BY ISAAC BENJAMIN

In the summer of 2015, supporters from the American Society for Yad Vashem first began discussing a prospective mission to Poland and Israel. Understanding its unique status as the world’s preeminent Holocaust institution, the American Society considered such a trip an exceptional opportunity to reflect on the importance of Holocaust remembrance in the 21st century. A little more than a year later, the 31 Americans on the Leadership Mission joined their international partners in this unforgettable profound testament to Yad Vashem’s crucial role as the World Holocaust Remembrance Center.

Fifty-five passengers were greeted at the Copernicus Wroclaw Airport in Poland on the morning of July 6th by the large banner welcoming them to the 2016 Yad Vashem Leadership Mission. For these friends and supporters of Yad Vashem, the Leadership Mission was a weeklong journey to trace the Jewish experience in Poland and the Holocaust before flying to Israel for a rare, in-person experience in Poland and the Holocaust. Bente Kahan, a Norwegian-Jewish immigrant and its tragic destruction at the hands of the Nazis. The last stop was at the former site of the largest synagogue, a monument to the community that was a center for Jewish life for centuries.

Outside of Wroclaw was the Wolfisberg forced labor camp. Built as a series of tunnels underneath a small mountain, it was where thousands of Jewish prisoners were forced into hard labor. As the group walked through the damp tunnels, Yad Vashem guides recounted the story of Nachum Stern, a prisoner at Wolfisberg. Trading his rations for a pencil stub, Stern wrote the Rosh Hashanah service from memory onto scraps torn from bags of cement. Stern survived the Holocaust and later in life donated his cherished prayer book to Yad Vashem. Later on, each participant received a replica of the “Wolfisberg Machzor,” its 许多 edges a reminder of the unimaginable struggles the prisoners of Wolfisberg faced.

was a bright Friday morning as the Leadership Mission traveled to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Meeting at the infamous Arbeit Macht Frei gate, local Polish guides joined the Yad Vashem staff in leading the group through the barracks that make up the Auschwitz Museum. Block 27 is specifically curated by Yad Vashem as a permanent exhibit to commemorate the loss of Jewish life. Block 27 holds the monumental Book of Names — a collection of the names of millions of Holocaust victims. Many members of the group were able to find the names of their murdered relatives among the 4.2 million names.

The Leadership Mission was allowed unparalleled access at Auschwitz. As Dr. Mengele’s torture site, Block 10 is not open to the public. As the Polish guides unlocked the dusty padlocked door, several members were too overcome with emotion and trepidation to step inside to see the stark hallways left untouched for decades. In Birkenau, one railroad car stands alone on the abandoned tracks as a symbol of the millions of deportees. For the Leadership Mission, Auschwitz guides opened the usually closed underground prison of the vehicle. As they were led up the otherwise gated-off stairwell to the Birkenau watchtower, the expansive grid of barracks came into view. For Jessica Glickman-Maul, a grandson of survivors and mother of three young children, “it was a sight I will never forget. I want my children to

way has been so moving to witness.”

The Leadership Mission began in Wroclaw, a city once known as Breslau. They were led by Bente Kahan, a Norwegian-Jewish immigrant who has spearheaded the effort to restore the White Stork Synagogue as the local Jewish community’s cultural center. Around the city are signs of the once-thriving Jewish community and its tragic destruction at the hands of the Nazis. The last stop was at the former site of the largest synagogue in Wroclaw, burned down on Kristallnacht. The group recited kaddish at the lone surviving wall of the synagogue, a monument to the community that was a center for Jewish
Efraim Zuroff has accomplished much in his long career, but there’s one thing he’s particularly proud of: he’s the most hated Jew in Lithuania. His Lithuanian friend Ruta Vanagaite agrees: she called him a “mammuth,” a “boogeyman” and the “ruiner of reputations” — and that’s just in the introduction to a book they co-authored.

Last summer, in a journey that helped cement his notoriety, Zuroff set off across the Lithuanian country-side in a gray SUV with Vanagaite, an author best known for a book about women finding happiness after age 50. Their goal: to visit some of the nation’s more than 200 sites of mass murder during World War II. On the road, between destinations, they talked and talked, recording their conversations. The trip formed the basis of their 2016 book, Our People: Journey with an Enemy.

“Old age should not protect people from punishment, people who committed such heinous crimes. We owe it to the victims — that’s three. Four is it sends a powerful message about the serious nature of these crimes, and greater, and your ability to deal with them is less. The French prepared the Jews to be sent somewhere, and they sent them away to be murdered. Here, the Jews were murdered by your people.... You know why everyone in Lithuania hates me? Because they know that I am right.”

THE THINKING MAN’S INDIANA JONES

Zuroff wants to make it very clear that Nazi hunting isn’t as glamorous as it sounds. “A lot of times, people come up to me and say, “You have my dream job.... When I was a child, I wanted to be a Nazi hunter.” He tells Newsweek, clearly amused by their ignorance. “You know — it’s not doing ambushes in the jungles of South America.”

Nor does it resemble the popular ‘70s book and subsequent film The Boys from Brazil, in which Laurence Olivier spends much of his time chasing Dr. Josef Mengele, played by Gregory Peck, and unraveling his evil plan to use 94 clones of Adolf Hitler to populate the world’s last Nazi hunter. He grew up in the Brooklyn borough of New York — Brighton Beach and Flatbush — hoping to become the first Orthodox Jew to play in the NBA. Though he was named for his great-uncle, Efraim Zar, who was murdered in Lithuania during the Holocaust, Zuroff’s career as a Nazi hunter began only after he made aliya, Jewish immigration to Israel, in 1970 and completed his PhD in Holocaust history.

In the early 1980s, he worked in Israel for the U.S. Justice Department’s Office of Special Investigations, which was formed in 1979 to probe and prosecute war criminals. Since 1986, Zuroff has directed the Israeli office of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a human rights organization that combats anti-Semitism and is named after the Holocaust survivor and legendary Nazi hunter who died in 2005. Since he operates through a nongovernmental organization that has no power to prosecute, Zuroff is considered a “freelance Nazi hunter.”

Zuroff, who was murdered in Lithuania — Brighton Beach and Flatbush — in one corner. This could be the work of a jealously paranoid Lithuania for collaborating with the Nazis and participating in the Holocaust, Zuroff tells Newsweek.

“I realize how difficult it could be for Lithuania to admit its complicity,” he told Vanagaite in Our People. “It took France 50 years to acknowledge its guilt. Germany had no choice. But for your sake and your children’s sake, the sooner you face this honestly, the sooner the healing process will start.” If it took France 50 years, it will take Lithuania 50 years as well,” said Vanagaite.

“No, it will take you 90 years,” replied Zuroff. “Because your crimes these days is “one-third detective, one-third historian, one-third political lobbyist,” with countless hours spent tracking down witnesses, poring over archives and convincing governments to take action. Imagine Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom with the hero spending 98 percent of the movie in his school’s library.

Zuroff never set out to become an object of contempt in Lithuania or the world’s last Nazi hunter. He grew up in the Brooklyn borough of New York — Brighton Beach and Flatbush — hoping to become the first Orthodox Jew to play in the NBA. Though he was named for his great-uncle, Efraim Zar, who was murdered in Lithuania during the Holocaust, Zuroff’s career as a Nazi hunter began only after he made aliya, Jewish immigration to Israel, in 1970 and completed his PhD in Holocaust history.

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Soviet war of 1941 to 1945. In the testimonies about vicious pogroms that the Jews killed next to the Ubort river used to read.

On the bus ride back to Zhytomyr, the enormity of my experience was almost too much to bear. The tears of the survivor’s daughter; the rotting tefflin in an abandoned cemetery; the black memorial that conceals the identity of the dead; and the beautiful Ubort river and Polesia forest. I knew I had to return.

Twice more, in 2011 and 2012, I visited Olevsk, always helped by the younger Misha. The golden plaque honoring the Sich at the site of their pogroms was eventually removed as a result of local political upheaval. But in its stead, a new monument was built just down the road from where the pogroms took place. Also a pet project of Svoboda, it was unveiled in August 2011 with party leader Oleh Tyahnybok in attendance. The unveiling sparked some heated debate in the local paper over the place of the Sich in Olevsk’s history — but no discussion of the pogroms in which the town’s Jews were killed.

