

Centre News

September 2013

Jewish Holocaust Centre

Raoul Wallenberg
becomes Australia's
first honorary citizen



The magazine of the Jewish Holocaust Centre, Melbourne, Australia

Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. VBH 7236

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The Jewish Holocaust Centre is dedicated to the memory of the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators between 1933 and 1945.

We consider the finest memorial to all victims of racist policies to be an educational program which aims to combat antisemitism, racism and prejudice in the community and fosters understanding between people.

Centre News

CONTENTS

From the President	3
Editor's letter	3
Director's cut	4
Education	5
Honorary Australian citizenship for Raoul Wallenberg	6
Frank Vajda and Raoul Wallenberg	7
Postcard from Sarajevo	8
Mazal tov to Kitia Altman OAM and Abram Goldberg OAM	10
Reflections on the Anne Frank exhibition	11
The ghettos 1943: the beginning of the end	12
Remembering the uprising	14
Witnessing the Warsaw Ghetto uprising	15
A Dutch story of survival	16
A short history of my life	17
Musings on modern Poland based on conversations with Ola Bramson	18
Lost and found at the Salvos	19
What happened to the Jewish communities of North Africa during the Second World War?	20
From Melbourne to Magdeburg	21
My March of the Living journey	22
Reflections on the Student March of the Living	23
Breaking down walls by building them: victims, perpetrators, and the work of Rwandan Stories	24
Book review: <i>Lion Hearts</i>	25
JHC Social Club	26
Friends of the Jewish Holocaust Centre	27
Seen around the Centre	28
Stories from the Collection	30
New acquisitions	31
Meet the team: a week in the life of the Jewish Holocaust Centre Library	32
Introducing new Jewish Holocaust Centre staff	33
Honouring Jewish Holocaust Centre volunteers	34
Jakob Frenkiel: leaving a generous legacy for future generations	35
Community news	36

On the cover:

Raoul Wallenberg.

Photo: Thomas Veres, the photographer for Raoul Wallenberg who documented the Holocaust in Budapest.

Inset: Peter Farkas and Frank Vajda with Wallenberg's Honorary Australian Citizenship certificate

This publication has been designed and produced by Izigraphics Pty Ltd www.izigraphics.com.au

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Mon-Thu: 10am-4pm

Fri: 10am-2pm

Sun & Public Hols: 12pm-4pm

Closed on Saturdays,
Jewish Holy Days and
some Public Holidays



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Pauline
Rockman OAM

On a crisp sunny autumn day in May, together with our Executive Director Warren Fineberg, I attended a ceremony at Government House Canberra to confer Honorary Australian Citizenship on Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg. Wallenberg saved thousands of Hungarian Jews in Budapest during the Second World War by providing them with 'protective passports', and he is the first person on whom the honour of Honorary Australian Citizenship has been bestowed.

I felt so proud to be an Australian citizen and could not help thinking how my late parents would have felt. Formerly from Europe, they were so grateful for, and so valued, their Australian citizenship. The gracious words of the Governor-General and our then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard would have made them equally proud.

The following week the Swedish Ambassador, His Excellency Sven-Olof Petersson visited the Centre for the first time. As a young child, his mother had welcomed former concentration camp prisoners to their village at the end of

the war, and Ambassador Petersson recalled with emotion the stories she had told him.

The Red Cross rescued about a thousand Jewish women from Ravensbruck camp towards the end of the war and brought them to Sweden to recuperate. Sweden's record, like that of most countries at the time, is 'mixed' according to Dr Robert Rozett of Yad Vashem. Although in the 1930s the Swedes had implemented a pro-Germany policy, in the 1940s they saved thousands of Jews from extermination.

In January 2000, Sweden hosted an international gathering to promote awareness of the Holocaust that was attended by heads of state from numerous countries. It resulted in the creation of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, which has played an integral role in Holocaust education around the world. Australia has not yet completed the requirements for membership, but it is our hope that we will eventually join.

The Centre farewelled the outgoing Polish Ambassador and welcomed in his place His Excellency Pawel Milewski. We look forward to continued collaboration in future.

We also farewelled the Israeli Ambassador, His Excellency Yuval Rotem, who will be greatly missed. Among the many events he attended were the memorial service on Yom Hashoah, and the function to honour Polish Righteous Among the Nations

Irena Sendler, and he made a significant contribution to Jewish-Polish relations. On a more personal note, he also played a poignant role in the memorial service for his late cousin Abe Frenkiel, a Centre guide who was part of the family he discovered in Australia.

In July we welcomed Senators Fifield and Ryan, together with David Southwick MLA and Kevin Ekendahl, and councillors from the City of Port Phillip.

To Kitia Altman and Abe Goldberg, a well deserved *mazal tov* on receiving Medals of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the 2013 Queen's Birthday honours. Kitia and Abe have contributed significantly to the establishment and development of the Jewish Holocaust Centre, a commitment that continues today.

I hope that like me you look forward to reading our fantastic *Centre News*. Every edition is so full of wonderful articles and reports! I must commend our editor Ruth Mushin and her team on their great work, and I am thrilled that the Yiddish section, written by Moshe Ajzenbud, is still a feature.

I leave the last words to Robert Todesco, a recent work experience student at the Centre: 'I have seen the consequences and the great hurt that racism can have on the world and I am determined not to let this happen again. I leave the Jewish Holocaust Centre with valuable experience... it has opened my eyes to a better future.'

L'shana tova

EDITOR'S LETTER



Ruth Mushin

In 1943, the Nazis stepped up their 'Final Solution' and liquidated the majority of European ghettos. In this edition of *Centre News*, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of what Dr Bill Anderson calls 'the beginning of the end', we bring you his thoughtful analysis of that time. Dr Anderson is an academic, and consultant and educator at the Jewish

Holocaust Centre. For me, his article has even more impact when you read the personal accounts of those who were there. So, we bring you the riveting first-person accounts of Berysz Aurbach, who took part in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and Kitia Altman, who was in the Bedzin Ghetto when news arrived of the events in Warsaw and inspired the inhabitants of Bedzin to take a stand.

We celebrate the conferring of Honorary Australian Citizenship on Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Hungarian Jews. He is a fitting person to be the first to receive this honour from the Australian Government. And again, how fortunate we are to have the moving story of Melbourne

child survivor, Frank Vajda, who was saved by Wallenberg, to complement the eloquent words of the Governor-General, Her Excellency Quentin Bryce.

Our third and exclusive feature is 'Postcard from Sarajevo', the reflections of social anthropologist, writer, and survivor of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hariz Halilovich. Hariz's words are particularly poignant as they were written during his recent journey through Europe. Writing of the places he visited, Hariz says: 'They represent a continuum both in my personal history and in the history of many of those whose last presence can be seen in the black-and-white photos displayed at the Jewish Holocaust Centre and similar places commemorating the Holocaust.'

I hope you enjoy this edition.



Warren Fineberg

In May this year we celebrated Volunteer Month, which coincided with the Jewish Holocaust Centre's Annual General Meeting. This provided a great opportunity to combine both events on the same evening. We began the evening with volunteers congregating in the Smorgon Auditorium, where a table on the stage was laden with beautiful commemorative plaques and honour certificates. Board Members were thanked and handed a certificate for their 'often behind the scenes voluntary contribution', steering the Centre's strategic operations and ensuring we meet our goals. Survivor guides were honoured with commemorative plaques for their tireless work over the years, leading school groups and members of the public through the museum. An important addition to our list of thanks were those

volunteers who supported the Anne Frank exhibition, an enterprise we could not have hosted without their generous support.

Recent visitors to the Centre will have noticed changes to the rear of the Smorgon Auditorium. In our quest to establish a children's program, we have removed the display walls and made other changes so that the space can be used for a children's program and for special exhibitions and displays. This space will revert to part of the full auditorium as required.

In the first half of the year we welcomed new staff to the Centre. An additional position of Testimony Assistant Coordinator (Testimonies Project) and Audio-Visual Producer has been filled by Robbie Simons. Robbie will work with Phillip Maisel in the Testimonies Project and with the Education and Development teams to provide video production support.

Our Director of Education Zvi Civins plans to retire at the end of this year. Zvi has made an outstanding contribution to Holocaust education and scholarship at the Centre. His publications on the Holocaust include educational materials, booklets, video, web-based

material and DVDs. He is currently developing the iTextbook project – a cutting-edge resource for students and teachers, which will be available through the Apple iBookstores internationally. We wish Zvi the very best on his retirement 'adventure'.

There has been much talk at the Centre on planning for the future. Any visitor will know that we have far outgrown the space we have for hosting our exhibits and activities. Our plans are taking into account realistic assessments of growth over the next 20 years, and budgetary considerations. The work of the Centre in Holocaust education, combating antisemitism, racism and prejudice, and fostering understanding between people is an essential component of every student's education, and our programs and resources are well placed to support school teachers and students in this endeavour. With general public visits now having more than doubled over the last three years, there is a clear need to provide good access to our rich display of resources to make a visit to the Centre even more worthwhile. Development plans will be announced in 2014, coinciding with the 30-year anniversary of the Jewish Holocaust Centre.

The JHC StoryPod app is now available

One of the highlights of a visit to the Jewish Holocaust Centre is the opportunity to meet survivors, so by including material related to ten survivor guides on our JHC StoryPod app, their stories are now accessible to a wider audience.



You can download the free JHC app for your iPhone or iPad from the Apple App Store. Just search under 'JHC' and download the app.



Zvi Civins

This will be my last column for *Centre News* as I shall be leaving my position at the end of 2013. I do so only because I believe that an organisation needs to refresh and renew itself, and after six years as Director of Education it is time for the Jewish Holocaust Centre to renew itself, and for me to refresh myself as well. I leave with great pride in our educational achievements. I also leave with great confidence that the Centre will continue to grow and develop in exciting ways.

Our education program has ensured that thousands of students, and their teachers, have an engaging visit with our survivors and guides and the museum itself. Holocaust information is easy to access from one's phone, iPad or computer. Information, however, is not the same as understanding. Even though the Holocaust transcends our ability to really 'understand' it, for only those who experienced it can do this, we need to help our students go beyond merely acquiring information. Information alone about the Holocaust will not make a lasting impression on the students. For them to 'leave different', in the words of my colleague Jayne Josem, we need to challenge them, stimulate their thinking and help them delve deeper behind the facts, statistics and dates.

In the coming years Holocaust education may become more and more challenging to teachers and those in our museum. The more we expect students to know, the more they are expected to learn.

There is great competition in school curricula and programs. What subject is most important? How much time can we devote to this or that topic? Can we afford the necessary texts, videos or excursions? These questions and the decisions made will affect the depth and quality of the teaching and learning.

The Holocaust has been the 20th century's, if not history's greatest horror, but there have been other tragedies, and undoubtedly there will be more. Will the Holocaust be seen as an essential aspect of a student's education? Will it be one brief topic among many, or will it not be taught at all? Despite the Australian National Curriculum, it is still uncertain what the future holds. I have great faith in teachers and their profession, but we have to be realistic in foreseeing the challenges ahead.

This is why our museum is so important. When teachers lack resources for teaching the Holocaust, we are their first stop. When teachers need more information, we are their first stop. Students want to know, 'What was it really like?' They say, 'My textbook is just words on a page. How can we come closer to understanding what the Holocaust was?' For them, the Jewish Holocaust Centre is the answer.

Meeting our survivors was, is, and always will be the most important part of students' visits. I know that listening to survivors, meeting them face to face, shaking their hands or hugging them makes a difference in the lives of the students even more than our museum displays do. Students do, in fact, 'leave different'. How different are they? In what ways? You may have seen many examples of their comments which they write on our message board before they leave. Their comments, both written and verbal, have shown me much.

The students realise that their lives must not be taken for granted. They leave here realising how precious

their families are. They leave here understanding the danger of racism, and the importance of recognising that despite our differences in culture, language, religion or colour, we are human beings with similar needs and aspirations. They see examples of the most resilient and inspirational people, our survivors. They learn from them that the pursuit of vengeance would just lead to hatred, and that hatred is a deadly disease. Instead of destroying one's life with hatred, one can, and should, embrace life fully. If our survivors can do this, then surely anyone can.

Students also learn how important it is to stand up for someone in need, and how an act of courage, such as those of the Righteous Among the Nations, can mean the world to the person in need. They understand that complacency in the face of prejudice or injustice has to be replaced with action. They hear from our survivors what being 'the other' meant for them, and understand that rather than seeing someone as 'other' it is better to see them as 'another', another person like themselves. Many of our survivors are here today due to the courage of someone else who saw them in this light, and our students are encouraged to do the same when necessary in their lives. These are life-changing, life-affirming insights. They are achieved by the personal interactions that our museum offers.

This generation of students will be the last to have the honour to meet Holocaust survivors. They have a duty to pass on their knowledge, their insights and their understanding. They have the choice to live their lives in the light of knowing what happened in the Holocaust. As we always say, knowing what happened to our survivors will not change the past, but it certainly can help the young ensure that their future is a bright one.

This is what our museum does, and may it go from strength to strength.



Honorary Australian citizenship for Raoul Wallenberg

Her Excellency Quentin Bryce AC CVO



Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved up to 100,000 Hungarian Jews from deportation and death at the hands of the Nazis during the Second World War, was recognised as the first honorary Australian citizen at a ceremony at Government House Canberra on 6 May 2013. The award was conferred by Governor-General Quentin Bryce, at a ceremony attended by the then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Opposition Leader, Tony Abbott, members of parliament and representatives of community organisations. Also present were Professor Frank Vajda, who was saved by Raoul Wallenberg's actions as a nine-year-old boy, and George Farkas, the son of resistance fighter John Farkas, the last known person to see Wallenberg alive. The citizenship certificate has been displayed at the Jewish Holocaust Centre, Melbourne and the Sydney Jewish Museum. This is the transcript of the Governor-General's address:

Nobel Laureate, writer and Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel has said:

The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference.

With these words, Professor Wiesel has reminded the world of its tragic failure to prevent one of the darkest periods in human history, the Holocaust. This was a time when the Nazi war machine, not geared to victory on the battlefield but to the systematic annihilation of their fellow man, destroyed the innocent lives of countless millions of Jewish, Romani, disabled and homosexual people. But within this dark abyss of sadness and despair, there were flickers of light. Acts of bravery and humanity by those who were not indifferent. Acts of righteous and courageous people. No actions shone brighter or reflected better on the qualities of humanity than those of Raoul Wallenberg, a man whose courage in the face of adversity must be remembered for all time.

Born in Sweden in 1912, Wallenberg was an architect, businessman and diplomat who served as Sweden's special envoy in Budapest, Hungary from July 1944. Confronted with the reality of Hitler's Final Solution, he set about trying to save as many Jews as possible. Repeatedly putting his own life at risk, he succeeded in issuing 'protective passports' and providing shelter for up to 100,000 people whose lives would otherwise have been lost. He rented buildings

which he would label 'The Swedish Library' or the 'Swedish Research Institute' seeking to extend to them the protection of diplomatic immunity when these buildings were really just providing a safe haven for those he had rescued. He would confront the Hungarian fascists, the Arrow Cross, as they were transporting men and women to the gas chambers, desperately handing out Swedish passports to all those he could find. And his intervention would help thwart Adolf Eichmann's plan to liquidate Hungary's General Ghetto, which would itself have killed almost 70,000 Jews just as the Nazi occupation of Budapest was coming to an end. These were the actions of one selfless man who was to be tragically taken by the Red Army after they entered Budapest on 17 January, 1945. He was never to be seen again.

But since that time, much has been done around the world to ensure Wallenberg's memory is not forgotten. At Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial he is honoured as 'Righteous Among the Nations' and the United States, Canada, Hungary and Israel have each made him an honorary citizen. In Australia Wallenberg has already been honoured by parks and monuments created in his name. I am proud that today our nation goes one step further in making Raoul Wallenberg our first ever honorary citizen. I cannot think of a more appropriate and significant figure to welcome to our Australian family. Wallenberg's life is an example to us all. His brave, selfless and compassionate actions are proof that just one person can make a real

difference. Today may not have occurred but for the efforts of people who understand how important it is to perpetuate Raoul Wallenberg's memory. None more so than Dr Frank Vajda, who with his mother Maria were rescued by Wallenberg. You have done so much to honour his name. To you we say thank you.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today is a special day. A special day for the Swedish community who see us honour one of their own. A special day for survivors of the Holocaust and their families, some of whom are with us today. We say to you that Australia proudly welcomes its newest citizen, and we assure you that the proposition 'Never Again' beats firmly in our hearts and minds. It is said in the Old Testament, that one who saves a life is considered to have saved an entire world. Today we honour the heroic deeds of one man

who refused to be indifferent in the face of inhumanity and hatred. He ultimately would give his life so that others could have theirs. For this, and for all that Raoul Wallenberg symbolises, we should all be eternally grateful.



Photo courtesy Government House Canberra

Her Excellency Quentin Bryce AC CVO

Frank Vajda and Raoul Wallenberg

Frank Vajda was nine years old when he and his mother were saved by Raoul Wallenberg. He told his story to Fay Helfenbaum.

While Raoul Wallenberg's honorary Australian citizenship was recently celebrated as a fitting honour for an exemplary individual, it was particularly personal for Frank Vajda, who had been saved by Wallenberg as a child. 'I hold Raoul Wallenberg in the highest regard,' Professor Vajda says. 'Equal to my parents.'

Frank Vajda was born in Budapest in 1935. He grew up in a middle class Jewish family in a country that was already experiencing antisemitism. For the first two years of his schooling he attended a Jewish school; his family worried that he would be beaten in a general school. Even before the Nazi occupation, Hungary's Jews were called up for labour service, in reality little more than slave labour, and many of Vajda's family members were lost. On return from such a detail, his father was stopped and sent on a train to Auschwitz, where he was murdered. Frank and his mother only learned of his fate four years later.



Photo courtesy Government House Canberra

Dignitaries at the ceremony conferring Honorary Australian Citizenship on Raoul Wallenberg

In 1944 Nazi Germany occupied Hungary. Raoul Wallenberg arrived in Budapest later that year, recruited by Theodore Roosevelt's War Refugee Board to aid civilian victims of Nazism. He operated under the banner of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and used his diplomatic position to lobby those in power and issue protective passports to Jews. His actions saved tens of thousands of people.

