

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



Vol. 35-No.5

ISSN 0892-1571

May/June 2009-Iyyar/Sivan 5769

WOMEN, RESISTANCE & RENEWAL

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON

Over 200 attendees at the American Society for Yad Vashem Annual Spring Luncheon gathered in the Pegasus Suites of the Rainbow Room on the sunny afternoon of May 21st to honor two distinguished members of the survivors' community, Stella Skura and Anna Erlich.

After greeting the audience, the Chairwoman of the Luncheon, Marilyn Rubenstein said:

"We gather here in support of Yad Vashem, the Jewish People's National Memorial to the Holocaust, and the largest repository of documents on the events that befell our people in recent history. Yad Vashem is the institution serving as the keeper of the legacy of the Six Million *Kedoshim* and Survivors for generations to come.

"This year's theme is *Women, Resistance & Renewal*, and we are pleased to honor two women, Stella Skura and Anna Erlich, who have dedicated their lives to remembering the *Shoah* and passing on to their children and communities that it is not a mere commemorative act, but a sacred legacy.

"I am honored to introduce our esteemed and dedicated founder and Chairman, Eli Zborowski. Eli continues to be the driving force behind the American Society for Yad Vashem. For close to 30 years he has worked tirelessly in the name of Remembrance. Those who wish to deny that the atrocities of the Holocaust ever happened will have people everywhere who will be fortified with the knowledge to prove them wrong. We who are committed to this cause now, including the third generation, are following his lead.

Constantly mindful that the world never forgets, Eli, along with Yad Vashem, works to make sure that the world is armed to prove wrong those who would deny the Holocaust.

"Today, we celebrate our accomplishments and reaffirm our commitment to Yad Vashem by acknowledging the survivors who triumphed over tremendous adversity, rebuilding their lives. We also salute the contributions of our Young

Leadership to the noble cause of Remembrance. We all derive inspiration from our Chairman and founder, Eli Zborowski."

In his speech, the Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, Eli Zborowski, said:

"The American Society for Yad Vashem's achievements are evident throughout the Yad Vashem landscape in Jerusalem. They include more

endeavors. I would also like to acknowledge the role of my wife, Elizabeth Zborowski, who served as a sounding board for ideas and who worked along with our staff in making this afternoon a success.

"In 1997, we inaugurated our Young Leadership Associates. They have since grown from a handful of young adults to a membership which numbers in excess of 700. Under the able guidance of Caroline Massel, their activities have significant-

their commitment to the Cause of Remembrance. Anna has been a devoted member of the Society since its inception in 1981. She has demonstrated her steadfast resolve by her attendance at and support of all our events. On behalf of the American Society for Yad Vashem, I am pleased to extend a hearty *mazel-tov* to Anna on being honored this afternoon.

"Friendships among survivors are different than most conventional friendships.



Marilyn Rubenstein, Spring Luncheon Chair; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem Inc.; Guest Speaker Professor Nechama Tec; Saul Kagan, Executive Vice President Emeritus of the Claims Conference; and Fanya G. Heller, American Society for Yad Vashem Inc. National Vice Chair, NY.

than thirty major projects which have rendered Yad Vashem as the Global Guardian of Holocaust Remembrance. For this, I owe a personal debt of gratitude to all of you who continue to support our

ly impacted Holocaust awareness and education. We are delighted to showcase their interest. This afternoon's program includes remarks from several of their members.

"The theme of this year's luncheon is 'Women, Resistance and Renewal.' The two women we honor, Anna Erlich and Stella Skura, as well as our guest speaker, Prof. Nechama Tec, are each in their own way the embodiment of this theme.

"Anna Erlich was for many years a friend and a neighbor of ours in Forest Hills, a community that became a nurturing home for scores of survivors and their families. Despite the many hardships and devastating losses the Erlichs experienced during the war, Anna and her late husband, Jacob, chose to renew their lives through *Tikkun Olam*. Especially noteworthy is

They are far more intense, more lasting and more meaningful. For sixty years, starting in the DP Camp *Feldafing*, Sam Skura, z'l, was my best friend, and my most trusted colleague. Not only were we best friends, our wives were best friends. Stella and my late wife Diana were soul-mates who spoke to each other almost daily.

"Stella and Sam were partners in their many Holocaust-related activities. The decision to form an organization in support of Yad Vashem was made at a parlor meeting of about 10 people in the home of Stella and Sam Skura. Their support for the Society has been unwavering and includes being Benefactors of the Valley of Communities and Benefactors of Project 2001. Stella served on the committee that inaugurated the Spring

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YOM HASHOAH RESONATES IN OUR HEARTS

USA – U.S. President Barack Obama has paid tribute to the memory of the 6 million Jews murdered in the Holocaust. The president called on people worldwide to ensure that nothing like it ever happens again.

In a Holocaust Days of Remembrance ceremony at the U.S. Capitol, President Obama warned of the dangers of silence when atrocities are being committed. And he said bearing witness to such horrors is only the first step.

"To commit ourselves to resisting injustice and intolerance and indifference, in whatever forms they may take, whether confronting those who tell lies about history or doing everything we can to prevent and end atrocities like those that took place in Rwanda, those taking place in Darfur," Mr. Obama said.



President Barack Obama shakes hands with Kaddish Morris Rosen, a Holocaust survivor, at the end of the National Commemoration of the Days of Remembrance on Capitol Hill.

Mr. Obama did not name names, but said that some people still deny that the Holocaust took place.

"There are those who insist the Holocaust never happened, who perpetrate every form of intolerance – racism and anti-Semitism, homophobia, xenophobia, sexism, and more – hatred that degrades its victim and diminishes us all," Mr. Obama said.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has often denied the Holocaust. At the Capitol Hill ceremony, Nobel laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel condemned the Iranian leader's comments this week at the United Nations Conference on Racism.

"I just came back from Geneva, where we attended an event that was incredibly offensive," Wiesel said.

Wiesel, the founding chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, objected to Mr. Ahmadinejad's remark that Israel is a "cruel, repressive and racist regime."

"And he used the solemn setting of a United Nations gathering again to insult the state of Israel in a way that no civilized person should ever do there," Wiesel said.

The Days of Remembrance ceremony also honored five Polish citizens as "Righteous Among the Nations," for rescuing Jews during the Holocaust.

The observance concluded with a Jewish prayer for the victims of the Nazi regime, led by Morris Rosen, a Holocaust survivor from Poland.

Israel – The State of Israel paused on the night of April 20 at 8 p.m. to remember the six million Jews who perished from 1933 to 1945, as the nation marked the start of Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The state ceremony ushering in the 24-hour commemoration began after sunset at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in the capital.

The solemn hour-and-a-quarter opening

event, broadcast live on television and radio, was attended by President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Tel Aviv Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, a *Buchenwald* survivor and the chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, as well as scores of ambassadors and dignitaries from around the world.

In his speech, Peres said that the appearance of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at the Geneva Durban review conference hours earlier was "a deplorable disgrace."

"The conference opening today in Geneva constitutes an acceptance of racism, rather than the fight against it, and its main speaker is Ahmadinejad, who calls for the annihilation of Israel and denies the Holocaust," Peres said.

"Criticism of the Jewish state is also tinged with chilling anti-Semitism. Among those who collaborated with the Nazis, and those who stood by and let the Holocaust happen, there are those who criticize the one state that rose to grant refuge to Holocaust survivors. The one state that will prevent another Holocaust.

"Anti-Semitism is not a Jewish disease, and its cure is incumbent upon those who perpetrate it," the president said.

"We have learned that our spiritual heritage is dependent on physical security.

"A people which lost a third of its members, a third of its children to the



An Israeli woman soldier reacts as she visits the Holocaust museum at Yad Vashem.

Holocaust, does not forget, and must not be caught off-guard," Peres said.

Netanyahu, speaking after Peres, also mentioned the Geneva conference, lamenting that "there are those who chose to participate in the display of hate."

The prime minister directed a question at Swiss President Hans-Rudolf Merz, who met with Ahmadinejad in Geneva on Sunday. "I turn to you, the Swiss president, and ask you: How can you meet someone who denies the Holocaust and wishes for a new holocaust to occur?"

Netanyahu praised "important countries" that chose to distance themselves from the conference, mentioning the United States, Canada, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Australia and New Zealand.

"We will not let the Holocaust deniers perpetrate another holocaust on the Jewish people," he said. "This is the highest responsibility of the State of Israel and of myself as prime minister."

"Israel is the shield and the hope of the Jewish people. Here we create for the

glory of our people and all of mankind. The country's achievements in every field – culture and science, medicine and security – are groundbreaking. We are a nation small in number but of great fortitude," Netanyahu said.

Recalling his experiences as an orphan



Twin sisters and Holocaust survivors Lia Huber and Yudit Barnea light a torch during the opening ceremony marking the Holocaust Remembrance Day at Yad Vashem.

in the *Buchenwald* concentration camp, Lau cited "another child sitting in the dark, Gilad Schalit," who has been held in the Gaza Strip since June 2006.

"Yad Vashem decided to dedicate this year's ceremony to children in the Holocaust, so that Israel's children might appreciate what we have: A national home. A state. Freedom. Sovereignty. Pride. Backbone.

"We can and should kiss this country's ground, which enables us to live a full life with a Jewish identity in our home," the rabbi said.

Some 1.5 million Jewish children were killed by the Nazis.

During the ceremony, which included speeches and somber musical interludes, six torches were lit by survivors in memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The chief rabbis of Israel, Shlomo Amar and Yona Metzger, recited Psalms and the Kaddish mourning prayer.

Poland – Thousands of young Jews and elderly Holocaust survivors marched at the former Nazi death camp of Auschwitz to honor those who perished in the Holocaust, while an Israeli official condemned the Iranian president's recent anti-Israel comments.

A shofar sounded the march's start. Around 7,000 people from more than 40 countries, many carrying the blue-and-white flag of Israel, then streamed through



A young Jew walks along a railway during the annual "March of the Living" at the former Nazi death camp Auschwitz, in Oswiecim.

the infamous wrought-iron gate crowned with the words "Arbeit Macht Frei," or "Work Sets You Free," at the former Auschwitz camp.

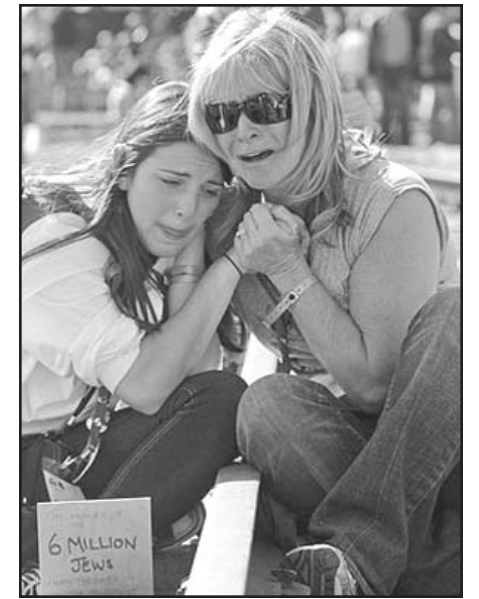
Under a clear blue sky, the participants trekked 2 miles to the sprawling Nazi sister camp of *Birkenau*, home to wooden barracks and the gas chambers.

The annual March of the Living, which honors the memory of some six million Jews who died in the Holocaust, appeared this year as a counterpoint to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's speech at a U.N. racism conference in Geneva.

Ahmadinejad, who has denied that the Holocaust happened and has called for Israel's destruction, accused the Jewish state in his speech of being a "most cruel and repressive racist regime." His official text had referred to the Holocaust as "ambiguous and dubious" but Ahmadinejad dropped that reference from his speech.

Speaking before the march, Israel's deputy prime minister Silvan Shalom dismissed the Iranian leader's address as "a speech of hatred."

"What Iran is doing today is not too far off from what Hitler did to the Jewish people 65 years ago," Shalom said. "He (Ahmadinejad) would like of course to develop these beliefs that Israel has no right to exist."



It was an emotional day for participants in the "March of the Living" event in Poland commemorating the 6 million Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

After arriving at *Birkenau*, some marchers placed small wooden slabs with messages of mourning on them between the train tracks that brought Jews to their death. One read "I love and miss you Papa Adam," while another read "In loving memories of families Gromb and Markovity, who were brutally killed by the Nazis."

"I'm back because for me this is a pilgrimage. I come back to pay tribute, first to the ones I did know, and then to the hundreds of thousands who died here and were murdered here," said Noah Klieger, an 83-year-old journalist from Tel Aviv who survived the camp along with his mother and father.

"I feel it's my duty to come because I was saved and many others were not," he said.

The march ended in a ceremony with the *Kaddish* at the monument to the camp's victims between the red-brick ruins of *Birkenau's* crematoria.

Younger marchers said it was important to understand the horror the survivors went through.

"I'm here right now in memory of the people (survivors) who are coming back," said Nathan Koreie, 18. "They had not only the strength to endure what they went through at Auschwitz-Birkenau, but that they've come back now and they are coming to teach us is a testament to their strength and will to survive."

US DEPORTS FORMER NAZI CAMP GUARD

A former Nazi concentration camp guard who served at death camps in Poland, France and Germany, has been deported from the United States to Austria.

The US Justice Department said it deported Josias Kumpf, 83, who worked as an armed SS guard at the *Sachsenhausen* Concentration Camp in Germany and at the *Trawniki* Labor Camp in Poland.

Kumpf, who was born in Serbia, emigrated from Austria to America in 1956, acquired US citizenship in 1964, and settled in Racine, Wis.

US officials said he took part in heinous acts during the Second World War that contributed to the death of thousands of civilians.

Prisoners under his watch at slave labor sites in Nazi-occupied France were forced to build launching platforms for German missile attacks on Britain.

While a guard at *Trawniki*, he participated in a November 3, 1943, mass shooting in which 8000 Jewish men, women, and children were murdered in a single day.

Kumpf helped guard the prisoners — including approximately 400 children — who were shot and killed in pits at *Trawniki*. According to Kumpf, his assignment had been to shoot to kill any survivors.

"Josias Kumpf, by his own admission, stood guard with orders to shoot any surviving prisoners who attempted to escape an SS massacre that left thousands of Jews dead," Acting Assistant Attorney

General Rita Glavin said.

"His court-ordered removal from the United States to Austria is another milestone in the government's long-running effort to ensure



Josias Kumpf.

that individuals who participated in crimes against humanity do not find sanctuary in this country," she said.

The Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations — the US office tasked with locating and prosecuting or repatriating Nazi war criminals hiding out in the United States — has won cases against 107 individuals since it began operations in 1979, the office said.

GERMAN TEENS SAY JEWS DESERVED HOLOCAUST

More than 14 percent of German teenagers in a survey said Jews must have deserved to be persecuted in the Holocaust.

"Youth as Victims and Perpetrators of Violence," a poll of 44,610 German students, also found that about one in every 20 German teenage boys belongs to a far-right group.

The survey, conducted by the Hanover-based Criminal Research Institute, found that far more German boys aged 15 belong to extremist groups than to mainstream political youth clubs. In some towns or cities, membership in far-right groups is as high as 10 percent, while in others it is virtually nonexistent.

Among boys of German background, 7 percent in former East German states showed clear signs of anti-Semitism and xenophobia, as opposed to 3 percent in

western states. The institute's director, Christian Pfeiffer, suggested it might be due to the decades of anti-Israel propaganda promoted in the former Communist East Germany.

