

JOURNAL

Members of the 2nd Generation who travelled with "The Boys" to Israel from the U.K. and the U.S.A. to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the State.

Here they draw attention to the names of the benefactors at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

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The year 2009 will mark the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War. It was also the beginning, for most of us, of an ordeal that defies imagination that lasted for over 5½ years. Who would have foreseen the horrendous consequences of this war in which fifty million people were killed, including the systematic and cold-blooded killing of six million Jewish men, women and children, the total destruction of whole communities and the dramatic transformation of Jewish life across the European continent.

Looking back, it evokes many memories. We remember our friends and neighbours as they were before they were taken away to the gas chambers. Young, happy and smiling, with great expectations and full of *joie de vivre*. We think of a vanished world that had no chance to blossom. We cherish the thought that we are privileged to revere their memory for most of them probably have no-one to say Kaddish for them. To those who live a normal life and who do not begin to think about their deceased friends and neighbours until late in their lifetime, this may sound morbid. That is why it is so difficult to comprehend the enormity of the crime that was committed against the Jewish people. Recalling these memories is by its very nature a painful experience but survivors have no alternative but to live with the memory of lives gratuitously and viciously annihilated. They are an inescapable part of our collective memory, a part of our identity and a means to our self-understanding.

Our common background carries memories and echoes of the stirring world into which we were born. As the years go by the more insistent becomes the desire to recapture something of the elemental power that has harnessed this vibrant and exciting life.

Who can forget the talent, the genius, the traditional ceremonies, customs and the intense religious, secular, Zionist and Socialist fervour that was so pervasive. The real and ultimate tragedy lies in the destruction of the great centres of Jewish learning. The milieu of indigenous Jewish living which for centuries has been the cradle of Jewish leadership was obliterated. The sources from which Jewish life drew its nourishment were destroyed. The world will never know what great contribution they may have made to civilisation. We also remember the cynical world in which we spent our childhood, a world of unemployment, virulent anti-Semitism and persecution. These stark and unique memories that we share together are completely incomprehensible, especially to those who were born after the war in countries where freedom and the Rule of Law is prevalent.

You are all aware that for the past few years the Second and Third Generation, our children and grandchildren have been endeavouring to work closely together and it is very encouraging that they have at last come of age. You will find in the Journal some reports of their activities and a number of interesting articles written by them. For us, this is a sense of fulfilment as they are our continuation. Now that they have made a start, they will discover how much inspiration they will draw from one another, just as we have been a source of inspiration to each other. Apart from the fact that they have in common the uniqueness of being the guardians of a legacy, remembering the Holocaust, they will transmit that legacy to future generations so that the lessons of the Holocaust are not forgotten. They have an exciting and challenging time ahead of them and we wish them good luck in all their endeavours.

“When you Survive...”

Roman Halter

Chodecz, where I was born in 1927, was situated in north-west Poland – that is, according to the pre-1939 map. Today, when people ask me where Chodecz is, I tell them it is midway between Warsaw and Poznan, and 10 miles north. In Yiddish we called the town *Hotz*, and Yiddish people thought it was a lovely little place to live – so much so that the Jewish population doubled in size between 1931 and 1939 as people from other parts of Poland came to settle there.

What was it about Chodecz that appealed to Jewish people?

Well, it had a Chief of Police who was friendly towards the Jews – you could even say that he liked them. And the town council consisted of Poles – German Poles and Jewish Poles – who were all keen for the village to grow into a town, which it did. There was also a large lake, good drinking water, undulating hills, forests and a fairly large, clean market place where new houses could be built on inexpensive land. All of this appealed to the newcomers fleeing from villages and towns where antisemitism was virulent. But what Orthodox Jews were mostly looking for was a nice synagogue with a learned rabbi – and Chodecz had both of these. So by September 1939, about 800 Jews lived in our town.

But after the death of Marshal Pilsudski, Chief of State of Poland, the attitude towards Jews in Chodecz started to deteriorate. Antisemitism

Roman came to England with The Windermere group and lived in the Loughton Hostel. He is an architect and painter and some of his paintings are permanently shown at The Imperial War Museum. His book “Roman’s Journey” was published last year.

became steadily more marked. As a schoolboy, I can remember asking my grandfather how I could dodge my classmates’ punches. They seemed to think it was fair game to beat up Jewish boys after school.

Most of Chodecz’s buildings were made of wood – single-storey structures not unlike those you see in pictures of *shtetls*. Smaller Jewish communities like ours were virtually cut off, not only from the rest of the world, but even from other small Jewish communities. The railway was 7km away and the nearest big town, Wloclawek., 30km away. None of the Jewish families owned a car. There was a bus that went through Chodecz twice a day on the way to Wloclawek – bringing the newspapers in the morning, including the Yiddish press – but very few families could afford to travel either by bus or train.

My father was an ardent reader of the Yiddish newspaper *Haynt* (Today). He would clip the best short story from the week’s papers to read aloud to the family after the Friday night meal.

When the story was also suitable for children, I would be allowed to stay up late to hear it. This was a special treat for me.

Families who traded went to markets and other *shtetls* by horse and cart. They would set off very early in the morning, usually travelling in convoys because it was safer. That way they could protect both themselves and their goods. Those who were financially better off were families who traded in corn and wheat, along with timber merchants, ironmongers and stove dealers. For generations, my family had been scribes and printers until my grandfather, father and uncle decided to become timber merchants, intending to better their lot.

Our house was partly brick and stucco and it had an upper floor. The house nearest ours belonged to the Eszner family who were German Poles, just as we were Jewish Poles. The Esznerns had five children: four sons and one daughter, and their youngest son was called Karol. In our family, I was the youngest of seven children.

When it became compulsory for all the children of Chodecz to attend the Polish school, *Szkola Powszechna* (in addition to Hebrew studies at the cheder for Jewish children), Karol Eszner and I would often walk to school together. My birthday fell on 7 July and Karol’s was exactly a week later, 14 July, although he was two years my senior. Besides being neighbours, we

had a common interest – we both liked sketching horses and birds. And on our birthdays, we were both given similar sketchbooks. But my friendship with Karol was slightly out of the ordinary at the time, because Jewish children mostly played with other Jewish children.

On Sundays, all the Eszners, dressed in their Sunday best, would make their way to the Protestant church, an imposing building with a tall spire in the town centre, close to the market place. Chodecz had three places of worship. Besides the Protestant church, there was a Roman Catholic church in semi-gothic style, that also had a big spire. Peasants from the outlying villages would make their way there on Sundays. In summer they used to walk barefoot to save wearing out their shoe leather on the long tramp. They would sling their shoes round their shoulders, then stop to put them on outside the church. The third place of worship, our synagogue, was by comparison a modest wooden structure. It was actually situated outside the town, towards the lake. We Jewish children thought it was quite lovely.

At home on Fridays, there would be all the bustle of preparations for *Shabbat*. The *cholent* (a type of stew) for *Shabbat* lunch had to be taken to the baker's to be cooked, and although the women still made their own *challah* (bread) and cakes, they would take them to the baker's on Friday mornings to be baked. Friday lunch at home was only a snack because the main, big cooked meal was eaten after prayers on Friday night.

Going to the *mikvah* – the ritual bath – was one of the

high spots of the week. That was firstly because it meant going with my father and grandfather, but also because the *mikvah's* hard surfaces produced good acoustics, encouraging the men to sing before they immersed themselves in the water. Some of them had splendid voices and I loved being there and hearing the naughty Yiddish songs, trying to guess at words I didn't understand. They would sing as they were scrubbed down, before going down the steps to submerge themselves in the enormous vat of steaming hot water. They would come out looking as red as lobsters.

On Saturdays we dressed in our *Shabbat* best. I would hold my grandfather's hand as we made our way together to the synagogue. On the way we would talk and he would tell me about the portion of Torah to be read that day. Grandfather was retired by then and had time for me. I realise now how very fortunate I was to grow up in his company. He used to tell me Bible stories – and much more. Today, some 60 years later, I still treasure some of the things he taught me.

In 1936, when Hitler's foul screeching against the Jews intensified and crossed the border from Germany into Poland, I asked my grandfather what was wrong with the Jews and why people didn't like us. He calmly explained that those people were wrong and what they said was obscene. We Jewish people had existed for more than 4,000 years; we were just as great as any other people on earth. But we had to be truthful and fair, and also strong in mind, will and body. He told me that all human beings were equal in dignity; that all were equal before God – just as we

should all be equal before the law, both in Germany and Poland. He also taught me that life is precious; that we have to value it – and other people's lives, as they should value ours.

There were also lighter moments and a lighter side to his teaching. I remember when a man who did business with my father came to Chodecz from the small neighbouring *shtetl* of Klodawa. He was travelling in a brand new *droszka* (carriage), pulled by a vigorous young horse. Before this, he had owned an old jalopy of a *droszka* that was painfully dragged along by a skinny old horse. Everyone in Chodecz came out to see Mr Zurawski in his fine new vehicle, shouting excitedly, "Moshe pipik – a Gemachte Mensch!" (Trumped-up little man). I asked my grandfather whether Mr Zurawski was a very important person now. He answered me with a riddle. "Tell me, Romek," he said, "What is a goat after four years?" I didn't know. "What is a goat after four years, grandfather?" "A five-year-old goat!" was his laconic reply.

My father used to pray every morning and he went to synagogue on Friday night and on *Shabbat*. My grandfather prayed three times a day and, of course, went to *shul* on *Shabbat* and all the *chagim* (Jewish holidays). Other people sat and studied and prayed in the *shtiebel* (prayer room) next to the synagogue from morning till night, but to me this seemed like days on end. I was curious to know how much God wanted us to pray. My grandfather saw beyond my question and said, "If you came to tell me that you had only said the *Shema* prayer

yesterday, and nothing else, I would understand. And I would say, 'At least you said the *Shema*,' because you see I love you and I understand. God also loves you and He would surely understand as well."

But I owe my greatest gratitude to my grandfather for helping me to survive. I remember well that winter day of 1940 when he was dying of starvation in the Lodz ghetto, where the family was then forced to live. I stood before him, haggard, cold and starved, unable to speak, unable to say anything that would comfort him. But he understood me. He knew that I believed him and loved him. He told me not to grieve, but to remember him as he was on our walks to the synagogue. He said I must be strong. He told me that I would live – and that *when* I survived, I must speak out simply and directly about the suffering of the Jews and what the Nazis were doing to us even then in 1940. I had grown so used to his wisdom, so used to believing in him that when he told me that I would survive, that I would live, I fully accepted what he said. As the weeks and months went by, as starvation and other hardships increased, I kept telling myself that I would survive to testify, no matter what. I would live to see a day like today, when I could tell the world about my family and my grandfather.

Today, we survivors know that survival was a matter of chance and luck, of somehow slipping through the murderous net that trapped millions of Jews. But still, because of grandfather, even in my starved and weakened condition, I carried within me the certainty of

life. I carried it with me through Auschwitz, through Stutthof concentration camp, through the bombing of Dresden, in the factory that was hit in the night raid of 13 February 1945, and through many, many other experiences of that tragic history of ours between 1940 and 1945 – those years which now – perhaps a little glibly, almost without thinking of the meaning – we call the Holocaust.

The war ended for me in May 1945. Now free to travel across Europe without being hunted, I made my way back to Poland, to Chodecz, my little home town. No one from my family had survived. Of the 800 Jews who had lived in Chodecz before 1939, only four returned. Only four were alive. And I was one of the four.

Three Polish families were living in my parents' house. They were not pleased to see me. I had come to visit my home, to remember... but what they saw was a ghost from a past they could not wait to forget. They must have been afraid that I had come to reclaim my family's house – their newly-acquired property. I understood their expressions, for by now my sense of danger was a well-developed instinct. I left there as quickly as I could.

From there, I went to see the husband and wife who had worked for my parents for 14 years before the war, and they put me up. Then I set out for the Jewish cemetery to say the few words of *Kaddish* that I could remember – for my family, my friends and all the Jewish people of *Hotz*. When I got there, I found that the SS had used the place to shoot people and they had then piled rubble and sand on top of the bodies. The place was just a

huge mound. There was no trace of the cemetery.

On my way back, I took a diagonal route towards the forest and came across a group of women collecting wood for kindling. Amongst them was Mrs Eszner, our former neighbour, my friend Karol's mother. Her hair was now completely grey and she looked withered and old. Looking at her, it was hard to believe this was the woman in the photograph that had hung in the big oval frame in their living room before 1939. That photo showed Mrs Eszner with her lovely hair gathered high on her head and a black ribbon around her neck, from which hung a glittering pendant. She looked regal and happy. Now, wearing a black dress buttoned right up to her scraggy neck, with a wide black belt round her waist, she seemed to me a quite different Mrs Eszner.

But then I was also a different youth. When I met some of my classmates from before the war, they looked so tall, strong and well developed. In comparison, I felt – and was – like a boy of 14, although by then I was nearly 18 years old.

We walked slowly and partly in silence. I suddenly remembered the time when I was eight and I climbed the wooden fence between our two properties. On the Esznars' side, there was a tree with lovely plums; we called them *Damasinki*. One night I lowered myself to the ground from my bedroom window, climbed the fence and began picking the plums. I was just putting them into my pyjama pockets when a large hand grasped me. I would still remember the shock this gave me. I had almost fallen off the fence.

"You're stealing my plums," Mrs Eszner said. "If you don't want me to tell your parents, make sure you come tomorrow after school. I'll teach you not to go pinching my fruit." I went to her house next day. My punishment was to sit in her kitchen and peel a big bowl of potatoes.

Just at that moment, as if by telepathy, Mrs Eszner said, "Do you forgive me for the way I punished you once?" "Oh yes, Mrs Eszner, I deserved a much harsher

punishment for taking your fruit."

Then, as we walked side by side, I asked her about her youngest child, Karol. She told me that he hadn't returned yet. "Returned from where?" I found myself asking. "None of my boys are back from the services yet." I understood. I did not want to know more. I didn't want to hear that Karol - the friend I had sketched birds and horses with - was in the SS, that like the rest of them, he had been

murdering my people.

She told me that her husband had been killed by the Russians when they entered Chodecz; that other people now lived in her house and she was only allowed one small room facing the road... She did not ask me about the fate of my parents, my grandfather, my brothers and sisters. She did not ask me what had happened to them.

I left the wood outside her door and left. I never saw her again.

In Memoriam – Jozef Fischler – My Brother

10.3.1923 Krakow – 18.11.2006 London

The 65th Anniversary of The Liquidation of the Krakow Ghetto fell on Thursday, 13th March 2008.

We, the survivors, assembled in The Ghetto Heroes' Square - during the years 1941 - 1943 "Umschlagplatz" - the assembly point for deportations.

There must have been about 500 survivors present - all elderly, and some quite frail. They came from The United States, Israel and from various corners of the globe with their children and grandchildren to remember, to pay homage. How closely related we felt! How poignant, how vivid our memories!

We formed a March of The Living and tramped all the way to The Plaszow Concentration Camp area - a goodly way and uphill.... Two stalwart Israeli youngsters suddenly materialised on either side of me - courteous, but determined to look after me. We gathered round the Memorial Monument.... We wept, we smiled, we kissed and hugged each other, but we remained silent. Words

Janina Fischler-
Martinho

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

seemed superfluous.

A Krakow Rabbi recited Kaddish and his voice was strong, sonorous, charged with deep yearning...

A many-layered garland of fresh flowers was placed round the Monument; golden-tipped candles flickered, rose and dipped, but not one was extinguished. Tiny white Israeli flags, planted amongst the flowers, swayed gently in the breeze...

I quote below, in a somewhat abbreviated form, an article, which I had written

in my native tongue and sent to a Krakow newspaper and which, to my great surprise, was accepted and printed on the day. Here it is in my dearly-loved, adopted tongue.

We were a Krakow Jewish family - Father Mamma and three children - Joseph, Janina and Bartus. We were driven into the Krakow Ghetto in the winter of 1941. It was a harsh winter, but we were together and a spark of hope still flickered within us. Summer came.

In the June of 1942 "Resettlement Aktion", conducted by the SS, we lost our parents and 8-year old Bartus. The two of us, 19-year old Joseph and 12-year old Janina, were left behind.

We never received the tiniest sign of life from them... They vanished, just as the blessing of peaceful sleep vanishes. There were just the two of us now. Days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months... Filled with longing and fear, orphaned, we understood that they would not come back, that we were alone.

The summer had gone, the autumn had gone. The fourth winter of war came - the year 1943. The Ghetto had by now become a tiny, triangular, over-populated island. Shadows and the deepest sorrow. Orphaned children with lily-white faces and the gaze of old, burnt-out beings.

January, February, March 1943. The Ghetto's spark of life is guttering like a burnt-out candle. The word "liquidation" is being bandied about...

It is Saturday - 13th March 1943. It is a grey, dismal morning. It is drizzling. Drops of rain, as tiny as pin-heads, are silently shivering against the window-pane. The sky above The Square is overcast - mute and pitiless.

The door to our room is pushed open and a woman, like a bird of ill-omen, flies in, calling out in blood-curdling tones: "We are surrounded, we are surrounded..." She flies out again. We know what those words signify. The Ghetto is encircled by the SS. They have marched in; they will conduct the liquidation.... In the glimmer of an eye everyone is dressed... Tea half-drunk... Bread half-eaten... To join one's Labour Group, not wasting, not frittering a minute... To be transferred to The Camp at Plaszow... Joseph grabs me by the hand - hard, very hard, and holds my small child's hand in his strong man's hand. He knows, and I know too, that for a small child-like girl there is only one solution - either here in The Ghetto, or in Auschwitz...

We leave our room, we leave the building at No. 4 The Square of Peace - fast, fast.... It is raining. The

Square is shrouded in fine, milky mist. The Ghetto is frozen in fear. We reach the corner of Targova and Josefinska streets - a sound accosts our ears... Hundreds, maybe thousands, of human feet dragging, shuffling, scurrying... Josefinska Street is the only street left in The Ghetto with a wide, long thoroughfare. A human swarm, tightly packed, fills the street - writhing from one end to the other. It seems that The Ghetto's entire population, driven by sheer terror, has left its shelters, its hiding-places! Like a Tsunami wave swallowing, sweeping, sucking in all in its wake, the convulsed human tide draws us in... But the loudest is the lament of the women who know they will lose their children... Drawn into this sea of fear, we hold each other by the hand, tight, for we know that if we let go, we shall never meet again....

Two young, tall, elegant SS officers are standing on the pavement shooting into the crowd for entertainment. The crowd sways, pulls, writhes in utmost fear, in total helplessness. And just as it sucked us in, so it spits us out at the corner of Krakusa Street. We gaze in front of us and take stock. This, the upper part of Krakusa Street, is fenced off by the high, solid, red-brick Ghetto wall. On the other side of the wall there is a wide Aryan thoroughfare and the river, The Vistula, is flowing peacefully, but not for us... Krakusa Street is quiet, empty. The Aktion is developing... it has not reached Krakusa yet. Our gaze is drawn by a small group of people, tightly knit, standing close to the wall. Men and women. We

approach. They are standing by a manhole. The metal lid has been removed and placed on the ground nearby.

They are leaping in, one after another. The men already inside hold out their arms to the women. It is all taking place swiftly and efficiently. Here there is death lying in wait for us. There, on the other side, there may be life....

Without a moment's hesitation, without exchanging a word between us, in total silence, we join the group, take our place in the manhole line and wait for our turn.

It is a deep, dark square and, right at the bottom, in its lowest depths, black dense matter - like melted tar.

Joseph, my "big" brother, a hopeful gymnast, lithely and lightly lowers himself down. He raises both arms, as if in prayer, in supplication for the Lord's blessing and His support, and says: "Nie бой sie, Jaska" (don't be scared, Janina). I leap forward. Those stretched-out hands catch me, tighten themselves around me, place me on the stone ledge....

We are moving forward along the moist, slippery ledge. It is too narrow to place both feet on it... One foot in front of the other - that is how we move forward. The black, stagnant stream is on a level with the ledge - floods it.... My left foot, the one nearer "the stream" slips into it. But it is of no moment. We move forward in the darkness, our senses stretched by it, and in total silence. After a time, a sliver of greyish-brownish light enters the darkness. We are approaching a manhole. This time, there are steps leading up. A male voice calls out: "Stop." We stop. The man is

standing at the very top of the steps. Lightly, cautiously, he places his palms under the steel cover, levers it up - just a crack in order to find our exact bearings. His voice reaches us: "We are outside The Ghetto walls, but close, too close to come out. It would be risky..." We move on.

And again it is night in the sewer... What is my mind dwelling on? I remember, clearly, that there was only one thought, one wish clogging my mind. I was conducting a silent dialogue with my Maker. I was making extravagant promises. It was a prayer and yet it was not a prayer - more like business negotiations, bribery even.... "Dear Lord, Dear Lord, if you permit me the joy of seeing daylight again, I'll always be good, very good. I'll never stray, nor err... Promises which, I am sad to say, I have not kept.

How long we were in the sewer I cannot say. Maybe an hour, maybe two... After a long while, there filters in a chink of yellowish light. And again there are steps. Quietly, deftly, the man works the cover away... Daylight - grey, almost soiled, pours into the sewer. The male voice announces: "We are in Zablocie, by the Vistula, near The Third

Bridge... We can come out...

We climb up the short flight of steps - maybe they will lead to life... The sky is overcast, dim, smudged - it looks down on us pitilessly. A cold, clean drizzle rinses our faces. The air is sharp, briny, permeated by the Vistula.

We are standing in a vacant lot - muddy, boggy - ugly weeds poking at its edges. Behind us, in the distance, is a disused railway line. In front of us the Vistula. Tall, merchant ships are moored on it. The Jews - drenched, filthy, heart-in-mouth, disperse in the glimmer of an eye.... We take leave of each other - Joseph and I. No sentiment. Joseph places his hand on my shoulder and says: "Look after yourself, sister..." "And you, Jozek, look after yourself..."

My 19-year old brother - a quiet, modest lad, possessed the physical and mental attributes to be a sportsman.... Now, in 1943, he had been assigned to labour in a lime-quarry at the other end of Krakow. There was a night-hut attached to the quarry.... to reach it, he had to cross the whole of occupied Krakow. To venture into the centre where they were to be found in numbers. To tear the arm-band off one's sleeve, to walk along at a steady,

normal pace - a young Jewish male who had just emerged from a sewer - under their very gaze... The courage it took. The survivors will understand... He made it.

I, too, set off. I remember that I was drenched up to the waist and felt chilled right through. Once I had reached The Third Bridge and crossed it, I felt safer, for I was leaving The Ghetto area well behind me. I must have decided to make for the far off suburb of Olsza, where we had once lived as a family.... It was Saturday afternoon. The weather was bad. Cold and wet. The streets were empty, deserted... I did not meet a single uniformed German... I walked along the almost endless Rakowicka Street, the black gunge sloshing in my shoes. My stockings, the skirt of my frock, my undergarments, were soaked right through. They clung damply to my body. I had reached the creaking, wooden bridge over the narrow Olsza river. I dragged myself along the muddy, unmade road, running along the river - slowly, for I was very tired and very cold. Maybe a one-time good neighbour or kindly acquaintance would stretch out a helping hand, offer shelter....

Alec Ward – The Story Continues

Introduction

Part one in the last edition of Link ended with Alec's liberation from Mauthausen in 1945. Having survived death camps, slave labour camps, severe hunger, forced marches in severe weather condition, beatings and having seen his little brother,

Alec Ward's story continued

By David Onnie

This story appeared in the Link Magazine of The Elstree Borehamwood Synagogue

Laib, shot in front of him, Alec didn't merely carry on surviving but built another life for himself in England after the war had ended. The feat is remarkable especially when one remembers that many thousands died shortly after being liberated, their bodies and minds broken and

unable to find the strength to survive any longer. When you read this second installment of Alec's story, just remember what Alec had just endured and here he was embarking on a new life in a foreign country, not speaking a word of English and without any family. He was just eighteen years old.

The American army took me to Regensburg, Bavaria where twelve of us, all survivors, lived as a family for several months. Whilst there, I benefited from the kindness of a middle-aged couple, also survivors, who fitted me out with black boots and warm breeches to prepare me for the cold in England! I used to go for daily walks in Regensburg and on one of these I met a Canadian officer who I begged to take me out of Germany. She informed me that there was a group of young survivors in Cloister Indersdorf, near Dachau, who were waiting to leave for England. Unfortunately, upon arriving at Cloister Indersdorf, I was told that there was no further room in this group and I would have to wait for the next group. However, we were all moved when one of the boys saw his sister who he had not seen for four years after being separated in different camps, walking on the other side of the street. He decided to stay behind with her and I took his place on the airplane.

On the flight to England I remember being very apprehensive as many things were worrying me. For example, at that time I had forgotten my birthday. *(Editor: Alec's birthday was traced by the Red Cross from records in Buchenwald*

concentration camp and was found to be 1st March 1927). Would I be able to learn how to speak English? Would I have the opportunity to learn a trade or profession? What kind of people were the English? Would they force me to change my religion? These questions and others needn't have worried me as, on arriving in England, I found nothing but wonderful hospitality. We had landed at RAF Southampton where the staff gave us a wonderful tea, with cakes and oranges. We lived at Wintershill Hall near Southampton for a while and I remember I was intoxicated with the freedom in England - I could walk freely wherever I wanted. I could ride a bicycle and could be a free person, all of which I had not experienced for the last five years. Everyone was so kind and helpful to me.

Before I had left Germany I had been asked by a girl to contact her uncle in London to tell him that she had survived. Her uncle and aunt, Boris and Julia Bennett, immediately came to visit me in Southampton and I remember her aunt started to cry when she first saw several of the young children in the group. I was invited to spend two weeks with the Bennetts in London where I had an unforgettable time - I was taken to many places including the theatre and was given new clothes. When I eventually returned to Southampton my friends could not recognise me. During the two weeks Boris took me to a restaurant for lunch every day. I recall that on the first occasion I instinctively took two slices when the waiter put a basket of bread on the table. Boris told me in Yiddish that there was enough bread in England

- psychologically, I was still in the camps.

Sixteen of us eventually moved to a hostel at 833 Finchley Road and I found out a few years ago that the Bennetts helped to finance this place. They also raised funds for the Central British Fund which supported us until we learned a trade or profession. Whilst we stayed at the hostel the Bennetts invited us for Shabbos dinner every Friday night. I shall never forget their warm friendship, hospitality, generosity and, above all, their humanity. Every member of the Bennett family played a pivotal role in my emergence into civilisation.

I also remember Boris and his neighbour taking eight of us from the hostel one Sunday morning to the East End. There they fitted us out in new navy blue chalk striped suits. We felt like the "cat's whiskers" walking down the road on Shabbat in North West London, convinced that the whole neighbourhood was admiring our new suits! Some of us even got married in those beautiful outfits.

I eventually began work as a tailor and later became a quality controller in the ladies garment industry. In 1952 I met a young girl, Hettie Cohen, and we married a year later. She has always been very supportive of me in everything that I have ever done and is simply my best friend. *(Editor: when I have chatted to Hettie at their home there is a protective, gentle calmness which reveals itself. I have no doubt that Hettie's gentleness has been a strong counter balance to the turbulence and trauma within Alec).* We had two lovely children, Mark and Lyla, although tragically

Mark died of cancer in 1981 when he was only twenty-three. During the war I knew who the enemy was and could see it but in 1981 I did not know and couldn't see it.

I am retired and spend my time listening to classical,

klezmer and cantoral music. I also attend the Jewish Association of Cultural Societies and the Holocaust Survivors Centre and have given various talks about my experiences during the war to prison inmates, schools and various Jewish

organisations. I am not able to watch any form of violence on television.

After those terrible experiences none of us were counselled on arrival in England. Things would have been very different nowadays.

One of the Boys – Joseph Zeller (Zelikovich)

About the time I graduated high school in 1953, I met my husband Joe Zeller (Joseph Zelikovich). It was on Sunday night, October 25, 1953, on the lower East Side in Manhattan. A friend took me to this dance, run by two European boys in a private party room in a restaurant called Feigenbaums. Joe walked me home and I told him a little about me and my family and he told me about his family. He was born in Czechoslovakia on October 16, 1929, one of six children. His mother's name was Gitel, father, Heshel Leib, his older brother Abraham Chaim, his twin brother Shumel, Yona, his sister Fradel and Yankel the baby. Joe's Hebrew name is Yoseph Moishe. In 1942, his father was taken away from their home, a little village called Chemy Ardiv (Fekete Ardiv) in the sub-Carpathian region. He was sent to a forced labor camp in Russia, and never to be heard of again. Before his father was taken away, his older brother and twin brother were sent to Budapest to learn a trade by his parents. Sometime during the war, they were rounded up and shot.

In April 1944 after Passover, he, his mother, sister, and two younger brothers and the whole village of Jews were told to

Written by his wife
Shirley Zeller

take their belongings and go to the Shul. A couple of days later, they were taken by horse and wagon to the ghetto in Solish, the next big city. They stayed there for a month without much food, water, and sanitation until all the Jews from the surrounding villages were gathered. Then, they marched them by foot to the train station and took them to Auschwitz. When they arrived, Joe was separated from the rest of his family. His mother, sister, and two brothers went on the line to be gassed and he went on the line for those chosen to live. It was then he became an orphan. He is the only remaining survivor of his immediate family.

Joe was liberated in Buchenwald by the American army in April 1945 and given documentary (release) papers. Then, he and others were taken to Prague and put in a Sanitarium (rehab center). He stayed there a while and recuperated. He then left and went to his hometown in search of family. He heard that a Jewish agency in Romania was giving free money and clothing to the Holocaust survivors. He went there by

train with some people from his hometown. He then went to Budapest and found cousins who survived. After a couple of weeks, he went back to his hometown and stayed with other survivors; that is where he heard talk about taking boys and girls to England. Joe went back to Prague and registered. When they assembled enough boys and girls for transport, they took them by plane to Scotland, England. He stayed there for one year, where he was medically cared for, given schooling, and learned English. Then, Joe was taken to London and lived in a hostel. In London, he belonged to the Primrose club, where all the girls and boys came to socialize.

In London, a Jewish agency and a philanthropist came to the hostel and offered the boys and girls jobs so they could become self-sufficient. Joe chose jewelry. In London, Joe worked and lived for four years, learning how to make jewelry. Then, Joe, through the Jewish organization, contacted his Aunt and Uncle who lived in Cleveland, Ohio. They sponsored him and sent papers to come to America. Joe came to America at the end of 1950 and lived in Cleveland for one and a half years. He worked in a jewelry shop and repaired jewelry.

In 1952, Joe came to New York and worked in a jewelry factory for one year. He then went into business for himself. The name of the business was called Astoria Jewelry Manufacturing Co, named after a dance hall in London, where he and his friends went to dance and socialize.

When I met Joe, he was in business for about a year. Three months later, we were engaged and four months later, we were married, on May 2, 1954, in the Clinton Plaza on the lower East Side of Manhattan. We have three lovely children: Howard married to Lori, Gail married to Richard Ignatow, and Cheryl married to

Douglas Landsman and 7 wonderful grandchildren; Jason, Bradley, and Alyson Zeller, Jennifer and Jessica Rubin, and Michael and Melissa Landsman.

Joe was charitable and successful in business and he is now retired. He never forgot his roots. Joe always helped people. The life and family he lost and what he went through to survive, which he says, was luck. We belong to a conservative temple, Shelter Rock Jewish Center on Long Island, where he is active. We belonged to many organizations, including the Shul's sisterhood, men's club, B'nai Brith, UJA, Big Pac, and the Holocaust group on

Long Island. Joe has been honored by B'nai Brith, Israel Bonds, etc.

We lived for many years on the North Shore of Long Island. About five years ago, we bought a co-op apartment in Queens, NY, which is where we live. It is on the border of Queens and Long Island.

Joe and I have gone back to visit his hometown, which is still primitive and now is the Ukraine. Joe is a very good natured person. Joe is a loving husband and father. He has many friends and everyone loves and respects him. My children and grandchildren think the world of him and we all love him very much.

Picric Works

INTRODUCTION

MARIA LEWINGER (1920-2006) was a survivor of two slave labour 'factory camps' within the munitions factories of the Hugo Schneider Company and its trade name 'Hasag', first at Skarzysko-Kamienna in the Radom District of German occupied Poland, and finally at 'Hasag' Leipzig in Germany. She lost her parents and two sisters in the Holocaust.

After the war, it took all her determination and energy to make a new life, first in Poland and then in the USA. The memories did not fade but she shielded her grandchildren from the horrors of her experience, reticent and even afraid to impose the terrible narrative upon the younger generation.

But in her last years, Maria felt an inner necessity to release the silence of the past. Transported from Plaszow labour camp in

November 1943 to Skarzysko, in a contingent of 2,500 Jews, she felt impelled both as a participant and witness, to record 'the hell of Skarzysko ...' as a warning to future generations of the Jewish people, with the fervent admonition 'Never again!'

In this vivid and passionate description, Maria pays tribute to the resistance of those young Jews – men and women – who by their daily struggle for survival fought back with tremendous endurance against the Nazi plans for 'extermination through work' – and still kept their humane spirit. Even the 'mournful camp songs' Maria mentions were overtaken by the Polish 'Cannon Song' with its message of rebellion, sung at first by the poorest Jewish women labourers, to become the camp 'anthem'.

Of the three Works of Skarzysko, the Picric Works was the most fearsome and most feared. In 'The Press' the labourers suffered the deadly effects of the extremely hazardous explosive substance – picric acid powder – an essential substance used there in the initial stage of the production of munitions. Working without any protective clothing, masks, gloves or goggles, they were victims to the killing effects of the powder – absorbed through the mouth and skin – on the eyes, lungs and kidneys – all heralded by the notorious yellowing effect on the skin and hair. Three months working with picric acid in such conditions meant a death sentence.

'Hasag', a long-standing German company, heavily invested by major German banks, was well entrenched in the Nazi pre-war arms

programme. On the invasion of Poland, 'Hasag' soon became 'entrusted' with six works (Skarzysko, Kielce, Apparatebau, Rakow, Warta, and Czystochova) in a large munitions complex built pre-war by the Polish State.

The 'factory camp' had begun in March 1942 within the works grounds of the 'Hasag' Kamienna munitions factory, with the specific purpose of exploiting Jews as slave labourers to further production, procurement and sale of munitions to the Wehrmacht for the Eastern Front. Unlike slave labourers directed from the SS concentration camps (the WVHA), the 'factory camp' system gave 'Hasag' managers immediate access, distribution and control of the intensity of exploitation without mercy. The Jews presented none of the problems that arose from the Polish workforce in the factory (in the region of 6,000 workers) – wages bills, extra food rations, bouts of absenteeism...

Working closely with the military arms inspectorate, the 'Hasag' demand for

its 'factory camp' system was backed by a veritable network of German authorities including the local Nazi governors in Krakow, the SS police who oversaw the camp's security, and the Albert Speer Ministry of Arms overlordship. Benefiting hugely from the demands of 'total war', 'Hasag' became a corporation, the second largest arms producer in Poland, and took the monopoly there in the production of infantry and artillery munitions.

