This year’s Annual Spring Luncheon honored Dr. Deborah E. Lipstadt. She is a world-renowned expert on Holocaust history and a worldwide defender of the truth about the atrocities of WWII. Professor Lipstadt is the Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies at Emory University in Atlanta. Her book Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory was the first full-length study of those who attempt to deny the Holocaust. A notorious person in that study was David Irving, whom Lipstadt called “one of the most dangerous spokespersons for Holocaust denial.” Irving’s response was to file a libel suit against Professor Lipstadt, which was the subject of her latest book and the topic of her speech at which was the subject of her latest libel suit against Professor Lipstadt.

Survivors heaped praise on Lipstadt as their heroine. She explained that it was only after the trial that she understood their meaning about standing up to false allegations.

Dr. Lipstadt spoke about the continuing need to be vigilant in uncovering Holocaust deniers, especially in light of the homework incident recently exposed in a school in California. The one-page instruction sheet given to the students stated: “When tragic events occur in history, there is often debate about their actual existence. For example, some people claim the Holocaust is not an actual event, but instead is a propaganda tool that was used for political and monetary gain.”

It is only through remaining vigilant and continuing to properly educate people that we can fight Holocaust deniers and make sure the world never forgets.

Dr. Lipstadt captivated the audience when she discussed her book The Eichmann Trial. The book gives an overview of the trial and analyzes the dramatic effect the survivors’ courtroom testimony — which was itself not without controversy — had on the world. Until the trial, we regularly commemo-rated the Holocaust but never fully understood what the millions who died and the hundreds of thousands who managed to survive had actually experienced.

Her book gives a view of the world as it continues to confront the continuing reality of genocide and ponder the future of those who survive it. The Eichmann trial, which was the trial of the century, has become a touchstone for judicial proceedings throughout the world, and offers a legal, moral and political framework for coming to terms with evil.

Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem Leonard A. Wilf reminded us of the importance of raising the awareness of the next generation. He praised the co-chairs of our Young Leadership Associates, Abbi Halpern and Barry Levine, for their efforts to reach out to the third generation. Mr. Wilf also pointed out that the mission of the American Society for Yad Vashem is best exemplified by our honoree and guest speaker, Dr. Deborah Lipstadt, who has spent her life making the world aware of the atrocities of the Holocaust.

Jessica Glickman Mauk, an active member of our Young Leadership Associates, introduced Dr. Lipstadt. She pointed out that, even as recently as yesterday, we were reminded in a Wall Street Journal article of the continued presence of anti-Semitism, and of how the need for Dr. Lipstadt’s work continues to be as important and necessary today as when she first began.

Marilyn Rubenstein, the Honorary Spring Luncheon Chair, Dr. Deborah E. Lipstadt, 2014 Spring Luncheon Honoree; and Leonard A. Wilf, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem.
T he latest revelation about the Holocaust stuns even the scholars who thought they already knew everything about the horrific details of Germany’s program of genocide against the Jewish people.

It’s taken more than 70 years to finally know the full facts. And what is almost beyond belief is that what really happened goes far beyond what anyone could ever have imagined.

For the longest time we have spoken of the tragedy of six million Jews. It was a number that represented the closest approximation we could find to the victims of Hitler’s plan for a Final Solution. The hope was that by diminishing the tragedy claimed six million was a gross exaggeration. Others went further and denied the historicity of the Holocaust, insisting that the Jews fabricated their suffering.

But now we know the truth.

The reality was much worse than what we imagined.

The unspeakable crime of the 20th century, more than the triumph of evil, was the sin of the “innocent” bystander.

It wasn’t just the huge killing centers whose very names — Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau, Majdanek, Belzec, Ravensbruck, Sobibor, Treblinka — were the ghostly images by now so familiar to us. It wasn’t just the Warsaw ghetto. It wasn’t just the famous sites we’ve all by now heard of that deservedly live on in everlasting infamy.

Researchers have just released documentation that astounds even the most informed scholars steeped in the previously known statistics of German atrocities. Here is some of what has now been conclusively discovered.

There were more than 42,500 Nazi ghettos and camps throughout Europe from 1933 to 1945. There were 30,000 slave labor camps; 1,150 Jewish ghettos; 980 concentration camps; 1,000 prisoner of war camps; 500 brothels filled with sex slaves; and thousands of other camps used for euthanizing the elderly and infirm, performing forced abortions, “Germanizing” prisoners or transporting victims to killing centers.

The best estimate using current information available is 15 to 20 million people who died or were imprisoned in sites controlled by the Germans throughout the European continent.

Simply put, in the words of Hartmut Berghoff, director of the German Historical Institute in Washington, “The numbers are so much higher than what we originally thought; we knew before how horrible life in the camps and ghettos was, but the actual numbers are unbelievable.”

And what makes this revelation so important is that it forces us to acknowledge a crucial truth about the Holocaust that many people have tried to ignore or to minimize — a truth that has profound contemporary significance: The unspeakable crime of the 20th century, more than the triumph of evil, was the sin of the “innocent” bystander.

For years our efforts to understand the Holocaust focused on the perpetrators. We looked for explanations for the madness of Mengele, the obsessive fixation of Hitler, the impulsive cruelty of Eichmann. We sought answers to how it was possible for the criminal elements, the sadists and the mentally unbalanced to achieve the kind of power that made the mass killings feasible.

That was because full realization of the extent of the horror. With more than 42,000 ghettos and concentration camps scattered throughout the length and breadth of a supposedly civilized continent, there’s no longer any way to avoid the obvious conclusion. The cultured, the enlightened, the liberal, the refined, the sophisticated, the urban — all of them share in the shame of a world that lost its moral compass and willingly acceded to the victory of evil.

“We had no idea what was happening” needs to be clearly identified as “the great lie” of the years of Nazi power. The harsh truth is that almost everyone had to know. The numbers negate the possibility for collective ignorance. And still the killings did not stop, the torture did not cease, the concentration camps were not closed, the crematoria continued their barbaric task.

The “decent” people were somehow able to rationalize their silence.

J ust last year Mary Fulbrook, a distinguished scholar of German history, in A Small Town Near Auschwitz wrote a richly and painfully detailed examination of those Germans who, after the war, successfully operated in the role of innocent bystanders.

“These people have almost entirely escaped the familiar net of ‘perpetrators, victims and bystanders’; yet they were functionally crucial to the eventual possibility of implementing policies of mass murder. They may not have intended or wanted to contribute to this outcome; but, without their attitudes, mentalities, and actions, it would have been virtually impossible for murder on this scale to have taken place in the way that it did. The concepts of perpetrator and bystander need to be amended, expanded, rendered more complex, as our attention and focus shifts to those involved in upholding an unfolding universe murder system.”

Mary Fulbrook singles out for censure those who lived near Auschwitz. But that was before we learned that Auschwitz was replicated many thousands of times over throughout the continent in ways that could not have gone unnoticed by major parts of the population. Millions of people were witnesses to small towns like Auschwitz in their own backyards.

And so Elie Wiesel of course was right. The insight that most powerfully needs to be grasped when we reflect upon the Holocaust’s message must be that “The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it’s indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it’s indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it’s indifference.”

BY RABBI BENJAMIN BLECH, VIRTUAL JERUSALEM

AT SOBIBOR: BUILDING IN THE HEART OF A DEATH CAMP

I recently had the opportunity to visit Sobibor, a former death camp in eastern Poland.

The construction — slated to begin next year — was approved by an international steering committee, including representatives from Israel’s Yad Vashem. With a projected cost of $5 million, the project makes Sobibor one of the last former extermination centers to add significant tourist infrastructure.

“I am very impressed that they are building these things at Sobibor,” said Selma Engel, one of only seven remaining Sobibor survivors who escaped from the camp during a 1943 prisoner revolt.

After carrying out a meticulous plan to kill the camp’s SS masters, more than 300 Jewish prisoners fled to the forest; however, fewer than 50 escapees survived until the war’s end.

“Now people will finally be able to see the camp from the road, and know the truth about what was there,” the 91-year-old Engel told the Times of Israel in a phone interview from her home in Branford, Connecticut.

“Nobody knows about Sobibor,” said Engel. “They have no idea what it is to be inside a killing machine. I think it is very important that they are doing something inside the camp,” said Engel, one of only several Dutch Jews to survive Sobibor.

However, not everyone agrees that construction inside the camp itself makes sense, including archeologists who’ve excavated at Sobibor since 2007. From their perspective, the site’s historical integrity and future research prospects are best served by building outside the camp, and not on top of Holocaust-era remains.

“We lost the fight, and they are continuing with the visitor center and now a very long memorial wall,” said Israeli archeologist Yoram Haimi. “We think they should do it outside the camp. Never build something inside the camp. But this is not our decision,” he told the Times in an interview.

BY MATT LEOVIC, THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

The numbers are now being conclusively discovered: 42,500 ghettos and camps and more than 250,000 Jews.

A group of boys taking part in Jewish religious practice in Camp II, Sobibor, a very long memorial wall. After carrying out a meticulous plan to kill the camp’s SS masters, more than 300 Jewish prisoners fled to the forest; however, fewer than 50 escapees survived until the war’s end.

