

# MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



Vol. 38-No. 2

ISSN 0892-1571

November/December 2011-Kislev/Tevet 5772

## PRESERVING THE PAST – GUARDING THE FUTURE: 30 YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENT

### ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER OF THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM

The annual gathering of the American and International Societies for Yad Vashem is an experience in remembrance and continuity. This year the organization is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary. At the Tribute Dinner that was held on November 20 at the Sheraton Hotel in New York, survivors were joined by the generations that are their inheritors of Jewish continuity.

The theme of the 2011 dinner was “Preserving the Past – Guarding the Future: 30 Years of Achievement.” The contributions of 30 “Pioneers” and 30 “Visionaries” were recognized at this year’s event, which was attended by more than 800 hundred people, including members of the diplomatic corps, dignitaries, and heads of major Jewish organizations, showing their support of the Yad Vashem Memorial.

The release of the biography of the founder of the American Society for Yad Vashem, Eli Zborowski – *A Life of Leadership: Eli Zborowski: from the Underground to Industry to Holocaust Remembrance*, written by Rochel and George Berman – was noted at the event. Under Eli Zborowski’s leadership more than \$100 million has been raised to support the Holocaust Memorial. In his address to the Dinner guests Eli Zborowski said:

“On this 30th anniversary of the American and International Societies for Yad Vashem, I reflect back on our courageous beginning, when a group of friends, dedicated survivors, met to discuss the formation of an organization committed to Remembrance. Firm in their resolve to help make Yad Vashem the world’s center for Holocaust remembrance and education, we established the American and International Societies for Yad Vashem. Those were the Pioneers.

“Over the years, this group of Pioneers was joined by an outstanding group of Visionaries, who were determined to ensure the future of our organization, and through this the future of Yad Vashem.

“We gather here tonight to pay tribute to the Pioneers and Visionaries, those who are with us today and those who have

passed on but whose spirit joins us on this joyous occasion. I am proud to see how far we have come since that first meeting, thanks to the generosity of all who are here tonight and those we remember with love. We witness the growth of Yad Vashem, its many sites and museums built, and programs established, through our efforts.

“And we see our future leaders, the Young Leadership Associates, many following their parents’ footsteps, who are determined to ensure remembrance.



David Halpern, Dinner Chairman; Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; Ira Mitzner, Dinner Chairman; and Leonard Wilf, Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

“Of the many endeavors the American Society has undertaken in recent years, none brings us more pride than the growth and development of our Young Leadership Associates, members of the second and third generations. Each year, for the past decade, they have sponsored a Professional Educational Conference, on various themes relating to the Holocaust, that attracts several hundred teachers from the Tri-State area and beyond. By transmitting the lessons of the Holocaust to present and future generations, these young people are increasing awareness and fostering sensitivity in reducing hatred, intolerance,

and prejudice. We are always pleased to have with us and recognize the major leadership of this spectacular 800 member association.

“The Young Leadership Associates are the guardians of the future and will be responsible for ensuring our legacy.

“Our thoughts tonight are bittersweet; we remember our loved ones and all which was lost in the Holocaust, but we are energized by our determination to ensure a future free of hatred and prejudice. I am

the imperative of Holocaust remembrance and thus help ensure that no nation – anywhere, anytime – should ever again suffer a calamity of the unprecedented nature and scope that befell our people some 70 years ago in Europe,” said Rabbi Lau.

Recognizing the tremendous contribution of the Societies’ chairman Eli Zborowski to the cause of Holocaust remembrance, Rabbi Lau said.

“Eli, I pray that the Creator of the world continues to grant you a long, healthy, and vigorous life that will enable you to carry on your hallowed labor of memory, as well as to transmit your torch onwards to the coming generations.”

The importance of the work of the American Society for Yad Vashem and Eli Zborowski’s personal devotion to Holocaust remembrance was the central theme of the speech delivered by the Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, Avner Shalev.

“As we gather to celebrate the thirty years of achievement that have marked the unique existence and activity of the American Society for Yad Vashem, I join you in recalling and saluting the founding pioneers who established the Society three decades ago. All were distinguished by a matchless verve and dedication to ensuring remembrance of the Holocaust that they and their loved ones had personally endured. That group of vigorous, deeply committed survivors has been led from the start by Eli Zborowski, the Society’s visionary founder.

“Eli Zborowski is a dear friend and true partner in the ongoing mission to establish Yad Vashem in Jerusalem as the world’s leading institution for Holocaust remembrance.

“Eli was instilled by his parents with the values of integrity, diligence, and responsibility, as well as a strong Zionist legacy. These principles have motivated him to ensure the future of Holocaust commemoration and education for generations to come. He was among the first Holocaust survivors to bring these goals to the center

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## HOLOCAUST MASS GRAVES MEMORIALIZED

The Lo Tishkach Foundation, in cooperation with the Association of Jewish Communities of Ukraine (VAAD) and the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, is commemorating the mass murders of Jews in Ukrainian towns with the setting of memorial stones at these sites, marking 70 years since the mass killings of Jews during the Holocaust.



Memorial stones to be set at mass grave sites.

Renovation and memorialization projects at these sites have been made possible following surveys at all Jewish cemeteries and Holocaust mass grave sites in Kiev Oblast, undertaken by local youth and students, and coordination by the Lo Tishkach Foundation.

The placing of official memorials at these sites has been enabled by a kind donation

from Jonathan J. Rikoon, facilitated by the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.

Memorial stones were to be inaugurated in *Baryshivka, Fastiv, Dymier, Brovary, and Tarascha*.

The memorialization of these sites marks the first stage in a vast renovation and memorialization project currently undertaken by the Lo Tishkach Foundation, which was set up in 2006 by the Conference of European Rabbis and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany with a remit to preserve the memory and protect the thousands of Jewish burial sites across the European continent.

Since 2009, the Lo Tishkach Foundation has surveyed hundreds of sites across Ukraine, taking in the Oblasts of *Cherkasy, Chernihiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kiev, Odessa and Zakarpattia*, and representing over one third of the territory of Ukraine.

As results from these surveys are processed, detailing the current situation on the ground at these sites, many further renovation and memorialization projects are scheduled.

The Lo Tishkach Foundation said it was grateful for the support provided by the United States Commission, enabling the protection and memorialization of these sites, so that the memory of Jewish victims killed in the Holocaust will not be forgotten.

## MOSCOW GETS FIRST PRIVATE MUSEUM OF JEWISH HISTORY

The first private museum of Jewish history has opened in Moscow. The museum's collection covers more than 200 years of the history of Jewish life in Russia from the late 18th century through to the late Soviet period.

The museum's collection totals over 4,000 exhibits, most of which were re-deemed from private collectors. The first part of it rediscovers the Jewish identity through traditions, culture, beliefs, and the way Jewish communities in Russia used to live.

The second part of the collection digs into the social issues. It considers the Jewish community within a historical context, exploring the professions and crafts of the Jews, and their relations with the government.

A significant number of exhibits tell the stories of the USSR's Jewish community.

The display features dozens of photographs, portraits, rare documents, art pieces by Jewish handicraftsmen and their working tools and equipment, and religious cultural relics. For example, the exhibition offers the chance to see an armchair used for the traditional circumcision ritual, cases for storing Torah

scrolls, ritual lamps, and many other items of interest.

The newly-opened museum also recreates a special area that was common for most synagogues – the *genizah*. This



room was used to store worn-out Hebrew books and papers on religious topics, mainly Torah scrolls that were stored there before they could receive a proper cemetery burial.

The founder of the museum, Sergey Ustinov, vice-president of the Russian Jewish Congress, has sponsored the creation of the Jewish History Museum in Moscow.

## ID CARDS TO COMMEMORATE SHOAH DEAD

Israel is unveiling new identity cards for its citizens that will commemorate the Jews killed in the Nazi Holocaust of World War II.

The serial numbers will begin at 6,000,000, the number of Jews who perished in the genocide. The new cards will also include six Stars of David, representing the six million victims.

Baruch Dadon, head of the new ID card project in Israel's Interior Ministry, said a government committee tasked with planning the updated, biometric cards came

up with the idea to incorporate Holocaust symbolism into the design, a sort of honorary citizenship for the six million victims.

"We haven't forgotten them," said Dadon of the Holocaust victims. "They are with us ... and they will be with us in the future."

The numbers serve a purely technical function for indexing the number of cards printed. But Dadon said the symbolic numbering was not trivial.

"We are the state of the Jews," said Dadon. "I think this was necessary."

## HITLER'S FIRST "OFFICIAL" PLAN TO MURDER JEWS BOUGHT BY HOLOCAUST ORGANIZATION

The first known document in which Adolf Hitler wrote about the "irrevocable removal" of Jews has been bought by a Holocaust museum in Los Angeles.

The 1919 diatribe charts his plans for their extermination a full 21 years before the massacres began in Russia and in death camps in occupied Poland.

The paper, known as the "Gemlich Letter," was sent to Adolf Gemlich, who was in charge of the post-World War I German army.

Writing about the "Jewish Question," he describes Jews as being "like a racial tuberculosis," says that there needs to be an "elimination of the privileges of the Jews," and calls for an "Aliens Law."

The most chilling line, however, is a line in which he makes no apology and does not try to cover up his intentions when he writes: "The ultimate objective of such legislation must, however, be the irrevocable removal of the Jews in general."

The letter has been bought by the Holocaust remembrance organization for £100,000 and will go on display at the Museum of Tolerance.

Scholars have known about the letter for some time, and it is considered significant because it shows just how far back Hitler started vocalizing his ideas to wipe out Jews.

Historian Saul Friedlander said: "It is Hitler's first written statement about the Jews. It shows that they were at the very heart of his political passions from the beginning."

Rabbi Marvin Hier, founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, said he acquired the four-page letter through a dealer in May.

He said: "In terms of the Holocaust we have nothing that would compare to this document."

## MONTENEGRO TO MAKE JUDAISM A STATE RELIGION

Montenegro's Prime Minister Igor Lukšić told Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger his country would recognize Judaism as a state religion.

During a meeting held in the capital Podgorica, the head of state said the Jewish faith will receive the same legal status as Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity and Islam.

"I will do everything I can to encourage this issue, whether through legislation or amending existing regulations," Lukšić told Metzger, who was accompanied by a delegation from the Rabbinical Center of Europe (RCE) and the local Jewish community.

There are no more than a handful of Jews living in the republic but state officials hoped elevating the religion's status would encourage interest and investment from Jews around the world in Montenegro.

Yasha Alfandri, president of the Jewish community, was quoted as welcoming the

At the time of the letter, Hitler was in Munich, where he was struggling to find a purpose after the slaughter in the trenches of WWI.

In July that year he was appointed a police spy of an intelligence commando when he was sent to infiltrate the German Workers' Party.

However, he became obsessed with the notion of a "non-Jewish" idea of Socialism and liked the anti-Semitic, anti-Marxist ideas of the party.

Just two months later, founder Anton Drexler became impressed with Hitler's oratory skills and invited him to join the party.

### EXTRACTS FROM THE LETTER

"The danger posed by Jewry for our people today finds expression in the undeniable aversion of wide sections of our people... it arises mostly from personal contact and from the personal impression which the individual Jew leaves, almost always an unfavorable one.

"And thus comes the fact that there lives amongst us a non-German, alien race which neither wishes nor is able to sacrifice its racial character or to deny its feeling, thinking, and striving.

"This thinking and striving after money and power, and the feelings that go along with it, serve the purposes of the Jew who is unscrupulous in the choice of methods and pitiless in their employment.

"In his effects and consequences he is like a racial tuberculosis of the nations.

"An anti-Semitism based on reason must lead to systematic legal combating and elimination of the privileges of the Jews, that which distinguishes the Jews from the other aliens who live among us – an Aliens Law.

"The ultimate objective of such legislation must, however, be the irrevocable removal of the Jews in general."

declarations by the Montenegro officials. "This is truly an important and exciting step taken by the leaders of Montenegro and will certainly provide a boost for the development of our community and raises Jewish pride in our wonderful country," Alfandri said.

The meetings were coordinated by Rabbi Levi Matusof, RCE's Director of European Jewish Public Affairs in Brussels.

In recent years several states in the Balkans have showed an interest in reviving local Jewish communities that have existed in the region since antiquity. Macedonia has helped fund a Jewish museum in its capital Skopje; Greece's *Thessaloniki* has highlighted its rich Jewish heritage to attract tourists and businessmen; and last year Albania appointed its first-ever chief rabbi. Still, the Jewish communities in the Balkans have never recovered from the Holocaust, and their numbers keep dwindling due to old age, emigration and assimilation.

## 70 YEARS SINCE OPERATION BARBAROSSA

Marking 70 years since the German Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Operation Barbarossa, the Center for Research on the History of Soviet Jews during the Holocaust at Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research held a daylong symposium in June exploring the invasion as an ideological war. Historians discussed political, economic and ideological aspects of the war between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, and its critical and destructive impact on the Jews living in those areas; the *Wehrmacht's* role in the murder



of Jews in the first months of the Eastern front war; and the Jews' mistaken beliefs in the great military power of the Red Army and that anti-Semitism among Soviet citizens was a matter of the past.

The Symposium took place with the support of the Genesis Philanthropy Group and European Jewish Fund, and the Gutwirth Family Fund.



## AVNER SHALEV, CHAIRMAN OF YAD VASHEM, RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS JERUSALEM AWARD

Avner Shalev, Chairman of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, was awarded the prestigious 2011 Patron of Jerusalem (*Yakir Yerushalayim*) Award in recognition of his public activities.

The award was presented in a ceremony at the Tower of David Museum.

Since 1967, the award has been presented by the Mayor of Jerusalem on Jerusalem Day to individuals who have



contributed to the city of Jerusalem, and whose public service has been focused in Israel's capital and on its behalf.

Born in Jerusalem, Avner Shalev served first in the Israeli army as Bureau Chief for Chief of Staff David Elazar during the 1973 Yom Kippur War and later as Chief Education Officer and head of the Education Corps.

After retiring from military service, Shalev served as Director General of the Culture Authority in the Ministry of Education and Culture, and Chairman of the National Culture and Art Council, and was on the board of directors of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

## NAZI WAR CRIMINALS MAY GET THEIR DAY IN COURT

Kurt Schrimm is the man the German government has put in charge of chasing down and bringing to justice the people responsible for the atrocities of the Holocaust.

In October he announced that he was reopening hundreds of cases of suspected war criminals that could lead to the prosecutions and convictions of dozens of former Nazi guards and officials.