Dubbed '... the Macabees' by a military commander, the prisoners were forced to work in twelve-hour shifts at the pace of the machines to reach pitiless work quotas. Whilst the recorded pre-war quota per press was 350 cubes of explosives, the slave labourers' target could be up to 1,650 cubes per press. Such tortuous labour was enforced by a savage regime of terror, with its continual toll of beatings, weekly 'selections' and executions.

As the Red Army approached the Radom area in June 1944, the camp was

dismantled, marked by savage events, a massacre of an attempted escape and a vicious 'selection', prior to the evacuation of 7,000 Jews to Buchenwald and other slave labour camps.

Maria was eventually transported to the 'Hasag' Leipzig munitions factory in Germany.

It is estimated that of the 20,000 Jews who passed through Skarzysko-Kamienna slave labour camp between 1942 and 1944 – 14,000 perished.

Jews from many organisations – Akiva, (of which Maria was a member), the Bund, religious groups, poets, writers, musicians, and all walks of life, made a defiant stand as protagonists of their faith, beliefs, history and culture against the inhumanity at Skarzysko-Kamienna camp.

For further reading, 'Death Comes in Yellow' by Felicja Karay (1996) and 'Hasag-Leipzig Slave Labour Camp for Women - 'The Struggle for Survival Told By The Women And Their Poetry' by Felicja Karay (2002)

The Picric Works: 'The Press'

SLAVE LABOUR AT THE 'HASAG' SKARZYSKO-KAMIENNA FACTORY, POLAND – NOVEMBER 1943

A Memoir by
Maria Lewinger

From the first moment I entered the shop floor of 'The Press', I wanted to turn back and run. I was hit by the stuffy air, and the acrid, bitter stench started to seep into my nose and throat. I couldn't stop coughing and choking. Tears streamed from my eyes. It seemed I wouldn't be able to stand it for a minute, but I had to sit down at the bench and start working ...

The stinking smell of paraffin stifled me and penetrated my lungs, the hot cubes of picric powder burnt my hands. I was exhausted and hungry, but I had to work fast to keep up the workload. Now and then the police escort's voice took me to task: she kept yelling at me to get down to work. I sat silent, dejected

and wretched.

I look around at my companions. Under the burning electric lights, the yellowness was not noticeable and they looked just like ordinary human beings. Then they began singing the mournful camp songs. Finally, the workload was done. I hotfooted it to the washroom, got rid of my clothes that were soaked with the yellow picric powder, and

with terrific force began scrubbing my body as if it was a floor! I was absolutely determined to remove every trace of yellow – and I was sure that I had succeeded. I looked into the mirror: the electric light didn't show anything. Satisfied with myself, I ran to meet my sister who was coming back from another floor in the factory.

"How did you get on?" I called out from a distance.

"Extremely good!" My sister was pleased. "I've got the easiest job, I'm a weigher! And imagine, the powder is white, not yellow. I won't be yellow at all!" she shouted with glee.

"Yes, I think me neither" I replied. "Isn't it true ... I'm not yellow?"

My sister looked at me closely. "No, nothing to be seen. Come quickly to the roll-call. We're going back to the camp now."

Though I was exhausted, before entering our barrack I dropped into the washroom once more. It was dark, cold and empty. A bitterly cold November wind blew through the broken windows. But nothing discouraged me. I stripped naked and started to wash myself again. At first I thought my legs would freeze to the floor and my skin would be covered with an icy coating, but I clenched my teeth, determined to be white, regardless of the cost. Finally, shivering from cold, I slipped into the barrack and to warm a little I cuddled up to my sister who was already sleeping.

The next morning, the groups assembled to go to work. The traffic through the barrack woke me. I felt parched and there was a bitter taste in my mouth. I ran to the washroom for some water. On my way, I met

some friends heading for work, and as usual, greeted them in a cheery way, but no one responded to my greeting. They looked at me strangely, with consternation and horror in their eyes, and passed by silently, many of them turning their heads away. "What is the matter?" I thought. I quickened my pace, and when continuing to meet the same cold, reluctant glances, I started to run ahead quite terrified.

I rushed into the barrack and snatched the mirror from the first girl standing by the door. I looked at myself in the mirror – and was petrified! My blonde hair, though well wrapped with a headscarf, was now greenish and yellow: bright yellow spots appeared by my eyes, nose, and mouth. I looked all over myself. My nails and hands were red, my body yellow, my overcoat and shoes all yellow. I was quite yellow, yellow from the roots of my hair to the tips of my shoes, all after only one single night in the "Press Room".

Very slowly, I climbed into my bunk. Hela, my sister awoke. "You're only now going to sleep?" she asked. "It's late." I pulled my blanket up quickly and covered my head so that my sister couldn't see me. "No, I won't get up in the day any longer" I replied. "There is no point. I have been to the washroom. Nobody wants to know me any more, I have no friends, there is no sympathy for me in their eyes ... I'll work only at night, during the day I won't show myself to anyone I'm yellow, cursed, plague-stricken ...!"

In the evening, our group made its way to the factory, to start the night shift. No one knew how it would be. Would there be enough men, or would they collapse in front

of the barrack from hunger and exhaustion, or fall asleep on the yellowed bunk never to rise again? Or maybe someone contracted blood poisoning from picric acid so that his limbs have become paralysed and he is unable to move them ... but this happens every day. It is a fact that the number of men working at Shop Floor No. 13 becomes alarmingly lower and lower, and the women had to replace them, making the night shifts the most feared. *The women are marching slowly, troubled, everyone is thinking the same: who will be assigned to 'The Press' by the foreman today?*

The factory building: as usual we assemble in fours in front of the gate. The German foreman greets us, he's counting ... "What, not enough men again!" he bellows, roaring furiously to the policeman who is shivering with fear. "I say for the last time: unless tomorrow every sick man reports to work, I'll order women to the picric presses!" He passes towards the girls. The rows are deathly silent. The German is standing in front of the girls bunched together, yellow haggard creatures. He is tall, so tremendously tall against the paled women shrinking with fear. His high soldier's helmet makes him even taller: the sun is reflected with a thousand beams from the badge on his cap, and reflects back again from his shining knee-high boots.

In the glittering light, the foreman seems a powerful sovereign, a lord holding our lives in his hands. He runs his cold eyes impassively over each face which turn pale immediately under his glance – as if he wanted to relish our fear. There is a silence so

absolute that probably the frantic beat could be heard of our miserable hearts awaiting the verdict. And suddenly, the policeman's voice reaches me:

"You are going to 'The Press' today..."

I leave the row slowly, and in the last moment I hear the relieved sigh of the other girls. My legs, still swollen from typhoid, now go strangely weak. I pass the foreman, join the group of men pressers and enter the hall. 'The Press' will be operated by the four of us, me and the three men. I sit down on a high stool in 'the pourer's' place. "Please pour the sawdust into the opening, close the device with the plug and push it to me. What, is this your first time at 'The Press'? Oh that's terrible. *Hurry, we must do our workload. The workload must be done, understood!*"

Even with all your veins swollen like ropes, even with your heart pounding at a frantic rate, the workload must be done, m-u-s-t! The others already have a box half full, while we are only starting. *"Faster, faster, for heaven's sake!"* All of me is now an automatic machine, I'm working like a machine. There is nothing all around me but the device opening and small heaps of the explosive, which have to be poured in and out incessantly. *My companions are always shouting: "Pour faster, faster..."*

My hand, the explosive, the opening, the device, pour in, close, push, faster and faster, still faster! The devices are flickering before my eyes with lightening speed. I'm deafened by the hiss of steel and the thudding of 'The Press'. The dust rising from the explosive eats its way

into my eyes, clogs up my nose and creates white strings flowing back into my mouth. I swallow its bitterness quickly. With no time to mop my sweating brow, I cannot stop working or look away even for a moment as the devices fly to me, pushed by the men's strong arms.

Faster! The angry workers are screaming to me one after another. "At other presses they have made their fourth box already, while we haven't finished two yet!" I don't answer, my words would be nothing but the bitter dust that I am now swallowing constantly.

And the workload, the omnipotent, powerful workload, seized the floor and reigned over the presses. It mocks the pressers spitefully in the terrifying hiss of the steel devices, sniggers over their fears and grins with its eleven chipped teeth. Its teeth are eleven cubes of explosive, which mean eleven boxes, each containing a hundred and fifty cubes. *And all this must be done in one night...!*

The presser is shouting "Pour faster, otherwise we won't do our workload!" A moment arrives when I feel I have lost all my strength. Everything becomes dim in front of my eyes. I can't hit the device with the explosive, I spill the dust on the press, I forget to clean the plug My hands are shaking, I'm unable to push the tool, and I knock it over on the bench. My companions give me a sideways look. One of them murmurs, *"She's finished, she won't be around much longer..."*

"What are you doing?" a furious roar from the presser opposite me: "Why don't you clean the plug? It may cause an explosion and you will be

suspected of sabotage. Do you know what that means? Even if you are lucky enough and the work guards won't shoot you in the forest, the foreman will kick your ribs and head black and blue, will condemn you to starvation. You won't even get the meagre piece of blood sausage they give us once a week!" "Well, be careful" said another worker, looking at my pale face and deranged eyes. "It's only half an hour until the break. If you work until then between the two boxes we will be able to run to the door and breath a lungful of fresh air at least once.."

A gong. The break. I hurriedly swallow some sour soup from the blackened mess tin. My larynx is like a tube of sand. I've eaten only the bitterness of picric acid with my food.

Then I go out in front of the shop floor and suddenly burst into laughter with a harsh cry. The contrast is striking: the starlit night flows over me, bearing thousands of fragrances, tucking me in the dusk, its gentle fingers closing my tired eyelids to sleep – and behind me the factory floors illuminated by dazzling electricity: constant rumble and din of metal, stifling air, biting dust and staggering human skeletons, covered in explosive powder, pushing and shoving the heavy devices.

But I have no time to brood. Already the bell is calling us back to work. I sit down at my place again. My companions lick out the soup barrel thoroughly. Attention! The presser is approaching me. "Now, we're working on three devices to catch up with the other presses. If you'll hurry, we'll still have time to wash when we are finished."

I focus my will as much as possible. 'The Press' starts. The devices just flicker before my eyes. My hands are operating like a perfect machine. The work is going on with a murderous speed. We are absolutely silent, our nerves focused solely on the circulating devices. The thud of mental merges into an incessant sharp hiss, always echoing one rhythm in my ears: *four paces, pour faster, pour faster, faster*.

"The box is ready", the presser calls out smiling. "We've made it in record time! Now we can slow down." Everyone is happy, our workload will be done soon. "You have to understand us..." One of my companions starts talking to me. "We used to do worse

work than this", he says. "Last winter I was with the railway transport, quite naked and barefoot, no shirt, my trousers torn. We were each unloading 50 kg grenades. Our fingers froze up onto the iron. Pieces of skin came off our hands. Frost made the open wounds terribly painful. We had to work insanely fast because the trains were leaving, and more than once the German truncheons marked my uncovered frozen body. I had to beg to be assigned to the presses. Today, this job seems sweet to me..."

I say nothing. What could I reply? Is there a more cruel evil than the one we experience here? The work comes to its end slowly. The final cube at last! "Go, get a wash. We'll clean the tools

ourselves." The presser smiles graciously when saying it. I return his grace and through a mask of picric acid powder, I twist my face into a tight smile.

Only now, as I look at him, do I see that my all night tyrant is a human being. He is a 17 year old boy. His face is yellowed, swollen with hunger, with big, blue circled looming eyes, the eyes of a child but also of an old man. His figure is terribly emaciated, a skin covered skeleton: only great, shapeless knots of muscles are attached to his arms. I cannot comprehend how it is that this youngster is mustering all his unearthly strength to do this atrocious work. But he is the chief responsible presser.

Children smugglers of the Warsaw Ghetto

Sam Dresner

This story is dedicated to the memory of the children of the Warsaw Ghetto and, in particular, to an 8 year old boy named Shmulik (my namesake).

Shmulik, his mother, younger brother and his 3 year old sister, lived in a coal-cellar next to ours.

We all lived in the small ghetto in Warsaw, in a street called Walicow. The house was next to a wall dividing the street. Half-way up the street was a bomb-site clearing which became a little market place where you could buy bread or potatoes at a price or sell articles that could be sold by the smugglers to the other side.

It was early summer of 1941. The ghetto had by now been hermetically sealed for over half a year.

The rations had been cut to hardly anything and hunger was widespread. The worst affected were the families who were driven in from the surrounding villages as they had to leave all their possessions behind and had nothing to sell or exchange. Shmulik's was such a family.

I don't remember exactly when the children started to appear on the streets but it must have still been cold as I remember them wrapped in large coats (probably their parents' overcoats). They sat there, propped up against the walls or in doorways. Whole families, or just little brothers and sisters. At the beginning, they would call out shyly for a piece of bread; they were not professionals. Then, as time went on, their calls stopped and they just

sat there, resigned. Some were beginning to get swollen from hunger.

All these memories came back to me recently after looking at a book of photographs taken by a German soldier in 1941. The images came back so visibly that I could see the expressions on those little faces in my mind's eye.

That morning mother gave me some money to go and buy a piece of bread. Unfortunately, the previous night very little managed to be smuggled into the ghetto, and prices were astronomical. I could not get the smallest piece of bread with the money I had.

On the way back home, I met the gang of children smugglers who lived in my street. Their leader was Shmulik and although he

was the youngest, he was also the toughest and most resourceful and they all followed him. The gang consisted of six boys aged between 8 and 12. On impulse, I asked whether I could join them. At 13, I was the oldest and tallest of the group.

We hung about at a certain distance from the gate in the next street. It was guarded by a German gendarme and a Polish policeman on one side and a Jewish policeman on the ghetto side. From time to time, it opened to let horse-drawn wagons through or groups of Jewish workers sent out to work by the Judenrat for the German masters.

The idea was to time the run just as the gate opened and the German sentry was occupied inspecting the wagons or searching the people. Everything depended on the timing and Shmulik was a master at it and we all followed him. We all got through to the other side. It was easy. We could run very fast and the German was

reluctant to shoot towards the Polish side in case he hit a Pole. It was different coming back laden with potatoes and bread which was bought at Polish prices.

As soon as we crossed, three small Polish boys started following us. Just like animals of prey, they soon singled out the weakest one and that was me. The others ran in different directions. They knew the ropes. By pushing and shoving, the Polish boys managed to isolate me and push me into a doorway and demanded money. I was much bigger and probably could have dealt with them but they threatened to call the German police and kept on shouting "Jude". I gave them the money I had on me. Now I still had to get back to the ghetto.

Again, we hung around in doorways till we saw a big group of workers returning to the ghetto. On Shmulik's cue, we all made a dash for the gate. We all made it, although it was not easy for the others to run. Their

trousers, tied up at the ankles and filled up with potatoes, made running very difficult. By the time the German sentry became aware of us and took the rifle off his shoulder, we were quite a distance away. One shot was fired but nobody was hit this time.

That night, Shmulik's little brother and sister did not go to bed hungry and my career as a smuggler was over.

By the time we managed to escape from the ghetto at the end of October 1941, Shmulik was still alive and finding food for his family in various ingenious ways, although some of the children smugglers were shot or arrested every day.

I wonder what would have become of Shmulik had he survived. But he had no chance. His age, his black curly hair and brown eyes were against him. Even had he found somebody brave enough to hide him, he would not have left his little brother and sister.

Escape through the tunnel to the Partisans

Jack Kagan

The fourth massacre in Novogrudok took place on the 7th May 1943. 250 skilled Jews working for the German army were killed, among them my mother and sister. I was then aged 14.

After this massacre, food was cut down to 125 grams (just over four ounces) of bread, mixed with straw, and a bowl of soup a day - a slow starvation diet. It was impossible for me to get used to the hunger. I was not occupied, and the days passed very slowly, lying

there just waiting twenty-four hours for the next slice of bread.

An escape committee was formed, because we were now certain that nobody would be left alive, the war against the Jews was more important to them than the war against the Russians. The first plan of escape was to wait for a dark night, throw hand grenades into the guardroom and run. Some would definitely reach the forest, but what about me? I could

not run and could not let myself be taken alive. In desperation my father prepared two nooses. As soon as we would hear the first explosion we would hang ourselves. However after about a week, this plan was dropped and a new one devised: to dig a tunnel 100 metres (328 feet) long to the other side of the barbed wire, into a field of growing wheat. The plan was worked out by Berl Yoselevitz. The work had to start immediately. The aim was to dig two metres per day. Digging actually started

in the 2nd week in May. A works committee was formed and they met in the room where I lay on the top bunk. I couldn't walk. They used to meet three - four times a week to discuss the progress. Two permanent members of the committee lived in my room: Notke Sucharski and Ruvke Shabakovski. It is difficult to know how many members served on the committee; people were called in as they were needed.

The word tunnel changed the whole atmosphere in the camp. It was no a secret, everyone but Mr. Mendelson (more about him later) knew about it. For me it was a Godsend. I felt that maybe I would recover sufficiently to participate in the escape. For people that believed in the escape it gave a hope for salvation. People that did not want to escape did not have to make up their minds on the spot. It was decided to start digging in the stable. It was the furthest building from the guards and the least occupied. I can't be certain, but I believe that the stable had an earthen floor. Notke Sucharski and Lionke Portnoy promised to make the necessary tools available within a week and to keep them in perfect condition. The lower bunk was hinged to the wall, for quick access. A 2 metre deep vertical shaft was dug. Sosnovski the tailor was called in and told to collect blankets and to make 60 bags, each 40 cm x 50 cm in size. A joiner was called in and asked to cut a trap door from the stable to the loft of the next building. Salek Jacobovitz, the policeman, was responsible for the selection of diggers and for finding extra food for them. It was established that the tunnel should be 65 cm x

70cm in cross-section. The soil was to be stored on either side of the loft. There was a builder in the camp. I can't remember his name. He was later sent to Koldichevo. He was responsible for the storage of the dug out earth and for making sure that the loft would not cave in under the weight of the earth. After two weeks it was realized that it would be impossible to maintain the rate of two metres per day. The lamp in the tunnel did not burn properly. It was difficult for people to sit inside the tunnel and to pass the bags filled with soil.

We had no electric light in the living quarters. Rukovski, the best electrician in the camp, was called in and told to look for a live electric cable to provide electric light in the tunnel. After a few days he reported that he found the mains cable and he could do it.

Skolnik, the carpenter from Karelich, was called in and told to make a trolley on wheels 50 cm x 50 cm in size as quickly as possible. They asked my father to stitch up two reins, each 50 m long. They had to be strong and have rings at the ends. It was like magic, everything materialized despite the difficult conditions. Skolnik built the platform in pieces to be able to smuggle them out from the joiners workshop.

I think that within three weeks electricity was provided inside the tunnel. The trolley was functioning, but not well enough. Earth was spilling over and the trolley was hitting the walls.

Skolnik was called in again, this time to produce four panels, 50 cm x 50 cm x 50 cm in size, fitted to the sides of the trolley. The front and the back panels were

hinged, for quick loading and unloading of the soil. Wider wheels and guiding rails for the wheels were made, so that the trolley would move in a straight line and not hit the walls. The request was enormous. It meant making and stealing four one-metre rails a day to extend the rail line. Whoever was caught stealing German property would be hung. Skolnik had been caught six months previously carrying a piece of wood and he was hung by the arms. He survived.

The aim was to pull out 9 - 10 trolleys of earth a day and move the soil in the night. In the shaft at the entrance to the tunnel a space for two people was made. They passed on the bags of soil. Sixty or seventy people sat in a row from the entrance to the tunnel to the loft and passed the bags, which were emptied on both sides of the loft, to each other. Nobody complained. From the entrance to the tunnel to the barbed wire fence was 40 metres. On a Sunday morning at the end of June, Lionke Portnoy installed an air pipe to let air into the tunnel. At the same time a test was made to measure the depth and the position of the tunnel. This was not a simple exercise; he needed to push through a two metre rod from a 65 cm cavity. Lionke brought with him 4 sticks. They had to be assembled into one. The top one was painted white, so that it could be seen easily. At the same time Joselevitz went up into the loft and took out some tiles to be able to see the direction the tunnel took. Everything was perfect.

At the beginning of July 1943, my father came to me during the working day, took some belongings, and said

goodbye. He told me that they were sending him and another ten specialists for a short while to a different camp. It was a very sad day for me, the parting was so quick. To this day I can see him with his small packet in his hands, putting on a brave face, saying he would see me soon, knowing very well that this was goodbye for ever. He was killed in an escape from Koldichevo in February 1944.

His job to look after the reins was passed on to Efroim Sielubski, who made a good job of it.

When I began to feel better, I started to test my strength. After six months of lying still, I felt pins and needles and pain when I lowered my legs. I was very weak, but I was also tremendously determined. I was still only fourteen years old and life was hard for me. I could get around more or less on crutches, but I was just like a skeleton. I had to live completely on charity, for someone to give me a slice of bread and some "soup water". I started to participate in building the tunnel. Every evening I sat in the loft in line and passed the small bags.

The digging of the tunnel progressed well. The escape plan was put in motion. Rukovski, the electrician, managed to make a switch board so that he could control the two large searchlights. To the end, the Germans could not find out the reason why the searchlights were not functioning properly. The escape was planned for the second week in August. The wheat outside the camp was the best camouflage.

Then one day in August the Germans brought a tractor into the field and cut the wheat. We were afraid that

the tunnel would collapse under the weight of the tractor, but luckily it held. However, we were left with a problem. Escape was impossible into an open field.

Had we escaped early in August as planned, none of us would have survived. The Germans made a plan to liquidate the partisans in the Novogrudok-Ivenietz area. They named the operation "Herman". 52,000 soldiers and police were assembled in Novogrudok and the surrounding villages. The troops consisted of: the 1st Infantry SS brigade under Nazi Major-General Curt von Gottberg, 2nd infantry SS regiment, 30th police regiment, 4 separate SS-Sondercommando units led by SS Lieutenant-Colonel Oscar Dirlewanger, a group of three separate SS battalions under Kerner, the 15th, 57th, 116th and 118th Ukrainian battalions, a Latvian battalion, a gendarmerie group under Kraikenborn, police from towns and villages in the area of the operation, and special commandos of General Kube.

The Germans conducted the "Hermann" operation in the Naliboki forest between the 13th July and 8th August 1943. Their intention was to surround the vast forest, to push the partisans to the centre and liquidate them.

The Bielski partisans survived the German net. It was a miracle. Among the partisan fighters were also the old and the very young, the sick and the lame. They were there because Bielski vowed that he would accept every Jew who came to him. At the beginning of the onslaught all were taken to a remote island. They stayed there for several days till the

danger passed. They survived the round-up because they knew the wilderness they lived in and because of their determination to survive Hitler and his Reich. In the end they did not lose one single person in the German round-up. Would they have not survived, the Jews from Novogrudok, having escaped from the Ghetto, would have had nowhere to shelter.

The committee met and decided to dig further to the end of the ridge, in excess of 150 metres more. Nobody can imagine how much earth accumulates from such a project. First the loft was filled, then double walls were built and filled. We had to hide any incriminating evidence. Sunday was the sanitary day in the camp. We had to make sure that outside the buildings and grounds were clean. New toilets had to be built and that gave us an opportunity to dispose of earth from the tunnel.

At the end of August there were further problems: rain was seeping through and earth was falling from the roof of the tunnel. Timber had to be stolen and some bunks destroyed to make supports to prevent the tunnel from collapsing.

In the middle of September a meeting was called, and a vote was taken. There were still some people who said it was better to die in the camp than to run, but the majority preferred escape, so a list was drawn up. Mr Yitzhak Rosenhouse put together a list of the names of inmates and gave it to the committee to decide on the order people would go out through the tunnel. The only name which was left off was that of Mr. Mendelson. Mr. Mendelson was a convert from Vienna

and he was not trusted. He lived separately and knew nothing about the tunnel. He was left behind. On the 27th of September he was arrested and later shot in prison.

The first to go through the tunnel would be the tunnel diggers, followed by five armed men, and then all fit people. I would be among the last, along with my friend Pesach, who had also lost some toes. I had to trial run to see whether I was capable of making the distance. It went perfectly well. I was already walking without sticks.

On 19 September 1943 another meeting was called, and we were notified that the tunnel would be completed in the following week. So started the longest week of my life, but I was not afraid. People were saying goodbye to each other and exchanging tips about the route and the best way to go. It was thought that if we all went our separate ways, we would stand a better chance of survival.

The day arrived on the 26th September 1943, our chosen day of escape. We assembled in the rooms of the front building. There were about 10 rooms in that building. Orders were given for some people to go up to the loft. This was a test. The committee was afraid that if 250 people would go up into the loft at the same time the ceiling might collapse.

The night was dark and stormy. It was made to order. The searchlights had been cut off and some of the nails removed from the zinc roof in the stable, to make them rattle a lot in the wind. The leaders did not let anybody into the tunnel till they had broken through to the surface, to make sure that there would be enough air for

the first 120 people when they went into the tunnel. Only then did they begin to move. The rest went up into the loft and formed a line which moved slowly forward towards the stable. The first group that went in to the tunnel sat there for about ten to fifteen minutes until the hole was enlarged. Then the line started to move forward. But we had not allowed for the effect of the light in the tunnel. When people came out at the other end, the sudden darkness after the brightness in the tunnel disorientated them and they ran towards the camp, whereupon the guards opened fire. Although the searchlights were cut off, the guards could still see movement in the dark, and probably thought partisans had come to liberate the camp.

When I came out of the tunnel I could see the whole field alive with flying bullets. I saw figures in the dark running towards the forest, and was certain that in the morning the Germans would search that area. So Pesach and I stuck together. We planned to skirt around the town and wait on the other side. The fields had recently been ploughed, so walking was difficult. We took the same route I had taken on my first escape and crossed the same river.

Dawn started to break. We lay behind a bush and stayed there all day, about two kilometres (over a mile) from town. As soon as darkness fell, we got up and went to the nearest house and asked for food. A man gave us a loaf of the most delicious bread and some milk. We walked for five nights in the same direction. It rained for some of the time, and I was afraid

to take off my tattered shoes. Around the hole that had developed in one of them, I could see dried blood. On the morning of 1st October 1943, whilst we sat down to rest after a night's walk, we saw a group of people with horses and a cart. We hid ourselves, but then we heard them speaking Yiddish and I recognized one of the partisans.

They were fighters returning from a mission. We were very lucky to have met them: it is impossible to calculate the odds of going into that forest, without really knowing the way, and reaching the people we were searching for.

The partisans took us to their base, where I was reunited with my cousin Berl. We laughed and cried at the same time. I had reached the Ordzhonikidze detachment of the Kirov brigade. This was the name of the former Bielski fighting group of 180 men and women. Not long afterwards Berl decided that we should join the family group of the Kalinin detachment, better known as the Bielski detachment, so that we could stay together. He got permission for us to transfer, and we left the fighting group.

It was only a short journey on foot to the Kalinin group, whose commander was Tuvia Bielski. It was strange to see so many Jews in one place, quite unafraid, although we were close to German police stations.

A reconnaissance group arrived and told Bielski that the Germans and local police were on the move. That meant immediate evacuation of the camp. It could not have happened at a worse time for me as my wounds were just beginning to heal. We moved

out slowly in the middle of the day, in a large convoy. The danger was great because we had to cross several major roads. Berl decided that he and I should leave the convoy, because if shooting took place, I would not be able to run. He found out the route the convoy was taking, and we left on our own.

Berl knew the way and we walked slowly. We met the group on the following day and heard that shots had been exchanged with the local police. We had something to eat and moved on again to the next meeting place. I got used to sleeping in the forest without fear. We continued moving for the next few days until we reached the base in the huge Naliboki forest. We arrived late and I was very tired. I took the outer rags off my feet with difficulty, then I took off my sweater and wrapped it around my feet. I covered myself with an overcoat and fell into an exhausted sleep. I woke up early in the morning. The pain in my feet was almost unbearable.

The Bielski base in the forest developed into a little town with a bakery, a sausage-maker, shoe workshops, tailoring and engineering workshops and, later, a tannery. Partisans from all over the region used to come to get their guns, shoes and uniforms repaired there, and would exchange flour for bread and cows for sausages. I did all sorts of work in the camp.

In the forest the Jewish partisans had another enemy - the 'White' Poles. Their slogan was, 'Poland without Jews and Communists' and many Jews who managed to escape from the ghettos were

killed by them. The Bielski group took an active part in fighting the enemy and in committing various acts of sabotage, which included blowing up bridges and cutting down telegraph poles. Over a period of six months in 1944, the Bielski fighters stopped the German trains for a total of fifty-one hours, which was a great achievement.

At four o'clock in the morning on 22nd June 1944, exactly three years after the Nazis started the terrible war against Russia, the Red Army began its great offensive on the Byelorussian front. On 3rd July Minsk was liberated. We could hear, when lying on the ground, the sound of artillery. We prepared for a fight with the German army, as we knew their retreat would be through the forests. Sure enough, one morning a large retreating group of Germans broke through our reinforcements. Unfortunately, nine of our partisans were killed.

On the following day we heard that the Russian army was in Novogrudok. We were pleased that the nightmare was over, but each one of us felt terribly sad. We all knew what we would find in Novogrudok. It was a destroyed town without Jews, without the friends and neighbours we had known before the war. And yet we had nowhere else to go. It was decided that we would all return to Novogrodek. Bielski requested that everybody should march out of the forest in an organized body and so it was done. I walked without difficulty the 100 kilometres (62 miles) or more to the town. Thanks to the Bielski brothers, 1,230 Jews arrived in a suburb of Novogrudok on 16th July

1944. Although we were free, nobody talked or laughed or sang. We were all sad.

Long columns of German prisoners of war were led through the streets of Novogrodek. They were a scruffy lot, no longer the victorious army. I saw a high-ranking officer wearing a fine pair of boots, marching with his men.

I called the Russian guard and asked his permission to remove the boots. The soldier smiled and said with full approval 'Please help yourself!' I caught up with the officer and spoke to him in Yiddish, which is similar to German. I wanted him to know that I was a Jew. I told him to stop and remove his boots, saying they were too good for him. Then the Russian soldier approached and gave the officer a push with his rifle, whereupon he sat down and pulled off his boots. I wore them for a long time after that. In fact, I was still wearing them when I eventually arrived in England in 1947.

When I first came to England, I found a job as a cutter in a handbag factory. Then after fifteen months, I started my own company, Princelet Handbags, followed by another company, Hi-speed Plastics. After that, I started up a number of other successful enterprises. In time I met Barbara Steinfeld, fell in love with her, and we were married in 1955. We have two sons, Michael Leon and Jeffrey David, and one daughter, Deborah Judith. Between them we now have ten grandchildren.

I eventually settled down to a normal life, but I can never forget the past. I regret missing out on my youth and educational opportunities. But I continue my study of

the resistance movement in the Holocaust and speak to groups about the role of the remarkable Bielski brothers. To me they are among the greatest Jewish heroes.

Over the past fifty years I have given many talks to children, to university students and to the general public, Jewish and not Jewish. Always the same question comes up: how was it possible to dig for more than 4 months and not be discovered.

I tell them the reasons for the success of the tunnel project:

1. It was due to the consolidated effort of the Jews of the Ghetto and a great deal of ingenuity. There were numerous differences in the opinions on how to proceed, there were even threats of disclosure, but in the end most were united in the effort to complete the tunnel.
2. We were very careful. We were always on the look out. 2 people were always on guard and Rukovski installed a warning bell. The dug soil was moved only at night.
3. The Jewish tradesmen made certain that the

work in the workshops was not neglected and that the output did not drop. There was no reason for the Polish and Belarus foremen to suspect that another activity was going on.

4. The sanitary conditions in the Ghetto were appalling and the smell was atrocious. There was a lack of everything, including water. This was one of the reasons that the Germans kept away from inside the camp as much as possible.

**And, most importantly,
WE WERE LUCKY.**

The Kripo

The Lodz Ghetto... April 1940 - August 1944

The Kripo administration building in the Lodz Ghetto was known as the 'Red House', and was located on No. 8 Church Street. It had formerly been part of the administration offices for the church, but by 1940 it had become a torture chamber. It was situated in the centre of the ghetto, and as far as I understood, the Kripo, an acronym for criminal police, used it to extract any valuables, such as jewellery, foreign currency, silver, furs, etc., from the ghetto population.

As the Kripo were free to murder any Jew with impunity, without any explanation, they devised a method of mental and physical torture so that people who had been denounced by informers would reveal their hidden valuables. Those who did not have any gold rings or diamonds would not last for more than two weeks, and

Michael Etkind

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

those who disclosed their possessions were released, but called up again some two or three months later to be forced to give up any further hidden valuables.

I used to pass by this terrifying building twice daily for two years, always on the opposite side of the road, for we were not allowed to pass alongside its wall. I often saw people being carried out on stretchers from the main entrance. As far as I am aware nobody who had the misfortune of being interrogated by the Kripo survived the war.

One evening I returned to

my room and saw the green Kripo van standing outside the building. My mind was numbed with fear. I was afraid to go upstairs to my third floor room to see what was going on, so I turned and walked aimlessly along the ghetto streets until midnight. When I finally returned, to my relief I found my door was not broken and the padlock still intact. However, my neighbour opposite had been taken away for interrogation and his accommodation ransacked. I have never found out what happened to him, for it was safer not to ask any questions, and I have never seen him again.

After the war I heard a joke about life in Russia;

"Happiness is hearing that the lift which woke you up at 4 a.m. did not stop at your floor, but went up one storey higher"

There were very few lifts in the ghetto, but there was that green horse-driven

van with two or three Kripo men whose aim was to rob anyone in the ghetto who might still possess something of value, in the most vicious and ruthless manner.

J.S. Lec, the Polish Jewish poet, who was hidden

throughout the war by his Polish Catholic friends, describes his mental anguish at such times in one sentence:

"In times of extreme danger, I tried to abandon myself".

There were many moments during the war when I tried

to escape the reality of my situation by numbing my senses and pretending what was happening was not real but only a nightmare from which I would soon wake up, and during such times I did everything automatically without thinking.

The Jews of Poland

Michael Etkind

It is common knowledge that the Jews of Poland were sucked into Hitler's whirlwind at the beginning of September 1939, and were being murdered until the end of the war in May 1945; whereas for the Jewish populations in the other countries invaded by Germany, the Holocaust started later, even as late as the Spring of 1944.

We must not minimise the suffering of anyone who had the misfortune of finding himself at the receiving end of Nazi atrocities. The shortest stay in a ghetto or in any of the concentration camps was enough to terrify the bravest man and provide him with material for memoirs to last a lifetime - and this is my point. Those who had a relatively short encounter with the Third

Reich, are more able to describe their experiences than those who spent two thousand days under the sentence of death.

To see their families murdered, while they themselves were being enslaved, to be murdered later on, and to live in such a state for five and a half years, was enough to silence and traumatise the most resilient of human beings.