NEW HOLOCAUST DISCOVERIES

In 1986, Haimi discovered that two 200-meter-long escape tunnels opened in sites controlled by the Germans throughout the European continent.

Simply put, in the words of Hartmut Berghoff, director of the German Historical Institute in Washington, “The numbers are so much higher than what we originally thought; we knew before how horrible life in the camps and ghettos was, but the actual numbers are unbelievable.”

And what makes this revelation so important is that it forces us to acknowledge a crucial truth about the Holocaust that many people have tried to ignore or to minimize — a truth that has profound contemporary significance: The unspeakable crime of the 20th century, more than the triumph of evil, was the sin of the “innocent” bystander.

The numbers are now being conclusively discovered: 42,500 ghettos and camps and more than 250,000 Jews. From their perspective, the site’s historical integrity and future research prospects are best served by building outside the camp, and not on top of Holocaust-era remains.

“We lost the fight, and they are continuing with the visitor center and now a very long memorial wall,” said Israeli archeologist Yoram Haimi. “We think they should do it outside the camp. Never build something inside the camp. But this is not our decision,” he told the Times in an interview.

CLEARING THE GROUND

In 2008, Haimi discovered that two of his uncles were murdered at Sobibor. Within a year, the exuberant researcher — typically focused on excavating ancient Israel — arrived on-site at the former death camp, along with Polish archeologist Wojtek Mazurek.

For seven years, Haimi and Mazurek have unearthed thousands of personal items belonging to Sobibor’s victims. They’ve also remapped key parts of the camp by uncovering fences, buildings and — last year — what the researchers believe to be an escape tunnel.

In Camp II, site of the future visitor center, Jewish victims undressed and handed over their valuables before being led by barbed wire — was uncovered by Haimi and Mazurek during early excavation seasons, ending a decades-old debate about its precise location.

(Continued on page 13)
The Diary of Rywka Lipszyc — published by San Francisco-based Jewish Family and Children’s Services in partnership with Lehnhart Judaica — was exhaustively researched, authenticated and annotated. It took a team of historians, archivalists and translators years to finalize the newly published book.

More than anything, the survival of the diary itself constitutes a modern-day miracle. It was found at Auschwitz in 1945 and then remained hidden for years in a closet in Siberia. With its extraordinary recovery, preservation and publication, the world gains a renewed understanding of the human price of the Holocaust.

“It’s the kind of discovery that is so powerful, you know immediately it’s important,” said Anita Friedman, executive director of JFCS. “I knew we had to publish this diary.”

The 170-page book includes not only the full text of the diary, but also a deep analysis of it by National Jewish Book Award winner Alexandra Zapruder, as well as essays about the Lodz ghetto, the Lipszyc family, the provenance of the diary and the mystery of Rywka herself, of whom no trace has been found. It reads like a detective novel with an unsatisfying ending.

A Soviet Red Army doctor found the diary beside a crematorium at Auschwitz-Birkenau. It was remarkedably well preserved. But how did it get there? Why did the doctor keep the diary hidden away for decades until her death, and why did her son do the same for another 10 years?

Most poignantly, what happened to Rywka?

Some questions have no answers.

Those who worked on Rywka’s diary content themselves with the words of a cold and hungry child who faced the worst in humanity: “At moments like this,” Rywka wrote, “I want to live so much... Really one needs a lot of strength in order not to give up.”

In June, Randi noticed a new e-mail in her inbox.

The staff archivist at the S.F.-based Holocaust Center, saying she had a World War II-era document in her possession and wanted to know whether the center would examine it.

Hand-scrawled in Polish, the document appeared to be an anonymous diary, covering a six-month period starting in October 1943, and written in the Lodz ghetto, the longest-standing Jewish ghetto of the war.

Before she discovered it in 1995 among her late father’s effects in his Moscow home, Berezovskaya had never heard a word about the diary. No leads; no old stories, no family lore.

“The only thing I knew was that my grandmother was in the war,” said Berezovskaya, a former San Francisco resident. “She was a pretty strange woman and [stayed out of contact with] the family in her last years.”

Anastasia has deduced that her grandmother, Zinaida Berezovskaya, a former Red Army doctor, entered Auschwitz with Soviet liberators and plucked the diary from the ashes of the camp. The granddaughter found the diary wrapped with an explanatory cover note and an accompanying Russian newspaper article, with a photo from February 1945 showing the exact spot where the diary was found.

Anastasia’s grandmother kept the diary hidden in her home in Omsk (in southwestern Siberia) until her death in 1983. She had apparently made a few futile attempts to learn more about it, but no one had any answers. Then Anastasia’s father kept it in Moscow until his death in 1995. Anastasia then took it back to San Francisco, where she had immigrated four years earlier.

“I knew it was an important document,” she said of her thinking at the time. “I thought I’d like to show it to someone and do something with it. In 1995, the Internet was not widely available, so I asked around. People didn’t have a clue.”

A few organizations had expressed mild interest, some asking Anastasia to send the diary in the mail. But she wasn’t eager to part with it. And so, for the most part, the diary remained closed for another 13 years, until Janec dug it out, theo-
BOOK REVIEWS
THE JEWISH PRESS AND THE HOLOCAUST


REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

When this reviewer first noted the publication of Yosef Gorny’s The Jewish Press and the Holocaust, 1939-1945, her father immediately came to mind. Why? She could vividly recall how he always wondered what the rest of the world was thinking and doing — or not doing — while he was struggling to survive Hitler’s Nazi hell in Europe. Indeed, throughout the years this reviewer has met and read about many other survivors who wondered the very same thing. . . . Not surpris- ingly, then, Holocaust researchers have been increasingly drawn to this area of study. The result is Gorny’s thought-provoking book. Here, telling us what people in the free world were being told, how they reacted, and, most importantly and interestingly, how they understood it all. Needless to say, readers of M&F will find Gorny’s volume especially intriguing since it focuses specifically on the Jewish press in Palestine, Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union.

So what do we learn? Till about November/December 1942, “cautious optimism” reigned almost every-where. In other words, these newspa-pers in various parts of the world were reporting what was happening to their coreligionists in Europe. It’s just that most everyone reading these articles doubted the numbers murdered and the premeditated and organized aspect of these ruthless acts. Thus, what was happening was frequently compared to previous outbreaks of anti-Semitism. In sum, many thought it would soon end — as these outbreaks usually did — and the greater majority of the Jews of Europe would survive. No one imagined Hitler’s devilish “plans” for the Jews for none in his- tory had ever had them!

Interestingly, the above is very similar to how Lithuanian Jews reacted in the early years of the war when escaping Polish Jews plainly told them of how the Nazis were horribly mistreating them. The general reaction: Lithuanian Jews didn’t believe it. Oh, they understood that things weren’t going so well for good Jews under the Nazis. But they had absolutely no idea of how bad they were — nor could they have believed it — until they experi- enced it themselves. So, the question is: why should Jews living so far away have believed it? After all, it was the roughnecked Russians with their chaotic pogroms that had always been the enemy, not the proper Germans with their worldly and breathtaking arts and culture. . . .

Meanwhile, once the aforemen- tioned newspapers and their publics realized that what they’d thought were overblown reports com-ing to them from Eastern Europe were the truth, they all beat their breasts in anguish. Then they began passionately cri-tiquing themselves, cri-tiquing one another, cri-tiquing their govern-ments, and presenting a multitude of sugges-tions to the democra-cies. Some called for the gates of Palestine to be opened. Some called for easier immi-gration to America. Some called for havens, any havens, to be found for the rescue of children. Some called for protest marches. Some demanded a Jewish army be allowed to form and fight. Some demanded that the Nazis be clearly and definitively told that, in the end, they would pay heavily for their damnable deeds! Many newspa-pers, noting the tremendous hue and cry over what happened in Lidice in 1942 when the Nazis massacred many of the villagers in retribution for the killing of a highly placed Nazi, wondered why there wasn’t a greater cry going up for the many thousands of Jews being massacred in countless “Jewish Lidices”? Was “Jewish blood” cheaper than “gentile blood”? Many newspapers loudly protested the fact that the Bermuda Conference of 1943, called most especially to somehow rescue Europe’s Jews, had no Jewish representative present . . . and came to no real solution of any kind! And then there was the angry talk sur-rounding the Jewish owners of the New York Times and how they ginger-ly “universalized” the Jew as just another victim of the Nazis — among many their victims. The New York Times refused to recognize that the Jew, unlike any other victim, was pin-pointed by the Nazis for extermination, and thus deserving of special emer-gency measures vis-à-vis rescue!

All in all, Gorny’s work proves highly absorbing, and exceptionally fasci-nating. Sadly, it also especially high-lights the “impotence” of the Jews during those years — powerless all over the world. And this “powerless-ness” led, according to Gorny, to “unresponsiveness.”

Needless to say, Gorny’s The Jewish Press and the Holocaust should be a part of any Holocaust scholar’s library.

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

CHILDREN’S BOOKS ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

“T he world must remember.” This often echoed phrase has brought many people and forces together in an effort to understand the past and forearm about the future. The expanding number of museums, books, films, and so on have brought the subject of the Holocaust into the limelight. But still, there are many adults who either don’t believe in the reality of the Holocaust or find the subject too gruesome to discuss.

