HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY: NEVER FORGET

DEMAND AND DEFEND YOUR HUMAN RIGHTS

BY JILL GOLTZER

Every year, on January 27th, the international community marks International Holocaust Remembrance Day. This day, designated by the United Nations in 2005, marks the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp by the Red Army. The largest and perhaps most famous of the camps, Auschwitz-Birkenau was both a labor camp and a center for the rapid murder of Jews. Over 1.1 million Jews were murdered in this hell on earth.

Our Young Leadership Associates were honored to attend the official Holocaust remembrance ceremony at the United Nations headquarters on Monday, January 28th. Our members were welcomed as guests of the office of Ambassador Danny Danon, Israel’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations. We had a delegation of eighteen members attend the ceremony, including three senior board members (Adina Burian, Barry Levine, and Mark Moskowitz) and YLA Co-Chair Rachel Shnay.

The ceremony was hosted by Ms. Alison Smale, UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, and included remarks by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa, Secretary-General António Guterres, (Chair, International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance). The keynote speaker was Ms. Sara J. Bloomfield, director of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. In addition to the distinguished diplomats and figures mentioned, we had the privilege of hearing remarks from Holocaust survivors Marian Turski and Inge Auerbacher.

The theme of this year’s Holocaust remembrance and education activities is “Holocaust Remembrance: Demand and Defend Your Human Rights.” The theme highlights the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The UDHR was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on December 10, 1948. Eleanor Roosevelt, widow of American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was chair of the drafting committee. The Declaration was created in response to the world’s outrage at the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust; its purpose was to prevent such atrocities from ever happening again. However, as UN Secretary-General António Guterres mentioned in his remarks, we have seen countless incidents of persecution against groups simply because of who they are. Numerous genocides have taken place since the adoption of the Declaration. It is clear that we not only can do more, but we must as UN representatives of the American Society for Yad Vashem Jill Goltzer, Mark Moskowitz, Goldie Hertz, Adina Burian, Barry Levine and Rachel Shnay at the UN event dedicated to the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. New York, January 27.

Following the ceremony, our delegation attended the opening of “Beyond Duty: Diplomats Recognized as Righteous Among the Nations,” an exhibition curated by Yad Vashem for choosing to act according to their conscience rather than simply follow orders. Individuals such as Raoul Wallenberg from Sweden and Aristides de Sousa Mendes from Portugal risked their lives to help Jews by providing them with passports, visas and travel permits. Sousa Mendes famously stated, “I would rather stand with G-d against man than with man against G-d.” Such courage and unwavering commitment to humanity is responsible for saving the lives of thousands of Jews.
It was here that the SS stumbled on a modus operandi. The Jews were shot in groups: one victim, one shooter. It was a way of avoiding individual responsibility; there would only be collective guilt. It was psychologically better for the murderers.

The SS, as would become typical, logged the numbers, but not the experiences of those involved. But we do know what happened there. The most exposing testimony about the operation came from a Polish journalist, Kazimierz Sakawicz, whose diaries were published in 2005: “July 27, 1941: Shooting is carried on nearly every day. Will it go on for ever? The executioners began selling clothes of the killed. Other garments are crammed into sacks in a barn at the highway and taken to town.”

Sakawicz witnessed how slapdash the operation could be: “July 30: About 150 persons shot. Most of them were elderly people. The executioners complained of being very tired of their work,” of having aching shoulders from shooting. “That is the reason for not finishing the wounded off, so that they are buried half alive.”

On August 2 Sakawicz witnessed how the executioners carried out their work: “they were all inebriated; continued even as the Nazis looked to intensify their death marches. Following their work at Ponar, the Nazis experimented with gas vans and then finally the extermination camps.

As camps such as Auschwitz accelerated their ambitions for industrialized murder, the pace of killings at Ponar slowed. From 1942, as the Germans were getting bogged down in the East, Vilnius itself went into a period of relative calm and stabilization. The Germans needed many of the remaining Jews for slave labor. But by 1943, it became obvious that Hitler’s operations in the East had turned into an existential disaster. The Nazis might have been fatigued in looking after their weekly kill totals but they had no desire for the world to understand the reality of their bureaucratic list keeping. Hitler’s dreams were dying and there would be consequences. It didn’t take much imagination for those in charge to realise that a hundred thousand decaying bodies buried just a few miles outside a European capital would be evidence enough to hang anyone associated with it.

And so the SS began the clear up of Ponar. Paul Blobel was in charge as thousands of Jewish men, women and children were herded to their death at Baby Yar in Ukraine. In 1941 he had murdered 33,000 Jewish men, women and children. In 1942 he had been relieved of his duties because of his alcoholism. In 1943, however, Blobel was put in charge of destroying evidence of Nazi atrocities in Eastern Europe. His unit arrived in Vilnius and looked for any Jew still alive and healthy to help cover their tracks. They forcibly recruited young men into Leichenkommando (“corpse units”). Eighty prisoners were supervised by thirty Lithuanian and German guards.

They were forced to exhume the corpses, pile them high in the concrete fuel dumps and set them alight. It was a huge and terrible job. One of those from the corpse units, Szloma Gol, said: “We dug up altogether 68,000 corpses. I know this because two of the Jews in the pit with us were ordered by the Germans to keep count of the bodies — that was a secret job. The bodies were mixed, Jews, Polish priests, Russian prisoners-of-war.”

Szloma Gol found his own brother. He had been dead for two years. He could only identify him because he still had identification papers with him. He had been shot in September 1941. The corpse units worked chained together.

Described as how they were allowed to go sick for no more than two days. On the third day, if they were still ill to work, they would be shot. The Nazis may have been in retreat but they were capable of appalling sadism. As digging proceeded, the guards shot eleven prisoners. Their intention: to terrorize and cow the rest. The Jews realized it would only be a matter of time before they too were murdered so they hatched an escape plan. They dug a tunnel from the bottom of one pit, under the wire. On April 15, 1944, they made their escape. Forty managed to get through before noise alerted the guards. In the ensuing chase twenty five were killed but 15 escaped — including Szloma Gol. Five days after the escape the remaining prisoners were all shot. There were up to 235,000 Jews in Lithuania at the start of the war. By 1944, when the Russians pushed the Germans back across the border, it is thought that only 2,000 to 3,000 survived. The Nazis killed 97 percent of them.

