

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



Vol. 33-No.5

ISSN 0892-1571

May/June 2007-Sivan/Tammuz 5767

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON

Over 200 people attended the American Society for Yad Vashem Annual Spring Luncheon, in tribute to a Woman's Legacy: Not by Might, Not by Power, But with Love, held on Thursday, May 3, 2007 at the Park Avenue Synagogue. This year's Luncheon was made especially meaningful by the active participation of many members of the third generation, who expressed their commitment to carry the torch for the Legacy of Remembrance. Adina Shainker Burian, Young Leadership Associate Board Member and this year's Spring Luncheon Chairperson, led the way for members of this new group.

Yonina Gomberg, granddaughter of Gladys Halpern and member of the third generation, introduced Gladys Halpern of Hillside, New Jersey, who received an award recognizing her Resistance and Courage in the Face of the Holocaust and her Commitment to Pass the Lessons and Legacy of the Shoah to her children and grandchildren.

Mrs. Halpern, a Holocaust survivor, is active in numerous Jewish communal organizations. Since its inception, she has been a member of the American Society for Yad Vashem Spring Luncheon Committee and a member of the Annual Tribute Dinner Committee. Her husband, Sam Halpern, is the Vice Chairman of the

American and International Societies for Yad Vashem. Gladys's involvement in philanthropic causes and her efforts to enhance the lives of the Jewish people, both in the United States and Israel, is seen through her support of Israel Bonds, Yad Vashem, American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Jewish National Fund (JNF), Hadassah and numerous other American and Israeli Jewish organizations.

Rita Levy of Roslyn, New York was presented with an award recognizing her dedication to Remembering the Past and her commitment to use her creative talents to further Holocaust Awareness and Education by Julie Schwartz Kopel, a Young Leadership Associate Board Member and member of the third generation.

Mrs. Levy is deeply committed to Israel, Holocaust Remembrance and Jewish cultural preservation. Her father, Nathan Katz z'l was a Member of the Board of the American Society of Yad Vashem and the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors. Mrs. Levy and her mother, Sima Katz, were founding members of the International Women's Division of YIVO. Rita was a founding member of the San Francisco Jewish Community Federation Working Women's Forum and has served on the Strategic Planning Committee of the Brandeis-Hillel Day School. In addition she is active in many other American and Israeli organizations.

"MAY YOU EACH GO "M'CHAYIL L'CHAYIL""

ELI ZBOROWSKI, CHAIRMAN OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM

Committee Chairperson, Elizabeth Wilf; Luncheon Chairperson, Adina Burian; Guests of honor Gladys Halpern and Rita Levy, and Dear Friends:

At our first Spring Luncheon seven years ago, we honored the noted Holocaust scholar Professor Nechama Tec. At that time, Prof. Tec talked about gender differences during the Holocaust. She said that men and women traveled different roads to their final destination. While husbands and fathers were the first to suffer public humiliation and instant death, mothers and wives struggled to keep their starving families away from death. Together, men and women, and each in their own way, demonstrated enormous resilience and courage. Ultimately, however, one's "Jewishness" rather than gender was the determining factor in annihilation.

It is not surprising that following the war, survivors sought mates who had shared this horrific life-experience. Who else, other than another survivor, could possibly understand what we had been through? In marriage, we forged partnerships that produced families and created



2007 Spring Luncheon Honorees Gladys Halpern and Rita Levy with Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem. Park Avenue Synagogue, New York City, May 3, 2007.

new lives in new lands. While husbands and fathers went out to make a living, wives and mothers became the backbone of family and communal life. It was the women that enabled families to flourish and the tenacity of these partnerships that made possible the establishment of formal organizations for commemorating the Shoah.

This afternoon's program is a celebration of successive generations of women

engaged with our organization in Holocaust remembrance. The survivor generation is represented by Elizabeth Wilf, this year's Committee Chairperson and last year's honoree, and by Gladys Halpern, whom we are privileged to honor today. As a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and a person who has lent her vitality to numerous communal organizations, Gladys is a role model for her family and for all women.

Since its inception, Gladys and Sam Halpern have been active with the American Society for Yad Vashem. Gladys owes her survival to a Christian family who hid her and her mother during the war. As an expression of gratitude, the Halperns who are Yad Vashem benefactors supported the refurbishment of Yad Vashem's Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations

Rita Levy is a member of the Second Generation, whom we are delighted to honor today as well. She is the proud daughter of survivors Nathan Katz, z'l

and Sima Katz. Nathan and Sima are outstanding examples of the partnership of which I just spoke. They rose from the ashes of the Holocaust to build a life for themselves and their family in the United States. While the German Nazi war machine annihilated most of their extended family, it could not rob the Katzes of their basic value system. Perseverance, optimism and acts of chesed which were ingrained in them before the war are the values that they have ably passed along to their children and grandchildren. Rita has enthusiastically embraced her parents' legacy and is committed to its perpetuation through her children.

For the first time this year, members of the Third generation, represented by our Young Leadership Associates, have taken a prominent leadership role in this luncheon. We are grateful for the dedication of Caroline Massel, Chair of the Young Leadership Associates; Adina Burian, Luncheon Chair; and Yonina Gomberg and Julie Kopel, Luncheon Co-Chairs. Our choice of a Guest Speaker was also informed by our desire to be future-oriented. Kevin Haworth is part of a cadre of gifted young writers in their thirties and forties who have chosen to explore Holocaust themes in their work. We are pleased that Kevin accepted our invitation to share his thoughts and reflections with us this afternoon. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of Rachelle Grossman, our Events Coordinator who, together with the staff, is responsible for the Luncheon arrangements.

On behalf of the American Society for Yad Vashem I thank all of you for participating in this wonderful event. I conclude by extending a heartfelt mazel-tov to Gladys Halpern and her family and to Rita Levy and her family. May you each go "m'chayil l'chayil" from strength to strength.

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YOM HASHOAH OBSERVED AROUND THE WORLD

U.S., MANHATTAN, NY: The Holocaust is a grim reminder that Jews must be active in stopping genocide anywhere in the world, Sen. Charles Schumer warned at a candlelit ceremony in lower Manhattan marking Holocaust Remembrance Day.

"Thinking of the Holocaust should move us to fight other genocides as strongly as we can," he told more than 1,000 people – including survivors of the Nazi death camps – at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Battery Park.



Memorial candles are lit during Annual Gathering of Remembrance at lower Manhattan's Museum of Jewish Heritage.

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger recalled how 13 relatives were killed because they didn't believe Germany would carry out Hitler's maniacal plans.

"It is something one can never forget," he said.

Death-camp survivor Ray Kaner, 78, of New York, recalled the horrors she witnessed at Auschwitz when she was 11.

"A lot of people say it never happened, and the only way to respond is to go and tell your story," said Kaner, whose parents and two brothers were killed.

Held for the first time at the museum at 36 Battery Place, the event drew more than 1,000 Holocaust survivors, many with grandchildren in tow.

The theme this year was of passing the torch to the "third generation" – symbolized by a procession of 36 elderly sur-

vivors lighting candles with their grown grandchildren.

U.S., QUEENS, NY: The Queens Jewish Community Council, along with the Queens Jewish Historical Society and Congregation Toras Emeth on April 15 presented "*Fighting Back: The Jewish Resistance to Nazi Tyranny*." Keynote speaker was Sam Bloch, a Warsaw Ghetto freedom fighter. Also in attendance were representatives of WWII Jewish War Veterans who talked about their experiences. *Kel Molei Rachamim* was chanted by Rabbi Moshe Shur.

On the same day the Young Israel of Forest Hills hosted the 44th annual community-wide *Yom Hashoah* Commemoration and memorial service for the victims of the Nazi Holocaust. The guest speaker, Dr. Robert Moses Shapiro, professor of Judaic Studies at Brooklyn College, and author of scholarly articles and books on the Holocaust presented his work "*Individualizing the Holocaust: Diaries from the Lodz Ghetto*." The program also included a memorial candle lighting service by Holocaust survivors from the community.

U.S., FLORIDA: In observance of *Yom Hashoah* hundreds gathered at the Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach on Sunday, April 15 to hear guest speaker Dr. Judea Pearl, father of slain *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl and President of The Daniel Pearl Foundation.

Daniel Pearl was kidnapped and murdered by radical Islamist terrorists in 2002. His name will be etched in the Holocaust Memorial Wall alongside the names of victims of the Nazi genocide as a 21st-Century reminder that hatred did not end with the death of six million Jews during the Holocaust. Daniel's name is the first non-Holocaust victim name to be added to this Memorial Wall.

The annual *Yom Hashoah* commemoration attracted a multi-generational group of local participants, ranging from elderly Holocaust survivors and military veterans of World War II to school children from communities throughout South Florida. Miami-Dade County is home to nearly 3,800 Holocaust survivors and more than 4,800 children of Holocaust survivors.

This year's *Yom Hashoah* program included an intergenerational candle-lighting; a performance by the Samuel Scheck Hillel Community Day School Choir; remarks by Yitschak Ben Gad, Consul General of Israel to Florida and Puerto Rico; and a presentation by the 82nd Airborne Division Color Guard and the South Florida Shomrim Society.

Prior to the program, there was a reading of names of Holocaust victims who perished during World War II.

ISRAEL: Israelis marked *Yom Hashoah*, whose theme this year is "*Bearing Witness*." The Knesset began its Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony, "*To Each a Name*" at 11 a.m. on April 16, in which ministers and members of Knesset read names of victims of the Holocaust.



A Holocaust survivor arrives for the annual ceremony at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial marking Holocaust Remembrance Day in Jerusalem.

Participants, which included acting President Dalia Itzik and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, went up to the main stand

and read out names of members of their families who perished during the tragedy.



Prime Minister Ehud Olmert lays a wreath during the annual ceremony at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial marking Holocaust Remembrance Day in Jerusalem.

Israeli leaders and foreign ambassadors gathered for an evening ceremony at Yad Vashem, which included addresses by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Acting President Dalia Itzik, and former lawmaker and survivor Tommy Lapid. "The Holocaust is not only a stain on the history of Germany, not only on the history of European peoples, but a mark of Cain on all of humanity," Itzik told the audience at the Yad Vashem ceremony.

Also speaking at the ceremony, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert reminded guests and viewers of the importance of remembering the Holocaust, and its role in the future of Israel's existence.

"Sixty-two years have passed since the end of the most gruesome battles history has borne witness to. On the day of victory, the entire world danced in the streets of the capital cities. Only the Jews did not join in these celebrations, there was no reason to celebrate – a third of their people were wiped out."

"Only on the day of Israel's independence did the Jews allow themselves to celebrate. In eight days we will be celebrating Israel's Independence Day. The correlation between this Remembrance (Coverage continues on page 7)

BUSH DECLARED JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

President Bush proclaimed May to be Jewish American Heritage Month. "The faith and hard work of Jewish Americans have played an integral role in shaping the cultural fabric of America," Bush said in the proclamation.

"Throughout our history, Jewish Americans have contributed to the strength of our country and the preservation of our values. The talent and imagination of these citizens have helped our Nation prosper, and their efforts continue to remind us of America's gift of religious freedom and the blessings of God's steadfast love. Jewish Americans have worked to promote civil rights and build bridges of mutual understanding among the world's religions. Their deep commit-

ment to faith and strong ties to family enrich our country and set a positive example for others."

Jeremy Katz, Bush's liaison to the Jewish community, read the proclamation at a Capitol Hill event sponsored by the United Jewish Communities, among other groups. Also speaking at the event was U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), who initiated the legislation creating the heritage month.

The Democratic National Committee also issued a statement marking the month. "For more than 350 years Jewish Americans have been an integral part of helping the United States grow and flourish," said the statement by DNC chairman Howard Dean and vice-chairwoman Susan Turnbull, who is Jewish.

FRENCH JEWS PETITION U.S. FOR ASYLUM

More than 7,000 French Jews have signed a petition asking for political asylum in the United States because of anti-Semitism in France.

"Following the barbarous murder of a young Jew because he was Jewish, in the context of the rise in anti-Semitic acts committed by Islamic fundamentalists, numerous members of the community no longer feel safe in France," reads the petition, which was sent to the U.S. Congress. The reference was to Ilan Halimi, a 23-year-old Parisian Jew who was kidnapped and tortured to death last year by an anti-Semitic gang.

The petition asks Congress to enact a

law according refugee status to French Jews. "We believe that the United States, known for its traditional welcome to those under threat in their native lands, must open its doors to us," the petition says.

French communal officials reacted with outrage. "This petition is bizarre, stupid and out of place," Haim Musicant, director of CRIF, the umbrella organization of secular French Jewish groups, told Israel's *Ma'ariv* newspaper. "I don't feel threatened in France, and the authorities are doing everything they can to protect the Jewish community. French Jews don't need this kind of petition."

RIGHTEOUS WILL RECEIVE FRANCE'S LEGION OF HONOR

France's Legion of Honor, the country's highest civilian award, will be conferred on about 1,000 people, including some who helped save Jews from Nazi death camps.

The list of the honored people was published in the *«Journal Officiel»*, the State's Official Gazette.

Besides the 153 "Righteous of France" who kept Jews from being deported to concentration camps during World War II, others included billionaire businessman Francois Pinault, actor Jean-Paul Belmondo, and Nazi hunter Beate Klarsfeld.

The 153 are among those recognized

by Israel as "righteous among the nations" for their role in saving Jews from the Holocaust.

They helped save 75 percent of the 330,000 Jews in France under the Nazi occupation.

Some 2,725 have been recognized in France, the largest number after Poland and the Netherlands, and 16,000 in Europe as a whole.

"By contributing, during one of the darkest hours of our history, to saving three-quarters of the Jews of France from deportation, these men and women embody the values upon which the nation and the republic are based," said a statement from the French president's office.

BELGIAN PM APOLOGIZES FOR HOLOCAUST DEPORTATIONS

Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt reiterated the apology to the Jewish community for the deportation of Belgian Jews during the Holocaust.

Speaking at a ceremony in Brussels to mark the 62nd anniversary of the end of the Second World War, Verhofstadt said "it is impossible to go forward" without recognizing the role Belgian officials played in the murder of European Jewry.

He told local Jews that he is committed to "a future where this will never happen again."

The prime minister also said that the compensation process for the Jewish victims would be completed by the end of the year. The 5,640 requests for compensation introduced by Jewish victims for the event between 2001 and 2006 would be

entirely treated by the end of the year. "The sums which will not have been refunded individually will be transmitted to the Foundation of the Judaism of Belgium," it added.

Verhofstadt made the apology on the day when a government-backed report, titled "*Submissive Belgium*," was released. The report concluded that top Belgian officials collaborated with the Nazis during World War II.

"This report indicates that the authorities were too flexible. Worse, in several cases, they collaborated with the deportation and the continuation of the Jews of Belgium," he said.

Verhofstadt then unveiled a memorial to Belgians who worked to save Jews during the Holocaust.

FIGHTING RACISM IN EUROPE: CRIMINALIZING HOLOCAUST DENIAL ?

The issue of Holocaust denial featured prominently at a public hearing in the European parliament on how to combat racism and xenophobia in Europe.

MEPs discussed a German proposal to push through new rules that would make Holocaust denial a crime in the whole European Union.

While unanimous in their condemnation of those who deny the Holocaust, EU leaders are split over whether to criminalize such acts.

Two years ago, Luxembourg tried to use its EU presidency to push through legislation to unify legal standards for Holocaust denial but was blocked by Italy, Britain and Denmark on the grounds that the proposed rules breached freedom of speech and civil liberties.

Such legislation requires unanimity among the 27 EU member states. Citing its particular historic responsibility due to its Nazi past, Germany, which holds the six-month EU rotating presidency, has said it wants EU member states to adopt the proposed legislation as soon as possible.

Against a backdrop of increasing racist attacks in Europe, a German blueprint says that racist declarations or Holocaust denial would not be prosecuted if they were expressed in a way that did not incite hatred against an individual or

group of people.

At the hearing in Brussels, Martine Roure, a French Socialist MEP, spoke of the "necessity of including negationism" in the EU text.

She said that she understood the need to respect each member state's history and traditions, adding: "Recent events, including in our own institution with Maciej Giertych's publication suggesting that the Third Reich did no more than shut Jews into the ghettos they had themselves created, show that we must redouble our efforts to ban this type of historical minimization which is a veiled form of anti-Semitism."

It would be, however, for each Member State remain to decide how to punish such acts.

Laws criminalizing Holocaust denial already exist in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Spain.