If we don’t discuss the Holocaust and teach our children about it they will fall prey to ignorance. Our chil-dren must learn the truth about the past, since they are the builders of our future. The strength of our society depends solely on the education of our children.

So how do we educate our children? There are a number of growing lesson plans and activities to use in the classroom for educating about the Holocaust. But these programs and information will take time to spread, so parents must continue to educate the children to read. Perhaps you can read these books with your children and then discuss the feelings and events that are within them.

The following books are fiction about the Holocaust written specifically for children ages 9 to 12. These books show the Holocaust and its affect on the eyes of children. Though these books educate about the Holocaust, they are also wonderfully written stories of friendship, strength and bravery. Honestly, I found most of these difficult to put down, and each brought a tear to my eye. They are all worth reading.


C lara and her older sis- ter, Marta, were chased home by other children — one of them used to be Clara’s best friend. Since the persecution in Austria was increasing, Clara’s father decided that they would make a “night crossing” out of Austria to Switzerland. The family sold everything of value, including the mother’s wedding band, but the moth-er insisted on keeping the Shabbat candlesticks. Though the Shabbat candelesticks were hidden in the elder sister’s petticoat, they often clinked together, giving away their location. When the family neared the gate to the Swiss border, they realized that they could not chance the candle-sticks clinking together. So, to keep the candle-sticks from making noise, they were hidden inside Clara’s dolls. When they reached the gate, Clara not only had to pretend that the fami-ly had only been away on a holiday, but had to carry the family’s most valued possessions. Acting brave and strong, Clara successfully answered the Nazis’ questions with quick and clever answers. The family successfully made it into Switzerland.


Y ears after the Second World War, a young boy, Etienne, made his annual visit to spend the summer months with his grandfather. On his grandfather’s farm, Etienne helped with the pears and other chores and took excursions into the woods on Revere, the horse. At a certain woods, he heard children but didn’t see any. After a short discussion with Madame Joboter, a woman who helped the grandfather with house chores, Etienne was told that the location where he heard voices was haunted and that he was not to go there ever again. The grandfather pushed these stories aside and claimed that they stemmed from fears of guilty people. The grandfather didn’t explain what he meant by that. Etienne again went back to the location and this time saw and talked to some children. They seemed to be hiding in the woods and waiting for a train. Etienne didn’t understand, and when he told his grandfather, his grandfather did not believe the story. Etienne’s further journeys to this location yielded him physical items such as a pocketknife. Later, Etienne found a pen that made a blue mark on his arm. The grandfa-ther then told the story.

Many children had been sent by (Continued on page 15)
They fought alongside them, healed them and often befriended them. But how do Finland’s Jews feel today about their war — and little mentioned — alliance with the Nazis?

BY PAUL KENDALL, THE TELEGRAPH

In September 1941, a medical officer performed a deed so heroic he was awarded an Iron Cross by the German high command. With little regard for his own safety, and in the face of heavy Soviet shelling, Major Leo Skurnik, a district doctor who had once fostered ambitions of becoming a concert pianist, organized the evacuation of a field hospital on the Finnish-Russian border, saving the lives of more than 600 men, including members of the SS.

Skurnik was far from the only soldier to be awarded the Iron Cross during the Second World War. More than four million people received the decoration. But there was one fact about him that makes the recommendation remarkable: he was Jewish. And Skurnik was not the only Jew fighting on the side of the Germans. More than 300 found themselves in league with the Nazis when Finland, which had a mutual enemy in the Soviet Union, joined the war in June 1941.

The alliance between Hitler and the race he vowed to annihilate — the only instance of Jews fighting for Germany’s allies — is one of the most extraordinary aspects of the Second World War, and yet hardly anyone, including many Finns, knows anything about it.

“I lived here for 25 years before I heard about it, and I’m Jewish,” says John Simon, a New Yorker who moved to Helsinki in 1982. “It’s not a story that’s told very much.”

The reasons why it’s rarely told go right to the heart of what it means to be Jewish and that race’s quest to be accepted by a long list of unenthusiastic host nations. The Jewish veterans — a number who are still alive today — insist they’re not ashamed of what they did. But spend an evening in their company and talk to other members of the community who have examined the events in larger Russian force, he fought so valiantly, demonstrating such great skill and initiative, that he was promoted to sergeant.

For a while, an uneasy peace reigned between Finland and the Soviet Union, but, when Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa, his surprise invasion of the Communist state, Finland saw an opportunity to regain the territory it had lost in the Winter War and joined forces with Germany.

Like all Jews, Livson had heard Hitler’s venomous tirades against his people. He knew something about Kristallnacht, the attacks against German Jewish homes, businesses, schools and synagogues in November 1938. But, when the orders arrived to rejoin the fight against Russia, he didn’t for one minute consider disobeying.

Livson is 97 now and a frailer version of the tough soldier he once was, but his voice remains loud and clear, his handshake firm and his opinions unwavering.

“I had to do my duty, like everyone,” says he. “We weren’t Jews fighting in a Finnish army — we were Finnish people, Finnish soldiers, fighting for our country.”

“We have met in the cafeteria in the basement of Helsinki’s synagogue, alongside Livson’s wife and members of the Finnish Jewish Veterans Society. “The atmosphere is friendly, jovial even, in the way conversations among vets sometimes are, but there is no mistaking Livson’s serious intent. When he’s making an important point, he bangs a walking stick on the floor in unison with each word for emphasis.

As, as doing their duty as soldiers and proving their loyalty to their country, the veterans insist they were happy to fight for another reason: as far as they were concerned, Finland and Germany were fighting separate wars, they say; one a war of devotion and one a war of conquest. “I had nothing to do with the Germans,” says Livson. “There were no Germans where I was serving. They were 250 km north of my regiment.”

But not every Jew was so lucky. On the border with Russia, in the region of Karelia, Finnish and German troops fought side by side and Jews had to contend with two enemies: one in front of them and one within their ranks.

They lived in permanent fear of their identity being revealed, but, incredibly, on the occasions that it was, the German soldiers took the matter no further. The men were Finnish, they had the full support of their superior officers and the Germans while often shocked to find themselves fighting alongside Jews — did not have the authority to upbraid them. In fact, where they found themselves outranked by a Jewish officer, they were forced to salute.

There may have been German soldiers in Finland and the German command and Gestapo in Helsinki, but Finland rejected Hitler’s demands to introduce anti-Jewish laws. When Heinrich Himmler, the architect of the Final Solution, visited Finland in August 1942 and asked the prime minister Jukka Rangell about the “Jewish Question,” Rangell replied: “We do not have a Jewish Question.”

“Have a story about one Jewish soldier who was making his way back to camp with a German of a similar rank,” says Simon. “The Jew said to the German, ‘When we get back to camp, don’t tell people I’m Jewish.’ The German replied, ‘But nothing would happen to you — you’re a Finnish soldier. It’s me who would get into trouble.’”

Feelings ran particularly high among the injured. A scrapbook that belonged to Chaje Steinbach, a Jewish nurse in the main hospital in Oulu, 370 miles north of Helsinki, contains several heartfelt messages from German patients. “To my darling, what you are to me I have told you,” begins one from a soldier calling himself Rudy. “What I am to you, I have never asked. I do not want to know it, I do not want to hear it, because to know too much may destroy happiness. I will tell you just one thing: I would give you everything your heart desires. You are the woman I have loved over everything else. Until now, I had never believed that anything like this existed.”

Another woman, Dina Poljakoff, who worked as a nursing assistant, is believed to have made such an impression on her German patients.

Jews were part of this act of bringing everybody together.

“Politicians were determined to protect every citizen, even former Communists. If they had broken ranks, even for the Jews, it would have annihilated that argument.”

(Continued on page 14)
HITLER’S JEWISH NEIGHBOR LOOKS BACK IN HORROR IN NEW BOOK

BY DEBORAH COLE

E dgar Feuchtwanger, the son of a prominent German Jewish family with roots in Bavaria going back centuries, vividly remembers nearly bumping into his neighbor Adolf Hitler as a boy.

It was 1933 and Hitler, who had just become German chancellor, kept a sprawling flat on Munich’s elegant Prinzregentenplatz next door to Feuchtwanger’s family home.

Eight years old at the time, Edgar had been taken by his nanny for a walk when they nearly collided with the country's most powerful man. “It so happened that just at the moment when we were in front of his door, he came out. He was in a nearly white mackintosh,” Feuchtwanger told AFP.

“We were in his way. He looked at me and there were a few casual bystanders in the street — it was about half past eight in the morning, and they of course shouted ‘Heil Hitler!’ He just lifted his hat a little bit, as any democratic politician would do — he didn’t give the (straight-armed Nazi) salute — and then he got into his car.”

Feuchtwanger, who said several Jewish families lived in the neighborhood, made eye contact with Hitler, who looked at him “quite pleasantly.” “I have to emphasize that if he had known who I was, I wouldn’t be here,” he said.

“Just my name would have been like a red rag to him.”

