This year’s sold-out Annual Spring Luncheon was held on May 13th at the Jewish Museum on 92nd Street. Over 200 people attended the event, which honored Danielle Karten for her contributions to Holocaust remembrance and education. Our guest speaker was Alyson Richman, an accomplished author, who spoke about her new book ‘The Garden of Letters.’ Also featured on the program were Co-Chair Daniella Pomeranc and featured speaker Rachel Shnay, who are active members of our Young Leadership Associates.

Danielle Karten was presented with the American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award by Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem Leonard Wilf along with American Society Executive Director Ron Meier. She was recognized for her commitment to Holocaust commemoration and remembrance, which are central to the Karten family. She continues a longstanding family tradition of being actively involved in the American Society for Yad Vashem, which is being passed on to her children — Jonathan, Sharone and Izzy.

Rachel Shnay delivered a description of the emotional trip she took to Poland with her grandfather, in which they visited Auschwitz and her grandfather’s hometown. Rachel also told those gathered about her first trip to Yad Vashem, where she spotted her grandfather’s picture among those on exhibit in the New Museum.

In her closing remarks, Daniella Pomeranc told those gathered at the Luncheon about her family’s amazing story of survival in the Holocaust. From her grandmother’s daring escape from German-occupied Poland to Siberia and her grandfather’s dedication as a partisan, Daniella’s family’s commitment to Yad Vashem has been passed to the third generation.

Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem Leonard Wilf, spoke about the 70th Anniversary of the end of WW II. He reminded the Luncheon attendees of the importance of remembrance, education and commemoration to ensure that those, who perished in the Shoah, will not be forgotten. This year’s Luncheon program included a special presentation by Rachel Shnay and remarks from Daniella Pomeranc about their experiences as grand-children of survivors. It gives us great pride to know that members of the next generation are dedicated to Holocaust remembrance.
EX-AUSCHWITZ GUARD DESCRIBES CAMP IN CHILLING DETAIL

BY DAVID RISING

A former SS sergeant described in chilling detail how cattle cars full of Jews were brought to the Auschwitz death camp, the people stripped of their belongings and then most led directly into gas chambers.

Oskar Groening is being tried on 300,000 counts of accessory to murder, related to a period between May and July 1944 when around 425,000 Jews from Hungary were brought to the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex in Nazi-occupied Poland and most immediately gassed to death.

During that period, so many trains were arriving that Groening said he and the children by her side are her mother's lifelong secret, her personal experience and she was not there to confirm or deny it. The secret of her further.

She remembered that there were no plasma or white blood cell counts of veterans. The only difference was that she was barked at for her reactions. She had never experienced the sound of dogs barking. She remembered.

“I’m going to take whatever confessions there are and put them in the courtroom,” she said. “I’m going to take whatever confessions there are and put them in the courtroom.”

The book recounts a key event in the life of Corporon’s grandmother — the liberation of her family by the island during the Nazi occupation. The family had lived on the island for generations, and her mother had many co-plaintiffs as allowed under German law.

The book recounts a key event in the life of Corporon’s grandmother — the liberation of her family by the island during the Nazi occupation. The family had lived on the island for generations, and her mother had

AN OLD HOLOCAUST SECRET NEWLY

Israeli brothers Avraham and Peretz Hassid knew not to question their Greek-born mother Shoshana about what happened to her during the Holocaust, but an American author with her own family secret has changed the way they viewed their family’s history.

By Nir Cohen, YnetNews

Thousands of black-and-white photos are scattered across the small dining table in a modest house in Rehovot. Some of the people looking into the camera are smiling; others have a melancholic look. One does not need to know the figures in the photos to sense a tragic story deeply hidden. But until now, there was no one to tell.

Avraham and Peretz Hassid have been the owners of the photo collection since their mother Shoshana and aunt Nina passed away. But the people in the pictures remained a mystery.

Avraham is convinced that the little girl in one of the images bears a resemblance to his mother. Perhaps the children by her side are her younger siblings, perhaps on one Pogrom of the island of Corfu. The brothers Hassid had many questions that they never dared to ask. Their mother Shoshana had been through enough, they told themselves, and they had no desire to hurt her further.

Shoshana took her secrets with her to the grave. And neither brother imagined that they would one day receive a phone call that would turn their lives upside down.

“We have a story about your mother that you have to hear,” said the person on the other end of the line. Then her mother’s lifelong secret, her personal story, was about to be revealed — and she was not there to confirm or deny it. The secret of Ereikousa was about to come to light.

A STORY WITHOUT AN ENDING

The events of the Holocaust in Greece have always been studied in Israel through the framework of the destruction of the large and thriving Jewish community of Salonika. The smaller yet equally flourishing community on Corfu, which numbered about 2,000 people before the war, was taken by rickety fishing boats to the trains bound for Auschwitz, and was also almost entirely destroyed. But there are few references to it in historical literature. And if little has been written about Corfu, there is almost nothing about the nearby island of Ereikousa.

Shoshana and her brothers.

1977, describing the tiny island as a magical landscape, whose hundreds of residents run a remarkably unified community. “A markedly egalitarian society,” the article says of the island.

“We have no police and no courts; the residents are responsible for their actions towards others,” the article quotes one of the elderly residents as saying. “We all belong to one family, and we are all cousins.”

Shoshana was not quite right. Perhaps he did not know what happened on the island in 1943; perhaps he knew and chose to remain silent, as did all of his neighbors over the years. In the seven decades that have passed, not one of the Christian people living on Ereikousa has spoken of the Jewish family of five who hid on the island during the Nazi occupation. It was an act of concealment shared by all of Ereikousa’s residents, who risked their lives and those of their families. And it is a legacy that passed from the original keepers of the secret to their children and grandchildren.

The unraveling of the secret started more than a year ago. Director and writer Yevette Manessis Corporon, an Emmy winner of Greek origin, published her book When the Cypress Whispers, inspired by memories of her grandmother, a resident of Ereikousa.

The book recounts a key event in the life of Corporon’s grandmother (Continued on page 5)
I PRETENDED TO BE GERMAN TO SURVIVE THE HOLOCAUST

Shlomo Perel convinced a German soldier he wasn’t a Jew, got close enough to the Führer to take his picture, and found himself in a Hitler Youth school, wearing uniforms with a swastika — all to stay alive.

By SMADAR SHIR, YNETNEWS

Shlomo Perel rummages through a cardboard box, finds the photo he was looking for and says dryly: “Here, that’s Hitler. I photographed him with my Aqua camera from 50–70 meters away. I looked him in the eye. I was 16 years old then, a translator in the German army, with uniforms and a swastika, and I didn’t know who I was at all.

“For years I’ve been told, both to my face and behind my back, that I’m not a classic Holocaust story because I don’t have a swastika, but in my head I remembered I was a Jew whose father ordered him to live. I didn’t know how you come out. So they ordered me to put my hands up and I was eight meters away. I looked him in the eye. I didn’t know who I was at all.

“Perel was born in the city of Peine in Germany. In 1936, three years before World War II broke out, his parents decided to emigrate to the Soviet-controlled eastern Poland.

“Before we left my father told me in Yiddish: ‘Don’t ever forget who you are.’ Meaning, ‘Stay a Jew.’ Mother added in Yiddish: ‘Go, you must live.’ When a mother sends her children away knowing she’ll never see them again — that’s the greatest love of all.”