Stavros Lambrinidis, a Socialist Greek MEP said, on the other hand, that "freedom of speech is most important to be protected.

"There is no question that the Nazi genocide started with words and incitement to hatred but I wonder if sending

some people to jail for their words would have saved us from the Holocaust or rather would have transformed them into heroes," he added.

"There should be a clear line to define what should be punished. In democracy, freedom of speech should always be protected, in any circumstances. I come from a country which suffered a dictatorship and I consider it very dangerous to allow anybody to judge what can be said and what cannot."

In January, Justice European Commissioner Franco Frattini and German Justice Minister Brigitte Zypries have urged stronger EU-wide efforts against racism and xenophobia.

A report by the EU Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia in Vienna shows that's the number of racist acts increased in 2006 by between 20 and 45 per cent depending on the member state.

"These alarming figures show the urgency of achieving a minimum of harmonization in Europe, to include a common definition of racist and xenophobic behavior to be subject to criminal penalties which are effective, proportionate and have a deterrent effect," Roure said.



The European Parliament in Brussels

NORWAY SUED BY CHILDREN OF NAZIS

Norwegian offspring of German fathers were part of a "master race" plan. A group of Norwegians who were fathered by German soldiers in World War II are suing the Norwegian authorities at the European Court of Human Rights. The former war children claim they suffered widespread abuse and discrimination after the war.

During the war the Nazis encouraged liaisons between German troops and Norwegian women.

It was part of a plan to breed an Aryan master race of blonde-haired, blue-eyed babies for the Thousand-Year Reich. As for the infants produced by these affairs, most became known as Lebensborn Children. In post-war Norway they became targets of abuse, often bullied, beaten, even locked away in mental institutions, just because their fathers had been German soldiers.

Now, 150 war children are seeking justice at the European Court of Human Rights.

They are suing the Norwegian state for having failed to protect them after the war and for discriminating against them. Norway has, in the past, offered limited compensation to former Lebensborn Children but the authorities have never accepted responsibility for alleged cases of harassment dating back up to 60 years.

EL SALVADOR SEEKS MEDAL FOR DIPLOMAT WHO HELPED JEWS DURING WWII

The Salvadoran government said it will seek a posthumous medal for diplomat Jose Arturo Castellanos, who gave citizenship certificates to as many as 40,000 Jews during the Holocaust.

Representing a tiny country almost half a world away, Castellanos authorized Salvadoran citizenship papers to Jews throughout Europe, making it harder for the Nazis to deport them for execution.

Assistant Foreign Minister Eduardo Calix told that a two-year investigation helped establish

the facts surrounding the efforts by Castellanos, who died at age 86 in his homeland in 1977.

Castellanos is also listed as one of the diplomats who acted as a savior to Jews by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, named after a Swedish diplomat missing since January 1945 after saving tens of thousands of Jews.

The Yad Vashem title is granted by the authority's public committee, led by a retired Supreme Court judge. Castellanos would be the first Salvadoran to receive it.

REMNANTS OF PRE-HOLOCAUST JUDAISM ON THEIR WAY TO RIGHTFUL HEIRS

BY AMIRAM BARKAT, HAARETZ

Hundreds of thousands of books and many thousand Judaica items, which belonged to Holocaust victims and were distributed to public and private bodies in Israel in the 1950s, may now be reclaimed and returned to their heirs.

The state-owned Company for Locating and Retrieving Assets of Holocaust Victims intends to round up the cultural treasures and attempt to restore them to their rightful claimants.

It has recently transpired that more than 5,000 Judaica items, hundreds of works of art and about half a million books, including scriptures and valuable tomes that were owned by Holocaust victims, are in Israel.

Some of these items are being held by official state institutions, such as the Israel National Museum and the Jewish National and University Library, and the rest are held by private bodies, like museums and synagogues throughout the country.

The Company for Locating and Retrieving Assets of Holocaust Victims says that according to the law, it has to be given all these items so it can try to locate

the heirs. If the heirs cannot be found, the company intends to sell the items and allocate the money to organizations for aiding needy Holocaust survivors, and institutions commemorating the Holocaust's remembrance.

In the first years after WWII, tens of thousands of items that belonged to Holocaust victims were transferred to Israel by the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO), which had been set up by the Jewish Agency, the Joint Distribution Agency, the World Jewish Congress, Agudat Yisrael and other organizations.

Most of the items JRSO handled came from a huge buried treasure of looted Jewish property that was discovered by the United States Army in salt mines near Wiesbaden in central Germany.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem said that a university delegation headed by Professor Gershon Shalom and chief librarian Dr. Shlomo Shunami brought some 500,000 books with JRSO's help to Israel, but only half of them remained in the Jewish and University Library, while the rest were distributed among synagogues around the country.

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS KEEP MEMORIES ALIVE

As people filed out of the temple gathering, Ada Feingold stuck around and insisted on being heard.

"I am a survivor," said Feingold, 83, of Plantation. "I wanted to commit suicide, but I said no. I'm going to live; I'm going to tell the world what happened."

"I'm a survivor, too," said Bernard Cytryn, 79, of Coconut Creek. "I was liberated by the American Army." They were among 400 people, men and women mostly in their 80s, who attended a *Yom Hashoah* commemoration at Sunrise Jewish Center/Temple *Sha'aray Tzedek* in Sunrise.

The Jewish Federation of Broward County's Community Relations Committee and the Holocaust Survivors of South Florida held the event to honor all Holocaust survivors and remember the six

million Jews murdered in Nazi concentration camps.

Participants also took time to celebrate the Holocaust Survivors of South Florida's 25th anniversary.

Miriam Fridman, the group's president, said it was founded because many survivors had no friends or siblings when they retired to the community from New York and other places.

"We have a common bond because of our tragic past," Fridman said. "We try to get together and have an atmosphere and support each other."

She said it's extra special when they have a chance to meet at a big event, such as Yom Hashoah.

"We must continue to work together and spend time together," Fridman said. "Our motto is 'Never again,'" she said. "We should not be forgotten."

MANY ISRAELI JEWS FEAR ANOTHER HOLOCAUST

On the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Anti-Defamation League conducted a survey among Israeli Jewish youth, asking them if they felt another act of genocide against their people was possible in today's world.

About one-third of the 500 respondents said they believe another Holocaust is a very real possibility.

Apart from Iran – whose present leadership has openly stated its desire to annihilate the Jewish state, and is in a

race to develop the weapons needed to do so – most do not recognize other nations today as fertile ground for the birth of another anti-Jewish genocide.

But a new study showed that acts of violence and intimidation against Jews worldwide doubled in 2006 over the previous year.

The countries that experienced the sharpest rise in anti-Semitism were in Europe, home of the first Holocaust, according to the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Anti-Semitism.

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM AND JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS CELEBRATE ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY IN LAS VEGAS

On May 13 at the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas, Jewish organizations from Las Vegas and around the country gathered to celebrate Israel's 59 years of existence. The American Society was represented at this festivity by Ilana Apelker, Education Coordinator, and Shraga Mekel, Development Director.

Throughout the day people passed through



Mr. & Mrs. Blau, standing, and Ilana Apelker, Education Coordinator of the American Society for Yad Vashem at the Israel Independence Day Celebration on May 13, 2007, at the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas.

the ballroom to dance to Israeli music, eat, and learn about the different organizations in attendance. There was much interest in the work that the American Society for Yad Vashem does. Many people were curious about the different programs and exhibits that the Society has to offer. Our hope is that connections were made with those who can help further the goals of the Society.



BOOK REVIEWS

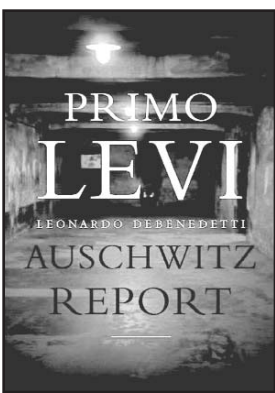
AUSCHWITZ REPORT

Auschwitz Report. By Primo Levi, with Leonardo De Benedetti. Edited by Robert S. C. Gordon. Verso, 2006. 128 pp. \$17.95.

REVIEWED BY STANISLAO G. PUGLIESE

Although best known for his seminal work, *Survival in Auschwitz*, Primo Levi's searing memoir was actually his second attempt to grapple with the enormity of Nazi extermination camps. After the Auschwitz system of camps was discovered by the Soviet Army on January 27, 1945, Levi and another Turinese Jew, Leonardo De Benedetti, a 46-year-old medical doctor, were charged by Soviet authorities to draft a report on the sanitary and medical organization of Auschwitz. The Russians' motives — notwithstanding their chaotic but essentially humane portrait in Levi's second memoir, *The Truce* — were not entirely altruistic: They wished to document the unspeakable crimes of the Nazi regime not just for posterity but also for propaganda purposes.

Cambridge University's Robert Gordon, a prolific writer on Levi's significance, has edited what he rightly calls the "ur-document of that exceptional voice of reason," the *Auschwitz Report*. For historians, the report is an invaluable primary source; for readers struggling to make sense of the Holocaust, it is much more. It is a disturbing look into the psychology and pathology of the concentration camp universe by two men who struggled not only to survive



its conditions but to fathom its *raison d'être*, as well.

Levi was born July 31, 1919, into a highly assimilated and cultured bourgeois Jewish family in Turin, Italy. He spoke no Hebrew until late in life, did not observe the dietary laws and only occasionally visited the Moorish-style synagogue in his native city on the High Holy Days. Like most Italian Jews, he was shocked when the fascist regime published a *"Manifesto of the Racial Scientists"* in the summer of 1938. The following autumn, the regime promulgated a series of anti-Semitic laws patterned on the Nuremberg Laws in Nazi Germany. When, in September 1943, Italy switched sides during World War II and found itself occupied by the Allies in the South and the Nazis in the rest of the country, Levi threw in his lot with a left-wing anti-fascist movement, the Action Party. Before firing a shot, he was captured and interned in Italy. In February 1944, he was sent to Auschwitz. (Of the 650 men, women and children on his transport, only 24 survived.) He survived through a fortuitous combination of his extensive knowledge of chemistry, the humanity of a precious few other prisoners and simple luck. His memoir of life in the extermination camp, *Survival in Auschwitz* (*"If This Is a Man"*), has claimed its rightful place among the masterpieces of Holocaust literature.

Although it can be argued that the Holocaust was the central event of our

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OUR HOLOCAUST

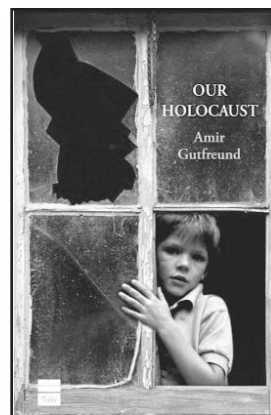
Our Holocaust. By Amir Gutfreund. Translated by Jessica Cohen. Toby Press, 2006. 407 pp. \$15.72.

REVIEWED BY ADAM SHARON

In my hometown of Toronto, Holocaust survivors migrated to the Downsview neighborhood to begin their new life in Canada. Staples of a typical Jewish community slowly emerged. Jewish schools were founded, kosher bakeries opened and synagogues were built and grew, including *Beth David B'nai Israel Beth Am*, known for its massive stained glass windows behind the rabbi's pulpit.

The art at Beth David included typical biblical symbols and modern-day images of an Israeli flag and IDF soldiers, coupled with Holocaust motifs. Synagogues set ablaze are meant to symbolize Kristallnacht. Deportation trains head toward Auschwitz-Birkenau and the infamous gates marked *"Arbeit Macht Frei."* A crematorium and concentration camp barracks are noticeable. Yellow Stars of David dot the area beneath the Holy Ark. The number 6,000,000 stands out.

As a youngster, it felt odd attending friends' bar mitzvah ceremonies and, more recently, their weddings at Beth David Synagogue. For behind the joy, images of hell were on display. And yet, while reading *Our Holocaust* by Amir Gutfreund, I kept recalling those stained-



glass windows. The powerful imagery and symbolism on display at Beth David Synagogue also appears in this wonderfully haunting debut novel. Joy is coupled with sadness; celebration is mixed with mourning.

Take the opening pages, for instance. Grandpa Lolek is introduced, described as the parsimonious elder with a sorrowful past who resides in Haifa. He is a miser whose penchant for frugality was born during a different era on the European continent. Empty bottles are collected and returned to reclaim deposits. Mostly depleted liquid soap in his bathroom is diluted and refilled with water. Tea bags are used repeatedly before being inspected by Grandpa Lolek, who would estimate the bag's vitality and decree its fate. It's a process watched by Amir and Effi, the children of Holocaust survivors (like author Gutfreund himself), whose childhood was pockmarked with incidents of such oddities.

Lolek and his Holocaust survivor friends live in a neighborhood of Haifa, but they are stuck in a netherworld defined by trauma. Food is never thrown out at home. Why? "Because people died for a single potato. Because people turned their parents in for a morsel of cabbage. Because people were so starved that they ate wooden planks in their huts in Buchenwald."

Amir and Effi spent one summer with a family at a kibbutz playing an invented

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KRISTALLNACHT: PRELUDE TO DESTRUCTION

Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction. By Martin Gilbert. HarperCollins, 2006. 314 pp. \$21.95.

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL R. MARRUS

Overnight on Nov. 9-10, 1938, German and Austrian Nazis launched a coordinated, riotous assault on Jews across the expanded German Reich — burning synagogues, destroying stores, looting houses, beating Jews and sending thousands to concentration camps. The next morning, the boots of the storm troopers and the Hitler Youth crunched the resulting broken glass, giving the name *Kristallnacht* ("Night of Broken Glass") to the terrible events that prefigured the Holocaust of European Jewry. "For the perpetrators of the destruction," writes Martin Gilbert in his new history of that dreadful night, "the name reflected their sense of both triumph and contempt: triumph at what they had destroyed, laughter at the thought of the sound of breaking glass. Yet fear and distress were inflicted on every German Jew that night." More than a thousand Jewish places of worship were destroyed; 91 Jews were murdered; 30,000 Jewish men between the ages of 16 and 60 were arrested; 30 Jews apparently committed suicide in Vienna; in Bayreuth, the home of Wagnerian opera, 60 Jewish men and women were locked in a cowshed; in Frankfurt, half of the town's 43 synagogues and houses of prayer were gutted; and in the small community of Bad Soden,

Jewish tuberculosis patients were turned out of their "home for consumptives," which was subsequently demolished.

This is grimly familiar ground, but Gilbert has found some new material, consisting mostly of descriptions and recollections by people who lived through *Kristallnacht*. One of the world's most prolific historians — he is the author of more than 80 works, including his most important achievement, his magisterial, multi-volume biography of Winston Churchill — Gilbert brings to bear the historical method that has served so well in the past. "I'm not a theoretical historian — seeking to guide the reader to a general conclusion," he once told the *Jerusalem Report*. "I'm quite content to be a narrative chronicler, a slave of the facts." But as anyone who has attempted to write history knows, the facts don't quite speak for themselves, and chronicles don't automatically provide accounts as fluent and absorbing as Gilbert at his best.

Unlike much of the Holocaust, *Kristallnacht* occurred under the noses of newspaper reporters and foreign diplomats, who painstakingly recorded what they saw. Gilbert assembles their accounts, together with those of the sur-

vivors, to immerse us in *Kristallnacht* and its aftermath, including Jews' frequently desperate efforts to escape Germany and find refuge elsewhere. We read of the terrorization of young and old, men and women, rich and poor, distinguished and obscure — all of them simply because they were Jews. Oskar Prager, then 9, saw a Nazi storm trooper wreck the family apartment and crush his birthday wristwatch; Ilse Morgenstern remembered the Nazis' seizing the family piano; and, in an extraordinary but in some sense typical reaction, Batya Emanuel, who was 13 at the time, recalled her father's futile reaction: "Here was Papa striding into the room, with the telephone, which was kept in our parents'

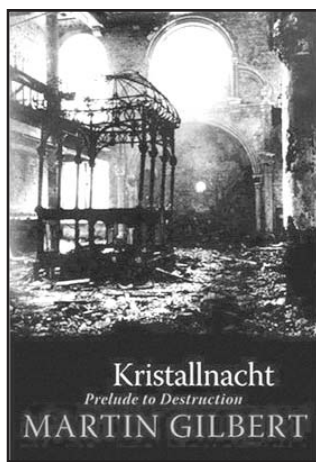
bedroom at night, tucked under his arm, and he was in braces, without a waistcoat and jacket. I don't think I had ever seen him not fully dressed before. He nodded curtly in my direction, plugged in the phone and dialed: 'Is that the police? I wish to inform you that the synagogue at the back of *Rutschbahn 11* has been broke into and is being vandalized at this very moment — you are sending your men? Thank you.'"