From almost the moment of occupation, the Nazis implemented the Final Solution in Hungary. Jewish residences and shops were looted. The Vajdas' flat was expropriated by the concierge, after which Frank and his mother moved into a midwifery hospital under the protection of Sweden. Wallenberg had bought a number of buildings in Budapest and declared them to be Swedish territory and therefore under diplomatic immunity. The hospital contained around 300 people, including the staff, their genuinely sick relatives and a variety of people who needed protection.

Just after Frank Vajda's ninth birthday the Arrow Cross Party (Hungarian Nazis) took over Budapest. The next day a group of heavily armed soldiers broke into the hospital. Frank Vajda, his mother and the other Jews sheltering in the hospital were not wearing the yellow star of David

they were forced to wear by law; the penalty for not doing so was death. As they frantically attempted to reattach their stars, Frank's mother explained that they had taken them off as they had been denounced by a laundry worker. The soldiers were not interested in excuses and the women were ordered to leave. Although Frank was ordered to stay behind, he would not leave his mother. He and the women were marched to the local barracks where the soldiers argued over whether they should be shot on the spot or taken to the Danube. Frank was glad that he had not deserted his mother, but was filled with utter hopelessness.

It was then that Wallenberg arrived and huddled with their captors. 'Whether he bribed, persuaded or bullied them, the atmosphere changed and we were taken back to the protected house. We couldn't believe it because people taken by armed Nazis never came back,' Frank Vajda recalls. 'He was the only man to come into these dens of murder and save people.'

Afraid that the Arrow Cross would return, on hearing an ambulance siren the Vajdas jumped from their first floor window and fled the house, walking straight past the same sentries who had seen them marched into the barracks. They escaped with false papers into the Aryan quarter, just days before Arrow Cross returned.

Frank Vajda came close to Raoul Wallenberg again while he and his mother were staying in another hospital. When the Arrow Cross broke in, the owner of the hospital negotiated with them to make a selection rather than take everyone. Rather than risk their lives again, Frank and his mother hid in a freezing cupboard. When they emerged several hours later, 35 people had been taken, including some of their relatives. When a cousin implored the hospital director to help, he was referred to Wallenberg, whom he described to be of medium build, and looking 'very tired and very kind'. When Frank's cousin asked Wallenberg for assistance, he replied that he too was being hunted and was moving houses every night, so that he was no longer able to help. Wallenberg explained that this incident was routine and that those taken would already be dead. He apologised profusely but was powerless.



In January 1945 Raoul Wallenberg was detained by Soviet authorities under suspicion of espionage and was not seen again. It is believed he died in custody later that year. He has been honoured in countries all over the world for his brave humanitarian efforts.

Professor Vajda, along with others, continues to work to uncover the truth of his death. When speaking about Wallenberg's recent honorary Australian citizenship, Vajda pauses. 'People ask me if I am happy,' he says. 'How can I be happy if I haven't been able to liberate and find him? How can I be happy if I don't know the truth? But I am very happy that the Australian Government saw fit to honour the greatest humanitarian of the 20th century.'

A postcard from Sarajevo

Hariz Halilovich



Hariz Halilovich at the memorial for the victims of the Sarajevo siege

Over the last twelve months I've been a frequent visitor to the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) in Melbourne in my formal roles of guest presenter and teacher, yet these visits have been, first and foremost, very personal learning events: they have provided me with new insights and new opportunities to learn about and engage with the very topic I research and teach. In discussions with my Monash University students and colleagues I was not surprised to hear that their visits to the JHC have made them reflect not only on the history of the Holocaust, but also on the more fundamental ideas and values about human nature. This reflexive essay is inspired by the visits and the stories I learned from and shared with different audiences at the JHC.

In reflecting on some of the most memorable events and story-sharing at the JHC, I am embarking on a mental journey, which, at the time of writing, coincides with my physical journey through Europe. Hence, I would like this paper to be read as a personal postcard to my friends and colleagues at the JHC and to all those who, in one way or another, are associated with this important place of remembrance and learning.

While having jotted down a few points about this article back in Melbourne, I have continued adding words into the text far away from my Australian home: in Vienna, Linz, Graz, Zagreb, Belgrade and here in Sarajevo, where I try to feel at home after having left the place more than 20 years ago. It is not only my physical and cognitive presence in these different places that make them connected; they represent a continuum both in my personal history and in the history of many of those whose last presence can be seen in the black-and-white photos displayed at the JHC and similar places commemorating the Holocaust. I had them, the faces from those photos, travelling with me when recently visiting the Mauthausen concentration camp, and walking through the 'disinfection' rooms, gas chambers, crematorium and sleeping barracks still soaked with pain and screaming silence left behind. I continue this mental journey in Sarajevo, in conversations with my friend Faruk Sehi, a Bosnian writer, who a few days ago returned from a study tour to Buchenwald. We talk about Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Dachau, Theresienstadt, Auschwitz... Like me, Faruk has been drawn to these places and not afraid or shy to connect intellectually as well as emotionally with what took place there, which has been part of our common European history – a part of history many would like to forget, or, even worse, ignore. Behind the interest in these

places of pain (*Places of Pain* is also the title of my recently published book) is our desire to comprehend and process the facts that just a generation ago people in Europe, people like us, were killed on an industrial scale only because of who they were. Faruk and I conclude that the more we learn and try to understand, the more there is to be discovered, talked and written about.

We are also aware that what might have awoken our dormant interests in, and sensibilities about, these places and stories might lie in our very personal histories and our first-hand experiences half a century after Buchenwald, Auschwitz, Mauthausen... Namely, during the 1990s genocidal war in Bosnia, our generation, Faruk's and mine, and the people to which we belong (or were assigned to belong), had its own share of suffering and persecution based on very similar grounds to those who suffered during the Holocaust. Our names, our nominal or formal group identities relating to ethnicity, religion and nationality, became our death warrant in more than a symbolic way.

Some 100,000 people like us perished only because of their names, and more than two million were expelled from their ancestral homes, towns and villages across Bosnia.

At the time students in our early twenties, now 20 years later, we reflect on how naïve we were to believe that something similar to the 1940s was impossible to happen again in Europe. Our generation was about rock 'n' roll, literature, cosmopolitanism – a light year distance from the dark European history involving concentration camps,



Bosnian places of pain

summary executions, deportations. That's what we believed back then; today, still feeling betrayed, we know that history is not a linear process in which humanity learns from its own past mistakes, but it is rather made of cyclical events that often seem to be repeating themselves in a similar fashion. Today we can add to the places we read about in our history books our own places of pain – places in which we lived and grew up, like Sarajevo, Srebrenica, Prijedor, Višegrad. During the 1990s, our generation had its own concentration camps: Omarska, Keraterm, Trnopolje, Luka, Šljivovica. These and many other places across Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Rwanda, as well as those that became infamous before and after the 1990s, remain a constant reminder that humankind has a long way to go in order to fulfil the famous promise of 'Never again!' declared after the Holocaust. While many members of our generation avoid talking about what they went through during the war, both Faruk and I have made it our mission to write about our own war experiences and those of others. We hope that our work will contribute to

shedding some light into the darkness of horror of the short word 'W-A-R' (or 'R-A-T' in Bosnian) that pierces the walls of our mind, destroys people's lives and challenges our very belief in humanity.

Here in Sarajevo, from the balcony where our conversation is taking place, we can see the apartment blocks still marked with bullet and shrapnel holes from 'the last war'. We also see a group of protesters, another dissatisfied group of people, demonstrating in front of the Bosnian Parliament, which only two years ago was resurrected from a burned-down ruin destroyed in the war.

I remember how I was standing at the same place in 1992. At the time the crowd in front of the Parliament building was many times larger and louder. Back then, as a 22-year-old university student, I joined thousands of Bosnians of all 'ethnic' and other backgrounds at a peace rally against the war in Croatia and for preserving peace in Bosnia. And this is when I was shot at for the first time in my life. In a classic terrorist attack scenario, bullets were sprayed at us from the surrounding hills and from the tops of buildings, where our attackers took their positions and waited for orders 'to start the war'. Thousands of the peace protesters dispersed in panic. In front of two of my friends and me, an older man was hit by a bullet. We carried him into the Philosophy Faculty building from where he was taken to hospital. Another two protesters, both women, fellow student Suada Dilberović and Olga Sučić – neither of whom fit into the ethnic or gender categories used to interpret the war in Bosnia – were not so lucky. They both died on the spot and became the first victims of the siege of Sarajevo.

The fact that at the time none of us was armed – a similar scenario could be seen across Bosnia – only helped the Serb nationalists led by Karadžić and Mladić to put into action the plan of 'ethnic unmixing' of a multi-ethnic society – a society sharing a unique tradition of a pluralist culture and way of life. Since then both of these notorious men and many other war criminals have been brought to justice at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) Hague Tribunal. Back then, in April 1992, General Mladić knew that he had been given a difficult task, which could only be achieved through the most brutal violence, in which he was willing to sacrifice any number of Bosnians and as many of his fellow Serbs as was needed. In one of the first series of artillery attacks on Sarajevo, Mladić disclosed his strategy on the radio: he issued orders to his gunners to aim at the suburbs of Velešići and Pofalići as 'there weren't many Serb residents' in them. As a non-resident of Sarajevo, this was Mladić's random guess, as in fact there was not a single part of the city that was not ethnically mixed. But he knew well that the thousands of shells raining daily down on Sarajevo would not be able to distinguish Serb heads and limbs from the heads and limbs of others.

By defying the longest siege of a city in modern history, Sarajevans of all ethnic, cultural, religious and social backgrounds – as well as those who would reject all these 'backgrounds' – fought not only for their bare survival but for the survival of the idea(l) that, at the end of the twentieth century, diversity, pluralism, secularism and multiculturalism were values worth fighting and dying for. They paid a heavy price, with more than 10,000 Sarajevans killed by Mladić's forces. But they saved much of the pre-war values of their multicultural city.

Many other places across Bosnia were less fortunate; they were completely destroyed as multicultural towns and villages, their residents 'ethnically cleansed' – 'ethnic cleansing' becoming a euphemism for genocide. Today, especially in eastern and western Bosnia, in the area that during the 1990s became 'Republika Srpska', there are hundreds of 'former' villages still lying in ruins, with those who once lived there either dead or living elsewhere – dispersed across the globe, from suburbs of St Louis in the USA to Melbourne, Australia.



(l-r) Faruk Sehić and Hariz Halilovich

In our writings as in our conversation here in Sarajevo, Faruk and I emphasise that the war in Bosnia was not some sort of spontaneous outbreak of ethnic or religious violence, as outsiders often simplify it. It was rather a very well-planned and orchestrated violence involving experts for war, trained military officers with their headquarters and generals in Belgrade, in Serbia. While the voice of many brave individuals and groups in Serbia – some of the world's finest intellectuals, human rights activists and journalists who deserve the Nobel Peace Prize – was brutally silenced and

marginalised by the Serbian war-time government, anyone keen to participate in shooting a few rounds at the civilians in besieged Sarajevo, Bihać, Gorazde, Tuzla or Srebrenica was provided with free passage and enough ammunition for these macabre, state-sanctioned war games. Although many willingly participated, many others 'tolerated' such, and similar, brutalities out of fear, or pretended that this had nothing to do with them.

However, there were also people able and willing to overcome their own fear and step out and defend their own humanity by caring for others. One of them was Srđan Aleksić, a member of Faruk's and my generation. By all standards, he was an ordinary guy who loved sports and acting, and who lived in Trebinje, a small town in the southern part of Bosnia. In 1992 his hometown was declared a part of an exclusive territory reserved for Serbs only. Srđan was an ethnic Serb, but many of his neighbours weren't; they were Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) and became subject to 'ethnic cleansing' and other forms of persecution by Serb nationalist militias. Many of them were killed.

On 21 January 1993, a group of Serb soldiers inspected several people at the Trebinje market. After finding out that one of them was a Bosniak, they began harassing and beating him. Srđan immediately tried to help the victim, but the four soldiers turned against him, beating Srđan to death with their rifle butts. He was 27 years of age. Srđan's father wrote in his obituary: 'Srđan died carrying out his human duty.'

I shared Srđan's story during *The Rescuers* exhibition at the Jewish Holocaust Centre last year.

A white delivery van stops across the street from where Faruk and I sit and sip our coffees. There is a name and an address of a company written on the doors of the van. I read the address; it says: 'Srđan Aleksić Street, Sarajevo'. This name and this city give us hope to believe in a better world, a world made of ordinary people willing to carry out their human duty and help other fellow humans at times when such actions require extraordinary courage.

Greetings from Sarajevo!

Hariz Halilovich is a senior lecturer at Monash University and author of Places of Pain: Forced Displacement, Popular Memory and Trans-local Identities in Bosnian War-torn Communities, Berghahn Books, 2013.

Mazal tov to Kitia Altman OAM and Abram Goldberg OAM



(l-r) Floris Kalman and Kitia Altman OAM

(l-r) Abram Goldberg OAM, Cedric Geffen and Cesia Goldberg



(l-r) Kitia Altman OAM and Elly Brooks

Stephanie Heller and Abram Goldberg OAM

Kitia Altman and Abram (Abe) Goldberg have been awarded Medals of the Order of Australia (OAM), Kitia for 'service to the community, particularly through the Jewish Holocaust Centre' and Abe for 'service to the Jewish community in Melbourne, and as a proponent of Yiddish language and culture'.

Kitia and Abe, both survivors of Auschwitz, have contributed significantly to the establishment and development of the Jewish Holocaust Centre, a commitment that continues today.



Kitia Altman OAM and Abram Goldberg OAM

Kitia has worked as a volunteer and guide at the Centre since 1988 and speaks with many school groups about her experience during the Holocaust, and the need for forgiveness. She has also been involved in the Custodians of Memory program, taking secondary and tertiary students under her tutelage to pass on her Holocaust story. Kitia speaks at many Centre functions and is always available to volunteers, guides, students, members of the public and the administrators of the Centre. She worked tirelessly with Yad Vashem to have Alfred Rossner recognised as 'Righteous Among the Nations', and notably debated Holocaust-denier David Irving on national television in the 1990s.

Abe Goldberg became a volunteer at the Centre when it was established in 1984. Since then he has acted as a volunteer guide, introducing thousands of students and other visitors to the museum and its message of tolerance. Abe has been a member of the Executive of the Board since 1989 and has held the portfolios of Treasurer and Survivor Volunteer Representative. He continues to provide hands-on support to the Centre, its volunteers and management. In particular, Abe encourages and supports the involvement of aged survivors as well as younger volunteers. While working tirelessly for the Centre, he has also provided uninterrupted support to the Kadimah (the Jewish Cultural Centre and National Library) and Sholem Aleichem College.

We wish Kitia and Abram a hearty *Mazal tov!*

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Reflections on the Anne Frank exhibition

Reuben Zylberszpic

When the opportunity arose in mid-2012 to host the Australian launch of *A History for Today*, the Anne Frank Travelling Exhibition from the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, we had a feeling it would be successful. We were correct in our assumption although we underestimated the extent of its success.

The exhibition was launched on 4 February 2013 by Mr Ronald Leopold, CEO of the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. Over the following three months more than 8,000 visitors went through the Centre – more than any other travelling exhibition held at the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) in its 29-year history. School groups and the general public came to see the Anne Frank exhibition, but a majority stayed to visit our permanent exhibition. That most of these visitors had never been to the JHC before made the event a greater success than imagined.

While this figure alone is impressive, its impact goes beyond mere numbers. The constant flow of people, especially young students, created a buzz that enlivened the Centre. Intermittently over the three months the exhibition was here, I would walk from my office next to the exhibition space through the museum observing people of all ages – from 8 to 90+-year-olds – taking in what the exhibition had to offer.

The 11-panel exhibition outlined the story of the Frank family chronologically, from their origins in Germany to the post-war publication of Anne's diary by the only surviving member of the Frank family, Anne's father Otto. This familial story was juxtaposed with events in Europe during the Second World War, and these parallel timelines showed clearly the direct impact world events had on one family. Visitors were also able to watch a short documentary about Anne Frank as an overview and precursor to the more detailed information in the exhibition itself.

Comments in our visitors' book reflected the deep emotional impact the exhibition had on individuals. Older people reminisced about reading the story as children, and how they view it now in the context of the world they live in and the people they have become. Younger people commented on the disbelief that such a thing could ever take place. One entry, written by a young hand simply said, 'I love you Anne Frank.'

The JHC took the initiative to enhance the experience of visitors by creating a life-size diorama of Anne's bedroom in the secret annex. This 5 x 2.6 metre photo on a curved wall in a darkened room, similar in size to Anne's actual bedroom, gave visitors an idea (albeit simplified) of how it would have been for her to live in a confined space for over two years. Students who attended the Centre's education program sat in this room and discussed aspects of Anne's story, and this experience added a visceral component to the written words of the main part of the exhibition.

The education program that accompanied the exhibition was developed by JHC Director of Education Zvi Civins and Education Officer Tammy Reznik to augment our existing education program. Although our education program caters for older students, the Anne Frank program was also designed to be suitable for primary school students as young as 8 years old. As a result of the exhibition's success with this younger demographic, our education staff and curator are now planning a permanent space and education program in the museum dedicated specifically to visitors of primary school age (8 to 12 years old). Influencing children at this stage of life, as we experienced with the Anne Frank exhibition, will have a positive impact on the broader community.

Another unique 'experience' we were able to offer visitors was to speak with, and listen to, Holocaust survivors who have their own stories of hiding during the Holocaust. Two such survivors are Bep Bomperts-Gerritse and Joe de Haan. Bep made herself available many times at sponsor and community functions during the exhibition, including the launch, to tell her story of survival. Joe de Haan seemed to live at the Centre for three months and worked tirelessly talking to visitors and answering their questions. We also had to put on extra volunteers to staff the welcome desk and assist visitors.

None of the above could have occurred without the generosity of Gandel Philanthropy as Principal Supporter, through a Community Build Grant, and the support of the Estate of the late Jakob Frenkiel. Their contribution made this exhibition possible, but it did so much more – it allowed the JHC to further its commitment to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive and ensure we continue to inform and influence future generations about the dangers of perpetuating any form of racial intolerance.



