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The American & International Societies for Yad Vashem Annual Tribute Dinner

LEGACY AND GRATITUDE

The Annual Tribute Dinner of the American Society for Yad Vashem was held on Sunday, November 10th. With inspiring addresses from honoree Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev, and *Mauthausen* survivor Ed Mosberg, the dinner marked thirty-two years since the Society was established by the Founding Chairman Eli Zborowski, *z"l*, along with other Holocaust survivors.

The program, entitled "Legacy and Gratitude," was presided over by Dinner Co-Chairpersons Marilyn and Barry Rubenstein, with Chairman of the Board Leonard Wilf giving opening remarks.

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg was honored with the Yad Vashem Remembrance Award, given for his visionary leadership and for his support of Yad Vashem's efforts to strengthen the cause of Holocaust remembrance and education. Most recently the recipient of the prestigious Genesis Prize, Mayor Bloomberg has been a central figure in empowering New York City as the capital of tolerance, innovation and growth. In 2005, Mayor Bloomberg was the official representative of President Bill Clinton at the opening of the new Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

The evening program featured a special memorial tribute to the life and contributions of Eli Zborowski, *z"l*. A member of the Jewish Fighters Organization, Zborowski survived the war in hiding along with his mother, sister and younger brother, and served as liaison between the Jewish ghettos and non-Jewish partisan units. Upon arriving in America, Eli immediately began devoting time and resources to Holocaust remembrance. In 1981, Eli founded the American and International Societies for Yad Vashem, and served as its volunteer Chairman from its inception, guiding it to raise over $100 million for the benefit of Yad Vashem. He established the Diana and Eli Zborowski Interdisciplinary Chair for Holocaust Studies and Research at Yeshiva University, and endowed the Diana Zborowski Center for the Study of the Aftermath of the Holocaust at Yad Vashem.

At the event, held on the 75th anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, speakers reflected on the *Shoah* and emphasized the importance of education and legacy, ensuring that the torch of remembrance is assumed by the second and third generations.

This year's dinner also recognized the tenth anniversary of the Columbia shuttle disaster. Tributes to Petr Ginz and Col. Ilan Ramon were especially powerful, thanks to the presence of Ginz's nephew Yoram Pressburger and Ramon's son Tal Ramon, who performed a song he composed in memory of his father. In addition to Tal Ramon's appearance, the program included performances by HaZamir: The International Jewish High School Choir, with moving renditions of "Eli, Eli," written by the young paratrooper Hannah Szenes, and the "Yugnt Hymn," dedicated to the youth club in the Vilna ghetto and written by partisan Shmerke Kaczerginski.

Leonard Wilf, Rabbi Israel Meir Lau and Ambassador Ron Prosor.

Honorable Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor of the City of New York, 2013 recipient of the Yad Vashem Remembrance Award.

IN THIS ISSUE

PAST TERRORS LIVE ON WITH HOLOCAUST'S CHILDREN

BY TIM MADIGAN,
FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

For the first-grade girl named Leslie, the playground antics seemed just that, a silly and harmless way for a few boys to spend recess. That day in the 1960s, at the elementary school in Fort Worth, the boys started jutting their hands in the air and shouting "Heil Hitler!" They laughed. Leslie had no idea what the words and gestures meant.

At home after school she found her mother, Brigitte Altman, sitting at her bedroom desk. Leslie began to describe the playground silliness.

"My mother had always been and still is mostly very calm, not easily upset," the daughter, Leslie Magee, said. "But she was just horrified when I mentioned this to her. She stopped what she was doing and she pulled me aside."

Mother and daughter sat down on the bed and Brigitte spoke of a distant place, a small European country on the Baltic Sea called Lithuania. The country was occupied by the Germans during World War II. Brigitte had been a Jewish teenager then, herded by the Nazis into a squalid ghetto of 40,000 people.

She was one of only a few hundred to survive. Brigitte's mother died of pneumonia and malnutrition. Scores of her uncles, aunts, cousins and friends were ordered to dig their own graves and then shot en masse. Brigitte's father was sent to the concentration camp at *Dachau*. Hitler, the mother explained, was the German leader behind it all, the man who tried to kill all the Jews.

"She was aghast and mortified, horrified, and understandably, because this was many years after the Holocaust and in Fort Worth, something like this was going on on the playground. I was shocked, and then there was this feeling of being deeply saddened because someone that I loved so much, my mother, had suffered so much.

This family photo shows Brigitte Friedmann's family in Lithuania. Only three members from Friedmann's, (now Altman's), family did not perish in the Holocaust.

"It hurt me to know that she had been put through such tragedy and loss," she said. "I carried that with me always."

Decades later, Leslie faced the decision of when to tell her own daughter, 11-year-old Lauren. The girl and her grandmother have shared a profound bond from the moment of Lauren's birth.

"My hand was forced," Leslie said. "Lauren was in kindergarten. I heard they were going to discuss the Holocaust in Sunday school. I told her there was a lot of sadness and death and that her grandmother had been involved in it."

Leslie has since tried to spare her daughter from the most haunting details. But Lauren seems to understand, one reason she has always doted on her grandmother.

"I'm very sad for what she went through," Lauren said. "And I'm very grateful that she's still here today. I don't want anything bad to happen to her anymore."

They are complex feelings familiar to thousands around the world in what is now an intergenerational story. Scores of studies have documented how the trauma and horror did not just afflict one generation, how it was often passed down by survivors to their offspring. But seven decades after the war, there are a third generation and a fourth.

Descendants remember the horror but are increasingly inclined to talk about something else, a new sense of healing and pride among the ones who came after.

For decades now, survivors and their descendants have been coming together around the world in formal and informal ways, talking of the past, looking to the future.

One new group is called Generations, organized by the Dallas Holocaust Museum. Its mission statement says Generations is "committed to educate our community and future generations by preserving the memories of the past and keeping our families' voices alive."

A handful of people were expected for its first meeting in June. More than a hundred showed up: survivors, second, third, and in a few cases, fourth generations.

"There was such excitement," said Arlington artist Julie Meetal, the daughter of Holocaust survivors and a founder of Generations. "There was such a need for second and third generations to get together and have their voices heard."

(Continued on page 12)

DISCOVERY OF NAZI PLUNDERED ART OFFERS GLIMPSE "INTO A DARK STORY"

BY CARLO ANGERER
AND ERIN MCCLAM, NBC NEWS

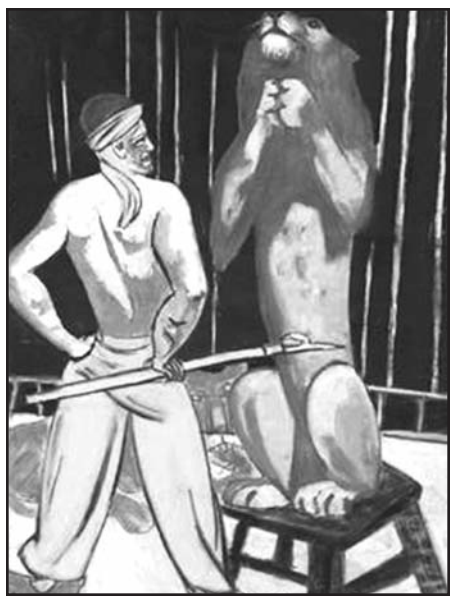
Hundreds of works of art by Picasso, Matisse and other masters of the 20th century — seized by the Nazis, lost for decades and now worth more than $1 billion — were reportedly found among piles of rotting groceries in a German apartment.

The find would be among the largest in the worldwide effort, underway since the end of World War II, to recover masterpieces plundered by the Nazis from Jews inside Germany and from elsewhere in Europe, considered the largest art heist in history.

Experts will appraise the works — paintings, drawings and prints — but the German news magazine *Focus*, which broke the story, put the value at more than 1 billion euros, or $1.3 billion.

German authorities have not released photos of the cache, which also includes works by Marc Chagall and Paul Klee. Investigators found it two years ago, after a man taking the train from *Zurich* to *Munich* was found carrying a large but legal amount of cash.

The man was the son of Hildebrand Gurlitt, who was a modern art specialist in the early 20th century. Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister, recruited Gurlitt to raise cash for the Third Reich by selling art that had been deemed degenerate by Adolf Hitler.



German artist Max Beckman's "Lion Tamer," a 1930 gouache and pastel work on paper, was recently sold by Cornelius Gurlitt — the reclusive son of Hildebrand Gurlitt, the art dealer who in the run-up to the Second World War had been in charge of gathering up so-called "degenerate art" for the Nazis.

When Hildebrand Gurlitt died, in a traffic accident in 1956, his son inherited the art, apparently unaware of its origin.

Focus reported that the son, Cornelius Gurlitt, 80, kept the works hidden in darkened rooms in his disheveled, food-littered apartment in *Munich*. He sold a painting now and then when he needed cash, the magazine said.

Much of the work was already known from reproductions, said Walter Grasskamp, a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in *Munich*.

"I think the surprise will be bigger in terms of politics: who owned it, how was it taken away, was it legal — obviously not," Grasskamp said. "What about the original owners, where did they end? I think this is a question as interesting as the value for the art market."

It was not clear why German authorities kept the find secret for two years. The British newspaper *The Guardian* reported that it may be because of diplomatic and legal complications, particularly claims for restitution from around the world.

International warrants were out for at least 200 of the prized works, according to *Focus*. The magazine reported that the recovered collection is being stored in a secure warehouse in *Munich* for now.

Asked about the *Focus* report, a spokesman for the German government, Steffen Seibert, said that authorities were aware of the case and supplying "advice from experts in the field of so-called degenerate art."

More than 20 percent of the art of Europe was looted by the Nazis under Hitler, and as many as 100,000 works are still thought to be missing, according to the U.S. National Archives.

The Allies recovered and catalogued much of the art, which had been stashed by the Germans in churches and other buildings.

The 1919 painting "Reading Girl in White and Yellow" by Henri Matisse. Other works by Matisse and other artists were among almost 1,500 discovered in a German apartment.

General Dwight Eisenhower personally inspected some of the stolen treasures after the Allied victory.

Grasskamp, the professor, said that the discovery should be deemed not a great find for Germany but a reminder of its dark past.

"It is connected with the worst chapter of German history, so it's not a triumph, it's not the 'Nazi treasure,' which is rubbish," he said. "I think this is an interesting peeping hole into a dark story."

THE NAZI HUNTER

THE REMARKABLE STORY OF THE JEWISH REFUGEE RESPONSIBLE FOR TRACKING DOWN THE AUSCHWITZ COMMANDANT

BY SARA MALM, MAIL ONLINE

A German-born Jewish refugee who served in the British Army during World War II has been unveiled as one of the leading investigators responsible for the capture of one of the worst Nazi criminals of the Holocaust.

Hanns Alexander, a Jewish refugee serving in the British Army, captured Rudolph Höss.

Throughout his life in Britain, Hanns Alexander never spoke of his involvement in the hunt for Auschwitz commander Rudolph Höss, and the truth was not unveiled until after his death.

In 1946 he played a crucial role in bringing Höss to justice, a man responsible for killing millions of Jewish men, women and children.

Rudolph Höss was not only in charge of the deadliest of the Holocaust concentration camps; he was also the mastermind behind the use of Zyklon B to commit mass killings of (mainly Jewish) prisoners.

Mr. Alexander's story was uncovered by his great-nephew at the war hero's funeral in 2006.

During a eulogy, Mr. Alexander's nephews spoke of his past as a Nazi hunter, and Thomas Harding, whose grandmother was Mr. Alexander's sister, began to investigate his past.

Hanns Alexander fled from Berlin to London in 1936 after his father, already in England, heard rumors of what was about to take place in their native Germany.

When Britain declared war on Germany in 1939, 22-year-old Hanns and his twin brother Paul volunteered for the British Army and were placed with the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, a unit of refugees who wanted to fight the Nazis.

In 1945, having taken part in the D-Day landings in Normandy and witnessed the liberation of *Bergen-Belsen* concentration camp, Hanns Alexander was chosen to take part in a 12-strong team, tasked with tracking down Nazi war criminals.

As the team rounded up the *Bergen-Belsen* guards and administrators, interpreter Hanns became central in the interrogations and uncovered Rudolph Höss's role in the Holocaust.