He was referring to the fact that he was a Jew, but also to his famous uncle, Lion Feuchtwanger, one of the most popular German authors of the early 20th century.

He penned a scathing 1930 satire of Mein Kampf in the best-seller rankings.

Feuchtwanger, who is 89, is about to go on a German tour for a book of his own, When Hitler Was Our Neighbor, starting, of course, in Munich.

He now lives in Britain, where his parents were able in 1938 to buy a visa that would save the family’s lives for a time ran neck and neck with Hitler’s Mein Kampf in the best-seller rankings.

Feuchtwanger says the family at first had only an abstract sense of the danger posed to them by the National Socialists and their personable neighbor.

“He went around Germany ceaselessly and he tended to come into Munich at the end of the week, spend a short time — he sometimes went to his favorite restaurant, the Osteria — and then he would move on to his mountain retreat at Berchtesgaden,” he said.

“After about 1935–36, you couldn’t any longer walk past his front door. You were kept to the opposite side of the road, but you could see these cars parked there, so I knew he was there even before I left the house.”

Feuchtwanger believes he as a child had a keener sense of what his thoroughly German Jewish parents and their friends could not believe: that the country they loved would turn on them with such speed, hatred and, finally, blood-lust.

“We were aware of the threat probably even in 1932,” he said, his English still lightly accented by his native German.

“But of course we didn’t realize how radical that threat was, how lethal it would get. My father had got that quite wrong.”

That changed during the Kristallnacht pogrom of November 9–10, 1938, when his father Ludwig, who worked for a publishing house, was swept up in the mass arrests.

He was seized at their flat, within view of Hitler’s front window, and held at the Dachau concentration camp north of Munich for six terrifying weeks.

Lion Feuchtwanger had already fled for France in 1933 because his books were banned and burned by the Nazis.

He and a few other relatives pooled together to give Ludwig the then hefty sum of 1,000 British pounds, upon his release, that would allow the family to escape the Third Reich.

Only Lion Feuchtwanger’s 59-year-old sister was sent to England first, and his parents joined him two months later.

His aunt Bella, however, stayed behind in Prague and would die at the Theresienstadt concentration camp.

When the war broke out in September 1939, Feuchtwanger was beginning a new life at a British boarding school.

His start was difficult, with the English boys making fun of his German name, calling him “fish finger” and “Volkswagen.”

But he would go on to outlive Hitler, study at Cambridge, marry a British general’s daughter and become a history professor at the University of Southampton.

He said French journalist Bertil Scali approached him a few years ago with the idea of a “literary” memoir that would expand on the given facts.

The German publication in April has drawn wide media coverage, with Munich-based national daily Süddeutsche Zeitung saying it read like a “spooky fairy tale — more Franz Kafka than the Brothers Grimm.”

Feuchtwanger, who is still looking for an English publisher, said his birthplace now seemed completely transformed.

“I tend to look at the German newspapers on my computer. One feels that somebody like (Chancellor) Angela Merkel, she’s blissfully without charisma,” he said with a hearty laugh.

“One’s had enough charismatic personalities in German history to last for good and all.”

HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR MEETS HER LIBERATOR AFTER 68 YEARS

BY NAOMI NIX

T: The Washington Post

It’s been almost 70 years, but Marsha Kreuzman still remembers the moment she lay outside the steps of a Nazi crematorium wishing she could die.

Kreuzman had already lost her mother, father and brother to the Holocaust, and death seemed inevitable, she said.

But then an American soldier picked up her 68-pound body and whisked her to safety.

“I wanted to kiss his hand and thank him,” she said. “From the first day I was liberated, I wanted to thank them, but I didn’t know who to thank.”

Since then, the now-90-year-old Holocaust survivor has been on a decades-long quest to find American soldiers who liberated the Mauthausen concentration camp, one that didn’t have any success until she met Joe Barbella, quite by chance.

Their unlikely meeting — and now a budding friendship — has given Kreuzman a pleasant twist to an otherwise tragic story.

That tale begins in Krakow, Poland.

After the Germans invaded Poland in September 1939, Kreuzman and her family were sent to the Krakow ghetto. In 1940, her mother was taken to the Majdanek concentration camp, where she was killed.

Marsha Kreuzman says the rest of the family was then taken to Plaszow, a labor camp just outside of Krakow, built on top of two former Jewish cemeteries.

There, she recalls, Nazis would punish or kill those who were too sick or weak to work.

“If they were able to work, they would be able to live,” said Michael Riff, director of Ramapo College’s Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. “It was a matter of life or death.”

(Continued on page 12)
NEW CASE STUDY EXPLORES ROLE OF POLISH PEASANTS IN HOLOCAUST ATROCITIES

BY JUDY MALTZ, HAARETZ

Polish peasants and villagers played an instrumental role in rounding up and denouncing Jews during the Holocaust, often taking initiatives without any encouragement from the Germans, according to a study by Holocaust historian Jan Grabowski.

In Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland, Grabowski argues that Poles living in the countryside served as enthusiastic accomplices to the Nazis and that many Jews who had managed to survive the roundups and escape transports to the death camps eventually lost their lives because they were turned in by their Polish neighbors.

Grabowski, a professor in the department of history at the University of Ottawa, is also on staff at the Polish Central Bureau of Research. He presented his findings at a special symposium held at Yad Vashem on May/June 2014 - Iyyar/Sivan 5774

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE             Page 7

DIARY OF SECOND WORLD WAR GERMAN TEENAGER REVEALS YOUNG LIVES UNTRoubLED BY NAZI HOLOCAUST

Newly published diary hailed as remarkable documentary evidence of how millions of Germans relied on collective indifference to endure the horrors of war.

BY TONY PATERSON, THE INDEPENDENT

Her neighborhood was bombed by the allies, the Jews around her, the German capital was being bombed nightly and the Nazi Holocaust was killing thousands. As a trainee secretary, she recorded her daily experiences to improve her stenography skills.

Now, some 70 years on, her diary has been published for the first time in Germany and is being hailed as remarkable documentary evidence of how millions of Germans relied on collective indifference to endure the horrors of war and ignore the brutality of the Nazi rule.

Her book, Die Nacht: Ein Tagebuch im Bombenkrieg (teenaged girl in bombing war), Eicke’s diary is an often banal account of everyday life. She started writing it in 1944 when she was 15 and less than a mile away from where she worked as a tailor.

“Gitti is merely a cog in the wheels that kept Nazi Germany turning,” is how Der Spiegel magazine described the author. “She is a young woman skilled in the art of blotting out ugliness, willing to believe what she’s told and, ultimately, one of the lucky ones,” it added.

Here is Gitti’s entry for February 1, 1944: “The school had been bombed when we arrived this morning. Waltraud, Melitta and I went back to Gisela’s and danced to gramophone records.” In another raid on her Berlin neighborhood in March 1943, two people are killed, 34 are injured and more than 1,000 are made homeless.

Gitti writes: “It took place in the middle of the night, horrible, I was half asleep.”

In November 1944, Hitler is trying to cripple the advances made after D-Day landings by planning an offensive in the Ardennes, but Gitti — by now a member of the Nazi Party — is more concerned about her hair.

She writes that she has just been given a “disastrous” perm by her hairdresser and is worried about going to work “looking a fright.”

Then on March 2, 1945, while Hitler’s troops are trying to halt the Red Army’s advance just 60 miles east of Berlin, Gitti, now 18, goes to the cinema. She writes: “Margot and I went to the Admiralspalast cinema to see Meine Herren Söhne. It was such a lovely film, but there was a power cut in the middle. How annoying!”

The humdrum tone is all the more disquieting when it comes to the steady disappearance of Berlin’s Jews — an issue that receives only one mention in the entire diary. On February 27, 1943, she ends a trivial-packed account about how she and her friend Waltraud go to the opera and get chatted up by soldiers on the way home with the entry: “Jews all over town being taken away, including the tailor across the road.”

Brigitte Eicke is now 86. She still lives in East Berlin’s Prenzlauerberg district, where she lived during the war. Just around the corner from where she worked as a secretary, there was a “collection center” for Jews who were being sent to the Auschwitz death camp.

In a recent interview to coincide with the publication of her diary, she said: “My son always said to me: how could you be so oblivious? But I never saw a thing.” She added: “There were some Jewish girls in my first class photograph taken in 1933 but, by the time the next one was taken, they were all gone. When I asked my mother about them, they had said they had moved to Palestine.”

Decades would pass before she grasped the enormity of the Nazis’ crimes. “It was only when I visited Buchenwald in 1970 that I saw photographs of the camps. It took me years to realize what had gone on,” she said.

