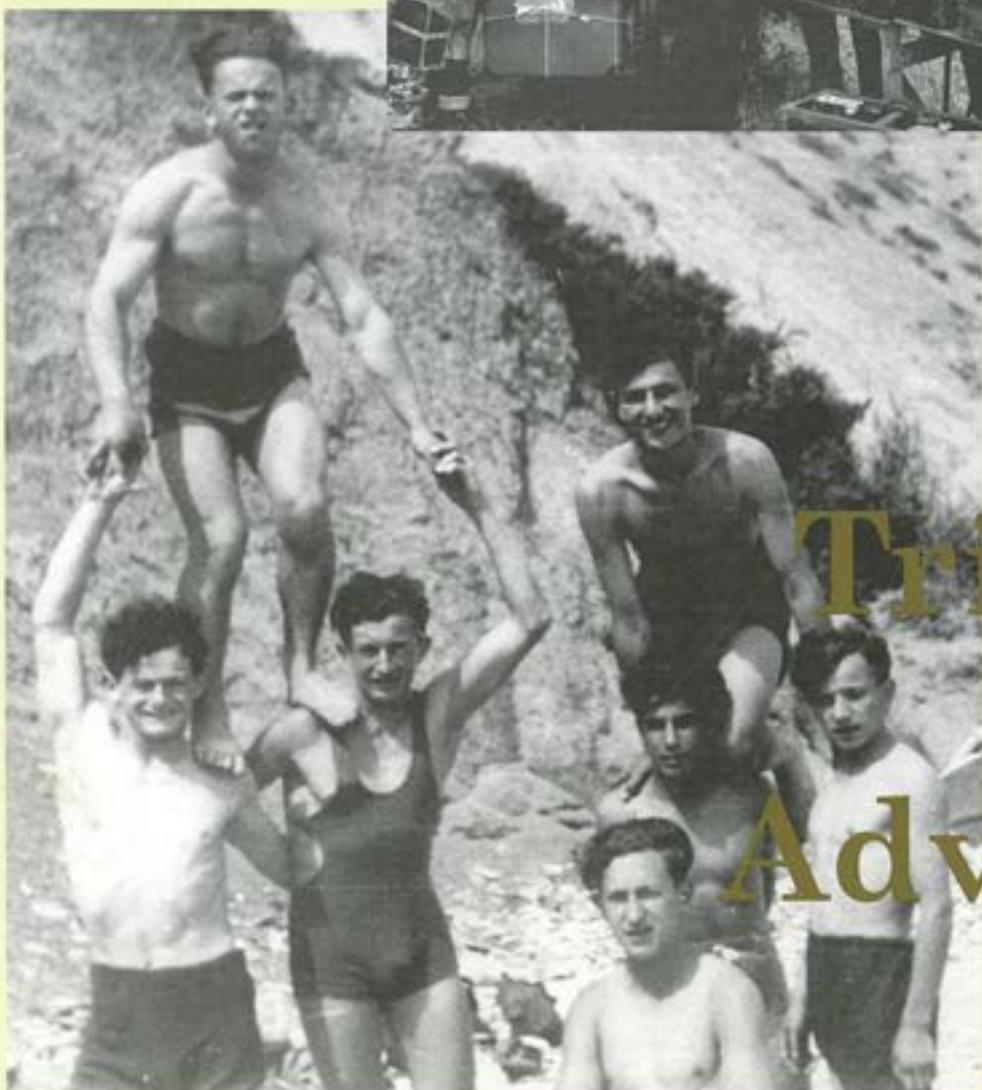
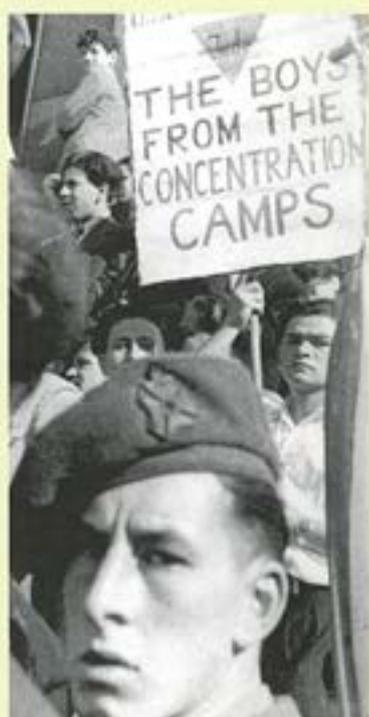




JOURNAL



HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS
245
SOCIETY

Triumph over Adversity

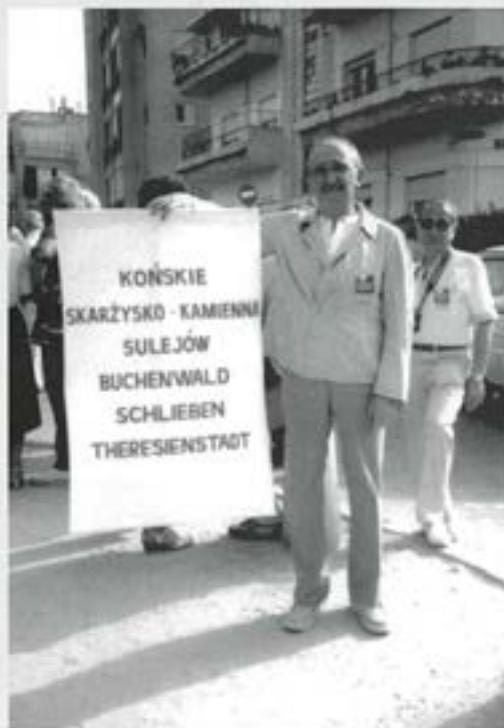
Issue No.37 2013



President Ezer Weizman and his wife Reuma at the opening of Zui Dagan's new factory in Ashkelon.



The '45 Aid Society contribution to Yad Vashem.



Chaskiel Rosenbloom at the first gathering of survivors in Israel.



Some of the 'Boys' with the President of the Board of Deputies at Auschwitz during the anniversary of the uprising of the Warsaw ghetto.



If you would like to purchase any photos from the REUNION please tel: John R. Rifkin on 020 8958 1370 or email: jrifkin@btconnect.com



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PEGGY LUCAS for the typing of the Journal.

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for facilitating the printing of the Journal.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Sir Martin Gilbert

Sadly, our President, Sir Martin Gilbert, is indisposed and so we take the liberty of printing this message, which is as relevant today as when he wrote it.

We send him greetings and wish him a speedy recovery.

Today marks the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and the final liberation of the camps. Each one of you has your own memories of that day; and of those terrible days and nights as the war was coming to an end, and your own survival hung on a slender thread.

Your sixtieth anniversary reunion marks a moment of triumph not only in your story, but in the story of the Jewish people, and of the wider humanity. Evil had done great harm, destroyed vast populations, uprooted a vibrant culture, but in the last resort, it was that very evil that was brought to an end. Hitler's Third Reich, which was to have lasted, according to its own declarations, for a thousand years, was in ruins and ashes after a mere twelve years.

Tragically, those twelve years were enough for the destructive anti-Jewish theme

of Nazism to wreak a terrible havoc and slaughter. But you survived, and the Jewish people survived. It will take many years until the gap left by the six million who were murdered is filled by new life and new generations, but that process of recreation is continuous.

Your own children and grandchildren, many of whom are with us for the sixtieth anniversary reunion, are the living proof that the designs of Amalek, Haman, and Chmielnicki, as well as of the Nazis, did not succeed. We are alive as a people and as a civilisation.

Each Purim we remember the victory over our adversaries. And each May we celebrate your liberation, while at the same time remembering the fate of your families and friends, your communities and towns. The memories you hold of them are a precious legacy.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Ben Helfgott

In this 68th anniversary of our liberation and the 50th anniversary of the formation of the '45 Aid Society, it is appropriate to highlight in this commemorative special issue our arrival in England and our recuperation and rehabilitation, life in the hostels, The Primrose Jewish Youth Club, The '45 Aid Society and our integration into the community. A sizeable number of the articles have been selected from the Journals of our Society which were published since April 1976 and from other material previously published. Other articles were specially written by our members, some are reflective and some describe their careers.

These articles are a tribute to the resilience of human nature that in spite of our traumatic suffering we managed to lead a normal life, integrate into society and play an active and creative part in the community. We could not have achieved this without the help extended to us by many remarkable people when first we were brought to this country.

The most outstanding were the late Elaine Blond, the late Leonard G Montefiore, the late Oscar Joseph, and the late Lola Hahn Warburg, to whom we are deeply indebted, as indeed we are to many others.

Elaine Blond always referred to us

endearingly as "her boys". In 1987, we honoured her by donating £5,000 for the purchase of sports equipment to be used by Felasha children at a Jerusalem school which was named after her.

In 1976, we established the Annual Leonard G Montefiore Memorial Lecture. Leonard Montefiore took a special interest in many of "our boys" in the hour of their need.

Oscar Joseph was the President of our Society from its inception in 1963 and continued to take a paternal interest in our affairs until his death in 1989. In 1979, we established the Annual Oscar Joseph Holocaust Award, which continues till today. We also donated, in 1987, £5,000 to the Wiener Library to help inaugurate an Audio-Visual Centre which was to bear his name.

Lola Hahn-Warburg also took a personal interest in "the boys" and after attending the 30th anniversary of our liberation, in a letter of thanks, wrote "I was moved by the spirit of brotherhood and feel deeply your dedication and your deep gratitude that a miracle saved you all. Coming home last night I looked through your brochure and read all the tributes and felt that when I cast my mind back over those thirty years, it was that noble personality of Leonard Montefiore and Oscar Friedman with whom I worked so closely, who guided you all. I feel so often in life when you give you receive. Last night, the few of us who there thirty years ago received in abundance".

How much they would have relished this evening had they been here tonight with us and meeting our grown-up children of whom we are so proud not only because of their success but because the kind of people they are, imbued with a sense of justice and deep responsibility to their fellow man.

In Britain we supported the Cystic Fibrosis Society and many other causes.

CBF World Jewish Relief funded and organised our immigration to the U.K., and we have made donations to them for many years as a token of our appreciation.

At our 50th Anniversary Reunion we donated to Yad Vashem £50,000. A few years later, we raised another £50,000 for the planting of a '45 Aid Society Garden in memory of the teachers who perished in the Shoah.

In Israel we have supported Micha Society for Deaf Children's Hospitals; a school for handicapped children, the Rebecca Sieff

Hospital in Sfat, and we donated a Magen David ambulance which we see often in the streets of Tel-Aviv. We responded generously to the Falasha Children Appeal and to the Kosover Children Appeal in 1999.

It is the establishment of the '45 Aid Society that held us together and provided us with the opportunity to continue as a cohesive group. This is borne out in many of the pages of this issue. The '45 Aid Society has also given us a public profile, a collective voice and evinced to the community at large how we came through our trauma with dignity and independence. In addition to our members in England, we keep in touch with those who live abroad, in Israel, U.S.A., Canada and in other parts of the world and we offer help whether material or moral to our members in times of need and represent them at committee level in all organisations concerned with their welfare.

In spite of the fact that we have diligently pursued our careers, we have always been conscious of our responsibility to preserve the memory of those who perished in the Shoa. It is with pride that I recall that our Society has been active for many years in promoting Holocaust education and remembrance long before other institutions now dealing with these matters came into being. We encouraged young people to participate in Holocaust essay competitions. In 1978, we helped to establish the Holocaust Fellowship at the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Jewish Studies. In 1981, many of our members gave talks to groups of schoolchildren at the East End Auschwitz Exhibition as, indeed, they have done at schools, universities and other public forum for many years and continue to do. We promoted books and exhibitions as well as organised public lectures on subjects relating to the Holocaust.

We have never faltered in our support of Israel. The State of Israel embodies the oneness of the Jewish people. It has enriched our lives and enhanced our pride and identity. Everything that happens to the people of Israel affects our lives. Many of our "Boys" fought for the independence of Israel and many settled there.

We are particularly proud to have commissioned a new Sefer Torah in remembrance of our murdered parents. This Sefer Torah, of which the Scribe was the son of one of our "boys", is housed at the Borehamwood and Elstree Synagogue, where we have dedicated

plaques commemorating the names of our parents . Each year, before Rosh Hashanah, we hold a memorial service in the Shul to say a collective Kaddish.

Looking back over the past sixty-eight years, we can say with gratitude that Britain has been good to us; it gave us the opportunity to integrate and to develop our potential in spite of our handicaps. We, in

turn, can be proud of the fact that we have made a positive contribution to the Jewish community and to society at large.

We cannot escape the fact that we still grieve the loss of six million souls murdered for no reason other than the fact that they were Jews. The world will never know what great contribution they may have made to civilisation.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the formation of our Society, it is appropriate to reprint the message sent us by the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair.

I warmly welcome the publication of this journal to mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps and I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to salute the survivors who have displayed such strength and courage in the face of the almost unimaginable evil of the Holocaust.

An evil which sought to deny any respect to the living or the dead; which inflicted equal cruelties on age and youth; which deprived children of any experience of childhood; and which tore apart the most sacred family ties. I know that many survivors will have lost their entire families. Many will have witnessed the terrifying brutality which led to the death of their loved ones. Others will have had to wrestle with the fact that members of their families met an unknown fate. Some will have struggled with a sense of guilt that it was they who survived while parents, brothers, sisters perished. And all will have had to live with loneliness and grief and the memory of having been caught up in unimaginable barbarity.

Yet despite this, and it should never be underestimated, survivors of the Holocaust have borne their suffering with dignity and resilience. They have rebuilt their lives, comforted one another and contributed to the greater common good. In this country, we have been immeasurably enriched by survivors who made their homes here, and who have raised families, pursued careers, and contributed to their communities. But we have also been enriched through their eloquent witness in the face of the most appalling tragedies and adversity, to the resilience and dignity of the human spirit

Tony Blair

Julek's dream of a better Future

By Julek Zylberger

*(Reprinted from Journal
No. 23, Autumn 1999,
page 10)*

Julek wrote this account soon after he arrived in Windermere. He emigrated to the United States in 1947 and married his wife Judy in 1953. He worked there as a cutter and sadly died tragically in December 1986. It was only after his death that Judy became aware of the existence of this most moving and poignant article.

The six years of German concentration camps passed like a dream and a new life opened its gates widely for us. I lie in bed and consider it. Yes, it is a significant moment in my life. I recollect the past. The outbreak of the war, mental suffering, four years of dreadful life in the Lodz Ghetto, evacuation, the last parting from my family, concentration camps, hunger, heavy strokes of the whip, and then, at last, liberation. I survived the various tortures, recovered health, and I am physically splendid. But the losses were tremendous. My family perished in an unnatural way, in the same way as millions of European Jews. I am lonely; solitary like a small isle in the middle of the ocean. I think about my future life. I tremble like a leaf when I think of it. What is it worth? I have no home, and what is worse, there is nobody to give me comfort. How can I start a new life? It seems almost impossible. I feel it. My energy fails me, my mental power too. Oh, but how ridiculous! Why did I

Rain, rain and rain. For five days it has rained, and there are no prospects of improvement. The black clouds cover the sky all over and the darkness seems to say: "No, boys, your time has not arrived yet." And another day passed. A day of impatient expectation, a day which has exasperated our feelings to such an extent that we could not fall asleep.

The night seems to last a century. In our room, dead silence reigns, but I am sure that nobody sleeps. From time to time, I can hear a boy whispering to his friend, but I don't pay the slightest attention to it. I am absorbed in thoughts. Yes, we are going to Britain. I try to recollect what I know about Britain. It is a highly civilised country; an island; a developed industry. Undoubtedly, I remember it from the geography lessons I used to have.

We have been in Prague five days and we are eagerly awaiting our departure, but the weather is not favourable and this is probably the reason why the aeroplanes are not punctual. The five days passed pleasantly. Prague, a city of over a million inhabitants, was a place where we could find enjoyment. After six years of sorrow, it was extremely delightful to go to cinemas, theatres, and to visit the art gallery, which impressed us very much. We visited the famous castle of Prague, the palace of President Benes, and many other historical buildings. But it did not last very long. After a few days it became tedious. We knew that something extraordinary awaits us.

have such a fight for existence? I suffered six years in the belief of seeing freedom, to see the sun which would shine for me once more. And now this has happened. The terrible time is over, and a new world invites me. A new world offers me its assistance but I have no strength to accept it. I feel a pain throughout my body, and my head falls heavily on the pillow. A cold chill passes down my back. I am half-conscious - but it does not last long. A mysterious power awakes me, a power which whispers: "Get up, you senseless fool, and begin to work." I am furious, furious like a ravenous beast which is thirsty for blood. But what troubles me? What has suddenly produced such a rage? I know what it is. It is a desire for revenge, a desire for vengeance over the Nazi murderers who are responsible for everything that is evil. They have broken my heart and doomed my future. But have they only broken my heart? Am I the only one who suffers from Nazi cruelty? Am I their sole victim? No! Millions of Jews have been exterminated in an inhuman way, by barbarous means which were not known in history before. Human beings have been mercilessly killed, children were taken away from their mothers. I feel that nothing would stop me now from committing a crime. My mouth is half open, and my eyes look expressionlessly at the wall as if waiting for advice. I endeavour to say something aloud but I am not able to utter a word; my voice refuses, my mouth does not obey me. I look timidly round



Outing in Windermere 1945.

me but I cannot see anything. My eyes are now filled with tears. I weep softly. Then for a few minutes I am lying in such a position. Gradually, tears disappear from my face and I resume thinking.

I look now scornfully on the idea of revenge. How could I have thought so, even for a moment? Is this according to principles of humanity? Would such an infamous deed avail the dead souls in the least? I am a member of a nation which has suffered various persecutions and which has not yet sullied its name with blood. A new idea flashes into my head. I reflect a moment and soon I determine. I am talking to myself. 'Don't hesitate, start life anew. Try to forget about the past. Don't look backwards, look constantly forward. Get in touch with your brothers and sisters. Unite with them. They will help you and you will help them.'

Together, together we shall acquire strength. Together we will achieve our common aim. Surely, there will be obstacles. But what are obstacles against a will? With our common effort we shall defeat our enemies and crush our oppressors. We will show the world that our profession

is not money lending as we have been judged by anti-Semites in European countries. We will show the world that we can think, work, and create.

But what has happened? Who makes such a noise? A loud voice penetrates our room. The voice becomes louder and louder. Now, several other voices are audible. A boy comes puffing into our room. He commences hastily, "Get up, boys. The aeroplanes are here; our departure is taking place at ten o'clock," and in a second he is outside.

Everyone rises as if it were a command. In ten minutes we are dressed and washed. Yes, it is true. We get direct orders from the aerodrome to get ready. In two minutes, I have packed my things. We eat breakfast quickly and after one hour buses take us to the aerodrome. The weather favours us this time. The sky is clear and the sun casts its warmth upon the earth. Some birds are flying round and warbling sweetly; probably announcing the arrival of summer. A breeze blows quietly as if murmuring a song.

We are at the aerodrome. Some journalists are trying

to get into conversation with us and want to know everything, as is their habit. Others take photos; one even develops a film. It is precious stuff for them, the right opportunity to make money.

Our leader wants to say a few words of farewell. He has not permission to enter Great Britain. He is the founder of the youth hostels in Terezin. He worked inexhaustibly, day and night, in order to relieve us, and is attached to us like his own children. He starts in a low voice but with such a spirit that these calm words penetrate our minds vigorously and move us entirely. He speaks about our future and several times emphasises the word "belief". 'You must believe in your own strength, in your power to create.'

The due time arrives and at last we are going into the aeroplane. The aeroplanes move forward and in one minute we are in the air. We are mounting higher and higher. The buildings of Prague vanish from our sight and the aeroplane cuts the air. Ten minutes later we cannot perceive anything; we are under the clouds. Everyone is in his best humour. We sing various songs and seem to

enjoy it very much, but soon it becomes evident that we are not used to such a journey. Singing ceases; some boys begin to vomit and others try to fall asleep.

A pilot asks me (with a gesture) to go with him. I agree, and take a friend with me. We enter the cockpit and sit opposite the pilots. They look curiously at us, eager to exchange a few words, but we don't know a single word of their language. One is tall and fair. His calm and handsome face has regular, delicate features. The other is short and stout, with curly hair, and a peculiar expression. Both are sympathetic and very friendly. Their eyes are searchingly fixed on us, hoping to read something from our faces. We would be delighted to hear something about Great Britain but, unfortunately, we don't know English, and therefore we cannot come to an understanding. We demonstrate with a gesture that their

effort is in vain and we smile slightly. But they do not give it up. One takes out coins and gives them to us. The other shows us pictures from all over Britain. The time passes.

The aeroplane emerges from the clouds and before us appears a marvellous view. We admire in amazement the beauty of nature. From one side, the shores of France and, from the other, the coast of Great Britain. Ships in the English Channel look like toys and the water has a brilliant colour. But the aeroplane shoots forward and soon we are under the clouds again. We are now busy surveying the construction of the aeroplane. We study intensively every corner and we don't omit the smallest screw. The time passes quickly and we don't know how we landed at the aerodrome at Carlisle. We are examined by doctors and then we go into buses which were arranged to take us to

our hostel. We are rather tired after a whole day's journey and we would be glad to go to bed. We go off and look around.

Our *madrachim* (leaders) who have been waiting for our arrival over a week, greet us. Their faces express the utmost happiness and indescribable attachment. Their look embraces us with a motherly love, with a love that is more than precious. I think that for the first time I understood the Jewish character. We are scattered all over the world, but we have the same heart. One may be religious, the other not; one may be right, the other left - but everyone is ready to sacrifice himself in order to help his brothers and sisters.

Oh, no! I am not lonely. I have found new brothers and sisters. I have found my own brothers and sisters whom I will love and who will love me in return. Oh, never, never, will I separate from them.

They find refuge in the Lake District European children flown to Crosby

*(Reproduced from the
Carlisle Journal, August
17th 1945)*

The writer of this article was the late Joseph Finkelstone, then a young reporter not much older than many of us were at the time. He later became Foreign Editor of The Jewish Chronicle and Honorary Member of our Society.

Jewish children from concentration camps, convalescent homes, and the streets of towns in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Germany have found a temporary home in the Cumberland Lake District. They have passed through horrors that can hardly be described. One of them, a boy of fifteen, actually fought in several battles and was awarded a medal.

The children were flown direct from the Continent to Crosby aerodrome near Carlisle, in ten RAF

Stirlings, and they landed on Tuesday afternoon. There were 337 of them - one a stowaway - and as they

stepped from the planes, clutching in their hands small suitcases, bundles and souvenirs, they smiled at the prospect of their new life.

These little mites have known what it is to be separated from their parents, some of whom have been murdered in German concentration camps, and to wander the streets homeless and hungry.

Buses were ready for them and they were quickly taken to a hostel at Ambleside, which is to be their home for some time.

The children were accompanied by a few adults, an UNRRA woman official and a British Army Captain who had rescued his wife from a concentration camp after being separated from her for six years.

A Stowaway

The preparations for the journey at Prague and at Crosby were thorough. Some weeks ago the children were medically examined and secluded to make sure that none of them were suffering from any disease. Precautions were taken to prevent any unauthorised person from joining the party, but the daring and resource of a Polish boy of 13½, Icek Korotnicki, overcame all obstacles.

While working in the Polish town of Czestochova he heard a rumour that there was going to be an evacuation of children to Britain from Prague, and arrived there four days before the children were due to leave.

He was told that he could not be taken, and officials heard nothing more of him until on the plane's arrival at Crosby it was discovered that he was amongst the passengers. The boy was immediately put in a room by himself. When seen by a "Journal" reporter he was apparently oblivious of the stir he had caused and was quietly munching a piece of cake. He was later conveyed to an isolation hospital for observation.

Reception Organisation

The arrival of the first plane late in the afternoon set in



A picture of the boys in Windermere with physical training teacher.



An outing in Westmorland.

motion the carefully prepared reception organisation. As they stepped from the plane the children were taken to a hut on the aerodrome, where refreshments had been prepared for them under the supervision of Mrs Mark Fraser and Mrs Honeyman, Carlisle Women's Voluntary Services. Officials of the Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and

Rehabilitation were very helpful in sorting out the youngsters. A doctor examined them, and Customs officials from Liverpool inspected the luggage. Mr J E Etchells and Miss E S Thompson, Ministry of Health, were also present

The children looked fit, and with a few exceptions, quite cheerful. Surprise was expressed at their good



Receiving our first clothing in Windermere.



Learning English.

physique but the doctor said afterwards that most of them were anaemic.

There were many touching scenes as the children arrived. A little boy presented one of the women officials with a bouquet of beautiful roses which he had brought all the way from Prague.

Later in the evening another child presented a second bouquet. There were expressions of appreciation from RAF personnel when a boy arrived with a small Union Jack in his lapel.

Terrible Stories

Before leaving, the children readily told their stories, and never before in human history had anything so terrible been heard from the lips of young children. One boy said that when the Germans evacuated the inmates of a camp before the arrival of the Allies they shot anyone who could not walk fast enough. For seven weeks they got hardly any food and the children had to eat grass. He himself had

eaten a snake. Another boy told proudly of his having been a Russian partisan.

Perhaps the most remarkable story and one that fascinated all those present came from a boy of 15, who was dressed in a miniature United States Army uniform. He explained in hesitating English, that he was in Buchenwald when the Third American Army arrived and became attached to a tank destroyer company. An American captain became so interested in him that he took him to other fronts and the boy actually fought in several battles and was awarded a medal.

When the two, now close friends, had to separate, the officer gave the boy a letter addressed to the American authorities. In it he stated that when conditions permitted and the boy could go to the States he would guarantee his schooling and work.

Nobody present could fail to be affected by the sight of the orphaned toddlers sitting by themselves on the grass and quietly sipping milk. They quickly became the favourites of RAF officers.

*Fifty years later,
Joe Finkelstone wrote:-*

A pivotal role in the transformation of the youngsters from traumatised camp survivors into well-adjusted British citizens was played by the specially established London youth club, named the Primrose after the local telephone dialling code.

Under the guidance of the club leader, Yogi Mayer, an athlete talented enough to represent Germany if the Nazis had not intervened,

the youngsters found the communal home they urgently needed.

They could eat there after work and they could find the sporting facilities they craved for.

It was at the Primrose that Ben Helfgott could display the first inklings of his sporting talents which were to lead him – uniquely for a death camp survivor – to become the British light-weight weightlifting champion and record-holder and represent his new country in the Olympic Games in Rome and Melbourne.

An even greater hunger than for good food and sport burnt in them – that for education.

Ben Helfgott sums up this feeling. "For years we had been deprived of the chance to study. Now we wanted to make up for lost time. We literally swallowed education." Those with special talents even became university dons. Kurt Klappholz became a Reader at the London School of Economics. Jerzy Herszberg, a Reader in mathematics at Birkbeck College. Witold Gutt obtained a doctorate in chemistry and a senior place in the civil service. Roman Halter won distinction as an artist and architect.

Their ranks also produced spiritual leaders, notably Rabbi Hugo Gryn of the West London Synagogue, who regularly agonises in the BBC's Moral Maze debates.

