Good evening and welcome to the Annual Tribute Dinner of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem. It is my pleasure to warmly welcome the dais guests, members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of national organizations and all of our many friends and supporters who have joined us this evening.

I would like to recognize two special guests. We are privileged to have with us our friend, colleague and partner, Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, and the Hon. Isaac Herzog, the State of Israel Minister of Social Affairs and Services who is our Guest Speaker.

The theme of this Dinner, “Whoever Saves a Life, Saves Humanity,” has been central to the lives of two of our honorees, Fanya Gottesfeld Heller, from Eastern Europe, who hid her and her family from the Nazi death squads; and Tovah Feldshuh, a world-renowned actress, has used her creative talents to portray the life of Irena Gut Opdyke, a Christian rescuer, in the award-winning Broadway play, Irena’s Vow.

While the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem were not officially inaugurated until 1981, our activities on behalf of Yad Vashem began in 1964. That year the first Yom Hashoah commemoration, held on the 27th day of Nissan, in accordance with the Israeli law, was sponsored by major Jewish organizations and by religious institutions from all streams of Judaism. This event took place at Young Israel of Forest Hills and led to commemorations in every Jewish house of worship throughout the United States. In 1971, we commissioned the first Yad Vashem traveling exhibition on the history of the Holocaust. And shortly thereafter, in 1973, we launched Martyrdom & Resistance, the first newspaper devoted to remembrance.

Just as we have been dedicated to the capital expansion of Yad Vashem as well as to research and educational projects, we have simultaneously been committed to the development of a strong infrastructure for our organization — one that will ensure that our mission will be perpetuated by successive generations.

Children of survivors have served on our Board for the past two decades. Iras Drucker, Leonard Will, David Halpern, Cheryl Lifshitz, Dr. Axel Stawoski, Melvin Bukiet, Harry Karten, and Lili Stawski were among the first of their generation to become active. This plan has borne fruit.

Our entire Executive Committee, consisting of 20 people, is of that age group. Our two chairs for this evening are descendants of survivors and exemplify this endeavor. Mark Will is a son of our Benefactors Joseph and Elizabeth Will. We are proud to have Mark on our Executive Board.

Caroline Masell, whose survivor grandparents, Regina and Salo Guttfreund z"l, were among my best friends, has been the central force behind our Young Leadership Associates. Starting in 1997, with a small core group, the Young Leadership Associates now proudly boasts a membership of 800 young people, many of whom do not have a direct family connection to the Shoah, but view remembrance as a historical imperative of the Jewish people.

I turn to my friend and colleague, Avner Shalev, Chairman of Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, and say to you and to all those present, “My friends, these young people, already active, provide us with assurance that successive generations will continue the work that we began and will carry the torch of remembrance with dignity and pride as part of the National Remembrance Authority — Yad Vashem.”

Elie Wiesel, a Nobel Prize laureate, has used his creative talents to portray the life of Irena Gut Opdyke, a Christian rescuer, in the award-winning Broadway play, Irena’s Vow. Wiesel has used his platform to bring awareness to the Holocaust and its lessons for future generations.

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. First of all, I would like to dedicate a few words to a great person, Elie Wiesel, for creating and leading this organization. And I also want to say a few words about Avner Shalev. Those of you who set foot on the grounds of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem in the last twenty years could see the incredible development and the outstanding success of Yad Vashem, and this is all due primarily to the hard work of Avner and his team. I want to congratulate today’s honorees — both great ladies — who exemplify the stories of our lives.

I am happy to be here on behalf of the Israeli government. I am carrying a certain lineage. My grandfather, Yitzhak Herzog, following the war, was traveling around Europe for six months on a rescue mission to save Jewish children who lived in monasteries or with Christian foster parents. He found and rescued 15,000 Jewish kids. My father, Israeli President Chaim Herzog, was a British officer who fought all major battles of WWII in Northern Europe and participated in the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Seventy-one years after Kristallnacht, there are people around the world who deny that the Holocaust ever happened, who want to destroy the state of Israel, who deny Israel the right to exist. Following WWII the international community decided to change the rules of the game to make sure that another Holocaust would not happen again. A series of international laws designed mostly by Jewish professors were passed to ensure that the international community has enough power to contain people who act viciously against other people and nations. But all of a sudden, in our time, the same tools that were handed to the international community after the war are being used by enemies of Israel, by Holocaust deniers, to destroy our country. Seventy-one years after the onset of the events that led to the Holocaust, we still need to remind young people around the world that the Holocaust did happen, and that is where Yad Vashem fits in.

Yad Vashem exemplifies not only the commemoration and the study and the research, but Yad Vashem is also at the forefront of combating Holocaust denial, hate for Israel, and anti-Semitism. I am very proud to be affiliated with Yad Vashem. I think that the role of my generation, as the young leaders who are here today, is to make young people around the world understand that the Holocaust was not just another catastrophe; it was a philosophy of hatred aimed at the Jewish people and the eradication of Jews. Our role is to transform the lessons of the past into today’s reality.

I would like to thank all of you for supporting Yad Vashem. This is a holy cause that stems out of the earth of Jerusalem. Each and every leader of the world who sets foot on Jerusalem’s soil, first and foremost is brought to Yad Vashem. We confront them with the story of the Holocaust: we want their hearts to burn with pain, and we want them to understand the full scope of what went on in the Holocaust. I think that the role of Yad Vashem must be continued, and for this we are gathered here tonight. To commit ourselves eternally to the empowering, fostering, and strengthening of Yad Vashem. To make sure that it will teach generations of people until the end of time a lesson of the most horrific tragedy in the history of humankind, to explain the story of Israel and the plight of Zion, and to make sure that someone on Earth defends the true rule of law and the true rules of human rights.
A monument was unveiled in the Polish port city of Gdansk to remember 10,000 Jews who were evacuated to Britain to save them from the Nazis. The bronze memorial commemorating a promise known as the Kindertransport shows five children with suitcases. It went up in front of the main train station in Gdansk, a city once on the Baltic Sea coast that at the time was Danzig, a free city lost to Germany after World War II. The children were sent to foster homes in Britain after the Kristallnacht pogrom on November 9, 1938, in which Jewish businesses were ransacked across Germany and about 30,000 Jews were rounded up. The children were saved from the Nazi ghettos and death camps, becoming one of the rare success stories of the war.

The children came mainly from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Danzig. Among those who designed the monument is Frank Meisler, a sculptor who was himself on one of the transports and who has also designed Kindertransport monuments in Berlin and London.

**POLISH CITY ERECTS MEMORIAL TO KINDERTRANSPORT CHILDREN**

**DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER TO HONOR HOLOCAUST HEROES**

F immaker Michael King is producing and directing the feature-length documentary The Rescuers, Heroes of the Holocaust, which focuses on the efforts of non-Jewish diplomats. The film will be shot throughout Europe and will retrace the route of thousands of escapees from the Nazis as they fled to China, Portugal, Argentina, Japan, Britain and the United States.

