

# MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



Vol. 44-No. 3

ISSN 0892-1571

January/February 2018-Shevat/Adar 5778

## SIX MILLION VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST REMEMBERED

**Warsaw** — Elderly Holocaust survivors, wearing striped scarves that recalled their uniforms as prisoners of Nazi Germany, made a yearly pilgrimage to Auschwitz on January 27, exactly 73 years after the Soviet army liberated the death camp in occupied Poland.

On the date now commemorated as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, political leaders and Jewish officials warned that the Nazi genocide must never cease serving as a reminder of the evil of which humans are capable.

In Warsaw, Poland, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson attended a solemn ceremony at a memorial to the Jews who died fighting the German forces in the Warsaw ghetto uprising of 1943.

The head of Warsaw's Jewish community read a prayer, and Tillerson made brief remarks about the importance of not forgetting the horrors of the Holocaust.

"On this occasion, it reminds us that we can never, we can never, be indifferent to the face of evil," Tillerson said.

"The Western alliance which emerged from World War II has committed itself to ensuring the security of all, that this would never happen again," he said. "As we mark this day in solemn remembrance, let us repeat the words of our own commitment: Never again. Never again."

**Jerusalem** — In honor of International Holocaust Remembrance Day nearly 8,000 people from 193 different countries joined

the Yad Vashem IRemember Wall this year. This annual social media campaign is a unique and meaningful opportunity for the public to participate in a unique commemorative activity to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day. By joining the IRemember Wall, the participant's Facebook profile is randomly linked to the name of a Holocaust

victim from the Holocaust" is an online exhibition staged by the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem.

The center holds thousands of missives from the doomed and will gradually publish them over the coming months.

In one such letter, Perla Tytelman writes along with her son Samuel and

chatter. You have already said everything and left me no room.

"On this occasion, mother watered the letter with her tears.

"The situation is now pretty bad because we have been imprisoned in the so-called Jewish quarter. Also at home a lot has changed. We now live in the bedroom [of the parents]. What do I do, you know? I have to come to the end.

"Remember, the most important thing is not to take anything to heart and persevere. Then we will definitely meet again."

The letter was sent in the autumn of 1941. All three would later perish in the ghetto, a fact that Jozef and Rachel would not learn until after the war.

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Staring at grainy video footage of Jewish children marching to their freedom through the barbed-wire fences of the Auschwitz death camp, 79-year-old Vera Kriegel Grossman excitedly points a finger at the screen upon identifying a dark-haired girl in a dirty striped uniform as her 6-year-old self.

"I can't believe that happened to me. I wasn't a child there. I was all grown up ... it was like I was 100 years old."

Archival footage shot by Auschwitz's Soviet liberators is part of the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial's latest exhibition, ahead of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, exploring the power of photography during World War II. The 1,500 photographs and 13 films displayed come from various perspectives, those of victims and perpetrators alike, and look to offer today's media-saturated visitors a new angle for looking at the horrors of the Holocaust.

Photography, perhaps more than anything else, has come to shape our memory of the Holocaust. The "Flashes of Memory" exhibit also offers a glimpse behind the lens — showing the actual cameras used, the photographers who took the pictures and their various motivations.

"The exhibit is aimed at the brain, (Continued on page 8)



Survivors and guests walk past the "Arbeit Macht Frei" gate at the former Nazi German concentration camp on International Holocaust Remembrance Day in Oswiecim, Poland, Saturday, January 27, 2018.

victim from Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names.

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Some of the most heartbreaking letters ever penned - written by Nazi victims to loved ones they would never see again - have been published ahead of World Holocaust Day.

"We Shall Meet Again - Last Letters

daughter Rega from the Warsaw ghetto to her husband, Jozef, and other daughter Rachel, who managed to flee to Siberia.

The letter reads: 'I am drawing on all my strength in order to survive for you.

"But you, my beloved ones, have to prove your bravery, you have to prove that you are capable of overcoming this undeserved punishment and the wanderings with strength and dignity. "You should be consoled by the thought that this has to end sometime, and that then we will once again be happy together. Our yearning for each other knows no bounds."

Rachel then adds her news to the letter, before saying she has to make room for Samuel, who is complaining there is no space left to write.

Samuel says: "I write last, so that the ladies signed above have time to

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## IN THE SHADOW OF AUSCHWITZ, JEWISH LIFE ONCE FLOWED WITH SPIRITS

BY MATT LEBOVIC,  
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Although its name later became synonymous with the Holocaust, the Polish town *Oswiecim* — or Auschwitz, in German — once brimmed with Jewish culture. The rise and fall of the community's buildings left behind evocative relics, a few dozen photographs and many tales of the town's special place in Polish-Jewish history.

Jews first settled in *Oswiecim*, west of *Krakow*, about 400 years ago. By the eve of the Holocaust, they made up half the town's population of 10,000 people. The community put up



Ritual objects from the Great Synagogue of *Oswiecim* in Poland, on display at the Auschwitz Jewish Center.

more than 20 synagogues, famous schools and one of Poland's first factories. *Oswiecim* was known as "not a bad place" to live for Jews; indeed, the Yiddish name for the town was *Oshpitzin*, which comes from the Aramaic word for guests.

Today, only the so-called Auschwitz Synagogue remains of that vanished Jewish landscape. Built in 1913, the modest *shul* located off the town square has changed hands many times. As it is the synagogue closest to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where the Nazis murdered more than one million Jews during World War II, visitors usually come on the same day as a tour of the former extermination center.

During the Nazi occupation, the Auschwitz Synagogue served as a munitions depot for the German army. The deportation of *Oswiecim's* 5,000 Jews was accomplished in one week, during a particularly well-photographed *aktion*. Many townspeople positioned themselves at windows to watch SS men march the Jews away forever, and *Oswiecim's* main landmarks — such as churches and stores — appear in snapshots taken by the neighbor-witnesses.

Following liberation in 1945, a few Jews returned to *Oswiecim* and held services at the *shul* again. However, by the early 1970s, the town's Jews had all emigrated, and "the last synagogue of Auschwitz" became a carpet warehouse. Later, post-Communism restitution laws returned the property

to a local Jewish community, which purchased the adjacent building and created the Auschwitz Jewish Center, an impressive synagogue-museum complex.

Although relatively few of the two million annual visitors to Auschwitz-Birkenau make their way into the historic core of *Oswiecim*, there are tantalizing objects from the town's Jewish past on display at the *shul*-museum complex. The collection includes ritual objects from the destroyed Great Synagogue, where — legend has it — the souls of departed Jews performed a "death dance" with the living.

Among artifacts presented at the Auschwitz Jewish Center, a selection of liquor bottles from the world-renowned Haberfeld distillery stands out.

In 1804, Jakob Haberfeld opened a "steam vodka & liquor factory" near a bridge crossing the Sola River. An early factory in Poland, the Jewish-owned outfit produced vast amounts of vodka, rum and juices. Next to the distillery was a 40-room family mansion, Haberfeld House, one of the town's architectural icons.

Years before World War II, the Haberfeld family had a railroad spur built to a marshy region outside town, where river gravel for the distillery was plentiful. Later, during the Nazi occupation of Poland, the tracks were used to bring Jews to the very end of their journey, the "old Jewish ramp" outside *Birkenau*, where SS doctors conducted "selections" for the gas chambers.

In 1939, with Alfons Haberfeld at the distillery's helm, Germany invaded



One of several photographs taken during the deportation of *Oswiecim's* Jews to death camps and ghettos in the region during the Nazi occupation of Poland.

Poland. At the time, Haberfeld and his wife, Felicia, were returning from the World's Fair in New York. The couple had left their two-year-old daughter, *Francziska*, behind in *Oswiecim*, in the care of her grandmother. Two years later, with Alfons and Felicia

Haberfeld trapped abroad, little *Francziska* was murdered at *Belzec*, the first of six Nazi death camps to operate with stationary gassing facilities.

In 1967, more than two decades after rebuilding their lives in the United States, Alfons and Felicia Haberfeld made a return trip to *Oswiecim*. The distillery was under state ownership, and Haberfeld



In *Oswiecim*, Poland, a water well is used in front of the so-called "Auschwitz Synagogue" near the center of town, during the interwar period.

House was in disrepair, they noted with sorrow. Disturbingly, a new wave of anti-Semitism was forcing *Shoah* survivors and their children to flee Poland only one generation after the Holocaust.

The trip to Poland was too much to bear for Alfons Haberfeld. "Emotionally devastated" by the encounter, he died three years later, aged 66.

During the 1990s, long after the death of her husband, Felicia Haberfeld attempted to reclaim family ownership of the mansion and factory. The widow's case did not convince authorities, and she lived to see the

demolition of both buildings in 2003. With the structures gone, plans to open a Jakob Haberfeld distillery — themed hotel inside the old factory fell through.

A few months after demolition balls erased Haberfeld House and the dis-

tillery, archeologists broke ground at the site of the former Great Synagogue. Among more than 400 objects pulled from the grassy slope in 2004, decorative motif fragments evoked the vast, storied complex, burned down by the Nazis in 1939.

According to one tale from Jewish *Oswiecim*, the Great Synagogue was a place where worshipers could commune with souls of the dead who

occasionally gathered to pray there.

One night long ago, it was said, the souls of *Oswiecim's* deceased Jews returned to the synagogue for Simchat Torah. Hearing strange noises coming from the fortress-like building after midnight, people went to investigate. Suddenly, the Great Synagogue filled with light, and a revelation was made.

"[The Jews] were informed that all of the worshippers were the purified souls of former *Oshpitzin* [*Oswiecim*] Jews who have long been in Heaven," according to the memoirs of Yakov Seifter, who grew up in the town and recalled the tale in his memoirs.

"Later, when the Torah Scrolls were returned to the Holy Ark, they were instructed that when leaving the synagogue no one should face the exit, but all were to exit walking backwards, so that they should not, God forbid, be harmed," wrote Seifter.

That Simchat Torah "death dance," and the occasional visit of departed souls on Shabbat, were part of Jewish *Oswiecim's* flavor, cultivated during 400 years of struggle and accomplishment.

"It is really good to live in Vienna, but one ought to die in *Oshpitzin*," according to a Yiddish saying. Because so many esteemed rabbis were buried in *Oswiecim*, Jews from throughout the Galicia region attempted to earn a final resting place among them.

"Anyone who merited to be buried [there] would not suffer travails at the time of resurrection," wrote Seifter of his boyhood home, once called "a city of Israel" in Poland.



## THE ITALIAN WALLEMBERG WHO SAVED OVER 5000 HUNGARIAN JEWS

BY MENUCHA CHANA LEVIN,  
AISH.COM

Giorgio Perlasca saved more Jews than the 1200 saved by the famous Oskar Schindler. Like Raoul Wallenberg, Perlasca boldly rescued Hungarian Jews from under the noses of the Nazis.

Yet the heroic Giorgio Perlasca still remains unknown.

Born in 1910 in the small northern Italian town of *Como* and raised in nearby *Padua*, Perlasca belonged to a family consisting of civil servants and army officers. Initially attracted to Italian Fascism, he volunteered for the army when Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935. Later he joined the Corps of Volunteer Troops, an Italian force assisting the rebel forces of Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939. In gratitude for his service, Perlasca received a letter of thanks from Franco's victorious new government.

The letter instructed the Spanish foreign service to come to his aid if he should ever need diplomatic assistance. At the time Perlasca had no idea how important this letter would turn out to be. Upon his return home to Italy, he found Mussolini had aligned with Hitler's Third Reich and introduced its racial laws in 1938. Perlasca, who had many Jewish friends from *Padua* and from his army service, was strongly opposed to anti-Semitism. At one time he explained, "I was neither Fascist, nor anti-Fascist; I

was anti-Nazi." From then on, he reserved his loyalty for the Italian king, Victor Emmanuel III.

In the early days of World War II, Perlasca avoided the draft by working as an import-export agent for



Giorgio Perlasca, September 1935.

the Italian army. He traveled to Zagreb, Belgrade and Eastern Europe, where he witnessed vicious Axis massacres of Jews and Serbs.

In 1942, he was assigned to Budapest. He found the Hungarian capital "full of life, where nothing was lacking and the restaurants and theaters were full of seemingly carefree people, many of them Jews." Tall, well-dressed and stylish, Perlasca also enjoyed an active social life, which came to an abrupt end in

September 1943. Italy surrendered to the Allies and the country was split. Some aligned themselves to Mussolini's Italian Social Republic, while others supported the king, who joined the Allies. Perlasca was arrested as an enemy alien and interned in a camp near the Austrian border. Escaping in October 1943, he made his way back to Budapest.

Life changed drastically in March 1944 when the Hungarian Nazis seized power. Perlasca ran to the Spanish consulate in Budapest. Producing his vital letter from the Spanish authorities, he received a Spanish passport with his new name: Jorge Perlasca.