Hanns Alexander then began his hunt for Höss, knowing that the former Auschwitz *Kommandant* would hold the key information to the workings of the Nazi atrocities committed against his people.

The fall of a Nazi criminal: Rudolph Höss, pictured with Heinrich Himmler during an inspection of Auschwitz, left, and battered and bruised following his arrest by the British, in March 1946.

After the fall of Auschwitz, Höss and his family had fled towards the Danish border. British intelligence had tracked them down to the *Flensburg* area, where Höss's wife Hedwig and their children lived in an old sugar factory.

After the British managed to intercept a letter from Hedwig proving that she knew where her husband was hiding, she had been taken in for questioning.

Hanns arrived on March 7, 1946, and began to interrogate Mrs Höss. She would not budge. But neither would Hanns Alexander.

Hanns and members of his team brought in Höss's oldest son Klaus and threatened Hedwig with deporting him to Siberia.

Ten minutes later, Hedwig had written down the location and new alias of her husband, who was living at a farm under the name Franz Lang.

Rudolph Höss was arrested on March 11, 1946. Hanns Alexander and his men dragged him out of hiding and beat him until he gave up his true identity.

Höss stood trial at Nuremberg in April and was subsequently handed over to Polish authorities on May 25, 1946. In Poland he stood trial accused of murdering three million people.

Höss was sentenced to death on April 2, 1947, and was hanged, immediately adjacent to the crematorium of the former Auschwitz I concentration camp, on April 16.

Captain Hanns Alexander never returned to Germany, and died in London in 2006, aged 89.

HOLOCAUST RESTITUTION MAKING LITTLE HEADWAY IN EASTERN EUROPE

BY DINAH SPRITZER, JTA

In 1988, Yehuda Evron received a memorable letter from Lech Walesa, the first post-Communist president of Poland, on the eve of the country's transition to democracy.

"He wrote that within a few months we would get my wife's property back," recalled Evron, now 80. His wife was the only Holocaust survivor of a family that owned a residential building and factory in *Zwienec* that had been confiscated by the Nazis and then seized by Poland's Communist government.

Evron, a Romanian émigré and leader of the New York-based Holocaust Restitution Committee, which represents claims of thousands of survivors from Poland, chortled bitterly when recalling his initial optimism after corresponding with Walesa. Nearly 25 years have passed since, many more survivors have died and Polish leaders repeatedly have reneged on promises to enact a restitution law to compensate for the billions of dollars in property stolen from Jews and non-Jews during and after the Holocaust.

Home to more Jews than any other country before World War II, Poland is now the only European country to endure Nazi occupation that has not enacted a law to ensure some kind of private property compensation or restitution to Holocaust survivors or their heirs.

Evron talked to JTA at a Prague meeting on Holocaust restitution, called the Immovable Property Review Conference, which was organized as a follow-up to a 2009 conference in this city that produced a historic resolution on Holocaust assets. The resolution, called the 2009 Terezin Declaration, was signed by 46 countries that committed to speeding up the restitution of private and communal property to Holocaust survivors and their heirs.

"In sum, restitution of property confiscated during the Holocaust proceeds exceedingly slowly, if at all," said a report prepared for the conference by the World Jewish Restitution Organization, an umbrella group.

The focus remains on Central and Eastern Europe, where compensation for communal and private property seizures began in the 1990s and in most cases continues at a glacial pace.

In Romania, all compensation to private property claimants has been suspended; critics blame a corrupt and bankrupt compensation fund.

In Latvia, where 300 Jewish communal properties were never returned, a bill offering some compensation has been stalled for six years.

In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orban has withheld the final two years of a government compensation program to aid Hungarian survivors who reside outside the country.

There have been a few bright spots.

In 2011, Lithuania authorized payment of about $50 million over 10 years to compensate the Jewish community for communal property seized by the Nazi and Soviet occupation regimes. Serbia passed a restitution bill affecting Jews and non-Jews that the Jewish community expects eventually will address Holocaust claims specifically.

Recently the Czech Republic's lower house of parliament approved a plan to return billions of dollars worth of communal property confiscated from Jews and Christians by previous Communist governments. If the bill passes, the Czech Federation of Jewish Communities is set to receive $500,000 a year over 30 years.

The worst restitution record, conference-goers said, belongs to Poland.

In 2010, Terezin Declaration signatories approved a set of nonbinding best practices, such as suggesting solutions to the problem of heirless property and making the claims process more transparent and affordable. After initially agreeing to the document, Poland made an abrupt about-face and withdrew its support. To add salt to an already festering diplomatic wound, Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski in 2011 went on Polish radio to complain of U.S. pressure on restitution issues.

"If the United States would have wanted to help Polish Jews, a good moment for that would have been 1943–44, when the majority of them were still alive," Sikorski quipped.

Stuart Eizenstat, a former U.S. deputy treasury secretary who served as special representative of the U.S. president and secretary of state for

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BOOK REVIEWS

A CHRONICLE OF TWO AND A HALF YEARS IN AUSCHWITZ

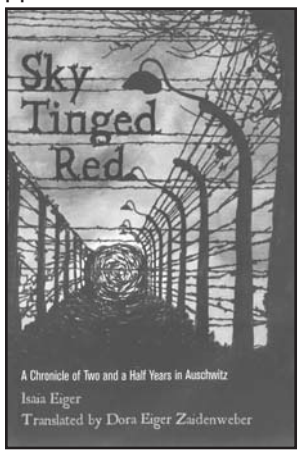
Sky Tinged Red: A Chronicle of Two and a Half Years in Auschwitz.

By Isaia Eiger. Translated by Dora Eiger Zaidenweber. Beaver's Pond Press, Inc.: Edina, Minnesota, 2013. 391 pp. $19.95 softcover.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

It isn't easy to write a book like *Sky Tinged Red: A Chronicle of Two and a Half Years in Auschwitz*. In his Introduction the author, Isaia Eiger, makes that clear. On the one hand, Eiger explains, he felt the responsibility of recording what he experienced during those brutal years. On the other hand there was the pain he felt reliving and writing it down... and the pain, he was sure, those who survived would feel reading the material and reliving it themselves. In sum, he began to think, "Why should I open their wounds?" Meanwhile, he realized, there were people who weren't there and who couldn't possibly begin to believe it all! Subsequently, however, the author began reading the Holocaust literature being published and realized the world desperately needed to know what he knew ....

Thus, Eiger, a native of *Radom*, Poland, troubled by the idea that many might feel "Jews went to their deaths like sheep to the slaughter," finds it important for us all to know of the courage and consummate heroism he found around him even in the very heart of *Birkenau*, Auschwitz's hellish extermination camp. It was there he spent those terrible two and a half years. Specifically, he was part of the skeletal crew the Nazis needed to do their damnable work — first slaving to construct the place, and then forced by them to do much of their dirty work. With that, Eiger shares with us the compelling story of the Greek Jew Isaac Tsitgiyahu, a member of the *Sonderkommando* in *Birkenau*. The *Sonderkommando* was charged with the horrendous task of removing the corpses from the gas chambers and then burning them in a fiery pit. On occasion it happened that a small child, sheltered in its mother's arms, was still alive when the chamber was opened. Such was discovered by Isaac, who put the child aside as he continued his work. An SS guard appeared and insisted Isaac throw the child into the fire. A fight ensued between the two men. One man could not overpower the other. The result — Isaac fell into the fire and "with all his remaining strength" determinedly took the SS man with him.



No less heroic and unforgettable is the story Eiger relates of the "28-year-old former dancer from Warsaw" Franciszka Manovna, "known as Lusia in her circle of friends." Naked and knowing she was about to enter the gas chamber — most had no idea — an SS man, admiring her figure, invited her to go into a corner with him for his pleasure. Her reaction in sum: She "spit in his face." He drew his pistol. In the melee that quickly followed, she grabbed the gun and proceeded to shoot him and every other SS man in the vicinity! True, in the end she herself was shot, but not before proclaiming to her ruthless murderers "in a clear proud voice" that "their end would soon come when they and their country would pay dearly for the horrific crimes they perpetrated."

For that matter, because the job Eiger had for the majority of his time in the camp gave him access to much information — he registered the endless transports of people brought to the camp from all over Europe and even North Africa — he records the story of the nameless masses who fought with all their might once they actually knew why they had been brought to Auschwitz-Birkenau. For, indeed, another aspect of Nazi murder the author stresses continually in this absorbing work is the incredible level of deceit practiced by the Nazis on their innocent victims. Thus we are told the particularly poignant and heartbreaking story of the Czechoslovak Jews from *Theresienstadt* brought to *Birkenau* in 1943. They were completely fooled into believing they were simply going to be "resettled to the wide-open spaces of eastern Europe." "They firmly believed in the high standards of German culture and civilization. They also believed that the present problems were due to the war and that when it was over they would return to their comfortable former lives." In fact, though, the ruse played on them was especially ruthless. Initially, they were solicitously kept together — young and old — in one area. Additionally, unlike everyone else brought to the camp, they weren't searched. Their belongings were not taken. Instead, a hospital was set up for them, a school was created for their children, workshops were organized for the adults . . . . In fact, Eiger and all the long-term inmates at *Birkenau* wondered what all this meant. What were the Germans up to now? Six months later these Czechoslovak Jews, with some few who were saved by Eiger and his friends, were taken to the gas chambers . . . "even as they resisted and fought."

The author writes about how inmates at *Birkenau*, like himself, never stopped thinking of escape, of ruminating on every possible method. Interestingly, they were all absolutely sure that once the world knew what was going on at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the world would quickly act to end the inhumanity. Concomitantly, too, inmates like Eiger also never stopped planning just how they could blow up the camp. And, in fact, unbelievably, they would eventually blow up a part of it!

In sum, Eiger has much to tell us, making his book an invaluable addition to Holocaust literature. Moreover, it is a book only he could write!

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

"IF, BY MIRACLE": A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR'S TALE

If, by Miracle.

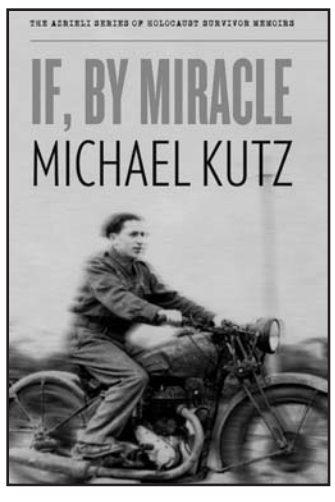
By Michael Kutz. Translated by Vivian Felsen.

Azrieli Foundation, 2013. 184 pp. $14.95 softcover.

At age 10, Michael Kutz is among the 4,000-plus Jews in his town in present-day Belarus who will be marched to the Nazi death pits on October 30, 1941.

In this excerpt from If, by Miracle*, Michael Kutz remembers the German army occupying his town of* Nieswiez*, in present-day Belarus, in June 1941. His father had been mobilized months earlier by the Soviet Red Army, and he was left with his mother and siblings to face the German soldiers and deal with the* Judenrat*, a Jewish council under the control of the Nazi authorities.*

The *Judenrat* then began to register all the Jews in *Nieswiez*. When the *Judenrat* presented the list to the German commandant, he ordered them to organize work groups of men, women and even children. My brother Tsalia was the first name on the list of people designated to clean the streets and sidewalks. Although I was only 10 years old, I was assigned to clean the public toilets, but Tsalia somehow arranged for me to go with his group . . . .



Our group, which included several other children, did eventually have to clean the public toilets, which the Nazis usually ordered us to do with our hands. They often photographed us doing the work. For the most part, we complied because we just wanted to return home safely to our families — if someone disobeyed a command, they were beaten on the head with rubber truncheons. We also heard more serious warnings from the Nazi authorities that forced-labor workers were occasionally shot for disobedience.

To provide the Germans with heat for their lodgings, peasants from the neighboring villages supplied logs from the forests around *Nieswiez*. Jewish men and older boys had to cut up the wood and arrange it in neat piles. Tsalia and I were soon placed among the woodcutters . . . .