Photo: no-miss photography



Photo: no-miss photography



Photo: no-miss photography

The ghettos 1943: the beginning of the end

Bill Anderson

*Jews from Krakow rounded up for deportation wait on the railway station platform for further transport.
Source: USHMM, courtesy of Archiwum Dokumentacji Mechanicznej*

By far the worst year of the Second World War for European Jews was 1942 (See Table 1). In November Winston Churchill, commenting on the Allied victory at El Alamein, famously stated: 'This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.' With the German defeat at Stalingrad in the first days of February 1943 we can say that the war was now clearly at the beginning of the end, the turning point in war. From this defeat henceforth German forces were on the retreat on the Eastern Front and defeat followed defeat in the other theatres of the war until Hitler killed himself in Berlin amidst the ruins of his country and his dreams. 1943 was also a very significant year in relation to the Eastern European ghettos. On 18 January the first armed resistance against deportation took place in the Warsaw Ghetto – the first of many such revolts in the year ahead – and the year ended with the first trial of Nazi war criminals in Kharkov on 15 December.

The term 'ghetto' originated in Venice and derived from the closed Jewish quarter called the *Geto Nuovo* (New Foundry) established in 1516. Originally ghettos were designed to be places of refuge for Jews – and for concentrating Jews to make their conversion to Christianity easier. Thereafter the term came to mean any residential district in which Jews were compelled to live.

On 21 September 1939, RSHA (Reich Security Main Office) Chief, Reinhard Heydrich, penned orders for the civil authorities in the General Government to establish ghettos and *Judenrate* (Nazi-appointed Jewish Councils) pending the *Gesamtlösung* (total solution) to the 'Jewish Question'. The Nazis established a total of at least 356 ghettos in Poland (very recent research by the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington suggests a much higher total), the Soviet Union, the Baltic Republics, Romania and Hungary between 1939 and 1945. In addition to ghettos in Eastern Europe, ghettos were also established in Amsterdam, Salonika and Terezin (Czechoslovakia). The first ghetto in Poland was established in the city of Piotrkow Trybunalski in October 1939, just a month after the war broke out. A

ghetto was closed off in Lodz, Poland's second largest city, on 30 April 1940 and in the capital of Poland, Warsaw, on 16 October 1940.

There was no uniform pattern in the establishment, method of isolation, or internal regime of the ghettos. Indeed, two divergent forms of ghetto existed: closed ghettos, those sealed off by walls or other physical means, and open ghettos, those that were not sealed off. Generally speaking, open ghettos were located in small towns, where Jews already lived in close proximity to each other. These ghettos were often only temporary measures, with the residents later moved to larger closed ghettos or sent directly to their deaths. Closed ghettos, in contrast, were almost always located in larger communities, and implied the transfer of all Jews to a small – invariably poor and rundown – neighbourhood.

It is crucial to understand that ghettoisation was designed to kill and was an integral part of the genocidal attack on the Jewish people. Nazi attitudes and objectives in relation to ghettoisation were made hideously clear by Hans Frank, Governor-General of the Government-General (after the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 the Government-General comprised five districts – Cracow, Warsaw, Lublin, Radom and Galicia) who, when referring to the Jews under his control, said: 'The more that die, the better.' In a similar vein Himmler, Head of the SS, bluntly stated his views on the treatment of the Jews of Eastern Europe when he said, 'It's high time that this rabble is driven together in ghettos, and then plague will creep in and they'll croak.' (Michael Burleigh, *A New History of the Third Reich*, 2001, p 587.)



Poor children struggled to survive in the Warsaw ghetto. c. 1941-3.

Melbourne survivor Bezio Bursztynski is in the background on the right walking past.

Source: The Warsaw Ghetto in Photographs: 206 Views Made in 1941, ed. Ulrich Keller, 1984, Dover Publications

From the start of enforced ghettoisation Jews faced living under rapidly deteriorating conditions and the ever-present threat of assault and/or seizure for labour camps or execution. Knowledge of the aims of the Nazis to exterminate Jews was not at first clear to the *Judenrate* and the Jewish community; this knowledge only came gradually.

Conditions varied from one ghetto to another but hunger,

terror, confusion, and fear of the unknown were common to all.

The two largest ghettos were Warsaw and Lodz. Living conditions in these ghettos were terrible. Malnutrition was widespread and death by starvation was a daily occurrence. Between 1941 and 1942, over 112,000 people – 20 percent of the population – in the Warsaw and Lodz ghettos starved to death.

A major change in Nazi policy in relation to Jewish ghettoisation was instituted in mid-1943 when Head of the SS Heinrich Himmler ordered the liquidation of all Polish ghettos (11.6.1943), an order soon expanded to include all ghettos in the Soviet Union (21.06.43) [See Table 2]. There were a number of possible reasons for the change of policy, not least being the fact that as the year progressed it was becoming increasingly obvious to Himmler that the Nazis were losing the war. This is perhaps shown by the fact that in the ten days between these two orders Himmler ordered SS Colonel Paul Blobel (later executed for war crimes) to coordinate the destruction of the evidence – the bodies – of the Nazis' grossest atrocities (15.6.1943). Himmler may also, of course, have been influenced by the magnificent resistance of the ghetto fighters in Warsaw, a revolt of such courage and desperation that it would clearly act as an inspiration to others. Ghettos continued to exist after 1943 but their days were numbered.

The Nazis always encouraged the belief that the worst had come and gone. The ghetto has been described as a 'mirage' as it instilled thoughts of normality and continuity at a time when the Nazis were actively planning and undertaking mass murder. The ghetto amounted to a 'cold pogrom'; the conditions which prevailed in the ghettos were designed to kill.

The whole idea behind ghettoisation was an affront to humanity. The disgusting and deadly conditions in which Jews were forced to live in these ghettos beggars description. For Jews forced into these abominable conditions, simply to persist in remaining human, in living in a community, ensuring the continuation of schools, hospitals, cultural activities, took immense courage, both physical and moral. Simply put, it was an act of faith.

Charles Dickens famously wrote: 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.' These words are perhaps a fitting way to conclude this paper. 1943 was the best of times – or at least better times – in relation to the war as a whole, in that the tide of war had clearly turned and the Nazis were everywhere on the retreat. The year, however, remained the 'worst of times' in that Jews and other victims of the Nazis still had much to suffer and endure before the war was finally over and Nazism defeated.

Jews murdered in each year during the Second World War	
Year	Jews killed
1933–1940	under 100,000
1941	1,100,000
1942	2,700,000
1943	500,000
1944	600,000
1945	100,000

Hilberg, Raul (2003) [1961]. *The Destruction of the European Jews* (3 volumes). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Major ghettos 'liquidated' in 1943
Name: Country: Estimated Jewish population: Date of ghetto opening: Date of liquidation
Bialystok: Poland: 50,000 (01.8.1941 - 18.8.1943) - Ghetto uprising took place in Ghetto's last days)
Bedzin: Poland: 21,000: (01.7.1940 - 1.8.1943)
Brody: Ukraine: 6,000 (01.1.1943 - 21.5.1943)
Brzezany: Ukraine: 3,500 (15.10.1942 - 12.6.1943)
Bochnia: Poland: 3,500 (15.3.1940 - September 43 - declared 'Jew free' 01.10.43)
Chernovtsy (Czernowitz): Romania: 50,000 (11.10.1941 - October 1943 when restrictions on Jewish movement abolished)
Czestochowa (Poland): 48,000 (9.4.1941 - 25.6.1943, Jewish underground resistance continued until 30.6.1943)
Crakow (Kraków): Poland: 12,000, some estimates are as high as 19,000 (3.3.1941 - 13/14.3.1943)
Chortkov (Czortków): Ukraine: 6,000 (Early April 1942 - September 1943)
Drohobycz: Ukraine: 10,000 (1.10.1942 - 10.6.1943)
Grodno: Belorussia: 25,000 (1.11.1941 - 12.3.1943)
Kovno (Kaunas): Lithuania: 29,760 (15.8.1941 - 15.9.1943, Following German order dated 21.6.1943 to transform European ghettos into concentration camps the SS took over ghetto on 15.9.1943 - ghetto renamed Concentration Camp Kauen. Of surviving prisoners, approximately 6,100 women were sent to Stutthof and men were sent to Dachau, July 8 - 14, 1944)
Kolomyia: Ukraine: 16,000 (25.3.1942 - February/early March 1943)
Lvov (Lwów): Poland (post-war - Ukraine): Estimated 110,000 - 120,000 (15.11.1941 - January 1943 redesignated a <i>Julager</i> (Jews camp) - 2.6.1943 - Jewish underground resisted until the following day)
Minsk: Belorussia: 80,000 (some sources estimate 100,000) (20.7.1941 - 21.10.1943)
Przemyśl: Poland: 16,500 (14.7.1942 - February 1943 - Ghetto A redesignated as a Labour Camp under SS control, 2.9.1943 Ghetto B liquidated)
Riga: Latvia: 29,602 (Ghetto sealed - 23.12.1941 - 2.11.1943)
Tarnów: Poland: 25,000 (1939) - increased to about 40,000 by Jews from Germany and Czechoslovakia being transported to the ghetto (19.2.1942 - 2.9.1943)
Vilna: Lithuania: 40,000 (6.9.1941 - 23.9.1943)
Warsaw: Poland: 460,000 at peak ghetto population in March 1941 (12.10.1940 - 16.0.1943: the Nazis claimed that as of 16 May 'The Jewish quarter in Warsaw is no more' but it seems that a few hundred Jewish resistance fighters – the 'people of the ruins' – continued to survive in the ghetto for some time after 16 May)

Information for the table taken from a variety of sources but primarily:
Miron Guy, and Shulhani, Shlomit, *Yad Vashem: Encyclopedia of the Ghettos during the Holocaust*, Two Volumes, (2009), Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.
Edelheit Abraham J. and Edelheit, Hershel, (1994) *History of the Holocaust: A Handbook and a Dictionary*, by Westview Press, Oxford/San Francisco/Boulder.

Remembering the uprising

Kitia Altman OAM



Kitia Altman, photographed by her boyfriend Willie in Bedzin

It is not much of a memory, as memories go.

It is a Sunday, a day free of work.

A Sunday in April. Beautiful, tranquil – almost normal. The mellifluous air is gently caressing the grass in the field. You feel like kicking off your shoes and lifting your face to be kissed by the sun. Just softly. The silence is pleasant and relaxing. Soothing. We walk holding hands – two young men, two

young women. We are going to meet two other couples. It is so quiet and peaceful.

We walk through open space linking Kamionka to Srodula – ghetto Bedzin to ghetto Sosnowiec. One of the young men from the other group is coming towards us. He works in the *Judenrat* and always has the latest news. He's almost running but not smiling or waving his arms as he usually does.

'Have you heard?' he asks.

'What?'

'Uprising in Warsaw, in the ghetto.'

Like a jagged knife plunged inside your brain, serenity is now torn to shreds. Gone is the caress of hope. That brief sense of peace seems ages ago. It does not belong to me now. The now is reprisals. We've learned to think in terms of individual crimes and collective punishments.

Moniek Meryn, head of the *Judenrat*, urges obedience. He sees himself as the new Messiah who will lead the remnants of Jewry to the Promised Land. Meryn did not doubt the Germans' intention to exterminate all Jews; however, he doubted they would be able to accomplish it. He knew of many who lived in hiding or on the Aryan side. He wanted to be the one, when the time came, who would gather them all and take them to *Eretz Israel*. He could not afford a revolt in his ghetto. Meryn tried hard to win the confidence of the Underground and cajoled its members with bribes of food and minor information. He even offered exemptions from transportation to labour camps.

He told representatives of the Zionist youth organisations that he, Moniek Meryn, was spiritually on their side. It was just that the politics of the time forced him to work for the Germans.

They still mistrusted him.

The Underground had long realised the power of this 'little king' and they feared him.

How then was he, Meryn, going to explain an uprising in

the Warsaw Ghetto to his SS bosses?

How was he going to convince them that his Jews were different? People in the Bedzin-Sosnowiec Ghetto were hungry, sure, but not as starving as they were in Warsaw. There was no overcrowding. After all, this was the part of Poland that was *eingliedert*, integrated into the Third Reich.

The unspoken question on everyone's mind was our future in the ghetto. And we were afraid.

In this our wonderful youth, we wanted to live and capture whatever was left of it. We didn't have a sense of destiny, nor did we owe anything to history. Even the people in the youth organisations, *Hashomer* and *Hanoar*, didn't give up on life. They didn't say: 'You have to die with dignity.' They said: 'Fight to the end and try to kill one of them before they kill you. Kick them with your feet, hit them with your fists, spit in their faces.'

Beyond this, nothing was revealed about any resistance. But there were rumours, all sorts of rumours. Some even mentioned Alfred Rossner, the German chief of the uniform factory, who was said to support the Underground.

Suddenly the mere word 'uprising' imparted strength. The Germans had discovered that Jews could fight. Without weapons, starved, desperate and decimated, the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto had risen to fight the German Army with its armoured columns and tanks.

We'd do it too.

We returned home to rooms crowded with people and furniture. We decided not to discuss it with our parents, a wise and critical decision. Traditional family roles had disintegrated in the ghetto. Young people became family providers. They worked and so became heads of their families. Parents whose children possessed a *Sonderkarte* from Rossner's shop felt safer than most elderly people did. This card protected two family members: either parents or a spouse and one child.

There was tremendous psychological pressure at home from the terrified parents. We called it the three don'ts: 'Don't do anything illegal, say anything illegal, or even think anything illegal.'

Sunken eyes constantly searched your face for a sign, pleading with us young people not to cause trouble.

What was our duty? Were we the sole masters of our own lives or were we duty-bound to our families? This gnawed and tormented us at night, made us restless and irritable during the day.

Bitter recriminating discussions took place all the time. Words were said in anger and anguish. Accusations were hurled around.

Days passed and in Warsaw they kept fighting. A week passed, ten days. We became used to our fears. The older generation started to relent. They could not help but admire the tenacity and courage of the fighters. They took pride in their determination, yet still feared their own children getting involved.

Young people who had no parents felt free to make their own decisions. Yet these decisions could impact on other people's parents.

Two weeks passed.

A Pole said the Warsaw Ghetto was burning.

'Where are the people?'

'Burning,' he said.

News still seeped through. Lodz still existed. Rossner's shop still existed. Once again life returned almost to normal – but not quite. The Underground intensified their activities. More and more people left the ghetto. Whispers were heard about safe places and reliable documents. Desperate letters were smuggled out of the ghetto and sent abroad to Switzerland, America and Palestine. No one spoke of the uprising anymore. It was as if it had been erased by silence, made to disappear. Only a few knew the truth and even they were uncertain that it was indeed accurate.

One day, five of the top people from the *Judenrat*, including Meryn, were summoned by the SS to accompany a special transport to Katowice. Twenty or so men and women with entry visas to countries such as Honduras were to be sent to an international internment camp. The five from the *Judenrat* never returned. The special transport of visa holders for Honduras never reached its destination either.

Late June 1943 saw the first large deportation from Bedzin-Sosnowiec since the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Our ghetto grew tense.

Rossner opened the doors of his shop for anyone to come in and stay. I remained there with my parents, day and night. We were still there when the *Judenrein aktion* started and the ghetto was surrounded.

It was a hot first day of August. For one week an ill-equipped, poorly organised yet courageous group, inspired by the example of the Warsaw Ghetto, fought and resisted. Theirs was not a fight for a better life, but for a different death.

Time has not altered their dreams or touched their courage. They will remain in the history of mankind, as pure and as noble as on the day when they fell fighting in the Bedzin-Sosnowiec Ghetto.

Witnessing the Warsaw Ghetto uprising

Berysz Aurbach



Berysz Aurbach in Biala Podlaska, his birthplace, in 1947

This is an extract from an article written by Berysz Aurbach, published in the Australian Jewish News, 16 April 1948.

Berysz took part in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and escaped from the ghetto with the help of the Polish resistance.

On 18 January 1943, the Gestapo and their Ukraine helpers appeared in the ghetto. They were met

with fire from Mila and Moranov streets. The resistance removed the firearms and uniforms from tens of corpses. The Germans answered by sending in members of an SS unit who shot every Jew they came across. After a few days, the Germans left the ghetto.

This resistance affected all the Jews in the ghetto. The idea of bunkers and hiding places was spread around and we began building them with urgent speed and great skill.

The resistance organisation grew stronger, and there was a close working relationship between the Bund and the Communists. Tens of new groups were formed. Arms were somehow acquired and the production of our own hand grenades increased. We started digging underground tunnels to reach the Polish side. The Nazis knew we were preparing for something and they recruited Jewish collaborators to uncover the resistance plans. We were successful in finding out about these contemptible people and the resistance organisation disposed of some. Various plans were found in their

possession which they had not yet managed to hand over to the Nazis. The work continued. Opportunely, vitriol and benzene were obtained and divided among the women in the resistance, to be poured into bottles. This continued until 19 April, the eve of Passover. Despite the terrible situation, we wanted to arrange a Seder meal in the bunkers.

On the morning of 19 April, the ghetto was surrounded by Ukrainians, and then the Gestapo entered through one of the gates. Resistance groups met them with fire. On the first day they succeeded in breaking through a wall, through which many escaped, and of whom several were saved. On that day tens of Germans were killed. From our posts we saw wagons circulating to collect the dead and wounded without cessation. I learned later from a Polish policeman that many Germans were blinded by the acidic vitriol poured over them.

On the second day the Germans arrived with many more forces. We were at our appointed places from which they were unable to move us. The Germans, seeing their heavy losses and our crucial resistance, retreated from the ghetto and ordered all the Poles from the other side of the barracks to evacuate their houses.

A few hours later, aircraft appeared over the ghetto and dropped incendiary bombs. Our positions were demolished, buildings began to collapse, and the ghetto was in flames, yet we did not encounter the enemy face to face. Members of the resistance began to rescue women and children from the burning houses and bring them to the bunkers. I observed how mothers threw their children from the upper stories, wrapped in feather quilts, meaning to save them. The shouts and screams were indescribable. In the underground bunkers some suffocated from the heat and smoke, but others managed to survive.

