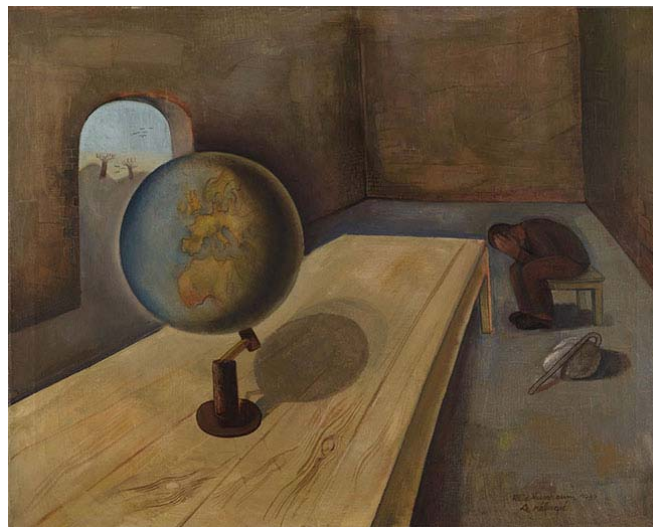


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John McCulloch - Israel January 2021

c/o St Andrew's Scottish Guest House
PO Box 8619
1 David Remez Street
Jerusalem 91086
Israel

In Memoriam



(International Holocaust Remembrance Day
Wednesday 27th of January 2021)
Jerusalem

John McCulloch

'Holocaust' by Barbara Sonek

*We played, we laughed, we were loved.
We were ripped from the arms of our parents and thrown into the fire.
We were nothing more than children.
We had a future.*

*We were going to be lawyers, rabbis, wives, teachers, mothers.
We had dreams, then we had no hope.*

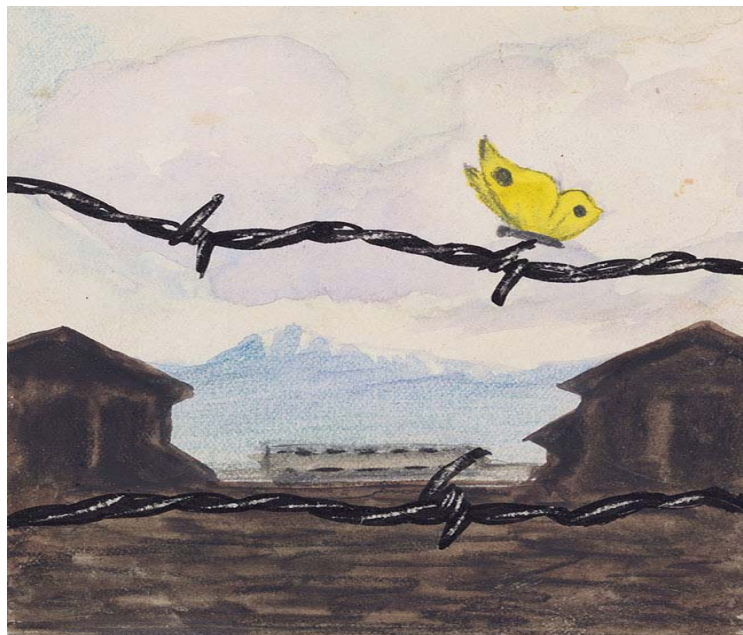
*We were taken away in the dead of night like cattle in cars, no air to breathe smothering,
crying, starving, dying. Separated from the world to be no more. From the ashes, hear our
plea. This atrocity to mankind cannot happen again. Remember us, for we were the
children whose dreams and lives were stolen away.*

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Today, like on every Holocaust Remembrance Day here in Jerusalem, I climbed the church tower to lower the Saltire to half mast, in remembrance of all who had suffered the horrors of the Holocaust. The St Andrew's Scots Memorial is situated in West Jerusalem, so our immediate neighbours and friends are mostly Jewish and Israeli, in addition to some 1948 Palestinian citizens of Israel, who have always lived here.

Last year, a gathering from within the Jewish and Israeli community were invited to St Andrew's for a special memorial service of reflection, silence and sharing; but with the ongoing pandemic and lockdown, we have not been able to do so this year. Nevertheless, it is important that today we pause, reflect and remember. We do so to honour the memory of those whose lives were so cruelly cut short...



In the 1980s, when I was growing up in Paris, my parents would sometimes take to me visit an elderly Jewish couple who lived in a small flat in a recondite *arrondissement* on the edge of the city. Whenever we visited, I was always struck by the black and white photographs on the wall, the menorah on the windowsill silhouetted against the Parisian rooftops and the Eiffel Tower in the distance, and a deep-seated sense of melancholy that pervaded their apartment. I didn't realise it then, but these friends of my parents were Holocaust survivors, who had moved to Paris after the death camps were freed at the end of the II World War.

Many years later, when attending an academic conference on the Poland-German border, I visited Auschwitz on a cold winter's day. I spent the morning walking silently through the abandoned prison shacks and gas chambers..., the site of the worst genocide to have happened on European soil, a stark reminder of the inhumanity and evil which fellow human beings can inflict on the other. I felt a mixture of nausea, profound sadness and horror, struggling with the theodicy questions of old, of where was God in all of this.

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In his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor E. Frankl (who had survived the Nazi death camps) wrote: *But there was no need to be ashamed of tears, for tears bore witness that a man had the greatest of courage, the courage to suffer.* In this same book, he went on to say that the reason why he was able to survive was because he was able to hold on to some teleological sense of purpose. He writes *Those who have a 'why' to live, can bear with almost any 'how'.*



The tragedy which we remember today happened, in part, because normal everyday citizens did not question or challenge what their political leaders were doing, and asking them to do. The words of writer C.P. Snow have never been so true: *More hideous crimes have been committed in the name of obedience than have ever been committed in the name of rebellion.*

Today, as we remember this dark episode in human history, may we be committed to fighting the forces of dehumanization and injustice that grip our world, wherever we find ourselves.

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Prayer

*Lead us from death to life,
from falsehood to truth.
Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust.
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace.
Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.
Amen*

