

# MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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## WITHOUT A TRACE: THE OBLIGATION OF MEMORY

BARBARA GUTFREUND ARFA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE ON HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

The Education Department of the American Society for Yad Vashem held its twenty-fourth annual professional development conference on Holocaust education on March 27, 2022. This year's program was generously supported by the Barbara Gutfreund Arfa Endowment Fund for Holocaust Education.

Our theme this year, *Without a Trace: The Obligation of Memory*, represents an opportunity to reflect on our obligations to honor the memory of Holocaust victims, to preserve the factual record of the Holocaust through education, and to make this history relevant decades later.

This program is a collaborative effort with the Association of Teachers of Social Studies/United Federation of Teachers, the UFT Jewish Heritage Committee, the Educators' Chapter of the Jewish Labor Committee, and the School of Education of Manhattanville College. Participants in this year's program included educators from five countries across the globe and fifteen states nationwide.

Our program aims to teach about the consequences of extreme and baseless hatred and prejudice. We educate to promote tolerance in the hope that through our efforts, future generations will make sure that the Holocaust, a low chapter in human history, will not repeat itself. This conference, organized by Marlene W. Yahalom, Director of Education of the American So-

ciety, has proven to be a strong vehicle to promote the mission of Holocaust remembrance and memory through education

Holocaust survivors; a future without Holocaust survivors; time constraints on educators for required subjects in their curricula; and the challenges of Holocaust denial and rising tides of anti-Semitism — just to name a few.

In times of unprecedented challenges due to the pandemic, we continue to carry the torch of remembrance through education and convey to the world the survival, resilience and strength of the Jews before, during and after the Holocaust. It is through education and the educational pedagogy developed by Yad Vashem that we sustain this mission and transmit the lessons of the Holocaust to present and future generations.

We want to highlight the best of humanity when the worst was there. By restoring a human face to the victim, we can underscore the resilience of the Jewish people and their ultimate survival.

We continue to consider what was lost and how Jews survived. The courage and resilience of Jews during the Holocaust must be identified and promoted. It is also critical to address the rising tides of anti-Semitism and the efforts of Holocaust deniers to muffle these important messages and facts.

We have the additional obligation of transmitting the lessons from this event for present and future generations with a directive to educators in all educational settings.

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Women and children on the Birkenau arrival platform known as the "ramp." The Jews were removed from the deportation trains onto the ramp, where they faced a selection process — most of them were sent immediately to their deaths, while others were sent to slave labor. Photo from the *Auschwitz Album*.

over the years. The conference was created by Caroline Massel, Executive Board member and chair of the Education Committee of the American Society for Yad Vashem, in 1999.

While identifying opportunities to reach a broader audience, we successfully connected with educators across the nation to broaden our reach and empower more teachers to share our mission of Holocaust remembrance with greater ease, thanks to the variety of remote platforms available.

It is important to recognize that there are many aspects of Holocaust education that did not change despite the multiple obstacles of pivoting to Zoom and remote format. We still face the same challenges. These challenges include the relevance of the Holocaust; the shrinking population of



# HOLOCAUST DENIAL AND DISTORTION: WHICH IS A GREATER THREAT?

Let's start with the good news: Though Holocaust denial does persist in America and around the world, it has been largely marginalized. Outright Holocaust denial was indeed once a major issue; however, various developments led to its marginalization in much of the world.

But what still runs rampant is a dangerous cousin of Holocaust denial: Holocaust distortion. We need to understand it well if we're to confront it effectively.

Distorters of the Holocaust, unlike deniers, concede that the Holocaust took place, but fabricate historical narratives about the *Shoah* that go far beyond the margins of reasonable historical discourse and are mostly, if not totally, false. These narratives are meant to serve problematic contemporary agendas. Holocaust distortion is dangerous because it distorts essential facts of history in order to legitimize past and present misdeeds.