With every hour the ghetto became more engulfed in flames. Many fell at their posts, unable to descend from the burning buildings. A few of my comrades and I managed to enter a bunker and telephone our comrades on the Polish side. With their help, I escaped from the ghetto, and I survived for the remainder of the war as a Christian. As a living witness, I have as my goal on every anniversary of the holy rebellion to immortalise the names of my comrades who gave their lives in the struggle.

This account was translated from Yiddish by Jewish Holocaust Centre volunteer Freda Hodge.

A Dutch story of survival

Joseph de Haan

Joseph de Haan was born in the Netherlands on 12 October 1922 to Michel and Judith de Haan. He had an older brother, Abraham (Appie). The family lived in a predominantly Jewish area of Amsterdam. Michel was a butcher and life was comfortable for the de Haans.

Before the war Amsterdam's Jewish population of approximately 85,000 lived relatively peacefully. Between 1933 and 1940, anti-Jewish laws were imposed in Germany, sparking a huge exodus of Jews from Germany to the Netherlands. Most of the Dutch Jews did not take the antisemitic outbursts from Germany very seriously.

The peace and quiet of the city was suddenly destroyed on 10 May 1940 by the wailing of sirens from the rooftops of Amsterdam with the German invasion. Holland was defeated by Germany in six days. The Jewish population was terrified and apprehensive. Many tried to flee to England but this became impossible as the Nazis occupied the coastal strip. Some Jews committed suicide. Joseph was 17 years old.

The Nazis immediately imposed humiliating anti-Jewish measures and isolated the Jews in every way. Jews had to surrender their radios and bicycles, and their telephones were disconnected. Kosher slaughter of meat was forbidden, and then Jews could not even buy non-kosher meat. They were forced to wear the yellow Star of David on the front and back of outer garments, their identity cards were printed with a large 'J', and a curfew was imposed upon them.

After the occupation Joseph's father, who had been active and industrious, became depressed. Joseph's mother passed away after a short illness in 1941. Her death affected Michel deeply. In August 1942, Appie was ordered by the Germans to report for duty. Michel was heartbroken when Appie left.

Joseph found employment with the Jewish Board issuing ration cards to Jewish citizens enabling them to purchase vegetables. One day the Germans invaded the building and rounded up all 100 workers. They were humiliated and beaten as they were marched to the Gestapo headquarters. Later Joseph was released, as were most of the others.

The Dutch police did the dirty work for the Germans, including forced roundups and deportations. Anybody could be picked up at any time. On 25 September 1942

three police knocked on the de Haans' door and took Joseph's father and stepmother, Clara. Joseph never saw them again. As Joseph's name did not appear on their list, he remained at home.

Joseph was taken in by the Trompetters, who were family friends, and shortly after by Mr and Mrs Soeters. Mrs. Soeters, a brave Christian, was a member of the Salvation Army and was not intimidated by the Nazis, even after being jailed for hiding a Jewish couple (who did not survive.) Joseph hid at the Soeters for two months.

Two men from the Dutch underground resistance movement then took Joseph to the province of Friesland, where he was placed with one farmer's family, then another family by the name of Vermeulens. In Friesland Joseph was reunited with Mauritz Trompetter. For a time Friesland was safe for Jews. However, in the summer of 1943 the Germans came in their trucks with their headlights switched off in order to capture hiding Jews off guard. A leader of the underground movement had informed the Germans of the whereabouts of the approximately fifteen Jewish people hidden in the area. He was killed by his own people.

Joseph managed to escape, but sadly the Trompetters were captured. Joseph was joined by Appie Rijksman, a Jewish friend from Amsterdam. Klaas Draaier, a local farmer and member of the underground provided safe hiding, warmth and food for Joseph and Appie between bales of straw, high in a hay loft in a barn. The entrance to the loft was via the chimney. They hid there throughout winter. After winter they were moved again and Joseph was hidden at Jan Rosier's farm in the Blija area. He never ventured out during the day, but after dark he would stroll around the farmhouse for some fresh air. He slept on a mattress in a well-concealed cavity behind the farmer's son's bed, practically in the eaves of the sloping roof. He milked the cows and learnt to spin wool, which kept him occupied while inside.

On 14 April 1945 news broke that the fighting was almost over. Joseph cycled to the nearby small village of Bilje and saw hundreds of German soldiers surrendered to the Allies. Jubilation was huge.

When Joseph returned to Amsterdam six weeks after liberation, he was shattered to find out that he was the only member of his family to have survived. Appie had died from typhus in Blechhammer concentration camp on 23 August 1944, and Michel and Clara were murdered in Auschwitz soon after their arrival on 25 September 1942. In total, over 100,000 Dutch Jews were murdered by the Nazis.

Soon after his return to Amsterdam Joseph met Cecilia de Wolff, another survivor whose family, aside from one brother and sister-in-law, had been murdered by the Nazis. Joseph and Cecilia married in 1947, and the following year they migrated to Cape Town, South Africa, where their children Michael and Judy were born. Their years in Cape Town were the happiest of their lives. In 1990 they migrated to Melbourne where their daughter's family had settled.



Joseph de Haan, 1948

A short history of my life

Kurt Friedlaender

I was born in Berlin on 21 September 1924. Our family – my parents Hans and Johanna Friedlaender (nee Gronau), my sister Ilse, my brother Fritz and I – lived in Dahlem, a choice suburb of Berlin.

My father passed away suddenly in April 1930, and his factory went into bankruptcy. My mother tried to make a living by dressmaking, but was not able to keep the family. Relatives helped by arranging for Fritz and me to go to the orphanage Reichenheimische Weisenhaus der Juedischen Gemeinde von Berlin. Ilse was sent to a girls' home. Life was regimented, but we were able to go home on Sundays and school holidays.

My mother gave birth to a third son, Karl Benjamin (Allan), in 1936, and died in hospital three weeks later, probably due to pneumonia. Mother's sister Kaethe brought Allan up until he went to England on the *Kindertransport*, just three weeks before war broke out.

Fritz emigrated to South Africa in September 1938, but was unsuccessful in obtaining a visa for me to join him. I still came home to Aunt Kaethe's, where Ilse was now living. At Easter 1938, I finished school and came to live with Aunt Kaethe. I was apprenticed to a printer who published two weekly Jewish newspapers.

As I cycled to work on *Kristallnacht*, (9-10 November 1938), I saw people looting and smashing the windows of the Jewish shops, as well as a synagogue burning. I was lucky not to have been picked up.

As the Nazis would not allow any Jewish factory to remain open, the printing company closed and I found work selling packages of soup mix, coffee and puddings around Berlin from a trailer attached to my bicycle. When war broke out I was sent to clear snow and re-lay rail tracks, and, after the bombing commenced, repair damaged suburban rail lines. We were paid minimum wages. In the meantime, the Jewish community had established training programs for young people interested in migrating illegally to Palestine (Israel), and I attended a gardening school and later a farm. Although in 1941 transports were still leaving for Israel, I was not lucky enough to join one.

I was transferred to a camp outside Berlin, where we provided casual help to farmers, as well as working in the forest. We were housed in the village dance hall, under the supervision of the forestry department. Times were not too bad, as we were still able to visit Berlin, although we had to wear the Star of David by that time, and that did not make it easy to travel by train.

In April 1943 we were brought back to Berlin to a collection point for transport to Auschwitz, but were sent instead to a transit camp, where our work was to remove tombstones in an old Jewish cemetery. One day we were loaded onto a goods wagon which arrived in Auschwitz on 20 April. Because I was young, I was selected for work at the sub-camp Monowitz, which supplied labour to IG Farben. We were showered, shaved and tattooed with numbers on our arm, then allocated three to a bunk in overcrowded barracks.

My first job was to lay electrical cable, and later I worked as a painter and learnt how to weld. We worked with German civilians, workers from German-occupied eastern countries, and English prisoners of war, one of whom was able to get a message to my sister (who had escaped to England).

On 18 January 1945 we were marched towards central Germany. Those who lagged behind or fell were shot by SS guards. Around three weeks later we arrived at Gross-Rosen camp, where I fell ill. This probably saved my life, as I was unable to leave on foot with my comrades. I never saw any of them again.

Instead I joined a transport in open cattle wagons to Dachau. When we stopped in Pilsen in Czechoslovakia, railway workers brought us bread and hot tea, which helped us to survive. We were starving and thirsty and, of the 400 who left Gross-Rosen, only half survived the journey.

In Dachau, I was sent to a camp hospital and survived the last few weeks of the war through the sheer luck of being German, as the German

political prisoners running the hospital kept me there for longer.

After we were liberated by the Americans in May 1945, I was diagnosed with tuberculosis and hospitalised. On 20 August, I was called to the front gate to find my brother Fritz coming towards me. A relative had found my name on the list of Dachau survivors and had told Ilse in England, who told Fritz, who was in the South African Army in Italy. Fritz had driven to Dachau, then around the displaced persons' camps in the area until he found a German priest who had been a prisoner with me and knew

where I was. Although we only had several hours together, it was wonderful to be reunited with my brother!

In 1946, I moved to Munich where I met my wife, Inge. We were married on 29 June 1947 and our son Leo was born in July 1948. After obtaining a landing permit to come to Australia, we disembarked in May 1950 to begin our new life.



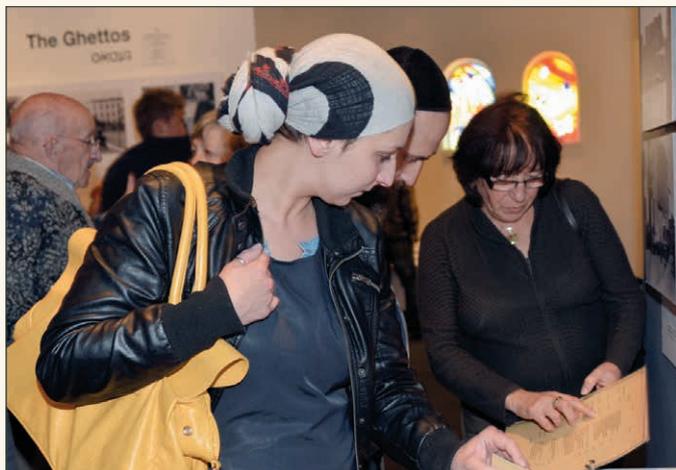
(l-r) Kurt and Fritz Friedlaender in 1945



Kurt Friedlaender

Musings on modern Poland based on conversations with Ola Bramson

Bernard Korbman OAM and Izydor Marmur



(l-r) Ola Bramson, Pawel Bramson and Rona Zinger

Those of you who were fortunate enough to meet with and speak to Paolina (Ola) and Pawel Bramson would have gained an interesting and perhaps unexpected insight into the amazing development and revival of the Jewish community in post-Second World War and post-Communist era Poland.

As was widely reported, Ola and Pawel were Polish skinheads who later found out that they were both halachically Jewish (both sets of parents being Jewish), and then became observant Jews. Pawel, now Pinchas, is a *shochet*, a *mashgiach* and an assistant to Chief Rabbi Michael Schudrich. Ola, now Tzietel, helps other women who have newly discovered their Jewish roots, and is also known as ‘the Jamie Oliver of kosher cooking’ in Warsaw.

Although not all experiences of discovering one’s Jewish heritage are as dramatic as the Bramsons’ story, the uncovering of one’s Jewish roots by quite a large number of Poles is not uncommon.

Responses by Poles who recently discovered their lost identity have varied. Some decided to dismiss their findings and continue to live their lives as they always had. A number decided to study and have embraced a religious lifestyle, while others identify as Jews through ethnic and cultural heritage.

Interestingly, the major universities in Poland now offer a number of courses in Jewish civilisation as diverse as Jewish History, the Holocaust, Yiddish and Hebrew. The Holocaust is now part of the high school curriculum throughout Poland.

As in Jewish communities around the world, there are philosophical and theological divisions within the community – such as Orthodox Jews, Reform Jews, politically active Zionist movements, a number of different youth movements – and there are different opinions about the best Jewish education for today’s children. However, as the Polish Jewish community is numerically small, resources are willingly shared in the major Jewish centres.

As far as antisemitism is concerned, it was quite fascinating to have a first-hand glimpse, from the

‘inside’ so to speak, given Pawel and Ola’s time spent as skinheads. They explained that the skinhead movement is not so much a faith-based or church-driven phenomenon, but rather a politically inspired right-wing nationalist ideology: a hate-filled credo based on the purity of the Slavic people, blaming of all the economic and social ills on ‘the other’, that is blacks, gypsies, Jews, Muslims and other minority groups.

Ola feels that unfortunately this is symptomatic of what is happening throughout Europe. However, she says that Poland fares much better than most EU countries in its acceptance of Jews. The Polish government maintains a very strong commitment towards modern Poland as a multicultural nation.

Zuzanna (Zusia), the Bramson’s fifteen-year-old daughter, attends the local high school. Although her parents are highly visible as Jews and have quite a high profile in the neighborhood, she has never been victimised or suffered antisemitic comments. She has both Jewish and non-Jewish friends, is invited and welcomed into their homes, and her friends are welcomed to her home. She leads a normal and happy life, with all the common teenage challenges.

The Bramsons walk, drive, take public transport and have never been subjected to antisemitic abuse, despite their Hassidic garb. At times they have been stared at or whispered about, especially outside the major cities of Poland, but that has been more out of curiosity for the exotic than through aggression.

Ola did say that one of the things she looks forward to is visiting her son Alex, who at seventeen is studying at a yeshivah in New York. There she feels totally comfortable because their Hassidic dress code is commonplace. In New York there are no expectations of a uniform dress code. Everyone is exotic, she muses.

Ola and Pawel, like many Jewish-born Poles, feel a level of disappointment and frustration at what they perceive to be a lack of support and recognition for their small but vibrant burgeoning community. They believe that they are invisible to their fellow Jews. Understandably, Jews from all over the world come to Poland and visit the death camps and other Holocaust historical sites, but they often forget that Poland is much more than a cemetery and a blood-soaked land where the Nazis murdered six million Jews. It is also the home of choice for a growing number of Polish-born Jews who feel comfortable and happy in their homeland. They would like Jewish visitors who go to Poland to acknowledge their existence by visiting them, and to see with their own eyes the remarkable Jewish infrastructure that they have built in their communities that consist of religious, educational, cultural and welfare institutions common to all Jewish centres around the world.

May their hopes and aspirations be realised.

Pawel, Ola and Zusia Bramson’s visit to Australia was hosted by the Australian Society of Polish Jews and their Descendants. Pawel Bramson spoke at the Jewish Holocaust Centre in June.

Lost and found at the Salvos

Anna Blay

On a hot Friday morning in March my husband gave me a message that Jayne Josem had rung from the Jewish Holocaust Centre, something to do with the Salvos and a piano accordion. I quickly got in touch with her and she arranged to pick me up. Apparently, the Salvos had been given an accordion with the letters 'ROSNER' painted on the bellows, and before putting it up for sale in their store, they'd looked the name up on the web and found some information about my father, Leo Rosner, and his Holocaust experiences.

So there we were, driving in the hot sunshine towards the Salvos Store in Noble Park. My mind was churning. My father had died five years ago, but I knew that everyone in the Jewish community who lived and grew up in Melbourne in the last sixty years remembered the musician who played at so many *simchas*, so many celebrations and parties. His music had been a link with the past for so many migrants, a joyful reminder of happier times. Many people also knew that Leo Rosner had been saved by Oskar Schindler and was featured in the film *Schindler's List*. My father always said that music saved his life, and his name was put on the list because Schindler loved listening to him and his brother playing at the Commandant's parties. But could this accordion be his?

We were met by Michael. As he led us to the offices at the back of the store, he explained how excited all the staff had been to find the links to my father on the internet. He asked me, 'Could this instrument be the one he'd played in the camps?' I had to tell him that that wasn't possible; my parents came to Australia in 1949 as refugees with nothing.

Jenny welcomed us into her small cramped office, and in the corner stood a big brown case. Michael lifted it up onto her desk and opened it. There it lay ... unmistakably



Anna Blay (l) and Jenny from the Salvos Store, Noble Park



Leo Rosner

it was my father's accordion with his name painted in broad white letters across the bellows, nestled in its red velvet lining. It was as familiar as his smell, his touch ... I was instantly taken back to our garden where, as a child, I watched my father lay his accordion on its back on a table; then, with a tin of white paint and a fine-haired brush, he would carefully paint the letters of his name across each individual bellow. When the accordion was at rest, the name ROSNER could be clearly seen; while he was playing, the bellows expanded and contracted as his name danced in time to the music. Every accordion my father owned (and there were many) was embellished in this eponymous way. This instrument before me was the heavy electronic one he had played for many years.

But how did it get there? Had it been stolen? Jenny even asked whether there might be a connection between the fact that Leo had been buried at Springvale, and somehow the accordion had found its way to the neighbouring suburb. In any case, the staff were delighted to know that I was Leo's daughter and shook my hand; and I was grateful that rather than treating the accordion as they would any other donation and put it up for sale, they'd done the research to try to connect the item with its owner.

Michael told me he'd found out all sorts of things about Leo's concentration camp experiences on the web; he couldn't understand how human beings could behave so appallingly, and had no words for the horrors of the Holocaust.

We couldn't take the accordion home that day, as we had to wait for a phone call to organise release. I was grateful to Jayne for making herself available that day and enabling me to connect with the Salvos.

I returned the following week to leave a donation for the Salvos and pick up the accordion, so that I could bring it back to our family and have another precious link with my father. But how it got to the Salvos remains a mystery.

What happened to the Jewish communities of North Africa during the Second World War?

Ziva Fain



Holocaust survivors returning to Libya from Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The inscription on the wagon states 'Back to Tripoli'.

During the Second World War, Vichy France controlled the North African colonies of Morocco, Algeria and Tunis, and Italy controlled Libya. Australians first fought the Italian army and then twice fought Rommel's German Desert Corps. In Australia we celebrate the heroic battles of Tobruk in Libya and El Alamein in Egypt, and we know that Italy and Vichy France were part of the Axis powers, but our knowledge of what happened in North Africa usually stops there. What, for instance, happened to the Jewish communities in those countries during the Second World War?