Tellingly, Gilbert's witnesses register not only the outrage, the cruelty and the brutality but also the generous responses of some Germans and foreign diplomats

who tried to help. Countess Maria von Maltzan, for example, whose brother was in the SS, turned her aristocratic bearing to good effect when she surreptitiously rescued victims: "The Countess made contact with members of the Swedish Protestant Church in Berlin, who were systematically smuggling Jews out of Germany. She forged visas, ration books and other documents, and drove vegetable lorries full of refugees out of Berlin." In Warzburg, at a Jewish teachers' seminary, the caretaker — apparently a storm trooper himself, wearing a brown shirt uniform — warned the youngsters "to dress quickly and run away, because 'they' were burning, looting and destroying synagogues and Jewish homes and shops." From Berlin, the senior British diplomat in Germany, Sir George Oglivie Forbes, telegraphed home on November 13: "I can find no words strong enough in condemnation of the disgusting treatment of so many innocent people, and the civilized world is faced with the appalling sight of 500,000 people about to rot away in starvation."

More than 330,000 German and Austrian Jews escaped one way or another by the outbreak of the war in 1939. *Kristallnacht* records what they suffered, how they managed to get away and what they remembered about it. Most pertinently, it also records how ordinary people responded to the catastrophe.

First published in the *Washington Post*



RESISTING THE NAZIS DESPITE THE ODDS

BY EDWARD ROTHSTEIN, THE NEW YORK TIMES

The discipline and determination are half-brilliant, half-mad: in 1940, in Warsaw, the Polish-Jewish historian Emanuel Ringelblum decided that the entire experience of Jewry under Nazi rule should be thoroughly documented. The internment of Jews within the Warsaw ghetto, he wrote (with chilly irony), "provided even greater opportunity for development of the archive."

A competition was established to select writers, teachers and intellectuals; they would study topics like community life, education, crime, youth, art and religion, while helping to smuggle information into the ghetto. Comprehensiveness and objectivity were meant to eclipse surrounding horrors, documenting them for the future. The secret project was called, in heavily sardonic code, *Oyneg Shabbes*, using the Yiddish words for a celebration welcoming the Sabbath.

"To our great regret, however, only part of the plan was carried out," Mr. Ringelblum writes, explaining with hyperbolic understatement: "We lacked the necessary tranquility for a plan of such scope and volume." Writers were executed; some were exiled for slave labor; and, in 1942, hundreds of thousands of ghetto residents were deported to death camps. Before the ghetto was consumed in the final conflagrations of an armed rebellion, Mr. Ringelblum's archive was buried in tin boxes and milk cans that

were only partly rediscovered after the war.

This epic is briefly alluded to in the important exhibition "*Daring to Resist: Jewish Defiance in the Holocaust*," on display at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in association with the Ghetto Fighters' House in Israel. Mr. Ringelblum is mentioned here, and facsimiles of the buried documents (now housed in Warsaw) are shown, but they are primarily demonstrating that in extreme times resistance to tyranny takes many forms. One is the enterprise of *Oyneg Shabbes*: documentation.



A forged work document for Tema Schneiderman, who secretly delivered news and ammunition to ghettos. She died in Treblinka.

Others forms of resistance are reflected in objects that in ordinary times have no distinctiveness: a ritual slaughterer's knife used at great risk to butcher kosher chickens in Denmark so they could be smuggled into Germany in the 1930s; a blue-and-white wrestling sash from 1934 awarded to Jewish contestants no longer permitted to compete with their fellow Germans; a girl's 1938 report card from a school founded by Jews in Berlin after Jewish

children were banned from public schools.

And reflecting later years are artifacts from even darker times, including false documents used by Jewish women who were couriers secretly bearing information from beyond the walls of ghettos and camps. Also on view are a violin, a stage set, school notebooks: all relics of a resilient Jewish life nurtured at the brink of extinction. ("When the children will come out of the cage," one survivor recalls being told, "they should be able to fly.")

There is even a pillowcase given to a Lithuanian woman by Rivka Gotz, who defied the Nazi ban on Jewish childbirth and smuggled her newborn son, Ben, out of the Shavli ghetto in a suitcase, placing him under the woman's secret care. The pillowcase now comes from Ben Gotz's collection.

Such is the evidence of resistance of one kind or another: creating institutions in the face of oppression; following religious observances that were the object of Nazi repugnance; continuing cultural life with defiant pride; risking life to bring new life into being. It is not until late in the exhibition that visitors see the first guns used by Jewish partisans or can read the first accounts of their sabotage as they darted from forests like gnats in the face of the German war machine.

The exhibition's curator, Yitzchak Mais, former director of the Yad Vashem museum in Jerusalem and a curator of the planned Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie, explains in a valuable companion volume to the show (which also includes many difficult-to-find first-hand accounts) that his intention was to address the kinds of accusatory questions



The Jewish partisans Abba Kovner, left, and Shmerke Kaczerginski were among the liberators of Vilna, Lithuania, in 1944.

that the writer Primo Levi said he often heard as a survivor: "Why did you not escape? Why did you not rebel?"

Mr. Mais's answer is that Jews did, again and again. There were more than 90 Jewish fighting organizations in European ghettos and three rebellions at the hellish centers of the Nazi death-kingdom: at Sobibor, Treblinka and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

But also, Mr. Mais suggests, "visitors to our exhibition will be challenged to re-evaluate their understanding of what constitutes resistance."

This is the show's greatest strength, and also its greatest weakness. It is a strength because to demonstrate how all of this involved resistance, the exhibition must convey just how extraordinary the circumstances were: the gradually tightening grip that held European Jews; the impressions that couldn't fully foreshadow what was to come; the human impulse toward hope being slowly stifled. "How does one respond," an introductory film asks, "when the future is unknown?"

"Who can you turn to?" asks the label text. "Who will speak for you when your

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IN BALTICS, TEACHING ABOUT SHOAH SOMETIMES TOUCHES RAW NERVES

BY MICHAEL J. JORDAN, JTA

Inside the Vilnius Zveryno High School, the Lithuanian teens greet a guest to their Tolerance Center as they would a teacher — standing at attention.

Striking Holocaust images painted by the teens cover the blackboard: mostly watercolors of Jews deported, torn from loved ones, trapped behind barbed wire.

In the back of the classroom, a cabinet has become a permanent exhibit, its doors opened to reveal a miniature concentration camp built of wood, clay and paper.

"We need to learn our country's history and what our ancestors did — it was very cruel," says Ruta Vastakaite, speaking, like her classmates, in near-flawless English.

"Some thought they were better than the Jews," Linas Budrys adds, "and that Jews should have no rights."

"Only when we know our own history can we prevent it from happening again," Ieva Kerzaitė concludes.

The words are an encouraging sign considering that not a single student in the class is Jewish. That's not surprising in a country that before World War II was a center of Jewish life but which today has no more than 5,000 Jews.

As in the neighboring Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia, Holocaust education in Lithuania is a tricky business. Not only were the Jewish populations in the Baltic countries decimated by the Nazis, many of their own countrymen took part in the killings.

Approximately 220,000 of the 250,000 Jews in Lithuania were killed, and 90,000 of 100,000 in Latvia. Only seven of the estimated 1,000 Jews survived the onslaught in Estonia.

Teaching children about those atrocities may mean implicating their own grandparents and denting national pride that was allowed to grow only with independence 16 years ago.

Critics charge that some in these small ex-Soviet republics tend to deal with this complexity with a form of Holocaust denial: not denying the Holocaust per se, but rejecting local culpability and pinning blame entirely on the Germans. Indeed, in contrast to other European countries, no Baltic nation has ever imprisoned a local Nazi war criminal.

"You have to be very savvy about the Holocaust education being taught," says Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Nazi-hunting office in Israel.

Five years ago the office launched "Operation Last Chance," which offers cash rewards for information leading to prosecutions of war criminals from the Baltics and other countries.

"Is local complicity an important component?" Zuroff asked. "Or are they engaging in Holocaust deflection, dealing only with the easier part — what Germany and the Nazis did?"

One more question can be added: Are the Vilnius Zveryno students the rule or

the exception? In Latvia, which has about 200 sites where Jews were killed, some youth are in the dark about what happened or feel disconnected from it, says Gita Umanovska, executive director of the Riga Jewish community.

"Maybe in their town of 3,000, 1,000 Jews were killed in the woods," Umanovska says. "Maybe they don't know, or don't want to know. They may feel it happened over there, but we're over here; it's not a part of my history, my town,



The students of Vilnius Zverynas High School stand with their teacher and principal in front of some of their Holocaust-themed artwork.

my family." In some cases, the government isn't helping.

President Vaira Vike-Freiberga has apologized for Latvian participation in the Nazi slaughter, but an official Latvian history book — produced in 2005 — described *Salaspils*, the country's main concentration camp, as a "corrective working camp." In reality, some 50,000

people were killed there.

Complicating the picture is that while Lithuania, for example, had one of Europe's highest rates of collaboration with the Nazis, Yad Vashem has honored 693 Lithuanians as "Righteous Gentiles" among the more than 21,700 so recognized. From Latvia, 103 righteous have been identified; from Estonia, three. A memoir of more than 100 Lithuanian ghetto and camp survivors, "*With a Needle in the Heart*," cites countless instances of ordinary folks helping Jews. In addition, the Baltic states endured their own wartime trauma: The Soviet "liberators" deported hundreds of thousands of people to Siberia, and executed or imprisoned many others. More attention to crimes against Jews might not resonate here, nor would puncturing these nations' own sense of victimization.

The Holocaust itself was a taboo topic for a half-century. Soviet propaganda would refer generically to the "Soviet victims of fascism," never the "Jewish victims."

Once the Soviet regime crumbled, the Baltics joined fellow Eastern European countries in saying the right things: apologizing for the Holocaust and vowing to commemorate it, resolve issues like restitution and prosecution of war criminals. Holocaust education essentially was a precondition for any country presenting itself as a decent, modern society with hopes of joining exclusive Western clubs like the European Union or NATO. The Baltic countries joined both organiza-

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SURVIVORS' CORNER

ESCAPE FROM THE HOLOCAUST: THE SECRET LIFE OF BRITAIN'S ANNE FRANK

BY IAN HERBERT, THE INDEPENDENT

The fragments of the story were there all along, bundled into a shoebox which lay, unopened, in a spare room at Suzanne Rappoport's apartment in Leeds. There were the postcards her father had sent, asking after her but providing no word of her mother; the studio photograph of the three of them taken a few weeks before they were separated; and the immaculate, handwritten note she had penned, aged no more than nine, telling how she longed to see them both again. "Je serai bien contente de revoir ma chere petite maman et mon cher petit papa," reads the letter. She never did.

Ms Rappoport was born of an immigrant British mother and has spent her entire adult life in England. But its defining event occurred on a warm August afternoon in German-occupied Paris, in 1942. The French police were collaborating with the Nazis in the round-up of non-French Jews - those who had come to France but were not born there - for deportation. Among them were her parents.

Ms. Rappoport would have been taken, too, were it not for the courage and sheer audacity of the woman across the third floor landing, Mme Yvonne Collomb, who removed the child from the flat - even as French police waited for her parents to pack a case each - and then helped conceal her from the Nazis and their collaborators for over three years. Though other British Jews are known to have been among France's 30,000 Hidden Children, who escaped the Nazis in circumstances captured by Sebastian Faulks' novel *Charlotte Gray*, Ms Rappoport was the first to tell her story, in a BBC *Timewatch* documentary which takes her back to the apartment block where, 65 years ago, she was concealed in a makeshift bed under

her neighbor's kitchen table.

There would have been no story to tell had not Ms Rappoport's mother, Millie Spadik, whose own parents first arrived in Liverpool by passenger ship in the early 1900s to escape the Russian pogroms, decided to leave her home in Newcastle-upon-Tyne for France after an unhappy marriage. She settled in Paris, where she had met Josek Rappoport, a Polish tailor. The last family photograph, taken at the *Studio Jean Guy*, marked their daughter's sixth birthday - 23 July 1942.

What occurred next remained firmly in the past until Ms. Rappoport, now 70, concluded it was time to revisit it. Her decision to go back stemmed from a chance conversation about her parents with one of her neighbors in Leeds, Barbara Govan, whose Screenhouse Productions company has produced the *Timewatch* documentary. "I felt that I needed, while I still could, to find out what had happened to my parents - and to my grandparents, who were also taken that summer," Ms. Rappoport said. "There were so many fragments of memory. That's how it must be with an experience like that."

She was at her father's shoulder, as he sat watching the pigeons in the sunshine through the window of their third-floor apartment, when they both heard the sound of the French policemen on the wooden staircase at 58 Rue de Belleville. The child was not immediately anxious: there had been a curfew for her that summer and the yellow star she and other

Jewish children were made her uncomfortable, but her parents had been assiduous about keeping the family's true predicament from her. It was as her parents locked the front door and quickly ushered her into the small family bedroom with them, bundling her under the bed, that it became clear something was seriously wrong. "Mother was sobbing, pacing backwards and forwards and tearing her hair out," Ms. Rappoport recalled. "From



Suzanne's parents both died in the death camps.

under the bed, I saw clumps of it falling to the floor. She knew what was coming." After the front door was broken in, the Rappoport were ordered into their sparse little kitchen and were packing bags in front of the small Salamander stove, under the eye of the policemen, when Mme Collomb rushed in. "She said: 'What's my child doing in this apartment? I've been looking everywhere for her. She dragged me out by the arm before I could react,'" Ms. Rappoport said. "She got away with it. The police left the building with my parents but never came looking for me."

Ms. Rappoport now believes that her parents and their neighbor had rehearsed this script in readiness for the moment. "Mme Collomb had sent her daughter out to play at the Butte de Chaumont park that day," she said. "I also found my parents' sideboard in her apartment, and items like their Japanese tea set, which puzzled me. I now think it might have been their advance payment to her for the task she was prepared to undertake."

The days which followed brought the same bewildering existence which the two young Jewish brothers experience when hidden in an upstairs room in *Charlotte Gray*. Mme Collomb made her new child a bed under the kitchen table, protected from view by a long, thick chenille tablecloth, and she occupied her with a pair of slippers made from old dusters. It was Suzanne's job to polish the floor with them. "I loved skating around the slippery kitchen on them," Ms. Rappoport recalled. "She knew how to distract me."

But it soon became unsafe for a child, whose existence was well known, to be confined so close to home. Mme Collomb tapped into a network which was hiding children in rural France and sent her to the village of Mondoubleau in the Loire Valley, whose role in hiding children has been documented. It was here that the reality of her parents' absence and her own grim existence - with hours hidden from view in a cellar - began to dawn on her. Though she did not know it, those into whose care she had been entrusted did not share Mme Collomb's empathy. A letter, written from a family in Mondoubleau to Mme Collomb and recently recovered from the Leeds shoebox, reads: "I'm sorry to put you in a difficult position over Suzanne, but I can't look after her. I can't be stuck at home for a child."

Suzanne was moved to a farmhouse in the Auvergne, where her yearning to see Mme Collomb, as well as her parents, was evident in an emotional letter to Ms Collomb.

Correspondence from southern Poland told Mme Collomb that the prospects for the child's parents were grim. Several postcards from Suzanne's father confirmed he was in the Auschwitz camp at Birkenau, where at least 1.1 million Jews and 75,000 Poles perished. His prisoner
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ISRAELI CITIZENSHIP FOR THE SAVIOR OF JEWISH CHILDREN

During World War II, Andree Geulen-Herscovici saved more than 300 Jewish children in Belgium, risking her own life to hide them from the Nazis. At an emotional ceremony, Israel honored the 86-year-old woman, granting her honorary citizenship and reuniting her with dozens of the people she rescued.

In 1942, the Brussels teacher witnessed a Gestapo raid on a school to arrest Jewish children. She then joined a rescue organization and for more than two years collected children and hid them in Christian homes and monasteries under assumed identities.

Throughout the war, she looked over them, keeping a secret record of their original names. At the end of the war, she gathered them once again and returned many to their surviving relatives.

In 1989, Geulen-Herscovici was recognized by the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial as a Righteous Among the Nations - an honor granted to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust, including Oskar Schindler and Raoul Wallenberg. Among these, only

a few hundred have been granted honorary citizenship by Israel.

