AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM HOLDS ITS MOST SUCCESSFUL TRIBUTE DINNER IN THIRTY-SIX YEARS

On Sunday, November 12, 2017, the American Society for Yad Vashem (ASYV) gathered at the Pierre Hotel in New York City for its Annual Tribute Dinner, honoring Robert H. and Amy A. Book, Abbi Halpern and Barry Levine. With over 600 attendees, this year’s Tribute Dinner raised a record-setting $8.5 million, including significant support directed toward Yad Vashem’s unique educational programs with the Israel Defense Forces.

The theme for the evening was “Carry the Torch,” and Dr. Ron Meier, American Society for Yad Vashem executive director, remarked, “We are thrilled to honor Bob, Amy, Abbi and Barry, who exemplify our theme of Carry the Torch as distinguished leaders of the second and third generations, respectively. The extraordinary outpouring of attendance and support for our exceptional honorees this evening is a true testament to the esteem in which they are held by family, friends and those whose lives they have touched. We are grateful to our honorees and to all who are involved for advancing Yad Vashem’s sacred mission of Holocaust remembrance and education.”

Rita Levy and Mark Moskowitz served as Tribute Dinner co-chairs, supported by Dinner Chair Emerita Marilyn Rubenstein, and honorary Dinner chairs Neil W. Book, Scott M. Book, and Douglas B. Book.

Following the Motzi, led by ASYV Treasurer Marvin Zborowski along with his sons Mark and Ziggi Zborowski, Master of Ceremonies Tony Orlando kicked off the evening with stories of his own connection to and support for Israel. He then introduced Leonard Wilf, chairman of the American and International Societies for Yad Vashem, who provided greetings and recognized all esteemed Holocaust survivors in the room. Lenny also introduced special guests, including Patrons of the Mount of Remembrance Sheldon and Miriam Adelson; Ambassador Dore Gold, from the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs; Malcolm Hoenlein, from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Simon Wiesenthal Center; and senior Yad Vashem colleagues Dorit Novak, Shaya Ben Yehuda and Michael Fisher.

During his greetings, Lenny announced the creation of the Eli Zborowski Legacy Circle, to recognize individuals and families who have made Yad Vashem a part of their estate plans.

The evening culminated with a special recognition award ceremony, following Lenny’s remarks, Mark Moskowitz spoke passionately and personally about his experience on the 2016 Yad Vashem Leadership Mission and invited everyone to join him on the 2018 Yad Vashem Generation to Generation Mission to Vienna and Israel, July 2–9, 2018. In speaking about the 2016 mission, Mark highlighted the tremendous impact the presence of young leaders had on the mission experience. “It was extraordinary to witness the spark that was ignited in our young leaders — sparks of Jewish identity and a strengthened connection to Israel and their Jewish heritage,” Mark noted. “The transformation of these young leaders left an indelible mark on all of us who shared their experience.”

The event then turned its focus toward the esteemed honorees. Yad Vashem Leadership Award recipients Bob and Amy Book were introduced by close friend and transformational philanthropist Jay Schottenstein, who spoke about their exceptional leadership on behalf of Yad Vashem. Bob and Amy dedicated the Northern Garden of the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem in honor of their son Douglas and in memory of Sam Halpern, z”l.

Caroline Arfa Massel, ASYV Board member, introduced Young Leadership Award recipients Abbi Halpern and Barry Levine. Abbi and Barry were presented with the Yad Vashem Young Leadership Award in recognition of their extraordinary service as co-chairs of ASYY’s Young Leadership Associates. Abbi and Barry, both members of the third generation, have dedicated themselves to preserving the legacy of their grandparents and all Holocaust survivors and victims and to ensuring that other young leaders will join them in advancing Yad Vashem’s sacred mission.

All of the honorees proudly and enthusiastically expressed their gratitude to the ASYV family and inspired all who were in attendance with their extraordinary vision, leadership and commitment for Yad Vashem.

Following the award ceremonies, David Halpern, ASYV treasurer, provided a moving “In Memoriam” tribute to the Holocaust survivors who had been lost, highlighting those from the ASYV community who had recently passed. He concluded his touching remarks with a moment of silence.

The evening culminated with a fundraising appeal led by entertainment industry icon and international philanthropist Haim Saban, who is a leader in his commitment to a strong relationship between the United States and Israel. Mr. Saban spoke passionately about Yad Vashem’s partnership with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to make the study of the Holocaust an integral part of its education.

(Continued on page 2)
BY JOSEFIN DOLSTEN, THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Nazi came for Rose Holm’s family in the afternoon. By the evening, the 16-year-old was lying among corpses in the underground bunker where she and her family had been hiding.

“I was between those dead ones, and I didn’t know if I’m alive or I’m dead,” Holm, now 92, recalled.

A few months later, she met a childhood friend who recruited her to join a group of Jewish partisans. Members of the fighting unit, which was under the command of Chiel Grynszpan, lived in the forest by day and fought the Nazis at night.

“I was thinking ‘I have to take revenge, whatever’s going to be, I don’t care,’” Holm told JTA at her New York Upper East Side apartment. “I never [used to] think I’m going to be alive, and that’s the way I survived with the partisans.”

Today, Holm is elegantly dressed and soft-spoken. She wears a pearl necklace and offers home-baked cookies.

As a partisan, it was a whole different story, she said. “I didn’t know what I was doing. Whatever I’d been told, that’s what I was doing.”

Holm is among a shrinking group of living partisans.

“Each year there are fewer Jewish partisans from Poland,” said of eating pork.

“Syndrome K was put on patient papers to indicate that the sick person had left the bunker with her husband and young daughter before the Nazis came.”

That unimaginable incident would go on to motivate Holm to fight back against the Nazis.

ITALIAN DOCTORS FOOLEO NAZIS BY INVENTING THIS FAKE DISEASE

In 1943, a team of ingenious Italian doctors invented a deadly, contagious virus called Syndrome K to protect Jews from annihilation. On October 16 of that year, as Nazis closed in to liquidate Rome’s Jewish ghetto, many runaways hid in the 450-occupied Parczew, a town in the eastern part of Poland. Only one family member other than Holm survived: a sister who had left the bunker with her husband and young daughter before the Nazis came.

The doctors were later honored for their heroic actions and Fatebenefratelli Hospital was declared a “House of Life” by the Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation.

“Syndrome K was on patient papers to indicate that the sick person had left the bunker without inspecting the diseases which included Holm and her late husband, Joe. It collected testimonies from 51 Jewish partisans from 2002 to 2015; only 16 are still alive.

Holm was one of five women in her unit, which started with 25 people but grew to around 250 by the end of World War II. Partisan fighter units were reluctant to have women and children as members, but the friend who recruited her — her future husband — told the other fighters that the two were a package deal.

As part of the unit, Holm and the other women carried supplies and helped detonate hand grenades. The group focused on destroying bridges and roads that Nazis were using.

“A train used to come, so we used to throw the hand grenades,” she recounted. “The hand grenades were very scary because if you pulled the pin (incorrectly), it could kill you.”

“They would make do with whatever food they got from non-Jewish Poles, who had been threatened that they could be killed if they did not aid the fighters. “For survival you do everything, you don’t think you’re a human being,” she said.

Sometimes the partisans would get a pig to grill in the forest. “The first time was very hard, but when you’re hungry you don’t ask questions,” Holm, whose religious family had observed Jewish dietary laws, said of eating pork.

Many times she came close to dying. In one incident, Holm entered the house of a non-Jewish Pole to get food and supplies. A German soldier discovered her and she ran, holding on to a sweater the Pole had given her. Later she found bullet holes dotting the side of the sweater, where the soldier had shot at her and narrowly missed.

During her time as a partisan, Holm didn’t think about life after the war. “I didn’t think I was going to be alive,” she said.

She became close with the friend who recruited her, and the two went on to marry shortly after the war, surrounded by the friends they made as partisans. In 1945, the couple moved to a displaced persons camp in Germany before leaving in 1949 for New York, where she found a job in a dress-making factory and he in a card-box factory.

Joe Holm later opened his own butcher shop before the couple founded a factory producing women’s sweaters about 10 years after moving to the United States. They had two children.

Joe died in 2009. Today, Holm lives in a New York Upper East Side apartment. “I don’t care,” she said. “I was between those dead ones, and I didn’t know if I’m alive or I’m dead.”

A still from the Warsaw ghetto uprising, in which Jewish resistance fighters held the Nazis at bay for nearly a month in April and May of 1943.

Italian doctors fooled Nazis by inventing this fake disease

BY KESSELRING AND HERBERT KAPPLER — two ruthless Nazi commanders.

The doctors instructed “patients” to cough very loudly and told Nazis that the disease was extremely dangerous, disfiguring and molto contagioso. Soldiers were not informed that the disease was symptoms and incessant coughing which left them without inspecting the patients. It’s estimated that a few dozen lives were saved by this brilliant scheme.

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IN 1943, a team of ingenious Italian doctors invented a deadly, contagious virus called Syndrome K to protect Jews from annihilation. On October 16 of that year, as Nazis closed in to liquidate Rome’s Jewish ghetto, many runaways hid in the 450-occupied Parczew, a town in the eastern part of Poland. Only one family member other than Holm survived: a sister who had left the bunker with her husband and young daughter before the Nazis came.

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Bor­n in Bud­apest in 1937, Chayim Herzl re­mem­bers be­ing taken by his mo­ther Eugenia to visit his fa­ther Reu­ven Salgo at a lab­or camp out­side the cit­y in 1943. “My hand was small, and I was able to pass some food to him through the fence. That was the last time I saw him,” said Herzl.

