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THE MIXED LEGACY OF NUREMBERG

BY ALAN M. DERSHOWITZ

This year commemorates the 80th anniversary of the notorious *Nuremberg* Laws, the Nazi racist enactments that formed the legal basis for the Holocaust. Ironically, it also marks the 70th anniversary of the *Nuremberg* Trials, which provided the legal basis for prosecuting the Nazi war criminals who murdered millions of Jews and others following the enactment of the *Nuremberg* Laws.

There is little dispute about the evil of the *Nuremberg* Laws. As Justice Robert H. Jackson, who was America's chief prosecutor at the *Nuremberg* Trials, put it: "The most odious of all oppressions are those which mask as justice."

There is some dispute, however, about the *Nuremberg* trials themselves. Did they represent objective justice or, as Hermann Göring characterized it, merely "victor's justice"? Were the rules under which the Nazi leaders were tried and convicted *ex post facto* laws, enacted after the crimes were committed in an effort to secure legal justice for the most immoral of crimes? Did the prosecution and conviction of a relatively small number of Nazi leaders exculpate too many hands-on perpetrators? Do the principles that emerged from the *Nuremberg* Trials have continued relevance in today's world?

Following the Holocaust, the world took a collective oath encapsulated in the powerful phrase "never again," but following the *Nuremberg* Trials, mass murders, war crimes and even genocides have been permitted to occur again and again and again and again. Cambodia, Rwanda, Darfur, the former Yugoslavia and now Syria. Why has the promise of "never again"

so frequently been broken? Why have the *Nuremberg* principles not been effectively applied to prevent and punish these unspeakable crimes? Will the International Criminal Court, established in 2002, be capable of enforcing the *Nuremberg* principles and deterring future genocides by punishing past ones?



Whether the captured Nazi leaders — those who did not commit suicide or escape — should have been placed on trial, rather than summarily shot, was the subject of much controversy. Even before the end of the war, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau had proposed that a list of major war criminals be drawn up, and as soon as they were captured and identified, they would be shot. President Roosevelt was initially sympathetic to such rough justice, but eventually both he and President Truman were

persuaded by Secretary of War Henry Stimson that summary execution was inconsistent with the American commitment to due process and the rule of law.

It was decided, therefore, to convene an international tribunal to sit in judgment over the Nazi leaders. But this proposal was not without consid-



ative nature of the newly announced laws and the jurisdictional problems posed by a multinational court — there was a fundamental question of justice posed. Contemporary commentators wondered whether judges appointed by the victorious governments — and politically accountable to those governments — could be

expected to listen with an open mind to the prosecution evidence offered by the Allies and to the defense claims submitted on behalf of erstwhile enemies.

A review of the trial nearly 70 years after the fact leads to the conclusion that the judges did a commendable job of trying to be fair. They did, after all, acquit three of the twenty-two defendants, and they sentenced another seven to prison terms rather than hanging. But results, of course,

are not the only or even the best criteria for evaluating the fairness of a trial. Furthermore, it is impossible to determine with hindsight whether the core leaders, such as Göring, von Ribbentrop and Rosenberg, ever had a chance, or whether the acquittals and lesser sentences for some of the others were a ploy to make it appear that proportional justice was being done.

In the end, it was the documentary evidence — the Germans' own detailed record of their aggression and genocide — that provided the smoking guns. Document after document proved beyond any doubt that the Nazis had conducted two wars: One was their aggressive war against Europe (and eventually America) for military, political, geographic and economic domination. The other was their genocidal war to destroy "inferior" races, primarily the Jews and Gypsies. Their war aim was eventually crushed by the combined might of the Americans and the Russians. Their genocidal aims came very close to

(Continued on page 3)

IN THIS ISSUE

She loved him, and he died in the Holocaust.....	2
How my grandmother helped the "Japanese Schindler" save Jews.....	3
Among the enemy: hiding in plain sight in Nazi Germany.....	4
Walking in the footsteps of the innocents of Babi Yar.....	5
Professional Development conference on Holocaust education.....	6
ASYV Young Leadership Associates Winter Gala.....	8-9
Nazis' descendants sing "Hatikva" to Holocaust survivors.....	10
Even in the gas chambers, miracles can happen.....	12
Did the Jew who "sparked" Kristallnacht survive the Holocaust?.....	14
Holocaust survivors celebrate seven decades of marriage.....	16

SHE LOVED HIM, AND HE DIED IN THE HOLOCAUST. NOW HER SON IS BRINGING HIS MUSIC BACK TO LIFE.

BY MALCOLM GAY,
THE BOSTON GLOBE

He's hovered over Robert Berkowitz's life for decades, a spectral promise of what might have been.

He's there in the family album, a composer looking older than his years in a bulky overcoat and fedora, his



"My mother has said: You brought back Lajos Delej to me," said Robert Berkowitz.

mustache cloaking the scar that marred his upper lip. Strolling along a busy Hungarian street, he towers over Berkowitz's mother, Pauline, who strides confidently beside her suitor — a pianist whose collaborators would later be counted among the titans of 20th-century music.

The photo has weathered with age. It's torn in the upper left-hand corner. No one remembers precisely when it was taken or by whom, but it is this moment — this instant before the war, Hitler, and the lethal machinery that tore the couple apart — that has obsessed Berkowitz and shaped him as he followed the trail of his mother's recollections.

"I'd hear the story about how he was courting my mother and then how he entered the ghetto looking to try to rescue her," said Berkowitz, a Natick-based psychiatrist. That noble choice, made for love, was deadly, Pauline would tell her son. "He lived very much in my head as an important exemplar," Berkowitz explained. "He really was the idealized man."

Lajos Delej (pronounced DELL-lay) was a composer of great promise, Pauline would recount, describing the musician's aristocratic bearing, his sensitivity as a pianist, and the celebrity that seemed to attend him everywhere. His works were played on Hungarian radio, his performances written up in the papers.

But then the Germans invaded Hungary. Pauline was sent to Auschwitz, and Delej was never heard from again — his young talent extinguished by Hitler's enterprising cruelty.

Doubt would creep in as Berkowitz, mining archives wherever he could find them, was unable to confirm a single detail of Delej's life. He began to question his mother's tale of musi-

cal genius and a great love lost.

"That was very discouraging," said Berkowitz, 57, a high-caliber amateur pianist in his own right. "She said he was so famous, playing on the radio all the time. I imagined there'd be recordings of him. I found nothing."

Over the past year, however, Berkowitz has embarked on a revelatory journey, reclaiming Delej's life while excavating his musical legacy.

Along the way, he's developed close ties with members of Delej's American family, who have uncovered a trove of correspondence and memorabilia providing an intimate window into the composer's life before the Holocaust, including a handful of lost works for solo piano.

Those pieces had gone unplayed for more than 75 years when Berkowitz premiered them last spring at New England Conservatory, where he is a continuing education student.

"I can't help but think that something about this tortuous, strange journey has allowed me to communicate something about him," said Berkowitz. "That conduit of love that extended from Delej to my mother, and then from my mother to me — does it not carry something that could be communicated in music?"

Life in Weimar-era Berlin had been rewarding for Imre Delej and his young wife, Leonora. As the parents of three children — Hillbrich, Livia and the baby, Lajos — the Delejs were firmly established in the city's more accomplished Jewish circles, holding an open house each Sunday where they hosted actors, artists and physicists.

Born to an affluent Budapest family, Imre spoke fluent French and traveled frequently. His hat factories provided a comfortable living for the family.

Still, the Delejs remained outsiders in Berlin. They never became German citizens, and their dual-minority status made them particularly vulnerable as the Nazi Party rose to power.

The family, led by Imre, returned to Budapest in the early 1930s, but their world would soon unravel.

Hillbrich had already immigrated to Buenos Aires, and daughter Livia sailed for the United States in 1937. Imre lost his German factories the following year, confiscated by the Nazis.

But even as life in Budapest became increasingly fraught, the Delejs took great pride in Lajos, known as "Loulou" (occasionally "Lulu"), whom they recognized early as a musical prodigy.

"You are surely curious about Lulu's exam," Leonora wrote Livia in September 1938, when Delej was 14. "He played 16 compositions by heart, flawlessly!!"

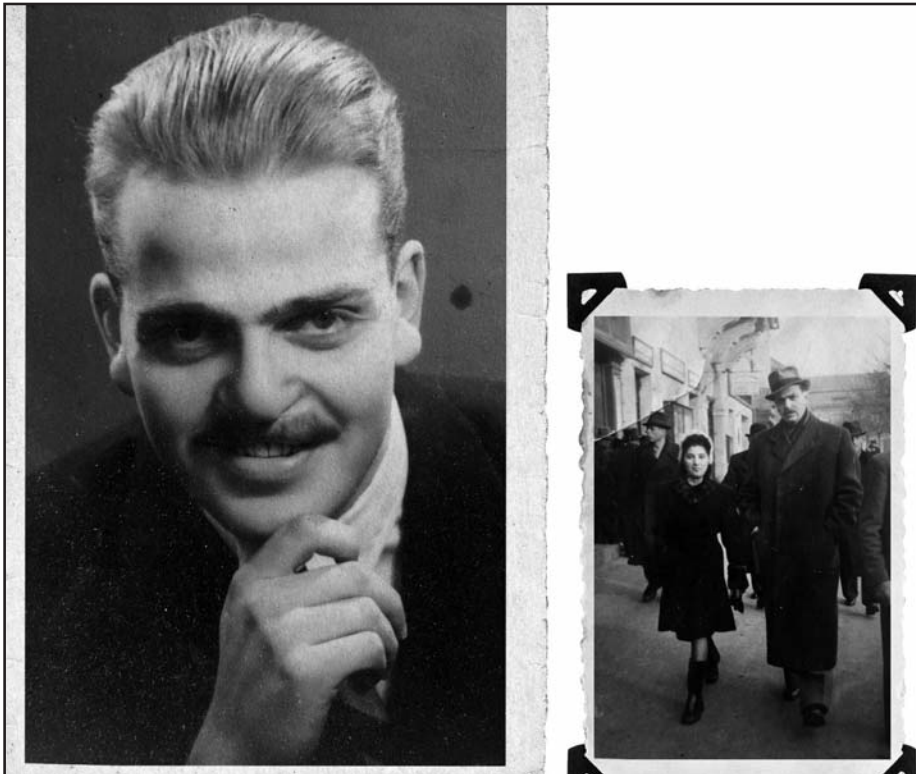
Though Imre was confident war could be avoided, the family was determined to keep its precious son safe, and Delej began learning English before his expected move to the United States, where he hoped to support himself.

"Loulou would like to learn saxophone as his second instrument," Imre wrote his daughter in October 1938. "This also seems to be practical for the employment possibilities that will be necessary for him 'over there.'"

Soon Delej was studying with the esteemed pianist-composer Pál Kadosa, who counted György Ligeti, later one of Hungary's greatest composers, among his pupils.

"Mr. Kadosa found barely a mistake," Leonora wrote Livia in September 1939. "Only in the recitation did he point something small out to Lulu! Do you know, my angel, what that means? He's already absolutely independent."

Robert Berkowitz knew none of this when he and his longtime partner, Beverly Benedetti, visited the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., in October 2015.



The composer Lajos Delej, pictured at right with Robert Berkowitz's mother, Pauline Herzek, from the family album.

Though the couple had visited the museum previously, running Delej's name through its huge database of Hitler's victims, they'd never discovered anything about Delej, reinforcing Berkowitz's suspicions that his mother had embellished the tale.

And why shouldn't she?

Life after the war had been difficult for Pauline, who lost her father and stepmother during their internment at

Auschwitz. Though she later married and immigrated to the United States, her challenges grew when Berkowitz's father, Ernest, entered a nursing home, incapacitated by multiple sclerosis. With limited English and scant formal education, Pauline was left alone to raise their son while working as a seamstress in Los Angeles.

