

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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ASYV GALAS: RESILIENCE 2020

This fall, the American Society for Yad Vashem hosted three nationwide Virtual Galas, Resilience 2020, honoring six deserving individuals, individuals who, each in his or her own way, have helped to further Yad Vashem's mission of Holocaust education and commemoration. Because of COVID-19, we were unable to host our usual Tribute Dinner, where hundreds of people gather to recognize the important work of this sacred institution. However, we were still able to gather in spirit from the comfort of our own homes.

The Seattle, National, and Los Angeles Virtual Galas were co-chaired by Adina Burian and Mark Moskowitz, and vice-chaired by Hanna Rubinstein and Karen Sandler. All three events centered around the theme of Resilience — the ability to respond to the evils of the *Shoah*, rebuild one's life, and inspire others by building for future generations.

The MC for the galas was actor Michael Zegen, Joel Maisel on *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, and himself the grandson of Holocaust survivors. Throughout the programs, we heard survivors' stories of resilience and messages from special guests, including Gal Gadot, Alex Borstein, Jesse Eisenberg and Susie Essman. We also had special musical performances by Israeli superstar Idan Raichel. But the real stars of our Virtual Galas were our incredible honorees.

At the October 25 Seattle Virtual Gala, we honored Nancy E. Powell, ASYV Benefactor and advocate of Holocaust education and teacher training. Nancy is dedicated to inspiring students and teachers to study the Holocaust, creating and supporting education programs for teachers to advance their professional careers, supporting faculty and student research, and preserving survivor testimonies.

During the National Virtual Gala on November 8, we honored Avner Shalev, chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, and Shaya Ben Yehuda, managing director of the International Relations Division at Yad Vashem. Avner was presented

with the Lifetime Achievement Award and Shaya with the Outstanding Leadership Award. From the beginning of Avner's tenure in 1993, he pioneered the redefinition of Holocaust remembrance and education, planning and implementing a comprehensive multiyear redevelopment plan with a goal of preparing Yad Vashem to meet the challenges of relevant Holocaust remembrance in the 21st century. To that end, he placed education at the forefront of Yad Vashem's activities by founding the International School for Holocaust Studies, as well as enlarging Yad Vashem's archives and re-

and Thomas M. Priselac. Susanne Czucker is a Holocaust survivor, Founding Benefactor of Yad Vashem, and national ASYV board member. As a young girl in Budapest, Hungary, Susanne was placed in a convent, in different camps, and ultimately on a transport train destined for Auschwitz. But when she saw an opportunity to escape, Susanne was hoisted through the roof by fellow "captives," jumped off the train, and survived by her wits and sheer determination. Following the war, she and her parents stayed in DP camps in Austria and Italy before ultimately emigrating to the US in 1952. Susanne built a successful interior design company and became active in the California Jewish community. She and her husband Jan, z"l, endowed Yad Vashem's "Bridge to a Vanished World," leading to the entrance of the Holocaust History Museum, and they are Benefactors of Yad Vashem's Eternal Fund.

Todd Morgan is the chairman and CEO of Bel Air Investment Advisors and founder of the Morgan Aging with Dignity Fund, which provides emergency assistance to Holocaust survivors. Todd is former chairman of the United Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles and has served in various roles at several charitable organizations, including vice chairman of the Coalition to Free Soviet Jews and lifetime trustee of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles.

Thomas M. Priselac is the president and CEO of Cedars-Sinai and was also named president and CEO of the Cedars-Sinai Health System when it was formed

in 2017. An author and invited speaker on policy issues regarding the delivery and financing of health care, Thomas has served the health care field in various roles during his career, including as past chair of the Association of American Medical Colleges. He is also an adjunct professor at the UCLA School of Public Health.

Throughout our three hour-long programs, we reflected on the lessons of those who rose from the ashes to recover and rebuild, and paid tribute to six inspiring honorees. These outstanding individuals work tirelessly to help the American Society for Yad Vashem achieve its mission, and it was a privilege to recognize their dedication and commitment.

BY JILL GOLTZER

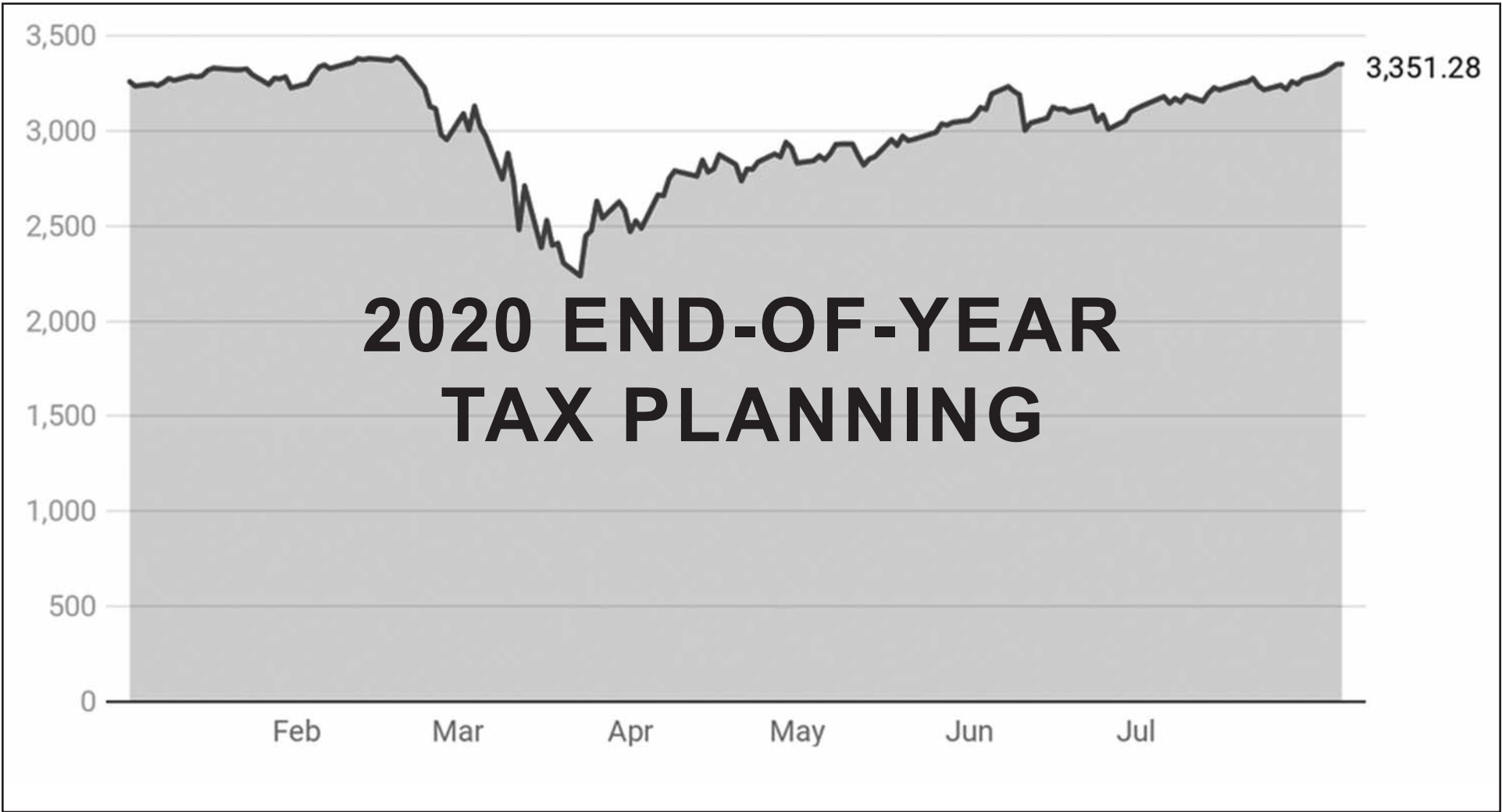


Galas' honorees: (top row L to R) Nancy E. Powell, Avner Shalev, Shaya Ben Yehuda; (bottom row L to R) Susanne Czucker, Thomas M. Priselac, Todd Morgan.

search facilities, and building a new Holocaust History Museum.

Shaya has been the managing director of the International Relations Division at Yad Vashem since 1999. During this period, he managed the enhancement of Yad Vashem's fundraising operations in order to meet the organization's expanding needs, including major capital campaigns and an exponential increase in programmatic activities. In addition, Shaya established the Christian Desk at Yad Vashem and was instrumental in establishing Friends societies in some 20 countries. He is a highly experienced educator and a veteran of the IDF, achieving the rank of lieutenant colonel.

At the Los Angeles Virtual Gala on December 2, we honored Susanne Czucker, Todd Morgan



IRA ROLLOVER

If you are actually over the age of 70½, you can make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) of up to \$100,000 annually from your individual IRA (traditional or Roth) to the American Society for Yad Vashem before the end of the calendar year. This type of gift is also commonly called the IRA charitable rollover. Many charities are recommending this option for donors over the age of 70½, especially toward the end of the calendar year.

DETAILS

A donor older than 70½ can individually distribute up to \$100,000 each year from his or her IRA (through its administrator) to the American Society for Yad Vashem (ASYV) without having to recognize the distribution as income to the donor. This distribution can be used to satisfy the RMD (required minimum distribution) for the year the distribution has been made. HOWEVER, THERE IS NO REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTION FOR 2020, in accordance with the 2020 CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) Act. Please note that the gift must be completed by December 31 (check cashed by ASYV) in order to qualify, and no benefit may be received by the donor from the charity.

As the American Society for Yad Vashem is a public charity, it falls within the permitted charitable recipients of an IRA charitable rollover. The donor must notify the administrator of the IRA to make a direct distribution to the charitable beneficiary in order to qualify. This giving opportunity was made permanent by the passing of the PATH (Protecting

Americans from Tax Hikes) Act in December of 2015 by Congress.

TAX CUTS AND JOBS ACT OF 2017

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 made a number of significant changes regarding income taxes for individuals and families. Most important among them is that there are now a total of seven income tax brackets, lowering taxes for some and raising taxes for others. We are living with the impact of the 2017 law, as it has simplified tax preparation for many, but significantly increased taxes for individuals living in states where there are high state income taxes, such as New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and California.

DETAILS

This coming tax season again will produce much angst for individuals and families domiciled in states that have state income taxes, as the final version of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 maintained this deduction, but limited the total deductible amount to \$10,000, which includes income, sales and property taxes. This limitation on deductibility has been quite significant for most upper-income individuals and families. There was an expectation that this limitation might be eliminated in 2020 by Congress, but it has not come to pass. Also included in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was an increase in the deductibility of cash gifts from 50% to 60% of AGI (adjusted gross income). The 2020 CARES Act raises the limit to 100% of AGI for 2020 only. This deductibility does not apply to donations to donor advised funds or support organizations.

