

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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

CELEBRATING RESISTANCE: ARMED RESISTANCE, GHETTO FIGHTERS, AND SPIRITUAL RESISTANCE

“THE TORCH WILL CONTINUE TO ILLUMINATE OUR SACRED MISSION”



LEONARD WILF,
Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem

Tonight's theme is "Resistance: Armed Resistance, Ghetto Fighters, and Spiritual Resistance." It is

therefore appropriate that we honor three people — Cesia and Frank Blaichman, and Liev Schreiber — who, in their own ways, represent the brave nature of resistance during World War II.

Cesia and Frank Blaichman were teenagers when the war broke out. They exhibited heroic courage when they each, separately, became resistance fighters. They miraculously survived the war, built their lives, and vowed to remember. Their connection to our organization goes back to its inception when together with Eli, z"l they spearheaded the construction of the "Memorial to the Jewish Soldiers" at Yad Vashem. They continue to dedicate themselves to the cause of Holocaust remembrance.

We are also delighted to have with us the celebrated actor of stage and screen, Liev Schreiber, whom we are privileged to honor as well. Mr. Schreiber, a recipient of the Tony Award and numerous Tony, Emmy, and Golden Globe award nominations, helped show the world the role of Jewish resistance during the war, through his portrayal of the partisan Zus Bielski.

Cesia and Frank Blaichman displayed unparalleled bravery in their own lives, and Liev Schreiber brought the story of Zus Bielski's courage to screen.

Our guest speaker, Major-General Amir Eshel, commander of Israel's Air Force, is also no stranger to valor. As you will later

hear, as a son of Holocaust survivors, Major-General Eshel undertook a unique and special historical mission to which he aspired a long time.

At this time of celebrating heroes, I wish to pay tribute to the hero who was in our midst: our recently departed friend, founder and chairman, Eli Zborowski, z"l.

It was because of Eli's vision and determination that we are able to stand here today, proud of what we have accomplished in the area of Holocaust commemoration and education, in Israel and throughout the world. Eli made it his life's mission to honor the memory of our heroes and martyrs and ensure that it be held for eternity.

We miss Eli dearly, but it is our commitment to continue in the path he forged. We will carry out the work of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem, and continue to be dedicated to the cause of remembrance. At these fraught times of terrorism and anti-Semitism, it is important that we renew our pledge to educate our children and grandchildren and indeed the world about the perils of intolerance and hate, those which gave birth to our biggest catastrophe, the *Shoah*. As your chairman I pledge to you that the torch held by my predecessor will continue to illuminate our sacred mission and burn bright.

I now wish to extend my deepest gratitude to Marilyn Rubenstein, for her role as dinner chairperson and supervisor. Marilyn put her heart and soul into ensuring that this event would be one to have made Eli proud. To Marilyn, and to her fellow chairpersons — Ira Drukier, Mark Wilf and Jeremy Halpern — thank you for a job well done.

And thank you all for being here tonight.

“WE CAN DEAL WITH ANY CHALLENGE”



AMIR ESHEL,
Major-General, Commander of Israel's Air Force

Six months ago I was privileged to receive the command of the Israeli Air Force. The responsibility for the most cen-

tral defensive and offensive force for the protection of the State of Israel was given to my hands.

In my office, in the headquarters of the Israel Air Force, hangs a single picture. The picture is not very large, but to me, it says it all.

On September 4, 1943, 1000 Jews, who had been transported from *Drancy* in France to Auschwitz-Birkenau, were murdered and cremated, as had so many been murdered just before and still after them.

Precisely 60 years later, I led a formation of three F-15 fighter jets of the Israeli Air Force, in a symbolic flight over the skies of the death camps in Poland.

The cockpits were manned exclusively by pilots who were the children or grandchildren of Holocaust victims and survivors.

Most of my own mother's family was brutally murdered by gunfire in the death gulies in eastern Poland, today Belarus. For all of us, this flight was both a personal and national journey, a journey that touched every raw nerve and asked every difficult question.

In that photograph on my wall, one can see two of those jets, with their blue Magen David, the Star of David. Below one sees the remnants of the crematoria, the selection platform, the remaining huts, and that terrible, infamous gateway into the camp.

From above, the concentration camp looks like a peaceful park, green fields in a village-like pastoral setting. The thought that this was the appearance of the ceme-

tery of the Jewish people, a hell on earth created by human beings, where Jews had been murdered simply for having been Jews, had a profound effect on all of us in the air above.

We stared down at the camp, thinking how, in this place, had flourished the death factory created by the nation that previously had taken the leading role in the culture and science of Europe. We saw but could not comprehend.

From above, we could imagine seeing the small figures of people marching along the selection platforms straight to their deaths.

We, the Sabras, who had been educated in our youth on the ethos of the New Jew, had often looked with disdain upon the so-called "Jews who went to the slaughter like sheep."

How many trials and tribulations did the Jews of Europe endure in the ghettos, in the transports, and in the camps, until their final annihilation by overwhelming forces? What bravery did it take to undergo all this? I understood how wrong we were about our attitude to the victims and to the survivors.

The sight that we saw from above on that September day in 2003 was identical to the sight seen by thousands of Allied pilots who flew over the camps in 1944. They saw but did not know. They did not realize.

But their leaders knew. Nevertheless, Auschwitz and the rail lines leading to the camp were not designated as military targets!

The thought that a relatively small bombing attack could have prevented the deaths of Hungarian Jewry and the Jews of ghetto *Lodz* arouses difficult thoughts, feelings, and questions. Questions that have no good answer.

I thought to myself about the amazing
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ANTI-SEMITISM IN EUROPE ON THE RISE

Anti-Semitic attitudes in ten European countries remain at “disturbingly high levels,” according to a new poll from the Anti-Defamation League, released in March.

In France the overall level of anti-Semitism increased to 24 percent of the population, up from 20 percent in 2009.

The poll finds that 45% of the French believe French Jews are more loyal to Israel than to France; 35% believe that Jews have too much power in the business world; 29% believe Jews hold too much power over the world’s international financial markets; and 35% believe Jews talk about the Holocaust too much.

“France has seen an increase in the level of anti-Semitism... all the more disturbing in light of the shooting attack at the Jewish school in *Toulouse*,” said Abraham H. Foxman, ADL National Director.

Out of the countries surveyed, the most anti-Semitic is Hungary, where 63 percent

harbor anti-Semitic sentiments, up from 47 percent in 2009.

In Spain, 53 percent of the population expressed anti-Semitic attitudes, and in Poland 48 percent did.

The levels in Austria and Germany were lower, with 28 percent and 21 percent, respectively.

In the United Kingdom, the levels were lower, but compared to the rates in 2009 a sharp rise was revealed. While the survey found 10 percent of the population held anti-Semitic attitudes in 2009, 17 percent do today.

“The survey is disturbing by the fact that anti-Semitism remains at high levels across the continent and infects many Europeans at a much higher level than we see here in the United States,” Foxman said. “In Hungary, Spain, and Poland the numbers for anti-Semitic attitudes are literally off the charts and demand a serious response from political, civic, and religious leaders.”

POLAND’S JEWISH GHETTOS REVEALED IN COLOR

The 72nd anniversary of the establishment of the Warsaw ghetto, in October 1940, was commemorated in October, and rare, newly released color photo-



Elderly Jewish man speaks with German officers rounding up *Kutno* Jews, German-occupied Poland, 1939.

graphs from ghettos around Poland, published on the website Life.com, provide a unique glimpse into the daily lives of the Jews during the years 1939–1940.

The photos depicting the Warsaw and *Kutno* ghettos are the work of high-ranking Nazi photographer Hugo Jaeger, who had rare access to the upper echelon of the Third Reich, including Adolf Hitler. At the time, the Nazi regime supplied Jaeger with the most cutting-edge technology, including a camera that was capable of taking color and three-dimensional photos.

Jaeger was described as “Hitler’s photographer” by *Life* magazine, which purchased his collection of 2,000 photos in the 1970s.

Life.com describes how in 1945, while Allied armies were advancing into Germany, Jaeger found himself face to face with American soldiers in a town west of Mu-

nich. He had hidden his photograph slides in a leather satchel. Jaeger, according to Life.com, recounted his fear that the photos would reveal his close connection to Hitler and the Nazi leadership, but said the Americans were more focused on a bottle of brandy and a tiny ivory gambling toy that were also in his bag. The soldiers never noticed the incriminating photographs.

Following his encounter with the Americans and fearing arrest and confiscation of



Warsaw, German-occupied Poland, 1940.

his archive, Jaeger buried the photos in a number of jars on the outskirts of town. He drew a map that would eventually lead him back to the photos. In 1955 Jaeger dug up the collection and transferred it to a bank in Switzerland, where it was kept in a safe. A decade later he sold the photos to *Life* magazine.

“enemies of Allah,” gives renewed vigor and legitimacy to anti-Semitism.

During the pre-Holocaust age, Jews in Europe were characterized as Communists and capitalists, misers and free-spenders. Jews were targeted as an ethno-religious group as well as individuals. In the godless Europe where Christianity is largely dead, it is politically incorrect to target individual Jews or Judaism; however, it has become more acceptable to target the Jewish State for hate. And, since Jews are automatically identified with Israel, they are once again a target for hate and violence. In March a rabbi and three young children were killed in *Toulouse*, France, and, while Europe was “shocked,” the appeasement of the Arab-Muslim world continues, as well as Israel bashing by the European media, academia, and most governments of the EU.

BULGARIA TO JOIN HOLOCAUST INTERNATIONAL BODY

Bulgaria’s Cabinet has approved a proposal for the country to join, as an observer, the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research (ITF), the Government’s press service said in a statement.

ITF, which describes itself as “an inter-governmental body whose purpose is to place political and social leaders’ support behind the need for Holocaust education, remembrance, and research both nationally and internationally,” was established in 1998 at the initiative of the Swedish prime minister at the time, Göran Persson.

It currently has 31 members, including most EU states — only Cyprus and Malta are not, while Portugal is one of three observer countries (along with Macedonia and Turkey and, soon, Bulgaria) — as well as Croatia, Serbia, Switzerland, Norway, Israel, Argentina, Canada, and the US.

“Bulgaria’s joining the group is a logical step, proof of our country’s contribution to the international efforts to clarify historical facts and the common work to spread the knowledge. It is also motivated by the unprecedented contribution of our country through the saving of Bulgarian Jews during World War II, which is highly appreciated by the Jewish people,” the Cabinet statement said.

ITF member states must support implementation of national policies and programs in support of Holocaust education,

remembrance, and research. The member states also agree on the importance of encouraging all archives, both public and pri-



Bulgarian President Rossen Plevneliev attends a commemorative service at the Sofia Synagogue in August, following the terrorist attack in *Bourgas*, which left five Israeli tourists and a Bulgarian bus driver dead.

vate, to make their holdings on the Holocaust more widely accessible.

Bulgaria and Israel have had a close relationship over the past decade, which intensified since the current Government took office in 2009, with Prime Minister Boiko Borissov visiting Israel in January 2010, a trip that included a visit to the Yad Vashem memorial to victims of the Holocaust.

ITALY’S PRIME MINISTER VOWS TO FIGHT ANTI-SEMITISM, HOLOCAUST DENIAL

Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti promised his country’s Jews that he would stand beside them in the fight against anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial.

“We know that anti-Semitism has not been eradicated in Europe,” Monti said at a ceremony night marking the 69th anniversary of the World War II roundup and deportation of 1,024 Roman Jews to Auschwitz. “We will not leave you alone.”

Monti, who was joined by Rome’s mayor, several government ministers, and other officials, spoke before several thousand people gathered outside Rome’s Great Synagogue to mark the anniver-

sary. Earlier, many had taken part in a torchlight memorial march through the city.

Monti promised that the government would act against mounting racial prejudice and xenophobia in Europe.

Remembering racist persecution during World War II, he said, “means also assuming a responsibility to combat every form of anti-Semitism and racism, and to work so that minorities are protected and not discriminated against.”

Warning against the dangers of Holocaust denial and revisionism, Monti urged the crowd to remember what Holocaust survivor Primo Levi once wrote: “Those who deny Auschwitz are ready to do it again.”

GERMANY DONATES \$13 MILLION TO YAD VASHEM HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, during his visit to Israel in February, signed an agreement granting 10 million euros (13 million dollars) to Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Center over the next 10 years.

“The agreement signifies the German government’s wish to help facilitate Yad Vashem’s various activities in Israel and globally which further commemoration, documentation, and education of the events of the Holocaust,” Yad Vashem said in a statement.

Education Minister Gideon Sa’ar said that the agreement constituted an important source of funding, and will be used to expand Yad Vashem’s activities and to locate and purchase significant Holocaust documents from archives in Europe, making them accessible to the public via the internet, Israeli media reported.

“This decision reflects the importance that the German government attaches to the subject of the Holocaust. The commemoration of the Holocaust is an endless task.”

“This agreement strengthens the obligation of the German government and the German people regarding Holocaust re-

membrance,” Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev said.

Westerwelle, who met Holocaust survivors at the Center in Jerusalem, spoke of “a program against forgetting.”

Among the survivors meeting Westerwelle was 80-year-old Vera Dotan, who survived Auschwitz and the death march the Nazis forced the prisoners to make as the advancing Red Army closed in on the extermination camp in early 1945.

Her father was murdered immediately on arrival in Auschwitz, and her only brother died of typhus two days before the camp was liberated.

For 40 years she hardly spoke a word of German. That changed in the 1980s, when she heard that some people did not take the Holocaust seriously.

“I then told myself, together with my husband: We must tell our story. People must know the Holocaust is not a fairy tale.”

From then on, she has told her story again and again — also in German.

She said that she was “very grateful” for the funding agreement. “We need a lot, and when it comes from Germany, it is maybe worth even more,” she said.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY AND EUROPEAN HYPOCRISY

German Nobel laureate Günter Grass, a former *Waffen SS* soldier in Hitler’s army, published a poem recently which criticized Israel for “aggressive warmongering against Iran” and identified the Jewish State as a “threat to world peace....”

Yom HaShoah/Holocaust Memorial Day is a widely recognized day of commemoration throughout Europe. Holocaust memorials and museums abound in Germany and other countries that willingly cooperated with Nazi Germany in the murder of the Jews. Yet, throughout Western and Northern Europe today, Jews feel like an endangered species. Residual anti-Semitism, largely borne of envy and age-old prejudices shared at many “kitchen tables,” is still prevalent in today’s Europe. This, coupled with the influx of Muslims who have been taught that the Jews are the

HUNGARIAN NAZI CAPTURE PLOT "MADE IN ISRAEL"

The most wanted Nazi criminal in the world, Ladislaus Csizsik-Csatory, accused of sending nearly 16,000 Jews to their deaths during World War II, was located and captured in Budapest this July thanks to information obtained by the Wiesenthal Center.

Prosecutors decided to charge Csatory with the "unlawful torture of human beings," a war crime that carries a maximum sentence of life in prison.

Tibor Ibolya, Budapest's acting chief prosecutor, said Csatory recounted his Holocaust-era activities to authorities during questioning, saying he was following orders and carrying out his duty.

"The suspect denied having committed the crimes," Ibolya said, adding that during his testimony Csatory's "attitude toward some of his fellow men of a certain religion ... is not what we would consider normal."

According to a summary of the case released by prosecutors, Csatory was a police officer in the Slovakian city of *Košice*, at the time part of Hungary.

