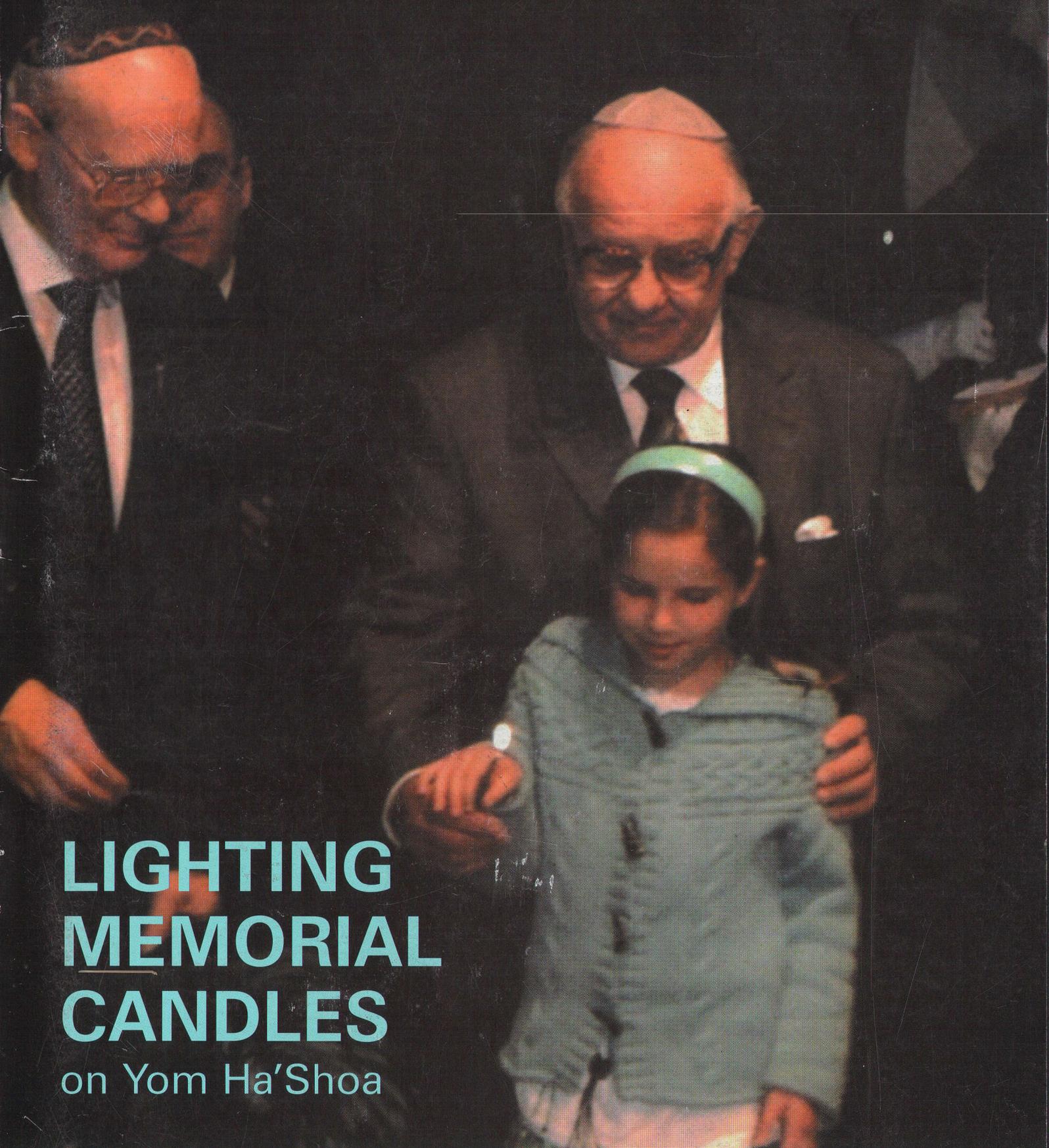


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# JOURNAL



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## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The annual Leonard G Montefiore lecture will take place on Thursday 22nd March 2007 at 7.30 pm at the Hendon Synagogue, 18 Raleigh Close, Wykeham Road, NW4 2TZ.

### **YOM HA'SHOAH**

The communal Yom Ha'shoah Commemoration will take place on Sunday 15th April 2007 at 11am at the Logan Hall, Bedford Way, London EC1.

\* \* \*

### **2006 ANNUAL REUNION**

The 62nd anniversary of our reunion will take place on Monday 7th May at the Royal Majestic Suite, 196 Willesden Lane, London NW6 7PR.

As always, we appeal to our members to support us by placing an advert in our souvenir brochure to be published by the Society.

Please contact:- Zigi Shipper  
6 Salisbury House  
57 Gordon Avenue  
Stanmore  
Middlesex HA7 3QR  
Tel: 020-8416 3899

\* \* \*

## **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 2007.

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 26th March 2007 to:

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*JOURNAL OF THE  
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All submissions for publication in the next issue (including letters to the Editor  
and Members' News Items) should be sent to:  
RUBY FRIEDMAN, 4 BROADLANDS, HILLSIDE ROAD, RADLETT, HERTS WD7 7BX

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## **A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S**

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**RUBY FRIEDMAN and ARZA HELFGOTT** for their kind assistance.  
**PEGGY LUCAS** for the typing of the Journal.  
**ANGELA COHEN** (daughter of Lottie and Moshe Malenicky)  
for facilitating the printing of the Journal.

Design by DG&LS

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## SECTION IX MANCHESTER NEWS 2005/6

Compiled by Louise Elliot

**November 2005** – Harley Sommer, the son of Anthony and Maxine and the grandson of Hynda and the late David Sommer was barmitzvah

**November 2005** – Stella, the wife of Harry Frankel, died after a very long illness and Long Life is wished by all our members.

**30th December 2005** – Our Life Vice-President, Mendel Beale, died suddenly. He was the founder member in Manchester for our branch of the Society and I worked very closely with him during his lifetime. He also took on the project of a Memorial Stone for the six million who perished in the Holocaust and a new Ohel was built with generous donations – a large contribution from the late Arthur Huber. Services are conducted yearly and slowly members of the general Jewish public and other organisations joined us. He was always available for help and advice to any member who contacted him and he will be sadly missed by us all. We all send our sincere condolences to his daughter Tania and sons Steven and Simon – Louise.

### 2006

**March** – Charlotte Swead, the daughter of Gillian and Peter and granddaughter of Sam Laskier and the late Blanche Laskier, had her Bat Chayil.

**April** – Celebrations for the Barmitzvah of Michelle Weiner, the son of Fione and Simon and the grandson of Itzek Alterman and Diane.

**April** – Yom Hashoah service was once again at King David School in Manchester and the candles were lit by six of the Second Generation.

**June** – Congratulations to Adash & Zena Bulwa on their granddaughter Danielle, the daughter of Suzanne and Paul Levy, gaining a First at Nottingham University.

Congratulations again to Alice Rubinstein and the late Joe on their granddaughter Laura, the daughter of Rosalind and Robert Nathan, achieving a First in Art and also her

grandson Daniel gaining a 2:1. Laura is going on to do an MA at Manchester University.

**July** – Congratulations to Louise and Herbert Elliot on their granddaughter Elizabeth Victoria, the daughter of their son Steven, gaining a First at Lady Margaret College at Oxford in French and German and being invited to spend another year there to take an Mst in French Literature.

Susan Kurnedz returned to Manchester unfortunately to sit Shiva for her sister.

Alicia Harrison, the daughter of Helen and Edward and granddaughter of Dorca and the late Nat Sampson, became engaged.

**August** – Jonathon, grandson of Sam and Hannah Gardner and son of Maralyn and Harris Turgel, became engaged.

**August** – The wedding took place of Emma, daughter of Michelle and Warren Shaffer and granddaughter of Berek Wurzel and the late Carol Wurzel.

**September** – Lily and Mayer Bomsztyk celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary with a party at Steincourt Shool surrounded by their family and friends.

Alice Rubinstein celebrated the birth of a son to her granddaughter Suzanne and her husband Robert (the daughter of Rosalind and Robert Nathan). The baby was named after the late Joe Rubinstein.

**October** – Mazeltov to Marita and the late Maurice Golding on the Barmitzvah of their grandson, the son of Dr Jonathan and Lesley Goldin.

**November** – Mazeltov to Stephen Beale and his wife on the engagement of their son.

The unveiling of a tombstone in memory of Mendel Beale was followed by the dedication of a plaque in the Ohel at Agecroft Cemetery amongst the plaques commemorating the families of those who perished in the Holocaust.

they are still able to bear witness. It is equally important for the future, however, to provide a means of locating these testimonies and knowing what information can be derived from them.

Dr. Elisabeth Maxwell

Hon. President,  
Remembering for the Future  
TEL: +44 (0)207259 9795  
FAX: +44 (0)207730 9289  
EMAIL: drmaxwell@btinternet.com  
11 Lochmore House  
Cundy Street  
London SW1W 9JX

---

### **BIRTHS:**

- Corrine & Paul Oppenheimer mazeltov on the birth of their grandson Eyal.
- Barbara & Leo Frischman mazeltov on the birth of their grandson Joshua Eleazar, born to Elizabeth & Daniel.
- Nechama & Menachem Sylberstein mazeltov on the birth of their great-granddaughter Yam, born to Sharon & David.
- Shoshana & Zvi Dagan mazeltov on the birth of their great-granddaughter Alice Julia, born to Rachel & Danny.
- Beatrice & Leon Manders mazeltov on the birth of their great-grandson Dovid.
- Thea & Isroel Rudzinski mazeltov on the birth of several great-grandchildren.
- Beatty Pollack mazeltov on the birth of your great-grandsons in Israel, Itamar and Jonaton, great-grandsons for the late Baruch Pollack
- Anita Wiernik, wife of the late Danny Wiernik, mazeltov on the birth of your great-grandson.

### **GOLDEN WEDDINGS ANNIVERSARY:**

- Lucille & Victor Breitburg , mazeltov – please accept our apologies for the late inclusion.

### **BARMITZVAHS:**

- Harry & Pauline Spiro mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their grandson Declan, son of Lannis & Gary.

- Solly Irving mazeltov on the barmitzvah of his grandson Eli, son of Ruth & Jeremy, grandson of the late Sandra Irving.
- Beatrice & Leon Manders mazeltov on the barmitzvah of their grandson.

### **MARRIAGES:**

- Pauline Balsam mazeltov on the marriage of her granddaughter Natalie to Marc. Natalie is the daughter of Rochelle & Stephen and granddaughter of the late Harry Balsam.
- Sala Newton-Katz mazeltov on the marriage of your grandson Jonathon to Allison. Jonathon is the son of Janet & Dennis and grandson of the late Benny Newton.
- Marie & Bob Obuchowski mazeltov on the marriage of their granddaughter Louise to Ben. Louise is the daughter of Susan & David.

### **DEATHS:**

- Sincere condolences to Paul Y Mayer on the loss of his wife Ilsa.
- Joe Moskowitz on the loss of his wife.
- Arnold Fulton on the loss of his wife.
- Etta Lerner on the loss of her husband Berish.

Members who have passed away since the publication of our last Journal.

We offer condolences to their families.

- Mark Singer
- Lipa Tepper
- Johnny Moss
- Abe Dichter
- Sol Erreich
- Peter Brandstein.

### **3RD GENERATION NEWS:**

- Mazeltov to Robert Richman on achieving a Masters Degree in Mathematics and Statistics at Manchester University. Robert is the grandson of Jeanette & Ziggy Shipper and the son of Michelle & Marcus.

Remembrance of the Holocaust is constantly threatened by revisionism, disinformation, even negation by the Holocaust deniers. It is important to note that the primary motivation for deniers is anti-Semitism. For them the Holocaust is an infuriatingly inconvenient fact of history. After all, the Holocaust has generally been recognised as one of the most terrible crimes that ever took place, and surely the very emblem of evil in the modern age. If that crime was a direct result of anti-Semitism, taken to its logical end, then anti-Semitism itself, even when expressed in private conversation, is inevitably discredited among most people.

What better way to rehabilitate anti-Semitism, make anti-Semitic arguments seem once again respectable in civilised discourse than by convincing the world that the great crime for which anti-Semitism was blamed simply never happened. Indeed, that it was nothing more than a frame-up invented by the Jews and propagated by them through their control of the media. What better way, in short, to make the world ripe again for anti-Semitism than by denying the Holocaust?

As the youngest survivors and eye-witnesses of the Holocaust, we owe it to those who did not survive and to posterity to speak out against this distortion of history.

It is comforting to know that our children and grandchildren - the 2nd and 3rd generations - are becoming more active in this field and they, too, are becoming a voice (see pages 62-72).

Until recently, the deniers of the Holocaust were on the fringes of society but the situation has now become more serious since the Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, organised an international conference in Tehran in order to promote the denial of the Holocaust. In spite of the fact that he was condemned by the United Nations, European Union, most governments of the world, leading statesmen and churchmen (see page 62 statement by the Archbishop of

Canterbury, Rowan Williams), undaunted, he set up an Iran-based World Foundation for Holocaust Studies. No doubt, it will attract many anti-Semites.

Equally, when Ahmadinejad first stated that "Israel should be wiped off the map", he was widely condemned and one would have thought that he would be sensitive to and taken notice of world public opinion. However, he never missed an opportunity to repeat this threat. At a conference on the Palestinian issue, he stressed again and again that the existence of Israel is a threat to the Islamic world and that the "Zionist regime is a rotten dried tree that will be eliminated by one storm". By continuing to ignore the opprobrium levelled against him, he clearly indicates that he follows in the footsteps of Hitler in the 1930s when Hitler at every opportunity threatened the annihilation of the Jewish people.

He is the head of a country that is on the threshold of developing the nuclear bomb and whose people, mainly ignorant, are living in dire poverty. It is not surprising that his nationalistic diatribe under the guise of Muslim Fundamentalism is very appealing to them.

Once again, the Jews, under the pretext of Israel, are a convenient scapegoat for Ahmedinejad's greater design of Muslim domination.

When we were liberated, almost 62 years ago, we could not have imagined that such a situation would be looming large, at any time, let alone in our lifetime.

Although we must take seriously the threats made against Jews and Israel in particular, we must not despair nor be alarmed. In some very important respects, our situation is very different from what it was in the 1930s. We are no longer the scorned, discriminated, humiliated and denigrated Jews. Our enemy is also the enemy of the people in whose midst we live. We are not alone, abandoned like we were in those dark years.

## The Italian Interlude

By Janina Fischler  
Martinho

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

In December 1945, Joseph, my brother, and I sneaked from Austria into Italy. It was a perilous, gruelling journey. We made it partly on foot, partly by lorry. The long-distance lifts were very helpful. Italy itself we covered by rail. It was difficult, as we had no valid, up-to-date papers and no money. We were unable to buy a train ticket in Italy. We spent most of the time aboard the train playing hide-and-seek, successfully, with the ticket inspector. The Italians are indulgent people. They understand life...

In a small town by the Adriatic, San Elpidio-a-Mare, we were re-united with our mother's younger brother — uncle Marek; a bachelor in his mid-thirties, a soldier in the Second Policy Army Corps. He was neither unkind nor ungenerous to us. Yet, as human beings, as his kith and kin, we were of no interest to him whatsoever. He was a cold man with a rich vein in sarcasm. He was inordinately preoccupied with social distinction. We were nobodies and he clearly saw us as such. Yet he did not shirk, what he considered to be, his family responsibilities towards us. Other, better men might not have been so scrupulous. He took us to Rome, where Joseph and I separated. I became a pupil at the Polish High School in Via Nomentana. Joseph found sanctuary at a Jewish youth hostel in Via Came Luce. Joseph, now 83 years

old, will say to this day: "That time, those few months in Italy, were the happiest, the most care-free period of all the post-war years"; and there have been 61 to date... Our life, Joseph's and mine, is divided into three distinct chapters: "Before the war... During the war... After the war..." Our uncle accompanied us to Rome. It was February 1946. The mild Italian winter was almost over. The sun was shining and everything appeared touched with its glow and enchantment. The beautiful, noble city; the friendly, zestful people; the women like colourful, scented flowers; the men with bold, promise-holding gaze... And the music of the language... Everything we saw and experienced was intoxicating. Simply to be alive in 1946, in Rome, was overwhelming. How was it possible that life had so much to offer? Fresh white bread spread

with butter... spaghetti... The fragrance of plump and sweet tangerines... The uncle's social merry-go-round of opera, concert, of restaurants and café... To us everyone of these discoveries, manifestations of the joy of living was sheer wonder!

Yet, at that time, in 1946, it was only four years since we had lost our parents, our little brother, our entire family. I only had to close my eyes and our life during the Occupation, in the Ghetto, on the run, would unfold itself day by day, incident by incident, as if I were uncoiling a roll of coloured film accompanied by soundtrack. I had not talked to anyone of those six long years. Of those I had lost. Of what I had witnessed and experienced. Only once did I describe, and at that time I think it would have been with the freshness and vividness of yesterday, under what circumstances we had lost our parents and our little brother.

At the school it was not considered good manners to talk about oneself or one's background. The daily routine was designed to befit young ladies from a privileged social background whose education, academic and social, still required a few finishing touches. The war had been blotted out. It was not mentioned. A veil woven out of the threads of social hypocrisy and shallow refinement had been thrown over that unfortunate

# Benjamin Meed (Miedzyrzecki)

Wladka Blit Robinson

The president of the American Gathering of the Jewish Holocaust Survivors, Benjamin Meed, died in New York on 24th October 2006. He was instrumental in helping to establish both the Holocaust Museum in Washington and the Living Memorial to the Holocaust in the Jewish Heritage Museum in New York.

He and his wife, Wladka Peltel Meed (whom I knew as a really extraordinarily brave courier for the Bund and the Jewish Armed Resistance

ZOD) also set up the Benjamin Meed and Wladka Meed Register of Jewish Survivors.

In Warsaw, during the German occupation, he risked his life for me. I met Benjamin in 1944 after the annihilation of the Warsaw ghetto and have much to thank him for. He had escaped from the Ghetto and was surviving as a gentile on the "Aryan side" and working for the Jewish resistance as a courier.

I will always remember him as Cheslaw – his clandestine name – a jaunty young man in high boots and a very Polish little moustache who came to pay the Polish family who were hiding me. I was then twelve years old and he and Wladka were my only contact with people who cared for me. Coming to pay for me was a dangerous assignment, but when he was blackmailed in the courtyard, he joked about it and came again next month. How glad I was to see him!

## SECTION IX MEMBERS NEWS 2005/6

Compiled by Ruby Friedman

### REMEMBERING FOR THE FUTURE (RFTF) ONLINE SURVIVOR TESTIMONY DATABASE

In association with The Holocaust Centre, Beth Shalom

#### *Abstract*

*RFTF Online* is an outgrowth of Remembering for the Future, the charity founded by Robert and Dr. Elisabeth Maxwell in 1988, which subsequently organized multiple international conferences on the Holocaust in an age of genocide.

*RFTF Online: Survivor Testimony Database* is a new RFTF project undertaken in collaboration with The Holocaust Centre, Beth Shalom. Its objective is to provide a comprehensive and searchable internet database of information concerning the location of all survivors' testimonies in all formats, including published and unpublished texts, video and audio files. The database will ultimately provide keywords, e.g. family names, countries of origin and concentration camp names, so that researchers will be able to identify and locate testimonies relevant to their own field of work with ease.

Work has begun on a pilot project to compile a database of all testimonies available in the United Kingdom, and in so doing, to refine the research process and determine the keywords and search criteria. Testimonies accessible in the UK will be analyzed and keywords entered into the database using a combination of high-technology and teams of volunteers to analyze video and audio recordings. To that end, an initial donation of cutting-edge digital archiving software and programming has already been made. We are now in the process of raising the remaining funds to complete the pilot project.

RFTF Online is essentially a race against time since many unpublished manuscripts and testimonies are known only to a very few individuals. As those few links disappear, the resources they know of will slip into obscurity unless a database of this kind is created. For some years now, the world has been aware of the importance of recording the testimonies of Holocaust survivors whilst

with only a sole surviving cousin in Israel. They found each other via an ad his cousin placed in the Jewish Chronicle.

In the UK, Dad became a baker and worked hard, walked everywhere and went on cycling and camping trips with friends. He cycled round Britain at least once. Dad had a costume jewellery/haberdashary market stall in all the usual places. He eventually went full time into that business with two partners and together they turned it into a thriving business with at one point 50+ staff based in East London.

I always remember Dad coming home of an evening, enjoying dinner with us,

tucking us into bed and watching the news, walking the dog and going to bed. Very comforting.

Dad finally retired in 99/00 and continued to enjoy the family and freemasonry he cherished, along with his love of football and Arsenal. His boys brought him the usual mix of joy and stress but when his grandson Coby joined him in Nov '05, he lit up.

Sadly Coby's arrival marked the start of his final journey which ended on Sunday, peacefully, with my mum, my brother and me at his side.

Despite all his ills over the last few years Dad did not complain and was comfortable and content for most of

the time. The army of people who assisted us and the friends that supported and visited Mum & Dad have a special place in our hearts & family.

Dad retained his sense of humour until his very last few days. I made him laugh (and cry, simultaneously of course) in the last fortnight.

Our favourite memories of Dad (and there are so many) include the now famous yabba-dabba-do's at both boys weddings, giving his mother-in-law Asne, who sadly passed away on July 1 2005, a witches broomstick with a red ribbon bow for her 75th and finally, believe it or not, his riding an Ostrich on holiday in South Africa.

## Guta Gottlieb

Sala Newton Katz  
Moniek Goldberg

**B**ikur Cholim is a great mitzvah. Since we live apart by great distances I, and others, try to fulfil these obligations by telephone. So, it is with great sadness that Sala Newton Katz and I join you in mourning the loss of Guta Gottlieb (nee Grynbaum). Guta passed away on June



*Guta with her husband.*

22, 2006 in New York after a long illness.

Gutka came with us to Windermere. I had not personally kept up with her for a number of years, although Sala regularly updated us about her as well as many other mutual friends. A few years ago, Sala told me that Guta was very ill and since then I called every so often. I telephoned her when we last got back from Israel and I told her about the reunion in London. I told her that we were planning an auto trip to Michigan and would like to make a detour to visit her. "Please don't visit", she answered, "Moniek, remember me the way I was". And so I will.

Guta is survived by Morris, her husband of 51 years, two

daughters, one grandson, two granddaughters, and one great grandson. She has a loving family and never failed to tell me how proud she was of them all and how thankful she was for the naches and all the love she had around her.

Allow me to share one anecdote: A few years ago, a young girl answered my 'phone call. I asked to speak to Guta. The girl responded, "There is no Guta here. I asked to speak to her grandmother and the girl said, "My grandmother's name is Tova". So, I hung up. Immediately afterwards I realised that Guta in Hebrew is Tova and I called right back and got through.

Our heartfelt condolences to the Gottlieb Family and may they know only joy from now on.

occurrence. After all, it was not a drawing-room topic for well brought-up young ladies.... It was not referred to – as if it had never taken place... That slate had been wiped clean and thoroughly polished. I was the only Jewish pupil there, and although my Jewishness was never commented upon, my surname, and my uncle's, were fully indicative.

Our manners generally, but particularly our table manners, were rigorously, if discreetly, observed. The first time I sat down to a meal in the school dining-room, my heart sank. I felt very self-conscious, very ill-at-ease. The array of cutlery by each table-mat beggared belief. What does one do? Which implement does one pick up?

I had spent two years, from 1943 to 1945, on the run, tramping the Polish countryside, working for peasant farmers as a menial, lowly servant. The only eating implement used by the farmers was a tin spoon, usually quite worn at the side and sharp. It sometimes led to mouth sores. Not infrequently, the eating was done communally. Two large bowls were placed on the table – one containing boiled or mashed potatoes, the other curdled milk or shredded cabbage stew. Losing no time, we all delved in – old, toothless mouths, as well as copiously dribbling toddlers – in a spirit of acute competition. We slurped, we champed, we licked our spoons. I was as able to hold my own as anybody. And here I was... I could not very well ask for allowances to be made in my case on the above grounds, could I?

I shared a room with a girl, Tessa, who was three years my junior, but light years older than I in academic prowess, general knowledge and social graces. She told me on one occasion that a young lady's handkerchief should always be immaculately fresh and delicately scented. I carried daily the same grubby and creased handkerchief in my pocket. My handkerchiefs have been immaculate every since. Tessa had meant no harm. She was, she is, a very fine human being – endowed with rare compassion and understanding. She had lost her father in the war, and she and her mother were evacuated to Russia where they spent some years sampling Joseph Stalin's hospitality.

Knowledgeable as Tessa was, she knew nothing, at the time, about the tragedy of the Jewish people under the German occupation.

Tessa and I became friends. Our friendship began to flower in an ice-cream parlour in the Via Nazionale. We went there whenever we could. They served the most fabulous ice-cream – Gelati con Panna". We sat on high bar stools. The ice-cream arrived at the counter in round silvery bowls on tall, slender stalks. The presentation was truly artistic and the taste divine. It was garnished with fresh cream; laced with a squirt of scarlet cordial meandering sinuously against the snow-cold ice-cream; it was sprinkled with crushed golden nuts; two fan-shaped wafers eyed each other coquettishly across this mouth-watering concoction. Tessa managed her allowance much better than I did.

I went a bit wild. All that plenitude tended to unhinge one. When I was broke, she would say: "It would give me great pleasure to stand you an ice-cream". An offer I would accept with alacrity.

Tessa and I are friends to this day. Over the years I have received much kindness, warmth and hospitality from her mother and step-father. Both her parents were gourmets with very discerning palates. It was a privilege to partake of their deliciously prepared and graciously served food. I remember an occasion when I was invited to her parents' flat in Ancona for lunch. Having thoroughly enjoyed the main course, I wiped the plate clean with a morsel of bread. It seemed such a shame to leave even a trace of that exquisite sauce behind. But I could tell from Tessa's expression that I had gone too far. Her charming mother, who understood my discomfort, came to my rescue. She said: "Quite right. Waste not, want not..."

In the evening, in Rome, after "Lights Out" we would chat. We had become true friends. The nights in Rome, during the summer of 1946 were very warm. We would leave the window ajar so that the aromatic scents from the school's lovely garden, and the cool evening breeze, could enter our room whilst we talked in the moon's pale light.

One evening, when neither of us could sleep, for the air was still clammy with the scorching heat of the day, I knew that I had found my "Wedding Guest". Like Coleridge's "The Ancient

Mariner", I told Tessa about myself. It was the very first time that I had consciously attempted to put into words, to describe, as faithfully, as exactly as I could, the Ghetto and, above all, the Aktion in which I had lost my parents and little brother. I cannot say today, sixty years later, whether the telling brought me relief or absolution – catharsis did not exist, either in my vocabulary, or in my

understanding... I started my tale of woe with the words: "I am Jewish, you see..."

I knew that I had a singularly intelligent and sensitive listener; that Tessa understood, inasmuch as it was possible to understand for anyone who had not had first-hand experience of that terrible darkness, my grief, my pain, my sense of loss. And Tessa trapped, trans-

fixed like "The Wedding Guest" listened to my ghastly tale.

Our friendship was sealed and has lived on through all the joys and vicissitudes, hers and mine, that life brings. But I had no photograph to show her. I was the only boarder there whose night-table was not graced with a family snap or memento. Not a thread, not a fibre had remained. Nothing.

## Visiting the Past

Edyta Smith

**W**e talked about it for a long time. The children should visit Poland, dig into my roots which, after all, are theirs too, face the horror of camps, holocaust, but, most of all, of Warsaw where I was born, grew up, lived through the entire war, and the Warsaw ghetto.

My family arrived on April 14th, Good Friday. This year, Pesach and Easter came almost together so I had to plan very carefully what is open and how to see the most in the short time. The grandchildren, William, 17, Katie, almost 16, and Hannah, 13, learned the word "Blitz". That afternoon and evening we drove and walked all the ghetto streets, the monument, Korczak's pre-war orphanage on Krochmalna Street, Mita Street and Amelegicz bunker, up and down Swietojerska where I lived in the ghetto with my parents and uncle. We spent a long time in the darkness on Umshlagplatz trying to explain the horrifying process of catching people, leading them into

*Edyta survived with her mother on the Aryan side. After the war they emigrated to the United States. She and her husband, Tom, have lived in London for over 40 years and, as members, have been staunch supporters of our society.*

vans or simply walking thousands of Jewish Warsaw people to the trains for Treblinka. Next morning, Treblinka. It is not a long trip by car, a couple of hours. I tried to explain to my grandchildren that it took 2-3 days in closed cattle wagons, without water and food in that hot summer of 1942 to arrive at this death camp. We followed the train tracks, passing the woods of Poniatowo where my stepfather, Stanislaw, was shot in November 1943. The tracks stop at the ramp, the rest of the way the victims walked to their death. We walked to the monument in the shape of the gas chamber, erected after the war. Not another

soul around. The rain and hail seemed appropriate. The museum of jagged stones representing communities is sensitive and well done. To me, Treblinka II was even more horrifying. A short distance there is only a small sign marking the place where thousands perished in a stone quarry breaking heavy stones into gravel for German roads. The rest of the day we spent in Praga on the right bank of the Vistula River where my early childhood has its memories. My grandfather, Jakob Krystawin, owned a pharmacy on Stalowa Street. It all looks very sad now. The synagogue on Jagielonska Street which my grandparents attended, does not exist. The zoo which I visited so often to ride a baby elephant has a lot of white bears, but not the excitement of my childhood. In September 1939, the Polish army positioned the anti-aircraft guns inside the zoo. The zookeeper opened all the cages and let out all the animals and birds. I lived across the road from the zoo

## Remembering my father, Monty (Mottel) Tabacznik (1928-2005)

**M**y father came to England in 1945; one of a group of survivors known as The Boys. Throughout the rest of his life, he regarded The Boys as his extended family and was close to them. He served on the '45 Aid Society Committee, which he enjoyed.

His first love, however, was my mother, Golde. Monty and Golde were happily married for almost 56 years and my father could hardly believe his good fortune, to think that a destitute Holocaust orphan could establish a wonderful family with even a great grandchild living in Israel.

Although he had a wonderful family life and made a comfortable living in

London, he never forgot his experiences during the War and took his responsibility as a Witness, seriously. Monty made detailed videotapes about his Holocaust experiences for Oxford University and the Spielberg Foundation. Even in his final days, he emphatically reminded family and hospital staff that he was a Survivor.

Nine years ago, Monty and his sons, Jeffrey and I went on a difficult but important trip to my father's hometown, Demblin, in Poland. There we obtained an official death certificate for our grandmother, Leah, who died a month before the War. Monty found this experience cathartic.

The pain of his experiences made him a compassionate and wise friend. Many people

confided in him as he never judged or preached but listened attentively and gave sage advice.

One of my final memories of my father took place hours before his death. Aunt Esther and Uncle Jonas were en route from Canada to England to visit him. Although he wasn't aware that they were coming, he seemed to hold on. When she arrived and told him (Mottel, Esther, dein shvester, ich bin du," he raised his hand to acknowledge her. Having ensured that his "baby" sister was safe and secure, he passed away peacefully.

May his memory be for a blessing.

Harold Tabacznik

## Lippa Tepper

Alan Tepper

**M**y Dad was born in Dukla on November 30th in 1926 where he lived a happy normal religious and peaceful life until the late 1930s.

In 1939, at the age of 13, it all started to go horribly wrong and he spent the next six years, more or less, in a variety of concentration camps in Poland, Germany & Czechoslovakia.

He survived. There are many stories. Dad was one of the many 'Boys' interviewed by Martin Gilbert for his book, *The Boys*.

Eventually, Dad was liberated by the Russians in

'45 and taken to the UK where he spent time in Windermere adapting to and preparing for British life.

His love for his adopted country was obvious and eternal. He had the wonderful pleasure of meeting the Queen twice in as many years very recently.

Sadly, his parents and sister were not heard of again and he always believed, with reliable information, that they had perished at the hands of the Nazis.

He remained the sole survivor of his close family,



*Lippa Tepper 1926-2006.*

the boys started coming in, smiling, talking in Yiddish and Polish – it took them time to learn English, of course, but they did this with great eagerness. I went out to the kitchen to prepare tea and drinks – when I returned to the dining-room I was in a state of shock – the tables were empty! This kind of thing happened once or twice, until the boys realised that everything was there for

them, for free – no need to hide anything under their pillows.

Achy once suggested to them to pool their pocket money – they laughed at him, and he understood. The boys were adopted by the nearby Forest Gate community Synagogue; they went, most of them, to O.R.T. schools and settled down very quickly – happily in their new home. Dubi made them feel like

family, after so many years of solitude and suffering.

Lots of youths came to visit – there were discussions, sing-songs, outings – lots of activities. Moggy, Dubi and I only stayed a year, we'd been waiting to go on Aliya since 1939 to Kfar Blum.

This was an experience we – and they – will never forget. It was lovely meeting Ben after 55 years!



*The Loughton Hostel Boys & their Madrichim 1946.*

## A letter to Martin Bennett from the Combe Hill Golf Club

Dear Martin,

At the end of January the world commemorated the 60th Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in 1945.

As a predominantly Jewish golf club, the GPC, on behalf of its members, has been considering an appropriate gesture to you on behalf of all those who experienced unimaginable suffering in

the concentration camps.

Accordingly, the GPC has decided to offer you an honorary membership of Coombe Hill Golf Club.

We hope you will accept this membership and we look forward to sharing the joys of Coombe Hill with you for many years.

Sincerely,  
A D GOVER  
Chairman

A reception was given on this occasion by Combe Hill Golf Club in which Rabbi David Mason of Kingston & Surbiton Synagogue conducted a service in memory of the six million who perished... and six candles were lit by Martin, his wife and family.

Congratulations Martin.



