AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE

Vol. 41-No.4 ISSN 0892-1571 March/April 2015 - Adar/Nissan 5775

70 YEARS AFTER THE HOLOCAUST: RESEARCH, RESOURCES AND REMEMBRANCE

ASYV SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE ON HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

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 for Social Studies of 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, organized by Dr. Marlene W. Yahalom, director of education of the American Society for Yad Vashem, has proven to be a strong vehicle to promote the mission of Holocaust remembrance and commemoration through education over the years. The conference was created by Caroline Massel, founding chair of the Young Leadership Associates of the American Society, in 1999.

Ron Meier, executive director of the American Society, gave greetings on behalf of the American Society and spoke about the importance of this program as one of many vehicles the American Society has to offer in its efforts to raise Holocaust awareness through education.

Carolyn Herbst, past president /past chairperson of the ATSS/UFT, emphasized that 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 challenge 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.

(Left to right) Helene Alalouf; Caroline Massel, executive board member; Abbi Halpern, YLA co-chair; Professor Karen Shawn; Marlene W. Yahalom, PhD, director of education, ASYV; Carolyn Herbst, past president, ATSS/UFT; Ron Meier, executive director, ASYV; Barry Levine, co-chair, YLA.

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

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IN THIS ISSUE

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.

Alex's father Michael Brummer with son Martin circa 1948.

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 *Tiszaujlak* — 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 checkers.

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

Over the decades, as I've listened to the reminiscences of my two aunts, 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.

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

For most of my childhood in Brighton, the industrial killing of six million Jews was 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 thugs had beaten him up and guards at the Czech border turned back his younger brother.

It was only after the war, in 1947, that my father — by then settled in Brighton — received out of the blue a telegram from the Swedish Red Cross. It said that the group had in safekeeping three young women with the name of Brummer, who claimed to have relatives in Britain. Was this so, and could they be returned to the family?

It was an affecting and joyous moment. Nothing had been heard of them and it was assumed that, like my grandparents, they had perished in the gas chambers.

Their survival has always felt like a small victory against the inhuman cruelty that cost my grandparents their lives. But still the shadow cast by the Nazis will always fall blackly upon my family, which is why I felt it so important to go and pay my respects at the place where they fell.

We came to that place of death to bear witness, to heed the words of Nobel Peace Prize–winning author Elie Wiesel: "Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to life as long as God himself. Never."

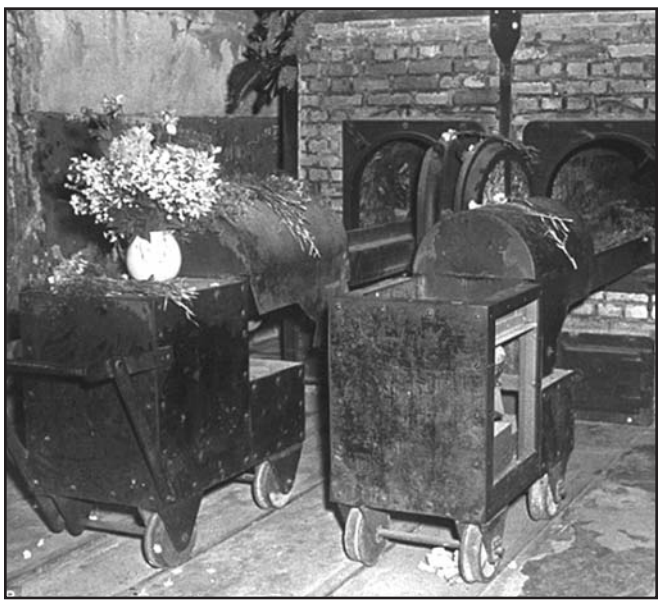
The journey from *Krakow* airport to Auschwitz took me an hour all those years ago. You drive through cultivated fields that could be Hampshire, past white-painted houses with bright orange roofs.

By the time we crossed the railway tracks and saw the most chilling station name in the world, the sky had darkened, with a swirling wind and the rain pelting down incessantly. The horror of what faced us became real, and a dull ache grew in the pit of my stomach.

Today, 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*."



And yet the smell of burning corpses, which more than five decades later still permeates the crematoria (crematorium in the Nazi Auschwitz concentration camp pictured above), 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 — without the icy wind, and the rain 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, terrible reality. In a stark room, where the smell of chemical preservative takes one by surprise, human hair is piled up like a mountain.

Shaved from Jews as they were led to gas chambers, much of the hair is grey now, turned so 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 enameled pots, pans and jugs which were part of the victims' 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 anyone had ever spotted a family member among the hundreds of photographs on the walls. "Yes," she replied. "Yes, they have." She then revealed that since she began working in this place she had discovered that one of her uncles — with Jewish blood — had died here, too.

Out in the bitter cold, we sheltered from the weather next to Block 10. This was a gruesome spot, where sterilization experiments were carried out on the helpless human guinea pigs.

My mind flashed back to the hushed tones of my childhood: visiting my Auntie Sussie in Hemel Hempstead after she had given birth to a tiny baby, who was kept alive only by the skills of modern medicine.

Josef Mengele's henchmen had experimented on my father's sisters, who were barely out of puberty at the time.

But the Nazi doctors failed. Having survived, moved to suburban Britain and married, they were eventually, with great difficulty, able to conceive.

The physiological scars may have healed, but the psychological impact has cascaded down the generations.

The survivors in my family live with the past every day. My Aunt Rosie lost her sense of smell because of the stench of the camps. The filth she was forced to live with has left her with an obsession with cleanliness.

When I recently spent time with my Uncle Martin (my father's younger brother), in a vibrant Israeli suburb, his body began to shudder and he was quickly 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 monstrosities 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 permanently smoldering funeral pyres?

Next to the wall today, barbed wire still stands bleakly against the sky.

And nearby, one can climb down

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NO BANALITY IN THIS EVIL

A new documentary and a new book look at Himmler and Eichmann through newly discovered letters.