Although distorters manipulate facts or invent them and twist or omit important contexts, their narratives often gain popular support. This is because some of their arguments are at least partially fact based and because they sometimes display a minimum of internal logic, despite their false assertions. The distorted narratives gain credence among a public that knows less and less about the historical period, or when the narratives being promoted align with preexisting prejudices.

In other words, it is distortion's veneer of "factuality" that allows distorters to use their narratives to promote their agendas.

Several themes, often interlinked, have emerged most prominently in the discourse of Holocaust distorters.

Particularly, though not exclusively, in post-Communist countries, a form of "national rebranding" has been underway since the fall of the Iron Curtain in the early 1990s. One of the prime expressions of such collective self-whitewashing is the redefinition of one's nation as a heroic community of anti-Nazi resisters and altruistic rescuers of Jews during World War II.

The distorters rely on the fact that there were indeed some instances of rescue and resistance in their countries. They not only greatly inflate both of these positive phe-

nomena; they also downplay the role that many of their citizens, leaders and institutions played in the murderous persecution of their Jewish citizens. Let me be clear: The vast extent of the Holocaust's atrocities would not have been possible without the collaboration of local authorities and numerous non-Jewish individuals in the countries aligned with or occupied by Nazi Germany.

Attempts by governments to "legislate" historical narratives in order to serve various interests are not new, but they have come to the fore increasingly of late, with some designed primarily to promote distorted Holocaust narratives. Laws in certain countries now criminalize the supposed "tarnishing of national honor" engendered by the citation of local collaboration with



An entrance gate at the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau is pictured in Oswiecim, Poland. The sign over the gate reads "work makes one free."

the Nazis in the persecution and murder of Jews. Various regimes now glorify historical figures as patriotic heroes, despite their participation in the persecution and murder of their Jewish neighbors.

As a result, accomplished historians in some places have been delegitimized and even have faced judicial proceedings. University students in such societies have become increasingly reluctant to engage in Holocaust studies, which could both prove problematic to their future careers and even raise the specter of prosecution. Moreover, the authorities' message has been sent to the wider public that the murder and persecution of the Jews was not

and is not "our" responsibility, nor do they disqualify someone from being admired as a national hero. The distorted promotion of such profoundly flawed characters as role models portends nothing good for the future of these nations.

## HOW CAN WE FIGHT HOLOCAUST DISTORTION?

We have recently witnessed, and welcomed, the commitments of world leaders who attended the Fifth World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem and the Malmo International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism, as well as other global conferences dedicated to remembering the Holocaust accurately and to fighting anti-Semitism. With the approach of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, and as many around the world turn their attention to the legacy of the *Shoah*, the international community must redouble its efforts to expand and support unfettered and fact-based Holocaust research and education.

It must be understood that Holocaust remembrance carries substantial relevance to other vital issues, such as genocide and other atrocities, as well as human rights, and that it may be compared and con-

trasted to them in order to gain valuable perspectives and insights. Nevertheless, it will always be crucial to relate to the *Shoah* as a unique and unprecedented event. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive, but need to be carefully considered.

We must remember and honor all the Jewish men, women and children who were murdered in ghettos, concentration and extermination camps, or killing sites, having been starved, enslaved and ultimately slaughtered by the Nazis.

No less important, the actions of all who committed such crimes or were complicit in them must be recorded, and they must be held accountable. Furthermore, recognizing the centrality of anti-Semitism to the Holocaust is critical to confronting anti-Semitism today and tomorrow.

Remembering the Holocaust correctly to prevent future crimes against humanity means rejecting not only outright denial but also devious distortion of what actually took place.

BY DANI DAYAN,  
Chairman of Yad Vashem, the World  
Holocaust Remembrance Center

# DANA SHAKARCHY, NEW TRISTATE REGIONAL DIRECTOR

The American Society for Yad Vashem is proud to announce the appointment of Dana Shakarchy as its new Tristate Regional Director. Dana joins with extensive experience from the Jewish communal world, focused primarily on resource development and community engagement. Her most recent role was at Tikkun Olam Makers (Reut USA) in the position of Director of Community Engagement, where she oversaw an extensive portfolio of foundation, sponsorship and individual giving and built strategic new partnerships with a wide array of stakeholders.

