

# MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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## INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY COMMEMORATED AROUND THE WORLD

The United Nations paid tribute to the six million Jews and countless others massacred in the Nazi Holocaust with a solemn ceremony in the General Assembly Hall, a rebuke to Holocaust deniers, and a warning from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the perils of anti-Semitism and hatred of any kind.

"The United Nations was founded to prevent any such horror from happening again. Yet tragedies from Cambodia to Rwanda to *Srebrenica* show that the poison of genocide still flows," he said in a message marking the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, held every year on 27 January, the date on which Auschwitz-Birkenau, one of the worst German Nazi concentration and extermination camps, was liberated in 1945.

Mr. Ban recalled his own visit to the camp in November as he walked through the "infamous" gate bearing the metal slogan "*Arbeit macht frei*" (work makes [you] free) and stood near the crematoria that burned the corpses of so many victims. "I will never forget my visit," he said.

"I saw the horrific remnants of the machinery of genocide, as well as moving images of European Jewish life in the 1930s — weddings, family meals, rituals, other scenes of simple daily life — all extinguished through systematic murder unique in human history.

"I saw the barracks where Jews, Roma, Sinti, homosexuals, dissidents, prisoners of war and persons with disabilities spent their final days in the most brutal conditions," he added, calling for unflinching vigilance

against bigotry, extremist ideologies, communal tensions and discrimination against minorities.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, recalling her own visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, has a "simple message" for all those who deny that the Holocaust happened, or who engage in anti-Semitism and other forms of religious, racial or ethnic intolerance or discrimination.

"Visit this historic and terrible place,"

at large failed so dismally to prevent it. The Holocaust stands as a searing reminder of the perils of discrimination and intolerance, and of just how powerful and deadly the incitement to racial hatred can be," she added, stressing the imperative of reacting quickly and firmly to discrimination and violence against individuals and entire communities, wherever they occur.

Ms. Pillay noted that despite the rev-

humanity and genocide with hate-inspired political philosophies and propaganda."

Opening the commemorative ceremony, General Assembly President John Ashe stressed that the Day underscored the international community's determination that "such unfathomable horror and unspeakable cruelty" would have no place in this world.

"Today, we are gathered here, to bear witness for all those who were brutalized, who suffered and who died, and we are also here to bear witness so that we the living never allow such a terrible tragedy to occur in our shared human history," he said.

"We will not forget them, we have not forgotten them, and they have not left us in vain. The sheer ferocity and pervasive cruelty of the Holocaust brought to fore a deep and powerful moral imperative that crimes of such enormity must be forever eliminated from this planet.

"This moral imperative calls on the international community to ensure that this horrendous crime against humanity, including various subsequent derivatives thereof, must never be repeated in any way, shape or form."

Giving the keynote speech at the ceremony, film director, writer and producer Steven Spielberg stressed that the world cannot emerge from the Holocaust until there are no more genocides, until "the unthinkable becomes impossible..."

"Tragically we are all aware that the Holocaust is with us today in ongoing attempts at genocides all around our planet," he added, highlighting the UN's role in bringing home the message.

"The United Nations is one of the most important institutions that humanity has created, not only because of that shared hope that it would accomplish what's set out in its Charter, but because the United Nations provides a place for representatives of all the peoples of the world to listen to witnesses telling their experiences, and after listening, policy is made. This is a place that testimony forms the basis of action."

(Continued on page 14)



Israeli Ambassador to the UN Ron Prosor with director Steven Spielberg at the United Nations on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Monday, January 27, 2014.

she said in a message marking the Day. "It is a truly humbling and harrowing experience to feel the chill of evil and immense tragedy that permeates its walls and grounds. It is important to feel — not just to know in an abstract way — where such behavior can lead."

"Each year, on 27 January, we take time to remember the victims of the Holocaust and to reflect on how it came about, and how the world

elation of the full horror of the Holocaust, the flames of hatred and persecution have risen again to consume other countries, people and societies — from the killing fields of Cambodia to the forests of *Srebrenica* in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the hills of Rwanda.

"Even today, in many places around the world, people are persecuted or discriminated against because of their race, religion, origin, sexual orientation or political opinions, and in countries such as Syria, the Central African Republic and South Sudan, people are still being maimed and slaughtered because of the group to which they belong," she warned.

"We need to stop turning a blind eye to the warning signs of serious human rights violations whenever and wherever they appear. That much, at least, we can do to honor all those millions murdered en masse by their fellow human beings, who attempted to justify war crimes, crimes against

### IN THIS ISSUE

International Holocaust Remembrance Day.....	1, 14-15
Deal with the devil.....	2
Return to Auschwitz.....	3
Gone to Pitchipoi.....	4
Survivors recall <i>Kindertransport</i> escape.....	5
The savior of <i>Sobibor</i> .....	6
Observing Yom Kippur in the shadow of death.....	6
The uses of Nazi "Degenerate art".....	8
"Traces of Life".....	10
16th Annual Conference on Holocaust Education.....	16

## DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

**As WWII drew to a close, Hitler sought the rapid annihilation of every remaining Jew. A group of Revisionist Zionists enlisted Swiss politician Jean-Marie Musy to convince Heinrich Himmler to go against the Führer's orders. In a remarkable episode largely overlooked to this day, the effort was partially successful.**

BY JOANNA M. SAIDEL,  
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

On November 3, 1944, Adolf Hitler's deputy, Reichsführer SS and General Plenipotentiary of Nazi Germany Heinrich Himmler, was traveling on a German military train from Breslau to Vienna. Sitting with him was his longtime friend, Dr. Jean-Marie Musy, the former president of the Swiss Confederation.

Their conversation that day set in process a remarkable saga that led to thousands — and possibly even tens of thousands — of European Jews being saved from Nazi extermination. It ranks as one of the more extraordinary stories of the war, and yet it is an all but unpublicized one.

Musy had known Himmler since the 1930s and had been the publisher of a pro-German newspaper, *La Jeune Suisse*. During that period he had worked to reduce the prominence of Jews in economic and public life. But by 1944, he had reversed his position, stopped his publication and decided that the Nazis were criminals and murderers. Unbeknown to Himmler, Musy had gone so far as to switch his loyalties and become an emissary of the Irgun, the Revisionist Zionist movement.

Unsurprisingly, the Irgun's route to Musy, and via him to Himmler, was a convoluted one. It originated with Dr. Reuben Hecht, who worked as an Irgun representative in Zurich. Hecht forged a close relationship with the American consul general there, Samuel Edison Woods, and persuaded him to embrace Zionism. Woods, in turn, introduced Hecht to Yitzchak and Recha Sternbuch, an Orthodox Jewish couple who ran the Swiss branch of the Emergency Rescue Committee (*Va'ad ha-Hatzalah*) of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis. They established contacts with the papal nuncio to Switzerland and gradually gained influence with the broader Swiss diplomatic community. And in September 1944, they came into contact with Musy, recruited him to the Zionist cause and, astoundingly, proved able to negotiate with Himmler through him.

A 1974 conference at Yad Vashem, and the resulting documentation, indicated that these negotiations ultimately saved the lives of many thousands of Jews. As World War II was drawing to a close, Hitler ordered the extermination of all remaining Jews in Nazi death camps throughout Europe. But under pressure from Musy, Himmler — the monstrous

architect of the Holocaust, now seeking to save his own skin and that of his comrades rather than go down with the ship as Hitler intended to do — countermanded the Führer's order.

Himmler's late November 1944 countermand ordered a halt to the murder of Jews throughout the Reich and called for the destruction of the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau. This order, it need hardly be stated, came far too late to save the millions upon millions of Jews and others whom the Nazis had murdered. Himmler, it also need hardly be stressed, was a central cog in that genocidal Nazi machine. His interven-



Adolf Hitler shakes hands with Heinrich Himmler, somewhere in Germany on May 18, 1944. From left to right; Hitler, Minister Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Admiral Karl Doenitz, Himmler and Field Marshal General Erhard Milch.

tion to counter Hitler toward the very end of the war was entirely cynical and self-motivated. It was also not universally implemented. Hitler himself worked to ensure that his will not be subverted. And lower-level commanders took independent actions in the chaos at war's end. Despite Himmler's orders to the contrary, there were death marches which continued until the last day of the war.

But scholarly data indicates that at least some of the Jews who were still alive in the camps when the war ended were there because of Himmler's intervention — a countermand that led Hitler to condemn his former faithful deputy for betrayal.

Evidence of Himmler's intervention and its consequences derives from a number of reliable sources — some of which were cited at the 1974 Yad Vashem conference — including testimony from the Nuremberg war trials, the Rudolf Kastner war trial, the Archives of the Holocaust, the Hecht Archive (which includes an enlightening interview of Hecht by Monty Noam Penkover, professor emeritus of Jewish history at the Machon Lander Graduate Center of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem), and US Foreign Service documents.

These documents indicate that Musy was able to persuade his old friend Himmler that, while the war was lost, there was still a narrow window of opportunity available to him: that if he worked against Hitler to keep camp inmates alive, stopping the death marches, gassings and executions, he could expect somewhat

more favorable international treatment and a greater chance of post-war survival.

It was these issues that were discussed by Himmler and Musy on that November 3 journey to Vienna. Two weeks later, on November 18, Musy informed Himmler in writing that the United States government was prepared to participate in negotiations with him, through Musy, via its consul general in Zurich, Woods, over the possible transfer of hundreds of thousands of Jews from concentration camps in the Reich to freedom via Switzerland. On November 24, 1944, Himmler ordered gassings to stop

Eichmann, at first, did not obey this order."

Hitler was unprepared for Himmler's turnabout, which did not become completely clear to him until April 1945. Himmler had been known as *der treue Heinrich*, "the faithful Heinrich." But though dedicated to the Führer throughout the war, Himmler was not part of Hitler's inner circle. And despite his unconditional obedience to Hitler — which lasted at least until late 1944 — Himmler preferred socializing with rank-and-file German soldiers. It was of great importance to Himmler that German concentration camp guards be treated as prisoners of war rather than being shot on the spot when Allied victors entered and took over the camps.

As Himmler issued orders to release trainloads of Jews, he was met with resistance and counter-commands from Hitler. Underlings faithful to the Führer brought news of the release of the first trainload of *Theresienstadt* Jews to Hitler's attention, and the transfers were halted. Now the secondary course of action went into effect — the effort to halt death marches and the preservation of camps marked for destruction. Himmler was able to partially prevail and keep some camps intact, preventing the immediate death of many prisoners.

The material that follows is drawn primarily from the documentary sources cited above. It comprises compelling testimony about the events and procedures used to influence Himmler to change his course of action.

### TWISTING HIMMLER'S ARM UNTIL IT BROKE

Himmler was no hero for his late wartime actions. He was guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity. Nonetheless, the story is worth telling because of the noble efforts of those who twisted Himmler's arm until it broke. They were not the only people who attempted to influence Himmler, but they were possibly the most successful. And they may be the least well known.

Many aspects of this fascinating story, which has received scant editorial notice, unfolded during testimony in the famous Kastner war trial. The trial itself sought to determine the innocence or guilt of one Jew but, en route, it revealed the audacious and at least partly successful effort to save Jews through negotiations with Himmler. Under questioning by the defense, Hecht revealed how emissaries of the Irgun persuaded former Nazi sympathizer Musy to join their cause and work through Himmler to try to subvert Hitler's plan to exterminate those Jews remaining in concentration camps at the close of the war.

The Antwerp-born elder son of shipping magnate Jacob Hecht, Reuben Hecht left his family business and for-

(Continued on page 9)

and crematoria to be destroyed at Auschwitz and its 51 sub-camps.

Subsequently, a first trainload of 1,200 Jews from *Theresienstadt* concentration camp were indeed released, as agreed upon, but no other Jews were liberated in this manner under the Musy-Himmler agreement. Hitler intervened and halted the plan to move these Jews out of Nazi territory by train. Instead, a secondary plan evolved, by which many thousands of Jews were ultimately saved through Himmler's intervention in Hitler's evacuation plan and by stopping the complete destruction of the concentration camps late in the war.

Dr. Rudolf Kastner, the former president of the Hungarian Zionist Organization, said in a 1945 affidavit: "After the fall of 1944 Himmler granted several concessions. Thus he permitted the departure for Switzerland of 1,700 Hungarian Jews deported to *Bergen-Belsen* and also agreed to suspend the annihilation of the Jews of the Budapest ghetto. Himmler permitted the handing over to the Allies of the Jews of *Bergen-Belsen* and *Theresienstadt* without a shot being fired, which in his eyes and the eyes of his colleagues was a very generous concession, and certainly one [for] which he expected some political concession to be granted in return. In hopes of contact with the Western Allies, Himmler even made concessions without any economic returns. To this end Himmler may be ascribed the general prohibition dated 25 November 1944, concerning the further killing of Jews.... [Adolf]

# RETURN TO AUSCHWITZ: HOW ISRAEL KEEPS HOLOCAUST MEMORIES ALIVE

BY KEVIN CONNOLLY, BBC NEWS

The number of people who survived the Holocaust is dwindling — they are all now old men and women. But the Holocaust carries a special importance for Israel. Can it ensure that the next generation knows, and does not forget, what happened in Europe seven decades ago?