In May 1944, Csatory was named chief of an internment camp at a *Košice* brick factory from which 12,000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz and other Nazi death camps. Authorities said Csatory was pres-



Ladislaus Csizsik-Csatory.

ent when the trains were loaded and sent on their way.

Csatory "regularly" used a dog whip against the Jewish detainees "without any special reasons and irrespective of the assaulted people's sex, age, or health condition," the prosecutors' statement said.

As one train departed with some 80 Jews crammed into one railcar, Csatory refused a request by one of the Jews to cut holes in the walls of the wagon to let more air in, the statement said.

"We took into consideration the severity of his acts, but we should not forget that the suspect is due the presumption of innocence," Ibolya said. "In our estimation, he will not be able to escape."

Ibolya said considering Csatory's age, he was in good physical and mental condition, although experts had yet to examine him.

Csatory was convicted in absentia for war crimes in Czechoslovakia in 1948 and sentenced to death. He arrived in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia the following year, became a Canadian citizen in 1955, and worked as an art dealer in Montreal.

In October 1997, Canadian authorities said the 82-year-old had left the country, apparently bound for Europe, before they had the chance to decide his fate in a deportation hearing. His citizenship had been revoked in August and the deportation order was based on his obtaining citizenship by giving false information.

Canadian authorities alleged that Csatory had failed to provide information concerning his collaboration with Nazi occupation forces while serving with the Royal Hungarian Police and his participation in the internment and deportation to

concentration camps of thousands of Hungarian Jews.

Ibolya said the investigation into the Csatory case was continuing and that prosecutors were waiting for information from Israel, including the possible testimony of survivors, and Canada.

"I expect this case to continue for months, even taking into account that we are treating it as one that we would like to conclude as soon as possible," Ibolya said.

"I confirm that Laszlo Csatory was identified and located in Budapest," said Efraim Zuroff, director of the Wiesenthal Center's Jerusalem office. "This whole operation was 'made in Israel.' It's the product of our work in cooperation with (British newspaper) *The Sun*," Zuroff told Ynet.

"It was important for us to cooperate (with the newspaper) so that it gets wide media coverage, more than we can ever achieve," he said, adding that *The Sun* invested large funds in tracking and even confronting Csatory "in hopes that the coverage would increase the pressure on the courts and public opinion in Hungary, as well as the world at large."

According to Zuroff, the affair is "a proof of inadequacy of the Hungarian authorities, which knew for 14 years that he is living in peace and quiet. It is shocking especially these days, when anti-Semitism is overflowing in Hungary."

Holocaust survivors expressed mixed feelings upon hearing the news of Csatory's capture.

Pension Gesner, 88, said "we were in *Košice* until we were transferred to Auschwitz in April 1944. I don't remember Csatory clearly, but I've heard his name.

"Why does God give these people such long lives?" Gesner wondered. "It's too late because he has already lived his life. As it is you don't have much of a life at that age."

Holocaust survivor Marianna Boaz was not consoled by the news either: "It's a disgrace for humanity that he has only been captured now and what happened with Demjanjuk can happen again," she said.

"It might be better than never, but the world is still silent because he got to live his life, unlike others whose deaths are his fault," Boaz noted.

Eva Franick seemed more content, saying that the news made her feel good. "It's nice to know that there are people out there who still care about serving justice to those people, because we no longer have the strength.

"Even if he is 97, having his life end like this is also a punishment," she said.

The British newspaper said on its online site that the Hungarian Nazi war criminal "was identified and found" in the Hungarian capital.

"Ten months ago, an informant gave us information with which we have located Csatory Laszlo in Budapest. This informant received a \$25,000 premium that we offered in exchange for the information," said Zuroff, adding that "*The Sun* was able to photograph and film him with information we had provided them in September 2011."

Zuroff noted that the information had been forwarded to the Budapest prosecutor's office in September 2011.

NAZI-SEIZED ART ORDERED RETURNED TO AMERICAN MAN

A Berlin museum must return thousands of rare posters to an American man, part of his Jewish father's unique collection that had been seized by the Nazis, Germany's top federal appeals court ruled.

The Federal Court of Justice in *Karlsruhe* confirmed Peter Sachs, 74, was the rightful owner of the posters collected by his father Hans and ruled he is entitled to receive them back from the German Historical Museum.

The ruling ended seven years of legal battles over a vast collection dating back to the late 19th century that is now believed to be worth between \$6 million and \$21 million.

The court said if the museum kept the posters it would be akin to perpetuating the crimes of the Nazis.

The case ended up with the *Karlsruhe* court because of the posters' unique and tumultuous journey through more than 70 years of German history. The posters were collected by Sachs, were stolen from him by the Nazis' Gestapo, became the possession of Communist East Germany for decades, and then moved to the Berlin museum after Germany's reunification in 1990.

The court acknowledged that Peter Sachs did not file for restitution of the posters by the official deadline for such claims, and that the postwar restitution regulations instituted by the Western Allies could not be specifically applied in his case. But the judges ruled that the spirit of the laws was clearly on Sachs' side.

Not to return the posters "would perpetuate Nazi injustice," the judges wrote. "This cannot be reconciled with the purpose of the Allied restitution provisions, which was to protect the rights of the victims."

Hagen Philipp Wolf, a spokesman for Germany's cultural affairs office, which oversees the public German Historical Museum, said the decision would be respected.

A total of 4,259 posters have been identified so far as having belonged to Sachs' father. They were among a collection of 12,500 that his father owned, which include advertisements for exhibitions, cabarets, movies, and consumer products, as well as political propaganda — all rare, with only small original print runs. It is not clear what happened to the remainder.

Sachs' attorney in Germany, Matthias Druba, said his client now hopes that he can find a new home for the collection where it can be displayed to a wider public.

"Hans Sachs wanted to show the poster art to the public, so the objective now is to find a depository for the posters in museums where they can really be seen and not hidden away," Druba told the AP.

The posters were seized from Hans Sachs' home in 1938 on the orders of Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, who wanted them for a museum of his own.

Born in 1881, Hans Sachs was a dentist who began collecting posters while in high school. By 1905, he was Germany's leading private poster collector, and later launched the art publication *Das Plakat* (The Poster).

After the seizure of the posters in the summer, Hans Sachs was arrested during the November 9, 1938, pogrom against the



Peter Sachs holds up a book with some of his father, Hans Sachs' favorite posters.

Jews known as *Kristallnacht* and thrown in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp north of Berlin.

When he was released about two weeks later, the family fled to the United States.

After the war, Hans Sachs assumed the collection had been destroyed and accepted compensation of about 225,000 German marks (then worth about \$50,000) from West Germany in 1961.

He learned five years later, however, that part of the collection had survived the war and been turned over to an East Berlin museum. He wrote the Communist authorities about seeing the posters or even bringing an exhibit to the West, to no avail. He died in 1974 without ever seeing them again.

The posters became part of the German Historical Museum's collection in 1990 after the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall.

Peter Sachs has said he only learned of the existence of the collection in 2005, and began fighting then for its return.

When he receives the posters back Sachs will repay the compensation that his father received, Druba said. He said it was not yet clear what the amount would be in current terms.

FIRST HOLOCAUST HISTORY BOOK IN FARSI PUBLISHED FOR IRANIANS

While Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad continues to deny the Holocaust, lending his anti-Semitic rhetoric to the already reprehensible trend, a 65-year-old Jewish American-Iranian from Orange County, California, has decided to write a four-volume book in Farsi, in an attempt to reveal the truths and indisputable facts of the time in a language which, thus far, has virtually no record of them.

Ari Babaknia's book entitled *Holocaust*, which he eventually hopes will be available free of charge within the borders of Iran, will enable Iranians to access information about systematic slaughter of the Jewish people that occurred at the hands of Nazis.

"It is not enough to sell this book," said Babaknia, a Jew who went to medical school in Iran in the 1970s and is now a fertility specialist in Newport Beach, California. "The power and reach of the Inter-

net is where the real impact of this book will be."

"I want the entire young Persian-speaking world who have access to the Internet to have the ability to download it, read it, and research it," he said, according to Fox News.

When Babaknia began researching his subject 15 years ago, he was surprised to learn that there was no Holocaust material available in Farsi.

Not only was there no description of the Holocaust, but there was little historical context for the younger generation of Iranians to learn about the mid-20th century events that shaped the world.

"I wanted to know where the rest of the world was," Babaknia said, according to Fox. "Where was Churchill? Where was Roosevelt? What was the reason for world leaders to be indifferent?"

After all, he said, "forgetting the Holocaust is repeating the Holocaust."



BOOK REVIEWS

AMERICA'S SOUL IN THE BALANCE

America's Soul in the Balance: The Holocaust, FDR's State Department, and the Moral Disgrace of an American Aristocracy.

By Gregory J. Wallace. Greenleaf Book Group Press: Austin, Texas, 2012. 328 pp. \$26.95 hardcover.

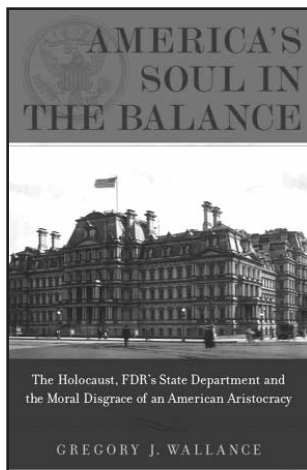
REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

In January of 1943, the World Jewish Congress in Geneva asked "the most senior American diplomat in Switzerland, the minister of the legation," to relay a report "to the State Department for transmission to Jewish leaders in the United States." This document, known as cable 482, "reported on both a step-up in the implementation of the German government's plan to murder all Jewish men, women, and children on the European continent . . . and the dying Romanian Jews who had been deported to the nightmarish land of Transnistria in the Nazi-conquered Ukraine." In February of 1943 in cable 354, the State Department, in reply, referring to cable 482, chided the "American minister for even having sent" the cable.

The story of America's activity, or rather inactivity, as regards any type of aid to the hapless and helpless Jews of Europe during World War II, initially persecuted and eventually murdered by the Nazis, is a very, very sad one. Who is to blame?

Gregory J. Wallace, in his absorbing and well-researched book, *America's Soul in the Balance: The Holocaust, FDR's State Department, and the Moral Disgrace of an American Aristocracy*, makes it plain that many who worked in the State Department have a lot to answer for.

According to Wallace, a major role in the State Department's "disgrace" was undoubtedly played by "Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long, in those years responsible for legislation, visa issues, and special war problems, among others." In fact, a clue to the man and his prejudices can already be seen in 1938 when Long, after reading Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, commented in his Diary that "the book was 'eloquent in opposition to Jewry and to Jews as exponents of Communism and chaos.'" Thus, not so surprisingly — and in keeping with the above — we discover how, but two short years after, Long, now assistant secretary of state, wrote in a 1940 in-house State Department memorandum that "We can delay and effectively stop for a temporary period of indefinite



length the number of immigrants into the United States . . . We could do this by simply advising our consuls to put every obstacle in the way and to require additional evidence and to resort to various administrative devices which would postpone and postpone the granting of the visas." Needless to say, the great majority of these immigrants were Jews.

And what of the others, those with less of a role in this "disgrace," who worked in the State Department and felt much as Long did? According to Wallace that included most all of those who worked on the third floor of the State Department — many of them assistant secretaries, many of them directly involved with communications, and many of them aristocratic Groton private-school graduates, convinced of their "Anglo-Saxon superiority." In sum, these men from the wealthy American patrician upper classes had no great empathy for the "sufferings of human beings from different ancestries, religions, or economic backgrounds" . . . and, like Long, little if any empathy for Jews.

Meanwhile, it definitely didn't help matters any that on the second floor of the State Department, home to the Secretary of State, indecisiveness reigned. Secretary of State Cordell Hull, at 71, had no diplomatic background and no management skills. He was out a lot because of health issues. He was insecure. Thus, according to Wallace, it was Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, "far more decisive and experienced," that "effectively ran the State Department." Welles was "a brilliant diplomat, Roosevelt's chief foreign policy strategist, and a man willing to take risks like no one else." Unfortunately, though, all this led to Hull's unbridled hatred of Welles . . . and Welles's eventual destruction, doubly sad since Welles appears to have been the Jews' only friend in that Department.

Of course, none of this would have mattered had there not been a war going on, and Jews in Europe being killed . . . waiting . . . waiting for someone, waiting for something to rescue them . . . when rescue, in fact, was possible . . .

Indeed, *America's Soul in the Balance* gives us a very clear picture of it all, and a very tragic and heart-wrenching picture it is.

P.S. Wallace writes that in 1945 Cordell Hull won the Nobel Peace Prize. It really is difficult to figure out for what.

"THE DEMONIC MAESTRO"

Hitler.

By A.N. Wilson. Basic Books: New York, 2012. 224 pp. \$24.99 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

Award-winning British author and biographer A.N. Wilson offers us a must-read, breathtaking interpretation in concise form of the enigma called Hitler, whose unparalleled modern bloody trail ended with the murderous destruction of six million European Jews in the context of World War II's 50 million victims.

Wilson argues, though it is contestable, that what is so frighteningly unusual about Adolph Hitler, the leader who moved and mesmerized millions, is that he was so usual. Namely, that he was merely a product of his changing times, with science replacing religion and Darwin's survival of the fittest as moral guide. It was tragically ironic that the first nation producing books would be the first burning them, at the Führer's order. Hitler's



early life offers no clues as to unique leadership ability nor outstanding talents. On the contrary, his natural laziness, coupled with lack of initiative and unproductive imagination, kept him down. Unusually, however, Hitler turned his salient weaknesses to the advantage of rising to no less than absolute power. "But he could not bring himself to get out of bed in the mornings. Hence his own slide into poverty. Hence he made his ruin into a personal myth with which a whole bankrupt nation was able to identify."

Hitler even tried to avoid conscription into the Austro-Hungarian army, ultimately

being found unfit to serve. An Austrian by birth, he became a German citizen only in 1932 prior to becoming Chancellor. Unlike many, he sought not to serve in WWI, with new research disclosing that his comrades considered him an oddball and mocked his physical awkwardness. He did earn (it was not difficult) the Iron Cross, First Class, at the recommendation of a Jewish officer, Hugo Gutmann, who was saved, but not by Hitler, when imprisoned by the Gestapo in 1937. Throughout, Hitler knew how to get his superiors' approval as well as that of

people of means and influence, such as industrialist Krupp. A masterful manipulator, he played people off against each other, excelling in "political poker" and unabashedly throwing tantrums to his gain.

The author emphasizes that Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), written while he was imprisoned in 1923 for five years for conspiring against the Weimar Republic, already offers his Final Solution plan as it speaks of gassing Jews, holding them responsible for

the WWI debacle. *Mein Kampf* also connects world Jewry to the "scourge" of both Bolshevism and capitalism, mindless of the implied contradiction. This anti-Semitic charge, contends Wilson, is alive today. Hitler's rabid anti-Semitism was curiously absent when he was losing his beloved 47-year-old mother, Klara, to breast cancer in 1907 with an attending Jewish physician, Edward Block.

Though rejecting the Catholic Church of their childhood, both Hitler and Goebbels, who became Propaganda Minister, created a party resembling in its structure a

(Continued on page 13)

THE HEART HAS REASONS: HOLOCAUST RESCUERS AND THEIR STORIES OF COURAGE

The Heart Has Reasons: Holocaust Rescuers and Their Stories of Courage.

