window in her attempt to establish a dialogue with the emergency workers inside the vehicle. They looked aghast at her, their expression apparently doubting her mental equilibrium and immediately accelerated away even though the light was probably still red!

Now, unlike the ambulance crew, in more than 55 years of marriage I have always had the good sense to never question my wife's mental state! Nevertheless, when she called me to inform me of this chance

encounter, I reacted with a combination of doubt and excitement. Unfortunately, Israel is forced to have a surfeit of ambulances but what are the chances of being confronted by just this one? Anyway, being my usual cool, calm and collected self (!) I immediately formulated a plan. I advised Anna to place a call right away to the Magen David Adom and verify the location of the home base of the said vehicle.

When making a call to any administrative office in Israel one normally ends up feeling like a ping pong ball having been bounced around to at least six different departments without getting any answers. However, we were again fortunate in that a helpful young lady by the name of Annette picked up the phone. Anna recounted her story of the '45 Aid Society ambulance and its rapid departure after she knocked on the window. Annette was soon able to identify the vehicle as ambulance number 32 and to locate its home base. She further arranged an appointment for us both to view the vehicle at the nearby home base the following day at 3 pm as long as it was not called out to respond to an emergency. Annette imparted the relevant information and was about to hang up when she asked a strange question. Annette asked Anna how far away she was from the original 'meeting' location. Anna responded that she was not far away, at which point Annette asked her to go back to that junction as soon as she hung up from the call. While not averse to catching some more fresh air, Anna wondered why she was 'schlepping' back and forth. As she approached the corner she was surprised to be met by three 'angels'; three brave and caring members of the emergency crew of the ambulance who she had briefly encountered earlier in the day. Annette had been kind enough to dispatch them in her direction and they were kind enough to immediately introduce themselves and to apologise for departing so hastily from their first 'meeting'. Thereafter,



David and Anna Turek, G-D at the wheel.

they gave her a tour of ambulance number 32.

When I received a report of these latest developments, my scepticism rapidly turned into excitement. While I am not known for my impatience (!), I felt I could not wait 24 hours to see 'our' ambulance. I advised Anna that I would immediately return to meet her and that we would proceed forthwith to the home base in order to see the ambulance. Half way there I realised I did not have a camera with me. How was I to share the experience with my family and friends? On the

way we jumped into a store and purchased a disposable camera. You can see the impressive results here.

When we arrived at the ambulance station we were fortunate again to find the ambulance 'waiting' for us! We were immediately surrounded by all the emergency personnel who warmly welcomed the "Frischman People" into their midst. We were given a very comprehensive tour of the ambulance and of the support facilities. They gave us a real insight into their daily mission in life and we expressed our

hope that in times of peace their sole preoccupation will be rushing expectant mothers to hospital to give birth to healthy babies.

As we walked away from there, we walked on air. We felt particularly grateful to have been afforded such considerate treatment from Magen David Adom. We felt particularly privileged to have been afforded the opportunity to meet "The Boys' Ambulance".

This was a uniquely heartwarming Israeli story but one continues to be amazed by how 'Bashert' this improbable encounter truly was. After all if Anna had embarked on her constitutional a few seconds earlier or later none of this incredible story would have unfolded.

As we gazed in wonderment at ambulance number 32, we felt enormous pride at our collective accomplishments. For surely this particular ambulance represents a very remarkable victory for our small group of Boys (and girls) who survived against all the odds and who today, in our own long dreamed-of Jewish Homeland, help others to survive.

I want to say Kaddish for a Sefer Torah today, for a Sefer Torah that lived for a fairly long time, and then disappeared in the sight of all the world.

It is the story of a Sefer Torah that made its first appearance in the very depths of Hell, and that made its last appearance in the heights of heaven.

Listen to its story, as it was told by Debby Wigoren, a reporter who is not Jewish, in the Washington Post.

The bar mitzvah took place before dawn on a Monday in March, 1944 inside a barracks at the Bergen Belsen concentration camp.

Those men who were strong enough covered the windows and doors with blankets and stood watch to make sure that no SS guards were coming.

Four candles, scrounged from somewhere, gave off enough flickering light for Rabbi Samuel Dasberg to unfurl this tiny Sefer Torah - the five books of Moses, handwritten by a scribe, on a parchment scroll that was just four and a half inches tall.

Thirteen year old Joachim Joseph chanted the blessings just as the rabbi had taught him, and then he

SHAVOUT, YIZKOR, 5763

Rabbi Jack Riemer

This article was submitted by Harold Tabacznik who lives in Canada and is the son of Mowl and Goldie Tabacznik

chanted aloud from the ancient scroll in the singsong Hebrew melody that has been passed down for hundreds of years.

"There were people listening in the beds all around," Joachim Joseph, who is now a 71 year old Israeli physicist, recalls, describing the narrow triple decker bunks where the Jewish men and boys slept. "Afterwards everybody congratulated me. Somebody fished out a piece of a chocolate bar that he had been saving and gave it to me. And somebody else fished out a deck of playing cards for me too. Everybody told me, 'now you are a bar mitzvah, now you are an adult. We are so very proud of you. Mazel tov!' And I felt very good.

"And then everything was quickly taken down, and we went out to roll call."

Rabbi Dasberg also gave Joseph

a gift that day. He gave him the miniature Torah scroll that they had used, covered in a red velvet wrapper and tucked into a small green box.

He said: "This little Sefer Torah is yours to keep now, because I am pretty sure that I will not get out of this place alive, but maybe you will." "And you know how children are," Joachim Joseph said when the Washington Post interviewed him by long distance phone. "At first, I didn't want to take it, but he insisted. He convinced me. And the condition was: I HAD TO PROMISE THAT IF I EVER GOT OUT OF THERE, THAT I MUST TELL THE STORY, the story of my bar mitzvah."

The story of that Sefer Torah was told to the world on January 21st, when Elon Ramon, the first Israeli astronaut, held the scroll aloft during a live teleconference from aboard the space shuttle Columbia.

"This Torah scroll was given by a rabbi to a young, scared, thin, thirteen year old boy in Bergen Belsen," Ramon said from inside the space shuttle. "It represents more than anything the ability of the Jewish people to survive. It represents their ability to go from black days, from periods of darkness, to

reach periods of hope and faith in the future."

And then, eleven days after that interview that Elon Ramon gave from outer space, you know what happened. Space ship Columbia disintegrated on its way back down to earth, and Elon Ramon and the other members of that crew were killed.

I don't believe that the Sefer Torah that Elon Ramon carried into space just disappeared. Not all of the experiments and projects that this mission was supposed to accomplish were successful. Many of those experiments perished with them. The results of some of them were sent back down to earth before the Columbia crashed and so they were not lost. But I think that the Sefer Torah fulfilled its mission more thoroughly than any of the other objects aboard that spaceship did.

Let me explain how that Sefer Torah came to be on board Columbia and why I feel that it achieved its mission.

One day a few years ago, Elon Ramon was visiting the home of Joachim Joseph in Tel Aviv. He noticed this miniature Sefer Torah on a shelf in Joseph's study and he asked him what it was. Dr Joseph, who is now a well-known physicist in Israel, explained to him that this Sefer Torah was given to him in Bergen Belsen on the day of his bar mitzvah.

He explained that he was born in Berlin and raised in Amsterdam. The young Joseph had watched with interest as older boys in his neighbourhood celebrated their bar mitzvah. His father, a lawyer, was not particularly religious, but several of his uncles were, and they would sometimes take him with them when they went to synagogue.

Joachim Joseph was not particularly devoted to Jewish rituals, but he did look forward to experiencing the excitement of becoming a bar mitzvah.

And then the Nazis came.

The family were sent to a Dutch prison camp called Westerbork late in 1942. A year later, the Josephs were brought to Bergen Belsen, the concentration camp in the Lower Saxony region of Germany, where sixty thousand people died, including their landsman, Anne Frank.

Joseph's father and mother were sent to different sections of the camp. He and his younger brother ended

up in a barracks with Rabbi Dasberg, the former Chief Rabbi of the Netherlands. The rabbi had brought some ritual objects and some Jewish texts with him when he was sent to Bergen Belsen, and he tried to study and pray from them every day. At first, such things were permitted but, by 1944, conditions at the camp were steadily worsening. A diary entry by a Dutch Jew describes how Rabbi Dasberg and others were caught at the gates of the crematorium, reciting the Kaddish for the dead. They were punished with extra hard labour for their crime.

When Rabbi Dasberg heard that Joachim Joseph was becoming 13 years old, the age of bar mitzvah, he asked if he could teach him. They studied together secretly at night. "We were still in a good enough condition so that that we could entertain the thought of doing such a thing," Dr Joseph remembers. But a couple of months later, Rabbi Dasberg disappeared from his barracks. He died on February 24th 1945, just a few months before British troops liberated the camp.

Joachim Joseph used rags to wrap the green box that held the Torah, and he hid it deep down at the bottom of his backpack. It stayed there, undetected, as conditions in the camp grew worse and worse.

As he approached his 14th birthday, he weighed only 42 pounds. His feet, protected only by rags, rope, and two chunks of an old tyre, froze in the winter cold. When he could no longer join the regular work detail, the Nazis gave him an easier assignment. After the morning roll call, it was his job to limp from bunk to bunk, checking to see if those who were still in bed were alive or had died during the night. If they had, it was his job to drag the corpse outside and wait for a cart to come by, so he could load it on.

Freedom came out of the blue. In February 1945, a maternal uncle who had fought for the French Resistance and then escaped to Switzerland, secured fake passports for Joachim and his family from several Latin American countries - something that was very rare so late in the war. The brothers and their parents, emaciated and near death, were reunited and put on a train, with captured foreign nations whom the Germans hoped to exchange for their own POWs. Months later, the family sailed on a British military

ship to Palestine, part of a generation of refugees who were determined to build a Jewish state.

In 1951, Joachim Joseph published the story of his clandestine bar mitzvah in the *Jerusalem Post*. He hated talking about his life in the concentration camps, and so he did not want to write the article, but his father, who remembered the promise his son had made to Rabbi Dasberg to tell the story, insisted.

For the next four decades, Joseph said almost nothing about his experiences during the war. He wanted to stop the nightmares he kept having, and he wanted to move on.

"I screwed it down, deep down," he says, "I did my best to forget about it."

He studied atmospheric physics and got a doctorate from UCLA in 1966. He pioneered experiments in how dust particles in the atmosphere affect the climate. And that is how he came to meet Elon Ramon. When Ramon saw the miniature Sefer Torah on the shelf in Dr Joseph's home, he asked about it, and so Dr Joseph told him the story. And then, a few months later, Ramon called from Houston and asked him for permission to take the Sefer Torah along with him when he went up into space. Dr Joseph reluctantly agreed, not because he wanted any publicity, but only out of courtesy to the promise that he had made to his rabbi on the day of his bar mitzvah.

And now, now that his grandchildren are 8 and 6 years old, and now that they, like everyone else in the world, have heard about the Sefer Torah that went up into space, he is ready to tell them the story of how he got it. As he said to the reporter from the *Washington Post* who called to interview him recently, "can you hear the noise in the background? Those are my grandchildren calling to me to come out and play with them."

Joseph says that he has no regrets about sending the Torah into space. "I'm not sorry that it is gone," he says, "it did what it, perhaps, was destined to do."

When I read that story, I had two reactions. One was: I am not sure if that was what the miniature Sefer Torah was destined to do or not. I can't imagine that when his rabbi gave him this Sefer Torah as a gift on the day of his bar mitzvah, that the rabbi, in his wildest dreams, could have imagined that there would

someday be a Jewish state, that it would someday have a Jewish astronaut, and that this astronaut would proudly carry this Sefer Torah that he was giving to this child up far into space. And I can't imagine that Rabbi Dasberg could have imagined that this astronaut would hold this Sefer Torah up proudly on world television, and that billions of people all around the world would see it and hear its story.

When Rabbi Dasberg said to this bar mitzvah boy, "Take this Sefer Torah as a gift from me, and, if you ever get out of here, promise me that you will tell the story of how you got it," little did he know how literally and how powerfully this boy would keep that promise!

And one more thought came to my mind when I read this story. It is a story that we read on Yom Kippur during the martyrology service. It is the story of Rabbi Hanina ben Teradion, who was taken out to be tortured wrapped in a Sefer Torah. The Romans tied him to a stake, and then they lit the fire. And his students said to Rabbi Hanina ben Teradion: "Our teacher, tell us, what

do you see?" And he said: "I see the scroll being burned, and I see the letters flying away." And with these words, Rabbi Hanina ben Teradion died.

I think that what the rabbi meant by those words was that the physical scroll, the parchment, could be burned, but the Torah itself was indestructible. As the parchment caught fire and began to burn, the letters flew up to heaven.

And so it is, I believe, with this Sefer Torah that went up in smoke, together with those seven brave astronauts. The parchment may have been destroyed - but the story will go on. The story will continue. The story will live on.

And so today, we say Yizkor, not only for the souls of those seven brave souls who perished on that mission, those six Americans who represented the very best of America, who were male and female, white and black, Hindu and Christian, and for Ilon Ramon. And we also say Yizkor for that miniature Sefer Torah that was originally written somewhere - I don't know exactly where - and that somehow

found its way, together with its owner, Rabbi Dasberg, to Bergen Belsen, and that came out of Bergen Belsen intact, together with the young boy who chanted from it on the day of his bar mitzvah, and then made its way, together with him, from Bergen Belsen to the land of Israel. And then went from Tel Aviv to Houston and from Houston to the very heights of heaven, before it fell back to earth. It did its job. It told its story to the whole civilised world.

And now it can rest, wherever its remains may be, while the letters that were in it fly up to heaven to come back down again into some other Sefer Torah someday, so that the story that it contains, like the story in the Sefer Torah that was wrapped around Rabbi Hanina ben Teradion, may continue to be told.

Let us say Yizkor today for a miniature Torah scroll, that was wrapped in rags and hidden at the bottom of a knapsack, and that survived the Holocaust and that told its story to the whole of humankind. May its story continue to be told.

