

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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YOM HASHOAH 2020: REMEMBERING FROM AFAR

Each year on *Yom HaShoah*, one can find Yad Vashem's Warsaw Ghetto Square packed with survivors, descendants of survivors, soldiers, students, dignitaries and state officials who have gathered to mark the start of the solemn day. *Yom HaShoah*, or Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day, is a national day of commemoration in Israel and around the world, when the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust are memorialized. This year, however, was markedly different. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to gather in person.

At this time of the year, the Yad Vashem campus is typically buzzing with activity. Student groups and visitors from across the globe tour the museum, attend workshops at the school, and meet with survivors to hear their stories. Instead, ceremonies and other commemorative events were made virtual this year, with individuals participating online from their homes.

Yad Vashem's annual recitation of names was adapted to an online platform to accommodate this year's unique circumstances. Normally, the names of Holocaust victims are recited in Yad Vashem's Hall of Remembrance and Hall of Names. In light of social distancing guidelines, Yad Vashem invited the public to join an International Virtual Name Reading Campaign. This campaign encouraged people of all ages, from all walks of life and from all corners of the world, to join a global name-reading initiative to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day 2020. Individuals around the world recorded videos of themselves reciting the names of family members or names they found in the Shoah Victims' Names database. They then shared the videos on social media using the hashtags #RememberingFromHome and #ShoahNames.

Numerous dignitaries and celebrities participated in the campaign, including President Rivlin and famous Israeli actor Tomer Kapon. Videos came in from across Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia and the Americas. One cannot

help but marvel at the diverse array of cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds represented. We were very proud to have so many people from the ASYV community, including members of the Board and our YLA, participate as well. Toward the end of *Yom HaShoah* on April 21st, Yad Vashem compiled the videos that came in from all over the world and created an online Holocaust Remembrance Day Global Name Reading Ceremony. While we were unable to gather in person this year, we were each able to recite the names of Holocaust victims from where we were. By re-

Reuveni from Czechoslovakia, Avraham Carmi from Czechoslovakia, and Yehuda Beilis from Lithuania. The personal stories of these torchlighters reflect the central theme of Holocaust Remembrance Day 2020.

The theme for this year's day of remembrance was "Rescue by Jews during the Holocaust: Solidarity in a Disintegrating World." In the week prior to the event, Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev reinforced the idea that during these challenging times, "we must strive to emulate those heroes who, despite the difficult conditions, rose up to aid their fellow brother." President Rivlin similarly emphasized the incredible moral courage of these heroes in his video message. "They proved time and again that... even at the lowest point, one can and must choose to be human, to hold the most fundamental Jewish value of life, of mutual responsibility.... And so they were the angels in the heart of hell."

The commemoration continued the morning of April 21st with the 10 am siren. Every year, an air raid siren sounds throughout the country, and Israelis pause for two minutes of silence in memory of the Jews murdered by the Nazis. Traditionally, the entire nation comes to a standstill; motorists stop their cars in the middle of the road to stand beside their vehicles, and all activity halts in the bustling markets. But this year, confined to their homes, many Israelis stood on their balconies. Police officers adorned in medical masks and gloves stood at attention in front of the homes of Holocaust survivors.

Although this year's Holocaust Remembrance Day was noticeably different from those in years past, the overall sentiment remained the same. We must treasure the survivors that are still with us and learn from their wisdom. They experienced what no human being should ever have to endure. We must honor the survivors and the memories of the victims by ensuring that such a catastrophe never befalls humanity again. This year — and every year — we renew our pledge to never forget!

BY JILL GOLTZER



(Top row, left to right) Haim Arbiv, Zohar Arnon, Yehuda Beilis; (bottom row, left to right) Aviva Blum-Wachs, Avraham Carmi, Lea Reuveni.

membering their names, we help to restore their identities and dignity.

The official state ceremony marking the start of *Yom HaShoah* was prerecorded on the Mount of Remembrance. Only the master of ceremonies and performers were present, while speakers sent in video messages. The April 20th event was broadcast live and shared on both the Yad Vashem and ASYV Facebook pages. The recording included messages from the president and prime minister of the State of Israel, the stories of the six survivors, musical interludes, prayers from the chief rabbis, and a message delivered on behalf of the survivors. This year's torchlighters were Holocaust survivors Zohar Arnon from Hungary, Aviva Blum-Wachs from Warsaw, Haim Arbiv from Libya, Lea Miriam

WORD GETS AROUND — HOLOCAUST EDUCATION ACROSS THE MILES

The education department of the American Society for Yad Vashem and its Young Leadership Associates held their twenty-second annual Arfa Professional Development Conference on Holocaust Education on March 29, 2020. This year's program was generously supported by the Barbara Arfa Endowment Fund for Holocaust Education. The theme for this year's event was *Never Again Means Now: Confronting Anti-Semitism in a Post-Holocaust World — The Impact of Education*.

Our original plan for the Arfa Conference this year had been a live program open to all educators interested in and committed to enriching their knowledge and resources about the Holocaust. Because of the onset and impact of COVID-19 and the immediate requirement of so-

About 75% of the participants were from public/non-Jewish schools; 19% were from Jewish day schools. 63% of the participants were new to our program and 31% were alums. The feedback we received addresses the conference in general and our efforts to sustain the conference tgiven the COVID-19 situation. It is all very positive and encouraging for future efforts.

This program is a collaborative effort with the Association of Teachers of Social Studies of the United Federation of Teachers, the Educators' Chapter of the UFT Jewish Heritage Committee, and the School of Education of Manhattanville College. Participants in this year's program, received In-Service credits for completing the conference.

In 2015, the ATSS/UFT presented the American Society for Yad Vashem with the President's Award for being in the forefront of Holocaust ed-

ucation in the United States and for organizing the Arfa Professional Development Conference on Holocaust Education. The American Society received the award to proclaim the ATSS/UFT's recognition of the valuable part the American Society plays in social studies education. This award also acknowledges that the ATSS/UFT commends the American Society for implementing best educational practices in using documents, inquiry and critical thinking and action for studying the Holocaust.

Stanley Stone, executive director of the American Society for Yad Vashem,

opened the program and welcomed the participants. Stanley commented how, even with the change in format, the program still sustained our dedication and commitment to Holocaust remembrance through education. Marlene W. Yahalom, PhD, director of education of the American Society, spoke about the importance of this program in its efforts to raise Holocaust awareness through education, and acknowledged the generosity of the Arfa and Massel families, who established the Barbara Arfa Endowment Fund for Holocaust Education that generously supports this program.

Our program and theme this year were a stark reminder to all of us of the need to sustain the lessons of the Holocaust and its relevance to our respective learning environments. With the rise of anti-Semitic incidents locally, nationally and globally, the shrinking population of Holocaust survivors, and the increase of Holocaust denial, we are faced with challenges that question the validity of the information and the justification to include it in school curricula. Dr. Yahalom spoke

about how the Holocaust demonstrates an atmosphere in which genocide can take place, and noted that the beliefs that result in a genocide survive because of a political and social climate that makes these beliefs acceptable. The Holocaust must therefore be remembered because it is an example of how these trends can and do become more threatening.

Carolyn Herbst, past president /past chairperson of the ATSS/UFT, emphasized that this conference is a valuable resource for increasing awareness and sensitivity to intolerance and injustice. Ms. Herbst remarked on the challenge of teaching this subject without reducing the topic to numbers and statistics, and emphasizing the human elements of the events — victims, rescuers, perpetrators and bystanders. She also spoke on the importance of educators realizing how “we must teach about the Holocaust as being on a continuum.”

Our keynote speaker was Na'ama Shik, PhD, director of e-learning at Yad Vashem. Dr. Shik presented an engaging lecture about women and the Holocaust, their bravery and resilience, and her research on the community of victims among the Jewish female prisoners of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Felice Cohen presented a workshop on family histories and enriched the audience's understanding on the relevance of historical documentation and the use of creating these histories as an invaluable resource in the classroom. Cheyenne Oliver discussed the role of propaganda during the Holocaust and the powerful impact it had on understanding the Holocaust during the war years. The workshop topics complemented the theme of the program.

Our theme this year is a reminder to all of us to sustain the lessons of the Holocaust and its relevance in our respective learning environments.

Although each year we learn about more states that aim to establish and enforce mandated Holocaust education, we are all painfully aware of the challenges we have encountered while executing this mission.

The legacy of the Holocaust is acutely relevant to understanding the resurgence of anti-Semitism and related issues, which signal us to be aware and diligent to strongly address these matters and work collectively toward “putting out the flames” of hatred, bigotry and intolerance to differences. The Arfa Conference is one of many resources we offer to meet these challenges.

As an immediate and effective response to the need for social distancing, shelter-at-home orders nationwide, and cancelled travel opportunities, we were able to move our educational outreach successfully to remote learning opportunities. Below is a list of our accomplishments so far.

During these challenging times of COVID-19, Holocaust survivors are again a powerful source of inspiration.

Our "Museum Without Walls: a Family's History through Artifacts" was an opportunity to bring the museum to you, since museum access of any kind is restricted for now. We created a program to share a family's story, through artifacts, of their life before, during and after the war, and after the war. Dr. Yahalom spoke about her family's story of survival during the Holocaust and the lives that were rebuilt by her parents (Judy

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The Besa exhibit at the Mobile Museum of Art — part of the professional development program.

cial distancing, our plans and format changed radically for our educational events and programming nationwide. Through our efforts to provide our programs and resources on a Zoom platform despite the many new challenges presented by COVID-19, we were able to offer the Arfa conference in a new format. We succeeded with an impactful program, reaching out to educators nationwide, and received strong and positive feedback from our dedicated participants. This conference has proven to be a strong vehicle to promote the mission of Holocaust remembrance and memory through education over the years. With the rise in anti-Semitism across the globe, our mission is now more important than ever before. The conference was created by Caroline Massel, executive board member and founding chair of the Young Leadership Associates of the American Society, in 1999.

This year, despite the challenges of switching to a Zoom formats at the last minute, we presented to approximately 80 participants. We had representation from seven states nationally.

MIRA ROSENBLATT: A STORY OF LEADERSHIP, RESILIENCE AND SURVIVAL

Mira Rosenblatt will never forget August 12, 1942. On that day, the teenager was among the 30,000 Jews living in the *Sosnowiec* ghetto in Poland who were rounded up by the Nazis and herded into the industrial city's stadium.

She was separated from her parents and three of her siblings, segregated into a group deemed strong enough to work.

At *Yom Hashoah* 2020, Mira, now 96, remains haunted by those events more than three-quarters of a century ago. In her apartment in Brooklyn, N.Y., she recounts the harrowing experience.

"Nothing is easy," says Mira. "I want people to know about the things that happened."

In the sea of detainees packing *Sosnowiec's* arena, Mira somehow made her way back to her family. As a family, they decided that she would take her siblings and attempt to blend them in among those fit for labor.

As they were being marched forward, she pushed her three siblings — older sister Vida Malka, younger sister Etusha and brother Natan — into a garden to try to save them. A Nazi guard put a gun to her shoulder, forcing her away from them.

She later learned they survived for a time, but did not ultimately survive the war. Nor did their parents, Helena and Shlomo Isaac Rosenblatt.

"I had very good parents, very understanding parents, educated parents," she remembers.

She was soon deported to *Gruenberg*, part of the *Gross-Rosen* concentration camp complex in the German town of *Silesia*, where she worked until January 1945, when camp directors forced the prisoners on a death march.

In February, after two weeks of marching, she saw her chance to escape when a Nazi looked away. She took her chance and ran.

Another girl followed. They spent "three or four days" in the freezing forest, where they banded with a trio of other girls on the run. The group slept in holes covered with snow; Mira said they ate ants and snakes to stave off starvation. One day, they came upon a home with a "big chimney," and Mira took another risk.

"I knocked on the door and a woman opened [it], a short little woman who said, 'Gott! You're a dead person!'" she recalls.

"I'm lost, I'm looking for my parents," she remembers telling the woman. "Then she said, 'Come in. I will give you something to eat.'"