"It was my mother and me," recalled Berkowitz, who began piano lessons around that time. "My mother maybe had the freedom to tell these stories, because my father wasn't in the house."

Pauline confided to her son that she'd met Delej during a piano recital of a cousin — a lithe and musically gifted young woman, the more obvious match for Delej.

"From the minute he saw me, he kind of fell in love," recalled Pauline Herzek, who today uses the surname of her late second husband. "From that moment on, he wrote me and came to visit."

Herzek regaled her son with tales of Delej's artistry. He had excelled at Chopin's "Heroic" Polonaise, so Berkowitz soon mastered a simplified version of it.

"It was clear from the stories I heard that my mother felt she was really supposed to marry this other man, Lajos Delej," said Berkowitz. She

sought refuge in his memory, and the life that could have been hers. "Here she was working as a seamstress . . . raising a son by herself. It's all very hard."

Growing up the son of a Holocaust survivor had special challenges of its own, he added.

"I could sense my mother's sadness, and I think I wanted to attend to

(Continued on page 7)

HOW MY GRANDMOTHER HELPED THE “JAPANESE SCHINDLER” SAVE THOUSANDS OF EUROPEAN JEWS

BY ALYZA D. LEWIN, HAARETZ

The story of Chiune Sugihara — the Japanese consul in Kovno, Lithuania, who disobeyed his government’s orders in 1940 and issued transit visas through Japan to thousands of Jews seeking to flee war-torn Europe — wasn’t widely known until 1985, when Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust memorial authority, honored him as one of the Righteous Among the Nations.

But I grew up hearing Sugihara’s story because he saved my father’s life. My father, the attorney Nathan Lewin, is a Sugihara survivor.

I also have a family connection to something that few others have known until very recently — the answer to a long-unsolved mystery surrounding Sugihara’s rescue of an estimated 6,000 Jews.

Why did the Dutch consul in Kovno, Jan Zwartendijk, begin issuing the “Curaçao visas” — the Dutch endorsements that appeared to permit travel to the island of Curaçao, Holland’s territory off South America upon which Sugihara relied when issuing visas? Why did Zwartendijk begin writing in Jewish passports that a visa was not needed to travel to Curaçao?

The answer: my late grandmother. Peppy Sternheim Lewin, the recipient of the first Curaçao visa, is the “missing link” in the story.

My grandmother was a Dutch citizen, raised and educated in Amsterdam. After she married my grandfather, Dr. Isaac Lewin, she moved to his home country, Poland. When the Nazi army invaded Poland in September 1939, my grandmother’s parents and her brother were visiting her in Lodz, my father’s birthplace. My great-grandfather promptly flew back to Amsterdam to take care of his business. He later perished at Auschwitz.

My grandmother’s mother, Rachel

Sternheim, and her brother, Leo Sternheim, were smuggled with my grandparents and my father, who was then 3 years old, over the border into Lithuania.

In Lithuania, my grandmother sought help from the Dutch diplomats because her mother and brother were Dutch citizens and because she had been a Dutch citizen prior to marrying my grandfather. She initially

tions where no visa was needed. The governor of Curaçao could authorize entry to anyone arriving there.

My grandmother again wrote to de Decker asking whether he could note the Curaçao or Surinam exception in her still-valid Polish passport. She asked the envoy to omit the additional note that permission of the governor of Curaçao was required. After all, she pointed out, she really did not

cially nullified by the Nazi invasion. On July 22, 1940, Zwartendijk agreed and wrote de Decker’s notation on my grandparents’ travel papers. That is how my grandparents and my father received the very first Curaçao visa.

Relying on Zwartendijk’s notation, Sugihara agreed to give my grandparents (and my grandmother’s mother and brother, who were still Dutch citizens) transit visas through Japan on their purported trip to Curaçao. Sugihara issued their visas on July 26, 1940.

The number of visas Sugihara issued jumped exponentially on July 29, 1940, when hundreds of Jews who had escaped to Vilna learned of my grandmother’s successful effort. They crowded outside the Japanese consulate in Kovno (Kaunas in Lithuanian), hoping Sugihara would issue them a visa. Sugihara worked around the clock for a month, issuing 2,139 visas, including to whole families. These enabled the refugees to take the trans-Siberian railroad from Moscow to Vladivostok, and then travel by boat from Russia to Japan, supposedly en route to Curaçao.

The story of Sugihara and his rescue is told in a feature film, *Persona Non Grata*, that had its premiere in October and is now making the rounds at Jewish film festivals across the country. It screened recently at the Washington Jewish Film Festival and was shown again in Washington, D.C., last month as part of CineMatsuri, the Japanese Film Festival in the Nation’s Capital. Although my grandmother’s role is one of the unsolved mysteries in the film, my father was asked to share his mother’s tale after a CineMatsuri screening.

There are perhaps 100,000 descendants of Sugihara survivors alive today. It is humbling to think that it was my grandmother’s initiative and perseverance that opened up this travel route to safety for so many.



The endorsement of Chiune Sugihara appears on the travel document that allowed Isaac Lewin and his family to escape Lithuania in 1940. Nathan Lewin is the 4-year-old boy in the arms of his mother.

asked Zwartendijk, who was in Kovno, if he could issue her a visa to the Dutch East Indies, which included Java and Sumatra. He refused. So she wrote to the Dutch ambassador in Riga, L.P.J. de Decker. He also turned down her request for a visa to Java or Sumatra.

Refusing to be discouraged, my grandmother, who was then in Vilna — a short trip from Kovno — wrote to de Decker again and asked him whether there was any way he could possibly help her family because it included Dutch citizens. The ambassador replied that the Dutch West Indies, including Curaçao and Surinam, were available destina-

plan to go to Curaçao or Surinam.

“Send me your passport,” de Decker replied. So she did.

On July 11, 1940, de Decker wrote in her passport in French, “The Consulate of the Netherlands, Riga, hereby declares that for the admission into Surinam, Curaçao, and other possessions of the Netherlands in the Americas, no entry visa is required.”

My grandmother then showed Zwartendijk what the Dutch ambassador had written in her passport and asked him to copy it onto my grandparents’ *Leidimas* — the temporary travel document they had been issued by the Latvian government after the existence of Poland was offi-

THE MIXED LEGACY OF NUREMBERG

(Continued from page 1)

succeeding. Nearly the entire Jewish and Gypsy populations within the control of the Third Reich were systematically murdered while the rest of the world — including those nations sitting in judgment — turned a blind eye.

The Nuremberg tribunal and those that followed it administered justice to a tiny fraction of those guilty of the worst barbarism ever inflicted on humankind. The vast majority of German killers were eventually “denazified” and allowed to live normal and often productive lives.

Perhaps Henry Morgenthau was asking for too much when he demanded that Germany’s industry and military capacity be destroyed “forever,” and that Germany be

“reduced to a nation of farmers.” But perhaps the Nuremberg tribunal asked too little when it implicitly expiated those guilty of thousands of hands-on murders by focusing culpability on a small number of leaders who could never have carried out their wholesale slaughter without the enthusiastic assistance of an army — both military and civilian — of wholesale butchers.

The Nuremberg trial was an example both of “victor’s justice” and of the possible beginning of a “new legal order” of accountability. Trying the culprits was plainly preferable to simply killing them. But trying so few of them sent out a powerful message that the “new legal order” would be lenient with those who were “just following orders.”

The reality that, following Nuremberg, the world was to experience genocide again and again demonstrated that trials alone cannot put an end to human barbarity. But the fact that tribunals were established to judge at least some of these crimes against humanity also demonstrates a willingness to at least attempt to prevent and punish evil using the rule of law.

One of the most important lessons of history is that for genocide and other mass killings to be carried out requires the active participation of numerous individuals, from those who do the actual killing to those who incite, organize and provide the means. The Holocaust itself required hundreds of thousands of active co-conspirators and millions more of

morally complicit people who remained silent while it was being carried out around them. Not only were most of these guilty participants immunized from prosecution, but many were rewarded with good jobs and other economic benefits. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the Nuremberg trials did not effectively deter subsequent mass killings. Indeed, the use of civilians as weapons of war — victims of genocide, mass rapes and human shields — has continued, with only a few handfuls of leaders and perpetrators prosecuted and punished. The challenge of Nuremberg is to construct an effective, ongoing, legal regime that punishes not just the leaders, but each and every guilty participant in the most egregious of war crimes.

AMONG THE ENEMY: HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT IN NAZI GERMANY

Among the Enemy: Hiding in Plain Sight in Nazi Germany.

By Sam Genirberg. Robertson Publishing: Los Gatos, California, 2012. 309 pp. \$22.95 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

Each and every Jew that survived the Holocaust has a miraculous story to tell, and by doing so adds to the full and complete documentation of this unbelievable event in human history. Thus, Sam Genirberg, in his book, *Among the Enemy: Hiding in Plain Sight in Nazi Germany*, tells us his story and his miracle. Born in *Dubno*, at times part of Poland and at other times part of the Ukraine, Genirberg, a teenager in 1941 when the war came, relates how his devoted mother — grown suspicious of what the Nazis had in store for *Dubno's* Jews — encouraged him to escape. He tells us that what especially aided him in his escape was the fact that with his “sandy blond hair, short nose, and green eyes,” he didn’t look Jewish. No less important was the fact that he spoke a number of languages well — “Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, and German.” That said, Genirberg then relates, and we experience, all the heart-pounding events he lived through, from his escape from his hometown until the culmination of the war and liberation. In the end, the reader cannot help but appreciate the enormous amount of

courage it took for him “to hide in plain sight,” “posing as a gentile under various aliases” “conscripted for compulsory labor” in Nazi Germany. Concomitantly, the reader cannot help but empathize in a very visceral sense with the constant and fearful terror Genirberg lived . . . as a Jew hiding in the very nest of evil!

How, specifically then, does this absorbing work add to the documentation of the Holocaust? Most importantly, the story of an exceptionally lucky Jewish teenager who, all alone, found a unique way to survive the war boldly underlines the fact that Jews did all they could to live, regardless of their exceptionally limited options. Indeed, oftentimes during those terrible years, Jews had to fear not just the Nazis come to murder them, but their neighbors who eagerly collaborated with Nazis. In sum, Jews fought for their lives in any and every way imaginable and unimaginable. They did not “go like sheep to the slaughter”!

Then there is the important fact that *Among the Enemy* tells us more about the tragic fate of the twelve

thousand Jews — “men, women, and children” — who made *Dubno* their home. Step by step, we learn about how the Nazis ordered a *Judenrat* organized there. Then we learn how the Nazis created a Jewish ghetto in *Dubno*, “guarded by Ukrainian policemen, armed with side arms and rifles.” Soon, we read about how 6,000 Jews deemed useless were separated off from the rest . . . and in May 1942, killed. Not long after, the rest of the Jewish population of *Dubno* was slaughtered. Then we learn how the Ukrainians and Poles benefited from

all this — opportunistically looting Jewish homes emptied of their inhabitants. . . . And all this information is related to us by one who was there!

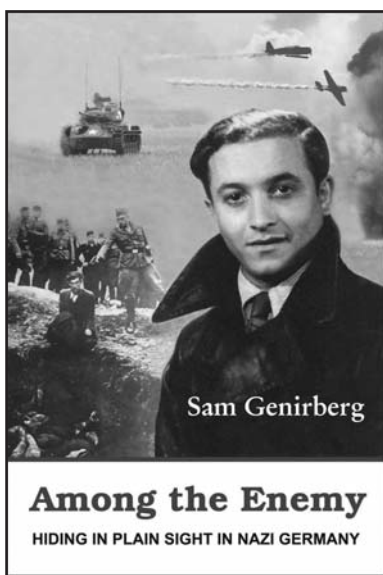
Genirberg also draws our attention to other aspects of the Holocaust and the war that should be a part of the historical record. Interestingly, because he spent his time in Germany, we learn how little German civilians actually “felt” the war. Indeed, they went about their lives even more “comfortably.” One example of that added “comfort” was that

they fully participated in the use of conscripted laborers (Genirberg being one of them). In fact, at one point Genirberg paints us a picture, resembling that of African slaves marketed in the South before the Civil War, as German civilians came to “look over” these laborers brought from all over Europe to work for them in various industries. Needless to say, many, many Germans “benefited” in one way or another with Hitler their leader!

