The Education Department of the American Society for Yad Vashem and its Young Leadership Associates held its seventeenth annual professional development conference on Holocaust education on March 22, 2015. This program is a collaborative effort with the Association of Teachers of Social Studies, the United Federation of Teachers, the Educators’ Chapter of the UFT Jewish Heritage Committee, and the School of Education of Manhattanville College. Participants in this year’s program, which included educators from all five boroughs of New York City and from the tri-state area, received in-service credits for completing the conference. The program also included a display of the educational unit developed by the International School of Holocaust Studies, “Keeping the Memory Alive: International Poster Competition.”

Through teaching we warn about the consequences of extreme and baseless hatred and prejudice. We educate to promote tolerance in the hope that through our efforts, future generations will make sure that the Holocaust, a low chapter in human history, will not repeat itself. This conference is a valuable resource for increasing awareness and sensitivity to intolerance and injustice. In her remarks to the conference participants, she emphasized the importance of learning from the lessons of the Holocaust. Carolyn remarked on the challenges of teaching this topic without reducing the topic to numbers and statistics, and emphasizing the human elements of the events — victims, rescuers, perpetrators and bystanders. Professor Karen Shawn, visiting associate professor of Jewish education at Azrieli School of Jewish Education and Administration of Yeshiva University, spoke about “Understanding Jewish Life in the Shadow of Destruction.” Her remarks offered a window of opportunity to learn about the bravery and heroism of Jews during the Holocaust. She gave an informative and engaging presentation of case studies of Jewish heroes and heroines during the War.

Our program and theme, “70 Years after the Holocaust: Research, Resources and Remembrance,” offered educators strategies on how to incorporate Holocaust studies into their lesson plans and curricula to enable students to realize the importance of documenting the Holocaust to meet the challenges of Holocaust denial. The workshop topics complemented the theme of the program; Using Survivor Testimonies in the Classroom, Ripples from the Holocaust — Learning about the Second Generation, German Rescuers of Jews: Unbelievable but True, and Global Perspectives on Holocaust Education — the Efforts of Germany, Israel and the US in This Process.

The American Society for Yad Vashem has recently been awarded the 2015 President’s Award by the Association of Teachers of Social Studies/United Federation of Teachers for the Society’s contributions to social studies education nationally. This is the first time this award was given to an organization. The award represents the ATSS/UFT’s recognition of the valuable part the American Society plays in social studies education, and of the American Society’s turning to the ATSS/UFT for assistance in bringing...
**MY PILGRIMAGE TO AUSCHWITZ TO HONOR THE GHOSTS OF MY MURDERED FAMILY**

**BY ALEX BRUMMER, DAILY MAIL**

Framed against the grey sky, the rabbi clambered on to the ruins of the Auschwitz crematorium, lifted the sacred ram’s horn to his lips and sounded the plaintive notes handed down the generations since the biblical days of Joshua.

Then there was a moment of deathly silence. For a few brief seconds, I could visualize my paternal grandfather, Sandor, standing at my side, his long, red beard swaying in the wind, wearing his long dark Sabbath coat, emaciated from illness and hunger, but smiling to see me there.

Both my grandfather and my grandmother, Fanya, died in the killing fields of Auschwitz, and so I never got to meet them. Neither have I ever seen a photograph.

In the haste in which they were marched away from their home town of Tiszaujfaluk — in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains in what was then Hungary — in June 1944, the family snaps were lost.

That was 17 years ago. But the emotion of my first visit to this place of death and despair, where my relatives suffered and died, still lives with me.

For most of my childhood in Brighton, the industrial killing of six million Jews had been a verboten subject only talked about in knowing whispers.

What I learned, however, was that it was the courage and tenacity of my first cousin, Shindy — then still a teenage girl — who helped to keep my two similarly aged aunts, Rosie and Sussie, alive at Auschwitz despite the best efforts of Josef Mengele and the Nazi doctors.

It was Shindy who bargained for bread and made the deals that made survival and eventual rescue possible.

My father Michael, who had trained to be a naval officer, was able to flee Hungary and escape to Britain in 1939, though not before anti-Semitic Nazis will always fall blackly upon my life. For a few brief seconds, I could visualize my paternal grandfather, Sandor, standing at my side, his long, red beard swaying in the wind, wearing his long dark Sabbath coat, emaciated from illness and hunger, but smiling to see me there.

Both my grandfather and my grandmother, Fanya, died in the killing fields of Auschwitz, and so I never got to meet them. Neither have I ever seen a photograph.

In the haste in which they were marched away from their home town of Tiszaujfaluk — in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains in what was then Hungary — in June 1944, the family snaps were lost.

But I have been told about the simple life my grandparents led before the darkness descended upon them. Their lives as dairy farmers were tough, with my grandfather up before the crack of dawn to do the milking. But there were relaxing family moments, too.

On Sabbath afternoons, in fine weather, he would gather the children around him under an overhanging pear tree in the garden of the family home, reading from the Bible with the elder boys.

In the evenings, he would be joined on the terrace by friends from the village, they would drink a little schnapps, tell stories and play cards and chat.

His mother would busy herself in the kitchen preparing her specialities, including rolled cabbage leaves filled with rice and spices, served with paprika and tomato sauce.

Over the decades, as I’ve listened to the reminiscences of my twain, an uncle and cousin — who all, miraculously, survived the death camps — the image of Sandor has become imprinted in my psyche. Travelling to Auschwitz and being so close to the spot where he and my grandmother perished had brought him back for a few precious moments.

Todays, this is not some remote, hidden-away facility, it is surrounded by industrial buildings and modern Polish army bases.

There are shops and petrol stations, whose architecture blends into that of Auschwitz 1 — the main camp — itself. It is a death camp in suburbia.

And yet the smell of burning corpses, which more than five decades later still permeates the crematoria, is a constant witness to what took place inside the gates with their iron sign that reads “Arbeit Macht Frei.”

There is nothing immediately alarming about Auschwitz 1. Superficially — with out the icy wind, and the trees that had turned the tracks to mud — the reconstructed barracks, surrounded by grass verges and lined with trees, could be mistaken for a pleasant housing estate.

But at Block 4, there is a quiet, terri-ble rea in a stark room, where the smell of chemical preservative takes one by surprise, human hair is piled up like a mound of wheat.

Shaved from Jews as they were led to gas chambers, much of the hair is grey now, turned by time and poor conservation. Yet still I searched for a trace of red — a family trait — as if it could be possible there was a direct link to be found here.

We passed the terrifying exhibits: enough spectacle frames to equip a small nation, the enamelled pots, pans and jugs which were part of the vic-tims’ chattels, and leather suitcases each carefully marked with names, dates and towns. The party vainly looked for a familiar name among the hundreds of suitcases.

The Polish guide was asked if any-one had ever spoken to family mem-ber among the hundreds of photo-graphs on the walls. “Yes,” she replied. “Yes, they have.” She then revealed that since she began work-ing in this place she had discovered that one of her uncles — with Jewish blood — had died in Auschwitz.

Out in the bitter cold, we sheltered by the skills of modern medicine. But the Nazi doctors failed. Having been moved to tears as he remembered his own ordeal in a different death camp.

And if you set foot in one of these places, even for a few hours, it is easy to understand why passing through the gates into such misery was truly a life sentence.

How could it not be so if you stood witness to monstralities such as Auschwitz’s “Wall of Death,” where thousands of prisoners, having been tried by Gestapo kangaroo courts, were summarily shot and their bodies dragged away on carts to the perma-nently smoldering funeral pyres.