Mira stayed on the woman's farm for three weeks, cleaning her house and mill, feeding her pigs and aiding with other chores. Although the German woman was a "very good person," Mira didn't want to push her luck, calling herself "Irina" as if she were a Polish Christian.

She remained mum about the four other girls, who were hiding in the barn, yet she smuggled food out to them.

One day, a Polish woman visited the house, saw Mira and threatened to call the police because Mira was "without papers."

The elderly woman told Mira, "Ignore her, she came here [from Poland], too." But Mira was spooked.

She told the elderly woman she must leave. The woman gave her a loaf of bread and a chunk of smoked meat, and said, "'God bless you, I hope you find your parents,'" Mira recalls. "And if you don't, come back to me."

"[She] loved me, the old woman, she kissed me and everything."

Mira divided the food among the girls. "I cut the bread and meat in five, so everyone had a proper piece," she says. "I thought we might get separated in the forest."

They walked a mile and a half and reached a farm, whereupon one in the group announced: "We three are going here. There's no room for [the two of] you."

They had met a man who had promised a place for only three to hide.

Mira recalls crying and saying, "I worked the whole time; I used to bring you food. You have no room for me?"

Mira and the fifth girl were left to fend on their own. Yet again, her initiative and a bit of good fortune saved her.

A young man came along in a wagon. The "P" on his lapel alerted Mira he was a Pole. In Polish, she said, "I'm lost. Maybe you have a place for me to stay by you?"

The young man, Bolek, took the two young women to a castle, where a number of Poles were farming the land. "We met the other people and started to work," Mira recounts, noting that once again she hid her heritage and called herself Irina.

Ultimately, she sent a letter to where her fam-

ily had lived in *Sosnowiec*, searching for any hope of their survival. "It was a 42-tenant building my grandfather had built," she remembers.

When the war ended, a young man came looking for her. One of the Poles said, "Irina, a man is walking around the street, and he's waving your letter; I recognize your handwriting."

Mira ran to the street and recognized the man as her distant cousin, Henry Rosenblatt.

"He was wearing green pants and a green blazer, and looked like a soldier," she recalls tearfully. "The Polish people got frightened because they thought he was an American. They didn't know I'm Jewish, remember. They said, 'Americans are here. They are going to kill us.'"

"I said, 'Let's find out if he speaks Polish.' He stayed with us for dinner."

Soon, Mira told them she was leaving with Henry. "Everyone said, 'Irina you cannot go away, you cannot leave us.' I said, 'No, I'm going with him.'"

"I left with my husband."

After the war, the couple settled in Germany, where they opened stores selling groceries and dry goods. They lost a daughter, Helena, when she was 22 months old. They emigrated to New York and went on to have three more children: Lil in 1951, Belinda in 1954, and a son, Mel, in 1958.



Mira displaying a picture of her extended family, most of whom perished in the Holocaust.

Mira's two elder brothers, Herschel and Moniek Rosenblatt, who had fled in 1939 to *Lemberg* on the Russian front and made their way to Uzbekistan, survived the war.

Henry died in 2017, and their son, who was a noted vascular and interventional radiologist, passed away last year.

Mira has eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. She is here to remember and remind others of the horrors — and the resilience.

Her legacy lives on.

BY HEATHER ROBINSON, JNS

NAZISM, THE HOLOCAUST, AND THE MIDDLE EAST

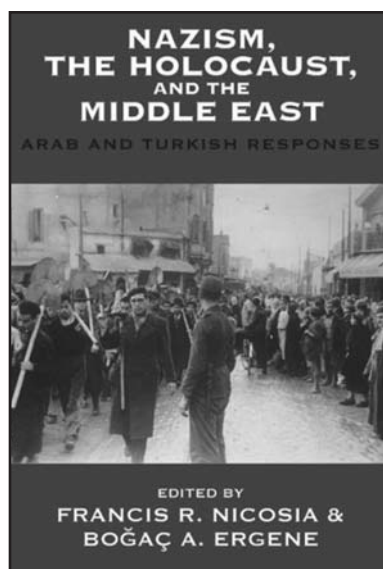
Nazism, the Holocaust, and the Middle East: Arab and Turkish Responses.

Edited by Francis R. Nicosia and Boğaç A. Ergene. Berghahn Books: New York, N.Y., 2018. 258 pp. \$23.86 softcover.

In recent years, much more is being written about the Holocaust vis-à-vis the Middle East and North Africa. In *Nazism, the Holocaust, and the Middle East: Arab and Turkish Responses*, the editors, Francis R. Nicosia & Boğaç A. Ergene, offer up a collection of scholarly writings concerning areas “predominantly, but not exclusively, Arab and Turkish, and predominantly, but not exclusively Muslim,” with the goal of making the “response to the possibility of a German victory in the war and to the prospect of Axis domination in some form” the centerpiece of their anthology. Of particular interest to readers of *Martyrdom and Resistance*, however, will be the response in these various regions to the knowledge of what was happening to Europe’s Jews. Indeed, students of the period will find the research published here both surprising and thought-provoking — all of it “authored by regional specialists familiar with local sources and languages of the region....”

For example, while for years many have believed that Turkey was a compassionate country when it came to reacting to Jewish suffering, Corry Guttsadt’s piece, entitled “Turkish Responses to the Holocaust: Ankara’s Policy toward the Jews, 1933-1945,” tells quite a different story. While Turkey maintained its neutrality throughout the period, we read of how Turkey’s own “nationalist domestic policies” were, in fact, encouraged by what was happening in Hitler’s Germany. Thus, “over the course of the 1930s, anti-Semitic tendencies [within the country] grew.” In the 1940s, particularly punishing was the Turkish government’s adoption of an “astro-

nomical[ly]” high “wealth tax,” especially when it came to Turkish Jews, blamed for price increases suffered by the general populace. When Jews couldn’t pay the “wealth tax,” their



property was confiscated and they were deported for “slave labor to a region near the Russian border.” (True, all non-Muslims had to pay this and, when they couldn’t, were sent off to slave labor. But Jews had to pay the most and hence were more likely to be deported.)

Meanwhile, when it came to “welcoming” Jews fleeing persecution in Europe, while Turkey accepted Jewish academics because of the desire to “modernize their schools,” others found the way barred. For that matter, even transit through Turkey was difficult. The saddest example is the story of the *Struma*. In December of 1941, 765 Jews from Romania were on board the vessel when its engine broke down in Turkey. “Turkish authorities refused to allow the passengers to disembark” and wait till it was fixed, even though Jewish relief organizations said they’d pay all the refugees’ expenses. Instead, the Turkish police “towed [the *Struma*] into the open sea,” where it sank. Only one person survived.

No less surprising and thought-provoking among the works in *Nazism, the Holocaust and the Middle East* is Israel Gershoni’s piece entitled “Demon and Infidel: Egyptian Intellectuals

Confronting Hitler and Nazism during World War II.” In short, where for years it has been believed that “many in Egypt and throughout the Arab world” were generally supportive of Hitler and Nazism (knowledge about the activities of the Mufti of Jerusalem has surely fueled these beliefs), Gershoni reveals that the story is not quite like that. According to him there were a number of very popular “mainstream intellectuals in Egypt,” including Tawfiq al-Hakim, ‘Abbas Mahmud al ‘Aqqad, and Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyat, “who created and disseminated a negative image of Hitler and Nazi Germany.” Put simply, they viewed him “as a demon/Satan” and/or “infidel/nonbeliever,” who, after winning the war, would never grant Egypt its independence from Britain — something those who supported Nazism believed Hitler would do. On the contrary, according to these writers, Nazism was not about freedom at all! It was “an unprecedented and colossal threat to human civilization.”

Finally, “prophetic” is the word that immediately comes to mind when reading Esther Webman’s “The Persecution of the Jews in Germany in Egyptian and Palestinian Public Discourses, 1933-1939.” For in comparing the respective newspapers popular in each region — *Al-Ahram* in Egypt and *Filastin* in Palestine — she makes crystal clear that while both papers covered what was happening to the Jews in Europe, *Filastin*’s overriding concern was the “problems” Palestinians saw attendant to the very possibility of Jewish immigration to Palestine, a solution which was always talked about whenever it came to the rescue of Europe’s Jews. And in order to prevent that happening, *Filastin* did all it could! It minimized what was happening to the Jews in Europe. Articles were published about how the Germans were simply defending themselves against Jew-Communists. Then *Filastin* published an article “introducing” its readers to Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. “One of the subtitles of the article was ‘The Social Flaws of the Jews.’”

All in all, the above is but a snapshot of the absorbing material *Nazism, the Holocaust, and the Middle East* offers the reader.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

JEWES WHO RESCUED JEWES

Throughout the Holocaust, in the shadow of their unprecedented persecution by the German Nazi regime and their collaborators, there were Jews who endeavored to save their fellow Jews — often beyond their immediate family or acquaintances. The conditions for rescue were not always ripe and the attempts were not always successful, but that did not deter these remarkable individuals and groups from trying. Jews saved other Jews through many kinds of activities — forging documents, assisting in locating hiding places, smuggling across borders, providing much-needed food, clothing and medicines, and more. These rescuers operated in their local communities, ghettos and camps. They acted alone, as partisans or as part of organized rescue groups.

Eleven of these inspiring stories feature in a

new online exhibition which was uploaded to Yad Vashem’s website to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day 2020. Entitled “Rescue by Jews: ‘One for All,’” the exhibition brings a small sample of the countless stories of selfless bravery and solidarity Jews exhibited during the Holocaust, despite the horrific circumstances in which they found themselves. The stories provide a glimpse into the harrowing experiences, as well as immeasurable pride, of Jewish rescuers.

* * *

Two of the stories included in the exhibition are related, and involve many of the same brave individuals who carried out these daring rescue attempts.

In April 1941, the Germans and the Italians occupied Yugoslavia. As part of their plan to dismantle the country, the Germans established a puppet state known as Independent Croatia

under the leadership of Ante Pavelić, the head of the racist Ustasha (*Ustaša*) movement. During the years 1941–1945, the Pavelić regime brutally murdered some 30,000 Jews, hundreds of thousands of Serbs and objectors to the regime, and thousands of Roma and Sinti. Heavy fines were imposed on the Jews, their movements were restricted, and they were forced to wear yellow stars.

In late November 1941, the Ustasha authorities issued an order to the Jewish community of *Osijek* to find a location to confine some 2,000 women and children. The community heard that in the town of *Djakovo* there was an abandoned flour mill belonging to the church, which could house a large number of people. The church opposed the idea of turning one of its properties into a concentration camp, but the Ustasha nev-

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A MUSEUM WITHOUT BORDERS

Since the start of this pandemic, the American Society for Yad Vashem has had to find new and creative ways of connecting with our communities. Although we cannot gather in person for the time being, our mission to educate and remember remains crucial and relevant. ASYV and Yad Vashem are constantly working to provide meaningful content to the public. If anything, this unique time has demonstrated that we are truly a museum without borders.

Unable to convene for the remainder of our ASYV Speaker Series, we transitioned the lectures to an online platform. A prerecorded video of “Woman and Resistance in the Holocaust” with Dr. Na’ama Shik was sent out to our supporters in late April, followed by “Spiritual Survival: Art During the Holocaust” with Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg in mid-May. The latter even included a virtual tour of the Yad Vashem Art Museum.

We have also shared numerous Zoom lectures and presentations being offered by Yad

Vashem’s world-renowned scholars and curators. Examples include “Aspects of Liberation, 75 Years Later” with Ephraim Kaye and “The Last Scion: Commemorating Holocaust Survivors Who Remained, Dying in Defense of the State of Israel” with Nurit Davidson.

Our Young Leadership Associates (YLA) have also kept active during these challenging times. The YLA Book Club has been meeting virtually and continues to have meaningful discussions about the Holocaust and the contemporary challenges we face in Holocaust remembrance. On the eve of *Yom HaShoah*, our YLA co-hosted a commemorative event with 3GNY as part of a new collaboration between our two organizations. YLA board member Alex Levine discussed the importance of being involved with Yad Vashem and the responsibility he has as a member of the Third Generation. The virtual event was live-streamed on Facebook, with hundreds of people tuning in from all around the globe.