Then when the Germans could no longer deny that they were losing the war, Genirberg tells us how he witnessed Germans rushing to burn incriminating documents. Later still, Genirberg relates how he overheard Germans wishing that the Americans had occupied all of Germany — yes, the Americans were much better to them than the Russians.... And then, later still, there is the comment directed to Genirberg himself, who the speaker believed was German: “Look out the window. Our country [Germany] is in ruins. . . . I tell you, my friend, there is only one thing wrong with Adolph Hitler — that he lost the war.”

Among the Enemy is a worthy addition to the library of books on the Holocaust.

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



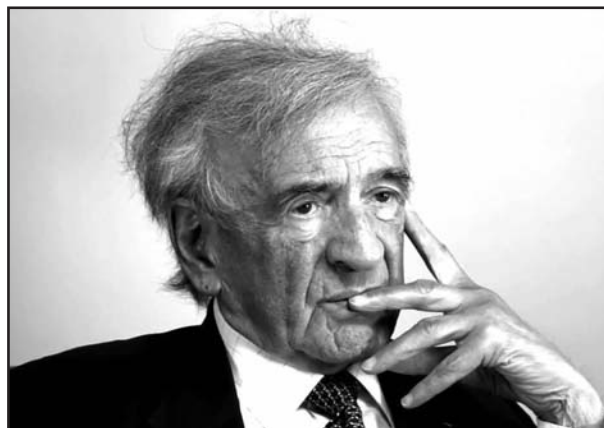
BEFORE ELIE WIESEL WAS A HERO TO GERMANS, HE WAS REGARDED AS A NUISANCE — OR WORSE

BY JACOB S. EDER, HNN

On July 2, 2016, the world lost — in the words of Angela Merkel — one of the most notable individuals of the 20th century. The German chancellor referred to the passing of the writer, scholar and human rights advocate Elie Wiesel, who died at age 87 over the summer in New York City. She called him a “noble reconciler” and an “insistent admonisher,” conveying her gratitude for Wiesel’s efforts to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive. His lifetime achievements, a long and productive career as a writer and scholar, and a significant role in the establishment of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington (USHMM), made him a moral authority and arguably the world’s most prominent Holocaust survivor. The reactions to Wiesel’s passing in the Germany of 2016, however, stand in remarkable contrast to the attitudes of West Germany’s political leadership towards Wiesel when he was in the process of establishing himself as the world’s eminent champion for Holocaust memorialization.

In the 1970s and 1980s, West German officials were distinctly less fond of Wiesel and greeted his advocacy for Holocaust memory with irrita-

tion and concern. The creation of an institutional infrastructure of Holocaust memorialization — exemplified by museums and memorials, memorial days, the establishment of educational and academic programs, and the 1978 NBC miniseries *Holocaust* — permanently anchored



Elie Wiesel.

Holocaust memory into American life. Transplanting the perspective of Holocaust victims into the popular, academic and intellectual culture of West Germany’s superpower ally was disturbing and distressing for representatives of West Germany, who were convinced that their country had successfully come to terms with the Nazi past and should not be continu-

ously confronted with its criminal history.

When Jimmy Carter appointed Wiesel as chairman of the President’s Commission on the Holocaust in 1978, the latter officially became a protagonist of the “Americanization” of the Holocaust and, in the eyes of West Germans, the embodiment of a political and diplomatic problem. In a worst-case scenario, German officials feared that learning about the history of the Holocaust, as told from the perspective of a survivor like Wiesel, might even cause Americans to question their Cold War alliance with the Federal Republic.

Consequently, German diplomats and politicians carefully monitored Wiesel’s public statements, speeches, writings, and work for the President’s Commission and later the US Holocaust Memorial Council. For example, they were highly critical of Wiesel’s “emotional” language and his efforts, based on personal experience, to emphasize the responsibility of ordinary Germans for the Holocaust.

Tensions between Wiesel and the Federal Republic reached their apex in the 1980s, during which time he chaired the US Holocaust Memorial Council. In 1984, for instance, Wiesel vehemently rejected West German considerations to sell arms to Saudi Arabia, an enemy of Israel, calling the Federal Republic a “merchant of death” and the Germans “people without memories.” And, in 1985, Wiesel emerged as the most vocal opponent of Ronald Reagan’s controversial visit to Germany, which included a visit to the *Bergen-Belsen* concentration camp memorial as well as to a German military cemetery near *Bitburg*. Since the early 1980s, the Federal Republic’s conservative Chancellor Helmut Kohl had worked toward consigning the Nazi past to the history books, and *Bitburg* was supposed to send a powerful sign of German-American friendship and reconciliation around the globe. The ceremony, however, at the very least implied a blurring of the lines between Nazi victims and perpetrators, which many, not only Wiesel, deemed unacceptable. In a live television interview on the day of Reagan’s visit, he told Tom Brokaw: “The road from *Bergen-Belsen* to *Bitburg* is a very long one, (Continued on page 11)

JOSEPH GOEBBELS' 105-YEAR-OLD SECRETARY: "NO ONE BELIEVES ME NOW, BUT I KNEW NOTHING"

BY KATE CONNOLLY,
THE GUARDIAN

“It was rare for us to see him in the mornings,” says Brunhilde Pomsel, her eyes closed and chin in her hand as she recalls her former boss. “He’d walk up the steps from his little palace near the Brandenburg Gate, onto which his huge propaganda ministry was attached. He’d trip up the steps like a little duke, through his library into his beautiful office on *Unter den Linden*.”

She smiles at the image, noting how elegant the furniture was, the carefree atmosphere where she sat in an antechamber off Joseph Goebbels’ office with five other secretaries, how his nails were always neatly manicured.

“We always knew once he had arrived, but we didn’t normally see him until he left his office, coming through a door that led directly into our room, so we could ask him any questions we had, or let him know who had called. Sometimes, his children came to visit and were so excited to visit Daddy at his work. They would come with the family’s lovely Airedale. They were very polite and would curtsy and shake our hands.”

Pomsel is giving one of the first, and last, in-depth interviews of her life; at the age of 105, and having lost her sight last year, she says she is relieved that her days are numbered. “In the little time that’s left to me —

and I hope it will be months rather than years — I just cling to the hope that the world doesn’t turn upside down again as it did then, though there have been some ghastly developments, haven’t there? I’m relieved I never had any children that I have to worry about.”



Brunhilde Pomsel.

So what is the motivation for effectively breaking her silence only now, as probably the last living survivor from the Nazi leadership’s inner circle?

“It is absolutely not about clearing my conscience,” she says.

While she admits she was at the heart of the Nazi propaganda machine, with her tasks including massaging downward statistics about fallen soldiers, as well as exaggerating the number of rapes of German women by the Red Army, she describes it, somewhat bizarrely, as

“just another job.”

A *German Life*, compiled from 30 hours of conversation with her, was recently released at the Munich film festival. It is the reason why she is willing to “politely answer” my questions. “It is important for me, when I watch the film, to recognize that mirror image in which I can understand everything I’ve done wrong,” she says. “But really, I didn’t do anything other than type in Goebbels’ office.”

Often, end-of-life statements such as these are suffused with a sense of guilt. But Pomsel is unrepentant. As she holds court, gesticulating wildly, with a broad grin on her face, it seems as if she even takes something restorative from her insistence that she simply acted the same way as most other Germans.

“Those people nowadays who say they would have stood up against the Nazis — I believe they are sincere in meaning that, but believe me, most of them wouldn’t have.” After the rise of the Nazi party, “the whole country was as if under a kind of a spell,” she insists. “I could open myself up to the accusations that I wasn’t interested in

politics, but the truth is, the idealism of youth might easily have led to you having your neck broken.”

She recalls being handed the case file of the anti-Nazi activist and student Sophie Scholl, who was active in the White Rose resistance movement. Scholl was executed for high treason in February 1943 after distributing antiwar leaflets at the University of Munich. “I was told by one of Goebbels’ special advisers to put it in the safe, and not to look at it. So I didn’t, and was quite pleased with myself that he trusted me, and that my keenness to honor that trust was stronger than my curiosity to open that file.”

Pomsel describes herself as a product of Prussian discipline, recalling a father who, when he returned from fighting in the First World War, when she was seven, banned chamber pots from the family bedrooms. “If we wanted to go to the toilet, we had to brave all the witches and evil spirits to get to the water closet.” She and her siblings were “spanked with the carpet beater” whenever they were disobedient. “That stayed with me, that Prussian something, that sense of duty.”

She was 31 and working for the state broadcaster as a well-paid secretary — a job she secured only after she became a paid-up member of the Nazi party — when someone recommended her for a transfer to the min-

(Continued on page 15)

WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE INNOCENTS OF BABI YAR

BY STEPHEN ORYSZCZUK,
THE JEWISH NEWS

I’ve been to *Babi Yar*. It is on the outskirts of the Ukrainian capital Kyiv. The word “yar” is Turkic in origin, and means “gully” or “ravine.” That’s why the Nazis chose it: because it was — is — a huge ravine. Bodies could fill it from the bottom.

That’s what happened. Over the course of just two days in September 1941, 33,771 Jews were stripped naked and shot by *Sonderkommando 4a* soldiers. Most of those murdered didn’t fall dead, however. They were already lying in neat lines when their lives were ended by Nazi bullets. Brought to the ravine in groups of 10 to 20, they approached and, realizing the full horror for the first time, were forced to lie on the still warm, still bleeding bodies of Jews who had just been gunned down moments earlier. As they lay there, they could only wait for the man with the machine gun to walk along the line. Men, women and children were all slain. When bullets ran low, Jewish heads were lined up so that one shot would kill several. At the end of each day, a layer of earth was tipped onto the dead and dying, so that the injured were buried alive.

The Nazis’ Ukrainian collaborators,

by all accounts, were busy shuffling, pushing and shunting Jews forced to stand in lines. Others brought picnics and watched from the banks. Eyewitnesses recalled Ukrainians loading the piles of clothing and valuables that the city’s Jews had been instructed to bring for their “resettlement.” There are no tales of Ukrainians doing anything heroic, or anything but help the massacre take place. And that’s what it was: the Holocaust’s first, and worst, massacre. These Jews were not gassed in a room impersonally, but shot in the head at close range. It doesn’t get much more personal than that.

I went in 2010. I was there to film, while I was editor of a now-defunct Jewish TV news channel based in the city, but my mind was elsewhere. Despite being neither Jewish nor Ukrainian, I have both Jewish and Ukrainian blood. My grandmother, a British Jew who had long suppressed her Jewish identity, married my grandfather, a Ukrainian non-Jew, only seven years after this ravine began to fill. I was reminded of this at *Babi Yar*. Did I have, within me, the blood of those whom Hitler killed and those whom Hitler had help from; those lying in the ravine, waiting to be shot, and those who sat on the banks,

eating their picnic?

It was difficult to concentrate on the filming. In the end, I gave up and walked the vast grassy flanks alone (I was the editor — the others would just have to wait). I walked and walked, through the trees, down the slopes, up to and away from the Soviet-era monument, along the walkways. I wondered how many had died crying. I thought about the children hugging their mothers’ thighs as the Nazis approached. I wondered how, or if, those lying on the newly dead had tried to console themselves in their last moments. I thought about how, in other battlefields around Europe, spilled blood had led to poppies, but that here, in *Babi Yar*, not even the soil had gained. More than anything, I wondered “how.” How? How could they?

