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The American & International Societies for Yad Vashem Annual Tribute Dinner

COMMEMORATING 70 YEARS SINCE LIBERATION

BY ISAAC BENJAMIN

On November 15th, the American Society for Yad Vashem held its Annual Tribute Dinner celebrating 70 years since the liberation of the concentration camps and the end of World War II. Joined by American Society Chair Leonard Wilf, Director General of Yad Vashem Dorit Novak, and international dignitaries, three generations committed to Holocaust remembrance came together at the Pierre Hotel in New York to support the American Society for Yad Vashem. Representing different aspects of liberation, the program was filled with memories of survival and the emotional return to humanity after the Holocaust.

The dinner opened with the event master of ceremonies, actor Mike Burstyn, singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "Hatikvah". As a friend of the organization, Burstyn has worked with the American Society in the past and ardently supports its work. Throughout the night, Burstyn guided the crowd through the meaningful program that was personally curated by 2015 Tribute Dinner Chair Mark Moskowitz.

Yad Vashem Benefactors Rose and Philip Friedman were honored for a lifetime devoted to supporting Jewish communities worldwide. As children of Holocaust survivors, the couple has made Holocaust remembrance and education a top priority. In 2014, the Friedman family dedicated the Jerusalem Garden at Yad Vashem in honor of their parents who survived the Holocaust, and to the memory of their many family members who per-

ished. At the dedication ceremony in Jerusalem, Mr. Friedman spoke of his and his wife's parents' stories of survival in the face of Nazi persecution. On the dais in New York he referenced those remarks, explaining that "being involved with Yad Vashem is not just another charity; to me it is personal." He concluded by acknowl-

has been recognized for both her talent and her social engagement by the White House and the president of Israel. In 2011, she received the American Society for Yad Vashem Young Leadership Award.

The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation was also recognized at the Tribute Dinner. Accepting the award,

the son of survivors shaped his conscience.

Offering a different narrative of that fateful time, Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter remembered his father, Rabbi Herschel Schacter, U.S. Army chaplain at the liberation of *Buchenwald*. The senior Rabbi Schacter was the first chaplain to reach *Buchenwald*, only an hour after General Patton. In those first few months, Schacter helped thousands of freshly liberated survivors both physically and spiritually. His son recalled hearing survivors express their gratitude to his father as "the most memorable experiences of my childhood." Over the years, as Rabbi Jacob Schacter witnessed these many reunions, he further appreciated the belief that "we were not spared to forget."

Throughout the evening, various speakers referenced General Dwight D. Eisenhower's role in the liberation of *Buchenwald* and other concentration camps. As the final speaker, the president's granddaughter Mary Jean Eisenhower brought those memories full circle with stories of how liberation had affected her grandfather. She read fragments from his correspondence, detailing the emotionally scarring "visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality." She concluded her remarks saying, "I do not believe my grandfather was ever the same after witnessing what he did, and I know he was emphatic that the world understand what happened."

When reflecting on the evening that covered the many perspectives of liberation, we left with an even greater commitment to Holocaust remembrance. The work of the American Society to support Yad Vashem's mission in Jerusalem has evolved from the founding group of passionate survivors to a much larger, intergenerational group committed to their foundational cause. When introducing Mary Jean Eisenhower, American Society Treasurer David Halpern poignantly verbalized the message of the evening. "The cause of Holocaust remembrance is very daunting," Halpern told the crowd, "but having you with us strengthens our resolve."



Ron B. Meier, executive director of ASYV; Philip Friedman, recipient of the Yad Vashem Remembrance Award; and Chairman of the ASYV Leonard A. Wilf.

edging the dozens of young adults in attendance, many of whom were third-generation representatives. "Because of the young people" Friedman emotionally concluded, "I still have hope."

A close friend of the Friedmans, famed "hip-hop violinist" Miri Ben-Ari, appeared on stage for a surprise tribute performance. The first time she met the Friedmans, the Grammy Award-winning artist told the crowd, "we shared our commitment to the mitzvah of 'never forget.'" The Israeli born Ben-Ari is the granddaughter of survivors and an activist for Holocaust remembrance. Ben-Ari

Dr. Lilian Steinberg described the relationship between her family, the foundation and Yad Vashem. Two families of survivors, Lillie and Milton Steinberg and Lola and Henry Tenenbaum, developed a close relationship with Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation trustee and talented artist Thomas Slaughter. Since the start of that friendship in 1993, the foundation has proudly donated over \$ 1 million to Yad Vashem. Accepting the recognition on behalf of the late Tom Slaughter was his daughter, Hannah Jocelyn.

As featured speaker, celebrated CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer was introduced by American Society Chair Leonard Wilf. Blitzer and Wilf as kids first met in Augsburg, Germany and grew up together as friends both in Germany and later in America. Blitzer began by showing a video clip he made for CNN, tracing his family's Holocaust experience through the Yad Vashem archives. "Yad Vashem played a significant role for me," he said about his trip, "as it has for many children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors." He stressed how the experience of growing up as

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AMERICA AND THE HOLOCAUST: THE PAST AS PROLOGUE

BY JEFF LIPKES,
AMERICAN THINKER

There are two kinds of evildoers: those who kill, rape, beat and brutalize others, and those who let this happen.

The story of American and British indifference to the fate of Jews during the Second World War still makes for disturbing reading. It's worth revisiting the subject for three reasons:

1) The abandonment of the Jews — the title of David Wyman's comprehensive study — is the ultimate rationale for the creation of the state of Israel. There will be no second Hitler in Europe — though he has many apprentices in the Middle East. But when the West turned its back on Hitler's victims (with exceptions discussed below), many Jews who were not committed Zionists were persuaded that the survival of their people depended on its having a state of its own, and an army to defend it. "There are two sorts of countries in the world," Chaim Weizmann had concluded in the late '30s, "those that want to expel the Jews and those that don't want to admit them."

2) America's response to the Holocaust helps explain the seemingly perverse attachment of American Jews to open borders — a policy that permits an influx of immigrants who are considerably more anti-Semitic than European Americans, apart from other consequences that negatively impact all Americans. (Even second-generation Hispanics are twice as likely as whites to have strong Judeophobic beliefs.) It helps explain also the seemingly irrational attachment of Jews to a party with a significantly less favorable attitude toward them and which is far less supportive of Israel than its rival. Fully 83% of Republicans sympathize more with Israel than the Palestinians; only 48% of Democrats do so.

3) The most important reason, though, has to do with the Iran nuclear agreement. A lot of things were taken off the table at Geneva: a renunciation of terrorism (responsible for 1,100 American combat deaths in Iraq), an effective means of verifying Tehran's compliance, even the return of four American hostages — a token gesture on the mullahs' part. Never on the table was the regime's determination to annihilate Israel, its chief objective in acquiring a nuclear arsenal. The fact that the administration's new Middle Eastern ally is bent on genocide was irrelevant. The Obama administration's abandonment of the Jewish state in 2015 was prefigured by the abandonment of European Jews in the '40s.

Hitler didn't waste any time persecuting Jews and political opponents. Within three months of coming to power in January 1933, the Nazis had fired nearly all Jewish government employees and judges, and

disbarred many lawyers from practicing. Jewish doctors, dentists and professors would soon join the ranks of the unemployed. The purging of the professions was accompanied by random arrests, beatings and murders of Jews and political opponents. There were about 2,000 assassinations during the year. This practice didn't begin with the notorious Night of the Long Knives in June 1934. Concentration camps at *Dachau* and *Oranienburg* were opened, and cities and towns vied with each other to pass laws restricting Jews. American consuls were appalled at the brutality, and sent back detailed reports.

The violence culminated in *Kristallnacht* on the night of November 9, 1938. Jews had already been stripped of citizenship by the Nuremberg Laws of September 1935. Now every synagogue in the Reich, which included Austria, was vandalized, burned or destroyed. Ninety-one Jews were killed, 30,000 arrested and sent to concentration camps, and Jewish shops and homes were invaded and looted.

There was outrage in the West. The pogrom was headline news, and Roosevelt denounced it. This kind of medieval savagery was supposed to have ended centuries earlier in Europe, with the exception of hopelessly backward Czarist Russia.

It was one thing to condemn the violence. But what would the West do?

The Evian Conference, three months before *Kristallnacht*, did not augur well. There were expressions of sympathy for the now stateless German Jews, but little commitment to accept the refugees. (Britain admitted 10,000 children in the *Kindertransport*, and the Dominican Republic, alone among the 32 participating nations, flung open its gates, agreeing to accept 100,000. Dictator Rafael Trujillo reportedly wanted to lighten the complexion of his people.)

In the U.S., the obstacle was the 1924 immigration law. This capped immigration at just under 154,000 per year, set quotas at 2% of the 1890 population of each European nationality, and barred Asians. Four times as many immigrants were permitted from the U.K. and Ireland as from Southern and Eastern Europe combined. Supporters of the legislation made the case that it was important to preserve the traditional ethnic composition of the U.S. and that time was needed for the immigrants admitted between 1890 and 1914 to assimilate. Most Americans were persuaded. Would the quotas be loosened in the wake of *Kristallnacht*? The answer came the following year. In February 1939, Sen. Robert Wagner and Rep.

Edith Rogers introduced a bill that would have admitted 10,000 Jewish children outside of the quota, matching the *Kindertransport*, and another 10,000 in 1940. The bill faced stiff opposition, was not supported by Roosevelt, and died in committee.

In May, refugees from Germany aboard the *St. Louis* were turned away from Cuba, though they had visas valid at the time they were issued. The captain, Gerhard



A synagogue on fire during *Kristallnacht*, Siegen, Germany.

Schröder, took the ship up the coast of Florida, but his pleas to be permitted to disembark his passengers were rejected. Britain, France, Belgium and Holland agreed to admit the refugees.

One hundred fifteen patriotic societies lobbied against the Wagner-Rogers bill, and a *Fortune* poll showed 83% of Americans opposed increasing the number of European refugees — Jews and opponents of Hitler.

Those who purposed rescue schemes ran up against a deep and pervasive anti-Semitism. In another 1939 poll, 53% of the respondents agreed with the statement "Jews are different and should be restricted."

It's not easy for those born after World War II to realize the extent of Judeophobia between 1920 and 1945. It wasn't confined to country clubs, resorts and upscale restaurants. Anti-Semitism was much more widespread and damaging, particularly as it affected employment opportunities. Want ads routinely listed "Christian" as a job requirement, abbreviated "Chr." Corporations seldom hired Jews for white-collar positions — the big three auto companies, major insurers, pharmaceuticals, manufacturers and commercial banks. Among the few established law firms accepting them as associates, they could not be made partners, and they were excluded from the staffs of most hospitals. The country's many Mt. Sinai Hospitals were built not out of clannishness, but because Jewish doctors were unable to hospitalize their patients in most cities. With very few exceptions, no Jews were permitted to teach in colleges and universities. The liberal arts were virtually off limits. Until the 1920s, admissions were based mostly on academic achievement. Jews comprised 20% of Harvard undergrads in 1919, 20% of Brown's, near-

ly 25% of Penn's and 40% of Columbia's. This door was slammed shut in the name of regional diversity and "character," acquired at private schools.

The great appeal of the New Deal for many Jews was not ideological, but simply that its new agencies and programs provided work they were excluded from in the private sector, apart from creating jobs for those who had lost them in the Crash of '29.

Counterintuitively, as the situation grew direr for nearly all of Europe's Jews, anti-Semitism in the U.S. increased. Jews placed third, behind Japanese and Germans, in a poll in February 1942 that asked "what nationality, religious or racial groups in this country are a menace to Americans?" By June 1944, they were in first place, with 24% of those surveyed believing they posed a threat to the country.

Four things contributed to the Judeophobia of the '20s, '30s and '40s:

1) The number of Jews admitted between 1899 and 1924 (over 1.8 million, chiefly from Russia, Galicia in Austria, and Romania) and their obvious foreignness.

2) Their success nonetheless in certain fields: retailing, the liberal professions, the media and, especially, the film industry.

3) The association of Jews with Bolshevism and socialism. The movies, as well as musicals and songs by Jewish writers, were unabashedly pro-American before the late 1960s, and there were fewer than 400 ethnic Jews among 23,000 Bolsheviks at the time of the 1917 Revolution. Nearly all of those in leadership positions were purged in the '30s. But Jews were, and are, predominantly on the Left. Just as many immigrants had been radicalized by the repression in Russia, so anti-Semitism in the U.S. made attractive a party that pledged, in principle, to eliminate discrimination.