BY SAUL AUSTERLITZ, TABLET

In 2006, a prominent Israeli psychiatrist named Dr. Nathaniel Laor received a telephone call from American real-estate mogul and philanthropist Leon Charney. Laor, a professor at both Tel Aviv University and Yale's Child Study Center, was told that a friend of Charney's knew a man who had come into possession of a remarkable trove of papers. Would he care to look them over and assess their historical value?

Soon Laor visited Chaim Rosenthal's apartment in the leafy *Ramat Aviv* neighborhood of Tel Aviv, where a battered suitcase lay on the floor under the bed. He opened the suitcase and discovered hundreds of letters written by Heinrich Himmler, *Reichsführer* of the SS and Nazi minister of the interior, to his wife Marga and his daughter Gudrun, and their letters to him. There were also family photographs, diaries, and notebooks detailing familial expenses. A near-complete record of the personal life of one of the most infamous Nazi war criminals had been in the state of Israel, unbeknownst to anyone, for decades.

"To come into a three-room apartment in Tel Aviv to find an old suitcase containing these pictures of the architect of the Holocaust and his family, with his steady type of calculations, his diaries, his letters, for me it was a shock," said Laor, the descendant of Holocaust survivors. Laor skimmed through the documents and knew that he had found something remarkable that needed to be shared with the general public and that someone would have to be brought in to shape 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 piquing 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."

Himmler with his daughter Gudrun.

Now Rosenthal, in his late sixties, wanted to sell the papers — not 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. "It was a sale, but for him it was getting rid of these documents." Above all, Rosenthal was worried that the papers would fall into the wrong hands, winding up in a neo-Nazi flea market somewhere, or worse, in the hands of Holocaust denialists who might somehow use these domestic letters as proof of Himmler's "innocence." Lapa's father wound up purchasing the letters for his daughter's production company, Realworks, for a relatively nominal sum.

Lapa was tantalized by a single question: How had Rosenthal acquired Himmler's personal correspondence? Lapa spent the first year digging for answers about the letters' provenance. The papers had been, at war's end, at the Himmlers' home in *Gmund-am-Tegernsee* in Bavaria. Marga Himmler 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? Rosenthal, who had been a painter and a cultural-affairs officer 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 1980s 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 about the letters. Having hit a dead end, Lapa decided to regroup and look to the contents of the letters, and not just the story of their owner. "Only then, I realized that maybe there is a bigger story or a more interesting story," said Lapa.

The Himmler papers were the private record of an eminently public man, his musings on his horrific work, and the mundane details of his family life, echoing his pronouncements as one of the highest-ranking officials of the Nazi Party. Their discovery would be part of a larger

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BUDAPEST RESIDENTS REMEMBER LOCALS' ROLE IN HOLOCAUST

BY MARTON DUNAI, REUTERS

Tamas 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, the government finds itself in conflict with the Jewish community over Hungarians' role in the Holocaust.

The Open Society Archives brought that role to the fore last June, opening up to the public 76 buildings where Jews were gathered during the war. Many were either slaughtered on the spot or transported to death camps.

In the courtyard of one building, Marton, now 84, talked to about 100 people about his personal memories.

He said he watched helplessly as Hungarian Fascists deported his mother from their home in an ornate building in central Budapest. She was first taken to rural Hungary. When she escaped and came home, an informer reported her.

"A day after she came back, the building manager showed up with a Fascist commando and took her away again," Marton said.

"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, at a building across the street, the Fascists responded to gunfire from a top-floor window by herding every Jewish resident into the street. They took the women and children to the ghetto, but not before executing the men in front of their families.

Resident Tamas Marton, 84, stands at the window of his apartment in a building where the Open Society Archives organizes a Holocaust commemoration in downtown Budapest.

Buildings were earmarked for Jews with a large yellow Star of David, many of them housing hundreds of people, several families crowded into each apartment. Time and again Fascist commandos raided such houses and killed dozens of Jews at a time.

Of the 2,000 buildings so designated, 1,600 still stand in the Hungarian capital, and in June residents of the 76 participating houses, many of them Holocaust survivors, welcomed visitors and told them about the horrors.

The Open Society Archives called the events the Day of Starred Houses, designed to spread out across Budapest in the hope of making the events as visible as possible.

Although Jewish culture has flourished in Hungary since the fall of Communism and Budapest is again home to one of Europe's largest Jewish communities, anti-Semitism is a growing problem that Jews and others view with alarm.

Budapest now has about 100,000 Jewish residents, compared with more than 200,000 before the Holocaust.

The government of center-right Prime Minister Viktor Orban found itself in confrontation with the Jewish community as it commissioned a World War II memorial that Jews think whitewashes the responsibility of Hungarians in the Holocaust.

Although Orban has repeatedly pledged zero tolerance for anti-Semitism and said Hungarians were indeed complicit in the genocide, he rejected full blame for it and said that without German occupation there would never have been death trains leaving Hungary at all.

Many Jewish organizations have boycotted government efforts to commemorate the Holocaust anniversary in protest.

After the far-right Jobbik party gained an unprecedented 21% in a parliamentary election in April, tens of thousands of Hungarians took to the street to protest the rise of the far right in the country.

To people like Tamas Marton, that is little comfort. To this day he lives in the same house where the atrocities happened to his family during the war. For decades he used to live side by side with the building manager who turned his mother in.

"He lived right in this building," he said. "Of course he tried to avoid me. He never really looked me in the eye after that."

BOOK REVIEWS

MOTHERLAND IN DANGER: SOVIET PROPAGANDA DURING WORLD WAR II

Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II.

By Karel C. Berkhoff. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2012. 407 pp. $31.32 hardcover.

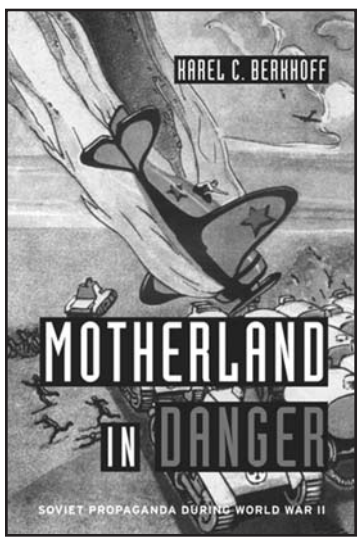
REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

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, sadly, we begin to understand how and why he handled the timely information he received about what was happening to them as he did. . . .