We know the logistics of “how” they perpetrated one of history’s most wretched crimes. Days earlier, Nazi posters were plastered around the city ordering all “kikes” to assemble at a certain time, at a certain place, and to “bring warm clothing.” The commander later reported back to his superiors, saying: “Although only approximately 5,000 to 6,000 Jews had been expected, more than 30,000 Jews arrived who, until the

very moment of their execution, still believed in their resettlement, thanks to an extremely clever organization.”

Over the next two years, about 100,000 people were killed there, including Jews, Gypsies/Roma, captured Russian soldiers, psychiatric patients and Ukrainian nationalists, like my grandfather. In 1943, with the Soviets pressing, the Nazis decided to burn the evidence. They looted the gravestones from a nearby Jewish cemetery and used them to form the foundation of a huge funeral pyre at the ravine, which in turn was used to burn the disinterred bodies of the *Babi Yar* dead. The furnaces burned for 40 days, reducing to ash the remains of the many unknown thousands. Still today, Yad Vashem has identified only a fraction of the dead.

If Auschwitz-Birkenau left me cold, *Babi Yar* left me confused, both about who I am, and about who people could be, and what they could do. If Auschwitz was industrial, this was insane, thousands of inhuman acts perpetrated on very human beings, innocents stripped naked, in floods of tears at the end of the Nazi barrel.

I won’t return, but nor will I forget what happened here. Never Again.

FORGOTTEN HOLOCAUST HISTORY IS GIVEN A NEW LIFE

BY BILLY HALLOWELL,
DESERET NEWS

Some Jewish historians’ personal stories of Holocaust plights and survival had reportedly fallen into obscurity due to a language barrier, but they are now seeing new light after one man embarked on a journey to preserve and highlight the texts.

The first-person stories that offer a rare glimpse and perspective into the Jewish experience during the Holocaust were written in Yiddish, creating a barrier for some mainstream historians who were unfamiliar with the language, according to the *Jewish Journal*.

Yiddish joins Hebrew and Aramaic as one of the three major languages that have been spoken throughout Jewish history. While its use was rampant by the time of the 19th century, millions of its speakers were victims of the Holocaust.

Additionally, as *Encyclopedia Britannica* notes, the former Soviet Union cracked down on the use of Yiddish, further hampering its use. Today, though, the language is once again thriving at universities and in other Jewish circles.

While the historical Holocaust texts were reportedly relatively ignored in academic circles over the years, Mark Smith, a 58-year-old graduate student, embarked on an intentional journey to bring their contents to light.

It all started a few decades ago when, out of interest in the Yiddish language, he began to collect rare works to try to preserve and protect them.




That later led Smith, who is an architect by trade, to take a deeper look at the texts — the stories from Jewish historians that he said represent “a deliberate choice” to communicate in Yiddish about what had unfolded during the Holocaust.

“It was a worldwide community of Yiddish speakers to whom they were addressing themselves,” he told the *Jewish Journal*.

Smith, a doctoral student at UCLA, recently completed a 536-page dissertation titled *The Yiddish Historians and the Struggle for a Jewish History of the Holocaust*.

It’s a work he believes could have an impact on the study of the Holocaust era, as the paper specifically takes a look at five historians whose work had not yet been given fair or proper attention, according to Smith.

Those historians were Mark Dworzecki, Philip Friedman, Isaiah



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Trunk, Joseph Kermish and Nachman Blumental. It was after surviving a number of concentration camps that Dworzecki, who was a medical doctor, specifically felt compelled to speak out and tell the stories of other Holocaust victims.

“Those who disappeared have commanded us: Tell!” he wrote in 1948, according to the *Jewish Journal*.

And now that these stories are being given new light, David Myers, a Jewish history professor at UCLA who also oversaw Smith’s thesis project, believes historians will now need to amend their understanding of the field.

“At the intersection of three areas of Jewish scholarship — Yiddish studies, Holocaust studies and the history of Jewish historiography —

one encounters a group of Holocaust historians whose works have yet to be explored in their original context,” reads the paper’s abstract.

Smith wrote in the abstract that these “survivor historians” decided to write the history of the Holocaust “in the Yiddish vernacular of their readers,” but that their work decades later was still “surprisingly neglected.”

The abstract said the work of these historians helps to round out understandings of early histories written on the Holocaust.

Rather than an early Holocaust history focusing primarily on the perpetrators of the event, these overlooked works provide first-person accounts from the victims who experienced the unspeakable horrors.

“Most recently, the gradual transfer of the Yiddish historians’ work from

the community of Yiddish speakers to the larger world of Jewish and general scholarship has gained these historians a degree of integration into the mainstream of Holocaust study,” the abstract reads.

One of the reasons the work of these historians is intriguing is that they wrote both about the histories surrounding the Holocaust and about the Jewish experience, including information about Jews’ attempts to resist the Nazi mentality through economic and spiritual means.

“Generally speaking, most historians who write about the Holocaust are not also Jewish historians,” Smith told the *Jewish Forward*. “Both fields are very large, and you have to specialize, and you don’t specialize in both.”

SHE LOVED HIM, AND HE DIED IN THE HOLOCAUST. NOW HER SON IS BRINGING HIS MUSIC BACK TO LIFE.

(Continued from page 2)

it in an important way,” said Berkowitz. “One of the things I could do was become like the guy she really wanted to be with. . . . My mother will tell you that she feels I was Delej’s son.”

These days Herzek, 94, can be a touch forgetful, but she vividly recalls that Delej once gave her a ring. Though they were not engaged (“it was too soon”), she is convinced they would have married had it not been for the war.

“We belonged to each other,” Herzek said by phone from San Diego, where she now lives. “In my heart he always was with me, and until I die he will be with me.”

At Auschwitz, Herzek was among the nearly 60,000 prisoners SS guards forced on “death marches” while evacuating the camp as Soviet troops advanced in January 1945. When she finally returned to her home village of *Nagybánya* (now Romania’s *Baia Mare*), she wrote Delej hoping to resume their romance. His mother replied that he’d perished.

“It was devastating,” said Herzek. “But you get married and you start your life.”

Herzek later wed Robert’s father, with whom she eventually settled in the United States.

Before leaving Europe, however, Herzek visited Delej’s home, where she hoped to pay her respects to his mother. She found only the family’s housekeeper, who told her Delej had died needlessly.

“He turned himself in,” said Herzek. “His silly thinking was that maybe he would find me. But he was in a ghetto. You couldn’t do such things.”

Delej had vanished, leaving no trace Berkowitz could find in his years of research, looking him up online, consulting encyclopedias, music anthologies and Holocaust records.

Now visiting the Holocaust museum with Benedetti, Berkowitz again entered the composer’s name into the terminal, misspelling it — as he had his entire life — “D-E-L-E-Y.”

A museum employee suggested the family likely wouldn’t have spelled their name with a “Y,” recommending he try instead the more traditional Delej.

Again, nothing.

The staffer went back to his desk and began fiddling at a computer. A few minutes later he turned to Berkowitz: “Was this guy a musician?”

“I couldn’t believe it,” said Berkowitz, who was soon printing dozens of World War II-era documents. “What had been a two-dimensional man suddenly became a three-dimensional person. It was as if he died all over again. I remember . . . saying to myself, maybe it’ll have a different ending now.”

When a package from Berkowitz arrived a few weeks later at the Manhattan home of Livia’s son, Peter Lengyel, there was one question: “Is Robert a kook?” asked Livia’s granddaughter, Kristen Lengyel, who goes by Cricket.

But the parcel, which contained a letter recounting his mother’s romance with Delej, family photos, and a trove of documents he’d discovered at the Holocaust museum, was



Pauline Herzek met Delej during a piano recital, a meeting the composer appears to have documented in a letter to his sister.

too enticing to pass up. They knew so little of their gifted uncle.

“I knew nothing other than he’d been picked up off the street,” said Peter Lengyel. “It was never talked about.”

Delej died when Lengyel was still a child. Though Livia had told him her younger brother was a marvelous musician, she rarely spoke of Delej, saying only that he’d died during the war.

In his letter, Berkowitz, who located the Lengyels online after finding an old US address in the museum files, conveyed his mother’s tale of the composer’s ill-fated attempt to save her. He shared that Delej had died at *Buchenwald* of complications from an infected frostbite wound on February 17, 1945 — less than two months before American troops liberated the camp. He was 21.

Finally, Berkowitz included a letter Peter Lengyel’s grandmother, Leonora, had written to the International Tracing Service five years after Delej’s death.

“I wonder if you could help me in finding the whereabouts of the remains of my dead son,” Leonora wrote in 1950. “Is there some kind of record showing where and in what

kind of grave he was buried?”

“I just started crying,” said Cricket Lengyel, who recognized Delej in the photos and soon began going through her grandmother’s correspondence. “To think of this young man, who happens to be my great-uncle, but more importantly he’s [Livia’s] little brother — it opened up this whole new world.”

Three weeks after Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, Leonora Delej wrote her daughter.

“I would be happy if he goes a year from now,” Leonora said of their plans to send Lajos to the United States. “Lulu is learning English diligently and soon we will, too.”

Meanwhile, 16-year-old Lajos Delej was coming into his own as a musician, giving his first public performance on March 5, 1940. One week later, he dedicated three pieces for solo piano to his sister, a gift on her 25th birthday.

The works had been all but forgotten when Cricket Lengyel discovered them behind the family piano. Had Berkowitz “never found us, Loulou would be gone forever,” said Lengyel, whose grandmother died at age 100, just six months before Berkowitz wrote the family.

For Berkowitz, who has incorporated the works into his repertoire, Delej’s compositions evoke a complicated mix of emotions.

“If Delej had lived, my mother and he would have had children, and I wouldn’t be alive. . . . It’s as if we have mutually exclusive world lines,” said Berkowitz. “This music is just asking for somebody to invest it with a particular way of playing, and I think to myself: Who better than me?”

By the spring of 1940, Delej had begun curtailing other activities to focus on his music, which would soon include conducting as well. Still, he remained a distractable teenager, taking dance lessons, swimming at the pool, and assuring Livia he wasn’t romantically interested in a fellow musician.

“She is much older than I,” Delej wrote Livia that May. “I think now you will be able again to sleep.”

While Delej struggled to find music students of his own to earn money, in time he gave performances and worked as an accompanist through the Goldmark Music School, a con-

servatory created for Jewish students.

“Goldmark was a safe island for Jewish pupils and teachers,” said Péter Bársony, a violist and professor at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music who has written extensively on Hungarian Jewish musicians during the Holocaust. “It was one of the few places in Budapest they could work.”

Ensnared in this cultural milieu, Delej composed his first sonata: a work for piano and cello.

“It is supposed to be beautiful,” Delej, who often penned little notes at the bottom of his parents’ letters to practice his English, wrote to Livia in May 1941. “It is only [too] bad that you cannot hear it immediately.”

Bársony, who during his research interviewed the renowned Hungarian cellist János Starker, said Starker told him Delej had written the sonata for him.

He added that Starker, who died in 2013, told him he’d once had the sonata’s sheet music. But no longer: He lost it in the late 1950s after performing Delej’s music at the BBC’s London studios.

“He was in a rush and somehow he left the music,” Bársony said by Skype from Budapest.

At least part of the sonata appears to have been recorded, and in 2014 Warner Classics released a 10-disc set of Starker performances, including the Delej sonata’s “Scherzo” movement.

“It’s a miracle that Starker lost the music, but through his playing the music survived,” said Bársony, who also interviewed Ligeti’s widow, Vera. The famed composer “considered [Delej] to be an exceptional talent, a genius,” wrote Barsony. “[H]e mourned his loss his entire life.”

