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THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER

WHOEVER SAVES A LIFE, SAVES HUMANITY

GUEST SPEAKER ISAAC HERZOG STATE OF ISRAEL MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND SERVICES



Isaac Herzog, son of former Israeli President Chaim Herzog, was born in Israel in 1960. He completed his army service with the rank of major (res.).

He holds a degree in Law and is an attorney by profession.

Isaac Herzog served as Secretary of the Economic-Social Council (1988-1990), as Government Secretary (1999-2001), and as Chairman of the Anti-Drug Authority (2000-2003).

Elected to the 16th Knesset in 2003, as a member of the Labor Party, he has served as a member of the Knesset Finance, Internal Affairs and Environment, and Anti-Drug Abuse Committees, as well as Israel Labor Party Parliamentary Group Whip. He has chaired the War against Drugs Lobby in Israel, the Israel Tourism Lobby, the

Lobby for Youth in Israel, and the Municipal Lobby.

In January 2005 Isaac Herzog was first appointed to a cabinet position in the Israeli government, and served as Minister of Housing and Construction. In this capacity he advanced important reforms and made significant achievements.

In May 2006, he was appointed Minister of Tourism, and was successful in handling the acute crisis that faced the tourism industry in Israel as a result of the Second Lebanon War.

In March 2007 he was appointed Minister of Social Affairs and Services & Minister of the Jewish Diaspora, Society and the fight against Anti-Semitism.

As Minister of Social Affairs and Services, Isaac Herzog has, since 2007, accomplished much in the economic and social spheres. His many achievements include significant development in the areas of children at risk, the absorption of people with disabilities into the workforce, enhancement of the quality of life of the elderly, the reinforcement of the social safety net, and more.

During Operation Cast Lead in Gaza (December 2008 - January 2009) Isaac Herzog was appointed by the cabinet to be the Israel Government Coordinator for the provision of humanitarian aid to the population of Gaza.

In February 2009 he began his second term as Minister of Social Affairs and Services.

Isaac Herzog speaks Hebrew, English, and Arabic, and has published articles in the Israeli and foreign press. He is married, and has three children.

The American & International Societies for Yad Vashem
Annual Tribute Dinner

whoever saves a life,
SAVES HUMANITY

NOVEMBER 8, 2009

It is with great pleasure that we write to invite you to join us at the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem's Annual Tribute Dinner.

Sunday, November 8, 2009
Sheraton New York Hotel Towers
811 Seventh Avenue at 52 Street
New York City

Reception 4:30
Dinner 6:00

Dietary Laws Observed *Black Tie optional*

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SHOOTING AT THE HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

An 88-year-old white supremacist with a rifle walked into the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, one of the capital's most visited sites, on June 10 in the afternoon and began shooting, fatally wounding a security guard and sending tourists scrambling before he himself was shot, the authorities said.

The gunman was identified by law enforcement officials as James W. von Brunn, who embraces various conspiracy theories involving Jews, blacks and other minority groups and at one point waged a personal war with the federal government.

Chief Cathy L. Lanier of the Washington police said the gunman walked into the museum's main entrance shortly before 1 p.m. and began shooting without warning. At least one security guard returned fire; a total of five or six shots are believed to have been fired.

Officials and others who track conspiracy theorists have long been familiar with Mr. von Brunn, whose latest address is believed to be in eastern Maryland, in part



Police restrained visitors near the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington after authorities reported that at least two people were shot at the museum.

because he maintains a Web site. He has claimed variously to be a member of Mensa, the high-I.Q. society; to have played varsity football at a Midwestern college, where he earned a degree in journalism; to have been a PT boat commander in World War II; and to be a painter and an author.

Mr. von Brunn has also claimed to have been victimized by a court system run by Jews and blacks.

Before June 10, he was best known to law enforcement officials for having walked into the Washington headquarters of the Federal Reserve System on Dec. 7, 1981, with a bag slung over the shoulder

of his trench coat. A guard chased him to the second floor, where the Fed's board was meeting, and found a revolver, a hunting knife and a sawed-off shotgun in the bag.

Mr. von Brunn, who lived in Lebanon, N.H., at the time, told the police he wanted to take board members hostage to focus news media attention on their responsibility for high interest rates and the nation's economic difficulties. He was convicted in 1983 and served several years in prison on attempted kidnapping, burglary, assault and weapons charges.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil rights organization based in Alabama, said that Mr. von Brunn is a racist and anti-Semite with "a long history of associations with prominent neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers."

Rabbi Marvin Hier, founder and dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and Abraham Cooper, an associate dean, said in a statement that the attack at the museum showed "that the cancer of hatred, bigotry and anti-Semitism is alive and well in America."

"It is deeply disturbing that one of America's most powerful symbols of the memory of the Holocaust was selected as the site of the attack just days after President Obama accompanied Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel to the *Buchenwald* death camp," they said.

Opened in 1993, the museum is situated near the Mall and the Potomac River. Since its dedication, it has had nearly

30 million visitors, including more than 8 million schoolchildren and 85 heads of state, the museum says on its Web site.

Like all public buildings in the capital, the museum has heavy security, with visitors required to pass through metal detectors. But someone determined to enter a building with a firearm can sometimes do so. In July 1998, a gunman killed two police officers and wounded a tourist in the Capitol.

On June 10 in the evening, President Obama issued a statement saying, in part, "This outrageous act reminds us that we must remain vigilant against anti-Semitism and prejudice in all its forms."

FORMER NAZI LABOR CAMP CONSECRATED AS JEWISH CEMETERY

A Nazi labor camp near Berlin where SS guards massacred more than one thousand inmates over 60 years ago was consecrated as a Jewish cemetery. The *Lieberose* camp, a satellite of the larger *Sachsenhausen* concentration camp north of Berlin, was open from 1943 to February 1945. During that time SS officers shot and killed 1,300 sick and invalid Jewish inmates.

It was above all a place of suffering for Jewish prisoners that the Nazis brought from Auschwitz or directly from their home regions, said Jorst Seferenz, spokesman

for the Foundation for *Brandenburg* Memorials, referring to the infamous death camp in Nazi-occupied Poland.

Bodies were first discovered at a grave near *Lieberose* in 1958, and almost 600 were found in 1971.

During the Cold War, East German officials took some of the bodies to *Dresden* for examination. Some were later interred in *Frankfurt an der Oder*, a town on the present-day border with Poland, while others were cremated and returned to the *Lieberose* site, some 100 kilometers southeast of Berlin.

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.

Meanwhile, the Czech government voted to contribute about \$100,000 toward the repair and upkeep of the former death camp. It is the second country, after Germany, to promise funds following a Polish plea for help.

NEARLY HALF OF ISRAELI ARABS DENY HOLOCAUST

More than 40 percent of Israeli Arabs claim the Holocaust never happened, according to an annual University of Haifa survey of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel.

Prof. Sammy Smooha, who conducted the survey, said he believes the 40.5 percent denial rate reflects a protest more than actual disbelief in the Holocaust. The survey, taken in 2008, found that 41 percent of Israeli Arabs deny Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. Another 53.7 percent accept Israel's right to exist.

The figures show Arab attitudes are hardening compared to previous years. In 2003, for instance, 65.6 percent of Israeli Arabs recognized Israel's right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state, and in 2006, only 28 percent denied the Holocaust.

Nevertheless, Smooha insisted that overall, "there is no clear, consistent trend of radicalization" over the last 30 years, contrary to the prevailing view among the public and policy-makers. He argued that this lack of substantive long-term change shows that Arabs are adapting to Israel's existence.

Explaining why he thought the sharp increase in Holocaust denial reflects a protest rather than actual disbelief, Smooha said: "To the Arabs, the Holocaust is a legitimization of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state" — which, as the survey found, 41 percent reject.

AUSCHWITZ SURVIVOR DONATES JEWELRY HE HID

ETGAR LEFKOVITS,
THE JERUSALEM POST

A 95-year-old Holocaust survivor from Boston donated to Yad Vashem seven pieces of jewelry and other personal items from Auschwitz victims that he managed to snatch away from the hands of the Nazis while working as a slave laborer at the notorious death camp more than six decades ago.

Polish-born Meyer Hack, who settled in Boston after World War II, found the jewelry while working in the "clothing chamber" at the camp during the Holocaust. Hack, who was in his late 20s at the time, had been assigned to the position after telling the Germans he was a tailor.

Periodically, he would find small pieces of jewelry and other valuables that the deportees, murdered in the gas chambers, had hidden in the linings of their clothing prior to their arrival. Risking his life, Hack hid them in a hole that he dug behind his barrack, determined that they not be melted down by the Nazis and used to feed their war machine.

Before the camp was liberated by the Russians in January 1945, Hack was forced on two death marches, but managed to retrieve the items from their hiding place and keep them in a sock until his eventual liberation that spring.

Hack, whose mother, sisters, and brother were all murdered at Auschwitz, kept the personal belongings, which included rings, watches, a bracelet, and a necklace pendant, in a metal box in the attic of his Boston home for the next 60 years.

"I was not going to touch it until the time comes," Hack recounted at the ceremony at Yad Vashem. "My computer," he said gesturing to his head, "had it locked in. I said some day, somehow [I would pass it on]."

Three years ago, he decided to donate the items to Yad Vashem, after consulting with his rabbi of 40 years, whom he had told the story to years earlier.

"At 95, now is the time," he said at the ceremony, repeatedly shifting back to the images of people sent to the crematorium.

"If you say there was no Holocaust, you're protesting this [Israel's existence]. This is a way of saying that the Jews use the Holocaust to portray themselves as the victims, when in truth, we [the Arabs] are the victims," he said.

The survey also found that Holocaust denial was not much affected by education: 37 percent of respondents with a post-secondary education said the Holocaust never happened, only slightly below the overall average.

Among the survey's other findings were that 12.6 percent of respondents believe any means, including taking up arms, would be justified to improve their situation, up from 5.4 percent in 2003; 41.4 percent engaged in a protest activity over the last year, up from 28.7 percent in 2003; and 47.3 percent would not want a Jewish neighbor, up from 27.2 percent in 2003.

"This hardening of Arab positions stems from a list of factors, including the Second Lebanon War, the freeze in [progress toward] an arrangement with the Palestinians, failure to implement the Or Commission's report [on ending discrimination against Israeli Arabs], the closure of the cases of the policemen who shot and killed Arab demonstrators in October 2000, and publication of the Arab vision documents that call for turning Israel into a binational state," Smooha said.

"He decided he wanted to give it to some place, and we decided Yad Vashem was the only appropriate place," said Rabbi Abraham Halfinger, who accompanied Hack on the trip together with the nonagenarian's cardiologist and a small number of friends and neighbors.

Hack said that the US director Steven Spielberg told him in a conversation to "go out and tell the world."



Meyer Hack displays some of the jewelry.

"I would love to have seen thousands of people here, since people here paid with their lives for this," Hack said.

"It is very rare that anything like this survived Auschwitz," said Yehudit Shendar, deputy director of the Museums Division at Yad Vashem, noting that most items discovered at Auschwitz come without a story behind them.

She noted that Yad Vashem has 20 German documents in its archives, alternatively listing Hack's profession as a gardener, tailor and electrician.

"We are talking about a survivor with a capital S," she said.

The jewelry will be stored in the Holocaust Memorial's artifacts division, as an everlasting memorial to its original owners who were murdered at Auschwitz.

More than a million people, mostly Jews, died in the gas chambers or through forced labor, disease, or starvation at the camp, which the Nazis built after occupying Poland.

One sixth of all Jews murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust were gassed at Auschwitz.

THE "BRITISH SCHINDLER" MEETS THE HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS HE HELPED SAVE

Seventy years ago they rode in silence, travelling on trains from Prague not knowing if they would ever see their parents and siblings again. None of them did.

BY STEPHEN ADAMS, THE TELEGRAPH

But by virtue of the foresight, humanity and sheer bloody-mindedness of a young British stockbroking clerk called Nicholas Winton, 669 Jewish children were saved from the clutches of the Nazis.

On September 4, 22 of them were reunited with their 100-year-old savior – now Sir Nicholas – who has come to be known as the 'British Schindler'.

A steam engine specially requisitioned to re-enact the last stage of their journey pulled into the very same platform at Liverpool Street Station in London, where as virtual orphans they had disembarked in 1939.

The emotional ceremony marked what is likely to be the final chapter in the odyssey begun by Sir Nicholas as a 29-year-old.

He was packing to go skiing just before Christmas in 1938 when he received a call from a friend working in a refugee camp in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia.

"Cancel your holiday," said the friend, Martin Blake. "I need you in Prague. Don't bring your skis."

The young banker was so moved by what he saw that he immediately set about persuading the British authorities to let in refugee children. The response was sluggish.

But after much work by Winton, a Christian whose family had Jewish roots, the paperwork for each child was painstakingly put in order.

Finally the wheels began to move.

Between March and August 1939 eight trains carried 669 children to Britain, who otherwise would probably have perished in the death camps. Fifteen thousand Czechoslovakian children died in the war.

Sir Nicholas, who was knighted in 2002, stepped off the Peppercorn A1 Pacific class steam engine on Friday morning to loud applause from those he had saved, now grey-haired, and their families.

The train had travelled from Harwich in Essex, containing 22 evacuees and about 150 other passengers, on the last leg of the 800-mile journey from Prague.

Each survivor was given a moment to talk to Sir Nicholas.

Speaking to the crowd, Sir Nicholas, from Maidenhead, Berkshire, joked: "This is much harder work than it was 70 years ago."

PROPER BURIAL FOR HOLOCAUST VICTIMS IS PLANNED

An international initiative to give Holocaust victims interred in mass graves a proper Jewish burial will be launched in Eastern Europe.

The Dignity Return project is being organized by Yuri Kanner, president of the Russian Jewish Congress, in cooperation with Rabbi Marc Schneier, chairman of the World Jewish Congress American Section.

The project's mission is to bury the remains of victims of mass execution from Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, and Estonia in a manner acceptable under Jewish law.

Kanner and Schneier expect the initiative to inspire thousands of volunteers

"Seventy years ago it was a question of getting a lot of little children together with the families who were going to look after them.

"It all worked out very well and it's wonderful that it did work out, because after all history could have made it very different."

He added: "It's wonderful to see you all after so many years – don't leave it quite so long until we meet here again."

His grandson, Laurence Watson, 21, who recently graduated from Cambridge



Sir Nicholas Winton with fans at Liverpool Street Station, London.

University with a degree in physics, spoke of his pride at his grandfather's actions.

He said: "There has always been bad things going on in the world and there has always been wars and conflicts.

"You see it every day in the newspapers. Very occasionally you meet someone who has read those same articles but who decides to do something about it.

"That's what my granddad did. He said 'Something needs doing and I am going to do it'."