In addition, the standard deduction for in-

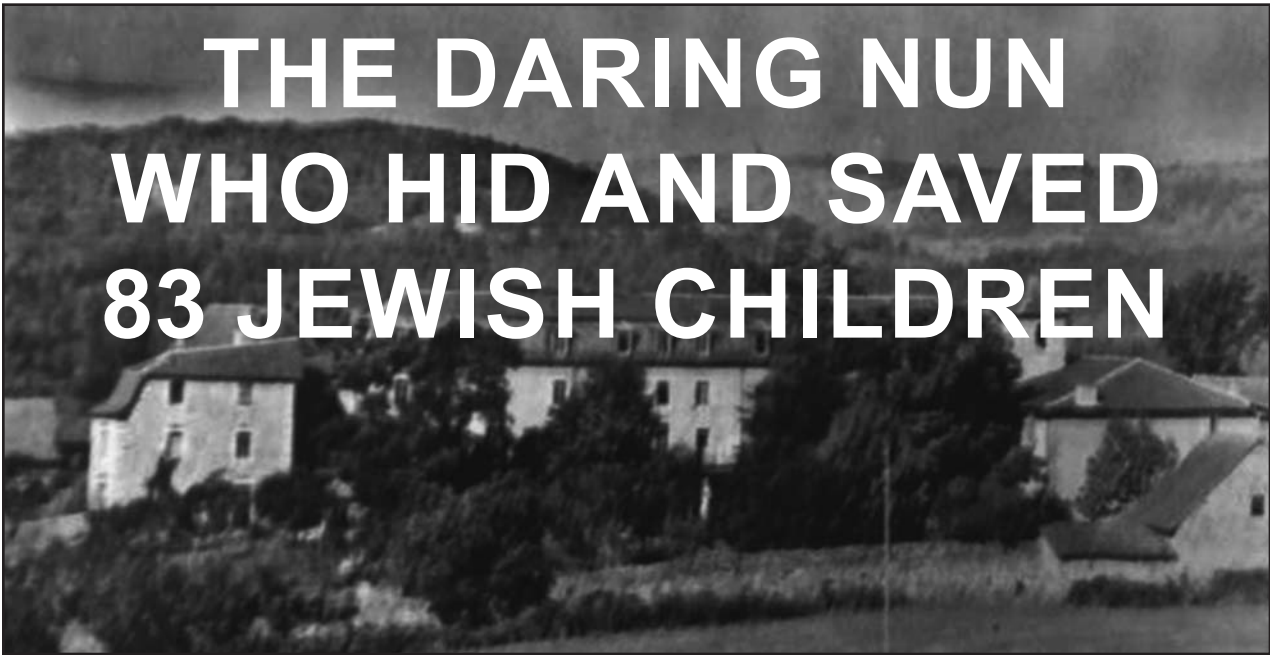
dividuals will be \$12,400 in 2020, for heads of household will be \$18,650 in 2020, and for married couples filing jointly and widows will be \$24,800 in 2020. Some additional consequential income tax deductions were eliminated by Congress as a part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, a few of which are listed here: most insurance casualty and theft losses; tax preparation charges; moving expenses; and employee expenses not reimbursed by the employer. Many more individuals and families utilized the standard deduction in 2020 than in past years.

DONATING APPRECIATED SECURITIES TO CHARITY

One tried and true option is to utilize appreciated (increased in value) publicly traded securities as a method of donation to a charity such as ASYV. If the stock has been held for one year by the donor, the donor is entitled to deduct the fair market value of the security (based on the average of the high and low on the date of transfer to the charity) and avoid paying capital gains on the increase in value of the security or securities transferred. This is a wonderful way to maximize the value of the donation.

Remember, it is always wise to check with your accountant or tax advisor as part of your review process. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by telephone at **212-220-4304 extension 213**, or by e-mail: **cmorton@yadvashemusa.org**.

BY ROBERT CHRISTOPHER MORTON,
Director of Planned Giving
American Society for Yad Vashem



Twelve-year-old H  l  ne Bach was playing in the garden with her younger sister, Ida, when they saw a military truck approaching and rushed inside. The two girls and their mother had left their home in *Lorraine*, in northeastern France, after the German invasion in May 1940 and started travelling toward the “free zone” in the south of the country.

To reduce the risk of the whole family being caught, it had been decided that the father, Aron, and oldest daughter, Annie, would make the journey separately. But when Aron and Annie were arrested in 1941 and taken to a detention camp near *Tours*, H  l  ne’s mother rented a house nearby. And they were still there a year later, when the German soldiers came driving up the road.

H  l  ne and eight-year-old Ida ran into the kitchen to warn their mother.

“My mother told us to run — to hide in the woods,” H  l  ne says. “I was holding my little sister by the hand, but she did not want to come with me. She wanted to go back to my mother. I could hear the Germans. I let her hand go and she ran back.”

Isolated in the woods, H  l  ne hid until she felt the coast was clear.

Then she crept back to the house and found some money her mother had left on the table.

“She knew I would come back,” she says.

H  l  ne went to stay with a friend she’d made in the area. She never saw her mother or younger sister again.

H  l  ne’s older sister, Annie, had her own narrow escape. After a year at the camp near *Tours*, she succeeded in escaping through some fencing and running away.

Aged 16, Annie succeeded this time in making the journey alone to her aunt’s home in the southern city of *Toulouse*, but even there she wasn’t safe. While her aunt’s family were not officially registered as Jews and could pretend to be Catholics, this wasn’t an option open to Annie.

One day in the autumn of 1942, the police rang at the door. “They ordered, ‘Show your family book and all your children, we want to check!’” she says.

“The luck of my life is that my cousin, Ida, had gone to buy bread — that’s why sometimes I believe in miracles. So my aunt said this is Estelle, Henri, H  l  ne and, pointing at me, Ida.”

Not long after Annie’s arrival in *Toulouse*, her aunt received a letter from H  l  ne, from her hid-

ing place near *Tours*. She then made arrangements for her to be rescued.

So one night a young woman from the French Resistance, the *Maquis*, knocked at the door of the house where H  l  ne was staying.

“She said that she came to find me, to cross the demarcation line,” H  l  ne remembers. To show that she could be trusted, the visitor pulled out a photograph of H  l  ne that her aunt had provided.



Sister Denise Bergon.

It was a difficult journey. The young woman had false papers in which she and H  l  ne were described as students, even though H  l  ne was so young. They were stopped and questioned several times.

The “free zone” in the south of France did not live up to its name. The government of Marshal Philippe P  tain, based in Vichy, passed anti-Jewish laws, allowed Jews rounded up in *Baden* and *Alsace-Lorraine* to be interned on its territory, and seized Jewish assets.

On August 23, 1942, the archbishop of *Toulouse*, Jules-Geraud Sali  ge, wrote a letter to his clergymen, asking them to recite a letter to their congregations.

“In our diocese, moving scenes have occurred,” it went. “Children, women, men, fathers and mothers are treated like a lowly herd. Members of a single family are separated from each other and carted away to an unknown destination. The Jews are men, the Jewesses are women. They are part of the human race; they

are our brothers like so many others. A Christian cannot forget this.”

He protested to the Vichy authorities about their Jewish policy, while most of the French Catholic hierarchy remained silent. Out of 100 French bishops, he was one of only six who spoke out against the Nazi regime.

Sali  ge’s message struck a chord with Sister Denise Bergon, the young mother superior of the Convent of Notre Dame de Massip in *Capdenac*, 93 miles northeast of *Toulouse*.

“This call deeply moved us, and such emotion grabbed our hearts. A favorable response to this letter was a testament to the strength of our religion, above all parties, all races,” she wrote after the war in 1946.

“It was also an act of patriotism, as by defending the oppressed we were defying the persecutors.”

The convent ran a boarding school, and Sister Denise knew it would be possible to hide Jewish children among her Catholic pupils. But she worried about endangering her fellow nuns, and about the dishonesty that this would entail.

Her own bishop supported P  tain, so she wrote to Archbishop Sali  ge for advice. She records his response in her journal: “Let’s lie, let’s lie, my daughter, as long as we are saving human lives.”

By the winter of 1942, Sister Denise Bergon was collecting Jewish children who had been hiding in the wooded valleys and gorges of the region around *Capdenac*, known as *L’Aveyron*.

As roundups of Jews intensified — carried out by German troops and, from 1943, by a Fascist militia, the *Milice* — the number of Jewish children taking refuge in the convent would eventually swell to 83.

Among them were Annie Bach, whose aunt realized she would be safer there than in *Toulouse*, shortly followed by H  l  ne, taken directly to the convent by her guide from the Resistance.

H  l  ne finally felt safe, though she was overwhelmed with emotion on her arrival.

“At the beginning, Madame Bergon took me into a room and she tried to make me feel as if my parents were here, and so she was like a mother really,” she says.

At the same time, the fate of her younger sister, Ida, weighed heavily on her.

“Every evening, we had to first do our homework. And then when we finished we could go out and play. I always thought if my sister had not let go of my hand, she would have been in the convent with me,” she says.

Another Jewish refugee from *Alsace-Lorraine* was a boy called Albert Seifer, who was a few years younger than the sisters.

“Surrounded by big walls, we were like in a fortress,” he says. “We were very happy. We did not really feel the war despite the fact that we were surrounded by danger.”

Parents and guardians would send their children with money, jewelry or other valuables in order to pay for the children’s upkeep, before they did their best to escape from France. Sister Denise kept careful records.

“From the beginning of 1944, the roundups of Jews were becoming tighter and numerous,” she recalled in 1946. “Requests came from all

(Continued on page 5)

THE HOLOCAUST AND NORTH AFRICA

The Holocaust and North Africa.
Edited by Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein. Stanford University Press: Palo Alto, Cal., 2019. 349 pp. \$30 softcover.

The *Holocaust and North Africa*, edited by Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein, is an exceptionally valuable volume focusing on an area of study far too long in the shadows. True, only Tunisia came directly under Nazi German occupation, but we quickly learn that the French (under Vichy) and the Italian colonial powers (think Mussolini) eagerly followed the Nazi lead in their North African colonies. In fact, sometimes it feels as though they couldn't wait to align themselves with the Nazis when it came to the Jews — enacting anti-Semitic laws even before they were pressured to do so. Making it all easier was the fact that European non-Jewish colonists living in the respective countries examined — Algeria, Morocco, Libya and Tunisia — were often already anti-Semitic for their own nationalist reasons. Indeed, many of the essays contained in *The Holocaust and North Africa* point out how colonial power easily turns Fascist.

For example, once Algeria was ruled by Vichy France in 1940, Algerian Jews, numbering more than 100,000, were almost immediately — and, we are told, particularly “rigorously” (more so than in Vichy itself) — subjected to a barrage of anti-Semitic rulings that destroyed the community economically and socially. Jews lost their jobs, their property was “Aryanized,” and more. Then Vichy stripped Algerian Jews of French citizenship. Interestingly, French colonists living in Algeria didn't mind this at all. They never liked the fact that Algerian Jews had a “say” in their country —

and citizenship had given them that right! Then there were the camps in Algeria, like *Bedeau*, a forced labor camp, where some “2,000–3,000 Jews” were sent. An interesting sidelight here is the story of the Algerian Jewish soldiers sent to *Bedeau*, where their denigration continued even when the changing tides of war should have substantially improved things for them “post Vichy.”