"She belongs to this unique club of courageous and honorable human beings," said Avner Shalev, director of Yad Vashem. "This is another way for us to say thank you."

The soft-spoken Geulen-Herscovici played down her heroics. "What I did was merely my duty. Disobeying the laws of the time was just the normal thing to do," she said in French.

Her actions altered the lives of hundreds of children, many of whom reunited with her recently, along with their own children and grandchildren.

Henri Lederhandler was nine in the spring of 1943, when Geulen-Herscovici took him in. He said he still vividly remembers the first meeting with the lovely young woman who would become his guardian angel.

"You saved us, you rescued us from the fingernails of the Nazis," he said at the

ceremony. "If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be here today. You are like a mother to us all."

After the war, Geulen-Herscovici married a Jewish survivor and raised two children of her own. But she also maintained contact with some of her Jewish children, many of whom later immigrated to Israel.



Andree Geulen-Herscovici.

"And since then I have never been alone. Through every moment of my life, you have been with me and I love you all like I love my own children," she said.

Shaul Harel, 70, was one of those children whom Geulen-Herscovici saved from the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

To honor her and others like her, the Israeli doctor organized an international conference in Israel for the Belgian children hidden during the Holocaust, of which there are an estimated 3,000.

The five-day conference coincided with Israel's official Holocaust Remembrance day.

The group, which includes some 160 survivors, has been sharing its survival stories after many years of keeping mum. Harel said doing so together with the woman who saved them made it more significant.

"When you meet the woman who is responsible for you being alive," he said, his voice trailing, "it's very emotional." Dozens accompanied Geulen-Herscovici as she strolled slowly through the museum. Many shed tears as she neared an exhibit and pointed to a black and white photograph on the wall showing her along with two children in her arms. "That's Jackie," she said, motioning to one of the kids.

She said she remembered them all, down to each one's serial number in her diary.

"Even in the darkest hour of humanity there were still a few rays of light," said Belgian Ambassador to Israel Danielle del Marmol. "Andree Geulen-Herscovici was one of those."

First reported by Associated Press

FILM RECOGNIZING MAN'S WORK FINDING NAZI WAR CRIMINALS

The Simon Wiesenthal Center hosted a Philadelphia premiere of *"I Have Never Forgotten You: The Life and Legacy of Simon Wiesenthal."* Directed by Richard Trank and narrated by actress Nicole Kidman, *"I Have Never Forgotten You"* was a stirring tribute to the life of Simon Wiesenthal, a Holocaust survivor and a self-trained investigator who brought thousands of Nazi war criminals to justice.

"I Have Never Forgotten You" chronicles the life of a man who relentlessly pursued his Nazi torturers with a passionate fervor and obsession. Unable to return to a "normal" life after his liberation from Mauthausen concentration camp in upper Austria, Wiesenthal was driven to follow a lifelong obsession in his quest for justice. A relentless researcher with a talent for ferreting out war criminals, Wiesenthal's lifelong passion would suggest a man ravaged by hate and driven by revenge to seek his torturers, yet *"I Have Never Forgotten You"* reveals a man who pursues former Nazis in the name of justice, but more importantly, for the friends, 89 family members and fellow sufferers and casualties of the Holocaust.

"I Have Never Forgotten You" is not an easy documentary to watch, nor does it soften the brutality of the Holocaust, but although the images on the screen depict horrible criminals, murderers and torturers, the purpose of the film is to memorialize the commendable work achieved by Wiesenthal throughout his lifetime to honor the lives lost at the hands of the

criminals he unearths. Labeled "the man who could not stop thinking about the guilt of other people" by a contributor in the documentary, Wiesenthal's obsession was apparent in the documentary, but so were his reasons.

"Survival is a privilege which entails obligations. I am forever asking myself what I can do for those who have not survived. The answer I have found for myself (and which need not necessarily be the answer for every survivor) is: I want to be their mouthpiece. I want to keep their memory alive, to make sure the dead live on in that memory," said Wiesenthal, in his book, *Justice, Not Vengeance*.

The documentary opens with footage from Mauthausen, one of the several concentration camps Wiesenthal endured during his capture, and the location from which he was liberated on May 5, 1945. Found lying helplessly in a barracks surrounded by the dead, and weighing less than 100 lbs., Wiesenthal barely survived to be liberated by an American armored unit. Wiesenthal's first documentation of the atrocities committed by the Nazi guards survives in volumes of sketches he drew while imprisoned.

"I drew what I was seeing every day," said Wiesenthal. "I wanted to leave something behind to document the horrors I saw every day."

Wiesenthal's first small efforts to expose the crimes of Nazi guards through his sketches were magnified greatly following his release. One day during the struggle to regain his health, Wiesenthal walked

into a meeting between the War Crimes Section of the U.S. Army and former Nazi prison guards. Amazed to see the German guards shackled and answering questions regarding their activities in the



A portrait of Simon Wiesenthal and his wife Cyla, 1936.

concentration camps, Wiesenthal immediately offered his services. Underweight, weak and completely untrained, U.S. officials placated the excited Wiesenthal and unofficially "commissioned" him to submit information. Wiesenthal's first list of 99 Nazi offenders, explicitly detailed and painstakingly categorized, incited a passion and obsession that ended only with his death in 2005.

Credited with providing information to bring nearly 1,100 Nazi war criminals to

court, Wiesenthal's most high-profile cases include Franz Murer, "The Butcher of Wilno;" Gustav Wagner, the commandant of Sobibor; Erich Rajakowitsch, in charge of the "death transports" in Holland; Karl Silberbauer, the Gestapo officer who arrested Anne Frank; Hermine Braunsteiner, a housewife living in Queens, N.Y., who had supervised the killing of hundreds of children at Majdanek; and Franz Stangl, the commandant of the Treblinka and Sobibor concentration camps in Poland.

Stangl, who Wiesenthal patiently researched for three years, was finally located in Brazil in 1967. Remanded in West Germany for trial, when asked whether he plead guilty or not guilty, Stangl replied "not guilty." Wiesenthal remarks grimly in his documentary, "The judge should have asked him that question 6,000,000 times." Stangl was sentenced to life imprisonment and died in prison.

Stangl, about whom Wiesenthal says, "Had I done nothing in my life except catch this man, I would not have lived in vain," was one of two on Wiesenthal's most-wanted list. Adolf Eichmann, chief of the Gestapo's Jewish Department, and implementer of "The Final Solution" was the other. After over a decade of relentless research, Wiesenthal aided Eichmann's capture in Buenos Aires in 1959. He was brought to Israel for trial, and executed on May 31, 1961 for mass murder.

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YOM HASHOAH OBSERVED AROUND THE WORLD

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Day, and the following celebrations is direct," Olmert continued.

Lapid spoke of the need to act against modern genocides.

"Even after the Holocaust, we witnessed genocide in Biafra, Cambodia, Rwanda, and we must cry out against the genocide currently being committed in Darfur in Sudan — and the world is sitting on its hands and sends a few sacks of flour, not so much in order to feed the hungry, but rather to calm its conscience," he said, according to *Ha'aretz*.

Lapid, also chairman of the Yad Vashem council, added a warning regarding "an existential threat to the Jewish people on the part of the Iranian president."

On Monday at 10 a.m. Israel time, sirens wailed throughout the country for two minutes, with Israelis standing silently to remember the victims.

The Vatican backed off a threat to boycott a Holocaust memorial event in Israel.



The papal nuncio in Israel, Monsignor Antonio Franco.

The Holy See's ambassador to Israel, Archbishop Antonio Franco, attended the evening inauguration of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day at Yad Vashem despite an earlier threat to stay away from the event.

The Vatican has been irked by a picture in a new wing of the Jerusalem museum that shows its wartime pope, Pius XII, with a caption saying that he "abstained from signing the Allied declaration condemning the extermination of the

Jews" and "maintained his neutral position throughout the war."

Yad Vashem issued a statement in response to the protest urging the Vatican to open its wartime archives and offering to change the picture caption on Pius if new evidence comes to light indicating resistance to the Nazi genocide.

POLAND: Holocaust survivors led prayers on *Yom Hashoah* as thousands of people remembered victims of the Nazis Final Solution at the annual March of the Living at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in southern Poland.

Some 8,000 people, from teenagers to elderly Holocaust survivors, assembled in this southern Polish town for the annual *March of the Living*. After the wail of a ram's horn signaled the start of the march, the marchers began walking the three kilometers from the infamous "*Arbeit macht Frei*" gateway that leads out of Auschwitz, to the ruins of the gas chambers of Birkenau.

Six survivors intoned the *kaddish*, the Jewish prayer of mourning, from a podium at the railhead at the Birkenau annex of the camp where Nazi guards selected new arrivals at the World War II death factory: some were sent to immediate death in the gas chambers, others to miserable existences as slave laborers.

The *kaddish* brought to a close a two-hour ceremony at the end of the March of the Living, a tribute to the estimated six

million Jews — half of them from Poland, which before World War II had Europe's biggest Jewish population — who perished in the Holocaust. The march has been held since 1988, and is aimed at stilling the voices of Holocaust deniers. It is open to people of all faiths.

GERMANY, STUTTGART: Thirty-four Jews who died serving as slave laborers for the Nazis were honored with the dedication of gravestones in a ceremony at the US Army airfield where their mass grave was recently discovered.

More than 200 mourners were on hand for ceremony to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, dedicating the gravestones to the anonymous victims of the Echterdingen concentration camp that were discovered in September 2005 during construction work at the airfield. Benjamin Gelhorn, a survivor of the Nazi camp system who spent three months at Echterdingen, said the *kaddish* prayer of mourning to close the ceremony.

HUNGARY: In Budapest, Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany on April 17 called for all members of parliament to sign a "zero tolerance" manifesto against hate speech as parliament marked Holocaust Memorial Day.

"Words and acts can give birth to violence, but can also set an example," Gyurcsany wrote in the manifesto, which

he read out in parliament. "We know that anti-Semitism and racism paved the way for the Holocaust, the most inhumane event in our history."

Hungary's main right-wing opposition party Fidesz, which normally walks out when Gyurcsany speaks, remained in parliament during the speech out of respect for the memorial event. Hungary began remembering the victims of the Holocaust on April 16, when Gyurcsany joined Jewish leaders and other politicians on a torch-lit march through Budapest.

The marchers — including Efraim Zuroff, the Simon Wiesenthal Center's chief Nazi-hunter — made their way from a Holocaust memorial museum to the downtown Dohany Synagogue, the largest synagogue in Europe. The synagogue sits at the edge of the Jewish ghetto that was set up during the Second World War.

Soviet troops liberated the ghetto on January 18, 1945, releasing around 70,000 Jews from their captivity. Approximately 30,000-40,000 Jews survived outside of the ghetto, kept safe with the help of foreign diplomats and ordinary citizens.

However, around half of the 200,000 Jews living in Budapest prior to the outbreak of war perished during the conflict, many of them sent to concentration camps or lined up on the banks of the Danube and shot.

In total, over 400,000 Jews were sent to death camps from Hungary in 1944, mainly from other towns and villages. Much of the butchery was carried out under the direction of Nazi-aligned Hungarian Arrow Cross Party, which came to power briefly in 1944.



Young Israelis hold each other as a Jewish prayer for the dead echoed across Birkenau during the annual "March of the Living."

A WOMAN'S LEGACY: NOT BY MIGHT



Dr. Rochelle Cherry, Ph.D., Kevin Haworth, Guest Speaker, Gladys Halpern, 2007 Honoree, Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem and Rita Levy, 2007 Honoree, at the Annual Spring Luncheon, May 3, 2007.



Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, Gladys Halpern 2007 Honoree and Yonina Gomberg, granddaughter of Gladys Halpern and member of the Third Generation

“HER TRIUMPH OVER HITLER IS A FAMILY COMMITTED TO JUDAISM”

YONINA GOMBERG, GRANDDAUGHTER OF GLADYS HALPERN AND MEMBER OF THE THIRD GENERATION

The life of my grandmother, Gladys Landau Halpern, has always inspired me. She had a happy childhood in the small town of Zolkiew, Poland until she and her family were forced to live in the Zolkiew ghetto. In January 1943, her father, Ephraim Landau, sent her out of the ghetto and into hiding in the home of the righteous gentile Marian Halizcki. Tragically, the day she left the ghetto was the last day she saw her father. My grandmother was soon joined by her mother, Sala, and two of Sala's sisters. They spent eighteen months in hiding, starving and overwhelmed with fear, waiting for the Nazis to come. Thank G-d that day never came and on July 26, 1944, she, her mother and aunts were liberated.

In 2003, sixty years after my grandmother went into hiding, many members of my family and I accompanied my grandparents, Gladys and Sam, who has his own miraculous story of survival, to Poland and the Ukraine. Chills rushed up my spine as I stood in the small room where my grandmother hid. The realization that this was where my elegant grandmother existed with fear and hunger for eighteen months was overpowering. My whole life I had known how my grandmother survived the Holocaust, but it was only then that I began to comprehend what she experienced, although I know that I will never fully understand. Over the course of that trip, I spent much time wondering how my grandparents, and many survivors like them, were able to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of Hitler's destruction. And yet, that's exactly what they did. Despite all that she endured, on June 30, 1946, my 17-year-old grandmother married her beloved Sam. Together, they had the courage to create a family, beginning in 1948 with the birth of my father Fred in Europe, followed with the birth of his three brothers, David, Jack and Murray, in the United States.

The theme of this afternoon's luncheon is: A Woman's Legacy – “Not by Might, Not by Power, But with Love.” This defines the way my grandmother lives her life. Rather than have a heavy heart, filled with hate and anger, my grandmother focuses on love. Just as she was taught by her mother, my grandmother is a loving and devoted wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. She is a true eshet chayil, whose generosity and kindness towards her family, friends, and even perfect strangers, is something I strive to emulate. Her revenge, her triumph over Hitler is that she and my grandfather raised a family committed to Judaism, to Israel and to Holocaust remembrance.

With gratitude to Hashem and to the Halizcki family who saved her, it is my privilege today to join you in paying tribute to a most deserving woman, a pillar of strength for our family, my grandmother, Gladys Halpern.



Friends and family of Gladys Halpern, seated in the front row right, who attended the 2007 Annual Spring Luncheon honoring Gladys Halpern.



Lilly Bloch, Paula Orlean Mandell, Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, Stella Skura and Elizabeth Zborowski at the Annual Spring Luncheon, May 3, 2007.

IT, NOT BY POWER, BUT WITH LOVE

(Zooariah 4:6)



Elizabeth Wilf 2007 Spring Luncheon Committee Chairperson, opening the Annual Spring Luncheon.



Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, Rita Levy 2007 Honoree and Julie Schwartz Kopel, Young Leadership Associates Board Member and member of the Third Generation.

“TELL THE STORY – “SO YOU’LL KNOW.”

RITA LEVY

Thank you, Julie, for that kind introduction. Thank you to the American Society for Yad Vashem and Eli Zborowski for this special honor. And thank you, Rochel Berman, for always knowing how to make things happen.

Mazel tov to my co-honoree today, Gladys Halpern. A well-deserved *kovet*.

I want to thank you all for being here today, my family, my friends, and especially my Mom’s “*chavertes*.”

You know, when I was a little girl, I thought all the women of mom’s generation had names like Chyeneleh, Chialeh, Tzileh and Sonyechkeh. I thought that every family spoke a second language inside the house, and that everybody’s parents either hosted or went to parties every Saturday night. Wasn’t that true for all of you?

As I got older, of course, I discovered that our home was different, my parents were different, and so was I.

My parents are Holocaust survivors. I could never really make the connection between the parents with whom I lived and the Holocaust stories I read and learned about in school.

I didn’t really understand and internalize the connection until right before my wedding. I was looking over the guest list and asked my father, “Who are all these people? In Cleveland? In Chicago? I don’t know them. Why are you inviting them to my wedding?” And he answered me by telling me specific stories about each of them and their experiences together during the war. He explained that they made a vow to each other that IF they survived this war, that they would always share each other’s *simchas*, no matter where they ended up in the world.

So you see, the milestones in our lives were precious and value-laden beyond the mere celebration of the moment. Every occasion became significant, not to be taken for granted.

My wedding was a reason for all of you to celebrate. My *simcha* was your *simcha*.