Throughout the broadcast, messages came in from New York, California, Las Vegas, Israel, Canada, Brazil and El Salvador!

Both as a group and as individuals, our young leaders are finding ways to connect with others in this age of social distancing. YLA Co-Chair Rachel Shnay has been using her social media platform to organize the delivery of hot meals to entire hospital units, all while supporting local kosher establishments. This initiative “is meant to be a *kiddush HaShem* to show that despite many harsh accusations made against Jewish communities during this time, Jewish people care about feeding and caring for EVERYONE, zero discrimination.” These are the values that survivors inspire us to live by!

If there is anything we have learned from survivors, it is resiliency. So, while we have no way of knowing if or when things will return to “normal,” we do know that we are capable of adapting to a new “normal.” Every day we are discovering new and effective ways to interact and connect from a distance. Through the use of online platforms and virtual activities, ASYV and Yad Vashem will continue to uphold our mission to safeguard the memory of the past and impart its meaning to future generations.

BY JILL GOLTZER

WORD GETS AROUND — HOLOCAUST EDUCATION ACROSS THE MILES

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and Ossi Warshawski) and her grandparents (Esther and Harry Rozmaryn and Rosa and Isaac Warshawski), all of whom survived the Holocaust. Dr. Yahalom shared her family’s 100-year journey of life during and after the Holocaust. A similar presentation was done for the *GenerationsForward* group of the Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center in Westchester.

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dr. Yahalom presented an exhibit walk-through and lecture at Temple Emanuel in Waterford, Connecticut, featuring “Architecture of Murder: the Auschwitz-Birkenau Blueprints.” This exhibit portrays the perpetrators and, through blueprints, photographs and maps, highlights the premeditation behind the construction and planning of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Dr. Yahalom also presented a professional development workshop for students and faculty at Waterford High School.

Dr. Yahalom presented a professional development program to regional educators and graduate students at Kean University on “The Eichmann Trial.” The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to enrich their understanding about the educational pedagogy of Yad Vashem, the trial, its lessons about justice, hearing the voice of Holocaust survivors in a public setting for the first time, and how this turn of events transformed Holocaust education, awareness and commemoration forever.

A lecture and workshop to accompany the exhibit “Besa: Albanians Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust,” currently on loan at the Mobile Museum of Art in Mobile, Alabama, will



Rabbi Israel Lau after liberation: an inspirational photo from the “No Child’s Play” exhibit.

be presented by Dr. Yahalom to the museum community via Zoom in June. She will also present a professional development workshop for regional educators, and participants will be eligible for professional development credit for attending the workshop.

The “No Child’s Play” and “The Eichmann Trial” exhibits were the resources selected this year for the National History Day project at the

Donna Klein Jewish Academy in Boca Raton. Students and faculty were introduced to the “No Child’s Play” and “The Eichmann Trial” exhibits, on loan from the American Society and curated and developed by Yad Vashem. Dr. Yahalom worked with the faculty and students at Donna Klein to guide the students through these two exhibits and incorporate this work into their senior research projects in honor of National History Day.

Students and faculty of the Rabbi Alexander S. Gross Hebrew Academy in Miami Beach received a professional development presentation by Dr. Yahalom to accompany the “No Child’s Play” exhibit. Students completed a research project and presentation, under faculty direction, that included this exhibit. Special emphasis was placed on discussing Jewish victims, their lives before, during and after the war, and the humanity of all victims, based on this learning model.

Dr. Yahalom attended a series of training sessions sponsored and developed by WEDU (We Educate) of 3GNY. These sessions are structured to train grandchildren of Holocaust survivors to share and present their family’s experiences of survival and rebirth during and after the Holocaust, in the classroom. We will be working with WEDU in an effort to promote and sustain these important educational messages.

For more information about ASYV educational programs and events, and Traveling Exhibitions, contact Marlene Warshawski Yahalom, PhD, Director of Education – mwy@yadvashe-musa.org

BY MARLENE W. YAHALOM, PHD, director of education of the ASYV

JEWES WHO RESCUED JEWES

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ertheless appropriated the mill, and on December 2, 1941, some 1,200 women and children, mostly from Sarajevo, were brought there. On December 20, another 700 people arrived. The vast majority of the inmates were Jewish, with another approximately 50 gentile Serbian women. Initially, the internal running of the camp was handled by the Jews. Two local Croatian policemen were stationed at the gate.

The *Osijek* Jewish community established a welfare committee to assist with the camp, which required volunteers. A group of youngsters call-

Members of *Leteća Ekipa* went along with Brodski's plan. They forged Sarina's age and took her out of the camp with dozens of other children.

Leo Grunwald recalled:
"The removal of 37 children up to age 12 was permitted.... When we arrived at the *Djakovo* camp, there was a female Jewish doctor from the *Osijek* community who helped us prepare the children for departure to *Vinkovci*.... Some families that knew me... approached me and asked me to take their children so that they would be saved. The truck was large and covered with

it will be good for you."
Gabriel and Leah were transferred to *Vinkovci*, where they were separated and placed with local Jewish families. After some three months, they were sent to *Osijek*, where they were reunited with their cousin Leo Herman.

Gabriel and Leah's mother Josephine (née Zeichner) remained imprisoned in *Djakovo*. Two of Josephine's sisters managed to escape to *Split*, and tried to arrange for Gabriel, Leah and Leo to come live with them. In the spring of 1942, the sisters hired someone to bring the children to *Split*. However, the children were abandoned in Zagreb, some 260 km (160 miles) north of their destination.

In Zagreb, the three managed to find a Jewish retirement home run by Ignac-Eliyahu Weiss. "There were old people there, and the three of us, three children, me being the eldest, nine and a half, while they [Leah and Leo] were five and a half," Gabriel later explained. "We slept together in the same bed because there wasn't any room.... Mr. Weiss made sure we had food, clothes and a place to sleep, until one day... they [the Ustasha] decided that the elderly also had to be taken."

After the retirement home residents were gathered in a local school, Ignac Weiss smuggled the children out and hid with them in an attic in Zagreb. His nephew Shimon met them there and helped take care of them. Several weeks later, a Muslim woman sent by their aunts arrived in Zagreb, and brought the three children to *Split*, where they were reunited.

In March 1942, local policemen guarding the gate of the *Djakovo* camp were expelled and replaced with Ustasha guards from the *Jasenovac* concentration camp. They had orders not to allow members of the *Osijek* community to enter the camp. The food arriving from the community was confiscated, and the treatment of prisoners was brutal. In June 1942, the camp was liquidated, and all the women and children were deported to *Jasenovac* and murdered upon arrival. Among them were Gabriel and Leah's mother, Josephine; Sarina's mother, father and sister, Luna, Leo and Dina Brodski; and Leo Herman's mother, Bertha. During the liquidation of the camp, members of the *Leteća Ekipa* managed to escape through a gap in the wall of a building and fled to *Osijek*.

In August 1942, the Jewish communities of *Vinkovci* and *Osijek* were also liquidated. The children from *Djakovo* were sent to their deaths along with the families who adopted them. Thankfully, Aryeh Hermoni (né Leo Herman), Gabriel Shenar-Sternberg and Leah Igner-Sternberg survived in *Split*. They all emigrated to Israel after the war. Shulamit Sarina Munchik also survived, having made her way to Switzerland and then to Israel. Aryeh Hermoni passed away in 2019.

Siblings Leah Igner and Gabriel Shenar currently live in an assisted living facility in the center of Israel in adjacent apartments. During the process of curating this online exhibition, I was thrilled to be able to connect Leah and Gabriel with the nephew of Ignac-Eliyahu Weiss, Shimon Tsachor-Weiss. They hope to meet as soon as the current coronavirus crisis abates.

BY YONA KOBO, *The Times of Israel*



The children saved by Ignac Weiss, director of the Jewish retirement home in Zagreb.

ing themselves *Leteća Ekipa* (the "Flying Brigade") volunteered to go to *Djakovo* and organize the camp. The members of the group stayed in a hotel next to the town railway station, and went on foot to the site every day in order to make the flour mill suitable for habitation. Together with the Jewish community, *Leteća Ekipa* helped build bunks, and obtained food, medicines and clothing for those imprisoned there.

Thanks to the efforts of the *Osijek* Jewish community and bribes paid to the local police, the policemen permitted the removal of children from the camp and their safe passage to Jewish families in *Osijek* and *Vinkovci*. Leo Grunwald and Isidore Ferrera from *Vinkovci* arrived with a truck to collect the children.

Sarina Munchik (née Brodski, later Shulamit Munchik), from Sarajevo, who at the age of 16 was a prisoner in *Djakovo* concentration camp, testified after the war:

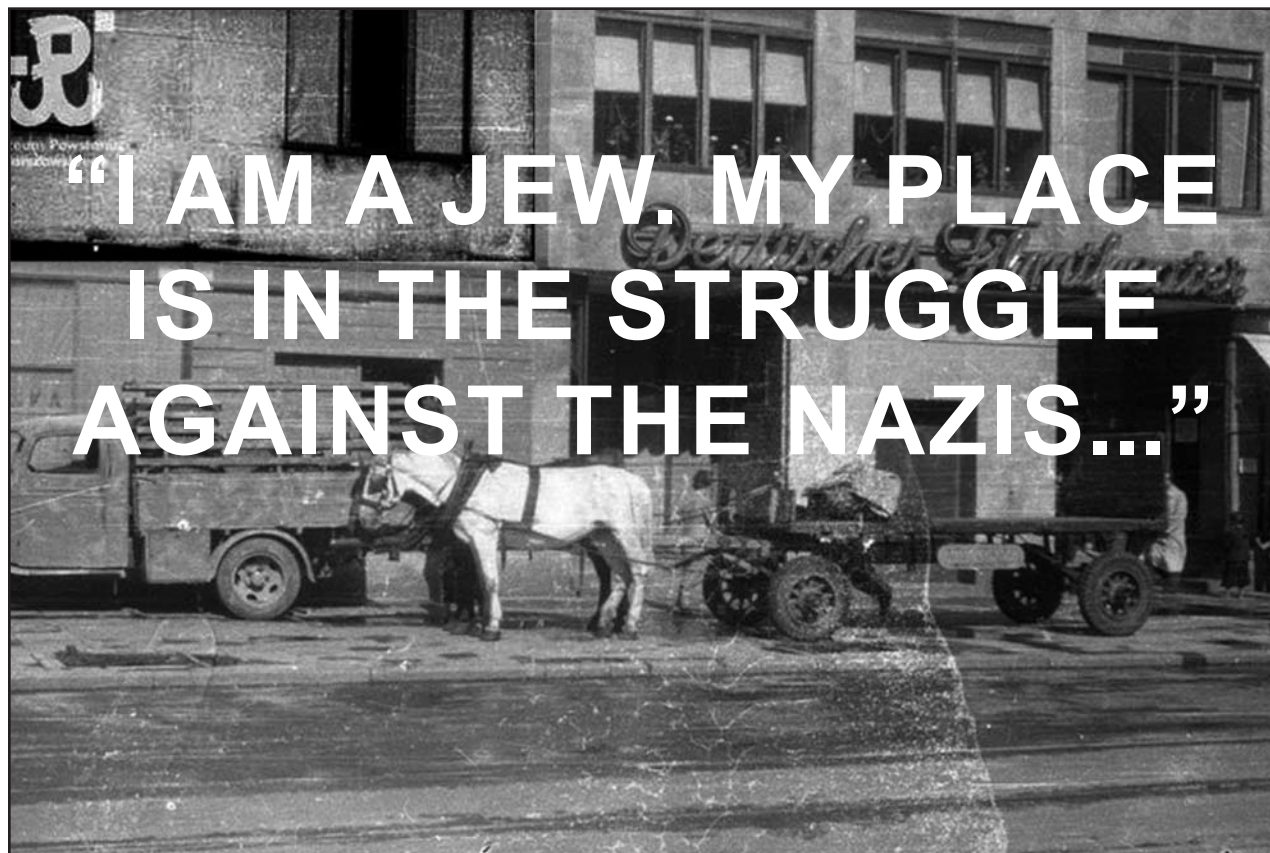
"One day, we heard a rumor that they want to evacuate children... up to age 12 or 14 to *Vinkovci*... and that families had already been organized to adopt them. Mother got involved and said that I was born in 1928 and begged them to take me. Of course, our parting was extremely hard, I didn't want [to go] at all."

tarp, so I took advantage of the opportunity without considering the possible repercussions of my actions. Using the permit I had for 37 children, I took 57 children, such that only the second digit, the number 7, matched the permit. The 57th child I took was Sarina Brodski."

