

# *New Cracow Friendship Society, Inc.*

3905 Arthur Avenue North, Seaford, N.Y. 11783

## CRACOW

# FRIENDSHIP

A NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW CRACOW FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY



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**SEPTEMBER 13, 2020**  
**12 NOON**

**YIZKOR AT BETH MOSES CEMETERY**  
**BLOCK 10**

**ALL COVID PROTOCOLS WILL BE OBSERVED.**  
**PLEASE WEAR A MASK.**  
**PHYSICAL DISTANCING WILL BE PRACTICED.**

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org](http://www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org)

תחי מדינת ישראל ועם ישראל

LONG LIVE THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

# NEW CRACOW FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

President Simone Hilfstein Scheumann

Editor Bernice Slutzman

[www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org](http://www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

It has been a challenge since March of this year to conduct our society business with the ongoing pandemic. Be assured that the Board of Directors has not stopped working on your behalf. We are meeting monthly via Zoom to continue our committee work and make plans for the future. Fortunately, through social media we can still participate and have a voice in local and world events and keep in touch with family and friends. You can now follow us on Instagram: [ncfs\\_org](https://www.instagram.com/ncfs_org) In July we introduced a one page Bulletin that is emailed monthly to anyone that has given us their email address. If you have not received it, please send us your email address.

I would like to thank our members who responded with generous contributions last month to specifically help one of our survivors Mr. Leon Schagrin. In addition, your donations to the general fund help other individuals we assist in the USA, Poland and Israel. We not only help individuals, but contribute to Holocaust survivor and pre-k programming in Krakow, Poland and Beit Halochem, (the facility for wounded Israeli veterans). The need has never been greater. Donations can be made In Honor of ..., or In Memory of.... on our secure website or mail a check with a note to our newsletter address. Do not hesitate to inform us of others in need by email to [ncfs.org@gmail.com](mailto:ncfs.org@gmail.com)

Hopefully in the near future we will return to our regular activities. Perhaps an online program will be added to our schedule.

Our next gathering will be Sunday, Sept. 13, 2020 for Yizkor Service at Beth Moses Cemetery **12 NOON**. Block# 10 Wellwood Ave. Pinelawn, NY. Physical distancing will be followed!

As a reminder, a tentative calendar for 2020-2021 can be found on our website: [www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org](http://www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org)

Have a safe summer and may the coming New Year bring you and your families good health and happiness.

Fondly,  
Simone

## VOLUNTEER WANTED

We are seeking a volunteer to take over the Phone Tree.

Please contact Simone Hilfstein Scheumann if you are interested for the details.

There is not too much work required.

## LISTING OF COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Cemetery	Bernice Slutzman <a href="mailto:brei513@aol.com">brei513@aol.com</a> Leon Hilfstein <a href="mailto:Leonh74d@gmail.com">Leonh74d@gmail.com</a>
Commemoration	Bernice Slutzman <a href="mailto:brei513@aol.com">brei513@aol.com</a>
Membership	Ida Lewis <a href="mailto:Idale747@gmail.com">Idale747@gmail.com</a>
Outreach	Dolores Berkowsky <a href="mailto:doloberko@gmail.com">doloberko@gmail.com</a> Steven Radwan <a href="mailto:sterad22@aol.com">sterad22@aol.com</a>
Social Action	Anna Gallegos <a href="mailto:socialaction.ncfs@gmail.com">socialaction.ncfs@gmail.com</a> Steven Radwan <a href="mailto:socialaction.ncfs@gmail.com">socialaction.ncfs@gmail.com</a>
Social Committee	Susan Krul Caren <a href="mailto:susankc@optonline.net">susankc@optonline.net</a>
Sunshine	Ida Lewis <a href="mailto:Idale747@gmail.com">Idale747@gmail.com</a> Eva Pfau <a href="mailto:Pfaueva@gmail.com">Pfaueva@gmail.com</a>
Telephone Tree	Leon Hilfstein <a href="mailto:leonh74d@gmail.com">leonh74d@gmail.com</a>
Website	Simone Scheumann <a href="mailto:ncfs.org@gmail.com">ncfs.org@gmail.com</a>
Welfare	Renata Farahnik <a href="mailto:Teacherspet130@hotmail.com">Teacherspet130@hotmail.com</a>

## MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

Dear Members,

I'm hoping this Newsletter finds you and your families well. The usual voluminous activity that has in the past responded rather rapidly to our yearly membership dues appeal has stepped down to a steady lull for months now. I'm hoping you will remit your yearly 2020 membership dues if you haven't done so yet.

