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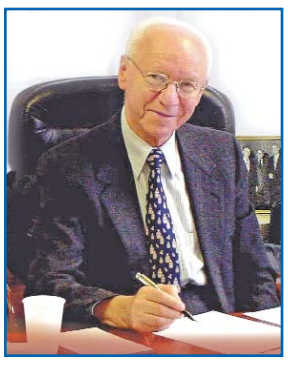
ENSURING THE LEGACY

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM



BY ELI ZBOROWSKI, *FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM*

Milestones provide an opportunity to reflect on the past and to project plans for the future. We began our efforts as the American & International Societies united in the desire that the horrors of the Holocaust should never be forgotten. As we mark the 30th Anniversary of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem in 2011, we feel that we have successfully met our envisioned goals. Our support has helped Yad Vashem become one of the most significant landmarks in the moral history of humankind.

IN THE EARLY YEARS

At this time, I would first like to share with you the challenges we faced in the early years. As a member of the Yad Vashem Directorate since 1969, I regularly attended quarterly meetings. I soon realized that it was consistently difficult for Yad Vashem to cover its expenses. I suggested that Jews all over the Diaspora should partner with Yad Vashem by contributing to its expenses in order to make it as vibrant and effective an institution as possible. It took more than a decade for the Directorate to accept that fundraising was a respectful and compassionate means of supporting an institution and that it was a necessity in order for Yad Vashem to move forward with its mission. This gave birth to two new organizations both founded and registered in the State of New York in 1981: The American Society for Yad Vashem and the International Society for Yad Vashem.

The people who had expressed interest in this newly organized Yad Vashem partnership came from various parts of the world. Groups were established in Brazil, Mexico, Chile, England, the Netherlands and Switzerland. I also had contacts in Germany among survivors who moved there after the war and did not relocate elsewhere.

Our first meeting took place in the home of Sam and Stella Skura in Hillcrest, New York, with Dr. Yitzhak Arad, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, as the guest speaker. This event was followed by ones hosted by various individuals in different locations, including Mr. and Mrs. Israel Krakowski of New York City; Mr. and Mrs. Isak Levenstein and Mr. and Mrs. Sam Halpern of Hillside, New Jersey; Mr. and Mrs. Mark Palmer of Chicago; and Mr. and Mrs. Solomon Gross of Rosedale, New York. Interest and enthusiasm soon attracted Arie Halpern, Harry and Joe Wilf, and others.

The first major project the Societies undertook at Yad Vashem was the building of the Valley of Communities, a memorial to the more than 5,000 communities that were destroyed during the Holocaust. During the nine years it took to build the Valley, the American Society completed the Jewish Soldiers, Ghetto Fighters, and Partisan Monument, an endeavor spearheaded by Frank Blaichman, Jack Pomerance and Isidore Karten. Several other projects were erected through the generosity of specific donors: The Children's Memorial – Edita and Abraham Spiegel; the Yad Vashem Candelabra – Stella and Sam Skura and Celina and Marvin Zborowski; the Auschwitz Chimney – David Feuerstein; the Cattle Car Exhibit – Bernice and Izzy Merin and Benjamin Merin.

The cornerstone for the Valley of Communities was laid at Yad Vashem in 1983 and the completed project, a massive two-and-a-half-acre monument blasted out of natural bedrock, was dedicated in 1992. In the center of the Valley stands the Beit Hakehilot, which my late wife Diana and I established in memory of our parents who perished during the *Shoah*.

Since 1985, *Martyrdom & Resistance*, a bimonthly newspaper chronicling current news and features on all aspects of the Holocaust, has been published by the International Society for Yad Vashem. Inaugurated in 1974 by the American Federation of Jewish Fighters, Camp Inmates, and Nazi Victims, it is the first continuous periodical devoted to the Holocaust. Reaching 50,000 primary readers, its circulation includes hundreds of teachers and Holocaust scholars.

CHANGING THE YAD VASHEM LANDSCAPE

In 1993, Avner Shalev succeeded Yitzhak Arad as Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate. Shalev's far-sighted vision and abundant energy and creativity ushered in a new era in which the entire landscape of the Yad Vashem campus underwent a vast transformation. In 1996, Shalev enlisted the support of the American Society in Yad Vashem 2001, a master plan designed to render Yad Vashem as a state-of-the-art facility capable of responding to the challenges of the 21st century. Joseph Wilf, American Society Vice Chairman, was appointed as the Chairman of the Yad Vashem 2001 Campaign.

The projects of major benefactors of Yad Vashem 2001 include:

The Partisans' Panorama – Julia and Isidore Karten, Harry Karten, Marcia Toledano, and Berne Bookhamer

The Survivors Wall – Gale and Ira Drukier

The Entrance Plaza – The Wilf family in memory of Harry Wilf

The Visitors' Center – David and Fela Shapell

Bridge to a Vanished World – Mr. and Mrs. Jan Czuker

The Holocaust History Museum – Harry and Judith Wilf family and Joseph and Elizabeth Wilf family

Gallery in the Holocaust History Museum – The Norman Braman Family Foundation

The Synagogue – Marilyn and Barry Rubenstein and family

The Museum of Holocaust Art – Dr. Miriam and Sheldon G. Adelson

The Learning Center – Stella and Sam Skura

The Exhibition Pavilion – Tina and Steven Schwarz and Rochelle and Henryk Schwarz

Renewal of the Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations – Gladys and Sam Halpern family and Eva and Arie Halpern family

The Visual Center – The Daniella and Daniel Steinmetz Foundation and Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation

The International School for Holocaust Studies Building – Marilyn and Jack Pechter and family

The Family Plaza – Ruta and Dr. Felix Zandman

The Library Building – Marilyn and Jack Belz and Philip Belz and family

The Warsaw Ghetto Plaza Refurbishment – David and Ruth Mitzner, Ira and Mindy Mitzner and family, and Phyllis and William Mack family

PAYING TRIBUTE TO SUPPORTERS

The Annual Tribute Dinner of the American and International Societies for Yad Vashem is the premier event on the organizations' calendar. It attracts 1,000 to 1,500 guests and is a forceful demonstration of the strength of the Societies. For survivors it is an affirmation, more than sixty years after the liberation, that the memory of the Holocaust has not dimmed. For younger generations it is an inspiring evening dedicated to the "State of Remembrance." Dinner honorees and guest speakers have included Ambassador Abba Eban, Ambassador Ronald Lauder, Sir Robert Maxwell, Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, Wolf Blitzer, Edgar Bronfman, Matthew Bronfman, Dr. Miriam and Sheldon Adelson, Fred Zeidman and Avner

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IN THIS ISSUE

A TRUE SURVIVOR: ALICE SOMMER HERZ GETS AWARD AT 107

The world's oldest Holocaust survivor, Czech pianist Alice Sommer Herz, has received a top cultural award on the occasion of her 107th birthday, the Czech News Agency (ČTK) reported.

Sommer Herz received the Artis Bohemiae Amicis medal for the promotion of Czech culture abroad from the Czech Ambassador to Britain, Michael Zantovsky, in her adopted home of London.

A world-renowed pianist based in Prague before World War II who had grown up on the knee of Gustav Mahler, a friend of her mother's, and who counted Franz Kafka among her own friends, Sommer Herz was sent to the *Terezin* concentration camp along with her family in 1943.

She performed some 150 concerts in the Jewish ghetto when the Nazis allowed the inmates to organize cultural events in hope of convincing the Red Cross that the living conditions were good there.

Sommer Herz's husband died at the Nazi camp, but she survived and emigrated to Israel in 1949.

There she worked as a music teacher and focused on the works of Czech Jewish composers Viktor Ulmann, Pavel Haas, Gideon Klein and Hans Krasa.

Alice Sommer Herz.

In 1986, she moved to London to live with her son, renowned cellist Raphael Sommer. She still plays piano there three hours a day.

Three years ago, biographer Melissa Müller and author Reinhard Piechocki, a close friend of Sommer Herz, published a book on the time she spent in the concentration camp, *A Garden of Eden in Hell*, which went on to become an international bestseller and has been translated into seven languages.

HOLLAND ASKS GERMANY TO LOCK UP ELDERLY NAZI FUGITIVE

The Dutch government asked Germany to jail an 89-year-old Dutch Nazi who escaped in 1952 from a Dutch prison where he was serving a life sentence for killing Jewish prisoners at a Nazi transit camp.

The Netherlands had already tried to extradite former SS soldier Klaas Carel Faber using a European Arrest Warrant – a European Union-wide agreed extradition mechanism – but a court in Munich turned down the application on the grounds that Faber is now a German citizen.

Dutch Justice Minister Ivo Opstelten wrote to his German counterpart saying that under European rules, Germany should impose on Faber the life sentence he had been serving in the Netherlands.

"The public prosecutor in Munich has informed the Dutch justice ministry it can apply for enforcement of the sentence to be transferred. Opstelten considers this a sign of willingness to implement the sentence in Germany," the Dutch government said in a statement.

Faber was sentenced to death in 1947 for the killing of at least 11 people in the *Westerbork* camp in the Netherlands, a staging post for Dutch Jews on their journey to concentration camps in Germany, Poland and Ukraine. His brother, who was also a member of the Dutch SS, was shot by firing squad after the war, but Faber's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He escaped from the prison and fled to Germany in 1952.

Dutch efforts to extradite Faber have been frustrated by a German law preventing extradition of German nationals for war crimes although Germany sentenced another former Dutch Nazi, Heinrich Broere, to life in prison in March last year.

A German court ruled in 1957 that it had insufficient evidence to try Faber, who, according to Dutch newspaper reports, is living in the Bavarian town of *Ingolstadt* and worked at local carmaker Audi.

In her comments to the German press, German Justice Minister Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger has been sympathetic to the Dutch requests regarding Faber. Israel has also asked Germany to hand Faber over to the Dutch authorities.

UKRAINE TO MARK HOLOCAUST DAY

By a large majority, the Ukrainian parliament has decided to turn International Holocaust Remembrance Day into an official commemoration day in the country.

The parliament also decided to mark the 70th anniversary of the Babi Yar massacre this year with a series of special events.

The decision of the Verkhovna Rada (Ukraine's parliament) was unequivocal, with 331 of 450 representatives voting in favor of commemorating the Jews murdered in the Holocaust in an annual state memorial day, and marking the 70th anniversary of the massacre in the ravine west of Kiev with special events.

According to the official document, a committee will be appointed to plan official ceremonies and events for the Babi Yar massacre anniversary in October.

Babi Yar memorial.

In September 1941, after the Nazi occupation of Ukraine, Babi Yar turned into a battlefield. More than 100,000 people were murdered and buried at the site. Some 33,000 Jews were slaughtered there within two days, on September 29 – 30.

Kiev's Jews gathered near a local cemetery, expecting to be taken to ghettos on trains. Instead, they were ordered to undress and were shot in groups into the ravine, which turned into a mass grave.

Soviet prisoners of war, gypsies, psychiatric patients, opposers of the Nazi regime, and many Ukrainian citizens were murdered in Babi Yar later on.

In August 1943, the Nazis tried to cover up the crimes they committed at the site. For weeks, hundreds of prisoners engaged in burning bodies and scattering the ashes.

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS TO RECEIVE MORE THAN HALF BILLION DOLLARS IN REPARATIONS

The Claims Conference has negotiated a significant increase in funds from the German government for survivors' homecare to ensure that victims of Nazism can live at home and receive the assistance they need.

The Claims Conference reevaluated reparations for Holocaust survivors and reached a landmark decision to increase survivor homecare funding over the next three years by a total of 564 million dollars.

Under the new agreement, in 2012 the German government will provide approximately $177 million for homecare funding; in 2013, approximately $191 million; and in 2014, approximately $196 million. This totals approximately $564 million.

The 2012 figure is a 15 percent increase over the amount negotiated for 2011. The money will be distributed to various agencies worldwide to provide survivors with in-home nursing and assistance in day-to-day activities.

The hope is that through providing at-home care, Holocaust victims will be able to remain living at home in spite of difficulties associated with old age.

The conference negotiated an increase in pension payments to survivors. It was also decided that while previously a minimum of 18 months' incarceration in a Nazi-era ghetto was the criterion for receiving payments, the German government will now review individual cases and determine based on hardship and persecution if those who spent less time in the ghetto are eligible for funding as well.

"With restitution-related sources of funding on the decline, this long-term agreement obtained by the Claims Conference is vital to addressing the growing social welfare needs of aging Holocaust survivors," said Julius Berman, Chairman of the Board of the Claims Conference. "It will provide survivors and the agencies that care for them the certainty that funding will be available to meet the anticipated growing demand over the next few years."

The Claims Conference Special Negotiator, Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat, commended the German government for assuming responsibility for reparations and assisting survivors as they enter advanced age.

"Once again, the German government has recognized its historic responsibility to help care for Jewish Holocaust victims in their final years," said Eizenstat, adding that "over the decades, the government has demonstrated its commitment to alleviating the plight of elderly victims who need the care that these funds will provide."

Greg Schneider, Claims Conference Executive Vice President, emphasized the importance of the increased funds, enumerating the multiple ways in which survivors will benefit from them.

"With these increased funds, the Claims Conference can provide more hours of homecare, addressing the most basic needs of these aging and frail victims of Nazism. We can enable more survivors to remain in their own homes, living in familiar surroundings while getting the services they need and deserve," said Schneider.

LEADING EGYPTIAN POL CALLS HOLOCAUST "A LIE"

A top official with one of Egypt's leading secular political parties called the Holocaust "a lie" and Anne Frank's diary "a fake."

Ahmed Ezz El-Arab, a vice chairman of the liberal Wafd party, also said in an interview with *The Washington Times* that the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks were "made in the USA."

"The Holocaust is a lie," he told the newspaper while in Hungary for the Conference of Democracy and Human Rights.

"The Jews under German occupation were 2.4 million. So if they were all exterminated, where does the remaining 3.6 million come from?"

El-Arab conceded that "hundreds of thousands" of Jews had been murdered, but pronounced the gas chambers "fanciful stories."

He similarly dismissed *The Diary of Anne Frank*, explaining that he had studied it as a doctoral student in Sweden.

"I could swear to God it's fake," he said. "The girl was there, but the memoirs are a fake."

El-Arab, the chairman of Wafd's foreign relations committee, also criticized Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

"He's a hateful character, " El-Arab said. "What he says about the Holocaust is true, but he doesn't say it because it's true. He says it out of hatred to the Israeli state."

The Wafd official also said there was "no chance at all" that Egypt would cancel its peace treaty with Israel.

"The Jews are there," he told *The Washington Times*. "Good or bad, they are there. You cannot as a human being think of exterminating 6 million or 5 million or whatever. That's crazy."

PARLIAMENT URGES GERMANY TO HIKE NAZI VICTIMS' PENSIONS

"The *Bundesrat* (upper house) calls on the federal government to recognize Jewish Holocaust victims from the former Soviet Union as 'persons persecuted by the Nazi regime' and to create the legal basis for independent pension claims for these people," it said in a resolution.