*Edyta and her grandchildren at the Korczak monument in the Warsaw Cemetery.*

park and tried to describe the strange vision to my grandchildren. Next day, Easter Sunday. On the streets of Warsaw, people and children with baskets beautifully decorated full of eggs, rush to churches to have their eggs blessed for Easter breakfast. We all rushed to the Jewish cemetery which opens this morning after Pesach. We make a short stop at the Catholic cemetery to buy flowers, wreaths and candles. It is a sunny morning and everything looks nice. A lot of work has been done, but still very much needs doing. It is an eighteenth century beautiful cemetery. Some of the grave-stones are truly works of art. Many famous Jewish people are buried here. The children are to visit their great, great, grandmother's grave, Rachela Katzenelenbogen Krystawin, who died in 1937. We light the candles and my friend and driver, Boleslaw,

says Kaddish. I know my babia is watching. She watched over me all through the war and I believe even now. I told my grandchildren the story of Dr Janusz Korczak, the way he watched over his charges and the orphanage to the last moment. We looked at the beautiful and moving monument. Next to Dr Korczak's is a monument dedicated to the Jewish child smugglers, erected by my dear friend, Jack Eisner. Easter Sunday my family enjoyed the real Warsaw Polish hospitality. My Polish friends tried to make them happy and comfortable, showing them as much as possible of the beautiful castle, old town, lovely squares and parks. Early Monday morning, we went to Krakow. We used this day for travelling, sightseeing in the old Jewish Kazimierz, visiting synagogues, cemeteries and Krakow itself, the

beautiful Wawel castle, the famous church at Mariacki where the children climbed to the top of the tower while my husband and I managed a cup of tea on this beautiful old square. Every hour, on the hour, there is a musical signal from the clock in the church tower. It is a lovely sound which I remember listening to on the radio before the war. Time to check into a hotel and think of food. Just then, my thoughtful friend, Lili, telephoned and recommended a restaurant with good food and music. Just what we needed.

Next morning, Oswiecim, Auschwitz! I visited with my husband in 1970 but forgot the huge size of this 4 sq km camp. We spent the whole day. The children and my son walked from barrack to barrack, reading everything – trying to comprehend the *i n c o m p r e h e n s i b l e*. Auschwitz and Auschwitz Birkenau, the small and big crematoria, the ovens, so small, make my heart break, everything sanitised for tourist, but millions have perished there. The whole site made us all feel very humble. We returned to Warsaw in silence. It was not an easy trip, but I am glad we did it.

# Meeting Kopel in Skarzysko

Alec Ward

One of my slave labour camps during the Holocaust was called Werk C in Skarzysko Kamienna in Poland. Men and women prisoners lived in separate huts and slept on bare boards in four tier bunks without any blankets. Our meagre rations consisted of a slice of black bread and some black coffee in the morning and some watery cabbage soup in the evening. Nowhere near enough to stop our hunger pain.

I worked twelve hourly shifts and the work was extremely exhausting. We were producing marine mines from dangerous chemicals, which was devastating to our health. Fellow prisoners only lived three months at that work. I was often beaten by brutal SS guards when I did not manage to complete the norm of mines per shift, as I was so desperately weak. The camp was constantly being replenished with Jewish prisoners, men and women, from Ghettos and concentration camps.

As there were no washing or delousing facilities in my camp, we were marched under heavy guard every few months to a nearby camp to use these facilities. Kopel Kendal was one of the prisoners in that camp and when he saw us for the first time he was convinced that we came from another world. We were bright yellow skele-

*Alec came to England with the Southampton group and lived in the Finchley Road hostel. He has been a staunch supporter of our society since its inception.*

tons, shuffling along instead of walking. Most of us had distended stomachs, felt extremely despondent and were in a most desperate situation. Kopel never saw the same yellow prisoners twice except one young boy who kept returning. This boy he calls the Miracle Boy and that boy was me.

The most outstanding incidents in Werk C which are still very vivid in my memory are as follows:- The hangings of prisoners, the selections, the dead bodies lying at the barbed wire fences early in the morning of Jewish prisoners who tried desperately to escape during the night and were shot. The painful hunger and malnutrition. The beatings. The man who cried every time he saw me as I reminded him of his young son, who perished at the hands of the Nazis. The time when I was so very weak and could not walk up the two steps leading into our hut, and of a miracle that happened which saved my life. I was queuing up for my ration of soup when a girl asked me who I was. When I

told her, she informed me that she was my late Uncle Yidl's lover and that they were planning to marry when my uncle was shot by the invading German troops in Laskarzew where they lived. That angel of a girl did some knitting for the Polish Christian women who came into the factories to work as paid workers and gave Henia some food occasionally, some of which she passed on to me. It was not long after meeting Henia that I began to negotiate the two steps into the hut normally. As far as I know, she did not survive the war, but should I ever meet her again I would be prepared to give my all to her for saving my life.

It is quite a coincidence that after the war, Kopel became a bespoke gents tailor, making clothes for the English gentry. I became a ladies tailor and dressmaker, producing and altering garments. For about twenty years I was a quality controller in the ladies fashion industry which involved me travelling regularly to Czechoslovakia and Hungary to control the quality of our merchandise.

It is also remarkable that Kopel and I married very loving and supportive English Jewish girls. The four of us are extremely proud to be members of the '45 Aid Society and the Holocaust Survivors Centre in Hendon, London.

women, civilians and service personnel relating to their experiences of Twentieth-Century conflict.

The book is published by Ebury Press, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA  
[www.randomhouse.co.uk](http://www.randomhouse.co.uk).

It is published in association with the Imperial War Museum.

The book has also been serialised by the Talking Bookshop Limited with Andrew Sachs (best known for his role as Manuel in *Fawlty Towers*) providing the narration.

The CD set can be obtained from the Talking Bookshop Limited, 11 Wigmore Street, London W1U 1PE  
Tel: 020 7491 4117  
Fax: 020 7629 1966  
Email: [support@talkingbooks.co.uk](mailto:support@talkingbooks.co.uk)  
[www.talkingbooks.co.uk](http://www.talkingbooks.co.uk)

## SECTION VII CORRESPONDENCE

April 1, 2006

Dear Ben.

The Journal of 2006 is a masterpiece. It is a continuation of all the Journals that preceded it and a fresh update and stocktaking of sixty years. The journals have been an opportunity for those who were there to bear witness and pass on the legacy of our witnessing. And an opportunity for those not there to deal with the legacy – writers, friends, theologians, historians, and, most significantly, second generation descendants.

We are grateful to have had the opportunity over the years to share our thoughts and to benefit from the contributions of others.

The Journal provides a commonality in experience, history, relevant content – and the range is wide. You deal with personal holocaust experiences, scholarly articles, current concerns, poetry, Israeli connections – always Israeli connections, and information of members' current events. And impressively there is room for agreement and disagreement. Like the '45 Society, "The Journal" too serves family needs – connections and replacements. Like a family album, it records our experiences, ongoing events, joys and tribulations, and provides us with an extended family beyond survivors, people who enrich and challenge our lives.

Memories of those days,

commitment to these days, celebrations, family, connections, and the message to the world so that

this time let us be on  
time  
not echoes of past  
silences  
nobly moaning ignorance

this time with bread in  
hand  
with difference  
on time

I want to thank all who are involved in the production of the Journal and especially to you Ben, whose imprint is evidenced throughout. And thank you for including my writings.

Shalom  
Judith Sherman

## It shall never happen again!

May 1945, the end of the war. Moggy, Dubi (2 years old) and I were still on our training farm in Gorsy Leaze, Marlborough, Wiltshire, when we were asked by the Jewish Agency if we were prepared to run a home for about 25 boys – of more than 700 whom England agreed to

Sonia Margalit

*Sonia Margalit was Matron of the Loughton Hostel.*

allow to immigrate (from concentration camps in Germany). We agreed and moved to Loughton Hostel which (I believe) was leased to us by Lady Henriques.

We contacted friends to join us – so Henda, Miriam and others were pleased to join us in this important and unforgettable project. We arrived at this beautiful estate and immediately started preparations for a celebrated arrival – we set the tables with crockery, sandwiches, cakes, chocolates and biscuits, and

Jewish survivor from the United Kingdom's graphic account is one of the many powerful and poignant memories captured by Lyn Smith in her superb book "Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust." For the last twenty five years Lyn Smith has been recording the experience of Holocaust survivors for the Imperial War Museum sound archive. Now, with *Forgotten voices of the Holocaust*, she has used these and other interviews to piece together this powerful oral history of how the Nazi regime murdered over 6,000,000 European Jews as well as Communists, Poles, Jehovah's Witnesses, Homosexuals, people with disabilities, Soviet POWs and much of the Sinti Roma (Gypsy) population.

As described on the cover-sheet, through the voices of over 100 contributors the story is told of how pre-war life changed to one of persecution; of the rise in emigration, and of the creation of the ghettos. We learn first-hand how people started to realise that relatives and friends being sent "East" were being sent to some kind of "Camp". And, of course, we also hear the unbelievable atrocities that were taking place.

We witness first-hand from those who managed to avoid the horror of concentration and death camps like Belsen and Auschwitz their own evocative tales of being in hiding and the active resistance to the Nazi regime. Whilst the horrific death marches and eventual liberation of the Camps marked the end of the Nazi's attempted *Final Solution*, Lyn Smith's book shows how

the Holocaust doesn't conclude there. In the wake of the genocide, millions struggled to rebuild their lives, only to find the process of returning to "normality" made all the more difficult by devastating family losses and complex feelings of guilt. For many of the contributors their interviews stand as the only time they have ever told their story to another living soul.

For example, my own father, Stanley Faull, recollects: "and I started to tell [my elder brother who was an RAF pilot] chronologically what had happened from when I said goodbye to him in Poland in 1937: And this went on for two hours. His Commanding Officer was present, and he walked off. Three quarters of the way through when I was telling him what I had seen: my mother, the horrors, the disease, the barbaric treatment of human beings by the guards and the extent that I thought this normality – I could see there was this man in uniform, a pilot, my elder brother, who cried hysterically.

And I vowed there and then that I would not discuss this with *anybody*. My own *brother* was so emotionally upset that I said to myself: I will never repeat this or discuss it again. And I have found that we can only discuss these things amongst ourselves because they are not *believable* by normal people – the inhumane, brutal actions of the guards – who, in the main were not German – was so barbaric and so sadistic that it's unbelievable. Even now I think it must have been a dream because how a nation

like Germany – an educated nation much more than the Poles, a civilised nation – how they could get into that situation to destroy the Jews, a race of people, as well as gypsies, cripples – *their own people, their own political prisoners* – to exterminate them as a matter of law, that to me even to this day is incomprehensible".

Unfortunately and regretfully in today's troubled times we are seeing new atrocities around the world, a rise in anti-Semitism and, most worryingly, a denial that the Holocaust ever occurred – particularly from men such as the current President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The "Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust" is an historical piece of work compiled painstakingly by Lyn Smith which stands as direct testimony to the events of the Holocaust so that they will not be forgotten and through us, the Second Generation, they will continue to be retold and remembered.

#### Notes:

Lyn Smith is a Professor of Politics, International Relations and Human Rights at Webster University (USA) in London. Over the past twenty five years she has worked regularly as a freelance interviewer for the Imperial War Museum Sound Archive.

*Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust* is the latest in a series of award winning oral histories drawn from the Imperial War Museum Sound Archive. The Archive was set up in 1972 and today holds over 33,000 hours of recorded interviews with men and

# Story of my Childhood

By Stanley Faull

**M**y name is Stanley Faull. I was born Salek Falinower on 29th October 1929 in Warsaw. I lived in Twarda Street, Warsaw with my parents - Naftali & Rachel (nee Frydman) Falinower. I had an older brother and sister. My elder brother Gerald (Chiel Zalman Falinower) was five years older than me and my sister, Henia Falinower, seven years older than me.

The first ten years of my life were spent with my family. We were a very close, happy family, with lots of aunts, uncles and cousins living nearby. Many of the family lived in the same street in which my maternal grandparents had a delicatessen shop, which ceased doing business in about 1935. My mother had two brothers who emigrated to England in 1911 & 1920 respectively, and three sisters, who remained close to us in Warsaw, where they married and lived with their families.

My father had three brothers and two sisters. The brothers had very different professions: one was a Talmud scholar, one a manufacturer of brass stair rods and the other was a watchmaker. His brothers and sisters were all married with families and lived in the same vicinity as us. My father ran an inherited family metal foundry and engineering business, which his family had owned and operated for some seven generations in Warsaw. He was also the warden of the Synagogue Nozyka, which was only a few yards away



*Stanley aged 7 with his parents.*

from our home, and which still exists. I remember going to my brother's barmitzvah there in 1937. We lived in a large apartment, with a resident maid. We three children all went to private schools and enjoyed holidays at villas owned by the family at Miedzeszyn and Otwock.

When my uncle travelled from England to visit his ailing mother in Warsaw in 1933, he saw the condition of the family business and suggested that it would be beneficial for my brother to go to England, receive a British education and obtain engineering and metallurgical qualifications. Consequently, in 1937, after his barmitzvah, I remember going to the central railway

station in Warsaw to wave him goodbye when he left for England. It was my father's wish that I too should go to England to be educated as soon as I was old enough – i.e. after my anticipated barmitzvah in 1942. However, the war intervened and I neither had a barmitzvah nor went to England for my education. The plan that Gerald and I would one day be able to improve and modernise the family business by using up-to-date British technology, and run it together, would unfortunately never materialise.

Life was relatively normal for me until just before my tenth birthday in September 1939 when the Nazi Germany war machine invaded Poland. Warsaw was heavily bombed, our home and my father's factory were completely destroyed and we had to move in with relatives in a nearby street. Life for me was never to be normal again.

We lived in extremely cramped conditions in the confines of the Warsaw ghetto until the time of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1943. The conditions were unbearable - overcrowding, severe shortage of basic foods, illness, no medical care and people dying of starvation. The Germans offered free transport to work camps in the east and a free loaf of bread for each family when they reported to the railway station. This was a big incentive. Over 100 members of my family succumbed to the temptation and were transported to the death camps created by the Germans,



*Stanley's Brother & Sister.*

never to be seen again. My father was, however, a great optimist and was of the opinion that the war would soon be over. Therefore, we remained in hiding, our lives in constant danger.

In 1942 my sister, then aged just 19, joined a resistance fighting group, against our parents' wishes. We never saw her or heard from her again. In 1943, during the weeks before the ghetto uprising, I remember there being great confusion and turmoil - buildings were ablaze and being demolished by the Germans in order to flush out the last Jews remaining in hiding and resisting capture. There was smoke, machine-gun fire, screams all around us, with dead and dying men, women and children all around us.

At this point my family became separated. The bunker in which we were hiding was ablaze and there was chaos everywhere. Together with a group of young resistance fighters, my mother and I were taken by

the Germans as "prisoners-of-war", rather than simply as Jews. We were sent to Majdanek, where we were separated, my mother being in the women's camp and I was with the men. We were unable to meet. I never saw her again. Up to this time I had always been protected by my parents. I was just 13.

In Majdanek there were mainly Russian prisoners-of-war, Hungarian and German political prisoners, together with Jews from a multitude of countries. I was initially put to work carrying stones from one part of the camp to another. Then I was put to work in the kitchen, which saved me from starvation. At this time, there was a cousin of mine Marysia Balbin, 11 years older than me, in the women's camp. On several occasions, I was able to steal some bread and smuggle it to her in the women's camp. Before the war she had worked as a secretary/book-keeper in my uncle's office at Ulice Prozna.

However, food became increasingly scarce and the Russian armies were now advancing towards us from the east. There were frequent 'selections'. At these random 'selections' the weak, the sick and anyone else whose face did not fit, were sent to the gas chambers by the Germans.

In the winter of 1943, as a registered metal-worker, I was selected to go with a group of workers sent as slave-laborers to Skarzysko Kamienna. This was an ammunition factory run by German foremen. Work was on a 24 hour shift basis; it was a very harsh and cruel regime. Due to a shortage of oil, hot soapy water was

used to lubricate the presses making various metal parts. I worked as a 'soap boy', boiling the soap and distributing the liquid to the presses. I worked directly under the orders of the chief engineer, a middle-aged German. He ate his meals in his office and I had to clean up the office afterwards. He used to leave me food (bread, cheese and German sausage) and warm clothes (woollen pullovers and woollen socks), all of which were luxuries. It was largely due to his kindness that I survived when deaths were occurring all around me due to overwork, cold, starvation and disease, especially typhus.

My cousin Marysia was also sent from Majdanek to Skarzysko Kamienna and survived the war. After a period in a displaced persons camp in Italy, she settled in Israel, married and had two daughters and seven grandchildren. Apart from my brother in England, she and I were the only ones out of a large family to survive.

In late 1944, when the Russian armies were rapidly advancing, the remaining Jewish slave-laborers were sent west by lorry to Buchenwald. On arrival, I contracted pneumonia. I was saved by a fellow prisoner, a French Jewish professor, who nursed me back to health without any medication, as none was available to us. It was midwinter - subzero temperatures. I worked as a member of a work party clearing roads in Weimar City, which were blocked and damaged as a result of night-time allied air-raids.

On one occasion a German civilian - a retired first world war general - came and took

Both Hinde and I lived on the Russian side.

The memoir ends abruptly. Hinde died in the Holocaust. The Red Cross reported that Hinde was alive in 1942 and it is known that she lived in

Przemysl with the Gutts in their residential buildings at the end of Mickiewicz Street. I met Hinde at that stage as one of my great-aunts. She died almost certainly in Belzec with many members

of the Gutt family from Mickiewicz Street.

The address of the distributors of the book, Harvard University Press is given as Cambridge Mass. and London England.

## Ragdolls

By Henry Golde

## Sevek & The Holocaust

By Sidney Finkel

In the last issue of our Journal, Sir Martin Gilbert referred to the fact that many of our members have been speaking about their experiences to schools and institutions for many years and recently have embarked upon writing their memoirs, which he very much encouraged.

I want to bring to your attention two books; one by Henry Golde, RAGDOLLS, and the other by Sevek Finkel (Finkelstein), SEVEK & THE HOLOCAUST – the boy who refused to die. Both of them came to England with the Windermere group and subsequently emigrated to the USA where they settled. Henry has been speaking to schools for over fifteen years and his book

was published in 2002. This is what P. Jake Jacobs PhD., Instructor of History at the Winnecome High School and Lakeland College in Wisconsin wrote: “For fifteen years Henry Golde, a survivor of the Holocaust, has shared with my High School and college students his living hell in Hitler’s haven; experiencing the horror of the murder factories and a number of slave labour camps throughout Nazi Europe. Henry’s story is compelling as it will make you laugh and most certainly cry and, most importantly, it will give you hope that deep within men is the desire to overcome evil with good”.

Sevek’s book was published in 2006 but he, too, has been speaking about his

experiences for many years. He received many commendations like the one from Vicky Knickerbocker, Outreach Co-ordinator, Centre for Holocaust & Genocide Studies, University of Minnesota. “I have just finished reading your book and want you to know that I found it very inspiring and informative. It is definitely a book I will recommend to the middle, high and post-secondary teachers.”

Both of them, like so many survivors in their retirement, have brought up their family and found a new purpose in life, dedicating their time to teaching the lessons of the Holocaust to the present generation.

## Forgotten voices of the Holocaust

By Lyn Smith

A review by  
Steven Faull

“My Holocaust experience keeps me a child because I had no childhood – you know, growing up time, being a *child*. My life stopped when I arrived there. And suddenly I’m grown up, without those years in between in which to grow up.

And I have this terrible feeling when I see people who are the same age as my mother: why couldn’t *she* still

be walking and talking and be amongst us - just like these other people of that age? It’s very hard. It’s not kind to feel as I feel: that this person who is as old as my mother would be now is a *privileged* person.”

Clare Parker, a Hungarian

*treatment of Muslim women, of Islamic governments' attempts to silence any questioning of their traditions, and of Western governments' blind tolerance of practices in their countries, such as genital mutilation and forced marriages of female minors".*

A mere review cannot do justice, not only to her clear, concise reasoning, but also to the wide learning and knowledge she displays. Coming from her background, her achievement is all the more remarkable. One day she will be seen, if not as

Joan of Arc, then certainly as the Aung San Suu Kyi of Islamic evolution.

Her story is clearly and boldly told. Read it, and ponder on this lonely voice, on this woman's bravery. Ponder too on those peace-loving Moslems who allow the persecution of this one woman and other free spirits and do nothing. Does fear conquer all?

The future of this planet may well depend on the success of those Moslems who seek only peace and who strive publicly to overcome the men of violence in their midst. That applies not only in Islam, but in every

religion, and in every society in the world.

We could be on the brink of a man-made nuclear tsunami, that will bring destruction to every shore. Are there enough brave souls like Ayaan who can divert that tide of violence onto the quiet sea of peace, progress, and content?

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'The Caged Virgin' by Ayaan Hirsi Ali is published by The Free Press, Simon & Schuster UK Ltd., Africa House, 64-78 Kingsway, London WC2B 6AH price £12.99

## On long winter nights

Hinde Bergner

**A** book under the above title has recently been published in English in 2005 ISBN 0-674-01970-9 after translation from Yiddish edited and with an introduction by Justin Daniel Cammy. It is distributed by Harvard University Press and was published by Harvard University Centre for Jewish Studies.

The book consists of memoirs of a Jewish family in a Galician township (1870-1900).

Hinde Bergner was a sister of my paternal grandmother Laytshe, married to Hersh Wolf Gutt. The book was published posthumously in Yiddish in Montreal in 1946 by my cousins the Yiddish writers Melekh Ravitsh and Herts Bergner, the first of whom I knew extremely well and who were Hinde's sons.

This book is an important

*A short review by Witold Gutt DSc., PhD., MSc., C.CHEM., FRSC., FCS*

document and carries a dedication by Isaac Bashevis Singer the Nobel laureate who writes, 'that he was smitten with a peculiar love for Hinde Bergner for her wonderful style, for the richness of her Yiddish, and her deeply human, womanly, and Jewish perspective on people the world and God.'

The translation into English is illustrated by beautiful drawings by Yosl Bergner, Hinde's grandson and a famous Israeli painter living in Tel Aviv.

Hinde's memoir of family life in the last years of the 19th century are the recollections of an older woman who turned to writing to soothe her loneliness. Composed in the late 1930s when her sons

were already successful Yiddish writers abroad, the memoir was intended to provide her children with a sense of their immediate ancestors and serve as a bridge between generations. Perhaps, because of the intimate nature of her imagined audience, it is written in a lively irreverent tone.

The book refers extensively to my Father and my Grandmother. Hinde's anecdotes about her many teachers and matchmakers are very beguiling.

Hinde Bergner was born on 11th October 1870 in Radymno a shtetl in Galicia near Przemysl my home town and an important fortress in the first World War. In the second World War the river San passing through the town marked the boundary between German and Russian occupied Poland.

me and three other Jews to his home. The SS officer in charge of our guards saluted him. He deliberately chose four Jews from the work party - clearly identified by the Star of David on our clothes - despite the efforts of the SS officer to get him to select non-Jewish Poles. At his home he and his wife fed us hot baked potatoes - he said it was all they had. On the walls we saw photographs of his three sons all in military uniform and about the same ages as us. The frames were draped in black as they had all been killed on the Russian front. He and his wife told us about them in tears.

In March 1945 the Germans sent about 1,300 of us by train to Theresienstadt. We were put into open cattle-trucks in freezing conditions, without food or water, not knowing where we were being sent. This journey was undoubtedly my most horrific experience. Only a small minority of us survived this horrendous journey, which lasted about two weeks. In my truck, more than half the prisoners were dead on arrival. At this point a miracle occurred. Suddenly all our SS guards disappeared. We were left to fend for ourselves and lived on grass for four or five days until liberated by the Russian Red Army in May 1945. At the end of the war, I was 15 and both my family and my childhood had been taken away from me.

The Russian civil administration then took charge over the next few weeks, and we gradually got used to eating normal food again. However, due to the sudden change in diet, many of my friends died



*Stanley (on the left) with his brother & sister.*

from over-eating rich food too quickly. Most of my group wanted to go to Palestine but that was not possible at that time and so some returned to their homes in Poland. Having family in England, I wanted to go there.

The Russians would not let anyone over 16 out of the country because they wanted them for military service. In August 1945 - when I was two months short of my 16th birthday - I was flown to England with about 350 other boys and girls in a British bomber aircraft, as part of the first group of children admitted by the British Government. Our travel had been arranged by the Central British Fund (now World Jewish Relief). On arrival, we were taken by coach to Windermere.

There I was reunited with my brother, whom I had last seen when he left Warsaw in 1937, some eight years previously. From the outbreak of war he had served in the Free Polish air force. He was a sergeant-pilot flying Lancaster bombers. I was then taken from Windermere by my family in England, and sent to a boarding-school to catch up on five years of lost educa-

tion. Later I joined the family metal business in England.

In 1954, I married Dian Cab, the daughter of a Hatton Garden diamond merchant, at Brighton Middle Street Synagogue and we subsequently settled in Hove, East Sussex. We have three sons, Steven, Maurice and Ashley; two went up to Cambridge University, graduating with honours in Economics and Law respectively, and the other one graduated with a Law degree from London University and subsequently obtained an MBA from Kingston. Their professions are as diverse as my father's three brothers: one being a Chartered Surveyor, one a Chartered Accountant and the other a businessman running a television company. My wife and I now also have three grandsons (Matthew, Harrison and Mackenzie) and a granddaughter, Emily.

I feel very fortunate that, from the time I lost the protection provided by my parents, I have survived, by dint of sheer good luck, some very terrible years.

**Stanley Faull**  
**March 2003**  
**(updated October 2005)**

# It was, as it continues to live within us forever

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

Here, the dangerous combination of modern technology and racial and tyrannical regimes found their expression which has no revulsion towards any means to wipe out the Jewish people from the face of the earth and to execute the Final Solution according to Nazi style. Murder has become a profession.

Even today, almost 60 years after the furnaces have ceased to operate, new and poisonous anti-Semitism spreads against the Jewish people in Europe – anti-Semitism which compares the State of Israel and its army to the Nazi thugs.

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

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

Ruta Krieger (Horowicz)

*Ruta was born in Piotrkow Tryb. She was in hiding and in various concentration camps. After the war she and her mother settled in Israel until very recently. She resisted talking or writing about her experiences during the war.*

story about the murder of the children:

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

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

Near the railway station of Piotrkow, a children's selection had been carried out in utmost cruelty, they were torn away from their parents. Amongst heart-breaking screaming, people were compressed into their wagons and the crying and shouting children were loaded on to army trucks and were brought to the area of the station. It is impossible to describe the horror and despair of the parents during

their journey to the camp of Blizin, leaving their children behind to their bitter fate.

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

To the sweet sounds of the music, the soldiers opened fire and the children collapsed while still half alive into the common grave. Many hours afterwards, the earth above these young victims trembled, as if rebelling against the taking of lives which had been terminated with such immense cruelty before their time.

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

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

HENIEK STASZEWSKI  
ANTUSIA DUNOWICZ  
MOISHE PINKUSZEWICZ  
FELUSH PINKUSZEWICZ.

How strange and mysterious are the ways of fate even in such cruel events: In the

## AYAAN and her Book 'The Caged Virgin'

Aubrey Rose C.B.E. Dr  
U. Univ.

Women have had a raw deal throughout history. There was a church doctrine which equated her with sin; another tradition that doubted whether she had a soul. A required practice of another culture was for a widow to immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Another pattern was to cover her up, as a male possession, excluded from the eyes of other men. Elsewhere, her feet were tied so tightly that movement was difficult.

And yet, despite all this, brave women emerged to confound the accepted, so often uncivilised, norms of their time.

Joan of Arc put resolve into the French. Florence Nightingale and Mary Seole helped the afflicted soldiers in that ridiculous male-made Crimean War. In America Helen Keller overcame appalling disabilities to help the afflicted. Elizabeth Fry and Emily Pankhurst in Britain sought reform where reform was vital. Cicely Saunders, compassionate and practical, established the hospices to aid those desperate souls about to depart this world. In Burma, brave democratic Aung San Suu Kyi has shamed the brutal illegal government. And now along comes Ayaan, who seeks change in the Moslem world. One can only marvel at the courage of these women.

Despite all the glowing

*Apart from his career as a lawyer, Aubrey has played an active role in several fields. He was an original member of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and involved with a number of Commonwealth organisations. He was for five years a Commissioner of the Commission for Racial Equality. He played an active part in British Jewry, including six years as Senior Vice-President of the Board of Deputies. He lectures widely and has written a number of books, including Judaism & Ecology and his biography.*

words of international statements, Declarations, Conventions, on human rights, women in many parts of the world still suffer discrimination, indignities, persecution. It may well be that only when women worldwide have complete equality before the law, a law that is enforced, that peace might descend on our tortured globe. For it is women who bear the children and care for them, the path of creation rather than destruction.

And so we come to Ayaan Hirsi Ali, another brave soul. Her book, 'The Caged Virgin', illustrates in telling detail the current crisis in Islam. From no other faith has violence on a world-scale emerged. Why?

Ayaan's story may well

indicate the reasons. Other world religions, in their time, have fought to limit the role and status of women. The battle for true equal rights goes on. In Islam that struggle is in its early stages. Many women, through fear or peer pressure or indoctrination, accept a dependent and second-class status. A handful do not. Ayaan is among the few who seek independence, dignity and equality.

Her story is outlined briefly on the cover of the book thus:

*"Born in Somalia and raised Muslim, but outraged by her religion's hostility towards women, Ayaan Hirsi Ali escaped an arranged marriage and fled to the Netherlands. There, she learned Dutch, earned a degree, and started a career in politics as a Dutch parliamentarian.*

*In November 2004, the violent murder on an Amsterdam street of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh, with whom Hirsi Ali had written a film about women and Islam called 'Submission', changed her life.*

*Threatened by the same group that killed Van Gogh, Hirsi Ali now has round-the-clock protection, but has not allowed that to compromise her fierce criticisms of the*

only a handful remain. But their families number in the thousands, maybe tens of thousands. They deserve that truth above all. But so do all Jews and all Poles also. For only on its basis, is it possible to build anew the friendship between us..

It was the eighteenth century French, Andre Rene Le Sage, who remarked that 'facts are stubborn things' and it would seem that it is the debate among historians, both Polish and Jewish, which offers the best chance to move forward. It is part of a general process, which has only really begun since the end of the communist system, of coming to terms with many neglected and taboo aspects of the Polish past. Among these are the history of Poles beyond the borders of present-day Poland, above all in the former Soviet Union, and relations between Poles and Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Germans and Russians. For too long, these topics have been the subject of much mythologisation. The first stage of approaching such issues has to be from a moral point of view – a settlement of long-overdue accounts.

In the case of Polish-Jewish relations, we are now beginning to enter a second stage, where apologies and apologetics will increasingly be replaced by careful and detailed research and reliable and nuanced first-hand testimony. It should be possible to move beyond strongly-held, competing and incompatible narratives of the past and reach some consensus which will be acceptable to all people of good will and which will bring about a degree of

normalization both in Poles' attitude to the past and in Polish-Jewish relations. Some have questioned whether normalization is a desirable or realisable goal. The past is too near and painful for that. Perhaps the aim should be for both Poles and Jews (insofar as these are mutually exclusive categories) to strive for a 'tragic acceptance' of those events which have united and, so often, divided them in the past century. That, at least, is owed to the millions of victims of the totalitarian systems of the last century.

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- 1 Mordekhai Tenenbaum-Tamaroff, *Dapim min hadelekeh*, Bet lohamei hageheta'ot, hakibbutz hameuhad, 1947, 49-50.
  - 2 Emanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War*, edited and with footnotes by Joseph Kermish and Shmuel Krakowski, Evanston, Illinois, 1992, 7-8.
  - 3 Yisrael Gutman, Shmuel Krakowski, *Unequal Victims. Poles and Jews During World War Two*, New York, 1968.
  - 4 Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations*, xlv.
  - 5 Wladyslaw Sila-Nowicki, 'Janowi Blońskiemu w odpowiedzi', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 22 February 1987. For an English translation, see Antony Polonsky (ed.), *'My Brother's Keeper? Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust*, London 1990, 59-68.
  - 6 Jerzy Andrzejewski, 'Zagadnienia polskiego antysemityzmu', *Martwa fala*, Warsaw, 1947.
  - 7 Jan Blonski, 'Biedni Polacy patrzy na ghetto', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 11 January 1987. For an English translation, see Antony

- Polonsky (ed.), *'My Brother's Keeper?'* 34-52.
- 8 Jerzy Jedlicki, 'How to Grapple with the Perplexing Legacy', *Polityka*, 10 February 2001
- 9 Jan Bloński, 'The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto', in A. Polonsky (ed.) *'My Brother's Keeper? Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust'* (London, 1990), 47. For the Polish version of this article see *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 11 January 1987.
- 10 This is taken from the Polish version, 114-5. In the English version, the last sentence reads: "For indeed, the 1,600 Jedwabne Jews were killed neither by the NKVD, nor by the Nazis, nor by the Stalinist secret police. Instead, as we now know beyond reasonable doubt, it was their neighbours who killed them."
- 11 Interview with Pawe Paliwoda, *ycie*, 2 February 2001.
- 12 *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 25-6 November 2000.
- 13 "Poduszka pani Marx", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 11 February 2001.
- 14 *Neighbours* (English edition), 155.
- 15 Martin Dean, "Die Armija Krajowa und die Beteiligung von Polen bei der einheimischen Hilfspolizei in den von den Deutschen besetzten ostpolnischen Gebieten" (unpublished); Shimon Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews, Ukrainians 1919-1945* (Bloomington, 2002); Sarunas Liekis, "Soviet Resistance in East-Southern Lithuania and the Jews" (unpublished).
- 16 *Neighbors* (English edition), 164.
- 17 Padraic Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists 1945-1950* (Ithaca, 1997); Andrzej Paczkowski (ed.), "Raporty o Pogromie", *Pu/s* 50/3, 1991.

days when the journey to Blizin was organised, Rifka, the sister of Heniek Stashevesky, got high fever. Following the advice of her aunt, Eva Gilda, Rifka's mother decided not to join that transport to Blizin.

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

Rifka, at the time of her liberation, was only 7 years old. Today she is the Director

of Manuscript and Archives in the National Library in Jerusalem.

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

### MAY THEIR MEMORY BE BLESSED

My gratitude to Itzhak Reichenbaum for his help in writing the above. Itzhak

and his brother Adulek of Blessed Memory were put on one of the trucks near the railway station.

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

Itzhak stayed in the Blizin camp and later on in Auschwitz., Sachsenhausen and Mauthausen, where he was liberated on 4th May 1945 in the Gunskirchen in Austria by the infantry division 71 of the American army.

## Dr. Schenier Levenberg 1907 – 1997

By Judge Israel  
Finestein QC

**I**t was characteristic of this intensely private man that he is not known to have spoken much outside the family about his own early years. He may well have found it too painful to do so. He alone of the family in Eastern Europe survived the Holocaust.

His formal education began with lessons by his sister at home in his native Russian town of Kursk. He attended a Soviet school where he was the only Jewish boy. His parents spoke Yiddish and Russian, which were among the languages in which he was to become, from his mid-teens, a life-long practising journalist. Levenberg's parents were Orthodox Jews.

