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. 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 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 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.

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 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 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 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 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 (Continued on page 2)
HONORING RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

(Continued from page 1) France. Loes 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 Pechanez 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, Pechanez 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, Pechanez 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 important projects of the Israeli government. Pechanez 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. It has helped shape and sustain 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 Grisvacher, 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.”

Grisvacher has 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.

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 illuminating 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.”

You read what happened in Holland, it’s unfathomable that people haven’t talked about it yet.”

The new memorial, which will cost about $5.5 million, should be complet- ed by the end of 2017 or early 2018.

Both the memorial wall and the new Holocaust museum, which is expected to cost $24 million, when its four-year plan is completed, will be estab- lished in the Jodenbuurt, or Jewish district, the eastern section of the old city center.

In the late 16th and early 17th centuries, the first Jewish migrants from Portugal and Spain settled in this area of Amsterdam. In what is now called the Jewish Cultural Quarter, there are still landmarks of the old Jewish life, including the Portuguese Synagogue; a cluster of former synagogues that have been turned into the Jewish Museum; and the Hollandsche Schouwburg, a former theater that the Nazis used as a deportation center and is now a museum and remem- brance chapel.

It was also in this neighborhood that the Anne Frank House, 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 Eides, 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, Eides 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 survi- vor 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 pre- ferred 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.

Grisvacher, who was 3 when he left his home for the first time 71 years ago, has a long time to wait for any kind of large-scale commemoration.

“It’s time,” he said. “We have a lot of people around us now that 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

BY OFER ADERET, HAARETZ

In 2001, Matt Rozell, a high school history teacher from 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 Carroll Walsh, a retiree and the judge-father 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.

“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 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. The 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 the Allies 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.

T he story behind the photograph is an extraordinary rescue story behind it. Thanks to several memoirs written by survivors who witnessed them, but Rozell was the first person, other than the Allies 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.

It’s the fate of the third train — actually the first of the three trains 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 passengers who came from the camp.

“The train moved little; it remained standing a great deal,” Vitis-Shomron wrote in her book The Sandgame (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 bows. 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 stopped, the Germans fled and we stopped,” he remembered. “The Germans left behind two rather elderly soldiers to guard the Jews, and they were outnumbered 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. I 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 bows. One of them pointed to the Star of David he wore on a chain around his neck. ‘So am I!’”

(Continued on page 11)
HITLER’S VILE CRETINS

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 procedure, and the result is a fascinating and informative compendium of details and little-known tidbits relayed with fair. The Allied captors weren’t impressed by the Nazi bigwigs in their charge. “They are perverses, dopes, and liars,” opined Colonel Burton C. Andrus, the chief warden of the interrogation center at a converted resort in Luxembourg, where the chief Nazi was 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 two-piece linen suit.” When Ley got here he had a gonorrheal tincture with him and comported himself as any bureaucrat.

Propagandist Julius Streicher. The result is a fascinating and informative compendium of details and little-known tidbits relayed with fair. The Allied captors weren’t impressed by the Nazi bigwigs in their charge. “They are perverses, dopes, and liars,” opined Colonel Burton C. Andrus, the chief warden of the interrogation center at a converted resort in Luxembourg, where the chief Nazi was 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 two-piece linen suit.” When Ley got here he had a gonorrheal tincture with him and comported himself as any bureaucrat.

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P
ingly not for the last time, human remains from inmates used in Holocaust-era "medical experiments" were accidentally dis
covered 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.

Join other events that are suddenly uncovered after 70 years," said the director of research at the internation-
al Holocaust center. "Whoe
thought this chapter was completely finished is mistaken."

"LIFE UNWORTHY OF LIFE"

Just as he was in charge of imple-
menting the "Final Solution," SS
chief Heinrich Himmler sat atop the
chain of command for medical exper-
iments in Nazi camps. Because his
guiding obsession was to advance
Himler's racial utopia, Himmler took
special interest in projects like "block
sonnel who ran these gassing installa-
tions 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 pro
duced 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 demonstrated physicians' leadership in projects like the T4 "mercy killings," shattering the image of a few mon-
sters 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

L
agely forgotten among the noto-
rious 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 tri-

bunal sentenced seven physicians to
death. Thousands of medical per-
sonnel 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 tri-

als, what emerged was an incom-
plete, often hasty, and unfair prosecu-
tion of crimes that demanded more
resources and research," said Victor Shlyane, author of the 2009 book
Remember Us: My Journey from the
Shitd Through the Holocaust.