In all questions related to far-right identification and anti-Semitism, "boys are far above the girls," Pfeiffer noted, adding that in general, the survey also found that girls who joined far-right groups usually were following a boyfriend.

German Interior Minister Wolfgang Schauble said the survey made clear that more funding is needed for youth sports clubs in trouble spots around the country.

Juliane Wetzels, an expert on educational programs at the Berlin-based Center for Research on Anti-Semitism, said "It is important to get to these youngsters who feel there is nothing else out there for them."

HOLOCAUST HEIRS GETTING HEARST CASTLE PAINTINGS

Two paintings from the 1500s that hung in Hearst Castle for decades are being returned to the family of Holocaust victims who were forced to sell them by the Nazis, authorities said.

A two-year investigation by the state determined that three paintings in the castle originally belonged to antique dealers Rosa and Jakob Oppenheimer.

The Oppenheims and other Jewish business owners were forced to sell their property in the 1930s. The Oppenheims fled to France but later died in the Holocaust.

The heirs to their estate allowed California to retain ownership of one painting that will remain at the castle, the state Department of Parks and Recreation said in a statement. The others were to be handed over to family representatives.

William Randolph Hearst, the wealthy publisher who built the castle and stocked it with art from around the world, didn't know the ownership history when he acquired the paintings in

1935, the parks department said.

The 16th century paintings include a portrait of a man with a book and a necklace of shells around his shoulders that may be the work of Venetian artist Giovanni Cariani, according to the parks department.

A portrait of Venetian nobleman Alvise Vendramin is attributed to the school of Tintoretto and a painting of Venus and Cupid is attributed to the school of Venetian artist Paris Bordone.

The paintings were deeded to the state by the Hearst Corporation in 1972 when the castle and its belongings were transferred to the state.

An attorney for the Oppenheimer estate inquired about the paintings in March 2007, prompting a two-year investigation that concluded the works belonged to the Oppenheimer estate.

The Venus and Cupid painting will remain at Hearst Castle along with photographic reproductions of the other works, officials said.

ITALIAN JEWS AID TOWNS THAT GAVE SHELTER DURING WWII

Italian Jews and Holocaust survivors are rushing to aid communities that sheltered them during World War II and were hit by last week's devastating earthquake.

A delegation of some 20 elderly survivors and their descendants, as well as Jewish community leaders, roamed the shattered countryside of central Italy, looking for their one-time saviors, now living in tent camps.

They offered everything from gym shoes to summer camps for children.

"I wouldn't be here if it weren't for these people," said Alberto Di Consiglio, whose parents were sheltered in the small hamlet of *Fossa* during the war. "We have to help them."

More than 100 tent cities have been built around *L'Aquila* and the 26 towns and villages affected by the 6.3-magnitude quake, which struck central Italy on April 6. The temblor killed 294 people and displaced another 55,000.

In the chaos of the relief efforts, Jews who had been sheltered in the area during the war lost touch with their one-time saviors, many of whom are simple farmers with no cell phones.

At least five Jewish families, including around 30 people, took shelter in the small mountainside hamlets of *Fossa* and *Casentino* from mid-1943 until the arrival of the Allies a year later, survivors said.

In one tent, Di Consiglio managed to find Nello De Bernardinis, 74, the son of the couple who sheltered Di Consiglio's father and eight other relatives during the war.

"It was a great emotion, it's so painful that such righteous people should suffer like this and live in a tent," Di Consiglio said.

De Bernardinis said he was fine for the moment and greatly appreciated the gesture of the Jewish community to check in on him and his family. He said, though, that it would be useful to have help during

harvest time, and Di Consiglio promised his whole family would come.

Riccardo Pacifici, the head of Rome's Jewish community, said he was working to get recognition from Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial for people like De Bernardinis and others who sheltered Roman Jews.

Irena Steinfeldt, director of the Righteous Among the Nations department at Yad Vashem, said the museum was not familiar with the stories of *Fossa* and *Casentino*. She urged the Jewish families



Emma Di Segni, left, reacts as Italia Tagliacozzo talks on the phone with earthquake survivor Luisa Giovanni Sarra, whose family sheltered their families during World War II, in the Casentino tent-camp, near L'Aquila, central Italy.

to come forward so the people who saved them could be recognized.

"We have not heard these stories, and we want to hear these stories," Steinfeldt said. "There are still people who haven't approached us and haven't spoken, and I would be happy if the families contacted Yad Vashem and told us," she said.

Other stories of Jews being saved in the same area were recorded, she said, usually involving Jews who fled from Rome to nearby villages. In one town, *Tagliacozzo Alto*, a priest named Don Gaetano Tantalò took in the Orvieto family in the spring of 1944, even preparing a traditional Passover meal for them, she said. He was recognized by Yad Vashem in 1978.

SHARP RISE IN ANTI-SEMITISM IN 2009

The survey, conducted by the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism at Tel Aviv University in cooperation with the European Jewish Congress, was released on the eve of Holocaust Memorial Day and at the start of the Durban II anti-racism conference.

The start of Operation Cast Lead in the Gaza Strip on Dec. 27, 2008, brought into 2009 a wave of anti-Semitic manifestations throughout the world, the report said.

The anti-Semitic incidents included both violent incidents such as arson attacks on synagogues, assaults on Jewish individuals, desecration of cemeteries, and vandalizing of Jewish property and Holocaust monuments, and also as verbal and visual expressions such as insults, threats, caricatures, and violent demonstrations. Although most of these activities featured traditional anti-Semitic motifs, their use

was more extreme, intensive and vociferous than in the past, the report said.

The survey's authors estimate that there were close to 1,000 manifestations of all types of anti-Semitism throughout the world in January. Many of the anti-Semitic incidents used Holocaust motifs instead of classic Jewish stereotyping.

Anti-Semitic incidents in 2008 decreased by 11 percent compared to 2007, according to the study. A decline was recorded in Britain, Canada, and Australia, but Belgium, the United States, Hungary, Italy, and Lithuania reported increases. Violent incidents, including attacks on individuals, decreased, while threats, insults, graffiti, and slogans rose.

The economic crisis that began in the summer also triggered anti-Jewish reactions, most notably in Eastern Europe and the Arab world.

AUSCHWITZ INMATES' NOTE DISCOVERED

A message written by Nazi prisoners and placed in a bottle was discovered by builders working near the site of the Auschwitz death camp.

The bottle was discovered April 20, hidden in a concrete wall in a school that prisoners had been forced to reinforce, according to an Auschwitz museum official.

The official told reporters that the message was written in pencil, dated Sept. 9,

1944, and signed by seven inmates from Poland and France. At least two survived the Holocaust, the official said.

"They were young people who were trying to leave some trace of their existence behind them," said the museum spokesman.

The note's authenticity has been verified and the museum will receive the note next month.



BOOK REVIEWS

LONEK'S JOURNEY

Lonek's Journey: The True Story of a Boy's Escape to Freedom.

By Dorit Bader Whiteman. Star Bright Books, 2005. 144 pp. \$12.45 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY DIANE R. SPIELMANN

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the historical record was beckoning for testimony in order to attempt an understanding of what had happened. The responsibility to record and relay the unprecedented events rested with the survivors. As time passed, the challenge to convey that experience responsibly to the second, and now the third and fourth generations, in which there no longer may be a direct tie to the survivors themselves, has become ever more magnified. In this regard, *Lonek's Journey* is an invaluable resource from all perspectives.

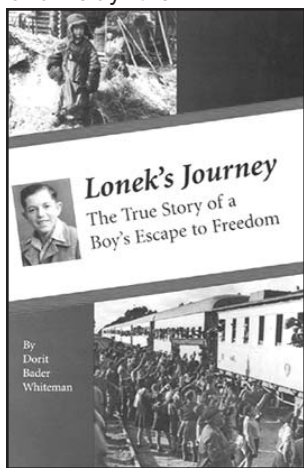
The book, by Dorit Whiteman, is adapted from her earlier publication, *Escape via Siberia*, in which she chronicled the odyssey of a child survivor. As a clinical psychologist with extensive experience working with children, and herself a child "escapee," Whiteman wrote this adapted version for the young reader; this resonates with children and adolescents in an informative and yet psychologically responsible manner.

The story begins in August 1939 when Lonek, an 11 year-old Jewish child in Jaroslaw, Poland, learns from his father that war with Germany is imminent. From that moment on Lonek's life is disrupted

as his father leaves to join the Polish army, with Lonek, his baby brother and his mother remaining behind. Telling the story from Lonek's perspective, Whiteman deftly interweaves dire circumstances together with hope that will lead Lonek and his family from destitution in Siberia and *Tashkent*, to their subsequent separation, which brings Lonek to *Karachi* and his eventual safe arrival in Palestine three years later.

In an Afterword presented in a question-and-answer format, Whiteman describes Lonek's experiences subsequent to his arrival in Palestine, including the reunification with his family intact after a 10-year separation from them.

Written in the style of an adventure story, and yet true, the book is riveting. There is one cliffhanger leading to another as the story unfolds from chapter to chapter, and thus holds the attention of the young reader. The vocabulary is direct and simple, and yet never disturbing. From a psychological perspective the proverbial "Happy Ending," coupled with a subtheme of hope running throughout the narrative, takes on a new meaning. Whiteman skillfully uses the approach as a tool to convey the gruesome accuracies of anti-Semitism and Holocaust survival without the graphics. Examples include the horrific train transport to Siberia, when "Lonek felt as though he couldn't breathe." But, he then remembers, "Never give up hope," as his father had always told him. This technique is used by Whiteman throughout the book, which ends on that very note, as she concludes Lonek's story with his arrival in Palestine.



HARVEST OF BLOSSOMS

Harvest of Blossoms: Poems from a Life Cut Short.

By Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger. Edited and with an Introduction by Irene Silverblatt and Helene Silverblatt. Northwestern University Press, 2008. 147 pp. \$14.78 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY RABBI I. ZOBERMAN

Reminiscent of Anne Frank's diary's survival odyssey, we are proudly and painfully in possession in English of a unique collection of poems that endured the vicissitudes of war and destruction, poignantly reminding us of so much lost promising talent.

Poet Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger (1924-1942) was only eighteen years old when her life ended due to the inhumane conditions in a labor camp run by the Nazi SS in the Ukraine. She was transported there with her parents from their home of limited means in *Czernowitz*, Romania, now *Chernivtsi*, Ukraine. Selma grew up in the cross-culturally rich city that produced the great likes of her cousin French poet Paul Celan and Israeli author Aharon Appelfeld, and where the influence of German culture and language was deeply felt, profoundly impacting Selma and her Jewish friends.

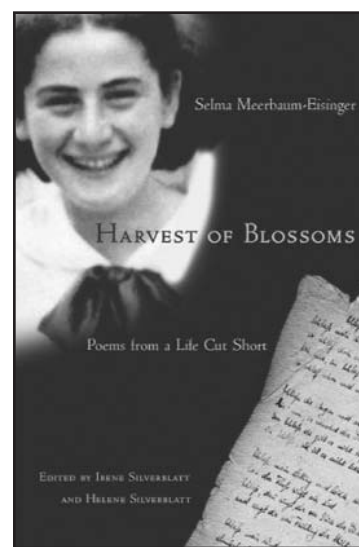
Selma is remembered by those who knew her for her captivating life-force and zest to live to the fullest. While gifted, she

was not boisterous, enjoying going out with friends to the city's lovely parks and holding readings of German poets and thinkers. Socializing and dancing late into the night was her favorite as well. She even managed to find love with Leiser Fichman to whom her poetry is dedicated. Leiser, who was somehow able to keep the poems, deposited them with a mutual friend, fearing for their safety, just before boarding a ship to Palestine in 1944 which was sunk with all its passengers lost.

The temporary 1940 presence of the Soviets in *Czernowitz* was accompanied by renewed manifestation of Yiddish culture along with capricious deportations to Siberia. Selma and her friends identified with the Labor Zionist movement and were members of *Hashomer Hatzair*, whose goal was to settle in Palestine with Soviet assistance. The scene was radically altered with the German invasion of

1941. An encounter with a Romanian patrol left Selma bleeding from a blow to the head. The trying ghetto experience was followed by deportation, suffering and death in labor camps. We are fortunate to have witness testimony concerning Selma's and other inmates' experiences at the *Michailowka* camp, from Arnold Daghani, an artist whose diary and drawings also depict Selma's death on December 16, 1942, from typhus, a disease

(Continued on page 14)



RADIO AND THE JEWS

Radio and the Jews: The Untold Story of How Radio Influenced America's Image of Jews, 1920s-1950s.

By David S. Siegel and Susan Siegel. Book Hunter Press: New York, 2007. 283 pp. \$24.95 softcover.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

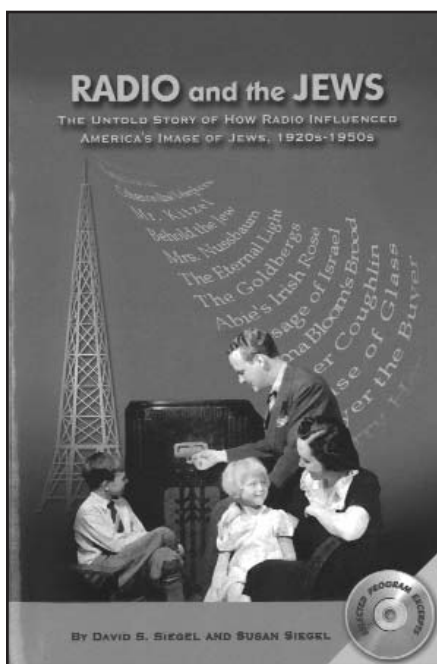
Radio and the Jews: The Untold Story of How Radio Influenced America's Image of Jews, 1920s-1950s by David S. Siegel and Susan Siegel is a unique book. Moreover, it should be of special interest to readers of *M&R*. Why? It makes one think about the power of a communication medium — in this case the radio — to affect the listener. And it can't help but make us wonder if America's action, or rather inaction, *vis-à-vis* the Jews of Europe during World War II was affected by the radio programs Americans had or were then listening to . . .

The first program the authors investigate is *The Rise of the Goldbergs* "(renamed *The Goldbergs* in 1936)," created, directed, and initially produced in 1929 by Gertrude Berg. Starring Berg as Molly Goldberg, "the mother, wife, homemaker, philosopher and matriarch" of a Jewish family come to America, storylines for the 1929-through-1934 run of the radio program dealt with immigrant issues: "respect for education, family values and the generational conflict between immigrant parents and their American

born children."

Interestingly, according to the authors of *Radio and the Jews*, even though this program was about a Jewish immigrant family, all immigrants could relate to it, and did.

In its 1936-through-1945 run, the family, now middle class, soon was living in Connecticut. Molly replaced her Yiddish accent with charming malapropisms. For example, there's the inquiry she makes of her son Sammy's violin teacher as to how Sammy is doing: "How is the progressing of my offspring? Meanwhile, storylines included conversations voicing concerns about what Jews were experiencing in Eastern Europe. When the actor playing her son, Alfred Ryder, went off to war in real life, Berg made that an episode on her show entitled, "Sammy Going to War." Finally, the program was exceptionally patriotic, not at all surprising what with Berg's "strong support for President Roosevelt." In sum, the authors of *Radio and the Jews* con-



clude this chapter of their volume by underlining their belief that Berg's work, in fact, resulted in a respect for all ethnic minorities.