So, what does propaganda have to do with all of this? Put simply, through a tightfisted control of information offered his countrymen, and, concomitantly, through a heightened glorification of patriotism and loyalty, not to him, but to the "Motherland" — iron-willed Stalin calculatedly mobilized all his people for total war! Indeed, Stalin was a great believer in the power of propaganda. It could unite and move people like nothing else. It could, and according to him, would, convince his 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!



Thus we read how "on June 24, 1941" — just a few days after Russia was attacked by Germany, its supposed ally — "the Soviet Information Bureau was founded with the explicit aim of monopolizing all information about internal, international, and military affairs. No major event . . . could be reported before the Bureau mentioned it, unless . . . the reporter was Stalin himself or others from his inner circle." 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 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 a "panicky and depressed mood" and consequently hinder victory. This, even as the slightest of achievements were "exaggerated." Then, as the war wore on, the above easily allowed for the atrocities committed by the enemy, wherever it was met, to be brought home to the Russian people! According to Berkhoff "The goal [here] was less to expose crimes than to mobilize. These materials were supposed to develop hatred and ready the mind for merciless vengeance." Which brings us to Stalin and the Jews, who suffered the most under the Nazis. . . .

Since this reviewer does not wish to give away what many reading here will find most thought-provoking about *Motherland in Danger*, let's just say Stalin's approach and reaction to all he heard about the Jews and the Holocaust were uneven. For in fact, as Berkhoff tells us, "there was no Soviet policy to remain silent or vague" about the mass murder of the Jews by the Nazis. As evidence was discovered, information about it did appear in the Soviet media. But, just as all the leading Allies did—specifically Britain and America — the Soviets "buried" the murder of Jews within the pages of newspapers and the media generally. Instead, the British, the Americans and the Soviets felt much more comfortable "universaliz[ing]" the victims of Nazi crimes. Why? Among the many and diverse reasons, one striking reason common to them all was anti-Semitism . . . which frighteningly must lead one to ponder the unthinkable: Would the Allies have fought as hard if the war had been made more about saving Jews?

Obviously, for Stalin, much simpler and easier to handle propaganda-wise was the glorification of the Soviet patriot: the soldier who fought on regardless of his wounds or the odds against him, the farmer on the home front who voluntarily and hence patriotically worked on beyond the quota expected of him, the women, children and invalids in the cities and the countryside who did all they could and more for the war effort. All of this, constantly and consistently talked about in the Soviet media, presenting the image of a united people, in fact, was exceptionally successful in creating a united people . . . selflessly fighting to the death a bloodthirsty enemy of the Motherland — Hitler and his ruthless followers!

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

VIOLINS OF HOPE

(VIOLINS OF THE HOLOCAUST-INSTRUMENTS OF HOPE AND LIBERATION IN MANKIND'S DARKEST HOUR)

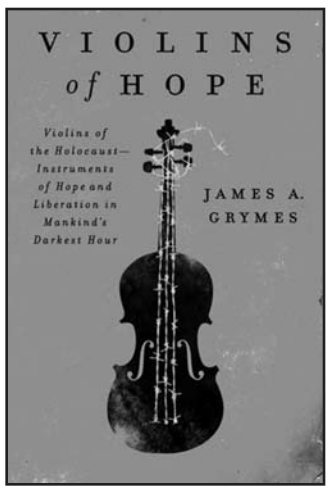
Violins of Hope.

By James A. Grymes. HarperCollins Publishers, NY, 2014, 336 pp. $12.78.

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 Nazism 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 in 1938, lost their entire families in the Holocaust. The crying 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 who were housed in his home. 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 Auschwitz's crematorium, when the owner was ordered to perform outdoors. 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 *Drezden*, 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

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HOW THE PHILIPPINES SAVED 1,200 JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST

BY MADISON PARK, CNN

Even 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 growling 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 *Breslau*, 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 policies, including the *Nuremberg* race laws, intensified. Unable to emigrate to countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, thousands of Jews escaped to places such as *Shanghai* in China, *Sosúa* in the Dominican Republic, and Manila.

From 1937 to 1941, about 1,200 European Jews found refuge from the Holocaust in the Philippines. Their migration was part of an effort by Philippines President Manuel Quezon, the Jewish-American Frieder family, and an American official, Paul McNutt. Several of the Jewish refugees pose with Mr. and Mrs. Lex Frieder in this 1940 picture in the Philippines.

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

This 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 children when they arrived in the Philippines over 70 years ago.

"That was like a rebirth," said Noel Izon, 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 president 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 concerned about the treatment of Jews in Europe during the late 1930s.

"They had a shared view of the world, they were men who understood what was happening in Europe," said Russ Hodge, co-producer 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 strategy 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 refuge committee sought highly skilled professionals such as doctors, mechanics and accountants.

Ursula and Martha Miodowski fled the Nazis through the Philippines in 1939. Martha's husband was Jewish, which meant that her daughter's life was also in danger.

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," Izon 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 passports 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 infamous Bataan Death March, in which an estimated 10,000 prisoners died.

Japanese officers confiscated residents' homes and also hoarded crops for Japan's military. The local economy shriveled 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.

"Fires 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, torture, beheadings and bayoneting of civilians were widely reported, so much so that a Japanese general, Tomoyuki Yamashita, was later executed for having failed to control his troops.

"The Japanese decided to destroy

(Continued on page 13)

SURVIVORS' CORNER

A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR TELLS OF AUSCHWITZ AT 18 AND, AGAIN, AT 90

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 lingeringly beautiful charmer. So the contrast with the Holocaust horror she is describing is all the more complete.

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 Holocaust, including her mother and sister Gilike, then 11. Her last glimpse of them was on the ramp at *Birkenau*, where arriving Jews were sorted into those sent instantly to the gas chambers and those — like Ms. Fahidi — selected for hard labor and thus a chance at survival. She was later transferred from Auschwitz to *Münchmühle*, a camp near *Stadtallendorf*, in the German state of *Hesse*.