"The degree of interest in bringing criminals to justice must be ques-
tioned, and one must wonder how
much this had to do with political
interests of the current period," said
Shayne in an interview with The Times of Israel. "These included the
gains for Nazi scientists that occurred
between the United States and the
Soviet Union, and the incestuous
relationship between Nazi corpora-
tions and Allied nations, including
the US."

Indeed, several of the most notori-
ous Nazi physicians were rehabilitat-
ed after the war. Among these men
was Carl Clauberg of Auschwitz's hor-
drid 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 Otnar 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 clini-
cians like Harvard-trained Professor
G. Schaltenbrand, who conducted
neuro-immunological experiments on
uniformed subjects — not at a con-
centration camp but at the Julius

Maximilian University of Wurzburg," wrote Hanauske-Abel.

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

One of 85 witnesses who testified during the "Doctors' Trial" at Nuremberg, Germany, in 1946.

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 dur-
ing 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 WWI

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 work. The idea was to poison the water supply with arsenic and undermine international support for the establishment of the state of Israel fighting for its survival in a hostile region.

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 area.

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.”

If I am proud of something it is that I didn’t actually succeed in killing any 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.

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 the state 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.

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.”

The trial of those responsible for the 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.

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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.

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 1996 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 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 plots, 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.

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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.

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.

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 bakery, which supplied bread to Stalag 13, seven miles away.

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.

Tal 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.

“I was impetuous 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 thinking about paying those bastards back. It would have been awful not to respond to those animals.”

First published by AP

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE November/December 2016 - Kislev/Tevet 5777
DUTCH SURVIVOR’S DIARY
CALLED AN ANNE FRANK STORY WITH A “HAPPY ENDING”

BY CNAAN LIPSHIZ, JTA

A Holocaust survivor dubbed “America’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.

Whereas Frank and many of her relatives were among the 104,000 Dutch Jews who perished in the Holocaust, 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 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 anti-fascist 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 and neighbor-borough 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 Auschwitz.”

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 complained 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’s 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 undis- covered topic: the religious life in hid- ing,” Wallet wrote. “It shows how the people 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 naked on this cold floor. You will not shed for three days, made him strip naked on this cold floor. You will not

End at the end of the war, P.O. Box

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PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM

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

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

Gale & Ira Drucker and Marilyn & Barry Rubenstein.

Mark Moskowitz, 2016 Annual Tribute Dinner co-chair.

Guest speaker Sara Pechner, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

Michael Bernardi, master of ceremonies and Broadway actor.


“THEY LAUGHED BY DAY AND CRIED AT NIGHT”

BY DINA PORATH

IN SEPTEMBER 1943, WITH THE ITALIAN SURRONDER 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.

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 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 passengers-inmates were. “We must have looked terrifying, like nightmare figures, monsters from science fiction, apparitions arisen from the grave,” he said as saying in Rozell’s book. “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 day, Rozell decided to research it in depth.

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 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 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.

“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 day, Rozell decided to research it in depth.

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 United States, close to Rozell) 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 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.

A nother 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, 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 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 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.”
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, hiding 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 Rudolf Höss; the SS governor of Poland, Martin Bormann; and the AXIS man charged with crimes against humanity — were eventually freed, but they weren't safe in Paris, where Jews were under constant threat of arrest. Soon Argentinians were being deported, still to this day. 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 lac-tic 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 the few that I couldn't save."

"There are no superiors, no inferiors. Everyone is equal, whatever their origins, their beliefs, their skin color," he later added. "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 quitted for good, and mostly made a living teaching typing. He met a young law student, of German birth, and the two decided to move to Paris. They're operating a clandestine laboratory to make false passports for children and families about to be deported to concentration camps. The youngest child on her heart, Gudrun Burwitz, the sister of a group, the lab's technical director, is practically a child herself. 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 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 as a teenager in World War II, he forged passports for French Jews. "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 Argentinian passports, was allowed to rejoin relatives in France. "It was then that I realized the significance of the word "paper," 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 engi-neer, and would answer all of my questions," he said. On weekends he cooked and cleaned in a local dairy, in exchange for butter.

In the summer of 1943, he and his family were 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 govern-ment 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 advised him to tutor other children 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." Mr. Kaminsky 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 remained as fiercely devoted to him as he was to Hitler, keeping a scrap-book of every newspaper picture she could find of him. In her house in a leafy Munich street lies a manuscript to his memory. It's a great responsibility. 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."