Thanks to the help of a local journalist, I interviewed two people, Maria Koloniets and Mykola Dovhoslits, who witnessed the Sich taking Olevsk’s Jews to their deaths, with beatings and humiliations along the way. I also spoke to Aleksei Makarchuk, who had been a teenager during the war. After telling us his story about how he escaped deportation at the hands of the local police and his escape from the pogroms, Makarchuk described watching the

(Continued on page 13)
HITLER’S FURIES: GERMAN WOMEN IN THE NAZI KILLING FIELDS

Hitler’s Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields.


REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

“On September 16, 1942, [in the Ukrainian-Polish border town of Volodymyr-Volynsky], Johanna Altvater entered the ghetto and approached two Jewish children, a six-year-old and a toddler... The toddler came over to her... Altvater grabbed the child by the legs, held it upside down, and slammed its head against the ghetto wall... then, she threw the lifeless child at the feet of her father...”

A horrifying and brutal woman — but somehow feel such a being can’t possibly exist. That it’s “unnatural.” We are certain that deep down all women have a maternal instinct. But real life isn’t like that. The lines quoted above, taken from Wendy Lower’s unique volume entitled Hitler’s Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields, makes that quite evident... nor was Johanna Altvater an anomaly. There were quite a few other German women like her... and they weren’t camp guards either!

In sum, Lower’s engaging and conscientiously researched book squarely focuses our attention on the unacknowledged and rarely if ever discussed fact that “hundreds of thousands of German women went to the Nazi East — that is, to Poland and the western territories of what was for many years the USSR, including today’s Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia — and were involved in the largest parts of Hitler’s machinery of destruction.” Teachers, nurses, secretaries, welfare workers and wives — they all went to service the German troops there and, comically, to “patriotically” colonize the newly won lands for Nazi Germany. Interestingly, the more personal reasons for these young “seventeen-to-thirty-year-olds” going east were the supposed “hallowed places of Jewish tragedy” offered, and the pure adventure of this “liberating” experience!

Yes, on the one hand, according to Lower, they cared for German soldiers physically and mentally injured in the fighting. They ministered to their wounds and socialized with them, bringing a bit of home to the front. But they also “witnessed the deprivation and murder of Soviet prisoners of war and Jews. They worked in the infirmaries of the concentration camps...” They assisted in medical experiments, and administered lethal injections. They stood on railway platforms while Jewish deportees locked in railway cars begged for help. Finally, “some committed mass murderers as the euthanasia program expanded from Germany into Poland.”

Then there were the “legions of secretaries who kept the mass-murder machinery functioning.” On the other hand they “organized, tracked, and distributed the massive supplies necessary to keep the war machine running.” However, thousands of them were also employed in district offices in the Nazi East, “responsible for the dispensation of indigenous populations, including Jews, that the Nazis... had been placed in ghettos and forced labor assignments...” Some secretaries were recruited “professional opportunity!” Some secretaries who typed up all those reports handed in by Einsatzgruppen leaders highlighting their “diligence” in the murder of Jews, reports accompanied by graphs making things easy for the upper leadership to quickly comprehend and, of course, admire.

Finally, and surprisingly, the worst of the lot were the wives that came with their men to the East. Such a one was Erna Petri. In 1942, “under the auspices of Himmler’s Race and Resettlement Office, Horst Petri, an SS officer, and Erna Petri who paid for her crime somewhat was tried in East Germany. But even she got out of her life sentence... many felt, through the help of Söle Hille (Silent Aid), a silent underground SS organization, one of whose prominent members is Gudrun Burwitz, the daughter of Henrich Himmler.” Petri, meanwhile, lived to be eighty... Yes, this is quite a book!

Reviewed by Dr. Diane Cypkin, Professor of Media, Communication, and Visual Arts at Pace University.

AT THE GATES OF BIRKENAU, A NAME FOR A NAME

BY AVI BAUMOL,
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

A custom at Jewish cemeteries around the world is to recite the names of the loved ones departed. At hallowed places of Jewish tragedy such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, people often recite a list of names of their loved ones who were struck down sanctifying the name of God. That is what I found myself doing on a cloudy Friday in early June in front of 150 cyclists about to embark on the most meaningful bike ride of their lives. Inspired by Robert Desmond, a young English Jew, who, three years ago, decided to bike from his home all the way to Auschwitz, over 25 days, the JCC Krakow Ride for the Living was created to memorialize the past, but also to celebrate the survival of Jews throughout Communism and the revival of Jewish life — in Poland of all places. Not just in Poland, but in Krakow, down the road from the largest Jewish cemetery in the world. And so I began like every other person in front of such loss — reciting names.

My great-grandfather Michael ben Naffati Ferber was murdered in Berlin during Kristallnacht. My great-grandmother, Lila Goldberg, from Mielec, were murdered in their city and buried in an unknown grave. My grandfather’s brother, Yehoshua, murdered in Belzec, was just 27 years old, a son of the Lublin Yeshiva. My grandfather’s aunt Rachel and her husband Chaim, son of Rabbi Nissan Shinerer of Krakow, were murdered together with their children. Their 10 colorless of varying ages were all murdered in Tarnów, Lvov and Buczacz.

The list is frightening, paralyzing. What would have become of my extended family? How would the Jewish world have been different? These names did not represent death and destruction?

But then I continued with another list of names, this time not commemorating the dead, rather they signaled rebirth, return, revival!

Each name represented hundreds, if not thousands. Iwo, Iwona, Michael, Patryk, Julia, Petri, an SS officer, and Erna Petri were given the task of cultivating and defending a Polish plantation in eastern Galicia. Thus, she, her husband and their three-year-old son were soon living in a “white-pillared manor... in the midst of rolling meadows” — requisitioned for the family’s use. It was idyllic and beautiful, and undoubtedly for Erna, a farmer’s daughter whose only job had been as a house-servant, unbelievable!

Before long both her husband and she were being and brutalizing their forced laborers — Ukrainians, Poles, and Jews. In 1943 they were hunting down Jews who somehow escaped extermination. He resolutely shot any and all Jews. And Erna? All on her own, she came to cold-bloodedly kill six hapless “half-naked Jewish boys who whimpered as she drew her pistol.” Indeed, after the war, this last was especially brought out in her pre-trial interrogation.

Which brings us to the justice “doled out” to these women after the war... or rather the lack of it. The only one who paid for her crime somewhat was Erna Petri — tried in East Germany. But even she got out of her life sentence... many felt, through the help of Söle Hille (Silent Aid), a silent underground SS organization, one of whose prominent members is Gudrun Burwitz, the daughter of Henrich Himmler. Petri, meanwhile, lived to be eighty... Yes, this is quite a book!
AMERICAN HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS STRUGGLE “TO FINISH IN A DECENT WAY”

BY MATT LEBOVIC, THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Despite recent funding infusions to provide care for aging Holocaust survivors, the dwindling community’s basic needs will outpace earmarked resources in the years ahead, according to experts.

Out of the just under 100,000 Jewish survivors of the Nazi genocide who reside in the US, more than 30,000 live below poverty threshold standards, according to the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS). And as the survivor community ages, a larger segment will need increased assistance with health care and other basic needs.

Responding to the dire situation, the Claims Conference announced it will commit an additional $550 million toward Holocaust survivors’ home health care needs, and lift the cap on funded hours of care per survivor.

For Boston-area survivors, new funding will also come from sales of the 
sized hours of care per survivor.

Nearly 300 survivors are served by JF&CS, and who estimates there are 2,500 in the area. Because some are “fearful of seeking help,” connecting survivors to appropriate services can be challenging — even when there is funding, said Frankel.

“We see the will to live and the resilience,” said Frankel of survivors she has worked with for almost two decades. “Many of them face acute chronic medical conditions and poverty,” she added.

Labeling the survivors’ needs “very intense,” Frankel said her agency’s goal is to help them remain at home for as long as possible. This requires access to services ranging from food delivery to transportation, with home health care being “a very expensive service to provide,” she said.

“If we can help people stay at home, they are feeling safe, with a sense of dignity and respect from the community at large,” Frankel said.

Some people called them “green-horns,” and not many made efforts to learn about the wartime experience of survivors transplanted to the US, recalled Israeli “Izzy” Arbeiter, a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau and long-time leader of New England’s survivor community.