In the late 1930s, however, there were other voices on the radio, brutal voices blaming the Jews, most especially, for disruptive events in the world. Number one on this list was Father Charles E. Coughlin on his program *The Golden Hour of the Little Flower*. While his fallacious remarks about them began in

1930, they came to a head in his November 20, 1938 broadcast. In this sermon, coming on the heels of *Kristallnacht*, the clever Father, among other things, simply rationalized away the Nazi attack on the Jews of Germany. How? He claimed that Nazism was simply a "defense mechanism" against communism spread by the Jews. Thus, according to the Father, Nazis were simply protecting their country when they attacked them!

Nor was Father Coughlin alone. There were others spewing their brand of anti-Semitic poison over the radio. There was Charles Lindbergh, best known for his historic nonstop flight from America to Europe. Lucky for him, few now know of his "other" activities. There was Gerald L.K. Smith whose career "lasted longer than Coughlin's" and who seems to have had an even better way with words than Coughlin did! And then there was Henry Ford, who, while not a speaker himself, supported a weekly program with a segment that publicized his anti-Semitic views.

So what was the reaction to these men? What did the American public and American Jews themselves think of the image of them painted by the likes of Coughlin, Lindbergh, Smith, and Ford? Moreover, if they didn't like it, could they completely erase what so many listeners had heard? I leave that for readers to discover and contemplate . . .

Needless to say, this reviewer has only just scratched the surface of this volume. *Radio and the Jews* "examines over 100 radio programs that featured Jewish themes and/or characters." Moreover, the book comes with a wonderful CD containing exciting excerpts of radio programs discussed in the volume. In short, this is a thought-provoking and major work worth reading and studying.

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

REMEMBERING “THE DUTCH AUSCHWITZ” – THE STORY OF SOBIBOR

There is little in *Sobibor* to remind one of the former Nazi concentration camp where 34,000 Dutch Jews died. That is going to change, thanks in part to help from the Netherlands.

Anyone who didn't know better would think they are in a typical Polish hamlet, where clean washing flutters in the wind, farmers on old tractors rumble by and lumbermen lug tree trunks. But *Stara Kolonia Sobibor* is not typical, nor will it ever be.

During World War II this was the site of the German extermination camp *Sobibor*, where 170,000 Jews, more than 34,000 of them Dutch, were systematically murdered. It is a difficult place to reach, deep in the forests of Poland's eastern border area, and easy to forget. But that is going to change.

The Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, and Israel recently agreed on a major “renovation”



Stara Kolonia Sobibor.

aimed at opening up the former camp to the outside world and pulling it out of the shadow of the well-known Auschwitz-Birkenau camp in southern Poland.

“We must do right by the victims of *Sobibor*,” State Secretary Jet Bussemaker said during a working visit to Poland. “The camp is unknown, even in the Netherlands, since virtually no one survived and lived to tell.”

Unlike at Auschwitz, there is nothing to see at *Sobibor*. The Germans dismantled the camp in 1943 after an uprising in which 12 SS officers were killed and sev-

eral hundred Jews managed to escape. Fifty of them survived the war. The Germans planted trees on the bare terrain.

As Bussemaker's delegation made its way to the edge of the young forest, Jetje Manheim, chairman of the *Sobibor Foundation*, makes the invisible visible. “Potato soup and raw oats were on the menu,” she says. “Anyone who was unable to supplement this ration did not have much hope of survival.”

The handful of houses that make up present day *Stara Kolonia Sobibor*, adjoining the forest, are from after the war,

except for a striking green building with a view over the crumbling train platform where the transports arrived. That was the camp commander's house. Now a Polish family lives there.

After the war the Polish were at a loss as to what to do with the extermination camps the Germans had built on Polish soil. Auschwitz quickly became a state museum, but smaller camps like *Sobibor* were left to revert to nature. Poland was in ruins; there were other priorities.

And of course there was communism,

with its own version of the historical truth. “The camp guards in *Sobibor* were Ukrainian,” says Janusz Kloc, the local starosta (county leader). “But you could not say that out loud. Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union then, a friendly nation.”

In the 1970s an austere monument was built, a “hill of ashes” at the place where the bodies from the gas chambers were burnt on grates in the open air. A plaque explains that “Soviet prisoners of war, Jews, Poles and gypsies” were murdered here. The fact that it was mainly Jews was kept silent. The Polish suffering could not be overshadowed by Jewish suffering. “This really shouldn't be,” Bussemaker says, pointing to the hill of ashes where she has just laid a wreath. “Somewhere here are all those ashes and we are just merrily treading on it.” It is one of the issues she hopes to resolve with the renovation of the camp.

A great deal has already changed since the fall of communism. There are new plaques — and these ones do declare the victims to be Jews. And in 2003 a “reflection lane” was opened, where survivors can place stones with the names of murdered family members. The path roughly coincides with the route to the gas chambers, dubbed the *Himmelfahrtstrasse* (road to heaven) by the detainees.

“The reflection lane is unique in our country,” says Marek Bem, director of the regional museum of Wlodawa, the nearby town in whose territory *Sobibor* falls. “In Poland we often remember collectively; victims are anonymous. Here there is a

story behind every name.”

Jetje Manheim, herself a surviving relative, is happy with the attention now being paid to the camp, but she is also concerned. The last thing she wants is for *Sobibor* to become like *Belzec*, a former



Jews from *Lublin Ghetto* in 1942 being hustled to the trains to be sent to *Sobibor* death camp.

extermination camp to the south, where a giant monument funded by American money was unveiled in 2004. “Holocaust architecture,” Manheim calls it.

“*Belzec* is overwhelming,” Manheim says. “You don't get the space for your own thoughts there. *Sobibor* is much more intimate.” She does see room for improvement: the small museum in the hamlet does not have decent toilet facilities or heating. And the texts are in Polish. “But beyond that *Sobibor* can stay as it is.” Bem too hopes the good intentions of the various governments will not degenerate into architectural bombast. “This is the truth,” he says, with a sweeping movement of his arm indicating the forest.

First published in Der Spiegel.

THEY WENT LIKE SHEEP TO THE SLAUGHTER AND OTHER MYTHS

BY RABBI DR. BERNHARD H. ROSENBERG

As a child of survivors of the Nazi death camps who has published extensive articles and editorials regarding the Holocaust, I am deeply disturbed and sense the deep pangs of anguish of those who still cannot either comprehend or appreciate the true acts of heroism which prevailed. As a practicing rabbi who refuses to allow the memories of the past to be distorted, I appeal to our fellow Jew: “Never forget the acts of heroism which made it possible for us to exist.”

The recurring questions which haunt survivors and their children echo through the halls of time. “Why didn't they fight back? Why did they enter the chambers of death like sheep to the slaughter?” By our standards, such actions as placidly lining up against a wall to be shot or walking silently into the gas chambers or standing nude and obedient at the edge of a ravine filled with blood-covered bodies awaiting one's own turn to die, defy all understanding. Indeed, anti-Semites would suggest that Jews were different, somehow not quite as brave, not quite as courageous as the average person. Our enemies will even conclude that the Jews were guilty of the crimes they were accused of, and hence with heavy conscience and accepting the punishment for their “crimes,” the Jews quietly submitted to their deserved punishment.

Nothing could be a greater falsification of the truth. The hopelessness seen in their faces was not a reflection of guilt; rather it was a realization that they had been completely deserted and betrayed by humanity. The light of morality, conscience, and brotherhood had been completely extinguished, and for them life became a terror-filled abyss. Responsibility for their death clearly lies with the Nazis and their collaborators.

Individuals confronted by the Holocaust often ask obvious questions to which there are no simplistic answers. One needs to read, to study, to discuss, to reflect, and to interview individuals who have lived through the tortures of hell on earth. Since it is evident that many will not read the volumes necessary for research, allow us to attempt to analyze the crucial and sensitive issue of “sheep to the slaughter.”

In order to understand the Jew of the Holocaust, we must attempt to put ourselves in his place. He knows of centuries of persecution carried out by the drunk and the sober, by the church and by government dictum. He has suffered many instances of prejudice, degradation and depersonalization prior to the Holocaust. The Holocaust begins with the Nuremberg Laws, anti-Semitic newspaper articles, cartoons, radio broadcasts, rallies, humiliations, beatings, intimidations, and economic boycott. The Holocaust victim begins to feel as if he is choking; fear becomes a part of daily life.



Despite overwhelming obstacles, scholars believe that 20,000–30,000 Jews participated in partisan units in the forests where they carried out daring raids and rescue operations. In the photo above, Jewish partisans enter the liberated city of *Vilna*, Lithuania.

Maybe he should leave Europe, he thinks. But to where should he go, and should he not stay together with his family? The International Conference at *Evian*, France, demonstrates that the world does not want the Jew. Not one country is willing to open the doors of freedom. The vic-

tim is trapped, like a child in a cage with a ravenous lion. The victim's passport is marked with the letter “J” for *Jude* and *Kristallnacht* results in vast destruction; his home, his shop, and even his place of worship cannot escape the wrath of maniacs bent upon the complete annihilation of the Jew.

Some Jews are arrested and sent to concentration camps, and the victim is informed that his children are expelled from school. The children do not understand; the victim is powerless to explain these atrocities to them. A yellow badge is to be worn and to be found on the streets without it means death.

The innocent victim and his family are uprooted and resettled in a ghetto, seven people in a room, little food, almost no medicine. The old and the young perish in the street. The victim's child falls ill and dies. He cries and screams in anguish. He is helpless to save her. A four-month-old baby perishes and the world remains silent.

His family is ordered to report to the train station. On the journey there are no sanitary facilities; pressed together like sardines, there is no room for the corpses to fall. They stand like the rest for nine days. The victim's grandfather dies begging for air.

Finally, the concentration camp. They arrive ravenous with hunger, nearly unconscious. Here, a short man motions with his finger to the left or to the right.

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SURVIVORS' CORNER

SURVIVORS OF HOLOCAUST TRAIN MEET LIBERATORS

BY BRUCE SMITH, AP

Robert Spitz was an emaciated, lice-infested 15-year-old when he was put on an overcrowded train at the *Bergen-Belsen* concentration camp in the waning days of World War II. He was sure it was a journey to death.

Instead, it proved to be a trip to freedom as the train, moving prisoners before approaching Allied troops in April 1945, was abandoned by the Germans after five days and liberated by troops from the U.S. 30th Infantry Division.

On March 27, eight survivors of that horrific train ride attended an annual reunion that is held in different cities each year. The survivors shared stories and gave thanks with about 50 other people, including dozens of soldiers and their wives.

A number of them choked back tears during a memorial service honoring those veterans who have passed away in the last year from the 30th Infantry Division of World War II.

"As we marched out of the camp under SS guard, we were passing stacks of

dead bodies. They were stacked like cordwood," said Spitz, 79, a Jew who was arrested in Budapest, Hungary, and spent 13 months in the camp before being put on the train. He weighed 65 pounds at the time.

"Only God knew where we were going or what the future held for us," said Spitz, who now lives in Fayetteville, Ark.

The train wandered for five days until it was abandoned near the town of *Magdeburg*, about 50 miles southwest of Berlin.



Members of the Old Hickory Association (from left, Neil Trivette, Robbie Lamb and Ken Hyatt) retire the colors after a memorial service honoring those veterans who have passed away in the last year from the 30th Infantry Division of World War II.

"When the American medics arrived they said, 'You are free! You are free!'" recalled Spitz. He said many on the train were too weak to move or even comprehend.

The train is thought to have carried

2,500 prisoners, and reunion organizers think as many as 400 may still be living. It

included both passenger and cattle cars, which were used by the Germans to transport 40 soldiers. On this trip, however, those cattle cars were packed with 90 prisoners with no food or water.

"They were filthy. They were skin and bones. They were infested with lice," said Frank Towers, 92, of Brooker, Fla., a first lieutenant who led a convoy on a 50-mile ride to a town where those on the train could be cared for. "For five days they were allowed out of the train for only an hour a day to eat. And that was water with potato skins — potato soup."

John Fransman, 69, another train survivor, came from London for the reunion.

Originally from Amsterdam, he was just a child when he rode the hard, wooden seats in the passenger car with his mother. His father was executed in the concentration camp.

"I remember seeing the bodies of dead people every morning," he said. "We very much lost our childhood."

"I am very grateful to come here and express my thanks," he said.

The reunion with the Holocaust survivors results from a project started



Holocaust survivors George Somjen, left, and Robert Spitz, right, who were liberated from train out of *Bergen-Belsen* concentration camp, reunite with their liberators from the 30th Infantry Division of World War II.

by Matthew Rozell, a history teacher from Hudson Falls, N.Y. He posted a soldier's account of the liberation on the Web in 2002 and survivors have found the site over the years.

To date, about 50 have been located, Rozell said. "They are all over the world. We want to find more," he said.

The train was liberated on April 13, 1945, days before *Bergen-Belsen*, which is in northwestern Germany.

The *Magdeburg* train was one of three to leave the concentration camp in the last days of the war. One arrived at another German concentration camp in Czechoslovakia, while the third was intercepted by the Soviets.

MUDDLING THE HOLOCAUST IN LITHUANIA

BY STEVEN F. LAWSON

As Peter Novick argues in *The Holocaust in American Life* (1999), in the late 1940s Americans, especially Jews, hesitated to discuss the Holocaust openly. The Nuremberg Trials and the presentation of film footage of Nazi atrocities in the concentration camps had appropriately shocked citizens in the U.S. and Allied countries. The conversion of postwar Germany into an ally against the Soviet Union as the Cold War began did not change the horror of the extermination of six million Jewish civilians by the Nazis and their collaborators, but it did encourage American leaders to focus on the "Red Fascism" of the U.S.S.R. instead of the German fascism that had produced the Holocaust.

This has changed of course during the past sixty years. American presidents have visited the sites of concentration camps, and Hollywood has supplied a vast array of television series, documentaries, and feature films testifying to the human misery inflicted by the *Third Reich* during World War II. The end of the Cold War in the last decade of the twentieth century further allowed the Holocaust to become a subject of public discussion and analysis without upsetting the U.S.'s geopolitical demands in battling Communism.

Yet the end of the Cold War has brought about ironic and dangerous twists in remembering and depicting the

Holocaust. The dissolution of the Soviet empire and the creation of independent republics in Eastern Europe and the Baltic States brought political, economic, and intellectual freedoms. However, this independence has posed challenges both for keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive and for safeguarding those remaining elderly Jews who fought on the Partisan side during World War II alongside the Soviet Union. Such is the situation in Lithuania, where the Nazis and their collaborators murdered over 200,000 Jews, around 95 percent of the country's prewar Jewish population.

Ironically, as Lithuania has entered a closer alliance with the United States through NATO and membership in the European Union, it has revived a new internal cold war. Without rejecting the idea of the Jewish Holocaust, the Lithuanian government has called for historical "symmetry," one that recognizes and even privileges the suffering of Lithuanians under Soviet rule. In promoting a kind of holocaust equality, the Lithuanian government financed an "International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania" and established a "Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania" in its capital, Vilnius.