4) The eclipse of religious by racial anti-Semitism, a transformation that began in Germany in the 1880s. This provided more plausible grounds for Judeophobia than the belief that Jews had killed Christ or that they used the blood of Christians on Passover.

But the problem for German Jews, and then Jews in most of the rest of Europe, was not attitudes among the general public, but at Foggy Bottom.

In 1933, with 26,000 places reserved for all Germans, only 1,798 were admitted. The following year the total was 4,716, and the year after, 5,117. As desperate German Jews swarmed the American consulates, the State Department placed insuperable obstacles before would-be immigrants. Consuls rigorously enforced a requirement that applicants provide a certificate of good character from the police, not easy to come by for German Jews. The provision that

(Continued on page 12)

THE 43: THE STORY OF HOW UK JEWS FOUGHT A WAVE OF POSTWAR ANTI-SEMITISM

BY CAHAL MILMO, INDEPENDENT

When Morris Beckman returned to *Hackney* after the Second World War, he — like other British Jewish servicemen — must have hoped his work was done in snuffing out Fascism and the anti-Semitism that drove the Holocaust.

It did not take him long to realize that it was not. After arriving at his parents' East London home after six years of service as a merchant seaman, during which he had been twice torpedoed, Mr. Beckman sensed an unease. His father told him: "The Blackshirts are back, the Fascists are back."

Against a backdrop of smashed windows and anti-Jewish graffiti, Oswald Mosley and his supporters had re-named themselves the "British League of Ex-Servicemen and Women." By early 1946, they were once more holding outdoor meetings and seeking to regain the prewar momentum of Mosley's British Union of Fascists.



Protests against the release from internment of Mosley in 1943.

While the language had changed — instead of railing against Jews, the Mosleyites used the euphemism "aliens" — it was clear that the intent to spread the poison of anti-Semitism by targeting London's Jewish communities had not. The windows of the Jewish religious school in *Dalston* were smashed and Jewish shops were daubed with the letters "PJ" — "Perish Judah." Jews were taunted in the streets — "Not enough Jews were burned in *Belsen*" — and the Horst Wessel song was openly sung after pubs closed.

For Britain's Jewish war heroes the juxtaposition of images emerging from Auschwitz, *Treblinka* and other death camps with the realization that Hitler's British fellow travelers were once more flourishing was profoundly shocking.

Mr. Beckman said: "At that time one could be sickened by newsreel documentaries showing bulldozers in concentration camps shoveling mounds of bodies into lime pits, and then later encountering Fascist speakers saying things like, 'Hitler was right, but not

enough Jews were gassed."

He added: "We wanted revenge — the Holocaust was in our minds. We decided we had to out-Fascist the Fascists."

What followed over the next four years was a brutal, often vicious and now long-forgotten confrontation which, its participants argue, stopped a nascent British Fascism dead in its tracks while others looked away by using the only method Mosley and his supporters understood — sustained, focused and overwhelming violence.

In February 1946, Mr. Beckman and three fellow Jewish ex-servicemen, including a decorated former paratrooper wounded at *Arnhem*, had disrupted a Fascist meeting in *Hampstead* on the spur of the moment, making their escape to the applause of an elderly Jewish refugee. Shortly afterwards, a gathering of British Jews took place at the nearby Maccabi Sports Club to discuss how to counter the threat posed by postwar Fascism.

Mr. Beckman, who died earlier this year aged 94, recalled: "They were told that the intention was to create an organization that would be devoted to launching an all-out assault on Mosley and his Fascists until they were utterly destroyed. They were told it would be a no-quarter, no-holding-back, disciplined paramilitary operation. Those present were offered the option of ducking out with no hard feelings. Not a single one left the room."

A total of 43 Jewish ex-service personnel attended the meeting, and so the 43 Group was born with the unvarnished intent of, quite literally, beating British anti-Semitic activists into submission. Among these soldiers, sailors and airmen would be a teenage former British Army private who was serving an apprenticeship as a hairdresser and went by the name of Vidal Sassoon.

The resulting conflict, fought out in London's Jewish suburbs and beyond by what became a force of more than 1,000 Jews and non-Jews, has largely fallen from popular memory.

But as its participants dwindle in number, it was announced recently that the story of their campaign is to be retold in a six-part television drama for the BBC and the American network NBC, written by the Emmy-winning creator of *Band of Brothers*.

The Anglo-American producers of the series announced that the project was in its "advanced stages" after spending three years researching the

activities of the 43 Group and interviewing its remaining members.

What they will have uncovered is the uncompromising story of how a group of British Jews, hardened by experiences in the front line which saw them awarded battle honors including the Victoria Cross, felt



Sir Oswald Mosley, who reemerged as a Fascist leader after the war.

morally obliged and politically compelled to break the law in the tatty, war-weary surroundings of late 1940s Britain to protect their families and community.

Having watched the Nazis rise from a small fringe party to become the authors of the Holocaust, and after encountering official indifference, here were individuals who took the view that fire had to be fought with fire. As Sassoon later put it from his Hollywood mansion: "After Auschwitz, there were no laws."

Where Mosleyites turned up to bait and persecute Jewish tailors in *Hackney* or *Dalston*, they found themselves confronted by former commandos and Royal Marines well versed in mortal combat.

Julius Konopinsky, one of the 43 Group's founding members, had more reason than many to see the virtues of such an approach. Having arrived in *Hackney* from Poland in 1939, he learned in 1945 that his nine maternal uncles and aunts had been murdered by the Nazis. A year later, another uncle, who had survived Auschwitz, came to live with him.

Now 85, Mr. Konopinsky said: "Call them Fascists, call them Nazis, they only seemed to understand one thing — to hurt you or to be hurt. And we believed in hurting them first before they hurt us. I still believe that."

The result was a succession of pitched battles during Fascist gatherings where the 43 Group and their opponents gave no quarter. Knuckle-dusters, knives, steel-toed boots and sharpened belt buckles were wielded on both sides with devastating effect. One former veteran said he was told: "We're not here to kill. We're here to maim."

Asked once whether he had left anyone seriously injured, Mr. Konopinsky would only say "Yes."

But what set the 43 Group apart was not just its embrace of violence but also its extraordinary level of organization.

By 1947 it had 1,000 members across Britain, including a group of non-Jews who penetrated Fascist groups and delivered back intelligence on where meetings and marches were taking place.

The group set up quick-reaction "commando" cells of ex-servicemen

who were transported to Mosleyite gatherings by friendly London black taxi drivers. The men then used a twin-pronged attack to carve their way to the platform of a meeting and assault the speaker, forcing police to intervene.

Its actions included stakeouts of Jewish cemeteries to catch anti-Semites engaged in the desecration of graves, and raids on the homes of Fascists who were warned to cease their activities or face grim consequences.

The group did not gain universal approval among Britain's Jews. The Board of Deputies feared the militants would be conflated with the activities of extreme Zionists such as Irgun, which was at the time conducting a bloody campaign against British control of then Palestine.

Although some, including Sassoon, did subsequently join in the war to establish Israel, there were in reality no links between the 43 Group and such militant Zionists; nor indeed was it linked, as some suspected, to Communist agitators.

Instead, with British Fascism broken in the face of the ferocity of its onslaught, the group decided to disband in 1950. Mr. Beckman said: "In 1946, there were only two countries in Europe that allowed Fascist parties — us and Franco's Spain. Why did the authorities allow Mosley to go unchecked? Somebody had to do it, so we did."

Within the Jewish community, there is cautious approval that, while its tactics are no longer valid, the 43 Group's memory is being resurrected.

A spokesman for the Community Security Trust, the volunteer body which helps safeguard Jewish communities, said: "It is a very interesting episode in the history of the Jewish community in this country. It brings more color and nuance to our understanding of Jewish integration and how anti-Semitism was fought. It was a time when a lot of Jewish people really stood up and it worked."



BOOK REVIEWS

GOD, FAITH & IDENTITY FROM THE ASHES: REFLECTIONS OF CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

God, Faith & Identity from the Ashes: Reflections of Children and Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors.

Edited by Menachem Z. Rosensaft. Prologue by Elie Wiesel.

Jewish Lights: Woodstock, Vermont, 2015. 309 pp. \$55.91 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

"I have learned . . . it is what we do with suffering that matters."

Elie Wiesel, from the Prologue to *God, Faith & Identity from the Ashes*

With the passing of each day, each week, each month, each year — more and more Holocaust survivors are leaving us. That makes their children and grandchildren responsible for, as Menachem Z. Rosensaft, editor of *God, Faith & Identity from the Ashes: Reflections of Children and Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors* writes, "transmitting the survivors' legacy of remembrance into the future...." How, as the progeny of individual survivors with collective and yet differing Holocaust histories, is this responsibility viewed by them? More specifically, how has being the offspring of survivors affected the manner in which these children and grandchildren believe, how they see themselves, what they do and "are doing with their lives"? "Eighty-eight contributors who live in sixteen countries on six continents," including "theologians, scholars, rabbis, and cantors to authors, artists, political and community leaders, physicians, psychologists, and media personali-

ties" — all reflect in an interesting and thought-provoking manner on one or more of these issues in *God, Faith & Identity*, differing in ways and yet, in the end, not that very different.

For example, we read about how when it comes to faith in God, oddly enough, survivors who were believers before the Holocaust on the whole generally continued believing, and raised families who did too! How have some of these survivors, and their children and grandchildren, come to answer the question as to why God allowed the Holocaust to happen? God gave humans free will, and the Holocaust was humanity's doing! Others insist God was still there helping . . . others continue questioning . . . while determinedly continuing to believe. Meanwhile, there are those survivors who weren't believers before the Holocaust, and would raise families who didn't believe either! So, if not to God, where do these individuals and their children and grandchildren now turn for otherworldly help when it's such help they need? A telling anecdote offered by an Israeli daughter of survivors:

"Two elite paratroopers, one secular and one religious, are on the verge of collapse during a long, backbreaking exercise of running while carrying fellow soldiers on stretchers.

"The secular soldier: 'Tell me, where do you get the strength to

keep running?'

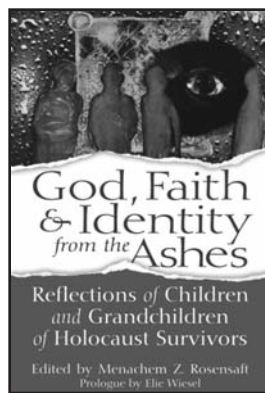
"The religious soldier: 'From God in heaven. How about you?'

"The secular soldier: 'From Auschwitz.'"

Which easily brings us to the essays in *God, Faith & Identity* offered in the section labeled "Identity," and the progeny of a considerable number of Holocaust survivors who fervently proclaim that, just as many religiously oriented Jews

believe all Jews should feel they were at Mount Sinai when God gave us the Torah, so now all Jews, unquestionably, should feel they were witness to the *Shoah*. Thus, not just the children and grandchildren of actual survivors, but all Jews are honor-bound to remember the Holocaust and what was and what

can be. In fact, for many in this cohort (descendants of survivors, like the Israeli daughter quoted above) it's almost (if not surely) as if their Jewish identity springs from the *Shoah* more than from anything else! (Interestingly, such is frequently the case for Jews not children or grandchildren of survivors too.) Meanwhile, because of the Holocaust and the experiences of their parents and grandparents, many have become ardent Zionists. Then, too, there are those who want to let go of the Holocaust and what they see as its demands "without leaving"



ANATOMY OF THE MURDERERS

The Third Reich in History and Memory.

By Richard J. Evans. Oxford University Press, New York, 2015. 496 pp. \$29.95 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY JULIA M. KLEIN

However deranged his deeds, Adolf Hitler was not certifiably mad.

The German people did not voluntarily embrace the dictator, but acquiesced in his rule only after a campaign of terror that silenced or sidelined the political opposition.

And the Holocaust, compared to other 20th-century genocides, was unique in its global scope and ambition.

These are among the views that Richard J. Evans, the formidable Cambridge University historian, espouses in his lucid and informative essay collection, *The Third Reich in History and Memory*. Evans, best known for his three-volume study of the Nazi regime, originally wrote most

of these pieces as book reviews; others appeared as journal articles. Apart from some repetition, the essays have aged well and provide a succinct overview of recent scholarly trends.

