

# Holocaust

## MEMORIAL DAY

2003



**Learning from the past ~ lessons for today**

The Holocaust Memorial Day Committee in association with the Lord Mayor of Dublin  
and **KNOW RACISM** – The National Anti-Racism Awareness Programme

Dublin City Hall ~ Sunday, 26th January 2003





## To the Little Polish Boy standing with his arms up

*Excerpt from poem by  
Holocaust survivor Peter Fischl  
about the 1943 roundup of Jews  
in the Warsaw Ghetto*

I would like to be an artist  
So I could make a painting of you  
Little Polish Boy

Standing with your little hat  
On your head  
The Star of David  
On your coat  
Standing in the ghetto  
With your arms up  
As many Nazi machine guns  
Point at you

I am not a composer  
But I will write a composition  
For five trillion trumpets  
So it will blast the ear drums  
Of this world.

The world  
Who heard nothing.

I  
Am  
Sorry  
That  
It was you  
And not me.



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN  
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

**MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT McALEESE**

In marking the twenty-seventh January as Holocaust Memorial Day we, as civilised nations, are paying homage to all the victims of the Holocaust. It is also an opportunity to pay tribute to all the remarkable and courageous people who bravely stood against the forces of evil. Here in Ireland we can be proud to count Irish citizens among those exceptional people who saved thousands of lives. I would like to pay a special tribute to the Irish recipients of the Righteous Among the Nations title, an honour bestowed on those individuals who epitomise selflessness.

Holocaust Memorial Day is a stark and harsh reminder of where racism, bigotry and prejudice can lead. We as a nation must concentrate our efforts and fortify our resolve to build a society that is truly inclusive and which embraces cultural diversity. Racism and hatred have no place in twenty-first century Ireland – a message which is echoed in your theme *Learning from the past – lessons for today*.

I would like to commend all those involved in organising this event and I wish them well with all future endeavours.

Mary McAleese  
President of Ireland





**COUNCILLOR DERMOT LACEY**  
**LORD MAYOR OF DUBLIN**



A Nuclear-Free City  
Office of the Lord Mayor  
16 Castle Street,  
Dublin 2

I feel privileged to host the first of what I am sure will become an annual Holocaust Memorial Day in Ireland.

In January 2000, on the fifty-fifth anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp, forty-four countries, including the Republic of Ireland, signed the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust.

Accordingly, we are gathered here this evening to pay homage to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, and to honour those who stood against it.

We remember the six million Jews - the men, women and one and a half million children - who were exterminated in the death camps, in the ghettos, in the forests, in the streets and in their homes, solely by reason of their birth and of their faith.

And we remember the millions of other innocent victims, including political, religious and ethnic minorities, homosexuals, and people with disabilities.

Only by remembering the horrors that man is capable of inflicting on man will we truly learn the lessons for today as we strive to eradicate the scourge of racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance from our midst.

I wish to acknowledge the work of the Holocaust Memorial Day Committee and everyone else involved in organising this event.

Cllr. Dermot Lacey  
Lord Mayor of Dublin



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# Holocaust

## MEMORIAL DAY

DUBLIN CITY HALL ~ SUNDAY, 26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2003

## Programme

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- **Introductory remarks, Yanky Fachler**
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- **Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, read by John Bowman**
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- **Opening address, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Dermot Lacey**
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- **Guest Speakers:** Michael McDowell TD, Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform  
Dick Roche TD, Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach  
with responsibility for European Affairs
- 
- **Choral interlude, Christ Church Cathedral Choir**
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- **Quotation from Lutheran pastor Martin Niemoeller, read by Senator David Norris**
- 
- ***To The Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up*, read by Ingrid Craigie**
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- **Excerpt from *Faraway Home* by Marilyn Taylor, read by Jason Druker**
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- **Denis Johnston's account of the liberation of Buchenwald, read by Jennifer Johnston**
- 
- ***Children of Auschwitz*, read by Nadia Salem**
- 
- ***Shoa*, written and read by Máire Mhac an tSaoi**
- 
- **Bob and Han Collis, read by Suzi Diamond**
- 
- **Holocaust poems from *The Gossamer Wall*, written and read by Micheal O'Siadhail**
- 
- **Quotation from Simon Wiesenthal, read by John Bowman**
- 
- ***Go Home From This Place And Tell Your Children*, written and read by Paddy Fitzgibbon**
- 
- **One Minute of Silence**
- 
- **Choral interlude, Christ Church Cathedral Choir**
- 
- **Candle-lighting ceremony in memory of Holocaust victims**
    - Representatives of the people with disabilities
    - Representatives of the homosexual community
    - Representatives of the political victims
    - Representatives of the Christian victims and the Righteous Among The Nations
    - Representatives of ethnic minorities
    - Representatives of the six million Jews
- 
- **Prayer for the Repose of the Souls of the Departed, recited by the Very Rev. Rabbi Dr. Yaakov Pearlman, Chief Rabbi of Ireland**
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- ***El Malay Rachamim*, recited by Cantor Alwyn Shulman**
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- **Closing remarks, Yanky Fachler**
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## **The Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust**

**Summary of the Declaration by 44 countries,  
including the Republic of Ireland,  
issued in January 2000, on the anniversary  
of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1945.**

We, the governments attending the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, recognise that the Holocaust was a tragically defining episode of the 20th century, a crisis for European civilisation and a universal catastrophe for humanity. In declaring that the Holocaust fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilisation, we share a commitment to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, and to honour those who stood against it. The horrors that engulfed the Jewish people and other victims of the Nazis must forever be seared in our collective memory. With humanity still scarred by genocide, anti-semitism, ethnic cleansing, racism, xenophobia and other expressions of hatred and discrimination, we share a solemn responsibility to fight against these evils. Together with our European partners and the wider international community, we share a commitment to remember all the victims who perished, to respect the survivors still with us, and to reaffirm humanity's common aspiration for a democratic and tolerant society, free of the evils of prejudice and other forms of bigotry.