In the summer of 1941, Delej traveled to *Kolozsvár* (now *Cluj-Napoca* in Romania), the city where he would meet Berkowitz’s mother, Pauline. He may have gone to study with the acclaimed composer Sándor Veress.

Initially, the 17-year-old Delej found the town’s women wanting.

“[Loulou] writes that there are no ‘pretty’ women there,” Imre wrote on August 9, 1941. “My young boy sets almost unrealizable demands with regard to ‘beauty.’”

But later that month, Delej’s romantic prospects had brightened.

“I have again fallen a bit in love, but don’t worry, nothing life-threatening,” Delej wrote on August 24, going on to describe his reception in *Kolozsvár*. “I had a big, big success; I was somewhat worshiped; it was really uncomfortable, and rather unpleasant. You must not forget that it is, after all, a small town.”

But Delej’s talent was equally recog-

(Continued on page 13)

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE AM

YOUNG LEADERSHIP ASS



YLA Leadership: (l. to r.) Josh Gelnick, Daniella Pomeranc, ASYV Chairman Leonard Wilf, Rachel Shnay, Michael Shmuely, Abbi Halpern, Barry Levine.



Members of the YLA Board. Top (l. to r.): Alex Levine, Josh Gelnick, ASYV Chairman Leonard Wilf, Daniella Pomeranc, Michael Shmuely, YLA Co-Chair Barry Levine, Alexandra Lebovits, Nadav Besner, Harry Karten, YLA Liaison Isaac Benjamin, Susie Nussbaum. Bottom (l. to r.): Lara Meyer, Jessica Glickman-Mauk, YLA Co-Chair Abbi Halpern, Avi Felberbaum, Michael Distenfeld, Erica Distenfeld, Isidore Karten.



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Zoe Baker and Avi Snyder are signing up to research family history with the support of Yad Vashem archivists.



NAZIS’ DESCENDANTS SING “HATIKVA” TO HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

German organization March of Life encourages young Germans to investigate their families’ past, break the barrier of silence and uncover the acts committed by their grandparents during the Holocaust. The activities include marches in main cities around the world under the banner “Never Again,” meetings with survivors and strong support for the State of Israel.

BY ITAY ILNAI, YNETNEWS

It was an emotionally charged moment: A young German woman, the granddaughter of a Nazi officer, sitting next to a Holocaust survivor and specifying what her grandfather had done to Jews during World War II. There was no anger there, just a lot of sadness.

“Both sides of my family, my paternal side and my maternal side, were devout Nazis,” Anna Reiner confesses with a serious look on her angel face. “My great-grandfather took part in burning the synagogue in the city of



Anna Reiner (right), a descendant of Nazis, and Holocaust survivor Yevgenya Chaika.

Darmstadt, Germany. Another grandfather was a policeman in the *Krakow* ghetto. Another grandfather was in the *Wehrmacht*, the German army, and took part in the occupation of Belarus.”

While 25-year-old Reiner describes the horrible acts committed by her grandparents, Yevgenya Chaika sits next to her and strokes her arm, calming her down. It’s quite possible that Chaika, a Belarus-born Holocaust survivor, ran into Reiner’s grandfather at some point. She was only eight months old when Hitler’s soldiers stormed eastern Belarus and jailed all the Jews in crowded ghettos. Together with her family members, she was tossed “like a sack of potatoes” into a crate on a large truck, which took her to the ghetto. She barely survived there for four years, a helpless baby. After the ghetto was liberated, the family returned home, only to discover that the house had been bombed and robbed.

Who knows, it may have been Reiner’s grandfather of all people who threw little Yevgenya into the crate on the truck. It may have been he who fired the mortar shell that

destroyed her childhood home. “And what if it was him?” Chaika says in her heavy accent as she keeps caressing Reiner’s hand. “Is she to blame for what her grandfather and grandmother did? Absolutely not. I love her as if she were my own daughter.”

The unusual meeting between Reiner and Chaika was held recently in the Israeli city of *Netanya*, as part of the activity of German organization March of Life. About 100 Belarus-born Holocaust survivors, wearing caps and glasses and wrapped in their coats, faced some 10 young Germans, tall and good-looking, the descendants of Nazi soldiers and officers. The former spoke about their horrible experiences in the Holocaust, and the latter told them about their families’ grim history.

Surprisingly, there was no anger in this intergenerational meeting, just a lot of sadness and a bit of comfort, for both sides. Not a single eye remained dry when Asia Bronstein recalled how her father was drafted by the Soviet army and she was forced to flee eastward with her mother. On the way, they found themselves in a small Jewish town just as the German army arrived in the area, encircled the town and turned it into a ghetto.

“That wasn’t life, just a difficult, daily survival,” she recounted. “The winter of 1941 was extremely cold, and there was no need to shoot people. They died of hunger, of the cold and of diseases. Every day, a wagon passed between the houses and collected the bodies. Only a few survived.”

The 25-year-old Samuel Haas took the microphone and said, “My grandparents were Nazis. One of them handed out printed propaganda information, and the other three traveled across Europe as part of their job in the *Wehrmacht* army. They murdered, robbed and looted. And as a descendant of these people, I would like to stand on Israeli soil and say out loud that we must not let such a thing happen again. I want to expose my family’s story and support Israel and the war on anti-Semitism.”

Haas’ comments reflect the solidarity at the heart of this event and the agreement that such meetings will help guarantee that horrible events like the Holocaust will never repeat themselves.

“Anna and her friends are reaching out to us now,” Chaika says with a broad smile. “They are very good young men and women. It warms my

heart that they are so cute and that they know it was wrong. I’m not angry with them, absolutely not. I hope that they won’t be like their grandparents now.”

The March of Life organization was founded nine years ago in a bid to commemorate the Holocaust and fight anti-Semitism. It encourages young Germans to investigate their families’ past, break the barrier of silence and uncover the acts committed by their grandparents in the Holocaust.

“For years, no one in Germany discussed what had happened only several meters from the German city centers,” explains Heinz Reuss, the organization’s international director. “Not only was there no public debate, there were no family conversations about the past either. People didn’t talk about what they did in the war. We started investigating our families’ past, started asking questions. Many of us discovered that their grandparents were Nazi criminals. We were shocked.”

Not just in Germany, but in Israel too, there has been a silencing culture about the Holocaust for many years. The main principle of the organization, therefore, is talking. The actual discussion of the matter, after years of silencing on both sides, brings people closer and releases tensions and old hatreds. It aims to guarantee that the past does not repeat itself.

As part of the organization, the young Germans meet with Holocaust survivors around the world, tell them about their families’ Nazi past and seek their forgiveness, promising to do everything in their power so that those hate crimes do not repeat themselves.

In the meeting held in *Netanya*, the young Germans even presented a Hasidic dance to the survivors and sang a modern version of Israel’s national anthem, “Hatikva,” including a rap segment in German, which was met with loud applause. They then handed out flowers to the survivors.

“The March of Life insists that we don’t keep silent again,” says Reuss, “that we speak publicly about what our forefathers did. The goal is to bring together the Nazi criminals’

descendants with the Holocaust survivors and the victims of the Holocaust. The meeting between them is part of our message — to remember what happened not just through figures and data, but through personal stories too.”

As part of the organization, the young Germans participate in marches that are held in main cities around the world, alongside local citizens and Holocaust survivors, under the banner “Never Again.” So far, the organization has held 350 marches in 14 different countries. In 2018, in honor of Israel’s 70th Independence Day, it plans to hold its biggest march in Jerusalem.

It would be very easy to change the organization’s name from March of Life to Walk of Shame. But Anna Reiner and her young friends are willing to swear that it’s not the shame which makes them learn the words of “Hatikva” and perform in front of 100 elderly people in *Netanya*.

“It’s the responsibility,” she explains. “I am the descendant of Nazi criminals, and I am responsible for this matter and for making sure that it doesn’t happen again. Before I knew all this information about my family, I had no interest in the Holocaust. Today, I am breaking the silence. It’s important to talk about it and not to forget.”

Beyond the exposure of the past, the solidarity marches and the personal meetings, one of the organization’s basic principles is unwavering support, some would say fanatic support, for the State of Israel. For example, at the end of each testimony, the young German pledges allegiance to the State of Israel and vows to fight any criticism directed at the country.

One of the explanations is the fact that the organization works from churches across Germany and mainly appeals to young devout Christians, deeply leaning on the Holy Scriptures.

“I believe in the Bible, I am Christian, and the Bible says that God gave this land to the Jews,” Reiner recites. “So I think that they have the right to fight for it. Beyond speaking about my family’s past, an important part as far as I am concerned is to stand behind Israel.”



Dancing and singing to Holocaust survivors.

BEFORE ELIE WIESEL WAS A HERO TO GERMANS, HE WAS REGARDED AS A NUISANCE — OR WORSE

(Continued from page 4)

and I thought it would take centuries for humankind to cross it. And the president of the United States has just crossed it in less than one hour.” Although it was mostly directed at Reagan, the German Chancellery met Wiesel’s vocal opposition with anger and disregard. Kohl and his advisors, however, believed they had been correct in their assumption that many American Jews, especially prominent Holocaust survivors, their organizations and Jewish journalists, were determined to undermine Germany’s rehabilitation in the United States. With reference to Wiesel, Kohl stated disparagingly behind closed

American Committee on Learning and Remembrance to discuss issues concerning the museum in the aftermath of *Bitburg*, its content was never up for negotiation. To Wiesel, the committee’s task was to find “a new avenue in German-American relations without forgetting the Holocaust.” He was convinced that such a forum, had it been founded earlier, could have averted the *Bitburg* scandal. Not only Wiesel, but also many other Holocaust survivors in the United States saw Kohl’s insistence on the ceremony as an indicator that West Germany was struggling to accept historical responsibility for the Holocaust, that the country lacked

because he was America’s “most prominent Jew,” but officially because “with great persuasion he has encouraged people around the world to reach a higher grade of moral sensitivity.... It would be a great encouragement for all, among them the German people, who dedicate themselves to reconciliation.” Even though Wiesel received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986, the year he also resigned from the chairmanship of the Holocaust Council, the museum planners — many of them survivors of the Holocaust — did not accommodate German requests for a modification of the museum. And it was only during the 1990s, after the opening of the USHMM, that the German government abandoned its claim to a co-determination in the shaping of Holocaust memory abroad, as well as its critical position toward Wiesel. In the new millennium, the Holocaust has become a paradigm for mass crime and genocide, the embodiment of barbarism and human rights violations, and the fate of the Jews has been transformed into a universally recognized point of reference for other victim groups. As a result, its terminology, iconography and imagery have traveled and been appropriated, politicized, used and abused outside their original historical context. This universalization of the Holocaust, which we can see in the United States, Germany and many other countries, has also had a significant impact on the reputation of Holocaust survivors.

In this process, Elie Wiesel, who commanded unrivaled attention among Holocaust survivors around the globe, became a moral authority and a celebrity, also in Germany. In 2000, Wiesel gave the official address to the Bundestag on the occasion of Holocaust Remembrance Day, and in 2009, he returned with Barack Obama and Angela Merkel to *Buchenwald*, from which he had been liberated in 1945. Today, Germany acknowledges its criminal history, and its leaders have changed their minds about Wiesel. Indeed, the country’s political leadership actively accepts historical responsibility and openly identifies with its past. It is thus not at all surprising that Germany’s political elites today admire and revere Wiesel, and that Merkel, President Joachim Gauck and many others have embraced his moral message and praised his achievements as an advocate for Holocaust memory emphatically on the occasion of his passing. One should not forget, however, that Germany’s coming to terms with the Nazi past was a difficult, contradictory and long-winded process, which is also reflected in the country’s ambivalent attitudes towards Elie Wiesel.