Her father also perished in the camps, whose horror she has chronicled in a memoir in this 70th year since the liberation of Auschwitz, and which she wishes to see judged, finally, when a former Auschwitz guard goes on trial in Germany in April.

"When I came home from the Holocaust," she said, using an everyday phrase in German that seems implausible when containing so much tragedy, she ran right past the house in *Debrecen*, eastern Hungary, where her prosperous family had lived.

The house was so rundown, she said, that "I knew instantly I would not have anyone to look for." The inhabitants "were complete strangers who really did not let me in my own home."

It turned out, in late 1945, that she did have a distant aunt and uncle who had survived. For two years, she said, she was bedridden — because of a congenital condition that left her unable to sit for long periods after the camps — in their home in *Nove Zamky*, now part of Slovakia. Her uncle, a doctor forced by the anti-Semitic laws of post-World War I Hungary to get his medical training in Vienna and Prague, was, like her, an avid reader. He gave her Marx's *Das Kapital*, which she read "from the first word to the last."

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

"I knew," she smiled, "that the capitalist world cannot survive, that my father was an exploiter and the only theology that can make people happy is Marxism. All this, with my bourgeois background!"

Her embrace of Marxism led to a young man who within a week became her first husband. The haste, she said, reflected her loneliness and sense of displacement.

It is "unnatural and unworthy, how I lost my family," she said. "At my age now, it is normal not to have grandparents, parents, uncles or aunts. But when it happens as it did, you cannot simply get over it."

Marrying within a week happened "because we felt so terribly alone that it was quite natural to say yes, now at least I have a husband, and one belongs somewhere."

"We were both young and happy and determined to save the world with Marxist theories." She smiled again. "We didn't quite succeed."

Young Jewish Marxists like Ms. Fahidi and her husband "did not really realize that Russia had been promised all the Eastern countries" at talks in *Yalta* and *Potsdam*, she said. When the Communists turned on Jews as enemies, her husband 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 history again shook up her life.

Hungary's rebellion against Communism in 1956 created a brief window of freedom during which she landed a job at a foreign trade enterprise. Even after the revolt was crushed, Ms. Fahidi's precious foreign languages, imparted by her upbringing in the polyglot former Austro-Hungarian empire, enabled her to continue work in the field — in the end, for 42 years — and thus travel abroad.

It was not until 1989, when anti-Communist revolt was again brewing, eventually felling the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union itself, that her distant past bubbled up.

Hungarian newspapers published announcements that officials in *Stadtallendorf* were looking for survivors of the *Münchmühle* camp. "That was my camp," she said. "I didn't want to believe it. What in heaven's name did they want now, after 50 years?"

"It turned out," she said, that the Germans of *Stadtallendorf* "wanted to ask our forgiveness."

Slowly, Ms. Fahidi embarked on a journey through memory that took her back to Auschwitz-Birkenau on July 1, 2003, 59 years to the day after she had arrived in 1944. "The trees had grown beautifully," she sighed. But nature could not eradicate the pain.

"One of the biggest lies is that time could help," she said. "Time does not help. It only deepens the feeling that something is missing. One simply learns to live with such trauma. And if you don't get to the point where you can forgive them, then I think you can't go on living."

"I needed a lot of time," she said. "Six decades."

After that 2003 visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ms. Fahidi declared it her duty to share what she remembered, and wrote her memoir, *Die Seele der Dinge*, or *The Soul of Things*, published in German in 2011 and later in Hungarian.

She hopes especially to encourage scrutiny of the past in Hungary, which like other central and eastern European nations has not really examined its history of the era.

"At some point it has to come," she said. "Because much repeats in history, and if you don't know what happened and what consequences it has, then it can happen very quickly again."

On the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, she spoke at a Berlin ceremony hosted by Chancellor Angela Merkel, then traveled with Germany's president, Joachim Gauck, to Auschwitz for commemorations there. Her 22-year-old granddaughter, a photographer who had previously evinced scant interest in her grandmother's past, was along.

Now she had asked her grandmother to draw her section of *Birkenau*. Instead, Ms. Fahidi had made a collage on wood, which she fetched for a visitor. Uncannily, it somehow captured *Birkenau's* desolation.

Not one to sit still — she cracked open a bottle of red wine and fielded at least three calls during a two-hour talk — Ms. Fahidi has a new goal.

Last year, she was bitterly disappointed when one of the few surviving Auschwitz guards indicted at this late stage by German justice died in Pennsylvania, a day before an extradition order was to be executed. The deceased man, Johann Breyer, was born in her year, 1925, and she had wanted the chance to look him in the eye at the trial and ask how he could have stood on the ramp.

Now the German authorities are preparing to try another Auschwitz camp guard, Oskar Gröning, 93, in April. Her fervent wish is that he not die before her.

"Nothing is too slow for German justice," she said, displaying gall for the first time. "They are doing everything so you won't have a trial, because either the delinquent dies, or gets senile."

NO BANALITY IN THIS EVIL

(Continued from page 3)

process of finding or revisiting the private words of prominent Nazis, separating out the fictions they peddled in public from their personal beliefs. For while Lapa and Laor were sorting through their find, a German philosopher was visiting archives around Germany, painstakingly assembling the complete text of a series of conversations, held after the war in Argentina, that she believed might help her understand the mental world of none other than Adolf Eichmann. The two discoveries would ultimately offer, as we see in two recent artistic works, a perspective on high-ranking Nazis — and the way they thought of themselves and their work — unavailable from any other source. Himmler's letters and Eichmann's transcripts offer a privileged view inside the personal lives and thoughts of Nazi leaders otherwise intent on maintaining an unflinching public pose, allowing us to glimpse not only their actions, but also their motivations

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The Decent One, the film Lapa ultimately made, is an epistolary documentary, drawn entirely from the Himmler family's letters and diaries. It begins when Himmler was still a child, enthusing about a visit to see a Passion play, but picks up steam shortly after his graduation from university, when Himmler joined the Nazi Party and began corresponding regularly with Marga Boden, a clinic owner seven years older than him. Their tone is initially playful — he suggests a ceremonial pact in which she must exercise twice daily and cook him soup — but even during these early years with Hitler, he bristles at any

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 am jointly responsible for them."