He soon discovered that the Spanish consul, Angel Sanz Briz, was issuing "letters of protection" for Hungarian Jews who were forced to wear the yellow Star of David. The embassy was overwhelmed with requests from stateless Jews seeking asylum in a neutral country such as Spain, or safe passage out of Europe.

The consulate also employed Jews as clerks and housed them in eight apartment buildings under its control. Perlasca offered his assistance. The Hungarian government then discovered that the Spanish officials had been harboring Jews in their houses and embassy, and began raiding the homes of diplomats. With Budapest in chaos, Angel Sanz Briz and other officials received orders to vacate immediately. Sanz Briz left a note for

Perlasca imploring him to leave too. Realizing that without protection many Jews would be killed, Perlasca bravely decided to remain.

The only person in the consulate with a Spanish passport, he went to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Utilizing his boundless chutzpah and a letter he had forged, Perlasca succeeded in convincing the officials he had been appointed the new Spanish consul and that Sanz Briz was simply on leave. The German and Hungarian officials believed his appointment and his warning that Spain would retaliate if forced to turn over their refugees. Fortunately for him, they were unable to confirm Perlasca's new status with Madrid, and he was permitted to continue working.

"I couldn't stand the sight of people being branded like animals . . . I couldn't stand seeing children being killed," he stated. "I did what I had to do."

Perlasca described his situation: "At first, I didn't know what to do, but then I began to feel like a fish in water. I continued giving out protective passes and looked after the Jews in the 'safe houses' flying the Spanish flag. As the proverb says, 'Opportunity makes the thief.'"

The new "consul" organized food, medical aid and protection for 5,200 Jews in the consulate's apartments.

(Continued on page 7)

## WE KNEW, BUT FAILED TO STOP THE HOLOCAUST

BY MITCHELL BARD,  
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

One of the reasons given for the failure to prevent the Holocaust, or to save some of the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators, is that the world was unaware of the slaughter. The Nazis were good at concealing their heinous crimes, but the Allies learned early in the war about the Final Solution. Worse, everyone knew Jews were in danger before World War II began; nevertheless, Western leaders failed to act when the evidence was in front of their eyes.

In less than 48 hours, beginning on November 9, 1938, at least 96 Jews were killed in Germany and Austria, 7,500 businesses were destroyed, and countless Jewish cemeteries and schools were vandalized. A total of 30,000 Jews were sent to concentration camps. The pogrom became known as the "Night of Broken Glass" or *Kristallnacht*. A member of the Hitler Youth admitted that after *Kristallnacht*, "no German old enough to walk could ever plead ignorance of the persecution of the Jews, and no Jews could harbor any delusion that

Hitler wanted Germany anything but *judenrein*, clean of Jews."

It was not only the Germans and Austrians who witnessed this savagery. The front page of the *New York Times* (November 11) reported "a wave of destruction, looting, and incendiarism unparalleled in Germany since the Thirty Years War and, in Europe generally, since the Bolshevik Revolution." The story said, "National Socialist cohorts took vengeance on Jewish shops, offices and synagogues for the murder by a young Polish Jew of Ernst vom Rath, third secretary of the German Embassy in Paris."

Other than condemning the violence — five days later — and temporarily withdrawing the U.S. ambassador from Germany, President Franklin Roosevelt did nothing. Other Western leaders were appalled but not sufficiently concerned to take any action against Germany. They were not roused to come to the aid of the Jews even after Hitler told the Czech foreign minister in January 1939: "We shall exterminate the Jews."

Roosevelt was paralyzed by the climate of isolationism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. Rather than rising above it, and taking even the relative-

ly benign step of opening America's doors to Jewish immigrants, the president followed public opinion and barred our gates, condemning thousands to death. He went so far as to oppose Congressional legislation to allow 20,000 Jewish children into the country. That was before the war. After it began, the President and his advisers minimized Nazi persecution of Jews to rationalize their inaction.

A precedent was set in May 1897 when the U.S. ambassador to Persia interceded on behalf of the Jews in Tehran who were being subjected to mob violence by Muslims. His actions were approved "in the interest of common humanity." American ambassadors in 1939-45 could have acted in that interest, as Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg did, by providing visas or passports to as many Jews as possible. This would have been the least U.S. officials could do.

U.S. officials could have warned the Nazis earlier and more frequently about the consequences of harming Jews, and then acted after learning of German crimes. For example, steps toward prosecuting war criminals might have begun before the end of the war to send the message that Germans who were caught faced

serious consequences.

The Red Cross could have given greater publicity to the Nazi genocide, used its influence to obtain access to more camps and mobilized world opinion to crusade for an end to the atrocities. Hitler might not have been moved by an outcry, but the absence of one allowed him to conclude that his annihilation of the Jews was of little concern to his enemies.

General Dwight Eisenhower acknowledged publicizing atrocities would increase support for the war effort when he was asked if the wide publication of such information was going to be useful. "I think the people at home ought to know what they are fighting for and the kind of person they are fighting," he said. Unfortunately, Eisenhower said this after the liberation of the camps.

*Kristallnacht* was the beginning of the end for German Jewry, and telegraphed the fate of all Jews who would come under Nazi control. Hitler saw from the world's reaction that he could murder Jews with impunity. Less than three years later, the deportation of German Jews to their deaths began. Fewer than 10,000 of the 131,800 German Jews targeted for extermination by the Nazis survived.



## WORDWINGS

Wordwings.

By Sydelle Pearl. Guernica Editions: Toronto, 2017. 203 pp. \$20 softcover.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

*"For a moment, I close my eyes and imagine myself transformed into a great white swan flying over the wall and barbed wire of the Ghetto until I arrive in a beautiful green meadow very far away — somewhere in a Hans Christian Andersen fairytale."*

Rivke from *Wordwings*

I'm sure that the readers of *Martyrdom and Resistance* have all seen clips of films taken inside the ghettos, ironically, usually by the Nazis. These clips show the inhuman conditions Jews were forced to "live" under. They show the men and women — often dressed in rags and starving — forced to inhabit this hell-on-earth. Most heartbreaking of all, these clips also show us Jewish children: frequently orphaned, lost and alone, or perhaps with siblings or others like themselves, disheveled and hungry, born into an unfriendly, murderous world, neither understood by them nor of their making. Sometimes we see these little ones singing or dancing by way of begging for food or some little money from adult passers-by in the ghetto who themselves have little or nothing. Sometimes we see them simply standing there crying. Yes, we see them . . . but we never hear them or are ever truly privy to their thoughts or feelings...

In Sydelle Pearl's fictional volume,

*Wordwings*, about a child-diarist's experiences in the Warsaw ghetto — twelve-year-old Rivke Rosenblum — it's as if we suddenly hear one of these children speak. Moreover, Pearl allows us entry into her thoughts. Thus among other things, we learn of her love for her grandfather, who sells pillows on the market in the ghetto. We can feel Rivke's compassion for others in the ghetto through her descriptions of them — like the lady who sells half-rotten potatoes on the market, and the beggar with his little glove puppet whom she has fondly nicknamed the "Peddler of Wind." We recognize Rivke's admiration for the courage shown by Gittel and her twin sister Ruchel, children who, because they don't look Jewish, have become smugglers bringing needed goods (usually food) into the ghetto from the Aryan side of Warsaw — a historically accurate depiction. Oftentimes, it actually was Jewish children who didn't look Jewish that kept ghetto Jews alive through their smuggling of food-stuffs.

Indeed, Pearl's book gains especial depth, and adds to the knowledge of the Holocaust for students of the period, when it weaves people

who truly lived and played important lesser-known roles in the Warsaw ghetto into the narrative. For example, we meet Batya, whose full name was actually Batya Temkin-Berman, a dedicated librarian. She had a special place in her heart for the children in the Warsaw ghetto. She would bring them books to read, wherever they were, books that offered joy and nurtured imaginations, promising a tomorrow. Pearl has Rivke help Batya in distributing these books to the children. She also has her tell them stories — some of Rivke's own making. The story of "The Jewish Geese" is especially wonderful. I leave that for the readers of *Wordwings* to discover.

Another individual Rivke interacts with and who actually lived in the Warsaw ghetto is Gela Seksztajn, an artist. Gela taught art to the children in the ghetto, she drew them, and she also helped "with costumes and scenery for their plays." For, in fact, Adam Czerniakow, the Jewish head of the ghetto, and Janusz Korczak, who cared for many of the orphaned little ones in the ghetto — both noted in *Wordwings* — were very concerned with these children enjoying some kind of childhood.... Thus, there were

puppet shows and children's plays done. In Pearl's volume we read about Gela's work with the children. Then, with Pearl taking the liberty of a fiction writer, we also read about Gela showing Rivke how her diary, basically Rivke's writings in the margins of a beloved book of fairy tales by Hans Christian Anderson, will, alongside Gela's drawings of ghetto children, become part of a secret archive called "Oyneg Shabes" — in truth, a documentation collected by Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum, recounting the history of the Warsaw ghetto. For in Pearl's volume, Ringelblum has asked Rivke, impressed by her work, to contribute her writings to this secret archive to be buried so future generations will know what happened in the ghetto....

Rivke's reaction:

"I think of my diary placed inside one of those milk cans in this cellar and then planted in the earth. In my imagination, my words and the words of Hans Christian Andersen push up through a tiny crack in the dirt and turn themselves into wings...."

And, if you think about it, Rivke's wish came true. *Wordwings* has made it possible for her words to turn themselves into wings, flying miles and years . . . all the way to us . . . representative of so many innocent children whose words were lost....

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

## KIELCE: THE POST-HOLOCAUST POGROM THAT POLAND IS STILL FIGHTING OVER

BY RACHEL E. GROSS,  
SMITHSONIAN.COM

The massacre started with a blood libel. That wouldn't be unusual, except this wasn't the Middle Ages or even Nazi Germany — it was 1946, a year after the end of World War II.

A few days earlier, an 8-year-old Polish boy named Henryk Błaszczak had gone missing from his home in Kielce, a city of 50,000 in southeastern Poland. When Henryk reappeared two days later, he told his family he had been held by a man in a basement. As his father walked him to the police station to recount his story, the boy pointed at a man who was walking near the large corner building at 7 Planty Street.

He did it, Henryk said.

The building, which was owned by the Jewish Committee and housed many Jewish institutions, was home to up to 180 Jews. It did not have a basement. Most of the residents were refugees, having survived the horrors of the death camps that decimated more than 90 percent of the Polish Jewish population. After the war, they had returned to their homeland with

the hope that they could leave the past behind them. They had no idea they were about to become the target of anti-Semitic aggression once again — this time from the Polish neighbors they lived alongside.



Archival image of 7 Planty.

On the morning of July 4, a small group of state militia and local police approached the building to investigate the alleged kidnapping. As rumors of misdeeds spread, a version of the centuries-old "blood libel" that Jews were kidnapping Christian chil-

dren for ritual sacrifice, a mob began to assemble. But it was the police and military who started the violence, recounts Polish historian Jan T. Gross in his 2006 book *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz*. Though

they were ostensibly there to protect civilians and keep the peace, officers instead opened fire and began dragging Jews into the courtyard, where the townspeople savagely attacked the Jewish residents.

That day, Jewish men and women were stoned, robbed, beaten with rifles, stabbed with bayonets and hurled into a river

that flowed nearby. Yet while other Kielce residents walked by, none did anything to stop it. It wasn't until noon that another group of soldiers was sent in to break up the crowd and evacuate the wounded and dead. In the afternoon, a group of metal work-

ers ran toward the building, armed with iron bars and other weapons. The residents of 7 Planty were relieved; they thought these men had come to help. Instead, the metal workers began brutally attacking and killing those still alive inside the building.

The violence went on for hours. As Miriam Guterman, one of the last remaining survivors of the pogrom, put it in the 2016 documentary film *Bogdan's Journey*: "I couldn't believe that these were humans."

All told, 42 Jews were killed that day at 7 Planty and around the city, including a newborn baby and a woman who was six months pregnant. Another 40 were injured. Yet beyond the horror of those physical facts, the event would take on a larger historical significance. After the Holocaust, many Jews had dreamed of returning to their native lands. *Kielce* shattered that dream; for Jews, Poland could never again be home.

"[Kielce] really is a symbol of the exodus of Jewish survivors from Poland, and a symbol sometimes that there is no future in Poland for Jews," says Joanna Sliwa, a historian with  
(Continued on page 10)



## JAMAICA WAS A WARTIME HAVEN FOR JEWISH REFUGEES

BY SHELDON KIRSHNER,  
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

As improbable as it may sound, the Caribbean island of Jamaica was a wartime haven for European Jewish refugees fleeing Fascism and anti-Semitism. Jamaica, then a British colony, began admitting imperiled Jews in 1938 and continued welcoming them through the early 1940s. This little-known footnote in the annals of the Holocaust could easily have fallen through the cracks of history. It does not thanks to Diana Cooper-Clark's book, *Dreams of Re-Creation in Jamaica*, published by Friesen Press in Canada.