**Excerpt from the address at the Holocaust Commemoration ceremony at Terenure Synagogue on 26th April 1995 by Taoiseach John Bruton.**

We in Ireland have not been immune from the bigotry and the indifference which manifested itself in Europe this century. Ireland's doors were not freely open to those families and individuals fleeing from persecution and death. Some people did find refuge and comfort in Ireland, but their numbers were not very great. We must acknowledge the consequences of this indifference. Tonight, on behalf of the Irish Government and people, I honour the memory of those millions of European Jews who died in the Holocaust. I also recall the gypsies and the homosexual community who were marked down for extermination and all those who were persecuted for resisting the Nazi tyranny.

**In response to a student's question, *How could this happen?* Lutheran pastor Martin Niemoeller wrote this response after the Holocaust. Niemoeller was arrested in 1937 for preaching against the Nazis, and spent until 1945 in Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps.**

First they came for the Communists,  
But I was not a Communist so I did not speak out.  
Then they came for the Socialists and Trade Unionists,  
But I was not a Socialist or Trade Unionist, so I did not speak out.  
Then they came for the Jews,  
But I was not a Jew so I did not speak out.  
Then they came for me,  
But by then there was no one left to speak out for me.

**Extract from *Children of Auschwitz*, by Laura Hillman, sister of Rosel Siev.**

I wake up at night  
hear the cries  
still  
children,  
always children  
walking to the crematoria.

They carried their  
dolls  
teddy bears  
wide eyed  
or sleepy looking  
bewildered  
crying out  
Mutti  
Mama  
Mamutchka  
Mama  
where have you gone?

Pink pyjamas  
blue nightgowns  
fluffy dresses  
shabby dresses  
sailor suits  
shoeless  
unkempt  
or neat looking  
they walk by.

I hear their measured steps  
tramping to the crematoria  
watched by SS guards  
Who ruled their world now  
And who had taken their mothers and fathers away.

Still  
through the gaggling of the geese  
I hear  
The haunting cries of the children  
Of Auschwitz.

The door of the crematorium is shut.  
One last cry  
Now silence.



## Hubert Butler

**Hubert Butler, from Kilkenny, was a classical scholar, archaeologist and essayist. After teaching English in Alexandria and Leningrad, he went to Vienna in 1938 to work at the Quaker Centre where the Religious Society of Friends had launched an international effort to relieve those suffering from political persecution. Between March 1938 and August 1939, Butler and his colleagues at the Centre helped some 2,408 Jews leave Austria. In *The Children of Drancy*, Butler writes of the French-Jewish children deported to Auschwitz:**

The facts are bleak and few. It was in August 1942 that the 4501 children were sent off to be killed in Poland from the transit camp at Drancy, north of Paris. Were they boys or girls? It is usually said boys, but suburban residents on the outskirts of Paris who heard them wailing at night say they were little girls, and there is a story of a bleeding ear torn by a harried police inspector as he removed an earring. They spent four days without food at the Vélodrome d'Hiver (the winter cycle-racing stadium) before their mothers were taken from them, then they were loaded three or four hundred at a time into cattle-trains at the Gare d'Austerlitz and taken to Auschwitz. It was related at Nuremberg that an order came from Berlin that deportees from Vichy France should be mingled discreetly with the children to make them look like family groups.

In the book, Butler quotes French writer François Mauriac, who was in Paris at the time:

Nothing I had seen during those sombre years of the Occupation had left so deep a mark on me as those trainloads of Jewish children standing at the Gare d'Austerlitz. The way these lambs had been torn from their mothers in itself exceeded anything we had so far thought possible. I believe that on that

day I touched upon the mystery of iniquity whose revelation was to mark the end of one era and the beginning of another. The dream which Western man conceived in the 18th century, whose dawn he thought he saw in 1789, and which, until August 2nd 1914, had grown stronger with the process of enlightenment and the discoveries of science - this dream vanished finally for me before those trainloads of little children. And yet I was still thousands of miles away from thinking that they were fuel for the gas chamber and crematorium.

Land	Zahl
<b>A. Altreich</b>	131.800
Ostmark	43.700
Ostgebiete	420.000
Generalgouvernement	2.284.000
Bialystok	400.000
Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren	74.200
Estland - judenfrei -	
Lettland	3.500
Litauen	34.000
Belgien	43.000
Dänemark	5.600
Frankreich / Besetztes Gebiet	165.000
Griechenland / Unbesetztes Gebiet	700.000
Niederlande	69.600
Norwegen	1.300
<b>B. Bulgarien</b>	48.000
England	330.000
Finnland	2.300
Irland	4.000
Italien einschl. Sardinien	58.000
Albanien	200
Kroatien	40.000
Portugal	3.000
Rumänien einschl. Bessarabien	342.000
Schweden	8.000
Schweiz	18.000
Serbien	10.000
Slowakei	88.000
Spanien	6.000
Türkei (europ. Teil)	55.500
Ungarn	742.800
UdSSR	5.000.000
Ukraine	2.994.684
Weißrußland aus- schl. Bialystok	446.484
<b>Zusammen: über</b>	<b>11.000.000</b>

List of countries presented to the Wannsee Conference (January 1942) with the number of Jews marked out for death. The Republic of Ireland is on the list with 4,000.



