

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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WOMEN OF VALOR

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON THE UNDENIABLE TRUTH OF THE HOLOCAUST

ILANA APELKER,
AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM

This year's Annual Spring Luncheon had the distinct honor of welcoming Professor Deborah Lipstadt as our guest speaker. Professor Lipstadt is Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies at Emory University in Atlanta. Her book *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (Free Press/Macmillan, 1993) was the first full-length study of those who attempt to deny the Holocaust. One of the individuals in that study was David Irving, whom Lipstadt called "one of the most dangerous spokespersons for Holocaust denial." Irving's response to this claim was to file a libel suit against Professor Lipstadt which was the subject of her latest book and the topic of her speech at this year's luncheon.

The book, *History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving* (Ecco/Harper Collins, 2005) is the story of the libel trial in London. In her remarks at Cipriani, Professor Lipstadt recounts her reaction to first learning of the libel suit. Thinking that it was nothing and would just go away on its own, almost brushing it off as insignificant by sticking it under a pile of other papers to be looked at later. Once the realization hit that this was a real case that meant she had to prove her findings (since British courts are very different than ones in the US) she knew she had to fight Irving and not just make the allegations go away, even though some told her to. Her early life, growing up in an active

Jewish community in New York, prepared her for the fight she was about to endure. With help from the Jewish community, her university, and the

personal reputation, but the record of history itself; the record of the Holocaust.

The trial, as Lipstadt says, was a

a victim a second time! So too would everybody else who perished there. I loved my mother very much and have not seen her since April 14, 1939



Jean Gluck, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Honoree, Eli Zborowski, Chairman (American Society for Yad Vashem), and Dr. Rochelle Cherry, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Honoree.

general public (Jews and non-Jews alike), the one-and-half million dollars to mount her defense was raised and the trial began. The outcome of the trial, she knew, would be not only her

victory for history and historians. And survivors heaped their praise on Lipstadt as being their heroine. She described that it was only after the trial that she understood their meaning. That she had done something, had stood up against these false allegations. Where sixty years ago, so many people did nothing. At the end of her remarks, Lipstadt read various passages from her book, letters that people from all over the world had written to her.

Dear Professor Lipstadt

You do not know me and we will probably never meet...My mother was killed in Auchwitz.If David Irving had won my mother would have been

when I was 14 years old. She was killed on October 23, 1944. Gratefully yours, Anne Bertolin (nee Hannelore Josias) {pg. 286}

Professor Deborah Lipstadt spoke out against Holocaust denial when few knew what the meaning of those words were. She is an example to young scholars and deemed a heroine by those she vowed to fight for. But perhaps the strongest words to describe her are her own:

"I fought to defend myself, to preserve my belief in freedom of expression, and to defeat a man who lied about history and expressed deeply contemptuous views of Jews and other minorities." {pg. 289}

IN THIS ISSUE

The American Society for Yad Vashem Annual Spring Luncheon.....	1, 8-9
Holocaust Remembrance day observed around the world.....	2
Beyond justice: The Auschwitz trial.....	4
Britain's Holocaust shame: The voyage of the <i>Exodus</i>	5
Warsaw ghetto uprising leader speaks of struggle.....	6
Hunt on for Nazi doctor.....	7
Personal writing from the <i>Shoah</i>	10
Completing a mission.....	11
Scholars run down more clues to a Holocaust mystery.....	13
Oscar Schindler, from Holocaust hero to obscurity.....	14
Salute Hollywood.....	16

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY OBSERVED AROUND THE WORLD

ISRAEL – Holocaust Remembrance Day began at sundown with a solemn ceremony attended by Israeli officials, Holocaust survivors and foreign dignitaries. They gathered at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem to reflect on one of the darkest chapters in Jewish history.

Flags were lowered to half-staff across the country. Places of entertainment were closed and radio and TV broadcasts were dedicated to the Holocaust.

A cantor chanted a mournful prayer as Holocaust survivors lit six torches in memory of the six million Jews killed by the Nazis during World War II.



A flame is lit by a Holocaust survivor at Yad Vashem, marking the beginning of official ceremonies on *Yom Ha-Shoah*.

Israel's President Shimon Peres said the world could have faced destruction if Adolf Hitler had acquired nuclear weapons.

Peres charged that the world woke up too late to eliminate the threat from Hitler's Germany and he warned that must not happen again.

Aides said Peres was urging the world to take action to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons before it is too late.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert also addressed the gathering.

Mr. Olmert said today the Jews can defend themselves in their homeland, and therefore, he said, the Holocaust will never happen again.

FRANCE – From April 30 evening and during 24 hours the names of the Jews who died after being deported by the Nazis in France during WWII were read in a loud voice, to mark *Yom HaShoah*.

The 76,000 names are engraved in the "Wall of Names" at the *Shoah* Memorial located in the 4th district of Paris.

Such reading takes place every year on April 30, the date chosen by the State of Israel to honor the memory of the Holocaust victims and of the heroes of Jewish resistance against the Nazis.

The memorial started with an official ceremony Wednesday evening in the presence of Richard Prasquier, head of CRIF, the umbrella group of French Jewish institutions, Israel's ambassador to France, Daniel Shek, Serge Klarsfeld, president of the association of Sons and Daughters of Jews deported from France, and Anne-Marie Revcolevschi, director of the Foundation for the memory of the *Shoah*.

Earlier that week, France's Defense Secretary of State, Jean-Marie Bockel, called for "the most extreme firmness" against the desecration of graveyards and revisionist statements, during a ceremony in Paris commemorating the *Shoah*. The French capital's Mayor, Bertrand Delanoë, attended the ceremony.

"As soon as there is desecration or revisionist comment, it is necessary to react with the extreme firmness," Bockel said in a reference to Jean-Marie Le Pen, National Front leader, who, in an interview, called again the Nazi gas chambers "a detail of the history of World War II."



The Wall of Names at the Shoah Memorial in Paris.

The landmark nine-and-a-half hour documentary film, "*Shoah*", directed by Claude Lanzmann in 1985, which is an oral history of the Holocaust, was broadcast in four parts on French television from May 5 until May 8.

CZECH REPUBLIC – *Yom Ha-Shoah* was marked in many parts of the Czech Republic – in synagogues, at public gatherings and in private, by families whose lives were directly affected by the Holocaust. Anyone passing through Prague's *Náměstí Miru* on April 30 could stop to take part in a public reading of the names of Holocaust victims. The event was organized by the Terezín Initiative Institute, the Czech Union of Jewish Youth and the Foundation for Holocaust Victims.

"What we are doing here at *Náměstí Miru* in Prague is, and that's how this

event differs from the other *Yom Ha-Shoah* events, is that we claim a part of the public place, a square that doesn't have anything to do with the Holocaust, said one of the organizers of the event Michal Frankl.

"And why we are doing it? We are doing it in order to show that the Holocaust is not just something that should be commemorated in synagogues or concentration camps, but it is something that relates to the public and it is part of Czech history. It is also part



Observing *Yom Ha-Shoah* in Prague.

of Prague's history and of this neighborhood, *Královské Vinohrady*, which used to have a large Jewish population."

"The other reason is that we want to show that the case of racial persecution and the attempt to segregate Jews from non-Jews during WWII is still relevant, that it may be related to some other cases of racism that we can witness these days. In the booklets that we distribute, we try to show the number of anti-Jewish measures that try to separate Jews from non-Jews.

"That's why the symbol of this year's *Yom Ha-Shoah* is a calendar, in order to illustrate the quick pace in which these measures and laws were issued. Besides this, we want to show that many Jews resisted this attempt of segregation. Many Jews tried to defend themselves, to keep their own space and dignity."

USA, BOSTON – Some held back tears, others let them fall, as Stephan B. Ross, founder of Boston's Holocaust memorial, recounted the torture and humiliation he suffered in Nazi death camps over five years.

As difficult as the story was to hear for many of the 400 participants in the Holocaust remembrance at Faneuil Hall on that May 4 afternoon, organizers said his journey, along with those of other survivors, needs to be remembered.

"The generation of survivors is dwindling," said Rabbi Moshe Waldoks, chair-

man of the Jewish Community Relations Council's commemoration organizing committee. "The memory should not be taken away because the witnesses are no longer here."

The annual ceremony carried a sense of urgency, with speakers noting there are fewer eye-witnesses to the Holocaust – today's survivors experienced it as children or as teenagers. They recognized one prominent Holocaust survivor, the late California Congressman Tom Lantos, who died in February, as the only survivor of the Nazi campaign to have served in the US Congress. His widow and daughter spoke and lit a candle in his honor.

At the same time, speakers voiced concerns over recent remarks by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran calling genocide against Jews "a myth," and offered pleas for support of Israel.

The ceremony this year also fell in the same month in which the state of Israel marks its 60th anniversary.

"Each year we move closer to the moment when the Holocaust will cease to be a living memory and become history," said Nadav Tamir, consul general of Israel to New England. "We should be the torchbearers of 'never again.'"

Emphasizing the importance of passing on accounts of the Holocaust to a younger generation, organizers had two Boston teenagers read from diaries of children who were believed to have been their ages when they died in concentration camps.

But it was the forceful, personal story of Ross that elicited the most seat-shifting among listeners.

His son, City Councilor Michael P. Ross, stood with him as he talked about being sustained by the hope of seeing his family, only to learn upon his release that his parents and six of his siblings had been killed.

Stephan Ross and his family were rounded up from their homeland in Poland and separated in 1940, when he was 8 years old. Ross would be transferred to about 10 prison camps, including Auschwitz, where he was subjected to slavery, abused by pedophile guards, and witnessed cannibalism.

"It was hard for me to go on living, and I prayed for God to stop punishing me," he said.

He finally pointed to a small American flag hanging from the lectern at Faneuil Hall, which he said an American soldier handed him to dry his tears during his camp's liberation in April 1945.

"I cherished this flag for 63 years. It is my greatest treasure," he said. "May the tragedy of the Holocaust be a lesson to mankind to speak out against racism."

POLISH PEOPLE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HOLOCAUST

Israeli President Shimon Peres and his Polish counterpart, Lech Kaczyński, were among those who took part in Holocaust memorial ceremony at the Treblinka concentration camp on April 14. President Shimon Peres delivered an address at a ceremony marking 65 years since the Warsaw ghetto uprising, stating that peace is the way in which Israel must avenge the horrors of the Holocaust.

In his speech Peres, who lit a torch in honor of the Holocaust victims, said "Millions of Jews lived here for a thousand years. And though their lives were not always secure, they sustained us as a people. It is very hard for me to stand here, but that is not the fault of the Polish people, rather it is the incomparable extermination (of the Jews) carried

out by the Nazis.

"When I come to places such as this it almost irritates me to see the shining sun and the green trees, but the Nazis are to blame," the Israeli president said.

Referring to the Israeli soldiers and students who were also in attendance, Peres said "I am very moved by their presence here. I think to myself – if they had lived back then – this would not have happened to us.

"We will never again allow people with murderous compulsions, uncontrollable



Shimon Peres (right) with Polish PM Donald Tusk.

animals – to do this again," he said.

Polish President Kaczyński also addressed the audience: "We are standing in a place where 800-900,000

Jewish citizens of Poland were exterminated; and why? Only because they were Jews. This was the only reason behind their deaths and it was a sentence delivered regardless of age, sex or anything else.

"The 3,000 Jews of the ghetto in Warsaw, one of the largest Jewish cities in the world, were murdered here. What more can we say in the face of such a crime except 'never again.' Never again will there be persecutions over nationality, religion or race.

"We remember the dreadful crime that took place here, and those who saved Jews, but let us also think of the future – we wish to make every effort so that our relations with Israel will continually improve; this is our duty," said Kaczyński.

ISRAELIS CELEBRATE NATION'S 60TH BIRTHDAY

Air force jets streaked across the country's coastline as sailboats bobbed in the sea below. Spectators packed the shores, climbing on rooftops for a better view of the air show as Israelis came out to celebrate 60 years of statehood.

The nation's mood shifted from mourning to celebration the night before as Memorial Day gave way to Independence Day. City squares were filled with revelers who came to hear concerts and watch fireworks and sound and light shows. Kicking off Independence Day events, *Knesset*

Speaker Dalia Itzik tried to strike an upbeat note, despite the rather grim political mood in the country.

"The State of Israel is an unusual success story, a wonder by any historical standard," Itzik said.

"We had no miracles. We built this splendid achievement with our own hands."



Israel's capital has been festooned with flags for the nation's 60th birthday.

The defense establishment played a key role in official events for the day. In Haifa, the navy exhibited its ships and submarines, and its underwater commandos held a demonstration. Along the northern border, an air force base was open to the public, as was the country's intelligence training school near Tel Aviv.

The school exhibited espionage equipment and offered guided tours of tunnels modeled after those in the Gaza Strip that are used for smuggling weapons across the border from Egypt. Also on display was a model of a Hezbollah base used in Lebanon.

Walking among the crowds in Tel Aviv, Yaniv Bashan took in the meaning of the day.

"It's a nostalgic time, people are looking back at what was," said Bashan, a 29-year-old engineer. "There are lots of questions about the future but it's clear the situation is much better now than it was 60 years ago."

AUSTRIA TO RETURN MORE ART NAZIS STOLE FROM JEWS

Austria will tighten rules requiring the restitution of art seized during the Nazi period, the government said following criticism from the Jewish community.

Culture Minister Claudia Schmied said an exemption for private foundations, which has excluded claims against Vienna's Leopold Museum, would be re-examined.

"I am seeking a clear regulation of the matter of restitution regarding the Leopold Foundation. The debate of the past few weeks has not enhanced the reputation of the republic and especially not that of the Leopold Foundation," she said.

Property belonging to Jews was confiscated as a matter of course during Nazi rule in Germany and neighboring countries.

Debate was revived after Austria's Jewish community leader, Ariel Muzicant, said in a television interview in February the Leopold Museum should be closed down until the law was changed. The museum, one of Vienna's major tourist attractions, is classed as a private foundation, even though it is state-funded. In addition, the government will seek the return of works taken between 1933, when Hitler first came to power in

Germany, and 1945, when Nazi Germany was defeated.

The current law covers from 1938, when Austria was annexed by Nazi Germany, to 1945.

The change in the law would also broaden the definition of property that could be returned and includes goods expropriated in all areas of influence of the Nazis' *Third Reich*.

Thousands of artworks have been returned to their original owners or their heirs under the present law. It was unclear how much more property would be covered by the changes.

Sophie Lillie, an art researcher, told Reuters the most significant work at issue is "*Haeuser am Meer*" (Houses on the Sea) by 20th-century expressionist Egon Schiele. It was seized by the Nazis in 1938 and is claimed by a British family. One report values it at \$15 million.

"Any national museum would have given it back long ago," Lillie said.

Rudolf Leopold, 83, founder of the collection and an expert on Schiele, was quoted by cultural weekly *Falter* last month as refusing to return "*Haeuser am Meer*."

"I have never extorted from anyone and never bought anything that I knew had been Jewish property," he said.

POLAND WANTS HOLOCAUST PROPERTY RESTITUTION LAW BY END OF YEAR

After years of delay, the Polish government aims to complete the issue of Holocaust property restitution by the end of the year, Polish Ambassador to Israel, Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska said.