The refugees, mainly of Polish and Dutch ancestry, waited out World War II in the Gibraltar and Up Park internment camps in Kingston, the capital of Jamaica. Cooper-Clark, a professor in the departments of English and Humanities at York University in Toronto, describes their experiences through the prism of "hope, disappointment, pain, loss" and the prospect of a new life.

The author, whose interest in the Holocaust was sparked by a book she read at the age of six about the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, believes that about 1,400 Jews found refuge in these makeshift camps. They left Jamaica after the war, rebuilding their lives in countries such as the United States, Canada, Holland and Britain.

Jamaica beckoned as a place of refuge after the British Foreign Office informed the Joint Distribution Board, a Jewish organization, that Jewish refugees could come to the island if it paid for their upkeep for at least a year and if the newcomers passed a security test ensuring they were not spies for the Axis powers.

She leaves the impression that many of the refugees were brought to Jamaica by Portuguese ships such as the *Serpa Pinto* and the *SS Sao Thome*. Upon arriving in Kingston, they were treated like enemy aliens, their passports stamped with the notation: "Permitted to land ... but restricted to close supervision pending result of thorough investigation."

Much to their disappointment, they were not permitted to look for jobs. And as time elapsed, some complained about conditions in the Gibraltar camp. One indignant refugee went as far as to liken Gibraltar to a Nazi concentration camp. "The comparison is an obscenity," she writes, flatly dismissing the claim. "Gibraltar camp was a confined location for internees, but it certainly did not resemble the architectures of doom that were the Nazi concentration camps."

Cooper-Clark adds that the refugees were fed reasonably well. They were no worse off than "the people of the island, and they were eating better than many impoverished Jamaicans." She goes on to write: "People in Europe had not seen the

kind of food served in the camp for years, such as meat, fruit, vegetables, butter and sugar. Ersatz coffee was all that Europeans had had for years, while ... the refugees often had Blue Mountain coffee, one of the best in the world."

Rejecting the allegation that the venerable Jamaican Jewish community was indifferent to the refugees, she contends that some local Jews were indeed helpful. Citing an example, she says that Owen Karl Henriques, a prominent businessman, worked tirelessly on their behalf.


In an interesting aside, she sketches a pen portrait of Jamaica's long-established, highly assimilated Jewish community. Pointing out that mixed marriages have taken a drastic toll on its

size since the 1880s, Cooper-Clark says the descendants of such unions are far removed from Judaism. She gives three examples. Chris Blackwell, a musician and recording executive who has worked with Bob Marley and the Rolling Stones, is related to the Jewish Lindo family. Harry Belafonte, the singer, has Jewish roots. Colin Powell, the former U.S. secretary of state, is descended from Jews on his father's side.

In another aside, she informs the reader that 65 Jews from the Caribbean islands and Central America, almost all of them Sephardim, were murdered during the Holocaust. It's a largely unknown fact, even to those familiar with the Holocaust.

Mexico tops this list with 23 victims, followed by Cuba (19), Curaçao (15), Dominican Republic (two), Trinidad and Tobago (one), Saint Thomas, Virgin Islands (one), Guatemala (one), El Salvador (one), Nicaragua (one) and Guadeloupe (one). During this period, she says, the Nazis and their collaborators killed 160,000 Sephardic Jews.

Much to her credit, Cooper-Clark has rescued this obscure episode from oblivion. Although *Dreams of Re-Creation in Jamaica* is a workmanlike account well worth delving into, it's disjointed and repetitious at times. These defects, though, are mere quibbles when compared to the broad sweep of her pathbreaking book.



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**Barbara Gutfreund Arfa Professional Development Conference on Holocaust Education**

**SURVIVORS CLUB: LESSONS FOR OUR CHILDREN –  
TAKING A STAND TO PRESERVE THE FUTURE**

**SURVIVOR TESTIMONY by Michael Borenstein, PhD, & Debbie Bornstein Holinstat**  
Dr. Michael Borenstein is one of the youngest known survivors of Auschwitz. He and his daughter Debbie Borenstein Holinstat, are the authors of *Survivors Club*, a narrative about Michael's experiences in the Holocaust.

**EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES by Robert Rozett, PhD, Director - Yad Vashem Libraries**

**Date:** Sunday, March 18th, 2018  
**Time:** 8:30 AM - 3:15 PM  
8:30 AM Breakfast  
9:00 AM Program Commences

**Location:** RAMAZ MIDDLE SCHOOL  
114 East 85th Street  
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**REGISTRATION: Free of charge, registration required\***

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In-Service credit available  
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This Professional Development Conference is being generously supported by the  
Barbara Gutfreund Arfa Endowment Fund for Holocaust Education



## “AND THEN THE NAZIS TOLD ME, YOU’RE GOING TO PALESTINE”

BY OFER ADERET, HAARETZ

The marvelous story of Mali Bruckenthal, who was born in 1914 in Munich and died at Kibbutz *Hafetz Haim* at the age of 103, is contained in testimony that she gave to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, in 2002. Her testimony, which also appears in a book published in 2008 by her family, reveal an extraordinary woman — resourceful, courageous, determined and faith-driven.

Amalia (Mali) Landau was born in 1914 in Munich into a religiously observant family. She immigrated to Palestine in 1935 and settled in Tel Aviv. The following year, she married Rabbi Hillel Bruckenthal, who had immigrated from Poland. The couple moved to the youth training farm, in *Kfar Sava*, of the ultra-Orthodox Poalei Agudat Yisrael movement, whose members were later among the founders of Kibbutz *Hafetz Haim*, east of *Ashdod*.

A few months later, they returned to Europe as envoys of the Zionist movement. They were sent to the city of *Enschede*, in Holland, where they ran an agricultural training center for young refugees from Germany who were waiting for British-issued immigration certificates for Palestine. The couple’s first three children, all of them sons, were born in *Enschede*.

In 1940, immediately after the Germans invaded Holland, Hillel was arrested by the S.S. Initially he was incarcerated in a detention camp in Holland. Mali did the unthinkable, and went to meet with the country’s Nazi governor in order to demand her husband’s release. “He didn’t think I was Jewish — a Jewish woman doesn’t

allow herself to enter the lion’s den,” she said in her testimony. She afterward explained that she brought her chutzpah from the Land of Israel, where she was already a proud pioneer.

Subsequently she actually reached the camp in which her husband was imprisoned and, amid a confrontation with S.S. personnel, was able to meet



Bruckenthal and her three oldest sons. They were on the list of privileged prisoners who were “exchange candidates.”

with him, although she could not secure his release. Hillel was then sent to Germany. Now they could communicate only by letters, which he sent her through the Red Cross. In one such letter he wrote that she should visit her aunt “Hester” (the Dutch name for “Esther”; the word means “hide” in Hebrew). In other words, he was hinting to her that she should go into hiding.

Mali remained nearby with her three sons and about 70 young aspiring pioneers, for whom she was responsible. She went on managing the center

for two and a half years under the Nazi regime. In September 1942, she was sent with her sons to the *Westerbork* camp, a departure point for transports to the death camps. On the way to *Westerbork*, during a stop made by the train, she somehow convinced to get off with the children and ensconce herself in a local café, under the Nazis’ eyes. In fact, she says in her testimony, the children later played with Nazi officers on the train.

She did not fully take in her situation until she reached the camp and was herded with the children onto a truck. “Darkness, you can’t see a thing. I search for my children’s heads, and say: Hold onto my skirt so we will stay together,” she related. A month later, she and the children were placed on the list of privileged prisoners who were “exchange candidates”: Because she was a citizen of the

British Mandate administration in Palestine, the Nazis wanted to exchange her and others with a similar status for German citizens who had been arrested by the British, in particular women from the German Templar sect who lived in Palestine.

“I didn’t believe it when they told me I was going to the Land of Israel with the children,” she recounted in her testimony. “When someone from *Westerbork* goes to a place other than *Auschwitz* or *Bergen-Belsen* — it just couldn’t be,” Mali said. It was, she suggested, like someone being noti-

fied that tomorrow he was flying to the moon.

The next stop was Vienna, the center for transports of the so-called exchange people from Europe. While they waited for the train that would take them on the next leg of their journey, Mali went into an empty café in the Austrian capital and struck up a conversation with the saleswoman. “The café was always full of Jews. One of them wrote all the time, maybe a book, another made music, and there were merchants who had meetings. And now there are no Jews in Vienna. Who will come to me?” she recalled the saleswoman saying to her. To which Mali said, in rebuttal, “You are to blame, you wanted to go together with the Germans.”

From there she and her sons were taken by train to Istanbul, where the exchange itself took place under the auspices of the Red Cross. Then, under British supervision, the transport proceeded to Palestine via Turkey and Syria. In the leg between Turkey and *Aleppo*, Amalia and the other exchange people traveled on a luxury train. “There were even night beds for everyone. Everyone received such and such portions of wine. People who had already been in the ghetto for years and had not eaten, attacked the food,” she related.

Once back in Palestine, Mali Bruckenthal was among the founders of kibbutz *Hafetz Haim*, and after the war, was reunited with her husband, who returned from a German POW camp in July 1945. “He looked awfully bad, but never mind, he was alive,” she recounted. The couple had six more children in the kibbutz, where Hillel was appointed the rabbi and school principal. Mali was the house-mother of the guest house.

## NAZI HAVENS IN SOUTH AMERICA

BY DR. YVETTE ALT MILLER, AISH.COM

After 1945 the scale of the horror of the Holocaust came to light. Faced with unprecedented cruelty, much of the world responded with unprecedented vigor. The new term “crimes against humanity” was coined in the subsequent *Nuremberg* trials, as Allied lawyers called senior Nazis to account.

Yet fewer than 300 Nazis faced judgment in the *Nuremberg* trials, while up to 9,000 Nazis by some counts were spirited away from Europe after World War II, helped by sympathetic agents and friends. Many found new lives in South America. By the late 1940s, much of South America, particularly Brazil, Chile and Argentina, was a haven for thousands of Nazis eluding justice. German prosecutors in recent years have esti-

mated that Brazil accepted between 1,500 and 2,000 Nazis, Chile took in between 500 and 1,000, and Argentinians welcomed up to 5,000 Nazis to their country.

Many South American countries were home to large communities of ethnic Germans during and after World War II. In many cases, these communities were sympathetic to and even welcomed Nazis, helping them to evade justice. In the mid-1980s, it was estimated that 3.6 million of Brazil’s 130 million citizens, one million out of Argentina’s 28 million people, and 200,000 out of 3.5 million citizens of Paraguay were ethnically German. “Many of them maintain the language and traditions of their forefathers,” the *New York Times* noted in 1985. “Because of their strong cultural identity, the older German farming communities in southern Brazil and southern Paraguay have often been accused of harboring Nazis. In 1962,

the Chilean town of *Colonia Dignidad* was found to be home to 300 families who’d fled Germany after World War II, finding a welcome — and no ques-



Juan Peron.

tions asked — among their compatriots in South America.”

In 1955, General Alfredo Stroessner, a grandson of immigrants

from Bavaria, opened Paraguay to former Nazis. In the 1930s, Brazil had the biggest Nazi party in the world after Germany, with 40,000 members; many of these Brazilian Nazis welcomed German Nazis after the war. In Argentina, future president Juan Peron spent part of the war, from 1939 to 1941, working in Argentina’s embassy in Italy and openly admired the politics of Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler. When Peron became president of Argentina in 1946, he ordered the establishment of secret channels — dubbed “ratlines” — to ferry thousands of Nazis from ports in Spain and Italy out of Europe and into Latin America.

Historian Uki Goni, in his 2002 book *The Real Odessa: Smuggling the Nazis to Peron’s Argentina*, documents that in 1946 Juan Peron sent secret word to France that Nazi officials facing pros-

(Continued on page 11)



## THE ITALIAN WALLEMBERG WHO SAVED OVER 5000 HUNGARIAN JEWS

(Continued from page 3)

An intelligence network warned him in advance of possible Nazi searches.

The diplomatic missions of four other neutral states — Portugal, Switzerland, the Vatican and Sweden — also helped save Jewish lives.

In the following months Perlasca did more than organize the hiding, feeding and transport of thousands of Jews. He came up with a brilliant plan to use an old Spanish law which gave Spanish-born Jews full citizenship and protection. Perlasca successfully issued fake safe-conduct passes claiming that Hungarian Jews were actually Spanish-born. The passes read:

"The relatives of all Spaniards in Hungary require their presence in Spain. Until we are able to reestablish communications and the journey back is possible, they will remain here under the protection of the government of Spain."

Giorgio Perlasca teamed up with Sweden's Raoul Wallenberg, Angelo Rotta from the Vatican and Friedrich Born from the International Red Cross to vouch for Jews across Hungary. Together they helped organize and secure the escape of thousands of Jews.

However, Raoul Wallenberg possessed plentiful funds, but there was no one to pay Perlasca a salary. When consular funds ran out, he used his own money, then that of the local Jewish committee. Finally he had to ask for funds from the families hiding in the apartments.

A fearless man, Perlasca acted as if he really was a protected diplomat, openly risking his own life to save oth-

ers.

