

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



Vol. 43-No. 2

ISSN 0892-1571

November/December 2016-Kislev/Tevet 5777

The American & International Societies for Yad Vashem Annual Tribute Dinner

HONORING RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

On Sunday, November 13th, the American Society for Yad Vashem (ASYV) hosted its Annual Tribute Dinner in New York City. Representatives from Yad Vashem, international dignitaries and the American Society's community of supporters gathered at the Pierre Hotel for a memorable program honoring Righteous Among the Nations. Led by Co-Chairs Mark Moskowitz and Phil and Rose Friedman, the spirited evening was the largest fundraiser in ASYV's thirty-five-year history, raising more than \$1.3 million in support of Yad Vashem.

The evening's program profiled four families touched by Righteous Among the Nations. In the 1930s and 1940s, most Europeans stood silently by as the Jews of Europe faced increased discrimination and persecution at the hands of the Nazis. However, there were a select few who risked everything and courageously chose to help Jews survive the Holocaust. Since 1953, Yad Vashem and the State of Israel have awarded more than 26,000 of these individuals the honorary title of Righteous Among the Nations. In his opening remarks, ASYV Chairman Leonard A. Wilf spoke to the significance of the Righteous Among the Nations. "Yad Vashem is committed to ensuring that these examples of extraordinary

heroism and human decency remain a light for us all in remembering the darkest chapter in the history of the Jewish people."

Along with recognizing the Righteous Among the Nations, the

Relations Division; and Michael Fisher, director of the American Desk, attended as part of the Israeli delegation, catching up with the many American supporters who frequently visit Yad Vashem.

Wiesel, z"l, calling the Nobel Laureate "a representative of Yad Vashem and the Jewish people, and a steward of the world's moral compass." The tribute to Joseph Wilf, z"l, and the other survivors of the Holocaust who had helped found and continually supported the American Society for Yad Vashem was a poignant moment of reflection.

Founder of ASYV and Yad Vashem Benefactor Sima Katz of Roslyn, New York, was honored with the ASYV Leadership Award. Her granddaughter, Rebecca Levy, shared Sima's harrowing journey of survival during the Holocaust with the help of a Lithuanian Christian family. She explained how her grandparents, Sima and Nathan, z"l, returned to Lithuania after the war to find the family who rescued them and sent testimony to Yad Vashem advocating that the Žilevičius family be awarded the title of Righteous Among the Nations. The families



Sima Katz, 2016 Annual Tribute Dinner honoree (center); (L to R) Rebecca Levy, Rita Levy, Matthew Levy and David Levy.

Tribute Dinner emphasized the important work of Yad Vashem. Starting with a powerful message thanking American supporters by Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev, the program was sprinkled with video vignettes highlighting Yad Vashem's efforts and future plans. Director General of Yad Vashem Dorit Novak; Shaya Ben Yehuda, managing director of the International

The master of ceremonies for the program was Michael Bernardi, currently performing as Mordcha the innkeeper in *Fiddler on the Roof* on Broadway. Bernardi's father, Herschel Bernardi, famously played Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* on Broadway and on many national tours. Coming straight from a Sunday matinee performance, Bernardi explained his perspective to the crowd. "I am reminded how precious Jewish culture is. That telling the stories of Sholem Aleichem, when so much Jewish expression has been destroyed, is in itself a miracle. *Fiddler* embodies the principles of Jewish identity that have survived."

The Tribute Dinner offered our guests an opportunity to mark the passing of notable leaders within the ASYV community within the past year. ASYV Treasurer David Halpern presented a stirring tribute to Elie

embraced at Rebecca's bat mitzvah celebration 17 years ago, in the very same ballroom at the Pierre Hotel.

After the presentation of the Leadership Award, Bernardi again took the stage to praise Katz for her lifetime devotion to promoting Holocaust education before dedicating a rousing performance of "If I Were a Rich Man" to her. As Bernardi performed with animated gusto, the crowd of more than 500 clapped along to the legendary song of Tevye the Milkman.

The program posthumously honored Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds and Lois Gunden, the 4th and 5th Americans ever to be recognized as Righteous Among the Nations. Mary Jean Gunden spoke of the bravery and compassion of her aunt, Lois Gunden, who saved the lives of dozens of Jewish children in

(Continued on page 2)

IN THIS ISSUE

The ASYV Annual Tribute Dinner.....	1,2,8-9
The Holocaust train that led Jews to freedom instead of death.....	3
Hitler's vile cretins.....	4
The long, twisted shadow cast by Nazi medical experiments.....	5
Jewish Avengers unapologetic for targeting Nazis after WWII.....	6
When a Holocaust survivor pissed on Hitler's henchman.....	7
"They laughed by day and cried at night".....	10
"If I sleep for an hour, 30 people will die".....	12
The teenage girl who documented the last days of <i>Theresienstadt</i>	14
Historical "burden" shared by third generation.....	16

HONORING RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

(Continued from page 1)

France. Lois Gunden never told her family of her heroism. As Mary Jean learned after her aunt had passed away, the late Gunden had convinced, sometimes pleaded with, parents to entrust her with their children to increase their chances for survival.

Pastor Chris Edmonds told the story of his father's awe-inspiring service during World War II. It was not until after his father's death that the family learned of his immense heroism while imprisoned in the German Stalag IX A POW camp, where he boldly stood up to Nazi captors and saved the lives of hundreds of American Jewish soldiers. Edmonds was the first, and only, U.S. soldier ever to receive this

esteemed honor. ASYV Executive Director Ron Meier introduced the junior Edmonds, saying, "Pastor Chris says his father was an ordinary man thrust into an extraordinary moment: a moment that expressed his faith in God, fixed his duty to comrades, and demonstrated his infectious love for all." Both Edmonds and Gunden were honored in January at a historic ceremony at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C. President Obama joined ASYV, Yad Vashem and Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer at the first ceremony recognizing American Righteous Among the Nations in the United States.

The evening's featured speaker provided another testament to Yad Vashem's worldwide influence. Sara

Pechanec was the daughter of the first Muslim couple ever to be recognized as Righteous Among the Nations. During World War II, her family had risked their lives to shelter four Jewish neighbors, the Kabilio family, from Nazi persecution in Sarajevo. Fifty years after the Holocaust, when Sarajevo was under the attack of Serbian forces, Pechanec and her husband, daughter, and mother, Zejneba, found themselves in great distress. With the help of the Joint Distribution Committee, Yad Vashem successfully appealed to the president of Bosnia to permit the family to come to Israel. Since coming to Israel, Pechanec and her family have converted to Judaism, and she now

works at Yad Vashem.

The entire evening was a beautiful tribute to Yad Vashem from the ASYV community of supporters. Since its inception, American donors have continually made up the largest source of funding for Yad Vashem's annual budget outside of the Israeli government. Pechanec concluded her emotional address, echoing the sentiment felt all evening:

"When people think of Yad Vashem, they might make the mistake of thinking it is just a museum. As if it only speaks of history. I hope that my story shows a different side of Yad Vashem. The side that is not of a past, but of a future. The side that not only remembers the history, but shapes and creates the future."

BEYOND ANNE FRANK: DUTCH TELL THEIR FULL HOLOCAUST STORY

BY NINA SIEGAL,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

Anne Frank is only part of the story.

The diary of the young Jewish girl who came of age hiding from the Nazis in Amsterdam has long been the dominant narrative of the Netherlands' experience during World War II. Hers is a story of inspiration and resistance that in many ways the Dutch have promoted and chosen to remember.

But the rest of the story of the Holocaust in the Netherlands has gone largely untold, and survivors and others fear it is in danger of being forever forgotten.

So it was that after a 10-year struggle, the Amsterdam City Council approved a location for a memorial wall for the roughly 102,000 Dutch Jewish victims of the Nazis. The decision coincided with the opening of a National Holocaust Museum, a separate and sometimes competing effort to build a permanent home in Amsterdam for exhibitions about the Holocaust and other genocides.

Together the new projects reflect a movement among a second and third generation of postwar Dutch Jewish leaders to balance what they feel may be an incomplete, or even distorted, understanding of what happened during the five years of Nazi occupation of the Netherlands.

"When I talk to younger people, I tell them I'm the same as Anne Frank," said Jacques Grishaver, 74, another "hidden child," who was born in Amsterdam in 1942. "That's always where I start, because I want to tell them that it wasn't only Anne Frank. There were more."

Grishaver may have lost as many as 50 relatives to the Nazi extermination. Today he is the chairman of the Auschwitz Committee, which led the fight for the memorial wall.

Between 75 percent and 80 percent of Jews in the Netherlands were killed during the war, the highest rate in Western Europe.

Although about 150,000 Jews were living in the Netherlands in 1940, including about 25,000 German Jews who had come as refugees, only about 15,000 were counted during the postwar census of 1947.



Jewish school children wearing a yellow Star of David in 1942 Holland.

By comparison, neighboring Belgium lost about 40 percent of its Jewish population, and France lost about 25 percent.

From the start, the push for a memorial to honor these victims had the support of Daniel Libeskind, the Polish-American architect of the Ground Zero Master Plan in New York and the Jewish Museum Berlin.

Libeskind, who was visiting Amsterdam in 2011 to deliver an annual "never again" lecture for the Auschwitz Committee, learned of the plans and volunteered to design the wall before a budget had even been established.

He conceived of the wall's illuminated names, he said in a telephone interview, "to write the names back into the book of life, out of the book of forgetting and into the book of the mind, of the heart and the soul of Amsterdam, of Holland."

"All the major cities of Europe have Holocaust memorials, and Amsterdam is really one of the last," he said. "I think it's one of the most important projects, because so much happened there."

"We know most of it only from the Anne Frank diary, and most people associate the story with that incredible document," he added. "But when

Nazis used as a deportation center and is now a museum and remembrance chapel.

It was also in this neighborhood that the Nazis consolidated the Netherlands' Jews before deporting them to concentration camps.

Beginning in 1943, about 34,000 Dutch Jews were sent to the Sobibor death camp in Poland, and only 18 survived, said Maarten Eddes, the chairman of the Sobibor Foundation in the Netherlands. This relatively unknown camp accounted for about a third of the Dutch Jewish victims of the Holocaust, Eddes said, and Auschwitz accounted for most of the others.

For many, the approval of the memorial was made more poignant by the death of the Holocaust survivor and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel.

"The generation of survivors is dying on us, and we no longer have them to tell the story," said Emile Schrijver, the general director of the Jewish Historical Museum and the Jewish Cultural Quarter in Amsterdam.

"We have to keep telling the story for them, lest we forget," he said.

One reason these stories have not been given a public showcase until now is that people may have preferred to forget, said Karel Berkhoff, a senior researcher at the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam.

"There was a sense that this was an ugly past and we needed to cleanse ourselves of it, and this was sometimes even an attitude among survivors," he said.

Grishaver, who was 3 when he left his hiding place, said 71 years was a long time to wait for any kind of large-scale commemoration.

"It's time," he said. "We have a lot of people the same age as Elie Wiesel who pray that the monument will be built before they die so that they can touch the names of their relatives."

THE HOLOCAUST TRAIN THAT LED JEWS TO FREEDOM INSTEAD OF DEATH

After stumbling upon an amazing photograph at a WWII veteran's home, a history teacher from a small New York town embarks on a search to discover the extraordinary rescue story behind it.

BY OFER ADERET, HAARETZ

In 2001, Matt Rozell, a high school history teacher in the upstate New York town of Hudson Falls, had concluded another successful interview for his project of documenting World War II veterans. He'd spent two riveting hours with 80-year-old Carrol Walsh, a retired judge and the grandfather of one of his students. In the war, Walsh was a tank commander with the U.S. Army. As Rozell was packing up his equipment and getting ready to leave, Walsh's daughter, Elizabeth, came into the living room and asked her father whether he'd told Rozell about the train.

"It's a pretty interesting story," she added.



Still-unknown women, moments after liberation, April 13, 1945.

"Ah, right, the train," Walsh said.

Rozell didn't know it, but he was about to embark on an international historical adventure in the wake of an extraordinary story of rescue and survival. In its course, he was to discover one of the war's most powerful and jolting photographs, which for decades had lain, forgotten, in a shoebox in a San Diego, California, home.