The problem is not in vindicating the historical suffering of diverse victims of tyranny, but in using this anti-Soviet sentiment to minimize Lithuania's enormous complicity in the destruction of its wartime

Jewish population. This is no attempt by the government to engage in the shameful, anti-Semitic practice of Holocaust denial, as practiced by the Iranian government, but to confuse the issue in a way that diminishes sympathy and support for Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The disreputable cause of Holocaust denial has been replaced by what one scholar, a professor at the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, calls "Holocaust obfuscation." The term has been gaining traction since *The Economist* published a piece on the subject last August. Lithuania must stop blaming the victims.

The key to Holocaust obfuscation is to stress the connection between Jewish citizens who escaped certain extermination by joining the Soviet-sponsored partisan groups in fighting the Nazis on the one hand; and on the other the Stalinist regime that inflicted pain and terror upon the Lithuanian people and upon its Jewish minority too. Undoubtedly there were Lithuanian Jewish Communists (before the war well under 1 percent of the Jewish population), but placing their actions on a par with the Nazi slaughter of millions of people masks a sophisticated and pernicious form of anti-Semitism in the name of equality and tolerance. Indeed, Vilnius's Genocide Research Center displays many books about Soviet deportations, but almost none about the Jewish Holocaust. Its Genocide Museum barely mentions the Holocaust at all.

To make matters worse, Lithuanian officials have recently sought to question

Lithuanian Jews on suspicion of "crimes against humanity." One of them is Fania Brantsovsky, the 86-year-old librarian of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute. A former partisan, Brantsovsky has been called "a murderer" for her time fighting with the Soviet partisans against the Nazis, and a local newspaper has demanded "she be put on trial." At the urging of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, the American Embassy in Lithuania honored Brantsovsky with a certificate of achievement last April, and in August, the British Embassy organized a walking tour of the former *Vilna Ghetto*, led by Brantsovsky, in which fifteen Western alliance embassies participated (but none of those of the Baltic States).

Another target is Dr. Rachel Margolis, 87, a retired Vilnius University biologist who helped set up a Holocaust exhibit in the city and published a fine book of memoirs in 2006. She had also rediscovered, transcribed, and published the lost diary of a Polish witness to the murders at *Ponar (Paneriai)*, the mass murder site outside Vilnius (an English edition, *Ponary Diary*, was brought out by Yale in 2005). Some surmise that this work inspired a craving for revenge, because the diary reveals exactly who the killers were, a fact masked in many local treatments of the period, and left wholly unmentioned by the new "genocide industry" in town. A dual Lithuanian-Israeli citizen, Margolis is in *Rehovot*, unable to return to her native city, Vilnius, for her annual lectures on the Holocaust. Last

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COGS IN THE MURDER MACHINE?

TOM BOWER, TIMES ONLINE

Kate Winslet deserves endless prizes for her portrayal of Hanna Schmitz, the former concentration camp guard, in *The Reader*. Few recent movies have used such a gripping emotional narrative to raise profound questions about morality during and after the Second World War. Normally war movies portray heroes and villains and give the audience the satisfaction at the end that the good guys won. *The Reader* does the opposite. There are no heroes, only dilemmas and excuses.

The dilemma is for the 15-year-old boy who falls in love with Schmitz, an older woman in a German provincial town in the late 1950s, unaware of her dreadful past. The excuses are for Schmitz, who just happens during the war to have transferred from a production line in a Siemens factory to employment on another production line to systematically eradicate millions of Europeans because of their race and religion.

Wrapped up among the excuses for Schmitz, the illiterate Auschwitz mass murderer, are the bigger excuses for the German people who were all victims of the Nazis, both during and after the war. What no one in Britain realises is that Schmitz's character is partly drawn upon Hermine Braunsteiner, a real Nazi monster, whose life and trial are deftly sanitized to suit the author's and film-maker's purpose.

Sixty years after the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals, and when nearly all the murderers are dead, the truth about Germany's reintroduction of slavery and persecution into 20th-century Europe has become blurred by convenient myths. The worst, perpetuated by *The Reader*, is that the Schmitzes – the 135,000 Germans involved in mass murder – were fallible uneducated human beings whose fate could have been shared by any of us.

The question directed at the audience is whether any can be sure that he or she would not have done the same as Schmitz during the Nazi era by working in Auschwitz or any other extermination camp. Just how can we be certain of standing on the moral high ground? This pernicious question suits the modern German cultural elite and their uninformed sympathizers. As the postwar Germans quite rightly shrug off any sense of personal guilt, they have introduced "moral equivalence" into German culture.

The Allies' carpet bombing of Germany and especially *Dresden*, the barbaric behavior of Soviet soldiers as they fought towards Berlin, and the forced evacuation of millions of Germans from eastern Europe in 1945 are all nowadays cited by some Germans as placing their country on the same moral level as the Allies.

The recently completed official German history of the war by the authoritative Military History Research Institute in *Potsdam* declares that most Germans during the war were aware of the extermination of the Jews and the vast majority believed the Jews deserved their fate. The Allied bombing of German cities, according to the *Potsdam* study, is viewed as the same crime as the Nazi extermination camps.

Put simply, "moral equivalence" is the

German extermination camp commander saying to the Jewish inmate: "You've got your problems and I have my problems." The German's problem is to obey his orders or else. So the murderer and the Jew are equal victims of the same orders. But "or else" is the mendaciously contrived dilemma in the film. What compulsion did Schmitz and the mass murderers endure to transform themselves from law-abiding citizens into sadistic executioners?

In *The Reader* that issue is posed during Schmitz's trial. The scene is eerily realistic. In the public gallery the former lover watches Schmitz's questioning by the judge. During the exchanges the boy, who has become a law student, grasps her secret. While they lay in bed years ago, Schmitz had demanded that he read long passages from literary books. Innocently, he had agreed – only realizing during the trial that she had concealed her illiteracy.



The Reader starring Kate Winslet and David Kross.

The question for the judge is whether Schmitz wrote a report about the death by burning of female prisoners locked up for the night in a church hit by an Allied bomb. (Note that an Allied bomb has hit a holy church killing innocent women whom the Germans had spared – the Germans no longer ask why the women were in the church in the first place.) Clearly, the illiterate Schmitz could not have written the report, but suffering lifetime shame about her secret, she prefers to admit to her guilt and take the punishment rather than suffer the embarrassment.

To conceal the same dilemma, at Siemens she apparently volunteered to become an Auschwitz guard. The portrayal of the transition from factory to mass murderer as seamless – Siemens one day, Auschwitz the next – justifies the notion of Schmitz as victim, a convenient fantasy for Germany's new soothsayers. "What would you have done?" she asks the judge, who is made to look discomfited when posed the test of "moral equivalence."

All those issues are bogus, raised by some Germans to avoid the fundamental discovery described by the *Potsdam* history: that in 1945 most Germans felt no guilt but only regret for their personal losses and the country's humiliating surrender. The Germans' inability to mourn for the victims of the Nazis reflected their overwhelming self-pity.

To suggest that Schmitz, a sadistic thug,

would employ an incompetent lawyer and accept long imprisonment to hide the shame of her illiteracy deliberately distorts the murderer's character. By humanizing the murderer's dilemma – should I admit to illiteracy and escape long punishment? – the film deceives the audience.

West Germany after 1945 became a sanctuary for Nazi war criminals. Initially, the British army employed just 12 men to hunt them down. Instead of being punished, the murderers were reinstated in their wartime jobs – in the police, schools, courts, hospitals, industry and government – with the help of the British and American occupiers. Thousands of the worst criminals – scientists who had conducted human experiments or employed slave laborers to build rockets, the intelligence officers who had tortured resistance fighters – were arrested and then employed by the Allies.

Similar protection was rarely the fate of the Nazis' foot soldiers, like Schmitz. She is the fall guy – used to do the dirty work during the war and to serve as the pawn in Germany's conscience afterwards. Swept up in the initial dragnet, the foot soldiers were imprisoned but soon released and returned to their communities to resume working in factories or, like Schmitz, as a tram conductor. Former mass murderers became law-abiding citizens, carefully avoiding even a parking ticket. They were protected by the shared guilt of most of their neighbors, whose common regret was about Germany's defeat, not the crimes. Only much later, when the West German conscience required it, was there the occasional show trial such as Schmitz's – again the fall guy.

Ever since *The Reader* opened, attempts have been made to identify the real Schmitz. Bernhard Schlink, who wrote the 1995 novel behind the film, rightly insists she was invented but I have little doubt that Braunsteiner's trial, along with those of 15 other defendants accused of murder at *Majdanek*, was a pertinent influence. Starting in 1975 and lasting nearly six years, the trial stigmatized German justice as prejudiced and galvanized sympathy for the defendants for their "ordeal" 30 years after the alleged crime.

Braunsteiner's story was similar to Schmitz's. Born in Vienna in 1919, the daughter of a butcher, she was recruited to work in 1938 at the Heinkel factory in Berlin. Soon after, she was recruited for training as an SS guard with the promise of better pay. After training, Braunsteiner progressed from the *Ravensbrück* concentration camp in Germany to *Majdanek*. Survivors testifying in *Düsseldorf* recalled her wild rages, stamping and whipping women to death.

She was nicknamed "the Stomping Mare" because of her fatal tantrums. One witness testified how she "seized children by their hair and threw them on trucks heading to the gas chambers."

At the end of the war she returned to Vienna, where she was convicted in 1949 for brutality to inmates at *Ravensbrück* but released in 1950. Aged 31, working as a waitress and a hotel receptionist, she was still good-looking and seductive. Her prize was Russell Ryan, an American air force

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NAZI FORCED LABORERS RECOUNT ORDEAL ONLINE

Video testimony of nearly 600 survivors of Nazi forced labor programs was posted online for historians and students to better understand their ordeal.

The project is an offshoot of a compensation fund founded by the German government and major companies in 2001 for survivors of a program that saw 12 million people rounded up and conscripted to work during World War II.

The 341 men and 249 women featured in the videos tell of working in concentration camps or munitions plants under grueling conditions for little or no pay, in miserable living conditions and constant exposure to hunger and disease.

"Their suffering should not be forgotten," the head of the "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" foundation managing the 5.7-billion-dollar fund, Guenther Saathoff, told reporters.

Some 1.66 million people from nearly 100 countries received compensation from the German fund between 2001 and 2007.

Saathoff said the online video project was launched because the former forced laborers were seeking more than reparations.

"The victims did not want only money that was owed to them – they also wanted to tell about things that no one wanted to hear about for decades," he said.

In one account, a Hungarian Jew in his 80s who has lived in Atlanta since the war's end, Henry Friedmann, explains that he was the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust.

Friedmann told of being beaten while he was forced to work at a huge arms factory in Budapest in 1944, before he was assigned to transports for German troops fighting the Russians in the countryside.

"We were taken by the Germans to a German outpost, and we were given orders that every day we would assemble at 3:00 am and would climb the mountain and would be over there from between 3:00 till 5:00, 6:00 the next morning," he said.

"At that time, in the mountains, it was maybe 40 below zero. No clothing, not the right clothing... When we finished supplying the hot food, we brought down on stretchers the wounded or dead Germans to the base of the mountains. That would be our job."

He said Jews suffered particularly brutal treatment among the workers.

"In case someone gets hurt, don't even ask for any kind of bandage or anything because you're a Jew – you're not entitled to – which meant that if you're lost or hurt, you have to freeze to death or bleed to death," he said.

The 2.5-million-euro documentary project began in 2005. Survivors ranging in age from 65 to 98 were recorded on video primarily in Eastern Europe but also in the United States, Israel and South Africa.

One-third of them were so-called "slave laborers," often Jews or Roma who were forced to work in concentration camps in particularly degrading and frequently life-threatening conditions.

A former slave laborer at the news conference, Felix Kolmer, said the online archive would make increasingly rare personal accounts of the Nazi program available to researchers, teachers, and students.

"Victims will finally get the public recognition and attention for which they have often waited in vain over the last decades," said Kolmer, who is also vice president of the International Auschwitz Committee, a Holocaust survivors group.

The project can be viewed at www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de.

WOMEN, RESISTANCE

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM LUNCHEON



Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem Inc.; Scott Erlich; Anna Erlich, 2009 Award Recipient; Dr. Sheila Erlich Pruzansky; and Susan Erlich.



Jackie Lindenbaum; Ilana Lifshitz; Stella Skura, 2009 Award Recipient; Iris Lifshitz Lindenbaum; and Cheryl Skura Lifshitz.



Abbi Halpern, member of the Young Leadership Associates, Luncheon Co-Chair: "I am proud to be a member of the American Society for Yad Vashem's Young Leadership Associates and as a member of the YLA acknowledge the importance of continuing to carry the torch of the Legacy of the Holocaust. As a young mother I see the importance of my generation taking a leadership role in continuing to make sure that the memory of those who perished will never be forgotten."



Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem Inc.; Elizabeth Zborowski, Cultural Director, American Society for Yad Vashem; Saul Kagan, Executive Vice President Emeritus of the Claims Conference; Elizabeth and Joseph Wilf, Vice Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem.



Ilana Lifshitz, member of the Young Leadership Associates: "My grandparents, from as early as I can remember, showed me the importance of the past. They took my sister and me to the Holocaust Museum. They showed us the horrific remnants of those malevolent acts: *Treblinka*, *Majdanek*. They taught us the magnitude of the Holocaust and the necessity of being involved in the organization's mission. Now, it is our generation's – to start teaching. We have to pick up the torch and to tell our stories – our stories. I can think of

(Continued from page 1)
Luncheon and has each year lent her energy and talent to make it a success. Her allegiance to our cause is appreciated through the honor we bestow on her today.

"Many of you will remember that Prof. Nechama Tec was the Guest of Honor at our first Spring Luncheon, chaired by Fanya Gottesfeld Heller. The important messages Prof. Tec shared with us then on the role of women during the *Shoah* continue to resonate with all of us who were privileged to hear her that day. Prof. Tec has made major scholarly contributions to our understanding of the Holocaust. It is not surprising that her book, *Defiance*, portraying the role of the Bielski partisans in saving Jews during the *Shoah*, inspired the production of a major Hollywood film and that the book became a *New York Times* best seller. We are honored to have her with us today as our Guest Speaker.

"We also welcome her husband Dr. Leon Tec and her children Leora and

Roland, who was a co-producer of the film *Defiance*."

Nicole Meyer, a member of the Young Leadership of the American Society and the granddaughter of the one of the heroes depicted in *Defiance*, introduced Prof. Nechama Tec:

"Nechama Tec is a remarkable woman who has captured a pivotal period in history through her book *Defiance*. In fact, I would most likely not be standing here today had it not been for the bravery and goodness of the Bielski family who saved my grandmother Rae Kushner.

"Tuvia Bielski articulated very clearly that 'it was better to save one Jew than to kill many Germans.' In this quote from *Defiance*, Tuvia insists on the integration of all Jews reaching the camp, whether or not they possessed arms or were able to fight. And throughout those challenging times, he repeatedly states, 'Would that there were thousands of Jews who could reach our

camp, we would take all of them in.'

"My great-grandfather, Nuchum Kushner, for whom I am named, arrived at the camp frail with two young daughters by his side after escaping from the *Novogrudeck* Ghetto. They were 3 of the 300 who escaped through an underground tunnel – out of the 18,000 Jews in the Ghetto. They were too weak to fight, but Tuvia did not turn them away. He welcomed my family with open arms and gave them an opportunity to help. My Zaide Nuchum, a furrier by trade prior to the war, made coats to keep the community warm and my grandmother and her sister spent their long days cooking a variety of dishes from bread and potatoes to feed the hundreds of hungry mouths.