One December day in 1944, he went to the train station and began arguing with a German officer, demanding the release of two Jewish children on a train headed for Auschwitz. Also present was Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat whose similar daring acts also saved many Jewish lives.

"A young SS major pulled out his pistol, pointing it at me," Perlasca later recalled. "Wallenberg, standing nearby, shouted at him that he could



Perlasca rescuing Jews at the train station at Budapest.

not treat a Spanish diplomatic representative like this. Then, at a certain moment, an SS lieutenant-colonel arrived and asked what was happening. He listened, then ordered the major coldly to do nothing more because, 'Sooner or later', he said, 'we'll get the children anyway.' They went away, and it was then that Wallenberg told me that the SS colonel was the notorious Adolf Eichmann."

Perlasca once noticed some Nazi soldiers leading a group of Jews to their execution. Using his bold air of authority, he insisted that the soldiers

release the prisoners to his care. He overruled their protests and eventually they walked away, leaving the Jews safely behind.

When the Red Army bombarded Budapest towards the end of 1944, the Ministry of the Interior planned to move all Jews from the consular apartments into the ghetto, then set it on fire.

Perlasca refused to believe this horrific plan would be put into effect until he saw Jews from the Portuguese-protected apartments being marched to the ghetto. Rushing to the minister of the interior, he begged him to stop the plans, but his humanitarian and religious arguments had no effect.

Perlasca then switched to threats, warning that if the Spanish government was not assured within 48 hours that the Jews under its protection would be safe, all Hungarians in Spain would be imprisoned and their property confiscated. He further added that the Brazilian and Uruguayan governments would be urged to follow suit. The minister of the interior decided to abandon his vicious plan.

When Soviet troops entered Budapest in January 1945, the Jews were finally able to leave the apartments. However, the Russians forced Perlasca to work as a street cleaner.

After a few weeks he was able to leave for Istanbul and eventually returned to Italy. There, few people would credit his story. "My wife didn't say outright that she didn't believe me," he recalled. "But I was sure she

was not convinced."

So Perlasca ceased speaking about his exploits in Budapest and lived in relative anonymity.

The full facts of his extraordinary story did not emerge until the late 1980s, when some Hungarian Jews recalled the events of wartime Budapest at a family gathering.

"Do you remember that Spanish consul?" someone asked.

Several did, and they placed a notice in Budapest's Jewish newspaper asking for other testimonies. Gradually Perlasca's story emerged and the tributes finally began to flow. In 1989 the Hungarian Parliament awarded him its highest honor and a statue was dedicated to him in Budapest. Israel accorded him honorary citizenship and dedicated a tree to him at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

As part of its Righteous Among the Nations project, the Raanana Symphonette Orchestra in Israel commissioned an original orchestral piece, *His Finest Hour*, from composer Moshe Zorman in tribute to Perlasca. The piece had its debut at a concert attended by Perlasca's son Franco and daughter-in-law Luciana Amadia.

In 1990 he was honored in New York by the Raoul Wallenberg Committee.

The Spanish king awarded him the Order of Isabella and a pension.

In Italy he became the subject of a book and a feature film.

Like many Holocaust heroes, he downplayed his valor to the end. Deploring the fuss, he asked, "Wouldn't you have done the same? If you had seen Jewish children being shot in the streets?"

## JEWISH FAMILIES GATHER IN GERMANY TO REMEMBER A HOLOCAUST VICTIM THEY NEVER KNEW

BY OFER ADERET, HAARETZ

About 30 Jewish families from around the world participated in a special commemorative ceremony in Germany for a relative they never met — Karolina Cohn, who was murdered in the Holocaust. A golden memorial "stumbling stone" was placed at the entrance to Cohn's Frankfurt home after she was identified as the owner of a pendant discovered at Sobibor concentration camp.

The stumbling stone (*Stolperstein*) project, an initiative of artist Gunter Demnig, began about 20 years ago; stones bearing inscriptions with names and life dates are placed at the entrances to homes of Jews that had been expelled and sent to their death by the Nazis.

During an archaeological excavation of the Sobibor concentration camp, in what had been German-occupied Poland, a pendant was

found that bore a July 3, 1929, birthdate with the words "Mazal tov," the city Frankfurt, the Hebrew letter "hei" (standing for God) and stars of David.



"Stolpersteine" (stumbling blocks) have been laid for Karolina Cohn and her family at a place where they once lived.

A protracted archival and historical study into people born in Frankfurt on that date concluded that the pendant had belonged to Cohn, who was killed at age 14. Later her relatives were located in Germany, Britain, the U.S., Israel and other countries.

Karolina Cohn's pendant was found at Sobibor by the Israeli archaeologist Yoram Haimi and his Polish colleague Wojciech Mazurek.

The two found tens of thousands of items that had belonged to Jews murdered at the camp, including jewelry, clothing, cutlery and more. "The amount of items we found buried in the earth is inconceivable," Haimi told Haaretz.

Following Haaretz's report on the discovery of Cohn's pendant, amateur genealogists, including Chaim Motzen of Israel, began searching for more information about her life. Ultimately about 100 people related to her were found.

"We proved that her name and history have not been erased," Motzen told Haaretz.

Although her pendant was found at Sobibor, it is not clear whether Cohn met her death there. According to Yad Vashem, she was banished from Frankfurt to Minsk, Belarus, on November 11, 1941, after which all trace of her vanished. She may have been murdered there, or survived and been banished to Sobibor in September 1943, when the Minsk ghetto, which had been created after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, was liquidated.

If she did reach Sobibor, it seems she lost her pendant on the way to the gas chambers. If she was murdered in Minsk, it's possible a family member or friend kept the pendant and lost it at the death camp upon their own murder.

The ceremony, placing a "stumbling stone" by the entrance to what had been her home, was funded by the Claims Conference. Cohn had lived there with her parents and sister, who were also killed in the Holocaust.



# SIX MILLION VICTIMS OF THE

(Continued from page 1)

not the heart," said Daniel Uziel, its historical adviser. "We are asking the visitor to look beyond the image and examine the wider historical perspective."

Perhaps most insightful are the everyday photos taken by the Jewish victims themselves in various ghettos, some in the service of the Nazis and some in stealth in a desperate attempt to document the atrocities against



United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres.

them to serve as future proof. For example, Zvi Kadushin, an underground photographer in the Kovno ghetto, did so at great personal risk and produced essential documentation as a result.

"They used those images in order to present to the Germans their usefulness, their effectiveness," said Uziel. "On the other hand, the Jews also seek, without permission, to document the crimes done by the Germans."

Six million Jews were killed by German Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust, wiping out a third of world Jewry. Israel's main Holocaust memorial day is in the spring — marking the anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising — while the United Nations designated January 27 as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, commemorating the date of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp in 1945.

That's the day Grossman considers her second birthday, since she was delivered from the horrors of the camp to freedom.

"God opened the skies and sent us angels and rescued us," she recalled, upon seeing the Soviet troops who later filmed her and the number tattooed on her arm. "I am happy it was documented."

Grossman's father was gassed and incinerated in the camp's crematorium, and she and her twin sister Olga were subjected to the ruthless experiments of the infamous Nazi doctor Josef Mengele. She said her resistance to him is what kept her alive.

"I told myself what he would tell me to do, I would do the opposite, because he had no right to do these things to me," she said. "He took away my body because he could do that, but he couldn't take away my mind."

Far less eager to discuss their experiences were identical twins Lia Huber and Judith Barnea, both 80. Seeing the images, and

themselves in them, brought back memories both had spent decades suppressing.

"It is buried inside our hearts and we don't talk about it," said Huber. "If you want to survive and continue life, you must continue and live with what you got and carry on."

Photos from various chapters of the Nazi persecution of Jews were scattered across desks to depict the chaos in which they were taken. But it was the displaying of Nazi prop-

aganda in the museum in particular that posed a difficult dilemma for Yad Vashem. Vivian Uria, the exhibit's curator, said they tried to balance this with artifacts and testimony of survivors and victims who told their point of view. Ultimately, though, she said the visuals were essential and it was up to the viewer to look back at that dark era with a critical eye toward all those who documented it.

"The camera and its manipulative power have tremendous power and far-reaching influence," she said. "Although photography pretends to reflect reality as it is, it is in fact an interpretation of it."

**Washington** — On January 26, President Trump marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day by mourning the six million Jews killed in the Nazi genocide.

"Tomorrow marks the 73rd anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Nazi death and concentration camp in Nazi-occupied Poland. We take this opportunity to recall the Nazis' systematic persecution and brutal murder of six million Jewish people. In their death camps and under their inhuman rule, the Nazis also enslaved and killed millions of Slavs, Roma, gays, people with disabilities, priests and religious leaders, and others who courageously opposed their brutal regime.

"Our nation is indebted to the Holocaust's survivors. Despite the trauma they carry with them, they continue to educate us by sharing their experiences, strength, wisdom and generosity of spirit to advance respect for human rights. Although they are aging and their numbers are slowly dwindling, their stories remain with us, giving us the strength to combat intolerance, including anti-Semitism and all other forms of bigotry and discrimination.

**New York** — Calling on the world to "stand together against the normalization of hate,"

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has stressed in his message for the international day dedicated to honoring Holocaust victims that everyone has a responsibility to quickly and decisively resist racism and violence.

Mr. Guterres recalled that the international day, marked annually on 27 January, was created to honor the memory of six million Jewish men, women and children that perished in the Holocaust and countless others who lost their lives as cruelty convulsed the world.

Yet, decades since the Second World War, there is still the persistence of anti-Semitism and an increase in other forms of prejudice.

Citing neo-Nazis and white supremacy groups as among the main purveyors of extreme hatred, the UN chief said that too often, vile views are moving from the margins to the mainstream of societies and politics.

"Whenever and wherever humanity's values are abandoned, we are all at risk," stressed the Secretary-General.

"All of us have a responsibility to quickly, clearly and decisively resist racism and violence," he stated, adding: "Through education and understanding, we can build a future of dignity, human rights and peaceful coexistence for all."

For his part, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein held the painful day of remembrance for Holocaust victims as forcing us "to contemplate the horrors to which bigotry, racism and discrimination ultimately lead."

"The sadistic brutality of the atrocities inflicted by the Nazi regime on Jews, Roma, Slavs, disabled people, political dissidents, homosexuals and others was nourished by layer upon layer of propaganda, falsifications and

Mr. Zeid continued, "wedge the need to prevent anti-Semitism and all forms of religious hatred and discrimination."

"In honoring the victims, we must recognize that we are all equal and we must be able to come together to face many challenges facing our world," he concluded.

At the same time, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), cited the need to strengthen nations' commitment to human rights.

Recalling the possibility that the Holocaust carries a memory that we must not forget, she said, adding: "We must resist anti-Semitism, in whatever form it takes, in this fight" in which everyone must play.

**Boston** — Holocaust Remembrance Day has long been deployed to commemorate the Holocaust's horrific immensity. In a few people acted to save lives in occupied Europe. During the Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony held in Boston, dozens of countries spoke about their efforts and their relevance to the world.

"Rescue stories carry a powerful reality, and bring us back to the dimension we can identify with," said Harrowitz, a Holocaust survivor at Boston University and a member of the Boston Holocaust Remembrance Committee—organized by the city.

Speaking of the need to "recreate what happened" in Italy's consul-general to



Survivors attend a commemoration event at the former Nazi German concentration camp Auschwitz II-Birkenau on International Holocaust Remembrance Day in Oswiecim, Poland.

incitement to hatred," he stated, adding how they were denigrated and smeared, "one after another, their rights were refused, and finally, even their humanity was denied."

Mr. Zeid pointed to the statement of Primo Levi, who survived the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp: "It happened, therefore it can happen again."

"As we honor the victims of the Holocaust,"

De Santis, shared the story of Agnese Tribbioli, the last nun of the convent in Florence who was persecuted by the Nazis.

For hiding and protecting Jews, Communist refugees, and others, organized by Yad Vashem, the "Righteous Among the Nations."

Like dozens of countries,



# THE HOLOCAUST REMEMBERED

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tries, Italy commemo-

rates the Holocaust each year on January 27,  
the date when Auschwitz-Birkenau was liber-  
ated in 1945. When asked about the role of  
Holocaust education in Italy, De Santis  
referred to his country's "strong literature and  
filmography" with regard to the murder of  
8,000 Italian Jews in the death camps.

Attacks on the press, educators and other  
"intellectuals" were among the first actions  
taken by the Nazis in occupied Poland, said  
Marek Lesniewski-Laas, honorary consul-  
general of Poland to New England. He noted

Leikind, his father would not have survived  
without assistance from — for instance — the  
head of a mosque who gave him false identi-  
ty papers, or countless townspeople who  
turned a blind eye to his presence in some-  
one's home.

"Even in times of overwhelming darkness,  
virtue can still survive," said Leikind.