Rozell's book, *A Train Near Magdeburg*, subtitled *A Teacher's Journey into the Holocaust and the Reuniting of the Survivors and Liberators, 70 Years On*, documents the story behind the powerful photograph that came into his possession.

In the center of the image is a woman holding the hand of a little girl, possibly a mother and her daughter. The woman is wearing a kerchief. The expression on her face is an amalgam of fright, sadness, surprise and joy.

Both the woman and the girl are well dressed — not as we might expect of people who had just been liberated from a death train that had set out from a concentration camp.

"No written words can describe so vividly the events of that day as this picture does," Rozell told me, via an email interview. The historical events relating to the picture came to light thanks to several memoirs written by survivors who witnessed them, but Rozell was the first person, other than a few elderly American war veterans, who saw the photograph itself. In recent years, thanks to his efforts, it has become one of the best-known and most talked-about images of the Holocaust.

The story behind the photograph dates to early April 1945, just a few days before the liberation of the *Bergen-Belsen* concentration camp in Germany. The Nazis were in a hurry to get rid of the inmates. Three train transports left the camp between April 6 and April 11, each consisting of about 2,500 prisoners. Their destination was the *Theresienstadt* concentration camp, in German-occupied Czechoslovakia. Ultimately only one train reached the camp, after a few dozen of its passengers were killed in an aerial bombing by Allied forces. A second, later known as the "lost train," traveled for two weeks back and forth between the lines of combatants, and finally came to a halt near the town of *Troebitz*, in eastern Germany, where the prisoners were liberated by the Red Army.

It's the fate of the third train — actually the first of the three to leave *Bergen-Belsen* — the one in the photo, that is of interest to us here. Its passengers exited the camp's gates on April 7 and trudged 10 kilometers to the town of *Celle*, where they boarded the train. Among them were Jews from Hungary, Holland, Poland, Greece and Slovakia. Many of them were "privileged" prisoners who had previously been in the "special camp" at *Bergen-Belsen*: they had been selected by the Germans for future prisoner exchanges with the Allies.

Aliza Vitis-Shomron, who lives today on kibbutz *Givat Oz* in northern Israel, a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto and *Bergen-Belsen*, was one of the 2,500 people on the train.

"The train moved little; it remained standing a great deal," Vitis-Shomron wrote in her memoir, *Youth in Flames* (English translation by Hana Raz). "The front line was everywhere and chaos all around us. German families fled with their belongings in all direc-

tions in carts and on foot Experts in solving riddles and interpreting rumors said that the Germans wanted to use us as hostages." She describes a scene that would not be out of place in a surreal movie: "One day the officer commanding the military escort called our representatives.



A day after the liberation of the train at *Farsleben*.

He was well mannered and received them politely." He then removed his military cap, "turned to the Jews in fear" and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, the end of the war is near. What shall we do?"

According to one version, the S.S. personnel escorting the transport had been ordered to destroy the train and drown the prisoners in the adjacent Elbe river if they came under Allied fire. However, Israeli writer Uri Orlev, another passenger on the train, wrote in his book *The Sandgame* that the German commander stated to the prisoners from the beginning that he did not intend to drown the inmates. He said that once the train reached the front lines, he would flee with his troops.

In any event, after a six-day journey, the train stopped suddenly near the German village of *Farsleben*, which is located in a valley between two mountains and a river, 17 kilometers from the city of *Magdeburg* and seven kilometers from the Elbe. Exchanges of artillery fire between the Allied forces and the Germans echoed in the distance.

According to Vitis-Shomron, the Germans fled at night with the aid of the train's locomotive, but returned before dawn. "They didn't want to let the birds in their hands escape, even though the Allies had already encircled them on all sides," she wrote. Orlev remembered that the Germans left behind two rather elderly soldiers to guard the Jews, and they were pummeled by the young people among the prisoners.

On April 13, American soldiers approached the train. "There must have been guards, but they evidently ran away before or as we arrived, for I remember no firefight," recalls Sergeant George Gross, one

of the liberators in the tank battalion, in the new book by Rozell. "Our taking of the train, therefore, was no great heroic action but a small police operation. The heroism that day was all with the prisoners on the train."

Orlev, in *The Sandgame*, recalls that American troops in camouflage

suddenly emerged from the forest and ran toward the prisoners with rifles ready to fire. When everyone started to cheer, one of the soldiers said they should temper their happiness, because President Roosevelt had just died (on April 12). Afterward, a U.S. Army vehicle distributed bread such as the prisoners had never before seen — a veritable American wonder.

According to Vitis-Shomron, "People burst out of the carriages. Suddenly someone shouted: 'The Americans are coming!' To our great surprise, a tank came slowly down the hill opposite, followed by another one. I ran toward the tank, laughing hysterically. It stopped. I embraced the wheels, kissed the iron plates ... We had won the war."

Another woman on the train, Hilde Huppert, then in her mid-30s, recalled in her book *Hand in Hand with Tommy* (English translation by Yael Chaver and Reuven Morgan) that a jeep approached, "manned by four G.I.s with steel helmets coated in dust. They pulled up and approached us warily: a motley crowd of women and children together with a couple of men here and there, all clad in rags and tatters. We must have been a pitiful sight. 'Who are you?' they demanded. 'Hello friends!' we shouted back in a chorus [in English]. 'We love you! We are Jews!' They slipped off their helmets and mopped their brows. One of them pointed to the Star of David he wore on a chain around his neck. 'So am I.'"

Dr. Mordechai Weisskopf, a retired physician who lives in *Rehovot*, was a boy of 14 on the train. "The train stopped, the Germans fled and we were there without a guard, in the midst of the front, with artillery fire in

(Continued on page 11)

YOUNG LIONS: HOW JEWISH AUTHORS REINVENTED THE AMERICAN WAR NOVEL

Young Lions: How Jewish Authors Reinvented the American War Novel.

By Leah Garrett. Published by Northwestern University Press: Evanston, Ill, 2015. 275 pp. \$34.95 paperback.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

"By turning our gaze to Jewish American popular literature, we discover a series of early attempts by Jewish authors to tell mainstream readers about the Shoah, and this rebuts the notion that Jewish Americans were largely silent about the Holocaust until the 1950s."

In 1948, according to Leah Garrett in her thought-provoking volume *Young Lions: How Jewish Authors Reinvented the American War Novel*, Jewish American writers created a whole new genre of top-selling work: World War II fiction. Interestingly, many of these books contained the earliest descriptions of German camps liberated by the Allies, particularly *Dachau*. Meanwhile, no less interesting, many of them, published from the late 1940s through the 1960s and keenly analyzed here, present a vivid picture of the development of the Jewish protagonist as a fighter; indeed, nothing less than "the popular literary representative of what it meant to be a soldier." Needless to say, the above makes *Young Lions* important reading for the student of the Holocaust and literature.

For example, in Garrett's chapter entitled, "1948 and the Holocaust: *The Young Lions, That Winter, The*

Crusaders, and *Point of No Return*," this reviewer's attention was drawn to *Point of No Return* and its author, Martha Gellhorn. While some may only know Gellhorn as Ernest Hemingway's third wife, she was "one of the most important American journalists of World War II," and, uniquely, a woman "reporting on combat firsthand." What makes her especially interesting to readers of *Martyrdom and Resistance* is her life-changing trip to *Dachau* "right after its liberation." It made Gellhorn, an assimilated Missouri woman born of half-Jews, "re-avow the importance of her Jewishness." It made her attend and report on the *Nuremberg* and the Eichmann trials. It made her "a lifelong Zionist." Finally, it led to the writing of *Point of No Return* — her way of "exorcis[ing] what [she] . . . could not live with," "the memory of *Dachau*..."

Thus Gellhorn, in search of some "cathartic" literary remedy, created Private First Class Jacob Levy, her obvious surrogate in *Point of No Return*. Like her, he is from Missouri. Like her, he is an assimilated Jew. Like her, Levy travels to *Dachau*, where he and the reader experience "the horrors" Gellhorn actually witnessed, written here in "explicit" [journalistic] form. How does Levy react to

what he sees? He's angry at himself for not fighting harder! He's furious at all Germans! He's disappointed with the world for doing so very little! For not even trying to bomb the camps.... Does Levy find any "cathartic" outlet for his brutalized emotions? No.

Does Gellhorn? Not really. Sadly, they have both come to a point where there is "no return . . ."

Meanwhile, Garrett's chronological study of all the novels in *Young Lions* — and most specifically their Jewish protagonists — reflects the very real and changing position of Jews on the American scene, not surprising since the authors of these

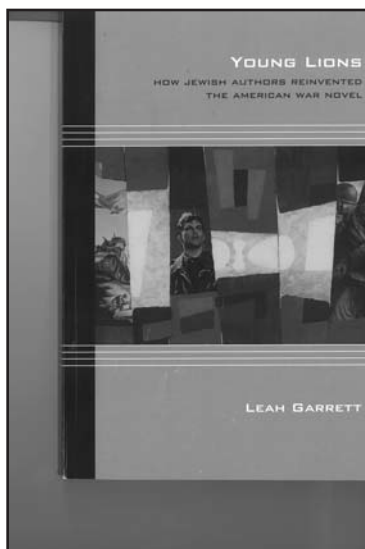
novels were all Jews then living in America. This approach clearly shows the characters' evolution. In the early novels, the Jewish protagonist was generally a more cerebral soldier and the outsider in his platoon, frequently the target of anti-Semitism. By contrast, in the works published in the 1950s, he is much tougher, and neither an outsider nor the butt of anyone's rude remarks! He has been accepted as a regular patriotic American soldier in his platoon — or at least the authors want Jews to be seen as such.

Battle Cry, written by Leon Uris, a proud United States American Marine

himself, presents us with just such a leading Jewish character. Jake Levin, from Brooklyn, may initially appear "soft." In no time, however, we see him become a "tough and uncomplaining Marine," accepted as one of the guys, fighting in some of the bloodiest battles of the war — as Uris did. In *Battle Cry*, Uris also introduced a "new type of Jewish character," who right from the start is a true warrior-hero to his men: the "fighting machine," Captain Max Shapiro. He may "look like a rabbi" but that's where the comparison ends. In fact, this "new type of tough Jew" would "become the dominant figure in the rest of Uris's corpus" (think of his *Exodus*).

Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* is the subject of Garrett's "1961 and the New Liberalism" chapter. *Catch-22*, "popular during the Vietnam War," "was embraced by many as an antiwar manifesto." It was "a call against mass conformism" demanded by any bureaucracy, including the military. It was written by the Jewish author, Heller, but its leading character, a bombardier, is the Armenian American Yossarian, an Assyrian name. Why does Garrett include this novel in her study of Jewish writers and their Jewish protagonists? Why, if as Garrett notes, Yossarian's "actions have numerous qualities that are often ascribed to Jews," didn't Heller clearly identify him as a Jew? What stopped him? I'll leave that to the reader of this absorbing and well-written work to discover.

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



HITLER'S VILE CRETINS

Anatomy of Malice: The Enigma of the Nazi War Criminals.

By Joel E. Dimsdale. Yale University Press: New Haven, Conn., 2016. 256 pp. \$19.60.

REVIEWED BY TIBOR KRAUSZ, THE JERUSALEM POST

Picture any prominent Nazi, and he will appear something like this: a jackbooted, steely-eyed brute in a crisp uniform who is as much given to casual outbursts of murderous sadism as to barking "Heil Hitler!" with right arm raised in the obligatory salute.

It's a simplistic view of them, yes, but one with the comforting certainties of pigeonholing.

Yet the Nazi mass murderers were hardly mere cardboard cutouts of one another.

They were a disparate bunch: some erudite and cultured, some unschooled and uncouth, some prudish and dependable, some seedy and venal. When it came to the tasks of indoctrinating the masses, waging war and killing Jews, however, they all tended to be dedicated and methodical.

cal.

The usual explanations about why they murdered have run on predictable lines: The Nazis were sociopaths without any empathy for their victims. They were in thrall to their charismatic leader. They were sadists and ruthless murderers. They were indoctrinated and brainwashed. They were sticklers for rules and just followed orders. They were cold-blooded beasts in human form. They were a combination of all these to one extent or another.

To Joel E. Dimsdale, a Jewish-American clinical psychiatrist, some of these explanations were always suspect, or at least insufficient.