In his late years, in an address at an event in his honour, arranged by the Board of Deputies, Levenberg described his father as a 'very tolerant person — who did not interfere', which he

*Israel Finestein held numerous communal offices and was President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and of the Jewish Historical Society of England in whose publications many of his writings appeared. He has written much on Anglo-Jewish history, the contemporary Jewish scene and Israel Diaspora relations. He is an outstanding speaker and greatly admired and esteemed by our members.*

considered a 'remarkable trait for a person of that generation'.

While he was outraged at the oppression by the Czarist regime and its hostile attitude to the Jews, he had no taste for the authoritarianism of the Communist administration. He was

appalled by the anti-Jewish brutality of the 'White' counter-revolutionaries. The latter engaged in violent anti-Jewish outbreaks in his boyhood when, for a time, they had ousted the Communist forces in the area of Kursk.

He described himself to the Board of Deputies as 'a son of the Lenin Revolution'. He added: "I never knew what 'childhood' meant. I grew up in the anti-Jewish atmosphere of Czarist Russia, followed by the Lenin Revolution, the Civil War, the reactionary 'White Guards', accompanied by epidemics and starvation". He felt 'the anti-Semitic atmosphere' among sections of the Kursk population, and he 'admired' the revolutionaries who were against the Czarist government.

His eventual movement away from his father's religious life-style was

irreversible. The family fled the Communist regime when he was fourteen and settled in Latvia where they had relatives and where a democratic republic had been proclaimed in the wake of that country's declaration of independence from Lenin's Russia. He had already become interested in Labour Zionism, a political creed which, in Latvia, especially in the capital, Riga, was propounded by a coterie of distinguished publicists.

Levenberg became the leader of the Latvian student Zionist Socialist body. He always said that he was born a Zionist but not a Socialist. A Zionist society had been formed in Kursk in 1897. Now he was learning and showed aptitudes in socialist theory, as well as in the skills of presentation and organisation. He was appointed Chairman of a new united party which, in addition to the students, included a society of young intended chalutzim and the general association of Zionist Socialists.

Meanwhile, he studied law and economics at Riga University. While at university, he gave up further religious customs which had been cherished by his father. The university accorded him a doctorate in subjects of his study. He published, in Latvia, a book on the rights of minorities which he wrote in Latvian.

On the overthrow of the Latvian Liberal Government by a fascist coup in 1934, the activities in which he and his associates were engaged came under government supervision. The change spelled danger. He was among those who fled further

west. He spent two years in Warsaw, working as a journalist. Following a stay of some weeks in Jerusalem as a journalist on behalf of his newspaper, he left for England in 1936 where he remained for the rest of his life.

While in Warsaw, Levenberg met many Jewish figures who were to perish in the suppression of the Ghetto uprising in 1943 and thereafter, one of whom was Emanuel Ringelbaum, the Labour Zionist and historian and the archivist of the Ghetto. "For some", Levenberg wrote in 1977 in the *Jewish Observer & Middle East Review*, "the uprising may be a significant chapter of Jewish history. For me its anniversary is a reminder of people whom I knew, of a great Jewish community destroyed through man's inhumanity to man". Many of the victims had become personal friends and colleagues.

His career and scholarly reputation made him a natural recruit as head of the research department of the Jewish Agency in London. In 1949, he became head of the Zionist Information Office in London and was soon appointed (on Professor Selig Brodetsky's departure for Israel to become President of the Hebrew University) to the sensitive post of the agency's political representative in the United Kingdom.

In memorable Zangwillian style, Chaim Bermant pointedly observed that Levenberg 'tended to treat good news glumly as if it were the inevitable precursor of bad news', which, he added, 'was often the case':

*Jewish Chronicle*, 6 June 1997, Levenberg's daughters would say that in the family circle he showed a lively spirit which belied his external public appearance and demeanour. He was 'not an optimist by nature', but if his speeches 'rarely raised his audiences' spirits, he invariably enriched their minds': per Chaim Bermont, *supra*.

Levenberg was an avid reader of foreign newspapers. This sharpened his instinct for assessing political situations. It contributed, at least in part, to the acknowledged picture of him as a kind of walking encyclopedia on the contemporary and changing political scene, especially in the Jewish field.

He was a regular advocate of Jewish day school education when such was not popular in some influential communal quarters. For some years, he was editor of the *Zionist Review*, the organ of newer Jewish writers, and sought to extend the journal's 'cultural' coverage. He was not a wholly partisan editor.

In the course of preparations for the production of the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (which was published in Jerusalem in 1972) Levenberg was appointed the Departmental Editor of its extensive material on Jews in socialism and in the Labour movement generally. He was especially gratified by the invitation. He saw it as an acknowledgment of his life's work as historian and expositor of Zionist Socialism and his role in the development of Poale Zion.

He was described in the *Jewish Year Book* at the time as 'historian of Jewry'. This was accurate in the sense

how far it can be justified.

The same applies to Gross's observation:

.in the process of the Communist takeover in Poland after the war, the natural allies of the Communist Party, on the local level, were people who had been compromised during the German occupation.<sup>16</sup>

This is an attempt to counteract the widespread view in Poland that the post-1944 regime was dominated by Jews. The participation of former Nazi sympathisers and collaborators in the new communist government does seem to be borne out by some of the work of Padraic Kenney and Andrzej Paczkowski<sup>17</sup> But at present it is still no more than an interesting hypothesis.

More recently, the temperature of the debate seems to have cooled. One reason for the more sober nature of the discussion is the large mass of information which has been collected by investigative journalists and the more detailed investigations which have been undertaken by many historians. Another hopeful sign is the widespread trust in the Institute of National Memory, which issued its report in October of last year.

Another factor was the more nuanced understanding of the Polish situation in the Jewish world which the Jewabne revelations revealed. The reaction to the publication of Gross's book in English in 2002 did not fulfil the alarmist predictions of those who feared that it would lead to a widespread assumption in the Jewish world that the Poles were as guilty as the Germans for the mass murder of the Jews

during the Second World War. On the contrary, there was considerable understanding in the Jewish world for the way the Poles reacted to the expose of the tragic events in Jedwabne. The American Jewish Committee organized a delegation of Polish Americans and American Jews to attend the dedication of the monument in Jedwabne in July 2001. In the introduction to the pamphlet written by one member of this group, Professor Alvin Rosenfeld of Indiana University, David Harris, Executive Director of The American Jewish Committee, wrote:

The need to heal the wounds stretches from President Kwasniewski to the townspeople of Jedwabne and the surrounding villages and reaches around the world, where Polish and Jewish descendants seek paths to reconciliation. Today, while Jedwabne is *judenrein*, remarkably Jewish life in other parts of Poland is beginning to stir. If the ghosts of the past are properly exhumed and courageously confronted—and, fortunately, there are a number of Poles dedicated to this goal, with whom we collaborate closely—who knows if there will not be another glorious chapter in Jewish-Polish history ahead?

There was, it is true, an acrimonious correspondence in the *Times Literary Supplement* following Abraham Brumberg's review and which reflected some of the sentiments which the revelations of the Jedwabne massacre and the subsequent

debate provoked among surviving Polish Jews. Most Jewish responses were more moderate. In Israel the tone was set by the introductions written by Israel Gutman and David Engel to the Hebrew edition of *Neighbours*. Gutman stressed the importance of coming to terms with the past and that it was not possible to hold all Poles responsible for the massacre. Engel, for his part, compared the debate to that provoked by the 'new historians' in Israel.

In America, the responses were similar. Samuel Kassow, writing in *Forwards* asserted:

In fairness, Jedwabne was more the exception than the rule. Indifference rather than murder best characterized Polish attitudes, and Poland still furnished more 'righteous gentiles' than any other occupied country. But the murder of Jews certainly created new and unforeseen opportunities for neighbors who were otherwise decent people.

The Jewish response was perhaps best summed up by Rabbi Baker, who left Jedwabne shortly before the war and who spoke movingly at the commemoration service of the long history of the Jews in the area. In his interview with Krzysztof Darewicz of *Rzeczpospolita* on 10 March 2001, he remarked:

The most important is that the silence has been interrupted. That you have begun to tell the truth about Jedwabne, for it was not possible to wait any longer. Of those Jews born in Jedwabne

children comes close to attempting to excuse murder.

The arguments over the larger significance of the massacre are concerned with three issues. Firstly there is the question of collective guilt. No sentence in *Neighbours* has aroused more controversy than the statement with which the book concludes: "...the 1,600 Jedwabne Jews were killed neither by the Nazis, nor by NKVD, nor by the UB... but by society."<sup>10</sup> This was widely taken as a statement of collective guilt. Thus Bogdan Musial has observed:

If Gross had written that X or Y was responsible for these crimes that would be acceptable. However, he makes the society of Jedwabne, Polish society, responsible for this crime."

However, this is an interpretation which cannot be sustained by a careful reading of the whole of the final paragraph of the Polish edition. Gross explained his intentions in an article in *Gazeta Wuborcza* on 25-26 November 2000. He points out that he led up to this paragraph by observing that Poland was no exception in Europe: "And like several other nations, in order to reclaim its own past, Poland will have to tell its past to itself anew." He continues, "After this assertion that the truth about our history in the period of the Second World War still remains to be written, comes the paragraph that reads thus":

An appropriate memento is, of course, to be found in Jedwabne, where there are two monuments with inscriptions carved into the stone that will have to be chipped away in order to liberate the

historical truth in them. One says simply that the Germans killed the Jews: "THE PLACE OF THE SUFFERING OF THE JEWISH POPULATION. THE GESTAPO AND THE NAZI GENDARMERIE BURNED 1600 PEOPLE ALIVE JULY 10, 1941." The other one, erected in a Poland that was already free, either implies that there were no Jews at all in Jedwabne-or else it bears witness, in spite of itself, to the crime that was committed: "TO THE MEMORY OF APPROXIMATELY 180 PERSONS INCLUDING TWO PRIESTS MURDERED IN THE TERRITORY OF JEDWABNE DISTRICT" IN THE YEARS 1939-1956 BY THE NKVD, THE NAZIS, AND THE UB SOCIETY" For, in fact, the 1,600 Jedwabne Jews who are omitted here (even though they were "murdered in the community of Jedwabne in the years 1939-1956") were not murdered by any Nazis or NKVD or UB, but rather by society.

The issue is thus the falsification of memory perpetrated by those who erected the two monuments, or in Gross's words, "my point is that it is necessary to write the truth, because the truth will always out." He added, perhaps aware that his subtle observations risked being misunderstood:

On reflection, I nevertheless feel that the final word in the book "society" should have been put in quotation marks, to make it immediately plain that it unconsciously reveals the truth hidden in the lies inscribed on the Jedwabne monuments.<sup>12</sup>

This still leaves the diffi-

cult question of the overall attitude of Polish society towards the Jewish genocide. On this issue, while rejecting the concept of collective guilt, Gross takes a rather strong line, highlighting the widespread anti-Semitism and the "general debasement of morality during the occupation."<sup>13</sup> Others have stressed rather the Poles' widespread fear and indifference, and also examples of Polish aid to the Jews. We still lack a broad and nuanced picture of this important subject.

Gross also makes a number of challenging assertions. Thus, he claims:

... it is manifest that the local non-Jewish population enthusiastically greeted entering Wehrmacht units in 1941 and broadly engaged in collaboration with the Germans, up to and including participation in the exterminatory war against the Jews.<sup>14</sup>

This is an important assertion and seems, at least partially, to be borne out by the researches of Martin Dean on Polish participation in German-organized police forces east of the Curzon line. He has shown that about half of those persons punished in Poland after the war for war crimes in the former Eastern Polish territories served as local policemen in the *Schutzmannschaft* (several hundred individuals, especially from the territory of modern Belarus). They are also partly confirmed by Shimon Redlich's work on Berezhany and by Sarunas Liekis's investigation of the three-way civil war in southern Lithuania between Poles, Lithuanians and Soviets.<sup>15</sup> But only further research will demonstrate

that he had gained expertise in a striking variety of Jewish historical fields, including a number of specialised Anglo-Jewish themes, ranging from pre-Balfour Zionism in Britain to Jewish life in London's East End. He was a voluminous reader of Anglo-Jewish history, as well as the wide history of the Jews in his native Russia.

His massive book, *The Enigma of Soviet Jewry*, remains more than an historical narrative. In part, it was a self-justification, in part a self-portrayal. In quarters where he moved in Britain, he was conscious of his being a unique figure. He seemed to personify a great deal of the history of which he wrote. Outside the family, it was often a lonely road. This revealing compilation includes transcripts of public debates in which he participated, addresses by him and long extracts from authors cited by him, bearing upon the tasks which he set for himself.

The book is dedicated to

'Members of the Levenberg and Jacob families, victims of the Holocaust'. Jacob was the name of his wife's family.

Levenberg's unbroken pang over the darkness of the Holocaust strengthened his sense of responsibility to ensure that the facts are recovered and remembered. He was, by temperament, reserved in speech and had little or no small talk. He certainly had his own sense of humour but behind the quiet exterior there was passion over what Simon Dubnov, the non-Zionist Russian historian called the "destruction of the Nest". For Levenberg Zionism was some antidote to his grief over the nest's destruction.

For him it lived on in Israel under old/new colours. It is not surprising that it was during his term as Vice-President of the Board that he and the then President, Lord Fisher, established the Yad Vashem Committee, whose important multifarious educational and commemorative works continue.

The *Enigma* was published in 1991 by the Glenvil group of companies, centred in Hull, East Yorkshire. The group was headed by its founder, the late Jack Lennard, a prominent activist on behalf of the Jews in the Soviet Union and other libertarian and humanitarian causes. He was a member of the Board of Deputies and its Foreign Affairs Committee. There were strong bonds of shared public interests between him and Dr. Levenberg. They both lived to see not only substantial Aliyah from the former Soviet Union but also the remarkable fluorescence of the Jewish spirit inside what was Stalin's empire, despite the heavy-handed Communist era.

*This article, which appears here by leave of the author, is an extract from a chapter on Dr Levenberg in the author's pending volume entitled Anglo-Jewish Profiles, to be published by Vallentine Mitchell.*

## The Death of Pavel

Michael Etkind

**P**avel. I never knew his surname. He was two metres tall, easily the biggest in our cell. With broad shoulders, a strong man with an open face – the kind of person anyone would trust. We slept on bare boards, thirty men to a cell. There was no straw, no bunks. Marysin prison, in Lodz. It was the 3rd March, 1944. This was to be our last day in the cells. Next day, at dawn, the cattle trucks would shunt us to the camps.

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

That night they fed us well; the thickest soup we'd had for months. With lumps of meat, potatoes, kasha, gruel, it was

a soup in which the spoon could stand. Each sip, each mouthful was a lease of life. And bread, we all were given half a loaf. The mood improved, we sang, made jokes, and Pavel was the loudest of us all. When, suddenly, the news came: a man from the cell above jumped and broke his leg. He'd been trying to kill himself, and had botched it... An ambulance drove him away.

Out of the ensuing silence, the awkward pause, someone

joked: "Why rush to die, there'll be plenty of opportunities!" A strange foreboding hung about our group. No one expected Pavel to break down. He was crying like a child, stammering between his sobs: "At least people will know his burial place. He'll not be buried like a dog, somewhere beside a fence".

Two months passed – a lifetime and a half in camps, and

by then we'd been taken to Czestochowa, far from Lodz. One day they took a dozen of the strongest men to clear some burned buildings, bombed by partisans. At dusk they brought Pavel back, his face a ghastly purplish blue. He was writhing with pain, and died some hours later. They had found food and beer inside the burning sheds. One of the bottles Pavel found was

brown, resembled beer. But it contained poison used by painters.

The next day we buried Pavel inside the camp. Next to the wire fence.

In the Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto on page 468, under the heading: "Peculiar Bravery", there is a note referring to a man who jumped from the second floor of the Central Prison, in order to avoid deportation.

## A letter to Ilse Mayer about the fate of her Brother

Dear Mrs. Mayer,

I recently received your address from Mr. Walter Laqueur who told me that you are the sister of Hans Fabisch. As Walter probably told you, Hans and I were very good friends in a crucial period of our lives. I thought that you may be interested in my recollections of your brother and the general circumstances of his life at a time when there was no longer any postal connection between the two of you.

To begin with, Hans was my best friend during the 21 months when we knew each other; in fact he was my last best (male) friend. I never had such a close (male) friend again. We met on the day when both of us were drafted into forced labor at the Elektromotorenwerk (Elmowerk) of Siemens in Berlin-Siemensstadt on April 29, 1941. On this first day of our acquaintance I did not know yet that this was his 20th birthday. He was almost exactly a year and a half older than I. We hit it off from the very first day. We had

*The late Ilsa Mayer was the wife of Yogi, our mentor and club leader at The Primrose Club. Both of them came to England from Germany in 1939.*

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28 July 1999  
Mrs. Ilse Mayer

similar backgrounds, similar education, a similar sense of humour, and looked at life and our situation in much the same way. In many ways he was an inspiration for me.

As you know, he was alone in Berlin (i.e. without his parents) and shared a furnished room with another young Jewish man of roughly the same age, Karl-Hermann Salomon, in a fifth floor walk-up apartment in the Hinterhaus of Brandenburgische Strasse 43, Berlin-Wilmersdorf. They sublet the room from a Jewish widow, a certain Mrs. Striem. I vaguely remember that Hans told me that before

being drafted to work for Siemens he went to the Chemieschule. That was a school run by the Jewish Community of Berlin where students could learn the elementary aspects of chemistry to enhance their employment opportunities abroad in case they could still emigrate. For many of the students the Chemieschule also served as a substitute university. Hans and Karl-Hermann were not close personally and in fact Hans felt that K.H. often rubbed him the wrong way. I myself lived at home a few blocks away at Eisenbahnstrasse 64 where our family (my parents, my younger sister, and I) sublet two rooms in a larger apartment belonging to an uncle and aunt of my mother. In addition to my family and my mother's aunt and uncle the latter's son and two unrelated widows (i.e. altogether 9 persons) lived in the apartment which originally only served my mother's aunt and uncle. In those days all Jews in Berlin were squeezed together in so-called Jew houses. That was one of the

was written about Jews before the war, when one discovers how much hatred there was in Polish society, one can only be surprised that words were not followed by deeds. But they were not (or very rarely).<sup>9</sup>

Jedwabne turned out to be one of these exceptions.

The impact of the twenty-two months of Soviet occupation of former eastern Poland in exacerbating Polish-Jewish relations and creating the climate in which the massacre was possible has been stressed by many participants. Certainly the Soviet occupation created divergent interests between Poles and Jews. The Poles saw themselves as confronted by two enemies, the Nazis and the Soviets, and Polish diplomacy and underground strategy was dominated from the time of the Polish defeat in September 1939 by the aim of ensuring the re-emergence of Poland as an independent state within its pre-war frontiers. The Poles totally rejected the incorporation into the Soviet Union of what were described as Western Belarus and Western Ukraine and attempted to organise resistance to the brutal methods adopted by the Soviets to ensure the permanence of their control of their new territorial acquisitions. For the Jews, the Soviets were a lesser evil than the Nazis, whose anti-Jewish policies were all too well-known. They did not, by and large, accept Polish strategic thinking and were prepared to accept as permanent the new territorial arrangements in the multi-ethnic eastern Kresy, something which obviously had a seriously

adverse effect on Polish-Jewish relations in the area.

In addition, Jewish "collaboration" with the new Soviet authorities aroused widespread Polish resentment. It is undeniable that a fair number of Jews (like the overwhelming majority of Belarussians, a considerable number of Ukrainians and even some Poles) welcomed the establishment of Soviet rule. In the Jewish case, this welcome was natural: a desire to see an end to the insecurity caused by the collapse of Polish rule in these areas and the belief that the Soviets were less hostile than the Nazis, resentment at Polish anti-Jewish policies in the interwar period. There was in addition some support for the communist system, although this was very much a minority position within the Jewish community. While the Soviets did offer new opportunities to individual Jews, they acted to suppress organized Jewish life, both religious and political, dissolving *kehillot*, banning virtually all Jewish parties and arresting their leaders. Jews made up nearly a third of the over half a million people deported (and in many cases thereby saved) by the Soviets from these areas. Under these conditions, the overwhelming majority of the Jewish population here very quickly lost whatever illusions they had about the Soviet system.

This was not how most Poles saw the situation. They were affronted by Jewish behavior in 1939, probably exaggerated Jewish participation in the new system because a Jewish presence in the apparatus of government was so unprecedented in

Poland and accused the Jews of disloyalty and treason in a moment of national crisis. It is clear that more research needs to be done on the impact of Soviet rule in the Jedwabne area. Yet what is obvious is that the widespread acceptance of the stereotype of the pro-Soviet and anti-Polish Jew greatly widened the gulf between the two communities. This stereotype, embodied in the Polish concept of "Zydokomuna" (Judeo-communism) had a long history on the Polish lands, going back to Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz's 1817 dystopia, *The Year 3333*, which described a Warsaw of the future renamed Moszkopolis, after its Jewish ruler, which had been taken over by a mafia of superficially Europeanised Jews. It was given a new lease of life by the Bolshevik revolution. Many Poles felt directly threatened both by the prospect of revolution and by Russian imperialism in a new guise, which they saw embodied in the Soviet regime. The fact that Jews played a significant part both in the government of the USSR and in the illegal Polish Communist Party further strengthened the hold of this form of political paranoia, which was clearly apparent during the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-20 and became a basic feature of the political discourse of the radical right in the nineteen thirties. It now seemed to have been confirmed by the events of 1939.

Moreover, as even Gross's critics admit, to use the alleged Jewish responsibility for the crimes of the Soviet Union to explain the massacre of women and

were 'marginal people'. 83 percent held that it was good that the crime at Jedwabne had been brought to light. 40 percent approved of the President's apology, 35 percent disapproved. 44 percent thought such an apology necessary against 35 percent who did not. The body which carried out this poll (OBOP) concluded 'Those who refuse to acknowledge guilt for Jedwabne are primarily older people, those with less education, who live in the countryside and in small towns. Those who are in favour of such an acknowledgment are mostly younger, more educated and town-dwellers'. It may be that, as in Germany, the long term impact of the controversy will be very different from its first reception as is suggested by this last poll. Certainly, a more recent poll conducted in January 2004 found that 51% of the respondents believed that 'it is still necessary to discuss the sufferings inflicted by Poles on others during the Second World War' which has to be understood, above all, to refer to Jews. 39% felt it was no longer necessary.

The actual historical disputes can be summed up under three headings. Firstly there are the disagreements about what actually happened in Jedwabne between the collapse of Soviet rule in late June and the final massacre of 10 July 1941. Secondly there are differing views about the context of the massacre. Finally there are arguments over its larger significance. The controversies about what happened in Jedwabne revolve around a number of questions. How many Jews were murdered? How many Poles took part?

How much German incitement and involvement was there? These issues have arisen constantly throughout this volume and one of the main problems in resolving them is the difficulty of reconstructing an event over sixty years later when there are only imperfect records and when, in addition, given the criminal character of what occurred, there are great incentives to dissemble. Certainly Gross was compelled in his work to rely on a narrow range of sources and, in spite of great efforts, the source base for reconstructing the events in Jedwabne has not been greatly enlarged since the publication of the Polish edition of *Neighbours*.

The problem of how to reconstruct what actually occurred in Jedwabne is well dealt with in a recent article by Dariusz Stola. He argues that the massacre has to be understood in the context of the collaborationist authority established by the Germans in Jedwabne. The initiative for the massacre clearly came from the Germans, but they were probably not present in large numbers and do not seem to have participated actively. The existence of a collaborationist town council made the implementation of the massacre easier and meant that it could be carried out by a core of what Stola, following Goldhagen, describes as "willing executioners". They had the tacit support of the bulk of the townspeople and very few had the civic courage to oppose them. He argues that the number of Jewish victims in his estimate is closer to 600 than 1500. (Although this does not affect the moral issue, it is important to try

and reach as accurate an assessment of this figure as possible. In this context it is unfortunate that the exhumation carried out was so brief and unsatisfactory).

In the controversy about the context of the massacre, two key points are in dispute – how strong was anti-Semitism in interwar Poland and how significant was the effect of Soviet occupation in inflaming Polish-Jewish relations. The intensity of anti-Jewish feeling in interwar Poland remains a matter of controversy and the different positions adopted in the Jedwabne controversy echo earlier disputes which I have already discussed. Here, a pessimistic conclusion seems justified. As Jerzy Jedlicki put it:

Poland was unquestionably one of the countries most affected by the [anti-Semitic] obsession. Its ideological leaders never ceased developing ideas to deprive millions of Polish citizens of their rights and property and banish them from the country. The only groups to actively oppose such ideas were the socialists and communists and the liberal fraction of the intelligentsia, which explains the inclinations of assimilating Jews to seek refuge and support in these circles that did not treat them with aggression and contempt.<sup>8</sup>

These developments inevitably affected the situation in Jedwabne located in one of the most strongly nationalist parts of Poland. Jan Bloński, in his article 'The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto' wrote:

.... when one reads what

great ideas of the Generalbauinspektor für die Reichshauptstadt Albert Speer. I had somewhat strained relations with my parents, and Hans was all alone in Berlin. So we became each other's confidants and did many things together in our limited free time.

Our daily shift at Siemens started at 6 am and lasted until 4 pm with two 30-minute breaks. In order to get to work on time, we had to take the first S-Bahn train of the day at about 5:15 am. It was about a 10-minute brisk walk to the nearest S-Bahn station, and our paths converged at the Kurfurstendamm. There were no street lights or any lights from the houses because of the wartime conditions; so as not to give the allied bombers any guidance or targets. The streets were therefore pitch dark that early in the morning. By agreement we met each morning on the Kurfurstendamm at a precise time and called each other with a certain whistle signal. Neither one of us had usually slept enough. We were still somewhat in a trance and walked together in silence. The Jewish forced laborers had to arrive at the plant gate of the huge Siemens works latest at 5:45. We were not permitted to walk through the plant on our own. At 5:45 sharp we were picked up at the gate by a guard who led us to our department. We had separate locker rooms from the "Aryan" employees where we changed into our work clothes. We worked in a closed group separated from the "Aryan" workers. We were not permitted to eat in the factory cafeteria but had

to eat our lunch sitting at our work places. We were not permitted to go to the toilets on our own. Twice a day, once at 9 am and a second time at 1 pm, we were led by a guard to the toilets like a herd of cattle. Yet neither one of us ever lost our sense of humor and good spirits.

The department we worked in built commutators. That is a component of an electro-motor. As I remember it, we were between 40 and 50 Jewish forced labourers, men and women, with a wide spread in ages. Hans and I were of course among the younger ones, but the very youngest were two 14-year old boys. The oldest ones were in their sixties. None of the people had ever worked in a factory before. The type of work, the long hours, and especially the early starting time represented a great hardship for all of the Jewish forced laborers. The harsh working conditions described above made it even worse.

An additional factor which made our lives even harsher was the small food ration which Jews received. Food was of course rationed in Germany since the outbreak of the war. There were three categories of ration coupons, General Consumer (Normalverbraucher), Worker (Arbeiter), and Heavy Worker (Schwerarbeiter). German workers who did comparable work to what we were doing received the Worker rations. Jews were only entitled to the General Consumer ration, no matter what they were doing. As time went on, our rations were gradually reduced even to below that for the General Consumer.

Starting on September 19, 1941, every Jew had to wear

a yellow Star of David when appearing in public. That measure not only made us Jews targets of all kinds of harassment, but it also enabled the government to issue a list of additional restrictions on our freedoms which now became easy to enforce. Jews were permitted shopping only one hour per day from 4 to 5 pm Monday through Friday and no shopping at all on Saturday. Under wartime conditions practically all shopping consisted of food buying. In the era before supermarkets one had to go to the butcher, the baker, the dairy, and the greengrocer, and in each of these stores there was always a line. If a Jew had stood in line, say, for 15 minutes, and it was 5 o'clock, he had to leave the store without having bought anything. Any German had the right to get in line in front of a Jew. Even if a merchant would have wanted to serve the Jew after 5 o'clock, he did not dare to for fear that one of the other customers might denounce him. Most working Jews returned from their jobs only after 4, some not until shortly before 5 (like Hans and I for example): For these people buying the meagre rations became in itself a nightmare.

With the introduction of the yellow Star of David, the Gestapo also imposed a curfew on all Jews. A Jew had to be at home (at the place where he/she was registered) latest by 8 pm in winter and 9 pm in summer. The Gestapo made spot checks, and any Jew who arrived home even only 5 minutes after the curfew time was arrested and put into a concentration camp under merciless conditions. A friend

of mine suffered such a fate. In addition Jews were forbidden the use of public transport except for commuting to their forced labor jobs. For that purpose the police issued special yellow permits listing the stations between which the holder needed to commute. These permits were issued only to workers who lived more than 7 km away from their place of work. Workers with less than 7 km to their jobs had to walk. A Jew had to carry the permit with him/her every time s/he used public transportation and to show it on demand. Use of public transportation other than commuting to work was strictly forbidden and resulted in immediate arrest. The same was true if someone was caught on a train without the police permit.

One month after the introduction of the star the deportations to the east started. Initially all Jews who worked in defence plants were exempted from deportation. So we were protected. However, any Jew who was discovered without a star was subject to immediate deportation regardless of a defence job.

In normal times both of us would have studied at the university. Hans' goal was to become a physician, and I wanted to study either chemistry or physics. That path was now blocked for us. As you probably know, we were also barred from attending any cultural or entertainment events from operas and symphony concerts to cabarets and circuses to recreational facilities such as swimming pools or sports stadiums. Our radios and telephones had already been

taken away from us shortly after the outbreak of the war. Hans and I were very conscious of the fact that the combination of long hours at hard work in the factory and total lack of any cultural or intellectual stimulation would lead to a complete proletarianisation in a cultural and intellectual sense. Economically we were already proletarians anyway. We could observe this effect in many of our Jewish co-workers, especially the older ones because they no longer had the energy and resources to fight against this development. We consciously tried to counteract this trend. One way of doing this was that we got together with a circle of Jewish young people, all of them forced labourers in the German war machine, all of them well educated and intellectually curious and frustrated over not being able to have any intellectual stimulation. This group of young people was not a formal organization which would not have been possible anyway because it would have run afoul of Gestapo regulations for Jews. Most of us had some connections to Jews of the older generation who had been kicked out of their professions and were frequently eager to give informal talks to younger people. We met periodically in each other's apartments to listen to such lectures. After almost 60 years I remember the subjects of only two such talks, one on urban planning by a "Baurat" Jacoby who gave his talk to the group through arrangements made by Hans who knew him from somewhere. "Baurat" used to be a German title given to architects of special merit which he obviously must

have received before 1933. The other talk was given by a physician whose name escapes me on epidemics. The physician used to be in the city office concerned with public health in the city of Berlin before 1933. In addition we held private concerts in our apartments where we gathered to listen to the flat sound of those low-fi, sometimes scratchy 78 rpm records played on equally low-fi phonographs of that era while imagining that we were sitting in Philharmonic Hall. Hans was a very active member of the group and a great music lover.

I should add that Hans and I also went to movie theaters even though that was strictly forbidden for Jews and was therefore connected with a certain risk. Before the introduction of the yellow star this risk was not very great provided we went to movie theaters in areas far away from our neighborhood where nobody knew us. That is what we did. With the introduction of the star the situation changed drastically. Obviously it was suicidal to be seen without a star in one's house or street or even neighborhood, and we surely could not go to the movies with the yellow star. So Hans came up with a solution to this dilemma. He bought little metal hooks and eyes (the kind used at the top of some blouses which close in the back), filed the hooks to a sharp point, sewed a hook on each of the six corners on the back of the Star of David, and then hooked the star on his outer coat or jacket. In this way, the star became easily removable. He also made a set for me. So we could leave our building and neighbor-

prayer.'

Although this prayer service took place on 27 May 2001 without Jewish participation (the diplomatic excuse was that it was on the first day of Shavuot, but the real reason was irritation at the behaviour of the Primate) and in the Church of All Saints in central Warsaw, where anti-Semitic literature was prominently displayed, it turned out much better than could have been anticipated. The church was packed with worshipers and most of Poland's bishops were also present. Speaking on behalf of the Church, Bishop Stanislaw Gadecki said that the Jews were victims of a crime and that there had been 'Poles and Catholics' among the perpetrators. 'We are deeply disturbed by the actions of those who caused Jews to suffer and even murdered them in Jedwabne and in other places over the ages.' Among the biblical readings were the story of Cain and Abel and the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Bishops also prayed for peace in the Middle East. The service concluded with the Primate praying for the Jewish nation (narod):

God of Abraham, God of the Prophets, God of Jesus Christ...Hear our prayers on behalf of the Jewish nation—which, because of its forefathers—is still very dear to you.

Arouse in this nation unceasingly an ever more lively desire to deepen Your truth and Your love. Aid it, so that in achieving truth and justice, it may reveal to the world the power of Your blessing.

Support it that it may receive the respect and

love of all those who do not yet understand the great sufferings that it has undergone, so that they may feel in solidarity a sense of common concern and feel together the wounds that it has suffered. Remember its new generations of young people and children so that they may remain unchangingly true to You, upholding the particular secret of their mission...

How far has Polish society followed the lead given, even if not entirely clearly, by its elites? In an article that appeared in late April 2001 in the newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*, the historian Andrzej Paczkowski sketched out a tentative typology of the discussion which, as he rightly observed, concerned less the events as such than the 'range, intensity and nature of Polish anti-Semitism.' He identified four categories: first, the 'affirmative,' which upholds Gross's basic premises, and is particularly concerned about their moral ramifications; second, the 'defensive open' genre, which accepts some of Gross's conclusions, but raises questions about his research priorities and methods, and stresses in particular the supposedly still vague nature of German participation in the atrocity; third, the 'defensive closed' which generally portrays some Poles as, at worst, unwitting helpers of the Nazis, or as motivated largely by a desire to retaliate for the various wrongs perpetrated against them by the Jews (an overwhelming number of them, presumably) who worked for the Soviet forces and Soviet secret police in 1939-41; finally, the letters and articles aiming to refute Gross's book *tout court*, in

the process often resorting to old stereotypes, from deicide to mounting perfidious conspiracies against Poland.

It is difficult to decide how Polish opinion is divided between these four categories. In a public opinion poll held in early April 2001, 48 percent of those polled did not believe that Poles should apologise to the 'Jewish nation' for the crime of Jedwabne. 30 percent were for an apology. 80 percent did not feel – as Poles – any moral responsibility for Jedwabne, while only 13 percent felt such a responsibility. 34 percent believed that the Germans were solely responsible for the crime, 14 percent that Germans and Poles were responsible, 7 percent believed that Poles were solely responsible.

