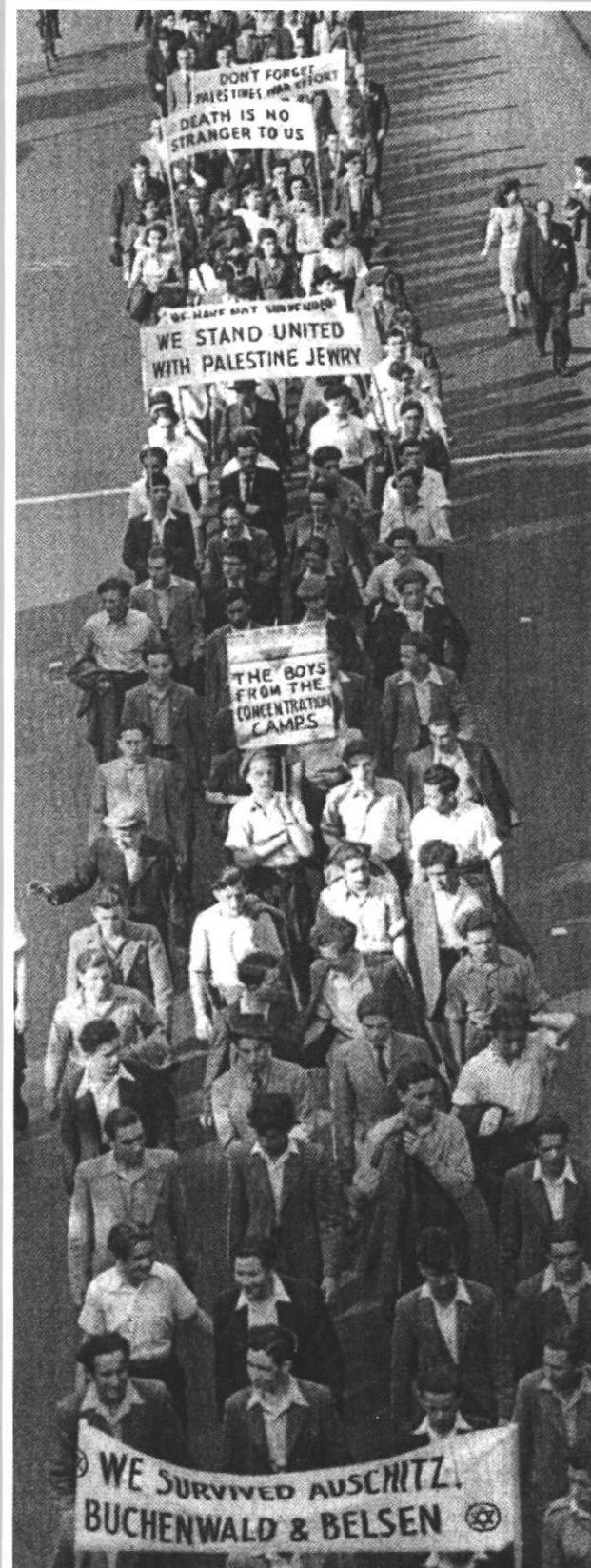


HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

245

AID SOCIETY

# JOURNAL



Issue No.26  
Autumn 2002

**‘We  
stand  
with  
Israel’**

(see page 3  
Chairman’s  
Comments)

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# CHAIRMAN'S *Comments*

There are two topics which we have often discussed amongst ourselves but have never raised them in our Journal. One is "what is it like to be the spouse of a survivor?" The other is "the second generation and living with survivors!" There is very little written about the first and it is very much hoped that the two articles, one by Reuven Sherman and the other by Phin Levy, which are published in this issue will generate further contributions.

There is a vast literature on the second topic, as Witold Gutt points out in his thought provoking article. The late Dr Shamai Davidson, who was the head of Shalvata Hospital in Israel, wrote extensively as early as the 70s on the "inherited trauma" of the Second Generation. He did, however, find that the Second Generation in England was not so much affected as those living in Israel and the United States where the majority of survivors live. He attributed this to the fact that the majority of the survivors in England were generally younger and that their spouses were in the main born in England. The fact that we are a cohesive and closely knit group was also a mitigating factor.

Anne Karpf, in her article "The Second Generation in the 21st Century", raises some interesting and challenging issues which I hope will stimulate our children to write about how they feel they have been affected.

It is very exciting to note that for the first time three generations of the Sherman family in the United States, Judith, Reuven, their daughter Ora and their granddaughter Ilana, have contributed to the Journal.

The attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11th was a watershed in human history. A well-known commentator, Thomas L. Friedman, referred to it in the New York Times "as the onset of World War III, the anti-terror coalition has to understand what this war is about. It is not fighting to eradicate terrorism. Terrorism

is just a tool. It is fighting to defeat an ideology: religious totalitarianism.

"World War II and the Cold War were fought to defeat secular totalitarianism - Nazism and Communism and World War III is a battle against religious totalitarianism, a view of the world that any faith must reign supreme and can be affirmed and held passionately only if all others are negated. That's bin Ladenism."

The article by a commentator on current affairs "Attack on America 11th September - A defining moment in world history" deals with this subject in great depth and should be of great interest to our readers.

The picture on the cover of the Journal was taken in July 1946 when we took part in a rally in Trafalgar Square organised by the Zionist Organisation. We were then living in different hostels and together with tens of thousands of members of the Jewish community, we demanded the lifting of restrictions of immigration to Palestine. This was at a time when survivors were living in Displaced Persons Camps in Germany and had no home to which to go.

Two years later, the State of Israel gained her independence in the pangs of war, a war which was inflicted upon her, with relatively large casualties. We are very proud that many of the "Boys" went clandestinely from England to fight in this historic and momentous war and some settled there.

In the last fifty-four years we witnessed the transformation of Israel from a dream to a thriving and vibrant modern state. The total population of Palestine in 1948 was 1.8 million, of whom about 600,000 were Jews. Today there are 6 million people living in Israel, of whom 5 million are Jews. In 1948 there was not enough food to feed the population. Today, Israel is not only self-sufficient in food, but it has

become a major exporter of agricultural products in the world, not to mention the high tech and electronic industries which are making great inroads in the world markets.

The ingathering of the exiles from all the four corners of the world and their absorption is a shining example of an outstanding humanitarian endeavour and is a striking condemnation of the Arab people in the way they have cynically allowed the Palestinian Arabs to linger in the refugee camps for so many years for no other reason than to use them as a tool against Israel.

Israel's achievements are even more remarkable when one considers that she had to fight four wars where her neighbours were all aggressors and there was hardly any let-up from terrorist activities. Israel has experienced over fifty years of unremitting conflict and undiminished isolation and remains now more than ever locked in a desperate struggle, with its neighbouring enemies, for survival.

In 1986, Connor Cruise O'Brien, a distinguished diplomat, with a literary and journalistic career, wrote a book "The Siege - The Saga of Israel and Zionism". The theme was that Israel will have to continue living in a state of siege for a long time because there is no way it can achieve "peace for territory" as there will always be extremists among the Arabs who will repudiate an agreement. As he put it: "they want it all." He also stated, "that Israel was a powerful country with a powerful friend which will be able to survive the intense hatred to which it will continue to be subject." Sixteen years later, in spite of the Oslo agreement in 1993 and the strenuous efforts for peace made by the late Itzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and especially Ehud Barak, that hatred is even more intense and O'Brien's analysis, unfortunately, seems

to be vindicated. After the collapse of the Camp David negotiations in September 2000, Barak stated that he was fortified by the knowledge that he had done everything possible in the attempt to achieve peace without jeopardising the security of Israel and if hostilities between the Palestinians and Israel were to erupt, he would not blame himself that he could have done more. Barak, by pressing for a final Treaty, called Arafat's bluff and revealed his real intentions, i.e., the elimination of the State of Israel. It is no coincidence that the suicide bombers started after the creation of the Palestine Authority. Arafat had complete control of all organs of Palestinian education and propaganda. He instilled hatred and venom into his people and especially the children. Here are two of many exhortations of Palestinian preachers on Palestine Authority TV - "Blessed be he who dons a vest of explosives on himself or his children and goes into the depth of the Jews." "We will blow them up in Hadera, we will blow them up in Tel Aviv and Netanya.... Blessing to he who saves a bullet in order to shoot it into a Jew's head."

The Arab and Moslem world is awash with this kind of exhortation. It is not surprising that the recent anti-semitic manifestations in most European countries have become more frequent and audacious. Although the right-wing elements in Europe are anti-immigrant, anti-Moslem, anti-black, when it comes to Jews, they are strange bed-fellows with those they profess to hate.

Our destiny is inextricably bound with the State of Israel and those who write letters to the Press and sign collective declarations, appear on television and radio criticising the Israeli Government, only give ammunition to those who are intent on destroying us.

In a recent article in "The Times", Michael Gove wrote "Israel's actions in the areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority have provoked criticism of Ariel Sharon's

government. But what makes contemporary comment on Israel worryingly different, both for Jews and democrats as myself, from the normal run of foreign commentators, is the biased nature, dangerously underlying assumptions and wickedly intemperate nature of its criticism, loaded phrases are used, truths obscured, parallels invoked or ignored and coverage slanted to apply the oldest anti-semitic techniques of all, the double standard. Jews and the Jewish State are judged in a way that no other peoples would be - found wanting even before any evidence is adduced."

Very often, some of the media look at the conflict through a narrow prism and react emotionally to the present, overlooking the wider picture. To them the F16 and the tank looks more menacing than the young suicide bomber. This perception is, of course, inexcusable and should be vigorously contested.

Although anti-semitism surged in recent months, the fears are understandable, but should not be exaggerated. Anti-semitism today is much different from that which we experienced before the war and so is our present situation. We live in liberal democracies enjoying equal rights and opportunities as all other citizens.

Israel defence forces are strong, well disciplined, well armed, well educated and highly sophisticated. The majority of the people in the United States are supportive of Israel and so is its government, which sees the global menace coming mainly from the rogue states such as Iraq, Iran, Syria and Yemen. These countries are also mortal enemies of Israel.

We must never forget that there are many people who recognise that anti-semitism is corrosive and inimical to the well-being of society at large. Nevertheless, we must not be complacent and must continue to be vigilant, confident and never waver in our resolution to support Israel.

**Wishing you and your family a very happy and healthy New Year.**

## ROSH HASHANAH MESSAGE 5763

from

*The President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews*

**I**t gives me great pleasure to send you a Rosh Hashanah message in this, my second full year as President of the Board of Deputies, and my first as President of the European Jewish Congress.

In what has been a very challenging and difficult year, the Board's work has been overwhelmingly concerned with the situation in Israel. The Board has invested considerable resources to counter the anti-Israel propaganda and disinformation that is prevalent in so much of the broadcast and print media. We produced an Israel Information Pack which contains briefing materials and web site sources together with media response guidance. This has been an overwhelming success and has been requested not only by thousands of people in this country, but by community activists across the world. It is a significant part of our work, together with other Israel-related organisations, to ensure that misreporting by the media is

questioned and not just accepted at face-value.

Sadly we have been subject to a rise in antisemitic activity over the past year. The Board works tirelessly with the police and CST to ensure a safe environment for the Jewish community in Britain. Our thoughts are particularly with the congregations of both Finsbury Park and Swansea synagogues following the recent desecrations, and indeed with the many other Jewish communities throughout Europe who have been subject to antisemitic attacks over the past year.

Yet during these difficult times, it has been a source of hope and inspiration to see Jewish communities across the world uniting together in support of Israel. On 6 May, over 50,000 people joined in Trafalgar Square at the largest ever gathering of British Jewry. As President of the European Jewish Congress, it filled me with great pride to see such demonstrations widely imitated throughout Europe. I whole-heartedly

believe that together and united, we will not fail.

Some of the most essential work carried out by the Board lies in our working side by side with other communities in Britain. We will continue to brief Cabinet members over issues of concern, as well as work with other organisations and religious groups. It will remain one of our fundamental tasks to inform the Jewish community, and educate the wider society, on the key issues which affect us all.

A New Year marks a time for reflection, as well as a time for new beginnings. We must all pray that this New Year will bring fresh hope and peace for the people in Israel, a year free from fear and terror, a year of progress and prosperity for Jews worldwide. The Board will continue to serve the Jewish community in Britain, do everything in its power to promote good relations with others, and provide for the interests and safety of those it represents.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very healthy and happy New Year.

LShana Tova Tikatevu.

**JO WAGERMAN, OBE**

## PAST AND PRESENT

### "WIR FAHREN NACH ENGLAND"

Salek Benedikt

*Salek came to England with the Southampton group in November 1945 and lived in the Finchley Road Hostel. He has been a regular contributor to this journal.*



**The Polish girls came to see us off.**



**Berek and Naftali. The ones we left behind.**

**I**n April 1945 the Jewish inmates of the Flössenberg Concentration Camp were ordered to leave the camp for Dachau.

We set out by rail, in cattle trucks, with two SS guards to every wagon. Within the first few days, the train was attacked by Allied aircraft. After the engine was immobilised, we were forced to continue the journey on foot. The injured and the weak were kept behind and shot in a nearby wood.

We marched in columns at five abreast. Moshe Kusmierski, Mordka Topel and myself, next to each other.

It was an arduous journey. Those who faltered or could not keep pace were shot by the roadside.

One rainy morning, the column came to a sudden halt. We remained stationary for a while, then the formation started to break up. People were dispersing in all directions. The guards were gone.

At first, we took cover in a nearby woodland, then decided to search for food and shelter.

When we came across a village, we knocked at the door of the first house we approached. Someone called out from inside, we should go away, the house is already full of Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, etc.

We received a similar reception at all the other houses. By the time we reached the last dwelling in the village, we were in despair. We knocked at the door and waited.

A man appeared. He told us there was no room for us



driven by a GI. We were each given an "iron ration" (box of food) and we moved off.

We were in jubilant mood. Someone started singing - "Wir fahren nach England", we all joined in. Passing Germans looked on, in amazement.

In the early afternoon, we entered the village of Winzer, Kr. Deggendorf. The truck stopped in front of large gates guarded by armed Polish and American soldiers.

After handing a document to a guard, the truck entered the camp. This was a Polish military camp. Our driver ordered us to alight. We refused, claiming that we were supposed to go to England.

The driver would have none of that. His orders were to bring us here and return to base, empty.

A Polish officer turned up. He confirmed that our arrival was expected and provision had been made for our accommodation. Two barracks, set apart from the army barracks. We would receive our food with the soldiers and would not be permitted to leave the camp.

This was pretty depressing news. We were behind barbed wire, under guard and our movement restricted. Our previous freedom was short-lived.

During the night about a dozen of our group escaped. The rest of us held a meeting in the morning. We decided to stay on for the time being to await further developments.

We did not have to wait long. The UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) had been informed of our arrival there and sent an officer on a fact-finding mission. After she felt convinced that we were genuine Displaced Persons, she asked how the UNRRA could help.

We requested additional blankets, a radio and freedom to receive our food apart from the military. But, above all, to be allowed to leave or enter the camp at will. We also brought up the question of emigration to England.

She made a note of our requests and promised to return within a week.

On her return, she brought a number of blankets



**The UNRRA Team 182.**

and a radio. The request for receiving the food apart from the soldiers was granted, and so was our freedom of movement.

The question of emigration was more complex. There was no way we could emigrate from our present "address". But, if we were prepared to move to an UNRRA Children's Home, there was a distinct possibility of emigration.

We beseeched her to get us to the Children's Home as soon as possible.

Our transfer took place sooner than expected. We travelled to a place called Kloster Indersdorf, Landkreis Dachau.

The Children's Home was run by the UNRRA Team 182.

Upon arrival there, we were greeted by the Director and several members of the team. She made a welcoming speech, which set us at ease.

After we bathed (assisted by the nurses) we had a meal and were shown to the dormitories. Two large rooms, furnished with white painted cots, neatly arranged in rows. The place was spotlessly clean.

The staff consisted of fifteen volunteers from eleven countries. They encouraged us to attend lessons in English, in preparation for our ultimate journey.

Just to mention the staff of whom I have a record: The Director, Prof. Lillian Robbins, New York, USA., her deputy, Marrison E Hutton, San Francisco, USA., Social Affairs: Mr André Marx, Luxembourg, Nurse: Edna Davis, Victoria, Australia, Teacher: Helen

Steiger, Winterhur, Switzerland, Storekeeper: Mr Parker, Warrant Officer in the British Army. All were committed to caring for us, and help in the transition from the "camp experience" to a world we had never known. Quite different from the one from which we had been snatched in the 1940s.

The incumbent nuns went about their duties, unobtrusively, oblivious to the fact that we were Holocaust survivors.

Before the fall of Germany, they hosted a troop of Hitler Youth!!!

In another part of the cloister, there was living a group of Polish, Christian youngsters, both boys and girls. They were brought to Germany to work as forced labour on the surrounding farms.

The boys avoided any contact with us, although we were showing a friendly attitude towards them. The girls had no such inhibitions. They freely mixed with our group. There even blossomed one or two romances (see page 273 "The Boys" by Martin Gilbert).

In an attempt to improve relations with the Polish boys, Mr Marx arranged a football match. Unfortunately, early into the game, the Poles started to abuse us verbally.

Fights broke out all over the pitch. Mr Marx had no option but to stop the game.

Early in September there was cause for excitement. General Eisenhower was to visit the Centre. Prompted by the UNRRA staff, we were going to put on a show in his honour.

I copied a picture of the general from a newspaper. It was framed and prominently displayed on a table surrounded by flowers. Kurt Klappholz would recite poems by Heinrich Heine. A Hungarian boy volunteered to sing Hungarian folk songs. The youngest among us formed a choir. Kurt was going to conduct them in singing "My Bonnie lies over the ocean".

On the morning of the day the General was due to visit, a message arrived that his schedule had changed and regretfully he was unable to keep the appointment.

We felt disappointed and at a loss. Thanks to the directors' intervention, we were allowed to carry on with our programme. The kitchen provided extra food and everyone seemed to have had an enjoyable time.

On the 15th October we were issued with UNRRA identity cards. The following day we made a last trip to Munich to facilitate those who had any money to change into sterling.

Shortly before leaving for England, a group from Feldafing Refugee Camp joined us for the flight.

Sadly, two of our group had to stay behind because they were diagnosed with T.B., both of them good friends of mine, Berek and Naftali, the gentlest people I have ever known.

On the day we left, the director, Lillian Robbins, handed each of us a personal letter (see illustration). And so we said good-bye to all those lovely people who really did care. I am still thankful for the good fortune to have met them.

Mrs Marrison Hutton visited London on several occasions and some of us met her in Kurt Klappholz's house in Belsize Park.

In August 1946, the UNRRA designated Kloster Indersdorf as a Jewish Children's Centre. The residents published a newspaper entitled UJ ELET and many of them collaborated to form Kibbutz Dror, a Zionist youth village and commune. Kloster Indersdorf closed on June 30th 1949.

During the time that it was open, it was home to over three hundred Jewish DPs.

# PICTURES FROM THE ALBUM

Phyllis Horal

*Phyllis and her parents, the Bennetts, have had a close link with some of the 'Boys' from the Finchley Road Hostel and have taken a keen interest in our Society.*



**Pre-war family picture from Lodz. Woman holding child was my aunt Venta. The seated men were my uncles Josek and Jacob.**

The photographs were neatly pasted into the family album. As a child the pictures of children of whom I knew nothing fascinated me. Smiling faces posing for the camera. They lived far away in Poland and only their names carried a resonance, Meir, Mendel, Simcha Benim, Mordechai Elias. Occasionally a letter arrived from my father's brother, which was kept in a painted wooden box, gift of an American army rabbi that stood on a desk in the library. It also held photographs of my father's parents. We never knew the contents of the letters written in Yiddish. The box stands today on my mother's desk.

In 1940, my siblings and I were sent to boarding schools and for many years no further thought was given to the photographs. At the end of the war we heard that four girl cousins had survived. Everyone else in a large family had perished.

My husband and I visited Poland around 1965. First stop being Warsaw. I took our car, engaged a guide and asked to be shown the sights. It was impressive to see how much of the city had been reconstructed. After seeing churches, palaces and monuments, I invited the guide back to the hotel for tea. Asking if she had shown me all the most important sites, she became defensive and pointed out that she was the finest guide in the city. I asked about the Ghetto, she replied that a 'fine English lady' would not find it interesting. Setting off on my own in the late afternoon with the window of the car rolled down, I stopped now and then to ask directions and eventually found the square where the eternal flame lit by Chancellor Willi Brandt of Germany stood on the memorial plinth. There was a wall of rocks nearby and scrambling up I looked far down into a quadrangle. Prisoners marched around the perimeter in single file. The recollection is clear but has often been disputed. But Salek Benedikt, through judicious detective work, confirmed that the prison yard belonged to the infamous Pawiak Prison on Pawia where during WWII thousands upon thousands of Poles and Jews had been

interrogated and murdered. The prison was located within the Ghetto walls. At the end of the war SS and Gestapo rounded up by the police were brought here for trial.

We drove to Lodz, passing through the flat countryside, understanding how easy it was for German troops to have invaded the country on that fateful September morning in 1939. Emotions were high. It was Erev Shabbat; we stayed in the Grand Hotel on the Piotrkowska, a wide avenue of magnificent late 19th century buildings, where my parents had lodged in 1931.

My imagination was racing as I wondered how it had been in those far off days. Lodz was an important textile city and the majority of the Jewish population engaged in the manufacture of weaving the textiles for which it was famous. It was called the Manchester of Poland. Many of the Jews worked for Jewish companies that enabled them to observe the Sabbath but they were very badly paid. There was a vast cottage industry with the majority working on hand looms at home, often in very cramped conditions. Even though many of them belonged

to Guilds, it was difficult to obtain a job. Overall, the living standard was not high; no bathrooms or internal lavatories and many families lived in one room with several children, utilising every inch of limited accommodation for eating, sleeping and, above all, working. Before World War II more than 200,000 Jews lived in Lodz. There was a great gap between the wealthy industrialists, owning factories, or working as merchants and bankers and the majority of poorer working-class Jews.

The following morning I asked the concierge in the hotel if there was a Jewish Community or cemetery and was directed to the tourist office. There I was informed that the Jews had left before the war, they thought to America. Not knowing where to turn, I walked into many of the buildings looking carefully on each door for a Jewish or familiar name. There were none. Nearby was a florist. I emptied my pocket of the few zloty I had onto the counter and pointed to a flower. I carried it through the streets holding it as a talisman. It symbolised life where to me the grey city felt dead. Any colour had long since been obliterated through the long years

of Communism and above all the overwhelming loss of their vibrant Jewish population.

We left for Auschwitz-Birkenau; the guide assigned to us had been a former inmate, his crime - being a scoutmaster. We were the only visitors. Cutlery still pointed upwards from the hardened ground. The guide bent down, picking up a handful of earth, which he dribbled into my hand; the white shards of bone were easily visible. No birds sang and the silence was oppressive as if nature itself was in revolt against what had taken place there. We shivered in the warm September sun.

Returning to London, I was shocked to see photographs of the Jewish Polish Film director, Roman Polanski, sitting on tombstones from the Jewish Cemetery, that I was told no longer existed.

Some thirty years passed before our second trip, again to Warsaw and Lodz. This time we visited the New Jewish cemetery built in 1892 and through some helpful Polish friends were able to find the mound where my grandparents had been buried before the war that had originally held a fine marble double memorial

stone. Grandfather succumbed to the great 'flu epidemic and passed away in 1918 and grandmother died in 1936. The memorial stone had long since disappeared as so often happened but a photograph exists of my parents taken during their visit. Even today memorial stones are taken with which to build homes or used to lay paths. This time, we ordered a plaque to be firmly cemented onto the perimeter wall. We were not allowed at that time to have the inscription in Hebrew so settled for Polish to honour the memory of my grandparents and their offspring that had perished. This will be a starting point for future generations of family genealogists.

In 1997 my husband and I persuaded Salek Benedikt to accompany us to Warsaw and then to travel on with me to Lodz. It was the first time for Salek after an absence of 62 years. I was very apprehensive as to how he would react emotionally. We travelled by train, again staying at the Grand Hotel. At the beginning of the Piotrkowska a large church and a statue of Tadeusz Kosciuszko dominate Plac Wolnosci. The archives that we had come to search are housed on the first floor of No 1 Plac Wolnosci, formerly the Town Hall.

I had already contacted the State Archives in Warsaw for permission to view the Lodz archives. Armed with the necessary letter, the archivist was able to show me the book that listed the inhabitants of the Lodz Ghetto. This gave their name, date of birth, previous address before they were rounded up and their abode in the Ghetto; all this, of course, in German. Professions and occupations were also given. I extracted all the names of those likely to have been related and that may have been members of my father's family as there were many of the same name and I had no idea which was which. However, by subsequently cross-referencing, it was possible to piece together some parts of the puzzle.

Armed with this information we walked to 153 Piotrkowska that was the office of the Births, Deaths and Marriages where we were fortunate enough to see the

head of the department who was able to penetrate the labyrinth of documents and she produced copies of birth certificates of several cousins. It was an overwhelming moment and enabled me to start a long and protracted journey that will be a lifetime's work to reinstate and keep faith with the photographs.

The names of Josek, his wife Sura Leje and his three daughters, Faiga, Marjam and Bajla, two of whom survived. Lipman Jenta nee Sochaczewski born 23.11.1902 deported 10.10.1942 and their three children, Tauba born 9.1.1926 deported, Mordechaj Elias born 28.9.1927 deported 10.10.1942, Simcha Benim born 1.3.1932 deported 10.10.1942. Only Tauba survived. Listed on the deportation records were the hateful names of the ghetto streets that became Germanised as Sigfried, Pfeffergasse, Hanseaton and others. The streets had been renamed to suit an army of occupation. The papers I was able to accumulate gave form and shape to the unknown members of the family. I feel that there is a deep obligation to recreate at least on paper, those that are no longer here and of the children that never had a chance to live and fulfil their lives. The cousins, uncles and aunts I never knew.

We retraced our steps and walked to the street on which Salek's parents had run a restaurant opposite the rococo Poznanski Palace that had belonged to a very wealthy textile industrialist. Next to it stands an imposing building on Zachodnia, formerly housing the District Administration for Lodz, the Wojewodztwo, and used by the Nazi Party during the war. At that time a long banner hung across the façade claiming it as the headquarters of the 'National Socialistische Deutsche Arbeits Partei'.

The Benedikt family building was now pretty decrepit and with misgivings we decided to go in. The rest is really Salek's story. His family flat had been divided so that three families could live there. We rang the doorbell and a young woman in a dressing gown answered.

After explaining that this had been Salek's home she allowed us to enter. People were amazed at the fine and elegant Polish Salek spoke, albeit a little limited after an absence of over 50 years.

We walked along Zgierska Street alongside a park built where the ghetto boundary line had previously started. It had been a heavily patrolled 'no man's land'.

We made for Baluty that had originally been a small village close to Lodz, where the majority of poorer Jews had lived. I had some addresses given to me by one of my surviving cousins. After about a mile we found the road and the block where she and her family had lived. Salek asked questions of an elderly man, assuming that he might have remembered some details of the Jewish community. He wondered at our curiosity, asking Salek, 'I can't understand why we have visitors from the USA and other countries taking photographs of this old building'. Salek thought quickly and replied that it was because the architecture was so interesting that people wanted to have a souvenir before it was pulled down. The answer seemed to satisfy him.

A small street ran alongside just off the main road where there still stand some of the original typical "stetl" houses that were built early in the 20th century. We took a taxi to another part of the town, to Zeromskiego 24 where my father's eldest sister Neltcia had lived before volunteering to go further East for "re-settlement" and ended up at Treblinka. It was deeply emotional to find it intact. The building was dark and sombre. Leaving Salek in the taxi I went into the courtyard untouched for the past 70 years. Narrow, dank staircases gave access to upper floors and faceless windows. I stood and wept for the life that had once existed there.

There was a small restaurant near the hotel where we ate most evenings. The food was tasty and the vodka helped to dull the emotions of the day. The service was unhurried and we talked and talked.

We visited the Jewish Community Centre but

found that they could add very little to what we already had found ourselves. The following day we took a taxi to Ozorkow where my father was born, moving to Lodz at the age of three. The town had been rebuilt after having been almost destroyed during the war. The helpful lady at the Town Hall told us that almost all records had been destroyed during heavy fighting between the Germans and Russians. 15,000 Jews had been living there before World War II but only one man named Dreihorn had returned. He had married a Polish woman but had died some years before our visit. We were given her address and told that she divided her time between her home in Ozorkow and Lodz where she worked for the Jewish community. We crossed the main road to her house. Our taxi caught up with us and pointed out that her post box was overflowing with unopened letters and sadly, we never met her.

Deciding to return to Warsaw by taxi we found a genial driver who pointed out to us the many fenced-in palatial dwellings along the main road. Gypsy families owned them. According to him they made their fortunes by restoring cars stolen in Germany for onward sale. The homes were truly amazing.

We passed the town of Sochaczew from where I assume the family name of Sochaczewski derives. Again, this town had suffered terribly during the war and had been rebuilt in typical sterile Communist fashion.

A military museum was interesting but we found nothing of Jewish history. The man in charge of Records told us there were no Jews there and re-iterated what we had been told in Ozorkow that all records had been destroyed. The taxi drove on to Warsaw. Salek and I, each alone with our impressions and thoughts of what had been an emotionally taxing and demanding few days.

We spoke about returning one day and in fact did so two years later.... but that is another story. (To be continued)

## TEREZIN - MAY 2002-05-3

Michael Etkind

*Michael came to England with the Windermere group. He lived in the Cardross hostel and later studied architecture. He has been a regular contributor to our journal and was dubbed by our President, Sir Martin Gilbert, as the poet of our Society.*

After leaving the museum we made our way to what was described to us as the small fortress, which was used by the Gestapo as the prison and place of torture and execution. Before entering the Main Gateway we passed a cemetery which was used to bury the victims of the typhus epidemic which occurred at the end of the war. A large memorial Cross and Star of David dominate the burial ground.

We entered through the Main Gateway and were immediately confronted with the words "Arbeit Macht Frei", over an arched gateway, which I have no recollection of seeing there. We were shown courtyards containing dark cells in which the prisoners were kept. We were conducted through the underground passage which I used in July 1945 for entering Terezin for the first time. It is now illuminated at equal intervals.

The swimming pool, built for the two daughters of H.J.ckel, the Commander of the prison, was empty. We were told that some prisoners

were killed whilst building it in 1942. I remember watching Roman and Buki splashing and horse-playing in it in July 1945. Our guide, an elderly Czech woman, told us that J'ckel was a waiter before the war, and that after the war he was sentenced to death by the court in Litomerice, and executed two years later. He was not executed in Terezin on the same gallows as had been used for the prisoners as the ex-inmates felt it would be a sacrilege to their memory.

The rest of the week we spent in Prague, walking on the cobbled streets of the Old Town, and looking for seats to rest upon amongst the milling crowds. It was "wall to wall" people as we happened to be there during the first week of May, and it was very hot - twenty six degrees Centigrade.

We visited the Jewish Quarter and Museum where we saw the many treasures rescued and preserved from the Jewish communities of Bohemia and Moravia liquidated during the war. On display also were some of

the 4,000 original drawings made by the children of Terezin, and we were taken through the very overcrowded cemetery.

A guided tour of Prague Castle took us across the river where we spent another busy morning viewing the many architectural features of the Gothic, Baroque and Rococo buildings which make up the castle area which is like a small town in itself. There are many beautiful churches which are now mainly used as museums and concert venues. We were told that the Czech people are the least religious people in Europe now, not due to the Communists, but more because of the disputes of many centuries between the early Protestants, the Hussites and the Roman Catholic Church. The well-known photograph of the group of 'boys' taken in Prague before embarking for the U.K. was taken on the steps of the monument to Jan Hus in the Old Town Square.

On the last day we went to the National Museum of Modern Art, which contains some wonderful 19th century landscapes and the largest collection of French Art outside of France. We were told by one of the hawk-eyed ladies, the gallery attendants, that many of the pictures had been confiscated from the Jewish people during the war and never reclaimed.

Having spent a busy week in Prague we felt we needed a restful holiday to follow.

My first impression was that of confusion. Today Terezin appears to be a small deserted town set in the middle of the Czech countryside, and the population which now exists there are mostly involved in the upkeep of the site as monument and museum.

The whole place is neat and clean and seems very empty. There are no outside latrines overrun with rats. I did not see the crematorium with its sloping concrete roof, which we crossed and re-crossed whilst smuggling fruit purchased in Litomerice, but it does appear on the plan of Terezin. It was obvious, even then, that with Sobibor, Belzec, Treblinka, Majdanek and Auschwitz liberated by the Russians, the Germans intended the Terezin crematorium to gas all the remaining slave labourers arriving by trains and on foot from Germany. Apparently the men engaged on this project, at the beginning of 1945 realised its purpose and managed to sabotage and to delay its completion.

The museum at the side of the Main Square used to be a primary school before the war but whilst it was a ghetto it was used as a boy's home. I remember staying in one of the buildings overlooking this square in July and August 1945 until I left with the group to go by rail to Prague on August 11th. The branch line which took us to Prague no longer exists.

It was Ben Helfgott who told me that four million of the six million Jews who perished in The Shoah, did so in 1942... He is right, of course; it was the year in which so many of us were orphaned...

The Cracow Ghetto was sealed off by the SS, for the first time in its fifteen-month existence, on the 31st of May 1942. A "resettlement" Aktion spread over eight days and carried out in three separate stages - on 1st, 4th and 8th June - would take place. On each of those dates a multitude of three to four thousand people, never to be heard from, never to be seen again, would be marched out of the Ghetto...

A good while before the

## THE MARCH

Janina Fischler-Martinho

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

endless procession of men, women and children, marching in rows of five, came in sight the streets, the tenements, the very sky were filled with great stillness. Not a leaf shivered, not an insect buzzed. Silence. And then, gradually, a sound travelled along the thoroughfare. A sound which it is hard to describe, to render, although

it rings in my ears to this day. It has never stopped ringing since that week in June, sixty years ago, when I first heard it.

It is difficult to pass on a sound - immaterial, disembodied, unregistered. Yet I must persist, for these recollections are the most precious part of my spiritual estate, of my spiritual legacy. I wish to

leave them to future generations to look after, to preserve and to pass on yet again. I must make every attempt to describe the sound, even if only remotely, approximately... I am fearful that it may not reach, however distantly, however faintly, the ears of those who have never heard it. I am fearful that it may be dismissed, obliterated by the passage of time... that it may slip into oblivion.

Yet it was a common enough sound during the war years - repeated daily, hourly in all seasons, in all weathers. In pleasant, mild weather just right for a stroll; in bright daylight; in tenebrous night; under scorching sun; in driving snow; in freezing, torrential rain. The elements, however harshly manifested,

were no excuse for not marching. For six long years they marched - the hale and the halt. They marched in rows of five throughout Poland, France, Holland.... Throughout Europe.... Staggering under the weight of their pitiful bundles they marched submissively - defying the elements, merging with them - to be swallowed up by darkness....

Long before we saw their faces, long before we saw the human tide flood the black-tarred city thoroughfare, the soft, muddy shtetl tract, the dusty village road - there was the sound... At first distant - but gathering in strength; tearing, ripping the deep silence of the Ghetto, the white, blazing heat; the deserted streets, the bleak tenements. The sound - doleful, ominous rising, rising... The blood congealing sound which we had learnt to interpret. And then they came and the thoroughfare was inundated, submerged by the human tide which the forerunner, the death-knell sound, had announced. The scraping, the scratching, the scurrying of thousands and thousands of feet. Human feet - weary, sore, used... Then the endless procession. Faces. Masks frozen in fear. Ashen. Closed.

This was the third multitude of the June Aktion. The Jews had been penned in an enclosed compound for twenty-four hours and more. They were very tired, dehydrated - overcome by the torrid heat of that June week. They were numb. Numb with the fear they, the German troops, inspired. The procession was marching in perfect order and docility. In those rows of five, the men were always on the outside - closest to the German guards. The women and children were on the inside - distanced, protected, inasmuch as it was possible, from the guards. The German soldiery, the SS officers, apart from guarding the doomed multitude, were relatively inactive. As it was the third such procession in one week, the Germans, too, must have been somewhat spent, having been on their mettle, having given of their best all that week. They were, no doubt, looking forward to a bit of respite...

Joseph and I were stand-

ing at the window overlooking the thoroughfare. Joseph, my brother, was a young man - nineteen years old.

Many years later, in a Lisbon tea-room, I heard a young mother sternly admonish her small son, three or four years old, who was crying loudly, lustily: "Um homem não chora..." (a man does not cry). And again I remembered. The image and the sound. swam back in perfect vividness, in raw pain.

Yes, we lived in a world in which a boy was brought up, no matter what, not to cry, not to shed tears. It was not manly. Alas, no provision had been made for these wholly exceptional circumstances. No one had foreseen them. Did the Talmud, did the Torah, did all the learning and wisdom of our mentors prepare us for what we were witnessing and feeling that day? Their erudition, their sagacity, were they up to the enormity of The Shoah?

From the moment the sound of the marching feet broke the awesome silence of the Ghetto, long before the very first row of the human family came in sight, Joseph began to cry... As the march proceeded, so his crying grew louder, more copious... By the time the row of five for which we were waiting appeared - Father, Mamma, Bartus, Aunt Rose, Uncle Dolek - Joseph was choking, suffocating... I have never, in seventy years of life, seen nor heard a human being cry like that...

About half way through the procession they came - our Parents, our Brother, Father's sister and her husband... Father tall and straight in his overcoat and hat. His head held high, his gaze unflinching. Then eight-year-old Bartus - the youngest of us three children - walking between Father and Mamma in the navy-blue jacket from Mamma's winter suit. It nearly reaches the ground on him and it hides entirely his slight body, his thin legs. He wears a dark-blue hand-knitted woollen hood-cum-scarf. It hides his short, dark-blond hair. He must be so hot... He will never smile again - the smile which reached his round, blue eyes and exposed his already well-formed, white, even teeth. Father is holding Bartus's left hand.

The weather is muggy. Close.

Then Mamma in a navy-blue summer suit. A pleated skirt and short-sleeved three-quarter length jacket. A morsel of red silk with tiny white polka dots is peeping out of the breast-pocket of the jacket. She had folded it so nicely, like a miniature open fan, and stitched it to the inside of the pocket. That was long ago, before the war, when she was a very pretty, beautifully turned-out woman only just in her forties. And her shoes... I see them so plainly to this day. I would recognise them among thousands and thousands of pairs of shoes, now, sixty years later. Neat, navy-blue court shoes with a sturdy, yet dainty, medium heel. They are plain except for a small bow in front of soft, pliant leather folded double. Mamma is holding Bartus's right hand... Mamma raises her head and looks up at the window - she knows we are standing there watching out for them. How grave, how sad the expression on her face!

Aunt Rose - Father's only sibling and his younger sister - a tall, slim woman. Her husband - Uncle Dolek - a big, heavy, kindly man.

I do not see my own face, but Joseph's features have disappeared in a face like a piece of raw, red flesh, The agony of the endless march, the visceral grief, the sobbing... How could they not touch God? Move Him? I did not know that a human being's vocal chords could produce a sound like that ... It tears one apart. It chills one to the very bone.