He lost his mother in early 1945 when men from Hungary’s Arrow Cross took her from their safe house outside the gheto, or gan­a­r­ized by dia­plomat Raoul Wallenberg, while he hid un­der the bed.

Hav­ing lost his fa­ther at age six and his mo­ther at eight, Herzl has only fleet­ing mem­ories of his par­ents. Now, thanks to a com­pre­hen­sive de­cade-long project to col­lect names of Hun­garian Holocaust vic­tims, com­pleted in a col­la­bor­ation with Is­rael’s Ho­lo­caust mem­orial mu­seum Yad Vashem and funded by the Fon­da­tion pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, Herzl has re­gained some­thing he calls “in­de­scribably price­less” — in­for­ma­tion.

Through the pro­ject, Herzl learned that his fa­ther died just days be­fore the end of the war in a POW de­ath march, af­ter hav­ing been for­ced into a lab­or corps in the Hun­gari­an army fight­ing on the East­ern front. Be­yond that, he now has a doc­u­ment with his fa­ther’s sig­nature. The sig­nature, his fa­ther’s or­thog­ra­phic fin­ger­print, is the only piece of his fa­ther’s writ­ing Herzl owns.

“Through the ef­forts of Yad Vashem’s names col­lec­tion proj­ect in Hun­gary, I was fin­ally able to find a sense of clo­sure in know­ing what hap­pened to my fa­ther. Find­ing a doc­u­ment con­tain­ing his sig­nature is ev­i­dence to the world that my fa­ther lived and a tes­ti­mony to the tragic fate that be­fell him and so many Hun­garian Jews,” said Herzl.

“The job is not yet com­plete. My mother, from the day she was taken from me, has van­ished from the face of the earth and re­mains am­ong the un­doc­u­ment­ed. I know that Yad Vashem is com­mit­ted to leav­ing no stone un­turnd in the ef­fort to iden­tify as many Ho­lo­caust vic­tims as pos­si­ble,” Herzl told The Times of Is­rael.

Ten years ago, ap­prox­i­mately 40 per­cent of Hun­garian vic­tims were iden­tified af­ter the ad­vances made by Ho­lo­caust his­torian and Ho­lo­caust sur­vivor Ser­ge Kla­sfeld. Kla­sfeld in the 1980s launched the Nevek Project, gather­ing names from lists of prison­ers of forced labor and con­cen­tra­tion camps dur­ing World War II. Be­cause of fund­ing and bu­rea­cu­ra­tic is­sues, he aban­doned his pro­ject.

Build­ing on Kla­sfeld’s Nevek Project, Yad Vashem—trained his­tori­ans have added some 225,000 vic­tims’ names over the past 10 years of in­ten­sive research. This major pro­ject was fund­ed by the Fon­da­tion pour la Mémoire de la Shoah and sup­ported by the late French po­litician and Ho­lo­caust sur­vivor Simone Veil, who served as its first pres­i­dent. Re­cently, Yad Vashem hosted an event that in­clud­ed a spe­cial tribute to Veil.

Simone Veil saw sig­nifi­cance in the col­lec­tion of names of Hun­garian Jews. She wit­nessed first­hand the ar­rival and ex­ter­na­tion of Hun­gary’s Jews at Aus­chwitz-Birkenau. It was im­port­ant to her that their iden­ti­ties be me­mor­i­al­ized, and she there­fore de­cided to sup­port this im­por­tant ini­tia­tive,” said Yad Vashem Chair­man Avner Shalev.

But the scope of Yad Vashem’s names col­lec­tion proj­ect goes well bey­ond iden­ti­fy­ing Jewish Hun­garian vic­tims. It is, to date, the larg­est proj­ect Yad Vashem has un­der­taken and rep­re­sents a holis­tic ap­proach to col­lect­ing in­for­ma­tion and doc­u­ments that far sur­passes pre­vi­ous ef­forts.

“This is the most suc­cess­ful pro­ject that Yad Vashem’s Ar­chives has un­der­taken. The holis­tic ap­proach of the pro­ject has be­come a model for other endeav­ors we are cur­rently pro­mot­ing in the name-gath­er­ing process, in par­tic­u­lar the Polish Names Project, and we hope that with the con­tinued sup­port of the French Fou­n­da­tion we will ac­com­plish sim­i­lar re­sults to those we ob­tained in col­lect­ing names of Jewish vic­tims from Hun­gary,” said Shalev.

Chayim Herzl (Salgo) was born in 1937 in Budapest, Hun­gary, the only child of Reu­ve­n and Eugenia Salgo.

In ad­dition to Pol­and, which has be­come a co­op­era­tion ap­proach with the in­sti­tu­tion, Yad Vashem is im­ple­ment­ing the in­form­a­tion-gath­er­ing mod­el it founded in Hun­gary in its names re­covery ef­forts in the territo­ries of the for­mer So­vi­et Union and the Bal­kan States.

Dr. Alexan­der Avram, direc­tor of the Hall of Names and the Central Database of Shoah Vic­tims’ Names, ex­plained the proj­ect’s pro­ce­dures and re­son­ance.

Unlike the ini­tial goal of the Nevek Pro­ject of at­tach­ing a name to every vic­tim, the Yad Vashem pro­ject “has re­vealed part of their in­di­vid­ual sto­ries, and in some cases, for the first time was able to con­nect a rare pho­to­graph with the name of the faceless murdered,” said Avram.

The in­tensive work began in 2007 and was con­ducted un­der the leader­ship of three Yad Vashem his­tor­i­ans who trained a staff of some 20 re­search­ers who were on the ground in Great­er Hun­gary: Hun­gary, Slo­vakia, parts of Ro­mania, Ser­bia and Trans­yl­va­nia. Through spe­cial diplo­matic agree­ments for­ged with the Hun­garian gov­ern­ment in 2005 and 2006, said Avram, the re­search­ers were grant­ed full ac­cess to all state archi­ves for this spe­cific proj­ect.

“It is not eas­y in these coun­tries to find doc­u­men­tion about the Ho­lo­caust and Jews,” said Avram. “They are no key words for cata­logs; there is no arch­ive in Eu­ro­pe that has a topic ‘Ho­lo­caust’ and cata­logs for this or for Jews.”

The team pored over archive ma­te­ri­al from all sorts of of­fices — includ­ing the Min­is­tries of the In­ter­ior, De­fense and Ag­ri­cul­tur­al — “page by page, to map those doc­u­ments im­por­tant to Jews and the Ho­lo­caust,” he said. The im­port­ant pages were scan­ned and sent to Yad Vashem, which is in the pro­cess of up­load­ing the pages into its da­tabase.

“The team, trained by Yad Vashem, must be fluent in Hun­garian, and have skills in Ger­man, Ro­manian, Ser­bian and other lan­guages of the re­gion to decip­her the hand­writing of the pre–World War II doc­u­ments. In De­cember, the in­ten­sive re­search col­lec­tion is finish­ing, but the team will con­tinue to decip­her doc­u­ments to add more names and sto­ries into the da­tabase.

“In our da­tabase, we have 4,700,000 names of Jews mur­dered in the Ho­lo­caust. That means that more than 1 mil­lion are not iden­ti­fied,” said Avram. Where­as in cen­tral and west­ern Eu­rope some 95% of the vic­tims doc­u­mented as Jews were ar­rested, sent to transit camps, and then sent on to de­ath camps, in east­ern Eu­rope there is less of a pap­er trail.

Al­though he said the teams of re­search­ers at Yad Vashem will con­tinue to doc­u­ment vic­tims, it is im­por­tant to note, said Avram, that the teams have “ex­hausted most of the easy sources, and now look for names scattered in less-explored sources where they will some­times read a book of 500 pages to reach four or five names.”

“We are fo­cus­ing our ef­forts in the coun­tries where we have a more sig­nifi­cant gap in names of vic­tims,” said Avram. In Hun­gary, for exam­ple, where there were or­gan­ized trans­ports, “no­body cared to re­gister the names of the Jews on the trans­ports,” he said.

As in the case for Herzl, who discov­ered his fa­ther’s fate through the Yad Vashem proj­ect, Avram hopes to find more than mere mon­itors for the re­main­der of the vic­tims.

“We can some­times build a per­son­al sto­ry. Pre­vious at­tempts were to doc­u­ment names of vic­tims; in this proj­ect, we are try­ing to go fur­ther than that,” he said, and trans­form the name into a per­son.
Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front: The German Infantry's War, 1941–1944.

By Jeff Rutherford, in his exceptionally well-researched work, Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front: The German Infantry's War, 1941–1944, gives us his thought-provoking view of just how this happened.

First off, Rutherford points out that German General Gertha, a researcher who has written a good deal about violent societies, found that the Nazi society itself was violent. And this violence was not merely a result of “government policies but was rather an expression of the German population's attitudes and values.” All the participants were sure they were bringing “order” back to a Germany that was being destroyed. Thus the enemies, “communists, ‘socialists’ and later a multitude of groups including the mentally and physically disabled, homosexuals, and Jews,” were targeted. In order to get as many Germans as possible to feel right about this violence and also “conform,” Nazi governmental officials, we read, utilized all propaganda means available to create a “Nazi conscious” society. “The hoped-for result: A truly moral and ethical German living in the Nazi racial state would intuitively understand the necessity and right- eousness of eliminating Jews and other undesirables from the Nazi body.”

The Wehrmacht soldiers of Army Group North, and specifically the 121st, 123rd and 126th Infantry Divisions specifically examined here, were, of course, representatives of that society. Called up on the October 10, 1940, they were three of the ten divisions that would invade the Soviet Union in June 1941. Before the actual invasion took place, there followed more “ideological education,” which basically made sure the soldiers realized just what they were fighting for. The recommended text for instruction on the “German Volk” was Hitler’s Mein Kampf. Indeed, these men were to be “racial warriors.”

