



HOLOCAUST  
MEMORIAL  
DAY TRUST

## HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2014: JOURNEYS

*...on the following day the Jews would be leaving. All the Jews, without exception. Even the children, even the old, even the ill. Our destination? Nobody knew.*

Primo Levi, Holocaust survivor and author

### HMD themes

HMDT is committed to putting the experiences of those who suffered the Holocaust, Nazi Persecution and genocide at the centre of HMD. Each year we identify a specific topic, relevant to survivors and those who perished, which will enable HMD activity organisers to approach their annual activities with a fresh focus, keep the interest of their existing participants and engage new audiences.

### Introduction to the 2014 theme: Journeys

The experience of those affected by the Holocaust and genocide is characterised by forced journeys. Many of these journeys ended in death: persecutors forcibly moved huge numbers of people – in trains, cattle trucks and on death marches, from homes in villages and towns and across countries. Some journeys ended in survival: when those persecuted made journeys to escape, some in disguise, some into hiding. There are journeys too, made after liberation: to life in new countries, or returning home to the places where neighbours may have contributed to the persecution.

Individuals and families were forced to move away from their homes and familiar surroundings, into the unknown. These journeys were mostly undertaken in fear and in ignorance of what would be found at the journey's end. Refugees travelled across countries and across seas. We read of endless queues for visas, train or boat tickets, of timetables and waiting on station platforms. We read of people struggling to carry suitcases with whatever they could pack in a time of desperate need.

Similar journeys may be made during other war situations. However, journeys undertaken during the Holocaust and subsequent genocides are underpinned by the perpetrators' systematic and planned use of vast transport infrastructure and personnel resources to facilitate stages of genocide: separating families and communities, organising and preparing for torture and murder by moving populations to ghettos and camps. In

deportations and death marches, the journey itself was a means of degrading, persecuting and killing Jews, political prisoners and many others.

The history of the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and of the subsequent genocides is of upheaval, uprooting individuals, families and even whole communities, people forced to travel from village to city, from town to hiding places. For survivors who arrived in the UK, their journeys ended with the establishment of new lives and new homes in a country that at first felt very alien.

## **Journeys of persecution**

### **Deportations**

The Nazis used rail transport across continental Europe to move, by force, huge numbers of Jews from their homes to ghettos or transit camps and later to concentration camps; guards were ordered to shoot anyone who tried to escape. The scale of these journeys is shown in Sir Martin Gilbert's *Atlas of the Holocaust*. These journeys, sometimes of several days, were under terrible conditions with Jews crammed into carriages with no water, food or sanitary provision. Many died on the journeys; the living were crammed against the corpses.

The doors had been closed at once, but the train did not move until evening.....The train travelled slowly, with long, unnerving halts.....Among the 45 people in my wagon only 4 saw their homes again, and it was by far the most fortunate wagon.....We suffered from thirst and cold; every stop we clamoured for water, or even a handful of snow, but we were rarely heard.

Primo Levi, *If this is a Man*

### **Death marches**

As the Allies advanced on Auschwitz in 1945, tens of thousands of people were evacuated from the camp and marched away – the death marches often lasted for weeks. Freddie Knoller is an Austrian Jew who spent the early part of the war under a false identity in Antwerp and France. However, he was betrayed in 1943 and transported to Auschwitz. In January 1945 he was evacuated as the Russians advanced.

All those who were able to walk, we had to walk from Auschwitz to Gleiwitz about twenty or thirty kilometres. It was January, minus twenty temperature with our pyjamas on...so many people collapsed and so many people ran away into the woods, the Germans surrounded us shooting.

Freddie Knoller, Holocaust survivor

## Journeys of escape

### Journeys into hiding

Apolinaire Kageruka was a teacher in Rwanda when the killings began in Kigali in 1994. He asked a Hutu neighbour, Pascal, to help – the parent of one of his students. The student was clever, but his family was poor and a few years previously Apolinaire had paid for the boy's schooling. Pascal agreed and hid him for several weeks; the militia searched Apolinaire's house barely two hours after he had left.

Can you imagine you bring another person in that small house, without a bed, without blanket? Think! Just sleeping on the floor. You don't have any food; you want some water. You can't go to find the water. You can't go to find the food. Think.... imagine.