Under a lightless Polish sky as dull and flat as a sheet of beaten lead the Israeli flag flutters listlessly in the light wind.

There are not many touches of color to be seen at the gates of Auschwitz, and the blue Star of David stands out on its crisp white background.

The Israeli soldiers carrying the flag have not come as tourists, of course — they are here as an official military delegation to learn the lessons of the Holocaust and to piece together fragments of family histories that were shattered by war and by genocide.



Israeli military delegation in Auschwitz.

The Israeli delegation is marching in the footsteps of the many Jews who took their last steps here.

This is the spot where German SS officers rapidly assessed which prisoners looked fit and strong enough to be sent to the wooden blockhouses where the slave laborers lived. The Germans had taken a timber building originally designed to house about 50 cavalry horses and adapted it to the demands of the prison camp. Four hundred prisoners were crammed into the same space, packed on to double-decker bunks. In freezing rooms on starvation rations, only a few lived for more than a few months.

The rest were herded towards the gas chambers.

It was murder on an industrial scale — whole communities perished together within hours of climbing down from the trains.

So the most moving moment in the Israeli soldiers' journey comes inside one of the old blockhouses, where a handful of them read out loud lists of the names of family members who died in the Holocaust.

Sometimes almost nothing is known to tell the stories of lives that were not

lived, except a name.

As Yishai Szekely — a doctor who serves as a reserve officer in an artillery unit — explains, in some families firsthand memories are passed down. There are photographs or books and ornaments with stories attached, that make the dead seem real.

Here, the reading of the names is the only way to reclaim the dead from the anonymity of genocide.

"Six million is such a huge number, even to think of 1,000 it confuses you," Szekely says. "The power is in the name because we don't have much left. That's the only thing we can touch or understand or imagine, our only connection that we could start to make to our past... When you connect to one name, one person to one name, it makes it easier for you to understand."

When the last name has been read, I stroll between the blockhouses with Yechiel Aleksander, who was brought to Auschwitz as a teenager in 1944, on one of the Eastern Transports —

two or three generations from now?

"In 1994 I promised that all this must remain for future generations. I thought [if things remained the way they were] that in two generations from now no one would even know that this place existed. It's much easier now that I know I'm passing things on to youngsters. Perhaps it will stick now and each generation will pass it on to the next generation."

Yechiel leads me to an open pool of water with deep concrete sides, on a grass verge beside the blockhouses — the kind dug to give firefighters access to an easy supply of water for emergencies.

He tells me that one day in August 1944 he was among a group of slaves ordered to help make a set of concrete steps to stretch down inside the water to the floor of the pool. The SS, it seemed, wanted somewhere to go swimming.

The story is grim and bizarre — and it tells you a lot about the mood of the German officers working at the camp in the late summer of 1944.

There is the arrogance and inhumanity of wanting a swimming pool to be built just a few hundred meters from the gas chambers and crematoriums of the Holocaust, of course.

But that aside, you do find yourself wondering how the Germans can have been thinking about the construction of a swimming pool in the month when the Americans liberated Paris and the Russians began closing in on Warsaw, just a few hundred kilometers north of Auschwitz.

The Germans had planned to carry out the Holocaust under the darkness of a brutal military occupation in some of the most remote parts of Europe. Surely they must at least have begun to fear, as the Nazi armies were pushed back, that their crimes would be detected and punished?

It is a small but telling detail from history. And we know it only because Yechiel Aleksander was there.

At one point in the Israeli delegation's journey through Auschwitz he delivers a speech inside one of the preserved wooden blockhouses, with the soldiers grouped around him.

He is a good talker too. It is tough in those circumstances to find the variation of light and shade to make a speech compelling, to hold an audience, but this is an extraordinary performance — a shaft of light that illuminates the darkness through which he lived.

When it is over I ask Yael Sela-Arbel, a captain, what difference it makes to hear the story of the camp firsthand from a survivor.

"I've been crying a lot," she says. But just being there, for her, has been important.

"I think it's a way of saying that even though everything was done to erase this nation, it's living, so it's a private

victory and a national victory, our country, our achievements. It's a way of saying: 'Here we are — you wanted to erase us but here we are, we are strong, and we are capable and advanced and we are everything the people who you murdered expected us to be.'"

Any period of history changes when there is no one left alive who remembers it at first hand.



Asher Aud.

I can remember writing stories back in 1998 about the 80th anniversary of the end of World War I when you could still talk with men who'd fought on the Somme or at Jutland, and with the women who had nursed them.

Fifteen years on from that moment, they are all gone.

And who knows, perhaps 15 years from now all the Holocaust survivors will be gone too.

Yechiel Aleksander feels that those who endured these horrors have a special responsibility to talk about them.

When you meet him, you are reminded that the rest of us have a special responsibility to listen.

Before we left Israel for Poland I wanted to try to understand a little more about the role the survivors play in passing on the memory of the Holocaust.

I spent some time with Asher Aud, who lives with his wife in a homely apartment in a block of sheltered living units in the middle of Jerusalem.

His wife, Haya, likes to paint, and she loves her grandchildren. Those two passions have between them filled almost every available inch of hanging space with pictures and photographs.

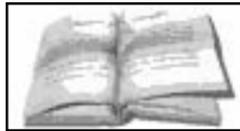
Your eye is drawn, though, to a wooden panel that Haya made to mark her husband's 70th birthday, on which scenes from his life are etched into the wood in brightly colored inks.

One panel, decorated with rings and hearts, marks the day they married. Another records the births of each of their four children.

A third commemorates Asher Aud's time in Auschwitz.

Just above the biographical panel on the wall is an old-fashioned chiming clock with one of those old-fashioned movements of weights and springs that mechanically chops each day into minutes.

(Continued on page 7)



# BOOK REVIEWS

## GONE TO PITCHIPOI

*Gone to Pitchipoï: A Boy's Desperate Fight for Survival in Wartime.*

By Rubin Katz. Academic Studies Press: Brighton, MA, 2013. 326 pp. \$22.40 paperback.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

"We referred to our absent friends as having 'gone to Pitchipoï,' an imaginary far-off place, in ghetto-jargon . . . Although there were ominous rumours, we just couldn't grasp in our young minds that they could be true, that anything so terrible had befallen our missing relatives and friends."

All Holocaust survivor memoirs document a miracle. No Jew was supposed to survive Hitler's "extermination plans" — and as one delves deeper into those devilish "plans," it is incredible that any did! No less importantly, all Holocaust survivor memoirs document the unchallengeable reality of what happened as nothing else can. For, indeed, the resultant work is written by an individual who was there, who lived it, and lived to tell the terrible tale. Thus each memoir is invaluable. Thus each memoir — confirming and adding information and/or nuance — completes the unimaginable picture of a time that must be thoroughly and accurately recorded

and remembered . . . in the name of those who cannot speak, who were murdered by the Nazis and their eager collaborators.

Written by Rubin Katz, *Gone to Pitchipoï: A Boy's Desperate Fight for Survival in Wartime* is, most assuredly, a miraculous tale. In it we read how on September 7, 1939, the Nazis took over the author's small Polish town of *Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski*. We read how they methodically proceeded to wipe out its Jewish community, employing the same deadly techniques they used to wipe out all the Jewish communities that had the misfortune of falling under their "jurisdiction." Concomitantly, we read of the self-sacrificing love of the author's eight family members — one for the other — that made it possible for some of them to survive . . . Frighteningly, we also see how pure "luck" often made the difference between life and death. Survivors will be the first to tell you that!

Meanwhile, throughout *Gone to Pitchipoï*, the reader is also continually reminded of the troubling role the Polish people played during this terri-

ble time — a role that should be more widely known. In sum, while there were some Poles who helped Jews, and, in fact, from time to time, some who helped the author and his family, there were, sadly, so very many who were only too happy to help the Nazis. These eagerly identified Jews

for the Nazis, bringing them in for some reward. These opportunistically extorted Jews when they found them, claiming that for money they'd keep their identity secret. Then, too, there were Poles who thought nothing of extorting Jews and, when the money stopped, turning them in for their Nazi reward. The picture becomes even more horrifying

when it comes to Jews who wanted to join Polish partisans fighting the Germans. For as *Gone to Pitchipoï* clearly reveals, joining the wrong partisan group, even if it was fighting the Germans, could spell death for the Jew at the hands of the Polish partisan who hated Jews as much as Germans . . . if not more!

Then, after the war, unbelievably, we are boldly shown how Polish hatred of the few surviving Jews only grew!

"Poles were dismayed at the thought of Jews coming back to reclaim their properties and possessions, which they had meanwhile appropriated." Hence, they "were often greeted by former neighbors and acquaintances with an unenthusiastic, 'Oh, so you're alive!'" The result: "It has been estimated that well over a thousand Jews were killed in the pogroms that swept Poland after the war, but the true figure can never be known."

On the other hand, and on a completely different and positive note, *Gone to Pitchipoï* also tells us of the heartfelt work of the distinguished rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld, from London. He came to Poland in 1946 to locate and rescue Jewish children, bringing them back with him to England. How he took care of his charges, how he ushered them back into life — it's a beautiful and caring story that the world should also know about. Rubin Katz, the author of the work here under review, was one of those lucky children.

In sum, beautifully and sensitively written, *Gone to Pitchipoï* is an important addition to Holocaust study. It will most definitely be highly appreciated by the layman and scholar alike.

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

## ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE BOOKS ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST WAS JUST PUBLISHED

1941: The Year That Keeps Returning.

By Slavko Goldstein. New York Review Books, 2013. 622 pp. \$25.12 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY ADAM KIRSCH, TABLET

"I think I can pinpoint exactly the hour and day when my childhood ended," writes Slavko Goldstein near the beginning of *1941: The Year That Keeps Returning*. The date was April 13, 1941, when Goldstein was 13 years old. That morning, he asked his father if he could go out to play with friends. His father, Ivo, was hesitant: just two days earlier, German troops had marched unopposed into Croatia, and tanks were on the streets of their small city, *Karlovac*. But he gave his permission, and Slavko went off. When he returned that afternoon, his father was gone: he was part of the first group of *Karlovac* citizens arrested by the new Fascist regime. Ivo would never return home again, and by August he was dead, one of thousands of prisoners executed at the *Jadovno* camp that summer.

*1941* is Goldstein's attempt, 70 years later, to make sense of exactly what happened to his father and his

country in that brutal year. In its combination of personal intimacy and historical rigor, it is one of the most remarkable books about the Holocaust to have appeared in recent years. The recipient of many prizes when it was published in Croatia in 2007, it has now been translated by Michael Gable and published in the United States by New York Review Books. I had the chance to talk to Slavko Goldstein about the book, his life, and the tragedies of Yugoslav history. Today, at 87, he remains a vigorous and forceful presence; while he apologized in advance for his English, it was in fact almost completely fluent.

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To understand the story Goldstein tells in *1941*, it's useful to know something about the situation of Yugoslavia at the time. The country was created by diplomatic fiat at the end of WWI, as the union of several mutually hostile Slavic peo-

ples. It struggled to stay viable for two decades, and when the Germans occupied the country in April 1941 they quickly divided it into its constituent parts. Serbia, in the south, was directly occupied by the German army; some coastal territory was handed over to Fascist Italy. But Croatia, in the north, was turned into a puppet state, ironically named the Independent State of Croatia.

To rule this small country, the Nazis brought in the Ustaše (anglicized as Ustasha), a Fascist party, fanatically anti-Serb and anti-Semitic, whose leadership had spent the last several years in exile in Italy. Ante Pavelic became the dictator of Croatia — his title, *Polglavnik*, was the Croatian equivalent of Führer or Duce — and immediately began to terrorize his people. Goldstein recalled that, unlike in Germany, where the Nazis were a mass movement with near majority support, the Ustasha regime struck Croatia like a bolt from the blue. "At the moment of the establishment of the Ustasha

state," he explained, "the Ustasha movement was a very, very minor movement — they had no more than 4,000 active members. For a country of 4 million, it wasn't much. But when the so-called Independent State of Croatia was established in 1941, many Croats — not the majority, but many — thought that independence was something that they had wished for, and they hoped that Croatia would be able to stay out of the war." The first pages of *1941* describe the welcome that crowds of Croats gave to the German army: "Children were waving small paper flags, while from the ranks of people a jubilant refrain sounded: 'No war and we have a state!'"

"Of course," Goldstein told me, "disillusion and disappointment started very soon. After seven weeks it was obvious there was no independence and that Croatia had to participate in the war on the wrong side — on the side of the Fascists." The Ustasha regime was wholly indebted to Nazi Germany and had to follow its lead, especially with regard to the Holocaust. Goldstein can give the figures easily, from memory: "When the

(Continued on page 11)



# SURVIVORS RECALL KINDERTRANSPORT ESCAPE

BY NAOMI KOPPEL, AP

**The operation was called Kindertransport — Children's Transport — and it was a passage from hell to freedom.**

**K**ristallnacht had just rocked Nazi Germany. The pogroms killed dozens of Jews, burned hundreds of synagogues and imprisoned tens of thousands in concentration camps. Many historians see them as the start of Hitler's Final Solution.