THE FÜHRER AT CLOSE RANGE

The two brothers crossed the border, with the elder sibling going to his acquaintance in Vilna, while Perel found shelter at an Jewish orphanage in Grodno.

“At the morning of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, all of the children were woken up and told to escape east. I arrived with the fleeing masses to the outskirts of Minsk. The German surrounded us in an open field and ordered us to stand in a line, and then it was my turn. The German soldier who stood in front of me ordered me to put my hands up and asked: ‘Are you a Jew?’

“That was a pivotal moment in Perel’s life. I knew that if I told the truth, I’d be facing immediate death and I had to choose between my father who told me ‘always stay a Jew’ and my mother who told me ‘you must live.’ Luckily, mother’s voice prevailed and I said: ‘No, I’m German.’

“And then a miracle happened — for some reason he believed me. All of the men had to pull down their pants and those found circumcision were executed, but not only did that soldier not order me to take off my clothes, he called me a ‘Volksdeutscher’ (an ethnic German living outside Germany).

“He brought me to his unit, where a senior officer took a liking to me and appointed me a Russian and Polish translator — a role I had for nine months.

“During that time, Hitler came to visit the front lines. ‘Only the high-ranked generals approached him and were allowed past his wall of bodyguards. I was hiding with a camera,’ Perel says.

“After the war, I was asked many times: ‘Why did you photograph Hitler instead of killing him?’ And I tell the truth: Had I shot Hitler, I’m not sure I would’ve hit him, but I would’ve surely been killed on the spot. And I didn’t want to get into the history pages as a hero, I preferred being an anti-hero and survive.”

“Does this question anger you?

“No anymore. People can’t understand the situation I was in. When I was looking at my chest, I saw a swastika, but in my head I remembered I was a Jew whose father ordered him to stay a Jew and whose mother ordered him to live. I didn’t know who I was at all.

“When talking about the Holocaust, there’s a clear division: The victims were Jews, and the perpetrators were the Nazis, while I was both. From the moment I wore the uniforms with a swastika on, I became my own enemy and I had to escape myself to survive.

“How did you manage to hide the fact you were circumcisioned?

“I found all sorts of ways to avoid medical examinations, and I always entered the shower stall closest to the wall so no one could see me.

“But I was sexually abused. An army doctor had his eye on me and one of the nights, when I entered the shower after everyone left, he surprised me from behind and tried to rape me. I fought him with all of my strength until I managed to free myself from his grasp. When I turned around he found out I was circumcision. He was surprised and said: ‘You’re a Jew!’ I was sure this was the end for me, but he said: ‘Know that there is also a different kind of Germans.’

“ ‘He didn’t inform on me so as to not expose himself as a homosexual. I knew his secret and he knew mine, and after that incident he took care of me until he was killed.”

“Later on, Perel was sent to a Hitler youth school in Braunschweig.

“For three and a half years I studied Supremacism and developed defense mechanisms which made me forget that I was a Jew,” he says.

“I changed my name to Josef, the Germans called me Jupp, and as the days went by, the lie turned into a reality. I felt like any other Hitler Youth and I was so convinced, that no one suspected I wasn’t. I stopped eating Jewish cemetery there.”

“And how did the war end for you? Hitler issued an order that ‘all of the Hitler Youths must take arms, to defend the homeland,’ and I was sent to the front with a bazooka in hand. I was sure I’d be shot down. But somehow I survived. I asked him why he did it, and he said: ‘An internal voice told me to believe you.’ I felt ambivalent about him, he could’ve been my executioner, but on the other hand he saved me. I forgave him when I saw how much he did and for the war for the Jewish community left in Łubeck, and I even had him at my house in Givatayim.”

Shlomo Perel in his home.

“My second enemy was dreaming. When you’re awake, you can control what you say, but during a dream you could cry out something about mother and father, and a roommate can hear you.”

“In the winter of 1943, wearing his Hitler Youth uniforms, he took the tram through the Lodz ghetto, “and this was the first time I saw the horrors. It was only after the war that I learned mother was killed in a sealed truck, with the gas from the engine entering the cabin and people suffocating during the drive. She has no grave. Father died two weeks after the army entered Lodz from exhaustion, disease and starvation, and he was buried in the Persian Jewish cemetery there.”

“A German judges’ panel refused to submit (the movie) to the Oscars, claiming it wasn’t a documentary,” he says.

“They dared suspect my story was fiction. So I went to Germany with an Israeli journalist, we located friends of mine from the Hitler Youth school and they confirmed that for three and a half years, they did not suspect I was a Jew, We also managed to locate the German soldier who believed I was a German and saved my life. I asked him why he did it, and he said: ‘An internal voice told me to believe you.’ I felt ambivalent about him, he could’ve been my executioner, but on the other hand he saved me. I forgave him when I saw how much he did and for the war for the Jewish community left in Łubeck, and I even had him at my house in Givatayim.”
**BOOK REVIEWS**

**THE JEWISH KULTURBUND THEATER COMPANY IN NAZI BERLIN**

The Jewish Kulturbund Theater Company in Nazi Berlin


**REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN**

In Rebecca Rovit’s beautifully written and conscientiously researched book entitled *The Jewish Kulturbund Theater Company in Nazi Berlin*, we read about how from 1933 to 1941 the finest of Jewish theater artists — actors, musicians, and designers alike — dismissed from their positions owing to Hitler’s “purgue of prominent Jewish artists and intellectuals from Germany’s cultural institutions,” came together to create a theater of their own: “an all-Jewish theater.” Brave and determined, Dr. Kurt Singer, “the former director of Berlin’s Municipal Opera, had negotiated the conditions for the Kulturbund with the Ministry of Propaganda SS-Kommandant Hans Hinkel, the Nazi official assigned to Jewish cultural affairs.” In sum, Singer agreed that this would be a “closed” theater. In other words, it would be open only to Jewish theater artists and be seen only by the Jewish community. Additionally and most importantly, Singer agreed that Nazi officialdom — General Hans Hinkel and his colleagues — would censor all the plays to be mounted. This meant they would decide which plays could be done and which plays needed “editing” in order to meet Nazi “standards” vis-à-vis a Jewish Theater in Germany. Thus, many of the finest Jewish performers subsequently unemployed were reemployed once again and could practice their beloved art as part of the Kulturbund, which, in fact, had independent branches all over Germany. It was even more miraculously because many of them had absolutely no funds to “fall back on,” making the Kulturbund a true “life-saver.” Finally, many — like the great majority of their audience members — had no plans to leave Germany. For most everyone thought Hitler and Fascism were just a passing phase, soon to be forgotten . . . and Germany was, after all, their home . . .

Interestingly, this last leads to the most thought-provoking material in Rovit’s book, as she specifically deals with the Berlin branch of the Kulturbund (but, undoubtedly, applies to all the Kulturbunds in the country): Many wondered just exactly what a Jewish theater should look like in Germany where most Jews (certainly then) were so very assimilated. The great majority of those in the Kulturbund simply saw it as a theater “for Jews.” Thus — with artistic standards kept high — their objective was to present the best of theater by the best of writers from all over the world. For wasn’t that what most these German-Jewish theater artists had always been doing? And wasn’t that what most of their German-Jewish public was generally accustomed to? Of course, here, Rovit makes clear, there was most definitely a difference of opinion among factions within the community and even in the theater. Thus Nazi officials, however, didn’t see it like that at all! Among other directives, Singer was strictly told not to present works that had any “assimilatory” tendencies. Judaism was not to be mixed with German culture in any way. Aryan culture was to remain pure. The Kulturbund was not to perform “plays by non-Jewish Germans and Austrians.” For that matter dramas by Strindberg and Ibsen’s Peer Gynt were forbidden too. For these works, it was decided, “portray[ed] Nordic ideal[s].” Indeed, “Jewish-themed plays” were to be done; but [Hinkel] censored even those plays because of their messages about a triumphant Jewish collective.