Five months of altered reality have hovered over our planet. A plague we usually read about at the annual Pesach seder table has descended upon us. This year, many of us were reading the Haggadah alone or with partners and immediate families but not whole families and guests which is our yearly tradition... as the "maka" (plague) named "Covid-19" blew in and around attacking men, women and children of all colors and cultures indiscriminately. For the first time in recent history, many of us were faced with constant trepidation, remaining in our blessed homes for weeks leading into months... learning how to stay afloat in unusual times. Families and friends were separated. Children stayed home from school. Beloved relatives in nursing homes & assisted living facilities were placed in isolation in their rooms and no visitors were allowed. So many other scenarios frayed our peoples' nerves. Jobs ended or they were transferred to new tech in-home approaches: Zoom, FaceTime, Viber, etc. And the most daunting thing... many hundreds of thousands succumbed to the disease and died. It brought back memories of stories of typhus which I heard at home as a child. To our members who have lost relatives and loved ones in recent months, we send our deepest condolences.

"First we had concentration camp", Rhoda, an elder widow from the local senior center lamented when I phoned her to see how she was. "Now we have this! Who would believe?" I wondered how our senior members were handling their newly placed restrictions. I was only able to phone a few. Ankle surgery in early March inhibited conversations and required bed rest for 12 weeks.

As a 2G, I had a whole different spin on my isolation than my American-born Jewish friends. When during the first few weeks of the pandemic, as many folks were at wits ends, my inner conversation was more like...."Thank G-d, I have a roof over my head, more than enough food, and a couch upon which to rest. This isn't the Ghetto, a barrack, or a bunk like our folks were subjected to. The level 9/10 pain is so very high but I will survive. It's very quiet out now, so make the best of it... and I did. While the world was going topsy turvy with the pandemic, the violence, the demonstrations, the politics... I was slowly healing and witnessing. Couldn't have picked a better time to break an ankle!

Now I see a correlation between the personal healing, family healing, national healing, global healing and the Society healing. When this pandemic will finally be passed over, we will rebuild. We are now being required to reframe our comfort zones and bring new ideas, activities and attitudes to the table. We will either move forward or return. We will transform what needs to be changed or we will remain passive. As senior survivors, 2Gs and 3Gs I believe we understand that change is inevitable and essential... and we must grow and be involved in action.. whether social, humanitarian,

philanthropic, support for Israel, etc. Our membership activity needs to be more than just dues paying members. But pay our dues we must! Please send your check to me at the address below or look up our website .... [www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org](http://www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org). and pay through PayPal. Fees are still reasonable. Contributions are always appreciated. Dues are \$25 singles, \$40 for couple. 3Gs over 18 must apply. Membership must be current to move smoothly in the case of a member's passing necessitating a Beth Moses burial plot. Please remit your dues and any outstanding dues you may owe.

Please let us know how you will assist the New Cracow Friendship Society to maintain respect for the accomplishments of our founders and elders and be proud of it's present membership interest, involvement, present and future action. Contact our Board Members. Share your thoughts and ideas. Come to our future "live" membership meetings. Hopefully we will arrive at that reality again soon. Let us get to know one another.

In the meantime, stay safe. Be well. And stay positive. We'll survive all this and emerge stronger than before, if that's possible!

Best regards,  
Ida Lewis  
Membership Committee Chairperson  
147-17 78th Road  
Flushing NY 11367  
(718) 380-3574

## **A MOSTLY MISUNDERSTOOD SOCIAL ACTION BULLETIN**

After the recent Social Action Bulletin was published some members were upset that it did not exclusively pertain to fighting anti-Semitism and taking a pro-Israel stance and questioned why we included support for the fight against racial prejudice.