The Nazi racial laws adopted by Vichy France and Italy were implemented in the colonies of North Africa to the letter, with the help of European settlers who saw the Jews as competing with their commercial and social interests. As in Europe, Jews were forbidden to work in government jobs and their children to attend government schools; medical practitioners and lawyers were not allowed to attend to non-Jews; and Jewish businesses were confiscated and given to non-Jews. Jews were forced to leave their properties and moved to the old ghetto areas in the cities. These were the worst areas, without sewage and water supplies, and with overcrowded and dilapidated buildings. Jews were forced to join the labour work force and finance their tools and food. They were subjected to pogroms, monetary and physical punishment and kidnapping. No law protected them. Work and punishment camps were established and here too the communities were made responsible for supplying tools and food. Treatment in the punishment camps was cruel and prisoners had little chance of surviving.

The Muslim population was not united in its treatment of Jews. In Jerusalem, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin El Husseini and his collaborators broadcast antisemitic German propaganda by short wave radio. At the same time, Arab nationalism was on the rise, and the majority of Muslims cooperated with the authorities in the persecution of the Jews. They served as soldiers in the African Corps and as auxiliary workers, like guards, in the camps and willingly participated in pogroms. However, a small group of Muslims helped the Jews, in accordance with the Islamic *dhimma* laws. Those laws required non-Muslims to accept second-rate status and pay a poll tax for their protection.

The arrival of the Germans in North Africa made life even harder for the Jewish communities. Food was scarce and raids on Jewish houses became a daily occurrence. The worst conditions were in Tunis and Libya, where the Germans had direct control. In Libya the country changed hands three times, from Italian to British and then to German control. The Germans considered the Libyan Jews to be supporters of the British and therefore traitors. Punishment was severe. During air raids Jewish young men were sent to clear minefields and rubble with their bare hands. All the Libyan Jewish communities of the main towns were evacuated inland to a desert concentration camp. During the long trip there was no protection from the weather nor water supplied. Conditions in the camp were atrocious: there was not enough shelter, food or water, no sewage or medical help.

In Algeria, the Vichy government implemented harsh racial laws with the complete cooperation of the French settler and Muslim populations. Jews were first stripped of their French citizenship and legal protection, and then of their property and fundamental human rights. In Morocco the situation of the Jews was a little better, as King Mohammed V refused to comply with all the Vichy government's antisemitic decrees.

In 1941 the Nazis had plans for the genocide of the Jews of North Africa, including a plan to build gas chambers on the border of Tunis and Algeria. *Einsatzgruppen* stood by in southern Italy ready to move into North Africa and the Middle East, and plans for transporting Libyan Jews to Poland were in their last stages.

Two events saved the Jews: Operation Torch and a typhus epidemic. On 8 November 1942 the Americans landed in Algeria as part of Operation Torch, and the German army was forced to fight on two fronts, reducing their capacity to act on eliminating the Jewish population. In Libya, a typhus epidemic in the concentration camp cost 500 Jewish lives, but saved the rest of the community, as the Germans were afraid to enter the camp and postponed the transportation of prisoners to Poland. By the time the typhus epidemic had receded, the English army had conquered Libya again and the Germans were defeated.

Egyptian and Middle Eastern Jewry were not spared from persecution. The Arab population in Egypt discriminated against Jews, who were subject to attack, and not always protected by the British colonial government. In Syria, Iraq and Iran, pogroms instigated by Nazi supporters caused large loss of life and financial damage. Their instigator was Haj Amin el Husseini, whose actions earned him the title 'the Arab Hitler'.

Ziva Fain's research was funded by a Jewish Holocaust Centre Maly Kohn Professional Development Scholarship. She is grateful to Miriam Weiss and family for the establishment of the scholarship which enabled her to make contact with North African Jewish associations in Israel and the USA, and to the Libyan Jewish Association in Israel for their generous help.

From Melbourne to Magdeburg

Hannah Miska

It was just by chance that I met Heike. Heike Ponitka is the commissioner for gender equality of the city of Magdeburg. She was undertaking a project about the life of women in Magdeburg during and after the Second World War, for which she interviewed my mother.

It was a sheer coincidence that I was at my mother's place on that day, and was invited to listen. My mother, who was a young woman at the end of the war, talked about the difficulties of life at that time, especially for women, most of whom were on their own because their men had not yet returned, or would not return from the war or from prison camps. They had to try to make a living, look after their parents and children, 'organise' food and coal, which were scarce commodities, and help clear away the debris in the heavily bombed city.

After Heike had finished her interview, she turned to me to ask what I was doing. I smiled and said: 'Actually, I have been interviewing people, as well, people who were persecuted during the Holocaust.' Heike was very interested and immediately asked lots of questions. I told her that I am writing a book about Holocaust survivors who emigrated to Australia after the war, a book depicting the stories of 16 survivors from various countries – Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania and Poland. Their stories are told with many citations, preceded by a chapter providing contemporary context to their individual accounts.

Heike did not hesitate to ask me whether I would do a reading on the occasion of the *Frauen Aktionstage* (Women's Action Days) in Magdeburg, a two-week festival organised by women, embracing many themes, not all women-related. I agreed.

The reading took place on 14 March this year in the city hall. The audience of 120 people included members of the Political Round Table – women who engage in various projects to lobby for women's rights, democracy and tolerance; women of *BeReshith*, a Jewish women's organisation from the state of Sachsen-Anhalt; and history students from two Magdeburg schools. It turned out to be an event of real interest. Local and regional journalists were there, and I was interviewed by a TV channel. Heike had arranged for the Jewish group, *Foyal*, to play Yiddish songs, and with clarinet, base, drums, accordion and a



Audience at the *Frauen Aktionstage* reading in Magdeburg



Hannah Miska's reading at the *Frauen Aktionstage* in Magdeburg

singer they were excellent.

I began with a brief speech about the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) in Melbourne, how I came across it, how I started to work there and why a Holocaust museum had been built in Melbourne, Australia. I also talked about the volunteers who work there and, finally, I mentioned Pauline Rockman. I told the audience that one day Pauline had said to me that she was going on a trip to Germany. 'Where to?' I had asked her. To which she replied: 'Aaah, never mind, you wouldn't know the place anyway.' As a matter of fact, she went to Magdeburg – my home town – to witness the laying of a *Stolperstein* (a small brass memorial for victims of Nazism, set in the pavement in front of the building in which they once lived) for her family, as Pauline's great grandfather Mechel Herz and his family had lived in Magdeburg. All perished in the Shoah with the exception of Mechel's son, Samuel, who managed to emigrate to Australia one month before the Second World War began. He survived and became Pauline's grandfather.

For the reading I chose the story of Irma Hanner, a Holocaust survivor and JHC guide who was deported to Theresienstadt as a twelve-year-old girl. Irma was born in Germany and grew up in Dresden, a city just two hours away from Magdeburg. My sister Christine was my co-reader. While I read the historical and connecting background text, Christine read quotes from Irma's story. The combination worked well and the audience was very attentive. There was not even noise to be heard from the students' ranks!

After the reading, many people approached me to let me know how deeply moved they were. Even though they all knew about the Holocaust, they stressed that there is a difference between reading a history book and reading about the lives of individuals who, first hand, experienced the traumas of the past.

Melbourne and Magdeburg have connected. In autumn, Christine and I have been invited to read again. This time, it will be part of the Magdeburg Jewish Festival – the sixth time this festival will have taken place.

One parting comment: In September 2012, a youth group of a welfare organisation went on a trip to Theresienstadt. Realising that many cities erect a plaque to honour their citizens who were deported to Theresienstadt and died, the group established an initiative called 'Commemorative Plaque for Magdeburg'. Only a year later, on 18 September 2013, the Lord Mayor of Magdeburg will present a plaque in Theresienstadt to honour the citizens of Magdeburg who were deported there.

My March of the Living journey

Brad Shofer



Brad and Helene Shofer, Auschwitz

I was a Holocaust denier. Not in the way of David Irving, but within myself. As a young boy, I'd watched the *World at War* documentary series on TV. The horrific images of emaciated 'shells' in striped pajamas were forever burnt into my psyche. They haunted and petrified me. So I shut them out. This wasn't my life, wasn't my concern. Yet there was a deep connection, one that I didn't yet understand.

At 52 years of age, I was comfortable with myself. However I've learned that one can never be too comfortable for too long. My wife, Helene, suggested we go on the annual March of the Living (MOTL) program to Poland and Israel.

My family had avoided the horrors of the Holocaust by leaving Lithuania in the late 1920s. My wife's family had not been so lucky. Her father was one of the few people to get out in time. She had always wanted to go back to Eastern Europe to learn more about what had happened, pay her respects to her family, and to bear witness.

I was the complete opposite. It was too painful even to begin to consider. I believed that deep down I wouldn't be able to handle it emotionally. I might not cope. No, sorry, just can't do it. Can't go there. Don't want to spend any money in Poland anyway.

Our eldest daughter had been on the student March of the Living three years previously. She seemed to handle it okay but never said much to us about it. Now our middle child was just weeks away from making the trip. We called the MOTL office and, to my horror, discovered that it wasn't too late. Pretty soon we were *all* signed up. There was no backing out.

The next three weeks were a blur. We became acquainted with our fellow marchers and attended briefings. One event that stands out was a delightful afternoon spent with 93-year-old survivor Eddie Jaku. What an inspiration he is!

The adult program runs parallel to the student one, treading similar paths with occasional crossovers. Most importantly

you march together on the actual MOTL day, from Auschwitz to Birkenau. Part of one big column of 11,000 people in blue and white, remembering, honouring and bearing witness, doing your bit to ensure it isn't forgotten and that it doesn't happen again.

So now I'm here, out the other side. There were tough moments, but the overwhelming memories and impacts on me have all been positive.

I met some incredible like-minded people on this amazing journey. There were 85 of us from four different countries journeying through Poland and Israel on two buses. We now share a bond that endures.

I learned so much I didn't know: the intricate, fascinating details of how such a horrific, despicable, unimaginable genocide could happen on such a mammoth scale. We were there together, with a common purpose, too involved in the experience to worry about minor inconveniences.

My perspective on life has been changed forever. I now seek to fill my life with purpose and meaning and tend not to sweat the small stuff as much. As Eddie told us, 'If you have two bottles of fine wine, always drink the best one first.'

There were some confronting moments. That first walk through the gas chamber at Auschwitz was harrowing. For a short while I held my breath as I took in the horror of the place. Then I was out the other side and back in the fresh air. All along the way I felt supported. Help was there if you needed it. The knowledge of this was enough comfort.

And then we were whisked away through the night to Israel. The efficient El Al staff had a job to do, but somehow seemed to understand what we'd been through.



Brad and Helene Shofer, Jerusalem

We experienced Yom Hazikaron on a moshav outside of Jerusalem, listening to heartbreaking stories of loss in a small community. Then we experienced the joy of Yom Ha'atzmaut, dancing together in the evening at Safra Square before marching the following day to the Kotel, singing and exchanging flags.

We understood as never before the importance of having a Jewish homeland, a place to go to when all other doors have been firmly shut in our faces.

Adult MOTL has been one of the most important journeys of my life and I am so glad I did it. I'm proud that I was able to bear witness and I will continue to do so. It has connected me more deeply to my roots. It has given me perspective.

I kept a blog of my journey along the way. Each night I wrote about what we experienced and what I was feeling. I tried to describe the journey as openly and honestly as I could. If you are interested you can read it at <http://amotlbrad.wordpress.com>

Brad Shofer was a participant in the Adult March of the Living, April 2013.

Reflections on the Student March of the Living

Abi Lax



Auschwitz



Abi Lax

Some react to the atrocities perpetrated against the Jews during the Second World War by harbouring ongoing feelings of hatred. Others, whose reactions are driven by shock and disbelief, respond with despair. One of the most common reactions to the Holocaust, I have found, is numbness, perhaps as a result of conflicting emotions,

perhaps as a result of merely not knowing what 'the proper reaction' should be.

March of the Living (MOTL) provided an environment in which I felt comfortable settling into the reaction I felt was appropriate to Holocaust memorial. MOTL, I found, was a program that devoted itself to balance and contrast – the contrast, for example, between the atrocities of the Holocaust and persecution of the Jewish people, and the absolute triumph and unity of the Jewish nation that exists in Israel. The balance existed between the despair felt in Poland, and the bliss of being in Israel, making the trip an emotionally satisfying experience.

I have always had a fascination with the Second World War on a purely historical level. From an intellectual perspective I have found the entire Nazi regime, German occupation of Europe, the Holocaust and the downfall of Nazi Germany intriguing. Initially, it was my love of history which attracted me to the MOTL program. However, as the experience loomed closer and closer, I came to terms with the concept of being a custodian of the memory of our Holocaust survivors and of the victims of the Shoah. I slowly began to realise that our generation will be the last to have direct contact with those who survived the Holocaust; our generation will be the last to hear the stories first hand. It was after discovering this that I really grasped the importance of the trip; I too had to continue to kindle and keep alive the flame of Holocaust memory.

In Poland, I learnt a lesson in tolerance. What occurred in the very places I stood, over 68 years ago, was a result of inhumanity, paranoia, wickedness and xenophobia. The first camp we visited was the one which had the greatest impact on me. Of all the camps that exist as memorials today, Majdanek is by far the most intact, and could be converted into a functioning camp in just over 24 hours. During its 34 months of operation, approximately 79,000 people were killed there. One of the most shocking things about Majdanek is its proximity to Lublin. I recall standing

at my window in our accommodation in Lublin, looking out at the facades of buildings, and then just seeing an expanse of nothing. Majdanek literally lay in the middle of suburban Lublin. This disturbed many MOTL participants deeply because it highlighted the concept of the bystander, who literally stood by during the murder of thousands upon thousands of people, and did nothing.

Holocaust memorial is about highlighting the presence of absence. The outcome of the Holocaust was absence, for what there once was no longer is. The Holocaust memorials aim to show the magnitude of European Jewry that thrived until the build-up to the Second World War. The mere notion that a millennium of Jewish history, culture and life could be extinguished in less than five years is one that could only be considered achievable if hate was taken to its absolute extreme, and was allowed to engulf a nation.

And yet, despite all that has been lost, Judaism still exists today. I walked through Poland and visited these memorials as the granddaughter of a Polish Jew; Nazism failed, the Jewish spirit triumphed. Hatred failed, and Judaism triumphed.

Israel, as an experience and a component of the trip, highlights the balance of the MOTL program. After being exposed to the effects of the atrocities of the Second World War in Poland, we were shown the strength of the Jewish religion and culture. Being in Israel, as a Jew and a Zionist,

gave me a feeling of safety and comfort that cannot be achieved anywhere else. In Israel we spent our Friday night Shabbat service at the Kotel with thousands of other members of MOTL youth contingents from around the world. There I found myself connected with my history and culture as never before. Where I stood, millions of people have stood for the past millennia. In front of the Western Wall, I was living the Zionist dream of having the freedom to practise my religion freely in my Jewish homeland, something that I was

able to understand for the first time.

March of the Living is an experience that taught me the value of tolerance, an appreciation of Judaism and the importance of memorialising the Holocaust. Since I have returned home, I have found myself more willing to give back to the community that has provided me with so much. Perhaps most importantly, I learnt that it will soon become our duty and our responsibility to continue to remember, and to continue to vow: 'never again', so the memories of those who perished will never be forgotten.

Abi Lax participated in the 2013 Student MOTL program. She is a student at Emanuel College in Sydney.



Abi Lax with participants of the Student March of the Living

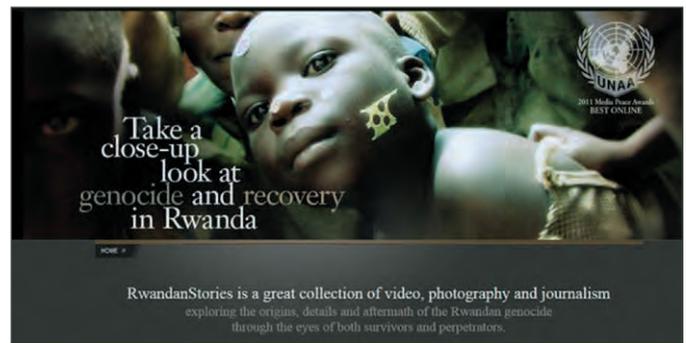
Breaking down walls by building them: victims, perpetrators, and the work of *Rwandan Stories*

Adam Brown

The JHC Film Club – a series of film screenings on the Holocaust, other genocides, and human rights issues held monthly at the Jewish Holocaust Centre – has been home to some unique and truly remarkable evenings. The value of these experiences lies not only in the quality of the films we are fortunate enough to be able to screen, but perhaps even more so in the presentations by guest speakers and their interactive discussions with the audience.

One recent event included a screening of *Blinky & Me* (2011), a documentary about Yoram Gross, the highly influential children's animator and creator of the character 'Blinky Bill'. The screening was preceded by a Skype interview with the film's director Thomas Magierski in New York, and followed by a discussion with Yoram Gross himself. The documentary revealed (for the first time on the screen) how Gross' work, which has had a major impact on Australian national identity, is indelibly linked to his experiences as a Polish Jew during the war. Another 2013 screening focused on the award-winning film *Misa's Figue* (2012), an impressive collaborative effort of teachers and students from a high school in Fleetwood, Pennsylvania, that tells the traumatic story of Frank Grunwald, a survivor of several concentration camps. A live online discussion with director Sean Gaston and producer Jennifer Goss revealed how the innovative film involved student participation in creating visuals, editing, and musical scoring, and raised many interesting issues regarding how younger generations might be brought closer to Holocaust history in the present.