To the most distinguished
Dr Riccardo Di Segni
Chief Rabbi of Rome

Shalom!

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is
when brothers dwell in unity!"

Hinneh ma tov u-ma na'im, shevet

akhim gam yakhad!"

(Ps 133 [132]: 1).

1. With deep joy I join the Jewish Community of Rome which is celebrating the centenary of the Great Synagogue of Rome, a symbol and a reminder of the millennial presence in this city of the people of the Covenant of Sinai. For more than 2,000 years your community has been an integral part of life in the city; it can boast of being the most ancient Jewish Community in Western Europe and of having played an important role in spreading Judaism on this Continent. Today's commemoration, therefore, acquires a special significance for religious, cultural and social life in the capital and cannot but have a very special resonance in the heart of the Bishop of Rome! Since I am unable to attend in person, I have asked my Vicar

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE CHIEF RABBI OF ROME DR RICCARDO DI SEGNI FOR THE CENTENARY OF THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE OF ROME

General for the Diocese of Rome, Cardinal Camillo Ruini, to represent me; he is accompanied by Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Holy See's Commission for Relations with the Jews. They formally express my desire to be with you on this day.

In offering you my respectful greeting, distinguished Dr Riccardo Di Segni, I extend my cordial thoughts to all the Members of the Community, to their President, Mr Leone Elio Paserman, and to all who are gathered to witness once again the importance and vigour of the religious patrimony that is celebrated every Saturday in the Great Synagogue of Rome. I would like to extend a special greeting to Professor Elio Toaff, Chief Rabbi emeritus; with his open and generous spirit, he welcomed me to the Synagogue when I visited it on 13 April 1986.

The event lives on, engraved in my mind and heart as a symbol of new developments in relations between the Jewish people and the Catholic Church in recent decades after periods that were at times difficult and troubled.

2. Today's celebration, in whose joy we all readily join, recalls the first century of this majestic Synagogue. It stands on the banks of the Tiber, witnessing with the harmony of its architectural lines to faith and to praise of the Almighty. The Christian Community of Rome, through the Successor of Peter, joins you in thanking the Lord for this happy occasion. As I said during the visit I mentioned, we greet you as our "beloved brothers" in the faith of Abraham, our Patriarch, of Isaac and Jacob, of Sarah and Rebecca, Rachael and Leah. In writing to the Romans (cf. Rom 11: 16-18), St Paul was already speaking of the holy root of Israel on which pagans are grafted onto Christ, "for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29), and you continue to be the first-born people of the Covenant (liturgy of Good Friday, General Intercessions, *For the Jewish People*).

You have been citizens of this City of Rome for more than 2,000 years, even before Peter the fisherman and Paul in chains came here sustained from within by the Breath of the Spirit. Not only the Sacred Scriptures, in which to a large extent we share, not only the liturgy but also very ancient art forms witness to the Church's deep bond with the Synagogue; this is because of that spiritual heritage which without being divided or rejected has been made known to believers in Christ and constitutes an inseparable bond between us and you, the people of the Torah of Moses, the good olive tree onto which a new branch was grafted (cf. Rom 11:17).

In the Middle Ages, some of your great thinkers, such as Yehuda ha-Levi and Moses Maimonides, sought to examine how it would be possible to worship the Lord and serve suffering humanity together, thereby paving the way to peace. The great philosopher and theologian, well known to St Thomas Aquinas, Maimonides of Cordoba (1138-1204), the eighth centenary of whose death we are commemorating this year, expressed the hope that better relations between Jews and Christians might lead "the whole world to unanimous adoration of God as has been said: 'I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord' (Zep 3:9) (*Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Melakhim* XI, 4, ed. Jerusalem, Mossad Harav Kook).

3. We have covered much ground together since that 13 April 1986 when the Bishop of Rome - the first since the Apostle Peter - paid you a visit: it was the embrace of brothers who were meeting again after a long period fraught with misunderstanding, rejection and distress. With the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council inaugurated by Bl. Pope John XXIII, and especially after the publication of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (28 October 1965), the Catholic Church opened her arms wide to you, remembering that "Jesus was and will always remain a Jew" (Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Notes on the correct way to present the Jews and Judaism in preaching and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church* [1985]: III, 12). During the Second Vatican Council, the Church clearly and

definitively reaffirmed her rejection of all expressions of anti-Semitism. However, the sincere deploration and condemnation of those hostilities directed against the Jewish people that have often marked history do not suffice; we must also develop friendship, esteem and brotherly relations with them. These friendly relations, reinforced and nurtured after the session of the Council in the last century, saw us united in commemorating the victims of the Shoah, especially those who were wrenched from their families and from your beloved Jewish Community in Rome in October 1943 and interned in Auschwitz. May their memory be blessed and induce us to work as brothers and sisters.

Moreover, it is only right to remember all those Christians, motivated by natural kindness and an upright conscience and sustained by their faith and the teaching of the Gospel, who reacted courageously also in this city of Rome and offered the persecuted Jews practical help in the form of solidarity and assistance, sometimes even at the risk of their own lives. May their blessed memory live on, together with the certainty that for them, as for all the "just of nations", the "tzaddiqim", a place is prepared in the future world in the resurrection of the dead. Nor can we forget, in addition to the official pronouncements, the often hidden action of the Apostolic See which went to the aid of the Jews in danger in many ways, as has been recognised by authoritative representatives of it (cf. *We remember: A reflection on the "Shoah"*, 16 March 1998).

4. With help from Heaven, in taking this road to brotherhood, the Church has not hesitated to express deep sorrow at "the failures of her sons and daughters in every age" (ibid.) And, in an act of repentance (*teshuva*), has asked forgiveness for their responsibility connected in any way with the scourges of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism (ibid.). During the Great Jubilee, we prayed for God's mercy in the Basilica sacred to the memory of Peter in Rome, and in Jerusalem, the city beloved by all Jews, the heart of that Land which is Holy for us all. The Successor of Peter went on pilgrimage to the hills of Judea and paid homage to the victims of the Shoah at Yad Vashem; he prayed beside you on Mount Zion at the foot of that Holy Place.

Unfortunately, the mere thought of the Holy Land gives rise in our hearts to anxiety and sorrow because of the violence that continues to stain that region and the excessive flow of innocent blood poured out by both Israelis and Palestinians that hinders peace in justice from dawning. Today, therefore, in faith and hope, we are addressing a fervent prayer to the Eternal One, to the God of *Shalom*, so that enmity and hatred may no longer overpower those who turn to our father, Abraham - Jews, Christians and Muslims - and may lead the way to a clear knowledge of the ties that bind them and the responsibilities that lie on each one's shoulders.

We still have a long way to go: the God of justice and peace, of mercy and of reconciliation calls us to collaborate without wavering in our world today which is scarred by disputes and hostilities. If we can join our hearts and hands to respond to the divine call, the light of the Eternal One will shine close to us to illumine all peoples and show us paths to peace, to *Shalom*. Let us walk them with one heart.

5. Not only in Jerusalem and in the Land of Israel but also here in Rome, we can do many things together: for those close to us who are suffering marginalisation, for immigrants and foreigners, for the weak and the poverty-stricken. Sharing the values of the defence of life and the dignity of every human person, we can increase our fraternal cooperation in concrete ways.

Our meeting today is, as it were, in preparation for your imminent solemnity of *Shavu'ot* and of our Pentecost which proclaim the fullness of our respective paschal celebrations. May these feasts see us united in praying David's paschal Hallel.

"Hallelu et Adonay kol goim
shabbahuHu kol ha-ummim
ki gavar "alenu khasdo
we-emet Adonay le-"olam".

"Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes, col-
laudate Eum, omnes populi.
Quoniam confirmata est super nos mis-
ericordia eius,
et veritas Domini manet in aeternum"
Hallelu-Yah (Ps 117[116]).

From the Vatican, 22 May 2004

IOANNES PAULUS II

KADDISH FOR A PRIEST

Last December, I was invited by Joachim Russek, the Director and driving force of the Centre for Jewish Culture in Crakow to speak there about my experiences both during and after the Second World War. It was part of a programme leading up to the Annual Holocaust Memorial Day which takes place in Poland on the 27th January.

I presented a short outline, which was followed by an hour of questions and answers. It was an open and soul-searching discussion. I was struck by the genuine interest of the participants and their understanding of the Polish-Jewish predicament which they so ardently tried to address.

Among the participants was the famous Jesuit Priest, Father Stanislaw Musial, the scourge of the anti-Semites, fervent in the pursuit of truth and justice, courageous polemicist and a great protagonist in the dialogue of Polish-Jewish relations. He made an excellent positive contribution to the discussion.

I had never met him before but, for nearly twenty years, I have read many of his articles which appeared in a number of leading Polish newspapers. They evinced great erudition, a sense of justice and a love for humanity. Meeting him was an honour, privilege, inspiring and the highlight of my two-day stay in Krakow. Sadly, he died suddenly at the age of sixty-six three weeks later, a wonderful and irreplaceable human being who had still so much to offer for the betterment of humanity.

Below is one of the many interviews which Father Musial gave and which were published in the Polish Press and widely read. It gives a flavour of the kind of man he was. Editor.

Gazeta Wyborcza,
January 9-10, 1999

Nationalism is the greatest threat to the Church in Poland. Meanwhile, the Church around the world is becoming increasingly more universal. If we do not rid ourselves of our nationalistic inclinations, we are in danger of being marginalized and cut off from the mainstream of the Universal Church

- Stanislaw Musial S.J., in an interview with Witold Beres and Krzysztof Burnetko

STANISLAW MUSIAL S.J.: In my early childhood, I experienced a situation that allowed me to make an important discovery: that the same person can be a guardian angel to some and an executioner to others.

It must have been 1942, and I would have been about four years old. A Jewish man whom we knew knocked at the door of our house in Lososina Górna, near Limanowa. He asked for help. Mama was packing up some food for him when the Blue Police and German gendarmes drove up. Father managed to slip away, and Mama, my grandfather, and we three children were left with that Jewish man, who did not want to flee.

They were supposed to shoot us for aiding a Jew. As I was later told, they lined us all up in a row in front of the house. And then I remember this part—I was led by some sort of childish instinct to throw myself at the feet of the German who was in command, and to grab hold of his legs. He was moved. He sent the other soldiers off to search for Jews at our neighbors', and later he remarked that he had left a son just like me behind in Germany... What is more, from then until the end of the war he brought me colored candies at Christmas every year, which was something incredible to me in those days.

As for that Jew whom we had wanted to help: they tied him to a horse, dragged him through the village, and killed him....

Neither mourning nor tears...

WITOLD BERES, KRZYSZTOF BURNETKO: Instead of uniting everyone in suffering, Auschwitz, the symbol of the Holocaust, is igniting much hatred today. What is the cause of this? Is it because anti-Semitism is still strong among the Poles? Should we put the blame on 45 years of communist indoctrination? Is the Church insufficiently involved in this issue? Or could it, paradoxically,

be the fault of extreme Jewish groups, from Rabbi Weiss to Rabbi Joskowicz, who talks about extraterritorial status for Auschwitz?

— First, it is necessary to realize that, before the war, ten percent of the citizens of Poland were Jews. Suddenly, those three and a half million people disappeared from the face of the earth. Yet there was no mourning for them, no tears. Nothing... This is shocking. When we speak about Auschwitz today, we must bear this in mind above all.

Where do such hatred and evil emotions come from? From the fact that, so far, we in Poland have not asked ourselves all the disturbing questions. About our relations to the Jews throughout history, during the war, and after the war. All these issues await answers, but historians are basically not working on them. Other nations, such as the Germans, French and Italians, have gone a long way not only in such research, but also in accusing themselves. For us, this is still a taboo: we keep defending ourselves. We want to be regarded as a nation that was wronged, but that never wronged anyone else.

The Church bears great "theological" guilt, as well. In practical terms, the Jew was regarded until the Second Vatican Council as someone rejected by God. The everyday understanding of theology did not, in principle, offer Catholics sufficient motivation to help the Jew: if he is guilty of the sin of killing God, then everything that befalls him is punishment for that sin. Only with the Vatican Council was there a different vision of the Jews. Except that the way it was put into practice left a great deal to be desired.

Of course, the Polish bishops have promulgated two texts on the subject, but they were difficult and rather theoretical documents. There should have been a follow-up: I suggested to the Church authorities that a letter should be issued explaining to Polish Catholics in concrete terms what the sin of anti-Semitism consists of.

What does it consist of?

Committing the sin of anti-Semitism means that, in everyday or political decisions, you are guided by whether or not someone is of Jewish origins. You commit the sin of anti-Semitism if you write anti-Semitic slogans on the walls, or if you tolerate the writing of such slogans. Just ask yourself what a Jewish mother is supposed to tell her child who comes home terrified after reading such a graffiti. You commit the sin of anti-Semitism if, instead of the correct term "Jew," you talk about "little Jews" or "Jew-boys." You commit the sin of anti-Semitism if you deny the dimensions of the Holocaust. And so on.

The letter would have to be very concrete, almost like an instruction manual. Theorizing won't do any good, because even definitions of anti-Semitism exist by the score.

Yet, sometimes, there is little desire for dialogue on the Jewish side. There may not even be any desire to learn about Poland and the Poles. Jewish people themselves have pointed out that the young people who come to Poland for the March of the Living take no interest in Poland or in talking with Poles.

—That is true. But the attitude of the Jews who come to Poland is understandable. They are interested in their own tragedy. Our obligation, on the other hand, is to meet them halfway and try to understand their history.

Our most grievous fault

Perhaps the reason for these emotions is less comprehensible. Could it be that the tragedy of the Holocaust is so great that it overwhelms our conceptual apparatus? And that we do not know how to talk about it?

—Certainly: in this case, we are facing a gigantic black wall.