"I grew up [in Sioux City, Iowa] with stick-finger thin ideas of evil from the comic books — the Joker, Lex Luther, Doctor Doom. This was not a world

where evil was nuanced," he recalls in *The Anatomy of Malice*. What his long practice as a psychiatrist has taught him, the author says, is that people

can rarely be reduced to clearcut singularities of behavior and motivation.

In the book he sets out to unravel the psyches of Nazi mass murderers — or at least get the measure of them.

To do so, Dimsdale, a professor emeritus of psychiatry at the University of California, San Diego, spent years scouring myriad archives for contemporary psychiatric evaluations, medical examinations,

witness testimonies, wardens' memoirs and magazine articles about the two dozen Nazi leaders tried in *Nuremberg* after the war. He decided to zero in on four of the most notorious: Vice-Chancellor Hermann Göring, Deputy Fuehrer Rudolf Hess, Labor leader Robert Ley, and

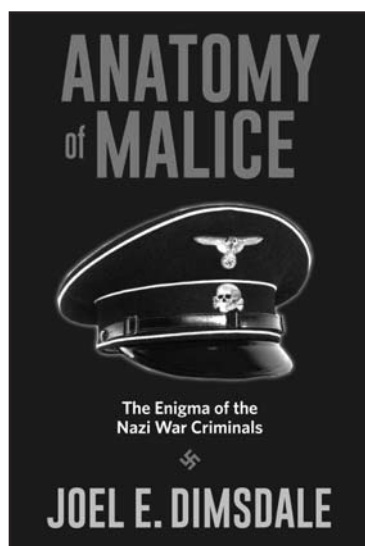
propagandist Julius Streicher. The result is a fascinating and informative compendium of details and little-known tidbits relayed with flair.

The Allied captors weren't impressed by the Nazi bigwigs in their charge. "They are perverts, dope fiends and liars," opined Colonel Burton C. Andrus, the chief warden of the interrogation center at a converted resort in Luxembourg, where the chief Nazis were held while awaiting trial in *Nuremberg*. "When Dr. Frank" — Hans Frank, Hitler's personal lawyer, who oversaw the murder of countless Jews in occupied Poland — "got here he was wearing a pair of lace panties. Göring brought an apple-cheeked 'valet' with him. When Ley got here he had a gonorrheal tincture with him and complained that he couldn't live without women."

There you have it: the Third Reich's finest.

The Nazi leaders had been a famously fissiparous lot, and in prison too, they continued griping, whining, bickering, scheming and grandstand-

(Continued on page 13)



THE LONG, TWISTED SHADOW CAST BY NAZI MEDICAL EXPERIMENTS

BY MATT LEBOVIC,
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Probably not for the last time, human remains from inmates used in Holocaust-era “medical experiments” were accidentally discovered in Germany last year.

Employees of the Max Planck Psychiatric Institute in *Munich* found the brain samples during construction in 2015, but the finding was not announced until recently. The institute regularly received human remains from experiments performed on Nazi camp inmates during World War II.



Physician Karl Brandt (center) was one of 23 German physicians tried at *Nuremberg* in 1946 for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The man most closely associated with these “medical” activities was Dr. Josef Mengele, the “Angel of Death” who selected inmates for the gas chambers or forced labor on the ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. According to the Max Planck Institute, the remains found last year were collected by Mengele and other physicians for analysis at the lab, which was then called the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute.

“We are embarrassed by these findings, and the blemish of their discovery in the archives,” said the institute in a statement about the remains, found in jars during building renovations.

Israel’s Yad Vashem expressed concern over how long it took officials to publicize the discovery, pointing to other examples of the mishandling of human remains from Nazi-era experiments. Two years ago in Berlin, for instance, victims’ bones were discovered in the trash. Last year, the remains of Jews gassed for research were uncovered at a forensic medical institute in *Strasbourg*, France, meticulously labeled with the victims’ information.

“Next year, we’re going to organize a convention about this issue,” said Yad Vashem’s Dan Machman in an interview with Israel’s Army Radio following the Planck Institute’s announcement.

“This [discovery] is something new that was previously unknown, and

joins other events that are suddenly uncovered after 70 years,” said the director of research at the international Holocaust center. “Whoever thought this chapter was completely finished is mistaken.”

“LIFE UNWORTHY OF LIFE”

Just as he was in charge of implementing the “Final Solution,” SS chief Heinrich Himmler sat atop the chain of command for medical experiments in Nazi camps. Because his guiding obsession was to advance Hitler’s racial utopia, Himmler took special interest in projects like “Block

sonnel who ran these gassing installations went on to apply their findings at death camps in Nazi-occupied Poland.

According to historians, Hitler did not need to entice or coerce medical professionals into implementing the T4 program. Not widely probed until recent decades, German scientists apparently outpaced the regime in their haste to deal with “life unworthy of life,” as Nazi propaganda described the disabled.

“The German medical community set its own course in 1933,” wrote Hartmut M. Hanauske-Abel in a seminal paper titled *Not a Slippery Slope or Sudden Subversion: German Medicine and National Socialism in 1933*.

In that 1996 paper, Hanauske-Abel wrote about “[the German medical] profession’s eager pursuit of enforced eugenic sterilizations.” His research detailed physicians’ leadership in projects like the T4 “mercy killings,” shattering the image of a few monsters like Mengele being responsible for Nazi atrocities.

For all his research into history, Hanauske-Abel’s license was revoked by Germany’s Chamber of Medicine. He currently teaches at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, with department appointments in women’s health and pediatrics.

JUSTICE AND SILENCE

Largely forgotten among the notorious defendants at the *Nuremberg* trials, two dozen doctors were charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity. During almost five months of testimony from 85 witnesses, evidence of atrocities committed at Auschwitz, *Dachau* and elsewhere was presented, and the tribunal sentenced seven physicians to death.

Although thousands of medical personnel were involved in Nazi-era medical experiments on unwilling inmates, just 23 men stood in for all of them at *Nuremberg*.

“To untrained judges, attorneys, investigators and juries, as existed during the time of the *Nuremberg* trials, what emerged was an incomplete, often hasty, and unfair prosecution of crimes that demanded more resources and research,” said Victor Shayne, author of the 2009 book, *Remember Us: My Journey from the Shtetl Through the Holocaust*.

“The degree of interest in bringing criminals to justice must be questioned, and one must wonder how much this had to do with political interests of the postwar period,” said Shayne in an interview with *The Times of Israel*. “These included the grab for Nazi scientists that occurred between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the incestuous relationship between Nazi corporations and Allied nations, including the US.”

Indeed, several of the most notorious Nazi physicians were rehabilitated after the war. Among these men was Carl Clauberg of Auschwitz’s horrific Block 10. After being released from a Soviet prison, Clauberg listed Auschwitz on his business card and gave a press conference about his work there and the women’s camp *Ravensbruck*. Clauberg was arrested in 1955, although the German Chamber of Medicine refused to revoke his license.

Another prominent Nazi physician who continued his medical career was Baron Otmar Von Verschuer. As Mengele’s chief mentor, the doctor received eyeballs and other remains taken from Mengele’s victims. As with Clauberg, Germany’s Chamber of Medicine upheld Von Verschuer’s medical license after the war, and he enjoyed a career of prominence until the late 1960s.

“The annals of the downfall of German medicine are replete with the names of internationally renowned scientists like Professors Planck, Rudin, and Hallervorden and clinicians like Harvard-trained Professor G. Schaltenbrand, who conducted neuro-immunological experiments on uninformed subjects — not at a concentration camp but at the Julius



One of 85 witnesses who testified during the “Doctors’ Trial” at *Nuremberg*, Germany, in 1946.

Maximilian University of *Wurzburg*,” wrote Hanauske-Abel.

There is still debate over whether or not it is acceptable to use data obtained from Nazi experiments. For instance, Nazi-era research into the gas phosgene became relevant during the Gulf War, when US military strategists feared it might be deployed against their forces. Publications like *The New England Journal of Medicine* have rejected papers that make use of data obtained from the Nazis’ victims, including the human “cooling curve” derived from freezing experiments.

“In dehumanizing people, whether Jews, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Communists or others, there arises a rationalization for any sort of crime, from torture to stealing to murder,” said Shayne. “And this dehumanization lies at the bottom of Nazi experimentation.”

JEWISH AVENGERS UNAPOLOGETIC FOR TARGETING NAZIS AFTER WWII

Seventy years after the most daring attempt of Jewish Holocaust survivors to seek revenge against their former tormentors, the leader of the plot has only one simple regret — that to his knowledge he didn't actually succeed in killing any Nazis.

Joseph Harmatz is one of the few remaining Jewish "Avengers" who carried out a mass poisoning of former SS men in an American prisoner-of-war camp in 1946 that sickened more than 2,200 Germans but ultimately caused no known deaths. A recently declassified U.S. military report obtained by The Associated Press has only added to the mystery of why the brazen operation did not

trials were prosecuting some top Nazis, but the Jewish people had no formal representative. There was a deep sense of justice denied, as the vast majority of Nazis immersed themselves back into a postwar Germany that was being rebuilt by the Americans' Marshall Plan.

While there were some isolated acts of Jews harming individual Nazis after the war, the group, codenamed Nakam, Hebrew for vengeance, sought a more comprehensive form of punishment.

"We didn't understand why it shouldn't be paid back," said Harmatz, who was nicknamed Julek, and lost most of his family in the Holocaust.



In this April 1946 photo, U.S. Lt. Robert R. Rogers, left, and Eric Pinkau, of the German criminal police, examine the under-floor hiding place where arsenic was found in a Nuremberg, Germany, bakery which supplied bread to Stalag 13, seven miles away.

kill Nazis, because it shows the amount of arsenic used should have been fatal to tens of thousands.

Still, the 91-year-old Harmatz says the message echoed into a rallying cry for the newborn state of Israel — that the days when attacks on Jews went unanswered were over.

"We didn't want to come back (to prestate Israel) without having done something, and that is why we were keen," Harmatz said in a hoarse, whispery voice from his apartment in north Tel Aviv.

Despite a visceral desire for vengeance, most Holocaust survivors were too weary or devastated to seriously consider it, after their world was shattered and six million Jews killed during World War II. For most, merely rebuilding their lives and starting new families was revenge enough against a Nazi regime that aimed to destroy them. For others, physical retribution ran counter to Jewish morals and traditions. For even more, the whole concept of reprisals seemed pointless given the sheer scope of the genocide.

But a group of some 50, most young men and women who had already fought in the resistance, could not let the crimes go unpunished and actively sought to exact at least a small measure of revenge. The Nuremberg

So the group set out with a simple mission.

"Kill Germans," Harmatz said flatly.

How many?

"As many as possible," he quickly replied.

The first plan of action described by Harmatz was audacious. Initiated by the resistance fighter and noted Israeli poet Abba Kovner, the idea was to poison the water supply of Nuremberg, a plot that could have potentially killed hundreds of thousands.

But there were deep reservations even among the Avengers that such an operation would kill innocent Germans and undermine international support for the establishment of Israel. Either way, when Kovner sailed for Europe with the poison, he drew suspicion from British authorities and was forced to toss it overboard before he was arrested.

Following that setback, attention shifted toward Plan B, a more limited operation that specifically targeted the worst Nazi perpetrators. Undercover members of the group found work at a bakery that supplied the Stalag 13 POW camp at Langwasser, near Nuremberg, and waited for their chance to strike the thousands of SS men the Americans held there.

It came on April 13, 1946. Using poison procured from one of Kovner's associates, three members spent two hours coating some 3,000 loaves of bread with arsenic, divided into four portions. The goal was to kill 12,000 SS personnel, and Harmatz oversaw the operation from outside the bakery.

While the mass death count of the first plan would have been disastrous for the Jewish people, the second's more direct route was easier to accept, since its targets were the worst of the worst, said Dina Porat, the chief historian at Israel's Yad Vashem memorial. She has written a biography of Kovner and is about to publish another book on the Avengers themselves.

"The terrible tragedy was about to be forgotten, and if you don't punish for one crime, you will get another," she explained. "This is what was driving them, not only justice but a warning, a warning to the world that you cannot hurt Jews in such a manner and get away with it."