Unlike thousands of young German women, Brigitte Eicke appears to have escaped being raped by Red Army troops when they took Berlin. But she lost her father and an uncle on the eastern front. Some German commentators have suggested that her naive and apolitical account of her experiences was an unconscious survival attempt.
REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

JEWS “ON THE EDGE”

1944: BETWEEN ANNIHILATION AND LIBERATION

BY PROFESSOR DINA PORAT

The expression “on the edge,” taken from Nathan Alterman’s poem Joy of the Poor, very aptly expresses the feeling which prevailed in 1944 among the Jews of Europe, who were in the throes of a double race on which their very lives depended. On the one hand, cities from east to west, such as Vilna and Minsk, Warsaw and Rigas, Belgrade and Sofia, Paris and Rome, were being liberated from the yoke of Nazi Germany; the Red Army was advancing, and the western Allies continued to bog down Germany, their landing in Normandy tipping the scales still further. On the other hand, in the same year, the Jews of Hungary were sent to Auschwitz, the Lodz and Kovno ghettos were liquidated, the last of the Jews of Kovno went to Auschwitz, the last of the Jews of Transnistria, a region in southern Ukraine, were deported, and in July, the Kovno ghetto in Lithuania was liquidated. It was reaching out to them across the horizon of the last years of the war. This was the beginning of the return of the remnant of those exiled to the ghettos in Lithuania was liquidated. At around the same time, Zionist youth, other Jewish activists and neutral diplomats stepped up their rescue activities in Budapest, ultimately contributing to the survival of over 100,000 Hungarian Jews. However, in June, Jews from the Greek island of Corfu were rounded up and deported, and in July, the Kovno ghetto in Lithuania was liquidated. Nazi ideology, which was centered around the burning desire to kill every single Jewish individual, dictated such efforts even in the final year of the war, when the Germans needed every means at their disposal to fight at the front, a need that included the urgent requirement for trains to bring them equipment and armor as a very last resort. This meant that all the means at their disposal, including the bodies of the murdered victims. They blew up one of the gas chambers with the help of explosives smuggled in to them by a group of young Jewish women. The question of whether or not they succeeded, if so, how did these men and women, imprisoned in this indescribable place, draw the strength to organize, band together, choose the right moment, and actually hope to succeed? These events are at the heart of the tension between annihilation and liberation, a tension that was literally a question of life and death for the Jews at that time, who were living on the very edge.

“WE FOUND YOUR NOTE”

MYSTERIOUS LETTER REUNITES FAMILIES SEPARATED SINCE THE HOLOCAUST

BY DEBORAH BERMAN

When sisters Nurit Baruch and Dorit Oz Gross visited their grandmother’s grave at a Petchak Tivka cemetery, they found a chilling mes- sage from someone who claimed to be a long-lost relative — someone who was reaching out to them across decades of separation in the wake of the Shoah. The letter was written by Alexander Gold, whose family research led him to the grave when, after years of tireless search efforts, he found new information on Yad Vashem’s Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names and was determined to do everything in his power to seek out his surviving lost family. The information in the Names Database and the mysterious letter led to the reunion of two branches of the family that had not known of each other’s existence since the end of World War II.

Growing up, Nurit and Dorit believed that most of the extended Decker family from Budzanow, Poland, had been murdered by the Nazis. They had always been told that of the seven Decker children, Aryeh, Sima, Leibish and Rachel were killed, and only Penina, Esther and Chedva had survived. Nurit and Dorit, two of Penina’s grandchildren, visited her grave every year and held a joint memorial service for her and her sister Esther. They took upon themselves the role of diligently safeguarding and preserving the Decker family memory, in the belief that they were among the only surviving descendants. During their annual visit in the summer of 2012, they noticed a dusty plastic bag under a memorial candle. The printed letter inside included a telephone number, and called on visitors to the grave to make contact, stating: “Shalom, I am the grandson of Esther Abramowich. My mother, the late Milka Freida Gold, was her niece. The daughter of Rachel, Esther’s sister. My name is Alexander Gold.”

Later their initial shock, Nurit and Dorit realized that something in Alexander’s story did not add up: since they knew that Esther Abramowich had only one son, who was executed by the Nazis, Alexander could not be her grandson. Upon further consideration, they entertained the thought that perhaps the author of the letter meant that he was a descendant of Esther, but was actually the grandson of Rachel Gold née Decker, who might not have been murdered as they thought but might perhaps have survived the war. They immediately dialed the phone number that appeared in the letter. “We left my phone number because my father does not speak Hebrew well and we were afraid that he might miss the call,” recalls Alexander, Esther’s son. “The phone rang and I heard the emotional voice of a woman who said: ‘We found your note.’”

Following the war, Alexander’s mother Freida had returned to eastern Ukraine and searched local archives for every scrap of information that would help her determine if any members of her family had survived. It was only when Alexander decided to conduct a search in the Names Database listing the country as Poland, instead of Ukraine, that he found a Page of Testimony commemorating Rachel Gold, submitted to Yad Vashem by her sister Esther Abramowich in 1995. “My father did not think to search for Poland — the town Budzanow was right on the border,” Alex explained. “For years he entered Ukraine and suddenly, when he entered Poland, he found the name Esther Abramowich — the sister of his grandmother.”

Alex helped his father continue his research in Israel to track down Esther, and eventually contacted the local burial society, who told them exactly where her grave was located within the cemetery compound. Alexander visited the cemetery, where he left the letter in the hope that someone from the family would find it.

A short time after the graveside telephone conversation, an emotional reunion took place at Dorit’s home in Modi’in. The families compared photos and documents and cross-referenced information about the Decker family. It turned out that all the information confirmed that they were indeed related. “The reunion was monumental for my family, and so important to my father,” said Alex. “After years of research, trying to find any surviving members of his family, it was very, very exciting. We saw that we had the same photo- graphs, and our documents bore the same family names. It was a really special moment.”
Hitler and Stalin. 

was bringing out another book on

Bullock wrote — he was the first biog-

was an avid reader of anything

upon a placard outside the

newsagent at Finchley Road station.

than were gassed in Auschwitz.”

Kennedy’s car in Chappaquiddick

thought, and, in any case, Hitler

much smaller scale than previously

Second World War, had contented

it was not immediately clear how to

among the academic community, and

Irving.

year, their ranks were swollen by the

sued for libel by Captain Broome,

despite having been successfully

as a researcher. He achieved this

World War historian, and especially

acquired credibility as a Second

Irving.

His change of tack can best be

the Logan Hall, and pre-sold 1,000

one could refuse and agreed to give

replied that if he would

consent to give a lecture,

him at Oxford in the

destruction of the Soviet

listener urged that it should be made

only orders coming from the top

non as a two-way process, with not

Only one thing, he maintained,

mutually exclusive. But

down, but also initiatives coming from

the bottom up.

What Bullock did in this

article was to produce a

synthesis of the two ideas, which,

he said, were not

mutually exclusive. But

one thing, he maintained,

was a constant — Hitler’s

twin dream of the destruc-

tion of the Jews and the

destruction of the Soviet

Union.

I then rang Bullock, and

after introductions (I’d met

him at Oxford in the

1950s), he asked me what

I wanted from him.

replied that if he would

consent to give a lecture,

we would reprint 20,000 copies of the

Listener article, and send them to

every history faculty and sixth-form

college in the world.

There was a momentary pause, and

then Bullock said that was an offer no

I would have

accepted. He said he

would address two or three related but

separate issues.

The first was the scope of the

Holocaust. Bullock stated that his

research showed that at the least,

some five million, and at the higher

end, some seven million victims had

been exterminated, and that this

percentage of destruction of an identifi-

able homogenous group was the

highest in history.

The second issue was that he

traced Hitler’s personal knowledge

and control of the genocide. But it

was the third part of the lecture that was

to prove sensational. Bullock

drew our attention to the work of Dr.

Gerald Fleming, reader in German at

Surrey University and someone who

drew our attention to the work of Dr.

Van Pelt published an operation in the Second World

War. Fleming and Van Pelt published

their findings in 1992–93.

The only remaining question for us

was how to publish the information.

But sitting in the audience at the

Logan Hall that night was a young

BBC producer named Isabelle Rosin,

who worked for Horizon, a science

documentary series on BBC2.

She began to urge her bosses to

allow her to make a film disclosing

Fleming’s and van Pelt’s findings.

At first, the Horizon producers were

reluctant, simply because it was a sci-

ence program. Her point was that

here was history revealed in architec-

tural drawings. Finally she got her

way, and in 1994 The Blueprints

of Genocide was broadcast in 94 coun-

tries to an audience of 130 million people.

The film also chronicled the liber-

ation of the camp, and the four officers

who commanded the operation. One of

them, the Soviet General Petrenko,

was still alive.

We were preparing to organize the

50th anniversary of the liberation of

Auschwitz. I got hold of a Russian

interpreter and found the general’s

phone number. I told him that we

were planning a special screening of

the Horizon film. “On that day,” I said,

“you come to tell people what we did,

then you’ll be brought to trials.”

In the end, that day was actually set up,

and there were many contributors to

the move the idea forward, but the fact

remains that the utterance of those

words by the general was the first

the time the idea of an annual memorial

day had been raised.

Apart from thousands of Jewish partic-

pants and spectators, there were probably

some 200,000 Jewish soldiers in the

ranks of the Red Army; there were

surely 300 Jewish generals.

I tried to address the general’s

remarks in my vote of thanks. I said:

The Jewish people and the Russian

people share the fate of the latter.

We have risen up to destroy us.” The

words by the general was the first

time the idea of an annual memorial day

had been raised.

The second group, called

“Intentionalists” and led by Lucy

Davidowitz, maintained that Hitler’s

purpose from the very beginning was

the destruction of European Jewry.