Next to the wall today, barbed wire still stands bleakly against the sky. And nearby, one can climb down (Continued on page 12)
BUDAPEST RESIDENTS REMEMBER LOCALS' ROLE IN HOLOCAUST

She was deported to the camp in Bergen-Belsen and died there, two days after the camp was liberated. She received food and her eviscerated body could not handle it.

He remembered that on one occasion, relatively nominal sum.

Lapa was tantalized by a single question: How had Rosenthal acquired Himmler's personal correspondence? The papers had been, at war's end, at the Himmlers' home in Gmund-am-Tegernsee in Bavaria. A local Hungarian had been questioned by American forces in September 1945 and had testified that all of her husband's papers were in the safe. Where had they stopped along the path from Gmund to Tel Aviv, and who had held them along the way?

Laor. "It was a sale, but for him it was getting rid of these documents." Above all, Rosenthal was worried that the papers would be shared with too general public and that someone would have to be in the shape of the material. "I realized that it's a gold mine," said Laor. After visiting Rosenthal's apartment, Laor called Vanessa Lapa, a Belgian-Israeli television producer whom he had met when she had worked for the Channel 1 and Channel 10 news. By the time Laor and Lapa encountered Rosenthal, he was a broken man, his spirit worn down by the perverse responsibility of the Himmler papers. Rosenthal had reached out on numerous occasions to German newspapers in the past in the hopes of piecing their interest in his cache but had been unable to attract their attention. "Rosenthal knew the enormity of the find, and somehow he couldn't get the attention of the world," said Laor. "Something with these documents was bothering him, it was like a bone stuck in his throat. He needed to clear his house." Now Rosenthal, in his late sixties, wanted to make a profit, but simply to pass the burden on to someone else. "It was clear that the man was under stress while selling these documents," said Laor.

BY MARTON DUNAI, REUTERS

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No banality in this evil

BY SAUL AUSTERLITZ, TABLET

T amas Marton was a Budapest schoolboy in 1944 when Hungarians allied to Nazi Germany helped to deport half a million Jews, including his mother, to death camps. Seventy years on, as Hungarians still grapple with the past and many support the far-right Jobbik party, which has worked for the state of Israel, had told different stories at different times about how he had acquired the Himmler papers. He had originally stated that he purchased the papers at a flea market in Brussels in the 1960s. In a 1982 New York Times article, Rosenthal claimed to have purchased 700 letters and two diaries for $40,000 from a former Nazi officer living in Mexico. Rosenthal had also served as a cultural attaché in the United States in the 1960s and had possibly acquired them at a flea market in Los Angeles during his term of service. Or he had borrowed the letters and diaries from a couple at the Mexican-American border and then neglected to ever return them. Rosenthal was now too frail to remember, or had jumbled up the contradictory stories he had told in the past. At some point, he realized that the man was under stress while selling these documents."
MOTHERLAND IN DANGER:
SOVIET PROPAGANDA DURING WORLD WAR II

Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II

Reviewed by Dr. Diane Cypkin

Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II by Karel C. Berkhoff is an important work full of fascinating information everyone should know. Why? Unfortunately, the world still generally knows little about the crucial role Russia played in liberating a good part of Europe from the Nazis during World War II. People know even less about its enigmatic, determined leader during those years, Stalin — controlling, calculating, and hell-bent on destroying his treacherous archfoe Hitler and Nazism.

At the same time, readers of this newspaper — many of whom were, undoubtedly, liberated by the Red Army and know very well Russia’s crucial role in the war — will find Berkhoff’s book no less fascinating. Why? We get an exceptionally interesting and keenly nuanced view of how Stalin felt about the Jews and the Holocaust. In fact, because of this volume, I might even say, the above easily allowed for the censorship of any information that could possibly aid the enemy. (And Stalin’s boundless paranoia is well known!) It also easily allowed for the “enormous... cover-up of the early disasters” Russia suffered on its front — a knowledge Stalin was convinced his countrymen should not have since it would cause the people to die for the Motherland rather than surrender — which according to Berkhoff was nothing more nor less than the act of a cowardly traitor.

Thus we read how “on June 24, 1941” — just a few days after Russia was attacked by Germany, its supposed ally — “the Soviet government... ordered the Bureau to give away what many reading this volume will find most thought-provoking about Motherland in Danger.” Simply put, Stalin was well aware of the enmity of Germany’s Jews, and wanted to use this enmity against them. A day later “the Politburo confirmed a decision by the Council of People’s Commissars obliging all people to hand in all radio sets or other radio transmission devices...” “The resolution did allow public organizations to use wireless radio receivers but ‘exclusively for collective listening of radio broadcasts at strictly defined hours.’” Needless to say, the above easily allowed for the violation of patriotism and loyalty, not to mention the power of propaganda. It could unite and move people like nothing else. It could, and according to Berkhoff, convince the people to die for the Motherland rather than surrender — which according to Stalin was nothing more nor less than the act of a cowardly traitor

S
ince this reviewer does not wish to give away what many reading this volume will find most thought-provoking about Motherland in Danger, let’s just say Stalin’s approach and reaction to the Motherland during those years, let’s just say Stalin himself shocked his people, and, concomitantly, through a heightened glorification of patriotism and loyalty, not to mention the power of propaganda. It could unite and move people like nothing else. It could, and according to Berkhoff, convince the people to die for the Motherland rather than surrender — which according to Stalin was nothing more nor less than the act of a cowardly traitor.

Violins of Hope.

Reviewed by Rabbi Zoberman

Author James A. Grymes, noted professor of musicology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, grew up in Virginia Beach. His latest book, Violins of Hope, is truly a unique contribution to Holocaust literature and the outcome of a significant labor of love. It is dedicated to those whose violins made a difference at a time of monumental challenge, when Nazi’s sought to silence the free flow of humanity’s transforming music and the arts in general. The meticulously researched account by the academic author is far from dry — the reader will even shed tears — beginning with the Weinstein family in Tel Aviv, Israel, whose second generation continues to repair violins along with broken hearts. Those violins serve as eloquent though bruised witnesses not only to the Holocaust’s vast tragedy, but also to the power of music to save lives and even move ardent Nazis. Both Moshe and Golda Weinstein, who moved to then Palestine from Lithuania as professional musicians, lost their entire families in the Holocaust. The cowering absence of the many slaughtered relatives was deeply felt at holiday time, when Moshe, Golda, and their children Amnon and Esther sat at a table along with “four hundred ghosts.”

Upon Moshe’s passing in 1986 his son Amnon took over the business, and later on grandson Avshalom was trained to become a luthier as well. Amnon repressed the Holocaust for years following his traumatic exposure early on to the nightly cries of the refugees. The weak housed in his shop. He changed course when approached by a survivor who had played his violin in Auschwitz but had not touched it since. The man, who finally decided to give it to his grandson, wanted Amnon to restore the damaged instrument. Upon opening up the violin, Amnon shockingly found human ashes that had blown into it from a crematorium, when the owner was ordered to perform out-doors. However, only in the 1990s he felt the need to find and restore those special Holocaust violins. A well-received 1999 presentation by Amnon in Dresden, Germany, before the Association of German Violinists and Bowmakers would spur him on in his sacred worldwide project of collecting Holocaust-related violins. Especially those unidentified ones are most dear to him, representing the...
BY MADISON PARK, CNN

E ven at the age of 7, Lotte Hershfield knew her world was crumbling.

She avoided the benches with the sign: No dogs or Jews allowed. She couldn’t attend public schools. And the Nazis and their growing German shepherds raided her family’s house, throwing their books into a fire.