To say one film screening is more powerful than another misses the point, as the films differ markedly in subject matter, and each participant takes away something different from the experience. Nonetheless, one evening that had a particularly deep impact on me, which I wanted to reflect on here, was the screening of *As We Forgive* (2010). This film explores the traumatic aftermath of genocide in Rwanda, a subject about which I (to my shame) know very little. Issues of revenge, forgiveness and justice continue to permeate a country in which the government returned over 50,000 perpetrators back to the very communities they helped to destroy. As the film shows, this situation frequently brings survivors face-to-face with the person(s) who killed members of their families. In many cases, former perpetrators attempt to make amends for their past behaviour – at least to whatever extent possible given the extreme circumstances. (I'm uncomfortable using the word 'reconciliation' here, particularly given the Christian connotations of the term and the Catholic Church's complicity in the genocide.) Bridging metaphor and reality, many former killers help to build mud brick houses for victims. *As We Forgive* depicts this complex situation with nuance and respect, and is in many ways



Rwandan Stories website

an intriguing film. The effect on the audience was both obvious and profound, but the highlight of the evening for me, and I'm sure for many others, was the post-film discussion with Dave Fullerton and Sally Morgan.

Having just stepped off the plane from his most recent trip to Rwanda, Dave Fullerton gave a stunning speech (which is available in full on YouTube) that provided insights into Rwandan society and culture that can only come from someone who has been there. Intensely personal and oftentimes moving, Dave gave the audience a glimpse into the everyday lives of a people whose remarkable dignity, fortitude and resilience enable them to approach something that might be considered 'recovery'. Dave noted in his speech that 'because relationships and community are so important to Rwandans... most of them have got on board fairly quickly with the idea that Rwanda should be a home again for all Rwandans.' Dave works as a researcher, writer, editor, camera operator, filmmaker, graphic artist and web designer for the award-winning *Rwandan Stories* project. After Dave's stirring speech, Sally Morgan, a teacher and curriculum developer from the project, joined Dave for an engaging discussion with the audience.

The *Rwandan Stories* website (www.rwandanstories.org) contains twenty remarkable short films on the genocide and broader history of Rwanda, drawing on firsthand interviews with survivors – many of whom had lost all members of their families to the mass killings. In one film, Alisa tells of barely surviving in the marshes of the Nyabarongo River as perpetrators of the genocide surrounded her. After her baby was murdered while being carried on her back, Alisa escaped to hide among the papyrus trees: 'Every day in the swamp many teams of killers would come looking for people to kill... they knew we were hiding there. Every day we jumped over corpses to escape from them.' Connected with *Rwandan Stories* is *Vanishing Point* (www.vanishingpoint.com.au), a small social enterprise working in mainstream education to provide curriculum support to teachers and students in relation to Rwanda. These inspirational projects underline just how much can be done by so few and, like the ongoing efforts of the Jewish Holocaust Centre, reveal how fundamental they are to the continued remembrance of, and education about, genocide in the twenty-first century.

Please contact the Jewish Holocaust Centre or visit the website for full screening details, or email Adam Brown (abrown@deakin.edu.au) to join the JHC Film Club mailing list.

Lion Hearts: A Family Saga of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Published by Hybrid Publishers 2012

Written by Henry R Lew

Reviewed by Elaine Davidoff

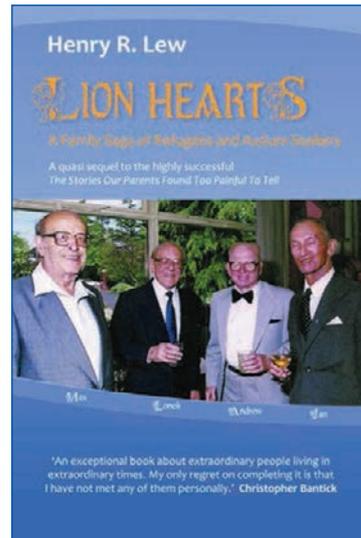
The photograph of Jan Karski on the cover of *Lion Hearts* immediately piqued my interest. If this book was about people of anything like his calibre – Karski was a Polish Second World War resistance fighter and is counted among the Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem – I assumed I would not be disappointed. My hunch was right. Most of the characters in Henry (Harry) Lew's warm and engaging book are people of great courage and character.

Lion Hearts is essentially a biography in which a son honours his father for whom he clearly has a deep, abiding love and regard. As he states in the introduction, writing his father's obituary was a task Lew found too painful in the period immediately following his father's death. With the passage of time, however, and having undertaken a great deal of research, Lew has written a book that reveals Lonek Lew by introducing the reader to many of the people who had an impact on, and informed, his life in various ways. *Lion Hearts* is a mosaic of stories – some deeply moving, even heartbreaking; and some light and amusing and, as in the chapter entitled 'Gustav', occasionally quite oblique. All, however, add a dimension to Lonek and give us insight into his character.

Lonek Lew was born in 1907 in Bialystok, Poland, where he was named Arieh Lev. Translated from Hebrew into English, the name becomes Lion Heart, hence the title of the book. In Australia he was known as Leo or Leon Lew, but his friends called him Lonek.

The first person we meet in this colourful mosaic is Lonek's younger brother Naum – or Monia as he was also known – whom Harry in fact had never met, as he died in 1942 during the Holocaust. The young Harry was told numerous amusing and exciting stories about his uncle and felt a great affinity for him. Ultimately, however, Monia's story is a tragic one and it is through this narrative that we become aware of the prevailing sadness that is at the core of Harry Lew's family history.

Lonek and his wife Genia were fatefully not in Bialystok when the Germans invaded after Hitler broke his pact with Stalin, and they survived the war in remote areas of the former Soviet Union. Their families were not so



fortunate and most of them were murdered in the Holocaust. Yet for all this tragedy, *Lion Hearts* is not a bleak book. Countering the sadness is Lonek's determined positivity, as he states over and over: 'No matter how long you live, always remember that you are only alive for a very short time, and you're dead for a very long time, so never give up on life, no matter how things seem, fight on and make the most of it.'

Among the many stories of courage and resilience in Lonek's circle of family and friends, the chapter entitled 'Tomek', in which Harry recounts his initially reluctant journey back to Poland, makes for compelling, albeit distressing, reading. As Harry says, although Lonek 'was a man who never hated, he never learnt to hate Germans or Poles... "there are no bad nations," he would repeatedly emphasise to me, "only bad people."' Harry preferred to retain a mental picture of Poland as it was before the war. As he explains, 'I had no wish to change the numerous images which my parents had implanted in my mind, to pollute it with new material' – namely, the Holocaust.

Nonetheless, after Lonek's death, Harry does visit his parents' birthplace and it is here that he meets the remarkable Tomek Wisniewski, a highly regarded Polish guide, who teaches him a great deal more about Bialystok. Lonek had met Tomek on one of his trips to Poland, and it is with Tomek that Harry traces the steps of his lost family in Poland.

Through the stories of Naum, Jan, Sylvia and Jurek, Max and Andrew, to name a few, we come to appreciate something of Lonek's intelligence, his curiosity, his remarkable linguistic skills, his charm and humour. Most significant of all, though, is his fierce determination to adapt to life regardless of its difficulties and to make the most of it, even into his very old age.

I would have liked *Lion Hearts* to include some photographs of the characters we meet on this journey, and a family tree would have provided a useful roadmap through some of the chapters rich in detail and history. Yet this is a small quibble in what is otherwise a worthwhile and engaging book. For members of the Australian Jewish community who have a close link to the Holocaust, particularly as it was experienced by the Jews of Poland, the stories in *Lion Hearts* may well resonate with aspects of their own family histories. For readers who do not have a personal connection to this tragic period of modern Jewish history, the book is an invaluable insight into what shapes and informs the unique post-Holocaust Australian Jewish community.

Harry Lew is a fortunate man to have had a life enriched by such a father, and by the many people he came to know through his father's experiences.

JHC Social Club

Barbara Sacks



(standing l-r) Barbara Sacks, Zeddy Lawrence, Judy and Alex Resofsky, (seated l-r) Clara Weis, Sonia Wajsenberg and Masha Wiener.

The JHC Social Club has become very popular, as more and more people join this vibrant group.

We have had some interesting and stimulating speakers over the last few months:

- Emanuel Santos, well known Melbourne-based documentary and art photographer born in the Philippines, spoke to us about his life and work, focusing on 'Art and Remembrance'. Most of his work over the past three decades has related to the Jewish Diaspora, the Holocaust and cultures of antiquity, and he is the official photographer for the annual March of the Living.
- Zeddy Lawrence, National Editor of the *Australian Jewish News*, entertained us with stories about life as a journalist and editor in London and Melbourne. A graduate of Queen's College Oxford, Zeddy was formerly editorial director of the Jewish News and Media Group in the United Kingdom, and has worked as a radio presenter, journalist and TV scriptwriter.
- Shelley Cohny, academic, tour guide and kosher culinary expert, spoke to us about 'The History of Jewish Food'. Shelley has written and lectured about food, history and Judaism both in Australia and overseas, conducts food tours, and has been a kosher cooking demonstrator at the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival.
- Yvette Crafti, a Humanitarian Aid Trainer with RedR Australia, trains aid workers in a number of areas critical to effective international disaster response, including water, sanitation, shelter, health, protection, law, education, aid worker security, food and nutrition,

site planning and working with the military. Before becoming a trainer, Yvette worked in Tanzania for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. She spoke to us about 'Food Security and Famine in the 21st Century'.

- Anita Frayman is a lawyer and PhD candidate at Monash University who spoke about 'Cultural Diversity among Older Jewish People in Melbourne'. Anita is currently conducting research into cultural influences on ageing in the Melbourne Jewish community. Her previous research has included an oral history on immigration of Holocaust survivors, which culminated in the 'Buchenwald Boys' exhibition at the Melbourne Immigration Museum in 2005.



(l-r) Barbara Sacks and Yvette Crafti

We invite all readers to come and have a bagel and coffee with us while we socialise and engage in lively discussion with our guest speakers. We meet monthly in the Marejn Auditorium of the Jewish Holocaust Centre.

For further information about the JHC Social Club, please contact Barbara Sacks on 9596 9857.



(l-r) Goldie Birch, Sue Lewis and Caroline Bryce

The Anne Frank touring exhibition brought an unprecedented number of visitors to the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) from February to April this year, and the Friends of the Jewish Holocaust Centre ran several informative and inspiring events to complement the work of the Centre's dedicated staff and volunteers.

The Young Friends, capably run by Lauren Spitalnic, held a function on 7 March which attracted a wide range of tertiary students from different cultural backgrounds, as well as young working Friends. It was a great opportunity for these people to see the exhibition and visit the Centre's museum.

On 13 March, 100 people attended a more formal event, addressed by JHC curator Jayne Josem and Dutch survivor and Centre volunteer Bep Gomperts. A documentary about Anne Frank was screened and the work of the Centre was outlined. A third and equally successful evening, similar to the March event, was held on 21 April, coordinated by Silvana Layton and Ely Brooks.

Lisa Lewis and Melanie Raleigh (granddaughter of survivor guide Tuvia Lipson) organised an evening on 22 April for a new group of Young Friends aged in their 30s and 40s. Many who attended had not visited the Centre

Friends of the Jewish Holocaust Centre

Goldie Birch

since their high school days and were delighted to see the renovated museum.

In April, *The Sum of Three*, written by Rita Ross, was launched at Beth Weizmann Community Centre, with half the proceeds from the sale of books kindly donated to the JHC. The book, published by the Makor *Write Your Story* program, was launched by Sue Hampel. Almost 200 people attended and nearly 100 books were sold. We thank Mrs Ross and her daughter-in-law, Tacye Ross, for generously sharing this event with Friends.

These functions have helped raise awareness of the Centre's activities and have inspired a great deal of enthusiasm, particularly among the younger generation. The Friends committee continues to develop grass roots support for the Centre, with the art auction *To Life*, our major fundraising focus for later this year. We hope to emulate the success of our art auction held in 2009, and look forward to seeing many of our supporters there. Details appear on the back cover of this issue of *Centre News*.

Finally, I wish JHC staff, volunteers and committee members of the Friends a happy, healthy and sweet New Year and well over the Fast.



(l-r) Jonathon Zimmet, Lauren Spitalnic and Carlie Cohen

Become a Friend of the Jewish Holocaust Centre. Support the activities of the Centre.

The Friends of the Jewish Holocaust Centre plays an important role in providing financial support to the Centre through membership subscriptions, raffle book sales, sales of the Entertainment Book and social fundraising functions.

To become a Friend of the Jewish Holocaust Centre, simply download and complete the form from www.jhc.org.au/friends-of-the-jhc.html

For further information please contact Goldie Birch on (03) 9528 1985 or email goldiegb@bigpond.net.au.

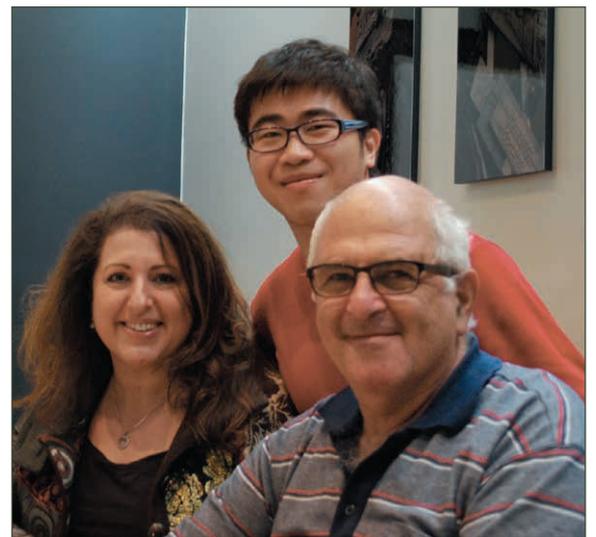
Jewish Holocaust Centre Friends
REMEMBRANCE EDUCATION MUSEUM



(l-r) Jayne Josem, Michael Cohen, Warren Fineberg, His Excellency Sven-Olof Petersson, Swedish Ambassador to Australia, and Pauline Rockman OAM



(l-r) Charlie Goldberg, Nikki Winston and George Braitberg



(l-r) Nicki Pick, Wesley Tang and John Berhang



(l-r) Yoram Gross and Warren Fineberg



(l-r) Ursula Flicker OAM, Bep Gomperts and Henryka Fromm



(l-r) Phillip Maisel OAM, Sarah Saaroni and Tuvia Lipson



(l-r) His Excellency Mr Pawel Milewski, Polish Ambassador to Australia, Honorary Consul-General Dr George Luc-Kozika and Moshe Fizman



(l-r) Gita and Jack Ginger



(l-r) Leila Gurruwiwi and Stephanie Heller



(l-r) Wolf Dean and Jack Fogel



(l-r) Adam Brown and Yoram Gross



(l-r) Sandra Reisner, Susan Onas, Marie Farmer and Lynne Samuel

Kindertransport tag: a journey to a new life

Jayne Josem

A small round tag recently donated to Jewish Holocaust Centre collection by Dr Barry Arkles, alongside a few other items, tells a heartbreaking story of a young woman's separation from her parents and her survival.

Lore Oschinski, who was born on 12 August 1923, wore the name tag when she went to England with the *Kindertransport* as a 16-year-old, together with hundreds of other children.

The *Kindertransport* was a rescue mission that took place following *Kristallnacht* (Night of the Broken Glass) in November 1938, a night of brutal attacks on Jews, Jewish homes, businesses and institutions across Germany and Austria. In the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*, British refugee organisations persuaded the British government to waive certain immigration requirements to enable predominantly Jewish children under 17 years of age to come temporarily to Britain. Between December 1938 and September 1939 when the Second World War began, the *Kindertransport* trains brought around 10,000 children to Britain from Nazi Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and the Sudetenland (part of Czechoslovakia that had been been incorporated into the German Reich towards the end of 1938). The trains crossed into the Netherlands and Belgium, after which the children continued to Britain by ship. At first the ships arrived twice weekly, then in June and July 1939 they arrived daily.



Lore Oschinski

Lore's journey began when her parents, Herta and Richard Oschinski, sent her to safety from Berlin, with other children, to Brussels where she lived with her uncle Alfred. She attended a local school in Brussels from April to September 1939. With war looming, a large group



Lore Oschinski's
Kindertransport tag

of Jewish children was sent on the *Kindertransport* to England. When Lore arrived there, war had broken out and her parents were trapped in Germany.

With Britain at war with Germany, Germans and Austrians living in England were classified as enemy aliens. Lore was categorised as 'B' – 'loyalty a little suspect; remain at liberty' – but in mid-1940 the British decided it best to intern enemy aliens in this category so she was sent to a women's camp at Port Erin on the Isle of Man. Among the items donated to the Jewish Holocaust Centre is a small notebook Lore had with her in which she drew some childish but beautiful drawings. On the day of her internment she wrote the quote: 'Scout Law: smile and whistle under all difficulties.'

The whole of Port Erin, a residential holiday village on the west coast, along with its smaller neighbour Port St Mary, became Rushen Camp for women prisoners. Unlike the male camps, there was no barbed wire and the boarding house keepers were allowed to stay on site. The women prisoners were billeted and catered for in a similar manner to ordinary holiday makers, but on a tighter budget. The government paid each landlady £1 3s 6d per head per week, and the rations for the internees were also delivered to her. In the majority of cases the landladies did all the cooking. Landladies enjoyed certain powers: they were instructed to cut off the electric and gas supply at the hours fixed; they controlled the wireless and they had the right to go into the women's rooms at any time. Apart from housework, the women had no regular occupation.

Lore's mother Herta succeeded in escaping Germany and joined her at Port Erin, but her father could not leave. Lore received a 19th birthday card on 12 August 1942 from her father Richard, together with a farewell letter. Unbeknown to her, her father had committed suicide on 9 August 1942. Her two aunts, Frieda and Elsie, had also committed suicide in July 1942. These deaths preceded a deportation to Theresienstadt in 1942 and were officially notified in 1946.

On Lore's 21st birthday in 1944 her mother gave her a card, which has also been donated to the Centre's collection, in which she wrote: 'I hope the second part of your life is as interesting but less stormy than the first part.'

Lore Oschinski subsequently trained as a nurse and midwife at West Suffolk General Hospital in England during the Second World War and worked in St Mark's Hospital in the east of London in the aftermath of the war. The family name Oschinski was changed to Oliver. We have a business card in the Jewish Holocaust Centre archives with her new name and profession, marking her transition from a German-Jewish child refugee to a working adult contributing to her new homeland.