"Due to the age of the Holocaust survivors, we call on the federal government to table a draft law without delay."

The *Bundesrat*, which represents Germany's 16 states, said that the Jewish former prisoners of concentration camps and ghettos had fallen victim to a legal loophole that exempted them from the list of recognied victims of the Nazis.

As such, they were not entitled to state pensions accorded to people persecuted under the Third Reich and were thus dependent on much smaller monthly subsistence payments.

A policy approved in January 1991 allowed Jewish Holocaust survivors from the former Soviet Union to emigrate to Germany as refugees.

That status, however, has meant they had no right to state pensions for Nazi victims and must even report any savings they had accumulated, for example from support payments from the Jewish Claims Conference.

Germany has paid out the equivalent of more than 67 billion euros ($97 billion) to victims of the Nazis.

During the Cold War, West Germany only offered restitution to people living in the West and referred those living in the Eastern bloc to the government of Communist East Germany, which refused to assume any responsibility for Hitler's crimes.

After German unification in 1990 and following negotiations with the Jewish Claims Conference, the country agreed to establish a new fund for Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe.

VIENNA MEMORIAL FOR NAZI VICTIMS UNVEILED

Dedicated not only to Jewish victims but also to resistance fighters, a new remembrance site includes a small exhibit that shows how Gestapo officials often used torture to torment those they summoned.

Austria's president unveiled a newly revamped memorial commemorating victims of the Nazis, including those who lost their lives because they stood up to the brutal regime.

The remembrance site is situated in the heart of Vienna, the Austrian capital, where a luxury hotel once stood that served as a coordination center for the Gestapo, Adolf Hitler's secret police.

Dedicated not only to Jewish victims but also to resistance fighters, it includes a small exhibit that shows how Gestapo officials often used torture to torment those they summoned and notes how the feared force was fed information from spies and informants in the Austrian population.

"The fates of thousands of people were decided here," Austrian President Heinz Fischer told a small crowd. "Thousands became victims of torture and were often sent from here to concentration camps."

"Never Forget!" is written across the rear of the small space that used to be the back entrance of the Gestapo center. Leading to it are footprints that, according to Fischer, symbolize the helplessness of the men and women who walked through the dreaded doors.

Wedged between a tanning salon and a video rental store, the memorial originally opened in 1968 but was closed for a makeover.

The exhibit, consisting of a series of panels with photos and documents, also focuses on some of those who had the courage to confront Hitler and his followers.

One of those portrayed is Jacob Kastelic, a resistance fighter who was executed on August 2, 1944.

His son, 71-year-old Gerhard, who was not even 4 years old when his father was killed, said he hoped the memorial would help today's youth realize that, during a dark time in Austria's history, there were individuals who had the courage to stand up for their convictions.

"It's a way to show young people that while many Austrians at the time were, unquestionably, perpetrators... there was also resistance," he told The Associated Press.

Austria became part of a Greater Germany on March 12, 1938, when *Wehrmacht* troops crossed into the country to ensure a smooth takeover. Just days after *Anschluss*, Hitler basked in the adoration of nearly 200,000 in a downtown Vienna square.

AUSCHWITZ "THIEF" REPENTS ACT

Moti Posloshani, who was convicted along with his wife of stealing artifacts from a Nazi death camp, explained what motivated him to nab the items. "I wanted to safeguard them, hand them to Yad Vashem."

"I know what the Holocaust is. My parents are Auschwitz survivors. To say that I stole would be a mistake," said Moti Posloshani, who was convicted along with his wife Dominique of stealing artifacts from the Auschwitz death camp memorial.

Posloshani repented his acts, saying "I am ashamed and I ask for forgiveness, especially from Holocaust survivors whom I might have hurt."

In an interview with *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Posloshani, who resigned from his position as a department head in the Herzliya Municipality, said he and his wife arrived at the Auschwitz death camp on a tourist bus, but separated from the group and toured the place on their own.

At some point, they entered a room that displayed the victims' artifacts. "One of the display boxes had silverware," Posloshani recalled.

"Suddenly, when we stopped next to the display box, we saw six or seven artifacts lying on the ground, covered in mud. I picked them up and tried to figure out what they were.

"I saw a knife, a fork, and a kettle lid. They were partially burnt. At that moment I decided that I – the son of Holocaust survivors – will safeguard the artifacts, clean them and maybe hand them to Yad Vashem," he said, adding that "my wife agreed with me, and so we slipped the items into our bags."

Posloshani broke out in tears when asked why he didn't return the artifacts to the display box. "I don't see it as theft," he tried to explain, "I picked up some neglected items. I wanted them to be in a better place – to be protected, here in Israel.

"I've made a big mistake. I shouldn't have picked the items up in the first place," he noted.

The couple was arrested at the *Krakow* airport during the weekend, after border guard officers detected the stolen artifacts in their luggage.

After spending the night at the detention center by the airport, the two were indicted for stealing souvenirs of great cultural and historical value, an offense that is punishable by up to ten years in prison in Poland.

The couple was brought in front of a Polish judge, who convicted them of the offense, and gave them a two-year suspended prison sentence and about $1,450 fine each.

WIESENTHAL CENTER: NINE STATES NOT CHASING NAZI CRIMINALS

Syria, Austria, and Lithuania are among the countries that the Simon Wiesenthal Center says "refuse in principle to investigate suspected Nazi war criminals because of legal restrictions."

Syria, Austria and Lithuania are among 9 countries where Nazi war criminals are not being brought to justice, the Center said in a statement.

These nations either "refuse in principle to investigate, let alone prosecute, suspected Nazi war criminals because of legal (statute of limitation) or ideological restrictions," or their "efforts (or lack thereof) have resulted in complete failure during the period under review, primarily due to the absence of political will to proceed and/or a lack of the requisite resources and/or expertise," according to the center's annual report card examining efforts to track down perpetrators of crimes against Jews during WW II.

The other countries named by the Center in its report were Sweden, Norway, Canada, Estonia, Latvia, and Ukraine.

FOREST FIRE NEAR YAD VASHEM

A wildfire tore through a forest on the outskirts of Jerusalem on July 17, moving within several hundred yards of Israel's Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem and sending a huge plume of smoke billowing over parts of the holy city.

Fire service spokesman Boaz Rakia said the fire was under control at nightfall. He said Yad Vashem was not in danger. He said investigators were considering the possibility of arson because of reports that the blaze erupted in several places at once.

Estee Yaari, a spokeswoman for Yad Vashem, said the 45-acre campus was evacuated as the blaze approached. Police said the fire was a few hundred yards from the memorial.

"Everybody was evacuated calmly," Yaari said. "There was a lot of smoke on campus."

Two people required medical treatment, she added.

Yad Vashem is one of Israel's national treasures, home to a museum and memorials for the victims of the Holocaust. Foreign dignitaries routinely stop at Yad Vashem when visiting the country.

The memorial holds some 140 million pages of Holocaust documentation, the world's largest such collection. It also exhibits artifacts, such as shoes, photographs, suitcases, and recorded testimonies of Holocaust victims and survivors.

It also has an eternal flame in its "Hall of Remembrance," as well as the "Hall of Names," where it is collecting the identities of the 6 million Jews who perished during World War II.

LITHUANIA APPROVES COMPENSATION FOR CONFISCATED PROPERTY

Lithuania's parliament agreed to pay $52 million over 10 years to compensate for properties confiscated from Lithuanian Jews by the Nazis and Soviets.

International and Lithuanian Jewish organizations have been pushing for compensation since 2002.

The bill that was passed by the parliament would make Lithuania one of the few countries with a restitution law on the books. Outside of Germany and Austria, European countries have been slow to sign on to any kind of agreement that would involve restituting property taken illegally from Jews during the Holocaust years. A compensation deal in Poland fell apart in March.

Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius praised the bill's passage in a radio interview, calling it a demonstration of goodwill and "understanding of the tragedy the Jewish community suffered during the Holocaust."

The properties in question are currently in the hands of the Lithuanian government. The government reportedly would begin paying into a special compensation fund starting next year. The funds will be used in part to restore Jewish heritage sites. In addition, $1.25 million would be paid directly to Holocaust survivors next year.

Faina Kukliansky, deputy chair of Lithuania's approximately 3,000-member Jewish community, told Reuters that the spirit of the bill was more important than the amount. "This is what the state can afford at this stage," she said.

The World Jewish Restitution Organization, which is charged with securing restitution in countries other than Germany and Austria, said that the law offered "a small measure of justice."

"While the amount which will be paid over the next decade represents only a small fraction of the value of the communal and religious property which was owned by the Jewish community prior to World War II, the passage of the law is historic, reflecting the Lithuanian government's recognition of its moral obligation to return or provide compensation for stolen Jewish property," the organization said in a statement.

The American Jewish Committee, which supported the Lithuanian Jewish community in its quest for compensation, greeted the bill as "a hard-fought victory."

Rabbi Andrew Baker, AJC's director of international Jewish affairs, said that delays were largely due to concerns over domestic politics and nervousness about a populist, anti-Semitic backlash. Baker cited the efforts of U.S. Ambassador Anne Derse and her predecessors as instrumental in winning over Lithuania's legislators.

According to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Lithuania's prewar Jewish population was about 160,000, some 7 percent of the country's total population. Lithuanian Jewry was nearly wiped out during the Holocaust, and Lithuanian perpetrators as well as German killing squads were key to the genocide.

RUSSIANS MUM ON REQUESTS FOR WALLENBERG INFO

Russian authorities have failed to respond to requests for more information on the Raoul Wallenberg case.

The requests by The Associated Press and the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and their Descendants came in the aftermath of the release of a new book released by the Russian government on Wallenberg.

"Secrets of the Third Reich Diplomacy," which was released earlier this year, contains quotes from the interrogation of Willy Roedel, a German officer who shared a cell with Wallenberg. Roedel was arrested by the Soviets after World War II.

Wallenberg was a Swedish diplomat who helped tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews escape persecution during World War II. He was arrested by the Soviet Union in 1945, and Soviet officals said he was executed in 1947. However, scholars and family members insist that Wallenberg lived in the state-run gulag camps for decades after he was declared dead.

Academics investigating the disappearance of Wallenberg for years have requested tapes of Roedel's interrogation, but the Russians have maintained that such tapes never existed.

Roedel's published statements predate his introduction to Wallenberg, but focus on his relationship with Gustav Richter, a German police attaché who was Wallenberg's cellmate for the first six weeks of his arrest.

While the new information does little to explain the fate of Wallenberg, it does suggest that the Russians may have more information on the diplomat's life than has been made public. Roedel's statements were pulled from an unpublished 549-page file that appears to have 57 unreleased pages.

BOOK REVIEWS

A LIFE OF LEADERSHIP

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.

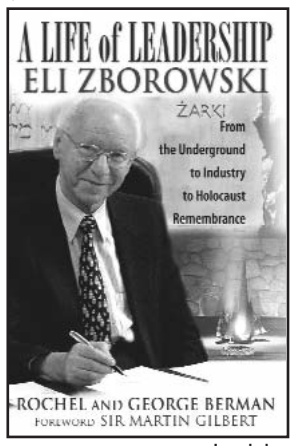
REVIEWED BY DR. ISRAEL DRAZIN

Great leaders possess courage and vision. They see human and societal needs. They accept responsibility and step forward to aid others with persistence. They have the ability to persuade and the strength to withstand difficulties when others crouch in fear.

Rochel and George Berman tell the remarkable tale of such a man in their beautifully written analytical biography, which reveals, among many things, the impact of early childhood experiences. It is about an individual who never saw himself as a victim, a man who inspired countless people and produced many needed world changes.

Eli Zborowski was born in *Žarki*, Poland in 1925 in a small town where two-thirds of the inhabitants were Jews. The Jews produced more than two thirds of the significant contributions to the community. The Bermans' descriptions of Jewish life in Poland are fascinating. They describe the wise ways that Eli's father, a businessman, taught him how to do business and how to treat customers, so that Eli would say later, "Unquestionably, I learned about business and the moral underpinnings of business from my father." The Bermans also describe Eli's personality, how he was an intelligent and caring risk-taker.

When Eli was fourteen, the Nazis took control of his country and killed numerous Jews, and many Poles joined in the massacre. When he was seventeen, Poles murdered his father. Even after the war, Poles threw three grenades into his home, fortunately not harming his family, but making it clear that they must leave the land of their birth.



Eli left Poland and started life in the US with a pregnant wife, no money, no contacts, and little knowledge of the English language. He began by peddling camera parts door to door. Yet, within ten years, because of insight, understanding, and perseverance Eli became the president of the Sheaffer pen company in Latin America. He also founded a highly profitable import-export business in Argentina, Panama, and Mexico.

Many of the events in Eli's life are very moving, as, for example, how he knew the Nazis were defeated. He saw a Russian soldier in white winter camouflage. He looked to Eli like an angel sent by God. Eli fell to his knees and kissed the Russian's boots. Later, when he saw captured German prisoners, he writes, "I was suddenly overcome with pity for them. I knew that they had not had food or water for days. I decided to bring out some water for them. Now in retrospect this incident still leaves me with an unsettled feeling. I cannot really understand my motivations, except that in their disheveled and diminished state, I no longer saw them as menacing demons." Later, as a translator, he altered the story of a German soldier in a way that saved his life. He wrote, "To this day, I don't know why I did it, and to this day I do not regret it."

Eli's lifetime achievements take up dozens of pages in this biography and make inspirational reading. At the end of World War II, when he was just twenty, he led 116 young Jewish orphans from Poland to safety in displaced persons camps in Germany. He opened the door to diplomatic relations between Israel and Poland despite Poland's complicity in the death of so many of its Jewish citizens. He helped many Jews leave Poland. In 1964, he created the first commemoration in the United States of *Yom Hashoah*, a day of Holocaust remembrance. He endowed the first chair for Holocaust studies in the world at Yeshiva University. He secured over $100 million for Yad Vashem in Israel. He instituted the study and understanding of the Holocaust in many schools. He was appointed by President Jimmy Carter and President Ronald Reagan to important posts. He received numerous awards and honors, including an honorary doctorate. He helped people realize that although they suffered enormous losses, they could move forward and develop a sense of hope and optimism that could pervade their lives and influence others.

And he saved lives. During the war he worked for the Underground. Once, to cite an example, after he had escaped from the Nazis through a hail of bullets, he remembered a girl he knew who had not escaped from the ghetto. He risked his life, turned back and saved her. On another occasion, to mention one of many, at age seventeen, while running with their family from the Nazis, his brother sprained his ankle and Eli carried him miles to safety.

Rabbi Israel Meyer Lau, former chief rabbi of the State of Israel, held up a silver Sheaffer pen that Eli Zborowski once gave him as a gift and praised Eli, saying that he "built an empire selling Sheaffer pens like this one. He could have built an empire twice the size. Instead, he devoted his time and energy to holy causes on behalf of the Jewish people."

REFOCUSING LOSS THROUGH THE HOLOCAUST'S LENS

American Jewish Loss after the Holocaust.