Still, it was “the Wehrmacht’s adherence to a doctrine of military necessity,” or, in simpler terms, the need to “whatever was necessary to preserve its combat efficiency and emerge victorious on the battlefield,” which, according to Rutherford, was the driving force and best explains the acts of the German army in the Soviet Union. From Rutherford we learn this hearkens back to the history of the Prussian-German Army [which] traditionally placed “radicalized notion of military necessity” in which the institution focused on defeating the opposing army without regard for normal ethical or moral considerations.” How did the aforementioned ideological training fit into all this? It made murder and all manner of murderous acts that much easier.

The 121st, 123rd and 126th Infantry Divisions, subordinated to the Sixteenth Army, were “charged with destroying the Red Army in the Baltic States, capturing the region’s vital port facilities, maintaining contact with the northern wing of Army Group Center, and most importantly seizing Leningrad.” In their initial advance, there were the usual battles, sometimes degenerating into pure savagery. Nonetheless, it was their defensive battles leading to the long-term occupation of parts of the above areas — unexpected, since Germany thought it would defeat the Soviet Union in just weeks — that appear, sooner or later, to have brought out the very worst in these divisions. Because the divisions were ill equipped for the winter of 1941–42 both in foodstuffs and clothing, countless less Russian civilians were robbed of everything and left to die of starvation or the bitter cold. Partisans were hanged and left to a “dangle” to make the place look “patriotic.” Punishment for any act deemed anti-Nazi. Worse still was the collective punishment doled out when any person or no person was to be found guilty of some “crime”?

How did the German soldier generally feel about this? It was part of war and the war was to be won at all costs. These Russian civilians, who German soldiers had also been taught were dirty fighters and simply animals, meant absolutely nothing and were “mere obstacles to final victory.” Germany and what was good for Germany mattered! Jews, meanwhile, meant less than nothing. To the Nazis they were the enemy! Sometimes the Nazis could fully depend on their collaborators when it came to the Jews. Rutherford particularly points out how this was the case in some Baltic countries. In fact, one German soldier watching Lithuanian gangs would write in his diary how stunned he was by the “heinous” acts he witnessed perpetrated on Jews. Otherwise, these Wehrmacht troops, working with Einsatzgruppen (muder squads) that followed closely behind them, thought nothing of helping them.

Needless to say, Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front is an absorbing work!

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

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**SURVIVOR AV PERLMUTTER: “ANGEL” WATCHED OVER HIM**

BY JANE ULMAN, JEWISH JOURNAL

“Were Adolf Perlmutter?” one of the German soldiers shouted, bursting into Suzanne Cohen’s house in Amsterdam in March 1943, rushing past a 15-year-old boy living there who was known as Avraham or Av.

Upstairs they found one of the Cohens’ sons, in his early 20s, and ordered, “You come with us.” On their way out, they grabbed Av, realizing he was the one they were looking for — his official name was Adolf — and led both young men into a police van. They headed to the Jewish Theatre, which had been converted to a detention center from where Jews were deported to camps.

“The moment I came in, I was thinking how to get out,” Av recalled. He noticed that pairs of German soldiers at the exits changed shifts regularly. At one door in particular, they actually abandoned their post to fetch their replacement. He heard this to the Cohen son, who deemed it too dangerous to try escaping. “They’ll shoot us,” he told Av.

Av was underdressed. In the middle of the night, when the exit was left unguarded, he calmly walked out and ran.

Avraham Abba Perlmutter, who was given the name Adolf by the Austrian government, was born on August 28, 1927, in Vienna, to Chaim and Malka Perlmutter. His sister, Thea, was three years older.

Chaim owned a textile family store, providing the family with a middle-class, very observant life. Every morning, Av prayed with his father in the small shul located on their apartment building’s first floor.

Av was a self-described “wild child.” At 6, he was asked not to return for a second year in Jewish school because of his misbehavior. He attended public school and played soccer with neighborhood boys. Av’s life changed on March 12, 1938 — the day before Kristallnacht. The following fall he enrolled in a Jewish middle school.

On the night of November 9, 1938, Kristallnacht began. The Perlmutter family’s store was plundered. Two months later, Av’s parents arranged for him and Thea to leave for the Netherlands on a Kindertransport, a rescue operation for children — to join Av’s aunt and uncle, Annie Frank and her family, who were already hiding. His relatives in The Hague were all murdered later in Auschwitz and Buchenwald.

After Av escaped from the Jewish Theatre in March 1943, he ran back to the Cohens’ house, where he hid in the attic. The next day, his community leaders notified the Nazis the Cohen’s son was still living there.

Thea, meanwhile, was transferred to a Youth Aliyah camp east of Amsterdam in Loodsrecht, with a plan for her parents to follow. Unfortunately, they had immigrated illegally in June 1939. Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940. And while Av continued attending school, playing soccer and celebrating his bar mitzvah, anti-Jewish measures were enacted gradually.

On October 7, 1942, after non-Dutch Jews were ordered to move from coastal areas, Av was sent to Amsterdam, where he was placed with Suzanne Cohen and her adult sons, within two miles of where Annie Frank and her family were already hidden. His relatives in The Hague were all murdered later in Auschwitz and Buchenwald.

How did the German soldier generally feel about this? It was part of war and the war was to be won at all costs. These Russian civilians, who German soldiers had also been taught were dirty fighters and simply animals, meant absolutely nothing and were “mere obstacles to final victory.” Germany and what was good for Germany mattered! Jews, meanwhile, meant less than nothing. To the Nazis they were the enemy! Sometimes the Nazis could fully depend on their collaborators when it came to the Jews. Rutherford particularly points out how this was the case in some Baltic countries. In fact, one German soldier watching Lithuanian gangs would write in his diary how stunned he was by the “heinous” acts he witnessed perpetrated on Jews. Otherwise, these Wehrmacht troops, working with Einsatzgruppen (muder squads) that followed closely behind them, thought nothing of helping them.

Needless to say, Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front is an absorbing work!

*Dr. Diane Cypkin is a Professor of Media, Communication, and Visual Arts at Pace University.*
Proud of Anne’s thoughts and her writing, I read just a bit each day, as it was handing over the diary to him after the family was forced into hiding. On June 1942, just weeks before the war ended and whose father Erich and brother Heinz Geiringer were sent to Auschwitz, but later perished when the war (at Opekta, his trading company) — witnessed the story behind the diary Anne Frank went on living. From June 1942, just weeks before the family was forced into hiding. On handover to the diary to him after the war, Miep told Otto: “This is your daughter Anne’s legacy.” “It took Otto three weeks to read it, reading just a bit each day, as it was so painful,” says Schloss. “He was so proud of Anne’s thoughts and her writings that he showed it to everyone.” Many people wonder at the polished style and expression of Anne’s diary. While the Franks were in hiding, the Dutch education minister, who was in exile in London, appealed on British radio for people to keep war diaries. It was at this point that Anne started to rewrite the diary with the intention of publishing it after the war.

It was Jewish historian Annie Romein, notes Schloss, who told Otto that it was his duty to publish it. But finding a publisher was not easy — until a 1946 article by Romein’s husband, Jan, helped put the diary in the spotlight. In his front-page piece in Dutch newspaper Het Parool, he wrote: “To me, however, this apparently inconsequential diary by a child... stammered out in a child’s voice, embodies all the hideousness of fascism, more so than all the evidence at Nuremberg [trials] put together.”


In his own diary entry for June 25, 1947, Otto marked one word: “book.” How proud Anne would have been if she had experienced it,” he later said. But, recounts Schloss, the first edition wasn’t particularly successful because people weren’t in the mood to read more terrible things after all the suffering that had been endured in the war. Moreover, no one thought what a little girl writes about day to day would interest anyone.”

Undeterred, Otto got in touch with various foreign publishers, who had it translated. Then he tried America, but by one of the bodies seen in the mass grave at Bergen-Belsen, for in August 1944, the knock came on that hidden door in Amsterdam. After the people had been taken away, Dutch friends found Anne’s diary in the debris, and saved it. “There is anguish in the thought of how much creative power, how much sheer beauty of living, was cut off through genocide. But through her diary Anne goes on living. From the German Holocaust, to Italy, Spain, the Germans too have published her book. And now she comes to America. Surely she will be widely loved, for this wise and wonderful young girl brings back a poigniant delight in the infinite human spirit.”

The review made the diary an overnight bestseller, which “thrilled and amazed” Otto. Otto gave Levin the opportunity to adapt the diary into a play, but he was unsuccessful in finding a producer to take on his work. In the end Otto and Levin were embroiled in a bitter dispute, over which Levin took Otto to court, Levin later wrote a book called The Obsession, where he described his feelings of being cheated out of his rightful due. Instead, the playwright couple Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett obtained the rights to the play, and it premiered on Broadway in 1955. The play was a hit, and led to the first Anne Frank film, starring Millie Perkins, in 1959.

Otto married Fritzi in 1953 and they moved to Basel, Switzerland. In 1963 he set up a charitable trust; the royalities from the diary, the play and any other related source was, said Otto, “Anne’s money.” The proceeds have been distributed to many charities. Otto bequeathed the unedited version of the diary to the Dutch government. After his death in 1980 the government decided to publish the diary in its entirety. It became available to all publishers. To date the diary has been translated into over 60 languages, with more than 30 million copies sold.

Schloss retains special memories of her stepfather, and the “grandfather” Otto became to the author. His sensitivity — not wanting to marry Fritzi until Eva was married, and coupled with his warmth and kindness, — was an important source of consolation and reassurance after the trauma of the war years.