Speaking of their transformation into proud Londoners and Mancunians, "the boys" and "the girls", as they are still known despite having themselves become grandparents, make clear one



The boys at the Cardross hostel.



Some of the boys from the Loughton hostel.

crucial point. Repeatedly they told me: "We survived because we wanted to tell the world the terrible story of Nazi murders. We wanted to help ensure that no such hell could ever happen again."

Yet they added: "When we emerged from the Nazi hell, we never thought of revenge. We retained our faith in humanity, a faith confirmed by our experiences in England."

Now, the once destitute "boys" and "girls" are raising, through their '45 Aid Society,

considerable sums of money for worthy charities.

Having heard from their President – historian, Sir Martin Gilbert, author of the massive biography of Winston Churchill – of their endeavours, Princes Charles and John Major have voiced their admiration.

"Courage, fortitude, resilience" are precisely the words which one would want to associate with the youngsters who arrived in Carlisle 50 years ago.

Children from the Camps

Joan Stiebel

*(Reprinted from Journal,
19th December 1995,
page 3)*

Joan was Executive Director of the CBF, now World Jewish Relief, at the time of our arrival in England.

Soon after the end of the war, the Jewish Refugees Committee and the Friends Committee for Refugees and Aliens asked the Home Office for permission to bring over some of the orphaned children who had been in concentration camps. The Home Office gave their consent for up to 1,000 under the age of 16 to come to this country and the scene was set for the operation to begin.

Through the Home Office, a largely disused Ministry of Production housing site on Lake Windermere was made available for the accommodation of the first group and we set about equipping it, whilst the selection of suitable children went ahead in Europe.

The first children came from Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia and numbered 300. It was anticipated that many would require medical treatment and the preparation of a suitable sick-bay was considered of great importance.

The arrangements for the transport of the children were put in hand and the Royal Air Force provided Sterling bombers for the purpose. Then the weather took a hand and for five days it was not suitable for the evacuation exercise to take place.

In the meantime, a special committee – The Committee for the Care of Children from the Camps – was set up in Bloomsbury House, with Mr Leonard Montefiore as its Chairman. It also included Mrs Neville Blond and Mrs Lola Hahn-Warburg,

both of whom, with Mr Montefiore, were extremely active throughout. On the administrative side, I was the professional most involved, whilst Mr Oscar Friedman, a psychology social worker, was in overall charge of the care and welfare of the children.

It was decided that Mr Montefiore and I should meet the first group who were to come in at Crosby-in-Eden, an airfield near Carlisle. Sleepers on the trains were in short supply, but the Home Office arranged them for some categories of traveller, including those connected with the refugee organisations. I booked sleepers for four days in a row and always had to cancel them because the planes could not fly. On the fifth day, I did no booking, the weather cleared and Mr Montefiore and I had a crowded and, in a way, amusing journey sitting up in a very overcrowded train.

We arrived at Carlisle at six o'clock in the morning and immediately contacted the RAMC who were providing trucks to transport the children from the airport to Windermere. We then managed to get a bath and breakfast in one of the hotels prior to going to Marks and

Spencer, when it opened, to see the Manager. Through Mrs Blond, he had taken charge of all the local arrangements and was a tower of strength.

Eventually, we had lunch with him in the store and then drove out to Crosby-in-Eden. Immigration officers and MI5 representatives were there, as were the press. An amusing aside in what turned out to be a very long day was when one of the press asked Mr Montefiore what he did, and he replied,

"I am one of those awful beings known as a rentier!"

Once at the airfield, all we had to do was to wait for the first plane to come into sight. When it did, I can still remember the choked feeling I had that it was all happening but, once the aircraft landed, followed by the rest, there was no time for contemplation.

Mr Montefiore went down to the landing area and I stayed at the airport building to deal with whatever came up. Some time during that hectic afternoon, there was a call from one of the MI5 men:

"Miss Stiebel, come – we've got a stowaway."

I am not sure if it was ever discovered how the boy, known as Ivan, got onto the plane. Each plane had two adult escorts, in addition to the children, and there was a nominal roll of everyone on board, but nobody admitted having seen Ivan and he was clearly not a spy.



In Theresienstadt before our arrival in Windermere.

When they arrived, the children were not in very good shape. The plane had come down en route and the travellers had been plied with chocolate and oranges – not a good combination in rather choppy flying conditions!

By the time all the planes had landed and we had dealt with the formalities, it was quite late and we still had the drive to Windermere.

Some time during the drive, we heard that the Japanese had surrendered and that peace had come at last.

We reached Windermere in the early hours of the morning where staff and some voluntary workers awaited us.

The children were in amazingly good spirits and Mr Montefiore used to tell a story which indicated their joy at being in a free country. The truck he was in broke down en route and he apologised to his group for the delay. One boy said:

"Don't apologise. It is an honour to break down on a British road."

Surely that said it all.

The next day must have been a strange one for them all. There was so much that had to be done: Medical examinations, clothing distribution, acclimatisation to such a new environment and much more. One thing that stands out in my mind is the first main meal with the children. Some of them emerged from it, their new jerseys bulging. Believing that there might not always be food, they had taken bread as a stand-by.

There were still some locals living on the Estate and they were very interested in our group and did everything they could to help them, amongst other things, loaning them bicycles. We were lucky in that we had genuinely concerned volunteers from nearby places as well as some Londoners who were holidaying in the vicinity,

notably the late Mrs Anna Schwab, a former member of the Jewish Refugees Committee. She helped in many ways, especially on the domestic front

Whilst I was involved in everything during my brief stay in Windermere, mine was an administrative job and the actual planning for the children's future lay with Mr Oscar Friedman.

I also went with Mr Montefiore to meet the second group which came to Southampton. The contrast between the two reception places could not have been greater because the first was specially erected for the Ministry of Production during the war and Southampton was a beautiful old house lent for the purpose by its owner.

Although Mr Oscar Friedman continued in overall charge of the whole group, Mr Fritz Friedman ran Southampton and looked after the group who were housed there.

Recollections of the arrival of the Windermere Group

Alice Goldberger

*(Reprinted from Journal
No. 2, September 1976,
page 20)*

Alice Goldberger was a close collaborator of the late Oskar Friedmann and looked after the youngest members of the Windermere Group at Lingfield House.

Again we celebrated the reunion of our liberation, and again one met good-looking, mature men and women, well-dressed, happy and surrounded by their children.

31 years... and I remembered waiting at the airport near the Lake District for the first aeroplane to land. I had been sent by Mr O Friedmann, and next to me, lying in the grass, waiting, was a thoughtful, quiet gentleman, Mr Leonard Montefiore. We did not speak, but we wondered what kind of youngsters would appear, what language they would speak and how they would react.

At last, after many hours waiting, the 'planes landed, and the first group of grey-faced little men, dressed in oddly collected clothing, appeared. They had

photographs in their hands and asked "Do you know what they have done to us?" The second question was "Is there a school where we can go to?" And when I asked "Do you want to go to school?" they all shouted, "Of course, we have not been allowed to learn anything".

When we finally arrived at the Reception Centre "Troutbeck Bridge", the youngsters had to leave their clothing to be disinfected,

(since the place they had come from was thought to be infected with Typhoid) and they were asked not to leave their houses until new clothing would be provided for them. However, the following morning one saw a group of young men in long white underpants, dictionaries in their hands, asking the friendly villagers, who looked at them with some curiosity, "BICYCLES?" They all wanted to ride and move about, and soon one saw these funny looking boys on bicycles in the village streets.

The youngest children were terrified when the people from Windermere greeted them at the bus-stops, for since it was already dark when they arrived, the people carried torches to greet these young strangers. The children were



Watching a performance in Windermere.

frightened, they had seen people with torches shouting and threatening them, and not greeting them happily, as they were greeting them now. But could a four year old know the difference?

Later on, when we were already in our beautiful house in Lingfield, one young boy suddenly walked with heavy steps and talking in a gruff voice like a man. I understood when I heard him saying to another child, "Children have mothers, I have not got one, so I have to be a grown-up now".

Another boy, 7 years old, asked every visitor, "Are you married? Have you children?" And when the answer was "no", he said reproachfully, "You should have children, a lot of children, and never go away from them."

When the children were able to talk and express their feelings, one girl told me how everything was so much better at home, "even our pudding was pinker". While the older boys and girls had true memories of their families and their experiences, the young children

could hardly remember anything and had to make up stories of their home.

That was the beginning.

Now these young children have grown up, have families of their own and are good and loving parents. Some live in Israel, some in the USA, one family with four children lives in Australia and the rest have made their homes in England.

All of them have remained in close contact with each other and with me.

The Games Master

When 82-year-old George Lawrence opened his Evening Standard on Monday, he got one of the biggest surprises of his long life.

"I could hardly believe my eyes", he said. "There in front of me were photographs of boys and girls I taught games fifty years ago. And there was the exciting story of their arrival in this country of the youngsters who had amazingly survived the Nazi death camps in Europe."

As he looked at the photographs, George Lawrence's excitement rose. He thought that he recognised quite a few of them. They had become his enthusiastic pupils. For fifty years he has kept the photographs he had taken of some of the "boys". Now he could compare them with those published in the Evening Standard as they stood at the window of one of the R.A.F. planes bringing them from the former Nazi camp at Theresienstadt to Carlisle on August 14, 1945.

(This article about the late George Lawrence is reprinted from our Journal, 19th December 1995, page 7)

From there they were sent for recuperation to the Lake District and it was there that George Lawrence first met them.

"I happened to live at Troutbeck Bridge on the shores of Lake Windermere when the boys arrived there",

he recalled. "I applied and got the job of games master and spent many happy hours in their company. It gave me a great feeling to read about them again."

His photographs of the boys are very revealing. Although now enjoying the beautiful and serene surroundings of Lake Windermere, the scars of their terrible experiences in the Nazi death camps are still visible on their faces and



Mr Lawrence with one of the football teams.

in their stance. Their eyes look out as if from a different, harsher world. After a meal, some of them emerged from the dining hall with bulging pullovers. They had to be persuaded that they need not hide food as there would be enough for the next meal.

On the backs of the photographs, the boys wrote greetings to Mr Lawrence. At first, the greetings were in Polish, as nearly all of them were born in Poland. Within months, however, the boys were writing the greetings in English.

"For my teacher - Gershon Frydman". "One of your pupils - Jashek, from Poland, Krakow".

"I did not know what language they spoke, whether it was Polish, Yiddish, German, but we got

on famously", George Lawrence said. "The boys loved sport and competed with immense enthusiasm".

This enthusiasm could even be excessive, as one of their club leaders at the Primrose Youth Club, Yogi Mayer, later found. When he rebuked one boy for fighting after a football match, he replied:

"I have lost so much that I cannot keep on losing".

For fifty years, George Lawrence, who now lives in Roehampton, has cherished the photographs of the boys. Some of the inscriptions have already faded, but his memories of the "boys" are still sharp. Now he is eager to meet them. One of them he will not see. The "boy" who

saw his fatter shot dead by the Nazis, himself died a couple of years ago. But the others, now grandparents, are just as eager to meet him. A reunion is being arranged by Ben Helfgott, Chairman of the '45 Aid Society, which represents all the boys and girls who came to Britain 50 years ago. The "boys" believe they owe a great deal to games master, George Lawrence, as they successfully struggled to start a fruitful new life in London and elsewhere, becoming doctors, dentists, university lecturers, manufacturers and, in one case, a champion bridge player. Learning to play the game, they became well-adjusted British citizens in abundance, the love, freedom and opportunities they found in their adoptive country.

A reporter at large A quiet life in Hampshire

Molly Panter-Downes

This article was written by Mollie Panter-Downes and appeared in the New Yorker on March 2nd 1946 soon after the second group of the 'Boys' arrived in England.

The British government has up to now brought between four and five hundred Jewish children from the Nazi concentration camps over to England. The children are, as far as is known, mostly orphans between nine and sixteen; checking on ages has been difficult, since the youngsters have no papers and nothing more definite than a few hazy scraps of family history to help trace any relatives who may still be living. Bloomsbury House, in London, the headquarters of the Jewish Refugee Committee, made all arrangements for the children's journey - the R.A.F. brought them to England by air - to reception hostels at

Windermere, in the Lake District, and at Durley, in Hampshire, and from there to smaller hostels in Manchester, Oxford, and elsewhere. One morning recently I went down to visit the hostel at Durley, a tiny hamlet in a part of Hampshire where you see nothing much but quiet, brown fields, an occasional thatched cottage, and a lot of windy sky. Wintershill Hall, where this particular hostel

has been set up, is a large, rather gloomy-looking Georgian mansion whose conventional pattern of park, formal gardens, and greenhouses has been somewhat altered by a block of Army huts. A Star of David was chalked on a pillar of the portico, where an electric bell, its push button missing, invited one to *klinge*. Before I could do so, the door was opened by a young man in spectacles, who wore a beret and a dark blue lumberjacket, on one sleeve of which the Star was indistinctly chalked. I entered a hall decorated only with multicoloured paper chains - I just had time to notice a lot of children milling about in the background -

and he led me into the office of Dr Friedman, the head of the hostel, and his organizing secretary, Mrs Katz.

Dr Friedman is an eager, thickset, red-headed man with humorous eyes and the vitality of the successful youth leader. He got out of Germany himself four months before the war started, and has since been a professor of languages and history at a university in the Midlands. He speaks excellent, lively English, and his pronunciation is perfect except for an occasional confusion of the letters "v" and "w". The first group of children arrived at Wintershill Hall five weeks before, he said; there were a hundred and fifty-two, the majority of them Polish. Now there were just half that number. Most of the others had been sent to other hostels or to hospitals for medical treatment, and a few were living with recently discovered relatives. Ever since it had been announced that the children were coming, Bloomsbury House had been besieged by anxious callers, come to scan the lists of each fresh party of arrivals for the name of the Polish niece, the German grandson, the Czech cousin who had disappeared behind the iron curtain in 1939. Sixteen children had been reunited with relatives in the London area, and a few fathers who had gone to America before the Nazis took over in their home towns had turned up, wearing American uniforms, to collect what was left of their families. Usually it wasn't much. Dr Friedman said that the children were mostly eleven or older, and there were far fewer girls than boys - only twenty-eight

girls out of the hundred and fifty-two children at Wintershill Hall. "The young ones and the girls died more easily," said Dr Friedman simply.

I asked what would happen to the children who did not find relatives or were not adopted, and Dr Friedman said that at the moment this was hard to answer. The British authorities had let them all in on a two-year-visa permit, provided they would agree not to take any jobs. The older ones would, however, be permitted to receive some sort of vocational training. The Australian Jewish community was willing to take a large number of children, but transportation for them was not yet obtainable. It was hoped that eventually most of the homeless children would be allowed to go in a group to Palestine, a hope which the present difficulties of that troubled land have not exactly simplified. "It is what the children themselves wish, naturally," Dr Friedman said. "While they were in Germany, Palestine appeared indeed a promised land. Some of them feel very bitter toward the British about it, though they will possibly change their minds when they have been here a while and have heard all sides of the question. But what appeals to them most is the idea that in Palestine they would all be together. They dread being parted from each other. Children who have been together in Belsen and Buchenwald, who have lost parents and relatives, cling pathetically to that shared experience because it is all the background they possess in the world." Dr Friedman's face brightened. "But in spite

of all they have gone through," he went on, "these children have managed to retain their will to survive. They are anxious to succeed, they are hungry to learn. And they have no sense of being under obligation to anyone. No, the very reverse! They feel that it is up to society to make the best deal it can for them. People say to me, "But in this house, in this lovely country - for these children to come here from Belsen and Terazin and so on must be heaven!" Dr Friedman flung up his hands and laughed delightedly. "Not in the least! They are highly critical! When we give them a coat, they will touch the cloth and say, "Terribly poor quality.' or they may criticize the cut. It is not lack of gratitude, it is that they worry about their futures, you understand. How they look is extremely important to them. They are anxious, passionately anxious, to look well. The boys carry little combs in their pockets and comb their hair all the time. They do not want to be set apart from the rest of the world by what they have gone through. No, already they feel that they are individuals. You can understand why it is our aim to encourage that feeling."

The health of the children, Dr Friedman said, has been on the whole surprisingly good. The months of proper food since their liberation have worked a considerable change. "There was much tuberculosis, as you can imagine," he said, "but it was checked by all the affected children being immediately removed for treatment. For the rest, there were skin complaints, such as scabies, and a general low resistance to any small infection. The

most noticeable defect was their teeth. Terrible! We have a dentist coming here twice a week, working as hard as he can, but he does not know how to get through all the jobs."

"None of the big boys - there are a few older ones - have started to shave, either," said Mrs Katz, a calm and pretty woman. "I suppose that's a sign of weakness. And when they get excited over anything, or exert themselves at all, the sweat literally pours down their faces." The telephone rang, and she got up and began an earnest conversation with what was obviously the village plumber about a jammed lavatory in one of the boys' dormitories.

"Emotionally, yes - that is where I would say they show their history," said Dr Friedman to me. "There is no delinquency among them. Their terrible sufferings have not made them vicious, as might have happened. For instance, one child here was thrown by the Nazis on a heap of bodies waiting to be burned. When the British arrived, they found him still alive, though unconscious. Another boy saw Kramer take a baby by the foot, throw it in the air, and bang! with his revolver. Pleasant things to remember in your childhood! But when they arrived here, we were surprised at their control, their willingness. For remember, they couldn't be sure that any new grown-up wasn't someone to be feared, who could torture and make life hideous if he chose. At first they couldn't get used to the idea that there would always be enough food for all at regular hours. It was one of the Nazis' ideas of humour to

break up bits of stale bread occasionally and throw it among these starving little wolves just to see them fight for it. So when our meal bell rang there was a rush, a mad stampede. I have seen boys jump clean over tables in their anxiety to get there first and grab the food before the others. When they understood, after a few days, that each had his own chair, his own share of food, which was to be respected by the others, they were perfectly reasonable. But their emotions are still strong. They are up in the air one moment, down the next. Suddenly it will come over a child: I have no father or mother, I am alone, I do not know what will happen to me. And of course they are terribly restless. They would like a cinema each night, each day something new to happen. Imagine the life of violent, terrible happenings to which they were accustomed! Some, you know, were in hiding in the ghettos, down in the sewers, and were accustomed to jumping trains, to dodging S.S. guards on the frontier. And then the dreadful things all the time in the camps - shootings, beatings, cremations. Here in Hampshire it seems quiet after that. So they are mad for movement - bicycles. If I could get them some, I would, but it is difficult. What they suffer from is the old refugee malady of moving on, moving somewhere. It's easy to understand."

Dr Friedman paused and offered me a cigarette. I asked if the children were allowed to go outside the grounds. He said that they certainly were. They go down to the village when they want to do a bit of shopping or see a movie. Each child is given

three shillings a week pocket money, which he can spend as he wants; many, said the Doctor proudly, had started little savings-bank accounts. (The whole scheme, I learned, is being financed by the Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation, which appealed for help to the Jews of England.) Twice a week the village boys come up and there are what Dr Friedman called "the sport" - football games on the muddy playing field, between the Durley lads and the lads of Belsen, Buchenwald, and places east. Both sides apparently enjoy themselves. "In the afternoons there are handicrafts, too," Dr Friedman said. "Such work is valuable for calming the mind. Or we may have an informal discussion group on current affairs. You might hear one later. But our real work is in the morning. We have three periods: one English, one Hebrew, and the third on Palestinography - history and government, civic affairs, and so on. No boy or girl is forced to attend classes, but they are encouraged and persuaded by us to do so. And most of them have a thirst for learning; they wish to soak it up as fast as we can give it to them. Some find that they cannot keep up with the brighter ones, and then they have a tendency to stop trying, to give up all hope immediately. The habit of hope is still so new to them. In those cases, we have to coax them until their confidence in themselves slowly, slowly emerges."

Mrs Katz, who had settled things with the plumber, now rejoined the conversation. She said that she thought lack of confidence in anything

or anybody was the chief mark left by the concentration camps. "Even though they like us now - perhaps they even love us - they still don't trust us completely," she said. "If you tell one to do something, you see him wondering what your motive is in telling him to do that. They don't trust humanity yet, and they have no idea of sharing or of the communal spirit, either. When it came to handing out clothing outfits, a boy would immediately be bitterly jealous and resentful if another boy got a pull-over or boots of a better quality. Even if it was his best friend, it made no difference. Because we guessed this would happen, we were very anxious to get all the children outfits exactly alike. But this turned out to be impossible; with clothing terribly short, we had to take what we could get. Even our determination not to give them any second-hand things failed. All their lives they had worn old, cast-off rags, and it would have been so wonderful psychologically to start them out with a brand-new outfit that was theirs alone. Sad to say, we just couldn't manage it."

Dr Friedman said that the children had been astonished and horrified to hear that the English had a tight rationing of clothing and food. "When they talked in the camps, England always appeared as the golden land, the land of plenty," he said. "Now the boys say, 'Why, the Germans were better off than that!' I took them to see the bomb damage in Southampton one day and they could not get over that, either. They had not known that England had been so badly knocked about." He jumped up, tapped on the window, and called in

German to two boys who were passing outside. "They are from Belsen, and I have told them to come in and meet you," he said, sitting down again. "You know, it's funny, the English press has called all these children who have come over here Belsen children, but many have never been to that camp. Belsen and Buchenwald have taken all the limelight, but there were others far worse, far more horrible, which no one seems to know about. Many of our boys have been in four or five camps, and if you ask them, they say Treblinka, in Poland, was the worst. They had a song about Treblinka which they used to sing in all the camps. It went from camp to camp, and even down into the ghettos where the Jewish people lay hiding in the sewers, and it grew all the time as it went from mouth to mouth - like one of the old European folk songs, you know. I have a translation of it"

He was getting up to look for it when the two boys came in. One was small and swarthy, with lively black eyes and curly hair; the other was a taller, pin-faced boy with a shy, pleasant smile. They shook hands and said, "Hello, cheerio, thank you very much," all in one breath. Dr Friedman, coming back with the song, explained that the boys had picked up a bit of English since they had been liberated. He added that they were both about fifteen and had been in several camps before they fetched up in Belsen.

The translation of the song ran:

Not far from here, at the shunting yard,

The people are crowding round the cattle trucks.

The piteous cry of a child is heard calling to his mother,

"Don't leave me here alone. You will never come back again!"

For Treblinka is a grave for every Jew.

Whoever goes there remains there;

From there, there is no return....

My heart breaks
When I think of the good friends who there met a violent death.

My heart breaks
When I remember that there my brother and sisters perished.

My heart breaks
When I remember that there my mother and father were murdered,

And I join the others at the shunting site,
Sobbing bitterly with them and crying,

"Don't leave me here alone!"

"You know that Treblinka song, don't you?" Dr Friedman asked the smaller boy. "Oh, sure, sure," the boy said matter-of-factly, as though he had been asked if he knew the latest swing number. "You often saw Kramer and the others at Belsen, Arthur?" Dr Friedman asked the older one. "Sure, sure," he said. "I was doing a painter's job, see, and I hear Kramer say to one of the S.S., 'The British here very soon, so you got to get the place better, or else bad for me, see?' So we must quick paint the barracks, and Kramer tries to kill many more by the glass, so that when the British come, not so

many Jews in camp, see?"

"Powdered glass," explained Dr Friedman, and the bigger boy, smiling gently, said, "In the soup - a small piece each day. In two, t'ree week, you dead for sure. Many, many have died by the glass."

"But then the British come," said Arthur. "They come on April fifteen." The boys looked at each other, laughed, and chanted together, "T'ree p.m.!"

"And they made the Nazis bury all the bodies they had not had time to burn," said Arthur. "Look! I show you!" He pulled out of his pocket a little diary and flicked the pages, in which, he showed me, he had methodically noted, "April 22nd, 1,000 [bodies buried]," "April 23rd, 5,000," "April 24th, 5,000," and so on. In the middle of these entries was a normal, childish memo, in large, straggling capital letters: "MY BIRTHDAY."

"There goes the dinner bell," said Dr Friedman. "Off you go." Arthur, who had plainly been warming to his subject, looked disappointed, but he and his companion obeyed promptly. As we followed them, Dr Friedman said, "They don't speak of such things to each other. It's only when there is someone new who they think is interested. Among themselves, they discuss the work, the sport, the future - they worry much about the future - but not the past"

As we went through the hall, I noticed that the handrail of the big, curving staircase was twisted around and around with cord. "To stop them sliding down and breaking their necks," Mrs Katz explained. In the dining room were five long tables,

already lined with chattering children. Some grown-ups (teachers, I was told) were lading out plates of soup at a side table. Nearly all the boys wore large cloth caps pulled down to their ears, which gave them a curiously Dead End Kid effect. A few wore black skullcaps or berets. "Orthodox Jews must be covered at table," explained Dr Friedman, as he fished a skullcap out of his pocket and placed it on his head.

At first glance, the children looked healthy enough, though some of them were small for their age, and skinny. But when I inspected them carefully, I got a disconcerting impression of something not quite right, like a drawing which is out of scale. A number of the older boys were big, strapping lads, but their weight seemed badly distributed. When I spoke of this, Mrs Katz said that a lot of the children had a queer, bloated look because of overeating after the years of starvation. "Some of the girls, in particular, are extremely odd shapes," she said. Their eyes weren't quite right, either, having an odd, remote, sardonic expression, as if they were always remembering, even though the rest of the children's bodies had accepted all the changes for the better since April, 1945. Everybody's table manners were excellent. I said as much to Mrs Katz, and she replied, "Not bad when you remember that they weren't used to knives or forks, or to sitting on chairs, or eating off anything but a filthy floor."

"They all smoke," said Dr Friedman deprecatingly. "Girls and boys, even the little ones. How can one stop them? After they were

liberated, the soldiers paid them in cigarettes for doing odd jobs."

"If you suggest they cut down," Mrs Katz said, "they look at you and say, 'You'd smoke all day too if you'd seen your mother and father burned,' and that is difficult to answer."

After the soup came a hearty helping of boiled beef and carrots and then some highly spiced pudding. When the children had finished, a young woman passed along the tables carrying a bowl of vitamin pills (the children are required to take them), and then the young man who had opened the door for me began to chant grace in a loud, high voice. This took some time, but the children loudly and with great gusto sang the responses. When grace was over, they got up and cheerfully clattered out of the room. "They have kept their religion," said Dr Friedman. "In the camps, the Nazis would make them do all sorts of forbidden jobs on the Sabbath day, but when the work was over, they would immediately say their prayers." He pointed out two posters, bearing Hebrew inscriptions in red, on the walls. He translated one as "From slavery to liberty," and the other as "A new light will shine upon Zion."