One camp, called the

“Accidentalists” and led by Lucy

Davidowitz, maintained that Hitler’s

purpose from the very beginning was

the destruction of European Jewry.

One camp, called the

“Accidentalists” and led by Lucy

Davidowitz, maintained that Hitler’s

purpose from the very beginning was

the destruction of European Jewry.

One camp, called the

“Accidentalists” and led by Lucy

Davidowitz, maintained that Hitler’s

purpose from the very beginning was

the destruction of European Jewry.

One camp, called the

“Accidentalists” and led by Lucy

Davidowitz, maintained that Hitler’s

purpose from the very beginning was

the destruction of European Jewry.

One camp, called the

“Accidentalists” and led by Lucy

Davidowitz, maintained that Hitler’s

purpose from the very beginning was

the destruction of European Jewry.

One camp, called the

“Accidentalists” and led by Lucy

Davidowitz, maintained that Hitler’s

purpose from the very beginning was

the destruction of European Jewry.

One camp, called the

“Accidentalists” and led by Lucy

Davidowitz, maintained that Hitler’s

purpose from the very beginning was

the destruction of European Jewry.

One camp, called the

“Accidentalists” and led by Lucy

Davidowitz, maintained that Hitler’s

purpose from the very beginning was

the destruction of European Jewry.

One camp, called the

“Accidentalists” and led by Lucy

Davidowitz, maintained that Hitler’s

purpose from the very beginning was

the destruction of European Jewry.

One camp, called the

“Accidentalists” and led by Lucy

Davidowitz, maintained that Hitler’s

purpose from the very beginning was

the destruction of European Jewry.
RECALLING THE 1943 ROSH HASHANAH HOLocaust ESCAPE OF DANISH JEWS

BY RAPHAEL MEDOFF
The Jewish Voice

A few minutes of Rosh Hashanah ticked away, 13-year-old Leo Goldberg was hiding, along with his parents and three brothers, in the thick brush along the shore of Dragor, a small fishing village south of Copenhagen. The year was 1943, and the Goldbergs, like thousands of other Danish Jews, were desperately trying to escape an imminent Nazi round-up.

“Finally, after what seemed like an excruciatingly long wait, we saw our signal offshore,” Goldberg later recalled. His family “strode straight into the ocean and waded through three or four feet of icy water until we were hauled aboard a fishing boat” and covered themselves “with smelly canvases.” Shivering and frightened, but grateful, the Goldbergs family soon found itself in the safety and freedom of neutral Sweden.

For years, the Allied leaders had insisted that nothing could be done to rescue Jews from the Nazis except to win the war. But on one extraordinary night, the Danish people exploded that myth and changed history.

When the Nazis occupied Denmark during the war, the Danes put up little resistance. As a result, the German authorities agreed to let the Danish government continue functioning with greater autonomy than those of other occupied countries. They also postponed taking measures to deport the Jewish refugees. “There were nine of us, lying down on the floor,” Esther said. “I always look for liberators,” she said. “I wasn’t giving up.”

At one point, Kreuzman didn’t even finish building a road because it was raining, and guards responded by beating those who had not cowered in the right and those who were considered unable to work to the left. Kreuzman said she remembers lying on her back to this day, she said. Another time, they hung her upside down on a door for several days.

In another coup for the Danish-Swedish effort, “It was hard to believe, but we were now safe. We cried and the Swedes cried with us as they escorted as ashore. The night-mare was over,” Esther recalled.

(Continued from page 6)

It was a strategy Kreuzman and her family would come to know intimately. “They didn’t let us live, but they didn’t let us die,” Kreuzman said.

On Yom Kippur in 1943, Kreuzman’s father was found hiding in a ditch, where the camp’s bathrooms were. Nazi soldiers killed him and dozens of other Jews by one by one in front of the camp’s occupants and shot them down, according to Kreuzman.

“They shot him in front of us,” she said.

Her brother, Stephan Grunberg, was also a hero.

On May 13, 1944, Nazi soldiers rounded up some of the camp’s prisoners, including Stephan. German doctors inspected each person and sent those deemed capable of working to the right and those who were considered unable to work to the left. Kreuzman said.

On September 30 and October 1 in 1943, Kreuzman pointed to a Star of David and declaring that if the Nazis imposed it upon the Jews of Denmark, “then we must all wear the Star of David,” she said.

“Then suddenly, the captain began to sing and whistle nonchalant-ly, which puzzled us. Soon we heard him shouting in German toward a boat: ‘Wollen sie einen beer haben?’ (Would you like a beer?) — a clever gimmick designed to avoid the Germans’ suspicions. After three tense hours, we heard shouting: ‘Get up! Get up! And welcome to Sweden!’ It was hard to believe, but we were now safe. We cried and the Swedes cried with us as they escorted as ashore. The night-mare was over,” Esther recalled.

THE JEWISH VOICE
Page 12 MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE                                             May/June 2014 - Iyyar/Sivan 5774

The implications of the Danish depicted in rescue operation resonated strongly in the United States. The Roosevelt administration had long insisted that rescue of Jews from the Nazis was not possible. The refuge advocates known as the Bergson Group began citing the escape of Denmark’s Jews as evidence that it the Allies were sufficiently interested, ways could be found to save many European Jews.

The Bergson Group sponsored a series of full-page newspaper adver-tisements about the Danish-Swedish effort, headlined “It Can Be Done!” On October 31, thousands of New Yorkers jammed Carnegie Hall for the Bergson Group’s “Salute to Sweden and Denmark” rally.

Keynote speakers included members of Congress, Danish and Swedish diplomats, and one of the biggest names in Hollywood — Orson Welles, director of Citizen Kane and The War of the Worlds. In another coup for the Bergson Group, one of the speakers was Leon Henderson, one of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s own for-mer economic advisers.

In blunt language, the speech summed up the tragedy — and the hope — Henderson declared: “The Allied gov-ernments have been guilty of moral cowardice. The issue of saving the Jewish people of Europe has been avoided, submerged, played down, resisted with all the forms of political force that are available… Sweden and Denmark have proved that this be a war for civiliza-tion, then most surely this is the time to be civilized!”

HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR MEETS HER LIBERATOR AFTER 68 YEARS

n’t enter the camp with the medical team of his division, he said.

“When we got there, we saw all these people were skin and bones,” Barbara said.

And as the war came to a close several months later, Kreuzman was finally able to meet the liberator who had been her hero.

“The Star-Ledger

Henderson declared: “The Allied gov-ernments have been guilty of moral cowardice. The issue of saving the Jewish people of Europe has been avoided, submerged, played down, resisted with all the forms of political force that are available… Sweden and Denmark have proved that this be a war for civiliza-tion, then most surely this is the time to be civilized!”

The Star-Ledger
A

(Continued from page 2)

The international aspect of this project is particularly important, said Mazurek. “It’s very sensitive to touch this place,” Mazurek told the Times. “Every artifact is important, since it means it was one more human life. The feeling is always a bit sad, but it’s very important we can discover these artifacts and show the world,” he said.

The latest excavations yielded several complete skeletons — possibly Poles who were shot by Soviet soldiers, said Haimi. Also uncovered were open-air cremation pits, close to the mass graves, bringing the total of such pits mapped to nine.

“When we opened near the mass graves, we smelled fluids from the bodies,” said Haimi. “It’s been 70 years, we still smell them,” he said.

As Haimi and Mazurek dug at Sobibor, the Polish-German Reconciliation Foundation conducted fund-raising for the visitor center. Created in 1991 to assist Nazi victims and promote dialogue, the Foundation has distributed more than one billion dollars to 700,000 victims, in addition to funding projects at sites like Sobibor.

Working closely with the Foundation, the Polish government’s Sobibor steering committee includes representatives from Israel, the Netherlands and the Slovak Republic. In 2012, the committee unanimously voted to construct a visitor center, museum and new memorial structures. The Majdanek State Museum — which oversees activities at the former death camps Majdanek and Belzec — was brought in to supervise the project.

“The international aspect of this project is particularly important for me,” said Piotr Zuchowski, Poland’s deputy minister of culture and chair of the Sobibor steering committee. “For the first time in a project of this scale, there has been a long-term cooperation between countries with different history and traditions, as well as with different approaches to the remembrance of the victims of the Shoah,” said the deputy minister. “My intention in the nearest future is to invite to the project all the countries whose nationals were killed in Sobibor,” he said.

In an interview with the Times, the deputy minister praised the steering committee for funding more than half a decade of excavations at Sobibor, a project he called “of unprecedented scope and scale.”

The visitor center’s design was selected through an international architectural competition held last year. The one-story structure — chosen from among 63 submissions — will include almost 10,000 square feet of exhibition halls, classrooms and a cafeteria.

Project plans also call for erecting a memorial wall, almost a mile long — between the visitor center and the area of mass graves, parallel to the “Road to Heaven.” The wall will be inscribed with historical information about the camp and will encircle the mass graves themselves, including the prominent “ash mountain” memorial.

BALANCING COMPETING INTERESTS

The plans for Sobibor are not only welcome, but long overdue, said some Holocaust educators. For decades, Sobibor has been the least visited of the former death camps, due to both its remote location and the lack of tourist facilities.