The timing of the reunion contains a sad epitaph, however.

The ninth train, containing 250 children, was due to leave Prague on 3 September 1939, the day Britain declared war.

The Germans never let it leave the station, and most of the children never lived to see 1945.

Almost as remarkable as the scheme itself, and a mark of Sir Nicholas's modesty, was that he chose to conceal his achievements for decades.

Only when his wife Greta unearthed a briefcase in the attic that contained lists of the children he saved and letters to the parents, did he admit his part.

He said in 1999: "My wife didn't know about it for 40 years after our marriage, but there are all kinds of things you don't talk about even with your family.

"Everything that happened before the war actually didn't feel important in the light of the war itself."

He also rejected the comparison with Oskar Schindler, who saved about 1,200 Jews in the war, saying unlike the German his actions never put him in danger.

from around the world, according to a joint news release.

"As we move further away from the *Shoah*, the number of those who can share a personal experience from this atrocity grows smaller," Schneier said in the statement. "As a result, it is increasingly up to those who were born after the Holocaust to preserve and protect their stories and these sites so that Holocaust revisionists will be unable to change history, and our call of 'Never again' will continue to resonate from one generation to the next."

The founders of the Dignity Return initiative will present details of the project on Holocaust Remembrance Day, Jan. 27.

RUSSIA WON'T PARTICIPATE IN JEWISH DOCUMENTS SUIT

Russia told a U.S. court on Friday that judges have no authority to tell the country how to handle sacred Jewish documents held in its state library that were seized by the Nazi and Soviet armies.

The documents are at the center of a lawsuit brought by members of *Chabad-Lubavitch*, which follows the teachings of Eastern European rabbis and emphasizes the study of the *Torah*. The group is suing Russia in U.S. court to recover thousands of manuscripts, prayers, lectures and philosophical discourses by leading rabbis dating back to the 18th century.

The case is being handled by the chief judge of the U.S. District Court in Washington, Royce Lamberth, who in January ordered Russia to preserve the documents over *Chabad's* fears they are not being properly cared for and could be sold on the black market.

But Russia said in its filing that even though it respects the U.S. court, it would not participate in the litigation to protect its sovereignty. Russia said the United States should use diplomatic channels to address any concerns it has about the collection.

"This court has no authority to enter orders with respect to the property owned by the Russian Federation and in its possession, and the Russian Federation will not consider

any such orders to be binding on it," said the Russian filing.

Lamberth agreed to take the case in U.S. court because he said both the Nazi seizure and the Russian government's appropriation of the collection, which *Chabad* says totals 12,000 books and 50,000 rare documents, violated international law.

The collection was formerly held by Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, a leader of *Chabad-Lubavitch* who was born in Russia but forced by the Soviets to leave in 1927. He took the documents to Latvia and later Poland, but left them behind when the Nazis invaded and he fled to the U.S. The collection was seized and taken to Germany, then recovered by the Soviet Army in 1945.

Attorneys representing *Chabad* at the law firm Bingham McCutchen said after five years of litigation, Russia "is now acting like a child who has lost the game and wants to start all over on its home court."

"Obviously, Russia cannot justify why it has refused to return Jewish manuscripts which were stolen by the Nazis and then looted by the Soviet Army during the Second World War," the attorneys said in a statement. "The plundering of religious texts during war is contrary to the Hague convention and the norms of any civilized society."

NEW COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH PROJECT AT YAD VASHEM

A new, comprehensive research project documenting 101 killing sites in areas of the former Soviet Union has been uploaded to Yad Vashem's website, www.yadvashem.org.

Marking Holocaust Remembrance Day, "The Untold Stories: The Murder Sites of the Jews in the Former USSR" chronicles the murders of thousands of Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators in 51 different communities whose Jewish populations were massacred during the Holocaust.

The "Untold Stories" is a project of Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research, which tells the hitherto untold stories of the destruction of the Jews of the former USSR. It is generously supported by Dr. Moshe Kantor, Chairman of the Board of Governors, Russian Jewish Congress (RJC), and uploaded to the Internet at his initiative and in partnership with the RJC.

The new project began with the collection and registration of all the murder sites in the former USSR being studied by researchers at Yad Vashem. From this pool of data, 51 different communities whose Jewish populations were murdered – in Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia and Russia – were chosen. The historical background serves as the central feature of the site. Links branch out to a variety of primary and secondary resources, primarily from Yad Vashem's Archives and private collections – documents, photographs, letters, maps, illustrations, video testimonies, Pages of Testimony, film clips, lists of victims and stories of Righteous Among the Nations. Together these elements create a multi-dimensional historical and human portrait.

"While the world knows about Auschwitz and even *Babi Yar*, more than a million Jews were murdered in towns and villages that remain relatively unknown," said Avner Shalev, Chairman of Yad Vashem. "In some locations thousands were gunned down, in others a dozen men and women tortured and killed. This important project sheds light on what happened in these communities, some of

which were a cradle of Jewish life for centuries, whose names still resonate in Jewish communities around the world. The use of all the sources available



Lubny, Ukraine. A mother with her two children at the assembly point awaiting, with other Jews from the town, their execution, October 16, 1941.

makes this project invaluable to all those who seek to know what happened."

The project contains 139 video clips, of which over 80 are witness accounts, most of them from the collection of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education (formerly the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation) founded by Steven Spielberg. There are also 1,459 photographs (including scans of original documents). The "Untold Stories" features chilling testimonies of people – at the time primarily children – who climbed out of the killing pits and managed to survive. It also sheds light on local Jews' attempts, after the war, to memorialize the murdered Jews and destroyed communities, even as the Soviets were seeking to quell any feelings of Jewish identity.



BOOK REVIEWS

INHERITING THE HOLOCAUST

Inheriting the Holocaust: A Second-Generation Memoir. By Paula S. Fass. Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey, 2009. 197 pp. \$34.95 hardcover

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

"I was the product of an unparalleled disaster that it was my fate to reflect upon for the rest of my life."

Interestingly, Paula S. Fass, a child of Holocaust survivors, and the author of *Inheriting the Holocaust: A Second-Generation Memoir*, did not intend making herself the central figure in her work. The original goal was to investigate and set down the history of her family, a history she had come to realize was important; and to re-connect with her past, a past she had somehow managed to "bracket" out of her life. So she gathered all her memories together, did a good deal of research that included visits to Polish archives, and put pen to paper . . . only to see her focus ever-so-subtly change . . .

Oh, there is still a great deal of information about her Lodzer parents in this book. Indeed, the author even writes about her grandparents — particularly on her mother's side. Thus we read about her maternal grandmother, Perla (Pola) Nawry Sieradzki, nicknamed the "empress," who

spoke Polish, and was elegant in every way. We read about how she married Israel Sieradzki, a hasid, "for love," something rather unusual then what with marriages being arranged. We read about how this grandfather was a follower of the Gerer Rebbe, yet did not dress in the Orthodox style, but rather in a conservative suit. Ironically, the author also notes here how around 1913 this grandfather came to America looking for a better life and would soon have brought the entire family over (the couple had had two sons and a daughter by then) were it not for the fact that he was "summoned" home by his wife.

Unfortunately, after that came the chaos of World War I, the tightening of immigration laws in America, and the horror of World War II. In short, none of Fass's grandparents would make it to these shores.

The author tells us about her parents, Bluma Sieradzki and Chaim Harry Fass. Before the war, both were married to others and had children with their

respective spouses. When the war came, both — with their families — were imprisoned in the Lodz ghetto. Both were deported to Auschwitz. And by the end of the war, both of them, Bluma, liberated at Bergen-Belsen and Chaim Harry, at Ahlem, a labor camp, had lost their families — murdered by the Nazis. Bluma and Chaim Harry would meet after the war and marry in 1946. In 1951 they came to America.

So how, with all the above-noted, did this book — which was supposed to be about the author's parents — come to be much more about the author?

Since Fass was going to include herself in the work (the author was born eleven months after her parents married) she

undoubtedly quickly realized that she was the product not only of her parents, but of history and, most especially, the Holocaust.

Needless to say, the Holocaust affected her parents. (Many books have been written about how survivors were affected by it physically, mentally, and spiritually). And in the telling of their story, Fass could clearly see how, by way of them, it had affected and continues to affect her . . . nor is she shy to tell us just how throughout her volume. Put simply, the author realizes, even down to the fact that she is now a Professor of History at the University of California at Berkeley, how much this twentieth-century cataclysm played and continues to play a role in her life. The Holocaust was just so very big and traumatic an event.

Finally, this reviewer is a child of Holocaust survivors, and finds it easy to relate to much of what Fass writes.

Inheriting the Holocaust is a wonderful addition to Holocaust studies. It examines an issue which has become one of increasing interest to professionals and laymen alike.

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



TO THE LAND OF THE REEDS

To the Land of the Reeds. By Aharon Appelfeld. Kinneret Zmora – Bitan Dvir Publishing House. 2009. 222 pp. In Hebrew.

REVIEWED BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

At summer's end of 1939, the gathering storm of World War II and the Shoah is about to erupt with its furious and shattering impact.

Beautiful and emotional Tony, the main protagonist of Appelfeld's totally absorbing and irresistible drama, chose at age seventeen to run away from her Jewish parents and born identity with August, a handsome calculating Gentile Austrian and a city engineer. He would soon enough abuse her while she was pregnant with their son Rudy.

Following serial relationships, mostly unsuccessful, she flees to the false security of her parents' existence deep in the countryside, in "the land of the reeds" (The book's title).

Tony uproots her bright sixteen-year-old son from his high school studies, to finally reconcile with her parents and her tormenting guilt for abandoning them, after they had already lost her promising older sister to illness.

Ironically and tragically, the eventful flight of mother and son back to their Jewish roots to find solace from a fragmented life (though Tony has at last come into money from an elderly lover) leads them to a waiting trap.

For the insatiable Nazi beast, even unsuspecting Jews of all social strata in remote corners are a prized catch, and the unstoppable death train will ultimately pick them all up, including Tony and Rudy,

in a colossal conspiracy of deception and destruction. Following a traumatic separation from his mother while on the demanding as well as transforming journey home, Rudy discovers his Jewish connection through the supportive and nourishing love of Erma, who too is seeking her lost mother. They are all destined to be reunited through shared Jewish faith and fate, though all so cruelly victimized.

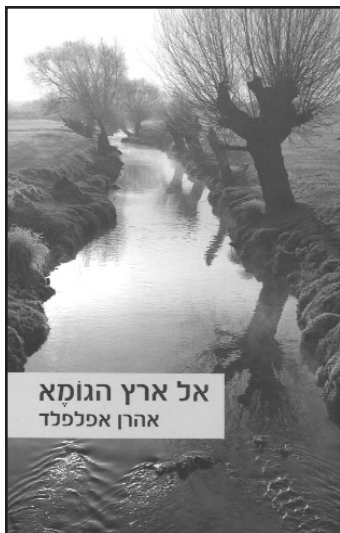
Even with the world collapsing around them and on top of them, the Jews, particularly the assimilated urban ones, are portrayed, as having already lost their inner Jewish core, to the point of self-hate.

Consequently, they have become far too weak to face the physical onslaught. The envious and frustrated Gentiles look down upon the relatively well-off Jews for lacking the solid faith of their ancestors, replaced by attachment to Communism's enticing ideals and financial craving.

We are once more beholden to the genius of Appelfeld, the most prolific Holocaust author and survivor, for so artfully weaving this

great tale of madness and magic, with his own autobiographical golden threads of powerful yet subtle rendition. How faithful is his commitment to remain connected to dear ones in the face of the threatening forgetfulness of time's inevitable passage.

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



MARK MY WORDS

Mark My Words. By Mark Hasten. Brocthin Books, 2004. 416 pp. \$24.95.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT ROZETT

Stories and studies of Jews during the Holocaust who aligned themselves with the Revisionist Zionists have come to light more and more in recent years. Moshe Arens' new study of *Betar's* role in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is a case in point. The memoirs of the Hasten brothers, Mark and Hart, are also clear examples of this trend. It can be said that being aligned with the minority group in the Zionist camp exerted a certain torque that affected the movement's adherents during the Holocaust era and beyond.

Born in the shtetl of *Bohorodczany* (known by its predominately Jewish residents as *Brocthin*), Mark Hasten paints an idyllic picture of his childhood. The life he led, surrounded by a loving family that was well respected in the community, came to an end under the devastating impact of World War II. Most of the two thousand Jews of *Bohorodczany* were murdered and the Jewish character of the shtetl obliterated; only a few dozen survivors remained to testify to what once was and can be no more.

Mark Hasten did not have an archetypal Holocaust experience. At the time of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, his perceptive father led the family in flight toward Kazakhstan. The Hasten family — Mark, his younger brother Hart and his father and mother, accompanied by four sons of their neighbors the

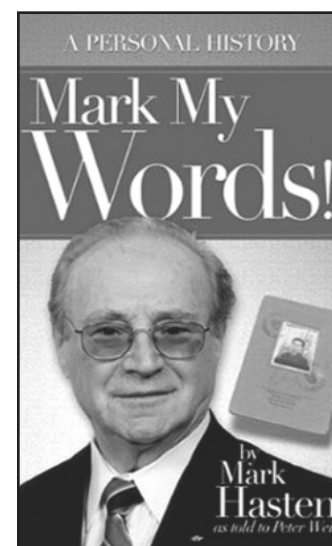
Friedmans — therefore never actually experienced Nazi rule directly. Their plight as Jewish refugees in Soviet Asia, however, encompassed its own brand of suffering and challenge, and is part of the mosaic of events that make up the Holocaust.

While in Kazakhstan, Hasten volunteered for the Polish forces established under the auspices of the Red Army. At the ripe old age of 16 he left his family and became a soldier, specializing in building pontoon bridges. The family would only reunite at the end of the war, coming together in Poland and eventually making their way to a series of DP camps in occupied Austria. From Austria, Hasten would later head for Israel, while his brother and parents would reach the US.

In Austria, Hasten became active in the *Etzel*, where his military experience held him in good stead. His political inclinations, however, twice brought him into sharp conflict with the dominant stream of Zionism. The first time, Hasten and his *Etzel*

comrades, who were left out of *Haganah* led *Aliyah* operations in Austria, tried to muscle in on those operations. Forcing their way into their rivals' headquarters, one of the *Etzel* men shot a *Haganah* man. The rest of the *Etzel* activists, including Hasten, fled for their lives, profoundly shaken by the death of a fellow Jew. Soon after the creation of the State of Israel, Hasten reached the shores of Palestine with other members of *Etzel* aboard a boat whose name would become

(Continued on page 14)



AUSCHWITZ BLUEPRINTS GIVEN TO NETANYAHU IN GERMANY

Sketched on yellowing parchment, the 29 blueprints presented to Israel's prime minister on Thursday laid out the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz in chilling detail, with gas chambers, crematories, delousing facilities and watchtowers drawn to scale.