We have lived with that image for sixty years - the endless procession of Jews being led to the cattle-trucks. Men, women and children. There were so many children. Little ones carried in rucksacks - just the head and a pair of frightened eyes peeping out. Toddlers carried piggy-back. Very tiny ones in the parents' arms or even inside the lapels of a coat. There were whole families. Grand-parents - elderly, frail people only just able to shuffle along. Invalids. Cripples. And young men and women holding their children by the hand, supporting an infirm father, a stricken mother... And they were burdened with every-

day, homely possessions - bedding, clothing, cooking utensils...

And to add to the dreadful torment inflicted upon them, the immeasurable cynicism evinced towards them, the Jews were officially permitted to carry fifteen kilos of luggage each. People were very concerned about excess weight. They feared they might be punished if their luggage exceeded the stated amount. How innocent, how naive we were: How ill we had understood their intentions, their resolve to wipe us out. And their unshakeable staunchness in the face of our suffering!

Well-educated, professional people tried to carry out their instructions, their regulations to the letter. I have read an account where a doctor, an obstetrician, was so concerned about his personal luggage not exceeding the stipulated fifteen kilos by a gramme that he weighed it most censoriously on the infant-scales he used daily in his surgery to weigh newborn babies.

Oh yes, they carried medical, dental instruments, weaving-looms, carpentry tools, mops, brushes, buckets for they believed they would continue to exercise their professions, their skills, earn their daily bread, keep themselves and their abodes clean... out there, in the East...

And. I remember, on both sides of the procession, every few paces or so, there was a fully armed German soldier wielding a long whip, like those carried by cattle-breeders, to help him "control" those very submissive crowds, to make them march more briskly, with military precision, in line... And the Jews like rag dolls, like wound-up puppets marched on...

Our Parents, Bartus, the Aunt and Uncle have gone on, disappeared from view, but the procession weaves on for a long time yet.... After a time, the sound of the marching feet diminishes, grows faint... All we can hear now is the echo dying, dying, dying...

The sky has become grey, overcast. It is drizzling. For the first time this week the sun has hidden its face in shame.

# CHOICES

By Irit Amiel

Translated from the Polish by  
Janina Fischler-Martinho

*This article was published in Tel Aviv KONTURA Vol XII. It is a selection of prose written in Polish by Jewish writers in Israel.*

ment and with a short, sharp snap adds one more child to the existing statistics of one-and-a-half-million other children.

Choice No. 2 - to go to the market place, where the deportation is taking place and join those who are being despatched to Treblinka, Oswiecim, Dachau, Majdanek - death by means of gas...

Choice No. 3 - she gobbles up all the food provisions which she finds in the apartment. At last she is replete. She cries. She drops off.

Twilight has already set in when she wakes up. It is dark and quiet. The shouting, the moans, the sobbing have ceased. She jumps out of the ground floor apartment window and begins her Odyssey - from which she will never come back, denounced by the very first two-half-penny informer... town and railway stations are just teeming with them

Choice No. 4 - she understands that she must not count on anyone, she must rely only on herself. Soundlessly, she slips out through the cellar window into the street - it is covered with broken window-pane glass, with rags and nasty, useless odds and ends, with rusty saucepans and chamber-pots, smashed furniture, scattered feathers, family photographs smudged with dirt and mud... All her life, into ripe old age, the image of that street will remain with her... It will haunt her in her nightmares...

In the meantime, however, as she is familiar with all the interconnecting doorways in her native town, under cover of darkness (luckily it is a moonless night) she reaches

the perimeter of the Ghetto and whilst the German guard is concentrating on lighting his cigarette, she crawls under the barbed-wire onto the Aryan side. Small, homely, a dark head-scarf over her fair hair, in a grey-brown coat made out of an old blanket, she cautiously creeps in the shadows cast by the buildings. It is curfew hour; there is not a living soul to be seen in the streets, only now and then she hears the footsteps of those black hob-nailed boots of a German patrol. Only just breathing, motionless, her small body clings to the wall of a building. Her heart pounds - she is frightened that the whole street can hear it.

Through an iron, slightly ajar, doorway, she deftly slips into the building and gently knocks on her parents' friends' door... Who is it? A low, muffled voice reaches her. It's me, Celinka Grin, please let me in, she asks humbly. The rattle of a chain. The door opens just a crack. Celinka, what are you doing here, at this time of night? Where is your Mamma, Daddy, Granny, Auntie, Uncle? They have taken them all, she whispers, please let me in. An almost feverish discussion takes place on the other side of the door... Mrs N. is in favour. Mr. N. is against. Come in my child, just for a moment, you know that we are forbidden to... It would place us in grave danger. It carries the death penalty...

She stands in the passage. It smells of good barley soup, it smells of home... "You must be hungry, Celinka. Here, take this bread, they push a thick slice of buttered bread into her hand, only go, go, for heaven's sake go... because

they'll shoot us... Only today posters have appeared, the death penalty is in force... Only today, this very day, the posters have appeared.... if someone offers shelter to a Jewish child..., you know...

She is back in the dark street, trapped like a little wild animal. She eats the bread, washes it down with her tears, turns numb at the imperious sound of the steel-tipped boots of the patrol. She has been to those who had accepted the family silver, cutlery for safekeeping. And to those who undertook to "guard" Mamma's black Persian lamb coat, Mamma's silver fox. And to those who so readily accepted the merchandise - the fabrics - to keep and never return? from Granny Ud's clothes shop, and nobody, but nobody, not even for a moment...

Never, even if she lives to be a hundred, will she learn anything new about human nature...

Finally, she reaches Andzia's flat. Andzia, a one time neighbour's maid - the neighbours had left, in good time, for the United States of America - the very same Andzia with whom she used to sing on a Sunday: "Today is Miss Andzia's day off... today, she, herself, is a Grand Dame..." Andzia is certainly not a Grande Dame, nor is she her own mistress; she has a little nook, a cell, in an apartment requisitioned by the Germans, but Andzia is a human being.

She pulls her into the cubby-hole, verminous though she is, she lays her in her own bed, brings a meal on a tray, carries the child out, gingerly, a brimming chamber-pot...

At the crack of dawn, so that the German family do not catch on, they steal out of the house. They catch a train which takes them to the country, to Andzia's friends, with whom she plies the black market - smuggling pork fat... The countryside is not far from Malkinia - last station but one before Treblinka.

The child still has three years of wandering from pillar to post - strangers' houses, peasant cottages, woods, towns, villages, townlets.

She called late at night. She was overwrought. I have never yet met her personally, and only knew her from telephone conversations; she would call from time to time to offer me words of praise for a story or a poem of mine which had appeared in the local paper.

One is always pleased to receive such a call, and yet one feels embarrassed... What can one say? One says "thank you" a hundred times, repeats meaningless formulae and one feels, briefly, a celebrity, a star...

This time, however, it was different. There was a force in her voice, an uncontrolled rage, a great bitterness. She asked sharply and who, if you please, is going to write about them? "Them." They who are paying for "those" years to this very day? Perhaps you should write yourself, I suggested timidly. And then something inside her burst, flooded out and a stream of scalding words, like a wave of boiling-hot lava, poured over the telephone wires. I turned on the recorder and listened quietly.

Take me for example, me, whose parents were snatched away straight from work when I was 10 years old. I was left with a childless auntie, my father's sister. She had made arrangements with a Polish woman who was coming to take me to the country, to place me with her family. Auntie went to work and never came back. And the Polish woman, who had accepted the money, simply never showed up...

Here I turned off the recorder, finished the conversation, and started to write.

What does a girl of 10 do, in the Ghetto, in 1942, amid a non-stop Aktion, a ceaseless round-up of Jews, when she is abandoned by God and people in a ground floor apartment, in a loft, in a cellar?

Choice No. 1 - she waits, on tenterhooks, for rescue, for help under a table covered with a floor-length cloth. She hides in the wardrobe. Under the bed. In the cupboard above the toilet, from where a German inspecting one-time Jewish apartments drags her out with a sigh of content-

She takes the cows out to graze, she washes dirty clothing, she carries buckets of water on a yoke from the well, she does the washing up, she weeps for loneliness, she tramps from place to place, she is hungry, she steals rancid potatoes from

the pigs' trough, she hides in stables, in wardrobes, she reads whatever comes to hand... She will always sing, slightly falsetto, Polish songs and, for a time, (when her hormones first become active) she even sings with Jurek T., in Warsaw, "Hey

Lads, to Arms" whilst cleaning and hiding in the cellar, in a sack of frozen potatoes, parts of a rusty hand-gun called "Parabellum.."

She will survive and she will live, live, live... She and her children and grandchildren. And maybe even great

grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren.

I, myself, however, having lived to see the 21st century, put this question to myself, which option would I have chosen - the N. couple's or Andzia's?

## AN INTRODUCTION BY NAT PIVNIK

My wife and I visited Poland in July 2001, with a group from Aish Hatorah. I am sure you will agree that our suffering, and the murder of our dear families and six million of our brothers and sisters, will always be remembered by the present and future generations of our people, when you read the following interesting article about our journey.

Gabbie Siever, Manchester

### FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT IN 12 DAYS

In the summer of 2001, Nat and Jill Pivnick joined an Aish Hatorah trip back to the country of Nat's childhood - Poland. The trip was led by Jonny Kirsch and it took a group of young students around some of the main sights of Poland for five days. Most of the participants had never met each other before, but the group was only small, and it didn't take long for us all to 'gel.' After spending five days in Poland we then went straight to Israel. Some very special friendships were formed as we shared in this experience of a lifetime

#### Day 1: Wednesday 4th July - Bedzin

The first place we visited, once in Poland, was Nat's home town - Bedzin. Nat took us to the place where the synagogue had stood.

I will never forget the look in his eyes as he said to us 'This is where we would all come on Shabbat, but our Shul is no longer here.'

The Shul had been burnt down by the Nazis, along with fifty Jewish homes, on September 9th, 1939. As we wandered through the narrow streets of Poland, we

tried to imagine ourselves walking through Nat's community. We walked passed the houses that had belonged to the Jews, noticing the marks left on the doorposts from their holy Mezuzos. We then visited Nat's street, and Nat's school where he took much joy in telling us stories from his childhood. After a long day we settled in a hotel in Cracow for the night, and prepared ourselves for the next day, when we were to tour Cracow, and then visit Auschwitz.

#### Day 2: Thursday 5th July

First thing Thursday morning we met up with our tour guides and explored the streets of Cracow. Its so alive! The very walls contain such spirit. We were shown around several synagogues, The Ramah Shul, The Itschak Shul, The Alte Shul - to mention but a few. They are all very different. Some large, some small. Some beautifully decorated with mystical paintings and words of prayers and some more simple in style. But all of them have a holiness that is so palpable - like I've never witnessed in any synagogue before. We walked on, passing schools, mikvahs, yeshivas - we were just beginning to get a feel of what a vibrant community Poland was. From there we moved

on to the Jewish cemetery, and then the time came to get on our coach, as we were to take that dreaded journey to Auschwitz.

As we arrived at Auschwitz I, we were greeted by those notorious gates bearing the motto "Arbeit Macht Frei." Auschwitz I had contained very few Jews and was a prison, rather than an extermination camp. The real shocks came later that day as we were taken through Auschwitz 2, more commonly known as Auschwitz-Birkenau. It was here that we saw piles of Jewish property: pots and pans, eye-glasses & shoes of every size, and suitcases with names and ages written on them. As we examined the cases, the names that were familiar jumped out at us, connecting those suitcases to friends or family in our very own lives. And then we were shown a sight that I will never forget.

As we walked into this next room I remember hearing gasps from my friends.

Before I even saw anything I sensed that I was about to be confronted with something very harsh. As I peered round the corner, there lay a huge amount of human hair. In all my life I had never felt so sick. Next came the barracks and the latrines, and we all lit candles along the way for those precious souls who had suffered so terribly. But worse was to come. As we came closer to the gas chambers death could be sensed in the air.

We walked through the 'shower room' and then straight through to the crematorium. And then we walked out into the fresh air. Alive.

We were suddenly more aware than ever of how lucky we were to have been given our lives.

For us to be able to walk through Auschwitz,

as tourists, without fear, or suffering, but with a Jewish identity that we could be proud of, was a powerful feeling.

We went back to the barracks and sat on the floor. Our wonderful leader, Debbie Grodzinsky, read to us a scene from a survivor's book called 'To vanquish the Dragon.' She chose a scene with a positive and inspiring message, and then another of our leaders, Johnny Newman, began singing 'Am Yisroel Chai.' Slowly and surely more of us began to join him, until we were all singing together.

From a place so filled with death we called out 'The People of Israel live.'

We then said 'Kadesh' by the ruins of the gas chambers that the Nazis had destroyed, and walked along the railway tracks, back to our coach. As the coach left we watched the barbed wire fences disappear from our sight, but never from our minds.

#### Day 3: Friday 6th July - Belzec

Having slept in a hotel in Jaroslaw, we rose early, piled on our coach and made our way to Belzec. We had no idea what to expect, but we were sure that we could take anything after what we had seen yesterday - I mean, what could be worse than Auschwitz? As we waited outside yet another barbed wire fence, Johnny Kirsch gave us some background information. He informed us that the reason we hadn't heard of Belzec is because, although 600,000 Jews were taken here, only two people survived. We were shocked when he instructed us to pick up any pieces of bone that we may find, and I personally didn't believe we would really find any human bone after all these years. How wrong I was.

Emptiness, all signs of evil disguised in a piece of

beautiful countryside. Now peacefulness replaces the terror, silence replaces the screams, laughing and normality of the neighbours lives, replacing the lives of the people who were murdered and lie under their footsteps. Bodies replaced with flowers, beauty filling a place of incomprehensible ugliness.

But there was no disguising those pieces of shattered bone, you don't have to be the world's greatest scientist to recognise a piece of someone's jaw, or a hip bone - pieces of shattered lives. We do all we can for these Jews by burying them in the proper way, giving them back a tiny bit of the dignity they deserve.

Emotionally drained, we climb back on the bus, and make for our next destination, Majdanek.

### **Majdanek**

As we came off the coach and entered Majdanek, we braced ourselves for the last camp we would see.

The weather had become incredibly hot, but no-one complained.

We were grateful that we had water, that we were allowed to sit down and rest, and that at the end of the day we would get back on our air conditioned coach, get taken to a hotel and freely observe Shabbos in peace.

The first thing we noted about Majdanek was the distance between the gas chambers, which greeted us at the beginning of the camp, and the crematorium, which was at the other end of the camp. This meant that the 'lucky ones' who were given the job of burning the bodies had to carry the bodies for miles across the camp. Our rucksacks suddenly seemed very light. Majdanek was left exactly as it was, the wooden barracks were dimly lit and extremely stuffy. There was one particular barrack filled with more shoes than a person can ever imagine, from floor to ceiling on all sides, the stench of feet was unbearable. There was also a barrack filled with hair, but this time I was warned first and so I did not enter.

As we walked on through the barracks an old Polish

man introduced himself to us. He claimed that as a child he had lived next door to the camp and had passed food through the fence to the Jews. He was a charming man full of blessings for each one of us. We were not sure whether to believe him or not. Some of us were really touched, others, including Nat, thought that he was making it up to either free his conscience or to have a laugh at our expense. Either way, he had certainly sparked off some interesting discussions.

The most memorable part of Majdanek for me was when we passed some flagpoles. We decided to put up the Israeli flag, it took a while but once it was up it was definitely worth the effort. It looked glorious.

We felt very proud and thankful to be able to stand in a place where Nazis had ruled and replace their flag with ours.

We then walked up hill to the top of Majdanek where we found the 'mound of ashes' - a huge hole that looked a little like a well, filled with ashes and a few bones. We said 'kadesh' again, lit some candles and read out some poems that we had been given in our booklets. I specifically remember the poem that Nat read:

**I BELIEVE IN THE SUN  
EVEN WHEN IT IS NOT  
SHINING,**

**I BELIEVE IN LOVE  
WHEN FEELING IT NOT,**

**I BELIEVE IN GOD EVEN  
WHEN HE IS SILENT.**

I recently discovered that this poem had been found written on the wall of a cellar where Jews had been in hiding.

### **Shabbos in Lublin**

After leaving another place of evil behind us our spirits began to lift as we looked forward to Shabbos. We booked into our hotel and prepared ourselves for what was to be the most memorable Shabbos in my life. We joined the few Jews of the Lublin community for Friday night prayers in what used to be the famous Yeshiva of Lublin.

We welcomed the shabbos with real joy, singing and

dancing from the depths of our souls.

We then brought the members of the community back to our hotel for our Friday night meal. We had a great time, singing and eating and taking in the warm and happy atmosphere - helped along by a few drinks! Jonny Kirsch entertained us all with his talent in dancing whilst balancing a bottle on his head, while our leader Debbie was kept happy by one of our old men from the community who had taken quite a shine to her! Nat sang to us his Yiddish songs with which we were very impressed, and then, on a more serious note Debbie spoke to us, giving over some moving and powerful messages. We sang a song from that week's torah portion with Bilam's famous blessing for the Jews: 'Ma tovu oholecho yaakov, Mishkanosecho Yisroel' and were taught a Niggun composed by Reb Shlomo Carlebach called the 'Cracower Niggun' which has stayed with me all year and lifts my spirits whenever I'm down. After an exhausting three days we were all ready to catch up on some much needed sleep, we said goodnight to the lovely people of the Lublin community and went to bed.

Shabbos morning, and some of us go back to the Yeshiva for service - I personally slept through most of Shabbos morning, waking up just in time for kiddush. In between Kiddush and lunch some of us studied more about Bilam's blessing to the Jews giving our song much more meaning. We were happy to find that the community had come again to join us for lunch, and the joyous atmosphere was carried right through Shabbos. In the afternoon we were given time to relax and later we were taken on a walking tour of Lublin. We then enjoyed the third meal and said goodbye to our beautiful Shabbos.

### **Motzei Shabbos in Krasnik**

After Shabbos had gone out we were told to quickly change, bring our torches and return once more to our coach. Excited and curious

we set off to our next destination, unsure of what was in store for us tonight. As we got off our coach and entered a huge building we were told that we were in Krasnik. The building was dark and dusty but with torches we could see an old Shul, with prayers written on the walls and lots of different rooms: one for the children's service, one for the main service etc. We climbed down some rickety stairs and found yet more space where we sat in a circle, lit some candles and poured out our hearts in song.

I closed my eyes and let the harmony of those sweet voices lift me into a new world filled with hope and meaning.

For a few minutes the pain of the past floated away, along with all of my worries of the future. All that mattered was that God has given me life, with a purpose, and everything I need to fulfil that purpose. From that night onwards I have always appreciated the specialness of 'Motzei Shabbos' - that time between Shabbos and the rest of the week, where we take the holiness of Shabbos, and bring it into a new week - a better week. Just as we were about to leave we passed through another room. We would have just passed through without much attention, but somebody had noticed something. Our attention was directed to the wall. We were totally blown away by what we saw in front of us. On the wall was written 'Ma tovu oholecha Yaakov, Mishkenotecha Yisrael', the very prayer which had dominated our discussions and songs throughout Shabbos! A perfect end to a perfect night.

### **Day 5: Sunday 8th July**

Sunday morning, our last day in Poland, we travel to Warsaw. We visit a place called Gora Kaiwaria, more commonly known as the village or 'Gur' from where the 'Gerer Chassidim' originate. We then visited the Warsaw Cemetery, followed by a tour of Warsaw. It was pouring with rain, I don't think I've ever been caught in such a heavy downpour! We went to the 'Umschlagplatz' where the Jews were gathered for deportation or shootings.

And then we saw the monument erected in memory of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It was amazing - on one side was sculptured proud men fighting for their freedom, and on the other side were tired men, looking beaten. It was very expressive.

Eventually, it was time to leave. We were especially sorry to part with the Pivnicks, they had given us so much and we had become very fond of them.

### Israel

After a long wait in the airport we finally boarded our plane. The excitement of going to Israel was almost too much to bear. A few hours later we were greeted by Tel Aviv Airport. We rushed to Yerushalayim, deposited our bags at our lodgings and went straight to the Western wall.

As we walked down the stone steps, carrying the Israeli flag behind us, tears welled up in my eyes.

At last we were in our holy land.

All week I had dreamed of running up to the wall, the only thing left of our holy Beis Hamikdosh, and praying to G-d with all my heart and soul. We stood a small distance from the wall, and watched the sunrise as the men read out Tehillim.

As we discussed coming from darkness to light, the sun, as if in agreement, gradually began to light up the sky, and with it our lives.

Eventually I had the chance to touch the wall. As I added my tears to all the millions already absorbed into the wall, everything from the passed week flashed through my mind. And I looked up the wall, and into the sky. And I acknowledged my Creator, my loving G-d, who had taken me from a place of terror and evil, to a place filled with His Presence. To a place where the first thing that we are greeted with is 'Shalom'-Peace. And I eagerly await the time when that greeting will spread right across Israel and shine out to the rest of the world. And G-d's Presence will be known throughout His entire universe, forever.

# The Kitaj Exhibition at the National Gallery London, November 2001 - February 2002 'in the Aura of Cezanne and other Masters'

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

RB. Kitaj was born in USA in 1932, his Jewish maternal grandmother came from Russia and his stepfather Dr. W.Kitaj, was a Viennese Jew. He is then, an American Jewish painter. After the war, he served in the American Army in Germany. He spent much of his working life in London, having studied at the Royal College of Art with Hockney and others of the 'School of London.' He left the UK after 40 years, following tragic death of his young wife, Sandra Fisher, which he linked to the attitude of critics to his work.

One of Kitaj's main interests is representation of the Holocaust.

A most interesting article by Julia Herman about Kitaj's work appeared in this Journal in 1994. (no.16 p 40)

The painting entitled 'If Not, Not' (1975-6) is a main work on Holocaust and appears in the exhibition. It is also presented as a tapestry which hangs in the main hall of the new British Library in London. In this painting the gatehouse of Auschwitz can be seen in the background. In the foreground there is a beautiful landscape inspired by Giorgione's painting 'The Tempest,' which is in the Accademia in Venice. In that painting a mother holding a baby sits, appearing happily unaware of the approaching tempest. It is likely that the point of using this reference in 'If Not, Not,' to the unsuspecting and unprotected mother and child, is the approaching danger of the Holocaust. It has been said

that the landscape represents that which formed the approach to Buchenwald. In the centre of Kitaj's painting there is a ram representing sacrifice. A reclining figure of a man is almost certainly T.S. Eliot, and there are other references to 'The Waste Land,' which is Eliot's great elegy on the aftermath of the First World War.

In agreement with the title of the Exhibition some of Kitaj's work shown relates, painting by painting, to work of famous masters. The most striking, for me, relates to the Uccello 'Breaking Down of the Jews' Door' depicting the approaching attack and murder by a lynch mob of a Jewish family in their house. This is a part of the altarpiece in Urbino on 'The profanation of the Host.'(1468). The Jews are trapped inside the house, waiting for the inevitable. The door is about to be kicked in by the lynch party. Allegedly the Pope was so pleased with the lynching of the Jewish family --who had been accused of burning the Holy Bread used in the Mass--that he arranged for a church to be built on the site of the Jews' house. Kitaj's response is a painting entitled 'The Eclipse of God' (1997-2000) which depicts an identical event, but taking place in our own time.

The key issue that I wish to bring out is the difference between Kitaj and the famous Jewish artists of the 'School of London;' Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossof, in that Kitaj is openly attempting to respond

to the Holocaust. Auerbach, who came with the Kindertransport and never saw his parents again, repetitively paints cityscapes and landscapes, particularly of his immediate environment in Primrose Hill and local building sites. He states, in a film on view at the Royal Academy in November 2001 accompanying his Retrospective Exhibition there, that he was not overwhelmed by the death of his parents; 'It happened,' he said, 'and the 24 word letters forwarded by the Red Cross, ceased.' He accepted it.

Auerbach also paints portraits, extensively reworked, of his son, and of women who are important in his life. They sat for him for years for each portrait, and critics have commented that the nature of these portraits suggests unhappiness. I feel that they may subconsciously allude to the Holocaust and the loss of his parents.

However, it is evident that Kitaj is the only one of these artists who makes a deliberate and sustained attempt to represent the Holocaust. He states this in a film which was on view in the National Gallery Nov. 2001 in conjunction with his exhibition.

When our Journal is published it will be too late to see this exhibition but the tapestry remains permanently on view at the British Library, and the exhibition catalogue includes an interview with Kitaj and an essay by Anthony Rudolph about Kitaj and his work

Eleven years ago I witnessed a demonstration I'll never forget. It wasn't reported. I doubt if more than a handful of people even knew it had taken place. It was in Jerusalem at the start of the Gulf War. Saddam Hussein had begun launching SCUD missiles at Israel. Every time the siren sounded we had to put on our gas masks and go to our sealed rooms. We didn't know then, we didn't know till the end of the war, whether those missiles contained chemical or biological weapons and we had to assume the worst. And it was then that in the little square in Rechov Melech George, opposite Ben Yehudah Street, that a little group of Holocaust survivors gathered, carrying placards. They said: "We came to Israel to escape death by gas; and now we're facing it again." I don't know when I saw something more quietly moving. There were no voices raised; no anger; just a deep traumatic sadness, that after everything that had happened in the Shoah, Jews were again being attacked, just because they were there.

And so we have met, year after year on this day, simply to remember and remind others of what happened once and must never happen again, if we are to retain our sanity, our humanity. And this year, it's happening again. I don't speak today about Israel. I spoke about it yesterday, and I'll do so again on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week on our gatherings for Yom Ha'atzmaut. I speak only about the Jews of Europe, about the five shuls in France attacked over Pesach, one of them burned to the ground; about the attacks on shuls in Brussels and Antwerp; about the lorry filled with explosives that crashed into a shul in Djerba, killing thirteen people; about the attacks on shuls in Canada, about the further attacks on shuls in France yesterday; about the son of a friend who was quietly walking down the street in London when he was attacked and taken to hospi-

# YOM HASHOA

Speech by the  
Chief Rabbi,  
Professor Jonathan Sacks,  
on Yom Hashoa,  
at The Logan Hall, London,  
on Sunday 14th April 2002

tal, his jaw broken; or the two girls, members of a Jewish youth movement, who were also attacked in London on their way back from a Shabbaton. These were not Israeli targets. They were Jewish targets. This is anti-Semitism - I was going to say, pure and simple, but anti-Semitism is never pure and rarely simple.

How did it happen? Because in the past 12 months the floodgates have opened to everything we have fought against for the past 57 years and a wave of hate has filled the world. It began in Durban at the beginning of September when, at a series of gatherings, there was a sustained campaign of anti-Jewish slogans, cartoons taken from Der Sturmer, and public holocaust denial. And where? At a United Nations Conference Against Racism. And within one week, the tragedy of 11 September shook the world, reminding us what we should never have forgotten, that an attack on Jews never ends with Jews.

And since then a kind of madness has seized significant parts of the world, using every evil anti-Semitic myth, from the blood libel to the protocols of the elders of Zion. In Britain a cleric is arrested for distributing a video in which he is seen telling his followers, 'How do you deal with the Jews? You kill the Jews.' In Pakistan a journalist from the Wall Street Journal is murdered in front of a video camera which shows him at his last moments being forced at

gunpoint to admit that he's a Jew and his parents are Jews.

Anti-Semitism is a virus, and like a virus it mutates, and because it mutates, it gets past our immune systems, which are still on the lookout for last year's virus. That is what happened in the 19th century when the religious anti-Judaism of the middle ages turned into racial anti-Semitism; and it's what's happening now that racial anti-Semitism is turning into a religious anti-Zionism that calls Zionism racism and defines all Jews as Zionists. There are conflicts going on all over the world, in Chechnya, the Balkans, Kashmir, India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Venezuela, and a dozen other places, but only one that has turned into myth and hate and attacks targets all over the world. And we must continue to fight it; not for ourselves alone; not just for the sake of Jews throughout the world; not just for the sake of decency and truth; but because blaming Jews is the classic resort of every tyrant and totalitarian who wants to deflect criticism from his own regime which denies freedom and democracy and basic human rights to his own people. So it was, so it is and so it always will be. That is why anti-Semitism is a crime against humanity.

Friends, I don't want to exaggerate. Britain is and hopefully always will be a tolerant, decent country which we love. But what shall I say to the French couple we were with over Pesach whose son 'phoned them while we were

with them to say, 'Mum, Dad, we've got to leave France, it's no longer safe for us here.' What do I say to my colleague, the Chief Rabbi of Brussels, beaten up as he was walking back from shul a few months ago? *Im hacharesh tachanshi la'et kazot*, as Mordechai told Esther; we cannot be silent at such a time. Which is why, six weeks ago, at a meeting of the interparliamentary council against anti-Semitism I sounded the alarm.

In the eleven years since I became Chief Rabbi one of the greatest privileges of my life has been coming to know our Holocaust survivors. You taught us what it is to have the courage to survive, and remember, and tell the story, so that it should never be forgotten. You taught us to teach these things diligently to our children so that they will fight racism when their turn comes. Because of you, today we have a National Holocaust Exhibition and a National Holocaust Memorial Day. But most of all you taught us what it is to remember without hate, and turn the shadow of death into an affirmation of life. I will never forget that it was you, the Holocaust survivors, who identified most strongly with the Bosnians in 1991 and the Kosovan Albanians in 1999; both of them Muslim populations. You showed us that remembering the Holocaust doesn't mean just fighting for our fellow Jews, though it surely means that it means fighting for the humanity that transcends our differences; and for a world in which innocent people are no longer hated for the colour of their skin or the nature of their faith. And today we rededicate ourselves to that cause, knowing how much is at stake and how much still has to be done; knowing that God has made many races, many faiths, but only one world in which to live together, and it is getting smaller all the time. You voice, the voice of the survivors, is the voice of sanity; and I pray we heed it now. Amen.

**Commemoration of The Shoah and the  
Warsaw Ghetto Uprising  
Logan Hall London WC 1 on 2nd April 2002**

# YOM HASHOA

**A personal view of a survivor  
by Witold Gutt**

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

had not been there. This, I feel, is a most important point, often transgressed by 'self-proclaimed experts' on the Holocaust. The voice of survivors should be heard more often while some of us are still here.

Rabbi Dr.A.Levy, the Sephardi Chief Rabbi, gave a most interesting account of the reasonable treatment of Jews by Salazar, the leader of Portugal during the War and the action of various diplomats in Portugal and France, some British, who saved many Jewish lives by issuing visas to Jews.

Before the next speech there was a marvellous performance by the North-West London Jewish Day School Choir, very young children, of Eli-Eli I Memories.

We then turned to remembering the Warsaw Ghetto. Martin Kurzer FRCS, a second generation speaker, summarised briefly but with great clarity how the 500,000 Warsaw Jews were destroyed in the Ghetto. The population

was reduced to 35,000 between July and September 1942 by their murder in Treblinka. At the end of 1942 a few hundred Jews conducted the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and fought the Germans, the first such resistance in Europe. Two Thousand SS with tanks fought for one month to liquidate the Ghetto. The Jewish population of Poland was reduced from 3.5 million to 20,000. Martin Kurzer referred to the current crisis in Israel and the over-riding importance of the survival of the Jewish State as seen against the background of the Holocaust.

Cantor Robins with his powerful voice sang the Hymn of the Partisans.

Thereafter a 17-year old schoolboy, Adam Kraus, described his visit to Auschwitz with a school party.

Ben Helfgott, as Chairman of the Yad Vashem Committee and of the 45 Society, described the horror

of the Holocaust and illustrated this by the 'Testimony of the Living,' in which four 13-year old girls wrote down under their photographs in 1942 their feelings and fears as they saw young people dying around them. Ben said that these girls did not survive. The pictures of the girls and their testimonies written in Polish (reproduced in the programme), I found very moving and heart-breaking. It also made me very angry. I could identify with them as I was the same age at that time and in the Przemysl ghetto, soon to be sent to the camp at Krakow-Plaszow.

Maureen Lipman CBE gave a reading of Holocaust poetry. She was followed by the Israeli Ambassador Dr. Zvi Shtauber who gave an important address on the present predicament of the State of Israel and the importance of Jews everywhere giving their support to the Israeli cause.

The last speaker was Mrs. Jo Wagerman OBE, the President of the Board of Deputies, who spoke well and emphasized that though Israel was in difficulties, its existence and that of its Army ensured that the situation of world Jewry now was not comparable to that in 1939 when we depended on other people's politicians and were generally quite helpless.

Mr. Henry Grunwald QC who acted throughout as a most effective Chairman, proposed a vote of thanks to the organisers.

The meeting concluded by Cantor Robins and the Choir singing Adon Olom, Hatikvah, and the National Anthem.

It was certainly a memorable and worthwhile event.

This meeting occurred at a crucial time for Israel with suicide bombers entering Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa almost daily and the Israeli Army sweeping the West Bank for the leaders of this terror.

The Chief Rabbi, Dr. Jonathan Sacks, gave an excellent opening address describing the reaction in Europe to the events in Israel; attacks on Synagogues in France and Belgium and anti-Semitic attacks on individuals even in the UK. His speech was intended as an alert both on the threat to Israel and the wider threat to Jews everywhere, since the anti-Israeli feelings have become translated into hatred of Jews once again.

He mentioned Holocaust survivors as an example of a group which has managed to get through and used its experiences to oppose racial hatred everywhere and in particular when it was directed against Moslems in Bosnia.

The presence of AJEX standards, faultlessly handled by Jewish ex-service men added dignity to the occasion. Cantor Robins and the Shabbaton Choir performed Shomer Yisroel beautifully.

The candle-lighting by survivors when death camps were named was moving as ever.

This was followed by choir singing of Elmale Rachamim, Yizkor and, most importantly, Kaddish for the six million performed by Cantor Robins and the Choir.

The next section of the meeting consisted of various readings.

Rabbi Steven Katz spoke of the special experiences of survivors which could not be imagined by anyone who



Members of the '45 Aid Society lighting candles on Yom Hashoa.



Some of our members at the Annual Purim Party.

The National UK Holocaust Memorial Day in the London Borough of Lewisham was observed by a service in the Catford and Bromley Synagogue, an event in the Broadway Theatre, Catford and a week long exhibition in the Town Hall.

At the Synagogue the afternoon service commenced with the unveiling of a newly erected Granite Holocaust Memorial designed by one of its members, Phin. Levy. Incorporated in the memorial is a Stainless Steel Menorah (candelabra) with places for six candles; one for each million Jewish men, women and children who perished during the Holocaust. These candles were lit, in turn, by the Mayor of Lewisham, Councillor Dave Sullivan representing Borough residents. Rachel Levy, wife of the designer, and members and friends of the Synagogue who were survivors of, or lost

## National Holocaust Memorial Day 27th January 2002

in the London Borough of Lewisham and Catford and Bromley Synagogue

Phin. Levy

family during the Holocaust also lit candles. Children of the Synagogue's religious education classes read poems and stories as well as singing, as a choir, songs all relevant to Holocaust Remembrance. Reverend Dr. Amit addressed the congregation and Psalms were read. Councillor Pauline Morrison, Chair of Holocaust Working Party, read the English translation of Psalm 121 which Elkan Pressman had previously read in Hebrew. The Hebrew and English translation of Psalm 130 were read by Louis Kleinman and the Synagogue Channan Joe Burchell. The service concluded with the congregation reciting the Kadish (Memorial Prayer) followed with an English translation read by Reverend Dr. Amit,

### Continuation

A thank you to those who had taken part in the service together with an explanation of the background to the Memorial's design concept and facts surrounding its manufacture was given by Phin. Levy. The explanation also touched on the manufacture of a complementary portable Menorah which was to be used for the first time later in the afternoon at the Broadway Theatre event. This Menorah has, painted on the back plate, a line drawing of burning buildings created by Emma, the now married daughter of a Synagogue member, Joan Goldberg.

Broadway Theatre was the venue for the remainder of the afternoon with children from local schools and youth groups performing readings, songs, music and dance

which touched on the Holocaust, acts of Genocide which have or are still being carried out in the world today and the intolerance between people of various ethnic backgrounds. The six candle portable Menorah, mentioned above, was lit by children from various Religious Groups in the Borough.

The Mayor Councillor Dave Sullivan and the minister from Catford and Bromley Synagogue, Reverend Dr. Zev Amit both spoke on the need to remember and not forget the atrocities which many people have witnessed in their lifetime and which should not be repeated in the lifetime of future generations. The Mayor also congratulated and thanked all those who had partaken in and organized the afternoon's events.

A civic reception hosted by the Mayor and catered by the Synagogues Ladies Society rounded off the afternoon's proceedings.

It was with some hesitation that a joint committee from Northwood United Synagogue and Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue undertook to organise a 3-day Event for local non-Jewish secondary schools to mark the second national Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2002. What if teachers were not interested in bringing their students, or maybe were not able to take time out of the busy educational schedule? What if our plans to educate young people about the horrors of discrimination and genocide were inadequate? Our initial worries proved to be unfounded, for we received bookings from 9 schools and a total of nearly 600 students aged from 14 to 17. At the end of the three days, it was generally agreed by teachers, students, speakers and visitors that the considerable amount of work put into the Event by the Northwood Holocaust Committee and other helpers was very worthwhile.

As we offered slightly different programmes at the centres, we divided each school group into two so that they experienced all aspects of the Event and could then discuss their respective experiences when back at school. Students attended one of five

## HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY EVENT IN NORTHWOOD 29 - 31 January 2002

sessions held over the three days and each session started with the lighting of 6 yahrzeit candles. At the NPLS centre, students watched a 20-minute monologue about the Holocaust entitled 'The Lightmakers'. This was followed by an interactive debriefing session, led by an Educator. The Northwood United Synagogue had a display of memorabilia and pictures relating to the Holocaust. A bookstall offered for sale books on the Holocaust from three publishing houses as well as independently published books written by Holocaust Survivors. The Beth Shalom Holocaust exhibition 'Another Time, Another Place', set up in the United Synagogue, gave students the opportunity to do a worksheet activity and to discuss the content with an Educator or a Survivor. Both centres had speakers who had left Germany before war broke out, or who had survived the Holocaust.

We are indebted to Ben Helfgott who provided the names of a number of Survivors, all of whom were prepared to help us by talking to the students of their experiences, accom-

panying students around the Beth Shalom exhibition and participating in question-and-answer sessions. We were delighted, and very grateful, to welcome Sam Dresner, Michael Etkind, Solly Irving, Kopel Kendall, Krulik Wilder and Ben's sister Mala Tribich,

The students were made aware of how lucky they were to be able to hear the speakers, since the next generation will not be able to hear their first-hand witness accounts.

A visitor to the Event, Northwood and Ruislip MP John Wilkinson, described the occasion as 'a very worthwhile event'.

Before the students left the two centres, they were invited to note on a postcard their comments about the Holocaust Event and a pledge of what each one, as an individual, could do to prevent another Holocaust. Here is a brief selection of what they wrote:

- 'This was a once in a lifetime experience. The things that were said were very moving and made me think about others more.'
- 'I should try to be more understanding of other people's situations and try to

put myself in other people's shoes.'

- 'After hearing about the Holocaust, I am going to try to be more friendly and less judgmental towards others.'

- 'Today has been an emotional experience and it has shown me how wrong it is to make people suffer for what they believe in.'

- 'I have learnt that we will never understand the full horror of the Holocaust, but listening to a Survivor can bring us closer.'

- 'To tell the amazing stories that I heard from a Survivor of the Holocaust to my family and friends. To pass them on and to remind people of the terrible things that people suffered during that awful time.'

- 'It's better to be told by personal experience than by book.'

- 'We are the future generation, so it is important for us to understand.'