Writers like Arthur Koestler and Albert Camus wrote about men spending their last night in condemned cells, but who can write about the condemned spending two thousand nights in such a predicament? There are, of course, the diaries of Korczak and Czerniakow, and the

poetry of Icchak Kacenelson, but those who wrote in the ghetto did not survive. You could not keep a diary and numb your feelings at the same time. To describe what was going on meant thinking, feeling, comparing, and such emotions had to be suppressed and kept under control. Such "luxuries" were tantamount to committing suicide.

Polish Jewish survivors did not produce an Elie Wiesel, a Paul Celan, or a Primo Levi, all of whom wrote after the war. The numbing process essential for their survival did not vanish on the day of their liberation. Is it possible that the Polish Jewish survivors have been over-exposed to the horrors, and this has made them tongue-tied?

SECTION III HERE AND NOW

What Next?

Robert Sherman

Robert is the husband of Judith and both are regular contributors to our Journal.

Many art works and monuments are devoted to Holocaust themes or dedicated to Holocaust per-

We look backwards. We look forward. We see that Holocaust Education Programs have taken root in many places. There are hundreds of Holocaust museums and Holocaust centres all over the world. There are doctoral programmes in Holocaust studies at many universities.

sons or events. Documentary films and fictional films on Holocaust themes are abundant. Tens of thousands of oral and video testimonies of survivors are archived for posterity and research. The literature on the Holocaust is voluminous, much of it in the form of memoirs. Third generation biographies

are appearing that try to reconstruct the experiences of the grandparents, some of whom died before the projects were undertaken. Holocaust commemoration programmes are widespread and routinely incorporated into the calendar of community events.

All of the above form a very persuasive body of works that help to keep the memory and meaning of the Holocaust alive and vibrant. In addition, the Claims Conference and others have negotiated various forms of restitution to survivors, their families, and the Jewish communities. An international court exists to try cases of crimes against humanity.

In many ways, for good or ill, the Holocaust has become an integral part of Jewish identity influencing much Jewish thought and behaviour. It connected survivors and their children intimately to Israel. It has also become part of the psyche of non-Jews in many parts of the world.

MUCH ACCOMPLISHMENT. The '45 Aid Society and its members made major contributions toward those accomplishments.

We shout "Never Again!!" expressing our hope and dreams for a better more humane non-violent world. In addition to influencing our own times, all this work is to diligently bear witness and pass some kind of torch to succeeding generations. The torch casts light upon tolerance and respect for diversity and settling differences by means other than hatred and violence. The terrible consequences of hatred are clearly highlighted. The Jewish message to celebrate life, not death, is an integral part of the light. We hope to bring light

where there is darkness and to prevent darkness from absorbing the light.

In spite of all that has been accomplished, hatred, including violent and non-violent anti-semitism, continues to flourish. War and genocidal actions still very much go on. Holocaust deniers shout out their messages, all evidence to the contrary. Revisionist histories are written by serious scholars. The memories and accurate perceptions of survivors is seriously questioned, especially since so much of it is reported in retrospect, sometimes decades later. Ironically, the Nazi archives and films, and the films of the liberators are considered to be the best "objective" evidence. The accusation is levelled that the Holocaust has been turned into an exploitative Holocaust "enterprise".

New generations appear more distant from the atrocities; just as we perhaps do not experience the full horror of our ancestors who suffered the atrocities of the Babylonian and Roman conquests and the destruction of Jerusalem and its population through starvation and torture. Yes, some Jews continue to observe Tisha B'Av, but do we really "get it" today, even though we still experience the "exile"?

In spite of all that has happened and is happening, we live with hope and optimism that mankind can learn the lessons and consequences of hatred and change for the better. We know from experience that the story of the Holocaust has changed many lives and influenced the world to be more aware and more wary. We know that important

seeds are planted and growing.

What are some of the next steps that we may want to nurture and encourage? Humbly some ideas are presented below for consideration and in the hope of stimulating more and better ideas.

1. Do more of the same for as long as we can. It is working.
2. Recruit members of succeeding generations to recognize how important this work is to repairing the world. But we need their help in finding the right new methods to reach out and touch their sensibilities in ways that are relevant to them. We have to connect on their terms. We have to let them teach us what those terms are.
3. We can start with our own offspring who by now far outnumber the number of the original survivors. That gives us a larger base to work with. Add to that base all those younger people we have reached and influenced through all the activities in the first paragraph and through how we lived our own lives. They are far more numerous and younger than we.
4. All the museums, centres, and education programs must learn the new means of expression and ways of connecting to succeeding generations and modify their programs on an ongoing basis. The pace of change is more rapid than by measuring generational change. Many changes occur within a single

generation, much more rapid than in our own, which has been quite a ride. If we do not refine our means of passing the torch and impacting on succeeding generations, then our torch may cast a dimmer light in the future.

5. Even though we stress the universalism of the Holocaust lessons, we also continue to struggle to maintain its distinctiveness as a cruel and unique genocide and its place in the Jewish experience and psyche. We also focus on how the world helped to support and sustain it. The process of survivor liberation was merely a consequence of fighting a war against would be conquerors. There was no world agenda to save the Jews.
6. The existence of Israel and the Jewish connection to Israelis is a major component of Holocaust teachings. Not

only must we support Israel, but the world that turned its back on the Jews must be fully engaged in supporting Israel as a Jewish State. This is not a matter of guilt but of morality and justice. Israel is and will be a blessing unto the world. This is a major lesson of the Holocaust.

7. If we are to address hatred we also need to find ways to connect with those who find or manufacture reasons to hate. They engage in educating others to hate and to act out their hatred. This means providing programs and personal contacts in adult communal settings as well as in educating children. This means engaging those who use hatred as forms of public or moral policy. Such engagement can take the forms of all restraints possible and also of efforts to win over the minds of the leaders

and/or their publics. A big order, but we must be optimistic.

8. Closer to home, we can provide for continuity within our own extended families by telling stories, writing memoirs, leaving stories on electronic tools, maintaining photo albums of prints and electronics, preparing legacy Wills that contain specific ways in which you desire that succeeding generations will honour your legacy. You can pass on your torch.

The road ahead is no easier than the road before. But look what has been done up to now. This gives us the courage and momentum to go on and to have high hopes for the future. Surely mankind can learn that love tops hate and that violence in the service of hatred is a crime against humanity. We cannot attain perfection, but surely we will make progress.

Women, Children and Holocaust Art

My talk will take about 15 to 20 minutes. I see that no chairs are provided for you guests. But perhaps standing in discomfort in this context is not so inappropriate.

This exhibition deals with Women, Children and Holocaust Art.

These words do not fit. How do you integrate Women, Children, Holocaust and Art?

My sister Mirjam is seven at this time - in the Spring of 1944 - my brother Karpu is nine and I am thirteen. Mirjam and I are in hiding

Judith Sherman

Mercer County
Community College, N. J.
October 2007

with a Christian family. We are betrayed and imprisoned in a Gestapo prison. On the cell walls there is writing - names and messages in several languages; some in Hebrew lettering. I write - "I recognize you who have passed through and left your marks on these prison walls.... May these walls rot ere I forget you, your tales, your years, your brevity... You

who come here after me, recount my tale, my years, my brevity." I am 13 and in that Gestapo prison cell I learn that we humans within these walls want markers, remembrance, acknowledgement. Secret disposal of one's life does not fit. My brother, Karpu is gassed in Auschwitz. He will forever be nine. My memory is his marker.

*Excerpts from: Mirjam's
letter from hiding:*

Why does this woman brush my hair and make my braids so tight?

This brush is wrong! I need my purple one from home.

All my life and all the time I have this name that's really mine

Now, hear this — Mirjam-it-is! Mirjam , Mirjam, Mirjam - is me

But she says "child, Maria, it must be."

This does not fit. Mirjam wants her own mother, her own purple hair brush, her own name she wants — "hear this.. Mirjam, Mirjam, Mirjam is me. . . but here Maria it must be." What fits? For Women and Children - what fits? Connections. Comforting. Milk.

Enchantment. Celebrations. Play grounds. Grandparents and cousins. Hugs. Names, Pleated skirts. Hans Christian Andersen. Knee length trousers. Yamurlikes. Fathers. Yes, fathers. Photographs. Milk.

In the German Reich women are encouraged - forcefully enjoined - to bear children - for the Fatherland. large families — to expand the Reich with Aryan children. The goal for the Jews is annihilation. Birth of children, the existence, of children denotes future orientation. The Final Solution aborts such a direction.

I am imprisoned in Ravensbruck, a women's Concentration Camp in Germany.

The left shoe in Ravensbruck

The gypsy girl has one shoe, the left shoe. Inside the shoe an orange rag right up to her knee,

formerly this is her right-hand sleeve

"Mutter?" she asks of every woman in her path.

A hundred, thousand, million

"Mutter?" "Mutter?"

"Mutter?"

That gypsy child never gets it right.

Her mother is no longer among the hundred, thousand, million.

Holocaust, Women, Children — what should not be - is. Separated families. Murdered parents, murdered children No milk. Where are the fathers? Unheated barracks. Unmatched shoes. Unprotected children. Caring for others is forbidden. We do so secretly, furtively. In Ravensbruck Concentration Camp a friend kills my lice. I share my blackened, raw potato with her. Lice are ever present. Potatoes hardly ever.

Ravensbruck friend

In no other place can a friend say and do and be a friend of such magnitude as here - where a friend can say and do and be so minimally

Holocaust Art is not a creation of celebration. Not affirmation. Not a "recapture of a sweet careless rapture." Not a devotional expression of awe and gratitude. Not intended to decorate your living room wall. Not romantic. Not color filled. No reds or purples. No sunny yellows, no green water melons. No long haired maidens or muscled boys. No animals, except dogs. One breed of dog. German Shepherd Hounds. The camp has many injured prisoners. I hear that most of the injuries are from dog attacks.... He does not falter, this brute extension of his master.

I do once see a drawing in Ravensbruck. of a lovely young girl in a filled blouse and long braids. "But Anka does not look like that" I

protest to the artist. "No, she does not" says Gerta, the artist, "but she wishes she did". This pretend imagery does also happen in Ravensbruck... as does my pretend eating "with empty bowl and spoon in hand I practice eating - lest I forget". I also hide a postcard in Ravensbruck. I find - an art reproduction — of a young woman - by Reynolds I think - I keep it folded in my shoe throughout my stay in Ravensbruck. An image to strive for? Into Adulthood? I never take my shoes off - the main reason — "life is from the ground up. With shoes maybe - without shoes death." Today I own sturdy boots... a promise I kept from way, way back when I said - "feet — you shall have soles for your toes and splendid options to roam in all directions.

Holocaust Art depicts a world that should not be. But because it is, there is a desire, a need a commitment to witness and document. Art done in Ghettos and camps is done with such conviction and such courage and so little art material. No art material is allowed. The Germans do not want records of that universe. That ugly visibility is to be kept invisible from the outside. And what information does get out at such great cost and sacrifice is denied and minimized, ignored, by the outside.

Art material is obtained through "organization" Organization is a euphemism for theft. Organization from the Germans is morally acceptable by prisoners. Theft from fellow prisoners is not — though it occurs. Paper and pencil is obtained through barter - usually of bread - the most valued

currency. The art materials are stolen from SS offices at risk of torture and murder. The drawings, narratives, poems are hidden – if found, torture and death result. (In some camps, e.g., Theresienstadt, professional painters are ordered by the Nazis to paint “Pretty pictures” of the “Model Camp” and these same artists paint the ugly reality in secret. In secret they erase the insulting propaganda and imprint the reality of the camp. Some of this hidden art is found after the war. Most is not.

And the children and art? – a whole ugly world of a child’s terror and deprivation is summed up in the book title “Only I Never Saw Another Butterfly.” – the poem is written by Pavel Friedmann in Terezin in 1942 at age 12. “Such a yellow is carried way up high. It went away I am sure because it wished to kiss the world goodbye. That butterfly was the last one. Butterflies don’t live in here – in the Ghetto.”

There are 4,000 drawings in the archives of the State Museum in Prague of Terezin children’s drawings. Out of 1,500 children in Terezin, 100 survived. The drawings and poems are the only witness to their existence.

These children’s art depict the camp ugliness but also the nearby hills and butterflies and birds. And they draw curtains and food-filled pots from home. Fear and famine and hope. Those of us survivors who speak to children in schools receive their letters and poems and pictures. These communications to us express in concrete imagery the reality of our tales and invariably the children also offer us in their writing words consolation and hope...

and promise us a legacy of betterment – an echo of Sinai in schoolchildren’s voices – “naase v nishma – we shall do and we shall hear.”

Drawings, diaries, poetry. Why did they? Those holocaust prisoners, why did they?

To document what they witnessed? To express some measure of power and control in that totally overpowering choiceless environment? To create – because artists create? To leave a mark of themselves behind? As a form of resistance to dehumanization? A choice for truth?

The drawings are bare. Minimal. The artist has no time, no space, no paper, for details. That is also the camp rule – mach shnell, mach shnell. You are hurried into roll call, into work, into mud into cold. Only hunger and torture are long lasting. Camp art is not for beauty. Beauty is foreign here. We do not trust it. I say in my poem ... “Let not flowers here, not scented rose, not meadow hues. Not daffodils not gentle dew. No beauty scenes for me, beauty scenes a mockery! Crushed and crazed, indignant I would be when tortured among splendidry.” From the Siemens Camp where we prisoners produce armaments for the German Reich, you can see Lake Swedsee. The outside world is visible from here, not a brick wall but a high voltaged electric fence surrounds this camp. Calm waters with two swans and on the banks are trees. A world out there – peaceful and natural. How can this be? The normal surprises me, the unimaginable is staring at me twenty-four hours a day. (Later I learn that the ashes from the nearby crematoria were dumped into this lake.

Later I place flowers on the water – for those I knew and for those who have no-one to place a flower for them.)

Holocaust art is produced in Ghettos. The hero of the Warsaw ghetto, diarist, Anielewicz, urges: “Record, record” – and he did. His writings are found hidden in a milk jar. He is murdered. Photographs taken by Liberators present to the world objective records of German atrocity. Undeniable, indelible images imprinted into eternity and beyond. Post Holocaust artists have options of large canvasses and colorful paints and the world as model, yet so many choose involvement with Holocaust themes. As do writers, and poets and movie makers. Are they saying? Attention must be paid – behold – recoil – no more no more, no more of that never again.

No. Holocaust art does not provide consolation—. I do not know if they believed, like Anne Frank, that “man is essentially good at heart”, I do not know if Anne Frank believed that as she was starving in Auschwitz and dying of typhoid in Bergen Belsen, but these artists must have believed that their art would make witnesses of all who see it. They must have hoped that these images would be eternally embedded upon the world’s retina and we would gird against man-made worlds that should not be. That do not fit.

“Though most of these artists are unknown, through their work they force the world to know. History commands us not to forget – this art is the immortal symbol of that command,” says Nelly Toll, the art historian.

Survivors live on two tracks always – we are in the

present - and we have the past next to us. Always next to us. Our voices all have Holocaust accents - the purity of our language is rooted in the telling of our tales. Tales that should not be. Sixty-two years ago I do not die though my death sentence is proclaimed. Today, I and my fellow survivors are fortunate to have reached a life stage where normal processes will dictate our death. We witnesses do not all excel

in creative oratory - in numbness or in tears we tell our tales. Our witnessing is coming to an end ... from here on different voices will tell the tale. The art you see here today in this exhibition provides permanent reminders of history's terror. It is so valuable because unlike us mortal witnesses, it has the power to transcend time - it can be shown anywhere, any time. Will it be? I see those Darfur images and say

"this time let us be on time, not echoes of past silences, nobly moaning ignorance. This time with bread in hand with difference - on time. On time." I say... world, we must develop allergies to evil, allergies that pain, itch, scratch, make us throw up - force us to act with the powerful counter measures of involvement and caring.

I wish you voice of song and summer woods.

A small piece of 20th Century History

When, in the summer of 1944, the Lodz Ghetto was liquidated, I was selected with a group of 499 metal workers, men, women and youths, for slave-labour in Germany.

We were transported in cattle trucks, 80 people per truck, to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The train was made up of 35 trucks. In that train were also 2,300 people who tried to hide in the ghetto. The journey to Auschwitz took 2½ days and nights. The S.S. planned it that way, they wanted us to arrive there half-dead.

At Auschwitz-Birkenau we the 500 were selected out and the 2,300 were taken to the gas chambers. We were in Auschwitz for a time and then we were sent via another concentration camp, Stutthof, to Dresden to work in a munition factory.

When Albert Speer came out of Spandau, I wrote to him and asked him whether it was on his instructions that we were sent to Dresden (and not gassed in

Roman Halter

Auschwitz). His secretary replied and she did so very vaguely and unclearly. This was not what I wanted and needed. I was then recording my Shoah past and I wanted to know. So I wrote again and added that perhaps it would be simpler for me to come with two friends - (if Speer said 'Yes' I wanted friends to witness what he and I would say to one another).

And this enclosed copy is what he wrote. After some thought, I decided that to face this dreadful person of the top Nazi gang was not worth the information that I would get. So I wrote my letter.

Rettenberg 16.11.80
Dear Mr Halter,

Thank you so much for your letter! I was in the mountains, to try to finish my manuscript in quietness! Coming back, I found your letter.

Now it is too late for your proposed visit in H—. And I

am still under pressure until the midst of December. How is it with the 15th of December at 19.30. It would be an honor for us, if you would accept an invitation of dinner.

In any case, let's phone. Give me your phone number.

Of course we would like to have your friends with us too this evening.

Looking forward to this event.

With best wishes,
Albert Speer

27th November 1980
Albert Speer,
8971 Rettenberg,
Heidelberg,
W Germany.

Herr Albert Speer,

I acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated 16th November 1980 and your kind invitation to dinner on 15th December 1980. I have thought a lot about this, and although I don't have to excuse myself to anyone, I

would like to state why I will not come.

In the introduction to my work I quote a part of what my grand-father told me before his death in the Lodz Ghetto. My family did not come from Lodz. We lived in a small town in Poland called Chodecz (in German Godetz) near the town of Wloclawek (in German Leslau). From late 1939 Jews began to be murdered not only in our town but in the adjoining small villages and hamlets nearby Chodecz. My early memory of these deeds was when groups of my people were rounded up, taken to a forest, and shot as a form of practice for the new SS recruits; the 'Volksdeutsch German' who were being conscripted and initiated in the art of murder. Some of my school friends were so butchered. By autumn 1940 when we, the remainder of the Jews from Chodecz, were transported to the Lodz Ghetto the Jewish families from the little places nearby were no longer alive.

What my grandfather said then - nearly 40 years now since that time, is in its vividness indelibly engrained on my mind; - one may not remember what happened last week, but the substance of some of the past experiences live fresh within one, forever.

"When you survive, speak all you have witnessed.

Speak it the best way you can. Do not philosophise about it for murder is murder and, we are being murdered today on the orders of evil leaders. Do not make yourself into a saint or a martyr for this is not your

crowning. Live fully, but do not allow yourself to forget these times. Neither must you go around forgiving the evil-doers - this is God's job.

"Do not give up because few are only willing to listen to you. Those that want to know and are concerned about decency, humanity and our history will listen, for these are the people who will also work for the future, so that tomorrow may be saner and safer not only for us Jews but for all mankind."

Although my curiosity and even the strange fascination of meeting you and asking you some historical questions which may be of interest was only part-reason for wanting to see you, I feel now that I would betray and dishonour the memory of my family, my friends and my people who were murdered in various brutal ways, should I come and *break bread* with you.

From the population of the Jews of Chodecz three girls and I survived.

You were a very senior minister in the government whose integral policy was to hate and murder us. This is a fact. It is also a fact that because of that piece of paper from you our group of 500 from Lodz Ghetto were not sent to the gas chambers of Auschwitz but were taken, via Stutthof, to slave-work in the munition factory of von Reemtsma in Dresden.

I say "via Stutthof" as if this would be some kind of normal-stop-over place. It was not. Before the cattle trucks took us to Dresden

we were transported to Stutthof Concentration Camp and kept there for a few weeks whilst about thirty of the group were sent to Szamotuly to clean, pack and despatch to Dresden all kinds of machinery for munition production. Within the few weeks that this work took to complete the group of 500 were substantially depleted.

The women with children were murdered. The vermin, the hunger, the cold and the indiscriminate beatings, finished off over 100 people from our group.

Having survived, I will not deny it, that it is good to be alive. But one has this thought in the back of one's mind now, "Did Herr Speer send that note which saved us at Auschwitz because he wanted to save some Jews in the autumn of 1944 or did he do it because we were skilled metal and munition workers? Was this done because of his humanity and compassion for us, or was it the tonnage of the munition quota that was really the prime mover behind this action?"

I do not waste my time by hating, but I do feel grieved that those whom I loved were made to suffer and then they were all murdered. I feel contempt for leaders who in order to attain and keep power have willingly served a system which had as an integral part of its policy a programme of murder of millions of children and mothers and innocent people. Originally, I wanted to come and say this to you face-to-face but instead I decided to write and tell you this.

Roman Halter.

Heidelberg 26 January 1981

Dear Mr Halter,

It is with much regret and sadness that I read your letter of November 28. I fully understand and accept your decision to decline my invitation. I am sure you will appreciate that there is a marked difference between your first and second letters. Had it not been for the cordiality of your first letter, I would not have extended an

invitation to you and your friends, which I now realize may have hurt your feelings, and even offended you. This was never my intention.

It may mean little in the face of your sufferings that I have accepted, without bitterness, full responsibility for the crimes committed against your people under Hitler, and that I have served twenty-one years in prison. It may mean even less that I have tried, and still do, through my writings and

lectures, to warn against such events ever happening again. This is nowhere more evident than in my new book entitled "Infiltrations" and due for publication in the Spring. It deals with the attempts by the SS to infiltrate armaments and industry, and includes a large section on the concentration camps.

I shall continue this attitude in the future.

Sincerely,
Albert Speer

Hadrian at the British Museum

Dr. W H Gutt

The Roman Emperor Hadrian (born AD 76 reigned AD 117 – 138) transformed the Roman Empire and ruled a vast territory that stretched from Britain to North Africa, from Spain to the Middle East.

A major exhibition about his love, legacy, empire and conflict has been at the British Museum 24th July to 26th October 2008.

Hadrian was initially well disposed to the Jews. However, he banned circumcision and put forward proposals to build a Roman City on the site of Jerusalem which had been destroyed by Roman legions some 60 years earlier and he planned to build a temple to Jupiter on Temple Mount. These proposals led to a rebellion by Jews. It took Hadrian's forces four years to defeat it, with the death of 500,000 Jewish fighters and an unknown number of women and children.

Twelve Roman legions were brought from various parts of the empire to fight the rebellion, which was led by Simon Bar-Kochba, a valiant and effective military leader. Eventually, both he and another leader, Akiva,

Witold Gutt D.Sc, Ph.D, M.Sc, C.Chem, FRSC, FCS, came to England with the Southampton group in November 1945 and lived in the Finchley Road Hostel. He was Senior Principal Scientific Officer and Head of Materials Division at the Building Research Establishment of the Department of the Environment. He is a regular contributor to our Journal.

were killed by the Romans. Hadrian travelled to the East to celebrate the victory over the Judeans, this being one of only two such visits signifying the importance of victory and — of the rebellion.

I feel that military effectiveness of Bar-Kochba and his army should be enormously applauded. In the 20th century Jews have been often viewed as weak and were criticised by some commentators for not resisting more in the Holocaust with the most important exception of the Warsaw Ghetto rising. The collaboration of the

"Judenrats" was also criticised.

It is not till the "Six Day War" that the military prowess of Israel against Egypt greatly raised the reputation of Jewish military capability and, ironically, the Poles became proud of the strength of "their" Jews.

I feel that this contrast between the resistance of Bar-Kochba and the destruction in the Holocaust are worthy of thought and contemplation. Of course, we had no arms fit to take on the German military might in 1939. Nevertheless, the various aspects of the two situations deserve to be studied and compared especially by us who were there and who will soon cease to be available for such comparisons which are unique and are not to be replaced by scholarly studies by professional researchers who were not there, important as they are.

I recommend our members, "The Boys", to visit the exhibition at the British Museum.

Witold Henryk Gutt
Ex-prisoner Dachau
No. 147597

Occello – The Profanation of the Host

June 19th 08

Dear Dr. Saumarez Smith,

On Oct. 8th, when you Sir were Director of the National Gallery. I sent you my article on the KITAJ exhibition, published in the Journal of the Holocaust survivors no.26 Autumn 2002. You acknowledged this on 4.10.02

A copy of my article is enclosed as it may be relevant to the current exhibition of KITAJ at the Royal Academy and the article about Kitaj by Marco Livingstone in the RA magazine for summer 2008. In this article Dr. Livingstone discusses Kitaj's paintings on Jewish subjects, especially those related to the Holocaust.

The purpose of this letter is to mention Kitaj's painting THE ECLIPSE OF GOD which was in the National Gallery exhibition. This painting was Kitaj's response to UCELLO's painting, THE PROFANATION OF THE HOST and specifically to that part entitled BREAKING DOWN OF THE JEW'S DOOR. The relation of these two paintings by Kitaj and Uccello respectively, was the subject of my original letter which was sent to Kitaj.

Dr. Witold Gutt

In May this year I visited Urbino and saw, in the Palazzo Ducale, the six paintings which constitute the PROFANATION OF THE HOST. I feel that these paintings are of considerable significance and are relevant to the history of anti-Semitism and hence to the Holocaust. I feel that Kitaj's choice of these paintings for his response merits mention.

Kitaj found, in the approaching murder of the Jewish family by the lynch mob, a striking image conveying the horror of the Holocaust and the title of his painting, THE ECLIPSE OF GOD shows the importance he attached to Uccello's painting, and his response.

Moreover, libels of the nature of THE PROFANATION OF THE HOST were often repeated in Eastern Europe and led to pogroms.

It should be mentioned that at the time when Uccello painted the Profanation (1465-1468) for the Oratory of the Confraternita del Corpus Domini of Urbino there was no hostility to Jews in Urbino, the city of the Montefeltros, and the Duke Federico of Urbino cultivated a considerable interest in Jewish culture.

The story which Uccello's six paintings narrate is based upon a presumed MIRACLE OF THE PROFANED HOST said to have taken place in Paris in 1290.

Yours sincerely
Witold Henryk Gutt
Ex-prisoner Dachau
No. 147597

ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS

21 July 2008

Dr W H Gutt
79 West Heath Road
London
NW3 7TH

Dear Dr Gutt

I am sorry that I have been remiss in replying to thank you very much indeed for your letter sent on 19 June with the accompanying press concerning the Kitaj exhibition at the National Gallery. I was very grateful to you for sending me this information.

Yours sincerely,
Charles Saumarez Smith
Secretary and Chief
Executive

The Jew Haters

Dr. W H Gutt

For a substantial time after the war, it was indecent to show Jew hatred. The horror of the Holocaust revealed in the media was too immense to own up to a hatred of the victims and survivors of Auschwitz, Dachau and

Belsen. Slowly, the hatred of Israel provided an excuse even if suicide bombers were a problem.

Also, when a little drunk, they allowed themselves to show the hatred deep-rooted

and ugly. Your people are so inconsiderate or demanding or rich, they succeed where others fail through nepotism or excessive work or by being too clever by half, unworthy as they are. We are visiting the Holy Land or Palestine, they will tell you,

never Israel.

Some of our best friends are Jews, as individuals they are OK, it is different in groups where they show their true selves.

One should never ignore the insults however unpleasant it may be to

respond. Tell them, if you hate Jews be explicit, identify with David Irving and his gang. I don't buy in Jewboy shops. It is safer at Marks and Spencer they say.

Tell them to beware for the moving finger writes MENE, MENE, TEKEL UPHAR-SIN

like BEL-SHAZ-ZAR, who drank from the temple vessels, they may not wake up next morning, the Jew Haters.

Witold Henryk Gutt
Ex-prisoner Dachau
No. 147597

On not Returning to Poland

It is tempting to make a return visit to Przemyśl.

To see the great house at 6 Ratuszowa there, Dziadek, grandfather, Peiper wrote all his law books, like *Komentarz Do Kodeksu Postępowania Karnego*, 1933. Where are the paintings and Persian carpets, furniture

Dr. W H Gutt

from Vienna, silver and porcelain, and Judge Sedzia Stanisława Peipera Krzyż Zasługi, Order of Merit.

There is nothing but emptiness there. However, it is tempting but dangerous.

The memories of horror and loss hide in the corners. They could be very damaging,

carefully built defences could be breached.

It is safer, *for some*, to stay where the tide left them or to substitute untouched sights in another country that the torturer's horse did not visit.

Witold Henryk Gutt
Ex-prisoner Kradow-Plaszow
No. 7535

Dachau Death March Commemoration

Elly Gotz

In April, 1945, five year old Ekkehard Knobloch looked out of the window of his home in Gauting, near Munich, and saw a large group of exhausted, emaciated prisoners being driven by soldiers along the road past his house. He was frightened by the sight of them.

Just three days before the liberation of the Dachau Concentration Camp, the SS forced 6,887 prisoners on a Death March from Dachau south to Tegernsee. During the six-day Death March, anyone who could not keep up was shot. The German guards forced a brutal pace and thousands of marchers succumbed to exposure, hunger, or exhaustion in just a few days and were shot dead. The plan was to kill them, out of sight of the rapidly advancing

Toronto residents Elly Gotz and Abe Beker, Survivors of Dachau and Abe Beker of the Death March as well, joined the Israel Association of Survivors, Landsberg/Kaufering (Outer camps of Dachau) in a visit to Germany.

U.S. military.

American forces liberated the Dachau concentration camp on April 29, 1945. In early May 1945, American troops liberated the surviving prisoners from the Death March to Tegernsee.

40 years later, in 1985, Knobloch was a lawyer and the Mayor of Gauting. The image of that horror that he witnessed as a child never left him. He wanted to do something to commemorate the victims of Fascism, of

the Nazi era. He initiated discussions with a number of municipalities along the route of the so-called "Death March from Dachau."

The municipalities decided to erect monuments in every community along the 90 kilometre route. After a competition, the proposal by a local sculptor, Professor Hubertus von Pilgrim, was chosen by a committee which included a survivor of the March. Eventually, 28 bronze copies of the sculpture were cast and mounted along the route; the first one in Dachau, and the last one was sent to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

The local communities decided to gather each year on the 3rd May to commemorate the liberation. The municipalities placed a notice in Israeli newspapers seeking survivors of the Dachau Death March. It

turns out that in Israel there is an Association of Lithuanian Jews who were in Dachau Camp #1 and survived that Death March. At first, they were reluctant to travel to Germany, but a few went and in later years it became a yearly pilgrimage.

We, in Toronto, heard about this commemoration last year from a speaker during Holocaust Education Week. The speaker was Solly Ganor, who published an excellent book, "Light One Candle" about his survival in Ghetto Kovno, Dachau and the Death March: a German translation of the book is now a high school textbook on the Holocaust in German schools.

I am a survivor of Dachau Camp #1, and in May 2008, my wife Esme and I joined a group of 50 people from Israel to travel to Munich and participate in the commemorative events. We were joined by our friend Abe Beker of Toronto, a fellow Survivor from the same camp, with his wife Simmy and 2 grandchildren.

The now retired Mayor of Gauting, Ekkehard Knobloch, met us at Munich Airport. We were the guests of the participating communities and we were accommodated in a beautiful hotel outside Munich on the shore of the Starnberg Lake.

A bus was waiting to drive us to the start of the Commemorative March. The present mayor of Gauting greeted us and it was our first opportunity to see the evocative bronze sculpture created by Professor von Pilgrim. We were surprised to find ourselves among some 300 German citizens who marched with us to the next monument a few kilometres away! Young and old, some

pushed bicycles, some came with young children. A group of four Protestant nuns from Darmstadt had come especially to be with us. Their order was founded in 1987, specifically to assist Jewish survivors. They run a hostel in Israel for survivors.

I noticed a German gentleman walking alongside me, in suit and tie. I turned to him and introduced myself. He seemed very pleased to start a conversation. He told me that he was anxious to initiate conversations with survivors, but was in a way embarrassed. He told me that he is in charge of maintaining these monuments, and also to arrange school visits to these monuments by all the schools in the area, so the students should understand the significance of these memorials.

At each memorial we visited there was a reception, the local mayor greeted us. The speeches all emphasized that "We cannot change the past, but we must remember and make sure it never happens again. We must also fight discrimination and genocide anywhere in the world." At each stop along the way the speeches were followed by children singing, or a musical program.

Our bus driver was a volunteer, Theo Schlier, a chemical engineer, who was warm and helpful and respectful. He knew to wear a kippah at every commemoration - just the kindest of men! He and Knobloch had travelled to Israel and been hosted by the Association of Lithuanian Jews.

We spent seven days in the Munich area, during which time we were taken to

a commemoration in the Central Camp of Dachau. We visited the beautiful new Munich Jewish Community Centre and Synagogue. We visited cemeteries of Jewish prisoners around the area, all of which were meticulously maintained. We visited the monastery of St. Ottilien, where many of us recovered in the hospital after liberation. I recognized the little pond there, where I went "fishing" as a hospital patient. I used a bent pin and a piece of string to catch a couple of three-inch long fish, which I salted for 3 days and ate - to remind me of herring (I am a Litvak - Litvaks love herring!).

Our hosts then flew us to Berlin for two days of guided tours. We visited many "Jewish" sites, and I was touched by the willingness of society to remember and face their country's Nazi past everywhere. For example: right on the main street of Berlin is a huge sign listing twelve death camps like Auschwitz, Stutthof, Bergen Belsen, and the words "Terrible places that we must never forget". There was nothing that I could see nearby to prompt this sign - it is just a reminder. Germany is facing up to this horrendous part of its history without flinching.

They have given prime space in Berlin to the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, an area comprising four city blocks. The Jewish Museum, the restoration of synagogues - they appear to be doing their best to commemorate the past and support the growing Jewish community there.

Travelling to Germany has always been an issue for survivors. The painful

memories never disappear. Some say that they will never put their foot in Germany again. I was touched by the reception given to us on this occasion and by the people we met and talked to,

by their genuine pain at the deeds of some of their forefathers on their soil and their desire to make amends. The feelings of guilt they feel for their Fatherland's past is genuine

and palpable. I saw no sign at all of denial or any diminishing of guilt. I witnessed a painful respect for us, as survivors.

Elly Gotz Toronto, Canada

Destined to Survive

Jonathan Marshall

Jonathan is the Director of the Plymouth Religious & Cultural Resource Centre

has visited us on an annual basis around the time of Holocaust Memorial Day. From earlier two day visits, Solly now spends four days in Plymouth, visiting a staggering twelve schools each year, speaking to over three thousand pupils and staff!!

In a most powerful yet tragic, sad and yet heartfelt way this ordinary yet extraordinary man speaks to children about the horrors and unimaginable sadness of his life, his human life, somehow spared.

As Solly often says, he was "destined to survive." With Nazi occupation of Poland, Solly was taken aside by his father at the age of 11 and told, "Stay alive, you must survive and one day tell people what happened to us." Solly was then separated from his loving and devoted parents, four sisters, extended family, friends and neighbours. He never saw any of them again.