Jewish girls and women worked at Nazi headquarters doing laundry, ironing shirts and uniforms, cleaning rooms, peeling potatoes and washing pots. They were often raped by the officers. Some of the young women who had belonged to Zionist organizations before the war were trained in the use of machine guns, revolvers and hand grenades, and managed to smuggle out parts of weapons hidden beneath their clothing and deliver them to people in the newly formed Jewish underground resistance. These girls had to be very careful because the police usually searched their backpacks at the end of each day.

WIDESPREAD HUNGER

With each passing day, hunger became more and more widespread among the Jewish population, and there were instances of sympathetic gentiles selling potatoes and flour to Jews. Whenever the police saw Jews with food supplies, they either arrested them or shot them on the spot and then punished the townspeople for helping them.

My mother used to tell us that necessity is the mother of invention. When we suggested to her that in the evenings, after dark, we could take our clean tablecloths and linen to exchange for food, she, her voice trembling, agreed, choosing me for this task because I was fast and careful. So I became a courier in the dark of night, exchanging these items with non-Jewish acquaintances for bread. I had to assume the responsibilities of an adult, taking the place of our father

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THE VAST REACH OF THE NAZI HOLOCAUST

Seventy years ago a group of rabbis and Jewish war veterans staged a small march in Washington to draw public attention to the Holocaust then taking place across Nazi-occupied Europe. We are still learning more about just what happened, both from archives and from the personal witness of those who somehow survived.

BY LEE COWAN, CBS

She remembers it vividly: "The train arrives, people getting out, lining up on the platform, and pretty soon they will be told, 'Men to one side and women to the other.'"

To talk with Irene Weiss is to touch the Holocaust in a truly personal way.

She's a survivor, and yet — some seven decades later — she can barely believe it actually happened.

"At first, this was pretty hard to talk about, wasn't it?" Cowan asked.

"Yes. It was extremely difficult. And then I realized that we have to share the story. We can't let people forget it."

She was just 13 when the boxcar carrying her and her family arrived at Auschwitz on that all-too-busy platform.

Weiss knew little of what would become of her when the doors of the cattle car opened: "They were barking orders to get out. My father and 16-year-old brother lined up with the other men and boys, and the women and children and elderly in another line."

"Where did your mom go?" Cowan asked.

"Well, she and a very large number of the people from the train were headed right to the gas chambers," Weiss said. "Within a half hour, they were all dead."

That was her childhood reality. But the older she grew, the more unimaginable it all seemed — until one day, she heard about a set of photos that she never knew existed. They were taken by the Nazis on the Auschwitz platform on the very day Irene arrived.

A picture captured that very moment: Irene to the left, alone on the Auschwitz platform. "I'm leaning in to see where my little sister went."

"The very first thing we asked is, 'When are we going to see our families?' " she said. "And they pointed to the chimney and they said, 'That's where your parents are. That's where your family is.'"

"They pointed to the chimney?"

"The chimney. And we ignored it. We ignored it totally. It cannot be."

And then there's this photo that captured Irene's family waiting in line for the Auschwitz gas chamber.

"These two little boys are my two little brothers, and for a long time I could not find my mother here, and I was very unhappy," Weiss said. "And then one day this little face here, sticking out, and I looked with a magnifying glass, and I found her. Ah, yeah, that's the one."

The Holocaust, it seems, continues even now to reveal its horrific reality — and not just to survivors like Irene Weiss.

At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., a 13-year project has uncovered evidence that the number of places where the Holocaust was put into practice was actually far more numerous than anyone imagined.

Geoffrey Megargee, the lead editor of a multi-volume encyclopedia being written on the Holocaust, said that when he started his research, his sense of the scope, of the number of sites implementing Hitler's orders was in the range of 5,000 to 7,000, which to him was "an astounding number."

He now says the total is 42,500 — six times what he originally thought.

"Exactly," he said. "When you put them all together, this was a shock."

Megargee's research doesn't change the number of people exterminated; what it does is enumerate the mind-boggling number of concentration camps, killing centers, ghettos, brothels and forced-labor camps where the Nazis persecuted not only Jews, but Poles, homosexuals, Soviet prisoners of war and many others, too.

"So what does that say about the notion that this was just taking place in a few corners of Europe and was the result of Hitler and a few madmen?" asked Cowan.

"I think it destroys it, utterly," Megargee replied. "Really, to say that you didn't know that there were camps, what was going on in the camps that were local, that would have been impossible."

In the left foreground, Irene Fogel Weiss' two brothers, Reuven and Gershon Fogel, are pictured at Auschwitz; their mother, Lenke Mermelstein Fogel, is seated on the ground behind them. All perished at the Nazi concentration camp.

Members of the League of German Girls (the girls' wing of the Hitler Youth) engage in paramilitary training in 1936.

Which raises the question: Just who beyond the notorious SS was complicit in the persecution?

For most of the last 70-plus years, German women, for example, were thought to be largely innocent bystanders.

But disturbing new research to be released in a book paints an unnerving portrait of women's participation in the Holocaust. They, too, could be brutal killers.

"It takes a certain cognitive ability to carry out, to organize this kind of mass murder on this scale," said Wendy Lower, author of *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*. "And women are not innocent of that. They have that cognitive ability."

Lower said a generation of women was swept up in the nationalistic fervor of the Nazi movement. Banners like one reading "Women and girls — the Jews are your ruin" were pervasive.

She points to 23-year-old Erna Petri, who stumbled on six Jewish children who had escaped from a nearby train. She was so anxious to prove her loyalty to the Reich that she shot them all in the back of the head.

There was Johanna Altvater, who at 22 had moved east to be a secretary. One day she was on a visit to a Jewish ghetto, one inquisitive child got too close: "She picked the child up by the legs and slammed it against the ghetto wall, like she was, you know, kind of shaking the dust out of a carpet."

These women weren't military — they weren't under orders to kill. Lower points out: it's what they knew.

"They did it willingly," she said. "They weren't just conforming, they weren't just getting along. They were ideologically hooked."

Ursula Mahlendorf knows about getting ideologically hooked. "I was very enthusiastic, there was no time that I ever doubted anything," she said of being a Nazi. "Yeah, I was really proud. Yeah, oh yes. Yeah."

She was a member of the Hitler Youth at the tender age of 10. She was forced to join.

"Everything the nation did was all right; everything that Hitler did was all right," Mahlendorf said. "And if bad things were done by the party, Hitler didn't know about it."

She later became a nurse's aide at a field hospital.

One day an injured Russian POW was brought in. She had been taught to hate anything not purely German. Two orderlies asked her if they should kill him instead of treat him.

What happened next surprised her.

"I've never felt a hate, a wave of hatred like that before, and I was just about to yell, 'Yes, you do it,'" Mahlendorf said.

Kill him? "Yeah, and I was aware of what it was, of what I would have been saying. That was one realization that always stayed with me: I could have killed."

She didn't; as far as she knows, that POW survived.

Mahlendorf eventually moved to the U.S. as a Fulbright scholar, and spent her life teaching at the University of California at Santa Barbara. But her Nazi past still haunts her to this day.

"Have you forgiven yourself?" Cowan asked.

"That's a hard one," she said. "Yeah, in part. I've got to live with myself."

She now counts among her friends Holocaust survivors who bear a different kind of witness.

The extent of the Nazi brutality may only be coming to light to researchers now, but for Irene Weiss, it was always there.

"This may be an odd question," said Cowan, "but do you ever wonder why you survived?"

"Pure chance in every way," Weiss said. "There were so many chances to die, and so many, occasionally, chances to survive another day. The system was rigged against survival."

SURVIVORS' CORNER

"BEING JEWISH MEANT BEING DEAD"

BY JOE O'CONNOR, NATIONAL POST

There is a list of horrors rattling around inside Mary Gale's head.

The 86-year-old tells me the story of her life, starting from the happy beginning as a girl growing up in a middle-class Jewish family in *Lodz*, Poland, a family that, like so many other Jewish families would be torn apart by the horrors of the Holocaust.

But Mary Gale has spent the past 70 years living with a burdensome secret, a lie she no longer wishes to conceal. She can pinpoint exactly when the lie began because it had to begin somewhere in order for her to survive. Her father, Menachem, obtained false identity papers for the family and, in 1939, at the stroke of a forger's pen, Miriam Zimmerman — a blond-haired, blue-eyed Polish Jew — became Mary Plochocka, a blond-haired, blue-eyed Polish gentile.

It was a sleight of hand that ultimately saved Miriam Zimmerman's life and a life-giving lie she continued to live with even after the war. Even after marrying Arthur Gale and moving to Canada and becoming a mother who never really talked to her children about those terrible years, because what could she possibly say?

That she was a Jew? That most of her family had been wiped out? That her real name was Miriam Zimmerman and not Mary Gale?

"It is hard for to me to explain why I kept my Jewish identity secret for so long, but the thing is, I became paranoid, and it got to the point during the war where I couldn't even think of being Jewish because being Jewish meant being dead — they were the same thing to me," says Mary Gale, now living in a seniors home in Toronto's west end.

"It got to the point that, even today, when I had six teeth pulled out at the dentist I refused the anesthetic because to take a needle was to never come back. And that was what being Jewish meant to me — it meant never coming back.

"I saw so many horrible things. I saw so many dead people. It is amazing what seeing these things can do to a mind. I knew I was safe here in Canada. But I just couldn't say I was Jewish."

Not even to her son, Tom, who, after a terrible car accident near Ottawa during his university years, went looking for the big answers in life and found religion, converted to Judaism, changed his name to Gershon and moved to Israel where, to this day, he leads an orthodox life. (And where, until recently, his mother had never told him he was Jewish to begin with.)

Keeping her secret was essential, in another time. A Christian woman hid the Zimmermans in Warsaw. Mary, with her hair, her eyes and a phony identity card, was their window to the outside. She shopped, mailed letters, worked in a factory and hid in plain view.

"Nobody thought I could be Jewish because I looked so gentile," Mary says. "I was only ever stopped by the Germans once."

The Warsaw uprising in August 1944 changed things. The city became a battleground. The sky was aflame. Mary's father was killed by the Germans.

"I remember seeing his body," she says, tears welling in her eyes.

Mary Gale.

Mary, her mother Rosa and her sister, Helen, were sent to *Buchenwald* concentration camp — as Polish political prisoners. She weighed 80 pounds at the time of liberation and, in the months ahead, would fall in love with Arthur Gale, a Canadian charged with running their displaced persons camp.

"I told my husband I was Jewish but that I wouldn't tell anyone else," she says. "And he told me it was my life, that I had survived the war, and that I could do whatever I pleased."

So she did, celebrating Christmas, and dropping Anita, her youngest child, at the Anglican church for confirmation classes.

"I always suspected that my mother was Jewish," Anita Stern says. "My grandmother would have matzo and halva hidden underneath her dresser."

Mary experienced a health scare a few years back. She revealed her Jewish identity to Anita then, swearing her to secrecy, a secret she let slip to her eldest daughter, Christine, during a trip back to Warsaw for her 80th birthday.

"I stood on the spot where my father was killed and I fell apart," she says. "I couldn't not tell the truth of who I was."

Now she is telling the world, thanks to a memoir written with the help of Ruth Krongold, a volunteer with The Azrieli Foundation and Ryerson University's Sustaining Memories Project, which documents survivors' stories.

Mary and Ruth met every day for several weeks this fall. Mary talked. Ruth listened.

"It was exhausting," Mary says. "I would go to bed one person and in the middle of the night I'd be in *Buchenwald*. It was a therapy for me. I owed it to all those who died to talk. It took 70 years, but it was time to let go of my lie."

Mary Gale smiles. Her eyes are warm, blue as the sky beyond the nearby window. I ask her who she is now, what name she prefers to be known by: Miriam or Mary?

"I don't really know myself," she says, chuckling. "To be honest, I don't know what name you should call me by."

OUR LOST WARSAW GHETTO DIARY

My relative wrote one of the* Shoah's *most revealing documents. Why doesn't anyone know of it?