"Upon visiting the grave, which is more like a covered pit, where both of my great-grandmothers were murdered by the Nazis, I remember my father's tears as he said *Kaddish* for 'the grandmothers' and for so many other relatives that he never knew. I think of this moment in time and

thank the Bielski family for giving my family a chance of survival and an opportunity to remember and never forget.

"The book *Defiance* gives these valiant people their appropriate place in history as heroes and role models for what the Jewish heart and mind is all about. By telling the story, Nechama has captured the essence of the many fundamental values that our Torah teaches us.

"Each Bielski otriad member has a unique and miraculous story of survival, humanity, and bravery in the forest during those horrific years. Fortunately, my grandparents met and married through their adventures at the end of the war with the Bielski otriad.

"Nechama, from a very personal point of view, I cannot thank you enough for capturing this history and for highlighting the bravery and compassion of so many involved. You gave the Bielskis and all the participants the much deserved recognition, respect, and appreciation that they so richly deserve."

Iris Lifshitz Lindenbaum; Stella Skura, 2009 Award Recipient; Iris Lifshitz Lindenbaum; and Cheryl Skura Lifshitz.

Ilana Lifshitz, member of the Young Leadership Associates: "My grandparents, from as early as I can remember, showed me the importance of the past. They took my sister and me to the Holocaust Museum. They showed us the horrific remnants of those malevolent acts: *Treblinka*, *Majdanek*. They taught us the magnitude of the Holocaust and the necessity of being involved in the organization's mission. Now, it is our generation's – to start teaching. We have to pick up the torch and to tell our stories – our stories. I can think of

Fourth Luncheon

ANCE & RENEWAL FOR YAD VASHEM ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON



Lindenbaum, member of the Young Leadership Associates, Luncheon Co-Chair: "Yad Vashem is not only an organization that pays testament to those who perished in the Holocaust, but has provided my family with a community of those like me who also look to the future while always remembering the past."



Dara Orbach, Seryl Kushner, Guest Speaker Professor Nechama Tec, Nicole Meyer, Charles Kushner and Joan Meyer.



Elizabeth Zborowski, Cultural Director, American Society for Yad Vashem; Stella Skura, 2009 Award Recipient; Guest Speaker Professor Nechama Tec; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem Inc.; and Gladys Halpern.



Members of the Young Leadership Associates, Sam and Stella Skura remember, instilled the phrase 'never forget.' They returned to Poland. They are descendants of the Nazis, Miedonik, Auschwitz. The American Society for Yad Vashem and I am proud to be part of this organization - the third generation. We have been asked to share these stories with the world these stories are no greater privilege."



Members of the Young Leadership Associates of the American Society for Yad Vashem who attended the 2009 Spring Luncheon.



Guest Speaker Professor Nechama Tec and Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem Inc.



Second generation of Holocaust survivors Briana Halpern with her father Jeremy Halpern at the 2009 Spring Luncheon.



Marilyn Rubenstein Table.



REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

POLITICS ABOUNDS ON POPE'S MISSION OF PEACE TO ISRAEL

BY MARCY OSTER, JTA

Coming as a self-described "pilgrim of peace," Pope Benedict XVI vowed to fight anti-Semitism and called for a Palestinian state in the moments after his arrival in Israel for a five-day visit. But controversy has marked the visit from the start, as the pope's supposedly



Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, presents a gift to Pope Benedict XVI.

non-political trip abounds with politics and his hosts in Israel and the Palestinian Authority parse his words with nearly Talmudic precision, eyeing support for their positions.

"I come, like so many others before me, to pray at the holy places, to pray especially for peace — peace here in the Holy Land, and peace throughout the world," Benedict said during a welcoming ceremony at Ben Gurion International Airport, where he was met by President Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Benedict would repeat that desire for peace and interfaith dialogue in every appearance in the early days of his trip, which the Vatican insisted is non-political.

But his visit to Yad Vashem, Israel's national Holocaust memorial, sparked criticism by former Israeli Chief Rabbi Israel

Meir Lau and Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin, who greeted the pontiff at the museum.

"I am deeply grateful to God and to you for the opportunity to stand here in silence: a silence to remember, a silence to pray, a silence to hope," the pope said. The cry of those killed "echoes in our hearts. It is a cry raised against every act of injustice and violence. It is a perpetual reproach against the spilling of innocent blood."

Following the visit, in which the pope did not enter the actual museum due to an exhibit that offers an unflattering portrayal of Pope Pius XII, who has been accused of being silent in the face of Nazi atrocities against the Jews during World War II, Lau criticized the pope's speech in an interview on Israel's Channel 1.

Lau, a survivor of Buchenwald who serves

as the chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, lamented that while Benedict's predecessor, Pope John Paul II, in his address at the museum nine years ago offered a moving personal expression of grief, the current pope did not go that far, instead offering the Church's "deep compassion" for those killed in the Holocaust.

"I personally missed hearing a tone of sharing the grief," Lau said. "I missed hearing 'I'm sorry, I apologize.'"

Lau also pointed out that the pontiff, who is German by birth and was a member of the Hitler Youth, did not mention the Germans, or Nazis, as those who carried out the genocide, and used the word "killed" instead of "murdered" to describe how the Jews died. And, he added, the pope never said that 6 million were killed, saying only "millions."

Rivlin also criticized the pope.

"With all due respect to the Holy See, we cannot ignore the burden he bears, as a young German who joined the Hitler Youth and as a person who joined Hitler's army, which was an instrument in the extermination," he said on Israel Radio. "He came and told us as if he were a historian, someone looking in from the sidelines, about things that should not have happened. And what can you do? He was a part of them."

Vatican spokesman the Rev. Federico Lombardi fired back, noting that the pope has denounced the Nazis and spoken of his German heritage in previous speeches, including during a visit to the Auschwitz death camp, and used the 6 million figure during his remarks upon arriving in Israel.

Lombardi also said four times that the pope was never a member of the Hitler Youth, whose members were volunteers. Later in the day, however, he had to retract the statement, as the pope has acknowledged joining Hitler Youth — he and others have said he was forced to register against his will.

The spokesman also said that the pope, then known as Joseph Ratzinger, was drafted into the German army, where he served with anti-aircraft troops.

During a brief visit to the Western Wall, the pope placed a handwritten personal prayer between the stones of the wall asking God to "send your peace upon this Holy Land, upon the Middle East, upon the entire human family," according to a text released by the Office of the Holy See.

The pope arrived in Israel after spending two days in Jordan, where he celebrated Mass before an estimated audience of 25,000 in a soccer stadium in Amman.

Benedict also visited the King Hussein bin Talal Mosque in Amman. He did not remove his shoes while visiting the



Edward Mosberg (left) shakes hands with Pope Benedict XVI as the Chair of the Yad Vashem directorate, Avner Shalev, looks on.

Edward Mosberg, a survivor of the *Plaszow* and *Mauthausen* concentration camps and a Board member of the American Society of Yad Vashem, urged Pope Benedict XVI to denounce those who deny the Holocaust.

Mosberg said his time with the pope at the *Shoah* memorial was brief. Still, said Mosberg, "I asked His Holiness to condemn all the deniers, then I said, 'Thank you for listening to me and God bless you.'"

mosque and engaged in silent reflection rather than prayer, according to reports. In a meeting there with Muslim leaders, the pope called for a "trilateral dialogue," including the Church, to help bring Jews and Muslims together to discuss peace.

The pope and Peres together planted an olive tree at the president's residence, followed by a performance by a choir made up of Jewish and Arab girls joined by Israeli tenor Dudu Fisher, who sang "Bring Him Home" from the musical *Les Miserables* only minutes after the pope met with the family of kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

VICTIMS' MEMORIES WILL NOT BE KILLED

Over the course of the past century most American Jewish families left Europe and North Africa. Many of their families and friends who remained became victims of the Nazi death machine. The murderers took their lives and disposed of the bodies en masse. Millions of Jews vanished without any physical trace. No grave markers record their names.

The Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Law, passed unanimously by the Israeli Knesset in August 1953, empowered Yad Vashem, in the name of the Jewish people, to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust. Since 1955 Yad Vashem has been collecting names, photographs and biographic details of the martyred Jews. Millions are already recorded on special documents — Pages of Testimony — that are carefully preserved in Yad Vashem; but many names are still unknown.

The Pages of Testimony in the Hall of Names at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem stand as symbolic *mazevoth* (tombstones) for the martyred Jews. The victims

dignity that the murderers tried so hard to obliterate.

Eli Zborowski, the Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem Inc., says: "We began our work in collecting Pages of Testimony a long time ago, even before we established the Society in 1981.

"The late Mr. Miron Zifzider worked in our office as a volunteer in charge of collecting Pages of Testimony on behalf of the American Federation of Jewish Fighters, Partisans, Camp Inmates and Nazi Victims, and we continued this work as the American Society for Yad Vashem. In the period of over 30 years we can count tens of thousands of 'Pages of Testimony' that we have delivered to Yad Vashem through our activities."

The killers murdered the victims. It is up to us to ensure that the victims memories will not be killed also.



Mark Palmer, Board member of the American Society for Yad Vashem, Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, and Elizabeth Mundlak-Zborowski, Cultural Director of the American Society for Yad Vashem, hand over Pages of Testimony to the Chair of the Yad Vashem directorate in Jerusalem, Avner Shalev.

deserve to be remembered not as cold, anonymous numbers but as individual human beings. These Pages of Testimony preserve the unique identity and personal

UKRAINIAN SHOAH DATABASE RELEASED

A database of Ukrainian Holocaust victims and survivors has been turned over to a Yad Vashem representative.

The database, with information collected during a gathering of survivors in Ukraine's *Charkassy* and *Chernigovskaya* regions, includes the testimonies of survivors or relatives of the victims, a list of Holocaust victims including more than 3,000 names identified and published for the first time, places of execution and photos.

The information will be used for a joint project between the Jewish Council of Ukraine and Yad Vashem Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, called the *Shoah Victims' Names Recovery Project*.

"For the first time in the territory of one of the former Soviet republics, we received data from every possible source concerning the history of Jews during the Holocaust in two of Ukraine's regions," said Boris Maftsir, a manager of the project in the former Soviet Union.

The handover of the database's disks took place during a meeting Jan. 30 to discuss the project.

The Jewish Council of Ukraine and Yad Vashem initiated and co-organized the event.

WHY BRITISH INTELLIGENCE REFUSED TO BELIEVE ALL REPORTS OF THE MASS MURDER OF POLAND'S JEWS

BY MICHAEL EVANS, TIMESONLINE

Britain's intelligence chiefs refused to accept witness reports of the German massacre of Polish Jews in the Second World War and discounted the existence of the Holocaust, according to an authorized account based on official archives.

The intelligence chiefs thought that reports of the genocide of Jews in Poland, brought by two emissaries from Warsaw, lacked credibility. Their disbelief was one of the reasons why Winston Churchill was kept ignorant of the scale of the Holocaust at a time when decisive action might have been taken to try to stop the wholesale killings.

The dismissive response to the Holocaust reports in 1942 and 1943 is detailed in a remarkable publication of official intelligence records of the Second World War, sanctioned by the British and Polish governments.

Intelligence Co-operation Between Poland and Great Britain During World War II highlights the successes of the Anglo-Polish wartime relationship. However, the intelligence chiefs' dismissal of the evidence of German genocide of Polish Jews provides an insight into one of the most controversial issues of the

war. Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, met one of the emissaries but was more interested in Polish-Soviet relations and future borders between the two countries than in any Allied action on behalf of murdered Jews. President Roosevelt also met the same emissary from Warsaw in Washington, but asked more questions about Polish resistance.

William Cavendish-Bentinck, chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, the main coordinator of intelligence in the 1939-45 war, summed up the views of the British intelligence hierarchy. He thought the Polish, and especially Jewish, reports on the German atrocities were not credible. According to the declassified intelligence archives, he stated in August 1943 that they were "exaggerating the German atrocities, and did so 'to stiffen our resolve'."

The two key emissaries from Warsaw, both witnesses of the slaughter, were Jan Karski, who came to London in November 1942, and Jan Nowak-Jezioranski, who arrived in December in 1943. Karski, a liaison officer of the Polish underground, told Cavendish-Bentinck about the mass murder of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto and in a concentration camp called *Belzec*.

Nowak-Jezioranski said that some 3.3 million Polish Jews had been murdered from the beginning of the war until August 1943. His report in the intelligence archives says "the Germans used troops, tanks and artillery to liquidate the ghetto in Warsaw." He handed over photos as evidence.

Although Karski, who was initially interrogated by MI5, wrote his own account of the disbelieving Allies after the war, the new history shows up the Whitehall brick wall that he and the other emissary faced when they tried to convince London and Washington of Germany's Holocaust strategy.

The new official history says: "As chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee and thanks to Enigma, Cavendish-Bentinck had access to the decrypted German police and SS reports which also mentioned the persecution and genocide of the Jews on the territories held by the Germans.

"This was a clear validation of Polish and Jewish information. Cavendish-Bentinck [a former Ambassador to Warsaw] was more interested in military intelligence on the Germany Navy than in the fate of dying Polish Jews." It goes on: "As was the case with his political master, Anthony Eden, who was responsible for SIS [Secret Intelligence

Service], he believed that only the swiftest possible end to the war could save the Jews of occupied Europe from complete annihilation."

Roger Allen, a high-ranking Foreign Office official who worked closely with Cavendish-Bentinck during the war, "refused to believe that the Germans used gas chambers in Poland to murder people."

At the end of August 1943, Allen wrote in a memo that he could "never understand what the advantage of a gas chamber over a simple machinegun or over starving people would be." He said the recurring mentions of gas chambers in reports were "very general and tended to come from Jewish sources."

The testimony of both Polish emissaries was kept secret. In the War Cabinet minutes concerning Karski's account of the massacres, all references to the Jews were deleted, and when Eden wrote to Churchill on the subject, he also removed everything which mentioned Jews being murdered. Eden refused to let Karski report personally to Churchill because he felt it was "his duty to protect the elderly and overworked Prime Minister from too many petitioners."

The official history, with a foreword by Tony Blair, is by the Anglo-Polish Historical Committee, set up five years ago to evaluate historical records.

IN BERLIN, TEACHING GERMANY'S JEWISH HISTORY

BY EDWARD ROTHSTEIN,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

There may be worse Jewish museums in the world than the *Jüdisches Museum Berlin*, which opened in 2001. But it is difficult to imagine that any could be as uninspiring and banal, particularly given its pedigree and promise. Has any other Jewish museum been more celebrated or its new building (designed by Daniel Libeskind) so widely hailed? Is any other Jewish museum of more symbolic importance?

This is the largest such institution in Europe, a national museum devoted to exploring the history of a people this country was once intent on eradicating. Is there any museum of any kind more laden with the baggage of guilt and suffering, of restitution and tribute?

So many museums now deal with recollections of trauma that Berlin's fraught examples are illuminating. Ruin and relics are part of renovation here. When the destroyed *Neue Synagoge* was being restored, it was clear that the original 19th-century structure, with its ornate echoes of the Alhambra, could never be reconstituted. So its extraordinary facade, rededicated in 1995, frames not a house of worship but a modest exhibition about a particular Jewish community and its once-thriving synagogue, while fragments of the original building's altar are pieced together like an unfinished puzzle.