Amid the horror, Britain agreed to take in children threatened by the Nazi murder machine.

Seventy-five years ago the first group of kids arrived without their parents at the English port of *Harwich*, and took a train to London's Liverpool Street Station.

Some 10,000 children, most but not all Jewish, would escape the Nazis in the months to come — until the outbreak of war in September 1939, when the borders were closed.

From London the children went to homes and hostels across Britain. But their parents — the few that eventual-

*I was two years in a hostel in Manchester. The committee got me a job in a fur shop. Once I was over 18 I was allowed to go to London. In 1944 I got papers from the Ministry of Labor that I had to go in the army.*

*It took me 30 years to get my parents' story together. Basically they were put in the ghetto in 1941 and in September 1942 ... they were all put on the cattle trains. They were sent to a place called Belzec, which was one of the well-known gas chambers near Treblinka.*

*And that was that.*

Already 16 when he arrived in June 1939, Findling, who grew up in the eastern German city of *Leipzig*, is the oldest surviving *Kind*. After a career in garment manufacturing, he now lives with his second wife in London.

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**HERBERT LEVY, 84**

*My parents had tried to get out of Germany for many years but it was very difficult to get into anywhere until the British government allowed children to come on the*

*recently.") Levy went on to become an actor. His wife, Lillian, survived the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.*

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**THE REV. FRANCIS WAHLE, 84**

*Hitler marched into Austria in March 1938. Until that time I was just an ordinary Catholic. I then discovered that I was Jewish as far as Hitler was concerned, because all my four grandparents were Jewish. My*

*the most senior judge in Austria.*

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**RUTH BARNETT, 78**

*I was only 4 when I came to England so I have snatches of memory. My dad was a judge in Berlin. He was summarily sacked when the Nazis came into power in 1933. He did get out and he went to Shanghai, which was awful because of the war between Japan and China.*



A copy of a photograph of Francis Wahle, left, when he was around eight years old, with his sister Anna. Father Wahle was brought to England by *Kindertransport* from Austria to escape Nazi persecution.



In this photo, Oscar Findling, 91, who was brought to England by *Kindertransport* from Germany to escape Nazi persecution, sits at his home in London.

ly made it over — were placed in camps as "enemy aliens."

Many of the children settled in Britain, having found their families wiped out by the Nazis.

December 2 was World Kindertransport Day, with events to mark the anniversary in many countries. These are the stories of five *Kinder* in their own words.

**OSCAR FINDLING, 91**

*My father was not a German citizen. On the night before Kristallnacht, he was arrested by the Gestapo.*

*That was the last I saw of my father.*

*As soon as we found out (about the Kindertransport), my mother went to where the committee was and put my name down. She wouldn't put my brother down because, she said, "I don't want to lose both my sons on one day."*

*I'll never forget the last words my mother said: "Will I ever see you again?"*

*Prophetic words.*

*Kindertransport. My parents applied, and by pure luck I was one of the chosen ones. I was not yet 10 years old.*

*My parents took me to the station. I said goodbye to my grandparents. My grandfather was to die a few weeks later. My grandmother was one of the 6 million people who died in the extermination camps, with her two sisters, many cousins, many nephews and nieces.*

*We finally arrived at the border. You can't imagine the relief of being in Holland, to have passed Nazi Germany.*

*It was fantastic to feel free at last.*

Levy came from Berlin via the Netherlands in June 1939. Months later, his parents joined him. They were interned in a British camp for "enemy aliens." Levy recalls being greeted with chants of "Bloody Germans!" ("This was quite amazing for me," he said, "because I had been shouted at as 'bloody Jew' until

*parents tried to get us out. As we had relations in Italy, the first attempt was to get us out to Italy, but they never got all the right papers. So we started learning English.*

*I was nine and a half at the time. It was dreary, that journey through Germany, until we came to the Dutch border, and then the ladies provided the kids with soft drinks and a bit of cake.*

*My sister and I were split up. I was very lucky. I was taken to a place in Sussex. A lady had let the committee have her very large place for the refugees.*

*I stayed there until 1940. At that time a new regulation came in that enemy aliens — and of course we were classed as enemy aliens — were not allowed to be within so many miles of the coast because we might be spies. And so we had to leave. I was taken on for free by the Jesuits in a boarding school.*

*Having escaped death really, and my parents having escaped death, it's made me immensely grateful to God, and I suppose the fact of becoming a priest is the result of that.*

Wahle and his younger sister Anna left Vienna in January 1939. He was an accountant before studying for the priesthood. Although now retired from his parish, he still works as a priest. Wahle's parents fled their home as the Gestapo came to arrest them; they went underground, living without papers for three years. Wahle's father went on to become

*Our mother came with us on the train because being a proper Aryan German, she could get a visa. So I experienced it as a family outing. I remember saying, "Are we nearly there? Are we nearly there?"*

*My mother had to go back (to Germany). She would have been an enemy once war broke out. She brought us to our first foster family, which was a vicar and his wife in Kent. The vicar was a lovely man but his wife obviously didn't want refugees foisted on her. She was very cruel to us.*

*The second foster family ... had five children and they treated us exactly the same as their children. But where we were living there was in the path of the doodlebugs, and that absolutely fazed (my brother) Martin. So we had to be moved. Our third family was on a farm. I was in seventh heaven with the animals.*

*I had no nationality for the first 18 years of my life. The Nazis ... took away citizenship from all the Jews and Gypsies. I had to travel on a document that was a sheet of paper with "person of no nationality" written across the top. It had such a deep effect on me.*

Barnett's father was Jewish but her mother was not. She arrived in February 1939 with her older brother Martin. Having worked as a psychotherapist, she speaks today in schools about the Holocaust and seeks to highlight the fate not only of Jews but also of the hundreds of

*(Continued on page 15)*

# SURVIVORS' CORNER

## THE SAVIOR OF SOBIBOR

BY RICHARD RASHKE,  
THE DAILY BEAST

**In a daring escape, Sasha Pechersky saved hundreds of Jews from Hitler's infamous death camp. But thousands had to die first, as the world watched and did nothing.**

By the summer of 1942, the Allies and most of the world knew that the Nazis were gassing Jews in *Belzec*, *Sobibor* and *Treblinka*. Holocaust historians like Martin Gilbert have described in careful detail who knew what and when. The *London Daily Telegraph*, for example, published in mid-1942 a two-part article based on eyewitness accounts about the Nazi slaughter of Jews. And Dr. Gerhard Riegner, director of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland, sent an urgent cable to London, Washington and New York.

Riegner warned the Allies that Berlin had a plan to exterminate all Jews in countries occupied or controlled by Germany. But Washington didn't believe Riegner. Labeling his cable as "utterly fantastic," it suppressed the message.

Soon after the Riegner cable, Richard Lichtheim, a Zionist leader in Geneva, wrote a report that reached both London and Washington. He told

world leaders that nearly three million Polish Jews had already been murdered, as well as a majority of Latvian, Serbian, Slovak, Dutch and French Jews. Washington found the Lichtheim report both convincing and



Sasha Pechersky in Red Square, 1981.

disturbing — for a pragmatic reason. It feared that news of a Final Solution would distract the Allies into wasting "a disproportionate amount of time dealing with wailing Jews."

Then there was Jan Karski, a lieutenant in the Polish underground army whom Jews had smuggled into both the Warsaw ghetto and a temporary camp for Jews destined for the gas chambers. Karski would one day detail his experiences in his book, *Story of a Secret State*.

A volunteer emissary from Polish

Jews to the Allies, Karski delivered a powerful message to world leaders in London, New York and Washington, including British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He not only described the heart-wrenching atrocities he had witnessed; he also warned that trains continued to transport Jews to the death camps almost daily.

Karski also delivered to the Allies a list of requests from Polish Jews. The first was to bomb German cities in reprisal for the continued murder of Jews, then to drop leaflets telling the Germans why the bombs were falling. The Allies rejected the request because it involved killing civilians.

Next, Polish Jews demanded that the Allies and neutral nations welcome the Jews who had managed to escape the Nazi net. For the most part, the world turned a deaf ear. As Anthony Eden put it: the best way for the Allies to help Jews was "to win the war."

Polish Jews directed their next two requests to their government-in-exile. They demanded that the underground Home Army punish — as a deterrent — Poles who blackmailed, denounced and murdered Jews. Eleven Poles were eventually

tried and executed. But by that time, 90 percent of Polish Jews were already dead.

As requested, Karski also reported to the Polish government-in-exile that the Warsaw ghetto was poised to rise up against the SS, the Gestapo and their foreign collaborators. The ghetto fighters desperately needed weapons. The Home Army eventually gave them twenty guns.

Finally, Polish Jews asked the Allies to ransom Jews from Berlin. The Allies rejected that request, arguing that if they did so, the ransom money would fund the killing of even more Allied soldiers.

Having rejected every recommendation, the Allies had only one option left — issue a strong condemnation of Hitler, the Nazis and the Final Solution. On December 17, 1942, the United States, Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union, among other nations, signed a strongly worded United Nations declaration "against the bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination."

The international media jumped on the story. The death camp transports kept on rolling.

Early in 1944, the international Jewish community also requested specific action. It was too late to save

(Continued on page 15)

## OBSERVING YOM KIPPUR IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH

BY RAFAEL MEDOFF

Holocaust memoirs and eyewitness testimony record how Jews living under Nazi rule repeatedly took extraordinary risks to mark Yom Kippur in some way. Despite the grave dangers involved, and even though Jewish law permits eating or performing labor on the Day of Atonement to save one's life, many Jews endured unimaginable suffering to commemorate the holiest day on the Jewish calendar.

In his diary, Rabbi Shimon Huberband described his experiences in the Polish town of *Piotrkow* in the aftermath of the September 1939 German invasion. The occupation authorities imposed an astronomical fine on the local Jewish community, with Yom Kippur as the deadline. To demonstrate the punishment to be expected if the money was not paid, the Nazis seized a number of local Jews at random on the eve of Yom Kippur and took them to Gestapo headquarters, where they were "beaten, attacked by dogs, forced to crawl on their stomachs... forced to clean toilets with their bare hands... [and] ordered to collect shattered pieces of

glass with their mouths."

Rabbi Huberband's diary noted that the local *Judenrat*, the German-appointed Jewish ruling council, "dispatched notices saying that everyone should contribute his designated amount toward the tribute by tomorrow, the last day." At the same time, because all public observances of Yom Kippur had been outlawed, a debate broke out as to whether or not Jewish shopkeepers should open their stores, lest they be accused by the Germans of closing them in honor of the holiday.

On the eve of Yom Kippur, the German commanding officer, aware of the approaching Jewish holy day, warned them that anyone who fasted "will be executed by a firing squad."

On Yom Kippur, it rained heavily along the Polish-Slovakian border region where they were working, and the area was covered in deep mud. When the Germans distributed their meager food rations, the Jewish prisoners pretended to consume them but instead "spilled the coffee into the running muddy gullies and tucked the stale bread into their soaked jackets." Those who had memorized portions of the Yom Kippur prayer service recited them by

heart until finally, as night fell, their work ended and they prepared to break the fast.

Just then they were confronted by the German commander, who informed them he was aware that they had fasted, and instead of simply executing them, they would have to climb a nearby mountain and slide down it on their stomachs. "Tired, soaked, starved and emaciated," the Jews did as they were told — 10 times "climbing and sliding from an unknown Polish mountain which on that soggy Yom Kippur night became a symbol of Jewish courage and human dignity."

Eventually the Germans tired of this sport and the defiant Jewish prisoners were permitted to break their fast and live — at least for another day.

Isaiah Trunk's classic *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution* cites a remarkable anecdote from an Auschwitz survivor about Yom Kippur in the women's block there in 1944. Minutes before sundown, the Jewish barracks leader, or *Blokowa*, suddenly "put a white tablecloth over the barrack oven, lit some candles, and told all the Jewish women to walk up and pray.... The barrack was filled with an unbearable wailing. The women

again saw their annihilated homes." It happened that "Froh Rohtshtat, the famous violinist from *Lodz*, was also kept in our barracks," and the barracks leader "brought in a fiddle and asked Froh Rohtshtat to play *Kol Nidre*. She refused, saying she couldn't play because her heart was bursting. The *Blokowa* threatened to beat her... if she didn't play. When Froh Rohtshtat began playing, the Jewish *Blokowa* suddenly lost control and started pushing us away and clubbing the Jewish women, yelling, 'Enough! You've had enough pleasure!'"

"What was the reason for the Jewish *Blokowa's* sudden change of mind?" Dr. Trunk wondered. "One can only guess that, fearing the inmates would see how she was overcome with emotion by the solemn tones of *Kol Nidre*, she would thus be seen in a state of weakness and would consequently lose the firm grip she had on them."