- 'Thank you for the time you gave up to tell us about your lives.'

- 'I entered the Synagogue oblivious of what the Holocaust was. I left absolutely stunned. Thank you!'

**Valerie Mellor**  
For the Northwood  
Holocaust Committee

## REUNION: 5TH MAY 2002



'BOYS' from abroad lighting the candles in the memory of the six million.



Michael Preston, Moniek Goldberg and Aron Zylberszac at the reunion.

It is now more than six years since *"The Boys, Triumph Over Adversity"* was published. Although it was not my last book on a Holocaust theme, it was, and remains, the one that has given me the most satisfaction to write, not least because of the many Boys (and Girls) with whom it put me in contact, here in Britain, in Israel, in the United States, in Canada and elsewhere in the world.

In my most recent book, *"The Righteous"*, which is to be published later this year, the story of several of the Boys who were saved or helped by Gentiles has its place: that book, too, brought me in contact with many remarkable people, both those who were saved, and those who saved them.

On my desk there are always manuscripts of survivors' memoirs, which have been sent to me in the hope that I can help find a publisher, which sometimes I am able to do. It is encouraging to see how many survivors are still putting pen to paper (even if they now use a computer). Many publishers are willing to publish Holocaust memoirs, pre-eminent among these publishers is Frank Cass, whose *Library of Survivors' Testimony*, issued by Valentine Mitchell, has in the last ten years issued twenty-eight volumes.

Receiving the manuscript of a Holocaust memoir is always an exciting moment. It is even more exciting when a published memoir arrives through the post, or is pushed through my letterbox - as happened yesterday - by the author. Among the most

# HERE AND NOW

## A HISTORIAN'S REFLECTIONS

Sir Martin Gilbert

recent memoirs to reach me is Jerzy Lando's *Saved By My Face*. It is incredible how much can be told, as he tells it, graphically and wisely, in a mere 224 pages.

How can teachers and students know what a survivor's memoir contains? Unfortunately, very few memoirs have an index: Jerzy Lando's memoir is no exception to this rule. It is a pity that so many publishers neglect this essential tool. Without an index, how can one know, without reading every single page, if Piotrkow or Lodz, Treblinka or Skarzysko-Kamienna, Dachau or Theresienstadt, is mentioned. It is a formidable - actually an impossible - task, when there are so many memoirs, to know where to begin to look up a particular place in which one is interested.

Then there are the themes that memoirs might include: the ghetto, slave labour, deportation, the Righteous, the death marches, liberation. Are they mentioned? With no index as a guide, the reader might read every page and even then discover that the place or theme does not appear at all. The student in search of a particular aspect of the Holocaust for a project or a paper, or the teacher wanting to recommend a memoir that deals with the

topic under review, will have an impossible task if every un-indexed memoir has to be read in its entirety.

How can one possibly know if the places, or the topics, in which one is interested are in a book of memoirs at all? The answer is coming to hand. A new scheme has recently been launched which will help rectify this. Starting a year ago, each Holocaust memoir is being presented in a five- to ten-page summary, with a listing of themes, and with quotations from the text, to enable all students and teachers to see if a particular memoir will be of help or not in the scheme of study, in the essay to be written, in the class paper to be presented. The project is called the Holocaust Memoir Digest. I can strongly recommend it.

One other point has often puzzled me. Many memoirs are rich in geographic aspects: every Boy recalls the trains and travels and incarcerations of the war years, or the layout of the ghetto. Jerzy Lando's book, for example, is rich in information about the Warsaw Ghetto. Yet, in the main, few memoirs have a map (or maps) to show the reader the places mentioned on the text, to enable the reader to see where the events described in the memoir - events central to

our understanding of the Holocaust - are taking place. This gap is also being rectified by the Holocaust Memoir Digest project.

As well as the detailed summaries of each memoir, a map, or if needed several maps, are drawn specially to show each location mentioned in the memoir: thus, not only does Elie Wiesel's home town of Sighet appear on one of the Digest maps relating to his pioneering work, but also the towns in which his aunts lived, the places where he and his family went on holiday before the war - indeed, all the locations he mentions.

I was so impressed by the ability of the Holocaust Memoir Digest to make survivors' memoirs more accessible, and more useful, to the next generation of students, that I agreed to draw the maps myself, and to do so in colour, a new technique for me. Although this work takes up time, it is, I believe, time well spent.

To end on a personal note, I have recently embarked on a large-scale project, which I expect will take several years: a comprehensive five-volume *Atlas-Encyclopaedia of Jewish History*. My aim is to draw at least a thousand maps, each on some aspect of Jewish history. Perhaps some of you who read this article will have ideas about what aspects of Jewish history I should try to map - from the Garden of Eden to (why not?) the location of each annual 45-Aid Society reunion, starting, even before the society was formally founded, in The Refectory, Golders Green!

# ON LIVING IN EXILE

Rafael F. Scharf

*Rafael E. Scharf was born in Cracow and came to England in 1939. He served in the British Army during the Second World War and by the end of it was a member of a war crimes investigation unit. He has written and lectured extensively and most poignantly about the vanished world of Polish Jewry. He was a co-founder of the Jewish Quarterly, as well as of the Institute of Polish Jewish Studies in Oxford.*

anti-semitic "tendency" or "instinct" (I do not know how to call it - one would not grace these moral deviations with a term like 'philosophy') that Jews as a nation, as an ethnic entity, have survived. If, in the course of centuries, there had been no anti-semitism in the Diaspora (an anti-semitite - runs one of the definitions - is a person that hates Jews more that they deserve it) but only a welcoming, friendly reception (which fortunately (?) does not threaten), with a few exceptions of religious enclaves, all trace of Jews would have gone.

I think that the way I perceive this country in this respect says something flattering about it. Jews offer a sort of acid test of the degree of civilisation a country has reached. Some time ago I published a collection of essays entitled "Poland, what have I to do with Thee - Essays without prejudice" - I am tempted to elaborate the theme under the title: "England, what have I to do with Thee..." I think that if one's fate was to live one's life in exile - England proved to be a good haven.

Obstacles to "assimilation" are twofold - from the inside and from the outside. On the one hand this society has a high opinion of its specific character and with its herd-instinct defends itself against an outside influence and the dilution of its essence. On the other hand, our individual internal landscape, attachment to our own forms, our perception of our role in this world, a notion of what in this process of adaptation constitutes "gain" and what constitutes "loss", our emotional engagement in the fate of this country - all this marks the process of our

"assimilation".

In my case - if this were to throw some additional light on the problem - my Judaism, such as it is, distinguishes me from my English surroundings. Also this last war - even though I served in it as a British soldier in a British army uniform, was for me, a Polish Jew, something different than for my "brothers in arms".

When it comes to "the emotional engagement in the fate of the country - something which I consider to be an important touchstone of identity - I confess I do not quite see what one should worry about: whether a bit more or a bit less prosperous, whether it plays this or that part in the world's league - those are not matters which cause me sleepless nights. What does cause me such nights is concern for the future of Israel, where at stake is the very existence of that State.

What did we know and think of England before we landed on these shores (in the majority of cases not out of choice)? In my case I am talking of the time where the sun never set on the British Empire, when the maps of the world were coloured red, when there was a popular myth of the might of the Empire coupled with an idea of an Englishman as somebody by nature superior and of higher rank.

I had been preparing myself for my journey to England for some time. It was not a simple matter. To start with, one had to secure some means of material support. Also procure documents to enable one to squeeze through the needle's eye at the border.

I had a card to prove that I was a "foreign correspon-

dent", working for "Nowy Dziennik", a Jewish daily in the Polish language appearing at that time in Cracow, as well as a letter of acceptance to the London School of Economics, in the department of Colonial Administration, in order to write a doctor's thesis in that subject (I had a Master's degree in Law from the Jagiellonian University in Cracow) - Poland had at that time ambitions to acquire colonies in Africa and any expertise in the field, acquired at source, might have qualified me for a new career - perhaps the Governorship of Zanzibar?

Great Britain was at that time a "Mandatory Power", governing Palestine on behalf of the League of Nations. Great Britain was entrusted with the task of developing that country and fulfilling the "Balfour Declaration", i.e. the creation of the Jewish National Home in Palestine (where precisely that "in" was has been marked in blood).

Having, not unnaturally, its own interests in view, Great Britain interpreted the promises of the Balfour Declaration, as we Jews saw them, less and less favourably. I was at that time an active member of the radical Zionist party led by Vladimir Jabotinski. I viewed Great Britain as a political opponent with whom, one way or another, one would have to struggle and whom it was important to get to know - that was one of the reasons for coming here. I did not know it would be for life.

I would like to devote a few words to another "I" of the Polish Jewish variety, whose career marked him out of the common herd. His name was Isaac Deutscher. He was born in 1907, his father owned a well known Jewish printing-house. In my "conducted tours" of Cracow, I always pause in front of a house in Dietla Street, where on a side wall one can still distinguish the traces of an old shop-sign "Deutscher's Printing Works". His father, stemming like my own from Chrzanow, was a learned man, deeply orthodox, but with an irresistible pull towards Western, mainly German, culture. Young Isaac

One of the definitions of an "I" is a person whose centre of gravity is outside his body. There are millions of us around the world, hundreds of thousands in Great Britain alone, of different dates and origins. It might be worthwhile to look into the nature and state of mind of such a creature - I shall start with myself.

I came to London from Cracow in Poland a year before the outbreak of war (when we refer to the 'War' it is known which war we have in mind) - thus I have lived in this country uninterruptedly for over 60 years. My wife with whom I happily share my life is English, we have three children, now grown up, and five grandchildren. I have mastered the language to a certain extent, I do not try any more to get rid of the remnants of my 'foreign' sounding accent (I do not know how I would sound if I tried), that bit of "foreignness" suits me. I have gained, consciously and subconsciously, a modicum of knowledge about this country which allows me, on occasions, to take part in serious conversations on current topics. I owned a business which secured a stable existence to the family. I have a wide circle of friends, many of them - because of my wife's work - in academic circles. Nothing exceptional to talk about, an average profile of an ordinary member of the middle class.

The question arises therefore - and this is at the core of these deliberations - why have I not "assimilated", why do I not think of this country as "mine", why do I remain, in a deep sense, a "stranger"? This does not trouble me, I consider this state of affairs to be natural. I would like at this moment to note - because this is for me important, perhaps the most important factor - that through all these years I do not recall (I would not have forgotten it) a single anti-semitic incident directed against me personally. It does not mean that I am not aware that anti-semitism in various forms and guises did not and does not exist in this country. I am inclined to the view that it is due, very largely to this

was growing up in that singular atmosphere, not uncommon in many Jewish households, where there was a true cult of books, those "holy" ones, like the Talmud, as well as those secular, like the poetry of Heine or Mickiewicz. From a young age Isaac was displaying literary talents and wrote poetry. His father saw to it that he received the traditional Jewish education in "the cheder" and cherished hopes that he would become a rabbi. But Isaac had plans of his own. At the age of 18 he cut his side-locks, cast his "kaftan" and characteristic black cap which were a sort of orthodox uniform, left the parental home and settled in Warsaw, where he soon joined the ranks of the illegal communist party.

Sensitive to human suffering and the omnipresent manifestations of social injustice, he fell - like many of his contemporaries - for the attraction of the "scientific" theory and political movement which was set to cure that injustice (and on the way, as it were, also to solve the "Jewish question"). He soon became the editor of various semi-legal and underground publications. In 1931 he made a journey through the Soviet Union. On his return he organised, within the party, the first cells of anti-Stalinist opposition - the cause of the split was official thesis that "Social-Democracy was the enemy of the working class, the twin of National-Socialism". Soon after he was expelled from the party and, as he told me many times, "he was under careful observation of two agents - the State police and a volunteer from the Stalinist party".

In April 1939 Deutscher came to London as a correspondent of "Nasz Przegląd" - a Jewish daily in the Polish language published in Warsaw. The editor of "Nowy Dziennik" in Cracow informed me of his arrival and asked me to meet him on arrival, which naturally I did - by that time I already had a year's experience in London. We remained in loose contact, I watched with admiration and a little envy his impressive career as a jour-

nalist and writer in a new country and a new language. He joined the editorial board of "The Economist", as their expert on the Soviet Union, also became a correspondent of "The Observer". At the end of the war he abandoned the ephemeral career of a journalist and devoted himself to something more worthy of his talents and knowledge. In 1949 there appeared his first, controversial work: "Stalin - a political biography" which reached many editions, has been translated into many languages and established Deutscher as an authority on all matters Russian and a historian of the revolution. Now there followed his magnum opus, the achievement of his life, a three-volume biography of his hero Trotsky: "The Prophet Armed" (1954), "The Prophet Unarmed" (1959), "The Prophet Outcast" (1963) - monumental work where Deutscher shows himself also a master of English prose. That biography is based on materials deposited in the Trotsky archives at Harvard. Deutscher had access to them by special permission of Trotsky's widow, Natalia Sedov - other than that they were to be locked up till the end of the last century.

Deutscher is also an author of essays which appeared in book form. I was mainly attracted to a volume published by his widow, Tamara, in 1966, a year after his premature death. Isaac was preparing these materials for print, like the proposed biography of Lenin.

The volume is entitled "The Non-Jewish Jew" and contains a long interview which I had with him in 1966 and published in the Jewish Quarterly under the title "Who is a Jew?"

I have little sympathy and understanding for this specific introspection which seems to haunt Deutscher and many intellectuals of Jewish origin. What is the nature of this Judaism to which "in some sense" they declare attachment and allegiance and which, in their own eyes and eyes of their peers distinguishes them from their surroundings, if they have, as they say, no Jewish convictions and reject that link, as well as the belief

in a "Jewish" God which connects "real" Jews?

It is a complex problem of many aspects, but personally I never had any trouble with it, never felt the need for some sort of "definition" and it never occurred to me to wonder what sort of a Jew I was. I could not visualise for a moment that I was not one. Maybe the fact that I was born and have grown up in Poland, where it was difficult not to be aware of it all the time has something to do with it.

I abandoned religious beliefs so long ago that I don't quite remember when it was. It was not any sort of moral or intellectual crisis, but from the moment I consciously started to formulate for myself a view of the world, any belief in an almighty creator, omnipotent, omniscient, all-seeing, omniscient, appeared to me absurd and could not be reconciled with other knowledge. I appreciate the role of religion in history and its singular role in the history of the Jews, I realise that without it Jews as such would not have survived and, perhaps, will not survive; I regret, in a way, that I cannot accept these beliefs as my own, but one cannot force it. Judaism in my eyes is a civilisation of which religion presents only one aspect.

I am a Jew because I am one, because I consider myself to be one - that is a simple and complete definition, nothing needs to be added or taken away. But if a Deutscher pressed me to say something more, in the belief that it could help someone by having some more light being thrown on the matter, I would be prepared to say:

I have this singular sense of community with other Jews in the world, awareness that we share our fate, good and bad; awareness that even though I do not share the beliefs and practices of many other Jews (I find it difficult to find a proper word to describe this relationship, the word that springs to mind is "coreligionists", but precisely in this context it sounds inappropriate) - they are all "my" people, for whom I am in some sense responsible, as they are for me.

I take pride in some worthy achievements - there are many of them. I am ashamed of those that call for blame - there is no shortage of those either.

I have a cult of Jewish history and tradition, am strangely moved by the shape of a Hebrew letter, by the sound of the Hebrew language (Yiddish comes into it sometimes, in a roundabout way).

I feel under an obligation to deny Hitler a posthumous victory. I therefore must not forget for a moment what has happened in our times and do everything in my power for such things never to happen anywhere in the world - a task for life.

I identify with the State of Israel. I know that the State as such, like every state is, on occasions, an instrument of injustice to some of its citizens, some part of society, some minority, some of its neighbours. There was a time before the new Jewish State came into being that the Jewish nation, due to its singular situation, was in no way an instrument of such an injustice to others. This age of innocence is irretrievably lost. Nonetheless I consider the creation of the State of Israel one of the finest achievements of our times and I accept, with pain, the consequences of that loss of innocence. All injustice has to be fought by all possible means which do not, by themselves, create a greater injustice. I am convinced that without the State of Israel, after the Holocaust, the remnants of the Jewish nation in the Diaspora would not have survived in any meaningful form.

My Jewishness is clear, self-evident, omnipresent, enlightened, without problems - I think that it fits me.

I do not know whether this necessarily superficial description would have satisfied Deutscher but I grant nobody the right to question this as - my Jewish identity - also those from the other end of the spectrum for whom Judaism without religion is an absurdity and who - because of my uncompromising atheism - consider me a renegade. However they view me, I have a sense of community with them. I

sound a warning that there are many Jews like me and that Jewry cannot afford to ignore us or cut us off. Having said that I would not propagate or commend this sort of a model to anybody.

I think that it behoves every individual, by his/her own efforts and relying on authorities which have earned and command their confidence, to reach a position which they find intellectually and emotionally satisfying. This is a dynamic process which can and should continue through life.

I left Deutscher behind, but not for long. Throughout his life he was a "Marxist", a "Trotskyist" and, what follows, a fighting anti-Zionist.

In view of what has happened I think that he would have to admit that Zionism followed a more constructive vision of the future than the "revolutionary" ideals and that the Jewish State was a salvation. But the anti-Zionism in him and people of his ilk was deeply rooted and it did not take much to bring it to the fore. It is hard for them to part from the guiding dogmas of Marxism, even if all their predictions proved false.

"The tragic events of the Nazi era do not invalidate the classic, Marxist analysis of the Jewish question and do not demand its revision... Marxism counted on the transformation of capitalism into a socialist society, did not reckon with its opposition and its destructive effect on civilisation... Nazism was the self-defence of the old order against communism" - writes Deutscher. "The Jews of Europe paid the price for the effective defence of capitalism against the socialist revolution. That fact does not call for the revision of Marxist analysis - just the contrary, it confirms it. The fate of the Jews in Europe does not weaken my Marxist convictions". Practice proved disappointing, life proved disappointing, theory remains true! "If the world had not lost its way and would have moved, as it was right to do, towards true socialism - matters would have looked different"...

In another place Deutscher writes: "It is a tragic and

macabre truth that it was Hitler who redefined afresh the Jewish identity, this is one of his posthumous triumphs. Auschwitz is the cradle of the new Jewish identity and the new Jewish nation. Those who always stressed the continuity of existence must come to terms with the thought that at the foundation of this new identity there lies the extermination of six million. "I would prefer" - writes Deutscher - "for the six million of men, women and children to be alive and for Jewry as such to perish. The Phoenix of the Jewish people rose from the ashes of those six million. What a resurrection!"

I am not sure that I understand clearly Deutscher's thought here, what is his case and with whom is his quarrel. I have the feeling that this thinker loses himself in the labyrinth of his own making.

In one of his essays Deutscher describes an apparently trivial event which marked him for life. As a fourteen - year old, going to the "cheder", he became friendly with one of his father's "enlightened" workers and fell under his influence. To demonstrate that he understood the "progressive" teaching and took the rebellion against religion and the Jewish tradition seriously, on Yom Kippur he sneaks away from the synagogue, went to the Jewish cemetery, where on the grave of the great Rabbi Remuh he met his mentor-worker, took from him a ham sandwich and eats it, half-expecting at that moment to be struck by lightning. In the evening, at the festive family supper after the fast he suffers terrible remorse - not for the committed sin, for the breaking of all those taboos - the breaking of the fast, eating butter and meat (pig's meat at that!), but for the act of betrayal, betrayal of his father, mother, brother. That bite, it seems, stuck in his gullet for ever. That "non-Jewish Jew" - a category among whom he liked to count himself, together with Spinoza, Heine, Marx, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Freud - remained in eternal perplexity, uncertain who he was and where he belonged.

## "My Courtyard in Cracow"

Rafael F. Scharf

In a Polish newspaper which I read occasionally and which appears in Cracow, my home town, there appeared the other day an appeal to its readers to write a short memoir, under the general heading "My Courtyard" - recollecting the place where one lived a long time ago I felt as if this appeal was addressed directly to me and I could not resist responding to it. Here it is - in my English translation.

I have many reasons to have a warm spot for London. But Cracow is something different, something entirely different.

I left Cracow as a young man, a graduate of the Jagiellonian University, over 60 years ago, because I saw no future for myself in Poland. Since that time, except for the period in the British Army during the Second World War, I have lived uninterruptedly in London, where I found a safe haven, where I have family, friends, acquaintances and a place of work.

But I have an inner need to visit Cracow occasionally. When I arrive, I buy a stack of picture-postcards, those featuring the Castle of Wawel, the Cloth-halls "Sukiennice" and the traditional horse-cabs. I sit at a table under the arcades of the "Noworolski" and send greetings to friends around the world, from Tel-Aviv to Toronto to Melbourne. I write: "Here I am again in my (whose?) Cracow, a city as beautiful as ever (except that I am no longer as beautiful as ever)". I look at the monument of Mickiewicz, at the Church of the Virgin Mary, at the houses surrounding the Main Square - an urban panorama which has no equal. From here I saunter towards Kazimierz, the former Jewish quarter, where every stone is laden with memories and I loiter through the labyrinth of alleyways, Esther Street, Isaac Street, Joseph Street - where else in the world are streets named after the figures of

the Old Testament? I shall cross the street "Koletek" to the sport's ground of the football club "Makkabi", "Orzeszkowa" Street to the offices of the newspaper "NowyDziennik", "Miodowa" Street to the Reform Synagogue "Tempel", "Brzozowa" Street to the Hebrew High School where I passed my matric and on whose walls, a few years ago, I had the honour to unveil a memorial plaque.

I shall pause for a while in front of the Synagogues: The Popper, The "High", The "Old one", "Remuh" - judging by the number of synagogues one might be inclined to think that the Jews of Cracow were singularly pious. Indeed they were, but there were also those who - as described by Isaac Deutscher, a former Cracovian, the famous biographer of Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky - on the day of the great fast of Yom-Kippur would go to the grave of Rabbi Isserle~ and there, demonstratively, eat a ham sandwich - to spite him and one's own parents.

The tenement house at Sebastiana Street 33 was my own "courtyard"~

I was born there and lived there, with my family, for many years, in a two-room flat, with kitchen and bathroom, on the top floor with a balcony.

The only non-Jewish tenant in the whole house, apart from the doorkeeper, was Franciszek Rehman, our neighbour, a chimneysweep. I remember him with respect and gratitude - he was helpful to my mother during the war, and such help by a non-Jewish neighbour was, sad to say, quite rare. On the first floor lived Ignace Danziger, a teacher, whose son was my childhood friend. On the second floor there lived an orthodox family, the Appelbaums, on the third floor Fischer, a cobbler, whose workshop was on the ground floor, with entrance from the street, and whose family (wife, six sons and a daughter) were crowded into one room and a kitchen.

From that family there was a single survivor, Shmulik, my contemporary. He told me the story when we met in Cracow, when I came when the war ended to fetch my Mother, who survived on so-called "Aryan papers". He lived in a cellar, plagued by rats. He was begging, playing - hassidic tunes (the only ones he knew) on the mouth-organ, on the steps of the local church, pretending to be blind - but what he did see was enough to drive a person mad. After the liberation he went to Palestine.

Around the corner, in Berka Joselewicza Street, there was a tenement house, over whose entrance there hung a decorative sign: "Peace to all who live here". My mother bid me to cross to the other side of the street at this point, to avoid brushing against this building, for it was known that here was a popular bordello. Boy-Zelenski wrote in his famous collection of cabaret songs, "Slowka", that the Berka Joselewicza Street had "its peculiar destiny".

Jan Zawiejski, the architect of the town's theatre named after the poet Slowacki, was descended from the well-known Cracovian family of Feintuchs. Already at the beginning of the XIX century the Feintuchs belonged to the richest and most respected Jewish families. Zawiejski's ancestor, Ben Feintuch, was one of the four "elders" of the Jewish community.

Jan's uncle set up in the "Szara Kamienica", a corner building in the "Rynek"

(the Main Square) a huge general store and his family adopted the name "Szarski". The family of Feintuchs were among the first to get converted to Christianity (of the Evangelical denomination) and became assimilated. At my time the right-wing, anti-semitic "Stronnictwo Narodowe" had their headquarters in the "Szara Kamienica".

The following anecdote of how 'Feintuch' was transformed into 'Szarski' was current at the time. One Saturday evening, when Shlomo (Stanislaw) Feintuch returned home from town, he found his pious wife Sarah, reciting the prayer "Shmone esrej". "Sarah" - he said - "I have something important to tell you". She rebuked him for interrupting the prayer with a sharp look and a gesture, putting her finger on her mouth, bidding him to be silent, and continued her prayer. He was impatient. "Sarah" - he said - "they offered me the "Szara Kamienica" for sale". She continued praying. "But they made one condition". She made a questioning gesture - and continued praying. "The condition is that I convert". She could stand it no longer. "And what did you say?" - she asked. "I told them that I am willing to convert" -he said. Sarah sighed a sigh of relief. "Thank God for that" - she said and raising her eyes to heaven continued to say her prayers.

One could make a song and dance about the Jews of Cracow. There lived there

many colourful and distinguished figures. The most prominent figure was Rabbi Dr. Osias Thon, a deputy in the Polish parliament and a preacher in the Reform Synagogue ("The Temple"). One of the best known figures was Dr. Ignacy Schwarzbart, a Zionist leader and a member of the Polish National Council in London during the Second World War. Dr. Chaim Hilfstein, one of the cofounders of the Hebrew School whose name later the school carried. Also the teachers of that school: Scherer, Haber, Mifelew, Rappaport, Katz, Szmulewicz, Feldhorn, Stendig, Waldman, Metalman - many others. One would have to add the many lawyers: Susskind, Hoffman, Feldblum, Gottlieb, Goldblat, Bader, Schechter. Rabbi Kornitzer, the head of the Orthodox Community, Dr. Rafael Landau, the President of the "Kahal", Wilhelm Berkelhammer, the editor of "Nowy Dziennik", the Jewish newspaper in the Polish language - (one of three such newspapers in the inter-war years), Moses Kanfer, David Lazer -members of the editorial board of that newspaper, Reuben Wolff, the head of the Union of Jewish University Students, Mrs. Rose Rock, the head of the Jewish orphanage.

There were youth organisations of many shades. "Przedswit-Hashahar", "Hashomer Hatzair", "Akiba", "Gordonia", "Betar", "Massada" and sports clubs

"Makkabi" and "Jutrzenka". There were many highly respected families: Tigner, Einhorn, Faliman, Leser, Bester, Selinger, Stoeger, Freiwald, Herzig, Stein, Alexandrowicz, Karmel, Freilich, Monderer, Ehrlich, Lauterbach, Jassem...

I see all those faces and profiles vividly, as if it was all yesterday. I think of them with sentiment and affection. I could find my way to their dwellings with my eyes shut, feeling for the spot at the door where there was the "mezuzah". I cannot forget for one moment that the majority of them - family, friends, teachers, shopkeepers, beggars -virtually all of them died a cruel death in the ghettos, the camps, the gas-chambers.

We have got used to talk, to write about this in ordinary words, drawn from everyday language, but nobody can really grasp the magnitude and the meaning of that loss.

A remarkable thing - during my last visit to Cracow I have not heard a single new Jewish joke. There is nobody to laugh, nobody to laugh at. But that life-enhancing, humorous trend remains somewhere in the Jewish psyche - life would be infinitely impoverished without it.

The Great writer in the Yiddish language, Sholem Aleichem, tells us: "Nur lachen, als dafke - nur lachen!" (Laugh - in spite of everything, laugh out of spite!)

**F**or almost 50 years Judith has been by my side - friend, helpmate, partner, co-parent, and teacher. Adamant about not being an object of sympathy, she stressed from day one her own independence and the importance of being present and being counted. It was as though she was shouting "I am here!!!" No allowances were to be made for her Holocaust experiences, scars or heavy losses - and absolutely no guilt to be transferred to others! Nor did Judith express any outward hatred toward Germans. She deals with all these issues inwardly and privately. Never

## WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE THE SPOUSE OF A SURVIVOR?

Reuven Sherman

a word about her experiences was spoken. It was a law! The silence lasted for 50 years until 1995, the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the camps and her visit to Ravensbruck. Then, finally, Judith found it possible to begin to open up to others about her history.

Judith steadily pursued advanced education and a career for herself in addition to raising children, running a

home and engaging us all in an active social and cultural life. Whatever she turned to, she had "to know" in depth. Aesthetics of sound, color and environment were very important. Family and extended family were critical elements in our lives. This included the "adult" caretakers from Lingfield House, the Lingfield children and some of "the Boys" with whom she had come

to England. All of these probably natural inclinations of her character were accentuated by her experiences of persecution and prior family precedents.

This was Judith's face to the world - determined, courageous, tolerant, aesthetic and loving. However, the Holocaust also did take a different toll and there was a darker side - the terrible nightmares, bouts of sadness, fears for her children, and concerns about her own adequacy and competency, among others.

So how did all this affect me as the spouse? I had my own background, character,

values, ambitions, and needs. Among my strongest needs was to be needed and to be a giver in order to belong and be significant. I was more comfortable being the helper than the helpee. I believed that I am responsible for myself, and have to do for myself; others are not likely to do for me. It was very hard for me to take from others. I respected and admired strength and independence in others but counted strongly on my own self-reliance.

To be significant I wanted to help and serve Judith. This was my language of loving. The more I wanted to help the more I undercut her need to demonstrate her independence, significance and control over her own life and destiny - imperative to her after her war experiences. Judith insisted that I be less helpful and that I stand up more for myself in relationships, especially with her. So we engaged in a not so merry dance until we learned better: I learned to emphasize more the first half of Hillel's dictum to acquire greater balance in life, "If I am not for me, who will be for me?" In this respect I owe her a great deal.

Judith's silence about her Holocaust experience was difficult for me. I wanted to share it and be there for her. Sometimes I felt distanced and rejected. The children too wanted to know, especially our daughter. I sympathized with the children but did not side with them. I respected "Judith's Law" as necessary for her. I gleaned bits of information over the years in working together on United Restitution claims and similar documents, which she did with great reluctance and suffering and the minimum of information required. Such information was more of a tease for me than a full revelation. The little I learned just added to my own fury toward the Nazis and the Germans in general. I could not purchase, use or own any German products. Still can't. I had murderous fantasies. Never expressed out loud to Judith or the children.

Judith was more often the tougher disciplinarian with

the children. This was consistent with the differences between us described above. But, given her fears for the children's safety, I was the one who fought for their independence to engage in various age appropriate activities without supervision earlier than she wanted to let go. Similarly, she was more conscious of and insistent upon rules of safety in the house and in general. Congruent with both our backgrounds was the desire for the children to develop self-reliance and independence. Also among our values were commitment to family, Judaism, Israel, education, community and mutual trust.

Our children grew up accepting their Jewishness in the U.S. as normal and without fear. Judith was joyous about it and I was amazed based on my many anti-semitic encounters in my lifetime living in the U.S. I keep waiting for the axe to fall. Strangely, Judith much less so - overtly.

There were times of sadness with no particular known triggers. The inner life of the Holocaust occasionally triumphed and came to the surface. At these times I wanted desperately to be able to "fix it." Of course, I couldn't. I had to learn to just be there with and for Judith as best I could. But often I felt that I was a total failure. Here I was a psychologist working with many others who were depressed and somehow helping them. Why couldn't I "fix it" for Judith? In my mind I failed as a male/husband and as a psychologist. Of course she never expected me to fix it. That was my shtick. But when depressed, she was also critical and accusatory. That goes with the territory of depression. I knew that, but for some years took it personally anyway until I had more confidence in my place in our relationship.

Being a European, Judith brought new dimensions into my life. She often had a different perspective on world affairs, manners, and other matters, which were refreshing. She also had the knack of seeking out people with special talents and expertise and bringing them into her life, and often into

my life, enriching us both.

The truly precious thing this orphan girl brought me is a whole different world of European friends and a few surviving relatives- her mishpacha - the survivors. Mirjam - her sister - and her son Joshua are very central to our family. We instantly had an international family of these friends and few remaining relatives who had settled in many different countries and places. Our children grew up with a world-view, because "family" were constant visitors and we visited with them. This is always exciting and the warmth of these relationships very rewarding. Although this "family" of survivors enjoys reminiscing about the past, except for their Holocaust experiences, the members are primarily forward looking and share a wide range of interests. They are incredibly inclusive and readily admit into their midst even an outsider like inc born in Brooklyn and not a survivor at all.

The issues inherent in faith, religion, spirituality and the nature of God are of great interest to us. Based on her experiences, Judith "undertakes" to have intense conversations with God, as evidenced in her poetry and writing, believing in his existence, but challenging him on a variety of fronts. I too question and challenge, but not as boldly as she. As we age these conversations become more acute and our studies and affiliations more intense.

While much of what I have described above places me in the role of a spouse reacting to his wife, I of course was also proactive as a spouse. For the most part I was "there." I provided a great deal of encouragement, freedom, stability and reliability which I believe helped Judith to expand, grow and get on productively with her life. We shared a multitude of values, traditions, and aspirations for ourselves our family and the world. Together we created important customs and traditions for our lives and family. For example, we have always made it a point to have special individual time with each child and to make holidays special. We

evolved a division of labor and responsibilities to assure that the business of living would be properly taken care of- after some years of practice that is. This included being playful and playing in different ways. For example, Judith engaged us more in verbal play and I in physical play. I always envied her verbal talents. But I brought the music into our home. I also brought my family into the relationship.

Fortunately, we gradually prospered, matured, had successful careers, launched our children, developed a long, rich history together, moved ever closer to one another while we've learned to give each lots of space for personal growth and activity and develop tolerance for personal peculiarities. We each strongly encouraged the growth of the other. Judith has become a talented poet, writer and presenter and stimulates me to do some creative writing instead of adding to my list of professional publications. I am in process of tinkering with a book of children's tales. We moderate a number of local T.V. panel discussion programs in our community. We enjoy auditing undergraduate courses at Princeton University and engage in many other learning activities. We are active participants in our community and Shoah activities.

Early in our marriage living in the U.S. and separated from her roots, Judith was sometimes known to other people outside of our circle as Robert's Wife. As the years progressed it is more often that to other people I am Judith's Husband. Although Judith is the "survivor" simultaneously living both there and then and here and now, as spouses we have created a fair exchange.

Our children too have turned out well, each possessing a doctoral degree, a reasonably successful career and interested in and caring about people and community. Our daughter is involved with Second Generation organizations. The story continues.

**Am Yisrael Chai.**

In October this year Rachel and I will have been married for 49 years unless what I am about to write, at the invitation of your Chairman Ben, brings to an end a beautiful friendship which has survived despite the ups and downs of life.

Rachel is a survivor who as one of the 732 'Boys' was flown to the United Kingdom, under the auspices of The Central British Fund, from war torn Europe, which in Rachel's case meant she ended up at Millisle in Donaghadee - near Belfast Northern Ireland. After recuperating and learning basic English in Millisle Rachel came to mainland England and was in a girls hostel in Kings Langley. Her brother, Chaskel, also one of 'The Boys' was in Quare Mead, after an initial period in the Ashford Sanatorium, recovering from tuberculosis. Regular visits to Quare Mead were very much part of Rachel's weekend activity for many months until Chaskel recovered sufficiently and came to live in London.

After Kings Langley some of the 80 girls who came over as 'The Boys' were transferred to a hostel in Herne Hill, SE London an area close to the Brixton Synagogue with a very active Maccabi Club who extended an open house to the girls.

It is at this point that the Mendoza family and I come into the picture as we lived just around the corner from the Herne Hill hostel. As Rachel and her three cousins availed themselves of the Maccabi offer we were often in each others company. Our friendship with the girls grew and when the hostel closed Rachel went to live with Mr. And Mrs. Mendoza, Martha and Betty. Not long after her brother came to live as a boarder in a house on the opposite side of the road and he too enjoyed the homely hospitality of the Mendoza family.

For my part I was a SE London boy, born and brought up in the Herne Hill Brixton area with the shul very much the centre of religious and free time activity. When boy meets girl, espe-

# AN ENGLISHMAN MARRIED TO A SURVIVOR

Phin. Levy

cially a girl as beautiful as Rachel, the pulse begins to race! In 1952 we got engaged and on the 11th October 1953 we were married at the Brixton Synagogue. One week later we left England for Denmark initially for three months but ending up being three years.

We returned to England for three years during which our son Martin was born. He was two years old the day after we arrived in Kenya with me on a years contract to set up a newspaper for the Aga Khan in Nairobi. On our return to England we set up home in Bromley and on a very cold and extremely foggy November day in 1962 our daughter was born. She was very small and weighed practically nothing. The midwife could not get to the house or us to the hospital. All we could do was keep her warm and fed; now 40 years later one can see that the power to survive was well and truly handed down in the genes.

So far in this article it has mainly been a history of our life together and the birth of our two children. This carried on much the same while they grew up. Did we as a family talk about the war or more importantly the war as it unfolded for Rachel?. I do not think so, there might have been oblique references to events but not in depth discussions. It can be recorded that if programmes on television to do with Holocaust subjects, or films which also skirt the subject are to be shown I feel uncomfortable watching them as I am certain Rachel feels the same.

As a person Rachel has all the qualities of a 'baleboosteh' which stems from her formative years with a loving

family living the traditional Jewish life found in Eastern European close knit orthodox communities.

The war destroyed this tranquil existence and for many years prior to and a lot of the early years of our marriage Rachel suffered with long bouts of migraine and nightmares usually preceded by screams. The migraines, which without doubt greatly affected her quality of life, required her to rest in a darkened room for many hours in order to get some relief. This is more than can be said for some of the medications that were prescribed by doctors and specialists who did not appreciate the long term psychological effects of camp life or did not know enough background history to realize treatment other than medication was required. Indigestion and heart-burn were two other troublesome complaints which, together with the migraine, I am certain have been brought about by war time experiences. Night-time screaming and the nightmares that followed can I am sure be traced to subconscious recollections of events in the camps. Despite all this she continued to look after our children and the home even though at times it was a struggle.

From the late eighties we have attended most of the '45 Aid Society' annual reunions and other organized activities, these are always a chance for Rachel to meet 'the Boys' and hear news of people they have met in their travels. Over the years my interest in what went on in Europe during the war has been increased by attending the numerous lectures and talks your Society has sponsored.

It is without doubt that the most significant change in our family's ability to come to terms with Rachel's war-time experiences came during and after 'Oxford Conference' organised by Mrs. Elizabeth Maxwell in July '88. Rachel and I only attended the Sternberg Centre meetings held on the last Sunday. At one of the small workshop groups Rachel was asked to talk on her camp experiences. Within minutes of starting her talk a migraine of unbelievable severity struck together with nausea and overall weakness. The first aid people managed to stabilize her sufficiently for me to get her home. This was the beginning of several months of medical attention followed by many sessions with a counsellor.

Slowly it was possible for Rachel to talk about the events at the Sternberg Centre but, more importantly, she was able to talk about more far-ranging things that happened up to liberation in 1945. In the years following the above reaction audio tapes, videos for the Spielberg Centre and talks to school children and one to our shul congregation have been possible.

This great change has helped make talking about the Holocaust a lot easier though some of the more horrific happenings that occurred are still off limits. I have also wondered, more so in recent years, whether I, brought up in pre-war Western Europe, could ever comprehend fully the reality of what went on in Eastern Europe in the 1930s to 1945. I am however certain that TV, films, reading books, going to exhibitions and lectures have only touched on a small part of the events during the period in question.