Schrimm decided to reopen the cases because of a major legal breakthrough he achieved last year with the conviction of a former Nazi guard named John Demjanjuk. Demjanjuk was accused of contributing to the deaths of nearly 30,000 people at a death camp in Poland.

According to Schrimm the case gave him legal precedent to prosecute suspected war criminals even when they couldn't be connected to a specific crime, only to a

## JEWISH GHETTO VICTIMS REMEMBERED

A memorial ceremony for thousands of Jewish victims of the Holocaust was held in a church in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, with volunteers reading the name and profession of every resident who lived in the Jewish ghetto.

Organizers said the list of names, gathered from a census taken in 1942, includes thousands of names and would require at least 15 hours to read.

The ghetto was established after Nazi Germany took over Lithuania in 1941. A large part of the ghetto's population died from either starvation or disease, and those who survived were subsequently shot outside Vilnius or sent to death camps.

"There were thousands on names read – names of Jews who died in a forest near

He initiated the establishment of The Sam Spiegel Film & Television School in the city, and positioned the Israel Festival as a Jerusalem event.

Shalev was appointed Chairman of Yad Vashem in 1993.

From the beginning of his tenure, Shalev has strived to redefine Holocaust remembrance and education, introducing a far-reaching multiyear redevelopment plan with the goal of preparing Yad Vashem to meet the challenges of Holocaust commemoration in the 21st century.

To that end, he has put education at the forefront of Yad Vashem's activities by opening the International School for Holocaust Studies, as well as enlarging Yad Vashem's archives and research facilities, and building a new museum complex.

He is Chief Curator of the Holocaust History Museum that opened in 2005.

"Shalev dared to position Holocaust remembrance in the 21st century at the center of public discourse, in Israel and abroad. Time and again, he pulls it from the margins of social and cultural debate to the heart of our creative efforts," said Dr. Martin Weyl, Holocaust survivor and former Director of the Israel Museum, to the Award panel.

In 2003, Yad Vashem received the Israel Prize, and in 2007 Shalev received the Legion of Honor from French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

That same year, he received, on Yad Vashem's behalf, the Prince of Asturias Award for Concord from Spanish Crown Prince Felipe.

death camp or event. Schrimm says it also gave German courts jurisdiction over crimes that occurred outside their borders, in places like Poland.

Jewish organizations are applauding the move. The American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and their Descendants says this is the final opportunity for many survivors to see justice in their lifetime. But even Schrimm admits that many of the people who are implicated are over 90 years old and may not last through an extended investigation.

Meanwhile, even Demjanjuk, who by some accounts was one of the most sadistic guards at the Polish death camp in which he worked and was convicted for helping to murder tens of thousands of people, was only given 5 years in prison and is currently free on parole pending an appeal.

Vilnius after the Nazis marched them there from the ghetto," lawmaker Emanuelis Zingeris told The Associated Press.

"It was especially touching to see dozens of young and old Lithuanians reading those names in their church from dawn till dusk. This is the right way to remember victims of the Holocaust," he said.

About 95% of the country's prewar Jewish population of 220,000 people was killed by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II.

the day of the ceremony marked the 68th anniversary of the destruction of the Vilnius ghetto, which effectively marked the end of Lithuania's Jewish community.

In June, lawmakers voted to pay \$53 million in compensation for the seizure of Jewish property by Nazis during the war.

## JEWISH HISTORY MUSEUM TO OPEN IN WARSAW ON ANNIVERSARY OF UPRISING

An ambitious museum devoted to the 1,000-year history of Poland's Jews will open on the anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

Some 500,000 visitors are expected each year to the Museum of the History of Polish Jews to view multimedia exhibits on the life and culture of Jews in Poland, and their fate in the Holocaust and the present day, as Jewish culture is being gradually revived.

"The Jews were a part of the Polish landscape, now they are gone," said historian Marian Turski. "We want to fill in this vacuum."

"This (museum) is about people who were here, who created their works here, who contributed to the progress of the civilization," said Turski, who is head of the Jewish Historical Institute, which is cooperating on the project.

The building is an austere concrete-and-glass structure, divided by a jagged chasm that symbolizes Moses' Biblical parting of the Red Sea that allowed the Jews to flee slavery in Egypt.

It will open to visitors on April 19, 2013, the 70th anniversary of the doomed uprising by

Warsaw's Jews against the Nazis, said Agnieszka Ruzinska, the museum's head.

Culture Minister Bogdan Zdrojewski announced a subsidy of 10 million zlotys (\$3 million) to help finish the building on time. The funds are to come from state and Warsaw coffers.



Young Israelis stand in front of the building under construction for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, Poland.

President Barack Obama visited the neighboring Monument to Warsaw Ghetto Heroes and was briefed on the progress of the museum in May.

Poland's Jewish community numbered 3.5 million before World War II, but most were murdered during the Holocaust under German Nazi occupation.

## WILL IS THE MAJOR OBSTACLE IN NAZI PROSECUTIONS

A lack of political will is more to blame than aging in the failure to prosecute Nazi-era war criminals, the Simon Wiesenthal Center said in an annual report.

"The lack of political will to bring Nazi war criminals to justice and/or to punish them continues to be the major obstacle to achieving justice, particularly in post-Communist Eastern Europe," said the center's report.

"The campaign led by the Baltic countries to distort the history of the Holocaust and obtain official recognition that the crimes of Communism are equal to those of the Nazis is another major obstacle to the prosecution of those responsible for the crimes of the Shoah."

Only the United States receives an A rating in the report, for proactive prosecution of war criminals.

"While it is generally assumed that it is the age of the suspects that is the biggest obstacle to prosecution, in many cases it is the lack of political will, more than anything

else, that has hindered the efforts to bring Holocaust perpetrators to justice, along with the mistaken notion that it was impossible at this point to locate, identify, and convict these criminals," the report said.

Croatia, Denmark, and Britain get D ratings for making only a minimal effort and for not having any practical results.

Austria, Canada, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine are rated as failures in practice for having the necessary laws but not pursuing prosecutions.

The center listed as most wanted Alois Brunner, the Adolf Eichmann deputy responsible for deporting Jews to death camps from Austria, Greece, Slovakia and France. He was last seen in Syria, where he sought postwar refuge, in 2001. He would be 99 today.

"The chances of his being alive are relatively slim, but until conclusive evidence of his demise is obtained, he should still be mentioned on any Most Wanted List of Holocaust perpetrators," the report said.

## HOLOCAUST ORGANIZER "WANTED PRAISE FOR ROLE"

Adolf Eichmann, a major organizer of the Nazi Holocaust, longed to leave hiding and return to Germany to get recognition for sending millions of Jews to their deaths, according to a new book.

Tired of farming rabbits in anonymity in Argentina after World War II, Eichmann came forward in 1956 in a recently discovered letter, asking West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer if he could return so he could claim his place in history.

The letter, along with hundreds of other uncovered documents in German archives, forms the basis of author Bettina Stangneth's book, *Eichmann before Jerusalem*. Stangneth said she was stunned when she found the typed letter in a misidentified state file.

"It's a tactical letter from Eichmann," Stangneth said. "He wanted his place in history. He always thought he could be the redeemer of the German people. He wanted to relieve them of their (post-war) guilt."

"It is time for me to step out of my anonymity and introduce myself," wrote a

50-year-old Eichmann, who lived in Argentina from 1950 to 1960 under the pseudonym Ricardo Klement. "Name: Adolf Otto Eichmann. Profession: former SS lieutenant colonel.

"How much longer fate will allow me to live, I don't know," Eichmann wrote in the remarkable letter.

It is not known if Adenauer saw the letter, Stangneth said. She added Eichmann and former Nazis in hiding abroad first wanted to have it published in a newspaper in Argentina and in Germany. But because of the content of the letter in which Eichmann acknowledged the Holocaust, they decided not to publish the letter for fear of implicating themselves as war criminals.

"Eichmann lied about many things, but he never lied about the Holocaust," Stangneth said.

Stangneth said he was eager to get recognition for his role in the Nazi regime. "He was so unspeakably proud of his name. He wanted his famous name back."





# BOOK REVIEWS

## AMIDST THE SHADOWS OF TREES

Amidst the Shadows of Trees: A Holocaust Child's Survival in the Partisans.

By Miriam Brysk. Yellow Star Press: Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2007. 183 pp. \$14.95.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

*"For a moment in time long ago  
The trees turned black and gray  
The resin and sap from their veins  
Exuded silent bloody tears  
Bystanders at Babi Yar and Ponar  
Also there in my town of Lida"  
Excerpt from "Silent Trees"  
by Miriam Brysk*

Each memoir written by a Holocaust survivor is exceptionally valuable. Each adds to the documentation of the event in its entirety. Each highlights another aspect of the unbelievable but true.

*Amidst the Shadows of Trees* by Miriam Brysk is aptly subtitled, *A Holocaust Child's Survival in the Partisans*. For the author recounts how at seven years old, she, her mother, and her father became members of a partisan group operating in the *Lipczanska* forest, within fifty miles of *Lida*, Poland. The partisans smuggled the whole family out of the *Lida* ghetto because her father, Dr. Chaim Miasnik, was "renowned for his surgical skills" and they were in dire need of a doctor.

Thus from Miriam's, or rather as she was then called, Mirele's vantage point, we

read about how, indeed, her father "was constantly sent away on missions to treat wounded partisans in scattered parts of [the] forest." How "he had no attendant staff to help him, nor a sterile ambient environment in which to operate. He had no medications to ease the pain and prevent infection. All that he could offer the injured was some vodka." How "the wounds were disinfected with alcohol, which was used to sterilize Papa's hands. Papa carried with him a small satchel of boiled surgical instruments and cloths, hoping they would suffice." Then, how, miraculously, her father helped establish a forest hospital, secured by its remoteness and surrounding swamps from the Germans. How the partisans provisioned it with medical supplies, the result of determined and courageous raids on "municipal hospitals in the surrounding towns." How her father, as chief of staff of this forest hospital, staffed it, saw that the hospital was supplied with food, and operated night after night saving so many . . . Not surprisingly, at war's end, Dr. Miasnik was awarded the *Orden*

*Lenina* or the Order of Lenin, "among the highest medals bestowed in the Soviet Union."

At the same time, we read about the reality of life with the partisans and how very hard and raw it was. How partisans themselves generally only accepted new members if they came armed. Unarmed, you were more than likely left in the forest and to a tragic end. How being a woman alone among them was dangerous. Thus women generally paired off with a man for safety's sake. How children in a fighting partisan unit were considered a liability. They could cry or scream and cause the death of fighters. There was anti-Semitism among partisans. There were roving hooligans in the forest who caught Jews for German reward. There were the Germans ruthlessly hunting for Jews. Then, too, there was the relentless cold and hunger.



Finally, the author openly shares with us the impact that her father's fiery temper — undoubtedly aggravated by his intense wartime responsibilities — and her own fears and trepidations during the war, had on her. It took years to work things out. The childhood years are fundamental and

formative. Happily, though, time would bring understanding, solace, and joy. Her father would eventually reopen his practice in America — Brooklyn to be exact — respected and loved by all. Miriam, his daughter, would earn a Ph.D. from Columbia University, and herself become a respected research scientist, professor, artist, and poet, and write this fine book. Moreover, while she is retired now, one gets the distinct impression that Miriam still has more things she'd like to do.

On a personal note, interestingly, within the text the author writes about how when she first met her "American family" — she had uncles here — they "could not empathize with what we had lived through. . . they failed to grasp what it meant to have survived, to be one of the Holocaust's living victims. In particular they made ignorant remarks" like "You will soon forget the past; we don't want you to dwell on the war; remember you are now in America." Many experienced that . . . including this reviewer's family . . . They simply don't understand. Some things just can't be forgotten, nor should they be. Then again, how could someone far from the Holocaust ever understand any of it!

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

## A CONTEMPORARY ULYSSES

A Life of Leadership: Eli Zborowski from the Underground to Industry to Holocaust Remembrance.

By Rochel and George Berman. KTAV Publishing House and Yad Vashem Publications, 2011. 290 pp. \$25.00.

REVIEWED BY  
YO CHEVED MIRIAM ZEMEL

Ulysses has been eclipsed by Eli Zborowski. The Greek hero's multiple adventures symbolize man's tenacity in overcoming a variety of difficulties using cunning, strength and courage. Eli Zborowski, the founder of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem, and former president of Sheaffer Latin America, achieved that and more. After the loss of his father at the age of 16, he heroically saved not only himself, but scores of others from destitution and victimization. Unlike Ulysses who suffered from hubris, false pride, Eli has maintained his humility and his belief in God and in his fellow man despite all his ordeals.

Eli's exploits and their ramifications form the basis for this exciting narrative. But it goes one step further. Rochel and George Berman, the biographers, underscore the leadership qualities that Eli has displayed through his life, both in taking others with him out of the cauldron of the Holocaust, and through his journeys to make the Holocaust a symbol of struggle and courage rather than of victimization and despair.

The authors take us from *Zarki*, the town in Poland where Eli grew up as one of three children in the privileged and principled home of Moshe and Zisel Zborowski, to whom the book is dedicated. We are not

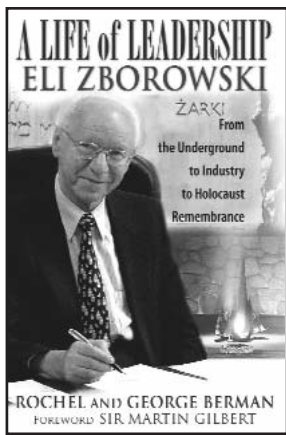
spared the details of the harrowing escape of Eli and his mother, brother, and sister from the hands of the Nazi occupiers, nor of the circumstances of his father's murder at the hands of the Poles. Still, Eli has refused to issue a blanket condemnation of the Polish people. As the first of six survivors to greet Pope John Paul II at Yad Vashem, he spoke to His Holiness in Polish and welcomed him to "the Land of Israel, the independent Jewish state."

Eli spoke to the Pope about his rescuers. While acknowledging the role of Polish people in the death of his father, Eli explained, "My mother, my two siblings, and I were given refuge by Polish neighbors who kept us hidden for 18 months at the risk of their own lives. Given this, how can one possibly generalize about the Polish people?" This positive attitude enabled Eli to be instrumental in opening the door to diplomatic relations between Israel and Poland.