Even after the publication of the report of the Institute for National Memory in October 2002, 50 percent of those polled were unable to say who was responsible for the massacre. This answer was most frequently given by people without higher education, among those who lived in the countryside or who declared they had no interest in politics. Three percent held that the murders had been committed by the local Polish population without the participation of the Germans; 17 percent held that those responsible were the local Poles incited by Germans; 28 percent Germans with the help of Poles; 34 percent by Poles compelled to do so by Germans and 18 percent by Germans without Polish help. Asked what sort of Poles participated in the massacre, 50 percent responded 'ordinary people, like everyone else' while 32 percent believed that they

of the works of already established Polish-Jewish authors. The nineties were marked by an outburst of creativity by Hanna Krall and Henryk Grynberg and the publication of important new writers, such as Wilhelm Dichter and works by authors, like Michal Glowinski, which dealt extensively with their previously concealed Jewish backgrounds. All had a common background in that they experienced the war as children hidden on the 'Aryan' side, and grew up in the complex post-war years. Their work gave a graphic and largely negative picture of what it was like to be a Jew in a hostile environment both during the war and under Communism.

This is the context for the debate provoked by the publication of Jan Gross's *Neighbors*, first published in Poland in June 2000. The book describes, in detail, in the basis of evidence produced for a trial in 1949 an incident in the town of Jedwabne in the north-east of today's Poland in which, with some German incitement, but little actual assistance, the local population brutally murdered the overwhelming majority of their Jewish neighbours. Almost the entire Jewish population, plus many Jewish refugees from other localities, were driven out of their homes and herded at the market place. Many were beaten to death with poles, brooms and axes. Some were murdered at the Jewish cemetery. The vast majority (at least 700) was forced into a barn standing near to the cemetery, which was then set on fire burning those inside alive.

The debate on Jedwabne has been the most serious,

protracted and profound on the issue of Polish-Jewish relations since the end of the war. Certainly the responses of the Polish President, Alexander Kwasniewski, the then Prime Minister, Jerzy Buzek and the then Foreign Minister, Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, have been entirely appropriate given the seriousness of the moral problems involved. The actions of the government in removing the monument which attributed the massacre to the Germans and proposing to replace it with a more appropriate one, accompanied by a suitable ceremony have also been impressive. The responses of the political leaders differ somewhat in tone, from Bartoszewski's explanation to an American audience of the steps that will be taken to investigate the massacre in Jedwabne and commemorate it, to Kwasniewski's moving attempt to come to terms with the difficult truth. At the commemoration service, held in Jedwabne on the sixtieth anniversary of the massacre, Kwasniewski observed:

We express our pain and shame, we give expression to our determination in seeking to learn the truth, our courage in overcoming an evil past, our unbending will for understanding and harmony. Because of this crime we should beg the shadows of the dead and their families for forgiveness. Therefore, today, as a citizen and as the President of the Polish Republic, I apologize. I apologize in the name of those Poles whose conscience is moved by that crime.

The Church has been more equivocal. In particular, Cardinal Glemp, the Primate of the Polish Roman Catholic Church has failed to give a clear lead. Although he acknowledged the seriousness of what had happened in Jedwabne in a statement on 4 March 2001, on 14 May of that year, after promising that the Church would apologise for wrongs to Jews, he asked rhetorically 'We wonder if Jews shouldn't recognize their own guilt toward the Poles – particularly for cooperating with Bolsheviks, sending Poles to prison and degrading so many of their fellow citizens.' Some other members of the hierarchy expressed more contrition. Thus, Archbishop Muszynski in an interview with *Tygodnik Powszechny* of 25 March 2001, admitted that 'some Polish residents of Jedwabne' were 'direct perpetrators of the crime [the words of the interviewer] and went on to say:

For any crime, it is the direct perpetrator who is answerable; but those who are connected to him by religious or national ties—though they bear no personal guilt—cannot feel themselves to be free of moral responsibility for the victims of this murder.

He referred to the removal of the old monument in Jedwabne as 'symbolic of the beginning of the end of the era of falsification, instrumentalisation, and the ideologising of the truth.' For this process to continue, Poles, like the Pope, would have to ask for forgiveness for 'wrongdoing and sins against the Jews.' This should take the form of joint participation with Jews in a 'community of

hood as good Jews and after some safe distance duck into a building entrance, remove the star, and emerge transformed as pure "Aryans" ready to go to the movies. On the way home we reversed this procedure.

Hans prepared himself very seriously for his medical career and spent as much time as possible in self-study. He had several medical books for this purpose. He did some of these studies with the support of Dr. Valy Scheftel, a Jewish physician from Vienna who then lived in Berlin and of course as a Jew could not practice medicine. The reason why she was able to complete her medical studies was that she was Austrian and studied in Vienna. She must have completed her studies before March 1938 when Austria was annexed by Germany. Hans and Valy fell in love and got married on January 5, 1943. Valy was several years older than Hans. She was a lovely and very warm person, and she and I also became good friends. Hans' old roommate Karl-Illermann Salomon then moved to a different apartment, and Valy moved into Hans' room.

As the deportations gathered steam, there was a feeling of complete impotence in the Jewish population. Our lecture-and-music group decided that we should do something actively. One of the most unnerving aspects of the deportations was the fact that with a few exceptions no mail or message of any kind was ever received from any deportee. So we decided that the first person from our circle to be deported should try by any means to get a message back about conditions at the destination.

Shortly thereafter a girl from our group was deported. Nothing was ever heard from her. After that all of us agreed that everyone should try to go underground to avoid deportation and that the time to prepare for such a step was now. The term "underground" meant a change in identity and residence to that of a fictitious "Aryan".

Beginning in the fall of 1942 our department at Siemens received additional workers, women from France and Poland who had been deported to Germany against their will for work in defence plants. That was an ominous sign. On December 24, 1942, my parents and sister were arrested and imprisoned in a former old-age home of the Jewish community in the Grosse Hamburger Strasse which served as a transit camp for Jews destined for deportation. One day after their arrest one of the Jewish orderlies who worked in the transit camp contacted me at the request of my mother to let me know that she had been interrogated by a Gestapo official who also showed considerable interest in me and among other things asked her where I worked and at what time I come home from work. I took this as a warning from my mother. I had to go underground immediately. My parents and sister left Berlin in a transport of freight cars on January 12, 1943, for Auschwitz. I never heard from them again.

Hans, Valy, and I discussed the need to go underground. All of us were in agreement that going underground was the only way to save ourselves from deportation. At that time we did not even

know the full truth about Auschwitz. As a first step Hans and I bought forged identification papers which were indispensable for a life underground, especially for males of military age which we were. There were frequent identity checks on the streets by military and civilian police looking for deserters. Because of the warning from my mother I had gone underground in the last days of December 1942. This meant that I stopped wearing the Star of David, carried my forged identification with me at all times, stopped going to work at Siemens, and most importantly moved out of our apartment and moved into the apartment of another Jewish family. This was of course not 100% safe and was only a temporary solution, but all of the members of that family worked. So they were probably still exempt from deportation, and the Gestapo was surely not going to look for me in that apartment. I later went into hiding with that family, and we survived the war together.

Hans told me that he preferred to wait before taking the risky and irrevocable step of going underground. His rationale was that as long as we worked for Siemens we were exempted from deportation and therefore safe, while if we went underground and were somehow detected we would be arrested and deported immediately. That was of course true, but I argued that the presence of the foreign women in our department at Siemens showed that the Germans were preparing the ground for making us dispensable. At some point the exemption from deportation for Jewish

defence workers would be lifted, and the Gestapo would not publicise this fact. At that point it might be too late to go underground. Hans felt that he and Valy could go underground at short notice since he was already in possession of forged papers.

I went to our apartment for only short periods during daytime when I was supposed to be at work and did not expect any visits by the Gestapo. The purpose of these visits was to pack the things I wanted to salvage. It was on one of those visits shortly after noontime on Monday January 18, 1943, when one of the elderly widows who also lived in our apartment as subtenants came home from a walk and reported that she saw the infamous furniture van, which was used by the Gestapo to collect Jews for deportation, in the Brandenburgische Strasse where Hans and Valy lived. Hans was, of course, at work at Siemens at that hour, but I assumed that Valy who did not work would be at home. It was a very cold day. I immediately put on my coat and raced over to their house several blocks away to warn her. When I turned the corner into Brandenburgische Strasse, I saw the furniture van parked exactly in front of No. 43, the house of Hans and Valy. I knew that there were many Jewish apartments in that building both in the front building facing the street (the Vorderhaus) and in the rear wing where Hans and Valy lived. The probability was therefore not very great that the Gestapo people were in Hans' apartment just at that moment. At any rate, I strongly felt that I would never be able to face

Hans again if I did not make any attempt to get Valy out of there. As I mentioned above, I was already underground without my Star of David and with a forged identification on a fictitious name.

I raced up the stairs to their fifth floor apartment and rang the bell. My luck would have it that the Gestapo was just then in their apartment. I was "received" by a uniformed officer of the Sicherheitsdienst to which all Gestapo members belonged. He asked for my identification which he carefully examined and then put into his uniform pocket. Then he asked me a few questions which indicated to me that the identification paper had worked, after which he dismissed me with the remark that he wanted to ask me some additional questions and that I should come to his office in room xyz at Gestapo headquarters on Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse tomorrow morning at 9, and that he would return my identification paper at that time. I left the apartment minus my identification paper but it had fulfilled its purpose to save my life. My brief encounter with the Gestapo man had taken place in the entrance hall of the apartment. All of the rooms opened to this entrance hall, and all of the doors were open. While I was standing there, I quickly looked into the other rooms and did not see Valy. So I concluded that she must have been out.

Downstairs I decided to walk to the next side street, go around the corner, and post myself there. From that position I could see anyone approaching the building No 43. My intention was to

intercept Valy when I would see her walking toward the building. I stood there for about one and a half hours waiting in vain for Valy to appear. The furniture van had left a long time ago. I remember that my legs were frozen stiff when I finally gave up. My heart was heavy because I suspected the worst. Now the only thing left was to inform Hans. I intercepted him on his way home from Siemens and told him the events described above. By the time we reached the Brandenburgische Strasse, it was already dark. We quickly walked through the large doorway of the front building which faced the street (Vorderhaus) to the rear courtyard from where we looked up to the fifth floor windows of their apartment in the rear building. There was a thin line of light emanating from below the legally required curtains or blinds. The light was on in the apartment! We quickly concluded that Mrs. Striem was picked up by the Gestapo and that Valy must have returned after the Gestapo had left. We hurried upstairs. When we were one floor below their apartment, Hans suddenly turned to me and suggested that I wait there until he had a chance to look into the apartment and give me the all-clear signal. He walked the last steps. I could see how he put his key into the keyhole. Before he could turn the key, the door opened from the inside, and a tall gray-haired civilian stood in front of Hans. He looked over Hans' shoulder and saw me at the floor below. He immediately shouted: "Who are you?" Thereupon I turned around and ran downstairs as fast as I could, taking two and three

apologetics and attempts to justify Polish conduct. The reason for this, he claims, is the Poles' fear, conscious or unconscious, of themselves being accused either of participation in this genocide or, at best, of observing it with acquiescence. This fear cannot be easily evaded, even if it is shared by the Poles with the rest of Europe. The only way to deal with it, he asserted, is for the Poles to 'stop haggling, trying to defend and justify ourselves. To stop arguing about the things that were beyond our power to do, during the occupation and beforehand. Nor to place blame on political, social and economic conditions. But to say first of all, "Yes, we are guilty".'

This guilt does not consist, in his view, in involvement in the mass murder of the Jews, in which he claims the Poles did not participate significantly. It has two aspects. First, there is the Poles' 'insufficient effort to resist', their 'holding back' from offering help to the Jews. This was the consequence of the second aspect, that the Poles had not in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries created conditions in which the Jews could be integrated into the Polish national community.

If only we had behaved more humanely in the past, had been wiser, more generous, then genocide would perhaps have been 'less imaginable', would probably have been considerably more difficult to carry out, and almost certainly would have met with much greater resistance than it did. To put it differently, it would not have met with the

indifference and moral turpitude of the society in whose full view it took place.<sup>7</sup>

The parameters of the debate in Poland in the nineties seemed to have been set by Sila-Nowicki and the Bloński. Indeed, that decade saw a series of set-piece debates similar to that aroused by Blonski's article, among them one initiated by the publication in the main Polish daily newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 29/30 January 1994 of an article by a young (non-Jewish) historian Michal Cichy discussing anti-Jewish attitudes and actions the part of Polish military organisations and civilian population during the sixty-three day Warsaw Uprising, another provoked by the exchange in the pages of *Tygodnik Powszechny* in late 1997 between Fathers Musial and Chrostowski on the reaction of the Polish hierarchy to the anti-Semitic utterances of Father Jankowski and a third stimulated by an article 'The Disgrace of Indifference' by the sociologist Hanna Swida-Ziemba, which appeared in *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 17 August 1998 and which repeated in sharper form the arguments set out by Blonski.

What is striking about these debates is their moral character. It is no accident that several of them took place in a Catholic periodical. They are mostly conducted by theologians, philosophers and literary critics. This is why Jerzy Turowicz, the veteran editor of *Tygodnik Powszechny*, who died in 1998 found it necessary to point out that the argument between the two sides was 'conducted on totally

different planes'.

At the same time, two new developments stimulated a more fundamental rethinking of attitudes towards Jews and the 'Jewish Question', the large mass of new historical material which has provided a much fuller picture of Polish-Jewish relations in the twentieth century and the emergence of a new generation of Polish-Jewish writers, who have brought a new and unique voice to the debate. From the new research, a clear and unambiguous picture is emerging. This was set out in an important review article by Maria Janion in *Tygodnik Powszechny* on 22 October 2000. She points out that although Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* has many flaws, his concept of 'eliminationist anti-Semitism' is a useful analytical tool. She argues that there are several stages before a society adopts such a stance: Jews are first seen as undesirable and to be denied some rights; then comes a demand for the voluntary or compulsory removal of the bulk of Jews from the society; only then does the move to mass murder occur. Janion argues persuasively that the majority of Polish society and of Polish political parties had come by the 1930s to the position that the 'solution' of the 'Jewish problem' was the voluntary or compulsory removal of most Jews from Poland. These difficult conclusions were increasingly incorporated into the scholarly consensus in Poland in the 1990s.

A second important development was the emergence of some new Polish-Jewish writers and the more widespread distribution in Poland

or other places of slaughter, should have to see indifference or even gladness on the faces of their neighbours? Last summer, when carts packed with captive Jewish men, women and children moved through the streets of the capital, did there really need to be laughter from the wild mobs resounding from the other side of the ghetto walls, did there really have to prevail such blank indifference in the face of the greatest tragedy of all time?<sup>2</sup>

This view is echoed in the most important scholarly investigation of the problem, that by Yisrael Gutman and Shmuel Krakowski<sup>3</sup>, and is shared by the doyen of Holocaust historians, Yehuda Bauer. He has written:

The majority of Poles evinced an indifference, often rather hostile, to the fate of the Jews, expressed in a lack of basic human interest in their fate. A fairly large minority was actively hostile to the Jews, and a smaller minority was friendly and helpful...<sup>4</sup>

Polish responses to these accusations have taken two forms: attempts to justify Polish behaviour and apologies for the failings of the Poles in this period. The most characteristic articulation of the apologetic point of view was set out by the late Wladyslaw Sila-Nowicki, a prominent opposition lawyer and former resistance fighter. In an article 1987, he attacked those who argued that the Polish record during the Second World War in relation to the Jews should be strongly assailed. Such people were playing into the

hands of Poland's enemies and lending credibility to 'anti-Polish propaganda'. He then rehearsed the familiar arguments that so many Poles have used to justify their behaviour towards Jews before, during and after the Holocaust. For centuries, he asserted, when they were expelled elsewhere, Jews were able to settle in Poland and their numbers increased remarkably. The hostility they aroused before 1939 was moderate considering their privileged position. They 'dominated' certain professions and controlled a 'disproportionate part' of wealth in Poland. The pre-war quota on university admissions (the *numerus clausus*) for Jews was justified since 'it is natural for a society to defend itself against the numerical domination of its intelligentsia'. During the war, no European nation did more to assist Jews than Poland, where the risk of such assistance was the greatest, the normal penalty being death – and death not only of the individual, but of his or her family as well. Polish suffering during the occupation was enormous, second only to that of the Jews. There were, he argued, no quislings in Poland, and the Polish underground sentenced to death those who betrayed Jews to the Nazis. It was the passivity of the Jews, more than anything else, that led to their destruction. Habits of accommodation, presumably different from those of the rebellious, insurrectionary Poles, led them to go to their deaths without offering resistance. He concluded defiantly (and inconsistently):

I am proud of my nation's stance in every respect during the period of occu-

pation and in this I include the attitude towards the tragedy of the Jewish nation. Obviously, attitudes towards the Jews during that period do not give us a particular reason to be proud, but neither are they any grounds for shame, and even less for ignominy. Simply, we could have done relatively little more than we actually did.<sup>5</sup>

There have also been voices much more critical of Polish responses. Such views were articulated in the immediate post-war period, but communist cultural uniformity meant that they have been largely unheard until more recent years. Thus, in his contribution to a pamphlet denouncing anti-Semitism published in 1947, the Catholic writer, Jerzy Andrzejewski observed:

For all honest Poles, the fate of the perishing Jews was bound to be exceedingly painful, since the dying ... were people whom our people could not look straight in the face, with a clear conscience. The Polish nation could look straight in the face of Polish men and women who were dying for freedom. It could not do so in the face of the Jews dying in the burning ghetto.<sup>6</sup>

A similar point of view was expressed by Jan Bloński. In his article, 'The Poor Poles look at the Ghetto', published in 1987. Bloński observes that any attempt by Poles to discuss the Polish reactions to the Nazi anti-Jewish genocide, whether with Jews or with other people, very quickly degenerates into

steps at a time. I never saw Hans again. I had set out to save his life and that of Valy, and in the end he saved my life.

Hans and Valy were imprisoned in the same transit camp where my parents had been held. They left Berlin with the transport on January 29, 1943, for Auschwitz.

Almost all of my above report is based on my recollections. A few details like Hans' wedding date I obtained from the meagre notes which I had kept at the time. The departure of a deportation transport spread among the Jewish community by word of mouth. I must have learned of it within a day or two. Both Hans and Valy are also listed in the Memorial Book for Berlin, Gedenkbuch Berlins der Jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus, published by the Central Institute for Research in the Social Sciences of the Free University of Berlin at the

request of the Senate of the City of Berlin. In case you ever look at that book, I should mention that Hans' address listed in it is a mistake. He lived, of course, at the same address as Valy, Brandenburger Strasse 43, Berlin-Wilmersdorf. I can vouch for that.

Dear Mrs. Mayer, as you can imagine from this report, I have gone over the events of that day in my mind innumerable times in the past 56 years. Even after this very long time it is difficult for me to comprehend the events of that day. It was a monumental tragedy. There is no doubt in my mind that Hans had the intelligence, stamina, strength of character, and ability to adapt himself quickly to changed unexpected circumstances all of which were necessary for surviving underground. In this letter I have also tried to paint a general picture of the conditions under which we Jews lived in Berlin during those crucial

years. Specifically I have tried to relate how Hans and I coped with those conditions.

In that short span of time of 21 months, during which we knew each other, Hans has been a great source of strength for me. The writing of this letter was an inner need for me. I wished I had written this letter half a century ago, but I never knew that Hans had a sister in England. I admit that is strange. I don't remember that he ever talked of his family. In many ways he was quite introverted even with me apparently.

I want to close this letter by letting you know that you should feel free to ask any questions you might have or to ask for clarification of any point in my letter which is not clear. If I have the answers, I will give them to you.

Best wishes and kind regards,

## Memories of Piotrkow

**10 Trubunalski** was famous in Piotrkow, not just as the number of a building, but as a concept which was the focus of Jewish life in Piotrkow. The building itself belonged to the Horowicz family, with its distinguished ancestry [and to Bunem Rozenstroych from Warsaw]. In this building, in 10 Trubunalski, only Jews lived, about thirty families, with one exception the old Christian concierge with her daughters. The main interest of the building was focussed on Tenenbaum's 'pub'.

### 10 TRYBUNALSKI

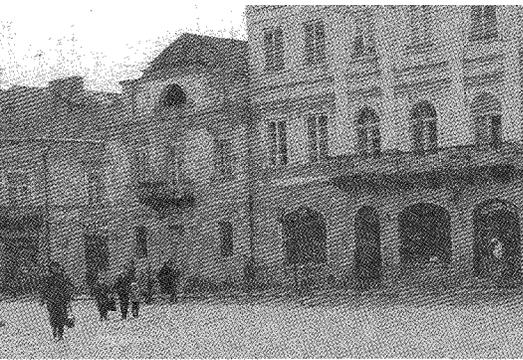
Yehoshua Eibeyszyc

*This article appeared in the "Voice of Piotrkow Survivors" of which Ben Giladi is the indefatigable and outstanding editor. Yehoshua is the author of many books and a prominent Yiddish columnist.*

*Translated from Yiddish by  
BARRY DAVIS*

Piotrkow's many money changers concentrated round Tenenbaum's "pub". This was

not just a 'pub' where you could grab a tasty bit to eat, a cold glass of 'Akatsim' beer, a roasted 'quarter', a portion of something jellied, or other fine delicacies. Tenenbaum's 'pub' was truly a centre of Jewish Piotrkow. The 'pub' was an important element in the financial life of the town, which enabled the Jewish population of Piotrkow to breathe freely. Most of the brokers or 'changers' were Hasidim. Although my grandfather, Aryeh Eibeyszyc, was the closest neighbour to the Tenenbaum's, I very



***Krulik and his family lived in this house, before war and during war.***

seldom visited the 'pub', except when we had a guest from the country, and he fancied one of the tasty delicacies from the pub. Then I would go into the pub to get the guest what he desired.

As a boy of about 8 – 9 years, I stood there, sobbing, astounded and confused looking at the frenetic comings and goings in the pub. It wasn't only the stinking smoke of the cheap cigarettes, which was combined with the smells of the tasty and enticing foods which were laid out under the glass buffet. Not just the mish-mash of the various Yiddish dialects of Jewish Poland; *ikh*, *yekh*, *yakh*, and so on, which were heard in the pub. The brokers had their own particular language: This did not consist of particular professional bank and finance expressions, but their very own brokers' language, a sort of slang that only they understood. For example: Discussing a Bill of exchange, would be 'making a bris' a long-term bill of exchange 'a little pregnant woman', a short-term bill of exchange a *koncowke* or a 'Oh, my Goodness!' A Hasidic broker would say "Today, I've eaten a few pieces of bacon" and how could you possibly know that by this he meant: "Today, I bought a few gold roubles"

i.e., 'the bacon' in the broker's language. Again, American gold dollars would be called 'Moloch brings'. Who could have thought they would use such a 'language'.

Tenenbaum's 'pub' was located, as already mentioned, in the square of Platz Trybunalski and Platz Czarnieckiego. The square was four-cornered like a four-cornered box. From 'our' side, the square began with the colonial-goods shop of Yisoel-Yakov Dulle, opposite the cheder 'Yesodey Hatorah' (Foundations of the Torah), further on was Jurkiewicz's patisserie, further on the dye shop Mendl Szmaraagd, further the shoe shop of Chaim Ritterband, the herring shop of Zajac, the fancy goods store of Sholem Pearl (a son of Rabbi Chaim Pearl), the Tenenbaum's pub and pharmacy. The second side consisted of the following: In the corner was Praszker's book and newspaper shop [where I would secretly read the Hebrew Zionist weekly *Baderekh*] next to it was Moyshe Rotberg's clothes shop, next to that Saxon's drug-store, and so on. On the third side of the square there was located the 'Tradesmen's Bank' [headed by Michal Hertz] and in the same building lived the popular Doctor Leyfuner. On the fourth side there was Tzv. An., the ironmonger's shop of the educationalist Rabbi Moyshe Reichmann, and so on.

Next to and around the pub there was a concentration of horse-and-cabmen in their navy-blue uniforms and their gleaming caps sitting on the carriage box, bellowing at their colourfully decorated horses in their coachman's

horse language, that only they, that is the cabbie and the horse, understood. All the cabbies were Jews, some of them were even frum, and in their free time would manage to get in a psalm or two. The cabs were always lined up as if in a military parade. And it was no surprise that they were all soldiers. Overall, the cabbies were extraordinarily disciplined, and were known for their loyalty to one another. For example, no-one ever jumped the queue, everyone kept to his place. If a 'customer' came along for a cab, they would look for the cabbie who was first in the queue.

In those years – 1925-1930 – taxis were unheard of, the only means of transport in the town were the horse-cabs. If a Jew or a non-Jew had a journey to make to somewhere far-off, you had to take the trouble to get to Platz Trybunalski and take a horse-cab. And so it was until the Holocaust, in 1939.

A section on neighbours also belongs to the Memories of 10 Trybunalski. As already mentioned, about thirty Jewish families lived there. There were four entrances into the courtyard of number 10. On the other side of the courtyard was a church and a house in which the priest and his housekeeper lived.

The owner of the building, Abba Horowicz, lived on the second floor with his three sons – Majer, a young man who worked as a bookkeeper for Michael Hertz at the Tradesmen's Bank, Veluel, a Chassidic boy who studied at the Gerer Shtibl and the two-year-old, Mottele.

their lives in the Nazi genocide. Of the 3.5 million Jews in Poland on the eve of the Second World War, barely 350,000 survived the war, the large majority by fleeing or being deported to the interior of the Soviet Union. Thus, more than 90 percent of Polish Jewry perished in the Holocaust. Only in the Baltic States was the percentage of Jewish casualties higher.

There is no more controversial topic in the history of the Jews in Poland than the question of the degree of accountability borne by Polish society for the fact that such a small proportion of Polish Jewry escaped the Nazi mass murderers. The primary responsibility for this clearly lies with the Nazis. The genocide was carried out in three stages. Its initiation was part of the radicalisation of Nazi policy which accompanied Operation Barbarossa, the planned conquest of the USSR, and its final adoption accompanied the euphoria of victory in September and October 1941. In the first, mobile killing squads, the *Einsatzgruppen*, advanced behind the *Wehrmacht*, killing Soviet officials and first Jewish adult men and then, after a period, also Jewish women and children. At least one million Jews were killed in this way between July and December 1941. This method of murder was abandoned because of its deleterious effect on the morale of those required to carry it out. It was replaced, in the second stage, by the creation of death camps, where assembly line techniques of mass murder were developed using first carbon monoxide and then an insecticide, Zyklon B. During this

period of the genocide, which came to an end in late 1942, the Germans were operating in areas where there was no limitation on their absolute freedom of action, when their power was at its height and the ability of the Allies or the subject populations under the control of the Third Reich to exercise influence on their behaviour was minimal. Most of the actual genocide was also at this stage carried out by Germans. It was during this period that at least another 2.7 million Jews were murdered. Most of them came from within the pre-1939 borders of Poland and by the end of 1942 very few Polish Jews survived. In the third stage of the genocide, which lasted until the end of the war, the Nazis found themselves obliged to persuade or coerce their allies, satellites and puppets in the New Europe to hand over their Jews. By this time, both these governments, the Western Allies and virtually everybody else in Nazi-occupied Europe knew that Nazi policy towards the Jews involved genocide and were obliged to articulate some sort of response. However, by now very few Polish Jews survived.

The recognition of the primary role of the Germans in the genocide has not prevented bitter arguments over Polish behaviour during the Second World War. This is a debate similar to those which have taken place in many countries in Europe about the origins and character of the genocide which the Nazis attempted to inflict on the Jewish people during the Second World War. Even as the war ended, Jews harshly criticized what they have seen as Polish indifference to

the fate of the Jews and the willingness of a minority to aid the Nazis or to take advantage of the new conditions to profit at Jewish expense. According to Mordechai Tenenbaum, Commander of the Jewish Fighting Organization in the Bialystok ghetto, in his memoirs, published shortly after the war:

If it had not been for the Poles, for their aid - passive and active - in the 'solution' of the Jewish problem in Poland, the Germans would never have dared to do what they did. It was they, the Poles, who called out 'Yid' at every Jew who escaped from the train transporting him, it was they who caught the unfortunate wretches, who rejoiced at every Jewish misfortune - they were vile and contemptible.'

A somewhat more moderate but still strongly critical view was expressed by Emanuel Ringelblum in his *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War* written in hiding on the 'Aryan' side in 1944:

The Polish people and the Government of the Republic of Poland were incapable of deflecting the Nazi steam-roller from its anti-Jewish course. But the question is permissible whether the attitude of the Polish people befitted the enormity of the calamities that befell the country's citizens. Was it inevitable that the Jews, looking their last on this world as they rode in the death trains speeding from different parts of the country to Treblinka

create successful lives. Yet to define their success in terms of wealth is to miss the point. "My greatest success is my family, my three beautiful sons", says a tearful Krulik.

The film also shows footage recently discovered at the Imperial War Museum of the orphaned camp survivors boarding RAF planes on their way to a new life in Britain in August 1945. Of the thousands of children in Nazi camps, few survived to tell the tale. The British welcomed these orphans (many had lost not only parents but grandparents, siblings, whole families wiped out) with open arms and brought them to rehabilitation centres in the tranquil safety of Windermere in the Lake District. As one of the Boys reminisces "We had been living in hell, now we

were in Heaven!"

There were moving tales of how the orphans couldn't quite believe the kindness of their hosts; "They put crisp white tablecloths and shiny cutlery on the dining tables – all for us, *for us*, we couldn't believe such a thing. And the food! So much food – like we'd never seen before! The audience laughs affectionately at the "Boy" who tells of how they would huddle under the table and greedily eat to bursting point, "Just in case we never had the chance to eat again!"

Their time in Windermere was healing; by day they swam, played sport, learned to read and write English. Nights were not so peaceful, as one survivor recalls. "We had nightmares of course. How could we not?" Indeed. How could you not? And

maybe the nightmares will always be there, ready to pounce at nightfall. And yet, and yet. We hear sanguine words from a tearful David Herman. "I've had good times. I've had sad times. I prefer to remember the good times".

The British handled the situation with great emotional sensitivity; none of the children were separated. They were treated as a family and rightly so. "We had lost everything and had been through so much together," said one. "We were brothers and sisters now." Forget the saying blood is thicker than water. The Boys yearly reunions are a joy to behold and are up there with the best of family weddings, bar mitzvahs, birthday celebrations. Long may this continue!

## SECTION V ANNUAL LEONARD G. MONTEFIORE LECTURE

### POLISH-JEWISH RELATIONS AFTER JEDWABNE

Professor

Antony Polonsky

*'We were taught as children' – I was told by a seventy-year old Pole – 'that we Poles never harmed anyone'. A partial abandonment of this morally comfortable position is very, very difficult for me.*

Helga Hirsch, a German journalist in *Polityka*, 24 February 2001

One major reconciliation still remains to be accomplished after the butchery of World War II and the Holocaust. Germany and France have become close allies. Germany and Israel have formed what is sometimes called a special

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relationship. And in the decade after the cold war ended, even Germany and Poland have come to see their future as twinned. By

contrast, Poles and Jews are only now beginning to work together in the painful process of facing and overcoming their shared past. The catalyst is the series of revelations about the massacre of Jews in Jedwabne in 1941.

The past that must be overcome is still all but inconceivable. On the eve of the Second World War, Poland contained the largest Jewish community in Europe and the second in the world. With its population of nearly three and a half million, Polish Jewry still retained its position as one of the main centers of the Jewish world. The bulk of Polish Jewry lost

# Kaminsk – Life and Death of a Shtetl

By Victor Breitburg

Some excerpts from the story are of my return to Lodz. In 1938 I was eleven-years-old and it is from that perspective that I write.

Kaminsk was a shtetl between Piotrkow and Belchatow, and about ninety kilometers south of Lodz. It was a typical shtetl, like hundreds of others in Poland; half the population were Jewish and the other half Christian. Neither group cared for the other, but the need for survival made them tolerate each other. Both parties barely survived from one day to another, each depended on the other to carry the day to an end. Poverty was everyone's worst enemy.

In the centre of the shtetl was a market. Every Wednesday, the peasants brought their commodities there. Money seldom was exchanged, most of the time they used the old-fashioned way of bartering. On the right side of the market there was a church, a little distance away there was a Jewish synagogue.

In 1997, against the advice of many people, my wife Lucille, the Polish driver and I returned to Kaminsk. From Lodz it took us less than two hours. What I found was a small, beautiful, modern town. First, I went to the police station, just to let them know I am an American, and that I came to visit the place where I was born. When I enquired about the Jewish Cemetery where my grandfather was buried, I was told it no longer existed. Now, where the cemetery area once

*Victor came to England with the Windermere group, lived in the Cardross hostel in Scotland and subsequently emigrated to the USA. After his retirement, having been a successful businessman, he has been involved in passing on his war experiences to the public at large.*

existed, there are houses.

Next, I went to the Magistrate's office to try to obtain some documents. At the entrance to the Magistrate's office, a group of men congregated and were drinking alcohol. The Polish driver was not too happy to cross the entrance. I felt it had taken me a long time to get here and I was not going to be deterred from going through the entrance. I had long ago left in Auschwitz my childhood fear of Poles. I walked over and politely asked for a path to be cleared so as to enter the office.

The receptionist was a young woman who greeted us and asked if she could help. I told her I wanted to obtain my own birth certificate and those for many people in my family. She gave me a room number and said we would find somebody there who could help. The designated door was half-open and I noted a woman with the looks of a typical civil servant. She ordered me to wait outside. At that point my face flushed with anger and I asked her in an impolite voice to repeat what she just said. I saw she was taken aback by the way I spoke to her. This time she

used the word "please" and said she would be with us shortly. Within a few minutes she came to the door and invited us into her office.

She offered my wife a chair and retrieved another for me from an adjoining room. This time she was full of smiles and asked what she could do for me. I requested my birth certificate and those of my father and mother.

Not only did she get my and my father's birth certificates, she also got the witnesses' deposition papers. My mother's birth certificate was another matter. No records were found and I assumed that my mother must have been born elsewhere. She then asked if she could do anything else for me and said she hoped to see me again. I thanked her and bid her goodbye.