Among those to be profiled in the film are Princess Alice of Greece, who hid Jews in her palace in Athens, and Portuguese diplomat Aristides de Sousa Mendes, who ignored orders and issued visas to thousands of Jews in France.

**POLAND TO PUBLISH ONLINE LIST OF WWII DEAD**

The Internet list, which is the result of three years of painstaking research and comparison of different databases, ranges from 5,000 to 6,000. Poles who died in combat in the resistance at home and fighting the Nazis under Allied command, to civilian victims of German reprisals. The next step, Kunert said, is to expand the list to at least 3.5 million names, notably via more research in Germany and Poland. But the 10-year project could end up listing still more names, he said. The Internet project is financed by Poland’s culture ministry and the Institute of National Remembrance, set up in 1998 to investigate historical crimes.

**HOLOCAUST TRAUMAS STILL CAUSE DISTRESS FOR MANY SURVIVORS**

More than 65 years after World War II, many Holocaust survivors in Israel and the US have been found to experience psychiatric problems such as anxiety, emotional distress and sleep disturbances. A recent study published Thursday in the British Journal of Psychiatry. Researchers based in Jerusalem and the US held face-to-face interviews with 145 European-born Jews who had survived the Holocaust. Of those, 55 had been in concentration camps and 36 in ghettos or in hiding, while 54 had fled their countries to escape the Nazis. Analyst Shemesh and Dr. Itzhak Levav of the Health Ministry, Asaf Sharon and Dr. Hesham Brodsky of the Myers J. D. C. - Brookdale Institute in Jerusalem and Dr. Robert Kahn of Brown University in Rhode Island also interviewed a comparison group of about 50 surviving children of Nazi victims who have never been over the years, and even six decades later,” the researchers wrote. “The reported sleep disturbances were quite noteworthy and could result from repeated and traumatic imagery or dreams regularly appearing during sleep.”

Severe adversity, such as that experienced during the Holocaust, can affect people in different ways as they grow older, they noted. In later years, feelings attached to the encapsulated memories of the adverse past events might return, possibly reactivated by other events such as Holocaust Remembrance Day, visits to the extermination camps, or even if war, they concluded.

“In older individuals, who often engage in retrospective rumination, such traumas may vividly evoke those early years of depriva- tion, losses and persecution, and as a result, they instigate feelings of distress,” they wrote.
ANTI-SEMITIC VANDALISM

Nearly 60 headstones at a Chicago Jewish cemetery were spray-paint-ed with anti-Semitic graffiti. Swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans such as “Juden raus” (German for “Jews out”), “Aryan Power” and a Star of David hanging from a gallows were found on headstones at the West域 Academy in northwest Chicago. About 46,000 people are buried there. The vandalism likely occurred on Jan. 6, according to Shrif Tom Dart, who called the damage a hate crime.

“What they did there is especially despica-ble,” Dart said at a news conference last Friday afternoon, the Chicago Tribune report-ed. “The desecration of graves has a level in the circle of hell that goes to the very bottom.”

The memorial in Grossburgwedel, a German town over a new memorial that ignores Jewish Holocaust victims. The survivors and others were attacked while commemorating the 64th-anniver-sary of liberation of a concentration camp near Salzberg on May 9. Calling the incident one of the worst in post-reunification Germany, authorities said the incident also illustrated the growing right-wing extremism among Austrene youth. The teens involved apparently had no previous record. Two people were wounded in the attack, in which teens allegedly fired plastic bul-lets from air guns and harassed visitors verbally, according to reports. One of the attackers was found later near the scene, according to police.

The masked youths also allegedly shouted “Heil Hitler” and gave the Nazi salute, shocking a group of visitors from France and Italy, according to news reports. Some of the visitors, including survivors of the Ebensee slave labor camp, were standing near a stone pit at the site when the incident occurred. The arrested teens, who had fled the scene, ranged in age from 17 to 19 and come from the Salzburg area. They have been charged and released on their own recognizance. Authorities say they are the “most serious” hate crimes. The arrested teens were charged and released on their own recognizance. Authorities say they are the “most serious” hate crimes.

BY TOBY AXELROD, JTA

A controversy has erupted in a German town over a new memorial that critics say honors SS soldiers and ignores Jewish Holocaust victims.

The interfaith German-Israel Society says the memorial unveiled Nov. 15 in Grossburgwedel, near Hannover, recognizes members of the notori-ous Blackshirts. But the mayor of Grossburgwedel, the continent’s main Orthodox rabbinic association, and sponsored by the Conference for Jewish Material Claims against Germany. Youth groups in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia will assemble geographical data, take photos and report on the condition of the sites. Of particular importance for the project is assessing the need for fences or demarcations in keeping with Jewish law. Local governments will be encour-aged to contribute financially to the pro-tection and improvement of the sites, the statement said. The “identification and protection [of the cemeteries] is fundamental to the battle against Holocaust denial,” Lo Tishkach Executive Director Philip Carmel said.

The Genesis Philanthropy Group and the Claims Conference are supporting the project. Lo Tishkach was launched in early 2008.

The memorial in Grossburgwedel.

When older residents of Grossburgwedel proposed the idea some years ago, Hopenstiedt said, the town decided to have two memorials: one for civilian vic-tims, the other for military ones.

Local Jewish leaders were consulted, and Michael Fuerst, head of the State Association of Jewish Communities in Lower Saxony, told the mayor that his organization did not want Jewish names included since the other stone might bear the names of SS members.

“There was no problem with simple sol-diers, but the Jewish community could not accept there being SS and Gestapo there,” Fuerst told JTA.

Hopenstiedt said professional researchers had conducted a determination whether any of the soldiers “had any hints of war crimes in their files. We found nothing.”

Clues that a sixth soldier had been in the SD, a so-called security serv-ice, were connected to the Gestapo, could not be confirmed. The decision was made not to excuse any of the six names.

Fuerst said the mayor informed him immediately once a decision had been made.

“I told the mayor that I respected him, but that the Jewish communi-ty still could not approve of having Jewish victims on one stone and a group of people involved on the other,” Fuerst said, adding that a main square in Grossburgwedel is named after Jewish doctor Albert David, who took his life in 1941 when the Gestapo came to arrest him.

Schweigmann-Greve in a statement said it was regrettable that local citi-zens, “given the choice of including Jews of Nazi Germany as well as Jewish citizens of Grossburgwedel, decided against including the Jews.”

A dding fuel to the fire, a left-wing blogger using the name Lindener Butjer has accused the town’s mayor, a member of the conservative Christian Democratic Union Party, of ignoring Jewish and Gypsy victims while highlight-ing the tactics described as “an organized protest against this form of institutional-ized falsification of history.”

It is completely understandable that the Jewish community does not want to have its murdered relatives on a memorial with SS men,” said Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Jerusalem office.

Zuroff told JTA in an interview that “the fact that someone was not charged with war crimes does not mean that they were not involved in war crimes. German per-secution policy back then was far from comprehensive; it was quite lenient.”

