

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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LIBERATION שְׁרֵשֶׁת CHAIN 65 YEARS LATER

The American & International Societies for Yad Vashem Annual Tribute Dinner

DR. YITZHAK ARAD

Dr. Yitzhak Arad is an Israeli historian and retired IDF brigadier general. A veteran of the Nazi-era Jewish resistance movement, he has researched, lectured, and published extensively on the Holocaust. Dr. Arad served as Chairman of the Directorate of Yad Vashem for 21 years (1972-1993), and remains associated with Yad Vashem as Deputy Chairman of the International Council of Yad Vashem.



Dr. Arad was born Itzhak Rudnicki in Świąciany, Poland (now Svencionys, Lithuania) on November 11, 1926. In his youth, he belonged to the Zionist youth movement and was educated in Hebrew schools.

During the war, he was active in the ghetto underground movement. In February 1943, at the age of seventeen, he joined the Soviet partisans in the Vilnius Battalion of the Markov Brigade, a primarily non-Jewish unit. Apart from a foray infiltrating the Vilna ghetto in April of that year to meet with underground leader Abba Kovner, he stayed with the partisans until the end of the war, fighting the Germans and their collaborators in the Narocz Forest of Belarus and in eastern Lithuania. He

participated in the mining of sixteen German trains leading to and from the Leningrad front.

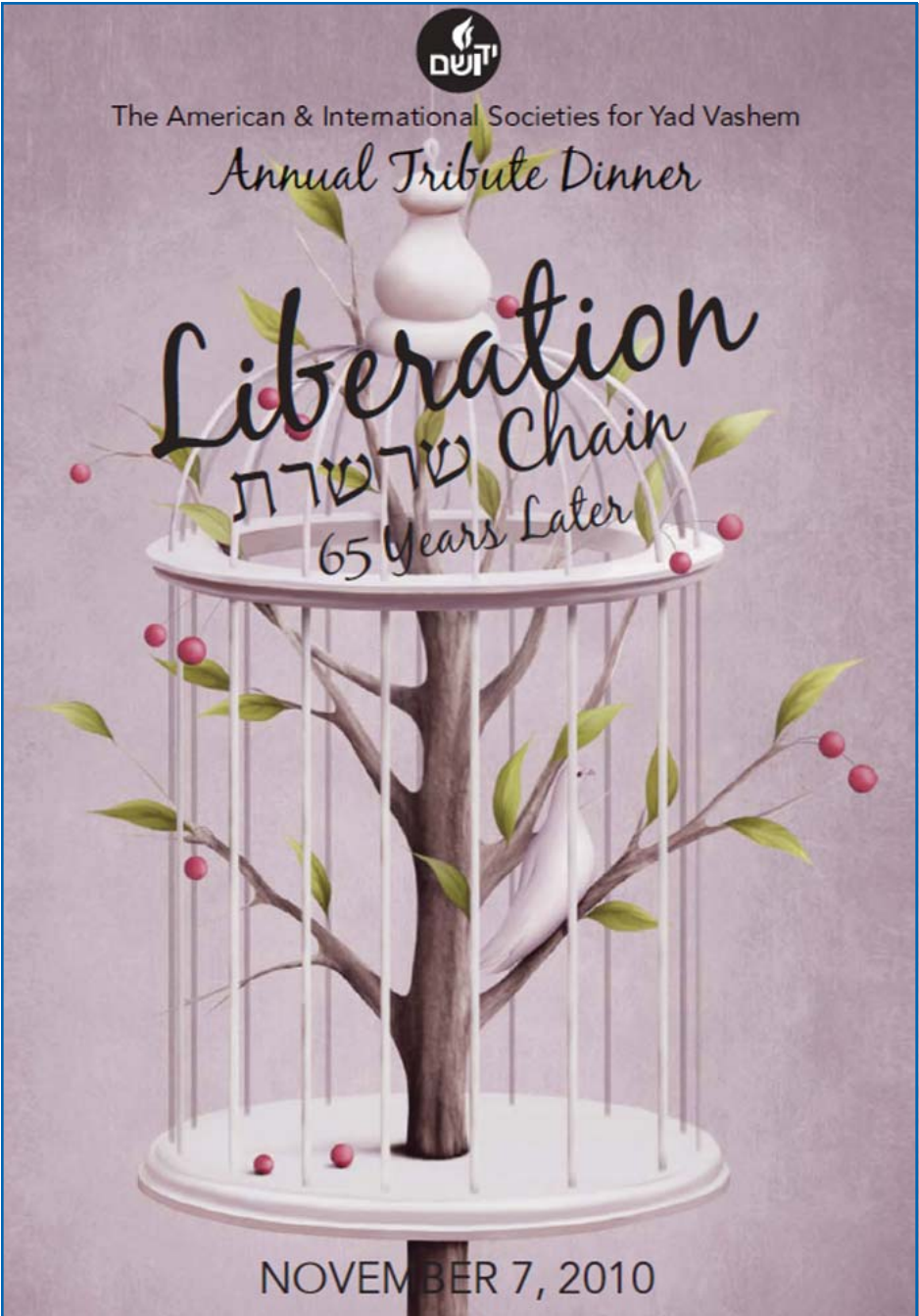
Arad was 14 years old when Germans occupied his native town of Świąciany, which had about 3,000 Jews, at the end of July '41. In September they told all of the Jews that they were being removed to a ghetto. A total of about 8,000 Jews were taken — not to a ghetto but to an isolated military camp instead. They shot them on the second day. He escaped. The night before Jews were deported from Świąciany to the so-called ghetto, a group of fifteen- to sixteen-year olds, including Yitzhak Arad, decided to flee to Belorussia. A few days after their arrival in Belorussia they learned that *Einsatzgruppen* Eight had murdered almost all the Jews from Świąciany. Only 250 remained. But after a few months the killing of Jews began in Belorussia and Arad returned to his native town.

There he was captured by the Germans and taken out of the ghetto with about ten others. They were taken to a place outside of town where there was a camp where Germans collected captured Soviet arms. On the first day Arad put a small gun beneath his shirt and was able to bring it back to Świąciany that night. Within a month Arad and his friends were able to steal about ten guns, and they started an underground group. In February 1943 they left for the forest, where they operated for about two months and later met with a Russian partisan group, which they joined.

In one of his interviews when reflecting on this period of his life, Arad said:

"There were many problems for a Jew to be with the Soviet partisans. First of all, there were anti-Semitic feelings. Then, a Jew would only be accepted in the ranks of the Soviet partisans if he had his own arms. (Any non-Jew, whether a local peasant or one who had escaped from a prisoner-of-war camp, would be accepted without arms.) Also, there was the image of the Jew as a bad fighter or a coward. So you fought to prove yourself, to say, 'Any-

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Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers
811 Seventh Avenue at 52nd Street New York City

Reception 4:30 PM

Dinner 6:00 PM

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FORTY COUNTRIES AT JERUSALEM SHOAH CONFERENCE

BY JONAH MANDEL,
THE JERUSALEM POST

Nearly 200 decision-makers in the field of education, officially representing some 40 countries, took part in the Seventh International Conference on Holocaust Education and Remembrance, held at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

The conference focused on new challenges facing educators who teach about the Holocaust.



Chairman of Yad Vashem Council Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau addresses the audience at the Seventh International Conference on Holocaust Education and Remembrance.

One such challenge is the growing tendency to link Holocaust commemoration with criticism of Israel – aptly illustrated when a Turkish delegation cancelled its participation following the IDF’s raid on the Gaza-bound flotilla.

Held by the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem, the event was attended by philosophers, historians, human rights activists, educators, politicians, ambassadors, and directors of government ministries. They attended lectures and participated in discussion groups focusing on questions such as how to grapple with Holocaust denial, how to avoid “competitions” between the suffering experienced under different totalitarian regimes, and how to keep from falling into a pattern of referring to the Jewish people as victims.

Among the speakers were Education Minister Gideon Sa’ar, Prof. Alain Finkielkraut, former chief rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, former Polish president Aleksander Kwasniewski and former Croatian president Stjepan Mesic.

Recommendations that emerged from the discussions were presented to representatives of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF) at its four-day conference that took place in Jerusalem.

“The event marks an exceptional accomplishment of years of collaboration, to create a group of professionals dedicated to the theme from 40 states, who came despite pressures to partake in a journey of thought and finding solutions in the face of a changing reality,” Yad Vashem chairman Avner Shalev told *The Jerusalem Post*.

“Trends of Holocaust trivialization and building new narratives pose a new situation and new problems that educators must face,” he said, noting such issues as

the tendency to fuse the Holocaust with other European tragedies, and problems teaching the *Shoa* to Muslims, some of



Visit to art exhibition, “Virtues of Memory: Six Decades of Holocaust Survivors’ Creativity.”

whom object, due to their antagonism toward the State of Israel.

“It is important to open new questions and think systematically,” Shalev said.

Regarding the cancellation by the Turkish delegation, he expressed sorrow over enmeshing a political dispute with a broader educational issue that is important to the entire world, and called it “very saddening” that the Turkish delegation could not separate the two.

“You can criticize or even [defy] Israeli policies, but dealing with Holocaust education is not an Israeli or even Jewish issue, rather one for the entire world and part of the European discourse that Turkey is trying to become part of,” Shalev said.

“The great state of Turkey will have to show its intent to continue its dialogue with the entire world, and not just Islam. I hope they will reconsider and come to realize that these are universal questions we are dealing with. Maybe we’ll still see Turkish educational groups.”

PROPERTY RESTITUTION TO HOLOCAUST VICTIMS

Forty-three countries have agreed in Prague on a set of recommendations concerning the restitution of the property of Holocaust victims and other victims of Nazi persecution, presented by Czech PM Jan Fischer and U.S. Department of State adviser for Holocaust assets Stuart Eizenstat.

The document recommends the principles the restitution and compensation for the property of the Jewish victims of the Nazi persecution should be based on.

The states express in it their willingness to consider working out national programs and legislation on the still open restitution issues.

The recommendations concern not only the synagogues, cemeteries, schools, and other buildings that served religious purposes before the Nazis confiscated them in 1933-1945, but also private real estate, Eizenstat said.

He said the recommendations also involve the property that has no more owners to be returned to. The revenues from it should serve the survivors with low income.

There are about 500,000 such survivors all over the world. About a half of them live below the limit of poverty, Eizenstat said.

He said the list of recommendations is not binding, nor does it break the law of the countries that have agreed with it.

Russia disagrees with the recommendations and will not follow them, the Russian embassy in Prague said in reaction to the disclosure of the document.

The Terezin Declaration, which EU representatives signed in *Terezin* (wartime *Theresienstadt* with a Jewish ghetto and a Nazi prison), north Bohemia, at the close of the Czech EU presidency in mid-2009, calls for the restitution of the Holocaust victims’ property, including private, that was seized by the Nazis.

CAMPAIGN SEEKS TO LOCATE HEIRS TO ISRAELI ASSETS

A campaign is being launched in North America to locate the heirs to Israeli assets originally purchased by Jews who died in the Holocaust.

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, hundreds of European Jews invested in what was then Palestine. Following World War II, many of the assets were never claimed. Included in these assets are untouched plots of land, unclaimed bank accounts, and shares from the Jewish Colonial Trust — the parent company of the Anglo-Palestine Bank which later became Bank Leumi — as well as other Israeli financial institutions.

The Restitution of Holocaust Victims’ Assets, which is launching the campaign, has compiled lists of these assets and is working to make the process of returning the belongings to their beneficiaries as easy as possible. Ads calling on the heirs to come forward will run in Jewish newspapers in North America and on Jewish Web sites. It is believed that many of the investors or their descendants made their way to the United States following the war.

Set up by the State of Israel, the Restitution of Holocaust Victims’ Assets was established in 2006 to provide historical justice to the victims of the Holocaust and reinstate the assets with their legal heirs. Its establishment followed criticism of Israel for not doing enough to find the rightful heirs of Israeli assets. There are currently some 55,000 unclaimed assets on the organization’s list.

The organization’s Web site, Hashava.org.il, contains additional information on submitting an application to request restitution of an asset on the list.

AUSTRIA PAYS FOR BOOKS LOOTED BY NAZIS FROM JEWS

The Austrian National Library said it would pay 135,000 euros (164,000 dollars) for thousands of books in its possession that were looted by the Nazis from Jews during World War II.

In a symbolic gesture, library director Johanna Rachinger handed over the books to the Austrian National Fund for the Victims of National Socialism at a special ceremony.

The objects, some 8,363 in all, included children’s books, scientific reference works and theological treatises dating back to the 17th century, whose owners the library had not been able to trace.

But the library has agreed to buy them back immediately at their market value, so that proceeds can go to Nazi victims who had not so far received any form of compensation, “such as Jews who arrived in

Austria in the 1930s,” said the head of the fund, Hannah Lessing.

The national library decided in 2003 to return 52,403 books looted by the Nazis after the annexation of Austria in 1938 to their rightful owners.

It had succeeded in returning 35,217 so far. And a decision was still pending on a further 8,823 books, manuscripts, sheet music, and cards, Rachinger said.

However, a total 8,363 objects had been determined to be “heirless” where research had failed to yield any indications of their previous owners.

And so it was decided to use them to help people who had not been compensated so far. Austria decided in the 1990s to award a gesture payment of just over 5,000 euros to Nazi victims as an acknowledgment of the injustices suffered.

FORMER AUDI EMPLOYEE CONVICTED NAZI WAR CRIMINAL

He may look like a harmless old man now, but according to *The Sun*, to suggest that Klaus Carel Faber has some skeletons in his closet would be a gross understatement. During the Second World War, Faber volunteered for the SS and acted as a Gestapo executioner in the same Dutch concentration camp that held diary author Anne Frank prior to her deportation to Auschwitz.

Following the war he was convicted on 22 counts of murder, and though the actual death toll was estimated much higher, his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Five years later, he and six other war criminals escaped prison in Holland and made their way to Germany. Faber was given a hero’s

welcome and went on to work for Audi, driving a Volkswagen Golf and living out his life in peace in the seat of the company’s headquarters in *Ingolstadt*.

The fifth most wanted Nazi war criminal, Faber apparently remains protected by the only law enacted by Adolf Hitler still on the books. Under the “Führer’s Law,” he was naturalized a German citizen as a foreign volunteer for the SS, and subsequently remains immune to extradition under German law.

Unbelievably, rather than prosecute him locally for his heinous crimes, German prosecutors classified Faber’s genocide as manslaughter, for which the statute of limitations – unlike murder, for which there isn’t one – has long since expired.

FRANCO GAVE NAZIS LIST OF JEWS IN SPAIN

When former Prime Minister Golda Meir thanked Spanish dictator General Francisco Franco for his “humanitarian attitude” and for protecting the Jews in his country during the Holocaust, she was not aware that he had ordered his officials to draw up a list of thousands of Jews living in Spain to be handed over to the Nazis.

The list, which was published in the *El País* newspaper, would have sent thousands more Jews to their deaths in the Nazi extermination camps.

Franco, whose apologists and supporters claim he gave protection to the Jews of Spain, ordered his officials during the Second World War to compose a list of some 6,000 Jews, both Spanish and foreign, living in his country.

The list was handed over to the Nazi architect of the “final solution,” German SS chief Heinrich Himmler, at a time when the two countries were discussing Spain’s possible incorporation into the Axis powers that included Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan.

The Spanish newspaper published the original order, which was recently unearthed in the Spanish government’s archives and instructed provincial governors to provide detailed lists of “all the national and foreign Jews living in the province... showing their personal and political leanings, means of living, commercial activities, degree of danger, and security category.”

The governors were ordered to keep a close eye on Sephardic Jews, as their language and appearance enabled them to blend in with Spanish society.