The *Jüdisches Museum* inverts the formula. Here it is the new — the building created by Mr. Libeskind — that invokes scars and wreckage. The old is suggested by its contents, consisting largely of text, images, reproductions and interactive displays that are meant to conjure a past worthy of celebration.

This museum may even be considered a German example of a genre dominant in the United States: the "identity" museum. Typically, the identity museum recounts how a particular ethnic group has sur-

vived, chronicling its travails and triumphs, culminating in the institution's own prideful displays. Here, of course, the Holocaust interrupts the uplift. But the overarching idea was to reveal something about the people Hitler set out to obliterate by surveying the rich, complicated history of Jews in Germany.

So while the narrative begins with evocations of the Holocaust, it is meant to end, if not in redemption for Germans or Jews, at least in a kind of mutual respect. In the museum's catalog foreword, the German commissioner for cultural affairs, Julian Nida-Rümelin, points out that the institution may be providing "the only contact many non-Jewish Germans have with Jews and Judaism" outside their history classes.

The museum's director, W. Michael Blumenthal, explains, too, that the exhibition's story "far transcends" the history of German Jewry, demonstrating "a widely shared determination" to apply its lessons "to societal problems of today and tomorrow," and promoting "tolerance toward minorities in a globalized world."

The resulting strain is almost bipolar, with the building aggressively screaming about apocalypse as its exhibition affirms harmonious universalism, with neither making its case.

The building, for example, proposes that the shattered, fractured world of the Holocaust is best suggested by shattered, fractured space. You enter the exhibition by descending a lobby staircase that leads into a world of skewed geometry. The floors are raked and tilted.

Displays are off-kilter. And rather than feeling something profound, you almost expect moving platforms and leaping ghosts, as in an amusement park's house of horrors.

Add to this a sheen of pretense. One corridor is called the Axis of Exile, because along it are the personal effects of Jews who fled Germany during the 1930s. Another is named the Axis of the Holocaust, which shows letters and photographs of murdered Jews. And lest it all look too bleak, an Axis of Continuity leads



The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

upstairs, where you learn about where all of this fits into 2,000 years of German Jewish history.

Meanwhile, the items on display are so cursorily identified and their owners so obliquely described that they might as well have been anonymous points on an Axis of Victimhood. The space trivializes history rather than revealing it.

To see what else is possible, go in Berlin to the outdoor Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe: it, too, uses abstract space to symbolize tragedy, but doesn't prod or preen. Its thousands of pillars seem to emerge gradually from the city's street. But their array creates passages that lead you from daylight into dense alleys of looming stone, as if you are gradually submerged into a maze, obliterating

the human. The pillars can resemble the tilted gravestones of Prague's ancient Jewish Cemetery, only here they are anonymous and ominous.

But as strong as this 2005 memorial, designed by Peter Eisenman, is, an exhibition in its below-ground information center is even more powerful. The Holocaust is historically outlined and then made personally vivid. Embedded in the floor of a darkened room are illuminated panels inscribed with letters from the period, around which you walk as if navigating the memorial's pillars, until you enter, in dazed shock, another gallery that traces the way specific Jewish families from all over Europe headed toward destruction.

Far smaller than Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and far more focused than the United States Holocaust Museum, it is the most extraordinarily informative and affecting display about its subject I have seen.

So such commemorations are possible. But the *Jüdisches Museum* amplifies its errors. If you emerge from the Axes into the top galleries where the chronological show begins, you see two dominant objects: a fake pomegranate tree and an enormous plastic garlic.

O.K., these have some significance — the pomegranate tree is a Jewish symbol of renewal, though hardly as fundamental as the museum suggests, and the garlic is a playful allusion to a Hebrew acrostic naming the three Germanic towns on the *Rhine* (*Speyer, Worms and Mainz*) where Jews settled in the Middle Ages. But you will remember garlic and pomegranates more readily than anything else.

There are few original objects here, and only scattered explanations of Judaism. You have to watch brief films to get any historical background and by the time you reach the 16th-century galleries, you have only the vaguest idea about what Jews believed or why they survived.

We read, for example, that learning and the Scriptures were highly valued; we see

(Continued on page 14)

ORIGINAL "SCHINDLER'S LIST" FOUND IN SYDNEY

A list of Jews saved by Oskar Schindler that inspired the novel and Oscar-winning film *Schindler's List* has been found in a Sydney library, its co-curator said.

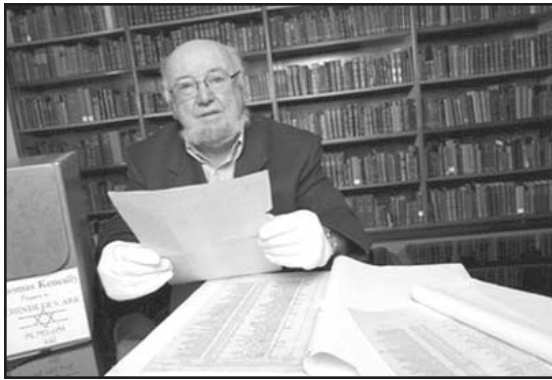
Workers at the New South Wales State Library found the list, containing the names of 801 Jews saved from the Holocaust by the businessman, as they sifted through boxes of Australian author Thomas Keneally's manuscript material.

The 13-page document, a yellowed and fragile carbon typescript copy of the original, was found between research notes and German newspaper clippings in one of the boxes, library co-curator Olwen Pryke said.

Pryke described the 13-page list as "one of the most powerful documents of the 20th Century" and was stunned to find it in the library's collection.

"This list was hurriedly typed on April 18, 1945, in the closing days of WWII, and it saved 801 men from the gas chambers," she said.

"It's an incredibly moving piece of history." She said the library had no idea the list was among six boxes of material acquired in 1996 relating to Keneally's Booker



Australian author Thomas Keneally at the State Library with Schindler's list papers containing the names of 801 Jews saved from the Holocaust.

Prize-winning novel, originally published as *Schindler's Ark*.

The 1982 novel told the story of how the roguish Schindler discovered his conscience and risked his life to save more than 1,000 Jews from the Nazis.

Hollywood director Steven Spielberg

turned it into a film in 1993, starring Liam Neeson as Schindler and Ralph Fiennes as the head of an SS-run camp.

Pryke said that, although the novel and film implied there was a single, definitive list, Schindler actually compiled a number of them as he persuaded Nazi bureaucrats not to send his workers to the death camps.

She said the document found by the library was given to Keneally in 1980 by Leopold Pfefferberg — named on the list as Jewish worker number 173 — when he was persuading the novelist to write Schindler's story.

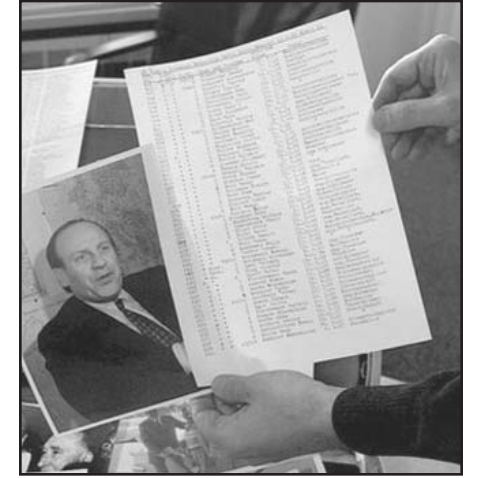
As such, it was the list that inspired Keneally to tell the world about Schindler's heroics, she said.

Pryke said she had no idea how much the list was worth.

Schindler, born in a German-speaking part of Austria-Hungary in 1908, began the war as a card-carrying Nazi who used his connections to gain control of a factory in Krakow, Poland, shortly after Hitler invaded the country.

He used Jewish labor in the factory but, as the war progressed, he became appalled at the conduct of the Nazis.

Using bribery and charm, he persuaded officials that his workers were vital to the war effort and should not be sent to the death camps.



Papers and a photograph of German industrialist Oskar Schindler, who saved almost 1200 Jews from concentration camps during Germany's Nazi era.

Schindler died relatively unknown in 1974, but he gained public recognition following Keneally's book and Spielberg's film.

ONE GROUP'S MUSIC, TELLING OF A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL IN THE HOLOCAUST

BY COREY KILGANNON

Wearing grave expressions and lavender head scarves, a dozen women filed into a church garret in Woodstock, N.Y., recently and began tackling Chopin, Schumann and Beethoven with instruments including mandolins, guitars, accordion, and snare drum.

While no philharmonic, this community orchestra, part of Ars Choralis, is no cinch to play in. During one performance, a violinist lifted her bow to perform and simply froze.

"She just stared straight ahead and cried," said the group's conductor and musical director, Barbara Pickhardt, adding that the violinist had later solved the problem by distracting herself with cartoons, "so she didn't have to think, she didn't have to go there."

"There" is Auschwitz, and this group is, with its instrumentation, uniforms, and repertory, emulating one of the best known of the concentration-camp ensembles: the *Birkenau* women's orchestra of some 54 Jewish prisoners at Auschwitz from 1943 through 1945.

The *Birkenau* group had some accomplished players and was led by the violin virtuoso and conductor Alma Rosé, a niece of Gustav Mahler and also a prisoner at Auschwitz. Nazi officers formed the ensemble for their listening pleasure, but also for practical purposes — to divert and dupe prisoners and keep them calm so they could be more easily controlled.

Ars Choralis, a chorus and orchestra formed in 1966, has mainly performed local concerts, but is now receiving wider exposure. On April 19 it performed at the former *Ravensbrück* concentration camp in Germany, as part of the camp's annual liberation day memorial service for Holocaust survivors.

"We want to bring the story of the *Birkenau* women back to Germany," said Alice Radosh, project director of the group, whose program, "Music in Desperate Times: Remembering the Women's Orchestra of *Birkenau*," combines selections played by the *Birkenau* orchestra and choral music set to lyrics based on survivors' memoirs.

"Desperate Times," Ms. Radosh said, is meant to be a poignant reminder of the horrors of the Holocaust and of how a group of women used music to survive. While this mission has been hailed by numerous Jewish groups, some survivors find it too poignant. The ensemble has agreed to forgo the "Desperate Times" program of music and lyrics at

lasted for 18 months. As Jews poured into Auschwitz, musicians were found by word of mouth for auditions.

Compared with other prisoners living in rags amid filth, death, disease, and starvation, the musicians received better food, treatment, clothing, and living quarters, in barracks near the road leading to the gas chambers and crematoriums. They slept in triple bunks, each



Members of Ars Choralis at a rehearsal. The ensemble was inspired by the women's orchestra at *Birkenau*.

Ravensbrück and play other music instead, Ms. Radosh said, because "survivors said it would be too painful."

Esther Béjarano, 84, a pianist who played accordion in the *Birkenau* orchestra, said it saved her life. But she called the current orchestra's revival of the music "distasteful."

"I don't want to listen to this music," she said recently from her home in Hamburg, Germany. "I don't want to be reminded. Never in my life do I want to ever hear it again."

Another survivor, Anita Lasker Wallfisch, who played cello in the *Birkenau* orchestra, said recently from her home in London that she had disputed some details of the chorus lyrics and sent corrections to Ms. Radosh. When pressed, Ms. Wallfisch, 83, said, "It is laudable that people have an interest to do this."

The orchestra, the subject of the 1980 film *Playing for Time*, with Vanessa Redgrave, was founded in the spring of 1943 at *Birkenau*, the death camp at Auschwitz, and

with a mattress and blanket.

A spot in the orchestra also meant survival. All 54 members avoided being killed at Auschwitz, where more than a million Jews were murdered in gas chambers.

The orchestra was forced to play for new arrivals during the devastating selection processes in which Nazi guards separated them into groups bound for gas chambers or labor details. The orchestra also performed at the gates as prisoners were marched in and out for grueling work assignments. They were often made to play mocking tunes during executions.

Orchestra members knew that many prisoners envied and hated them. And playing sublime music for human skeletons, and for the pleasure of their captors, was a surreal, difficult and guilt-inducing experience, according to numerous memoirs.

Ms. Pickhardt said that her musicians speak of channeling these same conditions as they perform. "They feel when they put that lavender scarf on, they have

a huge responsibility to tell that story to the best of their ability," she said.

Many women arrived at Auschwitz without their instruments, and many quickly adapted to other ones to join the orchestra. Six months into the ensemble's existence, Rosé arrived and took leadership.

Rosé's father was Arnold Rosé, concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic. She was married to the Czech violin virtuoso Vasa Pihoda. Before she was arrested by the Nazis, she had founded and led a women's touring orchestra.

She demanded exhaustive rehearsing and elevated the repertory from marches and folk songs to renditions of Puccini, Mozart and Beethoven. She and others often wrote their music from memory and orchestrated it for the available instruments.

Some memoirs accused Rosé, who died of an illness at the camp, of cozying up to Nazi officers, while many others say that anything she did was to save her players from the gas chambers, even favoring more complex polyphonic pieces necessitating more musicians, and more survivors. While there was envy from some non-musician prisoners, others recalled that the music strengthened their resolve to survive.

Ms. Wallfisch and Ms. Béjarano credit the orchestra with saving their lives.

"If it were not for Alma Rosé, I would not be talking to you today," Ms. Wallfisch said. She described how joining the orchestra saved her from the gas chambers when she arrived at Auschwitz.

"A female prisoner shaving my hair asked me, 'What did you do before you were arrested?'" Ms. Wallfisch recalled. "I was naked without hair and I said, 'I played the cello.' I was expecting to go into the gas chamber and suddenly we're talking about cello playing. I thought, 'This is a madhouse.'"

Ms. Béjarano said that she arrived at Auschwitz in early 1943 and hauled stones until she joined the orchestra as an accordionist. She had never played one, but quickly applied her theory and keyboard knowledge at her audition.

"The music helped me to survive because if I would have continued the work," she said, "I would never have made it."

PHOTOGRAPHER TRICKED NAZIS TO SAVE AUSCHWITZ IMAGES

Wilhelm Brasse was put through daily torture photographing the horrors of the Auschwitz death camp, but the young Pole pulled a fast one over his Nazi captors to make sure the terrible events were not forgotten.

Brasse, now 91, was ordered to photograph women whose genitals were butchered in pseudo-medical experiments, Jewish prisoners arriving at the death camp and the brothel where female prisoners were turned into sex slaves.

Somehow Brasse survived the war and with the Soviet Red Army approaching, on January 17, 1945, his Nazi commander ordered him to burn all the negatives.

"He said: 'Brasse, the 'Ivans' are coming – destroy everything'," the photographer recalled in an interview.

"But he didn't know the negatives were non-flammable. I put them in the stove, lit it, my boss waited 10 minutes and when he left I poured water on the flames," said Brasse.

It was one of the miracles of Auschwitz, where Brasse, a portrait photographer from Katowice in southern Poland, was held after being caught trying to escape the occupied country in 1939.

"This one, it's a special photo ordered by Dr. Mengele in 1943: they were Jewish teenage girls, two sets of twins," said Brasse, holding up a copy of one of his photos of four living skeletons that he acquired from the Auschwitz archive after the war.

"They were so young, terrified and so embarrassed standing naked in front of me, a 23-year-old man," he told AFP, showing a photo of himself as prisoner.

