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.

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.
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 as silly and harmless a way for a few boys to spend recess. That day in the 1960s, at the elementary school in Fort Worth, the boys started juggling 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 ghetto of 40,000 people."

Herbed by the Nazis into a squalid ghetto of 40,000 people.

"But she was just horrified when I mentioned this to her. She stopped what she was doing and she pulled me aside."

"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.

Scenes of studies have documented how the trauma and horror did not just affect 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)
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 commandant Rudolph Höss, and the truth was not revealed 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 main physician 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.

Hansens lived in an 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 Nola Sibertz. 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.

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.

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.

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At age 10, Michael Kutz is among the 4,000 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 Niesiwiz, 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 Niesiwiz. 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 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 Niesiwiz. 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 . . . .

Michael Kutz

“IF, BY MIRACLE”: A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR’S TALE

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 revising 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 no less heroic and unforgettable is the story Eiger relates of the “28-year-old forerunner, from Warsaw, Franciszka Manovna, “known as Lusia in her circle of friends.” Naken 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! Then, 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 sum, Eiger and all the long-term inmates at Birkenau wondered what they did to deserve such treatment.

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 eventual — ly 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.

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.
THE VAST REACH OF THE NAZI HOLOCAUST

Seventy years ago a group of rab-

bits and Jewish war veterans staged a

small march in Washington to
draw public attention to the

Holocaust then taking place ac-

ross Nazi-occupied Europe. We are still

learning more about just what hap-
pened, both from archives and from

the personal witness of those who

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 bare-

ly 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 plat-

form. Weiss knew little of what would

become of her when the doors of the

car opened: “They were barking

lies?” 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 cap-

tured 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 mag-

ifying 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 any-

one 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 camps, what was going on in the camps that were local, that would have been impossible.”

Which raises the question: Just who

beyond the notorious SS was com-

plicit 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 unnerv-

ing portrait of women’s participation in the

Holocaust. They, too, could be

brutal killers.

“I take 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 cog-
nitive 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 Altaver, 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 on points: 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.”

Faula Mahlendorf knows about get-

ting 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 orders asked her if she 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 differ-

ent 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.”

In the left foreground, Irene Fogel Weiss’ two brothers, Reuben and Geresh 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 paramili-

etary training in 1936.
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 Stem says. “My grandmother would have mazo and halva hidden underneath her dresser.”

Mary experienced a health scare a few years back. She revealed her Jewish identity to Ana then, swaying 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, and she replies, chuckling, “To be honest, I don’t know what name you should call me by.”

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 archives 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 archives 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 teem-ing with sights so maddening, so depraved that it is hard to find any equivalent in the treasury of humani-

ty’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 scrappy, 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 chewing 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, then to 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 Miranowska 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 rea-

tions: one, it is contemporaneous. It is also in Hebrew. Most of the diarists (Continued on page 13)
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 living in the former German territories when the Nazis 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 couldn't," he says. In his new book, Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland, he explains how the Nazis 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: the 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 area of interest is the Holocaust, Grabowski had always been "sleeping in me," he says, "but woke up in a vengeance" a decade ago when he was often, "turning on and killing Jews they'd known for decades."

It's his impression that Finland would be his country's "in-your-face" Holocaust. "Everything that happened to them was extremely public," he says. Before the war, there were 66,678 Jews living in Finland, of whom 286 later perished. In the end, "only" 4,733 Jews, out of about 50,000 in total, were deported to Auschwitz.

Poland's Dark Hunt

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

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

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 Elina and Alan Pines.

Lawrence and Adina Burian.

Maya Naveh.

Boaz Zborowski.
Rebbitzen 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.
In the spring of 1943, the friend of a Polish Catholic family discovered a naked Jewish baby in a near-by 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.

"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 Rzeszów, summer of 1947. "You cannot explain it rationally, because I didn’t remember them and yet this feeling was there. I felt that they loved me."

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 the Roztropowicz family who moved with her to Israel two years later.

"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 rescuers.

Rescuer Genowefa Majcher from Poland, with rescued Michael Radyvyliv, 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— a Polish Catholic family discovered a naked Jewish baby in a near-by 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.

"The reason she is alive."

Her Jewish parents had been murdered, and the family they paid to protect her had abandoned her.