By Laura Levit. NYU Press: New York, 2007. 312 pp. $45 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY ARLENE STEIN

Although the Holocaust is increasingly visible in American life, it remains forbidden territory. We distance ourselves from it, bathing it in Hollywood homilies to the power of human kindness. We draw boundaries around it, housing it in concrete structures, hoping to contain it.

The alternative — to look clearly into the eye of unimaginable horror — threatens to make us crazy. How can one enter that place of mass death without being driven to despair? How can Jews, in particular, build clear-headed connections to their murdered cousins while affirming the value of life in the present?

These questions haunt many of us who have grown up in the shadow of the Holocaust, and they haunt Laura Levitt, whose new book, *American Jewish Loss after the Holocaust*, tries to come to terms with the meaning of the Holocaust in relation to the everyday, ordinary losses we all endure.

Levitt is a professor of religion at Temple University, an American Jew who has no immediate connection to the Holocaust but has been moved by memoirs and literature, and wishes to build a bridge between her own familial losses and those extraordinary losses in order to understand both better. Her argument is simple but profound: that all of us, no matter how close or far removed from the tragedy, come to understand the Holocaust in relation to our own individual, personal losses.

She begins the book with a vignette about her own father's family, about how she learned late in life that the woman she thought was her grandmother was in fact her grandfather's second wife. She is haunted by this history, and takes it upon herself to come to terms with her missing grandmother, who died when her father was a boy. In a process that bears similarity to the journeys that many descendants of Holocaust survivors undertake, she movingly excavates and recasts her family history. It is partly through reading the art and literature on the Holocaust that she gains a deeper understanding of her own fractured legacy.

Levitt's claim that we experience loss in personal ways seems irrefutable. It's true of everyday, ordinary losses, to be sure, but it is also true of those who have experienced extraordinary losses. The now voluminous testimonies of Holocaust survivors, after all, focus on the loss of mothers, fathers, aunts, and uncles once known and loved. (Indeed, the term "Holocaust" describing the collective experience of destruction, was not widely used until the 1970s.)

But when Levitt writes that she "hopes to invert the all-too-pervasive logic that insists that the Holocaust must always come first," one wonders whether it is really true that individuals' ordinary losses have been overshadowed by Holocaust memory. And if so, who is making such demands of Jewish Americans?

(Continued on page 15)

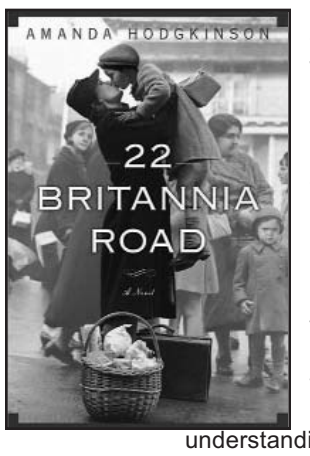
22 BRITANNIA ROAD

22 Britannia Road.

By Amanda Hodgkinson. Penguin Group, USA, 2011. 336 pp. $25.95.

REVIEWED BY SARAH TOWERS, THE NEW YORK TIMES

For Silvana, the Polish Holocaust survivor at the center of Amanda Hodgkinson's accomplished first novel, *22 Britannia Road*, maternal love is a heart-scorching, perilous emotion. During the war, threats to the life of Aurek, her young son, were everywhere: from the "filthy" skies, raked with thunder clouds and German planes, to the sunless, brambly depths of the Polish forests, where she and Aurek, like two figures in a fairy tale, hid out for years. They are rescued from a refugee camp by Janusz, the husband and father from whom they were separated at the beginning of the fighting. Janusz brings them to Ipswich, to the small house and garden that give the novel its title. There Silvana forces herself to believe that a normal life is possible: that she and Janusz will rediscover themselves as husband and wife, that Aurek will have a father — and that the secret still threatening her son's security will stay buried.



Starting over is far from easy. Silvana, baffled by English customs, spends her days "wandering through the rooms in a daze." Janusz must teach mother and son "not to take a bath in their clothes, . . . not to steal vegetables from the allotments by the river." Aurek hates school and misses the forest, where he learned to sing out like a bird.

Moving between Janusz's and Silvana's (and occasionally Aurek's) points of view, Hodgkinson links each to flashbacks from the war. While these are often riveting, the back and forth saps the novel of momentum, and at times the structure feels rigid. Yet Hodgkinson compensates with luminous prose and with her intense exploration of how the past, no matter how horrific, no matter how much we wish to forget it, lodges deep in our innermost selves.

The years Silvana spent in the forest with Aurek, skinning rabbits and fending off marauding soldiers, were nightmarish. Yet that time grips both her imagination and her language, and produces a near-mythic closeness with her son, who at the age of 7 is still breast-feeding. "The boy was everything to her," the book opens. "All the dark hearts of the lost, the found and the never forgotten lived in his child's body, in his quick eyes. She loved him with the same unforgiving force that pushes forests from the deep ground."

It is Hodgkinson's portrait of the primal bond between mother and child, her visceral understanding of the gorgeous, terrible weight of love mothers must carry, war or no war, secret or no secret, that leaves an indelible impression. One of the novel's most powerful scenes comes in a flashback, when Silvana and Aurek are stumbling through the snow-covered forest, close to collapse. Suddenly, in the midst of a clearing, they come upon a red velvet chaise longue. How is this possible? she wonders. Is it an enchantment, a hallucination, or simply a piece of furniture discarded by a fleeing family? It scarcely matters. Holding Aurek close, she lies down on the couch, hoping death will come quickly: "This way, she reasoned as she let go of consciousness, they would be together forever. She and the child."

LAST SURVIVING AUSTRIAN WHO HID JEWS HONORED

BY GEORGE JAHN, AP

It was 1942 in Hitler's Austria, a time when a late-night knock on the door could have resulted in deportation or death. Edeltrud Becher shuddered as she heard the rap of knuckles from unannounced visitors.

She opened the door and gasped: Instead of the Gestapo, her Jewish fiancé and his two brothers were on the doorstep, looking nervously over their shoulders.

The three had fled to Prague after the Nazi annexation of Austria in 1938. But by 1942, that city too was in the hands of Hitler's henchmen. The three were told to pack essentials for deportation to a concentration camp.

They wrote suicide notes to make authorities think they were dead, and then did what no one thought any Jew would do: they took a night train straight to Vienna, back into the heartland of the Nazi Reich. In deciding to protect them from the Nazis that night, Becher now Edeltrud Posiles embarked on a dangerous game of hide-and-seek that included some truly hairy moments: on one occasion the three jumped from a balcony to escape detection, and Walter, her future husband, pretended to be a waiter as the Gestapo stormed a cafe.

Walter Posiles as well as his brother Ludwig survived. Hans, the oldest brother, beat the odds of being found by the Nazis, only to be killed by a Russian bomb during the dying days of the war.

Edeltrud Posiles, 94, is the last one of 88 Austrians known to have saved Jews from the Holocaust who is still alive.

Hiding Jews was punishable by death. But the feisty 94-year-old says "there was never a moment's doubt in my mind," when asked if she hesitated as she was asked by the brothers for sanctuary.

And even though the marriage ended in divorce, "I would do it again," declares Posiles, the last one of 88 Austrians known to have saved Jews from the Holocaust who is still alive.

"Even though I'm a coward," the former librarian adds after a pause, moving gingerly from her walker to stand proudly before banner letters prominently spelling out her name on Vienna's bustling Ring Avenue along with Austria's 87 other known "Righteous Gentiles."

German industrialist Oskar Schindler and Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg are well known for rescuing thousands, but others who saved more modest numbers of Jews remain anonymous unless profiled by exhibits such as the Vienna show, put on by a Holocaust remembrance group.

Posiles insists that what she did was nothing special, but it's clear that she enjoyed the sudden prominence granted her by the exhibit that ran from late April through early May.

Frail, but sharp as a tack and with a wicked sense of humor, she willingly answered questions shouted into her ear as she related some of the more chilling moments of her adventure while sitting in the cafeteria of her seniors' residence.

There was the time, for instance, when Fritz, the Nazi fiancé of Posiles' sister, came home from the front lines on leave unexpectedly while the three brothers were being hidden in his apartment.

"I managed to keep him busy on the stairs just long enough for them to grab their belongings and jump over a balcony to freedom," she said, adding that other quarters were found for the three until Fritz left again.

Even though leaving their shelter was dangerous, the brothers took chances. Posiles recalls standing in a park in front of the apartment, handbag in hand, and lifting the bag with left hand if all clear, right hand if not, "because I'm left handed."

"Once Walter and I went into a coffee house and minutes later the Gestapo rushed in, looking for deserters," she said. "Walter pretended to be a waiter, grabbing a bunch of newspapers and distributing them among the guests."

Feeding three hungry men called for taking further risks despite the consequences for being caught that included execution. "We made counterfeit food ration cards so that we could get food for five," said Posiles.

While many Austrians embraced Hitler and his ideology, not all were enthusiastic followers. Posiles said that while some friends would not have hidden Jews out of fear for their lives, they shared in her secret and kept silent.

"They behaved admirably," she said of the dozen or so people she said she had to confide in "for one reason or another."

"As for me, I have a clear conscience," she said of the war years. "Not everyone can say the same."

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AGAIN SEEK INSURANCE CLAIMS

BY ERIC LICHTBLAU, THE NEW YORK TIMES

Sixty-six years after she survived the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz, Renee Firestone is still trying to find out what became of an insurance policy that she suspects her father, who died in the Holocaust, took out from an Italian insurer before the war.

Ms. Firestone, 87, a naturalized American citizen from the former Czechoslovakia who became a fashion designer in Los Angeles, expected resistance from the insurance companies that fielded claims from many thousands of Holocaust survivors and their heirs. What she did not foresee, she said, was the opposition from her own government — including the State Department and Congress — to her getting her day in court.

"What's so painful is that we can see they're just waiting for all of us to die," she said.

The legal claims by hundreds of American survivors like Ms. Firestone have set off an intense lobbying campaign in Washington on their behalf. But opposition from the government and even from leading Jewish groups has created an uncomfortable rift between groups that are normally in alliance and has created a potential minefield for President Obama.

"The whole thing saddens me," Elie Wiesel, the Nobel laureate who is perhaps the most well-known Holocaust survivor, said of the rift over the insurance benefits. "I don't know how or why this has happened, but the survivors should be helped however we can."

The State Department, under both the Obama and George W. Bush administrations, has vigorously opposed the idea of allowing survivors to press claims in court against European insurance companies because they say it would undermine a reparations agreement that the United States reached in 2000 with Germany, which led to $300 million in insurance payments to survivors and their heirs.

The threat of private lawsuits, administration officials say, treads on the president's authority to set foreign policy. The United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit last year validated the State Department's position as it dismissed claims brought against an Italian insurance company, Generali, which had issued many policies before the Holocaust to European Jews who wanted to protect themselves financially against the rise of Nazi power.

"The State Department is concerned that lawsuits by the survivors could not only disrupt prior agreements with European governments but might also have a negative impact on other reparation agreements growing out of the Holocaust as well," the department said in a statement.

Renee Firestone.

In line with the State Department, leading Jewish groups like the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League have also opposed the survivors' attempts to plead their case in court and have lobbied against prior efforts by Congress to intervene, as have the insurance companies themselves.

Now, however, a new push in Congress on behalf of the survivors appears to be gaining some ground.

"I'm feeling optimistic that this is our year," said Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Florida Republican who introduced legislation in the House in March that would force insurers to disclose the names of Holocaust-era policy holders and allow survivors and their heirs to seek claims in American courts.

One group of survivors, known as the Holocaust Survivors Foundation USA, has been ratcheting up its efforts to bring pressure on the Obama administration and on leading Jewish groups to change their stance on the volatile insurance issue.

The survivors group took out full-page advertisements in Jewish and mainstream newspapers accusing leading Jewish groups like the American Jewish Committee of "dishonoring" the memories of the Holocaust.

The ads accused Jewish groups of "protecting" European insurers like Allianz because the insurers gave money to American-Jewish causes. (Allianz, based in Germany, had committed in 2008 to buying naming rights to the New Meadowlands Stadium for $25 million a year, but the Jets and the Giants pulled out of talks after publicity over the company's role in insuring Nazi facilities, including Auschwitz, and of blocking payment of survivors' claims after the Holocaust.)

Eighteen survivors also sent Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton a nine-page letter expressing their anger and disappointment over the treatment of their claims.

"It is beyond the pale that we should be perceived as the adversary of our government, to be gamed and denied what was ours and was stolen from us by companies with the protection of the most vicious regime in history," they wrote.

Sam Dubbin, a Miami lawyer who works with a number of Holocaust survivors, said the current proposal in Congress was "the last, best hope" for correcting what he said was a historical injustice. He said that the claims process set in place by the 2000 agreement with Germany was rife with abuse and that money paid out from it represented only a small fraction of the $20 billion in current dollars that was owed on Holocaust-era insurance policies.

The bulk of the claims have gone unpaid, Mr. Dubbin said, while many of the survivors are living in poverty in cities around the United States. "It's an utter disgrace," he said.

Susan Rubin, 84, a Hungarian native who survived Auschwitz and now lives in Brooklyn, said that she spotted the name of her father, Jozsef Rosenfeld, who died at Auschwitz, on a listing of unclaimed insurance policies in 2001. It indicated that he had taken out a policy with Generali in Budapest. But after she put in her claim, the processors rejected it for lack of evidence; she was unable to prove that her father was the same Jozsef Rosenfeld who took out the policy.

Incensed and dejected, she and her husband, Nathan, wrote to legislators in Washington and Albany to ask for help, but they got no response.

"It's not about the money," Mr. Rubin said. "It's about what they took away from us. You figure there's any hope now? There's not too many years left for us."

The accusation from Mr. Dubbin's group that Jewish leaders have neglected survivors because of their own agendas "is awful and horrible and offensive," said Rabbi Andrew Baker, the director of international Jewish affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

He pointed, for instance, to a recent agreement forged with Germany by the State Department and Jewish groups to secure more than $500 million in financing for home care for elderly Holocaust survivors.

Stuart E. Eizenstat, a special envoy to the State Department who worked on the recent home-care agreement, said it was distressing to see the government's efforts, and his own personal integrity, now under attack by some survivors.

"I can't figure it out," he said. "It's just very, very sad."

SURVIVORS' CORNER

CHILDREN AT THE SHABBOS TABLE: DREAMS OF A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

BY RIVKA CHAYA BERMAN, LUBAVITCH.COM

Time has blurred the A-4890 tattoo on Margot Dzialoszynski's arm. At 85, she hesitates before offering details about how she survived *Theresienstadt*, Auschwitz, *Birkenau*, *Gross-Rosen* and *Bergen-Belsen*.

But she'll sing Hebrew songs learned as a first-grader in Berlin's *Rykestrasse* School, and she'll rattle off the names of the 13 children she and husband Avraham brought into the world after the Holocaust. ("Because the Germans killed so many of us, we have to make up for the loss," she told a washerwoman who questioned her family's size.)

But even when Margot is prompted by daughter Rivka Marules to retell the stories she once shared, she cannot. Rivka asks, "Remember when the Nazi shot in the air and did not shoot at you?"