The core of a bill, which was accepted by the Polish parliament in draft form two years ago, is ready, and the Polish government hopes to reach a resolution by the end of the year, she said in a briefing with Israeli journalists.

The draft bill passed its initial reading in the previous parliament, but it needs to be reintroduced due to the recent change of government. The bill would pay 20 percent compensation to former property-owners – both Jewish and non-Jewish – whose property was seized during World War II.

Polish officials estimate that the Jewish-

owned private property makes up nearly 20% of all property taken.

Moreover, many of the areas populated by Jews ahead of WWII – the so-called Galicia region – are now located outside the boundaries of present-day Poland and fall in Ukraine.

Magdziak-Miszewska said it was important for Poland to finalize the agreement for both historical and economic reasons, since claimants who have taken their cases directly to Polish courts have been receiving 100% compensation for their property.

"It is [both] moral justice and the real economic interest of Poland to end this issue," she said.

The total value of seized property is estimated to be around \$21b.-24b., according to Polish groups working to attain the compensation.

HOLOCAUST TRAIN BANNED FROM BERLIN CENTRAL STATION

A movable exhibition on the deportation of Jewish children during the Holocaust has been refused permission to stop in Berlin's central station.

"At this site of mass deportations, technical concerns were deemed more important than the exhibition," the organizers of the "*Zug der Erinnerung*" (Memory Train) said in a statement.

State rail operator *Deutsche Bahn* has said rail traffic would be disrupted if the steam train carrying the exhibition stopped at the capital's gleaming new *Hauptbahnhof* main station.

The row is the latest of several between the organizers and state rail provider *Deutsche Bahn*, which initially refused to let the exhibition be shown at any German stations at all.

Deutsche Bahn argued that the memorial exhibition did not belong in stations because it deserved more than the divided attention of hurried commuters, but relented after its stance drew strong criticism.

Since then, it has come under fire for charging the organizers transport fees.

Michael Szentei-Heise, the leader of the Jewish community in the western city of *Duesseldorf*, has called *Deutsche Bahn*

chief Hartmut Mehdorn "a Nazi at heart ... (who) would have arranged the deportation of Jews with great conviction."

Deutsche Bahn has threatened to sue him.

The exhibition traces the plight of, among others, 11,400 Jewish children who were deported from France to the Auschwitz death camp, often crammed together in cattle trucks, between 1942 and 1944.

The Nazi state paid *Deutsche Bahn's* wartime predecessor, the *Reichsbahn*, 25 *Reichsmarks*, the equivalent of 38 dollars, for each child it transported to the camp.

The exhibition opened in Berlin in January and was being shown at eight other stations in Germany. It would eventually travel through Poland to the site of Auschwitz.

Instead of stopping at *Hauptbahnhof* the exhibition train stopped at the small Grunewald station in Berlin, which was suggested as an alternative by *Deutsche Bahn* and is home to the "Platform 17" Holocaust memorial.

The Nazis began deporting Jews to concentration camps from *Grunewald* in October 1941 in their brutal campaign of persecution that led to the death of six million Jews by the end of World War II.

HATRED THROUGH THE HOLOCAUST

MEGAN JACOBS,
THE JERUSALEM POST

A new exhibit in Gaza portrays the Jewish state burning Palestinian children in ovens.

A group called the National Committee for Defense of Children from the Holocaust unveiled its premier exhibit last week, entitled "Gaza: An exhibit describing the suffering of the children of the Holocaust."

Rather than teach about the Nazi genocide of European Jewry, the exhibit portrays Israel as the perpetrators of the Holocaust; Palestinian children are "burned" in a model crematorium by "Israelis."

According to the Ramallah-based *Al-Ayyam* daily, "The exhibit includes a large oven and inside it small children are being burned. The picture speaks for itself."

The Zionist Organization of America condemned the exhibit, saying in a statement that "there seems to be no limit to the depravity of Palestinian hate education and incitement."

"We have seen over the years every sort of perversity, including educating children to become suicide bombers and honoring mass murderers. Here, the Palestinians, both *Hamas* and *Fatah*, depict Israelis as exterminating-Nazis, while teaching nothing about the actual Holocaust in which the wartime Palestinian leadership of Haj Amin el-Husseini was in fact very active. Husseini not only orchestrated campaigns of murder against Jews in the British Mandate, but also became an ally of the Nazis, and worked hard to speed up the work of deportation and murder," said ZOA President Morton Klein.

"The depiction of Israelis as exterminating Nazis essentially sends the message

that Jews are evil people who should, like the Nazi regime, be destroyed. It is a travesty that many nations, including the US, continue to fund the PA, and thereby work to keep this conflict alive, while speaking endlessly of working hard to end it. Until and unless the Palestinians are held to their commitments to end terrorism and the incitement to hatred and murder that feeds it, no peace can be expected to become even feasible," he said.

"This is different than anything else," said Palestinian Media Watch director Itamar Marcus. "In the past, Palestinians

would compare what Israel is doing to them to the Holocaust."

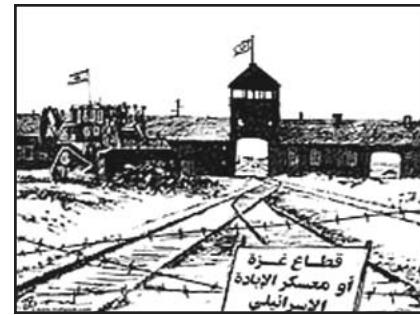
Over the last few years, Palestinian Media Watch has documented a "tremendous increase" in the usage of the word "holocaust" in the Palestinian media. Marcus said it was now being used "regularly, a few times per week or per article," versus once a month, as it had been prior, causing concern on multiple levels.

"The use of the term 'Shoah' has no doubt permeated society," Marcus said. "It has been adopted as their term."

Once adopted, it serves to de-legitimize Israelis, making them out to be liars and aggressors, he said.

Furthermore, the perversion of Shoah language is incitement to hatred that, though not a direct incitement to violence, is equally as dangerous, he said. Marcus compares the current dialogue and hatred promotion to that of 1996-2000, where "incessant hatred was pumped into [Palestinian] society." Once "hatred, fear and a feeling that revenge is legitimate" are instilled in the population, an eruption into violence is the next step in a terrorist cycle, he said.

"Our greatest danger for peace in the long-term is promotion of hatred," said Marcus. "This is the worst kind. It will imprint hatred on those kids forever."



Railroad to the death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau is seen but with Israeli flags replacing the Nazi ones. Sign in Arabic reads: "Gaza Strip or the Israeli Annihilation Camp."



BOOK REVIEWS

BEYOND JUSTICE: THE AUSCHWITZ TRIAL

Beyond Justice: The Auschwitz Trial. By Rebecca Wittmann, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2005. 336 pp. \$35 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

“There is one incident I can never forget: it must have been around November 1944. A truck, carrying Jewish children drove into the camp. The truck stopped by the barracks of the Political Department. A boy – he must have been about four or five years old – jumped out. He was playing with an apple that he was holding in his hand. Boger took the child by his feet and smashed his head against the wall . . . Later, I was called in to do some translation for Boger. He was sitting in his office, eating the boy’s apple.”

The above is but an excerpt from the testimony given by Douna Wasserstrom, a survivor of Auschwitz, given at the Auschwitz Trial in the 1960s – a trial exceptionally well-documented in Rebecca Wittmann’s, *Beyond Justice: The Auschwitz Trial*.

Interestingly, it all began in March, 1958, when Adolf Rögner, “a prisoner in the *Bruchsal* penitentiary convicted of fraud” complained about his heart medication in a letter to the prosecutor’s office in Stuttgart. In this selfsame letter, he also began to talk about an SS *Oberscharführer* Boger, known as “the Devil of Birkenau.”

He said Boger was alive, that he had been a mass murderer in Auschwitz where Rögner was once a prisoner, and that he wanted to press charges against Boger . . . and did. Thus the prosecutors heard Rögner out . . . and his charge would lead to “the largest most public and most important [trial of its kind] ever to take place in West Germany using West German judges and West German law.”

It is at this point that the author, Wittman, makes us privy to the West German legal way of doing things – quite different from our own way. It is here, too, that Wittman makes us privy to the fact that “some four hundred witness interrogations, and the investigation of as many as eight hundred perpetrators at Auschwitz” was part of this trial. In the end, twenty men – most all SS-men – faced the court of three judges and six jurists.

Eyewitness testimony was most important at this trial, which began December, 1963. Hence, there was the testimony of Dr. Tadeusz Paczula, a

Polish surgeon who “witnessed the results of the most heinous crimes committed by defendant Josef Klehr.” He characterized Klehr as a “sadist” and a “lustful killer” as

he injected prisoners with phenol, murdering them on his own volition. Then there were the Jewish women, secretaries in the Political Department, who saw Wilhelm Boger’s swing “and the unrecognizable state in which most prisoners appeared after being brutalized on it.” They spoke. There was evidence against Oswald Kaduk. Testimony against him showed him “fond of drowning, beating, whipping, shooting, running over, or in any other way killing prisoners.” As far as SS private and block officer Stefan Baretzki, “a soft-spoken Austrian Jewish doctor named Otto Wolken” testified about his witnessing Baretzki’s “favorite ritual, a ‘rabbit hunt.’” “Prisoners at roll call were ordered to take their hats off, and those who reacted too slowly were beaten and murdered on the electrical fence.”

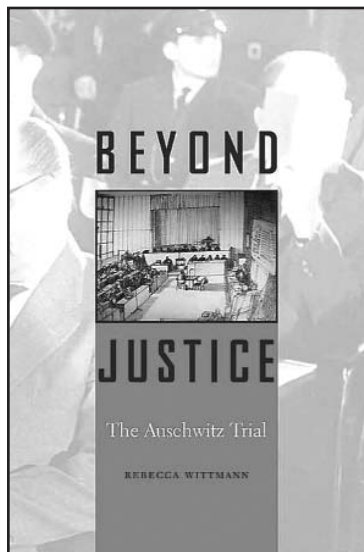
Not surprisingly, those I’ve noted would

receive life sentences, often with additional years tacked on. But where there was no eyewitness testimony of a defendant going above and beyond their usual murderous duties, where there was no proof that “defendants had acted on their own, exceeding (my emphasis) the orders of the SS in Berlin,” they could not be found guilty of murder. Perhaps they could be found guilty of “aiding and abetting,” but that was it!

Wittmann finds this rather “paradoxical,” as would any normal human being. For, in fact, the court, in coming to its verdicts on the various individuals on trial utilized the “laws of the camp” (Auschwitz) as its “standard.” Hence those who followed orders, who herded thousands into the gas chambers, are not guilty of murder according to this “standard.” That was the law in Auschwitz! Only those who murdered with “base motives” and with “individual initiative” are guilty!! . . . Strange . . . very strange . . . It makes one wonder about justice . . .

Surely *Beyond Justice: The Auschwitz Trial* is a unique addition to Holocaust literature and should be of interest to students of the Holocaust . . . and the law.

Dr. Diane Cypkin is a Professor of Media and Communication Arts at Pace University.



A GIFT FROM THE HEAVENS

A gift from the heavens. By Chava Pressburger and Elena Lappin. Atlantic Monthly Press, 2007. 192 pp. \$16.32.

REVIEWED BY BILL GLAUBER

The dutiful diary of Petr Ginz, killed at Auschwitz at 16, has been recovered — oddly, as a result of the Columbia space shuttle disaster.

“The Diary of Petr Ginz” is a gift from history, a gift from the heavens — a fragment of a life extinguished by the Holocaust. Ginz was almost 14, Jewish, a resident of Prague, when he began a diary, “the equivalent of a captain’s log on a sinking ship,” translator Elena Lappin writes.

A budding artist, author and voracious reader, Ginz records the slow ebbing of everyday life for Prague’s Jews. The writing is spare, without emotion, as Ginz notes signposts on the long trail of death for Europe’s Jews, draws the yellow star he is forced to wear, counts the 69 “sheriffs” he sees on his way to school.

An introduction and concluding story by Petr’s sister, Chava Pressburger, add context. So do family photos, and Petr’s later essays.

But Petr’s flat prose is powerful. On Jan. 1, 1942, he writes: “What is quite ordinary now would certainly cause upset

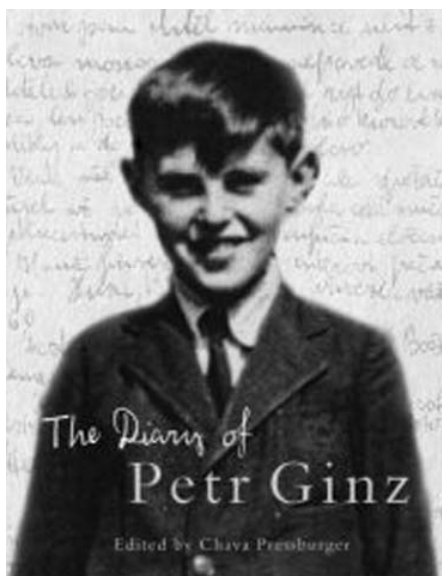
in a normal time. For example, Jews don’t have fruit, geese, and any poultry, cheese, onions, garlic and many other things. Tobacco ration cards are forbidden to prisoners, madmen, and Jews.”

By the hundreds and then thousands, Prague’s Jews are transported away. To Petr, the numbers are people, the Levituses, the Poppers. Finally, in August 1942, a final diary entry: “In the morning at home.” Petr is sent to *Theresienstadt*. The Germans claimed it was a spa town; in reality, it was a Jewish ghetto and transit camp where Petr continued to grow, reading, drawing and painting and writing for a secret newspaper.

In 1944 he died at Auschwitz.

There, the story might have ended. But some of Petr’s artwork and writings survived. In 2003, Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon took a piece of the Holocaust into space — a copy of Petr’s drawing of a moonscape. Ramon and the other members of the space shuttle *Columbia* crew died when the ship broke up in the sky on Feb. 1, 2003 — what would have been Petr’s 75th birthday.

News of the painting reached a man in Prague, who realized he was in possession of a most unusual item in his attic. From tragedy came a remarkable discovery: Petr’s long-lost war diary was found.



WHAT HAPPENED TO “THE LOST”?

The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million. By Daniel Mendelsohn. Harper Collins, 2006. 528 pp. \$18.45

REVIEWED BY DON OLDENBURG

As a boy growing up on Long Island, Daniel Mendelsohn loved stories his Orthodox Jewish grandfather told about the ancestral home in the Ukrainian *shtetl* of *Bolechow* and relatives who left it for Israel and America.

But, over the years, Mendelsohn’s curiosity grew about those who didn’t leave *Bolechow* — great-uncle Shmiel Jager, a prominent butcher, his wife, Ester, and their “four beautiful daughters.” He realized the stories about them never went beyond the whispered epitaph “killed by the Nazis.”

As if their fate alone said it all.

It didn’t for Mendelsohn, whose new book, *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million*, recounts in sometimes numbing but mostly riveting detail his five-year odyssey in search of what happened to these six who perished in the Holocaust.

Trying to recover identities from the anonymous mass graves of Eastern Europe, the author studied old photos, prowled online genealogy sites and badgered elderly kin for anything they might remember.