Dana’s prior work experience reads as a Who’s Who in the Jewish not-for-profit world. She has held leadership positions at JFNA (Jewish Federations of North America), BBYO, the American Zionist Movement and the Jewish National Fund. At many of these organizations, Dana was

responsible for developing and stewarding young leaders, which positions her well for



some of the work she will be doing with ASYV’s Young Leadership Associates.

Dana feels connected to the message of driving a future generation that is committed to humanity and feels empowered. “I think the only way to do that is to understand our past and our history. It’s paving a way for a kinder future, and more specif-

ically, a secure Jewish future,” Dana said.

Dana also finds inspiration in the work she will be doing at the American Society for Yad Vashem because of her belief in the power of resiliency. As we see survivors and their children and grandchildren integrating their families’ stories and loss into their lives, that contributes to the incredible generational resiliency of the Jewish people. As Dana puts it, “bridging the past and present to create a better future is something that at ASYV, we get to not only witness but be a part of, and that’s just one of the many reasons why I’m so excited about this opportunity.”

Dana is certified in life coaching as well as holistic health and wellness, and has served for many years as a Taglit-Birthright Israel educator and leader. Dana is a proud graduate of York College of Pennsylvania and currently resides on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

# WITHOUT A TRACE: THE OBLIGATION OF MEMORY

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To lay the groundwork for today’s speaker and workshop moderator, Dr. Yahalom reviewed the educational strategy developed by Yad Vashem to study the Holocaust and its connection to Yad Vashem as an institution.

This strategy begins with the understanding that we need to go beyond the raw statistics of the Holocaust to learn from and teach about this event.

The human story is at center stage, so we study the event as a human narrative and put a face to each victim. The goal is to present Jewish people as human beings with discernable identities. By learning about each victim — their names, their homes, their journeys and their fates — the human face of the victim, and subsequently of the community, is restored, remembered and commemorated.

In thinking about the obligation of memory, the program focused on two concrete reminders: the railway or cattle car — the principal mode of deportation used by the Nazis to uproot millions of Jews from their homes and deport them to death camps — and photographs, through the *Auschwitz Album*.

We were privileged to have Professor Yehuda Bauer, Israel Prize laureate, academic advisor to Yad Vashem, and honorary chairman of the International Holocaust Remembrance Al-

liance (to name a few), as our keynote speaker in his presentation entitled *Reflections on Transports to Extinction*, and to learn more about how the Nazis turned Europe’s transportation system to the service of Nazi Germany’s genocidal plans.

Professor Bauer enriched our understanding about the topic of transports and railway cars, and directed us to question what we can learn from thinking about the ease with which the transportation system was organized to deport Jews to their deaths during the Holocaust. His remarks shed light on the need to consider the contribution of factors from many levels that resulted in the success of this seemingly innocent effort.

We also learned from Lori Gerson, educational coordinator from the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem, on the value of photographs as historical evidence and as a tribute to Holocaust victims who perished. In her discussion of the *Auschwitz Album*, Lori explained the value of studying historical artifacts, the instructional value of using the *Auschwitz Album* in the classroom, and the need to supplement Holocaust survivor testimony to present a more complete picture of the information provided by the photographs in this album.

Keeping in mind the significance of our topic today, our conference connects the topic of Holocaust remembrance to our educational communities through the following considerations: presenting the

Holocaust as a topic that encourages critical thinking about ways to address and safeguard against Holocaust denial and distortion; keeping the subject relevant even as time distances us from the event; and appreciating the value of history as a way of sustaining Holocaust education.