The final solution for many is Auschwitz: the industrialised abattoir designed for mass murder with minimal impact on the butchers’ mental health. They could kill without having “eyes on” their victims. This was a terror where the murderers operated safely insulated from the horror. Their victims expired on the other side of a concrete wall. But the viability of their plan was set in motion here in the quiet forest of Ponar.

Today the forest of Ponar is a reluctant memorial. The seven pits that reveal the narrative of the area form a heartbreak ing trail. The first pit, close to the road and railway, would receive those about to die. It was here that the terrified victims would take their clothes off, leave them behind and then be led to the holding trench. Nature has now overtaken it; trees have spread roots where the bare feet of naked men, women and children once trod, waiting for death.

And when you talk to Lithuanians in Vilnius about the carnage a handful of miles outside their city, barely any know what the Germans and willing Lithuanians did. It’s a forgotten blot on the collective memory. Uncomfortable.
RESCUING THE JEWS OF DENMARK

BY RHONA LEWIS, JEWISH PRESS

It was 1943. Inge Sulzbacher and her twin sister were five years old. Members of the Danish resistance helped them escape the Nazi roundup in Copenhagen by hiding them under deck in a fishing boat crossing the choppy Øresund Strait to Sweden. Shulamit Kahn wasn’t quite seven.

“Some memories are etched into your mind and you never forget them,” says Shulamit. The Danish resistance movement, along with many ordinary Danish citizens, managed to evacuate 7,220 of Denmark’s 7,800 Jews. It was the largest action of collective resistance in the countries occupied by Nazi Germany. And we haven’t forgotten it.

Jewish history in Denmark dates back to 1622, when King Christian IV sent a message to the leaders of the Sephardi community in Amsterdam and Hamburg, inviting Jews to settle in the township of Glückstadt. Jews who accepted this invitation began trading and manufacturing operations there. The king built the famous Round Tower, an astronomical observatory, on which the letters yud keh yav keh can be clearly seen, to show his recognition of their contributions.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jews from Eastern Europe continued arriving and settled in Copenhagen, where they enjoyed a warm welcome.

Gittel Davidson, whose father was a member of the Machzikei Hadas shul, founded in 1910, shares a memory: “During the First World War, when no lulavim were available, my grandfather paid the curators of the Copenhagen Botanical Gardens to be allowed to pick lulavim from the palms in the hothouse for tropical plants,” she says.

This idyllic stability was rocked on April 9, 1940, when Nazi Germany invaded Denmark. With little choice, the Danish government surrendered, and Denmark became a “model protectorate.” Model meant that some sort of quasi-cordial relationship was maintained. While Germany sent 22,000 officials to occupied France, a mere 89 officials were sent to Denmark. During the early years of the occupation, Danish officials repeatedly insisted to the German occupation authorities that there was no “Jewish problem” in Denmark.

The Germans looked the other way because the Germans were on the march and Denmark was going against the Reich, members of the Danish resistance became bolder. The Germans hit back.

In September 29, erev Rosh Hashana, during Selichos, Jews were warned by Rabbi Melchior of the planned German action and urged to go into hiding immediately. The word spread. The Danish underground and regular citizens — intellectuals, priests, policemen, doctors, blue-collar workers — worked together to track down Jews and find ways to hide them. Some simply contacted friends and asked them to go through telephone books and warn those with Jewish-sounding names to go into hiding. It was a national refutation of Nazi Germany and a reaffirmation of democratic and humanistic values.

“My father and eleven-year-old brother had gone into hiding a few days earlier because we’d already heard rumors of a deportation,” recalls Shulamit. “On erev Rosh Hashana, when we became sure that the deportation was going to happen, my mother together with three children (my ten-year-old sister, myself, and my three-year-old brother) traveled by rail to the coast. There we were split up among the villagers because the Germans were on the lookout and it was too risky for anyone to hide from four of us together.”

The parents of Inge Sulzbacher faced a terrible choice. “My father didn’t daven in Rabbi Melchior’s shul, but the word about the round-up spread fast. Our table was laid for Rosh Hashana. Even the fish was ready,” she recalls. “My parents were afraid to hide them. Some simply contacted friends and asked them to go through telephone books and warn those with Jewish-sounding names to go into hiding. It was a national refutation of Nazi Germany and a reaffirmation of democratic and humanistic values.

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A SURVIVOR’S DUTY

A Survivor’s Duty: Surviving the Holocaust and Fighting for Israel — A Story of Father and Son.


NEW BOOK LEAVES NORWAY’S “HEROIC ROLE” IN THE HOLOCAUST IN TATTERS

BY OFER ADERET, HARETZ

“W hat did the resistance know?” This simple question has been the focus of fierce debate in Norway in recent weeks. The answer to this question, which is emblazoned on the cover of a new book by journalist Marte Michelet, threatens to shatter Norway’s great- est myth: the heroism of the resis- tance that fought the Nazis and saved the Jews.

In summary, getting back to this vol- ume’s title, Laufer notes in the fore- word of his book how it is a “duty” that “memories of our experiences [both of father and son] and their lessons” be communicated “to our children and the generations to follow” — just as Elie Wiesel felt. As far as this reviewer is concerned, the author of A Survivor’s Duty: Surviving the Holocaust and Fighting for Israel — A Story of Father and Son has most def- initely done his duty.

Dr. Diane Cypkin is a Professor of Media, Communication, and Visual Arts at Pace University.
by Judy Simon, Israel National News

Rabbi Joseph Polak was three years old when the Holocaust ended. His survival story is still unfolding.

We have heard, read and sold stories of child survivors and their families. But what we often forget is the stories of the children born during the Shoah. These children never had a normal childhood, never experienced a normal family life. These small ones had to deal with returning to the world after their terrible ordeal, a world in which their own parents were horribly changed in every way. The child survivors tell a different story.

Chid of the Holocaust, Surviving Every Day

Rabbi Joseph Polak, born in 1942, saved his family in utero, by delaying their deportation to Westerbork by a year. In Westerbork, there was a surreal experience of normalcy, of good food, of excellent health care. But it was the gateway to almost certain death, as every Tuesday morning, a train was filled with Jews who were taken east.