“Their adaptation to our environment and their similar temperament allow them to hide their origins more easily,” said the order, sent out in May 1941.



General Francisco Franco.

The order describes the Jews as a race, and not a religious minority. “This notorious race,” the order said, “remained unnoticed, with no opportunity of preventing their easily-carried out attempts at subversion.”

The German SS officers stationed in Spain kept a close watch on the local Jews, and were displeased with the fact that some of them had close ties with officials in Franco’s regime.

According to *El País*, the German agents tried to stop Jewish writer Samuel Ros from publishing his works in newspapers and official publications.

With the defeat of the Nazis, Franco tried to conceal his cooperation with Adolf Hitler, and destroyed most of the lists of Jews. Lists that remained in the provincial governors’ offices, however, found their way to the Spanish archives.

U.S. PLEDGES \$15 MILLION TO AUSCHWITZ PRESERVATION

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced the five-year pledge during a visit to Poland.

The pledge, subject to congressional approval, “illustrates the significance of the Auschwitz-Birkenau site, helps commemorate the 1.1 million victims who perished there, and demonstrates America’s commitment to Holocaust education, remembrance, and research,” a State Department statement said.

The money will help fund a more than \$150 million endowment aimed at preserving the site, which has fallen into disrepair.

“The United States strongly encourages other nations who have not already done so to follow suit and to contribute to the Auschwitz-Birkenau fund to preserve the

site for future generations,” the statement said. “The preservation and continuation of Auschwitz-Birkenau is essential so that future generations can visit and understand how the world can never again allow a place of such hatred and persecution to exist. It is also an important educational tool to show those who doubt that the Holocaust ever existed that indeed, tragically, it did.”

More than 1 million people visit the site each year to commemorate the Holocaust.

Clinton, who was in Poland to sign a missile defense pact, made the announcement at the Schindler Factory Museum in Krakow. The museum is dedicated to Oskar Schindler, the German entrepreneur who saved 1,300 Jews during the war.

BIKERS SHOUT “HEIL HITLER” DURING HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY IN HOLLAND

Passing bikers shouted “Heil Hitler” during a Holocaust remembrance commemoration in Holland.

The ceremony, held at the former children’s concentration camp in *Vught*, in the south of the country, is an annual event to remember the last transport of 3,000 children sent to Nazi death camps in Poland.

There were several convoys from the concentration camp in *Vught* to the death camps located in Germany and Poland. In June 1943, for example, hundreds of Jewish children were sent to the *Sobibor* extermination camp. There was also transportation of Jews to death camps in November 1943 and June 1944. In July, as the Allied forces approached the camp, the number of executions increased dramatically.

While Rabbi Binyomin Jacobs, Chief Rabbi of Holland, was giving a speech in memory of those who died, the bikers shouted their obscene comments.

He expressed outrage at the comments, but said that they were a pertinent lesson for the participants at the memorial.

“I was shocked to hear the words ‘Heil Hitler’ in the middle of my speech, especially at such a memorial service,” the rabbi said.

“However, in a certain way I was pleased it happened, as it was an important lesson for those present.”

“We continued the memorial service as if nothing happened, but the unspoken message was that we should be cognizant to the continuing threat of anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, we should carry on with our lives and not let the anti-Semites win.” The incident happened a few days after the doors of the 280-year-old synagogue in *Amersfoort*, the town where Rabbi Jacobs resides, were smeared with red paint.

According to results of research released earlier this year, anti-Semitism in Holland has dramatically risen in recent years.

LAWMAKERS PRESS EASTERN EUROPE ON HOLOCAUST-ERA COMPENSATION

Leading U.S. lawmakers called on formerly Communist European nations to advance Holocaust-era property reclamation processes.

The call comes a year after the Prague Conference on Holocaust Era Assets, which declared 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 (victims of the Holocaust), the vast majority of whom died heirless.”

The Helsinki Commission, the congressional branch of a multinational grouping of parliamentary human rights groups, heard testimony from Stuart Eizenstat, the special adviser to the U.S. secretary of state on Holocaust issues.

“Implementation remains very uneven,” Eizenstat said of the post-Communist nations. Western European nations had for the most part resolved such issues by the time the Iron Curtain collapsed.

“Corruption, processing delays, difficulty in obtaining basic documentation, and inconsistent information about the application process have marred property restitution in too many countries,” he said. “In some instances, basic legislation is still lacking.”

Eizenstat singled out Poland, Romania and Lithuania as nations “where we are awaiting long overdue improvements.”

“Every major political party in Poland has supported draft legislation on property compensation, and I hope that the prime minister will be able to carry through on his stated commitment to see a general prop-

erty law adopted,” said commission chairman Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.).

“In Lithuania, the 1995 property law is needlessly restrictive. I hope the government will fulfill its promises to revisit that law and ensure that communal properties, including



Polish art historian Karol Estreicher with MFAA officer Lt. Frank P. Albright and two American GIs as they prepare to return Leonardo da Vinci’s *Lady with an Ermine* to the Czartoryski Museum in Krakow, Poland, from which it had been stolen by the Nazis.

schools and places of worship, are returned to their proper owners.”

Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-Fla.), Cardin’s co-chairman, called on the nations to retreat from applying standard inheritance laws on such exceptional cases.

“There is something terribly perverse about applying the normal rules of inheritance to the extraordinary and tragic circumstances created by the Holocaust,” he said. “It is just wrong that a government can prevent a man from retrieving his own uncle’s artwork because a law says that uncle has no direct heirs. When whole families were murdered in the Holocaust, I would think such an exception should be made a part of the law.”

THE LAST NAZI TRIAL? FORMER DEATH CAMP GUARD INDICTED

A 90-year-old retired civil servant has been charged with participating in the murder of 430,000 Jews in a Nazi death camp. The former guard came onto the radar of the prosecutors during their investigation into John Demjanjuk.

Many had predicted that the Demjanjuk trial would be the last big Nazi war crimes trial in Germany. But public prosecutors have now indicted another elderly man on charges relating to the Holocaust.

Samuel Kunz has been charged with participating in the murder of 434,000 Jews at the *Belzec* camp in occupied Poland. He is also charged with shooting dead 10 Jewish prisoners, according to the testimony of another former guard who has since died.

Kunz, who was a guard at the *Belzec* death camp from January 1942 to July 1943, had previously been questioned several times, in 1969, 1975, and 1980, by German investigators but had not become the focus of interest himself until his name was mentioned during the investigation into John Demjanjuk.

Demjanjuk is currently facing charges of assisting in the murder of 27,900 Jews while allegedly working as a guard at the *Sobibor* death camp. The Ukrainian-born former auto worker was deported from the US to Munich last year to face trial. The 90-year-old denies ever being a guard, claiming he was actually a slave laborer.

After his name came up, Kunz was questioned by police in Bavaria. The Central Office for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes, based in *Ludwigsberg*, produced a report and sent it to the public prosecutor’s office in *Dortmund*. Speaking

to the investigators last June, Kunz admitted that he had worked at the camp. “We all realized that the Jews were exterminated and later also burned there,” he told them. “We could even smell that every day.”

The former official at the West German Ministry for Regional City Planning — now part of the Transportation Ministry’s portfolio — was born in 1921 in the Soviet Union, became a prisoner of war in 1941, and volunteered for guard duty. He received German citizenship three years later.

Kunz is now No. 3 on the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s list of most-wanted Nazi sus-



Nazi guards at *Belzec* death camp in occupied Poland in 1942.

pects. Efraim Zuroff, the center’s top Nazi hunter, welcomed the decision to indict him. “It reflects the changes in the German prosecution policy, which have significantly enlarged the number of suspects who will be brought to justice.”

Since the Nuremberg trials immediately following World War II, German authorities have examined more than 25,000 cases, but the vast majority never made it to court. However, in recent years, there has been a flurry of investigations and arrests in a bid to bring the last of the aging perpetrators to justice.



BOOK REVIEWS

HITLER’S PRIVATE LIBRARY: THE BOOKS THAT SHAPED HIS LIFE

Hitler’s Private Library: The Books That Shaped His Life.
By Timothy W. Ryback. Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 2008. 278 pp. \$ 25.95 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

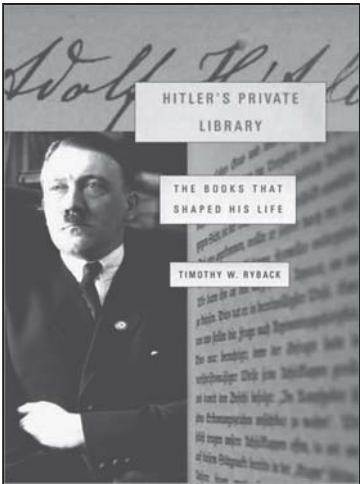
Needless to say, countless volumes have been written about Adolf Hitler. An inordinate number of them attempt to understand, by way of one method or another, just how such an individual came to be. They search for the origin of the ruthless ideas that nurtured him throughout his life. They search for the source of the brutality that determinedly motivated him. And then there is that overriding question of “why?” Why was Hitler the author of so much death, so much destruction? Indeed, the deafening clamor of “why” echoes down the years . . . among the living and the dead.

Timothy W. Ryback, in his unique work entitled *Hitler’s Private Library: The Books That Shaped His Life*, conscientiously and courageously wrestles with the above. The intriguingly successful result: readers of Ryback’s book will come away with a frighteningly clear understanding of Hitler, the archvillain of the twentieth century, based on the books he voraciously read and carefully studied all his adult life.

For example, Ryback shows us how the book entitled *Racial Typology of the German People*, written by Hans F. K. Günther

— literary scholar become social anthropologist — a book which appeared in 1923, left a lasting impression on Hitler. Ryback notes how Günther’s “five-hundred-page tome,” published by J. F. Lehman Verlag, a company that proudly published “a veritable compendium of the pervasive — moral, ethical, social, political, legal, economic, and historical absurdities and excesses we have come to associate with the Nazi era,” was “well-thumbed” by Hitler. Then Ryback points out how Günther’s racist “anthropological” views were gingerly incorporated by Hitler in his own anti-Semitic opus, *Mein Kampf*. Moreover, Günther’s views would also come to lay the “groundwork” for the racial laws and eugenic programs in Hitler’s Germany.

In that same year of 1923, another book appeared which left its indelible mark on Hitler, Ernst Schertel’s *Magic: History, Theory and Practice*. In this volume Schertel theorized about “the great cultures of the past” and how, according to him, they were “willed into existence by individuals . . . through the force of their personality.”



“Schertel describes this creative genius as the ‘truly ektropic,’ an energizing force possessed of demonic qualities that is capable of shaping the course of the world.”

That said, Schertel scorned the “calci-fied” and weak Europeans then about him and saw the world in dire “need [of] the ‘ektropic’ individual — potent and powerful — who rightly (according to Schertel) operates “beyond good and evil,” beyond “right or wrong,” to create a new and “great” world. Hitler saw himself as this force.

Then, in 1926, Ernest Jünger’s battlefield memoir, *Fire and Blood*, drew Hitler’s rapt attention. Jünger glorified war. He wrote of “the transformative effects of slaughter, about the hardening of the heart and soul, . . . about the bonding experience of men rushing forward into battle, about the fusion of human life and the state apparatus, . . . about a world beyond all known ‘borders of human values,’ where ‘courage, fear, sympathy — all that no longer exists’ — meld to the point where the human will first ‘speak through fire, then speaks through blood.” All of this — we are told — Hitler’s

pencil underlined. All of this resonated and found favor with Hitler. All of this Hitler read again and again.

Nor does Ryback’s analysis end with just how these books affected Hitler. He also tells us whether Hitler actually bought the book for himself or if it was a gift. If a gift, he tells us who gave him the book and the very circumstances surrounding the “giving.” Put simply, we learn the very history of the artifact (the book) itself. All of this gives us clues as regards the man, Hitler.

In sum, the three works discussed herein only just scratch the surface when it comes to *Hitler’s Private Library* and what it has to offer us. There is much, much more — all of it absorbing, thought-provoking, and enlightening.

Interestingly, in the Preface to his volume Ryback summarizes the view of the well known German-Jewish critic Walter Benjamin on private libraries and the collectors who create them. Benjamin felt that collectors were mistaken in their belief that they were preserving books. Books really “pre-serve their collector.”

There surely is something to that.

Hitler’s Private Library is a “must read” for anyone interested in any aspect of World War II!

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

TELL ME A STORY, TELL ME THE TRUTH

Tell Me a Story, Tell Me the Truth.
By Gina Roitman.
Second Story Press: Toronto, 2008. 155 pp. \$17.95.

REVIEWED BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

I am glad that I turned to the pages of this slim volume, yet one carrying within it compelling dramas. One of the photos on the book’s front cover reminded me of my own family album from that distinct planet of Europe’s Displaced Persons Camps, following the conclusion of WWII and the massive dislocation of the *Shoah*’s surviving refugees.

Gina Roitman, the gifted Montreal author of this important confessional and intimate sharing by a second generation Holocaust survivor, was born – though her mother was advised she could not bear more children – in 1948 in southeastern Germany’s *Passau*, living in the *Pocking-Waldstadt* Displaced Persons Camp. Gina moved with her parents to Canada when 18 months old. The parents, Sula Kluger and Benzion Miedwiecki, in whose memory the book is dedicated, met and married at the camp.

Sula, the only survivor of five sisters, escaped from Krakow with her first husband to Uzbekistan, where he and their 3 year old son died. Benzion, hailing from *Baranowicze*, Byelorussia, lost his first wife and their three children in Auschwitz. Just like my own father, Yechiel, Benzion was drafted into the Russian Army with both having miraculous survival stories. Benzion’s skill as a tailor twice saved his life. While each survivor bears a unique tale of

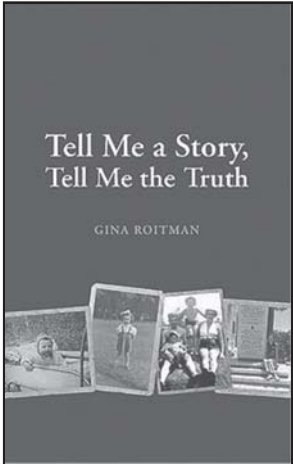
woes and each responds in his or her own way, Gina’s parents’ suffering and endurance provided for a trying journey of rebuilding their lives in a new culture, blessed with two children after tragic personal losses.

Gina, represented in the book through the figure of Leah Smilovitz, was exposed along with her four-years-younger brother David to a trying childhood in the Holocaust’s heavy shadow, with their mother’s true horror stories when Gina would refuse eating her lunch. As the book’s title reflects, Gina found her mother’s frightful Holocaust stories too incredible to be true. Confronted with Gina’s unruly conduct, Sula would lay a guilt trip on her by responding, “I survived Hitler for this?” (p.5), and even used a belt for punishment. Gina, a mature though vulnerable child, would console her mother when down and distressed, was regarded by Sula as an adult since turning twelve, thus imposing upon her old world standards.

Nonetheless, Gina remains grateful for her mother’s life’s wisdom that continues to guide her since she died at 63 when Gina was only 28 years old. My own mother Chasia tried to shield me and my two sisters from her traumatic past, mostly avoiding the display of raw emotions. But she did relish spoiling us. Like Sula, however, Chasia kept a full refrigerator. The insecurities of one’s refugee life are hard to erase.

Sula’s high energy corresponds to my mother’s, as Gina describes the meticulous Passover preparations with Sula inter-

(Continued on page 15)



A HOLOCAUST NARRATIVE IN THE WORDS OF REFUGEE JEWS

Flight from the Reich: Refugee Jews, 1933-1946.
By Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan Van Pelt. W. W. Norton & Company: New York, 2009. 512 pp. \$35 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL KENNEY

Through the *Kindertransport* program organized by international aid groups, some 530 Jewish children from Vienna arrived in England as refugees in December 1938.