In central Poland’s Plock, Arbeiter’s parents and brother were murdered in the Nazi death camp Treblinka. In 1939 the town’s Jews numbered some 10,000 and made up 26% of the local population; by war’s end only 300 survived. In 1946, Arbeiter married his wife Anna, with whom he had survived a forced labor camp and imprisonment at Auschwitz. Within two years, Anna gave birth to a daughter and the family made their home outside Boston.

“We were not very welcomed by the Jewish community after the war,” said Arbeiter in an interview with The Times of Israel.

The historian Barbara Burstin wrote in her book, Boston-based publisher Houghton Mifflin Harcourt recently decided to directly royalty proceeds from Mein Kampf to programs run by Jewish Family & Children’s Service (JF&CS) for local survivors.

Totaling about $60,000 a year, Mein Kampf royalties will only cover a modest portion of the survivor community’s needs. Locally, the gap between these needs and available funds has hit up to $150,000 annually, according to Rick Mann, a JF&CS volunteer and chair of the Jewish Community Relations Council’s (JCRC) Holocaust outreach committee.

“I had very little idea of the severity of the problem being faced by local survivors until very recently,” Mann told The Times of Israel. “There are hundreds in greater Boston who are in need of essential services,” said Mann, adding that many survivors live under the communal radar.

Several decades after what many of them experienced as a frosty reception, thousands of Holocaust survivors are again finding themselves in need of assistance with their basic needs.

“We have a lot more people that are in need now, especially from the [former Soviet Union],” said Arbeiter. “Home care is the greatest need, along with food and medicine,” he said. For more than half a century, Arbeiter has advocated on behalf of survivors in the US and other countries, including Germany, where he received the Order of Merit in 2008 for his work on Jewish-German relations. A volunteer adviser for survivor services at JF&CS, Arbeiter has seen the community’s needs increase as more members reach advanced ages.

“There are a lot of survivors who need a little help to be able to finish in a decent way,” said Arbeiter. “We have got to have the tools to help these people,” he added.

As put by Mann, “JF&CS has to make a ‘Sophie’s Choice’ on a daily basis as to who gets services. The problem is going to increase, not decrease, over the next decade,” he said.

In New York City, for instance, up to 30,000 survivors — about half of the community — live in “deprivation, isolation, and poverty,” according to Stuart Eizenstat, special adviser on Holocaust issues to US Secretary of State John Kerry. In an interview with AFP last year, Eizenstat said about one-third of survivors in Israel cope with poverty, and these rates approach 90% in some former Soviet Union countries.

In the US, the government has started to fund social services grants specifically for aging Holocaust survivors. Some European countries have made reparations available to victims of the Nazis living outside Europe, but these funds are usually one-time infusions, as opposed to sustainable, ongoing support.

“There isn’t going to be an opportunity to make this right if we do not act now,” said Mann. “And if we do not act now, it means the pain of not having helped when our help was needed,” he said.

BY CAROL J. WILLIAMS, LOS ANGELES TIMES

M onaco committed the “irreparable” injustice of deporting Jews to Nazi camps during World War II, Prince Albert II said in belated apology for the actions 73 years ago that sent scores of resi-
dents and refugees to their deaths.

Many of the 68 people handed over to Nazi occupiers in neighboring France had sought refuge in the principality that was neutral in the first years of the war.

But on the night of August 27, 1942, Monaco authorities rounded up Jewish residents and delivered them to the Nazis. At least 24 other Monegasques living in the Riviera principality or in the surrounding French countryside were deported during the war, according to a gov-
ern report released this year.

Only nine of the 90 who were deport-
died survived their Nazi detention.

“We committed the irreparable in handing over to the neighboring authorities women, men and children who had taken refuge with us to escape the persecutions they had suffered in France,” Albert said at a ceremony in which a monument to the victims was unveiled. “In distress, they came specifically to take shelter with us, thinking they would find neutrality,” he said.

The acknowledgment of wrongdoing by the wartime authori-
ties “is to ask forgiveness,” address-
ing his apology to Jewish community leaders in attendance, including the principality’s chief rabbi and renowned Holocaust researchers Shmuel Bechar and Katzir.

The government review of Monaco’s World War II relationship with the Axis powers was ordered by Albert and concluded this year with recommendations for establishing a restitution program to return the property seized from the deported Jews to their heirs. Nine compensa-
tion claims have already been approved, the government reported.

“We welcome the desire of the prin-
cipality to properly examine its role during these dark days of the Nazi occupation,” European Jewish Congress leader Moshe Kantor said in a statement. The Klarsfelds had encouraged Albert’s late father, Prince Rainier, to examine the wartime government’s actions. Albert took up the mission after succeeding Rainier, who died in 2005 after 56 years as head of the House of Grimaldi.

It was Rainier’s predecessor, Prince Louis II, who reigned during World War II, though under succes-
sive Italian and German occupations in the war’s latter years.
We looked for the market at Zielonka, Brama Borski (Iron Gate), where her brother stumbled across an abandoned sack of prunes that fed them during the monthlong bombing. The market has shifted, but it was bustling with stalls of fresh strawberries, sausages and flowers, a far cry from the wartime and Communist-era austerity.

At the shelling's tail end, my mother retreated to an aunt's home at 26 Franciszanska, closer to the Vistula River, on her brother's theory that they would be nearer a source of water they could drink. My mother described the building's terrified tenants huddling in a courtyard. My sister and I saw a pleasant street where all the prewar buildings had been replaced by ascelic apartment blocks. There was no Number 26. What was left of the addresses we searched for was a four-story plain gray building at 16 Krasinski where my parents and I, their infant son, lived in 1945 before returning to Poland from their wartime refuge in the Soviet Union. They stayed a few months, fleeing when news broke of the Kielce pogrom that left 42 Jews dead, and making their way to the Allied displaced persons camps. Like tens of thousands of other Jews, they gave up on Poland.

So my mother's Warsaw is no longer there, but we took to enjoy contemporary Warsaw, which is a cosmopolitan city that can compare with other European capitals in charm, intriguing shops and fine restaurants other European capitals in charm, intriguing shops and fine restaurants a cosmopolitan city that can rival other European capitals in charm, intriguing shops and fine restaurants. My mother described the building's terrified tenants huddling in a courtyard. My sister and I saw a pleasant street where all the prewar buildings had been replaced by ascelic apartment blocks. There was no Number 26. What was left of the addresses we searched for was a four-story plain gray building at 16 Krasinski where my parents and I, their infant son, lived in 1945 before returning to Poland from their wartime refuge in the Soviet Union. They stayed a few months, fleeing when news broke of the Kielce pogrom that left 42 Jews dead, and making their way to the Allied displaced persons camps. Like tens of thousands of other Jews, they gave up on Poland.

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As Nazi Germany annexes Lithuania on the Baltic Coast, Reichsfuehrer Adolf Hitler is accompanied by Wehrmacht military leaders and aides as he marches down the streets of Memel, or Klaipeda, to view the last addition to his Third Reich, March 23, 1939.

Regardless of which estimate you use, the Jewish death rate there was one of the highest in all of Europe. And there's a sickening twist to this already-grosssome tale: in countries like France and the Netherlands, Nazi collaboration typically meant identifying, gathering and preparing Jews to be deported to concentration camps, but collaborators in Lithuania also did much of the killing — usually by shooting their neighbors and watching their bodies collapse, one on top of another, into pits dug in the forest.

Lithuania's crimes against its own people during World War II seem irrefutable, but the country's collective memory has been muddied by several factors. For one, there is its long history of foreign occupation, particularly by the Soviets, who took over twice — first in 1940, then again in 1944, when the Red Army pushed the occupying Nazis westward. Lithuania did not declare independence from the Soviet Union until March 1990, after nearly half a century of Communist rule. Another is that, in line with much of the right-wing thinking all over Europe between the World wars, many Lithuanians associated Jews with Bolshevism — a strain of anti-Semitism stoked by Nazi propaganda. Decades under the Soviets also led many Lithuanians to see themselves as "victims slash heroes," as Vanagaite tells Newsweek; the former for their suffering under the Soviets and the latter for eventually breaking free of the USSR and aiding in its demise. With that mindset, it's hard for a nation to accept that its citizens could also have been perpetrators of genocide. Even those who participated in mass murder might be celebrated as national heroes for their anti-Soviet activities.