Even if they were ultimately unsuccessful, she said, the Avengers' act was seeped with symbolism for a burgeoning state of Israel fighting for its survival in a hostile region.

"What is Zionism? Zionism is the Jews taking their fate in their own hands and not letting the others dictate our fate," she said. "This is what they wanted to show. You cannot get away with such a terrible deed."

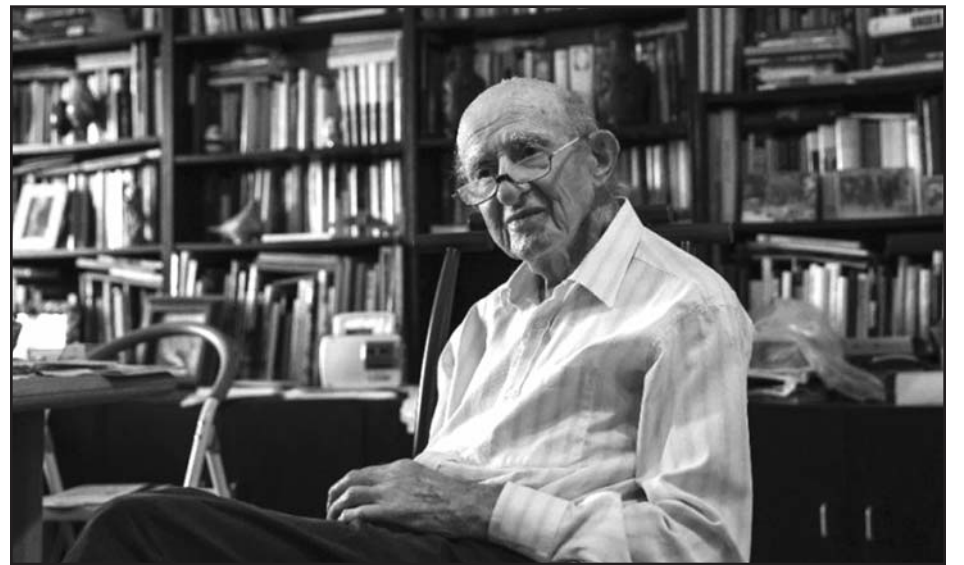
files from the U.S. military's Counter Intelligence Corps, which investigated the 1946 incident, and which the Nuremberg prosecutors did not have access to, the amount of arsenic used should have been enough to cause a massive number of deaths.

In one memo from 1947 stamped "confidential," investigators write that at the bakery they found "three empty hot water bottles and a burlap bag containing four full hot water bottles." An analysis of the contents "revealed that they contained enough arsenic mixed with glue and water to kill approximately 60,000 persons."

To this day, it remains a mystery as to why the poison failed to kill Nazis. The prevailing theory is that the plotters, in their haste, spread the poison too thinly. Another is that the Nazi prisoners immediately sensed something was off with the bread and therefore no one ingested enough of it to die.

After the attack, Harmatz, Distal and others had to flee quickly. At the border of Czechoslovakia they were met by Yehuda Maimon, an Auschwitz survivor from Poland who had lost his parents in the camps and decided to join Nakam shortly after escaping a death march. He was responsible for smuggling the group out safely and bribing officials at the border. From there, they slipped into Italy before migrating for good to the Holy Land.

From the retirement home outside



Joseph Harmatz is one of the few remaining Jewish "Avengers" who carried out a mass poisoning of former SS men in an American prisoner-of-war camp in 1946 after World War II.

Under German regulations, authorities in Nuremberg later investigated Harmatz and Leipke Distal, who worked undercover in the bakery for months, after they appeared in a 1999 television documentary and revealed details of the operation.

The prosecutors, in the uncomfortable position of having to investigate Holocaust survivors trying to kill Nazis, eventually concluded that even though there was an attempted murder, they would not file charges because of the "extraordinary circumstances."

According to previously classified

Tel Aviv where his grandchildren frequently visit him, the 92-year-old Maimon, who goes by the nickname Poldek, fixes a steely gaze with his piercing blue eyes. He looks back with satisfaction at carrying out his "duty" for revenge before starting anew in Israel.

"It was imperative to form this group. If I am proud of something it is that I belonged to this group," he said. "Heaven forbid if after the war we had just gone back to the routine without thinking about paying those bastards back. It would have been awful not to respond to those animals."

First published by AP

DUTCH SURVIVOR'S DIARY CALLED AN ANNE FRANK STORY WITH A "HAPPY" ENDING

BY CNAAN LIPSHIZ, JTA

A Holocaust survivor dubbed "Rotterdam's Anne Frank" in her native Netherlands has published her wartime diary, which she wrote while hiding in the bombed-out city.

At *Night I Dream of Peace*, the Dutch-language diary of 89-year-old Carry Ulreich, hit bookstores in the Netherlands in October. The book generated strong interest from the national media, which likened and contrasted Ulreich's story with that of Frank, the murdered Jewish teenager from Amsterdam whose diaries in hiding were made into one of the world's best-read books about the Holocaust.

Ulreich, who immigrated to Israel in the years after World War II, was 2 1/2 years older than Frank when the Nazis invaded the Netherlands in 1940 and sent many of the country's 140,000 Jews into hiding. Unlike Frank, whose writings have been described as offering a universalist worldview, Ulreich displays a distinctly Jewish one, describing her deep emotional connection to Jewish prayer and traditions.

Whereas Frank and many of her relatives were among the 104,000 Dutch Jews murdered in the genocide, Ulreich survived to have three children, 20 grandchildren and over 60

great-grandchildren. She took her wartime diary, spread over several yellowing notebooks, to Israel but reread it only two years ago, deciding to publish. In an interview with the



Carry Ulreich, right, and her older sister, Rachel, in a photograph taken during their time in hiding in Rotterdam during the Nazi occupation.

Dutch newspaper *Trouw*, she described her story as "like Anne Frank's, but with a happy end."

The book, in which Ulreich documented her family's battle to survive as the world around them became increasingly dangerous, is among a handful of detailed testimonies of life in hiding in Rotterdam, which unlike most Dutch cities was largely destroyed in massive aerial bombardments by both the Germans and later the Allied forces.

It affords a rare account of the

sometimes awkward encounter between the Ulreichs, a Zionist and traditionalist family from Eastern Europe whose members were proud of their Jewish heritage, and their deeply religious Catholic saviors, the Zijlmans family.

Whereas the Franks, a family of secular and cosmopolitan Jews from Germany, lived apart from the people who hid them, the Ulreichs lived with the Zijlmans in conditions that required considerable sacrifice on the part of the hosts and led to some friction as the two households interacted.

The Zijlmans couple, who were recognized by Israel as Righteous Among the Nations in 1977 for risking their lives to save the Ulreichs, gave their bedroom to the Ulreichs and moved into a small room where potatoes were stored. They also severed their social contacts to avoid detection as their guests lived in fear.

"We are simply terrified that they will report us to the *Waffen-SS* for neighborhood disturbance," Ulreich wrote of the neighbors. "Then they will come

with their truck, and we'll have to go to *Westerbork* and then to Poland and after that ... death?"

Westerbork was a Nazi transit camp in Holland's northeast.

Ulreich also recalls hearing a chazan, or cantor, offer a prayer for Holocaust victims on a British radio transmission, which she said made the Jews cry and feel "connected with him by heart." But she complains over the airing of the prayer on Shabbat, when Jews are not supposed to turn on the radio.

"The Christians try to support us, but they simply don't understand these things," she wrote.

"Carry shows, next to the enormous gratitude for the hospitality, the discomfort of two different families who suddenly have to live together," wrote Bart Wallet, the editor of the diary and expert on Dutch Jewry with the *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*. "The tension and complete dependence are almost tangible for the reader."

The diary also describes theological discussions between the families.

"This book reveals a lot of information about a, until now, highly undiscussed topic: the religious life in hiding," Wallet wrote. "It shows how the Jews struggled to eat kosher and how they still tried to celebrate their holy days."

WHEN A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR PISSED ON HITLER'S HENCHMAN

It sounds like a scene from a Quentin Tarantino film.

A Holocaust survivor, whose mother and sister were killed in the genocide, said he locked a Nazi prisoner in a shed for three days, made him strip and urinated on his face.

"I told him, from now on, you sleep naked on this cold floor. You will not move," Werner Meritz said.

"And with that, I pissed all over him. Terrible thing to tell you. His head and everywhere. ... I said, you're just to lie there to get some sense of what you Nazis did to the Jews."

The captured Nazi was Julius Streicher, a friend and protege of Adolf Hitler and the publisher of the notorious anti-Semitic newspaper *Der Sturmer*. His tormentor was one of a number of Jewish refugees from Europe who were recruited by the American military to interrogate Nazi prisoners during World War II.

Meritz recalled his actions to rangers from Fort Hunt Park in Virginia, who in 2006 discovered that their national park was once the location for the secret military interrogation project, code-named P.O. Box 1142.

"These men were specifically recruited because they spoke German and because they understood the nuances of German culture and psychology, slang, cultural references, small details that an American

would miss," explained radio producer Karen Duffin.

After spending three months at *Buchenwald* in 1938, Meritz came to the United States and joined the project for two years. He then travelled to Europe near the end of the war to track down and interrogate Nazis there.

"I was enraged. I was trembling. There were tears in my eyes that I had captured this guy. I had him to myself," he said.

"I explained to the MPs, I'm gonna do things, you probably think I'm crazy. And you wanna know something? I am crazy. I'm crazed. I captured a Nazi of unbelievable mischief. ... I'm gonna do what I have to do."

After three days of feeding Streicher only potato skins that he had also urinated on, Meritz handed his prisoner off to American officers. Streicher was later one of 11 Nazis sentenced to death in the *Nuremberg* trials. Meritz went on to start his own textile business. He died in 2010. His daughter described him as a sharp dresser with a well-trimmed mustache and strong opinions.

Duffin said the records of Streicher's capture are "spotty and contradictory," and someone else is usually credited with capturing him. But an expert at the National Archives told her Werner could have done what he said he did.

Meritz's account would be an exception to the norm at P.O. Box 1142. The military trained the men to use nonviolent and even friendly interrogation tactics, according to Duffin, who reviewed 70 interviews the rangers conducted with former interrogators and interviewed 10 of the interrogators or their families herself. She also obtained more than 1,000 pages of previously classified files about the program.

"Try to make the prisoner feel that you're his friend, the first one he's met since his capture. All are human underneath. Our interrogator's job is to play upon those weaknesses to help make up the complete intelligence picture," a World War II interrogation training film featured in the report instructs.

While many of the Jewish former interrogators were happy to help the U.S. defeat the Nazis, some struggled with the policy of getting chummy with the prisoners, who had just helped drive them out of their countries and in some cases kill their loved ones.

In the end, the novel approach worked. The interrogators extracted critical information about where the Allies should bomb, German weapons development and the structure of the German army, according to Duffin. One of the Enigma machines the Nazis used to send coded messages was captured based on intelli-

gence from P.O. Box 1142, she said.

Having signed a secrecy agreement with the army, most of the former interrogators did not speak about their work for more than 60 years, even to their wives and children. Then, in 2006, army intelligence cleared them to talk to the park rangers.

At the end of the war, P.O. Box 1142's mission changed from interrogating Nazis to wining and dining them in an attempt to recruit them to the American side, especially scientists who could also be valuable to the Russians.

Arno Mayer, 88, who escaped the Nazi occupation of Luxembourg and went on to become a history professor at Princeton University, was assigned Wernher von Braun, the famed Nazi rocket scientist who later helped the U.S. get to the moon. Mayer told Duffin he regretted not being more subversive.

"I should have told them to go to hell, but I didn't do it. I was a coward. I mean I only exploded once. I could have exploded many other times," he said.

The men who participated in P.O. Box 1142 went on to become lawyers, a CIA agent, an ambassador, head of the Culinary Institute of America, conductor of the Chicago Chamber Orchestra and the richest man in America in the 1980s, John Kluge.

First published in *Jewish News Online*

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER OF T



Leonard A. Wilf, chairman of the ASYV; representatives of the American Righteous Among the Nations Regina & Pastor Chris Edmonds and Mary Jean Gunden.



Ron Meier, executive director of the ASYV; Sharon Halpern; and David Halpern, American Society for Yad Vashem treasurer.