This exciting book takes us through the passages of Eli's life, allowing us into the home in which he lived and his relations with his family and friends. We are privy to such everyday details as why he enjoys French toast, and how his father's business acumen and honest dealings stood as models for Eli's success and good relations in business.

Eli Zborowski's stellar advance from poverty when he arrived in America to owner and president of Sheaffer Latin America is brought to light. In spite of Eli's severe economic straits, and the facts that his wife, Diana, was expecting, and that Eli knew very little English, Eli was not deterred. Determined to work for himself,

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## DOVE ON A BARBED WIRE

Dove on a Barbed Wire.

By Deborah Steiner-van Rooyen. Devora Publishing, 2010. 145 pp. \$21.95.

REVIEWED BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

Published first in Israel in Hebrew by Yad Vashem in 2007, and now in an attractive and improved English format, this compelling account is bound to acquire an honored place in the vast literature of Holocaust memoirs. It is the family drama wrapped in dramas of the author Deborah Steiner-van Rooyen and the book's heroic protagonist, Yonah Steiner.

1951-born American Deborah was approached in 1969 by her grandpa Solomon Steiner with a special request as she was about to embark on a global travel venture while postponing her college education. Beloved Solomon, the first family member to leave Poland for the States in 1912, wanted via Deborah to reconnect to his Israeli nephew Yonah Steiner, son of his martyred brother Simon, who along with brother Paul were the sole Holocaust survivors of the large Steiner family. All that Solomon had was an old envelope with Yonah's name at kibbutz *Ginosar* in Israel.

Solomon had visited Polish *Gromnik*, near *Krakow*, in 1932, but his attempts to persuade his family to join him in the States fell on deaf ears, as Yonah's patriarchal grandpa Aharon, Solomon's father, would not listen, and later on Simon, Yonah's father, nixed the idea in spite of his wife Rachel's urging to sell their property and leave before it was too late. Yonah and his three older brothers, Paul and the twins Willi and Rudi, grew up happy and often unruly on the very large family farm.



Yonah did not enjoy school, and when attending he would stand up to the Polish bullies.

13-year-old Yonah was on the way home from school on a September afternoon in 1939, when he was apprehended by the German SS and thrown into a truck without communicating with his parents, who were murdered soon afterwards, along with the rest of *Gromnik's* Jews. This abrupt and tragic interruption to all that young Yonah knew, ironically saved his life, even as "the nightmare began." It lasted the war's five years with Yonah's unimaginable survival.

From *Pustkow* to *Danzig* to *Mielec* to *Tarnow* to *Flossen-burg* to *Auschwitz* to *Mauthausen*, it was a hellish journey of a Jewish boy from a loving family through a world of inhumanity with its own death-and-life rules. Yonah was wise to

learn from older and experienced inmates with whom he aligned, but also in knowing how to keep to himself. On his unsuccessful first escape from *Pustkow* in Poland's southeast, where he spent 4 months, he was able to kill with his bare hands a German Shepherd dog. The second escape, from *Danzig* in East Prussia where he worked in a submarine factory, was facilitated with the help of "The Boss," a seasoned fellow inmate with whom he bonded and who led him into the *Tarnow* ghetto. In the *Tarnow* ghetto with its 150,000 residents, Yonah could not get any support from the terrified Jews. Caught again, he ended up in *Mielec*, in Poland's west, and, lying about being a steel cutter, he was assigned to the Henklewerks factory of the Messerschmitt's planes. His talents were recognized though he had no prior training, and he studied

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## DIARIES REVEAL HOW MUCH WARTIME GERMANS KNEW

BY ELKE SCHMITTER, SPIEGEL ONLINE

Newly published diaries by a Nazi-era court official document details that others conveniently ignored. While many Germans would later claim they knew nothing of Nazi crimes, Friedrich Kellner's critical observations show that such information was available.

The penultimate year of the war began with a speech exhorting Germans to persevere. Italy was no longer Germany's ally, and the Soviet army was approaching the borders of Poland, Hungary and Romania. The Allied landing in France was imminent. After addressing soldiers and his fellow Germans, Adolf Hitler turned his attention to the Lord himself in his speech to ring in the New Year of 1944. "He is aware of the goal of our struggle," he said. The Lord's "justice will continue to test us until he can pass judgment. Our duty is to ensure that we do not appear to be too weak in his eyes, but that we are given a merciful judgment that spells 'victory' and thus signifies life!"

Two very different men in the German Reich noted their thoughts about Hitler's expression of religious sentiments in their diaries. The first, Victor Klemperer, lived with his wife in a "Jew house" in Dresden, where he wrote about the dictator, using a false name: "New content: Karl becomes religious. (The new approach lies in his approximation of the ecclesiastical style.)"

The second, Friedrich Kellner, lived with his wife in an official apartment in a court building for the Hessian town of Laubach, where he hid his written account of the war in a living-room cabinet. In his commentary on the Hitler speech, Kellner wrote: "The Lord, who has been maligned by all National Socialists as part of their official pol-

icy, is now being implored by the Führer in his hour of need. What strange hypocrisy!"

The extensive diary written by Klemperer, a professor of Romance literature who had been fired from his job in Dresden, was published in 1995 under the title



Friedrich Kellner, photographed in his Laubach apartment in 1940.

*Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten* (I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years). It is perhaps the most important private document about the Nazis, because it offers an extremely clear-sighted and detailed account of the 12 years of the "Thousand-year Reich" from the perspective of someone who was marginalized. The account details small annoyances and major crimes, daily

life, and the development of Nazi propaganda.

This document now has a counterpart, the diaries of judicial inspector Friedrich Kellner. The 900-page book begins in September 1938, told from the perspective of a German citizen who was not a Nazi. It also reveals what information Germans could have obtained about the Nazis if they had wanted to.

### AN ORDINARY FAMILY

Kellner, born in 1885, a few years later than Klemperer, was not a privileged man. The son of a baker and a maid, he embarked on a judicial career after graduating from the *Oberrealschule*, a higher vocational school. At 22, Kellner completed his one year of compulsory military service as an infantryman in the western city of Mainz, and in 1913 he married Paulina Preuss, an office clerk. The couple's only son was born three years later, when Kellner returned from the French front after being wounded in the First World War.

They were an ordinary, lower-middle-class family, but they were also politically active. He distributed flyers, gave speeches, and recruited new members for the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Kellner had read Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, and he took the book seriously, saying that it brought shame to Gutenberg. After the 1932 elections, in which the Nazi Party became the strongest faction in the parliament, the Reichstag, Kellner requested a transfer from Mainz. In 1933, two weeks before Hitler's appointment as Reich chancellor and the first

wave of internal terror, he began working as a government employee in the Laubach District Court. He was an unknown entity in a town with strong Nazi sympathies. It was there that Kellner wrote his diary: a conversation he conducted with himself out of despair that was also an analysis of the present and a planned legacy.

"The purpose of my record," he began, on September 26, 1938, "is to capture a picture of the current mood in my surroundings, so that a future generation is not tempted to construe a 'great event' from it (a 'heroic time' or the like)." In the same passage, on the same day, Kellner revealed a bitter clear-sightedness, when he summed up German postwar history in one sentence: "Those who wish to be acquainted with contemporary society, with the souls of the 'good Germans,' should read what I have written. But I fear that very few decent people will remain after events have taken their course, and that the guilty will have no interest in seeing their disgrace documented in writing."

Ten closely written volumes document the things Kellner experienced and observed and, most of all, what he read and heard. He cut out speeches and calls to action from newspapers and analyzed them, and he made notes about ordinances and decrees. He contrasted the information provided by the government with the facts, both in everyday life in Hesse and at the distant front. He listened to foreign radio stations when he could. But most of all, he analyzed the propaganda from a critical standpoint. Commenting on the 1939 "Treaty of Friendship" with the Soviet Union, he wrote: "We must resort to aligning ourselves with Russia to even have a  
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## SEVEN DECADES AFTER HITLER'S FALL, GERMAN GRANDCHILDREN OF NAZIS DELVE INTO FAMILY PAST

KIRSTEN GRIESHABER,  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rainer Hoess was 12 years old when he found out his grandfather was one of the worst mass murderers in history.

The gardener at his boarding school, an Auschwitz survivor, beat him black and blue after hearing he was the grandson of Rudolf Hoess, commandant of the death camp synonymous with the Holocaust.

"He beat me, because he projected on me all the horror he went through," Rainer Hoess said, with a shrug and a helpless smile. "Once a Hoess, always a Hoess. Whether you're the grandfather or the grandson — guilty is guilty."

Germans have for decades confronted the Nazi era head-on, paying billions in compensation, meticulously teaching Third Reich history in school, and building memorials to victims. The conviction in Munich of retired Ohio autoworker John Demjanjuk on charges he was a guard at the Sobibor Nazi death camp drives home how the Holocaust is still very much at the forefront of the German psyche.

But most Germans have skirted their own possible family involvement in Nazi atrocities. Now, more than 65 years after the end of Hitler's regime, an increasing number of Germans are trying to pierce the family secrets.

Some, like Hoess, have launched an obsessive solitary search. Others seek help from seminars and workshops that have

sprung up across Germany to provide research guidance and psychological support.

"From the outside, the third generation has had it all — prosperity, access to education, peace, and stability," said Sabine Bode, who has written books on how the Holocaust weighs on German families today. "Yet they grew up with a lot of unspoken secrets, felt the silent burdens in their families that were often paired with a lack of emotional warmth and vague anxieties."

Like others, Hoess had to overcome fierce resistance within his own family, who preferred that he "not poke around in the past." Undeterred, he spent lonely hours at archives and on the Internet researching his grandfather.

Rudolf Hoess was in charge of Auschwitz from May 1940 to November 1943. He came back to Auschwitz for a short stint in 1944, to oversee the murder of some 400,000 Hungarian Jews in the camp's gas chambers within less than two months.

The commandant lived in a luxurious mansion at Auschwitz with his wife and five children — among them Hans-Rudolf, the father of Rainer. Only 150 meters (yards) away the crematories' chimneys were blowing out the ashes of the dead day and night.

After the war, Hoess went into hiding on a farm in northern Germany; he was even-

tually captured and hanged in 1947, in front of his former home on the grounds of Auschwitz.

"When I investigate and read about my grandfather's crimes, it tears me apart every single time," Hoess said during a recent interview at his home in a little Black Forest village.

As a young man, he said, he tried twice to kill himself. He has suffered three heart



Dr. Josef Mengele, Rudolf Hoess, and Josef Kramer.

attacks in recent years as well as asthma, which he says gets worse when he digs into his family's Nazi past.

Today, Hoess says, he no longer feels guilty, but the burden of the past weighs on him at all times.

"My grandfather was a mass murderer — something that I can only be ashamed and sad about," said the 45-year-old chef and father of two boys and two girls. "However,

I do not want to close my eyes and pretend nothing ever happened, like the rest of my family still does ... I want to stop the curse that's been haunting my family ever since, for the sake of myself and that of my own children."

Hoess is no longer in contact with his father, brother, aunts, and cousins, who all call him a traitor. Strangers often look at him with distrust when he tells them about his grandfather — "as if I could have inherited his evil."

Despite such reactions, descendants of Nazis — from high-ranking officials to lowly foot soldiers — are increasingly trying to find out what their families did between 1933 and 1945.

"The Nazis — the first generation — were too ashamed to talk about the crimes they committed and covered everything up. The second generation often had trouble personally confronting their Nazi parents. So now it is up to the grandchildren to lift the curses off their families," said Bode.

It was only during her university years — reading books about the Holocaust — that Ursula Boger found out her grandfather was the most dreaded torturer at Auschwitz.

"I felt numb for days after I read about what he did," recalled Boger, a shy, soft-spoken woman who lives near Freiburg in southwestern Germany. "For many years I was ashamed to tell anybody about him, but then I realized that my own silence was  
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# SURVIVORS' CORNER

## THE SCHOOLGIRL WHO SURVIVED THE HOLOCAUST BY FOOLING THE NAZIS

VANESSA THORPE, THE OBSERVER

On an Auschwitz station platform in 1944, Helga Weiss and her mother fooled one of the most reviled men in modern history, Josef Mengele, and managed to save their lives. Not long into her teens, Weiss lied about her age, claiming she was old enough to work for her keep. Her mother persuaded the Nazis under Mengele's command that Helga was in fact her daughter's older sister, and she was sent to the forced labor barracks and not the gas chamber.

The story is one of many recorded in a concentration camp diary that was sold to publishers around the world at the Frankfurt book fair. The private journals of Helga Weiss are to be published in the UK for the first time next year by Viking Press, while foreign rights have been snapped up by publishing houses across the world.

Weiss, an artist in her early 80s who lives in Prague and is also known by her married name of Weissova-Hoskova, mentioned her journal during occasional public appearances, but until now public interest in her written story has always been overshadowed by her success as a postwar painter. The British publisher Venetia Butterfield heard of the diary's existence last summer when Weiss visited London for a concert at the Wigmore Hall commemorating fellow inmates at the *Terezin* camp in former Czechoslovakia.

"I heard about the event and called someone in north London who knew Helga. They told me she was just about to get on a plane back to Prague, but that she was coming round for a coffee first," said Butterfield. "I raced up to see her and we talked for no more than 10 or 15 minutes. She is an amazing woman with a great, feisty attitude."

Butterfield, who also publishes Anne Frank's diary, asked to see a sample of the writing in one of Weiss's surviving exercise books. "We had an academic report done, and once it was clear what the diaries were I went to Prague to see her. Accounts of the past are often shaped by the knowledge of what was to happen next. What is so important about the diary is that it is Helga's reality. You are there with her. It is a very different thing from a memoir."

Before Weiss was sent to the Nazi-controlled ghetto of *Terezin* as a child, she witnessed the insidious progress of the Holocaust in Prague. "One thing after another was forbidden: employees lost their jobs, we were banned from the parks, swimming pools, sports clubs. I was banned from going to school when I was 10," Weiss told the *Observer* at the time of the London concert. "I was always asking my parents, 'What's happening?', and became angry at

them if I thought they were trying to hide something, to protect me."

The Weiss apartment was handed over to Germans and the family was transported to *Terezin* by rail. Known as *Theresienstadt* in German, the city on the northwest perimeter of Prague had become a transit hub where Czech Jews



Helga Weiss three days before her family was deported in December 1941.

were put to work before being sent on to extermination camps. Her diary, which begins in 1939, records noises that still haunt her; the "thunderous steps, the roar of the ghetto guards, the banging of doors and hysterical weeping always sound – and foretell – the same."