## Christabel Bielenberg

**Christabel Bielenberg married a young German law student in 1934 and lived in Nazi Germany throughout the War. She sheltered Jews on the run, and her husband Peter was imprisoned for his part in the 1944 July Plot to assassinate Hitler. In *The Past Is Myself*, Christabel tells of meeting a Latvian who had joined the Waffen SS after the Nazis liberated his village from the Russians. When he asks her where she is from, she tells him that her people are from Ireland. The Latvian soldier launches into a monologue:**

"Well, they told us that we could revenge ourselves on our enemies and they sent us to Poland. Not to fight the Poles, oh no, they had been defeated long ago — but to kill Jews. We just had the shooting to do, others did the burying," he drew a deep, sighing breath. "Do you know what it means — to kill Jews, men, women, and children as they stand in a semicircle around the machine guns? I belonged to what is called an Einsatzkommando, an extermination squad — so I know. What do you say when I tell you that a little boy, no older than my youngest brother, before such a killing, stood there to attention and asked me 'Do I stand straight enough, Uncle?' Yes, he asked that of me; and once, when the circle stood round us, an old man stepped out of the ranks, he had long hair and a beard, a priest of some sort I suppose. Anyway, he came towards us slowly across the grass, slowly step by step, and within a few feet of the guns he stopped and looked at us one after another, a straight, deep, dark and terrible look. 'My children,' he said, 'God is watching what you do.' He turned from us then, and someone shot him in the back before he had gone more than a few steps. But I — I could not forget that look, even now it burns into me."

**Nobel Laureate, Elie Wiesel, was sent to Auschwitz at the age of fourteen. This is an excerpt from his book *Night*.**

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed.  
Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned to wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky.  
Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.  
Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live.  
Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust.  
Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God himself.  
Never.

## Liberation of Buchenwald

**Irish writer and journalist Denis Johnston was one of the first reporters to reach Buchenwald concentration camp after its liberation. This extract is taken from his autobiography *Nine Rivers from Jordan*.**

As we entered the long hut, the stench hit us in the face, a queer wailing came to our ears. Along both sides of the shed was tier upon tier of what can only be described as shelves. And lying on these, packed tightly side by side, like knives and forks in a drawer, were living creatures — some of them stirring, some of them stiff and silent, but all of them skeletons, with the skin drawn tight over their bones, with heads bulging and misshapen from emaciation, with burning eyes and sagging jaws. And as we came in, those with the strength to do so turned their heads and gazed at us; and from their lips came that thin, unearthly noise.

Then I realised what it was. It was meant to be cheering... From the shelves, feeble arms rose and waved, like twigs in a breeze...

## The Kindertransports

**Excerpt from *Faraway Home* by Marilyn Taylor, based on the true story of Jewish refugee children who escaped Nazi Vienna on a Kindertransport train and found a haven on Millisle Refugee Farm in County Down, Northern Ireland. The farm was leased by the Belfast Jewish Community in 1938 with assistance and support from Jewish communities in the South of Ireland.**

Through windswept streets, Karl and Rosa walked silently with Mama and Papa. Papa had insisted on coming, despite the danger of being picked up by the SS. 'No one,' he said firmly, 'is going to stop me saying goodbye to my children.'

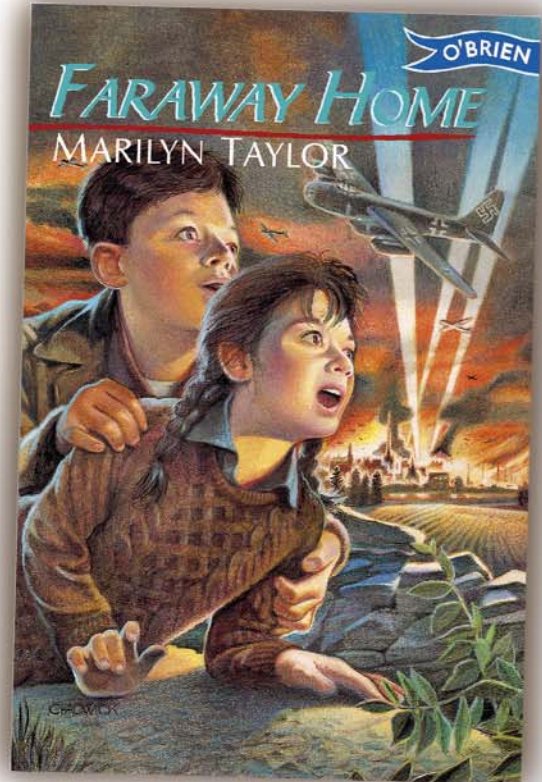
At the station they joined crowds of parents and children, all clutching their suitcases, as grim-faced Nazi Stormtroopers with guns and truncheons patrolled the platform with vicious dogs in tow.

The reality of the separation from his family, and the journey to an unknown world, hit Karl like a sudden blow in the guts as he and Rosa hugged their parents, the comforting arms enfolding them for the last time. They kissed Mama's velvety cheek and Papa's bristly one. Papa dried Rosa's tears with his handkerchief and handed her a new doll and a book about a dog, a golden retriever just like their own Goldi. Mama, with a forced smile, handed them paper bags with sandwiches and apples for the journey.

Then they had to get into the train. 'Look after Rosa, Karl,' murmured Mama. 'God bless you both.' 'Remember, stay together,' said Papa huskily. 'We'll join you as soon as we can.'

Inside the carriage it was dark. The window-blinds had been drawn by the guards, so that parents and children couldn't see each other.

As his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, Karl saw that the carriage was full of children of all



ages. Some were crying; others, the younger ones, not understanding what was going on, were excited at the prospect of an adventure; and two girls of Karl's age were, like him, beyond tears.