As a child, “we were very aware,” said Hershfield, now 84. Jews weren’t welcome in their own home.

Growing increasingly fearful, her parents and her older brother left their hometown of Breislaus, Germany, in 1938 and journeyed to an unlikely new home: the Philippines.

About 1,200 European Jews fled to the Philippines from 1937 to 1941, escaping the oppression of the Nazis only to face another bloody war under Japanese occupation.

Many of the Jews came from Austria and Germany, as the anti-Semitic race laws, intensified. Unable to emigrate to countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, thou-

sand of Jews escaped to places such as Shanghai in China, Sosúa in the Dominican Republic, and Manila.

Those who arrived in Manila didn’t realize that they had escaped the Holocaust only to be caught in the war in the Eastern Front, where the Philippines came under attack.

“We were going from the frying pan to the fire,” Hershfield said. “We went from Nazi persecutors to the Japanese.”

The Philippines capital was liberated after a grueling, month-long campaign in the Battle of Manila, one of the bloodiest battles of World War II, which now marks its 70th anniversary.

FROM PERSECUTION TO A WELCOME

His little-known chapter of history about Jewish refugees in the Philippines has inspired two documentaries and talk of a possible movie.

“We know about stories like Anne Frank, Schindler’s List — the things that grab popular imagination,” said Michelle Ephraim, whose father, Frank Ephraim, escaped to the Philippines after Kristallnacht in 1938. “Once you bring an Asia element, it becomes so complicated, interesting and surprising.”

About 40 of the Philippines refugees are alive today, according to documentary filmmakers. They were chil-

dren when they arrived in the Philippines over 70 years ago.

“That was like a rebirth,” said Noel Iton, the filmmaker of the documentary, An Open Door: Jewish Rescue in the Philippines, in which he interviewed several Jewish refugees.

“They went from certain death to this life.”

Among them was Frank Ephraim, who arrived in Manila at the age of eight. He recounted his experience in his biography, Escape to Manila: From Nazi Tyranny to Japanese Terror.

“My father got a lot of positive attention, coming from a place where Jews were exiled and treated so poorly,” said his daughter, of his escape from Europe. Frank Ephraim died in 2006.

“The Filipinos were incredibly kind and treated him extremely well. There was an element of something so redemptive.”

HOW THE PHILIPPINES BECAME A HAVEN

Manuel Quezon, the first presi-

dent of the Philippine Commonwealth, and a group of Americans that included future U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Freiders, the Jewish-American brothers, became increasingly con-

cerned about the treatment of Jews in Europe during the late 1930s.

“They had a shared view of the world, they were men who under-

stood what was happening in Europe,” said Russ Hodge, co-pro-
ducer of the documentary Rescue in the Philippines. That documentary was screened in the Philippines with the country’s president, Benigno Aquino, in attendance last year.

Over poker, the men devised a strat-

ey to bring Jewish refugees to the Philippines.

The Philippine Commonwealth remained under U.S. supervision, so it could not accept people who would need public assistance. The refugee committee sought highly skilled professionals such as doctors, mechanics and accountants.

By 1938, a stream of refugees arrived including a rabbi, doctors, chemists and even a conductor, Herbert Zipper, who survived Dachau concentration camp and later became the founder of the Manila Symphony.

Quezon’s ambitions to settle 10,000 Jews in the southern island of Mindanao were dashed as the war arrived on the shores of the Philippines.

A NEW HOME IN THE TROPICS

For the European Jews who arrived in the Philippines, “It was a cultural shock,” said Hershfield. “We didn’t know the language. We had never seen any other than white people before.”

The humidity was thick, the heat overpowering and the mosquitoes gigantic.

But the young Jewish refugees saw the Philippines as a new adventure. Children climbed mango trees, swam in the bay and learned Filipino songs.

Hershfield became friends with local neighbors, played sipa (a local kicking game) and relished tropical fruit such as papaya and guava. Life in Manila was running around in sandals and summer clothes. The experience differed for her parents.

“It was very difficult for my parents,” she said. “They never really learned Tagalog. They had been westernized, and they stayed mostly within their circle of other immigrants.”

Many of them lived in crowded community housing where fights would break out. They had gone from being wealthy in Germany to having nothing.

“It wasn’t what they’d known before in Germany,” Iton said. At the same time, “they were able to practice their religion, able to intermingle and have businesses.”

Hershfield’s idyllic days of playing under the Manila sun came to an abrupt end as the war came ashore to the Philippines.

JAPANESE OCCUPATION

Starting in 1941, the Japanese occupied the Philippines. In some respects, the Jewish refugees were treated considerably better than Filipinos. What protected the Jews, ironically, was their German pass-
ports with the swastikas — they were viewed as allies.

“It occurred to me later, that’s what kept us from being interned,” said Ursula Miodowski, who was 7 years old at the time.

The Japanese interned British and American residents in camps. Filipinos and American soldiers were forced to march 65 miles in the infa-
famous Bataan Death March, in which an estimated 10,000 prisoners died.

Japanese officers confiscated resi-
dents’ homes and also hoarded crops for Japan’s military. The local economy shrieved and food became scarce.

Life under the Japanese was hard and brutal, surviving refugees said.

When Allied forces began taking back the Philippines, bombs fell daily. Families hid in bomb shelters, not knowing where the next one would fall. Frank Ephraim spent days hiding in a ditch, shaking with a mattress covering his head. One of Hershfield’s friends died after stepping on a mine.

“We were going on all the time,” said Hershfield. “You could see the black clouds, smell the bodies, lying there and decaying.”

As the Japanese were losing Manila, the imperial troops launched a brutal urban campaign. Rapes, tor-
ture, beheadings and bayoneting of civilians were widely reported, so much so that a Japanese general, Tomoyuki Yamashita, was later exe-
cuted for having failed to control his troops.

“The Japanese decided to destroy (Continued on page 13)
BY ALISON SMALE
THE NEW YORK TIMES

High above the hubbub of Budapest’s main tourist street, Eva Fahidi flits, birdlike, around her warm apartment, lined with books and plants. The setting is cozy, and the hostess and narrator, at 90, a linge- ringly beautiful charmer. So the contrast with the Holocaust horror she is describing is all the more com- plete.

When she was 18, she was, as she put it, “ripped off the school bench to be deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau,” one of an estimated 437,000 Hungarian Jews rounded up outside Budapest and dispatched to death camps in just 57 days in 1944.

Auschwitz-Birkenau, she recalled, “was not ready. It was too fast. The gas chambers were big enough that people could still be suffocated to death. But the crematories could not manage. So corpses were being burned on open fires.”

“Really, at the very first moment you knew something was wrong. It was the huge stench of burning corpses — only we didn’t know.”

Ms. Fahidi lost 49 relatives in the camps, whose horror she has chronicled in a memoir in this 70th year of the Holocaust,” she said, using an every- eye at the trial and ask how he could have let himself be implicated when one of the few surviv- ors — Ms. Fahidi has a new goal.

“My father also perished in the camps in just 57 days in 1944. Budapest and dispatched to death camps — in their millions in the German state of Nove Zamky, now part of Slovakia. Her uncle, a doctor forced to continue work in the field — in the end, for 42 years — and thus to divorce him, something he could not help. It only deepens the feeling that something is missing. One simply learns to live with such trauma,” said Eva Fahidi.

“Time does not help. It only deepens the feeling that something is missing. One simply learns to live with such trauma,” said Eva Fahidi.