In his book Operation Last Chance: One Man's Quest to Bring Nazi Criminals to Justice, Zuroff recalled a 1991 dedication ceremony for a monument in Panerai — a suburb of Vilnius where roughly 70,000 Jews were killed. Gediminas Vagnorius, then the prime minister of Lithuania, claimed the Holocaust lasted only three months and reduced the scope of Lithuanian participation, saying "a group of criminals cannot outweigh the good name of a nation, nor can it rob it of its conscience and decency." Perhaps those comments can be shrugged off as the growing pains of a newborn nation, but even today the country to prosecute Holocaust criminals, appearing on television and petitioning the government to pursue legal action. As Vanagaite put it in Our People, "[He] came to spoil the wedding." Despite his persistence, only three people have been tried for Holocaust crimes in independent Lithuania — and the possibility of any more facing judgment seems remote. In 2001, Kazys Gimzauskas, a deputy in the Saugumas (the Lithuanian equivalent of the German Gestapo), became the first Nazi collaborator convicted in an independent former Soviet republic, but by then the court ruled him too ill to be incarcerated. In 2006, Algimantas Dalide, another member of the Saugumas, was convicted and sentenced to five years. However, a court in Vilnius ruled that he would not be imprisoned "because he is very old and does not pose danger to society."

Zuroff helped scare the third, Aleksandras Lieakis, a Saugumas commander, back to Lithuania from Norwood, Massachusetts, where he had been living for many years, working at a Lithuanian encyclopedia publishing company. Lieakis was stripped of his U.S. citizenship in 2007 after the U.S. Department of Justice charged that he had "concealed his involvement in the mass murder and other persecu- tion of Jews and others" when applying for immigration. Lieakis was indict- ed by a Lithuanian court but died in September 2000 before his trial was over.

The Nazi hunter's pursuit of Lieakis didn't win him any Lithuanian friends. "That old person was already half-dead," says Vanagaite, who lived next door to Lieakis after he'd returned to Vilnius and remembers seeing him in his wheelchair. "I was upset like everybody else. I said, 'If he did something wrong, then he soon will be dead and go to hell.'" She remem- bers seeing Zuroff on TV, talking angrily about Lithuania, and recalls wondering what "this foreign, strong, big Jew" wanted from her country's people.

Nearly two decades later, she came to understand what Zuroff wanted and why it was so important that he get it. And then she became the Nazi hunter's unlikely, and arguably most significant, ally in Lithuania.

As Nazi Germany annexes Lithuania on the Baltic Coast, Reichsfuehrer Adolf Hitler is accompanied by Wehrmacht military leaders and aides as he marches down the streets of Memel, or Klaipeda, to view the last addition to his Third Reich, March 23, 1939.
A teddy bear accompanied Fred Lessing in his wanderings from one hiding place to another during World War II and became a symbol after being loaned to Yad Vashem. Now the subject of a children’s book, Lessing reveals how he was persuaded to let someone else tell his story.

BY DAFNA ARAD, HAARETZ

Fred’s teddy bear is not the most impressive in the world; it’s not even the most impressive in Jerusalem. Its fur is tattered, its gray head sporting eyes stitched together with red thread. It’s skinny, faded, dirty and nameless — and yet it became Yad Vashem’s “Mona Lisa.” This little toy has symbolized the memory of the Holocaust for millions of children who survived, commemorating the million and a half who perished.

The teddy bear belongs to a Dutch survivor, Alfred (“Fred”) Lessing, who moved between hiding places during World War II. He later moved to the United States, with his teddy bear accompanying him wherever he went. In 1996, the teddy bear reached Israel alone and was showcased at Yad Vashem as part of an exhibition called “No Child’s Play,” which was on display for 17 years.

Curator Yehudit Inbar once said that “when I first took him into hiding after a dog pounced on him and tore it off, I was with many Christian families while I hid, going from one to the other. My parents changed my name and dyed my hair, they obtained forged documents in order to pretend to be Christians. For the first two and a half years I was alone with numerous families. That was a very difficult period for me. While I was hid-

An illustration from Iris Argaman’s book Bear and Fred, with “heartrending” illustrations by Avi Ofer.

ing with a family in Amsterdam I suffered from diphtheria; my mother came to visit and sewed a new head for the teddy bear.”

Lessing, who retired last year, was a Holocaust lecturer and psychotherapist and lecturer in philosophy, but “much of my identity is one of a Jewish Holocaust survivor.”

“Although many years have passed, I’m an adult who knows exactly what happened in the Holocaust, when I tell my story I have to remember that I was only a child then, which is why I took my teddy bear with me. I agreed to lend it to Yad Vashem after I was told the exhibition would last only a few months. I didn’t want to part from him, but Bear and I decided he should go. When he reached Israel, a new chapter began in his life. Since the exhibition continued for many years, my brother Ed bought me a stand-in bear.”

THE HOLOCAUST TOLD FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A TEDDY BEAR

BY OFER.

The story of this emotional journey opens Hadoobi shel Fred (“Fred’s Teddy Bear,” but Bear and Fred in English), a new book by Iris Argaman. This children’s story about the Holocaust is told from the perspective of a teddy bear. It was published earlier this year by Hakibbutz Hakinneret, with heartrending illustrations by Avi Ofer.

Last June, it won Yad Vashem’s prize for a children’s or young adult’s book on the topic of the Holocaust. This prize was established by the late Sandra Brand in memory of her only child, Bruno, who perished in the Holocaust. The book is now being translated into Italian.

Argaman has aimed the book at children aged six to eight. She describes it as “a story of a friendship between a boy and his brave teddy bear, in the shadow of a terrible war.” She hopes it won’t be read only before Holocaust Remembrance Day. She enjoyed a long correspondence near The Hague. When I was six, on October 23, 1942, our family was on a list of Jews who were to be transported for ‘resettlement in the East,’ which in retrospect meant death camps. My parents decided to go into hiding instead of getting on that train.

“It was an ordinary day, I played with my brother upstairs, a technician was repairing a stove in the kitchen and our mother called us. From her voice we could tell it was something important, frightening and serious. She hugged us and said, ‘You are Jewish children but if anyone hears that they’ll kill you.’ This was the first time in my life that I heard I was Jewish. She asked us to pretend we were just going out, not taking anything with us, and told the technician we’d be back soon. Never we returned home.

‘I didn’t listen to her and took my little teddy bear with me. It was the only thing I took and the only thing I had for the next three years besides the clothes on my back. The teddy bear survived the war years with me.’

In the book the teddy bear’s head flaps around until it’s better attached. What really happened?

‘He was already missing a head when I first took him into hiding after a dog pounced on him and tore it off. I was with many Christian families while I hid, going from one to the other. My parents changed my name and dyed my hair, they obtained forged documents so I could pretend to be a Christian. After the first two and a half years I was alone with numerous families. That was a very difficult period for me. While I was hid-

HARSH REALITIES

Lessing stops and goes to a baby’s high chair, from which he pulls out a fat and woolly teddy bear, Holocaust, and I grew up as a regular American kid. Toward the end of the 1980s, children who had been in hiding started coming out and telling their stories, giving interviews and meeting each other.

‘The first such meeting took place in 1991, in New York. My wife and I were supposed to board a plane for New York. We were on our way out of the house when she asked if I’d taken everything. I then said — wait a minute! I felt like I had to take my little teddy bear with me. It was like in 1942, when I grabbed it just before leaving the house. I drew a lot of attention by other former children at the meeting. Even though none of us were still children, they all identified with my teddy bear. Since then it has joined me everywhere I’ve been invited to speak.

‘Although many years have passed, I’m an adult who knows exactly what happened in the Holocaust, when I tell my story I have to remember that I was only a child then, which is why I took my teddy bear with me. I agreed to lend it to Yad Vashem after I was told the exhibition would last only a few months. I didn’t want to part from him, but Bear and I decided he should go. When he reached Israel, a new chapter began in his life. Since the exhibition continued for many years, my brother Ed bought me a stand-in bear.”

Fred Lessing’s teddy bear on display in the “Children in the Holocaust: Stars Without a Heaven” exhibition at Yad Vashem.

(Continued on page 13)
LEADERSHIP MISSION VISITS POLAND AND ISRAEL

American Society for Yad Vashem Chairman Leonard Wilf (left) and Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev (right) present Israeli President Reuven Rivlin with a replica of the Wölfisberg Machzor at a ceremony at the President’s Residence.