"There are those who deny that the Holocaust happened," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said as he accepted the documents as a gift to Israel's Holocaust memorial, where they will go on display next year. "Let them come to Jerusalem and look at these plans, these plans for the factory of death."

One of the largest of the blueprints featured multicolored sketches, with barracks and even latrines drawn in detail. Other, smaller sheets showed architectural designs of individual buildings, drawn from various angles.

The Israeli leader was accompanied by his wife, Sara, whose father was the only member of his family to survive the Nazi genocide that killed six million Jews during World War II.

Also present was Yossi Peled, an Israeli cabinet minister and former general whose father was killed by the Nazis and whose mother survived Auschwitz in one of the barracks detailed in the blueprints. Mr. Peled himself was hidden until age 7 by a family in Belgium who raised him as a Christian. He discovered his Jewish roots in 1948 and was taken to Israel two years later.

In Germany for a visit that combined talks on the Middle East conflict with acknowledgments of the painful past that binds the two countries, Mr. Netanyahu warned against ignoring new threats.

"We cannot allow those who wish to perpetrate mass death, those who call for the destruction of the Jewish people or the Jewish state, to go unchallenged," Mr. Netanyahu said.

Axel Springer Verlag, the publisher of the newspaper *Bild*, obtained the Auschwitz blueprints last year from a German man who said he had found them when cleaning out an apartment in what was formerly East Berlin.

Germany's federal archive has confirmed the documents' authenticity.



From left, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; Kai Diekmann, editor of *Bild*; and Avner Shalev, chairman of Israel's Yad Vashem memorial, looking at plans for Auschwitz.

The documents were displayed for several weeks this year in the lobby of *Bild's* headquarters in Berlin. The newspaper's editor, Kai Diekmann, said the publisher decided to give the sketches to Israel to ensure that as many people as possible could see them.

"These plans have an important function — they remind us of a crime that, with the passing of time, seems ever more incomprehensible," Mr. Diekmann said. "It is of the utmost importance to continue to be reminded of it."

While they are not the only original Auschwitz blueprints that still exist — oth-

ers were captured by the Soviet Red Army and brought to Moscow — they will be the first for Israel's Yad Vashem memorial, its chairman, Avner Shalev, said.

"This set is a very early one, which was found here in Berlin, from the autumn of '41," Mr. Shalev said. "It brings a better understanding of the whole

process, and the intention of the planners of the complex, and from this perspective it is important."

Mr. Shalev said the sketches would be on display in Jerusalem beginning Jan. 27 as part of a special exhibit marking the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

The blueprints include general plans for the original Auschwitz camp and the expansion of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, where most of the killings were carried out. They were initialed by the head of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, and Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Hoess.

AUSTRIAN TEENS HELD IN ATTACK ON SURVIVORS

Five Austrian teenagers were arrested in connection with a neo-Nazi attack on Holocaust survivors.

The survivors and others were attacked while commemorating the 64th anniversary of the liberation of a concentration camp near *Salzburg* on May 9.

Calling the incident one of the worst in postwar Austria, authorities said the incident also illustrated the growing right-wing extremism among Austrian youth. The teens involved apparently had no previous record.

Two people were wounded in the attack, in which teens allegedly fired plastic bullets from air guns and harassed visitors verbally, according to reports. One of the guns 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, range in age from 14 to 17 and come from the *Salzburg* area. They have been charged and released on their own recognizance. They reportedly admitted under interrogation that they had planned to disrupt the commemorative ceremony marking the liberation of the camp.

Austrian Interior Minister Maria Fekter described the case as a "very serious" example of rising right-wing tendencies. Alois Lissl, chief of the Upper Austrian security directorate, said the teenagers professed to be unaware that if convicted as youths, they could spend up to five years in prison for breaching the law that bans the Nazi party and any activities aimed at reviving it.

SEARCHING FOR HOLOCAUST MASSACRE VICTIMS

STEVE KETTMANN,
SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

Each year, Peter Fischer drives from his Berlin home to this small rural town 75 miles away to keep alive what he says is a flame of truth.

In *Jamlitz*, the 64-year-old Fischer pays respects to more than 1,000 Jews slain and placed in mass graves in early 1945 as the Soviet Red Army closed in on Berlin during the last phase of World War II.

The victims were survivors of the Auschwitz death camp in occupied Poland, forced by the Nazis to march to nearby *Lieberose*, a labor subcamp of the *Sachsenhausen* concentration camp, and killed in what Fischer fears will remain a forgotten chapter of Holocaust history. Those who weren't murdered at *Lieberose* were forced to walk to *Sachsenhausen*, north of Berlin.

"Most of the people got killed on the Death March from *Lieberose* to *Sachsenhausen*," recalled Jan Czucker, a march survivor who now lives in Los Angeles.

Those who could not walk — the elderly and the sick — were gunned down by the Nazi SS, according to multiple eyewitnesses. And yet only one mass grave, with 589 victims, has been discovered. Historians believe more than 750 others were hastily thrown into a separate mass grave that has yet to be discovered.

"It was a very public crime. *Lieberose* is part of the Holocaust," said historian Guenter Morsch, director of the *Brandenburg* state memorial foundation in Berlin.

Fischer was born in London, after his par-

who told him that it was time to turn the ovens back on at Auschwitz, and a tour of the infamous Nazi concentration camp in 1987 — persuaded him to dedicate his life the memory of Holocaust victims.



Peter Fischer, with the Central Council of Jews in Germany, has dedicated his life to the memory of Holocaust victims.

ents fled the Third Reich. After the war, he returned to Berlin, growing up in East Germany and becoming a Communist Party member. His father was an ardent member of the *Comintern* — the international Communist organization in Moscow.

Fischer, who is an expert on aging, long believed East Germans were above the anti-Semitism that had gripped the nation a generation earlier. But two things — the taunts of the son of a former SS member

It was on a 1992 trip to *Buchenwald* — one of the largest concentration camps inside Nazi Germany — that Fischer first heard about the *Lieberose* massacre.

Over the years, he perceived the reluctance of East German authorities to search for the victims' remains. Nevertheless, he and historian Morsch lobbied for forensic anthropologists to search for the mass graves.

One of the most likely areas, according to Morsch and other experts, was a plot on privately owned land whose owner had long refused to allow any search, even though he had moved to the southern state of Bavaria. After a lengthy legal dispute, the unidentified farmer reached an agreement last fall with a *Brandenburg* state court over compensation, and a team began digging in late April.

On the day the long-delayed dig was announced, Fischer stood alone in the near-

by village of *Staakow* on the site where the 589 victims had been discovered accidentally by a work crew in 1971, laying a ribboned wreath of flowers at the site.

He then watched as workers toiled for three weeks, locating only one of the *Lieberose* barracks and silverware emblazoned with the SS insignia.

Fischer was downcast at first, fearing the lack of human remains would halt the project's momentum. He was well aware of the general weariness that many Germans feel toward Holocaust matters after decades of public debate. Questions of national or collective guilt are never far from the surface, but stories like the *Lieberose* massacre now tend to fall on the inside pages of the national press.

But Jörg Schönbohm, Brandenburg state's interior minister, quickly put such fears to rest, saying the investigation would continue. "We cannot stop the search there, not after the findings of the latest excavations," Schönbohm said, referring to the discovery of the barracks.

At the same time, Fischer says he will never stop lobbying for finding the remains of victims of a forgotten piece of Holocaust history.

"I believe the people want to understand the past and have a strong interest in living an authentic life," he said. "Places like *Jamlitz* have a spiritual message about the future of mankind. They teach us lessons."

SURVIVORS' CORNER

THE JEWS WHO SAVED JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST

GREER FAY CASHMAN,
THE JERUSALEM POST

Child Holocaust survivor Tova Teitelbaum is angry at the paucity of material about Jews who saved Jews. While there is no dearth of information about Jews who resisted the Nazis and died in doing so, most notably in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943, very little has been documented about those who survived unless they went on to carve great careers for themselves after the war or became controversial figures such as anti-Zionist Dr. Marek Edelman, now 86 and believed to be the last survivor of the uprising.

Teitelbaum has good reason to be angry. Her late father, Jonas Eckstein, was among those courageous people who risked life and limb on a daily basis to save fellow Jews.

Although occasional mention of this period in his life had been made among relatives and close friends over the years, it wasn't something that his family dwelt on.

While some families never overcome the scars of the Holocaust, for the Ecksteins it did not linger as part of their everyday lives, though at the *Pessah seder* when reciting the story of the Exodus from Egypt and the suffering that the Children of Israel had experienced at the hands of the Egyptians, Eckstein would add the line, "Even in this day and age..."

Although he didn't talk much about the war, he had hoped to one day convey his experiences to his daughter, an English teacher, who as a student had been editor of her school magazine.

Unfortunately, that never happened, and he had realized that it probably never would, especially after she moved to Israel from Australia, where the family had

settled after the war.

Eckstein started to write his autobiography, but the sentences are disjointed and there are no dates. "I wish I had listened to him more," says Teitelbaum in retrospect.

Two years ago, she finally decided to write a book about her father's exploits. She had been spurred to do so while on a visit to Jerusalem from her home in *Haifa*.

A conference at the Jerusalem *Michlala* on Jews hiding Jews had sparked her interest. Among the other attendees were a number of people who had lived in Bratislava during the war, and they spoke mainly about Rabbi Michael-Dov Weissmandel, who had been a leading figure in Jewish rescue operations, and though he managed to save many people including strangers, had lost his own wife and children.

Teitelbaum commented that her father, who was likewise from Bratislava, had also been engaged in rescuing Jews. When she mentioned his name, there were several people who remembered him.

Snatches of the stories she had heard in her youth began chasing each other in Teitelbaum's brain, and subsequently wherever she encountered people from wartime Czechoslovakia, almost all of them had heard about Jonas Eckstein,

and some could even tell her about testimonial books in which his name appeared.

The urge to find out everything she could about her father became ever stronger.

Over the years, following her father's death in 1971, she occasionally asked her Austrian-born mother, Valerie, known to one and all as Wally, to tell her about those dark days — but the conversations were episodic and lacking depth — as if her mother did not really want to remember. Now, she is no position to remember.

Teitelbaum has met with some of the people who were saved by her father, but they are of an advanced age, and can't really recollect much.

"When there's nobody left to ask, you discover that you want to know," she says ruefully.

Never afraid of research, she went to Yad Vashem expecting to find some information in testimonies given by people saved

by her father. If such material does exist, it wasn't cross-referenced, and Teitelbaum came away frustrated and none the wiser.

Because her son Benny is a reporter and editor at Israel Radio's Reshet Bet, Teitelbaum is probably more aware than most people of the power of radio.

It occurred to her that if she called Yaron Enosh, who has a daily program on

Reshet Bet about people searching for information about relatives and friends, she might get a lead.

And indeed she did. After telling what she knew of her father's story to Enosh, she received a few responses, the most valuable of which was that there is a *geniza* in *Bnei Brak* that stores Holocaust-related documentation about Orthodox Jews that cannot necessarily be found in Yad Vashem.

Teitelbaum wasted little time in traveling to *Bnei Brak*. She found a file with her father's name, and inside were testimonies, photographs and newspaper clippings.

She remembered that in January 1966, her father had come to Israel on a visit and had spent more time in Tel Aviv, meeting people whose lives he had saved, than with his daughter in *Haifa*.

There was a clipping about the visit in the Hungarian-language newspaper *Ukelet*. It was because of this article about Jonas Eckstein's arrival in Israel that so many people sought him out.

Teitelbaum went through the files, photocopied almost everything, and then made a list of all the names, and began tracking as many people as she could. Some had died in the interim. Others had memory lapses and could not really provide a coherent version of the facts, and some simply refused to talk to her.

But there were a few people who were willing to share whatever they could remember, and with the help of her son, Teitelbaum started putting together a small collection of videotaped interviews.

The article in *Ukelet* noted that Jonas Eckstein had hidden as many as 40 people at a time at a bunker in his home in *Pressburg*, the German name for Bratislava.

(Continued on page 15)



A new memorial stands in honor of the Poles who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jews — the first of its kind in the world.

NAZI VICTIM: CAN PEOPLE WITHOUT A SOUL BE PUNISHED?

For 65 years, Elisabeth Mann has carried with her the pain only a Holocaust survivor can know.

For the only one in her Hungarian Jewish family to make it out of the Nazi death camps, life for a long time felt like punishment.

Branded in her mind are the images of, for example, a pile of babies set ablaze, snarling dogs and the laughter of an SS officer pointing to the black smoke of incinerated bodies that filled the sky. And on her heavy heart is the anguish, including the blame she feels for her brother Laci's death.

He was 13 and not feeling well when the family arrived by cattle car at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

"I told him to go with my mother because mothers are the people who take care of sick children," she cried, while sitting in her Los Angeles, California, home. "I didn't know that with my advice I killed my brother because all the mothers and all the children were taken to the gas chamber right away."

Given the horrors she's lived and witnessed, one might think Mann, now in her 80s, would be among those demanding that Nazi war criminals be brought to justice. And yet she was uncomfortable with the ongoing attempts to deport to

Germany for trial John Demjanjuk, an 89-year-old Cleveland, Ohio, man allegedly linked to mass killings at *Sobibor*, a death camp in Poland.

Demjanjuk insists it wasn't him. The pursuit of him — and of suspects like him — isn't one Mann supports. She said she never wanted revenge, because "I did not want to be like them."

Mann doesn't think going after war criminals now is worth the cost and energy, nor does she think the legal process will make a difference to such men who've already lived a full life.

"What is punishment for a person who is capable to do such horror, such horrible things to living people?" Mann, an artist, wondered aloud. "I cannot imagine that that person has a soul or conscience or heart. ... He simply wouldn't feel it. ... What kind of punishment could you give to a person like that?"

Her argument doesn't work for Efraim Zuroff, who has spent nearly 30 years hunting Nazis responsible for the Holocaust, a systematic effort that wiped out 6 million Jews, or two-thirds of European Jewry.

"It has to be clear to everybody that the Holocaust was not a natural disaster. ... It was created by man, against man," he said from Jerusalem, Israel, where he

coordinates Nazi war crimes research for the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Jewish human rights organization. "When responsibility can be determined, people have to be held accountable."

On April 20, the day before Holocaust Remembrance Day, the center released its latest status report on Nazi war criminal investigations and prosecutions.

Demjanjuk tops the list of the 10 most wanted. Others on the list include Sandor Kepiro, a former Hungarian officer who allegedly helped kill 1,200 people in *Novi Sad*, Serbia, as well as Milivoj Asner, a one-time Croatian police chief, now believed to be living in Austria, who allegedly persecuted and deported to the Nazi camps hundreds of Jews, Serbs and Gypsies.