Peering through a crack between the blinds, he saw Mama and Papa in the line of quietly weeping parents. His mother, in her best hat, stepped behind Papa to try and hide her tears.

In a kind of daze, Karl stowed the cases in the overhead racks. Thankfully, Rosa had stopped crying and was cuddling the new doll.

A whistle blew. The train hissed, signalling its imminent departure. It shuddered and started to move - slowly, then faster... Karl gazed at the rigid figures of his parents, trying to fix their images forever in his mind as they grew smaller and smaller. Then the train, with a shrill whistle, clattered round a bend, and Karl could see them no more.

## Personal Recollections

### Geoffrey Phillips

**Recollections of Geoffrey Phillips, as told to Mary Rose Doorley in *Hidden Memories*. Geoffrey escaped from Germany as a thirteen-year-old on one of the Kindertransport trains that brought 10,000 children to safety in Britain in the months before the war. Geoffrey has lived in Ireland with his wife and family for over 50 years.**

My father was a German soldier in the First World War, as was my uncle. They were both members of the old veterans association. The rise of Hitler cleared the way for hundreds of official strategies in which Jews could suddenly be discriminated against. No matter how clever Jewish students were at school it was ensured that they failed or barely passed their exams. Many teachers actively encouraged physical violence against Jewish students. We always had to walk to school in groups of five or six, because if you were on your own, you might end up getting stones thrown at you or getting a good hiding.

9 November 1938. Kristallnacht. In the early hours of the morning, we heard that our synagogue had been set on fire by squads of Hitler Youth. Later on we heard the same thing was happening all over the country. Before we had recovered from the shock of this terrible news, there was a knock on the door. Two plainclothes policemen asked for my father, told him to pack a change of clothes and took him away.

### Rosel Siev

**Excerpts from the memories of Rosel Siev (nee Wolff), from Aurich, Ostfriesland, Germany, close to the Dutch border. Rosel and her husband have lived in Ireland for over 50 years.**

I was the eldest daughter of five children growing up in a loving, secure family, until Hitler came to power in 1933. Virtually my entire family – 63 persons – perished in the Holocaust. My youngest sister Hanna went through several concentration camps before being sent to Auschwitz in 1942. By chance, she stumbled and stepped out of the line on the way to the gas chambers, and was later saved by working for Oskar Schindler.

While by far the greater part of the German people supported the Nazis and turned hostile almost immediately, there were individual exceptions. I had a remarkable escape from death in 1938. Having suffered a serious throat infection (no penicillin in those days) which necessitated admission to hospital, I was asked my religion. I replied, “I am of the Jewish faith.” The sister in charge, a Catholic nun, said to me: “If you want to get out of here alive, you must state that you are Catholic.” She wrote this on my admission form. When the doctor appeared, he was in Nazi uniform. He studied the admission form, believed what was written down, and I was saved. That nun was a Righteous Gentile.



*Group of children who survived the concentration camps arriving in Britain in 1945*



## Bergen Belsen – The Irish Connection

### Bob and Han Collis

**The story of Bob and Han Collis, who tended to hundreds of young children who had survived Bergen-Belsen. They brought five of these children back with them to Ireland.**

When British forces liberated Bergen-Belsen on 15 April 1945, they found more than 50,000 human beings alive under appalling conditions. The stench of death could be smelled from 15 miles away. Belsen itself was not an elimination centre but had originally been intended as a transit camp, where inmates were not gassed, but starved. Their malnutrition was exacerbated by an epidemic of typhus carried by lice, and every form of enteritis including typhoid fever. 14,000 prisoners died in the first few days after liberation, and a similar number perished in the following weeks.

Towards the end of the war, Dr Bob Collis, a paediatrician at Dublin's Rotunda Hospital, joined the British Red Cross and St John's Ambulance Brigade together with Irish colleagues Patrick McClancy, a paediatrician, and Nigel Kinnear, a surgeon. Their goal was to reach the Continent and give service to war victims. When they heard eye-witness accounts about the conditions in Bergen-Belsen, Bob Collis and his colleagues immediately volunteered their help. They were joined by a Dutchwoman called Han Hogerzeil, a lawyer who spoke five languages and who, together with her mother, had courageously helped to run a safe house

for Jews during the war. Han's family lost everything, including the family home, at the Battle of Arnhem.

One of the blocks that Bob took on in the camp contained a large number of orphan children recovering from malnutrition. Another block was transformed into a children's hospital. Han's knowledge of languages was invaluable, as the five hundred mostly Jewish children were of nine different nationalities.

Han: 'The thing that moved me more than anything else was this huge pile of shoes. Shoes are somehow part of you and your personality. You see tiny children's shoes, and high-heeled shoes, and half-broken old men's shoes. For me that was the very worst. In fact it was worse than seeing a dead person. These people had put on these shoes and possibly walked to their death in them.'

Six of the children in the hospital – Zoltan, Edith, Tibor (Terry), Zsuzsi (Suzi), Evelin and Franz – became Bob's special charges.



Zoltan and Edith were of Slovak origin. Two of their siblings had not survived - their baby sister died in the cattle car on the way to the camps, and their brother, Aladar, died immediately after liberation as did their mother. Bob describes the moment he first met Zoltan. "On my way round the children's hospital one morning I came into a small ward. Here I found Han with the most entrancing scrap of humanity in her arms. He appeared one great smile. There was very little else of him. The fever (typhus) had just left him, his body was wasted." Bob and Han managed to nurse Zoltan through tubercular pleurisy and critical complications.