BY SARAH WILDMAN, TABLET

"Jews began to write," wrote Emmanuel Ringelblum, the most famous Warsaw ghetto chronicler, recalling efforts to document the destruction. Ringelblum founded the *Oneg Shabbat* group, the collection of "journalists, writers, teachers, public figures, youth, even children," who decided they would record their experiences. The group buried an archive of selected materials, to bear witness. "A great deal was written," Ringelblum recounted, before his own murder, "but most of it was lost during the deportations and extermination of Warsaw's Jews. Only the material hidden in the ghetto archive remained."

That's what Ringelblum believed.

But missing from the famous ghetto archive is the diary of a man named Reuven Ben-Shem. About 800 pages long, penned in minuscule handwriting that is almost impossible to read with the naked eye, the diary is a remarkable account, clear-eyed and poignant, spanning roughly the time from the establishment of the ghetto to the arrival of Soviet troops in Warsaw. It contains references to everything its author had ever studied — from Mishnah and Torah to secular literature and the work of Sigmund Freud, with whom Ben-Shem learned in Vienna in the interwar period — as well as a close observation of the ways in which Jews were forced to become animals, not metaphorically, but actually. And it is written in modern Hebrew. "It is a fabulous document," said Amos Goldberg, senior lecturer in Holocaust studies at the Department of Jewish History at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who recently wrote a book on Holocaust diaries. "It has incredible descriptive force."

"February 1942. The street is teeming with sights so maddening, so depraved that it is hard to find any equivalent in the treasury of humanity's degradation. There is no doubt that the denizens of the jungle and animals will never behave this way. The dead are naked. When someone has just starved, they cover him in wrapping paper and lay him down on the sidewalk, and at night his friends, or just beggars, walk out, and undress him completely, and leave him all naked with no shoes, no dress or even underwear. And in the morning, as you go out in the street and the wind blows off the wrapping papers covering the dead, you see the organs of men, women and children all scrawny, the quivering organs of death in the street. You see the naked bodies, frozen stuck to the sidewalk. The body becomes one with the stone, congealed. One dead chunk screaming with poverty and disgust."

Ben-Shem kept his diary in a leather satchel that he carried with him from the ghetto to the Aryan side of Warsaw, to *Lublin*, through Romania and onto the illegal ship that ferried him to Palestine in 1946. It remained in the family home until about four years ago, when his Israeli-born son Kami showed all 800 pages, stored exactly as they had been in Warsaw, to a researcher named Laurence Weinbaum, who had stumbled upon the name Reuven Ben-Shem dotted throughout Chaim Lazar's *Muranowska 7*, a biography of the Revisionist Zionist underground in the Warsaw ghetto. Intrigued, Weinbaum tracked down the Ben-Shem family and was eventually invited to see what the family had at home. "You can imagine it felt like the moment when the bedouin presented the Dead Sea Scrolls," he told me, during a recent interview in his Jerusalem office.

What Weinbaum found was, in his opinion, one of the most important works of first-person narrative to have survived the *Shoah*. The diary, he says, "is extraordinary for several reasons: one, it is contemporaneous. It is also in Hebrew. Most of the diarists

(Continued on page 13)

POLAND'S DARK HUNT

New research reveals some Poles were encouraged by the Nazis to actively persecute the Jewish population.

BY PATRICIA TREBLE, MACLEAN'S

There were approximately 3.3 million Jews in Poland before the Germans invaded in September 1939. At the end of the war, that number had plummeted to about 30,000. Now, in pathbreaking research, Jan Grabowski, a history professor at the University of Ottawa, reveals what happened to those Jews who tried to hide in rural Poland after the Nazis violently emptied the ghettos. "The locals had everything to say about who could survive and who could not," he says. In his new book, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland*, he explains how, all too often, Poles turned on and killed Jewish neighbors they'd known for decades. And, in particular, he destroys the myth that the Polish "blue" police had nothing to do with killing Jews.

When an earlier Polish version of his book was released in 2011, Grabowski's findings deeply polarized public opinion in that country. In media interviews and debates, his was the face for a hot-button topic: a reevaluation of Polish actions during the Holocaust. Poles have long, and rightly, perceived themselves as victims in the Second World War, at the expense of exploring their involvement in the Holocaust. Now, Grabowski says, "You show that, sometimes, victims were victimizing even more desperate people."

Though his Ph.D. is on New France, an interest in the Holocaust had "always been sleeping in me," he says, "but woke up in a vengeance" a decade ago while he was visiting his parents in Warsaw. He went to the archives and stumbled upon German court files from the war that hadn't been opened by historians. Grabowski, whose Jewish father and paternal grandparents survived by "passing" as Poles in Warsaw during the war, began his work.

He focused on one rural county in southeastern Poland, *Dabrowa Tarnowska* — chosen simply because there is a lot of preserved, archived documentation of what happened there. While the central events of the Holocaust are infamous, little was known about events "at the margins, far away from the factories of death, and far away from historical scrutiny." What he uncovered was an "in-your-face" Holocaust. "Everything that happened to them was extremely public."

Before the war, there were 66,678 people in the poor, agrarian county, including 4,807 Jews. While nearly 2,000 were farmers, most lived in town, also called *Dabrowa Tarnowska*. Unlike urban Jews, who were quickly isolated in ghettos, their rural brethren lived and worked amid the non-Jewish population until just before mid-1942, when they were rounded up in a series of "liquidation actions."

After the mass deportations to the *Belzec* extermination camp, only 337 Jews were left. In a meticulously detailed micro history, Grabowski pieced together their stories by combing survivors' accounts, as well as records that had never before been examined. Sometimes he found the same event described by Jews, Poles and Germans. Through those historical documents, he discovered that 286 later perished. (While

Grabowski's numbers are precise, he cautions that they are what can be found in historical records. Countless others perished in anonymity.) Only one percent (51) of the county's prewar Jewish population would survive in *Dabrowa Tarnowska*. That's because the Nazis' relentless campaign to slaughter every Jew didn't stop after the ghettos were emptied. It continued in the form of organized *Judenjagd* (hunt for the Jews).

While Grabowski expected to find "a degree of treachery, of complacency, of violence," he found an astounding level of betrayal. Germans needed local help to ferret out the Jews from the scores of small villages. Token rewards were offered to participants — sometimes sugar, often clothes stripped off dead Jews. And to ensure cooperation from even the reluctant, the Germans would demand "hostages" from the villages who would chivvy their neighbors to join. "If the local population did not participate in sufficient numbers in the Jew hunt, then these 10 would be in for a very rough ride," Grabowski says in an interview.

For the historian, one explanation for widespread involvement in the hunts is a change in attitude: "At a certain point, you see that torture and extermination become normal and are getting condoned by the authorities. The Jews were perceived by many —not by all — as no longer entirely human. Once you dehumanize someone, everything becomes much more easy."

And that meant some Poles began to organize their own hunts. In *Hunt for the Jews*, the author reveals the untold story of the involvement of the Polish "blue" police. Made up partly of prewar police, it was the only uniformed, armed Polish police force working under the Nazis, and used its knowledge of the area and networks of informants to track down Jews. Polish doctor Zygmunt Klukowski recorded how, with the SS gone after the liquidations, "today it is the turn of 'our' gendarmes and our 'blue' policemen, who were told to kill every Jew on the spot. They follow these orders with great joy. Throughout the day, they pulled the Jews from various hideouts" and, after robbing them, "finished them off in plain sight of everyone."

For peasants who no longer wanted to hide Jews, an option was to hand them over to the blues, who would rob and shoot them before notifying the Germans. In all, while seven Jews were discovered and murdered by Germans alone, Grabowski found 220 who were denounced and/or killed by locals or Polish "blue" police.

It's the latest chapter in an emotional reexamination of Polish-Jewish relations that exploded into the national consciousness in 2001, when Jan Gross published *Neighbors*, an account of how Poles in *Jedwabne* slaughtered their neighbors on July 10, 1941. Gross, a professor at Princeton University, believes public opinion is slowly becoming more open to acknowledging the dark aspects of the war, partly because of the work of Grabowski and others at the Polish Center for Holocaust Studies, established in 2003. "Each time a book came out that dealt with these issues," says Gross, about his own works, "the debate was shorter and less acrimonious." Though well received in academia, the Polish version of Grabowski's book triggered a wave of hate among the nationalist right. The author was even "disinvited for security reasons" from debates.

And interestingly, when a TV crew spent a day in *Dabrowa Tarnowska* to investigate Grabowski's findings, they were told of several killings that he'd never heard of, now included in the new English version of his book. Currently, the historian is investigating counties in northeastern Poland. The initial results are "even more depressing," he reports.

Today, the synagogue of *Dabrowa Tarnowska*, which was in ruins when Grabowski researched his book, has been restored to its former glory, thanks to European Union money. But it's too late. There are no longer any Jews in the county.

HOLOCAUST RESCUES

Countries and communities that prominently resisted Nazi efforts to deport their Jews.

Italy: Despite Rome's alliance with Nazi Germany, the Italian military generally refused to accede to German demands for the deportation of Jews either from Italy itself or from territory it occupied. After the Germans occupied northern and central Italy, in September 1943, they ordered the immediate roundup of the Jews in those areas. To a large extent, the Italian public did not cooperate, nor did Italian police, and in the end, "only" 4,733 Jews, out of about 50,000 in total, were deported to Auschwitz.

Denmark: In late September 1943, a nationwide effort in Denmark resulted in 7,200 of the country's approximately 8,000 Jews (and an additional 680 non-Jewish family members) being smuggled out of the country to Sweden, where they were given refuge.

Albania: In the years leading up to World War II, a number of Jews from Germany and Austria took up refuge in Albania. None of them was deported, either during Italian or the subsequent German occupation. Neither were the approximately 200 Albanian Jews. Thus, at the end of the war, there were some 1,800 Jews living in the country. In 1995, Yad Vashem recognized the Republic of Albania as Righteous Among the Nations. On the other hand, some 600 Jews living in territory under Albanian occupation (including Kosovo) were deported to *Bergen-Belsen* and murdered.

Bulgaria: Although Bulgarian authorities imposed a wide variety of restrictions on the country's 50,000 Jewish citizens, and also cooperated with the deportation of non-Bulgarian Jews from territories under occupation by Bulgaria (including Macedonia and Thrace), King Boris III successfully avoided deporting a single one of the country's Jews to the death camps.

Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, *France:* Between 1940 and 1944, the residents of this Protestant town in south central France hid some 5,000 people, more than half of them Jews, from German arrest.

Finland: Between 1939 and 1945, Finland fought in three wars, the first two against Russia, the third against Germany. During the second war, the so-called Continuation War, Finland was actually allied with Germany. Nonetheless, Jewish citizens fought with the army in all three conflicts, and even operated their own field synagogue under the noses of the German allies. Finland did turn over eight Jewish refugees to the Nazis in 1942, out of approximately 500 that passed through the country; later in the war, Germany's ambassador in Helsinki wrote to Adolf Hitler that it was his impression that Finland would not deport any of its Jewish citizens.

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER OF T

Leonard Wilf, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; and Edward Mosberg, Holocaust survivor and guest speaker.

Tal Ramon, the son of Colonel Ilan Ramon, *z"l*, and Yoram Pressburger, nephew of Petr Ginz *z"l*, recognized on the 10th anniversary of the Columbia shuttle disaster; and Leonard Wilf.

Gale and Ira Drukier, and Leonard Wilf.

Harry Krakowski, and Elisa and Alan Pines.

Lawrence and Adina Burian.

Maya Naveh.

Boaz Zborowski.

THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM

Rebbetzin Lau, Eugene Gluck, Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, and Sharon and David Halpern.

Lily Zborowski-Naveh, Leonard Wilf, and Marilyn and Barry Rubenstein.

Rafi, Rose, Wendy, Dan, Paula and Jacob Moskowitz.

Abbi Halpern and Barry Levine.

Caroline Massel, Iris Lifshitz Lindenbaum, Stella Skura and Adam Lindenbaum.

HaZamir: The International Jewish High School Choir.

REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

YAD VASHEM EXHIBIT HONORS THOSE WHO RISKED THEIR LIVES TO SAVE JEWS IN WWII

BY ARON HELLER, AP

In the spring of 1943, the friend of a Polish Catholic family discovered a naked Jewish baby in a nearby dark, cold cellar. The child, not even two years old, could neither walk nor talk. Her Jewish parents had been murdered, and the family they paid to protect her had abandoned her.