It was not until 1989, when anti- Communist revolt was again brewing in Hungary, Hungary’s rebellion against Communist in 1956 created a brief window of freedom during which she was among those arrested and jailed in 1951. To get a job, she was forced to divorce him, something he could not forgive when he was released after Stalin’s death in 1953, she said.

They parted, with Ms. Fahidi remarrying in 1959. Before that, Europe’s turbulent 20th-century his- tory again shook up her life.

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Some of the documents first found in the Himmler family house in 1945, hidden in Tel Aviv for decades and sold to the father of the Israeli documentary filmmaker Vanessa Lapa, questioning of his devotion to the Nazi cause. "Why are you going to a Hitler rally," Marga wonders in one of her letters, which are read in voice-over by actors in The Decent One, "when you know what he will say?" Himmler frostily responds, "I must go to Hitler's rallies, because I organize them and I am jointly responsible for them."

The prewar letters (the precise Himmler numbering of his correspondence) are the missives of a traveling salesman, constantly on the road, and checking in on his family back at home, with the only notable distinction being that the product Heinrich Himmler was selling was Nazism. Heinrich Himmler was born in 1929, and the most haunting story told by the family’s correspondence is the record of the cozy relationship between a murderous father and his adoring daughter. On the occasion of Gudrun’s first birthday, Himmler draws the outline of her hand into the “bang journal” he and Marga keep but that her development. Marga writes to her husband about how a worried Gudrun had asked her whether “vt and Hitler” will ever die. Their humdrum domestic life stands in marked contrast to Himmler’s bloodthirstily brutality elsewhere.

Current events become familial triumphs. Shortly after the Austrian Anschluss, Gudrun was still thrilled by her father’s Viennese trip: “At this time yesterday, Daddy went in!” Himmler’s rigid sense of Nazi morality affects his domestic life. He tells Marga that a “health and orderliness” requires at least four children. The Himmlers wound up adopting a boy named Gerhard, whose unhealthy behavior presages him in Heinrich’s disquisitions on the need for order in his letters: “Order creates the nation, the culture, and order creates the state.” Later, Heinrich cruelly suggests to Marga that she should not sign her letters to Gerhard “Mother,” but could resume doing so if he improved behavior. (Gerhard was eventually sent to join the SS at the age of 15 after being caught smoking marijuana.)

German prisoner of war in the Soviet Union before being released in 1955, 10 years after the end of World War II. In an interview, Himmler insists on believing in “decent.” The Decent One is unerv- ing for its demonstration that Himmler truly believed he was, at the very last, a decent man. Lapa proceeds chronologically through Himmler’s life, telling his story in his family’s own words, her careful- ly selected suite of images serving as a bitterly ironic counterpart and reminder of everything left unsaid. A letter from Himmler to his daughter Gudrun about a package for her is illustrated with an image of prisoners being shot by a firing squad. He writes to his wife, apologizing for hav- ing missed their anniversary, pleading how busy he has been in the past few days, over images of Jews being clobbered with two-by-fours, Jews being shot, dirt being piled into mass graves. The film is intensely disturbing for the ordinariness of the exchanges; as Himmler plans the genocide of the Jews, he is also offering advice about his children, bantering with his daugh- ter, and flirting with his mistress. We see him through the looking glass, seeing the Holocaust from the perspective of the German philosopher Bettina Stangneth’s powerful new book Eichmann Before Jerusalem, which uses the so-called Argentina Papers — transcribed records of a postwar South American study circle com- posed of Adolf Eichmann and other unregenerate Nazis — to transcend the clichéd cog-in-the-machine stereotypes about Eichmann. Like the Himmler letters, Eichmann’s Argentina Papers offered the chance to hear a confirmed Nazi present his version of the truth. This was not court testimony, but opinions and observa- tions shared with the assurance that no one other than true believers would ever hear them.

The Argentina Papers were never lost, but they might as well have been. During his trial in Jerusalem, Eichmann had claimed that the inter- view transcripts were the result of an encounter with an unscrupulous Dutch journalist named Willem Sassen, who preyed on the drunken Eichmann in a local pub. None of it could be admissible, he argued, and the panel of Israeli judges agreed. After all, even if the transcripts were genuine, how could they be proved to correspond with actual conversations when, in many cases, the original tapes were nowhere to be found? Many researchers took Eichmann at his word, and ignored or downplayed the significance of the Argentina Papers as mere drunken boasting.

In reality, Eichmann and Sassen had been friends, both members of a group that met regularly in Sassen’s living room to discuss and debate Nazi ideology and history. Eichmann had been invited as the Argentinean Nazi known to have the most first- hand knowledge of the war against the Jews. Sassen and his friends,
PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE AMERICAN YOUNG LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATION
REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM
LIVING WITH THE SHADOW, CREATING WITH THE LIGHT

BY ELIAD MOREH-ROSENBERG

“I was between three and four o’clock, the date 11 April 1945. We waited in suspense and with unprecedented tension.... Suddenly there were shouts, from the opposite direction, from the main camp.... We rushed out to investigate: our compound was lifeless as before. ‘Look at the gate!’ someone shouted. I lifted my eyes and searched for the pyramid-shaped roof on the main watchtower that stood out from beyond the main camp. The crooked cross of Fascism had gone. Fluttering from the symbolic flagpole was something white. The moment we had so anxiously been longing for had come: the cherished victorious minute, for which our comrades had been waiting for 4,453 days and nights, was here at last.”

Buchenwald by the prisoners. With impressive accuracy, he sketched the figures of the fighting prisoners, the Allied tanks at the entrance to the camp, and the gate on which the flag was replaced. With punctilious detail, he even noted the exact time on the gate’s clock: 3:15 pm. Thomas, whose physical condition did not permit him to leave the camp’s barracks, remained at the fence for approximately a month, where he drew this picture and some 80 other drawings, each the size of a postcard. In a detailed, almost scientific way, his artwork documents his life as a prisoner at the Auschwitz extermination camp, the death march, Buchenwald and the moment of liberation. His stated goal was to share the pictures with his father, who had fled to England just in time. But there is no doubt that these creations also made it possible for him to process the trauma and mentally rehabilitate himself, while at the same time gathering physical strength.

On January 27, to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yad Vashem’s Art Collection opened an exhibition entitled “The Anguish of Liberation as Reflected in Art, 1945–1947,” which includes 30 pictures and drawings by almost 20 artists, all from Yad Vashem’s Art Collection. Surprisingly, a comprehensive examination of post-liberation artwork indicates that in contrast to Geve and liberators such as Zinovii Tolkatchev, who marked the event themselves, most of the survivor-artists did not commemorate Liberation Day itself — the moment they longed for throughout the war — focusing instead on other subjects.

Thus, the diverse post-liberation work of survivors can be divided into five main categories: references to freedom; documenting the ruin and destruction; searching for identity; coping with trauma; and, to a lesser degree, the day of liberation.

Some of the artists returned to the places where they had grown up, searching for home or hoping to find relatives. However, instead of the old familiar world in which they had hoped to rehabilitate themselves, they found only ruin and devastation. Henryk Hechtkopf documented post-war Warsaw in a series of drawings that he created from 1945 to 1946. His beloved hometown appears totally destroyed, strewn with piles of rubble, and its main streets resemble a ghost town of desolate structures. Yet these apocalyptic sights do not just reveal her unstable mental state with the lines of a quivering pencil. Ilsa Gede from Budapest, two years younger than Halina, presents herself with no head, with skewed and frail shoulders, and hands wracked with pain.