"Thank G-d, I forgot."

The call to the second, third, now fourth post-Holocaust generation to "Never Forget" grows more urgent with each passing year. Margot is one of Israel's 208,000 Holocaust survivors. The time when men and women of Margot's generation could be counted upon to bear witness to the Holocaust at school assemblies and speak at community memorials is quickly fading away.

Over the last year in Israel 13,000 Holocaust survivors passed away. It's estimated that by 2015, only 145,000 Holocaust survivors will remain alive in Israel. How many of them will possess the

Margot Dzialoszynski (right) with her daughter Rivka Marules.

ability to share their experiences is far fewer than that. Soon the books, the Spielberg interviews, the artifacts in Yad Vashem, the purposefully preserved memories will be all we have from this generation that is both our sorrow and our rebirth. Margot published her own memoir in 2002 (*The Living Miracle*, Targum Press), where she recounted the horrors she endured and the faith that carried her through.

Sitting alongside a floor-to-ceiling window of her daughter's gracious *Bnei Brak* home, her clear eyes catching Israel's sunlight, Margot smiles at her daughter and her granddaughter Kreindy, who is back in Israel after teaching at Chabad centers in San Francisco and Cincinnati.

That this woman survived Hitler's death camps, the murder of her parents and two brothers,and near-death from typhus and tuberculosis, and then went on to raise a large family in Switzerland and enjoy golden years in Israel, qualifies as a textbook definition of the "living miracle."

In her daughter's household, there is no danger of forgetting the circumstances of this miracle even if Margot can no longer tell the story of Chanukah, 1944. When Margot worked in the munitions factory at the *Gross-Rosen* labor camp outside of *Christianstadt*, she scavenged wax from the camp dump and baked potato peels into latkes.

To this day, "I cannot throw away food," said Rivka, now a grandmother and mother of 10 children, ages 29 to 3.

There are other lessons that endure and serve to strengthen the next generation. After the war, Margot was delirious with a 105-degree fever and dehydrated, and was treated in a makeshift hospital, once *Bergen's* officers' club. Margot had but one answer for friends who asked her what her last wishes were. A peaceful passing? Some rest? Food?

"My dream is I want a big family to sit and sing around the *Shabbos* table."

In her memoirs, Margot later wrote, "The vision of *Shabbos* is what kept me going in the worst moments."

Margot's dream has long been realized. Despite a doctor's dire predictions about the effects of illnesses that left Margot desperately weak for years after the war, she married Avraham Dzialoszynski, a doctor-to-be who followed the Lubavitcher Rebbe's advice to stay in *Basel*, and teach Jewish children there and in *Zurich*. The Dzialoszynskis raised one of the biggest families in *Basel*.

"As a child, I didn't realize how hard it was, how my mother managed. My mother had nobody," said Rivka. "Despite all the hardship, my mother never dreamed of giving up."

Of all the messages from the Holocaust, this is the one Rivka is most adamant about passing on to her children. "Life can be tough," but instead of welcoming a peaceful death, her mother wished for a family singing at a *Shabbos* table.

"That's how she made it."

SAFE HOUSE

BY JONATHAN FREEDLAND, THE GUARDIAN

It's a building you would never notice, on a busy traffic intersection in Hendon, a stubbornly unfashionable part of north London. Inside, there is nothing that would catch the eye: the meeting rooms are filled with basic, functional furniture. A quick glance at the people who have come to visit would suggest nothing more than a regular drop-in center for the elderly.

But linger more than a moment and you'll realize this is no ordinary place. I have barely taken off my coat when Sam Pivnick, strong-voiced and vigorous at 85, urges me to sit down with him as he finishes off a bowl of thick, steaming soup. We have not been speaking long when he rolls up his sleeve to show me the bluey line of digits that still stains the skin of his left arm: the tattoo that marks former inmates of Auschwitz.

For this is the Holocaust Survivors Center, the only place of its kind in Britain and the first of its kind anywhere. Its clients, numbering 550 – including 300 regulars – are now deep into their 70s, 80s and 90s. What they have in common is direct experience of the event widely regarded as the greatest crime in human history.

Here, one regular tells me, "If people ask, 'Where are you from?' they mean, 'What did you go through?'" Here, memories of tragedy, despair and the most appalling suffering are not the exception; they are the rule.

It manifests itself in the most unexpected ways. Take that soup. Thick, hot and nourishing, it is served all year round, even in the height of summer. Thin soup is never on the menu, says Rachelle Lazarus, one of the center's full-time staff: thin soup is too associated with the camps.

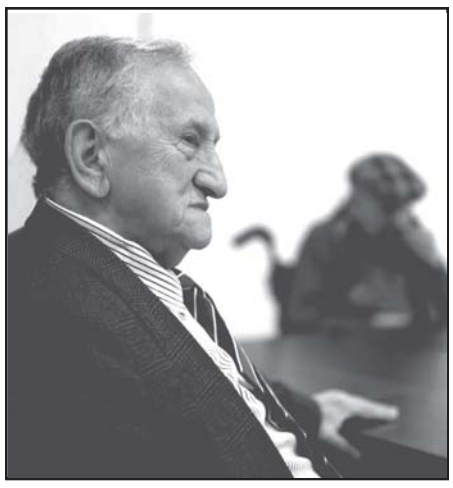
Similarly, I notice that a basket carrying big, solid chunks of bread is out all the time, even after lunch has been cleared away. That's a legacy of the time someone took away someone else's bread. "All hell broke loose," Lazarus says. The injured party had saved that bread for later, a habit developed seven decades ago and never shaken off. To this day, many of those who endured enforced hunger – whether in a concentration camp or ghetto – need to know there is food available, just in case. So the bread rolls stay out.

I'm also struck by the appearance of those who have come on this midweek day. Many, especially those in their 70s, rather than 90s, are short. That's how most of the world's remaining Holocaust survivors look – short because starvation stunted their growth as children or teenagers.

Whatever preconceptions you might have about a day center for the elderly should be checked at the door. The men are smartly dressed, most in jackets and ties; the women are elegantly turned out. Judith Hassan, the center's founder and director, tells me that, too, is the product of a survival strategy. "If you looked unwell, you were going to be exterminated," she says. Survivors have told her that, back in the camps, they would sometimes prick their fingers, rubbing the blood on their cheeks so they would not look too pale to work. Because if you didn't work, you didn't live.

There are clashes of personality and squabbles, as there would be in any similar center (or youth club, for that matter). But here they have a different quality.

Before I visited, I had been warned that there was a "strong sense of hierarchy" among the survivors, according to who had



Harry Fox: "If you survive, it's luck."

endured the worst fate under the Nazis, with those who had been through the death camps ranked above those who were, for example, child refugees from Germany.

Sure enough, Sam Pivnick and I had been talking for only a few minutes when another man wanted to join our conversation, standing over us, interjecting with observations of his own. It turned out he was one of those who had escaped Germany as a child, a baby in fact. Soon Sam's patience snapped. "Who wants to hear about you?" he shouted. "What did you survive? You were in your mother's womb!"

Most I speak to don't share that sentiment. "We're a diminishing flock," says Harry Fox, 81, born Chaim Fuchs and a survivor of several camps, including *Buchenwald*. "If we didn't let others in, we'd be very small." He endorses the center's inclusion of those who came to the UK as refugees after November 1938 – the month of Germany's *Kristallnacht* pogrom against the Jews – including many on the *Kindertransport*, the prewar evacuation route that saw Jewish parents in Germany and beyond send some 10,000 children to Britain for safety. Besides, Harry adds, "I feel sorry for those *Kindertransport* children. Eight or nine, and they were taken away from their parents. I was with my mother till 1942 and my father till 1945. I'm lucky."

The Holocaust Survivors Center began with a gap. Judith Hassan, then a newly trained psychotherapist with the Jewish Welfare Board – predecessor of today's Jewish Care – was working in late-1970s Swiss Cottage. It was an area of north London she knew had become home to many who had either escaped or survived the Nazis' war against the Jews. Yet they were not coming forward. "They didn't want to seek help," Hassan says now. "These were people who had survived by keeping a low profile; they had learned not to appear frail or vulnerable."

They were especially wary of a formal organization, even a Jewish charity anxious to help. In the war years, being on a list held by a bureaucracy could spell death. Hassan recalls the attitude: "It's an institution, it's an organization – it's dangerous."

But it was clear there were people who

(Continued on page 11)

WE MUST STOP TIME DESTROYING OUR LAST PROOF OF THE HOLOCAUST

BY ANTONELLA LAZZERI, THE SUN

She found it tucked tightly into a shoe. A young child's math test hidden by a proud parent desperate to keep something he could cherish.

Both father and child almost certainly died at Auschwitz. The paper is now carefully preserved among the 35,000 other documents found at the concentration camp after it was liberated by the Allies.

It was discovered by conservationist Paulina Scigaj, 25, as she worked on cleaning some of the shoes – there are 110,000 – looted from the millions of Jews and other prisoners sent to Auschwitz by the Nazis during the Second World War.

Horrifyingly, 1.1 million victims died there and at its satellite camp, *Birkenau*.

Now gently holding a woman's red velvet stiletto, Paulina said: "This job can be very emotional. Finding that test, thinking of who that child was – it was very difficult.

"Cleaning the children's shoes and baby booties is the hardest. Some of the women working here are mothers."

Paulina is just one of around 50 people employed in Auschwitz's Preservation Unit near the entrance to the camp in *Oswiecim*, Poland. The iconic displays include shoes, suitcases, spectacles, baby clothes, and even artificial limbs.

But those items are, like the camp and the infamous gate themselves, crumbling away with the passage of time.

Pawel Sawicki, who also works there, said: "Left alone they would eventually crumble away like dust. It is vital we work to preserve them. They are evidence of what happened here.

Gone but not forgotten ... Jews arrive at the camp by train.

"The shoes, the spectacles – they are as important as the buildings."

Aside from those on display, the experts have a huge number of other items looted from the prisoners by the Nazis that also need preserving.

They include pushchairs and family photos. Some of them will eventually become exhibits. One thing that the conservationists do not work on is the mass of hair – two tons of it shaven from prisoners' heads – which is displayed in a glass cabinet.

Over the years it has faded from brown, blonde and red to grey.

Paulina said: "It is human remains. We do not touch it out of respect to the victims. Eventually, it will turn to dust."

Standing under the sign at the entrance of the camp – with its foreboding message "Work Makes You Free" – Dr. Piotr Cywinski, the director of Auschwitz, said firmly: "We are the curator of memories.

"Coming here is an experience like no other. This site has a unique power. You can read about what happened here but being here makes it very real."

Dr. Cywinski added: "It is especially important to preserve it for future generations.

"If we want to avoid new genocides we must make new generations aware of the tragedy of Auschwitz. If there is nothing here, memories will fade.

"The last survivors will eventually die. It is only this place which will be left to tell their story."

Auschwitz was opened as a memorial and museum in 1947. Last year it attracted more visitors than ever before, nearly 1.4 million, some coming from as far away as South Korea.

It will cost around £4 million a year to preserve it. Dr. Cywinski wants to raise a fund of £104 million. Governments all over the world have donated but there is still a shortfall of £31.2 million. All the money will be spent on preserving Auschwitz for future generations.

In the labs the scientists work on saving all sorts of things, from paintings done by prisoners on the walls to the pots and pans and the meticulous hygiene records kept by the Nazis.

The artifacts pose unique challenges. For the documents alone, scientists had to identify 132 different types of ink and how best to preserve them. It took three years to restore them.

The shoes have to be vacuumed to remove dust and insects, then cleaned with a special soap and oiled if they are leather.

But they are never mended – nor are any of the other artifacts.

Paulina said: "Our job is not to restore them to original condition but as they were found after the camp was liberated. We do not do a makeover. That would remove the authenticity of things here."

Some of the shoes were ripped apart by the Nazis looking for hidden precious jewelry, such as wedding rings. She added: "We do not repair those, just clean them."

Just as much in danger of crumbling away are the buildings of Auschwitz and *Birkenau*, which was known to the Nazis as Auschwitz II.

Dr. Cywinski said: "If we do nothing then I fear that within five years *Birkenau* will no longer exist. The situation there is critical."

Walking around *Birkenau* – known as the extermination camp because it is where most gassings were carried out – it is clear to see what he means.

Out of 35 brick barracks only two are open to the public. And they are in shocking condition.

Huge cracks run down walls, the cement floors are buckled, the wooden pallets – on which up to seven prisoners slept side by side – are disintegrating.

One of the few things remaining in good condition in the barracks that housed more than 700 people at a time are the slogans scrawled on the walls by the Nazis.

Messages including "Silence!", "Be Clean" and "One Louse is Your Death!".

Pawel said: "At *Birkenau* nature is our enemy.

"The water level in the ground is very high. In winter it freezes, then it thaws and makes the foundations move.

"The camp was built by starving prisoners. It was never intended by the Germans that Auschwitz or *Birkenau* would be permanent. It is something of a miracle that they still exist."

Moving ... Paulina Scigaj works to preserve victims' shoes.

Some of the barracks walls and chimneys are shored up by wooden batons as experts work out how they can be saved.

Pawel said: "We cannot simply rebuild and recreate. That would be wrong.

"We need to find a method of preserving what is there. Not adding, not replacing."

Crematorium No. 2 at *Birkenau* – in which up to 2,000 people an hour were gassed – was blown up by the Nazis as they fled the camps. Pawel said: "Strangely, it is harder to preserve ruins than buildings.

"A building has a roof to protect it from the elements. Here we have injected the ground around the ruins with micropiles of cement.

"It makes the area more stable. It would not be right to simply recreate the crematorium. People died here."

Many of the wooden barracks at the site have already collapsed.

The gate tower – seen in so many Holocaust films – is also in danger, so now the number of visitors allowed to climb up it is limited.

Aside from preserving the camps, the foundation money will also be used to slightly change the focus of them. Pawel said: "The museums were built by survivors who at the time did not want to remember the perpetrators.

"But now we want to personalize them. There were 8,000 to 9,000 SS men who served here.

"We need to tell their stories, alongside the victims.

"There were also 2,000 companies that supplied these camps, like the builders of the crematoria.

"This was a state-run institution. We need to illustrate that."

Pledging money to the foundation last year, Prime Minister David Cameron said: "Auschwitz-Birkenau is a very powerful reminder of the ultimate consequences of intolerance."

More than 60 years ago, the retreating Nazis tried to destroy the camps – attempting to remove all the horrifying evidence of the biggest mass murder in human history.

Now the experts at Auschwitz are locked in a battle to ensure the ravages of time don't succeed where the Nazis failed.

Auschwitz survivor Henry Appel says they must win.

He added: "There is only one thing worse than Auschwitz itself – and that is if the world forgets there was such a place."

ULTRA-ORTHODOX MAN BUYS DIARIES OF NAZI DOCTOR MENGELE

BY OFER ADERET, HAARETZ

The diaries written by Nazi death camp doctor Josef Mengele after he escaped to South America were auctioned off in August to an ultra-Orthodox American man for $245,000.