“We have to remember that the Nazis tried to demolish these sites to erase all memory,” said Holocaust scholar and educator Eliana Yael Heideman. “Until now, Sobibor has had little more to offer a visitor than barrenness, isolation, and an eerie feeling of emptiness,” Heideman told the Times.

“The importance of bringing more people to Sobibor outweighs the ‘somewhat necessary destruction’ involved in creating new facilities, she said.

“Having a museum, albeit one set up facing the path on which people walked to their deaths, is meant to pay tribute to their death by perpetuating knowledge and memory of what transpired there,” said Heideman.

In response to archeologists’ concerns about building inside Sobibor, deputy minister Zuchowski said “exhaustive research” has already been conducted at the proposed construction site.

“It is not considered acceptable by our civilization to create a permanent archeological zone in an area of eternal rest,” said Zuchowski. “This was the scene of the crime, as well as the place of eternal rest — a kind of cemetery,” he added.

When ground is broken next year, archeologists will be on hand to supervise activities and — as permitted by Polish law — halt construction to retrieve artifacts, said Zuchowski.

Haimi and Mazurek await permission to excavate, including — they hope — underneath an asphalt-paved square, built as a memorial in 1965. Under this square — almost the size of a soccer field — they expect to find remnants of the gas chambers.

Even in parts of Sobibor not “paved over” since the Holocaust, questions remain. At the mass graves area, unauthorized excavations during the 1990s caused considerable damage, said Mazurek. As with the asphalt square memorial, there is no record of who conducted what Haimi called “a botched dig,” or what was found in the ground.

For six years, the University of Hartford’s Sobibor Documentation Project has conducted research from each excavation season. A documentary film about the site, called Deadly Deception at Sobibor, will be published in production.

“It’s quite amazing to see this process unfold,” said Avinoam Patt, a professor of modern Jewish history involved with the project. “The archeologists are incorporating testimonies of survivors into their research, and we are getting all kinds of information we did not have before,” Patt told the Times.

The question of building inside former death camps revolves around “competing interests,” including the pull between historical and commemorative motives, said James Young, professor of Judaic studies at the University of Massachusetts, and author of several books on Holocaust memory.

Visitors to Sobibor will experience what Young called “a weird kind of collapse between the two processes of forensics and memory.”

“Despite these tensions, there should be room for ongoing discussions to find accommodation for both building and excavation,” Young told the Times. “It seems to me that they can adjust, so long as it’s quite clear in everyone’s mind to what end they are doing this,” he said.
THE JEWS WHO FOUGHT FOR HITLER

Continued from page 5)

that, like Skurnik and Klass, he was awarded the Iron Cross (the third and final Finnish Jew to have been offered the medal), “Non-Aryan women were not meant to tend to Aryan men and the Germans knew my mother was Jewish, but despite all this, they liked her,” says Aviva Nemes-Jalkanen, the daughter of Steinbock.

Germans are even reported to have visited a field synagogue that was erected near the front line. “It was an unbelievable picture,” says Tony Smolar, the son of Tony Smolar, the man who founded the synagogue, told a conference in the United States in 2008. “German soldiers in their uniforms sat shoulder to shoulder with praying Jewish men. The Jewish worshippers noticed that some of the Germans even took a certain respect for the Jewish service.”

Of course, many of the details of the Holocaust were still secret at this point. The Jewish soldiers didn’t know about the gas chambers and the horrors of Auschwitz, Dachau and Bergen-Belsen. But most were in contact with relatives in Poland and other countries in Eastern Europe.

“They got letters,” says Simo Muir, adjunct professor of Jewish studies at Helsinki University. “They knew about the deportations.”

Leo Skurnik was certainly aware of the dangers. A talented scientist whose career had been blocked by anti-Semitism in Finland, he had traveling salesmen in his family who had written to him about the gathering clouds over Europe. “He knew enough to be afraid,” says his son, Samuli. Nevertheless, as a doctor responsible for both German and Finnish soldiers, he refused to discriminate.

“If you want to describe my father, the one feature that came across very strongly was his humanity. He had taken the Hippocratic oath and, because of that, he wouldn’t turn away an injured man, whatever his nationality.”

And there were many injured Germans who needed his help. The sector where Skurnik was stationed saw some of the fiercest fighting of the war, and both his regiment, the 53rd infantry, and the German SS division with whom they were fighting, suffered heavy losses.

“It was really sad,” says Samuli. “There were a lot of casualties and my father didn’t have enough medication.” But Skurnik never gave up. At one point he even ventured into no-man’s-land to rescue wounded German soldiers when no other officers dared. Finally, with no sign of a letup in the Russian shelling, he took the decision that the field hospital had to be evacuated. That operation, across five and a half miles of no-man’s-land, won him the Iron Cross, but, like Klass, who won his decoration for clearing a path for a German charge up a hill, and Dina Poljakoff, Skurnik turned his award down.

When the Germans decided they like to give their decoration to my father, they told General Sillasuo. He then told my father, who thought it had to be a mistake and decided to see what happened when Berlin found out he was a Jew. But, after a while, General Sillasuo came back to my father and told him the award had been approved. He said, “My good friend, do you think you can take that kind of decoration? Tell your German colleagues that I wipe my arse with it!” The general told them, word for word, what my father had said. The Germans, infuriated, told Sillasuo to hand Skurnik over for punishment, but he refused.

There were plenty of other acts of mini-rebellion during the war. A doctor stationed in Oulu, who was less — or, some might argue, more — principled than Skurnik, refused to operate on injured German soldiers until a visit to a memorial service at a synagogue in Helsinki in 1944. “Perhaps,” says Simo Muir, “in the postwar era, the value of Jewish fighting for Finland has been overemphasized.” If they were guilty of anything, it was of trying too hard to fit in. Unlike Islam, which urges its followers to reform the law of their host nation so that it complies with Muslim law, Judaism’s key texts emphasize the importance of adhering to the law of the land, even if the society is second class. “Hindenburg had a certain respect for the law and a desire to escape the ghettos, attend university and play a proper part in politics and society, have added to Jews’ strong drive to fit in. “Over the centuries, Jews have wanted to prove that they were the best kind of citizens,” says Lea Mühlestein, a rabbi at the Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue. “They wanted to show there was no conflict between being Jewish and being a patriot; that there was no double loyalty.”

But the Finnish Jews were on an equal footing with their German and Finnish counterparts. They were fighting for their country, and their Finnish compatriots: the latter were fighting for their future, but, if the war had ended, they would have had no future. What were the consequences of that? That is the question nobody can answer.
THE DIARY OF ANOTHER YOUNG GIRL

(Continued from page 3)

At that moment, Rywka Lipszyc van-ished from history. That is, until more than 60 years later when the grand-daughter of the army doctor who found the diary came forth and handed it over to exactly the right people.

Rosenbaum couldn’t believe his eyes when he first examined Rywka’s notebook. The Lodz ghetto was much on his mind, as he had just finished collaborating on a memoir by Eva Lбитitzky, 90, a Lodz ghetto sur-vivor whose son, Moses Libitzky, today lives in Oklahoma.

He knew immediately that the diary about that.”

Another reason he believes the diary is of historical value is because of Rywka’s religious faith, expressed in nearly every entry of the diary.

“We have other diaries of teens in the war, it’s rare to have one by a religious teen,” Rosenbaum said. “Most of them are not religious. Here’s one who has faith in God, and that becomes her only comfort and shield from the hell she’s living in.”

The diary captures that hell in chilling detail.

When Rywka begins it, she and her sister Cipka are the sole survivors of the immediate family. She works in a clothing factory making material for the German war machine.

As Rosenbaum notes in his essay, the Lodz ghetto was an urban slave labor camp. Unlike, say, the Warsaw ghetto, from which somehow Jewish workers could come and go (and occasionally sneak out), the Lodz ghetto was sealed tight. The Nazis, hoping that what they had done was wiped out, meant those inside were trapped, subject to extermination and deportations and countless other abuses.

That did not stop the Jewish prison-ers from attempting to maintain nor-mality. Rywka’s diary is full of attempts to have school, Torah study and Jewish holi-day celebrations. She has a schoolgirl crush on an older mentor, Surció, and writes about her fellow teen girls. It is eerily, tragically, like any other teen diary from any other era.

Rywka also reveals herself as a young writer infatuated with her new-found self-expression. Though war brought her formal education to an end when she was 10, Rywka wres-tled with the language to master her thoughts. Over time, she becomes a more confident writer, despite the hor-rors around her. Her prayers and thoughts dominate the diary. The ever-present cold. The fear of deportation. Grief over lost family members. Almost every entry ends with a cry from the heart, a wail of sorrow.

Rywka’s diary is a book of latter-day films in which the young author cries out to God for help and comfort.

“It is very powerful, very touching,” Rosenbaum said. “Heart-wrenching in many places. It’s also uplifting and inspirational: a girl who has an abiding faith in God despite it all.”

Rywka, he said, could not have known the dramatic effect of her words 70 years later. Rywka’s penultimate entry, from April 11, 1944, includes this passage:

“Thank you, God, for the spring! Thank you, God! I don’t want to write much about it because I don’t want to mess it up, but I’ll write one very sig-nificant word: hope!”