The young Yehuda Bacon finds a renewed faith in humanity and life in general in the figure of the educator Pitter Premysl. Premysl, who saved Jews during the Holocaust and was eventually recognized as Righteous Among the Nations, also tended to the needs and rehabilitation of children who survived the war, including young Bacon. Like Orpheus leaving the underworld, Bacon departs himself bent over and led by Premysl from the darkness of the camps to the light of life awaiting him in Eretz Israel. For Jakob Zim, who, like Thomas Geve, was liberated from Buchenwald, the meaning of liberation lay in his ability to discern beauty even in the accursed landscape of the village near the camp, and in the renewed freedom to paint. In this time of crisis and destruction, the possibility of having an aesthetic experience while giving voice to it in the conscious act of painting is a testament to the vast powers of the mind. Ultimately, the survivors’ desire to create, to express pain, perception, emotion and reflection through art reveals their fierce will to live in spite of every-thing. For them, choosing to paint is like choosing life, or in Jakob Zim’s words: “I live with the shadow and create with the light.”

By Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg

BY ELIAD MOREH-ROSENBERG

“I was between three and four o’clock, the date 11 April 1945. We waited in suspense and with unprecedented tension.... Suddenly there were shouts, from the opposite direction, from the main camp.... We rushed out to investigate: our compound was lifeless as before. ‘Look at the gate!’ someone shouted. I lifted my eyes and searched for the pyramid-shaped roof on the main watchtower that stood out from beyond the main camp. The crooked cross of Fascism had gone. Fluttering from the symbolic flagpole was something white. The moment we had so anxiously been longing for had come: the cherished victorious minute, for which our comrades had been waiting for 4,453 days and nights, was here at last.”

Buchenwald by the prisoners. With impressive accuracy, he sketched the figures of the fighting prisoners, the Allied tanks at the entrance to the camp, and the gate on which the flag was replaced. With punctilious detail, he even noted the exact time on the gate’s clock: 3:15 pm. Thomas, whose physical condition did not permit him to leave the camp’s barracks, remained at the fence for approximately a month, where he drew this picture and some 80 other drawings, each the size of a postcard. In a detailed, almost scientific way, his artwork documents his life as a prisoner at the Auschwitz extermination camp, the death march, Buchenwald and the moment of liberation. His stated goal was to share the pictures with his father, who had fled to England just in time. But there is no doubt that these creations also made it possible for him to process the trauma and mentally rehabilitate himself, while at the same time gathering physical strength.

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By Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg
THE NAZI WHO SAVED US FROM KRISTALLNACHT

BY JILL MERMAN HARRIS, FORWARD

The Wachses were just another middle class Jewish family living in Vienna. Moritz Wachs and his wife Henia Fach had two children: Ilie, who was born in 1927, and his sister Deborah, who followed in 1935. Moritz was a tailor who owned his own small tailor and clothing shop. His head tailor was a quiet German man in his 20s named Alois. Considered a friend of the family, he often played soccer with Ilie.

After Nazi Germany annexed Austria in March 1938, the business was “aryanized” and Alois, a member of the Nazi Party, became its owner. One day in early November of 1938, Alois warned the family that “something terrible” was going to happen, and told them to remain quiet inside their apartment. He called the police, school officials, and the Jews’ association. “Keep everyone inside. You will not be touched,” said Alois. On November 9, in widespread pogroms that became known as Kristallnacht (“night of the crystal”), Jewish business and synagogues were vandalized and destroyed, almost 100 Jews were murdered, and thousands sent to concentration camps. Ilie and his family managed to escape. His sister, Deborah, was never heard from again.

In an exhibition on Jewish refugees in China, Strobin saw a photo of herself, aged 5, with two other Jewish children. “For me, it was pure horror,” she said. She concluded that the Japanese, who at the time had governed and occupied Shanghai as a foreign concession, used the photos as propaganda. She wanted to write a book about their lives, an Uncommon Journey. An article on Wacs’s 70th birthday, when he provided his sister with a trip to take a trip with him to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. “I was reluctant to go,” she said. "I didn’t want to be reminded of anything. I never even wanted to talk about it.”

Ilie never wanted to see Alois as anything but good.” Jane Rohman, whose public relations firm has guided the book since its publication, said that without fail, if Strobin or Wacs lectured, visited a school or appeared at a museum, inevitably someone would ask, “What happened to Alois?” Curiosity from audience members and readers fueled an interest in finding the German who helped the Jewish family.

Late last year Wacs exhibited a collection of his paintings at the Museum of Tolerance in New York. At the end of the exhibit Rohman went out on a limb and commissioned a large poster that read, “Help us find Alois.”

Wacs and Rohman were hanging the installation at the Museum of Tolerance in preparation for its opening, David Schroeder, a professor of criminal justice and forensic sciences at the University of New Haven in Connecticut, passed through the museum along with several of his students. After he met Wacs and learned about Alois, Schroeder and a colleague decided to create a one-credit course for the following semester, aptly titled, “Finding Alois.”

With scant information, the students threw themselves into social networking, creating a Facebook page, Finding Alois, and pursuing leads coming in from as far away as Australia.

But as the semester came to an end in May, the effort had not yielded Alois’s whereabouts. Nonetheless, all the students in the “Finding Alois” class (which is no longer being offered) committed to continue the search. As for Schroeder, he is looking for concrete evidence. Right now, he is focused on the Austrian government’s tax records. Only there, he said, can Moritz Wachs’s employee(s) for 1937 or 1938 be found. “Once we get that name, I think the barrel will just roll.”

Earlier this year, a Jewish American man sent the siblings a photograph of an aging, lanky man in his 90s, sitting in a wheelchair. The sender said he had read the story of the search for Alois on the “Finding Alois” Facebook page and recognized in the description a soft-spoken German man, who had worked for him as a salesman for twenty-five years beginning in the 1960s. He was known as Al. While the two mostly correspond via telephone, the Jewish man remembers hearing that Al had been a Nazi. The businessman never asked Al about it because he never discovered any anti-Semitism, despite knowing that his boss was Jewish.

Because of the sensitive nature of the search, neither Strobin nor Schroeder can give specifics about this lead, which is one of several they have pursued.

Wacs, upon seeing the photograph, said that there was something familiar about the man but he could not tell for sure if it was Al. It was attended by lung cancer on September 7.

His family and friends say that Wacs always came back to Alois, giving considerable thought to the context of what was happening in Germany in 1938 when a Nazi German came forward to help a Jew.

Rohman remembers Wacs asking: What is it in one person that makes them do that? “Even if we never find Alois, the case reminds us that one human being versus another who sees injustice being done and does something about it, no matter how small, what does it mean if he then went on to do some awful things as well? This is an unprecedented initiative, both in its scope and in its attempt to recover names as a symbol of the humanity of man.”

For many, these testimonies are the only remaining link to their loved ones who were murdered in the Holocaust,” added Avner Shalev, chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate. “The German Nazis and their accomplices tried to murder every Jewish man, woman and child and to erase any trace of their existence. Through this project of collecting names and testimonies, we can restore their names and identities. I call upon the public to commemorate those who were murdered in the Holocaust.”

UNESCO RECOGNIZES YAD VASHEM’S HOLOCAUST TESTIMONIES

“F”
(Continued from page 7)

many of whom vociferously supported the Nazi cause without having them- selves fought in the war, hoped Eichmann would prove what they believed to be true: that the Holocaust was a myth. Instead, and much to their horror, Eichmann proudly and at great length detailed his central role in the Final Solution, citing evidence from books his friends procured and taking copious notes.