Terry and Suzi came from a cultured Jewish-Hungarian background. All of their family had been murdered by the Nazis and their mother died in Belsen immediately after liberation. Bob described them: "Suzi was very weak after typhus and only just alive. Terry was a splendid little male. He was only five but he nursed her and literally would not let her die."

Evelin Schwartz was a little German-Jewish girl, and Franz Berlin was so called because he had been picked up unconscious in the street in Berlin and brought to the hospital in Belsen.

After many of the children in the camp had been restored to health, they were repatriated to their different countries. The Swedish government invited hundreds of the remaining orphans to Sweden where

they could recuperate further. Since nobody appeared to claim Bob's children, he and Han eventually brought them home to Ireland, first staying in Fairy Hill, a beautiful open-air hospital on the Hill of Howth near Dublin. Bob and his wife adopted Zoltan and Edith, and they arranged for Terry and Suzi to be adopted by a Dublin Jewish couple, Willie and Elsie Samuels. Evelin Schwartz was adopted by a Dublin couple who later moved to Australia.

Han went on to a distinguished humanitarian career in refugee resettlement work. She served at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and later at the Inter-Governmental Commission for Refugees in London. She later studied medicine at King's College Hospital in London, and did her internship at the Jewish Hospital in the East End of London.

Bob and Han Collis were two matched spirits who met through the hell of Belsen and devoted their entire lives to the well-being of children of all religions and backgrounds. They later worked with Han's brother, Dr. Lykle Hogerzeil, at his leprosy mission in India. Wherever they worked and lived, they stayed in touch with their Belsen children who all thrived, and whose children and grandchildren can be found throughout the world.

Bob and Han were the first Irish people to be honoured with the title "Righteous Among the Nations" by the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Authority in Israel.



*Edith with a gypsy child and Zoltan in Belsen after the Liberation, June 1945*



*Zoltan and Suzi, April 1946*



## Jack and Bertha Weingreen

**The story of Jack and Bertha Weingreen, members of the Dublin Jewish community who were active in the areas of education and youth development.**

Jack Weingreen was a distinguished teacher, writer and professor of Hebrew at Trinity College Dublin. His wife Bertha came from South Africa where she taught English and Drama at a training college for 'coloured' teachers. In 1945, Jack and Bertha joined the Jewish Relief Unit which cared for the remnants of European Jewry who had survived the Nazi concentration camps. Bertha was Chief Welfare Officer responsible for all Jewish DPs (Displaced Persons) in the British Zone, and was stationed at the former military barracks at Bergen-Belsen. Jack joined her there in 1946 as Director of Education for all DP's, which included concentration camp survivors as well as thousands of Polish Jews who fled back from Poland after a series of pogroms on Jews returning to their towns after the War.

Following a visit to the British sector of divided Berlin, Bertha discovered a number of Jewish children who had been hidden during the war. She set up a kindergarten and organised a crate of toys to be sent by the Dublin JYRO (Jewish Youth Relief Organisation). As the harsh winter of 1946 approached, the Weingreens once again turned to JYRO which sent large bales of Donegal tweed to be made into winter clothing by tailors in the DP camp. Linen mills in Northern Ireland donated material for nappies to cater for the 'baby boom' following numerous marriages in the DP camps. At the same time, Jack established a flourishing trade school at Belsen which was later transformed by ORT (the International Jewish Organisation for Rehabilitation through Training) into a top-grade technical college.



Jack and Bertha returned to Dublin in 1947. One of the memories from this traumatic period in Europe that haunted them most vividly was a visit Bertha made to a hospital for sick child survivors in Lubeck. "When she entered the small ward," Jack later wrote, "the faces of the children resembled the faces of mummies, which can be seen in museums. Instead of arms and fingers lying on the blankets, there were sticks, at the end of which were claws. The shock was overwhelming and in the corridor Bertha shed bitter tears at what had been done to these children, in the last stages of hunger and abuse."

The couple continued to play an active part in Irish academic life and in the life of Dublin's Jewish community right up to their deaths in the 1990s.



## Chaim Herzog

**Born in Ireland during the Civil War, Chaim Herzog went on to become President of the State of Israel. In 1945, this Irishman visited the newly-liberated Bergen-Belsen Camp. The following extract is taken from Herzog's autobiography, *Living History*.**

The horrors of the concentration camps were revealed to an unbelieving world when Bergen-Belsen fell to the British Eighth Corps, who were fighting and advancing on our right flank. When there was a lull in the fighting, I drove to Bergen-Belsen, having heard whispers of the atrocities that had occurred there. The sight of the living, emaciated skeletons was by now horribly familiar to me but that familiarity didn't make it any less terrifying. The entire scene was made more apocalyptic – if that's even possible – by the fact that, because typhus raged throughout the camp, the wooden barracks were being burned to the ground. I told some of the survivors I was a Jewish officer from Palestine. They all burst into tears.



## Clonyn Castle

**Holocaust orphan survivors in Clonyn Castle, Co. Westmeath, after the war.**

Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld, the executive director of the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council in London, took a personal interest in the rescue of Jewish children from the Polish ghettos both before and after the war. In 1946, he persuaded the owners of the 100-acre Clonyn Castle in Delvin, Co. Westmeath, to make the place available as a children's hostel. The Council asked the Irish Department of Justice to admit 100 Jewish orphans who had survived the concentration camps, on the understanding that the Council would undertake to arrange for the children's emigration after a specified period.

The scheme was not approved by Justice Minister Gerry Boland, and a Department memorandum noted that the Minister feared "any substantial increase in our Jewish population might give rise to an anti-Semitic problem". At the urging of former Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog, the Taoiseach Eamon de Valera overruled this decision, and the children were allowed in on condition that there was a guarantee that their stay would be for a short period only. In May 1948, over 100 orphans arrived from Czechoslovakia and stayed in Clonyn Castle for about 15 months before being moved out of Ireland, as agreed. They settled in the US, Israel and the UK. In the year 2000, many of the Clonyn Castle children travelled back to attend a reunion in Ireland where they reminisced about the time they had spent there.