"I don’t have their identity."

"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 Shendler, who curated the exhibit, said the stories showed 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 silver 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."
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 grandaddy 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 Michal 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, Polish, and English.

Yet the war featured in some of Kichka’s more pleasant recollections as well. In describing how he inherited his father’s love of drawing from his father, Kichka depicts himself as a child, sitting on his father’s lap while he draws Hitler — with a sunny nose and buckteeth, wearing flowered boxer shorts, and carrying a broom instead of a rifle. On the same page, below that memory, Kichka depicts a black-clad Kichka surrounded by his father. One is mourning 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-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. “I’m one big cemetery,” Kichka’s father begins to sing, “I’m none of the lost property; she is rescued by the wily family friend, 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 defendant present and in reasonable health — were concluded in two different European countries. The former Nazi guard (in Memel) was that of Ivan Demjanjuk, who was tried in Germany for his role as an armed SS guard in the Sobibor death camp. In the 1940s, 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 gendarme lieutenant Sandor Keprivo, 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 Keprivo, 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 evidence.

In Hungary, Chief Prosecutor Zsolt Falvi was able to name six persons who were murdered by Keprivo’s men during the roundup in Novi Sad and to submit evidence regarding a truck-load of 30 arrested persons, whom Keprivo 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 Keprivo’s subordinates and subsequently murdered by the Hungarian forces at the Danube.

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. For example, without any living witnesses.

Based on evidence alone, it would appear that the likelihood of Keprivo’s being convicted was much higher than that of Demjanjuk. Yet ultimately, it was Demjanjuk who was convicted in May, whereas Keprivo 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 Völkischdeutsche, 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 try Keprivo as evident from the almost five years it took them to put him on trial, despite his acknowledged 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 Keprivo’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 Keprivo to 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 south Fort Worth.

She was reunited in Italy.

Holocaust survivor Brigitte Altman, center, poses for a photograph with her daughter, Leslie Magee, right, and granddaugh
ter 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 face in an attempt 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. “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 gentle 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. It was a boy or what it was. It was a Russian soldier. I was startled but overjoyed.”

Somewhere her father had survived the war. He and his daughter were reunited in Italy.

In 1949, Brigitte came to live with relatives in Dallas. A few years later she married Fredric Altman, a 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)

written in Yiddish and Polish. And Feldschuh (Ben-Shem's original name) had extraordinary intellectual horizons." He also points out Havi Dreyfus, a researcher in the Department of Jewish History at the University of Tel Aviv, a broad observ-er, 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 Silberman, senior historian at Yad Vashem, "What Reuven Feldschuh did was of great significance. It will be a huge book if the entire diary is pub-lished." Silberman believes that the diary's impact is "potentially similar to" the impact Victor Klemperer's diaries had in the 1990s about the quality of the writer and the richness of experience and expanson of years." I wouldn't know of Reuven Ben- Shem's diary, either, except that he was my grandfather's first cousin. 

Let's recall that in 1942, two years after the girl’s arrival in the Warsaw ghetto, two years later, the news came in and as they went out. The, postwar family would see her as they came in and as they went out. They fact that few outside Ben- 

Shem's immediate family circle ever learned of the diary’s existence wasn’t because the family kept it squir- 
relaxed 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 testi- monies 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 his his- toriography, the way in which popular writers and academics alike have changed their perception of what first-person accounts mean to the narra- tive of the Holocaust — and also because of Reuven’s own meander- ings through Zionist political move- ments. The fate of his work under- scores the arbitrary nature of those who write, those who become heroes, and those who are forgotten. ***

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 yeshiva. Reuven had recently spent several years in Palestine, where he had been, briefly, a halutz, and a founder of the kibbutz Kfar Araham, 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. New conditions 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 Zionist 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 sous, a woman named Shoshana Kosower-Rozenaew, would one day be his rescuer from the ghetto).

Reuven's right-wing activity, and his aggressive polemics against social- ism 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 culture” and express a militant, militaristic vitriol for all things of the then-ascen- dent left, explains Daniel Kupfer, 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 Kupfer, “informed the public” that Reuven had “swept under the rug in the 1950s” as Israel grappled with “who owned the legacy of fighters and self-defense” during the Holocaust.