If we all only take a position with a narrow focus on our parochial concerns then Jews will defend and support only Jews, Blacks will defend and support only Blacks, Hispanics will defend and support only Hispanics ...you get the idea. In fact, it's worse than that: all Jews, for instance, do not agree on all issues. So Zionists will not support or defend the anti-Zionists; the religious Jew will not support or defend the secular Jew, those who favor a 2-state solution to the Palestine issue will not support or defend those who favor another path to peace ...you get the idea.

The narrow focus, while tempting because it seems simpler ultimately results in dividing us and limiting our ability to effect real change. How much more effective can you imagine we could be if, rather than the voices of a dozen or two dozen active members of our society, we could join forces with others battling hatred and injustice, and together speak with the thunder of hundreds or

thousands?

‘Cherry-picking’ our battles limits the resources we bring to bear and thereby limits the results we can expect to achieve. It also opens us to accusations of hypocrisy: ‘So if a Jew is involved it’s injustice - but you won’t speak out against injustice to another?’

If our organization is to remain relevant in the 21st century, we must broaden our focus; our 3rd (and 4th generations?) are fighting for change - we must embrace their vision of a society that serves justice for all lest we are relegated to past.

#### The Social Action Committee

\*A version of the following is on display at the Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem in Jerusalem:

First they came for the Communists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Communist

Then they came for the Socialists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Socialist

Then they came for the trade unionists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a trade unionist

Then they came for the Jews  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Jew

Then they came for me  
And there was no one left  
To speak out for me

Lutheran Pastor Martin Niemöller (1892-1984)

*The quotation stems from Niemöller's lectures during the early postwar period. Different versions of the quotation exist. These can be attributed to the fact that Niemöller spoke extemporaneously and in a number of settings. Much controversy surrounds the content of the poem as it has been printed in varying forms, referring to diverse groups such as Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, Trade Unionists, or Communists depending upon the version. Nonetheless his point was that Germans had been complicit through their silence in the Nazi imprisonment, persecution, and murder of millions of people. He felt this was true in particular of the leaders of the Protestant churches (of which the Lutheran church was one denomination).*

#### WELFARE COMMITTEE REPORT

Our society would like to gratefully acknowledge your generous response in sending donations to help fellow holocaust survivor Mr. Leon Schagrin.

To date, we have raised over \$3,000 to help him with his monthly shortfall. This has allowed him to stay in his apartment, as well as help with his many medical needs. Our society helps many holocaust survivors who are experiencing financial difficulties . For some , our assistance keeps a roof over their heads; for others it helps with much needed medicines for survival that they could not otherwise afford. Our assistance goes to survivors in different countries, Poland, U.S, Israel , wherever there is a request for a need. We receive letters gratefully acknowledging our help, as well as telling us how it has improved their lives. Many survivors have no one else left to turn to.

If any member knows someone who is in financial need please contact [ncfs.org@gmail.com](mailto:ncfs.org@gmail.com). Attention : Renata Farahnik

Our website for making donations is: [www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org](http://www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org). Indicate it’s for the welfare fund or for Mr. Leon Schagrin. He has a shortfall of \$800 every month. Thanks so much for your very kind and generous donations. You have helped save and improve many lives.

Wishing you all good health and have a very safe summer.

Renata Fryszman Farahnik

#### HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS URGE FACEBOOK TO REMOVE DENIAL POSTS

BERLIN (AP) — Holocaust survivors around the world are lending their voices to a campaign launched Wednesday targeting Facebook head Mark Zuckerberg, urging him to take action to remove denial of the Nazi genocide from the social media site.

Coordinated by the New York-based Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, the #NoDenyingIt campaign uses Facebook itself to make the survivors’ entreaties to Zuckerberg heard, posting one video per day urging him to remove Holocaust-denying groups, pages and posts as hate speech. Videos will also be posted on Facebook-owned Instagram, as well as Twitter.

Zuckerberg raised the ire of the Claims Conference and others with comments in 2018 to the tech website Recode that posts denying the Nazi annihilation of 6 million Jews would not necessarily be removed. He said he did not think Holocaust deniers were “intentionally” getting it wrong, and that as long as posts were not calling for harm or violence, even offensive content should be protected.

After an outcry, Zuckerberg, who is Jewish himself, clarified that while he personally found “Holocaust denial deeply offensive” he believed that “the

best way to fight offensive bad speech is with good speech.”