Rabbi Polak’s family ended up in Bergen-Belsen, where the small boy played hide-and-seek among the piles of corpses. In 1945, when he was three, his family was aboard the “Lost Transport,” which journeyed to Treblinka, where Rabbi Polak’s father succumbed to his illness and was buried. At this point, the child was adopted by a Dutch family, as his mother was too sick to care for him. Rabbi Polak’s first vivid memory was of the meeting with his mother in a hospital in the Hague. “I remember that everything in the room was white. I saw a woman in the bed. They must not have told me that I was going to meet my mother,” Rabbi Polak recalls. “Hello madam,” he greeted the strange lady. “Don’t say ‘hello madam,’” he was told. Mrs. Polak first had to prove that the child was her son. And then she gave him a small red siddur (prayer book) and a pair of tallit (ritual fringed garment). She told her young son, “You are a Jewish boy. These are things a Jew needs every day.”

Rabbi Polak describes his entry into school in Montreal as a six-year-old who didn’t even know how to play, let alone make friends. He asked his mother to stop speaking to him in Dutch. It was only many years later that he discovered that fully two thirds of the boys in his seventh grade class were child survivors like himself. They had worked so hard on fitting in, on silencing the pain of their past, that they didn’t even realize that they were in the majority.

In meetings with older Holocaust survivors, Rabbi Polak describes the painful negotiation of who the child survivors are. Many adult survivors told the children, “You don’t really understand. You were just a kid. You know nothing about what happened there.” This denial of their experiences made the younger survivors feel like fakes, like liars. Now that virtually all Holocaust survivors are alive today, children at the time of the horror, they talk about their experiences with one another. “We feel a need to tell, to share our stories. We are the last witnesses to what happened. We were there,” he explains.
that the resistance didn’t have concrete intelligence about the deportations, while the atmosphere was one of rumor under “the fog of occupation.”

A BUSINESS IN EVERY RESPECT

Still, Michelet discovered documents and testimonies about anti-Semitism that was common in the resistance. She also learned that despite the resistance’s decision not to help the Jews, some activists realized the economic potential in rescuing them.

Thus, groups in the resistance that needed money to finance their operation smuggled Jews to Sweden for large sums of money. The rescue operation emerged from her book, a business in every respect, one that left the surviving Jews impoverished. Wealthy people who could pay were saved; those without means were sent to Auschwitz.

Norwegian historians are confirming the findings and are revealing equally damning details about groups within the resistance that competed to save Jews for money. Archival documents depict as national heroes groups in the resistance that competed to save Jews, and those without means were depicted as national villains.

The price was paid, of course, by any Jews who were being hit by the group that was informed on.

Michelet faces criticism from establishment historians, especially those of the Jewish Museum in Oslo and the Resistance Museum in Oslo, who have cast doubt on her findings and attacked her professional integrity. But a former president of the Jewish community in the Norwegian capital, Ervin Kohn, has defended her, noting that most of her revelations were known to the Jewish community.

German Half of Norway’s Jews, about 800 people, were sent to the death camps, with the help of the Norwegian authorities. Most of them were deported on a ship that left Oslo in the fall of 1942.

BY DOVID EFUNE, THE ALGEMEINER

I have long known that my grandmother witnessed Kristallnacht. But it is only recently that I have come to learn the details of her horrifying experience.

Now Esli Kalms, my grandmother grew up as Esther Weinstock on Lilienbrunngasse, a small street in Vienna’s 2nd district, just south of the River Danube. In March 1938, nine months before the pogrom, Austria was incorporated into Nazi Germany through the infamous Anschluss, and Adolf Hitler was greeted by adoring crowds on the Heldenplatz when he triumphantly arrived in Vienna.

The area where my grandmother lived was home to a significant Orthodox Jewish community, alongside non-Jewish neighbors. The street was relatively narrow for Vienna, lined with fairly large apartment blocks, all four stories high.

“From your window you could look into the windows of the houses opposite,” my grandmother told me. There were a few stores on the block and a synagogue that was housed directly below her apartment.

It was the family’s proximity to the synagogue that made her a frontline observer to the events of that brutal night, when more than one hundred Jews were murdered, thousands deported to concentration camps, and hundreds of synagogues and Jewish-owned stores destroyed in the anti-Semitic frenzy.

My grandmother was nine years old at the time. She recalls huddling silently at the window of their apartment with her siblings, her mother, who sold knitted goods for a living, and her father, a kabbalist and local rabbi, and “hearing a lot of noise outside in the street.”

The road below was dimly lit, and in their apartment all lights were switched off. “We were told to stand well back from the window, so as not to be seen from the street,” she said.

“We thought we would be next.”

But the resistance smuggled hundreds of Jews — half the community — across the border to safety in Sweden. A tree has been planted in the underground’s honor at Yad Vashem.

Most of the resistance’s glory stems from the daring operation to blow up the heavy water production plant the Nazis used as part of their nuclear weapons program. The commander of that operation, Joachim Ronneberg, who died in last October at 99, was a national hero.

But over the years it turned out that the number of Norwegians who volunteered for the German army was far greater than the number who fought in the resistance.

In 1996, discussion began on the Jewish property that was stolen and nationalized by the authorities during the war. Amid public pressure, a government commission was set up to examine the issue and a majority in the commission ruled that the government was not responsible for the Nazis’ crimes, and the compensation could be sought from private individuals. Later it emerged that it was the Norwegian police who carried out the mass arrests of the Jews, not German soldiers, and many Norwegians helped the police or turned a blind eye.

In 2012, Norway’s prime minister officially apologized for the role Norwegians played in the arrest and deportation of Jews. A few months later the Norwegian police also apologized, followed by the national railroad company in 2012.

In 2014, Michelet published her debut book, whose title translates as The Ultimate Crime: Victims and Perpetrators in the Norwegian Holocaust. It immediately sparked a controversy. Michelet said she began to research the topic when she moved into an apartment in Oslo once occupied by Jews who were deported from Norway and murdered at Auschwitz.

Yet the national narrative continued to glorify the resistance’s role in saving Jews. Michelet’s new book What Did the Resistance Know? is threatening to take even that credit away. The Norwegian newspaper Dagbladet has called it “the most important book of the year.”
HIDDEN in the guts of Stazione Centrale, Milan’s impressive train station, which was inaugurated during the Fascist era and now serves 120 million railway passengers per year, is the point where Fascist Italy converges with Nazi Germany: Platform 21. This is the platform where postal items were loaded onto freight trains, heading to their destinations around Europe. This is also where Jews, and non-Jewish dissidents, were loaded onto cattle cars heading to their destinations around Europe: the camps of Fossoli, Bolzano, Mauthausen, Bergen-Belsen, Ravensbrück, Flossenbürg and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Twenty such transports left for the concentration and death camps, from December 1943 to January 1945, while on the upper floor, passenger trains continued to rush toward European cities.