The man, whose name was not disclosed by the auction house, is apparently an avid collector of WWII artifacts.

One of the most infamous and gruesome war criminals of the Holocaust, Mengele, nicknamed the "Angel of Death", was blamed for tens of thousands of deaths in his role as concentration camp doctor.

Over the objections of Holocaust survivors and historians, the auction took place at Alexander Historical Auctions in Stamford, Connecticut.

The price for Mengele's nearly 3,400 hand-written pages of invective fell short of a widely cited estimate of the value at $400,000 to $1 million.

The 31 ring notebooks and bound diaries were written from 1960 to 1975, long after Mengele had escaped following World War

Dr. Mengele.

II to Paraguay and Brazil. He drowned in 1979 in Brazil.

During the Holocaust, the SS physician carried out grisly pseudo-medical research. One of his main roles was in "selection duty," where he decided whether arriving Jews and other prisoners went to the gas chambers or were kept alive for work details.

In his flight from Auschwitz as Soviet troops advanced on Poland, Mengele kept under the radar at a refugee camp and as a farm worker in Bavaria until 1949, when he escaped to South America. In the diaries he writes about himself in the third person, but the books were judged to be authentic.

The diaries had belonged for a time to Mengele's son, according to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, but he was apparently not the direct seller. A spokesman for the Stamford auction house confirmed the sale to the German Press Agency dpa, but refused to give information about the seller or the buyer, saying it was up to customers whether or not to go public about a purchase.

Bill Panagopulos, president of Alexander Historic Auctions, said that his intention was for a Holocaust collector or museum to buy them, "for preservation." In 2010, the auction house sold another Mengele diary, written right after he fled Auschwitz, to the grandson of a camp survivor.

Wolfgang Benz, former head of the Center for Research on Antisemitism of the Technische Universitaet Berlin, condemned the sale of Mengele's diaries. He said the documents belonged in the German federal archives and called the auction "obscene."

"I think it's even more obscene ... that anybody expected a Jewish organization to buy these diaries," the historian told German public radio.

Mengele biographer Ulrich Voelklein called the auction "distasteful."

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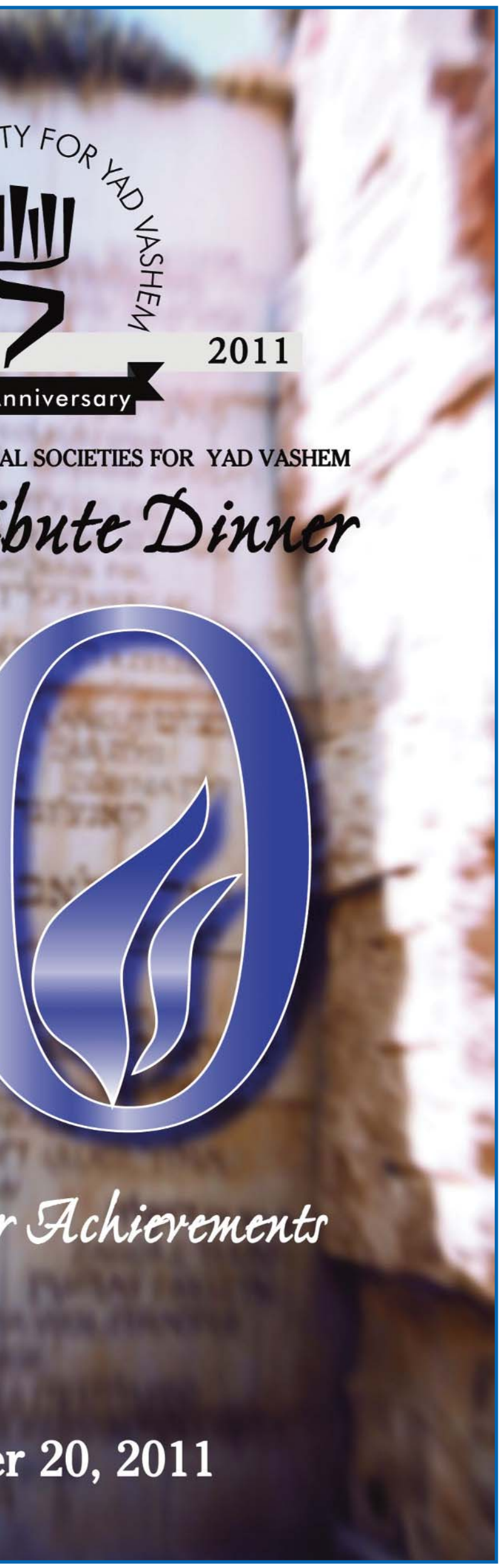
ES FOR YAD VASHEM ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER



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REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

PORTRAITS OF JEWISH "COUNTERFEITERS" DONATED TO YAD VASHEM

BY CRISTIAN SALAZAR AND RANDY HERSCHAFT, AP

He survived the Holocaust carrying the solemn portraits he drew of concentration camp prisoners who labored alongside him in one of the largest counterfeiting operations in history. For decades, those portraits have rarely been seen.

Now the collection of 43 drawings by Felix Cytrin of his fellow Jewish prisoners have been donated to Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial and museum, where researchers can study them and they will be exhibited for public viewing.

They are among the few images that exist of the young men who worked in an infamous secret Nazi operation to produce fake money, fictionalized in the Oscar-winning film *The Counterfeiters*. Cytrin's heirs donated them to Yad Vashem at a special ceremony held September 1 in the office of the American and International Societies for Yad Vashem in New York.

The works, most dated 1944 and 1945, were drawn on paper in pencil, charcoal, and chalk.

"I think what is amazing when you look at these portraits is how beautiful these young men look," said Yehudit Shendar, the senior art curator for the Jerusalem-based museum, who came to New York City to receive the portraits.

"Probably Cytrin felt a need to beautify them. Why to beautify them? To give them back the individuality that they were robbed of during that time," she said.

The works will be integrated into Yad Vashem's art collection, and some will be exhibited in Jerusalem in December, along with other portraits created by artists imprisoned during World War II.

Shendar said they belonged to a genre of portraiture by imprisoned artists who sought to document the faces of people who were likely doomed.

The Nazis hand-picked from death camps a group of about 140 mostly skilled craftsmen at the *Sachsenhausen* concentration camp north of Berlin beginning in 1942, and gave them the dubious choice of creating bogus money for the Nazis or almost certain death. They were isolated away from the rest of the camp in barracks known as Block 19, surrounded by barbed wire.

Yad Vashem senior art curator Yehudit Shendar, left, holds a portrait of Felix Cytrin, a Jewish engraver, artist and forced-labor counterfeiter. Marcia Friday, right, heir to Felix Cytrin, listens as Yehudit Shendar discusses Friday's donation of 43 of Cytrin's portraits of fellow German concentration camp prisoners to the Israeli Holocaust remembrance museum.

Initially, the goal of "Operation Bernhard" (named for its lead SS officer, Bernhard Krueger) was to counterfeit millions of British pounds that could be air-dropped on England to undermine the Allied country's economy, but the plan did not work out. The bogus money was also used to finance Nazi espionage.

Lawrence Malkin, the author of *Krueger's Men: The Secret Nazi Counterfeit Plot and the Prisoners of Block 19*, said in notes for a 2011 speech that at the height of production in 1943 and 1944, the prisoners were churning out 650,000 fake British notes a month. That amounted to $6 billion or $7 billion in 2011's money, Malkin wrote.

Cytrin was born in what is now Warsaw, Poland, in 1894, and his name appears on a list of "Operation Bernhard" inmates recovered from a lake in Austria, where the Nazis dumped documents about the plot, according to the International Tracing Service in *Bad Arolsen*.

A toolmaker and engraver, Cytrin was working in *Leipzig* when he was recruited to the secret plot and made chief of the engraving section, a critical job for the men working and living in Block 19.

Malkin called him one of the dozen or so people who "figured fairly importantly."

"There are people who stand out," he said. "And I'm sure that Cytrin stood out."

In early 1945, the counterfeiters were producing American dollars, but as the Red Army approached the operation was demobilized; the prisoners were sent with the equipment to *Mauthausen* concentration camp, then to a smaller camp in *Redl-Zipf*. The prisoners were then taken to *Ebensee*, to be killed.

But one day their Nazi guards disappeared, and Cytrin and the other members of "Operation Bernhard" were liberated in early May 1945.

Cytrin, who had a brother in the Bronx, came to the U.S. with his wife in 1949 and found his way to New Jersey. His family said Cytrin's attempt to do portraiture professionally fizzled, so he turned to tool and die-making. He died in 1971.

For many years after he had moved to the U.S., his family said he was suspicious of being watched by the government. The Associated Press has identified Army intelligence documents about Cytrin that remain classified at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.

At the ceremony Marcia Friday, who had been then married to Cytrin's grandson, said that about 25 years ago she discovered the disintegrating portraits in a cardboard portfolio at the family home in Pennsylvania.

Speaking at the Manhattan offices of the American Society for Yad Vashem, a U.S. organization that supports the Israeli memorial's mission, she said she was moved by how Cytrin was able to render his fellow prisoners' emotions.

"He was able to capture in each of the men's eyes an emotion that is below the external expressions in their faces," she said. "I think the emotions range from numbness to fear to terror."

HISTORIANS DEBATE: COULD MORE JEWS HAVE BEEN SAVED?

BY MORDECHAI I. TWERSKY

Seventy years after the Holocaust, the issue of America's response to it, and whether more Jews could have been saved, still arouses passions. At a July 17 academic conference at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem featuring the institution's leading historians alongside scholars from the U.S.-based David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, they locked horns over the question.

The historian David S. Wyman, in his book that appeared 28 years ago – *The Abandonment of the Jews* – exposed a pattern of apathy and obstruction at the highest of levels of the U.S. Government and among the Jewish organizational establishment led by Rabbi Steven S. Wise.

In his book, Wyman detailed the actions of an activist named Hillel Kook, who, using the pseudonym Peter Bergson, led a series of political action committees precisely 70 years ago that came to be known collectively as the Bergson Group.

That group was said to be ahead of its time, as it took out full-page ads in leading American newspapers; planned public rallies; staged theatrical plays with the participation of some of Hollywood's leading stars; planned a dramatic march of 400 rabbis to the steps of the Capitol and to the White House in 1943; and successfully lobbied Congress to introduce a resolution calling for the creation of a federal government agency to rescue refugees.

According to Wyman, the War Refugee Board played a major role in the rescue of more than 200,000 Jews, and among other things, sponsored the work of the heroic Swedish rescuer, Raoul Wallenberg.

Yad Vashem scholars took a different view toward the extent of Bergson's influence and the 200,000 figure cited by Wyman.

In a moment of high drama, Yad Vashem's Director of Libraries, Dr. Robert Rozett, read a letter from the noted Yad Vashem historian, Yehuda Bauer – who could not attend the conference – openly refuting Wyman's key contentions.

"To claim today that Kook was responsible for saving lives in Budapest is a little short of preposterous," asserted Bauer in his letter. "I do not doubt that the Bergson Group contributed very much to awareness of the Holocaust in the U.S., although by 1944, forty-eight percent of Americans were expressing anti-Jewish views, as Fortune Magazine told us. But all these controversies were marginal to any prospect of rescue. In a sense, the [U.S]. Administration was right, as it was powerless to save the millions. The only answer was to win the war and kill the murderers. Kook and Wise could not do much about that."

Those words provoked a nearly-10-minute rebuttal from Wyman Institute Director Rafael Medoff, who concluded, "The idea that there was nothing the American government could have done in 1944 to rescue more Jews, that is preposterous."

In another dramatic moment, panelist Moshe Arens, the former Israeli defense minister and ambassador to Washington who recently authored a book about the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, openly disagreed with Yad Vashem historians about the extent to which Jews could have – and should have – come together in unity.

"That Jews did not come together is beyond understanding and unforgivable," he said.

Leaders of both institutions said the day-long, joint conference was an important step forward.

"I think it was a productive day that presented new pieces of research in regard to saving Jews," said Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate.

"For many years after the Holocaust, the Bergson Group was not mentioned in museums, in history books, and elsewhere," Dr. Medoff said. "Only in recent years have a number of important museums and other institutions begun to recognize the Bergson Group's important role in helping to promote the rescue of Jews from the Holocaust."

An author and historian, Medoff looked past the tensions that permeated the conference. He said it was significant that world-class scholars gathered at Yad Vashem to present new research about the legacy of the Bergson Group. "The Bergson Group, in its time, aroused a lot of controversy in the Jewish community and beyond," he added. "The most important thing is for scholars to look at the documents, go into the archives, find the evidence, and then present it in public settings like this so that we can really understand what happened in those days and the impact of what activists like the Bergson Group were able to achieve."

Professor Wyman, 81, called the conference "a further step in bringing the message out about the things Bergson and his group were able to achieve."

"For many, many years, up until recently, the activities of my father and his various committees in the United States during the war years were literally written out of — primarily Israeli, but not only Israeli — historiography about the Holocaust," said Kook's daughter, Dr. Rebecca Kook, of Ben Gurion University. "The conference at Yad Vashem indicates a recognition from the side of 'official' Israeli scholarship, and that carries with it much significance," she said.

As for the present-day lesson to be learned from the initiatives of the Bergson Group, Bar-Ilan University historian Judith Baumel-Schwartz summed it up in four words. "Think outside the box."

SAFE HOUSE

(Continued from page 6)

needed specific help. She remembers one woman suffering terribly as she went through the process of moving house. The woman didn't spell it out, but Hassan soon realized the experience was evoking memories of a forced eviction back in Germany.

Slowly, contact with a single survivor led to the creation of a small, informal social group, meeting at first in people's houses. Hassan did not lead, but listened and offered help. It's an approach she still follows today, ensuring that every decision – from the type of cake served for tea to new fabric for the sofas – is taken in consultation with the survivors themselves. Why? "I can't be the leader, because then I'll be seen as the Nazi." Instead, the center aims to give a measure of control and autonomy to people who were robbed of every shred of it.

One might think that the Holocaust Survivors Center is a place of horror, drenched in melancholy. But that's wrong. On the walls are paintings from the art group. They depict beaches and woodland, scenes of bucolic beauty from the English countryside. They once had a session dedicated to a shared passion for chocolate. There is plenty of laughter – an emphasis on life rather than death.

Part of the explanation lies in the fact that when the survivors look back, many are keen to focus less on the agonies that were visited upon them by Hitler and his executioners and more on the lives they lived before. Harry Fox remembers being Chaim Fuchs, growing up in a *shtetl*, a village 12 miles from *Lodz* in the Polish countryside. He can still hear the sound the pigs made when the Polish farmers killed them, not in a slaughterhouse, but by whacking them with a plank of wood.

On one of the days I visit, there's a session in Yiddish, five men and seven women sitting around a boardroom-style table – laden with pastries – exchanging banter in the language of their childhood.