The American Society for Yad Vashem received the 2015 President’s Award from the Association of Teachers of Social Studies/United Federation of Teachers for the Society’s contributions to social studies education nationally. This was the first time this award was given to an organization.

Dr. Yahalom also acknowledged the inspirational leadership of Adina Burian and Mark Moskowitz, co-chairs of the American Society, in defining how “through programs such as the Conference we can teach participants about the many themes to consider in this undertaking: the multifaceted contours of human behavior, the dangers of extreme and baseless hatred, the role of the Holocaust in public memory, the lives of the heroes and the victims, and the overarching challenge to make sure neither group is forgotten.”

Contact Marlene W. Yahalom, PhD, Director of Education — [mwy@yadvashe-musa.org](mailto:mwy@yadvashe-musa.org) — for more information about the American Society for Yad Vashem’s education work, outreach, traveling exhibits and professional development opportunities.



# THE JEWS WHO SURVIVED THE SHOAH WITH A FAKE IDENTITY

*In the previous issue of M&R (January/February) we presented a snapshot of the new exhibitions at Yad Vashem. In this article we take a closer look at one of them, titled “Remember Your New Name: Surviving the Holocaust under a False Identity.”*

As the Second World War raged, every night for months on end, Brenda Pluczenik would wake up her daughters and their cousin and ask them one question: “What is your name?”

Yona Kobo, the curator of a new online exhibition at Yad Vashem, is in no doubt. “You could not survive as yourself.”

In “Remember Your New Name: Surviving the Holocaust under a False Identity,” Yad Vashem looks for the first time at Jews who survived using fake documents.

Often, like Brenda and her family, they posed as Polish Christians and relied on

“It was a daily challenge,” says Kobo. “Sometimes people were pushed from one place to another because there were suspicions that they were Jews and the authorities were alerted.

“So people might have to leave in a second, abandoning all their belongings and having to find a new hiding place. Sometimes Jews paid for the fake papers, and sometimes they were betrayed. Other times they were helped and hidden. Each story is unique.”

So who was doing the forging and why? Again, this varied a great deal. Some of those providing fake papers were opportunists, black marketers who were making money out of the war and did a little casual forgery on the side.

Some were members of the local resistance, often helping to provide documents for Jews who had crossed borders and left their country of origin, because it was too

false papers — would be dragged into a side alley by local Poles and made to drop their trousers to see if they were circumcised. That, in turn, led to frequent attempts at extortion.

In some cases it was Jews who were saved by other Jews, those who had joined underground units and begun “a business,” supplying food coupons or forged identity papers to other Jews. “They would provide fake birth certificates or travel documents,” says Kobo. “That happened in many places.”

One man whose remarkable story is featured in the exhibition is Tony Gryn, a Polish-born would-be medical student who ended up running a forgery workshop in Paris.

He set up a Jewish underground rescue unit in the French capital in 1943, and, according to Yad Vashem, “he established a workshop for forging documents, and a network for them to reach thousands of Jews hiding in Paris and northern France.

“He organized liaisons, who sourced the forms and stamps crucial for the forging operation and obtained them at great personal risk.

“In the workshop... hundreds of stamps were replicated, and different documents were prepared according to names and ID details obtained from municipal offices....

“The forged documents produced included IDs, birth certificates, coupons for food, clothing and tobacco, release papers from the French Army, Disabled Army Veteran certificates, exemptions from forced labor, and marriage and death certificates.”

Gryn was later awarded the Légion d’Honneur for his wartime work.

Arye Mayer, a teenager who survived in Berlin under a false name — but without the vital paperwork — spent the war years “running from place to place, like mice, with his mother and sister,” according to Kobo. In the last place Arye and his family lived before liberation, he had been forced to join in with anti-Semitic denunciations and Hitler salutes.

Yona Kobo shrewdly says there was often a large element of luck, as well as grit and determination by the Jews. Charlotte (née Birnbaum) Weber, who lives today in Jerusalem, survived the war in an obscure village in Belgium, *Godinne sur Meuse*, together with her mother, her aunt, her brother and her grandparents.