ANNE FRANK WASN’T BETRAYED?

Anne Frank may not have been betrayed to Nazi occupiers, but captured by chance. A new study published by the Anne Frank House museum in Amsterdam says that despite decades of research, there is no conclusive evidence that the Jewish diarist and her family were betrayed to the Netherlands’ German occupiers during World War II, leading to their arrest and deportation. Ronald Leopold, Executive Director of the Anne Frank House museum, said in a statement that new research by the museum “illustrates that other scenarios should also be considered.”



One possible theory is that the August 4, 1944, raid that led to Anne’s arrest could have been part of an investigation into illegal labor or falsified ration coupons at the canal-side house where she and other Jews hid for just over two years. Anne kept a diary during her time in hiding that was published after the war and turned her into a globally recognized symbol of Holocaust victims. She died in the *Bergen-Belsen* Nazi concentration camp at age 15, shortly before it was liberated by Allied forces.

The new research points to two men who worked in the building on Amsterdam’s Prinsengracht canal and dealt in illegal ration cards. They were arrested earlier in 1944 and subsequently released, Dutch records show. The arrests also are mentioned in Anne’s diary. Such arrests were reported to an investigation division based in The Hague, and the report says that, “During their day-to-day activities, investigators from this department often came across Jews in hiding by chance.”

Another possibility raised by the report is that the raid was part of an investigation into people being allowed to work to prevent them being called up as forced labor and sent to Germany. “A company where people were working illegally and two sales representatives were arrested for dealing in ration coupons obviously ran the risk of attracting the attention of the authorities,” the report says.

It adds that, “The possibility of betrayal has of course not been entirely ruled out by this, nor has any relationship between the ration coupon fraud and the arrest been proven,” and says further research is necessary. “Clearly, the last word about that fateful summer day in 1944 has not yet been said,” it adds.



President Shimon Peres seen awarding Nobel Peace Prize recipient Elie Wiesel the Presidential Medal of Distinction, at a ceremony in New York City, November 25, 2013.

doors: “Mister Wiesel, who came from Auschwitz ... is operating in this matter with a particular severity against us, to a degree that I cannot completely understand, as I wish politely to put it.”

At this time, the leadership around Kohl had come to perceive themselves as the victims of American Holocaust memory and were determined to avert damage, as it were, to the country’s reputation abroad. Perhaps even more so than during the *Bitburg* controversy, they saw Wiesel as an antagonist in the context of the establishment of America’s national Holocaust museum on the Mall in Washington. Kohl and his advisors perceived the plans for this institution as a particular slight against Germany, in their eyes the United States’ most loyal Cold War ally. To avert damage to the Federal Republic’s reputation, German intermediaries tried for more than a decade to persuade the museum planners to integrate postwar German history and the history of German anti-Nazi military resistance into the exhibition concept. They aimed to show that not all Germans had been Nazis during the Third Reich and that the Federal Republic was distinctly different from Nazi Germany. Though Wiesel agreed to set up a German-

adequate Holocaust education, and that this created an opportunity for the revival of neo-Nazism.

Nevertheless, West German intermediaries tried to win over Wiesel, though without much success in the end. Among numerous initiatives and proposals, supporting Wiesel’s campaign for the Nobel Peace Prize evolved as the most promising strategy. An advisor to Kohl noted that, in order to convince the museum planners to accommodate the German government’s suggestions, “we would have to get the leading American Jews on our side, and for this purpose it would be ideal to support the efforts of the most prominent Jew, Prof. Elie Wiesel, to receive the Nobel Prize.” Such thinking was consistent with a specific form of West German secondary anti-Semitism, which suggested that Jews refused to forgive the Germans for the Holocaust, and that they exploited Holocaust memory for political reasons at the expense of postwar Germany. For these reasons, but also out of fear of the alleged power of “the influential Jews in America,” a campaign by the German Bundestag was orchestrated in support of Wiesel’s bid for the Nobel Prize. Needless to say, the roughly 80 parliamentarians who signed the petition did not recommend Wiesel

EVEN IN THE GAS CHAMBERS, MIRACLES CAN HAPPEN

A new documentary chronicles how a Holocaust survivor escaped the gas chambers, a lethal injection and a death camp, and lived to keep a promise to her father.

BY JUDY MALTZ, HAARETZ

Suzanna Braun (nee Weisz) was barely 16 when she walked into a gas chamber at Auschwitz, together with her mother and sister. A rare malfunction saved their lives.

“There were about 30 of us in there, and I remember thinking this was the end,” she recalls. “There was no water coming out of the shower, but there was a faint smell of gas. That was it, though. Just a faint smell. And suddenly, after a few minutes, the doors were opened, and we were all herded out. We understood that something wasn’t working like it should be.”

That was in June 1944. About half a year later, in a different death camp, Braun stared down death again, surviving what should have been a lethal injection of strychnine. But this time it was her own ingenuity, not luck, that saved her. When her turn in line came, she rotated her wrist so that the needle only pricked her skin. “I watched as one inmate after another died instantly after getting the injection shot directly into a vein,” she recounts. “I had remembered learning at some point that when something gets injected directly into the vein it has a much more powerful effect, so

instinctively I turned my arm around.”

After the injection, Braun lifted a bale of hay and used the baling wire to bore a hole completely through her forearm, in the hope of forcing out the poison. Somehow or other it worked, and using the same primitive technique she saved two other prisoners near her in the line and her beloved older sister, Agi. Braun shows a visitor



Suzanna Braun at her home in Jerusalem with an old album of family photos.

the scar on her arm from her crude self-surgery of 70 years ago.

Recently, Braun retraced part of the horrific journey that began in April 1944 when the Nazis occupied her hometown of *Kosice*, the second-largest city in what is now Slovakia, and put an abrupt end to what had been a very privileged childhood. She insisted that her daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren accompany

her.

This trip back in time is the subject of a documentary *A Story in Third Person*. The driving force behind the project is public relations professional Elisheva Braun-Lapidot, Braun’s only child.

“When my mother talks about what she went through, it’s so painful, the only way she can do it is if she talks about it happening to someone else,”

Jewish family. In 1938 *Kosice* was ceded to Hungary. In April 1944, right after the Nazis occupied the city, the Jewish students were singled out, given their final report cards and told not to return to school. Two months later the family was transported to Auschwitz by cattle car.

“I remember getting off the train at Auschwitz, and the first thing I saw was the smoke coming out of the chimneys and Dr. Mengele standing there wearing white gloves,” recalls Braun. “I also remember seeing three people who had been hanged. They were all hanging from their feet.”

The women and children were pushed into one line, the men into another. “That was the last time I saw my father,” says Braun. “I never got to say goodbye to him.”

She did, though, fulfill an important commitment she had made to him just before the family left *Kosice*. “My sister Agi, who was four years older than I, had been ill, and my father made me promise that I would look after her no matter what happened,” recounts Braun. “And I did.”

Auschwitz-Birkenau was the first of numerous stops for the two sisters before they eventually found their way back home in October 1945. But the trip Braun took with her family last summer ended at the infamous death camp.

“As strange as it sounds,” says Braun-Lapidot, “Auschwitz and *Birk-* (Continued on page 14)

A NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE IN FRANCE CIRCA 1942

BY ELI HONIG, CJN

As an infant, hidden in occupied France during the Holocaust, whose father and his father’s family perished in Auschwitz, I grew up with a haunting legacy. Over the years, I wrestled with many aspects of this history.

My mother was five months pregnant with me, and she was left with her two little girls, when my father was arrested in the first nationwide roundup of Jews in France, on July 16, 1942. When I was much older, she told me that once, prior to his arrest, she had removed her yellow star and travelled to Paris from the town of *Château-Gontier*, where our family was in enforced residence. When she arrived she was caught in a large police dragnet of prostitutes and placed in a jail cell with them. Three days later, she was released and returned home.

Late in my mother’s pregnancy, two SS or Gestapo officers came by car to the small town to arrest her and her two girls. In a last act of desperation, she blurted out that she was about to give birth. Since she was very heavy with child, and since the officers realized what a childbirth would do to their Mercedes, they retreated, saying that they would return. Through the

remarkable mind-numbing efforts of the extended Christian Counord-Gardon family, they failed in their mission. I was born, and they placed us in different hiding places for the dura-

search of bodies, thereby allowing for more time to execute our escape.

I have in my possession a copy of a letter from the chief of the French police in *Château-Gontier* to the com-



Two young women wear the Star of David in Paris.

tion of the war.

The Germans, realizing that their “prey” had eluded them, started hunting for us. They even interviewed my midwife, who told them that Mme. Honig was so desperate that she probably jumped into the nearby Mayenne River with her children. When in 1980 I visited the people who had risked life, limb and torture to save us, I was told that the Germans dredged the river for three days in

missioner of police for the province of Mayenne, stating that Mme. Esther Honig disappeared with her three children (names, and places and dates of birth included), and that he had no idea which direction she took. But he assured his superior that as soon as he found the whereabouts of the “fugitives” he would let him know. The letter was dated November 24, 1942. So my mother was labeled a fugitive, and by extension I was too, at the age of

three weeks.

When I was 50 years old, I visited my mother in Montreal, and together we watched a video of the Holocaust interview that she had at the Living Testimonies Project at McGill University. There and then I finally learned the reason for her surreptitious nighttime trip to Paris, where she was arrested and eventually released. She was going to an underground clinic to have an abortion! When she stepped out of the jail, she didn’t know where to go. One direction led to the clinic and the other direction led to home. Then she saw a German soldier across the street, and she said to herself that what she could do with two children, she could do with three. And she left for home — and I was born.

The revelation that I was almost aborted reeled me. But it was my mother’s courage, and the realization that I ended up being the vehicle for the saving of my mother and my two sisters, not to speak of me, that has haunted me for years. Now I realize that for almost two years, we all had near-death experiences, though only my mother was aware of the true danger at the time. As an infant, I could have no understanding of what transpired then. Yet it was surely the near-death experiences that have shadowed me in my cognitive years.

SHE LOVED HIM, AND HE DIED IN THE HOLOCAUST. NOW HER SON IS BRINGING HIS MUSIC BACK TO LIFE.

(Continued from page 7)

nized in Budapest, where after hearing the young composer play his “Intermezzo” (a work whose whereabouts are today unknown), his piano teacher György Faragó was so impressed, he vowed to record it.

Even as Delej’s celebrity grew, the family began working feverishly to secure his passage to the United States.

Livia had reserved him a space aboard the SS *Serpa Pinto*, which during the war ferried thousands of refugees from Lisbon to the United States.

“It seemed like everything was in order,” said Michael L. Miller, head of the Nationalism Studies program and cofounder of the Jewish Studies program at Central European University in Budapest. “The problem was that

tifiably 1½ eyes cry.”

In that same letter Delej’s mood is light, as he finally confesses that he’s met someone.

“In *Kolozsvár* it was perfect, simply excellent,” wrote Delej. “I met a girl; we write to each other weekly.”

Three months later Hungary, pressed by the Axis powers, would declare war on the United States.

So was the girl from *Kolozsvár* Robert Berkowitz’s mother?

Her son certainly likes to think so.

“That must be about his meeting with my mother,” Berkowitz said, adding, “I’ve been knocking at a door shaped like that face my whole life. My mother has said: You brought back Lajos Delej to me.”

Still, the dates are a little fuzzy. Herzek doesn’t recall the precise year



Robert Berkowitz and his mother, Pauline Herzek.

he also needed transit visas through Germany, France and Spain.”

Miller, who has been translating the Delejs’ correspondence as part of a broader book project on Hungarian Jewry, said the family’s plight was complicated by US immigration policy, which would tighten considerably after the Pearl Harbor attack.

“They had to get affidavits and tickets and all sorts of things,” Miller said via Skype from Budapest. “Things were going slower than they wanted, but things were going in the right direction. They never lost confidence that he was eventually going to get to America.”