Fuerst said he had no complaint about how the city handled the matter and applauded the involvement of local teens in researching and installing the memorial. Conversely, he said he found the tactics of opponents “not good.”

“They say that the town did not speak with me,” Fuerst said. “That is not true.”

Hopenstiedt said he hoped the memorial would demonstrate for the families of those named, and for those who have no per-sonal connection to that time, that they will “always have to ask about what happened and what we have to do to prevent it in the future.”
A VOW FULFILLED
Day After Night
By Anita Diamant.
Schoenber, 2009. 304 pp. $27.00 hardcover.
REVIEWED BY DEBRA SMARK
SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE
A fter 1945, some Holocaust sur-
vivors, unwilling or unable to return
home, set their sights on Palestine. Given
the 1917 Balfour Declaration, Jews might
have expected to be received in the land
with milk and honey with open
arms. But not so.
In 1939, the British issued a "White Paper"
that altered the promise of the Balfour Declaration
by creating immigration quotas that kept Jews (at
times quite literally) at sea; they weren’t allowed
off the ships that had transported them to
Europe. Of those illegal immigrants who made it to
shore, some even found themselves behind
barbed wire once again, freed from a concentration
 camp only to land in Aitl, a British internment camp
located south of Haifa on the Mediterranean.
Though Aitl had its friendly aspects — food, Hebrew lessons in infancy
and exercise classes — it was still imprison-
ment. Men and women slept in separate
barracks; days were long and boring, the
future uncertain.
In her latest novel, Day After Night, Aitl, Diamant imagines what life inside
Aitl must have been like for its female
inhabitants. She follows the fortunes of four Holocaust survivors who are
leading up to a dramatic nighttime libera-
tion of the camp by the British. The novel
provides a fascinating glimpse of forces
arm of the Jewish militia.
Despite the biblical hero-
ines in her best-selling
The Red Tent, Diamant’s
aim is to speak for those
silenced by history. In this
case, the untold stories be-
tween Shaysneld, Leonie,
Zorah, and Tedi, though
the novel ranges widely
to describe the hearts and minds of the
camp’s cook, the child-

Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why Do They Say It? — and Why Do They Say It?

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SCHINDLER'S APPRENTICE

BY ARON HELLER, AP

More than 60 years ago, little Leon Leyson steadied himself on top of a box each morning, climbing the makeshift ladder that reached the controls of a barely working lathe machine that towered over his skinny 13-year-old body.

Today, that pint-sized worker is 80, the youngest survivor of Oskar Schindler's factory in Krakow, the workplace where he was taken prisoner in 1941 and where he stayed almost routine.

Leyson said, "It was little so I stood on a box so I could reach the controls better and see over the machine. I think maybe Schindler was a little bit amused at that," he said. "He used to stop and talk to me, ask me how I was doing. Sometimes after some of these visits he would occasionally order a double ration of food for me."

Leyson does recall seeing younger children playing at the factory, but they were too young to work and were eventually taken to Auschwitz at the end of the war. And he remembers a worker, feared that he and his colleagues could be sent away at any second. "I was the weakest child at the factory and I was always being bullied," Leyson said.

She faced the pain of an angry victim, that she realized that they were an extraordinary community that was going to survive communally," Berenbaum said. "They just had it bad enough for there to be a sense of shared destiny and good enough for them to have enough left to be able to share and create community."

The ties are also based on a lot less guilt because they survived together," he added.

But as the absolute youngest worker, Leyson felt that he was treated as if the beloved factory owner was particularly special.

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SURVIVORS' CORNER

PRESEVING THE FACES OF THE HOLOCAUST

BY MONIKA SCISLOWSKA, AP

T o try to reach young people around the world, the memorial museum at Auschwitz has launched a page on Facebook, the social networking site usually home to news and photos about friends, funny videos, and the minutiae of modern life. The page aims to be a forum for discussion, reflection and learning about the Nazi death camp, and many people have left a simple message in English, Hebrew, Polish and “Never again.”

In one week since opening, the page has drawn more than 1,800 fans, who have subscribed, and the number is growing by the hour. About 1,000 signed up on Thursday alone.

Pawel Sawicki, a spokesman for the Auschwitz memorial, said the museum viewed its venture onto the popular site as “kind of an experiment.”

“Facebook is the tool that young people are using to communicate, so if we want to reach them, we should be using their tool,” Sawicki told The Associated Press.

Other organizations that deal with the legacy of the Holocaust already have ventured onto Facebook. The Simon Wiesenthal Center counts more than 2,000 fans on its site and also has used Twitter.

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum launched its Facebook page in June and has more than 5,500 fans. It also is on Twitter and YouTube.

“Facebook is just another way to reach people,” said David Klevan, the education manager for technology and distance learning at the Washington museum. “Just like museums often hold programs in coffee shops or other places in their local communities, this is where people gather — they gather on Facebook.”

Eitan Zutfil of the Wiesenthal Center in Jerusalem said the idea of using the Internet is “to reach out to as many people as possible.”

Although the Web is also rife with far-right sites that attempt to distort or deny the Holocaust, it was said that was no reason for others to dismiss using it.

“The vehicle depends on the content,” he said. “If the content is educational, there’s no reason not to use the vehicle.”

There’s been no suggestion that Facebook is an inappropriate place to discuss the Holocaust and Auschwitz, a potent symbol of Nazi Germany’s attempt to eliminate European Jewry.

“Facebook is the worst place for education, and let’s be honest — the world has changed,” said Piotr Kadiok, the head of Poland’s Jewish community.

“Facebook can be such a place, and I don’t see anything dangerous or wrong about the Auschwitz museum having a profile on it.”

Facebook turned five years old this year and has more than 175 million users worldwide. There are scores of Facebook groups dedicated to Auschwitz started by individuals, but the page — found by searching the site with the keywords “Auschwitz Memorial” — allows people to take part in discussions moderated by the memorial’s staff.

So far, the site has seen no postings by Holocaust deniers, Sawicki said. If they do show up, they will be removed quickly, he said, adding that engaging such people in debate is “a waste of time.”

The Facebook venture is not the museum’s first attempt to take advantage of new technologies to reach a broader audience. It launched a Polish-language channel on YouTube in 2008 and an English-language page two months ago. Some 22,000 people have viewed the video so far.

“You can see that although many years have passed since the Holocaust, this is still an important reference point for people and that each generation has its own thoughts and reflections on it,” Sawicki said.

Between 1940 and 1945, some 1 million people, mostly Jews, were killed or died of starvation, disease, and forced labor at the camp, which the Nazis built in occupied Poland. Sawicki said the memorial’s 1 million annual visitors are primarily students and other young people.

There is an unofficial Facebook page dedicated to Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, which says it plans an official page in the coming weeks.