The standard narrative was it was only the Zionist social- ists, who had been active in the Warsaw ghetto uprising, historian Kupfert Heller says, “So, on the right bank 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 at some point in the process of getting, he says, may be a means of understanding “how we commemo- rate 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 come 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 jour- nal — the truth of how people lived in this place. And the 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 even knew about Reuven’s faithful documenta- tion of his family circle and their life in the ghetto, and the Soviet invasion, nor did they know of his role as a leading revisionist Zionist. We, the younger generation, just knew the story of Josima — although we knew Reuven had lost everyone and that he had named Kami, whose full name is Neokamia, "Revenge God." His sec- ond marriage was to another survivor, with an equally harrowing tale: a woman survived after jumping from the train to Treblinka, leaving behind a half- dozen siblings. With her he eventual- ly 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 aliya; upon return, his daughter Rina Ben-Shem (now Maruwa) was given the first bat mitz- vah in Israeli history, she told me — may have contributed to his postwar sequestration. But the forgetting, or burying, of the diary is also a reflec- tion of a trend in historiography that is only changing now, some 70 years after the events took place: the val- orization 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 celebrat- ed, read, performed, since the 1950s. But the truth is, Frank is an exception. Alexandra Garbarini, chair of the Jewish Studies Department at Williams College, titles her book Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust, explained to me that these documents were long seen as of lim- ited value, because diaries are inher- ently local, narrowly focused, and, in the case of Holocaust diaries, the author was often, as Judith Reuven had lost everyone and that his cousins, knew little to noth- ing of his role as a rescuer from the ghetto).

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Jews that espoused ideas that were parallel to the Fascists were embarrassing. But at some point in the process of getting, he says, may be a means of understanding “how we commemo- rate 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 come 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 jour- nal — the truth of how people lived in this place. And the 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 even knew about Reuven’s faithful documenta- tion of his family circle and their life in the ghetto, and the Soviet invasion, nor did they know of his role as a leading revisionist Zionist. We, the younger generation, just knew the story of Josima — although we knew Reuven had lost everyone and that he had named Kami, whose full name is Neokamia, "Revenge God." His sec- ond marriage was to another survivor, with an equally harrowing tale: a woman survived after jumping from the train to Treblinka, leaving behind a half- dozen siblings. With her he eventual- ly 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 aliya; upon return, his daughter Rina Ben-Shem (now Maruwa) was given the first bat mitz- vah in Israeli history, she told me — may have contributed to his postwar sequestration. But the forgetting, or burying, of the diary is also a reflec- tion of a trend in historiography that is only changing now, some 70 years after the events took place: the val- orization 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 celebrat- ed, read, performed, since the 1950s. But the truth is, Frank is an exception. Alexandra Garbarini, chair of the Jewish Studies Department at Williams College, titles her book Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust, explained to me that these documents were long seen as of lim- ited value, because diaries are inher- ently local, narrowly focused, and, in the case of Holocaust diaries, the author was often, as Judith Reuven had lost everyone and that his cousins, knew little to noth-
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. Furious bearded Jews and young women covered parts of their bodies with their hands. I heard the cries of children and the prayers of their par-
ents 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. I threw them into the air with one hand, and shot them with the revolver they held in their other hand. When the infants fell to the ground, the men 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 horriﬁc 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 blood was boiling. 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 wound-
dered. 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 sur-
rounding 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 front was really advancing. I was too small to see out of the pit. I sum-
moned the strength to drag some of the bodies into a pile and, by climbing up on top of them, I 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. You must bear witness. I believe
what happened to us.” My mother pressed to her and kissed me.

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

Then shots were ﬁred into the air, pos-
sibly intended to quiet us, but the situ-
ation 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
some 50 to 100 people. When it had
quieted down, I saw that the Einsatzgruppen had again surrounded the pris-
ioners. One had any chance of escaping. Almost everyone
was crying in despair at being separat-
ed from their loved ones. Hopeless,
our spirits broken, we stood in line and
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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 Beneš. 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 Germans. 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, Edouard 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 Oklahoma, 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 Chiune Sugihara’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.
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 Halpern’s 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.

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Sam Halpern, Holocaust Survivor, Dead at 93