By Mark Klempner. The Pilgrim Press: Cleveland, Ohio, 2006. 272 pp. \$24.00.

REVIEWED BY MARK PINKUS

Generations of readers have been captivated by Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* since its release more than fifty years ago. They've been particularly fascinated by Dutch heroes such as Miep Gies, who risked her life to hide the Franks from the Nazi regime. Books about such heroism during World War II have continued to pour in over the years, but there remains the need for a book that conveys the hard-earned wisdom of the rescuers and how this wisdom relates to contemporary issues. *The Heart Has Reasons* is such a book.

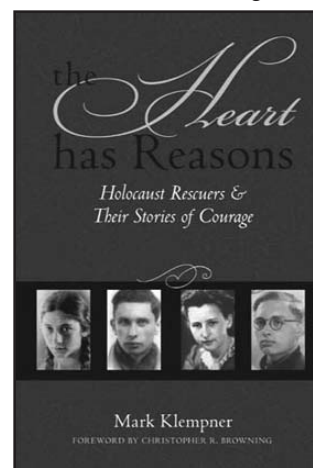
The author has assembled a collection of poignant narratives told by Dutch rescuers, all of whom helped hide Jewish children during the Nazi occupation of Holland. His book features amazing stories of fearlessness. For example, after being thrown into prison for transporting Jewish children to safe places, Hetty Voyte successfully assisted some British paratroopers in the cell above hers to escape. For that, she was sentenced to work at a labor camp, where she further defied the Nazis by secretly ruining the gas masks she made in an assembly line there. Rut Matthijsen worked tirelessly behind the scenes, forging iden-

tity cards and other vital papers, and printing illegal books and posters, the sale of which supported hundreds of children in hiding. Pieter Meerburg, who co-founded a rescue network at only 21 years of age, orchestrated the stealthy removal of hundreds of Jewish children from the "Creche," a building in Amsterdam where Jewish children were detained before being sent to concentration camps. The

rescuers' stories and personalities vary widely, but the thread that connects them all is their unwavering courage and compassion during one of the darkest periods in history.

As told to Mark Klempner, whose own father narrowly escaped the Nazi scourge, the stories act as both a window to the past and a vision for the future. Framed by Klempner's quest for spirituality in his life, the book asks questions about how people of faith and con-

science can navigate ethically in an increasingly complex world. If the rescuers could remain committed to acting with love and generosity, even while under the boot of the Nazi regime, they surely have something to teach us today — about being courageous in addressing injustices, about maintaining an open heart, and about not giving in or giving up. Their critiques of modern society can be as startling as their memories of the Nazi years, yet most have retained an unshakable optimism, anchored in their time-tested conviction that each individual can make a difference.



TROVE OF EVERYDAY ITEMS REVEALS LITHUANIA'S DARK HOLOCAUST SECRET

BY OFER ADERET, HAARETZ

On the shiny glass table lie jewelry, coins and metal utensils — similar to those in a catalog of antiques. The years have left their mark on the items, but they are still in good shape. Some collector would probably pay a nice amount for them.

But these items are not for sale. It is doubtful whether anyone even would think of buying them if they knew where they came from. They were found about a year ago in *Kovno*, Lithuania, also known as *Kaunas*. Vladimir Orlov, a young local archaeologist, found the items — and revealed a dark secret hidden for 70 years.

At a 10-day seminar held at the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem for Lithuanian educators, Orlov presented his research in a talk: "The Beginning of the Holocaust in Lithuania (VII Fort Findings)."

Kovno is the second largest city in Lithuania. The archaeological site was found in one of the 10 fortresses, built surrounding the city in the 19th century, that were used as prisons. In the summer of 1941, some 4,000 Jews from the city were quickly gathered in the seventh fort and murdered. Some were shot using machine guns and others were killed by hand grenades.

Over the past seven decades, the personal belongings of the Jews killed there — eyeglasses, rings, pen knives, scissors, and coins — were hidden by the dirt. Hebrew letters decorated some of the items, and are the only testimony as to the identity of their forgotten owners.

Orlov said he located the items based on historical documents and pictures that in-

dicated the location. Some were found in a nearby well at a depth of three meters. Over the years the rain and snow had swept the items into the well. "We pumped out the water and sifted what we found," said Orlov.

The items found among the sand and stones were "the personal items of the victims," he said. A Jewish prayer book and bank documents were also found.

The weather was not the only thing that made discovering the items difficult over the past 70 years. After the Soviet Union took over Lithuania following the Second World War, the site was covered



Belongings of Jewish victims were buried under asphalt and garbage for seven decades.

over with asphalt and was also used as a garbage dump. The stories about the site were forgotten as the generations passed. Only a few in *Kovno* knew the truth about the site, but they never spoke about it, said Orlov. It didn't interest anyone and no one researched it. There was barely any information available, he added.

Five years ago the Lithuanian Center for Military History, a private organization, bought the site. The original plans were to build a museum there with a center to study the area's fortifications. The organization's members, including Orlov, started to investigate the history of the site and very quickly realized that it had served as a concentration camp during the Holocaust period.

"I thought it would be impossible to find anything there, other than 'a few thousand' were killed there," he said. "We made a goal of finding their graves."

After a year of searching they found the site: a mass grave of 4,000 murdered Jews.

Later, not far away, they found the personal belongings. The collection is not impressive or very big, said Orlov. There are only 25 items in total, but they are very important since they prove the entire story was true, he said.

The nationalistic awakening in Lithuania in recent years, in which war criminals from the Nazi-occupation era are being honored as national heroes,

makes such authentic evidence even more important. Alongside the victims' belongings were also items left by the murderers: shell casings and bottles of alcohol.

Orlov, a computer engineer by training, is one of a group of 450 educators and researchers from Lithuania who attended the seminar at Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies. He man-

aged on this visit to identify 89 names of the 4,000 victims from the Seventh Fortress. He was bothered that historians knew the names of the murderers, but no one knew the names of the victims.

"It's insane that the murderers live on in history while the victims remain anonymous," said Orlov. "We only found a few of the names, but that's better than nothing."

Germans did not carry out the mass murder at the site — that was organized and carried out from the beginning to the end by local Lithuanians. The provisional government in Lithuania, which existed between the end of the Soviet occupation and the time of the German occupation — after Germany attacked the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941 — ordered the creation of the concentration camp at the site.

Everything was carried out by local residents. "Not everyone was a criminal or from the lower class. Some were educated and had families," said Orlov.

Dr. Irit Abramski of Yad Vashem accompanied Orlov on his visit here. They share a language as Abramski was born in Lithuania and her mother was a Holocaust survivor of the Vilna ghetto. "All the family on her side was killed," she said. "Orlov discovered something completely new, which was unknown, and it is important to make it public knowledge."

The importance of the research is in who is conducting it: "Not us, the Jews, are telling [the story], but an independent Lithuanian researcher who revealed the role of the Lithuanians and their responsibility for the murders," said Abramski.

JEWISH LEADER TO FDR: DON'T SEND NEW YEAR GREETINGS

BY RAFAEL MEDOFF,
THE JERUSALEM POST

Every year, on the eve of Rosh Hashana, American political leaders, candidates for office, and other VIPs send the Jewish community their wishes for a happy new year.

Although these boilerplate messages consist of general platitudes, without reference to any of the actual issues or problems troubling American Jewry, Jewish leaders respond with fulsome expressions of gratitude. But in 1943, one Jewish leader decided that sympathetic words without accompanying action would no longer do. A Holocaust was raging. Enough was enough.

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, leader of the American Jewish Congress, the World Jewish Congress, and the American Zionist movement, was the most prominent and influential of Jewish leaders of the 1930s and 1940s. He was also deeply attached to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the New Deal, and the Democratic Party. Wise sometimes privately referred to FDR as "the All Highest," "the Great Man," or other terms of reverence.

"I still repeat the new American Hosanna, 'Thank God for Franklin D. Roosevelt,'" Wise declared after reading the president's Rosh Hashana greeting to American Jewry in 1938.

But by 1943, there was a growing sense of disappointment in the Jewish community over the Roosevelt administration's in-

sistence that nothing could be done to rescue Jews from Hitler.

FDR's aides claimed, for example, that no ships were available to transport refugees — but a *Baltimore Jewish Times* editorial pointed out that empty troop-supply ships were "frequently going out of their way to find ballast" to weigh them down on their return trips, and that the Allies had managed to find ships to bring tens of thousands of Polish refugees to Iran, Uganda and Mexico.

The administration asserted that refugees would take jobs away from Americans — but Congressman Samuel Dickstein revealed in a radio address that the Department of Agriculture was spending \$30 million "to import into this country Mexican and other residents of this hemisphere to help to relieve our labor shortage."

US officials said that the immigration quota system prevented admitting more refugees — but immigration "has for years been held far below the legal quotas" by the administration as a matter of policy, the World Jewish Congress charged. "[T]he admission of immigrants has been obstructed by the piling up of formalities, questionnaires, [and] inquiries... The whole thing could be summarily dropped, fully or in part, by a simple order of the chief executive."



On May 1, 1943, American and British officials were concluding the proceedings of their conference in Bermuda on the refugee problem. It was clear that no concrete rescue plans would emerge.

That evening, at a Zionist conference in Philadelphia, Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver of Cleveland delivered the sharpest public challenge yet to President Roosevelt's Jewish refugee policy.

A rising star in the American Zionist leadership and an advocate of greater activism, Silver was critical of Rabbi Wise and other FDR supporters for accepting the White House's excuses on rescue. In his keynote address at the United Palestine Appeal's national conference, Silver pulled no punches.

"Our former friends in government circles" — note Silver's use of the term "former" — "content themselves with sending us prolific expressions of sympathies on Jewish persecution," Silver complained.

"When pressed to do something about it, they regretfully remind us how difficult it is to do anything for these unfortunate people under present war conditions.

"The whole subject of a Jewish homeland in Palestine has suddenly become taboo in Washington," Silver charged. The president's most recent holiday message to the Jewish community "quite pointedly, and not by accident, omit[ted] any mention whatsoever of Palestine."

"We've had enough Rosh Hashana greetings from the president of the United States," Silver declared. We'd like to see some action on the matters which mean the most to us."

Sadly, Rabbi Silver's appeal fell on deaf ears. When Rosh Hashana rolled around in September 1943, President Roosevelt sent another vague greeting to American Jewry.

Five days later, 400 rabbis marched to the White House to plead for rescue; FDR refused to meet with their leaders. Three weeks after that, Allied leaders meeting in Moscow issued a statement deploring Nazi atrocities against a long list of occupied nations — but omitting the Jews.

To get the action that Silver wanted, Jews would have to take matters into their own hands. At the end of 1943, a campaign of newspaper ads, rallies, and Capitol Hill lobbying by the activist Bergson Group brought the rescue issue to the front pages. The Bergson pressure, combined with behind-the-scenes efforts by Treasury Department staffers, eventually forced President Roosevelt to establish the War Refugee Board, a government agency to rescue Jews from the Nazis.

Although understaffed and underfunded, the War Refugee Board helped save an estimated 200,000 Jews during the final 15 months of the war. Had FDR created it sooner, instead of contenting himself with sending the Jewish community pleasant Rosh Hashana greetings, many more would have been rescued.

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

SURVIVORS' CORNER

SAVED IN SHANGHAI

BY MICHAL SHMULOVICH,
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

20,000 Jews were protected from the Holocaust in the Japanese-occupied city. Nina Admoni, whose husband would later head the Mossad, was one of them

Nina Admoni (née Wertans) was six when Germany invaded her native Poland. Fleeing falling bombs and seeing starving people beg for food along the Trans-Siberian Railway were some of her first encounters with World War II.

That was before she made it to Shanghai.

Thanks to good fortune and kindness, Nina's childhood years in *Hongkou* (*Hongkew*), Shanghai, were a world apart from the horrors of Europe. She played hopscotch with her Chinese and Jewish friends and wandered along the Bund, the city's main fairway, to and from school each day.

Shanghai, China's main port city and business capital, had become a vivacious melting pot, a unique blend of East-meets-West. With traces of its traditional past, evident in things like the historic *shikumen* houses, Shanghai mixed the enchantment of the Far East with international flair, courtesy of the eight countries — the US, UK, France, Russia, Italy, Austro-Hungary, Japan, and Germany — which had been given territorial concessions across the city during the 19th century.

During World War II, some 20,000 Jews found refuge from the Holocaust in the vibrant Chinese city. David Kranzler, a noted Holocaust historian, calls it the "miracle of Shanghai" — a rare bright spot in the dark tragedy of that era.

Wealthy Jews from Baghdad had been living in Shanghai since the 19th century. Then, Russian Jews came to Shanghai be-

some of their possessions with them. Nina Wertans belonged to this group.

SHANGHAI, AN OPEN CITY

Still an active woman who wakes up at 5 a.m. each day at her home in Tel Aviv's Ramat Aviv Gimmel, Admoni, now 79, headed the Israel-America Chamber of Commerce for 26 years. She looks back

on her experience in Shanghai fondly, even idyllically. "The Chinese people in Shanghai were very kind," she said softly. "That's what I remember."

"The idea, when the war first started, was to go to Vilnius," she said, because that's where her mother was from and where her grandfather was a leader in the Jewish community.

So the family drove to Vilnius, "bombs falling on the way." But the Soviets entered the area fairly soon afterward. "My father was considered a capitalist, and it was not terribly nice for him. He was concerned, but he was more concerned that the Germans were coming soon."

They looked for a way out, and heard that a Japanese consul in *Kaunas*, Lithuania, a man named Chiune Sugihara, was issuing transit visas for Jews through Japan. By going against orders and issu-

ing Jews such visas, Sugihara saved more than 3,000 people.

But in order to get a transit visa, you need an end visa. "My parents received a paper from the Dutch consul that stated that in order to go to Curaçao (a formerly Dutch island off the coast of Venezuela), one did not need an entry visa." This document essentially served as an end visa for her family, and others, because it provided them with a destination.

"On the basis of that piece of paper, the Japanese consul gave us a transit visa (in 1940), and we also got an exit visa from the Soviets" — not a small feat at the time because people could not "come and go as they pleased," she added.

"My father bought tickets from Intourist [the travel agency] and we took a train to Moscow, and then the Trans-Siberian Railway to *Vladivostok*, a 10-day trip. You had to pay in dollars," Nina said. And it was extremely dangerous to be found with dollars at that time.

When the train stopped along the route people banged on the windows, begging for food. "It was a very sad sight," Nina said.

The family then took a ship from *Vladivostok* to *Suruga*, a Japanese port. From *Suruga* they went to *Kobe*, one of Japan's main cities, where she entered first grade at St. Marie's School. It was run by nuns, but she was excused from "crossing" her-
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A young Jewish refugee and her Chinese girlfriends in Shanghai during World War II.

fore and after World War I to escape pogroms, anti-Semitism, and the Soviets.

The third influx of Jewish immigrants, from Germany and Austria, arrived in the 1930s, fleeing the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis.

And soon after this impoverished group arrived, it was followed by the next: refugees from Poland and Lithuania in mid-1941. At least they were able to bring

PROUDLY BEARING ELDERS' SCARS

BY JODI RUDOREN,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

When Eli Sagir showed her grandfather, Yosef Diamant, the new tattoo on her left forearm, he bent his head to kiss it.