To maintain her position as a barracks head, the *Blokowa* needed to forsake all Jewish connections and feeling — and for a few fleeting moments, the emotional power of Yom Kippur had threatened to touch even her iron heart.

# RETURN TO AUSCHWITZ: HOW ISRAEL KEEPS HOLOCAUST MEMORIES ALIVE

(Continued from page 3)

There are nights when Aud hears every one of those minutes measured out. Even when he manages a little fitful sleep he knows, without checking, exactly what time it is when he wakes up.

It is a legacy of the camps. Maybe the superhuman watchfulness that helped you to stay alive, maybe a kind of anxiety that seeped into the soul in those years of terror and never left. Either way it is there.

The cold seeped into his bones too. As the Germans retreated westwards from the advancing Russians in the bitter winter of 1944–45 they took the survivors from the camps with them.

They wanted to stop them testifying to the Russians about what had happened in places like Auschwitz, of course, but they also intended to put the prisoners back to work at camps deeper inside German territory.

Aud can remember at one point collapsing into the snow and ice wearing only a thin shirt and pair of trousers and knowing that he would die if he stopped moving and surrendered to the numbing cold. He remembers wriggling desperately to stop his skin from freezing to the icy ground. When he's back in Poland, even in August, he finds himself wrapping up warm against the chill that only he feels — like the anxiety, the cold must have soaked into him and never really left.

He goes back often. He's one of a group of survivors who accompany the many Israeli delegations — schoolchildren, civil servants and soldiers — who now visit the death camps every year.

Like a lot of other survivors, he feels a responsibility to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive.

As time passes, their numbers are steadily dwindling.

There are very few people alive who remember the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 as adults.

Even to remember it as a child — to have been 10 years old, for example, when the war ended in 1945 — you must be nearly 80 years old.

In the future you will still be able to read what happened when the Germans came in September 1939 to Aud's home village of *Zdunska Wola* in central Poland — the public hangings of Jewish community leaders, the beatings and the systematic looting of Jewish homes.

To hear it at first hand is different.

Aud tells the story in English in short phrases. He pauses every now and then as though searching for words that will make it all seem comprehensible to someone who never lived through it, who wasn't there.

But there are no such words.

What words could there ever be to describe the last day he saw his mother alive, 74 years ago?

Asher Aud's family was forced into a

field outside *Zdunska Wola* with the rest of the village's Jewish community. Many of the men had already been murdered, including Asher's father.

Aud himself, although he was only 11 years old, had managed to prove to the Germans that he was strong enough to work in a construction gang. The judgment that he was fit enough for slave labor as a child saved his life.

The Jews of *Zdunska Wola* were formed into a single long line and ordered to parade past a group of German soldiers. There was more



This photograph of Meir Dagan's grandfather hung on the wall of the office of Meir Dagan, who rose to become head of Mossad.

casual brutality of course — they were kicked or punched or hit with rifle butts as they filed past. But this was not just another exercise in casual humiliation.

Every so often someone would be pulled from the line and ordered to stand to one side. Aud was among this group. His mother and younger brother were not. They walked on, away from him. He never saw either of them again.

Aud had been selected to join a slave labor gang in the camp at Auschwitz.

His mother and brother were taken to *Chełmno*, a camp where the Nazis were making their first experiments in the mass murder of Jews deemed unfit for work.

His voice as he tells the story is steady but his eyes are distant. Every time he describes that day he is reliving it all, the sounds and smells of the field extraordinarily vivid.

He understands the value of telling his story — he sees it as a duty. But it doesn't get any easier with the passing of time.

Modern Israel sees in the Holocaust a clear message for the modern world — that the Jewish people are only safe if they have their own state, a state that has to be strong.

Holocaust survivors are honored — valued as firsthand witnesses to the great horror that is one of the defining events of modern history.

That wasn't always the way. The truth is, the legacy of the Nazi attempt to wipe out the Jews of Europe wasn't always seen with such clarity.

The new state of Israel absorbed the survivors of the camps — DPs, or displaced persons, in the jargon of the postwar era — but the process wasn't always easy or smooth.

The historian Tom Segev describes the difficulties in his book *The Seventh Million* — in particular the cultural and political gulf between Israelis who had migrated to the region as a political choice in the

your neighbor has that blue number on his arm — what do you say? How do you live with such a person? Do you want them to tell you what happened to them?"

Too often in that immediate postwar period, the answer, it seemed, was that people did not want to hear those stories.

The book *The Seventh Million* chronicles the story of the 81st blow.

A young Holocaust survivor made his way to Israel and described what had happened to him in his concentration camp, of how the commandant had beaten him senseless, landing 80 blows on his head and body.

He found that his story was doubted, disbelieved.

Surely, it was reasoned, if he'd really been beaten so extensively he would be dead.

That skepticism, that downright disbelief, was the 81st blow.

A great deal has changed since then. Israel's national memorial center at Yad Vashem on the hills outside Jerusalem is a thriving center of research as well as a moving museum to which all important foreign visitors are taken.

It is working to improve our historical understanding of what happened during the Holocaust and to improve the way the subject is taught. And in parallel with those tasks, the simplest and saddest job of all continues to this day — the job of recording the names of the individuals who died.

Yad Vashem's chairman Avner Shalev tells me that in the immediate postwar years only a few survivors' stories were published. Today more than 11,000 memoirs have been produced all over the world — more than half of them since the turn of the century.

The change in attitudes towards Holocaust survivors started in 1962, when Israeli agents found Adolf Eichmann living in Buenos Aires.

His trial began a kind of national catharsis, and the survivors' stories of suffering and barbarism began to be heard more widely.

Israel's founders had mentioned the Holocaust in their declaration of independence back in 1948, but it was the prosecution of Eichmann that placed the suffering of the survivors at the center of national life.

A lesson began to crystallize, not just about the need for Israel to be strong, but for the Jews of the world to recognize that they couldn't depend on anyone else to guarantee their safety.

Even during what Segev calls the Great Silence, some Israeli families had been piecing together fragments of evidence about the fate of those who died.

A few years ago the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Ahronot* published the

(Continued on page 13)

# THE USES OF NAZI “DEGENERATE ART”

BY NEIL LEVI, THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The recently disclosed discovery, in a *Munich* apartment, of about 1,400 works of 20th century European art looted by the Nazis has brought to light the first hints of a morally and politically complex story bound for the best-seller lists. It has also revived persistent myths and



Painting by Marc Chagall.

misconceptions about the Nazis' attitude to modern art and especially toward those works they exhibited under the rubric of “Degenerate Art” — how they felt about it, why they disapproved of it, and what they did with the works they seized from museums and galleries.

The Nazi exhibition, “Degenerate Art,” opened in the summer of 1937, as part of the celebration of the fourth



Painting by Otto Dix.

anniversary of Hitler's ascent to power, four years being the amount of time he had told the German people he would need to bring about the rebirth of the nation. “Degenerate Art” was there to remind the people of

what Hitler had saved them from. It was presented as a counterexhibition to the first showing of “Great German Art,” which had opened on July 18, 1937, in a new building designed by the neoclassical architect Paul Ludwig Troost. “Degenerate Art,” which displayed more than 600 works of modernist art that had been seized from museums throughout Germany, opened the next day in the city's Archaeological Institute. Where else to show works destined for the dustbin of history?

Yet it was the modernist art that people came to see. The *Munich* exhibition of “Degenerate Art” was reportedly visited by over two million people, far more than went to see “Great German Art.” Evidently the exhibition's popularity did not overly concern the Nazis. In his diaries, Goebbels records the rapidly rising attendance figures for “Degenerate Art” and remarks, “Great success!” Indeed, the show was taken on the road, making stops in Berlin, *Leipzig*, *Düsseldorf*, *Salzburg* and elsewhere until 1941.

Perhaps the most tenacious fantasy about the story of modernist art under the Nazis is that these works can somehow stand for human lives. “They keep coming back,” says the art critic Michael Kimmelman, “these works lost to the Nazis.” Many of us want to believe that we can see in the fate of these paintings, drawings and sculptures an important parallel to, or even anticipation of, the fate of the Nazis' victims, particularly European Jews.

But the fate of modernist art under the Nazis is not an allegory, metaphor or foreshadowing of the fate of the Jews, and it is worthwhile to try to understand why. These works are not survivors of a Nazi program of death and destruction. They exist because the Nazis did not try to destroy them in the first place. (As the story of how the works came to be in that apartment in *Munich* reminds us, the Nazis tried to sell them.) Nazi attitudes toward modernist art were far more ambivalent and far more calculating than we tend to believe.

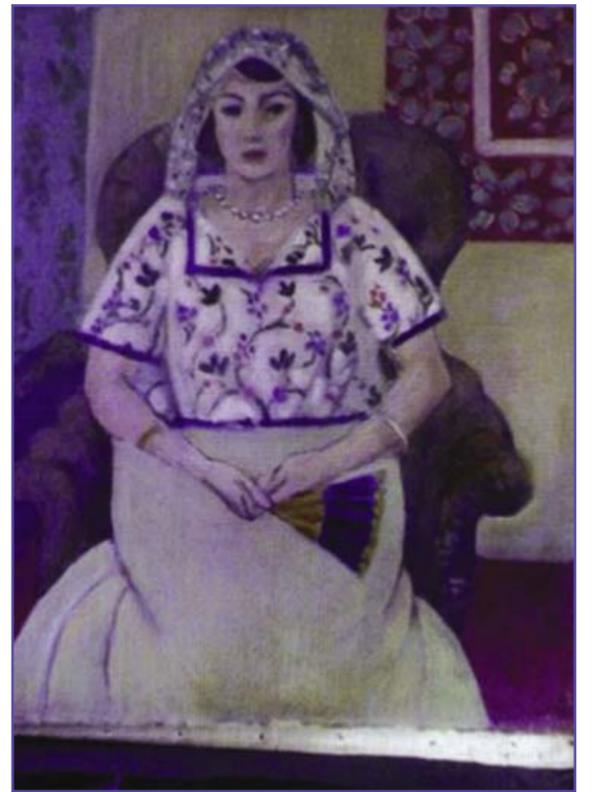
The fate of certain branches of modernist art was hardly a fait accompli when the Nazis took power. While Hitler certainly disapproved of modernism in the arts, and one of his chief ideologues, Alfred Rosenberg, led campaigns against modernist art, in the early years of the Nazi regime, art journals, prominent student organizations and public exhibitions promoted German Expressionism as an appropriately “National Socialist revolutionary art.” Goebbels was known to

appreciate such Expressionists as Emil Nolde and Ernst Barlach. The Nazi architect Albert Speer decorated his home with works by Nolde.

Yet none of that enthusiasm would save Nolde, who had himself joined the Nazi Party in the early 1920s, from being the artist with the most works on display in the “Degenerate Art” exhibition. More than a curious fact, Nolde's story shows that there were conflicting views among the Nazi leadership toward modernist art in a way that there was not — could not be — about, say, the Weimar Republic, Communism or the Jews.

Nolde's story also reminds us that most of the modernist works the Nazis seized did not appear in the notorious exhibition. Works by Picasso and Matisse were found in the Gurlitt apartment but not on the walls of “Degenerate Art.” In *Munich* visitors saw an exhibition predominantly concerned with displaying German artists: Nolde, Barlach, Kirchner, Dix, Grosz.

The point of the exhibition was to present visitors with reflections of



This painting was attributed to Henri Matisse.

strength of the German *Volk*. If they had, they would not have exhibited it to millions of Germans in the first place. In addition to presenting object lessons about the influence of Judeo-Bolshevism, these works of art were understood to be valuable commodities, the destruction of which would serve no useful end.

Those Jews who did write about



Goebbels views the Degenerate Art exhibition.

themselves, to show Germans what had become of their art and culture under the purported influence of Jewish art dealers, museum directors and, not least, critics. (In 1936, Goebbels had banned art criticism itself for its putatively Jewish perversion of proper artistic judgment.)

In short, the works on display were meant to show the German people that they had been “Jewified” — contaminated by a mobile, contagious Jewish spirit that had polluted their thinking, their perceptions, their political and cultural institutions — and that the Nazi regime had saved them from this Jewification. The Nazis did not destroy these works of art, because they did not believe the art presented a mortal threat to the integrity and

these works, who did own them, promote them or purchase them on behalf of German cultural institutions, were, of course, not so fortunate.

That these works have been discovered in such fine condition is rightly a cause to celebrate. But their survival is also a significant fact. We deceive ourselves about both the power of modernist art and what it meant to the Nazis if we think, almost 75 years to the day after *Kristallnacht*, that in this recovered art we are seeing anything like the return of the dead, however dearly we might wish it were so.

*Neil Levi is an associate professor of English at Drew University. He is the author of Modernist Form and the Myth of Jewification.*

## DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

(Continued from page 2)

tune to join the Irgun in 1939 as "Repatriation Commissioner." He was sent to Switzerland, where he became involved in aiding illegal immigration to Palestine and in rescuing Jews trapped in Nazi Europe. Hecht built a close contact with US consul general Woods, who was one of the most successful intelligence gatherers of World War II.