The destruction of the Jews is the greatest sin that hangs over mankind. In the first place, it was the extermination of a people (at a Vatican symposium on October 31, 1997, John Paul II pointed out that it was a special case of genocide,

because it was directed against the Chosen People). Secondly, it was perpetrated on an "industrial" scale. Thirdly, there was the silence of the authorities in the worlds of culture, politics, and religion. Especially the latter. During the war, Pope Pius XII never used the word "Jew"; he did indeed speak several times about extermination and about persecution on the grounds of faith or race, but he never indicated concretely whom he had in mind. It might even have seemed conceivable that he was referring to the Bolsheviks—which is how the Nazis explained it. The Pope failed to utter even such a sentence as: "Christians, when you meet a Jew in need, help him." No argumentation by the defenders of Pius XII is going to convince me.

This is the sin that lies upon our conscience. For that matter, I would go so far as to say that, if there is a crisis of Christianity and European culture today, then it is because Christianity failed to live up to people's expectations in the time of the Shoah. Many Christians did, of course, come to the aid of Jews—and yet we feel, deep down inside, that we did not meet the challenge. This is reflected in our present attitudes. This is why we react in such an emotional way. And yet, one way or another, we must work things out someday.

I can, of course, hardly dictate to the Holy Father, but I would imagine that, on the occasion of the jubilee of the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Christ, he could issue a special document in which he acknowledges that Christianity is burdened by the sins of many centuries of religious anti-Semitism, and that by failing to render aid to the Jews in the time of the Shoah, Christianity committed the sin of renunciation against them. Half a page of sincere words would be enough. Perhaps better times would then come for Christianity, as well.

If the Church had protested...

But perhaps it is also necessary to attempt to talk with the people who are erecting crosses in the gravel pit. If you were to meet with them as a pastor and to take a step to understand and persuade them, what would you do?

—I would ask them if they have ever seen the face of a dying child. More than a million Jewish children died during the Shoah. Can they imagine the face of someone who is dying in the gas chambers? What brutal agony that was, stretching almost into infinity, for death occurred over the course of twenty minutes of horrible suffering. If they were shown those faces, if they were told about those staggering numbers, about that abasement of human beings, then they might begin to understand the issue.

They often say: My mother also died here, and her father was killed in the gas chambers, so I, too, have a right to this place.

—Poles died one way, and Jews died another way. Jews died by reason of their birth certificates. Two philosophies of death. Death is always death, but one philosophy stands behind the death of the Poles, and a different philosophy stands behind the death of the Jews.

I was born just before the war, and I am alive. If I had been Jewish, I probably would not have survived. That's the first thing. The second thing is that we Poles have many places of martyrdom in Poland and around the world. For Jews from all over the world, however, the one proper symbol of the extermination of their people is Auschwitz. 1,300,000 Jews probably died there. That is more than ninety percent of the victims of Auschwitz. If Jews raise the issue of extraterritoriality, the suggestion is not off the mark from a moral point of view. This is, after all, the bit of the earth's surface that has soaked up the most Jewish blood. A sovereign Jewish Auschwitz would be a true monument to the Holocaust.

Is Poland—the country that was the most hospitable place for the Jews in medieval Europe—unable to afford such a symbolic gesture? Especially since the majority of the Jews murdered here were Polish citizens? I am certain that the Jews would take pains over the dignified remembrance of all the others who were murdered, including Poles.

The struggle to prevent the world from forgetting about the destruction

of the Jews is in everyone's interest: that of Jews and non-Jews alike. So that this horror can never again be repeated.

Let us remind ourselves of the *Kristallnacht*, on November 9, 1938: synagogues burned in Germany, Jews were murdered on the streets, hundreds of their houses and shops were destroyed. Yet none of the bishops raised his voice, not even Pope Pius XI. Yet if the world — and the Church — had protested against that crime, then perhaps it would not have had its tragic sequel. Hitler treated *Kristallnacht* as a trial run. He was testing how far he could go in his hatred of the Jews.

The greatest fault of the Church was the fact that, while opposing racism, it was not against moderate anti-Semitism. What does this mean? It was agreed that the state has a free hand in regulating the political, economic and community life of its citizens and national minorities, including above all the Jews, who were blamed for everything.

If we take the article on anti-Semitism from a 1930 dictionary of Catholic theology, written by one of my fellow Jesuits, a German who later became a close collaborator with Pius XII, we find it clearly stated that moderate anti-Semitism is permissible. Yet if we agree to moderate anti-Semitism, then how are we to protest against the burning of synagogues or the deportation of Jews? We will remain silent, because we acknowledge that the state is acting within its rights.

The issue, then, is not that Christians failed to protest in 1942. By then, it was already too late. It was necessary to protest in the 1930s, when anti-Jewish legislation began appearing, even before *Kristallnacht*.

To take one detail: In April, 1933—after Hitler had come to power—Edith Stein wrote a letter to Pope Pius XI just before she entered the convent. She asked him for an encyclical on anti-Semitism. (Pius XI later spoke out on the subject of racism, but that is not the same.) To this day, her letter has not been published! The person who was made responsible by the Church for handling her canonization was allowed to see that letter, but without being able to make any notes, and after being sworn to keep its contents secret. And we canonized Edith Stein,

yet this important letter to the Pope is still unknown. (Cardinal Meisner, the archbishop of Cologne, even asked for a copy of the letter for the Edith Stein archives in Cologne, but to no avail.)

All that is known is that Edith Stein mentioned this letter when she wrote a biographical note about herself in 1938. She states there with all the humility of a nun (she had taken the Carmelite vows) that everything she had written in that letter was coming to pass.

Why is the Church afraid of that letter?

— I do not know.

Dangerous language

The communists manipulated the language: they said that they were not anti-Semites, only anti-Zionists. Yet today, some Church circles never mention anti-Semitism; at most, they speak of Christian anti-Judaism.

-This terminological shift is highly dangerous. It is a flight from responsibility. Then it will always be possible to say, "I was never an anti-Semite, only a theological anti-Judaist."

The term "anti-Semitism" arose in Berlin in 1879. We even know the name of its author Wilhelm Marr. Etymologically, it is nonsense, since there are many Semitic peoples (including the Arabs). Yet this incorrect term was so fascinating that, within a year of being coined, it had begun functioning in all the European languages. For while hatred of the Jews had a history of more than two thousand years, there had always been a lack of an appropriate, high-sounding term. No one, after all, is willing to simply proclaim their hatred, "Anti-Semitism," on the other hand, was camouflaged by linguistic mysticism, scientism, and conceptual coldness.

Yet perhaps the most important reason not to give up the term "anti-Semitism" is the fact that (in order to mollify the Arabs) Hitler recommended in 1934 that the term be changed to "anti-Judaism." Giving up "anti-Semitism" would thus represent a posthumous terminological victory for Hitler.

The attempt to flee from "anti-Semitism" is a grand falsification, because it means that we are fleeing from responsibility. We will now attempt to say: "We were never anti-Semites, only anti-Judaists." In fact, if it had not been for centuries of theological anti-Semitism, Hitler would have had no foundations for his racist anti-Semitism. The latter would have been rejected, just as a healthy organism rejects a foreign body.

Who got the peasants drunk?

You have been struggling for many years in favor of Polish-Jewish dialogue. Where does your fighting spirit come from?

- In my childhood, my surroundings were strongly anti-Semitic. I was born in 1938, in Lososina Górna, near Limanowa. In Galicia in the time of my great-grandparents (and not only here), the Jew was the middle-man between the landowner and the peasant, and so all the village's hatred of the manor-house was directed against the Jew.

Let me give you an example. Years ago, we had a discussion of anti-Semitism at the Catholic Intelligentsia Club. Attorney Sila-Nowicki put forward the thesis that the Jews had encouraged alcoholism among the Polish peasantry. Andrzej Potocki, president of the Cracow Catholic Intelligentsia Club, did something that impressed me. He stood up and said, "It wasn't the Jew that got the peasants drunk I was the one who got them drunk—as the landowner. The Jew was my servant I set him up as my agent in the inn and then squeezed him for money. So what was the Jew supposed to do?"

The Church was, obviously, an important part of my environment as I was growing up. I was an altar boy in my childhood. I liked the services and the religious books. An elderly teacher, Miss Odziomek, exercised spiritual care over me. She wrote to various religious orders, asking if they would accept me in the minor seminary (in preparation for taking monastic vows or for the major seminary). The Jesuits said yes. I was twelve years old. I lived with them in Nowy Sacz and completed the seventh class at the Mickiewicz primary school.

In 1952, at the height of Stalinism, the authorities closed down the minor seminary. One July night, the militia surrounded the monastery and brought in bricklayers who walled off three quarters of the building where we minor seminarians lived together with the Jesuits. In this situation, the Jesuit fathers allowed the majority of us to take our vows even though we had not reached the so-called "canonical age" of fifteen. Thus, I donned the cassock as a fourteen-year-old boy...

After being consecrated as a priest, I went abroad in 1965. And I remained outside Poland until 1979. I studied in Rome for several years, and then in Munich, and did pastoral work in France, then in Italy again, then Germany and France. During those fourteen years, I spent less than three weeks in Poland. What is more, I had no contact with Poles living abroad, and so I missed out on all the Polish cultural and political life of the period. Soon afterwards, I had another interruption from 1981 to 1985, when I was in Austria. In that period, I spent two years as a guest in a Trappist monastery, which cured me forever of eating meat and watching television. Although I met many Jewish people and made friends with them during these stays abroad, I never experienced any turning point.

The Einsatzkommando turned up...

The breakthrough came with the Auschwitz convent controversy. It erupted after I had returned to Poland for good and resumed my employment (which had begun in 1980) at *Tygodnik Powszechny*. I remember how Bernard Suchocki, a young historian from Brussels, showed up at the editorial offices on Christmas Eve, 1985. All my colleagues went to the archdiocesan curia to exchange holiday wishes with the cardinal. Jerzy Turowicz asked me to look after our visitor. During that conversation, I learned what a problem the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz represented for Jews. Before that, no one on the newspaper staff had had the slightest idea. I even joked that it was a beautiful thing that the sisters

were singing Jewish psalms there, that things could be worse-but it was a stupid joke, and to this day I regret it.

Suchocki visited Cardinal Macharski, traveled to Auschwitz, and wrote about the whole affair. That was what really set off protests in Jewish circles against the presence of Catholic nuns at the site of the Holocaust. The Cardinal asked Jerzy Turowicz and me to help in this matter. It is therefore not true, as one bishop later suggested, that the delegates to the negotiations with the Jews had nominated themselves.

That was when I began studying the problem of the destruction of the Jews. It was the fate of Jewish children during the war that made the greatest impression on me. Such as the memoirs from the Ukraine of two German army chaplains who described how the Germans assembled more than a hundred Jewish children in one house. They were marked for liquidation, but the required personnel were unavailable. The oldest child was ten. They were left without food, without warm clothing, with nothing. And they took care of each other. Four-year-olds and six-year-olds took care of little toddlers. And then the *Einsatzkommando* turned up...

That was a terrible shock to me. As a Christian, I began asking, How was this possible? How could my Church have kept silent? The older I get, the more the sin of the silence of the Church during the Shoah weighs on me. I can no longer smile fully because of it. Especially because I see no will among us Catholics to strike our breasts in contrition.

In the spring of 1998, the Vatican nevertheless did issue a document on the Holocaust and the attitudes of Christians toward Jews. The document evoked a great deal of criticism.

- In one regard, it is a very important text, for it uses the proper definition of the word Shoah. It states forthrightly that the Jews died only because they were Jews. Yet, at the same time, it goes on upholding the thesis that we-Catholics, the church-were only anti-Judaists, not anti-Semites; the concept of anti-Semitism is reduced to racist

anti-Semitism alone. This document, fortunately, was not signed by the Holy Father, but only by Cardinal Edward Cassidy, chairman of the Vatican commission for dialogue with Judaism.

The other circumstance in which I live-and live in joy-is among the Jesuits. The society boasts a special vow of obedience to the Pope: always obedient and united. However, some of my foreign brothers hold the thesis that there can be no genuine obedience without a certain dose of "holy" disobedience. And it is hard to say that they are wrong. If the Jesuits had stood as one man in the sixteenth century and opposed, for instance, the burning of heretics, then the Holy Father would not now have to apologize (or at least not to such a degree) for this sin by the Church.

Prohibitions

We have heard that you have been prohibited from speaking out on certain subjects. It began with your November, 1997 article "Black is Black" in *Tygodnik Powszechny*. You wrote that the Church hierarchy should react to the anti-Semitic utterances of the clergy, because otherwise it will share responsibility for the propagation of hatred in Poland. (Journalistic circles regarded this as an act of civic courage, and the monthly Press awarded you the 'Polish Pulitzer Prize.?) Later, when the conflict over the Auschwitz gravel pit broke out, you stated that the cross was being used as an instrument of hatred there. You were then attacked by the Primate of Poland; he called you "a representative of the Jewish option."

-Yes. In August 1998, after I published an article titled "A Clenched Fist in Opposition-the Crosses at Auschwitz," I was forbidden on paper from "speaking out in the matter of the crosses at Auschwitz and related subjects." The vagueness of this prohibition was painful to me. Is not Christ one of these "related subjects"? Not without a certain amount of "Jesuit contrariness," I regard the prohibition as covering perhaps only new judgements. I can,

on the other hand, talk about the positions that I had already taken. I try to be faithful to this, although I have often been tempted to speak up in the "debate" about the gravel-pit.

I do not believe that I will now be violating this prohibition, especially in the light of my vows of obedience to the Pope, if I try to defend the Holy Father in one matter. It is a striking example of manipulation to refer to the first, seven-meter cross at the gravel-pit, erected without the consent of the Church authorities, as the "papal" cross. The term "papal" can be used only with the assent of the Holy Father.

When I was studying in Rome, I lived in Robert Bellarmine College, which is called "papal" because the Apostolic See agreed. The crowns of several miraculous icons in Poland are called "papal" because they were sent by the pope. In the meantime, as far as I know, no cross at the gravel-pit was sent there by John Paul II. The fact that the Pope celebrated the Eucharist at another time and place in front of that first cross is not sufficient for that cross, erected out of hatred for the Jews, to now be called "papal." Terminological falsehood, to which even members of the clergy have been susceptible, is an important component of the conflict.

Why is it that Poles do not obey the Pope specifically in the matter of the Jews?