Yad Vashem curators highlight the document archival process. (From left to right) Shira Stein, Jessica Glickman-Mauk, Rags Devloor, Rev. Mark Jenkins.

Mark Moskowitz (right) and his nephew Sam Gordon pause to reflect on Sam’s first visit to Auschwitz.

American Society for Yad Vashem Chairman Leonard Wilf and his family tour the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow. (From l. to r.) Harrison Wilf, Jenna Wilf, Leonard Wilf, Halle Wilf, Beth Wilf, Rags Devloor, Joseph Paradis, Rev. Malcolm Hedding.


Young Leadership Associates on the Leadership Mission observe the Hall of Names on a private tour of the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem.
Leadership Mission visits Poland and Israel

Leadership Mission participants at Auschwitz.

(Continued from page 1) never forget what happened, and I hope they experience this one day.” At the end of the day, the delegation gathered for a service to mark the visit. Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, director of the Auschwitz Museum, offered welcoming remarks before the group participated in a beautiful candle-lighting ceremony. American Society board member Adina Burian, visiting Poland for the first time with her eldest son Jonah, 16, read a touching letter from her father-in-law Andrew Burian, who survived Auschwitz. The group joined together for a final spirited singing of “Hatikvah,” passing a Torah scroll around and proudly waving the Israeli flag. In closing the ceremony, American Society Chairman Leonard Wilf echoed Chairman Barry Levine, co-chair of the Young Leaders Division, his grandfather’s childhood in front of the crumbling crematoriums of Auschwitz, reminding the delegation what had come together on this emotional journey. “We just came from seeing the crumbling crematoriums of Auschwitz, and these blueprints show the world what we saw and what the Nazis planned to do. I am so glad Yad Vashem by Holocaust survivors or their families. Director Michael Tal and his team, armed in white gloves, highlighted the collection, showcasing complete prisoner uniforms, stuffed teddy bears with secret compartments, and family photo albums that were miraculously kept intact. Dr. Gertner led the group on a tour of the archives. For Michael Shmuely of New York, viewing the original blueprints for Auschwitz had particular resonance. “We just came from seeing the crumbing crematoriums of Auschwitz, and these blueprints show the world what we saw and what the Nazis planned to do. I am so glad Yad Vashem has these documents protected.”

The delegation was privileged to witness a moving Righteous Among the Nations ceremony honoring Jan Willem Kamphuis and his daughter Klaziena Kamphuis-Vink of Holland. The delegation joined Avner Shalev, retired Israeli Supreme Court justice; Chairman of the Committee for the Designation of the Righteous Jacob Turkel; and Dutch diplomats in the Yad Vashem synagogue for the presentation. The group watched on as the descendants of the Kamphuis and the woman they sheltered from danger shared an emotional embrace. It was one of several ceremonies throughout the Leadership Mission that brought many to tears.

The delegation of the trip brought the delegation together. Sharing hugs, tears and intimate memories with otherwise perfect strangers quickly created a close-knit delegation. The group relished being in the Jewish homeland, an opportunity so many Holocaust victims sought for but were murdered before they had the chance. Throughout the three days in Israel, prominent Israeli performers joined the Leadership Mission to celebrate their spiritual journey. The voices of Rami Kleinstein, Israeli Defense Force Cantor Shai Abramson, Dubu Fisher and others brought the group together several times in spontaneous dance.

The final evening of the Leadership Mission provided an opportunity to reflect and look forward. Over dinner, Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, the South African Rev. Malcolm Hedding and American Society Chairman Barry Levine echoed the delegation’s commitment to Yad Vashem’s mission of continued remembrance in the 21st century. In the Valley of the Communities, the largest project the American Society has taken on at Yad Vashem, Israeli Minister of Education and Minister of the Diaspora Naftali Bennett praised the delegation’s presentation in a theme that continued throughout the evening. Mark Moskowitz offered his remarks as the only member to have been on Yad Vashem’s 60th Anniversary Mission in 2014. As the son of survivors, he recalled his family’s knowledge of the Holocaust Remembrance Day every year at Yad Vashem, a tradition he proudly still observes.

Shalev concluded the evening addressing the different contingents that had come together on this emotional journey, from different nationalities, religions and backgrounds. “Yad Vashem is committed to a future in which the memory of the Holocaust remains relevant and the continuation of meaningful commemoration of the Holocaust is guaranteed for generations to come — and you are that future.” As the evening came to a close, the 55 participants danced together, sang “Am Yisrael Chai” and waving the Israeli flag. They left the 2016 Leadership Mission as witnesses to the strength of the Jewish experience destroyed by the Nazis, and as committed global ambassadors for Yad Vashem and its unique impact on Holocaust remembrance.
Zuroff couldn’t make it that day, but the two met before the conference to film a video address. For decades, the Nazi hunter had been treated with hostility in Lithuania, but suddenly here was a woman, small in stature but with an outsized personality, willing to admit to her family’s likely involvement in the Holocaust. (A case file in the Lithuanian Special Archives revealed that Vanagaite’s grandfather, who opposed the Soviet occupation of Lithuania in 1941 and was deported to the gulag upon its return in 1944, had been part of a commission that compiled lists of Jews during the Nazi occupation. Her aunt’s husband, who used to send her letters, jeans and records from America, had been the chief of police in Panevezys and, Vanagaite therefore assumes, helped organize the killing of Jews. A “desk murderer,” she calls him in the book she wrote with Zuroff.)

But it wasn’t until after the conference, when Vanagaite attended a smaller seminar for history teachers who might be selected to participate in training at Yad Vashem, that she gave more thought to Zuroff’s version of the story. She couldn’t stop questioning what she had learned from Soviet-era textbooks — the same narratives she says her children were taught years later that minimized or ignored Lithuanians’ role in the mass murder of Jews. She wanted to know about relatives and neighbors. They snacked on graham bars andixon sandwich- es, always on the lookout for kosher food — no easy task in a country now home to only about 5,000 Jews.

“...she told us of a man...”

“I know it will be very controversial,” said Vanagaite, referring to the book, speaking before Our People was published. “I have lost a couple of friends because... because they think I’m betraying my people, betraying my country, and [they say] maybe Jews are paying for this [project].” Some members of her family are angry that she wrote about relatives and have refused to read the book.

“I feel like I’m on a sick therapy,” she says, “but I think it’s a healing book.”

Their journey clearly shocked even Zuroff, who says that as a Nazi hunter, “you have to make sure it’s never personal, because then you’ll get consumed by the job, you’ll get destroyed.” For years, he was mostly successful in this regard, but the road trips with his Lithuanian co-author were “emotionally horrifying,” he says. “I felt for the first time...that the Shoah had taken over my life.”

When the pair arrived at Linkmenys, the field where Zuroff’s grandfather and great-uncle once lived, he stood among patches of raspberries staring up at the trees. Jews had been ordered to lie face down on the ground before Lithuanians showered them with bullets. As he did at each site they visited, he stopped to say “kaddish, a prayer of mourning. “I do not know what to do, so I move away a bit and wait for him,” Vanagaite wrote of that moment. “And then I hear a strange sound. Very strange indeed. I hear the last Nazi hunter.”

The book bolstered Zuroff’s vile reputation in Lithuania, and in some quarters, it made Vanagaite the country’s most despised daughter. She was given an interview by a TV crew at her home one day when they sudenly demanded to see her birth certificate to prove she was, in fact, Lithuanian (and not Jewish), she says. She’s also been told to “go back to Israel,” and she had to explain to a concerned taxi driver that she doesn’t carry a weapon to protect herself, despite the many vitriolic comments about her and the book on the Internet.

Some suggested the book was funded by an Israeli foundation. Others claimed it discredited the Lithuanian partisan movement and serves Putin’s propaganda machine of Jewish victims in Lithuania, for the millions of Jews throughout Europe who perished during the Holocaust and for those who have become victims of subsequent genocides.

With a burden so great, what would become of him? Zuroff, who had once been a salesman for the Lithuanian State Security Department, insisted, Vanagaite says. Vanagaite was particularly incensed by critics who faulted the book for not including more positive elements of Lithuania’s actions during the war, like the Lithuanians who saved Jews. “I was so pissed off that I said, ‘OK, you know, this book is about the Holocaust, about the murder of the Jews. I’m very sorry that it’s so negative. I’m sorry the Jews didn’t smile when we were killing them.’”