Rose & Philip Friedman, 2016 Annual Tribute Dinner co-chairs.



Eugen Gluck and his grandson Josh Gelnick saying HaMotzi.



Jeremy & Abbi Halpern with their daughter Brianna.



Yonina & Eric Gomberg and Gonen & Jaci Paradis.

THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM



Mark Moskowitz, 2016 Annual Tribute Dinner co-chair.



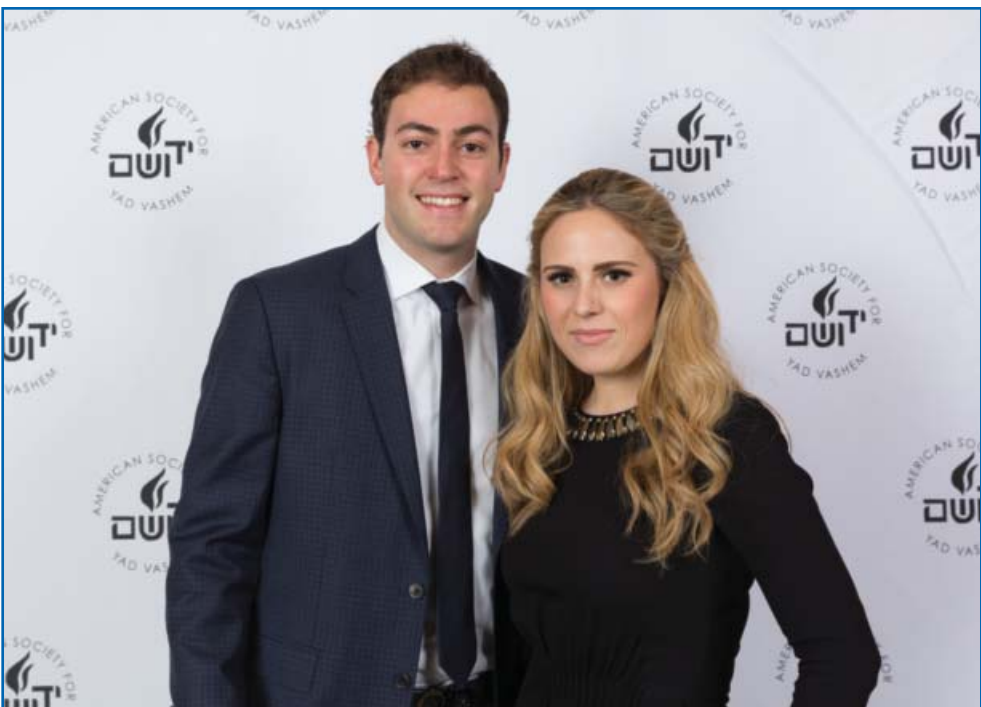
Guest speaker Sara Pechanec, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.



Leonard A. Wilf, chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem.



Gale & Ira Drukier and Marilyn & Barry Rubenstein.



Michael Shmuely and Rachel Shnay, incoming co-vice chairs, Young Leadership Associates.



Michael Bernardi, master of ceremonies and Broadway actor.

“WHOEVER SAVES ONE LIFE...”

BY IRENA STEINFELDT

During the Holocaust, Jewish parents sometimes faced the impossible decision of parting from their children and delivering them into the arms of strangers in order to save them. In other cases, they had to endure difficult conditions under the paralyzing fear of being caught, and the need to keep silent made the situation tremendously difficult. Despite these hardships, the terrible traumas that marked their childhood and the loss of family members, those children who survived endeavored to rebuild their lives and contribute to society — some of them excelling in their professions, as judges, doctors, teachers, human rights activists, politicians and more. A few survivors have even won global accolades for their contributions to humankind, including the Nobel Prize.

Roald Hoffmann (b. 1937) was hidden with his mother Clara and other relatives from January 1943 until June 1944 in the attic of the schoolhouse in the village of *Uniow* (today *Univ*), Ukraine. Mykola Dyuk, who served as the teacher of the one-

classroom school, lived with his wife Maria and their three children in the schoolhouse. From the attic window, six-year-old Roald could watch the vil-



Roald Hoffman and his mother Clara in Krakow after liberation, 1945.

lage children. “I felt — I still feel — the pain of seeing these children being free to move while I couldn’t leave,” he told Yad Vashem in 2007, when he

applied to have his rescuers honored as Righteous Among the Nations. “I had to keep quiet. That must have been difficult. It’s a huge tribute to my mother — she kept inventing games to play with me for 15 months.” Hoffmann’s father was murdered, and after the war his mother remarried and the Hoffmann family began their journey westward. Hoffmann had to change schools many times as his family wandered from *Krakow* through Czechoslovakia to DP camps in Austria and Germany, finally reaching the US in 1949, where he began his schooling in English — his sixth language at this point. Despite his travails, Hoffmann became an accomplished student and writer, and in 1981 won the Nobel Prize in the field of chemistry.

Last year, the wartime rescuers of another Nobel prize winner were honored as Righteous Among the Nations. At the age of ten, Francois Englert, the son of Jewish-Polish immigrants to Belgium, was brought to the home of Camille and Louise Jourdan, the owners of a cafe-restaurant in the village of *Lustin* in the Ardennes. His parents were hidden in

the same town, but for the sake of security, he was not told about their whereabouts. His mother sometimes came to see him, but always pretended to have arrived from a distance by train. Englert had no contact with the outside world; instead of sending him to school, the Jourdans arranged for a local teacher to give him private lessons. After a few months, when denunciation became a threat, the Englerts took Francois to the village of *Annevoie*, where they were sheltered by one of the residents and the local priest. The family survived the war, but all of their relatives in Poland were murdered. Although his schooling was disrupted by the Holocaust, Francois Englert excelled as a student, became a physicist, and in 2013 won the Nobel Prize. Looking back at the war years, he paid tribute to the extraordinary bravery of his rescuers: “We were helped and hidden by people who did not even know us, people who in those times of darkness took the great risk of displaying generosity, humanity and courage... Without these wonderful people we could not have escaped the persecution and I would not be here to tell the tale.”

“THEY LAUGHED BY DAY AND CRIED AT NIGHT”

BY DINA PORATH

In September 1943, with the Italian surrender to the Allies, the Germans occupied the area of Nice in southern France — formerly under Italian control — and began to hunt down Jews in the vicinity. Approximately one month later, they carried out a raid on a children’s home near *Marseilles* in southern France, sending the occupants to the detention camp at *Drancy*. News of the raid soon reached the other children’s homes in southern France. The directors of the children’s aid society OSE made the decision to evacuate the children in their care and gradually close down their children’s homes.

One of these homes, which provided refuge for dozens of children, had been established in April 1943 in the village of *Izieu*, formerly Vichy territory. The home, part of the OSE’s network of hiding places, was run by Sabine Zlatin, a Jewish nurse and OSE activist. Some of the children who lived there were French, while others had fled Nazi occupation in Belgium, Austria, Germany and Poland. Several had arrived there from other children’s homes in France.

Despite the fact that the children’s home in *Izieu* was in a secluded locality and didn’t attract attention, the decision was made to evacuate the children hidden there as well. On April 3, 1944, Zlatin traveled to *Montpellier* to look for hiding places for the children in her care. However, just three days later, members of the

Lyon Gestapo who had been tipped off by an informant carried out a raid on the home and arrested everyone there. Forty-four children aged four through 17, and seven staff members who had been taking care of them, were incarcerated in the *Lyon* prison,

and later deported to their deaths in Auschwitz and other places, along with the children.

The tragic account of *Izieu* is featured in a new Yad Vashem online exhibition, describing one of the unique phenomena of the Holocaust

Jewish and Christian, whose members rescued children from detention camps or hiding places and brought them to safety in remote locations. The caretakers did everything in their power to continue the children’s Jewish and general education, and to enable a sense of routine and normalcy. Staff members encouraged observation of Jewish rituals and customs, as well as musical and other cultural endeavors, and even took the children on outings, mainly in rural and mountainous areas where the danger of being discovered was lower. The children who survived thanks to these children’s homes remember their rescuers fondly, recalling their efforts to create a loving, supportive and protective environment. Some of the non-Jewish rescuers of these children were later recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations.

Enriched with original photographs and related artifacts in Yad Vashem’s Collections, “Children’s Homes in France During the Holocaust” tells the stories of three children’s homes: in *Izieu*, in *Chamonix* and in *Chabannes*. While, as in the case of *Izieu*, the children and their caretakers were often discovered and murdered, many Jewish boys and girls were also saved thanks to this unique rescue endeavor — as illustrated in the moving video testimonies and touching personal accounts featured in the exhibition: accounts of courage and determination, of sacrifice and loyalty, and of dedication to maintaining the human spirit during the crucible of the Holocaust.



Memento made after the war with photographs of the staff at the children’s home in *Chamonix* as well as underground activists. The background is adorned with a menorah and verses from Psalms written in French.

and then deported to *Drancy*. The deportation order was issued by local Gestapo head Klaus Barbie. During the children’s detention in *Lyon*, the Germans discovered the whereabouts of some of their family members, who were also taken to *Drancy*

period: the rescue of Jewish children in France.

In response to the arrest and deportation of Jews in France by the German occupiers, a network of protective homes was established by different aid organizations, both

THE HOLOCAUST TRAIN THAT LED JEWS TO FREEDOM INSTEAD OF DEATH

(Continued from page 3)

the background,” he told me. “The joy that seized us at the sight of the American tank is indescribable. Suddenly, from nonhuman slaves, we were transformed into free people. It

about the fact that the soldiers had reached the site equipped with cameras.

Initially Rozell posted the images on the high school’s website. “We didn’t have much traffic,” he recalls. No one

the rescue operation with the train’s survivors. In a series of meetings he arranged in the United States, close ties were forged between liberators and survivors. Afterward, Walsh wrote to one of the survivors who had contacted him, “You are always expressing gratitude to me and [my unit]. But I do not believe gratitude is deserved, because we were doing what we, and the whole world, should have been doing — rescuing and protecting innocent people from being killed, murdered by vicious criminals.”

Another high point in this story occurred in 2011, when 55 survivors of the train from Israel and other countries met in Rehovot. The guest of honor at the event, which was organized by Varda Weisskopf, was Major Frank Towers, who also took part in the liberation. He organized the transfer of the 2,500 released prisoners to a nearby town, *Hillersleben*, where they received medical treatment from Allied troops.

“With intelligence, infinite devotion and courage, risking infection, the soldiers of the medical battalion prevented a major disaster and saved the lives of more than 2,300 Jews, among them 700 children and adolescents,” Varda Weisskopf notes. Those who died succumbed to the crowded conditions on the train or to disease,

99.

A letter from Walsh was also read out at the meeting. He noted that he was ashamed that the survivors had thanked and praised him for saving their lives. They did not owe him anything, he told them, because it was his duty to do what he did. On the contrary, he added, the survivors were owed a great debt for their suffering: all of them innocent, accused unjustly. You were guilty of only one thing, he declared: of being Jews.

Thanks to Rozell, the photograph that captured the moment of the liberation has acquired worldwide resonance. “It’s been called ‘one of the most powerful photographs of the 20th century,’ it’s been shown in museums and memorial sites around the world, in exhibitions, films and articles. Students download it from the Internet and filmmakers ask to use it in documentaries,” Rozell says.

The climax of the story came last year, when the photograph was displayed at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of the war’s conclusion.

“If you search for ‘Holocaust’ and ‘train’ on the web, you get photographs of people being led to their death. This amazing picture shows the exact opposite,” Rozell observes.

Only one riddle remains: the identity of the two women at the center of the photo. Rozell told me that this summer he received a phone call from someone in the Orthodox community of New York, who thinks the woman in



People liberated from the train in *Farsleben*, April 13, 1945.

was very thrilling, unforgettable. We saw American soldiers, and one of them shouted in Yiddish, his eyes flowing with tears, ‘I am a Jew, too.’ There was an outburst of joy that is hard to describe.”

The American soldiers who liberated the train were from the 743rd Tank Battalion of the 30th Infantry Division of the Ninth Army. According to Fred Spiegel, one of the survivors, who was then 13, the soldiers weren’t sure who the passenger-inmates were. “We must have looked terrifying, like nightmare figures, monsters from science fiction, apparitions arisen from the grave,” he is quoted as saying in Rozell’s book.