Remember Mom and Dad’s 50th wedding anniversary party? How many of you said, “This is like it’s a party that’s celebrating my own anniversary”? When Rebecca, at 9 years old stood in front of over 200 of you to sing a medley of songs in honor of her bubbie and zaydie, she was excited, but, understandably nervous. I told her, “You will never perform in front of an audience that loves you more.”

Rebecca and Matthew understood that their bat and bar mitzvahs were occasions to, once again, share their *simchas* and affirm life and keep the promise that my parents made with their “*chevreh*” — if you survive, you will share each other’s *simchas*.

At Rebecca’s bat mitzvah we took the opportunity to not only enjoy the occasion, but to honor the Lithuanian Christian family (whom we recognized at Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations) who hid my grandfather, parents, aunt and uncle and cousins. Local television stations and newspapers ran the story. We were able to tell the story of what happened to the world.

And then Dad wrote his story in a book, “Teach Us to Count Our Days.” As he said in his forward, he wrote the book... so you’ll know.”

In his book, Dad also said that *tzedakkah* was always a hallmark of his life. In order to continue the legacy further, my husband, David and I will be working with Yad Vashem to endow an educational program that will embody these inter-generational values passed down from my parents to us and to our children, and, we hope, to theirs.

Share your good times, give *tzedakkah*, but always remember and never forget: tell the story — “so you’ll know.”

That’s what I want to keep doing — tell the story — not just my parent’s story, but all of your stories—Chialeh’s, Basha’s, Asia’s, Gusta’s — so others outside this room will know. And in a world in which people deny or minimize or FORGET the lessons of the Holocaust, it is my hope and desire that MY generation of moms — the Susan’s, Debbi’s and Cindy’s, will continue the legacy and further the mission of Yad Vashem — “so you’ll know.”



Rita Levy 2007 Honoree and Sima Katz second row right with friends and family who attended the Annual Spring Luncheon honoring Rita Levy.



Sandra Halpern, Sam Halpern, Jean Gluck and Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem at the 2007 Annual Spring Luncheon.



REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

“SPOTS OF LIGHT: TO BE A WOMAN IN THE HOLOCAUST”

BY YEHUDIT INBAR

The Holocaust was an historical event — an act of murder and violence that the Nazis and their accomplices unleashed against the Jewish people, paved with horrifying brutality. In certain respects however, men, women and children followed different paths to death.

“Spots of Light: To Be a Woman in the Holocaust” attempts to reveal the human story that lurks behind the historical account, giving special voice to the unique experiences of the millions of women who were targeted, pursued, abused and murdered during the Shoah.

Nazi ideology

viewed women generally as agents of fertility and, accordingly, targeted the Jewish woman for extermination, in order to thwart the rise of future generations. For their part, Jewish women in Europe at that time inhabited a largely conservative and patriarchal society, with men heading the household and women discharging traditional roles at home or helping to make a living. In place of external leadership roles, Jewish women assumed those that called for the “affirmation of life:” the attempt to survive and keep others alive, in whatever situation they found themselves.

“Spots of Light” does not retell in detail the horrors these women experienced during the Holocaust, except as background information to the goal of the exhibition: the broad and diverse range of actions and responses of Jewish women

to their devastatingly extreme circumstances. Some of these responses were unique; others turn out to have been typical of many. Torn between dual commitments — to their families (husbands and children) and their elderly parents — they often also assumed responsibility for other needy groups, looking out for themselves in only the most extreme cases.

Emanuel Ringelblum, the historian who established the “Oneg Shabbat” Archives in the Warsaw ghetto, wrote in his diary: “The future historian will have to dedicate an appropriate page to the Jewish woman in the war. She will take up an important page in Jewish history for her courage and steadfastness. By

her merit, thousands of families have managed to surmount the terror of the times.”

Jewish women in the Holocaust: applied their intellect in places that deprived them of their minds and brought strength to places where none was to be found. And in places where they and their families were not given the right to live, they walked each step towards death imbuing every additional moment of life with meaning and significance.

We wish to hear their voices and tell their stories.

“Spots of Light: To Be a Woman in the Holocaust” opened at Yad Vashem’s Exhibitions Pavilion on 6 April 2007.

The author is Director of the Museums Division at Yad Vashem, and Chief Curator of the exhibition, *“Spots of Light: To Be a Woman in the Holocaust.”*



Women and children during the deportation of the Jews of Szydlowiec to the Treblinka death camp, September 1942.

"ALONE IN THE DRAWER"

BY MALKA TOR

“I say to myself: ‘What exactly do you want? ... There are many people who don’t know anything.’ And this puts me back into the same special box that I’ve been living in... alone in the drawer.” Kalman Bar On of Yugoslavia, Auschwitz survivor.

Despite the feeling common among survivors that “someone who wasn’t there could never understand,” in recent years more and more survivors have contacted Yad Vashem to give oral testimony, perhaps due to a sense that time is running out. These remnants of Europe’s prewar Jewish community are seeking to perpetuate the memory of the vibrant Jewish world that was destroyed and the families that perished, as well as their personal survival experiences: they are telling their entire

life stories, sometimes for the very first time.

Yad Vashem’s documentation enterprise began with the underground ghetto archives and has continued in recording studios established by Yad Vashem throughout Israel — for residents and tourists alike — in cooperation with other organizations, such as *Ginzach Kiddush Hashem* and *Yad LeZahava*. However, many survivors are now unable to get to the studios due to advanced age and failing health, so on Holocaust Remembrance Day 2006, a national testimony-collection campaign in the homes of the survivors themselves was announced. “The recollections of the people who personally experienced the horrors of the Shoah have crucial educational and moral importance,” explained Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev. “They represent an essential vehicle for imparting the memory of the Holocaust.” In the first two weeks after this innova-

YAD VASHEM WELCOMES ITS DECISION TO TRANSFER COPIES OF ARCHIVES TO MEMBER STATES

Yad Vashem welcomes the International Tracing Service (ITS) International Commission’s decision to transfer digital copies of the Bad Arolsen Archives to member states of the International Commission. The transfer will allow the states to prepare for the opening of the Archives, while ratification of the relevant agreements (adopted May 2006) is pending. Once all 11-member states have ratified, the archives will be opened to researchers. Thus far, seven countries have ratified the agreements.

Chairman of Yad Vashem Avner Shalev welcomed the agreements. “I am delighted to see this project moving forward, and look forward to welcoming a delegation of senior archival and technical professionals from the ITS to Yad Vashem. Together with Yad Vashem staff, the delegation will explore the best methods to facilitate the opening of the vast and complex collection at Bad Arolsen to historians and researchers. Yad Vashem looks forward to being able to share its experience in

digitizing archival information and making it user-friendly. In the near future, Yad Vashem will send an expert group of archivists and technical professionals to Bad Arolsen.”

In May 2006, the International Commission of the ITS decided to open the archives at Bad Arolsen; however this decision depends on the ratification of all 11 member states (France, Greece, Luxembourg, Belgium, Italy, United States, Poland, Germany, Holland, United Kingdom, and Israel.)

Israel, a member of the International Commission, will receive the information via Yad Vashem, which has already begun to study the material. At the end of the study process, Yad Vashem will be able to evaluate the requirements necessary to make the Bad Arolsen information accessible. Yad Vashem’s Archives currently contain some 70 million pages of documentation — including 20 million pages scanned from the ITS in the 1950s.

YAD VASHEM CALLS ON UN SECRETARY GENERAL TO STOP GENOCIDE IN DARFUR

Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council Joseph (Tommy) Lapid and Chairman of Yad Vashem Avner Shalev sent a letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urging him to do everything in his power to stop the genocide in Darfur. “It is not sufficient for the international community to issue condemnations, and statements via the United Nations, while this Khartoum-sponsored genocide is taking place. Concrete steps must be taken; we must do everything to ensure that the Security Council will decide to send troops to Darfur who will be able to restore security. Every day that passes adds thousands of names to the list of dead,” they wrote.

For more than three years, genocide under the sponsorship of the Khartoum government has been taking place in Darfur. Since the beginning of the crisis,

some 400,000 men, women and children have been murdered, and some 2.5 million people have become displaced. Tens of thousands of women have been raped, and many thousands of sick and wounded die due to lack of medicines.

“As the heads of the Jewish people’s central organization for commemorating the Holocaust — a genocide that took place while the world was silent — we feel a special obligation, as we discussed with you during your recent visit to Yad Vashem, to raise the alarm on Darfur. In order to uphold the values and commitments spelled out in the UN Charter, we urge you to use the full moral authority of your office to do everything possible to put an end to the horrific crimes taking place in Darfur,” wrote Lapid and Shalev.

ARCHBISHOP OF PARIS PAYS TRIBUTE TO HOLOCAUST VICTIMS

Paris’ top Roman Catholic leader and over 600 French pilgrims squeezed through the hallways at Israel’s Holocaust memorial as they paid tribute to the victims of the Nazi genocide.

Almost 10 years after the Catholic Church in France officially apologized for its silence during the Holocaust, the Archbishop of Paris, Andre Vingt-Trois, placed an orange and green wreath at a large stone memorial for the 6 million Jews who were killed during the Holocaust.

During meetings at the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum, he spoke about the importance of remaining hopeful while remembering the tragedy.

“Without hope, the remembrance of crime is the despair of man,” Vingt-Trois said. “Keeping the memory with hope, this is faith.”

Vingt-Trois’ visit to Jerusalem sent an important message that Christians, Jews and Muslims all need to come together in remembering the genocide, Iris Rosenberg, a Yad Vashem spokeswoman said.

tive proposal was publicized, Yad Vashem received no less than six hundred relevant referrals in Israel, and the Oral History Section is currently making extensive efforts to organize and assemble home-based documentation teams. The interviews will be added to the collection of some 44,000 written, audio and visual testimonies in the Yad Vashem Archives for permanent preservation. In addition, they will be accessible to visitors at the new Visual Center, which will also house tens of thousands of testimonies collected by the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation (established by Steven Spielberg) from Israel and around the world.

Yad Vashem urges all Holocaust survivors and their families to contact the Oral History Section to schedule an interview, and help realize the words of the prophet: “Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.” (Joel 1:3)

HOLOCAUST EXHIBIT IN FRANCE A VITAL LESSON

BRETT KLINE, JTA

Alexander Halaunbrenner easily finds his two kid sisters, Mina and Claudine, in a group photo taken in an improvised summer camp called Izieu near Lyon in 1944.

The children hidden at Izieu were rounded up by the Lyon Gestapo led by Klaus Barbie on April 13, 1944. Mina and Claudine were gassed at Auschwitz along with more than 30 other children from the summer camp.

The photo is among thousands of photographs, official documents, lists and personal testimonies that make up the exhibit on deported children at the Paris City Hall.

Halaunbrenner's father and brother were killed by Barbie's Gestapo in Lyon. A baby sister and his mother survived separately in hiding. Halaunbrenner was with his mother.

"It breaks my heart every time I tell the stories of my family and the Shoah," said Halaunbrenner, now 75, as he surveys the large rooms at City Hall filled by the exhibit.

In all, 11,400 French children were deported, 6,000 from Paris.

Halaunbrenner has been the flag-bearer for the past 35 years at ceremonies held by the Association of Sons and Daughters of Jews, which organized the City Hall exhibit. The organization was founded and is still headed by famed Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld.

"I have been an activist for all these years to teach young people that it really did happen," Halaunbrenner said. "The

Gestapo called me in to identify my father's body. I was 10 years old. What can I say?"

He looks around at the crowd of people invited to opening day of the exhibit, nearly all of them are elderly. They examine the photos and documents, and compare family notes and train convoy numbers from the Drancy internment camp north of Paris to Auschwitz.

"Are the children and grandchildren of all these people going to continue passing the message about the Shoah to the French, the Europeans and the Americans?" Halaunbrenner asks.

"Frankly, the answer for the most part is no. People have other things to do. They have lives to live."

Klarsfeld, well known in Europe for tracking down Nazi war criminals including Barbie, the so-called "Butcher of Lyon," says school groups have signed up to visit the exhibit.

On Jewish radio here, Klarsfeld was asked about bringing Jewish school groups to the exhibit, and says of course they should come.

"But the most important thing is to bring groups of French French and Magrebi Arab French kids," he said. "If they don't come and see the physical proof of the Shoah, they will stop believing that it hap-

pened. In fact, that is happening already." Klarsfeld sent an invitation to the Iranian embassy.

"It is obvious that Iranian President Ahmadinejad never took a class on the Shoah," he said wryly. "I would like to bring this exhibit to Iran, but I don't think that will happen."



Holocaust survivor and activist Alexander Halaunbrenner stands in front of part of an exhibit he helped organize of deported French Jewish children, at the Paris City Hall in March 2007.

The thousands of documents list deportees city by city, and by district in Paris. It will be the permanent collection of a museum on the site of the Des Milles internment camp near Marseilles. "You notice that the children are all dressed up in the photos," Halaunbrenner said. "The photos come from family archives. Neither the parents, children or the photographers could imagine that these beautiful families would all be killed not long after."

Photos show Halaunbrenner's mother with Klarsfeld's wife, Beate, in La Paz, Bolivia. They traveled to Lima, Peru, and then La Paz to identify Barbie, whom the Klarsfelds had tracked there living under the alias Klaus Altmann.

Originally documented in Klarsfeld's 1985 "Les Enfants d'Izieu," or "The Children of Izieu: A Human Tragedy," the story now covers the walls of Paris City Hall.

Barbie was brought back to France in February 1982, but his trial didn't start

until five years later. Halaunbrenner's mother was among the many who testified against Barbie in a trial that made international headlines. Barbie died in prison in 1991.

Barbie had been recruited by U.S. counterintelligence services in 1947 in Germany, and moved to Bolivia a few years later with U.S. government help. Michal Gans visited the exhibit from Kibbutz Beit Lohamei Haghetat in Israel, where she is the international department director of the Ghetto Fighters Museum. Gans is proposing a project to French Talmud Torah classes and Jewish schools for parents holding their children's b'nai mitzvah in Israel.

"We associate the bar mitzvah with the memory and name of a child who was deported in a ceremony that takes place at the museum," she explained, noting that several such ceremonies have taken place.

She brings 30 high school teachers to the Ghetto Fighters Museum every year from France, Italy and Belgium. So far, 250 teachers have done the weeklong program on the kibbutz.

"We had a similar program in the States, but it ended many years ago," Gans said. "The key to teaching lessons from the Shoah is in getting middle school and high school students to come to exhibits like this one here in Paris.

"Gallic French and Arab and African French kids must come with school groups to see the photos and documents. Otherwise they will never be able to believe what they learn in class, if they learn anything at all."

HOW ONE MAN CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

BY JOHANNA J. NEUMANN

It is often said that one man can make a difference and indeed in this case the man is Gunter Demnig, an artist from Cologne. About 15 years ago, Mr. Demnig decided that large monuments to the victims of Nazi Germany were impersonal, cold and quite meaningless since there were no names of the individual victims mentioned. Therefore, he decided to create his own very personalized monuments. He created the *Stolpersteine* — stumble stones.

Each stone is a brass plaque measuring 4 by 4 inches and Gunter Demnig hand-engraves each plaque with a few bare facts. Person's name, name of the place they were deported to and finally the date they were murdered. The stumble stones are then set permanently into the sidewalk outside the place where the individual lived. In some cases *Stolpersteine* have been set in front of an orphanage, an old age home or even in front of the court house in Hamburg, in memory of a number of Jewish judges who were murdered by Nazis. In front of the orphanage in Hamburg are 34 stones, one for each of the children who were deported, together with their teachers and caretakers.

This project is one of the most meaningful memorials one can imagine. The first time I was in Hamburg and saw the shin-

ny little plaques I was overwhelmed. No one simply walks by them, inevitably one stops and reads the name. I have watched people go by, always trying to avoid stepping on the *Stolpersteine*.

Most of the money for this project is being raised from Germans. Among those who have made this project their main focus is Peter Hess, coordina-

tor of the project and Johann-Hinrich Moeller. These people are devoting their lives to ensure that the horrible events of the Holocaust will not be forgotten.

By now more than 10,000 plaques have been hammered into the sidewalks of 202 German cities and towns.

Over the years many survivors have returned to Germany in order to be present at the laying of the stumble stones for their parents, grandparents or other relatives. These are people who for the most part never wanted to set foot on German

soil again, but these memorial plaques were important enough to them to be present. In our own family, four *Stolpersteine* were laid in front of the house my husband's two grandmothers, an uncle and an aunt had lived in Noerdlingen.

To quote Mr. Demnig's own words: "This is my life's work. I will continue for as long as I am able. Giving names back to the dead is a way to keep them alive."