Rescuer Genowefa Majcher from Poland, with rescued Michael Rozenshein, summer of 1947.

Taking on considerable peril, Jozef and Natalia Roztropowicz took in the child, baptized her as Irena and raised her as their own. Five years later, they made another gut-wrenching choice: returning their beloved daughter to an adoptive Jewish family, who moved with her to Israel two years later.

The child, now a 71-year-old woman named Sabina Heller, says they are the reason she is alive.

"I would have been dead if they hadn't taken me in ... (they gave me) not only life, but love," said Heller, a teacher and writer who now lives in Los Angeles. "The Roztropowicz family did two courageous things. First they took me in, and the second time they let me go."

Heller only discovered the full details in 1999. The following year, Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust museum and memorial recognized the Roztropowicz family as Righteous Among the Nations, the highest honor given to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during World War II.

In June, Yad Vashem unveiled a new exhibition that marked 50 years of recognizing these saviors, and dedicated it to the 24,811 people from 47 countries who have been honored as Righteous Among the Nations.

A special committee, chaired by a retired Supreme Court justice, is responsible for vetting every case before awarding the title. Following a lengthy process, between 400 and 500 are typically recognized a year.

"The next generations need to know about these rare stars amid the darkness," said Israel Meir Lau, who heads Yad Vashem's advisory council, and who himself credits one of those honored, a non-Jewish Russian named Feodor Mikhailichenko, with saving him as a child in the *Buchenwald* concentration camp.

Lau, a former chief rabbi of Israel, said that those who experienced the worst evil of man also know they could not have survived without the goodness of man, either.

"These people risked themselves, risked their families to protect us," he said at ceremony in June. "There were lots of righteous, but not enough."

About six million European Jews were killed by German Nazis and their collaborators during World War II. The names of those honored for refusing to be indifferent to the genocide are engraved along an avenue of trees at the Jerusalem memorial.

The most famous cases are Oskar Schindler, whose efforts to save more than 1,000 Jews were documented in Steven Spielberg's 1993 film *Schindler's List*, and Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat who is credited for having saved at least 20,000 Jews before mysteriously disappearing. But the new exhibit aims to tell the stories of the lesser-known cases, such as the Roztropowiczes.

Rescuer Johanna Kuiper (The Netherlands) with the rescued Ennie Kater, 1948.

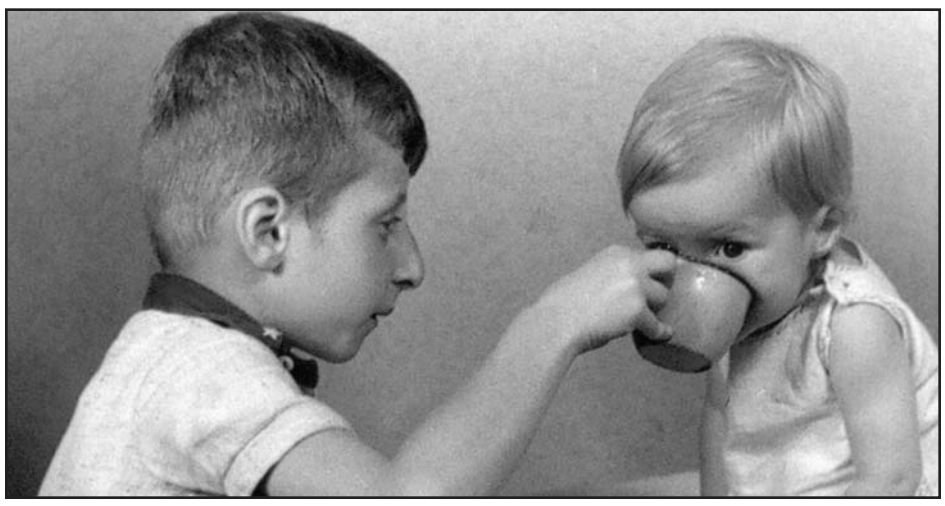
The exhibition, "I Am My Brother's Keeper," features five 8-minute-long, animated video presentations of rescue stories projected in a dark, cavernous hall.

Yad Vashem broke down the rescuers into five different categories:

"In the Cellars, Pits and Attics describes those who offered shelter and cared for those they hid. "Under the Benefaction of the Cross" pays tribute to rescuers who were members of the Christian clergy. "Paying the Ultimate Price" is dedicated to those who were killed as a result of their actions. "The Courage to Defy" honors those who refused their bureaucratic orders to help Jews. And finally, "Parting Once Again" tells the stories of those hidden children, like Heller, who lost their identities.

Heller is now widowed and has two grown sons.

She was born to the Kagan family in the city of *Radyvyliv*, today in Ukraine. Though she doesn't even know the names of her biological parents, who were burned to death inside a barn shortly after giving her up, and has no memory of them, she considers them heroes just like her Christian adoptive parents.



Rescued Alexander Groenteman with the daughter of Klaas and Hendrika van der Knoop, the rescuers.

"Imagine the kind of decision they had to make, a decision that no parents should have to make — to separate themselves from their baby," she said. "They gave me life by doing that. There were a lot of Jewish parents at that time who couldn't bring themselves to do that, and as a result they are all dead."

With the Roztropowicz family she went by the name Inka, before taking on a new name with the Jewish family that moved her to Israel. Her Jewish adopted mother kept her past a secret from her, hoping to give her a new beginning.

It was only in 1999, when she was 58 and after her mother had passed away, that her mother's cousin Rachel Rabin (incidentally, the lone sister of assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin) came upon new information, gleaned from an Israeli doctorate student's research on hidden children during the Holocaust, that brought her background to light. She informed Heller, leading to information about her biological parents, the Kagans, and the discovery of her adopted sister Stanislawa Roztropowicz, known as Stanka.

An emotional phone call followed.

"I said, 'Stanka, this is Inka,'" she recalled. "And then Stanka said, 'Inka, we have waited for this call for 50 years.'"

They have since reconnected, with Heller visiting Ukraine and filling in the missing pieces of her past. She learned that the Roztropowicz family never stopped its quest to find out what happened to her and had kept a childhood picture of her in its home for five decades.

"Attachments that you make in the very early years in life somehow stay with you," said Heller. "You cannot explain it rationally, because I didn't remember them and yet this feeling was there. I felt that they loved me."

Museum official Yehudit Shendar, who curated the exhibit, said the stories spoke volumes about the courage of the righteous and about the fortitude of the survivors who pushed for their rescuers to be recognized.

"They survived, they made it, and they tried to get a positive to remember the horrors, remember the evil, but also take out some hope, something positive," she said.

Heller concurred, saying her own existence was a direct result of this sliver of hope to emerge from the ashes of the Holocaust.

"Some people have the strength of character to go against the stream and do the right thing. Sometimes it has to do with religion and sometimes just faith in the goodness of man," she said. "I like to dwell on the positive — on that one positive element of the Holocaust."

HOLOCAUST GRAPHIC NOVELS GIVE ISRAELIS A WAY TO CONNECT TO A PAST NOT QUITE THEIRS

BY ANAT ROSENBERG, TABLET

The words Holocaust and graphic novel generally bring to mind Art Spiegelman and his trailblazing, Pulitzer Prize–winning work *Maus*, which got its start as a three-page comic in 1971. Fifteen years later it was published in book form, paving the way for an unlikely new genre. In the more than two decades since the publication of the granddaddy of Holocaust graphic novels, Anne Frank's diary has been published in comics form; the story of the Warsaw ghetto has been turned into a graphic novel, and other children of survivors have embraced the genre to recount their families' histories — pointing to the fact that, tragically, Spiegelman's father wasn't the only one to "bleed history" (to borrow a phrase from the subtitle of *Maus*).

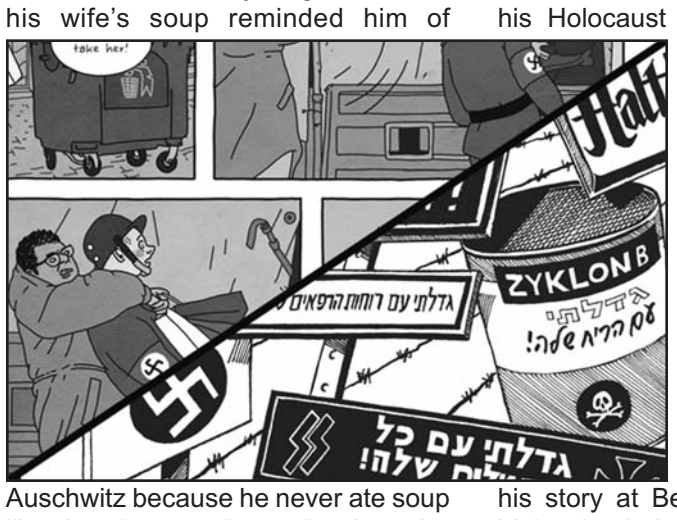
With two recent publications, Israel has further embraced the form of the Holocaust-related graphic novel. The first is Michel Kichka's memoir *Second Generation: Things I Never Told My Father*, which was originally

released in French and, like *Maus*, recounts growing up in the shadow of a Holocaust survivor. The second is Rutu Modan's *The Property*, a fictional account of a young Israeli woman and her grandmother who travel to Poland to reclaim an apartment that belonged to the family before the war, published simultaneously in Hebrew and English.

At first, these two works appear to be united solely by the fact that they both fall into the "Holocaust graphic novel" category — one is autobiographical, the other is fictional; one is drawn in stark black and white, the other bursts with vibrant color. Yet while profoundly different in narrative and graphic style, *Second Generation* and *The Property* have more in common than meets the eye. Both center on family bonds, secrets, and intrigue; both feature journeys to reclaim something tangible or intangible that was lost; both are characterized by a bittersweet intensity and off-kilter humor.

Kichka opens *Second Generation* with the line, "My father almost never spoke about his family." The panel underneath it shows the author, as a child, looking at the tattoo on his father's arm and wondering, "Who wrote a number under his arm hair?" The book's first two chapters focus on Kichka's early curiosity about his father's wartime experiences, blending well-known Holocaust imagery with his father's personal story of survival.

Kichka's father, Henri, made only passing references to his life during the war — whether joking about how his wife's soup reminded him of



Auschwitz because he never ate soup like that there, or lamenting how the Nazis destroyed his feet by forcing him to march in the snow.

As a child, Kichka searched for his father, to no avail, in the haunting photograph of emaciated survivors lining barracks in *Buchenwald* on the day the camp was liberated. He writes how he felt like "that boy," drawing himself as the Jewish youth holding his hands up in the iconic photo from the Warsaw ghetto. He depicts his childhood nightmares using a combination of his father's gaunt, naked corpse, the *Arbeit Macht Frei* sign, railroad tracks, and a crematorium scattering his family's ashes to the wind. At the top left corner, Kichka appears as a crying, frightened child hiding under the covers.

Yet the war featured in some of Kichka's more pleasant recollections as well. In describing how he inherited his love of drawing from his father, Kichka depicts himself as a child, sitting on his father's lap while he draws Hitler — with a runny nose and buck-teeth, wearing flowered boxer shorts and carrying a broom instead of a rifle. On the same page, below that memory, Kichka depicts a black-clad Nazi surrounded by three drawings of his father: One is mooning the Nazi, one is giving him a *bras d'honneur*, and one is sticking out his tongue. You can almost hear him say, "I survived Auschwitz — na-na-na-na-na."

The book's turning point comes about midway, when (spoiler alert) Kichka's younger brother, Charlie — whom he describes as the spitting image of their father — commits suicide, and Kichka returns from Israel to Belgium to grieve with his family. On the first evening of the shiva, as the last guests remain, Kichka's father abruptly says, "On September 3, 1942, the Gestapo arrested us," while on the next page Kichka tells us, "and he talked and talked and talked and talked and talked," repeating the Hebrew word for "and talked" more than 100 times. On the same page, he portrays his father as a young man standing next to Hitler, with a yellow Star of David, a cattle car, a canister of Zyklon B, and other Holocaust symbols.