"I knew they would die in a few days or a few hours. It was their last photo.

"The only thing I could tell them was that nothing else would happen to them," he said.

Brasse was also forced to record inhuman experiments.

1940 and was put to work in the "Erkennungsdienst," a unit identifying prisoners created by the Nazi Gestapo security force in January 1941.

He had tried to get to France to join a free Polish force but was caught at the

He had become a photographer because his parents were too poor to pay school fees.

"I was the only professional photographer in the 'Erkennungsdienst.' The Germans needed me, this is why I survived," he said.

He was ordered to photograph the severed head of a prisoner who had drowned in the *Sola* river, adjacent to the camp. Brasse was also required to photograph women forced to work in a camp brothel and the elite German SS officers who ran it.

Days before the liberation of Auschwitz on January 27, 1945 by the Soviet Red Army, Brasse was evacuated from the camp in the infamous Death March of 60,000 sick and dying prisoners over hundreds of kilometers west to the *Gross-Rosen* and *Buchenwald* camps.

He survived and was held at the *Mauthausen*, *Melk* and *Ebensee* camps in Austria before being liberated by US troops on May 6, 1945 at the end of the war.

1.1 million people died in the hands of the Nazis at the twin Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps between 1940 and 1945. Ninety percent of the victims were Jews.

Nazi Germany created six camps in occupied Poland to exterminate Jews gathered from across occupied Europe. Besides Auschwitz-Birkenau, there were also *Chelmno*, *Treblinka*, *Sobibor*, *Majdanek* and *Belzec*.

"After the war, I tried to work as a photographer, but I couldn't. Those poor Jewish children were always before my eyes," he said.



Former prisoner of Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp Jerzy Michnol shows pictures of himself and his family in front of the Auschwitz-Birkenau monument as he participates in a ceremony commemorating the 64th anniversary of the liberation of the camp, on January 27, 2009.

He also photographed prisoners arriving at the camp.

"When they arrived at Auschwitz, people's faces were full, they looked normal. Just weeks later, if they were still alive, they were unrecognizable."

Brasse was among the first prisoners to arrive at Auschwitz on August 31,

border and shipped to Auschwitz among 460 Polish political prisoners.

"The Germans wanted me to declare I was German," said Brasse. But he refused to renounce his Polish nationality. "My mother was Polish; I felt Polish even though I spoke German well, just like my grandfather," he said.

FRANKLIN LITTELL, SCHOLAR OF HOLOCAUST, DIES AT 91

BY DOUGLAS MARTIN,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

Franklin H. Littell, a father of Holocaust studies who traced his engagement with the subject to the revolution he felt as a young Methodist minister while witnessing a big Nazi rally in *Nuremberg* in 1939, died May 23, at his home in Merion Station, Pa., He was 91.

His wife, Marcia Sachs Littell, announced the death.

Dr. Littell, the author of more than two dozen scholarly books and a thousand articles, was among the first intellectuals to delve into the question of how baptized Christians in the heart of Christian Europe could have either killed or ignored the killing of six million Jews. A big part of the answer, as he found it, was that Christians from the time of Jesus on had shown systematic contempt for Jews and their beliefs.

Hubert G. Locke, a leading Holocaust scholar and former dean of the Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington, said in an interview on Wednesday that Dr. Littell had had "singular influence" in turning a focus on these ancient prejudices as the basis for the Holocaust.

Another Holocaust scholar, John K. Roth, emeritus professor of philosophy at Claremont McKenna College, said Dr. Littell had "helped to turn the tide on the awareness of Christian complicity, shortcoming, indifference in the face of what was happening to Jews under Hitler."

For more than a decade after the end of World War II, the Holocaust was studied and publicly discussed sparsely; the common wisdom was that survivors needed time to heal. But by the 1960s, attention to

it was starting to grow with the publication of books like Elie Wiesel's "Night," the trial of Adolph Eichmann and other efforts to collect testimony of survivors.

It was around then that academic programs on the Holocaust were pioneered by Dr. Littell. At Emory University in 1959, he started the first graduate seminar on the Holocaust, preceding what are believed to have been the first undergraduate courses on it, in 1960 at Brandeis and in 1961 at Brooklyn College. In 1970, with Dr. Locke, he set up one of the first annual scholarly conferences on the Holocaust, a forum that continues today.

In 1976, at Temple University, he began the first doctoral program in Holocaust studies. And in 1998, he and his wife established the first interdisciplinary master's degree program in Holocaust studies, at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey.

"When Franklin Littell started his work, it was almost the case that there was no such thing as Holocaust studies as a field," Dr. Roth said. Now hundreds of colleges offer courses on the Holocaust, and many states require public schools to teach about it.

Dr. Littell also became an enthusiastic supporter of Israel, in part because he believed that its very existence refuted theologies that foresaw or favored the withering away of the Jewish people. He rejected the theology of some Christian backers of Israel that Jews must ultimate-

ly become Christian, Marcia Littell said.

Soon after the Six-Day War, of June 1967, Dr. Littell started an organization called Christians Concerned for Israel, to promote a pro-Israeli spirit in Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant churches. In 1978, he founded the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel, which lobbied against arms sales to Arab nations and campaigned against the United Nations resolution, adopted in 1975 and since repealed, that described



Franklin H. Littell, left, Methodist minister and supporter of Israel, with Menachem Begin, the Israeli prime minister, in 1981.

Zionism as racism.

Franklin Hamlin Littell was born on June 20, 1917, in Syracuse, graduated from Cornell College in Iowa and earned a divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary. Afterward he visited Germany on the way to a religion conference for young people in Amsterdam.

It was then that he attended the *Nuremberg* rally, out of curiosity. Later in life, he recalled having been appalled by its open racism and its religious glorifica-

tion of Aryans. When Hitler made an almost godlike appearance, bathed in a halo of lights, Mr. Littell was so repelled, he remembered, that he had to leave.

Mr. Littell later earned a doctorate in theology from Yale and, after teaching at the University of Michigan, joined the United States high commissioner in occupied Germany as the Protestant adviser on de-Nazification.

In 1966, he founded the Institute for American Democracy to fight political extremists. It was attacked by far-right groups, and a window of his home was shot out.

In 1969, Dr. Littell published a book on political extremism, *Wild Tongues: A Handbook of Social Pathology*, in which he accused the prominent conservative author and columnist William F. Buckley Jr. of being a "fellow traveler" of fascism. Mr. Buckley sued for libel and won.

Dr. Littell's first wife, the former Harriet Lewis, died in 1978. In addition to Marcia Sachs Littell, he is survived by three daughters from his first marriage, Jeannie Lawrence, Karen Littell and Miriam Littell; a son from that marriage, Stephen; his stepsons, Jonathan Sachs and Robert L. Sachs Jr.; his stepdaughter, Jennifer Sachs Dahner; 11 grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Over his long career, Dr. Littell was also president of Iowa Wesleyan College and a founding board member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in Washington.

His best-known book was *The Crucifixion of the Jews* (1975), in which he pressed his view that Christianity is essentially Jewish. Jesus, Paul and Peter, Dr. Littell said, would have been executed at Auschwitz.

IN BERLIN, TEACHING GERMANY'S JEWISH HISTORY

(Continued from page 11)

an electronic page from the Talmud and a prayer book, but get no real sense of their content or how they shaped Jewish life. Judaism here seems like a religion whose main importance is sociological.

One of the most extensive displays is based on a journal by a remarkable Jewish woman, Glikl bas Juda Leib (1646-1724), who left rare accounts of 17th-century Jewish private life. We learn more about

with the ideals of the Enlightenment, but you won't find out here that because he had trouble selling artifacts from his Royal Porcelain Factory, he forced Jews to buy second-rate porcelain if they wanted to bear children without paying exorbitant taxes.

Facts like those can disclose an entire world. But it would also make the museum more troubling. Instead, by making the German past seem more



The Jüdisches Museum.

her, though, than about the imposing rabbinical scholars of these lands, or how their debates shaped Judaism in Europe.

There is palpable relief when the pre-modern is left behind, for now we see Jews fully enter into secular history. After the Enlightenment, the museum finally feels on firm ground, recounting the ways in which Jews became central figures in German banking, commerce, journalism and the arts.

But over all, it is as if intellectual and religious substance had been drained from Judaism, leaving behind cursory accounts of rituals, tales of victimization and an accumulation of Jewish achievements that might inspire contemporary interest (like Leib's writings or the emigration of Levi Strauss, the jeans pioneer).

And while pointing out conflicts, the museum tends to become sanguine about the knotty relationship between Jews and Germans. You learn, for example, about the involvement of Friedrich the Great

enlightened, and the Jewish past less particular, it has created an assimilated blandness in which antipodes unite in ersatz tolerance.

Imagine what the museum might have been had it decided to eliminate exaggerated effects and dull homogeneity. It might have been subtle, touching, unsettling. It might have taken history seriously. Perhaps it would have had the potency of the underground "Bibliotek" memorial built in the mid-1990s on the Bebelplatz, where the Nazis held a book burning in 1933, consigning thousands of volumes to the flames.

The memorial's creator, Micha Ullman, knew he couldn't reproduce the magnitude of the event or its destructiveness. So instead, he put a transparent window in the ground of the plaza, under which you can see an illuminated array of empty white bookshelves.

"Where books are burned," a bronze plaque simply reads, quoting the poet Heinrich Heine from 1820, "in the end people will burn."

MUDDLING THE HOLOCAUST IN LITHUANIA

(Continued from page 6)

May, armed plainclothes police came looking for her. Three American congressmen took up her cause last August, but she has yet to receive assurances of safe passage for return to Vilnius. A group of European Union and NATO ambassadors has recently sent her a joint letter expressing the wish to hear her lecture in Vilnius. They include representatives of Austria, Britain, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Ireland, Sweden, and the United States.

All of this comes despite the poor record of the Lithuanian government in pursuing non-Jewish war criminals. No Lithuanian collaborator of the Nazis has been punished since the country achieved independence in 1991, and the recent efforts to target Soviet anti-Nazi partisans seems to name only Jews, who were a minority in the partisan movement. It also comes at a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise in Vilnius, as witnessed by the parade of some 200 neo-Nazis through the city on Independence Day, March 11, 2008, and the more recent painting of swastikas and

anti-Semitic slogans on the tiny number of Jewish community centers in the country.

The actions of the Lithuanian government have occasioned protests from the tiny Jewish population remaining in Vilnius as well as from some academics and staff associated with the Vilnius Yiddish Institute at the University of Vilnius. But these folks at the Institute are running afoul of the state security services and genocide industry establishments, and may be in danger of marginalization and losing their jobs. The government, however, doesn't want bad publicity to interfere with its attempts to show the western world, and especially American Jews, that Lithuania remembers Jewish suffering, while at the same time it obfuscates the memory of the Holocaust with its anti-Soviet priorities. It is vital for people to rally around the truth tellers in the Yiddish Institute and let the Lithuanian government and academy know that, in the words of the 1960s, "the whole world is watching."

Mr. Lawson is a Professor of History at Rutgers University.

THEY WENT LIKE SHEEP TO THE SLAUGHTER AND OTHER MYTHS

(Continued from page 5)

The victim goes to the right; his family to the left. He soon discovers that the only means of escape is through the chimney.

His family, his wife, his two children are already in the next world. The chimney continues operating at full capacity. The heart and the soul of the world are uncompassionate.

An inmate attempts to overcome a guard. He is tortured brutally and hung in front of the inmates. Each victim begins thinking to himself that he wants to avoid that suffering, revolt is meaningless, and even if he escaped where would he go? No one wants him.

The victim dreams and longs for a better world. He yearns for the time to come when he will no longer suffer and will begin to rebuild anew. The world remains silent to his pleas. His dreams remain unfulfilled. His heroic vision of hope for the future is clouded by the reality of the inferno surrounding him. He is tormented by recurring nightmares. He hears the voices of his children, wife, parents, and loved ones. He remembers the sight of Joseph, his friend and neighbor, who was buried alive. In front of his eyes stand Yaakov, his uncle who was disemboweled, Chaim who was hanged, and Chana who was subjected to medical experiments and then tortured to death. Tears flow as he envisions Pinchas who was drowned and his brother who was trampled to death. He awakens, scarred by the memory of Shmuel who was burnt with cigarettes and then thrown into the burning crematorium while still alive.

Today the world has the audacity to exclaim "Why didn't they fight back? Why didn't they rush the armed guards? Why didn't they attempt mass suicide?" The world refuses to realize that courage and heroism are often expressed in the individual's will to live; to seek to survive and build a better life, a better world for himself and his future family. The world dares to forget that numerous heroic uprisings did occur.

The remnants of Hitler's inferno came back from the grave to build a new nation, a nation conceived in blood and tears, a nation which loudly proclaims, "We will not be silent. Jews, return to your own home, our gates are eagerly awaiting you." These survivors dedicated themselves and their children to a new purpose; the atrocities of the past, the inhumanity of

mankind, could not extinguish the Jewish spirit.

Our young must be told that we have always fought tyranny, we did not die like sheep for the slaughter. The Jewish nation has experienced the inferno of humanity. Jews have been criticized, labeled, stereotyped and maligned; we have experienced anguish and peril; many have tried to murder us, others to missionize our young; and yet, through it all, we, unlike any other people, have survived.

Sophisticated 21st-century mechanistic society not only wishes to forget the atrocities of the Holocaust, but tragically wishes to deny that it ever existed. Professor Arthur Butz and his followers would have us believe that the Nazi extermination of six million Jews was a myth created by the Jewish establishment. The tears and frequent nightmares of terror experienced by survivors – are these exaggerations exploited by Zionists? Are the numbers branded on the arms of survivors beauty marks, reminders of the good old days when the orchestra played such melodic tunes as "Arbeit Macht Frei?"

The gas chambers of yesteryear have been replaced with sophisticated mind-controlling devices. Organized cults are directing their deceptive ploys against Jewish children. These evangelists robe themselves with creative labels such as Hare Krishna, Jews for Jesus and Moonie. These antagonists are deceptive; their prime target is our youth.

The propaganda machine rings aloud with the deceptions of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Twentieth century anti-Semites declare that Jews control industry, that Jews operate the banks, direct Wall Street and manipulate the economy. These anti-Semites suggest that we control the mass media and that newspapers echo Jewish propaganda. The General Browns of the world have not learned the tragic lessons of the past.

We Jews have been gassed in the bathhouses of humanity, burned in crematoria constructed by the world's intellectuals, our children bayoneted, their blood spilt on the walls of the most civilized nations in the world. We have returned from the grave. We did not perish in the inferno. Our nation will never march like sheep to the slaughter. The people of Israel shall live.

HARVEST OF BLOSSOMS

(Continued from page 4)

that claimed the lives of many, including her parents. We learn that Selma had planned to escape with a guard's help prior to her consuming illness.

The collected fifty-seven poems were written ironically in German, along with five translated poems. Selma's poems touch us with their sincere yearning for a transformed personal and outer world, reflecting an appreciation for nature's varied expressions and the longing for life and love of a sensitive and gifted young soul. To read Selma's poetry is to hug her and cry for a life that was not allowed to fully blossom and yet has blessed us with such a rich harvest of spiritual resistance.