For the Jews in Morocco, numbering more than 200,000, most in the French protectorate — again ruled by Vichy — things were a bit better. The reason was ironic. In Algeria, when Jews lost their French citizenship, they were deemed a race; but in Morocco, where Jews had been considered “colonial subjects,” now they were deemed a religion. This seemingly minor distinction ended up making a big difference since racial laws were then more “difficult” to apply. Then, too, there was the power Moroccan authorities still wielded, oftentimes protecting Jews from economic disaster for the benefit of Morocco. Nonetheless, Moroccan Jews living in “outlying neighborhoods” had to move into restricted Jewish zones or *mellahs*. Additionally, many Jews, again, were sent to forced labor camps.

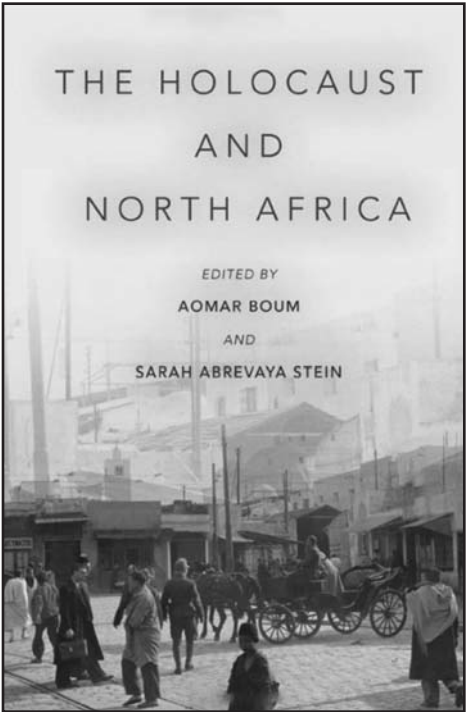
Meanwhile, Italian Fascists, both soldiers and settlers, were unhappy with, and had been making life difficult for, Jews in Libya, Italy's North African colony since the 1920s. In 1938, however, when racial laws were promulgated, the persecution of the 30,000 to 40,000 Libyan Jews became “organized.” This resulted in the “impoverishment” of many Jewish families. But still worse was to come, particularly after 1940 when Libya itself became a battleground. At that point Italian Fas-

cist accusations of Libyan-Jewish collaboration with the British — Italy's immediate enemy in Libya — led to attacks on Libyan Jews, scapegoats for any and all losses. In the end, under Mussolini's direction (and most probably influenced by Nazi Germany) Libyan Jews were deported or sent to internment camps, the worst of which was, *Giado*.

Finally, Tunisian Jews numbering about 80,000 were subjected to anti-Semitic laws proclaimed by Vichy — much like Morocco's Jews. The difference in their experience? The laws were initially moderately enforced. Some say it was because Resident-General Admiral Jean Pierre Esteva, the Vichy governor in Tunisia, wasn't keen on them. Additionally, it appears that the bey, among other local Tunisian officials, had some power in Tunis, and he wasn't keen on them either. Things got much worse, though, in 1941, once Xavier Vallat, heading the Commissariat-General for Jewish Questions for the Vichy government — “a newly created agency” — came on the scene to check on how racial laws were being implemented. Then when the Nazi Germans arrived in November 1942, under the leadership of Colonel Walther Rauff, Tunisian Jews felt the full brunt of Nazism. “Jews were targets of harassment, physical violence, unexplained arrests, internments and general spoliation. Men between the ages of 16 and 60 were transported to camps” for forced labor . . . “individuals were assassinated or deported to concentration camps in Europe.” Luckily, the Allies arrived a few months later to save them . . . and all North African Jews.

Needless to say, *The Holocaust and North Africa* is an absorbing work that will undoubtedly whet the appetite of many a student of the Holocaust, eager to know more about what happened to Jews in that part of the world during the war years.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN
Professor of Media, Communication
and Visual Arts at Pace University



YAD VASHEM, UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME TO PROMOTE HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Yad Vashem and the University of Notre Dame have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) set to promote Holocaust education and research among the “next generation of historians and researchers.”

The agreement between the World Holocaust Remembrance Center and the South Bend, Indiana, university forwards Yad Vashem's vision to increase Holocaust education and research across the globe.

“It is with great satisfaction that Yad Vashem is signing this important agreement with the University of Notre Dame,” Yad Vashem director-general Dorit Novak said in a statement. “Yad Vashem is committed to ensuring that the history of the Holocaust continues to be relevant today and for future generations, and is not relegated to yet another chapter in human history.

“Our efforts aim to equip students and teachers alike with the necessary tools and materials to address the topic of the Holocaust and engage young scholars in the need for further research into its multifaceted nature and relevance today,” she said. “Yad Vashem hopes that this agreement will open opportunities at many more universities and college campuses across the United States and in the rest of the world.”

In addition to the MoU, scholars from both institutions intend to explore how the Holocaust came to be — dehumanizing and murdering millions in the process — and the role “healing justice plays in our world today.”

This specifically is the focus of Yad Vashem's new online educational tool, based on its Learning Center — the Center for Major Questions Arising from the Holocaust — which is intended

to induce thought and discussion. “The University of Notre Dame is very proud to enter into this partnership with Yad Vashem,” said vice president and associate provost for internationalization at the University of Notre Dame Michael Pippenger. “For our students who study abroad in Jerusalem, the collaboration will allow for greater access to Yad Vashem's extraordinary resources — both its world-renowned experts and its unparalleled archives — to pursue their research and become a part of the global conversation on Holocaust studies.”

The associate provost added that “for our students on campus, we hope that the partnership will lead to a better understanding of the history and legacy of the Holocaust and what that understanding calls us to study and act on today.”

THE DARING NUN WHO HID AND SAVED 83 JEWISH CHILDREN

(Continued from page 3)

sides, and we received around 15 little girls, some of whom had just escaped in a miraculous way from the pursuit of the Gestapo.”

She added: “They had simply become our children, and we had committed ourselves to suffer everything so as to return them safely to their families.”

Other than Sister Denise, only the school’s director, Marguerite Rocques, its chaplain and two other sisters knew the truth about the children’s origins. The other 11 nuns were aware that a number of the children were refugees from *Alsace-Lorraine*, but did not know they were Jewish — nor did the officials whom Sister Denise pressed for more and more ration books.



Helene and Anne’s mother, Cecile Bach.

The children’s lack of familiarity with Catholic rituals threatened to expose them, but an explanation was found.

“We came from the east of France, a place with many industrial cities and a lot of workers who were Communists,” says Annie. “So we posed as Communist children who knew nothing of religion!”

The longer the war continued, the more dangerous the children’s position became and Sister Denise began to worry about possible searches.

“Even though all compromising papers and the jewelry from the children’s families had already been hidden in the most secret corners of the house, we did not feel safe,” she wrote in her 1946 journal. “So, late at night, when everyone was asleep in the house, we dug a hole for the hidden things in the convent’s garden and we buried as deep as possible anything that could be compromising.”

In May 1944 a battle-hardened elite SS division known as *Das Reich* arrived in the area from the eastern front.

About this time, Annie remembers that a member of the Resistance arrived with an alarming warning.

“One day the doorbell rang. Since the sister in charge of the door was a bit far, I opened it

myself,” she says.

“A young man was standing there. He said: ‘Quick! I must speak to your director! It is very, very urgent!’

“The man told us that we had been denounced. News had spread that the convent was hiding Jewish children.”

Sister Denise hatched a plan with the Resistance, who agreed to fire warning shots if the enemy was approaching.

“The children would go to sleep, the older ones paired up with the younger ones and, at the first detonation heard in the night, in silence but in haste, they must get to the woods and leave the house to the invaders,” she wrote in 1946.

But soon she decided to hide the children without waiting for the invaders to arrive. One group, including Annie, was taken to the chapel.

“The chaplain was strong and could lift the benches. He opened a trap door. We slid down in there,” she says.

The tiny underground space was 2.5 meters long and less than 1.5 meters high.

Seven children huddled together there for five days. They could not stand up or lie down to sleep during the long nights, and were only allowed out for short periods in the early hours of the morning, to exercise, eat, drink and go to the toilet.

Air came through a small vent that opened on onto the courtyard.

“After five days there it was no longer possible to endure,” Annie says.

“Imagine if the nuns had been arrested,” she adds.

Those days hidden underground marked Annie for life — she has slept with a night-light ever since. Hélène was fortunate enough to be housed instead with a local family.

Though they didn’t enter the convent, the SS did leave a trail of destruction right on the convent’s doorstep.

“We found some *maquisards* [members of the *Maquis*] who had been killed and tossed on the road. The Germans set an example so that others did not resist,” Annie says.

Sister Denise wanted to pay her respects to the dead and asked Annie to help her place flowers on each of the dead bodies.

In June 1944, *Das Reich* was ordered north to join the effort to repel the Allied landings in Normandy. On the way it took part in two massacres designed to punish locals for *Maquis* activity in the area. Then, on arrival in Normandy, it was encircled by the US 2nd Armored Division and crushed, losing 5,000 men and more than 200 tanks and other combat vehicles.

After southern France was liberated, in Au-

gust 1944, the Jewish children slowly left the convent. Albert Seifer was reunited with his family, including his father, who returned alive from Auschwitz.

Annie and Hélène weren’t so fortunate.

Although their aunt survived, their parents and younger sister, Ida, were murdered in Auschwitz.

They refer to Sister Denise as “*notre dame de la guerre*” — our lady of the war.

They were sad to say goodbye to her, and regularly visited her for the rest of her life.

When Annie’s children were young she often took them with her, in order to keep this period of history alive for them — a constant reminder of what the Jewish people endured.

Sister Denise remained at the convent and continued working until her death in 2006 at the age of 94. Later in life she helped disadvantaged children, and then immigrants from North Africa.

In 1980, she was honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. A street is named after her in *Capdenac*, but apart from that the only memorial is in the grounds of the convent.

It says: “This cedar tree was planted on 5 April 1992 in memory of the saving of 83 Jewish children (from December 1942 to July 1944) by Denise Bergon... at the request of Monsignor Jules-Geraud Saliège, archbishop of *Toulouse*.”

Hélène and Annie at the entrance to the convent.

It stands close to the spot where Sister Denise buried the jewelry, money and valuable items parents left behind — which she gave back, untouched, after the war to help the families start again.