The prewar letters (the precise Himmler numbered 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.

Himmler's daughter Gudrun 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 admiring daughter. On the occasion of Gudrun's first birthday, Himmler draws the outline of her hand into the "bang journal" he and Marga kept about Gudrun's development. Marga writes to her husband about how a worried Gudrun had asked her whether "Uncle Hitler" will ever die. Their humdrum domestic life stands in marked contrast to Himmler's bloodthirsty 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 "healthy marriage" requires at least four children. The Himmlers wound up adopting a boy named Gerhard, whose unruly behavior presumably prompted some of 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 his behavior improved. (Gerhard was eventually sent to join the SS at the age of 15 after being caught smoking a cigarette, and became the youngest German prisoner of war in the Soviet Union before being released in 1955, 10 years after the end of World War II.)

On first impression, Himmler seems a doting father, at least to Gudrun, but Lapa and her co-writer Ori Weisbrod soon found jarring notes intervening. Gudrun was invited to tour *Dachau* with her mother and aunts in 1941, and writes with enthusiasm of the trip: "We saw everything. The vegetable patch, the mill, the bees." What sort of father brings his 12-year-old daughter to visit a concentration camp? "This is what I mean when I say he was not that amazing, loving father," argues Lapa. "Because an amazing, loving father would protect his own child from this." Even his outlining of his one-year-old daughter's fingers is followed by the comment that she would not hold her hand still. "He's educating, judging. She's not good enough," observed Lapa. "You always have the perverted twist, the nastiness. This is what amazed me time and time again. I knew that it would come at a certain point."

We are reminded time and again in the letters that the extermination of the Jews was the daily business of the Himmler family. Marga writes of purchasing 10,000 bars of chocolate as a Christmas gift for the soldiers of the SS. Heinrich tells his wife that "despite all the work, I am doing fine and sleeping well." All his assurances to the contrary, the business of genocide took a physical toll on him. He had dismissively mentioned an officer who had had to have his bowels manually emptied after his experiences killing Jews, but goes on to talk about some "intestinal issues" he was himself experiencing.

Himmler liked to present himself as the iron-boweled, unbending, morally upright paragon of Nazism, but the letters tell a subtly different story. "We have a moral right, an obligation, to our people, to take the people who want to kill us, and kill them," he wrote in 1942. "But we have no right to enrich ourselves with a single fur, a watch, a single mark, a cigarette, or anything else." Mass murder was allowed, but theft was a shocking criminal act — or so he claimed. In the next letter, Himmler mentions a gold bracelet he was sending along, with a fur coat that was on its way — both presumably booty from some of the Jewish inmates he encountered.

The Eichmann trial.

Himmler insisted on believing in himself, and the SS officers who carried out the genocide of the Jews, as fundamentally upstanding people. In a 1943 speech quoted in *The Decent One*, he told a crowd of SS men in Posen, "Most of you will know what it means when a hundred corpses lie side by side, whether there are five hundred or one thousand, and to endure that and, apart from a few exceptions, to remain decent, has made us tough, but it is never mentioned, and will never appear in the glorious annals of our history. We can have but one desire as to what is said about us. 'These German soldiers, these German generals: they were decent.'" *The Decent One* is unnerving 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 carefully selected suite of images serving as a bitterly ironic counterpoint and a 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 having missed their anniversary, pleading how busy he has been the past few days, over images of Jews being clobbered with two-by-fours, Jews being shot, dirt being piled into mass Jewish 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 daughter, and flirting with his mistress. We are through the looking glass, seeing the Holocaust from the perspective of not only the perpetrators, but those who looked after the perpetrators. Lapa has expertly pared down the Himmler material into a spare narrative whose silences are often as expressive as its words.

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The Himmler papers are not the only previously hidden or ignored sources about the inner lives of Nazis to recently re-emerge. German philosopher Bettina Stangneth's powerful new book *Eichmann Before Jerusalem* (Knopf) uses the so-called Argentina Papers — transcribed records of a postwar South American study circle composed 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 observations 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 interview 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,

(Continued on page 12)

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE AM
YOUNG LEADERSHIP ASS

IERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM SOCIATES WINTER GALA

REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

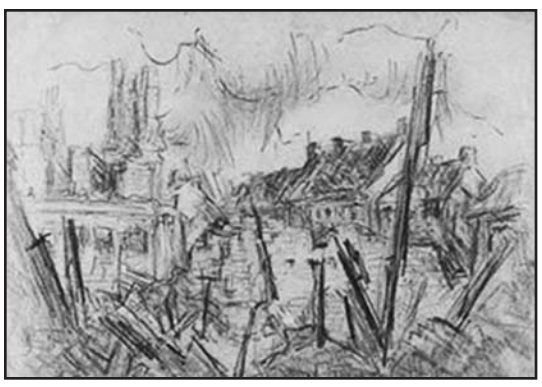
LIVING WITH THE SHADOW, CREATING WITH THE LIGHT

NEW EXHIBIT: "THE ANGUISH OF LIBERATION AS REFLECTED IN ART, 1945–1947"

BY ELIAD MOREH-ROSENBERG

"It 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."

Thomas Geve (b. 1929), *We Are Free*, *Buchenwald* DP camp, 1945. Pencil, colored pencil and watercolor on paper. Yad Vashem Art Collection, gift of the artist.



Alexander Bogen (Katzenbogen), *Ruins of Vilna Ghetto*. Vilna, 1944. Pencil and charcoal on paper. Gift of the artist.

In 1956, Thomas Geve (pen name for Stefan Cohn) gave this description of the moment of liberation from the *Buchenwald* concentration camp, where he had been transferred from *Gross-Rosen* and Auschwitz. Yet at the time of liberation itself, 15-year-old Thomas chose the medium of drawing in order to document the formative moment of the liberation of *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 Block 29 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 and 70 years since the liberation of Auschwitz, a special display opened at Yad Vashem's Museum of Holocaust Art in the presence of Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and survivor-artist Thomas Geve. The exhibit, entitled "The Anguish of Liberation as Reflected in Art, 1945–1947," 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 document the destruction caused in the wake of the bombings. Rather, they also disclose the artist's inner feelings, finding in the chaos outside expression for his personal suffering and existential turmoil.