-The teaching of the Holy Father is accepted selectively in Poland. Where it is comfortable for us, we accept it. Where it is not, we remain silent or interpret it by our own lights. That is why the Pope's meetings with Jews are commented on according to the principle that "There's no avoiding meeting with them, but we know how things really stand."

At the same time, the Church in Poland displays little "autonomy." We keep passing the buck to the Holy Father: He'll come here, say something, shake things up, provide the solution. What's going to happen in fifty years, when the Pope is an African who does not know Poland in detail and is not going to come here every few years?

Could that reliance on John Paul II result from the very structure of the Church? In the case of the removal of the Carmelite sisters from Auschwitz, we were dealing with insubordination by the mother superior. Only papal intervention saved the day.

—It's sad that there was no one in Poland strong enough to stand up to three or four women. (Or perhaps there were others standing behind those women?)

And then there is the issue of returning the church in Przemyśl to the Greek Catholics there. In that case, not even the Pope was of any help...

-These examples show that nationalism is the greatest threat to the Church in Poland. Meanwhile, the Church around the world is becoming increasingly more universal. That is what the Church of the Third Millennium is going to be like. If we do not rid ourselves of our nationalistic inclinations, we are in danger of being marginalized and cut off from the mainstream of the Universal Church.

Perhaps it's not that bad. You have been chastised and there has been an attempt to get you into line. Then, suddenly, the bishops themselves resorted to the same arguments that you had been making. If Archbishop Muszynski says that the cross cannot be a sign of division, he's practically quoting you.

-I'll leave others to assess that point. Comparing texts is a job for literary scholars.

Before the Judgement Seat

-I'm 60. That's an age when people start fearing other people less, and fearing God more. Now I am indeed enjoying the gift of freedom that God grants to all people. I may err, but when I stand before the Throne of Justice, I will be asked not only about love, but also about what I did with my freedom, and whether I was myself.

What else, aside from your early circumstances, have you freed yourself from?

-From a feeling of religious superiority I suckled Christianity along with my mother's milk. And, as a Christian, I had a feeling of a certain superiority over people of other faiths, and over non-believers. Now, I am becoming humble, for it is very difficult to interpret this world, with all its shades of light and darkness, in an unequivocal way. Today, the Lord appears to me as the ultimate reality of full compassion, love, and benevolence.

I used to think: You must be good, because then the Lord will also be good to you. Now I think that the essence of Christianity is the fact that God loves us without demanding anything, and without setting any conditions.

There are those who would ask: And what about responsibility?

-Responsibility is an important matter. But those who obtain grace and attempt to understand that great power of divine love and compassion will surely become honest people.

I would prefer that today the Church educated people in a spirit of openness and hope, and not of fear of God and the world. Of course, the contemporary world contains dangers. But it will be easier to confront those dangers for people who have a positive attitude towards the real world, and who are convinced that there is more good than evil around them.

I feel bad about those Catholic circles that spread fear. Now, I walk down the street and people come up to me and say, "Father, do you know that they have decided in Brussels that the population of Poland should be only 20 million? Do you know, Father, that the Jews are supposed to buy up Poland?" How do they know this? They heard it on a Catholic radio station!

Provoking phobias is irresponsible; it is a crime against the little ones. They are poor anyway, and now they have to live with such additional fears about the future.

I wish that the Church had less false visibility, fewer boisterous holiday celebrations and blessings of supermarkets. All of this is the

"periphery" of Christianity. If there is too much of it, we will become secularized and suppress our faith.

I would also like to see a great act of national forgiveness. (To make things perfectly clear: Thanks to my parents, I knew from childhood what communism means. My father was proud of having fought against the Bolsheviks.) Now I meet people who are denied any dignity because they once had something to do with the Party. I am not talking about the leadership, who should be punished for their crimes. I'm talking about the rank and file who tried to build that Poland because they were convinced that they were doing right. They deserve to be able to die with a feeling of dignity.

My colleagues and superiors expected me to become a professor of philosophy. I let them down. I am merely the chaplain at a long-term care facility run by the Trinitarian Sisters on Kollataj Street in Cracow: 75 elderly, ill women. The encounter with them is, for me, a great divine grace—a meditation on human greatness, on life and death, on man and God.

My deepest dream—and I am not saying this in order to provide a moving point to the story—is for a rabbi to say the kaddish over my coffin. Then I could truly call myself a Catholic, because Catholicism means "the whole" (the word "Catholic" comes from the Greek *kat'holon*, or, "according to the whole"), the Jewish roots and the shoots that sprang from them—Christianity.

Stanislaw Musial, SJ., 60, is a Jesuit who was secretary of the Polish Episcopate Commission for Dialogue with Judaism from 1986-95. In 1987, he played a decisive role in reaching an agreement with Jewish representatives in the controversy over the site of the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz. Until 1991, he was associate editor of *Tygodnik Powszechny*. He was the first winner of the "Polish Pulitzer Prize" (acknowledged just before Christmas, 1998, by *Press* magazine).

Witold Beres and Krzysztof Burnetko are journalists from the staff of *Tygodnik Powszechny*.

FATHER STANISLAW MUSIAL

Professor Stanislaw Obirek

Stanislaw Obirek holds the Chair of History & Philosophy of Culture at the University School of Philosophy & Religious Pedagogy in Cracow and is the Director of the Centre of Culture and Dialogue. He took part in a recent one-day seminar at The Institute of Polish-Jewish Studies in London and spoke on What are the Fundamental Philosophical Issues Currently Raised by the Holocaust Debates in Poland?

Fr. Stanislaw Musial was born on 1st May 1938 in Lososina Gorna near Limanowa in Poland. He died on 5th March 2004 in Cracow. It was probably the first time – certainly in post-war Poland – that the funeral of a Catholic priest was attended not only by hundreds of priests, nuns, and thousands of Catholics and other Christians (Protestants and Orthodox) but also by Jews and non-believers. The attendance at the Catholic funeral in a Catholic cemetery of three Rabbis and the Israeli Ambassador to Poland was indeed remarkable. The explanation is simple – the life and work of Stanislaw Musial was unusual. His commitment and collaboration was deeply rooted in his religious convictions, so much so, that he wished to have a Rabbi say Kaddish for him at his funeral. To him Kaddish was as important as the Catholic prayers. It was moving to listen to the prayers read by the Cardinal of Cracow followed by the prayers incanted by the Rabbi of Cracow.



Stanislaw Musial, SJ

LEONARD MONTEFIORE MEMORIAL LECTURE

RESPONSES TO JEWISH IMMIGRATION INTO BRITAIN 1656 - 1914 BASED ON AUTHOR'S 2003 MEMORIAL LECTURE

By His Honour Israel Finestein Q.C.

Public reactions reflected successive diverse phases in British history. There was a mixture of distrust and toleration; envy and admiration; periodic bouts of religious bigotry and genuine awe at Jewish survival against all the odds. There was no ghetto. From Cromwell's day they lived in freedom, protected by the law of the land, but no-one could be indifferent to the Jews. They were perceived as different, mostly unassimilable, with special interests and international connections of their own.

From the start in the 17th century, the ambiguity of public response was evident. In the 1650s, Cromwell and the Council of State considered Menasseh Ben Israel's famous petition to allow Jews to resettle in England. They had been expelled by royal decree in 1290. Rumour ran through London that it was all a Jewish plot to enable Jews to buy St Paul's for conversion into a synagogue. Whether or not William Payne, who diligently spread such tales, believed them, others certainly did. Cromwell would have none of this. His party, the Puritans, traditionally had a high opinion of the Hebrew bible and biblical prophecy. In any case, he saw the Jews as natural allies against Spain and likely economic assets to the State.

By the time his Republican regime was over and the monarchy restored (1660), at least thirty Jewish families lived in London openly as Jews. They included Marranos glad to do away with their disguise. Immigration inevitably increased. Charles II and his successor, his brother James II, confirmed Cromwell's permissiveness in 1673 and 1685. Some merchants in the Port of London had sought to lay charges against Jews (under old laws) for not attending church and for conducting their own services; each

monarch ordered the proceedings to be quashed under the royal prerogative and declared that as long as the Jews were law-abiding, they were not to be molested and should be allowed their own religion and customs. These declarations by Orders-in-Council long remained the protective legal basis for Jewish residence in England.

Such experiences helped to induce in Jewish minds a preference for keeping a "low profile". Meanwhile, there was an ever-increasing flow of Jews from continental countries, including Italy, Holland, and the newly-acquired territory of Gibraltar. By the end of the 17th century, there were two synagogues in London - one Sephardi and the other Ashkenazi. The law increasingly took account of the Jewish minority. The Courts now permitted Jews to sue, to act as witnesses in Court and to swear on their own bible.

Yet when, in 1753, an Act of Parliament permitted foreign-born Jews to be naturalised without taking the customary Christian oath of allegiance, popular opposition was violent. It spilled into the streets and became so widespread (inspired by an organised campaign of hostile cartoons and pamphlets) that the government felt obliged to cause the Act to be at once repealed. The fragility of toleration was exposed.

This episode lived long in the Jewish communal memory. It played a part in further encouraging the Jewish habit of caution in Jewish public relations. This was perhaps more marked among Sephardim than among Ashkenazim. It may, to some extent, explain the much later difference between Sir Moses Montefiore's caution in the emancipation campaigns of the 19th century and the more robust attitude of leading Ashkenazim, headed by the Goldsmids. The object of the

abortive reform of 1753 was quietly attained by an Act of Parliament in 1826.

Throughout the 18th century, the fluctuating pressures on Jewish communities abroad impelled westward emigration, with England an attractive locale. The threat of the Hapsburg Empress, Maria Theresa, to expel Jews from Prague in the 1740s caused a movement of Jews from Bohemia. When Frederick II of Prussia considered the imposition of additional special taxes on the Jews, there was a like migration from that kingdom.

Jews also arrived from territories as diverse as North Africa and Poland. In particular, the partitions of Poland in the 1770s and 1790s led to Jewish emigration, especially from the extensive areas allocated to the Czarist empire.

Jewish poverty became endemic in London. Unemployment was rife. Jews formed a considerable proportion of the numbers of poor roaming the streets. Street begging, unco-ordinated relief and petty street crime increased pauperisation and accentuated the need for a planned approach to a growing "public nuisance".

A London magistrate, Patrick Colquhoun, wrote a long report on the subject in which he dealt in detail with the expanding Jewish element in these problems. His strictures led Dr Joshua Van Oven, surgeon to the poor of the Great Synagogue, to devise a scheme in the 1790s for occupational training of Jewish youth and a residential home for the Jewish sick and aged. It was a beginning, which had the financial support of Abraham Goldsmid, the financier of Dutch origin. The scheme was the distant forerunner of today's Norwood. The attempted European revolutions in and around 1848 were accompanied by successive waves of

migration, notably from Hungary and Eastern Europe. In 1859, Ephraim Alex founded the London Jewish Board of Guardians (now unrecognisably grown into Jewish Care), to assist the poor, encourage self-help and facilitate the manual training of Jewish youth.

The immigration declined substantially on the outbreak of the French wars in 1793 and soon came to a halt. At the conclusion of the hostilities in 1815, there were about 25,000 Jews in England, mainly in London, but with growing communities in some ports and market towns. When all restrictions on entry were formally lifted in 1836, the number of arrivals grew considerably until, from 1881, the waves of arrivals, especially through London and Hull, reached unprecedented levels following the onset of the Russian pogroms. Many passed through on their way to America. Those who remained in Britain transformed the Jewish community. In London alone about one quarter of the Jewish population was in receipt of private or institutional relief. The traditional Jewish trades were over-crowded. In the 1880s, there were about 60,000 Jews in this country. Within 25 years, there were, in London alone, about 180,000 Jews and about 25,000 in each of Manchester and Leeds.

During the 19th century, the old ambivalence was still clearly in evidence. Some writers, including Lord Byron, George Eliot, and Robert Browning, showed respect and understanding. At the same time, Dickens' Fagin evoked the memory of Shylock and also helped to keep alive the unnatural stereotypes of medieval legends. The notable essayist, Charles Lamb, expressed puzzlement and distaste at any Jewish expressed desire for association with gentiles, since he regarded the Jews as, in reality, irretrievably self-centred, inward-looking and foreign. It was argued that Jews have more in common with Jews in their lands of origin than with their next door neighbours in London. Lord Derby, Tory Prime Minister, told the House of Lords in 1857 that the Jews are "with us but not of us.... there is an impassible gulf". Yet it was his government which, the next year, put through Parliament the measure which opened the Commons to professing Jews.

The ceaseless immigration was accompanied by the continuing assertion that some of the newcomers were not and could not become Englishmen, that they prayed and hoped for their national restoration to Jerusalem and that they brought up their families in the same spirit. These comments were sometimes directed not only to the immigrant Jews but also to those of longer residence. Some supporters of restricting immigration, such as William Shaw, who founded the British Brothers League, supported the Zionist movement. The question was raised as to whether a Jew could be a patriot. It was posed by the Liberal politician and historian, Professor Goldwin Smith. The main Jewish protagonist in that debate was the Chief Rabbi Dr Hermann Adler. Such questions led to his ever more strongly advising the Jewish community of the need to Anglicise and "civilise" the immigrant Jews. It was a most unfortunate phrase which his critics in the East End did not easily forget. Adler invited continental rabbis to discourage Jews from emigrating to Britain, on the grounds that it was difficult to find work and that immigration fuelled anti-Semitism. In this he had the support of some leaders of the United Synagogue.

After 1881, major social and economic issues were raised in the main areas of Jewish residence. Pressure on housing, the labour market and wage levels, added a new dimension to the ongoing debate on the Jewish presence. Some trades union leaders called for curbs on immigration and for some control over "sweating" conditions in Jewish "factories", especially in the tailoring trades, many of which were established by former immigrants who had aspired to "self-employment" and the status of "master". In the 1890s the Tory party included in its programme proposals to limit, if not stop, alien (i.e., Jewish) immigration. Some Liberals and certain Jewish politicians supported their policy. Demagogues were not slow to make political capital out of the changing scene.