Now we were ready to explore the town. At its centre there is a memorial for soldiers who died on the first day of the war. Around the park there is a row of family houses and the old church was still there. We walked to where the Temple once was, but could not find the place. The demography changed; there was no resemblance to what I remembered. There was no trace of Jews ever having lived there. Gone was the market. Now, in its place, are modern stores. Gone are the Jews, the Temple, the mikvah, and gone is the Kaminsk I used to know. We returned to our car and left. There was no reason for us to spend any more time there.

The only thing left for me was the cherished memory of the summer of 1938.

# The Bombing of the Buna & Blechhammer

Salek Benedikt

It is interesting to reflect that our lives under the Nazis were not only in danger because of the regime but towards the end of the war we were also endangered by the allied bombings and the resulting food and water shortage.

I recall two such incidents.

In July 1944, I was transferred from Birkenau to the work camp Monowitz-Buna. There, I was assigned to the Building Commando and put to work in the Buna at a large excavation. I was told by my co-workers that an underground air-raid shelter was to be built on site.

A month later, the bombing of Upper Silesia by the allied air force started. As a consequence, the excavation flooded and the main installations, including the water supply were badly damaged. We were deprived of water with which to wash or drink and the kitchen had no water with which to make our morning "coffee" or cook our daily ration of soup. From then on we had no regular work to go to. We were allocated work on an ad hoc basis.

One day, myself and another haffling were working on unloading a wagon full of loose cement. It was a hot day; the cement dust clung to my sweaty face and neck. It penetrated

*Salek came to England with the Southampton group in November 1945 and lived in the Finchley Road hostel, together with the late Kurt Klappholz with whom he was very friendly.*

every orifice in my body. The work was hard and unpleasant.

We were emptying the cement into a heap against a wall of an unfinished shelter. We could occasionally hear hammering coming from the inside of the shelter.

When the air-raid siren sounded, we quickly made our way down to the shelter. Inside we found four Hungarians. They looked at us and commented that we looked like an "apparition"; we were covered in cement dust from head to foot. Only one of them spoke Yiddish. He told us that they had been working there for more than a week. Nobody ever comes to inspect, they do little work. They mostly sleep. One of them is always on guard on the outside and whenever he sees a Capo or guard approaching, he throws a pebble through the ventilation hole, and then they start hammering like mad. They hoped to work there until the liberation.

We could hear the whistling of bombs and explosions. All of a sudden, there was a deafening bang and everything went black. Suspecting we took a direct hit, I looked up at the ceiling, expecting it to come down on us. Nothing happened. After a little while, I could see some light appearing at the ventilation shaft. Soon it became sufficiently light to see each other. I noticed the Hungarians were now covered in cement dust as well.

Outside, in the cement which we had stacked against the unfinished shelter, we saw the tail end of an unexploded bomb!!!

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**Monowitz (Auschwitz III)** was a subcamp of Auschwitz I, 6 km away. the camp held approximately 10,000 prisoners, mainly Jews, but also a number of Poles and Germans.

**Buna.** An industrial estate 3 km away from the camp. It consisted mainly of factories, laboratories and warehouses. The majority of workers were engaged in manual work. The others in the production of synthetic rubber.

The workforce was over 30,000, including French volunteers, British POWs, Italians and Ukrainian women.

## THE BOMBING OF BLECHHAMMER

Further west from Monowitz, beyond Gleiwitz, lay the concentration camp of Blechhammer. Kurt Klappholz worked there as an orderly in the Kranken Bau (hospital).

Blechhammer fared badly in the air-raid, many haffling lost their lives. Kurt was given the task of collecting the left forearms, the ones with the tattooed number of those killed. For this purpose he was given a large

cardboard box. The box, with its contents, was then to be delivered to the Registration Office.

While busying himself with his task, an SS officer walked by. He stopped in front of Kurt and watched him in silence then, just before leaving, said to Kurt "Sehen sie was die Allierten zu unsere menchen tuen?" ("Do you see what the Allies are doing to our people?")

Kurt was flabbergasted!

Endless questions had been whirring around my head all day.

I decided I would reply by email that night and I ran a hot bath to soothe my tired muscles and ease my head which had been in overdrive all day. Refreshed and on my way downstairs, one of my daughters handed me the telephone. In a loud whisper she said "It's a Rozensztrauch".

Tears welled up in my eyes and there was a catch in my throat. A young man introduced himself in fluent English, with a Polish accent. This was Tomek, living in Galway, Ireland. "My Dad's been waiting for your call all day". I felt so guilty. I had gone off for a jaunt, not knowing what to do, while my cousins had been expectantly and anxiously waiting for me to telephone. "I will ring your Dad now". I telephoned Mieczyslaw (my Polish pronunciation was so awful, I did not know how to pronounce his name). He is Andrzej's

oldest son. I introduced myself, but I was so close to tears I could hardly take in what he said to me. When I spoke in reply, I gabbled so fast he could not understand me. I realised I was still too full of emotion to make any sense, so I suggested we correspond by email, so we could understand each other.

This happened 1 year and 4 months ago. So much has happened since, so many stories. I have two photographs which sum up this story and conclude this part of my tale. Both pictures are taken in Poland. The first photograph is taken in Lodz at the Rozensztrauch family flat, 21 Zachodnia sometime in 1936. Dad told me he was 12 years old in this family photo taken on the occasion of the family re-union when his Auntie Roza, husband Michel and son Marcel came on a visit from France to Lodz. Tante (as I called her) is holding a big bouquet. The second photograph was taken on Sunday 28th August

2005 in Tzinszsko a very small village near Jelenia Gora. This was the first meeting of the Rozensztrauch English/Polish Families. A wonderful celebration of survival and a memorial to two brothers who lost each other in 1939 and although tragically they never found each other, the two halves of this family were re-joined 66 years later.

Just as a post script: As I commented before - life is full of coincidences. I am often surprised how things match up. There have been so many coincidences, that my story could just be about these strange events that pop up unlooked for as if they were meant to be found. I looked up Walbrzych again recently. It is twinned with Wolverhampton. An EU mentoring agreement has been set up between the two cities. I was for 3 years a Law Student in Wolverhampton!

24TH APRIL 2006 FILM PREMIERE OF

## *The Boys – Triumph Over Adversity,*

Directed by HERB KROSNEY and Narrated by SIR MARTIN GILBERT

By Annabel Wright

As the lights dim in the auditorium on Yom Ha'shoah the mood is appropriately sombre. This is no ordinary film we are about to watch. On a table in front of the screen, six memorial candles, lit by second and third generation children, flicker in remembrance of the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust. Is it only me who hopes that each and every one of them is sitting on a cloud in Heaven, looking

down as we honour them?

We listen to the powerfully moving voice of Norman Coeh as he sings his remembrance prayer. Now we are about to watch the premiere of *The Boys*, a film that is sad, shocking, uplifting, moving and, in places, funny – yes, you read correctly – *funny*. These Boys have a sense of humour that is second to none.

We watch, furtively wiping away tears, as these amazing people, now in their seventies and eighties, many present in the audience, look back (but rarely in anger) at their past experiences; first as orphans liberated from concentration camps at the end of the Second World War. Then we follow their journey to England where they had to start life all over again.

These children did more than survive; they went on to

"Zysa Majta" into "Zofia"  
09.08.1955

Andrzej Rozensztrauch,  
widower, married 22.12.1966  
in Wabrzych, Jadwiga  
Moczydowska.

There are no words to describe my state of amazement. I realised – my father's brother, Moshe, had not died during the war. He had survived and 10 years later changed his first name to "Andrzej". Dad changed his name about the same time, but his change was complete – Laib Rozensztrauch to Leo Robeson. Andrzej had been married twice.

My father had died 10 years ago. Could his older brother still be alive, it was possible – he would have been 84. Was his second wife still alive? Did he have children from either marriage? Questions, questions? My head was swimming with unanswered questions. I took deep breaths. Where do I start? Where do I look? How? If I have Polish family, do they want to find Jewish English family? I started by emailing the archivist. Perhaps she could help me? She had taken over 4 months to send me copies of the documents I had requested in April. How long would it take her to search for Rozensztrauch relatives in a country as big as Poland? The last entry, 1966 in Walbrzych was 38 years ago. I looked up Walbrzych on the internet. The official entry was only one page and at the bottom an email contact address at the town hall.

On Thursday 2 September 2004 I sent them an email in English (would they understand? Would they want to help? If they are like

our local authorities, maybe I will get a response in 6 months, if I'm lucky!)

I explained my father's family history, who I was and how I had found the entries about my Uncle Andrzej. Was he still alive? Was his wife still alive? Did he have any children from either marriage and could they give me any information?

Whilst I sat back to wait for a response, I pondered on what to do with the information that I had so far. I told my husband. We talked it through. All this excitement could still be for nothing. I felt it likely that my uncle was dead. I just had a strong feeling – perhaps because my father had died so young. Just before he died, Dad told me that his grandfather had died at the age of 70 of a heart attack. This was the only time my father had spoken of his grandfather. Three days later Dad died of a heart attack, he was 70.

If my Uncle's wife was still alive, perhaps she had moved away from Walbrzych. If there were any children from either of my Uncle's marriages, could they still be in Walbrzych? Perhaps he had no children? I decided not to say anything to my brothers until I had received a reply (if I got one) from Walbrzych. I began to doubt they would respond. My head buzzed, lots of questions. I wondered how many weeks, more likely it would be months until I got a response.

Saturday 4th September 2004. It was a beautiful cloudless early autumn morning. It was perfect for our planned family cycle ride. Just 3 of us. My husband,

our youngest daughter and myself. Everything was ready. Two bicycles on top of the car, one in the boot. Side panniers packed and in the back of the car. Dressed in my cycle gear I was all ready to go. I stopped for a moment. I thought, I'll just check my emails before I leave. I was not expecting anything in particular. I just hoped. An outside chance. To my surprise there was one message. An unfamiliar address with pl at the end. Polish, my heart missed a beat – I opened it and gasped. Then I just cried and cried. I couldn't speak for the tears – sadness and joy overflowing. There were 3 names – one was a Rozensztrauch. Next to each a Polish telephone number. One sentence at the end "call us".

I couldn't stop crying. Our three children gathered around me hugging me with great concern and anxiety. "Mummy what's wrong?" It seemed like ages before I could speak. My husband, Stephen was also looking at me with concern. Finally I told them. I have 3 first cousins in Poland. "So, why are you crying?" Yes, it did seem silly. "It is a beautiful day, we are all packed and ready, so we must go out now". I agreed. I had to let this information sink in slowly.

We did have a wonderful ride, but I cried all day, looking up at the blue sky through a haze of tears. The enormity of my discovery, how quickly it had happened. If only Dad knew – perhaps, wherever he is, he did know.

We cycled a long way and returned home late in the afternoon. What should I do next? How shall I reply? –

# Mayer grilled by German Prosecutor

(Reprinted from the Jewish Telegraph Friday May 26, 2006)

Mayer Hersh

A small item in the *Jewish Telegraph* last November led to an overwhelming experience for Holocaust survivor Mayer Hersh and his wife Judith.

The news story stated that a mass grave with the bodies of 34 concentration camp victims was found during construction work at Stuttgart Airport. Germany was ordering the reburial of the bones.

But due to a German spelling error, Mayer – one of the only four living survivors of the nearby Echterdingen concentration camp, from where the bodies came – was not notified of the funeral last December.

When Mayer, of Whitefield, heard about it, he wrote to the prime minister of Baden-Wittenberg expressing his sorrow at not being at the funeral and requesting an invitation to the stonemasonry whenever it would take place.

He received a courteous letter back from the premier and later a call from the American liaison officer at the army base now situated at Echterdingen, asking him to address a Yom Ha'shoah lunch.

The visit was to be Mayer's first official trip back to Germany – the land which had inflicted so much suffering upon him and his fellow Jews.

The experience moved him to tears when he realised how honoured he was by his German and American hosts.

Mayer had spent two

*Mayer came to England with the Windermere group and stayed in a hostel in Manchester where he subsequently settled. In recent years he has, indefatigably, been talking about his experiences to schoolchildren and the public at large.*

months at Echterdingen – the sixth camp of his Holocaust nightmare – at the end of 1944.

In November, 1944, 600 Nazi victims from all over Europe were transported on a near-three day train journey from Stutthof, near Danzig, on the Baltic Sea to Echterdingen near Stuttgart.

Mayer, who was 17 at the time, recalls: "We had neither food nor water on the journey".

He added: "I only vaguely remember arriving at Echterdingen. We were dragged so many times from camp to camp.

"But eyewitness accounts from Germans living nearby said that many of us could not walk as we had been lying so long in the wagon. We had to be supported by each other".

The victims were taken to an aircraft hangar. Mayer described the conditions.

"It had massive doors which would not shut," he recalled. "There was no heating. Many prisoners had snow on their bunk beds. We had no winter clothes.

"People were dying all the time from starvation, extremely hard work and cold. Most victims were buried at night."

This latter fact Mayer considered suspicious. By the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945, the German population knew they were losing the war.

Mayer said: "There consciences began to bother them. Eyewitness accounts say that they cried when they saw German soldiers beat our bent bodies with our bones sticking out.

"Civilians threw us bits of bread and fruit and left apples near the bins. We would all jump at the food and soldiers would come at us with rifles."

When taken around the air base by his American hosts. Mayer immediately recognised the hangar where he had suffered for two months.

He said: "I recognised it immediately although it had different doors and windows and a cement floor.

"But the picture of how it was came back to me, reawakening memories. It was very painful."

For the last 26 years, Mayer has been inflicting such pain upon himself on a regular basis.

It all began at a Holocaust exhibition at Manchester's Bnei Akiva bayit when Mayer was asked to explain some exhibits to a group of secondary school children from Rochdale.

He recalls: "I was very

nervous. It was a very emotional subject. Talking was a very painful experience."

Yet Mayer undergoes this agony, which he reckons is at the expense of his health, on a regular basis, visiting schools all over the north-west of England to recount his experiences.

Why does he do it?

He replied: "I speak on behalf of the family I lost. We were such a close family. I have to tell people what human beings can do to one another."

But Mayer's talk at the Echterdingen army base was the most fulfilling he has ever experienced.

He had tears in his eyes when he received a standing ovation from the assembled local German and American soldiers.

He said: "It was the first time in my life that I have been so honoured and appreciated by Germans.

"This was my first official visit to Germany. I had

previously gone in the early 1980s to see a childhood friend."

Mayer found the Germans very friendly. He said: "They have a feeling a tremendous guilt."

In his speech, he urged them to be in the forefront of condemning and eradicating the new wave of anti-Semitism which was sweeping through the world in the guise of anti-Zionism.

In an action-packed four-day trip, organised by the base in conjunction with the Stuttgart Jewish community, Mayer was also interviewed by a historian and by a reporter from the local newspaper.

To his own surprise, he was able to speak to the journalist for two hours in German – for which he was congratulated.

Mayer was also feted by the local Jewish community who provided kosher food throughout the trip.

*However, the most gruelling part of the visit was an interview on his final day by the*

*local public prosecutor who had already interviewed the three other camp survivors – one from Amsterdam, one from Antwerp and one from Munich.*

The prosecutor could not understand why the four accounts did not tally. Mayer explained that they all had different experiences.

The prosecutor gave Mayer, who suspected foul play because of the night burials, a hard time.

Mayer said: "He is probably trying to prove that Echterdingen was not the worst camp in Germany.

"My wife was very annoyed at the method of questioning. But the prosecutor, who has been trained in an adversarial way of questioning, is used to dealing with criminals."

Despite this negative experience, Mayer has not been put off returning to Echterdingen for the stonemasonry of his fellow inmates.

## A mother's legacy

by Emil Klein

I was born in Kosice, Czechoslovakia on August 4th 1924. One of my most treasured memories was from the summer of 1934 when I was ten years of age. My parents were told that a delivery truck would be travelling from Kosice to Sobrance. I was instructed to polish my shoes and to get ready to go to Podhorod, a village near Sobrance, to visit my Babika (grandmother) who lived with my uncle, Shmuel Winkler, and his family. My uncle was the manager of a sawmill, a temporary employment. After

a gruelling trip riding on the top of an open truck with a young girl (not related), we finally arrived in Sobrance and from there I transferred to a horse and cart to travel to Podhorod. It was my very first vacation ever and I was excited to be with my cousins. Such an adventure!

My uncle lived in a castle in the middle of the forest in the Carpathian mountains. Eagles would swoop down and steal the chickens. White storks would nest in the trees

for everyone to see. I had such a great time with my cousins, going to picnics, picking wild strawberries and raspberries, going horseback riding (without a saddle) up the mountain to pick half raw hazelnuts which was a great delicacy. We would jump from the rooftops into piles of sawdust. In the midst of all these pleasures there was my grandmother with her majestic presence, instructing my cousins to pray, and to learn the prayers by heart as she herself was able to do. Her reputation for wisdom and

We were also joined in Lodz by another cousin from the US on the Fabershevitch family branch. So in April 2004 there was an "international family gathering" in Lodz of distant cousins from Melbourne, London and Los Angeles.

Dad did not talk much about his early life in Poland. One of my earliest memories was my knowledge that all Dad's family had perished in the Holocaust. Occasionally he would tell us stories, but I did not know what actually happened except that his Mother and he were on one of the last transports from the Lodz ghetto to Auschwitz and that his Mother perished in the gas chambers.

Dad had always wanted to obtain copies of his and his siblings birth certificates. He obtained short extracts from the Register of Births in 1989, which made him very excited. The details were very sparse. His youngest Sister's date of birth was wrong as was his Brother's name "Andrzej" instead of "Moshe". Dad said these were just "beaurocratic" errors.

In Lodz we arranged to meet an archivist who had helped Salek obtain copies of his Family's Birth Certificates and Marriage Certificates. My cousins started to research our Favarshevitch family, we have a family tree going quite far back into the 1700's. So, I decided to look into Dad's Rozensztrauch family, as I had few details.

Unfortunately, we ran out of time and I left Poland without getting hold of copies of any documents (even though the archives are now open, researching is very

time consuming), but I ordered copies of the birth certificates to be posted to London.

On my return home, my brother asked me "Well, did you find anything?" I laughed. He was curious as to why I should decide, quite out of the blue, to visit Poland. What did I hope to find? "Nothing", I said. I had no expectations. Of course, we had heard stories, but I had not gone to Poland to look for living family. Dad was very positive they had all perished. I quizzed him just once about what had happened. His eyes filled with tears. No one had survived. Why should I doubt him? And after so much time, how could it be possible to find anyone.

Dad had gone back to Lodz twice after the war (in 1945 and in the early 1960's) and found nothing, so how was it possible that I could find anyone after so much time had passed, particularly as Dad was no longer with us.

After I returned in April 2004, there followed a long silence. I sent some reminder emails to the Archivist, but they bounced back.

Then I received an email at the end of August from the Archivist. It was very long, lots of records of Rozensztrauch's in the Lodz ghetto. Rozensztrauch was a fairly common name (perhaps) or maybe we had a huge family. I knew that my Grandfather had seven siblings. I was aware that two of them had survived the war. My Father's Aunt Roza was married and living in France, although their only son, Marcel, was taken and perished in a concentration camp. Dad's Uncle Moshe, I

believed was living in London with his family, wife Rachel and 2 young sons, Marcel and Simon.

I printed out page after page of Rozensztrauch's living in the Lodz ghetto and started going through them. I found grouped together something that astonished me. Five names: my father, his mother and father and his grandparents. Full names, dates of birth and occupations listed as well as the one address that they shared. My father had never spoken of anyone other than his Mother in the ghetto. So now I knew that part of the family was together. However, my father's 2 sisters and brother were not listed. What had become of them? I guessed I would never find out.

The last page I turned to had the most exciting discovery in store. It listed the four Rozensztrauch children of my grandfather Nuta Majer Rozensztrauch. The youngest daughter first. Her name, date of birth, her father's full name, Brzeziny (town of permanent residence) father's occupation and age, mother's name and age. A final column - "Remarks" Signature: Nuta Majer Rozensztrauch. I glanced at the rest of the list. The entry next to my father's name, Lajb and his oldest sister, Sura were the same. But there were 14 condensed lines of remarks next to my father's brother's name, translated into English by the archivist. I gulped hard. I could not take them in. I read and re-read the entry over and over.

1955 Registry Office in Wabrzych: "Abram Mojesz" changed into "Andrzej" and



*Gates at Auschwitz.*

Our visit to Auschwitz was followed by a trip to Grandpas old house. The only remains are the back fence and his garden. From Grandpas hometown, we went to Chelmno. Chelmno is a place of mass graves for the thousands killed. There were too many for each to have their own gravestone, so there was a monument placed there for them all, with the word 'Pamientamy' – 'We remember'.

My experience of visiting

Poland is a memory that will stay with me for the rest of my life. I am grateful that I not only understand everything that happened, but was able to witness it, and I am truly thankful that my Grandpa survived. In my eyes, he is a hero. I will pass on what I have learnt to my children and grandchildren.

We will not forget, we will remember.

Jeni Obuchowski

## Rozensztrauch; Remembered Rejoined and Rejoiced

It wasn't my idea to re-visit Poland in April 2004. Salek Benedikt, my Father's friend from Lodz, where they both grew up as close neighbours, told me I must go. He was most emphatic. I had to get copies of my father's, his brother and two sisters birth certificates. The photocopies would have on them my grandfather's signature. A link to my father's past. Something I had not seen before.

My Father, Laib Rozensztrauch (Leo Robeson) died in 1994. My Mother, Pauline just 16 months later in 1995.

I thought this idea of Salek's was an excellent way for me to remember Dad, re-visit Lodz (I was last there in 1978) and revisit the past by getting copies of these documents which Dad had tried unsuccessfully to obtain.

In 1978, Dad had arranged a trip to Poland for me (as he did not have British citizenship he was unable to go), so

Suzanne Gainsley

I was his envoy. I had to obtain a visa and an invitation. Dad had made contact through his business with some Poles from Lodz and so he arranged people for me to stay with and an interesting itinerary of places to visit. In 1978, Poland was not on my list of "must see" countries. I loved to travel to exotic places, but Poland, I envisaged as uninteresting and grey. I was also nervous about my visit, as I would be travelling with and staying with strangers. These contacts were unknown to Dad. It was an eye opening trip and I had a whirlwind 10 day tour of everything Dad had planned for me except Auschwitz. I froze at the sound of the name. I could not face it.

Lodz was top of Dad's list. I found it a sad decaying town. I was very disappointed that I could not find Dad's family's flat. The building numbers had been

changed and no one seemed to remember the pre-war street numbering, even though the war had ended only 33 years before. This first trip was the start of my fascination for Poland and my interest in its tragic recent history, which had devastated my family like millions of others.

Life is full of coincidences. A chance meeting on a London Street with his old school friend, Wolf Fabershevitch from Lodz, led to my parent's marriage. Wolf was staying with his Auntie Sophie (my Grandmother). Another coincidence occurred whilst I was planning my second trip to Poland in April 2004. I had made outline plans for my Polish trip and emailed one of my Mum's cousins in the US. She told me that my Mother's cousin Wolf, now age 80 years and living in Australia, was also going to Lodz with his son in April. Sadly, I had lost touch with Wolf after my parents died, so we arranged to meet in Lodz.

knowledge was widely known, and she was treated with tremendous respect as the matriarch of a large and distinguished family.

I returned home with my memories, and these memories have stayed with me forever. Sadly, a few weeks later, news came to us in Kosice that my grandmother had passed away. It was a dreadful loss for the entire family and particularly for my mother who had abundant love and respect for her. Unfortunately my mother did not go to the funeral. In fact, if I recall correctly, the family kept it a secret for thirty days so that she should not have to sit shiva.

Travel was hard in those days, so my mother never managed to visit the gravesite of her beloved mother, my grandmother, and shortly afterwards my uncle and his family moved to a different location and my Zaidika (grandfather) came to live with us. We only had two bedrooms and kitchen for a very large family. How we managed is completely beyond my comprehension. I was the second youngest of eleven children, but I was the one to whom my mother would say: "Shishu, when you grow up, you will have a car, and you will take me to Podhorod to Kaver Avos to visit my mother's grave."

My mother was a woman of great intellect and knowledge. In spite of all her responsibilities she read constantly, also reading the Tsenna V'Renna (Parsha of the Week) to the neighbourhood women. On Tisha B'Av the women would sit around her and she would read to them the Book of

Lamentations in Yiddish. Although it was a very religious community, lots of the women had no opportunity to learn to read, and there was plenty of shedding of tears as the living conditions were very hard for most people.

Mother was also a great lover of nature. At every opportunity she would take me and the youngest two sisters to the nearest mountains or to the river banks, especially on Shabbos morning. All my friends would tag along and she was the Scoutmaster.

Meanwhile, dark clouds were gathering over Europe, with Hitler barking away at the Jews. When the Hungarian Army took over our town, most people were cheering, but my mother came home crying, sensing that things were going to deteriorate. It did not take very long before my brothers were called up into labour camps, and the war years became harder and harder.

In 1940 my Zaidy died on a bitter cold day in February. The funeral was from my home. I slept in the same room as him, and my mother awoke me and told me I must get up because he had died. All my aunts and uncles came to the funeral and I remember my father giving the hesped.

In 1942 I went to Budapest to learn a trade. I lived in a home for young men where we learned a trade during the day, and had to spend time on Jewish studies in the evenings. In March, 1944 Germans took over Hungary and began the deportation of Hungarian Jewry. I managed to get home to Kosice for a while to be with my family in the Ghetto, but after

the deportation I was able to escape to Budapest. My parents and sisters were deported to Auschwitz. My parents, two married brothers and their families, as well as my five sisters, all perished in the Holocaust.

After the war my mother's prediction that I would have a car came true, but I no longer had my mother and most of my family were gone.

In 1955 I married in London, England, and soon afterwards we emigrated to Canada where two of my brothers lived. There was a trend towards emigration at that time, and perhaps I also remembered my mother's words of advice. At the time of the deportation from Kosice she encouraged me to escape. When we said goodbye, I asked her what I would do if I was left alone after the war, and she reassured me that I would meet up with my brothers again. My brother David was with the Czech army and my brother Benjamin was with the British army.

In 1992 my cousin Miriam Popper, who lived in Israel, told us that she had recently visited another cousin in Kosice who would really be interested in hearing from us, and if possible, receiving a visit from us. After much soul searching, my wife and I decided to go to Kosice to visit this cousin, Magda Novotna. It was no easy task fifty years later to go back to the town that had ejected me and destroyed my family and all its Jewish population.

The town had grown from a population of 75,000 to 300,000, and had become an industrial city for the Russians who discovered iron ore and other minerals there.

It looked totally different and the street that we lived on does not even exist anymore. Large apartment blocks have been built on that site. The synagogues are in a terrible condition. Although there are about 500 Jews still living in this city, there is no minyan during the week, and hardly on the Sabbath. There is a Kosher chicken slaughter house which is still open - though not used, yet the smell of the chickens still lingers.

There is a Jewish community office and there I found the entry of my grandfather's burial, the row etc. Like all Holocaust survivors, the only thing we can look for are the graves of previous grandparents who died of natural causes, in order to form a connection with the past.

We went with our cousin to the very rundown, neglected cemetery in Kosice to find the grave. Unfortunately we could not find it, although I remember clearly being at the funeral and recalled where the plot was. This suggests that the monument fell over and sank below the ground.

Saying good-bye to my cousin Magda, her daughter Evey and grandson Franto was not easy. When we left, Magda came to the train station with us and, as the train pulled away, begged us "not to forget them" Since then her grandson and our grandson communicate by e-mail and we keep in touch by telephone and mail.

In 1996 I wrote to her to see if she could find out if the cemetery in Podhorod still exists, and if she could obtain further information about it. This task did not take her

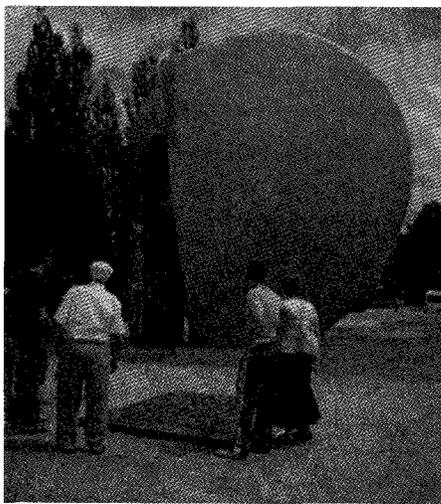
very long, and she had detailed information that there were about a dozen graves there. There was registration that my grandmother died in 1934, with her maiden name etc. We wanted to have the information, thinking that perhaps one day we would try to go there, as I was ever mindful of my mother's wistful request to me all those years before. The thought persisted that maybe we should go back once more to Kosice and, possibly, to Podhorod, although we did not give much credence to the possibility that we would actually find something there.

When we visited Israel in May, 1998 we decided to go back to Kosice on the way home to Canada. When we arrived Magda arranged a car and a driver, and the very next morning off we drove to Podhorod which is about one and a half hours from Kosice by car. We passed through a spot called Dargo Pass where an enormous battle took place between the Germans and the Russians, with thousands of casualties on both sides. A monument was erected to mark the spot in memory of the Russian soldiers who died there. We passed through many villages and small towns where hundreds of Jews had lived before the war. Now the area is completely "Judenfrei". One of the places was Secovce, where my second oldest brother Shaya got married.

In Podhorod we went directly to a large administration centre, a sort of town hall, in a big though deserted building. In one of its rooms we were greeted by a secretary who asked us why

we had come. She had no idea about a Jewish cemetery. She took us to the administrator who is a Justice of the Peace, and my cousin told him in Slovakian what we were searching for. We got no reaction from him. In fact, he made it clear that he was from a generation in which no Jews existed in that region. After persistent conversation on the part of my cousin Magda, he "softened" and said that there were two elderly men in the village who attend church every week, and who perhaps might remember the Jewish cemetery. He sent his secretary on foot to bring one of them to his office.

Finally, the secretary returned with an elderly gentleman who used a walking cane. We asked him if he remembered the Jewish cemetery and, if so, whether he would take us there. He acknowledged that he remembered my uncle, Mr. Winkler, and also the owner of the sawmill, Mr. Ehrenberg. The sawmill no longer exists and the castle where my uncle and his family lived is now in ruins. It was hard to believe that this gentleman really knew where the cemetery was, but he told us that it was up the mountain, a long walk, but he was quite willing to take us. The car that we travelled in could not go through the fields or climb the steep slopes. We finally came to a forest, which was completely overgrown with nettles, bushes, thorns and high grass. My wife and cousin could not manage the walk because of their skirts, so they waited while my guide and I set out to investigate further.



***Children's Memorial at Lodz.***

bullied into the nearby river and held him in there with his feet in the freezing ice. Since that day, he was never bullied, even though the mother of the bully came in the next day and verbally abused him.

Grandpa was only fourteen when the Germans came to the ghetto in Ozorkow, and prepared to send everyone who lived there to a death camp at Chelмно. All of the Jews were to gather in the main school and undress completely. They were then stamped with either a letter A or B on their bare chests. Everyone was confused and Grandpa and his friends even messed around by saying "I've got an A, you've got a B". 80% were stamped with a B, including Grandpa's parents, grandfather, and one sister. The B's were taken away. That was the last time Grandpa saw them.

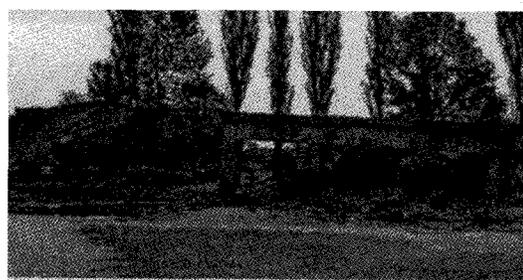
Grandpa and his other sister were sent away, with the others stamped with an A to a ghetto in Ozorkow. They were then transferred to Lodz 6 weeks later. In September 1944, Grandpa was sent to Birkenau with his sister. The men and boys were to sit in front of the Germans. 25 were chosen, including grandpa. The 25 of them were sent to a hut and

told to undress for inspection, to see if they were fit for work. In the Lodz ghetto, the top of Grandpa's leg had decomposed and he was in a coma for 6 days. He was left lying in his own urine, deteriorating the flesh and leaving a gap in the bone. This scared Grandpa, as his problem was obvious. The other 24 helped Grandpa by standing closely behind him and next to him so that the Germans wouldn't notice. They saved his life; if the Germans saw Grandpa's leg, he would have been killed.

When Grandpa got off of the train at the platform in Birkenau, it was the last time he ever saw his sister. Grandpa was in Birkenau for 8 hours only; he was then made to march to Auschwitz. The ground was inches thick with snow, and from Auschwitz, Grandpa had to walk to Rehmsdorf, wearing only his striped pyjamas, no underwear or shoes.

Grandpa told me that Rehmsdorf was 'hell on earth', and the worst camp of all. Grandpa broke his foot whilst in the camp. He was sent to 'hospital' where a cast was fitted. One of the inmates came to Grandpa the following morning to tell him that he has to go to work. Grandpa took off his cast so that he could work properly. At the end of the day, he went back to the hospital. It was empty. All of the patients had been killed. The inmate saved Grandpa's life. He had overheard a conversation about the hospital being 'cleared'.

Thinking about what my Grandpa went through makes me realise that we take life for granted. Grandpa was only a young



***Remains of crematorium at Auschwitz.***

boy when his family were killed and he was left alone. He told me that many times he gave up. He lay down in a tunnel to die. He was starving, but another prisoner urged him to keep going and not to give up. If it wasn't for that man, I wouldn't be here today.

Some people argue that the Holocaust never happened. How can someone like my Grandpa make such things up? The Germans tried to get rid of the crematoriums and the gas chambers. Any remains were blown up with dynamite, but still, you can see the evidence.

We went to Auschwitz next. I think that it was inappropriate to turn the area into a museum. I think that it should have been left the way it was. As we entered Auschwitz, we walked under a sign, which said 'Arbeit Macht Frei' - 'Work Brings Freedom'. We saw the piles of shoes, hairbrushes, shoe polish, toothbrushes and bags that were taken away from the prisoners. It seemed like the heaps of material went on forever. There were gallows where some prisoners were hung. It was outside the huts so everyone else could see what punishment they would get if they did something wrong. Auschwitz is surrounded by an electric fence. Grandpa told me that some people tried to escape, but they got electrocuted and were killed instantly.

raw inside, despite outward appearances.

The daughter of a Holocaust survivor – her Hungarian mother survived Auschwitz and emigrated to the States in 1945 – Lipkin has made it her life's work to keep the memory of our murdered six million alive. She has toured Europe and the States with her one woman show *What Mother Never Told Me – Reminiscences of a Child of a Holocaust Survivor*. She writes books, lectures in schools. Her energy is endless, her desire to teach and inform, clearly unquenchable.