"She was obviously very clever and quite mature," said Butterfield. "She was obsessed with school at first, like any child of that age. Then there are terrible goodbyes as her friends begin to be taken off to

*Terezin*. At each point Helga thinks the worst thing has happened to her so you see how people become used to bad things. Eventually, when the family are sent to the camp they take some cake and eat a little every day."

Butterfield points out that memories of *Terezin* are not all painful. Weiss grew up there, fell in love for the first time, and spent time with both her parents, before her father was killed at Auschwitz. "My father told me that, whatever happens, we must remain human, so that we do not die like cattle," Weiss has said. "And I think that the will to create was an expression of the will to live, and survive, as human beings."

On 4 October 1944, Weiss and her mother were also transported to Auschwitz, where they faced Mengele, who was directing children and older women towards the gas chambers and fit adults towards the forced labor camp. Thanks to her subterfuge, she was one of only 150 to 1,500 children believed to have survived of the 15,000 sent to *Terezin*.

She was then transferred from Auschwitz to a labor camp at *Flossenbürg*, where she escaped death a second time when she was forced to join a 16-day "death march" to the camp at *Mauthausen*. She remained there until the end of the war. "I asked Helga whether it had felt wonderful to be liberated," said Butterfield. "She said, no, it was not that special because by that point she was so ill and had seen so many terrible things it was hard to feel anything."

## "RIGHTEOUS" MOVED TO ISRAEL AFTER SAVING JEWS IN HOLOCAUST

BY NATHAN JEFFAY, FORWARD

It's a bigger sacrifice than most people could ever imagine. But for Hester Grinberg-Boissevain, risking her life by hiding innocent Jews during the Holocaust just wasn't enough of a contribution to the Jewish people. The Dutch nurse also decided to move to Israel.

Until three years ago, the residents of *Ramat Yishai*, near Nazareth, knew nothing of the remarkable story that brought their now retired community nurse to Israel. Then, the social charity Atzum urged Grinberg-Boissevain to share it.

As a child, together with her parents and siblings in *Haarlem*, Netherlands, Grinberg-Boissevain helped to hide a Jewish family. After the war, she trained as a nurse, and at 27, she packed her bags and moved to a kibbutz.

"Israel was a special state, a new state, and there was an opportunity to help build and help care for people," she told the *Forward* at a Rosh Hashanah party for so-called Righteous Gentiles, who are known as such for hiding Jews from the Nazis.

Grinberg-Boissevain is one of at least 130 Righteous Gentiles who made the decision after the war to move to Israel. It is only now with the group dwindling fast from old age that members are starting to tell and write down their stories. Grinberg-Boissevain, for example, has a homemade pamphlet that she shares with friends and acquaintances.

"People in Israel, even in the communities where [Righteous Gentiles] are living, just have no idea that they are there," said

Yael Rosen, coordinator of Atzum's 9-year-old project to make records of their stories. "People are amazed when they hear about the heroes living in their midst."

Atzum also helps the immigrants secure the medical and social services they need in their old age, recruits volunteers to visit them, provides financial assistance, and arranges events like the Rosh Hashanah



Jaroslawa Lewicki, who rescued Jews during the Holocaust, was grateful for the chance to move from Ukraine to Israel.

party, viewing these undertakings as part of a moral responsibility.

"We think that these people did so much and that anything we can do for them is a drop in the ocean by comparison — but that we must still provide that drop in the ocean," Rosen said.

Righteous Gentiles started moving to Palestine soon after World War II. The new Israeli authorities welcomed them, giving them citizenship and special pensions since the mid-1980s.

Those who came in the early days tend to speak fluent Hebrew and have integrated into Israeli society. Grinberg-Boissevain met a Jewish man on a kibbutz, converted to Judaism "for the sake of our kids" and married him.

For others, especially the later arrivals like Jaroslawa Lewicki, their strongest connection to Jews remains their wartime acts of heroism.

As a child in *Lvov*, Ukraine, Lewicki, together with her mother and grandmother, took food to 25 Jews who were hiding in a bunker in the local ghetto. She also helped her grandfather hide two Jews.

Lewicki moved to *Haifa* in 1995 after hearing that Israel was offering citizenship to Righteous Gentiles.

Lewicki faced a bleak social and economic situation in *Lvov*. "I felt that this was Israel saying a big thank you to me all these years after I helped Jews, and that meant a lot," she commented.

The rescuers chatted at the Rosh Hashanah party as waiters brought lunch, and it became clear that their heroism has determined not only where they live, but also their personal relationships.

For Lewicki, her closest Israeli friend was Avraham Shapiro, a man she helped to save. Shapiro, who moved to Israel 50 years before her, died early this year.

Lidiya Krimer, who in 1991 moved to Upper Nazareth from *Odessa*, distributed

food to Jews near *Odessa* when she was a child and then helped her family to hide a Jewish doctor along with her mother and her two children. Inspired by the doctor, after the war she trained as a nurse and accepted return hospitality: She lived with the doctor during her training. She loves Israel and describes herself as "the happiest person in the world."

Remarkably, one of the people at the party would never have been born if not for her family's heroism. The romance of Tzipi Shurani's parents blossomed through the fence of a Nazi work camp in Hungary.

Her father, Latzi, was a Jewish prisoner, while her mother, Irena, was a Christian whose family home faced the fence.

"When he was still in the camp, my father told my grandmother, 'If I come out of here alive, she will be my wife,'" Shurani said. Shurani's grandmother made sure he did. She dug a tunnel, through which 35 Jews escaped. Her mother led one of the groups, which included Latzi, and the couple married after the war.

The final episode of Shurani's story holds the irony of the Righteous Gentiles: Many of them have a devotion to Israel stronger than that of the Jews they rescued. Her parents made aliyah in 1949 together with most of the 35 escapees, and her mother, widowed in 2002, still lives in *Nahariya*.

Many of the escapees chose to search for greener pastures.

"The others left Israel, for New York and elsewhere," Shurani said. "My father begged my mother to go. But she said that this is her country and refused to leave, insisting, 'I stay here.'"



## IGNORING ROMANIA'S HOLOCAUST COMPLICITY: NOT AN OPTION

OLEKSANDR FELDMAN,  
THE ALGEMEINER

More than 70 years after the start of World War II, one would think that few secrets remain from what might be the most heavily researched and examined period ever in world history. Each year, however, historians uncover new elements to the scope of horror that defined this era – and in particular the Holocaust. The sheer magnitude of human evil is difficult enough to comprehend, but when one looks at the mass murder of an entire people, it becomes all the more unfathomable.

One such example must be the complicity of the Romanian government in the murder of more than 400,000 Jews, the vast majority of them in the villages and forests of Ukraine. Among Hitler's allies, the Romanians are all too often forgotten. Unlike Japan and Italy, Romania wasn't driven by a global conquest complex. Its motivations for an alliance with Germany were not principled or ideological; they were simply based on what was viewed to be in Romania's narrow national interest. Yet the crimes perpetrated were no less evil and perhaps even worse than those of many other nations typically thought of as partners with the Nazis.

In 1939, at the outbreak of WWII, Romania adopted an official policy of neutrality. However, the increasing instability in Europe and growing anti-Semitism led a Fascist political force known as the Iron Guard

to rise to power. The regime's policy platform was staunchly anti-Communist and ultra-nationalistic. Members were known for their virulent anti-Semitism. During this period, the growing weakness of Romania's main territorial guarantors France and Britain became increasingly obvious. The Iron Guard already favored an alliance with Nazi Germany and hoped their alliance would ensure similar territorial guarantees from the Germans.

The result was a tragedy for the Jews of Romania, who consequently suffered inexplicable evils at the hands of their own countrymen and neighbors. In 1941, in one pogrom (of many) alone, 15,000 Jews perished in the city of Iași. The horrific act was carried out by squads of Romanian soldiers and policemen. The Jews also suffered regularly from violent mobs in what amounted to state-sponsored genocide.

The brutality of the Romanians extended beyond Romania's borders and into Ukraine, where many Jews fell victim to German-controlled Romanian forces. During the *Odessa Massacre* in 1941, Romanian soldiers gleefully took part in a gruesome attack against over 19,000 Ukrainian Jews. The Romanians sought reprisal for a bomb attack they believed to be carried out by Jews. The entire local Jewish community was assembled in a square, sprayed with gasoline and burned alive.

Romania failed to acknowledge these genocidal outrages, along with a multitude of similar acts carried out against Romanian and Ukrainian Jewry, for over a decade after the fall of Communism. Adding further insult to the memory of the murder victims, no responsibility was ever taken for the fate of murdered Jews inside Romania or in the Ukraine during their occupation there.

Until today there remain serious distortions of history regarding Romania's role in WWII and more specifically the Holocaust.



The death train from Iași.

In recent years, only following significant international pressure, did the Romanian government agree to create a panel of historians to investigate their nation's actions during the Holocaust.

The commission compiled undeniable evidence that implicated Romanian culpability in the systematic murder of Jews. It also found that Romania bore responsibility for the deaths of more Jews than any

other German-allied country other than Germany itself.

Yet in the face of all the clear evidence of the destruction of communities and loss of life, Romania maintained its innocence. In an attempt to absolve themselves of any guilt or responsibility Romanians have consistently laid blame on the Germans, the Hungarians, virtually everyone else in the area except their own regime and the people who supported it.

Evidence of pogroms and the fact that death trains were dispatched from Romanian cities was eventually, reluctantly acknowledged by the authorities. Even then it was under the guise that such tragedies were not ethnically based and took place because of the Communist sympathies of the murdered victims (i.e., Jews).

Tragically, as recently as 2003, Romanian officials, including then-president Ion Iliescu, declared that it was "unjust to link Romania to the persecution of the Jews in Europe" and that numbers were being inflated for the sake of media impact. The odd "academic" revisionist or extremist kook who denies the Holocaust is uniformly ostracized by the civilized world. Yet hardly an eyebrow was raised when the national leader of a bona fide nation-state essentially denied the Holocaust, or at least Romania's sanguinary complicity in mass murder.

If Romania wants to be a respected member of the community of nations, it must confront and accept the horrors of its past in the same ways as have so many other European governments.

## UNRAVELING THE MENGELE MYSTERY

**More than 30 years after the infamous Nazi doctor died under mysterious circumstances, an internal police report reveals just how much effort Israel invested in tracking him down.**

BY OFER ADERET, HAARETZ

"Mengele was executed by Israeli commandos," reported *Haaretz* in December 1973, citing news agency reports. "Unknown men, apparently Israelis, killed Mengele," it was reported several days later. Spokesmen for the Brazilian police were quoted by the country's news agencies as saying that three unknown men – who had infiltrated the home of the infamous Nazi doctor on the border between Brazil and Paraguay – beat him to death in front of his wife and children. The report ended as follows: "The search for the three men, who fled afterward, continues."

Shortly afterward, it turned out that this so-called "Mengele" was actually an old farmer of German descent who had nothing whatsoever to do with the "Angel of Death" from Auschwitz.

Rumors about the killing or capture of Josef Mengele have filled newspapers for almost four decades. An internal Israel Police report, part of which was recently obtained by *Haaretz*, reveals the major intelligence effort invested by local law enforcement officials in finding and capturing him.

On May 24, 1943, Mengele was sent as a doctor to Auschwitz, where he served until he was evacuated on January 18, 1945. He had completed his medical studies five years earlier at Goethe University Frankfurt. According to the report, "On June 21, 1943, while riding a motorcycle inside the concentration camp in Auschwitz, he was injured in an accident. There were no details about the type of injury, but according to the records, he reported for his regular job four weeks after the accident." Three months later, in Sep-

tember 1943, "Mengele was cleared of the accusation of causing an accident."

In January 1945, the Nazis hastily evacuated Auschwitz with a death march. About a week later, Mengele was spotted in the *Mauthausen* concentration camp by one of the twins evacuated from



Dr. Josef Mengele.

Auschwitz, who had previously suffered during experimentation at his hands. Four months later, at the end of April, Dr. Otto Hans Kahler, a friend from the doctor's war days, met him by chance. He said Mengele "didn't want to believe the report that had been broadcast over the radio that day about Hitler's suicide." According to Kahler's testimony, Mengele showed up suddenly in the unit where he had served as a medical officer during the withdrawal from the *Sudetenland*, in the uniform of an officer of the *Wehrmacht*, the German army, rather than in his SS uniform.

A few weeks later, the unit surrendered to the U.S. Army and was taken to a prisoner of war camp, where Mengele and Kahler shared a room. The U.S. soldiers checked the POWs for tattoos, which were a trademark of the SS. Mengele was not

found among the captives because he had no tattoo. "Mengele was in a deep depression and was even considering suicide," according to the segment of the police report pertaining to that period. Several weeks later, the captives were liberated, including Mengele, who succeeded in eluding the Americans.

His wife Irene and his son Rolf lived after the war with Irene's parents in a town near *Gunzburg*, Bavaria. "During their stay in the town no strange man was seen to visit them," said the Israel Police report, adding that the two left in 1948. "There are reports to the effect that the Mengeles met in secret during this period, but there is no confirmation of that."

On January 5, 1947, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency published a report from Warsaw to the effect that American forces in Germany had caught a group of Nazi criminals and extradited them to Poland. The report also said that the Polish military delegation to *Nuremberg* had asked the Americans to extradite Dr. Mengele, who had supposedly been arrested near Berlin.

A letter sent by the Polish Central Jewish Historical Committee in June 1947 to an international organization of survivors in Vienna reported that Mengele had been extradited to Poland with the first group of Nazi war criminals who had been active in Auschwitz. In the letter, it was also claimed that "for technical reasons" no date had been set for the beginning of Mengele's trial.

Later, Israeli police succeeded in locating in Israel the man who was then head of the Polish military delegation – the source of the reports about Mengele's arrest. He told them that he had received the information about the arrest from the U.S. representative attached to the International Military Tribunal in *Nuremberg*. Another official, who provided erroneous details about Mengele's fate, was also found in Israel by

the police. At the end of April 1947, the official had requested that authorities in Vienna interrogate Mengele, who had supposedly been arrested there. But in a conversation with the police, "he was unable to add details" about the affair.