In 1905 the Aliens Act was passed by a Tory government, headed by Arthur Balfour. It was not wholly exclusive. Immigration lawfully continued under the Act at a more limited pace. The anti-Jewish riots

in South Wales in 1911 had their own particular local context, but they were a telling reminder of a continuing antipathy. By 1914, the number of Jews in Britain far exceeded 200,000. The outbreak of war in 1914 halted the immigration.

The fashionability of anti-Jewish prejudice had deep roots in society, regardless of immigration, yet social emancipation long preceded civic and political emancipation in the United Kingdom. Anti-Semitism is an ancient European malady, a state of mind. It is never short of self-justification and "explanations". It can become obsessional and a danger not only to Jews but to the general public. Dislike of Jews in England sprang at first from the often-mentioned dislike of the unlike, an attitude sharpened by considerations of religion. Later, it became associated with industrial and economic factors and, still later, it became, in a sense, politico-national. Weizmann agreed with Herzl that anti-Semitism was a national issue - that once the number of Jews in a particular country or region reached a certain proportion in relation to the general population, anti-Semitism tended to follow. On this principle, it mattered not how great or distinctive were the benefits which the immigrants and their families may have rendered to society or their loyalty in peace and war.

The Jews in Britain benefited from the stability and the legal and political traditions of the country. They enjoyed the "free air" of the land. Until the 1930s the anti-Jewish sentiment was never incorporated into the ethos of any political party. Whatever may have lain behind a certain aloofness and "distance" towards Jews in some quarters, a highly-regarded Jewish figure in the early 20th century, Albert Jessel Q.C., declared that anti-Semitism was the result of ostentation by rich Jews. Certainly the influence of certain wealthy Jews of recent foreign origin in the South Africa goldmining industry was much commented on, as was the presence of prominent Jewish magnates in the circle of Edward VII. None of this was related to the immediate practical issue of Jewish immigration.

SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION

REPORT ON '45 AID SECOND GENERATION DISCUSSION EVENING - 18 MAY 2004

More than 100 people attended the first '45 Aid Society Second Generation Discussion evening which was on 18 May at World ORT Headquarters in Camden, North West London.

The meeting was primarily arranged for '45 Aid members and their children - the 2nd Generation - to discuss future plans. The activity was hailed as a great success by many of those who attended.

The evening was arranged and introduced by Second Generation members Philip Burton and Maurice Helfgott. A warm welcome was extended to all by Dr Gidon Meyer, Deputy Director General of World

ORT, and by '45 Aid Society Chairman, Ben Helfgott.

Film and Discussion sessions

The evening started with a preview of part of the excellent and controversial film "Lest We Forget". This hard-hitting film, produced by a German Christian organisation, traces the rise of Anti-Semitism in the world today.

The film showcases Anti-Semitism in the Middle-East and compares Anti-Zionism with Anti-Semitism. The film focuses on the violence in

Israel today and provides a summary of Anti-Semitic elements in the Middle East. It includes details of Anti-Semitic educational programmes and propaganda and media footage from the Middle East. This shocking and provocative material produced a number of passionate reactions from the audience.

Discussion topics

The film was followed by a debate in 4 separate groups. Survivors joined members of the Second Generation to discuss their reactions to the film and to debate a number of points. Discussion topics were:

1. Anti-Semitism today: Is there a problem? How real is the threat? Is the Jewish community exaggerated in its fears, or is it complacent? Is there a REAL difference between Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism? Do we strengthen our case by arguing against them as a single phenomenon, or do we weaken it?

2. What is OUR responsibility? Do we, as Survivors and 2nd Generation, have a distinct responsibility to remember the past and to teach its lessons? If so, what is it, and how should we go about it? Does the 60th Anniversary [of the liberation of the Survivors, in May 2005] provide a focus to allow us to do things together? If so, what activities and events are of interest?

Conclusions

The meeting wound up with a plenary session to report back on the outcome of all the Discussion Groups. A number of suggestions were presented for future project activities for the Second Generation to undertake.



Left: Philip Burton, Right: Maurice Helfgott



The Boys meeting with the Second Generation.

A few of the projects highlighted are summarised below:

1. Educational programmes: To be developed for and delivered to UK schools, cheders; teachers; Universities; our own children; and for others as applicable (politicians, clergy...)
2. Promoting Understanding between communities: Foster links with other religious and community groups in UK - suggestions included contact and joint events with Muslim groups.
3. Media campaigns: various campaigns suggested to achieve better portrayal of Holocaust & Jewish community issues; to gain more positive coverage of Jewish community issues and to counteract anti-Israel bias.
4. Support of Holocaust Memorial day(s): 2nd Generation attendance at and involvement in all key public ceremonies, undertaking speaking engagements etc.
5. Links with other Jewish community groups: Foster & maintain links with relevant Jewish community and Holocaust Survivor groups in the UK and abroad.

Next Steps

Many participants felt that the time was right to begin passing the baton of responsibility from the Survivors to the Second Generation. Members of the Second Generation welcomed this suggestion, and plans were initiated for a follow-up meeting to begin discussions on next steps.

A planning meeting for Second Generation members is scheduled in early July 2004 (details to follow) with another follow-up meeting planned for September 2004.

Want to be involved?

The '45 Aid Society Second Generation would like to thank all those who attended the meeting and for making it such a success. We hope that many more Second Generation will attend future events, details of which will be published by email.

Please send your email address to secondgeneration@45aid.com or call 0845 226 7545, or write to Second Generation, PO Box 47814, London NW11 8WH, England.

Acknowledgements and thanks

We would like to thank all the staff at World ORT Headquarters in Camden

for making us to welcome for providing all the facilities, rooms, reception and security to ensure it was a successful meeting.

Particular thanks go to Gary Spiro, Leonard Herman, Alan Greenberg, Nathan Helfgott, Charles Herman and David Zwirek for helping to run the meeting and for chairing the Discussion Groups and presenting their conclusions. Our thanks are also due to the '45 Aid Society members who ensured that tea, coffee and snacks were provided for all 100+ attendees.

Video and DVD copies of the film, "Lest We Forget", directed by Hugh Kitson, produced by Johannes Facius and Chris McDermott, are available in the UK from CFI who can be contacted on +44 (0)1323 410810

Further information or suggestions?

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EXPERIENCE OF POLAND

Bryan Huberman & Caroline
Spencer
nee Huberman, children of
Alfred & Sylvia Huberman

In November 2003, a group of 28 people left Gatwick airport on a bright autumn day. We landed two hours later in a grey misty Krakow. Rabbi Meyer led us from the Brighton and Hove Reform Synagogue, he was an extremely knowledgeable and supportive teacher. The trip was planned meticulously to ensure we had the right balance of past, present and future.

Being the son and daughter of a survivor, we decided to make this trip and the very fact that we were in a position to do so made us appreciate that we may not live in this Polish town, but we were proof that the "final solution" had not succeeded. We knew that Krakow had once been a vibrant and thriving Jewish community, which now no longer existed.

In preparing for this trip, people had commented that we were brave, courageous and how cold Poland would be. But we were 'tourists' on a weekend trip and we knew we would be coming home. We were going there to see, learn and remember those who had not survived.

We stayed in a warm and comfortable kosher hotel in the centre of Krakow, which had an excellent basement bar where the group spent hours reflecting philosophically about the day's events. Everything we saw and heard whilst on this trip generated long debates and discussions. The group became very close during that weekend, as we realised everyone had their own reason for making the trip. We were afforded particular warmth and support from the group when they became aware we were the children of someone who had actually experienced and survived the camps.

On Friday night we were joined by a young Polish tour guide. We discussed the events that built up to the war and the experiences of Polish people at the time. She described the total lack of understanding between Polish people and Jewish people, which she felt was exacerbated by isolation of the two groups. She told us how she frequently takes groups of Polish children to Auschwitz so they understand the past. We were also pleased to discover that The Holocaust is taught to Polish children and this gave us hope that through education they will not grow up with

the same views as previous generations. The guide also said that Israeli children often visit the area and she would like them to mix with Polish children and get to know each other. She felt that one of the problems was that visitors often only come to visit the camps and don't want to see the real Poland of today.

The Poland that we saw had mainly been redeveloped since the movie *Schindler's List*. The Jewish area consisted of a state run cultural centre, Synagogues and newly opened Yiddish and Jewish style restaurants selling pseudo traditional food. The group discussed whether the Polish were cashing in on the success of the film. Certainly, my brother and I were pleased to see our Jewish past was being recognised and that you could still get similar food to that eaten by our father as a child.

Going to Shul on Saturday morning was one of the highlights of our trip. The Remuh Synagogue built in the 1800's holds a regular service and greatly depends on visitors attending to make up a Minyon. For us it felt like a great achievement to be sitting in a Shul in the middle of Poland. The local community is now tiny, with only a handful of local people attending the service; most of the congregation was just there for the day. The most poignant moment was when a little boy aged about ten came in and we imagined that he was how old our father had been, in the 1930s before all the horrors began.

We all felt well prepared for our visit to Auschwitz Birkenau, having experienced the exhibition at The Imperial War Museum, having viewed several films and, of course, having read *The Boys* (Sir Martin Gilbert telling the story of the 732 children, including our father, brought to England after the Holocaust). On the day the group seemed to cope with the visit in their own way. Our experience was of

very close personal interest and sadness to us. The visit was planned meticulously, even to planning what and when we ate. We all thought that it would have been inappropriate and disrespectful to visit a restaurant on a day like this. The organisers also carefully planned the visit to ensure that we left the camps just before nightfall.

How can anyone say that we were brave to go and visit under such circumstances? We will never understand what our families went through. We had a tour guide, the place was clean and had been completely sanitised with flowers placed all over the site. We were surprised to see flowers, probably placed with all good intentions, but this made me angry because it added some false beauty to an horrific place.

Seeing the main gate with "*Arbeit mach frei*" (work makes you free), tree-lined paths and gas chambers disguised as showers, proves what planning, thought and deception was used to make this death factory. We also learnt that the people deported to this place were even made to pay for the train ticket, with children's tickets half-price. Nothing and nobody was sacred, every possible thought had been made to make this place efficient and cost-effective and so breathtakingly evil.

At least we have now been to one of the places where the atrocities took place. We have a better appreciation of the awesome size and layout of the camps and can understand with slightly more insight what occurred in those terrible years. The enormity of the Holocaust is still difficult to believe and we are left with more questions than answers. Since returning from the trip, a simple railway track does not have the same meaning as it did before. But it was a very worthwhile experience and has left us feeling closer to the family that tragically we never knew.

We have no regrets about visiting Poland. The Polish people were polite and seemed happy to host us. We have seen the white-barked tall trees that encircle the forests, walked by the River Vistula and have experienced a small aspect of the culture of Poland. And then we came home.

THE EARLY LIFE OF MY COURAGEOUS GRANDFATHER

Genna Spiro

Genna Spiro, 15 years old, is the daughter of Gary & Lannis Spiro and the grand-daughter of Pauline & Harry Spiro

This story needs to be told. This story needs to be told over and over again. This story must not be forgotten. I am a grand-daughter of a Holocaust survivor. My grandfather survived one of the most evil and tragic events of modern times. His family were part of Hitler's six million victims.

Many grandchildren are filled with a panic of the impending boredom they fear when faced with yet another story from a grandparent's past. There is a well-known brain shut down when you feel that the story is of no interest or relevance to you. However, each time my grandfather begins, I am anxious to hear, anxious to sit near him, anxious to become part of and experience another unbelievable story of his youth.

In 1939, at the age of only ten, my grandfather was living a normal life in a town in Poland called Piotrkow-Tryb which, looking back now, he took for granted. He came from a religious Jewish background. His father used to go to synagogue every day and my grandfather used to accompany him on the Sabbath.

Suddenly, without warning, the world that my grandfather knew and enjoyed came to an abrupt end. From November 1939, he was forced to live in a ghetto, which was the first ghetto in Poland. They were trapped, nobody was allowed out, nobody was allowed in. They were now controlled by the Nazi strict regime. Gradually, my grandfather and his family were finding it hard to live on their food rations, they were given only a small supply and it was not lasting them through the bitter, numbing winter. What seemed like a game then, but really could have put my grandfather's life at risk, was the way in which his family received their food. Every week my grandfather smuggled himself out from the ghetto to buy some food. He thought he was being brave, courageous and pleasing his mother whom he truly

adored.

Slowly, families along his street began to disappear, mothers would be heard crying, children would be heard screaming and day by day another family, another friend of his was taken away, somewhere nobody was too sure of.

The poignant memory of my grandfather's story is one which he finds hard to remember. It is the day when he received the "thump" at his door, the day that Nazis had come to take his family away. It was now their turn. Like every twelve-year-old boy would do, my grandfather hid behind his mother whilst she and his father struggled away from the Nazis. The fear he felt was overwhelming. He was clinging onto his

him out from behind her telling him to go to work at the factory where he had already worked for some months. My grandfather would not let go of her; he only wanted to follow his family to where the Nazis were taking them and to all stick together. His mother turned round to him and said in a voice of a desperate woman: "You can stay alive, you are strong and can work for the Nazis and you can have the chance to survive. You can make it through this terrible war, the future is in your hands and you will carry on the family name," and with this she put both of her fragile hands on his shoulders and pushed him out.

It is quite remarkable to imagine what a courageous, unselfish



Harry Spiro and his grandchildren, Genna and Stephen.

mother, clutching onto her skirt with clenched fist, holding onto her for protection. She then acted in the most extraordinary way. She pulled

woman she must have been. The exceptional behaviour is completely contradictory to any motherly instinct that she must have been

feeling. My grandfather tells me that he did not understand why his mother was doing this to him and why he could not go with the rest of his family, but now he realises that it was the bravest, hardest thing that a mother could do for her son.

My grandfather was not sure, at the time, where they were deported but after the war he found out that his mother, father and younger sister were sent to the Treblinka extermination camp. When he heard about their fate, the pain in his heart was unbearable, but he knew he couldn't shed one tear; he had to remain strong, focussed and stoic

and think of his future if he was to survive.