"Suddenly I understood that, for the first time in his life, my father is telling his Holocaust story," Kichka writes. "But I came to mourn my brother, to talk about him. Instead, Dad is talking about himself, and I can't bear to hear it. I stand on the sidelines rather than sit down with everyone, and whisper to myself, 'What shitty timing!' "

From that moment on, Kichka said, his father began sharing his story at Belgian schools, joining high school trips to Auschwitz, reliving his past and even writing a book about his lost youth. "Time transformed him from a victim of the Holocaust to a Holocaust hero," Kichka writes. "And now you can't talk to him about anything else. So, I wonder: What's better, to keep quiet or to talk? I wish I had an unequivocal answer."

Perhaps there is a happy medium, Rutu Modan seems to suggest in her latest graphic novel, *The Property*. Loosely based on her personal experience of meeting her estranged maternal grandfather, the book opens with an epigraph attributed to Modan's mother: "With family, you don't have to tell the whole truth and it's not considered lying."

That sentence sets the stage for the fictional story of Regina Segal and her granddaughter Mica to unfold, as the two feisty women travel from Israel to Warsaw ostensibly to deal with prewar property issues. Soon enough, the seemingly straightforward plot thickens into a yarn that's part love story, part whodunit, part screwball comedy, and part exploration of Jewish-Israeli identity. Modan even uses different typefaces for the different languages — Hebrew, Polish and English — spoken throughout the novel, adding a graphic element to the drama.

From the start, Modan depicts the ambivalence that sometimes accompanies such trips. On the plane to Poland, when a guide accompanying Israeli students on a March of the Living trip tells Regina how moving it is to be able to show Mica her old haunts, she responds, "Warsaw doesn't interest me. It's one big cemetery," adding that they're going simply to claim their property.

Once in Warsaw, however, Regina's true motives for the trip emerge, as she stealthily tracks down an old love interest — a non-Jewish Pole named Roman Gorski who (spoiler alert) fathered her son, Mica's late father, before Regina fled to Mandatory Palestine to escape the Nazis. Mica, meanwhile, treks all over Warsaw in search of the lost property; she is alternately accompanied by a gentile tour guide of Jewish Warsaw, with whom she becomes involved, and shadowed by a family acquaintance driven by his own motives.

Unlike Kichka, Modan doesn't explicitly depict Holocaust imagery in *The Property*. Instead, her clear drawing style, switches from vividly colored panels to sepia-toned ones when characters discuss the past or flash back to it. The only Nazis pictured in the book appear when Mica inadvertently gets "caught" in a reenactment of the Warsaw ghetto uprising and is rescued by the wily family friend.

Fittingly, the action comes to a head as all the characters unite in a Warsaw cemetery on *Zaduszki* (All Saints' Day), the day that souls of the dead return to visit their homes, according to Polish tradition. This not only echoes Regina's remark about Poland being one big cemetery — it also underscores the fact that family skeletons often have a way of creeping back to life despite painstaking efforts to keep them buried.

IN GOING AFTER NAZI CRIMINALS, EUROPE IS STILL DIVIDED

BY DR. EFRAIM ZUROFF, HAARETZ

In 2011, for the first time in a decade, two trials of Nazi war criminals indicted on criminal charges — with the defendants present and in reasonable health — were concluded in two different European countries. The first to be completed (in May 2011) was that of Ivan Demjanjuk, who was tried in Germany for his role as an armed SS guard in the *Sobibor* death camp, where approximately 250,000 Jews were murdered during the years 1942–1943. The second, which took place in Hungary and was concluded in July, was that of local gendarmerie lieutenant Sandor Kepiro, who was charged for his role in the massacre of 3,300 civilians in the Serbian city of *Novi Sad* and its vicinity in the latter half of January 1942.

On the surface, there are several noticeable differences between the two cases.

Most significant is the difference in rank of the accused. While Kepiro, a lawyer, was an officer, and even acknowledged that he was personally responsible for the roundup of civilians in a specific area of *Novi Sad* on January 23, Demjanjuk was a guard who only received orders. Another significant difference between the cases was the amount and specificity of evidence of the crimes alleged to have been committed by the accused available to the prosecutors to present to the court.

In Hungary, Chief Prosecutor Zsolt Falvi was able to name six persons who were murdered by Kepiro's men during the roundups in *Novi Sad* and to submit evidence regarding a truckload of 30 arrested persons, whom Kepiro reportedly sent directly to the Danube River to be shot, instead of to a collection point in the city center, where their cases would have been reviewed by Hungarian officers. In theory, he also could have pointed to the many dozens of people who were arrested by Kepiro's subordinates and subsequently murdered by the Hungarian forces at the Danube.

John Demjanjuk (left); Sandor Kepiro.

In Demjanjuk's case, on the other hand, no evidence of any specific crimes was presented to the court aside from the fact of his service as an armed guard at the death camp. In fact, the indictment was unprecedented in German legal history, since it was the first time ever that a Nazi war criminal was charged in the Federal Republic without any evidence of a specific crime against an identifiable victim, a decision that reflected a far more historically realistic approach to the cases of men who served in camps like *Sobibor* than had previously been applied in German courts.

Aside from these differences, however, there were several significant similarities between the two cases that strongly influenced their outcome. The first was the fact that both defendants had previously been convicted in legal proceedings connected to the crimes, but not for these specific charges. Also in both cases, prosecutors were aided by the fact that during the course of the proceedings, critical evidence was obtained that made it possible to mount a case many decades after the fact, even without any living witnesses.

Based on evidence alone, it would appear that the likelihood of Kepiro's being convicted was much higher than that of Demjanjuk. Yet ultimately, it was Demjanjuk who was convicted in May, whereas Kepiro was acquitted last July. In this respect, one of the most critical elements of each trial was its venue, and the extent of political will, in Germany and Hungary, respectively, to bring elderly Nazi war criminals to trial.

And in fact, the contrast between the two countries in this regard was patently obvious. Whereas Germany could easily have ignored the case of Demjanjuk, who was neither German nor *Volksdeutsche*, and had no current ties to Germany, but instead made a determined effort to try him in *Munich* (his port of embarkation for America), the Hungarians' reluctance to prosecute Kepiro was clearly evident from the almost five years it took them to put him on trial, despite his advanced age and the strong possibility he might elude justice due to infirmity. (In fact, he died in September 2011, less than two months after the trial ended.) And his acquittal by Judge Bela Varga, who dismissed all the evidence from 1944 without taking into consideration that it was the Nazis who pressured the Hungarians to cancel Kepiro's original conviction, also underscores this reality. In fact, it is highly likely that if not for the fact that Hungary assumed the rotating presidency of the European Union in January 2011, and was under harsh criticism for legislative initiatives considered anti-democratic by the EU, its right-wing government would never have even allowed Kepiro to be put on trial.

These two cases clearly reflect the significant gap that persists between Eastern and Western Europe in dealing with the Holocaust and its aftermath. Clearly, the Communist domination of countries like Hungary prevented the soul-searching necessary to enable any meaningful acknowledgment and confrontation with local guilt and complicity. Unfortunately, by the time such a process will, if ever, take place, it will be too late to hold any of the local perpetrators accountable, and thus an opportunity to achieve a measure of justice, one of the most important dimensions of reconciliation, will have been squandered irrevocably.

PAST TERRORS LIVE ON WITH HOLOCAUST'S CHILDREN

(Continued from page 2)

And to share a new sense of hope.

Leslie Magee has carried the sadness from that day in first grade. But she has watched her mother soldier on through life with a remarkable equanimity. She has witnessed firsthand the power of a child, her child, to vanquish old horrors.

"My mother just beamed like I had never seen before," Leslie said of the day of Lauren's birth. "Not that this one child could replace all the lives that were lost. But she represented hope in the future, and happiness, and the continuation of her family."

Brigitte Altman was an only child, born August 15, 1924, in *Memel*, Lithuania. Her father was a wealthy businessman.

"My mother tried to teach me the social graces," Brigitte said. "I hope I did not disappoint her."

In the 1930s, her parents talked at dinner about what was happening to Jewish relatives in nearby Germany. The family tried to flee to the United States or Canada but could not obtain visas. Eventually they lost everything.

Soon after the Nazi occupation began in 1941, Brigitte's family was forced into the infamous *Kovno* ghetto, an enclave with primitive homes and no running water, surrounded by barbed wire. Food was scarce. Brigitte's mother suffered a stroke.

Holocaust survivor Brigitte Altman, center, poses for a photograph with her daughter, Leslie Magee, right, and granddaughter Lauren Magee.

The intentions of the Germans became clear.

The day in late October 1941 was known as the Great Action.

"That was the most horrifying of all," Brigitte said in a 1997 interview. "Ten thousand people were taken away. At six or seven in the morning, every person in the ghetto, including the infirm, was to come to a place of assembly called Democracy Square. My mother was still an invalid and I remember putting some lipstick on her cheeks to give her a healthier appearance.

"We bundled up. It was a mixture of rain and sleet coming down," she recalled. "The German sergeant, he may have been eating a sandwich while he was directing people to the right and left with his whip. I forget which side was life and which side was death, I had become so numb standing there and waiting for our turn to pass before him.

"But apparently he was not looking at us," she said. "The three of us, my mother in the middle, we were kind of holding her by the elbows. We made it to the good side. The other side had small children, the elderly. Wailing and crying from family members that had been forcibly separated."

Brigitte's mother died in 1942. A few months after, Brigitte watched the Nazis collect thousands of young children.

"That was the day the famous Children's Action took place," she said. "That was really the catalyst that prompted my father to try and get me out of the ghetto."

Brigitte left the ghetto on a work detail and slipped away, aided by her father's former bookkeeper, a gentile woman who took her in. Brigitte spent the last years of the war hidden on a distant farm.

"The day I was liberated it was summer," she said. "I had gone to one of the outer buildings. It was still dark outside. I heard a very slight noise behind me. I turned around to see who or what it was. It was a Russian soldier. I was startled but overjoyed."

Somehow her father had survived *Dachau*. He and his daughter were reunited in Italy.

In 1949, Brigitte came to live with relatives in Dallas. A few years later she married a dashing American war hero, Fredric Altman. The couple settled in a quiet, leafy neighborhood in south Fort Worth.

OUR LOST WARSAW GHETTO DIARY

(Continued from page 6)

wrote in Yiddish or Polish. And Feldschuh (Ben-Shem's original name) had extraordinary intellectual horizons." He was also, points out Havi Dreyfus, a senior lecturer in the Department of Jewish History at the University of Tel Aviv, a broad observer, from the deportations, to religious life, to the extremes of ghetto poverty — to intense, painful, descriptions of his desperate desire to allow his young daughter Josima, a piano prodigy, to live. He was a brilliant Hebraist and fluent in — at least — three other languages. Agrees David Silberklang, senior historian at Yad Vashem, "What Reuven Feldschuh did was of great significance. It will be a huge book if the entire diary is published." Silberklang believes that the diary's impact is "potentially similar to" the impact Victor Klemperer's diaries had in the 1990s, "because of the quality of the writer and the richness of experience and expanse of years."

I wouldn't know of Reuven Ben-Shem's diary, either, except that he was my grandfather's first cousin.

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Late on a recent Friday night in the Tel Aviv suburb of *Ramat Gan*, I attended a Shabbat dinner. At some point, the guests moved from table to couch, and an array of liquors was lined up on the coffee table. Our host, Kami Ben-Shem, receded into a back room and returned with a selection of crumbling, yellow paper. The first page — kept in a plastic sleeve, the sort that might be used by children in a binder for school — was an announcement for a concert.

"15 March 1941" it is dated, at the top; "Josima Feldschuh" it says, above the image of a rosy-cheeked girl with a bow in her hair, sitting at a piano; and then, below her photo, it is written in Polish, "11 year old piano virtuoso." The program promises selections from Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* and Schubert's Unfinished Symphony, a concert held at Rymarska 12, the heart of the Warsaw ghetto. Two years later, the girl, Kami's half-sister, was smuggled to the Aryan side just before the uprising. Her father had feared her death for all his months in the ghetto.

"January 1942. There's talk recently of the vandals murdering the children and the blood of all the fathers hardens in their veins as they listen to such whispers… I returned home and I am all shaken. My child is sleeping, I am looking at her. My eye deceives me and I don't see her. She disappears, the bed grows empty. I was frightened. I bent over and held her so forcefully that she woke up, quizzical and afraid. She calmed down as she saw me, and her face radiated with a lovely smile. She sent me a kiss by air, turned over to her side, and fell asleep. Inside of me fritters a demon of fear."