Since then, Facebook representatives have met with the Claims Conference but the group, which negotiates compensation payments from Germany for Holocaust victims, says Zuckerberg himself has refused to. The goal of the campaign is to get him to sit down with Holocaust survivors so that they can personally tell him their stories and make their case that denial violates Facebook’s hate speech standards and should be removed.

“In Germany or in Austria people go to prison if they deny the Holocaust because they know it’s a lie, it’s libel,” said Eva Schloss, an Auschwitz survivor who today lives in London and has recorded a message for Zuckerberg.

“How can somebody really doubt it? Where are the 6 million people? There are tens of thousands of photos taken by the Nazis themselves. They were proud of what they were doing. They don’t deny it, they know they did it.”

Schloss’ family escaped before the war from Vienna to the Netherlands, where she became friends with Anne Frank, who lived nearby in Amsterdam and was the same age. After the German army overran the country, the Schloss and Frank families went into hiding but were discovered by the Nazis separately in 1944, the Schloss family betrayed by a Dutch woman.

Schloss and her mother survived Auschwitz, but her father and brother were killed, while Otto Frank, Anne’s father, was the only survivor of his immediate family and married Schloss’ mother after the war. Otto Frank published his daughter’s now-famous diary so that the world could hear her story. Schloss has written about her own story, is a frequent speaker and would like to tell Zuckerberg of her own experience.

“It was just every day, the chimneys were smoking, the smell of burning flesh,” the 91-year-old told The Associated Press, adding that she had been separated from her mother and assumed she had been gassed.

“Can you imagine that feeling? I was 15-years-old and I felt alone in the world and it was terrible.”

Facebook said in a statement that it takes down Holocaust denial posts in countries where it is illegal, like Germany, France and Poland, while in countries where it is not an offense, like the U.S. and Britain, it is carefully monitored to determine whether it crosses the line into what is allowed.

“We take down any post that celebrates, defends, or attempts to justify the Holocaust,” Facebook told the AP. “The same goes for any content that mocks Holocaust victims, accuses victims of lying about the atrocities, spews hate, or advocates for violence against Jewish people in any way. Posts and articles that deny the Holocaust often violate one or more of these standards

and are removed from Facebook.”

Earlier this month, a two-year audit of Facebook’s civil rights record found “serious setbacks” that have marred the social network’s progress on matters such as hate speech, misinformation and bias. Zuckerberg is one of four CEOs of big tech firms who face a grilling by the U.S. Congress on Wednesday over the way they dominate the market.

More than 500 companies on July 1 began an advertising boycott intended to pressure Facebook into taking a stronger stand against hate speech. The Claims Conference decided to launch its own campaign after concluding the boycott “doesn’t seem to be making a dent,” said Greg Schneider, the Claims Conference’s executive vice president.

Several Holocaust denial groups have been identified on Facebook by the New York-based Anti-Defamation League, some hidden and most private. On one, “Real World War 2 History,” administrators are clearly aware of the fine line between what is and isn’t allowed, listing among its rules that members must “avoid posts that feature grotesque cartoons that FB censors can construe as racist or hateful.”

Another page, the “Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust,” features regular posts of revisionist videos, including one from February in which the commentator says the Zyklon B gas used to kill Jews in Nazi death camps was actually employed to kill the lice that spread typhus, claiming “this chemical was used to improve the inmates’ health and reduce, not increase, camp mortality.” Though not overtly advocating attacks, such postings are meant to “perpetuate a myth, anti-Semitic tropes that somehow Jews made this up in order to gain sympathy or political advantage” and could easily incite violence, Schneider said.

“The United Nations has acknowledged that Holocaust denial is a form of anti-Semitism, and of course anti-Semitism is hate speech,” he said.

For Charlotte Knobloch, a prominent German Jewish leader who survived the Holocaust in hiding as a young girl and is participating in the campaign, it is particularly important for social media platforms to be vigilant about preventing denial because many in younger generations rely on them for information.

“They have a particular responsibility,” the 87-year-old told the AP.