Platform 21 was transformed into a Holocaust memorial in 2013. In its heart, a few of the original cars are standing along a short track, which ends in an exposed space, from which the train cars with their human cargo were brought up to the station level — the journey to hell had begun many years before, on November 17, 1938, when Benito Mussolini’s Racial Laws against Jews went into effect. The racist laws had been preceded by publication of the “Manifesto of Race,” which was defined by one scientist in July 1938, purporting to give it a scientific basis. Signed without hesitation by King Vittorio Emanuele III, the statutes were meant to ban Jews from society and humiliated them. They included a series of prohibitions that became increasingly rigid, up through the spring of 1945. They ranged from bans on intermarriage, schooling in public institutions, working in state entities, membership in the Fascist Party and participation in the “free” professions, to prohibitions on ownership of real estate above a certain value, renting out rooms to non-Jews, peddling and trading in wool, to forbidding involvement in the realms of music, theater, acrobatics, management of dance studios, along with owning radios, being listed in the phone books, publishing death notices and raising carrier pigeons.

The sky fell on about 50,000 Italian Jews, the oldest Jewish community in Europe, about 10 percent of whom were registered in 1933 with the Fascist Party. All of a sudden, well-established, patriotic families with deep roots in the country, who saw themselves as Italian in every respect — some of whom had even lived there for hundreds of years, like Segre’s forebears — were stripped of all civil rights. In the fall of 1943, along with the invasion of German forces and the establishment of the Italian Socialist Republic of Salo, came the physical persecution as well.

Segre, who was born in Milan in September 1930, was eight years old when the Laws were enacted. “A very happy, serene, slightly naughty little girl, upon whom my father and grandparents heaped endless love,” says Segre, who lost her mother at a tender age.

“I grew up in a secular, you could say atheist, family, in which there were no religious symbols and which did not celebrate (Jewish) holidays,” she recently told Haaretz during an interview in her home, where Hanukkah menorah stands out today, adding, “I wasn’t even aware that I was Jewish.”

The revelation of her Jewish identity caught her by surprise. It was the day her father informed her that she had been expelled from school — the very same school that her children and grandchildren would later attend.

“This word, ‘expelled,’ was a terrible word in my eyes,” says Segre, a tall, elegant woman who speaks gently, with restrained intensity, devoid of pathos. “I didn’t understand why. I didn’t understand what I’d done wrong.”

For the first time in her life, the mischievous and happy girl felt “different” from her friends, most of whom faded into the background. Segre was one of 25 Jewish children deported to the death camps, the journey to hell had begun many years before, on November 17, 1938, when Benito Mussolini’s Racial Laws against Jews went into effect.

The persecution of Italian Jews Fascist racist laws did not threaten the lives of Italy’s Jews. Mussolini was an anti-Semitic “Insider,” but not an unbridled one like Hitler,” says Michele Sarfatti, an Italian historian who specializes in Jewish history under Fascist rule.

“He was a pragmatic leader. On the one hand, he could write articles tinged with anti-Semitism and attack the ‘Jewish question’; on the other hand, he had no problem conducting close relations with Jews like [journalist and socialist politician] Claudio Treves or Margherita Sarfatti,” Mussolini’s lover of 20 years, who shared his Fascist ideology and wrote his first official biography, Dux.

“It is true that until his regime was solidly established, Mussolini was not reluctant to use violence or to allow Fascist bullies’ attacks on the streets, but after 1925 he wasn’t interested in street violence as was prevalent in Germany. With few exceptions, there was no burning books or Kristallnacht in Italy,” says Sarfatti. “Under the new Fascist order, oppressing Jews and opponents of the regime was supposed to be done by the police, without out killing, without establishing violent camps like Dachau.”

The situation changed drastically on September 8, 1943 — a month and a half after Mussolini was deposed and incarcerated, on the very day the

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu led a plethora of world leaders observing International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27.

Netanyahu marked the occasion by welcoming three Holocaust survivors to his office, recounting their stories and warning against the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe today.

"Anti-Semitism from the right is not a new phenomenon there," he said. "What is new in Europe is the combination of Islamic anti-Semitism and the anti-Semitism of the extreme left, which includes anti-Zionism, such as has recently occurred in Great Britain and in Ireland. What a disgrace. We condemn all forms of anti-Semitism as such."

"During the Holocaust, the Jewish people were completely helpless," noted the prime minister. "Today the state of the Jews is among the strongest and most advanced in the world. First and foremost, we have restored to our people the strength to resist that we lost in exile. In contrast to the terrible helplessness of our people then, today we strike at those who seek our lives and hurt all those who try to hurt us. At the same time, we do not forget our dead, our enemies and our rescuers."

Detailing the experiences of his survivor guests, Moshe Haelyon, Mordecai (Motka) Weisel and Malka Steinmetz, Netanyahu said, "We are honored with the presence of Moshe, Malka and Motka, Holocaust survivors that I just met before the meeting. "Moshe survived the death camps and the death march. Malka lost her five sisters in the crematoria and has a number burned onto her arm. Motka, whose brother fell at Latrun, interrupted an SS officer who whipped his back. The penalty for such an offense was immediate death, but he somehow survived."

By this unbelievable act of heroism, he served as an example to thousands. The story spread among thousands, of all mankind."

Trump continued, "The Third Reich, and its collaborators, pursued the complete elimination of the entire Jewish people. Six million Jews were killed by the Nazis. But the Nazis also enslaved and murdered Slavs, Roma, gays, homosexuals, religious leaders, courageously opposing the totalitarian regime. The brutality was a crime against humanity. It was a crime against children."

"On International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we honor the memory of the innocent woman and child and the millions who perished — is to strive from happening again or indifference to the horror in the history of how all men and women invites repetition of this."

Trump’s statement, 'Never Again' means not only remembering — in a profound and lasting way — the evils of the Holocaust; he elaborated, "but it also means remembering the individual men and women in this nation, and throughout the world, who have devoted their lives to the preservation and security of the Jewish people and to the betterment of all mankind."

The monument for the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes during the Remembrance for the Victims of the Holocaust in Warsaw.
Jews were systematized in horrific ways. The disabled and murdered people with disabilities and others who posed their cruel humanity of the Holocaust against God.