In a written statement about the report, Zuroff said that since the start of 2001, there have been 76 convictions and at least 48 indictments, and hundreds of investigations have been launched. Central to these actions has been a project Zuroff has helped oversee called Operation: Last Chance, a push — started in 2002 — to support worldwide government efforts to pursue aging Nazi war crime suspects.

While some countries have stepped up, including the U.S., Germany, Serbia and Spain, others, such as Australia, Austria and

Ukraine, have shown a "lack of political will" and have failed to act, the statement says.

"The easiest thing in the world is to just forget," Zuroff, 60, said by phone. "The passage of time in no way diminishes the guilt of the murderers. ... We don't think people deserve a prize for reaching an old age."

Mann's own children couldn't agree more. Like Zuroff, they think pursuing Nazi war criminals is the least that can be done to honor victims.

"I'm definitely in favor of going after these folks, regardless of their age," said Mann's daughter, Nancy. "A lot of people suffered, and are still suffering, because of the crimes that were done in the past." Thomas, Mann's son, said that going after Nazi war criminals "sends a message to our society and the world that it's not OK to do these things," and that it helps bring awareness "to people who don't know about the Holocaust, and there are lots of them."

He told the story of a college freshman in Southern California who stood up during a presentation his mother was giving and said she'd never heard of the Holocaust.

"That really brings it home," Thomas said. By pursuing suspected Nazi criminals, the process "reminds people that this did happen" and shows that "people do care that this happened."

HOLOCAUST CLASSES ARE SELDOM EASY ON CHILDREN

BY SUSAN DOMINUS,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

When President Nicolas Sarkozy mandated recently that every French fifth grader would learn the life story of a French child who died at the hands of the Nazis, the proposal didn't exactly generate the overwhelming gratitude he might have expected from Holocaust educators in his country.

"You cannot inflict this on little ones of 10 years old," Simone Veil, the honorary president of the Foundation for the Memory of the Holocaust, told the Web site of the magazine *L'Express*. "The weight of this memory is much too heavy to bear."

As someone who attended Hebrew school at a Conservative synagogue in Westchester County during the late 1970s and early '80s, I couldn't help wondering what Ms. Veil would have made of the Holocaust education provided for Jewish children then.

It wasn't unusual, at the time, for kids in Jewish day schools and after-school programs to be expected to absorb a lot more than one tragic narrative. Or maybe, in some ways, a lot less: Rather than being asked to identify closely with the life and death of an individual child, many of us were shown films of mass murder, piles of bodies in camps, so much graphic detail that our nascent faculties of analysis froze.

I can still remember the trembling rage of my Hebrew school teacher when two fellow students giggled about some private girlish intrigue, retreating into the familiar as images from the camps flickered across the screen. We were spoiled and overprotected, the teacher railed, all of which was surely true. Also, if I recall correctly, we were about 11.

Within the vast body of Holocaust literature a tiny subset has emerged, writings about Holocaust education trauma. In his 2006 novel, *Absurdistan*, Gary Shteyngart, who attended a Jewish day school in Queens in the '80s, included a

parody of a white paper that proposed to fend off interfaith marriage by using the Holocaust, which, "when harnessed properly as a source of guilt, shame and victimhood, can serve as a remarkable tool for Jewish continuity."

In the subsection "Holocaust for Kidz," the paper's author wrote, "Studies have shown that it's never too early to frighten a child with images of skeletal remains and naked women being chased by dogs across the Polish snow." And in Shalom Auslander's first collection of short stories, *Beware of God*, a character offers what he calls "Holocaust Tips for Kids," a survival guide for children terrified by what they're learning in Hebrew school (he advises that they defend themselves with nunchaku, just like his hero Bruce Lee).

In his 2007 memoir, *Foreskin's Lament*, Mr. Auslander describes the first naked Jewish girl he ever saw, at age 11 while attending a yeshiva in Monsey, N.Y.: film footage of a corpse tumbling off a pile of bulldozed bodies.

As spoiled and overprotected as we might have been, children at that time were considered hardier creatures than they are today (no car seats, no parents hovering over our homework, and no holds barred on the bulldozer scenes). And although it already seemed like ancient history to us at the time, World War II was a generation closer, and even closer than that for our teachers. Explaining the complexity of the history to young children — a history so relevant to our own grandparents — might have been impossible, but at least, educators thought, they could convey some urgency with overwhelming visuals and statistics.

At the time, I agreed with a philosophy

my teachers must also have held — that if tens of thousands of children had lived, or didn't live, through those horrors, the least we could do was witness 20 minutes of that reality, even if it gave us nightmares. In many ways, I lived in too safe and comfortable a world to internalize the other message that often came with Holocaust education: that it could happen here, that we, too, were vulnerable to such vast and hateful forces of history.

Nah, I decided, and went home to watch *Little House on the Prairie* reruns while my mom made dinner.



Students learn about the living conditions inside a Concentration camp.

For some kids, that kind of message may have reinforced their Jewish identity. But the focus on Jewish isolation — long on graphic proof, short on historical context — actively repelled at least as many of my peers (including Mr. Shteyngart and Mr. Auslander, as recent conversations with both made clear).

"We were scaring kids half to death and then telling them, 'You've got to embrace your Judaism,'" said Carol K. Ingall, a professor of Jewish education at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Manhattan. "It didn't work."

In the past 25 years, much has changed about Holocaust education in Jewish schools and in public schools, where it's a more recent addition to the curriculum.

There has been a shift, Dr. Ingall said, away from what teachers wanted to convey and toward "the needs of the learner — there's an understanding that they're more likely to wrap their heads around a narrative around children like themselves or Jews who did courageous things."

As a child, I craved the latter, as well as the context provided by a curriculum like Facing History, an influential program that took off nationally in the '90s, and is taught in both public and Jewish schools, mostly in middle and high schools. The curriculum teaches the Holocaust, along with the history of genocide, as a way of understanding the power of individual citizens in a democracy, with emphasis on the historical steps that led to the Nazi regime (and with sparing, careful presentation of the atrocities).

In primary schools, increasingly, the Holocaust is being used as a model, said Jeffrey Shandler, a professor of Jewish studies at Rutgers University, "to teach young children about tolerance — for example, teaching that it is wrong to be a bully."

But, Dr. Shandler added with understatement, "There's a risk in offering an overly simple argument that there is a direct line between being a bully and being complicit in mass murder." And as for a new spate of Holocaust books for children that focus on kids who got out safely, highlighting courage and resistance, emphasizing only the inspirational, one can't help wondering if this is an arena in which the message of self-esteem is insufficient.

It seems appropriate that a chapter of history almost impossible to grasp would present impossible challenges, especially for young children. Maybe 25 years from now, thirtysomething Jewish authors will be writing satirical novels about the bill of goods they were sold in grade school about all those kids who survived the Holocaust.

Chances are, educators will still be wrestling with how best to approach the material. History's facts are immutable, but what we want for our children — and from them — keeps changing.

GERMANS REMEMBER THE HOLOCAUST AND THE JEWISH LIFE

BY TOBY AXELROD, JTA

Holocaust remembrance in Germany has many faces.

In the former East German city of *Erfurt*, illegal squatters hide from the camera but show visitors where the ovens of Auschwitz were designed and made. In *Hameln*, in what was West Germany, Bernhard Gelderblom has worked for decades "in the darkness" to return an identity to his town's lost Jews. And in *Euskirchen*, Hans-Dieter Arntz has been bringing the light of day to a local history buried out of shame and guilt.

Such efforts contribute to a depth of remembrance in Germany at which official commemorations can only hint. To really find out, one has to visit towns and cities across Germany and seek out the local, sometimes unofficial, historians.

Some grassroots groups "are very creative," said Walter Momper, president of Berlin's House of Representatives, who spent this year's Holocaust Remembrance Day hosting the ninth annual Obermayer German Jewish History Awards. "They force society to ask what was there ... and they confront peo-

ple with what happened just next door."

This is just what the group of young squatters has been doing in *Erfurt*. Since moving into abandoned buildings of the former *Topf und Söhne* oven manufacturers some 10 years ago, they have been



Holocaust memorial in Berlin.

giving informal walking tours of the now decrepit site where the company designed and built the Auschwitz crematorium, as well as air-tight gas chamber doors and ventilation systems. The youth have run cultural programs at the site, and teens are asked to remove any Palestinian scarves when they enter.

"It is a symbol of anti-Semitism — I see it that way," said one of the squatters, who gave his name as Timo. "Anti-Semitism did not end in 1945."

The squatters complemented the work of a local association dedicated to unearthing the site's history, said association member Rudiger Bender, chair for intercultural communications at the University of *Erfurt*.

"It is important to actually work on a very local level" and then compare the results "with a birds' eye perspective" to see how it fits with the bigger picture, Bender said.

Over the years, awareness of the site's history has grown. Now its new owner, Helmut Golla — though insisting the squatters leave — has agreed to establish an information center and museum in the former administration building using materials developed by historians from the nearby *Buchenwald* memorial.

The previous mayor "had no great

appetite" to see a museum there, explained Wolfgang Nossen, president of the Jewish Community of *Thuringia*. "I was told to think about the image of the city. I answered, 'One should have said that 70 years ago.'"

Topf und Söhne was an old family firm, he said, that "designed these ovens themselves to make practical use of energy." Human bodies were the fuel. "It was absolutely perfidious."

For decades, no one in *Erfurt* talked about this past. The same pattern was repeated in towns and cities across Germany. Few chose to recall what happened to the 500,000 Jews who lived in Germany before 1933. Nearly half fled, though many would later be deported from other occupied countries. Only a few thousand German Jews survived here in hiding.

Even so, long after the end of World War II, there is still much history to uncover, said Arthur Obermayer, the Boston-based businessman and philanthropist who created the Obermayer Award after exploring his own family's roots in *Creglingen*. The award honors Germans who have tried to find out about local Jewish history and to establish contacts with Jews around the world.

THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES WHOEVER SAVES A LI

HONOREE FANYA GOTTESFELD HELLER



Fanya Gottesfeld Heller is a Holocaust survivor, author, and philanthropist whose life story offers hope to all who have suffered through discrimination or the horrors of war. Born into a traditional Jewish family in a small Ukrainian village in 1924, Mrs. Heller and her family hid from the Nazi death squads with the help of two Christian rescuers. Beset by hunger, marked for death by her neighbors, and faced with the constant threat of discovery and execution, she miraculously survived to share her message of life and hope.

Mrs. Heller recently reissued her book under a new title, *Love in a World of Sorrow*. The new edition features an updated preface and epilogue which describe Mrs. Heller's emotional reunion with the daughter of her rescuer, as well as some of the thousands of responses she has received from those touched by her story. The book, a candid portrait of her family's struggle for survival and her relationship with her Christian rescuers, is part of the curriculum of courses at Princeton University, Yale

University, the University of Connecticut and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel. Since the original publication of her book, Mrs. Heller has dedicated her life to sharing her

message of tolerance and hope. In 1998 the New York State Board of Regents awarded Mrs. Heller the Louis E. Yavner Citizen Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions to teaching about the Holocaust and other assaults on humanity.

To give other educators the tools to effectively teach the lessons of the Holocaust, Mrs. Heller also commissions an annual conference on Holocaust education at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City.

Mrs. Heller obtained a B.A. and an M.A. in psychology from the New School for Social Research and honorary degrees from Yeshiva University and Bar-Ilan University.

In 1998 she established The Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism at Bar-Ilan University, a unique academic initiative that employs an interdisciplinary approach to an examination of the female Jewish identity within the context of the social, cultural and religious history of the Jewish people.

Mrs. Heller serves on the boards of The Jewish Museum, Yeshiva University, Stern College for Women, the Program in Judaic Studies at Princeton University, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Miklat – Shelter From Abuse, the Aleph Society, the American Society for Yad Vashem, and the Museum of Jewish Heritage. She is a benefactor of the United Jewish Agency's "Project Renewal" in Lod, Israel, the Benjamin and Charlotte Gottesfeld Chair in Talmud at Yeshiva University and the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Floor at the Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem.

Mrs. Heller lives in New York City. She has three children, eight grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

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FOR YAD VASHEM ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER FE, SAVES HUMANITY

HONOREE TOVAH FELDSHUH



Tovah Feldshuh, the world-renowned actress, most recently starred on Broadway in *Irena's Vow*. She played the role of Irena Gut Opdyke, a Christian rescuer during the Holocaust, for which she received the BroadwayWorld.com Theatre Fans' Choice Award for Best Leading Actress in a Play. For her work on the New York stage, from *Yentl* to *Saravà!* to *Lend Me a Tenor* to *Golda's Balcony*, Tovah Feldshuh earned four Tony nominations for Best Actress and won four Drama Desk Awards, four Outer Critics Circle Awards, the Obie, the Theatre World Award and the Lucille Lortel Award for Best Actress (for *Golda's Balcony*).

Ms. Feldshuh continues to receive acclaim for her roles on stage, film and television. On stage she appeared in *Cyrano*; *Rodgers and Hart*; *Dreyfus in Rehearsal*; *She Stoops to Conquer*; *Mistress of the Inn*; *Three Sisters*; *The Vagina Monologues*; *Tallulah Hallelujah!*; *Full Gallop*; *The Prime of Miss Jean*

Brodie; *Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh*; and *Tea at Five*. Her one-woman show, *Tovah: Out of Her Mind!* sold out in London's West End. The *Boston Globe* selected *Tovah: Out of Her*

Mind! as the best one-person show of 2000.

Her film appearances include *Kissing Jessica Steins*; *A Walk on the Moon*; *Happy Accidents*; *The Corruptor*; *Daniel*; *The Idolmaker*; *Brewster's Millions*; *Cheaper to Keep Her*; *Three Little Wolves*; *Friends and Family*; *Old Love*; *Nunzio*; *The Believer*; *Life On The Ledge*; *The Alchemist*; and *Toll Booth*. Most recently she appeared onscreen in *O Jerusalem* in which she plays Golda Meir, and in *Lady in the Water* for M. Night Shyamalan.

On television, she received her first Emmy nomination for her portrayal of the Czech freedom fighter Helena in *Holocaust*. She also appeared in *The Amazing Howard Hughes*; *Citizen Cohn*; *The Cosby Mysteries* and *The Cosby Show*; and in *The Education of Max Bickford*. In 2004 she was nominated for her second Emmy for her work on *Law & Order* as defense attorney Danielle Melnick.

On the US West Coast, she starred at the Ahmanson as Regina in Lillian Hellman's *Another Part of the Forest*, and served as a leading lady for Jack O'Brien and Craig Noel at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego in such shows as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Two Gentlemen Of Verona*, *Measure For Measure*. At the Globe she was named an Associate Artist and won two Drama-Logue Awards for her Juliet and for her first one-woman show.