Hiding out on his own for a time, somehow, this young boy of 12 survived but with a Polish winter coming on he was forced to join a labour camp. He was transported to other camps, on to Buchenwald and eventually a month long journey by cattle truck to Theresienstadt

where he was finally liberated by the Russians.

This young boy saw brutality, such brutality, agony, pain, despair and death. Somehow, he was destined to survive. But anyone who survives such horror, Solly often says, cannot be normal - too much pain and tragedy - too many deaths - too many nightmares.

Over the past seven years I have sat next to Solly on over 40 occasions as he has struggled to tell his story, often to groups of between two to three hundred teenagers and their teachers. Without notes, each time it is slightly different. Each time I can hear a pin drop. Each time I see young-people deeply moved, compassionate, open and sensitive. Each time I see tears... often in the eyes of teachers. Each time I realise that this is the best kind of education - heart to heart communication.

Solly often asks his young audiences if they will be his future witnesses after he has gone. Yes, they will. They will remember him for the rest of their lives. The unimaginable scale of the genocide of the holocaust has become real and in part understood in this one human tragedy.

Thank you Solly.
Jonathan Marshall
Director
March 2007

As a teacher, I am deeply concerned to know how we should educate the young about the Holocaust. How can we hope to encompass the full horror and scope of these terrifying and traumatic events and at the same time draw out the vital lessons for today?

In schools today pupils will certainly study the Holocaust in their Secondary years. They will explore the issues through Religious Education and dedicated studies of Judaism. English too provides study of related books like "The Diary of Anne Frank." There is no shortage of resources around the Holocaust theme, there are many books, videos, films and DVDs. The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust also produces annually their excellent packs and notes for teachers. But...

It was about seven years ago that I first met Solly Irving, a Jewish Holocaust survivor from London. Through Ben Helfgott I invited Solly down to Plymouth to speak at the city's museum, as part of a "Jewish Way of Life" exhibition they were hosting. I quickly realised as Solly spoke to a large audience, including teachers and children from four local secondary schools, that here was someone rather important and special. For the past seven years Solly

DO YOU STILL LOOK AT LIFE...

Do the camps
Still lay claim on your time
Do their ghosts
Still return in the night
Do you manage
To push them aside
Do they flee
When you put on the light

Are you slowly
Preparing for blows
As the clocks
Tick away with no pause
Are you still
As you were long ago
And ignore
All your troubles and woes

Do you still look at life
Through your holocaust eyes
Seeing fear
Injustice and crime
Do you stop
At the sight try to help
Or walk by
While diverting your gaze

Have you really
Made peace with the world
As you near
The end of the line
Will you leave
With a sigh or a smile
Will you cling
To the remnants of time

Will you leave
With resentment and fear
Knowing
Death's not the prettiest of sights
Do you hope
You will not disappear
And believe
That there is afterlife

The questions come easily to mind
The answers are lagging behind

THE WORDS I WRITE

The words I write are not for squeamish
ears;
The sights I saw are not for timid eyes.
I saw a world that was – entirely disappear
As, in its place, arrived the Nazi Reich.

I do not write about man's better nature,
But, of man's mean, sadistic, hateful side.
I saw how men, who butchered human
beings,
Would stride erect with dignity and pride.

I watched how men had reached the nadir
of despair
And crawled along the bottom of the pit
Had lost their faith, their hope, their human
nature
And trod on corpses for some scraps to eat

The words I write are not for squeamish
ears,
The sights I saw are not for timid minds;
I saw a world controlled by hate and fear –
I saw a world bereft of love and light...

I FEAR MAN

I fear man
I fear his handshake
And his smile
I fear his greed
His hatred and his wiles
I fear his needs

But most of all
I fear his blind
Unshaken faith

Those other beasts I fear less
They are less likely
To transgress and stray
From their predestined paths

Blind faith has an evil look in its eyes.

Ilford Composer's "Yizkor" Premiered on Holocaust Day

Mark Harris

(This article has appeared in the Essex Jewish News)

An original musical composition by Holocaust survivor and Ilford resident, Arthur Poznanski, was premiered at the London Borough of Barnet's Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) commemoration, which was held at Middlesex University in Hendon and attended by some 500 people. The hauntingly melodic work, entitled "Yizkor", and designed for chazan and choir, is set to the words of "Av Harachamim" (Father of Compassion). This prayer, for the martyrs who died to sanctify the Almighty's name, is included in the Yizkor memorial service for departed parents and other loved ones, which is recited in the synagogue on Yom Kippur, Pesach, Shavuot and Shemini Atzereth.

At the HMD remembrance event, in the presence of Barnet mayor, Cllr Maureen Braun, and numerous other local dignitaries, "Yizkor" was sung by Chazan David Shine and choristers (including Mr Poznanski) of The London Cantorial Singers conducted by David Druce. Mr Poznanski, choirmaster at Ilford United Synagogue in Beehive Lane for many years and a talented author of liturgical music, told the EJN: "When I wrote 'Yizkor' last year, I was very much thinking of the members of my close family, parents, grandparents and youngest brother, and other relatives who perished during the Holocaust.

He added: "Of course, the memorial prayer is a cry to the Almighty. But I wanted also to ensure that the music reflected my deep feelings about what happened to my family and our people. I would like to thank the Cantorials and especially Chazan Shine, who had encouraged me to set the prayer to music, for their magnificent performance."

Mr Poznanski, who lives with his wife Renée near Beehive Lane, was also one of the principal speakers at the remembrance ceremony organised by the London Borough of Redbridge around the Valentine's Park Holocaust Memorial Garden in Ilford. The commemoration was attended by between 200 and 300 people, including Redbridge mayor, Cllr Joyce Ryan, leader of the council. Cllr Alan Weinberg and several other local dignitaries, MPs, rabbonim and other faith leaders.

This year's HMD theme was "Imagine, remember, reflect and react". Mr Poznanski (who survived slave labour and Buchenwald concentration camp, and escaped from a train transporting him to Mauthausen) spoke of his dreadful years of suffering. "I was only a young boy,

taken from my family and friends, starved, beaten and tortured," he recalled. "I knew that one slight mistake could end my life. All I could think about was, 'Why are all people not instructed that a person's religion does not make him or her evil?'"

He continued: "Imagine if the people of Germany had been taught tolerance and acceptance of, and respect for, the differences of cultures, religions, colour and sexual orientation. All of us should focus on how we can prevent the recurrence of such events everywhere in the world." During the proceedings, Mr Poznanski conducted a combined choir from Ilford United and South West Essex and Settlement Reform Synagogues.

Shortly after this year's HMD, the government announced that it would help fund two sixth-formers from every school in England to take part in visits to Auschwitz to learn about the Holocaust. The initiative's expressed aim is to make sure that the lessons of the Nazi genocide are learned by a new generation. Schools minister Jim Knight said: "Six million people died, not for what they had done, but simply for who they were." The day-long visits to the former death camp in Poland will be organised by the Holocaust Education Trust, which currently runs such trips for pupils and students.

Ceremony of the Roll Call of Honour The 65th Anniversary of the Outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

**WARSAW GHETTO
FIGHTERS!**

**VETERANS OF THE
JEWISH COMBAT
ORGANIZATION AND
THE JEWISH
MILITARY UNION!**

COMPATRIOTS!

**SOLDIERS OF THE
POLISH ARMY!**

HARK!

We are falling in today for the ceremony of the Roll Call of Honour in commemoration of the struggle of the Warsaw Ghetto fighters in the first uprising staged in a city of Europe under the Nazi occupation. We are meeting here, in front of Their Memorial, in the place hallowed by the blood of those who were up in arms, to honour Them and pay tribute to Them.

I summon you: fighters of the Jewish Combat Organization and of the Jewish Military Union, all Polish Jews who in the face of enemy's assault, of bloody occupation and a threat of annihilation engaged in a heroic fight in defence of virtue and honour, Home and humanity.

I am calling you! Warsaw Ghetto fighters! Your suffering and death were not in vain. They have not been forgotten. You laid down your lives for your beloved city, for your faith and tradition, for the centuries-long history of the Polish Jews, for freedom and fraternity on your native soil.

This moving, poignant and meaningful 'Roll Call of Honour' was made by a captain of the Polish Army at the monument of the Ghetto Fighters in Warsaw.

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
THEY FELL ON THE FIELD OF
GLORY!**

I am calling you! Ghetto fighters from the units fighting at Mila, Franciszkanska, Niska, Nalewki, Swietojska, Leszno, Nowolipki and Nowolipie Street, Gesia, Zamenhofa, Smocza, Majzelsa, Muranowska Streets. I summon the defenders of the bunkers, tunnels and "shops" who did not succumb to the pressure of the Nazi genocide and waged a heroic struggle.

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
THEY FELL ON THE FIELD OF
GLORY!**

I am calling you! Commander of the Jewish Combat Organization: Mordechaj Anielewicz! I am calling the legendary defenders of the bunker at 18 Mila Street who persisted in their posts for many days and nights in a devastating hail of bullets. I am calling you: Abrasza Blum, Michal Klepfisz, Efraim Fondaminski, Arie Wilner, Lutek Rotblat, Chaim Akerman, Szyja Szpancer, Motel Goldsztael, Herszel Kawe, Lew Rudnicki, Jurek Grynszpan, Meier Mejerowicz.

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
THEY FELL ON THE FIELD OF
GLORY!**

I summon all the fighters of the Jewish Military Union who fought to the last breath, to the last bullet against crashing Nazi odds. I am calling you, Commander of the Jewish Military Union Pawel Frenkel and your subordinates: Leon Rodal, Michal Strykowski, Natan Schultz, Eliyah Halbersztein, Icchak Bilawski, Salek Hasensprung, Pinkas Taub, Abraham Rodal, and other unknown by name fighters of the Jewish Military Union.

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
THEY FELL ON THE FIELD OF
GLORY!**

I am calling you! The youngest defenders of the Ghetto: Lusiek and Eliah Blones, Zygmunt Igla, Tadek Szajngut, Szaanan Lent, Szlamek Szuster, Jurek Zolotow, Mojzesz Finkman.

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
THEY FELL ON THE FIELD OF
GLORY!**

I am calling you! Indomitable patriot and humanist; doctor Janusz Korczak bringing love to the youngest prisoners of the Ghetto. I am calling you, defenceless children viciously murdered in the camps and annihilation centres.

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
MAY THEIR NAMES LIVE ON!**

I am calling you! Szmul Zygelbojm, staunch defender of life and honour of the Polish Jewry. Your tragic death in protest against the Holocaust was a token of struggle for the freedom

of Homeland and for human rights.

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
MAY HIS NAME LIVE ON!**

I am calling the members of the Council for Aid to Jews "Zegota" who brought help to those persecuted by the Nazis. I am calling you, defenders of the Jewish population: Zofia Kossak, Julian Grobelny, Tadeusz Rek, Emilia Hizowa, Stefan Sendlak, Adolf Berman, Leon Feiner, Lusja Hausman, Marek Arczynski.

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
MAY THEIR NAMES LIVE ON!**

I am calling the soldiers of the Polish underground who came to aid the fighting Ghetto warriors and died a soldier's death in combat. I am calling you: Jozef Wilk, Eugeniusz Morawski.

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
THEY FELL ON THE FIELD OF
GLORY!**

I am calling the Jews, citizens of the Republic of Poland and of other states viciously murdered in annihilation camps. I am calling you! The victims of the Holocaust whose ashes rest in annihilation camps of Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek, Chelmno on the Net river, in concentration camps in Stutthof, Gross Rosen. I am calling those murdered in the ghettos. I am calling those murdered in labour camps in Lodz and Czestochowa, Radom, Plaszow, Bedzin, Sosnowiec, Dabrowa Gornicza, Sandomierz, Jaslo. I am calling those murdered in the Oboz Janowski near Lviv, in Ponary near Vilnius,

in Gnidow near Luck, in Baranowicze and numerous other sites of Jewish martyrdom scattered all across Europe.

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
THEY DIED A MARTYR'S
DEATH!**

I am calling you! Participants of the fights against Nazi oppressors in the ghettos of Bialystok, Bedzin and Tarnow, in the camps of Sobibor and Treblinka, Trawniki and Poniatowa.

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
THEY FELL ON THE FIELD OF
GLORY!**

I am calling you, Jews, Polish soldiers fighting against the invader from the very first to the very last day of the World War 2! I am calling you! The defenders of Homeland of September 1939, soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces in the West, the defenders of Narvik and France of 1940, airmen of the Polish Air Force, seamen of the Polish Navy, soldiers fighting in Tobruk and in Monte Cassino, Ancona and Bologna, Chambois and Falaise, liberators of Ghent and Breda. I am calling you, Jews, soldiers of the Polish First and Second Armies fallen on the combat trail from Lenino to the Elbe. I am calling you, Jews, soldiers of various formations of the Polish independence underground and of the Jewish partisan units, participants of the Warsaw Uprising.

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
THEY FELL ON THE FIELD OF
GLORY!**

I am calling you! Polish Jews, officers murdered by

the NKVD in Katyn and in other sites of martyrdom, and Prisoners of War murdered in Majdanek in 1942.

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
THEY DIED A MARTYR'S
DEATH!**

I am calling you! Polish Jews concealed and hiding out for years in dugouts in woods and in households of the Righteous, the people of good will. I am calling you! The ones saved by the Ulm Family: the Szalls and the Goldmans, hundreds of others known or unknown by name, treacherously betrayed and murdered together with their rescuers. Victims of human hatred and baseness!

**FALL IN FOR THE ROLL CALL!
THEY DIED A MARTYR'S
DEATH!**

I appeal to you, posterity! Remember the offering of blood and life made by Jewish soldiers, insurgents and partisans till the end of time. May Their persons and heroic deeds be engraved in our consciousness, in the history of Poland and in the history of the Jewish People for ever.

May the names of those fallen and their heroic deeds act as a beacon to us in our study, work and service of the Republic of Poland.

**GLORY TO
THE HEROES!
MAY THEIR
NAMES
LIVE ON!**

Address by the President of the State of Israel SHIMON PERES at the Warsaw Ghetto on April 15, 2008

In the words of Zvia Lubetkin as she remembered May 1: "Scores of Jewish fighters sat in the dark, all clutching their weapons, surrounded by thousands of apprehensive Jews, waiting. Aren't these the silent days of May? The sense of responsibility sat heavily on our shoulders, on our conscience, and it allowed no rest.

The Jews, anxiously gathered closely around us, waited for a word of hope from the mouths of the fighters. We were in shock and helpless. What could we say to them? What could we say to ourselves? How terrible this sense of being powerless was! How terrible was the weight of fate on the last of the desperate Jewish fighters. We could not withstand the onslaught of the Germans who had been firing at us incessantly, while we lacked water, food and arms."

Yes the Germans had the upper hand, backed by thousands of soldiers, firing indiscriminately, flushing streams of gas into the bunkers. Yet who won from the historical viewpoint? What did these evil Nazis leave as a legacy to their sons? Only shame and disgrace, a curse and ruin.

Most of the resistance fighters were killed. They were murdered in cold blood. They lost the battle. But historically, there was

never such a victory. Victory of man over human animal. An illustration of how the higher spirit conquers the darkness of the soul. Few against many. Few, very few, against many, too many. The few had guns. The many machine-guns. But the few had a conscience and the many were driven by Satan, in the real sense of the word.

The grand-daughter of Zvia Lubetkin and Antek Zuckerman is the first woman fighter pilot in Israel's Air Force. If at the time we had an Air Force as we do today, Hitler would not have been free to murder so many unchecked. If Poland was liberated then as she is today, her land would not have been stained by the heinous acts of the Nazi regime.

Today's Germany is deliberating the dilemma of how to deal with the memory of her sons at that time. And we look upon the resistance fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto as a historical peak. A pinnacle that surpasses every tale, every poem, every norm. A historical climax that our children will carry with pride in their hearts.

Revenge, of course we seek revenge. But a different form of revenge, not Nazi revenge, but Jewish revenge. And it materialized. Zvia Lubetkin and Antek Zuckerman immigrated to Israel and joined a kibbutz.

Kibbutz life is a way of life that is the most just in the world. This is revenge.

A Jewish state was founded. A nation that is recognized as a world leader in the field of agriculture, medicine and hi-tech. This is revenge.

And even after the Holocaust, when most of the countries in the world closed their gates in the face of Holocaust survivors, the gates of Zion opened. This is revenge.

And when our neighbors attacked us seven times in the course of sixty years, and were unable to defeat us, this is revenge.

And when in the wake of the Holocaust, after the wars, after the intifadas, after the enriched uranium, we aspire for peace, this is revenge.

This is the revenge of the sons of light over the sons of darkness.

In the Warsaw uprising we lost the cream of our daughters and the cream of our sons – but their light will shine in the future as flares of courage that transcend this world. They will be remembered as the carriers of beacons of justice in impossible conditions.

Representing the hope of enlightened human beings.

May their memory be praised and blessed.

Visit to Israel

Maureen Hecht



Maureen and Jack.

At our age we complain about how time flies. Our children, grandchildren and even great grandchildren keep us young. We can't remember simple tasks from the morning but bore friends by repeating stories from the past. The stories vary from person to person but there is always an underlying theme - The Holocaust. And even though we may not see these friends all year we are bound to meet up with them each May. Unfortunately these days the conversation is not about business, exotic holidays etc., no, it's recommending a good surgeon or osteopath and the cost of living. April and Pesach is the first hurdle. Jack was liberated on the 23rd April 1945, which happens to be St. George's day and Shakespeare's birthday. Not in the same year of course. We somehow manage to fit in Yom Hashoah and the 'DO'. It is a busy calendar. In recent years a crowd of us have managed to visit Israel during special years, such as their 50th Anniversary and likewise ours, celebrating our Liberation. This year was no exception and in spite of falling numbers and unavoidable illnesses quite a few turned up at the airport with cries of Shalom! Was macht die and Gezind! Crowne Plaza treated us very well but we were not the only visitors there.

Every night they poured in - Texan hats from America and Canada, berets from France, lederhosen from Germany, sombreros from Brazil and we are talking about Christians! Let us

hope that these visitors will continue to visit Israel which has so much to offer. One lady was wearing two hats at breakfast. Her excuse was that she didn't want to squash them! But why didn't she just leave them in her room? The first organised trip was to Yad Vashem and as always their welcome was unstinting. It was good seeing the new improvements and additions there, and to enjoy their delicious refreshments. The next event was 'the Do' organised by the Israeli Boys. It was a pleasure to see them all at The Sheraton City Hotel and to hear their latest news. On other evenings most of us visited relatives and friends with Sallah (Newton Katz) being no exception, treating us to a fun affair with outstanding nosh. However, most evenings, we dragged ourselves back to the hotel, joining the gang in a coven-like circle at the lobby. Without much ado, the

conversation would turn to jokes. And what old chestnuts they were. But nobody cared and the circle got wider and wider as the evening wore on. Part of our plan to be in Israel at this time was to join in the Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations for 5768. As for 1948, it is incredible to see how much has been done in that little country during sixty short years. Friends who have been unable to visit for many years are astonished at the progress that has been made. Our son Sam is often invited to lecture on design and has a great respect for the country and its people. Our daughter Nina has been there four years and wouldn't live anywhere else. To watch the Israel Defence Forces up above and on the sea showing their prowess, is a joy to behold. On the celebration day we sit around the pool, which is high up overlooking the beach. The battleships come past sounding their signals to acknowledge us and helicopters bow, with aircraft roaring overhead. Israel would not be where she is today without these brave boys. I did feel somewhat tearful and frightened when the 'planes flew over because it reminded me of World War II when our bombers flew over on missions. As I wrote at the beginning, time flies and we were soon packing our cases to return home. It had been a nostalgic and enjoyable trip, tinged with sadness for the 'boys' who had passed away or are suffering illnesses. Must leave now as we are off to the Chanukah Party - Shalom! "IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR"

A Country called Limmud

Who would have thought that, amidst the rolling Midland countryside, 2,500 souls would have gathered to conscientiously ignore Christmas and probe the rich mine of Jewish tradition. The dates were 23rd to 27th December 2007. The place was the extensive campus of Warwick University close to Coventry.

The name "Warwick" is redolent of Shakespeare and castles. Coventry is forever engraved on the national psyche as the recipient of wartime German malevolence, as well as a hub of past industry. Middle England is the seat of world influence. Perhaps within 70 or 80 miles of this wandering campus were born three men of universal acclaim. "Who?" you ask. Well, to the north-east rose up the father of modern science, Sir Isaac Newton, astronomer and astrologer. North-west saw the birthplace of Charles Darwin who, with Alfred Russel Wallace, produced the theory of evolution, whilst, in the south-west was born William Shakespeare, the incomparable genius of the written word.

Amidst such wonder what would our 2,500 souls do? They would live together in peaceful amity, no disturbances, no drunks, no violence, just the pursuit of learning, Jewish learning. To feed this multitude, this heavenly host, required considerable organisation. We consumed no meat or chicken, plenty of soups, sandwiches, rolls, pasta, etc., average, non-Michelin food, adequate, unremarkable. No one starved, a few had stomachs that rebelled.

Organising the food was just one element. A Limmud 2007 Committee, chaired

Aubrey Rose C.B.E

Aubrey 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 environment which led to his book "Judaism & 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 is Deputy Chairman of the British Caribbean Association. His latest book 'The Rainbow Never Ends' is his autobiography.

by amiable Kevin Sefton, supported by 130 – or was it 150 – volunteers, took on themselves a task that would have daunted a Government Department or a major industrial concern. They did so well that they ought to take over a Ministry, particularly the disaster that is called the Home Office.

But, you may ask, what did they organise? They organised the coming and going of all, the programme filling a mere 350 pages, an array of speakers, musicians, singers, group leaders, a daily paper, getting everyone to the session rooms on time. It was a massive task, carried out with humour and efficiency.

There are streets and buildings galore in this scholastic village. To assist the poor wandering student, signs were pasted, posted, on every street where we lived and walked. 'Chem', 'Soe', 'Su', 'Rem', etc., were the strange, strangulated

shorthand for Chemistry block, etc. Rootes (car industry?) was the central hub.

I was distressed to see 'Ram'. I knew Sonny Ramphal, former Vice-Chancellor here, well, now creating a new Ramphal Foundation. Emanating from Guyana, he had served famously as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth. Surely he deserved more than a cursory 'Ram'!

Our heroic organisers, including those who manned the 'Help' desk, the 'Presenters' desk, had to contend for much of the time with damp, wet, uninviting weather, yet communal morale remained high. I would estimate that almost half of those present were under the age of 40. Whole families came, with babies, small children, all provided for in crèches and playrooms. Many married couples came. I met some I had not seen since my twenties. They all looked so much older!

Prayers ascended to heaven at all hours of the day and night, Orthodox prayers, very Orthodox prayers, Masorti prayers, Progressive prayers. I have no doubt all were equally acceptable. English was the lingua franca, but other tongues, Hebrew especially, were much in evidence. People had come to this oracular centre from a dozen countries or more, United States, Canada, Argentine, Holland, France, Denmark, Norway, even further afield! We sat around in the capacious lounges, imbibing coffee and wisdom from abroad. What a tribute to the reputation of Limmud and the skill of the organisers. We intermingled, exchanged thoughts and addresses.

But, so far, I have commented on the plumage and ignored the bird. The word Limmud, now well-established for over 20 years, is a kind of shorthand for the learning and teaching process, mining so much from the rich vein of Jewish history, religion and experience. If I itemised the subjects, the speakers, this note could expand to inordinate length. Suffice to say that whatever your interest, you would be well provided for.

Better still, get a copy of the brochure, the programme, the time-table, or else the thick, thick folder itemising every event, every speaker, in minute detail. All I can do here, most discriminately, is to mention a few items that stood out for me. I loved the roly-poly new Israeli Ambassador, a man of wisdom, perception and patience. I marvelled at Ruth Gruber, 96 years old, holding forth without a note. Clive Lawton entranced with his eloquence and mental agility (I have to mention him as he said nice things

about me). Clive commented on the Sabbath day of rest as a unique Jewish contribution.

A roster of rabbis dissected the past and the future. Philosophers philosophised (was Philo among their subjects?) We learned about Rav Kook, Rabbis Nachmay and Levi Yitzhak. I contributed a bit on the environment and healing.

The list is massive. Music was not neglected. Geraldine Auerbach, in four sessions, explained synagogue music. Harry Pitch, octogenarian, played the mouth organ brilliantly and spoke about Gershwin in a uniquely lively and humorous manner. What a wonderful performance! Craig Taubman, a Los Angeles sweet singer of Israel, attacked the air surrounding him with vehemence, as he aroused excited audience participation with but a wave of his hand.

Judith Silver, ever-smiling, ever-moving, got us all "nigguning". A wonder of wonders was the creation of cast and orchestra in just three days to enliven us

with Fiddler on the Roof. Some of the tacked-on beards were hilarious. Late night parties allowed steam to be let off, while Eilat Dance Group from Latvia was grace in action.

A Gala concert produced strong rhythmic backing for Craig and the Sephardi chazan with his soaring voice. I loved David Hoffman's Jews Blues and Country westerns. And so on, and so on. I could write for pages and pages, but why should I? Reader, don't miss the opportunity to go to Limmud 2008, its many offspring Lummudniks scattered around the country and abroad.

This is a rare initiative that cuts across every distinction of age, gender, beliefs, affiliations. It is a true Jewish learning democracy in action, of which we can all be proud. Be a part of it. You will enjoy yourself immensely, make new friends, and leave with happy lasting memories.

December 30, 2007

Opening of the New Gedenkstaette in Belsen

Before I go into a more detailed account of what was happening at the site of the former camp I should say that I had occasion to witness the progress made there since the late eighties when I visited Belsen for the first time, breaking my vow never ever to set foot on German soil again.

This happened more by accident than by design.

I got my usual marching orders for the month from the English Chamber Orchestra and saw the names 'Celle' and 'Soltau' on the list. I was always excused from travelling to Germany with

Anita Lasker Wallfisch

Anita was deported from her hometown, Breslau – now Wroclaw – to Auschwitz where, as an inmate, she played the cello in the Camp Orchestra. Later, she was sent to Bergen-Belsen where she was liberated. She came to England in 1946 and three years later she became a founder member of the English Chamber Orchestra. She published her biography "Inherit The Truth 1939-1945". She is a valued member of our Society and a regular contributor to our Journal.

the Orchestra, but when I saw these names, I just knew that I had to go and see what has been happening there in the last half century. One of my colleagues was taking his car on that tour and we had arranged to go to the camp the day after the first concert. (You need a car to go to Belsen from Celle.)

We arrived in Celle, went to the concert hall, and to my surprise, (because I thought that in Germany everything is so well organised) the music stands had not arrived. So we waited. I had to keep reminding myself that I was back in Germany. It could have been any other place. I

sat there, smoking as usual, when a man came towards me, bowed in a very German-like fashion and said that he heard that I had been a prisoner in Belsen. Would I accept to be taken there by him. (News travel fast.)

Since I had no intention to talk to any Germans, my first reaction was to say: no thanks. Then I had a second thought. That man was quite young, obviously born after the war. So why not. He will not have to tell me that he has never been a Nazi. I accepted the offer for the second day of my stay there.

Next morning, after the first concert, we drove off – direction Belsen.

By now several people from the orchestra had joined us – I was glad about this. These are young people; 'Belsen' and what it stands for is something out of history books.

We arrived at the entrance. There was a car park, and everything looked very civilised.

I parted company with my colleagues. I wanted to be alone on this first return to this infamous place.

All one can see is a large space surrounded by trees and huge elevations... the mass graves! The very graves I saw being filled 44 years ago with the bodies we had been made to drag there.. Each of these graves has a stone plaque saying how many bodies it contains. Six hundred – Eight hundred – two thousand – and 'HERE LIE AN UNKNOWN NUMBER OF DEAD' etc...

I walked about from one mass grave to the next and finally to the obelisk that stands in front of a huge stone wall with inscriptions in all languages and thought of all the people who could no longer walk about and had to ask myself: Why me?

It is impossible to recreate

the exact shape of the camp. There are so many trees there ... where was the camp?

I got the explanation the next day when I went again – this time with the above mentioned German. These trees have grown since the liberation and it takes 20 years for such trees to reach full size. I have not been there for 44 years.

I met up with my colleagues again. They had gone to what was the 'museum' in those days. A small hut! (We have come a long way since then.) They complained that the subtitles to the exhibits were all in German. I decided to do something about it, entered this 'museum', recognised myself on one of the photos, saw some building going on and a notice that the 'Gedenkstaette' was going to be enlarged.

Responsible body: The '*Niedersaechsische Landeszentrale fuer politische Bildung*' and a name and an address: Dr. Rahe.

I noted this down and intended to write a letter.

On the way back to Celle we passed the former DP Camp into which I had moved after the last hut in Belsen had been ceremoniously burnt down on May 21, 1945. This DP camp was formerly a German Army Training camp and was now used for the survivors after the liberation. I have spent seven long months there waiting to find a new home and a new life and get back to normality. Now it belongs to the British Army. There was a big cannon at the gate and the place looked well guarded.

We stopped the car, I told the guard at the entrance that I had been living there after the liberation and could I possibly have a look round and visit the cemetery. Many, many people had died and been buried there after

the liberation.

He was a bit suspicious. ...I showed him my tattooed number and he said he would have to ask permission and could I come back tomorrow.

Next Day: I met up with my German acquaintance. (his name is Heiko Gevers) and off we drove in a very posh Mercedes. On the way there we picked up an American lady, Linda Engelhardt, now Mrs Gevers. (I mention their names because they are both heavily involved with the creation of this most impressive latest creation of the 'Gedenkstaette' we visited on October 28".

My 'driver' Heiko took the precaution to take all sorts of identification papers with him because he thought he might have difficulties entering a British Military Establishment. But not a bit of it. All the guard remarked that I had come in a different car from the one I had arrived in the previous day. I explained the reason, namely that I am being driven by different people, and to my amazement he waved us straight in without asking for any sort of identification. So much for 'security'.

This base is absolutely vast and I really could not recall where the cemetery was located. We drove around...searching.

We stopped at a Military Police Building, got some vague directions and warning that it was hard to find. Probably it was totally overgrown and I was ready to give up the search. However, eventually we found it, got out of the car and to my utter amazement there stood a Priest, a Rabbi and three civilians.

I approached the Rabbi and asked him what he was doing here.

He just stared at me and said...but you are Anita...do you still play the cello? Yes, I still play the cello and it is that very fact that brought me to this spot.

To think that he recognized me after all these years!

His name was Azaria, formerly Helfgott. He had been a partisan during the war, came to Belsen after the liberation as a rabbi and it was he who had buried the people here after the liberation.

This meeting was really quite something! We chatted for a while; he asked after my sister Renate and my friend Hilde.etc. etc.

I was glad that all this was witnessed by Germans. It was proof that I am not just telling stories.

I was introduced to the priest and the other two people there.:

Lt. Col Wilkinson, who was in charge of the base, and a young man whose name was Dr.Rahe, (the man responsible for the new museum which was to open in April 1990.) Very convenient. I could lodge my complaint about the 'German subtitles' there and then and save myself the expense of a postage stamp.

We walked around the cemetery. There were graves there as late as 1952! Seven years after the liberation! What an indictment to the human race.

Lt. Col. Wilkinson told me that when the Exodus was intercepted and turned back by the British, some people made their way back to Belsen: the only 'home' they had!! He said that he was not proud.

He then kindly drove me around the camp. We tried to find the Interpreter's house where I had lived whilst I was there, but could not find it. It must have died of old age. (There is a photograph of

it in my book.) I kept in close contact with Dr.Rahe, was able to contribute to the then new documentation centre, returned for the inauguration and was invited several times to speak.

In fact, this meeting at the cemetery was a turning point for me in my 'relationship' with Germany and the younger generation of Germans.

Since many years now I go back, talk in schools and on all sorts of other venues and know how important this is.

This year marks the opening of yet another, the third attempt to commemorate the terrible events that led to horrors that Belsen represented in April 1945. Everybody who had contributed something to the new documentation centre, i.e. documents or video interviews was invited and it proved a most impressive event.

Everyone, and that means hundreds of people, were collected from the airport.

I was lucky to be staying in Celle and not Hannover, because it is much nearer to the actual camp. We were given the 'running order' of the event, had meals at a nearby hotel and occasion to meet other participants.

We were given some information about the planned events of the next two days, and the rest of the day was free.

There was a mega reception in the evening ... the usual endless speeches laboriously translated into several languages and hours of waiting for the handful of religious people who had to wait for the end of shabbat! Followed by a somewhat embarrassing and totally unnecessary performance of a choir brought in by the local music professor who specializes in 'Jewish Music.'

It is not easy to find an acceptable balance between Jewish and non-Jewish victims, of which there were many representatives on that occasion. In fact there were a number of quite embarrassing moments that could have been handled with a little more diplomacy.

The next day was a shining example of organisation. Umpteen buses took us all to the former DP camp, we assembled in what used to be - and probably still is - the officers club. Every seat was equipped with earphones and you could choose between 8 languages. ...no less!

On the stage sat 4 musicians, a pianist a violinist a cellist and a clarinettist. I knew at a glance that we were going to hear Messian's 'The End of Time'. It was a pity that there was no mention in the programme why this particular piece of music had been chosen. It had in fact been composed in a POW camp by Messian, and the reason for this unusual combination of instruments was that these were the only instruments available in the camp at the time. It is a complicated piece and I don't think it made much sense to most people without some explanation.

We returned to the various buses and drove to the camp. We entered Belsen itself . . not by the actual entrance but from the back, so that we arrived at the big wall with all the inscriptions and could make our way slowly through the vast burial ground to the entrance of the camp where the new Documentation Centre is situated.

There was food provided for everybody and one could visit the new Building at one's leisure.

There is an enormous amount of information to take in.

One needs a great deal of

time to look at everything. Artefacts that have been unearthed by various international youth working parties who spend time in Belsen on a regular basis are set into the

ground and illuminated. Hundreds of photographs are shown: Belsen 'before', 'during' and 'after'.

A wealth of information brought together with infinite care.

The dedication of the people who put this memorial centre together is immeasurable.

May it serve a purpose!

My trip to Breslau (Wroclaw) and Auschwitz September 2008

Anita Lasker Wallfisch

This was no doubt one of the most extraordinary trips ever.

It all started with my son, a professional musician, telling me that he had an engagement for a concert in Wroclaw and would I come too.

Of course I would come and, what is more, we decided to use this occasion to make a trip to Auschwitz, since he had not yet been there.

He went a day early to rehearse with the orchestra. I arrived at what is now an almost respectable airport where he met me and we drove to our hotel. This hotel – just by the way – stands exactly on the ground where the house used to be in which I lived before we had to move to an overcrowded apartment.

The hotel is not too far from the railway station where I was arrested.

We went to have a look at it, also the street corner where my sister and I committed our unsuccessful suicide went to the 'Ring' with the famous Town Hall where we had a very mediocre meal. The weather was fantastic and the place was full of tourists.

Unbelievably peaceful!!!

Next morning at breakfast we sat near a table with a large family group. Two tiny babies, two oldies and three young couples. I heard that they spoke Hebrew.