“We certainly view the Internet as a key tool in disseminating accurate, credible information about the Holocaust to as many people as possible,” said Yad Vashem spokesman Estee Yaari.
Begun after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the slaughter by bullets was the opening phase of what became the Nazis’ Final Solution, with its factories of death operating in Auschwitz, Poland, and other camps. Desbois’s research dovetails with Wistrich’s book, in August, to work in his Ukraine, where he has discovered the unmarked graves, more than 500,000 of them previously unknown. Since the book was written, he has expanded his search for mass graves into Belarus and plans to look early this year in areas of Russia that were occupied by the Germans.

Some survivors testify that, old men and women from Ukrainian villages recount the events as “one of the ten worst years of the war,” and elders were marched or carted in from neighboring towns to be shot, burned to death, or buried alive by German troops. Romanian forces of hun- dreds of thousands of Ukrainian collaborators, and ethnic German volunteers.

Even then, booze in methodical. Desbois’s research. First, Germans would arrive in a town or village and gather intelligence on the Jews intended to transfer to the next victi- mization sites, where to execute them, and how to dispose of their bodies.

It was done in an absolutely systematic way, as it was done elsewhere, “said John Paul Himka, an expert on the Holocaust and Ukraine at the University of Alberta in Canada, who is not connected to Desbois’s work. “You can read as they’re figuring out the best way to do this, the Holocaust is an absolutely systematic, no accident here.” Desbois’s interviews and grave-hunting tie in to millions of pages of Soviet archives, heightening their credibility, says John S. Roth, curator of the Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, who wrote the foreword to Desbois’s book.

It was work also has an impact on efforts to preserve Holocaust sites. In December of 2008, the 26-nation European Union(Task Force) called on European governments to ensure the protection of locations, such as mass graves and sites, more than 10,000 of them, according to Shapiro, who helped draft the resolution.

A mong Desbois’s key findings is the widespread use of local children to help bury the dead, wait on German soldi- ers during meals, and remove gold teeth and other valuables from the bodies. His work also has yielded evidence that the killings were most frequently carried out in the open, in daylight and in a variety of ways — shooting victims, throwing them alive into bonfires, walking up a group of Jews in a cellar that wasn’t opened until 12 years later.

Desbois’s witnesses are mostly Orthodox Christians, and he comes to them as a priest, not as an historian analyzing a clunky piece of history, taking in their pain and trying to ease their suffering. Many have never before talked about the experiences.

In the village of Ternivka, about 200 miles south of Kiev, where 2,300 Jews were killed, a frail, elderly woman, who identified herself only as Petrivna, told Desbois the unbearable task the Nazis imposed on her. The young schoolgirl said her neighborhood thrown into a large pit, any still alive and convulsing in agony. Her task was to trample on them barefoot to make space for more. One of those who had to tread on was a classmate. “You know, we were very poor, we didn’t have shoes,” Petrivna told Desbois in a single breath, her body twitching in pain, Desbois wrote in his book. “You see, it is not easy to walk on bodies.” Desbois, 53, a short, soft-spoken man with a thin face and a small frame, hair, says the stories give him nightmares. The most difficult is “to hear the horrors that the witnesses tell me, because often the people are simple, very kind, and want to tell me everything,” Desbois said.

“You have to be able to listen, to accept, to hear this horror,” said Desbois. “I am not here to judge the people’s guilt; we are here to know what happened.”

Desbois’s team includes a translator, a researcher, a mapping expert, a ballistics specialist, and a video and photo crew. He often joins his witnesses in their homes, leaving his shoes outside. He tends to a peas- ant’s cow while the man tells his story.

Desbois has deep personal roots in his project, dating to 2002, when he first visit- ed Ukraine to see the place where his grandfather was interned as a French prisoner in World War II. Desbois’s grandfather told him of a stream of blood that had run from the site where the Jews were executed, and of a dismembered woman hanging from a tree after the Nazis threw a grenade in a pit full of people. When he was offered a visit to more villages, he did not hesitate.

“i am in a hurry to find all the bones, to establish the truth and justice so that the world can know what happened and that the Germans never left a tiny village in Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia without killing Jews there.”

Ross. Entitled Killing Kasztner, the Jew Who Dealt with Nazis, the 116-minute film won rave reviews in Israel, where it was dubbed “a moral equalizer” to Steven Spielberg’s Academy Award-winning documentary about the Hungarian Holocaust, Kasztner’s name is never heard, his face never seen.

BY MARIA DANILDOVA and RANDY HERSCHAP, AP

T he Holocaust has a landscape engraved in the mind’s eye: barbed- wire fences and gas-chamber furnaces. Less known is the so-called Holocaust by Bullets, in which more than 2 million Jews were gassed down in towns and vil- lages across Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. Their part in the Nazi’s Final Solution has been under-researched, their bodies left unidentifed in unmarked mass graves.

Shoah, French filmmaker Claude Lanzmann’s documentary, stands as the 20th century’s epic visual record of the Holocaust. Now, another Frenchman, Catholic priest Patrick Desbois, is filling in a different part of the picture.

Desbois says he has interviewed more than 800 eyewitnesses and pinpointed hundreds of mass graves strewn around dusty fields in the former Soviet Union. The result is a book, The Holocaust by Bullets, and an exhibition that ran through March 15 at New York’s Museum of Jewish Heritage.

Brought to Ukraine by a twist of fate, Desbois has spent seven years trying to document the truth, honor the dead, relieve witnesses of their pain and guilt and prevent future acts of genocide.

About 1.4 million of Soviet Ukraine’s 2.4 million Jews were executed, starved to death or died of disease during the war. Another 550,000-650,000 Soviet Jews were killed in Belarus and up to 140,000 in Russia, according to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Most of the victims were women, children and elderly people.

The history of the Holocaust runs fa- therless with tales of personal tragedy. Yet few remain more dramatic – or more contentious – than the story of Rezso Kasztner, the heroic Hungarian Jew who tried to negotiate directly with the Nazis to save a half million of his people from the gas chambers. Kasztner ultimately failed in most of his grand ambition. But he did succeed in saving more than 20,000 Hungarian Jews, only to be accused in the postwar years of being a villainous collaborator.

Kasztner’s subsequent trial and his brutal murder on the streets of Tel Aviv 12 years after the Holocaust had ended – are the subjects of a new documentary film by New York documentary director Gaylen Ross. Entitled Killing Kasztner, the Jew Who Dealt with Nazis, the 116-minute film won rave reviews in Israel, where it was dubbed “a moral equalizer” to Steven Spielberg’s Academy Award-winning documentary about the Hungarian Holocaust, Kasztner’s name is never heard, his face never seen.
WHOEVER SAVES A LIFE
ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER OF THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM

Tribute Dinner Guest Speaker Hon. Isaac Herzog, Minister of Social Affairs and Services of the State of Israel (center), with (l to r) Michal Herzog; Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; and Elizabeth Zborowski.

Fanya Gottesfeld Heller, recipient of the 2009 Yad Vashem Education Remembrance Award (center), with (l to r) Natasha Hamina; Dr. Jacqueline Heller; Miriam Hamina; Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; and Ben Heller.