Ms. Feldshuh is a graduate of Sarah Lawrence College and a winner of the McKnight Fellowship to the Guthrie Theatre and the University of Minnesota. She has taught at Yale, Cornell and New York Universities and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters. She is the recipient of the Eleanor Roosevelt Humanitas Award and the Israel Peace Medal. Ms. Feldshuh is married to New York attorney Andrew Harris Levy. They have two children.

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REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL HONORS RABBI LAU'S SAVIOR

BY ARON HELLER, AP

After surviving the Holocaust as a child, Israel Meir Lau — a former Israeli chief rabbi — spent decades searching for the man who saved his life.

That journey ended with a recently discovered Nazi document confirming the identity of the teenager who shielded him from German gunfire when his concentration camp was liberated.

In an emotional ceremony, the Holocaust memorial Lau now chairs posthumously granted Feodor Mikhailichenko Israel's highest honor for non-Jews.

"This closes a circle of 64 years. You look for this person, to whom you owe your life, and you don't know whom to thank," said Lau, 72. "He was my childhood hero. A man with a huge soul and a heart of gold."

Lau had previously identified a fellow inmate, a non-Jewish Russian named Feodor, as his savior in the *Buchenwald* concentration camp, but he never learned the 18-year-old's full name. He said Feodor stole and cooked potatoes for him, knitted him wool earmuffs to protect him from the bitter cold and lay on top of him as gunfire erupted when the camp was liberated on Apr. 11, 1945.

At the time, Lau was an eight-year-old boy nicknamed Lulek.

"Feodor, the Russian, looked after me in the daily life like a father would for a son. His concern and feeling of responsibility gave me a sense of security," Lau wrote in his 2005 autobiography.

Mikhailichenko grew so close to Lau that he wanted to adopt him as a son. But Lau kept his word to his murdered family and emigrated to pre-state Israel on a ship of orphaned refugee children. He lost track of Mikhailichenko and despite many

efforts could never trace him again.

The mystery began to unfold in June 2008 when Holocaust researcher

down and confirmed that their father often spoke lovingly about a young Jewish boy named Lulek in *Buchenwald*.



Former Israeli chief rabbi and one of the country's most prominent spiritual leaders Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, second left, introduces his son, left, to Yulia Selutina, right, and Yelena Belayaeva, second right, daughters of Feodor Mikhailichenko from Russia, who saved him as a child during the Holocaust, during a ceremony posthumously honoring him as a Righteous Among the Nations, outside the Hall of Remembrance at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, on Aug. 4, 2009.

Kenneth Waltzer of Michigan State University discovered the man's true identity through a Nazi document he discovered in a recently opened secret archive in the small German town of *Bad Arolsen*.

The document had been stashed away for more than six decades.

Lau first learned the full name of his rescuer through an AP report about the discovery.

Mikhailichenko returned to Russia where he became a prominent geologist. He died of cancer in 1993 at the age of 66. But his daughters, Yulia Selutina and Yelena Belayaeva, were quickly tracked

After last year's discovery, Lau invited both daughters to Israel and had them at his home for dinner. There, he introduced them to many of his eight children, 50 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

"I told them, 'All of this I owe to your father. If it wasn't for your father, none of them would exist,'" he said. "I looked for him for decades and I never forgot him for a single day."

Selutina teared up as she accepted a medal and a certificate on her father's behalf. She said her father never forgot Lulek either, and traveled to *Buchenwald* a year before his death

seeking information about him.

Mikhailichenko was featured in a 1992 Russian documentary detailing how he and other Russian inmates helped Lau survive by doing his chores and protecting him from the wrath of German guards.

Mikhailichenko's daughters met with Israeli President Shimon Peres.

"There are not a lot of daughters in the world who can be as proud of their father as you can. Your father acted with ultimate humanity when he saved one soul and risked his life," Peres told them. "The entire state of Israel is proud of you and your family and will be grateful to you our entire lives."

Nearly all of the Polish-born Lau's family members were exterminated in Nazi concentration camps. Lau's older brother Naftali cared for the young boy until the two were separated upon arrival at *Buchenwald* in January 1945.

Mikhailichenko was already a veteran inmate of the camp, having been arrested by the Gestapo in 1942 for robbery. He knew the ropes and watched over Lau.

When *Buchenwald* was liberated by American troops, Lau was among its youngest surviving prisoners. He went on to become one of Israel's most prominent spiritual leaders. He served as the country's chief rabbi between 1993 and 2003 and is currently the chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, an advisory board to Israel's official Holocaust memorial.

Lau said Mikhailichenko proved the goodness that exists in humans, regardless of nationality, religion or gender.

"You see through him that there is a chance for humanity, there is hope for the world," he said. "Feodor is a lesson of morals, of ethics, of humanity."

"Now we know the lesson that even in a dark tunnel, in the midst of the dark tunnel, there is a light. The light is Feodor."

YAD VASHEM EXAMINES HOLOCAUST-ERA MEDIA OUTPUT AND RESPONSES

JESSICA LEVING,
THE JERUSALEM POST

Walking through the dimly lit corridors of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, visitors often find themselves asking: How could the world have stood idly by in the face of the Holocaust's atrocities?

A workshop for international Holocaust scholars at Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research sheds some light on this question by examining newsreels, films, radio broadcasts, and political cartoons from the Holocaust era (1933-1947), as well as news commentaries and police reports that might reveal public reaction to the news.

"Looking at a diversity of media and geographic areas, the workshop will help clarify such questions as what 'bystanders' really knew about the Holocaust, during the Holocaust and, if the Holocaust was marginalized in the press, why was this the case?" Prof. David Bankier, head of the International Institute for Holocaust Research, said in a statement.

"So far, research has looked at post-WWII media in relation to the Holocaust," he said. "For the first time, this workshop brings together serious research on real-

time media coverage of the Holocaust. Some of the research that will be presented was undertaken specifically for this workshop."

The workshop, which took place in July, included presentations by Holocaust scholars from Israel, Canada, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the UK,

"We really want to know what was the reaction of different populations in occupied Europe and the free world to the Jewish plight.

"We are not only dealing with Roosevelt and Churchill; we also want to know what the ordinary Canadian or Hungarian saw when he went to the

movies and saw the newsreel. If the Jewish question wasn't included, why wasn't it included? If it was included, can we see any reactions by the public?"

Bankier said much information about public reaction to the news can be gleaned from police records and reports of conversations that took place after the

newsreels were shown in occupied European nations.

"Between the screening of the newsreel and the film, people went out to smoke a cigarette or have a coffee, and they would comment on what they had

just seen," he said. "The state was under Gestapo control, and recorded those comments.

"People were not arrested for saying something the state didn't like, but it was recorded by Gestapo agents. This then went up to the Ministry of the Interior, [which] composed the propaganda. They were collecting information in order to make their propaganda more effective."

Sample presentation topics will include "German Newsreels and the Holocaust"; "Jews in Hungarian Newsreels, 1933-1947"; "Radio Vaticana: A Catholic Voice in the Second World War"; and "The Bystanders' Perspective: Coverage of the Persecution of the Jews and the Holocaust in the Canadian Print, Radio and Newsreel Media."

"We want to get a better understanding of what was covered and what wasn't," said Estee Yaari, foreign media liaison for Yad Vashem. "Hopefully they can get a discussion going about this and really open a window into this issue. It's something that unless you're researching it, most people don't know about it."

Yaari said the workshop was the initiative of the International Institute for Holocaust Research.

"At this time there are no plans to make a new exhibit for the museum, it's just a presentation of research," she added.



Der Stürmer, a weekly magazine published by Julius Streicher, was the most vile anti-Semitic publication of the National Socialist period.

Hungary, Russia, Holland, and the United States.

"We are dealing with one of the crucial questions of the attitude of the bystanders," said Bankier, in an interview with *The Jerusalem Post*.

HOLOCAUST TOLL WILL RISE EVEN HIGHER, SAYS PRIEST ON TRAIL OF NAZI MASS-KILLERS

BY ROGER BOYES, TIMESONLINE

When Father Patrick Desbois heard that chilling Nazi maxim — one bullet, one Jew — he knew that he had to make a journey into one of the darkest corners of the Holocaust.

After a five-year investigation he had received a shocking insight into the mechanics of genocide — and strong indications that historians may have to raise their estimate of how many Jews were killed.

Working with a ballistics expert, the 53-year-old French priest dug up the mass graves of Ukraine.

“Every village was a crime scene,” he says, “and each case was different because the heads of the killing squads had to take in all the different factors — the geography, the transport available, the proximity of partisans — before organizing the most efficient massacre.”

As his work in the Nazi killing fields continues, he is convinced that the figure for the number of Jewish dead will have to be revised upwards.

“Surely at the end of it all the numbers will be larger,” Father Desbois said, “but we are still inspecting sites in Belarus and there is the vastness of Russia ahead of us.”

At present, Paul Shapiro, of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum — which has been co-operating in Father Desbois’s body hunt — reckons that 1.5 million Jews were murdered by the Germans, their allies and collaborators in the towns and villages of Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and other former Soviet republics.

As Hitler’s armies pressed into Russia, the *Einsatzgruppen* — Operational Groups — rounded up the Jews and forced them to dig pits, strip and lie in the mud until they were shot.

Hundreds and thousands were killed even before German bureaucrats met in 1942 at the Wannsee Conference to work

out the logistics of systematically murdering European Jewry and before the concentration camps were slaughtering their inmates. Father Desbois calls it “the Holocaust by bullets”.

The activities of the *Einsatzgruppen* have been known at least since the Nuremberg trials but their scope was never quite clear.



Father Patrick Desbois says about his search for mass graves of murdered Jews: “We cannot let our ancestors be unburied like animals.”

As a result, estimates of the number of Jewish Holocaust victims fluctuates between 5.1 million (Raoul Hilberg), 5.75 million (Martin Gilbert) and 5.9 million (Lucy Dawidowicz). These figures may have to be raised once Father Desbois has completed his grim research.

When the Germans were driven out of Russia and Ukraine, Soviet investigators were sent to the villages to take witness testimony, photograph the sites and make an estimate of how many died in the usually unmarked sites in fields and forests.

It was not until some years after the collapse of Communism that it was feasible to check the Soviet documentation.

It was a task Father Desbois took on as a holy mission. His curiosity was stirred as a child because his grandfather had been a prisoner of war in a German camp in Ukraine.

The priest went to what was left of the

camp — a small memorial stone — and discovered that 7,500 Jews had been killed in the area. The deputy mayor organized the local old people to meet the priest and the stories, untold for more than 60 years, tumbled out.

Some had fathers who had used the farm’s horse and cart to carry away the clothes of the victims. At least one inter-

walk on the bodies of the people who were shot?’ She replied: ‘Yes, I had to pack them down . . . after every volley of shots. We were three Ukrainian girls who, in our bare feet, had to pack them down, the bodies of the Jews, and throw a fine layer of sand on top of them so that other Jews could lay down.’”

More than 2,000 were killed in that single massacre and even larger numbers were killed across Ukraine. In the *Lisnitchi* forest, outside *Lviv*, 90,000 were shot in six months.

“Now it is just a recreation area, part of the city. Lovers go there. And though there are 57 mass graves in the woods there is not a single monument or memorial.”

Using a powerful metal detector, the priest and his team worked out where to dig. After one visit to a massacre site they gathered up the German cartridges and counted them on a restaurant table. They came to 600.

So far the priest’s investigations suggest that the Soviet reporting was accurate. This, he says, will help to thwart the Holocaust deniers.

The commonly quoted figure of six million Jews killed during the Holocaust is derived from a claim by the senior SS officer Adolf Eichmann during his trial in Israel in 1961. It was the figure that he gave to Heinrich Himmler in 1944. Many historians believe it was an overestimate.

Raul Hilberg’s 1961 book, one of the first significant studies after the war, estimated that 5.1 million Jews were killed. The British historian Martin Gilbert, in his *Atlas of the Holocaust*, said it was 5.75 million.

Much of the controversy over the figures comes from different estimates of the numbers killed by roaming SS squads after Germany invaded Russia in 1941. Records of the number of Jews killed in open-air shootings in places such as Ukraine, Poland and Russia are far less definitive.

USING DNA TO TRACK HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

BY STEWART AIN, THE NEW YORK TIMES

For years, Allen Rosenberg, a real estate developer from Hewlett Bay Park, has had a nagging thought: What if a first or second cousin survived the Holocaust and he didn’t know it?

“Maybe my cousin was placed in a displaced persons camp on the other side of Germany or in Poland,” said Mr. Rosenberg, who is 45.

As far as he knows, Mr. Rosenberg said, his father, who went into a hospital in *Hamburg*, Germany, with tuberculosis right after World War II and died in 1988, was the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust. Still, he said, “there is that slim chance.”

Until recently, Mr. Rosenberg could do no more than wonder. Then he learned of the DNA Shoah Project, which seeks to reunite families torn apart by the Holocaust.

The nonprofit project is asking survivors, their children and grandchildren to provide a DNA sample to help build a genetic database of Jewish Holocaust survivors and their immediate descendants. The database may eventually be made available to European forensic experts attempting to identify remains of Holocaust victims.

More than 500,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors are believed to be alive, according to the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, an organization founded in 1951 to negotiate reparations for the Holocaust.

Syd Mandelbaum of Cedarhurst, a co-founder of the project, is looking for any trace of his grandfather Shlomo Barber, who was 42 in 1942 when he disappeared while a slave laborer in Germany. Mr. Mandelbaum said his three other grandparents were murdered at Auschwitz.

Mr. Mandelbaum said that about 1,000 DNA samples had been collected since the project, which is free to participants, began three years ago. Lynn K. Davis, the project’s information specialist, said about 10,000 samples are needed for the database to be statistically significant.

“Once you get close to 10,000, you start getting hits,” she said.

Ms. Davis said the DNA samples are taken using two cotton brushes to scrape the inside of a participant’s cheeks for 30 seconds. Kits may be requested at dnashoah.org or by

calling (866) 897-1150.

Mr. Mandelbaum has a long background with DNA research and with Holocaust survivors. In 1981 he helped found the first project to videotape the stories of Holocaust survivors and camp liberators.



Syd Mandelbaum, project co-founder, takes samples from Betty Lerman, left, and Hellene Rothenberg.

He is also a scientist with a background in genetic and DNA research who headed the American team that in the 1990s used DNA sequencing to disprove Anna Anderson’s claim that she was Anatasia, the youngest daughter of Czar Nicholas II of Russia.

After sets of nearly three dozen remains of what may have been Holocaust victims were found in Germany in 2005, Mr.

Mandelbaum said, he learned that no DNA database of Holocaust victims existed. With the help of Michael Hammer, the head of a genetics analysis lab at the University of Arizona, the DNA Shoah Project was born.