May also pointed to contemporary anti-Semitism, asserting, "At a time where Jews are being targeted simply because of who they are, all of us of any faith can come together in their defense. "And as the Shoah begins to drift to the edge of living memory, we can once again commit ourselves to remembering those who were murdered, and to ensuring that such a human catastrophe is never permitted to happen again," she added.

"On this day, we repeat the vow, 'Never Again' — not as a phrase, but as a promise to remain vigilant against the threat of genocide," he pledged. "We must preserve the memories of those who lived through the horrors of the Shoah, so that our generation — and those to come — will never forget their stories." Turning to his own country, Trudeau admonished, "We must also acknowledge Canada’s own history of anti-Semitism, and its devastating results. In November, the Government issued a long-overdue apology for Canada’s inaction and apathy toward Jews during the Nazi era. Our country’s disgraceful ‘none is too many’ immigration policy doomed many Jews to Nazi death camps, including hundreds of Jewish refugees aboard the MS St. Louis. No words will ever erase this tragedy — but it is our sincere hope that this apology will help ensure the lessons we have learned are never forgotten.

"We are not immune to the effects of ignorance and hate," the prime minister added. "The threats of violence, xenophobia and anti-Semitism still exist today. The murder of eleven Jews at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh — one of the deadliest attacks against Jews in North American history — is fresh in our minds. The Government will continue to stand with the Jewish community in Canada and around the world, and call out the anti-Semitism, hatred and racism that incites such despicable acts."

In his own statement, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called the Holocaust "a stark reminder of the dangers of hatred and discrimination, and the irreversible consequences of inaction and indifference.

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French President Emmanuel Macron simply tweeted a picture of a memorial candle with the words "light of remembrance" in French. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez also took to Twitter in honor of the occasion, saying, "We shall not forget the barbarism of anti-Semitism, racism and intolerance.”

In Germany, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas warned in an opinion column that Germany’s “culture of remembrance is crumbling” owing to “pressure from the extreme right.” On Saturday, Chancellor Angela Merkel had declared “zero tolerance” for anti-Semitism and remarked, “People growing up today must know what people were capable of in the past, and we must work proactively to ensure that it is never repeated.”
BY URI BERLINER, NPR

T he monkey’s fur is worn away. It’s nearly a century old. A well-loved toy, it is barely four inches tall. It was packed away for long voyages, on an escape from Nazi Germany, to Sweden and America. And now, it’s the key to a discovery that transformed my family.

The monkey belonged to my father, Gert Berliner, who as a boy in Berlin in the 1930s rode his bicycle around the city. Clipped to the handlebars was the toy monkey.

“I liked him,” my dad, who is now 94, “He was like a good luck piece.”

In pictures from his young days in Berlin, my father looks confident, a tall, hearty man. His face is clear, and he smiles. But I had never seen this toy. I knew about his childhood toy, and all that it symbolized.

In 1939, at the age of 14, Gert had to flee for his life nearly 80 years ago. It’s now part of the collection at the Jewish Museum Berlin.

Among all the other things of my father’s that I know, he didn’t want him to part with the monkey. She had a good point. It was the most intimate object he had left from his childhood. But eventually he decided that the toy monkey should go back out into the world where it would do more good as a little ambassador to history.

And so the monkey returned to Berlin, this time living in a museum, not on a young boy’s bicycle. Aubrey Pomerance visited my dad at the Jewish Museum Berlin, an archivist from the Kindertransport exhibit. He was a distant father. And I knew about his childhood toy, and all that it symbolized.

As a young man of 22, he had left Sweden for New York — on an escape from Nazi Germany. He was a distant father. And I knew about his childhood toy, and all that it symbolized.

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And then two things happened — with the toy monkey at the center of both events.

In 1993, at the age of 14, he had to say goodbye to his parents, Paul and Sophie Berliner. He boarded the train in Berlin, bound for the city of Kalmar, on the Baltic Coast. He had a small bag and there wasn’t much he could bring. But stashed away in his suitcase was the toy monkey, his talisman.

The monkey wasn’t useful. But he took it with him anyway. He was worried, fearful about his parents. But he had reached shelter, taken in by a generous, kind family. My dad’s first impression of Sweden was the air. Free from the violence of Berlin, he could exhale. “Suddenly you could breathe,” he recalled. “It was like the air was different.”

But his parents’ fate remained uncertain. Eventually their letters stopped coming. Paul and Sophie Berliner were captured by the Gestapo and sent to Auschwitz on a train, Transport 39, on May 17, 1943. They were murdered there.

Throughout his childhood and well into my adult years, we rarely discussed what had been through the murder of his parents, how alone he must have felt as a young refugee. How it affected his life, our relationship. He was a distant father. And I was a distant son. Each of us would come together beset by halting, uncomfortable silences.

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And so it all came together. It turns out that my father’s dad, Paul Berliner, had a brother named Carl. Carl Berliner had two sons, and Carl sent them to Sweden for safety, too. But they didn’t get out of Germany on the Kindertransport. They were sent to work on isolated farms deep in the Swedish countryside. Those boys were my dad’s cousins. But they had lost touch with each other.

N ow, some 80 years later, a bond has been reestablished with the help of a talanted toy monkey. In the summer, I traveled to Sweden to meet my newfound relatives and to retrace my father’s steps. I met Agneta and her family on Sweden’s solstice holiday, Midsummer Eve, and we celebrated together with a traditional Swedish feast lasting well into the evening.

My dad has lived mostly in New York, working as a photographer and artist, with stints in New Mexico and Italy. And for more than half a century, his toy monkey went with him. But it lived in drawers, existing only in a private space, so private that I never even knew about his childhood toy, and all that it symbolized.

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OPENING ITALY’S “CLOSET OF SHAME”

(Continued from page 7)

government announced the signing of an armistice between Italy and the Allies, and the very day the Italians found out that their king and prime minister had deserted them and fled to territories held under Allied control. Within days, Nazi forces entered the beleaguered country, released Mussolini from jail, installed him as the head of a puppet state in northern Italy — the Socialist Republic of Salò — and embarked on implementing the Final Solution.

According to Sarfatti, nearly 500,000 Jews out of some 50,000 were deported to death camps between September 1943 and Italy’s liberation in April 1945. Over 5,900 of them were exterminated, over 800 survived, and another 300 were murdered on Italian territory.