(l to r) Joseph Wilf, Vice Chairman, American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; Elizabeth Wilf; Elizabeth Zborowski, Cultural Director; and Eli Zborowski, Chairman, American & International Societies for Yad Vashem.

Barry Levine, Young Leadership Associates Dinner Committee Chair delivers greetings from the Hon. Shimon Peres, President of the State of Israel.

Jeremy Halpern, Young Leadership Associates Dinner Committee Chair and Member of the Board, delivers greetings from the Hon. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel.

Guest Speaker the Hon. Isaac Herzog, Minister of Social Affairs and Services, State of Israel, delivers tribute dinner.

Close to 1,000 guests attended the 2009 Annual Tribute Dinner at the Sheraton New York Hotel and Tower.
Tovah Feldshuh, Recipient of the 2009 Yad Vashem Remembrance Award (center), with (l to r) Caroline Massel, Dinner Chair and Young Leadership Associates Chairperson; Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate; Elizabeth Zborowski, Cultural Director; and Eli Zborowski, Chairman, American & International Societies for Yad Vashem.

Cheryl Lifshitz, Executive Committee, American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; Michal Herzog, Minister Isaac Herzog; Stella Skura; and Elizabeth and Eli Zborowski.

Isaac Herzog, Minister of Social Affairs and Services of the State of Israel; Leonard Wilf, Chairman, Board of Trustees; and Tovah Feldshuh, recipient of the Yad Vashem Leadership Remembrance Award.

Members of the Young Leadership Associates of the American Society for Yad Vashem at the 2009 Annual Tribute Dinner.
REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

HOW MUCH DID THEY KNOW?

REAL-TIME MEDIA REPORTS DURING WWII

BY ESTEE YAARI

One of the most troubling issues about the bystanders’ role during the Holocaust has always been what they knew about the Nazis’ plans for the Jews — how this information was related to them and, of course, when.

Did the average Frenchman in Paris know what was happening to the Jews being deported from his country? What about the Poles, who witnessed trainsloads of prisoners being transported across the land? In Europe, was there any way to know what was actually happening? The Allies have come under criticism for not doing enough to rescue European Jewry — but did they actually have enough information to compel them to act?

These questions and more were tackled at a recent weekend scholarly session held by Yad Vashem’s International Institute for Holocaust Research. Examining how the Holocaust was reported in various media — particularly in Europe — during WWII, researchers from Israel, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the UK, Hungary, Russia, Holland and the United States came together for an in-depth discussion of how the various media reported the Holocaust as it unfolded.

“For the very first time, this workshop brought together serious research on real-time media coverage of the Holocaust,” explains Prof. David Bankier, Head of the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem. “In fact, some of the research presented was undertaken specifically for the event. Looking at a diversity of media as well as geographic areas, the workshop helped clarify what bystanders knew about the Holocaust in real time. It also provided greater insight into the Nazis’ use of the media to manipulate public opinion.”

The bystanders in Europe knew what was happening, stated Prof. Bankier. Even if it was not spelled out — and it never was — years of propaganda had conditioned the people of Europe to understand the meaning of Jews being loaded onto a truck to an ‘unknown destination.’

Turning his attention to the Canadian media, Dr. Ulrich Frisse of the University of Western Ontario studied two major media outlets, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the Toronto Daily Star, and concluded that at least in these media, the Holocaust was reported.

Indeed, in 1943, the Star ran a chart seeking to answer the question, “What was happening to the Jews of Europe?” While the Bermuda Conference was taking place in April 1943, political activist Watson Thomson spoke on the CBC national radio network about the mass extermination of Jews by SS squads in the Soviet Union and the extermination camps in Poland. He condemned Canada’s indifference toward the Jewish victims and called for the immediate rescue of European Jewry.

Dr. Frisse was careful to note that this kind of presentation was not necessarily representative of all the Canadian media, and that indeed, the press in Quebec, for example, was not so sympathetic to the plight of the Jews.

Participants agreed that more studies needed to be conducted, particularly a comparative examination of what was happening in the Allied countries. Most of the researchers agreed that a topic that requires more attention is how media reports on the Holocaust influenced people’s positions vis-a-vis the Jews during the war.

“The workshop was a most rewarding ten days which allowed me to meet many distinguished Holocaust scholars in a vibrant atmosphere,” said Dr. Colin Watson, former head of the Toronto Daily Star.
NEW LIGHT, LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE, ON NAZI CRIMES

BY EDWARD ROTHSTEIN, Times Staff Writer

A first it seems like an anomaly. You walk up to the campus entrance from the enormous parking lot that defines Queensborough Community College as a commuting institution, and the first structure you see is the administration building, the new Harriet and Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Research Center and Archives. The $5.5 million building, which was dedicated in a public ceremony this week, is clad in glass, steel and distinctive sand-colored limestone quarried near Jerusalem. And inside its new permanent exhibition space is bathed in daylight from the windows and translucent walls, creating a deliberate contrast to the dark subject of man.

The effect is unexpected. It causes you to pay attention, this anomalous light, even if the holographic landscapes projected on the walls, and even if it makes the videos of Queens Holocaust survivors appear less vivid in image if not in personal detail. The light almost allows you to miss the room’s somber allusion: the way the rectangular geometry of a glass wall suddenly gives way to skelined and irregular shapes, invoking the shattered windows of Kristallnacht, the night in 1938 when Jewish shops and synagogues were smashed and burned all over Germany and Austria.

It seems that Charles Thanhauser of Tek Architects, who designed the building, means this natural light to cast an inverse shadow over the narrative. The light shows us how the ghosts of photographs projected on the walls, and even if it makes the videos of Queens Holocaust survivors appear less vivid in image if not in personal detail. The light almost allows you to miss the room’s somber allusion: the way the rectangular geometry of a glass wall suddenly gives way to skelined and irregular shapes, invoking the shattered windows of Kristallnacht, the night in 1938 when Jewish shops and synagogues were smashed and burned all over Germany and Austria.

The modest 2,000-square-foot permanent exhibition gives an impressive capsule history of the fate of Jews in Germany during the Nazi period.

The center has been at Queensborough for about 24 years, growing out of a class about the history of the center’s namesake, Arthur Flug, a former student at the college, and being labeled “Life After the Holocaust,” showing similar normality in the lives of survivors. This is an account of restoration, of emergence into light. This is a little too brightly bold of course, and, unfortunately, to a certain extent, that is perhaps true of the current generation, which is not that different from those of other institutions and educational treatment centers of the Holocaust.

What makes it possible for our family to survive," said Westfield, who retired from Vanderbilt University in Nashville. "His heirs have a right to what was taken away from them. We are not trying to recover particular pictures because we really don’t have the resources to find the 400 or more items auctioned off at the demand of the state’s attorney in Dusseldorf." The lawsuit, filed in Davidson County Chancery Court, says today’s Germany is responsible for the actions of Hitler’s regime and wants a jury to award an unspecified amount for the loss to Westfield’s heirs.