Charles Srebnik, 75, of New City in Rockland County, said he was told that only he and his mother survived the Holocaust out of 300 family members in Europe. He has longed to find another relative.

“For 42 years I traveled the world, and whenever I checked into a hotel, the first thing I did was go to the local phone book and look for my families’ names,” said Mr. Srebnik, whose mother’s maiden name was Slusznay. “But I never found anything.”

“Now that they are starting to find mass graves, it’s possible my DNA might match someone,” he said.

Ann Miller of Commack said she recently learned of the project and plans to add her DNA to the database. Her grandmother died while giving birth to her mother in a concentration camp in Ukraine in 1944.

“I don’t know if my grandmother had any brothers or sisters — I know nothing about her family, not even her last name,” she said.

Joseph Fishoff, associate rabbi of Temple Beth El in Cedarhurst, said he provided his DNA because although his uncle “told me everybody is gone, I’d be thrilled to find others.”

EXTENT OF NAZI CAMPS FAR GREATER THAN REALIZED

BY MONICA HESSE,
THE WASHINGTON POST

A little more than a decade ago, researchers at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum decided to create an encyclopedia of concentration camps. They assumed the finished work would be massive, featuring a staggering 5,000 to 7,000 camps and ghettos.

They underestimated by 15,000. Their ultimate count of more than 20,000 camps — which they reached after a year of research — is far more than most scholars had known existed and might reshape public understanding of the scope of the Holocaust itself.

“What’s going to happen is that the mental universe of how scholars operate is going to change,” said Steven Katz, director of Boston University’s Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies. “Instead of thinking of main death camps, people are going to understand that this was a continent-wide phenomenon.”

The *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos: 1933-1945* “is the first major reference work for Holocaust studies since... the fall of the U.S.S.R.” and the opening of many European archives, says Paul Shapiro, director of the museum’s Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies. As a result, more information was available to researchers than had ever been before. Scholars chased footnotes in old books and used Internet mailing lists to find historians who might possess tiny pieces of the puzzle.

Most of the sites included in the encyclopedia were known, says Geoff Megargee, the encyclopedia project director. “But they were known to one or two people. . . . Sometimes there would be just one person who had done research on one prison.” The first volume focuses on SS-run camps and

contains more than 1,100 entries written by some 230 contributors.

The Holocaust’s horror always has been its precision and vastness: how many people died, how many people were complicit, how many countries fell to the Nazi regime. The enormous number of sites catalogued in the museum’s encyclopedia reveals that for every commonly



Dachau Nazi concentration camp.

known camp — Auschwitz and Dachau, Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen — there are literally dozens more that the average reader has likely never heard of. The book is organized as a traditional encyclopedia; each camp or ghetto receives its own alphabetic entry, some with photographs or maps.

Few people might realize, Megargee says, that each of the 23 main camps had sub-camps — nearly 900 sub-camps, each placed into categories with chillingly euphemistic names. There were “care facilities for foreign children,” where pregnant prisoners would be sent for forced abortions. There were Germanization camps, where foreign youth with desirable racial features would be indoctrinated. There were youth protection camps for the rebellious German teens who’d been caught listening to jazz.

In his decade of working on the project, Megargee says that he never stopped learning of new atrocities or personal stories.

“There was a woman who was a professional singer in the barracks” in a sub-camp of *Flossenburg*, he recalls, “who sang ‘Ave Maria’ for [her fellow prisoners] one Christmas. She moved the barracks to tears, then a guard overheard her and came and knocked her teeth out.” Her story is recounted in the entry on the *Willschthal* sub-camp.

The book reveals “a complex ecology of coordinated devastation,” says Henry Knight, director of Keene State College’s Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies in New Hampshire. He has previewed the book, and sees it as particularly useful for college students or serious Holocaust researchers, but adds that “anyone looking through this volume is going to be astounded at how vast the camp system was. . . . It’s simply not possible to think of these activities as an aberration when you see all of the information.”

Shapiro says that the sheer number of camps may end one of the lingering protestations surrounding the Holocaust — that ordinary people knew nothing of the killing underway in their locales. “In most towns, there was some sort of prison, or holding area or place where people were victimized,” Shapiro says. “Think about what this means. For anyone who thinks this took place out of sight of the average person, this shatters that mythology. There was one Auschwitz. There was one *Treblinka*. But there were 20,000 other camps spread through the rest of Europe.”

Says Shapiro: “What we are seeing in this project is that all of Europe was a camp.”

SERBIA SET TO PROSECUTE EGNER

Last year, prosecutors asked for a probe into Egner on the grounds that as a member of the Gestapo during World War II, he had organized the execution of Jews and other civilians at a camp in Belgrade and another in a suburb of the city.

Serbia’s prosecutor for war crimes said in June that measures were in hand to strip a former Gestapo member, Peter Egner, of US nationality so that he could be prosecuted for Nazi war crimes.



Peter Egner.

“The procedure to deprive Peter Egner of his American citizenship is under way,” prosecutor Vladimir Vukcevic told journalists. “After that, we will take steps to have him extradited.”

The US Ambassador to Serbia, Cameron Munter, told a joint press conference, “American authorities are working with Serb authorities in the way mentioned by Mr Vukcevic.”

At the end of last August, Vukcevic asked for a probe into Egner, 87, on the grounds that as a member of the Gestapo during World War II, he had organized the execution of Jews and other civilians at a camp in Belgrade and another in a suburb of the city.

He is also suspected of participating in building several concentration camps in Belgrade in 1941 and 1942.

According to the Serbian media, Egner is allegedly responsible for the deaths of about 17,000 people.

More than 24,000 died in the *Staro Samjiste* concentration camp in Belgrade during the Nazi occupation of the city, and almost 80,000 were executed at *Jajinci* in the suburbs of the capital.

THREE HUNDRED NAZIS STILL GO FREE IN AMERICA

Three hundred Nazis are living in plain sight in the United States, according to the world’s preeminent Nazi-hunting organization.

Although the case against John Demjanjuk, the former Ohio auto worker formally charged with war crimes in Germany, is being called the last great Nazi war-crimes trial, Efraim Zuroff told *The Post* there are hundreds more suspects to be brought to justice.

“We don’t have much longer,” said Zuroff, of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Israel. “We have to go after them or they will be too sick to bring to trial.”

Many of the Nazis still here are elderly men who worked and raised families in the United States and whose neighbors were unaware of their past, including: * Johann Leprich, a retired tool-and-die worker from Michigan, who was a “Death Head” guard at the *Mauthausen* concentration camp, where inmates were used as slave laborers in a quarry and tortured and killed by gassing, hanging and electric shock.

* Mykola Wasylyk of upstate Ellenville, who ran a Catskills bungalow colony renting cabins to Jewish visitors. He served as a perimeter guard at the *Trawniki* labor camp in Poland. He proclaimed in a 2002 letter to the US attorney that he was forced into Nazi service and that he had been “an exemplary and law-abiding citizen” for the last 54 years.

* Jakiw Palij of Queens, who quietly tends his flower garden every morning outside his Jackson Heights home. He was a guard at *Trawniki* and found to have

helped keep prisoners from escaping the camp where 6,000 people were shot to death in one of the largest single massacres of the Holocaust.

* Elfriede Rinkel, who lived such a seemingly ordinary life as a San Francisco furrier that her Jewish husband knew nothing about her past. Rinkel worked as a guard at the *Ravensbruck* concentration camp for women in Germany, where malnourished inmates were forced to march to slave-labor sites daily and then kept in check by attack dogs.

The number of Nazis who came to the United States after World War II has been estimated from a few hundred to several thousand. Hundreds of thousands of Nazis are thought to have survived the war, many of them staying in the countries where they committed their crimes.

Since 1979, 107 Nazis have been prosecuted in the United States and at least 60 have been deported. Eleven suspected Nazis are now being prosecuted, and another 30 are under investigation. Demjanjuk was stripped of his US citizenship in 1981, when he was believed to be “Ivan the Terrible,” a guard at Poland’s *Treblinka* death camp. He was sentenced to death in Israel, but that country’s

Supreme Court threw out the case, saying he was the wrong man.

US prosecutors began a new case in 1999, accusing Demjanjuk of working as a guard at a different Polish camp. He was

an Allied victory was imminent, [and] the bulk of the surviving documentation is scattered in archives in many countries and remains poorly indexed,” he said.

The DOJ usually snares Nazis on immigration violations, contending they lied about their past when they entered the United States, and then proving their underlying criminal conduct during the war.

Five Nazis brought to justice and stripped of their US citizenship are stuck in a deportation limbo with no countries agreeing to take them.

Among them is Palij, 85, whose citizenship was revoked in 2003.

Wasylyk is also awaiting deportation after four countries refused to take him.

Many of the Nazis have been found by governmental officials poring over immigration documents and comparing them with a list of 70,000 war criminals culled from countries around the world. The collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1989 brought more information to light.

In Israel, Zuroff spends much of his time persuading countries in Europe, the former Soviet Union and Australia to prosecute Nazis.

While Israel was the site of probably the most important Nazi war-crime trial, that of Adolf Eichmann in 1961, the country has recently shied away from accepting other Nazis prosecuted on immigration issues in the United States.

Zuroff said in order to try these Nazis in Israel, a case would have to be brought on criminal charges, which would be difficult to prove since so much time has elapsed.

HORROR SHOW

The following people have been prosecuted by the federal government for Holocaust atrocities and immigration fraud. All of them have been stripped of their US citizenship, but remain here either because they are appealing their cases or no other countries have yet accepted them.

JOHN KALYMON ■ Age: 88 ■ Born: Poland ■ Crime: Member of the Nazi-operated Ukrainian auxiliary police ■ Stripped of US citizenship in 2007 ■ Home: Troy, Mich.	JAKIW PALIJ ■ Age: 85 ■ Born: Poland ■ Crime: Arrived guard at Trawniki labor camp in Nazi-occupied Poland ■ Stripped of US citizenship in 2003 ■ Home: Queens
JOHANN LEPRICH ■ Age: 84 ■ Born: Romania ■ Crime: Arrived “Death Head” guard at the Mauthausen Concentration Camp in Austria ■ Stripped of US citizenship in 2007 just before his citizenship was revoked, and re-entered illegally in 2003	JAKIW PALIJ (continued) ■ Stripped of US citizenship in 2003 ■ Home: Queens ■ Status: Citizenship revoked in 2003. No country willing to accept him
OSYR FURSHCHAK ■ Age: 90 ■ Born: Ukraine ■ Home: Chicago ■ Crime: Served in the Nazi-operated Ukrainian auxiliary police, which rounded up and killed more than 100,000 Jews. ■ Stripped of US citizenship in 2007 ■ Status: Stripped of his citizenship in 2007. Appeal is pending.	VLADIS ZAMONKOUSKAS ■ Age: 72 ■ Born: Lithuania ■ Crime: Served as a noncommissioned SS officer and was a member of the unit that took part in the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto. ■ Stripped of US citizenship in 2005 ■ Home: Goffin, Mass. ■ Status: Citizenship revoked in 2005. Deportation ordered in 2007. Appeal is pending.

Source: US Department of Justice and Associated Press

These people have been prosecuted by federal government for Holocaust atrocities and immigration fraud. All of them have been stripped of their US citizenship, but remain here either because they are appealing their cases or no other countries have yet accepted them.

finally deported to Germany in May.

“These are the ultimate cold cases,” said Eli Rosenbaum, the director of the US Department of Justice’s Office of Special Investigations, which hunts Nazis and other human-rights abusers.

Cooperating witnesses were either murdered by the Nazis or have since died, and most of the criminals were not known by name to their victims, Rosenbaum said.

“The Nazis destroyed much of the incriminating documentation in the closing months of the war when they realized that

A COMBINED DAY OF COMMEMORATION FOR THE VICTIMS OF NAZISM AND COMMUNISM?

EFFRAIM ZUROFF,
THE JERUSALEM POST

As hard as this may be to believe, it is entirely possible that in a few years, Europe will no longer set aside a special day to commemorate the Holocaust. Instead, Europeans will mark August 23, the day of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop nonaggression pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, which paved the way for the German and Russian invasions of Poland, as a day of commemoration for the victims of Nazism and Communism.

Given the enormous increase during the past decade in Holocaust awareness and education, such a prediction might sound very unlikely, but if the campaign being currently waged by Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, with support from other post-Communist countries, to equate Communism with Nazism succeeds, that will be only one of many very problematic changes in the manner in which Europeans relate to the annihilation of European Jewry.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the problem is the virtually total ignorance and apathy of Israel and the Jewish world in response to this campaign, which has been conducted for well over a decade and has recently been upgraded with very worrying results. In July, for example, the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), which met in

Vilnius, Lithuania, passed a resolution calling for the establishment of August 23 as a day of commemoration for the victims of Communism and Nazism, with the only opposition registered by Russia and a few European Communists.

The truth is that in this regard, the handwriting has been on the wall practically from the renewal of Baltic independence. Since 1991, in meetings with senior Baltic officials, in response to our demands that they acknowledge the extensive scope of Baltic collaboration in Nazi crimes, prosecute local Nazi war criminals, and rewrite the history textbooks to accurately reflect this reality, they always tried to divert the discussion to their suffering under the Russian occupation and the role of Jewish Communists in Soviet crimes.

Thus it was hardly surprising that when these governments decided to establish historical commissions to investigate the crimes suffered during their occupation, they insisted, despite protests from the Wiesenthal Center and other groups, on combining the research on local Holocaust crimes with that on Communist crimes in one unified body.

Another related phenomenon was that Baltic leaders consistently repeated the historically inaccurate mantra that Communist crimes were genocidal. I will never forget my meeting in Vilnius in the early 1990s with Vytautas Landsbergis, then Lithuanian head of state, who in response to my gift of a volume on

Holocaust research, reciprocated with a book on the mass deportations of Lithuanians to Siberia, which he referred to as "our Holocaust."

Add the total failure of the Baltics to prosecute local Nazi war criminals, the efforts to divert almost exclusive blame for the murders to the Germans and Austrians, and the establishment of genocide or occupation museums which totally ignore local Holocaust crimes and Nazi collaboration, and the pattern becomes crystal clear.

About two years ago, emboldened by the failure of the European Union, the United States, Israel, and the Jewish world to hold the Baltics accountable in a meaningful manner for their manifold failures in dealing with Holocaust issues (prosecution, restitution, documentation, etc.), these governments intensified their campaign to create official symmetry between Communism and Nazism.

Their first major success was the June 3, 2008 "Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism" signed by Václav Havel and numerous members of the European Parliament, which called for the establishment of August 23 as an official day of remembrance for Nazi and Communist victims "in the same way Europe remembers the victims of the Holocaust on January 27," as well as an "Institute of European Memory and Conscience" to serve as a museum, research, and educational center on these crimes. The rationale presented for these

steps points to the "substantial similarities between Nazism and Communism" and warns that "Europe will not be united unless it is able to reunite its history [and] recognize Communism and Nazism as a common legacy."