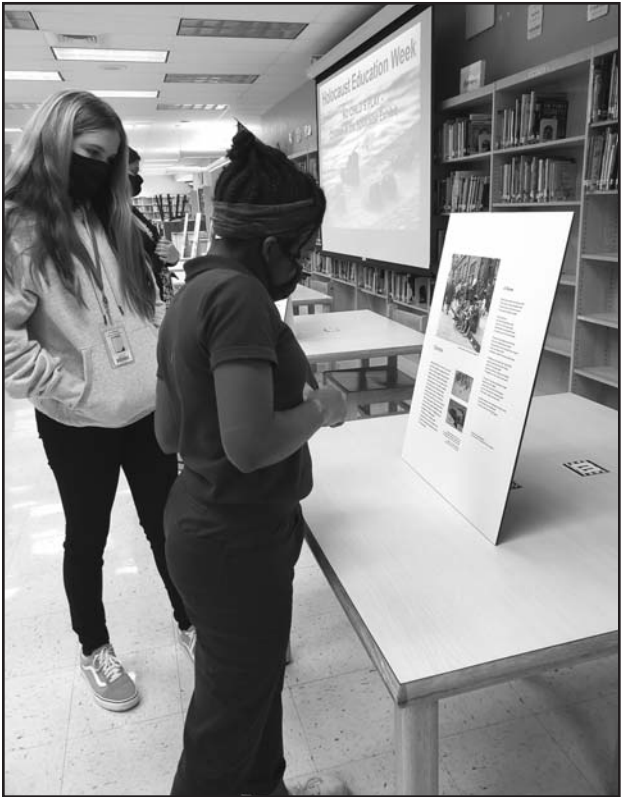
BY NIAMH HUGHES, BBC News



CLASSROOMS WITHOUT BORDERS

On October 30, 2020, the Florida Department of Education issued a memorandum designating the second week of November as Holocaust Education Week. This state-enforced legislation adds to the existing Holocaust Education Mandate that Florida adopted in 1994.

The School District of Palm Beach County invited Marlene W. Yahalom, PhD, director of education for the American Society for Yad Vashem,



Palm Beach County middle school students learning about “No Child’s Play” during Holocaust Education Week 2020.

to present professional development opportunities for South Florida educators and students, grades 6–12 in public schools. This invitation was in connection with the newly designated Holocaust Education Week that took place this year from November 9-16.

In connection with this initiative, Dr. Yahalom presented in middle schools and high schools in Palm Beach County using the Besa and “No Child’s Play” traveling exhibits developed by Yad Vashem. Her presentations also included meaningful discussions using Holocaust-related artifacts that gave life and meaning to the historical information that was introduced to these students.

To meet the changing landscape of classroom learning due to COVID-19, we have adapted student-centered teaching strategies for use online. Dr. Yahalom worked with regional educators in Florida to ensure meaningful learning about the Holocaust using educational resources developed by Yad Vashem and engagement with survivor testimony and primary source study. Through the use of digital tools and resources and lesson plans tailored to meet standards in the Holocaust Education Mandate, Dr. Yahalom presented to no fewer than 1,784 students of grades 6-12 and their teachers in South Florida during the week.

Designating the second week of November as Holocaust Education Week also offers an appropriate platform to commemorate *Kristallnacht* — the Night of Broken Glass, when, on November 9, 1938, a wave of terror began in Germany. The outburst appeared to be a spontaneous expression of national anger in re-

sponse to the November 3, 1938, assassination of Ernst vom Rath, a German embassy official in Paris, by a Polish Jewish youth, Herschl Grynszpan. The assassination became the pretext for what was to follow: within 24 hours, more than 1,000 synagogues were set on fire and destroyed, rioters smashed synagogues with hammers and axes, 91 Jews were killed, and more than 30,000 Jewish men between the ages of 16 and 60 were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

Kristallnacht was the culmination of nearly six years of systematic discrimination and persecution. During this time period, the identification, separation, isolation and deprivation of rights escalated, all disguised as lawful measures within the justice system. These measures were among the first of the racist Nazi laws that culminated in the Holocaust. Dr. Yahalom presented information and historical connections about *Kristallnacht* in each presentation so students could learn about and understand the relevance of commemorating this impactful date in Holocaust history.

Our goals of Holocaust education remain as relevant as ever before. We are obligated to remember and teach the Holocaust, honor the memory of the victims, commemorate and pay tribute to the lost Jewish communities of Europe, and safeguard this information against Holocaust denial and distortion. It is clear from recent surveys regarding decreased Holocaust awareness and rising rates of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial that our responsibility and outreach are needed more than ever before.

We need to identify the relevancy of the Holo-

to new and existing educational settings. Our professional development programs in South Florida this fall have ensured meaningful instruction about the Holocaust through innovative educational resources developed by Yad Vashem, engagement with Holocaust testimony and primary source study, and the use of artifacts as a tool to enrich and give meaning to historical facts. Our impact in South Florida to accommodate to recent legislation enforced in Florida to enrich its existing mandate is quite significant in this regard. We will continue to work with educators and students in this region throughout the 2020–2021 school year.

Students provided positive feedback following the workshops, including: “Your presentation helped me learn a lot about the Holocaust...,” “I learned much more than I knew about it...,” “The part that impacted me the most was ‘No Child’s Play’...,” “It was very enlightening. All in all I loved it. Thank you!...,” “I am so glad I learned about what my ancestors had to go through...,” and “I believe that schools don’t usually cover the Holocaust enough, so I think that what you did was very important.”

A note of gratitude from the Palm Beach County School District stated that “These beautiful, informative exhibits [‘No Child’s Play’ and ‘Besa’] have left a lasting imprint on the teachers and students that viewed them, but the most important impactful part of the exhibit was the thirty-plus presentations that you gave virtually. Your dedication to Holocaust education is commendable. We look forward to reaching more students together.”

Stay tuned for increased outreach and professional development programming. We continue to work in South Florida and are expanding our



Meaningful lessons about Jewish life during the Holocaust and Jewish resilience and survival in a post-Holocaust world.

caust and sustain interest in Holocaust education and instruction. This includes empowering educators to teach and sustain the lessons of this event in their classrooms. We are also obligated to teach this subject to address rising rates of anti-Semitism, a lack of basic Holocaust knowledge, and a continuous escalation in efforts to promote Holocaust denial and distortion.

With schools pivoting to remote or hybrid venues, our educational outreach continues to adapt

work to other locations, including Los Angeles and Seattle. Check our website for updates and schedules for events through the 2020–2021 school year.

Contact Marlene W. Yahalom, PhD, Director of Education — mwy@yadvashemusa.org — for more information about the American Society for Yad Vashem’s educational workshops and virtual academic opportunities.

THE TRIAL BEFORE NUREMBERG

Seventy-five years ago, on September 17, 1945, the first trial to apply international law to crimes committed by Nazi functionaries opened in *Lüneberg*, Germany. Pushed to end before the mid-November start of the *Nuremberg* trials, which focused on “crimes against peace,” “crimes against humanity” and “war crimes,” Britain’s “*Belsen* trial,” convened under its Royal Warrant, sought solely to prosecute those who acted criminally in concentration camps, participating in a system calculated to murder millions. By admitting evidence of atrocities committed by Germans against German or Axis nationals, it set a precedent for the series of trials to follow: No longer would “sovereign immunity” automatically shield war criminals. This position was not a given.

The British Second Army had liberated *Bergen-Belsen* on April 15. What they found in the then-largest concentration camp was indescribable. Still, the *Belsen* trial’s first witness, Brig. H. L. Glyn Hughes, the military officer who had assumed responsibility for medical relief at *Belsen*, tried to give a picture. In Camp One, five compounds contained more than 41,000 emaciated inmates in severely overcrowded, filthy huts. Seventy percent of them required immediate hospitalization. Of these, Hughes estimated that 14,000 would die before they could receive treatment. Ten thousand unburied corpses lay in mounds on the ground, among the living in some huts, and floating in concrete ponds of water. Epidemics of typhus, tuberculosis and gastroenteritis raged. Camp Two contained another 15,000 starving prisoners.

Accompanying the British Army into *Bergen-Belsen* was its Film and Photographic Unit. Together with journalists, this group captured evidence of Nazi barbarity. Though the Allied Control Council had yet to provide a uniform basis for prosecuting war criminals, outraged British citizens demanded justice. A trial slated to begin in July was delayed only because more time was needed to collect evidence. All summer, investigators, military officers and translators walked through the camp with stacks of photographs of guards and *kapos*, gathering affidavits from witnesses.

Most of the 45 SS and *kapos* charged with participating in the ill-treatment and murder of inmates at *Bergen-Belsen* had earlier served in Auschwitz. While overseeing a compound of 18,000 women, Irma Grese (then 19) used her special whip. Juana Borman, at 52 the oldest of the female guards, delighted in watching her dogs tear prisoners to pieces. Josef Kramer, who supervised the gassing of thousands at Auschwitz, went on to become *kommandant* and the “Beast of *Belsen*.” He casually shot 22 prisoners the day before the British arrived. These murderers sat among the other defendants in a dock in the gymnasium-turned-courtroom in the outskirts of *Lüneberg*. Hundreds more had fled at the time of the liberation.

Just as the British were unprepared for what

they found in *Bergen-Belsen*, they (and their allies) had no experience investigating and prosecuting such criminality. The act and effects of denying humans habitable quarters, medical and sanitary facilities, and food and water defied comprehension. How to proceed? Was “the proper treatment of citizens of nations occupied by a belligerent” outlined in Britain’s *Manual of Military Law* a fair consideration? Deciding to adhere to judicial norms, the British court would strive for evenhandedness and moderation.

Observers called the approach blasphemous. Colonel Smith, a London University professor of international law brought in to help the defense, argued that actions consonant with German law — which permitted the annexation of territory, the establishment of concentration camps, the confinement therein of prisoners, and the construction and use of gas chambers — were lawful. As “war crimes” had only to do with actual warfare, National Socialist racial policy, which subjected civilian prisoners to atrocities, fell outside the purview of the charges. The 11 defense lawyers concurred; the German’s duty was to obey his country’s law, even if it conflicted with international law.

Defense lawyers attacked survivor-witnesses who omitted in their testimonies incidents mentioned in earlier statements — or who mentioned incidents not in statements. They accused witnesses of combining trivial incidents to produce grave ones and of attributing remembered events to those in custody. They failed to understand the impossibility of knowing and keeping track of dates and times, and that questions might evoke recollections.

Helen Klein accused Franz Hoessler of selecting her for the gas chamber at Auschwitz, of telling her that at age 19 she had “lived long enough.” Another witness told how Hilda Lobauer beat and drowned women prisoners by pushing them into a ditch. Ada Bimko recounted, with tears, how members of her family, including her six-year-old son, died at Auschwitz. She explained how the *sonderkommando* were forced to bring bodies from the gas chambers to the crematoria. She identified Karl Francioh, supervisor of the cookhouse at *Belsen*, as the man who shot an inmate the day before the British arrived. And she saw Kramer kicking and beating prisoners. A defense counsel suggested that she fabricated statements about Kramer’s brutality.