Josima died of tuberculosis some weeks after she went into hiding; soon after, her mother, Pnina, a musicologist, took her own life. Only Reuven survived. After the war, Reuven never spoke of Josima, but her framed photo hung like a ghostly mezuzah in the doorway to his home, so each member of Ben-Shem's new postwar family would see her as they came in and as they went out.

Yet the fact that few outside Ben-Shem's immediate family circle ever learned of the diary's existence was not because the family kept it squirreled away. Reuven himself contacted Yad Vashem in the 1960s about his text; his cousin was Rachel Auerbach, the first person tasked by Yad Vashem with collecting survivor testimonies after the war. (Though she lived with Reuven in the ghetto, if Auerbach knew of her relative's diary, she never wrote of it.) Reuven's diary disappeared in plain sight in part because of the layered nature of historiography, the way in which popular writers and academics alike have changed their perception of what first-person accounts mean to the narrative of the Holocaust — and also because of Reuven's own meanderings through Zionist political movements. The fate of his work underscores the arbitrary nature of those we celebrate, those who become heroes, and those who are forgotten.

Poster for Josima's concert.

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My grandfather and his cousin Reuven lived together in Vienna, when Reuven was a student in the 1920s, studying psychology under Freud, and also rabbinics at a modern rabbinical school. Reuven had recently spent several years in Palestine, where he had been, briefly, a *halutz*, and a founder of the kibbutz *Kiryat Anavim*, outside Jerusalem; at the time he was active in *Hashomer Hatzair*. Yet he returned to Europe in the early 1920s, when he received word his father had been murdered in a Ukrainian pogrom; the news came just before a radical split with his left-wing Zionist roots, and he went on to become a leader in the burgeoning movement of right-wing Revisionist Zionism. He was a friend and devotee of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, a founder of *Betar*, and then he founded another nationalist right-wing group called *Hashomer Haleumi* — National Guard (one of his scouts, a woman named Shoshana Kossower-Rozencwajg, would one day be his rescuer from the ghetto).

Reuven's right-wing activity, and his aggressive polemics against socialism and Marxism, suggest one theory on why his name was buried in the postwar period. Reuven's published papers in the 1920s talk about "a Jewish race," refer to Communism as a "poison to Jewish children," and express a militant, militaristic vitriol for all things of the then-ascendant left, explains Daniel Kupfert Heller, a newly minted historian who wrote on *Betar* for his doctoral dissertation at Stanford. Though Reuven broke with Jabotinsky in 1933 (essentially calling him a Fascist), the revisionists, says Kupfert Heller, were "swept under the rug in the 1950s" as Israel grappled with "who owned the legacy of fighting and self-defense" during the Holocaust.

"The standard narrative was it was only the Zionist socialists," who had been active in the Warsaw ghetto uprising, historian Kupfert Heller says, "So, one might think of Reuven's diary as part of this broader embarrassment in Israeli national culture around the idea of right-wing Zionists. … Jews that espoused ideas that were parallel to the Fascists were embarrassing." But its purposeful forgetting, he says, may be a means of understanding "how we commemorate the past. One of the things that Reuven represents to me are the complexities and nuances that have really been [lost] by so many who commemorate the experience of Polish Jewry — we know so much about how they died and so little on how they lived."

"March 1942: I do not know if I will be able to get this journal out of here, or if it will live on without me after I have been covered by a layer of earth and oblivion. In any case, it is my wish that the truth be reflected in this journal — the truth of how people lived inside the earth, in a place where scorching lava is being formed under the burning, spewing volcano that is Hitler's Europe."

My grandfather was 12 years Reuven's junior, also orphaned, and they were very close. And yet no one in my part of the family ever knew about Reuven's faithful documentation of Nazi occupation of Warsaw, life in the ghetto, and the Soviet invasion, nor did they know of his role as a leading revisionist Zionist. We, the American cousins, knew little to nothing of Josima — although we knew Reuven had lost everyone and that he had named Kami, whose full name is Nekamia, "Revenge God." His second marriage was to another survivor, with an equally harrowing tale: she survived after jumping from the train to *Treblinka*, leaving behind a half-dozen siblings. With her he eventually also had another daughter, Rina, who now lives in America.

In their correspondence after the war, Reuven chided my grandfather for not living in Israel — the only place, he wrote, that a Jew could ever be comfortable or happy. To some degree, Reuven's emphasis on the importance of postwar life in Israel — he was a cultural attaché to Argentina in the 1950s, tasked with drumming up interest in *aliyah*; upon return, his daughter Rina Ben-Shem (now Mariuma) was given the first bat mitzvah in Israeli history, she told me — may have contributed to his diary's sequestration. But the forgetting, or burying, of the diary is also a reflection of a trend in historiography that is only changing now, some 70 years after the events took place: the valorization of eyewitness accounts.

That may sound absurd — after all, the diary of Anne Frank is perhaps the best-known testimony of the *Shoah*, and it has been celebrated, read, performed, since the 1950s. But the truth is, Frank is an exception. Alexandra Garbarini, chair of the Jewish Studies Department at Williams College and the author of *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust*, explained to me that these documents were long seen as of limited value, because diaries are inherently local, narrowly focused, and, in the case of Holocaust diaries, the diarists themselves were often isolated from outside news sources. So, historians first had to see that diaries were sources both resonant and relevant to telling a larger story, and also see the importance of telling smaller stories about everyday life. "You have to both care about and think there is something historically significant in what happens to that corpse on the street in the ghetto, and what that helps us to understand about Nazism, genocide, anti-Semitism and Jewish relations," she said. "What the diary most reveals is daily life in the ghetto and helping to understand one man's perspective — one insightful, intelligent, educated figure — to understand through his perspective what was happening to Jewish society in Warsaw under wartime occupation.

"But I also wonder," she mused, "how forthcoming [Reuven] was" about what he had carried to Israel with him. Amos Goldberg, the Hebrew

(Continued on page 15)

"IF, BY MIRACLE": A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR'S TALE

(Continued from page 4)

in the home. My mother and my siblings and I missed him very much, but our lives had to go on without him. It felt as if my childhood had vanished overnight, stolen from me at a time when my friends and I should have been playing outside and going to school. Although I had always hoped that I would learn the *haftorah* for my bar mitzvah, I now sensed that this would never happen. I began to understand what was happening around us.

Every day, the Nazis imposed new laws that led to more hardships. The curfew remained in effect; we were forbidden to walk on the sidewalks; and we had to wear white armbands and a black Star of David over the heart, which was later changed to a yellow Star of David on the right side of the chest and on the back. The Nazis called us names such as *verfluchte Juden* (damned Jews) or *Jüdische Untermenschen* (subhuman Jews). If a Nazi noticed a Jew not wearing a Star of David, he or she would be shot for not following orders. These incidents usually involved the elderly, children or the mentally challenged.

Jews were frequently arrested without knowing why, taken to Gestapo headquarters and shot. The collaborating Belorussian police killed anyone who resisted arrest. I heard that some were tortured and brutally beaten, their heads bashed with pickaxes. Afterward, the commandant would order the *Judenrat* to bring Jews to remove the bodies and bury them in graves that they had been forced to dig. Another group had to wash the blood from the commandant's courtyard.

Not far from *Nieswiez* was a village called *Glinistcha,* where Jews who had been caught buying food from gentiles were imprisoned, along with Red Army soldiers, Roma (called Gypsies at the time), Jewish Red Army officers and Communists. Hundreds of prisoners were killed there every day and early every morning, Jewish men were ordered to dig graves for the innocent victims. When the executions were over for the day, prisoners were ordered to cover the graves. We got this news from peasants in the area around *Nieswiez*, who could hear the screams of those being tortured prior to their execution. They told us that the Roma fought back with their bare hands. We were also told that the Soviet prisoners of war shouted slogans such as, "Long live the Soviet Union!" "Long live the Red Army!" "Our Fatherland will take revenge on you for the bloodshed of our people!" and "We will fight and destroy you for all time!"

We were not only aware of what was happening in *Glinistcha*, but throughout August, September and October we also heard news about mass murders in nearby towns and villages, as well as in bigger cities like Minsk, *Slutsk* and *Pinsk*. We felt hopeless and our morale was very low. Every day, we expected the worst.

On October 29, 1941, the chairman of the *Judenrat* received an announcement from the German commandant of *Nieswiez* that the *Gebietskommissar* (district commissar) of *Baranovichi* had ordered all Jews to gather in the market square in the center of town at 8 a.m. the next day, October 30. The Jewish police went from house to house with the militia to inform us that the next day we were to put on clean, warm clothing and bring our passports and birth certificates. We couldn't sleep that night ....

By 6:30 a.m. the next morning my mother and all of us children were dressed in our best clothes and warm coats. It was cold outside. At 7 a.m. the Jewish police went from street to street, ordering people to leave their homes and march to the market square. By 8 a.m., we had to be standing in rows with our families. Parents made their way through the streets, some carrying small children in their arms. Older children held their parents' hands. The elderly — grandmothers and grandfathers — many of whom were in poor health, also marched to the market square. Those who were very sick remained bedridden in their homes. I later found out that the Belorussian police searched all the houses that same day and killed anyone who had remained at home.

When my mother, my brother, my two sisters and I arrived at the market square, we were put into a row. After the entire Jewish population of the town — about 4,500 people — had assembled in the square, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Belorussians and the auxiliary police, all with automatic weapons on their shoulders and revolvers on their hips, suddenly appeared on trucks. Most of these murderers — known as the *Einsatzgruppen* — were drunk and reeked of vodka. Minutes later, these Nazi collaborators, many of whose uniforms were already covered in blood, surrounded us. I learned later that they had carried out an earlier *Aktion* in the town of *Kletsk*, 15 kilometers from *Nieswiez*. At 8 o'clock sharp the German commandant and several SS officers, one of them a red-headed high-ranking officer, began to carry out their gruesome plan.

FAMILIES SEPARATED

First, all the tradesmen and professionals and their families were ordered to stand in separate rows. The commandant had a list of these workers — doctors, engineers, textile workers, carpenters, painters, bricklayers, mechanics, tailors, shoemakers — and how many of them there should be. Most of the families were divided because people did not want to leave their elderly grandparents. There were close to 600 people selected, a very small number of them with their families, and they were separated from the rest of us and ordered to march the short distance to the schoolyard of the *Nieswiez* Gymnasium.

At the square, families were soon separated — children from parents and parents from children. This caused a huge commotion of people shouting and crying. Everyone wanted to run, without knowing where. My mother's last words to me were, "My dear, beloved child. If, by miracle, you survive, you must bear witness. I believe that God will protect you so that you will remain alive to tell the free world what happened to us." My mother pressed me to her and kissed me.

Michael Kutz (front row on the right) with the partisans. *Lodz*, 1945.

Then shots were fired into the air, possibly intended to quiet us, but the situation only worsened. People started pushing and stepping on one another. During the pushing and shoving, I was separated from my family.

The confusion did not last long because the killers soon got the upper hand. They placed us into groups of about 100 to 200 people. When it had quieted down, I saw that the *Einsatzgruppen* had again surrounded us on all sides. No one had any chance of escaping. Almost everyone was crying in despair at being separated from their loved ones. Hopeless, our spirits broken, we stood in line and waited for the order to march. Where we were marching, no one knew, but we all seemed to sense that we were going on our final journey . . . .

The day grew colder. In the cloudy sky high above us I could see birds that had stayed for the winter still flying freely. If only I could fly, I thought, I could escape. Instead, I stood under close surveillance, wondering what was going to become of me . . . .

Some young people broke away from our column and started to run, but I immediately heard shots and then saw them fall down. Not far away, the same happened in other groups. I, too, had considered escaping, but walking beside me was a Belorussian policeman with a loaded rifle, ready to shoot. I didn't have an opportunity to even try and make a run for it.