In his preface, Evans outlines these shifts in perspective: an attempt to situate Germany's imperial aspirations and exclusionary ideology in a global context, a renewed emphasis on the extent of popular support for Hitler's government, an examination of continuities between the Third Reich and Germany's postwar democratic regime, and an interest in the relationship between history and memory.

The issue of domestic support for Nazism remains highly contested. It bears on both the thorny notion of collective guilt and on specific legal culpability for Germany's crimes. And it

helps explain the country's generational lag in confronting the Holocaust.

Following World War II, Evans notes, the historical consensus was that the Third Reich was a police state with Hitler firmly in charge. Many

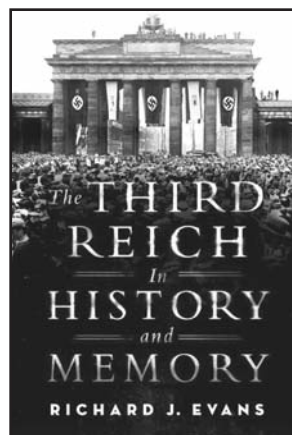
Germans portrayed themselves as victims of the Nazis (not to mention Allied bombs and the brutal Soviet invasion). Later research complicated the picture. It uncovered the complexities of the Nazi bureaucracy, with its internecine rivalries, and suggested that there was space to resist the regime. Why then was resistance so minimal, at once so short-lived and so slow (as the war effort faltered) to rematerialize?

Some historians credit Hitler's popularity. They believe, as Evans puts it, that the regime "rested not on police terror and coercion but on popular

Yes, indeed, there are most assuredly differences among us. (This reviewer is not only a child of survivors but a sister to one.) Yet there is one area where there is a great deal more agreement than not. Where? Overwhelmingly, many of us have dedicated ourselves not only to the betterment of life for our own people but also to the betterment of life for the world's people. In fact, it's common knowledge that many children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors have gone into the helping professions — as doctors, psychiatrists, nurses, psychologists and more — trying to mend the world, trying to bring peace to the world, trying to bring hope to the world. And it really is quite fascinating to ponder . . . for shouldn't WE be the neediest of individuals? Shouldn't WE be the ones needing a LOT of help ourselves? For that matter, shouldn't we also ALL be the most selfish of individuals? Strange, that those whose families have suffered such inhumanity have turned around to eagerly give the world so very much . . .

God, Faith & Identity from the Ashes: Reflections of Children and Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors is surely a unique addition to any Holocaust library and a must-read for any student of that period!

Dr. Diane Cypkin is a Professor of Media, Communication, and Visual Arts at Pace University. Her family survived the Kovno ghetto in Lithuania.



approval and consent." The German historian Götz Aly, for example, has famously argued that social mobility and economic benefits — derived from the plunder of Jewish property and conquered countries — helped bolster Hitler's support.

Evans is skeptical. "Nazi Germany actually was a dictatorship in which civil rights and freedoms were suppressed and opponents of the regime were not tolerated," he writes. In "Berlin in the Twenties," a dismissive review of Thomas Friedrich's book *Hitler's Berlin*, Evans writes that "mass violence underpinned the Nazi seizure of power at every level."

In "Coercion and Consent," he reminds us that the Nazis initially targeted not just Communists but also Social Democrats — the chief representatives of Germany's working classes and, together, a powerful electoral force. "These people were hardly members of a despised minority of social outcasts," he writes.

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“I DARED IT, AND I MADE IT”

BY JANE ULMAN,
JEWISH JOURNAL

David Lenga was riding a streetcar in Lodz, Poland, on September 1, 1939, traveling across town on an errand for his mother, when the city's air-raid sirens began blasting. The streetcar halted abruptly, and within minutes the 11-year-old saw German warplanes swooping down, machine-gunning civilians as they scattered in all directions. “Bodies went flying,” recalled David, who ran through an apartment courtyard and took alleyways back to his house. Inside, he found his father, mother, brother and grandmother huddled around the radio. His father somberly gathered everyone together. “This is the beginning of a horrible time,” David's father told them.

David was born in Lodz on December 3, 1927, to Abraham and Sarah Lenga. His younger brother, Nathan, was born in 1931. Abraham was a chemical engineer who owned and operated a wholesale tannery factory in Strykow, 11 miles south of Lodz.

David enjoyed a very comfortable life with a loving family. He attended public school, which was predominantly Jewish, as well as *cheder*, and played on his school's soccer team. But anti-Semitism was always prevalent. “You could feel it in the air,” he said.

On September 8, 1939, David watched in distress as his non-Jewish neighbors and friends welcomed the German soldiers marching into Lodz, accompanied by tanks and half-tracks flying swastika flags.

In mid-September, the Gestapo, now occupying the city, confiscated the tannery factory, keeping Abraham in charge while moving the family to Strykow's Jewish quarter.

In April or May of 1942, the Germans liquidated the Strykow ghetto, herding the town's Jews into the cemetery, where they were held for two days and two nights with no food or toilets.

On the third day, Abraham, who was very ill, was sent to a labor camp. The family didn't expect him to survive. The other family members were transported to the Lodz ghetto, where David worked in a clothing factory managed by Abraham's oldest brother, Chil, and became a full-fledged tailor.

In a large *aktion* the following September, Sarah was spared, but David, now 15, Nathan and their grandmother were selected for deportation and temporarily crammed into a warehouse just outside the ghetto along with hundreds of other Jews.

While sitting in the warehouse, David heard someone calling his name. Bewildered, he approached the front door, which a guard opened a crack. “Run for your life,” the guard instructed. David asked for his brother.

“He will come later,” the guard told him.

David raced back to the ghetto in search of his mother, but found only Aunt Bina, his mother's older sister, and Bina's son. She told him Sarah didn't want to live without her children and had begged Chil to save them. But when David and Nathan didn't appear, she went to the SS, desperate, requesting to be deported with them. David later learned that his mother and brother were murdered in *Chelmno*.

After his mother and brother had been taken away, David became suicidal. He made his way to a third-story window in an abandoned building and prepared to jump. But Bina had followed him and grabbed him. “You have to have hope,” she told him.

Late one night, David was ravenous and sneaked out of the ghetto to a nearby vegetable field. He'd filled his burlap sack halfway with potatoes when a spotlight illuminated him, and an old German soldier pointed

reached the second floor of the building where he hid. Suddenly air-raid sirens blared, forcing them to leave and saving his life.

After a week in hiding, David saw a dozen men sweeping the streets, part of a cleanup crew that still remained in the ghetto, and joined them. But the work was soon completed and the group, including David, was shipped to Auschwitz.

When David arrived, a prisoner pointed to a chimney spewing black smoke. “That's where you'll wind up,” the prisoner told David, who knew he needed to find a way out.

Seeing a group of men volunteering to work in Germany, David joined the line. “I'm a carpenter,” he told Dr. Josef Mengele, who rejected him for being too young. David reentered the line, but Mengele recognized him. Later that day, however, David sneaked into the workers' holding area with a kitchen crew. Three days later he was on a cattle train headed for Germany.



David Lenga.

ed a rifle at his head. “What are you doing here, you goddamned Jew?” he barked.

“Please, sir, my family is starving,” David answered. “Maybe you have a grandson my age.”

The soldier lowered his rifle. “Get the hell out of here, and take your goddamned sack with you,” the man ordered. David fled. The potatoes fed him, Bina and his cousin for weeks.

Sometime in 1943, as David passed a newly arrived transport, he heard someone calling him. “I'm a very good friend of your father's,” a man said. “Until last night, I was working with him in the *Poznan* labor camp. He's doing well.” The news reinvigorated David.

In August 1944, as the Lodz ghetto was being liquidated, David refused to leave, believing the Russians would soon arrive. He continued living in his room but had also scouted out a hiding place in the attic of a nearby abandoned building. At one point, he lit a fire to cook a potato, but the smoke was visible and he soon heard Germans approaching with barking dogs. David escaped to his hiding place, terrified as the Germans

The group was taken to one of the *Kaufering* concentration camps in Bavaria. There, David helped repair damaged railroad tracks, standing in wet cement in rubber boots while wielding a sledgehammer to keep the mixture soft.

Later, his block captain put him to work sewing socks, gloves and vests for the upcoming winter. For months he worked indoors, receiving extra rations. “That saved my life,” David said.

In late April 1945, as U.S. troops approached, the prisoners were evacuated, marched hours to the train station and then loaded into open cattle cars.

The train proceeded slowly, finally stopping in a thick pine forest, where a German military train pulled up alongside it. The same day, American planes strafed both trains, unaware that one held prisoners, and killed many of them.

Some of the prisoners, including David and his friends Roman and Sobol, were able to jump out, escaping into the forest.

The three eventually reached a farmhouse, where the farmer and his

wife let them stay in their barn, providing cots, clothes and regular meals. “We were given the opportunity to be human beings,” David said.

Less than a week later, David heard the thunderous roar of tanks. “Come out,” his friends yelled. “We're liberated.” It was May 5, 1945.

The freed prisoners sought in vain to communicate with the American soldiers. Finally, an officer approached. “You boys are Jews?” he asked in Yiddish. “We're taking you with us.”

The officer transported them to a displaced persons camp in *Landsberg*, 40 miles west of *Munich*. Using the camp as a base, David traveled throughout Germany, desperate to find family. Unsuccessful, he went to Sweden, accompanied by Roman and Sobol.

The three were sent to a men's camp in the hamlet of *Fur*. While checking out a nearby women's camp, David met Charlotte Katz, a survivor from Czechoslovakia. The two soon moved to *Helsingborg*, where they married on July 18, 1945. Their daughter Helene was born in May 1946 and daughter Bert in September 1948.

While in Sweden, where David worked as a custom tailor, he learned his father was alive and back in *Strykow*. “I couldn't speak. I was crying and my wife was holding me,” he said. He began corresponding with Abraham, but they weren't able to see one another until 1953, when David, working three jobs, had saved enough money to buy his father a boat ticket from Israel, where he was then living. “That was a meeting I will not forget for my entire life,” David said.

In 1954, the family moved to Pittsburgh, where daughter Barbara was born in December 1955. David worked as the manager of a custom tailor shop and then, in the 1960s, opened Lenga's Tailoring.

They relocated to Los Angeles in 1966. David designed suits for Eric Ross & Co. until 1981 and then switched into real estate investment, retiring in 1989.

Charlotte died in 2000, when her car was hit by a man fleeing police in a high-speed chase. “We were totally devastated,” David said. Three years later, on May 4, 2003, he married Eva Mandel.

Now a grandfather of seven and great-grandfather of three, David began telling his story in 2013. At 87, he speaks regularly at the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust and participates in The Righteous Conversations Project.

David took many risks during the Holocaust, any one of which could have been his last. “Call it cunning, call it instinct, call it whatever you want,” he said. “The fact is, I dared it, and I made it. I'm very proud of it.”

SURVIVORS' CORNER

“I’M STILL THERE — IN MY DREAMS”

BY SARAH KAPLAN,
THE WASHINGTON POST

Thomas “Toivi” Blatt was certain he would die on the evening of October 14, 1943.

He was 16 years old, orphaned, Jewish, a prisoner of the Nazis at one of their brutal death camps, *Sobibor*.



In this January 2010 photo, Thomas “Toivi” Blatt waits in a courtroom prior to the trial of John Demjanjuk, an alleged death camp guard.

And he was about to take part in one of the most daring revolts of concentration camp captives, one that nearly every participant knew was doomed.

“We had no dreams of liberation,” Blatt later wrote. “We hoped merely to destroy the camp and to die from bullets rather than from gas. We would not make it easy for the Germans.”

But some mixture of guts, grit and good luck carried him through the chaos — the Nazi guards’ indiscriminate shooting, the dangerous dash across an open field littered with land mines, the hours-long manhunt, a gunshot wound to the jaw and nearly a year of deprivation while waiting out the war in hiding. He was one of just about 50 people who fled *Sobibor* on that night in 1943 and who lived to tell the world about it.

The boy from *Izbica*, Poland, who lost his family and his childhood to the Nazis, went on to become an outspoken author and lecturer on the Holocaust and a prominent witness at the trial of an alleged *Sobibor* guard.