Then again, because Hinkel and his censors knew little of the arts, and (thankfully) were themselves confused (and at times, it appears, slip-tipsy) to what they were be looking for, presentation, plays like *Judith* by Friedrich Hebbel were mounted — which according to Nazi rules should not have been! First off, an *Amcha* was a German non-Jew. Furthermore, in the play, Judith, a Jewish heroine, saves her people by seducing and then “decapitating Holofernetes, the general for King Nebuchadnezzar, to prevent an attack on her home city of Bethulia.” Needless to say, such a play “embod-ied unmistakable, even ironic, paral- lels to the times” and hence must have been very satisfying to the German Jews come to see it!

Meanwhile, especially fascinating for this reviewer and Eastern European Jew the Kulturbund had in doing plays like Sholom Aleichem’s Der Haupttreffer (*The Big Win*), retitled Amcha by its German translator. It was the kind of material the Nazis wanted the Kulturbund to do. It was so very different from German theater work, and the Nazis wanted that difference to be boldy evident. But, in fact, most German Jews were very assimilated. They simply could not relate to their Yiddish-speaking confreres in Poland, Lithuania, and Russia . . .

They just didn’t have a “feel” for the material or the Yiddish cultural world generally.

By the way, just to give my reader-ship an idea of the talents that were a part of the Kulturbund in Berlin, Heinz Condell, a costume and set designer for a great many of the company’s pro-ductions, survived the war to come to New York, worked for Maurice Schwartz’s Yiddish Theater, the Artlet, and for many, many years the New York City Opera.

Dr. Diane Cypkin is a Professor of Media, Communication, and Visual Arts at Pace University.
AN OLD HOLOCAUST SECRET NEWLY TOLD

(Continued from page 2)

the rescue of Jewish tailor Savas, who escaped from Corfu during the Holocaust. And although the book was well received and won critical acclaim, Corporon believed that until she knew what had happened to the Jewish family, the story had no end ing.

“Mother grandmother said Savas fled to Erekoussa with his three daughters and his granddaughter when the Nazis came to Corfu, and the islanders hid them,” Corporon told Ynet.

“Every night, under cover of dark- ness, they would come out of hiding and come to my grandmother and she would welcome them with joy. The Nazis were conducting searches on another island to which Jews had fled, but despite explicit warnings that any- one hiding Jews would die along with all his family, no one revealed the secret. Everyone knew Savas and his daughters were hiding in the parson- age, but no one told.”

A SHOCKING DISCOVERY

Corporon decided to try to locate Savas’ descendants, to find out what had happened to them. She never imagined the huge emotional roller coaster to come, one that would span the globe.

She initially turned to the veterans of the island, some of whom remem- bered the Jewish tailor and his three daughters, Spera, Julia and Nina, and a little granddaughter named Rosa.

Some thought that their surname was “Israel,” but no one was sure, and no one knew what had happened to them.

Corporon then turned to the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, whose staff had helped survivors from Corfu, in order to locate Savas’ descendants. One Corfu native said that the name rang a bell, while another even said that Nina, Spera and Rosa were with him on the illegal immigration ship Henrietta Szold in 1946. The ship was captured by the British and its pas- sengers were deported to Cyprus.

Staff at Yad Vashem managed to track down a few more isolated details. “Nina married a man whose surname was Levi, Spera married a man named Moustaki. Rosa apparently also married, lived in Rehovot and had children, but we did not know their names,” Corporon said. Japhet discovered that they had children, and died in Greece.

“It was a very frustrating time,” says Corporon. “I received an email that read: Unfortunately, we have reached a dead end, let us know if you have more details.”

“But I had one name — Vittorio Moustaki. I went to the MyHeritage site (a specialist in researching family trees), which I knew has a giant data- base of over a billion names, and typed the name ‘Vittorio Moustaki.’ My coffee cup almost fell out of my hand when I got results.

Corporon found a large family tree that lists Vittorio Moustaki and some first names of his family of Israel. But the details did not correspond — the ages and relationships of the family did not match. She got in touch with the principal contact listed on the fam- ily tree, and within an hour received back a family photo. Yvette quickly checked the information with people who knew the tailor’s family. The peo- ple in the picture were not the ones she was looking for.

Frustrated at the impasse, Corporon asked MyHeritage for help. “It’s a little needle in a haystack,” she was told, “but we will do all we can to help.”

The details of the mysterious story reached the web- site’s founder, Gilad Japhet, a specialist in difficult family histories. He offered to help and was imme- diately sucked deep- er into the story.

“There is little infor- mation here, some of it contradictory,” Japhet wrote to his staff. “My challenge is finding relevant infor- mation through the available data are unfortunately less than 0.1 percent.”

But Japhet decided not to let it go. He plunged into a mountain of docu- ments and rescued information, and began to study names. That same night, he found Nina. Excited by the discovery, he reported his findings.

“I am delighted to report that I did it,” wrote Japhet. “Of all the women in Israel called Nina, he had found one who arrived from Greece after the war, and who had the previous sur- name “Israel.” Her father’s name, as it appeared in the official recordings, was Savas, and her mother’s name was Shoshana.

Shoshana could also be called Rodia. Japhet wrote to his staff, “and there was a good chance that the granddaughter Rosa was named after her grandmother.”

Japheth located Nina’s grave at Kiryat Shaul cemetery, and on the headstone was written her father’s name, Shabtai — the Hebrew version of the Greek name Savas. Buried by her side, Japhet discovered, was her husband Rahamim Levi.

Spera and her husband Vittorio.

FINDING SAVAS

Japhet then turned his attention to Spera, assuming that if she had come to Israel, she could well have changed her first name. The name Spera, Japhet guessed, comes from the Spanish word Esperanza or hope; the Hebrew version, Tikva, was a common Israeli name.

Acting on this assumption, he went looking for all the women called Tikva who came to Israel from Greece after the Holocaust. The first name to jump out at him seemed promising, Tikva Levi, a resident of 21 Geula Street, Tel Aviv.

“This is the same street in which I found Nina,” says Japhet. “I thought it wasn’t a coincidence. I assumed two family members who survived the Holocaust and came to Israel proba- bly wanted to live next to each other.”

Japhet described his findings in a detailed email to Corporon, “Year of immigration to Israel — 46. It seems that was on the ship Henrietta Szold. Father’s name: Savas. Wow! Mother’s name: Rosa. I believe that this Tikva is the Spera we’re looking for, because the pieces of the puzzle fit together so well. The chances of this being a coincidence are low.”

With a little more defective work, Japhet located Tikva’s granddaughter in the US, Michelle Mendelowitz, and told Corporon how to reach her. “She may lead us to Rosa’s children in Rehovot,” he wrote. “I am giving you the honor of contacting her and I look forward to hearing the outcome of the conversation.”

“My head exploded and spun at the same time,” says Corporon. She wrote back to Japhet: “You solved the puzzle, they should save you a place in heaven.”