In closing, I have just one last remark which I make publicly to Rachel that if in the past 48 + years I have not always recognised the effect that the horrendous events during the war has had on you, I apologise unreservedly and will continue to offer you the utmost support to the best of my ability.

The problems caused to the second generation, i.e., children of camp survivors, have been studied in the USA and Israel. There is a considerable literature on the subject (Ref 1).

The damage includes difficult relations between the parents and the children and also illness such as depression and anxiety in the children often blamed by them on the parents either explicitly or without admission. Moreover, the symptoms suffered by the children may be observed by the grandchildren and thus cause, in turn, damage to them who are the third generation.

All these problems place a heavy burden on the partners of survivors and almost invariably would have been unforeseen when

## SECOND GENERATION AND LIVING WITH SURVIVORS

Witold Gutt

the marriage with a survivor took place.

Some families of the partners have helped valiantly to ameliorate these effects by support and affection. In other cases, the families do not understand and do not help, making the situation worse.

Often there is a reluctance to recognise the problem or admit that it exists since depression and anxiety and the whole post-traumatic stress syndrome is not infrequently regarded as a weakness. The concept of "Triumph Over Adversity"

is not easily compatible with post-traumatic stress syndrome.

Some feel that the ideal survivor should be strong enough "to pass through the fire" undamaged and unscathed.

I feel that in the UK in particular this is often the view. British Jews are sometimes vague about the distinction between the experiences of concentration camp survivors and the Kinder Transport group, this is not to belittle the sufferings of the latter.

These issues deserve atten-

tion first of all because of the damage caused which no "wiedergutmachung" will put right and secondly because post-traumatic stress syndrome has and will occur in other wars and conflicts throughout the world.

*The '45 Aid Society members themselves have, I suspect, suffered more from PTSS than they would wish to reveal and who can blame them in view of the attitudes described above.*

Witold Gutt  
Ex-prisoner Kraków-Plaszów  
No. 7535  
Natzweiler No. 22441  
Dachau No. 147597  
7.7.02

Ref.1 Dina Wardi  
Memorial Candles,  
Children Of The Holocaust  
Tavistock/Routledge  
London & New York 1992

Through the years I have been asked on many occasions to submit an article to the Voice of Piotrkow Survivors about my life since I left the concentration camp. I have given this a lot of thought, especially lately having noticed that some of my friends who survived the Holocaust are beginning to tell the stories of what they have done with their lives over the past fifty-seven years. Because of their willingness to share their most important memories with us I felt that it was time for me to tell some of the more important events of my life since my liberation.

I was fortunate enough to become involved in the labour movement and that gave me the opportunity to become an activist who was deeply involved in the struggle for human rights and justice for working people throughout the world. It seemed only fitting to me that we who were helped by so many individuals and charitable organizations when we were freed from the concentration camps should dedicate our lives to helping others who are in need.

I became the head of the Philadelphia Joint Board of the Union of Needle-trades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) that at

## A LETTER TO "THE BOYS"

From John Fox

*John came to England with the Windermere Group in August 1945. He lived in Loughton and Belsize Park Hostels. He married his wife Betty in England and emigrated to the USA in 1956.*

one time represented 25,000 working people in the clothing industry in Philadelphia. I also became a Vice President of the national union, the Vice President of the Jewish Community Relations Council in Philadelphia, and President of the Jewish Labor Committee in Philadelphia. These organizations gave me the opportunity to travel around the world, to meet many interesting people and to be a representative at many meetings that dealt with the conditions of the working people.

I began to realize that I might have a special mission at these meetings. I understood that I was representing thousands of trade unionists and Jewish workers. But I also began to think that I might be there as a testament to the millions who died in the Holocaust as well as those who survived. I literally travelled the world over

the past twenty years to fulfil this mission.

I began my travels in 1983 with a trip to Geneva, Switzerland for a meeting of the Textile and Leather Workers Union and in July 1983 I went to Lisbon for a meeting of the same organizations. In August 1983 I was sent as a labor delegate to Russia. We went to Moscow, Rostov, Leningrad, and Kiev. At that meeting I met with labor leaders from England, Belgium, Prague, and Paris. I also spent three days discussing the conditions of workers in their countries with students from Africa, South America and many other nations.

In 1984 I was invited to spend a week in Egypt where we were the guests of the labor movement. We traveled extensively throughout Egypt and were invited into the homes of many Egyptian labor officials. In 1984 I also made my first visit to Israel.

Since then, I have gone to Israel every other year from 1984 to 1999.

In 1985 I went to Germany to speak to the German Parliament and Minister to ask them to introduce classes on the lessons of the holocaust in German schools. Al Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers was supposed to be with us, but he could not come so I was asked to address teachers and also spoke to school-children in a few schools not far from the Nordhausen Concentration Camp. I also spoke in the market place in Bonn, Germany to a gathering of German citizens about the need for Germans to understand what had happened in their country during the Holocaust. A bill was introduced in the Bundestag dealing with the teaching of the holocaust and was eventually approved.

I was invited to Germany again in 1985 by Chancellor Willie Brandt to commemorate the decimation of cities destroyed during the Second World War, including Warsaw, Stalingard, Au Odour, Coventry and many others. During this visit I was a guest of the German government and addressed the Bundestag. I spent an entire week with the mayors

of many European cities. One of these men was the mayor of Warsaw. When I explained that I had been born and raised in Poland and indicated that I had not been back to my home since the war, he said that he planned on inviting my entire family to Warsaw as his guest. Much to my surprise in 1988 he extended that invitation. In Nuremberg I addressed the Ministers and other representatives from England and other European countries. On this trip I also visited France and Belgium.

In September 1985 I was sent to Germany by the Jewish Labor Committee to meet with German Chancellor Willie Brandt to ask him to go to Russia to meet with Gorbachev in order to intervene on behalf of the refuseniks. I had dinner with Chancellor Brandt and asked him to see what he could do to help the refuseniks, many of whom were Jewish. He promised me that he would do his best and in fact he met with Gorbachev to discuss the situation, although the meeting and their subsequent agreement was never made public.

In 1988 the Mayor of Warsaw sent me a special invitation to come to Warsaw with my family as his guest. We were met at the airport by a representative of the Mayor and we spent two wonderful weeks in Poland. We went from Treblinka to Auschwitz to Piotrkow to Tuszyn and to many other places. My family and I were treated very nicely by everyone we met in Poland. During that trip I met with Lech Walesa, who I also met at a later time in the United States.

In November 1988 I spent ten days in Tokyo, Japan. On that trip I was a representative at a meeting of the Textile and Leather Workers Union. I found myself sitting at that meeting with Indians, Pakistanis, and people from countries that I had never heard of. There were actually representatives from eighty-two nations at that meeting.

*Russia and Lithuania  
in 1991.*

*Portugal in 1992.*

*Israeli Bonds in 1999.*

In 1995 I went to Israel to receive the Raoul Wallenberg Award presented to me by the Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem. A wing at the hospital was also named in my honour. My brother Harry was with me that day. Harry and I survived the Holocaust and were brought to England by the CBF, now World Jewish Relief, soon after the war. He remained in London and I emigrated to the United States in 1956 with my wife Betty, who was born and raised in England. We have three daughters and five wonderful grandchildren.

In 1999 I was honoured by the Israeli Bonds and we raised over three and a half million dollars. As you can see, I have lived a full and wonderful life. I have travelled throughout the world representing my union, the Jewish Labor Committee and working people. It has been a long and exciting road that I have traveled, that has led me from my boyhood in a small town in Poland to concentration camps during the war to a tailor shop in London to the clothing industry in Philadelphia and finally to a labour union that has made it possible for me to fulfill my destiny. I think that the journey has been fruitful and that my life has been worthwhile.

At seventy-five I am still active, especially where Israel is concerned. I am very fortunate to be able to continue to work, although I do not travel as much these days. I am also blessed because my daughter Lynne, who is a labour lawyer, is now the Manager of the Philadelphia Joint Board and an International Vice President of UNITE. I plan on continuing to work with all of my strength to carry on the struggle for workers and human rights and justice. Finally, I would like to extend an invitation to anyone of "the Boys" to come and visit the Fox family in Philadelphia.

# INGENIOUS UMBRELLA MAN REIGNS OVER THE INDUSTRY

By Nathan Jeffat

(This article is reprinted by kind permission of  
The Jewish Chronicle)

*Arnold came to England from Poland with Dr Shonfeld's group in April 1946. He was in hiding during the war and he and his sister are the only survivors of their family. He studied mechanical engineering at City University and, on graduation, he joined the Hermes Machine Tool Company where he specialised in the design of special purpose machines. He started the A Fulton Company in 1957 with two employees, making umbrellas. He is on the board of governors of the Shenker College of Engineering in Israel. He is a patron of the Royal Academy of Arts and a supporter of the Philharmonia Orchestra.*

An inventor with 100 patents to his name believes that his innovative streak developed while in hiding from the Nazis as a child and "necessity was the mother of invention."

Umbrella entrepreneur Arnold Fulton has made his fortune from saving other people from a rainy day, now controlling 35 per cent of the British market.

But he also boasts the patent to the first chicken-plucking machine; an all-in-one car, helicopter and boat, and all the devices which transformed umbrella-making from a labour-intensive manual occupation.

Polish-born Mr Fulton was 13 when he arrived in England in 1946. From a secular Zionist background, he found it difficult to adjust to life in the religious Jewish school he attended, particularly "Shabbat in the dark."

Not being allowed to switch lights on or off inspired him to come up with a ground-breaking time-switch using an inverted glass bottle, a weight, a cork, and a piece of wire attached to the switch.

He had survived the war hiding in Warsaw before and after his parents were killed by the Nazis. It was only when his sister discovered that he was being educated in a monastery that a transfer to Britain was set up.

His sister was also pivotal in his career path. She settled in Stockholm, where Mr Fulton visited her seven years later and saw her husband making umbrellas manually.

Putting his engineer's training to use, he automated the business, making his brother-in-law the largest umbrella manufacturer in Sweden.

# LODZ AND SYDNEY AND IN BETWEEN

Stephen Wolkowicz

(Sydney August 2002)

Mr Fulton then decided to try his hand at umbrella design and, back in England, "informed Selfridges that they would stock my new designs."

His creations were seen as "terribly unconventional," having 10 spokes when eight was the norm.

Helped by a rainy Saturday in 1958 when Selfridges sold out of umbrellas in one afternoon, his enterprise has expanded to the point of selling four million every year, whether under his own label or for top retailers such as Marks & Spencer and Gap. He was responsible for the first button-operated broly and the late Queen Mother's favourite "bird-cage" design.

Interviewed at his Docklands business base, Mr Fulton, 69, recalled that his inventive streak had been a life-saver in wartime, when he created fake walls and disguises to keep his hiding-place secret. It also served as his recreation. "I had nothing to do and life was difficult, so I invented things with what little materials I had.

"While in hiding, I made a gramophone, with an elastic band to turn round the disc. And my sister has never forgiven me for cutting the sleeves of her coat to make a camera whose film I could develop inside a box. My best barmitzvah present was an egg - I created an egg cup from a cigarette box."

He has only just resumed eating chicken on Friday nights at his Hampstead home after being "thoroughly put off poultry" when inventing the chicken-plucking machine in 1956, under the wing of a former Skoda executive who had fled the Nazis. "It took a long time and a lot of messy chickens to perfect. Then someone asked me to make a shechting [slaughtering] machine... I declined."

Umbrellas will be less essential items when Mr Fulton realises his remaining ambition of making aliyah. He hopes to set up home in Herzlia within the next year, leaving his son, Nigel, in charge of the business.

I write this story as the result of a coincidence. I came across a review in a recent Sydney newspaper of "The Boys" by Sir Martin Gilbert, the eminent British historian. I bought the book and found it contained many details familiar to me. Yes, I was one of the Windermere group who came to England from Europe in August 1945. I have been in Australia since 1948 and had lost contact with those I knew between 1945 and 1948 - that is until recently. The book and the help of Ben Helfgott, whose address was given to me by Sir Martin Gilbert, resulted in renewed contact with Jake Fersztand and Abe Dichter.

I was born in Lodz, Poland, in 1933, the only child of Paul and Miriam Wolkowicz (nee Pfeffer). We were in the Lodz ghetto from December 1939 until August 1944. Simon Pfeffer, was my mother's brother. He was an engineer placed in charge of a metal works department in the ghetto. Before we left the ghetto he was directed to make a list of skilled tradesmen but he refused, possibly knowing what might be in store for those not on the list. I never found out who made the list but it included Uncle Simon, his wife, Mala (nee Frenkiel), and his father, Jakub. (His mother, Rosalie had already died in the ghetto). Uncle Simon's parents were also my mother's parents, i.e., my grandparents. My parents and I and some others were also on this list of so-called skilled tradesmen. At the closure of the ghetto, those on the list became the personal slaves of Hans Bibow who had been the German commander of the Lodz ghetto. The group was kept together although separated by gender.

When the ghetto was liquidated in August 1944 we were sent south by cattle train to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Members of aunt Mala's family came with us but were

separated on arrival, never to be seen again as they were not on that list. After a few days in Auschwitz-Birkenau, we were sent north in open wagons to the Stuthoff concentration camp. We were there for three months. Four or five slept on wooden bunks, food was scarce, lice covered our clothes and bodies, it was very cold and we had to stand twice a day outside, irrespective of weather for a roll-call and all had to work. Grandfather Pfeffer died there from hunger and exhaustion. We were then transported south to Dresden, Germany, Bibow's intended destination where we had to set up a plant for the manufacture of bullet cores from steel wire on nail making machines. We lived and worked in the building, a former cigarette factory, and conditions there were much better than in Stuthoff

We were in Dresden during the great air raid. Our building and machinery were significantly damaged and we had to leave. We were force-marched south for ten days with only one light meal along the Laben (Elbe) River through Tetchenbodenbach (now Decin) and Aussig (now Usti nad Laben) to Theresienstadt (Terezin) all now in the Czech Republic.

The march took so long because of our condition and because our German SS guards wished to delay our arrival as long as possible in order to avoid their being sent to the Russian front which was rapidly advancing to the west. My father died next to me during the night in the yard of the Decin Castle and my mother died two days later in Usti nad Laben.

Uncle Simon, aunt Mala and I reached Terezin on April 24th with our last bit of strength. We were liberated by the Russian army on 9th May 1945. We immediately made our way out of Terezin in the early hours in a

commandeered horse-drawn wagon. Had we remained in Terezin we would have been held there by the Czech authorities for a number of weeks on account of a typhus outbreak. We wanted to go back towards Poland but this proved to be impossible as the Russian army was moving south along the narrow road to Prague where fighting was still taking place. We rested overnight in Litmerice where I became violently sick from eating too much of the food which was offered us by the local Czechs. Suspected of having typhus, I was rushed to a Prague hospital by a kind local whilst uncle Simon and aunt Mala made their way to Prague with the horse-drawn wagon. I was with them until the transport with other orphans to Windermere in August 1945.

After 18 months uncle Simon and aunt Mala went back to Decin and Usti nad Laben to ascertain if there were any details of my parents' final resting place. Whilst they could not find any reference to my mother's remains, they did find that my father was buried in a cemetery in Decin, Uncle Simon and aunt Mala erected a tombstone and took a photograph of it, the grave and the hillside behind it.

From Windermere I was sent to Ascot and then to Glasgow where I lived in the hostel attached to the synagogue on Hill Street opposite the Cancer Hospital. In Glasgow I went to Hyndland Senior Secondary School. This was my first school. There were schools in the Lodz ghetto but for some reason I was not sent there. I do have vivid memories of the war years but cannot remember who taught me to read, write and do arithmetic. It was not my parents. At Hyndland I did well in mathematics but struggled with English.

In 1948 uncle Simon and aunt Mala managed to get out

of Czechoslovakia and had organised immigration papers for the three of us to emigrate to Australia. I made the trip by train to Rome from Glasgow to meet them and waited for a flight to Australia chartered by the JOINT. There was a delay in the plane arriving from the USA to Rome and uncle Simon: organised visits to as many cultural venues as possible. The museums became a bore for me and my consolation was to photograph, and be photographed with, the statues of Venus.

During that waiting period in Rome, Uncle Simon, who was familiar with travel requirements having travelled internationally before the war, looked at the air routes marked on world maps and organized travel visas for the three of us for the countries that we would fly over.

As the charter flight was still delayed, we were directed to take a train to Paris where the flight started in a DC4 propeller driven plane. First stop was Athens. There we were given boxed sandwiches, small eggs and pickles. Shortly after take-off there was severe turbulence and all except the crew and me became severely air sick. The plane was full and had but one attendant who was busy running up and down the narrow aisle as people called him so that they could be sick into one large communal bag. All the usual small bags had been used up shortly after take-off.

The captain, trying to avoid a storm, landed in Basra, Iraq. The officials looking at the passengers who only had stateless papers (except for the three of us) decided that we were Jews trying to get to Israel which was fighting its War of Independence. Our arrival created an international incident. We were kept under arrest at the airport for ten days and finally, due to diplomatic pressure, we were allowed to leave.

On the way to Bombay, India, a woman started to go into labour. There was no doctor aboard. The crew

relief bed was made available for her. Medical radio contact was maintained until we reached Bombay just in time for the baby to be born in a hospital. To the best of my recollection it took many months for the nationality of the baby to be determined. It was born to stateless parents traveling on board an American aircraft in India on the way to Australia. In the end it was granted Australian citizenship.

We arrived in Melbourne in August 1948 and, almost immediately, uncle Simon and aunt Mala found jobs as a draftsman and in the clothing trade respectively. I attended the Brighton Technical School and after two years came second in the final year. I won a scholarship to Caulfield Technical College and completed my studies in 1956, in Communication Engineering, at the RMIT University.

My first proper job was in 1956, setting up the television station HSV7. (Television was being introduced in readiness for the Melbourne Olympic Games). Ben Helfgott told me recently that he was in Melbourne for the Games representing England in weightlifting. We never met at the time, which is not surprising as we didn't know each other then.

In Australia uncle Simon and aunt Mala had two daughters. Rosemarie was born in 1949, is married and lives in Switzerland with a son and daughter, and Monica, who was born in 1956, is married and has one son. She lives in Melbourne. Their children are now young adults. Uncle Simon died in 1962 and aunt Mala in 1997.

In 1963 I went to New Zealand for a holiday and, as I like to tell it, I stayed for ten years. I met my wife-to-be, Susan, and took a position of Factory Manager in a rigid PVC plastic sheet extrusion company north of Wellington and went on to become General Manager.

We built a home overlooking the harbour and city of Wellington. I joined General Motors of New Zealand in Wellington as a

Supervising Design Engineer in their new appliance division where I stayed for three years.

In 1969 our son Paul was born.

On our move to Sydney in 1974, I went back to electronics and computers and, in 1982, after joining G.E.C. my expertise was in business development. I went on to become General Manager of this division. I travelled extensively throughout Asia, securing business in rail, transmission and distribution of electric power and industrial automation. My main successes were in Indonesia and China.

About seven years ago, I retired from full-time work and worked as a consultant to ALSTOM, concentrating on the South American market. I retired from consultancy in December 2001.

Our son underwent many operations due to complications arising from the genetic condition of neurofibromatosis. He completed a Bachelors degree and topped his year in his Masters of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Sydney. He was awarded the New South Wales Government's Department of Planning Minister's Prize for Outstanding Academic Achievement. Tragically, during his first job, in the New South Wales Department of Planning, he was diagnosed with cancer and died seven years ago, aged 25.

Five years ago we visited Decin in search of my father's grave. I had the photograph taken by Uncle Simon in 1946. We searched through various records in Decin's archives and in many cemeteries, without success. At the edge of one cemetery, outside Decin, we came across a garden which was supposed to have been a Jewish cemetery. It was totally neglected with the funeral plots being used as garden beds and the broken tombstones used as walls, paths and for the foundations of a private house erected in recent years in the cemetery itself. A German couple, who had a small weekend house opposite, told us that the Jewish cemetery had been

sold to a Communist police official. The German man showed us a tombstone that he had taken during the break-up of the cemetery. It had belonged to the grave of a Jewish woman who had died in 1933. It was in perfect condition. When challenged as to why he had taken and kept it, he indicated that he wanted to protect at least one tombstone from disintegration and return it to a Jewish community when and if there would be one in Decin. We pointed out to him that there was a tiny Jewish community and that he should return it to them. But we still had no trace of my father's gravesite.

Four years later my wife and I again visited Decin. To our amazement the Jewish community had increased in size to some 120 or so people, aged from babies to the very old, and the ruined synagogue of four years prior had been restored by the local non-Jewish community, with American assistance, and was providing services, religious and pastoral, to its community. Secondly, to our even greater amazement, the cemetery archivist and the head of the Jewish community of Decin informed us that they had established in those four years why we were not able to find the grave. A factory in Decin adjacent to a church and a cemetery, with a Jewish section, had needed land for expansion. In 1952, under supervision of a rabbi from Prague, a doctor and a town official, the bodies of the four Jews who were buried there during the war were exhumed and were taken with their tombstones to that cemetery which we had visited and found in such disrepair some four years before. In support of this, I have a copy of the document of the agreement of the rabbi, the doctor and the town official, to exhume and re-inter the bodies and documents of the subsequent requests by local, non-Jewish groups and individuals to the authorities to try to prevent the desecration after 1952 of that cemetery in which my father was re-interred.

To the ordinary, peace-loving, law-abiding, Muslim living in the western democracies the murderous attack on the United States must be totally bewildering, frightening, devastating. They will be the innocent sufferers of an anti-Muslim backlash. This has already started.

Yet there are elements of that tradition that need probing for a clue as to the mental and emotional condition of those who would organise and perpetuate such a crime against humanity. The attack on New York and Washington is but the result of a process festering for years and of the same character, though far more deadly, as previous acts of terrorism.

We who live in democracies, where the rule of law, gender, equality, peaceful changes of government, prevail find it difficult to understand the mentality of those who live in less fortunate countries.

I refer to the attack on America as a defining moment in world history. It is, as was the Second World War and the Holocaust, just as was the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Communist Soviet Union. It is also a defining moment for Muslims themselves.

#### **Church Analogy**

I would like to make an historical comparison. The Catholic Church was dominant in Europe for many centuries. It was afraid of any new ideas. So it murdered Bruno, persecuted Copernicus and Galileo. It committed, by our present standards, terrible crimes. It slaughtered the Cathars, the Albigenses. Its Inquisition tortured and burnt to death countless thousands of innocent non-Catholics, believing sincerely that in so doing they were saving people's souls. They were crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity. The present Catholic church is apologising time and again for the acts of its predecessors, thereby indicating its fallibility.

By the 16th century there came a challenge to the exclusive control of the Catholic Church. There came Luther, Protestants, nationalism, the rise of science and scientific enquiry,

## **A DEFINING MOMENT IN WORLD HISTORY**

**This article is a reaction to the attack on America on**

**11th September 2001 by a commentator on current affairs.**

the secular state, ideas of individual rights and liberty.

The Church continued to provide help and satisfaction to many, but it could never be the same again. Those professing other faiths were no longer 'infidels'. Indeed, today, Catholics play an active and positive role in inter-faith movements.

#### **Islam The Modern Challenge**

I give this analogy as it has elements with modern Islam. The latter is one of the younger religions, arising subsequent to Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism. Christianity. Only the Sikhs and Bahais came later. It is immensely dependent on the Abrahamic tradition and the Old and New Testaments. It was a great advance on the animism of the 6th and 7th century Arab tribes.

It has various sections, the main divisions being between the Sunnis and Shias, the latter linked to the death of Ali, Mahomet's son-in-law. That division often erupts in violence. In fact the religion partly spread through violence, but also because, for certain peoples, it came at the right time. Perhaps the only world religion that did not spread through violence was Buddhism.

Some faiths were geared to a specific people, Shintoism to the Japanese, Judaism to the Jews, Hinduism to the Indians. Generally the two main missionary religions were Islam and Christianity, both feeling they alone possessed a unique universal truth. Hence those outside of both traditions were referred to as 'non-believers' and 'infidels'

The Catholic Church faced a powerful challenge in the 16th century. Islam today faces just such a challenge. It has no reformist element of any note. It is barely evolving. But the modern challenge it faces is different, not another branch of the same faith.

It faces the challenge of secularism, of democracy, of human rights, of the rule of secular law, of equality between men and women, of the change of government by peaceful means. Sometimes it identifies these matters with countries which often had colonial control of them, and so the anti-colonial mentality prevails, ignoring the advances and changes within those former colonial powers.

Islam had a golden age in the past, achieving great things in literature, architecture, design, gardens, science, mathematics, astronomy. It is a great tradition. But, even when co-operating with Jews and Christians, for example in Spain, it still never saw those as equals. They were not 'infidels', as they believed in one God, and were the people of the Book, but they were also 'dhimmis', second-class citizens. Sovereignty ultimately rested with Muslims, who did not take easily to life as a minority. The only holy book they regarded as perfect and God-given was the Koran. The Bible, as I heard a Muslim professor describe it, was a 'corrupt' - and this to a Christian and Jewish audience! So much for humility and inter-faith understanding.

It is this modern challenge which is creating such havoc in Islam. There is barely a Muslim country free from violence, often caused by those who cannot, and will not, adjust to change, groups referred to as fundamentalists or extremists.

The resulting violence is world-wide and, for convenience, I set these down country by country.

#### **Violence in Many Lands**

I note briefly problems in each country.

##### **Trinidad and Tobago**

The small Muslim minority kidnapped the Prime Minister and shot him in the

leg as they tried to take over the country.

##### **Borneo and parts of Indonesia**

Violence between Muslims and Christians still erupts.

##### **East Timor**

Persecution by Muslims of Catholics and Christians continued for years.

##### **Nigeria**

Violence continues between Muslims and Christians. Northern state applies Sharia law, ignoring the national constitution.

##### **Sudan**

Forcible conversion of Christians by Muslims, continued fighting and practising slavery of Africans.

##### **Lebanon**

Over 100,000 deaths in Muslim-Christian civil war. Hostage-taking by Muslims.

##### **Iraq-Kuwait**

Invasion by Iraq of independent fellow-Arab state, committing one of the worst ecological crimes, apart from persecution of Kurds and fellow Arabs

##### **Russia/Chechnya**

War with Russia. Blowing up apartment blocks in Russian cities.

##### **China**

Violence in Western China Philippines

Carrying on a war for over 20 years against the Government and majority Catholics.

##### **Israel**

Violence, terrorism and suicide bombers over decades, as well as attacks abroad.

##### **Iran/Iraq**

A war in which over one million died, especially youngsters.

##### **Iran**

Persecution of minorities, especially Bahais.

##### **Yemen**

Continued violence between separate parts of the country.

##### **Algeria**

Appalling violence against innocent people. Tens of thousands slaughtered. This continues endlessly.

##### **Egypt**

Attempts to overthrow government. Murder of tourists. Assassinations. Persecution of Christian Copts.

##### **Afghanistan**

A reversion into the darkest of Dark Ages. Treatment of women abominable. Christians put on trial for teaching Christianity!

##### **Kashmir**

Murder of Hindus. Violence supported by Pakistan.

## **Pakistan**

Persecution of Ahmediya, a Moslem sect. Prosecution and seeking death penalty for observation on the character of Mahomet the government did not like.

## **Balkans**

Underlying Muslim-Christian tensions behind racial and ethnic conflicts.

That is the record. Sometimes the violence comes from an inability to live as a minority. Sometimes it comes from the challenge of human rights, of freedom of expression (cfRushdie), sometimes from fear that any change in the religion will mean the end of the religion. There is a strange mixture of superiority and inferiority complexes in all this.

Fortunately some countries have made advances, e.g. Morocco, Tunisia, though Libya still has a terrorist record.

But the above is an appalling worldwide record, and must give moderate peace-loving Moslems grounds for self-examination of their faith and values.

These states have had little experience of democracy, of tolerance, of live and let live. They react. Saudi Arabia is a clear example of a total absence of democracy. Bangladesh emerges in a democratic direction, but violence cut down its first President and his family. It has taken 20 years to bring his murderers to justice. It is again in danger of reverting to former bad ways.

Often it is asserted the problem in the Muslim world revolves around the Israel-Palestinian dispute. The list I have set out shows clearly that is not the case and that the Muslim problem is far wider. It is frequently a Muslim-Christian confrontation, or a Muslim-Hindu confrontation, or a Muslim-secular confrontation.

The 20th century has seen an explosion of terrorist organisations and acts, terrorism being a total disregard for the sanctity of human life. The latter has been a feature of Muslim terrorism involving hijacking of planes, blowing up buildings, exploding bombs in planes, suicide bombers. A shocking feature is that the only use of poison gas since the First World War has been by Arabs, in the Yemen and Iraq.

As acts follow beliefs, it is valuable to look at some of the ideas that underlie these examples of violence.

## **Beliefs**

Islam is a monotheistic religion, sharing much with Judaism, but also respecting the figure of Jesus. At its most spiritual, it produced the Sufis, and the great poets. It produced notable doctors, even the alphabet we use. It learned much from India and passed on that heritage to Europe, as well as the ancient Greek tradition and teachings.

It had a great constructive age, particularly in buildings, though insisting that no other religious edifice could be higher than a mosque.

The five main points of Islam, fasting, one God, charity, etc. are not distinctive. These factors are in other faiths, but the base of some of the current terrorist actions derive from some of the beliefs, a few of which derive from the story of the Hebrews in the Old Testament.

### **1. God's Final Word**

The Koran, stated to be dictated to Mahomet by the angel Gabriel, is regarded as God's final word to mankind. Thus this allows some standing to Christianity and Judaism, but none to any other religion that predates it, e.g. Hinduism and Buddhism, and not to any subsequent faith, e.g. Sikhism or Bahai. The latter is particularly objected to as its founder emerged from a Muslim background. Similarly other later prophets are the object of hostility. Hence the expression 'infidel', hence the persecution in Pakistan of the Ahmediya. Muslims are not alone in the idea of God's last word. Other faiths had the same view. Hence also, the passion for converting others by Muslims and formerly by Christians.

### **2. Holy Places**

This again is a feature of most faiths, but not with the exclusivity of Islam with regard to Mecca and the land of Saudi Arabia. The prohibition on any but Muslims entering Mecca is unique. Anyone can go to the Vatican, Jerusalem, Benares. Why cannot anyone visit Mecca?

The reasons may throw light on a mind-set. Even the pilgrimages there involve an element of violence in the ritual.

### **3. Holy War**

Moslem ecclesiastics often interpret this as meaning a personal war of the individual to conquer himself No one else does. To the vast mass of Muslims, jihad, or holy war, means what it says, a physical war, particularly against infidels. That is what it has always meant in practice.

The idea is not unique. The crusades were holy wars, by Christians against another set of infidels, but that idea ceased in Christianity several centuries ago. It has not ceased in Islam, except among the more enlightened who live in democratic states.

The idea of a holy war, whether Christian or Muslim, justifies any sort of violence, murder, pogroms, because the infidel's life has no value, no sanctity. You can justify the most terrible acts, the pogroms and Holocaust against the Jews, slavery in Africa, the use of slave labour, the butchery in Cambodia, by a mental brain-washing that demonises others and regards their extinction as justified, even holy. It is a terrible thought, but it is without doubt the mind-set of the pilots who hijacked the four planes and spread death and destruction on 11th September 2001. Sensible Muslims will have to consider whether any war can ever be holy.

### **4. Martyrdom**

On this point there is a fundamental difference between the Muslim view and that of almost all other faiths, perhaps because of a difference in attitude as to sanctity of life.

A suicide bomber who kills himself and hundreds of others - perfectly innocent people - is regarded as a martyr. This is unbelievable today to adherents of other faiths. In Judaism and Christianity a martyr is someone who dies for a cause, a belief, but not someone who kills other people.

What form of brain-washing goes into the making of a person who has no regard for his own life or the

lives of others? It is not exclusive to Islam. There were Japanese suicide pilots in the Second World War. There are parallels in the endless civil war in Sri Lanka.

How cheaply does one hold one's own life and that of other perfectly innocent people? It is a moral black hole, and a terrible blot on modern civilisation. How dreadful to describe martyrs as 'soldiers of God'. What sort of God wants a person to kill himself and others, God's creatures!

### **5. Racism**

Muslim leaders often point to adherents of different colours and nationalities, and indicate that Islam is a brotherhood, a unity, an 'umma', that transcends race. It is not so, seen in practice. The average Western peace-loving Muslim would be appalled to learn his or her religion has a racist element.

The Koran itself encourages devotees to kill Jews and pagans. In 1983 thirteen Islamic fundamentalists were tried for conspiring with Iran to establish 'a pure ethnic Bosnia', free of non-Muslims. Indeed the whole recent tragedy of the Balkans is based on a combination of racism and religious prejudice and hatred. This reflects the Christian-Muslim tension. Indeed it has been noted that 'since 1500 there has scarcely been any 5-year period when Muslims have not been in arms against Europe somewhere in the Muslim world.'

The current view in some Muslim states is extremely racist in its propaganda against America, Israel and the West. Palestinian leaflets also outdo Hitler and Goebbels' 'Der Sturmer' in its racist cartoons and articles.

This racist attitude permeates education in Palestinian schools. Contempt for Judaism was shown not merely by launching a war on the Jewish Day of Atonement in 1973, but by the destruction of over 50 synagogues in old Jerusalem and using them as latrines. What would the Muslim world have said if 50 mosques had been so destroyed and desecrated!

This indicates a closed mind-set contemptuous of other faiths.

Again this is something Muslims engaged in inter-faith activity will have to ponder, and consider whether an apology is due.

## 6. Hatred

Khomeini of Iran stated "The governments of the world should know that Islam cannot be defeated. Islam will be victorious in all countries of the world, and Islam and the teachings of the Koran will prevail all over the world."

This kind of talk encourages devotees to do any terrible deed to achieve their ends. Morality and respect for human life disappears.

These words of Khomeini remind one of the boasts of Hitler and the Nazis, as well as the Communist Khrushchev who addressed the West stating, "We will bury you yet." Who was buried?

Rarely has a religious grouping shown such antagonism to others, the burning of flags, the parades in the streets with crowds yelling "Death to America" or "Death to Israel", burning effigies. We rarely hear talk of love or of peace. Could the present Muslim world produce a Gandhi, a Sai Baba, a Mother Theresa? That is a test.

Could one imagine a million Muslims sitting quietly chanting "Om Shanti" - peace - or the Arab equivalent? That is also a test.

The campaign let loose against Salman Rushdie was indicative of a blind hatred. So is a popular song in the Arab world entitled "I hate Israel".

The propaganda on both sides in the Iran-Iraq war also is a marker as to depth of hatred in which there were both religious and racial elements. Indeed the basic Shia doctrine is 'being in a state of perpetual rebellion. Every day in his life is a battle in which he must either triumph or achieve martyrdom.' No wonder there have been so many deaths within Islam. They include the following:

- a) Assassination of King Abdullah of Jordan
- b) Assassination of Anwar Sadat of Egypt
- c) Attempted assassination of the present Pope. It also includes:
- d) Murder of Israeli athletes in the Munich Olympics

- e) Letter bombs to Israel Embassies
- f) Hijacking of planes, e.g. Entebbe in Uganda
- g) Shooting down of Pan Am plane
- h) Killing German tourists in Egypt.

This base of hatred works within the Muslim world - both Au and his son Hussein were murdered in the infancy of Islam? and outside it, indicating yet another aspect.

## 7. Lack of respect for sovereignty of states

If you hate enough, are brainwashed enough, are so convinced that you possess God's final word, you can justify anything. It means you do not care about where you commit your deeds. You care not a fig for national boundaries and national sovereignty. You have no respect for the rights of other peoples. This is not a bland generalisation. There are examples.

- a) Bombing of US embassies and sites in Lebanon, Yemen, Kenya, Tanzania. An embassy is supposed to be inviolate. It was not in Teheran. How about respect for the governments and people of Tanzania and Kenya? The question does not even arise for the militants.
- b) The murder of a British policewoman in a London square - WPC Fletcher. The attack on Israel's embassy in London. Again, no regard for British sovereignty.
- c) The destruction of the Jewish communal centre in Argentina. Again no regard for the sovereignty of that country.

These are a few examples. They indicate both arrogance and contempt for others.

## 8. The next world

In order to combat Muslim terrorism effectively it is necessary to disabuse them of the view that their 'martyrdom' leads to 'instant access to a better life'. It does not. It leads to just the reverse. How does one get this over to Muslims? This is crucial in the fight against terrorism. To undermine this belief presents problems for the adherents of other religions who have their own views of the next world and our role and treatment there. That is why this attack on America is a defining moment in history

from this particular aspect, affecting all faiths.

The indoctrination of these suicide killers is that they will inherit a wonderful sensual world of young maidens, beautiful gardens and so on. There is still the medieval view of heaven and hell. Khomeini warned that those who did not submit to Islam would be "put to the sword and dispatched to hell, where they shall roast forever." He also refers to America as "the great Satan?" He probably believed there was a Devil.

This appears to confirm my view that there are elements in Islam who are still thinking and living in medieval times. I compare Catholic views in the 16th century as to everlasting burning in Hell of non-believers.

Other faiths cannot be smug. The Christian idea of sitting on the right hand of God is also remote from the truth. Even the Buddhist conception may not be accurate.

I say this because the last 150 years have seen a mass of communication and links between the next world and this world. Those suicide bombers will have a very hard time. They will have to obtain forgiveness from those they killed. Their mind-set has to change, and that may take years

So one has to oppose their false ideas with the reality which we now know. That presents problems for the other faiths.

That is one of the reasons why this is a defining moment in world history. Life is a gift from God. To destroy life is a blasphemy. The action of the Islamic terrorists is The Great Blasphemy.

The West, if it has the courage, has perforce to attack the basic beliefs of these barbarians in order to undermine their will to sacrifice themselves and kill others in the process. In doing this they may have to look again at their own particular beliefs.

## 9. The battle of civilizations

I mentioned how the West had overcome the challenge of Nazi racism and Communist ideological warfare. There is now a third battle to be waged. It is against world terrorism, of

which Islam is producing the most notable but not the only example. It is a disease like Aids and as difficult to eradicate. Let us look for a moment why some Islamic elements oppose the West.

### a) Peaceful change of government

This is practically non-existent in the Arab world, and much of the Muslim world. There is the tradition of the ruler and the ruled. There is no tradition of democracy. It is creeping in slowly in some countries. Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan are examples of domination by secular or religious tyrants. Things are a bit better in Morocco, Egypt, and a few other places, but a peaceful change of the governing element is rare.

### b) Free Press and freedom of expression

The records of Amnesty International testify to the absence of freedom of expression and persecution of those writers whom the regimes regard as enemies. Look what has happened to journalists in Iran who thought there was a 'thaw' in state control.

### c) The status of women

All the religions have at one time or another given a lesser status to women. Sikhism has been progressive. Even in Christianity and Judaism and Hinduism there remain problems as to equality for women. But nothing exists comparable to Islam. Women's movements for their rights are in the early stages in Egypt and the Far East.

But look at Saudi Arabia where a woman cannot drive a car if alone. The horror story is of course the subjugation of women in Afghanistan.

The covering of women's hair and bodies is the result of regarding the woman as a chattel, hence the institution of the harem. Similarly on death a woman inherits less than a man. The whole law of marriage and divorce and custody is weighted in favour of men. This is now a major challenge to both men and women in Islamic countries. All international Conventions uphold complete equality between men and women.