## SHOAH

Poem, written in Irish, by Máire Mhac an tSaoi, inspired by a visit to the Holocaust memorial in Vienna. The poem, which appeared in *The Great Book of Ireland*, was illustrated by a Holocaust survivor who signed his work with his concentration camp tattoo number.

### As Gaeilge

An seanóir Giúdach ar a cheithre cnámha,  
Ualach sneachta ar a ghualíne,  
Cianta an rogha ina ghnúis –  
'Mar seo,' adeir an t-lomhá miotail,  
'Do sciúr mo chine "leacacha na sráide"  
I Wien na hOstaire, leathchéad bliain ó shoin –  
É sin, agus ar lean é –  
Ní náire feacadh í láthair Dé –

Ach sibhse, na meacain scoilte,  
Bhur gcoilsheasamh ar bhur "gcuailí arda",  
Nil agaibh teicheadh ón aithis:  
Ársa na mBeann crapadh go hisle glún,  
Beatha na n-éag insa láib,  
Ar a chosa deiridh don mbrútach!'

### English translation

*The old Jew on his hands and knees,  
A weight of snow on his shoulders,  
Ages of election in his face –  
'Thus' says the metal image,  
'My people scoured "the flagstones of the street"  
In Vienna of Austria, fifty years ago –  
That, and what followed –  
It is no shame to crouch in the face of God –  
But you, the forked root vegetables,  
Bolt upright on your "high stilts",  
You shall not escape defilement:  
The Ancient of the High Places stunted as low as the  
knee,  
Eternal life in the mud,  
The brute on his hind legs!*

by Máire Mhac an tSaoi

## The Award of "Righteous Among the Nations"

During the long night of the Holocaust, among the few points of light were the actions of the men and women who risked their lives to save the lives of Jews. Their actions show us that compassion, courage and morality were not totally extinguished in those dark years. Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Authority in Israel, has conferred the title "Righteous Among the Nations" on over 19,000 people throughout the world. Inscribed on the medal they receive is the Talmudic saying: "Whoever saves a single life is as one who has saved an entire world."

Bob and Han Collis are the only Irish people to be thus honoured, and the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Authority is currently studying the case of Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty, for his work in rescuing Jews in Rome during the Holocaust.

### SHEMA (Hear), a poem by Italian Holocaust survivor, Primo Levi, based on the Jewish prayer, 'Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.'

You who live secure  
In your warm houses,  
Who return at evening to find  
Hot food and friendly faces:  
Consider whether this is a man,  
Who labours in the mud  
Who knows no peace  
Who fights for a crust of bread  
Who dies at a yes or a no.  
Consider whether this is a woman  
Without hair or name  
With no more strength to remember  
Eyes empty and womb cold  
As a frog in winter.

Consider that this has been:  
I commend these words to you.  
Engrave them on your hearts  
When you are in your house, when you walk on  
your way,  
When you go to bed, when you rise.  
Repeat them to your children.  
Or may your house crumble,  
Disease render you powerless,  
Your offspring avert their faces from you.

## Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty, the Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican

Born in Lisrobin, Kiskeam in 1898 to a staunchly Republican family, Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty grew up in Killarney, and earned his BA degree in Theology. He was ordained in Rome in 1925 and appointed to the Vatican Diplomatic Service, serving in Egypt, Haiti, Santo Domingo and Czechoslovakia before returning to Rome in 1938 to work in the Holy Office.

Mgr. O'Flaherty initially dismissed accounts of Nazi atrocities as Allied propaganda. The Nazis' treatment of Rome's Jewish population transformed his opinions. In the autumn of 1942, he started smuggling and hiding refugees when the Germans and Italians cracked down on prominent Jews and anti-Fascists. Every evening, he stood in the porch of St. Peter's, in plain view of the German soldiers across the piazza.

One of the Jews who approached Mgr. O'Flaherty at his usual post proceeded to unwind a gold chain that went twice around his waist. "My wife and I expect to be arrested at any moment," said the Jew. "We have no way of escaping. When we are taken to Germany we shall die. But we have a small son; he is only seven and is too young to die. Please take this chain and take the boy for us too. Each link of the chain will keep him alive for a month. Will you save him?" The Monsignor improved upon this plan: he accepted the chain, hid the boy and procured false papers for the parents. At the end of the war, he returned the boy and the chain.

In the spring of 1943, Mgr. O'Flaherty's operation broadened to include escaped British POWs caught behind enemy lines. His fledgling, informal network of contacts was transformed into "The Organisation" – a massive partisan effort to save Jews, soldiers and refugees of many other creeds and nationalities. He hid them in monasteries and convents, at Castel Gandolfo, in his old college of the Propaganda Fide, in his own residence, the German College, and in his network of apartments. He provided them with food, clothing and money to reimburse the Italian families who risked their lives to hide them.



One of the people who worked closely with Mgr. O'Flaherty on a daily basis was John Furman, a Jewish captain in the British Army who had escaped from several POW camps and was later to be awarded the Military Cross. This is how he described the priest whose exploits were celebrated in the 1983 movie "The Scarlet and the Black."

"His face normally wore a benign, absent-minded, professorial expression, an effect which his spectacles heightened, but the mood could change very quickly and I was frequently to see the kindly twinkle in his eyes displaced by flaming passion whenever he heard of some particularly bestial cruelty perpetrated no matter by whom or against whom."