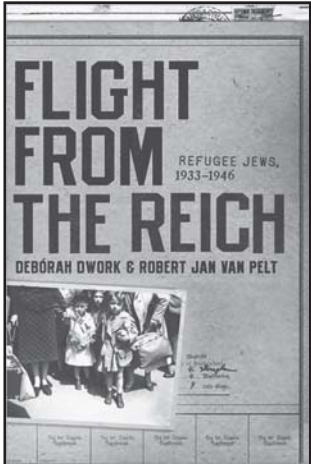
Among them was the teenage Kitty Pistol, who by the following summer was able to arrange a guarantee of employment that would allow her mother to join her. But by September 1939 it was too late.

“If the war would have started two weeks later, my mother would have made it,” she wrote. When, after the war, Pistol returned to Vienna, she found her mother’s trunk, packed for the hoped-for flight to England, which had been hidden with non-Jewish friends.

“She did not find her mother,” write the authors of *Flight From the Reich*, with affecting understatement.

And as Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan Van Pelt write at one point, escape was often a matter of timing, fortuitous circumstances – and luck.

Dwork is director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University, and Van Pelt, professor at University of Waterloo in Canada. In this, their third collaboration on Holocaust sub-



jects, they have crafted a powerful narrative that includes both a well-documented account of Nazi anti-Semitic policies – and of the halting challenges to them by the Western democracies – and emotionally charged stories of personal loss and thwarted hopes.

By focusing on the refugees – why some successfully escaped what the authors have called the Nazi “machinery of death,” while others either failed, or waited until it was too late – they provide a new dimension to the Holocaust narrative.

There were the schemes to find resettlement areas in Africa and South America – and one backed by the German government involving the French colony of Madagascar.

And there were the letters, too often bearing news of deaths or deportations – which, in time, would amount to the same thing. And well into the early 1940s, the Germans created postcards to be sent home from the concentration camps announcing inmates safe arrival and good conditions. They were, the authors write, “markers of death.”

The authors put the number of Jews murdered in the Holocaust between five and six million, noting that by late 1943, the number being killed had dropped to about 500,000 a year. The Germans, they write, “had run out of Jews to kill.”

There is no firm figure of how many escaped, but among them were the 10,000

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AUSCHWITZ SURVIVOR RECALLS DARING 1944 ESCAPE

BY MONIKA SCISLOWSKA,
THE HUFFINGTON POST

With every step toward the gate, Jerzy Bielecki was certain he would be shot.

The day was July 21, 1944. Bielecki was walking in broad daylight down a pathway at Auschwitz, wearing a stolen SS uniform with his Jewish sweetheart Cyla Cybulska by his side.

His knees buckling with fear, he tried to keep a stern bearing on the long stretch of gravel to the sentry post.

The German guard frowned at his forged pass and eyed the two for a period that seemed like an eternity – then uttered the miraculous words: “*Ja, danke*” – yes, thank you – and let Jerzy and Cyla out of the death camp and into freedom.

It was a common saying among Auschwitz inmates that the only way out was through the crematorium chimneys. These were among the few ever to escape through the side door.

The 23-year-old Bielecki used his relatively privileged position as a German-speaking Catholic Pole to orchestrate the daring rescue of his Jewish girlfriend who was doomed to die.

“It was great love,” Bielecki, now 89, recalled in an interview at his home in this small southern town 55 miles from Auschwitz.

“We were making plans that we would get married and would live together forever.”

Bielecki was 19 when the Germans seized him on the false suspicion he was a resistance fighter, and brought him to the

camp in April 1940 in the first transport of inmates, all Poles.

He was given number 243 and was sent to work in warehouses, where occasional access to additional food offered some chance of survival.

It was two years before the first mass transports of Jews started arriving in 1942.

Most of the Jews were taken straight to the gas chambers of neighboring *Birkenau*, while a few were designated to be forced laborers amid horrific conditions, allowing them to postpone death.

In September 1943 Bielecki was assigned to a grain storage warehouse. Another inmate was showing him around when suddenly a door opened and a group of girls walked in.

“It seemed to me that one of them, a pretty dark-haired one, winked at me,” Bielecki said with a broad smile as he recalled the scene. It was Cyla – who had just been assigned to repair grain sacks.

Their friendship grew into love, as the warehouse offered brief chances for more face-to-face meetings.

In a report she wrote for the Auschwitz memorial in 1983, Cybulska recalled that during the meetings they told each other their life stories and “every meeting was a truly important event for both of us.”

Cybulska, her parents, two brothers and a younger sister were rounded up in January 1943 in the *Lomza* ghetto in northern



Jerzy Bielecki.

Poland and taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Her parents and sister were immediately killed in the gas chambers, but she and her brothers were sent to work.

By September, 22-year-old Cybulska was the only one left alive, with inmate number 29558 tattooed on her left forearm.

As their love blossomed, Bielecki began working on the daring plan for escape.

From a fellow Polish inmate working at a uniform warehouse he secretly got a complete SS uniform and a pass. Using an eraser and a pencil, he changed the officer’s name in the pass from *Rottenfuehrer* Hel-

mut Stehler to Steiner just in case the guard knew the real Stehler, and filled it in to say an inmate was being led out of the camp for police interrogation at a nearby station. He secured some food, a razor for himself, and a sweater and boots for Cybulska.

He briefed her on his plan: “Tomorrow an SS man will come to take you for an interrogation. The SS man will be me.”

The next afternoon, Bielecki, dressed in the stolen uniform, came to the laundry barrack where Cybulska had been moved for work duty. Sweating with fear, he demanded the German supervisor release the woman.

Bielecki led her out of the barrack and onto a long path leading to a side gate

guarded by the sleepy SS man who let them go through.

The fear of being gunned down remained with him in his first steps of freedom: “I felt pain in my backbone, where I was expecting to be shot,” Bielecki said.

But when he eventually looked back, the guard was in his booth. They walked on to a road, then into fields where they hid in dense bushes until dark, when they started to march.

“Marching across fields and woods was very exhausting, especially for me, not used to such intensive walks,” Cybulska said in her report of Auschwitz as quoted in a Polish-language book Bielecki has written, *He Who Saves One Life ...*

“Far from any settlements, we had to cross rivers,” she wrote. “When water was high ... Jurek carried me to the other side.”

At one point she was too tired to walk and asked him to leave her.

“Jurek did not want to hear that and kept repeating: ‘we fled together and will walk on together,’” she reported, referring to Jerzy by his Polish diminutive.

For nine nights they moved under the cover of darkness toward Bielecki’s uncle’s home in a village not far from Krakow.

His mother, who was living at the house, was overjoyed to see him alive, though wasted away after four years at Auschwitz. A devout Catholic, however, she was dead set against him marrying a Jewish girl.

“How will you live? How will you raise your children?” Bielecki recalls her asking.

To keep her away from possible Nazi patrols, Cybulska was hidden on a nearby

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SATAN’S ADMINISTRATION: JOURNEY INTO NAZI DEATH RECORDS

Daily food intake of Auschwitz prisoner, original Schindler’s list, names of children on Exodus, blood-curdling account of millions of those murdered – and overwhelming response to deniers. Dor Glick takes trip among shelves of largest archive in world of Nazi horrors, and receives chilling greeting from his grandmother who survived and her brother who didn’t.

Welcome to *Grosse Allee 5* in the town of *Bad Arolsen*. Here you will find just one thing: documents. Fifty million card cabinets containing the names of 17.5 million people who were persecuted during the Third Reich. Gypsies, social democrats, homosexuals, communists, people the Nazis just wanted to have taken care of, and mainly – Jews.

Walking through the shelves of names organized in little card catalogues is a bit like flipping through a phone book. The place is flooded with familiar Jewish names. For a random family name like Abramovich, for instance, there are 849 spelling variations. As the shelves continue, you come across additional familiar names with similar numbers of spelling options. The inconceivable number – six million – starts to come into focus. The adage from Holocaust memorial ceremonies – to each person a name – takes shape, typed in black on the shelf.

“Satan’s administration” is what Udo Jost, the head of archives at *Bad Arolsen*, calls the world’s largest archives of the Nazi horrors. The documents housed here were found in thick binders throughout Germany and occupied Europe starting in 1945, and include records of factory-like operations that had to show production and expediency. In them are descriptions

of the camps, of the deranged plans, of those who remained alive, and of the enormous majority that did not survive.

The archive is not complete. In the last months of the war, with defeat quickly approaching, the Nazis launched a mass campaign to destroy documents, which took place mainly in locations that had time to rid of them. The farther east you go on the map, the more documenta-



Chilling family records. Dor Glick.

tion was destroyed. From *Sobibor*, for instance, nearly nothing remains. However, fortunately for history’s sake and the sake of defending against Holocaust deniers, a massive scale of material remains here as testimony. About *Buchenwald* and *Dachau*, you can find out everything in *Bad Arolsen* – what they received to eat on a given day, how many lice were on the head of a given inmate, etc.

All of this plunder was collected by conquered Germany’s new masters: the Americans, Soviets, British, and French. At first, the city of *Kassel*, in the center of the country, was chosen for the collection point

of all the material. However, *Kassel* was totally destroyed in the bombings and lacked sufficient intact infrastructure. Not far from there was an abandoned SS headquarters, which had good telephone and telegraph connections vital for the organization’s operations. Thus, the International Tracing Service, originally charged with locating displaced persons scattered across Europe, arrived in *Bad Arolsen*.

A tour of one of the rooms with Kathrin Flor, the head of ITS communications, is a lesson in history unlike any other. In the space of mere meters, without the grandiose display of a museum, the most tragically interesting stories of the 20th century can be found.

One gray binder, for instance, contains a document entitled “*Lebensborn*,” the document entering into force the Nazi organization responsible for encouraging and supporting Aryan births by pairing “racially pure” women with SS officers, and later by transferring blonde-haired, blue-eyed children from eastern Europe to Aryan German families within the boundaries of the *Reich*. Along the grey text of the typewriter, hand-written corrections can be seen, corrections made in pen that are amazingly preserved and look as though they were written just last week. The corrections were made by none other than SS leader Heinrich Himmler.

This is what can be read today on the businesslike document:

The committee operates in support of the following objectives:

1. Creation of families with many biologically and racially pure children
2. Support for single mothers that can bring biologically and racially pure children into the world

3. Support for such children
Signed: Heinrich Himmler Date: 24.12.1937

Jumping seven years ahead in time, the next binder delves the reader deep into the period of the most wide-scale, systematic murder known to humanity. The document is dated October 12, 1944 and listed under the anemic title “List of Names,” containing the personal details of 1,000 people – 700 men and 300 women, all Jews. Number 672 on the list: Yitzhak Stern, Profession: Accountant. This is the original Schindler’s list.

However, unlike in the Oscar-winning movie, there aren’t any sophisticated effects, like a little girl wearing a red coat in a black and white movie. The original is realistic, colorless, and light-years away from Hollywood’s translation onto the silver screen. As I go through some of the names on the list, Kathrin Flor looks around the room and says, “While this list became famous, it is actually just one of thousands that we have here in the archives. Each list has its own story.”

An interesting detail for those who like the movie: The list typed up by Yitzhak Stern himself as re-enacted in the Steven Spielberg’s movie did not survive the war. The historical information surrounding Schindler’s List comes from testimonies given by the factory workers. The list in the archive today was typed up by one of Schindler’s employees, during one of the transfers between camps. He gave the only copy he managed to keep to the

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SURVIVORS' CORNER

CHRONICLING THE HOLOCAUST FROM INSIDE THE GHETTO

BY JAN FRIEDMANN, SPIEGEL ONLINE

Roughly 50 men and women in the Warsaw Ghetto chose a special form of resistance. In a secret archive, they



Warsaw, September, 1946. The document had been hidden under a school on Nowolipki Street since August 1942. After the war one of three of the archivists to survive the war provided the information that led to the discovery of the 10 metal boxes.

documented their path to doom for future generations, chronicling the Nazis' crimes as they were being perpetrated.

David Graber was 19 when he hurriedly scribbled his farewell letter. "I would be overjoyed to experience the moment when this great treasure is unearthed and the world is confronted with the truth," he wrote.

While German soldiers combed the streets outside, Graber and his friend Nahum Grzywacz buried 10 metal boxes in the basement of an elementary school on Nowolipki Street in Warsaw's Jewish ghetto. It was Aug. 2, 1942.

The boxes were dug up more than four years later. By then, Graber and Grzywacz were long dead, murdered like almost all

of their roughly 50 collaborators. Only three survived the Nazi terror. They provided the information that led to the recovery of the boxes.

The buried treasure consisted of about 35,000 pieces of paper that a group of chroniclers had collected and used to document how, during World War II, the German occupiers had deprived Warsaw's Jews of their rights, tormented them and, finally, killed them in the death camps. "These materials tell a collective story of steady decline and unending humiliation, interspersed with many stories of quiet heroism and self-sacrifice," writes American historian Samuel Kassow. His book *Who Will Write Our History?: Rediscovering a Hidden Archive from the Warsaw Ghetto*, which has now been published in German translation, throws a new light on the exceptional source material.

NIGHTMARISH BODY OF TEXT

Jews also collected documents and wrote diaries elsewhere in Europe during the Holocaust, but the Warsaw archive is the most comprehensive and descriptive collection of all. The Polish capital was home to Europe's largest Jewish community, which became a magnet for many talented scientists and writers. As one female author wrote, she hoped that her account would be "driven under the wheel of history like a wedge." Contributions like hers would turn the clandestine archive into probably the most nightmarish body of text ever written about the Holocaust.

The group called itself *Oyneg Shabes*, or "Sabbath Joy," because it usually convened on Saturday afternoons, beginning

in November 1940. The chief thinker of the group, which included a large number of intellectuals, journalists, and teachers, was Emanuel Ringelblum, a historian born in Galicia in 1900. He had written a doctoral dissertation at the University of Warsaw on the history of the city's Jews prior to 1527, and he was part of the Jewish self-help organization "*Aleynhilf*."

Two weeks before the outbreak of World War II, Ringelblum attended the World Zionist Congress in Geneva as an envoy of the Marxist party *Poalei Zion*. The other delegates told him it was too dangerous to go back to Poland and urged him to stay in Switzerland, but Ringelblum wanted to be with his wife Yehudis and their nine-year-old son Uri. He had hardly returned home before German troops invaded Poland and captured Warsaw soon afterwards.

In October 1940, the occupation authorities decreed that all Jews were to be moved to a separate residential district. Workers then built a three-meter wall around the area. The Germans also relentlessly drove Jews from the surrounding countryside into the Warsaw Ghetto. Before long, half a million people were living in an area of only four square kilometers (1.5 square miles).

Ringelblum and his fellow members of *Oyneg Shabes* quickly recognized the dimensions of the drama and began to document it for posterity. They collected decrees, posters, ration cards, letters, diaries, and drawings —

documents of horror in Yiddish, German and Polish.

One of the documents specified the average daily calorie allotment for 1941, according to which Germans were to receive 2,613 kilocalories, Poles 699 and Jews only 184. The ghetto residents had to smuggle in food to survive. The archive used wages and prices on the black market to conduct market research and prepare sample calculations for a family of four.

QUESTIONNAIRES AND ESSAY CONTESTS

Like ethnologists, the chroniclers went about investigating their environment, scientists studying their own surroundings.

They issued standardized questionnaires and conducted hundreds of interviews with refugees and people on the verge of starvation.

Between 1940 and 1942, about 100,000 people died of hunger, exposure to cold temperatures, and disease. In November 1941, Ringelblum, describing the deaths around him, wrote: "The most terrible thing is to look at the freezing children... Today in the evening I heard the wailing of a little tot of three or four years. Probably tomorrow they will find his little corpse."