Mr. Diamant had the same tattoo, the number 157622, permanently inked on his own arm by the Nazis at Auschwitz. Nearly 70 years later, Ms. Sagir got hers at a hip tattoo parlor downtown after a high school trip to Poland. The next week, her mother and brother also had the six digits inscribed onto their forearms. This month, her uncle followed suit.

"All my generation knows nothing about the Holocaust," said Ms. Sagir, 21, who has had the tattoo for four years. "You talk with people and they think it's like the Exodus from Egypt, ancient history. I decided to do it to remind my generation: I want to tell them my grandfather's story and the Holocaust story."

Mr. Diamant's descendants are among a handful of children and grandchildren of Auschwitz survivors here who have taken the step of memorializing the darkest days of history on their own bodies. With the number of survivors here dropping to about 200,000 from 400,000 a decade ago, institutions and individuals are grappling with how best to remember the Holocaust — so integral to Israel's founding and identity — after those who lived it are gone.

Rite-of-passage trips to the death camps, like the one Ms. Sagir took, are now standard for high school students.

The Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and other museums are trying to make exhibits more accessible, using individual stories and special effects. Arguments rage about whether that approach trivializes symbols long held as sacred and whether the primary message should be about the importance of a self-reliant Jew-

them into a number would not be my first or second or third choice," but, he added, "it sure beats some of the other tattoos that some of the young people are drawing on their skin."

It is certainly an intensely personal decision that often provokes ugly interactions with strangers offended by the reappropri-



Livia Ravek was branded with the number 4559. Now her grandson, Daniel Philosoph, has the same tattoo. At right, three men who stood in the same line in Auschwitz have nearly consecutive numbers.

ish state in preventing a future genocide or a more universal one about racism and tolerance.

"We are moving from lived memory to historical memory," noted Michael Berenbaum, a professor at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles who is among the foremost scholars of the memorialization of the Holocaust. "We're at that transition, and this is sort of a brazen, in-your-face way of bridging it."

Mr. Berenbaum said that "replicating an act that destroyed their name and made



ation of perhaps the most profound symbol of the Holocaust's dehumanization of its victims. The fact that tattooing is prohibited by Jewish law — some survivors long feared, incorrectly, that their numbers would bar them from being buried in Jewish cemeteries — makes the phenomenon more unsettling to some, which may be part of the point.

"It's shocking when you see the number on a very young girl's hand," Ms. Sagir said. "It's very shocking. You have to ask, Why?"

Tattooing was introduced at Auschwitz in the autumn of 1941, according to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, and at the adjacent Birkenau the next March. They were the only camps to employ the practice, and it is unclear how many people were branded, briefly on the chest and more commonly on the left forearm.

Only those deemed fit for work were tattooed, so despite the degradation, the numbers were in some cases worn with pride, particularly lower ones, which indicated having survived several brutal winters in the camp. "Everyone will treat with respect the numbers from 30,000 to 80,000," Primo Levi wrote in his seminal memoir, *Survival in Auschwitz*, describing the tattoos as part of "the demolition of a man."

After the war, some Auschwitz survivors rushed to remove the tattoos through surgery or hid them under long sleeves. But over the decades, others played their numbers in the lottery or used them as passwords.

Dana Doron, a 31-year-old doctor and daughter of a survivor, interviewed about 50 tattooed survivors for the new Israeli documentary *Numbered*, which she directed with Uriel Sinai, a photojournalist; it will make its premiere in the United States next month at the Chicago International Film Festival.

When she asked survivors whether lovers kissed the number as they might a scar, Ms. Doron said, "some of them looked at me like, 'What are you, nuts?' and

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“WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT TO BURN JEWS?”

In the spring of 1944, Martin Hecht and his family were sent to Auschwitz from their village in Transylvania. “People were dying like flies and we took comfort in the fact that there would be more room on the stools.” How did he survive and reach Israel?

BY ROI MANDEL, YNETNEWS

Martin Hecht turned 80 last December 10. This date has a special meaning for him: until several years ago, his birthday was marked on a completely different date — March 2, 1931.

He pulled this random date out of his head in 1945, when he was asked for his personal details a moment before boarding a ship from Germany to Southampton, England, as part of a group of orphaned children who survived the Holocaust.

“Britain’s condition was 1,000 orphans under the age of 16,” he tells Ynet. “I was a little boy who survived the camps, I had no idea when I was born, so I made up a date. Thanks to the Romanian archives, I recently discovered my real date of birth.”

“WHAT’S SS?”

Hecht was born in the village of *Ruskova* in Transylvania into a well-established family which owned land in a village where most of the population was composed of traditional Jews.

“The Jews were financially established compared to the non-Jews who worked our land,” he says. “There was a main street with Jews’ houses on both sides, and synagogues at the start and end of the street.

“We had good neighborly relations with the Christians, even though we sometimes encountered anti-Semitism,” he recalls. “Jew, go to Palestine,” the locals would sometimes shout at us — most of them of Ukrainian descent.”

In 1935, the Hecht family considered immigrating to Palestine. The father of the family and four of his children, two sisters and two brothers, were granted a visa and looked into the possibility of settling in the city of *Rehovot*.

“My brother Moshe was the idealist. He encouraged the family to immigrate to

Palestine,” Hecht says. “Father decided to look into it and traveled to Israel for a visit. Two of my sisters and one brother stayed there, while my father and the youngest brother returned to the village in Romania and decided to further the visa process and immigrate with all of us.”

But the war in Europe changed those plans.

While war raged in Europe and the mass murder of Jews was underway, life in the Romanian village continued, as if it were a



Martin Hecht.

different planet. Because of the geographical distance between the village and the city, and the fact that the village was technologically disconnected from the world, the village’s Jews knew nothing of what was going on.

“There was no radio and no newspapers, and even no electricity in the village,” he recalls. “The adults may have known something about the Jews’ fate, but the children knew nothing. I didn’t know a thing about the Germans. I had never seen Germans before.”

In 1940, the area became Hungarian territory. The Germans left their handling of Hungary’s Jews for the end. Hecht remembers the day the Germans entered the village, in the spring of 1944, very well.

“Wehrmacht forces entered the village, dragging their artillery on horses because of the conditions in the area. We saw them coming from afar and got all excited. We didn’t know who they were.

“The soldiers tied their horses in the big area we owned and we welcomed them in our home. We brought them food and made sure they were comfortable. We assumed they were hungry and tired. We knew nothing of their intentions.”

The intentions became clear two weeks later, when SS soldiers arrived at the village alongside Hungarian police. It was a Friday, Hecht remembers, several hours before the start of Shabbat. The force set up barriers on both sides of the main street, and brutally entered the houses one by one, clearing the inhabitants who gathered outside the synagogue.

“‘Raus!’ The German soldiers shouted and removed the Jews out of their homes. No one understood what was going on and why they were doing it.”

Hecht and his family were transferred along with the village residents to the nearby town of *Viseu de Sus*, where

the Jews of the area were all expelled to and held in ghettos.

It was the first time he had left his village, the first time he was exposed to modern life and saw a light bulb with his own eyes. The shock, he says, was huge.

“Three weeks later, the SS soldiers ordered us to form lines again and led us to the railway station.” The Hecht family boarded the second transport out of four. That was the moment when 12-year-old Martin realized that something bad was about to happen.

“LOOK AT THE CHIMNEY, BOY”

“We were put on cattle cars and they began pushing people inside until there was no room to breathe. People were pushed against each other until some of them were crushed to death. It was shocking. You have to understand, it was the first time I ever traveled on a train.

“Several hours later, the train stopped and the doors opened. We stopped at the city of *Sighet*, where Elie Wiesel lived. There was hardly any room on the train, but the Germans kept pushing in more and more people.

“Today I understand that it was that stage in the war when they wanted to speed up the annihilation of Hungary’s Jews, because they realized they were losing the war.”

The train traveled for two days, while more and more people died from suffocation, hunger, or diseases. Suddenly the train stopped and the doors opened — it was the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp.

“We saw armed soldiers with raging dogs shouting, ‘Raus — out!’ The people from the train were told to form two lines — men on one side and women and children on the other. My three brothers and I stood on the men’s side, and my mother and sisters were sent to the other line.

“Suddenly, one of the soldiers pulled my father to the other line. The four brothers were left alone. We were led to the showers, our hair was trimmed and we underwent disinfection and were taken to the huts. It was the last time I ever saw my parents and sisters.”

Hecht received a striped uniform and a number on his shirt, but unlike other Auschwitz survivors, he did not get the number tattooed on his hand. “The situation was so chaotic that they didn’t give us tattoos. The transports from Hungary were so full and quick that they couldn’t keep up,” he says.

Hecht and his three brothers were taken to a hut, where they were greeted by the camp’s veteran prisoners. “One of them, who saw the shock on my face, asked me: ‘Do you know where you are?’ I said no. ‘You’re in Auschwitz, there’s no way back from here. Everyone dies here in the end.’

(Continued on page 14)

JAN KARSKI: “MEMORIES OF THE HOLOCAUST HAUNTED HIM TO THE END”

BY JONATHAN GURWITZ,
SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS

In May President Obama bestowed the nation’s highest civilian honor — the Presidential Medal of Freedom — on 13 individuals. One of them was Jan Karski. Karski was an institution at Georgetown University, where his classes were favorites among upper-division students in the School of Foreign Service. He was visibly striking, handsome, always finely dressed and standing rigidly straight. He had the air of nobility — an air exaggerated by his thick Polish accent and unusual facial features, with eyes that betrayed a life of tragedy.

He was born Jan Koziielewski in 1914 in *Lodz*, Poland. He was Catholic. As a young diplomat in the autumn of 1939, he was called to active duty as a Polish cavalry officer with the storm clouds of World War II on the horizon. For Koziielewski, the war as a soldier in uniform was short-lived. Germany overran Poland from the west. In an often forgotten episode, Russia also invaded Poland from the east, in accordance with a secret pact between Hitler and Stalin.

He escaped from the Soviets, barely avoiding the massacre of Polish officers at the *Katyn Forest*, then from the Nazis. Returning to Warsaw to join the Polish resistance, he adopted the nom de guerre that he would keep for the rest of his life — Karski.

Karski undertook many missions as a courier for the Polish government-in-exile. The Gestapo captured and brutally tortured him — the reason for those unusual facial features. He escaped yet again, and his final missions included dangerous visits to the Warsaw ghetto and a Nazi death camp.

Karski made his way to London, where he delivered the first eyewitness reports of the Holocaust to Allied leaders. In 1943, he went to Washington, where he gave personal testimony to members of Congress and President Franklin Roosevelt. He tried in vain to com-

pel the Allies to take direct action to stop the genocide. He was a living refutation of the claim, “We did not know.”

Karski was tormented throughout his life by what he had witnessed. He tormented

himself with the notion that he had not done enough. In 1981, at a conference organized by Elie Wiesel, Karski reflected on his agony: “The Lord assigned me a role to speak and write during the war when, as it seemed to me, it might help. It did not.” What more could one man have done?

In 1944, Karski wrote *Story of a Secret State*, his autobiographical account of the war years. Then, at some point, he buried the past. For decades he did not talk

about the war. In the late ’70s, director Claude Lanzmann approached him to offer testimony in his Holocaust documentary, *Shoah*. Karski complied. The episode seemed to spark in him the desire to open

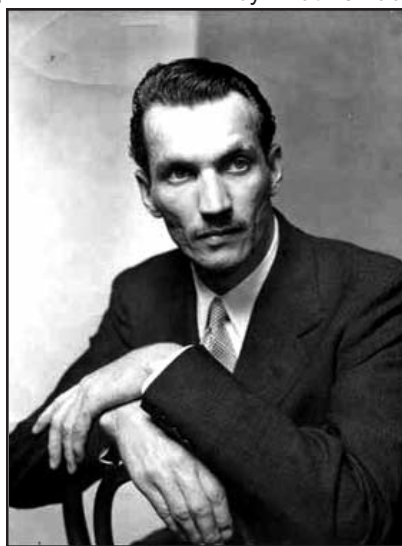
up about his wartime experiences. Not long afterward, I was one of his students.

Unlike *Schindler’s List*, *Story of a Secret State* and the rest of Karski’s life had no uplifting conclusion. He faced death threats throughout his life from unrepentant Nazis and their sympathizers. Tragedy stalked him until his final days. His wife jumped to her death from the balcony of their apartment in 1992. They had no children.

Perhaps the final tragedy is that Karski received the Medal of Freedom posthumously — he died 12 years ago — and the ceremony that should have recollected his bravery to an unknowing and often uncaring world has become overshadowed by an international dispute prompted by White House affronts to Poland.

In *Karski: How One Man Tried to Stop the Holocaust*, E. Thomas Wood and Stanislaw M. Jankowski give an account of Karski’s last visit to the Warsaw ghetto, during which he met with one of the Jewish resistance leaders. “Remember this,” he implored Karski. “Remember this.”

Karski never forgot. His memories of the Holocaust haunted him to the end.



Jan Karski.

CELEBRATING RESISTANCE: ARMED RESISTANCE, ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER OF THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM



Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, and Leonard Wilf, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem.



Leonard Wilf, Charles Blachman, and 2012 Annual Tribute Dinner Honoree Frank Blachman.



Boaz and Lolly Zborowski, Major-General Amir Eshel, and Dr. Lilly and Avner Naveh.



Mark Moskowitz, David Halpern, Barry and Marilyn Rubenstein, Cesia and Frank Blachman, Liev Schreiber, and Leonard Wilf.



Adina and Lawrence Burian with Major-General Amir Eshel.



More than 600 people attended the annual tribute dinner of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem.

GHETTO FIGHTERS, AND SPIRITUAL RESISTANCE

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM



Leonard Wilf, Jeremy Halpern, and 2012 Annual Tribute Dinner Honoree Liev Schreiber.



Red Army World War II Jewish veterans.



Alexandra Lebovits and Morris and Caroline Massel with Liev Schreiber.



Leonard Wilf, Liev Schreiber, and Barry and Marilyn Rubenstein.



Sam and Gladys Halpern, Sharon Halpern, Jeremy and Abbi Halpern, and Brianna.



Left to right front row: Rose Holm, Cesia Blaichman, Frank Blaichman; left to right back row: Debrah Charatan, Ann Zygelman, Charles Blaichman, Bella Sekons, Noah Blaichman, Aviva Blaichman, Micah Blaichman.



REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

YAD VASHEM MEMORIAL SPRAYED WITH GRAFFITI

Ten graffiti scrawls were found at the Yad Vashem memorial complex in Jerusalem

Three ultra-Orthodox Jewish men have been arrested in Israel, suspected of defacing the national Holocaust memorial with anti-Zionist graffiti.

One of the slogans daubed in paint on the walls of the memorial read: "If Hitler had not existed, the Zionists would have invented him."

The suspects have admitted vandalizing the site, a police spokesman said.



Suspicion for the attack had fallen on radical ultra-Orthodox Jews who oppose the creation of the state of Israel.

One of the slogans, all in Hebrew, was signed "world ultra-Orthodox Jewry."

Another read: "Thanks, Hitler, for the wonderful Holocaust you organized for us. Only thanks to you we got a state from the UN."

A third went: "Honorable government of Poland, stop allowing the Zionists to hold manipulative 'memorial' ceremonies in Auschwitz."

Some ultra-Orthodox Jews believe a Jewish state can be established only after the coming of the Messiah, and that the state of Israel is therefore illegitimate.

A small number of extremists believe the myth that Israel's founders conspired with Hitler to bring about the Jewish state.