Jakob Zim (Cymberknopf) (b. 1920), *View of* Buchenwald, *a Few Days after Liberation, Buchenwald,* 1945. Watercolor on paper. Yad Vashem Art Collection, gift of the artist.

Eliazer (Elie) Neuburger (18911972), *Ahasver*, Amsterdam, 1947. Oil on canvas. Yad Vashem Art Collection, gift of Yehezkel Kelman Weissblum Robin, Amsterdam.

These difficult feelings also appear in the survivors' self-portraits. Halina Olomucki, a young 26-year-old survivor of Auschwitz, draws the lines of her face like those of an old woman, revealing her unstable mental state with the lines of a quivering pencil. Ilka Gedo 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 depicts 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 the 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 everything. 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."

THE NAZI WHO SAVED US FROM *KRISTALLNACHT*

BY JILL WERMAN 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 at Lilienbrunngasse No. 7. "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 businesses and synagogues were vandalized and destroyed, almost 100 Jews were murdered, and thousands sent to concentration camps. Ilie and his sister recall vividly the terror, and then the relief, as Nazi boots marched past their door. The Wachs family remained safe, thanks to Alois.

Alois protected the family in other ways. He secured several extensions for them to stay in Vienna, as Moritz, who was Romanian and had deserted the army, was stateless, and Henia was from Poland. Finally, Alois urged the family to leave Austria by August 31 of 1939, clearly knowing of the September 1 invasion of Poland, which marked the beginning of the Second World War, when wartime conditions would make it more difficult to escape.

As instructed by Alois, the family made its way through Italy to Shanghai, a city that didn't require visas or passports to enter at that time. The Wachses stayed in Shanghai for twelve years, living in the Jewish "Shanghai ghetto" in *Hongkew* with 18,000 refugees, who came primarily from Germany and Austria. It was there that they changed their name to Wacs. Ilie eventually went on to study art in Paris and became a fashion designer in New York. Deborah and the parents emigrated to Canada and New York. Deborah, who married and took her husband's name, Strobin, settled in San Francisco and devoted her time to philanthropy. All family members who remained in Vienna were killed.

The siblings rarely spoke of their escape, their life in Shanghai or Alois, of whom they never heard again. They also did not know what happened to the tailor shop.

That is until 1997, on Wacs's 70th birthday, when he prodded his sister 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."

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. I was so shocked to see a picture of myself that I had never seen before," 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.

The experience triggered a desire to write a book about their lives. *An Uncommon Journey* was published by Barricade Books in 2011. Wacs was unwilling to search for Alois, as he feared to find out that the man who illustrated such great humanity to his own family might have acted in polar opposite fashion to so many others. Said Strobin: "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."

In the summer of 1939, the Wachs family was en route to Shanghai on board the *Conte Biancamano*.

When Rohman and others 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 (a course which is no longer being offered) committed to continue the search. As for Schroeder, he is looking for concrete evidence. Right now, he is seeking access to 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 had a phone relationship, the Jewish man remembers hearing that Al had been a Nazi. The businessman never asked Al about it because he had never displayed 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 Alois. Wacs died of 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," she says, "what is it in one human being versus another who sees injustice being done and does something about it?" And morally, what does it mean if he then went on to do some awful things as well?

UNESCO RECOGNIZES YAD VASHEM'S HOLOCAUST TESTIMONIES

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has added the Pages of Testimony collected at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial museum to its register of documentary heritage, which features items deemed to have "world significance and outstanding universal value."

UNESCO established its Memory of the World Register in 1995, and it currently includes 299 collections and unique items from around the world, featuring important archives, manuscripts, map collections and more. The Pages of Testimony are among 54 new additions to the collection.

Israel last year proposed to UNESCO that the Pages of Testimony, commemorating some of the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust, be recognized. The forms were filled out between 1954 and 2004 by the victims' relatives and friends, many with accompanying photographs, and the collection currently encompasses some 2.6 million pages.

Yad Vashem launched the project of collecting and documenting testimonies in 1954, and has thus far managed to collect the names of about 4.2 million Holocaust victims. Many of the names were independently verified through other documents, such as community registries and Nazi documents. In recent years, Yad Vashem has also employed volunteers to go to people's homes and collect testimonies.

"The Pages of Testimony project is a huge collective commemoration project for Holocaust victims," Dr. Alexander Avraham, director of the Hall of Names at Yad Vashem, said. "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 their loved ones who were murdered in the Holocaust."

NO BANALITY IN THIS EVIL

(Continued from page 7)
many of whom vociferously supported the Nazi cause without having themselves 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 together 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 incomparably intimate look at the mindset of one of the architects of the Holocaust — one that had been overlooked or downplayed by other researchers for decades. When Stangneth began her research, she found a jumble of disorganized 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 complete transcript. "I'm 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 revanchists. Eichmann and his friends firmly believed that, suitably cleansed of its tainted leaders (Himmler in particular was singled out as being beyond redemption), Nazism could be revitalized as a political force. "You can lose the world war, but you can be a winner if you are able to write books," said Stangneth. "And this was the plan. To make the propaganda for the next hundred years."

The Himmler and Eichmann papers are valuable in reorienting our understanding of these prominent Nazis' interior lives. They were men of action, to be sure, but they were also men of ideas, peddling their toxic notions of race and genocidal self-defense against the Jewish people. Their letters and interview transcripts provide an unfiltered look at not only what they did, but what they thought about their actions, and how they justified their nightmarish work to others.

Adolf Hitler with Heinrich Himmler and Himmler's daughter Gudrun.

The Himmler letters and the Argentina Papers are primary sources reminding us, in case we ever forgot, that these propagandists were committed with 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 followers of a totalitarian ideal. Doubt simply 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 criminals. Silent Aid fought to free convicted Nazis and to prevent accused Nazis from being extradited for trial. Himmler was neo-Nazi royalty, her lineage granting her elite status within the airless 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 adulthood? What does she do afterwards?" 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 propagation of evil. By saving Heinrich Himmler's papers, Chaim Rosenthal did us all a service, preserving documentation of Nazi ideology's calamitous effect not only on the Jewish people, but on Himmler's own family, too.