But he never really left the death camp behind.

“I never escaped from *Sobibor*. I’m still there — in my dreams, in everything,” Blatt said in 2010. “My point of reference is always *Sobibor*.”

Sobibor, where he was imprisoned for half a year before the mass escape, simultaneously haunted and motivated him. It’s the place where his parents and brother were killed, poisoned in gas chambers an hour after their arrival at the camp in Nazi-

occupied eastern Poland. It’s the place where he was forced to work for months, shaving the heads of doomed women, sorting clothes stripped off of people about to enter the gas chamber, cleaning the blood off boots of S.S. officers who had just driven those people to their deaths.

But it’s also the place where Blatt saw Alexander Pechersky, one of the

revolt’s ringleaders, jump onto a table in the moments before the breakout to speak to the people he hoped to help free.

“Those of you who may survive, bear witness,” Pechersky said in Russian, according to Blatt’s book on the revolt. “Let the world know what has happened here.”

The rebellion was born out of desperation, Blatt later said. *Sobibor* was not a work camp — its sole purpose was to kill prisoners. Most of the 250,000 or so Jews who were brought there were killed within hours of arrival. Just a few hundred prisoners were spared to help run the camp, and they knew that their time, too, was short — “work Jews” were routinely executed, Blatt told the *Independent* in 2011.

Led by Pechersky and by Polish-Jewish prisoner Leon Feldhendler, a small group of underground members worked to discreetly pick off the camp’s German guards on the afternoon of October 14. It was Blatt’s job to inform the officers that a new coat had been set aside for them, sending the men to the tailor’s shop where they would be quietly killed. The plan was for the rebels to then dress as officers and march the entire prisoner population out the camp’s front gates.

But they were discovered too soon, and one of the rebels blew a whistle for roll call, so the prisoners would gather in one place, Blatt wrote on the Web site accompanying his book about the uprising. That’s when

Pechersky gave his speech, and Jews began rushing to the exit, into a hail of gunfire from the remaining guards. Others clambered up the camp’s fence, dropping onto a field of land mines on the other side.

“Corpses were everywhere,” Blatt wrote. “The noise of rifles, exploding mines, grenades and the chatter of machine guns assaulted the ears. The Nazis shot from a distance while in our hands were only primitive knives and hatchets.”

It was the only mass escape from a World War II death camp, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, and the majority of participants did not survive it. Of the roughly 300 people who made it out of the camp, it’s thought that two-thirds were killed by land mines, by the guards’ gunfire or in the ensuing manhunt. Only about half of the escapees who survived their initial flight lived until the end of the war.

After the revolt, *Sobibor* was demolished, and every Jew who remained in the camp was executed.

Blatt managed to evade the mines and made a mad dash toward the shelter of the forest ahead. “It was so close,” he said. “I fell several times, each time thinking I was hit. And each time I got up and ran further ... 100 yards ... 50 yards ... 20 more yards ... and the forest at last. Behind us, blood and ashes.”

Blatt and two fellow escapees bribed a Polish farmer to hide them in his barn, but after a few months the farmer — fearful of being caught — shot them and left them for dead. Blatt’s companions died, but he survived with just a wound to his jaw. He gathered his strength and moved on.

After the war, Blatt emigrated to Israel and then to the United States, where he established three electronics shops and a family of his own. He bought a house in an exclusive neighborhood of Santa Barbara. When he looked out the window, he saw boats bobbing in the crystalline Pacific — a stark contrast to the horrors he saw when he closed his eyes.

“From the pit of hell to paradise,” he told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1988. “Sometimes I wonder if this is a dream and I’ll wake up and be back in *Sobibor* again.”

The death camp was never far from his mind. His study overflowed with

World War II literature and Holocaust narratives. Blatt himself wrote two books about the camp, and a manuscript for the 1987 TV movie *Escape from Sobibor*. In 1984, he traveled back to Europe to interview the commander of *Sobibor*’s imprisoned workers, Karl Frenzel, who had been sentenced to life in prison for war crimes but was released early for health reasons. He spearheaded the effort to preserve *Sobibor* as a memorial and often returned to the camp to check on its condition. Among the tall grasses and abandoned buildings, he still found burnt fragments of bone that he’d pray over, then bury.

Sometimes Blatt packed up and flew to Poland on a whim because he “had to be in *Sobibor*.” The obsession took a toll on his life in the U.S. When his first wife left, he recalled, she told him “I don’t want to live in *Sobibor* any more. ... I’ve lived there for 30 years.”

Blatt also spoke at the trial of Ohio autoworker John Demjanjuk, a native Ukrainian who was charged with thousands of counts of being an accessory to murder at *Sobibor*. His testimony helped bolster the prosecu-



Recently uncovered bricks of a former gas chamber are seen inside the perimeter of a Nazi death camp in *Sobibor*.

tion’s claim that if Demjanjuk was a guard at *Sobibor*, he would have taken part in the killing of Jews, according to the Associated Press.

Demjanjuk was convicted by a German court in 2011 and sentenced to five years in prison, but he remained free pending his appeal and died a year later.

But Demjanjuk’s imprisonment was less important to Blatt than the trial itself.

“I don’t care if he goes to prison or not — the trial is what matters to me,” he told the *Independent* in 2011. “The world should find out how it was at *Sobibor*.”

HOW A HOLOCAUST HEROINE IS FINALLY WRITTEN INTO THE ANNALS OF HISTORY

BY CATHRYN J. PRINCE,
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

The parachutist stood at the door of an American supply plane, wavy hair tucked underneath her helmet. Haviva Reick prepared herself to jump behind enemy lines in Nazi-occupied Europe to rescue Allied pilots taken prisoner of war and to organize the 1944 Slovak uprising, an armed insurrection against the Nazis by resistance fighters.



Haviva Reick.

Without hesitation or reservation she stepped off. The jump would be her last.

Born in 1914 as Marta Reick in the small village *Nadabula* in Slovakia, she joined the *Hashomer Hatzair* youth movement. She loved zipping around the village on a motorcycle, an act that defied societal expectations for women in the 1920s and 1930s. Resistance was in her nature.

Reick left Slovakia in 1938 and founded a *Hashomer Hatzair* kibbutz in British Mandate Palestine. In early 1944 the British military recruited Reick from the Palmach, the elite fighting force of the Haganah, and sent her back to Slovakia, where she served in British Intelligence and organized the remnants of a Jewish population living in Nazi-occupied territory.

Together with three parachutists, Reick set up a camp in the Slovak mountains.

The Nazis caught Reick and her comrades in November 1944. She was shot in the neck on the edge of a mass grave wearing a British uniform and dog tags. At war's end her body was transferred to Prague. Today she is buried in Mount Herzl.

Although she was a heroine of the Holocaust, Reick's story is not well known. Granted, in Israel there are streets named for her, but in America, "nobody to speak of knows about her," said Dr. Rochelle G. Saidel, founder and executive director of the

New York-based Remember the Women Institute.

That few know Reick's story speaks to a greater issue: the absence of women in history, Saidel said.

"Women have been left out of history since the beginning of history. In general women's experiences as women in the Holocaust and World War II have been overlooked in the historical narrative," Saidel said.

"As far as analytical books and films go, there just isn't a lot of information.

Their experiences were different than men's. That's not to say they were worse; they were just different. From pregnancy and childbirth, to the way women experienced slave labor or were sexually abused in the camps; it's all different," said Saidel.

June's New York premiere of *Return to a Burning House*, a Slovakian documentary with English subtitles about Reick, is one way Remember the Women hopes to change the narrative.

"Haviva Reick was a 'common' woman who recognized evil, understood what should be done and — what is most important — she also did it," said the documentary's producer, Mirka Molnár Lachka.

Lachka said this type of engagement and activism is still important today.

"We in Slovakia, in Europe, forgot about her but she deserves to be remembered. Our film brings Haviva back to our memory," said Lachka.

The film draws from interviews and unpublished materials. It takes viewers through Reick's life in Slovakia, London and Israel. It also uses Tehila and Zeev Ofer's 2014 book *Haviva Reick: A Kibbutz Pioneer's Mission and Fall behind Nazi Lines*. The pair served with the Palmach, and Tehila appears in the film. Originally published in Hebrew, it is now available in an English version.

Remember the Women Institute hopes films such as *Return to a*

Burning House will help restore Reick to collective memory. One of the institute's main goals is to illuminate overlooked stories of women in the Holocaust.

Both Holocaust and women's studies started in the 1960s, but it's only in the past several years that the two have come together. At the same time, the narrative of Jews as purely victims of the Holocaust has shifted to include a more in-depth look at resistance.

"The story of Haviva Reick really brings together those two strands of Holocaust history — Jewish resistance and gender dynamics — really well," said Thomas Ort, assistant history professor at Queens College.

Saidel drew inspiration for *Remember the Women* from the lives of her grandmothers and great-grandmothers, and from a 1980 visit to *Ravensbrück* concentration camp.

"There was simply no indication that Jewish women were there," Saidel said. She was working on her doctorate at SUNY at the time but started to investigate the issue as a side project. What she found was that not only were women missing from the story of *Ravensbrück*, but women also were missing from much of the history of the Holocaust.

Part of the reason for the historical gap is that many of these topics were, and remain, highly controversial, Ort said. Pregnancy in the

has been a taboo for many years and it was very controversial," Nava Semel, an award-winning Israeli author and playwright, said in a phone call from Jerusalem. "The survivors did not dare to speak about it, they felt shame and wanted to protect their families from the past. Only in old age could they come forward."

In 1985 Semel published the novel *A Hat of Glass*, based on the testimony of her mother, Margalit Artzli, a concentration camp survivor. The novel is about a lesbian *kapo* who, because she had been a *fronthure*, a prostitute for Nazi troops at the front, was able to secure medicine and other life-saving measures for the prisoners.

Semel's novel *And the Rat Laughed* delves into the topic of how Holocaust survivors hidden as children were sexually abused.

"We've come a long way in understanding men and women had different roles and survived in different ways," said Dr. Eva Fogelman, an author familiar with Reick's story.

It's time for these stories, whether they are acts of resistance and defiance as overt as Reick's or less known, like the *kapo* in Semel's novel, to be more widely known, Fogelman said.

Because the numbers of survivors are rapidly declining, the opportunities to give and share firsthand testimony are dwindling too. This gives a



Ravensbrück concentration camp, 1939.

camps, prostitution in the camps, abortions and sexual abuse are uncomfortable subjects around an already painful topic.

One recent Remember the Women project dealt with the identification of Holocaust survivors and witnesses of sexual violence. Together with Sonja Hedgepeth, Saidel edited *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust*.

"It was pioneer research. The topic

sense of urgency to the work of Remember the Women, Semel said.

"Special attention must be paid to what I call the shadowy corners of the Holocaust, it must be part of the discourse now," Semel said. "The institute is fighting to give voice to those who are mute or were silent. The institute gives them a feeling before they leave this world that they are not alone in the world, that someone is out there for them."

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER OF T



Leonard A. Wilf, chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, present the Yad Vashem Remembrance Award to Rose and Philip Friedman.



Wolf Blitzer, featured dinner speaker.



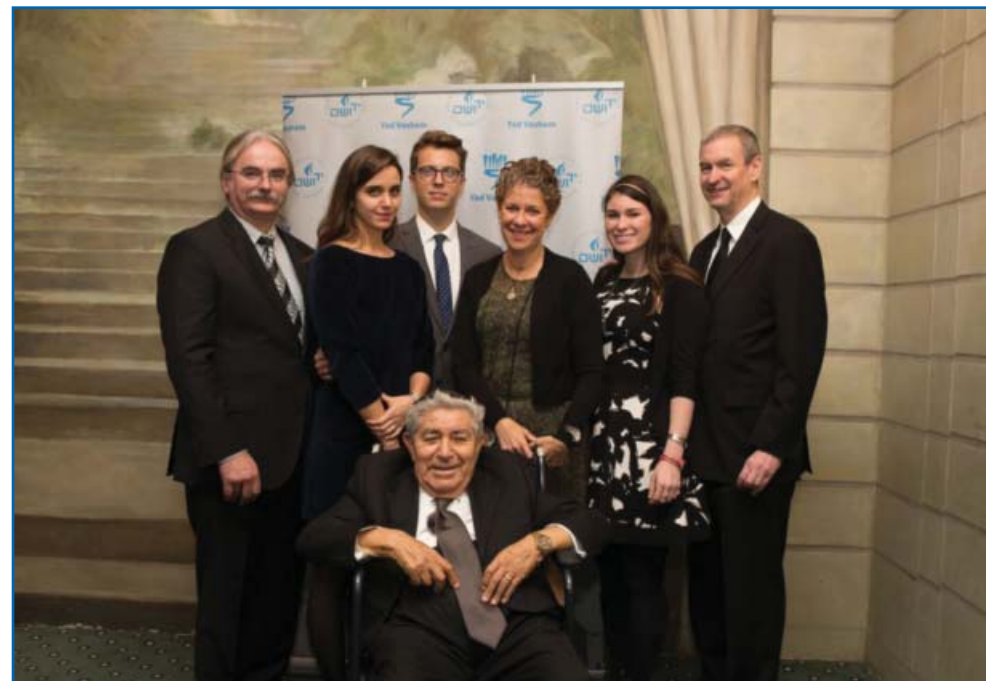
Mary Jean Eisenhower, dinner speaker.