This could only mean that they were on a 'sentimental' journey. I asked one of the young ones what they were doing visiting Breslau and she told me that her father used to live there. I looked for the father and, believe it or not, it turned out that 70 years ago [when he was 9 years old] I had taken him and his brother (aged 12) and parents to the railway station to say 'goodbye'. The family were on the way to Palestine. Saying 'goodbye' at the station was an activity I indulged in only too frequently in those days.

This meeting was really incredible and somehow typical.

The brother, just by the way, was my best friend at school. We are still in touch with each other. In Palestine he had joined the Palmach, eventually became a captain in the Israeli Navy but, most important, before he became 'legal', so to speak, he was one of the boys who brought 'illegal' immigrants on completely unseaworthy vessels to Palestine.

My son arranged tickets for the concert in the evening for all of them and we went our separate ways, finding various places of sentimental meaning, until it was time for the concert.

Breslau had been so thoroughly destroyed that it is almost impossible to find

places I knew so well..... like, for instance, my school. But we did find one of the houses we lived in when we were small children and took plenty of photographs.

The concert in the evening took place in a huge church on the 'Dominsel' which has obviously been extensively restored. This Insel [island] is a beautiful peaceful place now. The acoustics in the church were not exactly ideal for an enormous orchestra plus soloist. However, it is a very good piece and the composer [Macmillan] was also the conductor. Judging by the applause, it was an enormous success. The entire Israeli contingent, including babies, were there and everybody was very happy.

The next morning we set off on the second phase of this trip; Auschwitz. We had hired a car and arrived in Auschwitz at lunchtime, which was a lot later than I had originally planned, but the concert had only started at 9.30 and everything got extremely late. I mention this because my visit to Auschwitz had been prepared by Ben Helfgott who knows the director of the museum personally and had discussed with her an incident which occurred when friends of mine visited Birkenau. My friend had stood at what used to be 'my block' [Block 12 – the block of the "Kapelle"]. When my friend asked the guide about the women's

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orchestra in Birkenau, two of whom he knew personally, the reply was that there was no such thing and he should not believe what people were saying, especially old people, as they make up stories!!! Can you believe it?

Well, I took this matter in hand and the result was profuse apologies – including an abject one from the guide herself – for what it was worth. She has been severely reprimanded. I am still completely puzzled as to how such a thing could happen by an official guide. After all, there is plenty of literature on the subject.

to come back to my visit: We arrived at lunchtime and I went to the 'Information' to announce my arrival. There was no-one there to talk to. I tried several other possibilities, was sent from pillar to post, finishing up at some block I was advised to go to, where someone spoke to me incomprehensibly through an intercom and we gave up. We were hungry and went to the 'restaurant'. As my son was queuing, I thought I would have one more try to connect up with someone and this time found that the 'Information' was manned. When I said my name, everything changed.

Suddenly, we became VIPs! They had desperately been waiting for us since the morning... etc., etc. Several people came to apologise and we were taken to the office of the director. She speaks German. More apologies. Another lady – this time, English-speaking – asked me if she could interview me. I had been back to this infamous place several times before!! She had many, many questions and so my son went off on his own and I stayed in the office. The interview – which is not even completed – took several hours – and it was obvious that it got too

late to go to Birkenau. We had to stay in the town of Auschwitz overnight and continue the next day. Ben had given me the name of a hotel but our hosts would not hear of it – they could put us up 'in situ'. It was truly surreal.... We were offered 'hospitality' in Auschwitz.

If you can imagine, or even have seen the great big gallows at the end of the camp, there is a gate leading to the quarters of the people who work there.

In other words: in the old days the guards and now the people employed to look after the camp and keep it clean for the 'tourists'. What a place to bring up your children!!!

I am trying to describe here what this accommodation looked like. A long row of houses... the odd pram or tricycle... doors leading to several dwellings... a few steps... we opened our 'apartment'... On the left, a bathroom with a bath and toilet... no basin... another door leading to a room with two beds and two chairs... a radio that did not work and a table... blankets and clean sheets on the beds... that was it. The whole situation was completely unreal. We were now 'living' where in the old days the guards used to live... virtually in the camp at Auschwitz. Obviously by now the tourists had left, and it was arranged that we go out any time by a special gate.

We found a very acceptable little restaurant, had a meal and went back to the camp... not without some difficulty in finding the right entrance. So there we were... talk about a ghostly atmosphere. My son walked about in the dark... I stayed in our room.

We got up early, saw several people meticulously cleaning the camp for the next bunch of visitors, went to the canteen and indulged

in a rather dubious breakfast, were met by the same English-speaking lady who had started interviewing me the previous day. Very touchingly, she brought two mega parcels of food with her consisting of enormous pieces of pastry.

We drove to Birkenau with special permission to take the car into the camp and through a gate that was not normally used by visitors, but was the very spot where we, in the orchestra, used to play our marches. On the way there she showed us what used to be called the 'Judenrampe' and where she told me I had arrived in 1943. It is quite a way away from the entrance that is so well known now. I really could not remember that this was the spot I had arrived at in 1943.

Of course, it was at night and pitch dark.

We were talking about the various groups that come to visit and she told me about the Israeli youths. It is very distressing to hear that some young Israelis are behaving in a completely unacceptable manner. They light cigarettes in wooden blocks... throw litter about... take pictures of each other with their heads in the one remaining oven... etc., etc. I wish I could understand what is going on in their heads.

I must emphasise here that I am not talking about Israeli Youth per se. However, there are obviously some who have not fully understood what Auschwitz symbolises.

Auschwitz is a cemetery. The largest cemetery in the world. A cemetery without graves. A cemetery where people of all nationalities were murdered. The way we Jews have been murdered may have differed [for want of a better word] in 'style', but we cannot and must not ignore the thousands upon thousands of

other victims. We do not 'own' Auschwitz.

Of course, since relations between Jews and non-Jews are so precarious, no-one dares say anything to these youngsters, and the bad blood continues.

Why do we have to be so lacking in respect of others?

I am glad that Renata, my Polish companion, had enough confidence in me to tell me about it.

We drove into Birkenau. I showed my son where his mother had 'lived'. Like all the blocks there, only the outlines have survived, and the brickwork.

We looked at what is left of the gas chambers and crematoria. They are sinking more and more into the ground and will finally disappear. However, I learnt to my relief that something is going to be done about it.

We went to Crematorium 5 where the Hungarians have been gassed and saw the 'pond' that is full of human ashes.

Birkenau is absolutely vast and had we not been accompanied by Renata I would not have found the famous 'Sauna' where the shaving of heads and number-tattooing took place.

It was precisely there that I had met my sister Renate again because she had recognized the famous black shoes with the red pompoms on the laces. I had given them to the girl who had processed me some time previous to my sister's arrival.

This 'Sauna' is a vast complex; the floor is now covered with glass in order to preserve the worn-out surface where thousands of people have been walking.

Walking on glass adds to a feeling of complete 'insecurity'.

This was a truly unforgettable 'visit'.

Next stop: Krakow, where I had an appointment with Helena, an old colleague of mine from my days in the Lagerkapelle. We have kept in touch for all these years. We met at the entrance of the famous church where traditionally a trumpeter plays a fanfare every hour at the very top of the spire. Krakow was teeming with people; it was not warm enough to sit in the famous square I had told my son so much about. A proper visit to Krakow will have to wait until another time.

Time was running out. We had to head back to Wroclaw and catch a plane back to 'normality'.

What went Wrong?

A year went by since Judge Finestein delivered a well researched lecture at St John's Wood Synagogue under the title of "What went wrong?" subtitled "Germany and Jews 1830 – 1930". For me, it served as a useful contribution to the perennial question that has been haunting the Holocaust survivors who ask: "Why did it all happen? Why did it happen to us?" Judge Finestein explains, but, as far as I can see, fails to provide the answer for which we have been rummaging through pages of history, psychology, philosophy and religion. Another writer who explains "what went wrong" is an eminent Polish journalist, Edmund Jan

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Osmanczyk, whose article published in PRL in 1946¹ can be seen as an expansion of the lecture's subject. He takes us beyond 1930 to include the war and early post-war years. He considers "what went wrong" outside German borders and concerns himself more with human nature, Jewish and not-Jewish as a root of the tragedy.

For some twelve months, Osmanczyk was accredited by the Polish press as a reporter to the Nuremberg Trials. He was disillusioned. "Among examples of robbery

of public and individual property", he wrote, "there was the French claim of 49 million kilograms of cheese and 88 million bottles of champagne! But at the climax of the act of indictment were examples of malicious – without any military necessity – destruction of larger and smaller cities in Norway, France, Holland, Greece, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. But of Warsaw there is not a word! And among the crimes against humanity you will not find the Ghetto Rising." On his return, Osmanczyk noted in his diary: "If you cannot change the past, what puny satisfaction do you get? What do all those standing in the dock mean to me and to all who lived under the rule

¹ See the Bibliography

of the Third Reich?" He underlined three times the sentence: "This was a trial of the past only for the benefit of the future."

Born before World War I, he was "Conditioned by events of pre-1930 years and of most of the last century". He felt, in the twilight of his life, that this experience gave him the right and duty to pronounce on what he saw, and on how this fragment of Jewish history should be regarded within that of the whole humanity. During the war he lived in Warsaw, saw the elimination of Jews and overheard most of the voices recalled later by Lanzman in *Shoah*. He understood that "such voices can germinate within the minds of people with limited imagination." "And who in the West, in 1943, would believe in Treblinka?" he asks, "Was there anything exceptional in its geographical latitude?"

While in Berlin, like other influential Polish writers, he received a letter from Emil Somerstein, chairman of the Central Committee of Polish Jews appealing for public condemnation of the "bestial murders committed by the armed bands against defenceless remnants of the Jewish population." He did not reply, as he felt it was an exaggeration common amongst people who frequently face misfortune, conditioned by constant expectation of impending doom.

Unlike Judge Finestein, Osmanski was a Pole; a Catholic and not a Jew, a journalist and not an historian. His style is rhetorical rather than detached, reflective rather than objective; his writing is

not a result of painstaking research, but of direct experience mixed with conjecture and emotion. He has as much to say about the Jews and the Poles as about the Germans. He explained Kielce as much as Treblinka and generalised his finding. His insights concerning the Jews and of our own contribution to our age-long suffering are apt and relevant.

For an illustration, I have selected and freely translated the following extracts from his article:

".... There would have not been total Nazi crimes without total racial hatred. And what is the meaning of racial hatred? Moral detestation of one person of another which, when greatly magnified, confers to the haters the right to kill whomever they hate. Wherever hatred is sown, murder is gathered.

It is not true, (as Judge Finestein had pointed out) that the German nation was always inhuman. Nor is it true that Nazism transformed inhumanity into organized crime. German nation lost a critical moral perception; they ignored the fact that moral legislation which allowed killing the antisocial, homicidal individuals ought not apply to people targeted by moral loathing and racial hatred. Without the earlier propaganda efforts to demonize all the Jews, Poles, Russians and Serbs in German eyes, Hitler would not have committed his crimes.

In every human – and every German who believed in Hitler and obeyed his commands was certainly

human – is deeply embedded the God's command 'you shall not kill'. so, how could such people, without even some crumbs of moral justification, remain witness to the crimes on a scale unprecedented in the entire world's history? A hundred years of Prussian upbringing (as Judge Finestein has also said) changed Germans into an uncritical nation, still in love with their human values, yet increasingly indifferent to those of other nations. When German ambitions to rule the world were confronted, Prussian indifference changed into universal hatred. As there were no moral laws to justify German world domination, the German nation's Prussian schoolmasters found a substitute, which the uncritical nation accepted without protestation. The schoolmasters introduced a universal law of unrestricted killing, which they fused in the German soul with anti-Semitism. With mounting disgust, the German human kept turning away from the Jewish human, hoisting from the depths of his soul and abhorrence of one being of another. And then – in the belief that he can measure both his own virtue and his own superiority by the extent of the revulsion – he directed the moral hatred of other nations and races towards those not created in the likeness of the German human being.

Why did Prussian self-centred nationalism spreading among the Germans the right of killing the non-Germans, select the Jews rather than other Europeans as the object of their repugnance? Was it only because Jews were

² Omanczyk's own words

different in appearance, intelligence, initiative, enterprise, so that even the dimmest of Germans could with revulsion point out his finger at another human being: "oh, Jew!" No, not only for this reason were the Jews selected, but also because they were the weakest and the most tragic of all the world's nations.

Amongst the most primitive people, there existed a law to kill the weak such as cripples; the elderly and the sick. The law, present in nature, explains elimination of the weak as enabling the strong to prosper. It slumbers inside human souls since prehistoric days in spite of the world-wide spread of Christ's revelations. The fight against Christians in Germany went hand-in-hand with anti-Semitism and the first fracture in the Germans' understanding of Christianity was the law allowing doctors to kill the incurable. Anti-Semitism was a rehearsal for the law for killing incurable peoples and incurable weak nations.

The weakness of the Jewish nation stems largely from its long tragic history of having been deprived of its own state. It is an unusual nation, which for two thousand years enjoyed bitter-sweet hospitality of other nations yearning for its own home, a home which it was incapable of, through fatal destiny, unable to establish. This was a nation, which in exile, through the efforts of individuals knew how to influence the politics of their two-faced, ostensibly hospitable hosts, or even of the world. Yet, all their attempts – scattered as these people were like their nation – failed for a long time to recreate the state of Israel.

The buildings they erected were falling into ruin before reaching the roof. Most of their hardships of mind and body enriched other nations and other states, but until 1948 the Israel state had remained a Promised Land, the stuff of mystics' and realists' imagination, the stuff of unfathomed future.

Those periods of Jewish nation's important cultural and political influence in various countries had always a transitory character; they were not focused on any one area, like creating their own state. Ultimately, the achievements of Disraeli were passed on to the British nation, Heine's poems became property of the German nation and Tuwim's poetry remained confined to the Polish language. All there remained for the Jewish nation was bitter pride, like the feeling of a Pole who, crossing a wooden bridge, consoles himself with the thought that in America Rolf Modrzejewski was the first to build the suspended iron bridges. And how long ago it was! In the meantime, there was weakness, and in a weak human world each weakness is frustrating, though it may raise compassion.

Since prehistoric times, even if it does not kill the weak, the world maintains their abhorrence. People don't like abnormality; moreover, they don't like people that are unhappy or those afflicted by ill fate. One can take pity once, one can sympathise when misfortune strikes, but it leads in primitive minds to the fear of catching the misfortune from the unfortunate. This, at the end, creates an aversion of one who lives a normal life to the one afflicted by such fate. When absorbed by a national

society, aversion becomes the mildest form of anti-Semitism, anti-Polonism or anti-Armenianism. We know that such sentiment, apparently normal and understood, when stirred up by some fanatical idea easily mutates into moral aversion, into homicidal hatred. And here dwells the tragedy of every human phobia of the 20th century.

The monstrous events in Kielce in July 1946, the murder of forty Jews, survivors of the Nazi pogroms, remain a shattering evidence of how aversion uncontrolled by Christian morality that had gone astray in the war years makes it easy to believe a most outrageous lie, followed by floods of homicidal hatred. Was this due to the power of blindness? No, it was due to the power of demonising a society. In the dark years of the 20th century, belief in humans created in God's image was burnt to the ground within millions of souls. Witnessing crimes beyond any bounds of imagination, the mind's eye adjusted itself rapidly to perceive others as if behind most repulsive animal masks, especially when another jolt, internal or external, true or false, magnified the aversion of one person to another. The sheer number of crimes strengthened the conviction that every moral loathing and hatred sufficed. One could go on killing freely for any reason, not only for crimes and treachery, but for a different nationality, different faith, different political persuasion and different social outlook, for words of protest and for words of praise. In fact, for anything that

could rouse hatred within a soul undeterred by moral restraint: delightful hatred, comparable to God's wrath.

This is the bottom line: humans dehumanised.

The greatest Polish tragedy lies in the endurance of stirring hatred. It will continue for as long as – even in one mind – rots the belief that it is not the verdicts of legal courts but the superhumanly presumed interests of a nation, or a state, or a clique, or the triumph of such and such idea can justify the mob action. This often assumes the mantle of self-defence. But, one must not defend one crime by another crime; this would be the worse suicide, suicide of a human soul.

Searching for moral authority that could juggle a dim-witted conscience, I could only find one – the Church. For most part, Poles are a nation of believers. In response to the nightmares of war, doubts about the purpose of this world destroyed the faith in God and, in turn, faith in human beings. Without rebirth of Christian values, we won't cope with the power of demonizing humanity. Logical slogans, even of scathing condemnation, calling each crime a crime, will reach the minds but not the souls.

And here we must sound the S.O.S. call: The Kielce legal proceedings have revealed dim-witted souls that had lost touch with moral authority of any kind. Even a militiaman, a guardian of the Republic's rights derided and trampled over the interests of the Polish state. Swept by the same deceitful impulse as the crowd, he committed a crime. In this case, less important is

the fact of who did the goading, in whose interest and in what idea's name it was all done. What is important is that criminal words reached human souls and caused the killings of people by people. If the mood of several hours or even several minutes was sufficient for committing the crime, neither the words of censure nor the verdicts of the Courts of the Republic can suffice. One has to search deeper.

Do you remember this fragment of a prewar jibe by K.I. Galczyński?

'Here goes the fascist, kill the fascist!
Bang! Bang!
Here goes the communist, kill him too!
Crack! Crack!

Truly! Sacred Mother!
For You, killing spiders
Is all the same!

This is the harsh reality, in which killing people or spiders are all the same; it goes on, because each crime finds – if not a clear approval – then the group's explicit indifference. If a political friend is murdered, indignation and anger are genuine, because the loss touches the calculating mind; it startles the stunned conscience. But, when a political enemy is murdered, words of condemnation sound insincere, as the calculating mind sees no loss. And, where evaluation by individuals or groups of individuals of a man's worth, of his life and death, determine the usefulness or uselessness of others, there will lurk the endorsement and praise of crime. In this wonderful 20th century we have often seen how murderers have been awarded crosses of merit and

how, on the killers' graves strangers laid wreaths under the aegis of killer's ideals..."

This is the end of the extract.

Osmonczyk knew nothing about Jedwabne, but his words could have explained much of it. A critic might question his conjecture that statelessness of the Jews contributed to their weakness, hence to the universal hostility they have suffered: their independent state should have put an end to it. If he believed it, he was mistaken. Something went wrong again! Sixty years after the establishment of the Jewish national home, we witness anti-Semitism almost everywhere. But it has mutated. The so-called liberal, for whom racial discrimination is an anathema, deliberately confuses Jews with Zionists whom he can legitimately hate. The right-wing anti-Semitism, which still flourishes and prospers needs no such subterfuge.

I hope that after reading Osmonczyk's article, you, the readers will gain a deeper and wider understanding of what went wrong for us, although, like Judge Finstein, he is unable to give the answer to our simple "Why" question. In the meantime, his words, the words of a Christian Pole might move you and inspire you, just as they moved and inspired me.

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Germany and the Jews – 1830 – 1930: What went Wrong?

by Israel Finestein

This article is a summary of the author's lecture under this title given to a meeting at the St John's Wood Synagogue Hall under the joint auspices of the '45 Aid Society and the Cultural Committee of that congregation on 6th November 2007, Professor David Cesarani presiding.

This address did not relate to the history of anti-Semitism. It was concerned with the particular question of how one is to account for the collapse of a sophisticated society in the heart of 20th century Europe towards the mad frenzy of the Holocaust.

One could refer to the trauma of heavy human losses and the humiliating military defeat in war, followed by a provocative peace treaty; heavy reparations, which could only be paid with the aid of highly burdensome foreign loans; and the occupation by the French of the Ruhr, the heartland of German industry. Such a combination of experiences on the part of a proud people might well drive them to adopt extreme decisions in politics, even to forms of fanaticism, including xenophobia of a particularly sharp kind, yet there were many sober politicians in Germany who sought to face this history in practical and constructive ways, among them being the able Jewish and deeply patriotic Foreign Minister, Walther von Rathenau. It was not to them that power went; ultimate power was taken by a group whose political philosophy, if one may so call it, rested

Israel Finestein was a distinguished judge and wrote many books on the history of the Jews in the United Kingdom. He was President of the Board of Deputies and Chairman of important multifarious committees, too many to mention here. He is a Vice-President of our Society and much beloved by our members.

pre-eminently upon the most outlandish and unscientific theories of race, including the conviction that among the various races of mankind, the Jews as a people are congenitally criminal, avaricious, and in search of world power for themselves, using to that end whatever means may come to hand, including both Capitalism and Communism, which were defined as "Jewish inventions".

The Times published, on the announcement of Hitler's death, the speech by his designated successor - designated, that is, by the outgoing dictator shortly before his suicide - namely, Admiral Doenitz. Doenitz, in praise of Hitler, emphasised that, until his death, Hitler sought to defend the German people against his bitterest foes. Doenitz cited Bolshevism as being, in Hitler's view, his main opponent and principal target. While The Times report makes no reference to Hitler denouncing the Jews in those closing days, we know from other sources that he was still engaged in his ranting against them until

the very end. Bolshevism he regarded as their prime Jewish instrument for the conquest of Europe.

Such crude declamations of Hitler would not in themselves necessarily have aroused the wide enmity against the Jews which in fact followed in his lifetime. The reason for their immense influence was that Hitler was an undoubted master of the most powerful personal demagoguery of his time. He was assisted in that connection by Goebbels' cunning control of the media. The result was that while other parties struggled with one another for the ear of the ageing President Hindenburg, Hitler and his henchmen lost no opportunity of inciting the German masses against the Jews, who had long been quasi-outsiders in European society, whatever attempts many of them made for integration. A millennium and more of religious indoctrination, including charges of deicide and regular ritual murder, conditioned many otherwise balanced religious individuals into not only thinking the worst of the Jews, but of regarding them as meriting the fate of national homelessness, personal rightlessness and persecution. The Lutheran reformation in the 16th century in Germany brought into operation an anti-Catholic denomination, whose founder and leader, Martin Luther, became a virulent anti-Semite when he discovered intense difficulty in his ambition to convert Jews to his brand of Christianity; he had surmised that it might have appealed to

them since it was itself antipathetic to the Roman Catholic Church, which had dominated Europe during the whole of the millennium above mentioned.

Even such outlooks would not in themselves have been enough to account for the catastrophic collapse. A practical question which Hitler may have pondered as he reflected on how to handle the developing situation may have been where he was to find those ready to perform what he sought to achieve, not only the ousting of Jews from public office, from their livelihoods, and from their homes, and stirring up against them every kind of obloquy, but physically to exterminate them; his declared aim was to destroy European Jewry. In his terms, this was to be the penal consequence of their allegedly engineering the war against Germany. It was, in his perspective, the triumph of a "master race" over an inferior and worthless sub-branch of the human family.

When those confident and intelligent German military and civil officers held their famous meeting at Wansee at the height of the war, their object, representing a multiplicity of departments in German public life, was to co-ordinate arrangements for the movements of live Jewish human cargo from the whole of the continent eastwards to their doom in circumstances of the utmost brutality. Did any of them pause to think that they were engaged in a barbarous action that would have put to shame had they known of it – or imagined it – many esteemed philosophers and religious leaders in German history.

Even the most rabid of anti-Semites might have stopped short of the idea of

annihilating an entire people. The attempt was made by individuals in supposed service of the State. They and others were essential instruments of the State in the project. There were a number of political and economic factors that would have sharpened the hostility to the Jews, if only because they were so regularly pointed out in "high authority" as being Jewishly-created. There was the collapse in the value of the currency; hyper-inflation became the order of the day. The workers felt betrayed, the middle classes felt crushed. Violence and riots were endemic. Private armies would roam the streets. Many people looked round for a rock upon which to rely as giving haven for the future in such a deranged world. What was overlooked was that the resort to which so many turned, was part of and a prime source of the derangement. Prominent Germans of aristocratic lineage were ready to support Hitler's cause, no doubt in order, as they might have believed, to stem the tide of Communism. Hindenberg was advised by such personalities that Hitler would prove to be a safe appointment. The President obliged by being prepared to nominate him as Chancellor. Hitler went to the polls to secure a vote of confidence from the people. He was given an almost unanimous mandate.

It may safely be said that in many societies – perhaps in all societies – there are tragically to be found men and women, ready to obey orders whatever they may be and thereby salvage their conscience in the performance of the most outrageous deeds. Many of

such people may tragically be mentally unbalanced and suffer from an affliction whereby they are able to perform the cruellest deeds without paying the slightest attention to the pain or the suffering caused thereby. Some people may be ready to obey orders, whatever they might be, on the grounds of loyalty to the State. Such loyalty or misplaced loyalty in fear of the consequences of disobedience may all-too-easily in certain situations over-ride and ultimately nullify "antiquated" considerations of conscience and mercy. One of the "accusations" by the Nazis against the Jews was that Judaism and the Judeo-Christian tradition had introduced such "weakening" notions into western civilisation. Such ideas were deemed un-German and unmanly.

Let us consider Prussia in the early 19th century. The Hohenzollern dynasty had introduced forms of civil emancipation for the Jews in the 18th century. In 1812, Frederick William the Third issued a wide edict of Jewish emancipation. Jews remained excluded from the highest civil and military offices. There was, in the early decades of the 19th century, a veritable seeming liberal blossoming. The University of Berlin was founded in 1809. Professing Jews were admitted thereto from its inception. Jews were not admitted to the University of Oxford until the mid-1850s. Jews were not permitted, by law, in England to serve on municipal councils until 1845. There were some rare exceptional cases where individual Jews were so allowed without taking the required Christological oath.

What was introduced by law in 1845 in England, had been introduced by Hohenzollern decree in Prussia long before that date.

The traditionally and regimented militaristic state of Prussia had always reposed immense confidence in the Prussian armed forces. In the great battle of Jena in 1806, the forces of Napoleon defeated the Prussian army. The outcome came as a shock to all and taught a lesson to some. Eminent ministers of the Crown in Prussia detected as part of the secret of Napoleon's phenomenal successes in politics and war to be connected with his decision that all citizens should be given the right to serve the State. Meritocracy became the slogan in Berlin.

It was not until 1833 that Jewish schools in England received State aid. Well before then, in Prussia, the Government had extended its financial support to Jewish schools. The use of such public subventions was not confined to secular studies, but included Jewish studies also. One of those "liberal" ministers, Count von Hardenberg, was known to relate as an important principle of state policy the two conceptions of "public rights" and "public duties". He was ardently supported by Count von Stein along the same lines. Included in the curriculum of the schools there was the well-known German educational conception of what was called *Bildung*. That term represented a form of education which was intended to enhance pride in citizenship, good neighbourliness, a wide outlook on the world, and a breakdown of excessive inwardlookedness. It was thought, by the Jewish

educational authorities of the time, as well as by government officials, that such a form of education would end the "narrowness" and broaden the limited nature of Jewish involvement in social intercourse which was seen as part and parcel of the advancement of Jewish emancipation. The Jews of Germany certainly responded to the policies of the Prussian government in the great "battle of the nations", as it is called, in 1813, outside Leipzig, in which Napoleon suffered a heavy and crucial defeat. Prussia played its vital role and in the Prussian armed forces there were many Jewish volunteers in defence of the rights of the Prussian state. The example of Prussia was followed in other German states and the principles thereof were embodied in the constitution of the Federation of German states, which Bismarck founded in the 1860s and later in the German Empire established in the wake of the German victory in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1.

It has to be said that the "liberal" ministers had occasionally to dissent from some of the suggestions on the Jewish issue made by colleagues - sometimes even by the Crown - which seemed to them to amount to a departure from the "liberal" policies which they were advocating. They were acutely aware of the longstanding anti-Jewish prejudice that was to be found in Prussia and elsewhere, and they did what they could to guard against the intrusion of any such malaise into the formulation of policy.

Returning to the question with which I started, what were the factors that led

to the terrible descent which culminated, in the 20th century, in the Holocaust? At the famous "Parliament" of Frankfurt in 1848 which was a revolutionary assembly representing a variety of groups of people who wanted to better their status in the world, or in their immediate society, the plea of the principal Jewish spokesman, Gabriel Reisser, was that the Jews of Germany be regarded as Germans. He said if it is denied that Germany is their fatherland, then "we are a people without a country". The implication was clear. The Jews were in Germany on sufferance. That is to say, by way of being tolerated, not as of right.

There was, at that time, no such State as Germany. There were German states and Volk. When, in East Prussia, there was the public burning of books, despite the displeasure of the Hohenzollern dynasty, the books that were burnt included a whole variety of foreign European literature - not just Jewish books. What was spared was German literature. The burning was not a religious exercise, it was not, in itself, an anti-Jewish action. It was a demonstration by the German Volk, as represented by the East Prussian segment, that what was foreign, what was not German, should be kept out of the German cultural scene. When Hitler and the Nazis talked of the German Volk, they, by definition, excluded Jews.

This meant that if an action could be described with some reasonableness as a popular movement, an expression of the Volk, that could, if the highest authorities so willed, be its own justification.

The worst example – or the best example – is that of Kristallnacht in 1938. Goebbels presented Kristallnacht as a popular outbreak countrywide, a spontaneous act of the Volk. The police took no part in limiting the outrages. The fire service were content to prevent the blazes spreading to non-Jewish premises. It meant that those that could argue that they were expressing the spirit of Germany in the sense of race, were, in a way, free from the normal law enforcement agencies. The Volk was supreme, even against what might be called the customary agencies in defence of law and order.

One may place at the centre of the sought-after explanation, the impact of the notion of the Volk. It was a basic tenet of Nazidom. Its adherents ceaselessly asserted the "imperative need" to protect the Volk from pollution by the Jewish "virus". They were aliens, they contended, who had the ingrained character of a "virus". With a virus, argued one of their widely-read publicists, "one does not argue... one kills it." Ancient Teutonic mythology reinforced for some the popular attraction of the myths of race and the legendary heroism of a master-race. Some, imbued with such ideas, read into Darwinian literature what they preferred to interpret as enclosing the natural value and entitlement of the overlordship of the racially superior people over the racial inferior and to justify this cleansing of such out of the body politic, notably the Jewish "menace".

Martin Hoffman Champion Bridge Player

Andrew Robson

(Bridge correspondent of The Times)

Reprinted from The Times

Martin Hoffman came to England with the Windermere group and subsequently lived in the Stamford Hill Hostel. At the time, we used to call him the American because he used to wear an American uniform. It is very exciting to read in THE TIMES that one of our 'Boys' is so highly rated in the world of Bridge.

Bridge Andrew Robson

Martin Hoffman is one of the world's greatest card players. Now nearly eighty, he must hold the world record for the number of tricks made per minute, as he takes a lot of them in virtually no time.

Here are three facts about Martin, one of the great characters to have graced the game:

- (1) He is a Holocaust survivor.
- (2) He has written more than ten fascinating books on the game.
- (3) He can often be found at the greyhound track, the reason why he has remained at arm's length from affluence.

No one else made Five Clubs on today's featured deal. Yet Martin made it look effortlessly easy (in the three-and-a-half seconds he took to play it).

East won West's ten of hearts lead with the king and switched to a trump (best), West discarding. Winning dummy's queen, Martin and all the other declarers advanced the ten of spades.

The other declarers ran the ten of spades, playing low from hand. They then finessed the jack, cashed the ace, and ruffed a fourth spade. Stuck in dummy with the queen of hearts still to ruff, they led a diamond. East won cheaply and led a trump. They won dummy's king (winning in hand and ruffing a heart with dummy's king would promote a trump trick for East), then ruffed a diamond, and ruffed the queen of hearts. But, with no way back to hand without reducing their trumps, they had to concede down one.

Enter Martin. He did not play low on dummy's ten of spades at

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: North-South

Teams		N		E	
♠ 105	♥ J	♠ K864	♥ AK	♦ AQ10	♣ 10987
♦ KJ9732	♣ KQ32	♠ AQJ97	♥ Q3	♦ 5	♣ AJ654
♠ 32	♥ 109876542	♦ 864	♣ -		

S	W	N	E
1♠ (1)	3♥ (2)	4♣	4♥
4♣ (3)	Pass	5♣	Db(4)
End			

(1) Many modern players would open One Spade (except Zia, who still likes to open One Club with five-five in the blacks).

(2) Points Schmoints.

(3) Now you see the merit of opening One Club - it is easier to introduce your second suit. Open One Spade and there is a very real risk that West's skimpy preempt will prevent N-S from finding their club fit.

(3) Dubious, as most of his points are in South's shortages.

Contract: 5♣ Dbled, Opening Lead: ♥ 10

Trick Three, instead overtaking it with the jack (key play). Crucially in hand, he ruffed the queen of hearts, then finessed the queen of spades; he cashed the ace, ruffed a fourth spade, cashed the king of trumps, led a diamond, ruffed the red-suit return, drew East's trumps, and cashed his fifth spade. 11 tricks and doubled game made.

Notice, by the way, that West would make Five Hearts (by finessing the ten, then queen of diamonds), unless the defence lead three rounds of spades, North (over)ruffing with the queen.

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Claims Conference Update

Claims Conference Negotiations Obtain \$360 Million in Programs

The Claims Conference negotiating delegation meets regularly with representatives of the German Ministry of Finance and other German government officials to press a number of issues of concern to Jewish victims of Nazism.

In its 2008 annual negotiations with the German government, the Claims Conference obtained an additional estimated \$360 million for programs for Holocaust survivors over the next decade. The additional funds are a combination of increased payments, inclusion of additional survivors in the programs, and finding for homecare needs of Jewish victims of Nazism.

Full eligibility criteria for all Claims Conference compensation programs are available on our website, www.claimscon.org, or by contacting the Claims Conference office in Germany at +49-69-970-7080 or info@claims-frankfurt.de.

Increase in Payments

As of June 1, 2008, monthly payments from the Article 2 Fund and the Central and Eastern European Fund (CEEF) to 65,800 survivors worldwide were raised 8 percent. Payment under the Article 2 Fund increased to €291 per month (from €270). Payments under the CEEF were raised to €216 per month from €200 to survivors residing in European Union countries. Monthly CEEF payments to survivors residing in non-EU countries are €178, up from €165. These increases will result in an extra estimated

\$166 million being paid over the next decade. At the time of the agreement, more than 52,000 survivors were receiving Article 2 Fund payments and more than 13,800 survivors were receiving CEEF payments.

Western Persecutees

As well, the Claims Conference secured an agreement that certain Western Persecutees (Holocaust survivors who were (i) citizens of Western European countries at the time of their persecution and (ii) received a payment from one of many compensation agreements that Germany reached with respective European countries), may now for the first time be eligible for a pension from the Claims Conference Article 2 Fund if they were in concentration camps or ghettos OR if they received payment(s) from certain German sources based on loss of a family member. It is anticipated that these amendments will enable approximately 2,000 additional Holocaust survivors to receive a pension from the Article 2 Fund and will amount to the payment of approximately \$83 million during the next 10 years.