Lempertz auction house in Cologne, Germany, claimed the property was destroyed during bombing in WWII, but the lawsuit includes a copy of the December 1999 sale catalog and price list.

The conversion and sale were part of an integrated policy in which Jews were deprived of their artwork on fabricated grounds to appear as if the government was just enforcing laws, the goal being to raise substantial liquid funds on sale for the government and party officials," the lawits says. Overton Thompson III of Bass Berry & Sims law firm in Nashville and Vanderbilt law professor Jeffrey Schoenblum filed the suit October 3, 2009.

"Westfield had much of his entire art collection taken and he was treated in such a horrific manner before he was exterminated," Schoenblum said. "Our hope is that the matter can be resolved without pursuing lengthy litigation. Germany needs to remedy for what was done with respect to this prominent art dealer and his property." Schoenblum said the lawsuit is unusual because it seeks return of Jewish artifacts of the art works. Previous cases, such as a claim against Elizabeth Taylor for a Vincent van Gogh painting, have sought to have the art returned from current owners to the family’s estate.

For now, Westfield’s family and attorneys are waiting to see if the German government accepts the lawsuit. Under the Hague Convention, the country has three months to accept the lawsuit or request a hearing for its sovereign government," Schoenblum said.
A BELIEVER IN HEROISM, TO JEWS’ LASTING GRATITUDE

BY JOSEPH BERGER
THE NEW YORK TIMES

The walls of Dr. Tina Strobos’s light-filled apartment here are dappled with many plaques she has received from Jewish organizations, even though she is not Jewish.

Dr. Strobos, a sturdy 89, is honored every so often for the quietly valiant things she did as a social worker and student during the German occupation of the Netherlands: working with her mother, she and her sister were sent through their three-story rooming house in Amsterdam.

That sanctuary, which included an attic that was never discovered, was just a 10-minute stroll from a more famous hideout: Anne Frank’s secret room.

Indeed, the question of why the Franks knew they had escaped punishment for their crimes, instead of being turned over to the Gestapo, is a source of fascination and mystery. The reason, Dr. Strobos says, is that Dr. Strobos’s family was a “Turmoiled Type,” she recalled.

She is not the only one who believes that a sense of heroism and duty was almost a compulsion in Dr. Strobos.

She recalled carrying news and ration cards through the war, at great risk, and that bring her escapades to life.

But she would not make such gambles for people she sometimes barely knew.

“Is the right thing to do,” she said with nonchalance. “Your conscience tells you to do it. I believe in heroism, and when you’re young, you want to do dangerous things.”

But such an outlook has an origin, what Dr. Strobos calls “learned behavior.” Dr. Strobos comes from a family of socialist atheists who took in Belgian refugees during World War II and hid German and Austrian refugees before World War II. Dr. Strobos had close Jewish friends and, for a time, a Jewish fiancé, Abraham Fasch, who went on to become a particle physicist, though not her husband.

The Nazis required Dutch Jews to wear yellow stars and carry identity cards stamped with a J. So Dr. Strobos patched together false papers by swiping documents from gentile guests and inserting new photographs. As roundups increased, her six-bedroom row house, at 282 Neuezijds Voorburgwal, became a way station; most of those who stayed long enough for the underground network could find what was more durable refuges.

“We never hid more than four or five at a time,” she said. “We didn’t have enough food. I am not Jewish, but I believe in heroism.”

Many leading Nazis such as Hermann Göring, Rudolf Hess, and Albert Speer were prosecuted by the main Allies — the U.S., the Soviet Union, and the U.K. — shortly after the end of the war at the Nuremberg Trials.

South African judge Richard Goldstone, formerly the chief U.N. prosecutor for war crimes in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, told CNN that Nuremberg had been the “first attempt at criminal responsibility for crimes committed in the 21st century not to be able to hide from their past so easily, according to a leading war crimes prosecutor.

The new trials are about bringing the perpetrators of World War II atrocities to justice. To commit similar offenses in the 21st century will not be able to hide from their past so easily, according to a leading war crimes prosecutor.

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FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE GHETTO: RECOGNIZING THE RESCUERS

BY DR. LEA PRAIS

A nton Schmidt (1900-1942) was a musician, art historian, and a Zionist. He detested Hitler and Nazism, and when, as a Wehrmacht serviceman in Vilna, he became aware of the mass murders in Ponary, he resolved to dedicate himself to rescuing the persecuted. Schmidt helped many people forced into labor in his unit, as well as Polish prostitutes who were closely watched, but was particularly captivated by the members of the pioneering Zionist youth groups. On the eve of the civil New Year, 1942, he invited them, including their leader Mordechai Tenenbaum, to his apartment, and amid the wine-drinking and doughnut-eating, he wished them success in fulfilling their dreams. However, he stressed that first and foremost they must leave the ghetto. To make this happen, Schmidt called on all the resources at his disposal, and, taking severe personal risks, smuggled most of them to locations where they would be safe, at least for some time being. Some remained in Vilna; Tenenbaum and his circle were moved to Bialystok, where they led the Underground; others hid in Yiddish and Lida; and a few made it to Warsaw. Schmidt himself was arrested in January 1942, in effect, his final action.

In the middle of 1942, members of the Dvor youth movement in Warsaw found out what had happened to their benefactor, and decided to commemorate him in some way. In his memoirs, Yitzhak (Antek) Zuckerman wrote that Lonka Kudzhibrotzka, Dvor’s liaison officer, and Dora Tenenbaum, Zech Shalom Schmidt to the ghetto’s underground Oneg Shabbat archives. In a note, written in Yiddish over five pages, was a description of the figures of the German philosophe, who risked his life to rescue those of Vilna from their murderers.

The title was “Anton Schmidt – From the Series: The Righteous Among the Nations.” Thus it turns out that the pioneers and Oneg Shabbat archivists were the first to apply the Talmudic term “Righteous Among the Nations” (Tractate Baba Batra, 15b) to non-Jews who had put their lives at risk to save Jews during the Nazi occupation. In time, this term became universally known.

In 1945, after the Mandatory Palestine, Mordechai Shenhavi defined the rescuers as “Righteous Among the Nations.” Thus it turns out that the Yad Vashem Law, containing a special clause defining non-Jews who risked their lives to rescue Jews as Righteous Among the Nations. Eleven years earlier, in Vilna, Tenenbaum had told Schmidt that in the Land of Israel he would receive a gold Star of David.

Schmidt replied, “I will wear it with pride.” In 1984, Yad Vashem posthumously recognized Anton Schmidt as a Righteous Among the Nations. And thus, Schmidt earned the most prestigious recognition for a second time.

The author is a Project Manager at the International Institute for Holocaust Research.

NEW LIGHT, LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE, ON NAZI CRIMES

(Continued from page 11)

The broad lesson of tolerance also provides one impetus behind the growth of Holocaust centers; it is partly why this one was placed at the forefront of the Queensborough campus, where students represent more than 140 nationalities. Mr. Flug explained in an interview how the center also helped develop a “hate crimes” curriculum now being introduced into New York City schools. But this approach is worth examining.