*The following is from our sister organization in Israel The Association of Cracowians in Israel*

KL Plaszow (Konzentrationslager) was a concentration camp in a southern suburb of Cracow. At first it was designated as a labor camp and functioned as such from the summer of 1942 until January 10, 1944 when it was converted to a concentration camp. The 200

acres camp was built on the site of two Jewish cemeteries: the cemetery of the Podgorze Jewish Community on Jerosalimska street and the 'New' Jewish Cracow Community cemetery on Abrahama street on lands owned by the Jewish community and private lands confiscated from their Polish owners who were expelled.

The Cracow Ghetto was dismantled on 13-14 March 1943 and most of its Jewish occupants were sent to be murdered in Belzec, and 2,000 were murdered on the streets and buried in a mass grave in Plasow. The approximately 8,000 survivors were sent to the Plaszow camp.

It is estimated that 25,000-30,000 people were incarcerated in Plaszow during its 24 months of activity. The absolute majority were Jews along with a minority of Polish prisoners accused of political or administrative crimes as well as a few Gypsy families. Rate of death was very high due to typhoid, famine and executions. Plaszow is infamous for the practice of target shooting of individuals and groups. It is estimated that more than 8,000 were murdered in Plaszow.

From February 1943 until September 1944 the camp commander was Untersturmführer Amon Leopold Göth who was responsible for the most severe crimes committed in Plaszow such as mass murder, selections, 'extermination by labour' and innumerable killings committed in person.

In the summer of 1944 as the Red Army was advancing and closing on Plaszow, 2,000 Jewish prisoners were sent to the Auschwitz death camps and more to other camps. By fall of 1944 the camp was almost empty except a small group of prisoners whose job was to erase any traces of the crimes which took place by digging up the mass graves and burning the remains of the victims.

On 14 January 1945, the last prisoners were led in a death march towards Auschwitz. The camp was liberated by the Red Army on the 20<sup>th</sup> by which time it was already totally empty. For a few month it was used by the Red Army and after they left its barracks were dismantled and the site was abandoned.

For decades the site stood in neglect, desolate and abandoned, overgrown by wild grass and shrubs. Some residential buildings were built on half the area. A few monuments were erected, the largest and best known is the Memorial of Torn Out Hearts, in memory of the victims of fascism, monument in memory fo the Jews murdered in Cracow, a monument commemorating the Hungarian Jewish Women, the Wooden Cross dubbed 'hujowa gorka' and monument in memory of the Polish policemen.

KL Plaszow is the last of the camps which were built by the occupiers, which has not yet been properly preserved. Though it was recognized already in 2002 as a memorial sit, no organization or institute have assumed the role of historian and commemorator. Recently, the

leaders of the City of Cracow together with the Jewish Community and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage have initiated a project of preservation and commemoration budgeted at PLN 50M, due for completion by 2021.

Plans formulated after an extensive non-invasive archeological survey 100 acres will be devoted to the Memorial Site. The historic 'Grey House', which served the Cracow Hevra Kadisha (Jewish burial society), will be restored as well as a new building which will be erected to serve as memorial sites and will recount the history of the place.

The whole area has been cleaned, and more than 800 personal belongings of prisoners were found to date. On the WEB a new site was created <https://ca.muzeumkrakowa.pl/> which presents information on personnel (guards), prisoners, photographs and findings.

As of now the names of approximately 7,000 inmates have been recorded and we are working diligently with the purpose of recording the name of every single person who was in Plaszow. The required details include first and last name, previous names, place of birth and date, place and date of death, names of parents, name of spouse, date of arrival in Plaszow and from where, place of origin, date of departure and to which camp, date and place of liberation. Any additional biographical information will be most welcome.

If you possess such information kindly write directly to [k.karski@muzeumkrakowa.pl](mailto:k.karski@muzeumkrakowa.pl)

## **FROM THE OUTREACH COMMITTEE**

We are happy to announce our affiliation with the Galician Museum in Poland. (Tarnow)

## **ALERT TO OUR 2 AND 3-G AND SURVIVOR MEMBERS**

Friend our Facebook page: New Cracow Friendship Society.

We'd like to keep in touch and inform you of additional events in a timely fashion.

Check out some of the photos from our May 17th, 2015, 50th Anniversary celebration.