Survivor Anita Lasker-Wallfisch concluded that the trial was a “huge farce.” Others, too, thought the bending over backwards to allow the testimony and defense of the perpetrators an insult to those who had died and to *Belsen*’s liber-

ators. Criticizing protracted British justice and indulgence of the defendants, a Russian reporter called for the trial’s immediate end. A Moscow radio commentator said it encouraged Fascists everywhere.

In his affidavit, Dr. Klein, one of the accused, said that he told Kramer that had he been the English officer in charge, he would have taken them both, put them against the wall and shot them.

The *Belsen* trial defense attorneys would not have the final word. In his closing speech, prosecuting attorney Col. T. M. Backhouse of Headquarters, British Army of the Rhine, refuted each of the points raised by Colonel Smith. He submitted that interned civilians, including inhabitants of countries occupied by Germany during the war, were entitled to the same treatment as prisoners of war (as outlined by the Geneva Convention of 1929), and that all forms of cruel treatment were prohibited. He detailed the murderous scheme to which Auschwitz internees were subjected, and the continuation of brutalization and mass murder, in a different form, in *Bergen-Belsen*. He reviewed the testimony incriminating each of the accused and noted the problems of collecting evidence from those preoccupied, post-liberation, with trying to survive or save the dying. He remarked on the telling consistencies among various affidavits.

The *Belsen* trial’s verdict: 14 of the defendants were acquitted; 31 were found guilty. Of these, 11 were sentenced to death. The meticulous executioner Albert Pierrepoint hanged the eight men and three women on December 13, 1945, in a jail in *Hamelin*.

Like the *Belsen* trial, the *Nuremberg* trials would reject summary executions and seek to create authoritative, historical records. Focusing



Irma Grese (second from left) at the *Belsen* trial.

on the Nazi regime’s conspiracy to aggression, the International Military Tribunal (IMT) that produced *Nuremberg* — comprising the United States, Britain, France and Russia (each with its own prosecution agendas) — set standards for prosecuting crimes against humanity. It looked to an example, among hundreds of trials it overshadowed: the *Belsen* trial, the first to consider not only defendants’ individual war crimes, but also their part in a scheme to torture and murder Jews and other targeted victims, regardless of nationality.

BY BERNICE LERNER, JNC

BEHIND THE SEALED WINDOW

It is clearly a watercolor painted by a child. Cinderella is wearing a baby-blue dress, her hair in braids with matching bows. A princess greets her in a drawing room where another woman sits playing the piano. Ironically, the brightly colored scene couldn't be further from the life of the young artist — then-six-year-old Nelly Toll. Toll created her art during the nearly two years she spent hiding in a locked room with her mother, waiting for Poland to be liberated from the Nazis.



Nelly Toll.

As Toll recalls that time so long ago, she smiles at her rendition of Cinderella being greeted by a beautiful princess and not a handsome prince. Toll has always thought outside the box, even while living within one. Her odyssey began in 1943 when Germany was invading Poland, rounding up Jews and other people the Nazis considered undesirable. “The Jews were being taken by the Germans to be killed,” Toll says. Her father found refuge for his wife and daughter in the home of a tenant who was renting an apartment from him.



“Mother, Governess and Mother’s Three Children.”

“We lived in an apartment on the street level in a very fashionable Christian neighborhood,” Toll recalls. “My father was going to join us later on, after he placed other family members. To keep me busy, my mother got me a watercolor

box. I just made fairy tales of a happy childhood. “My mother taught me how to write. The people who hid us couldn’t read or write, but they had a friend who could go to the library. She could only bring grown-up books, because she had no children. So I read Maupassant, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Gorky, and my mother made it easier for me to understand.”

The room had three sections: one for Toll and her mother; one for the tenant, a man she calls Mr. W; and the third housed a beat-up sofa where the man’s wife slept. There was also a bathroom and kitchen. “We had what I call a double-decker danger on the outside and the inside,” she says. “Outside, the Germans could come at any moment. Inside, the man used to beat his wife terribly. She would sometimes get on the windowsill in the kitchen and call for the police, and we were in that room while the police came to the kitchen.” “The doors were locked, so Mrs. W would pretend to look for a key, at which point we would disappear to a hidden place in that room. I knew that if she turned the key to show them the room, it had to be empty and free of the watercolors, water and brushes. I couldn’t spill a drop of water. There could be no evidence that we were there. It was a matter of a few seconds that this had to be done. We would go into a hidden window.” “Before the war the room had three windows, and it was very cold. So my father bricked a window on the outside, but inside there was a windowsill. So he put in a wooden board and trap door, and when we needed to we would go in there and put a rug over it. It was touch and go

being turned in, so they would hide in the bathtub. One of her pictures shows two women vacationing in the country in a red house. “Afterward, they would be tired and the chambermaid would make a beautiful bath,” Toll says, describing how she reinterpreted the bathtub in her painting.



“Girls in the Field,” *Lwow*, 1943.

Though Toll doesn’t remember how she learned the story of Cinderella, she created a series of pictures to illustrate her version of the tale. “This Cinderella had a bad stepmother, so she ran away,” Toll says. “A butler lets her in, and she goes into this room where the princess sits on one chair and on the other end is a woman playing the piano. Cinderella is received by the princess and in the next picture they go into a car — that was a big deal in those days — and they go for a ride.” Alongside the pictures, Toll included written narrations of her illustrations. She created 60 stories during her time in hiding, most recalling what her life had been like before the war. She and her younger brother were raised in an affluent family, living in an apartment house in *Lwow* [now *Lviv*, Ukraine], Poland, where her mother loved to play the piano.

While most of Toll’s pictures depict happy scenes, she drew one black-and-white picture of marching German soldiers. She was also more realistic about her life in the diary she kept. “I recorded everything. That became the basis for my book, *Behind the Secret Window*,” she says. “That diary is still in my possession.” Toll vividly recalls the day the Russians liberated Poland. “When the Russians came I disregarded my mother and ran out of the house. The soldiers put me on top of their tank and gave me chocolates,” she remembers. Sadly, she never saw her father, younger brother or cousins again. Toll emigrated to the United States in 1951, first landing in Vineland, N.J. She got married and settled in Cherry Hill. Today Toll’s home is filled with her artwork, mostly watercolors, along with some pottery. Some pieces are from long ago, while others are very recent. “I love color,” she says. “There’s no inspiration, I just paint.”

BY TERRI AKMAN, *SJ Magazine*



It's factually accurate, yet reductive, to call the elegiac new film *The Song of Names* a Holocaust story. The historical drama, based on a 2002 novel by cultural critic Norman Lebrecht, tells the story of a young Jewish violin prodigy from Warsaw, Dovidl Rapoport, from age nine to 55. In the film, the character is portrayed by three actors, including Clive Owen.

During the 1930s, before Hitler's invasion of Poland, Dovidl is sent to live with a nurturing London family and develops a close brotherly bond with their son, Martin. As a young man in 1951, Dovidl is bursting with talent, his promotional recording acclaimed as "music from the gods," yet he's tormented by uncertainty over his family's fate during the war years.

The film's central mystery is why Dovidl disappears right before he's about to make his big international concert debut on the London stage. Even 35 years later, Martin (now played by Tim Roth) is mystified and bereft. He begins an obsessive quest to find out why Dovidl vanished, and whether he might still be alive.



Luke Doyle (left) and Misha Handley star in *The Song of Names*.

As the conundrum unfolds, and Martin and Dovidl eventually reunite, we learn why Dovidl was a no-show for his big debut, and how a chance visit he made at age 21 to a London synagogue would determine his life's path.

Ever since the temple's cantor introduced Dovidl to the film's title song, a haunting fictional recitation of the names of all those who died in the *Treblinka* concentration camp, Dovidl has lived

with acute survivor's guilt. It's an almost unbearable burden that forever changes his commitment to classical music, to family and to his own faith.

Yet, despite its heartbreaking World War II subject matter, one of the first things French-Canadian filmmaker François Girard says about his new movie is that "it's important that we're not looking at the Holocaust straight on."

The *Song of Names* has none of the usual scenes one expects in a story about Jews in Hitler's Europe. There are no re-creations of the Warsaw ghetto where Dovidl's family was sequestered, no graphic images of starving prisoners, no combat scenes or the eventual uplift of liberation.

Instead, there is music. Lots of beautiful music (composed by Oscar winner Howard Shore, known for his work on the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy) that serves as a requiem for those lost and to affirm the degree to which song and memory are linked.

"The bigger story of history, of World War II, is always present, but we never look at it head

parents died in the Holocaust). Much of Girard's work on screen, as well as in theater and opera, over the past two decades has explored the similar intersection of classical music and history.

"I think I trust music more than words," Girard said, especially when it comes to wringing emotion on screen from characters like Martin and Dovidl, who are both grappling with profound loss. "That might be a very personal thing, but one thing for sure is that the power of music captures states of mind and experiences where words fail us. We'll never need subtitles or translations with music because it reaches beyond borders."

Music's universality, along with the limits of language, was on Girard's mind when determining how to film a pivotal scene in *The Song of Names*, as the adult Martin (Roth) and Dovidl's former lover (played by Magdalena Cielecka) visit the *Treblinka* memorial, where a small forest



Tim Roth plays Martin, who visits the memorial at *Treblinka* in *The Song of Names*.

clearing is filled with thousands of jagged grave-stones commemorating the Nazi extermination camp's 900,000 victims.

In preparation, Girard, Cielecka and production designer François Seguin visited *Treblinka* together. "It was an extremely emotional experience," Girard said, one that informed the script, "which originally had the characters talking as they walked, and then that no longer seemed right. We spent three hours walking the fields, and we didn't exchange one word. What can you possibly say?"

"I wrote a long letter to the memorial's authorities, explaining the film and why we needed to shoot there. You feel such a responsibility to be true, that that's not a place where you want to play with special effects and green screen. You need the actors to walk the ground if the characters do."

The production was quickly granted approval, and *The Song of Names* became the first feature film to shoot with permission on the *Treblinka* memorial.

"We human beings have grown a very short memory, collectively," Girard said. Combating that amnesia "was my motivation for the heart of this film, and hopefully is the film's contribution. I think we have to push back to keep memory alive. We have to look backward and remember. Because, if we can't look backward, we can't look forward."

BY JESSICA ZACK, *Datebook*

THE REMARKABLE STORY OF “SHTILER, SHTILER”

Vilna, or Vilne (nowadays known by its Lithuanian name, Vilnius), was often called “The Jerusalem of Lithuania.”

On the eve of World War II, the city was home to some 60,000 Jews, comprising over a quarter of its population. Vilna Jews enjoyed a variety of educational institutions, including both Yiddish and Hebrew gymnasiums, as well as public libraries. There were Jewish orchestras and a choir and a drama studio, printing houses, newspapers and periodicals. “The Jerusalem of *galut*, the consolation of the Eastern people in the north,” it was called by poet Zalman Shneur, who had spent a couple of years there in his youth at the turn of the century.