One of the first U.S. soldiers to see the Jewish prisoners on the train was Captain Carrol Walsh, the veteran who later put history teacher Rozell onto the story. Walsh also told Rozell how to get in touch with George Gross, who went on to teach English literature at the University of San Diego. From Gross he received several rare photographs documenting the moments of liberation. One of them was the now-iconic image of the woman and child.

As it turned out, that photo was taken by another soldier, Major Clarence Benjamin, who was on his way to conquer the city of *Magdeburg*. Encountering the train, he considered it his moral and humane duty to rescue the prisoners from the Nazis. In the process, he captured on film the first instant of the liberation. When Rozell first perused the photographs, he realized he had come upon a treasure of incalculable worth. “A historic miracle,” he said

imagined that within a short time the photographs would be sought after by the world’s major Holocaust archives: In the wake of a cooperative effort between Rozell and the Holocaust memorial site at *Bergen-Belsen*, the history teacher was flooded with emails from people in different countries who had identified themselves in the photographs. Grasping that he had come upon a huge story, Rozell decided to research it in depth.

“I feel that I was chosen, as a non-Jew, to document the experiences of the survivors and of the rescuing American soldiers,” he told me. For the next 15 years, and indeed to this moment, he has been collecting and recording testimonies from survivors and rescuers from around the world who are connected to the train’s liberation.

Along with the dramatic images, he has obtained moving documents, such as a letter sent by a G.I. named Frank Gartner, written on April 15, 1945, two days after the train’s liberation, to the husband (already living in the Land of Israel) of Hilde Huppert. “I am one of the millions of soldiers of the United States Army, who is fighting for all the oppressed peoples of the world,” he begins. “Two days ago, it was the privilege of our unit, to be able to liberate a trainload full of people of all nations imaginable.... That is how I became acquainted with your wife, Mrs. Hilde Huppert, who asked me to drop you this note, saying, that both she and your son Tommy, are both healthy and well.”

Rozell gradually understood that it was his life’s mission to reunite the American soldiers who took part in



People liberated from the train in *Farsleben*, April 13, 1945.

exhaustion and perhaps just broken hearts in the hospital in the German town.

Speaking at the 2011 event, Towers said he was very proud to have been able to play a small part in paving the way to freedom and happiness for the victims. Towers died last July, aged

the foreground is his grandmother and that the little girl is his mother or his aunt. But, said Rozell, “another woman who’s quoted in the book maintains that the older woman is her aunt.”

The bottom line? “No one has yet produced convincing proof.”

“IF I SLEEP FOR AN HOUR, 30 PEOPLE WILL DIE”

BY PAMELA DRUCKERMAN,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

It's 1944, in occupied Paris. Four friends spend their days in a narrow room atop a Left Bank apartment building. The neighbors think they're painters — a cover story to explain the chemical smell. In fact, the friends are members of a Jewish resistance cell. They're operating a clandestine laboratory to make false passports for children and families about to be deported to concentration camps. The youngest member of the group, the lab's technical director, is practically a child himself: Adolfo Kaminsky, age 18.

If you're doubting whether you've done enough with your life, don't compare yourself to Mr. Kaminsky. By his 19th birthday, he had helped save the lives of thousands of people by making false documents to get them into hiding or out of the country. He went on to forge papers for people in practically every major conflict of the mid-20th century.

Now 91, Mr. Kaminsky is a small man with a long white beard and tweed jacket, who shuffles around his neighborhood with a cane. He lives in a modest apartment for people with low incomes, not far from his former laboratory.

When I followed him around with a film crew one day, neighbors kept asking me who he was. I told them he was a hero of World War II, though his story goes on long after that.

Mr. Kaminsky — a poor, hunted teenager — started his forgery work during the war and then continued it for many different causes afterward. Why did he do it?

It wasn't for the glory. He worked in secret and only spoke about it years later. His daughter Sarah learned her father's whole story only while writing a book about him, *Adolfo Kaminsky: A Forger's Life*.

It wasn't for the money, either. Mr. Kaminsky says he never accepted payment for forgeries, so that he could keep his motives clear and work only for causes he believed in. He was perpetually broke, and scraped

together a living as a commercial photographer, he said. The wartime work put such a strain on his vision that he eventually went blind in one eye.

Though he was a skilled forger — creating passports from scratch and improvising a device to make them look older — there was little joy in it. “The smallest error and you send someone to prison or death,” he told me. “It's a great responsibility. It's



Adolfo Kaminsky in a darkroom in 2014. As a teenager in World War II, he forged passports for French Jews.

heavy. It's not at all a pleasure.” Years later he's still haunted by the work, explaining: “I think mostly of the people that I couldn't save.”

Mr. Kaminsky empathized with refugees partly because he was one himself. He was born in Argentina to Russian Jews who'd first fled Russia to Paris, and then been kicked out of France. When Adolfo was 7, the family, by then with Argentine passports, was allowed to rejoin relatives in France. “It was then that I realized the significance of the word ‘papers,’” he explained.

After dropping out of school at 13 to help support his family, he was apprenticed to a clothes dyer, a precursor to the modern dry cleaner. He spent hours figuring out how to remove stains, then read chemistry

textbooks and did experiments at home. “My boss was a chemical engineer, and would answer all of my questions,” he said. On weekends he helped a chemist at a local dairy, in exchange for butter.

In the summer of 1943, he and his family were arrested and sent to *Drancy*, the internment camp for Jews near Paris that was the last stop before the death camps. This time, their passports saved them. Argentina's government protested the family's detention, so they stayed at *Drancy* for three months, while thousands of others were swiftly sent on to die.

Mr. Kaminsky remembered a math professor who had agreed to tutor him in the camp. “One day, when it was time for our classes, he wasn't there. He hadn't wanted to tell me beforehand that his name was on the list.”

The Kaminskys were eventually freed, but they weren't safe in Paris, where Jews were under constant threat of arrest. Soon Argentines were being deported, too.

To survive they would have to go underground. Adolfo's father arranged to get false papers from a Jewish resistance group, and sent Adolfo to pick them up. When the agent told Adolfo that they were struggling to erase a certain blue ink from the documents, he advised using lactic acid, a trick he'd learned at the dairy. It worked, and he was invited to join the resistance.

Mr. Kaminsky's cell was one of many. His would get tips on who was about to be arrested, then warn the families, assembling new papers for them on the spot.

The group focused on the most urgent cases: children who were about to be sent to *Drancy*. They placed the kids in rural homes or convents, or smuggled them into Switzerland or Spain. In one scene from the book, Mr. Kaminsky stays awake for two nights straight to fill an enormous rush order. “It's a simple calculation: In one hour I can make 30 blank documents; if I sleep for an hour, 30 people will die.”

Historians estimate that France's Jewish resistance networks together saved 7,000 to 10,000 children. Some 11,400 children were deported and killed.

After the war, Mr. Kaminsky didn't plan to keep working as a forger. But through his wartime networks, other movements got in touch. He continued forging papers for 30 more years, playing a small role in conflicts ranging from the Algerian war of independence to the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa to the Vietnam war, making documents for American draft dodgers. He estimates that in 1967 alone, he supplied forged papers to people in 15 countries.

I can't vouch for every cause. Some of the rebel groups he supported used violence. And at close range, his stubborn idealism was no doubt maddening. He had two kids soon after World War II, but couldn't tell them or his ex-wife about his underground work, so they didn't know why he rarely visited. Girlfriends assumed he was absent because he'd been cheating. He was supposed to follow one woman to America, but never showed up, because he'd joined the Algerian resistance.

“I saved lives because I can't deal with unnecessary deaths — I just can't,” he told me. “All humans are equal, whatever their origins, their beliefs, their skin color,” he later added. “There are no superiors, no inferiors. That is not acceptable for me.”

In 1971, convinced that too many different groups knew his identity, and that he'd soon be caught and imprisoned, Mr. Kaminsky quit forging for good, and mostly made a living teaching photography. On a visit to Algiers he met a young law student, of Tuareg ancestry, who was the daughter of a liberal Algerian imam. They're still married, and have three children.

The last time I saw Mr. Kaminsky, he showed me a photograph he'd taken just after the liberation of Paris. It shows about 30 children who'd come out of hiding, and were hoping to be reunited with their parents.

“MY FATHER HEINRICH HIMMLER WAS NOT A MONSTER”

BY ALLAN HALL, MIRROR

She could be anyone's lovable granny, waving goodbye on a sunny afternoon to her children who have been visiting to brighten up her day. But her arm raised high in farewell could also be seen in a more sinister light.

For in her heart Gudrun Burwitz remains Gudrun Himmler, the beloved daughter of Nazi *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler, the lord of death in the Third Reich who ran the Gestapo, the SS and the entire extermination program which murdered six million Jews.

It is more than 70 years since her beloved “Papi” killed himself with a

cyanide tablet hidden in his mouth, after being captured by British troops.

In his last week, one of Adolf Hitler's most senior lieutenants was on the run, hiking around northern Germany disguised as a soldier, his moustache shaved off and a patch on one eye.

Many children of Nazi monsters — Rudolf Hess; Hans Frank; the brutal governor of Poland, Martin Bormann — turned their backs on their fathers and their sins when adulthood made them aware of their crimes. But Gudrun is different.

She has preserved and nurtured the memory of her father, believing him to be a good and worthy man.

She was 14 when he died and, far from disowning her father, she has

remained as fiercely devoted to him as he was to Hitler, keeping a scrapbook of every newspaper picture she could find of him.

In her house in a leafy *Munich* street lies a manuscript to his memory. It “demolishes the lies” the Allies told about her father after the war. Not surprisingly, it has never been published.

Worse, while cherishing the memory of Himmler, she still works to this day, despite her advanced age, helping the survivors of Nazism try to evade justice.

As the leading figure in the shadowy and sinister support group *Stille Hilfe* — Silent Help — she brings support and financial help to the monsters still at large.

In 2010, Gudrun's organization paid for the defense of Samuel Kunz, an SS man charged with complicity in the murders of 437,000 Jews in *Belzec* extermination camp in occupied Poland.

Two years before he died in his bed, she came to the defense of Klaas Carel Faber, 90 — a Dutchman who served with the SS in Holland, where he murdered Jews — to prevent his being extradited to his homeland from Germany, where he lived in peace and quiet.

During Gudrun's time with *Stille Hilfe*, the group has eased the way into society for many Nazi war criminals, including Klaus Barbie, the

(Continued on page 15)

HITLER'S VILE CRETINS

(Continued from page 4)

ing. "On one occasion," Dimsdale writes, "Göering tried to strike Ribbentrop with his marshal's baton, shouting 'Shut up, you champagne peddler.'" Ribbentrop took offense at this breach of etiquette.

"[M]y name is von Ribbentrop," he retorted, insisting on the proper honorific.

Farcical? Certainly. Yet what they had all done while they were in power was hardly a laughing matter. Now, however, they were defeated men, humbled and deflated, who kept blaming everyone but themselves: each other and Hitler, mostly. Their mental state and behavior bordered on the comical.

Göering, who suffered from delusions of grandeur, was by turns belligerent and obsequious.

He was described by an American warden as a "simpering slob." The blubbery Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large bejeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck several of his captors as a petty and manipulative prima donna prone to theatrics and hysterics.

Yet he was a complex character. The creator of the Gestapo and an architect of the Final Solution who had been a first-class fighter pilot in World War I, Göering was directly responsible for the deaths of untold numbers of innocents. But he was a doting husband and father, had a soft spot for animals, and could be magnanimous. He even saved two Jews who had once helped him. He puzzled his interrogators. One saw him as "the devil incarnate," another as "a silly fat eunuch."

He was a skillful orator with manifest talents.

What he lacked was a conscience and a capacity for introspection. He remained unrepentant to the end and killed himself on the sly with secretly obtained cyanide. In clinical parlance, Dimsdale notes, Göering was a malignant narcissist whose only concern was his own well-being. Other people were simply disposable extras in the grand epic of his self-delusions.