Zuroff helped drive Aleksandras Lileikis from the U.S. back to Lithuania to face trial. Lileikis was stripped of his U.S. citizenship in 1996.

“One blogger wrote in the local Internet...”

For Zuroff, the hunt for Nazis and the fight against Holocaust distortion are seemingly endless, but both are part of a mission he can’t imagine abandoning. “I comfort myself that at least I did not betray the victims and violate their memory,” Zuroff wrote. “If the price for that is the enmity of local public opinion, so be it.”

As he continues to field calls, pursue leads and push governments to prosecute, Zuroff must also grapple with the ways in which his job is inevitably changing. He feels there is still justice left to be served — for his great-uncle, for the tens of thousands

Zuroff and Vanagaite launched their book the day before International Holocaust Remembrance Day in January, gathering the press at a tiny Suburban supermarket sandwich shop in the center of Vilnius. According to Vanagaite’s research, the building was for a period the headquarters of the Lithuanian “special unit” that murdered Jews. Among those present at the press event was Tomas Sernas, a priest...
IN POLAND, SEARCHING FOR JEWISH HERITAGE

(Continued from page 6)

wed seamstress. The mayor was named Friedman. The old woman's father was hired to sell merchandise on the Sabbath. A kindly Jewish physician, Dr. Unger, tended to all. 

When the Nazis arrived in 1941, Borynaya's Jews were subjected to beatings and indignities, with Ukrainian policemen assisting. A girl named Chaika, the grandmother said, came to her house pleading for bread. "My mother said, 'Please eat quickly and leave or they will kill all of us.'" Then in 1942 there were mass executions. In one, two dozen Jews were forced to sing while marching in procession and then were shot in front of open graves.

"There was a large woman named Stublach," the grandmother told us. "They took her and her convoluted child. I saw the child, I looked up, struck by the field's quiet innocence. Here, too, we saw kaddish. Painful as it was, the moment again allowed my sister and me to share our legacy and bring Jewish history closer together. In our version of a roots trip, the bond we achieved along the way, as my sister said, was "one root we actually found."

On our way back, we stopped in Turka, Borynaya's biggest neighbor, and were heartstuck to see that one synagogue was being used as a sawmill, another as a car repair shop. Yet in Poland such buildings seem to be cared for with more dignity. In Łesko, Poland, a well-maintained 17th-century synagogue draws tourists even if it is used as an art gallery that sells Christian icons. So does an even more recent 18th-century synagogue in Lancut, where biblical passages decorate the walls surrounding a Baroque four-pillared haim, or platform from which prayers and hunting for his parents. Zielinski, an 80-year-old Montreal man, he last walked the route as a 12-year-old liberator of Auschwitz and hunting for his parents. When he arrived on his bicycle in his Day-Glo green outfit alongside his son and two granddaughters, his face a jubilant grin, it was hard not to be overcome.

IN A NAZI LEGACY, A SON’S LOVE IS TESTED BY MURDER

BY URIEL HEILMAN, JTA

It's hard not to get emotional watching the superbly rendered A Nazi Legacy: What Our Fathers Did. But unlike with many Holocaust documentaries, the lingering feelings aren't sadness and loss, though there are those, too. They are exasperation and anger.

In the film, British Jewish lawyer Philippe Sands tells the story of two men, both the children of high-ranking Nazi figures. One is the elder Frank, who was hanged in 1946 after being found guilty at Nuremberg for complicity in the murder of Poland's three million Jews. Horst von Wachter is the son of Otto von Wachter, an Austrian who served as the Nazi governor of Galicia (now Lviv, Ukraine) and died in hiding in 1949 while under the Vatican's protection.

Frank, an author and journalist, is well known in Germany thanks to his controversial 1987 best-seller, The Father: A Settling of Accounts, which portrayed his father's character and his Nazi associates. His wife, Johanna,筝ided to the man who became known as the Butcher of Poland. In his will, Frank keeps a photograph of his father's corpse taken right after he was hanged.

By contrast, Wachter holds his own father in high esteem, refusing to acknowledge his role in the mass murder of the Jews, even as Sands presents him with increasingly clear and disturbing evidence of it.

Sands, whose grandfather is from Poland, presents Frank with what we had known abstractly: "The Hasidim tell me I have a Yiddish soul," he said.

As we made several such stops on our return to Krakow, we came to grips with what we had known abstractly: that Poland had been almost depleted of Jews both by the Nazis, the postwar pogroms and the Communist persecutions. There are 20,000 Jews left in a country that once had 3 million, according to Ms. Lieberman.

Yet shards of Judaism are being restored. Part of the effort is no doubt aimed at tourism. In medieval Krakow, largely intact, there are a half-dozen ancient synagogues, some that hold services, a well-preserved cemetery and a street with a dozen cafes that serve gefilte fish and matzo ball soup while gentle klezmer bands play Yiddish chestnuts. While charming, it was hard not to think of it as a Jewish Disneyland without actual Jews. Yet cynicism aside, such efforts restore a sense of Jewish entwined in Poland's soul. As in Warsaw, a New Yorker, Jonathan Ornstein, has led a revival, setting up a Jewish community center that boasts 550 members, some of them people who have discovered that they had Jewish grandparents who harbored them with Christian families and then perished.

"Poland has had periods of estrangement and persecution," Ornstein told us. "Let's take advantage of a good period."

While we were there, the center held a triumphant "Ride of the Living" along the 55 miles from Auschwitz, with 70 cyclists taking part to underscore the hopeful future of Poland's Jews. One was Marcel Zielenksi, an 80-year-old Montreal man, who last walked the route as a 10-year-old liberator of Auschwitz and hunting for his parents. When he arrived on his bicycle in his Day-Glo green outfit alongside his son and two granddaughters, his face a jubilant grin, it was hard not to be overcome.
THE HOLOCAUST TOLD FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A TEDDY BEAR

(Continued from page 8)\n
The plans, including naming a park after Bulba-Borovets as a monument for Bulba-Borovets as competed for five years. In the city of Olevsk, his family's home, there is a monument to the Jews who died in the pogrom. I had found in the testimonies written by the waves of arriving Jews. This was done by the Ukranian government's division force, the Einsatzgruppe, not to mention the Einsatzgruppe D and by Romanian army units.

Iris Argaman told me that it wasn't easy for you to agree to her writing this book. I deliberated for a long time over that issue. I was warned by other survivors not to let anyone else write my story or illustrate it, since you never know what they might do to it. Ultimately I wrote Iris a long letter, telling her I couldn't be part of it since I was the only one who could accurately relate my story — it's important to me that testimonies aren't exaggerated or stay from things as they happened. After sending the e-mail, I went to bed.

"The next morning I changed my mind. I wrote her again, saying that on the previous day I'd written as a survivor but that day I was writing as a teacher. I believe in education and in the importance of children learning about the Holocaust, and that if I'm not writing a children's book about the Holocaust I'll support her. Iris was glad, and her illustrator did an amazing job. When I saw the cover I realized that he understood that teddy bear, with an illustration showing me looking after it and it looking after me. It's so deep. The book is wonderful and moving. My son cried when he read it.

Is it important to explain the Holocaust to children?

"That's a question that comes up all the time. Eighty percent of Holland's Jewish population didn't survive. All my classmates were murdered. A million and a half Jewish children perished. Obviously you don't show small children history books. The prevailing wisdom here is that you don't expose children under 13 to it. In conversations I have with children I always try to avoid the scary aspects of the Holocaust and tell my story in a very personal way, adapted to the audience." In one of the book's pages Iris writes in the teddy bear's name: "Every night Fred would whisper that he misses his father, mother and brothers, that he's sad to be alone, that the world is scary and that he's lucky that I'm his best friend. Fred whispered those things, and while talking to me he stroked his face with his paw. Sometimes Fred shed small and warm tears and I wiped them away." Who is the target audience for such a sad book?

"Iris's book is suitable for any age because of the teddy bear. It doesn't mention the word Holocaust. At the end of the book the war is over and only then do you find out there was one. I'm surprised by your calling it sad: it has a happy ending. It's one of the happy stories about an entire family that survived the Holocaust."