Instantly, the room fills with the gestures, shrugged exclamations, and resigned humor that are Yiddish's signature. *Azoi vi a doktor vershtayte de krenk*. "Like a doctor understands a sickness," one says, to laughter. Harry tells a joke, moving between Yiddish and English. The teacher asks what they think of the upheavals in the Arab world. Someone responds that Israel should send a message to Egypt, reminding them it was the enslaved children of Israel who built the pyramids – and telling the Egyptians that, if they knock them over, "the Israelites won't build them up again."

Then Bella Kerridge – born Bella Zuckerman 89 years ago – a woman with eyes that sparkle, sings a Yiddish song, acting out the story, delivering a genuine performance. Her voice is sweet and clear as she sings of a now-vanished world – of *Shabbos*, of the *rebbe* and *rebbitzen* – a gentle melody of oy's and bim-bom-bom's that ripples through the room like faint signals sent from a once-bright star, snuffed out long ago.

In conversation after conversation, a common theme emerges. They are approaching the end of their lives; in 15 years, they assume, they will all be gone. What if, they worry, the memory of the Holocaust dies with them? Aware that there are deniers of the *Shoah* all around, starting with the president of Iran, their concern is intense.

The result of that anguish is an urgent, even desperate desire to tell their story, to ensure it is passed on to the next generation. Freddie Knoller, 90 years old and a tall, charismatic figure who chairs the center's Camp and Ghetto Survivors Committee, tells me proudly that he spoke at 54 schools last year – more than one a week. "To me it's a mission that I have to tell the young people what happened – so that the Holocaust is not forgotten. That is the fear of us survivors. After we're gone, will the Holocaust be forgotten?" Several have published, or self-published, memoirs. They want to testify.

And so it is that, within minutes of meeting people and at next to no prompting, I hear their stories. Sam Pivnick tells me

Irka Reichmann was six when the Germans came for her family in Warsaw. Her parents hid her in a cupboard: "They took my father and mother and sister… I saw it through the keyhole."

that as a teenager his job in Auschwitz had been to empty the trains as they arrived bringing Jews to the gas chambers. He had to sweep out "shit, piss and bodies – old people and children" who had not survived the journey. He witnessed the notorious selections, when Dr Josef Mengele – known as the Angel of Death – assessed the Jews standing before him, deciding who would live and who would die.

Joseph Kiersz, in shirt, tie and a hearing aid in each ear, tells me that he, too, had been a prisoner in Auschwitz, a slave laborer there for 18 months, before he was dispatched to another camp at *Nordhausen*. They went by train, travelling for six or seven days without food. They survived by constructing a box, attaching it to their belts and lowering it outside to scoop up the snow below. Sometimes it would be covered with oil from the train, but if it came up clean they would push the snow into their mouths, sucking out its moisture.

"We'd have to take off the dead people," he says. "You'd have to pick up the dead people and lay them like you lay herrings, one this way, one that way. I was carrying them. They weighed nothing, they were like skeletons. I carried them under my arm." His breaths are coming faster and heavier as he speaks. Eventually, when he recalls the wife he lost four years ago – "She was a lady, everybody adored her" – he starts to cry. But only then.

Janine Webber, born in *Lvov* in 1932, tells me she survived by posing as a Catholic and working as a maid. "I lived with two families: one betrayed me and killed my brother. After that, we lived in a hole, 13 adults and me, hidden by a young Pole. His name was Edek. He hid 14 Jews for nothing, for no money. For a year, in a bunker. We took it in turns to lie down or to sit. For a year, I didn't see daylight. I was 10."

And Irka Reichmann, warm and engaging at 78, tells me her story – one I cannot shake. She was in the Warsaw ghetto. "I was six and my parents hid me in a cupboard." Minutes later, just as her parents had feared, the Germans came. Irka knew they were Germans because, from her vantage point in the cupboard, she recognized their boots. "They took my father and mother and sister, and left me in the cupboard. I saw it through the keyhole." That was the last time she saw her family.

They didn't always speak this way. In the immediate decades after the war, many survivors were reluctant to talk about their experiences. "When you're young, you're busy, you're trying to build up a life," Irka says. "You have children, you're trying to make money." Some feared passing a burden of heartbreak on to their children, not wanting to "bring them up with hatred."

But if they were reluctant to speak, there was also a deep reluctance to listen. Some say their children never asked them about their experiences: "I think my son thought it would hurt me to talk about it," says one. Others say it was the wider society that didn't want to know, even Britain's Jewish community. "People here were not interested, they couldn't understand," says another.

"Our so-called brothers and sisters have so little knowledge," Irka says, remembering the British Jew who once told her, "We had it bad here, too; we had bombing." "People know nothing. They have no insight whatsoever." That will sound harsh to those in the Jewish community who believe they value survivors enormously; they will point to the support they give and the donations they make to Jewish Care, the center's main funder.

But for Irka the sentiment is real. She felt a barrier, one that separates her even from her own family – one that exists everywhere but here. Which only makes the Holocaust Survivors Center all the more valuable to her. "It's been my salvation," she says, a "second home," a place where she feels truly understood. "If I'm upset, if I'm hurt, I can come here, have a bowl of soup and talk. There are people here who went through what I did."

And the need is greater now than ever, now that many are alone, without the daily distractions of raising children and earning a living. "This is the worst time in a survivor's life," she says. "I think of my parents more now than when I was younger." Now a great-grandmother, Irka longs for just one photograph of the woman she last glimpsed through that keyhole. "I would like to know what my mother looked like."

What, besides a tragic past, do these people have in common? "We don't give up easily," says Janine Webber. "Resilience, that's the common thread."

Freddie Knoller agrees: "All those who survived were optimists. The pessimists gave up, but we are optimists. I love life. Most of the people here love life and love people."

But Harry Fox is having none of it. He knows the part chance, random acts of kindness or savagery, played in deciding who died, including his parents, and who lived, including him. "I can't stick my chest out. If you survive, it's luck. There are no heroes." He pauses. "The heroes are all dead."

"MEGILLAT HITLER," FDR, AND THE JEWS

BY DR. RAFAEL MEDOFF

Among the more remarkable documents of the Holocaust is a scroll, created in North Africa in 1943, called "Megillat Hitler." Written in the style of Megillat Esther and the Purim story, it celebrates the Allies' liberation of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, which saved the local Jewish communities from the Nazis. What the scroll's author did not realize, however, was that at the very moment he was setting quill to parchment, those same American authorities were actually trying to keep in place the anti-Jewish legislation imposed in North Africa by the Nazis.

On November 8, 1942, American and British forces invaded Nazi-occupied Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. It took the Allies just eight days to defeat the Germans and their Vichy French partners in the region.

For the 330,000 Jews of North Africa, the Allied conquest was heaven-sent. The Vichy regime that had ruled since the summer of 1940 had stripped the region's Jews of their civil rights, severely restricted their entrance to schools and some professions, confiscated Jewish property, and tolerated sporadic pogroms against Jews by local Muslims. In addition, thousands of Jewish men were hauled away to forced-labor camps. President Franklin Roosevelt, in his victory announcement, pledged "the abrogation of all laws and decrees inspired by Nazi governments or Nazi ideologists."

But there turned out to be a discrepancy between FDR's public rhetoric and his private feelings.

On January 17, 1943, Roosevelt met in *Casablanca* with Major-General Charles Nogues, a leader of the new "non-Vichy" regime. When the conversation turned to the question of rights for North African Jewry, Roosevelt did not mince words: "The number of Jews engaged in the practice of the professions (law, medicine, etc.) should be definitely limited to the percentage that the Jewish population in North Africa bears to the whole of the North African population…" The President stated that his plan "would further eliminate the specific and understandable complaints which the Germans bore toward the Jews in Germany, namely, that while they represented a small part of the population, over fifty percent of the lawyers, doctors, school teachers, college professors, etc., in Germany, were Jews." (It is not clear how FDR came up with that wildly exaggerated statistic.)

Various Jewish communities around the world have established local Purim-style celebrations to mark their deliverance from catastrophe.

The Jews of *Frankfurt*, for example, would hold a "Purim Vintz" one week after Purim, in remembrance of the downfall of an anti-Semitic agitator in 1620. Libyan Jews traditionally organized a "Purim Ashraf" and a "Purim Bergel" to recall the rescue of Jews in those towns, in 1705 and 1795, respectively.

The Jewish community of *Casablanca*, for its part, declared the day of the 1942 Allied liberation "Hitler Purim," and a local scribe, P. Hassine, created the "Megillat Hitler." (The original is on display at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.) The seven chapters of the scroll poignantly blend the flavor of the tale of ancient Persia with the amazing stroke of fortune that the Jews of *Casablanca* had themselves just experienced. It uses phrases straight from Megillat Esther, such as "the month which was turned from sorrow to rejoicing" and "the Jews had light

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A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR RAISED A FIST TO DEATH

BY KURT STREETER,
LOS ANGELES TIMES

She was Jewish, but to live she needed a Christian name.

She could not be Natalie Leya Weinstein, not in wartime Warsaw. Her father wrote her new name on a piece of paper.

Natalie Yazinska.

Her mother, Sima, sobbed.

"The little one must make it," Leon Weinstein told his wife. "We got no chance. But the little one, she is special. She must survive."

He fixed a metal crucifix to a necklace and hung it on their daughter. On the paper, he scrawled another fiction: "I am a war widow, and I have no way of taking care of her. I beg of you good people, please take care of her. In the name of Jesus Christ, he will take care of you for this."

A cold wind cut at the skin that December morning, so Leon Weinstein bundled Natalie, 18 months old, in heavy pants and a thick wool sweater. He headed for a nearby apartment, the home of a lawyer and his wife. The couple did not have a child. Weinstein hoped they wanted one.

He laid Natalie on their front step. Tears ran down his cheeks. You will make it, he thought. She had blond locks and blue eyes. They will think you are a Gentile, not one of us.

Walking away, he could hear her whimper, but forced himself not to look back until he crossed the street. Then he turned and saw a man step out of the apartment. The man read Weinstein's note. He puzzled over the baby.

Cradling Natalie in his arms, the man walked half a block to a police station and disappeared inside.

Weinstein was beside himself.

What if the Gestapo took her from the police?

What if they decided that she was a Jew?

Today, at his small Spanish-style home in Mid-City, Weinstein, 101, recalls in agonizing detail what it was like to give up his baby in 1941 amid the Nazi juggernaut. He is frail, but his wit and memory are keen. He remembers well what followed: killing Germans, dodging death, hunting for Natalie.

Leon Weinstein with his daughter Natalie Gold Lumer.

Holocaust scholars vouch for his account, calling him one of the last living fighters from the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, almost certainly the oldest.

For years, Weinstein kept his memories buried.

No more.

It is important to tell about Nazi horrors, he now says, so they are never forgotten. It is, he says, important to tell the story of his search for his little girl.

Weinstein was born in the Jewish village of *Radzymin*, Poland. As a child, he was independent, even stubborn. His family adhered to Orthodox Judaism, but he never fully believed. He defied his elders and grew into something of a tough. Eyes gleaming, he recalls those who called him a "dirty Jew."

"They'd meet my fists," he says. "Then they'd be picking their teeth from the ground."

By 15, he had run away from home and was living in Warsaw, where he worked as a tailor's assistant, then for a clothing company. In his 20s, he married Sima. After Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, they were forced to live in *Radzymin* with other Jews.

Natalie was born the next year. When she was a year old, Weinstein heard a Nazi guard say that German troops would soon send everyone in *Radzymin* to a death camp.

He prepared to flee and begged his extended family to leave too. They refused, saying Germans would never do such a thing.

But Weinstein had seen Nazi cruelty firsthand. So he slipped away, with his wife and daughter, into the nearby forest. It was far from a haven: anti-Semitic Polish thugs roamed there.

Using forged papers that identified him as a Christian, Weinstein and his family headed to Warsaw. They hoped that the sprawling capital would be a good hiding place. Sima had no papers; if the Nazis caught her, all three might be killed.

A Polish couple promised to hide Sima, but Weinstein and the baby would draw too much attention. They decided to leave Natalie on the lawyer's doorstep. Weinstein would head for the confines of the Warsaw Ghetto, where fellow Jews would give him shelter.

"This was a place completely unimaginable," Weinstein says. "A place worse even than the hell that Dante described."

The ghetto was surrounded by an 11-foot-high brick wall, barbed wire and guards. More than 400,000 Jews had been forced inside the 3.5-square-mile area. By early 1943, an estimated 300,000 of them had been shipped to *Treblinka*, a death camp in northeast Poland.

Nazis rationed food for those who remained and many died of starvation. Disease killed thousands more. Weinstein feared constantly for Natalie and Sima and was certain he would die.

He joined the ghetto resistance. "If we

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THE DAY FRANCE BETRAYED ITS JEWS

BY SIMON ROUND,
THE JEWISH CHRONICLE ONLINE

On the morning of July 16, 1942, some 13,000 Jews were arrested in Paris and sent to internment camps around France. After months of near starvation, the adults and children were separated and deported to Auschwitz. Only 25 of them returned to France at the end of the Second World War.

Director Rose Bosch.

This may be only a short summary of these horrific events, but it is more than you will find in French textbooks. The *Vel d'Hiv* roundup (named after the Winter Velodrome, the cycling stadium where the Jews were detained) has been almost totally ignored in France. This appalled investigative journalist and film-maker Rose Bosch, so much so that she spent five years of her life making a feature film about the episode. The resulting movie, *The Round Up*, has had a massive impact in France. It was one of the top 10 films of 2010, and was seen in cinemas by more than three million people – more than Hollywood blockbusters *Schindler's List* and *The Pianist*.

Bosch, who wrote the screenplay and directed the film, does not think there was anything accidental about this collective lapse of memory by the French. "It was completely intentional. I've been a journalist on news magazines for many years and I know these things aren't forgotten by accident. There was this terrible shame about what happened."

Bosch explains why this might be. "The French authorities negotiated with the Germans to take Jewish children that the Nazis did not even ask for. Most French people did not realise that there were more than 200 camps in their country. From 1940, Marshal Pétain, the president of the Vichy regime, had sent Jews to those camps without any demands coming from the Germans. He also published anti-Jewish laws before the Germans asked him to."

She adds that France was the only country in Europe which sent thousands of unaccompanied children on trains to the death camps. When they arrived at Auschwitz they were either marched to the gas chambers or machine-gunned to death.

For the French, discovering about their wartime past has been a traumatic experience. Says Bosch: "Imagine you just discovered there were camps in Britain, where people had been starved, abused and then deported to be murdered. That would be very shocking."

Bosch was adamant that all of the main characters in the film should be real-life people. "I wanted it to be as accurate as possible. We wanted to get this tragedy known and into the textbooks, rather than the two lines that I read when I was at school."

Jean Reno (second left) plays a Jewish doctor deported to a death camp in *The Round Up*.

Her research took three years, with two clear strands developing, both of which are represented in the film. The first was the political background – the horse-trading between the French authorities and the Nazis. The second was the minutiae of life for the Jews in occupied France. She says; "I wanted to find survivors because I thought it would be tough to make a film in which all the children die. On top of this, I wanted it to be mainly from the point of view of the children because I remember from when I was a reporter that children were always the victims – either losing their parents or witnessing horrors."