Despite recent successes in liberalizing certain criteria, open issues remain, and the Claims Conference continues to fight for inclusion in the Article 2 Fund of Holocaust survivors who:

- Were in forced military labor battalions and in concentration camps not currently recognized as such by Germany;
- Were subjected to

persecution for periods of time less than currently stipulated;

- Were confined in open ghettos;
- Have income in excess of the current income ceiling (for the Article 2 Fund);
- Were certain citizens of Western European countries and lived in hiding or under false identity and received small payments as part of their countries' Global Agreements with West Germany.

Open Issues

In addition, the Claims Conference is pressing the issue of applicants to the Hardship Fund who had not been able to meet eligibility criteria at the time of application and wish to re-open their application, and the establishment of a Hardship Fund for residents of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union who did not emigrate to the West and are therefore not eligible for payments from the Hardship Fund. Further, the Claims Conference is pressing the issue of child survivors.

In-Home Services

During the 2008 negotiations, the Claims Conference obtained funding for vital social services for Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. The German government agreed to provide a total amount of approximately \$70 million (€45 million) for these services for 2008 and 2009. This amount is more than double the combined amount for 2006 and 2007. This brings the total amount

obtained since 2004 from the German government to €81 million for the homecare needs of Jewish victims of Nazism.

With the health needs of aging Holocaust survivors becoming increasingly urgent, the Claims Conference has been pressing Germany to provide funds so survivors may receive the assistance they need to remain in their own homes, a matter of great importance to many.

The funds will be allocated by the Claims Conference to agencies assisting needy Jewish victims of Nazism around the world. In the UK, funds are allocated to the Association of Jewish Refugees.

Ghetto Pensions and Ghetto Fund

Following intensive negotiations with the Claims Conference, in September 2007 the German government announced the establishment of a new fund to pay symbolic compensation for voluntary work in Holocaust-era ghettos. The fund issues one-time payments of €2,000 to Holocaust survivors who performed voluntary work in ghettos subject to criteria of the German government. The German government has set aside €100 million for payments under this program.

In an attempt to ensure that as many eligible Holocaust survivors as possible receive the payment, the Claims Conference issued a step-by-step guide to the application form. At its 2008 negotiations, the Claims Conference delegation pressed the issues of the eased criteria and expedited implementation of the Fund. Out of approximately

38,000 applications received by September 2008, approximately 9,700 have been approved.

The Claims Conference will also continue to make all possible efforts to secure a more liberal application of the existing Social Security Ghetto Pension law following recent German court decisions in favor of applicants. German government Social Security pensions have been available since 1997 to Holocaust survivors who were employed for some form of wages during their internment in Nazi ghettos annexed to the Third Reich. The law, formally known by its German acronym of ZRBG, was further expanded in 2002.

Notwithstanding the establishment of the new fund, Holocaust survivors will continue to be able to pursue individual claims under the Ghetto Pension law and the existing rights of survivors remain unaffected.

Although the Claims Conference is not involved in the administration of this so-called "Ghetto Pension," it assists survivors in understanding the program and its complex regulations. In addition, the Claims Conference closely monitors the implementation of the ZRBG by Germany's Social Security network, and is at the forefront of efforts to improve this program.

The Claims Conference has met with Germany's Ministry of Health and Social Security several times to express concerns about implementation of the legislation. The exchanges have yielded some limited positive results but major issues remain with the terms and implementation of this program.

Leningrad Siege Victims

In an historic breakthrough, the Claims Conference negotiated one-time payments from Germany for certain Jewish victims of the Nazi siege of Leningrad. Certain Jewish persons who stayed in Leningrad at some time between September 1941 and January 1944 or fled from there during this period may receive a one-time Hardship Fund payment, if they meet the other requirements of the Hardship Fund. The program issues a one-time payment of €2,556.

It is expected that payments will be issued to several thousand Jewish victims of Nazism from the former Soviet Union now living in the West. It is the first time that the persecution of Jews who lived through the 900-day siege of Leningrad has been recognized by Germany.

All applications from persons who were in Leningrad at any time between September 1941 and January 1944 will be processed as new applications and eligibility will be based upon meeting the Hardship Fund criteria upon the later of June 4, 2008 or the date of receipt of the application.

Budapest Fund

In its 2008 negotiations, the Claims Conference obtained one-time payments from Germany for certain survivors of the Nazi occupation of Budapest. The Claims Conference Budapest Fund is making a one-time payment of €1,900 to certain Nazi victims who were persecuted as a Jew in Budapest at any time during the period from March 1944 to January

1945, and who currently reside in any of the former communist-bloc countries of Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union.

Payments totaling approximately €10.9 million have been made to 5,755 Jewish survivors of the Nazi occupation of Budapest. These payments were made in the first 90 days after the program was announced in August 2008, and represent 98 percent of applicants to date to the program.

The Claims Conference continues to discuss with the German government the issue of obtaining pension payments for these survivors.

After the Nazis occupied Hungary in 1944, Budapest's Jews were ordered into "yellow star houses," with each family allotted one room. Residents could leave for only three hours a day, and food rations for Jews were reduced to starvation levels. Many Jews died from lack of medical treatment and hunger.

During the summer of 1944, preparations continued to deport Budapest's Jews to Auschwitz, with nearly 440,000 Jews from the rest of the country having been deported and killed between May and July. Although these deportations were halted by the Hungarian government, the Jews of Budapest lived in fear of them.

When the Arrow Cross Party came to power in October 1944, organized gangs began to abduct and murder Budapest's Jews. Jews were also drafted for brutal forced labor, with a group of 50,000 to 70,000 sent on a march to Austria that killed thousands of them. The remaining Jews in Budapest were ordered into a closed ghetto, and as many as

20,000 were shot by the Arrow Cross.

Soviet forces liberated Budapest on January 18, 1945. More than 100,000 Jews remained in the city at liberation.

Allocations Increase to Expand Assistance to Nazi Victims

The Claims Conference is increasing the amount of funds it allocates to agencies and institutions around the world that provide social welfare services to Jewish victims of Nazism.

Total allocations by the Claims Conference will increase to \$193 million in 2009 from \$170 million in 2008, expanding services for Nazi victims in more than 40 countries. Allocations are primarily from the funds of the Successor Organization (recovery of unclaimed Jewish property in the former East Germany), with other funds coming from various sources of Holocaust-related compensation.

In the United Kingdom, approximately \$2 million was allocated to the "Umbrella Group" consisting of the '45 Aid Society Holocaust survivors, Jewish Care, AJR, Aguda Community Services and Jewish Refugee Committee for homecare, social work teams, meals on wheels, emergency assistance, and other services to Nazi victims.

In addition to allocations from the Successor Organization, the Claims Conference allocates funds for social welfare services from the German government, the Swiss Banks Settlement, the Hungarian Gold Train Settlement, and the Austrian government.

U.S. Congress Calls for Eastern European Property Restitution

In an attempt to make progress on Eastern European property restitution during the final days of the remaining Holocaust survivors, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution in September 2008 calling on countries in Eastern and Central Europe to immediately enact "fair, comprehensive, and just" legislation for the return of or compensation for individual and communal properties seized or lost during the Nazi era.

The Claims Conference has been working closely with members of Congress on these resolutions on a bipartisan basis. It views the resolution as an important message to those countries that have not fully addressed the issue of Holocaust-era property restitution, such as Poland and Lithuania, which were singled out in the resolution.

The United States government has been crucial to the process of Holocaust-era restitution and compensation. With Eastern European property restitution one of the major unresolved issues, the Claims Conference welcomes this strong support from Congress and hopes that it will help prompt these governments to help restore assets to rightful owners and heirs.

The Claims Conference and World Jewish Restitution Organization have been active in the area of Eastern European property restitution, pressing governments to enact legislation and monitoring existing laws and compensation programs. Many of the laws that have been passed are not thorough

enough or present significant obstacles to claimants living elsewhere.

**Ambassador
Stuart Eizenstat to Serve
as Claims Conference
Special Negotiator**

The Claims Conference is pleased to announce that Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat has agreed to serve on a pro bono basis as Special Negotiator of the Claims Conference. In this role he will be responsible for external negotiations of the Claims Conference.

Mr. Eizenstat, a former U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary, served as Special Representative of the President and the Secretary

of State for Holocaust Issues during the administration of President Clinton. In that capacity he negotiated agreements with the governments and industry of numerous European countries that have resulted in some \$8 billion in recoveries for victims of Nazism and their families, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

The involvement of Mr. Eizenstat as the representative of the U.S. government was pivotal to attaining the Swiss Banks Settlement; establishing the German Foundation to pay slave and forced labor claims; creating a forum for claims for unpaid life insurance policies of

Holocaust victims; and compelling Austria to face its role in the Shoah. He acted as an invaluable intermediary among European governments and industry, Jewish organizations, and attorneys representing Holocaust survivors.

At the request of President Clinton, Mr. Eizenstat also directed the investigation that resulted in 1997 and 1998 U.S. government reports detailing for the first time how Nazi Germany looted some \$4 billion in gold from the central banks of the countries it overran, and exchanged them for Swiss francs through the Swiss Central Bank.

Worldwide Shoah Memoirs Collection

In mid-April the claims Conference launched the Worldwide Shoah Memoirs Collection, an international collection in electronic form of previously unpublished or unavailable memoirs written by Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Oversight of this initiative rests with the Memoirs Committee of the Board of Directors.

Elie Wiesel is Honorary Chairman of the Worldwide Shoah Memoirs Collection, and Saul Friedlander, Roman Kent, Aron Krell, and Julius Breman participated in the launch. Yad Vashem, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Jewish Historical Institute, the Memorial de la Shoah, and the Holocaust Survivors Memoirs Project are partner organisations. In addition, over 120 organisations around the world have joined so far as associated organisations assisting with the project.

Over 325 manuscripts have been submitted thus far, mostly from Israel and the United States.

For the moment, the main concern is that all previously unpublished or unavailable memoirs be identified and preserved, but we are reviewing ways to make the memoirs publicly accessible. The manuscripts are being placed on a passworded website so that very soon they can be made available

to appropriate organisations engaged in research and documentation of the Shoah. In addition, each individual author will be able to access his or her own manuscript. Eventually, after historical vetting and review, manuscripts may be made available more publicly.

The idea is not to compete with regular publication of manuscripts, and authors are able to withdraw their manuscripts at any time and/or to publish them wherever and however they wish. But there are many manuscripts that for one reason or another are not likely to be regularly published.

The idea is also not to establish another archive, though obviously it helps identify and preserve for scholarship those manuscripts that are in private hands.

Rather, it should be noted, this whole enterprise is intended as a service to survivors and their families.

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At the reunion in Israel

SPEECH MADE BY SHLOMO RAZ, THE SON OF MOSHE AND STEFA ROSENBERG

Good evening.

I am Shlomo Raz, the son of Moshe and Stefa Rosenberg.

It was about three and a half (3½) years ago, in the freezing cold of January. The then President of the State of Israel had just finished his address in the ceremony commemorating 60 years since the liberation of the Death Camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. All of a sudden, a lady from among the audience stood up and started to run to the ramp, where all the transports arrived. All those present stood still. The lady ascended onto the ramp where all the dignitaries were seated, among them the President of the State of Israel, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and others; she grabbed the microphone, and called out loudly in Polish towards the grey sky above the death camp:

"Lachego (why), why did you burn my people?" Here" she continued to cry out, "here they burned all my family, here they robbed my name, and replaced it with a number tattooed onto my arm". She raised her arm showing the number tattooed on it. "It will never happen again" she cried out.

The lady who shocked everybody there, whose name is Miryam Yahav, and now lives in Beer Sheva and has a family, children and grand-children, arrived as a young girl at the Death

Camp Auschwitz-Birkenau from Ghetto Bialystok. Her question "Why did you burn my people, why did you burn my family?" still resonates very loudly, and doesn't let go.

Her unanswerable question resonated even more loudly last week when we marked Yom Hasoah here in Israel.

It resonated in a small elementary school just outside Jerusalem where my kids study, Ori, almost 10, whose second name is Rivka – Rebecca, after my father's mother, and Adar, 7½ whose second name is Dov, after my father's brother.

My father, Moshe Rosenberg, came to the school to talk to the kids, maybe for the first time, about himself as a youth growing-up in the Shoah. The kids, 3rd grade to 7th grade, asked time and again, such naive questions, that it was hard to even hear them.

Miriam Yahav's question, which was shouted on the ramp in Auschwitz-Birkenau, "why did they do it to us"? was brought up again and again by the children's questions and remarks.

After the meeting, the headmaster of the school e-mailed that the meeting was very unique and very moving. For me it was especially touching, to watch my father and my son sitting very close to each other and holding hands during the ceremony. My father told the young students, among other things, how he managed to escape from the Germans a couple of times, and to survive.

My son Adar was very proud of his brave grandfather who managed to hit the Germans, (that's how he understood it) and to escape from them.

I suppose that when he grows up he will understand that the bravery and the



The guest of honour Reuma Weizman

courage in those horrible days were much more complicated. The real struggle just to survive is the essence of the bravery. The ability to go on living in "the other planet", as Katsetnick defined it, was heroism.

For the last year one of the main subjects on the public agenda here in Israel, is the economic situation of the Holocaust survivors. (Many of them, by the way, are new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, who for many reasons are facing poverty).

The Knesset, The Israeli Parliament, recently decided to form an inquiry committee to explore the physical and economic situation of the Holocaust survivors. The Chairwoman of the committee is Justice Daliah Dorner, a former Israeli Supreme Court judge. Justice Dorner was one of the

judges who sentenced Ivan Demjanyuk to death. The Israeli Supreme Court later changed the verdict because of legal doubts.

Anyway, Justice Dorner has recently called not to portray the Holocaust survivors as miserable people. By doing so, she said, you are doing them injustice, these are brave people who came out of the ashes and arrived here 60 years ago and literally built new lives and a new state.

In recent years, the awareness of the vital role of the Holocaust survivors in building the State of Israel has increased. For example, not far from "Beit-Shemesh" there is a monument, perhaps the saddest one that I have ever seen. It is dedicated to Holocaust survivors; the only ones remaining from their families who, in 1948, during the

War of Independence disembarked the ships and were immediately recruited to the young IDF often on the same day, many of them didn't even know the language – Hebrew. They were sent to the battlefields and were killed, without leaving behind them any living survivors. The monument is dedicated to them

Sometimes their comrades in the military units didn't even know their names. This monument is a painful example of the unique contribution of the Holocaust survivors to the very existence of the Jewish State.

On behalf of the second and the third generation in our family, and I'm sure that on behalf of the second and the third generation in general, we are honoured to be here with you tonight.

'The Boys'

Nina Hecht

Nina is the daughter of Jack and Maureen Hecht.

I have been blessed to know 'The Boys' all of my life, my father Jack Hecht being one of them. I say blessed because they are the most positive, inspiring people I know. I was fortunate enough to spend the '45 Aid's 60th anniversary three years ago and Israel's 60th anniversary this year in Israel with them, as well as many simchas over the years.

All simchas are wonderful occasions but to see so many of 'The Boys' and their families in Israel, for Israel's birthday was something very special. The speeches by Ben and others were as heartfelt and moving as ever and to see a group of people who have

known each other for 63 years together at such an historic time in our history is unique. Spending time with them at the hotel, hearing stories about their lives, before, during and after the Shoah is always so interesting and moving for me.

I have often been asked 'when did your father tell you about what happened to him and his family in the Holocaust'. I reply that it was something I always knew. I grew up with 'The Boys' and their families and knew why

there were many relatives missing from our lives and why some families had no living relatives at all. I was fortunate in that my mother's parents were alive until I was 6 so I at least had the luxury of having grandparents for a while. From visiting my family in Israel where I now live, I knew when they had moved to Palestine (1935), except for one aunt who moved here after the war. I knew that I was named after my Safta Hannah, as were two other of my cousins, and that my Saba was a wealthy farmer and landowner.

I saw photos of my father's family and would stare at the photos, which I still do when I try and imagine their lives

before the Shoah. I look at how I resemble them and how my brother and his two sons resemble them also. I relish stories of how my father and his family lived in Romania.

I went to Auschwitz three years ago. The cold, the size of the camp, the proximity to Polish villages was so shocking to me. It was as my father had explained it would be but the size was something I couldn't get over. Before I left London on my trip my father and mother made sure I had enough layers of clothing as it was December and also that I

had bought enough food to take with me. When I got back my father made sure I hadn't been cold and had eaten enough. My father and mother's concern for me was so indicative of how loving they and 'The Boys' are. They suffered so much and they want their children and grand-children to have everything they never had and to feel safe. The fact that my father had been in Auschwitz in nothing more than pyjamas, with almost nothing to eat, whilst I had at least four layers of clothing on, boots and plenty of food, was almost surreal. At one

point as it was getting dark I took off my gloves and coats as I wanted to try and feel the cold. It was extremely cold but I was still wearing a few jumpers and in a short time I would be back on a warm bus going back to the airport and a warm home to be with my family.

I would like to thank Ben, Phillip, 'The Boys', 2nd Generation members in the UK and Israel and, of course, my family for bringing so much into my life and I hope that 2nd Generation Israel can equal the level of success that 2nd Generation in the UK has.

Visit to Theresienstadt 27th June 2008

Steven Faull

On 27th June 2008, just three days before my 53rd birthday, I had a very emotional visit with my father, Stanley Faull, to Theresienstadt, the camp from which he had been liberated by the Soviet Red Army on 5th May 1945.

My father had arrived in Theresienstadt shortly before the war ended. Originally from Warsaw, he was only nine when the war broke out in September 1939. He then survived the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, where following the resistance of the fighters he was taken as a prisoner of war to Majdanek concentration camp. From Majdanek he was forced to work as slave labour in the ammunition factory at Skarzysko-Kamienna and was eventually moved to Buchenwald, another notorious camp.

From Buchenwald, he had to endure a gruelling three week journey in unimaginably atrocious

Steven is the eldest son of Diane and Stanley.

conditions in open cattle trucks. It is hard to imagine but my father was still only fifteen years old and by that age had lost virtually all of his close family and 90 of his relatives. His over-riding memory of Theresienstadt was of a complete absence of German guards for the first time and by then everything was descending into chaos.

In 2008 things are very different. On approaching the camp, the initial view is of a massive Star of David dominating a serene, well cared for graveyard. This is located immediately outside the small fortress, which had been used by the Gestapo as their HQ. The principal room was now used by Dr Jan Munk, the Director of Terezin. He welcomed us to his office and it was chilling

to think of its previous historic connotations.

With the help of the Director, we concluded that my father's arrival must have been in the first days of May. From the museum we found several harrowing photographs of similar arrivals but unfortunately (fortunately?) none that my father could identify as himself. Nevertheless, and typical of my Dad's generous nature, he gave the Director a donation for the museum "for his bed and board" some 63 years previously!

We then had a tour of the camp. Theresienstadt is the "germanisation" of the Czech word, Terezin. Terezin had been built as a fort at the end of the 18th century in honour of Empress Maria Theresa. As a fort with a moat, the Germans recognised its potential as a concentration camp. Initially designed as a transit camp for Jews from Western Europe, it was for many poor souls the



Stanley Faull

intermediary step before their final journey to the extermination camps in the East.

Theresienstadt was transformed into a supposed model ghetto between 1941 and 1945. The International Red Cross were readily fooled into believing that the Germans had created a civilised internment camp, complete with a bank, shops, a café and schools – all of which were fake. Unfortunately, the Red Cross duly reported to the international community that the scare stories emanating from the East of German mass exterminations of Jews were not to be believed.

In reality, however, 88,196 people were deported from Theresienstadt to several death camps including Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Sobibor. Indeed, of the 149,037 Jews who reached Theresienstadt, records indicate that nearly 17,000 of the original prisoners in Terezin and about 13,000 survivors from the “death marches” and transports survived. Thankfully, my Dad was one of them.

We visited the Little

Fortress where the political prisoners were held and then the ghetto where the Jewish prisoners were incarcerated. For me, the surprise was the size of the area it encompassed, which was like a small town. Fortunately my father didn't recognise much of the main camp but a small section of the now defunct railway lines outside the main gates had been reserved as a memorial. This did invoke some memories for my father and the photographs taken here are particularly poignant. We finished our tour at the crematorium, where we all said a prayer and gave thanks that it wasn't my Dad's final resting place.

Two other brief anecdotes are worth recounting. First, the Soviet Army passed through the camp but wouldn't stop, saying their first priority was to push on to Prague. However, they advised that the auxiliary back-up administration was following and would look after the prisoners in a couple of days. They duly arrived with the Red Cross, who distributed food parcels. My father received a tin of sardines which almost

finished him off as his constitution couldn't take such a rich oily food high in protein after his meagre diet over the previous five years. Paradoxically, this act of kindness nearly killed him, although, after a period of severe illness, he fully recovered and joined the others to come to England after the war.

Finally, we ended our visit by returning to Prague where we re-created the photograph on the front cover of Martin Gilbert's book “The Boys”, with my father standing in the exact same position in front of the Jan Hus statue in Old Town Square. However, the statue is now protected from the public and surrounded by barricades. In order to stand on the same steps as in 1945, my father now ignored the barriers and we proceeded to take a photograph with him on the steps in the same place as 63 years previously. Unfortunately, on his return, two Czech policemen appeared as if from nowhere – obviously concerned that the barrier had been breached. However, when we showed them the cover of the book and explained the reason, they were more than understanding.

In summary, it was a very emotional trip with my father, (the only survivor of his entire family living in Warsaw at the start of the war), and one that we were both very pleased to have made together. I would certainly commend the experience to other second and third generation if their survivor parent or grandparent is willing to undertake what must undoubtedly be a very painful journey.

How? How could it have happened?

“Some questions cannot be answered/ they become familiar weights unyielding unyielding and cool”..
..Jane Hirshfield.

How? How could it have happened? How could a civilized country be so easily persuaded to participate in such barbaric acts? How could the ludicrous ideas of one man so easily infiltrate the minds of an entire nation? How could six million people simply vanish from the earth, bringing the future down with them? And perhaps the most troubling question of all, how could no one intervene? How could the world simply turn its back on the insanity that was creeping towards them? How could everyone step aside as humanity was ripped apart? In short, how could the Holocaust have occurred?

These questions have been tossed around through the decades that followed the inconceivable events of the Holocaust. They are “familiar weights in the hand,” an extension of the arm that pulls the body down into the dark abyss of mystery. However, no one feels this constant weight more than those who survived.

Most people read about the atrocities of the Holocaust in history books or Eli Wiesel's, **Night**. They hear survivors' stories on Oprah or watch on television as a politician visits Auschwitz. They exclaim in horror at the appalling symphony of actions orchestrated by Hitler. They shake their heads in dismay, feeling disgusted for a few moments. Then, just as swiftly as these

Ariel Sherman – age 16

Ariel is the grand-daughter of Judith and Robert Sherman

feelings arrived, they fly from their host's mind. Unfortunately, this is not a luxury enjoyed by all. My grandmother lived it. It is an ever-present shadow above her head, a heavy weight in her heart. Every day she must cope with all she lost: family, friends, life. And every day she does; she lives; she survives.

The spring of eighth grade coincided with the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Ravensbruck Concentration Camp, the hellhole my grandmother was confined to as a fourteen-year old. Sixty years later she returned with two generations behind her: her three children, and me, her granddaughter. She passively defeated the Nazis simply by living.

Today she views the world differently than most, and after this trip she pulled me behind her eyes. We arrived at the camp on a beautiful spring day, the rays of sunlight kissing our cheeks. It was hard to imagine that any evil was strong enough to overcome the beauty of this setting. However, as soon as we walked through the gates, reality struck with an iron fist. The stark grounds of Ravensbruck sharply contrasted with the lush countryside surrounding it. The camp remains desolate, as if new life is incapable of springing from the site of so much destruction. I imagined myself here sixty years ago,

surrounded by the starving hollow bodies of fellow prisoners. I imagined being forced to watch as death slowly eliminated what little life remained in the camp. I contemplated what horrors must have plagued the living to make them long for death's embrace. Such thoughts are impossible for me to comprehend. However, as we further explore the camp I know these feelings to be true. I see the square where prisoners were forced to stand for hours as role call was taken. I see the tiny corridor where the condemned were lined up and summarily shot. I see the crematoria where the bodies of both the dead and the living were consumed by flames. I look toward the beautiful lake that harbors the ashes of the murdered. A wave of questions cascades into my mind. How could she survive this? How could she survive the beatings, the starvation, and the disease? How could she manage to find even the smallest shred of hope when desperation and hopelessness suffocated everyone around her? How could she continue to fight when even the best outcomes seemed grim? How could she comprehend a future without family, without friends, without a home? How could a fourteen-year old child see when the light of the world seemed extinguished by the brutality of mankind? Such questions remain unanswered even by those who survived. “Some questions cannot be answered.”

Often I attempt to enter my grandmother's mind and interpret her habits. The

bread she always carries in her purse – food for snacking or perhaps food for comfort. The pounds of potatoes she keeps in her kitchen – maybe for dinner, but maybe to ensure an ample supply of provisions. I observe her words closely. She once wrote, “life is from the ground up,” explaining that prisoners with well-fitted, well-built shoes tended to survive longer than those without. I notice the shoes she wears – solid, sturdy shoes always purchased in bulk. I wonder what she thinks as she witnesses daily life. What goes through her mind in the middle of winter when a person bundled in thick winter-wear exclaims that they are freezing. Does she flashback to a time when she was forced to work outside during one of the coldest winters on record clad only in a tattered summer dress? When she turns on the shower does she experience a moment of fear when she imagines gas instead of water pouring from the faucet? Occasionally I slip into this mindset. When my stomach groans and I head to find food I pause to think of those who turned to grass to fill

their empty bellies, and when the grass was devoured contemplated consuming the leather of their shoes. When I burrow into the softness of my quilt on arctic nights I think of those who labored long hours in freezing trenches with only the prospect of a night blanketed by frost and sleep plagued by nightmares. Just before I drift into the blissful amnesia of sleep I imagine the prisoners unable to distinguish between the harsh reality of consciousness and the callous torments of dreams.

Recently, I have begun to ponder the importance of family. As college fast approaches, the time remaining at home becomes increasingly precious. I cling to my parents’ words and bask in the brightness of their compassion. When it is time for me to leave I will be armed with a cloak stitched with love, sixteen years in the making. I know exactly when I will be leaving and have a clear destination. Still, sadness lingers with me at the thought of leaving home. At these times, I turn my attention to the circumstances of which my grandmother left her home.

The Nazis invaded suddenly and swiftly tore her family apart, almost completely annihilating them. Her mother died in a hospital while my grandmother was in hiding with her younger sister. After being betrayed, my grandmother was sent to Ravensbruck. During this time her older sister died of illness. Her father died in Sachsenhausen, a mere twenty minutes from his daughter. Her nine-year old brother was gassed in Auschwitz, without a family member by his side. No amount of warning can prepare a family for this brutal departure. My grandmother would give anything to see her family again, to say goodbye. But the dead cannot return and the living cannot dwell in both worlds. My grandmother carries the past and lives in the present. She looks toward the future but she will never forget the events of her youth. I too vow never to forget. I vow to continue handling the questions that have conformed to the shape of my being and my fortitude. Some questions cannot be answered, but must be asked.

Poem

Ilana Gelb – age 14

Ilana is the grand-daughter of Judith and Robert Sherman.

He walked along the grassless plain
A single strand of grass lay left uneaten
He cautiously peered from left to right
Desperately hoping for no one to be in sight
When he saw that the area was desolate
His limp body bent down
He plucked the single strand of grass
Chewing slowly
Savoring every morsel
He gazed at the list his fingers clutched

This list was not wanted in his hands
His mind scowled and his heart sank
At the sight of this list
But the body
No longer concerned
Rejoiced over this list
His name would not be on this list
He would be able to remain
To remain in the world
Where the grey sky and grey ground

Met with the grey building and grey people
 Where the thin air was lucky to be inhaled
 Where the people were lucky to inhale it
 He peered at the list
 Reading
 Reciting
 Declaiming every name
 Every person
 Whose grey air would no longer be gasped
 Every faceless fatless body
 With no soul left
 No substance left
 Would disappear
 He would make them disappear
 His orders no
 But his words yes
 He gathered them
 One by one
 And not even a tear shed
 As he listed and read
 He stuttered
 He stuttered as he reached a name
 A familiar name
 A name he chose

The name of his son
 Of his child could he dispose
 Could he be the one to call his name
 To bring death upon this boy
 Not just a boy
 But a boy who shared his nose
 Could he put the name of another
 Sacrifice them instead
 Could he leave his son
 He would be the one to lead him to death
 To tell him to let go of the air
 That he could barely breathe
 The one to cart his body away
 Naked in a pile of gassed bloody bodies
 Throwing them into a hole
 To lose their identities forever more
 He could replace the name
 With his own
 With his own nose
 That matched the other
 One nose would have to leave its match
 But who
 But how
 Why.

Beneath the surface of its Streets Beats the Heart of the City

(This article appeared in "The Voice" of the Piotrkow Magazine,
 published by Ben Giladi in New York)

Abby Henig

25 E 78th Street – it's the imposing corner mansion on the southeast corner of Madison Avenue and 78th Street, originally designed by Stanford White and built in 1900 for Stuyvesant and Marion Fish, then prominent members of New York society. The building was recently in the news again, Mayor Bloomberg having purchased it for \$45 million to house his philanthropic foundation. A gorgeous 5-story limestone townhouse, it once boasted a ballroom on its second floor that was described in 1900 as one of the largest and most beautiful in the city. Mrs Fish hosted dinners and theater events in that ballroom for New York's oldest families.

Abby is the daughter of the late Hela and Mendel Henig, survivors from Piotrkow Trybunalski, who lived in the U.S.A.

The room had a gleaming parquet floor. How do I know this? Because, as a child, I played in this room; as a teenager and young adult, I served countless meals in its vast expanse. Because, for the first 25 years of my life, this grandiose, gorgeous prime piece of city property was my second home.

Little known fact: for a period of time in the mid-1900s, the house was owned by the Atran

Foundation and was home to a smorgasbord of Jewish organizations. Frank Z Atran was a real estate magnate who established the Foundation in 1945 to support Jewish cultural organizations. Born in 1885 in the Ukraine, he left the Soviet Union in 1925 for Berlin. After establishing a hosiery business there, he fled Nazi Germany in 1940 and came to the U.S., diving into real estate. He died in 1952 but, before then, he created the Foundation and the Foundation purchased the magnificent structure that was, for a time, the Atran House of Jewish Culture. There you could find the Jewish Labor Committee,

the Bund, the Workmen's Circle, an extensive library – and a secret jewel in its basement.

Back in the 1950s, you'd walk up the steps, push the massive glass-framed doors and enter a marble lobby. To your right was a telephone receptionist, perched behind a wooden desk, operating the switchboard, pulling at wires as incoming and outgoing phone calls were put through. To your left was a cavernous room that had a small door in its back wall, through which you could access a small, curving servants' staircase leading to – nowhere. Directly ahead was a tiny elevator, capable of holding 4½ persons, that would take you up to the second floor. There, you could enter that breathtaking ballroom in which the Fishes had thrown their lavish parties. The sheer grandeur of the room took your breath away. Tall ceilings, windows overlooking 78th Street, that polished parquet floor. To the left, behind a sliding door, was a library with a massive fireplace, a hint of cigar smoke still traceable in the air. Continue on to the third floor and you'd find a rabbit's warren of offices. The fourth and fifth floors contained more offices and countless rows of Yiddish books, carefully preserved.

Now, down to the basement. At one end, there was a small room in which a tall man with thick glasses sorted donated clothes for shipment to Europe. Follow the brass sign in Yiddish and you came upon the "Ess Tsimmer", an unassuming cafeteria that came to be reviewed in the *Underground Gourmet*, local radio and the

New York Times as one of the best lunch spots in an area that spanned art galleries, wealthy residences, privileged schools and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The magic place where Fifth Avenue rubbed elbows with the Lower East Side.

This was a self-service cafeteria. An opening in the brick wall at one end served as the kitchen counter and pass-through. Roughly 25 square tables, covered by red and white checked oilcloths, filled the room. Grated windows on the left side of the room furnished a view of the ankles and shoes of passers-by on the sidewalk above. The walls were adorned with posters of paintings by Ben Shahn and Chagall, interspersed with the original oils and acrylics of as-yet undiscovered artists. To the right of the kitchen counter hung a blackboard with the daily specials written in chalk – a bowl of home-made soup and bread - \$.25; a quarter roast chicken, with kugel or kasha and vegetables - \$1.00; gefilte fish - \$.95; stuffed cabbage - \$.90; chopped liver - \$.25; egg salad - \$.20; and the best baked apples and rugelach in town. On the right side was a curtained opening leading into the pantry – here, three deep sinks and wooden-troweled dish racks lined one wall. To the left of the pantry was the kitchen, the back wall consumed by two hulking black ovens, a refrigerator on the other side and, in the corner, a small, winding staircase leading to – the ceiling. Next to the refrigerator was a counter with an old-fashioned cash register, the numbers tabbed, the drawer opening with a *ting*. Then, a door opening

onto stairs leading up to the street – sacks of potatoes, flour and vegetables were hauled down these daily.

There, in the kitchen, you'd find my parents, Helen and Mendel, their business partners, Paul and Fela, and Rachel, erstwhile traffic controller – it was her job to encourage those seated at the tables to leave as soon as they finished eating so that others on the long line could have their chance.

My parents had arrived in the States in 1950, "off the boat", a small daughter in tow – confused by a new country, a new language, and the chance at a new life that, for an unfathomable reason, had been granted to them and not others. They were struggling to make ends meet, when my mother was approached by the Jewish Labor Committee; her first husband, who had perished in Moscow in 1945, had been a leader in the Bund in Poland before the war. They had a proposition for her – there was this building, there was a kitchen in the basement, would she consider making lunch for those who worked in its offices – sandwiches and the like? "What's a sandwich?" she asked.

So started the business. On weekends, they catered parties, bar mitzvahs, weddings and benefits in the ballroom. For those occasions, the library was set up as the food station. Tables, draped with starched linens and fresh ferns, were placed in a horseshoe around the walls. My father and Max, the quintessential burly waiter with, yes, a cigar in his mouth, carried out plates, carefully balancing eight on an arm, to the ballroom,

where, once again, laughter and music rang out in celebration of life.

But it was lunch time, Monday through Friday, when the magic happened. My mother quickly learned how to make sandwiches and more. At first, she served the office workers in the building. Word spread in the Jewish community, and soon the starving artists and writers took up their post at one

corner of the room, nursing their glasses of tea, swirls of thin cigarette smoke coiled above their intense arguments over the nature of life, love, art. Much of the artwork on the walls was theirs, payment for meals consumed. They were soon joined by the students who attended NYU down the block – lining up for bowls of thick, heart home-made soup and bread. If they couldn't

dredge up the money to pay – well, no matter – it was on the house.

Then, one day, the owners and customers of neighboring art galleries started showing up, followed by members from the embassies nearby, staff from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and local residents. By the 1970s, the room was packed – the proverbial line out the door.

The Piotrkow Trybunalski Cemetery Project – Report June 2008

Nataniel Yechieli

Nataniel is the grandson and great-grandson of survivors who were liberated in Theresienstadt and have settled in Israel. He is now the driving force among the survivors from Piotrkow who live in Israel.

there was a ceremony to fix a signpost inscribed in Hebrew and Polish, identifying the place, giving its history.