The archive held an essay contest to encourage traumatized children to tell their stories. A 15-year-old girl described how her mother had died next to her: "During

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Emanuel Ringelblum, who organized the archive *Oyneg Shabes* in 1940 to document the persecution of the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto.

LONG-LOST TELEGRAM BRINGS DESCENDANTS OF HOLOCAUST VICTIMS TOGETHER

BY CHANIE KAMINKER, CHABAD.ORG

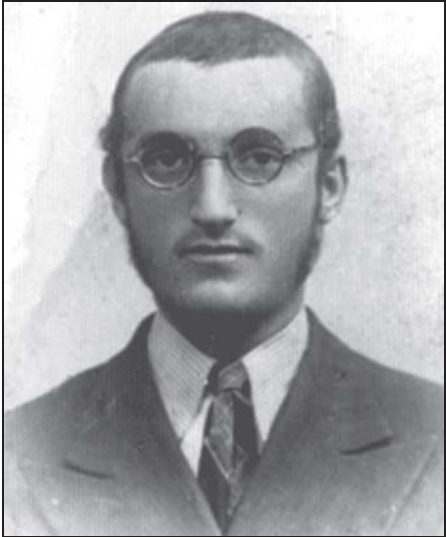
What's the value of 25 words? For many fleeing the onslaught of Nazi forces during World War II, and their families throughout Europe and beyond, a simple telegram was the only way to stay in touch with loved ones. They transmitted a priceless message, that for that moment in time at least, the sender was safe.

Delivered for free by the International Red Cross — a service the organization continues to provide to refugees today — most of the telegrams made it to their destinations. But in one recent case, it took 68 years and the help of a curious Dutch archivist for a crumpled form to arrive in the hands of a Holocaust survivor's descendants.

Addressed to Chaim Meir Bukiet, a young Chabad-Lubavitch yeshiva student who had made it out of Europe and was living in Shanghai, the telegram, dated April 23, 1942, was likely one of the last messages sent by Bukiet's parents before they were claimed by the Nazis. It was written by Moshe Stiel, a Dutch Jew living in Schevenigen, Netherlands, who it seems acted as a middleman for those caught in

occupied Europe and the refugees scattered across the globe.

Just six months prior, Bukiet and other students escaped Poland for Lithuania at



In 1942, Chaim Meir Bukiet was living with other yeshiva students in Shanghai thanks to the courageous efforts of Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul in Lithuania.

the behest of the Sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, of righteous memory. There, they secured

visas through the benevolent acts of Japanese consul Chiune Sugihara, and travelled across Russia by train.

"Your parents in *Chmielnik* send warm wishes and want you to know they are healthy," Stiel wrote in the telegram. "Please report what news of your health can be shared with your parents."

The telegram, sent through The Hague, reached Bukiet three months later, on July 19. He quickly wrote back on the back side of the telegram.

"Delighted about the news. Thank you. I'm healthy, my brothers, too. From Grandfather, good news," he wrote, delivering a coded message indicating that his fellow students were with him, and that the Rebbe had made it safely to New York. "Would be glad to hear from my parents very soon once again."

Bukiet sent the telegram back to The Hague, and the Red Cross sent it to Stiel, but by the time it arrived, he and his family had already been deported by the Nazis to a transit camp, where the Red Cross attempted to forward it. The message arrived on Feb. 27, 1943, just three days after Stiel was sent to Auschwitz, never to return.

The telegram made it back to The Hague, where it sat in a box amidst others

at the Red Cross's vaults, until archivist Raymund Schutz stumbled upon the forgotten correspondence nearly seven decades after the events that claimed Bukiet's parents and Stiel. Schutz took to the Internet to track down Bukiet, coming across an article on the Jewish Web site Chabad.org written by Bukiet's grandson, Rabbi Dovid Zaklikowski.

Zaklikowski, director of Chabad.org's Lubavitch Archives division, and Schutz worked together to fill in the missing parts of the story, resulting in an article in the Netherlands' *The Telegraph* newspaper and a first-person account in Chabad.org.

Such stories are the bread and butter of archivists looking to discern the circumstances behind specific documents. But the Bukiet telegram took on a life of its own when a friend of Stiel's grandson, 67-year-old Rafi Stiel, noticed the family name in the newspaper. He called up his friend, now living in Herzliya, Israel, who was immediately enraptured by the tale of a telegram written by the grandfather he never met.

Stiel enlisted the help of Teresa Pollin, a researcher at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, who scheduled a

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CAN A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR EVER FORGIVE THE GERMANS?

Anita Epstein, who was born in the Krakow ghetto in 1942, reflects on the collective guilt experienced by postwar Germans and on her own inability to see past the death she was spared.

It was more than 15 years ago, but I still remember the day clearly. My husband and I hosted a dinner at our home for emerging young German leaders. They were participating in an exchange program with the American Jewish Committee that included a week in Washington, D.C. I viewed the evening as a test of how I would deal with Germans — indeed, of whether I could deal with them at all.

The Germans, after all, had murdered almost all of my family in the Holocaust, to say nothing of their wanton slaughter of millions of other Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, and others. I escaped that gruesome fate myself only because shortly after my birth in the Krakow ghetto, in November 1942, my parents gave me away to be hidden by a Polish Catholic family. More than a million Jewish children, however, were not so fortunate: They were strangled or starved, shot or gassed, bashed against walls or tossed out windows, burned in ovens or buried in mass graves.

I tried to behave myself that evening. I really did. But I could not help myself: I asked a wispy young German woman with whom I was speaking whether she thought she was capable of throwing a baby off a balcony.

She was stunned. “What do you mean?” I told her that Germans routinely had thrown Jewish children off balconies during the Holocaust. Did she think she could do something like that? She protested. She said that she was not even alive during the Holocaust. How could I think such a thing? Wouldn’t I ever be able to forgive the Germans? She began to cry.

I told her that it was not hard for me to think such a thing. I think about such things often. I think about how easily I could have been one of the murdered babies. I think

of how the Germans killed all pregnant Jewish women they discovered in the ghetto along with so many others. I think of how my mother avoided their clutches to bring me into this world and, after she suffered terribly in four Nazi camps and returned from the brink of death, found me again after the war. And I think of the father, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and others I will never know, of the postwar anti-Semitism in Germany and Poland, and of the resentment heaped on me by some Holocaust survivors whose own sons and daughters had perished. (When I was older I realized that I was a constant reminder to them of their inability to save their children. I evidently was being punished for living.)

Despite all of this and more, I have managed to have a full life, if a deeply scarred one. After several years spent chiefly in a displaced persons camp in Germany, I came to America on a crammed troop ship, the U.S.S. *Taylor*, and in New York survived a different kind of ghetto — Brooklyn’s Bedford-Stuyvesant. I married and raised two wonderful daughters who have given me five marvelous grandchildren. I have done fulfilling work in publishing, in teaching, and, for 30 years, as a Washington lobbyist.

None of this, however, has been thanks to the Germans, who are responsible only for the darkest corners of my life, including, among other things, my regular nightmares, my survivor guilt (why was I spared?), and my persistent fear of intruders and attackers. No, I cannot forgive the Germans. That’s God’s job.

Of course, many people would disapprove of this view, and they can draw on an extensive literature about the impor-

tance of forgiving, including texts from the world’s religions, pronunciations of literary lions, and volumes from modern psychology and psychiatry. For me, though, most of their arguments miss the point. Consider



The deportation of Jews from the Krakow ghetto.

perhaps the most well-worn dictum in favor of letting bygones be bygones: Alexander Pope’s “To err is human, to forgive, divine.” In my case I find it easily dismissible. This is not only because it would be disgraceful to apply a remark about literary criticism — the line is from Pope’s 1711 “An Essay on Criticism,” which is actually a poem — to Germany’s systematic extermination of more than 6 million innocent people. Even more, it would be outrageous to characterize so immense an abomination as “erring.”

I am also unpersuaded by those who favor forgiveness because the act often makes the person doing the forgiving feel better. That’s a favorite of psychiatrists and psychologists, who are of course dedicated to making their patients feel better about themselves. Thus one can find works about how bestowing forgiveness can lift a weight from your shoulders, set you free, bring you peace and improve your physical health in the process. The problem is that I have long felt tolerably well about myself. Indeed, for me, the idea of forgiving those who perpetrated the Holocaust would have the opposite effect: It would make it hard for me to live with myself, to get out of bed and look in the mirror. I could not dishonor the memory of my family members and the millions of other Holocaust victims by giving a free pass to their murderers. That would only signal to other bestial beings that they, too, would be forgiven if they were to commit genocide.

Granted, a good number of people have followed the healing-through-forgiveness advice and benefited. They range from passed-over employees with deep grievances and divorcées seeking revenge to victims of childhood sex abuse and mothers in Northern Ireland who have had to bury their sons. In the Jewish community, one of the most striking examples is Eva Kor, a victim of Dr. Josef Mengele’s vile genetic “experiments” at Auschwitz on Jewish and Gypsy twins, dwarfs and others. The subject of a documentary film called “Forgiving Dr. Mengele,” Kor stood at Auschwitz in the winter of 1995, 50 years after its liberation, and declared that she was granting “amnesty to all Nazis who participated directly or indirectly in the murder of my family and millions of others,” including Mengele.

So dramatic a declaration took the Jewish community aback and infuriated other twins who had been Mengele victims. After

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MEMORIES OF THE HOLOCAUST: SABINA MILLER

BY STUART JEFFRIES, THE GUARDIAN

Sabina Miller never did find out what happened to the young woman she only knew as Ruzska. They both spent the winter of 1942-43 sheltering in a hole in the forests of northern Poland. It had been dug earlier by partisans and was the best accommodation the two women could find. “We couldn’t go home because we had no home, and we felt safer there in the woods than risk being betrayed to the Germans.”

Sabina fled the horrors of the Warsaw ghetto in her teens; later she ended up working on a farm run by a Lithuanian man. He used to horsewhip the Jewish women laborers if they didn’t work hard enough. There she met Ruzska, and together they finally ran away, to shelter in the forest. “We ran not because of him but because we heard that the ghettoes were being liquidated, and we heard that lorries were coming for [the Jews].”

We’re sitting over tea and cakes in Sabina’s warm kitchen in the flat in west Hampstead, London, where she has lived for nearly 50 years. What was it like in that freezing hole? “You couldn’t walk into it. You slid inside and then tried to keep as warm as you could. I think we had pinched a blanket from somewhere that kept us warm. But we were frozen and lousy. We looked like animals. My feet were so swollen I couldn’t wear boots.” Sabina

nods towards her feet. “Later I had to have an operation on my foot. They amputated part of my toe.”

The only thing that Sabina had to remind her of her past life with her family in Warsaw was a little washbag containing a few photographs and a postcard from her sister. The postcard, Sabina believes, had



Sabina Miller, Holocaust survivor.

been thrown by her sister from a train heading towards a death camp and was picked up by someone who posted it to the farm. “I don’t know that for certain. Maybe she jumped from that train. Maybe she’s alive.” All that seems unlikely, Sabina admits. But, nearly 70 years after the card was, perhaps, thrown from the train, she holds on to that hope.

During the night Sabina and Ruzska would go from farm to farm begging for food, but eventually farmers told them not to beg together — they looked too obvious

— so she and Ruzska started going out alone. One day Ruzska didn’t come back. “Who can say what happened to her?”

Sabina visited local farms asking after her friend. Nobody had any news, but one farmer’s wife made a proposal. Could Sabina, this 20-year-old Jewish woman from Warsaw, stand in for her own non-Jewish daughter who had been called to do forced labor in Germany? Sabina Najfeld (her maiden name) thus became, for a while, a Polish farmer’s daughter called Kazimira Kuc. Because she was in such bad shape, the Germans didn’t want to transport her to Germany for forced labor, but later, under another name, she did end up in Germany. She spent the rest of the war on the run under assumed names.

The years of subterfuge took their toll. “When the war ended, I thought I was the last Jew in Europe.” After liberation, she was taken to a camp for displaced persons. “One day, a soldier came up to me and said: ‘Are you Jewish?’ I said, ‘No.’” It was force of habit: Sabina had spent so much of the war denying who she was. “When I came to England, for the first two or three years I was still apprehensive to tell people I was Jewish. I fell in love with this country because what I got was kindness and acceptance.” Sabina flourished: she married, raised a family, learned English, made

friends, worked in retailing, and became what she hadn’t been in years — herself.

These days she can still recall her childhood in Warsaw, but only patchily. Her father and mother probably died of typhus in the ghetto. “I can’t be sure of what happened to my mother because I had typhus too and I blacked out for several weeks. When I came round, my mother was not there. I don’t even know who looked after me then. On the farm, I would tell everyone my mother is not dead. But I didn’t know.” She recalls being smuggled out of the ghetto by her brother to go and stay with an aunt who lived in the countryside. “I remember we didn’t take off our armbands during our escape because we were afraid, but we wore raincoats over the top to hide them.”

Three years ago, Sabina decided to go back to her homeland for the first time in more than 60 years to visit Auschwitz. “I had to bend my head from respect and pray for the dead.” She, her son, and her daughter recited the Kaddish, the Jewish mourning prayer. On the same trip, she also went to Warsaw to try to find out about her family. As with Ruzska, the fates of her siblings and her mother remained uncertain, though their murder by the Nazis is overwhelmingly likely. She tells me she regularly phones the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw to find out if, during their restoration work on the graves, they have found her mother, her father, or her grandparents.

LIBERATION

שחרות

The American & International Societies

DR. YITZHAK ARAD

(Continued from page 1)

thing you can do I can do — if not better at least as well. ‘So in the beginning we had to struggle for our places. But after a few months I was able to prove myself — my courage — and was allowed to take part in mining many trains, in ambushes and other activities. But still it wasn’t easy. There was some talk about making specifically Jewish units, but we could not do it because the official attitude of the Soviet partisan movement was that there was no place for Jewish units.

“The Soviet partisan movement was organized according to the structure of the Soviet Republic: Lithuanian, Belorussian, Ukrainian groups, etc. Since there was no Jewish republic, they forced us to disband. This became a problem because not all Jews were able to join partisan units. Some Jews even had their arms taken from them and had to face the dangers of forest life without weapons.”

In the same interview, published in the book *Voices from the Holocaust* by Harry J. Cargas, when asked “How does one who had participated so long and so courageously in the battle against the Nazis react to the charges that the Jews did not resist, did not fight back?” Arad said:

“Such charges are based on a misunderstanding of the situation of the Jews at that time and of not knowing of the existing Jewish Resistance. The main problem of the Jewish Resistance then, I would say, was that the way to the forest was

open only for young men who could get arms and fight in the forest. For the Jewish masses — women, children, elderly people — there was no way. I was without a family, without children, so it wasn’t a question for me. But I ask myself today, ‘If I had been twenty-four or twenty-five, married, and with two children in the ghetto, what would I have done?’ I might have been working, say, in some German factory. That gave us a little security, a way to get food for my family. And I would live like some others in the ghetto, hoping that some miracle might happen. Maybe Hitler would be killed, maybe the Allied forces would land in a second-front assault, maybe Germany would collapse, or there would be a successful Russian offensive. People lived with some hopes. Maybe as a young man I might have possibly escaped to the forest with some guns and left my wife and children behind in order to fight and blow up some German trains or something.