Children also composed a large part of the audience. "Children of 12 are taught about the Holocaust in France, and it was these kids who went to see *The Round Up* and then told their friends about it. I think they identified with the children in the film."

Bosch, who is not Jewish, said that she had expected during her research to discover that the French had been generally anti-Semitic. However, she found that there had been many instances of heroism. "On the morning of the roundup, 10,000 Jews just vanished – they must have hidden by non-Jews. This would have been very risky."

Bosch, whose film career goes back to 1987 when she wrote the screenplay about Christopher Columbus which became the basis of Ridley Scott's Hollywood film, *1492: Conquest of Paradise*, was not expecting *The Round Up* to be a money-making venture. In fact, she and the stars of the film, including Jean Reno, agreed to defer their salaries to keep costs down. So she is surprised that the film is now being shown worldwide.

She adds: "Our generation is the last one which will be able to hear the memories of these survivors. It is important to get these stories now while we still have the chance. I fear a world where those people won't be here to tell us what happened. The Holocaust was something so gigantically horrific that when all the witnesses have gone, people may choose not to believe that it happened at all."

JEWISH TEXTS LOST IN WAR ARE SURFACING IN NEW YORK

BY SAM DOLNICK, THE NEW YORK TIMES

In 1932, as the Nazis rose to power in Germany, a Jewish librarian in Frankfurt published a catalog of 15,000 books he had painstakingly collected for decades.

It listed the key texts of a groundbreaking field called the Science of Judaism, in which scholars analyzed the religion's philosophy and culture as they would study those of ancient Greece or Rome. The school of thought became the foundation for modern Jewish studies around the world.

In the tumult of war, great chunks of the collection vanished. Now, librarians an ocean away have determined that most of the missing titles have been sitting for years on the crowded shelves of the Leo Baeck Institute, a Manhattan center dedicated to preserving German Jewish culture.

The story of how the hundreds of tattered, cloth-bound books with esoteric German titles ended up in New York includes impossible escapes, careful scholarship and some very heavy suitcases. And while the exact trails of many of the volumes remain murky, they wind through book-lined apartments on the Upper West Side, across a 97-year-old woman's cluttered coffee table and into a library's cavernous stacks.

For Jewish scholars, the collection of Science of Judaism texts (in German, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*) is a touchstone marking the emergence of Jewish tradition as a philosophy and culture worthy of academic study.

"We're all heirs to the legacy of *Wissenschaft*," said Jonathan D. Sarna, a professor of American Jewish history at Brandeis University.

The University Library Frankfurt still houses the bulk of the collection, but experts there have determined over several decades that they were missing some 2,000 books listed in the 1932 catalog. In the last two years, a team led by Renate Evers, head librarian at the Leo Baeck Institute, found that her shelves had more than 1,000 of the lost titles.

While scholars say the books in New York are probably not the same copies as those lost from the Frankfurt library, their rediscovery offers the chance to rebuild what one professor called "a legendary collection." Frankfurt librarians are putting the collection online, while the Center for Jewish History, the institute's parent organization, is seeking a grant to do the same.

"This is very exciting," said Rachel Heuberger, head of the library's Judaica division. "You can reconstruct a collection that otherwise never would have come to life again."

Lotte Strauss's husband, Herbert, owned one of the books in the collection on the Science of Judaism.

Scholars say the books were most likely brought to New York from Europe by private collectors and antiquities dealers. In the past 50 years, donors, nearly all of them German Jews who immigrated and prospered here, gave them to the Leo Baeck Institute.

The donors, photographed in their cinched ties and sober suits, represent a generation of scholarly New York immigrants that is nearly gone. They escaped the Nazis, built new lives and created a sophisticated community that centered on books, culture and learning. Their ranks included the political philosopher Hannah Arendt and Dr. Ruth Westheimer.

Many came to this country hauling suitcases filled with books, and as they settled here, they created academic journals and scholarly institutes. They debated politics during formal dinners in Washington Heights parlors. They took typewriters along on vacation so they could keep working.

Herbert A. Strauss, who came to New York with his wife in 1946, owned one of the lost books, an 1843 volume by Ludwig Philippson. Where he got it, his widow, Lotte, has no idea. A historian and a professor, he was always coming home to their Upper Manhattan apartment with his arms full of new tomes.

"He was not only married to me," Mrs. Strauss said. "He was also married to his desk."

When he died in 2005, she donated 4,500 of his books to the Leo Baeck Institute.

The couple had met in Germany, and escaped together to Switzerland just steps ahead of the Gestapo. They recounted their ordeals in separate memoirs published in 1999.

Mrs. Strauss, 97, a great-grandmother, recalled meeting her husband. "I was fascinated by him," she said. "He was good-looking and he had new ideas."

On a recent afternoon in her sun-drenched apartment, Mrs. Strauss pulled out her husband's brittle papers. There were Nazi-era ration cards decorated with swastikas — red for bread, blue for meat. There was a lifeguard certificate from Berlin that showed a young man, sleeves rolled up past his elbows, smiling at something off-camera.

Did he carry books with him when he came to New York?

Mrs. Strauss laughed. "We came here poor as church mice," she said. "You went as you were; you didn't carry a thing." She was eight months pregnant and had one dress to her name. Mr. Strauss built his library, and their life, in New York.

Ludwig Schwarzschild, a dermatologist, brought his library with him when he came to the United States in 1934. Although his practice north of Frankfurt was shuttered by the authorities, he, his wife and their two young children were able to take most of their possessions out of Germany, said their daughter, Lore Singerman, of Annapolis, Md.

Mrs. Singerman, 78, remembered a Manhattan childhood of heavy European furniture and crowded bookcases. Reading was highly prized — prayer books, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *National Geographic*.

Her father owned one of the lost *Wissenschaft* volumes, an 1888 edition of a Hermann Cohen book. His family donated it to the institute in 1970, the year he died. Mrs. Singerman does not know where her father got the book, but said, "If it was in German, he probably brought it with him — he didn't buy German books here."

Fred W. Lessing, another German Jewish donor, built such a vast book collection at his home in Scarsdale, N.Y., that he ordered catalog cards from the Library of Congress to keep track of it all. He was chief executive of a Yonkers metal company, but his passion was his library and discussions with professors and writers.

Mr. Lessing scoured auction catalogs for treasures, with a special focus on the history of the Enlightenment. His children knew enough not to touch his "good books," said his daughter Joan Lessing. "His library was part of our lives," she said. "Books were in every room."

Mr. Lessing gave the institute an early-20th-century edition of a volume by Adolf Eckstein, but his daughter did not know where he had gotten it.

Even the Frankfurt librarian who cataloged the entire collection, Aron Freimann, came to New York. After arriving in 1939, he went on to work at the New York Public Library.

Today, his granddaughter, Ruth Dresner, lives in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. She keeps her grandfather's catalog on her shelf — she calls it his "magnum opus" — and plans to leave it to her children.

"I'm 80 years old, and I'm very devoted and dedicated to perpetuating tradition," she said. "I am very proud."

ISRAEL, JEWISH AGENCY LAUNCH GLOBAL EFFORT TO LOCATE PROPERTY LOST IN HOLOCAUST

BY RAPHAEL AHREN, HAARETZ

The Israeli government and the Jewish Agency launched a new worldwide initiative to identify Jewish property lost or stolen during the Holocaust with the goal of obtaining restitution for survivors or their heirs. Called Project HEART − Holocaust Era Asset Restitution Taskforce, the initiative is chaired by Rafi Eitan, the former senior citizen affairs minister, and directed by the Jewish Agency's Bobby Brown, a native New Yorker who has been active in the field of Holocaust restitution for more than a decade.

"This is the first time since the Holocaust that a general comprehensive program is being launched to gather information with the eventual purpose of receiving compensation for property looted, stolen, or forcibly sold during the Holocaust," Jewish Agency chairman Natan Sharansky said. "This will be an opportunity for many people to finally receive compensation for property that was taken from them and their families during the Holocaust era."

In its first stage, Project HEART − with an expected annual budget of around NIS 9 million − will focus on identifying individuals with potential claims mainly against Eastern European governments. Survivors or their heirs whose families owned private property − including real estate, movable items or intangible personal property − and have never been compensated will be asked to contact the project's staff. A website and a call center available in thirteen languages has been launched to facilitate the information gathering process.

"It is not necessary to have evidence of property ownership to be eligible. If individuals believe they owned or were beneficiaries of such property, they should fill out the questionnaire," said Anya Verkhovskaya, who is overseeing the initiative's practical aspects. Verkhovskaya is senior executive vice president and COO at A.B. Data, a company specializing in class-action suits. Based on the Milwaukee-based company's extensive work on previous cases of Holocaust restitution claim, the Jewish Agency and the government hired the company to do the actual legwork, such as creating the call center and setting up the advertising campaigns. "Unfortunately, Holocaust survivors are leaving this world at a very rapid rate, and even their children are now in their sixties. It is extremely important to get as accurate information as we possibly can for history's sake, for a memorial sake and for the sake of eventually coming forward in negotiations," Brown, 59, told *Haaretz*. "We feel that this is a critical moment that maybe we waited much too long for, but nevertheless, if we don't do it now, we may have lost the last possibility of doing it altogether."

Project HEART bases its hopes on a non-binding resolution passed during the 2009 Holocaust Era Assets Conference in Prague, in which the 46 participating countries agreed on their obligation to compensate Holocaust victims and their heirs for property lost on their territory.

Eastern European countries shortly before or immediately after the fall of Communism passed legislation allowing Jews to claim restitution for property lost or stolen during the Holocaust. However, due to difficult restrictions, these countries only compensated a small number of Jews with minor payments, according to Moshe Sanbar, who served for many years in senior positions in several organizations fighting for Holocaust restitution.

"With the Prague Conference we created a new basis for new claims − it wasn't legally binding, but it was and is binding morally," said Sanbar.

"Looted property has to be restituted − this is part of European policy, several American presidents have said that's our policy − and it's part of Israeli policy," said Brown.

The U.S.-based Claims Conference is today perhaps the best-known institution involved in fighting for restitution of property lost during the Holocaust. Founded in 1951, the group became one of the wealthiest Jewish organizations in the world after the fall of Iron Curtain through the sale of buildings in Eastern Germany that had belonged to Jews but whose heirs could not be located.

"The Claims Conference has done a marvelous job but they are limited to Germany and Austria," Brown told *Haaretz*.

"We are not focusing, at this point, on any one country. It is a wide net we're sending out, and hopefully we'll have established a registry for [survivors with legitimate claims], many of whom have given up hope of ever seeing any compensation. This is the last battle of the Holocaust and it is our obligation to find a modicum of justice in this area."

Project HEART has received overwhelmingly positive responses from Israelis involved in Holocaust restitution issues.

NEGLECTING THE LITHUANIAN HOLOCAUST

BY TIMOTHY SNYDER

In early July the words "Hitler was right" were painted in Russian on the memorial stone to the 72,000 Jews who were murdered at the Ponary Forest near Vilnius in Lithuania. On another monument close by, a vulgar reference was made to the compensation the Lithuanian government has made to the descendants of murdered Jews. No one seems to have noticed.

Vilnius, now the capital of Lithuania, was known for centuries as the "the Jerusalem of Lithuania" because of its centrality to medieval and early modern Jewish thought and politics. In the medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Jews settled in Vilnius in considerable numbers from both west and east. Over centuries, Jews prospered under a regime that permitted them local autonomy. During the waning of the Commonwealth in the eighteenth century, Vilnius was home to scholars such as Elijah ben Solomon, the "Gaon of Vilne," the great opponent of the Hasidic movement.

In the nineteenth century Vilnius was home to the Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, in the Russian Empire. After World War I the city was incorporated by Poland, though it was claimed by Lithuania as its capital. There were far more Poles than Lithuanians in the city, but there were about as many Jews as Poles, roughly eighty thousand each in the 1920s. In interwar Vilnius, tensions between Poles and Jews and between Poles and Lithuanians were high, but relations between Lithuanians and Jews were relatively peaceful.

In 1939, as World War II began, the Jews, Poles, and Lithuanians of Vilnius fell under Soviet power. By the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the alliance between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, eastern Poland (including Vilnius) came within the Soviet sphere of influence. The Soviets in 1939 gave Vilnius to Lithuania, then annexed the whole country in 1940. The NKVD, the Soviet secret police, then set about deporting Lithuania's political and social elites — about 21,000 people in all, including many Jews. Thousands more were shot in NKVD prisons. This level of wartime terror was unprecedented, and its first perpetrators were Soviets rather than Nazis. We remember, for example, that the Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara saved several thousand Jews by issuing them transit visas from Lithuania in 1940; what is often overlooked is that these Jews were fleeing not the Holocaust, which had not yet begun, but the threat of Soviet deportations.

The desecrated memorial stone to the Jews murdered in 1941 at the Ponary Forest. The graffiti reads "Hitler was right."

Meanwhile, the Germans prepared to betray their Soviet allies. Part of their planning for the invasion of the Soviet Union was the recruitment of local nationalists, who would help them spread their anti-Semitic message: Nazi rule was liberation from Soviet crimes, which were in fact the fault of local Jews. During the first few weeks of the German invasion, which first touched Lithuania and other lands that the Soviets had just annexed, local peoples took part in a few hundred extremely violent pogroms, killing some 24,000 Jews.

German troops were followed by four *Einsatzgruppen*, whose task was to murder groups who might resist German power. In Lithuania, more quickly than anywhere else, this mission became mass murder. The Germans' anti-Semitic equation of Jews with Soviet rule allowed Lithuanians (and others) to find a scapegoat for their own humiliation and suffering under Soviet rule. It also provided an escape route for many who had collaborated with the prior Soviet regime. The Germans had been sheltering Lithuanian nationalists who had fled Soviet rule, and cooperation between German forces and these Lithuanians allowed for a drastic escalation from pogroms to mass shootings.

The mass murder of the Jews of Vilnius could not have taken place without the assistance of Lithuanians: the Germans did not have enough men for the job. That said, it is important to remember that the double occupation of Lithuania, by the Soviets and then by the Germans, was an exceedingly violent break with the previous history of Vilnius and Lithuania. Though the Germans had no trouble finding Lithuanians willing to kill Jews, what happened in 1941 had no precedent in prewar Lithuanian policy or in the history of Lithuanian-Jewish relations.

The German unit assigned to kill the Vilnius Jews was *Einsatzkommando* 9 of *Einsatzgruppe* B. By July 23, 1941, the Germans had assembled a Lithuanian auxiliary that marched columns of Jews from Vilnius to the nearby Ponary Forest. Jews were taken in groups of between twelve and twenty to the edge of pits, where they had to hand over valuables and clothes before they were shot. Some 72,000 Jews from Vilnius and elsewhere were murdered at Ponary (as were about eight thousand Poles and Lithuanians). Ita Straż was one of the very few Jewish survivors. She was taken by Lithuanian policemen to a pit full of corpses. The shots missed her, but she fell into the pit, and was covered by the corpses of the people who came after. Later she climbed out and away: "I was barefoot. I walked and walked over corpses. There seemed to be no end to it."