Following the outbreak of the war in September 1939, Vilnius underwent a series of upheavals and shocks. Captured by the Red Army, it was first handed over to the Lithuanians, only to be later annexed by the Soviet Union. On June 22, 1941, Germany invaded its eastern neighbor and former ally, and two days after that the *Wehrmacht* conquered the city.



Alexander Wolkowyski (later Alexander Tamir), right, at liberation.

Vilna Jews soon suffered a series of *Aktions*, beginning in early July, when some 35,000 people were murdered by the Germans and their Lithuanian collaborators. But they were not transported by train to extermination camps dozens or hundreds of miles away; rather, the mass murder of Vilna's Jews took place in the city's own backyard — *Ponar*, a wooded area less than five miles southwest of the city, on the road to *Grodno*. Before the war the residents of Vilnius would enjoy holiday strolls there, gathering berries and mushrooms. Jewish schools would also go there on hikes, and at night sit around the campfire and sing and dance.

The Nazis saw a different potential in *Ponar*. The Soviets had dug large pits in the forest to store fuel tanks, but they left them behind before the project was completed. “Just as the Germans arrived, they discovered it,” wrote the great Yid-

dish poet Avrom Sutzkever in his prose account, *Fun vilner geto*, “a place as though tailor-made for their murderous plans. On the right, a road to transport the victims in cars; on the left, the Vilnius–Warsaw railway line.”

In December 1941, the great *Aktions* ceased. The Germans needed cheap labor, and since Jewish forced laborers were much cheaper to employ than non-Jews, they decided it would serve their purposes to keep them alive for the moment. The interval before the summer of 1943 is thus referred to as “the period of relative quiet,” during which the murder of individuals accused of “crimes” like food smuggling continued, as did that of the elderly and the sick deemed unfit for work. Nevertheless, the Jews of the ghetto clung to the belief, fostered by the Germans, that their work was essential and increased their chances of survival.

At the end of 1941, half a year into the German occupation, only about one-third of the Jews of Vilna, some 20,000 people, were still alive and crowded into seven alleys in the ghetto. Despite their inconceivable distress, an extensive program of educational and cultural activity was carried out there under the protection of the head of the ghetto, Jacob Gens. “The cultural life in the Vilna ghetto began the very day we entered there,” Sutzkever wrote.

Ghetto dwellers had not only kindergartens and elementary schools, a *heder* and yeshivas, a vocational school and a gymnasium — toward the end, they even began having compulsory school attendance — but also schools of music, art, eurhythmics and theater, a children's club and a youth club. There were a theater, a symphony orchestra and choirs (a Yiddish choir and two Hebrew ones, large and small), as well as a cultural center with a lending library and a reading room, an archive, a statistical bureau and a museum. Concerts, literary evenings, lectures, exhibitions and sports competitions were held.

Such was the setting of Gens' decision in December 1942 to hold a competition for which the song that later became “Quiet, Quiet” was composed by young Alexander (Alek) Wolkowyski. The original poem was written by his father, Dr. Noah (Leon) Wolkowyski, in Polish, the language spoken in their home. The man who translated it into Yiddish, the mother tongue of most Vilna Jews, and added two stanzas to it was Shmerke Kaczerginski, who was involved in saving thousands of Jewish books and tens of thousands of Jewish documents from the Germans. He was a member of the United Partisan Organization (FPO), an organizer of many cultural events of the ghetto, and — no less important — a prolific lyricist, who expressed the reality of ghetto life in his songs, many of which became hits. It was Wolkowyski Sr. who chose the lullaby form — a rather understandable choice coming from a man who wished to help his young son deal with the impossible reality of the ghetto.

All that is known about the original Polish verse is that its first words were: “Hush, hush,

hearts are crying”. The Yiddish version begins as follows: “*Shtiler, shtiler, lomir shvaygn, / Kvorim vaksn do. / S'hoben zey farflanst di sonim, / Grien zey tsum blo. / S'fired vegn zu Ponar tsu, / S'firt keyn veg tsurik. / Iz der tate vu farshvundn / Un mit im dos glik.*” In English:

Quiet, quiet, let's be silent,
Graves are growing here.
They were planted by the enemies,
See their bloom appear.
All the roads lead to *Ponar* now,
There are no roads back.
Papa too has vanished somewhere
And with him our luck.

A Hebrew translation of the song, written by the renowned Israeli poet Avraham Shlonsky, was published in Mandatory Palestine in September 1945, only a few months after the end of the war and even before the original, Yiddish version appeared in print, in the first issue of the children's magazine *Mishmar LaYeladim*. During the war, as news of the genocide taking place in Europe leaked out, the lullabies published in the children's magazines of the *Yishuv* served as a means of mediating the events to young readers. For the sake of those who might not have heard of *Ponar*, a note appeared under the lyrics: “A forest near Vilnius, where tens of thousands of Jews were murdered.” Rather blunt for a children's magazine, perhaps, but then, even today, more than seven decades later, educators still debate the correct way to educate children about the Holocaust.

Having escaped the ghetto just before its liquidation and fought as a partisan until liberation in the summer of 1944, Kaczerginski set to systematically collect and publish the songs of the ghettos and camps. When the original “Quiet, Quiet” first appeared in print in December 1945, in the *New York Morning Freiheit*, he spoke about the unique characteristics of ghetto songs. “In ordinary times, songs have a long way to go before they become popular. But in the ghetto ... a personal work turned into folklore right before our eyes. Any newly created song that expressed the feelings and experiences of the masses immediately caught on as though it were their own.” Daily life in the ghetto, he said, not only influenced the themes of the songs but was also the reason their form was often “not polished but rather simple, though unmediated and true.”

The song was performed before a large audience in the ghetto theater. There are no photographs of this performance, let alone audio or video recordings, but we do have an account given by someone who witnessed it. Nehamka Rahav (then Shuster) was a 16-year-old girl at the time, the same age as the singer, Mirele. Interviewed by Ofer Gavish in 2000, she described Mirele as a beautiful girl with curly blond hair. She didn't remember her last name, but she knew that she had perished in the *Stutthof* concentration camp in 1945, toward the end of the war.

(Continued on page 13)

THE FORGOTTEN HAVEN: THE KENT CAMP THAT SAVED 4,000 GERMAN JEWS



It is a near-forgotten chapter in 20th-century history: the rescue of thousands of Jewish men from the Nazis, brought to a camp on the outskirts of the medieval town of *Sandwich* in Kent as darkness fell across Europe.

The Kitchener Camp rescue began in February 1939, and by the time war broke out seven months later about 4,000 men — mainly German and Austrian Jews — had arrived by train and boat. Although the story of the 10,000 Jewish children brought to the UK on the *Kindertransport* is well known, the Kitchener Camp has received much less attention.

"It's not even well known in [UK] Jewish communities," said Clare Weissenberg, an exhibition curator at the Jewish Museum in London.

On September 2, a blue plaque was unveiled in *Sandwich* in the presence of descendants of the rescued men, as well as the son and daughter of two Jewish philanthropist brothers who ran the camp.

Among those present was Paul Secher, whose father, Otto, arrived in May 1939.

"My father didn't talk about it very much," said Secher. "I sensed it was a painful subject for him. He managed to escape, but his parents and a sister didn't. The burden must have been immense."

After the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in November 1938, when Jews and their property were violently attacked, about 30,000 Jewish men were rounded up and taken to *Dachau*, *Sachsenhausen* and *Buchenwald* concentration camps.

The Central British Fund (CBF), a Jewish aid organization in the UK now known as World Jewish Relief, persuaded the British government to admit some refugees. Adult men were brought to the UK on condition they would not be granted UK citizenship, they must not work, and they must emigrate onward to the US, Australia and elsewhere.

The CBF organized transport and rented a derelict army base at *Richborough*, near *Sandwich*, to house the men. Their first task was to transform the site into a small town. They built or refurbished 42 accommodation huts, shower and toilet blocks, two synagogues, a medical clinic, a post office and shops. A 1,000-seat cinema was constructed with money donated by Oscar Deutsch, the founder of the Odeon chain.

The men were not interned; they could request a pass to leave the camp. They played football against local teams, they visited nearby

beaches, and some illicitly worked for cash on Kent farms. Nine editions of a newsletter, the *Kitchener Camp Review*, were published.

At the time, the population of *Sandwich* was 3,500. The arrival of 4,000 refugees could have been overwhelming, but they were largely welcomed. Hundreds of people attended concerts performed by refugee musicians, and local children visited the camp to play table tennis.

The men expected their families — parents, siblings, wives and children — to follow them to the UK. Some women were granted "domestic service visas" enabling them to escape the Nazis, but arrivals abruptly ended with the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939.

Nearly all Kitchener men were categorized in tribunals as "friendly aliens," with the words "refugee from Nazi oppression" stamped on their papers. "Enemy aliens" were interned.

After the start of the war, 887 Kitchener men enlisted in the Pioneer Corps. But after the *Dunkirk* evacuation in May 1940, public opinion turned against German-speaking refugees, whom some suspected of being spies or saboteurs. Those not serving in the war effort were interned or deported to Australia and Canada. The Kitchener Camp was closed.

Weissenberg began investigating the camp's history after she "inherited [my father's] German suitcase. I saw references to the Kitchener Camp and thought, 'What on earth is that?'"

She set up a website and began collecting stories and memorabilia from descendants of Kitchener men. "Often they hadn't talked about it. Many of the men lost wives, children, parents — survivor guilt is a huge thing. Many families didn't know much about the history," she said. "As a child [of Holocaust survivors], you knew ... not to ask, almost to protect your parent."

An exception was Lothar Nelken, who had been a judge in Germany before being stripped of his position under the *Nuremberg* Laws and interned in *Buchenwald* concentration camp. "He wrote a diary throughout the war. I grew up

knowing about his experiences in *Buchenwald*. He never kept secrets, he shared his memories," said his son, Stephen.

On Thursday, July 13, 1939, Lothar Nelken wrote: "At around 9 pm we arrived in the camp.... We were welcomed with jubilation. After supper we were taken to our huts; Hut 37/II. I chose an upper bunk. One hut sleeps 36 men. The beds are surprisingly good. One sleeps as if in a cradle."

In 1973, Clare Ungerson discovered a plaque in *Sandwich*, "but the wording was very strange, referring to refugees from Nazi oppression." The daughter of a German Jewish refugee, Ungerson "realized it must refer to Jews, but I'd never heard of this camp."



A quartet practicing. Refugee musicians gave concerts for the locals.

After she retired, she researched and wrote a book, *Four Thousand Lives*. In terms of the terrible history of the time, the *Kitchener Camp* may be a small detail, she said, "but it's not small to the many descendants of Kitchener men, who would not exist if those men hadn't been rescued."