She entertains and educates through inspired story-telling and leaps like a whirling dervish from one mesmerising tale to another. One minute she's a little girl in Queen's New York, sitting at the table with her survivor

relatives (Mooshie, Tooshie, Nitzy, Pitzy. Hungary's answer to the seven dwarves perhaps?), eating, eating eating...(a symptom, she believes, of being a camp survivor and never knowing whether you'll eat again); the next she's walking with her mother past a factory in Queen's, the chimneys bellowing acrid smoke. Her mother tightly squeezes her little hand. Too tightly. Why the tight grip? Lisa wonders, as any child would. As an adult she now knows the chilling answer but as a child everything was unspoken. A look. A gesture. Something in the air.

The young Lisa imbibed by osmosis the horrors that befell her mother and survivor aunts - "The Gabor sisters of Hungary," chuckles Lipkin, - in that most notorious of Nazi death

camps. And yet, she has turned all this into a positive, not a negative. "We can be victims or we can celebrate our strength," says Lipkin, who is a beaming advert for choosing the latter.

She praises her mother for never mentioning the years she spent as a camp inmate. But she could see the pain in her mother's face; "A face that was hollow and fearful all the time," recalls Lipkin.

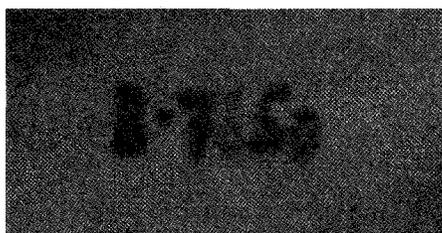
A divorcee, sadly, Lipkin has no children of her own and bravely admits that this may be because of her tainted upbringing. Now in her early 40s she says this is the first time she has felt ready for that challenge. Please G-d. She would make a wonderful mother.

Annabel Goldstaub

## The reason for my visit to Poland

Looking out of the window on the way to Birkenau, and thinking about the disastrous events that I would be learning about over the next few days was nothing that I could ever have expected. As we drew closer and closer to the 'museum', the atmosphere changed dramatically from the colourful noisy towns, to a dull grey slummy area, and eventually to a bare area, the existence of the now deserted prison camp. The smiling faces disappeared gradually, and were replaced with sad, shocked and angry ones. Nothing could have prepared me for the disbelief that hit me, and everyone else arriving at the camp. The

*B-7650 - Bob Obuchowski's prisoner tattoo*



large tower like entrance separated the real world, from a land filled with memories of torture and death. As we walked past the railway, I found it difficult to take in what my grandpa was telling me.

### **This is his story...**

Grandpa was born on 28th April 1928 in a small town called Ozorkow. About 20% of the population was Jewish.

Grandpa attended the local state school, and he went to cheder classes 3 times a week after school. He spoke Polish at school and Yiddish at home. Grandpa lived with his parents, his grandfather, his two sisters and his brother. Grandpa was the youngest of the four children. They lived in a bungalow, and his father owned a couple of horses and carts. The family made money by renting out one of their rooms, and also by selling hardware and groceries. At school, Grandpa was tough. He stood up for himself, and he looked out for others. He remembers an incident where two bullies were punching a Jewish boy. Grandpa dragged one of the

My guide, Mr. Senic, used his cane to try and make a pathway through the overgrown area. On the way we came across footprints belonging to animals. At some point he told me we were very close to the Ukrainian border. I kept asking him if he really knew where the cemetery was, but then we came to a spot where there were a few monuments, though the writing was not at all legible. The sky turned black, with much thunder and lightening. I suggested that we leave, but he insisted that we continue looking. Just then we saw a big tree and a tall monument standing upright at one side.

I could hardly decipher the writing because it had faded so, but with a pounding heart I managed to read the name Faiga, and on the second line the name Shlomo. One of my uncles had been called Shlomo - he had been named after my grandmother's father. This confirmed that here indeed was the monument we were searching for. It was a very traumatic experience. We took pictures of the monument, and eventually we emerged from the

forest, wondering how the two women were holding out after being left alone in the middle of nowhere, with no other person in sight. None of us could believe that we had actually found the grave, 64 years later.

We made our way down to the village and took our guide, Mr. Senic to a bar in the village to buy him a beer. We began to negotiate with him to clear the area and renovate the monument. We also asked him to send us a picture of his finished work. For this we would remunerate him, and of course we paid him for his initial efforts on our behalf.

We left him a paint brush and black paint given to us for this purpose by my cousin, Zev Winkler, who had lived in Podhorod with my grandmother and now resides in Israel. We bade him farewell, having no idea if we would ever hear from him again.

Within four weeks a letter arrived with pictures of the newly renovated monument, completely restored, with all the wording completely legible. He sent us pictures showing him with paint

brush in hand. It was a miracle to behold! In addition he wrote to us requesting that we translate the Hebrew inscription because he would like to know about the lady who was buried there and what exactly he was writing about her.

We truly believe this man is a "righteous gentile" since he was so sincere in the help he gave in restoring the monument. He is also now willing to help a friend of mine whose ancestors are buried in another place in Sobrance. My cousin in Kosice is trying to arrange this.

In conclusion, I wondered what made us make such an effort to look for something that was from so long ago, with little hope of achievement. Now I know: it was truly in honour of my mother who wanted me so much to take her there one day. That never happened. It was all for her - my dearest mother - whose grave I can never visit.

The eagles still swoop down. The white storks with their babies sit atop for everyone to see, such a unique and beautiful sight. Picturesque scenery - in a tortured land.

## Never again, L'chaim

Robert Sherman

“Never Again!” The familiar slogan used to assure ourselves and the world that a Holocaust will never again be permitted to happen. It sounds good. It feels right. Yet we know that even if the Holocaust, as the Jews know it and define it, never happens again, nevertheless, the world is filled

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

with ongoing examples of hate, dehumanization, terror, and murder. Historically, it has ever been so. Driven by

competition for land and resources, the thirst for power and conquest, the desire to be superior and above all others, and the fierce bugle calls of ideologies, men learn to hate, to plunder and to murder as something glorious and heroic. It is the “right” thing to do. So taught the Nazis,

their predecessors and their successors. The more cruelly done, the more honour to be achieved. The path to glory is through destruction.

For Jews this is a continuing two-sided story that goes back to slavery in Egypt and the Exodus and further back to God's blessing to Abraham that his descendants would be a blessing to mankind. The success of the Patriarchs evoked jealousy and fear in the hearts of their neighbours. Pharaoh was terrified that the Jews would join Egypt's enemies and destroy the Egyptians. The Jews left their persecutors and sought out new lands.

In each place and in each time, where the Jews left, the countries they left suffered the loss of their blessings - their incredible contributions to the land and its culture. But immigration to new lands and societies is difficult. Every generation of immigrants and refugees suffered the trauma of their previous persecution and loss of the familiar and the necessity of acquiring new languages, customs, homes, and livelihoods among strangers. They strove to be both Jewish and somehow rid themselves of being the hated "other." They strove to do this by hard work and by making important contributions to their new lands and societies. Usually, they succeeded,

until some new round of hatred toward Jews was fired up to persecute, kill, and drive them out. The Jews have had golden ages in many lands all over the globe. The Jew became a blessing for mankind by becoming the "Wandering Jew," bringing his blessings with him wherever he sojourned.

This is the experience of the members of the '45Aid Society. Surviving the loss of all that was dear to them and emerging from the bowels of hatred, death and destruction, they took on the mantle of the wandering Jew, who sojourns in a new land, somehow establishes a place for himself, and then miraculously brings blessings to its people and culture. Certainly the members have been making major contributions in all the lands of their dispersion despite their terrible losses and dislocations. This is true heroism, to emerge from the depths and create much good upon the ashes of the past. Jews are well practiced in such enterprises.

The story continues. We live in a world split by those people and nations who preach and practice humanitarian respect and concern for human dignity and freedom, and those who preach and teach hatred and practice terror and murder of the designated "others, including, of course, the Jews.

In today's fast paced world, fuelled by ever increasing technologies, we must be nimble and fast. When we pronounce "Never Again," we have to hasten to act to marshal the forces of decency in the world to not stand by, but to take forceful and deliberate action to both restrain and to retrain the forces of hate. We need to employ both power and education to accomplish this goal.

Many members of the '45Aid Society are active in Holocaust education, political lobbying, enlisting the media, teaching our children and grandchildren to join us, and in many other ways engaging against the growth of evil among us. With anti-Semitism once more on the rise and Israel besieged, we have no choice but to use our energies to their fullest to make "Never Again" a reality and not just a slogan. In this fast paced technological world we have little time to marshal the forces of decency. We do not have the privilege of being bystanders, for we know "they will come for us."

In all of its activities the Society and its members stand for life ñ the epitome of life. You model human decency and respect for life. You inspire all who know you and your personal stories. I am grateful for that inspiration. It is a blessing to mankind. Just like God said to Abraham.

Art. I decided against Fine Art, with the understanding that a career and making a living comes first, and my first choice became Graphic Design. My painting of Poland was accepted by the curator of the Yad Vashem art gallery, to my very great honour. The Chagall-based painting hangs in one of the administrator's offices at Yad Vashem, too.

I made aliyah in 1989, and studied graphic design for 4 years in Haifa, where I met my husband, Ilan. I then worked in Haifa at a design firm and an advertising agency, at which point we moved to London for two years. There, I was fortunate to land a great job designing at a Saatchi & Saatchi Group company, and went on to work in various freelance positions, including a few months at the prestigious Foster and Partners. We returned to Israel in 2000, where I set up my own design business working from home, and enjoying the best of both worlds, allowing me to work at convenient hours and look after our daughters, Eden, born in 2002, and Mika, born in 2004. I now design for the high tech world, mainly with

clients in the USA. My work comprises brochure design, direct mail and ads, logos, and lately I have been very fortunate to design a number of exciting books which have been successfully marketed internationally.

During all this time of intense study, work, travel, business and family time, my art became something of a luxury, and was pushed aside until sporadically the need to create became too great, and I would find myself painting, drawing, and making computer-generated illustrations in the dark of night. The subject of the Holocaust also took a back seat. Although I have continued to explore its effect on me and my family, I found that it was not something I could speak about without feeling foolish, and so I stopped talking about it altogether. Then, last year, I stumbled across a message on the internet about a group for Second Generation English speakers, where finally I found that there are others, even my age, with similar issues in common. It was a revelation to hear others talking about the miracle that we are here on

this earth, and it was comforting to feel that my experiences and feelings are similar to others'. I am also learning how important it is to educate my children in a way that will not leave them scarred or traumatised, but rather empowered. The group here is very young and still beating out a path and a direction - do we want to fundraise for Holocaust survivors who are below the poverty line? Do we want to educate? Do we want to talk about our experiences or keep the "therapy" part strictly out of the group?

And for me, something beautiful has come out of this group. When I showed the photographs of my high school paintings to the group, the response was so positive that I have decided to put my art back on the agenda and to somehow become an artist, as well as manage my business. I don't yet know what that will encompass or what form it will take, but I am honoured to be acknowledged by the London Second Generation website, and hope to keep the site posted with this new career as/when it takes off!

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## An evening with Lisa Lipkin – Story Teller extraordinaire

From the moment Lisa Lipkin steps on stage, you know you are in for a treat. Honey haired and voluptuous (a kindred Danish lover, I wonder?) she exudes an inner glow and owns the stage like few people can. She has the 200 strong audience at Belsize

*Annabel Goldstaub reviews Lisa Lipkin's extraordinary performance at Belsize Square Synagogue on Monday 20th November 2006*

Park silenced for over an hour, and, as we all know, that's no mean feat.

I had expected a watered-down Bette Middler with a

sharp tongue and razor wit. Don't get me wrong, Lisa has humour the size of Brent Cross, but her delivery is warm and wise and very gentle. She respects that her audience is made up of survivors and second and third generation and that emotionally many of us are

# Liora Blum – Second Generation Artist

I was born in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1970, to my South African mother, Linda, and my (late) Hungarian/Israeli father, Sanyi. I remember knowing, at a very early age, that my father was different in behaviour, culture and thinking to anyone else around us. Although he was a fun-loving man who adored me and my younger brother, Ilan, he carried a sadness with him which he rarely talked about, but his story was a source of both horror and fascination for me. As a child becoming aware of the Holocaust, I read every book that I could find about the subject. When I heard about Holocaust denial, I was impelled to give a speech at my school (a Jewish day school) about the effects of the past on our daily lives, about the nightmares, the paranoia, and my outrage at this crime.

At age 13, thanks to our Family Roots Project at school, my father agreed to be taped in an interview with me, when he finally told his story and answered so many questions about life before, during and after the war. He told me about his grandparents and their Judaism, the festivals which they had celebrated before the war. He told of the beatings by gangs of children at school, about the war and the ghetto in Budapest where he was forced to live with his mother, two brothers and sister. Most heart-wrenching for me was how he had clandestinely sneaked out of the ghetto to meet his father who was taken as a slave labourer in the Hungarian army, how

their last meeting never happened. They had arranged to meet at a bridge, but his father never appeared. My father kept returning to that meeting place, never to see his father again. It is a pain that I cannot imagine, a trauma of never knowing exactly what happened, of sifting through the claims of people who said that they had witnessed his death.

After the war and some great miracles which saved their lives, my father and his remaining family made their way to Palestine on the Exodus, only to be returned to live in Hamburg for another two years until 1948, when Israel became a State and they finally had a place that they could call home. He lived proudly as an Israeli, learned Hebrew and, together with his brothers, learned the trade of cabinet making, and enjoyed many good times with his friends. He also served in Tsahal in the wars, along with his brothers. In 1969, he met my mother, who was living in Israel for a year, and after getting married in Israel, they went to South Africa on honeymoon, where they ended up staying and starting a family.

Sadly, my father died of a sudden heart attack when I was 15, while I was on the plane going to Israel with a school group. It was to be my first trip to Israel and my first meeting with his beloved family. I fell in love with the country and decided I would come to live once I finished school.

Back in South Africa, I became very involved in my

favourite subject - Art. I was constantly painting and looking at the world from different angles, I was in love with art history and all the famous artists, especially Picasso and Chagall. My paintings centred around the Holocaust theme, though I also enjoyed painting portraits and making quick pen and pencil sketches. At age 18, I heard there was going to be a March of the Living in 1988 in Auschwitz. I was fired with determination to participate and see for myself what I had only read about or seen in movies until then, and to discover more about my father's family and my roots. I took with me a sketch book/diary, and constantly drew my impressions of the things that met my eyes. I remember sitting near the ruins of one of the gas chambers in Birkenau, sketching the bleak view of the broken concrete, with the infamous entrance building in the background. I returned home to paint "Freedom and Claustrophobia," depicting the Warsaw Ghetto rising up out of the horror all around. I then painted my impressions of Poland, viewed from the aeroplane window, with a scene of Warsaw roads and ancient gargoyles, leading in to Auschwitz. My last painting from school was called "Inside/Outside", where I based the characters on a Chagall painting where a man lovingly gives a bunch of flowers to his cow; only in my painting, the man becomes Hitler, offering the cow a knife.

I received the Art prize at Valedictory, and knew that I wanted to pursue a career in

# Adopt a survivor programme

Irving Roth

Dear Ben,

*I am enclosing the article on the "Adopt A Survivor" program. As you can see, it was written by Irving Roth of the Holocaust Resource Center in Manhasset, New York. Several of our local schools in New Jersey have adopted and implemented this program. Together with other survivors I have been involved in this project.*

*I met with my student, a high school senior, several times. Her mother came with her and videotaped our meetings. These tapes have been made into a DVD and are being used for educational purposes. What makes the tape especially meaningful is my student's ongoing reactions to each of our meetings.*

*In addition to committing to tell the survivor's testimony, each student also commits to tell the story in 2045 on the 100th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.*

*Our most recent community Yom Ha'shoah presentation consisted of four students who told the story of their adopted survivor with special additional focus on life after liberation. My student was one of the presenters to an audience of over 500. This program was also video-taped and will be distributed for educational uses.*

*Our local schools repeat this program yearly with different students adopting the survivors.*

Judith Sherman

## Adopt a survivor

### Extending the Life and Legacy of a Holocaust Survivor

The objective of this program is to transfer the life experiences of a Holocaust survivor to a student and to take him on a journey through the life of a survivor. By this personal journey the student becomes one with the survivor, absorbing his life, spirit and soul. The student will be able to represent the survivor and tell the survivor's story with accuracy and feeling to any audience for at least another 50 years.

### Value of Survivor Testimony in the Classroom

History that is taught in a classroom environment is often presented as dates and locations of events and major figures that were involved in the events. While this is essential, it does not provide a detailed account of the conditions and circumstances of the people affected. Modern technology, videos and CDs are of great help in giving a dramatic visualisation on the history of the Shoah as told by many survivors. However, producers and directors tend to give their interpretations of the event from their own perspective rather than an eyewitness account as the survivor remembers it and lived it.

Personal testimony by survivors has been extremely successful in transmitting and reinforcing Holocaust

information to students. Seeing and hearing an eyewitness describe his experiences makes history interesting. Students easily identify with a survivor and therefore with the Shoah itself. They have an opportunity to ask questions as to specifics of historical events intertwined with personal experiences over an extended time.

Unfortunately, Holocaust survivors are ageing and dying and the availability of live eyewitness accounts becoming less available and will not exist for future generations. In order to retain this personal testimony and memory, a program of "Adopting a Survivor" was implemented, with great success, in ten schools over three years with high school, college and graduate students.

The program pairs a survivor with one, two or three students for an extended number of sessions where the students and survivor form an integral unit and absorb the totality of the survivor's experience before, during and after the Holocaust.

To ensure that the students absorb and digest the "total" survivor's experience, the following topics, minimum, must be covered in great detail:

- The history of the country where the survivor was born and lived
- The relationship between Jews and non-Jews in the 19th and 20th century up to W.W.II
- Life style of Jews in general and survivor's

- family in particular
- Detailed knowledge of parents and grandparents, with specific anecdotes
- Religious, social, economic and educational life of Jews and non-Jews in community
- Details of life of survivor from earliest recollection to point of transition (1930s)
- Liberation, return to home, DP camp, waiting to emigrate
- Life in the new land – housing, job, education, marriage, children
- Philosophy of life – relationship to others, prayer, religious observance, reconciliation

The student examines and absorbs the attitude, spirit and soul of the survivor. He becomes a biographer interpreter and the alter ego of the survivor. As he gains insight, he will be able to represent the totality of the survivor's experience with accuracy and feeling which

he can then transmit today and fifty years from now to any audience. In effect, the specific survivor's testimony becomes part of the student's soul, thus extending testimony of the survivor for another 50 years.

The program has been implemented in areas where there are survivors available who can meet students. For the first time this year, we are conducting the program via internet and video-conferences. The result of the internet/video-conference program will be available during the summer of 2001.

#### **Adopt a Survivor Program in Europe:**

This program can be accomplished by inviting a survivor who once inhabited a particular city or town for a two week period. He spends most of his time with students. This would give the students an opportunity to see their town through the eyes of a survivor. The relationship of the students with a living survivor from their

own town would provide insight as well as a desire to probe and research into why the Jews are living there and the contribution they made to their local environ. This experience would become part of their own history as well as the fabric of their town. The students will be able to hear first hand testimony as a step-by-step process the survivor experienced from being part of a community, to being separated and shunned, to being evicted and taken to concentration camps and eventually emigrating to start a new life. They would see Jews as individual human beings rather than some amorphous mass.

For more information on the Adopt a Survivor Program, you may contact me on the internet at [irving.roth@gte.net](mailto:irving.roth@gte.net) or by mail to the address given above.

By Irving Roth  
Holocaust Resource Centre –  
Temple Judea Manhasset.

## **Memories of Koeln (Cologne) A/RH.**

**1933 – 1939 LIFE FOR ME IN GERMANY**

### **Manna Friedmann**

Dear Ben,

After receiving your Journal, issue no. 30, 2006, I promised you my contribution. I apologise for the delay for I find it very difficult to write about it and I will try to put it into a letter to you.

I found the Journal with pictures of the survivors talking to the Queen of England in commemoration of 'Memorial Day' Yom Ha'shoa, so moving.

*Manna was the wife of the late Oscar Friedmann and was very much involved with the little children, especially those who were liberated in Theresienstadt. She keeps in touch with them to this day.*

In a "retrospective journey", p. 28, William Samelson writes: "I don't live in the past but the past has a way of intruding into my life

daily".... How true this is for me.

I am 91 years old and, for the past five years, I have been living in "Twining Village", an interdenominational community for retired seniors in Pennsylvania U.S.A. I was brought over from London, England, by my niece Hannah Cohen (daughter and only child of my older brother) who lives here with her husband Gene. Most of my life I have lived in

tance. She is now doing a special Holocaust project in her history class.

Ariel accompanied me to Ravensbruck Concentration Camp in Germany last April to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the camp. I was a prisoner in the camp at her age. Therefore, the experience had an especially profound impact on her.

Ariel has practically memorized my recently published memoir, "Say the Name: A Survivor's Tale in Prose and Poetry" (the University of New Mexico Press).

Ariel represents the experience of the third generation here in the U.S. We need to hear from and support this generation in their commitment to remember the Holocaust and its message. Therefore, I hope you will consider publishing the composition in connection with the upcoming Yom Ha'shoah commemorations.

Judith Sherman.

The "Shoah" occurred sixty years ago: however, the effects are still felt today. The Shoah affected not only survivors' lives, but also the lives of all who have studied it.

Germany, led by Hitler, set out to destroy millions of innocent people in an attempt to create an Aryan "master" race. Most of Hitler's targets could not believe Hitler's threats. Who could have imagined that anything this terrible could take place in a civilized European country? Today, we know it is possible. This knowledge has spurred many

people to act and make their voice heard. History has taught us not to sit in silence, but to speak out and insure that every opinion is acknowledged. If the world had united against Hitler at the beginning of his rule, thirteen million people might have lived to laugh at the silly ruler who tried to conquer the world.

The Shoah has left survivors with nightmares and flashbacks. The Nazis instilled terror and pain into normal, everyday articles. To a survivor, simple objects can bring survivors back to a time when they were less than human. My grandma, a survivor of the Ravensbruck Concentration Camp, has certain rituals and rules she follows, even today. She has taught me to see things through her eyes. Now, when I see a tattoo, I think of the family in Auschwitz losing their identity and becoming a number. When I am in the shower, I am thankful it is water spraying from the faucet, not gas. When I am standing outside in my winter coat and still feel cold, I think of the child in rags standing in the snow without shoes. When I say I am starving, I think of the emaciated bodies of those who were actually starving. When I see a German car, I wonder if the company benefited from the use of slave labour. Other objects trigger emotions: potatoes, bread, stripes, and boots. I look at the world and wonder how it can look the same after such a horrific event, It should look different, changed, dead. There should be signs of the thirteen million people who perished.

After learning about the

Shoah, I think and act differently. I try not to be judgmental or discriminatory. When I witness someone being bullied, I try to stop it. I know what happens when people remain silent. We learn from history, and it is our duty to prevent the horrors of the past from repeating.

On Yom Ha'shoa, the Day of Remembrance, we commemorate all who died in the Holocaust: men, women, and children. We mourn not only the lost generation, but also the generations that would have followed. We mourn the loss of their achievements and their contributions to the world. On Yom Ha'shoa, we remember to embrace "Chai," life. We embrace our own lives as well as the lives of those whose existence was cut short.



**Rosalin Gelbart**  
**speaking on behalf of**  
**the 2nd generation on**  
**Yom Ha'shoah 2006.**

## PRESS RELEASES

Tuesday 19th December 2006

### *Rowan Williams Archbishop of Canterbury*

**O**n the eve of his pilgrimage to Bethlehem with other English Church leaders, the Archbishop of Canterbury commented on the Holocaust Conference which took place last week in Tehran.

He said "last week I was very honoured to attend a dinner in honour of Professor Elie Wiesel given by the Yad Vashem Foundation UK to mark the award to him of an honorary knighthood by the Queen. This was to honour in the most marked way, his services over so many years to Holocaust education." He continued: "Here is a Holocaust survivor whose life has been devoted to ensuring that the knowledge of that greatest of crimes will never be forgotten. In his very life as a survivor, as well as in his life's work he stands as a reproach to all who are tempted to question the stark realities of the Nazi era or to doubt that they could recur."

"It is shameful that in the same week, people whose lives have been wasted in denying the existence of the Holocaust, should have been drawn to an event which seeks under the guise of freedom of speech, to give spurious respectability to their pretensions."

In January this year, on the occasion of the National Holocaust Memorial Day, the Archbishop said: "It is essential for each generation to be able to enter into the terrible events of the Holocaust at the level of knowledge and of feeling.... While it is true that human history has been stained by other genocides, including those of our own generation, the events of the Nazi era stand alone in their nature and causes".

In relation to the pilgrimage, he said: "we shall be making our pilgrimage to the place of Christ's birth, a place of hope. I am conscious that in the place of Christ's crucifixion, there is the record of six million deaths at Yad Vashem. I shall hold both Bethlehem and Jerusalem in my prayers".

## SECTION IV SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION

### We must remember to "Never Forget"

Ariel Sherman

*My 14 year old granddaughter, Ariel, sent me the following composition that she wrote as a high school English assignment in a Wisconsin High School near Milwaukee. After*

*attending a Hebrew day school, this is her first year in a public high school. There are very few Jewish children in the school. Ariel is distressed to discover that*

*the students in this school have no knowledge of the Holocaust and little interest in it. She is making great efforts to inform the teachers and students about the Holocaust and its impor-*

two worlds, the Jewish world inside me, and the Gentile environment. I myself have not experienced life in a concentration camp like Judith Sherman, a contributor to the 'Journal' but my parents and four young brothers did and perished there.

The memory of saying good-bye to them on October 28 1938 at the Haptbahnhof in Koeln never leaves me. That was the first day when I realised that the world had changed.

My parents had emigrated from Poland in 1908, father from Krakow, my mother from Biala Bielitz, and they settled in Koeln where I and, later, my five siblings were born (enclosed photo of the first three, Sam myself and Albert) and where I lived the first twenty-four years of my life.

I went to a private Orthodox Jewish school and joined the Zionist Organisation Hapoel Hamizrachi, and, although born in Germany, we were considered Polish émigrés since we all had Polish passports. I had many Christian friends and Koeln was a friendly place until 1933 when Hitler became State Chancellor. From that day on drastic changes with anti-Semitic overtones were introduced.

We lived in the older part of the city. The Alt-Stadt, where most of the Polish immigrants lived, but about 10 minutes walk from us, Mauritius Steinweg, was the Jugendheim, (Home for the Youth) where young Jewish people met in camaraderie, studying Jewish history and Judaica. Each group, religious or Reform Jews had its teacher



*1930-31 Jodi & David the twins 4½ years old, my mother crocheted the suit for Jodi & David.*

or "Leader" but on Sabbath afternoon all groups met in the Auditorium and sang together, songs in German, Yiddish, Hebrew, taught by Julius Goldberg, a charismatic teacher and musician.

He introduced us to a wonderful book Hava Nashira (Auf, come and sing), published in 1935. These meetings were the highlights of the Jewish teenagers. And while we were singing indoors, out of doors there were changes, ignored by us. Large notices in theatres and movie-houses appeared "Juden Unerwünscht" (Jews are not welcome). Suddenly, there was an influx of Jewish children in our Orthodox school Javneh. Suddenly, new laws appeared.

"Non-Jews are not permitted to work for Jews, private families, or Jewish businesses or stores". Christian employees had to leave Jewish establishments, private or commercial. Jewish doctors were dismissed from non-Jewish hospitals, among them the well-known Professor K. The

number of Jewish artists out of work was growing with speed. The well-known contralto, Ruth K.A., was out of work. At this moment in time, I accepted work as "baby-sitter" in the K. household. Soon my position there changed into becoming "the house-daughter", and when the Christian couple's house-keepers had to leave, I was there to fill the gap.

Now, as the art world was closed for Jewish artists, the Kultur-Bund (culture-guild) was born, created and maintained by philanthropists and artists. Thanks to its existence, Jewish artists like Ruth K.A., found work, and "memories of the past intrude". She was asked to sing in the Kultur-Bund in Dusseldorf the oratorio 'Elijah' and together we travelled by train to Dusseldorf. In the press this concert was reported: "Eine Prophetin Betete Zu Ihren Gott" (a prophetess prayed to her god).

However, soon the growing anti-Semitism turned into violence, such as never had happened before.



***Koeln 1939 with Dora Loeb who emigrated to Palestine in 1940 but returned to Koeln after playing violin under Toscanini! Soon she was deported and died in a camp.***

Synagogues were set on fire and such news in the paper were dismissed as "lies and rumours". Jews were disappearing, deported or emigrated. And I, like in a cocoon, was living and working day and night for my 'foster-family'.

In the evening of November 9th 1938, "Kristalnacht" while the Synagogue in the Roonstrasse was on fire and the books from the Jewish Library were burning in front of it, I took the three children in a taxi to a friend of Professor K., and Ruth K.A., in the suburb of Koeln. We arrived at the house of Professor Statts. Our host opened the door and led us into his study. From above his writing-desk a large picture of Hitler in uniform and swastika looked down on us. The professor turned the picture round and on its back was the picture of his friend,

Professor K., the children's father. "Don't worry", our host whispered, "all this nonsense will soon be over. We are keeping our daughter Elisabeth out of the Hitler Youth as long as possible". (All schoolchildren had to be in the Hitler Youth, in rambler-like uniform with swastika.)

The following morning, I took the children home. When we arrived, a Gestapo official was there questioning the mother about the coin-collection, the family's hobby, but he soon left. At last, while in hiding with a Christian friend, Professor K., received his papers for the family's emigration to the USA and, in December 1938, they left for America. The "Lift" with their belongings was still in the house guarded by a friend, Dora Loeb, and myself. One evening, as I was standing outside the house, a policeman approached me and asked: "What are you doing here?" My answer was: "I live here". The policeman bent down and whispered into my ear: "Why don't you leave here while you can?"

Since women did not have to report to the police in October 1938, I had permission to stay in Germany until 31st July 1939.

I was lucky to receive my permit for England as a "domestic worker" the week before that date.

My brother and his fiancée had received their permits to emigrate to England on teachers' permits and were able to leave in time before me. Kristal-Nacht, November 9th 1938 had been the ultimate signal to leave without delay.

If we Jews in Germany had



***10yrs Salo, 2yrs Albert and 6yrs Manna.***

read Hitler's book Mein Kampf, we might have been aware and recognised that Hitler's evil mind was set to conquer the world by spreading his hatred for the Jews. His Hitler Youth children turned their parents into anti-Semites, into Nazis.

I was never interested in political books; instead I studied Hebrew and music. The book Hava Nashira was published again in the year 2001. It is still my favourite book and it was sent to me by my friend Charlotte Spanier, (the eldest child of the K. family, who lives in Jerusalem with her large family).

I taught these songs in Israel where I lived and worked for six happy years, where I met Oscar Friedman and followed him back to England in 1955.

I hope you, dear Ben, will be able to accept this modest contribution to your next Journal. Wishing you and your family the best of health!

Auschwitz the Führer has ordered the final solution of the Jewish question. Hoess states that the SS had to carry out this order. According to other explanations, there was a chaotic process of decision-making in the Third Reich; the Final Solution was a cumulative radicalisation under the stress of war, involving many people and much improvisation. Hitler was a catalyst rather than a decision maker. However, his final contribution was to continue the 'operation' up to the end of the war, long after everyone knew it was lost. Before committing suicide he said: "Well, we have lanced the Jewish abscess, and the world of the future will be eternally grateful to us"<sup>66</sup>.

The controversy that developed in Germany in 1980s, was an attempt to remove the stigma from the Germans. It questioned whether Jewish Holocaust should be regarded as a unique event or another

example of genocide or other inhuman acts comparable with it, similar to the allegedly equal genocidal events outside the German and European history, the massacre of Armenians, the mass annihilations in the Soviet Union, 'Holocaust on water' after the Vietnam War and wars in Afghanistan. Final Solution is thus relativized to the point that it becomes a quasi "normal" phenomenon of 20th century, and the entire world is responsible for it. But critics point out to important differences between the two systems: thus, Stalinist terror was used to secure political and social objectives, but the Nazi planned extermination had a biological objective.

Others point out that those rejecting the uniqueness of the Holocaust look at it from the perpetrators' point of view only and not of their victims<sup>67</sup>, described in a large number of recent publications of their own accounts.

But German historians find it hard to fit individual testimonies into a 'logical' generalized framework on which their own explanations of the Holocaust is based.

In conclusion, into the witches' brew of the Holocaust, other factors crept in besides anti-Semitism: völkish Nazism, racism and eugenics to make it into reality. There was Hitler's paranoia, his unique personality, the enthusiastic support from his nation, the nature of Nazi regime, effects of propaganda, modern technology in the hands of faceless but efficient bureaucracy, frailty of human nature, erosion of morality by total war and indifference of the outside world.

And finally, one can agree with Tony Kushner, that although the history of the Holocaust has become an integral part of historical consciousness, the Holocaust cannot be explained by 'normal' methods of historical enquiry<sup>68</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Bullock A. *Hitler and Stalin Parallel Lives* p. 825/6

<sup>67</sup> Bullock A. *Hitler and Stalin Parallel Lives*, p. 1056/7

<sup>68</sup> *Different Worlds* by Tony Kushner, in Cesarani, D. (ed.), *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation* p. 246

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in different situations. When somebody is nice to me, I find myself thinking "How will he be in Sobibor?"<sup>56</sup>

Another explanation of Holocaust comes from Ian Kershaw, who claims the underlying cause of Nazi *race* genocide was the Soviet *class* genocide<sup>57</sup>. Hitler saw history as a racial struggle between the superior Aryans and the lowest, the parasitic Jew bent on destroying them. He assumed that through Bolshevism they had killed or let starve to death some 30 million people in truly satanic savagery, in order to secure the rule of a bunch of Jewish literati and stock-market bandits'. It was the twisted Hitler's logic, as Goldhagen calls it, that saw the Nazi 'mission' to destroy 'Jewish Bolshevism' as a joint justification for a conquest for *Lebensraum* for the 'master-race'<sup>58</sup>. Destroying Jewish-Bolshevism was central to a 'war of annihilation' and was linked to the military campaign in the East. Its character was established with the onslaught of the *Einsatztruppen*, backed by the *Wehrmacht*, launched on the first days of invasion, which was to develop into an all-out genocidal programme<sup>59</sup>. The growing barbarism of the war led to an increasing dehumanization of the abstract image of the 'Jew' and an 'internaliza-

tion' of justifying the solution of the 'Jewish Question'<sup>60</sup>. By fighting a barbarous war, German soldiers came to view the industrial murder of millions of people as a logical and unavoidable by-product of their own battle for survival and not a horrendous crime<sup>61</sup>. Murder was norm at the front and there was every reason for its use against the regime's enemies. German troops were brutalised by the scale of the fighting and the horrendous losses they suffered, by hostile geographic and climatic conditions, by their life in most primitive conditions, suffering from exhaustion, frost-bite, infestation, hunger and lack of sleep. It was a return to a primeval confrontation, where the legal and moral traditions of civilization no longer mattered. German troops confronted an alien, primitive people, whom they saw as *Untermenschen*, a confirmation of the humanity being divided into higher and lower categories indoctrinated into them. In line with the Social Darwinism, whatever endangered their existence had to be eradicated.<sup>62</sup>

Arno Mayer argues that the main focus of Hitler's regime was a crusade against Bolshevism and that it was because of the failure of the campaign that Nazis turned

against the Jews. But he ignores the fact that the Nazis have always claimed that Bolshevism and Jews were identical. The war in the East was always presented a struggle against 'Judeo-Bolshevism', as a campaign for eradication of the Jews, the Bolsheviks and the Slavs, the former two destined for physical destruction<sup>63</sup>. It is believed that while the plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe had been conceived and approved in the euphoria of victory, it was fanatically carried out in the years of approaching defeat<sup>64</sup>.