“He exchanged the lives of Italy’s Jews for Nazi support for his regime. After his release from jail, he could have said ‘enough, I’m old and tired’ — without the Nazis executing him — but his hunger for power was so strong that he was ready to sacrifice not only Italy’s Jews, but also the regions of Trento and Trieste for it,” says Sarfatti.

The historian adds that Mussolini “had known since 1942, perhaps without all the details, about the camps, about the acts of mass slaughter in the Soviet Union, about the use of gas. As one who used gas himself in the conquest of Ethiopia, he knew very well what the use of gas meant.

In the fall of 1945, at age 15, Segre returned home to Milano — after almost a year in Auschwitz, the death march to Germany, and four months in a DP camp where, she recalls, she ate “day and night” and gained 10 kilos every month. Upon her return, her maternal grandparents, who had found refuge in a convent in Rome, were granted custody of her.

“They saw a fat, clumsy, ugly, difficult, wounded, grumbling girl,” she says. “It was hard for them, and I wanted them to accept me as I was.... They were good people, they loved me, and I loved them, but I wanted to live with Susanna, the maid who had lived in our home 47 years and loved all of us deeply. She had saved the family pictures and my grandmother’s jewelry for me. Upon her death, she left her money to a priest to pray for us for 10 years.”

Slowly, Segre began to readjust to daily life, studies and love. In 1951 she married Alfredo Belli Paci, a Catholic who was sent, along with some 600,000 other Italians, to a concentration camp for refusing to serve the Republic of Salò.

“He understood me when he saw the tattoo on my arm,” she once said in an interview. “He wasn’t shocked. He didn’t flee.”

With him she raised their three children, and she was by his side until he died 10 years ago.

“We met on the beach. We fell in love within days. It was a beautiful love like many Holocaust survivors,” says Segre kept silent for many years, “There were no words, it was too powerful, too tragic. We didn’t want to talk, and they didn’t want to listen.”

At 60, after the birth of her grandchildren, she felt that she had to pass her personal testimony on to the next generations. Since then, she has visited schools across Italy telling her story and the story of Italian Jewry.

“None of us will be left in 10 years, and the Holocaust will become a line in history books, and later not even that,” she says.

Segre’s appointment by President Sergio Mattarella as senator for life (“I am aware of age limitations,” she says, smiling) gave her immediate media exposure, and essentially turned her into a living, breathing symbol of a period that Italy has repressed for 80 years — a repression historian Anna Foa has called “collective amnesia.”

“Italy never opened its closet of shame,” says Segre. “After the war, suddenly there were no fascists. Everyone suddenly became Christian Democrats, Communists... but Italy was Fascist, just like Germany was Nazi. The people were deeply in love with Hitler and the new order which marked the 80th anniversary of the enactment of the anti-Semitic legislation, the media had been addressing the topic nonstop, there was a direct correlation between the laws and the Holocaust. There is almost no newspaper or current events program that doesn’t discuss these subjects, that don’t talk about Senator Segre or one of the few remaining survivors.

“I’ve already heard some complaints of an ‘overdose,’” Segre says. “People tell me, ‘Enough with the 80 years.’ On the one hand, it’s positive. On the other, many are sick of it by now. We are indeed a tiny minority. People think we are a million, or a million and a half, but we’re barely 40,000 out of a total population of more than 60 million.

Besides the widespread media coverage, 90 universities around Italy issued a first-ever apology for their part in expelling thousands of Jewish students, lecturers and employees from their institutions in order to comply with the Racial Laws. Sarfatti does not applaud this initiative.

“Apology creates pathos in society, and that’s okay, but it must be accompanied by practical steps, with research grants, relevant school curricula [studying the Racial Laws isn’t mandatory], restoration of Jewish names that were replaced by Fascist names,” he says. “In the medical department of the University of Bari, for example, there is an auditorium named for Nicola Pende, one of the 10 signatories on the scientists’ manifesto. Let them remove his name before they apologize.”

Despite the racist laws, despite the murder of her family, despite Auschwitz, Liliana Segre, who lives
HOW TINY ECUADOR HAD A HUGE IMPACT ON JEWS ESCAPING THE HOLOCAUST

BY RICH TENORIO.
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

While many countries did less than their all when Jews sought refuge from the Holocaust, the tiny South American nation of Ecuador made an outsized impact. Named for the equator, the former Spanish colony became an unlikely haven for an estimated 3,200 to 4,000 Jews from 1933 to 1945. Few of these refugees knew Spanish upon arrival, and many could not quite locate their new home on the map. Yet some émigrés achieved success in diverse fields, from science to medicine to the arts, helping Ecuador modernize along the way.

Last summer, Ecuador-based academic and author Daniel Kersffeld published a book in Spanish about Jewish immigrants on a farm 30 kilometers south of Quito.

The consul in Stockholm, Manuel Antonio Muňoz Borrero, issued 200 visas "true only," noting that di Capua, Ottolenghi and Muggia made LIFE into "one of the most outstanding businesses in Ecuador," able to export medications to much of Latin America while performing advanced scientific research that discovered new bacteria and viruses.

Other immigrants also made an impact in medicine. Austrian native Engel led the first endocrinological studies in Ecuador while pursuing literary fame under the pseudonym Diego Viga, while German-born Julius Zanders — who had been imprisoned after Kristallnacht — did pioneering work as a veterinarian and involved himself in Jewish community life.

Kersffeld credited Jewish immigrant doctors with introducing developments to Ecuador such as radiology and Freudian psychoanalysis. Journalist Benno Weiser used his investigative skills to denounce his new country's relations with Nazi Germany and inform fellow citizens about World War II. Later in life, he became a citizen of Israel, where he reported on the trial of infamous Nazi Adolf Eichmann and served as an ambassador to the Dominican Republic and Paraguay. His brother, Max Weiser, became the first honorary consul of Israel in Ecuador. In arts and culture, Kersffeld said, Jewish immigrants brought educational training from Europe and connections to luminaries such as Thomas Mann and Marc Chagall.

Hungarian refugee Olga Fisch became a celebrated collector of Ecuadorian indigenous handicrafts; her own acclaimed works are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian and the UN. Fellow artist Sojka "brought a personal testimony of the horror of the Nazi genocide to her artistic works," Kersffeld wrote, noting that virtually all of her family, including two daughters born six years apart, died in the Holocaust.