Dr Friedman said that he was now going to hold one of the current-affairs discussions. While a group of children was being assembled, one of the boys came up to the Doctor and asked for a chit to the village barber, so that he could get a haircut. He was a big, blond, slow-moving, good-natured-looking fellow. Dr Friedman said that he was one of several hundred



Some of the boys from the Finchley Hostel.

people who had been hastily evacuated by the Nazis from Dachau to a place in the Alps when the Americans got uncomfortably close, so that the camp would not have quite such a ghastly collection of emaciated humanity to give a bad impression to the liberators. Adults and children were loaded into cattle trucks, which were then nailed shut. They travelled four days without food or water. "Of the seventy in my truck, fifty were dead when we arrived," the boy said in German. With an innocent, happy smile, he recalled how the starving prisoners had raided the Alpine farms, killed cattle, and wolfed eggs and milk after the Nazis hastily decamped. "Many died immediately," he said, shrugging. "It's bad to eat so much when you are not used to eating." He laughed softly, as though remembering some childish indulgence at a Christmas party, and went off to get his hair cut.

Dr Friedman and I went into a big, bare classroom where about twenty boys and three or four girls were sitting on chairs they had dragged up in a semicircle around a sofa, on which he and I sat. The children

looked bright and expectant "I say everything in German and then repeat it in English. They are supposed to reply in English," Dr Friedman said to me. He began by holding up a newspaper and calling out, "What is this in my hand?"

"A newspaper!" the children shouted.

"What is contained in the newspaper?" Dr Friedman asked in German, and then repeated it in English. "Politik!" roared the children, and one boy, who was wearing American battle dress, got up and began a rambling political speech which made everybody laugh. "They're all ardent politicians," Dr Friedman said to me, and then added encouragingly to the speaker, "Good! But what else is in a paper?"

"News of the world," some of the children said. "Economic news," said a dark, handsome, intelligent-looking boy named Witold, who Dr Friedman said was the son of a Polish municipal engineer shot by the Nazis in 1939.

"Can you remember one piece of recent news that especially concerned us here in the hostel?" asked Dr Friedman.



"Belsen children arrive in England!" cried someone, and there was laughter. "Less food for everybody in England!" cried another boy.

"Less food for everybody in England," said Dr Friedman. "Now, is that political news or economic news?"

"Both," said Witold.

"Not bad, eh?" said Dr Friedman proudly, in an undertone. The news item to which he was referring, however, turned out to be about Palestine. He then touched on the United States loan to Great Britain. "Is Britain a rich country?" he asked.

"Not now," said Arthur. "Was," he added politely.

"What do you think of England?" asked Dr Friedman. "Speak freely! Say what you think, no matter what it is."

The boys hesitated, grinning and uncertain. At last Arthur said, "The English are very kind - ". He was flattened by Dr Friedman with a good-natured "That is no opinion. It means nothing - like saying someone is nice."

"They speak short," said another boy.

"He means the English are laconic," Dr Friedman said to me.

A curly-haired, pleasant-faced boy of about sixteen,

who had evidently thought out what he wanted to say, began carefully to say it. Dr Friedman said that his name was Kurt and that an American newspaperman had taken a great fancy to him and was making arrangements to adopt him. "What I like best about England," Kurt said, "is that each man is free to speak what he thinks. Also, he can read what he likes. That is the democratic life, and it is good."

"A fine answer," said Dr Friedman. After a few more remarks on English traditions and characteristics, Dr Friedman mentioned the Nuremberg trials, and the group began to thaw out. They all started talking at once, and Dr Friedman had to hold up a hand to slow them down.

"The English are too soft!" shouted Arthur.

Kurt jumped to his feet, energetically protesting, but was stopped by Dr Friedman, who calmly said, "Didn't we just say that free speech was the best part of a democracy? Each can say what he will."

"All know the Nazis are murdering, bad men," said Arthur passionately. "Why have the English give them trial and try to save them? All the Germans laugh at the English and the Americans because they so soft. Is true," he added, glancing defiantly at Kurt.

Nearly all his companions nodded. "Kill every Nazi twice!" someone shouted. Kurt look distressed. Keeping his eyes cast down on the pencil he held in one hand, he said earnestly, "If the English kill them without trial, all the other Germans have felt, 'It is no good; they are no better than Nazis themselves.' Then they have given



Ginger Friedman mentor to the Southampton 'Boys'.

up hope, and maybe another Hitler finds it a good time to come into power."

"These children find it impossible to believe that people in England want to feed the starving Germans," Dr Friedman said to me. "I have told them that there is a movement in this country, headed by Victor Gollancz, an English publisher who is a Jew, like themselves, to send food to Germany, but it is incomprehensible to them."

At the end of the discussion, the Doctor asked the children what they wanted to be when they grow up. Lots of the boys, including Witold, said, "Technician." "Cook and pastry cook!" cried Arthur, smacking his lips pleurably, as though he saw a lifetime of Apfelstrudel before him. Several others said that they wanted to be cooks; possibly they felt they didn't want to take any chances in the future. One boy said that he wanted to be a gravedigger, and a boy with dimples got up and said shyly that he wanted to be a

leather worker. "Mein Vater" he explained, "was a tanner." "I go to America!" shouted a merry-looking boy, and Dr Friedman murmured, "He has a father there, last heard of fighting in the Pacific. Who knows?" "Atlantic City!" the boy cried, looking knowledgeable and laughing.

Some of the children had not spoken at all throughout the session. The big, blond fellow who had been in Dachau was one. Most of the time he had listened, and he had laughed at some of the answers, but I noticed that he and some of the other children had occasionally sunk into a brown study and stopped paying any attention to what was going on. Maybe this was the self-protective knack of withdrawal which you must learn in order to survive in a concentration camp. Now one of the boys proudly showed me the ring on his left hand. It was a crude metal thing, made in Belsen, and he pointed out the dates 1941 and 1945 engraved on it "When I come

in and when I come out," he explained. Several of the children had similar little ornaments - two or three more rings, and a medallion engraved with the sad name "Treblinka." One boy rolled up a sleeve and exhibited his camp number tattooed in blue on his forearm. He did it quite calmly, but it was a relief when a jolly, freckled girl, showing me a bracelet made of threepenny bits, said happily, "From mine auntie in London." The other children looked at her respectfully.

Dr Friedman said that before I left I must take a look at the sick bay. Invalids are put in what was formerly the chauffeur's flat - several sunny, warm rooms, now in the charge of a bright-faced nurse. One patient, a boy, was sitting up in bed playing with a chemistry set "He's one of the few children who have found relatives among other parties of refugees in this country," the nurse said. "One of the workers from the Windermere Reception Centre, where the first lot of Belsen children went, was here helping me get ready for a group. We had all the children's tooth mugs lined up, with each child's name on his own, and when this girl saw this boy's mug, she said, 'Why, that's the same name as two boys in our camp!' They turned out to be his brothers, who had been parted from him for years - the parents disappeared somewhere in the usual concentration-camp way - and now they're down here with him.

He's just escaped pneumonia, but he's getting on fine. Thank goodness, we haven't had a ghost of an epidemic since the children

arrived. We keep a careful lookout, naturally." There were two other children in the sick bay - a girl who reared a startled head from a nest of blankets as we entered her room, and a dark-complexioned boy, dressed in American Army shirt, pants, and overseas cap, by the fire in the nurse's sitting room, laboriously tackling the critical first row of a newly cast-on bit of knitting. "There's nothing the matter with him any more, but he likes to drop back and see me," said the nurse. "All the children like it over here. It's cosy and more homelike, I suppose. I've been showing one of the girls how to knit, and he had to try, too." The boy had run into a snarl, and he confidently handed his knitting over to her to straighten out, as though he were a much younger child. His occupation and his soldierly kit made an odd contrast. When she had straightened out the snarl, the nurse passed the knitting back to him and said to me, "That little girl Margaret you saw lying down upstairs - she'll be down to tea in a moment. She was very ill with typhoid, but she's quite all right now. But she slips back to me whenever she can." She smiled warmly. "What Margaret needs is what they all need and have never had in their lives. A little mothering, that's all."

Next Dr Friedman took me to see the block of Army huts, which were warm and light. Some of them were dormitories, furnished with wooden bunks; others served as classrooms. The boys sleep in these dormitories; the girls and the staff sleep in the house. In one hut, a woman teacher was giving an

English lesson to Kurt. As we came in, he looked up triumphantly from a dictionary and cried, "Tupperware is 'pottery'!" He acted as though he had just dug up a nugget "The more advanced ones have private lessons," said Dr Friedman as we walked on. "They're quick linguists, most of them. Many of the children can speak Polish and Russian, and maybe Hungarian or Rumanian, as well as German of a kind, and now some English. As I have told you, they are eager to learn, not only from books but from the world. They know that they have missed so much and they are starving for experience of all kinds. The other evening a children's ballet from Southampton came to dance for them. They were entranced; they sat spellbound. No rude noises from the bigger boys! Nothing! We arrange similar little treats for them - trips to London to see a few sights, and so on. There is tremendous competition for these trips, but I take the children strictly in turn, and when I say to a boy, 'It will be your turn next time,' he goes away with a dark face, and I know that he does not believe me. They have no faith, no belief at all in a next time." Dr Friedman sighed and ran his hands over his hair. "That is perhaps the worst thing Belsen and Buchenwald have done to these children," he said. "But they will learn. I do not believe that it will ever leave their minds completely, but they will learn to be men and women who take pride in themselves, who can hope, who can look forward to tomorrow and know that it will come."

Hostels – The path to Rehabilitation

(This article by the late Henry Green was reproduced from our brochure on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of our liberation.)

Liberation came to us in many ways and varied circumstances. Some, I imagine, were strong enough to be about to see the Germans run for their lives or saw them surrender. It must have been a sight to see, an emotion of a lifetime to experience.

I was flat on my back, ill, pretty well on my way out and certainly past caring. Needless to say, I saw none of it

Instead, I woke up one day to find myself in a hospital bed. A bed with linen, clean linen I might add, and people caring for me. Caring for ME!

It was not long before I was able to get up and found myself convalescing in a children's home in Theresienstadt. My first HOSTEL.

I shared a room with four or five other boys. This, of course, was heaven when you consider the crowded conditions that I had been used to until then.

Erna, our matron, had two girls to help her and soon we became one small family.

Some of us were more energetic than others, but we were all getting gradually used to becoming individuals again. I began to discover that I am a person in my own right – quite a revelation after years of propaganda about “vermin” and “parasites”, etc.

One could not leave Theresienstadt without a permit, add to it that it was a garrison town, life was inevitably somewhat restricted, a good thing in a way as it introduced us into normal life in a city in a gradual way.

The arrival in Prague was quite an experience. The friendliness and hospitality of the Czech people is something I, for one, shall never forget. It was in Prague that I went to a circus and to a cinema for the first time as a free person.

Then England, by courtesy of R.A.F. Bomber Command. There were no seats or “mod-cons”. We sat where we could. On the floor, on boxes, anything at all. The R.A.F. men acting as stewards,

communicated with us in sign language. We spoke no English.

Carlisle aerodrome and then by coach to Windermere. Windermere, what a delightful place!

On arrival I was shown into a tiny room with a bed, chest of drawers and wardrobe. A room all to myself! Has anyone ever lived so luxuriously?

It was a particular time, certainly of my life, when there could have been no gift more precious. For the first time in years, in my short life, I would have the luxury of a room ALL TO MYSELF. I could have danced in the street for joy. I could and would have except for a small “technicality”.

Well, the clothes in which we arrived were suspect – from a cleanliness viewpoint, and so it had been planned to have new clothes waiting for us on arrival. There was a hitch. We arrived first. No clothes, except for underwear. Well, we were issued these and nought else. Since we could not wear our old



Stamford Hill, 1946



Finchley Road, 1946



Goldington, Bury, Bedford, 1946



Boys from the Ascot Hostel

clothes, underwear was all we had.

I just danced, metaphorically speaking, in my new room.

Windermere, my second hostel – home, where a group of friendly people, including Alice Goldberger, helped me and the others in various ways; teaching English, etc., and where I began to make friends with England and the English.

It was a happy time for me. I had the proximity of so many friends, sharing a dining room with them and participating in a variety of activities and yet being able to retire to the luxury of my PRIVATE room. I cannot recapture the wonder of it in

words sufficient to do the feeling justice. However, I have no doubt that those who shared this experience with me will know precisely what I mean.

Windermere – “Wondermore” – as I like to call it, stands out for me for it was, apart from its renowned natural beauty, my own reintroduction to a new life as an individual where living was no longer on the level of the animal’s instinct for survival but things of the spirit, of sight, sound and touch began to matter. Wonderful things were happening in “Wondermore”. A happy, happy time.

Three months or so went by very quickly and it was time

to move on yet again.

Scotland. Darleith House was about three miles from the village of Cardross in Dumbartonshire. It was in the style of a mansion set in its own extensive grounds with a rhododendron-flanked drive leading to it from the keeper’s lodge about a quarter of a mile away.

It would be quite easy again to become ecstatic about the beauty of the setting and the general splendour of the place which, as my third hostel, was about to become my new home, but to do so would be no more than to state a fact.

Here I must pause and say something for the people who planned all this for us. It was



The boys from the Nonetinghall Hostel



Manchester, 1946



Loughton, 1946



Cardros, Scotland 1946

obvious that a lot of effort, accompanied by a generous breadth of imagination went into finding these places for our benefit I feel that a deep humanity, coupled with an understanding of our need to be in lovely surroundings as an antidote to the ugliness that we had encountered in our lives hitherto, was the

visionary motive in all this.

To these people, whoever they are, MY SALUTE.

Cardross was more or less akin to life in Windermere with the same aims, pursuits and, above all, its country setting.

Glasgow was different and here I began to work, still living communally in a

hostel. I was learning a trade and studying in my spare time. Gradually city life was something I was taking in my stride and soon, feeling confident of being able to cope for myself, I moved with a friend from the hostel and into "digs". Life has come full circle. I began a "normal" life.

Address given to the Cambridge University Jewish Society on 18th October 1946 by the late Leonard G. Montefiore

When your Secretary was kind enough to ask me to address this Society, he suggested as my subject - Reform Judaism. Such an address should have completed a series, Orthodox, Liberal and then Reform which, as some people think, should follow a middle path. I hope, perhaps on another occasion, I may be allowed to attempt that subject. It will keep. But I wanted, while it is still fresh in my mind, to say something about an experiment in education or rehabilitation that before so many months or years will be concluded and become, unlike Reform Judaism, a piece of past history.

For the past 15 months, I

have been looking after some 700 Jewish orphans brought to this country from the concentration camps in Germany and Austria for a period of rest, re-training and rehabilitation in mind and body before leaving for their permanent homes, wherever those permanent homes can be found, in Palestine, in America or the British Commonwealth.

The Anglo-Jewish community has had long experience of refugees, displaced persons that is, people compelled by force to leave their homes and start life afresh in another country.

It is a problem that has been growing steadily more difficult to solve. The large

numbers of Jews who left Russia in the eighties of the last century and the steady stream that followed the first exodus almost all went to the United States. Many of them came here for a few weeks. All that was needed in those days was money to buy a steamship ticket. Arrangements were made to shelter and house each fresh batch and then they left by the next boat. Shipping companies competed for the traffic. The immigrants did not ask for expensive accommodation. It was a kind of human freight useful to fill up odd corners on the boats.

Then came 1933 and the emigration from Germany. By this time, the difficulties

had increased. Immigration laws and quotas and formalities of every kind had been introduced. Nevertheless, there was no shortage of shipping and by one means and another thousands were helped to proceed on their way.

But in 1945 matters were very different. Before any thought could be given to displaced persons, prisoners of war had to be sent home, troops in their thousands and millions had to be redistributed, G.I. brides, British brides, Canadian brides, had to be provided for. Priorities of all kinds had to be considered.

We had, in this country, in the six years between Hitler's accession to power and the outbreak of war, raised by voluntary contributions something like three million pounds for assisting Jewish refugees. We had brought through the Baldwin Fund some 10,000 children in 1938 from Germany and thus saved their lives in the very nick of time. Some time I hope the history of those children will be written and the contribution they made, are making, and, in my opinion, will make to the country which provided a safe refuge. All this work ceased in September, 1939. The Government took over much of the actual relief work when it was necessary and shortage of labour very soon made it easy to absorb all the refugees in industry.

With the end of the war in sight, it became necessary to consider what, if anything, could be done to help the Jews who had survived on the Continent. The concentration camps had been liberated and appalling stories were reaching this

country of the conditions disclosed. There was a very widespread and urgent feeling that something must be done. We could not just sit down and say the task must be left to UNRRA, to AMGOT or to the American Joint Distribution Committee.

I was in Paris myself in May, 1945, and I saw some of the first arrivals brought by air direct from the camps. I have never seen anything so ghastly in my life. The people I saw were like corpses that walked. I shall never quite forget the impression they made. But when we got down to considering what could be done, there were immense difficulties. No money could be sent out of the country, and if money had been sent, there was nothing to buy. But if we could bring the people we wanted to help to this country, then the currency difficulties were cleared out of the way.

In June, 1945, the Home Office gave permission for 1,000 orphans under the ages of 16 to be brought over for recuperation and ultimate re-emigration overseas. We pointed out immediately that it was unlikely that any documents would be available giving proof of age, and that children rescued from the concentration camps would most probably have no identity papers of any kind.

Then we went back to the Army and enquired if they had found any children still alive in the camps. At first we were told there were no children left alive at all, and it seemed as if our plans had been made in vain. But in August, relief workers for UNRRA told us there was a group of 300 children from Theresienstadt who could be evacuated. This group had

been collected at Prague and had been passed fit to travel by a local doctor approved by the British Embassy.

The camps had been overrun by Allied troops in April or May and it was now August. But I still had in mind the walking skeletons, with sunken eyes and yellow parchment skins I had seen in Paris a few months earlier.

It was a shock and a pleasant surprise to see the first batch get out of the planes, looking much fitter and stronger than anything we had expected. With them came some adults who had acted as escorts and who had near relatives in this country. By this means in some cases, women who had escaped to this country before the war met their husbands whom they had never expected again to see alive.

Relief work is rather a drab and tedious business. The highlights are few and far between. People usually cry from sorrow or from pain, or from fear, but tears shed from pure joy are one of those sights that must rejoice God in heaven, always assuming He is interested in affairs of this earth. A room full of people hugging each other, and splashing their cups of tea with tears is a very beautiful sight, something that is more moving than any human words can describe.

But so far as the 300 boys and girls were concerned, there were no family reunions of that kind. Occasionally uncles or aunts turned up, but the children had never seen them, or if they had seen them, it was long ago and they had become strangers.

A number of these orphans have distant relatives and when relationship can be

proved, they have every right and indeed the duty to take these children into their own homes. Probably in most cases the arrangement works well, but I wish I could feel confident that it works well in all cases. With a small child, who can be petted and made much of and can rapidly adapt itself, I have no fears, or much fewer, but with the adolescent in its 'teens, there must be mutual give and take and compromise. It is asking a lot from both sides. The boy or girl is bitterly averse to being regarded as an object of charity. On the other side, there can hardly help being some consciousness that this is a duty to be performed and that some gratitude should be shown for hospitality. But these domestic problems arose only in exceptional cases. For the remainder, we had a team of workers, nurses, teachers, cooks, a Rabbi, most of them drawn from Jewish youth groups, and, on account of the language difficulty, people who could speak German, or Polish, or Yiddish.

At the big Windermere Hostel, the children lived for about three months. They were given a complete medical and dental overhaul. Some had to be sent to hospital and we arranged a mass X-ray for suspected tuberculosis.

Then we started to try and find out what each child wanted to do. Most of us have had, to a very large extent at least, our lives made for us. "So free we seem, so fettered we are," as Andrea del Sarto says in the Browning poem. Most of us take the line of least resistance and that line is not always the worst to adopt. Few people strike out

for themselves. In your generation, as in mine, circumstances over which we have no control fashion our lives. Family tradition, military service, it is only in very exceptional cases there is a really free choice. So when we asked these children what they wanted to do and occasionally were told they would like to spend seven years in this country studying to be a doctor, or a professional pianist, or to become a portrait painter, we had to say: "Think of something else". Somehow we had assumed that the answer Palestine or the USA, the reply given in most cases, would be given in all cases. We had assumed, too easily perhaps, that an answer could be given after five years spent in prison, and those five years from 13 to 18. They had gone to prison, children, and they came out in some ways mature beyond their years and in other ways just as when they had been separated from their parents for the last time. For years these boys and girls have been accustomed to be treated as a mass, a group, a unit, call it by what name you please, but not as individuals. We, too, have in a different way experienced group treatment. The school thinks so and so, or the class or the regiment or the college. We take our opinion in all indifferent matters from our neighbours, some things are done, others are not, some things are thought, others are not. How many of our reactions are the result of training, environment and not the result of our own thoughts? For instance, we assume, most of us at least, that the public good takes precedence over private advantage. Unless we

thought that instinctively, no civilised state would work. We dimly realise it, and if we pick up a ration book that someone has dropped, we return it to the Food Office. We have formed social habits, we form queues, we accept discipline. But life in a concentration camp taught a very different lesson. Life was prolonged firstly by physical strength and endurance and courage. Those were the primary requisites. But almost equally important were ingenuity, fraud and disregard of others. It is quite true there were many examples of self-sacrifice, of prisoners taking the place of those too weak to move, of escapes concealed by volunteers taking the missing numbers in some convoy destined for death. Nevertheless, it was those who broke rules and regulations who survived rather than those who observed them. "The reason I am alive", one boy said to me "is that I was strong enough to take a piece of bread from someone who was too weak to eat it". None of us have ever experienced the law of every man for himself. We have never been thrown completely on our own resources in order to remain alive. We have remained civilised and civilised people co-operate. They must co-operate in order to remain civilised. Co-operation is civilisation's hall-mark.

Nearly a year after their arrival in this country, I suggested to one of these boys that it would be a useful piece of work to help in the harvest fields. After all, he was a guest in this country and food was short. I used the stock arguments that would have been accepted with

resignation, if not with enthusiasm, by any Sixth Former. Not so the ex-inmate of Buchenwald. He merely said that he was not interested in the British harvest. His work among the sheaves was unlikely to increase his bread ration and that was the only thing that interested him. The reply was unexpected, but when you come to think of it, not unnatural. The only work that boy had ever done in his life was forced labour for the Nazis. Work pro bono publico was unknown. Or again, a boy was found tucked up in bed about eleven o'clock in the morning. To suggestions that it was about time to get up, he merely replied, "For the past three years I worked 16 hours a day for the Nazis. If you imagine that I am going to do another hand's turn for the next three years, you are greatly mistaken."

Yet, in other cases, boys will make considerable sacrifices in order to acquire learning, and have had to be restrained from sitting up till the small hours of the morning over their books.

They are still very group conscious and reluctant to form their own opinions and judgments. Here again the contrast between these camp boys and the average Sixth Former or, for that matter, of most English lads, is very marked. When they first arrived, the divisions were sharply marked, the Orthodox, the Zionist, and the various shades of opinion within these groups. Jewish politics played a big part in their lives since their liberation and they had been carefully drilled in their opinions.

It may conceivably be a not

unimportant part of the work of rehabilitation to give these boys and girls an opportunity to notice that in a free and civilised country, men and women of very different political and religious views can live together and work together amicably without saying or believing that those who differ are necessarily scoundrels and traitors. They will learn, I hope, that there are other things of value in life besides politics, religious or secular. If one can imagine that, in the future, they may realise there are many people who were interested in them, not as possible recruits to some particular party or section, but merely as human beings, a useful result will have been achieved.

Oppression and cruelty breed intolerance. These children have been cruelly treated and one of the results is they are very intolerant, very reluctant to make the smallest concession or compromise. I suppose it is also reaction. For years they were made to do things by physical compulsion and menace. Now all rules are suspect. In camp, unless they were on the spot to seize their ration of food, they went hungry. Now they are in a free country and therefore meals must be ready for them at any time. In camps they were driven off to any destination their gaolers chose. Now in freedom they refuse to realise that accommodation is limited, that housekeeping is difficult, although they are free to come and go as they like. If they want to visit a friend in Liverpool or Glasgow, why not, they are free, free to do what they please. "We are not at Buchenwald any more, we thought England was a free

country; those are concentration camp methods." We are used to self-discipline, we depend on it. These children have only self-control, and it is a lesson most easily learned in childhood. The concentration camp children tend to suspect ulterior motives. One group accused me of wanting to make Englishmen of them. I tried to explain that I had no wish to do that, but I wished very much to teach the virtues of compromise, of level-headedness, of readiness to see and appreciate the other fellow's point of view. I do not think peace can be achieved, and still less maintained, if we train children to be fanatics, however sincerely we believe in any particular cause. That I admit is an idea which many Jewish educationalists do not share. They believe that, having themselves a perfect knowledge of what is right and what is wrong, it is their duty to train up pupils who will conform to the rules, think as they are taught to think and act as they are taught to act.

In dealing with what is in effect a very large school with 700 pupils, with no home influences to help or to hinder, we have only aimed at giving freedom, freedom of movement from place to place, freedom to choose employment, and, so far as funds permit, freedom to choose training and education.

One day, perhaps, we shall learn what the effect of some months or years spent in Great Britain (we have hostels in Scotland) has had on these Jewish children from Poland.

I think certain things have impressed them, or some of

the more intelligent of them. They were impressed by the kindness of the R.A.F., who gave them a great welcome and very special teas at the airports when they arrived. They have been impressed with the kindness of educational authorities who welcomed their attendance at evening classes and continuation schools. They have been impressed by the absence of anti-Jewish prejudice.

No doubt, there have been certain disappointments. They thought England was a very rich country where all the things they had missed for so many years would be provided by the incredible number of incredibly rich Jews who lived here. They had not the faintest conception of economic conditions prevailing in this country.

I wish they could have made more contacts, but they are not very keen on private hospitality. "We don't want to be made to feel schnorrers", they say! And they do not like leaving the protective familiarity of the group, the hostel where they are among friends who have been with them during their camp life.

The seven hundred have been split up among twenty-four or twenty-five residential hostels, and a number have gone into residential hostels, and a number have gone into Jewish boarding houses, while others are being looked after by relatives. Many are now at work and earning reasonable wages, others are at school.

On the whole, their health is good. But we have a few hapless invalids, boys of seventeen or eighteen who are consumptives and who

can never hope to recover. It has been very difficult indeed to provide for these cases that need specialised treatment. However kind and well-meaning the English staff may be, these Polish boys are lonely figures in the ward, and there is very little one can do to mitigate the loneliness.

But the hostels are happy places. The boys and girls live in the present and do not worry unduly about the future. And yet, one cannot help wondering how one would feel if at sixteen one had been left utterly alone without a single relation in the whole world, with no-one who cared very much if you lived or if you died, if you were happy or if you were miserable.

We take so many things for granted. The home that always has been and always will be open to us, under all circumstances, whatever we do or leave undone. I contrast my own boyhood with that of the boy I visited a few days ago. He has spinal tuberculosis and is semi-paralysed. He is having every care and attention but the clinic is in the country and some distance from London. On Sunday afternoon, visitors come and there is a cheerful buzz of conversation in the ward. But the Jewish boy lies alone staring into vacancy. Yes - Hitler has passed this way.

Not all the gold of Ophir or the wealth of Croesus can help him, but for the majority of these orphans, so long as they remain in this country, money can do a good deal if it is wisely spent. I admit the numbers we can help are very small and I admit if I were working in a DP camp in Germany, I should look

enviously on the care that is being lavished on the fortunate few who have been brought to this country. I think one can call them fortunate on account of the freedom that is theirs, the nearer approach they can make to the life of an ordinary boy and girl who has not been in a concentration camp and whose parents have not been murdered. However much is done in a DP camp, it remains camp life.