**Switzerland** — After the Second World  
War, 90 per cent of the Holocaust survivors  
were between 16 and 45 years old. Today, the  
youngest survivors, who were born in the last

tion is one of several events surrounding the  
annual observance of the International Day of  
Commemoration in memory of the victims of  
the Holocaust.

Anita Winter, President of the Gamaraal  
Foundation, which helps alleviate financial dis-  
tress of Holocaust survivors, is the child of sur-  
vivors. Seeing the difficulty with which the sur-  
vivors spoke of their experiences, she felt  
deeply thankful to them for sharing their stories.

According to Ms. Winter, many told her per-  
sonally that they felt it was their duty to speak  
on behalf of the six million who can no longer  
speak for themselves. For her, their resilience  
is amazing.

Born in 1932, Nina Weil lived in what is  
today the Czech Republic. In 1942, she was  
deported to *Theresienstadt* and later arrived  
at Auschwitz with her mother, who died at age  
38 of exhaustion. Ms. Weil survived a "selec-  
tion" by camp doctor Josef Mengele as well  
as a labor camp.

Ms. Weil shared her distress: "They tattooed  
me: 71978. I cried a lot. Not because of the  
pain, no, because of the number. Because I  
had lost the name, I was just a number. My  
mother said, 'Do not cry, nothing has hap-  
pened. When we get home, you visit the  
dance school and get a big bracelet so no  
one sees the number.' I never went to dance  
school and never got the bracelet."

Ms. Winter recalled an unsettling story that  
Ms. Weil shared with her about taking a trip  
to the hospital for blood work, where a young  
technician mistook the number she had tat-  
tooned on her arm at the concentration camp  
for her phone number.

Eduard Kornfeld survived both Auschwitz  
and *Dachau* camps. He grew up in Bratislava,  
Slovakia, and was arrested in 1944 while hid-  
ing with his brother in Hungary.

After the war, in which he lost his entire fam-  
ily, he arrived in *Davos* weighing only 27 kilos,  
or 60 pounds, weak and sick from exhaustion.  
There Swiss doctors saved his life.

Mr. Kornfeld said, "We were deported in a  
cattle car, the journey took three days. When  
the train suddenly stopped, I heard someone  
shouting outside in German, 'Get out!' I  
looked out of the carriage and saw SS officers  
beating people they thought were moving too  
slowly. A mother wasn't moving quick enough  
because she was trying to take care of her  
child, so the SS officers took her infant and  
threw him in the same truck they put the old  
and sick. Those people were sent to be  
gassed immediately."

Klaus Appel was born in 1925 in Berlin. After  
his father, Paul, and his older brother, Willi-  
Wolf, were arrested and sent to Auschwitz, he  
and his sister came to England in one of the  
last *Kindertransport* humanitarian programs.  
After the war, Klaus married a Swiss woman,  
moved to western Switzerland and worked as a  
watchmaker. He died in April 2017, 10 days  
before this exhibit was launched in Switzerland.

Mr. Appel explained, "We were at home  
when the doorbell rang. They had come to  
arrest my father. 'Are you Mr. Appel?' they  
asked him. 'Then come with us.' My father  
just calmly turned to me and said, 'You are  
going to school.' That was the last thing he  
ever said to me. I never saw him again."

Reflecting upon Mr. Appel, who passed away  
in 2017, Ms. Winter reminisced how he worked  
hard to share his experiences with young peo-  
ple, visiting schools and universities.



Images from the "Flashes of Memory" exhibit now on display at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

the example of *Krakow*, a university city,  
where hundreds of professors and other  
Polish leaders were murdered soon after the  
German invasion.

"By way of destruction of history, they  
burned the archives in Warsaw," said  
Lesniewski-Laas, whose remarks focused on  
Tadeusz Gebethner, a well-known Polish soc-  
cer player who died after sustaining injuries in  
the 1944 Warsaw uprising. During the war,  
Gebethner sheltered Jews and helped some  
of them flee to Hungary, efforts for which Yad  
Vashem honored him posthumously.

Despite concerns expressed about the  
potential for rescue stories to obscure the  
totality of what took place during the  
Holocaust, the accounts can be used to  
"widen our lens" and "think about ways to  
meet the lessons of dark times today," said  
Robert Leikind, director of the American  
Jewish Committee's New England chapter  
and event moderator.

"My brother and I owe our lives to these  
nameless, courageous people," said Leikind,  
whose father spent the war on the run from  
the Nazis in occupied France. According to

phase of the war, are over age 70.

Some endured concentration and exter-  
mination camps, while others escaped by flee-  
ing or hiding.

For the majority, returning to their homeland  
was not an option, so they emigrated to Israel  
or the United States.

It wasn't until the investigations of the  
Bergier Commission on dormant assets in the  
late 1990s that the public became aware of  
the Holocaust survivors living in  
Switzerland — most of whom traveled to the  
country only after the war.

The number of survivors is steadily  
decreasing.

Switzerland — which now presides over the  
International Holocaust Remembrance  
Alliance that unites governments and experts  
to strengthen and promote Holocaust educa-  
tion and remembrance globally — sponsored  
the exhibition on survivors at United Nations  
Headquarters in New York.

"Portraits of Holocaust Survivors" tells the  
stories of individuals who are among the last  
survivors, and how they carried on with their  
lives in Switzerland after the war. The exhibi-



# KIELCE: THE POST-HOLOCAUST POGROM THAT POLAND IS STILL FIGHTING OVER

(Continued from page 4)

the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany who focuses on modern Polish Jewish history

wounds. But for Bialek, bringing dialogue to this moment isn't just about reopening old wounds — it is about lancing a boil. "Each of us has a tough

Loewinger interviews several older residents who claim that the riot was instigated by Soviet intelligence, or even that Jews themselves staged a massacre by dragging bodies to the scene.

Unlike the better-known massacre at *Jedwabne*, when Poles living under Nazi control herded several hundred of their Jewish neighbors into a barn — and burned them alive — the tragedy in *Kielce* was born out of postwar tensions.

Poland was on the brink of civil war, its citizens were impoverished, and at the time many believed Jews were Communists or spies. "You have to understand, Poland was a pretty miserable place in 1946," says Loewinger. "It was poverty stricken. There were Jews floating around ... There was a lot of anger all over."

Yet there are clear parallels. *Jedwabne* happened in 1941, directly after the Nazi conquest of Poland; the accepted narrative is that the killing was carried out by Poles under pressure by Nazi Germans. In *Kielce*, the

other, the blood libel, and ... equating Jews with Communism, can turn into mob-like violence."

In a 2016 television interview, Poland's education minister Anna Zalewska appeared to deny Polish responsibility for any involvement in both of these historical events. When asked directly, "Who murdered *Kielce's* Jews during the town pogrom?" she was unable to answer the question. She demurred, before finally answering: "Anti-Semites." She did not admit that these anti-Semites were Poles. When controversy erupted, Zalewska received support from Foreign Minister Witold Wszczykowski, who said her comments had been "misunderstood."

"It has to do with the Polish government, the effort to in a way rewrite history," says Sliwa. "To put more emphasis on heroism and patriotism of the Polish nation during the war and after the war. It seems like it is an attempt to take hold over, to control, how the past is narrated."

The concern that Poland is rewriting its history feels more relevant now than ever. Ever since the 2015 victory of the Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) party, the right-wing populist party led by Jarosław Kaczyński, the government has pursued what is openly referred to as *polityka historyczna*, or "history policy." Journalists and historians like Sliwa, however, call it "politicized his-



Group portrait of Polish Jewish survivors in *Kielce* taken in 1945. Many were killed one year later, in the 1946 pogrom.

and the Holocaust. "That despite what Jews had endured during the Holocaust, and despite the fact that the local Polish population had observed all that, had witnessed all of that ... Jews cannot feel safe in Poland."

Sliwa points out that *Kielce* was not the first postwar pogrom against Jews in Poland; smaller outbursts of violence took place the previous year in *Krakow* and the town of *Rzeszow*.

In the years that followed, the *Kielce* pogrom — like so many atrocities committed or abetted by Poles during the war — became taboo. There were no memorials. When Bogdan Bialek, a Catholic Pole from *Białystok*, moved to *Kielce* in 1970, he sensed immediately that something was wrong. In *Bogdan's Journey* Bialek remembers sensing a deep guilt or shame among residents when it came to talking about the pogrom. He calls this oppression of silence a "disease."

Bialek became drawn to the abscess — what Jewish historian Michael Birnbaum referred to at the event as "the looming presence of absence" — that seemed to be haunting the town. Over the past 30 years, he has made it his mission to bring this memory back to life and engage today's residents of *Kielce* in dialogue through town meetings, memorials and conversations with survivors.

Unsurprisingly, he has encountered pushback. The story of the *Kielce* massacre — which the film pieces together using the testimony of some of the last living victims and their descendants — is inconvenient. It challenges Poles. It opens old

moment in his past," he says in the film. "Either we were harmed, or we harmed someone. Until we name it, we drag the past behind us."

Since the collapse of Communism in 1989, Poland has gone through a soul-searching process that has progressed in bursts, with moments of clarity but also worrisome backsliding. Polish Jews have come out of the shadows, establishing new communities and reincorporating Jews back into the country's fabric. In the mid-2000s, reports began to emerge documenting a curious trend: a "Jewish revival" of sorts sweeping Poland and beyond. Polish Jews reclaimed their roots; Polish-Jewish book publishers and museums sprung up; once-decimated Jewish quarters began to thrive again.

Part of that shift has been a reexamination of Poland's history, Bialek said in an interview with Smithsonian.com. "We began with no understanding at all, with a kind of denial, and over time it's been changing," Bialek said in Polish, translated by Michał Jaskulski, one of the film's directors. "These days it's also easier for [Poles] to see from the perspective of the victims, which didn't happen before. And we truly can notice how the pogrom strongly impacted Polish-Jewish relations."

But there is still work to be done, he readily admits. While Poles today don't deny that the pogrom actually happened, they do debate who deserves responsibility for the atrocity. Conspiracy theories ran rampant when Bialek first moved to *Kielce*, and he reports that they are still common today. In the film, co-director Larry



Funeral procession for the victims of the *Kielce* pogrom.

Polish people are equally "blameless." Both of these narratives allow Poles to cling to a national mythology of victimhood and heroism. As Polish journalist and dissident Konstanty Gebert wrote in *Moment*, "Raised for generations with the (legitimate) belief that theirs was a martyred nation, many Poles found it increasingly hard to accept that their victimhood did not automatically grant them the moral high ground when it came to their behavior toward Jews during the Holocaust."

Moreover, says Sliwa, "Both of these events show how dangerous these conspiracy theories are, and how these myths about the so-called

tory." Of course, she adds, "there was discussion about this even before Law and Justice came to rule Poland. But now they've taken over, it's become so public and acceptable. And official, really official."

You can see traces of this "history policy" in how the *Kielce* story has evolved over time. Despite the facts Gross and others have detailed, a 2004 report by the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) — a state research institute that examines crimes committed by the Nazi and Communist regimes and routinely minimizes Poland's role in the Holocaust — concluded that the *Kielce* pogrom was the result of a "mishap."



## NAZI HAVENS IN SOUTH AMERICA

(Continued from page 6)

education at home would find a welcoming haven in Argentina. The “Odessa” theory, popularized in the 1972 novel *The Odessa File* and the 1974 movie of the same name, was that a secret group of former SS officers had banded together and was helping former Nazi officials to escape postwar Europe. While there was no “Odessa” group, the truth was far stranger: some of the most senior officials in governments, the Catholic church and aid organizations actively worked to help Nazis escape justice, often sending them to South America.



Alois Hudal.

Peron's key point man in creating a pipeline for Nazis was the Argentinian Cardinal Antonio Caggiano. He passed along Peron's top-secret message to a cardinal in France, who communicated with Nazis living in France, helping usher them to Argentina. Peron invested considerable manpower in smuggling Nazis to Argentina, even setting up a secret office in Bern to help handle the paperwork. In spring 1946, the first French Nazis began receiving Argentinian tourist visas and setting sail for South America.

Many of these Nazis escaping to South America were aided by Catholic officials. Some merely wanted to help Catholics escape from the rising Communist governments in central Europe. Other officials, however, were actively anti-Semitic and desired to help Nazis elude justice. One of the highest-ranking Catholic officials who aided Nazi criminals was

Bishop Alois Hudal, an Austrian-born admirer of Hitler. Bishop Hudal worked in Rome, ministering to Axis POWs, and tirelessly aided war criminals by providing them with false Vatican-issued identity papers allowing them to gain passports from the International Red Cross and travel to South America.

Bishop Hudal worked with a network of officials throughout Europe; it was he, with the aid of a Franciscan friar in Italy, who provided false papers that allowed senior Nazi Adolf Eichmann to sail for Argentina. Hudal's activities helping “refugees” (many of whom were Nazis evading justice) garnered him much praise and financial support. The American Catholic Bishops Conference even approved a monthly stipend of \$200 to Bishop Hudal to help him in his work.