The trial brought to light the connection of the Irgun to the highest levels of the United States government — even to the president himself. This was accomplished through a back channel which has also previously drawn little public attention in the annals of American diplomatic history. The general method of communication had been to transmit information through the official intelligence center in Bern. This office was headed by Allen Dulles, an opponent of Zionism, but Woods had a brother in the cabinet of the American president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, through whom he was able to directly transmit reports to the president, circumventing Dulles.

Woods's transmissions detailed the expulsion of Jews from Switzerland and the conditions of Jews in concentration camps, and held suggestions for the rescue of Jews in Hungary and Bulgaria. Woods uncovered Hitler's plan to invade Russia and relayed this information to Washington as well. Woods and Hecht collaborated in many areas, including the rescue of Allied airmen. While Hecht was assisting the Allies, Woods became a firm supporter of the Zionist cause.

In the first of a selection of key transcripts presented in this article, here is how the Irgun's Hecht describes Woods's transition to Prof. Penkover during an interview:

**Reuben Hecht:** I explained to him [Woods] Zionism, it was new to him, and he became fascinated, and the next day again, he had five, six hours for me, and so, slowly, he came to our camp, and he also asked me to find out how many German coal trains with weapons went through Switzerland, to Italy, and so on, a lot of the things which he could not receive. So there was a cooperation, and then I helped him to bring the American pilots and captains of the air force, who were interned in Switzerland, to bring them out to the Maquis [rural French resistance fighters] to France. They had to flee from the camp.

**Monty Penkover:** How many people are we talking about?

**Hecht:** There were always a few people. In all, there were many dozens. That was very important, because they were pilots and captains of bombers.

In 1941, Woods met Hecht in Zurich and, in 1944, introduced him to Yitzchak and Recha Sternbuch, who headed the Emergency Rescue Committee of the Union of Orthodox

Rabbis.

**Hecht:** When I lived in Zurich, later, I made my job there, for the New Zionist Organization and others, and *Hatzalah*, and Irgun propaganda, and then Sam Woods once told me: "Why don't you work with the Sternbuch group? Why are you not working with an organization which has other connections? The Jewish connection in America." And he invited Sternbuch and me together in his office at the Consulate General.

*The connection between Hecht and Woods was based on mutual needs.*

**Hecht:** He gave a lot of information which he received from me directly to America, not through the channels of Dulles... because with Dulles — he knew that with Dulles it was for months and months without being forwarded... Dulles didn't even want it. Dulles was, I wouldn't say an anti-Semite, I don't know, but according to Woods, Dulles was not interested in the Jewish problem in Europe, because he thought that this is a nuisance for the Allied war effort... Now there were three Americans: McClelland, Dulles, who was an enemy, and Woods, who was the strongest, I could even say, practically the only helping force.

### THE KASTNER CONNECTION

Hecht's testimony was part of the broader trial against Rudolph Kastner. Kastner's detractors paint a far-from-heroic picture of him. They point to a deal with Eichmann, who said in an interview with *Life* magazine that Kastner "agreed to help



Rudolf Kastner, photographed at Israel Radio in the 1950s.

keep the Jews from resisting deportation — and even keep order in the collection camps — if I would close my eyes and let a few hundred or a few thousand young Jews emigrate to Palestine. It was a good bargain."

It has also been charged that Kastner was responsible for the capture and death of Jewish heroine Hannah Senesh, who, at age 22, parachuted behind enemy lines into Yugoslavia to help rescue Jews bound for Auschwitz. She was arrested after crossing into Hungary, imprisoned, tortured, and executed by firing squad on November 7, 1944. Her mother testified during the Kastner

trial that Kastner deceived her, and that she felt that he had given away the location of her daughter's unit and had responsibility in the mother's imprisonment. She also claimed that he had advised her not to obtain a lawyer when Hannah was arrested.

At the war's end, Kastner emigrated to Israel, where he became active in the Mapai party editing its weekly paper, *A Jövó*, and working on the editorial staff of another, *Uj Kelet*. Knesset records show that Kastner "was a clerk at the Ministry of Trade and Industry and a candidate on behalf of Mapai in the elections for the Second Knesset." In 1953, he was accused of collaboration with the Nazis in Hungary during the Holocaust. These charges were leveled by hotelier Malchiel Gruenwald in a self-published pamphlet. Gruenwald lost 52 relatives in Auschwitz. An Austro-Hungarian-born Jew like Kastner, he was caught up in a pogrom in Vienna in which his teeth were smashed, his tongue was slashed, and his arms and legs were broken. He was beaten unconscious and left for dead.

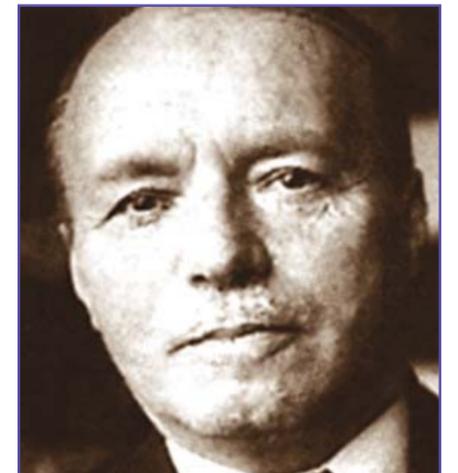
Gruenwald's pamphlet resulted in a lawsuit by the Israeli government on Kastner's behalf in which defendant Gruenwald was represented by Shmuel Tamir, formerly the Irgun's chief of intelligence in Jerusalem. The government expected the trial to last four days. It went on for two years.

Gruenwald and Tamir accused Kastner of having failed to warn the Hungarian Jewish community about the transports to the death camps and the gas chambers despite knowledge to that effect. They accused him of saving friends and family at the cost of the wider community and alleged that Kastner helped the SS avoid creating widespread panic among the Jews which would have slowed the transports. Jerusalem District Court Judge Benjamin Halevi ended the sensational libel trial by ruling in Gruenwald's favor, stating that "Kastner sold his soul to the devil." This verdict caused an uproar in the press, some of which clamored to defend him as a hero, others attacking him as a traitor.

The turmoil spread to the government itself. Since the trial had implications for the Mapai party, the government decided to appeal to the Supreme Court on Kastner's behalf. The Knesset website relates, "On May 28th 1955, Herut and Maki factions presented no-confidence motions, in which the General Zionists, a coalition member, abstained — leading to Prime Minister Sharett's resignation." Kastner fell into a depression which he described to reporters as "blacker than night, darker than hell."

In early March 1957, Kastner was shot in an assassination attempt and died two weeks later. His murder is regarded as the first political assassination in the State of Israel. In

January 1958, his sentence was posthumously overturned by the Supreme Court in a majority 3-2 decision in which, despite the verdict, all five justices ruled that Kastner had committed perjury in his 1947 testimony, which led to the acquittal of a senior SS officer. The court, however, also concluded that the lower court had erred seriously. One of the five judges, Shneur Zalman Cheshin, wrote: "On the basis of the extensive and diverse material which was compiled in the course of the hearing, it is easy to describe Kastner as blacker than black and place the mark of Cain on his forehead, but it is also possible to describe him as purer than the driven snow and regard him as 'the righteous of our generation.' A man who exposed himself to mortal danger in



Jean-Marie Musy.

order to save others."

Kastner has remained a controversial figure in Israel; to this day, no street has been named after him. His trial, however, was of great benefit to the state in that it brought to light wartime events that otherwise might never have been documented. Among them: the negotiations between Woods, Hecht, the Sternbuchs, the US government, the Irgun, Musy, and Heinrich Himmler.

### THE MUSY CHANNEL

During the Kastner trial, on April 6, 1954, Hecht was interrogated as the seventeenth witness for the defense by advocate Tamir, who questioned him about his connection with Musy.

**Shmuel Tamir:** Did you work with a man by the name of Musy? Who was he?

**Hecht:** He was a Swiss Catholic politician, formerly the head of the Swiss Union, and a several-time member of the Swiss Government. He had very close connections with the Swiss parties, also with the Swiss Parliament. He knew Himmler many years before the War.

**Tamir:** Why did you choose him as your mediator between you and Himmler?

**Hecht:** In view of all our experiences, the Committee came to the realization that a person had to be obtained who could acquire Himmler's confidence and needed not

(Continued on page 11)

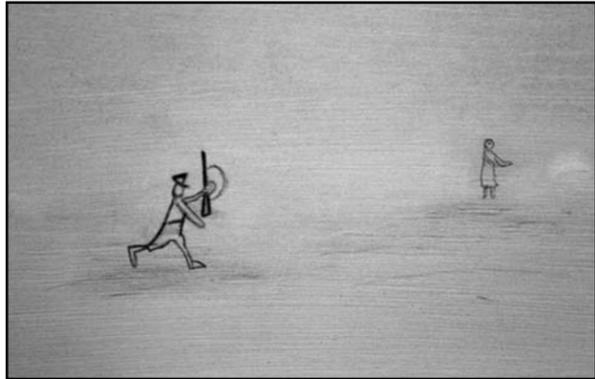


# REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

## “TRACES OF LIFE”

**Nazi ideology not only blamed the Jewish people for the world's troubles, but also targeted every Jewish child for annihilation — the most extreme expression of genocide.**

When the new permanent Jewish exhibition in Auschwitz-Birkenau was being devised, Yad Vashem approached world-acclaimed artist Michal Rovner to create a work for the space devoted to the 1.5 mil-



lion Jewish children murdered during the Shoah.

Rovner decided not to build a tribute or memorial, nor to deal directly with aspects of the murder. “At Auschwitz-Birkenau, we are already in the ‘territory of murder,’” she explains. “Therefore, I wanted to create a space that will reflect the children themselves.”

For over a year, Rovner studied the drawings and paintings made by children during the Holocaust. To this

end, Yad Vashem created a special collection for her from its own archives as well as others around the world — most notably, the Visual Arts Collection of the Jewish Museum in Prague.

“One day, I was sitting at Yad Vashem looking at children’s diaries and sketches from the Holocaust, and something struck me,” Rovner says. “After seeing some of those drawings in frames, reproductions behind glass, I suddenly realized how much power there can be in just a small detail in the margin of the page. I decided not to change, or appropriate the drawings.

“I believe that no artist could produce any better work on the topic of children during the Holocaust than what the children themselves had already created. I wanted their authentic voices to be heard.

“Those children’s families, homes, friends, belongings, landscapes and freedom had been taken away from them. Tragically, the vast majority of them left no sign behind them. Only very few were able to document the essential thing they were able to hold on to: their viewpoint. That is what is expressed in their drawings. Within a situation in which they had no choic-

es, in front of a piece of paper they had a certain freedom to express themselves and the way they saw reality.

“One can almost feel the urgency of the situation in many of the drawings. They are reflections and details of the life they were forced to leave behind, and the new reality they encountered. These drawings are their legacy — and our inheritance.”

In order to study and orient herself with the vast amount of drawings and their elements, Rovner divided them into themes. She then assembled different fragments and small details, creating a composition that flows without telling a direct story.

Remaining true to her undertaking not to change or produce her own version of the drawings, Rovner decided to copy the fragments with a pencil, exactly as they were, onto the walls of the room dedicated to the children. “Children will draw on whatever they can — quite often, even on the walls surrounding them,” she comments. With just a pencil and copy paper, one by one, detail after detail, Rovner drew each line again on a scale of 1:1. The drawings encircle the room, captivating and powerful. Together they give voice to the children’s Shoah.

Original recordings of Jewish children from that period, singing, talking and playing, echo in the background, “appearing” and “disappearing.” An accompanying text, composed espe-



cially for the exhibit by renowned Israeli author David Grossman, completes this unique effort to give presence to the world of the Jewish children, forever shattered by the Holocaust.

“The visitor enters an empty space in which nothing is displayed, only the footnotes of children’s voices and some of their marks on the wall,” concludes Rovner.

The delicateness, the fragility of these drawings is further magnified by the stark reality of the camp, viewed through the bare windows. These drawings and voices, these “traces of life” are like hovering souls. They express a powerful testimony in just a few strokes of a pencil.

## “FOR A FEW DAYS’ LEAVE”

### MOTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE MURDER OF THE JEWS

BY DR. DAVID SILBERKLANG

Why did people make the decisions they made and act as they did during the Shoah? Asked about guarding deportation trains to Auschwitz-Birkenau, one German reserve policeman regretted that he had not had the opportunity to guard such a train, “since the guards were allowed to go back home and they got a few days’ leave. It also would have been interesting for me to see what was happening there.” This is just one of many examples in the new issue of *Yad Vashem Studies* (41:1), which features a number of articles examining the motivations of various actors in the Shoah.