Among the six individuals there were only two sets of fake identity papers, in the names of Charlotte’s mother, Hudes Birn-  
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The Birnbaum family.

the help of smugglers or the kindness of non-Jews, who were later named as Righteous Among the Nations.

The use of faked documents was not confined to one geographical area, says Kobo. “It was happening all over Europe and it was one of the ways for Jews to survive.

“But it was a route fit only for a few: you had to be familiar with the culture and the language, the customs and the prayers of non-Jews. It wasn’t enough to get false papers and then relax. You had to be smart and resilient, to ignore all traces of your Jewishness.”

In 14 separate stories of individuals and families, ranging from Belgium and the Netherlands to France and the heart of the Nazi machine itself, Berlin, Yad Vashem casts a spotlight on those who survived by pretending to be other than what they were.

dangerous for them to remain among the local population.

Polish-born Zygmund Fischab, for example, testified to Yad Vashem: “It was possible to obtain a forged ID card (*Kennkarte*) and a Catholic birth certificate with which to escape from the ghetto and live on Aryan papers.

“Jews and Poles would provide these false papers for a fee. Anyone with a ‘good’ appearance, who didn’t look Jewish... had a chance of survival. In general, self-confidence was required in order not to arouse suspicion in neighborhoods where Aryans lived.

“Poles known as ‘*Schmalzovnikim*’ roamed the streets. They had a nose for sniffing out Jews.”

It was particularly hard for Jewish men to evade such people. Often, said Zygmund Fishchab, Jews — even those with

# HITLER’S JEWISH REFUGEES

Hitler’s Jewish Refugees: Hope and Anxiety in Portugal.  
By Marion Kaplan. Yale University Press: New Haven, Connecticut, 2020. 356 pp. \$39.65 hardcover.

We consider them “lucky.” After all, most of these Jews never experienced the worst of Hitler and Nazism. Most were never crammed into ghettos. They were never in slave labor or death camps. But they, too, were Hitler’s innocent victims — losing everything but their lives. Thus, told with a tremendous amount of empathy, Marion Kaplan, in her book entitled *Hitler’s Jewish Refugees: Hope and Anxiety in Portugal*, closely documents the emotional journey of these Jews who escaped the Nazis only to end up in Portugal, outcast and homeless, stranded and waiting for some country to let them in. Theirs is a story of constant fear, sadness, and also a tenacious and indefatigable hope that kept them going from day to day, month to month, and, in some cases, year to year.

Indeed, fear dogged these thousands every step of the way. Some left their countries — like Germany and Austria — legally. Some left illegally. Some — usually those who left their native country between 1933 and 1939 — had the necessary and ever-growing paperwork with them. Some didn’t, especially those who came later. Some traveled on well made forged documents. Some weren’t so well made. All were terrified of border guards and having to show “papers.” Because of that last, many traveled by foot, smuggled over the Pyrenees into Portugal and Lisbon, the last port, certainly after the spring of 1940, with ships leaving Europe for the United States and Latin America. For Jewish refugees, Lisbon became the “port of last resort.”

Nor did fear leave them once they got to Portugal. While we read about how “hospitable” the Portuguese people were to these hapless and helpless refugees, Portuguese police didn’t have that same reputation. In fact, they were seen as “xenophobic, anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic [sic].” Overstaying your “allowed time”

in Portugal, which according to transit visas issued was generally thirty days, could land a refugee in jail or in a Portuguese village, called a “fixed residence,” far from Lisbon. And being put in a “fixed residence” made it exceptionally difficult to get to Lisbon consulates, fill out “required” and ever-changing paperwork and get that longed-for ship ticket — all while standing for hours on endless lines, waiting in consulate corridors, and making sure to time everything out just right such that visas didn’t run out and actually “coordinated” with ship departures. Finally, there was the refugee’s greatest fear of all: being deported!