Göering despised Ley, who was a crooked and boozy *bierhaus* lout, and as head of the German Labor Front had been partly responsible for the vast network of slave labor created by the Nazis at the point of machine guns. He was a fanatical Nazi and a rabid Jew hater who wanted to "exterminate this filth, extirpate it root and branch." "Hitler was his Messiah, the Jew was his devil, and World War II was a titanic, apocalyptic struggle of good versus evil," Dimsdale writes.

Yet Ley had also championed the rights of German workers, including women. He resented being considered a war criminal.

He strangled himself in his cell with a noose fashioned from towels. In a

suicide note, he recanted his anti-Semitism, calling it "a mistake."

But then there was Julius Streicher: a pathological Jew hater, a convicted rapist and a brute of a man. Streicher had been editor of the Nazi rag *Der Stürmer*, in which capacity he had reveled in detailed depictions of Jews in lurid sado-masochistic phantasmagorias.

He was the epitome of "sheer nastiness, unalloyed with any saving graces," Dimsdale notes.

"He is a dirty old man of the sort that gives trouble in parks," wrote the British journalist Rebecca West, who covered the trial, "and a sane Germany would have sent him to an asylum long ago." In Hitler's Germany, of course, vile cretins like



Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg trials.

Streicher, far from being sent to asylums, were appointed to leadership positions with the power of life and death for Jews and other undesirables. He went to the gallows shouting "Heil Hitler!" His final words were "Purim Feast 1946," in one last dig at the Jews.

Rudolf Hess, too, was a puzzle to his captors.

A gaunt introvert with pinched, vulpine features and a "doglike devotion" to Hitler, in the words of a prison psychiatrist, Hess thought the Jews were trying to poison his food and control him telepathically. A bellyaching hypochondriac, the erstwhile deputy *fuehrer* was diagnosed by Allied psychiatrists as a paranoid schizophrenic.

After he stabbed himself in the chest in a failed suicide attempt, Hess claimed that Jews had made him do it through remote-controlled hypnosis. Not surprisingly, Churchill didn't know what to make of him, dismissing his antics as like those of "a mentally defective child."

Others suspected Hess was faking mental illness to avoid punishment. In the end he was declared fit to stand trial for war crimes and was sentenced to life in prison, where his erratic behavior continued until his death, at age 93 in 1987, when he hanged himself in his cell. Four men, four different personalities.

Yet they had a lot in common: extreme fanaticism that was impervious to reason, slavish devotion to Hitler, hugely inflated egos, patholog-

ical lack of conscience or even common decency. These traits alone didn't make them mass murderers, but they did make them ideal for leadership positions in a regime that was subservient to the will of a charismatic psychopath with world-conquering fantasies.

As Dimsdale's account makes it clear, these Nazi leaders weren't simply banal, as per Hannah Arendt's famous formulation about Adolf Eichmann; they were pathetic.

Yet they managed to turn one of the world's most civilized and cultured nations into a basket case of unadulterated hate and primitive, murderous atavism, where citizens came to embrace their leaders' bizarre psychoses.

How could that be? Perhaps there's no mystery. We tend to view people as rational actors who make intelligent decisions. What if they aren't? What if most people are motivated by blind self-interest? And the Germans were told incessantly by the Nazis that their self-interest lay in getting rid of the Jews, who were incorrigibly malignant influences and devilish schemers out to destroy the Fatherland.

As a result, to many of them the mass murder of Jews became a rational choice, a moral duty even.

"During the first try my hand trembled a bit as I shot, but one gets used to it," a German police officer, quoted in American historian Timothy Snyder's harrowing *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, wrote back home from the Ukraine apropos shooting Jews. "By the tenth try I aimed calmly and shot surely at the many women, children and infants. I kept in mind that I have two infants at home whom these hordes would treat just the same, if not ten times worse."

Here was mass murder justified as self-defense.

This was a common refrain among the Nazis who saw, or portrayed, themselves not as perpetrators but as the actual victims of their Jewish victims. They claimed to be facing an existential threat from the Jews, those evil machinators who sought to control the world, subjugate long-suffering Germans and pollute the pure blood of true Aryans, the rightful mas-

ters of the world. It was a life-or-death, kill-or-be-killed struggle in which industrial-scale eugenics and genocide became tools of defensive social engineering.

"As a psychiatrist, I've seen an enormous amount of irrational, self-destructive behavior. Why should it surprise me if an entire nation gets derailed and intoxicated by malice...?" Dimsdale observes. He prefers the word "malice" to "evil" in describing the animating sentiment behind the Nazis' actions.

What set the Nazis apart, the author says, was that they took their murderous malice to a new level: they industrialized it on a mass scale by subordinating the entire apparatus of the state to the goal of genocide.

The chief Nazi war criminals didn't have unique psychologies that made them do it, the author stresses. What they did have were unique opportunities to elevate themselves through brute force, which they duly took.

Hitler's Germany enabled ambitious and ruthless people like them to occupy positions of unquestioned authority, in which they became masters of life and death for millions upon millions of people. The Nazi leaders weren't monochrome villains. They were much worse: fairly normal human beings, some intoxicated by their power, some driven by their megalomania, some obsessed with their hatreds and blood lust. They could be ruthless opportunists or dull functionaries.

Social psychology experiments, Dimsdale notes, have borne out such views. In one seminal experiment, devised by Stanley Milgram at Yale University in the early 1960s, otherwise well-adjusted college students ended up administering increasingly painful electronic shocks to other students, to the point of outright torture, when they were instructed to do so. People, Milgram argued, can easily come to view themselves as merely the instruments of others in inflicting pain and death, thereby absolving themselves of personal responsibility. "[S]ocial context alone [can] foment a phenomenal amount of nastiness," Dimsdale notes.

Yet other experiments showed how easily people can become desensitized to the suffering of others in a phenomenon dubbed "bystander apathy." Such findings from the field of psychology have tallied with historian Ian Kershaw's observation that the Holocaust was largely the result of ordinary Germans' "lethal indifference towards the fate of the Jewish population."

All this makes for a sobering thought: without the active complicity or wanton indifference of millions of Germans, the Nazis would never have got away with mass murder, much less managed to pull it off.

Therein lies the true moral lesson of the Holocaust.

THE TEENAGE GIRL WHO DOCUMENTED THE LAST DAYS OF *THERESIENSTADT*

Alisa Ehrmann Shek was 17 when she kept a diary chronicling what proved to be the last six months of the Terzin ghetto. Now a crowdfunding project seeks to bring her journal to a wider audience.

BY OFER ADERET, HAARETZ

Israeli crowdfunding site Headstart added an unusual project last summer: An appeal to raise 20,000 shekels (\$5,180) to publish the diary of a teenage girl who chronicled the last days of the *Theresienstadt* ghetto.



A young Alisa Ehrmann Shek.

Alisa (Alice) Ehrmann Shek wrote her journal in *Theresienstadt* (also known as *Terzin* concentration camp) when she was 17. The Beit Theresienstadt museum — an educational center and museum located in Kibbutz *Givat Haim Ihud* — is behind the funding project. “The diary has only been seen by historians in the field of Holocaust research,” says Beit Theresienstadt’s director, Tami Kinberg. “It represents the only documentation of its type of the last days of the *Terzin* ghetto.”

The story of Alisa and her husband, Zeev Shek — both originally from Czechoslovakia and survivors of *Terzin* — is “a Holocaust story with a happy ending. A rare breed, without a doubt, which is inspiring like nothing else,” writes their son Daniel Shek in his introduction to the diary.

“An invisible hand granted both of them, each in their own way, a drop from the so small and so miserly cup of miraculous acts, thanks to which children, women and men were saved from the horror that the Nazis imposed on the continent of Europe and entire history of all mankind,” he writes.

Alisa was born in 1927. She knew Zeev, who was seven years her senior, from the Zionist youth movement in Prague. They next met in the *Terzin* ghetto, to which she was deported in 1943. They married in secret there, but were separated again soon after. This happened when Zeev discovered that his mother was on the list of

those being sent to Auschwitz, and he volunteered to be deported alongside her.

The transport that separated Zeev and Alisa in October 1944 was the starting point for her diary. Zeev instructed her to record everything that happened around her in the ghetto.

“The diary begins the day after my husband Zeev was sent in a transport to the east,” Alisa explained later. “Before he left, he charged me with recording the events that occurred in the ghetto from the minute he left, documentation that he had taken care of before that.

“He gave me a suitcase with documents he had collected over time from the ghetto, and asked me to continue it. ... Every day to take down the ‘order of the day’ from the board, to gather every note that reaches my hands. ... In addition, he asked me to write a diary — what happens every day in the ghetto ... That is how we separated.”

“Zeev was filled with a sense of [mission] concerning the documentation and collection of testimony on what was happening in the ghetto — as if he felt in his heart that the Nazis would try to blur [things] and the world would refuse to believe,” says Daniel Shek. This mission, which included the risk of death, was passed on to Alisa, and [Zeev] swore her to record, collect and hide every scrap of information from the Germans, adds Daniel.

The diary is 33 pages long and was written in German but using Hebrew letters. It included drawings and sketches made by Alisa. Only one thing managed to break her dedication to the task: an incorrect report that Zeev had been murdered. “The game is over, you were right,” her diary entry read.

His mother was sent to the gas chambers, but Zeev moved through various camps and survived. Alisa took refuge in her work with a Czech farmer and was among the very few who remained in *Terzin* until it was liberated by Soviet soldiers in May 1945. Zeev and Alisa reunited after the war and immigrated to prestate Israel in 1946.

Zeev went on to become the personal secretary of Moshe Sharett, Israel’s first foreign minister (and later its second prime minister), and he

was one of the founders of the Foreign Ministry. He passed away at 58 in 1978 after suffering a heart attack in Rome, where he was serving as Israel’s ambassador to Italy. Alisa, meanwhile, was an artist. They had three children: Daniel, who followed in his father’s footsteps and entered the Foreign Ministry, becoming Israel’s ambassador to France; Ruth Shek Yasur, who translated films; and Rachel, a silversmith.

Zeev and Alisa were among the founders of the Beit Theresienstadt museum, which opened in 1975. For 25 years, Alisa volunteered in the archives. Her diary offers a precise record of what actually occurred in *Terzin*, a camp the Nazis used for propaganda purposes to showcase the “humane” conditions they provided for the Jews — before most of them were sent to their deaths elsewhere.

In a propaganda film produced at the camp in 1944, hundreds of Jews participated as actors and extras, in an attempt to “dispel the rumors” about Germany’s treatment of the Jews in the concentration camps.

At the end of September 1944, the first transport of men left for a “new work camp.” A month later, when her husband joined a transport, Alisa wrote in her diary: “At 9:30 we began to load. Hospital, patients, hospital, stretchers endlessly ... being

among them those with a scary expression of maturity and quiet. It seems they will cling on to their belongings, but never again to their childhood,” she wrote.

“Everyone alone. ... People walking in a long line, walking, dragging, put-



An illustration from Alisa Ehrman Shek’s ghetto diary.

ting down their baggage and dragging. They walk and they are brave. No one whose story is not a tragedy. Everyone has been left in the horror by men, parents, brothers, lovers. Now they are walking without hope of seeing them again. Looking in astonishment at those whose eyes are puffed up from crying. They are brave. Those who walk have become stone. Those who remain swallow their tears. In the end, the baggage remains, there was no room,” she added.

On November 1, 1944, Alisa wrote: “Nevertheless, I go to work in the morning, and I will eat and sleep, wash my hands, brush my teeth, and maybe even laugh. I won’t think about it, but it hovers over all my thoughts. Maybe everything will go silent again and will be pushed aside, and I will be allowed ‘not to think’ again. Or it will grow and all my thoughts, and life, and time, will come to an end inside it, until my end will come there, too.”

Ehrmann Shek died in 2007. Her family discovered another diary after her death, a more personal one, which chronicled the thoughts of an enamored young woman who misses the love of her life after he was taken from her. This diary was kept in a locked drawer next to her bed. Sections of this diary will be combined with her historical diary. “It ranges from great hope to complete despair about her continued existence in the world,” admits her son.



An illustration from Alisa Ehrman Shek’s ghetto diary.

loaded. Belongings, too. Everyone had so little, and it seems even this little will be taken from them. ... I entered the room, small children aged 3 to 10, shouting. Everyone has a small backpack, eyes wide open,

“MY FATHER HEINRICH HIMMLER WAS NOT A MONSTER”

(Continued from page 12)

Gestapo Butcher of Lyon, and Erich Priebke, SS murderer of Italian partisans.