MY PILGRIMAGE TO AUSCHWITZ TO HONOR THE GHOSTS OF MY MURDERED FAMILY

(Continued from page 2)
into the cool of the only gas chamber not destroyed by the SS as Russian troops approached.

As I stood under the grates in the ceiling, where the Zyklon B had been poured forth onto naked Jewish bodies, tears flowed down my face.

A faint smell of burning, from the preserved crematorium next door, intensified the overwhelming effect.

Nearby, at *Birkenau*, whose preserved railway tracks were used in the opening scene from Spielberg's film *Schindler's List*, there are rough wooden barracks as far as the eye can see, punctuated by the chimneys of the Nazi death factory.

Inside the barracks, the roughly hewn wooden bunks, which each held five or six souls, remain intact.

Seeing them, I recalled the memories of my aunts about how they dressed in rough, thin cotton pajamas, huddling together for warmth in a freezing Polish winter.

In the center of the room, crude, unfinished concrete latrines, with drains running through the barracks, catch the eye.

More than 1,000 people in each barracks, each with a life expectancy — if they survived the selection for the gas chambers — of six months.

It was the courage and tenacity of my first cousin, Shindy (center) — then still a teenage girl — who helped to keep my two similarly aged aunts, Rosie (left) and Sussie (right), alive at Auschwitz despite the best efforts of Josef Mengele and the Nazi doctors.

Grass now grows around the buildings, but at the entrances, where our feet sank into the mud and ashes, one could almost smell the feces and urine which would run down the pitted tracks.

We walked for a mile or so down the side of the railway that brought the cattle trucks of Jews, gypsies and political dissidents from every corner of occupied Europe.

Journeys of 2,000 kilometers or more, without water or food, journeys on which the corpses would outnumber the living.

I recalled my cousin describing her departure from Hungary: the Jews begged through the cattle truck openings for water from their childhood friends and neighbors. Instead, they were offered salt.

At the end of the track, a rabbi named Marcus stood atop the blown-up debris of Crematorium 2, in which up to 1,000 people a day were incinerated.

Looking down at the large group he had brought to this spot, he pointed out that we, ordinary citizens of Europe, were no different from those who were driven here under the Nazi yoke. Yet we would have filled 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 grandparents 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 reclaimed for it a Jewish heritage.

Sheltering against the wind, I found a crevice in the rocks and quietly lit a single memorial light. The whole pilgrimage, I realized, was encapsulated in this moment of remembrance — for my grandparents, and the six million who suffered and died with them.

SON'S POSTCARD TO *LODZ* GHETTO RESURFACES 72 YEARS LATER

BY TOM TUGEND, JEWISH JOURNAL

Almost 73 years ago, on March 21, 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 parents' fate.

Stefan Prager was born in Berlin, the son of Ruth Prager and her husband, Ernst Wolfgang Prager, who was wounded three times fighting in the German army during World War I.

The boy attended a Jewish school in Berlin for four years, and in March 1939, the parents sent their 15-year-old son and 11-year-old daughter on a *Kindertransport* (children's transport) to Sweden.

Stefan, a big-city boy, spent the war years with a farmer in a remote forest area, living in a house without electricity, a toilet or running water, feeding the livestock and chopping down large trees in the icy winter. He kept writing to his parents in Berlin until they were deported in October 1941.

This was the time of Hitler's greatest victories, and as the German armies came closer and closer to Sweden, Stefan wondered, "Where 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]."

Thus 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 and organized 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 its 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 services, primarily for international shipping.

"A relative of mine found a postcard at your museum which I sent to my parents from Sweden to the *Lodz* ghetto in 1942. … I never heard from them," Prager wrote.

Stefan Prager, now 90, wrote this postcard on March 21, 1942, sending it from Sweden to his parents in Poland's *Lodz* ghetto; he never got 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 speculates 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 "Eldest 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."

LAMOTH president E. Randol Schoenberg noted that "the recovery of the Prager postcard reinforces the point that even 70 years after the end of the Holocaust, there are still undiscovered documents, still descendants of families searching for the fates of Nazi victims and still large gaps in our knowledge of concentration camps.

"For instance, who has heard of the *Maly Trostenets* extermination camp near Minsk? Yet, 65,000 Jews were murdered there.

"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."

HOW THE PHILIPPINES SAVED 1,200 JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST

(Continued from page 5)

Manila. They were going to give them a dead city, they set about doing that," said Miodowski. "They burned, they killed."

But wartime in the Philippines was "preferable to being in a concentration camp," she said.

The month-long urban street fighting for Manila left the capital in ashes, decimating its economy and infrastructure. The Philippines suffered nearly a million civilian deaths during the war.

Despite the trauma of facing both fronts of the war, Hershfield remains grateful.

"We would not be alive today if not for the Philippines. We would've been destroyed in the crematorium."

REFUGE REMEMBERED

In 2009, a monument honoring the Philippines was erected at the Holocaust Memorial Park in the Israeli city of *Rishon Lezion*. The monument, shaped like three open doors, thanks the Filipino people and its president for taking in Jewish refugees during the Holocaust.

Many of the descendants of the Jewish refugees who fled to the Philippines have not forgotten their family's place of refuge.

When Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines in November 2013, the disaster brought in relief workers from the American Jewish Distribution Committee.

Danny Pins, who is related to Hershfield and is the son of a Jewish

Lotte Cassel (now known as Hershfield) is seen as a teenager in 1946 after surviving both the Nazis and the Japanese occupation of the Philippines.

refugee to the Philippines, headed its assessment team.

"For me it was like coming full circle and I couldn't help but think of what it must have been like when my grandparents and mother arrived 76 years ago," he said. "My going to the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan was very special. I was repaying a debt to the country that saved my family."