“I have asked myself many times, ‘What would have been the right thing to do? What does courage mean in this situation?’ If you go out to fight and destroy things, you leave your family helpless. At the first selection or first *aktion* they become immediate victims. Even before that they will suffer from lack of food. If you stay with them you hope you will survive together. Which is the most courageous choice? When I lecture in Israel, I raise this question — asking army men, cadets, officers, ‘What would have been the right

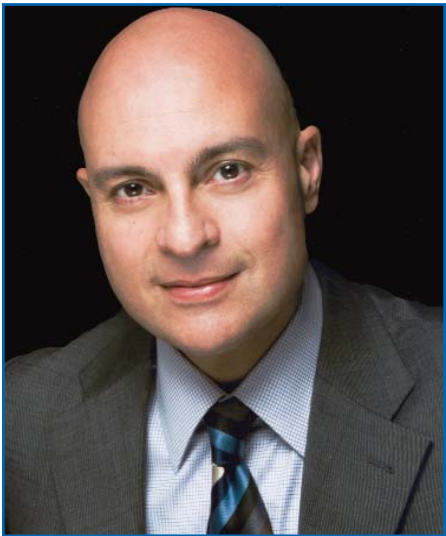
thing to do?’ Silence. How can one answer? I behaved one way as a young man and I do not have to justify my activity, so I can ask the question. If people escaped from the ghetto they went to a village, to a second village, to the forest to try to survive. But they were most usually caught either by local collaborators or someone informing the Germans or the Lithuanian police. Very few had a chance to reach the forest. Fighting gave very little chance for surviving. And the main aim of the Jews at that time, I would say, was to survive.”

In December 1945, Dr. Arad immigrated illegally to Mandatory Palestine. He served in the IDF, retiring in 1972 as a brigadier general.

In his academic career he has lectured on Jewish history at Tel Aviv University and as guest professor at Yeshiva University in New York. He has researched World War II and the Holocaust, and has published extensively as an author and editor, primarily in Hebrew, English and Russian. Recently Nebraska University Press and Yad Vashem published his research entitled, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, a book that received the Jewish Book Council “National Jewish Book Award”. His most recent research can be viewed in his book *In the Shadow of the Red Banner – Soviet Jews in the War against Nazi Germany*.

Dr. Arad is married to Michal. They have three children, ten grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

MARK MOSKOWITZ



Mark Moskowitz is the son of Rose Moskowitz and Henry Moskowitz, both Holocaust survivors who immigrated to the United States in 1951.

Mark and his siblings, Sonia, Jacob, and Dan, were raised on Manhattan’s Upper West Side and educated at Ramaz School. While earning his M.B.A. at Columbia Business School, he joined the family real estate and hotel business, Argo Real Estate LLC. Today, he serves as President and CEO of the company his father founded in 1952.

He is a principal of several residential and commercial properties and has managed the successful conversion of luxury apartment buildings throughout Manhattan, supervising numerous renovation projects, including those at landmark and hotel properties.

Mark is a loyal and committed member of Yad Vashem, as are all the members of the Moskowitz family. For the past five years, Mark has attended the official State Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony

at Yad Vashem and has represented the ASYV’s Second Generation.

This year, the Moskowitz Family sponsored the dedication of the Square of Hope at Yad Vashem in memory of Henry

Moskowitz for his enduring commitment to its mission. In anticipation of the Square’s dedication, Mark said, “Yad Vashem is the ultimate authority for Holocaust commemoration and remembrance.

“On behalf of my family, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to honor my late father.”

“Holocaust documentation, research, and education are ongoing commitments,” Mark adds. “In order to move forward as a nation, it is necessary to maintain an awareness of the past. My father always had the conviction that a true understanding of what occurred in the Holocaust could be achieved only within the context of being in Israel: a belief that I wholeheartedly share. The fact that Yad Vashem is centered in Jerusalem not only brings us a better understanding of the roots of the State of Israel and what it means for the Jewish People; it also gives a destination where we will always have access to our history and its documentation.”

LEADERS OF THE YOUNG LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATES

This year we are proud to honor the Leaders of the American Society for Yad Vashem Young Leadership Associates. This dedicated group of members of the third generation was established in 1997

Rachel Stone & Robert Bernstein
Nadav Besner
Adina & Lawrence Burian
Jeremy & Abbi Halpern
Rebecca Hanus
Ilana & Mitchell Kahn
Barry Levine
Nicole & Avi Lieberman

Ilana Lifshitz
Iris & Adam Lindenbaum
Caroline & Morris Massel
Nicole & Joseph Meyer
Jaci & Gonen Paradis
Mindy & Alan Schall
Aliza & Elie Singer
Keren Toledano

and is co-chaired by Caroline Massel and Jeremy Halpern. The Young Leadership Associates support ongoing educational activities committed to Holocaust remembrance through education.

Jason Wilf
Jeffrey Wilf
Jon Wilf
Lisa & Orin Wilf
Ariel Zborowski
Boaz Zborowski

Julius Berman
Barry Rubenstein
Dr. Miriam
Edgar M. Bronfman

Hon. Kirsten Gillibrand
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Marilyn & Jack A. Belz
Roberta & Irwin Chafetz
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Lewis Fagen
Lynn & Erwin Fisch
Jane & Ishaia Gol
Moritz Goldfeier

TRI
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Maria

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SHALOM HAIN 65 YEARS LATER

Program for Yad Vashem Annual Tribute Dinner

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REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

YAD VASHEM BREATHING LIFE INTO DESTROYED JEWISH COMMUNITIES

BY ELI STUTZ, INN.COM

Yad Vashem cannot revive what is lost, but it can help restore its memory. In a new initiative on the Yad Vashem website, the Holocaust Memorial authority is "bringing back to life" Jewish communi-



Jewish Klezmer musicians in the interwar period in *Munkács*.

ties that were destroyed, exhibiting them as they were before the Holocaust.

The latest community on exhibit is *Munkács* (pronounced *Munkatch*), a Jewish community that was the seat of the *Munkács* Hassidic dynasty which still lives on today in such places as Boro Park, Brooklyn, Williamsburg, and Monsey (all in New York).

Dana Porath, Director of the Internet Department of Yad Vashem, explained the project to Israel National News:

"We gathered [information] from all of Yad Vashem's collections, documents, and photos, and we contacted survivor groups for their stories. Our objective was to create a virtual home such that others can learn and discover what happened to these communities.

"We are trying to weave all these elements together in an experiential context in order to tell a story, a tapestry of memory. These communities were full of a whole, rich life. Here we can breathe life into a community that is gone. We want people to understand what life was like there. We try to tell this story through all these means."

Following the *Chmielnicki* pogroms, a few Jews immigrated from *Galicia* and Ukraine to the area, initiating the Jewish community in *Munkács* and its peripheries. A certificate from 1649 attests

to a Jew leasing property in *Munkács*, thereby achieving permission to settle in the area. For the next forty years, the Jews of *Munkács* leased licenses from the authorities for selling liquor, meat, candles, and soap, and for grinding produce and transporting wood to the port of *Danzig*.

Substantial Jewish settlement in *Munkács* began at the beginning of the 18th century. In 1718, there were five Jewish homes – 25 Jews – among them a *shochet* (ritual slaughterer). In 1741, the

Jewish community was established in the area, numbering some 80 souls. That same year, the first synagogue of the town was also established.

Gradually, *Munkács* became world renowned for its rabbis, *dayanim* and *roshei yeshiva*, dedicated to the Torah and yeshiva world.

On the eve of the Holocaust, *Munkács* (*Mukačevo*) was the

largest and most important Jewish community in *Subcarpathian Rus'*, Czechoslovakia. It was a thriving Eastern European community, known for its religious fervor, as well as substantial Zionist activities. In the final population census before the German invasion, conducted in January 1941, *Munkács* was noted to have 13,488 Jewish residents, some 42.7% of the total population of the town.

On November 10, 1938, the Hungarian army entered *Munkács*. The Jews of the town blessed the return of Hungarian rule, but their optimism was soon brought to an end. The Hungarian authorities persecuted the Jews from the beginning of their annexation of the town. Jews fell victim to physical violence, abuse, and robbery. The authorities harassed Zionist groups, limited the Jews' economic activities, and recruited many men for forced labor in the Hungarian army.

On March 19, 1944, the German army invaded Hungary, and four weeks later, the concentration of Jews began. Jews from *Munkács* were forced into two ghettos, and those from the surrounding areas were assembled at two brick factories on the outskirts of town. On May 11, 1944, the deportations to Auschwitz began, and on May 23, the last deportation train left *Munkács*.



Deportation of the Jews of *Munkács*. The Jews walked with their possessions along *Mihály Street*, opposite the great theater. They were brought to the brick factory, from where they were deported.

The Munkacs exhibition includes more details on the story of the Jews of Munkács as well as several photographs of community members before the War.

Other communities exhibited on the Yad Vashem's website are *Monastir*, a Sephardic community in Macedonia; *Trzebinia*, Poland, which is 19 km from Auschwitz; and *Wolbrom*, Poland, whose small community was destroyed during a period of only 24 hours.

YAD VASHEM MARKS 68 YEARS SINCE THE MURDER OF JANUSZ KORCZAK AND THE ORPHANAGE'S CHILDREN

Yad Vashem marked 68 years since the deportation to Treblinka of Janusz Korczak, Stefania Wilczynska, and the children of their orphanage, from the Warsaw Ghetto.



Korczak dedicated his life to caring for children, particularly orphans.

Holocaust survivor Yitzhak Balfour, who resided in Korczak's orphanage in Warsaw, members of the Korczak Society, and some 70 youth group members participated in a memorial ceremony at Janusz Korczak Square at Yad Vashem.

As part of a workshop, members of the *HaMachanot HaOlim* youth movement heard Yitzhak Balfour's testimony.

Janusz Korczak was the pen name of Henryk Goldszmit, a Polish-born doctor, author and educator.

Born in Warsaw to an assimilated Jewish family, Korczak dedicated his life to caring for children, particularly orphans. He believed that children should always be listened to and respected, and this belief was reflected in his work. He wrote several

books for and about children, and broadcast a children's radio program.

In 1912 Korczak became the director of a Jewish orphanage in Warsaw. When World War II broke out in 1939, Korczak first refused to accept the German occupation and heed their regulations (consequently spending time in jail). However, when the Jews of Warsaw were forced to move into a ghetto, Korczak refocused his efforts on the children in his orphanage. Despite offers from Polish friends to hide him on the "Aryan" side of the city, Korczak refused to abandon the children.

Stefania Wilczynska was born in 1886 in Poland and completed her studies at the University of *Liège*, Belgium. In 1909, she met Korczak and the two began working together.

When WWI began, Korczak was recruited and Stefania remained in charge of running the orphanage, which had expanded and now housed some 150 children.

In 1935, she visited Eretz Israel and lived at *Ein Harod* until 1939. With the Nazi occupation, the members of *Ein Harod* arranged for her the possibility of leaving Poland, but she turned it down and moved to the ghetto along with Dr. Korczak and the children.

In August 1942, during a 2-month wave of deportations from the ghetto, the Nazis rounded up Korczak, Wilczynska and the 200 children of the orphanage. They marched in rows to the *Umschlagplatz* with Korczak in the lead. He and Stefania never abandoned the children, even to the very end. Korczak, Wilczynska and the children were sent to *Treblinka*, where they were all murdered.

HOLOCAUST SCHOLARS STILL GRAPPLE WITH DIFFICULT HISTORY

BY GENEVIEVE LONG, THE EPOCH TIMES

Sixty years after the end of the Holocaust, the pieces of the puzzle are still being painstakingly assembled. At Yad Vashem, the national Holocaust remembrance authority, such work takes on many forms. One of them is academic historical research exploring the why, who, when, and how of the Holocaust and its aftermath.

In July, a Holocaust scholars' workshop, under the umbrella of Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research, drew about 35 academics. They converged for a 7-day conference from a dozen countries including Israel, America, Canada, England, France, Australia, the Netherlands, Greece, Italy, and Hungary.

"The goal of everything we do here is to represent the truth," said Estee Yaari, foreign media liaison for Yad Vashem on the final day of the Annual Summer Workshop for Holocaust Scholars, now in its third year.

The final day's symposium was aimed at academic interaction for doctoral research fellows. The six fellows, sponsored by the workshop's cosponsor Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, each presented in-progress doctoral work. The range of topics focused on grassroots aspects of the holocaust and how individuals and groups either aided Nazi Germany or helped persecuted Jews.

Rebecca Carter-Chand, a Canadian scholar from the University of Toronto, presented the current stage of her work on

Christian minorities in Germany and their relationship with Jews during the Third Reich.

One of Carter-Chand's examples is the assistance that Quakers gave to Jews who were rounded up and held for deportation to work camps. In part due to their history of humanitarian service in times of crises, and in part due to their reputation as neutral, some Quakers were able to move relatively freely among Jews in holding areas. The Quakers provided food and moral support, and were also trusted envoys for personal correspondence.

Carter-Chand told of an account she found in her research of Quakers waiting on platforms near trains full of Jews for letters that were thrown out at the last moment. Letters sometimes included material wealth, which the Quakers faithfully delivered.

"That says a lot, that they were trusted to deliver not only letters but also money," said Carter-Chand of the Quakers.

Another fellow who presented her ongoing research, Na'ama Shik, is a Holocaust scholar at Tel Aviv University and affiliated with the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem. Shik's presentation on her work, titled "Jewish Female Experience in Auschwitz-Birkenau," was a disturbing look into the dark world Jewish women experienced in the notorious camp.

Shik pointed out during her 45-minute presentation and discussion that her research is still in progress. She is currently focusing on the issue of women trading

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WOMEN’S ROLE IN HOLOCAUST MAY EXCEED OLD NOTIONS

BY ISABEL KERSHNER,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

Amid the horrors of the Holocaust, the atrocities perpetrated by a few brutal women have always stood out, like aberrations of nature.

There were notorious camp guards like Ilse Koch and Irma Grese. And lesser known killers like Erna Petri, the wife of an SS officer and a mother who was convicted of shooting to death six Jewish children in Nazi-occupied Poland; or Johanna Altvater Zelle, a German secretary accused of child murder in the *Volodymyr-Volynskyy* ghetto in Nazi-occupied Ukraine.

The Nazi killing machine was undoubtedly a male-dominated affair. But according to new research, the participation of German women in the genocide, as perpetrators, accomplices or passive witnesses, was far greater than previously thought.

The researcher, Wendy Lower, an American historian now living in Munich, has drawn attention to the number of seemingly ordinary German women who willingly went out to the Nazi-occupied eastern territories as part of the war effort, to areas where genocide was openly occurring.

“Thousands would be a conservative estimate,” Ms. Lower said in an interview in Jerusalem last week.

While most did not bloody their own hands, the acts of those who did seemed all the more perverse because they operated outside the concentration camp system, on their own initiative.

Ms. Lower’s findings shed new light on the Holocaust from a gender perspective, according to experts, and



Female guards, like these with the SS at *Bergen-Belsen* in 1945, constituted up to 10 percent of concentration camps’ personnel.

have further underlined the importance of the role of the lower echelons in the Nazi killing apparatus.

“In the dominant literature on perpetrators, you won’t find women mentioned,” said Dan Michman, the chief historian at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem.

Ms. Lower, 45, presented her work for the first time at this summer’s workshop at Yad Vashem’s International Institute for Holocaust Research. She has been trying to decipher what motivated these women to commit such crimes.

“They challenge so deeply our notion” of what constitutes normal female behavior, she said. But the Nazi system, she added, “turned everything on its head.”

Ms. Lower said she worked for many years at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and is now teaching and researching at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in *Munich*.

She began traveling to Ukraine in the early 1990s, as the Soviet archives opened up. She started in *Zhytomyr*, about 75 miles west of Kiev, where the SS leader Heinrich Himmler had his Ukrainian headquarters, and where she found original German files, some burned at the edges, in the local archive. She noticed the frequency with which women were mentioned at the scenes of genocide. Women also kept cropping up as witnesses in West and East German investigations after the war.

In an anomalous twist on Christopher R. Browning’s groundbreaking 1992 book, *Ordinary Men*, it appears that thousands of German women went to the eastern territories to help Germanize them, and to provide services to the local ethnic German populations there.