### d) Criminal law

Some ghastly situations still exist. Women are still stoned to death, thieves have their hands cut off, there are public executions. Rather than an

independent punishment, blood relatives can still decide the fate of a guilty person. All this harks back to some of the worst Biblical punishments. I gather that under the Sharia system of law the word of a non-Muslim carries less weight than that of a Muslim and the word of a woman less than that of a man. Quite horrifying is the rule that one is entitled to kill a person who abandons Islam for another religion. And this despite the statement in the Koran that "there is no compulsion in religion"e)

#### e) Human Rights

These may derive to a certain extent from the various scriptures, but the human rights movement is a modern Western creation. It derives from the teachings of West Europeans and Americans from the 17th century onwards. Its notable expressions emerged from the American and French revolutions of the 18th century. It developed in the 19th century with the ending of slavery, the gradual legal ending of discrimination. It flowered particularly after 1945 in a variety of Declarations of Human Rights.

Thus it is primarily a modern Western movement. That movement completely passed by the Muslim world. Today it represents a massive challenge to that world, since its concepts undermine some inherited religious teachings and laws as well as affecting the 'divine right' of clerical authorities.

Western governments have, for economic reasons, been loath to criticise Arab states for their breaches of human rights. This has not helped the emerging human rights groups in those countries.

It is only when a devastating physical attack, as on 11th September, takes place that the West begins to wake up to reality, and, even then, economic considerations may well hamper a unified Western response.

I have mentioned these few points to illustrate the gap between the inherited Muslim tradition and the present Western view. In Israel capital punishment has been abolished except for Nazis. Only one person has been executed in 53 years of

statehood. The judiciary is secular and completely independent, unlike Pakistan or Iran. Governments change peacefully and, apart from status, men and women have equal rights.

Israel is therefore a Western country and a standing reproach to her neighbours, as is Britain, America and Western-inspired countries.

Had the Palestinians and Arabs respected the U.N. decision of 1947, they could long ago have had a Palestinian state and 50 years of peaceful co-operation with Israel. Why they did not do this may be gleaned from some of the points I have set out.

Hence America is cast as the villain because America is the clearest case of a free and open prosperous secular society, and the greatest stumbling block to the extremists' expansionist outlook. The 11th September attack on America is the opening shot in both a physical and ideological battle. It may last for 10 or 15 years or much longer. The danger is that a medieval mind-set has 21st century technology at its disposal.

Again the average law-abiding Muslim living peacefully in the West may find it difficult to accept this analysis. The same would apply to a Jew, Christian, Hindu or Shintoist faced with a similar critical approach. After all it was religious extremists who assassinated both Gandhi and Rabin.

The question is whether there are sufficient moderate Muslims with the courage and wisdom to recognise that change has taken place in the world and that Islam has to reform and re-interpret itself. Those people are still afraid to come forward for obvious reasons, although there are the first stirrings of self-criticism. If they can assert the concepts of peace, love, justice and mercy they may one day revive the memory of a time when Islam was a positive constructive force in history rather than the destructive force it is today.

#### 10. The Shame of Western Europe

A final word should be added. As things are developing there will emerge an

alliance of a kind between America, India, Israel, Russia and possibly China. The first three are in the front line of the battle for democracy and human rights. The other two have their own particular interests.

But a sense of shame should fall on Western Europe, with its criticism of Israel largely a form of subterranean anti-Semitism or attempted self-exculpation for the past. (One day the U.N. and E.U. will condemn suicide bombers when passing their resolutions about Israel).

Most Western Europe countries today are adopting the same attitude they did in the 1930s. Nazi terrorism began in 1933. For 6 years those countries compromised, closed their eyes, acted like ostriches, while the aggression and the murders went on. Even the voice of a Churchill was barely heard. There is no Churchill today.

September 11 2001 was a declaration of war, by Muslim extremists on democracy. The blowing-up of Frenchmen in Pakistan, the blasphemy of suicide bombs on Israel, the attack on the Indian Parliament, are part of this war.

Western Europe and the E.U. have barely woken up to the fact that there is a war on. They are concerned about their minorities, money, oil, gas, exports. They do not realise this is as much a war on decent, peace-loving Muslims as on themselves.

Their attitude to the Palestinian Authority is typical. They have poured hundreds of millions of pounds into a body that is corrupt, guilty of human wrongs galore, and sponsor of all the terrorist attacks on Israel.

The E.U. should stop any payment as long as there is a single act of terrorism. In fact, with all the rich Arab states around, there is no reason why they should give anything at all. How much have they given Israel, who settled hundreds of thousands of people?

One day, when murder strikes close to home, these states, especially France, will wake up. One hopes it will not be too late and that too much destruction and loss of life will not have taken place.

The prospect ahead is sombre, just as it was for Britain in 1940, but, as then, this is a fight for civilisation and common decency.

## HOW LONG

Michael Etkind

They kill with "Fatwah" and with "God is Great" upon their lips...  
 With "Jihad" on their minds...  
 (God's greatness grows - no doubt - with every life that's lost).  
 Their shrivelled hearts explode with rage and hate for our way of life  
 Their Mullahs and their Imans have filled their heads with hatred of the West  
 The road to paradise - their paradise - is paved with skulls and bones of the Infidels..  
 How many years must pass before the freedoms of the democratic states  
 are grasped by those who're stuck in their medieval past?  
 How long we'll have to wait for them to soften their intransigence  
 and see that our way of life - of common sense - of compromise -  
 Must win, prevail, and last.

# JUDITH'S REACTION TO THE 11TH SEPTEMBER OUTRAGE

The Terror - of - Tuesday scratches images on all our souls and minds. In addition to what we hear and see - connections are made to our own personal experiences. I am thinking of how the Jerusalem vulnerability has spread to New York and Washington. I am thinking how as a Holocaust survivor I have - after the liberation - gone from the world of terror to the world of chaos and hope..... with names, with names. Looking for loved ones.

My poem unfortunately is of current terror. I have a new "forever" image. On September 12, 2001, I see on TV a young girl, in jeans, sneakers, pony-tail - typical American girl - but she has a photograph in her hand - she is looking for her dad,

If the style of this poem is in some way reminiscent of the style of Dr. Zeus, the children's writer, well that is the horror of it. A sudden new reality - and the fun-tale turns into a nightmare. For children too.

September 16, 2001  
Judith Sherman

Has any body seen my dad?  
His name is Arnie -  
Arnie... is my dad.  
He wears a tie  
That's purple - pink  
The one that I  
Have given him.

Oh, you'd recognize my dad - Between his front teeth  
There is a gap.  
Probably the reason why  
On this pho-to-graph  
He does not smile.

Did you see my dad? -  
My dad called home  
On the cell- phone  
Told my mom  
'there is a fire  
and I cannot see -  
I love you Ellie  
And tell the kids  
I——'

Have you seen my dad?  
The hospitals say -  
"No, not yet, not yet,, not yet."

You call if you see my dad,  
And I'll keep looking for you, Dad.  
Please God - Oh, God  
Where - Is - My -Dad?  
Where-is-my-dad?

Judith Sherman September, 2001

## THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AT YAD VASHEM

Jerusalem, April 9, 2002

The Prime Minister's International Conference on "The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors" - The Moral and Ethical Implications for Humanity, was held at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem between 8 - 11 April 2002. It was organised by Yad Vashem, The Centre of Organisations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel and supported by The conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

Despite the difficult security situation in Israel, hundreds of participants from Israel and from thirty countries attended the conference.

In his opening remarks, Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate,

stated: "This gathering was conceived as a way for looking forward to a future in which the Holocaust's legacy and lessons are communicated to generations which have no eye-witnesses to draw on. As we prepare to open our discussions, the situation has changed dramatically. Our participants are expressing shock over a new wave of violence directed against synagogues and community centres in France and Belgium. The warnings of the Holocaust have never been as alarming or relevant as they are today in April 2002."

It was a meaningful and successful conference and the following three articles give a flavour or its gravity.

### LEGACY OF THE HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

Moshe Sanbar

*Moshe was born in Hungary, survived Dachau and other concentration camps. He was a former Governor of the Bank of Israel and Chairman of Bank Leumi Israel (Worldwide). He is the Chairman of the Centre of Organisations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel and the Chairman of the Executive Board of the Claims Conference.*

Six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust-75 percent of all Jews in Europe who came under Nazi rule at the time. Nazism also inflicted severe damage on the traditional European culture and its moral infrastructure. The Nazi ideology fought Judaism in all ways: physically, by means of gas chambers and extermination in grueling labor, and spiritually, by burning books and boycotting Jewish creative artists. Nazism regarded Jewish culture-both religious and secular-as one of its greatest enemies. Indeed, Jewish culture and the Jewish value system are utterly anti-ethical to Nazi doctrine.

We, Holocaust survivors in Israel, in conjunction with Yad Vashem and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, took the initiative to call this conference. Our purpose was to stress the polar dissimilarity of these

two worldviews and to emphasize the moral principles and lessons that, in our opinion, flow from the triumph of democracy over Fascism and National Socialism. The Holocaust was ours above all-the Holocaust of the Jewish people-but most of its lessons are universal.

At the existential Jewish level, the most conspicuous lesson is that we cannot rely upon others to help us at times of distress. In the past, others had concerns that they considered more important. The same will probably hold true in the future. They may observe our agonies with genuine sorrow but their interests will usually steer their considerations toward "non-intervention." Consequently, the necessary response was the establishment of an independent Jewish state, the State of Israel, which would open its gates to all Jews who wished to find shelter there.

The cruel struggle for survival toughened us as individuals but also taught us that we must not abandon universal basic values in any event. Values of ethics and justice, equality, and national unity should light our path as a free state and society. This has been our incontrovertible response to past and present nemesis, on behalf of a better future. Most Holocaust survivors embraced this lofty goal after World War II when they decided, of their own free will, to settle in this country before and during the War of Independence. Only several years after we emerged from the gates of the Nazi hell, we joined the Haganah, Etzel, Lechi and later on the Israel Defence Forces to take part in that war, in which many of us perished. We regarded, and still regard, the establishment of our state as the ultimate solution for the Jewish people. We consider it a just solution and believe that it may also help to further regional development and enhance the standard of living of our neighbors, with whom we aspire to live in peace and tranquility.

My remarks to this point concerned the national level.

At the universal level, the main lesson-in my opinion-is that phenomena and ideologies that clash with elementary ethical imperatives should be "nipped in the bud," before they have a chance to amass strength and influence. The Holocaust could not have taken place were it not for the gradual and steady ascendancy of the Nazi Party. The Nazis never masked their intentions; Hitler explained them frankly in his book "Mein Kampf". However, many well-intentioned people at that time considered Nazism nothing

but a marginal phenomenon that would quickly vanish. Hitler's theory was built on "Aryan" racial supremacy and abhorrence of "inferior" races. The core object of the animus was the Jews, whom the Nazis blamed for every misfortune that had ever befallen Germany and Germans. This was their message to the German masses after their defeat in World War I. The economic crisis that coincided with the advent of the Nazi doctrine created fertile soil in which this ideology could spread. However, the practical fulfillment of the Nazi vision could happen only due to the baneful dictatorship that Hitler created-a regime from which his steadily expanding minions of thuggish associates benefited. By the same token, the opponents of the regime were afraid to speak out; most decided to hold their silence and withdraw into a shell, leaving the field to the Nazi gangs. Here lies the origin of the Nazis' contemptible racial laws, religious and ethnic discrimination, and denial of elementary human rights in the fields of occupation, property, education, and personal freedoms.

This is the history in a nutshell. As stated, however, the implications of this history are strongly evident in the present. The phenomena noted above are recurring almost everywhere. Hence the lesson: to act against them immediately and to strive limitlessly to attain the opposite goals-goals based on the assurance of personal freedom, human dignity, and equal rights and opportunity for all, irrespective of religion, sex, skin color, and ethnicity. Although the roots and residues of hate and discrimi-

nation are too deep to permit the attainment of these goals in one stroke, action to attain them should be taken persistently and indefatigably. The likelihood of success in realizing these aspirations is greater in true democracy. Education plays a central role in this matter. Basic moral values should be imparted to children at an early age so they, later on, may be inured to incitement and nurturing of hate.

It is sometimes said that "The ends justify the means." This is a favored slogan of dictatorships, in which the ruler chooses a goal and sanctions all forms of action, even the most illegitimate and unethical, on its behalf. Although Hitler and Stalin occupied opposite extremes of the political spectrum, both espoused this slogan. To serve such goals as they derived from their wrongful worldviews, one could murder and oppress millions and force additional millions into exile. In my opinion, no goal justifies the cold-blooded murder of absolutely innocent people. In this context, it is worth noting that the so-called suicide terrorists also serve what they consider an exalted national goal. However, their illegitimate means besmirch their cause and stain their banner and struggle with the blood of innocent people. The real terrorists, the genuine brutes, are not the bombers but those who send them, incite them, train them, equip them, and finance them. These are the people who determined that their goal justifies the despicable murder of children, the elderly, women, and unarmed men. They send brainwashed people to their death while they themselves, the planners and their children, do not for-

feit their lives for the same goal.

Some time ago, in an interview with the Washington Post, a leading figure in Hamas bragged that the Palestinians had found the Israelis' soft underbelly, i.e., their love of life. Thus, in his opinion, the suicide-bomber method is the ideal way to confront the Jews! This supremely disgusting way of thinking must not be countenanced under any conditions and deserves furious condemnation.

The use of suicide attackers against civilian populations was demonstrated against the United States on September 11, 2001. Today it is being used against us; tomorrow it may be invoked against some other nation. Who knows where this method will lead mankind? The heads of all religions, intellectuals, and enlightened leaders must censure this crime and fight it to the finish. There is not, and cannot be, an end that justifies all means, including the cold-blooded murder of innocents.

We Jews, especially those like us who survived the Holocaust, experienced the implications of a criminal ideology that sanctioned abuse, torture, and murder. Apart from our terrible personal experience, we witnessed the deaths of many who could not endure it. Hence we call upon the enlightened public and everyone who values human life: do not aid or abet the ascendancy and dissemination of ideologies that disregard basic values. Act against them everywhere, with resolve and without letup, for the sake of your children and posterity. This is the crux of our heritage, and it is our will and testament!

## Keynote address given by Prof. Elie Wiesel in the Valley of the Communities during the closing ceremony of the Conference 11/4/2002

In years to come visitors will enter this "Emek HaBacha", the "Valley of Jewish Communities", just to remember what our people lost during the cruelest of our tragedies, and they will weep as pious and learned Jews weep over the destruction of our Temple long ago. But then they will emerge and see the splendor and majesty of Jerusalem and they will smile, thinking, "Look at these visible and tangible

memories we have maintained alive just as they have maintained our dream and ourselves alive". Dr. Israel Singer, my friend, mentioned his town. Just behind me there is Buczacz. Buczacz - the place where Shai Agnon was born. Shai Agnon had a marvelous word in Stockholm when he received the Nobel Prize. He said, "Majesty, like all Jews I was born in Jerusalem, but then the Romans came and moved

my cradle to Buczacz." I would say, Avner Shalev and your friends, there are many museums in the world, but the source is here. And I have worked for one museum at least, if not for two, many, many years, and nevertheless, in the city of Jerusalem I must tell the truth. And the truth is that this is the heart and this is the soul of Jewish memory.

What does one do with memory? Here we utter

words that we cannot use anywhere else, just as there are certain prayers that you cannot pronounce anywhere else. Only in Jerusalem. Look at the stones. They are testimonies as are our lives, but "Who will be, who will bear witness for the witness," asked Paul Celan, who lived in Paris and committed suicide. He wasn't the only one. There were other writers who committed suicide. Especially writers, because they felt

poor with words. Writers have nothing else but words, and they realized that there are no words for this tragedy. There are stones and there are people who come to be in these stones. The despair of these people who did commit suicide must serve as warning, which remains a pitiful part of our legacy which, good and cherished friends, you, scholars, teachers, historians, researchers, have tried to do for the last three days. You were here together at a very important conference and you found the way to go deeper and deeper into the dimensions of memory that had not been explored until now. You have done so with intelligence and passion, and its impact, the impact of the conference will be felt in many years and decades to come. In this unique place of memory, where the uniqueness of the Jewish tragedy is being preserved, we must therefore be truthful to ourselves and ask, "Will this be the last gathering?" When Zvi Gill came to see me that is what he meant, and I objected. There is no "last" for us. As long as there will be one survivor, it won't be the last.

But who will be the last survivor? The last to tell the tale, saying, "I am the man" (Hebrew), as Yirmiyahu said. "I was there." Who will be our witness? What will happen to our legacy? What happened to it already? You mentioned France, and France is so important to me. And in spite of the work that my friends, Serge and Beate are doing, in spite of the work that all of you are doing, I don't know what is happening to that country. Anti-Semitism in France is gaining such an intensity now? Such violence? Burning synagogues? Causing Jews to feel threatened when they go into the street or wear a "kippa"? And what about Israel? The heart of our hearts, the dream of our dreams. Suicide killers murdering Jewish children and their parents and grandparents? For the first time in history Israel's unwilling yet virulent resistance to the scourge of blind murder is being criticised, censured and slandered in so many places. What would they wish Israel to do? To give in to terror?

And to give in to its fanatic priests, thirsty for Jewish blood and Jewish life? To some of us this day is very special. April 11th. April 11, 1945 was the liberation of Buchenwald. Naphtali Lavie and I remember that day - it's our birthday, we say. I remember we were Jewish adolescents, all orphans, and we didn't know what to do with our newly given freedom. Some of us formed a "miiyyan" and we recited the "kaddish", the first "kaddish" as free Jews. And I think I thought this "kaddish" will never stop. It will last until we die, and in a way I was right. This "kaddish" is still in us and sometimes I wonder whether if in all my writings it is something else that I am doing, whether just to say "kaddish". Often we feel weary and melancholy and close to despair, not only for the past, but also for the present. In other words, for what was done by so many on so many levels to the memory of our past. I am not referring to the professional Holocaust deniers. They don't deserve the dignity of a debate. I refer to a Nobel Prize winner in literature, Saramago, who came here, who had the arrogance to come to tell Palestinians that what Israel is doing to them is what Germans have done to the Jews. Writers should first read before they write. But I also refer to all those who use their skill, movie-makers and all people from all fields who trivialize our tragedy. The authenticity of the tragedy is being lost to some of them.

But all of them together belong to a minority. In general terms we may judge the situation as more positive. Never before have there been so many events, so many academic conferences, so many chairs, so many books on the Holocaust. Its place in history can no longer be questioned. Could it be distorted? It could, but as long as Yad Vashem and its director and staff, very gifted and able staff, and their archives will be open to interested scholars and students, which means forever, "Ad bo haMashiach", there will always be voices to correct innocent errors and willful misjudgements. They will be our heirs, our witnesses. They will be custodians of our memories, thus of legacy, your legacy, for

whoever listens to a witness becomes a witness.

So what will the legacy be? First, maybe let us see what it has been for survivors. It was an attempt to remain human even in inhuman conditions. Even inside Auschwitz, these men and women were capable of courage, generosity and compassion. A piece of bread, a good word, a prayer on Shabbat. Or a smile. All those were enough to give strength to a fellow prisoner. After the war these survivors could have chosen nihilism, hedonism, violent revenge or just extreme selfishness. They could have said to the world, "We owe you nothing. We paid the price. We want to enjoy life now and to hell with you." We could have said that. But instead, these survivors chose to emphasise hope and dignity. Some went back to their homes and became Communists. For good reasons then. They didn't know what Stalin had done. Later they came to regret that. But many survivors came to Israel and built on the ruins of so many lives a new state, which celebrates dignity, celebrates honour and celebrates humanity, in spite of all what people say about Israel and the people of Israel. Our legacy is rooted in what we call "Ahavat Yisrael", the love of Israel. Israel the State and Israel the People. No one loves Israel as a survivor does. No one. The legacy is that whatever happens to and in Jerusalem affects all Jews, wherever they may dwell, wherever they may live in fear or prosperity. When one community is threatened, all our people, the entire people, must mobilise its energies to rush to its aid. When one segment is slandered and one person is humiliated, we must all raise our voices in protest. From our experience we have learned that no Jew must ever feel alone and abandoned. A Jew alone is exposed to doubt and danger. Together, we know how to resist perils and above all, the peril of indifference. A Jew must never be indifferent to other Jews. We must never be quiet when Israel needs our voice.

Well, we must not be indifferent to other people's suffering either. That, too, is part of our moral legacy. When people suffer from

injustice, when they are victims of society or victims of destiny, we must not check their identity cards, but offer them our compassion. In other words, we must do for others what no one has done for us. Bring food for the hungry, a home for the homeless, conservation to the helpless and hope to the hopeless. We, who were forgotten by Creation and perhaps abandoned by its Creator, must demonstrate our faith in both. That faith preceded us and will follow us in history. We, who inside the barracks and the darkness saw all those leading to death, all endeavours dictated by the enemy, dominated by death, we still proclaim with every fibre of our being, our belief in the Jewish tradition, namely that everything about life is in life, be it frail and vulnerable. Ultimately, therefore, the question we had to face after liberation was, "What does one do with one's memories and do with one's suffering?" We could have used them as weapons to inflict suffering onto others, but we did not. Isn't Israel a great triumph, if not the greatest obtained by our generation? I know there are those who might take issue with what I just said about our own way of making use of suffering. Many survivors came here from D.P. camps. Haven't they made Palestinians suffer? That's what the Palestinians say. My answer is simple. When survivors came here their goal was not to make them suffer. It was not to conquer lands that they came here for, lands that did not belong to the Palestinians, but they came home to live without fear. Today there is still fear in this land, sanctified by its eternal quest for peace. That, too, is part of our legacy. Maimonides wants us to play for peace among all nations. Even when they fight among themselves, somehow we happen to become their victims. Thus, we tell the world today and generations to come to learn from us, the last remnant of the bloodiest tragedy in recorded history. The memory of suffering and agony can and must be invoked so as to prevent further suffering and more agony. Faced with the memory of the moral blank-

# OUR LIVING LEGACY

## A Message From Holocaust Survivors For All Generations

ness of the enemy, it is incumbent upon us to show greater sensitivity to ethical issues and challenges, and tell those who believe in death that that is not the way to fight for their cause. I cannot tell you enough, my good friends here, how perturbed I am, how worried I am, how dismayed I am that the world does not realize the danger of suicide bombings. I call them "suicide killers". I cannot understand that. These are people who made death into a cult, death into a passion, death into a theology. They believe that they kill in the name of their god, and in doing so they don't realize that they make their god into a killer. And the world refuses to understand that. And the world doesn't realize that we have learned in history that whatever happens to us is usually a beginning. If we do not get the possibility here to fight, disarm and vanquish and uproot the suicide killers and their teachers, they, the world, will feel what we now feel here in this land, where young soldiers. . . . where we see young soldiers - I see them on television - you see them, you, personally, here, going from funeral to funeral. Breaks my heart. When I see the "Hevra Kadisha" - I admire these men who, the moment it happens, they go there just to collect the "evarim", pieces. How do they do that? Or when we think of the parents, their children... no. Something is wrong with the world again, which means we have a legacy. They have not learned from it yet. There is a "midrash" that "Eliyahu HaNevi" actually is going around the world with a bag and he collects tales of Jewish suffering. And when the "Mashiach" will come, the stories of that bag will become the new Torah from which G-d Himself will study and teach. I am sure that one place that He will visit day and night is this place.

My very dear and good friends, Israel is going through a difficult time. I hope you believe us that we are so deeply with you, that maybe it will offer a moment or a spark of the fire that is still burning in us, for consolation and strength. Thank you.

**T**he Age of the Survivors is drawing to a close. Before long no one will be left to say, "I was there, I saw, I remember what happened." All that will be left will be books of literature and research, pictures and films, and multitudinous testimony. This will be a new era. The dark inheritance of the Shoah that was so indelibly stamped on the survivors' souls and hearts will become a sacred mission imposed upon humanity.

Fifty-seven years ago in the spring of 1945 the great thunder of WWII was silenced. In the eerie stillness that followed, we, the last vestiges of European Jewry, emerged from the camps, the forests, and the death marches. We were ragged, bitter and orphaned, without friend or relative, without a home. We were secretly wondering in our hearts if after the ghettos, transports, and Auschwitz, would we still be capable of rekindling a spark of life within us? Could we ever work again? Love again? Would we dare begin a family again?

No, we didn't turn into wild animals, hungering only for vengeance. This is a testament to the principles we possess as a people imbued of enduring faith in both man and Providence. We chose life. We chose to rebuild our lives, to fight for the establishment of the State of Israel, and we chose to contribute to society in Israel and in a host of other countries.

The majority of the Holocaust survivors came to Israel - the Jewish State. This was, for them, an existential imperative arising from the Holocaust. The foundations of the State of Israel were built not only on the memory of six million of our people who were murdered, but with the historical lessons of the Shoah in mind, namely

that a Holocaust will never happen again.

Since then, we have chosen to contend with the most resounding and perplexing issues relating to the Shoah: Why and for what purpose was the horror perpetrated? Why did the Germans single out the Jew as a danger to all humanity who must be exterminated? How is it possible that amongst the German nation, a people of such apparent intellect and modern culture who produced great artists, thinkers and teachers of ethics, could arise murderers who fashioned and operated this unprecedented killing machine?

The survivors are a pluralistic lot, with myriad opinions, convictions and doctrines. But we share in common a deep desire to transmit to the future generations what we lived through, and what we learned during that dark time, before we bid farewell to this life that showed us so much bitterness. It is from here, from Har HaZikaron - the Mount of Remembrance - from Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, that we, the survivors, choose to tell our story. And it is now, at the International Conference on the Shoah, dedicated this year to the Legacy of the Survivors, that we raise our collective and individual voices.

In Jewish tradition, the command to remember is absolute. But its obligation does not end with the cognitive act of memory - it must be connected to both meaning and action. Today, we for whom the memory is burned in our hearts and on our flesh, gather to pass the torch of memory to the next generation. We pass to you as well, the fundamental lesson of Judaism, that memory must be accompanied by actions of ethical and moral intent. This must be the

foundation and the focus of your energies toward the creation of a better world.

"Thou Shalt Not Murder!" This basic tenet of human morality was trumpeted to all humanity from the heights of Mount Sinai. The memory of the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis and their willing helpers obligates us to act on this injunction. Life is a gift of creation, its form and essence a statement of ultimate equality among all those created in a Godly image. With this in mind, it would seem obvious and indisputable that this fundamental commandment obligates all of humanity. And yet it is being mockingly violated in every corner of the world. As a part of the legacy of the Shoah we must be relentless in our pursuit of solving human conflict, between states, and between people, in ways that prevent unnecessary bloodshed.

For us, who experienced the degradation of cruel racism and prejudice, who were condemned to death merely for being born Jews, we call on humankind to adopt principles of equality among men and nations. Tyrannical despotism, political and religious oppression, economic deprivation designed to destroy human dignity must be seen by the world community as grave sins that will not be tolerated. There is no real alternative to co-existence between people and nations. Everything must be done to resolve differences not through the spilling of blood but through discussion and mediation, in the Middle East and in the entire world.

Anti-semitism and all other forms of racism present a danger not only to Jews but also to the community of nations. These days the "new anti-semitism" is directed simultaneously against Jews,

against Israel and against Zionism. By equating these terms, the danger for Jews as a whole is exacerbated. This phenomenon is also common in propaganda emanating from the Arab world. The Holocaust showed the world the extent of the destructive power of anti-semitism and racism. Holocaust denial, as well as minimization and banalisation of the Holocaust provide a means of avoiding the evident conclusions and learning the lessons for the future. We, the survivors, call upon the world to wipe out these phenomena and to combat them relentlessly.

The memory of the Shoah is contentious and dark, exposing the ugly and naked face of consummate inhumanity that threatens the very nature and stature of civilisation itself. We who staggered through the valley of death, only to see how our families, our communities and our people were destroyed, did not descend into despondency and despair. Rather, we struggled to extract a message of meaning and renewed purpose for our people, and for all people namely: a message of humanity, of human decency and of human dignity.

The Holocaust, which established the standard for absolute evil, is the universal heritage of all civilised people. The lessons of the Holocaust must form the cultural code for education toward humane values, democracy, human rights, tolerance and patience and opposition to racism and totalitarian ideologies.

From this conference at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem the words of Rabbi Hillel need to ring out loud and clear: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow human being!"

*This 'Living Legacy' was delivered in Hebrew during the closing ceremony of 'The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors' Conference at Yad Vashem's Valley of the Communities, on April 11, 2002.*

*May its words serve as an inspiration for our future generations.*

# IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

## (Some thoughts on a postponed Barmitzvah)

Reprinted from the Shalom Clayhall Synagogue Community Magazine

By Martin Greenberg

Ivor Perl, a long time member of Clayhall Synagogue, was Barmitzvah on March 9th - a unique occasion for our community as it was just after his seventieth birthday.

The shul was crowded with family and friends as Ivor "leyned" in a very confident manner. In common with all barmitzvah boys, he was a credit to himself, his family and the entire community who all wished him a hearty mazaltov! A splendid kid-dush then followed, enjoyed by everyone.

Many of you, I know, will have read Ivor's poignant account of his time in a concentration camp, "Chicken Soup under the Tree", for it was there he spent

his thirteenth birthday and of course, there was no barmitzvah.

"As my thirteenth birthday was approaching I thought back home to the times when the boys used to get barmitzvah and before I was even twelve, I was looking forward to celebrating, thinking how I would handle my ceremony, for the custom at home was that the barmitzvah boy chose the talmudic discourse he would deliver to the whole congregation after the service.

"But here I was on my thirteenth birthday standing behind a barbed wire fence of a concentration camp in the snow, skinny, starved and frozen in a dirty lice infested striped cotton uniform worn since I had arrived. Wooden

clogs and newspapers round my feet in lieu of socks. I prayed to God that if I survived this hell I would never ask for anything again."

I spoke to Ivor some time ago and asked him to give me his thoughts on this future happy event. He said that every time he attended a barmitzvah he had mixed feelings. Happiness for the boy, but sadness for his own missed celebration. As he approached his milestone birthday, he felt he would like to mark the event in our shul. Some fortunate people have a second barmitzvah when they are 83, so he was determined to at least have a first one!

When he was a child in Hungary, not only did the celebrant read from the Torah and give a precise of the sedra, but also he had to give a long discourse on a passage from the Gemorrah. This, he told me, made him quite nervous, but sadly events overtook his preparations.

So, despite the Nazis' worst efforts, this great wrong has been righted and another victory for the Jewish people has taken place.

# "FAITH"

By Pinchas Gutter as told to Arnine Cumsky Weiss

Pinchas Gutter Autumn 1944

*The story is one of fifty stories in a book which will be entitled "Bar Mitzvah" written by Arnine Cumsky Weiss and will be published in the Autumn 2002.*

I was born in Lodz, Poland when the war broke out. I was 7 years old and had a twin sister called, Sabina. She was my only sibling. My grandfather, Ichack Meir, was one of the notables of the Jewish Community in Lodz, and my father, Menachem Mendel, was a partner with my grandfather in the business, a wine-making concern. According to our tradition, the business was approximately 400 years old and was known as "Zlote Grone" in Polish and means "Golden Grape".

Within a few days of the Germans entering Lodz, they

started rounding up the VIPs of the town, both Polish Christians and Polish Jews, priests, rabbis, lawyers, doctors, and nobility. My grandfather was on one of those lists. When the Gestapo came to take him away, they found him in bed, having just undergone a kidney operation. He was 78 years old and as my father was at his bedside, they took him down to our wine cellars, beat him up and left him for dead. Later that same evening, the caretaker went down to the cellar and found that my father, despite being unconscious and badly

beaten, was still breathing and alive. He carried him to our apartment where he eventually recovered.

It was then decided that it was too dangerous for us to stay in Lodz and as we had an aunt, my father's sister, in Warsaw, we thought it best to go to her. Jews by that time were not allowed to use public transport, but my mother, Helena, was blonde and blue-eyed, and so were we, the two children. We thought it would be safe for us to go by train as Christian Poles. But my father had to walk from Lodz to Warsaw and it took him about three months to arrive in Warsaw.

We were in the Warsaw ghetto together until approximately 3 - 4 weeks after the Warsaw ghetto uprising. We were there right through the fighting hidden in a bunker. When the fighting subsided, we were betrayed by an informer. Threatened that if we did not evacuate the bunker immediately gas would be pumped in, we crept out to face the Germans who stood waiting for us, armed to the teeth, and

shouting "Hande Hoch! Nicht Schiessen!" (Hands up! Do not shoot!)

As we emerged, every person was patted down for arms that might be hidden under clothes. It was the end of the day. The sun was going down as we were marched through the streets of the Warsaw ghetto to the Umschlagplatz (the railway siding in northern Warsaw). Fires burned on both sides of the long column of Jews, a parodic image of the Hebrews leaving Egypt, marching through the divided waters on their way to liberation.

When we arrived at the Umschlagplatz we were immediately set upon by auxiliary SS of all different nationalities, Ukrainian, Polish, and others. We were chased up a stairwell and squashed into rooms packed so tightly there was hardly space to sit. My parents managed to get to a small corner where the four of us could huddle. Water was being sold by the bottle, but only for gold and diamonds. After several days we were loaded on to cattle trucks and taken to Majdanek.

The journey to Majdanek was horrific. Squeezed into the trucks in such numbers, it was not only difficult to find a place but one had to fight for a breath of air. It was even more difficult for the children. My parents shielded us as best they could. They had conserved a sock filled with sugar, and from the time we left the bunker until we reached Majdanek, my sister and I were fed teaspoons of sugar. My parents did not touch it. As soon as we arrived in Majdanek we were immediately torn apart. My sister looked more like a child than me and my mother would not leave her. They were taken together. I went with the men because I was quite tall. My father told me to say that I was eighteen years old. All the men were chased into a building and stripped naked. We had to throw our clothes, except for our belts, into some kind of wooden contraption in the middle of the room. We then had to run with our belts high over our heads. We were directed by an SS doctor to go either right or left, one way to immediate death, the other way to a lingering life.

My father, Menachem Mendel, my mother, Helena, and my twin sister, Sabina, were killed by the Germans the same day we arrived.

After about 6 weeks of the most horrendous existence with daily selections to the gas chamber, I was chosen for the only one or two transports that left Majdanek for a so-called "working camp". The only difference between the death camps and the so-called work camps was in the death camps you were gassed to death, while in the work camps you were worked to death, or beaten, or shot to death. The aim of the Nazis, "Jemach Shemam" (may their name be erased forever), was to exterminate us by one way or another. It is a miracle and Providence that those who survived, survived.

In the autumn of 1944, I was sent from one camp called Skarzysko Kamienne to another camp called Chestochowa Zelazna Chuta, owned at that time by H.A.S.A.G. which was a German firm. We worked in the iron works. This was hard labor, loading and unloading Pig Iron, and doubly hard for children.

The only difference between this camp and all of the others that I had experienced was the kindness shown by the Jewish Camp Commander who ran it. He chose kind Kapos and somehow he managed to work with the German Administration in such a way that they did not interfere too much in the running of the camp. Some said that he bribed the German Kommandant. Also, he especially went out of his way to help the children. In most camps we wore rags, but in Chestochowa, the Jewish camp commandant cut up blankets and made clothing for the youngsters which lasted till the end of the war. This made the conditions in this camp more bearable compared to the other camps. Nevertheless, hunger was still rife and life hung by a thread and one never knew from one moment to the next what could happen. The German guards were "Lords of Life and Death" and any transgression of their rules was usually punished by flogging, and often by shooting.

It goes without saying that any type of religious

observance was strictly forbidden and punishable by death. This, however, did not stop religious Jews from continuing to practice their religion against all odds.

When I arrived in Chestochowa, I found the great talmudist Rabbi Godel Eizner there. He had been a friend of my father's and they had studied together in the yeshiva. He decided to take me under his wing. The first thing he said to me was that I should hold on to my faith and with God's help I would survive the war. The next thing he told me was that he had been present at my Brith Milah and that as I was now thirteen years old, I was ready to make Bar Mitzvah. I looked at him as though he were mad, as by that time I had lost all hope and had long neglected any form of religious observance.

I ran away from him and tried to keep out of his way as much as I could partly because I was afraid and also because my friends were all completely irreligious and we stuck together all the time.

Rabbi Godel Eizner, however, was very determined and used every opportunity to keep on at me about my Bar Mitzvah. He constantly reminded me of my background as a son and grandson of Gerer Chasidim. Finally he prevailed and I agreed. I could not imagine how the ceremony would be carried out and he said nothing to me for some time.

Then one day he took me aside and told me that I would have to come and stay in his barrack as he had arranged a minyan (assembly of 10 men needed for communal prayer) for later that night. This was very dangerous because I was in a different barrack and we had regular appels during which we would be counted. I now had to arrange with the boys to cover for me and just before curfew I went across to Rabbi Eizner's barrack.

I lay under his bunk until all was quiet and the men he had organized for the minyan rose from their bunks, and as if by magic a tallit and tefillin materialized. To this day I have no idea how he managed to smuggle these into the camp. I repeated the benedictions after him. The whole minyan prayed and I was caught up in the great

Chassidic fervor of their devotion that night. It was as if I was born anew and I began to believe that with God's help. I might indeed survive the war. Shortly after that we were taken our separate ways.

It seemed almost like a miracle that, after many trials and tribulations, I met up with Rabbi Eizner once again, this time in Colditz, a camp in Germany, where I was fortunate to work in the kitchen. I was therefore privileged to be able to help the Rabbi with my soup portion which was given to those who worked in the kitchen at night. Rabbi Eizner survived the war, as well, and became a famous Rosh Yeshiva in Israel.

I was in six camps. All of them were concentration camps. I was liberated in Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia in August, 1945. Then I was taken to England with a group of young children who now call themselves the "Boys". Sir Martin Gilbert wrote a book about us entitled, "The Boys Triumph Over Adversity".

After the war I lived in several countries - England, France, Israel, Brazil, South Africa, and finally, Canada. I married an understanding South African Jewish lady in 1957. We have three children, and two grandchildren, Baruch Hashem (praise to G-d). Quite by chance, I became an honorary full-time cantor and have been for the past 25 years.

I feel spiritual always but especially when I conduct services and do ministering work for the aged. My advice to anybody and everybody is to remember what Hillel said, "Love your neighbour as thyself" and the rest will fall into place. The Holocaust not only defines you, but brands you. I grew up in a Chasidic home and Judaism and spirituality are part of every sinew in my body. I have no idea how I kept my faith. I think perhaps it was faith that kept me.

*Footnote:*

*The long quote describing my journey to Majdanek was taken from "The Boys, Triumph Over Adversity" by Sir Martin Gilbert. These recollections were in a letter from me to Sir Martin Gilbert dated 23 March 1996.*

The international conference was held in Warsaw on 18 April 2002 to present and discuss the development of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Organized and chaired by Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, the conference aimed to bring the representatives of governments and non-governmental organizations up to date on progress with this project. Shimon Peres, The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Chairman of the Museum's International Honorary Committee, came to Warsaw specially for this occasion.

The conference delegates were shown a detailed, multi-media presentation illustrating the content and form of the future museum's permanent exhibition, and how eight hundred years of the history of Jewish life in Poland and almost one thousand years of Polish-Jewish relations will be displayed. These proposals, which are still undergoing further elaboration, were prepared by the museum's international planning team, managed by project director Jerzy Halbersztadt in co-operation with a leading European firm specializing in modern museum design, the London-based Event Communications. The preliminary results of their work were publicly displayed at the conference for the first time.