Mendelsohn’s detective-like mission became an obsession. But it didn’t come to life — for him or in the book — until he visited *Bolechow*, and then Australia, Israel,

Sweden and elsewhere, to talk to survivors of the Nazi “aktions” in *Bolechow*.

The personalities and age-challenged memories of these remarkable old people, the author narrates masterfully. They become the lifeblood of the book, making it more intimate than just another generic Holocaust tome.

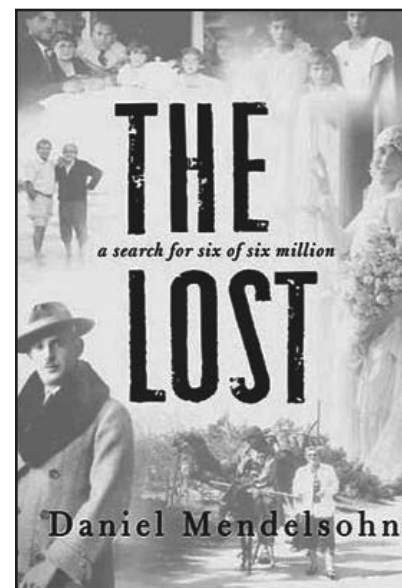
But be forewarned. This isn’t an easy read — and not only because of the horrifying historic events. A classicist and literary critic, Mendelsohn overburdens the reader, especially early on, with extraneous details, digressions, repetition and a self-indulgent style he describes as “Homeric,” likening it to his grandfather’s storytelling.

To draw parallels to the book’s themes of origins, family, betrayal and death, Mendelsohn weaves in italicized medieval Jewish interpretations

of the biblical stories of Creation, Cain and Abel and the Flood. That proves more exhausting than enlightening for the reader.

But the powerful ending — that final visit to *Bolechow* and the streets where Shmiel and his family lived and died — is poignant and heart-rending enough to eclipse the excesses and turn *The Lost* into a memorable, insightful book about what can be tragically lost — and ultimately, with persistence, found.

First published in USA Today.



AS PERPETRATORS DIE OUT, PUSH TO COLLECT NAZI STORIES

BY TOBY AXELROD, JTA

It was the spring of 1943 when Otto Ernst Duscheleit, a Hitler Youth leader, received the call: Join the Waffen-SS or be sent to a penal battalion.

"I was 17 and I knew little about what was happening," Duscheleit recalls.

He would spend two years on the front. Duscheleit helped set Russian villages ablaze during the retreat of German forces, and though he says he did not commit atrocities, he watched as Jews were loaded onto trains for deportation to death camps.

"They were wearing the yellow star," Duscheleit says. "I saw them, but I didn't think about what was happening."

Some 40 years later, Duscheleit had a dream in which someone called him an "SS pig," and the former Nazi began to reflect on his past. Overcome by shame, he soon started meeting with students and children of survivors to tell them his story. In 2006 he published an autobiography.

"When I tell my story to older people, some also start to tell what they remember," he says of fellow Germans. "I give them courage to speak about their past."

"But sometimes it is such a torture that they cannot speak about it. And then, after a short time, they die."

Duscheleit, who lives in Berlin, is among a small group of former Nazis relating their stories. Their stories represent a fast-disappearing opportunity to record the history of the Holocaust based on recollections of former perpetrators, collaborators or sympathizers.

Still, most living ex-Nazis do not want to share their stories, and those that are willing often offer unreliable accounts. Unlike Duscheleit, few are confronting their pasts critically.

"Many who had such experiences won't talk about it, or they will try to turn themselves into victims, or they will lie," said German filmmaker Malte Ludin, who wants to launch a project to record the ex-Nazis' stories and build an archive of perpetrators' testimony.

It's not that Ludin expects any earth-shattering revelations. He hopes the interviews help teach the world how crucial it is to oppose genocide.

Ludin's 2005 film, "2 or 3 Things I Know About Him," shows how his own family buried the truth about his father, an executed war criminal.

While tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors have recorded personal testimonies of their experiences, no comparable collection exists from Nazi perpetrators or sympathizers.

In recent years, however, several people like Ludin, who uncovered the Nazi pasts of their parents or grandparents have published their stories.

Psychotherapist Ute Althaus started probing her father's Nazi past in earnest only after he died. Her father, Ernst Meyer, had been sentenced to 10 years in prison after the war, but she said his war crimes were never discussed in the family.

After Meyer's death in 1993, Althaus read his prison letters. Her research was recorded in her 2006 book "I was No Nazi Officer."

"After the war, committed Nazis like my father presented themselves as non-Nazis and as victims of Hitler," Althaus told JTA.

In the postwar letters, Althaus said her



Followers of Adolf Hitler, left, with Nazi henchman, had a "kind of addictive relationship" with the Third Reich, says the author of "Why Did They Follow Hitler?"

father wrote that Hitler and his people "committed genocide without the knowledge of the Germans."

"I don't find any empathy with the victims in my father's letters," she added. "We children of Nazis grew up in a fraudulent world."

As to the testimonies of the perpetrators themselves, it's not so much what they say but how they say it that's interesting, says Stephan Marks, a social scientist at the University of Freiburg in Germany.

"As oral history it is not very fruitful," Marks said. "But if you look at the hidden content, it turns out to be very interesting. There is a kind of addictive relationship that followers of Hitler have with the Third Reich."

Interview subjects often insult their interviewers, suggesting that they could never understand how it was back then, says Marks, the author of the 2007 book, "Why Did They Follow Hitler? The Psychology of Nazism."

One interview subject had placed old grenades on the posts of his gate and even nailed his Nazi military ID to the front door.

It's difficult to know how truthful perpetrators are when recounting their

memories, says Israeli sociologist Dan Bar-On, the author of the 1989 book "Legacy of Silence."

"Many are apologetic, but they don't tell you much about what really happened and about how they felt," Bar-On said.

The more a perpetrator has to say, the less important the testimony, says Efraim Zuroff, the Israel director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

"It is incredibly rare that perpetrators own up to their crimes," Zuroff told JTA. "If they can talk about their crimes, they have nothing interesting to tell us."

Even in trial testimony, "most thought they were innocent and had done the right thing," Zuroff said. "That can teach us about the nature of people who have been brainwashed about Nazi ideology."

"They were not persons who came from outer space or Mars," said Micha Brumlik of the Institute for General Pedagogy in Frankfurt am Main. "It is important to prove to the younger generations that moral evil is very close to us."

Marks says it's important to explore how well-educated and intelligent people became so excited by the Nazi movement.

"The emotional underground that made this possible is something we have hardly started to touch," he said.

Sometime after Duscheleit began speaking publicly about his years in the Waffen SS, he said he was confronted by several right-wing youths after a speech.

"One young man came to me and said, 'How can you speak that way as a former SS man and Hitler Youth leader?'"

"I answered, 'I have learned something since then.' And the young man turned around and left."

BRITAIN'S HOLOCAUST SHAME: THE VOYAGE OF THE EXODUS

The ship was filled with Jewish refugees, desperately seeking a new life in the Promised Land after the horrors of Nazi concentration camps. But, thanks to the Royal Navy, they were sent back to prison camps in Germany.

BY ROBERT VERKAIK, THE INDEPENDENT

When British soldiers reached the concentration camps of Nazi Germany in the last days of the Second World War, the survivors of the Holocaust hailed them as saviors.

The troops' gruesome discoveries at Bergen-Belsen in 1945, where piles of skeletal corpses lay amid the camp's death ovens and gas chambers, prompted Britain's political leaders to promise that the world would never forget the suffering of the Jews.

Yet, just two years later, the British government was accused of mistreating thousands of Holocaust survivors, who, when prevented from fleeing to Palestine, had been forcibly sent back to barbed-wire detention camps in Germany, staffed by Germans.

Secret papers released at the National Archives for the first time this April reveal the fate of Jewish immigrants aboard the 1947 refugee ship *Exodus* and the bitter propaganda battle that ensued when Britain used force to return them to Germany.

British soldiers, ordered to storm the transport vessels to which the Jewish immigrants on board *Exodus* had been transferred, were accused of behaving like "Hitler Commandos," "gentleman fas-



Migrants from Europe on board the *Exodus*.

cists" and sadists.

As the British soldiers clashed with the Jewish refugees at the port of Hamburg, dockside banners read: "You are bringing us back to Germany, to a concentration camp worse than Belsen."

The episode proved hugely embarrassing for the British. But the international condemnation which accompanied the spectacle of Jews being marched off ships and put on trains for internment camps helped create the political climate for the creation of Israel the following year.

At the end of the war, it was left to the British to try to stem the flow of illegal immigration to Palestine, where the British

government, conscious of Arab sensitivities in the region, decided to maintain strict quotas upon Jewish entry. So it was that, in July 1947, the *Exodus*, under the close scrutiny of the Royal Navy, docked in Marseille and picked up 4,553 Jewish refugees, each determined to defy the British blockade of Palestine.

On its voyage, later made into a Hollywood film starring Paul Newman, the *Exodus* was

escorted by the British cruiser *Ajax* and a convoy of destroyers. The ship's captain, Yossi Harel, who died at the age of 90 last month, had planned to slip away from the escorts as he neared the coast of Palestine but, in the end, he decided to ignore the British warnings to stop, and made a run for the port.

The British response to that was to fire a warning shot into the *Exodus*'s bow, immediately followed by the dispatch of a boarding party.

The passengers and crew resisted, and fierce fighting broke out on the *Exodus*. Three passengers and a soldier died, and many were wounded. The British then

towed the *Exodus* into Haifa harbour, from where it was planned that the passengers would be sent back to France on three separate transport vessels.

But when the ships reached *Marseilles*, the refugees refused to disembark and the British decided the only course of action left to them was to escort them back to Germany.

By the time they had docked at Hamburg, many of the refugees were in defiant mood. When they first set out on their historic quest, they had believed they were days away from arriving at a Jewish homeland. The prospect of being sent to prison camps in Germany represented a pitiful failure of their original mission and for many of the Holocaust survivors, it was almost impossible to bear.

But the British government had no intention of backing down or relaxing its policy.

Under *Operation Oasis*, plans were put in place to storm the ships.

The British had identified one of the ships, the *Runnymede Park*, as the vessel most likely to cause them trouble.

A confidential report of the time noted: "It was known that the Jews on the *Runnymede Park* were under the leadership of a young, capable and energetic fanatic, Morenci Miry Rosman, and throughout the operation it had been realized that this ship might give trouble."

One hundred military police and 200 Sherwood Foresters troops were ordered to board the ship and eject the Jewish immigrants.

(Continued on page 12)

SURVIVORS' CORNER

FROM AUSCHWITZ, A TORAH AS STRONG AS ITS SPIRIT

BY JAMES BARRON,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

The back story of how a Torah got from the fetid barracks of Auschwitz to the ark of the Central Synagogue at Lexington Avenue and 55th Street is one the pastor of the Lutheran church down the street sums up as simply "miraculous."

It is the story of a sexton in the synagogue in the Polish city of *Oswiecim* who buried most of the sacred scroll before the Germans stormed in and later renamed the city Auschwitz. It is the story of Jewish prisoners who sneaked the rest of it — four carefully chosen panels — into the concentration camp.

It is the story of a Polish Catholic priest to whom they entrusted the four panels before their deaths. It is the story of a Maryland rabbi who went looking for it with a metal detector. And it is the story of how a hunch by the rabbi's 13-year-old son helped lead him to it.

This Torah, more than most, "is such an extraordinary symbol of rebirth," said Peter J. Rubinstein, the rabbi of Central Synagogue. "As one who has gone to the camps and assimilates into my being the horror of the Holocaust, this gives meaning to Jewish survival."

On April 30, the restored Torah was rededicated in honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day, which for more than 20 years the congregation of Central Synagogue has observed in conjunction with its neighbor, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, at Lexington Avenue and 54th Street. The senior pastor, the Rev. Amandus J. Derr, said that next to Easter, the Holocaust memorial is "the most important service I attend every year."

For years, Jews around the world have worked to recover and rehabilitate Torahs that disappeared or were destroyed during the Holocaust, returning them to use in synagogues.



Rabbi Menachem Youlus removes dirt from a Torah that had been buried in a Polish cemetery to keep it from the Nazis.

This Torah remained hidden for more than 60 years, buried where the sexton had put it, until Rabbi Menachem Youlus, who lives in Wheaton, Md., and runs the nonprofit Save a Torah foundation, began looking for it about eight years ago. Over two decades, Rabbi Youlus said, the foundation has found more than 1,000 desecrated Torahs and restored them, a painstaking and expensive process. This one was elusive. But Rabbi Youlus was determined.

He had heard a story told by Auschwitz survivors: Three nights before the Germans arrived, the synagogue sexton put the Torah scrolls in a metal box and buried them. The sexton knew that the Nazis were bent on destroying Judaism as well as killing Jews. But the survivors did not know where the sexton had buried the Torah. Others interested in rescuing the Torah after the war had not found it. As for what happened during the war, "I personally felt the last place the Nazis would look would be in the cemetery," Rabbi Youlus said in an interview, recalling his pilgrimage to Auschwitz, in late

2000 or early 2001, in search of the missing Torah. "So that was the first place I looked."

With a metal detector, because, if the story was correct, he was hunting for a metal box in a cemetery in which all the caskets were made of wood, according to Jewish laws of burial. The metal detector did not beep. "Nothing," the rabbi said. "I was discouraged."

He went home to Maryland. One of his sons, Yitzchok, then 13, wondered if the cemetery was the same size as in 1939. They went online and found land records that showed that the present-day cemetery was far smaller than the original one.

Rabbi Youlus went back in 2004 with his metal detector, aiming it at the spot where the *gneeza* — a burial plot for damaged Torahs, prayer books or other papers containing God's name — had been. It beeped as he passed a house that had been built after World War II.

He dug near the house and found the metal box. But when he opened it, he discovered the Torah was incomplete. "It was missing four panels," he said.

"The obvious question was, why would the sexton bury a scroll that's missing four panels? I was convinced those four panels had a story themselves."

They did, as he learned when he placed an ad in a Polish newspaper in the area "asking if anyone had parchment with Hebrew letters."

"I said I would pay top dollar," Rabbi Youlus said. "The response came the next day from a priest. He said, 'I know exactly what you're looking for, four panels of a

Torah. I couldn't believe it."

He compared the lettering and the pagination, and paid the priest. The priest "told me the panels were taken into Auschwitz by four different people," Rabbi Youlus said. "I believe they were folded and hidden." One of the panels contained the Ten Commandments from *Exodus*, a portion that, when chanted aloud each year, the congregation stands to hear. Another contained a similar passage from *Deuteronomy*.

The priest, who was born Jewish, was himself an Auschwitz survivor. He told Rabbi Youlus that the people with the four sections of the Torah gave them to him before they were put to death. "He kept all four pieces until I put that ad in the paper," Rabbi Youlus said. "As soon as I put that ad in the paper, he knew I must be the one with the rest of the Torah scroll." (Rabbi Youlus said that the priest has since died.)

Rabbi Youlus said that nearly half the Torah's lettering needed repair, work that the foundation has done over the past few years.

Rabbi Youlus called it "a good sturdy Torah, even if it hasn't been used in 65 years." The plan is to make it available every other year to the March of the Living, an international educational program that arranges for Jewish teenagers to go to Poland on Holocaust Remembrance Day, to march from Auschwitz to its companion death camp, Birkenau.