So..... look for 'New Cracow Friendship Society' on Facebook and friend us,

and visit our webpage: [www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org](http://www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org)  
Please send us your current e-mail address. Also share our information with your other family members. Information can be sent tot: [ncfs.org@gmail.com](mailto:ncfs.org@gmail.com)

Wishing a healthy and fun filled summer,  
Simone Scheumann  
Web Editor

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## The Crises of 2020: The View from Israel

The last time I wrote for this publication we all lived on a different planet. It's almost impossible to think back to that innocent time when I was discussing the third Israeli election, not knowing what was about to befall us all. Covid-19 has changed the world as we knew it. What was important a few months ago is not that important now. Maybe for the first time in world history, the entire world is going through the same experience. This isn't a war in some far off corner of the world. This isn't terror attacks that affect only Israel. Every country, some better, some worse, have had to deal with it. And everyone I speak to, whether in Israel, the US, the UK or somewhere else, is having the same experience.

That is not to say that every country is dealing with this crisis the same way. I will discuss the way Israel has handled it – once lauded as handling it among the best countries in the world in March and April only to fall quickly to one of the most infected countries in the world by July. But a comment first needs to be made about the US.

Usually, it is the US looking at events in Israel with concern. Wars, terror, Iran, non-ending political games, three elections, etc.. While that concern hasn't gone away of course, for the better part of this year it has been Israel looking at the US with concern. The dual crises of Covid-19 and the race riots sparked by the grotesque and utterly unacceptable killing of George Floyd while in police custody, have made the crises in Israel look small in comparison. As is my custom in these articles, I won't go into my views on internal American affairs, but as an American ex-Pat, as someone who deeply cares for the United States, as someone who truly believes in its ideals and principles, what we are watching from here is very concerning indeed. But need not worry, the usual concern for events in Israel has returned with a vengeance.

As noted above, Israel was applauded the world over for having handled the first wave of the virus perhaps better than anyone else. The draconian regulations handed down basically put the entire country into a full lockdown for six weeks. We were not allowed to move beyond 100 meters from our homes. Businesses could only have 10-11 people in the offices and these needed to be considered essential. Obviously, everything else was shut down. No parks, no beaches, no restaurants, no malls, in short nothing. In those days, I would run 100 meters in one direction, then 200 in the other (that was always a treat) and back again, and would actually reach 6-7 km. There was one person (I believe in Italy first and then it spread to Israel) that did a marathon running back and forth on his porch.....

The Passover holiday came and no one was allowed to be together other than immediate families who lived together in the same household. Israel Memorial

Day and Independence Day were celebrated virtually, the traditional ceremonies empty of people. In a certain way they had a strangely patriotic fervor about them; the televised but empty ceremonies showed scenes of Israelis waving flags from balconies singing the Hatikva. I admit it was powerful. Everyone was doing their share, chipping in for the common good. The numbers were going down. By May, we were in single digits for new daily cases and there was light at the end of the tunnel.

The weeks leading up to that point were not easy though, and I say this, going beyond the obvious, that no one was allowed out of the house and we were all going stir crazy. There were daily struggles with the police who were trying to enforce the closures in certain neighborhoods that weren't inclined to listen to the police. These were ugly and added to a charged atmosphere in the country against those people who were not paying attention to the regulations. There was the economic side of things that slowly, but surely, was reaching a boiling point. The government made it clear that it would subsidize those people put out on furlough (as opposed to other countries who subsidized companies so that they shouldn't put people on furlough). Israeli unemployment, which had hovered around the incredible level of 3% for the past few years, shot up to 21% within two months. Over one million people were unemployed, the vast majority on furlough. But the money the government promised to subsidize these people didn't come so fast, and the frustration boiled over. In the background to all this, there were the results of the third election held on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Again, without a clear path to a government, Israel teetered on the precipice of a fourth election, this time, to be held in the midst of the Corona Pandemic. The idea was crazy. And Benny Ganz and his Blue and White Party were the first to blink.