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Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg Trials.

Hitler's vile cretins

(Continued from page 4)

ing. “On one occasion,” Dimsdale writes, “ Göring tried to strike Ribbentrop with his marshal's baton, shouting ‘Rhubarb, you champagne peddler.’ ” Ribbentrop took offense at this breach of etiquette. “[M]y name is von Ribbentrop,” he retorted, insisting on the proper honorific. Farical? 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 defeated, who kept blaming everyone but themselves: each other and Hitler, mostly. Their mental state and behavior bordered on the comical.

Göring, who suffered from delusions of grandeur, was by turns beligerent and obsequious. He was described by an American warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.” The blueberry Nazi was also an effete snob with monogrammed suitcases, fingers bedecked with large jeweled rings, and nails coated in red varnish. He was addicted to morphine, suffered from heart problems and struck others bedecked with large bejeweled graces,” Dimsdale notes. The warden as a “simpering slob.”

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. When citing 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 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 is a common refrain among the Nazis who saw, or portrayed themselves not as perpetrators but as the actual victims of their Jewish vic- tims. They claimed to be facing an existential threat from the Jews, those evil machinators who sought to control the world, subjugate long-suffer- ing Germans and pollute the pure blood of true Aryans, the righteous 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 psychoanalyst, I’ve seen an enormous amount of irrational, self-destructive behavior. Why should it surprise us to see an entire nation get 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 murder- ers to a new level: they indu- trialized it on a mass scale by subor- dinating the entire apparatus of the state to the goal of racial purity.

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

Hitler, hugely inflated egos, patholog- ical and blood lust. They became masters of life and death for millions upon millions of people. The Nazi leaders weren’t monochrome vil- lains. They were much worse: fairly normal human beings, some intol- cated by their power, some driven by their megalomania, some obsessed with their hatred and/ or lust. They could be ruthless opportunists or dull functionaries.

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

Other experiments showed how easily people can become desensi- tized to the suffering of others in a phenomenon dubbed “bystander apathy.” Such findings from the field of psychology have tallied with histo- rian Ian Kershaw’s observation that the Holocaust was largely the result of ordinary Germans’ “lethal indiffer- ence towards the fate of the Jewish population.” Yet this makes for a sobering thought: without the active complicity or wanton indifference of millions of Germans, the Nazis would 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 Theresienstadt ghetto. Now a crowdfunding project seeks to bring her journal to a wider audience.

BY OFER ADERET, HAARETZ

Iraeli 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.

Alisa (Alice) Ehrmann Shek wrote her journal in Transnistria (also known as Theresienstadt concentration camp) when she was 17. The Beit Theresienstadt museum — an educational center and museum located in Kibbutz Givat HaShiv — 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 Terzin.

“It represents the only document of its type of the last days of the Theresienstadt ghetto.”

The story of Alisa and her husband, Zeev Shek — both originally from Czechoslovakia and survivors of Theresienstadt — 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 Theresienstadt 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 war 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 few who remained in Theresienstadt 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 1976 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 Theresienstadt, a camp the Nazis used for propaganda purposes to showcase the “human” 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 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, among those them 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, putting...
“MY FATHER HENRICH 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.

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 Blachacher Strasse. “I just do what I can. I can’t do any more.” 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 looking 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 travels around Germany and its conquered lands.

Puppi’s world collapsed when her father committed suicide in the Allied interrogation center near Luneburg, 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 Ulrichsburg, Austria, several years ago, where she was idolized by SS veterans.

“They were terrified of her,” said Andrea Ropke, an authority on neo-Nazis who was there. “All these high-ranking former officers lined up and she asked, ‘Where did you keep the documents?’

She refused to open all of its World War II files. But Francis did not say anything about the dispute over the Holocaust-era files. The Vatican knew about the Nazi murders. The files are likely to resolve the debate over whether several postwar refugee-smuggling networks that were run from France separately by an Austrian bishop, a German priest and a Croatian priest — and through which Nazi criminals escaped — were free-lance 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 Yedioth 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 time.”

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 consignors in charge of reviewing those thousands of reports was Giovanni Battista Montini, later Pope Paul VI.

It is little wonder that historians are 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.

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

“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 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 screenwriter Melissa Jane Osborne 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 special. We live in a YouTube era where you can broadcast yourself; where we do really value the individual, the every-day. That’s not the culture my grandmother grew up in at all.”

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