Corporon contacted Mendelowitz in Los Angeles and told her the story, and Japhet on the street outside their house. And soon they realized that the story they had been told was true.

“They knew everyone’s name and the family connections between them,” says Avraham. “They told us that our mother hid with three aunts, whom we had met, and with Savas, whom we knew nothing about, in a vil- lage in Erekoussa and that Christians hid them throughout the war. My mother’s time in the Holocaust had been a black hole for us until that moment.”

Among the pictures in the Hassid apartment, Japhet identified a photo of Savas. The MyHeritage researchers told the Hassids that their aunts were not their biological family but had formed an intimate connec- tion with their mother as their fates became intertwined.

“The Germans invaded Corfu and began to round up the Jews,” says Japhet. “We assume that Savas, who was a tailor and used to visit the neighboring island, fled there from Corfu with the help of friends, taking with him his daughters and a little girl called Rosa who had been left alone when her family was taken.”

On June 6, 1944, a transport from Athens arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau, carrying 2,044 Jews of (Continued on page 15)
Polish researcher explores the untold story of Jewish children who were adopted by Christian parents during World War II and experienced a difficult identity crisis at the end of the war, some refusing to return to their families or to Judaism.

BY TALI FARKASH, YNETNEWS

About a million Jewish children lived in Poland before World War II. Only few of them survived the Holocaust, mostly after being “adopted” by non-Jewish parents. But for an unclear reason, the story of these “miracle children” was pushed aside and neglected by historians for many decades.

Until Professor Joanna Beata Michlic came along. Professor Michlic is a Jew of Polish descent, a social historian who specializes in research into the Holocaust and its effects on children and family. She embarked on a journey retracing those children’s footsteps, delved into archives of the government, but we were deprived as far as food and clothing and toys,” he said.

Still, they managed to get by. In 1942, Rose sent Henri and Andre for a two-week summer vacation at a preventorium at Beaurouvre, 95 miles from home. It was “kind of like a sanitarium or orphanage for people very poor or affected by certain sicknesses,” Andre said. He was 9 then and his brother 11. While they attended, his mother stayed home with his sisters Georgette, 4, and Claudine, 2. The boys had not been there long when a neighbor and tenant, Madame Roby, wrote them. “My dear children Henri and Andre,” the letter read, “Don’t come back home. The Jews. “We’d behave as Christians,” he recollected. “So if they prayed, we prayed.” Sometimes when Germans came to the chateau, the boys were hidden somewhere in the house or in the fields until the Germans left. After the war, Samuel returned from his unit to find other people living in his apartment: his wife and children were gone. “Somebody took over and took our furniture and everything,” Andre said. Samuel managed to locate the boys through social services and, for a time, sought in hopes that his wife and daughters had survived.

While his father searched, the boys were sent to a Jewish orphanage in Jouy set up for children who had lost one or both parents in the Holocaust. “I was never a religious person,” Andre said, but in the orphanage “we learned to recapture our Jewishness. We learned some Hebrew. We learned some holidays. We basically learned that we were Jews.”

“I was a very upset young man because of my experience during the war, losing my mom and sisters. I was determined to do something.” So, in July 1947, he and his brother and father joined a group organized by the orphanage who aimed to illegally join the newly forming nation of Israel. They boarded the ship Exodus and sailed into history once again. The journey of the Exodus, a steamship packed with 4,515 people, most Holocaust survivors, would later be celebrated in movies and books. The British were determined to keep the passengers from entering Palestine and so, near Haifa, rammed and boarded the ship while the Jews put up a desperate fight to avoid being brought back to Europe.

“They had frigates that were a lot better than our lousy ship,” Andre said, and the Jews were quickly overpower.

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“They had frigates that were a lot better than our lousy ship,” Andre said, and the Jews were quickly overpower.

(Continued on page 13)
OLD NAZIS NEVER DIE

BY NICHOLAS KULISH
THE NEW YORK TIMES

As the decades roll by, there are fewer and fewer Nazi war criminals left alive to track down. Which made the recent reports suggesting that Alois Brunner, the top lieutenant to Adolf Eichmann, may have died as recently as a few years ago in his late 90s all the more surprising.

Even more startling for many, though, was the fact that he wasn’t hiding in Argentina or Brazil but in Damascus, Syria, where he had lived from the 1950s under the name Georg Fischer. Apparently, he may have even advised the Syrian government, according to Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Israel office (though not the benefit of an eye and three fingers he lost opening letter bombs over the years). It turns out Mr. Brunner wasn’t an anomaly. Many of the most notorious Nazi fugitives — members of the SS and the Gestapo — fled to South America after the war, but hundreds fanned out through the Middle East, primarily to Egypt and Syria. Eichmann was captured by the Mossad in Buenos Aires and brought back to Israel for trial and execution. But his deputy, Mr. Brunner, was among those who carved out new lives in the Middle East, where governments sometimes recruited them to build up military and intelligence programs.

A few years ago, as the Times’ Berlin bureau chief, I worked with a colleague on an article about the most wanted Nazi in the world, Dr. Aribert Heim. Investigators and Nazi hunters were searching for him in Chile, but we discovered that Heim had absconded to Egypt, converted to Islam and quietly lived out his days in a working-class neighborhood of Cairo.

Like Brunner, he was part of a wave of German soldiers and scientists who made their way to North Africa and the Middle East. Leaders in Egypt and Syria especially viewed the Germans as more sympathetic to their aspirations than Britain and France, which still had significant interests in the region. During World War II, many Arab nationalists had hoped the German field marshal Erwin Rommel would sweep the Allies out of the Middle East.

That respect for German military might and expertise survived the fall of the Third Reich, allowing the

(Continued on page 14)
PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE AMERICAN SOCIETY

2015 Spring Luncheon honoree Danielle Karten accompanied by her son Izzy Karten.

Executive Board Member Marilyn Rubenstein.

Luncheon guests on a guided exhibit tour at The Jewish Museum.

(front row) Selma Gruder Horowitz and Miriam Field; (back row) Danielle Karten, Pearl Field and Harry Karten.

Eve Wald, Rose Moskowitz and Lili Stawski.

Sigmund Rolat, Harry Karten, Samantha Asulin, Israel Yoram Edry, Danielle Karten.
TY FOR YAD VASHEM ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON

Terri Pomeranc, Daniella Pomeranc and Sally Pomeranc.

Members of the Karten family.


Stella Skura, Cheryl Lifshitz and Paquita Sitzer.

ASYV supporters at the Annual Spring Luncheon.

Photos by Bernard DeLierre.
Dear Mom, Dad and Jackie,

There is so much I must write to you about. I know you have been worried about me but the very fact that you have this letter should assure you that I am still well and trusting in God. A little tired and worn out perhaps and maybe a little older now than my 22 years — but well, nevertheless."

Thus begins what appears to be a typical letter to his family by a young American soldier fighting in Germany in spring 1945. But as the letter continues, it is anything but typical. Its young author, Sammy, a Jewish soldier from the Midwest, went on to recount two consecutive scenes that encapsulate in high relief the horror of the Holocaust. Among them women and children who died as well as those who survived.

Company had been moving across Germany for several weeks, and most recently Sammy had written home from Nuremberg. Nonetheless, on the day they approached Dachau and later entered the camp, these soldiers would be in for a great shock.