In a statement, Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev said: "I believe that it was important to know the identities of those who spray-painted the graffiti. The suspects are extremist ultra-Orthodox Jews, anti-Zionists, who are on the fringes of society, and do not represent the majority who respect the memory of the Holocaust."

PORTRAITS OF JEWISH INTELLECTUALS ON THE RUN

BY YEHUDIT SHENDAR

"Immigrants', as we were coined, always seemed to me a mistaken denotation, as we did not leave our homes to find a new country to live in. We did not leave our country of our own free will... What we did was escape — we were ousted, exiled." Thus reflected Bertholt Brecht on his flight from Germany in February 1933, similar to that of other German intellectuals in the wake of Hitler's rise to power in January that year.

A photograph portrays a handsome man donning a fine sports suit, with an adorable girl wearing a dress typical for the period, the relaxed air of a family holiday in a summer vacation town about them. The year is



Mario Stahl and Judith Kerr, *Küsnacht*, Switzerland, 1933.

1934; the place — *Sanary-sur-Mer*, a Mediterranean coastal town on the French Riviera. The individuals in the photograph are Mario Stahl and Judith Kerr. Despite their appearance, the two shared Brecht's fate: they were forced refugees — German Jews and opponents of the Nazi regime who were condemned and expelled from German society.

Along their escape route, many of the exiles passed through Zurich and Paris. They met as brothers in fate — not just as intellectuals, but also as former Berliners who shared a common language. Stahl, an artist born in 1908 and a student of Käthe Kollwitz and Emil Orlik, documented these

meetings with his delicate pencil. Intellectuals from the literary and theatrical circles, musicians, filmmakers, artists — every one of them influential and prominent in their forte — found themselves exiled in a foreign land, at a crossroads demanding a decision: where to now?

They first found safe harbor in the countries bordering Germany; however, as the danger increased, many continued on in search of calmer shores, far from the eye of the storm. Those depicted in the drawings are a faithful reflection of the meandering journeys of many. Miraculously, only two of the wanderers were murdered in the Holocaust (Paul Morgan and Theodor Wolff). Of the rest, a mere handful set their sights on Eretz Israel (Elise Lasker-Schüler, Arnold Zweig, Hermann Vallentin) or Britain (Sybille Binder, Lucie Mannheim); the majority settled down in two scenic coastal towns, separated by the expanses of the Atlantic. Many of those who managed to obtain US visas (Marianne Oswald, Moriz Rosenthal, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Max Simon Ehrlich, Alfred Döblin, Claire Goll, Emil Ludwig, Ludwig Hardt, Felix Bressart and Albert Bassermann) joined the diverse community of Pacific Palisades, California, a pastoral town in the mountains with a vista of the Pacific Ocean. Here, the Jewish writer Lion Feuchtwanger, himself a refugee, established a gathering place and a dwelling, Villa Aurora, home to a community of German émigrés. Of those German-speaking exiles remaining in Europe, most directed their steps to the coastal town in the French Riviera, *Sanary-sur-Mer*.

Here, too, was the destination of Stahl. Despite his elegant appearance, a drawing of his living quarters speaks of a very modest existence, appropriate to the hard times that had befallen him. From the south of France, Stahl fled to Italy, where he survived the Holocaust. At the end of the war, he immigrated to Sweden, the birthplace of his future wife. In the town of *Malmö*, Stahl gradually gained renown as

a painter, holding numerous exhibitions. In 1975, aged 67, Mario Stahl passed away, leaving behind a set of drawings dating back to the time of his escape from Nazi Germany.



Dr. Matthias Stahl holding a self-portrait painted by his father, Mario Stahl.

His son, Dr. Matthias Stahl, orphaned from his father at the age of 14, knew only a little of his father's fate, as Mario chose not to share stories and memories from the time of the Holocaust. Dr. Stahl's proposal to donate his father's drawings to Yad Vashem was enthusiastically welcomed, as this collection of drawings sheds light on a unique group: they were people of distinction, connections, and means, who did not share the cruel fate of European Jewry in general, or German Jewry in particular. Nonetheless, they stand witness to the rich culture that was annihilated with the murder of their brethren — an unfathomable loss to human civilization.

RYWKA'S DIARY

THE VOICE OF A YOUNG GIRL IN THE GHETTO

BY DEBBIE BERMAN

"I am just a tiny spot, even under a microscope I would be very hard to see — but I can laugh at the whole world because I am a Jew. I am poor and in the ghetto, I do not know what will happen to me tomorrow, and yet I can laugh at the whole world because I have something very strong supporting me — my faith."

So wrote 14-year-old Rywka Lipszyc in a diary she kept in the *Lodz* ghetto from October 1943 until April 1944. Rywka was born in September 1929 in *Lodz*, Poland, the daughter of Miriam and Jankiel Lipszyc — descendants of a great Polish rabbinic line. After losing her parents and siblings to disease and deportation, Rywka spent the remainder of the war with her cousins, Mina and Esther Lipszyc. Surviving the hunger of the *Lodz* ghetto, the horrors of Auschwitz, and a grueling death march, the three cousins finally arrived at *Bergen-Belsen* weak and very sick. Esther last saw Rywka on her deathbed in the

hospital ward. She and Mina slowly recuperated in Sweden, but they never heard anything more of their cousin until last summer, when they were told about the diary's discovery, thanks to a Page of Testimony Mina submitted to Yad Vashem in Rywka's memory.

Rywka's diary was found in the ashes of the crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau in early 1945 by Zinaida Berezovskaya, a doctor who arrived at the camp with the liberating Red Army. The diary (in Polish, Yiddish, and Hebrew) documented Rywka's daily life, along with her hopes, dreams, and deepest emotions. Berezovskaya stored it in an envelope, along with a newspaper clipping about the liberation of Auschwitz. For over half a century it remained untouched, until Berezovskaya's granddaughter discovered it among her father's effects in June 2008 and brought it to the Jewish Family and Children's Services (JFCS) Holocaust Center in San Francisco.

Archivists at the center immediately began to investigate the identity of the diary's author, which ultimately led them to

discover the Page of Testimony commemorating Rywka submitted by Mina Boyer in 1955 (updated in 2000). With the assistance of Yad Vashem staff, the family was contacted through Hadassah Halamish, Mina's daughter, who was deeply moved to learn of the diary's discovery so many years later.

For Esther and Mina, reading the diary reawakened painful memories of their wartime experiences, but it also provided them with the strength to share the rich legacy of their family's faith, expressed so poignantly in Rywka's diary.

"I tried to cut myself off from it, but then suddenly it came back," said Mina. "I had a few sleepless nights, because I was reliving everything. But I will not give [the Nazis] the satisfaction that I cannot sleep. That I will never do."

Esther, the oldest of the cousins, took on the responsibility for raising Rywka after her parents' death. She recalled how central the diary was in Rywka's young life. "It took me right back. There's even a section in the diary where she writes that I told her

she shouldn't be writing. I was always telling her not to write because there were other, more important things to be doing, like running the house. I needed help."

In April 2012, San Francisco JFCS Executive Director Dr. Anita Freidman, a longtime supporter of Yad Vashem's international *Shoah* Victims' Names Recovery Project, traveled to Israel to meet Esther and Mina and to allow the family to read Rywka's words from the original diary, which is planned to be published in the near future.

"I am terribly sad that I never had the opportunity to meet her," said Hadassah Halamish. "I know we would have had a lot in common. I have learned so much from her. Even under the most impossible living conditions, Rywka never lost the divine spirit inside her."

Now she has returned to us again. Esther and my mother have had the honor of raising large families in Israel, thereby keeping alive the memory of the dead. Anyone who reads Rywka's diary will be honoring her memory, too."

ARCHIVE REVEALS NEW DETAILS OF HOLOCAUST IN MOLDOVA

BY RICHARD SOLASH,
RADIO FREE EUROPE

In July 1941, Ura and Motl Gabis, two brothers living in the town of *Edinet*, in what is today Moldova, were taken with their mother and father from their home at gunpoint. They were lined up along the wall of a barn and shot. Their crime was their Judaism.

The shooter, Stepan Derevenchuk-Babutsak, was an unemployed son of peasants who knew which homes were Jewish. His gun came from local authorities who sent civilians to get an early start on the systematic cleansing to come when pro-Nazi Romanian and German soldiers swept in.

Evidence that these local attacks were ordered by the Romanian military under then-Prime Minister Ion Antonescu — and were not spontaneous, as was long claimed — can be found among the more than 40 million pages of archives held at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

The plan, complete with a map of target villages, turned neighbors into murderers on ground fertile for anti-Semitism.

But now, a tranche of documents newly delivered to the Holocaust Museum by the Moldovan government is providing researchers with fresh evidence of the plan's execution — and a look into the lives of victims and perpetrators alike.

"A plan is evidence of a crime, but when you don't have the result of this plan, then it's only half of the story," says Vadim Altskan, coordinator of the museum's International Archival Program. "So what we now have is the implementation, or results — who did this and how it actually worked. We have details — how it worked at the village level."

The case of Derevenchuk-Babutsak and his killing of the Gabis family is one of about 50 investigations and trials that are contained in the archive. They were carried out by the Moldovan KGB starting in 1944, after the Soviets liberated the area, and continued into the late 1950s.

In total, there are some 15,000 pages of testimony, interrogation transcripts, and other documents — all contained on a



Jews are deported to Transnistria in 1941 or 1942.

computer hard drive that was handed over by Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister Iurie Leanca at a ceremony in March.

Reading this particular case, Altskan quotes the shooter, Derevenchuk-Babutsak, during an interrogation in 1944, where he denies committing any crimes.

Then comes a twist.

While their parents fell dead beside them, the brothers, Ura and Motl Gabis, survived. They would live to testify against their shooter, who would be sentenced to 20 years of hard labor.

This and other cases not only provide evidence of barbarism, but also tell stories of co-opted ignorance, survival, and even love.

According to Radu Ioanid, the Bucharest-born archival director at the

Holocaust Museum, the Gabises were among some 300,000 Jews living in Bessarabia, the territory that largely constitutes today's Moldova, and the neighboring region of Bukovina in 1930.

Tens of thousands were killed during the Romanian/Nazi assault, while others were sent to regional internment camps and ghettos. From there, Ioanid says, most were carted off to the killing fields of Transnistria, today a breakaway region of Moldova.

"One hundred and fifty thousand Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina reached Transnistria alive [in 1941–42]," he says. "Two years later, only 50,000 were alive. That's the story. Transnistria was the ethnic dumping ground of the Romanian pro-Nazi government."

The Moldovan government estimates that there are some 15,000 Jews living in the country today.

Ioanid spearheaded the museum's efforts to obtain the archive. To succeed, the museum had to overcome political hurdles by enlisting U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden to push for an amendment to Moldovan restrictions on the international transport of personal data.

In fact, national politics often come into play when the museum tries to expand its repository.

Altskan says that among the countries of the former Soviet Union, the museum has yet to obtain postwar trial records held in Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

"The most important out of the four is Belarus. First of all, it was under Nazi occupation [and] you had a large Jewish

community. We visited them. They were ready to work with us — actually, more than willing," he explains. "It's because of our own government and sanctions we have against Belarus [that] we were told very clearly that it's not a good idea to collaborate with the local KGB."

U.S. law prohibits the transfer of equipment that the Holocaust Museum would ship to Minsk to assist in the copying of documents.

For the countries that hold Holocaust-era documents, there may also be a political advantage, perceived or real, to working with the U.S. museum, which is partially government-funded.

At the handover ceremony for the archives, Chişinău's Leanca expressed hope that the move would help convince U.S. lawmakers to repeal trade restrictions against Moldova stemming from Soviet-era limitations on Jewish emigration.

But foremost, Leanca said, was his country's commitment to "paying respect to the tragedy that occurred on our soil to make sure we draw the necessary lessons looking forward."

Indeed, leaders of Moldova's Jewish community are hoping that the new insight into Holocaust-era crimes will have reverberations at home.

"Unfortunately, the extent that today's students and youth are informed about the tragedies of the Holocaust is not sufficient," says Aleksandr Bilinkis, the vice president of the Organization of the Jewish Communities in Moldova.

"Moreover, the topic is not talked about or is distorted. Historical facts are twisted. In some places even the opposite happens, when information about the tragedies of these years is checked and [then] distorted to satisfy the prevailing political needs."

HOLOCAUST MUSEUMS IN ISRAEL EVOLVE

BY EDWARD ROTHSTEIN,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

It isn't only the history of the Holocaust that you see on display in Israel's Holocaust museums. It's also the history of the Holocaust. There is an archaeology of trauma to be found if you look closely, and in its layers and transmutations you see how a nation has wrestled with the burden of one of history's immense horrors.

Through examining how Israeli museums treat the Holocaust — including the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum in a kibbutz in the far north of the country, whose founders included survivors of the Warsaw ghetto uprising — we can see how visions of that past are changing, sometimes in unsettling ways.

One museum on another, smaller kibbutz, for example, was described in the newspaper *Haaretz* as "Warsaw-Ghetto Disneyland" for its new emphasis on sound and lighting effects, including a simulation of a cattle car heading to a death camp. The director of the museum at the Ghetto Fighters' House said that it would increasingly emphasize the broadest lessons of the Holocaust: an "ethical imperative" of "tolerance" that could "influence Israeli society." And when Yad Vashem in Jerusalem reworked its main exhibition in 2005 — creating the most powerful exposition of this history I have seen — it too modified its approach, with a new focus on feelings and individual stories.

These changes have different meanings and effects, and some are familiar from museums devoted to the subject in other countries. But in Israel this is far from a mere museological matter.

The major Holocaust institutions, for example, are on hilltops offering grand vistas. At the Ghetto Fighters' House, which may have been the first Holocaust museum in the world to open, in 1949, you emerge from its tales of darkness onto a bright plaza, overlooking an aqueduct, an outdoor amphitheater and the plains stretching toward the sea.

A companion institution at the kibbutz, *Yad La Yeled*, may be the world's only children's museum devoted to the Holocaust. You descend a ramp into the darkness, as if it were a tear in the texture of ordinary experience; gradually the walls close in. Sound effects are meant to simulate a child's preverbal experience. Inscribed along the way are brief recollections, almost heartbreaking in their simplicity: "Everyone will look at my yellow star and they'll know: she's 6, and she is Jewish." And you emerge from that journey into illumination: first through a gallery about children who survived, and ultimately into the Galilean landscape.

And, of course, the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem sits on its own hill, the Mount of Remembrance. In its latest incarnation, with a new exhibition design by Dorit Harel, and with Moshe Safdie as architect, the history is recounted along a zigzagging path, leading upward through a cement

gash in the mountain, emerging into daylight, overlooking the Jerusalem hills.

Even the poor relation of these at *Yad Mordechai*, a kibbutz in the south named after the leader of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, creates a similar drama, calling its whole exhibition "From Holocaust to Revival." You literally walk downward into the historical narrative and gradually work through tales of resistance until you emerge again into the landscape, in which important battles were fought during Israel's War of Independence.

These museums deliberately treat the landscape as a part of the history; indeed, as a resolution. From the start, that was one meaning the Holocaust took on: the founding of the State of Israel was seen as an answer to the Holocaust and a deliverance from it. That is one reason that the annual Holocaust Remembrance Day here is observed by a moment of nationwide stillness: a siren sounds, commerce halts, and cars pull over to the side of the highway.