They included nurses, teachers and welfare workers. Women ran the storehouses

of belongings taken from Jews. Local Germans were recruited to work as interpreters. Then there were the wives of regional officials, and their secretaries, some from their staffs back home.

For women from working-class families or farms in Germany, the occupied zones offered an attractive opportunity to advance themselves, Ms. Lower said.

There were up to 5,000 female guards in the concentration camps, making up about 10 percent of the personnel. Ms. Grese was hanged at the age of 21 for war crimes committed in Auschwitz and *Bergen-Belsen*; Ms. Koch was convicted of participating in murders at *Buchenwald*.

Mr. Browning’s book chronicled the role of the German Reserve Police Battalion 101, which helped provide the manpower for the elimination of most Polish Jewry within a year. The book mentions one woman, the young, pregnant bride of one of the captains of the police battalion. She had gone to Poland for a kind of honeymoon and went along with her husband to observe the clearing of a ghetto.

Only 1 or 2 percent of the perpetrators were women, according to Ms. Lower. But in many cases where genocide was taking place, German women were very close by. Several witnesses have described festive banquets near mass shooting sites in the Ukrainian forests, with German women providing refreshments for the shooting squads whose work often went on for days.

Ms. Petri was married to an SS officer who ran an agricultural estate, complete with a colonial-style manor house and

(Continued on page 15)

EXHIBIT AT SCHINDLER FACTORY SITE RECALLS NAZI-ERA KRAKOW

BY PATTI MCCrackEN, JTA

In January 1994, an American tourist stepped out of a taxi into a cold, drizzling rain and entered the Jarden Jewish Bookshop at the far end of the square in the Jewish quarter of Krakow.

On the counter he played a weeks-old copy of *The New York Times* before bookshop owner Les Zdzislaw.

“The man was pointing to photos of sites that were in ‘Schindler’s List’ and demanded to know where they were,” Zdzislaw recalls. “But what he didn’t understand

Seventeen years after the film brought fame to the factory, the facility opened as a museum on June 11.

The Historical Museum of the City of Krakow has transformed the site into what it calls a “memory factory,” the city’s first permanent exhibit of Nazi-occupied Krakow.

“The world already knows about Schindler,” says Marta Smietana, a museum spokeswoman. “Now we can show what all of Krakow was like when the Jews were working for him.”

“Krakow Under Nazi Occupation: 1939-1945” showcases life during the war for Poles and Jews, concentrating at least some of its narrative on the disruption of Polish-Jewish relations against the backdrop of Nazi brutality.

The project wasn’t without controversy — some were displeased that Schindler had to share the spotlight with the war-era city.

“Since the renovation, the factory seems to have lost some of its character,” Zdzislaw said. “I think having it devoted to the German occupation doesn’t do Schindler and others like him justice. They are two separate things.”

Others argued that Schindler was one among many heroes of the Holocaust in Poland, and a museum devoted solely to a man made famous by a Hollywood movie would distort history.

“If you focus on one person, what about all the other heroes?” asked Jonathan Ornstein, director of the Jewish community center in Krakow.

“When you talk about people who saved Jews on Polish soil, he’s not the only one. Take, for example, the Polish teachers and orphanage workers who saved 2,000 Jews. There are many, but the world just doesn’t know about them.”

The Emalia Factory, where Schindler manufactured tinware, sits on a broad stretch of a bending road among many plants and workshops in the industrial zone of Krakow. As one of the largest, it has a commanding presence.

After the war, the liberating Soviet forces nationalized the factory and turned it into a telecommunications equipment manufacturer. But eventually the facility was abandoned and fell into receivership, which is when the city bought it in 2005.

At the new museum, modern exhibits intended to take visitors back in time include life-size photo murals, voiceovers, digital displays and multimedia touch screens. The museum also will feature a Hall of Choices, a sculptural installation highlighting ethical dilemmas faced by citizens during the war.

Some visitors may be shocked by the black-on-white, swastika-like floor tiles in one of the rooms. The company that produced the tiles refused to do so with-

out first receiving assurance from the government that it would not be committing a crime if it went through with the order, since Nazi symbols are banned in Poland.

“We used the swastika symbol because it says so much about the occupation,”



The factory in which Oskar Schindler used Jewish slave labor during World War II has been turned into a Holocaust museum.

is that the movie had not yet premiered in Europe. We ourselves didn’t know where many of these locations were.”

The debut of Spielberg’s film in December 1993 sparked a stunning flood of tourists to Krakow that still continues. Many come on a pilgrimage to pay homage to Oskar Schindler, the war informant-turned-Nazi who daringly saved more than 1,000 Jews.



Oskar Schindler’s office and desk are on display in the Schindler museum.

Smietana said. “At first you think how banal it is, then you start to understand how dangerous it is.”

The exhibit is meant to provoke, as in the case of the floor tiles, but to many the “memory factory” will be about the memory of Schindler.

“A couple of months ago, an Israeli woman came to me and wanted to know if it was true that it was her grandfather who sold the factory to Schindler,” said Zuzanna Mistal, project director for the new museum. “I was able to tell her yes. It was a beautiful feeling, and it was the first time I understood how important my work is.”

MOTHER’S SAVIOR: A REVELATION

BY JIM DWYER, THE NEW YORK TIMES

The white-haired woman wet her index finger, then bent toward the shoulder of the man seated at the bench of a grand piano. He gave a quick nod, and she flipped to the next page in the score of Chopin’s *Berceuse*, a cradle song.

For Roger Peltzman of Washington Heights, who had flown to Brussels to sit at that Steinway, it was a chord from lost history.



Beatrice Peltzman in 1944.

More than half a century ago — in January 1944, to be precise — Mr. Peltzman’s uncle had played that same piano, and the elegant white-haired lady, now Ghislaine Hennessey but then a lively 20-year-old named Ghislaine Bomhals, had also turned the sheet music for him. Earlier this year, Mrs. Hennessey tracked down Mr. Peltzman and his brothers in New York.

The Peltzmans had heard plenty from their mother, a Holocaust survivor, about the uncle, Norbert Stern, a piano prodigy who made his debut at age 15, playing the

symphonic études of Schumann to rave reviews; they knew nothing, though, about the Steinway piano in the Bomhals home that he practiced on for two years while in hiding from the Nazis.

For that matter, they had never heard of the Bomhals.

Sitting in Mrs. Hennessey’s parlor that afternoon in June, Mr. Peltzman would discover that theirs were the hidden hands that had helped his mother survive.

“Mrs. Hennessey had all these pictures ready,” Mr. Peltzman, 49, said.

One was a photograph of Mr. Peltzman’s mother, Beatrice, dressed in the full habit of a Catholic nun.

Mr. Peltzman knew that picture, and thought he knew the whole story behind it. “We’d all seen it since we were little kids,” Mr. Peltzman said. “My mother had no reservations about telling us everything. We would bring it to show-and-tell at school.”

The Sterns had settled in Brussels in the 1930s. Norbert so dazzled the city with his piano playing that the queen made him her ward, an honor that turned out to be of little use when the Germans invaded. To avoid the roundups of Jews, the Sterns moved to the attic of a *Madame Acremant*.

One morning in January 1944, the Nazis battered the door, seized Norbert and his parents, and packed them off on trains. They vanished up the smokestacks of Auschwitz.

But Beatrice, who was 17, avoided capture by climbing out the attic window and huddling on the roof for hours. She made her way to a school friend. “The way we always heard it, it was a teacher named Gertler who arranged for the convent,” Mr. Peltzman said. “When the Nazis came there, my mother counted her rosary beads in front of them.”

After the war, Beatrice went to England and then to the United States. She married a pharmacist, was widowed at 47 and

raised three sons, Alan, Richard and Roger. She died in September at 83.

A few months later, Mrs. Hennessey contacted the Peltzmans and asked if they were related to Beatrice.

“She had a new chapter,” Roger Peltzman said.

When the Sterns went into hiding in Brussels, they happened to be living a few doors away from the home of Fernand Bomhals, the owner of a movie theater and a member of the resistance to the Nazis.

Norbert needed to practice, and we had a beautiful Steinway, and someone put him in touch with my father,” Mrs. Hennessey said last week by telephone. “He was brilliant. He asked me to play something, and I had been taking private lessons from age 7. He said to my father, ‘She’s good, she must go to the conservatoire,’ the place he had attended.”

Norbert’s sister, Beatrice, also visited and became friendly with Ghislaine.

Soon after the raid that captured Norbert and his parents, Mr. Bomhals was called to the house where Beatrice was being sheltered.

“My father went to see them, and he said, ‘I will try to get her in the convent,’” Mrs. Hennessey said. “I remember very vividly, like it was yesterday, that she was dressed as a nun, and that they went by train. He wouldn’t let me come with her. If people were caught hiding Jews, you were either sent to Germany, or shot.”



Beatrice Stern, left, with Ghislaine Hennessey at the Waterloo Station in London in an undated war-era photograph.

arm. “After that, I lost her completely,” Mrs. Hennessey said.

Until a few months ago, when Mrs. Hennessey saw a television program about the Jews sent from Belgium to the death camps. She asked a friend to see if the young pianist Norbert, and his parents, were included in the records of those killed.

“I was worried that the names of Norbert and his parents had not been given as Jews who had lived in Belgium and died in Auschwitz,” Mrs. Hennessey said.

Using the Web site of Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust museum, the friend found that Beatrice Peltzman had submitted their names. The friend also found a death notice for Beatrice that listed her sons. What had started as an act of remembrance by an old woman in Brussels had become a moment of revelation for three men in America.

CHRONICLING THE HOLOCAUST FROM INSIDE THE GHETTO

(Continued from page 6)

the night, I felt her becoming cold and stiff. But what could I have done? I lay there until the morning, still clinging to her body, until a neighbor helped me lift her out of the bed and place her on the ground.”

Outside, residents constantly ran the risk of being stopped by a German policeman and then beaten or shot. The ghetto residents even had a name for a particularly dangerous bottleneck-like street: “The Dardanelles.”

SMUGGLED EVIDENCE OF THE EXTERMINATION PROGRAM

In 1942, the chroniclers began to receive dramatic news from other parts of the country. Refugees told of mass shootings and synagogues burned to the ground. One refugee told the chroniclers how the SS had used gas to kill people in railroad cars in *Chełmno* west of Warsaw.

The industrial-scale mass killing had begun, leading many to ask themselves when the “Hell of Polish Jewry,” as the title of one of the documents in the archive read, would reach Warsaw. Several German officials had promised Jewish elder Adam Czerniakow that the Warsaw Ghetto would be spared. But on July 22, 1942, SS officer Herman Höfle announced that the “resettlement” had begun. A few days later, the archivists’ helpers buried the first of the metal boxes.

The *Gestapo* and the Jewish police rounded up the residents and took them to the “transshipment point,” where the trans-

ports to the *Treblinka* death camp began. A particularly cynical proclamation, dated July 29, lured the starving Jews with the promise that anyone who went to the point voluntarily would receive a ration of three kilos of bread and one kilo of marmalade. In an effort to deceive those who had been left behind, deportees were forced to send reassuring postcards home from the death camps.



A Nazi poster announcing death sentences in the Warsaw Ghetto.

The archivists had already started studying the Holocaust while it was in full swing. In several instances, they managed to smuggle evidence of the extermination program abroad, including to the BBC in London. Ringelblum hoped, in vain as it turned out, that his group had “completed a meaningful historical task and perhaps saved hundreds of thousands from extermination.”

The ghetto was quickly cleared. According to a statistic in the archive, 99 percent of all children had already been deported by November 1942. There were still 60,000 people living in the residential area, most of them men who worked in the workshops. Many turned over their personal reflections to the archive, documents of great emotional power.

Abraham Lewin, a teacher, described how his wife fell into the clutches of the henchmen: “There was a solar eclipse, and it was completely dark. My Luba was apprehended at a roadblock. I still see a shimmer of hope shining in front of my eyes. Perhaps she will be spared. And if not, what may God prevent?”

UPRISING SUPPRESSED

Another teacher, Natan Smolar, mourned his “only, beloved daughter Ninkele,” whose third birthday the family had just celebrated. “There were so many toys, and there was so much noise and play, so much happiness and shouting of children. And today Ninkele is no more, and her mother is gone, and so is my sister Etl.”

Those who had remained in the ghetto were plagued by feelings of guilt. They complained “that the Jews allowed themselves to be led like sheep to the slaughter.” One man wrote: “If only we had all climbed over the ghetto wall and stormed the streets of Warsaw, armed with knives,

axes or even stones — then perhaps they would have killed 10,000 or 20,000, but never 300,000!”

There are hardly any documents left on the armed resistance that eventually did erupt, in April 1943. The Germans brutally suppressed the uprising. SS brigade leader Jürgen Stroop had the buildings burned down, one after another, and the main synagogue blown up. On May 16, 1943, he reported: “The former Jewish residential area of Warsaw no longer exists.”

By that time, historian Ringelblum and his family had already fled to the non-Jewish section of Warsaw. He spent the last few months of his life together with about 40 men, women and children in a 23-by-16-foot cellar underneath a greenhouse that belonged to a Polish vegetable merchant. Day after day, Ringelblum sat at the end of a long table between the rows of bunk beds, surrounded by his books and lists.

The hiding place was discovered in March 1944, when the girlfriend of the Polish man betrayed him after they had separated. Ringelblum was taken to the notorious *Pawiak* Prison, where his captors tortured him in the hope that he would reveal details about Jewish resistance fighters. Then the Germans shot the chronicler of their crimes, together with his family and the other prisoners.

Only six days before his hiding place was discovered, Ringelblum wrote to a friend about his archive: “If none of us survives, at least this will remain.”

CAN A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR EVER FORGIVE THE GERMANS?

(Continued from page 7)

all, the “Angel of Death,” as the racial researcher was known, had brutalized and killed thousands. He selected twins for “experiments” on heredity, relationships between racial types and disease, eye coloration, and other questions raised by his mentor, Otmar von Verschuer, a pathologist who was a leading proponent of Nazi racial policies. Mengele put children through excruciating pain, ordering surgeries, spinal taps, and other procedures without anesthesia. He had some twins infected with deadly diseases, others castrated, still others injected in their eyes with chemicals, and at least one set sewn together. Many twins were killed with injections of phenol or chloroform into their hearts, after which their bodies were dissected and their eyes and other organs sent to Verschuer in Berlin. That is the man Kor wanted to forgive.

Whether she knew it or not, however, Kor had her own Jewish problem: Judaism does not give her the ability to forgive Mengele or others. Judaic paths to forgiveness are, of course, unlike those of other religions. In Judaism, a person cannot obtain forgiveness from God for wrongs done to other people, only for sins committed against God. For sins against others, Jewish law and tradition require offenders to express remorse, genuinely repent, provide recompense to victims if appropriate — and directly ask the victim, three times, for forgiveness. Obviously, Josef Mengele did not repent, and he did not beg Kor or other victims for forgiveness. Kor was thus mistaken when she thought, and said, that she had the power to forgive Mengele. She did not, at least so far as Judaism is concerned, and she certainly could not speak for her family or other victims or forgive all other Nazis, only those who specifically sinned against her.

Like anybody else, Kor naturally could come to terms personally with the atrocities committed by Mengele and other Nazis. While that would not absolve Mengele or anybody else, it could — and evidently did — help Kor. “I felt a burden of pain was lifted from me,” she has said. “I was no longer in the grip of pain and hate; I was finally free. The day I forgave the Nazis, privately I forgave my parents whom I hated all my life for not having saved me from Auschwitz. Children expect their parents to protect them, mine could-

n’t. And then I forgave myself for hating my parents. Forgiveness is really nothing more than an act of self-healing and self-empowerment.”