Every weekend, they sit togeth- er for four or five hours, Saturday and Sunday, talking on a very high level about books about the Holocaust," Stangneth said of the Sassen circle. For Stangneth, these transcripts provided an incomparable intimate look at the mindset of one of the architects of the Holocaust — one that had been overlooked or down- played by other researchers for decades. When Stangneth began her research, she found a jumble of disor- ganized pages scattered across numerous German archives. She might come to the end of one page and discover that the next was in another archive, 100 miles away. Previous scholars had shown little interest in even assembling a com- plete transcript. "I am astonished that there was so [little] curiosity about these papers," said Stangneth.

After Eichmann was arrested, his friends took the transcripts of the Argentina Papers. "The original papers were divided by friends of Eichmann to save them, because Eichmann's friends knew very well that these papers were dangerous for Eichmann in Jerusalem," said Stangneth. "So, they tried to separate the dangerous pages from the not-so- dangerous pages.

Stangneth is also intent on situating the Argentina Papers within the unsettling world of postwar Nazi men of ideas, peddling their toxic notions of race and genocidal self- defense against the Jewish people. Their letters and interviews provide an unfiltered look at not only what they did, but what they thought about their actions, and how they jus- tified their nightmarish work to others. The Himmler letters and the Argentina Papers are primary sources reminding us, in case we ever forget, that these propagandists were committed to undying ferocity to their own propaganda. Defeat was not an option, even when the war was nearly lost — even when the war was long over. They are privileged glimpses of true believers, reminding us that Nazis were not only murderers and torturers, but also devoted follow- ers of a totalitarian ideal. Doubt simp- ly did not exist.

One of the true believers, convinced that Nazism was not yet spent, was Gudrun Himmler. After the war, she became a prominent force in an organization called Stille Hilfe (Silent Aid), which helped Nazis escape Europe and provided financial and moral support to convicted war crim- inals. Silent Aid fought to free convict- ed Nazis and to prevent accused Nazis from being extradited for trial. Himmler was neo-Nazi royalty, her lin- eage granting her elite status within the airmless world of unreconstructed fascist ideologues.

Gudrun Himmler, now Gudrun Burwitz, is now 85 years old, still living in a suburb of Munich. She remains active in Silent Aid’s work, presumably as a tribute to her father’s memory. “The way you want to assess someone is, what does she do when she comes to adult- hood? What does she do after- wards?” wondered Emory historian Deborah Lipstadt, when we spoke, “What does she do as the truth comes out? Is she busy defending her father, or is she acknowledging that her father was responsible for mass murder?” The papers that spent decades in a suitcase in a Tel Aviv apartment document, among other things, the irreversible warping of a young mind. They are a record of a life — make that three lives — permanently devoted to the propa- gation of evil. By saving Heinrich Himmler’s papers, Chaim Rosenthal did us all a service, preserving doc- umentation of Nazi ideology’s calamitous effect not only on the Jewish people, but on Himmler’s own family, too.

(Continued from page 2)

into the cool of the only gas chamber not destroyed by the SS as Russian troops approached. "It was the courage and tenacity of my first cousin, Shindy (cen- ters and political dissidents from their families at the outbreak of war.

Looking down at the large group he had brought together, Burwitz pointed out that, we ordinary citizens of Europe, were no different from those who were driven here under the Nazi yoke. One man, who had survived only one-fifth of one barrack block.

Then, finally, came the tragic roll- call, the names of the people in our families who had perished: my grand- parents Sandor and Fanya, my uncles Danny and Ference, who fell in work camps after they were taken from their families at the outbreak of war. The prayer we spoke somehow sanctified the ground and proclaimed for it a Jewish heritage.

Sheltering against the wind, I found a stir was created by a single memorial light. The whole pil- grimage, I realized, was encapsulated in this moment of remembrance — for my grandparents, a mother, a woman who suffered and died with them.
BY TOM TUGEND, JEWISH JOURNAL

Almost 73 years ago, on March 22, 1942, Stefan Prager wrote a postcard from Sweden to his parents, who had been deported from their native Berlin to the Lodz ghetto in Poland.

He wrote about his recently celebrated 18th birthday, adding, “I’m feeling healthy and the winter passed well. How are you doing?”

Prager never got a response or heard from his parents.

Now, as Prager approaches his 91st birthday, the postcard has resurfaced within the extensive digitized archives of the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust (LAMOTH).

The postcard’s discovery has led, in turn, to new inquiries and some answers about his fate.

Stefan Prager was born in Berlin, the son of Ruth Prager and her husband, Ernst Wolfgang Prager, who was a successful three-dimension film shooting in the German army during World War I.

The boy attended a Jewish school in Berlin until 1914. Stefan Prager wrote a postcard to his parents from Lodz ghetto, a city of Holocaust Memorial Park in the Israeli family’s place of refuge.

“When Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan was very special. I was repaying a debt to the country that saved my family.”

He would not be alive today if not for the Filipino people and its president “Who would I go to hide?” he told the Journal in a recent interview.

In the [Swedish] village where my sister lived, there were several known Nazis who would tell [the Germans that she was Jewish].”

The story — like those of millions of other Holocaust victims — might have ended, but for the resilience of this postcard, which eluded destruction through all the upheavals.

In late 2011, Edward Victor, a retired Los Angeles lawyer, donated to LAMOTH an unusual collection of Nazi-era mementos that he had acquired during a 30-year period. It consisted of some 2,000 stamps, letters, identification cards, visas, school records and currency receipts, which frequently traced the fate of a given Jewish family from the beginning of the Nazi era in 1933 to the bloody end in 1945.

At LAMOTH, Vladimir Melamed, director of archives, library and collections, integrated the material in the museum’s online archive, which now holds close to a million document pages.

In December, Melamed received an email from Stefan Prager, who was living in Stockholm as a retired manager at SGS, a company that provides inspection, testing and certification.

Stefan Prager, now 96, wrote this postcard on March 21, 1942, sending it from Sweden to his parents in Poland’s Lodz ghetto, in the hope that they would get a response.

Melamed and his staff went to work and tracked down the postcard in one of his digitized files labeled “Correspondence to and from Lodz ghetto.”

No one knows how the card survived, but Prager speculated that “it was found at the Jewish administration office in Lodz among lots of similar stuff following the total evacuation of the ghetto to Auschwitz.”

With the recovered postcard as a lead, Melamed contacted the State Archive in Lodz for details on Prager’s parents’ fate. Last month, he received copies of handwritten entries by a Nazi official to the effect that Ernst and Ruth Prager were deported from Berlin October 27–29, 1941, to the Litzmannstadt ghetto (German for Lodz). The next paper is an “Announcement” from the ghetto’s “Elders of the Jews,” dated May 22, 1942, that Ruth Prager, now widowed, was being moved from the one room where she lived with her husband to another room shared with three other persons.

The last notice, dated October 13, 1942, simply stated that Ruth Prager had vacated her room the previous day. Under “Reason for the Move,” an official entered “Death.”

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“We owe it to the generosity of collectors like Edward Victor and the dedication of archivists like Dr. Melamed and his staff that large parts of the still unknown history of the Holocaust are coming to light.”

DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Manila. They were going to give them a dead city, they set about doing that,” said Miodowski. “They burned, they raped, they looted.”

“We would not be alive today if not for the Filipino people.”

Despite the trauma of facing both the Nazis and the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, Stefan Prager spent the war years with a farmer in a remote forest feeding the livestock and chopping down large trees in the icy winter.