Debates on the explanations of the Holocaust continue, starting with how the responsibility for it is to be distributed. There is clearly Hitler's obsession, a background of widespread racial anti-Semitism and ideological Jew-hatred with readiness to carry out his orders. Two main views emerge. According to one, Hitler's role and his racist ideology are central; there is a continuity between his ideas in the 1920s<sup>65</sup> and the genocidal policies in 1940s, as well as his Reichstag speech on January 31, 1939 – an unequivocal threat to destroy all Jewry – which must be seen as a *cause* of its annihilation.. According to Eichmann in Jerusalem and to Hoess, the commandant of

<sup>56</sup> Rees Laurence, *Auschwitz*, quoting Toivi Blatt, survivor of Sobibor concentration camp, p. 21/22

<sup>57</sup> Kershaw, Ian, *Hitler: Hubris*, p. XXIII

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 141

<sup>59</sup> Kershaw, Ian, *Hitler 1936-45: Nemesis* p. 461

<sup>60</sup> Kershaw, Ian *The 'Hitler Myth'*, p. 247

<sup>61</sup> Cesarani, D. (ed.), *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation*, p. 120

<sup>62</sup> Omer Bartov quoted by Cesarani, D. (ed.), *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation*, p. 122.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 133/134

<sup>64</sup> Browning in Cesarani, D. (ed.), *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation*, p. 145

<sup>65</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*

# They fought back

*I am a member of the 'Boys' who arrived from England in 1945 and a subscriber to the Journal. I am very impressed with the variety of the pieces included in the journal. Even though I live in California, I very much appreciate reading about Holocaust survivors who arrived in England after the war with me. I survived in Poland under false papers. Later, I attended Bunce Court, a school located in Kent, where I stayed from 1945-1948 until the school was closed. In 1950, I moved to the United States and was immediately drafted and served in the U.S. military in the Korea War. After demobilization, I made use of the Korein GI Bill, completed my studies, got married to Pearl and have three sons and seven grandchildren. Currently, I am Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Humboldt State University, Arcata, California, USA.*

I have been teaching courses at Humboldt State University for approximately 30 years including many courses on the Holocaust. Frequently, students ask why the Jews did not fight back or why they walked "like sheep to the slaughterhouse". I respond by explaining that this is an inaccurate perception of the Jewish people and that many Jews fought back valiantly against overwhelming odds.

The inadvertent misuse of the phrase "sheep to the slaughterhouse" came about as a result of the poet laureate of Israel Abba Kovner who asked the people

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in the Vilna ghetto to fight back and join him. Indeed, he was quite successful in recruiting young people to fight with him against the Nazi's. Unfortunately, many people don't have enough information, especially among young Americans, to realize that Jews fought back heroically in many instances. They fought back in the Ghettos, Extermination Camps, in partisan groups in most Nazi occupied countries including France and Yugoslavia, and took part in rescuing children in a number of different places. Space does not allow me to go into great detail other than to mention a few Jewish heroes and heroines.

Wilhelm Bachner, about whom I have written a book, was a Jew from the Warsaw ghetto who spoke perfect Polish and German and who was hired by a Nazi architectural and engineering firm by the name of Kelineer Firma. The owner did not know he had hired a Jew. Bachner became supervisor of a workforce of 800 people consisting of Poles, Ukrainians and of course over 50 Jews. Johannes Kelineer, owner of the firm, did not know he had Jews working in his firm. Bachner secretly assisted Jews, including members of his family, in escaping from the - Krakow and Warsaw ghettos. He was able to give

them false paperwork and identities. Elie Wiesel called Bachner the Jewish Oscar Schindler.

In 1942, Chaika Grossman was able to organize resistance in the Bialystok ghetto and inform other ghettos that resistance was growing. She was able to travel freely from ghetto to ghetto by posing as a Polish Christian woman.

Abba Kovner, the late Israeli poet laureate and the hero of the Vilna ghetto, along with other men and women, faced great danger in taking action to avenge the murder of Jews. In 1970, when he was a visiting poet at the University of California at Berkeley where I was a graduate student at the time, I had the privilege of driving him around and speaking to him personally about his experiences in the Vilna ghetto. Jack Werber helped save 700 children from Buchenwald including my friend, Sidney Finkel, whom Martin Gilbert mentioned in his introduction in the last issue. Roza Robata, of course, is a well-known heroine who, in September 1944, in Auschwitz-Birkenau, smuggled explosive powder in her bra with other young women to help blow up some of the crematoriums. Mordechai Tenenbaum was a resistance leader in several ghettos including Warsaw, Vilna and Bialystok. He established an underground archive that contained substantial and irrefutable evidence of Jews suffering in their struggle against the Nazi murderers. The most famous resistance to Nazi brutality was led by Mordecai

Anilewicz and took place in the Warsaw ghetto. There was heroic resistance outside of the ghetto and camps a well. In France, Dr. Ernest Papanek, an educator and psychologist, bought castles in southern France to serve as shelters for Jewish orphans. Marianne Cohn was one of the heroic young women who were instrumental in rescuing children from the Vichy government in Nazi occupied France. Dr. Bela Elak, when the Nazis and the Hungarian Arrow Cross began to round up Hungarian Jews for extermination, worked with Raoul Wallenberg to save Jewish lives. Hannah Senesz, Haviva Reik and Sara Braverman, these brave heroic women parachuted from Palestine to Hungary, Slovakia and Romania in order to help save Jews. Some were caught, tortured and exterminated. Marcel Rayman, a young Polish member of the French Underground in Paris, one of

the foreign Yiddish-speaking Jews who operated in small bands of partisans, bombed restaurants, hotels, cafes, cinemas most frequented by the military and police and threw grenades at German soldiers.

Besides Abba Kovner, there were other partisan groups of resistance. What should be mentioned is that out of about 17 million Jews in the world, about 1.5 million Jews which is 9 percent of the population, were in the military or in partisans, either in the Soviet armies or the Western armies. They fought valiantly to defeat the Nazis. A substantial number of partisans resisted the Nazis between 1940 - 1945 in the vicinity of Minsk, Gomel, Pinsk, Vitbsk, and other places in the Soviet Union. Lastly, what I want to mention is those rescuers who were defending the dignity of human life, I've mentioned Wilhelm Bachner, who I interviewed in great depth, who risked his life to save

others, not only Jews but also some Polish victims from Nazi extermination.

I am commonly confronted with the question, "what is heroism" and why was there no heroism - I respond that the definition of heroism needs to be expanded. Is it heroic to run away into the woods and take up arms against the enemy or is it more compassionately heroic to stay with an ailing mother, father or child in an attempt to comfort them in their last days of horror? Would it have been more heroic for Dr. Janusz Korczak to go and save himself because he was an eminent Polish medical doctor, broadcaster and author? Or was it more heroic to walk with his 200 orphans to Treblinka and comfort them during their last hours of life? Jews must not only be perceived as victims during the Holocaust years but also as heroes. They have done very well to restore the honor of the Jewish people.

## Auschwitz ... a stage production

Anita Lasker Wallfisch

**M**y last trip to Germany was somewhat unusual.

Some six years ago I received a letter from a German composer by the name of Heuke, telling me that he had read Fania Fenelon's book about the women's orchestra in Auschwitz, that he had visited the camp and was so touched and moved by it all that he felt inspired to write an opera about it and enclosed the preliminary libretto and asked for my opinion.

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

I read it and sent it to two of my former fellow members of this band and we were unanimous in our verdict. NO!

My reply was:  
London, April 20th 2000

Dear Stefan Heuke,

I have read the libretto, shown it to Hilde and Violette and we are unanimous in our opinion that since it is based on Fania's book it has no chance whatsoever to come

their Jewish victims. It is also a puzzle how eliminationist anti-Semitism, if so deeply embedded in the German psyche, could suddenly evaporate after the war has ended<sup>48</sup>, with an extensive voluntary reparations program (at least by the Bonn government) to follow.

It is beyond dispute that for Holocaust to happen, apart from the civil service bureaucracy the cooperation of many industrial leaders was necessary: of those who set up factories in concentration camp; who were in charge of manufacturing death machinery, crematoria and poison gas; of those experimenting with making soap from victims' bodies; of factory owners and their employees who converted – with no questions asked – endless trainloads of hardly used clothes into raw materials. These were ordinary people, competing for business or working for a living in full knowledge of what they were doing.

And, without propaganda, there might have not been the Holocaust. For nearly eight years, fanatical racist indoctrination deepened widespread anti-Semitism and eroded Germans' moral inhibitions<sup>49</sup>. Jews were portrayed as an alien race and a threat to western civilization. Jewish stereotypes were used in the press to distort the

Jewish role in the society: the massive increase in the circulation of the *Stürmer* proves the trend. Important role was played by films, like *Der Ewige Jude*. It equated Jewish migrations into Europe with the spread of disease brought by rats. Mixing such pictures with 'statistical facts and figures' were to prove 'that these "parasites" were involved in every aspect of international crime'<sup>50</sup>.

For another explanation of the Holocaust, I shall quote A. Berle, the USA Assistant Secretary of State, speaking at a mass meeting in Boston on May 2, 1943. He told his mainly Jewish audience that 'nothing can be done to save these helpless unfortunates, except through the invasion of Europe, the defeat of the German arms and breaking of the German power. There is no other way'<sup>51</sup>. But it was the Allied policy makers themselves in London, Washington and Bermuda, who had made sure that no other was even to be tried. Before the Bermuda Conference, the Allies had rejected the Jewish Agency's request for direct negotiations with the Germans in order to see if Hitler was prepared to let the surviving Jews leave Nazi-controlled Europe. At Bermuda Conference, which ended May 8, 1943, even the much

less controversial and widely publicised 'open door' policy to admit refugees to Great Britain, USA or Palestine had been rejected<sup>52</sup>. On the issue of refugees, there were 'signs of increasing anti-Semitic feeling in Britain itself, and in any declaration it was deemed better to avoid any mention that refugees were necessarily Jewish'<sup>53</sup>. George Bell, the Bishop of Chichester wrote on May 18, 1943 in *The Times*: "The guilt lies with the Nazis, but can we escape blame if, having it in our power to do something to save the victims, we fail to take the necessary action, and take it swiftly?" 'It was quite certain', the Bishop added, 'that if the British and American Governments were determined to achieve a programme for rescue in some way commensurate with the vastness of the need, they could do it'<sup>54</sup>.

Fleming comes to a moral conclusion that 'hatred feeds the animal instinct for destruction of human life which resides in us all'<sup>55</sup>. Human behaviour is fragile, unpredictable and often at the mercy of situation. For many people the 'situation' is what first determines their choice. To quote a concentration camp survivor: 'you ask a stranger: "Where is North Street?" – He shows you and is nice and kind. All of us can be good people or bad people

<sup>48</sup> Kershaw, Ian, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, p. 257/261

<sup>49</sup> Kershaw, Ian *The 'Hitler Myth'*, p. 229

<sup>50</sup> AA312, OU Book 4, p. 175

<sup>51</sup> Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin, vol 24, No. 102, 4 May 1943 as quoted by Gilbert Martin, *Auschwitz and the Allies* p. 135

<sup>52</sup> Gilbert Martin, *Auschwitz and the Allies.*, p. 135

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 133

<sup>54</sup> *The Times* 18 May 1943 as quoted by Gilbert Martin, *Auschwitz and the Allies* p. 137

<sup>55</sup> As quoted by Kershaw, Ian, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, p. 103/4

As an illustration of Germans' attitude, one hundred German doctors gathered in Krynica in mid October 1941 to discuss the threat of epidemic in the Generalgouvernement. They listened to Dr. Walbaum's, chief medical officer's address: 'One must be clear about it and I can speak openly in this circle. There are only two ways, we condemn the Jews in the ghettos to death by starvation or we shoot them'. His words were greeted by prolonged 'applause, clapping'<sup>38</sup>. Any Nazi official wanting a promotion had to get involved in what was going on, and the higher his ambitions, the more radical and more brutal he had to be. Eugenicists, technicians and planning experts identified themselves with Hitler's program, keen to practice their skills and advance their careers. Leaders and those in responsible intermediary positions read into Hitler's quizzical intentions an encouragement for radical actions that soon took on a momentum of their own<sup>39</sup>. Hitler needn't spell the words. 'If one wants to know what Hitler was thinking one should look at what Himmler was doing'<sup>40</sup>. Laurence Rees, who conducted post-war research into the motivation of the perpetrators, concluded from his interviews that the ordi-

nary members of the SS believed it was right to kill the Jews, but disagreed with Himmler forbidding them to profit individually from robbing their victims. And many of the former Nazis even after the war found an internal justification for their crimes<sup>41</sup>. Final Solution, Rees concludes, was 'a collective enterprise owned by thousands of people who made the decision themselves not just to take part but contribute actively to solve the problem of how to kill human beings and dispose of their bodies on a scale never attempted before'<sup>42</sup>. The perpetrators were directed by educated men, bureaucrats, members of a civilisation considered amongst the highest in Europe. There were no clear commands for the crime imposed from above, nor was there a blueprint devised from below<sup>43</sup>. Within SS-SD-Gestapo organization, it was not the racial fanatics so much as the ambitious organizers and competent administrators who 'turned the hellish vision into hell on earth'<sup>44</sup>. Similarly, Raul Hilbert argues that Final Solution was an administrative process involving the participation of bureaucrats from every sphere of organized life in Germany. Consensus for mass murder was 'not so much a product of laws and commands as it was

a matter of spirit, of shared comprehension, of consonance and synchronization'<sup>45</sup>. German bureaucrats, who would have found it repugnant to drive starving Jews into abattoirs, worked out the railway timetables for a regular supply of death-trains to the extermination camps, without feeling personally involved<sup>46</sup>. With the help from technology, they made the victims invisible to the perpetrators. Auschwitz, Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Sobibor and Treblinka were industrial plants for manufacturing death on a mass scale – a systematic procedure for "culling" those without "value". Goldhagen started a controversy by blaming all Germans for eliminationist anti-Semitism, which led them to take an active part in most cruel mass executions of Jews<sup>47</sup>. As his conclusion does not differ in its essence from those of Hobsbawm, Rees and Browning, it is strange that his reputation as a historian suffered. However, Goldhagen ignored the possibility that the motivation of ordinary middle age, middle class German ex-civilians behind killing of Jews might have been no different to that of killing Soviet prisoners of war and others. And like the Germans, Latvians, Lithuanians and Ukrainians were equally brutal towards

<sup>38</sup> Browning, Christopher, *The Path to Genocide*, p. 142

<sup>39</sup> Kershaw, Ian *The 'Hitler Myth'* p. 251

<sup>40</sup> Browning, Christopher R., *The Origins of the Final Solution*, p. 425

<sup>41</sup> Rees Laurence, *Auschwitz*, p. 15/16

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 21

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31

<sup>44</sup> Kershaw, Ian, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, p. 132

<sup>45</sup> As quoted in Browning, C., *The Path to Genocide*, p. 125

<sup>46</sup> Hobsbawm E., *The Age of Extremes*, p. 50

<sup>47</sup> Goldhagen, D., *Hitler's Willing Executioners*

anywhere near the reality of what actually happened there.

Maybe you will better understand when I tell you that Fania admitted – after being severely taken to task by all of us who were still alive then – that she wanted to bring everything that happened in the camp into her book and that for the sake of convenience she used us as quasi “coathangers”. I am aware of the fact that I cannot forbid you to use this material for an opera but in no way can I endorse that your libretto reflects truthfully what really went on there. The story is extremely complex and any attempt to reproduce it, especially in such a limited medium as an opera is doomed to failure.

Best regards  
Anita Lasker Wallfisch

His reply:  
Bochum November 10th 2001

Many many thanks for having taken the trouble to read and comment on the libretto. I would have been happier if you had given me the go-ahead but I understand very well that the story in which Fania plays the main part cannot meet with your approval ... and that the postwar generation cannot possibly deal adequately with this terrible story. I assure you that I myself had doubts whether I would be able to live up to the task. However, in my whole life there has never been a theme that has so profoundly touched me as the story of the women's orchestra of Auschwitz. It has occupied my mind for the

last twenty years. Maybe you will understand that I find it impossible to drop this undertaking.

Of course your various comments and doubts about the unsuitability of this subject for an opera have given me a great deal of thought and I have decided to show the letter you wrote to me when I first approached you in the prologue. I think this will show how much I have taken your opinion to heart..... Stefan Heuke.

This is the gist of what preceded an invitation to come to Moenchen Gladbach to attend the dress rehearsal and premiere of this opera. After all, I cannot stop Stefan Heuke to do what was obviously very important to him.

I flew to Dusseldorf and was met by a young lady who was going to drive me to Moenchen Gladbach.

What followed was rather touching. I was taken to an exhibition mounted by children aged about 12 – 16. Lots of instruments made of cardboard, music symbols and barbed wire. Hard to describe, but rather touching. Unfortunately, I had arrived much later than anticipated and just had time to speak to them briefly about my doubts concerning this venture, because the reality cannot really be reproduced.

From the moment I arrived, I could never make one step without a camera staring me in the face. This got worse when I eventually went to the theatre to attend the dress rehearsal.

More cameras and the dreaded questions: How was I feeling... was I afraid of being reminded etc., etc., These things really irritate me beyond belief. I assured

them that I have not forgotten... and I cannot comment on the finished article before I have seen it.

The curtain went up and lo and behold my correspondence with the composer was on a screen, leaving no doubt about my feelings concerning this venture.

An undertaking of this dimension can only be staged in Germany. There were two orchestras on the stage. The full Niederrheinische Symphony Orchestra behind a sort of transparent curtain in the back and, in the front, the camp orchestra.

I can say without hesitation that the stage production was most impressive. I cannot go into too many details here, but the producer certainly managed to convey the cramped condition, the constant burning of the chimneys and endless columns of people walking into the crematorium and coming out as smoke. The music is clever – for want of a better word. Most of it grating and unpleasant to listen to, intermixed with march music, arias and Schumann's Trauemerei, etc., etc.

One cannot help but admire the various singers who had to cope with extremely difficult musical acrobatics. It must have taken them months and months to learn this stuff. However... The opera lasts all of three hours.... much too long and contains scenes that are absolutely unnecessary and should be eliminated.

I was in the enviable position not to have to mince my words and told the composer exactly what I thought.

I spent a very nice after-

noon with the cast in the house of the producer... Kaffe und Kuchen! ... and a very animated evening with a whole lot of the orchestral musicians, organised by the first trumpeter who is a Russian Jew and we had a really good evening.

Next day: in the afternoon press conference and the opportunity to talk about the problem of portraying the Holocaust by artistic means after the demise of eye-witnesses.

In the evening: Premier. Full house, loads of digni-

taries, endless cameras and interviews. The problem in Germany is, of course, that it would be politically incorrect to have a negative reaction to such an undertaking.

I was sitting in the restaurant outside trying to recover from all the strain when a rather touching delegation from the Jewish community appeared with a lovely bunch of flowers.

I have since been sent an amazing number of reviews and am heartened to find that some critics actually

had the courage to criticise. Not the artistic side of this venture, but the fact that Auschwitz is now material for a stage production.

However, I am afraid that this is inevitably the way it will eventually go.

Maybe we should be glad that people should be reminded, in whatever shape or form, of the horrors of those days.

Need I tell you that I was extremely tired when I eventually returned home?

## Judith Sherman

*Judith (nee Stern) lived with her younger sister Miriam in Weir Courtney. She studied Social Science at the L.S.E., and later emigrated to the U.S.A., where she lives with her husband Reuben in New Jersey. Both of them are regular contributors to our Journal.*

Yom Ha'atzmaut

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

We arrive on the Magic Carpet  
of winged metal  
and make the mountains sing.

Operation Moses –  
Moses, in the Promised Lane –  
awe among the cypresses, cedars,  
thrush and rattlesnakes.

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

Come behold  
your land

your land  
your land

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

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

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

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

sions, Jews were channelled into usury, stirring more hatred. They were accused of blood-libel, desecration of Eucharist wafers, poisoning wells, causing the Black Death. Enlightenment's rejection of Christian Dogma brought the Jews little relief; they were no longer protected by the belief that their conversion was necessary for the Second Coming and their need to serve as 'witnesses' and guardians of the Old Testament (Saint Augustine). Voltaire, who hated the Jews as grasping exploiters, following medieval anti-Semitic tradition, initiated a new one, in which they are pictured as the archetypal capitalists. Romanticism's idealist nationalism perceived Jews a threat to the national soul, as well as a threat to the survival of Christian society. In Germany, it took on a special genocidal turn. Religious stigmatizing of Jews continued in other guises, supported by theories of race. The rise of anti-capitalism and socialism was seen as a Jewish threat, because of Jews' alleged inveterate commercialism; paradoxically the much feared Communism was perceived as a Jewish phenomenon, because Marx was considered a Jew. Their emancipation raised anxiety, because of Jewish prominence in the arts, sciences and professions, especially banking. A forged Russian document 'Protocols of the

Elders Zion' stoke up more hatred. An alleged evidence of Jewish determination to subjugate the world, it was widely circulated and believed throughout Europe, and at present throughout the Middle East. While Jews have always been resented as 'the other' – they dressed differently, spoke a different language, ate different food – assimilated Jews who tried to melt into gentile society were equally hated.

Most people will ignore the belief, still held by some orthodox Rabbis, that the Nazis were God's instrument for punishing Jews for their transgressions and agree that the Holocaust laid well within human control and responsibility.

Judaism's all-embracing idea of unity of the human race, one expanded through Christianity and later in the democratic and socialist systems, stood in opposition to *völkisch* values, i.e. according a transcendental 'essence' to a group of people and changing them into a mythical, self-perpetuating organism<sup>34</sup>, *Volksgemeinschaft* which required all its members to share the same goal. Those who would not fit in, like homosexuals, work-shy, political opponents and 'aliens', the 'incurable' had to be eradicated. Anthropology, biology and eugenics were used to identify the outsiders and suggest their treatment, culminating from 1939 in 'euthanasia', a systematic murder of the 'insane'.

For Henry Friedlander, the doctrine and practise of racial exclusion, as applied to Jews and Gypsies created the essential preconditions for 'scientifically conducted, industrially organized and bureaucratically managed mass murder'<sup>35</sup>. And Gerald Reitlinger was one of the first historians to note the direct connection between both the personnel and gas chamber technology of the 'euthanasia' program and the Holocaust<sup>36</sup>.

Without Hitler the Holocaust would not take place. But, his exact role has been differently interpreted. Beyond dispute was his profound loathing of Jews, whom he saw as followers of both Marxism and capitalism. Bolshevism became linked in his mind to the world-wide Jewry, determined to take over the world's leadership and annihilate the German nation<sup>37</sup>. He was convinced that even National Socialism would find it hard to stop such conspiracy. Hence, the mission of the German people was to destroy Bolshevism and with it 'our mortal enemy: the Jew'. His views were simple, unalterable and easy to communicate; he saw everything in terms of black and white – victory or total destruction.

But the Holocaust would not have happened without the active collaboration of the *Wehrmacht* – the only German force capable of checking the Nazi regime. They endorsed and participated in the Final Solution.

<sup>34</sup> Avraham Barkai, *Volksgemeinschaft, Aryaanization and Holocaust*, (ed.) David Cesarani, *Final Solution*, p. 34.

<sup>35</sup> Cesarani, D. (ed.), *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation*, p. 3

<sup>36</sup> Browning, Christopher R., *The Origins of the Final Solution* p. 93

<sup>37</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Memorandum on the Four-Year-Plan* (Aug. 1936), Primary sources 2 I:12

assisted by family members and organizations such as ORT. Uncle Felix said that he and my grandfather regularly attended meeting run by a branch of the Likkud party, which educated them on the Zionist movement. Uncle Felix added that they joined the Zionist movement and went to Palestine to gain a homeland. According to Uncle Felix, the Holocaust taught them that the Jews did not belong to the countries where they had lived, like Germany and Poland, and that they needed their own homeland.

Just as the Holocaust taught my grandfather that Jews could not live persecution-free in a world without a Jewish nation, other Jews had learned the same lesson throughout history. The Zionist movement was created by Theodore Herzl, a Jewish-French reporter living in the late 1880s. The movement

was created in response to the unjustified trial and death of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jew, who was falsely convicted of treason, in 1894. The trial and death of Mr. Dreyfus caused Theodore Herzl to realize that if Jews were affected by anti-Semitism in a country such as France, Jews would not be able to live happily and safely in any non-Jewish nation.

“How did the Holocaust survivors gain the strength to fight in the Israeli Independence War after suffering the atrocities of the Holocaust?” I asked Uncle Felix. He responded matter-of-factly that Holocaust Survivors lost their families and homes and they needed a homeland to ensure the future of the Jewish people. He repeated multiple times the familiar phrase “Never Again.” After the destruction of the Jewish people in Eastern Europe the surviving

Jews, needed a homeland to revive the Jewish people.

Approximately 25,000 Holocaust survivors traveled to Palestine to join the Israeli Defence forces and fight in the 1948 Israeli Independence War. In total, 370,000 Holocaust survivors moved to Israel between the years 1945 and 1951. The Holocaust survivors, the majority of which came from D.P. camps, contributed to the Israeli victory by drastically increasing the size of the Israeli army. According to Yad Vashem historian, Professor Hanna Yablonka, out of the 6,000 Israelis killed in the Israeli Independence War approximately 1,000 killed were Holocaust survivors. The Holocaust survivors who fought in the Israeli Independence War made an enormous impact on the success of the 1948 Independence War, and the creation of the state of Israel.

## Is anti-semitism a sufficient explanation for the Holocaust?

In addition to anti-Semitism, there is a great deal more for explaining the Holocaust. Anti-Semitism is described as a ‘reservoir of loathing, fear and contempt, deriving from the demonization of the Jews in the Christian Middle Ages<sup>31</sup>. Ever since, it has been disseminated by unceasing indoctrination, which presented Jews as deicides; like

Jerzy Lando BA (Hons)  
Hum (Open)

*Jerzy was born in Lodz and during the war lived in the Lodz and Warsaw Ghetto and then on the Aryan side. He describes his experiences in his book “Saved By My Face”*

Judas they evoked betrayal and corruption. Every spring since 1634, in Oberammergau, a Bavarian

village, the villagers enacted the Passion Play, attended by crowds of onlookers. Its version depicted Jews as evil betrayers, hungry for blood<sup>32</sup>. Hitler, no religious believer, praised it for its portrayal of “the whole muck and mire of Jewry<sup>33</sup>.” Jews as deicides were condemned to exile, slavery, existence in a degraded state. Excluded from all honourable profes-

<sup>31</sup> Goldhagen quoted by Maccaby H., *Antisemitism and Modernity* p.162

<sup>32</sup> The version shown at present was modified to remove its anti-Semitic bias.

<sup>33</sup> Review of *Oberammergau* [online]

# What Wireless Listeners Learned: SOME LESSER KNOWN BBC BROADCASTS ABOUT BELSEN

Suzanne Bardgett

Richard Dimbleby's account of the scenes he witnessed at Bergen-Belsen in April 1945 - recorded on what the famous broadcaster called 'the most horrible day of my life' - has acquired an iconic status in British popular memory. Less well known is the work of two other experienced BBC programme-makers who compiled accounts for radio of Belsen in the weeks and months after the camp's liberation.<sup>1</sup> This paper looks at their efforts to bring to British audiences a deeper understanding of what Belsen signified and of the suffering of those imprisoned there.

## Patrick Gordon Walker's 'sections of the jigsaw'

As the Allies advanced across the Low Countries in 1944, experts in psychological warfare moved in their wake, bringing the propaganda effort which had been waged from mainland Britain right up to Germany's borders. Patrick Gordon Walker - an Oxford don before the war, fluent in German - was part of this campaign.<sup>2</sup> As the BBC's German Service's Workers Programmes specialist he had since 1941 been at the heart of the section of the European Service based

*Susan Bardgett led the team which created the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum. This article appeared in History Today.*



in Bush House which provided a formidable daily output of news and features to Germany.<sup>3</sup>

In late 1944 a number of the German Service personnel found themselves in demand by the newly-formed Psychological Warfare Department under the joint Anglo-American-Canadian command of SHAEF

(Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force). Their brief was to use Radio Luxembourg, the newly-captured second most powerful radio station on the continent, to broadcast to the twelve and a half million foreign workers estimated to be living and working inside Germany.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Recordings were also made at Belsen by Wynford Vaughan Thomas on 28 April, covering the visit to the camp of the nearby town of Soltau.

<sup>2</sup> *Patrick Gordon Walker: Political Diaries 1932-1971*, Edited with an introduction by Robert Pearce, (London: The Historians' Press, 1991). Hereafter, Diaries.

<sup>3</sup> Gerard Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told: 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), pp 147-164.

<sup>4</sup> FO898/404. Summary by Peter Ritchie Calder, 10 March 1945.

Gordon Walker arrived in Luxembourg via Paris on 21 October 1944, enjoying a rapturous welcome from Luxemburgers who had regularly tuned into his programmes.<sup>5</sup> With the battlefield initially just ten miles away, and events moving fast, he spent the next six months using liaison officers, translators and interpreters to provide news commentaries and classical and light entertainment from dawn till one in the morning.

On 17 April he and his American driver, Sergeant Princie, left Luxembourg in a recording van for a 'dash into Germany' to make recordings. It ended up being a 1,250 mile trip. They headed first for Brunswick where the newly-captured main prison at Wolfenb,ttel was now under the charge of an English captain. He showed them the terrifying detritus of the prison's wartime history – torture instruments, and a guillotine. A rough memorial had been put up to the 550 prisoners who had been executed at the prison. They were shown a Czech and a Polish prisoner - in an appalling state of malnutrition.<sup>6</sup>

The next day they tried to reach a camp they had heard about at Salzwedel, but were turned back, and instead recorded the stories of some



of the people of Brunswick: a lawyer who had defended political prisoners; and the Bürgermeister, whose interview was 'long, nervously delivered, unclear and self-justificatory. I did not form a good impression of the man.'<sup>7</sup>

On Friday 20th April they arrived at Celle, 30 kilometres from Belsen and the following day drove to the camp.

After four intensive years at Bush House, Gordon Walker was probably the most expert in German affairs of the Allied commentators who visited the camp, and his deep curiosity can well be imagined.

What levels of knowledge would he have encountered among the British soldiers who guided him when he arrived there? It has been said that British press reports of Belsen in 1945 failed to give a full account of what the camp signified, and in particular did not acknowledge the high proportion of Jewish inmates in the

camp. Certainly newspaper accounts were limited by the fact that most journalists visited for one day only - and, with the fast pace of events in the closing weeks of the war, had little time for in-depth interviews and analysis. But in the camp itself, soldiers and relief workers – who had been specially reinforced by Jewish personnel – had started to grasp the essentials of what had happened to thousands of the inmates. As one Jewish relief worker commented:

the camp which is spoken of most frequently.. and with the most dread, is Auschwitz, and it was here that many of the internees were branded with their numbers<sup>8</sup>

Nor were the liberators naive about the fact that 'official agendas' would very likely ensure that certain facts were censored. A captain in REME reported:

I've been talking today to our officer who has been organising the water supply to a concentration camp. Here are some details that were not given in the account on the wireless tonight. 40% were Jews. The bulk of the inmates were Germans but most nationalities including British and American were represented.

<sup>5</sup> 'They all know my name. It's often quite touching. When I told the porter of the hotel I was here, he became very excited and sought out some woman in the office, crying out 'come quickly, Gordon Walker is here.' PGW to Audrey Gordon Walker, 21 October 1944, in the Papers of Baron Gordon Walker, GBR/ 0014/ GNWR, Churchill Archives Centre.

<sup>6</sup> Diaries, p 140.

<sup>7</sup> Diaries, p 142.

<sup>8</sup> IWM Department of Documents, Report by Jane Leverson to Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad, 6 May 1945.

You are victors and survivors  
From the chosen few,  
Now working for all of mankind,  
And always proud to be a Jew.

### Two of the Boys

Mengele selected you both as slaves  
In the stench of furnace and gallows,  
In Auschwitz one could barely survive  
And the scantiest of hope soon froze.

In the hell-holes of the Nazi slave drivers  
All anguished in hunger and dread,  
Merely machines for the grimmest of  
labour  
And, beaten and starved most dropped  
dead.

How did you survive such harshness  
Where parents and seven sibs perished,  
When all you possessed was skin, bone  
and luck  
And the Jewish tradition you cherished?

Luck was the main way to stay alive  
But a sure heart beat strong in your  
breast,  
Tragedy engulfed most relations and  
friends  
But fate saw you through every test.

Six million souls were consumed by fire  
And nine Perlmutter's, save Alec and Ivor,  
Yet revisionists dare call the Holocaust a  
hoax!  
I salute you and each Auschwitz survivor.

## Zionism, Holocaust survivors, and creation of Israel

By Hillary Duchovnay

Sitting on the mantle over my fireplace is an old picture that my Grandmother had given to my Mother. It is black and white. I recall as a child, my mom explaining that this picture was of my grandfather, who died many years ago, holding the Israeli flag and surrounded by his fellow soldiers in the Israeli Independence War. But being a young child I wasn't able to understand the significance of the picture, which had always filled my Grandmother with so much pride. Recently I looked at this picture again, and was filled with questions which my Grandmother, due to a stroke, was unable to answer.