Even when it was decided that Eva should become a photographer, after her schooling years, it was Otto who gave her her Leica camera. “I think Otto was an exceptional, wonderful, thoughtful and intelligent man. He was really an amazing person,” reminisces Schloss.

“He was a wonderful grandfa ther to our two children. He often talked to them about Anne.” She believes the maturity of Anne’s writing comes down to the education she received from her mother. “Otto read all of Dickens’s books with her and he probably discussed many things with her, from which she formed her own judgment. It shows you how important it is not to leave all education to the teacher. A parent is very important in the education of the children.”

Similarly, the message of education is one Schloss also shares with her audiences today as she travels the world telling her own story of survival in Auschwitz, as recounted in her three published books, Eva’s Story, After Auschwitz and The Promise.

Otto never expected his daughter’s diary to play such an important part in postwar education. It has become one of the great literary documents of the war, to be ranked alongside masterpieces like Primo Levi’s If This Is a Man. The diary ended up dominating Otto’s life. “He was completely consumed, not necessarily by her, but by her thoughts and the message he could convey,” says Schloss. He ended up dominating the US, Israel and Germany, dedicating libraries and schools in the name of his daughter. “He spoke to young people about Anne and her message,” concludes Schloss, “together with his own message, which was about peace and tolerance.”
American Jewish Historical Society Archive

Survivor Av Perlmutter: “Angel” Watched over Him

(Continued from page 4)

find a hiding place for him. “I was very Orthodox Jewish and I strongly believed that an angel of God was guarding me,” Av said.

Waterman told Av to meet him at the train station. After a series of stops and train changes, Av exited at what he believed was Zutphen, a city in the east-central Netherlands, where Waterman led him to the house of an elderly couple.

After dinner, as German soldiers approached, Av hid in a bedroom closet. As one of the soldiers approached, Av began hiccuping out of fear and nearly choked, smothering the noise. The German opened the closet door and slammed it, cursing.

The couple then hid him in a backyard coal bin. But after the Germans left, they were treated like a Jew, “because if they were caught hiding a Jew, they were treated like a Jew,” Av said. “I'm Jewish. Can you hide me?” he asked the young German who opened it. The man, who later turned out to be a Nazi, Henricus Vullinghs, met him at the train station and transported him along the railroad line, feeling for mines. Suddenly someone shouted, “Halt,” as Nazi soldiers jumped out from the railroad tracks.

That night as Av joined the Beijers family dinner on a nearby door. “I'm Jewish. Can you hide me?” he asked the young man who opened it. The man, who had a wife and small child, concealed him behind some boxes in the basement.

“Those Christians who were hiding Jews were extremely courageous, because if they were caught hiding a Jew, they were treated like a Jew,” Av said.

The next morning, Waterman found Av and arranged for Dutch Christians in several cities to hide him. Despite the late hour, Av knocked on a nearby door. “I'm Jewish. Can you hide me?” he asked the young man who opened it. The man, who had a wife and small child, concealed him behind some boxes in the basement.

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A photograph on the wall.

Kreutzmueller said, noticing the tiny, black-and-white pictures that were there — but by those that weren’t. “They’re all torn out,” he said, pointing to a page consisting only of tear marks whose residue reveals the size of a tank and soldiers posing on a Mercedes. The “war” page?

The album, however, opens with a picture of paradise: a German couple with their nude toddlers picnicking in a lush forest. As for the rest, most photos have been rearranged, out of order.

“There’s the innocent reading that [the album owner] hated the war and didn’t want to think of it anymore,” Kreutzmueller said of the reason for the torn pictures. “The biased, ‘mean’ reading is that perhaps they showed murder. I think that he really didn’t want to think of war anymore because the remnants that you see are not of fighting.”

In another album from the same vendor (collected from an apartment liquidated upon the resident’s passing), photos are neatly organized and labeled. They, too, open with “paradise” — a Nazi government-sponsored outlay amid beautiful land- scapes in May 1938. In October that same year, the month in which Germany began to deport its Polish Jews, the matriarch and patriarch celebrated their silver wedding anniversary. A few pages later, in 1940, the living room is newly adorned with a Goebbels snout.

“They supported the camera factually.” — Sandra Starke, who co-curated the 2009 traveling exhibition on Wehrmacht photo albums, “Focus on Strangers,” the album owner (collected from an apartment liquidated upon the resident’s passing), said Starke at her home in Berlin. She opened such how-to books, whose guidelines included: avoid levity while wearing a Nazi uniform; capture various angles of the perfect “Aryan” profile; do not include portraits with “racially inferior” friends.

During wartime, the men usually took the cameras to the battlefields. How family photos from the Nazi era are being maintained and kept today can give insight into how second-to fourth-generation Nazi-era Germans come to grips — or not — with possible family involvement in Hitler’s murderous, tyrannical regime. These two flea market albums represent two approaches to the past: torn and “untouched.”

March of Life was founded by Pastor Jobst Bittner of TOS Ministries, which in American terms is a Christian Evangelical ministry, based in Tübingen in southern Germany — a city that once boasted a high concentration of avowed Nazi party members. Several years ago, Bittner encouraged his congregants to inquire into their families’ history during the Nazi era. With the Holocaust generation dying out, most families must rely on family albums for clues if they did not receive first-hand accounts.

Until he headed his pastor’s call, Friedelhelm Chmell, 40, felt indiffer- ence on obligatory visits to concentra- tion camps.

“It never really touched my heart, so I never felt anything.” Chmell, a hospi- tal nurse, said via Skype from his home in Tübingen. “I felt a little bit sorry, but it was nothing personal.”

As a young adult, Klaus Schock, 47, a March of Life member from a small village near Tübingen, never wanted to “touch” his family’s role in the war years.

“In Germany, normally in school, you go into detail about Nazi times and the Nazi regime, and about the Third Reich,” Schock said. “For me, it was like something that had nothing to do with my life. I was wondering why do we learn about this. It was a terrible time, so what? I wasn’t really interested.”

According to the oral history of Chmell’s family, his maternal grandfa- ther worked at an army desk job, literally. Two pictures of him in uniform were assembled as part of a family album arranged by his uncle: one of him holding a letter at a desk and another of him posing on the balcony at his Antwerp office.

“I always saw this picture with this office and everything seemed so peaceful,” Chmell said. “We don’t want to see behind all these nice sto- ries and pictures they gave us. My whole family didn’t ask further, ‘What did he really do?’”

With the support of his wife, but not his siblings, Chmell became a sleuth. His investigation led him to Antwerp, Belgium, where, through Google Street View, he scoured balconies from the vantage point of the sky- scraper in the photo. He eventually found the building where his grandfa- ther posed and soon learned what it had housed.

“During World War II, it was the main headquarters of the Deutsche Wehrmacht in Antwerp, and then I searched for what the Deutsche Wehrmacht exactly was.”

His grandfather’s department was responsible for summoning Antwerp’s 20,000 Jews for deportation.

“When I found out this fact, it broke my heart,” Chmell said, tear-eyed.

“For the first time, I could see the truth about my family. I always thought there was nothing bad in my family, and maybe my family never killed a Jew, but he was one of the main people responsible in this office and he’s responsible for 20,000 Jews. They went straight to Auschwitz.”

Klaus Schock, a physicist, decided, on Bittner’s call, to open the lids of boxes with albums, letters and even army medals that had been shelved in his apartment’s attic.

At first, when he asked his parents about his paternal grandfather’s serv- ice under the Nazi regime, they said, defensively, that he had been a Nazi stormtrooper (the paramilitary wing of the Nazi party) for a brief period.

Documents and pictures revealed the facts: his grandfather enlisted in the stormtroopers in 1932 and then renounced his Nazi party member- ship to become a professional soldier for the next 12 years.

His grandfather’s album from France could be mistaken for that of a vacation: he took photographs of the Eiffel Tower and other French land- marks that suddenly became the Nazis’ playground. But the facts of annihi- lation and aggression was on full, organized display in the “Russia album.”

Via Skype, Schock opened the album and showed neat, labeled titles of images of dead Russian soldiers — some in a ditch, some being hanged. “I realized he must have seen a lot of things. Normally I’m a scientist and I’m more rational, but it shocked me.”

The great-grandparents of Chmell and Schock are no longer living, but Schock recalls his encounters with his grandfather as a young boy.

“As a young boy, I’ve always known he just lived in the house nearby together with my grandma, and so when I had to decide to go to the military or to civilian work (Continued on page 10)
PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM

Seated: Samantha Santiago, Doug Book, Sharon & Neil Book. Standing: Dorit Novak, director general, Yad Vashem; Ron Meier, executive director, American Society for Yad Vashem; Leonard Wilf, chairman, American Society for Yad Vashem; Robert H. Book & Amy A. Book, 2017 Tribute Dinner honorees; and Scott Book.


Cheryl Lifshitz, Marilyn & Barry Rubenstein, and Rita Levy.

Haim Saban.
Leonard Wilf, chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem, delivers his opening remarks, in which he pays tribute to the founding chairman Eli Zborowski, z”l.

Rose & Philip Friedman, Pinkas Lebovits, Dr. Herbert Dobrinsky, Judith Lebovits and Alexandra Lebovits.

Leonard Wilf, Marvin Zborowski, Mark & Judy Zborowski.

Sheldon and Dr. Miriam Adelson.