Why has the desecration of such a place escaped our notice? When the "Arbeit macht frei" sign was stolen in late 2009 from the gates of Auschwitz, an international scandal ensued, and the thieves (a Swedish neo-Nazi and two Polish accomplices) were apprehended. Perhaps reporters and editors in western Europe and the US do not associate places like Ponary with the Holocaust. Our imaginations are dominated by Auschwitz, even though more far more Jews were shot at places like Ponary than were murdered in its gas chambers.

For its part, the Lithuanian government tends to focus on the Lithuanian victims of the Soviet occupation. The Germans brought the first Soviet occupation to an end in 1941, but the Red Army returned in 1945, and remained until 1991.

Lithuanian authorities wonder, with justice, whether Lithuania's fellow EU member-states understand the difficulties of its Soviet past. The current Lithuanian government thus emphasizes Soviet crimes, sometimes to the point of neglecting obvious opportunities to acknowledge the scale of the Holocaust in Lithuania and the role of Lithuanians in the mass shootings on Lithuanian territory. Lithuania would likely have been more energetic in informing the world about an episode of vandalism at its Museum of Genocide Victims, whose exhibitions concern Soviet crimes.

But indubitable Western ignorance of Soviet crimes is no excuse for neglecting the historical record of the tragedy of Lithuanian Jews. Horrible as the Soviet occupation was, the largest group of genocide victims in Lithuania were the Jews murdered by the Germans with the help of the local population. These people were, of course, Lithuanian citizens. The responsibility to announce and resolve the crime rests with the Lithuanian authorities, and the local police have accordingly been in contact with the Jewish community of Vilnius (today only some three thousand people). Aside from basic decency, respect for the history of Lithuania and its peoples would demand that immediate and decisive measures are taken to bring those involved to justice.

"MEGILLAT HITLER," FDR, AND THE JEWS

(Continued from page 11)

and gladness, joy and honor," side by side with modern references such as "Cursed be Hitler, cursed be Mussolini."

The Jews of North Africa had much to celebrate. But after the festivities died down, questions began to arise. The Allies permitted nearly all the original senior officials of the Vichy regime in North Africa to remain in the new government. The Vichy "Office of Jewish Affairs" continued to operate, as did the forced labor camps in which thousands of Jewish men were being held.

American Jewish leaders were loath to publicly take issue with the Roosevelt administration, but by the spring of 1943, they began speaking out. The American Jewish Congress and World Jewish Congress charged that "the anti-Jewish legacy of the Nazis remains intact in North Africa" and urged FDR to eliminate the Vichy laws. "The spirit of the Swastika hovers over the Stars and Stripes," Benzion Netanyahu, director of the U.S. wing of the Revisionist Zionists (and father of Israel's current prime minister) charged. A group of Jewish GIs in Algiers protested directly to U.S. ambassador Murphy. Editorials in a number of American newspapers echoed this criticism.

At first, Roosevelt administration officials dug in their heels. Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles insisted that technically, the region was no longer under Allied military occupation and the U.S. could not dictate how the local government ran things.

"The under secretary of state was perhaps right from a strictly formal viewpoint," Prof. Michael Abitbol noted in his study of North African Jewry during the Holocaust. "But he was strangely underestimating the immense influence wielded by the United States over North African internal politics."

Eventually, under the accumulated weight of public protests, the Roosevelt administration made it clear to the local authorities that the anti-Jewish measures needed to be repealed.

The implementation process, however, was painfully slow. In April 1943, the forced-labor camps in North Africa were officially shut down, although some of them continued operating well into the summer. The Jewish quotas in schools and professions were gradually phased out. In May, the racial laws in Tunisia were abolished. Two hundred Italian Jews who had been taken by the Allies to a Tunisian forced-labor camp, because they were citizens of an Axis country, were released after several months.

And on October 20, 1943, nearly a year after the Allied liberation, full rights for North Africa's Jews were at last reinstated. The victory that "Megillat Hitler" celebrated was finally complete.

Dr. Medoff is director of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies.

ENSURING THE LEGACY

(Continued from page 1)

Shalev. On the occasion of the Societies' twenty-fifth anniversary in 2006, I was recognized with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

In conjunction with the tribute dinner, the Societies publish a commemorative journal which illustrates the transcendence of the Holocaust over the generations and becomes a treasured keepsake with enduring interest and value. The 2000 journal, *The Jewish Child from Then to Now*, a memorial tribute to the 1.5 million children who perished in the Holocaust, won the prestigious Clarion Award.

An annual spring luncheon was added to our calendar of events in 2000. The event attracts more than 250 people, and has featured outstanding Holocaust authors and scholars as guest speakers such as Nechama Tec, Deborah Lipstadt, Melvin Bukiet and Sir Martin Gilbert.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

With each passing year, there are fewer and fewer survivors with direct memories of the Shoah. In response, the American Society has developed Holocaust-related educational and cultural programs that have inspired younger people to become invested in preserving the memory of this most tragic period in Jewish history. The Young Leadership Associates, co-chaired by Caroline Massel and Jeremy Halpern, both grandchildren of survivors, was founded in 1997. Its first event attracted just over 200 people. In recent years attendance has swelled to over 800. An annual highlight of the YLA activities is a Professional Development Conference for public school teachers on the methodology and curriculum content for teaching the Holocaust. Utilizing the resources of the Yad Vashem Department of Education, Conference themes have included "Holocaust Education Towards the Next Century," "Using Survivors' Testimonies: Witnesses to the Past and Voices for the Future," and "Echoes and Reflections: A Multimedia Curriculum on the Holocaust."

I am pleased and proud to conclude this essay with a quote by Adina Burian, a fifth generation American and member of the Young Leadership Associates. She wrote in the Societies' 25th Anniversary Journal:

"The first and second generations built the infrastructure that ensures that our past will never be forgotten. It will be the task of the third generation, and indeed, the next generation, to ensure that the past is linked inexorably to the spirit, unity, and vibrancy of the Jewish future."

BERLIN EXHIBITION EXPOSES POLICE ROLE IN HOLOCAUST

BY AMRIT NARESH, THE LOCAL

An exhibition at the German Historical Museum in Berlin explores the role the police played in the Holocaust, with rare documents offering insight into how and why ordinary officers were complicit with the worst of the Nazi crimes.

In the decades following the Second World War, thousands of former police officers for the Nazi regime slipped back into

Deportation of Jews from *Ludwigshafen*, in the Rhine Neckar Area, October 1940.

their country's civilian workforce with impunity, their crimes lost to history.

Now, building on over 30 years of research, the new exhibition, "Order and Annihilation – The Police and the Nazi Regime," sets the record straight on the crimes of the police work in that era.

"The very normal uniformed green police [the regular urban police] force was, until 1942 ... a primary perpetrator of the Holocaust," says museum project director Dr. Wolfgang Schulte.

"The police had various functions and responsibilities in the Nazi state," continues a placard at the exhibition, "and as a general rule, police officers dutifully performed their given tasks – be it traffic control or mass executions."

The 1945-46 Nuremberg Trials indicted scores of high-ranking Nazi officials, but a majority of police officers, war criminals themselves, escaped justice and were never held accountable in court.

The global public knew little about the role of the police for several decades after the war, but the DHM exhibition delves into the gritty details. It tracks the lifespan of the force from its right-leaning origins in the Weimar Republic to its use as an instrument of terror during the Third Reich, to the eventual return of thousands of former Nazi officers to police forces across both East and West Germany.

During the war, according to the exhibition, the 355,000 men and women serving in the police force methodically carried out their duties of registering, collecting and exterminating undesirable groups in occupied territories. These were not just officers of the infamous Gestapo, but belonged to all branches of the police.

Even without any official punishment for the refusal to carry out an order, few officers abstained from their role in the killing, imprisonment and forced labor of millions of civilians in occupied territories.

"The manuscripts, the photos and videos the museum has compiled are disturbing, but also compelling and I think important to see," said Werner Hinrich, a history professor visiting from *Potsdam*.

"We've known about the crimes for a few years now," he added. "But it's important to remember and revisit the past, always, so we can make the future better."

Almost as unsettling as the crimes themselves was the re-employment of former Nazi officers in German police forces – including those administered by the Allied powers occupying West Germany.

One section of the exhibition tells the story of former SS officer Julius Wohlauf, a "good example" of a police officer, who took up a job as a salesman immediately after the war in 1945, before rejoining the Hamburg police force ten years later.

In all, he lived and worked freely for nearly two decades until he was brought to trial for war crimes in 1963, and sentenced in 1968 to eight years in prison for complicity in the murder of 9,200 people during the war.

The curators postulate that Wohlauf, alongside many officers like him, participated in the Nazi scheme for various reasons – out of "blind obedience, vocational ambition, ideological schooling, peer pressure and racism," but also out of "sadism and personal gain."

Police participating in the execution of Jews in the central Ukrainian city of *Lubny*, October 1941.

Despite such an explanation, the motives behind the police crimes during the Nazi era remain difficult to understand. But the new exhibition goes a long way in exposing a history that remained hidden for many years.

REFOCUSING LOSS THROUGH THE HOLOCAUST'S LENS

(Continued from page 4)

A clue emerges in Levitt's discussion of Yaffa Eliach's "Tower of Faces" exhibit at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., in which thousands of family photographs have been assembled to commemorate the Jewish dead of a single Polish town. "I wanted to imagine these people as my own," Levitt writes of the sense of familiarity and identification she felt when viewing the images. This exhibit provided, for her, a way into the enormity of the Holocaust, and a way to bridge the gap between ordinary and extraordinary loss.

While Levitt recognizes the extraordinary nature of the Holocaust, her book is, in essence, an argument for its universalization. Survivors and their descendants cannot and should not be the privileged bearers of moral authority related to loss, she seems to suggest. Once we acknowledge the connection between the extraordinary losses of the Holocaust and the ordinary losses of everyday life, we enlarge the pool of those who are able to integrate the Holocaust and its victims into their moral universe. This, she implies, is a good thing — and I agree.

And yet, American Jewish *Loss after the Holocaust* inadvertently reminds us of the continuing divide that separates those who grew up relatively insulated from Holocaust trauma and those of us who did not. For the very possibility of viewing those images of smiling Jews in the Holocaust Museum's Tower of Faces divorced from their ultimate fates remains, for many of us, a luxury that is out of reach. The trauma wrought by extraordinary loss, though increasingly recognized by a wider swath of the population, continues to be borne disproportionately by those closest to the destruction.

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A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR RAISED A FIST TO DEATH

(Continued from page 12)

were going to die," Weinstein says, "we would do it on our own terms. We would die standing proud, on our feet, making a statement to the world. We would take as many of those bastards as we could kill."

He helped organize and train resistance fighters. On occasion, using his forged papers, he talked his way out of the ghetto and smuggled weapons back inside.

On April 19, 1943, the first night of Passover, the Nazis began their final push to wipe out the ghetto. When German tanks rolled forward, Jewish fighters appeared at windows, on rooftops, along street corners. They hurled grenades, Molotov cocktails, bricks, and rocks. Weinstein ran along rooftops in a fury, strafing Nazis with a machine gun.

The resistance held, but only for a while.

"When could I have been killed?" Weinstein says. "Every five minutes." He says it again, pausing between each word. "Every…five…minutes."

One day he was crouched on the second floor of an abandoned building when he heard the footsteps of Nazi troops on the stairs.

It's over, he told himself.

He looked out a window. A solitary soldier stood guard below.

Weinstein leaped. His steel-toed boots slammed into the soldier's head. "He fell like a sack of stones," Weinstein says. "I could see his skull, his blood, brains. For killing a man who hunted me, I felt nothing but good — and I was so excited I felt no pain.

"I was alive at least for another day."

Weinstein hid in sewers that swarmed with rats and human waste. He eventually found a way out that seemed safe, but was too weak to lift the iron cover.

Was this how he would die?

He fell asleep and dreamed of his grandfather, a deeply religious man. " 'You must keep going,'" his grandfather told him. "'You must. Don't stop.'"

Weinstein awoke with new energy. He hunched his back against the manhole cover, gathered all of his strength and pushed. It opened.

In the early morning darkness, he hunted for someone who would shelter a fleeing Jew who stank of sewage and looked as though he might collapse and die.

A Warsaw couple he had known before the war took him in.

Weinstein asked after his relatives who had stayed behind in *Radzymin*. All were dead. He looked for Sima. He learned she was dead too.

By spring 1945, the war was over, and surviving Jews began to leave the country. Weinstein was not among them. He had to find Natalie.

His first stop was the street where he'd left his little girl. It was mostly rubble, but one building stood untouched — the police station.

He walked in. "Do you remember hearing about an abandoned girl who was taken here?"

One officer did. The girl had been taken to a nearby convent.

The nuns there remembered, too. The baby was among several they tried to shelter. Disease claimed some, but the baby named Natalie survived. When the fighting drew near, she was sent to a cloister in the countryside.

Over bombed-out roads, pedaling hard on his bicycle, Weinstein made his way there. But Natalie was gone, sent to another group of nuns. On he went, to convent after convent, sometimes sleeping in fields.

The story was the same. Natalie had been there, but nobody knew where she was now. Nobody knew if she was alive.

After six months, Weinstein returned to the city, exhausted.

Then, against all hope, he decided to visit a convent near the ghetto. He walked past a statue of the Virgin Mary, then into a hall where dozens of pale, thin orphans stood.

"Mister, mister." They grabbed at his tall, brown boots. "Mister, mister, take me, take me."

As he drew away, frustrated, a nun walked past, carrying a bony, blond girl, who looked about 4. He looked into the child's eyes. They were blue.

This, he said, was Natalie.

"She is yours?" the nun asked. "How can we know?"

"If she is," Weinstein said, "then she has a little brown birthmark, the size of a pencil eraser, just near her right hip."

The nun lifted the girl's dirty gray shirt and they looked.

He had found Natalie.

Weinstein and Natalie moved to France.

In time, he married Sophie, another Holocaust survivor, and they had a son, Michael.

In 1952, the family took a ship to New York, then a train to L.A., where Weinstein became a successful clothing manufacturer. In 1993, Michael died in a car accident. Twelve years later, Sophie died of heart disease.

Weinstein remains full of life. He recites the Torah at Congregation Atzei Chaim, the Beverly Grove synagogue he has attended for seven decades.

He reads three newspapers and sips at least one glass of Chivas Regal, on the rocks, every day.

He rarely goes more than two waking hours without telephoning the woman who fusses over him, who tends to his every need. She is a psychologist known by her married name: Natalie Gold Lumer.

Every Friday night, father and daughter share a Shabbat meal. They gather with family and friends, light candles, hold hands, tell stories and offer lengthy prayers of thanks.

"It was terrible, what I went through," Weinstein said at a dinner not long ago. "But it was worth what I came away with: my beautiful daughter."

Natalie looked at him, shaking her head. There was a long silence.

"To have a father with such courage," she said, finally. "Well, I owe everything to him....I owe him my life."

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