Our group included four people from Israel: Itzik Tushinsky, Naomi Kirsh, Chana Furman and Netanel Yechieli; and one from the US: Irving Gomolin. We arrived on Monday, June 23, 2008, and immediately commenced working. Dinka Schultz from Israel also joined us on Wednesday evening.

We had planned to record all the names that can be identified from the matzevot [gravestones], and to take a photo of each one that was transcribed.

We received much help from some residents of Piotrkow and especially from the journalist Pawel Reising

and his friend Jacek Bednarek, who was our main translator. At the cemetery we received special help from a young woman named Martha (from near Lodz), a student of Jewish studies at the University of Krakow, who arrived every day voluntarily to help us with the project. Martha is part of the interesting trend of many Polish people who have become involved in studying Jewish culture.

The work was exhausting, physical – all day long – and emotional as well. Part of what was inscribed on the matzevot is illegible. We especially looked for surnames, given names and dates.

It was a very special experience. Any person working for a few days in the cemetery can connect to the spirit of the Jewish community life of the past 200 years.

The oldest gravestone we found was from 1793 (5553); the newest dates from the year 2000 (5760), of the last Jew in Piotrkow, Roman Hipsher.

Most of the gravestones have Hebrew text; some

In recent years the Jewish world has been involved in an engaging process of search for family roots. Especially in the US and Israel – individuals wish to learn more about their family's origin. Internet websites and email correspondence have made finding information and communicating among people with common research goals easier.

Many Piotrkowers, of the first, second and third generations, are interested in following in the footsteps of their ancestors who lived in Piotrkow before WWII. As part of this process and in combination with the 2008 Shabbaton in Piotrkow, a group of volunteers decided to go early to take part in a documentation project of the Jewish Cemetery – Cmentarz Żydowska (at Spacerowa/Kreta St.), and also for the possibility of conducting research at the municipal archives. It should be mentioned that in the old cemetery, near the former Great Synagogue, nothing remains beyond a grassy lot between buildings. Recently,

are in Yiddish, mainly of members of the Bund, who preferred the Yiddish over the Hebrew language. Some are written in Polish, belonging to those of the kehila (community) who had strong links to Polish culture. A few of the matzevot are written in Russian; two of these belong to Jewish soldiers from the Russian Army (WWII) who had fought in the Piotrkow area, died there and were given a Jewish burial.

It is important to remember that use of surnames among Jews in the Piotrkow region began early in the 19th century. Most of the gravestones do not have surnames – only the deceased person's given name, his or her father's given name and the date of death. This makes it difficult for anyone who wants to search for his/her ancestors at the cemetery.

I estimate that we were able to record and photograph about 80% of gravestones. HOWEVER, all those where we identify a surname are listed and photographed. Those of the

matzevot that we did not document are mostly very old, and date from before 1900, and so do not include surnames. Someday, this work should be concluded in order to compile complete information.

Not all the matzevot have survived; many were destroyed during (or following) WWII. Nevertheless, there are over 1,000 on which the deceased person's name can be identified.

Very interesting is the fact that most of the stones that remain are for women. Women lived longer than men and it is possible that their stones were longer lasting.

Some matzevot were built of expensive stone; this part was stolen; unfortunately the part that was stolen usually contained the names and other data, thus preventing their transcription.

There remains much work to do. First of all, we need to organize and enter the data into Excel format (possibly we will use the JOWBR format of the cemetery project of

JewishGen) and add the photos; this will take a few more weeks, and we will be looking for volunteers to help us with this project.

We have already received emails from people interested in the outcome of our work. We hope to build a Piotrkower Internet website, in English and in Hebrew, that will become a new framework for all the Piotrkow "landsmen" and their descendants.

Personally, I found the tombstone of my grandfather's grandmother. Tove Goldhirsh, blessed be her memory, died in 1939, a few months before the beginning of WWII. My grandfather, Avraham Kurnandz-Yechieli, told me about Savta [Grandmother] Tova. She was landlady of a house of 44 apartments at 6 Belden St. It was such an unexpected and exciting moment at the end of a long and exhausting day of work. Suddenly my eyes fell on her name on the monument and, nearby, the name of her daughter, Sarah Dvora Dzovanowsky.

London and Israel 2008

Some would debate the emotional anticipation of an upcoming trip often surpasses the pleasure of the trip itself. However, I could not have fathomed the multitude of emotions I experienced during my trip to London and Israel this past May. I was fortunate enough to travel with my parents, Edith and Paul Gast to the Reunions of the '45 Aid Society.

Planning this trip to London and Israel was

By Monica Gast Stauber

Monica is the daughter of Paul and Edith Gast (Gastfreund)

indeed a challenge, due to the fact that I reside New York and my parents in Florida. We wanted to travel together, and after hours invested in the arrangement of flights and accommodations it was complete!

My Mom and I discussed what our goals were both in

London and Israel. I wanted to experience the British Museum because every time I visit London there seems to be a holiday and it is closed! Naturally, as every typical mother and daughter alike, we found it to be a necessity to window shop in Harrods and Harvey Nichols! In Israel, I sought to re-visit Safed where I marveled at the old part of town with its narrow cobblestone alleys revealing artists' galleries and medieval synagogues.

Naturally, one cannot visit Tel Aviv without strolling through the Carmel Market as well. These were just some of the plans we discussed and thought we would have plenty of time to accomplish in our two-week trip.

My father, I must say, was oblivious to our plans. He claimed the purpose of the trip, the Reunion of the '45 Aid Society both in London and Tel Aviv on the occasion of Israel's 60th birthday would be a gathering like no other.

I could recount our itinerary day by day and one would most likely be in awe of everything we accomplished. It was all astonishing, yet, there were a few extraordinary, once in a lifetime experiences that neither my mother, father, nor I will forget.

The first outing I would like to discuss was located approximately 45 minutes outside of London... Loughton. My father lived here after the war. I heard of Loughton often as I grew up when the 'Boys' would reminisce. One thing they forgot to mention was that Loughton was a remarkable estate! It stretched into the English countryside for more than twenty acres in its day, encompassing rolling fields and a lake. As a makeshift orphanage for 33 young men, this home supplied them with both physical and emotional care. As we toured the home, thanks to the generosity of its current owners, each of the boys retold stories of their time spent there. Who slept in which room, who rode their bicycles through the house, where they went to school, the time they swam in the lake and the proud tree still standing tall in the back

yard. (I won't even touch on the symbolism of that!) The best part of the afternoon was watching the expression on their faces; they were no longer men in their 70s, but the very teenage boys who inhabited those halls. These were the happy memories of their childhood. It occurred to me, that a child of privilege today would be blessed to have such cherished memories as these. Not only were the 'Boys' to benefit from such auspicious surroundings, they were reintroduced and socialized into society by Mrs. Re'uma Weizman, the wife of former President Ezer Weizman of Israel. Mrs. Weizman was a volunteer at Loughton, putting her training as a teacher to good use on the wild "Boys" of Loughton. I was honored to meet Mrs. Weizman at the reunion party in Tel Aviv. The expression on my father's face when she addressed him by name was priceless.

Upon our arrival in Tel Aviv my father immediately phoned both his cousins. Our cousins were definitely somewhat distant on the family tree, but not in heart. We spent several afternoons with them and learned their life stories. One of them is a retired accountant, his wife a noted artist and they have two children – they came to meet us too! Our other cousin, a successful businessman who lives both in Tel Aviv and in the United States, took us to the Carmel Market and other quaint shopping areas in Tel Aviv prior to sharing a relaxing meal. Our lost family was reunited.

Our day trip to Yad Vashem was a testament not only to those who are responsible for

the vast effort to create it, but also to those like our docent who choose to volunteer their time and share their knowledge about the Holocaust. Bernice was lovely. Her tour of the museum was planned especially for our group of survivors. She imbued us with valuable information that gave us a global perspective on the Holocaust as opposed to the personal ones we already had. One thing though seemed to be missing; she didn't know that she was touring with "The Boys". Once she was made aware, our experience was all the more personal. Each of "The Boys" took this opportunity to recount their own experience to her, many with tears in their eyes. My father noted several pictures that brought back vivid memories. One of the last pictures we viewed on display was that of a Rabbi Army chaplain conducting services after liberation. This very Rabbi was from my parents' future home in New York who performed their marriage ceremony!

I left my family at home for two weeks in order to join my parents on what I believed might be one of my last opportunities to share a trip such as this with them. My mother said that probably this will be her last large scale trip as she is exhausted. Well it was exhausting for me as well and I am one of the second generation. These trips become part of one's soul. .to remember the past and never forget. Time passes so quickly, it seems as though I just returned yesterday. I know my parents' memories as well as mine, will certainly last a lifetime, and definitely until the next trip!

Visit to my grandfather's hometown

I hear stories of people being 'stuck for words' when they try to sum up a trip to Poland like the one I went on with my grandfather Harry Spiro. Nevertheless, I believe the answer is quite simple. I left to go to Poland to see where my grandpa's family lived and died.

The importance of going to Poland to see for yourself how people lived is to ensure that the number 6,000,000 is not just seen as a number, but to try and personalise it and realise that every single person who died had a story similar to that of Gita, Tama and Lazer Spiro who I had heard so much about. I was now able to see them as great-grandparents and a

Stephen Moses (aged 16)

Stephen is the grandson of Pauline and Harry Spiro.

great-aunt. This summer I went on a tour to Israel with FZY. At the kotel I closed my eyes and thought back to my trip to Poland. Specifically to when we walked the forests of Treblinka death camp, where my family had been murdered along with 850,000 other people. I tried to imagine the fear of certain death they most likely experienced, but still I struggled to comprehend what they must have been through. If I could give them one message, it would have been this. "That my grandpa,

their son and brother, is still here, his 3 children are still here, his 9 grandchildren are still here, but the Nazi regime is not, and that 3 years after its collapse the State of Israel was established to fight and defend our rights to live as Jews, which you have died for." This thought was in my mind at the Kotel as I opened my eyes and turned around. In front of me stood a group of Israeli soldiers, some of them I am sure lost family in the Holocaust. But all of them, I know, will serve their people and their country with the memory of their 6 million brothers and sisters who perished ingrained within their hearts.

Visit to my grandfather's hometown

What I think is the greatest achievement of the survivors of the Holocaust is that when I hear them talk about the Holocaust and the tragic events that happened, I see no hatred in their eyes only sadness for their lost loved ones. The Nazi regime had their heart set on the destruction of the Jews but not only did they not succeed in that but we came out with a fire burning in our hearts and with our hope still wishing for a better future. No one can ever take the hope away from us. Many nations have tried to kill us but they never could, many men have tried to degrade us but we walk on past with our head held high and that is why we never backed down to the Nazis.

Daniel Moses (aged 13)

Daniel is the grandson of Pauline and Harry Spiro.

When I went to Poland with my grandfather, Harry Spiro, I had already heard all the stories but now I could see where it had all happened. My grandpa had told me a story of when there were 1,000 too many people in his ghetto so the Nazis rounded the 1,000 people into the synagogue. They were due to be shot. My grandpa was rounded up with this group. He was set free as he was a worker at Hortjensa, a glass factory, but all the others were sadly killed. When I went to see that synagogue, the room where they were all kept had been turned into a library but the

back wall was still original from the Holocaust. It was a beautifully decorated wall which was covered in bullet holes. A library is a place to learn and better yourself and we should all learn from the Holocaust never to be prejudiced again and to realise that each life counts, each man has a purpose in this world and if you kill him you change the world and take away that purpose.

The Nazis are not here but bad men are, the Nazis are not here but good men are. There will always be a war between good and evil but with just a little bit of goodness, hope and the lessons of the Holocaust at heart we will prevail and we will never let the men of Hitler rise to power again. We will never hate an innocent man.

The story of Mietek Szternfeld

as told by his grand-daughter Amy Stern

My grandfather, Mietek Szternfeld, was born in Zgierz near Lodz in Poland on the 3rd September 1927. He died suddenly of a heart attack on Yom Kippur in 1995 when I was only 12 years old. The story of how he survived the war years and became my grandfather has fascinated me and has eventually led to my writing this short article for the "45 Aid Society".

Like many of the survivors, my grandpa was never keen to discuss his experiences; in fact for the most part, he preferred to bury them. The first part of this story is based on what my own father remembers of what his father "shared" with him when he was a child. We understand now that some of this "sharing" was a kind of therapy, although many of the stories were of horror rather than happiness.

At the age of 12 when the Germans invaded his town, my grandpa became separated from his family. After some time spent hiding with partisans, he was eventually captured and forced into the Lodz Ghetto. Although we always believed that most of his family had been killed at the outbreak of the war, information available in the internet archives suggest that both of his parents and all of his three brothers had actually survived for a short period and he was reunited with them in the ghetto. Being young and relatively fit, and strong, Mietek was separated from his surviving family and sent to Czestochowa where he was forced into slave



labour for over 2 years. He was then sent to Buchenwald and eventually to Thereisenstadt from where he was finally liberated.

Within days of being liberated, he had contracted typhoid from eating polluted food. Surviving that (we believe with medical treatment from the Americans and Russians), he was eventually brought to England.

Despite believing that my Grandfather's family were all killed at the outbreak of the war, it appears that my great grandparents Fajga and Moscek Szternfeld, both died in the Lodz Ghetto. We know that his older brother Bolek, survived Auschwitz and ended up in Israel, but we did not, and still do not know what happened to his two younger brothers, Jakob and Zanwel nor to his extremely large extended family, the Zajacs and the Waldmans.

Last year after my second visit to Yad Vashem in Israel, I decided that I needed to know more about my family and what happened to them. I felt very uneasy that I did not know all of my grandfather's immediate family's names. At the very

least I wanted to know these just so we could light Yarzeit candles for each of them on the correct day. This lack of precise information in turn made me realise I did not know enough in detail about my own grandfather's journey. Being only 12 when he died, I had never been able to ask him these things and he was never able to speak about his family other than to say he had three brothers, as it upset him too much.

Once home from this last trip to Israel, I decided the best way that I could relate to my grandfather's experiences was to start reading up on Polish child survivors who had been on similarly horrifying journeys. I also wanted to know what Lodz was like pre-war, what the Jewish community had been like and to see whether I could find anyone to help corroborate my grandfather's story as we knew it and shed some light on who our family were and what exactly happened to them.

Having spent some time on the internet I chanced across a book by Sir Martin Gilbert, called *The Boys*. I decided, having scanned the back, that this would be a good start as the journey many of the Boys took sounded extremely similar to my grandfather's.

I must have been half-way through reading this book one lunch break at work when a young man walked past and said to me "my grandfather helped to write that book!" He then proceeded to inform me that his grandfather had sent Sir Martin Gilbert his own



Mietek Szternfeld in the Cardross Hostel

story. For me, given the circumstances surrounding my choosing of this book out of hundreds of books on the Holocaust, this was a real coincidence. I found out from my new friend Max that his grandfather was Krulik Wilder who incidentally was the person whose story I had been in the middle of reading!

I went home eager to share the coincidence with my family. I wanted them to understand how strange it was. When I told my mother, she said the name Wilder was very familiar and her father Max Berk had been good friends in his adult years with someone with the surname Wilder who was a Polish Holocaust survivor and could it be the same person? The only difference she knew for sure was that his name was not Krulik.

The next day my mother rung me at work to clarify that she had found her father's personal belongings and checked through his old cards and the man she remembered was called Issy not Krulik. I told her one coincidence was strange enough, but two? Surely not!

I must have bumped into Max Wilder again that same day because I found myself recounting the story and once I had finished he said "Wait,

my grandfather calls himself Israel- Issy also". I wondered whether it was possible that my grandfather Max Berk could have shared a common friend with my grandpa Mietek Szternfeld? I truly hoped so as my grandfathers had lived such different lives to each other and had also lived in different cities my whole life, so they didn't spend much time together.

Max kindly put me in touch with his grandfather Krulik via email. Before emailing Krulik I researched the internet and the Yad Vashem archives and found out a huge amount of information about the Szternfelds and a little bit more detail on each of their stories. I relayed all of this to Krulik and he said he would ask his friends, the same survivors whom I had read about in the book, whether they knew or remembered my grandfather as he did not recognise the name.

Unfortunately, although the information I gave Krulik was as thorough as it could be, no one else recognised the name Mietek Szternfeld and most importantly to me, no one knew what happened to his two younger brothers.

I went back to look at all the photos I had of my grandpa. I came across an

envelope at the back of a box that had been sealed and looked like it had never been opened. When I opened it I couldn't believe my eyes. I was staring at one of the very same photographs Sir Martin Gilbert had used in his book. I thought that cannot be possible as my grandpa was liberated from Buchenwald (according to my father), and this photo was of the liberation of the prisoners on their way from Buchenwald to Thereisenstadt. Why would my grandpa have this photo if he was not there at the time it was taken and if he was liberated in Buchenwald? I carried on looking at some more photos and sure enough I found a photo of my grandfather and a few other boys sitting on some steps in England, dated 1945. I picked up the book and went to the photos and checked each face against the photos in the book and was absolutely sure I could see a photo of one of the boys whose name was Moniek Goldberg, with my grandpa Mietek.

It occurred to me that Krulik may still be in touch with Moniek who I knew to be living in America. I decided to scan the old photos I had found into the computer and send them to Krulik over email. I sent a message asking whether this was a photo of his old friend Moniek and that my grandpa, whose name no-one had remembered, was also in the photo and I explained which boy he was.

Amazingly Krulik emailed me back almost immediately to tell me he knew my grandpa and sent me a photo of my grandpa that he had in his own album, that

was taken in England, that my father and the rest of my family had never seen before. What was even stranger was that Krulik was able to fill me in on those missing years, how my grandfather came to England, how he was in Windermere and Scotland and how Krulik himself was standing above my grandfather in the photo that I had sent to him!

This was probably the happiest news I had heard for a long time as when reading *The Boys*, the part I really enjoyed was the chapter "Windermere" and I

remembered at the time feeling sad that my grandpa did not get to share the relief and closeness these boys felt once they were safely there. To know now, thanks to Krulik, that my grandpa was also able to experience this has made me feel more at ease and very connected to a group of "Boys" I had only ever read about.

Last week, Krulik kindly invited me to the '45 Aid Society's Chanukah party where I was able to put faces to the many names I had read about in the book. For me it was incredible to be sitting in the same room as

the very same people who had shared the first 'normal', and I hope happy, years with my grandpa after the unimaginable horrors and losses they all had to endure. Even though I was sad to learn that once my grandpa left England in 1947 to go to America, he lost touch with these boys, I felt content to know he had spent his two most important years, finally back in civilisation again, with such an amazing group of people whom I am extremely proud to have met, even if it is a few years late.

SECOND GENERATION and '45 AID SOCIETY supports performance of Educational Play in over 50 Schools in the UK

“And Then They Came for Me” is a unique theatrical experience: a multimedia play that combines videotaped interviews with Holocaust survivors Eva Schloss and Ed Silverberg, together with live actors recreating scenes from their lives during World War II.

Ed was Anne Frank's first boyfriend, and she wrote about him in the beginning of her now-famous diary. Eva Schloss was the same age as Anne Frank and lived in the same apartment building in Amsterdam. Her family went into hiding the same day as the Frank family. And like the Frank family, they were betrayed. On Eva's 15th birthday, her family was arrested by the Nazis and sent to concentration camps. Eva and her mother survived, and after the war her mother married Otto Frank (Anne's father).

The '45 Aid Society's Second Generation London Committee is supporting a unique Holocaust education programme, which takes a powerful experience into schools in the UK. The programme "And Then They Came For Me" is being performed to teenagers across the UK.

Part oral history, part dramatic action, part direct address, part remembrance, the ensemble-driven *And Then They Came for Me* breaks new ground and has been acclaimed by audiences and critics in worldwide productions. "This production is like a historic newsreel brought to life on the stage. And it works."

The play is organised in the UK by the irrepressible Producer/Director Nic Careem and his Blue Sky Networks production com-

pany. Principal fundraising to support the productions is organised by Greg Rack and Logistics are managed, for the production company, by Hephzi Rodovsky. Thea Helfgott, Second Generation Treasurer, has worked tirelessly to facilitate the many payments with great appreciation of the Society. Batzi Susskind has been the coordinator for Second Generation.

Eva Schloss herself often addresses the audience in person after the show. On certain occasions, members of "The Boys" such as Bob Obuchowski have also supported the production and have spoken to the audience after the event to very moving effect.

It is extremely gratifying that the Second Generation is enabling such a powerful programme to reach many thousands of Teenagers in schools across the country.

SECOND GENERATION and The London Jewish Community Centre (JCC) collaborate to put on a poignant debate

Maurice Helfgott reports on a unique event where a Survivor and Second Generation share platform and debate with a film maker who exposed his family's Nazi past.

In early January 2008, I joined Mala Tribich and Austrian/American Marcus Carney on a panel discussion about Second Generation of Perpetrators and Survivors. The event was sponsored by the Second Generation and produced by the London Jewish Community Centre (JCC) in conjunction with Second Generation at the old Hampstead Town Hall in Belsize Park, North London.

Marcus Carney had made a very brave film *The End of the Neubacher Project*, highlighting - and repudiating - the continued anti-semitism of his Nazi collaborating Austrian antecedents and came to the meeting with some continued feelings of personal guilt. Having previously taken Rabbinic advice (!) I was happy to be able to assure him that Judaism did not believe in 'visiting the sins of the father on the children' as long as a descendant repudiated the evil actions of their forebears. This he, and indeed the German nation has done unequivocally so there is no place for any subsequent generation of Nazis to feel personal 'guilt'. Of course, their Nations can, must and have taken responsibility but that is not the same as saying that generations that were not born at the time are 'guilty'.

Mala Tribich, a Survivor and one of 'The Boys' and brother of Ben Helfgott, was, as always, magnificent and magnanimous throughout.

There was some lively discussion and indeed tension in the room as we discussed the degree to which Second and Third Generation were in any way 'victims' of the Holocaust. I expressed a personal view that we were in no way 'victims', that to allow ourselves to think as such is to allow Hitler to extend his evil through generations, and that we had to reject such a notion otherwise our children, and in turn their children and children's children would ad infinitum, carry this unwelcome burden.

I recognised that my father's, and indeed "The Boys" post-1945 story, was not universal because they were a group of teenagers who, by being put together and choosing to continue to draw strength from one another did overwhelmingly succeed in rebuilding their lives.

But I made the point that it's very important that as Second Generation UK we tell the story of their Triumph over Adversity - their rebuilding of families and careers and lives, their example to Charity and of being active in the wider world. We should seek to gain strength from their example and share it as inspiration to others.

We cannot speak for those Second Generation who believe themselves to be victims and everyone of us will have

different perspectives and experiences. Nonetheless I would strongly urge everyone who can choose to take the strength from their parents experience to share it as a positive role model and example to others who today are genuine direct victims of genocide and brutal oppression, and can take comfort and inspiration from the Survivors stories.

Maurice Helfgott
2008



Panel attendees from left: Marcus Carney, Naomi Gryn who chaired the debate, Mala Tribich and Maurice Helfgott



Marcus Carney addresses the Second Generation at the JCC "Opinion Soup" debate in January 2008

Survivors deliver their testimonies to SECOND GENERATION November 08

The aim of the evening was to enable the audience to put questions to the survivors. We all know our own parents'/grandparents' history, but many of us haven't heard personal accounts of other survivors. This was evident as the fascinated audience continued to ask detailed questions until late into the evening.

The stories of survival told by Mrs Tribich and Mrs Lasker Wallfisch were both fascinating and moving. We learned that, on several occasions during the war, they were saved by what can only be described as a miracle.

This event allowed members of the audience to

The Second Generation London Committee invited two female survivors, Anita Lasker Wallfisch and Mala Tribich to talk directly to the second and third generations about their experiences during the Second World War. Louise Forman, who briefed the speakers before the event, explains how much this was appreciated by the audience.

understand a lot more detail about experiences of each of these remarkable people and to hear first hand their thoughts, their concerns, as well as their responses to issues raised by Second Generation.

The evening concluded with a very important question to both the Survivors and the audience: Members of the second and third generation know many stories about the Holocaust from our own family history, but how can we make it our responsibility to ensure these stories live on? It was the most difficult question to answer but it is also the most important aim of the Second Generation Committee who are now building relationships with the Holocaust Educational Trust and other organisations with the view to providing active support to the work of Holocaust education in the UK.

Leonard Herman summarises the life stories of each of the survivors, Anita Lasker Wallfisch and Mala Tribich

Anita Lasker Wallfisch spoke first, describing her background. She was born in Breslau, Germany, in 1925 to a cultured, educated and secular family. Her father was a lawyer who received an Iron Cross decoration in the First World War. Her mother was a musician. She was brought up with her sister bilingual, speaking both German and French. Her father was taken to a Concentration Camp during Crystallnacht and for the first time she was called a "dirty Jew". He was only released after her mother had satisfied the German authorities that they had plans to emigrate.

Instead, they stayed put until 1942 when the Nazis

started rounding up the remaining German Jews. As Anita and her sister spoke fluent French, they removed their yellow stars and decided to pose as French workers in a paper factory where they met French prisoners of war with whom they communicated clandestinely through cracks in the washrooms. They got involved in helping them forge passes that enabled forced workers to return to France. Anita and her sister also tried to escape using the same passes and were arrested at a railway station and imprisoned by the Gestapo. They were brought before a Court and, following a trial, were sentenced to 3½ years.

She was then sent to Auschwitz on a prison train as a convicted criminal and thereby avoided the selection process on arrival that met other Jewish transports on arrival.

Instead she was chosen to play for the Birkenau Camp Orchestra who were lacking a cellist. She spoke condescendingly of the musical abilities of this particular orchestra, which tended to play mainly marching songs.

From there she was sent by train to Belsen where she was liberated and moved to England where she became a founding member of the English Chamber Orchestra. She avoided returning to Germany until her Orchestra went on tour there and she



Anita Lasker Wallfish (left) and Mala Tribich answered questions from Second and Third Generation late into the evening about their wartime experiences

was introduced to a young German who was organising a Museum at Belsen. She returned in 1994 to mark the 50th Anniversary of the liberation of the camps and has made many trips back since then.

Mala Tribich spoke next. Born in Piotrkow, Poland in 1930, her family found themselves in the first ghetto that the Nazis established. Her father managed to persuade a Catholic family in nearby Czystocowa to take in both her and her cousin. Her cousin later became homesick and asked to be taken back. Instead of being taken back she in fact disappeared and when Mala eventually returned, she recalls her Uncle pacing up and down asking "where's my child?".

Mala rejoined her family when it was considered safer and was smuggled back into the ghetto with a working party.

Mala gave several moving accounts of occasions when she narrowly escaped death. In December 1942, whilst her father and brother were out working, the police started rounding people up. They stormed her address whilst she was in bed and her mother told the officer in charge that she was seriously ill. So she was allowed to stay behind whilst her mother and 8 year old sister were arrested. A week later they were taken with the other detainees in batches of 50 to Rakow forest where they were forced to dig mass graves and murdered.

The final liquidation came in July 1943 when only two groups of workers were allowed to remain. The children were being forced onto lorries outside the ghetto to be taken to extermination camps. She recalls being surrounded by guards pointing machine guns at them and a woman in front of her carrying a baby who was covered in blood after having been struck on the head for no apparent reason. As she was about to board the lorry she suddenly left the line and went up to the SS officer in charge and

asked to be allowed to rejoin her father and brother still within the ghetto. Surprisingly he agreed and directed a police officer to take her back. She then pleaded with him to allow her to take her 5 year-old cousin too. Again he agreed.

Mala from then on took responsibility for her 5 year old cousin whose father had been killed and whose mother had been sent to Skazysko. Together, with her father and brother after working at the local glass factory, they were transported to Bugaj Labour camp where they stayed until November 1944 when she and her cousin were sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp and from there on to Belsen. There she discovered that there was a childrens' barracks run by a Dr Bimko. She pleaded with him to allow her and her cousin into his care and he agreed, for which she was spared from the worst horrors of the camp. Had they not been admitted, both surely would have perished. Still, she contracted typhus and when liberated was seriously ill and was taken to Sweden. She later returned to England to be re-united with her brother Ben Helfgott. Thanks to her - her cousin too survived and lives in Australia today.

Second Generation working with the Holocaust Educational Trust on an Education Programme

The Second Generation London Committee is currently working on a new project together with the UK Holocaust Educational Trust (HET).

Our goal is to establish a programme whereby we

are able to continue our parents' excellent work in talking to schools, teaching the lessons of the Holocaust and celebrating their achievements of building strong families and communities.

Following an initial meeting with the HET Chief Executive, Karen Pollock, and the HET's Anita Parmar, the Second Generation team has now set up a project. We are now working on the following:

1. Identifying a small group of second/third generation people who would be interested in public speaking training which would be given by the HET. This would be for those interested in the delivery of Holocaust education programmes and their parents' testimony
2. In January 2009 a group of us will be observing a second generation speaker named Eva Clarke giving a talk at a London school. She apparently talks

- brilliantly about her mother's experiences, using photographs, etc.
3. Collecting testimonies, photos and documents, which will be very useful tools in aiding us in telling our parents' stories.

We feel it is so important for the Second Generation to take responsibility for keeping our parents' legacy alive, using education. It was suggested that we put an advertisement in the '45 Aid Journal aimed at the second/third generations to get wider involvement.

We look forward to hearing

from any members of the second/third generations who would like to join our project or support our work in this area.

If you are looking to participate actively in Holocaust education yourself or if you are looking to find a way to keep your own parents'/grandparents' story alive, please contact us and join our project. Contact Sue Bermange: sbermange@tiscali.co.uk or phone 07932 049 021

Sue Bermange
2008

Speech at Yom Hashoah Memorial Service Logan Hall in April 2008

My first cousin Lucy and I stood up in front of 700 people in Logan hall to recite our speech on Yom Hashoah.

The theme of the day was 'Heroes', so we couldn't resist talking about our own hero – our Grandpa, Ben Helfgott, even though he didn't want us to just talk about him!

We spoke about how and why we loved him, the great moments we have shared, and about when he took us to the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. We also explained

about the Holocaust and how he survived partly because he did not look Jewish.

After a nerve racking few

minutes Lucy and I finished and we were so proud.

Sam Helfgott aged 10



*Third Generation speech
at Yom Hashoa, London
2008*



Lucy Helfgott Sam Helfgott

MESSAGE TO "THE BOYS"

The Second Generation team receive a lot of regular correspondence from people all over the world via the web site www.2ndGeneration.org.uk Below is an email that was received earlier this year containing a message to "The Boys".

From: Kim

Message: Hello - I spent the weekend re-reading 'The Boys' - I first read it 5 or 6 years ago. It had a profound impact on me the first time I read it, and that impact was not

lessened in any way this time around.

I come from a different country, different generation and different cultural/religious background, but the stories in the book made me realise that we are all part of a global family and if one group suffers, we all suffer.

Can you please pass on my sincere thanks to The Boys for their willingness to tell their stories with such courage and honesty.

*With kindest regards from New Zealand
Kim Stewart. kim.stewart@xtra.co.nz*

Trip to Munkacs, Ukraine – August 2008

We had planned for some time to travel to the Ukraine to visit Munkacs (now Mukacheve), the town in which my father, David Herman, was born. In August 2008, 11 of us finally made the trip: David's 2 daughters, Julia and Rosalind, our husbands, our 6 children aged between 6 and 20 and one of their friends. We found a transport company in nearby Uzhgorod who collected us from Budapest and took us across the border into the Ukraine and from there to Munkacs. This proved to be an excellent option as Baruch Huber is a very knowledgeable local guide with many years' experience arranging tours for people wishing to visit areas that their ancestors came from and investigate their roots.

Munkacs is in western Ukraine near the Carpathian mountains, close to borders with Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. The views were lovely - on the way there we saw fields of sunflowers, maize, wheat, tobacco plants and apple trees. The border crossing into Ukraine was relatively painless. We had been warned it could take hours but in fact it took only 30 minutes - although it was far longer on the return journey!

A few minutes after crossing the border, we drove into the town of Berehovo (Beregsatz), 30 km from Munkacs. The town was familiar to us as it was the home of Hugo Gryn and was featured in the book and the TV documentary film

Julia Burton
and Rosalind Gelbart

"Chasing Shadows" made by Naomi Gryn, his daughter.

As we approached Munkacs we could see the Palanok Castle dominating the area on top of a huge hill in the distance. As we entered the town, the bumpy tarmac road gave way to the original cobbled streets more than 100 years old. Some of the original houses were brightly painted - these contrasted sharply with the plain cement of other houses and with the drab Soviet-style buildings. We finally reached an impressive green painted building with a tall clock tower, which we recognised from photos as the Munkacs town hall.

Finding David's family home

We checked in to our hotel, the Csillag, and immediately set off on foot in search of our father's house. We knew it was only a short walk from the town centre. David had talked about his former life on many occasions and described the areas where he and his siblings used to play. We walked down the main street, past shops and cafés and an impressive brown painted church, then suddenly, as we approached a bus stop, there it was, on the right, the Herman family home. It was quite amazing to find ourselves standing in front of the house that we had heard so much about.

The house, with its mouldings and its unique wrought iron gates, matched perfectly the one shown in David's photos from his trip

there in 1990. It has been used as a school after the war and an engraved metal sign on the front of the house in Cyrillic text announced the name.

The front of the house was sadly quite dilapidated and seemed abandoned. One of the rear entrance doors was partially open and we investigated. To our delight, it opened. We went cautiously inside. The place smelt of damp. The large room to the right of the entrance hall was empty except for 2 ceramic stoves. This must have been David's parents' kitchen. He described it clearly in his autobiography saying how he and his brothers had played football there when they were small. It had very high ceilings, which David said they needed brushes on poles to paint. We had heard all about the old ceramic wood burning stoves that heated the house. It was an amazing feeling being inside this room that had housed so many family meals and celebrations.

In a neighbouring garden we saw a large walnut tree. The branches were huge



The house in which David Herman was born – Munkacs, (Mucacheve) Ukraine



Kiddush as a family in the Herman house

and reached across several neighbouring gardens. We were sure that this was the infamous tree that David had told us about and which he and his siblings climbed so often to collect walnuts. We managed to get hold of a walnut and brought it back to England for David.

We returned to the house on two further occasions. On the Friday night, after the service in the synagogue, we went to the house, let ourselves into the kitchen and lit the Shabbat candles. We made Kiddush with a local chailah and sang the blessings, which rang out loud. It was a special and emotional moment as the house was filled with the voices of David's children and grandchildren, more than 60 years after David and his family were forced to leave to the ghetto.



Julia making Kiddush in Munkacs

The flat in the ghetto

As if finding the house was not exciting enough, our next discovery left us speechless. We managed to find the flat in the ghetto in which the Herman family and their relatives had lived and we also got to see the inside of the flat.