The children were sent to live with Jewish families in *Vinkovci* and *Osijek*. Some of them were moved later to *Split*, which was in the area of Croatia under Italian rule. Sarina reached *Split*, and from there was taken with a group of children to Villa Emma in *Nonantola*, Italy. From Villa Emma, the children, including Sarina, were smuggled into Switzerland.

Also included in this rescue operation were Gabriel-Gavro Sternberg and his sister Leah. The Sternbergs had arrived in *Djakovo* from Sarajevo in late December. In his testimony, Gabriel described the camp:

"There was a large hall, and everyone had to claim a piece of the floor... we were there for perhaps two weeks.... One day, they came with a truck and gathered many of the children. There were parents who didn't allow their children to leave [the camp], but our mother said to us: Go,



When the Warsaw ghetto uprising erupted 77 years ago on April 19, it was not just Jewish men who decided to take up arms against the Germans.

Young Jewish women also fought in the five-week battle before the crushing superiority of the Germans overwhelmed the insurgents.

Dubbed *haluzzenmadein*, or pioneer girls, a portmanteau from Hebrew and German, they fascinated and terrified the Germans in equal measure.

One of the most remarkable was the underground assassin and partisan fighter Niuta Tajtelbaum.

She fought tenaciously in the ghetto uprising, taking out a *Waffen SS* heavy machine-gun nest, and attacking German artillery that was pounding the ghetto.

However, Niuta had already built a formidable reputation in Warsaw as an underground fighter in the Communist People's Guard, killing SS officers, attacking Germans-only cinemas and cafes and wrecking German supply lines in sabotage attacks.

Details of her short life are few, but her personal campaign against the Germans exemplified the values of heroism, courage, justice, loyalty and patriotism, magnified in the crucible of the occupation.

She is quoted as saying, "I am a Jew. My place is in the struggle against the Nazis for the honor of my people and for a free Poland!"

Known as the Heroine of Warsaw, she used her girlish charm and lambent blue eyes to make SS monsters drop their guard before eliminating them in cold blood.

Her most daring hit was astonishing in its audaciousness.

She walked into the Gestapo headquarters in the high-security police district in Warsaw dressed as a Polish farm girl with a kerchief on her head.

With an innocent look, she asked for a certain officer, her target, about a "personal matter." Assuming she was pregnant, the guards gave her a pass to the building and told her where to find her "boyfriend."

She walked into a private office and shot the astonished German in the head with a pistol fitted with a silencer.

The legend that built up around her adds the detail that she smiled at the guards who let her in.

In another operation, she killed two Gestapo officers and wounded a third, an agent of the feared organization. After the wounded agent was taken to the hospital, she disguised herself as a doctor, entered the hospital and killed both the Gestapo agent and his guard.

The few photographs that remain of Niuta suggest the innocence and absence of threat that allowed her to get close enough to her victims to pull the trigger.

However, they offer no hint of her contrarian, even rebellious nature, nor the deep well of courage that she drew on.

Niuta was born in October 1917 in Łódź to a Hasidic family, but she eventually rejected this devout form of Judaism.

At high school, she joined an illegal Communist group, but after the police revealed her membership, she was expelled from school.

Nevertheless, she was admitted into Warsaw University. A few months before the outbreak of World War II, she graduated in history and psychology.

In the Warsaw ghetto, she worked overtly as a manager in a boarding school on Ceglana Street.

Covertly, though, she sought out contacts to the Communist underground in the ghetto.

Shortly before the liquidation of the ghetto in summer 1942, she joined the People's Guard, the armed resistance organization of the Communist Polish Workers' Party.

Because of her appearance, she was ordered to leave the ghetto and go to the "Aryan" side, where she adopted the alias Wanda Witwicka.

Her job was to smuggle weapons into the sealed Jewish ghetto. Inside the ghetto, she built a conspiratorial cell of Jewish resistance fighters and taught women how to use weapons.

In 1942, Niuta was involved in sabotaging German rail transport on the outskirts of Warsaw, disrupting German supply routes to the eastern front.

The attacks were part of a wider campaign against German rail infrastructure carried out by the Home Army and the People's Guard.

The Germans held the People's Guard responsible and reacted with brutal retaliation. On October 16, they hanged 50 Polish "Communist saboteurs" and left them on the gallows for a whole day as a deterrent.

This in turn led to revenge by the People's Guard. Under Niuta's leadership, a group entered a German officers' club in the center of Warsaw and killed four officers and wounded 10.

In January 1943, Niuta planted a bomb at the Kammerlichtspiele cinema on Marschallstrasse, as Marszałkowska was called during the occupation.

She became an object of fear and fascination among Germans. However, because her identity was a mystery, they referred to her simply as Little Wanda with the Pigtails.

Infuriated by her campaign of killings and sabotage, they offered 150,000 zlotys for information leading to her capture.



Niuta Tajtelbaum, who once walked into Gestapo headquarters to assassinate a Nazi officer.

After the ghetto uprising, she went underground in the "Aryan" part of Warsaw and took part in further sabotage campaigns.

However, when she returned to her apartment on July 19, 1943, the Gestapo was waiting for her. She tried to commit suicide, but she had no time to swallow the vial of poison.

She was interrogated for weeks in *Pawiak*, the Gestapo prison in Warsaw.

Her tormentors subjected her to bestial torture and finally murdered her. However, she did not betray any of her fellow partisans.

On the second anniversary of the ghetto uprising, April 19, 1945, she was awarded the Order of the Grunwald Cross, Third Class.

BY STUART DOWELL, *The First News*

As a child, I was obsessed with Anne Frank’s *The Diary of a Young Girl*. Like Anne, I wanted to grow up to be a writer; like her, I kept a diary (though less faithfully), which for a time I addressed, following her model, as Kitty; like her, I agonized over how little my mother understood me and longed to swoon in a boy’s arms. My obsession peaked at the age of eight with a visit to the Secret Annexe, in Amsterdam — the warren of rooms where the Frank family hid from the Nazis. I had imagined it countless times and had the floor plan memorized, but seeing it was a shock: it was so much smaller than I had pictured.

That may have been the moment I began to understand how great was the distance between Anne’s world and my own. As a girl from a family of survivors, coming of age in nineteen-eighties America, I felt the Holocaust as a tangible presence, simultaneously inescapable and unknowable. My grandparents, Jews from Lodz who fled east when the Nazis began their advance into Poland, had better luck than many: taken prisoner by the Soviets, they spent much of the war in a Siberian labor camp. Some of their family had already made it to Palestine, but most of those who remained behind were sent first to the Lodz ghetto and then to Auschwitz. My great-grandmother died there, but my great-aunt survived.

Those who died in the camps left no testimonies, and, when I was growing up, the idea of writing imaginative literature for children about the death camps was considered almost sacrilegious. In February 1977, *The Horn Book*, a magazine devoted to literature for children, published an article by Eric A. Kimmel, with the title “Confronting the Ovens.” Kimmel laid out a taxonomy for children’s literature about the Holocaust, a genre that was then in its infancy. If the Holocaust could be pictured as something like Dante’s *Inferno*, a descending order of circles with the crematoriums at the very bottom, the books that existed when Kimmel made his study were situated on the middle to upper rings. They told stories of resistance, of refugees, of people under occupation — but not of the camps. Kimmel could find only one such work of fiction: Marietta Moskin’s *I Am Rosemarie*, in which a girl and her family are sent to *Bergen-Belsen*. Yet even they are “comparatively fortunate,” Kimmel writes, as they were spared the transports east to the extermination camps. And, of course, because they survived.

Why, Kimmel wondered, had no writer for children broached “the ultimate tragedy”? He concluded that it had to do with the irreconcilable tension between the subject and our assumptions about children’s literature. To write about the Holocaust realistically, in all its horror, violates the tacit promise of writing for young readers, he maintained: “not to be too violent, too accusing, too depressing.” At the same time, a story that won’t keep young readers up at night contradicts the historical reality. Kimmel continued, “To put it simply, is mass murder a subject for a children’s novel? Five years ago, we might have said no; ten years ago we cer-

HOW SHOULD CHILDREN DEAL WITH THE

tainly would have. Now, however, I think the appearance of a novel set in the center of the lowest circle is only a matter of time.”

It took eleven years. In 1988, Jane Yolen, who is best known for picture books, published *The Devil’s Arithmetic*. In it, she came up with an ingenious solution to the problem Kimmel had identified: employing a fantastical framing device that stops the atrocities of life in an extermination camp from being utterly overwhelming for her young readers. The book’s protagonist, a rebellious American preteen named Hannah, is magically whisked back to a Polish *shtetl* and then, along with its residents, transported to a camp. Four years later, Yolen elaborated on the formula with *Briar Rose*, which plays with the tropes of children’s literature by using *Sleeping Beauty* as a template for a survivor’s story.

Her next book, *Mapping the Bones* (Philomel), alludes to *Hansel and Gretel* as it follows two siblings from the Lodz ghetto through a period among a group of partisans and, finally, to a death camp.

Yolen spent several years researching and writing *The Devil’s Arithmetic*. She based Hannah on her own adolescent self: “a little bit whiney, slightly uncomfortable in her own skin, able to make up stories on the spot.”

When the novel opens, Hannah is complaining about having to go to a Seder hosted by her survivor relatives. “I’m tired of remembering,” she says. Her grandfather Will frightens her by yelling at the TV set whenever footage of the camps comes on; once, when she used a ballpoint pen to ink a copy of his tattoo on her arm, thinking it would please him, he screamed at her in Yiddish. At the Seder, a little tipsy from the watered-down wine she has been allowed to drink, Hannah opens the apartment door to welcome the prophet Elijah — a key moment in the Seder ritual — and finds herself transported to Poland in 1942. Suddenly, she’s Chaya, the niece of Gitl and Shmuel, siblings who have taken her in after the death of her parents. At first, Hannah/Chaya thinks she’s stumbled onto a movie set or become the victim of an elaborate joke. There’s even some humor in her interactions with other *shtetl* girls, who are puzzled by her references to pizza and *General Hospital*. But when the guests arrive for Shmuel’s wedding to Fayge, a rabbi’s daughter from a nearby village, Nazis are waiting

at the synagogue to transport them all for “resettlement.” To Hannah’s mounting frustration, no one will listen to her warnings:

“The men down there,” she cried out desperately, “they’re not wedding guests. They’re Nazis. Nazis! Do you understand? They kill people. They killed — kill — will kill Jews. . . . Six million of them! I know. Don’t ask me how I know, I just do. We have to turn the wagons around. We have to run!”