Thankfully, along the way, some refugees met “exceptional” individuals like Portugal’s consul general in *Bordeaux*, Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Despite instructions to the contrary, he supplied thousands of Jews with visas, helping them leave France and find asylum in Portugal. Because of this, in later years “Israel awarded him the honored title Righteous Among the Nations.” Once refugees made

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# ISRAEL SEES HOLOCAUST TROPES IN COVID PROTESTS FUELING ANTI-SEMITISM

Protesters against COVID-19 measures who liken themselves to Jews under Nazi persecution are stoking global anti-Semitism, the Israeli government said in a report marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Such Holocaust tropes have become “widespread” and, along with violent demonstrations linked to Israel’s May war in Gaza, were main factors behind physical or online attacks on Jews in Europe and North America last year, said the 152-page report by the Diaspora Affairs Ministry.

Several U.S. and British politicians have in recent months apologized after suggesting that vaccine or lockdown policies recalled Hitler’s regime.

Some demonstrators against pandemic curbs have worn yellow stars like those the Nazis forced on European Jews.

Such displays showed that factual knowledge of the genocide was eroding, the report said, adding that some COVID-19 agitators have been “consuming and disseminating anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that Jews are responsible for the crisis and are using it for oppression, global domination, economic gain, etc.”

Expanding on the findings, Diaspora Affairs Minister Nachman Shai said Holocaust distortion or trivialization is itself



A protester in Rome, Italy, demonstrating against the Green Pass (health pass) plan, wears a World War II emblem depicting the star of David badge with a German word “Jude” (Jew). A health pass certificate has become mandatory to access an array of services and leisure activities.

anti-Semitic and can sometimes lead to actual endangerment of Jews.

“There are people so fraught with hate who can, when faced with such imagery, be tipped over into action,” he told Reuters.

The Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM), a U.S.-based nonprofit, said that in 2020 and 2021 it had found 63.7 million engagements — participation, sharing or “liking” — during online discussions linking the pandemic to the Holocaust.

Yad Vashem, Israel’s main Holocaust memorial, has urged world leaders to come out against such discourse — a call apparently heeded by U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who on Monday said the yellow star protests were “reprehensible.”

“COVID brought Holocaust trivialization to a summit,” said Yad Vashem chairman Dani Dayan. “Things like that, sometimes done by politicians, by public figures, are despicable, and Yad Vashem is very clear in demanding those persons retract.”

Former Israeli Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, whose parents and brother were among the six million Jews killed by the Nazis and who himself survived a concentration camp as a child, had a more personal appeal during a Reuters interview.

“Please leave the word ‘Holocaust’ for the Holocaust — and nothing but it,” he said.

BY DAN WILLIAMS, Reuters



# HER FAMILY SAVED HIM DURING THE HOLOCAUST. YEARS LATER, A CHANCE ENCOUNTER LED TO LOVE

Isaak Tartakovsky was at the post office in Ukraine in 1953 when he spotted a woman he immediately recognized.

Her name was Lidiya Savchuk, and her family had saved his life in German-occupied Ukraine during World War II by hiding his identity as a Jewish soldier in the Soviet army who escaped a German prison camp.

The pair were reunited after nine years of not knowing what happened to each other as the war came to an end. They immediately rekindled the bond they had formed when Lidiya's family risked their lives to help Isaak.

Soon after, "the story develops almost like it would be shown in Hollywood," the couple's son, Anatoly Tartakovsky, said in an interview with *USA Today*. He and his sister, Elena, recounted their family's story with their mother by their side to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Savchuk and her family are among the roughly 28,000 people recognized as the "Righteous Among the Nations," an honor awarded by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Israel, for non-Jews who risked their lives to aid Jews during the genocide.

"When they were presented with a situation that was really impossible, they didn't turn their head the other way. They did remarkable things," said Dani Dayan, chairman of Yad Vashem.