(Continued on page 15)
JEWISH WOMAN RECALLS THE DAY SHE GAVE HITLER FLOWERS

BY MAYA OPPENHEIM, INDEPENDENT

Hanna Oppenheim’s parents would have kept her at home if they had known she would spend the day surrounded by Adolf Hitler and his SA Brownshirts. Her teacher would also have been highly unlikely to choose the nine-year-old girl to present the Nazi leader with a gargantuan bouquet of flowers in front of a piazza full of people in Munich.

“I do not think my teacher would have chosen me, because she would have been aware of the fact I was Jewish and she would not have wanted to expose me to it,” the 94-year-old tells The Independent.

“My classmates chose me. I remember being very pleased to be picked. It seemed a tremendous honor. It never occurred to me that I ought not to present the flowers.”

It was November 9, 1934, and my grandma, who was forced to leave Hitler’s Germany soon after the flower saga, was about nine and a half.

“Hitler had been in power for 11 months and he had decided to return to Munich — the home of the Nazi movement — for a special ceremony to commemorate the 10th anniversary of 1923 [the Munich Putsch].

All of the state elementary schools in Munich had gathered at Feldhernhalle — a building that is still standing to this very day. The piazza was full of kids and I remember being pushed forward by the crowds, the nonagenarian, who was known as Hannelore back then, says.

“At the time, Max was described as a terrible pessimist, like a prophet who prophesizes the end of the world,” she says. “While my father was probably not as much of a pessimist, he was also a great realist and could also see that it was a fact that the time to leave. Although it was only the beginning.

But she herself remained oblivious to what was happening to the country and had no idea she would soon be leaving or that the Nazi Party would go on to mass murder six million Jews.

She was too young to read the daily newspaper her parents had delivered to the flat and did not listen to the radio. Her parents also chose not to discuss the political situation in front of her.

“The environment that I had grown up in was a vile system at home, I might not have been able to lead a normal life. Despite the fact that we had lived in Germany for generations, he said we had to leave while we still could. As a young girl, it was only that I then grasped all of the things which had been hidden from me.”

They took the train through the Balkan countries, passing through Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece, before getting a boat from Athens to Jaffa and finally arriving in Jerusalem.

“Days after we moved in, I started school, and within weeks I could speak Hebrew fluently,” she says. “I made friends quickly and settled into the Mediterranean climate. From then on, a totally different life began.

“When the war broke out, I was 15 and old enough to realize how bad the situation was. Things had been getting progressively uglier since the day I met Hitler. People had disappeared and been dragged into camps. All the things my father had thought would happen, happened. But they were infinitely worse than anybody could have imagined, with thousands and millions of people being gassed.”

From Jerusalem, they followed the news closely. “We had Jewish friends and relatives in Germany and learned that the Oppenheimer side of the family had been taken to Bergen-Belsen,” she remembers. “The parents, the three children and two sets of grandparents were all taken away. In the end, the parents and two sets of grandparents died and the three children survived, Eve, Rutzi and Paul. You feel sad about the ones you knew and the millions you did not know.”

A photo of 10-year-old Hanna in 1934 — the year she and her family fled Germany for Jerusalem.
BY CNAAN LIPHSZIE, JTA

Like countless world-class pianists, Nelly Ben-Or began playing piano at the age of five and never stopped.

That discipline helped Ben-Or, 86, become an international concert pianist and the person most widely recognized for adapting the Alexander technique for postwar movement improvement for musicians.

But unlike for most of her peers, much of Ben-Or’s musical training in her native Poland took place while her family was hiding in Nazi-occupied Warsaw, where her mother, Antonina Podhorodez, time and again risked everything to afford her daughter access to the then scarce instrument.

Ben-Or, now a resident in London and still teaches master classes in piano and the Alexander technique, unfurls the story of her unlikely survival, how it marries opposites, such as artistic creativity, and survival and movement, called it “an inspiring personal account” by Jonathan Sacks, who praised as a “brilliant and deeply moving” study.

“Rabbi Andrew Goldstein, the president of Britain’s Liberal Judaism movement, called it “an inspiring story, beautifully written” in a foreword he penned for the book.

The strength of Ben-Or’s story stems partly from the author bearing witness to monstrous wartime events, including the Warsaw ghetto uprising, but also on how it marries opposites, such as betrayal and heroism, hunger and artistic creativity, and survival and self-sacrifice.

Throughout the packed 180-page narrative, one character — the piano — makes repeated and unlikely appearances.

The instrument features in Ben-Or’s earliest memories, from her childhood home in Lwow, which was part of Poland before World War II, now Lviv in Ukraine. She recalls that when she was six, German soldiers carried off the piano on which she had practiced in her family’s living room, "I shivered in fear and despair, huddled against my mother’s body as I watched them taking away the instrument which had become for me such a wonderful source of magic," Ben-Or writes.

Her family was about to lose much more than their prized possessions.

Ben-Or’s father, Leon, was taken away and, she later learned, killed at the Janowska concentration camp.

At the height of World War II, when the Nazis were hunting and executing people on the streets just below her home, Ben-Or was playing music on a grand piano that brought her brief hope of normalcy.

Noticing her talent, the Kowalskis suggested that Ben-Or join their granddaughter’s weekly piano lessons, to which her mother reluctantly agreed. The teacher suggested that Ben-Or attend a music school, but Antonina vetoed it.

"The fewer people who noticed me, or you, the safer we were," Ben-Or’s mother told her.

As a little girl, “playing the piano for chosen periods in the day became moments of paradise on Earth,” Ben-Or recalls. The teacher insisted that Nelly play at a students’ concert, and she was allowed to play, becoming the talk of the block for a while.

But her mother’s fears turned out to be justified. Soon after the concert, rumors that Antonina and Nelly were "not who they pretended to be" started circulating among the neighbors, forcing the two to leave yet another hiding place, Ben-Or writes.

They were rounded up in German army trains and transported to the death camps, an almost inconceivable rate of extermination.

"I desire to get to that instrument and play it made me nag my mother” to ask the Kowalskis for permission to play, Ben-Or writes. But doing so would have blown their cover as a working-class maid and her daughter, her mother feared.

“Musical gifts were so often associated with the Jewish people,” Ben-Or writes.

"But a part of my mother wanted me to keep playing," Ben-Or told JTA in an interview at her home near London, where she keeps two pianos in a study full of books and orchid plants.