(Continued from page 3)\n
Fred Lessing visiting Bear during the "No Child's Play" exhibition at Yad Vashem in 1997.

pogrom by the Ubort Sich. Makarchuk interrupted as we were ending the interview, "I want to add something else ... down by the river, they forced the Jews to eat grass like sheep. They were beaten with rods and made to go into the water, then drink the water. This was done by the banderovtsy [the Sich]. I saw this with my own eyes. I saw this with my own eyes." His memories matched details I had found in the testimonies written more than 60 years earlier about the July pogrom.

The memory of Bulba-Borovets and his Sich has figured prominently in Olevsk and regional politics over the past five years. In the city of Rivne there are plans to build a new monument for Bulba-Borovets as commander of the Sich, not to mention this summer’s bike race named after the Sich. Olevsk itself has more plans, including naming a park after the Olevsk Republican or Bulba-Borovets; naming a square after Bulba-Borovets; and creating an exposition about the Sich in a local museum (with plans to build a separate museum in the future). There have been celebrations of the Sich throughout the Volynia region this summer. Moreover, the Sich force has caught the interest of the Ukrainian parliament, the Verkhovna Rada. This past April it passed a resolution to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Poliska Sich.

This development on the national stage should come as no surprise to anyone following the Poroshenko government's divisive policies on historical memory. The driving force of this policy of whitewashing nationalist activities during the war is the Institute of National Memory, led by nationalist activist Volodymyr Viatroych, who believes the OUN-UPA (the Ukrainian Insurgent Army) — only saved Jews during the war and did not participate in any pogroms. These ideas are being realized quickly: a monument to Jews of Tompol, Ukraine, near the Dniester River, being defeated to Tsarniñia, July 1941. Most of the deported Jews were murdered in the following days by Einsatzgruppe D and by Romanian army units.

Moreover, the Sich's founding on the national stage should come as no surprise to anyone following the Poroshenko government's divisive policies on historical memory. The driving force of this policy of whitewashing nationalist activities during the war is the Institute of National Memory, led by nationalist activist Volodymyr Viatroych, who believes the OUN-UPA (the Ukrainian Insurgent Army) — only saved Jews during the war and did not participate in any pogroms. These ideas are being realized quickly: a monument to Jews of Tompol, Ukraine, near the Dniester River, being defeated to Tsarniñia, July 1941. Most of the deported Jews were murdered in the following days by Einsatzgruppe D and by Romanian army units.

There has been too little debate about these policies in Ukraine. Ironically, many Ukrainians might believe that Bulba-Borovets and his Sich offer a safe choice for memorialization because they are traditionally considered less radical than competing nationalists. But they would be wrong. The Jews of Olevsk, tortured and tormented throughout the summer of 1941, and eventually shot by the Germans and the Sich together, deserve to have their voices heard before new monuments are raised in honor of those who killed them. If the Ukrainian government is so keen on building new memorials, I would suggest one at the Ubort river that lists the names of the murdered, why they were killed, and by whom.

UKRAINIAN HOLOCAUST PERPETRATORS ARE BEING HONORED IN PLACE OF THEIR VICTIMS

(Continued from page 3) pogrom by the Ubort Sich. Makarchuk interrupted as we were ending the interview, "I want to add something else... down by the river, they forced the Jews to eat grass like sheep. They were beaten with rods and made to go into the water, then drink the water. This was done by the banderovtsy [the Sich]. I saw this with my own eyes. I saw this with my own eyes." His memories matched details I had found in the testimonies written more than 60 years earlier about the July pogrom.

The memory of Bulba-Borovets and his Sich has figured prominently in Olevsk and regional politics over the past five years. In the city of Rivne there are plans to build a new monument for Bulba-Borovets as commander of the Sich, not to mention this summer’s bike race named after the Sich. Olevsk itself has more plans, including naming a park after the Olevsk Republican or Bulba-Borovets; naming a square after Bulba-Borovets; and creating an exposition about the Sich in a local museum (with plans to build a separate museum in the future). There have been celebrations of the Sich throughout the Volynia region this summer. Moreover, the Sich force has caught the interest of the Ukrainian parliament, the Verkhovna Rada. This past April it passed a resolution to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Poliska Sich.

This development on the national stage should come as no surprise to anyone following the Poroshenko government’s divisive policies on historical memory. The driving force of this policy of whitewashing nationalist activities during the war is the Institute of National Memory, led by nationalist activist Volodymyr Viatroych, who believes the OUN-UPA (the Ukrainian Insurgent Army) — only saved Jews during the war and did not participate in any pogroms. These ideas are being realized quickly: a monument to pogrom leaders has been unveiled in Umar; a Ukrainian nationalist pogrom leader — and importantly, decorated Wehrmacht soldier who aided the Germans in suppressing the Warsaw uprising — Petro Diachenko, was celebrated by the Rada last year; and the Kyiv city government just voted to name a street after far-right-wing nationalist leader, Stepan Bandera, to name a few initiatives. "Decommunization" and the invocation of Western or European values serve as cover for this nationalist memory manipulation.

There has been too little debate about these policies in Ukraine. Ironically, many Ukrainians might believe that Bulba-Borovets and his Sich offer a safe choice for memorialization because they are traditionally considered less radical than competing nationalists. But they would be wrong. The Jews of Olevsk, tortured and tormented throughout the summer of 1941, and eventually shot by the Germans and the Sich together, deserve to have their voices heard before new monuments are raised in honor of those who killed them. If the Ukrainian government is so keen on building new memorials, I would suggest one at the Ubort river that lists the names of the murdered, why they were killed, and by whom.
**BELGIAN NOBLES MEET JEWS SAVED BY THEIR RELATIVES IN HOLOCAUST**

**BY GREER FAY CASHMAN, THE JERUSALEM POST**

They are directly or indirectly related to most of the royal houses of Europe and can trace the lineage for more than a millennium. Led by Prince Michel de Ligne, 35 of them, representing four generations from several countries, are currently in Israel to close a noble circle. They are descendants of Eugene, the 11th prince of Ligne, and his wife, Philippine, who during the Second World War hid hundreds of Jewish children in Belœil, the de Ligne family castle, which is widely known as the Versailles of Belgium.

Eugene and his wife were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations in June 1975, long after their deaths.

One of the survivors, Avraham Kapotka, speaking on behalf of the children who had been saved, said: “We were alone. We didn’t know if or when we would see our parents again, but we were in a safe and quiet place, and we thank Prince Michel for preserving the memory of our salvation.”

Prince Michel de Ligne (front left) and descendants of a Belgian royal house meet President Reuven Rivlin (front right) and Jews saved by the family during the Holocaust, Jerusalem.

Rivlin said that Wiesel was “perhaps the greatest example of the strength of the human spirit — a man who gave the Holocaust a face and the victims a voice.”

Albert Pacimora, who came on aliyah with his wife two years ago and now lives in Ramat Poleg, was with four other children when the Nazis began rounding up Jews in Brussels.

A member of the Jewish resistance called the mothers of all five and warned them that their children were in danger of being either killed or deported to Germany. Four of the mothers felt there was nothing they could do to change the situation.

The only mother who thought differently was Pacimora’s mother, Frida, who was also in the resistance and delivered food to Jews in hiding. She was the only mother who came to protect her child. At first he was sent to Waterloo for five months and then to Belœil, where no one mentioned the word “Jew.”

“We Jewish children became very good Christians,” he recalled, “the girls more so than the boys.” The youngsters had to recite their catechism every day, “and if we didn’t do it properly, the nuns would give us a wallop on the ear. I can still feel it after all these years.”

“At the time we thought they were cruel — but they saved our lives, while other Jewish children died.”

**DUTCH MAN AND DAUGHTER WHO HID JEWS DURING HOLOCAUST HONORED**

In July Yad Vashem held a ceremony posthumously honoring Jan Willem Kamphuis and his daughter Klazenia Kamphuis-Vink, from Holland, as Righteous Among the Nations.

During World War II, the two hid a Jewish couple, Henny and Manfred Kurt Lowenstein, in their home and saved them from the Nazis.

The medal and certificate of honor presented to Jan Willem Kamphuis and his wife two years after their deportation.

The extended Vink and Lowenstein families gather in the Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations following an emotional ceremony in Yad Vashem’s synagogues.

In the spring of 1943, Henny was arrested and taken to Hollandsche Schouwburg, the Jewish theater that served as an assembly point for Jews who had been arrested and were awaiting deportation. There, she told the authorities that she had experience caring for children and was transferred to the adjacent children’s home, where she helped the children before their deportation.