Articles by Yuri Radchenko (Ukrainian auxiliary police in *Kharkiv*) and Stefan Klemp (German police in Northern Italy) show that ideology was not the main incentive for most of the actions of these policemen during the Holocaust. Radchenko, one of the first scholars to access police documentation in *Kharkiv*, presents a profile and analysis of the auxiliary police

in this region of Ukraine who, from late 1942, were deeply involved in the persecution, spoliation and murder of Jews. The policemen’s impetus to participate in the murders was largely conformity and the attraction of a steady income. Klemp demonstrates that the job of German police guards to escort deportation trains from Italy to Auschwitz, in full knowledge of the fate of the deportees, was highly desirable because it usually also gave the policemen a few days’ home leave. Thus, a regular income or some time at home emerges as sufficient motivation for regular men to willingly participate in genocide.

Three articles examine local attitudes and behavior toward Jews in Poland and France. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir’s anthropological analysis of the participants in the *Kielce* pogrom of 4 July 1946 shows how three competing varieties of anti-Semitism — traditional/religious, racist/nationalist and leftist — coalesced into widespread participation in the pogrom that cut across party lines. In his review of three recent

books on rural Polish attitudes toward Jews during the Shoah, Samuel Kassow highlights the betrayal encountered by many Jews in the Polish countryside. Generally, the Poles who denounced Jews, turned them in or killed them in rural areas were respected, decent, hard-working men. Meanwhile, Sanford Gutman’s review of two books on aspects of daily life in Vichy France finds that professional, personal and material interests underpinned attitudes toward Jews. Thus, five articles point to mundane rather than ideological motives as the main factors that underlay the decisions of everyday citizens to participate in murder — or, alternatively, to abstain.

Alongside these examinations of ordinary citizens, three eminent historians analyze the motivations of governments and decision-makers in their policies toward Jews: Randolph Brahm in his comparative analysis of six German-allied countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia); Laurent Joly in his critical review of Alain Michel’s book on

Vichy policies; and Omer Bartov in his analysis of Peter Longerich’s biography of Heinrich Himmler. A twisted notion of decency and cold governmental calculation stand out in these analyses. Himmler believed that the murder of the Jews was an expression of SS “decency.” Brahm finds that the most important factor in each German-allied country’s policies toward Jews was the leaders’ changing perception of Germany’s fortunes in the war, which could either lead to genocidal murder or to its suspension. Joly argues that the Vichy regime was driven by a pursuit of national regeneration and collaboration in its criminal deportation of Jews who were not citizens.

All the above and other important articles reflect the broad scope developed in this journal by Livia Rothkirchen, its editor for 15 years, who passed away shortly before this issue of *Yad Vashem Studies* was completed. Livia played a major role in developing *Yad Vashem Studies* into a leading international journal, and 41:1 is a fitting tribute to Livia Rothkirchen’s legacy.

## ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE BOOKS ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST WAS JUST PUBLISHED

(Continued from page 4)

Independent State of Croatia was established in April 1941, its population included about 39,000 Jews. Of those, 8,500 survived the war, and 31,000 were killed; 24,000 were killed on the territory of Croatia and Bosnia, mainly by the Ustasha; 6,000 were deported to Auschwitz and other death camps in Poland — they were arrested by the Ustasha and deported by the German SS.”

The persecution of Jews, in Goldstein’s description, was in stark contrast with the generally peaceful and well-assimilated life of the Jewish community in Croatia. When I asked him if, growing up in the 1930s, he felt that he was a Croat or a Jew, he replied, “My feeling was that I was a Jew — but integrated into the life of Croatia. *Karlovac*, where I grew up, was a town of 25,000 inhabitants, and there were something like 300 Jews. We had Hebrew lessons — I still remember some Hebrew from those three years of lessons. My father was a young Zionist in his student days; he wasn’t Orthodox or even religious, but he took me to the synagogue four or five times during the year. We were Jews very openly, without any complexes.”

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Using evidence that only became available much later, Goldstein traces his father’s likely fate, as he was moved from jail to jail, and finally to *Jadovno*, where 3,000 prisoners were executed en masse in the summer of 1941. At the time, however, his mother Lea could only wonder about

her husband’s fate, even as conditions for Jews in *Karlovac* grew steadily worse. In May, the order came down that Jews had to wear the yellow star; children of Slavko’s age were exempt, but “my mother had to wear it, and she certainly did so when she was on the street.” Still, he writes, in an honest admission of the fallibili-



Slavko Goldstein.

ty of memory, “I don’t remember that symbol on my mother’s chest. She said that she was not ashamed to wear it; those who ordered her to wear it should be ashamed. I can vaguely remember once holding that symbol in my hands, both the early cloth one and the later metal one, but I don’t remember seeing it on my mother.”

Lea Goldstein, too, ended up being arrested by the Ustasha police. But unlike Ivo, she was able to escape, thanks to one of the many figures in 1941 who remain, in Goldstein’s probing assessment, deeply morally ambiguous: a police chief named Milan Stilianovic. Stilianovic released Goldstein’s mother from jail along with a number of other prisoners,

sparing them from certain death at the hands of the Ustasha. He arranged for her to get a travel pass to enter the Italian zone of occupation, from where she was able to join the Partisans, along with her two sons. After the war, this brave action was counted in Stilianovic’s favor, and he was spared the death penalty meted out to many collaborators. Yet at the same time, Goldstein writes, “during his mandate more than one hundred people had been sent to *Jasenovac*,” the main Croatian death camp. “Why then did he not resign?” Goldstein asked. “Or at least feign illness and seek a transfer?” The answer, like so many answers in this story, remains out of reach.

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Stilianovic’s hesitation to fully embrace the Ustasha’s regime of terror was shared, Goldstein shows, by many Croats. Terror was necessary, the Ustasha believed, because Croatia was far from the ethnically homogeneous state of their dreams. The main problem was not the small Jewish community, which numbered a mere 40,000, but the enormous number of Serbs — 1.8 million of them, nearly a third of the state’s whole population. To achieve a pure Croatia, the Ustasha would have to murder or drive out almost 2 million people.

Their attempts to do this led to disaster, not just for the victims, but for their own regime. In 1941, Goldstein describes how the Ustasha turned even Croat public opinion against them by their extreme, undisguised

brutality: “The cleansing occurred in the home, the courtyard, on the road, with parents in the presence of children or vice versa. ... There were drinking binges; there were barbarous scenes of cleansing children in the cradle, the elderly, entire families together, sadistic enjoyment of terrible tortures. ... Such acts provoked disapproval among honest and solid Croats, and whispers could be heard: This is a disgrace for the people of Croatia, our culture, and the Catholic faith.”

Goldstein describes how, starting in the summer of 1941, Ustasha outrages led many Serbs to take up arms against the regime. They came under the leadership of the Communist party, which was best positioned to organize a partisan resistance. Many of its leaders were themselves combat veterans of the Spanish Civil War, and they had the unity and discipline needed to create an army. Indeed, nowhere in Europe was the resistance to Fascism more effective than in Yugoslavia, where the Partisans, under the leadership of Josip Tito, managed to take control of huge swaths of territory.

Starting in 1942, the 14-year-old Slavko Goldstein fought in their ranks. He writes about the Partisans in largely glowing terms, and in conversation he describes the transition from civilian to military life as feeling “natural.”

Today, Goldstein speaks proudly of the role the Partisans played in rescuing the Jews of Yugoslavia. “Of the 8,500 Jews who survived, 5,000 sur-

(Continued on page 13)

## DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

(Continued from page 9)

to fear retribution. **Tamir:** What were the intentions of Musy, who was not a member of the Committee and was not a Jew? What were his intentions and his aims in this matter?

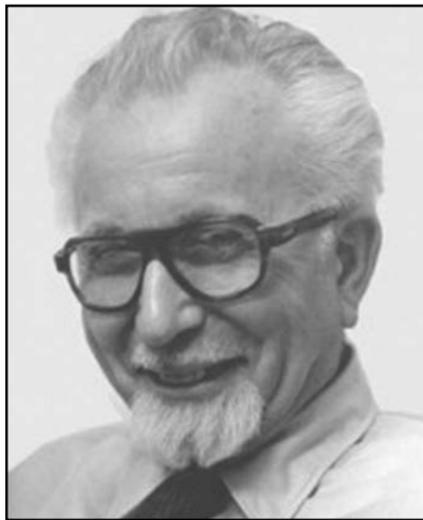
**Hecht:** It was impossible to find any Christian international personality who was ready to intervene for the benefit of the Jews before the National-Socialist regime. This had to be a man who would intervene, who could influence, who would take upon himself the risk of life of the many journeys connected with the matter.

**Tamir:** What did you understand about his aims? Why was he interested to do this?

**Hecht:** Musy was considered, towards the end of the War, as a very conservative politician, reactionary and Catholic. He was also a strong opponent of Communism in Europe. Therefore, we were convinced that he is the suitable man who could be received by Himmler and gain his confidence.

*Musy first met with the Sternbuchs in October of 1944 and wrote to Himmler at that time, requesting a*

*meeting. Two weeks later Himmler agreed and the November 3 meeting on the train to Vienna was set.*



Reuben Hecht.

**Hecht:** When Musy informed Himmler that he wanted to talk with him on an important matter, he received within 14 days a message that Himmler would receive him. That was proof for his really having the right approach to Himmler.

*Tamir again asked Hecht what Musy hoped to achieve in his talks with*

*Himmler and what was discussed.*

**Hecht:** Musy’s activity was entirely political — the intention was to explain to those German circles, who already understood that the War was lost, that the persecutions of the Jews created a terrible impression abroad, and to tell this to Himmler to his face. In addition, to make it clear to him that the catastrophic impression would be a bit less catastrophic if at least now the remaining 600,000–800,000 Jews would be released, who, according to the famous (earlier) order of Himmler were to be destroyed as well.

*In order to enable the Musy-Himmler agreement, Musy attempted to arrange the transfer of medical materials to the Reich at the request of Himmler during their second meeting on January 15, 1945, at Wildbad in the Black Forest. The Nazis were in need of medicine, trucks and other material. Two days later, Himmler demanded from Musy five million Swiss francs’ worth of medicine and relief supplies in exchange for freeing and delivering trainloads of Jewish concentration camp prisoners, promising the release of 1,200 to 1,800 Jewish prisoners every one to two*

*weeks from Germany through Switzerland to final safe destinations.*

*Reuben Hecht was questioned by advocate Tamir about this agreement during the Kastner trial.*

**Tamir:** The negotiations between you and Himmler included the cessation of the annihilation in the camp? Did it contain anything in the matter of the trains which would leave for Switzerland?

**Hecht:** The beginning of the negotiations was to release all the Jews of the camps through Swiss passage to overseas, in trains of every week or two with 1,200 to 1,800 persons per train.

*Musy and the Sternbuchs attempted to acquire the materials from emissaries in the United States, particularly from the Va’ad, but found this problematic. Delivery of such materials was seen as aiding the enemy and therefore illegal. Cash payment also posed problems.*

**Hecht:** In the beginning Musy demanded from us, through Himmler, sums, and that was rejected. Afterwards came this political agreement instead of sums. That was

(Continued on page 12)

## DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

(Continued from page 11)

immediately in the two last talks. Afterwards it was agreed that no money at all should be given, but an amount of 5 million Swiss francs should be deposited by Musy and Sternbuch, as a sign of the sincerity of their approach, and these, as Musy told us, should, after the release of all the Jews, be at the disposal of the International Red Cross for assistance to the Germans.

In exchange for the release, the United States was to provide surety in the form of cash held in escrow and a promise that, in exchange for not destroying the camps as Hitler commanded, Himmler would be guaranteed by the American army that the camp guards would receive treatment like the Wehrmacht soldiers, be regarded as war prisoners, and not be shot on the spot but rather brought before a military court. A promise came from the Americans that they would comply with this request under two conditions.

**Hecht:** The first condition was that the camp guards should wear army uniforms. The second, that it should be understood, in spite of this agreement, that each one personally would be responsible for war crimes. Meaning, that he would not be shot on the spot, but put before a court, and if it could be proved that he had killed people, he would be punished. We have proof that such an agreement was made.

### A FIRST "RESCUE TRAIN" BUT NO SECOND

Negotiations with the United States continued through the war's end. The Americans assured the Swiss government that refugees admitted to Swiss territory would be promptly evacuated to Allied territories overseas and that the cost of their upkeep and transport would be paid by the US.

Confirmation of the deal with Himmler is evident in the United States diplomatic correspondence, dated March 23, 1945, of Foreign Service Officer Roswell D. McClelland, on the "Subject: Musy's negotiations with Himmler during the past few months with a view to obtaining liberation of Jewish deportees."

In it McClelland writes:

"As briefly as possible this is the story of Musy's efforts to secure the release from Germany of Jewish deportees. Acting on behalf of an orthodox Jewish organization with headquarters in the United States Musy undertook the first of a series of trips to Germany to confer with his 'old friend' Heinrich Himmler early in November of 1944. Musy had volunteered, after having been approached by the Jewish circles in question, to use his influence with Himmler to effect the release of Jewish deportees still remaining in German hands. Musy claimed that he would accomplish this with 'political arguments,'

along the lines of pointing out to Himmler that it was in Germany's interest (and in the Nazis' interest) to make some humanitarian gesture at this point in the war which could only react favorably on the treatment meted out to the Nazis by the victorious Allies after the war."