Something in fairness must be put on the other side. For the comparatively small number of young children (the Germans ruthlessly destroyed nearly every Jewish child too young to work at munitions or in the mines), a first-class country home is maintained and staffed by the American Joint Distribution Committee.

Moreover, in the case of the adolescents, it seems likely that Youth Aliyah Certificates for entry into Palestine will be distributed on the Continent rather than in this country. Zionists sometimes have said to me that for those who wish to settle in Palestine, in a Kibbutz or Kvutzah, training in Germany is a better preparation than the rather freer life led in this country. I think it can be argued that, in the long run, there is a compensating advantage in having seen life in many different aspects, town as well as country, and for having made contacts with non-Jews as well as Jews. For those children who have relatives in America and will eventually go to the United States, there are obvious advantages in opportunities for learning English and for industrial training. Totalitarianism is,

in my opinion, an evil thing, in education just as elsewhere. There is no one kind of existence that is supremely good. God and man can be served on the farm or in the workshop, in the school or in the university, behind the shop counter or the street stall. So far as it is possible to avoid pressure in one direction or another, it should be avoided. Let those children, this handful of survivors be free. Let them be free to fashion their own lives after their own wishes so far as that may be. Above all, perhaps, let them become individuals, each with a mind and an

opinion of his or her own, not selfish but social, not egotistic but co-operative.

And thus I come back to where I started – the West London Reform Synagogue in Upper Berkeley Street. By no stretch of imagination is it conceivable that any one of these children will become a member of the Reform Synagogue. So I can, at least, say that I am not seeking recruits for my own particular tabernacle. I hope when they leave this country there will be the same diversity of outlook among these children as when they arrived. That diversity has made them a very interesting

group. I hope they will have gained insight into and appreciation of the essential virtues of this country, its kindly tolerance, its profound sympathy with suffering, its willingness to help if given the opportunity. And, just here and there, perhaps, there may be a few people who would otherwise have remained ignorant, who will have learned the virtues of the Polish Jew, his courage and patience, his humour and gaiety, his many engaging characteristics which have survived undimmed the years of persecution and cruelty.

Hugo's address to the boys, May 1947

Today as we celebrate the second anniversary of our liberation, we look back at the past two years, and then we ask ourselves the question: "Was it really worth being liberated, or would it have been better if we didn't survive?" Of course a question like this can be asked only by an utter pessimist, but how can we be optimistic if we see that today, two years after our liberation we are still homeless, still without a country, still being misunderstood and many on the continent still starving.

When we were liberated we thought the world was going to change from one day to another, we thought our wounds would be healed immediately, we thought our sorrow would turn into joy. And what happened in reality? Some of us went back to their hometowns, and what did they find? The lucky ones found four empty walls.

This copy of an address given by the late Hugo Gryn was found amongst his many papers and was sent for inclusion in our Journal by his daughter Naomi.



Many didn't even find that much either. Family? The word family - for us - exists only in fairy tales.

But Life didn't stop. It went on and on, and we had

to go on too. Most of us were forced by the circumstances to return to Germany, to camps. We, the younger and luckier ones, we found shelter in various hostels all over the continent, where committees took care of us. And things started to develop. But we realised soon that Europe wasn't for us any more; and we weren't for Europe either. We were pitied by everyone, but not understood. People felt it was their duty to pity us. But this period of being pitied didn't last very long. We were obliged to admit that although Hitler lost his war against the Allies, he won against the Jews.

There was only one solution left: Aliyah. But the gates of Palestine were guarded stronger than ever. For Aliyah B we were too weak. And all our hopes were just about to leave, when we got a chance to come to Britain, to train in a free

country, and at that time a friendly one too, for Palestine. The Aliyah - we were told - was only a matter of a few weeks. Slowly it became a matter of months, and today? Today

there is hardly any legal hope left.

But the two years were not wasted. In these two years, our aim for a free homeland of our own became even stronger. We were, and still

are preparing ourselves for a free life. Our aim is to create a new world, and new values in which the future generations will find all that we - unfortunately - didn't.

Primrose Club

Yogi Mayer

(Reproduced from our brochure on the 30th Anniversary of our liberation 1945 - 75)

Oscar Friedman asked me to join him at 24/25 Belsize Park, a place known to me as "Mrs Gluckman's British Restaurant". He wanted my advice. Did I think those premises suitable for a club and how did I think one ought to approach the idea of forming a club for the "Children rescued from the concentration camps" - a typical approach for Oscar Friedman, just an attempt to get me so involved that I would give up whatever I was doing and try to put my thoughts into practice.

Oscar was right. I accepted, but under one condition only; that this would be an "open club"; that anyone could become a member as long as he or she was asked by one of those children to join their club. Some "children", as I was to learn soon enough.

The opening was chaotic - particularly as there were free refreshments at the coffee bar. My wife feared for her life when the first on-rush started.

Weeks later, when our four football teams returned to the club for Miss Mahrer's Vienna cakes and trifles, I saw again with utter amazement what an immense amount of food those boys could manage.

The backbone of the club was the hostel on the top floor. I was Club Leader as well as Warden, signing



Mr. Yogi Mayer.

school reports for some, notes for absence for others and chasing a group having a "spiel" in the attic down to the boiler room.

Miss Mahrer's cakes not only enthralled the members; I found Mr Montefiore down in the kitchen, at a time when he was urgently required at a board meeting, eating Vienna strudel, listening to a gesticulating excited youngster and finally giving him some money. When I teased him for not having realised that he had listened to a pack of lies, he laughingly agreed "but the

boy told lies so charmingly".

Sunday started with volleyball and preparations for football matches. I shall never forget Primrose's battle-cry "Moishe, schiess!" and the lights after when a match had been lost. These boys just could not accept a defeat anymore! Then came the "nosh-up" in the club and finally what must have been one of the noisiest and biggest discussion groups ever in any youth club, with over a hundred involved members trying to express their opinions.

At one of their first meetings, the name for the club was discussed. Many wanted to call it "Freedom Club", others wanted to make use of famous names. Finally they drifted to their first real English action, a compromise. The name chosen was "Primrose", the club being so close to Primrose Hill. Romek won the badge competition. Natek, the future developer in the U.S.A. and Moniek, who became an accountant, accepted the post of Treasurer. And so we discovered Romek's artistic talent, which led him to qualify as an architect. Beniek's mental and physical strength made him not only a natural leader but also a member of the British Olympic Games Team. "Brains" Jerzy is now a university lecturer, as is Kurt,

who is at the L.S.E. Others showed their inclinations to get on. They succeeded as is apparent to anyone who attends these re-unions.

There were club holidays in Jersey, when the boys revolted and formed a "men only" society. Boys were in the majority amongst these "survivors" but they brought what they called "English" girls into the club, Jewish girls born in England. And today, there are many dozens of marriages based on first meetings at the club.

After two years the club moved across into St Peter's Hall, as the Jewish developer next door wanted both houses. However, most of the so-called children rescued from the concentration camps had become young adults, standing on their own feet. I searched, and when I found 523 Finchley Road, my job was done. I felt free to join Brady in the East End and handed over Primrose to Solly Marcus at new premises.

But the end of the club was near. Solly went to the Jewish Blind Society and the building, bought for £9,000 by the Jewish Youth Fund and the Jewish Refugee Committee, was available to Habonim.

When I joined the British Army during the first months of the war, being a refugee myself, there was a large sign "No vacancies" outside the recruitment office in Norwich at a time when Eastern Europe was already suffering under Nazi terror! In the final stages of the war, I served with the S.O.E., many of whom parachuted into Yugoslavia, Austria and one even into Germany. My section, one of the last to go, insisted again and again, that we would like to drop



Collecting the trophy on behalf of the Primrose Club who won the 1951 annual A.J.Y. Athletic Championship.

near the camps. But there was no chance to permit a British plane to land in Russia. It was too far for a non-stop flight and so one failed to save more children during those last stages of the war.

When those children who were finally rescued from the camps by others needed a club, as a step into Britain, I felt compelled to help. Those two or three years were most exciting, demanding and immensely rewarding.

I wonder whether there is anywhere another group of immigrants who came without anything, no funds, no education or skills. Surely the achievements of the group of 732 children rescued from the concentration camp



One of the four teams that competed in the A.J.Y.

would warrant a special study by a sociologist. Now their own achievements become over-shadowed by those of their own children, the second generation. No doubt, Churchill coined the right phrase "Hitler's loss was Britain's gain".

Yogi 100TH Birthday Celebrations

September 2012

Ben Helfgott

When I 'phoned Yogi to inform him that we were planning to have a party for him on his 80th birthday his immediate response was that a birthday card would be sufficient. I told him that he could not deprive us of the pleasure of honouring him in the presence of his family. I explained that we felt he had devoted a lot of time to us at their expense and they deserved to know that it was not in vain. At this he reluctantly agreed.

Yogi devoted a lifetime to the service of youth. I am not going to talk about his work in Hitler's Germany and his activities during the war. This is quite a story in itself. Nor do I wish to talk about his work in the Islington Borough as a Youth Officer.

We are sharing this evening with the former Brady Boys Club and so I shall leave it to others to speak of his work there.

Yogi was one of the most outstanding Jewish youth leaders in post war England. His influence and the impact he made on young people with whom he came in contact was far reaching.

He was a true leader with imagination, drive, commitment and dedication. Above all, he had a great sensitivity and understanding of the needs of youth.

It is even more remarkable when one considers his background. It is not surprising that as a young man he was a

youth leader in Germany. After all, he was in familiar surroundings, working with youth who, like him, had a very strong German orientation.

Our culture was completely alien to him; our wartime experiences did not make us into "easy customers". It would have broken the will of the best of club leaders.

But not Yogi!

It did not take him long to assess us and he soon gained our respect.

Yogi led by example.

He knew how to motivate us.

Whenever we played football or competed in other sports, Yogi was always there encouraging us in his inimitable way. He constantly extended the scope of our activities. Whenever a few of our members expressed an interest in a specific activity, he immediately acted upon it and made it happen.

It was Krulick Wilder who reminded me that when some of the Boys came back from Israel after they had fought in the War of Independence, it was Yogi that made them very welcome and helped them in every way he could.

Yogi was our club leader for about 3 years. Under his leadership we became a formidable force in the A. J. Y., winning most sports competitions.

He helped us to quicken the process of our integration. During this time our

friendships were further cemented which paved the way later, in 1963, to the formation of the '45 Aid Society. Our inaugural meeting took place at the Brady Club where Yogi was then the club leader. Yogi became a Vice-President of our Society and continued to take a keen interest in our welfare and activities.

Yogi's success, commitment and popularity could not have been achieved without the support of his wife Ilsa. I am sure it was not easy for her but in retrospect I hope she recognised how much Yogi had enriched the lives of so many young people and that it was a price worth paying.

After the victorious Israeli Six Day War in 1967 one of the many reasons put forward for the victory was that the Israeli officers were trained to lead with the command "follow me". It occurred to me that had Yogi been attracted to Zionism and emigrated to Israel, he would have become a distinguished Israeli general. He had all the attributes of a general. He planned, he organised, he motivated, he led from the front, he shepherded his flock and drove them to exhaustion if necessary. He was part of them and constantly inspired them to greater endeavour.

We have benefited from his leadership and deeply miss his friendship.

May he rest in peace.

Address given by Ben Helfgott on the occasion of the 10TH Anniversary of our Liberation, 7TH May 1955

We have gathered here today to celebrate the 10th anniversary of our liberation and although this is a momentous meeting to all of us, it is inevitable from the nature of its function that I have to recall the past and thus unleash old wounds and memories.

Ten years ago, from the millions who perished at the hands of the barbaric Nazis, we were among the fortunate few who were rescued by the allied forces and once again became free human beings. Most of us, by then, had already lost our families and were completely in the dark as to what was going to happen to us and undecided as to what to do. To return to our respective countries was like committing suicide. We have never cherished any love or devotion for these countries; the hatred, persecution and bitter anti-Semitism that prevailed there before the war still lingered in our minds. Besides, we were very frightened. We were free but were still obsessed with fear – all kinds of fear.

The stabilising framework of the family pattern had long been broken and in most of cases non-existent. That twin pillar of independence and security which plays such an important part in the mental development of young people was deplorably absent. True, our experiences in the camps and the early loss of our parents, which meant that we had to fend for ourselves at an early age, has given us a maturer outlook. But at the end of the war we were still adolescents who were in great need of guidance and care.

It was in this mood of trial and tribulation, apprehension and anxiety, that fortune smiled on us and supplied us with the answer to our problem of the day.

Due to the relentless efforts of a number of English Jews, some of whom we have the honour to have with us here tonight, we were admitted to this country and given a chance to rehabilitate ourselves.

The process of our adjustment was not an easy one. The social workers had a most unenviable task as we were the most difficult customers imaginable. But then, our background and experience was such that we could not have been ourselves had we behaved differently.

During the last ten years that have passed, great radical changes have taken place in our lives. The ready co-operation of the English people in general and the Jewish community in particular has helped us to restore our confidence and stability. The British way of life, based on the Rule of Law, Popular Government, and on the spirit of tolerance and freedom, has had a profound and salutary effect on us. It has helped us to modify our views on society and see things in a different light. It has given us a more balanced outlook and thus made us appreciate the responsibilities incumbent upon the individual in the community.

I should perhaps mention that well over half of our groups have emigrated to other countries to join their relatives. Some went to fight for Israeli Independence, something we should all be very proud of, and, may I

here pay tribute to their courage.

In spite of the lapse of time and the distances that separate us, we still maintain contact with each other and are always very interested to learn about each others' progress. We are like a large family spread all over the world but united by a common bond that springs from our similar experiences in the past. We know that we can always rely on each other and that we are not alone and this is a most gratifying thought.

You will forgive me if I bring out an aspect of our past that is often overlooked, that is, Jewish pre-war life in Poland and in the other Eastern countries.

Who of us can forget the traditional ceremonies, customs, dress and the intense religious fervour that was so pervading and that had remained unchanged throughout so many centuries. Anachronistic as it was, it had a charm and beauty that the very thought of it evokes in us a deep emotional feeling. Whether we come from orthodox or non-orthodox families, we cannot help but have a feeling of nostalgia and sentiment about it which seems to grow stronger as we get older. I believe it is especially felt during the Jewish festivals. This makes our bond even closer.

Finally, may I express the hope that the best way of reciprocating our appreciation and gratitude to the community will be to serve it to the best of our ability by taking an active and responsible part in its affairs.

A message from our past President

(Given by the late H Oscar Joseph, O.B.E., on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of our liberation, 10th May 1970)

After Twenty-Five Years

Five years ago, on the occasion of the twentieth Anniversary of the end of the war, I endeavoured in my message for your Dinner to recall the circumstances of our initial meeting:-

"It was at this point that our relationship with you commenced. Approaches were made to the British Government, and with a minimum of fuss and delay, permission was given for 1,000 young persons to be brought over for the purpose of rehabilitating them. Very few conditions were imposed, although it was understood that financial responsibility for their maintenance would be assumed by the Central British Fund.

"In the event 732 arrived here under the scheme. All of us can recall the reception camps which were the first places of habitation in this country - Windermere, Southampton, Carlisle, and the Jews Temporary Shelter. I well remember my first meeting with some of you when I spent a weekend in the Windermere Camp, where activities were already taking place.

"Somewhat later on the reception camps were broken up and smaller groups were



Oscar Joseph

placed in hostels. Names such as Alton, Hemel Hempstead, Gateshead, Loughton, Lingfield, Polton House and Belsize Park, will evoke memories, as indeed they should, for they represent the milestones along the road to rehabilitation. Belsize Park, too, was the centre of the Primrose Club, founded for the new refugees and which proved such a successful venture until the premises had to be vacated. Nor should we forget Quare Mead (donated by Leonard Montefiore) to take care of those T.B. cases who could no longer be left in the hospitals. Fortunately, this

proved to be a fairly short term problem and all the patients were eventually cured."

After a quarter of a century, none of us can look back on the events of May, 1945, without deep emotion. You, the Members of the '45 Aid Society, were provided with Passports to Freedom and life in a new country. The long programme of rehabilitation involved many adjustments which were made possible only by the mutual confidence that was created.

I always feel that one of the most gratifying developments has been the establishment of the '45 Aid Society which has maintained its strength and has succeeded in keeping contact not only with its members in London and Manchester but also with a number who have emigrated. The Society does valuable philanthropic work and I was very proud when I was invited to be your President I want to pay my tribute to the Chairman, Honorary Officers and Members of the Committee who devote so much time and effort to the cause.

I look forward to seeing you at the Dinner.

On celebrating the 30TH Anniversary of our Liberation

(This article by the late Kurt Klappholz, who was a Reader at the LSE, was reproduced from our Newsletter in Autumn 1974)

1975 is the year of the 30th Anniversary of our liberation. For individuals and for groups of people life is full of anniversaries. Why do we celebrate these anniversaries, and should we celebrate them? Why individuals celebrate their private anniversaries is possibly of some interest to anthropologists and sociologists; whether they should is strictly a matter for them. When we come to groups of people a little more can perhaps be said about the merits of celebrating any particular anniversary. For example, we should not be surprised and not a little shocked, if we suddenly heard that the Germans had begun to celebrate the anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. The emphasis here is on "celebrate". The Germans have very good reasons for remembering the outbreak of the War, but no good reasons at all for celebrating its anniversary and, as far as I know, they don't. In our own case, I think good reasons could be adduced for the group celebration, and perhaps also for urging individuals to join it. I shall devote a little space to the first point, but none to the second. I shall merely confess that I am an inveterate joiner in these celebrations. I was there, you might even say conspicuously there, when we celebrated the first Anniversary of our liberation in Seymour Hall in 1946; the



5th in the Refectory in Golders Green in 1950; the 10th in Leicester Square in 1955; the 20th in Kilburn in 1965. (I missed the 25th Anniversary in 1970 owing to my absence abroad at a conference.) And I shall be there, conspicuously or otherwise, when we come to celebrate our 30th Anniversary next year.

Having mentioned this series of Anniversaries, and thus the passage of time since we first started our celebrations, it behoves me to make a few brief remarks on the history of our group over that period. I think it can be said without any exaggeration that it is a history of unqualified success, as our Chairman, Ben Helfgott, frequently observes. When the War ended and the victorious Allied Armies rescued us from imminent death, one could hardly say that our experience had been

an ideal preparation for life in a free society. One could say that there exist other experiences, e.g., spending one's adolescence in the bosom of one's family without suffering from starvation, and attending a decent school, which are a better preparation for that purpose! And yet, despite this, we have acquitted ourselves pretty well in the competitive game of free-enterprise societies. There are among us people who have succeeded in entering the professions, others who have done creditably well in business, and hardly any, as far as I am aware, who are a charge on the State. Moreover, the next generation, i.e., our children, bid fair to do at least as well, if not better, than we have done. Of course, we were helped generously when we first arrived here and we shall be ever grateful for that help. (Although it may be individuuous to mention individuals in this connection, it is difficult to avoid thinking of the late Leonard G. Montefiore, O.B.E.) At a time when there is much controversy about the way in which the State should help those who are in need, we stand out as examples of those who used the help they received to help themselves.

During the period of our incarceration most of us developed our own private symbols which represented the "essence" of normal life, a life which we hardly dared to hope we could ever live again.

My own symbol was the curtains which covered the windows of the private family houses I saw on the way to and from work. Even when I first arrived in this country and walked along Finchley Road gazing at the curtained windows of the family houses, I still could not believe that I would ever live in a house like that. True, the windows of the hostels in which we lived were also curtained; but comfortable and comforting as our hostels were, they were not our family houses. For many years now most, if not all, of us have been living in houses with windows covered with just those curtains which 30 years ago symbolised for me a life from which I would be forever excluded. I regard that as no mean achievement.

To return to the reasons for our celebration. For us, the Anniversary of our liberation is literally a second birthday anniversary. The liberation not only snatched us from certain death, it also ended a period during which, though physiologically alive, it could hardly be said that we lived. Thus our celebration commemorates a communal resurrection, which is one of the bonds that has united us hitherto, and will continue to unite us until not one of us is left to celebrate another Anniversary.

An Anniversary such as this is inevitably a time for reviving memories. When I look back at my own experience in the camps I must confess that the memories are not too painful. The reasons for this are probably those to which I referred in speeches during

previous celebrations; our own suffering was mainly physical, because hunger saved us from what, in its absence, might have been much more serious spiritual suffering. Physical suffering alone probably does not leave intolerable memories. But in addition to the memories of our own, physical, suffering, we have other memories which do not seem to grow less painful with the passage of time. I am referring, of course, to the memories of the tragedy that befell our families. That tragedy is sometimes, indeed often, unthinkingly described as the "martyrdom of European Jewry". I find that description a sickeningly grotesque travesty of history. No doubt it springs from the natural desire to glorify the innocent victims of Nazi madness; at the same time, however, it makes that madness seem less mad.

When we speak of martyrs we normally have in mind people who chose to suffer in pursuit of a cause when they could avoid the suffering by abandoning it. This choice was never open to the Jews of Europe. No conceivable action on their part could have alleviated their suffering. The notion that "the Jews" stood for any particular idea, any particular cause, attributes to them a degree of Gleichschaltung which they would never have voluntarily embraced. Those who refer to them as "Martyrs" thus subscribe to a part of the monstrous Nazi mythology, albeit unwittingly and with the best intentions. The European Jews were no more and no less than deliberately

selected innocent victims of State power exercised by men whose wickedness it is hard to distinguish from insanity. To say that the Jews did not die as martyrs is in no sense to belittle their suffering, or to denigrate them. I cannot conceive of the grounds on which one would be less or different, but we must not seek that consolation by falsifying history. We have no alternative but to live with the memory of lives gratuitously and wickedly destroyed.

Each one of us has to decide for himself how to cope with these memories, for which time does not seem to be the proverbial healer. But perhaps it is appropriate to indicate the kind of attitudes which these memories should not engender. In saying what I am about to say, I think I am speaking for our group rather than to it.

Our memories do not lead us to bear grudges against, or feel hatred towards, individual people merely because they are members of a particular group (e.g., Germans). Had we succumbed to such feelings, we would have provided our erstwhile persecutors with an entirely gratuitous victory, for we would have adopted their attitudes. Our own history testifies to the fact that we did not succumb in this way. This is one of the victories our erstwhile persecutors did not achieve.

There is no escaping the fact that our celebration is not only a celebration; it is also, always was and will be, an occasion for re-living the most painful memories and for saying a uniquely bitter Kaddish.

**Address by
Dr. David Patterson
in response to the setting up by the
'45 Aid Society
of the Holocaust Fellowship
at Oxford in 1978**

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen. – I would like to begin by saying what a great privilege it is to be at this Dinner this evening and for giving me and my wife a very great experience indeed. You are a very special group of people and it is not given to all of us to celebrate with you 33 years after your liberation and coming to this country, and I thank you for enabling me to have an experience which is of a unique character, and through which we can learn something of this great traumatic event which was a formative part of your lives. In 1946 I was in charge of a Habonim Camp in this country and six of the young people who had come from the camps included your Chairman, Ben Helfgott, and I have known him ever since that time and feel for him a very great respect and affection. The work that has been done by your Society has been admirable and

we all have a very high appreciation of it

Let me say just one word about the Fellowship you are establishing. We all know that during the war an important event took place and it is impertinent for me to elaborate on this in present company. But what is forgotten is what went with that event, namely, that Jewish schools, museums, theatres, synagogues, houses of learning, were all destroyed, are all gone – finished. The whole of our culture and civilisation was wiped out virtually without trace. And so some years ago when we came to establish a Centre at Oxford one of its aims was to try to recover this loss in a tiny way, as if to raise it almost Phoenix-like out of the ashes. In the course of six years we have managed to bring to our Centre some of the most important scholars from around the world, and we have tried to bring back to life this great culture. And

we feel that within the framework of what is now a Centre, there ought to be a Fellowship in Holocaust Studies with scholars of renown able to make a record and to make sure that what is in danger of being forgotten will not be forgotten.

We feel that the name of Oxford always adds prestige and we feel that Oxford, in taking over a subject of this kind would make sure that what was a great tragedy would be shown as being worthy of being given special treatment. One can make a very strong case that one should write history from the Holocaust and work backwards. What we hope to do is to invite, year by year, a scholar of international calibre. I would like to express my very deep gratitude to the '45 Aid Society for making it possible at last to make a start on this important venture.





A visit to Micha

Carol Farkas

*(Reprinted from Journal
No. 6, May 1979)*

*Our Society continues to
support MICHA in its
wonderful work.*

attention. We watched one child being taught to speak by playing a game with the teacher, and when the child suddenly grasped what the teacher meant, and said a word, the teacher caught up the child in her arms and kissed her! It was amazing and really touching to see the patience and love being given to these unfortunate children. I say unfortunate, because of their disability, but they are really very lucky to have been born at a time when such advancements, and a place like Micha, are at their disposal.

We were told that about two hundred children attend these classes. The earlier a child's deafness is diagnosed and the sooner it can start to learn, the better its chances of being able to speak. We were amazed to learn that they try to start teaching babies at the age of six months!

Everyone at Micha was so pleased to see us, and asked us to thank all the members of the '45 Aid Society for the invaluable help we give.

Earlier this year, whilst Frank and I were in Israel, we decided to pay a visit to the Micha Home for Deaf Children, situated in Ramat Aviv.

No doubt you all know that Micha is one of the homes to which the '45 Aid Society donates some of the money we collect at our annual reunions, and it was certainly one of the most rewarding and memorable places that we have ever visited.

When we arrived, we noticed at the entrance of the building, a few plaques inscribed with the names of the donors, and it was with great pleasure we saw the name of the '45 Aid Society.

We introduced ourselves to the Director, a very charming woman, who immediately upon hearing that we were from the '45 Aid Society, took us around the building to show us how our money was being spent. It is a very modern building, and we were very impressed with all the modern technological aids.

We went there on a Friday morning, and were shown a

classroom with about twelve children, their ages ranging from about three to four years, being taught how to light the Shabbat candles and to take part in the Service. Each child was given a cup of 'wine', (which I could see they thoroughly enjoyed) and being taught to say the blessing. We were able to watch the children without being seen, as every classroom has a 2-way mirror. This is to enable parents to watch the progress of their children, so that when the children go home the parents themselves can continue to teach than by the same method. There is a microphone in each classroom so that the parents can also hear how the children are being taught.

Some classrooms are quite small, and these are used to give children individual



The Auschwitz East London Exhibition a recollection by the late Rt. Rev. Jim Thompson, Bishop of Stepney

It will soon be a year since the Auschwitz East London Exhibition closed. In some ways it will never close for me and other people involved in it – memories are still vivid, and perhaps will remain so as long as we live. Ben has asked me to look back and to reflect on the experience.

I suppose the opposition to the exhibition made most initial impact on me as the Chairman of the organising committee. There were many people who were against it – those who believed that such things should not be shown to children, those who said we must be sick to rake up the past, those who threatened us obscenely from amongst the contemporary British Fascists, those who thought that to put on any such exhibition was to play into the hands of Zionists and simply give moral justification to Israel's activities in Palestine, and those few Polish patriots who denied that there had been any anti-Semitism in Poland before Hitler.