The work of Bishop Hudal and other Catholic officials to help Nazis flee was an open secret. A 1947 memo sent from the United States' Italian embassy noted that “The Vatican of course is the largest single organization involved in the illegal movement of emigrants” out of Europe in those years.

Bishop Hudal and other Catholic officials had a willing accomplice in Carl Jacob Burckhardt, president of the International Red Cross in the years after World War II. In his 2011 book *Nazis on the Run: How Hitler's Henchmen Fled Justice*, historian Gerald Steinacher chronicles Burckhardt's anti-Semitism, as well as his penchant for helping Germans, including former Nazis. It's hard to know just how many former Nazis fled Europe using false Red Cross papers; in 2012, German lawyers, after examining recently declassified archives, estimated that thousands of Nazis were similarly able to obtain false Red Cross passports. About 800 SS members were able to flee to Argentina alone using these false documents.

One Nazi who fled to Argentina was Horst Wagner, who aided in the deportation and murder of at least 350,000 Jews. Wagner's story would have remained unknown were it not for the efforts of German family therapist turned author Gisela Heidenreich, whose mother Edith met and fell in love with Horst Wagner during the

war. In 2012, Ms. Heidenreich published a work documenting Wagner's escape from justice, *Beloved Criminal: A Diplomat in the Service of the Final Solution*. After escaping



Otto Skorzeny.

from an Allied-run jail in 1948, Wagner followed a path dubbed the “Kloster Line,” receiving sanctuary in convents and churches in Austria before heading to Rome. There, Bishop Hudal helped him obtain false papers and sail to Argentina.

Franz Stangl, the commander of the extermination camps of Sobibor and Treblinka who oversaw the murder of nearly one and a half million Jews, was another senior Nazi Ms. Heidenreich uncovered who followed the same path. Stangl was aided by Catholic church officials and eventually fled to Brazil on a false Red Cross passport. Stangl was eventually extradited to Germany in the 1960s and died in jail. Wagner met a different fate: he was never extradited and lived to old age in the Argentinian town of Bariloche, near Patagonia where he celebrated at weekly get-togethers in local beer halls, singing Nazi songs with other SS comrades who called Argentina home.

In addition to being ideologically sympathetic to Nazi ideology, Juan Peron also had a financial motive in bringing so many Nazis to his country. In 2005, drawing on government archives that had just been declassified, German journalist Gaby Weber found that Peron systematically used his government to launder money belonging to Nazi-owned companies, whose profits would otherwise have been seized as part of criminal inves-

tigations. In *The German Connection: The Laundering of Nazi Money in Argentina*, Ms. Weber estimates the value of the money-laundering operation at well over one billion dollars.

A Mercedes-Benz plant in the suburbs of Buenos Aires might have been the center of the program bringing German wealth and former Nazis to Argentina, Ms. Weber uncovered. Adolf Eichmann worked at the plant, first under his own name, and later under an alias. According to Ms. Weber, Eichmann might have worked as a paymaster, “financing the movement and flight to Argentina” of other Nazis, before he was captured by Israeli forces in 1960, tried, and executed in 1962.

Otto Skorzeny, an SS commander who was known as Hitler's favorite Nazi commando, is another senior Nazi figure who might have arranged for other Nazis to find homes in South America. Escaping from an Allied prison in 1947 with the help of local pro-Nazi citizens, Skorzeny moved to Madrid, where he ran an import/export agency that was rumored to be a front for organizing the escape of Nazis to South America. Skorzeny made numerous trips to Argentina, eventually working for a time as a bodyguard to Juan Peron's wildly popular second wife, Eva, known as Evita.

Evita seems to have been an enthusiastic helper of Nazis in her own right. She was reported to have been romantically involved with Skorzeny, and also might have been active in laundering money from German Nazis. In 2011, Brazilian authors Leandro Narloch and Duda Teixeira wrote, “It is still suspected that among (Eva Peron's) possessions, there were pieces of Nazi treasure that came from rich Jewish families killed in concentration camps.”

A generation ago, thousands of Nazis eluded justice by fleeing to South America. Today, as a new generation of historians delves into archives and other records, the truth about how so much of South America became a Nazi haven is being uncovered. It's too late to try most of these Nazi war criminals, but their victims, and all of us, deserve to know the truth about this dark chapter in South America's past.

## HOLOCAUST SUITCASE PACKS STORIES OF SURVIVAL

BY RONDA ROBINSON, AISH.COM

Paula Neuman Gris's 75-year-old blue suitcase is an old friend. It accompanied her from her childhood home in Czernowitz, Romania, to the killing fields of the Holocaust to a displaced persons' camp in Germany and across the ocean to America.

The suitcase held necessities and secrets. The journey began in 1941 when all the Jews of Czernowitz received the dreaded order to pack

two bags and be ready to leave in two hours. It was part of the Romanian government's directive to “cleanse the Earth” of Jews.

A year previously, after the Russians had occupied her hometown of Czernowitz, they seized her father, Simon Neuman, a men's haberdasher, as a slave laborer. “They arrested my father because he was a capitalist. They had their own political agenda. He was imprisoned. At that time, my mother was pregnant with their second child,” Paula says in an

Aish.com interview.

Her mother, Etká Neuman, would leave three-year-old Paula alone every day to visit him in prison and take him food. Then Simon disappeared with 10,000 Jewish men whom the Russians deported to Siberia. What became of him from there is unclear.

Meanwhile, Etká bore their baby. Anti-Jewish laws and a curfew were in force. Jews couldn't be admitted to public hospitals and weren't supposed to leave their homes at night.

However, Etká went into labor at night, so she risked her life and sneaked out onto the street to reach her Jewish midwife.

“My memory of that night was she left me alone – probably saying, ‘I love you, I have to leave now.’ She locked the door and went away. My memory was standing frozen as a three-year-old little girl, looking at the doorknob all night long. It was probably the beginning of a long period of experiencing terror and fear and the  
(Continued on page 13)



# RESCUED CHILDREN FINALLY IDENTIFY IRISH AID WORKER WHO SAVED THEM FROM AUSCHWITZ

BY MICHAEL RIORDAN,  
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Two young boys huddled silently under a blanket in the back of a large black car as it crossed under the gaze of the French prison guards and out the wooden gates of *Rivesaltes* internment camp. It was September 25, 1942.



Mary Elmes, who secretly brought Jewish children to be saved from Auschwitz.

Escaping deportation to Auschwitz and certain death in the gas chambers, Rene and Mario Freund, aged two and six years old, were driven high up into the Pyrenees Mountains to a remote village.

The boys had already faced danger before, as their father had tried and failed to smuggle them across the border into Switzerland.

After arriving in the hills, they were met by a priest and moved again to a small village further away from *Rivesaltes*. They were to be enrolled in a Catholic school and hidden by local families.

Decades later Rene and Mario — now named Ronald Friend and Michael Freund — fulfilled a lifelong ambition to identify their heroic liberator, the Irish aid worker Mary Elmes, and nominate her as Righteous Among the Nations.

"I wanted to know who took me out of the camp, and I found a document in the American Friends Service Committee [Quaker] files that identified her," said retired New York-based Prof. Ronald Friend in a new documentary about Elmes.

"I owe my life to Elmes and I feel very grateful. But I am just one of many who should feel the same," said brother Michael Freund.

Now, thanks to the quest by the two grateful brothers, the story of her personal valor has been highlighted in a new documentary, *It Tolls for Thee*.

The film is narrated by Winona Ryder, who herself had relatives murdered in the Holocaust and who was nominated for a Grammy for her audio version of *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

## A DISPLACED PEOPLE

After the fall of France, the collaborationist Vichy government

imprisoned thousands of Jews fleeing from the Nazis in the camp near *Perpignan*.

Enduring appalling conditions, families were in dire need of the assistance given by the Quaker organization with which Elmes was a volunteer. And then the Nazis ordered the transportation of all Jews to the east.

Despite efforts by French officials to

convince inmates that they were going to farms and factories, the Jewish prisoners knew the fate that awaited them. Some committed suicide. Parents were separated from their children. Elmes didn't believe the lie either. Risking being sent to Auschwitz herself, she was determined to save as many children as possible.

Between August and October 1942, nine convoys took 2,300 Jews from *Rivesaltes* camp to *Drancy* and on to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

But Elmes saved 200 children, driving many of them through the mountains to Catholic orphanages, and managing to smuggle others across the border into neutral Spain.

Rene and Mario's father, Hans Freund, approached Elmes in the camp and asked her to take his two boys away. She agreed. The boys never saw their father again.

## HISTORY OF A HERO

Elmes was born in the city of Cork in 1908, and graduated from Trinity College Dublin with a degree in literature. Her academic excellence earned her recognition from the London School of Economics, which awarded her a scholarship to pursue international studies.

During the Spanish Civil War, she volunteered to manage a hospital in northern Spain, returning to Ireland after the fall of Barcelona. However, hearing of the plight of the Republican refugees who fled to France, she traveled there to organize aid for them.

Being from neutral Ireland, she was able to stay on in *Rivesaltes* after World War II began, when others were forced to leave. She was there when the Jewish refugees arrived and began her selfless work soon thereafter.

In the documentary, one of the

saved children, George Koltein, recalled escaping from Paris to French-controlled Vichy after police raided their apartment building. However, they were arrested on arrival and sent to *Rivesaltes*.

Koltein's father was put into a work gang, but Elmes smuggled the children out of the camp and into the orphanage of Saint Christopher in *Perpignan*.

The orphanage was run by another woman who has also been recognized by Yad Vashem — Lois Gunden, who sheltered the children among the local orphans where police would not find them.

"Elmes drove seven children to Saint Christopher's that day," Koltein recalled in his documentary interview.

"Mary Elmes and Lois Gunden together formed a chain of solidarity with the Jews," he said. "If discovered, anyone attempting to rescue Jewish children would be sent to the death camps with them."

"I was amazed when I first heard Elmes's story, how it had remained so

unknown for so long," director Andrew Gallimore told *The Times of Israel*.



Children in *Rivesaltes* camp during World War II.

Elmes did such great work for the refugees," he said. "But she had to be vigilant not to be seen giving special assistance to the Jews who were the most in need of it."

Gallimore said he finds the fact that these terrible events happened in France "incredible."

"One of the inmates, Paul Niedermayer, asked during filming how could this have happened in France — the home of the Enlightenment," he added.

"When we were working in *Perpignan*," said Gallimore, "I felt that the Pyrenees became a metaphor for freedom. The Spanish Republicans crossing one way and the Jews in the opposite direction — much in the same way as the Mediterranean is today."

Meanwhile, Denis Peschanski of the French National Center for Scientific Research raised in the documentary the terrible moral dilemma that Elmes and other aid workers faced in *Rivesaltes*.

"They knew the truth about the

## TIRELESS SACRIFICE

Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Center said the aid workers in *Rivesaltes* had a unique opportunity to help some of the prisoners who were already designated to be murdered.

"On a daily basis Elmes worked tirelessly, driving long distances scrounging milk and blankets for the children in the camp," explained historian and founder of the Holocaust Art Restoration Project (HARP) Marc Masurovsky.

"Her superiors, however, who knew of her other activities, warned her not to do too much for fear that their humanitarian work would be halted," he said.

But Elmes persisted. In 1943, when Vichy was finally taken over by the Nazis, Elmes was arrested by the Gestapo on suspicion of aiding Jews and sent to the notorious prison in *Fresnes* near Paris, which housed

resistance members and political prisoners.

She spent six traumatic months there, but after intervention by the Irish Consulate and the International Red Cross, she was released. By the time she was freed, there were no Jews left in *Rivesaltes*.

After the war Elmes remained in *Perpignan*, where she married a French man with whom she had two children.

Her story became more widely known following a 1998 Mexican documentary on the Spanish Civil War in which she agreed to be interviewed. She died in 2002.

After her death, Freund discovered her identity and asked her family's permission to nominate her as Righteous Among the Nations. They agreed, and she was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2013, becoming Ireland's first recipient.

"My mother never wanted any attention and she did not wish to recall the war," said her son Patrick Danjou. "She turned down the French government's offer of the Legion D'Honneur."



## HOLOCAUST SUITCASE PACKS STORIES OF SURVIVAL

(Continued from page 11)

sense of helplessness," recalls Paula.

Her mother made it to the midwife's, where she spent the night. The next morning, she wrapped up her new baby in a blanket and walked home.

Paula declares that her childhood ended at that point. "I became my mother's partner until the end of the war in protecting and keeping that child alive."

Her mother managed to obtain an



The blue suitcase.

exemption written by the town mayor and allowing them to remain in the ghetto for nine months after the order came in November 1941 to transport Jews to the Romanian-administered territory called Transnistria, what Paula describes as the largest killing field of the Holocaust. One-quarter of a million Jews died of execution, disease and starvation there.

November was the coldest month on record in years, and many Jews piled into cattle cars froze to death in transit. Waiting nine months for the transport in June when the weather wasn't cold would give her baby sister Sylvia a better chance of survival.