Aaron Halpern; Gary Koesten; Marcy Comerchero; Wendy Rosenblatt; Gladys Halpern; Neil Rosenblatt; Abhi Halpern; 2017 Tribute Dinner honoree; Jeremy Halpern; Brianna Halpern; Jasmin Halpern; Mindy & Alan Schall.
THE NETHERLANDS IS STILL HOARDING A COLLECTION OF ART LOOTED FROM JEWS BY NAZIS

BY AVRAHAM ROET, HAARETZ

E arlier this year, the city of Deventer, Netherlands, played host to an exhibition of works of art looted from Jews during the Holocaust. The show, held in the Bergkerk Cathedral in this town east of Amsterdam, featured 75 pieces, and was the initiative of two local art historians, Eva Kleeman and Daaf Loedeboer. The married couple were assisted in their efforts by Professor Rustine Schock of the Dutch National Holocaust History Institute, who for the past 20 years has headed the Origins Unknown Agency, which deals with looted art in Netherlands.

Much of the art confiscated from Jews during the German occupation can still be found in warehouses belonging to the Dutch state, or in museums around the country. Because the Dutch authorities have been remiss in preserving archives and documentation, however, it’s not possible to make an accurate appraisal of the value of the plundered art, although unofficial estimates place it at between 150 million and 600 million Dutch guilders in 1940 terms, or between 3 billion and 12 billion euros.

Though the war ended more than seven decades ago, the scale of the thefts from Jews by both the Germans and the Dutch people themselves — not only during World War II but afterward as well — is still coming to light. Following the German conquest of the Netherlands, on May 10, 1940, Adolf Hitler and his deputy Hermann Goering began taking an intense personal interest in the acquisition of art, Goering began stealing obsessively for his own private collection, often competing with Hitler for the same items. In Netherlands, they found fertile ground for their efforts, as the country was home to a large number of art dealers, especially in Amsterdam. Many were Jews, some of whom had only recently settled in the Netherlands, in the wake of anti-Semitic persecution in Germany, Austria and Poland. They believed they would be safe from the Nazis in the free, democratic and neutral Netherlands. In the 1930s, in the midst of the global depression, art prices were relatively low. Dealers with the requisite capital could buy works cheaply and amass large collections.

Netherlands’ conquest by the German army over the course of just four days came as a stunning blow to the Dutch people in general and to the local Jewish community in particular. Most of the borders were closed, and attempts to flee, though widespread, were rarely successful. The Germans were successful in imposing their rule in large measure thanks to the collaboration and betrayal of their country by members of the local Nazi Party, who already then constituted about 10 percent of the population, one of the highest proportions in Europe.

The country’s art dealers soon discovered that the Germans were very interested in works by Old Masters and the like — and prices began to climb accordingly. Many of the merchants and Company, it became the major vehicle for wholesale but nominally legal theft from the Dutch Jews. It was Liro Bank that handled the sale of looted Jewish property of all kinds, using the revenues to cover the expenses entailed in deporting the Jews from Netherlands. The victims were forced to pay the authorities for moving them from their homes to ghettos, and later for transporting them to concentration and death camps in Netherlands and beyond. The Dutch railroad was punctilious about exacting payment for each passenger, and the railroad carried on its cattle cars toward their death.

Another example of Dutch collaboration comes from the sale of Van Beuningen’s Hooppoel Album to the Nazis in Rotterdam’s Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum. Even before the war, Daniel George van Beuningen (1885–1955), whose family dominated the business of transporting coal and other goods to Germany, was thought to be the richest person in this port city. A compulsive art collector, he ended up donating part of his collection to the Boijmans Museum, as it was then known, on the condition that the institution add his name to its own.

Only in recent years, however, has the scale of Van Beuningen’s cooperation with the occupiers become known. During the war, he traded in classical artworks plundered from Jews and sold them to Hitler, Goering and others. Ronny Naffaniel, a longtime head of the Centrum Informatie en Dokumentatie Israël — the local organization fighting anti-Semitism — and a former spokesman of the Dutch Jewish community, last month saw the removal of Van Beuningen’s name from the

GERMANS USE ALBUMS TO CLOSE THE PAGES OF NAZISM

(Continued from page 7)

service, he always wanted me to go to the military, and he was a passionate soldier,” Schock said. “He never talked about, say, Nazi philosophy or ideology; but looking back, I would say he must be wrong with me but I couldn’t figure out why I was so afraid to be a Jew. It’s just that my father. When I came back from Israel, I could have done the same things. That was shocking for me. But this opened the way that I could repent.”

He and his wife of seven years never wanted children — until he visited his family. It was such a special moment.”

Schock believes he became a “soft-er,” more empathic person. “Looking into my family’s past, it also revealed prejudice, racism and anti-Semitism inside of me. I realized that I am not better than my grandfather; I could have done the same things. That was shocking for me. But this opened the way that I could repent.”

As their WhatsApp profile pictures, Chmell and Schock each proudly display family portraits — their own family albums won’t be sold to the highest bidder at a flea market. Chmell loves taking family pictures.

“To show how I love my family, to show to all our family that my wife’s — have been changed totally, to remember all our family past but also to say our kids belong to the new generation.”

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"unouched" family album, photographs become sparse after 1942 and virtually nonexistent from 1943, the year in which Hitler’s downfall begins with his defeat at Stalingrad. The idyll disintegrates. A downed plane appears in September 1942. Women pose in front of an air raid shelter. Men are back home, holding canes, presumably injured. Finally, the end: a small boy standing in ruins, leaving no progeny, as it were, to safeguard the album and family legacy.

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"To show how I love my family, to show to all our family that my wife’s — have been changed totally, to remember all our family past but also to say our kids belong to the new generation."
By Dr. Rafael Medoff, United with Israel

FDR pledged "the abrogation of all laws and decrees inspired by Nazi governments or Nazi ideologists." But his public rhetoric apparently didn't express his private feelings. Among the more remarkable documents of the Holocaust is a scroll, created in North Africa in 1943, called "Megillat Hitler." Written in the style of Megillat Esther and the Purim story, it celebrates the Allies' liberation of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, which saved the local Jewish communities from the Nazis. What the scroll's author did not realize, however, was that at the very moment he was setting quill to parchment, those same American authorities were actually trying to keep in place the anti-Jewish legislation imposed in North Africa by the Nazis.

On November 8, 1942, American and British forces invaded Nazi-occupied Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. It took the Allies just eight days to defeat the Germans and their Vichy French partners in the region.

For the 330,000 Jews of North Africa, the Allied conquest was heaven-sent. The Vichy regime that had ruled since the summer of 1940 had stripped the region's Jews of their civil rights, severely restricted their entrance to schools and some professions, confiscated Jewish property, and tolerated sporadic pogroms against Jews by local Muslims. In addition, thousands of Jewish men were hauled away to forced labor camps. President Franklin Roosevelt, in his victory announcement, pledged "the abrogation of all laws and decrees inspired by Nazi governments or Nazi ideologists." But there turned out to be a discrepancy between public rhetoric and his private feelings.

On January 17, 1943, Roosevelt met in Casablanca with Major-General Charles Nogues, a leader of the new "non-Vichy" regime. When the conversation turned to the question of rights for North African Jewry, Roosevelt did not mince words: "The number of Jews engaged in the practice of the professions (law, medicine, etc.) should be definitely limited to the percentage that the Jewish population in North Africa bears to the whole of the North African population.... The President stated that his plan would further eliminate the specific and understandable complaints which the Germans bore toward the Jews in Germany, namely, that while they represented a small part of the population, over fifty percent of the lawyers, doctors, school teachers, college professors, etc., in Germany, were Jews." (It is not clear how FDR came up with that wildly exaggerated statistic.)

Various Jewish communities around the world have established local Purim-style celebrations to mark their deliverance from catastrophe. The Jews of Frankfurt, for example, would hold a "Purim Vintz" one week after Purim, in remembrance of the downfall of an anti-Semitic agitator in 1620. Libyan Jews traditionally organized a "Purim Ashrat" and a "Purim Bergetz" to recall the rescue of Jews in those towns, in 1705 and 1795, respectively.

The Jewish community of Casablanca, for its part, declared the day of the 1942 Allied liberation "Purim Purim," and a local scribe, P. Hassine, created the "Megillat Hitler." (The original is on display at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.) The seven chapters of the scroll poignantly blend the flavor of the tale of ancient Persia with the amazing stroke of fortune that the Jews of Casablanca had themselves just experienced. It uses phrases straight from Megillat Esther, such as "the month which was turned from sorrow to rejoicing" and "the Jew shall be glad, and gladness, joy and honor," side by side with modern references such as "Cursed be Hitler, cursed be Mussolini."

The Jews of North Africa had much to celebrate. But after the festivities died down, questions began to arise. The Allies permitted nearly all the original senior officials of the Vichy regime in North Africa to remain in the new government. The Vichy "Office of Jewish Affairs" continued to operate, as did the forced labor camps in which thousands of Jewish men were being held.

American Jewish leaders were loath to publicly take issue with the Roosevelt administration, but by the spring of 1943, they began speaking out. The American Jewish Congress and World Jewish Congress charged that "the anti-Jewish legacy of the Nazis remains intact in North Africa" and urged FDR to eliminate the Vishy laws. "The spirit of the Swastika hovers over the Stars and Stripes," Benzion Netanyahu, director of the U.S. wing of the Revisionist Zionists (and father of Israel's current prime minister) charged. A group of Jewish GIs in Algiers protested directly to U.S. Ambassador Murphy. Editorials in a number of American newspapers echoed this criticism.

At first, Roosevelt administration officials dug in their heels. Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles insisted that technically, the region was no longer under Allied military occupation and the U.S. could not dictate how the local government ran things.

"The undersecretary of state was perhaps right from a strictly formal point of view," Dr. Rafael Medoff noted in his study of North African Jewry during the Holocaust. "But he was strangely underestimating the immense influence wielded by the United States over North African internal politics."

Eventually, under the accumulated weight of public protests, the Roosevelt administration made it clear to the local authorities that the anti-Jewish measures needed to be repealed.