An incredibly complicated version of a unity government was established, calling for an equal amount of voice in the government despite a huge difference in the seats the Likud had (33) to Blue and White (19). It called for a rotation to take place in October 2021 with Netanyahu handing over the reins to Ganz (I dare anyone to name three people in Israel who actually believe that will happen...). It created a government with over 30 ministers, the largest government in history, at a time when a million people were out of work. It broke apart the Blue and White party, with Yair Lapid and his Yesh Atid faction and Mosh Yaalon's Telem faction pulling out of Blue and White which had become the largest and most effective opposition to Netanyahu in a decade, leaving Ganz and Blue and White with only 19 seats (a number which would plummet at least in the polls to only 9 seats by mid July). That new opposition, which also included Naftali Bennet and his Yamina party became a vocal and powerful opposition to the unity government, relentlessly and viciously attacking from both the left and the right.

In fact, the government never enjoyed even a day of quiet. It was ostensibly set up to fight the Corona virus.

All other issues, save one, annexation, we will get back to that, were put on the back burner. But it soon became obvious that all other issues, including annexation, were at the top of Netanyahu's agenda, and the fight against Corona seemed like it was going to take a back seat.

And so in mid May- critics name the exact date as May 17 - just before the new government was to be set up on that very date, Netanyahu, who had until that point micromanaged the Corona crisis, appeared nightly on TV giving updates, sidelined people like his defense minister Naftali Bennet, and generally took credit for what at the time looked like an impressive victory over the virus, ceremoniously declared that Israel's economy was opening up. People needed to go back to work. People needed to have fun. He listened more to the Treasury Department over the Health Department whose leadership would soon leave their posts after giving dire predictions (which turned out to be right) as to what would happen if the country opened up too quickly, and the government opened the country, almost all of it, almost immediately. Some say he wanted to do this before he would have to share the glory with Benny Ganz. Some say he gave in to the pressure from the public. Whatever it was, the trajectory was put in place at that time and it was about to change dramatically in a negative way.

The new government got off to a bad start and never really recovered. Ganz, who was now in a political wilderness having lost his base, but willing to do for the common good, was attacked daily as a loser, as someone without a backbone, as someone with no real effective way to stop Netanyahu's agenda which almost from day one was to push annexation, and attack the Supreme Court, other courts, police and the attorney general who were moving ahead with his trials. It became a national sport to attack Ganz as a worthless politician who sacrificed all to become another in a long list of people duped by Netanyahu, the most wily politician Israel has ever seen.

And then something happened in late June and July. The perfect storm hit Israel and it wasn't a good one. Certainly not a good one for Netanyahu. With the weeks leading up to July 1<sup>st</sup> filled with speculation on where the country was headed, the date cited in the coalition agreement as the first date that Netanyahu could begin legislation on annexation, anticipation mounted as to how Israel would weather *that* storm. Condemnation came from every quarter, from friends and foes alike, some of it with dramatic threats of consequences ranging from the freezing of the peace agreement with Jordan and any breakthroughs with the Gulf countries, to sanctions from the EU, to a potentially dangerous spat exacerbating the already strained relations with the Democratic Party to an outright Palestinian Third Intifada. Netanyahu and his henchmen (mostly Knesset Speaker Yariv Levin and Israeli Ambassador to the US Ron Dermer) pushed on, stating that almost at any cost, Israel would move ahead

with the annexation plans. But then it became known that Ganz wasn't so irrelevant. The Trump administration, mired no less deeply in the Corona crisis and others, not to mention a rapidly approaching November election, wanted Israel's unity government to be unified around the Peace Plan and accompanying annexation element. But that wasn't happening. Certainly not to support Netanyahu's desire to annex 30% of the territory allotted by the Trump plan, and certainly not unilaterally, that is without accepting the part of the Trump Plan that called for a Palestinian State, a part of the plan outright rejected by Israel's right wing, Netanyahu's base of support.

And so, as the virus got worse leading up to July 1, the costs of the annexation becoming clearer and clearer, it was somewhat of an anti-climax that July 1 came and went without an announcement and as of the time of this writing has more or less disappeared from the public debate. That doesn't mean it won't return, but as the November election gets closer and the crisis in Israel due to the economic situation and Corona virus gets worse, the chances of Netanyahu moving ahead on the annexation front go down.

Meanwhile, the numbers of sick in Israel began to soar in the first two weeks of July with daily new sick reaching an average of 1,300 a day, which is among the highest ratios in the world. Israel was excluded from the newly opened skies of the EU. World leaders who used to call Netanyahu to learn how Israel handled the Pandemic so effectively stopped calling. Israel went from best to worst. Or in other terminology, the government forgot that just because you win a battle, it doesn't mean you win the war. And this war is far from over.