Paula remembers the little blue suitcase's role. Her mother was allowed two suitcases, but needed one hand free to carry Sylvia, so she took just one suitcase packed with photo-

graphs, documents, diapers, a towel and soap. In the corners Etká stuffed money and jewelry with which to bribe officials if necessary, and they left home.

"I'm sure I must have said, 'Can I take my blanket? Can I take my bear?' Instead, I had to carry a soup can. I think that was probably the last time I cried," says Paula.

Suitcases remain etched in her memory from the eyes of a child. She recalls masses of people pushing toward the transport to Transnistria. Running, she held onto her mother's skirt. "You had to keep moving, otherwise you'd get trampled."

With her mother performing back-breaking forced labor for the war effort in the rock quarries of Transnistria, Paula was the sole caretaker of her baby sister during the day. The girls learned to hide and stay quiet in the vacated hut they occupied. Fear and hunger left them with no energy to play, with one day blending into the next, unbroken by birth-days or holidays.

"There was a very long darkness. I don't remember very much of it except sheltering my sister, waiting in an abandoned house for my mother to come back, not crying, being a caregiver to my sister, being as grown up as I could possibly be, which means trying to stay brave."

Immediately after returning home from work every night, Etká would wash the girls' clothes in a stream. As Paula explains, "Cleanliness was medicine for us, keeping off bedbugs and lice. After that my mother nursed her baby. The three of us slept in a cot together."

The family survived like that for two years, with little food and no medi-

cine. Paula learned to delay gratification. If she had a slice of bread, she never ate it all at once. Had the Germans not retreated from the Russians, she doesn't believe her family would have been able to hold out much longer under the lash of Nazism and Romanian anti-Semitism.

Their troubles were far from over after liberation. "When we went back to Czernowitz and discovered there was no one left, no one to help us or to rejoice at our return, it was a very difficult time. We lost many things in the war. Most of all we lost



Paula Gris.

who we were. We had been treated like animals."

Her mother had kept alive the hope of reuniting with her husband. But he never came back and was presumed killed. So she and her two young daughters lived in a displaced persons camp in the American Zone of Occupation in West Germany for seven years before emigrating to the United States in 1951.

Paula yearned to blend in as an American and cast off the cobwebs of her past. She quickly learned English and applied herself at school. Her mother maintained a strong sense of Jewish identity for them all. Paula worked as a junior counselor one summer at a day camp in Pleasantville, N.Y., run by the Young Men's Hebrew

Association. She met a senior counselor named Bill Gris, who was a rabbi's son and her future husband.

"The real reason I married him was I loved the smell of his family's home," she says jokingly. "It was clean in a way we immigrants never managed to get. The food was delicious; his bubbie did all the cooking. His bubbie loved me, so she heaped plates high for me."

After Bill finished Army duty, his and Paula's suitcases would come to rest in Atlanta when he took a job there. Meanwhile, Sylvia would become a wife, mother, photographer and artist who now lives in upstate New York.

Paula began reclaiming her prewar memories at the first World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in Jerusalem in 1981.

"That was the most incredible homecoming for all of us survivors. All of us had the same feeling: that God had put his Hand in the fire and had pulled out seeds to reseed the Jewish world."

She also reclaimed her tears upon hearing "Hatikva," the national anthem of Israel that promises a future for the Jewish people. Tears also well up when she hears young Jewish children singing songs of hope. A grandmother many times over, Paula appreciates the Jewish people's optimism and resiliency, building families and contributing to the world after seeing the worst in humanity.

The blue suitcase traveled around the world during her childhood and beyond, until it landed in a glass display case at the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta, where Paula is an educator. She and her husband, Bill, have lived in the community 60 years, and she continues to tell her story to make a young Romanian girl's voice heard.

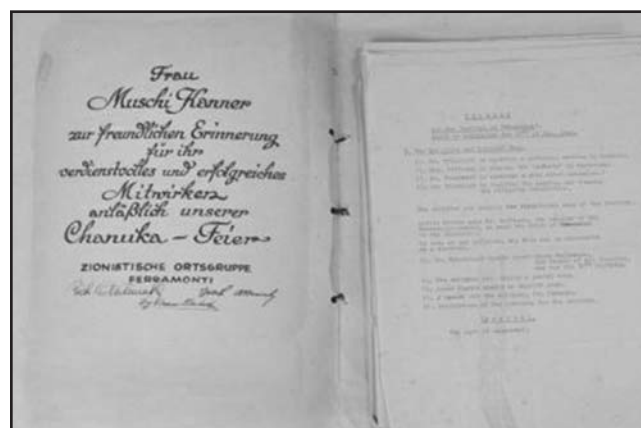
## EVIDENCE OF HANUKKAH IN ITALIAN INTERNMENT CAMP REVEALED

BY YORI YALON, ISRAEL HAYOM

Yad Vashem recently acquired a program detailing a Hanukkah celebration that took place at the Ferramonti internment camp in Italy in December 1944. The booklet's cover was stamped with the camp's symbol; above the stamp is a Star of David with a menorah illustrated inside it. The program arrived at Yad Vashem, Israel's national Holocaust museum, within the framework of the museum's "Operation Picking up the Pieces" project — a national campaign to save personal items from the Holocaust.

The unique booklet was preserved over the years by Yehudit Yitzhak, who decided to give it to Yad Vashem for future generations. Yitzhak's parents married in Danzig, where her father worked as a factory manager. In the spring of 1940, when her mother was pregnant, the couple fled Danzig and sought to immigrate to Palestine via the Italian seaport city of Trieste in the country's northeast.

From there the couple arrived in Benghazi, Libya, where they were supposed to board a ship, but they



The saved Hanukkah program from the Ferramonti internment camp in Italy.

were detained and sent to Naples. Yitzhak was born in Naples in September 1940. After her birth, she was sent along with her parents to the Ferramonti internment camp. The family was held at the camp for nearly four and a half years until 1945,

when they finally immigrated to Palestine and settled down in Tel Aviv.

Initially, conditions in Ferramonti, located in southern Italy, were tolerable, but they deteriorated gradually along with Italy's situation in World War II. Jews at the camp, however, were not harmed or deported to death camps in Poland, and were permitted to receive food packages and practice their religion.

The Ferramonti camp was liberated in September 1943, but a large number of Jews stayed there until December 1945. The unique Hanukkah celebration took place on December 10, 1944, after the camp had been liberated by Allied forces. The theme of the program was the move from darkness to light and was a testament to the man-

ner in which Jews observed their holidays even in the most trying of times.

Yitzhak, 77, still lives in Tel Aviv. She was 4 years old when the Hanukkah celebration at Ferramonti took place.

"I have memories from Ferramonti," she recounted. "The Italians let the Jews have autonomy. There was a synagogue at the camp, and there were cultural events. With that, the conditions there weren't easy. There were restrictions and barbed-wire fences, and the food wasn't nourishing. The area was malaria-stricken. The treatment was humane thanks to the Italian management [of the camp]."

In Israel, Yitzhak raised a family with three children and now has six grandchildren.

Of her decision to donate the Ferramonti Hanukkah program, she said: "[Yad Vashem] is the right place for it to be. It's an important asset that needs to be preserved and stored, so that future generations can understand and appreciate life at the Ferramonti camp."



# SECRET ANTI-NAZI DIARY GIVES VOICE TO MAN ON THE STREET

**Friedrich Kellner's account, starting from 1939, about the Nazi regime's atrocities and the unfolding destruction of European Jewry is being published in English for the first time.**

BY MATT LBOVIC,  
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Half a century after Friedrich Kellner gifted his Nazi-era diary to a grandson in America, the clandestine writings were published in English by Cambridge University Press in January.

A vociferous critic of the Nazis, Kellner used his diary to document the regime's atrocities beginning in 1939. The small town "justice inspector" wrote 676 entries, drawing from numerous sources and a formidable knowledge of history. In addition to

Kellner's diary, not only directed toward the Nazis, but also with regard to his fellow citizens and the world for allowing Hitler to rise.

"There is no punishment that would be hard enough to be applied to these Nazi beasts," wrote Kellner. "Of course, when the retribution comes, the innocent will have to suffer along with them. But because ninety-nine percent of the German population is guilty, directly or indirectly, for the present situation, we can only say that those who travel together will hang together."

With indictments like that, it's no wonder Kellner's full diary was not published in Germany until 2011.

Prior to Hitler wresting power, Kellner, a veteran of World War I, was a public opponent of Hitler and his movement. A lifelong Social

"To let people who are completely innocent suffer for the deeds of another is reminiscent of the horrific deeds of wild beasts in times long ago," wrote Kellner on October 26, 1941, following the murder of 100 French civilians by German forces in retaliation for the shooting of two officers.

Kellner's accounts of the Holocaust were concise, including his report on an early Jewish "action" in Poland.

"A soldier on leave here said he personally witnessed a terrible atrocity in the occupied part of Poland," wrote Kellner in 1941. "He watched as naked Jewish men and women were placed in front of a long deep ditch and, upon the order of the SS, were shot by Ukrainians in the back of their heads, and they fell into the ditch. Then the ditch was filled in as screams kept coming from it."

A few weeks later, Kellner wrote about "Jews being transported somewhere" and "treated worse than animals" along the way. In another entry, he reported on the deportation of specific Jewish families from his town.

"This cruel, despicable, and sadistic treatment against the Jews that has lasted now several years — with its final goal of extermination — is the biggest stain on the honor of Germany," wrote Kellner on December 15, 1941. "They will never be able to erase these crimes." (This is much prior to formal implementation of the Final Solution.)

This clandestine reporting of facts was not enough for the inflamed justice inspector, who also dared to criticize the regime outside of his diary. For this, Kellner was labelled a "bad influence" on the population of *Laubach* by its mayor. He was threatened with imprisonment in a concentration camp along with his wife, Pauline, and plans were drawn up to punish him after the Final Victory.

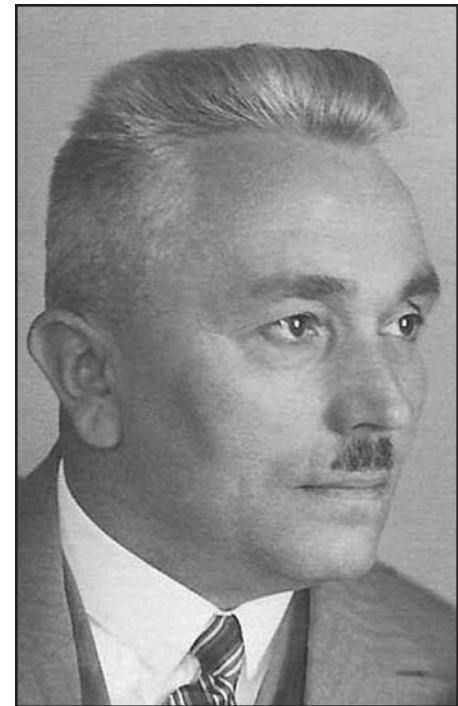
"He should be made to disappear," wrote Nazi official Ernst Monnig in a report on Kellner. Despite constant danger, the diarist continued to seek out friendly ears. Seemingly fearless, he sometimes gathered up anti-Nazi leaflets dropped by the Allies in order to place them strategically around town.

Following the liberation of Germany, Kellner was appointed deputy mayor of *Laubach*, where he helped with denazification and to revive the Social Democratic Party. He died in 1970, long before his *My Opposition* diary made it to readers' attention.

In 1968, with two years left to live, Friedrich Kellner gave his diary to an American-born grandson, Robert Scott Kellner.

"I could not fight the Nazis in the present, as they had the power to still my voice," Kellner told his grandson at the time. "So I decided to fight them in the future."

According to Robert Scott Kellner, a retired English professor, the diary



Friedrich Kellner in 1934.

was his grandfather's attempt to provide future generations with a weapon "against any resurgence of such evil." As the book's translator and editor, Kellner has also worked on a documentary film about his grandfather and several museum exhibitions based on the diary.