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AUSCHWITZ BOOKKEEPER MAY BE LAST NAZI TRIED IN GERMANY FOR WAR CRIMES

JOE O'CONNOR, NATIONAL POST

Thomas Walther is talking about Auschwitz, and numbers, and how the statistics of the Holocaust exceed imagination. What does it mean, for example, to deport 437,000 Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz in the span of 57 days in the spring and early summer of 1944? What does it mean to murder them at a rate of 1.5 Jews per minute, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so that by the end of the 57th day 300,000 of them are dead? What does it mean to have your parents, spouse, children and relatives systematically killed in a German Nazi death camp in German-occupied Poland, only to have them counted by history as a lump sum?

“I can speak about 300,000 dead people who are unknown to nobody, but nobody can imagine what that means — such figures of death — while the Holocaust, this word, is a part of families,” Mr. Walther says.

“It is inside of human beings. It is something in the tears, if you wake up in the night and think about your father who was killed. That is the Holocaust. And in the second generation, in the children of survivors, those who suffer the nightmares and memories of their parents — that is the Holocaust.”

Mr. Walther, with his red running shoes, his rumpled-looking dark blazer, could easily pass for a university lecturer. But his interest in the Holocaust isn’t academic. The 71-year-old retired German judge is a Nazi hunter, and he travelled to Toronto and Montreal to interview Hungarian Canadian Auschwitz survivors as co-plaintiffs for what could be the last Nazi war crimes trial in Germany.

“Co-plaintiffs represent their murdered parents and siblings, and I represent the co-plaintiffs in court,” Mr. Walther says.

“And to be sure that I find the right words for them, the right feeling in a German courtroom, this is the reason from the murdered Jews, occasional-ly courting it to his Nazi overlords in Berlin. He also stood guard on the train platform in Auschwitz, as cattle cars delivered their doomed Jewish cargo. He did so in the belief that, as he told Der Spiegel magazine in 2005, the destruction of the Jews was a ‘necessary thing.’ What makes Mr. Gröening, now 93 — and a widower with a comfortable home and robust company pension thanks to his postwar career managing a German glass factory — the intriguing defendant is that he has repented, in a sense. He admits he was at Auschwitz, and has spoken openly about it. He took his story public several years ago, as he explained to a German reporter, to combat the lies of the Holocaust deniers with the truth of someone who was there.

And in his version of the truth, he is not guilty of any crime. Not in a legal sense, since he was merely a bookkeeper, a brainwashed Nazi zealot involved in executing the murderous master plan of Adolf Hitler, but not an actual executioner himself.

“Guilt really has to do with actions,” Mr. Gröening told Der Spiegel. “Because I believe that I was not an active perpetrator, I don’t believe that I am guilty…”

“I would describe my role as a small cog in the gears,” Mr. Walther says. “He will only seek to diminish.”

Judy Lysy is a Holocaust survivor in Toronto. She met Mr. Walther at a dinner honoring him at a local synagogue. She is not among the co-plaintiffs in the Gröening case since the charges against him, for German legal reasons, only cover the 57-day killing frenzy associated with the Jewish Hungarian deportees. (Mr. Walther would not disclose the identities of the co-plaintiffs to me, explaining that, even today, they are uncomfortable with Groening’s prosecution.)

Ms. Lysy, a Slovakian Jew, was raised in pro-Nazi, Hungarian-occupied territory. She arrived in Auschwitz in April 1944. It was a sunny day. She was 16.

“There were these German officers, very neat and clean,” the 86-year-old Ms. Lysy said. “Oskar Gröening didn’t kill with his hands. But he was part of that killing machinery.

“They asked for a translator, and because I spoke Hungarian, German and Slovak, I put my hand up. And I stood beside this officer telling the people who those able and capable to walk, would walk [to our barracks], and the old people and children — he would load by truck.

“They would all be together, at the end. I translated all this to Hungarian ladies, including my aunt, with her two little children, and my grandma. The officer told the mothers not to fuss, if they wanted to stay with their children. And he put them all together, on a barge that went straight to the gas.

“We did not know where those people had gone for the first 10 days. And this was my arrival to Auschwitz. Oskar Gröening didn’t kill with his hands. But he was part of that killing machinery.”

Lysy is a small cog, a guard in a watchtower, an accountant in Auschwitz, was a well-trod road to legal — and social, moral and eco-nomic — absolution for SS men after the war. Of the 6,500 SS members who worked in Auschwitz, only 49 were ever convicted of a crime.

“The German police, prosecutors, the local judges, they weren’t interested in going after what we would call as the small-fry war criminals, and this attitude persisted well into the 1970s and beyond,” says Bernie Farber, former CEO of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

Many of those judges and lawyers had Nazi pasts, while the German people, including the 20% of respondents to an American survey, conducted in the American-occupied zone in 1945, who said they agreed with Hitler’s treatment of the Jews — weren’t willing, or even interested in confronting their complicity in the Holocaust. Hitler and his high-ranking Nazi cronies were the real bad guys, not them.

And the little Nazi fish, such as Oskar Gröening, got married, had kids and came to be viewed as a valu-able employee. He applied manage-rial skills honed in Auschwitz to a civil-ian job at a glass factory. Most Nazi war criminals didn’t disappear into the jungles of South America. They moved in next door.

And then along came Thomas Walther.

“Youngest child went to universi-ty, in France,” Ms. Lysy said. “I thought, if I can do something really important, something that has to be done — then I would like to do it.”

HOLOCAUST HERO FINALLY GETS HIS DUE IN HUNGARY

A soldier whose actions saved some 200,000 Hungarian Jews has finally been recognized in Hungary, 70 years after the event. That year, 1944, the Normandy landings weakened the position of the occupying Germans in the country, and the temporary Hungarian govern-ment took the chance to take a step that Germany would not like.

Colonel Ferenc Koszorús, interim commander of the Royal Hungarian 1st Armored Division, based in Esztergom, west of Budapest, using the units under his command, blocked a push by Hungarian Arrow Cross members who represented a gendarmerie, who had already deported Hungary’s rural Jewish pop-u-lation.

The action, ordered by Regent Miklós Horthy, took place from July 5, 1944 until the 15th, when the gen-darmes were withdrawn. The 1st Armored Division, his son, Frank Koszorús Jr. said, was being held in reserve to support Hungary’s with-drawal from the war. This eventually took place in October, but the action failed.

Koszorús, who was forced to flee Hungary from his country’s Axis “ally,” Nazi Germany, for fear of being exe-cutively by the Gestapo, also could not return after World War II, because the Communists hated him every bit as much as the Nazis. The feeling was mutual. After emigrating to the US, he was approached to help form a nucle-us of Hungarian officers in the event of the US liberating Hungary from Communistism.

For the first time ever, a modern Hungarian government has rec-ognized Koszorús at a cere-mony. Defense Minister Csaba Hende gave Frank Koszorús Jr., the Haszán Erdemjét (For the Homeland Martyr) in honor of his father’s action.

According to the online Magyar Nemzet newspaper, the memorial, held first at the wall plaque at Dohány Street, site of the former Jewish ghet-to and still seen as a key place for Hungary’s Jews, and then at a gala dinner at the Magyar Honvédéség (Hungarian Defence Forces’) Stélánia Palace, gave credit for Colonel Koszorús’ action.