In March 2012, the diary was hand-delivered to Mina Boyer and Esther Burstein, Rywka’s surviving cousins in Israel. Friedman delivered it in person, the powerful moment captured on Israeli TV news.

“I knew it would be painful for them,” Friedman said, “because it brought up old memories. They had no idea this diary existed. They thought Rywka had died, and were upset to find out that, even more so after the war, she was still alive. This poor child was all alone in some field hospital.”

In the new book, Burstein co-authors a chapter. She remembers that writing gave Rywka much satisfac-tion in the ghetto, and that it helped her forget about the hunger and pain. As for herself, Burstein writes, “We have our great revenge in that we’ve survived against those who wished to destroy us. We have a big family, a tribe among the glory of Israel.”

She’s right. A full-page photo near the end of the book depicts dozens of Rywka’s family members and their descendants in Israel. The smiles say it all.

CHILDREN’S BOOKS ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

(Continued from page 4)

their parents out of Germany in a last effort to save their lives. Many of these children had ended up in the grandfather’s small town. The towns-people tried to help these children, gave them food, mended clothing, and tried to give them a place to sleep. One day, the Nazis came and, under penalty of death, ordered all the children rounded up to be sent on a train. supposedly so that the Nazis could house and feed them. The townspeople deliv-ered the children to the Nazis, hoping that what the Nazis had said was true. Quickly they discovered that the children would be rounded up onto cattle cars. None of the children ever came back. The townsmen hadn’t spoken of the children for years, attempting to hide their guilt, but the children refused to be forgotten.

Number the Stars


Two young girls, Ellen and Annemarie, were not only neighbors but best friends. On the Jewish New Year, Ellen and her family went to the synagogue for services and were told by the rabbi that the Nazis had taken the lists that had all the names of the Jews. Ellen’s family were warned that the Nazis might come that night to take them away. Ellen was to stay with Annemarie’s family and pretend that Annemarie and Ellen were sisters. Ellen’s parents were given to understand that they had known exactly where they were going. Late that night, several Nazis came to Annemarie’s family’s apart-ment and insisted on looking around. They questioned Ellen’s dark hair, but Annemarie’s father was clever and “proved” to the Nazis that she was his daughter.

Ellen, Annemarie, Annemarie’s mother, and Annemarie’s sister left the next day for Annemarie’s uncle’s house. Annemarie’s uncle, Henrik, was a fisherman and was out on the water when they arrived. Several times, Annemarie’s mother and her uncle seemed to be talking in some kind of code, but she wasn’t sure what they were talking about. Then uncle Henrik announced that there was going to be a funeral for great-aunt Birte, but there was no such person. After privately confronting her uncle about this fact, her uncle told her that they had not told her the truth because it is easier to be brave if you do not know everything.

That night, the castle arrived in a hearse and then the mourners came. Among the mourners, were Ellen’s parents. The mourners were told in two years to uncle Henrik’s boat and hidden in a secret compartment. A small package that was of severe importance was left behind, and it was up to Annemarie to get it to the boat before the boat left. Running through woods, Annemarie carried the important envelope under bread and cheese in a basket. On her journey, she was stopped by Nazis with fierce dogs. The Nazis went through her basket and found the envelope. Since she did not know what was in the envelope, it was easier for Annemarie to remain brave. The Nazis left the contents untouched within the envelope left with her, and she barely made it in time for the boat. Later, her uncle explained what was in the envelope and why it was so important for her to bring it to Sweden.

Reviewed by Jennifer Rosenberg.
POPE AT YAD VASHEM: NEVER AGAIN, LORD, NEVER AGAIN!

BY ILENE PRUSHER, HAARETZ

Pope Francis gave a short speech during his visit to Yad Vashem in May, addressing humanity as "Adam" and blaming it for descending to the murderous behavior that led to the deaths of six million Jews.

Rather than mentioning Jews — or Nazis, Germans, concentration camps or World War II — Francis took a more global and theological approach to the Holocaust. The speech began with the question “Adam, where are you?” — a phrase from Genesis 3:9 in which God inquires into the first human beings’ whereabouts when it is clear that Adam and Eve have gone astray.

"Who convinced you that you were God? Not only did you torture and kill your brothers and sisters, but you sacrificed them to yourself, because you made yourself a god. Today, in this place, we hear once more the voice of God: Adam, where are you?" he delivered in Italian.

"Here before the boundless tragedy of the Holocaust, that cry — ‘Where are you?’ — echoes like a faint voice in an unfathomable abyss," he said. "A great evil has befallen us, such as never happened under the heavens. Now, Lord, hear our prayer, hear our plea, save us in your mercy. Save us from this horror."

The pope continued: "Grant us the grace to be ashamed of what men have done, to be ashamed of this massive idolatry, of having despised and destroyed our own flesh which you formed from the earth, to which you gave life with your own breath of grace to be ashamed of what men have done, to be ashamed of this massive idolatry, of having despised and destroyed our own flesh which you formed from the earth, to which you gave life with your own breath of grace to be ashamed of what men have done, to be ashamed of this massive idolatry, of having despised and destroyed our own flesh which you formed from the earth, to which you gave life with your own breath of your own breath of..."

A pope Francis accompanied Israeli President Shimon Peres, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Rabbi Israel Meir Lau and Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem directorate, during a ceremony in the Hall of Remembrance at Yad Vashem.

"I think his approach was appropriate," said Ha-Elion, 89.

Another survivor in the audience, Miriam Aviezer, said she wished the pope had seized the moment to say something about anti-Semitism.

"His focus was asking humanity, how did we deteriorate to such a situation? It was a general question for humanity, more than it focused only on the Holocaust. But I think this trip is a very positive and constructive step in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people and also the Vatican's respect for the state of Israel. That is a very significant and clear reaffirmation of something that began with Vatican II," he said, referring to a 1965 decision of the Catholic Church to state that it does not view Jews to be responsible for Jesus’ death.

"He is the one to take it even further than his predecessors. In the history of mankind, we can’t look at it measured in days or weeks," Schneier said. "For Israel, it’s 20 years after diplomatic relations. I think it will give further encouragement to other religious leaders who are either silent or afraid of interfaith relations.”

The pontiff also met the American rabbi Arthur Schneier, an Austrian-born Holocaust survivor and the rabbi of the Park East Synagogue in New York, has been involved in trying to forge better relations between Jews and the Vatican since 1965.

"I think this trip is a very positive and constructive step in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people and also the Vatican’s respect for the state of Israel. That is a very significant and clear reaffirmation of something that began with Vatican II,” he said, referring to a 1965 decision of the Catholic Church to state that it does not view Jews to be responsible for Jesus’ death.

"He is the one to take it even further than his predecessors. In the history of mankind, we can’t look at it measured in days or weeks," Schneier said. "For Israel, it’s 20 years after diplomatic relations. I think it will give further encouragement to other religious leaders who are either silent or afraid of interfaith relations.”

"As part of the official ceremony, the pope greeted six Holocaust survivors, shaking their hands and listening to brief highlights of their stories. These included Moshe Ha-Elion, Avraham Harshalon, Chava Shik, Joseph Goldtiker, Eleizer Grynfeld and Sonia Tunk-Geron.

Afterwards, Ha-Elion, who spent 21 months in Auschwitz as well as having been in three other concentration camps, said the pope’s speech felt more like a prayer than an address.

"His focus was asking humanity, how did we deteriorate to such a situation? It was a general question for humanity, more than it focused only specifically on the Holocaust. But Church did not do enough to oppose the Nazis’ plan, though there were many cases of individual churches, clergy members and average Christians who helped save Jews.

"We know about these things, but the pope’s invitation to President Shimon Peres and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to come to the Vatican for a prayer meeting was a “bold statement.” Many analysts have noted that the invitation is unusual and suggests a different path for this pope, perhaps hearkening back to a time when the Holy See played a much more prominent role in politics.

"Everyone knows that the peace process needs to advance somehow," said Shalev. "So he asked them and they immediately responded. I think that’s the most political that it can be, and coming from him, I think there is a power in that invitation.”

Rabbi Arthur Schneier, an American rabbi accompanying the pope on the visit, said it was a remarkable moment in the history of Israeli-Vatican relations — which after all were only made official in 1993. Schneier, an Austria-born Holocaust survivor and the rabbi of the Park East Synagogue in New York, has been involved in trying to forge better relations between Jews and the Vatican since 1965.

Schneier noted that during the visit to the president’s house shortly after the visit to Yad Vashem, the pope did specifically mention anti-Semitism and racism.

"I think this trip is a very positive and constructive step in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people and also the Vatican’s respect for the state of Israel. That is a very significant and clear reaffirmation of something that began with Vatican II," he said, referring to a 1965 decision of the Catholic Church to state that it does not view Jews to be responsible for Jesus’ death.

"He is the one to take it even further than his predecessors. In the history of mankind, we can’t look at it measured in days or weeks," Schneier said. "For Israel, it’s 20 years after diplomatic relations. I think it will give further encouragement to other religious leaders who are either silent or afraid of interfaith relations.”