Ron B. Meier, executive director of ASYV; Dr. Joyce Raynor and Dr. Miriam and Sheldon Adelson.



Miri Ben-Ari delivered a surprise performance in honor of Rose and Philip Friedman.



Hannah Jocelyn (2nd from left) representing the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, along with Lu Steinberg (4th from left), and Milton Steinberg (seated)

THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM



Daniella Pomeranc, Young Leadership Associates, introduced dinner speaker, Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter.



Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter, dinner speaker.



Rose and Philip Friedman and family.



Harry Karten, Barry and Marilyn Rubenstein, and David Halpern.



Mark Moskowitz, dinner chair (back row, r.), with Rose Moskowitz and members of his family.



Gladys Halpern is joined by two generations of her family as she recites the *Motzi*.

Photos by Bernard DeLierre.



REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

LIFE AFTER LIBERATION

BY DR. ELLA FLORSHEIM

Seventy years ago, as the Holocaust survivors began the slow and painful process of returning to life in the wake of the *Shoah*, many of them found themselves in, or were directed toward, displaced persons (DP) camps in Germany, Austria and Italy. Lasting from the end of World War II until the early 1950s, the period of the DP camps was short-lived, but is exemplified by the vibrant Jewish life created therein.

The living conditions of the thousands of Holocaust survivors who gathered in the various DP camps were characterized, primarily at first, by hardship and scarcity. The shock of liberation, the realization that many of them were alone in the world, and the physical and emotional scars and deprivations burdened many survivors who, even under American and British supervision, suffered anti-Semitic violence from time to time. A certain improvement in basic living conditions slowly emerged, yet even then the sense of transience and the yearning to leave the camps, whether for Eretz Israel or other destinations, remained dominant.

A significant change in the attitude toward the Jewish survivors and their living conditions in the DP camps took effect in the wake of the Harrison Report in the summer of 1945. Earl G. Harrison, envoy of US President

Harry Truman, visited the DP camps in Germany to examine the military authorities' treatment of the Jewish survivors. Harrison's unequivocal report was not late in coming: "We

Jewish affairs be appointed.

However, even before any major improvement in their living conditions, the members of *She'erit Hapleita* (the Surviving Remnant)

zations began to operate.

Another example of this desire to rebuild was the attempt to reestablish religious life, which was expressed in the many holiday assemblies, the founding of yeshivot in a number of the camps, and efforts to regulate kosher slaughter and other needs. Also noteworthy was the energetic cultural activity that developed among the members of *She'erit Hapleita*. This activity, most of which was conducted in Yiddish, included the publication of more than a hundred different newspapers, some of which became regular and wide-ranging publications. Yiddish theater blossomed in the camps, with numerous bands of amateurs and serious professionals taking part and performing for the benefit of the DPs. Another important venture that the survivors founded was the establishment of historical commissions in numerous camps and the beginning of gathering wartime testimony.

It should be noted that the public mood in the DP camps had a striking Zionist character, and the members of *She'erit Hapleita* waged an insistent campaign in favor of immigration to Eretz Israel. This last aspect was just another example of how the DPs themselves were active in the return to life after the long years of war, and fulfilled a prominent role in rehabilitating the fragments of the Jewish world after the Holocaust.



Elementary school pupils dancing the hora in a DP camp, Schwaebisch Hall, Germany.

appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them, except that we do not exterminate them," he declared in no uncertain terms. Harrison called for an immediate increase in food rations and clothing for the Jewish survivors, improved housing conditions, and the creation of separate DP camps for Jews. Truman adopted the Harrison Report, instructed the US Army to improve its treatment and attitude toward the Jews in Germany at once, and even ordered that a special advisor for

began to express in the first few weeks after liberation, and increasingly during the development of the DP camps, a vitality and wish to rebuild their lives. Many survivors married, had children and began to collect the fragments of their lives. This trend found a parallel expression in the public arena, too: local leadership from within the DPs sprouted quickly in the various camps, an education system and relief departments were established and, with time, youth movements and sports organi-

RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS FROM UKRAINE POSTHUMOUSLY HONORED AT YAD VASHEM

In the summer of 1942, when 150,000 Jews from *Lwow* (today *Lviv*) were deported to their deaths at the *Belzec* Extermination Camp, David Winter and his wife decided to separate from their newborn daughter, Anna, in order to increase her chances of survival. They secretly took Anna out of the ghetto and asked David's Ukrainian friend Petro Durniak to watch over their baby daughter. Petro's wife, Kateryna, was pregnant at the time, and shortly after Anna's arrival the couple had a daughter of their own, Christina. The couple changed Anna's name to Barbara and presented the two girls as twins. The Winter couple survived the Holocaust, and the first news they heard of their daughter came from David's brother, Nachum Winter.

Nachum was a soldier in the Red Army, and after his hometown *Lwow* was liberated, he requested time off and traveled to search for any of his relatives who might have survived. He found his niece at the home of Kateryna Durniak (she and Petro were separated at this time) and gave

her his monthly salary in gratitude for care of his niece. Before he left he took a photograph with his niece. When Nachum discovered his brother and his wife at one of the refugee



Lili Thau, commission member, presents Christina-Ludmila Kril, daughter of the Righteous Among the Nations Petro and Kateryna Durniak, with the certificate and medal.

camps in Central Europe, he informed them that their daughter was alive and sent them the picture he had taken with Anna-Barbara.

David and his wife contacted Kateryna and organized for Anna-Barbara's transfer to them, across the

border of the USSR. The Winter family moved to Israel, but shortly afterward they emigrated to Austria. With time, the Winters lost contact with the Durniak family. However, the

Durniaks never forgot Anna-Barbara. Kateryna kept her picture in a family photo album, and after her death, her daughter Christina kept the photograph.

The rescue story of baby Anna-Barbara came to light in 2013 when Freddy Gruber, whose father Josef Gruber was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations in 2005, travelled from

his home in Israel to *Lviv* to meet his father's family. Freddy also searched for any descendants of his father's friend, Petro Durniak. He arrived at Christina's home, and she showed him the picture of Anna-Barbara as a small child. Upon his return to Israel,

Freddy turned to Yad Vashem and told Anna-Barbara's rescue story. After further investigation, the Department of the Righteous Among the Nations uncovered a testimony given by Freddy's mother, Antonia Gruber, in 2005. In a single sentence she mentioned that her future husband's friend, named Durniak, had rescued a Jewish girl. In addition, a testimony from 1961 of Nachum Winter was found in the Yad Vashem Archives, in which he gave a detailed explanation of how he discovered his niece. Attached to his testimony was the picture that was taken of Nachum and Anna-Barbara at Kateryna's home. These two photographs, the one saved by Nachum from the Durniak family, and the photograph that was in David Winter's testimony, clearly show the same child. Therefore, with the help of testimony which was given more than fifty years ago, Yad Vashem was able to connect the two parts of this story.

On July 10, 2014, Petro and Kateryna Durniak were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations.

BBC APPEAL AFTER WW II SOUGHT HOMES FOR KIDS WHO LOST FAMILIES IN DEATH CAMPS

BY KATIE HIND AND
AMANDA KILLELEA, MIRROR

His mother and four sisters were gassed by the Nazis at the *Chelmo* concentration camp.

His father died behind bars in the *Lodz* ghetto. And he lost his big brother Josef when they were both sent to *Dachau*.

Jacob Bresler was only member of his family to survive the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust, and at the



Dachau horror: Children stare out of notorious death camp.

end of the war he was one of thousands of lost children who had nowhere to go.

So in August 1946 the BBC broadcast on the old Home Service a series of appeals to find any relatives in Britain.

In clipped 1940s tones, one said: "Jacob Bresler, a 16-year-old Polish boy, has survived five concentration camps, but has lost his entire family."

No one knew what happened next until nearly 70 years later, when the BBC found a recording of the 12 appeals and decided to find out what became of the children.

Of the 11 who were traced, five were still alive and four well enough to tell their stories, including Jacob, now 86, based in Los Angeles and known as Jack.

He says: "I came from a large family — four sisters, one brother and 65 first cousins. I am the only one who is alive."

"In 1939 when the war broke out, my father was taken away right away and I became the sole supporter of my family. They kept him in jail and I was separated from my mother and the rest of the family in 1942."

"My mother and two sisters were taken to an extermination camp. They were the first ones to be gassed in trucks. My other two sisters were sent to a different camp."

Then one day on a train he saw his father, who was being transferred between prisons.

"I knew it was him because of his name, but I didn't recognize him and

he didn't recognize me," says Jacob, choking up at the memory.

"He looked like a skeleton. It was tragic. I was crying and my dad was crying. He wanted to know what had happened in the years he had been away, but I didn't have any good news for him. It was so sad."

"He went off to prison, but through my boss at the Jewish colony where I was working, we got him out, and he came to live in the one-bedroom apartment with my brother."

"But then one day I got home and found a note saying he had gone back to prison because he didn't want our rations. I was devastated."

Soon afterward, Jacob and brother Josef were sent from the Polish city of *Lodz* to the infamous *Dachau* concentration camp, where they were split up.

Jacob worked nights in Camp 1, while his big brother worked days in Camp 4. Jacob still remembers the last time he saw Josef.

"I walked past him at *Dachau*," he said. "He looked exactly as my father had and he said exactly the same thing to me. He told me that he didn't want to live any more, and he died in January 1945."

"I was then left all alone. I had to fend for myself ever since that day and it was tough. I asked myself why it should be me that was the only one left. It is something I don't yet understand myself."

For days in May 1945 Jacob was locked in a train wagon by the Nazis, who were moving prisoners away from the approaching Allies. Packed like sardines, many were already dead, and young Jacob was clinging to life.

"We had been dragged around for two weeks without food or water," he says. "When I was liberated by the Americans we crawled on our bellies, because we could not walk, and kissed the tracks of the tanks."

At the time of the BBC appeal in 1946 Jacob was in a displaced persons camp, in *Landsberg*, Bavaria. That was the town where Adolf Hitler had written his evil *Mein Kampf* manifesto in the 1920s.

"We were like zombies," says Jacob. "We were fed, we were free, but we couldn't comprehend, because we were too damn young. What could a boy of 16 know of life, even though we had lived three lifetimes?"

"In *Landsberg* there was a bulletin board, where every day there were postings of people looking for people. I did not find anybody."

No one responded when his name was read out on the BBC, but after two years in the camp, Jacob discovered on the board a message for him from a couple in New York.

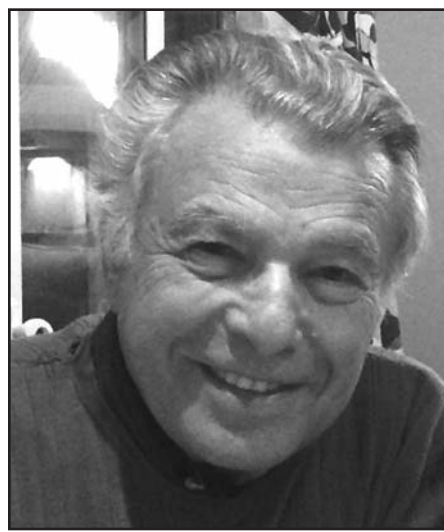
Sam and Dora Samuels, friends of his parents, had seen his name in a

list of survivors in a Jewish newspaper and invited him to the USA. He docked in New York on Christmas Day 1947, unable to speak a word of English.