McClelland did not trust Musy and suspected that he was motivated by personal political and monetary gain, charging that he was a Nazi sympathizer and "a very dangerous individual."

McClelland was no friend of the Zionists. His role in the entire episode was of interest to Professor Penkover when he interviewed Hecht on January 7-8, 1982. Hecht affirmed that McClelland had stalled efforts to bomb the railways leading to Auschwitz.

**Hecht:** It was one of the ideas of the Committee... that to bombard the railway crosspoints and the stations before Auschwitz and the crematoria could have saved hundreds of thousands of Jews. Because till they would repair it, especially if several



In March 1942, the Jews of the Lublin Province of Poland are deported to the Belzec death camp. We also brought, through McClelland, these recommendations to Eisenhower, who was the Chief Commander of the Allies, our request to make bombardments against this and to make bombardments of the gas ovens, of the crematoria, because if a few hundred people would have been killed it is nothing against the thousands who were murdered every day. But McClelland was not very helpful and the answer of Eisenhower was: We are not fighting a Jewish war, this is not in the way of the war effort, and we do not want that the Germans think we are fighting the war for the Jews. And Eisenhower was not in favor at all, and McClelland was a bureaucrat, and the Americans put it down!

In early March, 1945, a second "rescue train" failed to arrive. On February 5, 1945, Himmler had promised Musy that trains, each carrying 1,200-1,500 Jews from Theresienstadt, would arrive in Switzerland on a weekly basis. However, Hitler reaffirmed his

refusal to liberate Jews, demanding the continued evacuation of all concentration camp prisoners; thus, the killing of the half-million prisoners left in the concentration camps primarily by means of "death marches" in the spring of 1945.

Musy requested an immediate meeting with Hitler himself, but this was denied. In light of Hitler's order, Musy and the Sternbuch Committee focused their efforts on getting Himmler to give an order that the camps were to surrender to the Allied Forces intact. Pressure from Musy caused Himmler to rescind Hitler's evacuation order. Himmler wielded immense power which almost rivaled Hitler's. Himmler was chief of German police. He united the Gestapo and Criminal Police, thereby effectively removing police personnel, finances, actions and operations from external judicial or administrative review and consolidating all power. He had the power to plan, initiate and control the pace of German resettlement projects. He had exclusive responsibility over the security services, the judiciary, and the entire concentration camp system. He controlled military sectors, including the Waffen SS - which, by 1944, rivaled the German Army. In fact, Himmler was in charge of the planning and implementation of the "Final Solution." However, pressured by Musy and others, Himmler rescinded prior death march orders on March 12, 1945, promising to hand over the camps, intact, to the Allies, thereby countermanding the orders of Hitler.

Himmler was exploring every available avenue of survival. He apparently believed Musy's persuasive argument that releasing Jews would result in good press. Advocate Tamir, questioning Hecht during the Kastner trial, asked how the Swiss press had reacted to the first rescue train, and whether Hecht had connections to the press. Hecht confirmed that he did.

**Hecht:** This began by there being a joint journalists' conference with the

Prime Minister, in which an official announcement to the press was laid down, which was given on behalf of the Prime Minister. (Hecht is referring to the president of the Swiss Confederation, Eduard Von Steiger.) The press reacted in different ways. The [part of the] press that had explanations from us showed understanding for the entire problem.

**Tamir:** And the remaining press?

**Hecht:** There were newspapers who brought negative and untrue information, like, for instance, that the action, so to speak, was done in order to bring a number of leading Nazis under American protection, or that for this action much money had been paid, and these reports harmed us very much.

Hecht found himself with the unpleasant task of going to the president of the Swiss Confederation, Von Steiger, and to Socialist journalists who were opposed to writing positive things about the Nazi train agreement, and explaining the Zionist position. He detailed this experience in his interview with Professor Penkover.

**Hecht:** I had to explain to them that, in order not to destroy the rest of the Jews, but to save them, we are ready to work with the devil, and we are also ready, in a certain way, to fulfill their demand — after it, everybody is free to say that this was blackmail. So I went to the Socialists — it was the most difficult thing, a Socialist newspaper — and explained to them, you don't want to praise Himmler, so at least say that the German railways behaved very well by bringing these people not like cattle, to Auschwitz, but in normal, human railway trains without overfilling, in a normal way, in a decent way, and without payment, which they did. Now I found a kind of half-fulfilling the demand and half-not-fulfilling the demand.

But we had a lot of enemies who came to the Germans, said to Himmler: Look, the Jews, even this they don't fulfill. Even here they didn't praise us. And here, Musy had to reconcile, and he was able to do it. And we said: After the war, after it's finished, you can tell the truth — it was blackmail. Now the trains were so important, not only because they saved a lot of hundreds of Jewish lives, but mainly it proved it would be able to bring hundreds or tens of thousands of Jews out of Germany, and here the Jewish organizations failed completely. They started to discuss, we want to pay them not money, or we don't want to give them trucks. Sternbuch was ready, all of us, when McClelland and the Americans said: You are not allowed to give the Germans medical supplies and "trucks for Jews," otherwise you'll get on the Black List. We said: Okay, we are getting on the Black List. But in order to save Jews, we are ready to give them trucks.

(To be continued in the next issue)

## RETURN TO AUSCHWITZ: HOW ISRAEL KEEPS HOLOCAUST MEMORIES ALIVE

(Continued from page 7)

extraordinary story of a photograph which hung on the wall of the office of Meir Dagan, who rose to become head of Mossad, Israel's external intelligence agency.

It is a slightly battered black-and-white print showing a scene from 1942 in the village of *Lukow* in central Poland. An older Jewish man is kneeling on the floor surrounded by German soldiers.

It is Meir Dagan's grandfather, who is known to have been murdered a short time later.

The picture came to light when Dagan's father returned to his home village after the war, to look for Jewish survivors.

They asked a local Polish man to take some photographs. When he handed over the film roll and they eventually had it processed, they discovered at its start the picture of the Germans surrounding the helpless old man. The photographer must

fanatics but by what might be called normal men."

Outsiders may ask if there isn't a downside to the way in which Israel draws a lesson about the need for eternal vigilance from a story of such unremitting darkness — but it's not a point of view you hear very much in Israel.

Meir Dagan drew that clear connection between the vulnerability of the Jews in German-occupied Poland in the 1940s and the defense of the modern Israeli state.

He is not alone in that. When the current prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu talks about Israel's determination to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, he couches it in terms of a determination that there will never be another Holocaust.

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**B**ehind every story of survival in the Holocaust lies a miracle of good luck — something to make you reflect on the randomness and fragility of all of our lives.

If you were taken to a camp like Auschwitz in late 1944, for example — just a few months before it was liberated by the Red Army — you stood a much better chance of surviving than the families who came on the transports in 1942.

The real story of the Holocaust, of course, is the story of those who did not survive.

In *Kielce* on the Israeli delegation's long coach journey through Poland from Warsaw to Auschwitz I spend some time

with Brigadier General Royi Elcabets, its commander.

He speaks with huge passion about the overall political lesson of such visits — Israel's need to be strong — and a personal moral he draws himself about the special need for Jewish families to invest in their children and in the future.

His grandmother came from *Kielce*.

As darkness began to fall across Europe in the 1930s, she fled to France and endured a desperate and dangerous war that would make a compelling story in itself.

Of her large extended family that stayed behind in rural Poland, not a trace remains.

All we know for sure is that they vanished into the flames of the Holocaust. They were probably taken to Auschwitz because it was the closest of the camps.

General Elcabets sees himself as a kind of bridge between the past and the future.

His grandmother died in the 1990s, but she passed on her knowledge of the relatives who died to him, and he in turn will teach his children.

When the time is right, he will bring them to Poland.

"Obviously I will come with them — I think they're waiting for it," he tells me. "I think it is very important for the next generation to have the memory and the knowledge of the Holocaust and its implications. I will transfer the knowledge. It's my duty as a father."

General Elcabets isn't alone in those sentiments.

In 2009, the Israeli Institute for Democracy conducted an opinion poll asking Israeli Jews if they agreed with a number of general propositions about the Jewish state.

The need to remember the Holocaust came first, with a score of 98%.

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**T**owards the end of their day in Auschwitz, the Israeli officers conduct a service rich in patriotic symbolism. The Star of David is raised and the national anthem "HaTikvah" is sung.

But as the last of the pale grey light recedes from the cloudy skies, I find the moments before and after the official service most compelling.

As they began to gather for the ceremony, one of the Israeli guides takes out her smartphone and plays a recording of an old Jewish song — "Mein Shetlet Belz" — in the dwindling light.

It has been heard here before. In 1944, an SS officer overheard a 16-year-old Jewish orphan called Samuel Gogol playing it — and then forced him to play it again as families were herded along the last short walk to the gas chamber. It was apparently thought to make it easier to handle the crowds.

Here in the heart of darkness, to listen in the same place where it was played 70 years ago, is to listen to an echo of history.

When the service is over, some of the Israeli soldiers light candles and place them on the railway tracks that brought so many of the Jews of Europe to their deaths all those years ago.

With the forbidding arches of the old Auschwitz railway building in the background, it is, everyone agrees, an "iconic" image. Almost everyone pauses to photograph it.

It strikes me that there is something more in the moment too.

The tiny flickering lights stretching down the railway lines into the dark distance remind me of the way men and women suffered here and have somehow come through it.

Auschwitz is, of course, a warning from history.

But in the ability of people like Asher Aud and Yechiel Aleksander to endure, to survive and to remember, it is an inspiration for the future too.

## ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE BOOKS...

(Continued from page 11)

vived thanks completely or partly to the Partisans," he explained. "For instance, there was an Italian concentration camp for Jews on the island of *Rab*, with 3,200 inmates. On the day the Italians surrendered, they immediately formed a partisan battalion with 272 young people. Our partisan division, in connection with those young people, organized the transportation of the Jews from the island to the mainland. It is a unique example in occupied Europe — a whole concentration camp of Jews was saved."

Given Goldstein's pride in the Partisans' achievements, it is all the more remarkable that, in 1941, he writes honestly and critically about the Communist regime that emerged out of the movement in 1945. "After the war," he told me, "Tito and his leadership and the Communist Party established a very strong dictatorship on the model of Stalin's dictatorship. It was Stalinism, but without anti-Semitism — there was no anti-Semitism, especially not from the leadership. And I would say without the brutality against the peasants — because the peasants were the fighters in the partisan war. But in the towns, the political dictatorship was as tough as in other East European countries."

Personally, too, Goldstein was disillusioned by the harsh measures the Party began to implement after the war. In the book, he writes about how some family friends, who had helped him survive in 1941, had their factory confiscated by a Communist court. He alludes to the episode in our interview: "The Stalinist regime made trouble for some of my friends, and some of the people who helped me in the year 1941. It was a personal feeling of disillusionment. People who I knew were honest people — anti-Fascist, helped the movement — why did they have to be sentenced for nothing, just to take their property? Such things happened under Communism, especially Stalinism. After 1948, I wasn't a member of the Party."

In 1949, in fact, Goldstein actually left Yugoslavia and moved to the new state of Israel. But his heart remained in Croatia, and on a trip back there in 1951, he decided to return. In his long career as a writer and publisher, Goldstein made important contributions to Croatian culture, of which 1941 is perhaps the biggest. In the late 1980s and '90s, when Yugoslavia dissolved into civil war, Goldstein was a political and journalistic voice for reconciliation or, at least, amicable separation. And in writing about WWII in Croatia, he is helping to illuminate and detoxify memories that fueled the ethnic hatred of the 1990s. Indeed, he explained that the failure of Communist Yugoslavia to honestly confront its wartime past was one of the reasons the civil wars of the 1990s were so bitter.



When the service is over, some of the Israeli soldiers light candles and place them on the railway tracks that brought so many of the Jews of Europe to their deaths all those years ago.

have been taking photographs for the newly arrived Nazis too.

The photograph is appalling, but it's historically interesting too.

The young Germans are not Aryan supermen but ordinary soldiers called up into their reserve infantry battalions for service in Poland.

It's worth examining the soldiers' attitudes — they do not look to me like men who feel they've been caught doing something reprehensible. They look like men posing for a photograph which they intend to display on the mantelpiece in years to come.

Meir Dagan rose to become one of the most powerful men in Israel, and throughout his career he had the photograph of his grandfather and the Germans on the office wall.

The lesson he reads into it is simple: "We have," he tells me, "no choice but to rely on ourselves... and there's a hard moral lesson from the Holocaust that anyone could become a murderer. The killings weren't carried out by

# INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY COMMEMORATED AROUND THE WORLD

(Continued from page 1)

One of those witnesses was in the audience. Rena Finder, a Holocaust survivor whose name appeared on the real-life Schindler's List, shared her testimony in the General Assembly Hall. "Encouraging young



Israeli dignitaries attend ceremony at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Poland on International Holocaust Remembrance Day. From left: Jonny Daniels, coalition chairman MK Yariv Levin, singer Andrea Bocelli, opposition leader Isaac Herzog, and Immigrant Absorption Minister Sofa Landver.

people to be more accepting of others and learn from the cruelty that was inflicted on Jews and other minorities during the Holocaust has been my life's work," she said.