BY HARRIET SHERWOOD, *The Guardian*

HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR'S BOOK REVEALS HORRIFYING REALITY OF "PRIVILEGED" FAMILY CAMP

A book that recounts the horrors of the Nazis' Family Camp and its Children's Block at Auschwitz-Birkenau — including rapes, floggings and being shot for going to the toilet — has been published to a wider audience for the first time.

The Children's Block, originally published in Czech as a book called *The Painted Wall* in 1993, tells the true story of 500 Jewish children held in special areas of the Nazi death camps constructed to deceive the Red Cross about horrifying conditions for Czech families captured by the Germans.

Although fictional, it was written by survivor Otto B. Kraus, who served as a child counselor in the Family Camp, which existed from September 1943 to December 1944, and documents largely autobiographical experiences.

Kraus' account offers distressing insights into how the young inhabitants suffered, despite them being labeled as "SB," *Sonderbehandlung* ("special treatment") — part of a ploy to fool the Red Cross Commission, which was permitted to visit the ghetto-turned-concentration-camp, *Terezín*, in former Czechoslovakia, home country of many of the families.

The Jewish residents of *Terezín* were kept in healthier conditions to mask the reality of Nazi cruelty.

When it became too full, inhabitants would be sent to the Family Camp and its Children's Block at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The camps served to disprove that Jews were being exterminated at the Nazi camp — and the reason why the prisoners appeared to be getting treated more favorably was only discovered at World War II's end.



A child's drawing found in the concentration camp at *Terezín*. It was drawn by Margit Koretzova, who died aged nine on October 4, 1944, and was part of the Germans' attempt to mask the atrocities they were carrying out.

The first *Terezín* residents to arrive at Auschwitz-Birkenau got to keep their old clothes — not the striped uniform most were forced to wear; their heads weren't shaved and they received better meals. Children would spend time in the Children's Block in the day and return to the Family Camp in the evening.

In reality, the children would be brutally killed — in the gas chambers — six months after the day of their arrival in the camp. In total, more than 17,500 Jews entered the Family Camp, with more than 15,000 perishing from execution, disease or hunger.

The characters that Kraus, who died in 2000, created represent people he met while there, with the narrative based on the diary of fictitious Children's Block teacher Alex Ehren, who shields the children he encounters from the terror around them.

The book's foreword was written by Kraus' librarian wife Dita, whose real-life story was the basis for Antonio Iturbe's best-selling book *The Librarian of Auschwitz*.

She explains how a friend of Kraus', also an instructor on the Children's Block, urged him to write about their experiences, saying: "There was nothing like it in the entire Nazi machinery of the extermination of the Jews."

During his research, Kraus discovered that more of the adults who worked on the Children's Block remained alive than of those who were sent to other camps, coming to the conclusion that it was the sense of duty they felt toward the children that motivated them to stay alive.

The book evokes the terror and ultra-violence Jewish prisoners were subjected to in the camps. Kraus depicts harrowing scenes based on true stories.

Upon arriving at the camp, Alex is horrified to discover that SS guards would shoot Jewish people who needed the toilet if they strayed from the group they were in to empty their bladder.

A couple caught being intimate was flogged in front of all prisoners, a scene which is witnessed by the children in the book. And Kraus reveals that mothers of children in the block, and many other women, were raped on a nightly basis by other prisoners.

The novel's main protagonist, Alex, comes from the *Terezín* ghetto, as Kraus did. A poet, he gets enrolled as a worker in the Children's Block after his deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau in December 1943.

The story sees him in charge of eight unruly children, boys and girls, from dawn until dusk.

"Teachers" were actually forbidden to teach the children, Kraus explains, but says they would find a way to educate clandestinely from the SS guards.



Archive photo showing children arriving at Auschwitz with their mothers.

When he's not handling the children, making sure they shower, get fed and answer roll call, Alex dreams of an uprising and fleeing the horrors of the camp.

The children in the Family Camp were not told about the "chimney" or death, and lived relatively sheltered from the horrifying scenes of the camp. The "school" of the Children's Block seemed completely different from the usual representation of concentration camps.

Unlike the French or German children or Jewish children from other countries, the Czech children could play, visit their parents, and put on shows attended by SS officers.

They also had stronger rations of food, while many around them died of starvation. Possessions looted from death prisoners, while they mainly went to the SS, were also sometimes given to the Children's Block.

Yet six months after their arrival at Auschwitz, each cohort would be exterminated.

The first group of *Terezín* residents sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, 3,800 people, died in the night between March 7 and 8, 1944, and the second contingent, of more than 10,000, on the July 11 and 12, 1944.

A further 2,750 inmates were sent to Germany and, of these, only 1,167 were still alive in various slave-labor camps at the end of the war.

The Family Camp had a survival rate of about 6.6 percent, according to Kraus' research, but, astonishingly, most of the adults who worked on the Children's Block survived.

BY CLAIRE TOUREILLE, Mailonline

THE REMARKABLE STORY OF “SHTILER, SHTILER”

(Continued from page 10)

In 2001, director Racheli Schwartz went to Vilnius to gather material for her documentary *Ponar*, which followed Gavish’s research and was dedicated to “Quiet, Quiet” and its composer, Alek — Alexander Tamir. The film reaches a climax with a moving tribute in the very same theater hall almost six decades after the song came into being. The performance included three renderings of the song: an artistic reading by Sima Skurkowitz, who was an actress and singer in the ghetto; a Yiddish performance by a student at the local Jewish school, about the age of Wolkowyski-Tamir when he composed the song; and a Hebrew rendition by Meital Trabelsi, accompanied by the composer, who had returned to his hometown for the first time. It was there that Nehamka Rahav spoke about the performance back in 1943. Her words indicate that the experience was utterly cathartic:

“Mirele, a tiny little girl, goes up to the stage. And when she starts singing — her voice sounds like bells — everybody begins to cry. Not hysterically, not wailing — their sobbing was terrible but silent, out of the depths. It was perhaps the first time people there had let themselves express what they had been feeling for a year and a half. I didn’t cry when they took my father away and murdered him in *Ponar*. I didn’t cry, not once. But that day I cried too, and my tears kept falling, and Mirele stood there, singing — that’s something I’ve never wanted to forget.”

The song concludes with the mother’s words of hope to her child:

Let the wellspring calmly flow,
You be still and hope:
Papa will return with freedom,
Sleep, my child, oh sleep.
Like the Viliya — liberated,
The trees renewed in green,
Freedom’s light will soon shine
Upon your face,
Upon your face.

Among the 37 songs gathered by Kaczerginski after the war in the anthology *Dos gezang fun vilner geto* (*Songs of the Vilna Ghetto*), almost all of them written in the ghetto, there is no other song that contains such reference to *Ponar*. The enchanting melody must have done its part, too: in Tzila Dagan’s gentle, serene voice in Hebrew, as in the thunderous, pompous performance of Sidor Belarsky in Yiddish, this melody still enchants today, as the song is one of only a handful written during the war that are performed in Israel’s national Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremonies.

In the spring of 1946, “Shtiler, Shtiler” was published in the journal for Jewish ethnography *Reshumot*. The publication was accompanied by biographical details about the poet, Kaczerginski, including his activities during the war. The editors could even say that “the melody was written by the youngest among the Jewish composers in the ghetto, an eight-year-old boy, Dr. Wolkowyski’s son, and it is rumored that he is now in Eretz Israel.”

The rumor was true. After the liquidation of the ghetto in September 1943, young Alek was sent to a labor camp in Estonia, where his father served as a camp doctor. As the Soviets approached, a *Selektion* was conducted, in which the two were separated: His father was killed. Alek was sent to another camp, and from there to yet another, where he managed to survive until he was liberated by the French army in April 1945, at the age of 14. A few months later he emigrated to what would soon become Israel and reunited with his surviving relatives.

In the early 1950s he studied at the Jerusalem Academy of Music, where he later became a professor, and in 1955 he joined Bracha Eden in the creation of a classical piano duo, which performed for 50 years. Alek Wolkowyski,

the little boy who composed a song for a contest in the midst of all the horror and succeeded beyond anyone’s expectations, became Alexander



Tamir with his musical partner, Bracha Eden.

Tamir, the famous Israeli concert pianist. In 1968, the duo founded the Targ (now the Eden-Tamir) Music Center in Ein Karem, Jerusalem, where Tamir still lives.

The hope expressed in the song was eventually realized, but only on a tiny scale. By the time Vilna was finally liberated, the vast majority of the Jewish community — not only those in the “Jerusalem of Lithuania” but in all of Lithuania — had been decimated; out of over 200,000 Jews who had remained in the country under German occupation, only 5% — 1 in 20 — survived, as did 12,000 more who had been deported or escaped to the Soviet Union. About 70,000 Jews were killed in *Ponar* alone; the Nazis didn’t plant any graves there, but rather made every effort to hide their deeds. Tamir’s father, like most fathers — and mothers, and children — never came back.

BY AVIAD TE’ENI, *Tablet Magazine*

MOST GERMANS KNEW HOLOCAUST WAS HAPPENING

A “vanishingly small number” of Germans were unaware the Holocaust was going on during World War II, say the makers of a chilling new documentary.

The acclaimed British director Luke Holland interviewed more than 300 elderly Germans and Austrians, including many former SS members, for *Final Account*.

Holland, who died in June, spent more than a decade befriending former Nazis and persuading them to talk about what they knew for his monumental work.

Producer Sam Pope said Holland was able to gather the remarkable testimony because he spent years gaining the trust of his subjects.

While many struggled with their consciences, others were unrepentant and proud of serving in the SS “where you could rely on every man 100 percent.”

Others denied the Holocaust while openly ad-

mitting they knew about massacres. “Don’t blame Hitler,” one said. “The idea was correct... [but the Jews] should have been driven out of the country” rather than killed.

But Pope said the interviews with noncombatants, particularly women, gave the lie to the idea that few ordinary people in Germany and Austria knew what was going on.

“A common refrain was that it was after the war that we learned of these horrible crimes,” the producer told reporters.

“In the process of these interviews, I think that as a possibility becomes vanishingly small.

“Even if you weren’t there or didn’t participate, you knew someone, or had heard a rumor. Your brother who was a soldier came home and told you stories,” said Pope.

Yet one of the film’s most chilling scenes comes from modern Germany, when an elderly former SS soldier is shouted down by young

neo-Nazis for making them feel “ashamed to be German” by talking about his guilt.

The long emotional exchange happens around the table in Wannsee House, the stately home in a Berlin suburb where the Final Solution was drawn up.

In his epigraph for the film, Holland — whose mother’s family perished in the Holocaust — refused to damn his subjects, most of whom were in their 90s.

“Perpetrators are not born, they are made,” he wrote.

Yet he did not pull away from asking the hard questions of men and women he had befriended.