The implementation process, however, was painfully slow. In April 1943, the forced labor camps in North Africa were officially shut down, although some of them continued operating well into the summer. The Jewish quotas in schools and professions were gradually phased out. In May, the racial laws in Tunisia were abolished. Two hundred Italian Jews who had been taken by the Allies to a Tunisian forced labor camp, because they were citizens of an Axis country, were released after several months.

And on October 20, 1943, nearly a year after the Allied liberation, full rights and citizenship of the Jews of North Africa were officially reinstated. The victory that "Megillat Hitler" celebrated was finally complete.

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A SECRET JAPANESE HISTORY

By Monica Porter, The Jewish Chronicle

On my recent trip I discovered something remarkable, curious about the background to Japan's tiny Jewish community, so I did a little digging and learned about an astonishing episode of history.

We all know how cruel Japanese soldiers were to POWs during the World War II, and how appallingly they treated the Chinese.

But less well known is the fact that — despite its alliance with Nazi Germany — Japan offered Jews a refuge from the Holocaust. Many thousands were rescued by a Japanese government that had long, consistently resisted Nazi demands to implement anti-Jewish policies, much less to deport Jews to the concentration camps.

By the late 1930s a number of anti-Semitic German books had been translated into Japanese, but they found few readers and had no significant influence on the population. And in 1938 Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe and his military council prohibited the expulsion of Japan's Jewish settlers — merchants and traders who had come mainly from Russia, Germany and Eastern Europe, and settled in the port city of Kobe, where they established both Ashkenazi and Sephardic synagogues.

At the outbreak of war, Jews attempting to flee eastwards from Nazi-occupied Poland and finding themselves blocked by the Soviet Union, were offered an unexpected escape route via then-neutral Lithuania.

The Japanese consul to Lithuania, Chiune Sugihara, saved some 6,000 Jews by giving them entry visas to Japan, enabling their passage via the trans-Siberian railway to Vladivostok, and from there by boat to Kobe. The Japanese government required that visas be issued only to those who had gone through official immigration procedures, and had sufficient funds.

Most of the refugees didn't fulfill the criteria, but Sugihara knew they were in danger if they stayed behind, so he ignored his orders and granted the life-saving visas anyway.

Once in Japan they were given shelter, food and medicines. Many then received asylum visas for Canada, Australia and elsewhere, as well as immigration permits for Palestine.

In November 1941 the Japanese government decided to consolidate the Jewish refugees remaining under its control by transferring them to the Jewish ghetto in Shanghai, which was under Japanese occupation. Among those protected in the Shanghai ghetto were the family of Ben Zion Netanyahu, director of the Ben Zion Netanyahu Institute in Casablanca, which was under French control.

As the war neared its end, Germany pressed the Japanese government to liquidate the 50,000-strong Shanghai ghetto, but it refused to do so. The safe haven survived intact and after the war the majority of Jews who had been in Japanese-controlled territories dispersed to various Western countries.

(Continued on page 14)
YAD VASHEM HONORS CHILEAN RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

BY DR. YVETTE ALT MILLER, AISH.COM

The very idea that Britain, which fought against Nazi Germany and its allies throughout World War II, was home to Nazi camps might seem inconceivable. Yet thousands of Jews and others were imprisoned and murdered in a complex of four Nazi camps on a picturesque spot of countryside in Britain’s Channel Islands, which were occupied by Germany during the war.

Visitors to the tiny island of Alderney, a British Crown dependency, might notice three concrete pillars just south of the island’s airport. They are all that remains of Lager Sylt, one of four concentration camps on the island, and the only whose buildings remain at all. Many of the tourists who visit the island are unaware of what took place there.

In 1940, with war raging, Britain’s Prime Minister Winston Churchill faced an agonizing decision: maintain a military presence in the tiny Channel Islands, which had been British dependencies for centuries, or redirect Britain’s forces elsewhere? Churchill reluctantly pulled troops out of the country’s three Channel Islands — Alderney, Jersey and Guernsey — and in June of 1940, Hitler’s forces bombarded the islands and then occupied them for the remainder of the war.

Though the islands had little strategic value, they carried enormous symbolic value for Hitler, who relished occupying British land. They were heavily defended, and orders came in to build a complex of labor and concentration camps on Alderney, the smallest and northernmost of the islands, just 60 miles from England’s southern coast.

A watever tunnel and the remains of the rail track in the Alderney site.

Slave laborers, mainly from Eastern Europe and Russia, were brought in to build the camps. One of the camps staffed by the feared SS was Lager Sylt. It was built to house and work to death Jewish prisoners, both from the Channel Island’s tiny Jewish community and from elsewhere in Nazi-occupied Europe.

For years it was thought that these slave laborers toiled building the island’s defenses. Recent government documents that have been unsealed show an even more sinister plan: the Nazis built extensive underground tunnels on Alderney in which to manufacture launchers for V1 missiles carrying unconventional weapons. The plan was to shoot missiles armed with the nerve gas Sarin at mainland Britain.

Conditions at Lager Sylt were brutal. In 1944, a group of heavily guarded prisoners was brought to the nearby island of Guernsey. Their arrival was recorded by a local priest, Reverend Douglas Ord: “Coming down from the harbor was a column of men in rows of five. All were in striped pajama suits and their footgear varied from wooden sabotes…to pieces of cloth bound round the feet. Others were barefoot. There were more than 1,000 of them…They were shaven-headed and in varying degrees of weariness or lameness…. It tore the heart to see the effects of this systematic and deliberate degradation of human beings.”

Recently declassified British intelligence documents paint a chilling picture of the brutal conditions on Lager Sylt: “Too undernourished and exhausted to work efficiently, these men were mercilessly beaten by the German guards, and frequently, when they were too weak after a beating to stand up, they were clubbed to death or finished off with a knife.” Some prisoners were crucified on the camp gates. Some were publicly tortured to death, and rocky seashore on the island was known by locals as the “Valley of Death” because slave workers who were too ill or exhausted to work any longer were thrown to their deaths onto the rocks and the sea below. British intelligence estimated that half of the slave laborers at Lager Sylt died of maltreatment.

For years, it was thought that about 400 prisoners died in the Nazi camps on Alderney, but recent research by retired British Colonel Richard Kemp and John Weigold has revealed that figure to closer to 40,000. Many of the final resting places of the prisoners are known.

That has led to remains of those who died on Alderney being desecrated within the past year. British and French energy companies have been building links between the two nations in order to connect with a planned new power plant that is scheduled to be built in Alderney. Britain’s Sunday Times recently published a leaked archaeological report revealing that construction has already “severely damaged” the island’s main burial ground for prisoners from the camps, and that “greater damage” is expected as the planned energy link progresses.

Israel’s Holocaust center Yad Vashem has posthumously honored a Chilean diplomat who risked his career to help rescue over a thousand Polish Jews during the Holocaust.

Professor Sergio Della Pergola, member of the Commission for the Designation of the Righteous, and Irena Steinfeldt, Director of the Department of the Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem, presented Dr. Christian Beals Campos, a relative of Samuel del Campo, with the medal and certificate of honor on behalf of Yad Vashem, the State of Israel and the Jewish people.

Del Campo was a diplomat in the Foreign Service of the Republic of Chile who served as charge d'affaires at the Chilean representation in Bucharest from 1941 to 1943. During this time he assisted Jews by issuing various documents — mainly to Polish Jews in Czernowitz, which is now part of Ukraine.

During October 1941, a ghetto was established in the city of Czernowitz, and deportations to Transnistria began. In the absence of an official Polish representation in Romania, the representation of the interests of Polish citizens in Romania was transferred to Chile, and del Campo began to issue Chilean passports for Jews of Polish nationality.

After the deportations from Czernowitz to Transnistria resumed in June 1942, del Campo continued to intervene with the Romanian authorities on behalf of “the Jews under the protection of Chile,” Yad Vashem said. Based on recorded minutes from discussions in the Council of Ministers of Romania, Yad Vashem estimated that approximately 1,200 Jews received Chilean passports providing them with protection against deportation.

In the spring of 1943, diplomatic relations between Chile and Romania were severed, and Switzerland began to represent the interests of Chile. The documents del Campo issued were clearly not in line with the Chilean government’s policy; when Swiss envoys asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile to clarify the policy of the Ministry regarding the granting of Chilean passports, they were told that “they would prefer not to grant new passports without the approval of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile.”

Del Campo was appointed Consul for Poland on November 23, 2016, the Commission for the Designation of the Righteous Among the Nations decided to recognize Samuel del Campo as Righteous Among the Nations.
A COLLECTION OF ART LOOTED FROM JEWS BY NAZIS

(Continued from page 10)

firm was taken over by a German banker, who went on buying plundered artworks, which were in turn sold to Goering.

Only a small number of Jewish art dealers succeeded in selling their businesses to non-Jewish trustees, thereby averting the confiscation by the Germans. More often, Jewish dealers fled to England or the United States in the war, abandoning valuable artworks in Netherlands, or selling them to finance their escape. The assets left behind were seized by the Germans, on the grounds that they were enemy property. Most of them ended up in the hands of Hitler and Goering. There were also a large number of suicides among the Jewish population immediately after the German conquest, and the property of those who took their own lives, too, including classic works of art, was confiscated and shipped to Germany.

The majority of Netherlands's Jews were ultimately deported to Auschwitz and Sobibor, and the property that remained in their possession, which included many works of art, was stolen by Dutch collaborators and transported directly to Germany for sale.

The competition between Goering and Hitler had the effect of pushing up the prices for the staggering display of works of art of the Jewish population immediately after the German conquest, and the property of those who took their own lives, too, including classic works of art, was confiscated and shipped to Germany.