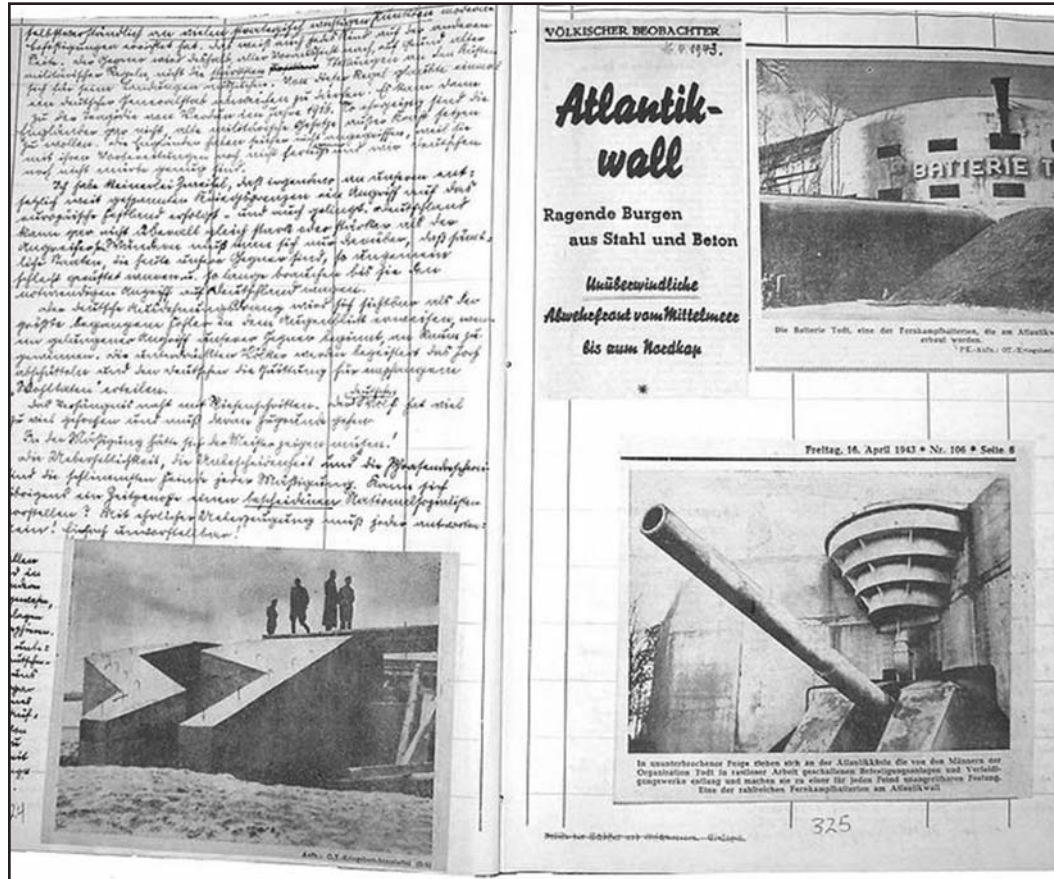
For more than 30 years after Friedrich Kellner's death, few people outside of the family saw the crisply penned pages of *My Opposition*. The writings got a big break in 2005, when the George Bush Presidential Library exhibited portions of the diary for public viewing. That endorsement helped bring about the German publication of the diary, which *Der Spiegel* said presented a "challenging" but essential narrative of wartime Germany.

January's publication of *My Opposition* in English is another milestone in his grandfather's legacy, Kellner told *The Times of Israel*.

Seventy-eight years ago, Friedrich Kellner addressed the issue of "blaming Jews" in one of his early diary entries. As was his habit, the activist refuted the regime's lies and accused his neighbors of complicity.

"To keep the people from directing their rage at their actual oppressor, rulers in every age have used diversionary tactics to shield their own guilt," wrote Kellner in 1939.

"The entire action against the Jews was no different from throwing down a piece of meat for the beasts. 'The Jews are our misfortune,' cry out the Nazis. The correct answers of the people would have been, 'No, not the Jews, but the Nazis are the misfortune for the German people,'" wrote Kellner.



The April 25, 1943, entry in Friedrich Kellner's wartime diary.

content on the unfolding Holocaust, Kellner wrote about the regime's use of propaganda to delude the populace, and what he regarded as the Allies' criminal mismanagement of the war.

Kellner's diary, which he titled *My Opposition*, is seen by some historians as a barometer for what "ordinary" Germans might have known about activities in the east, where members of the SS and other Germans were engaged in the mass murder of Jews, Poles and Slavs. Some of Kellner's information came from sources that were widely available, including the Nazi party broadsheet and illegal radio broadcasts. To gather other accounts, Kellner questioned people and sifted through gossip, attaching more than 500 newspaper clippings along the way.

A potent sense of anger fills

Democrat, he delivered anti-Nazi speeches during the heady Weimar Republic years, for which he was often assaulted. Following the regime's *Kristallnacht* pogrom in 1938, Kellner sought to bring charges against some of the riot leaders. In retaliation for these efforts, a Nazi judge ordered that he and his wife's "bloodlines" be investigated for traces of Jewish ancestry.

As the Nazis spread terror across Europe, Kellner documented atrocities the regime sought to hide. To put current events in context for future readers, he made pointed references to Hitler's tome *Mein Kampf*, on which he was an expert. Among other crimes, he wrote about the "mercy killings" of disabled Germans at *Hadamar*, and "retribution" killings carried out against civilians in occupied countries.



## HOW ARTIST BEAT FOOLPROOF NAZI SYSTEM TO SAVE 350 LIVES

BY MATT LEBOVIC,  
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

During the years in which 102,000 Dutch Jews were murdered by the Nazis, a German-born Jewish artist helped rescue hundreds of children from the clutches of genocide.

As an expert forger of identity papers, Alice Cohn worked with a Utrecht-based resistance group while in hiding. Their production of so-called “wild papers,” including ID and ration cards, saved up to 350 Jewish



Alice Cohn poses in front of the building in which she hid from the Nazis, in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

children from the Nazis. During the war's final year, Cohn's handiwork helped prevent young Dutch men from being sent to Germany as forced laborers.

Cohn's story and the saga of Dutch identity cards during World War II is a subject of an exhibit at the National Holocaust Museum in Amsterdam.

According to the museum, one motivation for highlighting Cohn's efforts was to help correct the “prevailing, but incorrect, image that Dutch Jews had a passive role during the war.” During the Holocaust, 102,000 Dutch Jews

— the majority of the community — were murdered at Nazi-built death camps and elsewhere in the Reich.

Born in *Breslau* in 1914, Cohn studied cabinetmaking until the Nazis came to power in 1933. When Jewish students were banned from taking exams or submitting final projects, she moved to Berlin for a year of school in graphic arts. The situation for German Jews continued to deteriorate, so Cohn fled to the Netherlands in search of a secure future.

Settling in Amsterdam on a student visa, Cohn learned Dutch and received commissions to design cinema posters. On the eve of the war, she was creating children's toys. Unbeknownst to the new Dutch citizen, the Nazis were about to catch up with her.

Of all the countries occupied by Germany during World War II, the Netherlands had the most robust prewar population registry. The system's success was attributed to Jacob Lentz, a Dutch official who created the so-called “foolproof” personal identity card. During the Nazi occupation, Lentz refined his system to help authorities issue new cards throughout the country.

In addition to a high-tech design and use of the bearer's fingerprints, Dutch identity cards were backed up in a central registry. This made it possible to confirm whether or not a suspicious-looking ID had been forged. At the exhibit on Alice Cohn's life, she is contrasted with the population-counting expert Lentz. While Cohn used her artistic skills to help save lives, Lentz — conjuring “the banality of evil” — deployed his organizational skills to implement the Nazis' agenda.

Beginning in 1941, all Dutch men and women were ordered to carry ID cards with them. For Jews, a large black “J,” for Jew, was stamped on both sides of the card. By the summer of 1942, authorities began using the registry to arrest and deport Jews from the Netherlands. Suddenly, the demand for altered or completely falsified identification exploded, including the need to crack Lentz's “hermetic” system.

Before she went into hiding, Cohn found a position with Amsterdam's Jewish Council as a doctor's assistant. With the job providing her a nominal degree of freedom, she was able to smuggle a Jewish child — 3-year-old Lonnie Lesser — out of a building where Jews were incarcerated prior to deportation. After seeing the child safely into hiding, Cohn made her own way to a “safe” address in Utrecht, south of Amsterdam.

During two years of hiding in an attic near Utrecht's Wilhelmina Park, Cohn accomplished what had been deemed impossible: She forged identity cards able to withstand scrutiny.

According to the museum,

Cohn and her group of co-resisters, called “The Utrecht Children's Committee,” managed to save 350 children from deportation and murder. The group also forged ration coupons needed by “underground” people in hiding to obtain food. During the last year of the war, many new “wild papers” were needed to help young Dutch men evade forced labor in Germany.

After liberation, Cohn learned that all of her relatives from *Breslau* had been murdered, including her par-

ents. Like other Jews among the Netherlands' surviving remnant, she had to build a new life from scratch.

As fate had it, Cohn began obtaining fabrics from a Liechtenstein-based merchant named Rudolf Bermann. The materials he provided helped her create, for instance, puppets with grinning faces and vibrant costumes. What began as an exchange of fabrics blossomed into love, and, in 1947, Cohn left the Netherlands to join Bermann as his wife in Liechtenstein.

Recently, some 17 years after Cohn died at age 85 in Liechtenstein, she was posthumously awarded the “Jewish Rescuers' Citation” for Jews who helped save fellow Jews during the *Shoah*. Cohn's daughter and son, Evelyne Bermann and Michael



Some of the Nazi-era forgeries that artist Alice Cohn worked on for the Dutch resistance.

Bermann, were presented with the honor during the Amsterdam opening of the exhibit on their mother's life. So far, 171 women and men from eight countries have been honored by Jewish organization B'nai B'rith in this capacity.

“There are many people who were able to escape deportation through fake identity cards,” said exhibit curator Annemiek Gringold. “The people who had the skills and the courage to carry out this vital work remain largely unknown until today.”

## NAZI DEATH SQUAD'S SHOCKING SECRETS REVEALED IN BURIED NOTE

BY BEN GRAHAM

Chilling notes from an Auschwitz inmate forced to help the Nazi murder squads have finally been deciphered — almost 75 years after they were written.

Marcel Nadjari, a Greek Jew, was one of 2200 members of the *Sonderkommando* — Jewish slaves of the SS who had to escort fellow Jews to the gas chambers. They also had to burn the bodies, collect gold fillings and women's hair, and throw the ashes into a nearby river.

Aged 26, he penned his accounts of life in the infamous death camp in 1944, and only now have they been decoded thanks to digital imaging, according to the BBC.

“Often I thought of going in with the others, to put an end to this. But always revenge prevented me doing

so. I wanted and want to live, to avenge the death of Dad, Mum and my dear little sister,” he wrote.

Historians say Nadjari stuffed his 13-page manuscript into a Thermos flask, which he sealed with a plastic top. He then placed the Thermos in a leather pouch and buried it.

“The crematorium is a big building with a wide chimney and 15 ovens. Under a garden there are two enormous cellars. One is where people undress and the other is the death chamber. People enter it naked and once about 3000 are inside it is locked and they are gassed. After six or seven minutes of suffering they die,” he wrote.

His accounts also provide intricate details of the sickening ways the Nazis disguised the gas chambers as showers.

“The gas canisters were always

delivered in a German Red Cross vehicle with two SS men. They then dropped the gas through openings — and half an hour later our work began,” he wrote.

“We dragged the bodies of those innocent women and children to the lift, which took them to the ovens.”

According to the BBC, the notes were found by a Polish forestry student during digging at the site — 36 years after they were buried.

Russian historian Pavel Polian said only 10 percent of the notes could be deciphered when they were first found.

The ink had faded over time and the text was virtually impossible to read.

“The inmates obviously discussed how many trains had arrived,” Mr Polian told the BBC.

“Nadjari's desire for revenge stands out — that's different from the other

accounts. And he pays much more attention to his family. For example, he specifies who he wants to receive his dead sister's piano.”

According to the Institute of Contemporary History in *Munich*, Nadjari was one of the few inmates to survive Auschwitz. He was then deported to the *Mauthausen* concentration camp in Austria as the Third Reich collapsed.

After the war, he married and in 1951 moved to New York. He already had a one-year-old son, and in 1957 his wife Rosa gave birth to a girl, whom they named Nelli — after Nadjari's late sister.

In prewar *Thessaloniki* he had worked as a merchant. In New York he made a living as a tailor.

Nadjari died in 1971, aged 53 — nine years before his Auschwitz message was discovered.





## ELI ZBOROWSKI LEGACY CIRCLE



The American Society for Yad Vashem was founded in 1981 by a group of Holocaust survivors and led by Eli Zborowski, z"l, for more than thirty years. Recently approved by the Board of Directors of the American Society for Yad Vashem, our Legacy Circle is being named in memory of Eli Zborowski, z"l, who was greatly respected for his work and accomplishments on behalf of Yad Vashem and is missed by all who knew him.

The Eli Zborowski Legacy Circle is open to and will recognize anyone who includes Yad Vashem in their estate plans. This can include a bequest by will, funding a Charitable Remainder Trust or Charitable Gift Annuity, donating a paid-up life insurance policy or contributing an interest in an IRA or retirement plan, or making ASYV the beneficiary of a Charitable Lead Trust. Individuals can make gifts of any size, through a broad range of programs and investment vehicles that can accommodate those of modest means, as well as those with substantial wealth.

*"I did not find the world desolate when I entered it. As my fathers planted for me before I was born, so do I plant for those who will come after me."*

The Talmud

By including Yad Vashem in your estate plans, you assure a future in which Holocaust remembrance and education will serve as a powerful antidote to denial, hate and indifference. For further information about the Eli Zborowski Legacy Circle, please contact

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### Martyrdom & Resistance

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

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