But it wasn't just the direct opposition from the press and from members of the public, but also the indirect opposition through the withdrawal

*(An article reprinted from
Journal 11 Issue, 1984)*

Many of our members played an active part in the exhibition by acting as guides.

of support from powerful people who initially thought it was a good idea but then saw the risks involved. This was one of the pains of putting on the Auschwitz exhibition, which I came to believe reflected the inevitable sorrow involved in looking into that pit of human despair. It was as though anyone who dared to associate with that most terrible of human experiences was going to have virtue drained out of him. Certainly the Committee experienced both pain and conflict, caused by pressure from the outside world; and pressure within, as people wrestled with political, religious and personal differences. There was the encounter with the pain of the Polish people, not just the Jewish Poles, but the whole nation, with the recognition that so many Polish people had died, had fought the evils of Fascism with great courage, had been destroyed

as families and friends through the War and occupation. There was the pain of Palestine with the tragic conflict between Israel, the surrounding nations, and the vast number of dispossessed refugees. There was also the pain in the eyes of those who had survived Auschwitz as they saw again the shocking, ordinary, mundane reminders of the nightmare of their life.

Perhaps people would say that with so much opposition and pain we should have turned back and allowed the Exhibition to return unused to store and then to Poland. But that would be to allow all the negative fears to triumph and to believe that the human race can survive and develop whilst suppressing the unpalatable part of its corporate memory. It is my belief that, looking back, we were totally right to press on and completely vindicated the reception of the Exhibition itself.

Nearly 25,000 people came, the majority of them being young people over the age of 13 and still at school. To visit the Exhibition was almost a religious experience. The vast majority of the youngsters looked, and saw, and were

reflective and dignified in the way they coped with the evidence. A generation is growing up which knows amazingly little about the Holocaust. The care and preparation of the teaching pack, together with the immense commitment of teachers and schools and the education team, meant that, for the vast majority of the young who saw the Exhibition, it was a real learning experience which led them to a rejection of racism and Fascism as they saw it portrayed. Of course, there were youngsters who came ill-prepared and reacted like silly or even destructive kids – but they were the exception, not the rule – and the visitors' book with all its variety of comments reveals that overwhelmingly the memory was stirred, the understanding developed, and turned to positive wisdom.

I have recently returned from South Africa and Namibia, and the situation in those countries further vindicated my belief that Auschwitz is one of the most important assets of the human race. All those people died, there was all that suffering, and we have no right to forget it or underestimate it, but rather use it as a constant warning about the depth of the scar which runs through human-kind. To see in South Africa the law

and the enforcement of the law dividing people according to variations of colour, like contours on a map, and enforcing those divisions by the cruellest opposition and oppression of those who fight them, reminds me of how ever-present the proneness to racism is in all society. To see the largely peasant people of Namibia oppressed by the iron force of South Africa, to hear of the secret interrogations and tortures, to see the power of armour, while under the total menace of a defence force and security police, all these things were a reminder of Auschwitz and a vindication for not allowing it to slip out of the human mind, for not allowing generations to grow up who do not realise the depth of evil to which human beings can sink. The control of the press and the media, the failure to bring the practises of secret police and the deeds done in the darkness to light, all these haunt me as they can lead along that dangerous road to attempted genocide.

The point of the Exhibition, in a way, is that racism and Fascism, and, I would add totalitarianism, which rides over the basic rights of citizens, are indivisible. In some nations, racism is there as an undercurrent tackled and dealt with by rational, caring people, who act to make sure that it never grows into a powerful beast; in other nations people were

held back from that opposition and the beast became full-grown.

These are all solemn thoughts, and to show that even such evil in the end does not conquer the human spirit, nor defeat the ultimate purpose of God, I end with my memories of the joys associated with the Exhibition. I think of the courage, humour and humility of the survivors who showed the children round and who became our friends; I think of the moments of truth and religious awe as young people and old people looked deeper into the nature of themselves and all their brothers and sisters; I think of sharing the Passover meal with Ben and his family and mine; I think of all the support given to the Exhibition by many people both as individuals and as corporate bodies and trusts, and I think of the inoculation against Fascism which was given to all those people who viewed the Exhibition and understood. Remembrance is a key part of both the Christian and the Jewish faith and in both our faiths, remembrance is the way in which we come into the presence of God. I hope and pray that Auschwitz, in our Exhibition and in the ones which follow, will provide such encounters with love and justice that is at the heart of our universe.

Address given by Ben Helfgott on the occasion of the unveiling of a memorial plaque by Lord Jakobovitz, the Emeritus Chief Rabbi, in honour of the parents of our members, who perished during the Holocaust

About a year before 15th December 1996, the 50th anniversary of our liberation, when we were discussing this event, one of our committee members, Isroel Rudzinski, suggested that we dedicate a Sefer Torah to the memory of our parents who were killed in the Shoa. In addition, a plaque inscribed with the names of our parents was to be placed in a synagogue where the Sefer Torah would find a home. Most of the committee members accepted with alacrity the second suggestion, but there were some doubters about the dedication of the Sefer Torah. However, Israel Rudzinski had set his mind on this project, to him this was a sacred task, and supported by Solly Irving managed to persuade the waverers on the committee to go ahead with this scheme. Those who were present in May last year at the Hachnasat Torah and watched our members completing the last letters in the Torah, supervised by the young Sofer who was the son of one of the 'Boys', Moshe Kuzmierski, found the occasion very moving and poignant. The exuberance and joy that prevailed during the Hakofos was a scene that none of us will ever forget. The timelessness of the Torah with all its splendour and

tradition was there for all of us to witness. Thea and Isroel Rudzinski, as well as Solly Irving, were beaming with satisfaction and fulfilment, as were all those who were present. The atmosphere was electric and contagious; we all felt that we were participating in an event that our parents and our ancestors gloried in for centuries. It was a confirmation of our unshakeable faith that in spite of the attempts by evil people to destroy us through the course of history "Am Israel Hai".

In a way our Society is a microcosm of our community and the Jewish people at large, representing a wide spectrum of religious, political and social diversity. We often have our differences but we are aware that we have in common the covenant of shared history 'Brit Goral'. We are conscious of the fact that the Nazis did not differentiate between secular and religious Jews. It is a lesson we learned, remember and try to apply in our daily life. Tolerance and understanding towards one another and to our fellow man is foremost in our minds.

I return to today's event which is of a different nature from last year when we were rejoicing. Today's occasion is one of solemnity. Our parents

were killed in the gas chambers, in the woods, in the ravines and marshes, on the death marches and in all sorts of unimaginable places. They have disappeared like the wind and we have no Matzevah for them. This plaque, that was unveiled by Lord Jakobovitz and to whom we are very grateful for accepting our invitation to officiate and making this event very meaningful to us, will be our collective Matzevah. It is here, in this synagogue that we will be able to come once a year and say collective Kaddish to the memory of our parents who were killed so prematurely and who did not see us grow up and, unlike most other parents, could not share with us our joy and sorrow and derive 'naches' from us. Our children, too, will know that there is a place where the names of their grandparents are honoured.

On behalf of our members I would like to thank the Hon. Officers of the Elstree and Borehamwood Synagogue and especially Rabbi Plancey who spoke so eloquently today and at last year's Hachnasat Torah and who was so supportive and encouraged us with this project.

Launch of the Book "The Boys" TRIUMPH OVER ADVERSITY

(Reprinted from Journal 20, December 1996)

The publication of "The Boys - Triumph over Adversity" was a momentous event for our members. The launch of the book on Wednesday 9th October at the Great Hall in King's College was extremely well attended and supported by the second generation as well as many of our friends. Rachel and Chaim Liss, Nechema and Menachem Silberstein, Sarah and Menachem Waksztok came specially from Israel for this event, as did Phyllis and Maurice Vegh from New York. It was a very moving and unforgettable occasion.

The book was widely and favourably reviewed and many articles were written about the Boys in various newspapers. Below are a few extracts from some of the reviews.

"This is a book about coming out of hell, about great evil,

about the triumph of the human spirit and about great goodness on the part of those who helped. One is left with hope and admiration."

Julia Neuberger - The Times

"In collating their stories, Martin Gilbert has created an entirely new archive of previously unrecorded Holocaust recollections. The results combine to create one of the most remarkable testaments of human hope and endurance, recovery, companionship and generosity of spirit you could ever read. It is their eloquent collective voice that gives this book its remarkable force.... Most moving of all though is their sense of modesty, they are - like Primo Levi - witnesses, just witnesses, and never presume to judge."

Ruth Cowen - Ham & High

"Martin Gilbert's book is both moving and reassuring and his subtitle, Triumph over Adversity, sums it up nicely... Gilbert, perhaps wisely, avoids any long excursions into sociology or psychopathology and lets his story speak for itself, but if one needs proof that one can suffer every handicap and adversity without declining into parasitism or depravity, it is to be found in the pages of this remarkable book."

Chaim Bermant - The Scotsman

"It is customary these days to think that those who have been on the receiving end of violence as young people can be forgiven for being violent in later life. Here of all places - that is not the case.... Their dignified bearing, their lack of anger, their normality,



At the HUS memorial in Prague before arriving in Windermere.

place them among the towering moral figures of our century."

James Blitz – Financial Times

"This is the story of human beings sucked into a vortex of destruction in which family, identity, religion and culture were all ripped away. A sense of near miraculous calm descends when the Boys finally arrive in Britain, when human fortitude finally prevails over absolute evil"

Professor David Cesarani – Times Literary Supplement

"This is an important book. There was a Holocaust.... Sometimes one encounters people who ask about the Holocaust: Did it really happen? Was it really that bad? Anyone confused by lingering doubts should read this book."

Patrick Skene Catling – The Spectator

"Martin Gilbert is to be congratulated on producing a masterly and deeply moving tribute to those who had the courage and luck to survive. This should be required reading. Through the horror of these pages.... there shines the determination of the human spirit to soldier on and ultimately to triumph in the face of the most extreme adversity imaginable."

Winston Churchill M.P. – Literary Review

"It is, as a further, indisputable, record of Nazi cruelty, as a series of testimonials to endurance and resourcefulness, full of arresting and memorable details that The Boys has to be read."

Caroline Moorehead – Daily Telegraph

This is not just another book about the Holocaust, in Martin Gilbert's words it is about 'the human capacity for hope and renewal'."

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch – The Sunday Telegraph

"In a year of gloomy books and gloomier events Martin Gilbert has given us, 'The Boys; Triumph over Adversity', a masterpiece of decency and courage and joy which describes what happened to the 732 young concentration camp survivors taken in by Britain. 'We were amongst the beasts' one wrote 'and I am proud to declare that we upheld the dignity of man'. Superb."

John Simpson's choice of his book of the year in the Daily Telegraph, Saturday 30th November 1996

Postbag from "The Boys - Triumph over Adversity"

I am a 72 year old pensioner and probably a similar age to many of you who survived all the horrors that the Nazis inflicted on all of you, your parents and your families. I have lived through the whole story (in my mind) and have wondered what I was doing during the time when you were all receiving such horrific treatment.

From your happy childhood days with loving parents and sisters and brothers, through to the days when Poland was invaded, the Ghettos, the deportations, the camps, the selection process, the labour camps and finally the death marches, followed by liberation and the flights to

England.

My home town is Morecambe in Lancashire where one of your Windermere boys found his brother. Those of you who landed at Crosby in Eden and were located in the Windermere hostels were in a place where I have spent many happy hours as it is only about an hour by car from Morecambe. I also played cricket there for my ICI works team.

I was pleased to follow the progress of all of you as you received education and eventually succeeded in business and formed your own families. I can understand the comradeship which

developed and which has remained to this day.

Going back to 1945 when you all belonged to each other and when this everlasting bond was formed. I am pleased for you all.

During my retirement I have been reading many books regarding the behaviour of your persecutors because, like so many of you, I ask WHY, WHY, WHY!

Recently I read "HITLER'S WILLING EXECUTIONERS" which told how there was never any shortage of people to carry out the atrocities. I try to think of what your parents told you all – not to hate or seek revenge, but when one is

so aware of what they did, it is not easy to be like that.

I am not a Jew, I was brought up in a Christian family and attended a Congregational Church in Morecambe, but to me, PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE and are all worthy of respect and fair treatment

I hope my letter finds you because I just wanted you to know I had read your stories and was aware of what you all went through.

Yours sincerely,
Harry Swarbrick

23.11.96

Dear Sir,

The enclosed letter I sent to the Daily Mail after reading the article on "The Boys", written by Mr Paul Harris, but was returned. I do wonder if you have any information regarding this

matter. Thanking you.

Yours sincerely,
Ann Chuter (nee Brough)

Dear Sir,

I read with interest your article on October 12th 1996 about 'The Boys', Polish Jewish evacuees, who were sent to Britain, and eventually, to Windermere in 1945, at the end of the war.

At the time I was living at Calgarth, in Windermere, an estate purposely built for the workers of Short Bros, who were building Flying Boats during the war. "The Boys" were given the Single men's billets on this estate. At the time I too was a teenager, as many of these boys were, we made lots of friends during these months. We took them to the pictures, went for walks on the fells, and many things your article mentioned. The language barrier was difficult at first, but we soon overcame it, and began

to understand one another very well. I remember these 4 months very clearly, and over the last 50 years I have often wondered what had happened to them all.

I made a particular friend called Izak Pomerance, who eventually left for London and Belsize Park, in 1945. We corresponded for quite a long time, and met once or twice when I came down South to live, but sad to say we lost touch over time.

I wondered if you could put me in touch with someone who would know what happened to him, did he stay in Britain? or go back to Poland? I would be grateful for any information you could give me. It was rather a coincidence, as when I read your article in the Daily Mail, I was travelling to Windermere to visit relatives.

Yours sincerely,
Ann Chuter (nee Brough)

Opening of the Exhibition "The Boys Triumph over Adversity"

The Jewish Museum, 80 East End Road, London N3

An exhibition about our members, entitled "Children who Survived the Holocaust" was opened at the Jewish Museum - London's Museum of Jewish Life, on Sunday 17* November 1996. The exhibition includes photographs, documents and objects relating to the lives of our members. These date from before and during the War and from the period of "The Boys" liberation and early days in Britain, with an accompanying text telling our story. The idea to hold this exhibition came from the Director of the Museum, Rickie Burman, and was sponsored by our Society. The exhibition will be available as a travelling display at schools and organisations and it will form part of the Museum's active programme of Holocaust education.

The exhibition was reviewed by Helen Jacobus in the Jewish Chronicle in which she stated "that it is a painstakingly compiled and clearly explained exhibition which cannot fail to absorb anyone who attends." We are grateful to Rickie Burman, Carol Siegel and the staff of the Jewish Museum for putting on this exhibition.

Collective Barmitzvah at ORT

Ben Helfgott

(Reprinted from Journal No. 22, Autumn 1998)

Last year some of our members participated in the launch, by World ORT, of a remarkable CD Rom programme called "Navigating the Bible". It enables those who prepare for their Barmitzvah to find their relevant portion in the Bible and to study and explore the Torah in the most modern and easy way, using the latest technology.

Many of our members, unfortunately, were unable to celebrate their Bar Mitzvah as they lived under conditions of extreme deprivation and it usually coincided with the deportations to the gas chambers. They also never found out what Sidrah related to their Bar Mitzvah.

The CD Rom launch was both an opportunity for some of them to participate in a collective Bar Mitzvah and to find their own portion which

was conducted by the same Chazan who sang the whole Torah and Haftoreh so beautifully for the programme and for ORT to demonstrate the value and importance of this project.

Those who participated in the collective Bar Mitzvah

were: Abe Dichter, Ben Helfgott, Zigi Shipper, Harry Spiro, Krulik Wilder, Ray Wino (Winogrodzki), Harry Ziskind and Zvi Dagan (Mlynarski), who came specially from Israel.

It was a very moving occasion and as the Director of ORT said – "It went just a little way to making up for what the "Boys" missed in those terrible years of horror."



Learning a trade at ORT

Dedication of Magen David Ambulance

In September 2002 our Society decided to donate a fully-equipped ambulance to Magen David Adom in Israel and appealed to our members to support us in achieving this goal. They responded magnificently. We can be justly proud of our members for their generosity. Once again, they have proved that when the occasion arises, they invariably respond. This time they have responded to a need that is close to our heart. We share memories of a traumatised past and to see the innocent, mutilated and wounded bodies in the streets of Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, Netanya and other places in Israel, affects us deeply. We have been brought up to believe in the sanctity of the human being and the idea of a suicide bomber is completely alien to us as, indeed, it is to all civilised people. Saving a life is to us a sacred duty and by donating an ambulance to Magen David Adom we have demonstrated this commitment.



Some personal reflections - your influence on my life

By Barbara Barnett

(Reprinted from Journal No. 24, Autumn 2000)

Dear Friends,

Your editor has asked me to think back over the years since first we met and share some of my recollections with you. This mental exercise has provoked all sorts of random incidents, information and impressions to come tumbling back into my mind. With some difficulty I have attempted to make some sort of sense of them.

My first knowledge of your existence was in the winter of 1946. Someone, I do not recall who, approached me at Lauderdale Road Synagogue and asked if I would visit young survivors of the Camps who had just reached London. He made the same request on the same occasion to Richard Barnett, then simply a family friend. I demurred initially. I had recently returned from 5 years in Canada, first at school then in the Royal Canadian Air Force. I was an undergraduate on a Social Science course at LSE. What had I to offer? Richard, 16 years my senior, was an excellent linguist, widely travelled and a gifted historian. He had been on active service in RAF Intelligence in the Middle East. He suggested we visit the Shelter together and find out more. That decision had a profound impact on the rest of our lives.

We learned some facts: that the British government had agreed to offer 1,000 child survivors, under 16 years old, temporary visas to the UK. The proviso was that the Jewish community took full

responsibility for them until they were rehabilitated overseas, and ensured that none became a financial liability on the state. The Jewish Refugee Committee had accepted this undertaking and then set up the CCC, the Committee for the Care of Children from the Camps, with Leonard Montefiore in the chair. No-one more caring, capable and discerning could have been selected for that sensitive position.

Richard and I introduced ourselves at the Jews' Temporary Shelter in the East End of London. There we met the boys in one dormitory and the girls in another, the rooms crammed with beds separated by small lockers. It was strangely quiet, the only sound occasional humming or snatches of song. We went round shaking hands in an attempt to make some contact. The language barrier was formidable. Richard decided it would be unacceptable to you to speak in German.

You were all teenagers, mostly from that part of Hungary that had been Czechoslovakia. You had chosen to come here as a first step to aliyah - or to joining relatives elsewhere. You spent your first few months at the Shelter in Mansell Street I wonder what impression it made on you! It was a typically Victorian

institution, solidly built but gaunt and forbidding. There you were surrounded by rows of shabby terraced houses and tenement buildings dotted with derelict bomb sites, scars from World War II. This is the area where refugees and impoverished immigrants had arrived from the London Docks during centuries past and in the last hundred years or so Jewish groups had also settled and established their own synagogues, schools and community centres there. The London Blitz was Hitler's attempt to demoralise the people and flatten the city. Both aims failed. The people relocated and the city was slowly recovering when you arrived.

We were told you needed help and encouragement in learning the language, introductions to local Jewish families and guidance in adapting to living in London. We were at a loss. How could we get to know you when there seemed no point of contact? I was ashamed of my ignorance of Jewish life in the Diaspora; or even about Palestine. There were no Zionist Youth Groups in our community. Slowly some information had reached us in Canada about the concentration camps but only after D-Day came ghastly reports of the findings by Allied forces. My cousin died from a disease caught in that task - he was 19.

Once you people had mastered some English - and how rapidly you did so! - Richard invited a few at a time to spend an evening

drawing and painting at his flat in Shepherd's Market. Wilfred Sloane, his RAF colleague, a gifted artist, provided paper, brushes and paint to be used freely; and Richard played classical records in the background. Of course, I produced refreshments, but they must have been very simple as we still had strict rationing. We never knew who would turn up on these occasions. It took some time before you trusted us. Magda and her cousin Rosina were among the first to do so.

The next stage found you reaching major decisions. The CBF counsellors worked with you one by one to discover your ambitions and lead you through what options they could find; to study and make up for lost schooling, to learn a trade, or to find a job. There were limits. The British economy had been drained by the war and you were competing for work and training alongside ex-servicemen. Many of you were disappointed with what was available. Later on, when Artur Poznanski had a rough time, Richard helped him find more congenial work; they came together as you would guess through their enjoyment of music.

As decisions were reached, lodgings were sought for each of you, usually a room in a private house with a Jewish landlady. This meant you would be isolated, living alone, or sometimes with a friend, and losing the firm support and deep-rooted solidarity that had built up with the others. No-one else could be expected to understand what you had been through or what your life once was. So the Primrose Club was established in

Belsize Park to provide a meeting place and a social centre. It proved a brilliant idea that was developed by Yogi Mayer, the very experienced and indefatigable leader, to become an outstanding success. You flocked there from your widely scattered digs. Every evening offered a growing variety of activities; there was a canteen and a small hostel. You were expected to sign up for some regular group, otherwise you could come and go as you liked. You excelled in sports. At inter-club competitions Primrose teams became famous. Locally-born young people applied to join and Yogi encouraged this.

We came to meet you there regularly. Richard brought records and introduced musical appreciation sessions. These became very popular. For some it was a first discovery of classical music, a newly found leisure pursuit with strong appeal; while for others powerful memories were evoked of music enjoyed in their childhood homes before all hell was let loose. Through art and music, people can find expression without any language barrier. Once that barrier disappeared, I had added weekly play-reading; and later on we performed Emyln Williams' grim tale, "Night Must Fall" at St Peter's Church Hall in Belsize Square. Do you remember Chaim Liss as the leading man? Hugo Gryn took part, too; I came to know him well over the years. Nowadays art and music and drama are recognised as valued outlets for self-expression. We did not know that then.

In June 1947, I was

required to decide where to focus my studies. With Richard's encouragement I applied for professional training in Child Welfare. My involvement with you had made a profound impact on me and contributed to my making this choice. I have worked in and around this field, here and in Israel, ever since. It was only when I started to live and work in Israel in 1974 and came to know Jewish people from far and wide that I realised how unusual was Anglo-Jewry, and how very strange and hard it must have been for you to adapt to life in London.

Richard and I had become engaged in November 1947 and married in July 1948. Our activities with you all had led to our spending more and more time together. The Girls announced that they were responsible for our marriage and there was some truth in that! Once we had our own home, first in Belsize Park, then higher up the hill, we were able to welcome a few of you there, often to share our Friday evenings. A few names and a few occasions I remember well, but I plead with those people and happenings omitted here to accept my apologies and know that I have warm feelings for you all. So many of you I continue to meet at '45 Aid Society gatherings and lectures and on other occasions are familiar from those early days, like Michael Etkind, Roman Halter, Jerry Herzberg and Koppel Kendal; but I have reached an age when, to my great embarrassment, names frequently escape me.

Magda came to tell us she was leaving for New York with her cousin Rosina and her husband Sam, another of

the Boys, and their baby daughter. We arranged to hold a farewell party for her and her friends. The day came. Lots of people arrived we hadn't ever met before; it was her landlady with numerous members of her family.

Abie Herman dropped in quite often till his untimely death. He would play the piano, share a meal, tell us about his properties and purchases and advise us on how to renovate our house. I keep in touch with two of his children, Marilyn, wherever she happens to be, and Geoffrey and his wife and baby in Jerusalem.

My part at the Primrose Club had ceased on the birth of our first baby in December 1951. The twins, Colin and Robert, arrived two years later. When Bertha Fischer (now Betty Weiss) left on aliyah she passed on her treasured doll to Celia, our little girl, who cherished it throughout her childhood. We called the doll "Bertha". You can read the real Bertha's story as she told it to me in this issue.

Richard stayed involved and some years on became chair of the Primrose Club Management Committee. Their meetings were in our house. Then came a blow; the lease expired on the Belsize Park properties. The CBF said the Club would be closed. The CCC's function in rehabilitating your group was reaching an end, for most of you were nearing independence. Their funds, always tight, had to be focussed on their main functions. But Richard was adamant that the Club must stay open. It was The Boys' sole meeting place. There you provided each other with mutual

support unavailable elsewhere. So he saw to it that the Club continued to function on a part-time basis at St Peter's Hall till a new plan was made. Eventually the Finchley Road premises were taken on and the Club was again a flourishing concern. Local youngsters were keen to join. The new leaders were Sol and Thelma Marcus for, by then, Yogi Mayer had moved on to Brady Club. He knew you could now manage your own lives. With his great wisdom, sensitivity and understanding he had played a major part in your personal development.

A fresh chapter was written when, as adults by then, you founded the '45 Aid Society - with Ben at the helm as he has been ever since. What an achievement! You created a self-help group for mutual assistance among you, now young adults, struggling to maintain your independence, coping with numerous ups and downs at work, with difficult landladies, with personal relationships. Some would say this was a normal picture. The huge difference was you had no family to fall back on as had your British contemporaries. But you had - and continue to have - the '45 Aid Society as your family. Inevitably, as in every family, there have been, and still are, squabbles and disagreements and sibling rivalry. I do hope recent heated disagreements between old friends will simmer down. Such is life in the best of human society. And, after all, you are mere humans like the rest of us!

There came a time, after most of you were married, when you had stable jobs, businesses and careers

and reached a more settled period. Your partners were then, and are now, a great strength, a marvellous support. Those who had had no wartime experience akin to yours quickly learned that any demands from The Boys took precedence even over theirs - that loyalty and solidarity among The Boys was paramount.

As you all matured so, too, did the '45 Aid Society. Suddenly (or so it seemed to me), a role reversal took place. You were contributing, and generously, to charities in Britain and in Israel - while always retaining responsibility and concern for each other. You are active on numerous relevant bodies. Ben and others have been in the forefront of negotiations for reparations and in numerous other educational and memorial activities. And Ben moved from being a recipient of the CBF, as you all were at first, to become its Treasurer. Special mention must be made of the garden dedicated to the Six Million in Hyde Park, your support for Beth Shalom, that very special memorial, and the development of the new Imperial War Museum exhibition.

The greatest pride of all, the true measure of your accomplishments, lies surely in the achievements of your children. It is overtly evident how you have led them to take full advantage of educational opportunities and career openings and provided every encouragement to do so - along avenues you were denied but dearly wished to enter. Their levels of success speak for you. And now you are enriching your lives through those of your grandchildren.

Professor Shamai Davidson of Shalvata Hospital in Israel was especially interested and deeply concerned in your welfare. Was it he who noticed how so many of your children, far more than in their peer group, are actively concerned with Human Rights issues? Your generation has entrusted them to keep alive knowledge

of what the Nazi machine attempted to do, how far it went, the atrocities that were committed that took six draining years by the Allies to extinguish. It is a heavy commitment The International Holocaust Survivors Gathering in July had as its sub-title: Remembering for the Future, The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide. In one of the small

discussion groups on that day it was one of The Boys who said it all: our duty is to fight for universal Human Rights.