On June 20, 1949, Mengele boarded the *North King*, which was sailing from Italy to Argentina. In his personal bag he carried forged International Red Cross papers bearing the name of Helmut Gregor, an Italian-born mechanic. Israeli police were unable to figure out how he had received



Hungarian twins Eva and Miriam Mozes, survivors of Dr. Mengele's experiments.

the forged immigration papers, but had a theory that the wife of one of his cousins had helped him. In any event, upon arrival, Mengele received an Argentine identity card from the local police. Within a short time, he began to work as the South American representative of the family business – the German Karl Mengele and Sons firm, which manufactured agricultural machinery. The company, which was founded in 1871 in *Gunzburg*, still operates under the same name.

Seven years later, in November 1956, (Continued on page 13)



# PRESERVING THE PAST – GUARDING THE FUTURE

## ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER OF THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM



Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate; Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council; Senator Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Former Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; and Rabbi Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland.



Jeremy Halpern, Young Leadership Associates Chair; Sam Halpern, National Vice Chairman; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; Elizabeth Zborowski, Cultural Director.



David Halpern, Dinner Chairman, opened the evening's program and welcomed the nearly 1,000 guests in attendance.



Caroline Massel, Chair of the Young Leadership Associates, spoke on behalf of the Young Leadership Associates.



Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; Barry and Marilyn Rubenstein.



Ira Drukier, Member, Board of Trustees, delivered the response on behalf of the Pioneers.



Julius Berman, Esq., Chairman, Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, introduced Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem.



Barry Rubenstein, Member, Board of Governors, delivered the response on behalf of the Visionaries.



Dr. Miriam Adelson and Sheldon G. Adelson announced the new American Society for Yad Vashem Educational Programs. Dr. Adelson said, "We will share the lessons of the Shoah to their students." Mr. Adelson said, "We will ensure the continuation of its vital educational programs and the American Society for Yad Vashem in its crucial role."



# THE FUTURE: 30 YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENT

## INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM



Dr. Miriam Adelson; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; Sheldon G. Adelson; and Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate.



Elizabeth Zborowski, Cultural Director; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; Jane Wilf and Mark Wilf, Member of the Board.



Ira Mitzner, Dinner Chairman, introduced the program guests.



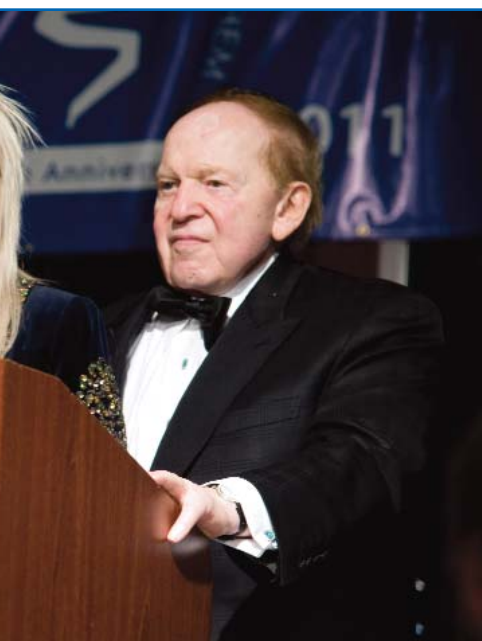
Iris Lindenbaum, Young Leadership Associates, read greetings from the Honorable Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister, State of Israel.



Adina Burian, Member of the Young Leadership Associates, reads greetings from the Honorable Shimon Peres, President, State of Israel.



Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council; Israel Krakowski, Member of the Board.



Announcing their \$25 million donation for the American and International Societies for Yad Vashem, Sheldon G. Adelson said, "We look to these educators to bring us closer to the truth. We are proud to partner with Yad Vashem in our activities. We encourage others to join us in supporting our work."



Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, gave greetings and reminded us of the importance of remembering the name and story of even one survivor.



Mark Moskowitz, Member of the Executive Committee, delivered closing remarks at the end of a very memorable event.



Harry Krakowski introduced the Guest Speaker, Rabbi Israel Meir Lau.





# REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

## HOLOCAUST HEROINE HONORED BY ISRAEL

By RENÉE C. LEE,  
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

When the Nazis invaded the Netherlands in 1940, Chanan Florsheim was comfortably living and working at a nursing home south of Amsterdam. Two years later, the young Jewish man's life was upended.

The Nazis, rooting out the Jews, destroyed the nursing home, and Florsheim needed somewhere to hide. He found refuge in an unlikely place – the home of a German national named Erika Heymann.

A Jewish organization sent him to Heymann because she was known to secretly harbor Jews. She rented rooms to them, fully aware that she was breaking the law and putting herself and her two children at risk. A small mistake, however, would later lead to her imprisonment in a concentration camp.

Florsheim, now 88, never forgot Heymann's sacrifice. A few years ago, he nominated Heymann for the Righteous Among the Nations award, which honors those who risked their lives to assist Jews during the Holocaust. Yad Vashem named her as a recipient last year.

Heymann's son, Dieter Heymann, a retired Rice University professor, accepted her medal at a ceremony held by the Holocaust Museum Houston. Israeli Consul General Meir Shlomo presented the award on behalf of the state of Israel. Florsheim, along with Heymann's family and friends, was also there for the special occasion.

Dieter Heymann, 84, said his mother probably would not have made much of the award if she were alive.

"She came from a family of politically active leftists," he said. "She had a deep sense of justice and injustice. My mother wanted to fight evil, and she saw evil in the Nazis."

Erika Heymann lived in Berlin and was married to a Jewish politician before the rise of Adolf Hitler. She fled to Amsterdam in 1933 when her husband was arrested and put in a concentration camp. She became a permanent resident and opened a boarding house.

Florsheim, who declined to be interviewed, was one of three Jewish men who lived in Heymann's Amsterdam apartment. The men used false names, disguised themselves and pretended to have jobs in the city.

In September 1943, German authorities knocked on her door. They had received a tip and arrested everybody in the apartment, including Erika Heymann. Florsheim made a daring escape by climbing over a balcony, said Dieter Heymann, who was then 16.

With help from friends, Florsheim quickly acquired a new name and false documentation and eventually made his way to Palestine. Erika Heymann was sent to a Dutch concentration camp for nine months.

Dieter Heymann and his older sister, Sonja, were visiting an uncle when the Germans arrested their mother. When they returned to an empty home, they noticed the vacuum cleaner was plugged into the wall. It was the secret signal their mother

had come up with to let them know she had been arrested.

"We were well trained," Heymann said. "We always knew the danger."

The Germans never arrested Heymann or his sister, who died two years ago. They took care of themselves until their mother was released from the concentration camp in 1944.



Dieter Heymann, at the Holocaust Museum Houston, accepted an award in honor of his mother, Erika Heymann, who protected three Jewish men during the Nazi occupation of Amsterdam.

She later told her children she had made just one mistake in hiding the Jews. She had failed to check out the young barber who was sent to her apartment to give a haircut to one of the Jewish boarders. The barber betrayed them by tipping off German authorities, Heymann said.

He said his mother stopped taking in boarders after her release and wanted to move back to Germany, but was too weak to do so. She died in 1952 from leukemia.

"She was an absolutely amazing woman," Heymann said.

## HOLOCAUST KADDISH PREMIERES AT YAD VASHEM

A special concert was held at the Warsaw Ghetto Square at Yad Vashem. The concert featured the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, IBA conducted by Gil Shohat, and soloists from the U.S. and from the Israeli Vocal Ensemble Choir, conducted by Yuval Ben-Ozer.

The featured piece was "Kaddish – I Am Here" by Dr. Lawrence Siegel. The piece is a unique creation which tells the stories of Holocaust survivors to music. The first part describes the social and cultural life of Jews in Europe before the Holocaust. The second part presents personal stories of Holocaust survivors, and the piece concludes by describing the resiliency of the Holocaust survivors.

"Kaddish – I Am Here" premiered in the United States three years ago and played several times there. The concert at Yad Vashem was its Israeli premiere.

"I worked for 25 years to adapt testimonies and create songs out of them," Dr. Siegel told Arutz Sheva. "I felt that I could do a really good job taking the words of survivors and turning them into vignettes about their lives before, during, and after the Holocaust."

Siegel spoke of his tremendous pride to be in Israel to see his special piece premiere there. Bringing "Kaddish - I Am Here" to Israel was a special project that was almost a year in the making.

"It was a tremendous team effort and I'm very, very impressed with the level of professionalism," he said.

Siegel added that there has been interest all over the world in his composition, including in places like China.

## RARE SURVIVOR ATTENDS ISRAELI MEMORIAL MARKING 70 YEARS SINCE BABI YAR MASSACRE

With tears in his eyes, Michael Sidko laid a wreath of flowers at Israel's official Holocaust memorial during a solemn ceremony on October 6 marking 70 years since a World War II massacre he barely escaped.

Sidko was six when he was taken with his family to the Babi Yar ravine outside Kiev, Ukraine — then part of the Soviet Union — to be murdered along with the rest of that city's Jews. In the two-day killing spree in September 1941, Nazi troops gunned down more than 33,000 Jews and buried them in mounds of dirt.

Among those murdered were Sidko's mother and two of his siblings. He and his older brother, Grisha, were among the few who managed to escape the killing fields.

"How is it that everyone was killed and only we survived?" he asked, hands quivering. "I still can't believe what happened there and how I managed to get away. I thank God I am here today."

At 76, he is one of the only living survivors of an atrocity that has become one of the defining events of the Nazi genocide of 6 million Jews.

The chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, who is a former Chief Rabbi of Israel and who was a child Holocaust survivor, theorized that the massacre at Babi Yar in Kiev 70 years ago may have been an experiment by Hitler to test world reaction to the elimination of the Jewish people.

Had the world raised its voice in protest at this horrendous atrocity, Lau surmised, what ensued afterwards might not have happened, and many more Jews might have survived the Holocaust.



Michael Sidko, 76, left, one of the lone survivors of the Babi Yar massacre, rekindles the Eternal Flame during a ceremony marking 70 years since the massacre, at the Hall of Remembrance at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, in Jerusalem.

Lau was speaking at the Jerusalem Theater at the close of a day of memorial events marking the 70th anniversary of the cold-blooded murder of 33,771 Jews.

After 70 years, said Lau, people still ask themselves how such a mass murder could have taken place. It was not a murder that was carried out in the concentra-

tion camps or the forests beyond the public eye. It happened where everyone could see it "and the world did nothing."

Retrospectively, said Lau, when he thought about it, he realized that the Babi Yar massacre had taken place prior to the January 1942 Wannsee Conference, at which the top Nazi command had discussed the final solution to the Jewish problem.

Babi Yar, he said, may have given Hitler the impetus to continue further.

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 marked a turning point in the German plan to "solve the Jewish problem."

At Babi Yar, the Jews were forced to hand over valuables, strip, and line up on the edge of the ravine. They were then shot with automatic fire and covered by dirt. The Nazis gunned down 33,771 Jews over two days.

Similar mass murders took place throughout the former Soviet Union.

After the war, a 1961 poem about the massacre by Yevgeni Yevtushenko was set to music, and Babi Yar became a symbol of Nazi evil.

"At that area, the mass murder systematically started, and for many years it was denied," said Avner Shalev, chairman of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial. "That very famous piece of poetry started a new process and immediately it caught the minds and hearts of so many people in the world."

Babi Yar also served as a slaughterhouse for non-Jews, such as Gypsies and Soviet prisoners of war. According to a So-

viet estimate, 100,000 people were murdered there.

Sidko said he was gathered along with a small group of children while the adults were being slaughtered. For some inexplicable reason, a German guard allowed him and his 13-year-old brother to break off from the group, and then they fled.

They returned home, but a Ukrainian neighbor reported them to the Gestapo and they were sent to a concentration camp. The brothers escaped that as well and were on the run for two more years, until the end of the war. Michael Sidko's brother Grisha is no longer alive.

At the ceremony, Sidko rekindled the eternal flame at Yad Vashem alongside Ukrainian Minister of Culture Mykhailo Kulynyak.

"It was hard," he said, in Russian. "I saw my whole life before my eyes."

Despite Israel's troubled history with Ukraine, Yad Vashem is set to sign a breakthrough agreement with the country's national archives that it hopes will shed more light on the massacres and help the Holocaust memorial in its project of collecting the names of all 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust.

Among the material in the Ukrainian archives is documentation from village, city and regional administrations, from which it is expected that details about the daily life of Jews before and after the Nazi invasion can be drawn.

"This is a significant achievement," Shalev said.



## HEROIC TALE OF HOLOCAUST, WITH A TWIST

BY ELAINE SCIOLINO,  
THE NEW YORK TIMES

The stories of the Holocaust have been documented, distorted, clarified and filtered through memory. Yet new stories keep coming, occasionally altering the grand, incomplete mosaic of Holocaust history.

One of them, dramatized in a French film recently released in France, focuses on an unlikely savior of Jews during the Nazi occupation of France: the rector of a Paris mosque.

Muslims, it seems, rescued Jews from the Nazis.

*Les Hommes Libres (Free Men)* is a tale of courage not found in French textbooks. According to the story, Si Kaddour Benghabrit, the founder and rector of the Grand Mosque of Paris, provided refuge and certificates of Muslim identity to a small number of Jews to allow them to evade arrest and deportation.

It was simpler than it sounds. In the early 1940s France was home to a large population of North Africans, including thousands of Sephardic Jews. The Jews spoke Arabic and shared many of the same traditions and everyday habits as the Arabs. Neither Muslims nor Jews ate pork. Both Muslim and Jewish men were circumcised. Muslim and Jewish names were often similar.

The mosque, a tiled, walled fortress the size of a city block on the Left Bank, served as a place to pray, certainly, but also as an oasis of calm where visitors were fed and clothed and could bathe, and where they could talk freely and rest in the garden.

It was possible for a Jew to pass.

"This film is an event," said Benjamin Stora, France's pre-eminent historian on North Africa and a consultant on the film. "Much has been written about Muslim collaboration with the Nazis. But it has not been widely known that Muslims helped Jews. There are still stories to be told, to be written."

The film, directed by Ismaël Ferroukhi, is described as fiction inspired by real events and built around the stories of two real-life figures (along with a made-up black marketeer). The veteran French actor Michael Lonsdale plays Benghabrit, an Algerian-born religious leader and a clever political maneuverer who gave tours of the mosque to German officers and their wives even as he apparently used it to help Jews.

Mahmoud Shalaby, a Palestinian actor living in Israel, plays Salim — originally Simon — Hilali, who was Paris's most popular Arabic-language singer, a Jew who survived the Holocaust by posing as a Muslim. (To make the assumed identity credible, Benghabrit had the name of Hilali's grandfather engraved on a tombstone in the Muslim cemetery in the Paris suburb of Bobigny, according to French obituaries about the singer. In one tense scene in the film a German soldier intent on proving that Hilali is a Jew, takes him to the cemetery to identify it.)