What is it about Zionism that caused my grandfather, and other Zionists like him, to leave their homes and families, travel to Palestine, and fight to create a home-

*Hillary Duchovnay, is the granddaughter of Bluma and Benjamin Urbas. Bluma is the sister of Berek Wurzel, both of whom came to England with the Windermere Group. Bluma is the sister of Berek Wurzel, both of whom came to England with the Windermere Group. Bluma now lives in the USA. Hillary has always been a student of the Holocaust, exploring the history of the Jewish people and her family. In the following article Hillary explores the importance of Israel, the strength of the Jewish soul and the commitment expressed in the universal phrase "Never Again!"*

land, after surviving the Holocaust? My grandfather was a victim of the Holocaust; having survived the atroci-

ties of the concentration camps of Blizen, Auschwitz Birkenau, Flossenbug, Leonburg, and Ganaker. His number was B 1876. He was liberated on May 1, 1945, by the Americans. After liberation, my grandfather and other survivors went to a Displaced Persons ("D.P.") camp where they were fed, educated, given vocational training, and taught about Zionism, the need for a Jewish homeland.

I interviewed one of my grandfather's best friends, Uncle Felix, who had met him in the D.P. camp, in Germany. Uncle Felix told me that Holocaust survivors adopted other survivors and created new families. He also told me about the procedures by which the survivors gained the sponsorships necessary to leave the D.P. camps and enter a new country. The survivors were

and it took a long time to make the journey to the hotel. On many lamp-posts there were large signs "Let My People Live". On arrival, I saw about six buses moving out from the front of the hotel. I missed my designated bus. I saw a car and it had a label, Babi Yar. In fact, it was the Dutch Ambassador's car. He gave me a lift to the Art Palace. After showing my invitation and a thorough search, I was let in. Immediately, I met with the Belarus delegation. There was a reception, lots of food and visitors from around the world, with the exception of the Arab countries. I was introduced to many heroes of the Soviet Union, brave people with many medals. Some live in Kiev, others came from Israel or the United States.

The following day we travelled to Babi Yar. About twenty buses from various hotels. There was strict security. My first stop was the ravine where the Jews

were murdered. It was very sad for me and for the people from Kiev. All of us said a joint Kaddish. From there we walked to the second ravine. There were lots of people. On the entrance we were given a rose and a white stone to put on the large memorial. We waited about an hour for presidents from various countries to arrive. The ceremony started with the arrival of the Ukrainian and Israeli presidents.

The Ukrainian president made a very moving speech. I understood some, but one did not have to understand him, just to watch the faces of the hardened servicemen and to see the tears running down their faces. He was speaking about his father's experience as a prisoner of war in Auschwitz and the Jewish suffering there.

There were many speeches, everybody wanted to be heard. I really don't know how the elderly people managed to stand there for about four hours.

From there we went to the beautiful opera building. There were many speeches from presidents, ministers from various countries, including Lord Janner, but the best speech was made by former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Lau, a child survivor.

Everybody was tired and we were pleased that the speeches were over and pleased to be back in the hotel but before going to sleep, the Russian group insisted on having some vodka.

The following day I went with the Director of Minsk Holocaust Museum to a Ukrainian school where Tkuma (Jewish organisation for teaching the Holocaust) gave lectures on the Holocaust to Ukrainian non-Jewish children. It was fascinating as some of the teachers were not Jewish. I learned a lot.

In the afternoon, I flew back to London and was happy that I had made the journey.

## Dedicated to the people who mean much to me

Dr David Ryde

*David and his wife Marian have been closely associated with our members for many years and are staunch supporters of our society.*

### Survivors (Ivor and Ben)

Your presence stands you proud  
In the Human Hall of Fame,  
You are more than just survivors  
And more than just a name.

Life was bleak and brutal,  
Cold and cruel to you,  
Yet your only sin

Was to be born a Jew.  
Your friends and all your family  
Perished in religious fire,  
Stoked by millennia of the church  
Performed with fervent ire.

From the ladder's lowest rung  
You sweated to the summit,  
Yet with your liberation  
Revenge you would not permit.

There were no lavatory arrangements whatever in the camp and most of the inmates had dysentery.<sup>9</sup>

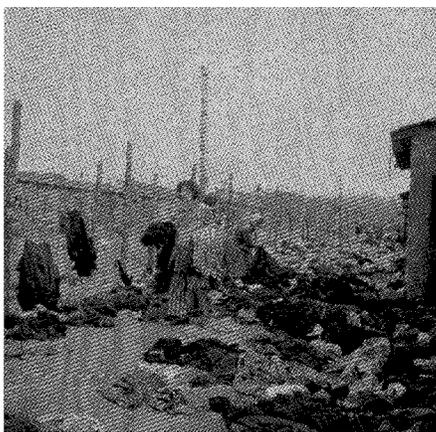
One of the Intelligence Corps officers who was Jewish, Arnold Horwell - was even allowed to give special briefings to press and others arriving at the camp - a clear recognition, it would seem, that the specifics of the Jewish survivors' situation needed to be made clear.<sup>10</sup>

Gordon Walker set to work and in just two days got a good deal of very useable material.

He called several soldiers of the Oxfordshire Yeomanry together in a tent and interviewed them as a group - perhaps to obtain more relaxed responses.<sup>11</sup>

In his fluent German he interviewed Anita Lasker and her sister Renate, and several others, including Hetty Werkendam<sup>12</sup>, a Dutch girl whose parents had been in a work camp. Her father had been half strangled by the SS and made to shovel human excreta in 'the shit pit': 'the little girl's stories went on endlessly he wrote in his diary.

His tapes have survived although sometimes with



little documentation. One captures the moment when a survivor was reunited with his wife - the man sobbing terribly. The wife is not heard - her appearance may be guessed at.<sup>13</sup>

Two survivors were recorded in English - Gitta Cartagena and Helen Kulker, both originally from Czechoslovakia, and both saved from the gas chambers at Auschwitz by being sent to join labour detachments in Hamburg. Helen Kulker described how the gas 'camera' had dominated Auschwitz, and how the chimneys could be seen smoking all day. Gordon Walker asked her to explain for the benefit of listeners the term 'camera' - 'it's an odd word in English'.

As Gordon Walker made his way around the camp a pattern emerged:

Over and over again I was told the same story - of the parades at which people stood naked for

hours and were picked out arbitrarily (allegedly incapable of work) for the gas chamber and crematoriums, where many were burnt alive. Only a person in perfect health survived. Life and death was a question of pure chance.<sup>14</sup>

Word got around that Gordon Walker would record messages to relatives which would then be broadcast on the BBC. (Messages to relatives of German prisoners of war had been an important feature of the German Service's output, so Gordon Walker would have been familiar with the drill for this.) Anita Lasker later recalled that it was no easy task to be confronted by a microphone, but with repeated transmissions the message that she and Renate were alive in Belsen camp eventually reached their third sister, Marianne, in Britain.<sup>15</sup>

That evening Gordon Walker recorded the first eve of Sabbath service held in the camp:

a group of a hundred or so in the open air, amid the corpses. The padre read the service in English and Hebrew. No eye was dry. Certainly

<sup>9</sup> IWM Department of Documents, 91/21/1, Captain M F Jupp, HQ REME, 6 Airborne Division, 19 April 1945

<sup>10</sup> IWM Department of Documents, Arnold Horwell to his wife, 16 May 1945. 'Bird has assured me that I shall have them for a few hours to 'drill' them on my pet subjects - Jewish problems, DP problems, moral aspects of ex-concentration camp inmates etc. It will be another unique chance to drive certain points home, of which press and public are not aware yet.'

<sup>11</sup> National Sound Archive, T 8684

<sup>12</sup> Hetty Verolme, *The Children's House at Belsen*, (London: Methuen, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> National Sound Archive, 8683, Band 7.

<sup>14</sup> *Political Diaries*, p 147.

<sup>15</sup> Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, *Inherit the Truth*, (London: Giles de la Mare, 1996), p 99.

not mine. Most of the celebrants were in uncontrolled floods of tears.<sup>16</sup>

The following Saturday morning, he recorded another Jewish service where 'all around women and men burst into tears and cried openly.'

Then we collected the orchestra together. They had got their instruments from the old camp band. Some of them played very well. They loved old jazz and played such tunes as *I can't give you anything but love*.

The mood to play was infectious - the atmosphere in the camp must have been quite extraordinary at this point - and Gordon Walker collected together some Russian girls and Dutch boys to sing. The Russians sang partisan songs, and the Dutch what appears to have been a specially-composed short song 'the English: long may they live in glory'.

On the last evening Gordon Walker was given access to some of the Nazi guards who were being held in custody. With a borrowed pistol for protection, and back-up from the British military, he tried to find an SS member ready to describe what had gone on in the camps. A medical doctor who had been at



Auschwitz tried to claim that he had only tended the sick, but another - a Rumanian - agreed to talk. A woman prisoner also, Elizabeth Volkenrath - who had overseen the women's camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau and subsequently held a similar post in Belsen - was also with considerable difficulty persuaded to speak on tape.<sup>17</sup>

During his time at the camp Gordon Walker realised that the rescue efforts of the British medical personnel were not progressing as fast as they should.

The concluding passages of his typescript of the diary are prefaced with the words FROM HERE ON NOT FOR PUBLICATION and document the 'serious shortcomings' which delayed decisions so that the evacuation of the military training school happened more than a week later than it might have. 'The main cause was that there was no person *in the camp* who was of high enough authority to take decisions and to put in his requests to the proper authorities.' He emphasises

in a later paragraph that 'it's a question of decision and authority'.<sup>18</sup>

What had happened? A report in 224 Military Government Detachment's war diary shows that there had indeed been 'frequent changes of command' and that this lack of authority had meant that fewer lives had been saved than might have been. It is clear that it was those in overall authority rather than the medical personnel on the ground who bore responsibility for the slowness of response.<sup>19</sup>

Gordon Walker left Belsen on the Sunday morning and he and Princie drove to the virtually flattened town of Hamm, where eight out of ten of the population were living in cellars. In the days that followed Gordon Walker wrote up his visit to Germany as a slim book, *The Lid Lifts*, for the publisher Victor Gollancz, finishing the first draft just as news came of Germany's unconditional surrender.

The radio programme for which he had made the recordings was assembled and broadcast in the evening of Sunday 27 May as 'Belsen: Facts and Thoughts'.<sup>20</sup>

Although the organisational failings of the rescuers had obviously perplexed Gordon Walker, it would have been

<sup>16</sup> Patrick Gordon Walker, *The Lid Lifts*, (London: Gollancz, 1945), p 46.

<sup>17</sup> National Sound Archive, T 8691. See also *Political Diaries*, pp 150-152. For more on Elizabeth Volkenrath see Raymond Phillips, (Ed) *The Belsen Trial*, William Hodge, 1949, pp 213 -222.

<sup>18</sup> Papers of Baron Gordon Walker, Churchill Archives Centre. Gordon Walker omitted his critical section from the copy of his diary which he lodged with the BBC.

<sup>19</sup> See Joanne Reilly, *Belsen: the liberation of a concentration camp*, (London: Routledge 1998, pp 34-36 and Chapter 5, 'Frustrations, 18-23 April 1945' in Ben Shephard, *After Daybreak: the Liberation of Belsen, 1945*, (London: Cape, 2005). Captain Gluck's Progress Report of 29 April - two weeks after the camp was discovered (WO219/3944) stated: 'feeding and fair distribution of food still a problem'.

<sup>20</sup> 'Belsen Concentration Camp: Facts and Thoughts', Sunday 27 May 1945, BBC Written Archives Centre.

# My visit to Kiev and Babi Yar

**K**iev was the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic with a population of 875,000, among them 175,000 Jews.

The Germans started the war against the Soviet Union on the 22nd June 1941. The western Ukraine and Byelorussia were overrun by the Germans in the first week of the war. The NKVD were on the old Polish Russian border and they did not let westerners cross unless they were party members, militia, fire brigade members or part of the Soviet administration. They were afraid of spies; so the western Ukrainian and Byelorussian Jews were trapped. No escape. We knew that we would have many problems under the German occupation. However, we did not think that the Germans would try to kill us all.

Kiev was a different story. The German army entered Kiev on 21st September 1941. The Jews had three months to escape. Many were mobilised in the Red army while others moved their factories to the east. Over 35,000 remained, thinking and hoping that nothing would happen to them. The Soviet Union knew of the German atrocities against the Jews, yet they did not evacuate them. Because of the Ribbentrop – Molotov Agreement, the Ukrainian Jews were lulled into a false sense of security because they did not believe that as Soviet allies, the Germans would commit atrocities in occupied Poland.

Two days after occupation, the SS immediately made a

Jack Kagan

*Jack is a committee member of our Society and has been a contributor to our Journal in recent years. His continuous efforts to keep alive the memory of his people from Novogrodek is most commendable. He published a book "Surviving The Holocaust With The Russian Jewish Partisans" and recently compiled a book entitled "Novogrodek – A History Of A Shtetl".*

plan to kill all the Jews that remained in Kiev. The SS Colonel Paul Globel, the head of Einsatzgruppe C., was in charge. On September 28th, 2,000 notices were posted in and around Kiev for the Jews to assemble on 29th September at 8 am at the corner of Melnicovskaya and Dukhtorovskaya Street. They were to bring their documents, money, other valuables and warm clothes and linen. Not suspecting what lay in store for them, almost all obeyed the German order. Some even came early in order to get a good seat on the train. When the Jews arrived in great numbers, they were herded into Babi Yar, a large ravine surrounded with barbed wire. They were ordered to put down the bundles and to strip naked, and then they were machine-gunned. According to official SS reports, the Germans, together with Ukrainian volunteers, murdered 33,771 Jews on 29th-30th September 1941, two days before Yom Kippur.

Babi Yar became a killing ground. In a nearby ravine, the Germans killed another 70,000 Russian prisoners of war, and others.

In 1976, the Soviet authorities built a monument over the second ravine and did not acknowledge that 33,771 Jews were massacred there. The place became a rubbish dump. The Jews of Kiev used to meet there as a protest against anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. During the Communist era, the poet Yevgenii Yevtushenko wrote a poem and Shostakovich wrote the 13th Symphony in memory of Babi Yar.

After the collapse of Communism, the Soviet citizens requested the authorities to clear up the area and to build some sort of monument to the Jewish victims. In 1991, a monument in the form of a menorah was erected on the killing site.

At the beginning of August 2006, I received an invitation from Victor Yushchenko, the President of the Ukraine, to attend the 65th anniversary of the tragedy of Babi Yar, which was to take place on 26th and 27th September.

I really could not decide whether to go and, in the end, I decided to make the trip, as I had never been to Kiev. It would give me the opportunity to see the city and meet with Ukrainian Jews. I arrived on the 26th September. To me, the 26th was a day of celebration and sadness as that was the day when we escaped through the tunnel and about eighty inmates lost their lives. The plane was late, the traffic in Kiev was as bad as in London

own business importing 18th and 19th Century European oil paintings and manufacturing frames. Through friends, I met my wife Elsa, a survivor of Auschwitz. Elsa and I were married in 1956 and moved to Scarsdale with our two children, Tina and Greg, in 1978. Today we are the proud grandparents of four beautiful grandchildren: Sammy, Noah, Ryan and baby Alanna.

Fast forward to May 7, 2006. On that day, I had the experience of a lifetime...

Before Elsa and I left for our annual winter vacation in Florida, I decided to contact Rabbi Schacter for the first time since he launched Sidney and me into the world after liberation. For years, I had followed the career of this eminent rabbi, who became nationally renowned for his successful efforts to bring Soviet Jews to the United States in the 1970s. But I made no attempt to contact him. Why? Well, knowing that I was only one of thousands of Holocaust survivors whose lives he had touched as a young man, I did not want to put him in the awkward position of having to pretend that he remembered me. Besides, most of us survivors were uncomfortable talking openly about our wartime experiences in those days, even to our own families. The public wasn't interested in hearing about our past, and we wanted to go on with our lives and not look back.

But times have changed and today, I, like many of my

fellow survivors, have become a public speaker. As a Board member of the Westchester Holocaust Education Center (WHEC) and a volunteer with its Speakers Bureau, I tell my story to middle and high school children throughout the Westchester area. I feel it is my duty as a survivor to share my experiences with anyone who will listen. I speak to honor the memory of those whose voices were silenced, and to ensure that the next generation will feel compelled to work toward preventing future genocides.

Rabbi Schacter and I became reacquainted over the phone, speaking in Yiddish, and when I returned from Florida, I invited him to join me as my special guest at a Yom Hashoah commemoration co-hosted by WHEC and the Westchester Jewish Conference at the Garden of Remembrance in White Plains. To my joy, the rabbi accepted my invitation, and he and his lovely wife Pnina traveled with me from their home in Riverdale to the Garden in White Plains.

The rabbi stood beside me as I shared our story with the audience of about 300 dignitaries, survivors, liberators, rescuers and ordinary citizens of diverse ages and backgrounds. Then he and I, ages 88 and 82 respectively, accompanied by Westchester County District Attorney Janet Di Fiore, opened the Garden's beautiful Gate of Remembrance (created by the late Rita Rapaport of Scarsdale) and invited

all the survivors, rescuers, liberators and their families in the audience to walk through and receive yellow flowers, a symbol of hope.

A young television reporter from News 12, Tara Rosenblum, interviewed us and her cameraman captured our every word and gesture on film. Our reunion aired as the lead story on their station's broadcast that night. A reporter from the *Journal News* was also there, and the paper featured us in a cover story the next day. All the publicity set off a wave of letters and phone calls to me from strangers who were touched by our story. I even heard from a 15-year-old boy in Ohio who saw the *Journal News* article on the Internet.

Like many great spiritual leaders, Rabbi Herschel Schacter is a modest man. "It's nice for him to be remembered," said his wife Pnina, when we spoke a few days after the ceremony.

It's not often that a person has the opportunity to reunite, after 61 years, with the hero who changed his life. To hug that extraordinary individual and introduce him to the children and grandchildren whose very existence he made possible. I am a lucky man, indeed, to have been given this gift. What's more, all the good souls who came together at the Garden of Remembrance that fine spring day for a gathering of remembrance and hope got the chance to meet an angel who walks among us.

unthinkable to mention any such shortcomings on air, and its overall thrust was to highlight the British Army's role in saving lives and the gratitude felt by the camp's inmates. The programme opened with 'God Save the King' - played on a very out-of-tune canteen piano by Fania Fenelon (one of the 'musicians of Auschwitz' who would later write a book about that camp's orchestra) - and closed with the children's songs and three 'hip-hip-hoorahs' for the British.

Two witness statements feature. Driver Mechanic Payne of the Oxfordshire Yeomanry describes seeing a woman who had completely lost her mind and who insisted on feeding milk to her long dead baby. Gitta Cartagena tells of her certainty in Auschwitz that she would be gassed and how she kept a record with notches on her bunk post of the days she had left to live.

Elizabeth Volkenrath's testimony was not used - perhaps because it was in German. The fact that she was in custody and awaiting trial would in any case have prohibited it.

The Jewish Sabbath open air service conducted by Leslie Hardman is given several minutes. A moving observation by Gordon Walker - that everyone was in tears but struggled on to show the outside world that they were still alive - was omitted from the final recording, presumably simply to shorten an overlong script.



A lengthy central section is taken up with Gordon Walker's own thoughts on the German camps and what they meant: 'whoever of us has shut his ears to these things, or flinched from whatever effort was necessary to put an end to them - now carries part of the responsibility for these things.'

Knowing the extent of material which Gordon Walker uncovered, one looks - with the benefit of hindsight of course - for more signs of understanding of the Jewish tragedy. On his last night in the camp he had spoken privately with Leslie Hardman, who 'broke down and sobbed out loud' - a heart-rending scene which made it into *The Lid Lifts*, but not into the BBC programme. He knew that many of the prisoners were there because they had been marched there, but did not attempt to build up a picture of this forced migration of prisoners from Auschwitz and other camps in the east to the western part of Germany. He perhaps felt that the recordings were so unusual as to require no further embellishment or conjecture, and was acutely conscious that it was simply too early to provide a full perspective:

In my diary I have set down things as I observed them as honestly as I could... For this is, I think, the best service you can give to a democracy at the moment on the German problem. To give the facts as accurately as possible and to let each draw his conclusions. But the diary method produces a jigsaw that is still in its box. The representative observer has one further task - to fit together some corner and sections of the jigsaw that belong together. This is still in the realm of fact reporting.<sup>21</sup>

The programme got a favourable reaction, according to the BBC Listeners' Report, with three out of four of the 9 o'clock News audience listening to it. 'Its APPRECIATION INDEX was 83...the recordings of the British Soldier's evidence, the singing of the children, the Jewish service, and the Czech girls's story were all singled out for praise, as was Patrick Gordon Walker's narration'.<sup>22</sup>

Realising that the children's songs offered a child's perspective on freedom from Nazi tyranny, Gordon Walker wrote a further talk based solely on these, and suggested it to the BBC programmers for Children's Hour. It was broadcast on 14 June 1945, giving younger Home Service listeners their own version of the horrific news story

<sup>21</sup> *The Lid Lifts*, p 73.

<sup>22</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre, Listener Research Report, Belsen: Facts and Thoughts, 14 June 1945 (based on 274 questionnaires returned by the Talks and Discussions Panel).

which had so perplexed their parents in previous weeks.<sup>23</sup>

'That was the message in song,' Gordon Walker closed the programme, 'of these children from this terrible concentration camp to the children in Britain. I suppose they are the saddest songs you will ever hear. All these Russian and Dutch children had lost their fathers and mothers, murdered by the Nazis.'<sup>24</sup>

### Leonard Cottrell's 'The Man from Belsen'

In April 1946 BBC listeners heard the first full-length drama documentary account of daily life in the Nazi camps as experienced by prisoners, when the Home Service broadcast a dramatised feature about the experiences of a British survivor of Belsen, Harold Le Druillenec. It was written and produced by Leonard Cottrell - writer of a number of talks, plays and adaptations for the BBC, who in later decades would find fame as the author of several popular histories of the ancient world, among them *The Bull of Minos* and *The Lost Pharaohs*.

Le Druillenec was a schoolmaster on Jersey, and during the Channel Islands' occupation had been arrested, together with his sister, Louisa Gould, for helping to shelter an escaped Russian prisoner of war. His trial took place just two weeks after the Normandy



landings - the sounds of the fighting on the nearby French coast could actually be heard in the St Helier courtroom - but the Nazi administration were still sending convicted Channel Islanders to the French mainland, and Le Druillenec was taken off the island to begin his five month sentence in a prison near Rheims. From there he was sent to Neuengamme, on the outskirts of Hamburg, where he was selected to join a slave labour detachment in Wilhelmshaven. As the Allies approached, he was transported to Belsen, arriving there on 5 April 1945.<sup>25</sup>

After the liberation Le Druillenec had been nursed back to health in a hospital at Epsom, Surrey. He was briefly heard on the Home Service when the Belsen Trial - at which he was a witness - was reported from Lüneberg. Then on Christmas Day 1945 he was heard by literally millions of wireless listeners in Britain and abroad when he broadcast live from Castle Cornet in Jersey on 'Wherever you may

be' - an hour-long sharing of greetings from different locations which directly preceded the King's Christmas message.<sup>26</sup>

Cottrell presumably interviewed his subject at length and drew out from these conversations a narrative and a cast of characters. The 'little band of friends' Le Druillenec had made during his captivity helped shape the piece: Colonel Reynaud, a First World War veteran and 'very much the old type of cavalry officer'; the bluff, sturdy American, Lloyd Gybels, who advises newly arrived inmates 'don't judge things by the standards of ordinary life'; the pale aristocrat Jean de Frotte whose privileged background made him least adaptable to the privations of camp life; and 'little Baudu', a tough Breton cattle-breeder.

The BBC must have been impressed by the script and gave it a strong cast of actors including Valentine Dyall (familiar to Home Service listeners as 'The Man in Black' in the popular thriller series *Appointment with Fear*, then five years into what would be a twelve-year run). Le Druillenec himself was persuaded to participate as narrator. A musical accompaniment was commissioned from the distinguished composer William Alwyn, and Eugene Pini, the well-known violinist, engaged to play it. Sound Effects were briefed to

<sup>23</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre, 'Children's Belsen' by Patrick Gordon Walker, 2.5 1945.

<sup>24</sup> Gordon Walker - who had been much involved in Labour politics in Oxford in the 1930s - won the seat for Smethwick in the 1945 General Election, and began a third career in politics. It would span nearly three decades, and make him an expert in Commonwealth affairs, and briefly - in 1964 - Foreign Secretary.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Sanders, *The Ultimate Sacrifice*, Chapter 5, Compassion with a Capital C: Louise Gould's 'Family Affair', (Jersey: Jersey Museums Service, 1998)

<sup>26</sup> BBC Yearbook, 1946

# A Yom Ha'Shoah to remember

Melvin Federbush

September 11 became an important and somber date for me long before the infamous attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. For on that same date, in 1939, I lost my parents and younger sisters when German warplanes strafed a field near our hometown of Deblin, Poland. I survived only because my mother sent me home to retrieve a precious sewing machine.

You see, the Germans had invaded Poland on September 1. They bombed our town immediately because it had the largest military airfield in Poland. My family had just returned from synagogue when the bombs started falling. That night, many of us left Deblin for a village called Ryki, where we thought we would be safer. But the bombers came. They burned the houses in the village and we took refuge in a field, to no avail.

I was 16, the eldest of five children. Soon after our family was killed, I and my two younger brothers, Sidney and Henry, were incarcerated and put to work in a slave labor camp that had been set up at the airfield in Deblin. Had we attempted to escape, we could have been shot by our German guards or killed by nearby Polish villagers, who stood to benefit from our deaths by claiming our property. When the Russian army advanced into Poland five years later, we were moved to a forced labor camp in Czestochova, nearer to the German border. There were two trains in the transport to

*Melvin is the husband of Elsa Stern, the sister of Meier, both of whom came to England in February 1946 with the Czech-Hungarian group.*

Czestochova, and we heard that children on the first train were killed upon arrival at the camp. My brothers and I got lucky – we were on the second train. In January 1945, as the Russians continued their offensive, we were deported to Buchenwald. (Ironically, after we left the first two camps, both were liberated by the Russians.)

Without warning, at the end of January 1945, I was separated from my brothers and placed in a terrible camp in Triglitz. In April, the Americans liberated Buchenwald. A month earlier, I leapt to freedom from a cattle car that was transporting me, along with other prisoners, from Triglitz to Theresienstadt concentration camp, the way-station for Auschwitz. I managed to find work on a farm in the German countryside by telling the farmer that I was Polish. (I learned later that the farmer suspected that I was a Jew but, being a decent human being, he went along with my ruse.)

I returned to Buchenwald in June 1945 to search for my little brothers. My brother Henry, who had worked for the resistance even while in the camp, died two days after liberation, from a severe beating that he had sustained the week before

when he was discovered breaking into an ammunition depot. But 15-year-old Sidney was alive! When I arrived at Buchenwald, I learned that the Swiss Red Cross was there making plans to transport all the surviving children under 16 years of age to Switzerland for rehabilitation. At 22, I was too old to be included. My brother and I had been separated only once since our captivity, and I was determined not to let that happen again. So I prevailed upon a young American army chaplain for help.

His name was Rabbi Herschel Schacter, and he was 26 years old at the time. I had heard about how, when he entered Buchenwald with the liberating Third U.S. Army battalion on April 11, the young New Yorker raced through the camp yelling in Yiddish, "*Thr zentfrei!* You are free! The war is over!" At that moment, he restored the former inmates' souls, and their humanity. Then, two days after liberation, he held a Passover seder in the camp. (That seder was immortalized by a photograph now preserved in the archive of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC.)

Living up to his motto, "No Jewish family will be separated," Rabbi Schacter made sure that Sidney and I remained together. We went to Switzerland and after the immigration laws were liberalized for children, Sidney immigrated to New York. I followed three years later, in 1950.

In New York, I started my



So what do these two programmes tell us about the BBC and its approach to the revelations made at Belsen in 1945? There is no doubt that the terrible facts were seen first and foremost as a story to be brandished at the defeated Germans:

The European Service must give the fullest possible attention today to the concentration camps. Bullock will write a special report which should be run at some length. Establish the war guilt. This was the system which the quislings supported and as the basis of the Nazi regime. Show that this was the justification for the war.<sup>28</sup>

But the news controllers acknowledged that the wider story was not a straightforward one:

In fact the guilt spreads over us all. Even Britain,

who declared war on this evil before she was herself directly attacked and who did so much to secure the victory should not forget that she herself negotiated with Adolf Hitler in 1938, turning a blind eye to Buchenwald and Dachau and the Jewish pogroms, and that a British trade delegation was visiting Germany when the Nazi pestilence was taken into Czechoslovakia. This is not to induce an exaggerated feeling of self-reproach but only to show that the essential evil is Nazism and that it is not only the German people who need to walk through these prison camps.<sup>29</sup>

And they knew that a large part of it had yet to be told:

While we are giving the details as we learn them

about the concentration camps in Germany, it should not be forgotten that the extermination camps in Poland were even more frightful and that there millions of people were slaughtered.<sup>30</sup>

Gordon Walker's 'Facts and thoughts' shows that - within the limitations of a very short programme and to a degree constrained by the mood of triumph in spring 1945 - a serious effort was made to get beyond the horrific images of the first reports, and to explore the identity and experiences of Belsen's inmates. The phenomenon of 'the concentration camp' was a new, dark arrival in Europe's history, and - as the elaborate production 'The Man from Belsen' shows - the best brains and talents were put to help public understanding of it.

<sup>28</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre, E2/131/22, Assistant Director, European News Directorate, 19 April 1945.

<sup>29</sup> E2/ 131/ 22 Foreign General Directives, European News Directives, File XXII, March - August 1945, Memo from Director of European News Department.

<sup>30</sup> General Directive in same file, 26 April 1945.

produce a hissing steam train, marching feet, the hum of planes and the distant thud of bombs.

And so it would have been quite a large group of actors, technicians and musicians who gathered together with Cottrell and Le Druillenec in Studio 8 at Bush House on 11th April 1946 for two full days' rehearsals, culminating in the live broadcast on the evening of Friday 12th - just three days before the first anniversary of Belsen's liberation.<sup>27</sup> To listen to the feature today is to experience a highly accomplished piece of radio - slightly old-fashioned in style, perhaps, but its spare construction and fluid dialogue make for a timeless and moving piece.

Listeners hear the angry surprise of the prisoners as the train Le Druillenec and his friends are being transported on slows down and they realise that they are being taken to a concentration camp, not a Stalag. In measured tones Le Druillenec explains how concentration camps were well organised and run with efficiency, how their inmates had their belongings confiscated and were made to lose their identity. 'I want you to imagine the scene: Naked men - all nationalities moving forward in a crocodile. Trousers, tunic, shirt, clogs. Trousers, tunic, shirt, clogs. Trousers, tunic, shirt, clogs. All with the characteristic stripes.' The *Blockälteste* barks at them 'like a vicious public school headmaster': 'From now on you have to be concerned with furthering the interests of the Third Reich.'



The American character, Lloyd Gybels, has been in Neuengamme for some while, and from him the new arrivals learn the rules of camp life: 'you'll see things going on here that'll drive you nuts if you try to figure them out - guys beaten to death for stealing a swede; guys tortured for weeks and then killed because the Camp Chief didn't like their faces.' The past history of the group's *Blockälteste*, Omar, once a radical journalist, is used to illustrate how the concentration camp system could take away the values of a civilised man and make him into a monster.

In the feature's second half, Le Druillenec is transported in a cattle wagon to Lüneberg where the train is bombed by American planes, and the inmates of an adjoining wagon killed. The following day Colonel Reynaud, Baudu and Le Druillenec are packed into a truck and driven to another camp - Belsen.

They realise that buildings adjoining their hut are crammed with dead bodies. The overcrowding is serious, yet more convoys arrive each day.

Le Druillenec narrates the painful progress of the ten days: on the second night the huts are too crowded for them to lie down and they

have to sit 'with legs apart, the next man between your knees'; on the sixth day the SS order them to start dragging the bodies to pits for burial; on the eighth Colonel Reynaud dies; on the ninth Le Druillenec says 'I am finished.'

But on the tenth day distant rifle shots are heard, and Baudu shakes his friend and tells him that the British are coming. At the end of the programme Le Druillenec manages to get the attention of Derrick Sington, the officer in charge of the Loudspeaker Unit which announced that the camp had been liberated. He tells Sington that he is British and is driven away on the bonnet of the loudspeaker van, Baudu shouting out to him: 'Goodbye Harold, you'll write to me won't you'.

The recording of this last section of the programme must have been extraordinary to witness - with Harold Le Druillenec describing his ordeal of just a year past, the passing of each day marked by the soaring notes of Eugene Pini's violin.

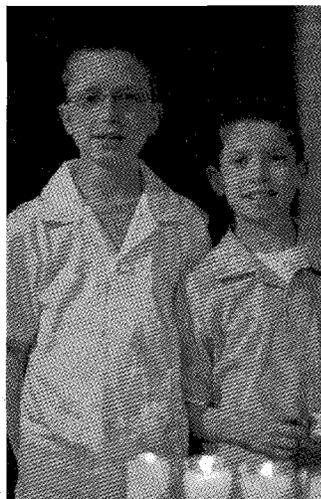
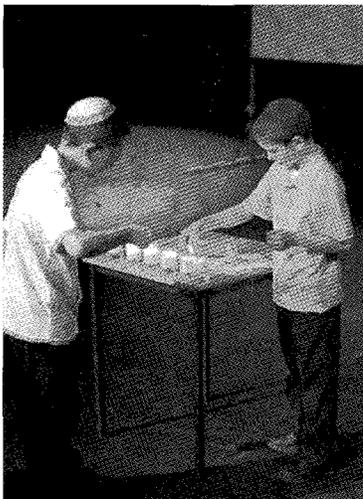
The programme did not portray the years of imprisonment and degradation in Auschwitz that had been the experience of many of Belsen's inmates, or make clear the fact that so many of the prisoners had been Jewish. Being delivered in unaccented English, moreover, it sounds strange when compared to the testimonies given in later years by 'continental Britons'. But as an attempt to explore the concentration camp experience it was a thoughtful and highly professional piece.

<sup>27</sup> Script: 'The Man from Belsen', 12 April 1946, BBC Written Archives Centre.

# Our members from around the



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