The memories of the years he spent in the concentration camps are overwhelming. The smell, the starvation, the cold, the torture, everything that he experienced was frightening. I always ask him if he felt lonely and he replied, saying "I made a few friends during my experience, although you could not get too close to anyone as you wouldn't know if you would both return safely in the evening." The nightmares that he suffered were awful, yet he knew the reality was just as harsh. He didn't know when

the war was going to end and if things would ever return to normal.

After four years of being in the concentration camps, the war ended. My grandfather had lost all his family and he was going to have to make a new start. As he faced the future, he found the strength to cope by remembering the words his mother said to him. "At least one member of the family should survive."

My grandfather looks upon his three children (all happily married) and his nine grandchildren as being his greatest achievement.

I want to believe it's over but in my heart I know it's only just beginning. I suppose I should re-live the horror for you. My name is Chaim and I'm 16. I had a mama, a papa and a sister.

It all started in 1939 - the first year of the war. I live in a small house in Warsaw. We don't have that much money but we're happy. Happy until the war started.

I was asleep almost instantly but was woken up by the sound of a megaphone. "People of Warsaw, we are the Germans, your new leaders. You are now part of the Warsaw Ghetto. No one is to leave their house after eight o'clock. Anyone caught out after this time or outside the boundaries of the Ghetto will be shot!"

Everyone was silent so the streets echoed with their words. I ran into mama and papa's room. They were whispering quickly but fell silent when they saw me. Mama's face was tearstained and she was still crying. She sniffed, trying to pull herself together. She whispered, "Go back to bed Chaim, darling." I tiptoed out trying not to wake my little sister.

The next few days were pretty ordinary, until the food ran out. The Nazis fed us but scarcely enough to keep us alive. Soon I decided enough was enough. I decided to steal some food from the neighbouring village.

I crept out of the house feeling very nervous and paranoid. I crept through the shadows and soon got to the wall. Relief washed over me as I thought I had done it. The village

I WANT TO BELIEVE

Rachel is 15 years old and is the daughter of Ros and Leslie Spiro and the grand-daughter of Pauline and Harry Spiro. She submitted this essay for the National Young Writers competition age 12 - 16 and was placed third.

This story is dedicated to my Grandpa whose life this is based on.

was in sight! How could I go wrong? I heard footsteps behind me and turned round to see six Nazis armed with machine guns running in a line towards me. From the bloodthirsty glint in their eyes I knew they had seen me. Panic spread round my body like wildfire. It was a dead end! They would kill me for sure and I'd never see mother again! Unless.... There was only one thing for it. I turned and leaped over the wall, the Nazis firing at me the whole time. Their bullets were so close I heard them whistle past me, I felt them make a wind and I smelt their stinky smell. But none of them hit their target. Running I reached the town and took the food. Cautiously I made my way home. When I got back I saw mama standing outside our home.

"Chaim! Oh, Chaim! Why? Why did you risk your life? We can manage without. Chaim look me straight in the eyes and promise me you won't sneak out again. Please."

"How did you know mama?" I asked.

"Promise me!"

"I promise."

"Good. In answer to your question, I heard the gunfire and checked to see if you were all right and found your bed empty!"

So for the next fortnight we were starving. It was a misty morning and at 6:00 I heard a knock at the door. Since I thought I was the only one up I ran downstairs to open the door, but I soon found that mama, papa and Gita had all beaten me to it. I was horrified and terrified to see a Nazi at the door. "Mrs Spiro all of you must go - you, Mr Spiro and Gita to the camp and Chaim with us."

With that he marched away calling "Pack your things, we will come for you at 8:00"

"Mama?" I asked.

I thought she would cry then but she didn't. She just explained everything whilst she packed our cases. There was a knock on the door. I couldn't believe it was 8:00 already. Mama went to the door and handed papa, Gita and I our suitcases. Behind him I could see two lines of people. One had men in it, the other had everyone else. He grabbed my arm and thrust me into the line of men and the rest of my family in the other.

It was then I broke into tears.

"Chaim" she said firmly, "if you go with them, then maybe one of us will survive." With that, my family was led away and I realised that even though I wanted to believe the war would be over tomorrow and I would see my family again, I knew I had lost them forever.

TRIP TO POLAND

Melody Wilder

*Melody is the daughter of
Paul and Suzanne
and grand-daughter of Krulik and Gloria.*



Melody Wilder helping children at Warsaw School.

Melody travelled to Poland with a school party from Immanuel College. Between 19th and 23rd December 2003 they visited Krakow, Auschwitz, Lublin, Majdanek, Treblinka and Warsaw. Her diary is very revealing and confirms the importance of such trips. On the 8th, the last day of the tour, the group visited a Warsaw school. The project was to make Chanukias with the children (see picture). The following is the conclusion with which Melody (aged 16) closed her diary:-

Conclusion 19.12.2003 -
23.12.2003

At the conclusion of my trip, where to start? With all the happy and sad

memories, it would be impossible to forget.

It has now been nearly a week after getting back from Poland. I would like to say that my attitude to life has changed, but I am not sure it has, yet...

Poland was overall such an incredible experience for me, it taught me so much. I learnt so much more about my religion and the Holocaust that I knew very little about before.

I learnt a lot about the reality of what happened, it was very hard to understand, but by the end of the week I had a much better understanding.

I realise how important family is to me, and shouldn't be taken for granted as so many people lost their family in the Holocaust.

I learnt how important it is to

support people in their time of need, and how important it is to be a good person.

Along with how nice people can be to each other, and how important friends are. Overall, on the trip I think I got a lot of inspiration from my fellow classmates, teachers, Madrichas and even tour guide.

I would like to think that the trip has changed me, if not immediately, then gradually, so eventually I will be a better person.

This incredible experience has come and gone too quickly. It will definitely never be forgotten. And I have my diary and photos as memories.

This trip made me realise how important family is, also the true understanding of what my Grandpa and his family went through. And how important family life is.

PHAB PAUL RUNS MARATHON AS SGT. PEPPER

Paul Wilder

Paul is the son of Gloria and Krulik Wilder.

It was certainly not a lonely hearts club, running this year's Flora London Marathon, together with almost 33,000 other runners.

Despite the atrocious weather conditions, the London Marathon was an awesome experience. After completing my first FLM last year with an official time of 4hrs 58mins 32secs, my goal was to try and knock a couple of minutes off this time. I succeeded with an unofficial time of 4hrs 42mins.

The support from the crowds along the route was sensational. Torrential rain did not deter the encouragement from the thousands of people that lined the streets. Cutty Sark, Canary Wharf and, of course, Birdcage Walk, stand out as the loudest supported spots.

Fancy dress runners make up part of the carnival atmosphere. I was dressed in a yellow Sgt. Pepper's uniform that kept my music theme going from last year's Elton John suit. This year I even overtook other costumes, including: a giant running shoe, an extreme ironing board, a Monopoly hat, not to mention the chicken and the egg amongst many.

I ran 11 minute miles for the first 20 miles and seemed to have plenty (well, maybe not plenty) left in the tank for the last few miles.

My wife Suzanne and daughter Melody were at the finishing line and said that I seemed to sprint the last few hundred yards.

My charities, including Phab Kids and the '45 Aid Society, will benefit from over £2,000 in donations from friends, family and other great supporters.



Paul Wilder

MARATHON MAN

Jeremy Turek runs the
London Marathon 2004

Jeremy is the son of Anne & David Turek

Little did I know that a passing word of advice from a surgeon following minor surgery would lead some time later to me lining up on Blackheath in anticipation of a rather daunting 26.2 mile run ahead of me.

That is exactly what transpired after a routine check-up, when my consultant advised me to consider taking up running as a way to improve my general fitness and aid my recovery. Bearing in mind that at that time I had difficulty running for a train, it was with a degree of reluctance that I started pounding the streets around Elstree. Over the months my training progressed until my regular sightseeing outings took me to such far flung places as Radlett, St Albans and beyond.

It was on a cold rainy Sunday morning in April, following nine months of training, that I found myself alongside 33,000 other runners awaiting with trepidation for the start of the 24th London Marathon. Nothing could have prepared us for such atrocious conditions although the showery rain did have a cooling effect at times.

A 9.45 start meant a 5.30 wake-up call and an early breakfast, where as much fuel as possible was required, so it was toast and porridge for most. Some time later, I found myself wondering if I would actually reach the start line, let alone the finish line, as it seemed to take an age for the thousands ahead of me to get through. Eventually my turn came, and all my nerves disappeared as I heard the first cheers of the spectators and started to soak up the atmosphere.

The knowledge that I was running to raise money for two such worthwhile causes, Children with



Jeremy Turek with his London Marathon Medal.

Leukaemia and Magen David Adom left me in no doubt whatsoever that I was going to reach the Mall at some stage during the day (or night!)

I can't say the first 20 miles were easy but it was at this time that modern technology allowed me to make contact with the outside world. A call to my parents, Anna and David Turek saying everything was going well was surely a precursor of an imminent hiccup. At 21 miles my recurring knee injury was screaming at me to stop. A 20 minute pit stop was required but eventually through my single-minded determination, I managed to continue.

After much encouragement from a Rhino, Scooby Doo and two bananas, I was gingerly edging towards the magic 26.2 mile mark. After a brief encounter with my wife Susan and two of our children, Daniel and Rachel, at the 25 mile mark (the other two, Talia and Benjamin, were staying with Grandma and Grandpa trying to spot daddy on television), I rounded the final corner close to Buckingham Palace and it was just past Her Majesty's residence that the finishing line came into view and I managed to hobble over it with great relief in a time of 5 hours and 30 seconds, a slightly longer run than planned but no less satisfying.

So much of it is now a blur, but the sight and sounds of the million or so people that turned out in such conditions to cheer the runners on will live in my memory. The bands, music, and dancers all along the route defied the weather to give us so much encouragement.

The journey home by tube seemed to take longer than the run but the hot bath that was waiting had never been so welcome. For 2 or 3 days after the run my body did not let me forget that I had participated in a marathon and for the next two weeks the blisters on my feet constantly reminded me of my previous exertions.

I have so far managed to collect over £3,000 for Children with Leukaemia and Magen David Adom and hope to return again next year to continue to raise money for charity.

It was a tough and gruelling experience, but the opportunity to help improve the quality of life of people less fortunate than ourselves certainly made it all worthwhile, with friends and family making it a day to remember for ever.

WINDOWS ON THE WORLD

Talya Halkin

Ardyn is the son of Roman & Susie Halter. This article appeared in the Jerusalem Post 9th April 2004.

Painter and stained glass artisan Ardyn Halter sheds light on the darkest side of human nature

In 1981, two years after he moved from London to Israel, artist Ardyn Halter began working on a series of large paintings he called "The Family I Never Knew."

One of these paintings, which he showed me two weeks ago in his Pardess Hanna studio, is a portrait of his paternal grandmother and her children. Nazi slogans frame the composition, while Hebrew inscriptions placed below each figure bear their names and announce their deaths during the Second World War. Roman Halter, Ardyn's father, is the only member of his large family to have survived the Holocaust.

"Working on that series of Holocaust paintings," he explained as he arranged several of them along one wall, "was for me a struggle to understand how you could paint the Holocaust from the perspective of the second generation. I was trying to communicate with the past, yet I was conscious of the fact that there was no real way of doing so."

In one of these paintings, a young child and a suitcase stand side by side on a gray dais against a white ground, which is covered in a repetitive series of black gothic letters that spell out the German term "Lebensraum" (living space). In another, several pupils study in a Jewish cheder against the ghostly background of a town emptied of its inhabitants.

"I didn't want to depict death itself," said Halter - a tall, lanky man in his late forties with an athlete's bearing and an intellectual's wire-rimmed glasses. "That would presume a false, deceitful experience of a time and place I did not know firsthand."

This same sentiment has guided him since he was commissioned, this past October, to create two monumental stained glass windows for the Gisozi Genocide Memorial Center in

Kigali, Rwanda, which officially opened this week.

The Aegis Trust, which is responsible for the creation of the Genocide Memorial in the Rwandan capital of Kigali, was established by the brothers James and Stephen Smith, two forty-something members of a non-Jewish family who had already used their own funds to establish Beit Shalom, the first Holocaust memorial in England. The center has been constructed by the Kigali City Council on the outskirts of Kigali, where it is estimated that 250,000 people (of the total of approximately 1,000,000 killed in the 1994 genocide) are buried in a mass grave.

The Rwandan center has received considerable support from the American, British, and Swedish governments, the United Nations, and many other international bodies. Like Beit Shalom (which is located in Nottingham, three hours east of London), its conception has been influenced by the Israeli Yad Vashem and Beit Lohamei Hagetaot museums. In addition to Halter's stained glass windows, it will include a permanent documentary exhibition, memorial gardens, and glass burial chambers for the bones of those massacred.

At Lohamei Hagetaot, the Smith brothers had seen Yad Lazeled, the memorial that Ardyn Halter designed together with his father, an architect-turned-artist, in memory of the 1.5 million Jewish children murdered during the Holocaust. Together, the two had taken the drawings of children made in Theresienstadt and transposed them into stained glass windows.

"They felt that it was particularly appropriate that a Holocaust survivor work on this project, together with members of the second generation," Halter explained. "I said to myself - this is too important a project for us

not to do."

Roman Halter was born in 1927 in western Poland, one of the first areas to be conquered by the Germans in 1939. He was sent first to the Lodz Ghetto, then to Auschwitz, and then to Stutthof, where he became a forced laborer in a munitions factory. Only 200 of the 700 workers who arrived there survived the first two weeks. He was then moved to an underground munitions factory in Dresden and managed to escape during the bombing of the city by the Allied forces.

In 1945, at the age of 18, he was sent to England by the Central British Fund, which gathered surviving children. There he became an apprentice draftsman and then went to architecture school. About 30 years ago, he stopped working as an architect and started painting his experiences of the Holocaust. He became an artist who, in addition to creating stained glass windows, makes the Royal Coat of Arms for Queen Elizabeth II and for other official uses.

When Ardyn and his siblings Aloma and Aviva were growing up, their father talked about the war in bits and fragments his children would then mentally put together.