As our column passed under the tall trees of the thickly forested park . . . I heard more shots and understood what was happening. There, among the trees, we were stopped and ordered to get completely undressed. Those who did not obey were beaten. Pious bearded Jews and young women covered parts of their bodies with their hands. I heard the cries of children and the prayers of their parents and more shots — the execution of the groups that had preceded ours. When the shots stopped, our group was led forward about 140 meters to open pits that were now mass graves. People were ordered to jump in. I watched the *Einsatzgruppen* tear tiny infants from their mothers' arms, throw them into the air with one hand, and shoot them with the revolver they held in their other hand. When the infants fell to the ground, the Nazis picked up the small bodies and threw them into the pits. The mothers who witnessed this execution of their children threw themselves on the murderers and were shot on the spot. Parents who tried to protect their children with their own bodies were also shot . . . .

I clearly remember standing with my back to the pit, facing the murderers. One ran over to me and hit me on the head with his rifle. The next thing I knew, I was inside the pit, and at some point, I opened my eyes to a horrifying sight. I lay among the dead and dying — there were people under me who were buried alive. I heard the moans of people underneath me and on top of me. Although I was only a child, I somehow found the strength to push the bodies off me and tried to stand up. My head was spinning. My body and face were covered in blood. Realizing that I was not seriously injured, I managed to stand up and look for anyone else around me who was not either dead or fatally wounded. There was no one.

SUMMONED STRENGTH

The pit in which I found myself had not yet been covered over. Much later, I found out that this was because the last remaining Jews from the surrounding villages were to be brought here the next morning. When I could no longer hear any shooting, I carefully tried to see what was happening above ground, to check whether the graves were being guarded, but I was too small to see out of the pit. I summoned the strength to drag some of the bodies into a pile and, by climbing up on top of them, was able to stick my head out of the pit.

In my mind I could still hear my mother saying, "My dear child, you must survive." I didn't see anyone outside the pit, so I jumped out. Although it was getting dark, I knew the area very well and started running. I had the feeling that my mother was running beside me and calling out to me, "Michael, run faster and don't look back!"

THE *MUNICH* CRISIS THROUGH THE EYES OF CARTOONISTS

BY RAFAEL MEDOFF AND CRAIG YOE, THE JERUSALEM POST

Seventy-five years ago, Adolf Hitler provoked his first major international diplomatic crisis.

It would ultimately help pave the way for World War II and the Holocaust.

Hitler sought a pretext to invade Czechoslovakia.

Throughout 1938, the German government-controlled news media published a flood of wildly exaggerated accounts of the Czech authorities supposedly persecuting ethnic Germans who were living in the western border region known as the Sudetenland. (Because of the redrawing of the region's borders after World War I, there were more than three million ethnic Germans residing in Czechoslovakia, constituting about one-fourth of the population.) At the same time, pro-Nazi Sudeten Germans staged violent demonstrations, claiming they were victims of "discrimination" and demanding "self-determination."

Matters reached a boiling point in early September, as the Nazis financed a wave of mob violence by Sudeten Germans, including attacks on local Jews. Hitler then began threatening to intervene to "restore order."

In the American press, a number of political cartoonists drew attention to the spiraling crisis. Some focused on Hitler's hypocrisy. Jerry Doyle of the *Philadelphia Record*, for example, depicted the German dictator brutalizing Austria, Czechoslovakia and Jews, even as he pointed an accusing finger at Czech president Edvard Benes. Likewise, Grover Page, in the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, and George White, in the *Tampa Tribune*, emphasized the absurdity of the Nazis complaining about alleged mistreatment of Sudeten Germans while they themselves were persecuting German Jews.

Great Britain and France had been Czechoslovakia's allies, but their fear of being drawn into a war with Germany quickly superseded their friendship with Prague.

By the summer of 1938, British prime minister Neville Chamberlain and his French counterpart, Èdouard Daladier, were pressing Czech president Benes to make territorial concessions to Hitler.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, while not endorsing any specific plan, repeatedly urged the parties to reach a negotiated solution. In practical terms, that would mean ceding part of Czechoslovakia to Hitler.

In late September, with Hitler seemingly on the brink of invading Czechoslovakia, the British and French prime ministers rushed to *Munich* for a late-night conference with the Nazi chief. The Czechs were not even invited.

Chamberlain and Daladier quickly gave in to Hitler's demands, agreeing that all Czech regions where the population was more than 50 percent ethnic German should be transferred to Germany. Abandoned by their allies, the desperate Czechs went along with what Chamberlain called "peace in our time." In Washington, President Roosevelt said he "rejoiced" that a diplomatic solution had been achieved.

America's cartoonists were not quite so starry-eyed. In two consecutive cartoons in the *Daily Oklahoman*, Charles Werner (who would win a Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning the following year) mocked the British and French for sacrificing Czechoslovakia on the altar of an illusory peace. Rollin Kirby (himself a three-time Pulitzer winner), in the *New York World-Telegram*, invoked Christianity's most poignant symbol to skewer the abandonment of the Czechs.

The title of Werner's cartoon asked how long appeasement would keep the Germans quiet. The answer: not very. Just six weeks later, the Nazis unleashed the nationwide *Kristallnacht* pogrom against Germany's Jews. And once again, the international community failed to mount a meaningful response: not a single country ended diplomatic or economic ties with Germany.

The Allies' sacrifice of Czechoslovakia, followed by their weak response to *Kristallnacht*, helped convince Hitler there would be no real effort to stop him. In the spring of 1939, the Germans took over the rest of Czechoslovakia without firing a shot. The West did not respond. An emboldened Hitler prepared to plunge the world into war and unleash the Holocaust.

HOLOCAUST RESTITUTION MAKING LITTLE HEADWAY IN EASTERN EUROPE

(Continued from page 3)

Holocaust issues during the Clinton administration, told JTA that he was disappointed in Poland but insisted the country was not a lost cause.

"When I began going hat in hand to these Eastern European governments in the 1990s, no one would have ever imagined we could have gotten all the agreements that are in place for the return of property," Eizenstat said. "In Poland, you have a process for the return of religious communal property, and that's thanks to the pressure of conferences like these."

Baroness Ruth Deech, a property expert and member of Britain's House of Lords, said Poland's position is infuriating.

"Looking at it from the outside, we read that 60 percent of Poles oppose private restitution and that the Jewish community in Poland today is fearful that pressing for justice will give rise to anti-Semitism," she told an audience at the Prague conference.

Poland's chief rabbi, New York native Michael Schudrich, countered that Poles' aversion toward restitution is economic, not anti-Semitic.

But failing to come to agreement on a restitution bill could be more costly for Poland, restitution advocates note. Jews could press private property claims in court, and the lack of clarity on land ownership in Poland hinders economic development. In Warsaw, for example, one-third of the city's real estate was in Jewish hands before World War II, according to Eizenstat, who is still involved in restitution negotiations and works as a pro bono consultant to the Claims Conference.

Eizenstat said he hopes economic arguments will convince Polish officials to move ahead with restitution.

Such appeals to the pocketbook are significant, since the West can no longer hold out admission into or rejection by the European Union or NATO as an incentive, said Rabbi Andrew Baker, director of international Jewish affairs for the American Jewish Committee and a longtime restitution negotiator. If you cannot prove economic self-interest, then you need to convince governments to provide restitution by continuing to appeal to the leaders' moral conscience, Baker suggested.

For his part, Evron continues to press his wife's case with Poland. But he doesn't have high hopes.

He bemoaned Poland's tactic of forcing claimants to spend years and thousands of dollars pressing their cases in Polish courts, where they are frequently asked to produce evidence destroyed during World War II. Even when victory is achieved, like a positive decision recently granted for his wife's residential building claim, cases are turned over to the Finance Ministry for review, Evron said.

"I asked my lawyer how long the review would take. He answered, could be a year, could be forever," Evron said. "I have now spent more money on this case than the building is worth, and my son asks, why bother? My answer: It's the principle that matters. You take something, you give it back."

OUR LOST WARSAW GHETTO DIARY

(Continued from page 13)

University historian of diaries, points out that Victor Klemperer's diary only came to light during the debate among ordinary Germans sparked by Daniel Goldhagen's 1997 book *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. "You need good public relations," said Goldberg, especially if the author is dead. "It's arbitrary, in a sense," who succeeds, whose work becomes iconic.

"Monday, July 20, 1942. At half past ten the rumor is spreading. Suddenly, from underground — deportation, the deportation of [the Jews of] Warsaw. All of Warsaw! Half of Warsaw! One hundred thousand! Two hundred thousand! Only the foreigners! Only the beggars! Everyone, except the officials! … Deportation, deportation … then … like madmen, like people on fire, everyone started to run, half a million people running — to the community [building], from the community [building] home, to the police, to relatives, to strangers! Everyone is running, running, deportation, deportation! What we have feared has come to pass! Vernichtung *[extermination] commando, deportation! We ran home, we fell into each other's arms, we hugged, we kissed, we bid one another farewell forever. We swore not to be separated, but to die together, to run away, to go into hiding together! The city burst into tears, the sound of which was certainly heard all over the world, but not on high. 'Deportation,' cried every child, every old person, every stone, every wall, every sidewalk. The street shook as if millions of terrified demons had jumped on it, and were running and being pushed."*

Perhaps, says Sharon, Kami's daughter, who is my age, publishing something about the diary can be a bit of a *tikkun* — a reparation, a balm. Yad Vashem has promised to publish the diary, but so far there doesn't seem to be a concrete plan in the works. It will require someone to spend a few years transcribing — and then, hopefully, translating — before it even has the chance to meet Klemperer on the shelf. Sharon and I looked together at the pages of notes her grandfather kept on Josima, her piano-prodigy aunt. After the war, Weinbaum tells us, Reuven wrote a children's book called *Beyn Chomot HaGhetto — Between the Ghetto Walls*. The book is a work of fiction whose heroine is named Josima — and she fights the Germans. In this story, she wins.

SAM HALPERN, HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR, DEAD AT 93

Sam Halpern, who narrowly escaped the Holocaust and went on to become one of the most prominent builders in the history of New Jersey, died on Thursday, October 31. He was 93.

For generations, Sam and his family have served as models of leadership for the American Society for Yad Vashem.

Both Sam and his wife Gladys came with personal stories of loss and hardship during the Holocaust: Sam Halpern and his family were forced into the *Chorostkow* ghetto and then transported to *Kamionka,* one of the smaller but most savage slave-labor camps. It has been reported that "out of 16,000 slave laborers in the *Kamionka* labor camp, only 36 survived the war." Mr. Halpern's account of his experiences there is among the most searing and difficult to endure. In his 1996 book, *Darkness and Hope*, Halpern described the horror of being herded with hundreds of others out of cattle cars and first setting sight on *Kamionka*.

"When we reached the camp, though, a hush settled over the group. We looked and carefully listened. The entire area was eerily silent," he wrote. "The cloud of death hung over the camp that stood before us, and the fields, which in the summer were filled with corn and wheat, were gray and brown and lifeless."

He curried favor with a Nazi commander at the camp and was able to save the lives of himself and his brother, Arie.

Together, they escaped the camp and made it back to their hometown, where they were hidden for eight months until the end of the war by a Catholic family.

For decades after the war, Halpern continued to send money to the family who hid him in a barn.

Sam met Gladys in *Bayreuth*, where they married; in 1949 they immigrated to the United States.

In America, the Halperns rebuilt their lives, starting a leading real estate development firm, becoming prominent members of the Jewish community, and devoting themselves to Holocaust education, commemoration and remembrance. Gladys and Sam Halpern were major supporters of Yad Vashem and Benefactors of the Valley of the Communities, receiving the Yad Vashem Remembrance Award in 1992.

We are tremendously saddened at the loss of such a great leader, an inspiring man to all. His memory lives on in his family, as the torch of remembrance has been passed on to the next generations: the Halperns' children and grandchildren are involved as members of the American Society for Yad Vashem and as Young Leadership Associates, taking personal responsibility for the future of Holocaust remembrance.

Our heartfelt sympathies are extended to his wife, Gladys; his children, Fred, David, Murray and Jack; and to the entire family. May they be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

American & International Societies for Yad Vashem
MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE
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Leonard Wilf,
Editor-in-Chief

Yefim Krasnyanskiy, M.A.,
Editor

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