The historical record remains incomplete, because documentation is sketchy. Help was provided to Jews on an ad hoc basis and was not part of any organized movement by the mosque. The number of Jews who benefited is not known. The

most graphic account, never corroborated, was given by Albert Assouline, a North African Jew who escaped from a German prison camp. He claimed that more than 1,700 resistance fighters — including Jews but also a lesser number of Muslims and Christians — found refuge in the mosque's underground caverns, and that the rector provided many Jews with certificates of Muslim identity.

In his 2006 book, *Among the Righteous*, Robert Satloff, director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, uncovered stories of Arabs who saved Jews during the Holocaust, and included a chap-



In *Les Hommes Libres (Free Men)*, a new wartime French film based on true stories, Tahar Rahim, seated, is a black-market operator and Michael Lonsdale portrays the rector of the Grand Mosque of Paris.

ter on the Grand Mosque. Dalil Boubakeur, the current rector, confirmed to him that some Jews — up to 100 perhaps — were given Muslim identity papers by the mosque, without specifying a number. Mr. Boubakeur said individual Muslims brought Jews they knew to the mosque for help, and the chief imam, not Benghabrit, was the man responsible.

Mr. Boubakeur showed Mr. Satloff a copy of a typewritten 1940 Foreign Ministry document from the French Archives. It stated

that the occupation authorities suspected mosque personnel of delivering false Muslim identity papers to Jews. "The imam was summoned, in a threatening manner, to put an end to all such practices," the document said.

Mr. Satloff said in a telephone interview: "One has to separate the myth from the fact. The number of Jews protected by the mosque was probably in the dozens, not the hundreds. But it is a story that carries a powerful political message and deserves to be told."

In doing research for the film, Mr. Ferroukhi and even Mr. Stora learned new stories. At one screening a woman asked him why the film did not mention the Ashkenazi Jews of Eastern European origin who had been saved by the mosque. Mr. Stora said he explained that the mosque didn't intervene on behalf of Ashkenazi Jews, who did not speak Arabic or know Arab culture.

"She told me: 'That's not true. My mother was protected and saved by a certificate from the mosque,'" Mr. Stora said.

Reviews were mixed on the film, which is to be released in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Belgium. (American rights have been sold as well.) The daily *Le Figaro* said it "reconstitutes an atmosphere and a period marvelously." The weekly *L'Express* called it "ideal for a school outing, less for an evening at the movies."

Mr. Ferroukhi does not care. He said he was lobbying the Culture and Education Ministries to get the film shown in schools. "It pays homage to the people of our history who have been invisible," he said. "It shows another reality, that Muslims and Jews existed in peace. We have to remember that — with pride."

## RECIPES RECALL DARKER DAYS

BY DEVRA FERST, FORWARD

A crop of books link the Holocaust with culinary memories

Cecile Rojer Jeruchim remembers the last meal she shared with her mother. It was a typical Belgian lunch of steak, mashed potatoes and Belgian endives. "I hated Belgian endives!" she recalls. It was 1943, she was 12.

When a non-Jewish friend stopped by during the lunch and offered Cecile the opportunity to accompany her to voice lessons, Cecile jumped at the chance. "Not before you finish your endives, or I will save them for you for dinner," her mother said. Choosing to put off the disliked dish for later, Cecile left with her friend. While she was gone, her parents were arrested and sent to Auschwitz, where they ultimately perished. Cecile and her sister, Anny, survived the war by hiding in a Catholic convent.

"Today I often eat Belgian endives, as their subtle flavor brings me closer to my mother..." she writes in *Recipes Remembered: A Celebration of Survival*, a new cookbook written and assembled by June Feiss Hersh in association with the Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust.

It may seem strange or even perverse to link food and recipes with stories of the Holocaust, a time when there was such

death, hunger, and deprivation. But the women caught in these horrors often discussed food, reciting and recording recipes. The experience of starvation in camps and ghettos fortified these culinary memories, and the discussions took on profound meaning as psychological sustenance and as a connection to a Jewish, and even human, identity.

This book, the third published in the United States to link recipes to stories of the Holocaust, represents an important evolution in the genre. While the first two books preserve the recipes of survivors and



1940s-era photos of contributors Cecile Rojer Jeruchim with her siblings on right, and Luna Kaufman with her mother on the left.

those who perished exactly as they were written by the original cooks, *Recipes Remembered* is the first to provide readers with tested (and, if necessary, slightly altered) recipes that can easily be re-created at home, allowing the tastes of these dishes to serve as reminders of the lives of the women and men who created them.

The tome comprises a collection of about 80 survivors' stories and their personal or family recipes. Jeruchim's entry includes a recipe for Belgian endives along with two

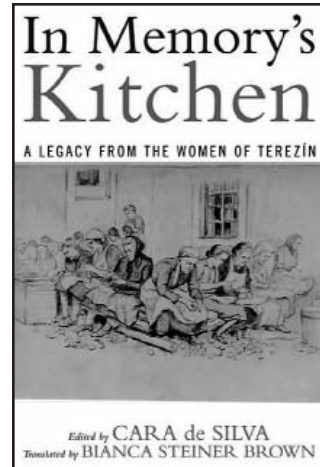
others. The stories, which are organized by geographical regions across Europe, are often both remarkable and heartbreaking, ranging from recollections of members of the Bielski partisans in Poland to recipes representing the refined Jewish cuisines of France and Germany. Collectively, the stories and recipes help the reader peer into the kitchen of a generation of European Jews and remember their tales through the dishes that sustained them.

The clearest example of recipes acting as psychological sustenance is seen in the first, and arguably most powerful, book of this genre, *In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezin*, originally published in 1996. A Holocaust artifact, it is a collection of recipes written on scraps of paper by women in the Czechoslovakian camp *Theresienstadt*, exactly as they were first composed.

Cara de Silva, editor of *In Memory's Kitchen*, explains in the introduction, "People who were... starving not only reminisced about favorite foods but also had discussions, even arguments, about the correct way to prepare dishes they might never be able to eat again."

As Michael Berenbaum, a Holocaust scholar and Jewish studies professor at the American Jewish University, puts it, discussing food "brought them back to a place where they had food, family, a table, children. It was an important psychological act of resistance."

In 2007, Joanne Caras compiled and self-published the *Holocaust Survivor Cookbook: Collected from Around the World*. The book contains the stories and recipes of 129 survivors, but doesn't connect the two well. It encourages readers to prepare the recipes and share the stories of the survivors with their families. The



recipes, though, are true to the way Caras received them — sometimes calling for a bissel of salt, or missing a step in the instructions. She decided to maintain their integrity as artifacts, even though it sometimes makes the dishes difficult to re-create.

Each book reveals the power of food to recall history, both personal and collective, and the importance that food plays in sustaining traditions, even, and perhaps especially,

during tragedy. "One of the things that kept me going during the war were memories of my family, and so many of those revolved around family gatherings and food," explains Florence Tabrys in her entry in *Recipes Remembered*. Another contributor, Judita Hruza, recalls grenadier march — a dish of potatoes, pasta and fried onions fed to her by a cook of a household she was ordered to clean. "Although this is a dish I associate with a terrible part of my life, I continued to make it after the war, because I have such strong memory of enjoying it that day," she writes.

Many of the book's entries are propelled

(Continued on page 12)



## MEMORIES OF THE HOLOCAUST: BEN HELFGOTT

BY STUART JEFFRIES, THE GUARDIAN

One morning, four days before Christmas in 1942, Nazi soldiers went to the synagogue in the Polish town of *Piotrków*, where 560 Jews were crammed, and demanded that 50 strong men accompany them to the woods. The men were told to dig five pits and then shot. In one week in October, 22,000 Jews (out of a population of 25,000) had been sent from *Piotrków* to the *Treblinka* gas chambers, so the men were under no illusions what they were digging.

The following morning, the SS took the rest of the people in the synagogue in groups of 100 to the woods. They were told to undress next to the pits and then they were shot. Among the victims was Ben Helfgott's 37-year-old mother and his eight-year-old sister, Lusía.

Twelve-year-old Ben was working in a glass factory outside the ghetto and so regarded as "legitimate" by the Nazis. His 11-year-old sister, Mala, somehow escaped the roundup and his father had a permit to live in the *Piotrków* ghetto. But his mother and Lusía were seen as illegals and so went into hiding, fearing that they would be

murdered. Then the Nazis offered illegals like Ben's mother asylum. It was a ruse, but she and Lusía came out of hiding and were held in the synagogue. It was hardly a place of sanctuary: for amusement, guards would shoot in through the windows, killing and wounding people.

Ben's father managed to get a permit for the release of his wife, but could not organize one for Lusía. He begged his wife to come home, but she refused. She wrote to her husband: "You look after the two children and I will have to look after the youngest one."

Nearly two years later, with the Russian army advancing across Poland, Ben and his father, along with 300 other Jewish men, were taken from *Piotrków* to *Buchenwald* concentration camp. It was the first of three concentration camps in which Ben was held during the war. Ben was 14 when he saw his father for the last time, before he was transferred from *Buchenwald* to *Schlieben* concentration camp, where hand-held anti-tank weapons were produced.

What does Ben remember of those camps? "We didn't have any mirrors," he says. "So you thought it was the others who looked terrible, that you didn't

have the swollen eyes and deep sockets that come from starvation." Ben was finally liberated in *Theresienstadt* in Czechoslovakia in May 1945. He then learned that his father had been shot a few days earlier as he tried to escape from a death march



Ben Helfgott, Holocaust survivor.

that was headed to *Theresienstadt*. "I was suddenly an orphan. I had heard that my mother and little sister were killed two-and-a-half years before when I was still with my father and my sister Mala. We were able to comfort each other. When I heard what happened to my father, I was alone. *Theresienstadt* was where I did all my crying. I cried for 24 hours."

After liberation, Ben returned to *Piotrków* with a cousin. "We thought we

would be welcome, but we were racially abused and almost murdered by two Polish army officers." However, there was good news. Ben's sister Mala, and another cousin, had managed to survive. Later, Ben became one of "the Boys", the young concentration camp survivors who were brought to Britain. Mala was taken to Sweden and the siblings were only reunited in London in 1947.

It was here that Ben built a new life. He learned English, went to university to study economics, and married, and he has a family of three sons, their wives, and nine grandchildren. Today he is a retired clothing manufacturer.

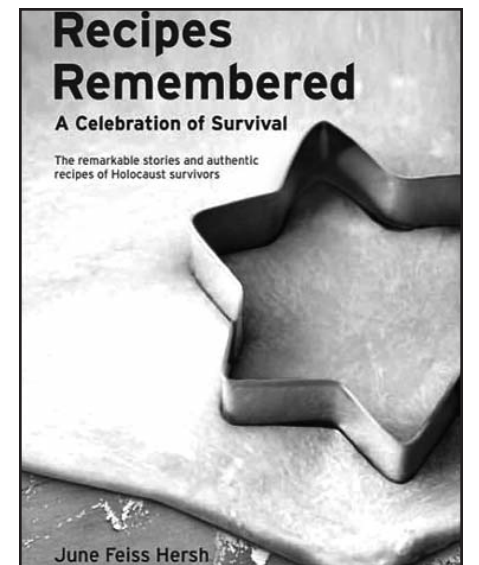
All that, though, misses an unexpected chapter in Ben's story. On a summer's day in 1948, the 18-year-old went swimming at Hampstead Heath ponds in London. He came across some weightlifters doing exercises. He asked whether he could try to lift some of the weights. One man said that he thought the weights would be too heavy for Ben, but he lifted 180 pounds with ease. He went on to become the only known survivor of Nazi concentration camps to compete in two Olympic games, captaining Britain's Olympic weightlifting team at Melbourne in 1956 and Rome in 1960.

## RECIPES RECALL DARKER DAYS

(Continued from page 11)

by a feeling of kinship with family that didn't survive. "If you make the same things your mother made, you feel less alone," Reni Hanau writes in her entry. As Hersh explains, "Food is a connection to their parents."

These recipes, however, are more than artifacts. They were written down to be carried forward. "It's both helping the women who



contributed [to the book] show the food that sustained them... and that now has carried their memories and traditions into the future," says de Silva. With tested recipes, these dishes can easily be prepared at home and can even "inspire us to create our own traditions," says de Silva.

While not all the stories in *Recipes Remembered* are directly tied to food, Hersh strives to make the link between survivor and recipe clear and relevant by introducing each dish. When only a memory of a food could be recalled, or when a survivor did not cook, Hersh asked professional chefs to contribute a recipe in the same spirit.

Although the chief purpose of these books is to help us remember the stories and recipes of these women and men, they also serve another, equally important, purpose: They ensure a connection to a Jewish culinary legacy far older than the recipes themselves, helping us carry forward the long and rich traditions of Jewish food.

## SEVEN DECADES AFTER HITLER'S FALL, GERMAN GRANDCHILDREN OF NAZIS DELVE INTO FAMILY PAST

(Continued from page 5)

eating me up from inside."

Her grandfather, Wilhelm Boger, invented the so-called Boger swing at Auschwitz — an iron bar that hung on chains from the ceiling. Boger would force naked inmates to bend over the bar and beat their genitals until they fainted or died.

Boger, 41, said it took her several years of therapy and group seminars to begin to come to terms with the fact her grandfather was a monster.

"I felt guilty, even though I hadn't committed a crime myself, felt like I had to do only good things at all times to make up for his evil," she said.

Like Hoess, Boger never personally met her grandfather, who died in prison in 1977. After her father died five years ago, she found old letters from her grandfather begging to see his grandchildren in prison — something that never happened.

"It all just doesn't go together," Boger said. "He is the man who killed a little boy with an apple who came in on a transport to Auschwitz, by smashing his head against a wall until he was dead, and then picked up and ate that apple."

"At the same time, he put a picture of myself as a little girl over his bed in prison. How am I supposed to come to terms with this?"

Tanja Hetzer, a therapist in Berlin, helps clients dealing with issues related to their family's Nazi past. While there are no studies or statistics, she said, many cases indicate that descendants of families who have never dealt with their Nazi family history suffer more from depression, burnout, and addiction, in particular alcoholism.