"I was both moved by and very pleased with the proposals. It's a wonderful museum -at last a really thought-provoking establishment of a high standard" said Senator Kazimierz Kutza. "I liked the idea of recreating a pre-war Jewish street," said Kalman Sultanik, President of the Federation of Polish Jews in the United States. "A world-class educational institution is going to be set up in Warsaw which is likely to be fascinating for the younger generation of both Poles and Jews. It's significant that, at a time when Israel is in a dramatic situation, Shimon Peres, the Chairman of the museum's Honorary Committee, found the time to come to Warsaw," he added. "The foreign delegates who were sitting near me were clearly moved by what they

## THE UNSETTLED PAST - THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN WARSAW DEVOTED TO THE MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF POLISH JEWS

Shannie Ross M.B.E.

*Mrs Ross in the Chairperson and driving force of the Friends of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in the U.K.*

saw. I think the museum will have a lot of strong allies," said Eva Anderson, Director of the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland.

During the conference many of the participating scholars, politicians and witnesses of the common history of the Jews and the Poles expressed their views on the most essential aspects of the museum's program and its future educational tasks. Professor Władysław Bartoszewski, former Polish Foreign Minister, co-founder during the war of Żegota, the Council to Aid Jews, and Chairman of the Poland-Israel Association, stressed the importance of relaying historical experience to contemporary society in a form that young people will find appealing. In Bartoszewski's view, it is particularly important to show the tragedies of the Second World War within their historical context. "The history of Polish Jews cannot be about nothing but their extermination. They lived here for eight hundred years and helped to create Poland," he said.

Minister Cimoszewicz holds a similar view. "It should be a museum about life, not death," he said. "If we were to fail to remember the lives of the people who were exterminated, it would be like condemning them to non-existence all over again." The future museum should present the truth about the complexity of Polish-Jewish relations, with all their lights and shades. "This is the only way to make a proper contribution to getting rid of harmful stereotypes, xenophobic prejudices and unfair impressions of each other," he added. "On behalf of the Polish government I declare unequivocal support for the

idea of building the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. The present government is happily continuing this support in accordance with the commitments made by its predecessor, because of its deep, moral conviction that this is an extremely important project," he said.

Professor Israel Gutman of Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Institute, who is directing the development of the museum's historical programme, stated that "Poland was never a paradise for us, but nor did the Poles drive us out. So it is impossible to imagine the history of Israel without understanding the history of Poland... The Jews came to Poland not just because it was a tolerant country, but because it needed them." Dr. Barbara Engelking-Boni mentioned the symbolic significance for the history of Poland's Jews of the site where the museum will be built, opposite the Monument to the Heroes of the Ghetto, reminding the delegates that for many long years before the war this was the center of Warsaw's vibrant Jewish quarter, and during the Nazi occupation it was the site of the headquarters of the Judenrat. "The restoration of memory, remembering that we are all in debt to the Polish Jews, actually can be achieved in the form of this museum," said Marian Turski, Chairman of the Jewish Historical Institute Association and of the museum's Council.

The appearance of Shimon Peres aroused special interest. He provided an overview of the history of Polish-Jewish relations, and said: "If I have to sum up, I feel thankful to Poland, without forgetting the bitter moments and the terrible downs. ... Poland hosted [the Jews] for a very

long period in a unique way. Earlier I said that Poland was 'pregnant' with Jewish life and Jewish independence, and in fact it did eventually give birth - to the state of Israel. Without Poland we wouldn't have been able to return to our land, to our language, to our history, to our own way of understanding the role of mankind, and the responsibility for making it our moral duty. So this museum is not going to host a piece of material, but must host the strength of a wind traversing generations and prejudices, and reaching the conclusion that no matter how high the cost, life of the spirit is stronger than any existing body. It is in this sense - in my judgement - that this museum surpasses ordinary museums... So here we meet again, not as two countries, but as two civilizations, not as two political bodies, but as two historic neighbours, each living within the bones of the other, trying to hand down the truth to our children and to posterity. It is in this spirit that we all hope to be able to rise to the occasion not only to respect the sacrifices made by our forefathers, but also to enrich the future of our children."

State Minister at the President's Chancellery Marek Siwiec read out a letter from Aleksander Kwasniewski. "As President of the Polish Republic I am a patron of the project to build the museum, whose creation is the subject of today's conference. I regard this project as a deeply significant undertaking dedicated to the history of the Jews in Poland and as a symbolic payment of the debt that contemporary generations owe to the extinct world of the Polish Jews.... It is no accident that the Museum of the History of Polish Jews will be situated on the ruins of the former 'Jewish quarter', which the Nazis reduced quite literally to dust. Therefore it will be a symbol of the memory of the Jewish nation that, despite the intentions of their executioners, has not disappeared from our hearts and minds, I am sure this project will gain wide international support, which I encourage and invite."

On the exclusive meeting

members of the International Honorary Committee, under the chairmanship of Shimon Peres, discussed the issue of the funding required for the museum's development. Several specific pledges were made, and the main tasks for the next period of activity were agreed. In Kalman Sultanik's view, "the success of our plans for the museum will depend on the level of financial input from the Polish authorities". This opinion is shared by Ben Helfgott, President of the '45 Aid Society, who also said that a share of the resources recovered through the restitution of Jewish property in Poland should go towards building the museum. Minister Cimoszewicz stated at the conference: "Naturally we understand that the success of this venture will rely not only on some effective decisions being made, and some efficient procedures implemented, but also the necessary financial assistance. And I commit a level of financial support that will be significant in terms of the needs of this project. I also hope this project will gain wide support in other countries, and within Jewish circles worldwide, and that together we shall bring this great work to fruition."

The conference delegates included Austrian Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waidner, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Justas Paleckis, and former Foreign Minister of Ukraine Gennady Udovenko. Other participants included government representatives, diplomats and prominent personalities and representatives of Jewish circles from Israel, the United States, Germany, Great Britain, France, Sweden, Denmark and Belgium. Also present were many leading Polish politicians, intellectuals, businessmen and people active in various partnership organizations.

Many of the people who came to find out about the plans envisaged for the museum are long-term supporters of the project, from all over Poland and abroad. Now they are eagerly looking forward to the day when the museum will finally be opened.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE ADDRESS OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND, WLODZIMIERZ CIMOSZEWICZ AT THE CONFERENCE "UNSETTLED PAST"

(Warsaw, April 18, 2002)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The aim of this conference is to grant new stimuli to the activities connected with the establishment of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw and disseminating information on this subject.

As you know, the work on the creation of the Museum started a few years ago. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all people who have been committed to this momentous undertaking, from the moment of its inception and now.

Let me now proceed to a few reflections connected with the establishment of the Museum.

As we meet today, the world is in a difficult and precarious situation. The threat of terrorism has become yet another challenge that we have to face. The torrent of dramatic events in the Middle East proves how indispensable it is to politically control situations that engender grave conflicts.

Paradoxically, in such a situation our debate on the significance of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews which will be devoted to restoring the memory of life, comprehensive achievements and creative accomplishments of Polish Jews - becomes even more weighty. The intention that has guided the preparatory work on the establishment of the Museum is an honest statement of truth about the complex Polish-Jewish relations, about all its bright and dark sides. Only in this way is it possible to contribute to eradicating harrowing stereotypes, xenophobic prejudices, unjust concepts of one another. These extremely dangerous phenomena emerge, as you know, when there is a lack of credible knowledge and information. They hamper

the readiness and ability to understand another person. Therefore it is important to competently present the assembled documentation which proves, as a matter of fact, our congenial coexistence in our common homeland.

The museum will be a reminder of the openness of the First Republic which was to the utmost multinational and which followed the principle of tolerance which shielded Poland from being ravaged by religious wars which desolated the Europe of that time. In this context, it is trite to remind you that it was this multinational Poland which became a safe haven in which European Jews could seek shelter from persecution.

The privileges granted by the Polish rulers guaranteed security and freedom of worship to the Jews, which was tantamount to a social status. Such a situation was in place since the Kalisz privileges were granted by Duke Boleslaus the Pious in 1264, and extended in 1334 on the area of the whole Polish Kingdom by King Casimir the Great. A crowning of sorts of this process was the establishment in the 16th century of the so-called Sejm of Four Lands - WAAD ARBA ART-ZOT. A significant strand of the policy of the First Republic towards Jews was the confirmation by successive Polish kings, potentates and city councils of the privileges granted by their predecessors. Thanks to this, Jewish communities gained independence and the right to govern themselves in the issues of greatest significance to them, e.g. in jurisdiction and religious education. Gradually Jews became, to an ever greater degree, the citizens of their Polish homeland.

This is how, over the time span of a few hundred years, the Jews grew more and more rooted in this land; this country; its life and development and its fate, though not without difficulty, for good and bad. This good aspect was to be embodied in the relevant provisions of the Constitution of 3 May which concerned the Jews. Unfortunately they were not put into practice because of the loss of statehood by Poland for the 123-year-long period of partitions.

In common parlance the term "Polish-Jewish relation" relates first and foremost to the 20th century, which was a European century of nationalistic passions transmogrifying into aggressive chauvinism, the century of two lacerating totalitarian regimes - one deprived Poland of its independence in 1939, the second stripped her of the chance for full independence in 1945. Between these two dates an unimaginable tragedy of Extermination befell the Jewish nation. Poland was the place chosen by the Nazis to implement this horrifying plan. On the Polish soil there are places whose names are bloodcurdling: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Majdanek, Chelmno, and many more. In the recollections and imagination of the Holocaust Survivors and a substantial part of the next generations of Jews in the Diaspora and in the State of Israel, Poland transmuted into a gigantic cemetery of the Jewish nation. From a country where the majority of European Jews lived and where their culture flourished - land transmuted into the graveyard of this nation and this culture. This, as you know, has an adverse emotional effect on the attitude towards Poland. It is with

indignation and profound sorrow that many Jews hold grudges against Poland because of her anti-Semitic tendencies and the fact that the Holocaust was frequently accompanied by silent indifference or blatant hostility on the part of the Poles, as well as the fact the anti-Semitism laid the groundwork for the disgrace of 1968. These phenomena further consolidated the psychological barrier driving a wedge between the contemporary Jews and Poland.

One must not forget that among those Righteous Among the Nations of the World upon whom distinction was conferred by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, a few thousand were Poles. Many more are still to be awarded this recognition. We know that there are deeply hurting stereotypes and prejudices entrenched on both sides.

I am firmly convinced that today, fifty-seven years after the cataclysm of the Second World War, only the memory of what happened to the Jewish people who were all but annihilated is essential but not adequate.

One cannot remember a calamity without at the same time bearing in mind the life, development and past which were annihilated.

This should be a museum of life, not a museum of death. If we fail to remember the lives of the ones who were exterminated, we would act as if we again sentenced them to obliteration.

I believe that one of the main tasks in this field is the restoration of memory of our common past. It is important for the contemporary and future generations of young Poles and Jews. The knowledge of this should complement and enrich the historical consciousness, it should also become an important factor conducive to our good mutual understanding.

There is no reason why young Jews and Poles who jointly participate in the March of the Living in Auschwitz should not be made aware of the shared experience over centuries in the common homeland of their ancestors.

There is a lot to talk and ponder upon in this respect.

It would be hard to overestimate the contribution of Polish Jews in the development of Poland. The likes of Kronenberg, Wawelberg, Poznanski, Kon and Epsztajn were in the ranks of the pioneers who brought about the thriving of cities, the establishment of trade and modern industry. They gave to the Polish culture eminent poets, prose writers, playwrights like the well known Brandstaetter, Brzechwa, Lesmian, Peiper Rudnicki, Schulz, Slonimski, Strykowski, Tuwim and many, many more; painters and sculptors such as Berlewi, Gerson or Gottlieb; great musicians like Rubinstein, Fitelberg, Huberman, Reichman and Szeryng; outstanding historians, whose work has become an integral part of the literature on the subject Aszkenazy, Handelsman, Kleiner, Feldman and Malowitz; eminent scholars in numerous other fields, e.g. in legal scholarly studies - Taubenschlag, in medicine - Hirszfeld. It would be hard to elaborate on the history of Polish publishing without mentioning such publishers as Orgelbrand and Mortkowicz. Finally, one should also bear in mind the great Jewish families who have contributed so much in many fields: e.g. the Kramsztyks or the Natansons. It was in Poland that the unique Jewish culture, grand literature in the Yiddish language was created, that the Jewish religious, social, political thought developed. Among the classics are the works of Ash, Percec and Singer. It was on Polish soil that the great religious movement of Hasidism was created and developed, as well as in the socio-political sphere the dynamic movement of Jewish emancipation - Zionism. The extremely dynamic development of Jewish press is a separate phenomenon.

The whole above enumeration is, out of necessity, a largely incomplete list of names of Polish Jews who co-created the culture, intellectual, artistic, spiritual and economic life on the Polish territory. It was a vast world which turned into the lost Atlantis. It is to this very world that we owe our

memory. Only so little and at the same time so much can we do for it and for the sake of mutually enriching ourselves spiritually and intellectually.

Polish Jews sealed their relationship with Poland by fighting and perishing in the Polish armies on all fronts of World War II. They are also buried in the graves of Katyn.

Since 1989 in the independent and democratic Poland we have embarked on a new chapter in Polish-Jewish relations. After more than ten years we are still only at the very beginning of writing this chapter. We have managed to do much, but much still remains to be done. It can be noted with tremendous satisfaction that there are many people in Poland, in Israel and in the Diaspora, who are aware of the importance of reaching full understanding between Poles and Jews. People who are aware of how indispensable are the activities undertaken in the cause of counteracting stereotypes and spurious concepts. Among them are politicians, teachers, scholars, activists and - what might be most important - ever more young people, pupils and students. The Museum of the History of Polish Jews will be addressed first and foremost to the young, for nothing is more important than the state of consciousness of the young generation.

I hope that I will not be mistaken in saying that I observe a substantial and ever intensifying interest among young people in the history of Polish Jews. In many places of our country young people uncover documents and collect accounts concerning the life of Jewish communities in their towns and cities with interest and even with inquisitiveness. There are schools in which teachers hold special courses devoted to the history of Polish Jews, to the good and bad experiences in this history and, obviously, to the Holocaust. There is much interest in these classes. Likewise, meetings with writers devoted to these topics enjoy much popularity.

Discovering the common past has already started. A few years ago this was, unexpectedly confirmed by the

response to the appeal of the "Shalom" Foundation in which it was asking people to send photographs of their Jewish neighbours. Many people dredged up from their cubbyholes, nooks, drawers, attics and cellars, the photographs of their friends and neighbors who lived next door and perished during the Holocaust. These were family and private photographs, photographs taken during family reunions and celebrations. As we remember, the exhibition "And I can still see their faces" was created thanks to the display of these photographs - it enjoyed great popularity even though visiting it was a heartrending experience. I believe that there will be a lot of such photographs displayed in the Museum.

Therefore the museum will be a place of remembrance - not a symbolic one, but concrete, factual and documented. It will be situated on a symbolic site: in the empty space in front of the Ghetto Heroes Memorial. I am confident that apart from young Poles, young Jews from Israel and the whole world will also be among the visitors.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Poland I extend unambiguous and unequivocal support for the magnificent concept of the construction of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Within the limits of their possibilities, the Polish authorities will lend financial support to this project. The Government also declares its assistance in raising funds in other countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen, much is said today on our continent about building a common, open and friendly Europe. A Europe that will be able to guard and protect the fundamental human values. A Europe remembering its past and being able to counteract the phenomena which propelled it to so many atrocities. The Museum of the History of Polish Jews should become a sign pointing in the direction of a hopefully better future of Europe.

Thank you for your attention.

# TEREZIN - MAY 2002-05-3

Michael Etkind

*Michael came to England with the Windermere group. He lived in the Cardross hostel and later studied architecture. He has been a regular contributor to our journal and was dubbed by our President, Sir Martin Gilbert, as the poet of our Society.*



**Monument to Jan Hus Prague Old Town**

**M**y first impression was that of confusion. Today Terezin appears to be a small deserted town set in the middle of the Czech countryside, and the population which now exists there are mostly involved in the upkeep of the site as monument and museum.

The whole place is neat and clean and seems very empty. There are no outside latrines overrun with rats. I did not see the crematorium with its sloping concrete roof, which we crossed and re-crossed whilst smuggling fruit purchased in Litomerice, but it does appear on the plan of Terezin. It was obvious, even then, that with Sobibor, Belzec, Treblinka, Majdanek and Auschwitz liberated by the Russians, the Germans intended the Terezin crematorium to gas all the remaining slave labourers arriving by trains and on foot from Germany. Apparently the men engaged on this project, at the beginning of 1945 realised its purpose and managed to sabotage and to delay its completion.

The museum at the side of the Main Square used to be a primary school before the war but whilst it was a ghetto it was used as a boy's home. I remember staying in one of the buildings overlooking this square in July and August 1945 until I left with the group to go by rail to Prague on August 11th. The branch line which took us to Prague no longer exists.

After leaving the museum we made our way to what was described to us as the small fortress, which was used by the Gestapo as



**The house of the Commander of the prison, H. Jöckel next to the empty swimming pool Terezin.**

the prison and place of torture and execution. Before entering the Main Gateway we passed a cemetery which was used to bury the victims of the typhus epidemic which occurred at the end of the war. A large memorial Cross and Star of David dominate the burial ground.

We entered through the Main Gateway and were immediately confronted with the words "Arbeit Macht Frei", over an arched gateway, which I have no recollection of seeing there. We were shown courtyards containing dark cells in which the prisoners were kept. We were conducted through the underground passage which I used in July 1945 for entering Terezin for the first time. It is now illuminated at equal intervals.

The swimming pool, built for the two daughters of H. Jöckel, the Commander of the prison, was empty. We were told that some prisoners were killed whilst building it in 1942. I remember watching Roman and Buki splashing and horse-playing in it in July 1945. Our guide, an elderly Czech woman, told us that Jöckel was a waiter before the war, and

that after the war he was sentenced to death by the court in Litomerice, and executed two years later. He was not executed in Terezin on the same gallows as had been used for the prisoners as the ex-inmates felt it would be a sacrilege to their memory.

The rest of the week we spent in Prague, walking on the cobbled streets of the Old Town, and looking for seats to rest upon amongst the milling crowds. It was "wall to wall" people as we happened to be there during the first week of May, and it was very hot - twenty six degrees Centigrade.

We visited the Jewish Quarter and Museum where we saw the many treasures rescued and preserved from the Jewish communities of Bohemia and Moravia liquidated during the war. On display also were some of the 4,000 original drawings made by the children of Terezin, and we were taken through the very overcrowded cemetery.

A guided tour of Prague Castle took us across the river where we spent another busy morning viewing the many architectural features of the Gothic, Baroque and Rococo

buildings which make up the castle area which is like a small town in itself. There are many beautiful churches which are now mainly used as museums and concert venues. We were told that the Czech people are the least religious people in Europe now, not due to the Communists, but more because of the disputes of many centuries between the early Protestants, the Hussites and the Roman Catholic Church. The well-known photograph of the group of 'boys' taken in Prague before embarking for the U.K. was taken on the steps of the monument to Jan Hus in the Old Town Square.

On the last day we went to the National Museum of Modern Art, which contains some wonderful 19th century landscapes and the largest collection of French Art outside of France. We were told by one of the hawk-eyed ladies, the gallery attendants, that many of the pictures had been confiscated from the Jewish people during the war and never reclaimed.

Having spent a busy week in Prague we felt we needed a restful holiday to follow.

### The Invitations

At the end of November 1941, Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the German Security Police, chief of the Security Service (SD) and protector of Bohemia and Moravia, sent out invitations to a meeting. The invitees were civil servants, Nazi Party officials and senior SS men with responsibility for Jewish matters; the meeting, to be followed by a buffet, was to take place in a grand SD villa in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee. Originally scheduled for the 9th December, it was deferred indefinitely by a phone call on the 8th. After a new round of invitations early in the New Year, the 15 senior officials finally came together on the 20th January 1942. The couple of hours they spent together came to be known as the 'Wannsee conference' - perhaps the most infamous meeting of modern times.

### The Meeting

The actual conference organisation had been entrusted to Adolf Eichmann, one of Heydrich's underlings. At his trial in Jerusalem in 1962, Eichmann said that on the morning of the 20th the assembled officials had stood around in groups and chatted for a while before they got down to business. The formal proceedings were relatively short - perhaps an hour to an hour and a half in length. With no agenda, much of the time was taken up by an extensive lecture from Heydrich. It seems there were some interjections from the other participants and a little more discussion afterwards. But these are conjectures. There is much in Eichmann's testimony that is open to question. We also have no direct transcript of what was said. A stenotypist took the minutes in shorthand but the notes have not been preserved. In any case they were not verbatim notes, according to Eichmann, and recorded only the salient points. What we have is Eichmann's glossary of the notes, which Eichmann claimed was in turn heavily edited by Heydrich. These minutes, or 'Protocol' as they have come to be known, in deference to the German term, are thus very far from a verbatim account. For a number of questions that discrepancy is

## MONTEFIORE MEMORIAL LECTURE A NEW LOOK AT THE WANNSEE CONFERENCE 1

Mark Roseman 08/05/02

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not so important, since the written protocol represents what Heydrich wanted it on record of the meeting; for others it raises real challenges of interpretation.

According to the minutes, Heydrich began by reminding his guests that Goering had entrusted him with preparing the Final Solution of the European Jewish question. The purpose of the present meeting was to establish clarity on fundamental questions. The Reich Marshal's desire to be provided with an outline of the organisational, policy and technical prerequisites for the final solution of the European Jewish question made it necessary to ensure in advance that the central organisations involved be brought together and their policies properly co-ordinated. From Heydrich's point of view, probably the most important sentence of the minutes came right at the beginning: overall control of the Final Solution lay, irrespective of geographical boundaries, with the Reichsführer SS and chief of the German police (i.e. Himmler) and specifically with Heydrich as his representative. Heydrich then reminded his listeners of the recent history of Nazi action against the Jews. The principal goals had been to remove Jews from different sectors of German society and then from German soil. The only solution available at the time had been to accelerate Jewish emigration, a policy that had led in 1939 to the creation of the Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration. But the Reichsführer SS had now

stopped emigration in view of the dangers it raised during wartime and the new possibilities in the East. Instead of emigration, Heydrich continued, the Führer had given his approval for a new kind of solution - the evacuation of Jews to the East. The next, ambiguous, sentence reads, 'These actions are nevertheless to be seen only as temporary relief (Ausweichmöglichkeiten) but they are providing the practical experience which is of great significance for the coming final solution of the Jewish question.'

With breathtaking calmness, the minutes continue with the observation that around 11 million Jews would be affected by the final solution. A table was provided listing European countries and their Jewish populations. The list included not only those countries under German occupation or control (Part A), but also Germany's European allies, neutral countries, and those with whom it was still at war (Part B). Some rather motley remarks followed about the difficulty of tackling the Jewish question in Rumania and Hungary and the occupational composition of Jews in Russia. Whether Eichmann's protocol was just picking up fragments here, or Heydrich had been responding to questions, or his presentation really did offer these little snippets, we do not know. Then came one of the most significant sections of the Protocol:

In the course of the Final Solution and under appropriate leadership, the

Jews should be put to work in the East. In large, single-sex labour columns, Jews fit to work will work their way eastwards constructing roads. Doubtless the large majority will be eliminated by natural causes. And doubtless any final remnant that survives will consist of the most resistant elements. They will have to be dealt with appropriately, because otherwise, by natural selection, they would form the germ cell of a new Jewish revival. (See the experience of history).

Germany and the Czech Protectorate would have to be cleared first and then Europe would be combed from West to East. Bit by bit the Jews would be brought to transit ghettos and then sent further East.

Heydrich then identified some key prerequisites for the deportations (or 'evacuations' in the language of the protocol). There had to be clarity about who was going to be deported. Jews over 65, and those with serious war injuries or Iron Cross First Class, would be sent to Theresienstadt. At a stroke, this would obviate the many interventions on their behalf. The larger evacuation actions would commence when the military situation allowed. There followed discussion involving Martin Luther from the Foreign Office about the situation in countries allied to Germany or under its influence - Slovakia, Croatia, Italy, France and so on.

A lengthy discussion of the issue of half-Jews and mixed marriages follows, taking up almost a third of the minutes. At this stage let us note his proposal that so-called first-degree Mischlinge be evacuated to the East with the rest of the Jews. There would be a few exceptions, and in these cases the person concerned should be sterilized. As far as Jews in mixed-marriages were concerned, Heydrich said that a decision should be made on the merits of each individual case as to whether the Jewish partner should be evacuated or, in view of the impact of such a measure on the German relatives, should be sent to an old-age ghetto.

The latter part of the minutes records a number of interventions from individual participants. Possibly the protocol gathered up individ-

ual interjections that had been made at various points in the meeting and inserted them here. However, in cross-examination in Jerusalem Eichmann indicated that towards the end of the Wannsee meeting, and somewhat fortified by brandy, the participants turned what had been a monologue from Heydrich into a bit more of a free for all. Dr. Bühler from the General government asked for the Final Solution to be begun in Poland, since transport was no major problem and there were no serious manpower issues to be born in mind. Bühler 'had only one request - that the Jewish question be solved as quickly as possible.'

An ominous section at the end of the Protocol noted that 'in conclusion the various possible kinds of solution, were discussed'. A rather obscure sentence added that both Dr. Meyer and Dr. Bühler took the view that in the course of the final solution certain preparatory work should be carried out directly in the territories concerned, though without alarming the populace. With a final request for cooperation and assistance in carrying out his tasks Heydrich closed the meeting. Afterwards, says Eichmann, the guests stood around in small groups for a little while, and then left.

#### *Historians and the protocol*

In March 1947, Robert Kemper and his US war crimes team were in search of material for the forthcoming indictment of German civil servants. In a German Foreign Office folder labelled 'Final solution of the Jewish question', they found the only surviving copy of the Wannsee protocol, no 16 out of the original 30. Kempner, by background a German-Jew and until 1933 a high-flying civil servant in the Prussian civil service, was staggered to discover what his former colleagues had been up to. Was such a thing possible? More than that, he thought he had found the key deciding meeting that unleashed Nazi genocide. The terminology of invitation and protocol suggested that it was here the fundamental questions were clarified, prior to the formulation and execution of a 'total solution' to the Jewish question. The

systematic listing of all the Jews of Europe, added credence to the idea that here for the first time a comprehensive European solution was being proposed. But most important of all was the fact that the Allied investigators already knew from diary entries and speeches of Bühler's boss, Hans Frank, the Governor of occupied Poland, that in mid-December 1941 Frank and other Nazi officials were eagerly awaiting some fundamental meeting in Berlin that would find a solution to the intractable Jewish question. Small wonder, then, that after the war 'Wannsee' rapidly became synonymous with the formulation of genocide, and to this day, it lives on in popular imagination as the meeting where the final solution was decreed.

Over the following decades, however, historians grew less and less certain whether Wannsee could have the significance originally attributed to it. A few reputable historians, most notably Dieter Rebentisch, (as well as the usual range of cranks and deniers) have wondered if the meeting ever really discussed genocide at all. Based on civil servants' post-war denials of ever having seen the minutes or of having talked about murder, Rebentisch questions whether the text of the Protocol bore any relation to the actual meeting and indeed whether the Protocol reached the bulk of the delegates who had been present. The Protocol is certainly a rather amateurish typewritten summary rather than a formal document. Only the one copy has ever been found. The cover note that accompanied it, sent to the Foreign Office's Martin Luther, was written on an individual basis, rather than being a clear duplicate of multiple letters with the same circular letter, (or at least place and date were inserted by hand, suggesting it *may* not have been a circular letter). It is just possible therefore that Luther received a document which other participants did not receive, and that those civil servants who denied having seen it at Nuremberg were justified. But the balance of probability is that the Protocol was indeed dispatched to all who attended, and that it does

convey a plausible summary of what took place. We certainly have evidence that it reached others in the Nazi hierarchy at the time. The above-mentioned cover-note to Luther as well as accompanying the protocol also contained an invitation to a follow-up meeting. Since we know the other ministries represented at Wannsee definitely received that invitation (because they sent representatives to the follow-up meeting), it seems most likely that they too received the protocol. In Jerusalem, Eichmann claimed that not only did the meeting cover the ground claimed in the protocol but that discussion of murder had been even more explicit than the written record allowed. Some civil servants too, most notably Bernhard Lösener, a junior official for Jewish matters in the Interior Ministry, whose boss Wilhelm Stuckart had been one of those sitting round the table at Wannsee, also claimed after the war the meeting really had discussed the issues outlined in the Protocol. This does not mean that we can take the Protocol quite at face value; on some matters it uses euphemisms where the meeting probably did not, on others it suggests a consensus was reached where dissension probably remained. But overall, we can assume that it was the official and widely circulated record.

The more serious doubts about the conference's significance arise because it took place so late in the day, and because the people round the table were too junior. After all, by the time the Staatssekretäre were sipping their cognacs at Wannsee, mass murder had been underway for 6 months or more. Since the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Einsatzgruppen had butchered more than half a million Jews. The German army had all but eliminated the Jewish population in Serbia. A special security police task force had conducted mass shootings in Polish Galicia. Gassing had started too. The Chelmno camp began operations in early December 1941, preparations at Belzec were well underway, and 'test-gassings' had been undertaken at Auschwitz. Against the background of these unbelievable

developments, what still needed to be decided? Moreover, even if major decisions were still required, was the group Heydrich gathered together empowered to make them? Neither Hitler nor Himmler attended; we do not know if Hitler was even informed about the meeting. Indeed, there were no actual ministers present - not surprising since Heydrich, though enjoying a great deal of influence and power, held SS office equivalent to the post of Staatssekretär (Permanent Secretary), a position that enabled him to give invitations to high civil servant rankings, but not to ministers.

As a result, many historians have questioned whether the Wannsee gathering could have had any programmatic significance. A lot of ingenuity has been applied to teasing out some special purpose or other to explain its existence. Wolfgang Scheffler, for example, claims the meeting was called because of Heydrich's concerns about his personal authority. In the weeks and months before the conference Himmler had rapidly expanded the concentration camp empire - an empire over which Heydrich's security police had little control. Heydrich thus wanted to reassert his position, and counterbalance this potential loss of authority. The historian Eberhard Jaeckel, on the other hand, while sharing the view that the meeting was about power, believes that far from feeling vulnerable, Heydrich - recently installed as protector of Bohemia and Moravia - wanted to demonstrate he was no longer simply Himmler's man. Wannsee was an almost empty event in a classy venue stage-managed to show off Heydrich's newly acquired independence. Henry Huettenbach offers another variant of the power struggle story - the meeting was simply to ensure that the SS supremacy was accepted by other officials, a conclusion that is probably close to the mark. Indeed, many of these interpretations have something for them, as does Dieter Rebentisch's assumption that if the meeting had a point it was to achieve a common line on the 'borderline' cases - the half-Jews and mixed marriages. But all

proceed from the assumption that the meeting was largely irrelevant for explaining the final solution. They all thus dismiss the Protocol's claim to be laying the foundations for a program yet to be implemented. But why should the meeting be making that claim, if the general program of murder was already decided? 'The most remarkable thing about Wannsee' concluded Eberhard Jackel, pondering this question in a seminal article published on the conference's fiftieth anniversary 'is that we do not know why it took place'.

**Murders without clear orders? The crystallisation of genocide in autumn 1941**  
Over the last few years, German documents recovered from the archives of the former Soviet Union have begun to shed light on developments in the preceding months that help to give Wannsee greater coherence and 'logic' - if such a term can be used in this context. Above all, they show that we need to rethink the way in which the Soviet killings were extended in a European-wide program of murder.

It used to be assumed that Goering's notorious instruction to Heydrich of July 31 1941, to 'prepare the groundwork for a total solution of the European Jewish question' (the mandate Heydrich later used as the justification for the Wannsee conference) was a clear order to provide a blueprint for genocide. But recent discoveries suggest that Heydrich himself had drafted the document in March, and resubmitted it now after discussions with Rosenberg, in order to prepare for a huge deportation program. In the summer of 1941, the terms 'final solution' and 'total solution' were not yet synonymous with murder. Other evidence, too, (for example, testimony from Eichmann and HO13) once cited to demonstrate that the key decisions had been taken in the summer of 1941, no longer looks so compelling. What we find in Spring and Summer 1941, in fact, is growing clamour from different Nazis groups hoping to use the Soviet territory as a dumping ground for German and other European Jews. No one thought that the

deportees were going to thrive there - and there was something implicitly genocidal about this. But it was not yet an overall plan for murder. If the summer was not the moment at which European Jewry's fate was sealed, other historians have seen the turning point as coming in mid-September 1941, when Hitler said that German Jews and those from the Czech Protectorate could be deported immediately. Not only was the green light being given in relation to Germany's Jews - other European Jews were also being readied for deportation. In the same month, the deportation of French Jews, initially limited to those in detention, was also announced. Since Hitler had given the green light for deportations under conditions no better than when he previously blocked them, some historians see in this crucial evidence that Hitler was now, in fact, either already decided on genocide, or on the brink of doing so. Yet Hitler's command for deportation did not tie in with murder plans very neatly. Logically, if mass murder were already on the agenda, it would have made more sense to hold the Jews in Germany until the camps were ready. Moreover, Hitler showed himself very uncertain over the following weeks as to whether the timing for deportations was opportune. Thus when, as a temporary step, Hitler and Himmler agreed in September that 60,000 Jews should be deported not to the Generalgouvernement but to the Łódź ghetto in the Wartheland, it seems deportation rather than murder, was what they had in mind. In early October, Hitler suggested that the Jews should not be sent to Poland but should immediately be directed further east, i.e. to the Soviet Union. It is obvious at the very least that the eventual extermination plan on Polish territory had not yet been arrived at, though unclear whether Hitler expected the deportees to be murdered on Soviet soil.

Indeed, when we look at developments in following months, we find ample evidence they were not responding to a central plan of killing. Instead, from the summer of 1941 the notion

spread that shooting Jews was an appropriate thing to do. In Serbia, for example the newly arrived commander, General Böhme, introduced a radical new reprisals policy against partisan attacks: all Jewish men of arms-bearing age were placed in a 'reservoir' of potential hostages and 100 shot for every German soldier killed. Though responding to central signals, Böhme had had no central instructions to make Jews his principal target. Instead, the historian Walter Manosehek has concluded that by the autumn of 1941 no special orders were necessary for such genocidal policy decisions to be taken. All the German authorities cooperated smoothly despite their disagreements in other questions. What's more, the willingness to kill was not the result of the special indoctrination given to SS men. It was ordinary soldiers who carried out most of the murders. By the end of the year, there was virtually no adult male Jewish population left in Serbia. Following the murder of the women and children in early 1942, Serbia became one of the first countries to be 'Jew free'. Eastern Galicia, and the role of the local SS and police leader Katzmann, may well also offer a similar picture of regional initiative in response to the shooting lessons from the Soviet Union.

In the late summer and early autumn two new factors influenced policy in the annexed Polish provinces and in the Generalgouvernement. The first was Hitler's September decision to unleash the deportation trains. Whatever Hitler's immediate intentions, the planned eastward deportation of German Jews created new pressures and challenges for the receiving territories. Within two weeks of Himmler's edict that the first deportations should be sent to Łódź - an already overcrowded ghetto within the jurisdiction of the Wartheland authorities - construction began of the Chelmno gas camp. A letter sent by the Wartheland's Gauleiter Greiser to Himmler on 1 May 1942, looking back on events in 1941, indicates that the killing of 100,000 Polish Jews from the region was specifically authorised by

Himmler, through Heydrich, as a quid pro quo for the willingness of the Wartheland authorities to receive deportees from Germany. While *authorisation* for the killings came from the centre, the initiative had come from the locality, and the goal was the solution of a regional 'problem' rather than the implementation of a comprehensive program.

Unlike the annexed former Polish territory in the Wartheland, the Generalgouvernement proper was not directly affected by Hitler's deportations decision. Here, the biggest impact of the Soviet campaign in the autumn was to disappoint earlier expectations of offloading the region's Jews. In the course of 1941, the whole of the administration, from Hans Frank downwards, had been anticipating the Jews rapid removal into the territory of the former Soviet Union. But in mid-October Frank learned for sure that the slow progress of the war meant there was little prospect of such removals. The dragging Soviet campaign also had economic implications for his region. A fatal two-pronged development ensued. The hard-line radicals in Himmler's almost autonomous police-empire in Poland undertook violent initiatives, while the civilian administration imposed ordinances of exclusion and persecution on the Jewish population that made killing seem the only option. The Lublin district SSPE, Odilo Globocnik, had shown ruthless energy in developing murderous labour projects for Jews in the Bug region. The outcome of Globocnik's consultations was the decision to begin building an extermination camp at Belzec. The implications of these recent findings, then, is to suggest that the slippage from murderously neglectful and brutal occupation policies to genocidal measures took place initially without a comprehensive set of commands from the centre. The centre, above all Himmler, was consulted in almost all cases we have looked at. But neither Hitler nor Himmler was providing a clear-cut plan or even a fundamental command for the lower echelons to carry out. What then happened was that in

interaction with these developments, Hitler, Himmler and Heydrich began to treat the idea of a territorial solution more and more as a metaphor. In other words, even though there was not yet a precise concept of killing the deportees by gas, the dividing line between the territorial solution and that of outright murder was becoming very thin indeed. On the 23rd October, all Jewish emigration from the Reich was prohibited. On the 25th, Erhard Wetzel, the official in charge of race questions in Rosenberg's ministry of the East wrote to the Reich commissioner for the Ostland, Heinrich Lohse, recommending the deployment of the former euthanasia personnel to construct gas installations in order to eliminate deported Jews who were unfit to work. The 'territorial' element of sending the Jews East was becoming more and more of a metaphor. Selection and attrition was becoming the central element of the process, rather than a desirable by-product.

In mid-November, Himmler and Rosenberg had a lengthy meeting after which Rosenberg provided a detailed press briefing. Here the distance between deportation and destruction had narrowed to nothing. Though the issue of killing - as against allowing to die - was not yet spelled out, and Rosenberg still used the metaphor of deportation, his reference to the 'biological eradication of the entire Jewry of Europe' made absolutely explicit that extinction and not just removal of Jewish presence was the aim. At almost exactly the same time, on 16th November, in the journal 'Das Reich', Goebbels published a leading article that was excerpted in many of the German regional papers. Entitled 'the Jews are guilty', the piece provided one of the most explicit communications to the German people as a whole that Jews were going to be exterminated. "World Jewry," Goebbels wrote, "was suffering a gradual annihilation process. Jews were falling according to their own law - an eye for eye, a tooth for a tooth." In December Goebbels acknowledged in his diary that the deportation of Jews to the East was "in

many cases synonymous with the death penalty."

On 28th November, Hitler met the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. Hitler was seeking to court the Grand Mufti - aware, no doubt, that just a few years earlier the Nazis had been working together with Jewish agencies to 'facilitate' Jewish emigration to Palestine. Some of what he said will have been for effect. But still, Hitler's declaration, which he requested the Mufti to 'lock deep into his heart', was striking. For the sake of pleasing the Grand Mufti, Hitler needed to have specified only that the Germans would deport the Jews to Siberia, along the lines of his statement to Kvaternik in the summer. But he went much further. After a successful war, Hitler said, Germany would have only one remaining objective in the Middle East: the annihilation of the Jews living under British protection in Arab lands. There was not a shadow of a territorial solution left.