It was difficult for us to locate the flat as street names were changed in the Soviet era. However, as we walked around the market area, Philip recognized the building from David's 1990 video footage and from the description of its location given previously by David and by Meir Stern. Today there is barber's shop and an undertaker's business on the ground floor. The first floor apartment is a beauty salon. The young female staff at the beauty salon were relatively friendly. Through our guide we explained that our family had once lived here. They seemed interested in, or perhaps amused by, the story we told them. They said we were welcome to look around.



Outside the flat the ghetto

Going further upstairs we found we could see into the loft space through a small gap in the door at the top of the stairs. David had explained that the children all slept together on straw mattresses up in the roof, as there were about 15 children and 9 adults living in the flat during the time of

the ghetto. When we told this to the staff at the salon, they immediately produced a key and unlocked the door at the top of the stairs.

We were all able to climb up into the roof space and see the brick walls and bare roof tiles, completely untouched from the time it had been built. We walked around in silence. For a moment, we wondered if any of the family's possessions could possibly have remained in the loft after they were forced to leave, 64 years ago. There was a small wooden child's sledge, an old enamel washing bowl and a rusty two-man saw. The saw reminded us of David's stories of going to the forests with his father to collect wood and bring it home for the winter. It took a while before the excitement subsided.

Other sites

Before the war, the population of Munkacs had been up to 50% Jewish. Today, there is surprisingly little evidence of any of these people or their history, except for one plaque on the side of a building at the location of the entrance to the ghetto. The plaque explains in Ukrainian and Hebrew that this was the point from which many of its



Jewish families started their final journey.

We visited the streets of the former ghetto in the centre of town and the old and new Jewish cemeteries outside town. At the Palanok Castle we asked them to open the 1-room museum of Jewish interest. A collection of old photos showed Jewish people in scenes from past happier times in Munkacs and scenes during the war and the deportations. Documents were displayed identifying the dates of

the transportations from Munkacs to Auschwitz in May 1944.

Vinogradiv

The final part of our journey was a visit was to the town of Vynohradiv (formerly Nagy Szöllos) where our grandmother Rosza Herman (nee Braun) was born.

This was a most amazing trip for all of us. We had no expectation that we would see so much of David's family home, David's birthplace, or the flat in the ghetto. It was

an exciting, fascinating and emotional journey for us all. This experience will remain with us always. It is only a pity that David was not able to accompany us.



Display in Jewish museum, Palanok Castle

SECTION V ANNUAL LEONARD G. MONTEFIORE LECTURE

Hitler's Gift: The Glyndebourne Festival – A Synopsis

Patrick Bade

Patrick lectures and broadcasts extensively on Art and Opera and he is a course organiser and principal lecturer at Christie's.

Few people would dispute that Adolf Hitler and his minions did more harm to the world than anyone who has ever lived. But in amongst the horrors that overwhelmed the world during the twelve years of the Third Reich were some little pockets of benefit. The story of how refugees from Germany, Austria and Nazi-occupied countries enriched their host nations, particularly in the fields of science, medicine and culture, is already well-known. One of the more surprising benefits to this country was the successful establishment of that most English of cultural institutions, the Glyndebourne Festival in 1934 and its post-war spin-off, the Edinburgh Festival, with the crucial help of three recent refugees from Germany.

The Glyndebourne formula of country house opera has been much imitated in recent years but none of the

mini-festivals that have sprung up have quite replicated Glyndebourne's original mixture of English eccentricity and high-minded central European Kultur.

The long list of talented refugees who contributed to Glyndebourne's early successes included the conductors Fritz Busch, Fritz Stiedry, Walter Süsskind, Berthold Goldschmidt (more famous today as a composer), the singers Irene Eisinger, Alexander Kipnis, Vera Schwarz and Hilde Zadek, stage director Carl Ebert, house manager Rudolf Bing, designer Caspar Naher, chorus master Peter Gelhorn and singing coach Jani Strasser.

The five essential creators

of the miracle of Glyndebourne were the owner, John Christie, his Canadian wife, the soprano Audrey Mildmay, Fritz Busch, Carl Ebert and Rudolf Bing.

The highly eccentric John Christie came from a wealthy land-owning family. He had spent sixteen years as a science master at Eton before returning to his family home at Glyndebourne and trying to organize local musical events. It was at one of these events that he met and fell in love with his future wife Audrey Mildmay. It was to show-case her talents that the festival was originally envisaged. Audrey Mildmay may not have been one of the century's greatest singers but she was good enough to hold her own in some high-powered international casts. More importantly, she possessed other talents that were vital to the successful establishment of the festival. She was a woman of great

charm and tact, able to restrain the somewhat abrasive energy of her husband and to smooth the ruffled feathers of temperamental artists.

Christie planned to build an opera house with seating for 150. The capacity was raised to 311 for the 1934 opening and after several expansions to around 800 by the outbreak of war. Initial plans for the first season were hopelessly vague and over-ambitious. Wagner's music drama *Die Walküre* was announced for the opening night and the intention was to perform the whole of the ring Cycle and *Parsifal*. Christie wrote to Sir Thomas Beecham to invite him to bring his current orchestra, the London Philharmonic, down to Glyndebourne. Beecham thought the idea so outlandish that he did not even bother to reply.

At this point, fate intervened in the person of the great German violinist Adolf Busch who happened to be giving a concert in nearby Eastbourne. Busch was introduced to Christie and suggested his newly-unemployed brother Fritz Busch as a substitute for Beecham. Though not as charismatic as Toscanini, Fürtwängler or Beecham, Fritz Busch was one of the world's most respected conductors. Eschewing the temper tantrums of Toscanini and the cruel wit of Beecham, Busch won over his English orchestra with empathy and gentle humour. Raising his baton and before the orchestra have even played a note, he would say in his heavy German accent "Iss alrrready too laut!".

After completing more than a decade as chief

conductor of the Dresden Opera where he maintained the very highest standards, Busch who, though not Jewish, made no secret of his opposition to the Nazis, fell victim to a Nazi-inspired hate campaign and was forced to leave Germany in the Spring of 1933.

As a pre-condition of accepting Christie's offer, Busch insisted on the hiring of stage director Carl Ebert. With Ebert, Busch hoped to stage performances of a high standard and a unity of style unmatched anywhere in the world, except perhaps Salzburg, and certainly of a kind unknown in Britain at the time.

Like so many luminaries of the golden age of German theatre in the Weimar period, Carl Ebert had started as a protégé of Max Rheinhardt. Ebert had been "intendant" of the theatre in Darmstadt and then until 1933 of the Städtische Oper in Berlin where he staged an epoch-making production of Verdi's then little known opera "Macbeth". In Darmstadt and in Berlin, Ebert's house manager was Rudolf Bing who would be the third and not the least important of the European triumvirate who helped to create Glyndebourne. As a Catholic from a wealthy assimilated family Bing was astonished to be fired from his post in Berlin on account of his Jewish ancestry. He even hung around Berlin for some time in the vain hope of being compensated by the Nazis for his dismissal. The memoirs of many singers who later worked under Bing at the Met in New York testify to his ruthless, dictatorial and devious character. Of himself he said "Remember under

this cold exterior there beats a heart of stone." No doubt Bing brought a much needed dose of Teutonic discipline to the chaotic amateurism of Glyndebourne in its first years. It was Bing, who in the harsh economic conditions of the post-war period had the inspired idea of creating a Summer festival in Edinburgh in order to be able to continue presenting Glyndebourne productions.

Bing's entertaining memoirs "5000 nights at the opera" give an illuminating insight into just how odd and even slightly barbaric England pre-war Britain seemed to these cultivated European refugees. They were in turn amused and bemused by English reserve and prudishness and by the intricacies of the class system. Dealing with the English was hardly easier for them than dealing with an Amazonian tribe. Bing recalled the difficulties he had in trying to explain the plot of act 1 of *Der Rosenkavalier* to a group of middle-aged nurses billeted at Glyndebourne when they sat down to listen to the old HMV 78 rpm record set on a winter's night during the war. Another of Bing's anecdotes offers a splendid example of English reserve and sang froid:- "I remember some guests and a number of county people, one of them a general, were sitting about at breakfast when Childs, Christie's butler came in and said "I'm sorry to disturb you Sir, but the cook is dead". There was a moment of uncomfortable silence, broken by the general who said "Under the circumstances, do you think I could have another sausage?" The émigrés could take an

affectionate view of such eccentricities but it was harder for them to accept what seemed to them the Christie's wilful political naivety. Christie was a died-in-the-wool Germanophile given to singing Wagner as he strode the Sussex Downs in lederhosen. Even the toilets were sign-posted "Damen" and "Herren" in the pre-war period. When Audrey Mildmay was invited to participate in the Nazi-controlled Salzburg Festival of 1939, it took considerable pressure to prevent the Christies' enthusiastic acceptance.

No doubt the European's casual assumption of cultural superiority (Bing seems to have regarded the description "cultivated Englishman" as a contradiction in terms) must have grated on the British hosts and colleagues from time to time. On one occasion, Ebert threatened suicide when Christie wanted to present an English soprano in the role of Konstanze. With remarkable arrogance Busch and Ebert demanded complete autonomy in artistic matters and with equally remarkable humility Christie, who paid the bills

to the then vast sum of £100,000 in the pre-war period, gave it to them.

Few of the elegantly dressed opera lovers, braving the vagaries of the English summer as they picnic on the lawns of Glyndebourne would be likely to give a thought to anything as remote from this oasis of civilised pleasure as the Third Reich. But the fact is that the Glyndebourne Festival would not exist and they would not be there if it were not for a handful of talented foreigners who fled from the greatest tyranny of the twentieth century.

SECTION VI BOOK REVIEW

Yiddish Civilisation. The Rise and Fall of a forgotten Nation

Paul Kriwaczek (Weidenfeld & Nicolson 2005)

Words on Fire. The unfinished story of Yiddish

Basic Books 2004

Although Paul Kriwaczek's book is entitled "The Rise And Fall Of Yiddish Civilization", it is not much focused on Yiddish itself. It is more a general history of Ashkenazi Jewry, the product of prodigious reading in many languages, and as such is a capable introduction, always careful to explain terminology to the reader. There are, perhaps, too many asides on topics not directly relevant to the main Jewish theme, but the book conveys the author's enthusiasm for the subject over the years and bears his very individual mark. There are observations on his family fleeing from post-*Anschluss* Austria, his own youth in London or his many European travels, where he describes revealingly what remains of

Reviewed by Barry Davis

Barry Davis taught history at Kingston, Thames Valley and Warwick Universities, and Jewish History and Yiddish at Oxford, SOAS and the London Jewish Cultural Centre. He is an actor in both Yiddish and English.

Jewish life (or as he might say 'Yiddish Civilization'). One cannot fault his pithy descriptions of various stages of Jewish history, but they do not always constitute part of a clear theme. It is difficult to see why the history he describes is 'forgotten'. Certainly, there are more people who are studying that history than ever before.

Echoing Salo Baron, Kriwaczek criticises the 'lachrymose' view of Jewish history, but his narrative fits

into it very well, as a tale of persecution and dispersion and final tragedy. He warns us not to view the earlier Jewish history in Europe in view of its later tragic outcome, but he does this precisely.

He argues that the abolition of the self-governing *kahal* by Tsar Nicholas I in 1844 was "the last act in the annulment of Yiddish national identity" and in this sense "brought the story of Yiddish Civilisation to a close." Surely this is a prolepsis, since the concept of the 'Yiddish Nation' did not exist until the late nineteenth century. He still writes later: "after 1881" — with the assassination of Tsar Alexander II and the subsequent pogroms — "the Yiddish day as a European civilisation was done," and it

is transferred to America. But, few would dispute, especially Dovid Katz, that Yiddish prospered in Eastern Europe until the holocaust. In Kriwaczek's book, the Yiddish world of Interwar Poland is mentioned fleetingly and through Polish eyes as "the dark continent." Yet, educational institutions, music, literary and other publications, theatre — even cinema — flourished as never before.

The only Yiddish writer he treats in any serious and detailed manner is Glikl of Hameln, who wrote in 17th Century German Yiddish. Kriwaczek takes Y. L. Peretz's disparaging comments on the limits of expression in Yiddish (in the poem *Monish*) as given, but Peretz did much to correct these limitations in his own work and in encouraging others. Like Mendele Moykher Sforim, he berates the Yiddish-speaking world for lacking an awareness of nature, but does an author need to know the name of every flower to write well? In any case, the idea that languages cannot inherently express certain ideas must be false, since language mostly develops from practice. It takes a writer who is willing to push language into a new form, or a situation that brings up new potential. Thus the Yiddish literature of the twentieth century created a language radically different from that of the nineteenth. In his definition of 'great' literature, Kriwaczek confidently excludes Yiddish, citing as evidence works published in a recent anthology of English translations. According to him, Yiddish literature is not able to go beyond the specific 'Jewish'

concern to the 'universal'. As if Jews have to forget their Jewishness in order to communicate with the outside world.

One might say of *Yiddish Civilisation* as Kriwaczek writes, quoting Rabbi Dovid Gans, who bridged the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds of the sixteenth century, that "with this book the respondent can answer and say a little about every epoch." Kriwaczek is better on the European background, than is Katz, whether of the Crusades or the Reformation or the growth of the state and its impact on nationalism. His assessments are more sophisticated, though hardly novel. Interestingly, both make use of a major geographical divide. For Kriwaczek it is between Central and Eastern Europe, the intellectual and progressive versus the emotional and backward. For Katz it is the north-south divide within Jewish Eastern Europe, the cold logical intellectual and poorer north — the 'Litvaks' — versus the warm obscurantist and richer South, the 'Galitsyaner' (the Poles, the Ukrainians and the Romanians).

Dovid Katz's book is the result of a lifelong passion for Yiddish and an investigation of it and is a welcome contribution to Yiddish studies. He provides broad surveys of Yiddish and seeks to place it within the wider historical context, but is most effective when dealing with issues of language *per se*. This would include newer ideas on the origins of Yiddish, or the character of the 'common denominator Yiddish' of the early publications. It might be an analysis of the differences in writing style

between various New York Yiddish newspapers or the nuanced interplay between Hebraic, Aramaic Germanic and Slavic elements, and between religious and secular meanings. His examination of the language of Sholem Aleichem is both instructive and highly entertaining. He provides compelling biographical sketches of leading philologists of Yiddish, including the Zionist Ber Borochov and the energetic Max Weinreich, the key figure in *Yivo* (The Yiddish Research Institute) both in Wilno (Vilnius) and later New York. There is a compendium-like quality to the book, so that very little of what one would like to know about Yiddish is left out.

Katz offers us a dialectical view of Ashkenazi history, whereby there are recurring revolts against traditional religious authority, which are then absorbed into the system. Yiddish has always been represented in this revolt, frequently expressing popular feeling. Hasidism was the last great religious revolt, to be followed by the "Great Secular Outburst" of the nineteenth century (in Hebrew, Yiddish and in the European languages) which is only now coming to its end. Secularism will continue but (except in Israel) at the cost of assimilation. Tradition will reassert itself in Yiddish and the future of the language will be amongst the ultra-orthodox. In its day, this outburst produced an extraordinarily creative period of Yiddish literature, both dynamic and confident. Despite the divorce from its religious roots, this Yiddish culture would still have been able to flourish on Eastern European soil, but for the

Holocaust, because there Yiddish was the 'natural' language of the Jews and the processes of assimilation were inhibited, but this was not so in the United States.

The book is characterised by a sympathetic treatment of the views of the ultra-orthodox and their use of Yiddish. What is novel here is Katz's exploration of the role of these religious Jews in building up the positive role of Yiddish from the early nineteenth century, beginning with the Khasam-Soyfer of Bratislava/Pressburg and paralleling the activities of the better-known secular advocates of the language. He sees the action of Eliezer Shapira, the Munkatsher Rebbe in 1920 in forbidding the speaking of languages other than Yiddish for God-fearing Jews as a decisive event that has been overlooked by Yiddishists. This prohibition also led to violence against the followers of the Belzer Rebbe and Shapira was, of course, a fervent opponent of Hebrew as a spoken language. This is in a piece with Katz's contention that the future of Yiddish lies with the Hasidim

of today rather with the much lesser numbers of secular Yiddishists. Though the Yiddishists can connect with the great literary traditions and feel that their Yiddish is the correct one, the actual language of many of the younger ones strikes Katz as arid in comparison with the rich colloquial and natural Yiddish of the Hasidim. Clearly a critical mass is required for the sturdy development of any language, and it is unlikely that anything similar to the impressive Yiddish literary and cultural productivity of the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries can be matched. Yet, as Katz himself points out, the work of Yitskhok Niborski and the Medem Library in Paris, for example, can show how much of a contribution can be made to the development of Yiddish from a relatively small base of Yiddish speakers. Katz himself has played a key role in the growth of the academic study of Yiddish and in promoting an interest in it amongst young people, particularly with the courses he has founded in Oxford and in Vilnius. With Yiddish

being studied in many Universities in the United States and Europe and in Israel, despite a difficult past, the *study* of the language is not in peril. Katz does, however, suggest that the Yiddish writers of the future will emerge from the religious background, as they did in the earlier period. Though he talks of the hatred of Yiddish from the Haskalah and from lovers of Hebrew in the nineteenth century, he reserves his harshest words for the militant and even violent tactics of 'Defenders' of Hebrew in Mandate Palestine, who exaggerated the threat from Yiddish. (In many ways they were a counterpart to the militant ultra-orthodox in Europe during the same period.). This was carried over in the antagonism of the new Jewish state and its harassment of Yiddish. But, argues Katz, they were arguing against something within themselves, for Modern Hebrew was a language 'recast' from the framework of Yiddish, which represents an organic linguistic continuity from post-Talmudic times.

SECTION VII OBITUARIES



David Kutner 25th April 1928 - 17th January 2008

My gentle, caring, loving David; what can I tell you all, that you don't already know.

David was born in Konstantinow, Poland. He was a very happy little boy, with his parents, his father Jonas, his mother Yochet Ryvka, his elder sister,

Frانيا, and his younger sister, Lola.

Then came the ravages of war and his six years of "hell on earth".

David's father and his mother and his younger sister, all perished in the Auschwitz gas chambers. His elder sister, Frانيا,

was sent from Auschwitz to Belsen, but sadly she died in New York at the age of 41 years. She did marry and had two lovely children, Hannah and Eugene, who flew to England to see dear David when they realised how ill he was.

David adored our daughters, Lorraine and Suzanne, and our lovely grandchildren, Emma and Zak, and if he could have given them the "moon and the stars", he would have done so. Nothing

was too much trouble for our girls and our grandchildren, and they are missing him so much.

As for me, I am that much older, and life deals us such terrible sadness that we have to adjust. We had a very happy marriage for fifty-five years, and I always tried to look after him, love him, and I always worried over him "full time".

David bore no hatred within himself for what happened, but he had such an indomitable spirit; that is

why he survived, and he showed tremendous great courage and dignity in his final last few weeks with us all.

We will always love him, and we are glad that he is now at peace with his dearest and loving family, for we know that they will look after him.

May Hashem bless you our Darling,

Much love, Valerie,
Lorraine and Suzanne,
Emma and Zak.

Samuel Hilton (Holckienner)

Samuel Hilton, age 79, passed away on Sunday, November 2, 2008, in Scottsdale, AZ. Sam Hilton is a Holocaust survivor with unprecedented courage in the Jewish community. His family was deported by the Nazis in 1942. Sam and his father hid in the underground bunkers of the Warsaw Ghetto until 1943 when they were discovered. They were sent to a death camp in Poland (Majdanek). Two months later they were shipped to the Skarzysko concentration camp, where Sam's father died of starvation and wounds. In 1944, at the age of 15, Sam was shipped to Buchenwald and subsequently to another camp and a death march to Theresienstadt near Prague where he was liberated by the Russian Army on May

Sam came to England with the Windermere Group on 15th August 1945. He subsequently lived in the Cardross Hostel in Scotland till 1947 when he emigrated to the USA. In 1999, when passing a bookshop, he recognised himself on the front cover of a newly-published book. It was "The Boys - Triumph Over Adversity"!!! Through a friend in Canada, he made contact with Moniek Goldberg in Florida and through him "returned to the fold". He came to two of our reunions and continued to keep in touch with us.

9th 1945. Sam is the only member of his family to survive the Nazi death camps. In 1945, Sam was flown to England for rehabilitation and medical care and relocated to the

United States in 1947. In the United States, Sam joined the U.S. Air Force and served for eight years, eventually becoming an American citizen in 1951. Following his military service, Sam enrolled in California State University where he received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in business. During that time, Sam began his C.P.A. career working for an accounting firm in Beverly Hills, then for the IRS, Capitol Industries (Records) and Memorex. After serving as Director of Taxes for Memorex, Sam relocated to Arizona in 1973 and worked for Talley Industries for 12 years.

Samuel is survived by his wife, Marion, sons, Steve (Suzanne) and David Hilton, and grandchildren, Shari, Eva, Natalie, Harrison and Sophie.

David Herman 1926-2008

By Julia Burton,
Rosalind Gelbart,
Charles Herman &
Paul Herman

David was born in Munkacs in former Czechoslovakia at the foot of the Carpathian mountains. He was one of four brothers and sisters brought up in an orthodox family. He spoke often of his happy childhood and the mischief he and his friends got up to, stealing walnuts from the neighbour's tree, jumping off the bridge into the Latorica River, conker fights and so much more. We are so lucky that he put these stories to paper for us to treasure forever.

Sadly, the war marked a turning point in our father's life. His family and the rest of the Jewish community were forced to leave their homes and move into the ghetto in the town centre until the time came for them to be deported. David was interned in five concentration camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau where he lost most of his relatives.

His incarceration culminated in the long and treacherous march from Rhemsdorf to Theresienstadt. Had it not been for a late reconciliation with his beloved younger brother Abe, he would surely have perished. They were finally liberated in 1945 by the Russians. Amazingly his older brother Szruli and sister Miriam also survived and happily they were later reunited. Miriam moved to Israel and Szruli settled in America, but Abe chose to stay in London close to David.

Together with the other orphaned survivors, "The Boys", David began to pick up the pieces of his life. He moved to London and was a regular at the Primrose Club in Belsize Park where he was a keen footballer and chess



player, with Abe his regular adversary until his untimely and tragic death in 1989.

David's first job in London was as an apprentice cabinet-maker. He later decided to go to night school at Northampton Polytechnic (now City University) to learn pattern cutting, specialising in fur design. In 1951 he got a job as a junior pattern cutter and designer at a top London fashion house. It was there that he met the love of his life, Olive Warner, who typed the very letter inviting him for the job interview! They were married in March 1954 and the following year set up their own company in London's West End. They named the company Herwa Fashions of London – abbreviated from their surnames.

David had little money, but youth and confidence were on his side and together with Olive they were prepared to work hard. With David's determination and talent for design and sales and Olive's administrative skills, they

made a charismatic team. Their company grew quickly and within two years they moved to bigger premises. Their offices soon became a busy meeting place for overseas buyers and David sold his patterns all over the world. With Olive as his inspiration and model, he attended fashion fairs in Paris, Milan, Madrid, Frankfurt, New York, Montreal and Hong-Kong and together they were a huge success.

David and Olive were blessed with four children: Charles, Rosalind, Julia and Paul. David stayed close to his religious roots. He and Olive were founder members of Finchley Reform Synagogue and then joined West London Synagogue where David's good friend from his post war days in Prague, Rabbi Hugo Gryn, presided. They later moved to Belsize Square Synagogue to be with their children and their families. Olive and David were always marvellous hosts, enjoying the company of their many friends and their children's friends. We remember many happy poolside barbecues where David wore the chef's apron on top of his swimming trunks whilst burning the sausages and chops! Friday nights were always exciting and lively affairs, with excellent company, food and conversation.

After retiring, David discovered another artistic talent and turned his hand to sculpture. Cutting stone was extremely physical work and David often came home exhausted and covered in dust. A prolific artist, he produced many original pieces in stone, some inspired by his Jewish roots. David

was also actively involved with the committee of the '45 Aid Society and enjoyed the camaraderie and close affection shared by "The Boys". He was a regular at the Holocaust Survivors' Centre and continued to play chess at the Jewish Cultural Centre.

In his seventies, David decided it was time to learn to use a computer, so he bought himself one and refused to let anyone else show him how to use it. Somehow he taught himself to type and use the internet and then wrote his autobiography. This is an extraordinary account of his family and Jewish life in Munkacs before the war, his ordeals as a concentration camp inmate and how he managed to rebuild his life and family in

England. Although David suffered, as did all Holocaust survivors, he was always philosophical about his life: "I've had happy times and I've had sad times, but I prefer to remember the happy times."

Olive and David were the perfect couple, always smiling, dancing and enjoying life. Together, they got huge enjoyment from their 9 grandchildren: Nicholas and Jessica Herman; Katie, Hannah and Benjamin Gelbart; Emily, Georgia and Sophie Burton and Alexander Herman. They will always remember their lovely smiley Papa.

We remember David for his astonishing spirit, strength of character, enormous generosity and as a loving family man. He lived life to

the full, enjoying his family and friends, hard work, travelling, good humour and good food. He will be dearly missed by all who knew him and will continue to live on in the hearts and minds of those who loved him. We will always remember him with a big smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye.

Of the many tributes received on the occasion of his death, a friend quoted: "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give," adding that this could have been written for David who always found joy in giving in so many ways to everybody whose life he touched. We are so proud to have had him as our dad.

SECTION VIII MEMBERS NEWS 2008

Compiled by Ruby Friedman

BIRTHS:

- Minia Jay, mazeltov on the birth of your great-grandson Jonathon, born to Sarah & Paul.
- Olive and David Herman, mazeltov on the birth of your grandson Alexander Joseph, born to Sarah and Paul.
- Anna Jackson and the late Ray Jackson, mazeltov on the birth of a grandson.
- Barbara and Jack Kagan, mazeltov on the birth of a great-grandson.
- Thea and Isroel Rudzinski, mazeltov on the birth of twin great-granddaughters among other great-grandchildren.
- Doreen Wajchandler and the late Harry Wajchandler, mazeltov on

the birth of a great-granddaughter, Shoshanna, born to Melanie and Grant, daughter of Leslie and Sandra, and a great-granddaughter, Leah, born to Claire and Stuart, son of Judith and Tony.

BARMITZVAH:

- Hettie and Alec Ward, mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their grandson Liron Mark, son of Lyla and Barend Velleman.
- Pauline and Harry Spiro, mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their grandson Daniel, son of Tracy and Michael.
- Harry and Margaret Olmer, mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their

grandson Miles, son of Pauline and Jonathan.

BATMITZVAH:

- Jasmine and Michael Bandel, mazeltov on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Sabrina Hannah, daughter of Amanda and Martin.

ENGAGEMENTS:

Jeanette and Zigi Shipper, mazeltov on the engagement of your grandson Darren, son of Michelle and Marcus, to Claire.

WEDDINGS:

- Evelyn and Aron Zylberszac, mazeltov on the marriage of your grandson Eli, son of Fiona and Armon, to Stacey.
- Doreen Wajchandler and the late Harry

Wajchandler, mazeltov on the marriage of your granddaughter Laura, daughter of Leslie and Sandra, to Dori.

GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES:

Jasmine and Michael Bandel

DEATHS:

- Abe Elkienbaum
- David Kutner
- Eddie Simmons
- Ella Weinstock
- Moishe Frei
- Edyta Smith
- Nat Breskin
- Henry Kay
- Ernest Sunog
- Rushka Goldman
- Abe Salamon
- Joe Stone
- Shimon Klyn
- Jack Himmel

- Henry Manski
- Rene Lister
- Bluma Urbas
- Max Cliffe
- Sam Hilton.
- David Herman

Condolences to:-

- Sima and the late Joe Stone on the loss of their daughter-in-law Fran.
- Charlie Shane on the loss of his brother in Israel.
- Menachem Wakstock on the loss of his wife Sara.
- The family of Pat Stein, wife of the late Icky Stein.
- Jack Hecht & Martin Hecht on the loss of their sister in Israel.

2ND GENERATION NEWS:

Congratulations to Sam Hecht on being made a Royal Designer for Industry;

there are only 100 awards given at any one time. Sam is the son of Maureen and Jack Hecht.

3RD GENERATION NEWS:

Congratulations to Daniel Turek on being chosen for the basketball team for the Maccabiah Games. Daniel is the grandson of Anna and David Turek and the son of Susan and Jeremy.

Congratulations to Leron Vellerman on winning a Bronze medal playing tennis for Maccabi in Detroit, USA. Leron Vellerman is the grandson of Hettie and Alec Ward and the son of Lyla and Barend.

SECTION IX MANCHESTER NEWS 2008

Compiled by Louise Elliot

January 2008 – Mazeltov to Adash and Zena Bulwa on the engagement of their grandson Adam, the son of their daughter Suzanne and son-in-law Paul Levy.

Mazeltov to Berek Wurzel on becoming a great-grandpa when his granddaughter Emma gave birth to a baby girl, she being the daughter of Michelle and Warren Shaffer.

Some of our members travelled with AJR to Liverpool for National Holocaust Memorial Day event at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall where there was a full programme taking about two hours, which included Rev. Leslie Hardman, Martin Bell, Sir Jonathan Sacks and the Most Reverend Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of

Canterbury, and both he and Sir Jonathan Sacks were on the platform together with elegant speeches. It was a very moving experience but after talking to many of the crowd, they all expressed the view that it was the sort of programme to be seen by a wider public and not our members.

IT HAS BEEN POINTED OUT TO ME THAT IN A PAST ISSUE I MENTIONED THE BARMITZVAH OF THE GRANDSON OF ITZEK ALTERMAN AND I DID NOT MENTION THE BARMITZVAH BOY'S LATE GRANDMOTHER – MYRA ALTERMAN. THIS WAS MY MISTAKE AND I MAKE PUBLIC APOLOGY TO ITZEK AND HOPE HE AND HIS FAMILY WILL ALL ACCEPT THIS.

As you all know, Mayer Bomsztyk is unable to carry out his duties as Chairman and Herbert, who has been his Vice-Chairman all along, has done as much as he can but after a lot of deliberation, we decided to see if the 2nd Generation could take on some of our work and make it easier for Herbert and I. They have come up trumps and have reorganised themselves with a strong committee and have taken over the responsibility of our yearly Memorial Service, a get-together, and a celebration service of survival in May. And they seem a dedicated bunch. For themselves, they have been heavily involved in the arranging of the Anne Frank and Family exhibition at the

Manchester Jewish Museum. Our member, Henry Ferster, was the opener. They secured some grant money and we gave some money out of our funds. They also secured some public donations and we understand that the exhibition was a success and will be travelling around the country.

We were all astonished to read in the press that in the Ukraine they had produced a doll in the form of Hitler and this has caused outrage amongst our Holocaust survivors and Mayer Hersh made his feelings known in an article in the Jewish Telegraph on 25th April 2008.

1st May 2008 – There was the Yom HaShoah presented at the Hilton Suite, Prestwich, organised by the Representative Council, of which Tania Nelson is the Chairman of the Hashoah Committee. The format and the venue were changed – everything was very impressive and obviously well-rehearsed; the testimonies of three survivors were told by three teenagers (one of the testimonies was of Henry Ferster – one of our members). The background music and lighting were up to a very good standard and there were many dignitaries present and it included the presence of the Ajax standard bearer. Chazan Isdale rendered El Maaie Rachamin beautifully and Reverend Brodie conducted Kaddish. In addition, Melinda Csenki on violin played the theme to Shindler's List, which was very moving. Henry Ferster read the Survivor's Legacy and his son, Jonathan Ferster, the Pledge to Remember – "We will never forget".

On Sunday 11th May 2008, the Second Generation hosted a luncheon when it was explained to the very large gathering of 1st, 2nd, 3rd and even 4th generation who attended that the 2nd Generation have agreed to take over the organising of a yearly get-together, our Shabbos Service of Commemoration as near to 4th May as possible, our yearly service between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur at Agecroft Cemetery making things easier for me and Herbert. This event was handled wonderfully and there was a happy atmosphere. The guest speaker was Stephen Smith from Bet Shalom and what he said was very moving. Presentations were made to him, Lily Bomszyk (for handling most of Mayer[s work]) to Laura Nathan for work at the Yom Hashoah presentation and to me. This was a great surprise and an honour and I hope I can continue for very many more years.

May 2008 – Mazeltov to Ike Alterman on attaining the age of 80 years.

June 2008 – Mazeltov to Berek Wurzel on the wedding of his and the late Carol Wurzel on the marriage of his granddaughter Laura, daughter of Michelle and Warren Shaffer.

July 2008 – Mayer Hersh gave a talk on his experiences in the Holocaust to the army cadets and a moving tribute was made to him by Army cadet Chaplain Reverend Dr Gerard Byrne who said that his visit had been "a life-changing experience" and he thanked Mayer for "bringing hope and God to their lives". The cadets had

been so moved that they had produced a book of their reactions, which was presented to Mayer at a meeting of the Rep. Council.

August 2008 – Arek Hersh attained the grand age of 80 and members were invited to join him in a celebration lunch, which was enjoyed by all.

September 2008 – We received news from Mayer Hersh that Abraham Salaman died in May last in the USA. The news was received from his daughter and we send sincere condolences to his family.

September 2008 – Herbert and I with kindertransportees went to Beth Shalom to view the new exhibition of "The Journey", which has been produced with children between 7 and 11 in mind. It was wonderfully put together and we are sure that the children will through this learn about the Holocaust without the horrifying events brought to them at such a tender age. Beth Shalom is booked up with visiting students and teachers for the whole of 2009 and the Smith family are looking to build another building so that they can accommodate more student parties in the near future. Their hospitality cannot be faulted and we wish them every success in all their future plans.

October 2008 – Berek Wurzel's sister Bluma died in America and we all wish him a long life.

October 2008 – Sadly, Lily Bomszyk, wife of Mayer, passed away. We send condolences to all the family and wish them "Long Life".

FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The annual Leonard G Montefiore lecture will take place on Wednesday, 4th February 2009 at 8 pm at The London Jewish Cultural Centre, Ivy House, 94 – 96 North End Road, London NW11 7SX. The title of the lecture is “The Road to the 2nd World War. Could it have been prevented?” Speaker – William Tyler

YOM HA'SHOAH

The communal Yom Ha'shoah Commemoration will take place on Sunday 19th April 2009 at 11am at the Logan Hall, Bedford Way, London EC1.

2008 ANNUAL REUNION

The 63rd anniversary of our reunion will take place on Sunday 3rd May 2009 at The Holiday Inn, London Elstree, Barnet By-Pass, Borehamwood, Herts WD6 5PU. Tel: 0870 4431271.

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
57 Oundle Avenue
Bushey
Herts WD23 4QG
020-8420 4035

We look forward to many of the 2nd and, perhaps, 3rd generation joining us for all or any of these events.

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 2009.

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 28th March 2009 to:

Ruby Friedman
4 Broadlands
Hillside Road
Radlett
Herts WD7 7BH



Lily pointing to a picture of her family at the exhibition at City Hall.



Some of our members celebrating the 60th Anniversary of Israel's Independence.



Some of our members at the National Holocaust Memorial Day in Liverpool.



Some of our members at the exhibition "I still see their faces" at the City Hall.