Similar lessons, after all, can be drawn from many kinds of injustice; here, I seem inadequate to the scope of the evil. They also strip away the Holocaust’s particularity, though may even encourage the proliferation of Nazi analogies. It isn’t only killing, intolerance does not necessarily lead to it.

The humanitarian lessons also make the scale of the events seem manageable, as if it were possible to eliminate hatred and prejudice with appropriate teaching. The idea of a “hate crime” fits with this view. It asserts that hatred itself is criminal and deserving of punishment, that it is something that can be eradicated as society takes on work once left for religion. But the concept is misguided. Hatred does not make murder or assault worse; it only provides a motive. Hatred itself is not criminal. The teaching on the basis of hatred that is criminal. In other contexts, society punishes the act rather than the thought, attacking discrimination in deed, not prejudice in belief. That is how it should be here as well. Anti-Semitism helped cause the Holocaust, but it is in the workings of law and deed, in turning belief into practice, that the Holocaust turned exceptional.

Queensborough’s new center shouldn’t bear the burden of this criticism, since it doesn’t slight the Holocaust or its particularity. But as that history recedes and lessons become broadened and amplified, the risk is worth keeping in mind.

ROMANIA DEDICATES MEMORIAL TO VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

Romania unveiled a monument in memory of 300,000 Jews and Gypsies killed during the Holocaust in the country, which at times in the past had denied that the extermination ever occurred.

President Traian Basescu said that it was the nation’s duty to “recognize the genocide during World War II and to honor the victims.”

Mr. Basescu was joined by Holocaust survivor and other leaders during the ceremony to unveil the marble and concrete tomb-like monument, which cost $74 million.

Only about 6,000 Jews live in Romania today. The country’s role in the Holocaust and in the deportation of Jews was ignored by the Communists who once controlled Romania, and it was minimized by subsequent governments after the collapse of Communism beginning in 1989.

“This monument is full of symbolism — hundreds of thousands were killed because they were thought to be Jewish,” said a survivor named HaCohen, Romania’s chief rabbi.
RON FENNERBERG, THE JERUSALEM POST

The film is grainy and in black and white, but it still manages to convey the reality of the events at odd moments and growing dim occasionally. But it’s the people that hold your attention, the weariness, the unadorned, unromantic clothes, nodding a stiff hello when they spot a friend. They watch a soccer match, sit briefly outside a small cafe, listen to a concert.

The Theresienstadt ghetto was established in Czechoslovakia as a model Jewish settlement that could be shown off to the international community. Propaganda films showed the conditions of the ghetto to counter stories of the miserable conditions of other ghettos.

It’s all a sham, of course, part of a bogus document produced by the Nazis during World War II at Theresienstadt; the concentration camp an hour north of Prague in what was then Czechoslovakia. And it’s one of the reasons you should visit this place if you’re traveling through eastern Europe.

The Holocaust continues to sound a melancholy note in the major cities of the region. Warsaw, Krakow, Budapest and Prague are remarkable, warm and charming, filled with cobblestone streets and intimate cafes, grand boulevards and monuments, fine art and fine food.

But in each of these cities is a reminder of the Jews who were murdered during World War II, initially forced into ghettos, eventually transported to death camps across the region. But it’s in Terezin, near Prague, that one of the most unique, bizarre stories of the period can be found. And it’s all captured in the grainy film produced by the Nazis.

The city that had been home for 7,000 residents before the war would at one point hold 60,000 inmates. Men and women were separated, housed in barracks that were packed with bunks that were three tiers high. There was little food, even less medicine. Sanitation was poor. Rats, lice, flies, and fleas were part of daily life. So, too, death.

On June 23, 1944, the Nazis had every reason to believe their deception had succeeded. It was then that the camp was opened to the world. Theresienstadt's原理

The charade was tested — and refined — in the summer of 1944 when a commission of Red Cross officials was able to visit the camp to make sure that inmates at Theresienstadt were living under humane conditions. The ruse became necessary after Jews from Denmark were sent to the camp the previous winter and Red Cross officials in Denmark began making inquiries about their whereabouts and health.

Over the next several months, the Nazis were able to set the stage up in certain key areas. Some living spaces were enlarged and painted. Drapes were hung and furniture added. Grass and flowers were planted.

A playground and sports fields were built. And a month before the orchestra trated visit, 7,500 inmates — mostly orphans and the sick were sent to Auschwitz and their deaths so Theresienstadt would appear less crowded.

An elaborate script was created that would have groups of inmates strolling along a central street, window shopping; others would be taking part in a soccer match, while yet others would be chatting and singing as they headed off to work.

On June 23, 1944, the Nazis had everything in place as the commission was escorted through the camp. The inmates played their parts to perfection, knowing they had little choice but to cooperate.

Camp officials were so happy with the result, they decided to put it all on display for a propaganda purposes.

What remains today is a series of black and white vignettes — inmates at a concert; inmates sitting outside a cafe; inmates cheering a soccer match. The actors smile occasionally for the camera, hiding the hideous truth of the Holocaust from view. But look closely enough and you can see the future in their faces.

Only a few months after the commission reported that inmates at Theresienstadt were being treated fairly, transports to death camps only a few hundred survived.

STATING HOLOCAUST REFERENCES IN PUBLIC DEBATE

A group of prominent religious leaders called for an end to the use of “inappropriate Nazi and Holocaust references” in public debate.

In an open letter to religious leaders, politicians, and the public, the group wrote that it has seen an alarming number of public figures use the Nazis and the Holocaust as metaphors in public debate.

Perpetrators of such use have included number of public figures use the Nazis and the Holocaust as metaphors in public debate.

“Parenthetically, the reference to Auschwitz for everything that is ‘terrible’ in today’s society is particularly disturbing,” the letter states.

The letter also asks those involved in public debate to generally “help restore the credibility of religious commentary.”

“With the recent rise of anti-Semitism, the language we use in public debate to generally ‘help restore the credibility of religious commentary’,” the letter states.

Among the 15 signatories are Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; Rabbi Jack Moline of Agudas Achim Congregation in Alexandria, Va.; Rabbi David Gelfand of Temple Israel of the City of New York; Imam Mahdi Bray of the Muslim American Society Freedom; and Sayyid Syeed of the Islamic Society of North America.

Executive Director Richard Hirschhaut, and Museum Interior and Exhibition Co-Conceptual Developers Michael Berenbaum and Yitzhak Maas. They met with Shalvi and senior Yad Vashem staff in order to explore avenues of coopera- tion.

The agreement notes “the strengthening of the ongoing relationship between our two institutions furthers the global signifi- cance of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center,” said Pritzker. “Our cooperative relationship will allow us to share Yad Vashem’s wealth of knowledge about the Holocaust with our Museum’s patrons.”