Museums reinforce that connection between the Holocaust and the state. It has become so strong that it has even led to a distortion of the history by some who twist the connection into cause and effect, presuming that the state was created as a

guilty compensation for the Holocaust rather than as something that emerged as a result of nearly a century of development.

The association between the Holocaust and the state initially had a very different



Photographs at *Yad Mordechai* depict children who died in the Holocaust.

significance, highlighted in the themes of the Ghetto Fighters' House and *Yad Mordechai*. Both were established during the early decades of a nation left with only intermittent episodes of peace. At the time an element of shame was associated with the seeming passivity of Jews who were murdered in Europe. So the emphasis of these institutions was at first placed not on survival, but rather on rebellion.

Exhibitions at the Ghetto Fighters' House, for example, focus on Jewish resistance, ranging from an escape by prisoners from a fortress prison in *Kovno* (now

(Continued on page 13)

A MAHARAJAH COMES TO THE RESCUE

BY HILLEL KUTTLER, JTA

Like many European Jews whose survival of the Holocaust led them far afield, Zygmunt Mandel relates a gripping, heartbreaking tale. His final stop before attaining his ultimate destination, Israel, in 1943 is striking: India.

Days after Germany's conquest of Poland in 1939, Mandel; his mother, Barbara; stepfather, Zygmunt Rappaport; and older sister, Lila, fled their native *Krakow* for *Kovel* and then *Lvov*. The Soviet army sent them to *Tesma* in Russia's Ural Mountains. (Lila remained in *Lvov* and was murdered during the *Shoah*.) They reached *Buchara*, Uzbekistan, where the parents died of typhus. Mandel stayed briefly at a Polish orphanage in *Samarkand* before being transported to *Ashgabad*, Turkmenistan.

Other Polish orphans converged there from elsewhere in the Soviet Union, and Mandel joined them on a truck convoy that departed on July 14, 1942. The passengers, including 12 Jewish children, journeyed 2 1/2 months and more than 1,300 miles through present-day Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and into India.

They finally reached Maharajah Jam Saheb Digvijaysinhji Jadeja's summer estate in *Balachadi*, a village northwest of *Mumbai*. The maharajah was away much of the time serving on the Imperial War Council in London, and it was in the British capital that Poland's prime minister in exile requested that he house the displaced orphans.

A report about the episode, contained in a thin folder known as the Kenneth X. Robbins Collection at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, reveals that the Polish children reached *Balachadi* in two overland transports: an initial group of 260 orphans, accompanied by 20 adults; and Mandel's

second group, which brought the total to "some 750."

A map of the *Balachadi* site, called the Polish Children's Camp, plots the location of the dormitories, school, playground, soccer field, tennis court, roads, and flagpole. The four-page report states that the camp included a 30-bed hospital ward and dispensary, with the children having arrived in "naturally very poor" condition and many needing appendix, tonsil, and dental treatment.

Their medical improvement "after only a few weeks' residence ... was most marked" and they "soon settled down and are most happy in their new surroundings," added the report, apparently written in 1942. The children received three meals daily, along with afternoon tea. On the maharajah's first visit, they dedicated the camp's main road in his name.

"After Russia, life [at the camp] was good," Mandel, 84, said in a recent telephone interview.

"We were sleeping on sheets, had enough food, things were clean, we were given clothes — they took care of us."

A Polish priest ran the school, which employed 30 teachers in six classes spanning ages 4 through 18, Mandel added. He remembers sports competitions and field trips, "just like in a normal boarding school."

India's role remains little known, even to experts on the *Shoah*. When reached at his *Petach Tikvah* home, Mandel had just bid farewell to researchers from Yad Vashem, Israel's central Holocaust-commemoration institution, who had interviewed him about his India experiences. They had known nothing about the orphans' stay in India, he said.

Mandel had contacted Yad Vashem after one of its officials spoke in May on the *Hamador L'chipus Krovim* (Searching for Relatives Bureau) radio program about an apparently separate incident she had just learned of, involving 1,200 Polish refugees who reached India by sea.

India's serving as a refuge is a "fascinating" aspect of the "transnational phenomenon" of *Shoah* history, said Atina Grossmann, a history professor at New York's Cooper Union.



Zygmunt Mandel.

The era's geopolitics complicates the story, Grossmann said, with England being "paranoid" on multiple levels: sitting on a powder keg in India, which would gain independence in 1947; worried about how its Palestine policies played among India's Muslims; and mindful of its alliance with the Soviet Union against Germany.

In 1943, Hershel Cynowicz, a Jewish Agency for Israel representative in *Mumbai*, arranged for the 12 Jewish children staying at *Balachadi* to go to prestate Israel, Mandel said. They traveled by ship to the Suez Canal port of *El-Qantara*, then by train to *Haifa*. A Jewish Agency document lists Mandel and the 11 other Jewish children at *Balachadi* who reached *Haifa* on April 24, 1943: Edmund Erlich, Paula Gilert, Avraham Magnushever, Fima Kauf-

man, Cyla Rozengarten and the siblings Ilona and Janusz Goldlost, Roza and Rachel Hoch, and Eliza and Maria Spalter. Rabbi Elias Shor chaperoned them from *Mumbai* to Israel.

Now retired from a 40-year career as an intelligence-security specialist in the Israel Defense Forces' Signal Corps, Mandel said he is "happy" that India and the maharajah welcomed him. He also is grateful to Cynowicz and Walter and Lotte Daus, a German-Jewish couple who had escaped to *Mumbai* and re-established their umbrella manufacturing company. The Dauses briefly hosted Mandel and Erlich in *Mumbai* and later joined them in Israel.

Mandel, a widower with two sons and four grandchildren, kept up for a time with some of his India mates. Magnushever changed his surname to Magen and moved to France, but Mandel hasn't heard from him in 20 years. He knew that Eliza Spalter married an IDF general, Nehemia Kain. Mandel speaks occasionally with Erlich, a successful restaurateur in Paris who once ran Jerusalem's King David Hotel.

The Jewish children's stay in India is "interesting because ultimately it's about who the survivors are, how they survived, why the doors closed," Grossmann said. "If you look at [Holocaust history] from the margins — India, East Asia, Africa, even *Shanghai* — it makes it richer. There were not that many Polish Jews who ended up in India; it was mostly Polish [Catholics] in India."

In her dissertation on the episode, New Delhi professor Anuradha Bhattacharjee wrote that the *Balachadi* camp and a second one at *Valivade* are significant for representing "the first offer of a domicile for the Polish civilian population being evacuated out of the Soviet Union."

The offer, she said, "came at a time when no country in the world was willing to accept the Polish refugees."

SURVIVOR LETS GO OF RAGE, 67 YEARS LATER

BY GIL SHEFLER,
THE JERUSALEM POST

Batsheva Dagan says she is amazed to reread the "fire and brimstone" letter she published in a 1945 edition of the *Post*, addressed to a notorious Nazi female guard at the Auschwitz death camp.

The year was 1945, and Isabella Rubinstein was angry.

Irma Grese, a notorious female guard at Auschwitz, the Nazi death camp where Rubinstein was a prisoner for two years, was on trial, and the survivor wanted to see her former tormentor writhing in pain. So she penned a piece describing Grese's iniquity in detail, and the punishment she thought she deserved, and sent it to *The Palestine Post*.

"We, your victims, do not want you to die," read the letter addressed to Grese, which the newspaper ran in full on October 29, 1945. "We would much rather that you live, as we had to, with billows of filthy black smoke from the chimneys of the crematoria constantly before your eyes.

"We want to see you dragging heavy stones, barefoot and in rags. We want to see you beaten, cruelly and mercilessly as you, cruel and without mercy, beat us.

"We want you to go so hungry that you cannot sleep at night, as we could not. We want to see your blonde hair shaved off, as you made us shave our heads."

66 years later, Batsheva Dagan — formerly Isabella Rubinstein — told *The Jerusalem Post* — formerly *The Palestine*

Post — why she would not write the same letter today.

"Such a letter I would not be able to write, and I'm amazed when I read it," said the diminutive woman in an interview held in the flower-filled living room of her apartment in *Holon*. "Its main issue was revenge, revenge, revenge."

In the decades since Dagan wrote her tirade, she has led a full and happy life. She married, raised a family, had a meaningful career as an educator, and published prose and verse about her experiences during the Holocaust.

In April the 87-year-old author was among the six survivors honored by lighting a torch during the state ceremony for Holocaust Remembrance Day at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Dagan is the first to admit she has been lucky.

"I even have a lucky number," she said, and rolled up her sleeve, revealing the number 45554, which the Nazis tattooed on her left arm as a means of identification. "It's a palindrome."

Dagan was born in 1925 in *Lodz*, the eighth of nine children. When the Nazis invaded Poland in September 1939, her large family scattered. One brother went to Palestine, another joined the Polish Brigade, and others sought refuge in the Soviet Union. Dagan moved with her parents and younger siblings to the relative safety of the central Polish city of *Radom*.

But in 1940, a ghetto was set up in *Radom* and life suddenly became mean.

"You would not believe the deprivation, the lows that humans can sink to," she said.

Dagan joined the ghetto's resistance movement and on one occasion traveled under the guise of a gentile to Warsaw — where she personally delivered a dispatch to Mordechai Anielewicz, the heroic leader of the 1943 Warsaw ghetto uprising — and then back again. When, in 1942, the *Radom* ghetto was about to be liquidated, she escaped using fake documents. She took on the identity of a non-Jewish maid and went to work for a family in Germany.

"I worked for a fervently Nazi family where I took care of two teenagers," she recalled. "Many years after the war I met them in *Hamburg*. The daughter was very cold to me, but the son was warm. They could not believe I survived."

Her ruse did not last long. Her real identity was discovered by the Gestapo and she was sent to Auschwitz in April 1943. There, she survived the worst horrors imaginable. She was given tasks like collecting prickly nettles, which were used to make tea, barehanded, and removing precious items from the bodies of those killed in the gas chambers. She survived by relying on the camaraderie of a group of eight women and a strict regimen of self-discipline.

"The most important thing was the suspension of gratification," she said. "Those who ate everything they had did not last, but those who put a little on the side did better."

When the Red Army approached Auschwitz in January 1945, Dagan was forced on a death march to Germany,

where she worked at two labor camps. Liberation came only in April 1945.

After the war Dagan quickly made *aliya* thanks to her husband, a British army soldier she met in Brussels. She was one of the first survivors of the Holocaust to arrive in Palestine, where she caught word of the trial of Grese, her former captor at Auschwitz.

"I wanted to travel to Germany to testify but the British, who ruled at the time, would not give me a travel certificate," she said. "So *The Palestine Post's* editor found me and asked me to write for them. It was a fire and brimstone piece. I could not write [something like that] today.

"Back then the urge for vengeance sought some release... nowadays I look for the human connection and I do not blame the younger generation for the sins of their parents or grandparents."

The incendiary letter to the *Post* was the first in her literary career. She later wrote, in a much more subdued tone, children's books like *Chika the Dog in the Ghetto* and *Today the Siren Cried*. Dagan also wrote a collection of poems.

Despite the ordeals she lived through — the murder of her parents and siblings, the torture by the Nazis in the ghetto, and the death camps, all of which she says is painful to speak of to this day — she remains an optimist.

"The Holocaust is not only horrors," said Dagan. "When I wrote for children about the Holocaust I had to give them a happy ending, and so I did. My stories always have a happy end."

HOLOCAUST MUSEUMS IN ISRAEL EVOLVE

(Continued from page 11)

in Lithuania to the secret recording of history in various ghettos. A wall at *Yad Mordechai* is inscribed with the name of every camp and ghetto where rebellion occurred; the museum's displays also make a connection between those battles and the resolute history of the kibbutz itself, which held off Egyptian forces — after war was declared on the fledgling state in 1948 — just long enough to prevent their march toward Tel Aviv. As recently as June, rockets launched from Gaza hit the kibbutz.

But because both of these kibbutz institutions also developed out of branches of left-wing Zionism, which would have been wary of forms of nationalism associated with the Israeli right, a mixture of sentiments has emerged there in recent decades. These founding lessons can take on different emphases. One recent tendency is to generalize what was once particular.

So in 1995 the Center for Humanistic Education was established by the Ghetto Fighters' House, stressing what it calls the "universal lessons" of the Holocaust rather than national ones, attacking "indifference to the suffering of others." When I recently spoke with Anat Livne, the museum's di-

rector, she mentioned plans for programs to encourage "tolerance" between Jews and Arabs.



Yellow stars are projected onto visitors in one section of *Yad Mordechai*.

rector, she mentioned plans for programs to encourage "tolerance" between Jews and Arabs.

None of this is evident in the exhibitions right now. But a similar strategy is employed by many American museums that attempt to draw lessons of tolerance from the Holocaust, most notably the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles (which has been involved in a controversial construction of an Israeli version in Jerusalem).

At *Yad Mordechai*, whose approach is more dated than the one at the Ghetto Fighters' House, attempts to create relevance have been more a matter of adding new display technology than any rethinking of the museum's mission. But the museum's director at the time, Vered Bar Samakh, told *Haaretz* in 2011 that the institution should incorporate notions of "peaceful coexistence" and deal with "racism and xenophobia."

"You have to learn a lesson from everything," she said. "I don't want to get into it, but the abuse at the checkpoints of the Warsaw ghetto bridge isn't far from what's happening today at our checkpoints in Judea and Samaria."

This view, thankfully, is not explicit in the museum. But it suggests that temptations are strong to replace historical analysis

with sentiment; that is more of a risk for *Yad Mordechai* than a Disneyfied approach, which is not particularly effective and has already been toned down. The museum now has a new director, Anat Pais, and plans for an exhibition about Poland between the world wars. But some pedagogical efforts in both museums emphasize less the need for resilience in confronting murderous ambitions than the need for tolerance, broadly applied.

This concept is familiar from American Holocaust museums, which also search for broad relevance as the last generation of survivors dies. But it leaves Holocaust museums intellectually orphaned. What "lessons" are we supposed to take away? The impulse has been to generalize, to say that a Holocaust museum can't be "just" about the murder of Jews during World War II.

Why? Is there a problem, say, with an American slavery museum being "just" about American slavery? Why should Holocaust museums deal with notions of tolerance or racism in general, or even genocide in general? Why do we think that the proper lesson comes from generalizing rather than comprehending the particular?

The moment we generalize, we strip away details: we lose information and create equivalences that may be fallacious.

In Israel, as the earlier "lessons" of museums are being submerged, there has been an increased focus on simulating the experience, trying to spur empathy. Feelings are evoked because nothing else can be assumed. This is to be expected at *Yad LaYeled*, which is a children's museum, but elsewhere it has serious limitations.

This has even affected Yad Vashem, with its new attention to individual stories. Is this an example of that museum's response to contemporary nonchalance, an attempt to seduce us into shock?

No. Yad Vashem is a stunning counterexample. It may imply a traditional, national lesson in its presence and placement — it was, after all, founded by a Knesset law in 1953 — but it scrupulously avoids moralizing or posturing. The museum offers no lessons and promises no relevance.

The stories, facts, and analyses accumulate until you begin to comprehend something beyond comprehension. The museum's implied conclusion is sensed rather than taught: after the harrowing history, you are brought back, finally, to the present, in somber gratitude.