I feel privileged to be a member of your Society and to have shared some of your joys and sorrows. Your strengths and achievements provide living evidence to the rest of us that good can triumph over evil.

What the Society means to us

Jake Fersztand

(Reprinted from Journal No. 6, May 79)

From the many aspects of living in a group or belonging to it I would like to say something about the strength and protection an individual can draw from the group and the feeling of security within it, as well as the fear of being exposed and misunderstood without

The group was quite certainly a substitute for the family lost by most of us and it had a very strong influence on our development. The security we experienced through being protected by this group till we were able to stand on our own feet emotionally was invaluable and I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that within it one never really felt abandoned.

It is true that loneliness and a deep pain at the awareness of being the only one left (in many cases of quite sizeable families) prevailed in the hearts of most. I personally don't know what emotions were harboured by others after having found themselves uprooted from their families; one just didn't communicate feelings in those days. Yet, looking back, I would

venture the guess that through our common past we found a higher level of understanding for one another in this group than is often possible among brothers and sisters in the normal family-cell.

The "digestive process" of such an experience is faster and more complete when one can communicate with those who shared the same fate, for one is likely to feel better understood. Similarly, the coherence of our group helped to accelerate the integration process into "normal life" at a time when we hadn't digested any of our wartime experiences. It can doubtlessly be said that the group had a therapeutic as well as a protective value, and prevented over-exposure to a way of life which most of us envied, and few thought attainable.

People of all backgrounds, ages and interests look for some group, be it simply in the form of club membership where one pursues a hobby,

in the form of professional affiliation, or because of deeper feelings of faith or "Weltanschauung". A group can radiate an enormous amount of strength and those who belong to it can just draw on it. It's as simple as that providing they are sensitive enough to feel it. I know that some of us who stopped to reflect on the subject are aware of this but I would think that most drew strength from this group subconsciously, and perhaps became aware of the significance of the group ties through a special experience.

There are comparatively few people who, by fate, were drawn into a group like ours and who, judging by the number attending the last reunion, adhere to it with such intensity. The fact that many of "the boys" founded "Colonies" in the USA, Canada, Israel, etc., shows their will to keep the common experience alive and thereby ensure that the strength of the group is not lost. It is a strength that supplements that which most of us draw from our own families, but without which many of us would lack something.

Roman Halter

Jackson, with his penetrating intelligence, was sitting next to me and would have none of this. "You talk like Ben with your 'fantastic' and 'success story'. We 'Boys'", he went on, "and this goes for all of us, failed only when we thought of ourselves as failure. When an

(Quoted from an article by Roman Halter "In Praise of our Boys in Israel" which appeared in our Journal 1st April 1976).

individual feels and thinks that he is finished then he is finished, and I am happy to say that there are very few amongst us who failed. As to

success, by whose standard ought we to measure it? By the achievements of Einstein, Rockefeller, Baal Shem Tov, Rembrandt? It's ridiculous, we are neither failures, nor successes, we are individuals who went through much and thereby learned a little more than other people from life's experiences; we learned to fight for what we believe, to be compassionate to and help others; we learned to overcome some shortcomings and to make the most of our talents and qualities. We learned not to believe in false prognoses – there is no Messiah on the tail end of Marx – life is a process. We 'Boys' found from the past that we are Jews and when we came through hell we found life and grew to love it and to love one another" and so we all drank Le-haim.



A few of Romans' friends at the inauguration of Romans' exhibition at the Imperial War Museum.

Moniek (Joseph Goldberg)

It is very prevalent today when people, especially young people, witness a disaster, as was the case with the Columbine High School and other places, they receive special counselling to help them get over their trauma. In most cases, these children had their parents waiting for them with open arms to embrace and comfort them. We did not have that luxury, but we did have each other. Starting with Dr Groak, then with the C.C.C., they created



a situation that has helped us bond together and become a family. I remember in Belsize Park, when Ben was waiting

for his sister Mala to arrive from Sweden, some of us were so excited as if our own sister was coming. We share in each others joy and we hurt in each others pain. I once heard Sir Martin Gilbert while being interviewed on American Radio, re the book "The Boys", explain that when you see these boys, when they meet, the way they touch, the way they look, the spontaneous joy of seeing each other, is remarkably unique and special.

Sixty years on Solly Irving

Ever since we arrived in England we have endeavoured to establish ourselves and to acquire some normality to the lives we lost as youngsters. Most of us have married and brought up a family of which we are all very proud. We have joined different communities and done our best to help others in various ways.

Our closeness to each other has been a positive example to many outside our circle and we are a very close knit group – when one hurts, we all feel it. Many of us



have suffered further personal tragedies and have found many advantages by

belonging to such a unique “family”. We feel so much for one another that many “outsiders” are envious.

Since retirement some of us have given valuable time outside of the community, to schools and other groups, speaking about our experiences in the Holocaust. We have helped a great deal to ensure that the Holocaust shall never be forgotten. All the above is proof positive that Hitler could not achieve his ultimate goal – the destruction of the Jewish people.

Yom HaShoah 5772 - A survivor's story

by Sala Newton Katz

My dear friends, I have spoken here before on Yom HaShoah. I told you then of my childhood, how I grew up in Lodz, Poland. I told you then how my childhood was ripped from me, as the ghetto was closed around us. I told you then that later I was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau and that on the day we arrived, I not only lost my childhood, but I lost my baby brother and dear mother - may their memory be for a bracha.

I told you then of the work-camp, Aideran, that I was sent to, and of the death-march I endured at the end of the war. Finally, I told you of my eventual liberation by the terrifying Russians at the concentration camp of Theresienstadt, just outside of Prague. It was there that I met my late husband Benny, and the others who were to become my family.

Sala came to England with the Windermere group and lived with the girls in Manchester. She now lives in Israel.



This brings me to what I would like to talk to you about today; not the horrors that I endured, but rather the reality of survival, of living

life as a ‘survivor’. It is something that I carry with me every hour of every day. We survivors are a dying breed; I am more often present at a levoyah (funeral) than a simcha these days. So let me tell you how being a survivor of the Shoah has affected me.

A group of us, all youths, were sponsored to be brought over from Theresienstadt to England after liberation. We affectionately called our group “The Boys”. The historian Martin Gilbert has written a book about our group. It was these individuals who were to become my brothers and sisters, in turn they were the uncles and aunts for my three girls. Like Benny and I, members of our group often married each other. At our wedding we had no family present, but in truth they were all family.

We didn't talk about our experiences in those days. If we did, we would only talk about them late at night, in hushed voices, once the children had gone to sleep. We only wanted to forget. But it was those experiences that bound us together. We found comfort in the fact that we had all been through hell; there was no need to talk much about it.

I didn't talk to my girls about what had happened to us. They grew up knowing that we were survivors, but not much more than that. Living life was my sole concern, to do as much as I could for my family. I worked many years as a nurse, giving to others as I had never been given to.

Benny was always trying to make it in business - at least once he realized that acting didn't put bread on the table. I can't remember how many times he pawned and then bought back my engagement ring to fund one of his ventures. Eventually, thank G-d, he found his business and his success.

Many of us survivors have little quirks that we keep with us throughout our lives. For Benny it was extravagance and over-generosity. Once he had money, nothing was too much for his girls or his wife. But, even before money came his way, Benny was always laughing, always cracking a joke, despite there being a hardness beneath. Laughter and gaiety was our escape from the pain of the past.

I also have my own little quirk; I always keep the fridge over-stocked. I know that a significant portion of the food will go to waste, but it doesn't matter. After one experiences true hunger, you

too would always want the fridge to be full to bursting!

Time passed and Benny wanted to return to Poland to set up a memorial in his hometown and to visit the camps. He took me with him. But I was not ready to return. I came back and fell ill for many weeks as the memories and sorrow threatened to overwhelm me.

But I am a survivor. It is a mentality that I live by, that I have given to my children and grandchildren. We must survive; we must live life and do as best we can. It's all we can do, but we must do it.

Twenty years ago Benny died from cancer. He had a sincere wish to live and die in Israel. To be honest, this was not a dream I shared. I was very happy in London. But, having come here, I appreciate what it means to live in Israel.

A number of years later I married Yosef Katz, whom you all know. It should be of little surprise that Yosef is also a survivor.

More recently I have been able to recount my experience. I was interviewed by the Spielberg Foundation. In truth, the story I tell of my time during the war is not rich in detail. I have buried most of my memories of that time. What remains is the bare framework of what happened to me. You see I never wanted to remember. I was never interested in remembering the fear and the atrocities that I had to endure.

Some of my friends have reached their old age and as a result woken up to their mortality. This, their mortality, is something they had felt very keenly before - in their broken childhood. Reliving their past has made them

depressed and withdrawn. They cannot sleep without nightmares of men in dark uniforms and death all around.

This is not a problem I face though. I am a survivor. I only look and strive for the good that can be found.

I would like to conclude by sharing with you an experience that gave me a sense of closure; that laid my ghosts to rest. You see my father died six months before the war started, and there was no time or resources to put up a head-stone for him. But a few years ago my grandson went with his Yeshiva to Poland, and, using the tour guide's contacts, managed to determine which grave in the Lodz cemetery was my father's.

This was the motivation that I needed. Two years later I went back to Poland. This time it was not as a broken girl, nor a scarred adult, but as a survivor, leading a group of people from my daughters' shul. Two of my daughters, a son-in-law, and two grandchildren accompanied me. I was well armed and prepared this time with my family and legacy with me.

We visited Warsaw and Krakow and then went back to Auschwitz, where I recounted the story of my arrival, of the music playing, and of the bright lights and the selections, of the fear it instilled. I told them of how we had to strip, had our hair shaved and then went into the showers where my mother was taken away from me - a wound that has never healed.

Eight weeks of continuous selections, standing naked in all weather, in front of Dr. Mengele and his assistant as

they chose. Once Dr Mengele stopped me and asked me my age, and I lied, telling him I was 18.

Eventually we ended up going to Lodz, my home town. We visited my old family home in Lodz, and even went up to the flat that had been my family's. It was so strange seeing Polish gentiles living in my parents' home. There was even the old anti-Semitic graffiti on the stairway walls. I walked around my old home town, recalling my childhood

experiences to the group and at the same time, laying my ghost to rest.

Finally, we arrived at the Lodz cemetery where we arranged for a matzeivah to be put up for my father. We performed the hakomos matzeivah ceremony, my son-in-law said kaddish, and my grandson gave a dvar torah. This was my closure. This was my revenge. This is my legacy.

I also stood in a bunkhouse in Birkenau, crying

for the last time over the memories of smoky skies and endless selections. When I had finished, the group and my family danced with me. With them they had brought a little sefer torah, and we sung "am Yisroel chai".

We must never forget the horrors that man can do. But we must also never forget that we are still here, that "am Yisroel chai". We have survived. I think that we all need to live with that name, "survivor".

A survivor celebrate life

Robert Sherman

Robert is married to Judith. 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. Both of them, together with their daughter and grandchildren, are regular contributors to our Journal.

Then came the Holocaust with countless miracles which somehow enabled survival. Then came the liberation and the search for family and friends and the recognition that all or most did not survive. Then the questions: why me? Why and how did I survive and what does that mean? I have nothing. Where and how do I go on? With whom? How can I deal with the pain of remembrance?

The search leads to helping agents from the larger world and the opportunity to plunge into that larger world with all its strangeness of people, language and cultural differences, but nevertheless,

an outstretched hand. Another miracle. All is not perfect because none involved have ever been here before. New friends are made, new language gradually acquired and new educational and career skills embarked upon. Try and stuff the memories, but they are firmly there. Begin to learn how to contain the memories while living in and celebrating the present with all its triggers to open wide the doors of memory. Friends, caretakers and helpers become somewhat like family. New language and career skills begin to take hold. Time to move on into that larger world with some confidence, as well as anxiety. You remember your forebears and discover that you are standing on their shoulders. But they have left a heritage and made a path. Onward you go.

You discover that there are many things you can do and do successfully. New friendships and discovery of a mate for life. Jobs and career ladders develop. Children are born. Happiness is not only

rediscovered but is actively engaging. But for most, memory is held silently and even protected from emerging by all kinds of restraints discovered by experimentation and example of other survivors, but mostly by telling yourself the past is not the present and can be treated somewhat separately. The triggers in the present keep emerging.

The '45 Aid Society powerfully emerges to unite survivors and give them a vehicle for engaging a combined present, past, and future. Remember together, help others, and work for a better more tolerant world in which hate is unacceptable. Lead by commemoration and example. The Society is a very effective vehicle and

very healing, especially for those who participate more actively.

The survivors, now spread over the world, stress compassion, the positive and the good. They create a heritage for children and grandchildren, and strong shoulders to stand on. By stressing the good, they provide a beacon of light to all who face the continuing onslaughts of evil. They point to all the miracles that have and still occur in their own lives as proof that every season is a season of miracles and miracles still occur. Your own entire life is an affirmation of the miraculous. You model how to overcome obstacles and solve problems with courage and commit-

ment. A few examples: finding a loving partner, jobs, birth and growth of children and grandchildren, friendships, family gatherings, the rediscovery of joy and laughter, finding your glasses or hearing aids (which compensate for losses of sight and hearing), remembering a name, celebrating the lives of those who pass on before us, still being alive to read this piece.

You celebrate your own life, accomplishment, blessings, and miracles, your heritage, your survival. You are a person of life!!!

It Takes Courage
The Holocaust.
Anguish, Sickness,
Deaths. Horrific.

Holocaust and after - Harvard University 2012

Judith Sherman

My thoughts today are of a very personal nature - based on very personal experience. Not the thoughts of a historian, scholar or theologian - the thoughts of a Holocaust survivor. Every survivor has their own story - but we also echo each others stories. I will focus briefly on - before, during and after.

My good life in America of over 50 years elicits gratitude and appreciation. A life of fullness. But my emotional connection is to Kurima, my village in Czechoslovakia. There my first memories are formed. Images of the house behind the store. First taste of homemade bread and homemade butter and homemade memories. I shall

Judith is married to Robert.. 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. Both of them, together with their daughter and grandchildren, are regular contributors to our Journal.

never see plum trees as right as those in my garden.

In Ravensbruck Concentration Camp I rage: let not flowers here, not scented rose, not meadow hues, not daffodils not gentle dew. No Edenic scenes for me - Edenic scenes - a mockery! crushes and crazed, indignant I

would be when tortured amidst splendidry.

No need for such concern. The torture is there but the hues are from bruises and shots, dog bites, dried blood and fresh blood and puss. Nothing grows in Ravensbruck. Here nature abstains.

THE MESSIAH. In Kurima the coming of the Messiah is said reverently and joyfully. We do never not expect him - but not yet. He will come - but not yet. Not yet. There is no need for the Messiah yet. The prophesy is accepted, The Messiah is expected - sometime, sometime... In the future. In the meantime our current reality is filled with hopes and tasks which we

ourselves expect to fulfill - with God's help. We have aspirations and savings for the future. The Messiah is for some unspecified distant future. But we sing Messiah songs "azMoschiach wilt kommen "And in our daily, Shabbat and Festival prayers we recite Isaiah's prophesy... Lo yisa goi el goi cherev, v'lo yilmidu od milchama"... "and Nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war anymore."

In Ravensbruck the distant, unspecified, future is NOW. Imminently, immediately NOW. In Ravensbruck the prayer, the pleading, the question:

God, It would suit us fine if you made this Messiah time. Is not this abyss Your cue to do the Messiah thing? "Here, today, the Messiah takes the form of President Franklin Roosevelt - The Messiah needed for his day, for this hour. To him I address my unwritten letter, (here is an excerpt).

"Mr. Roosevelt, President: We need to get out of here. Open the gates... of Arbeit Macht Frei. Go by our time, not by outside time...though we are not allowed to send or receive mail, thousands, millions of letters are sent to you from Buchenwald, Auschwitz, Ravensbruck. I vouch for their accuracy. Urgency. Though not sent - read them. Go by our time, not by outside time, President Roosevelt."

We prisoners never doubt that the allies would win the war - but for most of us - thousands, thousands, of us - death intrudes - precedes victory. Had we prisoners of fear and despair known that our urgency was not of high priority to President

Roosevelt many more would have given up and died. Hope and belief are helpful survivor bricks, but are no guarantees. For too many the bricks of Ravensbruck are too heavy. Where is Moses to remove the bricks - to free the slaves?

Religion, rituals and traditions: In Kurima we know what is Sacred and Holy. Our lives are fused with traditions and rituals. Connection with God is solid. When our silver candle sticks are taken my grandma lights the Shabbat candles on a stone. She will not deprive God of his Shabbat light.

In Ravensbruck I wear my red polka-dot dress. I wear it by day. I wear it by night. My only attire. Never gets washed. The red fades into blotchy - yellow - faded- pink, the white dots reflect the grey of camp's misery. Not a most appropriate camp attire, (what is appropriate?) The dress is not warm, not clean, but it is from home - a memory container. The dress outlasts the two dressmaker sisters who had sewn it.

There are many ways to die here but not by choice. Not by suicide. Suicide involves choice. Choice is not an option. Choice is not an option. Only dogs and guards may go about freely. They go everywhere except the typhoid hospital - for fear of infection.

Miracles: Miracles at home are of a Biblical nature . We celebrate them. The exodus on Pesach; Shavuot - we read of the Angel saving Isaac from sacrifice; of Jonah and Nineveh. Ravensbruck too has miracles. Every survivor has miracle stories. The boundary between life and

death is so narrow that any successful move away from immediate death is a miracle. Miracles - Another day alive. Another hour. A friend thought dead re-appears. A bruised leg not detected. A transport actually arriving at a Sub camp and not at the Gas Chamber. We put it all into the category of miracles. Miracles - because nothing beneficial happens because they want it to happen. Never their intent to counteract evil. It is difficult- almost indecent - to celebrate your own "good fortune" when all around you are suffering. Where can you look to not see misery? Hitler... their corrupt monotheism. Ein Land - Ein Fuhrer. On their belt buckles it says Got mit uns - God is with us. On their helmets is the death sign. In this "new order" - in this garden- of-evil Hitler aims to replace God. Though we are prohibited from looking into the eyes of these Supermen, we are at least protected from having to "Heil Hitler" . The Fuhrer does not want the salute of inferiors.

AFTER - - - POST HOLOCAUST THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

MESSIANIC FOOTSTEPS Messianic goals are large, cosmic, resulting in cataclysmic transformation. Expected in future time. Holocaust Survivors know other messianic footprints. Small ones, but of such magnitude. We recognize them in our daily lives. We know of transformation. That star in Heaven - not branding our chest. Bread, daily, daily, bread . Real. Not a mirage. Not a consuming, craving, memory of before. Water to

drink, to cleanse - not craving thirst and shower gas. Everyday words - hair, numbers, selection, cold, trains - transformed into words that mean just that - hair, numbers, selection, cold, train. But the Camp memory connection remains. That memory connection is not transformable. Not even a Messiah can delete it.

We are paving Messianic tracts. We are caring not just for ourselves but for others. Once freed of that evil weapon of forced passivity we move towards others. We share food, we carry a sick friend, we comfort. Some laugh out loud, some cry out loud. We make sounds. We crave to re-connect- willingly, publicly. In Camp every prisoner - with few exceptions- experienced a diminished self. Now we reclaim us - not only by surviving - by being. The scars are there and the numbers - and our prior back-home selves are resurfacing.

Messianic footprints in my garden. Green and growth and the Tightness of my purple-red anemones. Family. Family. Family. Names. Names. A book. Photographs. Songs. Cemeteries. A prayer said out loud - in Community. Words of choice. Yes. No. So many Yes options. So many No options. Wrinkles and grey hair - now that is a transformation of magnitude. Age allowed to happen. Messiah signs - mothers mothering. Fathers protecting. Children outgrowing their shoes.

I also see Messianic movement in the larger world. The election of a first black President. Knowledge and resources utilized towards the elimination of measles worldwide. Efforts to

address world hunger. Greater equality for women. Civil rights. Gay rights. Israel.

But this is not, this is not yet, the Messianic age of Universal Redemption. We dreamed of an "After" Liberation- world where God and the world would henceforth pay attention to the terror of that history of evil and move towards redemption - We thought in this after liberation time none of the world's parents would ever again have to leave children unprotected. We thought the Holocaust would be a rebuke and a warning.

No Messiah for six million Jews murdered. For the other murdered. What do we the living do? How do we transform the world into "Never Again" - the life saving Never Again? How? When? Today I ask. World of ethnic cleansing - Who is clean? World, I say - your brother's keeper but don't make a list no list, no list, no list of who the brother is.

More Questions: Where was man? We know where the oppressors were. We know where the victims were. We know where the bystanders were. Where was humanity?

I never fail to acknowledge the Christian families who risked their lives to help Jews. You, are the only Christian good during this time of terror. Today in Jerusalem on the Grounds of Yad VaShem - The Holocaust Memorial Museum - there is an alley of trees overlooking the City. It is the "Avenue of the Righteous." A tree planted in gratitude for every Christian rescuer. It is a beautiful sight of green and

growth in this place of the dead. Know you the nature of Nazism - help is punished by murder. The courage and care of those who actively helped made all the difference. And Survivors will always be grateful to the Allied Soldiers who opened the Camp gates. Our life savers - the first witnesses to the witnesses.

Where was God? No Jewish theologian or scholar believes the Holocaust was an act of Divine punishment. It was a terror carried out by people against people. Basically they do not offer an explanation of God's absence - they cannot (?) - but offer a way of responding to the enormity of the Holocaust. There are differences in responses.

Emil Fackenhaim, the Jewish scholar, states - Jews are commanded never to hand Hitler any posthumous victories. They must survive; they must remember; they must never despair; and they must never go mad. Jews must undertake again the practice of *tikun olam* - "mending of the world"; must recover the past of Jewish tradition; must remain faithful to the Covenant; must recover from the trauma of the Shoa . Fackenheim calls these imperatives the "614th" Mitzva - Commandment. I accept largely Fackenheim's teaching.

But, God, I do not have the maturity or wisdom to stop challenging You for answers. You must surely want the questions - would our silence not be an insult to you? But God, hear this, **I never want the wisdom to understand!** Not the Holocaust! Did understanding help Job? I do not want explanation or

justification. Accountability. Accountability.

As a survivor I have often been asked "Do you forgive the Nazis?" I have not heard a Nazi ask if I forgive him. I am enraged at Zionism being equated with racism? What is the true motive behind this? Holocaust deniers - What are your motives?

That man made terror was devastating as was the indifference of the bystanders as was the absence of God. I have difficulty with the allegedly comforting notion of the prophets of old who speak of the "Remnant" which survives and continues. In my innocent Kurima fantasy I want the whole world to fight Anti-Semitism. I am tired of Anti Semitism! The Bible exhorts us to choose life. World, let us get on with it!

Today the Holocaust will still not let go. I am accustomed to two track living - not integration, not forgetfulness - parallel existences. Holocaust connections do not dissipate. As life goes on new connections arise. Holocaust connections exist, remain, multiply.

During the last sixty years I have been challenging God for answers in my unsophisticated Kurima way. Did You miss us in the empty Synagogues as we missed You in the crowded cattle cars and death filled Camps? Because I cannot conceive of "A No God world" I continue to stay connected and challenge. I have also become more observant and interested in the Bible. I suspect this is true for other survivors as well, (and is perhaps also age connected - my old age connected).

Messianically speaking.

Today I am moving more closely towards Judaism that speaks of a future world in which human effort - not a Divinely sent messenger - will bring about a world of peace and natural harmony. (But if a messenger can help - baruch haba - welcome.)

Israel is in the DNA of every Jew. Many say the establishment of Israel is a consequence of the Holocaust. Do we have to have a Holocaust to have a Jewish State? We need Israel for spiritual, historical and human connection. For safety, for Joy. For being part of the Family of Nations and contributing to world welfare. Yes, there are serious unresolved issues between Israel and some of her Arab neighbours...in need of resolution not annihilation. God, our memories will forever embody Auschwitz but let us, our children, our children's children be your witness also through awe, safety, and joy! YES to Israel!

And yes, I do have these very strong connections to Israel and yes, our family lives in America. We are thankful to America for the fullness of our life here and especially that here our children's mantle of Jew is "so light, so safe so Kol b'Seder."

I want to share with you a recent experience. Shavuot, is the Festival of giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai and the Harvest Holyday of the offering of the first grain and fruits. On this Day, in May 2012, our Rabbi, Eli Perlman, makes a sermon of the value of anonymous giving. He then talks of how in the Days of the Temple those who heard

"them sing poetic Verses would be inspired." He states an anonymous giver wants to present the gift of a Tallit to the Synagogue poet laureate... He says when Judith Sherman is called to the Torah to make the blessing she puts on the borrowed Synagogue Tallit and smiles. When she returns the Tallit after the blessing her smile disappears. Therefore on this day an anonymous donor is gifting Judith with a Tallit - Her Own Tallit. He calls me up to the Bimah - the Torah Stage - and puts the Tallit onto my shoulders. There are tears in his eyes and mine.

Here are some excerpts of my response to the Congregation.

"The Tallit. When I was called up for an Aliyah and borrowed the Synagogue Tallit I have often thought of buying my own and then thought such a purchase should be connected to a very special occasion of merit. How wise of me. I shudder to think what I would have missed. My father Eli's Tallit was destroyed during the Holocaust. My brother, Karpu, never reached the age of Bar Mitzva. My parents, who were murdered, and I, now have a new meaningful connection... a Tallit celebration connection. I am always awed during the Alyia Torah prayer and now - and now I shall be garbed in silk and embroidery and will bring added beauty to the prayer. Yes, Shavuot is the Festival of gifts- spiritual and earthy. The Torah, the first fruits, the Show bread in the Temple, the compassion of Ruth, and I am adding to these - the gift of my Tallit. Not as earth shaking historically as the others but

an event of AWESOME SIGNIFICANCE IN MY LIFE. And behold too my Tallit's Israeli connections. Designed and made by an Israeli artist. The echoes reverberate. God must be pleased that this Tallit is given to this woman so full heartedly and received with such total, total JOY. And you, my fellow congregants benefit also. Since I do not know the identity of ANONYMOUS I will have to be nice to every one of you. For who knows?"

This Tallit was a revelation. I felt enveloped in a newly reciprocal connection to God. The Tallit made a demand of me for a deeper connection and my Tallit

demanded of God that he notice - that he be more present. An intensified bond between us. Today my ongoing questions and challenges are enveloped in that Tallit. God, I will stay connected and I will continue to ask the questions. But perhaps my challenges will be less loud. And perhaps I too will hear a still small voice. And God, please see to it that I always have what to feel AWE about.

These are the thoughts of a Jewish Holocaust Survivor. And I wish you song and Summer woods.

A poem of Jerusalem in my Tallit. My poem was put to music and sang in Chapel of

the Hadassah Hospital. I was there. Since it was sung in that special place by this special group of all four Perlmann Cantors I am pretending it is a psalm.

This year in Jerusalem.

This year in Jerusalem and on the shores of Ashkelon with might of tides, with roar of sea

and stiller than the olive tree and louder than the desert wind and sweeter than the Song of Songs - more ardent than

the shofar blast as honest as an infant's smile - as hope filled as a field of wheat - I shall pray for peace.