These poems are from Micheal O'Siadhail's  
*The Gossamer Wall: Poems in Witness to the Holocaust.*

**SUMMONS**

*Meditate that this came about. Imagine.*  
Pyjama ghosts tramp the shadow of a chimney.  
Shorn and nameless. Desolation's mad machine  
With endless counts and selections. *Try to see!*  
For each who survived, every numbered  
Arm that tries to hold the wedding guest,  
A thousand urgent stories forever unheard;  
In each testimony a thousand more suppressed.  
A Polish horizon glows with stifled cries:  
Who'll wake us from this infinite nightmare?  
Out of the cone of Vesuvius their lives rise  
To sky-write gaunt silences in the frozen air.  
A summons to *try to look, to try to see.*  
A muted dead demand their debt of memory.

**NEVER**

That any poem after Auschwitz is obscene?  
Covenants of silence so broken between us  
Can we still promise or trust what we mean?

Even in the dark of earth, seeds will swell.  
All the interweavings and fullness of being,  
Nothing less may insure against our hell.

A black sun only shines out of a vacuum.  
Cold narrowings and idols of blood and soil.  
And all the more now, we can't sing dumb!

A conversation so rich it knows it never arrives  
Or forecloses; in a buzz and cross-ruff of polity  
The restless subversive ragtime of what thrives.

Endless dialogues. The criss-cross of flourishings.  
Again and over again our complex yes.  
A raucous glory and the whole jazz of things.

The sudden riffs of surprise beyond our ken;  
Out of control, a music's brimming let-go.  
We feast to keep our promise of never again.

**FACES**

Neat millions of pairs of abandoned shoes  
Creased with mute presence of those whose

Faces both stare and vanish. Which ghetto?  
Warsaw, Vilna, Łódź, Riga, Kovno.

Eight hundred dark-eyed girls from Salonica  
Bony and sag-breasted singing the *Hatikvah*

Tread the barefoot floor to a shower-room.  
Friedländer, Berenstein, Menasche, Blum.

Each someone's fondled face. A named few.  
Did they hold hands the moment they knew?

*I'll change their shame to praise and renown in all  
The earth...* Always each face and shoeless footfall

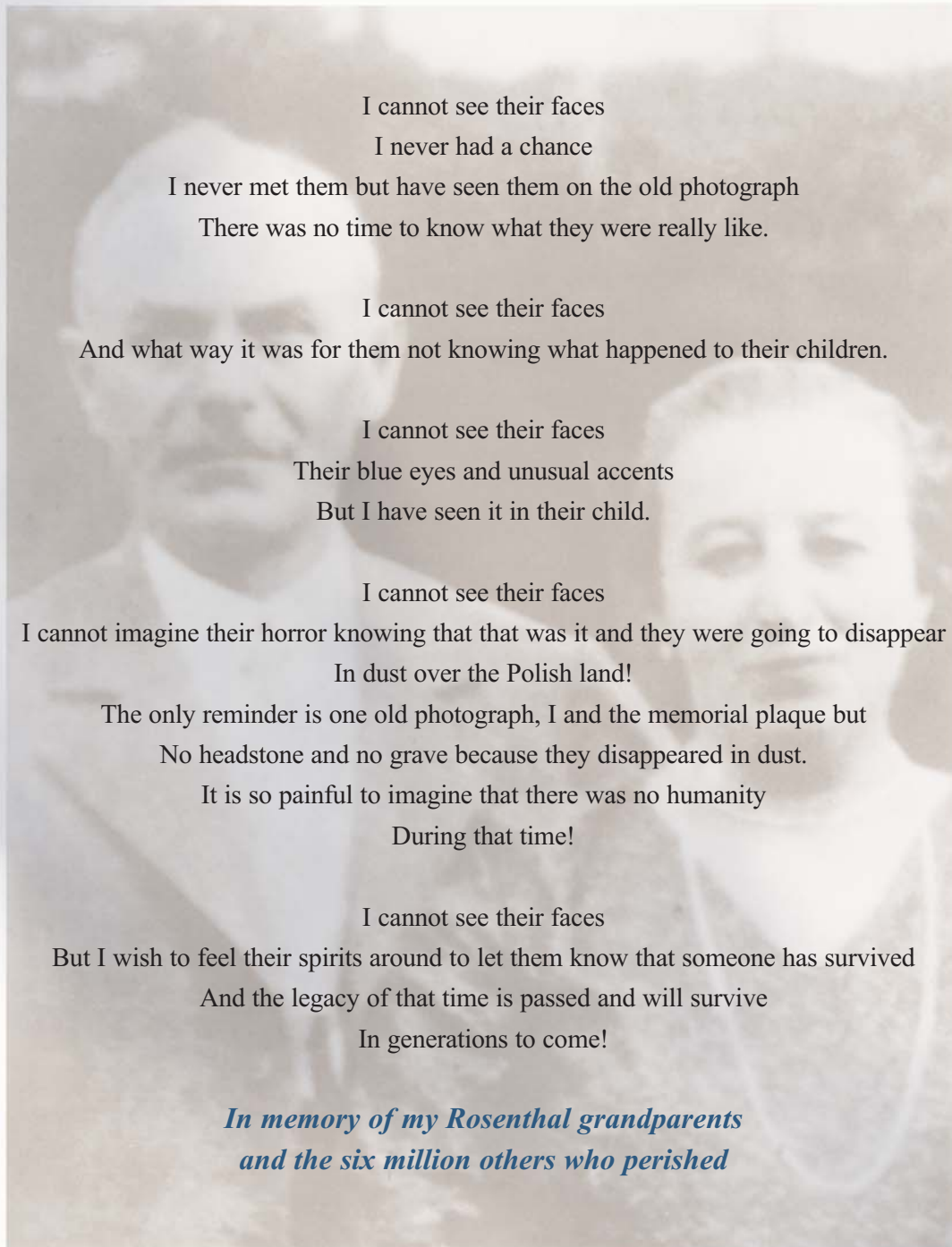
A breathing memory behind the gossamer wall.