Henny successfully escaped from the children’s home together with her future husband, Manfred Kurt Lowenstein. Shortly thereafter, the two found a hiding place in the home of Jan Willem Kamphuis, a widower who lived together with his daughter, Klazenia, in Driebergen near the city of Utrecht.

Despite the danger, Jan Willem and Klazenia opened their home to Manfred and Henny. For eight months, the couple hid in a small room in the attic of the house.

Although Henny and Manfred never dared venture outside except to hide out in the nearby forest when imminent danger loomed, the neighbors became suspicious of the Kamphuis home, and in February 1944, the situation became more dangerous, particularly because some of the neighbors were Dutch Nazi party members.

With the help of the local resistance, Henny and Manfred were taken to another hiding place, where they stayed through the end of the war. Shortly before their liberation, while still in hiding, Henny gave birth to their son.

Meanwhile, Rabbi Dr. Eliezer Dünner and his wife had been arrested together with their children and deported to Germany. Four of them felt there was nothing they could do to change the situation.

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“At the time we thought they were cruel — but they saved our lives, while other Jewish children died.”

The Jerusalem Post, “I wish I...
FOR SAM SHAMIE, A PLEDGE IS A PROMISE

BY ISAAC BENJAMIN

I n the spring of 2008, Sam Shamie and his family visited Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. On a guided tour, the family of four explored the museum and the various exhibitions and institutions dedicated to the Holocaust. Moved by the experience, Sam inspired to make a $200,000 pledge to the American Society for Yad Vashem. Partnering with Yad Vashem, Shamie and his wife Nancy dedicated their pledge to digitizing Yad Vashem’s 130,000-piece photography collection. Just as the new digital library was emerging online, however, the great recession set in.

As a real estate developer in metropolitan Detroit, Shamie was admittedly hit hard. “It really hurt me financially,” said Shamie. The long-time Michigan resident saw his business and the entire Detroit market decimated. The Shamies were forced to suspend their support during this tumultuous journey back to stability.

Throughout his personal troubles, Shamie always remembered his commitment to Yad Vashem. Born into the Syrian Sephardic community in Brooklyn, the son of immigrants from Aleppo, Shamie didn’t know much about the Holocaust growing up. According to Shamie, “Many Syrian Jews didn’t have family directly affected by the Holocaust, and it wasn’t a mandatory Holocaust education their children received. Their children have received the in-depth Holocaust education their father never had. Along with studying the Holocaust in school, the family traveled to Yad Vashem to celebrate the Holocaust experience is unique. “To me, Yad Vashem is different. The rich diversity of stories, the magnitude of the exhibits. It touchingly touches so many people.” As the world’s preeminent Holocaust education center, Yad Vashem remains a priority for Shamie.

This dedication brought Sam Shamie into the American Society for Yad Vashem’s New York office in early April. Eight years after the recession upended his life, he hand-delivered a check completing his pledge. “I have always remembered this pledge and have always hoped to fulfill it. This is fulfilling an obligation.” He needlessly apologized for the delay, but support from the likes of Sam Shamie never needs an explanation. Their dedication to Yad Vashem makes Sam and Nancy Shamie and family stand out as an inspiration to us all.

Sam Shamie actively supports the near-endowment Fund. Jackie, now 14, once asked her father why their gifts are always from the Shamie family; why aren’t the children’s names included? Sam responded by assigning a challenge to his daughters that they continue his legacy of charity and that eventually all Holocaust survivors should attach to their names.

Shamie actively supports the nearby Detroit Holocaust Memorial Center but believes that the Yad Vashem experience is unique. “To me, Yad Vashem is different. The rich diversity of stories, the magnitude of the exhibits. It touchingly touches so many people.” As the world’s preeminent Holocaust education center, Yad Vashem remains a priority for Shamie.

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Find out more about the ASYV Legacy Circle by contacting Chris Morton at (212) 420-4304 or CMorton@yadvashemusa.org.

IN A NAZI LEGACY, A SON’S LOVE IS TESTED BY MASS MURDER

(Continued from page 12)

father wanted a divorce. But Frank’s mother appealed to Hitler, who forbade the divorce until after the war. Hans Frank obliged.

“My father really deserved to die at the gallows,” he says.

The film intersperses interviews with Frank and Wachter with film and photos from the war. Some of the archival material is astonishing, including footage of Hitler and other top Nazis. Sands goes with Frank to the cell at Nuremberg that held his father until the day of his execution. The three men visit the remains of the synagogue where Sands’ own family likely spoke and sang with his family before the synagogue was burned to the ground by Nazis under the command of Wachter’s father.

All along, Wachter cannot bring himself to acknowledge his father’s crimes, offering one excuse after another and relying on vague generalities to rebut evidence that he bore responsibility for the deaths of tens of thousands of Jews.

As a proud Jew, he has become passionately committed to spreading Holocaust awareness. His ambition is clear: “I don’t want the world to forget what happened to my people, your people, our people... Ever!”

Sam and Nancy have embraced this adage as a Shamie family value. Their children have received the in-depth Holocaust education their father never had. Along with studying the Holocaust in school, the family traveled to Yad Vashem to celebrate their oldest daughter Natalie’s bat mitzvah. At Yad Vashem, the family learned about an 11-year-old girl, also named Shamie but no known relation, born in Aleppo, exiled to Greece and eventually murdered in Auschwitz. Natalie Shamie participated in the Museum’s B’nai Mitzvah program, marking her bat mitzvah with the memory of the young girl who never reached the pivotal age of 12.

During that same visit, Sam had an experience that still brings tears to his eyes. “We were at the Children’s Exhibit where you see the thousands of shoes from the concentration camp. I watched my younger daughter, Jackie deep in thought. This is a girl who is very stylish and absolutely loves shoes. She was staring down at her brand-new sneakers and then at the sea of black shoes in front her. She was just stunned by the magnitude of the sea of shoes belonging to children her age who were murdered. All of these people were killed just because they were Jewish? she asked. She was overwhelmed,” Shamie shared.

Just as teaching his own family the lessons of the Holocaust is important to Shamie, so is educating others. As a philanthropist, he has made Holocaust education a priority. The Shamies are part of the Yad Vashem Legacy Circle, having designated Yad Vashem in their estate to establish the Nancy and Sam Shamie & Family Legacy Circle by contacting Chris Morton at (212) 420-4304 or CMorton@yadvashemusa.org.

For Wachter, none of it is enough to change his fundamental belief that his father was a good man who played a bit part in the Nazi regime.

“He was absolutely somebody who wanted to do something good,” Wachter says. “His fault was that he believed Hitler would change his politics.”

Several pivotal scenes anchor the film, each intensifying the effort to get Wachter to come to terms with his father’s crimes. In one, a panel discussion with Sands, Frank and Wachter, the audience turns on Wachter for his unapologetic admiration of his father. Wachter squirms in his seat but holds firm.

For Wachter, it is enough to change his fundamental belief that his father was a good man who played a bit part in the Nazi regime.

“In the third, the men visit the killing field in Galicia where some 3,500 Jews were shot by the Nazis and Sands’ own family members met their fate. Wachter wanders around, maddeningly resisting all efforts to actually attach to his father’s culpability in the mass murder.

“There must be tens of thousands of Austrians lying [dead] around here, too,” Wachter argues. “I see this as a battlefield, you see.”

The film has its flaws. We’re told practically nothing about Frank and Wachter apart from the war, including what they do for a living or anything about their spouses or children. But these shortcomings aren’t central to the narrative.

Near the end of the film, the three men attend a memorial ceremony for Ukrainian nationals who fought the Soviets during World War II. They talk with a middle-aged man who wears a swastika around his neck and tells them how proud he is of his division’s wartime legacy.

Then they run into an elderly World War II veteran. When he is told what Wachter’s father did, he shakes Wachter’s hand enthusiastically, telling him that his father was a decent man.

Wachter, pained for so much of the film, finally seems at ease. He smiles.
A bequest to the American Society for Yad Vashem helps keep the memory of the Six Million alive...

Please remember us in your trust, will, estate plan or with the planned gift. It's your legacy... to your family, and your people.

For more information, or for help with proper wording for the bequest to ASYV, please contact Chris Morton at 212-220-4343.