Salek Benedikt

At the outbreak of war in 1939 my brother was 19 years old. A tall, lean, well-spoken and polite young man. He was well liked by most who knew him, especially by our neighbours Mr and Mrs Izbicki, a middle-aged, childless couple. Owners of silk cloth factory on the Zachodnia St. Lodz.

The Izbickis liked Izak from the time he was a child, and would often invite him to their apartment. Over the years, he got quite attached to them.

When Izak finished primary school, they suggested to my parents to enrol him at the private "Gimnazjum Tkactwa Mechanicznego" (Gimnasium for Mechanical Weaving) at their expense.

After finishing the course at the gymnasium, Izak joined Mr Izbicki at the

Salek came to England with the Southampton group and lived in the Finchley Road hostel.



factory, in a managerial position. The entire workforce at the factory was of ethnic German origin. They were already influenced by the Nazi ideology. They strongly objected to having a Jewish manager, but Mr Izbicki stood firm and would not give in.

When the German army entered Lodz, Mr and Mrs

Izbicki left town in a hurry, in fear of their ex-employees.

Izak decided to escape to the Russian occupied part of Poland, in the company of his friend David.

They crossed the border at Baranowicze. Within days, David fell ill. He insisted on returning home. Since he was not in a state to travel by himself, Izak felt obliged to accompany him.

Before they set out on the return journey, Izak managed to send a letter home, announcing his return. Upon receipt of the letter, my parents decided not to leave Lodz before his arrival. In the meantime, they would send most of their possessions to their friend in Wioszczowa near Kielce. I would accompany the goods. In Wioszczowa I received a letter from my parents telling me to join my grandparents

in a little village near Kouskie.

In March 1940 Polish partisans arrived in the village. They spent a weekend there.

Shortly after they left, the Gestapo arrived. They arrested a number of Poles, including the Catholic priest and the village elder.

At night we could see surrounding villages on fire. The SS torched all the villages the partisans crossed. My uncle decided we should all leave before we share their fate. One dark night we fled to the town of Szydłowiec. There, in May 1940, I received a letter from my brother. He volunteered to work in Germany, on a promise of good working conditions and pay. He also requested I should send him some warm clothing and food. He gave me an address, of which I only remember the place, Pinow am Reppen.

I took the parcel to the local Post Office. They were not allowed to accept any post to Germany. The nearest Post Office that would was in the town of Radom. The following morning I travelled to Radom. I found the "Post Office". It was in an imposing building in classic style, with wide steps leading to a colonnaded top. Two armed soldiers were marching to-and-fro in front of the entrance.

Behind the door, a man enquired as to my business. When I asked for the Post Office, all he said was "first floor".

At the top of the stairs, a man was sitting behind a desk. I handed him the parcel. He inspected it and asked what it contained. He then turned round, took a book from the shelf behind

him, looked at the address on the parcel, then at the open book. He looked up at me and asked, "Jude?" When I confirmed, he exclaimed, "Paket auf den Boden schmeissen und Raus!" (Throw the parcel on floor and get out!). He did not have to repeat himself. I turned and walked down the stairs, slowly, not to draw attention to myself.

Out of the building, I crossed the road and looked up at it. At the top of the building there was stretched a banner with the designation "SICHERHEITS DIENST".

I gave a sigh of relief.

Szydłowiec was not a safe refuge. SS men and their Latvian auxiliaries would descend on the town and grab people off the street and cart them away, no-one knew where.

New anti-Jewish legislations were constantly imposed, making life there ever more difficult.

A friend of my uncle was leaving Szydłowiec for the nearby town of Starachowice, where work was available at a munitions factory named Herman Göring Werkes. I asked my uncle to let me join him. We received minimal wages and were issued a pass that provided some measure of safety.

On the 27th October 1941, at dawn, the Ghetto of Starachowice was being liquidated, in a most cruel manner. I witnessed little children, elderly people and the infirm being mercilessly murdered by Nazis. The remainder underwent a selection on the market square. The able-bodied joined the pass-holders and we were all marched to an established Concentration

Camp, outside the town.

The conditions in this camp were horrendous. Hard work, beatings, starvation and vermin infestation. An epidemic of typhus broke out in 1943, which cost the lives of many people.

In July 1944, all inmates were "shipped off" to Auschwitz. I spent three weeks in Birkenau, then transferred to Monowitz, also known as Buna, the name of an industrial complex, three miles away, the workplace of most of us.

I noticed there were many people from the Lodz Ghetto there, so, in my spare time, I would visit other barracks enquiring whether anybody knew Izak Benedikt. Several people admitted to having known him but did not know his present whereabouts.

In November 1944 the Buna was once again bombed.

A number of us were mustered to clear up some of the mess. As we entered the Buna, a young chap was standing by the roadside and was calling my name. Since I did not recognise him, I ignored him. On the way back to camp, he was again there. This time he ran up to me and quickly told me who he was and asked me to come to his barrack that night.

His name was Schlama, an orphan who worked in the barber shop near my parents' business. The shop was also his abode. He had no other home. The owner, Mr Kuba, left Lodz soon after the Germans arrived.

He and his family migrated to the Russian occupied part of Poland, leaving Schlama penniless, without light, heat or warm clothing. Schlama knew that he could not survive the winter in these

circumstances. In desperation he turned to my parents. "Salek", he said, "your parents saved my life. They offered me a bed, warm clothing and fed me. I will never forget this as long as I live." Then he hugged me and said, "I haven't got much to spare but as a barrack

barber I receive two litres of extra soup. I will share it with you every Wednesday". At this point, I asked him whether he left Lodz together with my brother. He affirmed, hesitantly. I then pressed him to tell me where my brother was. He fell quiet for a while then said: "Look,

in this camp we're alive now but it is not certain that we will be tomorrow. Your brother is dead. He was shot by a guard after being injured at work."

Izak was my brother, friend and role model. I loved him dearly.

Personal memories of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on the 70TH Anniversary

In April 1943 my twin sister and I, aged 11, looked with terror out from the window of a tenement house in the "Arian" (non-Jewish) part of Warsaw overlooking the Ghetto. We were being sheltered temporarily by a Polish family after being smuggled out of the Ghetto six weeks earlier by members of the Jewish Bund underground organisation. What we saw that day is impossible to forget even after seventy years; screaming people running from houses with clothes on fire being shot at; a woman jumping from a window to escape the fire, pieces of burning paper flying through the air. The billowing smoke and fire could be seen from all over Warsaw. My mother, family, friends - everything and everyone I knew was in that inferno.

Seventy years ago on 19th April 1943 (the beginning of Passover) the Warsaw Ghetto, where some 300,000 Jews had been herded together by the Germans since November 1940, was finally surrounded by German soldiers and their Baltic and Ukrainian

Wladka Blit-Robertson

Vladka came to England with the Rabbi Schonfeld's group.

henchmen, members of the Vlasov army.

They entered through the gates in the Ghetto walls with tanks and machine guns and I saw them begin to pour petrol into the entrances to buildings and setting them on fire. The deportations to concentration camps and extermination camps had begun in August 1942. Now the remnants of the Jewish population who had somehow managed to survive, children along with men and women, were driven out of their cellars, bunkers and other hiding places by fire.

But I am glad to have the opportunity to write about the inspiring memories of my life in the Ghetto, and to remember the people there who tried not to be dehumanised despite the bestiality of the Germans. Yes, I remember hunger, haphazard beatings, executions, shootings of children caught smuggling food

through holes in the Ghetto walls, people dying of hunger or diseases, dead people on the pavement, and the selections. But I also remember the secret self help organisations, secret soup kitchens (one of them run by my mother) secret libraries, secret classes for older children, secret synagogues, even a puppet theatre, and secret bulletins being circulated by the organised clandestine Jewish resistance organisation ZOB. During the deportations I remember hiding once in a huge bunker where we were led one night through a secret passage by a member of the Poale Zion, Szmul Berlinski, who openly carried a revolver in his hand..

Victorious on all fronts until then, the Germans were surprised on entering the Ghetto to be met by fierce armed resistance from young Jews, mainly members of the various political and religious organisations, now unified to defend the Ghetto. These Jewish fighters could not win and almost all were murdered or committed suicide when they were

surrounded. A few fighters managed to escape through the sewers and fought as partisans in the forests around Warsaw. The uprising lasted six weeks. It was not until the middle of May 1943 the Germans declared the Ghetto "Judenfrei".

I want to pay tribute to these fighters, and also to those who chose not to fight but to stay looking after their families, though they had the chance to escape, and those who knew they could not escape and tried to comfort those under their care.

And I also want to pay tribute to the many clandestine Jewish couriers of the defence organisation who did so much to smuggle arms and information into the Ghetto, tried to find safe places

outside for people to escape to, and looking after them in these hiding places (a difficult, dangerous and self-sacrificing job because of so much blackmailing, denouncing and indifference from the local population). Some couriers managed to smuggle themselves into smaller concentration camps to give help to people there. Money came from the USA from Jewish organisations and was passed on through the Polish government in exile and the Polish underground organisation.

There were many couriers and I was lucky enough to know some of them : Ala Margolis, Wladka and Ben Meed, Inka Szwajgers and Marysia Warman . I want to write especially about

Michael Klepfish, who took my sister and myself out of the Ghetto and shared his room outside with us for a short time. He worked hard at finding places outside the Ghetto especially for children. He was an engineer and made incendiary bottles. Through his contacts with the Polish underground, he managed to obtain some small arms. On the first day of the uprising he smuggled himself into the Ghetto with his last consignment of arms, and was shot dead two days later. After the war The Polish government in exile awarded him the highest Polish military honour - Virturi Militari . But many others equally brave are not remembered.

God, Good and Evil

Aubrey Rose C.B.C.,
D.Univ.

Aubrey is a lawyer of great distinction and has played an active role in many fields. He was a senior Vice-President of the Board of Deputies and he was an active member of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative; he set up and chaired a working party on environment which led to his book Judaism & Ecology. He spent five years as a Commissioner for Racial Equality. He is Co-Chairman of the Indian Jewish Association, a Trustee of various charitable trusts and is Deputy Chairman of British Caribbean Association. He has written many books, including his autobiography "The Rainbow Never Ends".

strange Christian doctrine of the fall of man necessitating a later, much later, Saviour to redeem him.

The Professor puzzles over how a nation that produced Beethoven, Bach, Goethe, Schiller, could also produce Himmler, Goebbels, the whole panoply of Nazi wickedness. His analysis is detailed and profound and his underlying conclusion is that anti-Semitism, taken to its murderous, logical end, is a disease of the Church, something acknowledged by Pope John XXIII.

There is evidence to support this thought in the absence of anything remotely comparable in the Eastern worlds of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism or Chinese Realms. Contrast this with the pogroms of

Like so many, I still ponder on the evil known as The Holocaust. I know a learned scientific Professor who is analysing how a small area in Germany that produced the highest level of culture also produced Buchenwald. That terrible period in the 1940s contained the lowest level of human degradation when self-styled supermen descended to a sub-human level never before plumbed. Yet that period included also those who displayed immense moral heroism in the preservation of human life.

The problem of good and evil is a mark of the human condition. It is noted in the first chapter of The Bible, with allegorical reference to the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the temptation story of Adam and Eve, and the

Orthodox Russia, the medieval European Crusades, and the Religio-Racist murders of the Spanish Inquisition. Yet this problem of good and evil is always with us, our Jewish history seems to confirm Moses' words to the Children of Israel, "For the Lord has come to test you". A Rabbi I knew once referred to us as the moral barometer of the human race.

Yet the problem is much deeper and wider than our experience. How is it that today, 2013, there continues to be ritual sacrifice of children in Uganda? This unthinkable evil is detailed by Jubilee Campaign, a courageous British Charity. How is it that Baroness Caroline Cox, a heroine if ever there was one, risks her life to rescue slaves from modern Sudan.

Human slavery disfigured and shamed European colonialists but it has also been a terrible feature of Moslem history, little noted in Western text books. Slavery was only officially abolished in Saudi Arabia in 1922. There remains today a moral crisis in the Moslem world comparable to that same crisis 400 – 500 years ago in the Christian world.

I wonder whether my Professor friend can delve deeper than the religious elements of the good/evil struggles. He, like me, has the privilege of living in a

free, democratic state, where, as in other democracies like Israel, the death penalty has been abolished, and where human rights, enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration, are the standards aimed at, though not always achieved.

The teaching of Freud, Jung, and others, have directed our attention to more profound factors. Take the horror of suicide bombers, illustrated by Japanese airmen in World War II, by Tamil fighters recently in Sri Lanka, but particularly by Moslems in America, Britain, and elsewhere, a practice condemned by Mahomet himself.

People do terrible things as a result of intense indoctrination, especially from an early age, but there is also the immensely powerful surge of group or collective behaviour. The moral level of the group is far below that of the individual. Thus we witness the ghastly murders by the Manson adherents in U.S.A., the mass suicides of indoctrinated groups in Guyana, Tasmania and Switzerland, groups who looked to a leader as a Messiah.

On a scale of millions, apart from the uniquely terrible Holocaust, there was the Stalin-inspired starvation of seven million Ukrainians in the 1930s, in which decade the Japanese committed wicked crimes on

the Chinese, while, besotted with Mao and leadership hysteria, over 400 million Chinese perished in the 1960s. Other examples of evil abound, decade after decade.

I wonder what conclusions my friend will arrive at. Will he say that over-population is a cause of evil, or the daily soaking of the human mind by the many forms of the media, or mass starvation, or disease, or the abject failure of religion, or will he conclude that evolution will take us beyond good and evil one day, or that spiritual elements will emerge that will overcome the insistent demands of the physical and group madness?

We, as Jews, ever a mere handful amidst billions, have a greater experience over the millennia of evil than most. Can we meet the Mosaic challenge that the Lord has come to test us or have we been tested too severely and too often?

Having taken part in the Annual Holocaust Memorial Commemorations, I am always inspired by the sheer courage and dedication of survivors, now reduced in number, who have seen the face of evil yet who say yea to life, to family, and to the future. Long may their spirit, and that of all those who have gone before, continue to live amongst us and among future generations.

DAYS PASS

Michael Etkind

Michael was dubbed by Sir Martin Gilbert as the Society's poet.

Days pass – like pages of a book you read;
Months are its chapters. They gather speed –
The pace grows faster as they near the end.
The past grows larger, as your future shrinks.
Who said – time travels at a measured pace?

New pains arise in places which did not exist before.
A sudden twinge reminds you of this mortal phase;
This truth we all must face about the journey into the beyond.
The heart pulsates, but sometimes palpitates
And skips a beat or two;
The lungs inflate, but do not fill as once they did.
Blood pressure and cholesterol rise, while your libido fades.

You can't remember where you left the keys,
Or what you did last night;
But, when you lie in bed and shut your eyes,
Time travels back towards your early days.
Oh well – that's a survivor's fate – that is his tale of woes.
That ghetto and those concentration camps
Were not designed to prolong your life.

Be thankful that you're still alive
(someone is bound to say, or think).
So do not whinge, nor whine, but if you must
And if it brings relief, blame it on Schickelgruber's son and all his mates.

IRAN WILL MAKE THE BOMB

Iran will make the bomb;
 Hamas and Hizbollah
 Will get it
 Soon
 And then...
 All hell breaks loose..

And spreads
 Around the globe..

What can man do

Before the radio-active dust
 Blots out the sun..?!

Is man now watching
 His impending doom?

How can man deal with men
 Who 'know' the Will of God..?

All a Poet can do today is warn
 (Wilfred Owen 1918)

CLAIMS CONFERENCE

Over the past 18 months, Claims Conference negotiations with the government of Germany have substantially altered the contours of its individual compensation programs for Jewish victims of Nazism. Two rounds of talks with the German Ministry of Finance have resulted in considerable liberalizations to the pension programs, the Article 2 Fund and the Central and Eastern European Fund (CEEF), and to the one-time payment programme, the Hardship Fund.

Pension changes

Before negotiations in 2011, survivors claiming ghetto incarceration as their persecution for claims to the Article 2 Fund had to have been in a ghetto for at least 18 months in order to be eligible for payments. As of January 1, 2013, that minimum time in a ghetto is now 3 months under these programs.

The Claims Conference also negotiated to reduce the time from 18 to 6 months that victims had to have lived in hiding or under false identity in Nazi-occupied territories in order to be eligible for Claims Conference pensions. This will make up to 5,000 survivors eligible for monthly pensions starting January 1, 2013, affecting primarily survivors persecuted in Hungary, Italy, France, Greece, and Slovakia.

Finally, since the establishment of the CEEF in 1998 to pay certain survivors living in the former Soviet bloc, the Claims Conference has been

strongly advocating to the German government that its monthly payment should be the same as the Article 2 Fund. As of January 1, 2013, the CEEF monthly payments will increase to €300, the same as Article 2.

Hardship Fund

Sixty years after West Germany agreed to the first compensation payments to Holocaust victims, 80,000 now-elderly Jewish victims of Nazism living in the former Soviet Union will receive payments for the first time since WWII.

In a historic development, Germany and the Claims Conference agreed to expand the Hardship Fund to Jewish victims of Nazism living primarily in the countries of the former Soviet Union, who were previously unable to receive payments from this programme. The programme issues a one-time payment of €2,556.

This primarily affects Jews who fled eastward into the USSR ahead of the advancing Nazi army and mobile killing squads known as Einsatzgruppen but who did not live directly under Nazi occupation. This is the first Holocaust-related payment that these victims will ever receive, a long-sought goal of the Claims Conference. The history books are not yet closed on our 60-year endeavour to recognize the suffering of all Jewish victims of Nazism, no matter where they live. Two sisters may have fled into the eastern USSR together, but the one who today lives in the U.S. can receive a payment

while the one who stayed in Ukraine until now could not. A measure of justice should be granted based on history, not on present-day geography. It was imperative that we obtain this symbolic payment before it became too late.

In addition, Hardship Fund payments will now be made to certain Jews who fled ahead of the advancing Nazi army from some areas of the Soviet Union that were not subsequently occupied by the Nazis. Applicants may now be eligible for a payment from the Hardship Fund if they fled between June 22, 1941 and January 27, 1944 from areas of the Soviet Union that were generally up to 100 kilometres from the most easterly advance of the German army (Wehrmacht) but were not later occupied by the Nazis.

Those eligible will include Jews who fled from Moscow and Stalingrad. Eligible victims will also include those who fled from Leningrad after June 22, 1941 but before the siege of that city commenced in September 1941.

Homecare

Since 2011, German government funding for homecare for Nazi victims has increased substantially, a result of ongoing negotiations and Claims Conference efforts to convince the Finance Ministry of the growing need among elderly survivors. Homecare enables frail victims to remain living as long as possible in their own homes, in familiar

surroundings, and it is a continuing priority for the Claims Conference as the need for this service continues to grow in the coming years.

All these results over the

past 18 months, enabling more than 100,000 additional Holocaust victims to receive acknowledgement of their suffering, is due to the work of the Claims Conference negotiating committee, led by

Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat and including Ben Helfgott, Rabbi Andrew Baker, Uri Chanoch, Saul Kagan, Roman Kent, Amb. Reuven Merhav, Greg Schneider, and Marian Turski.

Montefiore Memorial Lecture 2012

William Tyler

1942: THE END OF THE BEGINNING

1942 – 70 YEARS LATER

Sometimes the problem for an historian is having access to too little material.

More often the problem is having access to too much material; And that is my problem over the next hour or so this evening.

Not only too much material, but much of it important to the story of the war, and indeed to the post war world which is to come.

And, finally, much of the material is of a horrifying nature.

Two recent books from historians carry the same title, 'December 1941'. The one written by American Craig Shirley is sub-titled, "30 Days that changed America and Saved the World"; Evan Mawdsley of The University of Glasgow's book is sub-titled, "Twelve Days that Began a World War".

If we are British we might wish to challenge such an American view of history. Britain had been at war since September 1939, and thus January 1942 was neither the beginning nor the end of the war. In Prime Minister Winston Churchill's memorable words, uttered in November 1942, following

the British victory at the Battle of El Alamein, "Now this is not the end. It is not the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning".

1942 began for Churchill with nothing short of relief – The United States was now, following the bombing of The American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour the previous month, militarily in this war alongside us.

Yet the opening months of 1942 were grim ones indeed as news from The Far East of Japanese victories came in fast and furious:-

- Hong Kong had fallen on Christmas Day 1941
 - The Philippines were invaded on 2nd January 1942
 - Burma was invaded on 12th January
 - The Solomon Islands followed on 25th January
 - And, then the most disastrous news of all; Singapore fell on 15th February. Churchill called it "the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history".
- The bad news from The East continued into the spring and even beyond:-

- On 9th April American troops surrendered on Bataan in The Philippines
- On 6th May American troops on Corregidor again in The Philippines surrendered
- On 3rd July the Japanese seized Guadalcanal

But the fightback had already begun, which was eventually, three years later, to lead to the unconditional surrender of Japan:-

- On 18th April American bombers attacked Tokyo
- On 4th May The United States Navy repelled the Japanese in the Battle of The Coral Sea. Australia was now safe from the threat of invasion, despite the continuance of bombings from the air. Almost a hundred air raids were launched by the Japanese on Northern Australia. The first raid was on the city of Darwin on 19th February, when two hundred and forty Australians lost their lives. The raids were to continue into 1943.

- Between the 3rd and the 6th of June the Americans won the naval engagement at Midway. Japanese expansion across The Pacific was halted. Historian Alan Warren writes, "On 7th August 1942 the Americans took an early advantage of their victory at Midway by returning to the Coral Sea region and landing marines at Guadalcanal and Tulagi, at the southern end of the Solomon Islands.... To their surprise, the Japanese found themselves drawn into a defensive battle of attrition, the losses of which the Americans were more able to absorb. The course of the war in the Pacific was changing.... As for Admiral Yamamoto, the badly defeated commander at Midway, a further costly defeat at Guadalcanal caused him more anguish. He wrote of the campaign: 'Guadalcanal was a very fierce battle. I do not know what to do next'.

For Britain, the post war consequences were to prove momentous. British power had been shown up, after the loss of The Prince of Wales and The Repulse to the Japanese air force, as well as the complete disaster at Singapore, to be a toothless power. Australia saw that its future defence and security rested now not with Britain but with The United States, whilst in India demands for independence post war grew - The All-India Congress issued its 'Quit India' resolution on 8th August 1942, "Depart! We have had

enough of your evasions and ambiguities... Make the country free now and we will defend it... The freedom of India will be at once the symbol and the beginning of the liberation of all other Asian peoples". And so it was to prove, starting with Indian and Pakistani independence a mere five years later in August 1947.

Perhaps one story from the Fall of Singapore graphically illustrates the loss of British prestige across the whole of Asia. As the final defence of Singapore Island was being undertaken, an Indian Army detachment under a British Officer, prepared to make a last stand. As they held firm a group of white soldiers came running helter skelter towards them. The British Officer ordered them to "Stand Firm!" They took no notice and continued their headlong flight to the ships in the harbour. An Indian Officer asked his British commander, "Why do the Sahibs run?" Despite the answer being "Oh, they're not Sahibs, they're Australians" the message the Indians took from Singapore's fall was a clear one.

Britain and America are now at last companions in arms, and on 14th January at The Arcadia Conference in Washington, DC, Roosevelt and Churchill agreed to establish a Combined Chiefs of Staff and to make the defeat of Germany their top priority (a great diplomatic triumph for Churchill for Roosevelt was under enormous political pressure at home to concentrate on the defeat of Japan). Winning the war in Europe would come before winning the war in the Pacific. The so-called 'Europe First' strategy.

In the North Atlantic the Germans are deploying 300 U Boats to attack allied shipping, and the current annual loss runs at 7m tons. Churchill commented after the war, "The only thing that really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril".

The peril was beaten by:-

1. Bletchley Park's cryptographers
2. American production of 3 Liberty ships per day. By the end of the war 2,751 such ships had been built.
3. USAAF and RAF being able to undertake longer range bombing.

By the end of 1942, Germany's chance of starving Britain into surrender had gone.

On The Home Front back in Britain things were getting worse. On 9th February soap became rationed for the first time. On 23rd April the Baedeker Raids began with an attack on the city of Exeter, in reprisal for the RAF's attack on Lubeck. Baedeker because The Nazis used the pre war guidebook to single out Britain's historical cities. Baron Von Sturm said, "We shall go out and bomb every building in Britain marked with three stars in the Baedeker Guide". On 24th April a further attack on Exeter took place, along with attacks on Bath, Norwich, York and Canterbury. Thousands of buildings were hit including York's Guildhall and The Assembly Rooms in Bath.

But we kept, in Churchill's phrase, "buggering on". Jan Struther had written in 1939

in The Times, "This is the people's war. It is our war. We are the fighters. Fight it with all that is in us. And may God defend the right". That spirit lived on throughout 1942 and what was now seeming to be a never-ending war. We were cheered in the cinema by Noel Coward's "In Which We Serve", and we "buggered on".

However, Britain, or at least its Government, or at least its Prime Minister, was already beginning to think positively about the world after the war. William Beveridge, with whom Churchill had worked when Churchill was a Liberal Cabinet Minister prior to The First War, was commissioned to draw up a blue print for post war Britain. The famous Beveridge Report, which under the Attlee Labour Government in 1945, was to become the basis of The Welfare State - "Most people want something new after the war" The Report said, "...New Britain should be free, as free as humanly possible, of the five giant evils, of Want, of Disease, of Ignorance, of Squalor, and of Idleness". Not everyone, however, agreed. Michael Bateman quotes Lady Montgomery as being most anxious: "With regard to the post war period, Lady Montgomery thinks it will be a much more difficult time for most of us than during the war years. One problem she could see was the finding of girls willing to enter domestic service after having been employed for so long in the Services, in the munitions, etc ..." Even members of the wartime Cabinet were concerned, including The Chancellor, Sir Kingsley Wood, "Many in this country

have persuaded themselves that the cessation of hostilities will mark the opening of the Golden Age (many were persuaded last time also). However this may be, the time for declaring a dividend on the profits of the Golden Age is the time when those profits have been realized in fact, not merely in the imagination".

In North Africa, 1942 saw the great British victory at El Alamein. Historians today have come to regard the battle as the very last major battle Britain will ever fight on its own. Fortunately, it was also a great victory. The war in North Africa had flowed back and forth. But Montgomery's defeat of Rommel at El Alamein, on 30th June, was significant. In retrospective mood Churchill said after the war, "Before Alamein we never had a victory. After Alamein, we never had a defeat."

On 8th November Operation Torch began in North Africa with the arrival of The Americans. Within six months the war in the desert was won.

In Europe the island of Malta was awarded the George Cross for gallantry, having suffered over a thousand air raids in four months. On the 10th May RAF bombers hit Cologne.

But the most positive news was from Russia where the German advance had been halted before Stalingrad and the defeat inflicted on the German Forces was enormous not only in terms of men and materiel but also psychologically.

The cracks were beginning to show in Hitler's ability to face reality and German defeat increasingly looked not just a possibility but a

racine certainty.