THE NAZI WHO SAVED SIGMUND FREUD

BY DAVID M. COHEN,
HUFFINGTON POST

Sigmund Freud was 82 years old and suffering from cancer of the jaw when he fled to London from Vienna in 1938. Freedom gave him a final burst of creative energy, and in the last 18 months of his life he finished a book, *Moses and Monotheism*, which he had hesitated over for years, and compiled a summary of his life's work, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*. When asked about his productivity at the time, he was known to give a rather curious response: "Thank the Führer."

After Hitler came to power, many Jews saw the writing on the wall and left Germany. Einstein, for example, did so almost at once. But Freud steadfastly refused, even though many friends warned him that the Nazis were bound to take over Austria. When they finally did in March 1938, Freud still would not consider leaving. He only changed his mind on March 22nd when the Gestapo arrested his beloved daughter Anna. Gripped with fear, Freud frantically paced up and down his apartment chain-smoking cigars — and he did not even know of the pills she had taken with her so that she could commit suicide if tortured.

In the end, Anna was allowed to return home as a result of intense pressure from two close friends of Freud — Princess Marie Bonaparte, Napoleon's great-grandniece, and William Bullitt, the American ambassador to France. These connections, however, would not have been enough to persuade the Nazis to let Freud leave. Here, he had an improbable stroke of luck. The Nazis imposed a *kommissar* to run every Jewish business in Austria, just as they had done in Germany. The *kommissar's* job was to fleece Jews of as much money as he could. By sheer fluke, the Nazis appointed as Freud's *kommissar* Dr. Anton Sauerwald, a forty-four-year-old chemist whose hobbies included bomb-making and gardening. It was Freud's good fortune that Sauerwald's professor had been one of Freud's friends.

As an academic, Sauerwald felt he had to read Freud's books so that he could perform his Nazi duties properly. Recognizing Freud's brilliance, slowly the Nazi chemist became convinced that he should help Freud. He hid damning evidence that the analyst had secret bank accounts in a number of European countries. Then he helped Freud and sixteen members of his family get exit visas. These cost a great deal of money, which Freud did not have, but his helpful *kommissar* arranged for the

sale of some of Freud's antiquities to foot the bill. Even more remarkably, Sauerwald got the Gestapo to pay for transporting many of Freud's books and the famous analytic couch to London. They are now in the Freud Museum in Hampstead.

On the day of his escape, the Gestapo would not let Freud board the train for Paris until he provided a statement that absolved them of any blame. "I can heartily recommend the Gestapo to anyone," Freud wrote. The Nazis did not see the irony.

Freud loved London and often told his friends he thanked Hitler for making it necessary for him to leave. Sauerwald stayed in touch and then came to London himself to see the old man; Freud promptly complained about English doctors and asked him to get his Vienna doctor to come to treat him. As the doctor was a Nazi he didn't need an exit visa, and Sauerwald offered to drive him to London. The doctor operated on Freud the day after he arrived — an operation Freud believed gave him another year of life.

One might have expected the Freud family to be very grateful to Sauerwald, but sadly they were not. After the war, one of Freud's nephews, Harry, who was an American officer, tracked Sauerwald down and had him arrested. Sauerwald was charged with war crimes, specifically with robbing the Freud family of its assets.

Sauerwald's trial lasted longer than those at *Nuremberg*. He spent months sick in jail before he ever set foot in the court. From his cell Sauerwald appealed to the Freud family for help, but Anna Freud was ambivalent. She hesitated because her brother Martin hated Sauerwald, ironically, because he had been helpful when Martin was rash enough to criticize the Nazis openly.

Eventually, however, Anna wrote a letter detailing how Sauerwald had saved her father. But even then, she did not actually sign it. After my book, *The Escape of Sigmund Freud*, came out in England, I was contacted by Anna Freud's last secretary, Gina Le Bon. She had never heard of Sauerwald even though she worked for Anna for some 20 years. He had been airbrushed out of Freudian history.

Sauerwald saved 16 Jews in all. He failed to obtain exit visas for four of Freud's sisters, and they all died in concentration camps. Anton Sauerwald is an unsung hero who deserves far better than he received. Perhaps when Freud was thanking the Führer, he had another Nazi in mind.

"THE DEMONIC MAESTRO"

(Continued from page 4)

controlling church organization, with a fanatical youth movement at its center. In addition to becoming Chancellor on January 30, 1933, Hitler acquired dictatorial powers through the Enabling Act. The Nazis did enjoy high popularity and Hitler was warmly embraced. 50,000 of Berlin's citizens joined the Nazi party upon Hitler's ascension to power, albeit 250 renowned writers and professors emigrated from Germany. The 1935 *Nuremberg Laws* were dismissed by most of the outside world, while the 1936 Berlin Olympics were sugarcoated with reduced overt anti-Jewishness. The loss of Jewish professionals was significant. For example, 75 percent of German dentists were Jewish. The *Kristallnacht* events of November 9 and 10, 1938, whose 75th anniversary is in 2013, resulted in possibly 2,000 dead Jews, with

some 300 committing suicide and 30,000 interred in concentration camps at *Dachau*, *Buchenwald* and *Sachsenhausen*. President FDR's condemnation of Nazi conduct fell short of opening wide America's gates to Jewish refugees blocked from leaving Germany as of October 1941.

Wilson ponders the terrifying scenario of a Hitler-like budding figure somewhere in the world. He concludes in his inimitable style, "...one man stands out as the demonic maestro who made Auschwitz a possibility... That gruesome pioneer was Hitler." Nonetheless the question is raised, how could Hitler be both "usual" and "demonic," "the first and the most hypnotic artist of post-literacy"?

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

“WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT TO BURN JEWS?”

(Continued from page 7)

“I couldn’t understand what he was talking about. ‘Your family was already burned a long time ago,’ he said. ‘Look outside, do you see the chimney? This is where Jews are burned.’ And I, a 12-year-old boy, didn’t understand anything. Who’s burning? Who’s being burned? Why would they want to kill us?”

“WE CARRIED ROCKS, BUT DIDN’T BREAK DOWN”

Several days later, Martin and his three brothers were put on a train again. This time it stopped at the *Dörnhau* forced labor camp. “A slaves’ camp,” he notes.

“We carried rocks, but didn’t break down. City children wouldn’t have survived, but we were strong in the village and knew what manual work was all about. I was a fighter,” he says.

Under unbearable conditions, without food and in the terrible cold, they worked like slaves. “People were dying like flies, and we took comfort in the fact that there would be more room on the stools in the hut, which were always crowded.

“One day, senior SS officers arrived and announced that the small children who could no longer work would be transferred to children’s homes, and they ordered the *kaapos* to collect 500 children for shipment.

“My brother Jack and I were told to stand with the group of children when suddenly, miraculously, one of the *kaapos*, who must have pitied me because I was the smallest one there, pulled Jack and me back to the hut and took two other children instead of us. The group was taken to the gas chambers and we were rescued.”

The four brothers worked at the *Dörnhau* camp for about half a year. One morning, SS soldiers ordered the prisoners to form lines and begin marching. The Russians were already beating the Nazis, who began transferring the remaining Jews to other forced labor camps.

“It was a very difficult winter. We were wet and dirty, we marched for a month, and

each time someone fell down he was shot to death. When we arrived at the forest the Nazis began a selection process. My two eldest brothers were separated from us and taken into the woods with another group. Jack and I were left all alone.

“Suddenly we heard gunshots. They were executed.”

Martin later tried to locate the place where his two brothers were shot to death, but was unsuccessful. “There was a lot of chaos and this murder wasn’t registered in the archives,” he says.

WINDOW OVERLOOKING CREMATORIUM

Martin and Jack were put on another train with the prisoners, when planes suddenly appeared in the sky. They were American jets, bombing the railroad.

“A friend of mine from the village was hit by shrapnel in the jaw. I was filled with blood but wasn’t hurt. The SS removed us from the wagon and ordered us to march. One of them tried to separate Jack and me. We were so weak that we couldn’t resist, but thanks to the *havoc* I managed to slip away from my group, grasp Jack’s hand again, and bring him to mine. The rest were executed.”

They marched for days until they reached the *Flossenbürg* concentration camp in the Bavaria area, where political and Jewish prisoners were held.

“They sent us into showers with a strong flow of water, which was partly boiling and partly frozen. The flow and the temperature were so strong that some of the people died on the spot.”

Martin and his brother were sent into a hut near the crematorium. “We were the closest hut to the electric barbed-wire fences, and the execution area and road leading to the furnaces were in front of our window. We would see people being executed by gunshots or hanging and people being led to the crematorium.

“Nonetheless, I knew that I must stay alive. I was small but determined not to let them kill me,” he says.

One day, as the US Army was approaching the camp area, the SS soldiers ordered everyone to form lines. The camps’ gates opened and the death march began. Those who fell down were shot immediately, while those who managed to stand on both feet hoped to survive at least one more day. Martin held Jack’s hand and the two clung to each other so as not to fall.

The moment of liberation was sudden. “Before we could even say Jack Robinson, we suddenly saw American tanks and soldiers coming out of them and opening fire at the SS,” Martin recalls. “One of the American soldiers, who was Jewish, shouted at us in Yiddish, ‘Hide behind the tank.’ They had already liberated several camps on the way and knew exactly who we were.”

And so, in one moment, Martin and Jack turned from *Muselmanner* (prisoners suffering from a combination of starvation and exhaustion) into free men.

“The American soldiers didn’t know what to do with us. They tried to help and even gave us chocolate and sweets, but that was the worst — people who survived the death march suffocated after swallowing the candy because they were so hungry.”

Hours after the release, the soldiers moved on, leaving the survivors free but lost.

“Suddenly we were alone, free, and had no idea what to do,” says Martin. “Where does one go from here? Where are we anyway? We saw a distant house and approached it. The landlord saw us, panicked and ran away. We entered the house, ate whatever we could find, and changed our clothes, but we mostly just slept.”

Several days later, additional American soldiers arrived and took the survivors, including Martin and his siblings, to a nearby city, where a Jewish community which survived the Holocaust was being formed.

The children were taken to the hospital and released after medical exams. Then they were on their way again — this time to the *Kloster Indersdorf* monastery in the town of *Dachau* — where orphaned children who survived the horror were taken.

Thanks to the nuns’ sensitive care, the children began adjusting to their new life, learned how to eat and sleep and mainly how to deal with the nightmares.

TURNING POINT

Martin and Jack sought to reach Palestine, to be with their siblings who had immigrated in 1935, but were banned entry to the Land of Israel. “They told us it was impossible, that we had only one option now — to go to England.”

Martin and Jack were part of the group of children, some of whom arrived from the *Theresienstadt* concentration camp in the Czech Republic, who boarded a ship to Southampton.

England’s Jewish community embraced the orphaned children. Martin and his brother were adopted by the community members and integrated into educational institutions. His dream to immigrate to Israel was shelved and Martin settled in England.

And yet, he found it difficult to rehabilitate his life. He remained lonely, and only in 1998 he married Aida and immigrated with her to Israel. They settled in *Rehovot* — the city where he was slated to live with his parents and siblings had the war not broken out.

For many years, he avoided talking about his experiences during the Holocaust. His wife, Aida, says that all her attempts to get him to talk were in vain. “He would close up and wouldn’t share,” she says.

The first visit to the monastery in Germany in 2005 was the turning point. “As a child, he lost his entire childhood,” says Aida. “Martin has a phenomenal memory of history and small details, but he forgot everything from that period.

“But when he saw the archive findings — when he saw his name on the Nazi lists in the camps he was held in and the numbers given to him in each camp, the memories came back. He realized that he had a childhood, that he had a name, and that he had a date of birth — December 10, 1931.”

SAVED IN SHANGHAI

(Continued from page 6)

self, she recounted, smiling.

While in Japan, they were temporarily put up in a very nice hotel, and the Jewish community came to help. “I thought the Japanese were very nice.... There were flowers everywhere, the hotel opened up into a garden. Everyone took their shoes off when entering. It was lovely,” she said.

After just a few months, the local authorities reminded them that they were in *Kobe* on a transit visa only. They had to move on.

The only place that would receive them was the open city of Shanghai.

STATELESS JEWS

Shanghai, an international city, was divided into sections — the British International Settlement and the French Concession.

Nina’s family first moved to the French Concession. They lived on Avenue Joffre. But by late 1943, the Germans told the Japanese that the Polish Jews were “stateless” — Poland no longer existed, as it was under German rule, they claimed. The Germans demanded that Shanghai’s “stateless Jews” be moved to a designated area, where the poor German and Austrian Jewish refugees already lived.

The Russian and Baghdadi Jews helped by arranging housing, and they got some

assistance from Jewish groups. Life in the designated area — the ghetto — was harsh. But it proved safe.

Nina, as a young girl, was free to leave the area and play with her friends; her father, on the other hand, was not allowed to move around, and could not continue the work he had found as an engineer. People needed passes to leave the designated area, passes which became increasingly difficult to obtain.

With hours of free time on his hands, he taught his daughter geography, history, mathematics, and literature. “He had a large map on the wall, and he followed the war closely, using pins to mark the progress of the war... That’s how I learned.

“I was young, and I really enjoyed playing with my Chinese friends — although I didn’t speak a word of Chinese. You know, at that age you don’t really need a common language; children find ways to speak to each other. We played a lot of games,” she recounted, nostalgia in her voice.

Nina attended the excellent Shanghai Jewish School — “with the best teachers.” As the war progressed, though, some of her teachers were interned at camps because they carried British passports.

While war destroyed the lives of so many children in distant Europe, Nina’s concerns were whether she would be first, or sec-



Jewish refugees take a rickshaw for a ride in Shanghai during World War II.

ond, in her class. She did not know the extent of the horrors at the start of the Holocaust — and if her parents did, they shielded her from the devastation.

Still, she does remember the American B-29 planes’ bombardment of Shanghai, several years after Pearl Harbor.

AFTER THE WAR

Shortly after the war, aged 14, carrying mostly memories, Nina parted ways with her Chinese neighbors and her classmates, and came to California.

The hours of lessons with her father paid off. When she entered an elite school in New York City, she skipped two grades. “They would have moved me up another grade, but I didn’t have enough American history background.” Nevertheless, she graduated high school at age 16.

When asked where she feels most at home, Nina answered without missing a beat — “Israel.”

But when asked where she feels that she grew up? “Shanghai... and maybe Berkeley.”

It was at Berkeley that she met her husband, Nahum Admoni — an Israeli student born in Jerusalem — who whisked her away to Israel, where he later rose through the ranks of the country’s intelligence establishment.

From 1982 until 1989, Nahum served as the head of the Mossad — the clandestine Israeli organization that helps safeguard Israelis and Jews around the world.

Nina Admoni must have particularly recognized the importance of that work, given her own family’s story of wartime survival.

IGNORING JEWISH HISTORY

BY YOCHANAN VISSER, YNETNEWS

Fresh manifestations of European anti-Semitism raised their heads once again when Jewish religious leaders were physically attacked by thugs in Berlin and Vienna at the end of August.

Recent data show that anti-Semitism in Europe is on the rise again, especially in Eastern Europe. The situation seems to be worst in Hungary, Poland, and Ukraine. A recent Anti-Defamation League poll carried out in Hungary revealed that a majority of that country's population holds anti-Semitic views.

There are European countries, however, where the situation seems to be better at first sight. One of them is the Czech Republic.

Data presented in the Prague Jewish community's report showed that during 2011 there was no year-on-year increase of anti-Semitic events in the Czech Republic.