The Allies, aware of the art-looting phenomenon, decided, as early as 1942–1943, that all plundered property would be returned after the war to its country of origin, without compensation being made to the then-current owner. To facilitate this, the Americans established the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives program. In 1945, the Netherlands government set up the Netherlands Art Property Foundation (SNK) to address the phenomenon. Anyone who knew of artworks owned by his or her family that had been stolen could fill out an SNK form requesting their return. Tens of thousands of requests poured in, despite the fact that the majority of Netherlands's Jews (some 75 percent of a prewar population of 140,000 Jews) were murdered in the war, and of those who survived, at least a quarter were children, who were unlikely to know much about their parents' art collections.

A substantial number of SNK applicants indeed took their property back, but more often a majority of thousands of items in the hands of Dutch state authorities after their repatriation from Germany.

After SNK was dissolved, in 1957, responsibility for the art still in the possession of the Dutch state was transferred to its Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, which went to lengths to ensure that the looted works would remain in Dutch museums and their store-rooms. In the 1970s, the ministry decided to sell many works, with the proceeds going into state coffers.

For example, the entire collection of Jewish banker Fritz Mannheimer, who died on the eve of the war, was seized by the Germans. The collection was subsequently returned intact to the Dutch authorities, and government representatives sold off some of the works. Hundreds of items remain in the Rijksmuseum, the national museum, in Amsterdam.

Toward the end of the 1990s, following international public pressure, the Dutch, like the governments of many other countries involved in the war, started to deal with still-unresolved problems of property and life related to World War II. The Dutch established several different commissions of inquiry. One of them, the Origins Unknown Agency, found that many items that were supposed to have been returned to their owners were still in the state's possession. The government published information about some 5,000 of them, and attempts were made to locate the rightful owners.

The heirs of Jacques Goudstikker were among those who received some satisfaction. In 2006, members of his family received the first of some 350 works, although they say that leaves another 900 pieces that were plundered. Leading the struggle for the restoration of Goudstikker's property is his daughter-in-law, Marei von Saher, and her daughter, Charlene. Von Saher's father, a former member of the German national soccer squad, was also a member of his country's Nazi Party.

Though Marei von Saher never met her father-in-law (she was born only in 1944, and met her husband, Eduard von Saher, in the U.S. in the 1960s), and is related to the Goudstikkers only by marriage — she waged a relentless legal fight against Dutch authorities, and in 2006 won a court case in which 202 paintings were returned to her. Some of them were immediately sold, fetching a total of $35 million, which was then used to pay a battery of lawyers in the United States. The family, which has had little connection to the Jewish communities in Netherlands, the United States or Israel, continues to press for the return of artworks from museums and private individuals in Netherlands and elsewhere.

CLAIMANTS GIVE UP

During the war, the Dutch government-in-exile stated that it would not recognize as valid any sale, transfer or plunder of artworks that were moved from Netherlands to Germany, and that it considered all such transactions null and void. After the war, all the works of art that were tracked down — tens of thousands in number — were unilaterally repatriated to the Netherlands.

Thus, after the war, the Netherlands was able to enjoy revenues from the sale of art collections it had received at no cost, and also benefited from the addition of other prized works, which were divided among museums in the country or have remained in the possession of the Culture Ministry to this day.

The prewar owners and their heirs, most of whom were Jews, demanded the return of the art, even if they had received partial or full payment for it during the war. They argued that the collections had been sold under duress and that there was no justification for their being confiscated now by the state — and at no cost, no less. Many of the Dutch Jews who were hidden by non-Jewish families paid them large amounts of money for the privilege, an operation that was often financed by the sale to collaborators of artwork and other objects that they had secretly retained when German authorities seized their property.

But in many cases, following protracted, exhausting and unsuccessful bureaucratic proceedings, claimants gave up on recovering their property back from Dutch authorities. A case in point is that of Bernard Houthakker, an Amsterdam antiques dealer who survived the holocaust. He provided information to the Netherlands government about a valuable painting (Continued on page 14)
THE NETHERLANDS IS STILL HOARDING A COLLECTION OF ART LOOTED FROM JEWS...

(Continued from page 13)

That had been stolen from him and had been returned to the state, but ultimately, for unclear reasons, abandoned the quest.

A new story that remains unresolved is that of Charlotte von Pannwitz-Roth (1876–1959), a German-born Jew of Argentine descent, who during the war sold off six paintings, including one by Rembrandt, in return for an exit visa from Netherlands to Switzerland. The paintings were returned to the Netherlands, but after the war, Pannwitz-Roth waived their restitution, and today the works are in the possession of the state.

Generally speaking, in almost every case where Jews declined to return art to their back artworks their family had owned, it was because the Netherlands’ government demanded payment of the amount the Germans had paid its collaborators for the works—not even that the state had not had to pay for repatriation of the art. Still, there are also cases in which a victim filched the painting by the courts and by the public commission produced positive results. An example is the collection of Friedrich “Fritz” Gutmann (1886–1944). In 1942, Gutmann was forced to sell his artworks to German dealers. He and his wife, Louise Gutmann von Landau, both of them converted Jews, were murdered by the Nazis in Auschwitz. After the war, their entire collection was returned to the Dutch government. The Gutmann’s two sons were compelled to go to Dordrecht in order to return to her family.

During the war, Jacques Hedeman, a textile merchant, stored a painting he owned by the 17th-century artist Jacob Gerritsz, in the vault of an Amsterdam bank, before escaping to Switzerland. The bank turned the painting, “Shepherdess with Child in Landscape,” over to the Germans. In 2002, the Dordrecht Museum purchased the work from a private individual in Germany. A subsequent investigation established that the painting had been looted from Hedeman. Ultimately, after the case received extensive publicity, the museum and Hedeman’s heirs reached an “agreement” by which the painting would remain in the museum and the latter would pay an undisclosed amount to the heirs.

One question that remains unanswered is why Dutch Jewry has not intervened as a community in the matter of the return of artworks to their owners. Similarly, world Jewry — the World Jewish Congress or the Claims Conference — never tried to become involved. In Israel, the World Jewish Restitution Organization, founded by the Claims Conference agency and the government of Israel, is supposed to deal with looted Jewish property. However, none of these bodies has yet taken action in regard to the return of artworks.

Underlying the WJRO’s failure to act for the return of works of art is, apparently, the fact that some of the property plundered from Jews in Europe, including works by Old Masters, ended up in the United States and other Allied countries. It’s well known that American Jewish categorically ignores the issue of looted Jewish property that is in the United States. American Jewry’s avoidance of dealing with these issues is a subject that merits separate treatment.

For its part, the German government announced recently that it will step up its efforts to return looted art. The Netherlands’ rigid policy on the return of objects of art was modified somewhat at the beginning of the 2000s, but remains defunct. To this day, anyone who asks for his property back is compelled to go through endless bureaucratic procedures that make it difficult to obtain the items. Various heirs of major art dealers have chosen the legal route, and in some cases have been able to get part of their property back.

END-OF-YEAR TAX PLANNING FOR OLDER DONORS

BY ROBERT CHRISTOPHER MORTON, DIRECTOR OF PLANNED GIVING

If you are over the age of 70½, you can make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) of up to $100,000 annually from your individual IRA (traditional or Roth) to the American Society for Yad Vashem before the end of the calendar year. This type of gift is also commonly called the IRA Charitable Rollover.

DETAILS

A donor older than 70½ can individually distribute up to $100,000 each year from his or her IRA (through its administrator) to the American Society for Yad Vashem without having to recognize the distribution as income to the donor. This distribution can be used to satisfy the RMD (required minimum distribution) for the year the distribution has been made. Please note that the gift must be completed by December 31 (check cashed by ASYY) in order to qualify and no benefit may be received by the donor from the charity.

As the American Society for Yad Vashem is a public charity, it falls within the permitted charitable recipients of an IRA Charitable Rollover. The donor must notify the administrator of the IRA to make a direct distribution to the charitable beneficiary in order to qualify.

This giving opportunity was made permanent by the passing of the PATH (Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes) Act in December of 2015 by Congress. Remember, it is always wise to check with your accountant or tax advisor as part of your review process.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Telephone: 212-220-4304, extension 213
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A SECRET JAPANESE HISTORY

(Continued from page 11)

or else emigrated to Palestine. Others stayed in Japan, with some marrying native Japanese and assimilating into mainstream society. So why did the Japanese, capable of such ruthlessness towards other groups, display a soft spot for its Jewish inhabitants?

It seems that many within the Japanese leadership harbored a longstanding respect for Jews, in particular for Jewish financial and commercial acumen. This originated with the historic treaty in 1854 between Japan and the United States, which opened trade links with the previously isolated Far East country and heralded the arrival of Jewish merchants.

The first, in 1861, was 21-year-old American-born Alexander Marks, who set up businesses in Yokohama and went on to make a hefty fortune. Another arrival was a German-born Jew of Argentine businesswoman Raphael Schover, who set up the country’s first foreign language newspaper, the Japan Express. But perhaps their highest esteem was reserved for New York banker Jacob Schiff, scion of an illustrious rabbinical family from Germany.

During the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905, he extended a $200 million loan to the Empire of Japan — which provided half the funds needed for Japan’s war effort. Why? Apart from sympathizing with Japan’s underdog status, Schiff regarded the loan as payback, on behalf of the Jewish people, for Russia’s bloody pogroms. A well-financed Japan won the war.

And so decades later, the Axis pact notwithstanding, the Japanese could not help but treat a Jewish race as an enemy to be destroyed. Japan was quick to recognize the formation of the State of Israel and establish diplomatic ties. Interest in Jewish culture and religion gradually grew in Japan, even within the Imperial family. The first synagogue in Tokyo was opened in 1953 with a formal celebra- tion attended by Prince and Princess Mikasa. The city’s present Beth David synagogue and community center stands on the same site, in a sleek modern building dating from 2009.