The argument here is thus that the dissemination and modification of the Soviet experiment took place piecemeal, by improvisation and example, over the period from September to November 1941. Himmler and Heydrich were closely involved; Hitler's involvement is less well documented, though he will at the very least have known what was happening, and at the very least will have decided not to have prevented it. To stay his course Himmler will have needed Hitler's approving nod, though how emphatic that was, we do not know. In the course of October and November, Hitler, Himmler and those around them made statements showing how rapidly the idea of a territorial solution was dissolving into a mere metaphor. The territories were becoming holding bays before death. Whatever Hitler's green light for deportations had meant in September, by the end of November, the idea of a reservation had effectively disappeared. In late November, as we will see, Himmler held a concerted series of consultations on the Jewish issue. It seems that as the overall concept of genocide crystallised in the heads of Nazi leaders, so other agencies had to be brought

on board. Something that made this all the more pressing were the murmurs of discontent among officials over the first mass shootings of German Jews in the last ten days of November. It is against this background that the Wannsee conference should be seen.

### *Wannsee as a window onto the 'Final Solution'*

When we turn to the conference protocol, how far does it support the kind of chronology advanced above? Part of the problem is that the protocol itself is a very ambiguous document. There are potentially at least three different narratives of genocide that can be read into it. In outlining the early history of Nazi measures towards the Jews, for example, Heydrich says that 'in pursuit of these ends (i.e. cleansing the Fatherland), the only provisional solution available had been a planned acceleration of Jewish emigration out of Reich territory' and that 'the drawbacks of such enforced accelerated emigration were clear to all involved'. This relegation of emigration to a mere provisional measure could be taken to imply that mass murder had always been the preferred strategy - but that in the past it had simply not been opportune. However, I think, this is a retrospective attempt by Heydrich to claim continuity that wasn't there. It is true that emigration had always raised difficulties for the Nazis, but there is no evidence that Heydrich had been thinking of genocide in 1939 or that at the time Jewish emigration was seen merely as a temporary fall back. A second chronology - that of the early autumn decision - is suggested by a passage that follows a survey of the statistics of emigration up to October 1941. Heydrich says that, 'in the meantime the Reichsführer-SS and Chief of the German Police had prohibited emigration of Jews due to the dangers of an emigration in wartime and due to the possibilities of the East... Instead of emigration the new solution has emerged, after prior approval by the Führer, of evacuating Jews to the East.' At the time of Himmler's ban on emigration in October 1941, Hitler had just autho-

rised the deportation of German Jews. Was Heydrich here talking about the onset of deportations - or was he implying in fact that that decision was the beginning of genocide? After all, elsewhere in the conference, there is no doubt that 'evacuation' was used as a euphemism for murder. Is that what the Führer had authorised in September? To make matters even more obscure, however, Heydrich goes on:

'These actions are nevertheless to be seen only as temporary relief but they are providing the practical experience which is of great significance for the coming final solution of the Jewish question.' That suggests, rather, a third chronology - that the program he is talking about until now is in fact still something piecemeal - a mixture of deportations and regional killings, but that the practical experience thus gained is creating the basis for a future comprehensive program of genocide.

I think we can say the following. First, and most emphatically, there is no territorial solution left. Heydrich's comments about what will happen to Jewish labour shows that all, even the fittest, are to be killed. Most will die through labour; those who do not must be eliminated. So Nazi policy towards European Jewry has crossed the Rubicon; death is the only outcome. Secondly, however, the comprehensive program is only now coming together; the gestation period is not yet over. Something that reinforces this point is not only Heydrich's description about collecting practical experience, but also his initial invitation list. When he initially drew up the guest list for the conference in November, his first draft did not include any representatives from Poland, suggesting that what was to be the eventual form of the Final Solution - the concentration of killings on Polish soil - had not yet reached the planning stage. Similarly, the comments Heydrich makes about using forced labour as a way of building roads and finishing off the Jews were in line with other proposals being mooted by various Nazi figures at this time, and show that Heydrich was still not yet focused on the

extermination camps. In other words, the final shape of the killing program was not yet established. It may be there was some talk at Wannsee about gassings - Eichmann certainly asserted this in Jerusalem just as strenuously as the others denied it. But overall our sense from the protocol is indeed that the crucial shift of mood from territorial solution to genocide has been effected, but that the final form of that genocide is only now being established.

### *Wannsee's function*

Wannsee, then really does provide a window on an ongoing process, a process in which the essential points have been set, but the full timetable and exact course of the journey has not yet been finalised. This does not, in itself, explain Wannsee's function, but the meeting no longer appears so detached from the overall process. What though was the exact point of the conference? Why had it been called? Looking at the guest list, we can rule out from the beginning the idea sometimes still voiced that Heydrich was planning to talk about the technical details of transports. Quite apart from the fact that the Staatssekretäre were too senior to be called together for such matters, Heydrich had not invited any transport specialist, or a military representative or indeed anyone from the finance ministry. Deportation arrangements were not to be on the agenda.

On the other hand, the choice of guests and the length of time devoted to the matter in the meeting both indicate that the half-Jews, the Mischlinge and other protected categories were an important item on the agenda. This had been in the sights of party radicals for a long time and particularly in the course of 1941. The radicals rejected the protection given to mixed marriages and particularly to first-degree Mischlinge. The Ministry of Interior and the Reich Chancellery in particular had committed themselves to protecting half-Jews and they were in RSHA's sights. A meeting convened by Eichmann in September 1941 had articulated almost word for word the same proposals that Heydrich now

voiced. So it is clear that the meeting was supposed to push forward the agenda on half-Jews.

Even so, that clearly was not the whole of the agenda. Instructive in this context, is Heydrich's decision to include German representatives from Poland (for whom the half-Jewish question was not a major issue) only a day or two after drawing up his first draft guest-list. What happened was that the Higher SS and Police Leader for the Generalgouvernement visited Himmler at the end of November, complaining about the conflicts he was having with Frank's civilian administration. A day later, Heydrich added SS and civilian representatives from Poland to the guest list. It was clear, in other words, that this was a meeting designed to assemble those with whom the security police and SS had run into demarcation disputes. Indeed, the Mischling question was of such interest to Heydrich precisely because it was one of the few significant areas where other ministries retained a leverage on Jewish policy. The original invitation, which stressed the importance of 'achieving a common view among the central agencies involved in the relevant tasks' made clear from the start how important it was for Heydrich to bring the other bodies into line. The Protocol itself, which re-emphasised the importance of the common line, is unwittingly revealing in this respect. Instead of saying (as was probably intended) that it was necessary that the bodies involved agree on a common treatment of the pertinent questions, the protocol offers a convoluted sentence that in fact says that the relevant bodies themselves should be given a prior common treatment ('vorherige gemeinsame Behandlung') in order to achieve 'parallelisation' of policy-making. Heydrich's desire to bring the others into line could hardly have been more explicit. It is important to recognise that - and here Scheffler and Jäckel are undoubtedly misguided - this was not a solo effort by Heydrich. Instead, it was a concerted effort by Himmler and his deputy to ensure they were in control, at a time when the Final Solution was

taking shape. Two weeks before the Wannsee invitations went out, both Himmler and Heydrich had arranged a series of meetings. In mid-November, Himmler and Rosenberg had their lengthy confabulation. A day later, Himmler and Heydrich spoke to coordinate their policy, among other things, on 'Eliminating the Jews'. On the 24th November it was Wilhelm Stuckart's turn to confer with Himmler. Number three of the four points in Himmler's appointments calendar was 'Jewish question - belongs to me.' If the post-war testimony of Bernhard Lösener is to be believed, Stuckart complained in the following weeks that Jewish matters were being taken away from the Ministry. On 28th November Himmler had yet another meeting on the issue - this time conferring with the HSSPF of the Generalgouvernement, Friedrich-Wilhelm Kruger. Between the invitation and the eventual Wannsee conference there were more such encounters, most notably between Himmler and Bühler on January 13th.

Himmler and Heydrich were thus making strenuous efforts to coordinate and centralise all initiatives on the Jewish question. 'This was the reason why Heydrich convened this Wannsee Conference', Eichmann said in Jerusalem, 'in order, as it were, to press through, on the highest level, his will and the will of the ReichsführerSS and Chief of the German Police.' Heydrich's real target was the civilian ministries - the other participants were brought along to strengthen his hand. In the weeks and months before the conference, Himmler and Heydrich had repeatedly clashed with civilian agencies over issues of competence. Both within Germany and in the occupied territories the demarcation lines were ill defined. In autumn 1941, Heydrich's security police experienced regular run-ins with the Ministry of the Eastern Territories and particular with the Ministry's Commissioners in the Baltic and White Russia. In Poland the conflicts between Himmler's staff and the civilian administration were, as noted, if anything even

more intense. Other ministries too, particularly the Interior Ministry, had a contested relationship with the RSHA. Nominally, Himmler was the subordinate of the Minister of the Interior. In practice, Minister Frick had abandoned any pretence at controlling Himmler, indeed was giving up hope even of being informed what the RSHA was up to. Yet some jealously-guarded questions of prerogative remained, particularly the borderline of mixed-race Jews. Alone among the civilian representatives at Wannsee, probably only Martin Luther from the Foreign Ministry had already resigned himself to subordination and had adapted by trying to be as helpful to the RSHA as possible.

It is perfectly possible that Himmler and Heydrich could have resolved demarcation issues on an individual basis with each agency. The series of November meetings suggests they were in the process of doing so. Yet, in the complicated power structure of the Third Reich, a collective acknowledgement among all the interested parties was of much greater worth in establishing power and precedents. Moreover, in the climate of a high level meeting with a strong Party-SS presence, the other representatives would be much more susceptible to group pressure.

There was another aspect to the meeting too: Heydrich wanted to establish shared complicity. The shooting of a transport of Berlin Jews to Riga on the 29th/30th November, news of which rapidly spread through government circles, had brought to a head the growing disquiet among some Berlin officials over the treatment of the German-Jewish deportees. Stuckart's deputy, Bernhard Lösener, later claimed that they represented a personal turning point. Both Heydrich and Himmler were undoubtedly concerned to bind in all agencies to their enterprise and prevent further murmurings. The last thing they wanted was for Hitler to worry about morale and once again rein in their activities. Moreover, with the first premonitions in December that Germany might not win the war, establishing common complicity

# FIRST AND SECOND GENERATION

## KATIE SHANE - EXPEDITION TO NEPAL

Katie Shane

*Katie is the granddaughter of Charles and Anita Shane. She was 17 years old when she was one of the Duke of Edinburgh awardees and was one of the fourteen students who was selected to participate in the World Challenge Expedition to Nepal.*

Dear Grandma & Grandpa

I am writing to tell you of the adventures and to thank you for all your support to the build-up of my World Challenge Expedition to Nepal from the 19th July - 20th August 2001.

After many months of training, preparation and fundraising, the time came to put all my plans into action. As the plane took off from London Heathrow to Kathmandu, Nepal, I had time to think and put into perspective what I was actually about to encounter. A month later I am now back from what I can proudly call the most amazing, rewarding and learning experience of my life. I would now like to tell of some of the adventures that our team came across.

My team consisted of seven boys, Chris, Jon, Sam, Amit, Sanjay, Avnish and Rusbi and seven girls, Selina, Fran, Avni, Urvi, Apeksha, Sheena and myself. There was also Steve the leader from World Challenge and Diane a teacher from school. The only time they were to intervene in our challenge was for safety reasons; the rest was down to us!

As soon as we left the airport we knew we were going to have a struggle as we were swamped by literally hundreds of Nepalese people trying to get us into their cars or carrying our bags. After much negotiating and persuading the team organised travel to a guesthouse in Thamel, Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. We hadn't made previous arrangements so finding somewhere to stay was a challenge in itself. It was no luxury place but it had toilets so we were happy.

The first week was taken up by our project work in a school called the Hindu

Vidhya Peeth School just outside the city. Our work consisted of plastering the walls and painting the buildings. Sounds quite straightforward, doesn't it? Well, not particularly. To make the plaster we had to gather sand from the river followed by building a sieve with rusty nails and rotting wood. Then of course came the sieving for hours on end. It was definitely hard work. But this was not over because painting was also tricky - without paintbrushes! We managed to make some using blackboard rubbers and a stick. Getting hold of paint was also quite tricky. We managed 2½ litres, which had to be watered down to cover a few buildings. I think you really do start to realise all we have here in England when you realise people like the Nepalese really have nothing. We managed to paint some really beautiful landscape murals on the hall walls, which were all greatly appreciated, as was all our hard work. The headmaster was so grateful and it was so nice to see we actually did some good.

In our breaks from our work we actually got to spend time and communicate with the children in the school. We went into their classrooms and taught them songs and dances such as Let It Be and The Macarena. Their smiling faces and spirit touched us all. I built a particular friendship with this one boy who taught me a valuable lesson that however bad things may seem you must always look on the bright side and carry on. He told me of all the troubles he had to face but also of how he still carried on smiling. The lesson really hit home then.

Unfortunately, all this good we were doing hit our

was a powerful force to ensure that other agencies toed the line. It would encourage them to hand over responsibility to the SS to avoid taking on further responsibility. Heydrich's aim of establishing shared knowledge of murder explains one of the real oddities of the Wannsee protocol, namely its peculiar juxtaposition of euphemism and undisguised murderousness. On the one hand, it is coy about killing and talks of 'evacuation to the east'. On the other hand, the language about eliminating Jewish workers is so open, and the implications for the rest so clear, as to render the euphemisms useless as a disguise. The natural tendency of the security police was to be extremely guarded. The euphemisms were its normal mode of communicating about murder, and will have served here to remind recipients of the language-codes they should use. At the same time it was so vital to establish the participants' shared knowledge in the killing program that this overrode the need for caution. This was why Lammers, Stuckart and others were at such pains after the war to deny having seen the Protocol, to escape from the trap that Heydrich had set them.

### *Wannsee's Aftermath*

1942 was the most astounding year of murder in the Holocaust, one of the most astounding years of murder in the whole history of mankind. But the period from the beginning of killings at Belzec in mid-March 1942 through to mid-February 1943 saw the extermination of over half of all the Jews who would die at the Nazis' hands. How significant was the Wannsee conference itself in unleashing this unbelievable tide?

Both Heydrich and Eichmann certainly talked up the meeting's significance at the time. Five days after Wannsee, Heydrich sent out a circular to all the regional security police chiefs, attaching Goering's mandate and assuring them the preparatory measures were now being implemented. Towards the end of February, Heydrich sent out copies of the Protocol, accompanying it with a note

to the participants affirming that 'happily the basic line' had now been 'established as regards the practical execution of the Final Solution of the Jewish question.' In the aftermath of the conference, Eichmann spread word among his subordinates about the plan to murder Europe's Jews. In Jerusalem, too, Eichmann continued to underline Wannsee's significance: At the very least, Wannsee opened the way to a massive new wave of deportations, as soon as the transport situation permitted.

There are signs too that the Protocol spread waves through German officials in Europe. 30 copies were produced; at a cautious estimate each one reached 5 - 10 officials. We know that the officials in Minsk soon heard about it, whilst on 23rd March, the Jewish expert in the German embassy in Paris, Carltheo Zeitschel, wrote to his superiors in the Foreign Office, saying he had heard that a Staatssekretär meeting had taken place and asking for a copy of the minutes.

As has already been indicated, Wannsee itself was not the moment of decision. Nobody at Wannsee, not even Heydrich, was senior enough to settle the fate of European Jewry. Moreover, some of the breakthroughs on Mischlinge Heydrich thought he had achieved there, in fact proved subsequently illusory. The Wannsee Protocol was rather a signpost indicating that genocide had become official policy. Yet Heydrich undoubtedly took the assent he had engineered at Wannsee very seriously. The signals he and Eichmann gave out after the event showed it had immeasurably strengthened their confidence. Even in May, visiting security officials in France for the last time before his assassination, Heydrich's account of the planning for the Final Solution emphasised the agreements reached on 20th January. Wannsee really had helped to clear the way for genocide.

*1. Readers seeking more detail on the points advanced here, as well as references, may like to consult the author's new study: The villa, the lake, the meeting (Penguin 2002).*

team with some devastating problems. During a football match with the children an accident happened. Chris managed to break his foot. He went to hospital where this was confirmed and then it followed that he would have to go home barely a week into the expedition and before the trek even began. This was gutting for our team morale and everyone was speechless. This was also the day when we had to leave the school and all our friends behind so there were tears all around. My feelings at that moment are indescribable.

Arriving back in Kathmandu and then waving Chris off in a cab without a proper goodbye was a very miserable day. A fellow team member had disappeared. Little did we know this was just the beginning of the rest of the adventure. After getting lost in Kathmandu and getting our spirits all-high again the trek was now about to begin. We were doing the Annapurna circuit, which was 200km round the Annapurna mountain range. From about 700 meters at the start in Besi Sahar to 5416 metres (17,599ft) at the highest point called the Thorong La Pass (the highest pass in the world).

Our trekking days became quite systematic. Waking up at about 5 or 6am, Tents down and breakfast at 7am. Leaving the campsite just before 8am for about four or more hours trekking in the morning and lunching in-between followed by another four or more hours walking in the afternoon. Arriving at camp was always a rush to get the tents up and ready before dark. Followed by help with dinner and eating by about 6.30pm. By this time it was pitch black so after dinner most people went into their tents after a long hard day. At some point at camp if we were lucky we managed a wash but this was quite rare!

The trek itself was full of adventure and hard tasks, including crossing some very unsafe looking swinging bridges and making some really high ascents. The weather was very humid and also raining a lot due to the monsoon, which lucky for us meant lots of leeches before

we reached 3000 metres! I remember clearly several times when we stopped during the day finding either blood drenched clothes where a leech had been or actually seeing the leech on my skin and attempting to flick it off. You couldn't feel them biting you so much but the blood just didn't stop, sometimes for hours. The rainy weather also meant that the whole month I was in Nepal my clothes did not dry once. Walking in wet clothes, sleeping in wet clothes and just everything being wet wasn't exactly comfortable. But I suppose you get used to it all and just carry on. And the toilets, what toilets? The whole idea of digging holes may sound shocking but it became normal for us. Our topics of conversation were pretty much based on each other's toilet habits, as it affected everyone, some more so than others. But the views, they made everyone speechless and the entire struggle seem so worthwhile. On a good day you could see the snow-capped mountains and really feel on top of the world. They were gorgeous.

A few days into the trek we were hit with another drastic problem. Rushi became increasingly ill and we had to have a rest day for him. Unfortunately he didn't get any better and just like Chris he had to go home. He got a helicopter out from the mountains and we didn't even get a chance to wave this time. Once again we were all gutted as another team member had gone but it was best for him as he was so unwell. But still, we had to carry on. And that we did.

We had with us some Sherpas who helped us on the way and about fifteen porters who helped carry the tents and supplies. They were all such a laugh and some of the porters were so young! As a team we all got on particularly well with the Sherpas who we were with all of the time. It's actually quite hard to comprehend that we were all in charge ourselves. Each person lead for a few days and had to organise what was going on and at what times. This ranged from arranging mealtimes to finding out how to navigate to where we were going.

Each day we got higher in altitude and it became increasingly harder to breathe. Some people became ill with breathing difficulties, dizziness, very bad blisters or twisted ankles, but luckily enough for me I was okay. Nights where it was too cold or wet to camp we found some tea houses and slept there.

My greatest moment was defiantly reaching the Thorong La Pass on the 11th day of trekking. For this we had to wake up and be out of our tents by 3.30am when it was pitch black. We started walking just before 4am for the hardest possible day. The four girls who were ill had to get ponies and go ahead. The first six hours involved a 1000metre ascent to the top of the pass up very steep ground with difficulty breathing. It was so hard but reaching the top felt amazing. Not many people have managed to make the pass but I did and felt great. 17 599ft or 5416m! It was so high and so cold but simply incredible. I can't even describe my feelings and emotions. But the day wasn't over. We then had to do a 1600metre descent straight away also very steep and it really killed your knees. Arriving at camp that night and meeting the pony riders was very exciting as everyone was on a high and knowing that we all made it safe made us all very proud.

The next days involved going down the mountains that isn't as easy as it sounds. It is very hard on your legs and 'Nepali down' or 'Nepali flat' usually means lots of 'ups' too! My leadership days were after the pass. I had to navigate in the worst winds where I could hardly hold the map up and trying to keep everyone together was impossible as it was hard enough to stand up let alone work as a team. But we learnt and stuck together from then on and although there was lots of stress and worry for everyone's safety on my behalf it turned out okay. By now it was day twenty-three of the expedition and we had bonded quite well as a team. Lots of working together and good laughs too. It was excellent. The challenges ahead of us included crossing

severe landslides from heavy rain and reaching the end of the trek.

The trek finished in Beth where we took a bus to Pokhara (the second largest city) where we camped for two nights. This was followed by another eight-hour bus ride back to Kathmandu where we had time to chill out and also blow our saved up budget on two nights in the Summit Hotel. It wasn't posh or anything but it sure seemed like it for us. These days were our R&R (rest and relaxation) where we shopped and experienced real Kathmandu life and the culture and people within it.

It may seem that I have told you quite a lot but there is so much more which I cannot put into words. Including the small villages we passed on the trek, the remarkable culture and religion of the Nepalese people and all their generosity to give you whatever they had. The whole experience has definitely been one that I will never forget. I learnt so many valuable lessons when things went wrong and also how to really cope on my own. The life skills and teamwork will also be with me forever. I even got the Expedition part for my Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award signed off, which makes me one step closer to another achievement. We will be keeping contact with the Nepalese school we worked in and hopefully doing some service fundraising for their benefit.

All that's left is to thank you once again for all the help you gave me in actually getting there with your support. Last year I went to the bottom of the world, the Dead Sea, This year was the highest pass in the world, in the years to come I have much more planned including the BT World Challenge and my greatest dream... to climb Everest. I hope you have enjoyed this little insight into my month away, if you would like to know more of my expedition or see any photos please contact me and I will be more than happy to explain all.

Kind regards and many thanks,

**Katie Shane**

A few moments into my opening address of the first British conference of children of Holocaust survivors and refugees in 1994, a woman in the front row began to sob. I don't flatter myself that it was the content of my speech which had so affected her - rather its very existence and that of the conference itself.

Before that, despite reams of professional literature and Helen Epstein's groundbreaking book, "Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors", published in 1979, in Britain the notion of a second generation still seemed like a foreign concept. To survivors who had conceived of their children as a new beginning, the concept of 'inherited trauma' was anathema and to many others it seemed like special pleading. Epstein helped change our thinking, but in Britain it was only in the late 1980s that therapeutic or social groups for the second generation began to be set up and not until 1994 that a network connecting us (the Second Generation Network with a newsletter "Voices") was established. During the 1990s we began to talk openly about the experience of being raised in a British 'Holocaust family', with a survivor or refugee parent or two. We also started to attend to the specifically British dimensions of the issue - the greater number of refugee than survivor families, the difference as well as the similarities between them, and the relationship with Anglo-Jewry.

Many of us have reclaimed our parents' histories and along with them the 'foreign' bits of ourselves. Some have revisited their parents' birthplaces. Others have done the griefwork which neither they nor their parents were earlier able to do. We have acquired a voice. We've become a 'we'.

At the same time - not coincidentally - the whole extent of public knowledge and debate about the Holocaust has changed. Who could have argued six years ago, as Peter Novick does in his brilliant and provocative new book, "The Holocaust and Collective Memory", that our obsession with the Shoah

## THE SECOND GENERATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By Anne Karpf, whose parents were camp survivors.  
She is a writer and journalist

is giving Hitler a posthumous victory (a phrase especially redolent for members of the second generation)?

The contrast between the post-war silence about the Holocaust and the post-Schindler's List frenzy of interest can be disorienting. On the one hand we applaud the belated recognition of our parents' experience and feel relief that it's no longer our burden to carry alone. On the other hand we may also rue some forms which this recognition takes, finding the lionisation of Holocaust survivors and the celebrity status they're sometimes accorded disturbing and unhelpful to both them and us. And while we appreciate the significance of Holocaust scholarship, with Novick we may share doubts as to whether this degree of interest is altogether healthy for Jewish identity.

On the threshold of the 21st century, what lies ahead for the second generation? As the first generation dies, individually we shall have to find ways of making our peace with them, or accepting that we couldn't - which is in itself a kind of peace-making. Like all adult children, we must try and come to terms with our parents' flaws, and the anxieties which many of us carried for them. This is intensely personal work - there are no mourning timetables - although the existence of groups and public debate help.

We mourn not only our parents and remaining relatives, some of who seemed so invincible - if Hitler couldn't get them, how could mere mortality claim them? - but also the last vestiges of the culture they came from.

Where do we stand in relation to that culture and its destruction? Some see themselves as a link between past and future, custodians of history with a personal responsibility to ensure that their parents' experience is preserved for posterity - in the form of oral history testimonies, Holocaust education work, or campaigns for memorials. Yet paradoxically,

in so doing we may remain personally in thrall to the Holocaust, unable to free ourselves from its baleful influence on our lives. Memorialising the Holocaust may also function to counteract retrospective feelings of powerlessness; we couldn't take away our parent's pain, but we're working to alert other people to its cause.

The second generation has been criticised of being pre-occupied with their family's past sufferings instead of other people's current ones. It's certainly possible to become morbidly fixated upon the war and suffering and there have been those whose connection with the Shoah has become an almost pathological badge of identity. (The words 'second generation survivor' make me flinch, for the misleading way they elide the experience of the first and second generation. Even 'member of the second generation' sometimes sounds like a proud claim on victimhood.)

Yet addressing one's own painful past doesn't preclude attending to other people's. On the contrary, the first is necessary in order to be effective in the second. Members of the second generation have made use of their personal experience to fight social and political battles against racism and other forms of discrimination. Our history can sensitise us to other people's struggles.

It's also been suggested that the time has come to put mourning and Holocaust obsession aside, and develop reconciliation with the other second generation - the children of Nazis and perpetrators. But while the work of the Second Generation Trust in opening a dialogue with young Germans has been valuable, not everyone is ready or wishes to engage in such work. Still others believe that the most effective role of the second generation is in educating the third - ensuring that they know their family history without it dominating their lives, raising a generation which is strong enough to separate

and differentiate themselves from us (something many of us found so hard to do with our own parents).

How many generations of the Holocaust will there be? Do we want there to be a 'fourth generation', another cohort which defines itself at least partly in relation to that terrible event? The sheer passage of time and the death of survivors ensures that the Holocaust will eventually become a distant historical event, memorialised chiefly in statuary. The scholar James Young has argued that within three generations statues become separated from that which they memorialise, lifeless tributes drained of the active remembering which was the impetus for their creation.

We can't help feeling ambivalent about the passage of time. For our grandchildren the Holocaust will be a family fable, inevitably mythologised to meet the family's changing needs. Some feared that the Holocaust would be left behind in the last century and Millennium, and felt guilt about it, as if the victims and survivors were being abandoned again, this time by sheer chronology. Others hoped it might be so - it was enough. What's certain is that, even as the number of survivors diminish, members of the second generation are in a much less lonely position than ever before. Conferences and reunions for survivors and their families ensure that there is a peer group, an international community, and also bring together the first and second generations who at times, necessarily, have been at odds and pursuing different agendas. Such gatherings make it possible for us, at least for a moment, to join together to acknowledge the past and celebrate the present. Together with the testimony and oral history so painfully produced by both generations, they are a tribute to the resilience of Jewish life - against all the odds.

*Anne Karpf's 'The War After; Living With The Holocaust' is published by Vintage.*

# A SECOND GENERATION YOM HASHOAH PRESENTATION - APRIL 7, 2022

Ora Sherman Geib

I am the grown child of a Holocaust survivor. While there were many influences on my development, I cannot think of any that had more far-reaching effects than being a second-generation survivor. We, the second generation, are a diverse group, as are our parents, but we have much in common. We carry within us the treasured values of our 4,000-year-old Jewish tradition, the unfathomable horrors perpetrated against our parents during the Holocaust, and the hopes for the future.

Many survivors told their young children about their holocaust experiences. Others, like my mother, were silent. Words or no words, we in the second generation felt and incorporated our parents' pain. We are named after loved ones murdered—an affirmation of life, a reminder of those who are no longer. As a child I wanted to fill a piece of the void left in my mother's life. I wanted to ease the suffering. And I wondered how much I could endure if tested. There was always more I should be doing. As an adult, I still have these tendencies. However it has become clear that we are no substitute for those lost, and we cannot take away our parents' heavy burden. What is helpful, more satisfactory, is that we can provide continuity-continuity of valued memories and of our faith.

We know that our parents' trauma did not end with liberation. There were lifelong losses, and adaptations to be made. I cannot really comprehend how our parents rebuilt their lives. This to me is the miracle. They formed relationships, had children, developed careers, loved and laughed. We witnessed and learned their strengths, resilience, and passion for life in addition to the sadness. The Group that has suffered greatest evil known to mankind has been able to impart values of

kindness and morality to their children.

I feel blessed to receive the gifts of our Jewish tradition and the lessons learned from our parents. I am so proud that my mother broke her silence to educate and inform about the Holocaust, even five years ago, I would have said with certainty, "My mother speak at a Yom Ha Shoah Commemoration? Never!" But in a moment she will recite her very moving story and insightful poetry.

My father was her anchor. He stood by as she evolved from experiencing earlier periods of despair to being the guiding light she is today (in my book anyway). My mother's testimony has caused people with no connection to the Holocaust to realise what took place and to be mindful that it could happen again. I hope that the second generation members here feel similarly to me—that we must be responsible to continue the work of preventing another holocaust, and to perpetuate Judaism.

*To do so, I believe we must:*

- Transmit the testimony of the Shoah to our children and grandchildren.
- Model and teach tolerance
- Support Israel, which I believe is critical to Jewish existence
- Recognise and remember the Righteous Gentiles
- Support organisations that fight anti-Semitism
- Participate in helping oppressed groups
- Show our children the joy and wisdom of our heritage

The third generation is learning about the Holocaust—from us and from other sources. We should help our children to develop a meaningful perspective about their history, one that fosters pride and dignity.

## ILANA'S POEMS AGE 7

### This Very Bad News

*Ilana is the granddaughter of Judith and Reuben Sherman*

One very nice day this horrible news spread through the town, the city, the state, the country and the continent.  
This very bad news spread throughout the world.  
The Jews set off hiding.  
Were they scared? Did they chatter? Were they cold?  
How many worries filled their head?  
The bumpy, rocky forest.  
Things to trip on. Branches to break.  
Splinters to wait for.  
Broken body parts indeed.  
Some Christians set off for war. Other Christians hid Jews.  
But some Christians just sat there.  
But now things are calmer. No more worries to worry and no more fears to fear.  
Now it is all peace and everyone glad.

## MY GRANDMA, JUDITH

How scared was she?  
I wonder how long she had to hide?  
I bet grandma felt sad when she found out that her mom, dad and brother died.  
Where did the Nazis find her?  
I'm even scared when I think about her life.  
I know there were a lot of rocks, sticks, and stones, stumps to trip on and make noise with.  
Millions of Nazis to watch out for.  
So little ditches and secret hiding places, guns and bombs.  
Nazi cars, bullets being blasted, bombs and shouting.  
The wind blowing hard and making you chatter, worries in your head,  
Three hours of sleep, wild animals to fight.  
How scared was she?

## R E V I E W S

### A DAY OF INFAMY

THE VILLA, THE LAKE, THE MEETING  
Wannsee and the Final Solution

By Mark Roseman

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Sixty years ago, on January 20, 1942, 15 men gathered at a grand villa on the shore of Lake Wannsee in a prosperous suburb of Berlin. They were educated men, 10 with university degrees. When the discussions and lunch were over, they broke up into small informal groups while waiters served cognac. In these convivial, civilised surroundings, host Reinhard Heydrich and his guests agreed on a plan for the "Final Solution of the Jewish question".

A schoolboy in St Albans at the time, I featured in the minutes of that meeting. I was one of the 330,000 Jews of England listed in a neat,

bureaucratic column along with the Jews of Switzerland, Ireland and the rest of Europe, including countries already under Nazi occupation. It added up to 11m. The "technical details" referred to in the minutes (presumably the logistics of deportation, the choice of solution methods) were to be left for later. Eventually, they would demand the full-time attention of Adolf Eichmann, Heydrich's subordinate and a key player at Wannsee.

The Wannsee Protocol (as the minutes are known) turn euphemism into an art form. The casual reader could be excused for overlooking what it is really about: the endorsement of systematic

Michael Mitzman's Review of  
**"MAJA'S STORY - TO FORGIVE ... BUT NOT FORGET"**

By Maja Abramowitch

*Michael was responsible for drawing up The Memorandum & Articles of Association in 1965. Since then, he has continued to be our legal advisor and staunch supporter of our Society.*

mass murder on a hitherto unknown scale and the destruction of an entire race. Thirty copies of the minutes were circulated, all of which had conveniently disappeared by the end of the war. In 1947, copy number 16 was found tucked away in a German Foreign Office folder. Described by one historian as "perhaps the most shameful document of modern history", it was used as crucial evidence in the prosecution of Nazi war criminals, and in the Jerusalem trial of Eichmann.

The Wannsee Protocol and its ramifications are the subject of Mark Roseman's study. He writes, "There has never been a bleaker rendition of the orderly governance of murder. To this day the Wannsee Protocol remains the most emblematic and programmatic statement of the Nazi way of doing genocide."

Documents that have come to light since the opening up of Soviet archives have added to the proliferation of books and academic papers on Wannsee. At the end of all the exhaustive investigations, debates and divisions of opinion, the protocol remains for Roseman "a macabre mystery". He quotes a historian who argues that, "the most remarkable thing about the Wannsee conference is that we do not know why it took place", which prompts Roseman to ask: "Even if we knew why the meeting was called, would that render it any more intelligible? ... Can we ever make sense of the devilish parody of administrative precision, delineating between the quarter-Jew (to be vetted), the half-Jew (to be sterilised if 'lucky'), or the full Jew (to be 'evacuated')? In other words, how was it possible that, on a snowy January day in Berlin, 15 state secretaries came to deliberate so calmly and carefully about genocide?"

Attempting to answer these and other questions throws up more questions. Heydrich's declared purpose for calling the meeting was to ensure that the various state organisations to be involved in implementing the Solution were briefed and co-ordinated. But might an important if not primary motivation on the convenor's part have been self-aggrandisement, a way of expanding his territory at a

point when he was emerging from the shadow of his boss, Himmler? Heydrich was not the only one of the participants at that gathering eager to curry favour with the Führer by flaunting his anti-semitic credentials.

For all his public rhetoric, Hitler avoided putting genocidal commands in writing, but Roseman, like most historians, has no doubt that a decision as momentous as the physical destruction of the Jews could not have been taken by underlings at Wannsee without the nod from on high: Hitler must "at some point have taken the ultimate decision".

Discouraging the notion that Wannsee marks, as it were, day one of the Holocaust, Roseman points up the disagreements among his fellow historians as to when exactly the authentic inception of the Holocaust took place. Some have cause to argue for June 1941. Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in that month, half a million Jews died in mass shootings. The first death camp at Chelmno was also busily at work before Wannsee. By November, mobile gas vans were disposing of Jews in Poland. In the light of new material emerging from Soviet-bloc archives, Roseman believes that, in some respects, "the deed of murder begat the idea of genocide".

The Wannsee conference continues to generate theories and speculation. Records and papers that might have answered many of the questions surrounding it were lost in the chaos of war or deliberately destroyed. Attempting to fill some of the gaps, Roseman's book provides an up-to-day analysis of the various ways that Wannsee may be interpreted as well as the author's own undidactic conclusions.

The sober subtitle of this book better reflects its content than the main title, redolent of an investigative journalism headline. This is a scholarly work, succinct, closely argued, free of academic jargon. Engrossing and chilling, it helps our understanding of Wannsee's place on the twisted path to genocide.

Imagine,

You are sitting in your comfortable home in Hampstead Garden Suburb, surrounded by the beautiful carpets, paintings and furnishings your family of prosperous shopkeepers has lovingly collected over three generations. Photographs of the family on the mantelpiece, carefully dusted each day by your maid. Suddenly there is a screech of brakes outside the door, a volley of shouts, a hail of bullets and an order to get outside in 15 minutes taking only what you can pack into a small suitcase.

You are then forced to march to the North Circular Road and whipped with 500 others into a large bare warehouse, to wait there overnight without food, water or any sanitary facilities for transport — to where? Imagine. And you will just be beginning to understand what happened to Maja Abramowitch and her family and countless others when Germany declared war on Russia and occupied her Latvian homeland in June 1941.

Mrs. Abramowitch tells her story soberly and factually, from her happy pre-war childhood in Dvinsk (now called Daugavpils) to the happy summer and autumn of her life in Johannesburg. In matter of fact words she paints a horrifying picture of the degraded depths to which the SS and their only-too-willing Latvian helpers would sink, of how life could depend on a whim, of how a humane action could lead to the death of the benefactor and the recipient.

Mrs. Abramowitch's only too factual account is entitled "To Forgive ... But Not Forget. - Maja's Story". It is one of a series "The Library of Holocaust Testimonies" published by Valentine Mitchell. It is the 24th of the series -24 told, out of millions of untold such stories. But the publishers have rendered a great service to humanity, in making available to a wider

public than would otherwise be acquainted with it, the knowledge of what happened sixty years ago to innocent noncombatants - and how innocent, many were babes in arms - whose 'offence' was to be Jewish.

It is not surprising that for so long many of the survivors found it too painful to recall the details of their personal wartime experiences. On a single page Maja, going from the ghetto to work, sees hundreds of Russian prisoners lying dead lightly covered by snow; is called into the yard to witness the public hanging of Minna Getz for allegedly wanting to hide her Jewishness. A beautiful blonde, she was spotted by a Gestapo soldier with her shawl covering her yellow star. Her body was left hanging for several days to emphasise the point. Chaya Meyerov who had managed to hide a length of material and exchange it for a kilo of flour at the gate of the ghetto was seen by a soldier and publicly hanged during a snow-storm. Masha Schneider was brought into the ghetto on a winter morning and the women were forced to stand outside in the bitter wind to watch her being hanged for living 'outside' with non-Jewish documents.

It is hard to believe that Maja and her mother (who lived to be 98 and to whose wisdom and bravery Maja pays eloquent tribute) were able to survive all this and make a new life after the war; that Maja was able, half a century later, to take her two daughters back to Daugavpils (Dvinsk) and introduce them to the family of her Nanny, who had done everything she could to help them through the Age of Atrocities, and who is honoured in Israel as a Righteous Gentile. This story, simply and movingly told, is a monument to the resilience of the human spirit. And a shocking reminder that we forget at our peril the evil and the cruelty that man is capable of devising and inflicting.

March 24, 2002

Dear Ben,  
The following are the impressions I carried forth from the elaborate ceremony commemorating the opening of the Little Camp Memorial in Buchenwald, which was held at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum on the 13th March 2002. The actual unveiling of the monument is to take place at the Lager 14th April 2002. I shall not be able to attend, since I am to spend that entire week in Hawaii speaking to the US Armed forces and the University of Hawaii at Manoa on the occasion of the observance of the Holocaust Day of Remembrance Annual Commemoration. Hence, please accept my report to you from Washington.

On entering the spacious auditorium, one immediately focused on the image of the monument projected onto the large screen. Its creation is a credit to the exceptional talent of our own landsman, Stephen Jacobs. It is an imposing and beautiful structure, though cloaked in modesty and humility very much becoming of the spirit in which it is intended. Here, again, it bespeaks the sensitivity and the heart of its architect.