Imre and Leonora envisioned the entire family would eventually be reunited in the United States. Still, they repeatedly had to extend their son’s ticket as they tried to arrange safe passage.

Two days after Delej missed a September 1941 embarkation date, Imre wrote his daughter: “The *Serpa Pinto* departed punctually on the 12th from Lisbon. The ship should have taken Loulou. Only half an eye is laughing that he’s still here, while jus-

she met Delej, but she believes they courted for a year or more before she was sent to Auschwitz in 1944.

Did they actually meet three years earlier, during the 1941 trip? Family correspondence offers little insight, winding down after Imre’s death in 1942.

What remains are a few pieces of ephemera — newspaper clippings and a concert program from that June, when Delej accompanied Starker in his sonata and presented other works, now lost. Delej won a recital award in 1943, and that December the German pianist Walter Giesecking was deeply moved by Delej’s performance of his composition “The Flame,” which is also lost. “The famous musician loved the piece so much that he inserted it into his repertoire,” reported a Budapest newspaper.

The Germans invaded in March 1944, after Hungary tried to negotiate with the Allies. Under SS influence, the Hungarian government ordered the country’s rural Jews into ghettos, deporting an estimated 440,000 — many to concentration camps — but

leaving roughly 200,000 Jews in the capital.

That July, the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg arrived in Budapest, where (joining other diplomats) he began distributing certificates of protection, or *schutzpasses*, to the city’s Jews. Wallenberg helped establish the so-called international ghetto, an archipelago of safe houses for Jews bearing protective papers.

The Delej home became one of Wallenberg’s safe houses, and Leonora and Lajos were issued *schutzpasses*.

In October 1944, however, the Germans organized a coup by the far-right Arrow Cross party, initiating the slaughter of hundreds and forcing many others into increasingly brutal labor.

“All those Jews who managed to survive in Budapest are now in danger,” said Miller. “The Jews in the safe houses are threatened. Jews are shot into the Danube. This is the worst phase of the Holocaust in Budapest.”

Leonora evaded capture by hiding at the base of an elevator shaft, assisted by the family’s housekeeper.

As Soviet troops advanced on Budapest, Hungarian authorities forced Jews without protective certificates into a fenced-off ghetto, while others remained in the international ghetto.

One week later, on December 8, Delej wrote his mother for the last time.

“My dear mommy,” he wrote in a hurried scrawl. “We are now heading in the direction of the Józsefváros train station, and there is no way to know. Do not despair. Really look after yourself. It is a real pity that I don’t have my gear here. Unfortunately, I have no food either. But, we’ll manage somehow. Mommy, don’t be afraid of anything. Our guardian angel will not abandon us. I kiss you warmly. Living just for you, Your Loulou.”

On Christmas Day 1944, authorities transferred Delej to *Buchenwald*.

Did Delej turn himself in to authorities in hopes of finding Herzek, as the housekeeper said, or was he picked off the street, as the Lengyels heard? The letters are silent. Either way, Delej appears to have been forced into labor sometime after the Germans invaded in March 1944.

“They took our poor little thing to the Albrecht barracks, and from there the wretched ones no longer let him out,”

Leonora wrote on May 17, 1945. “May the good God send him home soon, because this horrible waiting is slow poison. . . . I bemoan Lulu’s piano, which has been shattered into a thousand pieces.”

Delej is not mentioned again until June 1946, when Leonora placed a notice in a newspaper:

“Who knows about him? On December 15, 1944, Lajos Delej was taken from Budapest to *Buchenwald*, and from there he apparently arrived sick at a nearby camp in January-February. Whoever knows anything about him, please inform his mother.”

The saga of Delej goes almost silent after that.

Bárony’s research indicates that some of Delej’s compositions were played on Hungarian radio in the 1950s, but so far only the recording of the Scherzo has been recovered.

Listening to the movement now, Delej’s nephew, Peter Lengyel, is often overcome.

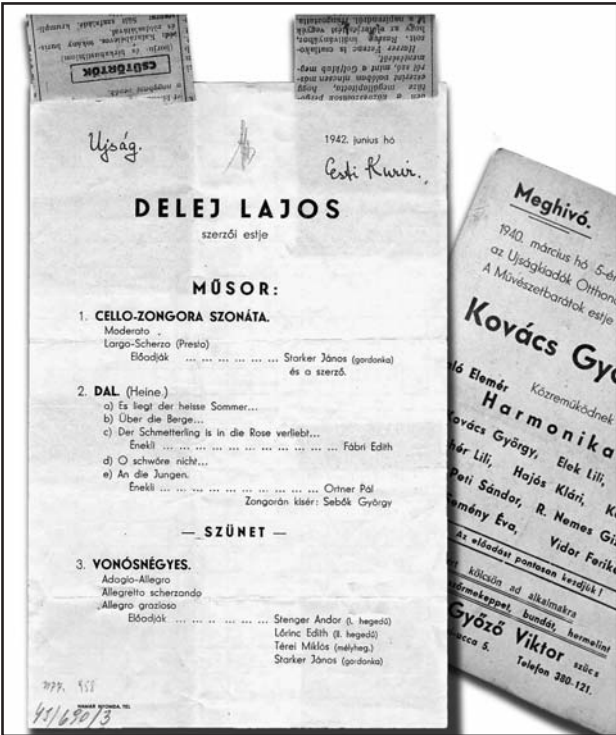
“I think it’s the most beautiful thing I’ve ever heard,” he said. “God only knows how great he could have been.”

James Conlon, music director of the Los Angeles Opera, said Delej’s death is part of a multigenerational cultural loss.

“The history of 20th-century music is written with an enormous omission,” said Conlon, who founded the Los Angeles based Orel Foundation to bring attention to Nazi-suppressed compositions. “Part of the loss is what

could have been. What could this person have become?”

Berkowitz doubts they will ever recover the rest of Delej’s sonata. Still, he holds out hope that descendants of musicians listed in the early programs may eventually step forward.



Concert programs from the early 1940s, when Delej performed with musicians who would later be counted among the luminaries of 20th-century music.

EVEN IN THE GAS CHAMBERS, MIRACLES CAN HAPPEN

(Continued from page 12)

enau was kid's stuff compared to the other things my mom went through, later on. She would not agree to go back to the other places."

After surviving the gas chambers, Suzanna, Agi and their mother were tossed into a truck with several dozen other women and driven more than 1,000 kilometers, to Estonia, where they were ordered to begin marching south. On the road, their mother, Elizabeth (Elisheva's namesake), was shot dead. Devastated by the loss, young Suzanna was unable to speak for a month.

Their next stops were a number of smaller, lesser-known concentration camps in Latvia and Poland, where Agi became progressively more ill.

After they escaped from a camp near Danzig, Suzanna dragged her older sister around on a sled for days in the bitter cold, searching in vain for shelter. By the time Russian forces drove the Germans out of that part of Europe, Agi had developed gangrene in her legs. Suzanne got her to a hospital, where Agi's feet were amputated.

"Through everything I went through until then, I never shed a tear," recalls Braun. "The one and only time I broke down is when the orderly dropped Agi's two feet into a tub and told me to take them down and discard them in a pile of limbs." Concerned that Agi was not receiving proper medical care at that particular hospital, Braun removed her from the facility, and the two sisters went by train to Russia. They stayed for eight months, until Agi was fully recuperated.

Suzanna and Agi eventually emigrated to Israel. They lived next door to each other for many years, until Agi's death. Braun recently moved into a retirement home overlooking the hills of Jerusalem and her one regret, she says, is that her sister did not live to see how tastefully she decorated her apartment. "How I would have loved to show her around," she says, sighing.

Because of the damage to her left arm from the strychnine injection, Braun was never able to resume piano playing, her great passion as a girl, but in recent years, after a long career teaching kindergarten, she has found a creative outlet in needlework and other crafts.

As she tells her story, Braun remains true to the title of the film, sharing the horrific details in a dry, matter-of-fact tone as if everything had happened to another person.

Until the very end. That is, until she gets to the part about the journey with her family last summer. "There I was walking again in Auschwitz-Birkenau, but this time with one grandchild on each side of me holding my hand," she recounts.

And then Braun begins to cry.

DID THE JEW "RESPONSIBLE" FOR SPARKING KRISTALLNACHT SURVIVE THE HOLOCAUST?

BY OFER ADERET, HAARETZ

Did Herschel Grynszpan, whose November 1938 killing of a German diplomat in Paris served as the "excuse" for the Nazi pogrom that came to be known as *Kristallnacht*, survive World War II?

An archive photo from 1946, found recently in the Vienna Jewish Museum, raises the possibility that Grynszpan, who was assumed to have died in a concentration camp during the war, actually survived it.

The photo, found in the museum by chance, shows a group of Jews in a displaced persons camp in Bamberg, Germany, on July 3, 1946, demonstrating for the right to emigrate to Palestine. The only person facing the camera looks strikingly like Grynszpan, who would have been 24 at the time.

German journalist and historian Armin Fuhrer, who in 2013 wrote a book called *Herschel: The Assassination by Herschel Grynszpan on the 7th of November 1938 and the Beginning of the Holocaust*, believes it is Grynszpan in that photo.

"It's highly likely that this picture indeed shows Herschel Grynszpan," Fuhrer wrote in the German newspaper *Focus* in November, after he was asked by the museum to give his opinion. "This photo is a real surprise, because Grynszpan's fate was never clear. The question of whether he survived the war and the Holocaust remained open. Until now."

The photo was found in the collection of Eliezer Breuer, a representative of the religious Poalei Agudat Yisrael organization, who was sent to the displaced persons camp to help pave the way for Holocaust survivors to come to Palestine. The picture also shows an American policeman pointing a gun at the demonstrators. It isn't known if Breuer took the photo or if it had been given to him by someone else.

On back of the picture it says, "Jews protesting against the closure of the gates of [Palestine] in 1946. American military policemen are keeping order with drawn weapons. I protested this and with the help of this picture the policemen were punished. The drawn pistols raised ire and difficult memories bordering on mass hysteria."

The photo had never been published, and bounced around between different locations until it reached the Vienna museum in the 1990s as part of a collection of some 30 photographs documenting Jews in the DP camps. It didn't attract much attention at the museum either, until its chief archivist, Christa Prokisch, recently

stumbled across it and recognized a person she thought was Grynszpan.

"It didn't seem as if the photographer photographed Grynszpan deliberately or recognized him, even though Grynszpan's picture made headlines all over the world in 1938," Fuhrer wrote.

Recently, Britain's *Guardian* newspaper reported that the picture had undergone a scientific examination involving comparisons to actual photos of Grynszpan, and concluded that there was a 95 percent likelihood that it was indeed him.

If Grynszpan were still alive today he would be 95.



Herschel Grynszpan in a 1938 photo, left, and, most likely, in the 1946 photo that recently surfaced in the archives of the Vienna Jewish Museum.

"It's not out of the question," Fuhrer told the *Guardian*. "He could be living under an assumed name in Israel or the United States."

However, in the past, relatives who survived the war and emigrated to Israel have ruled out that possibility.

In an interview with *Haaretz* in 2008, Grynszpan's niece, Malka Grynszpan (the daughter of his brother Mordechai, who died in 1996), said: "Our main proof that he did not live is that he did not make contact with us. He was so attached to his family that it is unreasonable to think he would not have looked for us."

Grynszpan's father, Sendel, who testified at the Eichmann trial in 1961, said he had found no proof that his son was alive.

Grynszpan was born in Germany in 1921 to Jewish parents who had immigrated from Poland. When he was 15 he moved to Paris. On November 7, 1938, he shot to death Ernst vom Rath, the third secretary at the German embassy in Paris. The murder provoked Nazi Germany to launch a pogrom in Germany on November 9–10 that became known as *Kristallnacht*, in which synagogues were destroyed, Jewish stores were looted, some 100 Jews were killed and tens of thousands were sent to detention camps. Most historians consider *Kristallnacht* to be the pre-

lude to the Holocaust.