Lore emigrated to South Africa in the late 1940s to join relatives who had left Germany for Johannesburg in the mid-1930s and she married Charles Arkles. She was his third wife and bore no children. They moved to England in the 1980s, where they both died.

Jayne Josem is the Jewish Holocaust Centre Curator and Head of Collections. Ann Kabillo, a volunteer at the Centre, provided research assistance for this article.

New acquisitions

Claude Fromm



Correspondence from Kletsk

The following are new additions to the Centre's collection from January to June 2013:

1. Letter sent from Jewish woman in Ukraine to her friend in 1941-1942, describing the desperate situation in Ukraine for Jews at that time and how she feared for her life. The author of the letter did not survive.
Donor: Klara Kuperschmidt
2. Items pertaining to *Kindertransport* survivor Lore Oliver, including business card, small drawing book, *Kindertransport* tag and birthday card.
Donor: Dr L Barry Arkles
3. Sculpture of woman's head
Donor: Mrs Regina Szmulewicz

4. Sculpture (artist unknown) and a video by Mrs Emma Rosenwasser describing how she witnessed atrocities in the Ukraine.
Donor: Mr Alex Dreyschner
5. Scrap books containing newspaper articles about antisemitism from around the world, written between 7 January 1960 and 21 October 1961
Donor: Anonymous
6. Series of photos and correspondence relating to the late Sam Gelfand, husband of the donor, whose family came from Kletsk, now in Belarus but formerly in Poland. He and his sister, Batya, were the only members of the family who survived the Holocaust.
Donor: Mrs Dina Gelfand



Sculpture of woman's head

The Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) collection is a vital repository of Holocaust-era material. Artefacts and documents are carefully catalogued and stored in a state-of-the-art temperature-controlled facility to ensure their preservation for future generations. The JHC invites members of the public who have precious items relating to the Holocaust to consider donating them to our collection for safekeeping.

Phillip Maisel Testimonies Project

The Jewish Holocaust Centre has over 1,300 video testimonies, as well as over 200 audio testimonies in its collection. These provide eyewitness accounts of the horrors of the Holocaust, together with glimpses into the vibrancy of pre-war Jewish life in Europe. The collection is widely used by researchers and students of oral history, the Holocaust and a variety of other disciplines.

If you would like to give your testimony or know of someone who is interested in giving a testimony, please contact Phillip Maisel.

Phone: (03) 9528 1985 or email: testimonies@jhc.org.au





(l-r) Len Wittner, Helen Hendy, Julia Reichstein, Wesley Tang, Freda Hodge and Mareike and Henry Montgomery
(absent were Chris Dargan, Tina Dikanovic, Debbie Dorfan and Ruth Tang)

Meet the team: a week in the life of the Jewish Holocaust Centre Library

Julia Reichstein

Changes within the Jewish Holocaust Centre Library are occurring, but its driving force remains unchanged; it still thrives on the passion and dedication of its volunteers – as exemplified by recently retired library founders and volunteers, Holocaust survivors Rosa Freilich, Sabina Josem and Zyga Elton.

I invite you now to be a book on our shelf and observe us at work!

Monday, 17 June

Meet Ruth Tang, coordinator of our Local Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection. Ruth scrutinises my latest transcript, a recent interview conducted with local Holocaust survivor and author, Halina Zylberman. Ruth combines this task with her own book review writing for the local memoirs collection.

Tuesday, 18 June

Introducing Debbie Dorfan. Qualified in Information Management, Debbie will become the library's Cataloguing and Loans Librarian. Today Debbie and I process and catalogue new books from scratch, and update and repair existing catalogue records.

Wednesday, 19 June

Len Wittner is one of our two Holocaust Reference Librarians. Busily creating a new book display to promote the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee for their upcoming hundred-year anniversary, work is paused momentarily for the library team's scheduled group photo.

Enter Helen Hendy, one of the library's three Research Librarians. Volunteering her expertise one Wednesday each month, Helen specialises in Holocaust genealogy, resource copyright and management policies. Today Helen resumes work on her assigned research patron case file.

Also at work today are Mareike Montgomery and her seven-month-old son, Henry. Mareike is our Administration and Promotions Librarian. She is continuing her inventory of Holocaust motion picture

DVDs to be made available for internal borrowing. Young Henry complements her work by conducting durability testing of the DVD boxes by way of tapping, tasting and blowing raspberries at them. We are careful not to disturb his scientific approach.

Thursday, 20 June

Arriving at 9:30am sharp, our second Research Librarian is diligent self-starter Tina Dikanovic. Tina has been developing a comprehensive Holocaust Research Reference Directory to aid the team with incoming Holocaust research and family tracing enquiries.

Chris Dargan is our second Reference Librarian and now the library's longest-serving volunteer. Chris completes his article on the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee for *The Voice* newsletter punctually, before commencing a promotions catalogue of our Local Holocaust Survivor Memoir collection.

Friday 21 June

Freda Hodge completes our library research team. After conducting a summary of a closing research file, Holocaust testimonies are then reviewed for a still-active file. A devised bibliography about Bergen-Belsen for the Testimonies Department concludes Freda's day.

Wesley Tang has aspirations to become a curator, and has been engaged in a shelf-check project, flagging damaged items and rare books. Of the latter, an encased rare books display will result.

Another week ends, yet our individual assignments are far from over. I feel anxiety creeping in until I recall the words of my library mentor, Rosa Freilich: 'Nothing is overnight. Don't rush... you need time to find a husband too!'

The Jewish Holocaust Centre Library is open Monday-Friday 10am-2pm and Sundays by appointment.

Introducing new Jewish Holocaust Centre staff

The Jewish Holocaust Centre would like you to meet three of our new staff members.



Julia Reichstein

Julia Reichstein, Librarian & Information Manager

Having had a need since childhood to comprehend her grandparents' Holocaust experiences, a love for writing, and profound admiration for the Dewey Decimal Classification System(!), Julia Reichstein commenced volunteering in libraries for three different organisations:

the Jewish Holocaust Centre under the guidance of Rosa Freilich and Sabina Josem; the City of Kingston Library and Information Service: Aged Care and Community Outreach; and the Mentone Public Library as Events Coordinator promoting local authors and community writing groups.

In 2012, Julia, who completed a Graduate Diploma in Information Management and Systems at Monash University in 2008, received what she says was the greatest Hannukah present of her life when the Jewish Holocaust Centre offered her a part-time position in the Centre's library. She feels enormous gratitude to be starting her library career for such an important cause and is grateful to the Centre's staff, volunteers and survivor volunteers for their support, assistance, knowledge and priceless friendships.

Tammy Reznik, Education Officer

One of Tammy Reznik's initial tasks, once appointed as Education Officer, was the management of the education program for the Anne Frank travelling exhibition, which



Tammy Reznik

was a great success.

Tammy has come to the Jewish Holocaust Centre with professional experience in research, management and higher education, as well as tertiary degrees in history and visual arts. Before joining the Centre, Tammy was Manager of the Leon Liberman Chair in Modern Israel Studies at the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilization,

Monash University. She has also trained in drama and performance and looks forward to utilising these skills within the education program. She is passionate about teaching the Holocaust to students, and applying the lessons in a contemporary context.

'I believe as human beings we all have the potential for doing good, though it is easy to be steered in the wrong direction. I would like to impart this message to students: that is to wake up each morning and make a decision to live consciously and mindfully,' she says.

Rae Silverstein, Volunteer Coordinator

Rae Silverstein began volunteering at the Jewish Holocaust Centre in 2007, coordinating the work of the Centre's volunteers. Her position became a paid part-time appointment this year.

Rae's work includes: looking after the welfare of the Centre's volunteers; compiling the rosters for guides; interviewing prospective volunteers; training new volunteers; placing volunteers in positions appropriate to the Centre's needs and the volunteers' skills; monitoring their progress; organising volunteers for special events and exhibitions; organising survivor guides to visit schools when requested; and supervising interns and work experience students.



Rae Silverstein

Rae began her career as a school teacher and has worked in the area of Special Education and with Jewish Care as the Integration Coordinator for Children with Disabilities in Jewish Day Schools. She is also a Grief and Bereavement Counsellor who has worked at the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement, where she continues to serve as a volunteer.

Become a Partner in Remembrance

The Jewish Holocaust Centre Foundation ensures the continued existence of the Centre and supports its important work. Funds raised through the Foundation are invested, with the earnings providing an ongoing source of income for the Centre to support its operations and programs into the future.

For more information on how you can help support the Foundation and how your support will be recognised, please contact Helen Mahemoff, Chair of the Foundation on 0417 323 595 or Email: jhcfoundation@bigpond.com.



Jewish Holocaust Centre Foundation
REMEMBRANCE EDUCATION MUSEUM

Honouring Jewish Holocaust Centre volunteers

During Volunteer Month in May, the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) honoured our survivor guides, recently retired volunteers and volunteers involved in the Anne Frank exhibition.



(l-r) Warren Fineberg, Kitia Altman OAM, Pauline Rockman OAM, Maria Lewit OAM

a week, guide schools, visitors and university groups through the museum, as well as giving visitors a personal account of their wartime experiences.

The retired volunteers – Sabina Josem, Rosa Freilich and Zyga Elton – had worked for many years in the Centre’s library and were honoured for their support, care and dedication. They each received an inscribed decorative shard.

Also honoured with a presentation of an inscribed shard were the survivor guides who every week, sometimes twice



(l-r) Sabina Josem & Pauline Rockman OAM

The volunteers who worked at the Anne Frank exhibition received certificates for their role in welcoming visitors, providing information about the exhibition and encouraging visitors to take the time to visit the JHC museum.

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Jakob Frenkiel: leaving a generous legacy for future generations

In late 2012 the Jewish Holocaust Centre received a bequest from the Estate of Jakob Frenkiel. Mr Frenkiel's instructions were simple: the bequest was to go towards 'education'. This generous donation is being channelled to several projects, including:

The Anne Frank Exhibition: this (along with the grant from Gandel Philanthropy) allowed us to present what turned out to be the most successful exhibition ever held at the Centre.

iTextbook: in keeping with advances in technology, the Centre is creating a unique iTextbook for iPad users. This reference book will give an overview of the Holocaust based on the Jewish Holocaust Centre archives, museum content and education program, using links and information from worldwide resources. By including testimonies of Melbourne Holocaust survivors it will give a human face to the often-incomprehensible statistics associated with this devastating period.

Both of these projects could not have been undertaken without Mr Frenkiel's support. In honour of his generosity, the Jewish Holocaust Centre wanted to share his story, but this was not an easy task as he had had no immediate family, and we knew very little about him. However, we were able to glean that Jakob Frenkiel – or Yankel as he was called by his family – was born around Purim in 1921 in Lida, Lithuania. He was the son of Esther and Yitzchak Frenkiel, who ran a small business manufacturing sharpening tools for scythes. Jakob had two older sisters, Berta and Dinke. A third sister died very young. Esther, Yitzchak, Berta and Dinke were murdered in the Holocaust.

Jakob survived miraculously because he was a slim man and was able to squeeze out of the carriage that was carrying him to Auschwitz. He did this by cutting a hole through the carriage floor using a screwdriver he had hidden in his boots. After his escape he lived in the forests with partisans, acting as a scout to report German positions and meeting regularly with people such as the Bielski brothers. The partisans were involved in blowing up trains carrying munitions for the Germans. He fled at the end of the war when the Russians arrived.

After some time in a displaced persons camp, he migrated to Australia to join his uncle and aunt, Dovid and Sonia Segan, his cousins Berek, Sima and Riva, and other family and friends. He was resourceful and hard working, and he used his mechanical aptitude to establish a business. He did not have formal education but was adept at picking up languages – apart from fluency in Yiddish, Polish, English and Hebrew he also had a working knowledge of Russian and Italian. He was a natural at sports and enjoyed golf and bowls.

Although he was not observant, his Jewish heritage was very important to him. He was proud of Israel and visited many times. Jakob Frenkiel passed away on his 90th birthday.

By an act of serendipity Trevor Hanna, a friend of Jakob's, introduced himself to Jewish Holocaust Centre staff while visiting the Anne Frank exhibition. His words give a personal insight into a man who survived the Holocaust, lived a full life and left a wonderful legacy to future generations:

'I met Jakob at the Elsternwick Bowling Club around 2006 and we often spent days together playing on the same team. He was outgoing, with a very keen wit and a great sense of humour. I am an amateur actor and have been often cast in Jewish roles. One particular play required a Yiddish type, and I asked Jacob if I could spend time with him to develop my accent and mannerisms, as he was the epitome of the character required.

I spent quite a few afternoons with Jakob and he gradually told me a little about his life in Poland. He told me that one day, the Germans arrived and surrounded his village, driving people into the centre and shooting them all – about 400 people. He was 17 years old and saw his entire family slaughtered. He ran for his life into the adjacent forest, managing to avoid the soldiers. There he met up with another lad he knew. Apparently they were the only two survivors on that day.

He had many varied jobs after arriving in Australia, including carpentry and furniture making. He then worked in the saw milling industry and had his own mill just out of Orbost in East Gippsland, which I believe was quite successful.

He never embraced religion. In his words, 'Any God that could let that happen is not my God.'

He lost a finger on his right hand in an accident at the saw mill and when he made a good shot at bowls he would give everyone a 'high four', as he called it. He did have a serious side, but not for long periods at a time. He

told me that the essence of Jewish humour is the ability to be self-deprecating, which I find admirable.

His humour knew no boundaries, and even with the pain of the loss of his family, his mirth delved dangerously close to some raw nerves at times. I asked if jokes of that nature ever upset him, and he replied by quoting an old Polish saying: "If you don't laugh, you cry!"

And that I believe would be a great epitaph for Jakob.'

The Jewish Holocaust Centre thanks Trevor Hanna, Berek Segan and several of Jakob's close friends for providing information for this article.



Jakob Frenkiel

Avram Zeleznikow: partisan, community activist and restaurateur

John Zeleznikow

Avram Zeleznikow, a partisan of the Vilna Ghetto, who fought heroically with the Jewish partisans in the forests of Rudniki and was a pioneer of Holocaust commemoration and education in Melbourne, passed away peacefully at the age of 89, on 8 June 2013. His life was dedicated to fighting the twin evils of fascism and bolshevism, commemorating those who died in the Holocaust and providing physical and emotional nourishment not only for the Jewish community, but more widely.

Avram was born in Vilna (then Poland, now Lithuania) on 25 May 1924 to Yankl and Etta (née Stock) Zeleznikow. While Yankl engaged in political activities and was elected to the Vilna Jewish Council, Etta ran an orphanage. Following the German invasion of Poland and the outbreak of war, Vilna was seized by the Soviet Union on 19 September 1939. Yankl, a devout anti-communist, was taken captive, never to be seen again.

When the Germans launched Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union in June 1941, Vilna fell quickly and on 6 September 1941 the Vilna ghetto was created.

By January 1942, the mass killing of Jews was beyond doubt, and representatives of the major youth groups in the ghetto formed an underground fighting organisation called *Fareynegte Partizaner Organizatsye (FPO)* (United Partisan Organisation). The FPO members acted as underground couriers, forged documents, planned escape routes, obtained weapons and offered weapons training. Avram became chairman of the youth club and an FPO group commander.

In the event of the ghetto's destruction, the FPO had planned to move into battle and – supported by the ghetto population – fight its way to the forest and take along as many Jews as possible. However, on 1 September 1943, when the FPO mobilised its forces as German SS troops entered the ghetto to round up Jews for deportation, the ghetto's population did not heed its call to arms and the resistance was put down bloodily.

Soon after, the Nazis liquidated the ghetto. Most residents hoped to take their chances surviving in a labour camp rather than risking almost certain death in revolt. As the ghetto was surrounded, the only way out was through the sewers. Fortunately, the leader of Avram's FPO group, Shloime Kaplinski, had been the chief of the Vilna sanitation system and led his partisans 50 kilometres through the maze of sewers to the Rudniki forest. Etta, her daughter Basia, son-in-law and grandchild were murdered at Ponary.

Along with other Jewish partisan units in the Vilna region, Avram and his colleagues created a partisan division and performed many acts of sabotage as part of the general (Soviet) partisan movement. Avram's group was named 'Death to Fascism' and was commanded

by Abba Kovner. The Vilna region partisans destroyed power and water infrastructures, freed groups of prisoners from the Kalais labour camp, and blew up some German military trains. Later, FPO members participated in the liberation of Vilna by the Soviet army in July 1944.

At war's end, Avram needed to create a new life. He fled the Soviet Union, escaping across the border to Poland. He met his wife Masha at the University of Lodz in 1946. As Poland was still not a safe place for Jews, Avram and Masha decided

to migrate to Australia. Arriving in Melbourne in 1951, Avram did not know the language, had few work skills apart from his professional training as a Yiddish teacher, and was separated from most of his partisan friends who were fighting for Jewish independence in Israel.

Masha and Avram opened the 'Scheherazade' café and restaurant in Acland Street St Kilda in May 1958. The Jewish community gravitated to the café. As well as giving his family a secure source of income, 'Scheherazade' allowed Avram to mingle, as many of his colleagues in Jewish communal organisations were also valued customers. So too were the Holocaust survivors, many of whom resided in sub-standard boarding houses and saw 'Scheherazade' as a place of refuge – to meet friends and soul-mates, reminisce about the past and to



Avram Zeleznikow (left) at an Australian Union of Jewish Students retreat Mt Macedon, 1972

have an affordable three-course meal. The restaurant provided sustenance for both their body and their soul.

During the 1960s Avram became involved in the Jewish Welfare Society and Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies – generally advocating Holocaust survivors’ and Yiddishist viewpoints. As an executive member of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies, Avram was chairman of the Community Relations committee and for 30 years organised the communal Holocaust Remembrance Commemoration.

Avram Zeleznikow was one of the pioneers in Melbourne who wished to educate the Jewish and wider communities about the lessons to be learned from the Holocaust. He and Masha helped found the Raoul Wallenberg Unit of B’nai B’rith and the Courage to Care Project. Both organisations help educate Australians about the dangers of racism and genocide in general, and the Holocaust in particular.