And worse, the public lost faith in the government. This past Saturday night (July 11), there was a huge demonstration in Tel Aviv, billed as apolitical, from all parts of the electorate, protesting the economic situation, the unprecedented unemployment, the fact that the money promised by the government had yet to arrive. The demonstration talked about collapse of the entire system. Frankly, in all my years here, I've never seen anything like it. And the government, almost looked like it was panicking. Promising and implementing in days, huge economic support, Netanyahu blasting Treasury officials for not releasing the money to the public. All of a sudden the talk of new elections Netanyahu and the Likud had been threatening to rid themselves of Ganz (who turned out to be not so ineffective on the issues of serving as a shield against the attacks on the courts, a shield against the annexation plans) seemed to cool off as Netanyahu took an unprecedented hit in the polls in terms of how he personally had been handling the crisis and what a future right wing government may look like. A poll last night (July 12), showed Blue and White dropping to 9 seats, the Likud now at 33 (down from 38 in the last poll) with Lapid up to 19 and Bennet up to 13. The viability of a Netanyahu led right wing coalition, teetering with 61 in the poll, is highly questionable. A such, going

to an election now in what looks like an extended economic crisis and Corona pandemic, at least from today's vantage point looks like political suicide.

So who said it hasn't been interesting here these past few months?

Here's hoping that the crises being faced in Israel, the US and the world over, will soon be a subject we can look back on and we all move on to better times. Maybe that will be the case by the time of the next article? As they say in this neck of the woods – Inshalla..

Barry Spielman  
Oranit, July 13, 2020

## **SUNSHINE COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **HAPPY EVENTS**

#### **ANNIVERSARIES:**

#### **July**

Mr. & Mrs. Steven Blumenfrucht- 7/2/85

#### **August**

Peter & Dolores Berkowitz- 8/3/80

Sam & Michelle Blumenstyk- 8/27

Leon & Dena Hilfstein-

Bernard & Stella Jungerwirth- 8/7/49

Ira & Bonnie Kantor- 8/21

Diane & Jeffrey Marks- 8/23/81

Dr. Michael Meyers & Irene Steiner- 8/1/82

Howard & Shelley Schapiro- 8 /15/76

Jack & Tina Wiener- 8/1/82

Congratulations to all the students... children, grandchildren and great- grandchildren of members who graduated from elementary and junior high, high schools, colleges, graduate programs under the difficult conditions set before us by Covid -19. Mazal tov!

Please submit your anniversary dates and any simchadich life cycle events (births, engagements, bar & bat mitzvah, graduations, anniversaries, etc.).  
to Ida Lewis of the Membership/SUNSHINE Committees (email below) so that we may congratulate you in our Newsletter regarding your special day/event. We love to share good news.

**NEW MEMBERS:** We welcome our newest member  
Arthur Huppert- Merion PA

## **DONATIONS**

Susan Krul Caren, in memory of her father, Eli Krul, on the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his passing, June 28, 1971, 5 Tamuz 5731, \$36

Annette Insdorf, on the occasion of the 35<sup>th</sup> Yahrzeit of her beloved father, Michael Insdorf, and the 10<sup>th</sup> Yahrzeit of her adored mother, Dr. Cecile Insdorf. \$200

Bernice Slutzman, in honor of the graduation of her grandson Jacob Hurst from Middle School. \$36

If you have news of any members who would like to receive our blessings , prayers, or be mentioned for health and recovery in our Newsletter, please inform us.

Wishing everyone a safe and healthy summer.

Ida Lewis 718 380-3574, [idale747@gmail.com](mailto:idale747@gmail.com)  
Eva Pfau 718 464-0932  
SUNSHINE COMMITTEE

We sadly announce the passing of  
Dear Member and Friend

**JULIUS ROSS**

Our sincerest condolences

**MAY HIS SOUL REST IN EVERLASTING PEACE**



We acknowledge the contribution of the  
Conference on Jewish Material Claims  
Against Germany in helping to publish  
this Newsletter.