Jacob says: "I will never forget the day. It should have been euphoric, but it wasn't because I was alone."

"Mr. and Mrs. Samuels were more than lovely. And they became my parents, practically, for the rest of their lives."

"They were angels. To this day, I do not have the words to express my gratitude."



Jacob Bresler happily retired in L.A.

With the help of the Samuels, Jacob made a life for himself. He fought with the US Army in Korea, where he told nobody about his past. He trained as an opera singer at the Academy of Music in Vienna, then became a film director and co-produced Eurovision shows in Austria between 1960 and 1968.

After moving to L.A. he opened a chain of Italian restaurants, with customers including Frank Sinatra, Marlon Brando and Robert De Niro.

And along the way he married Edith, his wife of 55 years and mother of his daughter Rachel. When she complained she saw little of her daddy because he was always working, he retired.

Jacob says: "I created my own family and now I have a wife, a daughter, a lovely son-in-law and a granddaughter and grandson. Time is a great healer, and I am happy now."

Twice, in 1960 and 1990, he went back to his birthplace, the Polish village of *Unejow*. "It was not very good," he recalls.

"It's one big Jewish grave there and it brought back terrible memories for me. There was nobody there who I knew anymore, and it was not easy to see it at all."

"I had to get it out of my system, but even today I'm not fond of my compatriots. They gave us away to the Germans. I managed to outsmart them by refusing to wear the Star of David — that's what helped me survive."

Jacob is now in touch with another survivor from the BBC appeals.

German Jew Gunter Wolff is now known as Gary and lives in Arizona. His father died in Auschwitz, while he slept beside him.

He recalls: "He just couldn't wake up one morning. I was next to him and that was it. To be honest, I was relieved. I had to take care of him."

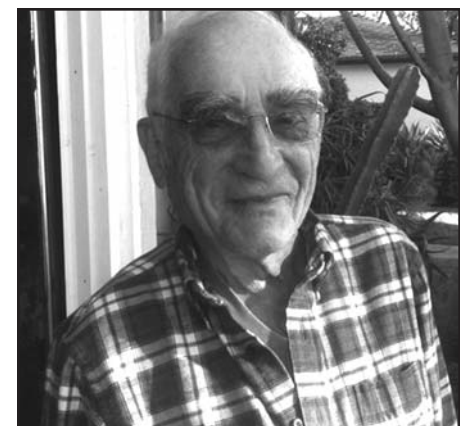
"He was not quick enough, he was not agile enough, I realized it was a matter of life or death. He was like the anchor if I had to survive. I felt guilty about feeling that way, but what are you going to do?"

Unlike Jacob, Gunter did find a new home as a direct consequence of the BBC appeals. Taken by the United Nations to London, he met a cousin of his father's at Waterloo Station.

Gunter says: "He looked more English than the English, with a bowler hat and umbrella. I said 'Uncle Theo!' in German and he said, 'We don't speak German here, we only speak English!'"

"I learned very early the only reliable person is you, yourself. I still have that today."

Eventually relatives in New York helped him to get papers to emigrate to the US, where Gunter ran a successful real estate business until he retired.



Gunter Wolff is now known as Gary and lives in Arizona.

He says: "Everyone who went through this is damaged in some way. I can speak to everyone who survived, and you will look in their refrigerators and they will be full of food."

"I have got too many shoes — I have had frostbite from all those marches. Shoes were life, if you didn't have shoes your feet would fall off, basically."

"There are all these little things that you aren't aware of that have absolutely shaped you."

As for Jacob, he still does what he did with those daily trips to the bulletin board — he continues to look for long-lost relatives. He says: "I love my family, they are my life and I don't know what I would do without them."

"But I am still looking today. I look at films and maybe I will recognize somebody from my family. But it has been 70 years and if they haven't given a sign of their life... then they are not alive."

AMERICA AND THE HOLOCAUST: THE PAST AS PROLOGUE

(Continued from page 2)

repeatedly barred the path was the stipulation that the émigré not become a “public charge.” This was interpreted with incredible strictness. In one of many similar cases, the application of a young physician and his wife, with \$1,600 in cash (the average annual salary in the U.S. was \$1,370), and affidavits of support from relatives with good jobs and valuable property, was summarily rejected.

The restrictive policies were partly a response to the Depression, naturally. But in July 1941, when unemployment had fallen from a high of nearly 25% to 9.6%, the State Department further tightened requirements. The Visa Division introduced the “relatives rule,” stipulating that any applicant with a child, parent or spouse in German, Italian or Russian territory would be subject to an extremely strict scrutiny involving representatives of five government agencies. After Pearl Harbor, all refugees from Axis-controlled Europe were labeled “enemy aliens,” increasing the difficulty of obtaining a visa. Still another paper wall was erected in the fall of 1943: refugees “not in acute danger” were denied entry. This barred individuals who had managed to escape to neutral countries.

In an extraordinary memo in June 1940, Assistant Secretary of State Breckenridge Long, in charge of immigration, explained his strategy to his subordinates: “We can delay and effectively stop for a temporary period of indefinite length the number of immigrants...by simply advising our consuls to postpone and postpone and postpone the granting of visas.”

This was done, and within a year, the number of visas issued had been cut in half.

Then, as a result of the various obstacles erected by the State Department, between December 1941 and April 1945, only 21,000 refugees were admitted from Axis-controlled territory, a little over 10% of the quota, and not all of them Jewish.

There were legitimate security considerations, of course, but all historians who’ve combed the State Department archives have concluded that these were largely pretexts. They have also discredited the other frequently mentioned excuse for not accepting more refugees — a shortage of shipping. More than 36,000 non-Jewish refugees from Yugoslavia were transported across the Adriatic and Mediterranean, and thousands of troopships returned to the U.S. empty — just as non-Jewish children (5,000 British in 1941) were welcomed without a murmur. A third reason frequently given by American, British and Colonial officials for denying entry was that an influx of Jews would trigger anti-Semitism. The line that was repeated ad nauseam was simply that the best way to help Hitler’s victims was to win the war. This was the conclusion of the notori-

ous Bermuda Conference of April 1943, arranged to placate Jewish organizations protesting government inaction.

The real problem was simply that Jews were not wanted. As a British official concluded in one memo, “The Foreign Office are [sic] concerned with the difficulties of disposing of any considerable number of Jews should they be rescued from enemy occupied territory.” The great nightmare for the Allies was that Hitler would permit hundreds of thousands of Jews to leave Europe.

Whitehall, in some instances more sympathetic than the U.S. to the fate of Hitler’s victims, had slammed the door to Palestine in the wake of Arab strikes, riots and murders between



Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill at the Tehran Conference, 1943.

1936 and 1939. The White Paper of 1939 restricted Jewish immigration to 15,000 per year for five years, after which further immigration would be subject to Arab consent. British authorities rejected proposals to increase the annual total in 1940 and '41, with the numbers to be deducted from the quotas for later years. Naturally, behind British appeasement of the Arabs, then as now, was the West’s dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

The Foreign Office statement came in response to a proposal to rescue 70,000 Jews from Romania. This attempt would turn the tide in Washington. It kicked off a bitter fight between Treasury Department officials and their colleagues at State, and a damning investigation by the former.

The effort to buy the freedom of the Romanian Jews had been initiated by an outsider to the Jewish establishment in the U.S., Peter Bergson. In a series of full-page ads, his organization appealed to Americans to support the attempt, which would be entirely funded by Jewish agencies (“For Sale to Humanity: 70,000 Jews”).

The State Department stalled the proposal for 11 weeks. When it finally reached Treasury, whose authorization was needed, it was approved in one day. When nothing further happened for another five months, Treasury officials investigated.

They then discovered something equally disturbing. The individual who had transmitted the Romanian government’s proposal, Gerhard Riegner of the World Jewish Congress, was also sending to Washington detailed

and accurate accounts of the extermination of Jews. His most valuable source was an anti-Nazi industrialist, Eduard Schulte, who traveled frequently to Geneva, where Riegner was based.

When his first telegram about the Holocaust arrived at the State Department in August 1942, officials refused to believe it and declined to pass it along to Rabbi Stephen Wise, the leader of American Jewry, as Riegner had requested. But Wise received the report from the Foreign Office, because the WJC official had telegraphed the news to London as well.

The State Department now resolved to silence Riegner. Disturbing reports about what was happening to Jews in

Europe might lead to calls for action. Riegner had been permitted to send his messages from the U.S. legation in Bern. A cable was sent instructing the American Minister not to transmit any more messages for private individuals or non-government organizations.

Treasury officials learned about this cable and asked to see a copy of it. State sent an altered version. The Treasury officials had been shown the original, and were angered by the duplicity of their colleagues. These officials, three non-Jews, Randolph Paul, Josiah DuBois and John Pehle, decided to alert the Treasury Secretary, Henry Morgenthau, about State Department sabotage, and press him to inform FDR. On Christmas Day 1943, DuBois wrote a searing 12-page memo, “Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of Jews.”

Morgenthau was reluctant to confront his friend Roosevelt, but did so after changing the memo’s title, cutting the indictment and bowdlerizing its language. Congress had meanwhile begun its own investigation. In testimony before a House committee, Breckenridge Long lied about the number of German immigrants allowed into the U.S. Faced with a political crisis — public exposure of the State Department’s machinations and lies — FDR took preemptive action. He authorized the creation of a War Refugee Board, to be headed by John Pehle and to be funded almost entirely by Jewish agencies.

The Board worked hard and had some significant successes. It subsidized the rescue of 120,000 Budapest Jews by Raoul Wallenberg and his staff. But it was repeatedly thwarted by the President and by government departments.

Pehle hoped to set up refugee camps in the U.S. He was permitted just one, in Oswego, New York, for fewer than 1000 Jews. These refugees

were to be repatriated, like the 425,000 German POWs who were housed in 700 camps — for whom shipping had been found. Pehle’s proposals to bomb Auschwitz and the rail lines from Hungary were repeatedly rejected by the War Department. He was told fighters couldn’t accompany the bombers that distance from Britain. In fact, bombers from *Foggia*, Italy, twice struck the synthetic oil and rubber plants at *Monowitz* (Auschwitz III), just five miles from the gas chambers.

As for censoring Riegner’s reports, the State Department need not have worried. News of the extermination of Jews never made the front pages. The official confirmation of the killing centers in November 1942 (four months after Riegner had informed the State Department) was delegated to page 10 of the *N.Y. Times* and page 6 of the *Washington Post*. No wonder Eisenhower was shocked when he saw the camps in Germany: “It was almost unbelievable,” he said.

John Kerry has called Israel’s reaction to the Iran deal “way over the top,” and warned that attempts to lobby Congress will make the Jewish state “more isolated and more blamed” by the international community. Obama has repeatedly attacked Netanyahu for criticizing the deal.

More déjà vu. The correspondence of both British and American officials in the ‘40s is filled with references to the Jewish penchant for exaggerating their problems and to Jews’ excessive self-pity. “A disproportionate amount of the time of the Office is wasted on these wailing Jews,” a Foreign Office official concluded.

Anti-Semitism has morphed once again. Having shifted from religious to racial grounds, it is now incited against nationality. The Jewish state and its supporters are subject to a pathological hatred. On the grounds that it’s a white, colonialist power oppressing native people of color (never mind that half of Israelis are Middle Easterners driven from places they’d called home for 2,500 years, and that tens of thousands of “Palestinians” arrived in the 1920s and ‘30s), the Left has joined Islam in calling for Israel’s annihilation. For Muslims, the loss of .2% of the land conquered from the Turks by the British is anathema. One advantage of the new anti-Semitism is that it permits Jews who wish to think well of themselves to take part.

The indifference to the threat Iran poses is eerily familiar. “The Jews Were Expendable” is the title of one study of government policy in the ‘40s. They still are. But the Roosevelt administration at least recognized the threat that Hitler posed to the U.S., though the Führer was not nearly as interested in attacking us as are the ayatollahs. We will all be paying for the pathway to nuclear citizenship guaranteed Tehran by the current administration.