While one can sympathize with the legitimate desire of the victims of Communism for recognition, there is nothing innocent about this declaration which clearly seeks to undermine the current status of the Holocaust as a unique historical tragedy.

On September 23, 2008, more than 400 members of the European Parliament signed a declaration supporting the establishment of August 23 as "European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism," and on April 2, 2009, a resolution similar to the Prague Declaration passed in the same body. A month ago, however, when I asked the members of the Israeli global forum on anti-Semitism whether anyone had heard of the Prague Declaration, not a single member responded positively.

It is clear that the time has come to start paying attention to this insidious campaign being conducted primarily by Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to alleviate their guilt for Holocaust crimes and displace the Shoah from its unique status. If not, we are likely to soon find ourselves facing the cancellation of the numerous important achievements of the past decade in Holocaust commemoration and education and forced to fight an uphill battle against a new and distorted World War II historical narrative.

POLAND'S JEWISH HERITAGE IS ABOUT MORE THAN JUST DEATH

BY RUTH ELLEN GRUBER, JTA

Outside the elegant theater in the city of *Bielsko-Biala* in southern Poland, a billboard advertises an upcoming play. Stark letters spell out the title: "Zyd" — Jew.

The lettering looks almost menacing, like scrawled graffiti, and I am a little taken aback.

But then I remember where I am. This is Poland.

And the play, in fact, is an award-winning exploration of anti-Semitism and the power of stereotypes — part of the endless continuing discussion here about the Jewish past, the Jewish present, and the long, complex, and troubled relationship between Jews and Catholic Poles.

"There is no theme that Poles are more likely to discuss than Jews," the play's author, Artur Palyga, told the Polish media. "It can be said that Judaism is our national passion."

"Zyd" deals with teachers in a provincial Polish town preparing for the visit of a former student, a Holocaust survivor who had attended their school before the Shoah, when Jews made up more than half the town's population.

Its portrayal of grassroots prejudice is graphic and sometimes grotesque. Indeed, the play came under fire in the right-wing press, and its premiere last year sparked protests.

Still, it won the main prize at a national festival of contemporary Polish drama for being "an honest, brave and theatrically precise attempt to settle accounts with the difficult Polish past."

The play is essentially about memory. In particular, it's about the various uses to which memory is put, and how memory differs in the minds of different people considering the same past.

These issues have suffused much of my

own work over the past two decades, as I have researched Jewish heritage sites in East and Central Europe and chronicled the Jewish experience in places where few or no Jews live today.

How are Jews and Jewish heritage remembered? Which Jewish places and personalities are incorporated into the local consciousness? How do local people choose to portray an important part of the population that was savagely removed, almost overnight?

I found *Bielsko-Biala* permeated with examples of how perspective influences memory.

They ranged from indifferent disregard to the kitschy commercialization of a "Jewish-style" restaurant called Rabbi, to an earnest attempt to acknowledge the contribution of Jews to the city.

Bielsko-Biala was officially established in 1951 with the amalgamation of two towns on opposite sides of the *Biala* River, which for centuries formed the border between the Austrian Empire and Poland, and then between the regions of *Silesia* and *Galicia*.

Before 1939, the population was divided among ethnic Germans, Jews and Poles, and the city remains a stronghold of Protestantism. The Nazis absorbed it into the *Reich*, and almost all the Jews were killed. After World War II, Poland took it over and expelled the ethnic Germans.

Only a small Jewish community lives here today, but Jews played a major role in local history. In the 19th century, Jewish industrialists helped build the city into a

major textile center, and a local Jewish architect, Karol Korn, designed key buildings that still define *Bielsko-Biala*.

Korn's grandest building — the Moorish-style great synagogue — no longer exists. Erected in 1881, it dominated the city's main avenue until it was blown up by the Nazis in 1939.

Today, a contemporary art gallery occupies the spot; a small plaque on an outer wall commemorates the destroyed building but says nothing about the community it once served.



Poland is filled with Jewish heritage sites, like this ornate ceremonial hall at the Jewish cemetery in *Bielsko-Biala*, that celebrate Jewish life, not simply death and the Holocaust.

There's a puppet theatre now next door, where the Jewish culture center once stood, and a courthouse occupies the former Jewish community building across the street. Its elaborate decoration, I was told, represents the seven fruits mentioned in the Torah.

The Jewish cemetery, whose red-and-orange striped ceremonial hall is another Korn design, is well maintained and designated a cultural monument. Among the tombs is a poignant memorial to Jewish

soldiers who fell fighting for the Austrians in World War I.

All these sites, and more, are noted on Jewish heritage itineraries included in local guidebooks available at the tourist information office and the city museum. On sale in both places I found reproductions of old postcards portraying the synagogue in all its glory as a major pre-war landmark.

I have no way of knowing who follows these itineraries or purchases the postcards. But, at least for tourists, they clearly acknowledge the Jewish contribution to the town and set Jewish history and heritage here within the general matrix.

This marks a welcome contrast to the "Jewish heritage package" offered by one of the city's leading hotels.

Far from exploring the rich historic contribution of Jews here, its itinerary is simply a round trip to Auschwitz, with "sight-seeing" at the memorial museum there, then dinner back at the hotel's restaurant.

Bielsko Biala is only 25 miles from Auschwitz. I would certainly urge anyone visiting the town to take a day and go there. But promoting a tour of the Nazis' most notorious death camp as a Jewish heritage package banalizes Jewish heritage and the Holocaust, and both ignores and insults the memory of the generations of Jews who lived here (and often prospered).

In *Bielsko Biala*, Poles have begun to offer up a more nuanced take on history — Jewish and Polish. Unfortunately, however, hotel tourist packages tend to offer only what their clients demand. Jews should take the lead in demanding more.

Even in places where few or no Jews live anymore, Jewish heritage must not be equated with its destruction. Nor, indeed, should the centuries-old Jewish experience be defined solely in terms of death.

NEW DATABASE GATHERS TALES OF SHANGHAI'S HOLOCAUST REFUGEES

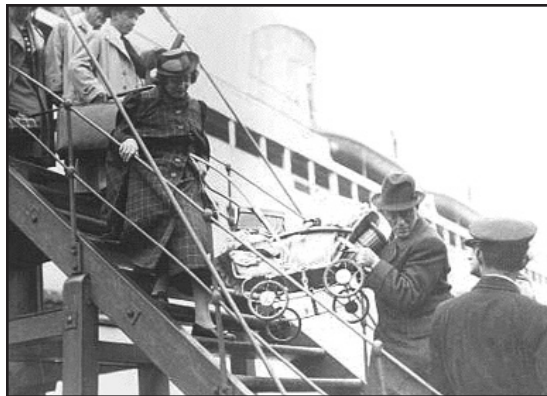
Shanghai's Jewish community celebrated in June the launch of a database that will document the stories of the thousands of refugees who found a safe haven in China's commercial capital during World War II.

So far the database lists the names of about 600 of the 30,000 Jews who fled to Shanghai in the 1930s and 1940s to escape Nazi death camps and other horrors of the Holocaust.

The database will give a record of the community, where its residents came from, their stories and struggles, where they have since moved and even how they might now be reached, said Israeli Consul General Uri Gutman.

The database, supported by the Israeli and Chinese governments, is housed in a museum in the city's former *Ohel Moshe* Synagogue.

"The independent state of Israel emerged out of the ashes of the Holocaust and we have the obligation to document and to keep the stories of the past alive for future generations," said Gutman.



Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria arrive at the port of Shanghai, 1938-1939.

Donations from Israeli companies helped finance the creation of the database, which is just beginning to take shape. Those developing it have names and some other information on some 10,000 refugees.

Shanghai was a major trading center long before the war and had a well-established Jewish community, making it a natural destination for many of those fleeing persecution in Europe. And while in many cases Jews were denied entry to other countries, China was relatively open to refugees.

As the Japanese invaded and occupied many regions of China during the war, grow-

ing numbers of Jews migrated to Shanghai.

Many escaped with visas granted by Ho Fengshan, the Chinese consul general in Vienna who continued issuing the documents en masse even after he had been ordered to desist by his superior, the Chinese ambassador in Berlin.

Despite its willingness to take in Jews, the thriving refugee community in Shanghai was forced into a teeming riverside ghetto in the city's Hongkou district during the Japanese occupation.

It gradually dwindled after the 1949 communist revolution, though many refugees remained for years before leaving for the West or for the then-British colony of Hong Kong.

Among the mostly European Jews who found refuge in Shanghai was Jakob Rosenfeld, an Austrian-trained doctor who was deported to *Dachau* concentration camp and then to *Buchenwald*, both in Germany. In 1939, he was released and fled to China.

The Chinese honor Rosenfeld, who died in 1952 while visiting Israel, for his later role as a field doctor for the Chinese Red Army.

Margaret Friga – a niece of Rosenfeld's from Miami, Florida, who attended the celebration, and a former history teacher – said the database would be an important historical accomplishment.

As Shanghai has regained its status as an international commercial center, the growing Jewish expatriate community has won support from local officials for restoring some synagogues and preserving the *Hongkou* ghetto as a historic district.

After a painstaking refurbishment, *Ohel Moshe* opened its doors several months ago for its first wedding in about 60 years.

The database is part of a three-phase project that included renovating a neighborhood senior center and donating equipment to a social welfare facility.

The project is in touch with Jewish communities in Australia, the U.S. West Coast and elsewhere seeking information, Gutman said, although it is racing against time as many Jews who lived in Shanghai are now in their 80s or older.

There was no decision yet on whether the historical database would eventually be made available online, he said.

FDR PUSHED TO GET JEWS TO SAFETY IN 1930S

Historian Richard Breitman says President Franklin D. Roosevelt "tried to carry out some humanitarian steps" while considering politics.

Newly uncovered documents reveal that President Franklin D. Roosevelt worked quietly in the late 1930s to find havens for European Jews, contradicting the view that he ignored their plight in the years leading up to the Holocaust.

Roosevelt was "a master politician who tried to carry out some humanitarian steps while juggling political and military considerations," writes historian Richard Breitman, co-editor of *Refugees and Rescue: The Diaries and Papers of James G. McDonald (1935-1945)*, released in May. The book draws on papers at the Center for Jewish History in New York City.

McDonald was chairman of Roosevelt's advisory committee on refugees. He met Adolf Hitler in 1933 and was convinced the Nazi planned to exterminate Europe's Jews, prompting him to sound warnings. He later was the first U.S. ambassador to Israel.

Despite FDR's popularity with Jewish Americans, the influential 1984 book *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust* argued that he did little to save their European brethren. Breitman says McDonald's papers soften that view, showing that in 1938, Roosevelt:

- Cut red tape that kept immigration quotas from being filled, allowing entry for 27,370 Germans, most of them Jews.

- Hoped to resettle millions of Jews from Central and Eastern Europe to other countries, mostly in Latin America. He called an international conference to line up money and support.

- Promised to ask Congress for \$150 million to help resettle refugees if Britain allowed more Jews into Palestine and private funds could be raised.

Roosevelt's efforts, including the conference in Evian, France, failed. Most countries refused to admit Jews amid a depression and anti-Semitism, Breitman says. Opposition also was strong at the State Department and in Congress, which

voted in 1939 not to let in 20,000 German Jewish children.

Breitman says Roosevelt is unfairly criticized for not supporting the bill and for refusing to admit 900 Jewish refugees on the *St. Louis*, which sailed from Germany 70 years ago. Cuba, the U.S. and Canada turned away those on the "voyage of the damned," and the ship



Franklin D. Roosevelt.

returned to Europe. Hundreds of passengers died in the Holocaust.

Roosevelt "made a decision to go for big results," Breitman says, adding that the president viewed letting in small numbers of Jews as "a gesture, not a solution" to the larger refugee problem.

In 1940, after the start of World War II in Europe, Roosevelt's priorities turned to national security, Breitman writes.

Rafael Medoff, director of the Wyman Institute, which studies America's response to the Holocaust, says the book won't absolve Roosevelt. He says FDR failed to take "concrete steps" such as giving Jewish refugees temporary haven in U.S. territories such as the Virgin Islands. "Instead, sadly, the president who claimed to be a humanitarian and champion of the little man refrained from taking such life-saving steps," he says.

Deborah Lipstadt, a Holocaust studies professor at Emory University in Atlanta, says the book will force historians to rethink their conclusions. "This is consensus-changing," she says. "He may deserve a lot more credit than he is getting."

First published in USA Today.

MARK MY WORDS

(Continued from page 4)

synonymous with internal strife, the *Altalena*. Although a minor player in the drama that ensued, Hasten was deeply distressed by the firing upon and sinking of the *Altalena* by the newly created IDF, and the loss of life that accompanied the episode. Hasten never really found a place for himself in the highly politicized climate after the War of Independence, feeling an outcast as a member of the minority Revisionist Zionist camp. He thus decided to rejoin his family in North America.

Living first in Canada and then later joining his family in the US, Hasten married, created a family, studied engineering, and eventually joined his brother in business; the brothers prospered exceedingly. Along the way, Hasten strengthened his commitment to Judaism, the Jewish community, his local community, and especially Israel, giving generously of his time and money to the causes dearest to him. This

string of events may sound a bit mundane, but unfolding on the backdrop of his past – a refugee who survived the Holocaust by the skin of his teeth and an ex-soldier in Israel's War of Independence who reached North America with nothing but a will to make a life for himself – it is anything but. Hasten is not alone in having survived the tumult of the Holocaust era and making for himself a good and meaningful life; certainly other survivors were able to do the same. Nevertheless, his story, like others, leaves us in awe of the resilience and strength of the human spirit, and inspires us to cleave to the values that have shaped and maintained the Jewish people over the ages.

Dr. Robert Rozett is the Director of the Yad Vashem Libraries, author of *Approaching the Holocaust: Texts and Contexts*, Mitchell Vallentine, 2005 and co-editor of *The Holocaust: Frequently Asked Questions*, Yad Vashem, 2005

BRANKO LUSTIG VISITS YAD VASHEM EXHIBIT



Hollywood producer Branko Lustig (right) viewing Yad Vashem's "No Child's Play" exhibition in Zagreb. Lustig, a survivor of the Holocaust and a two time Academy Award winner (for the films *Schindler's List* and *Gladiator*), conducts an annual Jewish Films Festival in Zagreb.

Yad Vashem's exhibition "No Child's Play" was displayed at the Festival last April, at the request of Branko Lustig, who also produced the films *Sophie's Choice*, *Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance*.