The book's expert introduction is by the book's editors, who are Selma's first cousins once removed. Irene Silverblatt is a professor of cultural anthropology and history at Duke University, and Helene Silverblatt is a professor of psychiatry and family and community medicine at the

University of New Mexico. Selma's poetry was first published in Germany in 1980 and reissued in 2005. Translations followed into Dutch, Spanish, French, and now English. A scholarship was established at Tel-Aviv University in her memory and the city of Czernowitz has honored her as well in recent years.

This important and handsome book, which is published by the distinguished Northwestern University Press, is a fitting memorial to a special life and spirit. The original poems are housed at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. The last line in the last poem, written on December 23, 1941, reads, "You'll fade like smoke and leave no trace." Selma, you are remembered and treasured forever by a most loving family and all who will encounter your poetry of the heart.

Rabbi Israel Zoberman, spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach, Virginia, is the son of Polish survivors from Zamosc, Sarny and Pinsk.

A BOOK BRINGS THE HOLOCAUST CLOSE TO HOME

BY AILEEN JACOBSON,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

During their childhoods, Arthur and Harold Charych — known as Artie and Hal — would often sneak looks at the black-covered volume, filled with gruesome photographs, that their parents kept in a hutch in their living room in New Jersey.

"Oh, my God, it was so shocking," Harold Charych recalled recently as he and his older brother carefully turned the fragile pages of the book, *Extermination of Polish Jews: Album of Pictures*.

In 1991, after their father's death, Arthur Charych carried the tattered 136-page book to his own house in Setauket. There it remained for some 15 years, untouched but not erased from their memories, said the brothers, engineers who are now 61 and 56.

The graphic book shows Jews being humiliated and tortured, as well as bodies of those who had been killed, in photos that an introduction says were mostly taken by German soldiers who wanted "charming" keepsakes." It was published in December 1945 in *Lodz*, Poland, by the

tor of the Suffolk Center on the Holocaust, Diversity and Human Understanding, asked to see it. He said he discovered through research how rare it was, and now the book is a focal point of an exhibition mounted by Mr. Schrier and Steven Klipstein. The exhibition, "The Occupation of Poland and the Extermination of Polish Jews," includes 22 framed photos, a slide show of others, the book, and a photo of the family's mother, then Henia Lin, with her parents and four siblings.

At 14, Henia left Poland to study in Russia, a week before the war started in 1939. When she returned at age 20, she learned that her family had perished in Auschwitz. All that was left of her former home was a boulder. "She sat on that boulder and cried," Harold Charych said.

Their father, the brothers said, was a gregarious risk-taker who had been a singer and stand-up comic. His personality, and luck, helped him survive, they said.

When he arrived in *Dachau*, along with his brother, Alex Charych claimed to be a sheet metal worker. He wasn't, but the Nazis needed sheet metal workers, Harold Charych said. By selling metal outside the camp, Mr. Charych



Harold Charych, left, and Arthur Charych, who inherited a book on the Holocaust.

Central Jewish Historical Committee in Poland. Their copy, the brothers said, was acquired in *Lodz* by their parents, Holocaust survivors who had met earlier that year.

In this country, the parents, Alex and Henia, took the book out when friends — most of them also survivors — came to visit, the brothers said. The grown-ups sat at the kitchen table, telling stories in Yiddish and poring over the book as though it were a family album, they said. The boys lingered nearby. "They thought we couldn't understand Yiddish, but we could," Harold Charych said.

Arthur Charych said their father never talked to them about the Holocaust. "The only information we had was when we listened in on their conversations," said Mr. Charych, explaining that this was how they learned about their father's years in *Dachau*, the German concentration camp. Their mother sometimes told them about her life during the war, working in Siberia.

The book would probably still be languishing in Arthur Charych's basement, the brothers said, if Harold Charych, who lives in Poquott, had not had dinner more than a year ago with a neighbor, Steven Schrier, and told him about the book.

Mr. Schrier, who is the executive direc-

tor could get extra food. Just before the war's end, the Nazis took the inmates on a forced march. When Mr. Charych's brother collapsed, Arthur Charych said, a guard shot him.

Alex and Henia met in Warsaw and lived in *Lodz* before emigrating to the United States when Arthur was almost 12 and Harold, 7. In *Lodz*, they said, their father continued to work with metal, making containers with false bottoms, suitable for smuggling.

In Guttenberg, N.J., where they settled, Mr. Charych worked as a roofer and his wife ran a laundrette that the family owned. They had another child, Deborah, now 44 and living in California. At some point — they are not sure when — the brothers discovered that their father had had a wife and three children in his hometown, *Vilna*, Lithuania, who had all been killed.

The parents' behavior, not discussing the Holocaust experiences with their children, is not uncommon, said Irving Roth, 79, a survivor of Auschwitz and *Buchenwald*. It is less common never to mention a murdered family, Mr. Roth said, but understandable.

"Who are we to criticize?" he said.

PERCENTAGE OF JEWS IN THE WORLD IN DECLINE SINCE HOLOCAUST

BY OFRI ILANI, HAARETZ

If not for the Holocaust, there would be as many as 32 million Jews worldwide, instead of the current 13 million, demographer Professor Sergio Della Pergola has written in a soon-to-be-published article. Della Pergola, who is the director of the Division of Jewish Demography and Statistics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, attempts to estimate the demographic damage to Jews of the Holocaust. The Holocaust "struck a mortal blow particularly at the Jews of Eastern Europe because of their especially young age structure, and particularly the number of children. This led to significant long-term demographic damage. The quantitative ramifications are far beyond what we think," he writes.

In the article, to be published in *Beshvil Hazikaron*, the periodical of the Yad Vashem Holocaust commemoration authority's school of Holocaust studies, he writes: "This was the destruction of a generation, and what we are lacking now is not only that generation, it is their children

and their children."

According to Della Pergola, while the birth rate of the Jewish population outside Israel is relatively low, the young Jewish population of Eastern Europe has great potential for growth. "What would happen if there were another 10 million Jews in Eastern Europe? It raises questions that are like science fiction — for example, would the State of Israel have come into being?"

Della Pergola says another demographic outcome of the Holocaust is the lower relative number of Jews in the world. "At present, the percentage of Jews in the world is constantly in decline. Before the Holocaust, the rate was eight Jews per thousand people in the world; today it is two per thousand."

Della Pergola also notes in the article that various estimates put the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust at between 5.6 and 5.9 million, and that part of the problem in pinpointing the numbers lies in the question of "who is a Jew," he writes, since some of those killed converted to Christianity before the Holocaust or were part-Jewish.

COGS IN THE MURDER MACHINE?

(Continued from page 7)

mechanic serving in Germany. They married and set up home in Queens, New York.

By all accounts, Ryan remained enthralled by his wife and unaware of her past until, in 1964, an American journalist acting on a tip-off from Wiesenthal, confronted Hermine Ryan on her doorstep. She immediately confessed to being Braunsteiner.

"My wife, sir, wouldn't hurt a fly," protested Ryan. "There's no more decent person on this earth. She told me this was a duty she had to perform. She didn't volunteer, she was conscripted."

Repatriating her to stand trial in *Düsseldorf* took nine years. No woman had previously featured in a similar war crimes trial prosecuted by the German government, especially involving *Majdanek*. Her middle-class lifestyle in New York conflicted with the testimony of her brutality.

The easy transition from the Heinkel production line to an extermination camp and then to domesticity in New York suggested to the apologists that Braunsteiner, like Schmitz, had no choice, becoming — as Braunsteiner insisted she was — an accidental cog in the murder machine, unable to escape.

But the court judged her to have been a committed and fanatical devotee of Nazism, ambitiously seeking promotion by murdering Jews. On conviction she received two life sentences. Released as a sick woman in 1996, she died in 1999.

In the courthouse it was impossible to equate the middle-aged woman with a uniformed sadist smashing a child's skull against the wall. But over the next 20 years I interviewed dozens of Nazi murderers in Germany and South America. Although all had different ranks, backgrounds and intellects, they all offered the same disarming pose of innocent obedience to orders, and ignorance or helplessness about the fate of the Jews and other persecuted races; and, uniformly, none uttered genuine remorse.

From *Düsseldorf* I drove south to a small town near *Frankfurt*. Ernst Heinrichsohn, a lawyer and the mayor, had been an SS officer central to the deportation of 76,000 French Jews to concentration camps in eastern Europe.

Pleading ignorance, he said he had visited the camps but had emerged unaware of anything wrong.

"I sent the children to Auschwitz," he told me, "and letters came back saying that they had arrived safely and were well."

Near *Innsbruck* I met Karl Wolf, the SS general who accompanied Himmler to Auschwitz, who told me that the murders were a "regrettable part of Nazi ideology." In north Germany I met Arthur Rudolph, the production manager of V2 rockets, manufactured by slaves in an underground factory near *Nordhausen*. Hanged inmates were left swinging on ropes for days after their execution to deter others from disobedience. "There was no alternative," he told me with patent sincerity.

In Brazil I met Gustav Wagner, the deputy commandant of *Sobibor*, an extermination camp where 250,000 were gassed. Wagner's trait was personally to murder about six people before breakfast. He liked to shoot a father and son with a single bullet through their heads.

Like Heinrichsohn, Braunsteiner, "Schmitz" and all Nazi murderers, Wagner lacked remorse. Like the others, he had been selected by the SS because of his devotion to Nazism and a complete lack of conscience. Like all the concentration camp guards he was groomed to prove his commitment before being sent to the "front line".

This induction into the murder machine after the initial interviews was carefully controlled and monitored by those responsible for the Final Solution. Repeatedly, Wagner was tested in successive murderous scenarios. Spotted as an idealistic Nazi, he was first sent to a hospital where insane children were murdered, and demonstrated his approval of euthanasia. Next he was sent to a minor camp where inmates were treated brutally. After personally participating in a few murders, he graduated to a bigger camp and only then was considered reliable as a mass murderer in *Sobibor*. No one who failed this test was punished.

Braunsteiner would have undergone similar grooming and, in reality, so would Schmitz. Both chose to obey orders and become murderers. Quite rightly, both were punished. So, despite its flaws, has at least resurrected the debate about personal responsibility in a tyranny.

HOLOCAUST MUSEUM LETS LOCAL VOICES MEMORIALIZE

BY SUSAN SAULNY,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

Barbara Steiner survived life as a child in the Warsaw ghetto and three Nazi death camps, emerging against dreadful odds without family or belongings but with a powerful story to tell. Yet for decades she was quiet about her trauma, concentrating on a new life raising her children in Skokie, Ill., northwest of Chicago.

Thirty-two years ago this summer, however, that peace was shattered when a group of American neo-Nazis threatened to march through the village, a destination carefully picked for its psychological punch: at the time, Skokie was home to many thousands of Jews like Ms. Steiner who were Holocaust survivors or their relatives.

The threatened march put Skokie at the bull's-eye of a national debate about

\$45 million Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, in the very village the neo-Nazis had hoped to horrify. The museum was shaped by what may be the last generation of Holocaust survivors to have such influence over their own stories.

"It's a dream come true and more," Ms. Steiner said, preparing for the public opening on April 19, at which former President Bill Clinton gave a keynote address.

"Magnificent is the only word for something so beautiful," she said.

The 66,000 square feet of exhibit space asks universal questions about human rights, as many Holocaust memorials do. But unlike similar institutions, the Skokie museum is almost totally anchored in the local, brought to life with the personal pictures, documents, clothing, testimonies, and other artifacts

cially called the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois, had a sparkling new building complete with art galleries and a children's wing, it did its work out of a modest storefront on Main Street in a residential neighborhood next to a pub.

Without large donors or the attention of designers and architects, they cobbled together a modest but poignant exhibit that welcomed busloads of schoolchildren and anyone else who wanted to hear their stories. There were about 20 or 30 members, Ms. Steiner recalls. (Of that original group, she said, only three are alive today.)

They worked with little fanfare until an epiphany of sorts. It was time to do some repairs to the storefront. What if they skipped the repair work and instead put their energy into fund-raising for a whole new center?

"They began to dream," said Richard S. Hirschhaut, the museum's executive director. "And this is an organization that had an annual budget at its high point of \$200,000."

But, as Mr. Hirschhaut said, it was a group known for its "luck and pluck." "They started asking, 'What if we could do more, reach more people? And how do we do it?'" he said. "It was an easy sell for newcomers who have fallen in love with the survivors, who adore and respect them, to go forward."

One such relative newcomer to the group was J. B. Pritzker of Chicago, the philanthropist scion of the Hyatt hotel chain and other investments, who said he had become enchanted by the survivors, adopting their dream as his own.

Approached to be the capital campaign chairman about 10 years ago, Mr. Pritzker, the managing partner of a private investment firm, accepted. He brought the group from having essentially nothing in the bank to where it is today, several tens of millions of dollars later.



Barbara Steiner in 2005 in front of a German rail car from the Nazi era. The car is now a centerpiece of the new museum.

free speech and democratic ideals. And although the march never materialized here, it prompted a movement among the death camp survivors that manifested itself in an urge to speak up and teach the lessons of their lives.

And so they organized a group and got to work.

All those decades of effort came to fruition this weekend in the form of the

of the building's own neighbors.

And several of the Holocaust survivors are working as docents and other staff members, weaving their first-person stories into the history, exploring issues of genocide around the world. They are candid about how their sense of tranquility was shattered by the threat of having to encounter the swastika on Skokie's streets, decades after their desperate escapes from the Nazis.

"The rightful place for this is here, because of the march," said Samuel R. Harris, the president of the museum and learning center, whose parents and siblings were killed at the Treblinka death camp. "You must know what fear the swastika brings to a survivor. The fear is immense, more than you can write. I felt, what can I do? Very simple solution: education."

The museum's co-curator, Yitzchak Mais, former director of the Yad Vashem museum in Jerusalem, explained its significance as filling a largely unexplored niche.

"These are your neighbors from the Midwest," Mr. Mais said. "You'll realize that you walked on the street with them, shopped with them at the grocery, sat with them at the movie theater."

"You've lived with the witnesses," he went on. "It removes the distance. This didn't happen a thousand miles away. It's about right here, and that's very clear."

Long before the group of survivors, offi-



Samuel R. Harris, president of a new museum about the Holocaust in Skokie, Ill.

Ms. Steiner, a former bookkeeper at Sears and other department stores, remembers the planning stages.

"When they were talking about millions, I said, 'Wait! You're talking about millions! You're kidding, right? How are we able to do that?'" she recalled telling Mr. Pritzker in a meeting. "He said, 'Don't worry, we'll have the money.' Thank God I was wrong. He was right."

Mr. Pritzker, leading a pre-opening tour, said, "The lesson we're trying to teach is that in small ways in everyday life we can rise and be up-standers. This is the universal message that the museum is all about."

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Among the people who told their stories at the museum is Aaron Elster, who moved to Skokie in 1955 by way of New York City. This is where his nightmares of hiding in a Polish family's attic for two years during the Holocaust began to subside.

"Like many people, I didn't want to

speak about my background," said Mr. Elster, 76, a retired insurance executive. "I didn't want to be known as a victim. But while we can, I feel that it's incumbent on every survivor to speak up."

So many are already gone. "I personally believe that their souls are here," Mr. Elster said. "And it becomes a holy place for people like myself."

Other speakers included writer and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, U.S. Sen. Roland Burris, Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn and President Barack Obama, who said in a video statement that "there is no greater obligation than to confront acts of inhumanity."

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

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