David Neumann in front of the house he grew up in Noerdlingen. He is kneeling in front of the *Stolpersteine* of his two grandmothers, an aunt and an uncle.

HOLLAND RETURNS ART STOLEN FROM A JEWISH COLLECTOR

Marei von Saher, daughter-in-law of Jewish art dealer Jacques Goudstikker, has successfully reclaimed works first stolen by Nazi officials and then quietly appropriated by the Dutch government. The case sets a ticklish precedent for museums in Holland.

Jews once led a happy life in Holland. "Is there any other country where you can eat your Passover lamb so peacefully, where you can break as many twigs off trees to build your Pesach hut?" asked poet Karl Gutzkow in his 1834 novella "The Sadducee of Amsterdam."

The question was rhetorical; everyone at the time knew Holland to be a stronghold of tolerance, which is why so many Sephardim Jews settled there. But 100 years later, the refugees who returned to Holland from Nazi concentration camps in the East weren't always greeted with quite the same openness and acceptance. In some cases, in fact, Dutch Jews returning from Nazi camps were told the property they had left behind would be used to pay off back taxes that had not been paid while they were out of the country.

Dsi Goudstikker, widow of the Jewish art dealer Jacques Goudstikker, was lucky. When she returned after 1945, The Hague declared the remains of the Goudstikker collection — originally 1,113 paintings — enemy property.

The paintings had fallen into the hands of Nazi honcho and Hitler confidante Hermann Gring. But she was allowed to keep her house in Amsterdam and her castle near Breukelen — and she was still well-off enough to buy back some of the more important paintings.

Half a century later, the Goudstikker's have finally been able to reclaim the rest of the collection. The government of

Minister-President Jan Peter Balkenende has revoked a court decision from 1952 and promised compensation.

"We're losing a substantial part of our collection," says Alexander von Grevenstein, director of Maastricht's Bonnefanten Museum. He has had to give up almost 40 works that once belonged to Goudstikker. But more important than the Goudstikker case is the precedent the ruling may set. After all, Dutch museums are stuffed full of works appropriated from private owners.

Jacques Goudstikker escaped from Amsterdam on May 14, 1940, four days after the German invasion, in order to seek asylum in England. But his luck didn't hold. Traveling on the SS Bodegraven, he fell into a cargo hatch and broke his neck and his small, black notebook was found on his corpse. In it, he had listed the name of every oil painting in his collection.

Two months later, the Goudstikker collection — the most important in Holland — was "Aryanized." Formally, it became the property of German banker Alois Miedl. But 779 paintings were instantly claimed by Hermann Gring, and the rest landed on the auction block.

Miedl paid 550,000 guilders for his company's new assets while Gring paid 2 million guilders. The actual value of the collection is still a matter of debate, but all can agree that it was far more than Miedl and Gring shelled out. Legally, though, the case is a difficult one; the paintings were neither rightfully purchased nor were they stolen outright.

One of the principle questions is whether the deal was made under duress. After all, Goudstikker was not an art col-

(Continued on page 13)

RESISTING THE NAZIS DESPITE THE ODDS

(Continued from page 5)

government turns enemy and neighbors turn away?" "Is it better to lie low or stand tall?" And another question: "To stay or to go?"

When the scale of the Nazi ambition starts to become clear, it is beyond comprehension. The show includes numerous fragments of interviews with survivors that capture those impressions. One woman recalls the postcards arriving from relatives whom the Nazis had just relocated "East"; they are full of carefully phrased optimism and artificially cheery description. But after the Nazi-supervised pap, one card ominously adds: "Very soon we are going to visit Uncle M a v e t". M a v e t, in Hebrew, means death.

But the exhibition's polemical focus is also a weakness, for it ends up turning resistance into a catchall concept that applies to any refusal to submit completely. There is an element of truth here, but also a needless desire to encompass every act of pride and survival within the idea of resistance. The result is almost too reassuring: Jews, the label text tells us, "recognized that their most precious resource was hope," and, "They acted imaginatively to shield their communities from despair and promote the will to resist."



The show at the Museum of Jewish Heritage includes this 1932 photo taken in Kiel, Germany.

It is as if the exhibition were shying away from too much complication. Almost unmentioned, for example, are the moral quandaries faced by Jewish leaders who even at best had to weigh the communal benefits of cooperation with the communal costs of resistance. In one of the show's short videos, a survivor recalls being called before community leaders when they learn of her plan to escape. They cite the massacres that would follow. She is asked, "Who gave you the right to buy your freedom at the price of others?"

That dilemma is unexplored. That would mean examining the idea of resistance more intensively; making more distinctions, not fewer. Why, for example, did it take so much time for Jewish resistance to erupt into outright refusal and rebellion? In the show's companion book, the historian David Engel suggests that at first Jews saw the Nazi phenomenon as a recurrence of earlier traumas, as part of the cycle of Jewish historical experience. Jews, after all, had received full German citizenship only in 1871, so if they were deprived of benefits in 1933, it was more a regression than a cataclysm.

The sense of repetitive cycles was reinforced by the literal medievalism of German oppression: the ghettos, the yellow stars, the governing Jewish councils. These historical echoes, Mr. Engel suggests, made Jews less likely to see clearly what was happening and made resistance less likely.

Those who did see, like the partisan Abba Kovner, took very different actions. In 1941, at 23, he said that the German goal was the "absolute, total annihilation" of the Jews. This put the entire situation in a new context. Unfortunately, in this show

one doesn't fully grasp how drastically interpretation shaped response; the partisans were a turning point as much as a continuation.

In a 2001 PBS documentary, "Resistance: Untold Stories of Jewish Partisans," Kenneth M. Mandel and



Children studying in a clandestine school in the Kovno Ghetto, 1941-1942.

Daniel B. Polin tell the story through interviews with 11 partisans who become recognizable individuals recounting an astonishing past. Some of those same figures appear in this exhibition's videos, but they are stripped of context and speaking in snippets. We don't learn enough about them to fully understand their achievement.

This makes the exhibition less powerful than it might have been. But at a time when Nazism has become a denatured metaphor for any political system deemed unpleasantly powerful, and when the concept of resistance has been perverted into meaninglessness by terrorist groups boasting exterminationist goals, this show begins to re-establish the sense of scale that once made Nazism so horrific and resistance so difficult.

The exhibition "Daring To Resist: Jewish Defiance in the Holocaust" will be on display through July 2008.

QUEENS COLLEGE STUDENTS FORGE BONDS AT HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

More than 100 students from Queens College this April went on a trip to The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The Queens College Hillel planned this year's "Hillels of New York Trip to The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum." The trip, sponsored by the David and Linda Taub family, has been sending Jewish and African-American students to the Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C. annually for over a decade.

The program is designed to unite Jewish and African-American students through the mutual historical experience of persecution and suffering, said trip organizer Itiel Katz. "It's also to inform people," Katz said, noting that "it's interesting to take a group with no connection at all [to the Holocaust Museum, when] we assume its crucial to other people."

Students from various campuses within the New York metropolitan area participated in the trip. After visiting the museum, students listened to a presentation from Lynn Williams, an African-American woman who works as a professional educator for the museum. Her presentation was followed by a sit-down dinner. Queens College student Yoni Markowitz said about the event, "It was incredible, it helped everyone realize how bad things were, and then you think how bad things are in Darfur." He also commented on the event's success in bringing together students with different backgrounds. "It's cool because it's together with different schools, different religions; we built bonds since we went through this experience."

AUSCHWITZ REPORT

(Continued from page 4)

time, Levi did not want to be known as a "Holocaust writer"; he aspired to the simple title of "writer" without any adjective ("Holocaust," "Italian" or "Jewish").

Besides his Holocaust masterpieces, Levi wrote poetry, essays, science fiction and a novel concerning Jewish partisans in World War II. In addition, although he was painfully shy and adamant about protecting his privacy, Levi graciously granted hundreds of interviews, including two eloquent conversations with Tullio Regge (the physicist) and Ferdinando Camon (a writer). For Levi was too modest, at least publicly. His testimony was not only, as he stated, "to bear witness," but also to search for an ethical line of conduct and moral reasoning based on classical humanism, but cognizant of humanity's changed moral status after Auschwitz. He once revealed to an interviewer, "I am a centaur," insisting that his role as a scientist, chemist and technician was complementary and not contradictory to his status as a writer and humanist. As he remarked in an interview with the American writer Philip Roth: "In my own way, I have remained an impurity, an anomaly, but now for reasons other than before: not especially as a Jew but as an Auschwitz survivor and an outsider-writer, coming not from the literary or university establishment but from the industrial world."

In an earlier work, "Primo Levi's Ordinary Virtues: From Testimony to Ethics," Gordon demonstrated how Levi's writings constitute a complete ethical system based on "ordinary virtues." These

are in contrast to the "heroic" virtues of heroism, courage and strength as traditionally conceived, and can be collectively considered a complete ethical system for the post-Auschwitz moral universe that we now occupy. We can now perhaps get a glimpse of the origins of Levi's "ordinary virtues" in "Auschwitz Report." The text first appeared in Italian in a prominent medical journal, *Minerva Medica*, in November 1946. It is, Gordon writes, "a disturbing and compelling document, full of unexpected, often absurd detail and unfamiliar perspectives."

Nor should we forget that at the same time that Levi and De Benedetti were reworking the report, Levi was secretly writing "Survival in Auschwitz" (similar in tone to the "Report") and penning searing poetry that laid bare his pain and trauma. Gordon, who will be the keynote speaker at a two-day international conference at Hofstra University in April to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Levi's death, perceptively notes that the report is no mere dry scientific description: Rather, it has captured the essence of the extermination camp universe, reduced to its core of "physiology and pathology."

Judiciously translated by Judith Woolf, who notes that "the language of medicine breaks down when confronted with the deliberate squalor and carelessly mocking brutality of what passed for medical services, the "Report" leaves us to contemplate how science and reason could be so perverted and yet can once again, after the fall, be called upon to guide us.

First published in *Forward*

ESCAPE FROM THE HOLOCAUST...

(Continued from page 6)

number – Birkenau 3776 – is at the top of the cards in which he reports: "I'm digging coal. I'm in good health. How is my child? Of my wife, I've heard nothing."

Young Suzanne, like dozens of France's hidden children, received no word of her parents' fate. She wept when a child, Fernandres, who had shared her predicament in the Auvergne, was suddenly taken home to Marseilles by her parents. Her years in hiding brought several close escapes – she was caught in the crossfire of a resistance attack on a German munitions train on one occasion – but eventually, after the war had ended, she returned to Mme Collomb, only to find herself within days on a ship to her maternal grandparents in Newcastle. "After everything, it wasn't what I wanted," she said. "I was returning to a strange country where I didn't speak the language. As soon as I was old enough, I left my family for London."

"Forget what happened," her grandparents told her, leaving her to reach her own conclusions about her parents' fate. And to this day, the precise details about them are unclear. Though Ms. Rappoport has located them both at the Shoah Memorial in Paris, where 76,000 Jews deported from France are remembered, the dates and places of their deaths are still unknown.



Suzanne Rappoport.

Mme Collomb's collection of evidence – passed to Ms. Rappoport in 1969 when she went to France in search of documentation to assist her application for a British passport – has helped her to discover more than she hoped to learn and prompted her to ensure that the French woman, who died in 1992, is remembered for her heroism. Yad Vashem, Israel's memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, has already agreed to name Mme Collomb as one of the Righteous Among the Nations, who saved Jewish lives during the Holocaust, and her name is also to be placed on France's *Mur des Justes*, which acknowledges those who defied the Nazis. It is now known that Mme Collomb saved others including a M. Hubermann, another neighbor, who hid in her broom cupboard.

"The police never came looking for me at Mme Collomb's house that day and whether I was on the arrest list is a mystery I shall never know the answer to," Ms. Rappoport said. The horror that she was spared is perhaps best understood by the letters written by other Parisian children before they were herded away on trains, that summer. "My heart is heavy and I can't tell you all I am feeling," said 15-year-old Jacques Befelor before departing Paris on what was known as Convoy 15 to Auschwitz. "We are rushing to prepare for a long, sad journey and it drives us mad that we are to be separated. This is the end."

ITALIAN COURT REJECTS LAWSUIT BY NAZI WAR CRIMINAL

BY JOE GOLDMAN, JTA

An Argentine researcher and journalist said he feels "a strong sense of relief" after a three-year battle in Italian courts ended with a Nazi war criminal's lawsuit against him being thrown out.

Uki Goni was referring to a Milan court's March 23 decision to reject a claim by convicted Nazi war criminal Erich Priebke, who had sued Goni and his Italian publisher for 50,000 euros — more than \$67,000 — for libel. The court not only tossed out Priebke's claim as unfounded but assessed him legal costs of nearly \$11,000.

Priebke is known for filing lawsuits, and Italian newspapers and magazines rejected many other articles for fear of being sued by Priebke or his lawyer, Lorenzo Borre, Goni said.

Priebke was discovered in 1995 living in Bariloche, a city in Argentina's western Andes Mountains, by an ABC-TV team of reporter Sam Donaldson and producers Harry Phillips and Delilah Herbst.

He was deported to Italy, where he was found responsible for the deaths of 335 people in what has come to be known as the Ardeatine Caves Massacre. Priebke and a group of SS officers rounded up Jews and Italian partisans in Rome, led them to the caves outside the city, and shot and killed them with bullets to the back of the neck.

Priebke was given a life sentence, which he has been serving under house arrest in the home of his attorney, Borre. He has become an assiduous reader of articles about himself, and he and Borre have become infamous for their spate of lawsuits.

TEACHING OF HOLOCAUST MUST FOCUS ON UGLY TRUTH

BY MARTIN KIMEL

As the son of Holocaust survivors, I'm glad that Oprah Winfrey has chosen Elie Wiesel's *Night* for her book club and is planning to make her recent visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau with Mr. Wiesel an educational experience for millions of her viewers.

At a time when the president of Iran denies the existence of the Holocaust, the world needs all of the good education it can get about one of the darkest events in history.

The Holocaust is a daunting subject to teach, in part because its ugliness is unpleasant to contemplate and in part because what happened at Auschwitz-Birkenau and elsewhere defies comprehension.

There are positive stories to be found concerning the Holocaust and its aftermath — of righteous Christians who risked their lives to save their Jewish neighbors during the war, of resilient survivors such as my parents, who left Poland years after the war and made successful lives for themselves in America. These stories deserve telling. But they're only a small part of what happened.

Last fall, I made a pilgrimage to Auschwitz-Birkenau. There isn't much uplifting about the massive Birkenau

"Even the threat of a lawsuit made a lot of publications nervous, and journalists shied away from the subject of the cave massacre and other matters involving the SS in Italy during the war," claims Goni, who has written a number of books investigating the connection among former Argentine President Juan Peron, the Vatican and the hundreds of Nazi war criminals fleeing postwar Europe who found safe haven in Argentina and neighboring countries.

In the most recent suit, Priebke sought not only monetary damages but a ban on Goni's most recent book, "The Real Odessa," published in English by Granta Books of London and later by Italian publisher Garzanti Libri as "Operazione Odessa."



Argentine journalist Uki Goni.

While the book mentions him only in passing, Priebke claimed it wrongly accused him of torturing people in the Gestapo's Rome headquarters, of participating in the selection of Jews to be sent to their death at the Ardeatine Caves and of acknowledging that he escaped justice when he fled to Argentina.

The Milan court ruled that Priebke's first two claims were unfounded due to evidence at the trial at which he was given the life sentence. The third charge was rejected due to evidence Goni provided of Priebke's entry papers to Argentina.

"He entered the country under a false name, Otto Pate, using a Red Cross passport and under the auspices of the Vatican's pontifical commission," Goni said. "If he did all that to hide his real identity, taking the same path as so many other war criminals, it was obvious that he was escaping as a war criminal."

Priebke can appeal to Italy's Supreme Court, but Goni said that was highly unlikely.

death camp, where roughly 1.5 million men, women and children perished, about 90 percent of them Jews. The Nazis couldn't have done what they did, there and elsewhere, without the active participation or acquiescence of far too many ordinary people.

In addition, life-affirming stories from the Holocaust are not, in my view, how that terrible time is most relevant to today. The failure of the United States and other countries to come to the aid of European Jewry earlier in the war has its parallel in the world's general apathy to the ongoing genocide in Darfur.

The Holocaust's lessons about man's potential for unmitigated cruelty, his ability to dehumanize the "other," to be indifferent to the suffering of his neighbors — these also find reflections in the later genocides in Cambodia and Rwanda and in the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Bosnia.