"This really is an opportunity to look up to the heavens and say, he who laughs last, laughs best," Rabbi Youlus said. "The Nazis really thought they had wiped Jews off the face of the earth, and Judaism. Here we are taking the ultimate symbol of hope and of Judaism and rededicating it and using it in a synagogue. And we'll take it to Auschwitz. You can't beat that."

First published in the New York Times

WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING LEADER SPEAKS OF STRUGGLE

For decades, Marek Edelman has found it painful to talk about his time as a leader in the ill-fated 1943 struggle by a handful of scrappy, poorly armed Jews in Warsaw to rise up against the Nazi's trained and equipped army.

If he ever returns to the traumatic memories of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, it is only to bring a word of warning to the contemporary world.

"Man is evil: By nature, man is a beast," Edelman told The Associated Press during an interview in his home in the central city of Lodz.

He said people "have to be educated from childhood, from kindergarten, that there should be no hatred."

"They have to be shown that all people are the same, that skin color, race, religion don't matter," he said. "We have only one life and we must not murder each other. We see the sun only once."

Sixty-five years after the revolt, Edelman is reluctant to recall details of the three weeks he and some 220 other young Jews spent fighting the Germans — who had begun liquidating the ghetto, sending the remaining tens of thousands of residents to death camps.

"It was the first, most important and most

spectacular" instance of Jewish armed resistance to the Nazi Holocaust, said Andrzej Zbikowski, head of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

For years, Edelman — the last living commander of the struggle — and a handful of survivors have marked the April 19 anniversary of the uprising by laying flowers at the Monument to the Heroes of the Ghetto. He views the observances as "part of educating people and fighting genocide."

Edelman, who still works as a doctor in a Lodz hospital, becomes emotional when he speaks of the struggle he helped launch.

"I remember them all — boys and girls — 220 all together, not too many to remember their faces, their names," he said. The Nazis "wanted to destroy the people, and we fought to protect the people in the ghetto, to extend their life by a day or two or five."

They scraped together guns and ammunition that they and Polish resistance managed to smuggle in from the outside. Still, "there weren't enough guns, ammunition. There was not enough food, but we were not starving. You can live for three weeks just on water and sugar," which they found in the homes of those deported to death camps, he said.



Marek Edelman

Edelman, then 24, took command of one of the revolt's three groups of fighters, all between the ages of 13 and 22. His brigade included 50 so-called "brush men" because their base was a brush factory.

They adopted hit-and-run tactics. With time, as supplies and forces began to run low, they resorted to attacks at night, for more safety.

"Every moment was difficult. It was two or three or 10 boys fighting with an army," Edelman said. "There were no easy moments."

"It lasted for three weeks, so this great

German army could not cope so easily with those 220 boys and girls," he said with a grain of pride.

The uprising ended when its main leaders — rounded up by the Nazis — committed suicide on May 8, 1943. The Nazis then razed the ghetto, street by street.

About 40 surviving fighters escaped through the city's sewers and joined the Polish partisans.

"No one believed he would be saved," said Edelman. "We knew that the struggle was doomed, but it showed the world that there is resistance against the Nazis, that you can fight the Nazis."

Edelman and a few others remained in Warsaw to help coordinate and supply the Jewish resistance groups. Some fighters still live in Israel and Canada. Edelman is the last one in Poland.

Despite the ghetto struggle's ultimate failure, "it was worth it," Edelman said. "Even at the price of the fighters' lives." After the war, Edelman chose to remain in Poland, becoming a social and a democratic activist, and guardian of the ghetto fighters' memory.

"When you were responsible for the life of some 60,000 people, you don't leave and abandon the memory of them," he said.

HUNT ON FOR NAZI DOCTOR

BY DAVID RISING, AP

Karl Lotter, a prisoner who worked in the hospital at *Mauthausen* concentration camp, had no trouble remembering the first time he watched SS doctor Aribert Heim kill a man.

It was 1941, and an 18-year-old Jew had been sent to the clinic with a foot inflammation. Heim asked him about himself and why he was he so fit. The young man said he had been a soccer player and swimmer.

Then, instead of treating the prisoner's foot, Heim anesthetized him, cut him open, castrated him, took apart one kidney and removed the second, Lotter said. The victim's head was removed and the flesh boiled off so that Heim could keep it on display.

"He needed the head because of its perfect teeth," Lotter, a non-Jewish political prisoner, recalled in testimony eight years later that was included in an Austrian warrant for Heim's arrest uncovered by The Associated Press. "Of all the camp doctors in *Mauthausen*, Dr. Heim was the most horrible."

But Heim managed to avoid prosecution, his American-held file in Germany mysteriously omitting his time at *Mauthausen*, and today he is the most wanted Nazi war criminal on a list of hundreds who the Simon Wiesenthal Center estimates are still free.

Heim would be 93 today and "we have good reason to believe he is still alive," said Efraim Zuroff, the Simon Wiesenthal

Center's top Nazi hunter. He spoke in a telephone interview from Jerusalem ahead of the center's plans to release a list of the most-sought fugitives on Wednesday, and to open a media campaign in South America this summer highlighting the \$485,000 reward for Heim's arrest posted by the center, along with Germany and Austria.

GLOBAL MANHUNT

The hunt for Heim has taken investigators from the German state of *Baden-Wuerttemberg* all around the world. Besides his home country of Austria and neighboring Germany, where he settled after the war, tips have come from Uruguay in 1998, Spain, Switzerland and Chile in 2005, and Brazil in 2006, said Heinz Heister, presiding judge of the *Baden-Baden* state court, where Heim was indicted in absentia on hundreds of counts of murder in 1979.

Thousands of German war criminals were prosecuted in West Germany after World War II. In the 1970s, Western democracies began a hunt in earnest for Eastern European collaborators who had fled West, claiming to be refugees from

communism, and the end of the Cold War gave access to a trove of communist files in the 1990s.

"All of a sudden, there was pressure on countries like Latvia and Estonia to put these people on trial," Zuroff said. "So two times in the past 30 years we've been given a tremendous infusion of new energy and new possibilities." The Wiesenthal Center's previous annual survey counted 1,019 investigations under way worldwide. The number is lower this year and inexact because not all countries responded, but new investigations were up from 63 to 202, Zuroff said.

Still, a lack of political will in many countries, and what Zuroff called the "misplaced-sympathy syndrome" — reluctance to pursue aging suspects — has meant that few people have been brought to trial and convicted.

GRUESOME EXPERIMENTS

Lotter, the witness to Heim's atrocity, was in *Mauthausen* because he fought with the communists in the Spanish Civil War. His statement from the 1950



Dr. Aribert Heim in a 1950 photo released by the State Office of Criminal Investigation in Stuttgart, southern Germany.

"NAZI GERMANY HELPED ESTABLISH ISRAEL"

BY JONATHAN BECK, THE JERUSALEM POST

Twenty five German professors co-signed a manifesto published in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* calling on Germany to stop giving Israel "preferential treatment," because, among other reasons, the country "helped" establish Israel by expelling Jews from Germany during the rule of the *Third Reich*. Approximately 160,000 Jews who were expelled from Nazi Germany ended up in the British mandate of Palestine and strengthened the Jewish presence here at the expense of the Arab population, they claimed.

Visiting in Israel as guests of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and the Academic College of *Netanya*, four professors and co-signatories on the manifesto were debating their claims with Israeli academics who opposed them. They claimed that approximately 160,000 Jews who arrived in mandatory Palestine enlarged Jewish control of the land from just six percent during the British mandate to approximately 60% after the War of Independence. Additionally, the Germans said their country has "paid off" its debt to the Jewish people by the sums it had given the Israeli government and survivors until today.

They admitted that the Holocaust was, nevertheless, an indelible stain in Germany's history.

The professors called on the German government to improve its relations with Arab countries by adopting an "even-handed" approach to both Israelis and Arabs. The debate was initiated by Dov Ben Meir, one of the heads of the

Center for Strategic Dialogue at the college and formerly chairman of the Knesset. Prof. Moshe Zimmerman, an expert on German history, was also sitting on the Israeli side. Ben Meir published his own counter-manifesto, rebuking the Germans' claims one by one.

First and foremost, unchecked data stated as fact has led the Germans to reach conclusions which were unjustified. For example, regarding the 60% of land controlled by Jews after the War of Independence, as cited in the manifesto, Ben Meir said most of it was in fact not Arab land but unclaimed "state land," i.e. land belonging to the British and to the Ottoman Empire before them. "They owe us something of an apology," he said.

He even claimed that, due to Israel's recognition of Germany following the Reparations' Agreement between the countries, the entire world came to see the country as "a different Germany." He said Israel purchased from Germany ten times more merchandise than what the Germans offered as part of the Reparations' Agreement, stressing that these funds should not be construed as special treatment and should be considered the "debt of a rogue to his victim." Ben Meir warned about Germany returning to the "black days" of Hitler if the country would stop its special treatment towards Israel.

Prof. Gert Krell, a retired professor of International Relations at Frankfurt's Johann Wolfgang Goethe University who specialized in the Middle East conflict, admitted after the panel finished its discussions that the manifesto was "well-meant but not good enough."

ANTI-SEMITISM ON THE RISE IN EUROPE

If you don't think anti-Semitism is rising in Europe, look at the political cartoons. A Greek cartoon suggests Israelis kill Christians on Easter. An Italian cartoon shows the baby Jesus worried that the Israelis are going to kill him again. And then there are the cartoons that compare the Jews to the Nazis. It reminds Jews of another period: the 1930s, the time before the Holocaust.

In Europe today, most Jews are at least anxious. Some are scared, and many have already left for Israel or the United States. Because, even though many European governments have condemned the new rise in anti-Semitism, there is a clear perception among many Jews that Europe's terrible history is somehow coming back to life.

"Jewish communities around the world are under more pressure now than at any time since 1945," says Prof. Robert Wistrich of Hebrew University in Israel. Wistrich is the son of Polish Jews who fled the Holocaust. "Here we are 60 years after that and what lessons have been learned? Not enough."

Throughout Europe, distorted and one-sided news coverage has created an Israel that is aggressive and evil. "It's a demonization based on a radical de-textualization, de-legitimization that's been going on," Melanie Phillips, a British conservative, says. "And if you're the averagely ignorant Brit, watching your TV, listening to your radio, you believe it. That's your world view."

In France, a court is deciding whether a government TV channel, France2, showed faked footage of the supposed death of a Palestinian boy, Mohammed al-Durah, during the second intifada in 2000, to make it look like he was killed by Israeli soldiers. When the judge ordered France2

arrest warrant was viewed by the AP at the National Archives in College Park, Md.

Now that the necessary evidence is in place, numerous witness statements have been taken and Heim has been indicted; all that's left is to find him.

Born June 28, 1914, in *Radkersburg*, Austria, Heim joined the local Nazi party in 1935, three years before Austria was bloodlessly annexed by Germany.

He later joined the *Waffen SS* and was assigned to *Mauthausen*, a concentration camp near *Linz*, Austria, as a camp doctor in October and November 1941.

While there, witnesses told investigators, he worked closely with SS pharmacist Erich Wasicky on such gruesome experiments as injecting various solutions into Jewish prisoners' hearts to see which killed them the fastest.

But while Wasicky was brought to trial by an American Military Tribunal in 1946 and sentenced to death, along with other camp medical personnel and commanders, Heim, who was a POW in American custody, was not among them.

Heim's file in the Berlin Document Center, the then-U.S.-run depot for Nazi-era papers, was apparently altered to obliterate any mention of *Mauthausen*, according to his 1979 German indictment, obtained by the AP. Instead, for the period he was known to be at the concentration camp, he was listed as having a different SS assignment.

This "cannot be correct," the indictment says. "It is possible that through data

(Continued on page 12)

to turn over all of its footage of the incident, it also showed the boy moving his arms and peering through his fingers after he was supposed to be dead.

But Muslim rage at the original France2 news story led to countless reprisals against Jews around the world. It was even mentioned by terrorists as a reason for the beheading Daniel Pearl.

The EU says Muslims are responsible for half of all attacks on Jews in Europe. In France, Muslims outnumber Jews 10 to 1. Nidra Poller, an American writer and commentator in Paris, says the government and media are afraid of the Muslims.

"The French are using the Muslims, allowing the Muslims, to express this vicious and violent, murderous Jews hatred, and they get a free ride on their old fashioned anti-Semitism," Poller said. "The whole Lebanon war was shown from the *Hezbollah* point of view. Israel was the villain. And *Hezbollah* were the innocents who were suffering. So all the Muslims in France got another dose of Jew hatred." And when Israel invaded Lebanon in 2006, anti-Semitic violence in Europe surged.

Anti-Semitism is by no means just a European phenomenon. But it is in Europe, the place of the Holocaust, where the return of anti-Semitism is so surprising.

As a boy in the Netherlands, Manfred Gerstenfeld hid from the Nazis in an upstairs apartment. He may have never believed it could happen again. But he now believes Europe is re-living the 1930s.

"A senior Dutch politician told me a few months ago, 'Look, the Jews have to understand that in the Netherlands, they have no future,' he said.

In large part because Israel lost the media war in Europe long ago, and the Jews are still paying for it."

WOMEN

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR

“INTOLERANCE MUST BE FOUGHT WHEREVER AND WHENEVER IT APPEARS”

DR. ROCHELLE CHERRY, 2008 ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON HONOREE

I am honored to be here today, but this honor is as much for my parents – Sol and Gloria Silberzweig, as it is for me. They both grew up in Warsaw and were survivors of the Holocaust. They met when my mother was 12 and my father 17. Their families vacationed together in the summer. They fell in love in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Both my parents fought in the uprising, and were later transported to concentration camps. They lost and found each other many times. Sol and Gloria experienced unspeakable atrocities in the camps. My mother lost her entire family. The only one of my father’s six siblings that survived was his brother, who had left Poland before the war.

The story of the Holocaust was told to me in snippets by my mother. Even as a child, the Holocaust was part of my life. I did not realize it then, but I was one of the lucky ones, because the Holocaust was not kept as a dark secret. As the oldest child, more details were shared with me than my two siblings. Survivors always question why they were spared death and never forget their family members and friends who were not so lucky. So many of the stories she told me were about her parents, siblings, and others in her family. She knew how lucky she had been because, with green eyes and blonde hair, she was often spared because she looked like a beautiful Polish woman. She died before she could write her story. Gloria was a wonderful caring mother and grandmother, who always gave me unconditional love. My parent’s story inspired my husband, an American-born Jew, to study the Holocaust and he has written a book, *Rethinking Poles and Jews*, about Polish-Jewish relations then and now which was published last summer.

My father did not really talk about the Holocaust until after my mother’s death in 1979. Just before his death in 2004, he wrote his memoir, *Mama It Will Be Alright*, which was published by Yad Vashem.

After the war my parents found each other, got married, and had me. I was the first person in my family to go to college, and then graduate school. I became an audiologist because I always wanted to help people. I have taught students who wanted to be audiologists at Brooklyn College for the last twenty-eight years. And I have tried to instill in them the respect for patients and a desire to help them that has motivated me.