VIOLINS OF HOPE

(Continued from page 4)

many unknown victims. The simply built violins are priceless to Amnon, testimony to the ordinary Jews who lovingly sustained their culture. "Amnon has never known the names of any of his uncles, aunts and cousins who died in the Holocaust. Since they were buried in mass graves, there are no graveyards to help him piece together his genealogy…. His only way of connecting with his family is through the craft his father taught him: repairing violins…. Each violin is a tombstone for a relative he never knew." The author was motivated to write this book following a week's visit with Amnon and his wife Assi in Tel Aviv back in February 2011. Assi, a journalist, is the daughter of one of the heroic Bielski brothers, the fighting partisans immortalized in the book and film, *Defiance*.

There is a theory that the violin, featured prominently in Jewish cultural life and klezmer music, was created by Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 who ended in Italy. Some Jewish violinists, such as Jascha Heifetz, Yehudi Menuhin and Isaac Stern, acquired universal acclaim. Currently Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman and Shlomo Mintz are acknowledged virtuosos. The author exposes us to the Palestine Orchestra's (now the famous Israel Philharmonic Orchestra) both trying and triumphant history with its opening performance in Tel Aviv on December 26, 1936, conducted by none other than Arturo Toscanini of the New York Philharmonic. Giant Toscanini pledged not to visit his homeland Italy nor Germany given their Fascism and anti-Semitism.

The founder of the Palestine Orchestra, celebrated Jewish violinist Bronislaw Huberman, also stood up to Nazism. When Jewish musicians could no longer be employed in Germany, he conceived of establishing a first-rate Jewish orchestra in Palestine that would disprove the Nazi propaganda that Jews were not great artists. While putting together what the *New York Times* described on February 9, 1936, as an "Orchestra of Exiles," from 1935 to 1939 Huberman saved about 1,000 lives. Following the Holocaust's heavy losses, some anguished musicians destroyed their German-made violins, with others practically giving them away to Moshe Weinstein. At the declaration of the founding of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948, this unique orchestra played the national anthem, "Hatikvah" (The Hope), of a reborn people. Indeed, "Wherever there were violins, there was hope."

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 3.5 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 murdered, but nobody can imagine what that means — such figures of death — while the Holocaust, this word, it 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, grey shoulder-length hair and 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 I am here in Canada, interviewing them."

The accused is Oskar Gröening, the so-called "bookkeeper" of Auschwitz, a former SS sergeant who sorted and counted monies stolen

Former SS sergeant Oskar Gröening counted money taken from dead Jews. He also stood guard on the Auschwitz train platform.

from the murdered Jews, occasionally couriering 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 — an 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 has heard this defense before, and views it as a fairy tale, a convenient narrative in which the otherwise decent German gets caught up in a killing mess, not of his making, and dutifully follows orders — without blinking an eye — as many did during the Nazi era.

"Gröening will not deny anything," 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, there are those unhappy 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 says.

"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 that those able and capable to walk, would walk [to our barracks], and the old people and children — he would send by truck.

"We 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 the side 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."

Being a small cog, a guard in a watchtower, an accountant in Auschwitz, was a well-trod road to legal — and social, moral and economic — 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 were perceived 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 valuable employees. He applied managerial skills honed in Auschwitz to a civilian 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.

"My youngest child went to university in 2006," he says. "I was 63 and 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 government 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 putsch by Hungarian Arrow Cross members supported by units of the gendarmerie, who had already deported Hungary's rural Jewish population.

The action, ordered by Regent Miklós Horthy, took place from July 5, 1944 until the 8th, when the gendarmes were withdrawn. The 1st Armored Division, his son, Frank Koszorús Jr. said, was being held in reserve to support Hungary's withdrawal 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 executed 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 nucleus of Hungarian officers in the event of the US liberating Hungary from Communism.

For the first time ever, a modern Hungarian government has recognized Koszorús' action at a ceremony. Defense Minister Csaba Hende gave Frank Koszorús Jr., the Hazáért Érdemjel (For the Homeland Merit Medal) in honor of his father's action.

According to the the online *Magyar Nemzet* newspaper, the memorial, held first at the wall plaque at Dohány Street, site of the former Jewish ghetto and still seen as a key place for Hungary's Jews, and then at a gala dinner at the Magyar Honvédség (Hungarian Defence Force)'s Stefánia 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 on (certain) television stations, radio stations and the Internet.

SURVIVING THE NAZIS, ONLY TO BE JAILED BY AMERICA

BY ERIC LICHTBLAU, 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 pajamas that the Nazis first gave them.

With the American forces overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of refugees under their control, underfed survivors lived for months in decrepit 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 the early months after the war, thousands of survivors died from disease and malnutrition. Food was so scarce that rioting broke out at some camps, as 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 matters now stand," he wrote, "we appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except that we do not exterminate them. They are in concentration camps in large numbers under our military guard instead of S.S. troops."

I ran across Harrison's report a few years ago while researching a book on the flight of Nazis to the United States after the war. As I examined the path the Nazis took out of Europe, I struggled to understand how so many of them had made it to America so easily while so many Holocaust survivors were left behind.

One answer came in a copy of Gen. George S. Patton's handwritten journal. In one entry from 1945, Patton, who oversaw 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, which he 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 stinking mass of humanity I have ever seen," Patton wrote. "Of course, I have seen them since the beginning and marveled that beings 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 Nazi 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 "de-Nazify" 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 livable, 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 we felt abandoned," Mr. Sachs added. "We were treated not quite as human beings. In a camp like that with a few thousand people, the only thing you feel is abnormal."

The State Department finally approved visas for Mr. Sachs and his wife and their 18-month-old daughter in 1949, just as Holocaust survivors were finally being allowed into the country 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

(Continued from page 1)

the study of 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 commends 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 transmit the lessons of the Holocaust to their students through education. As an institution, Yad Vashem is a symbol 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 fields 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 the 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, in the course of your important work as educators, to remember these 1.5 million Jewish children whose opportunities and adulthood were taken away from them."

For more information about ASYV educational programs and events, its traveling Exhibitis and its Young Leadership Associates, contact Marlene Warshawski Yahalom, PhD, Director of Education – mwy@yadvashemusa.org.

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NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POST
PAID
NEW YORK, N.Y.
PERMIT NO. 9313

Martyrdom & Resistance

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*Published Bimonthly
by the American Society
for Yad Vashem, Inc.
500 Fifth Avenue, 42nd Floor
New York, NY 10110
(212) 220-4304