During the Communist period, no one was allowed to speak of any people rescuing Jews, as the idea was to paint the pre-Communist period entirely black. However, in the last 20 years, despite efforts by some historians, the old Communist views have still held sway. In that sense, despite having to wait 70 years for recognition, Koszorús’ brave action is finally being referred to across commemoration stations, radio stations and the Internet.
SURVIVING THE NAZIS, ONLY TO BE JAILED BY AMERICA

BY ERIC LICHTBLAUF,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

In January world leaders gathered at Auschwitz to mark the liberation 70 years earlier of the Nazis’ most infamous concentration camp. Largely lost to history, however, is the cruel reality of what “liberation” actually meant for hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivors discovered barely alive in the Nazi camps. Even after the victorious American and Allied forces took control of the camps, the survivors — mainly Jews, but also small numbers of gays, Roma, Communists, Jehovah’s Witnesses and others — remained for months behind barbed wire and under armed guard in what became known euphemistically as displaced persons, or D.P., camps. Many Jews were left wearing the same notorious striped prison uniforms that the Nazis first gave them.

With the American forces overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of refugees under their control, displaced persons lived in makeshift camps in Germany and Austria — a number of them on the same grounds as the concentration camps. Even after conditions improved, thousands of former prisoners remained inside and in limbo for as long as five years because the United States and most other nations refused to let them in. In these camps, thousands of survivors died from disease and malnutrition. Food was so scarce that rioting broke out at some camps, and Allied commanders refused to give extra food rations to Jewish survivors because they did not want to be seen as giving them preferential treatment over German P.O.W.s and other prisoners.

Faced with complaints by outside Jewish groups about conditions of “abject misery,” President Harry S. Truman sent a former immigration official, Earl Harrison, to Europe to inspect the camps. His findings were blistering. The survivors “have been liberated more in a military sense than actually,” Harrison wrote Truman in the summer of 1945. “As that, I have no idea what to do with them, and I am strongly inclined to leave them as they are.”

One answer came in a copy of Gen. George S. Patton’s handwritten journal. In one entry from 1945, Patton, who observed the D.P. operations for the United States, seethed after reading Harrison’s findings, which he saw — quite accurately — as an attack on his own command.

“Harrison and his ilk believe that the Displaced Person is a human being, what is not, and this applies particularly to the Jews who are lower than animals,” Patton wrote. He complained of how the Jews in one camp, with “no sense of human relationships,” would defecate on the floors and live in filth like lazy “locusts,” and he told of taking his commander, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, to tour a makeshift synagogue set up to commemorate the holy day of Yom Kippur.

“We entered the synagogue, which was packed with the greatest shtinking mass of humanity I have ever seen,” Patton wrote. “Of course, I have seen them since the beginning and marveled at that being alleged to be made in the form of God can look the way they do, or act the way they act.”

Other evidence emerged revealing not only Patton’s disdain for the Jews in the camps, but an odd admiration for the Nazis prisoners of war under his watch.

Under Patton, Nazi prisoners not only were bunked at times with Jewish survivors, but were even allowed to hold positions of authority, despite orders from Eisenhower to “obliterate” the camps. “Listen,” Patton told one of his officers of the Nazis, “If you need these men, keep them and don’t worry about anything else.”

Following Harrison’s scathing report to Truman, conditions in the camps slowly became more tolerable, with schools, synagogues and markets sprouting up and fewer restrictions. But malaise set in, as survivors realized they had no place to go. Hundreds of thousands of war refugees from Eastern Europe — including many top Nazi collaborators — gained entry to the United States in the first few years after the war, but visas were scarce for those left in the camps. Some Washington policy makers were actively opposed to the idea of taking in Holocaust survivors because of lingering anti-Semitism.

At Bergen-Belsen, as many as 12,000 Jewish survivors at a time remained there until the camp was closed in 1951. Menachem Z. Rosensaft was born at the camp in 1948 to two Holocaust survivors. He said in an interview that he believed that the survivors’ hardships after the war had often been overlooked because “it doesn’t neatly fit the story line that we won the war and liberated the camps.”

Mr. Rosensaft, the editor of a new book by Holocaust descendants called God, Faith and Identity from the Ashes, added: “Nobody wanted them. They became an inconvenience to the world.”

Joe Sachs, an 88-year-old Holocaust survivor who now lives outside Miami, said his three and a half years in a displaced persons camp were tolerable. He met his wife there, he learned a trade as a dental technician, and, on most days at least, there was enough food for everyone to get a piece of bread or meat.

Compared with the Nazi camps, “it was heaven,” he said. “But of course, I have no kids, he added. “We were treated not quite as human beings. In a camp like that with only one thousand kids, the only thing you feel is abnormal.”

The State Department finally approved visas for Mr. Sachs and his wife and 18-month-old daughter in 1949, just as Holocaust survivors were finally being allowed into the United States in large numbers, and they left for New York City.

That, he said, was truly liberating.

70 YEARS AFTER THE HOLOCAUST: RESEARCH, RESOURCES AND REMEMBRANCE

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(Continued from page 1) The study, the Holocaust to the public schools of New York City: American Society for turning to the ATSS/UFT to assist the American Society for studying the Holocaust to the public schools of New York City. This award also acknowledges that the ATSS/ UFT recommends the American Society for implementing best educational practices in using documents, inquiry and critical thinking and action for studying the Holocaust.

Dr. Yahalom spoke about the “importance of empowering educators to teach the lessons of the Holocaust to their students through education. As an institution, Yad Vashem is a school of both destruction and rebirth. Through education, these parallel messages are conveyed to the community at large. One of the ways in which we provide teachers with enrichment about this subject is to provide resources to teach about this subject, but also to offer connections between this subject and other subjects of study. She added that “our own awareness of Holocaust survivors should include the changing image of Holocaust victims who survived and who perished. For those who perished, we need to consider how they want to be remembered. For those who survived, we should realize how they have been transformed from victims to heroes. They are our eyewitnesses to history, and their resistance efforts are symbols of the strength and of the resilience of the human spirit.”

Dr. Yahalom told the participants that “as educators, by sharing the responsibility of teaching the lessons of this event to future generations, you make a positive and meaningful contribution to Holocaust education and remembrance, since your efforts help secure the historically valid memory of this event for the future. Documenting the Holocaust and preserving its memory is the driving force behind Holocaust history. As educators, we are aware how the events of the Holocaust include a wide array of challenges to teachers and students because of the complexity, horror, content and obligation of remembrance this subject presents. To meet these challenges, we offer teachers connections between this event and contemporary issues. In this way, we hope to raise awareness and make the information more meaningful and relevant to our students.

She also acknowledged the inspirational leadership of Leonard Wilf, chairman of the American Society, and how “through programs such as this conference we can teach participants about the many themes to consider in this undertaking: the multifaceted contours of human behavior, the dangers of extreme and baseless hatred, the role of the Holocaust in public memory, the lives of the heroes and the victims, and the overarching challenge to make sure neither group is forgotten.”

She concluded with a request to conference participants acknowledging that although members of her own family — her parents and all four grandparents — were fortunate to survive and rebuild their lives after the Holocaust, not all Jews trapped in Europe at this time were as fortunate. “One and a half million Jewish children were murdered simply because they were Jews. These children did not have the opportunity to build their lives and contribute to their communities. I ask you, is the course of your important work as educators, to remember these 1.5 million Jewish children whose opportunities and lives were taken away from them.”

For more information about ASYV educational programs and events, its traveling Exhibits and its Young Leadership Associates, contact Mark Warshawski Yahalom, PhD, Director of Education — my@yadvashemusa.org.
Martyrdom & Resistance

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*1974-85, as Newsletter for the American Federation of Jewish Fighters, Camp Inmates, and Nazi Victims
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