I grew up hearing about the Holocaust, and how one group of people wanted to destroy another only because they were Jewish. The lesson I learned was to treat all people with respect and not judge them based on race, religion, or class. Intolerance must be fought wherever and whenever it appears.



Mindy Schall, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Co-Chair; Rita Levy, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Co-Chair; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American & International Society for Yad Vashem, and Dr. Rochelle Cherry, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Honoree.



Cheryl Lifshitz, Eli Zborowski, Chairman (American Society for Yad Vashem) and Stella Skura.



Elizabeth Wilf, Regina Peterseil and Fanya Gottesfeld Heller.



Halpern Family Table. Standing (left to right) Gail Propp, Leiba Halpern, Batsheva Halpern, Sima Schall, Sharon Halpern, 2006 Annual Spring Luncheon Chairwoman, Yonina Halpern, David Halpern. Sitting (left to right) Shelley Paradis, Chavcia Halpern, Gladys Halpern, 2007 Annual Spring Luncheon Honoree and 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Women’s Spring Luncheon Chairwoman, Mindy Schall, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Co-CHair, Alan Schall, Abbi Halpern.



Gladys Halpern, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Women’s Committee Chairwoman and 2007 Annual Spring Luncheon Honoree, and Dr. Deborah Lipstadt, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Guest Speaker.

OF VALOR FOR YAD VASHEM ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON

“I HAVE SO MUCH TO BE THANKFUL FOR”

JEAN GLUCK, 2008 ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON HONOREE

I am deeply honored to be selected as an honoree at this beautiful Yad Vashem luncheon, an institution which not only documents the history of the Holocaust, but preserves the memories of the six million victims and enables their legacy to be passed on to our children and our children’s children.

As someone who experienced that dark hour of Jewish history, I accept this honor with humility, and with a sense of responsibility to the memory of those who did not survive to tell their own stories.

As a young woman who was liberated from Auschwitz, after witnessing the most horrific crimes to our people, I had no idea what the future would bring.

So many questions – so many emotions. It is hard to imagine

How surviving the atrocities that we witnessed would make us feel closer to G-d – but we did. We felt Him guiding us every step of the way.

After sixty years, we are all here as testimony. Those who survived came out of Europe with nothing – no family, no possessions, no home. But we persevered. We had faith – and we dedicated our lives to rebuilding the Jewish people.

Our lives and our children’s lives are a vibrant demonstration of what the lives of six million Jews could have been.

I have so much to be thankful for, but first and foremost, I must thank G-d for being with me all of my life, guiding me, giving me strength and courage, and blessing me with a wonderful husband and magnificent family, of whom I am so proud.

To even imagine, that after going through unspeakable horrors, we would not only survive, but build a beautiful home and have so much *nachas*. That is something words cannot express.

It is certainly evidence of the eternity of *Am Yisrael*.

May we merit to continue imparting this message to future generations until we experience the ultimate salvation.



Mindy Schall, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Co-Chair; Gladys Halpern, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Women’s Committee Chairwoman and 2007 Annual Spring Luncheon Honoree; Rita Levy, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Co-Chair and 2007 Annual Spring Luncheon Honoree; Jean Gluck, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Honoree; Eugen Gluck and Eli Zborowski, Chairman (American Society for Yad Vashem).

ual Spring
societies for



The family of Jean Gluck, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Honoree, and Eugen Gluck



Ariel Zborowski, Eli Zborowski, Chairman (American Society for Yad Vashem), Elizabeth and Joseph Wilf.



Sharon Halpern; Mindy Schall, 2008 Annual Spring Luncheon Co-Chair and David Halpern.



Stefanie Shulman, Marilyn Rubenstein, Helene Dorfman.

REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

A STORY OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS, FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE

BY ISABEL KERSHNER,
INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

The gray walls of Yad Vashem have long documented the horrors of the Holocaust. Now an oddly vibrant exhibition at the official Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority is telling a less-known story of the renaissance of the survivors in Israel, and the extraordinary role they played in shaping the character of the new state.

"My Homeland: Holocaust Survivors in Israel" opened at the end of April week to mark the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the Jewish state in 1948, and for Holocaust Memorial Day, which was held May 1. But instead of gas chambers and ghettos, it showcases models in designer beachwear and boldly colored posters that launched such potent Israeli symbols as the national airline El Al.

Each exhibit is a tribute to the survivor who created it. Of more than 90 artists and innovators who are featured, only about half have lived to see the day.

In the past, a dominant image of survivors in Israel has been that of frail citizens living out their final years in cold and hunger, battling the state bureaucracy for monthly stipends. Of the roughly 250,000 survivors now in Israel, as many as 80,000 are said to be living on or near the poverty line.

Last August survivors took to the streets of Jerusalem in protest; a few wore yellow stars reminiscent of the ones the Nazis forced Jews to display. But experts say that the suffering of those left behind in their old age does not negate an immigration success story they describe as unparalleled anywhere in the world.

"The story of the Holocaust can be told from many different angles," said Hanna Yablonka, a historical consultant to the exhibition. "To me, one of the most important aspects is the question of where you take such a huge disaster. You can turn to revenge, or to building."



Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev guides Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in the new exhibition.

Lea Gottlieb, who turns 90 this year, hid from the Nazis during the German occupation of Hungary and stepped off a boat at the Port of Haifa in 1949. "We came with nothing, without money, with nowhere to live," Gottlieb recalled, viewing her corner of the exhibition an hour before the official opening. "The first two or three years were very, very hard."

Petite and manicured, in a black pantsuit and sensible leather shoes, Gottlieb recounted in halting Hebrew how she and her husband opened a raincoat factory like one they had left behind. But for months "we saw no rain, only sunshine," she said. So they founded Gottex, the swimwear company that quickly grew to become a leading Israeli brand name abroad.

One of her grandchildren, Danny Shir, said Gottlieb would occasionally recollect an ugly experience from the past — like when she hid herself and her children in a pit behind the home of their gentile host after spotting a Nazi with a pistol outside.

Almost half a million Jews who survived the camps and the ghettos, or who emerged out of hiding, arrived here in the years after World War II. Having cheated

death once, many headed again for the battlefield: half the fighters in the 1948 war were Holocaust survivors, and they made up a third of the number who fell.

By 1952, Kariel Gardosh, the caricaturist known as Dosh, had created Srulik, a figure in sandals, a blue work shirt and a blue canvas hat. Srulik became the symbol of what native-born Israelis saw as their quintessential selves — guileless and pioneering, with none of the complexes and pretenses of Europe.

Born in Hungary in 1921, Gardosh was sent to mine copper as forced labor; his family was murdered in Auschwitz. After immigrating to Israel in 1948, he drew a daily political cartoon in the Hebrew paper, *Maariv*, for almost 50 years, and died in 2000. Srulik is the symbol of the Yad Vashem exhibition today.

"Like many Israelis, I tended to look at the Holocaust survivors as victims," said Michal Broshi, a consultant curator. As she learned about the extent of their imprint on her Israeli identity, "I couldn't believe my ears," she said.

The survivors penetrated every sphere, from the arts and academia to commerce, industry and defense.

"They were acting as a normal part of the fabric of life. Actually, it was a miracle," said Yehudit Shendar, a Yad Vashem curator.

The encounter between the newcomers and the early Zionist pioneers was not always easy. The veterans disdained anything to do with Jewish exile, and the stories the survivors might have wanted to share were at first "beyond what a normal human being could grasp," said Avner Shalev, chairman of the directorate of Yad Vashem.

But the survivors took it upon themselves "to be integrated, to be more Israeli than the Israelis." The only difference between them and other Israelis, he said, "was that the pain never left them."

Six decades later, the immigrants who were accepted as Israelis are being honored as survivors, as well.

"I would prefer another reason to be celebrated," said Dan Reisinger, 73, a graphic designer. "But survival is something one should appreciate every day."

Reisinger was born in 1934 in Yugoslavia, and spent the German occupation hidden by a Serbian family. He immigrated to Israel with his mother and stepfather in 1949.

After studying at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem and spending time in Belgium and London, he returned to revolutionize Israeli design.

On display at Yad Vashem is a collection of Reisinger's distinctive corporate logos that have become ingrained in the Israeli consciousness, including that of El Al. "I wanted to bring something fresh, something new, something more cheerful to compensate for the dark years I went through," Reisinger said.

Reisinger, who also designed medals for the Israeli Army and a perpetual calendar for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, likes to define his life in colors, split into three parts: yellow for the yellow star; red for the Russian Army that liberated him; and blue for the Israeli sky.

PERSONAL WRITING FROM THE SHOAH

BY DR. DAVID SILBERKLANG
AND GABI HADAR

Anka My Dearest!
More than 18 months have passed since we were most brutally parted. During all that time, I have not stopped striving and searching for an opportunity to relate to you, at least in some small measure, my sad experiences throughout those dark months since our separation. A much too difficult task for my worn-out strength....

I wish that this bundle of memories, soaked in blood and tears, will serve as a perpetual tombstone for you, my dearest, and for our children, parents, brothers, sisters, and the millions of men, women and children who were murdered together with you.

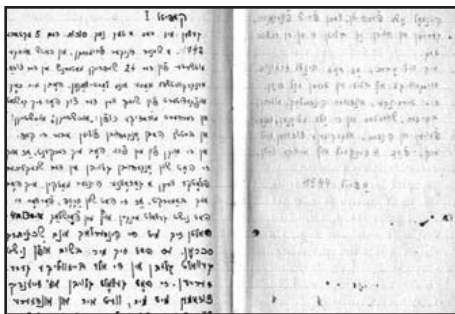
With these poignant words to his murdered wife, Oskar Strawczynski began his *Treblinka* memoir, written while hiding in a Polish forest in 1944.

Israel Cymlich, who escaped from the Treblinka I penal forced labor camp in April 1943, began his memoir more blunt-

ly: "I have decided to describe my war experiences. Two considerations prompted me to do so: my slim chances of surviving the war; and my desire to communicate my fortunes to my sister in Argentina."

These two memoirs, written clandestinely during the war, comprise the newest release in the *Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Series: Escaping Hell in Treblinka*. Cymlich's is one of the very few Jewish accounts of Treblinka I, which lay only two kilometers from the extermination camp, Treblinka II. Strawczynski's memoir is one of the first two written eyewitness accounts of the 2 August 1943 uprising in Treblinka II. Both accounts provide new information and insight about the life of the inmates in that infamous death camp.

Until this publication, very little was known about the Jews in *Treblinka I*.



Excerpt from the handwritten copy of Oskar Strawczynski's 1944 Yiddish memoir about his experiences in Treblinka.

Much of what Cymlich relates about the brutally harsh conditions, the camp population (mostly Jewish, it turns out), its operation, and many of the officials and prisoners is new. Strawczynski's sometimes graphic descriptions of vicious Jewish

camp officials and German staff, the corruption and debauchery in the camp, preparations for the uprising, and life after the mass escape are equally riveting.

Why did people write during the war? To whom were they addressing their thoughts? For what purpose? The reasons are as varied as the people themselves. Some simply wished to communicate, report events or find some kind of normalcy in their lives through their writing. Others sought to encourage their families to struggle on and to survive, or wished to leave a legacy after their own certain death.

Whereas only a fraction of what was written has survived, that small amount provides an insight that is inaccessible from other sources. These writings open a window onto a scene that the rest of us can understand only from a distance.

Yad Vashem has published dozens of diaries and other first-hand accounts and documents over the years. The insights into what Jews thought, what they discerned regarding their circumstances and their fate, and how they reacted are invaluable to our understanding of the Holocaust and of human behavior in extreme adversity. Many more such books are planned during the coming years. Will this body of first-hand, contemporaneous accounts explain the Holocaust for us? Of course not. But their contribution to our understanding is immense; without it we understand very little indeed. And with that in mind, Yad Vashem publications will continue to try to retrieve those voices from the oblivion to which the Nazis sought to confine them, in the hope that we can shed additional light on the event that has ruptured history as we know it.

COMPLETING A MISSION

A dedication of the Monument to the Murdered Jewish Citizens of Dvur Kralove nad Labem in Czech Republic was held on February 16. Rabbi Norman R. Patz was the initiator of this project that started more than 30 years ago. Below is his account of the event.

BY RABBI NORMAN R. PATZ

Our visit to Dvur Kralove on February 16, 2008 was the completion of mission: to memorialize the Jewish citizens of Dvur Kralove who were deported and murdered during the Holocaust. That mission started in 1975 when the congregation of Temple Sholom of West Essex, in Cedar Grove, New Jersey, received in trust a Torah scroll from the Memorial Scrolls Trust in London. The small scroll, we were told, came from a town in north-eastern Bohemia, where Jews had been leaders in textile manufacturing, and 111 of them had been murdered by the Nazis. In 1975, that was all the information we were able to learn about the Jewish community of Dvur Kralove nad Labem.

But we did know how this Torah scroll from Dvur Kralove got to the Westminster Synagogue in London. When the Nazis took over the remaining territory of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, just six months after the infamous Munich conference, they confiscated all Jewish properties, including synagogues. Then the Nazis started gathering the ritual objects of these synagogues, and had them sent to Prague to form the basis of a museum dedicated to the "exterminated ethnographic species." To this day, we cannot explain how or why the decision to gather these Jewish ritual items – Torah scrolls, silver Torah ornaments, embroidered curtains for the Holy Ark, etc. – was made. In

all of the other countries that the Nazis invaded and conquered, they plundered the synagogues and used the buildings for stables or storehouses, or as assembly points for Jews about to be murdered en masse or deported to one of the death camps in Poland.

Yet, in Prague, a collection of nearly 200,000 ritual objects was assembled and catalogued under Nazi supervision.



The dedication of the Monument to the Murdered Jewish Citizens of Dvur Kralove nad Labem.

With the end of World War II, few Czech Jewish communities could be reconstituted, so it was the Jewish Museum in Prague which attempted to cope with the treasures that had come into its possession. After the Communist coup, the Jewish Museum, like all other Czech museums, was nationalized. In 1962, the Communist leadership, looking for Western cash, sold the 1,564 Torah scrolls in the museum's collection to an English art collector who helped created the Memorial Scrolls Trust. The Trust conserved the scrolls and then started lending them to synagogues which could use them and thereby memorialize the Jews

who had been murdered.

When Temple Sholom of West Essex applied to the Trust for one of these Torah scrolls, the man who funded the acquisition had two requests: That the scroll be small in size, so that children could carry it in processions without difficulty, and that it be a kosher scroll – fit for ritual use, for reading the word of God in public worship services.

The scroll that best suited our needs came from the destroyed "Tempele" in Dvur Kralove. And since then, every young person who becomes Bar or Bat Mitzvah in the congregation reads from "our" Dvur Kralove scroll.

All of the Confirmation class students who came to Dvur Kralove for the dedication ceremony (and some of their parents) had read from the Dvur Kralove scroll and all of them knew the story well. They knew the names of the deportees and they had seen the drawings done secretly at Terezin by three Jewish children from Dvur Kralove – Petr Hellman, age 9, Marianna Schonova, age 10, and Ota

Hammerschlag, age 11. All of the members of my congregation who joined my wife and me at the dedication came with a sense of personal involvement in this history.