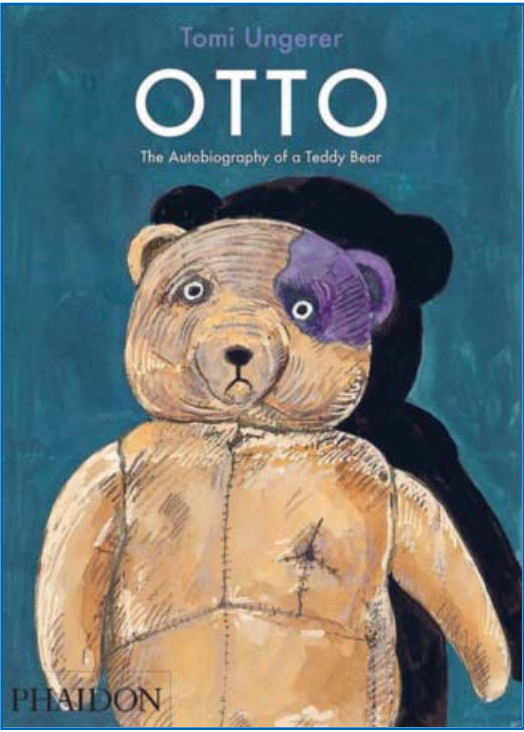
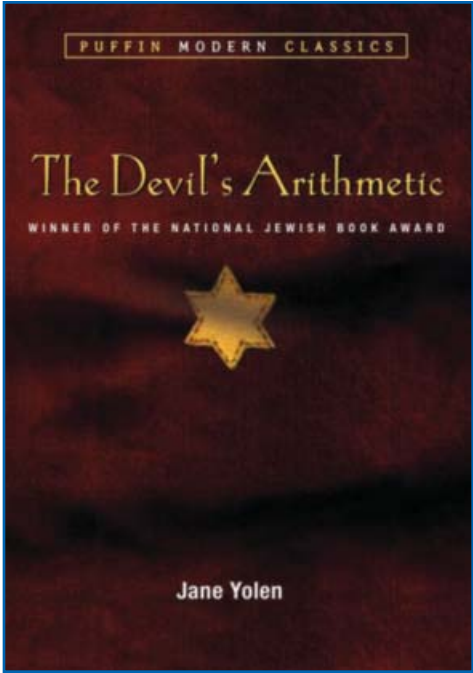
Reb Boruch shook his head. “There are not six million Jews in all of Poland, my child.”

“No, Rabbi, six million in Poland and Germany and Holland and France and . . .”

“My child, such a number.” He shook his head and smiled, but the corners of his mouth turned down instead of up. “And as for running — where would we run to? God is everywhere. There will always be Nazis among us.”

Yolen renders Hannah’s plight in language and imagery that make sense to younger readers: she is packed into a boxcar “worse than the worst subway jam she’d ever been in.” But the author does not condescend by evading the awful details. The stench of human vomit and excrement in the car grows thick; a child dies in its mother’s arms. When the train finally stops, after four days, Hannah is so thirsty that “she could feel her tongue as big as a sausage between her teeth.” Her head is shaved; she receives a tattoo. A girl named Rivka introduces her to the camp rules: “One does not ask why. . . . A person is not killed here, but chosen. They are not cremated in the ovens, they are processed.” When the commandant chooses Rivka for “processing,” Hannah goes instead, saving her. But, as she walks through the door to the gas chamber, she is restored to her real life in America, now with a new appreciation for her relatives’ stories.

At a convention for librarians soon after its publication, *The Devil’s Arithmetic* was attacked by an editor at a children’s-book journal who asked why readers should waste time on Yolen’s fiction when true chronicles, like Anne Frank’s diary, were available. To resort to fantasy, he said, trivialized the Holocaust. The science fiction writer Orson Scott Card struck back in the magazine *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Yolen’s book, he wrote, might actually be more powerful for its audience than the diary, not only because Frank’s account ends “where the true horror begins” but also because Yolen’s protagonist is a typical American preteen. *The Devil’s Arithmetic*



CHILDREN’S BOOKS

THE HOLOCAUST?

allows readers to imagine themselves in Hannah/Chaya’s place, Card wrote, in “the most terrible part of the most terrible crime mankind is capable of.”

In the years since *The Devil’s Arithmetic* appeared, other writers for young readers have imitated Yolen’s method of introducing a fantastical element. Tomi Ungerer’s *Otto: The Autobiography of a Teddy Bear* affectingly tells the story of the friendship between two boys, one German and one Jewish, through the fanciful adventures of a stuffed bear that passes between them. Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief*, about a girl in Nazi Germany who befriends a young Jewish man in hiding, is narrated in the voice of Death.

But the book that has drawn by far the most attention — *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, by the Irish writer John Boyne — is not explicitly fantastical. A best seller that was also made into a popular movie, it is told from the point of

view of Bruno, a nine-year-old German boy whose life is upended when his father, a Nazi officer, becomes the commandant of Auschwitz. Bored in his new surroundings, less luxurious and far more isolated than the family’s former home in Berlin, he discovers that from his bedroom window he can see, behind a fence, what looks like a whole city of people, all dressed in strange striped pajamas. Out for a walk one day, he finds a boy his own age sitting by the fence. They begin to talk, learn that they have the same birthday, and form a friendship.

The book has been both celebrated for its striking, parable-like style and condemned for sloppy moral equivalency and a cavalier treatment of historical fact. Even if a nine-year-old boy managed to get past the initial selection at Auschwitz — most children were gassed on arrival — he would not have had the leisure to sit and talk for hours. No one, prisoner or bystander, was allowed to go anywhere near the camp’s heavily guarded fence, much less to reach or crawl under it, as happens later in the novel. Bruno, whose passivity and lack of curiosity suggest a child much younger than nine, never asks why he is forbidden to cross the fence. Improbably for the son of a Nazi, he does not know what a Jew is — or whether he might himself be one.

Boyne, who is not Jewish, has said that he spent only a few days writing the book. He has defended his approach by saying that the writer’s obligation is to the “emotional truth” and that it’s “presumptuous to assume that from today’s perspective one can truly understand the horrors of the concentration camps.” This seems disingenuous. Whether or not it’s possible to understand another person’s horrific experience, writers and readers of fiction operate under the assumption

that such an understanding is worth trying to achieve. Holocaust novels — for adults as well as for young readers — tend to include extensive afterwords detailing the stories on which they are based and the ways, if any, in which they deviate from their sources. Such research alone isn’t sufficient to make a novel effective, but at least it assures the reader that the novel has a basis in reality. Worryingly, Boyne’s book is now often included in Holocaust-studies curricula at schools, and many teachers say that young readers who first learn about the Holocaust by reading it form a drastically ahistorical impression of what took place.

The comparison with Yolen is telling. Not only are her Holocaust books extensively researched, and their departures from historical fact scrupulously noted, but her fantasy framing devices also reflect a kind of imaginative humility about the difficulty of “truly understanding” — something to which Boyne pays only lip service. A book that involves time travel deliberately relinquishes the possibility of being taken as historical fact.

Another of Yolen’s works, *Mapping the Bones*, has points in common with her previous Holocaust novels, but it is also different, in a way that reflects how the genre she helped to create has changed in the three decades since. Although it uses *Hansel and Gretel* as a loose model, the fantastical element operates mostly at the level of allusion, and the book unfolds as a historical novel.

It is told from the perspective of teen-age twins, Chaim and Gittel Abramowicz. When the story begins, they are living with their parents in the Lodz ghetto and, like their almost-namesakes in the fairy tale, they are starving. The situation worsens when a family of displaced German Jews arrives to share their apartment. Soon the family members learn that their names are on a list for the next transport — a notification known in ghetto slang as a “wedding invitation.” They make a plan to escape, but things go awry, and the children, separated from their parents, spend weeks wandering in the forest with a band of partisans. With the Soviet border in sight, they are ambushed by another group of partisans, who capture the children and tell them they’re being taken to a camp.

The camp — Yolen calls it *Sobanek*, an amalgam of actual names — is populated mainly by children, whose small fingers are useful for stuffing gunpowder into munitions. Those who grow too big, they learn, “simply . . . disappear.” An evil doctor presides over the camp and its killings: the wicked witch, in a new shape. In this “fairy tale world gone mad,” the doctor comes bearing candy, which he doles out in exchange for information. It soon becomes clear that he has a particular interest in sets of twins such as Chaim and

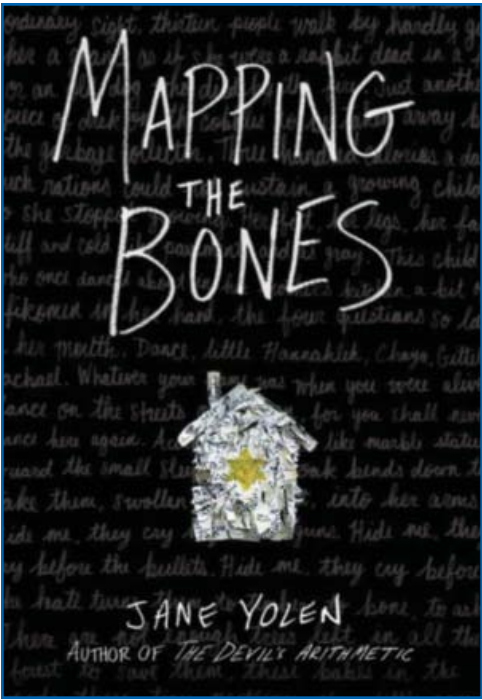
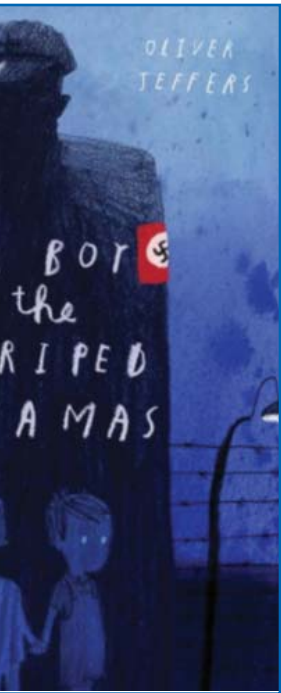
Gittel. As always, Yolen is excellent on the mundane details that make her story real to younger readers: the pebble in Chaim’s boot that plagues him as the family make their escape; his anguish over leaving behind his model plane when his backpack grows too heavy. The hints of *Hansel and Gretel* — a handful of pebbles tossed off a cart “so we can find our way home”; the camp’s nickname, House of Candy — are fairly subtle, but the novel channels a larger network of mythical allusions. Chaim, like a fairy-tale character whose tongue has been cut out, is functionally mute; because of an incapacitating stutter, he can speak only five words at a time. He compensates by writing poetry, using discarded bags when paper is hard to find. During the period in the forest, he is stricken with despair and abandons writing. But when he and Gittel arrive at the camp, another boy tells him, chillingly, “Just because we are in hell doesn’t make us fallen angels.” The comment awakens Chaim: “He could do something with that if he could bear to write again. And had some light to write by. If he still had his journal. All of which, he told himself, sounds like the impossible three tasks given to the hero of a fairy tale.”

In *The Devil’s Arithmetic* the primary emotional pull comes from the struggle of a character from a younger generation to come to grips with what happened to her grandparent. But, having dispensed with this framework, *Mapping the Bones* immerses us in Chaim and Gittel’s struggles directly. There’s no

reason that Yolen should repeat herself, of course, and it makes sense that the troubles of survivors’ descendants don’t feel as pressing as they did thirty years ago. Most children today will never see a survivor’s tattooed arm. Those of us who did are likely trying to figure out how to approach the Holocaust with our own children, wanting them to recognize its significance in their family history without allowing that knowledge to burden or define them.

Still, to me, there’s something essential about the interactions among generations in the stories we tell about the Holocaust. In Yolen’s first two Holocaust novels, a younger person literally bears witness to the stories of an older generation — either by experiencing them herself, as Hannah does, or by listening to the testimony of survivors. And the reader, by imagining herself in the place of the main character, can vicariously bear witness, too. If there’s a consolation in reading these books, that’s where it can be found. “There is no way that fiction can come close to touching how truly inhuman, alien, even satanic, was the efficient machinery of death at the camps,” Yolen wrote in an afterword to *The Devil’s Arithmetic*. “Fiction cannot recite the numbing numbers, but it can be that witness, that memory.” We may emerge from these books without grasping the true horror of their stories. But at least we’ve learned how to listen to them.

BY RUTH FRANKLIN, *The New Yorker*



A LOVE AFFAIR THAT MADE HIM RISK EVERYTHING

At 100 years old, Jozef Walaszczyk is Poland's oldest living rescuer of Jews. But he was fortunate enough just to survive World War II. As a partisan fighter who specialized in smuggling arms in Nazi-occupied Poland, Walaszczyk assumed that the Gestapo would catch up with him at some point.

He just expected it to happen on the field of battle, not while he was in bed with his new girlfriend Irena.

In 1941, Walaszczyk (pronounced Valash-chick) was in a room at the Grabowska Hotel in Warsaw when he heard Nazi officers outside their door.