Apolinaire Kageruka, survivor of the Genocide in Rwanda

### Refugee journeys

Kemal Pervanić's journeys started when he was taken with his middle brother, Kasim, to the Omarska concentration camp in Bosnia. Both brothers survived the camps, and moved to the UK shortly after their release. Since settling here, Kemal travels across the country, telling people about his experiences and encouraging them to learn about the genocide in Bosnia. He has also established the Most Mira charity, dedicated to building understanding and tolerance among young people of all ethnicities in Bosnia.

### Kindertransport

The most famous journeys to escape the Holocaust are perhaps those made by 10,000, mostly Jewish, children, offered a new life in Britain. They were rescued from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, leaving after Kristallnacht in November 1938 and before borders were closed at the outbreak of war. Each had to provide a £50 guarantee; they were found foster-homes around the UK by Jewish and non-Jewish families.

## **Journeys of return**

Some people made the journey back to their original homes after the war. Gad Beck was a young Berlin Jew who had been a leader of a Zionist youth group. The group took huge risks smuggling rations, money and clothes to Jews in hiding, and helped some flee to Switzerland by supplying forged papers.

Gad decided to resist in 1942, when his first boyfriend, Manfred Lewin, was arrested and held at a detention centre in Berlin. Gad disguised himself as a member of the Hitler Youth and boldly demanded to speak to the commandant. Having convinced him he needed Manfred for a short time, Gad and his boyfriend walked out. But Manfred turned back – he could not leave his parents. His family was sent to Auschwitz; none survived.

After the war, Gad worked in a displaced persons' camp, helping survivors resettle overseas. However, West Germany did not repeal Nazi anti-gay laws and adopted an increasingly repressive stance towards LGBT people. Gad emigrated to Israel, but made the journey back to Germany in 1979. He became the Director of Berlin's Jewish Adult Education Centre and a prominent gay activist. Gad felt it was his mission to return, to make his ultimate resistance rebuilding Jewish and LGBT life where the Nazis had tried to eradicate them.

## **Anniversary of the Genocide in Rwanda**

In 100 days in 1994 approximately one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered in the Genocide in Rwanda. Discrimination against Tutsis had long been widespread, with Tutsis being barred from going to many universities and undertaking certain jobs. 2014 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rwandan genocide; we ask you to acknowledge this in your HMD activity.

## **HMD 2014**

On HMD 2014 we can learn how journeys themselves became part of genocide, and how the journeys undertaken were often experiences of persecution and terror for so many people who suffered in the Holocaust, under Nazi persecution and in the subsequent genocides. We can also learn about the journeys that brought survivors to the UK and how, in many instances, journeys of return have been part of the experience of rebuilding.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

There are many resources on the HMDT website ([hmd.org.uk](http://hmd.org.uk)) which also provides links to other organisations with information on the Holocaust and subsequent genocides. Below are recommendations specifically relating to the HMD 2014 theme of **Journeys**.

### Reading

- *Atlas of the Holocaust*, Sir Martin Gilbert
- *The Other Schindlers*, Agnes Grunwald-Spier
- *If this is a man*, Primo Levi
- *An Underground Life: Memoirs of a gay Jew in Nazi Berlin*, Gad Beck, Frank Heibert, Allison Brown
- *In the shadow of the Banyan* – Vaddey Ratner

### Useful websites, exhibitions and organisations for this theme

#### Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR): [ajr.org.uk](http://ajr.org.uk)

- *Refugee Voices* – An archive of 150 digitally filmed interviews with Jewish refugees from Nazism who settled and rebuilt their lives in Britain. The collection consists of more than 450 hours of film and full transcribed, time-coded and catalogued testimonies.
- *Continental Britons – Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe* – An exhibition relating the remarkable and compelling story of the Jewish refugees who fled Nazi persecution in the German-speaking countries before World War II and came to Britain

#### Cambodian Association in the UK (CASUNIK): [casunik.org](http://casunik.org)

#### Holocaust Centre: [holocaustcentre.net/the-journey](http://holocaustcentre.net/the-journey)

- *The Journey* – Exhibition for primary school children, telling the story of a fictional German Jewish boy who travels from Nazi-occupied Germany to Britain

#### **Holocaust Educational Trust: [het.org.uk](http://het.org.uk)**

- Paul's Journey – A mix of text, pictures and other images, this tells the story of one family's experiences during the Holocaust through the eyes of its eldest child
- Martin and Erica's Journey – Publication telling the story of Holocaust survivor Dr Martin Stern and his younger sister Erica. Martin recounts their early life and the journey he and his sister were forced to make through Europe during the Second World War and emphasises how aid-giving helped them survive.
- Both publications are produced in conjunction with the National Union of Teachers and are appropriate for students aged 10 and above

#### **Holocaust Memorial Day Trust: [hmd.org.uk](http://hmd.org.uk)**

- Wide range of resources on the HMD 2014 theme, including lesson plans, assemblies and school materials for key stages 1 and 2, including for pupils with special educational needs. Materials for HMD activity organisers including posters, booklets, case studies, tailored factsheets.