Avram was prepared to discuss Holocaust atrocities in the 1950s and 1960s, when most of the rest of the community was too shaken to address these issues. He was frustrated when others would not listen, but it

was understandable that those survivors who had been incarcerated in concentration camps wanted to forget their experiences – while Avram the partisan wanted to highlight the action of the partisans and the importance of the messages of the Holocaust for future generations.

John Zeleznikow is Avram Zeleznikow’s son.



Avram Zeleznikow discussing his Holocaust experience with clockwise, his grandson Joseph Zeleznikow, Jared Levy and Aaron Corne at Leibler Yavneh College in May 2013

Mazal Tov

Marriage

To Tammy and Trevor Roth on the marriage of their daughter Tali to Marcus Jankie

Births

To Sue and Alex Hampel on the birth of their granddaughter Rio Hampel

To Faye and Michael Scholl on the birth of their granddaughter Willow Madison Blashki

To Susie and Stephen Kleid on the birth of their grandson Ari Small

Bar Mitzvah

To Judy Berman on the bar mitzvah of her grandson Oliver Levi-Weitzman

To Wolf and Aysa Deane on the bar mitzvah of their grandson Matthew Issko

Birthdays

To Sabina Josem on her 90th birthday

To Joe de Haan on his 90th birthday

To Sonia Wajsenberg on her 90th birthday

Condolences

To Eileen Vamos on the death of her mother Jane Conway

To Willy Lerner on the death of his son-in-law Morris Sztajer

To Tibor Farkas on the death of his wife Judith

In Memoriam

Moshe Szyja & Masha Cykiert
and siblings

Adela, Mirla, Sulen Yitzhok, Bluma, Bajla,

Miriam & Abraham Cykiert

Remembered by daughter, Tova Tauber
children & grandchildren

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Auschwitz Revisited

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Survivors are few, memories fade
The cries of the dying
Have long been forgotten
Silence and oblivion envelop the grounds Auschwitz is
but a ghost from the past That no-one wants to know.
There are no chimneys
No black smoke any more
No gas chambers. Just ruins
So why the fuss?
There is no fuss. Just the Museum To tell the tale.
The Museum whose silent walls Bore witness to heinous
crimes Witness to the last flickering lights Of human life
Being extinguished
The walls now hold no life
No life...
Just echoes of the past
Behind huge panels of sterile glass.
What is that there I see
Behind the glass
Piles upon piles of human hair
Once silken to the touch
I know it is of no avail
But where are my auburn locks I ask
A mountain of shoes, and I ponder, Children's shoes
Inert behind the glass
Those right in the corner there
Are familiar
Did my sister wear that size?
And the Spectacles
Millions of spectacles
All shapes colours and sizes Father, Father
Have you too lost your glasses?
The photos
Bewildered, horrified faces
eyes sunken in their sockets
A flickering moment of recognition Did I see him there?
Did he weep?
Enough, enough
The ghosts are laid to rest
There are no graves. Just a Monument A Monument
to the Dead
The fragrance of roses Wafts through the air Roses
for the Dead
And there I stand alone
My head held high
I murmur
You see I came to say good-bye
A teardrop gently hits the ground
As I whisper
Rest in Peace Father and Sister mine.

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אפעל צו קאמפענסירן אַרבעטער פון די געטאָס.

דער פרעזידענט פון ראַט פון די דייטשע יידן, נאָך נישט דעצידירט ווי אַזוי די אַרבעטער פון דיעטער גרומאַן, האָט אין אַ דערקלערונג פון די געטאָס זאָלן קריגן באַצאָלט. ערשטן מערץ ה.י. גערופן די פירער פון די ביז היינט זענען דאָ 22 טויזנט מענטשן אין פּאָליטישע פּאַרטייען אין דייטשן פּאַרליאָמענט, עלטער פון אַרום 85 יאָר, וואָס וואַרטן נאָך אַלץ אַז זיי דאַרפן פּאַרגיטיקן די אַרבעטער פון די אויף קאָמפענסאַציע. דער געהאַלט וועט זיין אַ ייִדישע געטאָס און זיי געבן קאָמפענסאַציע פאַר פאַרם פון אנערקענונג פאַ זייערע ליידן בשעת זייער אַרבעט. דער שטאַט סעקרעטאַר פון דער דעם נאַצי פּעריאָד. "יעדן טאָג וואָס זיי וואַרטן רעגירונג האָט דערקלערט, אַז די ריגירונג האָט אַז אַ טאָג צופיל". האָט ער צוגעגעבן.

דער אנדענק-טאָג פון חורבן אין קאַלענדאַר פון

אייראָפּעיִשן פּאַרבאַנד.

דער אייראָפּעיִשער פּאַרבאַנד האָט באַשלאָסן פּובליקער פאַרם". אַנצונעמען ד'דאָטע פון דעם 27 יאַנואַר, ווי אַ אין די פּאַרגאַנגענע עטלעכע יאָר האָט דער דאָטע וואָס זאָל אַרײַן אין איר אָפיציעלן אייראָפּעיִשער ייִדישער קאָנגרעס אָפּגעצייכנט קאַלענדאַר. מאַרטין שולץ, פרעזידענט פון דעם דעם טאָג מיט אַ צערעמאָניע אין דעם אייראָפּעיִשן פּאַרליאָמענט האָט געזאָגט בשעת אייראָפּעיִשן פּאַרליאָמענט, מיט דער דעם אַנדענק טאָג, פון 22 יאַנואַר אין בריסל באַטייליקונג פון געסט און רעדנער פון (בעלגיע) "עס איז אַ פּבּוד פאַר דער אייראָפּעיִשן פּאַרבאַנד. דאָס יאָר האָט מען טאָג, אינסטיטוציע מיט וועלכער איך פיר אָן צו דעם 27 יאַנואַר, פאַרמעל אַרײַנגענומען אין דעם פּאַרצייכענען דעם טאָג פון 27 יאַנואַר אין אַ קאַלענדאַר פון פּאַרבאַנד.

אַפּקלאַנגען פון דער צווייטער וועלט מלחמה.

אויסצוגן פון אַן אינטערוויו מיטן היסטאָריקער, צום טעכנישן פּערסאָנאַל: שאַפּערן, מעכאַניקער מאַרק סאַלאַנין, דורך דעם ראַדיאָ "עכאָ און אַנדערע. אַזאַ פּאַרנעם פון אַרבעט, אָן דער מאַסקווע". צוויי זשורנאַליסטן, וויטאַלי הילף פון דער אַרטיקער באַפעלקערונג איז דימאַרסקי און דימיטרי זאַכאַראָוו, האָבן איבערהויפט נשט געווען מעגלעך. גערעדט וועגן אומקום פון די יידן אין די די צוויי זשורנאַליסטן האָבן געפרעגט, אַקופירטע געגנטן פון געוועזענעם "פּאַרוואָס"? אַ ריכטיקע פּראָגע, האָט באַמערקט ראַטן-פּאַרבאַנד. אַזוי איז אָפּגעדרוקט געוואָרן סאַלאַנין. איך דערמאַן זיך אַן עפיזאָד, וואָס מיין אין דער צייטונג "פּאַנאַראַמאַ" דעם צווייטן מאי טאָטע האָט דערציילט וועגן דער צווייטער 2012. די ערשטע פּאַרניכטונג פון די יידן זענען וועלט מלחמה, עס האָט זיך איינגעקריצט אין געווען אין ליטע און אין די מריב געביטן פון מייזן זכרון. דאָס איז געווען אין 1941, נאָכן געוועזענעם פּוילן. עס זענען אָנגעגעבן קאַמף האָבן די אַרטיקע איינוווינער, (אין עטלעכע אינטערעסאַנטע ציפּערן. די גרעסטן טייל רוסן) אַראָפּגעצויגן פון די אָנפירערשאַפט פון ס.ס. האָבן געשיקט אין די טויטע און שווער פּאַרווונדעטע זעלנער, די פּאַרנומענע טעריטאָריעס, פיר "איינזאַץ" גרופן. מונדירן, שטייול און אונטעררוועש. אויפן זייער אַלגעמיינע צאָל איז געווען 3000 שלאַכט פּעלד זענען געלעגן טויטע און מענטשן, צווישן זיי, פּראָפּעסיאָנעלע מערדער שטאַרבנדיקע רוסישע זעלנער. "מלחמה איז און באַשטראַפּער, פאַר דער גאַנצער נישט קיין גוטע באַשעפּטיקונג". אין קריג וואָס טעריטאָריע אויף וועלכער עס האָבן געוויינט האָט זיך אָנגעהויבן אין 1941 האָבן זיך אַ טייל 80 טויזנט אַרטיקע איינוווינער. פון די דריי מענטשן פּאַוואַנדלט אין אוממענטשן. טויזנט זענען געווען 600 וועלכע האָבן געהערט

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דענקמאל פאר אלעקסאדער פיעטשארסקי אין תל-אביב.

דער אויפשטאנד אין דעם לאגער "סאָביבאָר" דע 16טן אָקטאָבער אין תל-אביב אויף דער גאס איז איינער פון די העלדישסטע קאָפיטלען אין "דרך שלום" איז פאָרגעקומען די אַנטהילונג פון דער געשיכטע פון דער צווייטער וועלט דעם דענקמאל אָצוגעבן כבוד דעם העלד פון מלחמה, דער איינציקער פאל ווען, דער "סאָביבאָר" אלעקסאנדער פיעטשארסקי. אויפשטאנד האָט זיך פאָרעדיקט מיט אַ נצחון. אין דער צערעמאָניע האָבן זיך באַטייליקט, אין שפּיץ פון דעם אויפשטאנד איז געשטאַנען צווישן אנדערע, דער אינפאָרמאַציע מיניסטער, אַ סאָויעטישער אָפיציר, אַ ייד, מיטן נאָמען יולי עדעלשטיין, און די מיניסטאַרין, פון אלעקסאדער פיעטשארסקי. אַבסאַרבאַציע, סאָפיע לאַנדאָו. דער ווייטערדיקער גורל פון דעם העלד איז דער איינציקער לעבנגעבליבענער פון געווען אַ דראַמאַטישער: שטראָף-באַטאַליאָן, "סאָביבאָר" אין ישראל, שמעון ראָזענפעלד, שפּיטעלער, שווערע פאָרווונדיקונג און וואָס האָט שפּעטער געדינט אין דער רויטער רעפּרעסיעס פון דער סאָויעטישער מאַכט אין אַרמיי האָט איבערגלאָזט אַן אוישריפט אויפן דער שטאָט "ראַסטאַוו" ביים טייך "דאָן". "רייכסטאַג" אין בערלין: "פאָראַנאוויטש - סאָביבאָר - בערלין".

אַ טרויריקע סך הכל.

לויט דער איניציאַטיוו פון אַמעריקאַנער חורבן מיסטער מעגאַרקע, דער הויפט אויספאָרשער, מוזעאום האָבן די פאָרשער: דזשערי מעגאַרקע האָט דערקלערט, אַז די רעזולטאַטן פון דער און מאַרטין דאָן, וועלכע האָבן אָנגעפירט מיט אויספאָרשונג האָבן געענדערט דאָס בילד און די דער אויספאָרשונג, אָפגעשאַצט, אַז צווישן פאָרשטעלונג וועגן חורבן. די היסטאָריקער פופצן ביז צוואנציק מיליאָן מענטשן זענען קלערן אויף ווי אַזוי דאָס אַלץ האָט זיך אומגעקומען אָדער פאָרשפאָרט געווען אין די אַטוויקלט זינט די נאַצישע זענען געקומען צו דער ספּעציעלע לאַגערן. די אויספאָרשונג האָט מאַכט. אין 1933 האָבן זיי גלייך אויפגעשטעלט געדויערט דרייצן יאָר. עס נעמט אַרום די צייט 110 לאַגערן ספּעציעל פאָר פאָליטישע פון היטלערס רעזשים אין די יאָרן 1933 ביז אַרעסטירטע און קעגנער פון פון נאַצי רעזשים. 1945 אין אייראָפּע. די צאָל אומגעברענגטע אין דער צייט נעמען געץ פון די לאַגערן און געטאָס געוואָרן אַריין די אַרבעטס לאַגערן, טויטן לאַגערן און אויסגעברייטערט און צייטנווייז האָבן זיי נישט אַנדערע ערטער פון פאָרשקלאָפונג. נאָר אויסגעמאָדעט יידן נאָר אויך די פירנדע אויטאָרן פון דער אויספאָרשונג האַמאַסעקסואַלן, ציגינער, פאָליאַקן, רוסן און זענען געווען: דזשערי מעגאַרקע און מאַרטין אַנדערע נאַציאַנאַליטעטן. דיאָן זיי שאַצן אָפּ, אַז צווישן פופצן ביז דער גרעסטער פון די געטאָס איז געווען, דער צוואנציק מיליאָן אָדער זענען געוואָרן וואַרשעווער געטאָ, וועלכער האָט אַריינגענומען פאָרשפאָרט אין די ערטער פון פאָרשקלאָפונג. פינפהונדערט טויזנט מענטשן. די עקזיסטענץ פון געוויסע לאַגערן זענען דער קלענסטער לאַגער איז געווען אין געווען ווייניק באַקאַנט. די דאָקומענטאַציע איז מינכען-שוואַבינג, אין דייטשלאַנד. באַזירט אויף פירענדערט דערקלערונגען, דער סך הכל פון דער אויספאָרשונג איז געווען אַ וועלכע מען האָט געניצט צום ערשטן מאל. דערשטוינענדיקער. 30000 טויזנט שקלאָפן אַ טייל פון די אויספאָרשונגען זענען געבויט לאַגערן, 1050 יידישע געטאָס, 980 אויף פאָרשידענע דערקלערונגען אַריינגערעכנט קאַנצענטראַציע לאַגערן און אויך קריגס די דערקלערונגען פון הענרי גרינבוים, וועכער געפאַנגענע לאַגערן. איז אין משח פון פינף יאָר געווען אין פינף לויט די מאַטעריאַלן פאָרעפנטלעכע אין דער "ניו-יאָרק טיימס" דורך. עריק ליכטבלוי.

סערזש קלאַרספעלד קריטיקירט דעם באַריכט פון דער "בערג קאָמיסע".

קלאַרספעלד שטעלט אונטער אַ פראַגע צייכן דערביי דערקלערט קלאַרספעלד, אַז דרייסיק דעם באַריכט פון דער "בערג" קאָמיסע וועגן טויזנט יידן איז דעלויבט געוואָרן אַריינצוקומען דער צאָל יידישע פליטים, וועלכע די אין דער שווייץ. עס איז וויכטיק פאַר דער שווייצאַרישע מאַכט האָט צוריקגעשיקט פון געזעלשאַפט צו וויסן וויפל יידן עס איז יאָ דער גרענעץ, ווען זיי זענען אַנטלאָפן פון נאַצי דערלויבט געוואָרן אַריינצוקומען אין דער דייטשלאַנד. די צאָל 24 טויזנט, דערקלערט שווייץ. קלאַרספעלד און זיין פרוי, בעטי, זענען קלאַרספעלד – איז איבערהויפט איבערגעטריבן. באַרימט אין זייער דערפאַלג אויסצוגעפינען אין ער האָט געזאָגט, אין דעם אויפטריט פאַר דעם יאָר 1970 דעם טרויעריק באַרימטן נאַצי שווייצאַרישן ראַדיאָ, אַז "עס איז פאַלש צו קאָמאַנדיר, קלאָוס באַרביע, וועלכער האָט זיך דערלאָזן אַזאַ מיינונג צו באַאיינפלוסן די אויסבאַהאַלטן אין באַליוויע (דרום אַמעריקע). אינטערנאַציאָנאַלע פאַרשטעלונג פון די אמתע דער 77 יאָריקער קלאַרספעלד, ווידמעט איצטער פאַקטן". זיין אַרבעט צו פאַשן דעם גורל פון די לויט אים איז די צאָל יידן געווען, מער ווי דריי פראַנצויזישע יידן בשעת דער לעצטער וועלט טויזנט, וועלכע מען האָט נישט אַריינגעלאָזט מלחמה. אַזוי גיט איבער די האַלענדישע נייעס אין דער שווייץ. אַגענטור....

קונסט רויבערייען אויסגעפירט דורך די נאַציס בשעת דער צווייטער וועלט מלחמה.

פראַנקרייך האָט אָנגעהויבן אינטעסיוו אויסזוכן אומקערן פון די קונסט וערק. "די באַרויבטע די יידישע אייגנטימער פון, אומגעפער צוויי דאַרפן זיך, וואָס שנעלער, ווענדן צו דער טויזנט קונסט-ווערק, וועכע די נאַציס האָבן קאָמיסיע און דאָס וועט זיין אונדזער לעצטע צוגערויבט אין דער צייט פון דער לעצטער מעגלעכקייט צו געפינען די אייגנטליכע וועלט מלחמה. אייגנטימער".

דאָס זענען די בילדער (מאַלערייען) פון די אַזוי האָט דערקלערט, זשאָן פירע באַרד, באַרימטע קינסטלער: "מאַנע", "רובענס", געוועזענער דירעקטאָר פון קולטור "רענואַר" און אַנדערע, וועלכע געפינען זיך מיניסטעריום, אויף דעם צוזאַמענקום פון דער היינט און הענגען צייטווייליק אין פאַריזער מוזעאום און אין "לווער" מוזעאום אין פאַריז. יאָר 1999 צו קאָמפּענסירן די קרבנות. דער פראַנצויזישער פרעזידענט, האַלענדער און קאָמיטעט מיטגלידער פון דער רעגירונג האָבן קאָמיטעט מיטגלידער. צונויפגעבראַכט היסטאָריקער, רעגולאַטאָרן, "זיבעציק יאָר איז אַ לאַנגע צייט, אָבער עס איז אַרכיוויסטן און עקספּערטן, זיי זאָלן אַקטיוו קיינמאַל נישט צו שפּעט צו פאַרריכטן דאָס, אויסזוכן פאַמיליעס ביי וועמען מען האָט וואָס איז געשען". צוגירויבט ווערטפולע בילדער און אַנדערע האָט געזאָגט דער פרעזידענט פון דער דאָזיקער חפצים, אָנשטאַט צו וואַרטן אויף די קאָמיסיע. לעבנגעבליבענע, וועלכע פאַלאַנגען דאָס



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