"At first, I thought they were there for me, that someone talked," Walaszczyk said.

But as he listened to them, it became clear that the Nazis were there to look for Jews, not members of the Polish resistance. Walaszczyk, who isn't Jewish, was relieved at first.

Then he saw that his girlfriend was "completely terrified." With the Gestapo barking orders outside, Irena told him that she was Jewish — a fact that risked not only her life but his as well if they were caught together in the same hotel room.

What followed was an unlikely and epic story of romance, heroism and brushes with Nazi capture. Walaszczyk's efforts to save Irena and over 50 other Jews earned him the title Righteous Among the Nations in 2002.

At the Grabowska, Walaszczyk quickly de-

vised a plan to keep himself and Irena alive.

He hid his girlfriend behind a wardrobe, locked the room's door behind him, handed his ID to an officer in the corridor and headed to a shared bathroom where he pretended to vomit noisily. When the Germans, who searched the hotel room by room, reached the door that Walaszczyk had locked, the hotel owner explained to them that it belonged to the man puking his guts out.

The ruse saved the couple's life, but it changed their relationship.

"We had been lucky, but I began bearing a grudge against Irena for not telling me about her situation, which risked both our lives," said Walaszczyk, whose memory of events that transpired 80 years ago seems as crisp as if they happened to him last week.

Still, Walaszczyk was in love with Irena.

"It was true love, but the way 20-year-olds love," he said.

Walaszczyk knew Irena stood little chance of surviving without high-quality forged identity papers. She had a false ID, but it was of poor quality and would not stand up to even the most random inspection, he said.

A factory foreman in Warsaw who spoke excellent German, Walaszczyk was able to travel across Poland using his work as cover and distribute arms, cash and other supplies to resist-

ance units hunkering down in various parts of Poland.

He decided to use contacts in the village of *Regnow*, situated between Warsaw and *Lodz*, to help with the papers for Irena.



Jozef Walaszczyk, who saved more than 50 Jews during the Holocaust.

"I told them the whole truth," he said, "because if they decided to help, they'd be risking their lives."

Three days later, with Irena living in a safe house in Warsaw that Walaszczyk had arranged for her, the *Regnow* mayor agreed to Walaszczyk's request. But there was a catch: Walaszczyk would have to pay handsomely and marry Irena, whom he had met only a few weeks earlier, to make the fake identity story work.

"The decision was easy," Walaszczyk recalled. "Irena was dear to me and her safety was

(Continued on page 13)

DID DUTCH JEWS GO LIKE LAMBS TO THE GAS CHAMBERS?

Retired Dutch general Toine Beukering — a candidate for chairman of the Senate — said earlier this month that the Jews were "chased like docile lambs into the gas chambers." This remark, for which he later apologized, once again raised the issue of the huge historical distortion of the Dutch role during World War II. The Dutch, who collaborated massively with the German occupiers, now exaggerate Dutch wartime resistance and underemphasize the disproportionately large role of Jews in it.

In May 1940, a few days after the Germans invaded the Netherlands, the Dutch queen, Wilhelmina of Oranje, fled to London without consulting her ministers. Most ministers followed her. They left no instructions to the remaining functionaries about how to act during the occupation. The Dutch army capitulated within a few days.

The Dutch Supreme Court was among the first to betray the Jews. In 1940, the Germans asked all Dutch officials and teachers to sign a declaration that they were not Jewish. Almost all concerned signed, including the non-Jewish members of the Supreme Court. So did almost

all employees of the Ministry of Justice. The Germans used this declaration to exclude Jews from official positions. Lodewijk Visser, the Jewish president of the Supreme Court, was dismissed by the Germans in early 1941.

In 2011, a book was published about the Supreme Court during the German occupation. The authors concluded that this court "lost the halo of the highest maintainers of justice in the Netherlands." When the book was publicly presented, the then President of the Supreme Court, Geert Corstens, said the signing of the declaration in 1940 "went against everything for which the Supreme Court should have stood."

Dutch Jews, who were forced to wear yellow stars, were increasingly isolated in a nation where the number of collaborators far exceeded the membership of the prewar Dutch National Socialist party (NSB). Most of the population displayed total indifference toward the Jews and their fate.

Members of the Dutch police knew it was their task to arrest only criminals, yet they greatly assisted the Germans in arresting Jews, including babies and the elderly. Jews were transported by Dutch railways to the *Westerbork* transit camp,

where they were guarded by Dutch military police. More than 100,000 Dutch Jews — over 70% of the prewar Jewish population — were sent to their deaths in the German camps in Poland.

In 2018, an exhibition about the Jews and the Royal House of Oranje took place at the Amsterdam Jewish Museum. There one could listen to an audio recording of the few sentences Queen Wilhelmina allocated to her Jewish citizens on Dutch radio in her multiple speeches during the war. They were spoken in an offhand manner. These few impassive lines were contrasted at the exhibition by the recording of her fiery talk against the mobilization of Dutch men to work in Germany.

A small percentage of the Dutch population — very courageous people — helped Jews. Twenty-four thousand Jews went into hiding. Of these, 16,000 survived. Many others were betrayed or caught by Dutch volunteer organizations — a civil and a police one — the members of which were rewarded monetarily for every Jew they captured.

In the Dutch resistance, Jews, who numbered less than 1.5% of the population before the war,

(Continued on page 13)

OVER TWO DAYS ALL JEWS IN THIS VILLAGE WERE SLAUGHTERED

Over two consecutive days in early August 1942, all the Jews hiding in the village of *Urozhaynaya* in the Caucasus Mountains were murdered. The 2,500 victims had believed until the very last moment that the long arm of the Nazi regime would not reach their distant place of residence, but their hopes were dashed. That summer the German army managed to capture parts of the area from the Red Army, and when the SS entered the gates of the village, they led the Jews to a nearby river and shot them to death.

Today, 78 years later, the bodies are still buried there, in one gigantic mass grave, without a monument or any documentation. Local residents of *Urozhaynaya*, located near the Russian city of *Stavropol*, have left the killing site desolate: They never built on the land, nor did they use it for agricultural purposes.

Only one Jew managed to evade the bitter fate of the community and survive the horrors — but she remembers nothing of them since she was a 10-month-old infant at the time.

Larisa Breicher (née Shavzin), 78, a resident of New York and a retired teacher, was hidden by Christian neighbors and survived thanks to a Nazi officer, who spared her life after he was promised that she would be baptized.

For decades authorities dealing with reparations refused to believe Breicher's story or recognize her as a Holocaust survivor. Only recently, thanks to a comprehensive archival study undertaken by some of her relatives, has she received the hoped-for recognition — and attendant compensation.

In addition, the family who saved Breicher from certain death — but never did baptize her — were recognized posthumously as Righteous Among the Nations.

Larisa Breicher was born in 1941 while her mother Manya and her grandparents were fleeing from Kishinev, Moldavia, to the Caucasus. Her father, David, had been drafted into the Red Army shortly beforehand, with the German invasion of the Soviet Union.

Like many Jewish refugees who fled to the east, the Shavzins hoped that the Nazis would not arrive in remote *Urozhaynaya*. But in the summer of 1942, reality caught up with them. The German army occupied large parts of the Caucasus and held onto them for about four months, during which about 31,000 people were murdered, 19,000 of them Jews.

Area residents were ordered to hand over the Jews, and anyone who hid them was severely punished. But thanks to the exceptional initiative, resourcefulness and courage of her Christian neighbors, Konstantin and Anna Bobin, little Larisa Shavzin was saved. The Bobins had heard from one of their relatives — who collaborated with the Germans — about a plan to eliminate the entire Jewish population of their village. Without delay, they rushed to the Shavzins' home, and asked them to give them the infant so as to save her life.

Manya, who hesitated at first but acceded to

the request in the end, was murdered shortly thereafter, as were all the Jews hiding in the vicinity.

The Bobin family watched over Larisa. In the morning they would hide the baby in a field of sunflowers, under the watchful eye of their 15-year-old daughter; in the evening, they would bring her home. Over time, however, rumors spread about a Jewish baby and reached the Nazi commanders stationed in town. Residents



Anna and Konstantin Bobin, the Christian neighbors who saved Larisa Breicher from the 1942 massacre of Jews in the Russian village of *Urozhaynaya*.

were assembled and given an ultimatum to hand the baby over within 24 hours. If not, warned the Nazis, the entire family of rescuers would be apprehended and then executed.

The Bobins were naturally torn between their own existential fears and concern for the welfare of Larisa. In a last-gasp effort, Anna Bobin embarked on a suicide mission. She knocked on the door of the German regional commander, and pleaded for the life of the Jewish baby. After about an hour, the family received his surprising decision: The Germans would show mercy for little Larisa, and allow the Bobins to continue to take care of her — on condition that they would raise the child as a Christian.

The devoted family continued to care for the baby until the winter of 1943, when the Red Army reoccupied the region and expelled the German forces. After the war was over, Larisa was found by her uncle, who brought her to her father David, who had seen combat in *Stalingrad*, Prague and Berlin, and received many medals for heroism.

Eventually, David Shavzin emigrated to Israel (he is buried in *Netanya*), but his daughter did not accompany him. She worked as a

teacher in the Soviet Union, emigrated in 1976 to the United States, where she worked in education as well, and married twice.

Over the years Larisa Breicher maintained warm relations with the family of her rescuers in the Caucasus. Later their descendants joined the circle, and even met and got to know one another. The relationship continued even after the Bobins and their daughter passed away.

Although the story of her rescue was not a secret per se, Breicher kept the details to herself for decades, and only recently began to open up about them. At one point she told her story to Edward Breicher, the son of her second husband, Alex; he resides in the Israeli town of *Kiryat Yam*, north of *Haifa*. Breicher, who teaches mechanical engineering and is an amateur historian, picked up the gauntlet and decided to research the story in depth, taking advantage of his command of Russian and German. Joining him in the endeavor was his son, David Breicher-Magen, a historian.

"We started by collecting documents about the Red Army and the German army, which referred to events at that time," Edward Breicher told *Haaretz*, noting that they found quite a bit of information in the government archives in the *Stavropol* district. After conducting more intense research, Breicher says, they were surprised to learn that unlike Larisa — who didn't reveal the saga of her rescue to anyone — residents in the area actually knew the story, having learned about it in school or after reading about it in the local press.

Breicher passed on the archival materials he and his son had collected to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, along with a request that the Bobins be recognized as Righteous Among the Nations.

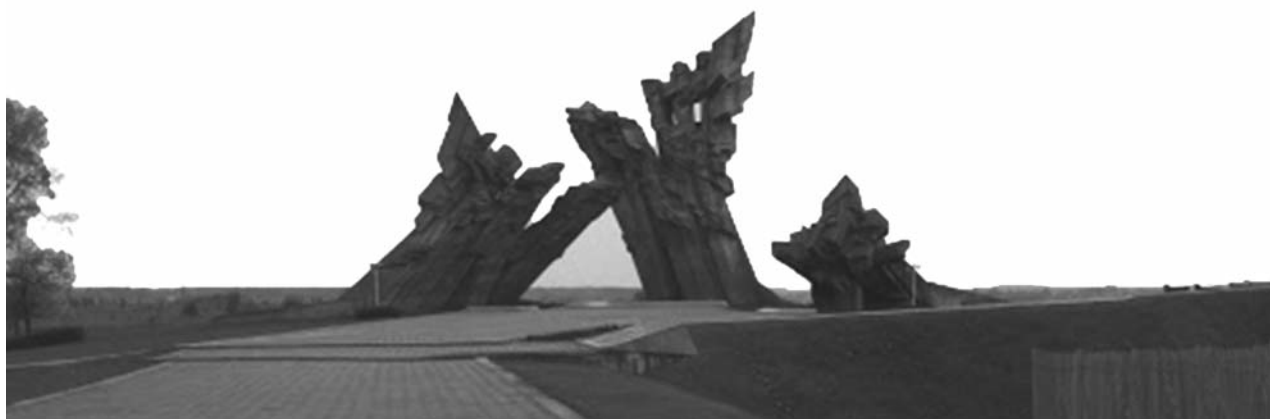
"Many people are alive today thanks to the Bobin family," he wrote Yad Vashem. "They acted out of humanity, compassion and love of man. In the sea of death and destruction that surrounded them, they endangered their lives and that of their daughter in order to rescue a Jewish baby. They continued to raise her even after the end of the Nazi occupation, thinking that her entire family had perished — until she was gathered into her father's arms."