As the auditorium gradually filled to capacity (by my rough estimate about a thousand people attended), one was able to measure the significance of the event by the august audience comprising members of the US House and Senate as well as dignitaries of foreign

## CORRESPONDENCE

*William obtained a Ph.D in Comparative Literature & Philosophy. He has written many books, both fact and fiction. His latest manuscript "WARNING AND HOPE: NAZI MURDER OF EUROPEAN JEWRY" will be published in the year 2003.*

Embassies. Indeed, Fred S. Zeidman, the newly appointed Museum's Memorial Council's Chairman introduced the foreign dignitaries as well as those of our own US legislators in attendance after having read the moving message from President George W. Bush. Alas, when the camp survivors present were asked to rise, only a handful stood up from their seats to the thunderous applause of the audience. Though it was heartwarming to have been recognized in such a spontaneous outpouring of affection and respect, I silently lamented the great losses we have suffered. So many thousands perished in that hellhole of the universe, Buchenwald, and so few have survived to bear witness to man's inhumanity to man. Nevertheless, those of us who are still around can attribute our survival to mysterious circumstances such as luck, an occasional *Rachmones* of an unfaithful Nazi, and, above all, to the prevailing affection of kin and dear friends among our fellow inmate comrades. Without these, survival was impossible. We can truly say that we were witnesses to the noblest as well as the most sinister nature of humanity, which we endured and overcame simultaneously.

Following Mr. Zeidman at the lectern were others present on the platform, notably Warren L. Miller, Chairman of the US Commission for the Preservation of American Heritage Abroad who recited the history of the monument and its difficult progression all the way to its completion; an emissary of Dr. Volkhard Knigge, the German Director of the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorial Foundation read the director's poignant remarks, after which Rabbi Herschel Schacter, the first rabbi to have entered the camp following its liberation by the US Army, offered some moving thoughts on his memorable encounter with the emaciated inmates. He concluded his remarks with the solemn Kaddish, and one was able to hear the sad voices of the survivors present repeating the hallowed words with him as they echoed above the somberly silent audience.

The auditorium ceremony then adjourned to the foyer of the grand but cavernous hall of the museum, the so-called Hall of Witness, for some refreshments, socializing and photo-ops for the "dignitaries". I was, indeed, pleased to meet our friend Stephen and pose for a modest photo with him and a pleasant chat, during which I

conveyed the greetings and congratulations from all of us Piotrkower on his success. He comes across as a genuine human, a real Mensch, unassuming and humble in his soft-voiced manner and amenable behavior.

Thus ended for me a nostalgic evening, full of sad thoughts. It also filled me with the hopes and aspirations that the memory of the pain of each individual of the countless victims, their anguish, and ultimate murder shall forever reverberate in the survivors' hearts and souls and the annals of history. Indeed, we will remember those of our much-loved families and friends as well as the many landsmen, neighbors and acquaintances who perished at the hand of the nazi assassins. We must extol the deeds of the righteous among all men and women, those long gone and others that now live imbued with a singular dedication to the remembrance of the past and for the good of the present and future. Only when we remain cognizant of the setbacks inflicted on civilization by nazi barbarism, can we draw strength through adversity and turn it into a solid reaffirmation of the indomitable human spirit. Such is our pledge, never to forget, never to permit history to repeat itself so ignominiously. These are my cordial greetings to you, my dear friend Ben, and all readers of the '45 Aid Society Journal. Cordially,

**William Samelson, PhD,  
March 17, 2002**

February 20, 2002

Dear Mr. Helfgott,

Allow me to introduce myself, my name is John Joseph. I am very pleased to be able to write to you. I have just finished Sir Martin Gilbert's moving book, "The Boys," that recounts the horrific events of World War II through the eyes of the young Jewish people, mostly boys, that were brought to Great Britain in 1945. I have read a number of books on the topic of the Holocaust, in part to educate myself about the history, and in part to try to comprehend the incomprehensible. This book is by

far the best that I have read because of its poignant first hand accounts that pierce through the conventional historical recitations to provide a deeply personal description of the brutality suffered by the European Jewish population. But just as important were the wonderful success stories of the "Boys" after the war. Your story of triumph, as well as the other stories recounted in the book, was truly inspirational and made "The Boys" a unique and

### JOHN N. JOSEPH

619 HARVARD ROAD  
BALA CYNWYD, PENNSYLVANIA 19004

ultimately uplifting book. A tremendous debt of gratitude is owed to you for choosing to reveal your painful histories so that the dreadful events of this period will never be forgotten and can never be denied.

While reading this book, I was astonished to learn that my "Uncle Oscar" was instrumental in the effort to support the young survivors in England. Oscar Joseph was a relative of mine. Oscar's father was my great grandfa-

ther Nathan's first cousin. I am descended from Leopold Joseph (Nathan's father) who left Germany for America in the mid-1800s. Leopold Joseph was a brother of Abraham Joseph, who was Oscar's grandfather. Abraham had a son, also named Leopold (presumably after his brother), who came to England at the turn of the century. This was Oscar's father.

I was born in 1961. As a child in the 60's and 70's I remember my "Uncle Oscar" (though technically not my uncle, that is what we called him) coming to visit our family in New York City when he

was here on business. In 1984, I had the opportunity to attend a semester of law school at Emanuel College, Cambridge University. While in England, I had the wonderful experience of spending an evening with Oscar at his home in St. John's Wood. I remember him as a very warm and earnest man. While my family in America was aware that Uncle Oscar had some involvement with aiding Holocaust survivors, due to Oscar's modesty and discretion, we never knew the extent of his contributions until I read the account depicted in Sir Gilbert's book.

I have been so struck by the stories conveyed in "The Boys," and this newly found information about my Uncle Oscar, that I have decided to try and find out more about him. As I read the book, I learned that one of the Boys, Mr. John Fox, lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and worked less than two miles from where I work! I wrote him a letter similar to this one and asked if I might meet with him. Mr. Fox called me and graciously invited me to meet with him and have lunch. We recently

had this meeting, during which I also had the opportunity to meet his daughter, Lynne. Over the course of our meeting Mr. Fox shared with me the chilling story of how he was perilously reunited with his brother Harry in Theresienstadt, and how he was almost prevented from being put on the list of boys to go to Great Britain. Mr. Fox was also kind enough to sign my copy of "The Boys" with an especially thoughtful inscription. As far as my Uncle Oscar is concerned, he did not remember much as he had moved to America in the early 1950s. He did remember meeting him twice.

Mr. Fox gave me his copy of the most recent edition of '45 Aid Society's Journal, and suggested that I use the information in it to contact you, as you would know more about my Uncle Oscar. Mr. Fox could not have been nicer to me, and he could not have spoken more highly of you. If it would not be too much of an imposition, I would like to find out more about Oscar Joseph and his involvement with "the Boys" and the '45 Aid Society. As you are

probably aware, Oscar was never married, and had no children, so I have no one else to contact. I cannot tell you how amazing it was to learn of Oscar's role in this story, and the esteem with which he was held by you and the people that he helped. I must admit that my family in America at times expressed regret at the fact that Oscar never had any children. If only they knew that he came to have over 700!

Anything you could tell me would be of interest to me and my family. In fact, Sir Gilbert refers to Oscar's obituary on page 456 of his book, a copy of this would be most meaningful. I would also be interested in being placed on the mailing list for the "'45 Aid Society" so that I can contribute and participate in honor of my Uncle Oscar and the people that he helped. This information is as much for my children, Michael (11) and Sarah (8) as it is for me. One of the reasons that I have been reading books about the Holocaust is so that I can educate them about this awful time. Not so they will live in fear or hate,

but so they will know that it happened, and that we all must play a part in making sure that it never happens again.

I hope this letter not only finds you, but finds you well. I very much look forward to hearing from you at your convenience.

Very Truly Yours,  
John N Joseph

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks for all the many kindnesses shown to me when my beloved husband Kopel (O.B.M.) passed away on January 23rd 2002. I was heart-broken but all the messages, cards, letters and 'phone calls were comforting to me. It helped to know my friends' thoughts were with me. It is really hard as only those who have been through it know. Unfortunately, it is happening more and more and my heart goes out to them. Again, thank you all for helping me through this difficult time and may G-d bless you.

Kitty Dessau  
22 Oaks Lane, Newbury Park  
Ilford, Essex IG2 7PL

## O B I T U A R I E S

### KOPEL DESSAU 1925 - 2002

By Bruce Dessau



Kopel Dessau in 1948

My father, Kopel Dessau, was always going on at me to write something about him. I could never quite bring myself to do it. It somehow didn't feel right when he was alive. My father died on 23rd January this year and I finally felt it was time to put something in print. My father's story is probably no different in essence to the story of any holocaust

survivor. He lost his entire immediate family during the war. Some in the ghetto, others in the camps. He was the youngest of five children, the only boy. His four sisters all perished. Kopel passed through numerous concentration camps, finally being liberated from Belsen in May 1945 and settling in London. There he married Kitty and had three sons, Gary, Steven and me. Yet despite tragedy being heaped upon tragedy, he seems to have been blessed with luck. For many years after the war he didn't talk about the camps, but when he did he always returned to one particular incident. He had actually been on his way to the gas chamber at one point, lining up for certain death, when a German guard asked him what he was doing there. Before my father could say

anything, the guard had told him to go away. That guard saved my father's life. A few years ago, when his health started to decline, Kopel didn't complain, he always maintained that he had already "had an extra fifty years".

Other Germans, of course, were not so sympathetic. One day, for no particular reason, a soldier hit Kopel in the face with the butt of his gun. The injury caused my father to lose the sight in his eye.

The one thing he never lost, however, was his zest for life. He was always cheerful, always busy. When he wasn't working hard at his own business, he was out having fun.

While Kopel always enjoyed himself, he never forgot his early years in Piotrkow. But inevitably, the memories of Poland were

mixed. In the mid-eighties he returned to the country of his birth with Kitty. It was an extremely emotional journey for him, but one he felt he had to make for the sake of his lost family. While there, he arranged to have a memorial put in the graveyard to commemorate his father Groinem.

In 1990 Kopel went back to Poland again. Gary and I accompanied him. Suddenly all of his stories of growing up had an image to go with them. The forest where he used to play football in the summer. The lake where he used to skate in the winter. The Hortensia glass factory where he worked during 1942 - It was slave labour yet at the time it meant survival and regular meals. The local workers all liked Kopel and in return for running errands they would give him extra food. Luxury compared to what was in store. We even visited his tiny one-roomed flat in the city centre. A curtain still divided the

cramped sleeping area from the primitive kitchen. It was like travelling back into the past as memories came flooding back for Kopel.

Of course, many of the memories were sad ones. A trip to Auschwitz was a powerful experience for all of us that is hard to put into words.

Later, back in Piotrkow, we visited the former synagogue, now a library, where the librarian pulled a curtain back to reveal the bullet holes in a painting of the Ten Commandments on the wall. In December 1942 the Germans had shot and killed Jews in this very spot. But perhaps the saddest moment for my father was seeing the memorial for his father Groinem. After nearly fifty years he was finally able to say goodbye to his father. The experience was cathartic. He stood there crying as I had never seen him cry before.

In the last ten years of his life, heart problems caused Kopel to become increasingly frail. As he got older, those early memories became even more precious to him. Whenever he had a health scare he was convinced that his father was looking after him. After one particularly bad time in hospital he miraculously returned home for his granddaughter Channa's batmitzvah. Kopel told me that he believed he had actually died, but his father had sent him back down to earth telling him, "It's not your time yet". Amazingly, Kopel lived on to see another granddaughter, Heather, batmitzvahed. He always loved to see his two youngest granddaughters Lily and Flo. Four girls to replace the four sisters he lost.

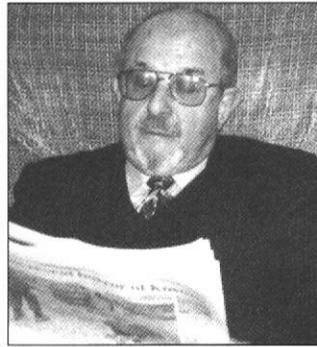
At the time of Heather's party in 2001 he was so weak he could barely walk. During the simcha I was looking for him and couldn't find him. Eventually I spotted him dancing on the dance floor. He was always surprising us like that. He was married to Kitty for over 52 years. Nobody expected him to last this long. Even at the end he was still fighting. Refusing to give in to the inevitable. But then that was Kopel Dessau of Piotrkow. A true survivor.

**W**hen Ben first asked me to write about my father, to do so seemed an easy task. I could set out the history of his life, his achievements and his success, perhaps a little about his family, something factual and to the point - a summing up, a remembrance.

But as I sit trying to write, the task does not seem so easy and I struggle to find the words to sum up a father's life. And so, it seems to me, that perhaps I should not try and recite a history. I find myself upset as I write and I realise that what comes to mind is Dad's experience, his wisdom and his learning, his worldliness and his charm. Those are the things I remember most and the things I miss most of all.

My father lived for his family. He saw his marriage and the birth of his sons as the greatest achievement of his life because to him it meant that the Nazi had not won and that Jewish life would go on and prosper. His support for his family was unstinting and unselfish and he devoted his life to them. When the grandchildren

## **HENRY KAY (KAWALEK) died 30th December 2001**



were born to him, that was the culmination of his efforts to preserve Yiddishkeit and the values and traditions which he knew to be his heritage and which he passed on to us.

And so through all this rejuvenation he worked and laboured to create a basis for us all. He built a business and worked to give us everything he could and he passed on to us the values he believed in: the belief in Yiddishkeit, in the family, in the community which he supported and loved for forty years, and an understanding of the oppressed and the suffering.

He taught us by example and always acted to teach us the best way forward. But most of all I will remember with affection his quality of forgiveness and magnanimity. These most of all made him the man he was. Perhaps it is his gentleness that I will remember most. He had no guile and he always saw the best in people. He had great pride in his children and grandchildren. He achieved his doctor and his lawyer because he believed in learning and study, and he taught us the Jewish instinct to survive whatever the odds.

I will miss the phone call to my Dad every day and the warm and gentle voice at the end of the phone.

All of you at the '45 Aid Society will know my father's history and the hardships of his life far better than I. You shared that history and that suffering. But your greatest achievement, all of you, like my dear father, is that you have proved through us your children that Hitler did not win.

We could not have had a better father and grandfather.

## **JOSEPH FINKLESTONE**

**Born Chelm, Poland, September 25, 1924. Died London, January 1, 2002, aged 77  
(Reprinted, with kind permission, from the Jewish Chronicle)**

**A**lmost a life-long stalwart of the Jewish Chronicle, where he worked for 43 years, Joseph Finklestone broke new ground with his travels to Arab countries and interviews of their leaders.

Starting as a young reporter, he would eventually become involved in every facet of the JC's news sections. He also wrote for the Israeli press, particularly Ma'ariv, and contributed to the British press, radio and TV.

A member of the Radzyn rabbinic dynasty, he was 13 when he came to England in 1937. His father, Rabbi Beresh Finklestein, the revered president of the Jewish community of Chelm, was offered the lowly but life-saving post of rabbinic supervisor for Bonn's matzah factory in Carlisle.

Joe, his two brothers and two sisters were brought up in Gateshead, his father hoping that he, too, would



**Joseph Finklestone after receiving his OBE at Buckingham Palace.**

become a rabbi. But Joe always wanted to write. Though family circumstances ruled out higher education, his schoolboy essays, on display at a local exhibition, impressed the Carlisle Journal, which engaged him.

In mid-August 1945, as the war against Japan ended, he was sent to cover the arrival of a plane carrying

300 teenagers rescued from the Nazi labour and death camps.

It was a powerful encounter, as the young reporter saw the fate his family had escaped. His emotional attachment to "the boys" - eventually totalling 700 - led to his honorary membership of the '45 Aid Society.

Joe joined the JC in 1946, when his family moved to London. He became chief sub-editor in 1949. Keen on sports, he covered the revived Maccabi games several times in Israel in the 1950s, also serving as unpaid editor of the Zionist Review.

In 1951, he married Israeli-born Hadassah Rivlin, then working at the Israeli consulate in London. The ceremony was conducted by the groom's father and by the Chief Rabbi, Dr Israel Brodie.

He became the JC's home news editor in 1959, assistant editor in 1964, and foreign editor in 1971. His northern

voice provided a reassuring commentary on radio and TV during the 1973 Yom Kippur War and other crises.

As foreign and, later, diplomatic editor, he reveled in the opportunity to speak to foreign leaders at the highest level and expound their views at length, as he gained their confidence and scoops.

But an exclusive interview in 1974 with the Palestine Liberation Organisation's London representative, Said Hammami - who said that Yasir Arafat was prepared to make peace with Israel - was followed just a few weeks later by the PLO man's assassination.

In 1977, he wrote to Egypt's President Anwar Sadat

to say he thought Sadat could break down the barriers of hatred between Arabs and Jews. Two years later, he was invited to interview Sadat in Cairo. Their conversation became the basis for Finklestone's 1996 biography, "Sadat: Visionary who Dared."

Even after Sadat's assassination in 1981, his widow continued supplying photographs and information for the book. Finklestone returned to Cairo at President Hosni Mubarak's invitation in 1984, and went to Morocco to cover an Israeli summit in 1986.

His interviewees included Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, south Lebanese Christian militia leader Major Saad Haddad - and Pope

John Paul II, whom he questioned on the Vatican's failure to open diplomatic ties with Israel. He also interviewed Arab and Israeli politicians and diplomats, and Romania's Chief Rabbi Moshe Rosen, whom he made the subject of a further book, "Dangers, Tests and Miracles," in 1990.

He was refused entry to Russia during the 1980 Moscow Olympics and again in 1987, when he was barred from accompanying Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher but still charged £1,200 for airfare and hotel.

His most emotional visit was to his native Poland, in 1988.

His lucid and fair reporting on Israel and the

Middle East was recognized with British journalism's David Holden award in 1981. He received the Guild of Jewish Journalists' first award for excellence and was chair from 1984 to 1994, attracting prominent speakers.

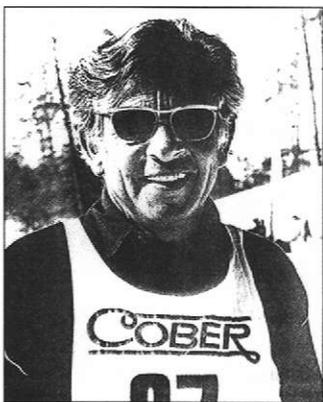
He was appointed OBE in 1998.

He continued writing after retirement in 1989, concentrating on diplomatic affairs. He was a member of the British Diplomatic and Commonwealth Writers Association and of the Middle East group of the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

He is survived by his wife; two daughters, Ilana and Daphna; and by four grandchildren.

## HENRY GREEN

Felix Berger



I felt deeply David Green's pain. Standing in front of his father's coffin in the middle of a barren field in Dedham village, hugging his mother and sobbing bitterly, forlorn, he wondered why his father had left them.

Poor David, poor Angela and poor Henry.

Henry was a deeply serious human being; intense, sensitive and highly principled with a strong practical streak; sociable yet a very private person; always eager to take a leading part in organising communal and cultural activities. We had seen his remarkable ability when as a youngster in the Scottish hostel at Darleith House he produced and directed a delightful play, greatly enjoyed by everyone. His career from Glasgow to Dedham was truly amazing - sheet metal worker, teacher,

estate agent and property developer.

He showed great craftsmanship in everything he did. He installed his own central heating with the efficiency of a professional heating engineer. This multi-talented man was also an intellectual. We saw it in the beautiful poetry he chose to be read at his own funeral. His contribution to the cultural and sporting life of his adopted Dedham was significant, and perhaps testifies to a truth that a man's worth may also be assessed by the respect accorded when he is dead.

We saw the large crowd of friends, neighbours and villagers, surrounding his grave, and the intimacy and warmth they shared with Angela and David.

Henry married late, bringing to his relationship a rich experience and maturity which made him an exemplary husband to Angela and a doting father to David.

Loss and grief are the natural conditions of life.

Poor David, poor Angela and poor Henry.

We his old friends have come to the Dedham fields for the final parting; to say Kaddish at his Humanist grave, bringing our love to Angela and David and to console them with the secular - "And death shall have no dominion", and the traditional Hebrew - "We wish you long life".

## FOUNDER OF ARTS AND CRAFT CENTRE

*This obituary appeared in the Essex County Standard Newspaper*

A survivor of a German concentration camp who became one of the founders of the Dedham Art and Craft Centre, Mr Henry Green, has died. He was 73.

Mr Green was born in a small Jewish community in Poland, the youngest of four children. He survived life in the ghetto and the concentration camp and came to England as a child refugee.

He was always grateful to Britain for giving him self-respect and for teaching him the value of democracy and freedom, and enabling him to restart his life. He also spent some time living in America, where his brother and sister had settled.

An idealistic socialist, Mr Green began by working with his hands as a sheet metal worker. Later he trained as a teacher and worked for some years in a demanding school in Hackney. He then formed his own property company, renovating old properties in north London.

A keen sportsman, he was one of the founder members of the Globe Tennis Club in Belsize Park, Hampstead, a club unique for its mix of nationalities. He also

belonged to the '45 Aid Society for survivors of the Holocaust.

In the 1970s, at the tennis club, he met Angela, who became his wife. Their son David was born in 1981.

Wanting to live in a small country community, the family moved to Dedham in 1983, settling in Bargate Lane.

Mr Green became involved in the creation of the Dedham Art and Craft Centre and worked with enthusiasm at anything involving the community. Although in his late fifties at the time, he was instrumental in starting the Dedham Tennis Club and also founded the Vale Bridge Club.

Always a keen skier, Mr Green derived much satisfaction and pleasure in watching his son David become an even better skier. And some of his happiest times were spent with his family in the French Alps.

Rather than looking back to the horrors of the past, Mr Green wanted to savour the pleasures of everyday existence.



**Michael Lee (Lewkowicz) born Lodz Poland 22/3/24 died 17/72002 aged 78.**

No one can understand a Holocaust survivor better than another survivor. Michael Lee talked to me two weeks before he died. He talked for well over an hour about his life in Lodz before the war, about his mother, Deborah, his father, Zisman, and his young brother Joseph, born in 1934. Then he went on to speak about the starvation and suffering his family had experienced in the Lodz Ghetto. He knew that I would understand all the nuances of that dreadful place because I, too, was there from autumn 1940 to autumn 1944, and had starved all the four years I was there. It was where I suffered the loss of my grandfather, father, mother and one sister with two of her children - all through starvation.

We were sitting in the lower, ground-floor cafeteria of the National Gallery after the 1pm lecture by Mr Colin Wiggins - our favourite lecturer - who had talked to us about the work of Matteo di Giovanni. Michael had no need to explain things to me. He talked in an unrestrained way and in a form of 'verbal shorthand', spicing his talk with Yiddish words. He spoke of how much he loved his wife, Ivy, and Deborah, his adored and only daughter, saying that it would be too much to talk to them about the horribleness of his Holocaust past. He did not wish to inflict the gruesome details that he carried in his mind onto their soul and spirit. Neither did he want them to feel sorry for him.

"When questions about my Holocaust past get too detailed and particular I sidestep the answers by saying that I don't fully remember it now. But most of the time I do remember and with great vividness and think of my

## MY LAST MEETING WITH MY FRIEND, MICHAEL LEE

Roman Halter

*Michael Lee (Lewkowicz), born in Lodz on 22nd March 1924, died in London on Wednesday 17th July 2002. He left behind his wife Ivy and daughter, Deborah.*

father, mother, and my young brother almost daily, much more so than I did twenty or thirty years ago.

"Nowadays, I keep on going to the Wiener Library, where I read about the Lodz Ghetto and about that paedophile Chaim Rumkowski and all the cronies who ran the Lodz Ghetto and collaborated fully with the German Nazis, so that, by sacrificing thousands upon thousands of Jewish men, women and children, they might save themselves and survive. "I try to understand the past a little better ... yet it makes no sense to me whatsoever! I visit places where concentration camps used to be and search for some information about my father. I know that my mother and my younger brother were both gassed in Auschwitz-Birkenau. To the outer world I show a smiling mask; an expression of calm and controlled good will. People say: 'What pleasant disposition that Michael has.' The inner anguish that I feel is hidden from the world with great skill."

Normally, we would go over some of the things we had seen and heard in the lecture and then begin discussing what each of us was doing; Michael had begun painting only in the last few years. His approach to painting was not instinctive, and he knew little about the history of art. But the idea of being an artist and dabbling in paint gave him an interest that diverted his attention from the Holocaust, and he welcomed it. During these lunch meetings, before we'd part, we somehow always drifted into the past: we would talk about certain experiences of our own in the Holocaust and especially those in the Lodz Ghetto.

I found out that Michael had also worked in the Metal factory on 68 Lagiewnicka Street in Lodz Ghetto from 1941 until the liquidation of the ghetto in the autumn of 1944. I too worked the same number of years in this factory, yet I

didn't know Michael then. There may have been two reasons for it. First of all, that when I was just over 13, he was 17. A seventeen-year old did not associate with thirteen year olds then. The second reason may have been that thousands of men, women and youth worked at this factory on its three shifts and in different groups; one tended to get to know the people in one's own immediate group and of the same age as oneself. Now, with both of us well over 70, the small difference in our ages did not impinge on our friendship.

That last meeting was somehow different. Michael felt some kind of premonition a foreboding. When I asked him how he was, he felt, he said with a smile, "very frail and mortal" and he began telling me that he had recently visited Buchenwald and found his former name, Lewkowicz, and the Auschwitz Concentration camp number, that was tattooed on his forearm, on a list of slave-labourers who were brought to Buchenwald at the beginning of 1945. He brought a copy of that list to show me, "Here," he pointed excitedly to the line, "That's me!"

I understood his need to talk and didn't interrupt. We queued for coffee and a sandwich and Michael carried on talking: "Do you know why you and I are still alive today, 58 years after we were liberated from the camps? The starvation, beatings, hard labour, anguish, suffering and trauma only increased our zest for life and this zest is still undiminished, except that now our bodies are falling apart."

We ate and drank our coffees. I kept silent. "Life in this country is very good and people, on the whole, behave decently. Years ago," continued Michael, "I met a shrink, and he told me that since, when I was a youngster, I'd been surrounded by murderers, killers, psychopaths... there was a strong possibility

that I too, might turn out to be one of them! This shrink couldn't have been more wrong. Decent family life was the role model for me, for my wife Ivy and my very dear Deborah.

"In England, I had to work hard to build up a business. Eventually, I had a handbag factory and employed people, to whom I was kind, just and fair. Murderous deeds were thoughts and nightmares that came to me about the S.S. men during the Second World War. When they came to me, they made me shudder with revulsion."

I fetched a bottle of water and two paper cups. Michael continued: "Before the war, we were very poor. We lived in Lodz on Sienkewicza Street, in a block of flats. My parents could only afford one room on the fourth floor. In that room, the four of us slept, cooked, ate, studied... That one room was our 'palazzo' - Michael said it with a chuckle.

"In '38, my brother Joseph was only four years old. My mother kept the room as tidy as a chocolate box. She also took in sewing to pay for my schooling, so that I'd be able to go to a better school. Imagine, this block of flats actually of rooms - had no lift. The only toilets were wooden shacks outside. To perform bodily functions one had to run down four floors and walk up four floors. There was no running water in the room. The tap with the sink underneath it was on the corridor, used by everyone who lived on the fourth floor. A few years ago I went back to Lodz with Deborah. I walked up the four floors and I couldn't quite remember which was our room. Then I noticed the sink, the same old sink which was there before the war and suddenly I knew, "Debbi" I said, "this was our room!"

"One day I came to the National Gallery - you weren't able to come on that day - Mr Colin Wiggins was giving the lecture. I think he talked about R.B.Kitaj. On the top part of one of his paintings, Kitaj has the building, which was the only way in to Auschwitz-Birkenau. I was moved by the superb lecture and, when he finished, I went up to him and introduced myself. I said that I was a Holocaust sur-

vivor and painter, and that I had been sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau in the autumn of 1944. I showed him the number on my arm. He became quite confused, and for a while didn't know what to say. Then he said: 'What do you paint?' And I replied that at present I was painting a sink. And, I added, a sink that still exists on the corridor of a fourth floor block of flats in Lodz, Poland, on Sienkiewicz Street, where my brother, father and mother and I lived before the Second World War.

You must get hold of a postcard of the sink which

Lucian Freud painted,' said Mr Wiggins. I made a note about Lucian Freud's sink. Mr Wiggins kept looking at me. When I finished writing he said: 'How long have you been painting that sink?'

I told him that I'd been painting it for over six months and the painting was still not finished.

'Well!' said Mr Wiggins, 'That will be some sink when you complete it!'

What he didn't realize, and the idea would never enter his head, was the fact that I didn't want to finish the painting. . . Each time I sit

down to paint that sink I am in communion with my father, who was murdered in one of the concentration camps... my mother, and Joseph my younger brother, ten years younger than me, who were both gassed in Auschwitz. . . this sink brings back many memories of them and of the times before the war. It is still my direct line to them and to that past...

Sometime later, Mr Colin Wiggins and I went to lunch together. I asked him about some paintings which are in the National Gallery and he was telling me so interestingly about them.

Then suddenly he broke off and said: 'Michael, do you think of the times you spent in the Lodz Ghetto, Auschwitz and other concentration camps every hour and every day?'

And I replied: "Good heavens, no! if I did, it would make me mad!" Then, looking at me, he added, "Roman, I should have told him that I think about the Holocaust past only half the time of each hour of each day; which is why I'm only half mad."

**R**abbi Israel Miller was the heart and soul of the Claims Conference. His guidance and stewardship during twenty-three years in office, as President, was exceptional. He successfully steered twenty-three diverse organisations with their different agendas towards a common goal.

The high esteem in which he was held, his wide-ranging experience - leadership in Jewish communal life was legendary. His many positions included the chairmanship of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisation in the 1970s. Over the years he was President of the Rabbinical Council of America, Chairman of the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry, and President of the American Zionist Federation.

## RABBI ISRAEL MILLER

He received recognition by a number of Presidents of the United States. In 1975, before Rabbi Miller became President of the Claims Conference, the then Prime Minister of Israel, the late Izhak Rabin, conferred upon him a special personal award for distinguished leadership and service to Israel and the Jewish people.

He worked tirelessly towards achieving a "measure of justice", a phrase which he repeated at every occasion, "for hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivors around the world." Under his leadership, historic compensation and restitution agreements were reached with Germany and Austria acknowledging the suffering of the Jewish people during the darkest period of Jewish history.

Throughout his life Rabbi Miller was a true servant to God and people. He was universally trusted for his wisdom, erudition and sincerity and, above all, for his independent spirit. His skill of conciliation made his chairmanship a memorable one. He was generous and fair-minded. When tempers and tensions rose at a meeting, he quickly calmed the situation with his fountain of knowledge and sagacity without ever compromising a principle. There was seldom a meeting when he did not illustrate a point to good effect with an apt quotation from the Bible. He always seemed to have the confidence of someone who is secure in his own belief and could afford to listen and wait for his view to emerge.

In October 2001, at an event marking the Claims Conference 50th anniversary, Rabbi Miller said "I would like to share with you in one word what the work of the Claims Conference means to me in my role as President, now almost twenty years. The word is sacred, or consecrated, or holy. Our work is holy work. Despite the mundane tasks, the frustrations, despite all the challenges - and there are many - I view our endeavour with reverence."

Those who have known and worked with Rabbi Miller will always remember him with gratitude and affection for all that he has done for the Claims Conference and for his enormous contribution to the survivors, Israel and World Jewry.

## MEMBERS NEWS 2002

Compiled by Ruby Friedman

### NEWS 2002

Apologies to Vivienne and Kopel Kendal and to Milly and Monty Graham for the mis-print in our last Journal. The announcements should have read as follows:

- Millie and Monty Graham mazeltov on the birth of their granddaughter Naomi born to Ruth and David.
- Vivienne and Kopel Kendall mazeltov on the birth of their granddaughter Honor Lauren born to Lisa and Stuart.

### BIRTHS

- Margaret and Harry Olmer mazeltov on the birth of their grandson Joshua Oliver born to Julia and Andrew.
- Olive and David Herman mazeltov on the birth of their granddaughter Sophie Hannah born to Julia and Phillip.
- Valerie Geddy and the late Leo Geddy mazeltov on the birth of your grandson Nathan Louis born to Geraldine &

Richard and another grandson born to Sarah and her husband.

- Geoffrey and Nechama Herman mazeltov on the birth of their son, a grandson for the late Abe Herman.
- Maureen and Jack Hecht mazeltov on the birth of their grandson Joshua born to Kim and Sammy.
- Minia and Peter Jay mazeltov on the birth of their great-grandson Jaacov.
- Arza and Ben Helfgott mazeltov on the birth of their granddaughter Jessica Debra born to Thea and Michael.
- Rene and Artek Posnanski mazeltov on the birth of their granddaughter Ilana born to Phillipa and Victor.
- Tina and Victor Greenberg mazeltov on the birth of their granddaughter Hannah Ruth born to Naomi and Peter.
- Betty and Charlie Lewkowicz mazeltov on the birth of their granddaughter Samantha born to Karen and Jack.

- Sylvia and Mark Goldfinger mazeltov on the birth of their great-granddaughter Daisy May born to Hayley and Anthony.
- Thea and Yisroel Rudzinski mazeltov on the birth of a number of great grandchildren (Bli Ayin Hora) both here and in Eretz Yisroel.
- Doreen and Harry Wajchendler mazeltov on the birth of their great grandson.

### BARMITZVAH

- Jeanette and Zigi Shipper mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their grandson Elliot.
- Michelle and the late Izzak Pomerance mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their grandson Alex, son of Denise Pearlman.
- Pauline and Harry Balsam mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their grandson Adam, son of Rochelle and Stephen.
- Taube and Mayer Cornell mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their grandson Gilad, son of Cherry and Sheldon.

- Sala Newton-Katz and the late Benny Newton mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their grandson Aaron, son of Rosalyn and Martin.
- Barbara and Jack Kagan mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their grandson Ori, son of Rutie and Michael and their grandson Nicholas, son of Lisa and Jeremy.
- Solly Irving and the late Sandra Irving mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their grandson Pini, eldest son of Ruth and Jeremy Shebson.
- Olive and David Herman mazeltov on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Jessica, daughter of Maja and Charles.

#### MARRIAGES

- Anita and the late David Wiernik mazeltov on the marriage of their granddaughter Miri to Ayal, daughter of Belinda and Toby Cohen.
- Fay and Moniek Goldberg mazeltov on the marriage of their granddaughter Rebecca to David.
- Valerie Geddy and Peter Butcher congratulations on their marriage which took place on February 18th 2002.
- Theo and Yisroel Rudzinski mazeltov on the marriage of their grandson Shulem Eliezer to Gitty Singer.

#### DEATHS

It is with much sorrow that we have to announce the loss during the year of the following named members:

- Henry Kaye
- Eva Condon (sister of the late Leo Geddy)
- Joe Finklestone
- Kopel Dessau
- Esther Kamoinka, wife of Motek Kamionka
- Henry Green
- Jurek Fisch
- Michael Lee.

- Rabbi Israel Miller
- Our condolences to Magda Bloom on the passing of her daughter Julia in Israel.
- Beatrice and Leon Manders on the loss of their daughter Gillian Hamilton.
- Also to Marion and Meir Stern on the passing of Meir's brother Solli in Israel.

#### NEWS

Congratulations to Susie Halter who competed in the 75 - 80 age group at the International World Master's Swimming Championships in Christchurch, New Zealand.



**Susie Halter**

She came: 3rd in the 50 m. Butterfly, 4th in the 50 m. Backstroke, 5th in the 50 m. and 100 m. Freestyle, and 5th in the 200 m. Freestyle, for which she received medals.

Susie then swam in the British Championships and Crystal Palace and won:

Gold in the 80 m. Butterfly, 50 m. Freestyle, 100 m. Freestyle, and 200 m. Freestyle, as well as Silver in the 100 m. Backstroke.

#### 2ND GENERATION NEWS

In October 2001 Leslie Wajchandler, son of Doreen and Harry Wajchandler, was honoured by being chosen as Choson Torah for his synagogue. He has also been appointed warden of Coventry Road Synagogue.

#### 3RD GENERATION NEWS

Congratulations to Lara Jackson on gaining 10A star and 2As in the G.S.C.E. examinations. Lara is the granddaughter of Laura and Joe Carver and the daughter of Geraldine and Frank Jackson.

## MANCHESTER NEWS 2002

Compiled by Louise Elliot

#### GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mazeltov to:

- Dorca and Nat Sampson.
- Charlie and Edna Igielman.
- Louise and Herbert Elliot.

May you all enjoy many more happy and healthy years together.

#### BARMITZVAH

- Mazeltov to Reginka and Mark Fruhman on the barmitzvah of their grandson in June 2002.

#### BATMITZVAH

- Mazeltov to Marita and Maurice Golding on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Sophie.
- Mazeltov to Elaine and Sam Walshaw on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter in July 2002.

#### 2ND GENERATION NEWS

Mazeltov to Simon, son-in-law of Mendel Beale who has been appointed Coroner for Bury, Rochdale and Oldham.

#### 3RD GENERATION NEWS

Mazeltov to Rochelle, granddaughter of Sam and Hannah Gardner, who gained a B.Sc in Psychology with Medicine.

Natalie Bodek, the granddaughter of Jerry and Eunice Parker, and Elizabeth Elliot, the granddaughter of Herbert and Louise Elliot. Both passed Oxbridge exams, subject, of course, to their getting the required grades. At the moment they have another three weeks to wait, but from past reports they should both be going to Oxford in October.

In April 2002 the Yom HaShoah event took place in the C.I.S. Hall and was very well attended. The presentation was superb, especially the centre piece on the stage made out of broken twigs and depicting a family, which was created by one of Alice and the late Joe Rubinstein's granddaughters.

Also in April, Zvi Malchin, former Chief of Operations for the Mossad and the man who captured Eichman, spoke at the Whitefield Shool Hall and captured a very interested audience. It was a great shame that not all of our members attended.

In May 2002 the members, as usual, attended the Service at Steincourt Shool to commemorate "The boys" liberation and this was followed by a Kiddush. This was well attended by our crowd. The following week, Karl and Estelle Kleinman hosted a supper evening so that this historic occasion could be further commemorated. There was a lovely atmosphere and it was so nice to see all "The Boys" together with their wives.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### YOM HA'SHOAH

The communal Yom Ha'shoah Commemoration will take place on Sunday 4th May 2003 at 11am at the Logan Hall, Bedford Way, London EC1.



### 2003 REUNION OF OUR SOCIETY

The 58th anniversary of our reunion will take place on Sunday 4th May 2003 at The Post House Hotel, Regents Park, Carburton Street, London W1.

As always, we appeal to our members to support us by placing an advert in our souvenir brochure to be published by the Society.

Please contact:-

Harry Balsam  
40 Marsh Lane, Mill Hill  
London NW7  
Tel. 020-8959 6517 (home)  
020-7372 3662 (office)

### 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 2003. The overall cost of participation is about £1,000.

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

Those interested should write, enclosing their CV and other details, not later than 5th March 2003 to:

Ruby Friedman  
4 Broadlands, Hillside Road,  
Radlett, Herts WD7 7BH

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**Gary Simmons and Jeffrey Stein**

wish the '45 Aid every success