STOP PERSONAL ATTACKS ON CLAIMS CONFERENCE LEADERS

BY MENACHEM Z. ROSENSAFT, JTA

The recent international Conference on Holocaust Era Assets in Prague highlighted the plight of needy Holocaust survivors throughout the world. For the first time, 46 states endorsed the conclusion that "It is unacceptable that those who suffered so greatly during the earlier part of their lives should live under impoverished circumstances at the end," and that "a high priority" must be to address "the social welfare needs of the most vulnerable elderly victims of Nazi persecution – such as hunger relief, medicine and home care as required, as well as measures that will encourage intergenerational contact and allow them to overcome their social isolation. These steps will enable them to live in dignity in the years to come."

The conference at the end of June also dealt with other pressing unresolved issues arising out of the Holocaust, including the restitution of communal and private Jewish real property, looted Judaica and Jewish cultural property, Nazi-confiscated and looted art, the preservation of Jewish cemeteries and burial sites, the need to maintain the integrity of the sites of mass annihilation, and a categorical, unambiguous repudiation of Holocaust denial and trivialization.

The declaration issued at the end constitutes a comprehensive road map of the final phase of the complex Holocaust reparations and restitution process. Its adoption was due primarily to the tireless efforts of Stuart Eizenstat, who headed the U.S. delegation; J. Christian Kennedy, the State Department's special envoy for Holocaust issues; and a group

of dedicated professionals who ensured that experts and stakeholders alike had genuine input into the conference proceedings. Among the critical catalysts in the latter category are the members of the senior staff of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, popularly known as the Claims Conference.

Without question, the Claims Conference is the single most important and effective body providing assistance to Holocaust survivors throughout the world. It also is frequently under attack by individuals and groups that take issue with its process of allocating funds.

No organization should be immune from criticism. However, some of the charges directed against the Claims Conference are out of control. Among the most commonly heard accusations is that the organization's leadership is somehow hostile to Holocaust survivors. This canard must finally be laid to rest.

Three organizations of Holocaust survivors are full members of the Claims Conference, and survivors are prominently represented on all of the organization's committees.

More importantly, while one may certainly disagree with individual allocations and actions of the Claims Conference, the integrity of its leaders and their dedication to the needs and welfare of Holocaust survivors is beyond question.

I am not suggesting that legitimate criticisms of the Claims Conference should not be aired, but it would behoove all involved to focus on constructive solutions that benefit the survivors rather than engaging in disingenuous personal attacks.

DECLARATION AIMS TO EASE HOLOCAUST PROPERTY RESTITUTION

Forty-six countries have ratified a document aimed at easing the restitution process for Jewish property taken during the Holocaust.

The *Terezin* Declaration, a nonbinding set of guiding principles aimed at faster, more open and transparent restitution of art and private and communal property taken by force or under duress during the Holocaust, was approved at the Prague Holocaust Era Assets Conference.

The document, whose signatories include the 27 countries of the European Union, Canada, Israel and the United States, also calls for greater commitment to the care of Holocaust survivors, Holocaust education and Jewish cemetery preservation. Hundreds of representatives of government and Jewish organizations, along with historians, art experts and lawyers, participated in its drafting.

The first comprehensive, multi-country document of its kind covering the issue of land confiscation together with survivor care, the declaration states: "Noting the importance of restituting communal and individual immovable property that belonged to the victims of the Holocaust (*Shoah*) and other victims of Nazi persecution, the Participating States urge that every effort be made to rectify the consequences of wrongful property seizures, such as confiscations, forced sales and

sales under duress of property, which were part of the persecution of these innocent people and groups, the vast majority of whom died heirless."

The document also commits countries to better monitoring of anti-Semitism, improved access to archives that facilitate looted art research, implementation of existing laws or creation of new systems to allow for the easier return of looted art, and the opening of a new center in the former *Terezin* concentration camp to collect information on countries' implementation of the declaration.

Christian Kennedy, the U.S. government special envoy for Holocaust issues, told JTA that "The really hard work comes over the next year, when countries are to agree on more exact principles over exactly how the declaration should be best implemented."

Some countries were singled out at the conference as particularly problematic. Among those cited were Poland, the only country in the former Eastern bloc not to have enacted private restitution or compensation; Lithuania, which has no communal property restitution program; Germany, which has only begun researching its stolen art; and Russia, which closes most archives to researchers and has made it impossible for claimants to obtain looted art.



On June 26, 2009, the Lithuanian tabloid *Vakarų žinios* cast Rabbi Andrew Baker, top, as a villain for his demand that Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius, bottom, return Jewish property after eight years of promises to do so.

THE JEWS WHO SAVED JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST

(Continued from page 6)

It was not uncommon for Orthodox Jews to engage in sport there. Jonas Eckstein had been a member of the *Hakoah Sports Club* which was active in Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. His favorite sport was wrestling, and he was good at it.

According to the article in *Ukelet*, his background as a sportsman had given him a number of invaluable connections, including in the police, and for some considerable period, he was free to come and go as he pleased. Somehow he was able to set up a communications network with the outside world, keeping Jews beyond Europe aware of what was going on.

In the early 1940s, groups of Jewish children from Poland crossed the border into Czechoslovakia and found their way to *Pressburg*, where Eckstein took it upon himself to hide them. When the coast was clear, he sent them to Hungary, where there was still relative calm. He kept track of these children and wrote to them regularly, because they had no one else to write to them. They had lost touch with their parents, who had either been murdered by the Nazis, or were in concentration camps or in hiding, with no knowledge of the fate of their children. Eckstein thought it was imperative that these children should know that someone cared about them.

He continued to maintain contact with them after the war, and when he came to Israel, his briefcase contained many photos of his "children" and "grandchildren" that they had sent him over the years.

The *Hitachdut Olei* Czechoslovakia organized a reception in his honor and sent out invitations to all its members, and of course to Eckstein's "children." More than 300 people from all over Israel showed up.

One of them, a man by the name of Natan Friedman, sent a letter saying how overjoyed he was to be able to greet him in Israel. Friedman recalled that in 1945, following his liberation from a concentration camp, he had come to *Pressburg* and bumped into Eckstein in the street. Sick and broken in spirit, Friedman was totally depressed. Eckstein had taken him home for a meal. There were other people from concentration camps around the table.

Comforted by decent food and the sight of other survivors, Friedman regained his will to live. He described the Eckstein house as "a great restaurant where the best meals were always served."

It was always open to the sick and the downtrodden, and often provided more than food. Eckstein had given Friedman a considerable sum of money, which Friedman initially refused to take because he had no way of repaying it. But Eckstein was insistent, and after a few months, Friedman was in the happy position of being able to give it back.

Eckstein was also able to arrange false documents during the war, and due to his connections, he was permitted to take food to Jews who had been imprisoned in jails or in labor camps, and was thus able to smuggle letters in and out.

A document from another source relates

how Eckstein managed to get hold of a big, fat duck for Succot. The duck was duly koshered and prepared.

That night, German soldiers came to the door. Eckstein managed to get most of the people in the house into a bunker in the cellar before the Germans entered.

The same document goes on to reveal other aspects of traditional Jewish life that continued despite the Nazi presence in the city. On *Shabbat*, they would light a memorial candle, so as to have light. Eckstein thought it was dangerous to have a light that would be visible from outside, and demanded that the candle be extinguished. The other members of the household refused, saying "It's *Shabbos*... We can't."

But Eckstein knew that the saving of life took precedence over the observance of the Sabbath – and he snuffed out the candle himself.

What pained Eckstein was the need to send his small daughter away. Tova Teitelbaum, born Gerta Eckstein in 1942, was a baby who cried a lot. Her crying endangered the lives of the people whom her father was trying to protect. The only solution was to find somewhere else for her to stay.

Eckstein chose the distant village of *Lamec*, on the outskirts of Bratislava, where some good-hearted Christians cared for her.

Teitelbaum went to *Lamec* a few years ago to look for the people to whom she owed her life. She found the daughter of the family (who has since died), who told

her that because the Germans went from village to village searching for Jews, her mother was afraid that the baby would be discovered. The woman's father was an engine driver, which entitled his whole family to a free pass for travel on the railways. So the woman, who was then a young girl, bundled up the baby and travelled all over Czechoslovakia with her until she could no longer do so because the frequency of her presence on the trains aroused the suspicions of railway personnel. So she returned to *Lamec*, rented a room, and pretended that the infant was her illegitimate child.

Meanwhile, both of Teitelbaum's parents had been caught by the Nazis and sent to *Theresienstadt*. After the war, her father came to look for her and found her.

There are many gaps in the story that Teitelbaum hopes to fill. She remains optimistic because almost everyone she speaks to gives her a lead to someone else, and every scrap of information is valuable.

The Jews in Czechoslovakia were well organized, she says, which is why people like her father were able to carry out their operations for a relatively long time. The combined network of contacts enabled them to foil the Nazis again and again, albeit not indefinitely.

Teitelbaum intends to keep going with her project, not only to honor her father, but to honor all Jews, especially Orthodox ones who engaged in saving Jews. History has not given them their due, she says, and erroneously portrays them as having gone like lambs to the slaughter.

She wants to tell the other side of the story.

JEWES REMAIN STYMIED IN EFFORTS TO RECLAIM ART LOOTED BY NAZIS

BY CRAIG WHITLOCK,
THE WASHINGTON POST

Holocaust survivors and their heirs are still battling museums and governments for the return of thousands of pieces of looted art, despite pledges made by dozens of countries in Washington a decade ago to resolve the claims.

At a major conference in Prague, delegates from 46 countries acknowledged that Jews continue to be stymied in their efforts to reclaim art that was stolen by the



View of Hampton Court Palace by Jan Griffier the Elder is held by the Tate but was looted by the Nazis.

Nazis and later transferred to museums and galleries around the world, especially in Europe. An estimated 100,000 artworks, from invaluable masterpieces to items of mostly sentimental value, remain lost or beyond legal reach of their victimized owners and descendants.

"This is one of our last chances to inject a new sense of justice into this issue before it's too late for Holocaust victims," said Stuart Eizenstat, head of the U.S. delegation to the conference and a former ambassador and deputy Treasury secretary during the Clinton administration.

The Holocaust Era Assets Conference, hosted by the Czech Republic, is an attempt to revive a global campaign that began 11 years ago to track down long-lost art collections that were confiscated or acquired under dubious circumstances during the Holocaust.

In December 1998, after many world-famous museums were found to have Nazi-tainted art in their collections, repre-

sentatives from 44 countries met in Washington and endorsed guidelines for investigating claims of stolen items and returning them to their rightful owners.

The guidelines, known in the art world as the Washington Principles, have eased the return of looted art in many cases. Despite their endorsement by most European countries and the United States, however, the guidelines are legally nonbinding. They are also often ignored in practice by museums and governments that profess in public to abide by them, according to art experts.

Michal Klepetar, a real-estate project manager from Prague, has been trying for nine years to persuade the Czech National Gallery to relinquish 43 paintings that once belonged to his great-uncle, Richard Popper, a prominent collector who was deported to Poland and perished in the

Jewish ghetto in the city of Lodz.

Popper's wife and daughter also died in Nazi camps. Klepetar, 62, and his brother are their closest living relatives. But the National Gallery has refused to part with the paintings, citing a law adopted in 2000 by the Czech government that entitles only Holocaust victims or their "direct descendants" to file claims for stolen property.

In an interview, Klepetar argued that the Czech law was unconstitutional, unethical and particularly unfair to Jews. An estimated 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust; many families were survived only by distant relatives.

"This country, like most of the region, had always been anti-Semitic through the centuries," he said. "The only difference now is that it's not politically correct. That's the root of the whole problem."

Klepetar's great-uncle had amassed a collection of 127 artworks — mostly Flemish and Dutch paintings from the 17th and 18th centuries — which vanished after the war. In 2000, however, Klepetar said someone leaked him part of a confidential Czech government report on looted art that indicated 43 of the paintings had been in the National Gallery's possession since the early 1950s.

The National Gallery later acknowledged it had the paintings but refused to divulge any details, such as how they were acquired, their condition or their precise location. Klepetar has pressed his claim in the Czech courts for several years but has lost repeatedly because he is not considered a direct descendant under the law.

Tomas Jelinek, vice president of the Czech Committee for Nazi Victims, said the government's decision to pass the 2000 law that limits who can file claims for Holocaust assets was designed to protect public galleries and government institutions.

"You have all these people in charge of the museums, and they don't want to lose their assets," he said. "There are always people who say, 'Why should we give these valuable objects from our collections away?'"

Tomas Wiesner, director of galleries and museums for the Czech Ministry of Culture, did not respond to requests for comment.

Art experts credited the Czech government with taking steps to make it easier to find and return looted art. In 2001, for instance, it established the Documentation Center for Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of World War II Victims, which maintains a public online database of artworks in Czech museums that once may have been owned by Holocaust victims.

The database, however, offers limited information and is hampered by spotty recordkeeping. For example, it lists only eight of the 43 paintings in the National Gallery that were part of Klepetar's family collection, even though the museum has acknowledged it has the others as well.

The Documentation Center also does not publish statistics on how many claims have been filed on behalf of Holocaust victims, or how many artworks have been returned. Helena Krajcova, director of the center and co-chair of the looted-art panel for the Holocaust Era Assets Conference, did not respond to requests for an interview.

Czech officials have sometimes taken extraordinary legal measures to prevent the return of looted art.

In December, the American heirs of Emil Freund, a Prague lawyer and collector who was killed during the Holocaust, reacquired 32 paintings and drawings that had been in the custody of the National Gallery for decades. But the Ministry of Culture classified 13 of the looted art-



Le Quai Malaquais by French impressionist artist Camille Pissarro was looted by the Nazis from a Jewish owner.

works as cultural treasures, a designation that prevents them from being taken out of the country.

Michaela Sidenberg, curator for visual art at the Jewish Museum in Prague, a private institution, said Holocaust survivors and their families are repeatedly stonewalled in the Czech Republic, despite official policy to make it simple for them to file claims for artwork taken by the Nazis.

"It's like a hot potato being thrown around," she said. "The claimants are kicked around from one bureaucracy to another. Everybody is just looking for some alibi and to avoid taking responsibility."

Asked about such criticism, Stefan Fule, the Czech Republic's minister for European Union affairs, said his government's hosting of the conference on

Holocaust-era assets demonstrates its dedication to resolving such claims fairly.

"These are serious questions that need to be seriously addressed," he said at a news briefing Friday. He declined to say, however, whether the Czech government would consider changing its laws so that distant relatives would be allowed to inherit property stolen by the Nazis.

In the meantime, Klepetar said he will keep pressing his case for the return of his great-uncle's collection, even though he predicted that there was "almost zero" chance that the Czech government would change its laws or policies.

"No, no, I'm not going to give up," he said. "It's the principle. Like they say, a Jew should never let anyone [defecate] on his head. And you can quote that."

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