Antonina relented, but only on the condition that Nelly pretend not to know how to play, recalled Ben-Or, a frail-looking woman with lively eyes.

"I went on eagerly from one piece of music to the next, playing anything that was available," including Johann Strauss waltzes considered too demanding for eight-year-old piano pupils, Ben-Or writes.

"Yet today, as a concert pianist, I am convinced that I owe to that unorthodox but invaluable experience of piano playing,“ she writes. It helped her hold on to her humanity and hopefulness in hours of despair and panic, she says.

After the war, Ben-Or was enrolled in a school for gifted musicians. She and her mother emigrated from Poland to Israel in 1950. A decade later, Ben-Or went to study in England and stayed. She married in 1964. She and her husband have a daughter who lives in London.

The book describes her development as a concert pianist, and as someone who faces formidable challenges as a survivor in three countries.

"It seems as if my voracious appetite for academic and musical progress was partly a reaction to the years of repression," Ben-Or writes.

"It was as if the darkness of the war years had been lifted, and the bright light and fresh air of freedom filled my whole being with the need to receive as much as possible of all that I had missed before."

THE HOLOCAUST’S DEADLIEST MONTHS

The killing only stopped when there was no one left to murder.

From August to October 1942, 1.2 million Jews were slain in the Nazi death camps, an almost inconceivable 15,000 people per day, a new study suggests.

This is more than previously calculated, and a rise from several recent genocides such as the one that occurred in Rwanda in 1994. In fact, roughly 25 percent of all Holocaust victims were killed from August to October 1942, which were quite likely the deadliest three months in human history as the German killing machine was at its most lethal.

Study lead author Lewi Stone, a mathematical biologist from Tel Aviv University and Australia’s RMIT University, used railway transporta-

tion records to reach his conclusions. The “special trains” that transported the victims were kept on strict time schedules, on which the Germans had detailed records of each trip.

Overall, some 480 train trips were made from 393 separate Polish towns, destined for death camps such as Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka.

The purpose of those three was strictly mass murder, unlike camps such as Auschwitz, which also served as forced labor camps.

“Apart from very few exceptions, victims who were transported to the death camps were rapidly murdered upon arrival in the gas chambers, thus giving the system perfected by the Nazis all the characteristics of an automated assembly line,” Stone told Newsweek.

Stone estimates that the Nazis’ murder campaign could have continued at this pace had there been more victims still living in Germany-occupied Poland. Instead, the murder rate tapered off in November 1942 as a result of there being essentially “no one left to kill,” Stone said.

The study shows that the “Nazi’s” focused genocide with the goal of obliterating the entire Jewish people of occupied Poland in as short a time as possible, mostly within three months.”

...
THE JEWISH WOMEN WHO FLED TYRANNY TO BECOME ANGELS OF THE NHS

BY STEPHEN ORYSZCZUK
JEWISH NEWS

In a room at the Royal College of Nursing’s historic Cavendish Square head office, I sit quietly waiting for a talk to begin. In front of me is a 98-year-old Vienna-born Jewish woman, just back from visiting her daughter in Brighton. Her name is Margaret, still sharp as a pin despite her years. She came to the UK just before the war and became a nurse. She is here to listen to Dr. Jane Brooks from the University of Manchester, who is researching the contribution of the 914 young Jewish women like Margaret who fled Nazi Europe to become trained nurses, midwives and probationers here.

Of these, 130 were Czech and 784 German or Austrian. Brooks says they were incredible — and underappreciated. “Much has been written about male refugees who were doctors, lawyers, scientists and businessmen, and there is a growing body of research on women who entered Britain on domestic service visas,” Brooks says. “But little has been written about this small but arguably significant cohort of women.” Margaret nods in agreement.

The late Walter Laquer, Holocaust historian and former director of the Wiener Library, called this “a remarkable generation” who made their mark in the countries they made their homes, but also internationally. Brooks says the European Jewish women who came to nurse were no different.

Annie Altschul, studying math and physics in Austria to prepare for a teaching career, fled to the UK when war broke out, becoming a nanny before entering nursing. She later pioneered psychiatric nursing research and became the UK’s first professor of mental health nursing and a staunch advocate of voluntary euthanasia. Her reports are still among the most globally cited. Lisbeth Hockey, daughter of a government architect in Vienna, was training as a doctor when — as a non-Aryan — she was forced to leave university.

She was brought to the UK by the Quakers, worked as a governess for the Wedgwood family, and then entered the London Hospital as a student in 1938, later becoming the country’s first director of nursing research. “I’d wanted to be a doctor and tried to get into medicine here, but there was no way because I was a woman,” she recalls in her oral history, now archived at the RCN.

In those days, it was very rare for women to get into medicine. I also wasn’t a British subject and had no money, so there were three conditions which just made it totally impossible.” The Wedgwoods advised her to try nursing instead. “I would never advise a person who wanted to be a doctor to go into nursing.... However, I did follow that advice,” she says. “There are many other examples such as Marion Ferguson, first director of nursing studies at Bedford College, Charlotte Krasner, an early pioneer of the department of nursing at the University of Manchester; and Ingeolre Czarlinski, who arrived on the Kindertransport in July 1939 and later supported the birth of Prince Charles.

“Those who succeeded did spectacularly well,” Zelig said. But she noted that while some succeeded, others failed because “they did not understand the country, the economy of the country, what they should do and not do to move forward.”

After World War II, Zelig said, many Jews left Ecuador, “especially after quotas became available from the US.” Today, she said, the Ecuadorian Jewish community numbers only about 800. “I think most Jews who went to Ecuador saw it as a stepping-stone,” she said, “Nobody knew where it was or anything.”

But, she said, “I feel tremendous gratitude. A lot of exiles felt very grateful to Ecuador having opened its doors.”

People [who watch the film] are saying, ‘Oh, I didn’t know, amazing, I didn’t know about this,’ whether they’re Jewish or non-Jewish,” Zelig said.

Ecuador has not been much scholarship on Jewish immigration to Ecuador, contrasting this with what he calls successful studies in other Latin American countries. He said that his investigation has sparked interest in the subject across the globe — from Latin America to the US to Israel.
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.

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.

“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

For further information about the Eli Zborowski Legacy Circle, please contact

Robert Christopher Morton,
Director of Planned Giving at ASYV, who can be reached at: 212-220-4304; cmorton@YadVashemUSA.org