The idea of building a monument on the site of the synagogue first came up when my wife and I visited Dvur Kralove in 2005. At that time, we presented a copy of the monograph we had written about the Jewish community – "Thus We Remember" – to then-mayor Jiri Rain. He showed us the location of the synagogue on old town plans, and then took us to see where the synagogue had stood. We spoke then about erecting a small memorial. That conversation started a process that led to a partnership between the municipality of Dvur Kralove and the congregation of Temple Sholom of West Essex, the commissioning of Ota Cerny to sculpt the monument that his late father had designed, and the actual placing of the Star of David monument where the entrance doors of the synagogue once stood.

We could not imagine how moving and emotional the ceremony would be. The scouts in their uniforms lined up as an honor guard for the flags of the Czech Republic, the USA and Israel were so very impressive (and so cold!). The singing of the anthems by the assembly, led by the school children, who had learned *Hatikvah*, was thrilling! The speeches by the three ministers of Christian faith praising the dedication and warning of the dangers of extremism and totalitarianism were inspiring, and the letters from the Czech Ambassador to the US, Petr Kolar, the US Ambassador to the Czech Republic, Richard Graber, and the Executive Vice President of the Jewish Federation of the Czech Republic, Tomas Kraus – all of which were presented to Mayor Lukes – gave an official aspect to the day.

NAZI HUNT: ITALIANS DO IT BETTER

Italy and the United States are the two most successful countries in bringing former Nazi war criminals to justice or managing to at least convict them in absentia.

The praising report comes from the Jerusalem office of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre (SWC), the international Jewish human rights organization dedicated to "repairing the world," a task that includes confronting anti-Semitism, hate, and terrorism, but also chasing Nazi war criminals.

In a conversation with EJP, Efraim Zuroff, the SWC Jerusalem coordinator, recited by heart the latest data concerning Italy: "Between 2005 and 2006, Italy convicted six Nazi criminals in absentia. Then between April 2006 and March 2007, the Italian justice convicted 14 Germans and one Austrian man. Overall, Italy issued 21 judgments in absentia."

Recently, the media's attention focused on the Italian justice against a former SS, corporal, Michael Seifert, extradited by Canada to Italy, where he was sentenced to life imprisonment in his absence.

From June 1944 to April 1945, Seifert served as commander of the concentration camp of Bolzano, an Italian town close to the Austrian border. Seifert, who had been living in Canada since 1951, was found guilty of 11 murders by the military tribunal in Verona in 2000, and the life sentence was confirmed in October 2002.

Better than Italy are only the United States, who get a full "A" for their "Highly Successful Investigation and Prosecution Program," granted to the countries that have adopted a proactive stance on the issue.

Less brilliant a grade, "C", was given to

Denmark, Serbia and Hungary ("Minimal Success That Could Have Been Greater, Additional Steps Urgently Required").

The SWC then gave France and Romania a "D" ("Insufficient and/or Unsuccessful Efforts"), highlighting that Paris and Bucharest "could achieve important results if they were to change their policy."

Bosnia, Finland, Russia, Slovakia and Uruguay only scored an "E" and are described as "countries in which there are no known suspects and no practical steps have been taken to uncover new cases".

Following are Norway, Sweden, Syria, F1 countries that, according to the SWC, "refuse in principle to investigate, let alone prosecute, suspected Nazi war criminals because of legal (statute of limitation) or ideological restrictions."

The report then lists the F2 countries (Australia, Austria, Canada, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Great Britain, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine) "whose efforts (or lack thereof) have resulted in complete failure during the period under review, primarily due to the absence of political will to proceed."

And it ends with a long list of South American but also European countries "which did not respond to the questionnaire, but clearly did not take any action whatsoever to investigate suspected Nazi war criminals during the period under review" (grade: X, Argentina, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Greece, Luxemburg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Paraguay, Slovenia, Spain, Venezuela).

MARCH OF THE LIVING 10,000 STRONG

Some 10,000 young Jews, Poles and World War II survivors took part in the March of the Living on May 1, an annual event at the former Nazi death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau that honors the memory of some 6 million Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

This year's march, the 17th, started with the blowing of the *shofar* at the iron gate — crowned with the words "*Arbeit Macht Frei*," or "Work Sets You Free" — that leads into the former camp of Auschwitz.

The misleading inscription was to suggest to inmates they were coming to work, not die here.

The Israeli army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, led the long column of marchers, accompanied by some camp survivors carrying the Torah, and fellow Israeli troops in uniform.

"Each and every one of us should do our utmost to ensure: Never again," Ashkenazi said.

The *Kaddish* was spoken at a huge stone monument to the camp's victims at Birkenau.

At least 1.1 million people, including Jews, Poles and Roma, perished in the camp's gas chambers, or from starvation, disease and forced labor, before Soviet troops liberated it in January 1945.

In Poland marchers from some 50 countries in matching raincoats formed a sea of blue, with Israeli white-and-blue national flags fluttering overhead. There was an occasional drizzle as they walked in *Oswiecim*, the Polish city where the occupying Germans built the complex.

They walked in silence along a 2-mile stretch from the red brick houses of

Auschwitz to Birkenau, another area of the camp that is the site of wooden barracks and ruins of the gas chambers.

Survivor Leib Zisman was visiting Birkenau for the first time since January 1945, when the Nazis forced the inmates to walk out of the camp in frost and snow to flee the advancing Soviet army.

"I walked into the barracks in Birkenau and I recognized the beds that I slept in," said Zisman, 77, of Long Island, N.Y. "The memories are very vivid; I remember everything."

The then-13-year-old Zisman was brought to Birkenau in 1944 from the *Kovno* ghetto in Lithuania, where his parents died. From Birkenau, he was taken to camps in Germany, where he was liberated by U.S. troops.

Among the marchers was Avram Grant, the Israeli manager of English soccer club Chelsea. It was his seventh visit to Auschwitz. This time, he brought his 14-year-old son, Daniel, and wife, Tsofit. His Polish-born father survived the Holocaust, but many other members of his family were killed.

"It was terrible how people behaved to other people," Grant said. "It is good that they kept a place like this as a memory and as education that to hate someone is not the right way."

Teenage participants also stressed the power of remembering.

"The most amazing feeling of the march is togetherness," said Elana Weiner, a 17-year-old student from Tucson, Ariz. "We are the key to the future and if we remember and promise to never forget, then the rest of the world won't."

BRITAIN'S HOLOCAUST SHAME: THE VOYAGE OF THE EXODUS

(Continued from page 5)

The officer in charge of the operation, Lt-Col Gregson, later gave a very frank assessment of the success of the storming of the ship, which, according to a secret report, left up to 33 Jews, including four women, injured in the fighting. Sixty-eight Jews were held in custody to be put on trial for unruly behavior. Only three soldiers were hurt.

But it could have been a lot worse. Gregson later admitted that he had considered using tear gas against the immigrants.

He concluded: "The Jew is liable to panic and 800-900 Jews fighting to get up a stairway to escape tear smoke could have produced a deplorable business." He added: "It is a very frightening thing to go into the hold full of yelling maniacs when outnumbered six or eight to one."

Describing the assault, the officer wrote to his superiors: "After a very short pause, with a lot of yelling and female screams, every available weapon up to a biscuit and bulks of timber was hurled at the soldiers. They withstood it admirably and very stoically till the Jews assaulted, and in the first rush, several soldiers were downed, with half a dozen Jews on top, kicking and tearing ... No other troops could have done it as well and as humanely as these British ones did."

He concluded: "It should be borne in mind that the guiding factor in most of the actions of the Jews is to gain the sympathy of the world press."

One of the official observers who witnessed the violence was Dr Noah Barou, secretary of the British section of the World Jewish Congress, who had 35 years experience of reporting. He gave a very different account of the fighting.

He described young soldiers beating Holocaust survivors as a "terrible mental picture."

"They went into the operation as a football match ... and it seemed evident that they had not had it explained to them that they were dealing with people who had suffered a lot and who are resisting in



Refugees arriving at Haifa, where they had been towed in by the British Navy after it had fired a shot at the ship.

accordance with their convictions."

He noted: "People were usually hit in the stomach and this, in my opinion, explains that many people who did not show any signs of injury were staggering and moving very slowly along the staircase, giving the impression that they were half-starved and beaten up."

"When the people walked off the ship, many of them, especially younger people, were shouting to the troops 'Hitler commandos,' 'gentleman fascists,' 'sadists'."

Dr Barou was "especially impressed" by one young girl who "came to the top of the stairs and shouted to the soldiers, 'I am from Dachau'. And when they did not react she shouted 'Hitler commandos'".

While the British could find no evidence of excessive force, they conceded that in one case a Jew "was dragged down the gangway by the feet with his head bumping on the wooden slats".

After the soldiers had cleared the ships, the refugees were packed on to trains and taken to two camps in the British zone, *Poppendorf* and *Am Stau*.

At the camps, the treatment of the refugees caused an international outcry after it emerged that the conditions could

be likened to the concentration camps where six million Jews had perished.

Dr Barou was once again on hand to witness events. He reported that conditions at Camp Poppendorf were poor and claimed that it was being run by a German camp commandant. That was denied by the British.

But the allegations of cruel and insensitive treatment would not go away and, on 6 October, 1947, the Foreign Office sent a telegram to the British commanders in the region demanding to know whether the camps really were surrounded with barbed wire and guarded by German staff.

It turned out that Barou's reports had been only partially accurate. There was no German commandant or guards, but there were German staff carrying out duties inside the camp.

As winter set in, the British government made a further attempt to end the stalemate.

In return for leaving Germany and going to France, the refugees were offered increased rations.

It turned out to be yet another diplomatic blunder, leaving the British vulnerable to the accusation that they were adopting a policy of "starvation or return to France."

ISRAEL'S HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

OPENS PHOTO ARCHIVE ON THE INTERNET

BY JULIE STAHL, CNSNEWS.COM

Tova Mendel looked worried as she and her husband Salomon Findling and their four children walked down the street of Stropkov, Slovakia, with other members of the Jewish community in May 1942. We'll never know what she was thinking, but a picture of the family carrying their belongings as they were being deported by the Nazis now appears on Web site of Yad Vashem, Israel's main Holocaust memorial.

In honor of Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day Yad Vashem expanded its Internet presence by opening an online database containing nearly two-thirds of the 200,000 photos in its archives.

Tova's picture is one of 130,000 photos that can now be accessed online. Another photo shows Jewish women and children at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Deemed "not fit for work," they are sitting on the grass before being gassed.

"It is part of the ongoing effort to harness technology to further the cause of Holocaust remembrance," said Estee Yaari, Yad Vashem's foreign media liaison. Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev said that putting the photo collection on the Internet would make the vast collection easily accessible to the public. "We are hoping that it will increase public

awareness of the archives' tremendous importance and encourage people who have similar photographs and documents to send them to Yad Vashem for safekeeping," Shalev said.



Nordhausen, Germany, Prisoners in uniform, liberation, 1945.

Dr. Haim Gertner, director of the Yad Vashem Archives, said he hopes the public will join the ongoing efforts to decipher the pictures and identify the people in them.

The archives are the largest and most comprehensive collection of photos of the Jewish people from that period. The online edition contains photos of the lives of Jews before, during and after the horrors of World War II.

The Website makes it easy for users to search for words that are spelled in a number of different ways.

HUNT ON FOR NAZI DOCTOR

(Continued from page 7)

manipulation the short assignment at the same time to the (concentration camp) was concealed."

There is no indication who might have been responsible.

SEARCH FOR HEIM POINTS TO SONS

The U.S. Army Intelligence file on Heim could shed light on his wartime and postwar activities, and is among hundreds of thousands transferred to the U.S. National Archives. But the Army's electronic format is such that staff have so far only been able to access about half of them, and these don't include the file requested by the AP.

Heim was relatively well-known, however, having been a national hockey player in Austria before the war, and there were plenty of witnesses from his time at *Mauthausen*.

Austrian authorities sent the 1950 arrest warrant to American authorities in Germany who initially agreed to turn him over, then told the Austrians in a Dec. 21, 1950, letter obtained by the AP that they couldn't trace him.

What happened next is unclear, but in 1958 Heim apparently felt comfortable enough to buy a 42-unit apartment block in Berlin, listing it in his own name with a home address in *Mannheim*, according to

In an explanation of its policy, a Foreign Office document states: "Those who refuse transport to France and choose to remain in Germany will be accommodated in camps provided by the British authorities."

"Those who volunteer to return to France will continue to receive the present generous ration of 2,800 calories per day up to and including the time of their departure. Those who choose to remain in Germany will receive the same basic scale ration as that received by the normal consumer."

Only two Jews chose to accept the offer of the transfer.

A telegram written by Jewish leaders of the camps on 20 October 1947 makes clear the determination of the refugees, mostly displaced from Germany and east-central Europe, to find a home in Palestine.

"Nothing will deter us from Palestine. Which jail we go to is up to you (the British). We did not ask you to reduce our rations, we did not ask you to put us in *Poppendorf* and *Am Stau*."

Britain's impossible position was later summed up by John Coulson, a diplomat at the British Embassy in Paris.

He pointed out: "The pros and cons of keeping the Exodus immigrants in camps ... there is one point that should be kept in mind. Our opponents in France, and I dare say in other countries, have made great play with the fact that these immigrants were being kept behind barbed wire, in concentration camps and guarded by Germans."

"If we decide it is convenient not to keep them in camps any longer, I suggest that we should make some play that we are releasing them from all restraint of this kind in accordance with their wishes and that they were only put in such accommodation for the preliminary necessities of screening and maintenance."

In the end, the Government decided to follow this advice, and the Jewish migrants were set free. The vast majority did find their way to Palestine and help in the struggle to create and secure the state of Israel.

purchase documents obtained by the AP. He then moved to the nearby resort town of *Baden-Baden* and opened a gynecological clinic – also under his own name, Heister said.

In 1961 German authorities were alerted and began an investigation, but when they finally went to arrest him in September 1962, they just missed him – he apparently had been tipped off.

Heim continued to live off the rents collected from the Berlin apartments until 1979 when the building was confiscated by German authorities.

Proof that he is alive may lie in the fact that no one has claimed his estate. Heim has two sons in Germany and a daughter who lived in Chile but whose current whereabouts are unknown.

In Frankfurt, Heim's lawyer said he still officially represents the fugitive, but has not heard from him for 20 years and has "no clue" to his whereabouts.

Asked in a telephone interview if Heim was dead, Fritz Steinacker said only: "I don't know."

Ruediger Heim, one of the sons, would not comment when telephoned at his *Baden-Baden* villa.

"All I can say is that it has been implied that I am in contact with my father, and that is absolutely false," he said. "The rest is speculation, and I can't enter into that."

HOLOCAUST TORCH-LIGHTER TELLS OF ROLE IN EICHMANN CAPTURE

Fifty years ago, Michael Maor returned to his native Germany on behalf of the *Mossad*, and photographed documents that led to the conviction of Holocaust mastermind Adolf Eichmann.

On April 30, he lit a torch at Yad Vashem in memory of those who perished in the Holocaust – including his entire family. “I’ve never seen a day of peace in my life,” Maor, 75, told *The Jerusalem Post*. “Of course it is a big honor to be at Yad Vashem.”

Attending photojournalism school in Germany in the 1950s, Maor was asked by the *Mossad* to gather evidence on Eichmann.