SEVEN DECADES ON, ISRAEL STILL SEEKS RESOLUTIONS FOR “HOLOCAUST ART”

BY DANIEL ESTRIN

Before and during World War II, the Nazis seized up to 600,000 works of art from all across Europe. This has created a long-running drama that is still playing out from movie studios in Hollywood to museums in Israel.

If you saw last year's movie *The Monuments Men*, starring George Clooney, then you know the story line. Toward the end of the war, American and Allied forces sent teams on a treasure hunt through Europe.

Their mission was to find those stolen art works the Nazis had stashed away, and return them to their original owners. But many of those owners had been killed in the Holocaust, and a lot of art was just never claimed.

Ultimately, a couple of thousand artworks were distributed to Jewish institutions around the world, with many going to Israel, including the country's leading museums.

Now, advocates for Holocaust victims say more needs to be done to get the art back to the families that once owned it.

At the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, director James Snyder shows me a 1915 oil painting — a sort of mosaic of rooftops — by Austrian artist Egon Schiele. It's a well-known work by a famous artist, one of about a thousand pieces of Holocaust-era art the museum received.

“The fact that no one has ever surfaced with record of its prior ownership sadly suggests that no one from the family that may have owned it before the war survived the war,” Snyder says.

Today, many museums around the world are going over their collections

to see if they have art that was confiscated by the Nazis. Snyder says the Israel Museum has returned about 40 works to heirs.

But art experts say it's likely that museums in Israel have many looted paintings on their walls and they don't even know it. These are likely works that museums bought in good faith, or received as gifts, and they simply aren't aware of the history, or have no way of tracing it or haven't done enough research to find out.

A RENEWED SEARCH

Stuart Eizenstat, special adviser to Secretary of State John Kerry on Holocaust issues, addressed a

Eizenstat.

The Israeli organization Hashava was formed by the government to locate Holocaust victims' assets in Israel, though it only started looking into art in 2013.

“I believe Israel always had the sense that being the state of the Jewish people, things should belong here if they are heirless,” says Elinor Kroitoru of Hashava.

Her organization has caused a bit of a stink on this issue, publicly accusing Israeli museums of not doing enough detective work to weed out suspect art.

Kroitoru has singled out one major museum, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.



James Snyder, director of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, with Egon Schiele's 1915 work, *Krumau Town Crescent I*. It's one of about 1,000 works of Nazi-confiscated art the museum has received. The museum has no record of who owned the painting before it was taken by the Nazis. In some 40 cases, the museum has returned artworks when heirs were found.

conference on art restitution in Israel this past summer. He said Israel hasn't done enough.

“It's ironic because Israel is the state of the Jewish people. It's ironic because Israel has the greatest number of Holocaust survivors in the world. It's ironic because Israel should be a leader as a Jewish state on Holocaust-related issues,” said

She says it has a big collection of impressionist and post-impressionist art — the kind European Jewish collectors owned before the war. She thinks that statistically, it's likely the museum has looted art on its walls without even realizing it.

“The Tel Aviv museum claims they have done research internally but nothing has been published yet,” she

says. “We are waiting for the museum to come forward and show us and the public what they have done. They are a responsible museum. I know they are a serious museum, and I hope they will publish and work transparently.”

Ruth Feldman, who recently retired as a curator at the museum, says the museum takes the matter seriously. “We did a lot of work in that field. There is not always the time to do it ... But things are done at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art,” Feldman said.

RAISING MONEY FOR RESEARCH

The Hashava organization is working to get money to fund provenance research at the Tel Aviv Museum. And this past summer, Israeli curators attended the first workshop of its kind in Israel, on how to do that research.

But even if a museum can find an heir and return a piece of art, that's not always the end of the story. In some cases, Kroitoru says, the heirs turn around and sell the piece to private collectors.

“Then we are in a very unusual situation, where art that was looted from a Jew in Europe before the war, ends up in the beautiful palace of a very rich person in Dubai. And one of the questions is, ‘Is that what we want to happen to looted art?’” she asks.

In other cases, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem has returned art to heirs and they have allowed the art to stay where it is, on loan, or sold it back to the museum.

That way, the heirs don't need to fuss with security cameras and climate-controlled rooms for their precious painting — and the public in Israel gets to appreciate a great work of art and a piece of Holocaust history.

ANATOMY OF THE MURDERERS

(Continued from page 4)

He notes, too, that the Gestapo and the concentration camps were only part of the apparatus of repression. The regular courts and state prisons played a role, along with job loss, eviction and harassment, as well as widespread indoctrination, effective particularly with younger Germans.

Though Evans makes a credible case, he doesn't entirely demolish his opponents' arguments. While the results of plebiscites were clearly unreliable, it seems incontestable that many Germans, by the mid-1930s, supported Hitler and his belligerent expansionism and (at the least) tolerated his violent persecution of the Jews and other groups. Even Evans admits that “the number of people who were willing to some degree or other to play a role in the coercive apparatus of the regime must have run into several millions.”

On the perhaps equally vexed ques-

tion of Hitler's personality, sanity and overall health, Evans coolly parses the evidence. In *Was Hitler III?*, a review of a 2013 book by Hans-Joachim Neumann and Henrik Eberle, he seconds the authors' conclusion “that... he was no more ill than most other people are at some time or other during their lifetime.” He agrees, too, that Hitler “certainly was not mentally ill, not at least in any sense known to medicine or psychiatry.” He fails to tackle the question of whether Hitler was a sociopath or suffered from some other severe personality disorder, emphasizing instead that “he was sane according to any reasonable definition of the term, and fully responsible for his actions.”

In the same vein, his essay on Heike Görtemaker's 2011 biography *Eva Braun: Life with Hitler* argues, in concert with the author, that the relationship between Eva Braun and Hitler was “a normal expression of

heterosexuality on both sides.” It took two failed suicide attempts for Braun to consolidate her hold on her man — tactical successes, Evans says. (Evidence of emotional instability, one might argue instead.)

Over time, Evans writes, Braun became increasingly assertive in the relationship, subverting the Nazi ideal of passive womanhood. Görtemaker's biography's depiction of the romance is “deeply troubling,” he suggests, because of its very normalcy. “For if a man like Hitler was capable of ordinary human love for another person,” he asks rhetorically, “then what power does love possess?”

On the (even more) emotional subject of genocide, Evans asserts the historian's right to introduce analytic distinctions. He reviews the murderous invasions of Poland by both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, the anti-Semitic actions of Croatia and

Romania, the Nazi killing of Gypsies and the handicapped and mentally ill, the early 20th-century extermination by Germans of the Herero tribe in southwest Africa, the 1930s Ukrainian famine, and the Armenian and Rwandan genocides — a depressing catalogue of human iniquity. But he finds that an “obsessiveness” and “desire to be comprehensive and make no exceptions, anywhere, is a major factor distinguishing the Nazis' racial war from all other racial wars in history.” He adds: “Unlike all the others it was bounded neither by space nor by time.”

It is possible to argue with Evans's conclusions. But as he threads his way through historiographical battles, assessing the merits of warring schools of thought, Evans emerges as a fair-minded and precise interpreter — a useful guide if not necessarily a final arbiter.

POLISH AUTHOR REOPENS MINEFIELD OF WHO KILLED JEDWABNE'S JEWS

*In an English translation of her book **The Crime and the Silence**, journalist Anna Bikont sheds more light on the WWII massacre of hundreds of Jews in occupied Poland.*

BY JP O' MALLEY,
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

In 2001, American historian Jan T. Gross set off a maelstrom of passionate historical debate upon the publication of his book about the massacre of hundreds of Jews during World War II, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. There were already numerous history books about World War II's brutal atrocities, but what set Gross's book apart was its revelation that these murders were not committed by the Nazis, but by the Poles themselves.

While this came as a shock to the world at large, years prior to *Neighbors'* publication, Polish-Jewish journalist Anna Bikont had been eager to report on the crimes of *Jedwabne*. But her editor, Adam Michnik — one of Poland's most prominent Jewish writers and public intellectuals — didn't want her to write the story.

"At the time he was afraid because Poland was coming into the European Union and NATO," says Bikont, who

they tried to hide. So it's very difficult to give an exact figure," she says.

Bikont tells *The Times of Israel* that to properly understand how hatred against the Jews manifested so intensely before the war and the Nazi occupation, one must understand the connections between anti-Semitism and the Catholic Church.

"Poland is a very Catholic country, so the Catholic Church has had a huge impact on the anti-Semitism that happened before the war, especially in east Poland in places like *Jedwabne*," she says.

In the 1930s, with anti-Semitism raging across Europe, Bikont claims Polish Catholics organized their entire social fabric around a deep mistrust and hatred for the Jews.

"Even children at the time would play anti-Semitic games such as 'the Jew is the thief,'" she explains. "So the Church taught Poles to have hostility and contempt for Jews from early childhood."

SOVIET OCCUPATION OF POLAND'S MIXED "BLESSING"

Bikont documents in her book how the Soviet occupation of wartime Poland also played an important role in stirring up a strong anti-Semitic feeling, especially in *Jedwabne*.

given the right to attend public school, to study, or to pursue professional careers in medicine or education.

"Many young Jews were particularly happy about the Soviets coming into Poland," says Bikont. "But when the Poles saw these Jews who had a normal life, that was not full of humiliation, they really resented that. So hatred for Jews from the Poles became far greater in the Soviet times."

During this time, many Poles were involved in the Soviet underground, where Poles often betrayed other Poles. But, Bikont says, it was easier for many to say that it was the Jews who denounced the Poles, so it didn't look as if Poles were betraying each other.

"Jews were given the blame for a lot of things in these paranoid and suspicious times," she says.

This helps to explain why the Jews, who were systematically rounded up to be torched alive in the barn on July 10, 1941, were paraded around the marketplace in *Jedwabne* beforehand. Crucially, though, they were made to carry a statue of Bolshevik Revolution leader Vladimir Lenin, just before they perished. This was seen both as a sign of humiliation, and to indicate Jewish-Soviet collaboration.

The Soviet iconography was extremely significant in representing feelings of far-right Polish nationalism at the time, says Bikont.

"All of the propaganda was anti-Bolshevik propaganda. So the Polish nationalists wanted to associate Jews with this statue of Lenin and to make these links between Jews and Communists," she says.

In all of the accounts that Bikont heard — both directly from her own research and from secondary sources about the *Jedwabne* massacre — the names of Zygmunt Laudański and Jerzy Laudański were always mentioned as the most active participants in the crime.

Both brothers were sentenced to prison for the massacre. Zygmunt was sentenced to 12 years, but served just six, while Jerzy served just eight years of a 15-year sentence.

As part of her research Bikont interviewed both brothers. "It was the most horrible thing I have ever had to do in my career," she says, looking extremely distressed as she thinks back to the interviews.

MEET THE MURDERERS

"Both brothers seemed very content in what they saw as achievements in their lives," Bikont tells *The Times of Israel*. "I saw that they were happy remembering how they raped and killed Jewish women. They showed no remorse in these interviews and they were completely cynical."

Even though both brothers served

time in a Communist prison, Bikont says after their release they were greeted as heroes in their local community.

"The Laudański brothers were liberated because most people who were in the prison were involved in anti-



Memorial in *Jedwabne*, dedicated to murdered Jews: "In remembrance of the Jews from *Jedwabne* and surrounding areas, men, women, children, co-habitants of this earth, murdered, burned alive here on July 10, 1941."

Communist activities. It's very difficult for Polish people to admit to any of these things, because all the time during the war the narrative was the same: that it was the Germans who committed the crimes, and not the Poles, who were always seen as the victims."

Many people in *Jedwabne* think that the Germans ordered the Polish to carry out these crimes, Bikont notes. But she says it's untrue.

"This is very difficult to think about for a Polish person, to be both a victim and a perpetrator at the same time. In Poland especially, because we are used to thinking about ourselves as a nation of victims throughout history. This is why I think it's so difficult for Poles to admit what happened in *Jedwabne*."

In Jan Gross's book, *Neighbors*, the historian writes that the murderers of the *Jedwabne* massacre were ordinary people. But Bikont believes that such a description has led to many academics and journalists claiming, falsely, that it was the Polish working class who predominantly carried out the murders.

In her book Bikont quotes a prominent Polish sociologist, Antoni Selek, who wrote on this period of history that "the most active participants in the atrocity were from the lower rungs of the social hierarchy, unsettled, unfettered by bonds of family."