The agreement notes that “emphasis will be placed upon optimal real- ization of Yad Vashem’s unsurpassed expertise and knowledge in Holocaust-related research, education and commemoration, together with the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center’s promis- ing and vital new position, in its region and elsewhere, as an effective catalyst for enhanced, widespread Holocaust remembrance.”

“We are grateful for this opportunity to work closely with Yad Vashem to enhance our institution’s offerings to our patrons,” said Hirschhaut. “The cooperation with Yad Vashem will enable the Illinois Holocaust Museum to comprome- rate the Jewish experience before, dur- ing, and after the Holocaust.”

STOP USING HOLOCAUST REFERENCES IN PUBLIC DEBATE

T H Insinuation that the Holocaust is a metaphor for anything is wrong. It never can be a metaphor. It was a real event with real lives.

It’s all a sham, of course, part of a bogus document produced by the Nazis during World War II at Theresienstadt; the concentration camp an hour north of Prague in what was then Czechoslovakia. And it’s one of the reasons you should visit this place if you’re traveling through eastern Europe.

The Holocaust continues to sound a melancholy note in the major cities of the region. Warsaw, Krakow, Budapest and Prague are remarkable, warm and charming, filled with cobblestone streets and intimate cafes, grand boulevards and monuments, fine art and fine food.

But in each of these cities is a reminder of the Jews who were murdered during World War II, initially forced into ghettos, eventually transported to death camps across the region. But it’s in Terezin, near Prague, that one of the most unique, bizarre stories of the period can be found. And it’s all captured in the grainy film produced by the Nazis.

The city that had been home for 7,000 residents before the war would at one point hold 60,000 inmates. Men and women were separated, housed in barracks that were packed with bunks that were three tiers high. There was little food, even less medicine. Sanitation was poor. Rats, lice, flies, and fleas were part of daily life. So, too, death.

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Odenheimer family: Julchen and Hugo deported to France, where they were put in a concentration camp, and later sent to Auschwitz where they were murdered.

Odenheimer, their six-year-old son Herbert (now Ehud) and his grandmother, Sophie. Sophie died in the Gurs Camp where the family was interned. Juli and Hugo were deported to Auschwitz in September 1942 where they were murdered.

The story of Odenheimer’s resistance was told in the book RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS FROM FRANCE POSTHUMOUSLY HONORED AT YAD VASHEM by Louise Roger. The Rogers decided to move Ehud to the home of Jules’ mother, Louise, in the village of Argy.

Ehud lived with Louise under an assumed identity, Hubert Odet, until the end of the war. He took part in many activities of the household, working on their farm, studying in the local school, even serving as a choirboy. Louise and Ehud were married.

“Grandma” took care of Ehud, providing for all his needs and ensuring he felt safe despite the difficulties of the time. Louise Roger died on June 24, 1947.

Righteous Among the Nations award was given in 1999 to the Odenheimer family: Julchen and Hugo, and Sophie Odenheimer, their grandmother. The award recognizes outstanding acts of bravery in the face of adversity, and the Rogers were honored for their commitment to preserving Jewish identity and tradition.

The story of Odenheimer’s resistance highlights the bravery and determination of ordinary people in the face of overwhelming adversity, and serves as a reminder of the importance of remembering the past and learning from history.
WHOEVER SAVES A LIFE, SAVES HUMANITY
ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER
OF THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU: THE WORK OF YAD VASHEM IS AS IMPORTANT AS EVER

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to send warm greetings from Jerusalem to the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem on the occasion of your Annual Tribute Dinner. This September, I spoke at the United Nations only a day after a Holocaust denier was given a hearing at the General Assembly. The original architectural plans of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp which I held up in my own speech were given to me this August when I visited Germany. They have joined the over 125 million pages of documentation held in the Yad Vashem archives.

Even though the Holocaust took place within living memory, there are those who would deny the undeniable. That is why the work of Yad Vashem is as important as ever. Its documentation and research bear witness to the horrors of the past but also serve to educate for the future. Your support and dedication to the American and International Societies for Yad Vashem is invaluable in ensuring that this important work continues.

SHimon Peres: Yad Vashem provides an environment for reflection

Dear Mr. Zborowski,

It is with distinct pleasure that I convey my heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of the forthcoming Annual Tribute Dinner to be held by the American Friends of Yad Vashem.

This event serves to highlight the vital role of Yad Vashem in promoting Holocaust awareness, education and research. At a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise, and Holocaust denial is rampant, reminding the world of the dark hours of our history is indeed essential. Yad Vashem provides an environment for reflection, a place in which to commune with those who are no longer with us, but whose voices can still be heard. This is where the memory of the victims of Nazi horrors can live on for ever more, and where their names are inscribed in perpetuity. Yad Vashem is also where the Righteous Among the Nations are honored — men and women of valor whose heroic actions saved so many of our Jewish brethren, evidence of the compassion and dignity of human kind, a symbol of hope for our tomorrow.

Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz: It is our fundamental moral duty to remember

Dear Mr. Chairman,

I am very honored to be invited for the 25th Annual Yad Vashem Tribute Dinner. Since I plan to be on that day in Berlin to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Wall, let me address you and the distinguished guests with this letter.

As a Pole who understands how fortunate were my ancestors who lived together with our Jewish brothers for generations and how tragic was the [fate] of the Victims of the Holocaust, I am deeply convinced that it is our fundamental moral duty to remember. And it is a privilege of the Survivors to remember those who helped them.

I fully share the Dinner’s motto. This is true that those who helped their Jewish friends and neighbors not only saved the individuals but also saved humanity. Following the activities of Yad Vashem which I had a chance to visit in Israel as the Prime Minister of Poland I would like to express my deepest respect and support for this noble Institution.

I wish you all to continue your precious mission for many years to come.

Charles Schumer: Yad Vashem is committed to the cause of Holocaust remembrance

Dear Friends,

Please accept my warmest greetings and congratulations as you gather to celebrate the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem Annual Tribute Dinner. I am grateful for the opportunity to recognize the fine work of American & International Societies for Yad Vashem and this year’s honorees on this wonderful occasion.

I am privileged to acknowledge the commemorative efforts of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem. For close to 30 years, the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem have been committed to the cause of Holocaust remembrance. The humanitarian effort of the organization to pass on the sacred legacy of the Holocaust has been indispensable. I applaud the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem for striving to transmit the lessons of the Holocaust to all members of our global community.

Further, I would like to extend my congratulations to tonight’s honorees, Tovah Feldshuh and Fanya Gottesfeld Heller. I am honored to join this show of support in recognizing these outstanding individuals for all their hard work and dedication on behalf of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem and our community. Their exemplary dedication to the ideals of Holocaust remembrance serves as inspiration to us all.

On behalf of all New Yorkers, congratulations and thank you for your dedication and hard work. I know that the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem will continue to serve the community for many years to come. Best wishes for a successful future and an inspirational dinner.

Eli Zborowski, Editor-in-Chief

Yad Vashem archives.