Under the cover of darkness, he sneaked into the office of the general prosecutor in *Baden Essen* to photograph documents proving Eichmann’s involvement in the murder of Jews.

“The room was heavy with cigar smoke, and when I started to take the pictures [I realized] the documents were of Eichmann,” Maor said.

The assignment almost got him caught. At one point, a cleaning lady was about to enter the room, but hesitated, allowing Maor to leave unnoticed.

“I saw documents you never thought you would see,” he said.

Eichmann was executed by Israel in 1962, the only Nazi to have been sentenced to death by the Jewish state.

Maor is one of six survivors selected to



Michael Maor.

light a torch on the eve of this year’s Holocaust Remembrance Day in honor of the six million Jews who perished.

Born in 1933 in *Halberstadt*, Germany, Maor – an only child – and his family fled the Nazis, first to Italy and then to Yugoslavia, where both of his parents were murdered while hiding in the woods.

“I was running for my life in the forest,” Maor said.

Hiding with various foster families and at an orphanage, he eventually made his way to Mandatory Palestine, ending up on *Kibbutz Mizra*, near *Afula*, in 1945. One of

the families Maor hid with came to Israel in 1949, settling in *Nahariya*; Maor is still in contact with them.

Describing his life in Israel, Maor speaks with a full German accent and a matter-of-fact delivery that is broken up by an occasional laugh – almost as if he himself finds it hard to believe some of the events of his life.

Following service in the Paratroopers Brigade, he returned to Germany for photojournalism school. Some of the teachers had been officers in the Nazi army. “I told them, I am not only a Jew, I am an Israeli officer,” Maor said.

Every morning, one of his teachers would give him a salute saying “Good morning, Mr. Maor.”

When he returned to Israel he worked as a photojournalist, including five years at the *Post*.

Maor didn’t remain in journalism for long.

“Before the Six Day War, I went back to the army and left all of these jobs behind,” he said.

He eventually founded the Border Police’s intelligence branch, serving for 15 years as a national intelligence officer. He retired in 1999.

Despite all the hardships he has endured during his life, Maor said he was happy with his situation today. “I have a wife, three children, four grandchildren, and I have a good life,” Maor said.

YAD VASHEM MOURNS THE PASSING OF ETA WROBEL

Eta Chait Wrobel died on Memorial Day, soon after her twin great-grandchildren were born. Her life was filled with the love of giving and of fighting for truth, justice, and the Jewish people.

“We fought to survive,” she would say. “We fought so that some of us would get out of there and make new families, to spit in the Nazi’s eyes. Our babies are our revenge.”

Eta grew up with nine siblings, and she was the sole survivor of her family. After the war she fled the Communists and settled in Brooklyn.

In time, the family moved to Kew Gardens, where Eta used her home to rally survivors to support Yad Vashem. Eta Wrobel was a participant of the first meeting that was held in the Stella and Sam Skura’s home, where American Society for Yad Vashem was established. Eta was also an active and vocal member of the National Council of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Their Descendants.



SCHOLARS RUN DOWN MORE CLUES TO A HOLOCAUST MYSTERY

Budapest, November 1944: Another German train has loaded its cargo of Jews bound for Auschwitz. A young Swedish diplomat pushes past the SS guard and scrambles onto the roof of a cattle car.

Ignoring shots fired over his head, he reaches through the open door to outstretched hands, passing out dozens of bogus “passports” that extended Sweden’s protection to the bearers. He orders everyone with a document off the train and into his caravan of vehicles. The guards look on, dumbfounded.

Raoul Wallenberg was a minor official of a neutral country, with an unimposing appearance and gentle manner. Recruited and financed by the U.S., he was sent into Hungary to save Jews. He bullied, bluffed and bribed powerful Nazis to prevent the deportation of 20,000 Hungarian Jews to concentration camps, and averted the massacre of 70,000 more people in Budapest’s ghetto by threatening to have the Nazi commander hanged as a war criminal.

Then, on Jan. 17, 1945, days after the Soviets moved into Budapest, the 32-year-old Wallenberg and his Hungarian driver, Vilmos Langfelder, drove off under a Russian security escort, and vanished forever.

And because he was a rare flicker of humanity in the man-made hell of the Holocaust, the world has celebrated him ever since. Streets have been named after him and his face has been on postage stamps. And researchers have wrestled with two enduring mysteries: Why was Wallenberg arrested, and did he really die in Soviet custody in 1947?

Fresh documents are to become public which might cast light on another puzzle: Whether Wallenberg was connected, directly or indirectly, to a super-secret wartime U.S. intelligence agency known as “the Pond,” operating as World War II was drawing to a close and the Soviets were growing increasingly suspicious of

Western intentions in Eastern Europe.

Speculation that Wallenberg was engaged in espionage has been rife since the Central Intelligence Agency acknowledged in the 1990s that he had been recruited for his rescue mission by an agent of the Office of Strategic Services, the OSS, which later became the CIA.

Despite dozens of books and hundreds of documents on Wallenberg, much remains hidden. The Kremlin has failed to find or deliver dozens of files, Sweden has declined to open all its books, and *The Associated Press* has learned as many as 100,000 pages of declassified OSS documents await processing at the National Archives.

The Russians say Wallenberg died in prison in 1947, but never produced a proper death certificate or his remains.

But independent research suggests he may have lived many years – perhaps until the late 1980s. If true, he likely was held in isolation, stripped of his identity, known only by a number or a false name and moving like a phantom among Soviet prisons, labor camps and psychiatric institutions. In 1991, the Russian government assigned Vyacheslav Nikonov, deputy head of the KGB intelligence service, to spend months searching classified archives about Wallenberg.

“I think I found all the existing documents,” Nikonov e-mailed *The Associated Press* last month. The Soviets believed Wallenberg had been a spy, he said, but unlike many political detainees he never had a trial.

Nikonov’s conclusion: “Shot in 1947.”

Wallenberg arrived in Budapest in July 1944. With the knowledge of

his government, his task as first secretary to the Swedish diplomatic legation was a cover for his true mission as secret emissary of the U.S. War Refugee Board, created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in a belated attempt to stem the annihilation of Europe’s Jews.

In the previous two months, 440,000 Hungarian Jews had been shipped to Auschwitz for extermination. They were among the last of six million Jews slaughtered in the Holocaust.

Of the 230,000 who remained in the Hungarian capital in mid-1944, 100,000 survived the war.

After the Red Army arrived in January, Wallenberg went to see the Russian military commander to discuss postwar reconstruction and restitution of Jewish property. Two days later he returned under Russian escort to collect some personal effects, then was never seen in public again. And what did his country or his influential cousins do about it?

Looking back a half century later, the Swedish government acknowledged that its own passive response to the detention of one of its diplomats was astounding, and that it had missed several chances to win his freedom.

“It is inconceivable,” says Wallenberg’s half-sister, Nina Lagergren “Here is a man sent out by the Swedish government to risk his life. He saved thousands of people and he was left to rot.”

Some time around 1994, Susan Mesinai, who had by then been researching the Wallenberg case for five years, visited Lucette Colvin Kelsey,

Wallenberg’s cousin, at her home in Connecticut. After lunch, Kelsey caught up with Mesinai as she got into the car and told her: “Raoul was working for the highest levels of government.”

“So I said to her, ‘How high? Do you mean the president?’ And she nodded her head,” Mesinai said, disclosing to AP a conversation she had kept confidential for 14 years.

Rather than clarify anything, Kelsey’s cryptic remark only deepened the fog.

Wallenberg’s rescue mission inevitably placed him in a vortex of intrigue and espionage involving the Hungarian resistance, the Jewish underground, communists working for the Soviets, and British, U.S. and Swedish intelligence operations. He also had regular contact with Adolf Eichmann and other Nazis running the deportation of Jews.

Whether or not he himself was passing on intelligence, Russia had plenty of reason to suspect him of spying, either for the Allies or Germany, or both.

“Wallenberg had ties to all the major actors in Hungary,” says Susanne Berger, a German researcher who collaborated with the Swedish-Russian research project.

The Stockholm chief of the War Refugee Board, Iver C. Olsen, was also a key member of the 35-man OSS station in the Swedish capital, and it was he who recruited Wallenberg, who in turn kept the U.S. connection secret by sending his communications through Swedish diplomatic channels.

In 1955, Olsen denied to the CIA that Wallenberg ever spied for the OSS, and Mesinai and Berger offer a different likelihood: that the Swede was a source for the Pond, which was a rival to the OSS known only to Roosevelt and a few insiders in the War and State Departments.

A small clandestine intelligence-gathering operation, the Pond relied on contacts in private corporations and hand-picked

(Continued on page 15)



Raoul Wallenberg

WE PLEDGE “NEVER TO FORGET”

In March and April, events commemorating the liquidation of the Cracow Ghetto were held in Florida. Below are excerpts from the speeches given by the president of New Cracow Friendship Society, Roman Weingarten at these events.

March 13 1943, a day that is ingrained in the memory of those who survived it as well as of those who lost members of their families on that day. In the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt, this was a “day of infamy” the day of the liquidation of the Cracow Ghetto, when 3000 of our brethren men, women and children, were brutally murdered and their blood drenched the pavements of the streets of Podgorze. And for those who survived, this was only the beginning of a nightmare that was to last for two more years.

But the history of the Jews of Cracow would be little more than a meaningless interlude of murder if we failed to place it in a larger context. This observance relates to a story of mass murder that took place on a small piece of land that we have known as the city of Cracow during the six years of the WW II. Six years is relatively a short time when compared to the thousands years of history of a people that had known all forms of disasters, persecution and suffering, but I dare to state that this experience has been so unique in its monstrosity that it has no parallel in the history of mankind. So, if we do not bury our dead with honor, safeguard their dignity and give meaning to their sacrifice

then future generations will regard them merely as so many sheep led to the slaughterhouse of history.

Our purpose here today is not to recreate the horrors, but to remember and pay homage to the people whom we lost and to the traditions we hold dear.

From the dawn of history, the Jews were the only people whose historic experience has traveled from biblical times to modern science, and it indeed is a history full of mystery and dreams. One of the deepest mysteries is the one of suffering. How can one rationalize this unique experience of a people attracting so much hatred and violence that has distorted mankind's spiritual values? And how are we to understand that obsession with a nation that brought to the world the doctrine of monotheism and the teachings of “Love thy neighbor as yourself.”

For the average Jewish person, when one mentions the Holocaust, they think of *Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek, Belzec* and other concentration and extermination camps. When we gather to commemorate the liquidation of the Cracow Ghetto, what passes in front of our eyes are the thousands of our brethren, our families and friends as they were chased to *Plac Zgody* in Podgorze to their destiny and death. For most of them, this was the last time that they walked on this earth.

The grip that those memories have upon us and the awareness that we are the last eyewitnesses to an event unparalleled in the history of mankind is

the main reasons that our organization continues with the observance of this commemoration.

On this occasion, we take time to recall the martyrdom and heroism of a small group of young people, many of whom I knew personally. The plan was to attack three coffee houses in Cracow simultaneously; the *Esplanada*, the *Cyganeria* and the *Zakopianka*. All operations were carried out as planned and the attack on *Cyganeria*, where seven Germans were killed and many others wounded, was the most successful. The event gave a great boost to the spirit of the fighters.

However, as fate would have it, the attack on *Cyganeria* was the last of the underground activities, because after that, most of the leadership was arrested and executed, which gave a death blow to the movement. But as we are paying tribute to the memory of those brave men and women, we include all who perished, because each and every Jew was a hero in his or her own rights.

For the survivors, the Holocaust in general continues to be the defining event, trying to understand not only the course of history during the 20th century but the course of human events. We are caught in the middle because we are the ones who experienced the Holocaust first-hand with all the horrors of starvation, deprivation and death.

We belong to a traumatized generation that witnessed the defeat of Nazism and

communism, but not of hatred. These emotions are still very much alive.

Some of the reasons that we are meeting here today, besides for the need to pay tribute and remember our *Kedoshim* is to expose denial and hatred. Soon after liberation, we were naïve to think that anti-Semitism and hatred will never again raise its ugly head. Surely, we thought, humankind has learned its lesson from the greatest and cruelest tragedy in recorded history. Never again will anti-Semitism be a seductive image in the lives of civilized people. So we thought!!!

But we now know better, we know that anti-Semitism and hatred did not die in the gas chambers, Jews did.

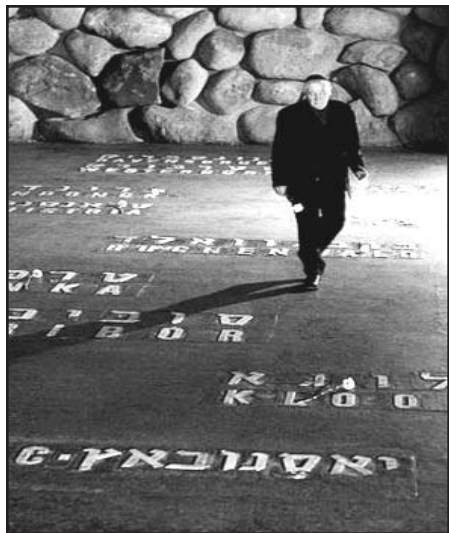
Now, 65 years after the nightmare was lifted, many good things have happened. The survivors have learned to build on ruins. Family life was recreated, children were born, friendships were revived, and we lived to see the rebirth of the Jewish nation in its own homeland, the State of Israel.

So, perhaps there is some logic in the argument “Let's make up”. Perhaps the time has come to reconcile our differences with the Almighty. But regardless of what we think, we can never allow ourselves to forget the infamous day of March 13 1943, the day of the liquidation of the Cracow Ghetto. We must and we will continue to remember the dead, pay tribute to their courage and pledge “Never to Forget.”

OSKAR SCHINDLER, FROM HOLOCAUST HERO TO OBSCURITY

Oskar Schindler saved more than 1,000 Jews from the gas chambers, but after 1945 he fell into obscurity and poverty and died without the recognition he deserved, a new exhibition in Frankfurt shows.

After years of ill health and a string of failed business ventures, Schindler died a bitter man aged 66 in 1974, two decades before Steven Spielberg's 1993 film “*Schindler's List*” made him famous worldwide.



A Holocaust survivor saved by Schindler.

“He was an unusual man for an unusual time. But (the war) was the high point of his life, and afterwards, things went downhill,” says Ursula Trautwein, a friend of Schindler in Frankfurt, where he lived from 1957 until his death.

His beginnings and early life were hardly auspicious, and he remained something of an enigma to the end.

Born in 1908 into a middle-class family in a German-speaking area of Austria-Hungary, which after 1918 became part of Czechoslovakia, he left school at 16.

His marriage, in 1928, to Emilie, was

childless and not a happy one. He was fond of a drink, was a notorious womanizer and fathered two illegitimate children.

He was also no angel in other ways, and his activities before the war suggested neither business acumen nor any readiness to let his conscience get in the way of looking after Number One.

After several years that included various jobs and periods of unemployment, which did nothing to temper his penchant for fast cars and the high life, he was arrested in 1938 by the Czechoslovakian secret police for spying. Ironically, the rise of Hitler and his annexation of the *Sudetenland* – the German-speaking part of Czechoslovakia – saved Schindler's neck at this point.