I’m afraid not. Forgiveness is, by definition, much more than a self-centered act. What Kor is describing is closer to catharsis, a purging of pain, a very different process — and one that not all Holocaust survivors wish to experience. Elie Wiesel, for example, has remarked, “I want to keep that pain; that zone of pain must stay inside me.” While I did not suffer from the ineffable horror of the concentration camps as Wiesel, my mother, my murdered family members, and so many others did, I know what he means. I, too, want to hold onto my pain. It helps ensure that the past is always present in me. It is an important part of what keeps me close to those I lost and to the world that died with them.

It also helps me deal with questions that keep rattling around in my head. For example, while the overwhelming majority of today’s Germans obviously were born after the Holocaust, do they nonetheless share guilt for the actions (or inactions) of their parents and grandparents? I have family members and friends who think not, who firmly believe that one can never hold children guilty for the sins of their parents. I have even been called some unpleasant names for holding an opposing view. I have noticed, however, that such opinions usually come from people who did not suffer from the Holocaust, who are a generation or two removed, and whose beliefs are rooted in theory, not experience. I think that such people, good-hearted though they may be, may find that the answer is not as simple as they think.

They are often among the first, after all, to insist on collective guilt for atrocious episodes in our own nation’s past — the horrors of slavery, the slaughter of Native Americans, the World War II internment of Japanese Americans, and other acts committed in our name. Such American guilt has been passed from generation to generation (though our forbears were in many

cases not even on these shores when the events occurred), and it has triggered such public responses as affirmative action; Japanese-American reparations payments; compensatory education, jobs, and housing policies; and repatriation of tribal graves and cultural property.

Like a number of other nations, today’s Germany also struggles with collective guilt for the sins of parents and grandparents. Germany’s burden is especially heavy, because it stems from what former German chancellor Gerhard Schröder termed “the greatest crime in the history of mankind,” the ultimate sin. Nations cannot easily shed that kind of guilt, and certainly not in a generation or two.



Holocaust memorial in Berlin.

That’s why Germany tries so hard, to this day, to make amends with the Jewish community, a seemingly impossible job. It not only has made restitution payments to a dwindling number of Holocaust survivors for more than 60 years. It also stands behind Israel in the Middle East. It is Israel’s second-largest trading partner. It has encouraged the renewal of a sizable Jewish community in Germany. It has built Holocaust memorials, created Holocaust school curricula, maintained former concentration camps as museums.

This is as it should be. If the pain of the past is always present in me, as it is in many other survivors and their children, it does not trouble me that contemporary Germans live with the hurt from that past as well. After all, just as children inherit wealth and otherwise benefit from what their parents achieve, so do they sometimes inherit their parents’ debts, including this one.

As for forgiveness, the truth is that I could not forgive today’s Germans even if I wanted to. While I never explained

this to the young German woman at my home that day, under Judaic law both the perpetrators and the survivors must be alive to have even the possibility of forgiveness. It is because of this, in fact, that some Jewish and Christian scholars have been groping with the question of whether, when all of Hitler’s henchmen and their victims are gone, the Jewish community will have any ability to grant forgiveness for the Holocaust. The answer seems to be that it will not. For me, though, this is not a terribly difficult question to begin with: I believe that the Holocaust is among what Moses Maimonides, in his Mishneh Torah, the 12th-century compilation of Jewish religious law, suggested were sins so hideous as to be beyond the realm of human forgiveness.

Nevertheless, many in the American Jewish community at least want to pursue reconciliation, if not forgiveness, with others. They are understandably eager to respond to Germany’s gestures toward the Jewish community and Israel, as well as to public statements of remorse by Protestant and Catholic leaders for the mistreatment of Jews. I certainly endorse reconciliation with Christian communities in general. I also understand the importance of Jewish and Israeli links to Germany today, just as I understand how U.S. national interests dictated that our main World War II enemies, Germany and Japan, become our postwar allies or that today we have shifting alliances with former foes like Russia and China. Such is the world of realpolitik.

On a personal level, however, I feel quite differently. I have never sought any restitution payments from Germany, and while I am mindful of how many Jews in Germany today are from the former Soviet Union, I still find it hard to comprehend why any Jew would want to live in that country. As for myself, I will never again set foot on German soil. I flinch just hearing someone talking German, the language I spoke myself when I first arrived in the United States at age 7.

In short, then, there are obvious strategic and practical reasons for reconciling and dealing with Germany. None, however, would move me to forgive all Germans today even if I had the ability to do so. In the end Germans will have to ask the Almighty for such absolution (though I sure would like to be there to have my say during those conversations).

ANTI-SEMITIC ATTACKS ACROSS U.S.

The 2009 Anti-Defamation League Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents counted a total of 1,211 incidents of vandalism, harassment and physical assaults against Jewish individuals, property, and community institutions across the U.S.

Using a newly revised methodology for reporting and tracking incidents, the Anti-Defamation League Audit identified 29 physical assaults on Jewish individuals, 760 incidents of anti-Semitic harassment and threats, and 422 cases of anti-Semitic vandalism during the 2009 calendar year.

“America is not immune to anti-Semitism, and 2009 was no different in this regard than in any other year,” said Abraham H. Foxman, ADL National Director. “It is a sobering reality that as Jews have become more accepted in society, there remains a consistent hatred of Jews among too many. The fact that Jews continue to be singled out for acts of hate on an average of three times per day in this country is a disturbing reality that we have to confront.”

Major anti-Semitic incidents in 2009 included the shooting attack on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., a thwarted plot by four Muslim converts to bomb synagogues in Riverdale, New York, and repeated picketing of institutions and community centers by members of a Kansas-based church.

According to the ADL press release, 2009 also saw the Internet playing an increasingly dominant role in the dissemination of anti-Semitic messages and content through social networking and content-sharing Web sites. While the ADL monitors and exposes online anti-Semitism, it does not include statistics on anti-Semitism in cyberspace as part of the Audit.

The ADL audit comprises data from 46 states and the District of Columbia, including official crime statistics as well as information provided to ADL’s regional offices. The audit encompasses criminal acts, such as vandalism, violence and threats of violence, as well as non-criminal incidents of harassment and intimidation.

LONG-LOST TELEGRAM...

(Continued from page 6)

meeting between Stiel and Zaklikowski. Recently, the two grandsons whose grandparents never met, but shared a bond in the form of a piece of paper, sat down in New York City.

The four-hour meeting was deeply emotional for the pair. Stiel was able to see his grandfather’s handwriting for the first time.

“This text, written in his handwriting, is the closest I’ve ever gotten to my grandfather,” said Stiel, whose family’s photographs and other mementos were all lost in the war.

At the same time, he continued, “it’s not every day that you meet someone whose grandfather was one of the last people assisted by my grandfather.”

For Pollin, the event crystallized the self-sacrifice of Stiel, a man who, like his other co-religionists, was marked for death by the Nazis, but went out of his way, traveling for hours to The Hague and back, just to transmit a message for a couple that he

most likely had never met. She plans on publishing the story of the telegram, complete with photos of the families, on the museum’s Web site.

Amidst all the horror, said Zaklikowski, there were people “who tried their best to assist. No one knows how many, but there were people around the world saving others.”

He added that he was inspired to meet Stiel.

“It was amazing to meet someone who has been through so much and has spent his life reconciling what he went through,” he explained. “He has been holding on to such an interest in his grandfather, and has been looking for how to bring him into his life.”

Stiel notes that the Bukiet telegram helps personalize the enormity of the Holocaust.

“We need to remember,” said Stiel, “that while we say that six million people were murdered, each one of them was an individual who had their own story and their own world that was destroyed.”

ANNE FRANK TREE FALLS OVER

The monumental chestnut tree that cheered Anne Frank while she was in hiding from the Nazis was toppled by wind and heavy rain on August 23.

The once mighty tree, now diseased and rotted through the trunk, snapped about 3 feet above ground and crashed across several gardens. It damaged a brick wall



The splintered trunk of the monumental chestnut tree that comforted Anne Frank while she hid from the Nazis during World War II is seen after it fell.

and several sheds, but nearby buildings — including the Anne Frank House museum — escaped unscathed.

A global campaign to save the chestnut, widely known as The Anne Frank Tree, was launched in 2007 after city officials deemed it a safety hazard and ordered it felled. The tree was granted a last-minute reprieve after a battle in court.

The 150-year-old tree suffered from fungus and moths that had caused more than half its trunk to rot.

Two years ago city workmen encased the trunk in a steel support system to pre-

vent it from falling, but that failed under windy weather.

Parts of the tree were later being offered for sale on Dutch auction website marktplaats.nl. The highest offer was 10 million euros (\$12.7 million), Reuters reported.

Many clones of the tree have been taken, including 11 planted at sites around the United States and 150 at a park in Amsterdam. It is not clear whether a new tree will replace the original one on the same spot, since it rests on property belonging to a neighbor.

Anne Frank made several references to the tree in the diary that she kept during the 25 months she remained indoors until her family was arrested in August 1944.

“Nearly every morning I go to the attic to blow the stuffy air out of my lungs,” she wrote on Feb. 23, 1944. “From my favorite spot on the floor I look up

at the blue sky and the bare chestnut tree, on whose branches little raindrops shine, appearing like silver, and at the seagulls and other birds as they glide on the wind.”

“Our chestnut tree is in full blossom. It is covered with leaves and is even more beautiful than last year,” she wrote in May 1944, not long before she was betrayed to the Nazis.

Anne Frank died of typhus in the *Bergen-Belsen* concentration camp in March 1945. Her diary was recovered and published after her death. It has become the most widely read document to emerge from the Holocaust.

AUSCHWITZ SURVIVOR RECALLS DARING 1944 ESCAPE

(Continued from page 5)

farm. Bielecki decided to go into hiding in Krakow — a fateful choice they believed would improve their chances of avoiding capture by the Nazis. The couple spent their last night together under a pear tree in an orchard, saying their goodbyes and making plans to meet right after the war.

After the Soviet army rolled through Krakow in January 1945, Bielecki left the city where he had been hiding from Nazi pursuit and walked 25 miles (40 kilometers) along snow-covered roads to meet Cybulska at the farmhouse.

But he was four days too late.

Cybulska, not aware that the area where she had been hiding had been liberated three weeks before Krakow, gave up waiting for him, concluding her “Juracek” either was dead or had abandoned their plans.

She got on a train to Warsaw, planning to find an uncle in the United States. On the train she met a Jewish man, David Zacharowitz, and the two began a relationship and eventually married. They headed to Sweden, then to Cybulska’s uncle in New York, who helped them start a jewelry business. Zacharowitz died in 1975.

In Poland, Bielecki eventually started a family of his own and worked as the director of a school for car mechanics. He had no news of Cybulska and had no way of finding her.

In her report Cybulska said that she was haunted in the years after she left Poland by a wish to see her hometown and to find Jurek, if he was alive.

Sheer chance made her wish come true.

While talking to her Polish cleaning woman in 1982, Cybulska related her Auschwitz escape story.

The woman was stunned.

“I know the story, I saw a man on Polish TV saying he had led his Jewish girlfriend out of Auschwitz,” the cleaning lady told Cybulska, according to Bielecki.

She tracked down his phone number and one early morning in May 1983 the telephone rang in Bielecki’s apartment in *Nowy Targ*.

“I heard someone laughing — or crying — on the phone and then a female voice said “Juracku, this is me, your little Cyla,” Bielecki recalls.

A few weeks later they met at Krakow Airport. He brought 39 red roses, one for each year they spent apart. She visited him in Poland many times, and they jointly visited the Auschwitz memorial, the farmer family that hid her and many other places, staying together in hotels.

“The love started to come back,” Bielecki said.

“Cyla was telling me: leave your wife, come with me to America,” he recalls. “She cried a lot when I told her: Look, I have such fine children, I have a son, how could I do that?”

She returned to New York and wrote to him: “Jurek I will not come again,” Bielecki recalled.

They never met again and she did not reply to his letters.

Cybulska died a few years later in New York in 2002.

In 1985, the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem awarded Bielecki the Righteous Among the Nations title for saving Cybulska.

“I was very much in love with Cyla, very much,” Bielecki said. “Sometimes I cried after the war, that she was not with me. I dreamed of her at night and woke up crying.

“Fate decided for us, but I would do the same again.”

SATAN’S ADMINISTRATION: JOURNEY INTO NAZI DEATH RECORDS

(Continued from page 5)

archive in *Bad Arolsen* in 1958.

Other documents carry enormously weighty importance when confronting various distorted and false claims related to the Holocaust. For instance, the claim that the average German would not have necessarily known about the forced labor camps and what was taking place in them. To this end, Flor took out a book listing prisoners at *Dachau* and *Buchenwald*. On a daily basis, it was listed precisely where each one of the thousands of prisoners worked — in which village, town, or German city he was forced to work, dressed in prisoners’ garb.

“Residents throughout Germany could not help but to see who arrived to perform forced labor next to them, and for an extended period of time,” she said. “This little book cancels any possibility for feigning innocence and lack of knowledge.”

“*Speisezettel – Auschwitz*” is written on another document randomly pulled from the shelf. It is the list of food the prisoners who passed the selection received in the notorious Auschwitz death camp. For instance, on Monday 7.12.1942, a “hard laborer” in Auschwitz received 450 grams of bread, 30 grams of margarine, and 125 grams of cheese. If you open the “menu” to two years later, this measly ration seems like a dream come true.

Moving on down the corridor: a brown card of the Nazi secret police, the *Gestapo*. Already in November 1935, the *Gestapo* sought to keep a watchful eye on a young German man suspected of “involvement in separatist activities.” Last

name: Adenauer. First name: Konrad. Seventeen years later, he was the statesman who signed the Reparations Agreement between West Germany and the State of Israel.

And it continues. The list of children who boarded the ship *Exodus*, documents identifying Ivan Demjanjuk that are currently being used in court. The fluorescent-light-flooded room does not cease to amaze. After a seven-hour visit, I am left with the feeling that I only got a small taste.

Beyond the vast historical interest such a place holds, no less important is what the archive provides on an individual basis for Holocaust survivors, as well as the second and third generation, who now can check with ease and accuracy impossible in the past what happened to their families. This is performed through the International Tracing Service located in *Bad Arolsen*.

On April 22, 1945, the prisoner Rachmin Feingold died in the *Dachau* concentration camp. The letters Sch-J are listed on his card. The archive staff, fluent in the Nazi bureaucratic language, translated the shorthand — “Prisoner without rights.” Reason for being held: “Jewish.”

What did 22-year-old prisoner Feingold die from? This is not listed on *Dachau*’s death list. Apparently from hunger. Just a week later on April 29, the American military arrived at the site and liberated the

camp. Rachmin (Yerachmiel) Feingold is my grandmother’s brother, the uncle my mother will never meet.

In *Bad Arolsen*, I received his death certificate, the possibility to see precisely where he died and to know for the first time the date it happened, just seven days before liberation.

The level of detail and documentation is astounding. Prisoner A-24652 was brought to Auschwitz in the transport on August 19, 1944, a day after her 16th birthday. This prisoner is my grandmother. She was lucky enough to pass the selection. Fortunately, 16 was an age at which it was somehow still possible to survive in Auschwitz.

The last documentation of the masses of people who arrived in Auschwitz and were subsequently sent to their deaths is the list of transports that arrived in the camp. For those who arrived in the camp and were first sent to forced labor, and only afterwards to their death, the cause of death is listed as “heart attack” or “pneumonia.”

The Nazi obsession with keeping records spared just one detail. In no list of deaths in all of *Bad Arolsen* will you find the word “gas.”

MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF GERMANY			
FRAGENBogen FÜR INsASSEN DER KONZENTRATIONSLAGER			
CONCENTRATION CAMP INMATES QUESTIONNAIRE			
Name des Konzentrationslagers Name of Concentration Camp	Buchenwald		Datum Date
Ort Location	Buchenwald		
Name des Lagerinsassen Name of Inmate	Wiesel	First	Victims
Gebohrte Sex	male	Geburtsdatum Date of Birth	Oct 4 - 1912
Staatsangehörigkeit Nationality	Austrian	Geburtsort Place of Birth	St. Pölten
Wohnungschrift Home Address	Mannsdorfergasse 1, Wien		
Beruf Occupation	Student		
Datum der Verhaftung Date of Arrest	April 16 - 1943	Durch Wen By whom	Police
Ort der Verhaftung Place of Arrest	Mannsdorfergasse		
Grund für Verhaftung Reason for Arrest	being a Jew		

Elie Wiesel’s record. ‘Reason for arrest: Being Jewish.’

Those who wish to browse through the archives can visit *Bad Arolsen* or send inquiries via email. The Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum, which works in close cooperation with the *Bad Arolsen* archives, holds several copies of the original document.

Both websites, as well as the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, share an impressive computerized database, but searching through it can be difficult. So, the *Bad Arolsen* archive offers personal assistance to visitors.

The archive was first opened to the public in 2007. If it were moved to Berlin, it would instantly become a must-see site for tourists visiting the city — certainly for Israelis. But it is located a four-hour drive from the German capital, far from any city of interest. Because of this, far too many people do not even know of its existence.

Flor, who holds a master’s Degree in History, and moved to the city in order to work in the archives, would like to change this.

“I lived for one year in Israel, and this period left me with the great desire to help those who suffered under the Nazi regime. The past I can’t change, but if I can do anything for the survivors and their families in the present, this is the main reason I am here.”

First published by Ynetnews.

HOW AUSTRALIA BECAME A HAVEN FOR WAR CRIMINALS

DAVID HUMPHRIES,
THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

The old woman looked across the courtroom where Ivan Polyukovich was facing trial for the 1942 murder of 850 Jews in Ukraine, 51 years earlier. She'd been asked to identify the man she was giving evidence against, and she took her duty solemnly.

She glanced over at Polyukovich in the dock and settled her gaze on a man in the public gallery. There, she indicated through an interpreter.

The hapless man, it turned out, was a tourist from New York; a Jew who had read of Australia's first Nazi war crimes trial in the morning newspaper that day in 1993 and had dropped in on the Adelaide Supreme Court out of curiosity.

It was one of many nails in the coffin of Australian enthusiasm for the pursuit of perpetrators of heinous acts against the mostly weak and vulnerable in foreign theaters of war. Once bitten, the authorities became twice shy.

The ambivalence fostered by reluctance served as comfort to dozens of suspected war criminals and rights abusers who had made Australia their home.

Little national pride is drawn from the disappearance of another alleged war criminal, Dragan Vasiljkovic, just as the High Court cleared the way for his extradition to Croatia.

Zagreb has been pursuing him for years for acts of horror carried out while he headed a Serb paramilitary squad during the Balkan conflict.

An Australian warrant for his arrest was issued four years ago and Croatia alerted authorities here to its assessment that Vasiljkovic – aka Captain Dragan, aka Daniel Snedden – was a flight risk.

The number of immigration officers dedicated to screening for war criminals was halved two years ago to five.

The Australian Federal Police have trained two officers in 10 years in the skills of investigating war crimes.

Australia refuses to follow Britain's lead in backdating to the early 1990s new laws intended to facilitate the domestic prosecution of atrocities committed not in conflicts between states (the old yardstick for war crimes) but within states. This would enable the pursuit of offenders from Rwanda, the Congo, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka.

Canada pursued 1800 cases in the past decade; Australia, 30. Labor commits the party to closing loopholes and

boosting resources to “ensure that any perpetrators found in Australia can be brought to justice.”

Australia put \$15 million last year towards the running of international war crimes tribunals, about the same as it cost Canada to run the world's finest war crimes domestic program.

And when things do happen, they move at a trickle.

Polyukovich, one of three Australian residents prosecuted for Nazi war crimes, was acquitted. His prosecution cost \$17 million. He died four years later in Adelaide, aged 81.

The reliability of witnesses to crimes half a century old was but one difficulty in prosecuting Nazi criminals. Heinrich Wagner was also due to stand trial in 1993, but cardiologists said he had suffered a heart attack and a trial would prove fatal.

A foreign television crew filmed him apparently fit and well seven years later in Adelaide, his recuperation no doubt assisted by the retreat of attention.

In 834 cases examined by the Special Investigations Unit over its five years from 1987 to 1992, falsehood was found to be rife and about a quarter of the suspects dead.

And like many countries, Australia was wary of documented “evidence” emerging from the Communist bloc.

The SIU era was established after an inquiry headed by Andrew Menzies, a former Attorney-General's Department official, found that war criminals had taken haven in Australia after World War II. The inquiry was prompted by the journalist Mark Aarons's revelations in 1986 of Nazis' postwar infiltration of Western countries.

Government patience with the SIU wore thin after Paul Keating replaced the Israel ally Bob Hawke as prime minister.

Resentment had been considerable in government ranks, and the lack of courtroom success, alongside \$20 million in public expenditure, armed its opponents with the executioner's sword.

The government pulled the plug on the prosecution of Karlis Ozols, though insiders said it was the best prospect for success.

“A lot of resources have been put into the fourth prosecution and he's a very important target and is a far more serious offender than any of the three that we've previously charged,” a furious Bob Greenwood, QC, said at the time.

Greenwood was the SIU's first leader. By the time he quit in 1991, he was “convinced that I was dealing with a government of almost nil moral fiber.”

TELL ME A STORY, TELL ME THE TRUTH

(Continued from page 4)

jecting her pre-war home memories, understandably evoked at a holiday time though she was constantly living with the past. How penetrating and poetic is the author's observation, “Our Passover dishes were purchased second-hand in a refugee camp in Germany. And like our family the set was incomplete” (p.150). I was more fortunate since three of my mother's six siblings came to then-Palestine in the 1930s. However, Gina enjoyed a tender bond with her father whose stories, unlike her mother's, were spiritually uplifting. The account of his dying while recalling his daughter Drora who perished in Auschwitz, with Gina holding onto him, is deeply moving.

The role of Yiddish in Gina's life, just like in my own, for we both were exposed to it at birth, is profound. “My mother tongue

was Yiddish and it already has been designated a dead language...I had been raised with the values and mores of a culture that was gone before I was born, leaving me lonely and hungering for something I never had” (p.148).

The flavorful portrayal of immigrant life in Montreal, and of Gina's falling in love in Israel only to be thwarted by the mother's cunning over-protection, as well as other enchanting vignettes, provide for an essential read to better understand and appreciate all affected by the monumental Shoah.

Rabbi Dr. Israel Zoberman, spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach, Virginia, was born in 1945 in Chu, Kazakhstan, to Polish survivors. From 1947 to 1949 he lived in Germany's Wetzlar Displaced Persons Camp.

WOMEN'S ROLE IN HOLOCAUST MAY EXCEED OLD NOTIONS

(Continued from page 11)

slave laborers, in Galicia, in occupied Poland. She later confessed to having murdered six Jewish children, aged 6 to 12. She came across them while out riding in her carriage. She was the mother of two young children, and was 25 at the time. Nearly naked, the Jewish children had apparently escaped from a railroad car bound for the Sobibor camp. She took them home, fed them, then led them into the woods and shot them one by one.

She told her interrogators that she had done so, in part, because she wanted to prove herself to the men.

She was tried in East Germany and served a life sentence.

Ms. Altvater Zelle went to Ukraine as a 22-year-old single woman and became the secretary of a district commissar, Wilhelm Westerheide. Survivors remembered her as the notorious Fräulein Hanna, and accused her, among other things, of smashing a toddler's head against a ghetto wall and of throwing children to their deaths from the window of a makeshift hospital.

Back in Germany, Ms. Altvater Zelle married, became a welfare case worker for

youth in her hometown, Minden, and adopted a son.

In Commissar Westerheide's region, about 20,000 Jews were wiped out. He and his loyal secretary were tried twice in West Germany, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They were acquitted both times because of contradictions that arose in the testimonies of witnesses gathered over 20 years, the former chief prosecutor in the case told Ms. Lower.

One survivor, Moses Messer, said he saw the woman he knew as Fräulein Hanna smashing the toddler to death against the wall. He told lawyers in Haifa, Israel, in the early 1960s: “Such sadism from a woman I have never seen. I will never forget this scene.”



Wendy Lower, who has studied women's participation in Nazi killings, at the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum in Jerusalem.

A HOLOCAUST NARRATIVE IN THE WORDS OF REFUGEE JEWS

(Continued from page 4)

children brought to Britain by the *Kindertransports*, and the groups of children who arrived, unescorted, in Switzerland – as well as the young adults and families who made their way to Palestine.

Dwork and Van Pelt carry their narrative into the postwar years.

Jewish observers, they write, realized that the European Jewish communities “had suffered total annihilation.” As one observer wrote, “there is no sound stock” in all the German-occupied countries “upon which to graft the stricken members” who had survived.

Another stirring account of the will to survive as annihilation loomed is provided by *Who Will Write Our History?* which details the creation of the *Oyneg Shabbes*, the secret archives of the Warsaw Ghetto, and its rediscovery after the war.

The account, by Samuel D. Kassow, a professor at Trinity College in Hartford, was originally published last year to little notice by Indiana University Press. It has now been republished (Vintage, paper-

back, \$16.95) for the wider audience it fully deserves.

Some 450,000 Jews were forced into the four-square-kilometer Warsaw Ghetto during the fall of 1940. After deaths from hunger and deportations to the camps, only some 60,000 were left when the Jewish underground launched a bold but hopeless rising in April 1943.

During those years, interviews were recorded and documents were collected by researchers, many of them teenagers, under the direction of historian Emanuel Ringelblum.

Only three of those researchers survived the war and Kassow credits one of them, Rachel Auerbach, with leading the search to find the archives that had been buried inside the ghetto.

As David Graber, a Jewish teenager working on the archives project wrote in August 1942, “What we were unable to cry and shriek out to the world we buried in the ground.”

First published in the Boston Globe.

HOLOCAUST SCHOLARS STILL GRAPPLE WITH DIFFICULT HISTORY

(Continued from page 10)

their bodies for food to survive, which Shik contends falls under the category of sexual abuse and was relatively rare. But she thinks targeting women's experiences is worthwhile.

“There is still a need to do research comparing male and female experiences in the Holocaust,” stated Shik. Her research is based largely on accounts, testimonies, and memoirs written by survivors — both male and female. Part of these testimonies examine the early postwar period's unvarnished accounts of women and male survivors.

“There is no lesson from their experience — they are just telling their stories,” said Shik of pre-1960s testimonies in an interview.

One question Shik poses is whether some of the things women lived through prevented survivors from recounting their experiences as the years wore on and their families grew.

The research being done by Carter-Chand, Shik, and others on the Holocaust is part of an already existing wealth of information on the topic, much of which is housed at Yad Vashem.

OUTREACH PROGRAM IN THE HAMPTONS

The American Society for Yad Vashem was delighted to have its first outreach program in the Hamptons on July 19, 2010, graciously hosted by Leslie Adler, good friend of Marilyn Rubenstein, ASYV benefactor.

Leslie opened her beautiful home in Sagaponack to 35 of her and Marilyn’s friends, for a lovely luncheon and program to introduce the work of the American Society for Yad Vashem.

The participants came from the local Hamptons area, as well as from New York City, a three hour drive away.

Eli Zborowski, Chairman of ASYV, retold his poignant personal story as a Holocaust survivor, and spoke about the mission of the organization, to support Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust are preserved for future generations.

The Guest speaker was Rabbi Avraham Bronstein, Assistant Rabbi of the Hamptons Synagogue. Rabbi Bronstein gave an interesting talk about the connection be-



Leslie Adler, Event Chair; Elizabeth Mundlak Zborowski, Director of Projects, ASYV; Eli Zborowski, Chairman, ASYV; Marilyn Rubenstein; and Rabbi Avraham Bronstein, Assistant Rabbi of the Hamptons Synagogue.

tween the mission of Yad Vashem and the holiday of *Tisha B’Av*, which our event preceded by one day.

The feedback from the participants was excellent, with everyone talking excitedly about what they had learned, and express-

ing interest in becoming more involved in our work.

Many thanks to Leslie Adler and Marilyn Rubenstein for a wonderful afternoon, hopefully the first of many in this lovely community.

AN EVENING WITH CURIOUS GEORGE

On June 9th over 100 members and friends of the American Society for Yad Vashem Young Leadership Associates gathered at the Jewish Museum in New York City for An Evening with Curious George – and the Wartime Journey that Saved Him.

This very successful event was chaired by Abbi & Jeremy Halpern and Ilana & Mitchell Kahn. The attendees were treated to a talk by Ilana Apelker, American Society for Yad Vashem Education, who spoke of Margaret & H.A. Rey and the famous children’s characters they created, as well as the amazing story of their escape with their stories and artwork from the Nazis in occupied France to South America.

“We were so pleased to see so many of our young people gathered at such an event,” said Chairman Eli Zborowski. “The Society looks forward to continuing to provide an educational venue where the Young Leadership Associates can get together and continue to learn about the Holocaust and ways it affected all our lives. I look forward to seeing many more of these types of events.”



Event chairs Jeremy & Abbi Halpern and Ilana & Mitchell Kahn with Eli Zborowski, Chairman, American Society for Yad Vashem.

POLAND UNVEILS MEMORIAL TO WARSAW GHETTO FIGHTERS

BY VANESSA GERA, AP

Polish officials unveiled a new monument honoring the last group of Jewish insurgents to escape from Warsaw’s burning ghetto in 1943 as the Nazis crushed the revolt against their brutal rule.

It was a doomed struggle, but some managed to survive, and today the act of resistance stands as a source of pride for many Jews, especially in Israel. With the remaining ghetto population facing mass deportations to death camps, the insurgents rose up in April 1943 and managed to hold off the German army for nearly a month before being crushed.

The bronze memorial shows a sewage canal rising vertically from the ground with disembodied hands symbolically climbing their way to freedom. It honors insurgents who escaped the ghetto to the city’s “Aryan” side through a stinking, dark, and claustrophobic sewage canal.

The monument stands on *Prosta* Street where the last group of about 50 fighters emerged on May 10, 1943. The leader of that escape, Simha Rotem, was honored by officials at the ceremony.

“We are here today to commemorate the heroic deed of a great Pole and a great Jew,” Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski said. “We must remember that his heroism did not



end in 1943. Together with several of his companions, he also took part a year later in the Warsaw Uprising,” another ill-fated insurgency, that one by the entire city.

Rotem, whose nom de guerre was Kazik, remembered the uprising as “suicidal.”

“We stood no chance; we were convinced that no one would survive this fight,”

Rotem said. However, after many days of “fighting against the Germans, it turned out that the majority of us were still breathing. In spite of impossible conditions, we were prepared to carry on with the fight, but we were threatened with being burned alive.”

At that point, with the battle lost, Rotem said it was necessary to cross the besieged ghetto walls and “get out of this hell.” He recalled that several attempts were unsuccessful before he led the final escape. The events are described in a book he has written, *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter*.

Sikorski said that Rotem “had limited contacts with the world outside the ghetto but nevertheless he managed to do something which seemed virtually impossible — to organize the transport and to contact the sewage workers, without whose cooperation covering those few kilometers (miles) in the sewage canal would have been impossible.”

One of the monument’s designers, architect Krzysztof Stefaniak, said the hands are meant to recall the drama of the fighters’ escape as well as the “horror and scene of terror.”

International Society for Yad Vashem
MARTYRDOM AND RESISTANCE
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Eli Zborowski,
Editor-in-Chief

Yefim Krasnyanskiy, M.A.,
Editor

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