## SOMEONE HAS SURVIVED

by Renata Katz

**Originally from Czechoslovakia, Renata has lived in Dublin for over 20 years. When she looks at the faded photograph, she thinks of the members of her family who perished in the Holocaust.**



I cannot see their faces  
I never had a chance  
I never met them but have seen them on the old photograph  
There was no time to know what they were really like.

I cannot see their faces  
And what way it was for them not knowing what happened to their children.

I cannot see their faces  
Their blue eyes and unusual accents  
But I have seen it in their child.

I cannot see their faces  
I cannot imagine their horror knowing that that was it and they were going to disappear  
In dust over the Polish land!  
The only reminder is one old photograph, I and the memorial plaque but  
No headstone and no grave because they disappeared in dust.  
It is so painful to imagine that there was no humanity  
During that time!

I cannot see their faces  
But I wish to feel their spirits around to let them know that someone has survived  
And the legacy of that time is passed and will survive  
In generations to come!

*In memory of my Rosenthal grandparents  
and the six million others who perished*

## The Ettie Steinberg story

**Ettie Steinberg was the only Irish-born Jew to die in the Holocaust. Her story was summarised in *Jews in Twentieth Century Ireland: Refugees, Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust*, by Dermot Keogh.**

Esther, or Ettie, Steinberg was the only Irish-born Jew to die in the Holocaust. She was one of a family of seven children who were reared in Raymond Terrace, South Circular Road, Dublin. Originally from Czechoslovakia, her family had come to Ireland from London in 1926. She was a beautiful girl, tall and slim with wonderful hands. "She was a fantastic dressmaker and embroiderer," recalled her sister-in-law, also Ettie. In 1937, at the age of twenty-two, Ettie Steinberg married a twenty-four-year-old goldsmith from Antwerp, Vogtjeck Gluck. The couple moved to Belgium, where their son Leon was born. When the Germans invaded the Low Countries, Ettie and her family went into hiding. By a strange irony, the Steinbergs in Dublin had secured visas for Ettie and her family through the British Home Office in Belfast. The visas were sent immediately to Toulouse but they arrived too late. Ettie and her family had been rounded up the day before and sent to the camp at Drancy, outside Paris. They were transported to Auschwitz and to their immediate death.

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**Death camp survivor and Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal became the conscience and voice of the millions of victims of the Holocaust.**

The only value of nearly five decades of my work is a warning to the murderers of tomorrow that they will never rest. It is not a written law that the next victims must be Jews. There can also be others. We saw it begin in Nazi Germany with the Jews, but people from more than twenty nations were also murdered. Hatred can be nurtured anywhere, idealism can be perverted into sadism anywhere. If hatred and sadism combine with modern technology, the inferno could erupt anew anywhere.



*Ettie Steinberg on her wedding day*

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**English rendition of El Male Rachamim, the Hebrew Prayer for the Repose of the Souls of the Departed:**

God who is full of mercy, who dwelleth on high, grant proper rest on the wings of the divine presence for the souls of all our brothers and sisters, the holy and pure ones who were butchered, murdered, slaughtered, incinerated, drowned, shot and strangled in the sanctification of thy name at the hands of the Nazi oppressors. We offer our humble prayers in remembrance of their souls, and may their resting place be in the Garden of Eden. May the Master of mercy shelter them in the shadow of his wings for eternity, and may he bind their souls in the soul of life. The Lord is their heritage, and may they repose in everlasting peace in their resting places. Now let us respond: Amen.





*Holocaust Memorial, Garden of Europe, Listowel, Co. Kerry.*

**Excerpt from the speech delivered in May 1995  
by Paddy Fitzgibbon of The Rotary Club of Listowel,  
on the occasion of the opening of the only  
public Holocaust memorial in Ireland,  
in the Garden of Europe in Listowel, County Kerry.**

Go home from this place and tell your children and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren that today in Listowel, you looked into eyes that witnessed the most cataclysmic events ever unleashed by mankind upon mankind. Tell them that you met people who will still be remembered and still talked about and still wept over 10,000 years from now – because if they are not, there will be no hope for us at all. The Holocaust happened and it can happen again, and every one of us, if only out of our own sense of self-preservation, has a solemn duty to ensure that nothing like it ever occurs again.

## HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

### HONOURED GUESTS

**Mr Terry Samuels** – Bergen-Belsen  
**Mrs Suzi Diamond** – Bergen-Belsen  
**Mrs Rosel Siev** – Aurich, Germany  
**Mr Zoltan Zinn-Collis** – Bergen Belsen  
**Mrs Doris Segal** – Sudetenland  
**Mr Geoffrey Phillips** – Kindertransport

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

**Yellow star**: courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, London.  
**Shoes**: Shoes collected from the victims of Majdanek concentration camp, courtesy Panstwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, Poland and Imperial War Museum London.  
**Ettie Steinberg photograph**: courtesy of Irish Jewish Museum.  
**Belsen Survivor**: photograph inside back cover from private collection of Han Collis.  
**Gate-tower and Ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau** and **Pile of Shoes**: courtesy Panstwowe Muzeum, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Poland.  
**The Little Polish Boy in the Warsaw Ghetto**: Hulton Archive.

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# Holocaust

MEMORIAL DAY

Dublin City Hall  
Sunday, 26th January 2003