On a street in the town, just outside of the camp, they came upon a train. The cars were filled with dead bodies, among them women and children who had died of starvation and dehydration, or had been shot. This train came to be known as the Dachau Death Train. It was composed of some 5,000 prisoners who had been dispatched to Dachau from Buchenwald on April 7, 1945, and had traveled for three weeks. It was held up because of the bombing of the railroad tracks and never reached Dachau. Sammy wrote: "When our company first approached the camp we came upon a railroad on which there were many boxcars — all of them filled with dead bodies, and the stink was horrific. There were many young children, women and men who had been lined up and machine-gunned to death by the SS just a few days previously." As they entered the camp itself, which they had smelled from far away, they saw additional signs of atrocities — the dead, the crematoria and the hellish barracks — and they met prisoners in striped uniforms who told them of their terrible ordeal of brutality, suffering and murder.

(Beginning on page 13)
THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON

DANIELLE KARTEN “WE WILL NEVER FORGET”

First, let us all take a moment of silence, honoring the memory of all the people who lost their lives in the Holocaust. I am here to accept this honor for a few people: for my incredible in-laws, Julia and Izzy Karten, may God bless their memories. For my dear sisters-in-law, Berne Bookhamer and Marcia Toledano; and for my loving husband, Harry, whose endless support I cherish, and also for my children, Jonathan, Shanie and Izzy, to whom we are passing on this legacy today. So how did I, an Israeli woman of Sephardic background, end up standing here, you might ask? And rightfully so. Yad Vashem and the Shoah were part of my childhood education in Israel. There is one particularly vivid memory I would like to share with you — a class visit to the Central Memorial at Yad Vashem. I stood surrounded by this dark hall, the echoes of the children’s names, one name after another; the ghosts of the living represented 1.5 million innocent child victims. I will never forget my teacher telling us that it would take over six years to say all of those children’s names.

Another strong memory comes from a story my grandma Simi told me about my grandpa, Rabbi Moshe, and Sheich Yossaf, her father. They, along with the other community leaders, were taken by the Nazis from their homes “ulad znagio” in a small village near Marrakesh, Morocco. The Nazis planned to leave the sheep without their shepherds. Dead in the village, the community sensed trouble, fear and loss. Luckily, the end of the war came a month later, and they were all released alive.

The Holocaust reached far and wide. The Shoah did not discriminate; Jews were killed if you were Reform or Orthodox; Sephardic or Ashkenazi. These and many other stories are taught and stored at Yad Vashem. My true relationship with Yad Vashem began when I married Harry and became a Karten. That is when I also married Yad Vashem. During the first few years of my marriage, I was fortunate enough to hear the heroic survival story of my mother who escaped to Russia and my baby sister, was murdered in the Holocaust. Thankfully, Julia had the presence of mind to quickly wrap the family gold coins into a bandana and tie it to her wrist. It was with these gold coins that she paid farmers to hide her. Since Julia posed too much of a threat to the farmers, who could not help her any longer, she was forced to turn herself in to the Bobrika ghetto. Here, she met Izzy, who offered her shelter in the woods, where they got married and spent three harsh winters together with Izzy’s three brothers and the rest of the Partisans.

You may read Isidore’s memoir in a book that Yad Vashem published, Survival in the Forest — the Switz Camp, the story of the four Karten brothers, who were able to help save over 400 lives that otherwise might have died in the ghettos or the concentration camps. Izzy’s family was sent to Belzec at the same time as Julia’s family. After liberation, the survivors needed to cope with their losses. Sadly, there were no cemeteries, nor any graves, to visit. Therefore Izzy and Julia joined the American Society for Yad Vashem as benefactors. It was decided that the first major project was to build the Valley of the Communities, a huge monument, dug out of natural bedrock at Yad Vashem, on Mount Herzl, in Jerusalem. This project symbolizes a large grave for 5,000 lost European communities, whose names, including Izzy’s village of Switz and Julia’s village of Milatycze, are engraved into these stone walls.

The legacy left to us by Izzy and Julia for our grandchildren values. This story of our family has been told and well absorbed by the second and third generations. Four Karten brothers survived, and they have 30 descendants. It is said that the story of the Karten family is not unique. Each of you honored survivors have your own story to tell. Would all the survivors please stand and allow us to applaud you? Would all the second and third generation of Holocaust survivors please join and stand with them? This, my friends, represents the revenge we took on Hitler. Let’s applaud all of them. We are all here for one cause. Our shared history must be kept alive through education and commemoration. Our families must continue to grow as does our support for Yad Vashem.

RACHEL SHNAY “IT IS UP TO US TO SPREAD THE FLAME”

It is hard for me to put into words something that is all-consuming, is rooted from my very core and causes a never-ending flow of emotions between my heart and soul. It is my past, present and future. It gives me perspective on every life occurrence, whether joyous or solemn, it forces the responsibility I feel to share and teach as much as I can about the horrors of the Holocaust. Faiga — the survivor in me — ignites the passion I have for teaching Torah and Jewish values, and ensuring continuity. And that is exactly what Yad Vashem represents. Its meaning — “a place and a name,” refers to memorializing those who perished and honoring those who survived.

Walking through the haunting structure of Yad Vashem, I cannot help but feel as though I am looking at the faces of my brothers and sisters. Those strangers in black and white seem so distant, yet they all have a face that seems familiar. My grandfather, Simcha Horowitz, is actually one of those faces. He is in two photographs in the liberation section: one in which he is proudly carrying an Israeli flag, coming as part of Alya Bet from Germany and arriving in then Palestine: the other, him rejoicing with other survivors as they listened to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion declare the State of Israel outside of the Knesset in Tel Aviv. How did he and hundreds of other Auschwitz survivors transform themselves from helpless prisoners into fearless soldiers, ready to fight for their own Jewish statehood? Just a few years prior, Simcha was a Chassidic little boy, the son of a great rabbi in Lodz, Rabbi Yaakov David Horowitz, and the youngest of seven boys. He was forced to watch his father be hanged by the Nazis, his mother and four of his brothers murdered in Auschwitz. Simcha survived Auschwitz, went on to become one of the founders of the Israeli Air Force and fought in the War of Independence.

Seventy years later, on January 27th, 2015, I was fortunate to return to Auschwitz to commemorate the anniversary of the liberation, with my grandfather, his children, grand- children, and with 102 honoree survivors from around the world, baruch hashem. As part of a WIZO delegation for the World Jewish Congress, 60 representatives from WIZO New York as well as many dignitaries from around the world attended this milestone event, and I am happy to see some of those women sitting in the room today. The Nazis’ goal was clear and simple: to annihilate every Jew. Did they succeed? After sharing four awe-inspiring days with the survivors and their families, it was clear that the Nazis’ objective was defeated. The message, related in beautiful tributes by both Ronald Lauder and Steven Spielberg, was that the world can never forget, especially in these days of rising anti-Semitism and the existential threat to the State of Israel. Seventy years after we defied and we resisted, we paused our busy lives to honor, to memorialize and to simply acknowledge their losses.

(Continued on page 13)
(Continued from page 6)

that children have a different sense of time, a different outlook. Very small children couldn’t even remember their name. They lost the reality of who they were, as they were unable to use their real name for a while.”

PARENTS TURNED INTO STRANGERS

In her study, Michlic documents heart-rending descriptions of tragedies and traumas suffered by the lucky children who survived with a false identity.