There are about 1,000 Jews living in Japan today, the majority being expats from around the world.

Tokyo has the larger of two communities; there is a smaller, Sephardic one, in Kobe. And in Yokosuka, in central Japan, you can find the Chiuene Sogoku Memorial Hall, dedicated to the consul who defied his superiors (an extraordinary act of insubordination in rigidly hierarchical Japanese culture), and helped hundreds of Jews about whom he knew little, except that they needed his help. In 1985, the year before his death, Yad Vashem named him a Righteous Among the Nations. The only Japanese national to receive the honor.

JAPANESE HISTORY

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THE UNHEARD STORY: BULGARIA’S RESCUE OF 50,000 JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST

BY KATRIN GENDOVA, THE ALGEMEINER

You have probably heard of Schindler’s List — Steven Spielberg’s movie, which brought to life the story of a German member of the Nazi party who saved the lives of more than 1,000 Jews during the Holocaust, by employing them in his factories in occupied Poland.

You may have also heard of the heroic rescue of the Danish Jews: With the help of the Danish government, people and resistance movement, we couldn’t go any more and then that country escaped the Nazis, and found salvation in Sweden.

What’s lesser known is the story of the 50,000 Jews who were saved by Bulgaria.

In his book, Beyond Hitler’s Grasp, Michael Brenig points out that “For years, Bulgaria’s Communist regime had tried to suppress the real story about [this] rescue for a very simple reason. The Bulgarian rescue had been carried out mostly by Communism’s three worst enemies: the Church, the royal court, and the pro-Fascist politicians. The Communist regime couldn’t admit that fact because it contradicted its basic beliefs.”

What’s even more astonishing is that these 50,000 Jews were saved while Bulgaria was actually an ally of Hitler. Bulgaria gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1878. Yet the newly independent state did not receive all of the territories that it desired, leaving ethnic Bulgarians outside of its newly formed borders. In order to gain its territories back, the country allied with Germany, because Hitler promised to help Bulgaria. But that alignment came at a certain price.

Bulgaria was then preceded by a series of dark events — especially the loss of 11,000 Jews in Thrace and Macedonia, who were sent to the Nazis, despite the fact that those territories were under Bulgarian administration. This happened because Germany did not acknowledge the annexation of Thrace and Macedonia to Bulgaria. Therefore, none of the Jews living in those areas received Bulgarian citizenship or nationality, making it impossible for the Bulgarian authorities to interfere.

The deportation of the Jews from Thrace and Macedonia alarmed Bulgaria so much that it was about to follow in its country. In March of 1943, trains arrived in Bulgaria to transport all of the Jews straight to a death camp in Treblinka. Arrests began early in the morning, as policemen gathered Jews to await their deportation. However, not a single Jew left the country.

The local Metropolitan Kiril, ordinary Bulgarian citizens and members of the parliament mobilized against the deportation, and succeeded in preventing it.

The head of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church played a major role in the rescue, having arrived on the day of the deportation at the railroads where the trains were supposed to depart. Bishop Metropolitan Kiril sent a letter to the king of Bulgaria, pleading for the Jews to be saved. The church also opened its doors and provided shelter for the Bulgarian Jews.

Owing to the pressure of the public outcry and the persistence of the bishop, the king canceled the deportation, leaving the trains for Treblinka entirely empty.

Yet that did not stop Hitler from continuing to demand the deportation of the Jews. Months later, he tried again, requesting that all of Bulgaria’s Jewish population be sent to Poland. In response, King Boris told the German leader that the country needed the Jews for labor; he then created labor camps where 20,000 men were sent to work — but remained in the country. The king’s skillful and quick response to Hitler’s demand prevented the second deportation of the Bulgarian Jews to the death camps.

The rescue of the Bulgarian Jews remained a long-secret until the end of the Communist regime in 1989. Fortunately, documents that recorded details of it were only hidden and locked up and not destroyed. Historians were then able to show the world the bravery of ordinary citizens and the decisive intervention of the Orthodox Church and the king of Bulgaria during the Holocaust.

In February of 2017, President Plevneliev was given the Friends of Zion Award in recognition of the 50,000 Jews rescued during the Holocaust — and acknowledging that Israel will not forget the lives saved by Bulgaria. With all of its dark and heroic moments, the story of a country that managed to protect its entire Jewish population while being an ally to Hitler is one that deserves to be recognized and remembered. Israel does — hopefully the rest of the world will, too.

REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

BY IVOR MARKMAN, HERALD LIVE

Irene Fainman was just six when her family were given 10 minutes to pack for a concentration camp where she would not see a tree or flowers again for nearly three years.

Taken to the notorious Nazi concentration camp at Ravensbrück on September 16, 1942, Fainman was rescued by the Swedish Red Cross on April 27, 1945.

Fainman was born in Schiedam, near Rotterdam, to a Hungarian father, Bela Krausz, and a British mother, Rachel cabin, in 1936.

Life changed after the Nazis invaded.

“I was at a little nursery school. One day we couldn’t go to the park, ” Fainman said.

She could not go skating on the grass.

“Some were very cruel, some were ordinary,” Fainman said.

When the camp was liberated, Fainman and her mother were taken to a hall, where everyone had to undress. Their clothes were taken and the women given blue-striped clothing and wooden clogs.

Their hair was checked, and if they had lice, they were shaved.

“I was too small for a uniform, so the clothes that I had when I left Holland I wore for a year and a half in Westerbork [and another year in Ravensbrück],” Fainman said.

Every Tuesday a train came with a large sign reading “Auschwitz.”

Nobody knew anything about Auschwitz, but 1,000 Jews had to be on that train. On February 3, 1943, Fainman’s father and brother, Don, were sent to Buchenwald concentration camp.

Two days later, she and her mother were sent to Ravensbrück.

Fainman was shocked when she entered the barracks.

There were three-tiered bunks with four people per bunk. “Everybody got the same dirty blanket and a straw mattress. I don’t remember if there was a pillow. I screamed and screamed,” Fainman said.

“The smell — I couldn’t breathe. Can you imagine unwashed bodies? People could only shower once in six months.”

The toilets was a long trough with taps, but the towels were the size of face cloths.

Irene Fainman.

“IT was freezing cold, so a lot of people didn’t wash. I saw people with [sunken] cheeks, big eyes, shaven heads,” Fainman said.

“I had blonde curls and they all wanted to touch my hair with their filthy hands.”

I was screaming. I couldn’t stop looking at them and screaming.”

That evening “they gave us this soup with beetroot and turnips — something called Stöck rube, it means [tupnic pieces] and it smelt ghastly. I refused to eat it.”

In the morning prisoners were given one slice of bread with a tiny amount of jam and margarine.

“The next morning when they gave that one piece of bread, I was jolly hungry and I ate it,” Fainman said.

“Everybody got up at 5 am for roll call. If the totals didn’t tally, prisoners stood for hours, sometimes in the cold snow, rain and hail.”

“People got frostbite or collapsed. The guards set dogs on them or came with whips.”

“The women guards were worse than the men. They had big leather boots, flannel skirts and big leather coats.”

“They weren’t cold, and of course they had gloves, and everyone was shivering, but you weren’t human, you weren’t a person, so it didn’t matter.”

The Blockälteste (barracks leaders) had immense power.

“They were very cruel, some were not. We had this Blockälteste who took our name off the [deportation] list.”

“I don’t think I ever saw a tree or a flower for a good few years. I was so excited when I saw one blade of grass.”

When the camp was liberated, Fainman and her mother were taken to Sweden. Her brother survived the war, and they were eventually reunited in England.
DESTINATION UNKNOWN REMINDS US THAT NO AMOUNT OF TIME CAN MASK A TRAGEDY

BY BRANDON KATZ, OBSERVER

Why do we tell stories? Is it to entertain; to capture the attention of the mind for just a moment amid the deluge of everyday life? Is it to teach; to pass down lessons from one generation to the next? Is it to remember; to ensure that our histories are never lost? Maybe each story has its own reasons for being told, and it is the audience’s responsibility to form their own conclusions. Perhaps that’s why I felt the answer was all of the above and more while watching the upcoming Holocaust documentary Destination Unknown, which was released November 10 and features intimate testimony from twelve survivors.

The film is a story of death and life, suffering and liberation, pain and strength. It is as complicated, emotional, heavy and taxing as you think it is. It is the tale of innocent men, women and children being torn from their homes and their lives and sent off into the treacherous darkness of deadly uncertainty — to destinations unknown. It is not easy or simple and it is not enjoyable. But it is important, it is not enjoyable. It is about the remarkable stories of those who survive the Holocaust were preserved for posterity,” producer Lilon Roberts said. “In the years since, I have met and interviewed a remarkable range of incredible people whose lives are an inspiration to us all. From the four hundred years of testimonies that I recorded, I wanted a film which captured the essence of their experience, made a contribution to the history of those times and perpetuated the memory of the Shoah.”

Destination Unknown does capture the essence of their experiences in powerful ways, but the movie isn’t just about the pain of what happened. It is also about the strength that is required to move forward. In that sense, one survivor captures the essence of their experience, made a contribution to the history of those times and perpetuated the memory of the Shoah.”

That is why we tell stories.

Empower, educate and strengthen our future by making an endowment gift to the American Society for Yad Vashem. Your legacy will help to support Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and keep the memory of the Holocaust and its victims, survivors and heroes alive forever.

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Our ASYV staff are here to help you accomplish your estate planning goals. For more information or assistance with your estate plan, please contact Chris Morton, Director of Planned Giving: cmorton@yadvashemusa.org or by phone at: 212-220-4304, extension 213.