Co-producer Riete Oord said it was clear many knew exactly what was going on “but they repressed it. There is a guy who says, ‘If 99 people in front of me thought it was OK to slaughter Jews, I would go with it too.’ The abnormal becomes very normal in such circumstances.”

THE ACT OF KINDNESS

The Germans invaded Poland in 1939. I was 14 years old at the time. Shortly after the invasion, I and several other young boys were selected by the Nazis to work on the roads. The work of repairing the roads was physically very demanding. We would gather every morning at the synagogue, at which time the German soldiers in charge would give us each one piece of bread for the day. We were then taken to the area in which we were working.

I worked on the roads for about two years. I don't remember exactly how it happened, but at one point I was taken from the road work and given the task of chopping wood and building the kitchen fires for the kettles. This kitchen served as a food preparation center for the Nazis, who were constructing Hitler's bunker in *Stempina*. The structure which was to become the bunker had, coincidentally, been my father's childhood home. There were other workers in the kitchen, primarily Poles who had been forced into labor. They did general kitchen work, including peeling potatoes.

Each night I was permitted to go home to my family. Needless to say, times were very difficult and food was very scarce.

One day I was coming into the kitchen holding a bucket filled with coal and firewood. In the kitchen there was a beautiful German woman I had not seen before. She was there, I imagine, looking for her husband, who, I learned, was a

high-ranking officer. She looked at me, seemed pensive for a moment, and then reached and grabbed two loaves of bread from the shelf and furtively put them in the bucket, an act for which, if caught, she would have faced grave consequences.

I brought the bread home to the great delight of my father, brothers and stepmother. Bread was a delicacy which my family had not eaten for several years.

During the course of the next day I again came into the kitchen with the bucket, and again found the officer's wife there. She once more put two loaves of bread in the bucket. Have you any idea of the value of four loaves of bread at that time?

I continued to work for a short while longer in the kitchen, but times were getting more difficult for the Jews, and there was talk of the Nazis coming to our town and liquidating the remaining Jews. I escaped to the forest and joined a small resistance group. The Nazis were intent on eliminating this small partisan group, and I ultimately found refuge with a Polish family.

I survived the Holocaust, and in 1946 after liberation and the end of the war, I and several of a group of survivors went to *Munich*, Germany, and planned to celebrate our survival. The party was to be held in a local hotel. When I got to the hotel I went into the dining room, which was filled with perhaps as many as 200 men and one woman. She was sitting alone in a booth. Something about her seemed famil-

iar. I passed her and took a look at her face. This was the very same woman who, several years earlier at a time of desperation and need, had given me four loaves of bread. I sat down at a table, called over the waiter and pointed to the woman, saying, "Give her the best meal money can buy. I will pay for it!" He brought her the food and she said in surprise, "I did not order this meal and I cannot pay for it."

The waiter informed her that the tab was being covered by a gentleman in the restaurant. When she finished the meal I approached her. She asked if I had paid for the meal, to which I replied "Yes." She questioned why I had paid for it since we had never met. I responded, "Oh yes. We have met. Do you remember the *shtetl* of *Frysztak*?" "Yes," she answered. "Do you remember a young boy of 16 to whom you gave four loaves of bread?" Yes, she remembered.

It was now 1946, the Nazis and German army had been defeated, and the Allies were seeking former Nazis in order to bring them to trial for their heinous deeds. Times were now, needless to say, very difficult for former Nazis and their families. I, however, remembered what she had done, and wanted to help her. I asked for her address, intending to send her food. She gave me an address, but it proved to be incorrect. Perhaps she feared I would inform the Allies. In any case, I never saw her again. It is now 78 years later, and I vividly remember her act of kindness shown during a time of unprecedented horror.

BY AARON APPELBAUM
Recorded by Goldie Apfelbaum Librach



THE INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY OF CORRIE TEN BOOM

In Jewish culture, we believe that only a very few, the most virtuous of all, have the distinction of passing through the "gateway to the Lord" while still in this world. Similarly, very few endangered their lives in order to save persecuted Jews during the Holocaust.

The ten Boom family — Corrie, her father Casper and her sister Elisabeth — are certainly deserving of this privilege. In their honor, a tree was planted in Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, when they were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations. This is why I'm very happy that the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., has created a special exhibit this summer to honor Corrie ten Boom.

She and her family, believers, were spots of light in the thick darkness that descended on Europe and North Africa as the fist of the Nazis and their collaborators sought to annihilate the Jews.

Corrie had been taught by her father from an

early age to cleave to the Bible and to recognize the special position of the Jewish people. When the Nazis invaded the Netherlands and began their oppression of the Jews, with the ultimate intention of sending them to the death camps, the ten Booms sought to provide a refuge for persecuted Jews. Their courage and sense of virtue saved many Jews, including numerous children.

Corrie and her family, motivated by the obligations of their religious belief and their sense of conscience, offered protection to the victimized Jews, who, for them, were the chosen people.

It is these people the prophet Malachi was referring to when he wrote: "In this vein have those who revere the Lord been talking to one another. The Lord has heard and noted it, and a scroll of remembrance has been written at His behest concerning those who revere the Lord and esteem His name."

The ten Boom family put their faith in the Lord, helped many Jews reach safety, and were ulti-

mately arrested and imprisoned for their efforts. Corrie may have survived her time in the *Ravensbruck* concentration camp only because she was released because of a clerical error — the other women her age were sent to the gas chambers. She lived to old age, dying in the early 1980s.

Yad Vashem has recorded their actions and recognized them as Righteous Among the Nations. The tree that was planted in their name will continue to tell the story of Corrie ten Boom and her family for the generations to come.

I hope many Jews and Christians will pass through the gates of the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., as thousands do each year at Yad Vashem in Israel, to learn a story we must remember so that we can tell it to our children, and to their children, for generations.

BY SHAYA BEN-YEHUDA,
Washington Examiner

WHEN DUTCH JEWS FOUND HAVEN IN AN ANTI-SEMITIC HUNGARY

When her classmates were sent from occupied Holland to death camps, Emmy Korodi and her Dutch Jewish family were safe in Hungary — one of Nazi Germany's closest allies.

Her family were among some 90 Jews who, at the height of World War II, survived for the

less, Horthy was a hardened anti-Semite whose policies of exclusion earned Hungary its reputation as one of Europe's most anti-Semitic nations. Years before the Nazis' rise to power, Hungary under him became the first European country to implement a quota on Jews in higher education and some professions.

His policies led thousands of Jews to leave Hungary — including for Holland. One of them was Korodi's father, a retired army officer who set up a business selling dentures in the Netherlands.

"When he came to Holland he saw it's a lovely place; there was no anti-Semitism and after World War I he moved here," Korodi said of her father.

"Horthy protected the interests of all Hungarians living abroad — even the Jews," said Willy Lindwer, the filmmaker. A "convinced anti-Semite," Horthy's

replacement with the Nazi puppet government of Ferenc Szalasi of the Fascist Arrow Cross movement again threatened the survival of some 360,000 Jews who were then living in Budapest. Notorious for their thirst for Jewish blood, Szalasi's men murdered thousands of Jews in Budapest.

Emmy Korodi in 1944 very nearly became one of the victims of the Arrow Cross, who would mutilate Jews on the street and shoot them in groups on the banks of the Danube river.

Running errands for her family because she was blonde and did not look stereotypically Jewish, she was nonetheless arrested by the dreaded Arrow Cross, who said she had escaped the ghetto.

Normally, any person facing the accusation would be immediately killed.

Korodi remembers seeing the bodies of an entire Jewish family who had been shot by Arrow Cross militiamen and then propped up on a park bench, either as a perverse joke or an attempt to terrorize other victims.

Yet she and many of the Dutch refugees were able to survive even that purge thanks to another twist in their fateful story: they obtained life-sav-



A Jewish family reunited in Budapest in 1943 following the arrival there of family members from Holland.

unlikeliest reasons: They fled the Germans and local police in the Netherlands — a country that many people credit for its population's efforts to save Jews — and found safety in Hungary, a perceived perpetrator nation of the Holocaust.

The story of the Dutch Jewish refugees in Hungary was told for the first time in a documentary titled *The Train Journey* by the award-winning Dutch-Israeli filmmaker Willy Lindwer.

Coming amid new revelations about Europe's Holocaust-era record, the film's story highlights in a striking manner the complexity and ambiguity of the Holocaust in countries with checkered histories.

"Compared to life in Holland, life in Budapest was fantastic," Korodi, a Holocaust survivor who was a child when her family fled to Hungary in 1942, said in the documentary. "We could go out, there was a wonderful swimming pool between Buda and Pest with hot springs. You'd see there men playing chess in the water."

Holland's collaborationist police force left the Korodis alone in Holland and later allowed them to come to Hungary because they were Hungarian citizens under the active protection of Hungary's pro-Nazi government under Miklos Horthy. Hungarian Jews in Holland were even exempted from wearing the yellow star.

The murder of Hungarian Jewry began in earnest in May 1944, under Horthy. Between May 15 and July 9, about 430,000 Hungarian Jews were deported, though not from Budapest.

Horthy defended the vast majority of Budapest's Jews from being murdered. Neverthe-

"nationalist feelings were nevertheless stronger," Lindwer added.

Meanwhile in the Netherlands, a democracy whose relative tolerance had drawn Emmy Korodi's father to settle there before the Germans occupied it in 1940, local police and volunteers were hunting for Jews — including Hungarian ones.

In 1942, Korodi recalls Dutch police arresting her and her father briefly — until her mother got them freed on account of their Hungarian citizenship.

As the Netherlands became increasingly dangerous for the Hungarian Jews, their government told them it could no longer vouch for their safety in Holland and arranged special trains to bring them back.

Hungarian Jewish men, including the ones who returned from Holland, were drafted to special labor units supervised by police and the military. Many died from the grueling conditions suffered by those drafted. Anyone caught dodging the draft would be summarily shot, sometimes with their relatives.

But at least their children and wives were safe.

Living in Hungary also meant more and better food than in the Netherlands, where some 22,000 people died of famine during World War II.

"We were extremely happy because there was food [in Budapest]," said Vera Gyergyoi-Rudnai, another person who survived the Holocaust by fleeing from Holland to Hungary.

But the overthrow of Horthy in 1944 and his



Anki Tauber is among 73 Jews from Holland who survived the Holocaust in pro-Nazi Hungary.

ing documents from Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat who saved tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews by issuing them visas of sorts to Sweden.

"I let them see the Wallenberg papers and they let me go," Korodi recalls in the documentary.

Of the 89 Jews who fled Holland to Hungary, 73 survived World War II.

None of them remained in Hungary.

To Lindwer, the story of the 89 Jews who fled Holland to Hungary illustrates how the "sheer complexity and unpredictability" of the Holocaust "defies both sweeping generalizations and popular perceptions," he said.

BY CNAAN LIPHSHIZ, JTA



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,
Director of Planned Giving at ASYV, who can be reached at:
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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