The horrors of 1942 are almost beyond description. In The Asian War the unspeakable horrors faced by those American, British and others taken POW by the Japanese. The American soldiers who surrendered at Bataan were forced on a 65 day march to prison camp - the so-called Death March. 40,000 Americans and Filipinos died on the march and during the first two months of imprisonment.

On the 27th May 1942 the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, Reich protector of Bohemia and Moravia took place in Prague.

There was worse happening in Germany where the Nazis took the decision to implement a Final Solution towards Jews in Nazi Occupied Europe. The infamous decision was taken at The Wannsee Conference in Berlin on the 20th January 1942, which had been chaired by Heydrich. Part of the Minutes read, "Around 11 million Jews are involved in this final solution of the Jewish question.... In the course of the practical implementation of the final solution Europe will be combed from west to east." Heydrich said, "Under suitable direction, the Jews should be brought to the East in the course of the Final Solution, for use as labour. In large labour gangs, with the sexes separated, the Jews capable of work will be transported to those areas and set to road building, in the course of which, without doubt, a large part of them will fall away through natural losses. The surviving remnant, surely those with the greatest powers of resistance, will be given special

treatment since, if freed, they would constitute the germinal cell for the re-creation of Jewry."

Goebbels wrote in his diary on 14th February, "Along with Bolshevism, Jewry is also about to experience its greatest disaster.... We must speed up this process coldly and ruthlessly, and we are doing mankind, tortured by Jewry for thousands of years, an inestimable service." On the 27th March part of Goebbels diary entry read, "A fairly barbaric practice will be used... one that cannot be precisely described."

SS Officer Kurt Gerstein described a scene on 18th August 1942 at Belzec death camp: "The people were still standing like columns of stone, with no room to fall or lean. Even in death you could tell the families, all holding hands. It was difficult to separate them while emptying the room for the next batch. The bodies were tossed out, blue, wet with sweat and urine, the legs smeared with excrement and menstrual blood. Two dozen workers were busy checking mouths which they

opened with iron hooks.... Dentists knocked out gold teeth, bridges and crowns with hammers."

Genocide has become by 1942 an industrial process.

A, perhaps, the *big* question: Could The Allies have done something to stop or at least alleviate this horror?

Andrew Roberts has written, "The issue of whether the Allies ought to have bombed Auschwitz will long be with us. Although it was logistically possible by early 1944.... The decision was nonetheless taken not to bomb a camp that the Allies had known since 1942 was being used for the systematic extermination of Jews and Poles.... The fear of killing large numbers of inmates was a major consideration, of course, but a much more regularly used argument at the time was that the best way to help the Jews was to defeat the Germans as quickly as possible, for which the RAF and USAAF needed to bomb military and industrial targets."

As 1942 draws to a close no one can be sure how long this

war will go on, or how many more will be killed. In fact there is another two and a half years of war to come and countless more deaths.

A horrifying year of the war and a horrifying year in the entire history of mankind.

But even in the darkest night there is hope of a new dawn. Hope is what keeps us going, the hope that is always in the soul as Emily Dickinson movingly reminds us:

"Hope" is the thing with
feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune
without the words
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale
is heard:
And sore must be the
storm
That could abash the
little bird
That kept so many warm

I've heard it in the
chilliest land
And on the strangest sea,
Yet never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me."

Address given by Shlomo Raz

I am Shlomo Raz, the son of Moshe and the late Sefa Rosenberg. On behalf of myself and my brother Oded who is here with us, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak before you tonight.

It was almost ten years ago. The Israeli Air force was invited to participate in the 85th anniversary of the Polish Air force in Radom, Poland.

Shlomo is the son of Moshe and the late Sefa Rosenberg.

Amir Eshel, then Brigadier, and now General and Chief of the Israeli Air force, was put in charge of the mission.

Eshel, in many aspects, symbolizes the new Israeli. His father, who was born in Iraq, served as a high ranking officer in the IDF and the Israeli security services. His

mother was born in Russia and lost all her family in the Shoah.

Amir Eshel set one condition to accepting the mission: to fly over the death camp Auschwitz - Birkenau. He was told that the Polish authorities would probably not approve such a flight, but he didn't give up. The Poles in fact did not approve the flight, but Eshel stuck to his plans, "for 800 years they told

us what to do, this time we are going to do it our way".

And so, on Sept 4th 2003, three Israeli F-15 combat airplanes - the arrowhead of the Israeli Defence Force - emerged from the clouds over the death camp, and Amir Eshel said over the radio: "We, the pilots of the Israeli Air force in the sky over the horror camp. We rose up from the ashes of the millions of victims carrying out their silent cry, salute their bravery and promise to be a shield to the Jewish people and to their land- Israel".

These moving words strongly and unequivocally reflect a change in attitude to Holocaust survivors in Israel.

No more the image of "lambs to the slaughter", but

brave people whom we salute.

As you know in Israel we commemorate "Yom Hazikaron Lashoah Velagevura, a week before The Memorial day for the fallen and The Day of Independence - and not by chance.

There is a strong linkage between these two events in which the Jewish faith and the human spirit have been intertwined.

The bravery and the heroism of a child fighting hunger and the freezing cold in the ghetto or in the death camp, is no less bravery than that of a soldier fighting for the freedom and the security of his nation.

As many Israelis, during

my military service I had to go more than once to the battlefields, where I lost close friends.

But still Yom Hazikaron Lashoah Velagevura carries more significance for me than The Memorial Day for the Fallen. It is a day when I remember that I never had grandparents - like many of my generation, just because we are Jewish. It's a day to remember that my parents Moshe and Stefa '77T, like many of you, were able to rise from the ashes to build a new life, to raise children and to literally build a new state.

On behalf of the second and the third generation in our family, we are honoured to be here with you tonight.

The Stern Family trip to Meir Stern's Home Town

Debby (Stern) Luzia

Debby is the daughter of Meir and Marion Stern.

moved to Mukachevo when he was eight. Although tainted with anti-Semitic events, he had a happy childhood. Finding the meadow to which he would take the family cow to graze, entering the Hebrew gymnasium and watching my father demonstrate how he would throw paper balls from his seat at the back of the class, standing on the bridge over the river in which he would bathe in the summer - these and other highlights of this special trip will stay in my memory for ever, creating some comfort and balance to the horrific events that took place in his life from May

1944. The most dramatic part of the trip for me was walking behind my father on the rail tracks towards the brick factory, where the Jews had been assembled. The factory still stands and while we all stood on the tracks, where the ramps used to be, my father explained in detail how the Jews boarded the trains that took them directly to Auschwitz. The grandchildren couldn't get enough of his stories. They documented everything - with cameras and video - taking in every word and asking many questions. We went to the town in which he was born - Svalava - and he showed us where his home once stood. He was so excited and full of energy walking and talking, pointing here and there, images coming

In August 2012 my father Meir Stern fulfilled his dream to take his family back to the old country - to Mukachevo - the town in which he grew up before the war. My parents, my brother and I, my husband and all six grandchildren flew to Budapest from Tel-Aviv and London and after a five hour drive, and a border crossing from Hungary to Ukraine, we met in Mukachevo, a picturesque town in what used to be Czechoslovakia and has since changed nationality a few times. After hearing Holocaust stories for the duration of my 54 years, it was very interesting and important to go back to the time before the war and learn about my father's childhood. Meir Stern was born in Svalava in 1929. The family

back into his mind after so many years. We went to the Jewish cemetery in Svalava where his brother and sister are buried but couldn't find their tombstones as all the granite and marble stones were stolen. Even so, my father said Kadish and we all stood around him, deeply moved by this surrealistic experience - so far away from our world but surrounded by stones over a hundred years old with clear Hebrew

titles, proof of the Jewish community that existed there. Not only the Jewish history - but our personal history.

In the main street of Mukachevo there is a sign on the wall of a clothes shop, in Ukrainian and Hebrew, stating that from this place in 1944 the Jews were led on their last journey towards their death. I read that sign and thought proudly of my father. Not only did he not

perish but he came back with both his children and grandchildren. He returned with pride and as his family's hero. We were very lucky to have this opportunity to be there with him and hear, first hand, the story of his life before the war. None of us will ever forget it. This is our heritage and we carry it with pride and admiration for our father and grandfather - the ultimate survivor.

THE HOLOCAUST

Michael Gelb (13 years old)

Michael is the grandson of Robert and Judith Sherman.

The Holocaust –
Families split, homes destroyed,
People in camps,
Lives ruined, lives lost.

It took a daring soul to escape
It took the strength of a lion to survive.
It took a hero to win the battle.
It takes courage to share the experience.

You suffered from the Holocaust,
Because you were Jewish,
Because you stood up,
Because you were prisoners,
You deserve to be remembered by all seven billion of us.

Each person who survived should be loved,
be remembered,
be learned from, and
be listened to.

Every survivor deserves a special place in our heart.
We remember you in times of struggle and
in times of joy and
in our thoughts, in our prayers.

From Auschwitz to New York and Back in the March of the Living

Marc Jason

Marc Jason is a New York businessman and an FIDF National Board Member. Marc and his grandfather, Wolf Gutman, joined FIDF's 30th anniversary delegation to Poland and Israel, April 2012.



Wolf Gutman with Prince Philip.

fifty thousand Jews on the eve of the Holocaust. First, he lost his brother. "He got sick due to the harsh conditions we endured in the ghetto. He was taken to the hospital, but then we got word that all the children who were taken there were put to death in the gas chambers". Gutman's parents, Bina and Avraham Iytzhak, rushed to the hospital and removed their son. But then, the Jewish Police arrived at their home and said that if the child is not returned to the hospital, the entire family will be taken. "That was the last time I ever saw my brother", says Gutman, who later

An American delegation that joined the *March of the Living* in Poland included a grandson, who for the past 20 years has asked his grandfather to return to the hell from which he escaped with his life. Members of the delegation huddle around the grave of an IDF officer's grandmother and say "Amen" as he recites the mourners Kadish with a broken voice.

For the past 20 years Marc Jason (39), a NY businessman, has been begging his grandfather, Wolf Gutman, to travel with him to the hell from which he escaped with his life, but lost his entire family – Auschwitz. His grandfather adamantly refused. This past week, he did so in an IAF "Re'em" Aircraft, and joined the *March of the Living* in Poland. 86 year old Gutman confesses: "I never believed that the Israeli military would arrive here."

Gutman struggled to walk through the gates of Birkenau. He entered Auschwitz quietly and warily, staring at the ominous and infamous gate, beyond which had stood the devil – Dr Joseph Mengele, next to the train tracks that transported the Jews to the gas chambers and the crematoriums.

Eventually, Gutman agrees to share his story with the group. He lived with his family in Lodz, a part of Poland's second largest Jewish population, numbering two hundred and

lost his mother to the camp's conditions.

Later on, the family was taken to Auschwitz. "Mengele sent my father, aunt, and sister, what was left of my family, to one side, and me to the other," says Gutman, who at the time did not understand what was going on and chose to follow his family members. "Suddenly, one of the Germans struck me and said 'If you continue to follow your family you will end up over there' and pointed a the smoke rising from the chimneys."

Gutman survived the War and started a family. He has three daughters, two living in London and the third in Israel. He has seven grandchildren. "I told Marc I did not want to make this journey, but he twisted my arm, and now I am very happy for him. For me, it is painful", the grandfather says as he walks between the huts he knows so well.

Jason and Gutman arrive in Poland as part of a delegation of the Friends of the IDF (FIDF), an organisation that was founded thirty years ago by Holocaust survivors who immigrated to the United States after the war, and has been active in support of the soldiers wellbeing ever since. The delegation, which is comprised of dozens of donors., as well as IDF officers in uniform, arrived in Poland earlier this week.

Lt. Colonel (Res.) Udi Guri

of the IDF's 88th Division, is among the IDF reservists who joined the delegation. His grandmother made Aliyah from Poland in 1939, but nearly all those she left behind were murdered, or emerged as mere shadows of what they were before. "My family members wanted to erase Poland and the past and ignored it," says Guri,

who travelled to Poland as a high school student 20 years ago. At the time, his family asked him to visit the grave site of his great grandmother, who died prior to WWII, but he stood no chance at the Warsaw cemetery which contains over a quarter of a million graves.

This week, with the aid of a new computerised mapping

programme, Guri was able to locate the gravesite. More than 100 members of the delegation; survivors, fighters, officers and donors huddle around and said "Amen" as Guri, choking up, recited the mourners Kadish. They also listened as the IDF Chief Cantor sang "El Rachamim"

Choose Life

David N. Goldberg

“I call on heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have presented you with life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore, choose life, so that you will live, you and your descendants, Deuteronomy 30:19.

We, the survivors of the Survivors are living evidence that they Chose Life.

The '45 Aid Society during the 50 years since its founding has clearly played a vital role in the Jewish dictum to Choose Life. The Society, with its Journal serving as a forum to exchange news and ideas, its reunions, and a host of activities honours all of its members.

The Torah verse above seems so simple: Chose Life or Death. Chose Blessing or Curse. It's "black or white". Life was chosen but always lived in the shadow of so much death and loss. Sadly, all Jewish history and affairs are punctuated with the reminders and remnants of tragedy. Just as during the most wonderful simcha, a wedding ceremony under the chupah, we must break the glass to be reminded of the Temple's destruction, so this

occasion marking 50 years since the formation of '45 Aid Society must be bittersweet for all as any survey of the members will both laud the collective accomplishments of the Society and its individual members and mourn those who have passed away (including the few who did not choose life as they could not overcome the horror and death).

Their Society members' families were destroyed but they created families. Their mates made courageous choices considering the "emotional baggage" (speaking in today's terms) a stateless "refugee" brought to the union, let alone the lack of resources such as a formal education, substantial savings, or family support. They chose Life and did not dwell on the Death. They built lives and established themselves as giving parents and members of their communities. We, the survivors of the Survivors were not nursed on Vengeance. Our childhoods were lovingly shielded from the hatred and bitterness that tore our parents away from the loving arms of their families. But they chose to

remain silent about the horror and pain and raised us to Choose Life instead. This is the Jewish way.

Choosing life is never so absolute. Choosing Life does not mean the denial or disappearance of Death. Choosing Life must mean shining light on the Truth. The Truth must counter the ever present Holocaust Denial, Anti-Semitism, and Anti-Zionism. Today, the internet has given new meaning to Mark Twain's quip, "A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes." This truth in conjunction with Goebbel's evil maxim, "If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it..." underscores how the essence of the Society's work- to Remember to - keep the truth alive -is as important as ever.

Choosing life applies when exercising self-defence. Jewish laws and teachings deal with this so that we do not revel in the taking of another life. This was profoundly demonstrated by Golda Meir in a statement made in London in 1969,"

"When peace comes we will perhaps in time be able to forgive the Arabs for killing our sons, but it will be harder for us to forgive them for having forced us to kill their sons." This statement is so quintessentially Jewish - especially when put into full relief against a statement made in 2012 on the Hamas AL-Aqsa TV network, "From

the Al-Qassam Brigades to the Zionist soldiers: The Al-Qassam Brigades love death more than you love life". In this instance these terrorist thugs show that they, too, understand the nature of the Jewish spirit. They are correct. We do love life. We Choose Life.

Our responsibility as survivors of the Survivors to

the 2nd, 3rd and all generations is to honour them by Choosing Life; by never forgetting; by supporting the Jewish State of Israel; and by furthering Jewish continuity. We, the survivors of the Survivors must insure that our survivors carry on these legacies and serve as evidence of the truth: Am Yisrael Chai.

Arnold Fulton

Ashley Fulton

Ashley is the son of Arnold.

This short piece describes Arnold Fulton's early years but focuses mainly on his post war life.

Arnold Fulton was born in 1931 in Czestochova in Poland. He lived with his parents, his maternal grandmother who joined the family in 1941, and sister Sonja, who was six years older.

Even as a child, he considered himself a bit of an inventor, making devices such as a model crane and a photograph developing kit, putting his arms through sleeves cut from Sonja's best coat to prevent light getting into the miniature darkroom.

The Nazis invaded Poland in September 1939 and his parents agonised whether to flee to Western Europe or even America and leave their comfortable life behind - or whether to try to brave it out in Poland. They chose the latter, with terrible consequences.

Arnold, together with his sister, was taken by someone, who would now be called a Righteous Among the Nations, to Warsaw where their parents thought they would be safer and their parents planned to follow

soon after. Their parents never made that journey and Arnold found himself orphaned when he was eleven years old. As he said recently, "I cried every day for six months".

He spent the war years in hiding, helped by his sister and her new husband, Jacob Igra. Arnold and his sister were separated by the chaotic events in Warsaw at that time and he spent the last part of the war in a Catholic monastery under the protection of a local priest.

Remarkably, he was reunited with his sister after the war. She went to Sweden whereas Arnold was taken in 1946 on one of Rabbi Dr Solomon Schönfeld's groups and settled here in London.

He completed his schooling in London and went on to qualify as a mechanical engineer. He developed a number of what he called "special purpose" machines and, in due course, ideas from some of these inventions proved to be very useful in

umbrella manufacture.

Why umbrellas? His brother-in-law's family had been umbrella manufacturers in pre-war Poland and his brother-in-law and sister had started an umbrella business in Stockholm. They were able to provide him with some basic training and he started A. Fulton Company Limited in 1955.

In 1958, he met his future wife, Colette Lodner. She was a beautiful young lady from Belgium and had come to London to further her education. She and Arnold were married in 1959 and they had three sons, Ashley, Craig and Nigel. Arnold has said that those early family years were the happiest of his life.

Arnold's first premises were very modest; a three storey building in the Commercial Road in the East End of London. Initially, he had just one employee and production was 200 umbrellas per week. Arnold was innovative from the outset, trying different colours and experimenting with frames using different numbers of ribs from the standard eight. His first major customer was

Selfridges. Within two years he had taken a lease on the adjacent property, doubling the size of his premises.

By the mid-1960s, A. Fulton Company Limited were producing 1,500 umbrellas per week and were the sixth largest manufacturer in the UK. The company moved to considerably larger premises in Butcher Row, just a little way along the Commercial Road. At around this time, Arnold was applying his engineering ideas to mechanising some of the processes of umbrella manufacture.

The umbrella industry was still labour-intensive and to improve production he designed and built his own equipment. He sold one of his machines to other umbrella manufacturers in the world, including Gewurtz in Israel.

He also found he had considerable flair as a designer, coming up with the "Birdcage" umbrella, a deeply domed umbrella with eight transparent PVC panels, or gores as they are correctly termed. The Birdcage seemed to chime with the fashions of the 1960s, with the John Lewis group taking up all of the Birdcage production. Both the Queen and the Queen Mother were keen users of this umbrella since it enabled them to be seen by crowds clearly, even in inclement weather. In due course, some twenty years later, largely due to the

Birdcage, the Royal Warrant was awarded to A. Fulton Company Limited.

Further innovations were just around the corner; at that time, almost all umbrellas were long, walking-length umbrellas and the small number of folding umbrellas, or telescopic umbrellas as they were then called, were very expensive. Telescopic frames were imported from Germany, expensive and protected by dozens of patents. Arnold, in partnership with a Spanish engineering company, developed their own folding umbrellas which did not infringe existing patents, and were even superior and less expensive. Once again, John Lewis took the lion's share of production and sales rocketed.

Arnold's factory in the East End could not keep up with demand. By the 1970s, umbrellas were being imported from the Far East, mainly Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan, in large numbers. Generally, these umbrellas were cheap and of low quality but Arnold felt that the design and quality of umbrellas imported from Taiwan in particular would improve and that Taiwan would be competing seriously at the higher end of the market. Furthermore, since production in London was at full capacity, Arnold was keen to have umbrellas manufactured elsewhere and Taiwan offered the best

opportunity. After a year of careful research, Arnold began importing umbrellas from Taiwan - the first British umbrella manufacturer to do so and, within a further year, many other British umbrella manufacturers were looking east. Besides the lower cost, the quality of the umbrellas was to Arnold's specification because they were made by workers trained by him and using some of his equipment and methods.

By the mid-1980s A. Fulton Company was ready for another move and Arnold acquired a site in the Isle of Dogs, in the area that would soon become Canary Wharf. Although the building period was fraught with problems, the final result was very impressive and Arnold was proud to name the building Fulton House. A few years ago, Arnold sold this property to Canary Wharf Group plc and the company relocated to new premises in Park Royal.

In recent years, Arnold has taken a step back from the umbrella business, leaving it in the care of his youngest son, Nigel. His other sons, Ashley and Craig, both run their own property companies, investing in commercial and residential properties. Arnold is involved with the Schenkar College of Engineering & Design in Israel, the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra, and a number of other good causes.

A taxi journey to remember

Alan Greenberg

Alan is the son of Tina and Victor

Last summer our family took a holiday in Crete.

We decided to visit the Aquarium which was a 40 minute taxi ride from the hotel.

Sat in the front of the taxi I started to chat to the taxi driver and before long we were talking about the financial troubles that Greece was struggling with.

He explained that taxi drivers had just been on strike as the government had recently removed requirements to train and then purchase licenses, to enable more Greeks to earn a living as taxi drivers.

I asked him why he thought that the country had reached this state and he said that the answer was simple.

It was the Jews...

He claimed that everyone was aware of it and that it was in the newspapers and that politicians were openly discussing it.

According to him, the Jewish bankers had arranged the financing for Greece in the knowledge that they could not repay, with the intention of stripping Greece of its assets in due course.

At this point I thought it appropriate to tell him that I was Jewish to which he replied that it wasn't me it was the other Jews!

Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident and I had a very similar conversation with a much younger taxi driver a couple of days later, although interestingly he blamed the Jews and the Germans, claiming that they should all be rounded up together to account for this.

On returning to England I contacted John Benjamin at the Board of Deputies who

responded immediately in concern regarding these preposterous comments.

He put me in touch with one of his colleagues who was due to meet with an equivalent senior figure from the Greek Jewish community.

He was aware of the growing anti-Semitism in Greece and of course the well-documented recent rise of the Golden Dawn party which currently has 18 of the 300 seats in parliament.

Interestingly, there are only 5000 Jews in Greece out of a population of 11.5 million.

With the troubled state of European economies and the nature of drastic steps of cash taxes that we are seeing in Cyprus; for example, the rise of the traditional Jewish scapegoatism is in need of monitoring and action more than ever.

Kalia Pissarro-Stern on Roots Trip

As a little girl, some of the memories I cherish the most are the ones where my grandpa – Saba Meir would sit with us telling stories. My family, being part French, part Israeli are, as I'm sure you can imagine, rather vocal and lively... To get us to sit silently and listen for hours is not the most simple of tasks...

Therefore it is not for granted that when Saba Meir would start to tell a story, the group, no matter how busy or hungry or preoccupied, would always gradually stop whatever they were doing to

sit silently and pay attention.

My grandpa is one of the most light-hearted, gentle and funny men I know, his ability to make any story into an exciting, magical tale of adventure is one of his most endearing characteristics.

Saba Meir is a storyteller.

So it is without any surprise that when he suggested the idea of bringing all the family together for a trip to visit his birthplace in Ukraine, that we all felt deeply intrigued. As a family we sometimes spend the "Chagim" together but we never took a vacation

as a group in this way and it looked to be something really special.

Having heard so many of his magical tales of survival, it was indeed a great honour for us all to finally have a chance to put real scenery into our imaginations.

So following a serious day of travelling from Tel Aviv to Hungary followed by an epic 7-hour drive to Munkacs, Ukraine to meet the rest of our family, we felt tired but motivated. Each of the 5 days that followed held its own different adventure, filled with stories, lots of driving

and courageous meal times, to say the least... Each location we stopped at was more beautiful than the last and the more we immersed ourselves in this story, the more we began to feel part of something wider than us. Thinking about this experience in such a way made us all feel silently grateful for the chance to be part of this blessing, being together after so many years of struggle, standing firm as a family, looking back into the disjointed roots of our past.

The odds that we would eventually be able to come and visit these places must have surely seemed, at times, unlikely to Saba Meir, so for

us to be there all together, standing where his childhood unfolded was deeply moving for everyone...

Having the backdrop of the actual settings there around us to illustrate his stories placed us directly in front of a window into history. Giving us a rare opportunity to gain, if only a tiny insight, into passed moments, and standing there gently fanning the flames of their life with all my family around me filled me with a great sense of hope and gratitude. There is so much I could say about the places themselves, the things that went on there, the fact that life, in its typical way tends to go on as normal and continue its mad

ironic journey, I could talk about the people we met, the stories we heard and the way it made us all feel... but sitting here months later, what has stayed with me is an impression of the significance this trip will have on all of our lives, the way it not only brought us closer together but closer to our roots and therefore to home...

Having the good fortune to have grandparents who can share their stories, it feels that the very least I can do to honour and carry on our piece of history, will be to provide my own children in turn with a solid understanding of where they come from, and why we are all so lucky to be here at all...

ALKHAM INVESTMENTS

WITH
COMPLIMENTS

“In memory of a wonderful son”

A SAFER TORAH was inaugurated in a most moving ceremony last Sunday night in memory of Reb Chaim Rudzinski, z”I by his wife Mrs Rudzinski and family, on the occasion of his first yohrtzeit.

Nothing could be more appropriate that donating a Sefer Torah *Le’ilui Nishmas* a man who spent every spare moment learning Torah. Reb Chaim not only learned Torah - he lived Torah. Every Mitzvah, every halocho was performed to perfection up to his last day. In his weakened state he still begged his children to learn with him.

The Hachnosas Sefer Torah left from the Ashtead Road home of Family Rudzinski. Reb Yisroel Rudzinski, the father of Reb Chaim z”I, wrote the last letter of the Torah.

The dancing in the street was one akin to the dancing of Simchas Torah in shul. Young and old were touched by the warm atmosphere, Reb Chaim was a man with utmost passion, and that was exactly what could be felt throughout. The dancing at the Bobov Shul, Clapton

Common, where the Sefer Torah was taken, lasted for over an hour. One could feel the very walls of the Beis Hamedrash dancing together with the massive crowd. Reb Chaim’s son Reb Moishe Yehude Rudzinski from Eretz Yisroel explained as follows: when a Beis Hamikdosh is missing a vessel, for example, the Menorah or Shulchan, it is not a Beis Hamikdosh. So too a shul which lost a special respected member; can it be considered a shul? With the arrival of the new Sefer Torah the missing vessel in the shul had been restored.

After the dancing in the shul, a Seudas Mitzvah was held at the Yismach Lev Hall. Reb Chaim’s sons, Reb Moishe Yehude (Eretz Yisroel), Reb Meilech Yosef (Manchester), and Reb Yitzchok Eisik, as well as his oldest son-in-law, Reb Levi Yitzchok Miller, recited Divrei Torah and Divrei Brocho.

May the zechus of this wonderful Mitzvah be a blessing and comfort to Reb Chaim’s devoted parents, Reb Yisroel and Mrs T. Rudzinski, to his wife and children.



A poignant moment on Sunday night as Reb Yisroel Rudzinski holds the new Sefer Torah in memory of his son Reb Chaim Yechezkelzi. The procession proceeded to the Bobover Beis Hamedrash in Clapton Common.

REUNION 2012