Indeed, visitors to Prague are likely to come away with the impression that all is well with the Jewish community of the Czech Republic. Thousands of tourists annually visit the well-maintained Jewish historical sites of Prague.

A member of Prague's Jewish community told me that, at worst, Czechs are generally indifferent to the Jews. He said the relative absence of Muslims in the Czech Republic contributes to the tolerant climate. He also said he is proud of the situation in the Jewish Quarter in Prague.

But the fine state of preservation of Prague's Jewish Quarter contrasts starkly with the former Jewish ghetto in *Třebíč*.



Jewish cemetery in Prague.

The *Třebíč* ghetto, founded in the 15th century, is advertised by the Czech government as the best-preserved Jewish ghetto in Europe.

It is evidently for this reason that UNESCO added the *Třebíč* ghetto to its prestigious World Heritage List.

Visitors to the *Třebíč* ghetto will immediately notice that no attempt has been made to tell the full history of the *Třebíč* ghetto's Jews.

In stark contrast to the wall of names at the entrance of the Warsaw ghetto and the memorial in the *Lodz* ghetto in Poland, there is no memorial of any kind to the 1,700 Jews of *Třebíč* who perished in Hitler's death camps.

Their abandoned homes have been turned into cozy apartments, shops, and pubs that serve the local population. The European Union and the *Třebíč* municipality provide the funding that has enabled their restoration.

Other than its two synagogues, the only building still recognizable as part of the ghetto is its former hospital. The structure was recently renovated. But instead of becoming a museum, the ghetto hospital has become a gentrified apartment building for the Czechs.

The most shocking example of ignorance of Jewish history and religion at this UNESCO site is to be found in the so called "Rear Synagogue." The building today serves mainly as a cultural and exhibition center for the local population.

Jewish religious and ritual items are displayed in showcases on the synagogue's upper floor. They include an open Torah scroll with its text visibly on display (forbidden according to Jewish law).

In the main hall of this holy site, to the left and right of the niche that formerly hosted the Holy Ark containing the Torah scrolls, two small statues are on display today. One depicts the biblical incident of the Sin of the Golden Calf. The second replicates the crucifixion of Jesus.

Dasa Juranova, a spokesperson for the *Třebíč* ghetto's management, explained to me that the choice of the statues was the work of the director and the management of the site.

Another member of the Czech management of the ghetto, Lenka Nevřklova, conceded that not enough was being done to explain the history of the Jews of *Třebíč*.

However, the display of statues in the synagogue of the former ghetto — a matter clearly prohibited by Jewish law — as well as the choice of the statues, testifies to something far worse than negligence.

It is obvious that its Czech management regards the site as a part of the Czech heritage and not as part of the Jewish inheritance in Europe.

Insensitivity of this kind to matters of Jewish religion and history is becoming a worrying trend in Europe. It finds its expression in attempts to prohibit

circumcision and ritual slaughter in several European countries. Among them are traditionally liberal countries like the Netherlands, which historically was one of the countries where Jews enjoyed broad freedom of religion.

In Germany, this trend has already led to criminal charges against a rabbi following the ruling of a *Cologne* court that circumcision constitutes an illegal form of bodily harm to babies.

The chief rabbi of France, Giles Bernheim, has recently warned about the growing rejection of Jews and Judaism in his country. Anti-Semitic incidents in France have increased by 53% compared with the same period last year.

It is encouraging that some in Europe have apparently seen the writing on the wall and have taken to the streets to protest the rise in anti-Semitic attacks. But clearly much more needs to be done.

There is obviously a direct link between the "growing rejection of Jews and Judaism" and the rise in anti-Semitic attacks in Europe.

Anti-Semitism in Europe has a long history, and has always been fed by distortions about Jews and their history and religion.

The way to combat this problem is to educate the masses, not only about the Holocaust but also about Jewish history and religion.

UNESCO world heritage sites are uniquely fit to provide this type of education.

Therefore UNESCO, as well as the Czech government, should take action to rectify the situation in the *Třebíč* ghetto.

A first step should be to respect the holiness of the Rear Synagogue and to ban the exhibition of statues at the site.

HOLOCAUST RAILROAD CASE TO PROCEED

For the first time, the U.S. Court of Appeals has found that a case may be brought against a foreign national railroad, in a Holocaust-related case that seeks billions of dollars.

The court in Chicago refused to dismiss a suit against the Hungarian State Railroads (also known as the MAV) brought by Hungarian victims of the Holocaust who claimed the railroad must compensate them for the property it took from them in violation of international law.

"The Jews of Hungary were relatively OK until 1944, and the MAV actually employed Jews right up to the minute it deported them [to concentration camps]," said Richard Weisberg, a professor at Yeshiva University's Cardozo Law School who is a lawyer in the case. "Some of our clients were MAV employees, and nothing like that could ever have happened in France."

He was referring to the French National Railroad, which survivors also sued but which American courts have ruled has sovereign immunity and thus protection from suits here.

But in the case against the MAV, Weisberg said, some of the plaintiffs not only

worked for the railroad but also "were tenants in MAV-owned homes."

"They were living in company housing, and all of a sudden they were kicked out and their possessions were left in the apartments," he said. "The MAV still owns them. And the MAV owns warehouses along the right-of-way, where Jews leased storage space. Those leasehold arrangements were breached as part of a pattern of genocidal conduct."

In addition, Weisberg said, the suit alleges that personal property such as candlesticks and jewelry were taken.

"Although the MAV does not currently own the jewelry that was taken, we allege that it still owns the proceeds," he said.

The Court of Appeals sent the case back down to a lower court with instructions

that it ensure that all legal remedies in Hungary have been exhausted before allowing the case to proceed in the United States. Weisberg said the plaintiffs would argue that there is such anti-Semitism in Hungary that "the idea our clients who are Jewish victims of the Holocaust would prevail in Hungarian courts on Holocaust-related claims is something we feel we would be able to deny. ... It would not make any sense given the climate in Hungary."



PROUDLY BEARING ELDERS' SCARS

(Continued from page 6)

some of them said, 'Of course.'

"To me, it's a scar," said Ms. Doron, who grew interested in the numbering while drawing blood from a tattooed arm in an emergency room. "The fact that young people are choosing to get the tattoos is, in my eyes, a sign that we're still carrying the scar of the Holocaust."

Numbered follows Hanna Rabinovitz, a middle-aged woman who puts her father's number on her ankle after his death. The film also tells the story of Ayal Gelles, a 28-year-old computer programmer, and his grandfather, Avraham Nachshon, 86, both of whom bear the number A-15510 on their arms.

"Like an inheritance or something," Mr. Gelles said of his tattoo. "It's provocative, I guess. Everyone is kind of appalled at first, kind of shocked by it."

Mr. Gelles said he had an epiphany seeing cows branded at a ranch in Argentina, leading him to get the tattoo and to adopt a vegan diet. He did not tell Mr. Nachshon of his plan.

"If I knew, I would have said to you not to do it," the grandfather told his grandson one recent evening.

"I dream every night about it," Mr. Nachshon said as he told his Holocaust story, which includes several months at *Birkenau*, where his mother and sister were killed in the gas chambers. "Many times we're running away from the Germans. Sometimes the whole night I was running. Maybe this time they won't catch me."

Mr. Nachshon swims, does yoga or runs on a treadmill each morning, returning home by 2 p.m. to feed the neighborhood cats and pass the hours in front of the TV. A couple of times a week, Mr. Gelles comes for supper at his Tel Aviv apartment, and they watch TV together.

"Every time I see it, it's a reminder to call him," Mr. Gelles said of the number. "I find it kind of hard to relate to people I don't know and places I haven't been to and this

thing called the Holocaust. The thing I relate to more is my grandfather."

The Israeli who tattooed Livia Ravek's number, 4559, on her son, Oded Ravek, and grandson, Daniel Philosoph, did it free.

It was a Friday. Mr. Ravek, a 56-year-old glass artist who lives in Ottawa and was here visiting family when he was tattooed two years ago, brought Sabbath flowers to his mother. "She was really upset about it at first," he said. "When I explained the reasons for why I did it, we cried together. I said, 'You're always with me.'"

The 10 tattooed descendants interviewed for this article echoed one another's motivations: they wanted to be intimately, eternally bonded to their survivor-relative. And they wanted to live the mantra "Never forget" with something that would constantly provoke questions and conversation.

Ms. Sagir, a cashier at a minimarket in the heart of touristy Jerusalem, said she is asked about the number 10 times a day. There was one man who called her "pathetic," saying of her grandfather, "You're trying to be him and take his suffering." And there was a police officer who said, "God creates the forgetfulness so we can forget," Ms. Sagir recalled. "I told her, 'Because of people like you who want to forget this, we will have it again.'"

One recent Friday, Ms. Sagir accompanied her uncle, Doron Diamant, 40, a carpenter and father of four, to the tattoo parlor. He was the fifth descendant of Yosef Diamant — who died last year at 84 — to be tattooed.

It was done in 15 minutes, for about \$40. When the tattoo artist, a Russian immigrant, joked that he is "not so patriotic" to do it at a discount, Mr. Diamant quietly seethed.

"This is the reason he sits here, this tattoo and what this number represents," Mr. Diamant said. "We got the country because of these people."

TORAH TRAVELS FROM HELL ON EARTH INTO OUTER SPACE

BY LAUREN MARKOE,
THE WASHINGTON POST

Nearly a decade ago, Dan Cohen set out to make a film about the Holocaust and dead astronauts, a story some told him would be too depressing to tell.

Released last year, *An Article of Hope* unflinchingly delves into two tragedies — one almost too massive to contemplate, the other fresher in our minds.

"It's some very, very dark and depressing subject matter, but really the message of the movie is hope," said Garrett Reisman, a Jewish former astronaut who is helping to promote the film. "Embedded in these two incredibly tragic events, of a completely different scale, there is the story of the constant human desire to achieve goodness."

An Article of Hope takes us to the launch site at the Kennedy Space Center on January 16, 2003, with intimate footage of the astronauts' faces as they ride and then walk toward the space shuttle *Columbia*.

On board the *Columbia* is a crew of seven — six Americans and Ilan Ramon, Israel's first astronaut and the son of a survivor of Auschwitz. Also aboard, in Ramon's care, is a Torah, given to him by another Holocaust survivor.

Joachim Joseph, an Israeli physicist, was born in the Netherlands, and deported as a boy to the *Bergen-Belsen* concentration camp with thousands of other Dutch Jews. There, at 13, he was secretly bar mitzvahed with a small Torah — the scrolls of the Hebrew Bible — that had been smuggled into the camp.

As Joseph recounts in the documentary, his dying rabbi pressed the Torah into his hands, and asked him to promise to protect it. Use it, he said, to tell the story of what happened here.

Joseph, who died in 2008 before the film was completed, explains in the documentary why Ramon asked permission to take the Torah on his mission: "He thought he would show it to the world as a symbol of how a person can go from the depths of hell to the heights of space."



Israel's first astronaut, Ilan Ramon.

An Article of Hope uses the 60-year journey of the Torah to weave together the stories of Ramon and Joseph, with footage from NASA, animated drawings of Joseph's life in the camp, and television news accounts of the day the *Columbia* was lost.

We learn that Ramon, a decorated fighter pilot, was a hero in Israel well before he became an astronaut. In addition to Joseph's Torah, he brought to space a picture of the Earth, from the perspective of the moon, drawn by a Jewish boy killed at Auschwitz.

We learn that Joseph was a climatologist who worked on an experiment Israelis had prepared for the *Columbia*, and that he had never, until Ramon asked him about the little Torah in his home, figured out how to fulfill his boyhood promise to the rabbi.

For more than a year, the documentary has made the rounds of film festivals, both Jewish-oriented and not. Synagogues and Jewish community centers have organized

special showings, often inviting Cohen and others involved with Holocaust remembrance and the space program to speak on panels afterward.

"You are devastated by the end of the film but there is a hopefulness," said Hilary Helstein, executive director of the Los Angeles Jewish Film Festival, where the film won best documentary. "We showed it a year ago, but people are still talking about it."

Howard Elias, who runs the Hong Kong Jewish Film Festival, said friends were skeptical when he told them he wanted to open it last November with *An Article of Hope*.

"They said, 'Nobody wants to see a film about a dead astronaut.'" But, as Elias predicted, the audience voted to award it first prize.

While *An Article of Hope* has resonated among Jewish filmgoers, Cohen wants to show it nationally, on public television.

The Public Broadcasting Service is eager, but requires financial support from the producers. Cohen has to raise \$35,000 more to guarantee it an airdate. He wants to time it to mark the 10th anniversary of the last flight of the space shuttle *Columbia*, which exploded on February 1, 2003.

As a Jewish director, Cohen was moved to create a documentary that would teach about the Holocaust. But he aimed for a universal story, and decided the best way to achieve one was to focus on the *Columbia* crew, and how they became a family.

"They are a shining example of the magnificence of diversity and what diversity brings to the world," said Cohen. "And woven around them is the story of the Holocaust and this little Torah scroll, in this horrific moment in our history, in which there was an attempt to stamp out diversity."

"WE CAN DEAL WITH ANY CHALLENGE"

(Continued from page 1)

journey the Jewish people have traveled in 60 years, from the horrors of the *Shoah* to a proud, strong, and independent State. A State that now has these powerful fighter jets returning to the Valley of Death of the grandfathers and grandmothers of our pilots. At that moment, I felt in my very being, the strength and power residing within our people, which demonstrated the ability to overcome and build itself anew. I pondered our ability to overcome any and all of those who seek to destroy us and to remain a free and proud people in its land forever.

After this most symbolic flight, we flew directly home to Israel without landing again on Polish soil. We flew from the darkness into the light. For the duration of the three hours' flying time there was radio silence between the jets. Despite being a bunch of Jewish pilots who normally talk nonstop, no one spoke a word. Each of us was busy with his own thoughts trying to understand what we had just done and the underlying meaning of this very special flight.

After landing in Israel, a voicemail was waiting for me. It was from Yitzhak Cohen, a native of *Saloniki*, Greece, and a survivor of Auschwitz. He had observed the flyover from the ground at Auschwitz. He said to me, "Amir, today I was born again. Thank you." I heard this and was tremendously moved. I knew that the effort had been worthwhile.

I would like to add that several days later, I presented the same photograph that I have on my wall to the father of my good friends, the man that you all know as Eli Zborowski, z"l. I felt that as a leader of the survivors here in the US and as the Chairman of this organization, he would understand and appreciate this special event.

I look at this photograph in my room every day. This is a photo that encompasses the Jewish people, tragedy and glory, pain, pride and hope. To remember and never to forget, to believe in ourselves, and to personify the words that we spoke above the skies of Poland.

"We, the pilots of the State of Israel, in the skies above the death camps, declare that we have arisen from the ashes of millions of victims. We carry their silent cry, we salute their bravery and courage, and we promise to be the defense shield of the Jewish People in their land, Israel."

The Middle East today is in a state of turmoil. Israel stands in the midst of it all as a formidable rock in a sea of ideological extremism that does not hesitate to utilize deadly weapons in its quest. No one knows what the future will bring.

It is clear to us that only a strong defensive force, independent and powerful will be able to ensure our continued existence as a free people in our homeland and ensure our desire for a peaceful existence within. The Israel Air Force is the primary deterrent force. The ability to defend must be razor sharp. Ready and able at any moment for action against enemies both near and far.

I look at our aircrews, at our ground crews and at our air defense people. I see their devotion and determination and I am certain that we can deal with any challenge.



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