“It was so traumatic,” she says, “that after the war, when the children’s relatives arrived to take them home, they saw them as complete strangers. Some of the Jewish children who were transferred to a Jewish orphanage in Poland after the war tried to escape to the people they saw as their parents. The emotional connection between them was very deep in some cases, and the separation was heart-rending.”

Who were the Christians who took in those children?

“The rescuers came from a very wide variety. Some took care of them as if they were their own children. Others expressed anti-Semitic views, and some were violent towards the adoptive children, as well as towards their biological children. There were also cases in which families murdered the children they were entrusted with,” Michlic says. “In homes in which children were abused — sexual abuse too, by the way — they were very happy to find out about their Jewishness and leave. But in families in which they felt loved and appreciated, there were huge difficulties. Some of the parents didn’t even know that the child they adopted was Jewish, and the separation was heart-rending. It took some of them years to really say goodbye.”

Michlic further notes that under the Soviet regime, “the issue became a taboo. The Polish families were afraid to reveal their connection to the Jews’ children, and therefore did not maintain it. The archives were sealed. Only today, when they have become local culture heroes, the issue can be discussed openly. But most of them are no longer alive, and the relations between them and the children they raised were broken in a very traumatic way.

“One of the most wonderful places to learn about the connection was through letters the children wrote to Jewish organizations during the civil struggle in Poland, asking that their rescuers be protected.”

JEWSH KIDS PRAYING TO VIRGIN MARY

The documentation discovered by Michlic describes dozens of cases of difficulties in bidding farewell to the adoptive family. Sara Avnun, one of the interviewees in Michlic’s research, documented her story in the book Rising from the Abyss, which Michlic sees as one of the most powerful and important depictions of the child experience during the Holocaust. But this documentation, she says, didn’t receive the proper research attention in previous years either.

“She describes the experiences of a little girl, who at a certain stage, after a number of difficult experiences of sexual abuse, abandonment and more, found herself in a Catholic orphanage. She was taken away from there by a childless Polish couple and created a renewed childhood for herself,” Michlic says. “After the war, when she was nine years old, her uncle arrived, and she simply refused to go with them. She escaped back to her ‘parents,’ until her grandmother took her away forcibly. She was a religious person and he put her in a kibbutz with other children, because he felt that the gaps between them were too big and he wanted her to reaccept her Jewish identity.”

Avnun’s story is one of the most heart-rending. “She has a wonderful family and a Jewish identity, but for a long time she kept in touch with her adoptive parents, who didn’t even know she was Jewish. There were periods of great difficulties, of a mixed identity, of a rejection of anything related to Judaism and Jews. The adoptive mother refused to acknowledge the fact that the daughter was Jewish, and just wanted her back even many years later.”

“And there were children who decided to stay with their Christian identity, and kept their Jewish identity a secret for many years. This group has been shrinking in recent years. There were children who found out the truth as adults, like Romuald (Jakub) Weksler-Waszkiewicz, who was already a Catholic priest when he learned the truth, and to this very day he lives in Israel with a split Jewish-Catholic identity.”

According to Michlic, “Even if the parents survived, there were children who wanted to officially convert to Christianity. These experiences, unfortunately, were not part of the historical memory for many years. Some of the children didn’t really talk about it and suppressed it, but even those who did were not heard. And so you could see a child who wants to emigrate to Israel on the one hand, and continues to go to church every Sunday on the other hand.”

The division of the religious identity continued. Michlic describes many cases in which small children continued to pray to Virgin Mary, or kept her picture. And it accompanied them through what they went through. Children who were raised on anti-Semitic stories, and didn’t receive the level of care they sometimes felt like they don’t belong. Some were raised on anti-Semitic stories, and didn’t receive the level of care they were entitled to, which increased their revulsion towards the discovery.”

TRAUMA MOVED ON TO NEXT GENERATION

How did the families that survived the horror deal with the new discovery?

“We must remember that the parents who survived had their own problems. They had survived concentration camps, death camps, even Soviet occupation, and years of hiding in Aryan areas. Some suffered from mental and emotional problems. They didn’t always have the ability to deal with the child’s traumas. Children were sometimes left in orphanages for a long time, until their parents managed to get back on their feet.”

“And what happened when the parents didn’t survive?”

“It wasn’t always clear who was responsible for the children. Sometimes it was an aunt or uncle, sometimes an extended family. Today we know from research that children who were taken care of by relatives sometimes felt like they don’t belong and didn’t receive the level of care they needed. Some of them just didn’t know how to deal with a child who had gone through what they went through.”

“Most of the children,” Prof. Michlic concludes sadly, “were not smiling ‘poster kids,’ but scared children with difficult problems. The untreated trauma moved on, when they became parents, to the second and third generation. Today’s Israelis have been raised and are still being raised in the shadow of this trauma. It isn’t over yet.”
tracks in Auschwitz that led over a million Jews to their deaths, a group of Israeli Air Force soldiers walked past us. With snow falling around us and only the light from our candles illuminating our faces, we took the long walk with our arms linked and our heads down in the snow. We were surrounded by snow-covered hills, mountains, and trees. It was freezing cold and the wind was blowing fiercely. We were silent, except for the sound of our footsteps on the snow. We walked for hours, with the soldiers leading the way.

As our group walked down the same route, we talked about the horrible things that had happened here. We talked about the camps, the gas chambers, the mass executions, the deportations, and the extermination of six million Jews. We talked about the pain, suffering, and loss that had occurred here. We talked about the courage, resilience, and hope that had survived here. We talked about the importance of remembering this history and honoring the memory of those who had died.

Through Hell and Back

(Continued from page 6)

A ndre made it to the dock at Haifa, but no farther. The passengers were put into three prison ships and taken to France, where the English intended to force them ashore, but the Jews refused to leave and France refused to let the English force them out. Andre remembered his fellow passengers taking a blanket to fashion a British flag with a swastika on it as a means of protesting how they were treated.

Eventually the British decided to take them through the Straits of Gibraltar, up the European coast and back to the British Zone in northern Germany. They were hungry, cold, and in disrepair. Their return was to the British Zone in northern Germany, because they were no longer wanted or needed in France.

He doesn’t recall if they were released or released, but the three managed to find their way back to the British Zone and from there, return again to Israel, this time legally.

He did not fight in the early wars that determined Israel’s borders and survival because he was only 15, but he worked in the ports of Haifa and rode armored trucks to be protected from Arab fire. When he came of age, he joined the military and was stationed at a kibbutz, and also served in the building up of Etat in the Negev Desert.

He remained in Israel for a number of years but eventually decided he wanted to start his own life. He often said that the Nazis did not only murder six million Jews, but they may have destroyed every single possible generation that could have, should have come out of those beautiful souls millions upon millions.

As our group walked down the same route, we talked about the horrible things that had happened here. We talked about the camps, the gas chambers, the mass executions, the deportations, and the extermination of six million Jews. We talked about the pain, suffering, and loss that had occurred here. We talked about the courage, resilience, and hope that had survived here. We talked about the importance of remembering this history and honoring the memory of those who had died.

Letters from Jewish Liberators

(Continued from page 10)

he wrote, and “I so much wanted to make them happy. I sang from ‘chaznish shitkelach’ for them and also ‘Yiddische nehe.” One asked if I wouldn’t write my Jewish name for them on a piece of paper. Soon I was scribbling it.”