#### **Jewish Museum London: [jewishmuseum.org.uk](http://jewishmuseum.org.uk)**

- The Holocaust Gallery – Exhibition centred on Leon Greenman's experiences and journey to Britain

#### **The Wiener Library: [wienerlibrary.co.uk](http://wienerlibrary.co.uk)**

- The Wiener Library – Run events, workshops and tours
- Until 3 October 2013 they will be featuring an exhibition on the experiences of five children from the *Kindertransport*

#### **London Jewish Cultural Centre (LJCC): [theholocaustexplained.org](http://theholocaustexplained.org)**

- The Holocaust Explained website is to help students with their school work, both in school and at home. It is designed to support the school curriculum.
- The site has images (pictures, maps, videos, diagrams) to help explain concepts and events.

## HMD ACTIVITY ORGANISERS: POINTS TO CONSIDER

The Nazis utilized huge infrastructure systems to facilitate the transportation of vast numbers of Jews, Gypsies, political prisoners, gay people and thousands of others. These included road and rail systems, and also personnel resources: train guards and drivers, railway officials, police officers. Several Government agencies were involved, such as the Ministry of Transportation, Order of Police, the Foreign Office and railway companies and their officials. Only recently have some of these rail companies acknowledged their complicity in the Holocaust.

In Cambodia, the population was moved from cities into the country, to force people to work as labourers on collective farms. Children were taken from their parents and placed in separate forced labour camps.

In contrast, during the Rwandan genocide, hundreds of thousands of people were murdered where they stood, mostly by hand. Agencies of the state were used to encourage Hutus trained in civilian death squads to murder their Tutsi neighbours.

Imagine leaving your home – what would you take with you? What would you have to leave behind? Where would you go and what would you find there? How much could you carry? Remember you cannot go where you want without the correct documents – borders were closed and officials were suspicious.

Consider how you could use images or items of journeys in your HMD activity, for example, suitcases, maps, luggage labels, timetables or signposts

## ADDITIONAL STORIES

### Rescue raid on a train to Auschwitz

Uniquely, on 19 April 1943, a daring raid was successfully carried out on a train carrying 1,600 Jews from Mechelen Transit Camp in Belgium to Auschwitz. Robert Maistriau was only 22 when he planned the raid with two colleagues, Youra Livchitz and Jean Frankelmon (both aged 25). They managed to stop the train, and immediately cut open carriage doors and encouraged people to jump out. 231 Jews escaped, and although 23 died in the attempt, most managed to get away, helped later by individual Belgians. Of all the 1000s of deportation train journeys during the Holocaust, this was the only rescue.

### Journey into hiding

There are many stories of rescuers who hid Jews and other victims of Nazi persecution, or acted as escorts to aid their escape. Jozef Barczynski rescued 250 Jews in Poland, through his work with the Polish resistance. He fitted his truck with a false bottom, and rescued 4 Jewish families from the Krakow ghetto by hiding them in the truck. He took people out of occupied Europe, escorting them to safety. His citation for the award of Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem includes the acknowledgement that 'Jozef succeeded in smuggling out 7-year-old Bronislawa Frim [from the Lvov Ghetto] and placing her with a Polish family, passing her off as a niece of his.'

### Voyage of the St Louis

The St Louis was a German transatlantic liner which left Hamburg in May 1939 to Cuba, with over 900 passengers, mostly Jews escaping the Third Reich. They had obtained landing permits for Cuba, often through bribery as well as by formal application, but unknown to the travellers the Cuban government had invalidated them and entry to Cuba was denied to all but 28 of the St Louis' passengers. The ship's captain sailed to America in the hope that they would be allowed entry. But America denied access to their waters, as most did not have American papers, and those who did would have needed to wait for their place in the US immigration quota. Jewish refugee organisations pleaded for European countries to allow the Jews to disembark; Britain, France, the Netherlands and Belgium accepted a few Jewish refugees from the ship, but most passengers eventually died at the hands of the Germans.