The Holocaust's general lessons about the dangers of any kind of racism or bigotry speak directly to us. These lessons must be studied, taught and remembered.

But the Holocaust was largely, though not exclusively, about one very specific kind of racism — anti-Semitism — which, unfortunately, still poses a grave threat more than 60 years after the liberation of

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THE CRIMES OF I.G. FARBEN

BY DENNIS BEHREANDT

During WWII, I.G. Farben, a synthetic-fuels manufacturer for the German war machine, was a major supporter of the Nazi regime and a willing co-conspirator in the Holocaust.

March 8, 1943 was the day when the Nazi S.S. came for Norbert Wollheim and his family. With his wife and his three-year-old son, Wollheim was sent to the Grasse Hamburgerstrasse "collecting camp," a way station on the blood-stained path to the Nazi's "final solution." A few days later, the family was sent to Auschwitz. Wollheim would never see his family again. "On arriving at the station at Auschwitz," Wollheim recalled at the Nuremberg Trials, "I was separated from my wife and child and have not seen them since."

Wollheim was one of the "lucky" ones. Along with about 220 other men, he was separated from the other prisoners who were condemned to immediate death in the gas chambers. Instead, he was taken by truck to the Monowitz camp, a special labor camp within the sprawling Auschwitz system of death camps. There, with the others, his head was shaved; he was disinfected, tattooed with his prison ID number, and immediately put to work. "I came to the dreaded 'murder detail 4,' whose task it was to unload cement bags or constructional steel," Wollheim recalled. He had ceased to be a private citizen. He was no longer even the property of the Nazi state. Instead, the deed to his life was held by the owner and operator of the Monowitz camp, the notorious German industrial conglomerate I.G. Farben.

By 1937, I.G. Farben was entirely Nazified. Carl Bosch had been replaced as head of the company in 1935, and now those members of the I.G. board who did not yet belong to the Nazi party eagerly joined. Conversely, any Jewish members of I.G.'s leadership were purged. The marriage of I.G. Farben with the Nazi state was complete. The consequences would be chilling.

"I.G. AUSCHWITZ"

The increased demand for both synthetic fuel and the synthetic rubber known as Buna that I.G. Farben produced required the construction of additional facilities. The Nazis summoned I.G. officials Fritz ter Meer and Otto Ambros to a secret meeting to discuss the situation, after which Ambros was sent on a scouting mission to Auschwitz. Ambros found that the proposed site had ready access to coal, rivers, and both road and railroad

HOLLAND RETURNS ART STOLEN FROM A JEWISH COLLECTOR

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lector but an art dealer. He had always considered his paintings as merchandise meant for the market.

Furthermore, Goudstikker's widow, who held a 15 percent share of his business, had explicitly approved the sale of the paintings. Still though, the buyer in this case, Hermann Gring, raises eyebrows.

He was, during World War II, an active art dealer and one of the nation's most voracious collectors. By 1945, he had bought about 1,800 works for his private collection. But he also ruthlessly exploited his substantial political weight in order to put pressure on his business partners.

Jewish art dealers and collectors who sold on his conditions could expect to be allowed to flee the country.

The banker Alois Miedl profited too.

transportation. But most of all, it had a ready source of labor in the unfortunates who were interred at the Auschwitz concentration camp. This, Ambros thought, would be the place to build the new I.G. Farben facilities. The new division would be named I.G. Auschwitz. I.G. management appointed Ambros head of the Auschwitz Buna facility and appointed Heinrich Bueteffisch head of the Auschwitz synthetic-oil plant. Under their leadership, I.G. would wholeheartedly participate in the brutal genocide of Jews and others whom the Nazis considered undesirable. The only difference would be that I.G. Farben would work the prisoners to death rather than kill them directly in the gas chambers.

At I.G. Auschwitz, the S.S. guaranteed the company access to 10,000 slave laborers under Nazi control. At first this seemed to satisfy the I.G. management. "Our new friendship with the S.S. is proving very profitable," Ambros informed Fritz ter Meer. Relations soon deteriorated between I.G. and the S.S., however, leading I.G. executives to claim — ludicrously since they were using slave labor — that the Nazi masters of Auschwitz didn't understand "the working methods of ... free enterprise." If the I.G. Farben notion of "free enterprise" was to succeed, they would need to build their own concentration camp. "In July 1942," wrote Justice Department official and I.G. Farben prosecutor Joseph Borkin, "the I.G. managing board voted to solve its Auschwitz labor problems by establishing its own concentration camp." Though owned and operated by I.G. Farben, the new camp, Monowitz, would be run on Nazi forced-labor principles: "All the inmates must be fed, sheltered and treated in such a way as to exploit them to the highest possible extent, at the lowest conceivable degree of expenditure." It was a death sentence almost as inescapable as the gas chamber. Work groups would march into the factories in the morning, and carry back the corpses of those who had died of exhaustion in the afternoon. "I.G. reduced slave labor to a consumable raw material," noted Borkin, "a human ore from which the mineral of life was systematically extracted. When no usable energy remained, the living dross was shipped to the gassing chambers and cremation furnaces of the extermination center at Birkenau, where the S.S. recycled it into the German war economy — gold teeth for the Reichsbank, hair for mattresses, and fat for soap."

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Towards the end of the war, Spanish authorities seized 22 valuable paintings that he had deposited in a shed in the port of Bilbao. More paintings were later found in the safe of a Swiss bank.

Banks didn't play a pretty role in the expropriation of the Jews, including Dutch banks. Though they claim to have followed a policy of passive resistance, the opposite was in fact true, says Gerald Aalders, a historian at the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation in Amsterdam.

Almost all major banks purchased Jewish artworks and stocks at cut-rate prices, including the predecessors of the two largest banks active in the Netherlands today, ING and ABN Amro Bank.

First published in *Der Spiegel*

FILM RECOGNIZING MAN'S WORK FINDING NAZI WAR CRIMINALS

(Continued from page 7)

Wiesenthal's work continued through the various obstacles time and the Cold War presented to a researcher of a war that was slowly becoming outdated. When Wiesenthal's association with the U.S. War Crimes Association ended in 1947, he opened the Jewish Historical

Documentation Center in Linz, Austria until 1954. Later, he reopened the Jewish Documentation Center, this time in Vienna. Although Wiesenthal's passion brought thousands of felons to justice, he suffered for his work at the hands of the public. Neo-Nazis and Nazi sympathizers criticized his work and made personal threats against Wiesenthal, his wife Cyla, and daughter Pauline. A police guard

was mounted around Wiesenthal's house, and friends and family encouraged the researcher to leave Vienna.

"A soldier must stay on the battlefield," said Wiesenthal. "It is my duty to continue."

Cyla, who suffered from nervous breakdowns, also pleaded with her husband to move to Israel, or to any other country. "I know you are right, I said to Cyla," said Wiesenthal in the documentary. "But all the people we lost - your mother, my mother, our family, friends and all I saw dying in the death camps - if I gave up, I would be betraying them. So I asked her - 'Could you live with a traitor?'"

Several films have been produced, based on Wiesenthal's life, including Paramount Pictures' 1974 film, "The Odessa File," and Twentieth Century Fox's 1978 film, "The Boys from Brazil," in

addition to a 1981 documentary produced by the Wiesenthal Center, titled "Genocide." Wiesenthal has written several books, most notably, *The Murderers Among Us*, a book of his memoirs, published in 1967.

Despite his various awards, Wiesenthal maintained a humble position in life, taking payment only from the films and books he published. He lived his final days in a modest apartment in Vienna with his wife, until her death in 2003.

"I am not a Jewish James Bond or Don Quixote," said Wiesenthal. "I am only a survivor who pays with his work for the privilege to remain alive."



Simon Wiesenthal at the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

In August 2000, Rabbi Marvin Hier accepted the Medal of Freedom on Wiesenthal's behalf,

the U.S.'s highest civilian honor, presented by President Clinton. Wiesenthal was only the sixth foreign citizen in the history of the U.S. to receive this honor. At the presentation, Hier gave President Clinton a letter on Wiesenthal's behalf. In the letter, Wiesenthal wrote, "My cause is justice, not vengeance. My work is for a better tomorrow and a more secure future for our children and grandchildren who will follow us. As a firm believer that each of us are accountable before our creator, I believe that when my life has ended, I shall one day be called to meet up with those who perished and they will undoubtedly ask me, 'What have you done?' At that moment, I will have the honor of stepping forward and saying to them, I have never forgotten you."

First published in *The Evening Bulletin*

IN BALTICS, TEACHING ABOUT SHOAH...

(Continued from page 5)

tions in 2004. But backing up words with action has lagged, leading some to question the sincerity of the *mea culpas*. Lithuania has no specifically designed Holocaust-studies course. Instead, lessons are folded into the broader history curriculum for students in the fifth, 10th and 12th grades.

The Holocaust chapter starts with "Destruction of the Lithuanian Jewish Community." Subsections highlight telling anecdotes from the era: a Lithuanian police officer's letter to superiors explaining how they killed Jews; a police report questioning what to do about a priest who wouldn't let killers of Jews into his church; a newspaper advertisement proclaiming that Lithuanians who help Jews would share their fate.

Yet the chapter runs just six pages. "It wasn't treated as something separate, just a part of history," Benjaminas Krumas, 23, recalls of his high school lessons in Kaunas, known to Jews as historic Kovno and home to a ghetto liquidated by the Nazis in 1944. "Perhaps the teacher had her own point of view on it or was afraid to discuss it more. But we learned more about it from our grandparents." Indeed, history teachers like Arija Melaikiene play a pivotal role. Both the Ministry of Education and the Lithuanian Jewish community recommended the Tolerance Center that Melaikiene founded at Vilnius Zverynas.

It was seven years ago that Melaikiene had an epiphany. She had assigned her students to draw up family trees as a springboard to discussion of Lithuania's various regions and names, as well as other topics.

One girl, by the name of Finkelsteinaite, turned in her assignment with half the tree lopped off.

"Everyone had died in 1942 or '43," Melaikiene recalls. "At first I thought she was too lazy to draw a real family tree. Then I realized what had happened."

Melaikiene speaks of three categories of

Lithuanians during the Holocaust — those who killed, those who turned a blind eye and those who helped Jews in some way — but admits to treading carefully when broaching the first two categories with students.

"I don't know whose grandfather did what, but I can guess: If there's a usually very active student, then we talk about the Holocaust and his activity disappears, I tell them, 'Don't hate your grandfather if he killed somebody because he's still your grandfather and you love him.' But if he killed someone, then it's a fact and we have to say this. It's a tragedy for that family."

Others trying to connect with students are the Holocaust survivors themselves — like Kaunas-born Fania Brancovskaja-Jocheles, 84, who escaped the Vilnius ghetto alone. Her mother, father and sister were among 50 relatives killed. In recent years, Brancovskaja-Jocheles has shared her story with classes in Lithuania. She also has traveled to Germany and Austria to recount her experiences.

Despite such campaigns, observers say the Baltic countries remain prone to anti-Jewish eruptions, especially in the media or on the Internet.

That's most evident in the torrent of vitriol unleashed amid stalled negotiations to return Jewish property or bring accused Nazi-era war criminals to justice. "Excluding the good efforts of hundreds of teachers and historians devoting their time to the memory of the Holocaust, the level of reaction and distrust is so great, I'm shocked by the reality 16 years after Lithuanian independence," says Emanuelis Zingeris, the lone Lithuanian Jewish parliamentarian, who is among the lobbyists for restitution.

With the carrot of Western integration digested, the stick has vanished as well. Lacking that leverage, Jewish activists like Baker say they now rely on a network of Baltic politicians, historians and teachers like Melaikiene.

HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR DIED SAVING STUDENTS' LIVES

BY YIGAL HAI, HAARETZ

An Israeli lecturer who saved several students before he was killed in the Virginia Tech massacre was a Holocaust survivor who later escaped from Communist Romania.

Relatives said Liviu Librescu, an internationally respected aeronautics engineer and a lecturer at Virginia Tech for 20 years, saved the lives of several students by blocking the gunman before he was gunned down in the most horrific shooting in US history, which coincided with Holocaust Remembrance Day. Thirty-two people and the gunman were killed in the campus.

Librescu's students sent e-mails to his family recounting how he blocked the gunman's way and saved their lives, said his son, Joe.

"My father blocked the doorway with his body and asked the students to flee," he said. "Students started opening windows and jumping out. We intend to look into this."

"My father was a senior researcher," he added. "In his field, he was number one."

"He himself was killed but thanks to him, his students stayed alive," an Israeli student who survived the massacre told Army Radio.

Librescu, 76, had known tragedy since childhood.

When Romania joined forces with Nazi Germany in World War II, he was interned in a labor camp, and then sent along with his family and thousands of other Jews to a central ghetto in the city of Focsani, his son said. Hundreds of thousands of Romanian Jews were killed by the collaborationist regime during the war.

Librescu later found work at a government aerospace company. But his career was stymied in the 1970s because he refused to swear allegiance to the Communist regime, his son said, and he was later fired when he requested permission to move to Israel.

In 1977, according to his son, then-prime minister Menachem Begin personally intervened to get the family an emigration permit, and they left for Israel in 1978.

Librescu left Israel for Virginia in 1985 for a sabbatical year, but eventually made the move permanent.



Liviu Librescu

OUR HOLOCAUST

(Continued from page 4)

game called Buchenwald: "The rules of the game were simple: No eating."

That changed when adolescence set in and the two boys "abandoned the Shoah." But as the generation of survivors begins to age and pass away, Amir's tortured memories and the stories he's been told creep to the surface. As much as he might want to, he can never forget.

Thus ends "1993: *Our Laws*," the first section of *Our Holocaust*, the anchor of the book's three sections. The chapter is packed with various characters, narratives, peculiar tales and troubling imagery, creating a choppy and disjointed plot — a literary tool used to convey a sense of madness.

In contrast, the subsequent chapter, "1991: *Grandpa Yosef's Travels*" is fluid, linear and ripe with rich descriptions. As Grandpa Lolek rested in a hospital bed, unwell, Grandpa Yosef, another family member of sorts, tells an unbelievable story of survival during the Holocaust when he was forced on a horrific journey with an SS officer from town to ghetto to concentration camp to liberation.

Gutfreund must have heard this story many times. How else could he recount this information in such particular detail? Rather than answer this question and spoil the conclusion, the afterword offers a

window into the author's motivations and offers a small surprise.

The final chapter ends with the deaths of Gutfreund's characters, a natural coda to an unnatural life lived by the subjects of the novel. Yet this chapter, titled "Yariv" and named for Gutfreund's son, sets the tone for future generations who must contemplate life after the survivors pass away. Gutfreund is forced to reconcile his family's past with Yariv's future. What kind of life does the author want for Yariv and how will the Holocaust shape future generations of Gutfreunds?

The same question can apply to the younger congregants of Beth David Synagogue looking to create a healthy new world for their children, yet remain truthful to their parents' and grandparents' experiences during the Holocaust. Will (and should) a day come when the stained glass at Beth David Synagogue is no longer palatable for the worshipping crowds?

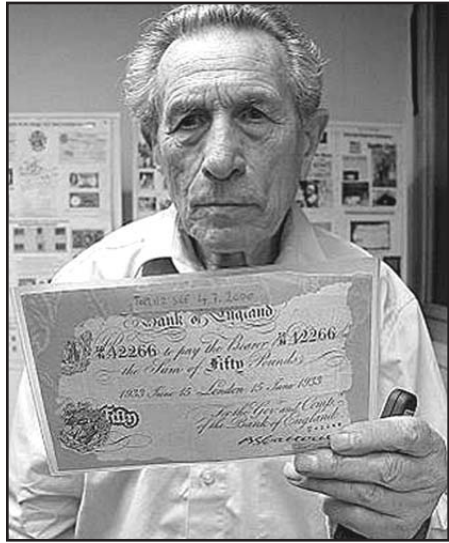
For Amir Gutfreund, *Our Holocaust* is an attempt to make peace with his family's Holocaust experiences. And yet, a nagging question remains. "Who will tell the stories?" the author asks, when the generation of survivors pass away. Perhaps the answer is Amir Gutfreund.