Sammy most probably was the first Jewish soldier to encounter Auschwitz. The juxtaposition of shooting SS men and then singing for Jewish survivors is nothing less than surreal, but it was as it should be. Sammy was not the only American soldier to ask himself why he was fighting and find his answer in his encounter with Nazi atrocities and the suffering prisoners. The war was never just about guns and bullets; it was the only one to feel that no punishment was enough for the perpetrators of the crimes. On April 18, 1945, two different Jewish soldiers from New York City wrote home about their first encounters with Nazi atrocities.

Keal, from Queens, wrote to his wife, posing the question, is any “ret-ribution vicious enough?” Jake, from Brooklyn, wrote: “Dear Folks... if you think you would want to wash your hands of these atrocities stories, you can remove it right now... It’s a sight I’ll never forget. They [the AFP] beg us not to show the Germans any mercy. They told me stories of barbarism that is beyond the realm of imagination.” In effect, Jake wrote more at length about the stories of the survivors, each one its own miracle.

Mr. Keent continued, in what he think was the most bone-chilling statement of the trip, “A minute in Auschwitz was like an hour in a laboratory, a day was like a year and a month an eternity. How many eternities can one person have in a single lifetime? How is it that those 102 survivors, pure angels, sit for a few feet ahead of us endured so many eternities? That question will forever be lingering in my mind.”

As my grandfather holds my hands, I thank Hashem for those hands. Those hands are so strong, so powerful, yet so gentle and vulnerable. And what will we do with our hands? Our hands of privilege, of freedom, of life? I ask him, “Papi, I just don’t understand, how did you survive?” Without hesitation he simply said, “My name is Symcha Michoel, Symcha means happiness and gives me masor. Michoel is the angel Michael, who is always watching over me.” Why is it that 1, 25-year-old Rachel Shnay standing here before you, get to live a beautiful life with endless opportunity while the 6-year-old Rachel Shnay never had a chance? We may carry their names, we may tell their stories, but we can never forget their sacrifice. It is Yad Vashem that has ignited the fire, and it is us to spread the flame.
OLD NAZIS NEVER DIE

(Continued from page 7)
defeat of the Arab coalition by the Israelis in 1948, German advisers were discreetly sold out to their best resources for building new, stronger armies. In a French documentary last year, The Nazi Exiles: The Promises of the Orient, the French-German filmmaker Géraldine Schwarz traced the paths of German soldiers of fortune, fugitives and propagandists, including Lt. Gen. Artur Schmitt, who fought with Rommel in North Africa. The Arab League recruited Schmitt to help form a more effective fighting force. After a trip to the Golan Heights in 1951, Schmitt wrote to an Egyptian colleague that the Arab defeat by Israel had been “the consequence of the early stages of fighting to wipe the state of Israel off the map with a blitzkrieg of two weeks at most.”

Meanwhile, a Syrian agent traveled to Rome to seek out Walter Rauff, who had helped develop the vans used as mobile gas chambers, to lead them to Egypt to seek out Walter Rauff, most “The Israelis were concerned about the Cairo Germans — in particular their missile-making expertise — to dispatch an undercover agent to Cairo. A letter bomb near the slightly blinded the German secretary working for one of the rocket scientists. Another device addressed to Dr. Eisele exploded prematurely in the hand of his Egyptian postman. But by then large and greatly trashed, the question for future researchers is how much influence the Germans had over these rapidly changing nations and their security apparatus. “The world as it is today was shaped after the war, and that is why the key word is: war. Ms. Schwarz said by telephone from Berlin. “The Germans were assembling the army, the secret service and the police at the moment when these countries were being built.”

MEMOIRS OF THE MURDERED

(Continued from page 4)
equation only when Germany began to destroy its neighboring states. After the Anschluss of Austria in 1938, some 1,521 Austrian Jews were sent to Dachau. That summer more than 2,000 German Jews were also sent to camps. After Kristallnacht, the nationwide pogrom organized by Nazi authorities that November, 26,000 German Jews were sent to camps, generally for short periods. The purpose was to intimidate heads of households so that Jewish families would leave Germany.

With the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, the character of the camps changed. Now the main victims were Poles, who were murdered and worked to death in appalling conditions. Right after the invasion, 110 Poles were placed in a cage in Buchenwald; 108 of them were dead by Christmas. At the new camp built for Poles at Gusen, the mortality rate was 5% per month. Between March and December 1940, more than 13,000 Poles were sent to Dachau. In the years 1940 and 1941, Poles were the largest group of inmates in the concentration camp system as a whole. The new camp at Auschwitz, built on the site of a Polish military base, was constructed in 1940 to intimidate the Polish population. As Mr. Wachsmann writes: “Today Auschwitz is synonomously for military intelligence; it was built to impose German rule in Poland.” There is still much to be learned from Polish sources about Polish prisoners of the camp, for example about the resistance leader Witold Pilecki and his extraordinary choice to volunteer to enter the camp to gather intelligence and organize resistance. The German invasion of Poland did not just mean camps for some Poles but also ghettos for almost all of the country’s Jews. The Holocaust, however, began not when Germany invaded Poland in 1939 but when Germany invaded the Soviet Union in July 1941. Although this is not his main subject, Mr. Wachsmann ably relates how the pogroms and the shooting of some Jews in the summer of 1941 became a policy of total killing of Jews in Soviet territories by the end of the year — a policy extended in 1942 to occupied Poland and then to all of occupied Europe. Auschwitz became the major site of the Holocaust only in 1943, as the Red Army advanced westward, and first the death pits and then the other death facilities could no longer be maintained. This meant one more adaptation for Auschwitz. It had been created to punish Poles and became a death factory in 1941 and in the order of Soviet prisoners of war. As Germany conquered the western Soviet Union in the second half of 1941, it starved millions of prisoners of war in enclosures that can hardly even be called camps, and it selected tens of thousands for “special treatment” — murder in the gas chambers. Some 100,000 were murdered in Sachsenhausen alone in September and October 1941, more would be killed at the Sobibor camp. Wachsmann treats these Soviet victims with the same individual attention he accords to Germans, Jews and Poles, noting where he can something about their lives and their places of origin, often in Ukraine or Belarus. The special technique used to murder these Soviet prisoners at Auschwitz, gassing, was based on the earlier German euthanasia program that murdered people deemed handicapped with carbon monoxide. The use of Zyklon B at Auschwitz was an adaptation of a program with which commandants and guards would have been familiar. As Mr. Wachsmann demonstrates, the evolution of Auschwitz into a gassing facility for Jews only makes sense against four separate backdrops: the development of the technique of gassing for the “euthanasia” program; the German advance into and retreat from eastern Europe; the associated decision to kill all Jews while the war was going on; and the development of the camp itself.

Mr. Wachsmann calculates that 80% of the Jews who reached the entry gates to Auschwitz were selected for immediate murder. They were not, in other words, concentration camp inmates at any point: like the Jews who stood over the death pits of the East or those gassed at Chełmno, Treblinka, Sobibór and Belzec, they were simply murdered. Jews who arrived at Auschwitz actually had a better chance of survival than Jews who were deported to those other death facilities, because at such places there was no selection for labor. O

Wirtschaftliche Bedeutung der ehemaligen Konzentrationslager

Wirtschaftliche Bedeutung der ehemaligen Konzentrationslager

Wirtschaftliche Bedeutung der ehemaligen Konzentrationslager

Wirtschaftliche Bedeutung der ehemaligen Konzentrationslager
AN OLD HOLOCAUST SECRET NEWLY TOLD

(Continued from page 5)
Corfu, the forced labor camp next to Auschwitz. According to the records, he was murdered on March 9, 1945. Details of the rest of the family have not yet been found.