In one prominent case, Bettina Goering, the grandniece of Hermann Goering, one of the country's leading Nazis and the head of the Luftwaffe air force, said in an Israeli TV documentary that she decided to be sterilized at age 30 "because I was afraid to bear another such monster."

Some grandchildren of Nazis find a measure of catharsis in confronting the past.

Alexandra Senfft is the granddaughter of Hanns Elard Ludin, Hitler's Slovakia envoy who was involved in the deportation of almost 70,000 Jews. After Ludin was hanged in 1947, his widow raised the children in the belief their father was "a good Nazi."

In her book, *The Pain of Silence*, Senfft describes how a web of lies burdened her family over decades, especially her mother, who was 14 years old when her beloved father was hanged.



This 1936 photo provided by Alexandra Senfft shows her grandfather Hanns Elard Ludin, left, and Hermann Goering, right, standing in front of Adolf Hitler during a Nazi party convention in Nuremberg, Germany. Ludin, was Hitler's Slovakia envoy who was involved in the deportation of almost 70,000 Jews.

"It was unbearable at times to work on this book, it brought up fears and pain, but at the same time I got a lot out of writing it all down," Senfft, a lively 49-year-old, explained during an interview at a Berlin coffee shop.

"If I had continued to remain oblivious and silent about my grandfather's crimes, I would have become complicit myself, perhaps without even being aware of it."

Senfft said she also wrote the book so her children could be free of guilt and shame, and that confronting family pasts is essential for the health of German society as a whole so that history does not repeat itself.

These days Rainer Hoess lectures schoolchildren about the Nazi era and anti-Semitism. A few months ago, he visited Auschwitz for the first time and met a group of Israeli students.

That day was "probably the most difficult and intense day in my life," Hoess said, but it was also liberating because he realized that the third generation of Jews after the Holocaust did not hold him responsible. One Israeli girl even gave him a little shell with a blue Star of David painted on it, which he now wears around his neck on a black leather necklace at all times.

Hoess was embroiled in controversy in 2009 when Israeli media reported he tried to sell some of his grandfather's possessions to Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust Memorial.

Email correspondence seen by the AP backs up Hoess' assertion that he would have been just as willing to donate the items. Hoess eventually donated everything he owned from his grandfather — including a trunk, letters and a cigar cutter — to the Institute of Contemporary History in Munich.

Hoess acknowledges that his grandfather will probably never stop haunting him. After his visit to Auschwitz, he met Jozef Paczynski, a Polish camp survivor and the former barber of Commandant Hoess.

"Somehow, subconsciously, I was hoping that maybe he would tell me one positive story about my grandfather, something that shows that he wasn't all evil after all, that there was some goodness in him," Hoess confided.

Paczynski asked Hoess to get up and walk across the room — then told him: "You look exactly like your grandfather."



## UNRAVELING THE MENGELE MYSTERY

(Continued from page 7)

Mengele showed up at the German embassy in Buenos Aires and presented his original birth certificate. The embassy confirmed the authenticity of the document, and based on it, Mengele received a new Argentine identity card, this time bearing his real name: Josef Mengele; date of birth: March 16, 1911; place of birth: *Gunzburg*.

Years later, when the German ambassador in Argentina was asked for an explanation, he said: "I received instructions from the Foreign Ministry in Bonn not to pay any attention to the issue, since there was no legal arrest order against Dr. Josef Mengele at the time, and the German delegation didn't request his extradition from Argentina."

The Israeli police report also provides a glimpse into the life of Mengele's family. His wife, Irene, refused to join her husband in South America. In 1954, she divorced him; about half a year later, she remarried. Four years after his divorce, Mengele married Martha Maria Mengele, his younger brother Karl's widow.

According to the police report, Mengele, who became infamous for his experiments on twins during the war, had two twin nephews. Their father was Mengele's other brother, Alois. The twins were born on May 12, 1945 – just four days after Nazi Germany surrendered unconditionally.

The report includes considerable detail about the people who helped Mengele hide and escape. One of them was Gitta Stammer, known as "Gi" for short. A native of Hungary, she immigrated to Brazil in 1948 with her husband, who was seeking work there as an engineer. A decade later, the two purchased a farm with tropical fruit trees, coffee and rice plantations, and a small herd of cows.

During their leisure hours, the two would spend time at a club for Hungarians and people from German-speaking countries. There they also met the Gerhards from Austria. The Austrian couple suggested that they employ on their farm a Swiss man named Peter Hochbichler. The Stammers agreed happily, and Hochbichler

went to live on their farm, which he began to manage. The police report said: "Peter refused to receive any payment for his work and even insisted that he would pay them for his board and the services he received. He was a very introverted person, received no visitors and adamantly refused to be photographed. The only people who visited him were the Gerhards, who on those occasions would bring him German newspapers and books."

Two years later, in 1963, Gitta Stammer happened to come across a photograph of Josef Mengele in a local newspaper. She became suspicious because of his surprising resemblance to her "Swiss" farm manager. "That evening, Peter confirmed in a conversation with them that he really was Josef Mengele and showed them papers with his real name. At the time, he told them a little about his past and his connections with leading Nazis in South America," according to the report.

In wake of this discovery, Stammer wanted to dismiss Mengele. But a short time later, a man who introduced himself as the "manager of the Mengele company" – the German-based family business – showed up at the farm. He gave the Stammers \$3,000 – "to cover his living expenses," he said, adding that it would be very hard to find another safe haven for him.

Another woman who helped Mengele to hide was Liselotte Bossert, a native of Austria. In a conversation with Israeli police, Bossert said that in 1977 she met Rolf Mengele, Dr. Mengele's son, in Brazil. Rolf arrived in Brazil with a passport he had stolen from his friend. Bossert's husband drove him to his father's house on the farm. Rolf then gave his father \$5,000 and spent a week with him.

Bossert also told police about the circumstances surrounding Mengele's death in 1979. As they did every year, she and her family spent their vacation at the *Bertioga* beach in Brazil. A day earlier, Josef Mengele had arrived at their home, planning to stay with them for a few days. Late in the evening, after she and the children had

gone to bed, her husband and Mengele stayed up and talked. At about 2 A.M., she was awakened by shouts coming from the living room. Her husband and Mengele were having a loud argument, and it was not clear why.

In spite of that, the family continued with its original plan, and the next day went on a morning hike to the forests and along the beach, in the company of Mengele. In the afternoon, they returned home and later went for a swim in the sea.

At about 5:30 P.M., the sea suddenly became stormy. Bossert got out of the water with her children. From a distance, she saw Mengele calling for help. Her husband quickly swam in his direction, in an attempt to rescue him. After considerable effort, he managed to pull Mengele out of the water, but almost drowned him-



Dr. Mengele's home in *Hohenau, Itapua, Paraguay*. Photo taken August 2007.

self. Bossert's husband was evacuated by ambulance, and Bossert remained on the beach next to Mengele's body. She covered the body with her robe and called for help. At 11 P.M., an ambulance arrived and took Mengele to the morgue.

Because of a problem with her car, Bossert was forced to hitch a ride with the ambulance that was carrying Mengele. On the way to the morgue, she asked the driver to stop near her house so that she could change clothes. A heavy thunderstorm began shortly thereafter, causing a tree to fall on the road. The ambulance was delayed once again. His body arrived at the morgue only at 2 A.M.

## DIARIES REVEAL HOW MUCH WARTIME GERMANS KNEW

(Continued from page 5)

'friend.' Russia, of all countries. The National Socialists owe their existence entirely to the fight against Bolshevism (World Enemy No. 1, Anti-Comintern Pact). Where have you disappeared to, you warriors against Asian disgrace?"

### CLIPPINGS AS EVIDENCE

Less than two years later, the warriors had returned, supposedly to preempt an attack by the Soviet Union. On June 22, 1941, Kellner wrote in his diary: "Once again, a country has become a victim of the non-aggression pact with Germany. No matter how our actions are justified, the truth will be found solely in the economy. Natural resources are the trump card. And if you are not compliant, I am prepared to use violence." But hardly anyone saw things the way he did. The women, over tea, liked to refer to the Germans "taking" a city, a region, or even an entire country. Kellner was horrified, by both the gullibility and barbarism of the people around him.

Using military news, obituaries of those who died ("for Germany's greatness and freedom"), caricatures, newspaper articles, and conversations with ordinary people, Kellner fashioned an image of Nazi Germany that has never existed before in such a vivid, concise and challenging form.

Until now, the discussion over German guilt has fluctuated within the broad space between two positions. The one side emphasizes the deliberate disinformation of Nazi propaganda and the notion that ordinary citizens lived in fear and terror, concluding that they couldn't have known better. The other side takes the opposite position, namely that most were aware of what was happening.

Kellner's writings offer a glimpse into what everyone could have known about the war of extermination in the East, the crimes against the Jews and the acts of terror committed by the Nazi Party. He wrote about the executions of "vermin" who made "defeatist" remarks, and about "racial hygiene." In July 1941 he wrote: "The mental hospitals have become murder centers." A family that had brought its son home from an institution later inadvertently received a notice that the child had died and that his ashes would soon be delivered. "The office had forgotten to remove the name from the death list. As a re-

sult, the deliberate killing was brought to light," he wrote.

### UNDER NAZI WATCH

By reading Kellner's diaries and recognizing what Germans could have known, it's tempting to rethink how the expression "We knew nothing about those things!" came into being. According to Kellner, people simply ignored the information available to them out of both laziness and enthusiasm for German war victories. When this denial of reality no longer worked, when too much had been revealed about what the Nazis were doing in Germany's name, there was no turning back for the majority of Germans. "I did that," says my memory," Nietzsche wrote. "I could not have done that," says my pride, and remains inexorable. Eventually, the memory yields."

Kellner himself wrote that "this pathetic German nation" had been held hostage by the perpetrators. "Everyone is convinced that we must triumph so that we are not completely lost." The Nazis

The papers she presented to the authorities were forged and bore the name of Wolfgang Gerhard, the man who had first introduced her to Mengele. The doctor on duty did not examine the body, did not photograph it and did not take fingerprints. Bossert asked to have the body cremated, but was told that would be possible only with the permission of close relatives.

The morgue official asked Bossert to identify the body in the coffin, but she refused, saying that she could identify the coffin and she was in a rush to get to the funeral, which was being held in the cemetery in *Embu*, about 30 kilometers from São Paulo.

At the cemetery, Bossert was once again asked to identify the body. Fearing that the cemetery director would notice that the dead man was not the same man as the man whose name appeared in his papers, she pretended to have an anxiety and fainting attack in order to distract them. Ultimately, the coffin was interred in a double plot, where the mother of the real Wolfgang Gerhard was also buried. Aside from the director of the cemetery and the gravedigger, nobody was present. Bossert later decided not to publicize the fact that Mengele had died, letting his family know in a letter under the heading "The last day."

Immediately after, Mengele's son Rolf arrived in Brazil once again. Mengele's friends gave Rolf the journals his father had left behind in his house.

Many years after the report about Mengele's drowning, the media were still carrying reports about sightings of the notorious doctor in various places around the world. The Israeli government even offered a monetary prize of \$1 million for his capture.

In 1985, Mengele's body was exhumed. With the help of the U.S. consul in São Paulo, his dentist was found, and he was able to provide authorities with X-rays of Mengele's teeth. These were compared to the remains of his body, which was then identified "with complete certainty" as belonging to Mengele. In 1992, a genetic test was conducted, confirming his death conclusively.

themselves warned the population against the revenge of the perpetrators. For most Germans, the only conceivable end of the war was victory — or total annihilation.

Kellner lived until 1970. Despite having been under surveillance by the party and questioned several times, he escaped the concentration camps. In a denunciation written in 1940, a Nazi official named Engst wrote: "If we want to apprehend people like Kellner, we will have to lure them out of their corners and allow them to make themselves guilty. The time is not ripe for an approach like the one that was used with the Jews. This can only happen after the war."

In the epilogue, the author's grandson describes how the publication of Kellner's diaries came about. German publishers were not interested at first. But then the diaries attracted attention when, in April 2005, *Spiegel* reported that former US President George Bush had looked at Kellner's original notebooks in the George Bush Presidential Library at Texas A&M University.

Now that they have finally been published, the volumes are likely to find a place next to the Klemperer diaries in German libraries and on private bookshelves too.



Scans of the original 10-volume diaries show clippings and observations made by the court official.



## ELUSIVE JUSTICE: THE SEARCH FOR NAZI WAR CRIMINALS

The American Society for Yad Vashem hosted the World Premiere Screening of *Elusive Justice: The Search for Nazi War Criminals* on September 20, 2011 at the prestigious Directors Guild Theater in New York City. The special evening, which included a VIP reception, selected film highlights, a panel discussion, and the Yad Vashem archival exhibit "Marking 50 Years Since the Eichmann Trial," was made possible by the generosity of the Blavatnik Family Foundation and Sigmund A. Rolat.

*Elusive Justice: The Search for Nazi War Criminals* is a landmark PBS documentary about the global effort to identify, prosecute, and punish the 20th Century's most notorious killers. The film was produced and directed by Emmy-award winning journalist Jonathan Silvers and narrated by Candice Bergen, and features well-known Nazi-hunters Rudolph Giuliani, Elizabeth Holtzman, Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, Allan A. Ryan, Howard Safir, and Eli Rosenbaum. In addition to Event Underwriters Leonard and Emily Blavatnik, and Sig-

mund A. Rolat, in attendance at the event were Executive Producers Nancy Spielberg, Jack Kliger, and Leon Constantiner, Event Sponsors Sharon and David Halpern, Mark Moskowitz, Alan Pines, and Young Leadership Chairs Nicole and Joseph Meyer. Stephen Segaller, Vice President of Programming, PBS-WNET 13, was one of the guest speakers.

The audience was treated to an in-depth and intriguing panel discussion after the film, featuring Elizabeth Holtzman, former U.S. Congresswoman and Chair of the House Immigration Subcommittee; Howard Safir, former Associate Director of the U.S. Marshals Service, Commissioner of the New York Police Department, and Commissioner of the New York Fire Department; Allan A. Ryan, former Director of the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) in the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice; and David G. Marwell, an investigative historian who served at the U.S. Justice Department's OSI.



Elizabeth Zborowski, ASYV Cultural Director; Charles Kushner, Sharon Halpern, Abbi Halpern, and Young Leadership Event Chair Nicole Meyer.



Nancy Spielberg, executive producer.



Producer/director Jonathan Silvers, executive producer Nancy Spielberg, and actor Peter Riegert.