Several weeks later, he was informed that his efforts had borne fruit: About two years ago now, Konstantin and Anna Bobin's granddaughter was invited to Moscow, where she received her grandparents' Righteous Among the Nations certificate, which she later placed on their grave.

But Edward Breicher's activity did not end there. He is now working to build a monument to the Jews — among them Larisa's mother — who were murdered and buried in the mass grave in *Urozhaynaya*, and is trying to bring the Bobins' granddaughter to Israel. By law she is entitled to residency status there as a descendant of rescuers of Jews.

BY OFER ADERET, *Haaretz*

TOO ABHORRENT EVEN FOR NAZIS



Nazis are documented as one of the most horrific, brutal and sadistic groups of genocidal murderers in history. They were insatiable in their lust for Jewish blood, and in their quest to dehumanize all Jews. Humiliating their victims, including children and infants, was sport. Emotional and physical torture of their victims became a practiced fetish. A human mind cannot conceive anything worse than a Nazi. However, is it possible for depravity to provide something even more cruel and sadistic?

Nazis were not alone in their bloodlust. Lithuanians volunteered en masse to murder Jews. Lithuanians led the way by completing a genocide of Lithuanian Jews prior to Germany's official determination to begin the "Final Solution." Lithuanian Prime Minister Skirpa was one of the first to propose the genocide of Jews to Nazis, and Lithuanians gleefully complied. The 220,000 Jews who were murdered in Lithuania were not a sufficient number to satiate Lithuanian bloodlust; therefore, Lithuanian murderers sought more.

Germans gave Lithuanians permission to go to Belarus to murder Jews in Minsk, Borisov and Slutsk districts. The documented crimes are as follows:

October 8, 1941: Lithuanian Second Battalion soldiers shot 617 Jews in the town of Dukor in the Minsk region.

October 10–11, 1941: battalion soldiers shot 188 civilians in the town of Rudensk in the Minsk region.

October 14, 1941: the battalion shot 1,300 civilians (mainly Jews) at Smilovich in the Minsk region.

October 15–16 and 18: they shot 1,775 Jews and Communists in Minsk.

October 21, 1941: soldiers from the battalion's first platoon shot about 1,000 Jews and Communists.

October 28–29, 1941: the battalion murdered about 5,000 Jews in Slutsk.

In the autumn of 1941 the Lithuanian Second Police Battalion, together with Germans, murdered about 46,000 people in Belarus, including about 9,000 Soviet POWs and 12 Soviet underground members. The overwhelming majority of the victims were Jews. The Lithuanian Second Police battalion was widely known for its sadism and brutality. Juozas Krikštaponis was in the leadership of this battalion.

Commissioner General of Belarus Wilhelm Kube wrote in protest to his superior and to Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler: *The town was a picture of horror during the action. With indescribable brutality on the part of both the German police officers and particularly the Lithuanian partisans, the Jewish people, but also among them Belarusians, were taken out of their dwellings and herded together. Everywhere in the town shots were to be heard and in different streets the corpses of shot Jews accumulated. The Belarusians were in greatest distress to free themselves from the encirclement.* The letter concluded: *I am submitting this report in duplicate so that one copy may be forwarded to the Reich Minister. Peace and order cannot be maintained in Belarus with methods of that sort. To bury seriously wounded people alive who worked their way out of their graves again is such a base and filthy act that the incidents as such should be reported to the Führer and Reichsmarshal.*

Slutsk district commissar Heinrich Carl was also horrified by these massacres. In his letter of October 30, 1941, to the German general commissar in Minsk, he wrote: "... On the methods of executing the operation, that, very sorry to say, I must admit, that they were almost equal to sadism. During the operation the very city appeared horrible. The unspeakably brutal German police officers, and especially the Lithuanian partisans, dragged Jews out of their homes, and among them were Belarusians, and packed them into a single location. There were bullets flying everywhere in the city, and on some streets whole heaps of the corpses of shot Jews turned up. ... I ask only that my one request be honored: in the future make sure to save me from this police battalion!"

The crimes of Krikštaponis were already well known when Lithuania began honoring him as a national hero. In 1996, the Lithuanian city Ukmerge named a center square to honor Juozas Krikštaponis.

In that same year, a wooden memorial cross was erected on the bunker where Krikštaponis died. In 2006 an obelisk was built next to this cross.

In 1997, the Lithuanian government granted Krikštaponis legal status as a soldier's volunteer. On October 31, 2002, the president of Lithuania granted Krikštaponis posthumous national honors. Krikštaponis's crimes remain well

known to the government and are even admitted by it, however, the government declines to revoke his honors. Clearly, Jewish victims are of no consequence to Lithuania. To give these victims a personal face, the family of Israeli President Shimon Peres was from this area. It is likely that some of his relatives were murdered by Krikštaponis and his gang. The Lithuanian government tells the international Jewish community that the country regrets its "loss" of Jews, but its domestic actions show the opposite sentiment. Are we to accept the Government's words or its very deliberate and very loud actions?

In past eras, it was standard that Jews would be accused of crimes. For example, the Dreyfus Affair of 1894 and the Beilis trial of 1913 are two of the more prominent of these cases. Those default accusations were halted after the Holocaust, but an inversion of this theory has been developed in Lithuania. The new prevailing theory of the Lithuanian government is that no Lithuanian could have perpetrated a crime against a Jew. Its construct is that Lithuanians who murdered Jews are elevated to hero status, with strict denials regarding their crimes. Krikštaponis is only one such example. So many Lithuanian Holocaust perpetrators have been elevated to hero status that one wonders if having murdered Jews was a criterion for Lithuanian national honors.

Cases such as Dreyfus and Beilis led to the pervasive anti-Semitism that infested Europe, directly leading into the Holocaust. Lithuania now leads the world in claiming that being a Holocaust perpetrator is not a character stain. seventy-five years since the conclusion of the Shoah in Lithuania, it is inconceivable that any country would still be defending Nazi collaborators; nonetheless, Lithuania is doing it.

Recently the Lithuanian government went to court to claim that the Lithuanian Holocaust perpetrator Jonas Noreika is not responsible for his crimes, and, like Krikštaponis, should remain a national hero. Government ministers officially ignore and deny the dozens of documents in their own archives that prove Noreika's guilt and they deny eyewitness accounts of his crimes and testimony from his own family. This will be the first time that a government has legally sought to defend a Nazi collaborator.

The inversions of the Dreyfus Affair and the Beilis trial are now the Lithuanian norm. 124 years after the Dreyfus Affair began, it remains a stain on France. The Noreika Affair will similarly remain a stain on Lithuania for generations, unless there is a dramatic change before the trial. Jews are no longer impacted by Lithuania; this time the damage inures to Lithuanian national dignity and identity. Already one out of every three high school students says he/she wishes to leave Lithuania forever. More than 80% say they have "been thinking about emigrating." Lithuania accounts for less than 1% of the EU population; certainly no rational business person will invest in a state with such overt leanings toward Nazi collaboration. The nation's failure to denounce its enthusiastic participation of the past makes it an uncertain partner for the future.

BY GRANT GOCHIN, *The Times of Israel*

A LOVE AFFAIR THAT MADE HIM RISK EVERYTHING

(Continued from page 10)
extremely important to me.”

Walaszczyk and his new wife moved into an apartment in Warsaw, and all seemed well for a while. But a few months later, in October 1941, Irena was arrested with 20 other Jewish women. They were friends from before the war who had gathered to alleviate their loneliness. All had false non-Jewish identities, but the gathering raised suspicion.

Again, Walaszczyk sprang into action: Using his underground contacts, he learned that the Polish police and German officers holding the women were amenable to bribes. There was a window of a few hours before the detainees were processed, and Walaszczyk used it.

He succeeded, but again there was a catch: He would need to pay for the release of all 21 women. The price was a hefty two pounds of gold that he had to produce within hours.

“It wasn’t easy,” said Walaszczyk, adding that he borrowed some money and leveraged his services for the partisan Polish Home Army to obtain the rest.

A second safe house was arranged for Irena, and “it was a good one,” Walaszczyk said.

In fact, the safe house was too good not to be used to save additional lives, he said. So Walaszczyk and Irena had two other women — Irena’s friend and nanny — move in. They all survived the war thanks to Walaszczyk’s actions.

But his love affair with Irena did not: Walaszczyk acknowledged that he had relation-

ships with other women while he was married. “Under these circumstances, you live every day like it’s your last one because you have to assume it is. And this has a lot of implications, also for a marriage,” he said.

Walaszczyk and Irena were divorced after liberation but stayed on good terms. As Walaszczyk tried to do business in Communist Poland — he attempted to open a beer distillery — he also supported his former wife financially until she “stood on her own two feet,” as he put it.

An ardent anti-Communist, Walaszczyk grew apart from Irena after she married a man who worked for the Soviet Union’s puppet regime in Poland.

Irena, who had a daughter with her second husband, asked to see Walaszczyk shortly before she passed away about 10 years ago. They met close to her death because she wanted to thank him one last time, he said.

Walaszczyk, who said he has had Jewish friends his whole life, also learned that Irena never told her daughter that she was Jewish.

“I was contacted by Irena’s grandchildren only recently, they had no idea about the story,” he said.

Walaszczyk remarried in 1950, and the couple had a son. They divorced and he remarried again, having another son with his third wife.

Throughout the war, Walaszczyk had also infiltrated the Jewish ghetto of Warsaw to deliver food and drugs to his friends there.

“I couldn’t leave them behind,” he said. “We

[the Home Army] were aware that our help was only symbolic. We also realized each visit could very well be the last thing we did in our life.”

Punishment for infiltrating the ghetto for non-Jews was death, typically immediately.

Walaszczyk additionally risked his life helping at least 30 other Jews by employing them at a factory deemed vital for the German war effort.

“I probably took on too many risks,” he said. “But helping people in real need has been something I couldn’t resist.”

Walaszczyk said he was an only child; his father died when he was 8, leaving his mother struggling financially and often at the mercy of strangers.

“This detail in my biography may have had something to do with my choices,” he said.

Poland has the highest number of Righteous: 6,992 (the second highest is Holland’s 5,778 saviors). But it also had thousands of Nazi collaborators, some of whom murdered Jews out of hatred and greed. The country also saw multiple anti-Semitic murderous pogroms after the Holocaust, such as in *Kielce* in 1946.

“There were many rescuers. There were also traitors,” said Walaszczyk. “I know because some of my friends were killed because of traitors.”

“We need to speak about both at the same time because the existence of each one of those groups helps us understand the significance of the actions of both.”

BY CNAAN LIPSHIZ, JTA

DID DUTCH JEWS GO LIKE LAMBS TO THE GAS CHAMBERS?

(Continued from page 10)
played a disproportionately large role. This has been underpublicized by both media and historians. A monument near the Amsterdam municipality testifies to the Jewish resistance.

A few months after the end of the war, Minister of Transport and Energy Steef van Schaik, of the Catholic KVP party, addressed a large gathering of railway employees at The Hague. He said: “With your trains, the unhappy victims were brought to the concentration camps. In your hearts, there was revolution. Nevertheless, you did it. That is to your honor. It was the duty the Dutch government asked from you because the railways are one of the pillars that support the economic life of the Dutch people. That should not be put at risk.”

Years later, a journalist wrote in an Amsterdam daily that Van Schaik’s words were “the most horrible text ever spoken by a Dutch minister.”

After the war, the Dutch had a psychological need to soften the impact of their rapid defeat in May 1940 at the hands of the Germans. This led

to an exaggeration of heroic acts by the Dutch during the occupation, even to the point of invention. In that scenario, there was, at best, a place for the Jews as second-tier victims. The image



Dutch Jews board the train that is to take them to Auschwitz.

was that they had not resisted but instead chosen meekly to be deported.