It also helped Anton Malloth, a brutal guard in a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia, who was sentenced to death in his absence before finding refuge in Germany.

Malloth was put up in an old age pensioners home with *Stille Hilfe* funds. Every week Gudrun visited him with fruit and chocolates in a residence built on land once owned by Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess.

“You need building up,” she would tell the weak sadist as she stroked his hands.



The Himmlers at the time Heinrich was masterminding death.

Although legal, the organization she runs operates in a moral grey zone.

It has just 40 members but gets money from rich industrialists sympathetic to the Nazi cause and an estimated 1,000 others from Europe's ragtag far right.

Tracked down to the Munich suburb of Furstenried, where she lives in a maisonette with her husband Wolf-Dieter, Gudrun Burwitz is as reticent now as she has been ever since

becoming the “Princess of Nazism,” as a leading historian has called her.

“I never talk about my work,” she said outside No. 3 Blaichacher Strasse. “I just do what I can when I can.” Her husband was more forthright. “Go away — you are not welcome,” he said.

Their home is just 15 miles from the first concentration camp at Dachau, where 36,000 people were murdered during the 12 years of the Third Reich.

Gudrun, now 87, knows it well, for she used to visit it as a child with her father, who called her “Puppi,” meaning Doll.

One picture has her laughing and joking as he looks on adoringly. When it was taken, men and women were dying just yards away. Himmler was like that — he regularly took his child on the plane with him on his murderous travels around Germany and its conquered lands.

Puppi's world collapsed when her father committed suicide in the Allied interrogation center near Lüneburg, on May 23, 1945.

She believes the British murdered him, and pledged her life to helping his comrades whenever she could.

German journalists who write about *Stille Hilfe* remark on the power she now wields in the organization. Often quoted is a rally of neo-Nazis she attended in Ulrichsberg, Austria, several years ago, where she was idolized by SS veterans.

“They were terrified of her,” said

Andrea Ropke, an authority on neo-Nazism who was there. “All these high-ranking former officers lined up and she asked, ‘Where did you



Gudrun Burwitz waves in the most recent picture in 2011.

serve?’ showing off a vast knowledge of military logistics.”

She and her group are monitored by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Germany's domestic intelligence service.

One official said: “She is over 80 but pin sharp. She likes it if you think of her as some Mrs. Doubtfire figure, but that is not the case. She has a genuine love for these men and women who served the worst parts of the Nazi regime from 1933 until 1945. She is a true believer and, like all zealots, that makes her dangerous.”

She has become the godmother to far-right women's groups. They are infiltrating kindergartens, schools and other organizations. In Mecklenburg-

Vorpommern state, there is a screening program to try to stop them working in nurseries.

But for all her work in the present, the past is the place where she chooses to dwell with her beloved father.

“On December 24 each year I used to drive with my father to see Hitler at the Brown House in Munich and wish him Merry Christmas,” she has said. “When I was little he used to give me dolls. Later he always gave me a box of chocolates.”

After her father's suicide, the Allied soldiers who captured Gudrun and her mother Margarete did not know what to do with them. They told Gudrun to change her name. She simply refused.

She had job after job in shattered postwar Germany and lost them all when people learned who she was. Once in a hotel a Jewish guest thundered: “My wife died in Auschwitz and you employ HER?” She was dismissed the same day.

Gudrun spoke in the 1950s of her intention to travel to America “where the documents are” that would clear her father. It is understood she has never been, perhaps even doubtful that the Americans would grant an entry visa to the daughter of the man who gave the world Auschwitz.

“I don't believe he swallowed that poison capsule,” she said. “My mother and I never had official notification of his death. To me, the photo of him dead is a retouched photo of when he was alive.”

Denial is obviously a comfort zone for Gudrun Burwitz. It is not a place that she is ever likely to leave.

HOW THE VATICAN CAN SHED LIGHT ON THE HOLOCAUST

BY GERALD POSNER,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

In July Pope Francis became the third Roman Catholic pope to visit Auschwitz. John Paul II was the first Polish pope in the church's 2,000-year history.

Some thought that Francis' visit could be the most significant ever if he used the symbolic backdrop to break with the policies of six predecessors over 70 years and order the release of the Vatican's sealed Holocaust-era archives. That didn't happen.

The debate over the church's secret wartime files is not new. The Vatican is the only country in Europe that refuses to open all of its World War II archives to independent historians and researchers. The issue is more than simply an academic debate over the appropriate rules for public disclosure of historically significant documents. The church's files are thought to contain important information about the Holocaust in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe. The Vatican had eyes and ears in the killing fields: tens of thousands of parish priests who

sent letters and reports to their bishops, who in turn forwarded them to the secretary of state in Vatican City. One of the messengers in charge of reviewing those thousands of reports was Giovanni Battista Montini, later Pope Paul VI.

It is little wonder that historians are eager to study the Vatican's Holocaust-era papers. The accounts by the parish priests may help answer lingering questions of when and what the Vatican knew about the Nazi murder machinery. The files are likely to shed light on whether the wartime pope, Pius XII, could have done more to try to stop the Holocaust. Also buried inside the secret archives are the early records of the scandal-ridden Vatican Bank, created during World War II. Those documents could resolve conclusively how much business the Vatican did with the Third Reich, as well as the extent of insurance company investments that yielded enormous profits from life insurance policies of Jews sent to Auschwitz, which I uncovered in my own reporting.

And finally, the church's secret files

might resolve the debate over whether several postwar refugee-smuggling networks that were run from Rome separately by an Austrian bishop, a German priest and a Croatian priest — and through which Nazi criminals escaped — were freelance operations, or instead parts of a program that had the pope's blessing.

The 2013 election of Pope Francis held out the promise for a change in the church's longstanding policy of secrecy. While still the archbishop of Buenos Aires, he had been asked about the dispute over the Holocaust-era files. The Vatican, he answered, “should open them and clarify everything.” Many Vaticanologists thought he would use a 2014 visit to Israel to free the files. But Francis did not say anything publicly about the papers.

Francis last discussed the issue in a November 2014 interview with the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Ahronot*. The pope asked: “Did Pius XII remain silent in the face of the extermination of the Jews? Did he say all he should have said? We will have to open the archives to know exactly what happened.” According to Francis: “There is an

agreement between the Vatican and Italy from 1929 that prevents us from opening the archives to researchers at this point in time. But because of the time that has passed since World War II, I see no problem with opening the archives the moment we sort out the legal and bureaucratic matters.”

The 1929 agreement Francis cited is the Lateran Pacts between the Vatican and Benito Mussolini's Fascist Italy. It gave the church full sovereignty over Vatican City. The agreement declared that the pope was not only the equivalent of a secular monarch but also endowed with divine rights. Instead of preventing the church from releasing its archives, as Francis suggested, the agreement invests the Vatican with inviolable powers to set its own policies independent of any interference from Italy. All that is required to open the long-sealed archives is a papal decree.

Jewish advocacy groups, human rights organizations and concentration camp survivors hope that Francis' commitment to reform will trump the desire of Vatican traditionalists to keep the documents buried forever.

HISTORICAL “BURDEN” SHARED BY THIRD GENERATION

BY SHIRYN GHERMEZIAN,
THE ALGEMEINER

A new short film presents the perspective of a third-generation Holocaust survivor and examines the inheritance of family trauma.

The film's director, Daniella Rabbani, a New York-based actress, spoke to *The Algemeiner* about being the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor, and the inspiration for the movie's story line, which stems from her maternal grandmother's reluctance to talk about her experience during the Holocaust.

In *OMA*, fictional character Dana Bloch must interview her estranged grandmother, Ethel, about her experience in the Holocaust for her thesis on genocide and film studies. As Dana persuades Ethel to open up about her past, their relationship develops and Dana discovers that her grandmother is far more intriguing than she expected.

Actress Lynn Cohen — who has appeared in *Munich* and *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* and had a reoccurring role in the *Sex in the City* series — will play Ethel.

“It's not a story about a Holocaust survivor. It's a universal narrative about family communication and learning about oneself through our family stories,” Rabbani explained. “This film and this conversation that we're starting, it's so much more about the present generation. It's so much more about the third-generation survivor.”

Rabbani said that Ethel's character was very much inspired by her grandmother Hedy Ranish.

When Rabbani was a child, Ranish told her grandchildren that she wanted them to call her Oma. Rabbani named the project after her and said she originally set out to create a documentary record of her grandmother's life during the Holocaust. Ranish, however, would never discuss her experience.

Ranish was born and raised in Romania. Her mother died young of tuberculosis, and she was in her teens when she was forced into a concentration camp, the name of which she never revealed to Rabbani. She survived with her father and brother. After she was freed from the camp, Rabbani said, she married Rabbani's grandfather.

“She doesn't tell me much about her life, but she'll start stories and then say ‘Hitler had other plans,’” said Rabbani.

The filmmaker, who is making her directorial debut with *OMA*, said she always had an interest in Holocaust studies and would read books and biographies about it when she was younger. She said *OMA* has been “decades in the making.”

Rabbani, whose father is Iranian, described a “cat and mouse game” in trying to get her grandmother to talk about the Holocaust before finally deciding to let her be.



“For years I tried to get my grandmother to open up, and I think through maturity and through this film-making process I realized it might not be my business,” she said.

“My curiosity and my need to understand my grandmother's life — that certain thirst has never been quenched. Because there is a part of me in her and a part of her in me,” she continued. “And so I want to know, and yet I realize in the making of this story that maybe giving my grandmother and others the dignity of their experience and their privacy is part of being a responsible human.”

OMA plays on the concept of silence when it comes to the Holocaust, and its profound impact on a family. The film's narrative is also focused on inherited trauma, a subject Rabbani has researched. For over a year, she and *OMA* screen-

writer Melissa Jane Osbourne have been interviewing Holocaust survivors.

Children and grandchildren of trauma survivors are genetically affected slightly from the experiences of generations ago, according to Rabbani. The trauma of the past can change the stress hormones in a survivor's body, which are passed down and can affect their descendants' reaction to stress. According to Rabbani, the inherited trauma makes them more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, addiction and depression.

On a personal level, Rabbani believes the trauma she inherited is part of the reason why she is an “incredibly sensitive person.”

“I also think that on a very basic level, my grandmother never having told me her Holocaust experience leaves a wound sort of open,” she continued.

Rabbani said she hopes *OMA* opens up intergenerational conversations among third-generation Holocaust survivors about the responsibility of transmitting these stories and the “burden” of history.

The filmmaker admitted that she still has “more questions than answers” about the Holocaust. However, interviewing Holocaust survivors made her realize the sacredness of revealing one's personal story. She said younger generations “interact with the world through a screen” and overshare a lot on social media about their daily lives, but not so much about who they truly are.

“What we learned through these interviews is that the giving of yourself — really telling someone how it was and who you are — is an incredibly vulnerable, sacred experience and something that our grandparents don't take lightly,” she said. “Some of them don't think that they're important or that their stories are important.”

“And what's hilarious is that we go to the bathroom and we broadcast it,” she continued. “We broadcast the very mundane moments of our lives, and yet our grandparents have humility about their life experiences where they don't think they're that special. We live in a YouTube era where you can broadcast yourself; where we do really value the individual, the everyday. That's not the culture my grandmother grew up in at all.”

American & International Societies for Yad Vashem
MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE
500 FIFTH AVENUE, 42ND FLOOR
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10110-4299
Web site: www.yadvashemusa.org

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

Martyrdom & Resistance

Ron B. Meier, Ph.D.,
Editor-in-Chief

Yefim Krasnyanskiy, M.A.,
Editor

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

EDITORIAL BOARD

Eli Zborowski**
Norman Belfer
Joseph Bukiet**
Sam Halpern**
Isidore Karten**
Israel Krakowski**
William Mandell
Mark Palmer
Sam Skura**
Marvin Zborowski

**1974-85, as Newsletter for the American Federation of Jewish Fighters, Camp Inmates, and Nazi Victims
**deceased



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

Please remember us in your trust, will, estate plan or with the planned gift. It's your legacy... to your family, and your people. For more information, or for help with proper wording for the bequest to ASYV, please contact Chris Morton at

212-220-4304