The motive for the shooting remains unclear. The most accepted explanation is that Grynszpan attacked the German official in revenge for the suffering caused to his parents and other Jews who were being expelled from Germany. But there are some who believe he had a romantic attachment to Vom Rath, and shot him when he refused to save his parents or help legalize his own status in Paris.

Initially, Grynszpan was arrested by the French; in 1940, when the Germans invaded France, he was transferred to Berlin and then to the nearby *Sachsenhausen* concentra-

tion camp. The last official confirmation found in Nazi archives that he was alive is from September 1942. After that, there is no trace of him.

Many historians assume that Grynszpan died in the camp, either from illness or at the hands of the Nazis. But there have always been rumors that he survived the Holocaust and was living in Paris, in *Hamburg* or even in Israel. Some have claimed that he had a family and lived under an assumed identity for fear of being assassinated.

In 1960, a German court pronounced Grynszpan dead, paving the way for his surviving relatives to get a pension from Germany.

Fuhrer told the *Guardian* that the photograph "raises more questions than answers. Not least, what did he do with the rest of his life, and perhaps more importantly, how did he manage to survive the Nazis — was he protected, and if so, by whom?"

Archivist Prokisch told the British newspaper that discovery of the photo might prompt people to come forward with new information, but "we might not like the answers we get," she said. "For someone of his prominence to have survived, as very few others did, the suspicion has to be that he collaborated with the Nazis in some way."

JOSEPH GOEBBELS' 105-YEAR-OLD SECRETARY: "NO ONE BELIEVES ME NOW, BUT I KNEW NOTHING"

(Continued from page 5)

istry of propaganda in 1942. "Only an infectious disease would have stopped me," she insists. "I was flattered, because it was a reward for being the fastest typist at the radio station."

She remembers her pay slip, on which a range of tax-free allowances was listed, alongside the 275-mark salary — a small fortune compared with what most of her friends were earning.

She notes how life for her vivacious, red-haired Jewish friend, Eva Löwenthal, became increasingly difficult after Adolf Hitler came to power. Pomsel was also shocked by the arrest of a hugely popular announcer at the radio station, who was sent to a concentration camp as punishment for being gay. But she says that largely, she remained in a bubble, unaware of the destruction being meted out by the Nazi regime on its enemies, despite the fact that she was at the physical heart of the system.

"I know no one ever believes us nowadays — everyone thinks we knew everything. We knew nothing, it was all kept well secret." She refuses to admit she was naive in believing that Jews who had been "disappeared" — including her friend Eva — had been sent to villages in the Sudetenland on the grounds that those territories were in need of being repopulated. "We believed it — we swallowed it — it seemed entirely plausible," she says.

When the flat she shared with her parents was destroyed in a bombing raid, Goebbels' wife, Magda, helped to soften the blow by presenting her with a silk-lined suit of blue Cheviot wool. "I've never possessed anything as chic as that before or since," she says. "They were both very nice to me."

She recalls her boss as being "short

but well kept," of a "gentlemanly countenance," who wore "suits of the best cloth, and always had a light tan." "He had well-groomed hands — he probably had a manicure every day," she says, laughing at the thought. "There was really nothing to criticize about him." She even felt sorry for him because of the limp he had, "which he made up for by being a bit arrogant."



Goebbels and his wife, Magda, with Hitler.

Only occasionally did she get a glimpse of the the man who turned lying into an art in pursuit of the Nazis' murderous goals. She was terrified to see him on stage at Berlin's Sportpalast delivering his infamous "total war" speech in February 1943. She and a colleague had been given ringside seats, just behind Magda Goebbels. It was shortly after the Battle of Stalingrad, and Goebbels hoped to get popular support to pull out all the stops to fight the threats facing Germany. "No actor could have been any better at the transformation from a civilized, serious person into a ranting, rowdy man In the office he had a kind of noble elegance, and then to see him there like a raging midget — you just can't imagine a greater contrast."

The details Pomsel chooses to focus on may reflect the way she has edited her own story so that she feels more comfortable with it. But it is also conceivable that a combination of ignorance and awe, as well as the protection offered by the huge office complex in the government quarter,,,,,, really did shield her from much of reality.

It was the day after Hitler's birthday in 1945 that her life as she knew it came to an abrupt halt. Goebbels and his entourage were ordered to join Hitler in his subterranean air raid shelter — the so-called Führerbunker — during the last days of the war. "It felt as if something inside me had died," says Pomsel. "We tried to make sure we didn't run out of alcohol. That was urgently needed in order to retain the numbness." She lifts an index finger as she takes pains to tell events in their right order, recalling how Goebbels' assistant Günther Schwägermann came with the news on April 30 that Hitler had killed himself, followed a day later by Goebbels. "We asked him: 'And his wife as well?' 'Yes.' 'And the children?' 'And the children too.'" She bows her head and

shakes it as she adds: "We were dumbstruck."

She and her fellow secretaries set about cutting up white food sacks and turning them into a large surrender flag to present to the Russians.

Discussing their strategy ahead of their inevitable arrest, Pomsel told her colleagues she would tell the truth, "That I had worked as a shorthand typist in Joseph Goebbels' propaganda ministry." She was sentenced to five years' incarceration in various Russian prison camps in and around Berlin. "It was no bed of roses," is all she will say about that time. It was only when she returned home that she became aware of the Holocaust, she insists, referring to it as "the matter of the Jews."

She quickly resumed a life not dissimilar to the one she had had, when she found secretarial work at the state broadcaster once again, working her way up to become the executive secretary to its director of programs and enjoying a privileged life of well-paid work and travel before retiring, aged 60, in 1971.

But it would take her a full six decades after the end of the war before she made any inquiries about her Jewish school friend, Eva. When the Holocaust memorial was unveiled in 2005, she took a trip from her home in Munich to see it for herself. "I went into the information center and told them I myself was missing someone, an Eva Löwenthal." A man went through the records and soon tracked down her friend, who had been deported to Auschwitz in November 1943, and had been declared dead in 1945.

"The list of names on the machine on which we found her just kept on rolling nonstop down the screen," she says, leaning her head back, the fingertips of one hand tracing the line of her necklace.

THE BANKER WHO USED NAZIS TO HELP SAVE JEWS

BY BENJAMIN GLATT,
THE JERUSALEM POST

A year prior to the start of the Second World War, prominent banker Baron Friedrich Carl von Oppenheim convinced two of his friends, the Jewish owners of a metal factory, to move their families and their metal operation to Amsterdam from *Cologne*.

Even though their firm was taken over by von Oppenheim's bank during the war, the Lissauer and Griessman families lived and worked in Amsterdam in relative peace during the first few months of the war. But as the long arm of the Nazis began to reach all of Western Europe, they were in grave danger of being deported and sent to concentration camps.

On September 7, 1940, an official Nazi bus escorted by two German military vehicles commanded by Nazi

officers arrived at the Lissauers' house, and the two families — 11 people in total — boarded the bus. They drove through occupied Belgium and France, and finally the Nazis reached their final destination at the Spanish border, dropping off the two families and returning home. Once in Spain, the Lissauers and Griessmans took a train to Portugal and traveled to Brazil via ship.

"Basically, they were escorted to freedom by Nazis. How was this possible?" von Oppenheim's grandson, Florian von Oppenheim, asked at a memorial in the Israeli Consulate in Shanghai in 2015.

He explained that through his grandfather's high-level connections with the German Central Bank, von Oppenheim was able to get them exit visas, convincing the bankers that the only way the metal company would be able to pay back their massive loans was through frozen funds the families

had in the United States.

"This was all an elaborate ploy, and the funds were never sent to Germany," he said.

After saving the lives of the two families, von Oppenheim continued to work to save the lives of more people, demonstrating to the Nazi authorities that the metal company was crucial for the German war effort, and its workers — almost exclusively Jewish refugees, most of whom had no experience at all in the metal business — needed to remain in the vicinity of the metal operation.

The ploy worked for a few years, but only a dozen were able to survive. And as von Oppenheim continued in his efforts, the Gestapo caught up with him, framing him and throwing him in jail on charges of treason with a death sentence over his head. He managed to survive in prison, and was freed by the Americans before the Nazis could execute him. After the war

he returned to the banking business, and he died in 1978.

But not only did von Oppenheim perform acts of kindness during the war; his legacy lives on in a Holocaust education fund. Today, the Baron Friedrich Carl von Oppenheim Chair for the Study of Racism, Antisemitism, and the Holocaust, founded and funded by the von Oppenheim family of *Cologne*, annually awards two or three postdoctoral fellowship grants.

"Whenever I reflect on my grandfather's actions, he helped save 11 lives from two families," said Florian von Oppenheim. "This is a drop in the ocean compared to the six million who were murdered. But for those 11 individuals and their descendants — it's everything."

On October 10, 1996, Yad Vashem recognized Baron Friedrich von Oppenheim as Righteous Among the Nations.

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS CELEBRATE SEVEN DECADES OF MARRIAGE

BY MARGARET BURIN, ABC NEWS

Having virtually grown up in labor camps, the teenagers were both wasting away when their eyes first locked in the Czystochowa camp in Poland.

"I lost my mind," Sigi says.

"When I saw her, the whole world was turning around me. I saw a pair of beautiful eyes and I heard bells ringing."

It was New Year's Eve 1944, 18 days before the camp was liberated by the Red Army.

"I had no interest in girls, because I was a skeleton," Sigi says.

"There was a pair of beautiful eyes looking at me, with a smile like I never saw in my life."

He approached her and they talked.

Before returning to his barracks he gave her a kiss on the cheek.

"I remember the first kiss," Hanka says as she puts her hand on her face.

That is exactly what she did on that first day, because, she says, she wanted to hold onto it forever.

Sigi had stood out in an environment where the inhumane conditions had left most people shells of their former selves.

"At that time, the people in the camp were terrible," she says.

"He was very gentle."

Over the coming days this new love was tested.

Sigi had been working in the munitions workshop making bullets for the Nazi German army.

He says he had been sabotaging the factory line — making bullets too small for the gun barrels.

When he received word that the Gestapo was looking for him, he found a hiding spot in a nearby abandoned construction site.

He says only Hanka knew where he was hiding.

"We are free."

The next day they were married.

The year after, Hanka gave birth to the first of their two daughters, Evelyne, the first baby born to Holocaust survivors in Sigi's home town of Katowice after the war.

Having moved to Australia in 1971, it wasn't until their 50th wedding anniversary that the couple had a proper wedding, in their daughter's Melbourne backyard.

"We've achieved a lot," Sigi says.

"We've got so many grandchildren and great-grandchildren."

"She charmed me. That was that, the rest was history."

Unlike Hanka and Sigi, only a handful of their classmates survived the Holocaust.

Their great-grandson's school, Bialik College, is currently collecting 1.5 million buttons to honor the children who were murdered under the Nazi regime.

Sigi is donating 180 buttons to the project this month, to represent the family he lost in the Holocaust.

The doting couple, aged 91 and 93, have already had their gravestones prepared, side by side, for when they leave this world.

The inscription also commemorates their immediate family who were never given a grave.

"We are inviting the souls of our exterminated family to rest in our grave."



Melbourne couple Sigi, 93, and Hanka, 91, say after all of these years they are still very much in love.

"She was the only person I could trust my life with," he says.

Hanka says she risked her life to keep him alive — smuggling him small pieces of her bread ration and a blanket that she had made to keep him warm on -15 degree nights.

Then one night, she came for a second visit.

This time she was smiling and had her arms out.

The camp was being liberated.

"They're gone," she told him.

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