"My father's story is so harrowing and brutal - he saw such an appalling gamut of destruction over that six-year period," he said. "Today, in the memoirs he is in the process of writing, he unconsciously tells things in the vocabulary of the age at which he experienced them."

"Recently," Halter continued, "My father was reading a novel by Joseph Roth. He told me he thought Roth wrote beautifully but that the book was unbearably painful. I wondered how someone who had been through what he has been through could find the story of a bourgeois Jewish family between the two wars so

unbearably painful. And then I thought that it was, perhaps, because reading involves the imagination - it involves taking in another person's pain. And it's almost as if over the years, because he suffered so much internally, to be able to absorb and empathise with the scope of another's pain was almost impossible for my father."

By contrast, he explained, "If there's any meaning to the term 'second generation,' I would say it's almost like being a translator who can form a kind of bridge between survivors and the rest of the world. We are close to them, sensitised to their pain."

Ardyn Halter was first publicly acknowledged as a painter at the age of nine, when a solo show of his artwork opened at London's Haringey Gallery and he was billed as a child prodigy. When he finished high school, art school seemed to him to "be a place of theory, not of technique." Instead, he chose to study English literature at Cambridge before coming to Israel on aliyah.

After serving in the army, he married sculptor Asnat Dror from Kibbutz Maagan Michael. Halter's paintings and prints have been exhibited in Israel, Europe, and the US. In the past two years, his work has been purchased by The Victoria and Albert Museum in London and by The New York Public Library. His series of 26 prints, "The Water's Edge," is on permanent exhibition at The British Library in London.

The Challenge in designing the windows for the Rwandan Genocide Center, Halter told me, was to avoid trying to create a personal vision based on the experience of visiting Rwanda and talking to survivors.

"That might seem cold," he said, "but it was an approach born out of dubiety concerning the scope of the sympathetic imagination. Faced with such a scale of genocide, there is a chasm you cannot and would not wish to cross. I realised that however sensitised I might be to this subject, I could never presume to comprehend so much death, and that looking at bones and speaking to people there wouldn't help me."

Roman and Ardyn Halter created the two windows together with Aviva, Ardyn's younger sister, who is

also an artist. Each of the windows is three meters high and almost three meters wide, and each is made of 25 individual sections of the finest cathedral glass from Poland, Germany, France, and England. The windows are located in two small individual halls, with steps leading up to them and nothing around them to distract the eye.

The first window, which is positioned between the museum sections "Before the Genocide" and "During the Genocide," depicts at its center a flight of stairs that is blocked, like the composition's foreground and middle ground, by swirling, semi-abstracted forms of machetes. The deep, brooding blues and reds stand in stark contrast to the bleached bones at the base of the window. The dead are not shown as Tutsis or Hutus but only as broken skulls. Still, in the dark depths of the composition, there are small areas of light.

The second window is positioned between the museum sections "During the Genocide" and "After the Genocide." Here, the sea of blues and reds, with the mound of skulls resting at its bottom, parts open to reveal a different staircase, which ascends unencumbered to a blue expanse of sky, studded with shards of yellow that turn golden in the sunlight.

The very creation of the Genocide Memorial Center in Rwanda is, according to Halter, a move away from pointing fingers of blame in any one direction.

"For Israelis remembering the Holocaust," he remarked, "it is rather simple: We were all victims, and the perpetrators were on the other side. The Rwanda case is immensely complicated because there is more than just one side to the equation. Now, 10 years after the genocide, the murderers are being released from prison and going back to their villages, where surviving families live. Even to Jewish people, this seems like a surreal situation. The sky and the prospect of hope in the second window can only be attained when the eye has recognised the skulls - the nation's common dead - and moved from there up the steps towards the future."

The Halters worked on the windows in the top section of Roman

and Suzy Halter's house in London, which has been converted into a stained glass studio.

"The project was so intense, that it was important to work on it almost continually," Ardyn said. "Towards the end, I was working 20 hours a day, both because of the time constraints and because it was extremely absorbing and emotionally draining."

"There is something very prurient about genocide," he continued. "It engrosses one in an unhealthy way. At the same time, you become involved in trying to make something beautiful. You lose yourself in the aesthetic side of things, only to be reminded suddenly and repeatedly of your subject, which is why it helped being under such time pressure because you want to be out and done."

While he was working on the windows, Halter thought often about Goya's famous series of etchings *The Disasters of War*, in which the artist gruesomely depicted the destruction wrought upon the Spanish countryside during the Napoleonic wars. Goya titled one of them "lo lo vei" ("I saw it with my own eyes") - an impassioned declaration that transformed classical battle imagery once and for all into modern war imagery, depicted from the subjective viewpoint of an individual reporter.

"Did Goya use that title as a sales pitch or as an expression of disbelief? We don't know what he saw, but his mind was quite capable of imagining anything," Halter remarked. "When you look at those etchings, you feel exposed to the blackest side of human nature. Nevertheless, you carry on looking because they are so supremely well done."

Halter would like people living in Israel to know that a considerable amount of inspiration for the Rwanda project was seeded by museums here.

"I don't say this as a source of pride but so that Israelis can be conscious of the fact that indirectly or directly, we may be providing help to others in the world," he says.

"The bones of the dead are there, physically, in the museum. I didn't feel that people needed me to describe them. I wanted to give them something that might, in some small way, lead them to think about the possibility of a way forward."

AT 85, LOOKING BACK GOING FORWARD

BY HERMAN TAUBE

Michael Berenbaum

Herman Taube, *Looking Back Going Forward: New and Selected Poems* (Takoma Park, Maryland and San Francisco, California: Dryad Press, 2002) pp. 160. Price \$16.95.

I suspect that not many communities in the United States can boast of a senior statesman who was a gifted civil servant to the Jewish community and a writer of considerable talent, a man who mastered not only "mama loshen", but the native tongues of the land of his birth, the land of his exile, the Jewish state and his adopted country, a person who is at home with his people and their many worlds - religious and secular, political and intellectual, personal and historic. In Washington, despite its impressive Jewish community, I know of only one such man, the venerable writer, essayist, poet and novelist Herman Taube. There must be others, elsewhere, of his generation, rooted deeply in Jewish experience and schooled so painfully and honestly by the anguishes of life. But Herman holds a special place in my heart. He was a colleague and mentor. He remains a friend. I have read of his work and time and again, I am surprised by their depth and breadth, and by their passion. And then I am surprised by my surprise.

This work, Taube's 20th published book, is a poetic autobiography that spans the years of his strength, to use the Biblical designation for those who have lived more than four score years. It begins in Siberia, to which Herman escaped from his native Poland, and describes in harsh and brutal terms the anguish of those, like Herman, who escaped the Nazis by wisely fleeing eastward only to encounter the Russians, whose

treatment of the Jews only seems humane when contrasted to the German policy of the "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem", but who imposed cruel living conditions that killed many escapees and horrendous political conditions that tortured the soul even as the body was wounded.

Herman was in Siberia, living in Central Asia for three long and miserable years. During the most intense period of the Holocaust, he was in Uzbekistan, that strange and far-off land that offered little refuge from the struggle to survive, but still remained at a safe distance from the killing centres in Poland. And then Herman found himself in Russia and a returnee to Poland as part of the ambulance corps of the liberating Soviet army.

Much of this material was written contemporaneously with the events he lived. It has the quality of testimony written with insight and poignancy, without self-pity or self-aggrandisement, a faithful witness who knew that he was living through historic times.

Herman was an early witness to Majdanek, and hence of the destruction. He wrote:

Everywhere, I went, I smelled gas,
the odor of the "Disinfectious
Kammer,"
the smell of the barrels of human
fat.

I didn't feel fear, hate, pity, just a
frozen numbness of mind and body,
raindrops
ran down my face. My army boots
stepped on
dead shells, parts of skulls, scattered

ties, scarves.

Every piece of discarded shred had
an owner; I could see their faces.
I could hear their voices.
They were my people.

He writes of historical figures: Arthur Szyk, the subject of a brilliant exhibition currently at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which documents his career as a passionate Zionist and as one of the earliest voices intuiting the systematic murder of the Jews before it unfolded.

He writes of Jan Karski, the recently deceased messenger from Poland who entered the Warsaw Ghetto and travelled to a transport centre on the way to Belzec so that he could bear witness, having seen who he had to see, first-hand.

It wasn't easy to listen to you talk.
It was difficult for me to concentrate
And absorb everything you said to
us all.
I was distracted by rage, listening to
your report...

I knew I must have wept when you
spoke.
Now, decades later when we meet, I
smile,
You are the bird that sings once in a
lifetime.

And of Herman Taube he writes in a
poem by Adam Mickiewicz:

When I hear music by Chopin, read
poems
by Yitzhak Katzenelson, when I hear
the names
like Marie Skłodowska-Curie or
Milosz,

When I think of Janusz Korczak, Jan Karski, Mordecai Anielewicz and Antek Zuckerman, I say proudly - I am a Jew from Lodz, Poland.

But Herman writes not only of the famous, but of the ordinary Jews who were an integral part of our extraordinary people at the moment of absolute darkness.

He writes of old age with power and without self-pity, distilling into verse the struggle to live with dignity, and the gradual lessening of one's physical prowess.

Being old is no disgrace, but
When knees no longer bend,
Arms are unable to be raised,
And insomnia rules the nights,
It doesn't make you disposed
to go on living. Sometimes

I wonder if it is worth praying
for longevity. Sometimes.

Elsewhere, he writes:

Amazingly, all summer when the
trees blossom,
we ignore their beauty. Only in
autumn, when
the foliage emerges, do we notice
the splendor.

They remind me of the falling years
of our lives.
I ask myself - why can't the autumn
days of our lives
be as beautiful as the trees' foliage?

He writes of the love of a young
man in the tones of Job and the
Song of Songs:

Naked, I arrived in Uzbekistan, and
Naked, alone, I returned to Poland.

But Eve still lives in my memory.
I often dream of our Uzbek nights.

Elsewhere he writes of memory.

Loss and survival are nothing more
than chance -
My girl, her family and mine - all
perished.
I survived and fell in love with
another woman.
Years passed, and now I am at the
edge of my life.
Still, in my mind, in my dreams,
lives an image
Of a girl with long braids, asking -
Remember me?

Herman Taube has remembered
and transmitted. He has borne
witness and has been as able a ser-
vant of the Jewish future as he has
been a messenger of the tragic and
fabled Jewish Past.

CORRESPONDENCE

LETTER TO LOUISE ELLIOT FROM FIVE LADIES IN WINDERMERE

Dear Mrs Elliot,

We are five Christians who meet
to pray for Israel every week.
We would like to be in touch with
any of the Holocaust survivors
who came to Windermere after the
war, and were here recently to
see again the place and some of
the people who helped them to
recover.

We feel a great responsibility for
all Israelis, and we do seek to comfort
them - in prayer, and practically by

sending funds when we can to help
the needy. Also, we send clothes
to the Distribution Centre in
Jerusalem, along with many other
British people. The family of one
of our number was able to help
the children when they came. I
have the name of one survivor -
Mr Arek Hirsch.

Please could you advise us? We
do want them to know that we care
for them and wish to stand by them,
especially in these difficult times

for Israelis and all Jewish people
everywhere. However, we do under-
stand that they may not wish to be in
touch.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Shirley Wood (Mrs)
for the Prayer Group here
connected with Windermere
Community Church

HARRY BALSAM

OUR DAD - "OUR HERO"

Stephen & Colin Balsam

From as young as I can remember, I knew that our dad was not an ordinary man. The stories that he would tell us about his experiences as a little boy of nine years old, having to fend for himself, selling anything from bottles of lemonade to boxes of matches in order to try and support his mother, brothers and sister during the early years of the Nazi occupation of his home town of Gorlice in southern Poland seemed incomprehensible.

However, all of his stories about his heroic fight for survival were always told to us with pride and dignity. Never once did he show any bitterness or hatred towards those who had destroyed his family, normality and early years of childhood, which we all take for granted.

He only ever saw good in people and always tried to instil this quality in both Colin and myself. His generosity, modesty and thoughtfulness touched all who knew him.

His most special gift was being able to converse with people of all ages, from all walks of life, making everyone feel they were important. He always talked to everyone with the utmost respect which, in turn, was always greatly reciprocated.

His smile and sense of humour were infectious. His cheekiness and colourful language was never offensive, spoken in a unique fashion that only he could ever get away with.

He had a special ability to always make people laugh. He was always the centre of attention, forever wanting to be surrounded by people and in turn, people loved being around him. He touched the lives of everyone who knew him.

He dedicated his family life in protecting, providing for, guiding and loving our mother, Colin and myself.

His hard work in becoming a



Harry Balsam

shrewd and successful businessman was always to ensure that his family would never endure any of the hardships that he had suffered as a child. This will always remain our greatest inspiration in life.

He had immense pride in seeing both Colin and myself married to two wonderful girls in Rochelle and Amanda, whom he loved and adored as his own daughters.

This legacy he created, of love, respect and affection, will live on through his grandchildren, Natalie, Jason, Adam, Jack and Emily. Not only did they all adore him as a wonderful grandfather, they all had unique relationships with him, from the younger ones Jack and Emily, treating their Grandpa Harry as their playmate, through to the oldest,

Natalie, Jason and Adam, being their confidante, friend and soulmate.

His love and friendship towards his fellow survivors, (The Boys) was both special and unique for all around to see. His endless charity work in helping to raise monies for those less fortunate never ceased.

Our dad is, and always will be, our hero. We will never stop missing him, and the memories we have of our life with him will help us through the tremendous pain.

No words can ever express our loss and the adoration we had for our dad and closest friend.

It was a privilege and honour to have been his sons.

THANK YOU FOR
BEING OUR DAD.

JULIA BENNETT, who died December 2003 aged 96, was the wife of the late Boris Bennett, the famous Jewish photographer in the East End of London. Julia and Boris were ardent Zionists working vigorously to raise money and giving generously to numerous organisations, especially to the Central British Fund.

In 1970, Julia and Boris Bennett built a complex in Northern Israel, in memory of one of their grandchildren, consisting of a large recreation hall, a disco and coffee bar, synagogue and mother and child clinic.