In a later interview with UN Television, Mr. Spielberg said education was the greatest thing the UN could do to prevent further genocides by disseminating eyewitness testimony.

Ceremonies were accompanied by two exhibitions at UN Headquarters under the theme "Remembrance Week: Journeys through the Holocaust," mark-



A woman stands between flowers and wreaths in front of the barbed wire of the former concentration camp Buchenwald near Weimar, Germany.

ing the 70th anniversary of the deportation of over half a million Jews from Hungary to the German Nazi death camps.

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**USA** — President Obama urged the nation and world to remember the victims on International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

"Each year on this day the world comes together to commemorate a barbaric crime unique in human history," Obama said in a statement. "We recall six million Jews and millions of other innocent victims who were murdered in Nazi death camps. We mourn lives cut short and communities torn apart."

Saying there remains room for hope on this solemn day, Obama noted that

January 27 is also the date on which Auschwitz was liberated 69 years ago.

"The noble acts of courage performed by liberators, rescuers, and the Righteous Among Nations remind us that we are never powerless," Obama said. "In our lives, we always

have choices. In our time, this means choosing to confront bigotry and hatred in all of its forms, especially anti-Semitism."

Obama also said people should condemn "any attempts to deny the occurrence of the Holocaust," and do "our part to ensure that survivors receive some measure of justice and the support they need to live out their lives in dignity."

"On this International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Michelle and I join the American people and our friends in the State of Israel and around the world as we reaffirm our obligation not just to bear witness, but to act.

"May God bless the memory of the millions, and may God grant us the strength and courage to make real our solemn vow: Never forget. Never again."

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**Israel** — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on January 27 berated the international community for showing indifference to the threat posed by Iran, comparing Tehran to the Nazi regime and implying that the world was not fulfilling its obligation to prevent a second Jewish holocaust.

"Even today when there is broad agreement that the Holocaust that took place should have been prevented, the world doesn't feel any sense of urgency regarding a regime that calls for our annihilation, and even welcomes with open arms the man who represents it," Netanyahu said, referring to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

"They all just clear their throats and greet [his] smiles with smiles of their own," he said in comments released to the press for International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Netanyahu added that Israel received "disproportionate" treatment, which "shows us that persecution of the Jews perpetuates 2,000 years of anti-Semitism."

A statement issued by the office of President Shimon Peres struck a decidedly different note, calling on global citizenry to "not be satisfied by condemning the Holocaust but rather join our hearts and hands to ensure that we live in a world where another Holocaust is impossible."

"The Holocaust is a great warning to us all," the president wrote. "Forgetfulness is a menace; we must remember and remember to love and respect everyone no matter the color of their skin or the origin of their birth. Moses taught us that every human being was made in the image of the Lord; no one has the right to take that away. We have a duty to remember the past but also to improve the future; this is not just a memorial day but a call to us all to move ahead, never forgetting the past but never losing hope in the future."

Earlier in the day, opposition leader Isaac Herzog spoke at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in southern Poland and vowed that Israel would continue to fight against racism and its consequences.

Speaking to a group that included nearly half of Israel's parliament, marking the 69th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp, Herzog said it was the Jewish state's mission to learn the lessons of the Holocaust and combat injustice.

"In the name of the State of Israel, I declare that we will continue in every way our life's mission — to learn and to teach the lesson, to improve the world with righteousness and justice, with benevolence and mercy," he said.

Herzog led a group of 54 members of Knesset from both sides of the aisle on a trip to Poland to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The Israeli lawmakers were joined in Poland by dozens of Holocaust survivors, Israeli dignitaries and service members, Polish parliamentarians, members of the United States Congress and the European Parliament.

"We came here in order to feel for a moment the corrupted air, to taste from the poisoned cup, to feel the pain. We stand here not as individuals, but rather as representatives of the nation which makes its way on an arduous and painful trek of remembrance, a trip to the depths of evil and to the foundations of Jewish and human existence," Herzog said.

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**Germany** — Ceremonies were held in Germany and Poland to commem-

orate victims of the Third Reich, with a survivor of the Nazi siege of Leningrad telling the German Parliament of the horrors that unfolded in the city during the blockade.

The commemorations for International Holocaust Remembrance Day come 69 years after Soviet soldiers swept into former death camp Auschwitz in Nazi-occupied Poland to liberate about 7,000 surviving inmates.

They also coincided with the 70th anniversary of the end of the almost 900-day blockade of Leningrad, which is thought to have led to the deaths of 1.5 million people. Leningrad reverted to its historic name of St. Petersburg in 1991.

Life in Leningrad quickly turned into a nightmare, with a lack of water and electricity, hunger, disease and daily bomb raids taking place before the city was liberated by Soviet forces in January 1944, Russian author Daniil Granin told the Bundestag.

"Death was someone who silently



A woman visits the snow-covered Holocaust Memorial on International Holocaust Remembrance Day in Berlin.

did his work in this war," he told German lawmakers, including Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The keynote speech came after German President Joachim Gauck led lawmakers in a moment of silence to honor the victims of Nazism.

"I can only think with deep sorrow and shame about the war of extermination launched by Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union," Gauck wrote in a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Putin marked the day by visiting the St. Petersburg Piskaryovskoye Memorial Cemetery, which contains a mass grave for about a half million victims of the siege, including one of Putin's brothers.

"It is our duty to remember the residents of that time and their victory over Fascism," he said.

In addition to the six million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis, International Holocaust Remembrance Day also commemorates other victims of the Third Reich, including the mentally ill, homosexuals and Roma and Sinti.

"We honor every one of those brutally murdered in the darkest period of European history," said EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton. "It is an occasion to remind us all of the need to continue fighting prejudice and racism in our own time."

(Continued on page 15)

## INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY COMMEMORATED AROUND THE WORLD

(Continued from page 14)

As a reminder of today's small, but active, far-right movement in Germany and other European nations, several posters denying the Holocaust were found in a town in the northern German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, police said. The posters, with the words "International Day of the 6-million Lie," were found on the walls of several government buildings in the town of *Grevesmuehlen*. Denying the Holocaust is illegal in Germany.

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**Hungary** — Hungarians collaborated with Nazis in sending nearly half a million Jews to their deaths, Hungary's president said in a rare public acknowledgement of a wartime past that Jewish groups say is often glossed over.

In a statement prepared for Holocaust Memorial Day, President János Áder said that if the war had gone according to the plans of Adolf Hitler and his Hungarian Fascist allies, Jews would have been exterminated completely from Hungary.

"Auschwitz may be hundreds of kilometers from Hungary but it is part of Hungarian history," Áder wrote. "This death camp was the scene of the inhumane suffering, humiliation and death of nearly half a million of our compatriots."

Jewish groups have criticized the center-right government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán for what they see as its lackluster attempt to fight anti-Semitism.

A Jewish group has threatened to boycott Holocaust commemorations over plans to erect a monument to the German occupation in 1944. It said that pushed the blame for the geno-

cide solely onto Germans, obscuring the role of Hungarians.

Orbán, favorite to win reelection in April, has said he would do everything to stamp out growing anti-Semitism in a country where a far-right party, Jobbik, again openly uses anti-Semitic rhetoric and last November unveiled a statue of wartime leader Miklós Horthy, an ally of Hitler.

"Seventy years ago, after our nation's German occupation, the Nazi overlords and the Hungarian authorities that collaborated with them

exterminations from happening ever again, an international conference on the Holocaust said on January 27.

The conference, titled "The Holocaust against the Serbs, Jews and Roma in World War II," was held at the Faculty of Business Studies and Law in Belgrade to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Organizational Committee President Zivota Radosavljevic said that the objective of the conference is to encourage establishment of new scientific facts about the victims of World War II, primarily Serbs, Jews and Roma.

The message that a crime like the Holocaust must never happen again needs to be conveyed to future generations, which will also be a contribution to reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia, he said.

Historical materials on the Holocaust in Serbia are not given enough attention, and one of the objectives of the conference is to establish a database of protagonists whose testimonies can

contribute to shedding light on this complex matter, Radosavljevic said.

"Ultimately, the conference proceedings will be made, and we plan to commemorate the victims on this day every year, with a view to focusing primarily on *Staro Sajmiste*," Radosavljevic said.

*Staro Sajmiste* was a Nazi concentration camp in Belgrade.

The conference was attended by around 70 participants, representatives of government and non-government organizations and ethnic minorities, as well as by professors, students and foreign lecturers from Croatia, Israel and Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Simcha Rotem, 90, a former Jewish underground fighter, speaks with a visitor as he attends an exhibition on the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

seemed to fulfill the will of Hitler's Nazi Germany," Áder wrote.

"In barely half a year they mercilessly completed ghettos and deported almost the entire rural Jewry."

Because the deportations were halted in July 1944, tens of thousands of Jews were spared the gas chamber, mostly in Budapest, and the central European capital today is home to the largest indigenous Jewish community in Europe.

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**Serbia** — Crimes committed against Serbs, Jews and Roma in World War II must not be forgotten, and the Holocaust must be remembered in order to prevent such mass

## THE SAVIOR OF SOBIBOR

(Continued from page 6)

millions, it argued, but there was still time to save thousands. It asked the Allies to bomb Auschwitz. The Allies rejected the request, arguing that to do so would be a death sentence for prisoners still alive there.

If the Allies were unwilling to bomb the camp, the Jewish community asked, would they at least bomb the railroads leading to Auschwitz? Washington in particular opposed that suggestion, arguing that it was irrelevant to the national interest, was impractical and would ultimately be ineffective. Instead of using bombs, Washington promised to punish Nazi war criminals after the war.

It wasn't just the Allies who failed to exercise moral leadership while six million Jews died. The pope and the Vatican remained publicly silent.

Although the Allies exerted pressure on Pope Pius XII to cosign the U.N. declaration, he chose not to. Jewish and world leaders privately asked him to excommunicate Hitler, but he declined to do so. And when they pleaded with him to condemn Hitler and the Nazis by name, he spoke eloquently about the dignity of man, freedom of religion and the sanctity of life. (The defenders of Pope Pius XII argue that he worked diplomatically to save the lives of thousands of Jews.)

By the summer of 1943, the 600 *Sobibor* prisoners knew they were both doomed and forgotten by a world that chose to ignore their plight. *Belzec* and *Treblinka* were already closed and their few remaining prisoners murdered. *Sobibor* was next. Trapped behind barbed wire and surrounded by guns and minefields, only

luck or a miracle could save them.

The miracle's name was Sasha Pechersky.

A Russian Jewish lieutenant in the Red Army, Pechersky arrived at *Sobibor* on September 23, 1943, with eighty fellow Russian Jewish soldiers. They were all supposed to go to the gas chambers at *Treblinka*, but that camp had already closed. Pechersky was a soldier who had never found a camp he couldn't escape from. He devised a daring escape plan with the camp's spiritual leader, Rabbi Leon Feldhendler, and a handful of savvy prisoners.

On the afternoon of October 14, 1943, the *Sobibor* Jews let out a mighty shout and charged the fences. Their victory was bittersweet. Three hundred died during and after the escape. Three hundred made it to the nearest woods. Only fifty survived the war.

## SURVIVORS RECALL KINDERTRANSPORT ESCAPE

(Continued from page 5)

thousands of Gypsies killed by Hitler.

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### EVE WILLMAN, 80

I was 5 when I came. My father was a doctor. My mother converted to Judaism when she married my father.

I came with another girl who was older than me. The only thing I remember about the journey is stopping at one point and people coming in and giving us a sweet drink. I don't remember saying goodbye to my parents.



Eve Willman, 80: "I became one of my aunt and uncle's children. My cousins became my brother and sister."

I went to the first foster home — a Unitarian minister and his wife. They didn't have any children. I remember that she was very strict and precise.

After a year they couldn't keep me anymore and so I went to the next foster home ... to an extremely nice family. But one of my uncles who had been a rabbi was most concerned that I didn't have any Jewish instruction. And so I went to another family. It was not such a nice family.

My uncle and aunt were then established in West Hartlepool. I went there for a holiday. It was such a wonderful turning point in my life somehow. My aunt said, "When you come back, you will be with us forever." I was 11. I became one of their children. My cousins became my brother and sister.

My father survived the war. My mother was able to work and she worked in a factory, and the factory was bombed. She was killed just before the end of the war so I never saw her again.

It was really a wonderful thing that the government did to let 10,000 children in who probably would have lost their lives.

But it's happening again. It isn't happening to Jews, but look at the children in Syria.

Willman, an only child, arrived from Vienna in April 1939. She later obtained a PhD. in biochemistry and worked as a researcher and biology teacher. She lives in London and has never married.



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