The Hassid brothers were finally learning their mother’s history. And in a Skype call from the US, an emotional Corporon told them for the first time the story of the family’s rescue on the island of Ereikousa.

“Suddenly we realized where it all began,” says Peretz. “We were never allowed to ask our mother about the war. Occasionally we would hear her talking to our aunts in Greek, but we were not allowed to interrupt. It is very moving to think that an entire island was involved in the rescue and that we are here thanks to the people there.”

Shoshana Hassid, it turns out, was married in the 1950s to Yaakov, an agronomist from Corfu. “She did not have a happy life,” says Avraham. “And knew no happiness,” says Peretz. “We were married in the 1950s to Yaakov, an agronomist from Corfu. “She did not have a happy life,” says Avraham. “And knew no happiness,” says Peretz.

Corfu, and immediately began to map out all the information known to them, collecting all the documents in Greek left behind by Shoshana, all the pictures and all the contacts, and began looking for relevant documents from around the world. After many conversations with Auschwitz survivors from Corfu, it emerged that Savas had another son, Solomoninio, who was more than likely killed by partisans who suspected him of collaborating with the Germans.

In the documents Shoshana submitted to Yad Vashem in 1999, she listed the names of just two of her siblings — Menachem and Gabriel. MyHeritage staff contacted government officials in Greece and Israel, and they agreed to help.

A document in Greek found in Shoshana’s apartment, with a birth certificate signed by a notary, led to the discovery of a file from the 1990s containing Shoshana’s records at the Ministry of Finance. The file also contains a testimony by Shoshana, in her own handwriting.

“In 1943, the Germans came to Corfu and immediately began to round up all the Jews, but the Germans could not catch those who fled. I ran into the mountains and villages with the help of other people. After the Germans occupied the city, I wandered from place to place with no clothes and no food. I feared that the Germans would catch me.”

The file states that Shoshana was the only one of her family who remained alive, and that she had been afraid her entire life that the Germans would return and take her too.

To obtain conclusive evidence about her family, MyHeritage staff explored every possible avenue, including the testimony by Shoshana, who had been just nine when the Germans caught her family.

“My brother Gabriel Belleli, 15, was killed in Auschwitz,” she wrote in her testimony at Yad Vashem. But international searches turned up an exciting fact: Gabriel Belleli, born in Corfu in 1930, is on the list of survivors of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The last recorded date on which Belleli appears is September 1945, six months after the war ended. Could it be that Shoshana’s older brother survived?

The information converges with the examination of documents at the City Hall in Corfu, and chances of this being the right person drastically increase. Gabriel Belleli, born in 1930, is the son of Peretz — the same name as Shoshana’s father. In 1955, Gabriel Belleli was removed from the population registry in Corfu, and is now listed as “Not in Existence.”

“Now the task is to track down Gabriel Belleli,” says the MyHeritage staff. “If he managed to survive, it is possible he never knew his sister Rosa survived the Holocaust and immigrated to Israel.”

COMMON FATE

For Avraham and Peretz, this is startling information. Until recently, they knew nothing about their mother’s history, and suddenly the family that they knew was no longer the same. They look at the picture of the three young children, and wonder whether one of them is Gabriel, and whether he survived.

“Seventy years after the Holocaust, suddenly everything is up in the air,” says Avraham. “It pains me that my mother is no longer alive and I cannot talk to her about what happened there, as I now know what happened to her.”

As the investigation continues, the story reached the organization of Jewish communities in Greece, who decided to hold a special ceremony to honor the residents of Ereikousa for the rescue.

Corporon, who has found the end to her book, was suddenly hit by a fateful event. In April 2014, thousands of miles from Israel, a neo-Nazi opened fire at a Jewish community building in Kansas City, killing three people. The motive for the murder was anti-Semitism, but the dead were passersby and Christians.

Two of the dead, 14-year-old Reat Underwood and his grandfather, Dr. William Corporon, were Yvette’s relatives. “In one moment, at the height of the investigation, I became a victim of anti-Semitism myself,” she tells Ynet. “My fate is now tied to the fate of Savas’ family.”

Savas’ daughters, Nina and Julia, were married but neither had children. Julia remained in Greece, and was married and died in Athens, where she is buried in a Jewish cemetery. Nina died in Israel, as did Spera.

Solomoninio Peretz.

Now, the investigation is focused on trying to locate Gabriel Belleli and finding the burial place of Savas, who apparently died after the war and was reportedly buried by his daughters with their own hands. The trauma experienced by Savas’ daughters during the Holocaust went with them to the grave.

Avraham and Peretz, the last surviving biological members of the family, will go to Ereikousa in June for a ceremony, during which Savas’ old sewing machine will be placed in the parsonage where the family was hidden during the war.

Corporon is now working on a documentary of the full story.
THE HOLOCAUST HERO TV PRODUCER WHO EXPOSED THE NAZIS’ TRUE EVIL TO THE WORLD

BY LAURA CONNOR, MIRROR

For Adolf Eichmann, architect of Hitler’s Final Solution, it was to be the final reckoning. For Milton Fruchtman, a U.S. TV producer, the Nazi henchman’s 1961 trial in Jerusalem was the chance to hold up for the first time the Third Reich’s full evil. Eichmann, it showed, organized the systematic genocide of six million Jews during the Second World War. He had them hunted out, scheduled their trains to the camps and then organized the killing. American Fruchtman cajoled Israel into letting him broadcast the trial, had to use cameras hidden by chicken wire and then endured death threats for doing the job.

Now the remarkable story is told in a BBC film, The Eichmann Show, starring Sherlock and The Hobbit star Martin Freeman as the filmmaker. Martin, 43, has said: “This is where the Holocaust really became the Holocaust.”

The program shows how Fruchtman, now 88, had a man armed with three grenades and a revolver outside his office during the show. Two days into the trial, a phone call and March 18, 1961, Eichmann was in court.

“Eichmann for me was a symbol of all this cruelty, an architect for people waiting for their deaths.”

The Nazi maintained a “steady, cold gaze” through the trial, said Fruchtman, and prompted reporter Hannah Arendt to coin the term “the banality of evil” about him. Fruchtman said: “Eichmann tried to communicate an attitude of intellectual powers, referring to philosophers like Kant. He attempted to convey how much we had suffered. He insisted he had been following orders. But Prosecutor Gideon Hausner produced evidence Eichmann had stated in 1945: “I will leap into my grave laughing because the feeling I have five million human beings on my conscience is for me a source of extraordinary satisfaction.”

In court, the accused, 56, said he meant crimes against humanity and was hung on June 1, 1962. His ashes were scattered on international waters just hours later. The film also stars Anthony LaPaglia as director Leo Hurwitz, who blacklisted during the McCarthy period.

Martin Freeman said: “Maybe it was the first time the scale and breadth of what happened had had a human face put on it — the face of the survivors.”

He said those responsible for such atrocities are not monsters with two heads but looked and sounded like us: “Which is the scariest thing of all.”

A bequest to the American Society for Yad Vashem helps keep the memory of the Six Million alive...

Please remember us in your trust, will, estate plan or with the planned gift. It’s your legacy... to your family, and your people. For more information, or for help with proper wording for the bequest to ASV, please contact Jonathan Gudema at 212-220-4304.