On a personal note, when I arrived in Southampton in 1945, together with a group of other young Holocaust survivors, I brought with me wonderful news for the Bennetts, namely, that a niece of theirs survived five years in various concentration camps, including Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen, and that she was reasonably well. Julia and Boris quickly came to meet me in Southampton and when they noticed that many in our group were mere

JULIA BENNETT

Alec Ward

children, they were overcome with emotion and there and then decided to set up a Hostel for a sizeable group of "Boys" in Golders Green and financed it.

A big house was loaned to us by another Jewish philanthropist by the name of Freshwater and the house became known as the Freshwater Hostel.

Julia and Boris took a great interest in the "Boys". Their wonderful kindness and generosity to us was carried out in strict anonymity. It was not till after Boris sadly passed away in 1985 and the Museum of the Jewish East End published a magazine of his life, that Julia and Boris' good deeds came to light.

There was not a Friday night that Julia and Boris did not invite me for the Sabbath dinner when I lived in the Hostel. They were not satisfied to invite me alone but insisted that I

should bring along other "Boys" as well. Mayer Perlmutter, who lives in America now, asked me some years ago to send him a photograph of the Bennett family to remind him of those unbelievable Friday nights.

On a Sunday morning, Julia and Boris and one of their kind neighbours by the name of Jack Cohen, came to the Hostel in two very big black cars and took eight of us to the East End and fitted us out with navy blue chalk-striped suits. People looked and admired our beautiful new outfits when we all walked together in North West London on a Saturday morning. Some of us were married in those smart suits. I could go on but space is beating me.

Julia was a highly intelligent person. Her advice in many matters was extremely beneficial. She was the epitome of a fine, generous and compassionate Jewish lady whose memory I, my family and many Boys will cherish for the rest of our lives.

There are few good people in the world and now there is one less.

Ida Zwirek (nee Selner) was born on 16 December 1928 in Plock, Poland. When she was just one year old, she left in the arms of her mother, Esther, to join her father, who had already made the journey to a new life in England.

As Esther and the baby Ida left their old home for the last time, the remaining family waved them goodbye. One of them was Ida's four-year-old cousin, Abraham. More than 20 years later that little boy would become her husband.

Ida was brought up in the close pre-war Jewish community of East London, helping her mum run the house and looking after her baby brother, Max. Ida was an intelligent girl and did well at school, wanting to become a teacher. She soaked up knowledge and yearned to travel the world to see for herself some of the places she had heard about in the classroom. That seemed like a distant dream which would never be a reality.

When the war came it was Ida's first chance to see beyond her own environment and to explore at least what life in England, outside the capital, had to offer. She was evacuated

IDA ZWIREK 1928 - 2004

By David Zwirek



Ida Zwirek

with her younger brother, first to Cambridgeshire and then to the beautiful coastal village of Mousehole in Cornwall. However, it was an inauspicious start to this eye-opening experience of life amongst the country folk of the South West. None of them wanted to take Ida and Max in as evacuees! Not because they were strange and foreign, or because they looked and dressed differently, but who wanted a 12-year-old girl and her younger brother together? Ida, though, would not be parted from her brother. She had promised her mother she would look after Max and stay with him and when the little boy thought his sister might go without him he started crying. So they both stood in line in Mousehole, a determined girl and a sobbing boy, unwilling to be separated from each other, waiting expectantly. Eventually someone chose them, and took these two strangers into their house.

This was a period in her life that my mum always remembered fondly and with happiness. To her and Max this was a new world, away from the streets of the big city and the bombs, to a completely different and beautiful way of life. She told me

tales of her brother running around the village causing mayhem; of the wonderful scenery and kind people and the unforgettable sight of all the little fishing boats setting sail from Mousehole to rescue the troops from the beaches of Dunkirk. She loved that village and it showed her a world she might never have seen. Her love of nature and of the world originated from those halcyon days.

On return to London, aspirations of becoming a teacher were put to one side. She left school and went out to work to earn a living and contribute to family finances. She enjoyed being a teenager in London, despite the war, working and going out dancing in the evening with her friends. She was good at her work and became a company secretary in London, but it was the end of the war that brought a new and unexpected phase to her life.

Most of you know my dad's story. Mick Zwirek came as one of the 'Boys' to this country and met his family members living in London - his auntie Esther and her children, cousins Ida and Max. Grateful for a good meal and some fussing, he became a regular at their flat. Inevitably perhaps, Ida and Mick grew closer, and mum used to tell me how the 'Boys' teased dad that he was in love with his cousin! They got married in 1951, and two years later my older sister, Helen, was born. David was born seven years later. My mother was happy bringing up her children, working and helping dad in his furrier business. Life was normal and from humble beginnings they bought their own house and worked hard. My mum loved that house and she never moved from it, never wanting to uproot herself from her family home. Like any mother and wife she was proud when her children did well and would always resolutely stand side-by-side with her husband.

What can I say about Ida? She was always my mum. She was witty, intelligent, determined and courageous. She was always a lady, refined and classy, eager to learn new things, knowledgeable in so much but

always wanting to know more. She was loved by so many people and her infectious enthusiasm for life and the things around her drew many to appreciate her qualities. She may never have become a schoolteacher but she taught many things to those who knew her.

One of her dreams did come true though. As my father enjoyed the fruits of his hard work and success, Ida travelled the world with him from East to West. She conquered her fear of flying, going to America, Thailand, Israel and many other countries. She even went with Mick on a 27-hour flight to New Zealand after dad had retired! She had a wonderful time in that country and talked about it when she got back. Maybe the scenery reminded her of Mousehole and those happy times as a child, but it was an experience she never forgot. When she was a war child, she would never have imagined that she would get to see such a far-off place for real.

About three years ago Ida became unwell, not with the disease which ended her life, but with a muscle disease, which was quite debilitating and made walking difficult. She bore this trial with her customary stoicism, taking the doctor's advice and medicines, but wanting to carry on as normally as possible. She made great efforts to do things, joining me and dad in Scotland when I was awarded a Master's Degree at the University of Stirling. She even travelled overnight on a train and explored Glasgow with us. She always tried to protect her family from her own pain, but I knew something was wrong when I spoke to her in mid-November last year. She pretended there was not much to worry about, but I knew there was.

Ida had cancer. It had spread and the outlook was serious. When the doctors told her she remained calm and stoical as usual and told Mick that she wanted everything to carry on as it had before. She did not want to go through the trauma of extreme treatment that would make her unwell and was unlikely to be

successful. We all wanted her to change her mind, but knew she wouldn't. When my mum had made her mind up, that was it.

We thought it wouldn't be quick. She got through her own birthday, again making great efforts to be with us and through Christmas, with her family close by at home. She went to hospital following Boxing Day and died a week later, on January 7th 2004, seven weeks after full diagnosis.

It was the day after my birthday. It was typical of my mum's determination to do things the right way. She would never have let my birthday remain tinged with sadness in the future. So she kept going and passed away peacefully, knowing yet again she had done the right thing.

It is difficult to put into words how we all feel and what we all think. Ida was a courageous, refined, hardworking, intelligent woman. She spent most of her life caring for others - her mother, her husband, her children, her brother. When she needed it we tried to care for her. She was proud and brave to the very last.

There is a big gap in all our lives. She died knowing we all loved her and she did not unduly suffer at the end. For that we are grateful. My father has lost his soulmate and wife of 52 years and we have all lost either a mother, sister or good friend.

She had a happy and good life with Mick. She saw places in the world she never thought she would see and she knew it had been a full life. Her last words to her husband were 'take care'. She was always thinking of others.

There were many tributes to her when she passed away, highlighting her popularity and kindness and the difference she had made. One of those tributes stands out in my mind. Somebody came up to me as I mourned my mother and said, with tears in his eyes: "She was really loved, you know. She was one of the Boys".

She would have liked that. God Bless you mum.

BIRTHS:

- Dian & Stanley Faull mazeltov on the birth of their grandson Mackenzie born to Heather and Ashley.
- Jeff Frydman mazeltov on the birth of a grandson.
- Sara & Jan Goldberger mazeltov on the birth of their granddaughter Emily born to Rachel & Danny.
- Maureen & Jack Hecht mazeltov on the birth of their grandson Noah Colin born to Kim and Sam.
- Arza & Ben Helfgott mazeltov on the birth of their grandson Nicholas born to Danielle and Maurice.
- Ivy Lee and the late Michael Lee mazeltov on the birth of their grandson Michael born to Dvora & Chris.
- Beattie Pollack and the late Baruch Pollack mazeltov on the birth of a great grandson Itamar Baruch born to their granddaughter Tammy & Itai.
- Rene & Artek Poznanski mazeltov on the birth of their grandson Joshua David born to Phillipa and Victor.

GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY:

- Olive & David Herman
- Rachel & Phin Levy
- Beatrice & Leon Manders
- Margaret & Harry Olmer
- Judith & Reuven Sherman
- Jeanette & Zigi Shipper
- Hetty & Alec Ward.
- Sheila & Ray Wino.

Mazeltov to you all and may you spend many more happy and healthy years together.

Congratulations to Arthur Poznanski for receiving a prestigious award for services to the Redbridge Community

DEATHS:

It is with much regret that we announce the loss of the following members during the past year.

- Idel Adler
- Harry Balsam
- Jack Fein in Australia
- Freddy Holt
- Betty Lewkowicz
- Salek Orenstein
- Mike Ross (Moniek Rotenstajn)
- Moshe Sobov
- Sam Walshaw
- Ida Zwirek

We express our sincere sympathy to those who have lost loved ones.

- Traute Batvenick on the loss of her husband.
- David Herman on the loss of his sister in Israel.
- Minia Jay on the loss of her husband Peter.
- Shirley Kiersz on the loss of her mother.
- Sylvia Perl on the loss of her sister.

BARMITZVAH:

- Millie & Monty Graham mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their grandson Jonathan son of Lorraine & Max.
- Sala Newton-Katz and the late Benny Newton, mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their grandson Gavriel son of Rosalynd and Martin.
- Gena Turgil and the late Norman Turgil mazeltov on the barmitzvah of your grandson Benjamin.
- Sybil Van Der Velde mazeltov on the barmitzvah of your grandson Daniel son of Gabby and the late David Van Der Velde, and your grandson Harrison son of Joanne. Daniel and Harrison are the grandsons of the late Joe Van Der Velde.

BATMITZVAH:

- Jasmine & Michael Bandel mazeltov on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Alana daughter of Gaynor & Daniel.
- Carol Farkus and the late Frank Farkas mazeltov on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Katya Hannah daughter of Emma & Alan.
- Olive & David Herman mazeltov on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Hannah daughter of Rosalynd & Geoff.
- Anita & Charles Shane mazeltov on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Georgia daughter of Elton.
- Evelyn and Aron Zylberszac mazeltov on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Allison daughter of Gary and Mandy.

SECOND GENERATION NEWS:

- Congratulations to Paul Wilder on completing the marathon and for his generous donation to the Society of £500. Paul is the son of Gloria & Krulik Wilder.
- Also to Jeremy Turek who completed the marathon. Jeremy is the son of Anna & David Turek.
- We wish to thank Nina Hecht for donating a trip to Paris which when auctioned at the re-union raised £200. Nina is the daughter of Maureen & Jack Hecht.

THIRD GENERATION NEWS:

- Congratulations to Robert Richman on attaining a 2.1 degree in Mathematics and Management at Manchester University. Robert is the grandson of Jeanette and Zigi Shipper and the son of Michelle and Marcus Richman.

MAYER BOMSZTYK reached the grand age of 75 in December 2003.

February 2004: Hannah and Sam Gardner's granddaughter Rochelle, qualified as a doctor and has taken up a post at Jimmy's Hospital in Leeds where she hopes to specialise in Paediatrics.

May 2004: We had our annual service at Steincourt Synagogue with a Kiddush to celebrate the boys' liberation.

May 2004: Hannah and Sam Gardner's grandson Benjamin had his barmitzvah and a small group went from Manchester and a very good time was had by all. The barmitzvah boy and his two brothers are all good singers and sang beautifully at the service and the simcha the next day.

June 2004: A small group went to Liverpool to see the film "Arek", which is based on Arek Hersch's book, and he took a prominent part in the film which took place mostly in Poland. This again was all done by Unison and

the audience were very moved by the content of the film and again vowed to support the fight against anti-Semitism and racism.

June 2004: Because of the barmitzvah mentioned above, we could not hold a reunion for our Manchester members as we usually do after the Shool service and had to pick a later date. At one time it looked as if we would not be able to have a get-together as we had no volunteers of a house, but Steven and Jacqueline Fruhman of the Second Generation made an offer of the loan of their beautiful house and, to save expense, Lily Bomsztyk and I have gone into the catering business and we are looking forward to a good and happy evening together.

June 2004: Alice and the late Joe Rubinstein's granddaughter Emily got engaged.

On a sad note, Amelia Flasz, the widow of the late Michael Flasz, died on the 10th June 2004.

Sam Walshaw passed away on June 19th 2004.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

YOM HA'SHOAH

The communal Yom Ha'shoah Commemoration will take place on Sunday 8th May 2005 at 11am at the Logan Hall, Bedford Way, London EC1.

★ ★ ★

2004 REUNION OF OUR SOCIETY

The 59th anniversary of our reunion will take place probably on 3rd or 4th May 2005.

As always, we appeal to our members to support us by placing an advert in our souvenir brochure to be published by the Society.

Please contact:-

Zigi Shipper
6 Salisbury House
57 Gordon Avenue
Stanmore
Middlesex HA7 3QR

THE ANNUAL OSCAR JOSEPH HOLOCAUST AWARDS

The '45 Aid Society offers up to two Awards of £600 each to assist successful candidates to participate in the Holocaust Seminar at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, which is held from 1st - 22nd July 2005. The overall cost of participation is about £1,000.

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

Those interested should write, enclosing their CV and other details, not later than 5th March 2005 to:

Ruby Friedman
4 Broadlands
Hillside Road
Radlett
Herts WD7 7BH

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Wish the '45 Aid every success

Members attending 2003 Chanukah Party



REUNION