David Halpern; Mark Moskowitz; Stephanie Risa Stein; Leonard Blavatnik; Nancy Spielberg; Alan Pines; and S. Isaac Mekel, ASYV Director of Development.



David G. Marwell, Allan A. Ryan, Elizabeth Holtzman, Howard Safir, and Jonathan Silvers.

### DOVE ON A BARBED WIRE

(Continued from page 4)

with SS officers. Transferred to Germany's *Flossenburg* for nine months, he tried to sabotage the planes he worked on so that they would explode in the air.

He even hit back his *kapo*-like blockmaster, gaining his respect. He witnessed the arrival of well-groomed Czech, Hungarian, German, and French women who became prey to the wild soldiers and were tortured to death in horrific ways when deemed useless. There he learned from a German prisoner and friend never to drink unboiled water and to eat every morsel of the meager food. It would save his life. Unbeknown to Yonah, his brother Willi died in *Flossenburg* in 1944.

The next torturous station was Austria's *Mauthausen*, where he was assigned to its largest camp with 200,000 inmates. Yonah learned for the first time that the Jews were targeted to die and not only to work. He was toiling on the quarry's infamous "Stairs of Death" when told of brother Rudi's presence, and resourcefully risked his life only to find him already dead. Even

foraging in human waste looking for gold to get food, Yonah's survival instinct was ever alert. With the Germans losing, their plot to blow up the camp was thwarted by inmates with electrical skills. Though many lives were saved, many were lost in the ensuing flight toward the electrified fences. Others, including Yonah, rushed to dig for potatoes. I'll always recall my visit to *Mauthausen* with my wife Jennifer on a July 2002 day, and the contrast between the pastoral environment and what transpired at the camp.

Following liberation by American troops on May 5, 1945, Yonah shared the revenge he and other freed inmates exacted on captured SS on a bridge in nearby *Linz* with bayonets supplied by the black American soldiers. In the same town in 1946, my family and I spent 6 weeks in a refugee facility upon our escape from Poland via Czechoslovakia. A period of reckless conduct, which Yonah was not proud of, ensued, expressing the survivors' outrage and pain. In Rome, Italy, with Yonah working for the Americans as a truck driver, an officer informed him

that a newly arrived Jeep was donated by a Solomon Steiner of New Jersey. It was Yonah's uncle! Subsequently Solomon sent him a ticket to join him, which Yonah didn't use, creating a long estrangement which lasted till Solomon and Rose Steiner made aliyah in 1973.

Yonah's focus became finding his brother Paul, who, unbeknown to him, was also in *Mauthausen*. Following arduous efforts, a book in itself, the two were reunited in Czechoslovakia's *Bratislava*, where ambitious Paul was operating a textile factory. Paul reluctantly joined irresistible Yonah, but ended up to the family's chagrin with a French Catholic wife in France. In *Hamburg*, Germany, Yonah met Rivkah, a Ukrainian family's sole survivor, and like many survivors quickly married. Yonah followed Rivkah to kibbutz *Ein Gev*, but was caught by the British. He was interred in Cyprus not before daring sea missions of bringing refugees to Palestine. He finally made it to *Ein Gev* with seven buddies in January 1947, escaping by boat from Cyprus. Yonah helped protect the kibbutz for

the forthcoming war, and when leaving for kibbutz *Ginosar* in 1951, he put into practice the skills gained as a slave laborer for the Germans whom he both hated and admired.

In September 1999, on the 60th anniversary of WW II, the author's uncle, David Steiner, took 21 family members on an emotional roots journey to *Gromnik*, where Yonah was finally able to cry, admitting to years of psychological detachment that also had protected him. David Steiner, who has become the family's generous patron, owns New York's Steiner's Studios and Steiner Equities, and is an AIPAC past chairman. The author fulfilled her pledge to Grandpa Solomon: she found Yonah.

Yonah died of cancer on May 26, 2009, five days after his family gathered to celebrate his 83rd birthday, and is buried in his beloved kibbutz where Deborah first met him in 1969. The dove in the book's title stands for the Hebrew, Yonah.

Rabbi Dr. Israel Zoberman, spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach, Virginia.



## ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER

(Continued from page 1)

of public discourse, making it his life's mission to build a connection between the events of the past and the hope of the future. Eli's unwavering passion towards this end energized him in his founding of the American Society thirty years ago and has nurtured his unceasing efforts to this day. These efforts have always reflected his faithfulness to Yad Vashem's needs and priorities, above all others. Eli's pioneering vision and inspiring leadership have generated extensive and innovative commemorative activities — such as the Society's signature project, the Valley of the Communities at Yad Vashem — and have stimulated younger generations to find meaning in everlasting Holocaust remembrance.

"Eli's perceptive insight regarding the powerful link between Holocaust remembrance and Jewish continuity has served as the essential foundation for the American Society's myriad achievements. Eli was instrumental in tying the permanent bond between the American Society and Yad Vashem. That bond has helped yield the fruition of the Yad Vashem 2001 Masterplan, including the completion of our new Museum Complex, the significant expansion of Holocaust education worldwide, and the effective integration of cutting edge technologies in the pursuit of Holocaust commemoration, education, documentation and research. These achievements reflect Eli Zborowski's paramount dedication to and identification with Yad Vashem.

"I know that Eli's matchless achievements, his keen wisdom, and steadfast solidarity with Yad Vashem constitute an enduring legacy of leadership and loyalty that will set the standard for all who steer the American Society in the decades to come. He, and we, have the satisfaction of seeing how a younger generation is assuming the continued responsibility of remembrance through loyal support of Yad Vashem.

"I wish Eli Zborowski, the American Society, and Yad Vashem much hatzlacha, success, as we continue together to pursue our destiny of meaningful remembrance."

Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli president Shimon Peres, and President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski sent their greetings to the American and International Societies for Yad Vashem on their 30th anniversary.

The annual tribute dinner concluded with the blessings recited by Rabbi Judah Oppenheimer of the Young Israel of Forest Hills.

(Continued from page 4)

Eli designated the location of the future business as 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue, signed up for a mailing address at 545 Fifth Avenue for \$10 a month, printed letterhead stationery, and started his first company.

Later, when Eli became a successful business leader, he provided nieces and nephews from Israel with an American Jewish camping experience in the States, established a business for his sister Tzila and her family in Israel, and, along with his wife, Diana, made his home a gathering place for family, friends, and business associates. The authors comment, "As he taught his family, any material success is by the grace of God. One's primary motivation should never be just to make money, but having it, to use it for *tikun olam* (repairing the world)."

His caring for others was manifested early on. When he was twenty years old, in the summer of 1945, a crisis arose. A

## BENJAMIN NETANYAHU: "WE COMMEND THE MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN &amp; INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES"

It gives me great pleasure to send warm greetings to the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem on the occasion of the Annual Tribute Dinner.

This year, the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem mark their 30th anniversary, and this year's dinner is a celebration of those remarkable individuals who helped establish Yad Vashem Jerusalem and the American & International Societies. Their achievements and dedication to ensuring that the horrors of the Holocaust are remembered and can never again occur are highly deserving of this recognition.

Yad Vashem is the leading Holocaust educational institution, and serves as a repository for valuable eyewitness testimony of those who survived the Holocaust, information regarding European Jewry before its almost total eradication and invaluable documents relating to World War Two.

We commend the members of the American & International Societies for their support in ensuring the future of Yad Vashem, and thank you for your commitment.

## SHIMON PERES: "WE SHALL CONTINUE TO REMEMBER THE PAST"

On the occasion of the Annual Tribute Dinner of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem, I want to warmly greet the distinguished participants of this event and congratulate you on your 30th anniversary celebration — 30 years of great achievements.

The years that have elapsed since the dark era of the Holocaust are many, but its memory is still vivid, and the voices and faces of its victims still haunt us, more meaningful yet at the sound of today's strident calls for our annihilation and the tangible threats to our very existence. We cannot let our guard down, we cannot falter in our determination to prevail, nor can we allow the distinctness of our past experiences to fade into the shadows of our memories.

"Preserving the Past — Guarding the future" encapsulates this essential need and must be upheld and I want to thank all those whose significant contribution to Yad Vashem's vital mission has been unflagging. And as we stand together as one, we shall continue to remember the past, never to forget, and these memories will inspire us to build a secure, hopeful and thriving future for the generations to come.

## BRONISŁAW KOMOROWSKI: "THE HOLOCAUST IS THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON WE MAY TAKE FROM THE HISTORY OF MANKIND"

I am happy that as the President of the Republic of Poland I may greet you and all those gathered for the 30th Annual Tribute Dinner of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem.

The Holocaust is the most important lesson we may take from the history of mankind. We must make an eternal commitment to confronting intolerance and hateful ideologies. Yad Vashem is the institution of record for transmitting the lessons of the Holocaust worldwide. Poland is grateful for its continuous cooperation with many Polish partners, including the Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau and other Polish museums.

I want to specifically express the gratitude of Poland for the efforts of Yad Vashem to honor those brave people who risked their lives to save Jewish citizens of Poland.

The cruel murder of millions of European Jews took place, to a great extent, on Polish territories occupied by Hitler's Germany and this places a special obligation on the Polish people to remember the past and recognize a danger of anti-Semitism, as well as to remember the coexistence of Poles and Jews for hundreds of years. In Warsaw the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews, which is under construction, will tell the story of our long common life, including its brightest and darkest chapters.

I thank you for the achievements of societies for Yad Vashem. Through the assistance of Yad Vashem you help everyone to build a better future for all of us.

## A CONTEMPORARY ULYSSES

group of more than a hundred orphaned youngsters in their mid-teens, some with younger siblings, were traveling with Eli on freight cars without legal immigration papers. When their *madrich* (counselor) mysteriously disappeared, Eli took over. He recalls, "I assumed responsibility for finding food to feed them, locating a place to sleep, and looking after anyone who didn't feel well." In doing this, he demonstrated what Michael Korda, editor-in-chief of Simon and Schuster, asserted as the quality that all successful people have: "the ability to take on responsibility."

The authors quote John C. Maxwell in his book, *The Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, in this apt observation: "Crisis doesn't make character, but it certainly reveals it."

Exciting close calls demonstrate Eli's resourcefulness, as when he convinced a Polish policeman who discovered him with a cache of illegal documents, that

the policeman should let him free, or face probable life-threatening consequences to himself and his family.

This resourcefulness has served Eli throughout a successful business career, as well as that of a community leader. His accomplishments are legendary. Included among them are his initiating the first *Yom Hashoah* commemoration in the United States, and his making this program an annual event in synagogues throughout the country. His endowment of the first chair in Holocaust Studies in the world at Yeshiva University is noteworthy, as is his having spearheaded the contribution of more than \$100 million to Yad Vashem and its works. Eli's other accomplishments are too numerous to mention in this review. Those, as well as his exemplary achievements in a score of worthwhile endeavors, are disclosed in this fascinating biography.

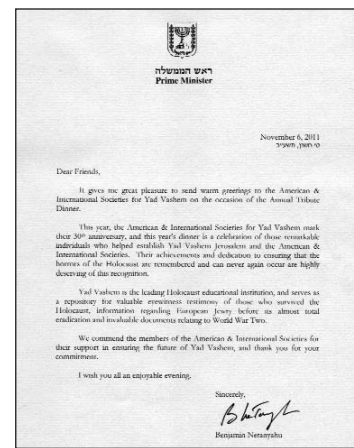
The perceptive comments of some of the Young Leadership of the American

Society of Yad Vashem and their work in furthering Eli's dream are recorded. Notable is the positive role that awareness of the courage and tenacity of those who overcame the ordeals of the Holocaust plays in inspiring future generations of Jews.

The photographs both at the commencement of each chapter as well as throughout the text poignantly capture significant moments in Eli Zborowski's life.

Rochel and George Berman gracefully chronicle more than eight decades of the life of a leader of our generation. Eli made enormous strides in assisting his people to absorb a most difficult moment in their collective history, and to rise above it with dignity, courage, and fortitude.

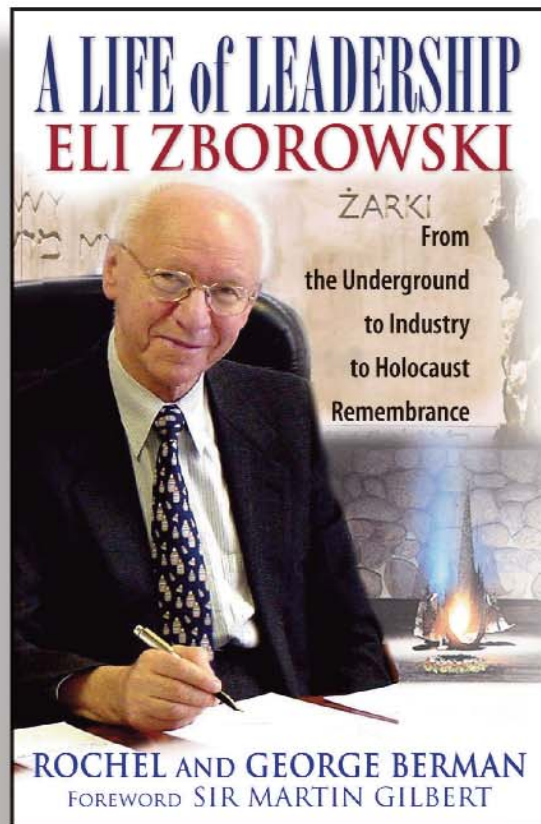
*Yocheved Miriam Zemel is a freelance writer living in Israel.*







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- Inaugurate the first Yom Hashoah commemoration in the United States
- Establish the world's first academic chair in Holocaust Studies at Yeshiva University
- Found and chair the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem

*See book review on page 4*

**"In this book there is not a single dull page, not a single story that does not resonate today with the capacity to inspire new generations."**  
 —The Right Honorable Sir Martin Gilbert

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 Web site: [www.yadvashemusa.org](http://www.yadvashemusa.org)

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**PAID**  
 NEW YORK, N.Y.  
 PERMIT NO. 9313

**Martyrdom & Resistance**

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

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\*1974-85, as Newsletter for the American Federation of Jewish Fighters, Camp Inmates, and Nazi Victims  
 \*\*deceased



**A bequest to the American Society for Yad Vashem helps keep the memory of the Six Million alive...**

Please remember us in your trust, will, estate plan or with the planned gift. It's your legacy... to your family, and your people.

For more information, or for help with proper wording for the bequest to ASYV, please contact us at 212-220-4304.