"This is simply not true," says Bikont. "There is a mythology out there that the people who committed these crimes in *Jedwabne* were the poor and the marginalized. Sure, there were also some people who were criminals who joined in on the pogroms. But it was not organized by them. It was organized by the local nationalistic Polish elites."



Author Anna Bikont.

helped found the left-wing newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* in 1989. "He thought this could promote an anti-Polish feeling with our European neighbors, and that it was better not to write about it.

"Michnik also told me he didn't believe so many people could be burnt in a barn, that it simply wasn't possible," she tells *The Times of Israel*.

Based on Bikont's extensive research, on July 10, 1941, the Jews of *Jedwabne*, a town in northeast Poland, were herded into a barn and burned alive by their Christian neighbors. The number of Jews murdered in the massacre has been widely contested over the last few decades, but Bikont believes it's likely to be between 600 and 900.

"Many Jews were burned. But also many were shot one by one when

In 1939, both Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia invaded Poland, carving up the country between them. The two occupying armies coordinated their efforts against Poland until 1941's Operation Barbarossa in which Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, causing a complete shift in their relationships.

Called "the reign of terror," the Soviet occupation destroyed the entire fabric of social life built up by the Jewish community for centuries — the Jewish municipal government was liquidated, Hebrew schools were closed, Yom Kippur became a normal work day, political parties were dissolved and Zionist activists were put on deportation lists.

But the occupation was beneficial for Jews too, says Bikont. Many began to experience equal rights for the first time in their lives and were

THE ROYAL FAMILY, THE HITLER SALUTE AND BRITISH POLICY DURING THE WAR

BY DANIEL WAGNER,
THE JERUSALEM POST

The recently released video footage of the Queen of England and her parents happily displaying the Hitler salute for the camera in 1933, now the subject of much media sensation, might be dismissed as an innocent action at the time. Some might even write it off as little more than practicing the “German” salute, perhaps not knowing then what evil Hitler was already in the process of unleashing on the Jews and other minorities in Germany and elsewhere in Europe.

Yet in 1933, a network of detention camps had already been established in Germany where political prisoners were being held, and Hitler was already in the process of using the salute to galvanize support for his political movement.

The reluctance of the royal family to release information from the archives that may be incriminating — evidence of either direct or indirect support for Hitler and the extermination of the Jews — is understandable. But if such support did exist it would not be surprising, because the fact is that the British government actively worked against the interests of Jews wishing to migrate to Palestine by severely restricting Jewish emigration to Palestine starting in 1939 (when Hitler’s evil was understood), and kept the restrictions in place until it was forced to rescind them in 1948, under protest. It seems the media are focused on the wrong issue.

While the Nazis prepared to annihilate the Jews in Europe, the British government approved the White Paper of 1939, which severely

restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine under the British Mandate.

The White Paper reinterpreted the Balfour Declaration and declared that Britain did not intend to build an independent Jewish state in Palestine. The White Paper effectively abandoned the idea of partitioning Palestine and provided instead for an independent Palestine to be governed by Palestinian Arabs and Jews in proportion to their numbers in the population.

A limit of 75,000 Jewish immigrants was set for the five-year period from 1940 to 1944 (consisting of a regular yearly quota of just 10,000 and a “flexible” supplementary quota of 25,000). After 1944, any additional immigration of Jews to Palestine would depend on permission of the Arab majority. At the same time, restrictions were placed on the rights of Jews to buy land, and the British government repeatedly blocked ships filled with refugees from entering Palestine.

By 1943 the BBC had evidence which conclusively proved Hitler’s plan for the “total extermination of European Jewry,” but despite the evidence, the BBC foreign and home news boards concluded that “it seemed desirable to soft-pedal the whole thing.” Government censors made sure the BBC would never be able to say anything contrary to official policy. The government line, echoed by the BBC, was to win the war, then save the Jews.

The BBC, in line with the Foreign Office, maintained a very British silence about the Holocaust.

Britain’s policy of denying a place of refuge to Jews facing extermination would have been very difficult to maintain had the public known what the government knew. Britain was determined to postpone active preparations for the Normandy landing until its colonial empire was made safe, which meant waging war for North Africa and Burma, while simultaneously pleading that it wasn’t ready to begin preparations for the war in Europe.

By 1943, with its victory in the war for the colonies, the British government had accomplished the first of its two strategic war aims. The other war aim was to prevent revolution in Europe. World War I had produced a wave of intense class struggle in many parts of the British Empire.

Signs were multiplying that World War II would repeat the experience of World War I, as the resistance movements in France, Yugoslavia and Greece were becoming an anti-imperialist struggle. In order to secure the empire and prevent revolution, the British government in essence decided to sacrifice the Jews of Europe.

At the end of World War II, the British Labor Party conference voted to rescind the White Paper and establish a Jewish state in Palestine; however, Labor foreign minister Ernest Bevin persisted with the policy, and it remained in effect until the British departed Palestine in May 1948.

After the war, the determination of Holocaust survivors to reach Palestine led to large-scale illegal Jewish migration. British efforts to block the migration led to violent resistance by the Zionist underground.

Illegal immigrants, who had no citizenship and could not be returned to any country, were detained by the British government in internment camps on Cyprus in deplorable conditions.

From October 1946, the British government, under the “severest pressure” from the U.S., relented and allowed 1,500 Jewish migrants per month into Palestine. Half of those admitted came from those prison camps in Cyprus owing to fears that a growing Jewish presence in Cyprus would lead to an uprising there. The Provisional Council of Israel’s first constitutional act was a proclamation that all legislation resulting from the British government’s White Paper of 1939 would become null and void.

The British government turned its back on the Jews of Europe and failed to aid Jewish resistance groups in Europe as a result of political and economic expediency. It was more concerned with access to oil from the Middle East and maintaining its empire than the plight of the victims of Hitler’s atrocities. Only in 2013 did Prime Minister David Cameron become the first British leader to establish a Commission on the Holocaust, and it was only in 2015 that the commission recommended that Britain create a national memorial to the Holocaust — 70 years after the end of the war. Just as the French and the Germans have done, the British people should take a cold, hard look at their government’s policy and actions during the war.



POPE FRANCIS WANTS TO OPEN HOLOCAUST-ERA VATICAN ARCHIVES

Pope Francis has reiterated his position to open the secret Vatican archives covering the period of World War II to allow researchers to assess the role played by Pope Pius XII during the Holocaust.

In an extensive interview with the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Ahronot*, Francis said there was “an agreement between the Vatican and Italy from 1929 that prevents us from opening the archives to researchers at this point in time. But because of the time that has passed since World War II, I see no problem with opening the archives the moment we sort out the legal and bureaucratic matters.”

The pope expressed worries that the current debate about Pius XII was not fair. “One thing worries me, and I’ll be honest with you — the image of Pope Pius XII. Ever since Rolf Hochhuth wrote the play *The Deputy* in 1963, poor Pope Pius XII has been accused of all sorts of things (including having been aware of the extermi-

nation of the Jews and doing nothing). I’m not saying he didn’t make mistakes. He made a few. I get things wrong often too. But prior to the release of the play, he was considered a big defender of the Jews.



Pope Francis places an envelope in the cracks between the stones of the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

“During the Holocaust, Pius gave refuge to many Jews in monasteries in Italy. In the Pope’s bed at Castel Gandolfo, 42 small children were born to couples who found refuge there from the Nazis. These are things that people don’t know. When Pius XII

died, Golda Meir sent a letter that read: ‘We share in the pain of humanity. When the Holocaust befell our people, the Pope spoke out for the victims.’ But then along came this theater performance, and everyone turned their backs on Pius XII.

“And again, I’m not saying that he didn’t make mistakes. But when you interpret history, you need to do so from the way of thinking of the time in question. I can’t judge historical events in modern-day terms. It doesn’t work. I’ll never get to the truth like that.

Professor Ben Zion Netanyahu, the father of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, once gave me a copy of the book he wrote about the Inquisition. I read it studiously. I’m not saying we should justify the actions of the Inquisition, but we need to investigate this period with the right tools and only then pass judgment.

“Did Pius XII remain silent in the face of the extermination of the Jews? Did he say all he should have said? We will have to open the archives to know exactly what happened. But to judge the actions, we will also need to understand the circumstances under which he was acting: Perhaps it was better for him to remain silent because had he spoken, more Jews would have been murdered? Or maybe the other way around? I don’t want to sound petty, but it really gets my goat when I see that everyone is against the Church, against Pius XII — all those detractors.

“And what about the Allies during the war? After all, they were well aware of what was going on in the death camps and they were very familiar with the railroad tracks that led Jews to Auschwitz. They had aerial photographs. And they didn’t bomb those tracks. I’ll leave that question hanging in the air, and say only that one needs to be very fair in these things.”

THE CONCENTRATION CAMP CURRENCY YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

BY PENNY SCHWARTZ, JTA

In the 70 years since the fall of the Third Reich, the trappings of Nazi power have become infamous icons of evil — think of the swastika flag, the yellow badge or the striped concentration camp uniform.

But have you ever heard of “Holocaust money,” the currencies that the Nazis forced on Jews and others in concentration camps and ghettos?

If not, you’re not alone. Even scholars have largely neglected the subject.

“It’s a mystery to me,” said Deborah Dwork, a professor of Holocaust history at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, regarding why there isn’t more contemporary research on the currencies.

Dwork hopes to change the situation. The university’s Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, which she directs, is making a newly acquired collection of the notes and coins available for study this fall.



A 50-krone banknote from the Theresienstadt concentration camp that is part of the Strassler Center’s collection of Holocaust money.

“Clearly this is an under-researched area,” Dwork said. “It is a salutary reminder that we think we know so very much, but there are areas about which we know very little.”

Robert Messing, an amateur numismatist, or currency expert, who graduated from Clark in 1959, donated the collection last spring. The university and the Strassler Center have funded Marissa Natale, 20, a junior studying history, the Holocaust and genocide, to research the collection and consider how students may be able to use it.

The first known use of Holocaust money was in the Lodz ghetto in Poland in 1940. Over the next five years, the Nazis introduced currencies in concentration camps and other ghettos in Germany and occupied Poland, Czechoslovakia and the

Netherlands. Each camp or ghetto had its own currency — with unique denominations and designs — to be used only within its gates.

Natale said Holocaust money was part of a complex economic system that served to strip European Jewry of its resources and further the Nazis’ genocidal aims. Jews could redeem the money under Nazi regulations or through black markets for food, clothes and other goods.

In concentration camps, Nazi officials and some factory owners paid Jewish slave laborers “bonuses” in the currencies to make them work harder. Thousands of Jews were worked to death during the Holocaust.

In ghettos, currencies served to compensate Jews when Nazi officials confiscated their valuables and cash. While ghetto residents relied on food rations, there was never enough to eat, and cash could be the difference between life and death. Coins in the Lodz ghetto were made of a flammable alloy and sometimes used as fuel.

The ghetto currencies also served to mark the Jews who carried them, putting them at risk if they left the ghettos, where they were legally required to stay.

Banknotes from the Theresienstadt concentration camp are included in the Strassler Center’s collection. Both the blue 50-krone notes and the pink 100-krone notes feature an image of Moses, bearded and holding the tablets of the Ten Commandments, and a stylized Star of David.

The notes were designed by a Theresienstadt inmate named Peter Kien, Natale explained. Nazis officials forced Kien to alter his original design to make Moses look more stereotypically Jewish and, ironically, to make

his hands cover the commandment “Thou shalt not kill.”

Handling notes and coins from the Holocaust, Natale said, brings the



Amateur numismatist Robert Messing sitting with Professor Deborah Dwork.

reality of the genocide home for her. She predicts the Holocaust money will resonate with other students as well.

“We all use money. People held it in their hands as part of their everyday lives. It connects people throughout time,” she said.

Much of Natale’s knowledge of Holocaust money comes from reading copies of *Shekel*, a magazine published by the American Israel Numismatic Association. Issues of the magazine and other documents were donated along with the currency collection by Messing, a founding member of the association.

First drawn to the subject because he lost family members in the Nazi genocide, Messing has now spent nearly 50 years researching, collecting and writing about Holocaust



Marissa Natale is researching a new collection of Holocaust money.

money. He donated his collection in hopes that it will become another symbol of the Nazis’ crimes — and one that people can hold in their hands.

“It’s a real artifact that said these horrible things did happen,” he said.

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