First published in *The Jewish Press*

AMBITIOUS NAZI COUNTERFEITING PLOT RECALLED BY HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

IAN WILLOUGHBY, ALEXIS ROSEN-ZWEIG, PANORAMA

Among the films premiered at this year's Berlin Film Festival was a German-language picture called *Die Falscher – The Counterfeiter*. It is based on the remarkable memoirs of Adolf



Adolf Burger

Burger. Along with 140 other Jewish concentration camp prisoners, he survived the war after being enlisted to take part in an ambitious Nazi counterfeiting plot aimed at crashing the economies of the Allies.

Burger, now 89, has been living in Prague for six decades, though he was born in Slovakia's High Tatra mountains. A book printer by trade, he was living in the capital, Bratislava, when Slovakia became a Nazi puppet state under Monsignor Jozef Tiso. Today, at home in the Prague suburb of Sporilov, Adolf Burger recalls his arrest by the Gestapo.

"The only underground organization in Slovakia in those days was the Communist Party. They recruited me to help Jews by printing counterfeit birth certificates or documents showing they had been Roman Catholics in 1938. I did that for three years before they arrested me and my wife the day before my 25th birthday, on August 11 1942. We were planning a celebration, but that didn't happen."

A few days later they were sent on a Nazi transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Burger managed to avoid one mass execution, but was deliberately infected with typhus as part of a so-called medical experiment. At

one point he weighed less than 40 kilos.

In the end, ironically, it was the reason for Adolf Burger's arrest which led to him, unlike his wife Gisela, surviving the gas chambers. One day he was called out of his cell, and braced himself for a beating. Instead he was treated with unexpected civility by the camp commandant.

"He looked at me and said, 'are you Mr Burger?' He called me, a prisoner, mister. I stuttered that I was. You're a typographer? I said yes, I was. He stood and said, Mr. Burger, tomorrow you go to Berlin. We need people like you, typographers, in a printing plant. You'll work like a free man again. I couldn't believe a word of what he said. Because at Birkenau there was an order NN – *Nacht und Nebel, Night and Fog*. That meant that whoever went to Birkenau could never leave."

Adolf Burger had just been recruited into a remarkable Nazi operation run by SS Major Bernhard Kruger. The aim of Operation Bernhard was to counterfeit huge amounts of English pounds and US dollars, flood the countries with the notes and thus cause their economies to crash.

He was transferred to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp near Berlin, where he and around 140 other Jews with similar skills worked in top-secret conditions.

"The windows were painted over so nobody could see in. When they took us to wash once a week – they were afraid we would die – the whole camp, prisoners and SS men, had to go indoors. Nobody was allowed to see us, not even the Sachsenhausen camp commander. Only secret service."

When Adolf Burger says the Nazis didn't want him and his co-counterfeiters to die, he means in the short-term, before their work was complete.

"We 140 Jewish typographers were not meant to survive. We should have been liquidated. But things turned out differently. After we'd made 31 million pounds sterling they then wanted dollars. There was one Jew called Jakobson from Holland,

my superior, so to speak. He said, if we print those dollars we'll drag the war out. We have to sabotage it. But that's easier said than done."

Dollars were harder to counterfeit than pounds, and Burger and his co-prisoners did manage to drag out the process of successfully producing fake greenbacks. Until, that is, they were told to do so within six weeks or face a firing squad. But by that time the Soviets were close to Berlin.

The counterfeiting group were put on a train bound for the Austrian Alps, to one of the Nazis few remaining strongholds in the last days of the war in Europe. Crates of fake money were dumped along the way.

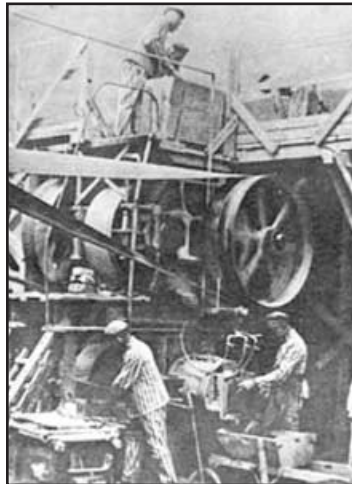
Adolf Burger expected he and his co-prisoners would be executed, but after a period of some confusion they eventually found themselves abandoned by the Nazis on May 5, 1945. He and the other counterfeiters were free. They had survived.

Incredibly, it was a good three decades before Adolf Burger told his story; he says he published his memoir *The Devil's Workshop* in the 1970s in response to growing Holocaust denial. He also began giving lectures about his story in Germany, and has done so for almost two decades now.

Six years ago, *The Devil's Workshop* caught the attention of two German film producers, who commissioned a screenplay based on it.

Sitting in his suburban home in Prague in 2007, Adolf Burger says he approves of the film *The Counterfeiter* – and outlines his reasons for consenting to it.

"In my opinion, it's a good film. And the reason I agreed to it, without conditions, when the producers approached me was because the English barred any investigation into the whole affair at the Nuremberg Trials. To this day people don't know that they counterfeited so much money. Now when this film comes out everybody will learn that the Nazis weren't just murderers – they were ordinary counterfeiters. That's what I wanted to achieve, and that's what I have achieved."



Sachsenhausen

THE CRIMES OF I.G. FARBEN

I.G. Farben to secure a large quantity of tetraethyl lead from Standard Oil. Standard Oil complied in a move that, according to Borkin, "materially strengthened Hitler's hand."

After the United States entered the war, Standard's cooperation with I.G. Farben became a scandal. In Senate hearings, Senator Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin was blunt in his criticism of the company. Standard Oil, he said, "was found by the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice to be conspiring with I.G. Farben ... of Germany. I.G. Farben, through its maze of international patent agreements, is the spear-head of Nazi economic warfare."

Standard Oil, though, was not the only well-known U.S. firm to do business with I.G. Farben and the Nazis. In his valuable study *Wall Street and the Rise of Adolf*

Hitler, historian Antony C. Sutton points out a surprising and disturbing number of American financial and industrial firms that contributed immensely to the funding that supported the rise of Nazi regime. Summarizing his research, Sutton wrote: "The evidence suggests that some members of the Wall Street elite are connected with, and certainly have influence with, all significant political groupings in the contemporary world socialist spectrum — Soviet socialism, Hitler's national socialism, and Roosevelt's New Deal socialism."

ONGOING LEGACY

After the World War II, I.G. Farben was broken up into its constituent companies and several Farben officials, including Fritz der Meer of the I.G. managing board and Otto Ambros and Heinrich Bueteffisch, were sentenced to terms in prison for their role in enslavement and

TEACHING OF HOLOCAUST MUST FOCUS ON UGLY TRUTH

(Continued from page 13)

Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Today, a virulent hatred of Jews pervades much of the Muslim world. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad threatens to wipe Israel off the face of the map while a major Iranian newspaper solicits cartoons mocking the Holocaust.

Unfortunately, this Jew hatred isn't limited to radical Islam. Respected Arab imams preach that Jews are the descendants of "pigs and monkeys." Our ally Saudi Arabia generally bars Jews from entering the kingdom. Ordinary Iraqis have blamed horrific truck bombs on the Jews.

Malaysia, whose former prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, blamed practically everything on the Jews, banned the film version of *Schindler's List* for a time because it portrayed Jews sympathetically.

In the United States, New Jersey's poet laureate in 2002, Amiri Baraka, suggested that the Jews knew about the 9/11 attacks in advance. The list goes on.

Classic European anti-Semitism was largely rooted in the Catholic Church's now-repudiated teachings that the Jews killed Christ. Islamic anti-Semitism is different, but it often draws on the same "inspirations" for its anti-Jewish stereotypes.

For example, Hamas' 1988 charter and Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* both cite the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as proof that Jews are bent on world domination. (In 2001, a popular multipart docudrama based on the Protocols was broadcast throughout the Arab world during prime time.)

The Arab media – which are mostly government-controlled – also traffic in the blood libel that Jews ritually kill non-Jews. And the Arab press routinely publishes vicious, anti-Jewish cartoons that could have sprung directly from the pages of the Nazi newspaper *Der Sturmer*. Few Muslims are taking to the streets to protest those cartoons.

As for the controversial Muhammad caricatures, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has called their publication by a Danish newspaper a Zionist plot (what isn't?).

These are not uplifting facts. But if Auschwitz-Birkenau and the Holocaust teach us anything, they teach us that people of good will must face unpleasant truths and stand against anti-Semitism and other forms of virulent racism and bigotry, wherever they appear.

First published in *Baltimore Sun*

(Continued from page 13)

THE UGLY WEB OF I.G. FARBEN

I.G. Farben was not solely the creation of German industrialists. Unwittingly, American industrialists and financiers played a role in the creation of conglomerate. Through its relationship with I.G. Farben, Standard Oil would play an important role in the arming of the Wehrmacht. According to Borkin, in the mid-1930s, realizing that Germany would need the capacity to manufacture tetraethyl lead, a crucially important fuel additive needed for high-performance engines, the German firm sought help from Standard. By 1938 German ambitions in central Europe meant that both the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe would need access to greater amounts of leaded fuels. To avert a shortage, the Nazi Air Ministry asked

death of those victims of the Holocaust who perished at the hands of I.G. Farben. As for I.G. companies, several continue in operation. Bayer AG, the producer of "Bayer Aspirin," is perhaps the best known of the I.G. companies remaining in operation. Bayer notes on its website that during WWII "forced laborers from the occupied countries of Europe were brought to work" at Bayer/I.G. Farben locations but says that this was true of "German industry as a whole." Bayer also states that "concentration camp prisoners were not employed in the Lower Rhine sites" where Bayer's operations were located. Other former I.G. companies that remain in operation include BASF, AGFA, and Hoechst AG. The latter merged with a French firm to form Aventis, the world's third-largest pharmaceutical company.

First published in *The New American*

WITH JEWISH ROOTS NOW PRIZED, SPAIN STARTS DIGGING

BY RENWICK MCLEAN

Spain has sometimes been slow to recognize its own treasures. Miguel de Cervantes was slipping into obscurity after his death until he was rescued by foreign critics. El Greco's paintings were pulled from oblivion by the French.

Now, 500 years after expelling its Jews and moving to hide if not eradicate all traces of their existence, Spain has begun rediscovering the Jewish culture that thrived here for centuries and that scholars say functioned as a second Jerusalem during the Middle Ages.

"We've gone from a period of pillaging the Jews and then suppressing and ignoring their patrimony to a period of rising curiosity and fascination," said Ana María López, the director of the Sephardic Museum in Toledo, a hub of Jewish life before the Jews were expelled or forced to convert to Christianity in 1492 during the Inquisition.

Cities and towns across Spain are searching for the remains of their medieval synagogues, excavating old Jewish neighborhoods and trying to identify Jewish cemeteries. Scholars say they are overwhelmed with requests from local

governments to study archaeological findings and ancient documents that may validate a region's Jewish heritage.

But Mr. Castaño and other scholars say the revival has in some ways gone too far. They contend that some local governments, eager to attract well-heeled tourists from the United States and Israel, are making claims about their Jewish heritage that are not supported by historical evidence.

"History is being exploited," Mr. Castaño said, citing Oviedo near the northern coast and Jaén in the south as particularly egregious examples. "People are trying to reproduce what has occurred in Toledo. Everyone wants their medieval synagogue."

Toledo, with two intact medieval synagogues, including the Tránsito Synagogue from the 14th century, is something of an exception in Spain, where the expulsion of the Jews was followed by a campaign to destroy, disassemble or obscure obvious

reminders of their presence.

Spain had the most vibrant Jewish population in Europe before the expulsion of 1492, and it produced one of the most influential cultural legacies in Jewish history.

It was here that Hebrew was reborn as a language suitable not just for prayer and liturgy but for poetry and other secular pursuits, contributing to the advent in Spain of what has been called a golden age of Jewish literature, philosophy and science in the 10th and 11th centuries.

"In the minds of her sons and daughters, Sepharad was a second Jerusalem," Jane S.

Gerber wrote in her book "The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience."

"Expulsion from Spain, therefore, was as keenly lamented as exile from the Holy Land," she said.

Still, despite the new enthusiasm for Spain's Jewish heritage, intolerance toward Jews here is far from a thing of the

past, the leaders say.

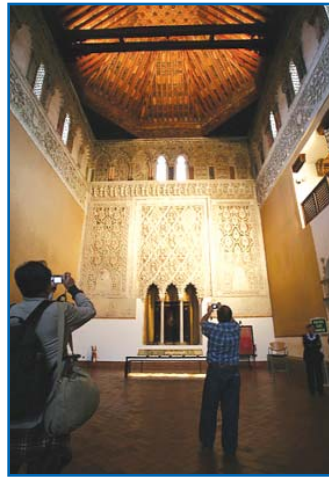
"A contradictory element in all this is that a new anti-Semitism is also developing in Spain," said Jacobo Israel Garzón, the president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Spain. "It uses the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as its source, but it passes very quickly from anti-Israelism to anti-Semitism."

Mr. Israel said the number of Jews in Spain today was still small, 40,000 to 50,000. But he said the population was growing steadily thanks to immigration, particularly from North Africa, where so many Jews fled after the expulsion 500 years ago.

Many of these returnees still speak a form of the Judeo-Spanish language of their ancestors and have maintained their traditions. "There is tremendous nostalgia for Sephardic Spain in the Jewish world, particularly in the ancestors of the expelled Jews," Mr. Israel said. "But even in the souls of the Jews who were not expelled there is the sense that with the end of Jewish Spain something very important was lost."

"Spain is now opening the way for the study of that lost footprint," he said.

First published in *The New York Times*



Synagogue in Toledo.

ESTONIA'S FIRST SYNAGOGUE SINCE WORLD WAR II OPENS

"You can burn down a building but you can't burn down a prayer," Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres said at the inauguration of the synagogue.

"We can be proud today that this synagogue has been built to serve the needs of the Jewish community here and be for the benefit of all," he told the gathering of Estonian and Israeli officials, as well as Jewish leaders from Estonia and abroad. Peres and Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves cut the red ribbon at the front of the synagogue, located 16 Karu Street in central Tallinn, after three Torah scrolls were brought inside by Israel's chief rabbi Yona Metzger and main donor Alexander Bronstein, amid music and dancing.

Russia's chief rabbi Berel Lazar and Pierre Besnainou, president of European Jewish Congress, also attended the ceremony.

Estonia's chief rabbi Shmuel Kot, the country's first rabbi since the Holocaust,



From L to R: Israel's chief rabbi Yona Metzger, Israeli deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Estonia's President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, main donor Alexander Bronstein and Estonia's Prime Minister Andrus Ansip and Russia's chief rabbi Berel Lazar are pictured during the inauguration ceremony of the newly-built Beit Bella synagogue in Tallinn.

said the inauguration of the Beit Bella synagogue filled a void in Estonia.

"Until today, Estonia was the last EU member state not to have a proper synagogue, which is required for a full Jewish life," he said.

The synagogue, which mixes modern design and traditional architecture, was designed by Estonian architects Kaur

Stoor and Tonis Kimmel. Construction of the 1.4 million euros building, which started in 2005, was financed by donations from Alexander Bronstein and the US-based George Rohr family foundation.

Rabbi Moshe Koltarski, from the New York Chabad Lubavitch, represented the Rohr family at the ceremony.

Estonian Prime Minister Andrus Ansip made a personal donation for the project.

The synagogue's prayer hall seats 180 people, with additional seating for up to 230 people for concerts and other public events.

In his address, Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves drew parallels between the histories of the Estonian and Jewish people.



View of the new Beit Bella synagogue in Tallinn. The last synagogue, built in 1883, was destroyed in the war during the Soviet bombing of the Estonian capital.

"We both, Estonians and Jews, have lived among foreign people and under foreign power, but kept our language and culture in order to mold it into statehood," he said.

"In the final year of the Nazi occupation of Estonia (in 1944), a Soviet air raid set fire to the Jewish synagogue in Tallinn.



Estonia's chief rabbi Shmuel Kot: "Now we will start building a Jewish life here."

Before WWII, about 5,000 Jews lived in Estonia, mostly in Tallinn. Many fled to the Soviet Union and those that remained were murdered by the Nazis.

The same air raid also set fire to the Estonia national theatre, a key landmark of Estonian culture."

The towering glass and concrete building, arching under old trees just off a busy street of Tallinn, houses the first kosher restaurant in post-war Estonia and the only mikvah, a ritual bath for women. Around 3,000 Jews live today in Estonia.

Martyrdom & Resistance

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*Published Bimonthly by the
International Society for Yad Vashem, Inc.
500 Fifth Avenue, 42nd Floor New York, NY 10110
(212) 220-4304

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NEW YORK, N.Y. 10110-4299

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