This profoundly false motif was expressed once again in Beukering’s words.

When Jewish representatives met the first postwar PM, Willem Schermerhorn, a Laborite, he told them he did not consider it his task to see

to it that Jews receive their assets back. These assets had been entirely stolen by the Germans.

Many decades later, the management board of the railways and some local police chiefs apologized for the wartime role of their predecessors in the persecution of Dutch Jews. Yet in 2012, then liberal Minister of Security and Justice Ivo Opstelten refused to apologize on behalf of the police at large. This was despite the fact that members of the Dutch police were critical to the process of carrying out the genocide of the Jews.

Postwar Dutch governments have continued to maintain the “docile lambs” distortion. The current liberal PM, Mark Rutte, has set the Netherlands apart as the only Western European country to refuse to admit the huge failures of its wartime governments, let alone apologize for them.

BY DR. MANFRED GERSTENFELD

HOW SPANISH “ANGEL OF BUDAPEST” SAVED JEWS

Thousands of Holocaust survivors and their descendants escaped the Nazis thanks to a Spanish diplomat nicknamed “the Angel of Budapest” — yet the late Angel Sanz Briz is hardly known in Spain today.

His improvised heroics in 1944 saved more than 5,000 Hungarian Jews from deportation to Auschwitz.



This Spanish joint passport got the Vándor family to safety from Hungary.

“He is a hero of greater stature than Schindler,” says Eva Benatar. Her mother sheltered her as a baby, just weeks old, and her brother in one of the safe houses set up by Sanz Briz in Nazi-occupied Budapest.

After the Nazi invasion on March 19, 1944, codenamed Operation Margarethe, the chief SS Holocaust organizer Adolf Eichmann moved to Budapest with a plan to eliminate Hungary’s roughly one million Jews in record time.

Sanz Briz was serving in Spain’s embassy as commercial attaché, before being left in charge of the mission in mid-1944 at the age of 33. He was one of a group of diplomats who decided to rescue Hungarian Jews.

In a matter of weeks the SS deported more than 400,000 Jews to Auschwitz.

One of the Spaniard’s fellow humanitarian conspirators became a household name — Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who issued “protective passports” and saved tens of thousands of Jews.

Wallenberg later disappeared; he was seized by occupying Soviet forces and is widely thought to have died in a Soviet jail.

As reports grew about the escalating Holocaust at Auschwitz and other Nazi killing sites, Sanz Briz started informing the fascist Franco government in Spain about the appalling truth.

A key document he sent was the Vrba-Wetzler report, by two Jewish escapees from Auschwitz.

However, for several months he received no instructions from a regime that had initially backed Hitler in the war.

Remarkably, he began to take the law into his own hands, falsifying consular documents to

grant nationality to refugees on the basis of a long-expired 1924 Spanish law aimed at Sephardic Jews, even though Hungary’s Jewish community was overwhelmingly Ashkenazi.

Jews were hidden in the Spanish embassy in Buda; bribes were paid to local officials. Sanz Briz braved the dangers of Nazi and Hungarian Fascist Arrow Cross patrols, as well as Allied bombing raids, to shelter Jews at risk.

“I managed to get the Hungarian government to authorize the protection by Spain of 200 Sephardic Jews. Then I turned those 200 units into 200 families; and those 200 families were multiplied indefinitely, through the simple procedure of not expediting any safe conduct to Jews with a number higher than 200,” Sanz Briz wrote in his report for the Spanish government from Berne in December 1944.

“He added letters to each number, using the whole alphabet,” explains the diplomat’s son, Juan Carlos Sanz Briz.

“It was quite out of character; he was actually a stickler for legality. Diplomats aren’t meant to issue false papers or put the national flag on buildings not part of the diplomatic mission.”

Sanz Briz’s meticulously recorded final tally came to 232 provisional passports issued to 352 people, as well as 1,898 protective letters, and 15 ordinary passports for 45 Sephardic Jews.

As the Nazis and Hungarian Fascists closed in on the city’s Jews, moving them into confined quarters and killing people in the streets, Sanz Briz rented 11 apartment buildings to house the approximately 5,000 people he had placed under Spain’s protection.

In a 2013 interview for Spain’s RNE public radio, Jaime Vándor (recently deceased), who moved to *Barcelona* with his family after the war, recalled the squalor of those Spanish refugees.

“There were 51 of us living in a flat with two and a half rooms. We were crowded, hungry and cold, infested with fleas. The hygiene was appalling, obviously, with so many people using one toilet. But the worst thing was the fear, the fear of deportation.”

Ms. Benatar’s mother was one of those granted papers by the Spanish embassy after she brandished a postage stamp from Madrid, where Eva’s grandmother had fled before the Nazi invasion.

Born in a cramped cellar, she never met her

father, who died in the so-called death marches in early 1945.

But baby Eva, her mother and her brother were able to escape Hungary, ending up in *Tangier*, then an international city, although the family eventually settled in Spain.

Sanz Briz left Budapest in November 1944, ordered out by his superiors in Madrid, who feared he would suffer reprisals from the approaching Soviet army, due to Spain’s help for the Germans on the Eastern front.

He retreated into a regular diplomatic career, and was not permitted by the stridently anti-Israel Franco regime to receive the honor of Righteous Among the Nations awarded by Yad Vashem.

He joined the ranks of the Righteous in 1966.

An obituary for Sanz Briz published by Spain’s ABC newspaper in 1980 makes no mention of his exploits in Budapest.

“I never talked about this subject with him. It was not something that was discussed at home,” says Juan Carlos Sanz Briz. “He must have suffered greatly, but he didn’t tell us that.”

Before Spain returned to democracy in the mid-1970s, the Franco regime had an ambivalent stance on its role in the Holocaust, sometimes claiming that General Franco had in fact been a savior of Jews.

When the Nazis began deporting Jews from France, the Franco regime at first allowed many thousands to flee through Spanish territory, before tightening the policy in 1940.

Jews were refused transit papers, and those caught in the country illegally were rounded up and sent to a concentration camp at *Miranda de Ebro*.

At no time was any significant number of Jews given the option of refuge in Spain, not

even Spanish-speaking Sephardic Jews from the Nazi-occupied Greek city of *Thessaloniki*.

But there is evidence that Franco began to sense the need to improve his regime’s international image as it became increasingly clear that Hitler was losing the war.

On October 24, 1944, then foreign minister José Félix de Lequerica sent a telegram to Sanz Briz in Budapest. “On request of the World Jewish Congress please extend protection to largest number persecuted Jews,” it said.



Eva Benatar with one of her grandchildren.

BY JAMES BADCOCK, BBC News

POLISH HOLOCAUST DISTORTERS LOVE DEAD JEWS

Polish commemoration of the Holocaust does not erase the fact that Poles murdered Jews, Yad Vashem and Hebrew University historian Yehuda Bauer said at the Fourth Polish-Israeli Foreign Policy Conference in that took place in Jerusalem in February.

He raised the matter of distortion of Holocaust history, which has clouded relations between Poland and Israel since January 2018, when Warsaw outlawed tarnishing Poland and its peo-



Yad Vashem and Hebrew University historian Yehuda Bauer.

ple’s “good name” by claiming its complicity in the Holocaust.

According to Bauer, the distorters say: “Of course, the Holocaust took place, and it was terrible, and we commemorate it, establish museums, statues and mainly make wonderful, terrific speeches.’ They love Jews, especially dead ones. That doesn’t mean Poles didn’t persecute and murder Jews.”

Professor Havi Dreifuss, head of the Center for Research on the Holocaust in Poland at Yad Vashem, argued at the conference that Polish distorters of history don’t even like all dead Jews — only the ones murdered by Germans.

“There is a total denial [of] Jews who were killed by Poles,” he said. “Most Jews were murdered by Nazi Germany, and nobody [in Poland] could save them. But there were Jews killed by Poles in different ways.... Polish scholars have shown us there were participants of Poles in the tragedy of Jews throughout the whole country, and this demands true research.”

Those who seek to distort history “make the argument that there were no Polish political collaborators with the Germans,” Bauer said. “It’s true, simply because the Germans simply didn’t want them. Not in Ukraine, or Lithuania, either. The Germans eliminated pro-Fascist, pro-Germany attempts to create some kind of autonomy.”

While the number of Poles who took part in the genocide of the Jews is not settled, he cited estimates from different historians who say there

were 130,000 to 180,000 or 200,000, pointing out that either way, it was widespread.

“No collaboration?” Bauer said. “There were thousands of Polish policemen who handed over Jews.... There was a Polish criminal police that was part of the German criminal police in Poland. There were fire brigades — so many buildings in Poland were built of wood — they collaborated fully and nicely with the Germans.”

Dreifuss said, “This is part of history” and should be researched and discussed. “No one blames Poland for the deeds of the Germans. But what we do say is Poland should take responsibility for the deeds of the Poles.”

Bauer and Dreifuss expressed support for historians Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, who are being sued in Poland over the contents of their book *Night Without End*.

“If they are found guilty of attacking the honor and good name of Polish people, they are likely to get a fine that may destroy the possibility of their work in the future,” Bauer said. “I don’t think the disagreement on certain facts should come in front of courts. That is not democracy. That is Bolshevism.”

At the same time, he acknowledged that an estimated 10% of ethnic Poles lost their lives owing to German occupation, citing “massive attacks by German forces on Polish villages and a whole program of eliminating Poles.”

Bauer estimated that about 30,000 Poles saved Jews, though they are not all recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations because of a lack of documentation.

Dreifuss said: “The Polish nation can be very proud of their struggle against Nazi Germany outside Poland and, of course, within occupied Poland. But sadly, many Poles accepted one part of German policy: the murder of Jews.”

She criticized the conflation of Polish Jews and ethnic Poles in statements that Polish participants in the conference made, such as using the formulation that six million Poles were killed,

three million of whom were Jewish. Dreifuss said even though Jews had Polish citizenship at the time, they were not viewed equally by other Poles. For example, while the Polish underground fought the Germans, the occurrences in which they tried to save Jews or punish Poles for killing Jews were rare, she said.

Polish political scientist and diplomat Jakub Kumoch tried to defend Poles for not treating Jews as though they were one nation, referring to Jews living in separate communities and not speaking Polish.

He said Grabowski’s and Engelking’s numbers were very far from the truth and could not be considered quantitative research.

“Poles were responsible for the deaths of thousands of Jews,” Kumoch admitted.

He compared the situation to Israel and the Palestinians: “Would anyone deny that the Israeli army committed crimes against Arabs? What if I said Israel killed 100,000 Palestinian children? That would make you a genocidal nation, and you are not a genocidal nation. Not all Poles were heroes. Many were traitors. We despise them. We are ashamed of them.”

Polish Ambassador to Israel Marek Magierowski said: “When I meet teenagers here... I don’t shy away from the past. I don’t hide virulent anti-Semitism, pogroms, [or] Poles who acted inhumanely during the war.”

However, he said, he also tells the story of two villages where German soldiers killed 31 people, 20 of whom were children, the youngest of which was six months old, because they hid two Jews.

“I want them to have the whole picture: the scale of intimidation millions of Poles were subject to, the very same Poles blamed for not being heroic enough to rescue their Jewish brethren during the Holocaust,” Magierowski said.

Polish Institute of International Affairs president Dr. Slawomir Debski said today is “a time when the future is certain, but the past seems unpredictable.”

“If you are rich enough, you can buy your narrative,” he said. “You can buy historians, journalists, parties to force them to speak the most unbelievable untruths.... It’s on us to deliver historical truth and deliver this message to future generations.”

BY LAHAV HARKOV, *The Jerusalem Post*



Nazi officers in the Warsaw ghetto, Poland, spring 1943.



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. Our Legacy Circle is 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 anyone who includes Yad Vashem in their estate plans. This includes a bequest by will, funding a

Charitable Remainder Trust or Charitable Gift Annuity, donating a paid-up life insurance policy or contributing an IRA or retirement plan.*

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 Holocaust denial, distortion, 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,
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212-220-4304; cmorton@YadVashemUSA.org

*ASYV now has nearly 100 individuals and families who have joined the Zborowski Legacy Circle.

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