He was released from prison and in September 1939 became a card-carrying member of Adolf Hitler's National Socialists and moved to Poland, where he acquired a formerly Jewish-owned factory in *Krakow* at a knock-down price.

Most of the employees were Jewish, at first simply because they were cheaper but as Schindler began to be horrified by the increasing brutality of the Nazis, something changed in his mind, and he began protecting them.

Schindler managed to convince the authorities, including concentration camp commander Amon Goeth, that his factory was vital to the Nazis and that even children and old men had skills vital to the war effort.

Still only in his 30s, the Gestapo arrested him three times, but Schindler always got out, and as the Red Army approached in 1945, he even managed to transfer his Jewish workers to a new factory in the *Sudetenland*.

He and his workers survived the war, but the charm, people skills and luck needed to pull all this off seemed to desert him after 1945.

Schindler was lucky to escape with his life and fled Eastern Europe, heading first with Emilie to *Regensburg* in *Bavaria*, where things did not work out. Four years later, the couple emigrated to Argentina.

Once there, Schindler opened a chicken farm and bred nutrias – beaver-like South American creatures also known as coypus – for their fur, but the venture was a disaster and in 1957 he returned, bankrupt, to then-West Germany.

He left not only debts in Argentina, but also Emilie, whom he never saw again, and settled in *Frankfurt*, Germany's drab banking capital, where he was to remain until his death.

Perhaps he only knew how to run a loss-making factory making things no one needed, because when it came to running a going concern, Schindler struggled.

He tried various ventures, helped by friends in Israel. In 1962 he bought a concrete factory which went bankrupt in less than 12 months. When he tried to get it going again, he suffered a heart attack that nearly killed him.

While his war heroics had won him recognition in Israel – he planted a tree at the Yad Vashem memorial – back in West Germany he was largely unknown despite receiving a medal in 1956, something which left him “bitter,” Trautwein told AFP.

It was her late husband, Dieter Trautwein, a provost, who tracked Schindler down after learning of his story – in Israel – and found him in 1966 living in a small apartment just across from the Frankfurt train station.

“My husband rang the bell ... and said, ‘I have a report here about one Oskar Schindler who rescued Jews,’ and the man said, ‘Yes, that is me,’” recounts

Ursula Trautwein.

A friendship began, along with efforts to secure recognition in Germany. In 1966 he was awarded the “*Bundesverdienstkreuz*” (the order of merit) and two years later was honored by the Roman Catholic Church.

But it was all too little, too late. Oskar Schindler died in 1974 in *Hildesheim*, where his partner at the time lived.

A large memorial service was held in Frankfurt – when people discovered for



Emilie Schindler.

the first time the existence of his two children – and he was buried in Israel.

According to Ursula Trautwein, both Thomas Keneally's 1982 book “*Schindler's Ark*” – which Leopold Page, a Jew saved by Schindler, persuaded him to write – and Spielberg's film give an accurate picture of Schindler the man.

“Keneally had such intuition. When I read his book, I could even hear Oskar Schindler laughing and talking, and he didn't even know him,” Trautwein says. “The film brought it all together very well.”

“His wife (who died in 2001) received every honor going – she was given an audience with the pope, by the US president... I wish Schindler could have had just a small piece of that,” she says.

JEWISH REMAINS DUG UP IN BELARUS

BY YURAS KARMANAU, AP

Workers rebuilding a sports stadium on the site of an 18th century Jewish cemetery in Belarus say they have no choice but to consign the bones to city dumps.

"It's impossible to pack an entire cemetery into sacks," said worker Mikhail Gubets, adding that he stopped counting the skulls when the number went over 100. But critics say it's part of a pattern of callous indifference toward Belarus' Jewish heritage that was prevalent when the country was a Soviet republic and hasn't changed.

The stadium in Gomel, Belarus' second-largest city and a center of Jewish life until World War II, is one of four that were built on top of Jewish cemeteries around the country.

The Gomel cemetery was destroyed then the stadium was built in 1961, but the remains lay largely undisturbed until this spring when reconstruction began and a bulldozer turned up the first bones. A Jewish leader in Gomel, Vladimir Gershanok, says he asked the builders to put the bones into sacks for reburial at a cemetery that has a monument to Holocaust victims.

"We know we can't stop the construction but we're trying to minimize the destruction," Gershanok said.

But city authorities have ruled that the construction can go ahead because the bones are more than 50 years old. Igor Poluyan, the city official responsible for building sports facilities, says he does-

n't understand the problem. "If something was scattered there, we'll collect it and take it away," he said.

A history professor, Yevgeny Malikov, sees the cemetery as part of the city's heritage. He has filled three sacks with bones and pulled aside two of the unearthed marble gravestones. Other gravestones are piled near a trash bin or already car-



Local history professor, Yevgeny Malikov shows human bones at a sports stadium in the city of Gomel.

ried away. Some of the bones have been carried off by stray dogs.

"The history of the city is being thrown into the dump together with the human remains," Malikov said.

Jews began settling in Gomel in the 16th century and by the end of the 19th century made up more than half of the population. In 1903, they made history by being the first to resist a pogrom, defending 26 synagogues and prayer houses.

Most of Gomel's 40,000 Jews managed to flee before the Nazis arrived. The 4,000

who remained were shot in November 1941. Only a few thousand Jews now live in the city of 500,000.

Oleg Korzhuyev, 38, who lives on Karl Marx Street at the edge of the site, said the workers aren't happy about digging up human bones, "but if they find a gold tooth then it's a real celebration."

Another city, Grodno, experienced a similar problem while reconstructing a stadium built on a Jewish cemetery. The excavated earth and bones were scattered into a ravine.

Jewish graves also have been disturbed in neighboring Ukraine.

"It's not just a Jewish issue, it's this general Soviet legacy," said Ukraine's chief rabbi, Yakov Blaikh. "They didn't respect people while they were alive and they don't respect them when they are dead."

In April, the Jewish community in the city of Vinnitsa was able to stop construction of an apartment building on a pre-World War II Jewish cemetery.

Ukrainian authorities apologized, saying they did not realize the construction would affect the cemetery. Belarus, on the other hand, has been "one of the least responsive countries on all Jewish issues," according to Efraim Zuroff, director of the Israeli Simon Wiesenthal Center.

"The government is simply erasing Jewish history from the face of this land," said Yakov Basin, vice president of the Belarusian Jewish Council.

Before the war, about 1 million Jews lived in Belarus and 800,000 of them died in the Holocaust. Today they number 27,000 in the country of 10 million.

HAMAS TV CLAIMS "SATANIC JEWS" PLANNED, PERPETRATED HOLOCAUST

Hamas' Al-Aqsa TV aired a documentary on April 18 claiming that Jews planned and perpetrated the Holocaust in order to rid the nation of the "burden" of the weak and disabled.

Palestinian Media Watch, a group that monitors Palestinian Arabic language media and schoolbooks, uploaded part of the program onto YouTube in a segment called "Hamas Holocaust Perversion: Jews Planned Holocaust to Kill Handicapped Jews."

The Al-Aqsa TV clip edits together footage from the World War II Nazi Genocide, showing Jews being rounded up and taken to a train as well as emaciated corpses lying in a pile, alongside images of Israeli leaders David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir.

The accompanying commentary claims that Ben Gurion said "the disabled and handicapped are a heavy burden on the state." To rid them of that scourge, the video claims, Ben Gurion and "the Satanic Jews thought up an evil plot to be rid of the burden of disabled and handicapped in twisted criminal ways."

The video also claims that Jews made up the Holocaust and blamed the Nazis for it in order to "benefit from international sympathy."

The Holocaust "was a joke, and part of the perfect show that Ben Gurion put on," said Amin Dabur, head of the Palestinian Center for Strategic Research organization, in the video.

Dabur added that the "Jewish plan" focused on developing "strong and energetic youth [for Israel]," and that the figure of six million Jewish victims is mere propaganda.

SCHOLARS RUN DOWN MORE CLUES TO A HOLOCAUST MYSTERY

(Continued from page 13)

embassy personnel. It worked closely with the Dutch electronics company N.V. Philips, "which had access to 'enemy' territory as well as a far-flung corporation intelligence apparatus in its own right," said former CIA analyst Mark Stout who wrote a brief unofficial history of the Pond.

So far, no evidence has emerged that Wallenberg worked for the Pond, and Stout said in an interview he had not seen Wallenberg mentioned in any papers he has reviewed.

"The Pond was centered around President Roosevelt's office and rumors of a special mission, intelligence or otherwise, for Raoul Wallenberg have persisted through the years," said Berger, who suspects the Soviets knew about the agency. It may have been just one more reason for Stalin to order his arrest, she said. Regardless of whether Wallenberg was involved, "the Pond's activities clearly would have served to enhance Soviet paranoia about Allied activities and aims in Hungary."

Wallenberg's very name may have been enough to arouse Russian distrust. Throughout the war, his cousins Marcus and Jacob Wallenberg, the czars of a banking and industrial empire, had done business in Germany, producing the ball bearings that kept its army on the move. The Wallenbergs also were involved in discreet, unsuccessful peace efforts between the Allies and Germany, which Stalin feared would leave him excluded, a foretaste of global realignment that would lead to the Cold War.

In December 1993, investigator Marvin Makinen of the University of Chicago interviewed Varvara Larina, a retired

orderly at Moscow's Vladimir Prison since 1946. She remembered a foreigner who was kept in solitary confinement on the third floor of Korpus 2, a building used both as a hospital and isolation ward. Though it was decades earlier, the prisoner stood out in Larina's memory. He spoke Russian with an accent and "complained about everything," she said.

He repeatedly griped that the soup was cold by the time Larina delivered it. Prison authorities ordered her to serve him first.

"This is very unusual," Makinen said in an interview. Normally, such complaints would condemn an inmate to a punishment cell. "The fact that he wasn't means he was a very special prisoner."

When shown a gallery of photographs, Larina immediately picked out Wallenberg's one never published before, Makinen said.

She recalled he was in the opposite cell when another prisoner, Kirill Osmak, died in May 1960.

That was enough for Makinen and Chicago colleague Ari Kaplan to roughly pinpoint the cell of Larina's foreigner. Creating a database of cell occupancy from the prison's registration cards, they found two units opposite Osmak's that were reported empty for 243 and 717 days respectively. Normally, cells were left vacant for a week at most, Makinen said.

The researchers concluded that those two cells likely held special prisoners, namelessly concealed in the gulag. Mesinai and others reviewed hundreds of accounts over the decades of people who claimed to have seen or heard of someone who could have been Wallenberg. They established a pattern of sightings, even though many individual reports were considered unreliable, uncorroborated,

deliberate hoaxes or cases of mistaken identity with other Swedish prisoners. Some stories, like Larina's, ring particularly true.

One compelling account came in 1961. Swedish physician Nanna Svartz asked an eminent Russian scientist about Wallenberg during a medical congress in Moscow. Lowering his voice, the Russian told her that Wallenberg was at a psychiatric hospital and "not in very good shape."

The Russian, Alexandr Myasnikov, later claimed he had been misunderstood, but Svartz stood firm. His remark, she later reported, "came spontaneously. He went pale as soon as he said it, and appeared to understand that he had said too much."

A few years later the Soviets sent out feelers for a possible spy swap. Envoys indicated Moscow was ready to "compensate" Sweden if it freed Stig Wennerstromm, a Swedish air force officer who had spied for the Kremlin for 15 years.

Though Wallenberg's name was never mentioned, he was considered the only prize worth exchanging for such a high-value spy. The intermediary was Wolfgang Vogel, an East German lawyer who engineered many Cold War prisoner exchanges. But years of halfhearted negotiation ended in no deal.

Nina Lagergren keeps a small wooden box in the cellar of her comfortable Stockholm home. The Russians gave it to her in 1989 when she visited Moscow. It contains her half-brother's diplomatic passport, a stack of currency, a Swedish license for the pistol he bought but never used, and two telephone diaries. Among the entries are Eichmann and Berber Smit, the daughter of the Dutch spy.

They also gave the family a copy of Wallenberg's "death certificate", handwritten and unstamped.

"They anticipated that I would get very moved and understand there was no more hope," Lagergren said.

Instead it reinforced her belief that Wallenberg had lived beyond 1947 and perhaps was even then alive. "This proved we could go on," she said. Today he would be 95, and she concedes he must be dead.

If indeed Wallenberg's death in 1947 was a lie, the question remains: Why was he never freed?

The 2001 Swedish report speculated that the longer he was held, the harder it was for the Soviets to release him. Still, "it would have been exceptional to order the execution of a diplomat from a neutral country. It might have appeared simpler to keep him in isolation," the report said. Berger, the independent researcher, has submitted a new, detailed request to Moscow to release files on prisoners who shared cells with the missing diplomat and on other foreigners in the gulag; Mesinai hopes to study psychiatric facilities where Wallenberg may have been confined; Ritter, the Hungarian researcher, is tracing the British spy network of Lolle Smit; and historians are awaiting the release of the Pond papers.

Whatever any of this reveals, a 1979 State Department memo puts these questions into perspective: "Whether or not Wallenberg was involved in espionage during World War II is a moot point at this stage in history. His obvious humanitarian acts certainly outweigh any conceivable 'spy' mission he may have been on."

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SALUTE HOLLYWOOD

Two hundred people gathered at the Four Seasons Hotel in Beverly Hills, California for the American Society for Yad Vashem event at the end of February. The event, which was organized together with the Jewish Life Foundation, saluted Hollywood and the films that were made about the Holocaust. Among the participants were David and Fela Shapell; Barry and Marilyn Rubenstein; Jan and Suzanne Czucker and their son Ed with his wife Elissa; Jack Belz and son Gary with his wife Shelly; Barbara Kort, Jona Goldrich, Maria Herskovic and daughters Patricia and Suzanne; Bernie & Hanna Rubenstein; Marilyn Ziering; Beryl Grace & Jonathan Rosenberg; Lou and Trudy Kestenbaum; Geoffrey Rolat, Sam Delug; Moshe and Helen Sassover, Jarow Rogovin, and many others.

Honorees included director Arthur Hiller for his film *The Man in the Glass Booth*; director Paul Verhoeven for his film *The Black Book*; violinist Miri Ben Ari for the music in the film *Freedom Writers*, and others.

Actresses Valerie Harper, Lainie Kazan, Millie Perkins and Mare Winningham, and actor Jon Voight read from the Diary of Anne Frank and the last letters of Holocaust victims compiled by Yad Vashem.



Yad Vashem Benefactors, Fela and David Shapell (middle) with Branko Lustig, Academy Award-winning producer of *Schindler's List* and his wife, Mirjana Lustig.



Actress Millie Perkins (left), who portrayed Anne Frank in the film *Diary of Anne Frank* with Yad Vashem Benefactors, Marilyn and Barry Rubenstein.



Standing from left to right, Gary Belz, actor Jon Voight, Cheryl Simon, Yad Vashem Builder, Jona Goldrich, Gary Belz's wife, Shelly. Sitting from left to right, Yad Vashem supporter, Barbara Kort, violinist Miri Ben-Ari, and Yad Vashem Benefactor Jack Belz.



Susanne and Jan Czucker, Yad Vashem Benefactors.

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