"When we talk about the Holocaust, there are not many happy endings to personal stories. Most end with death," Dayan said. "We should celebrate those occasions that are the opposite."

Isaak Tartakovsky grew up poor in the small town of *Volochysk* in Ukraine's Khmelnytskyi region, Anatoly and Elena said through an interpreter. His mother died when he was 5 years old. To escape the pogroms against Jews in the area, his father took the family to Kyiv. There, Tartakovsky began studying art but was drafted into the Soviet Army to fight in World War II.

Lidiya Savchuk grew up in *Vinnytsia*, and her family had many close Jewish friends, though they were not Jewish themselves. When the Nazis occupied Ukraine, her family feared for their safety but stayed in the city.

Savchuk's brother joined the Soviet mil-

itary, but as the war went on, the family knew nothing about where he was or whether he was alive.

Meanwhile, Isaak Tartakovsky was on the front lines and was captured by the Germans and taken to a concentration camp as a POW. Tartakovsky knew he could not reveal he was Jewish, Anatoly said.

He escaped through a small hole in the wall of the camp, Anatoly said. On the other side, Germans were allowing some Ukrainians to work for them in nearby occupied areas. Tartakovsky gave a fake name and said he was from *Vinnytsia*.

Once he made it to *Vinnytsia*, Tartakovsky feared he would be found out, Elena said, so he lived in abandoned houses and tried to survive. One day in

more than a year, until *Vinnytsia* was liberated in March 1944. Throughout that period, Tartakovsky and the Savchuks risked death if they were caught. At one point, the family was forced to flee their home to the nearby suburbs amid the German occupation, but they allowed Tartakovsky to stay with them, pretending he was a distant relative.

Anatoly and Elena said their mother and father were close during that period, given that her family was helping protect him, but the relationship was not romantic. Years later, when they reconnected, Savchuk in her late 20s and Tartakovsky in his early 40s, it was their shared bond of such difficult experiences during the war that drew them close, Anatoly and Elena said.

The couple were married within a year.

Tartakovsky became a well-known artist in Ukraine, and Anatoly attributed that success to the support of his mother.

Tartakovsky died in 2002 at age 90. Lidiya, almost 97, lives in Ukraine.

An estimated 1.5 million Jews in Ukraine were killed during the Holocaust. About 6 million Jews overall were killed. Before the war, Ukraine had been home to the largest Jewish population in Europe, which was largely decimated by mobile killing units called *Einsatzgruppen* and their collaborators. The units shot Jews near their

homes rather than send them to concentration camps.

The family's story — which is also being shared as part of a campaign called "Don't Be a Bystander" from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany to highlight those who risked their lives to help Jews during the Holocaust — has taken on a special meaning in 2022 given today's uncertainty and tensions in Ukraine, Anatoly said.

"It wasn't something which happened to some abstract person," he said, describing why he thought his mother's family took the risk to help his father. "It was a person who was standing in their kitchen, who was talking to them and asking for help. So they helped."

BY RYAN W. MILLER, *USA TODAY*



Lidiya Savchuk and her family sheltered Isaak Tartakovsky, a Soviet Jewish soldier who was captured by the Germans in Ukraine during World War II. Years later, they reconnected during a chance encounter, fell in love and got married.

1942, he saw an older woman, who also appeared poor, sitting in front of her house. Starving, Tartakovsky asked for whatever food she could spare, Anatoly said.

That woman was Lidiya's mother. Tartakovsky and the woman started talking, and soon her family invited him inside. They talked about their background and struggles. The family eventually revealed to him that they had a son in the Soviet Army and that they had helped one of his Jewish friends.

Hearing that story gave Tartakovsky the confidence to reveal his true identity, Anatoly said, and he asked whether he could live with the family.

Despite the risk, the Savchuk family agreed. "They just felt empathetic," Anatoly said.

Tartakovsky lived with the family for

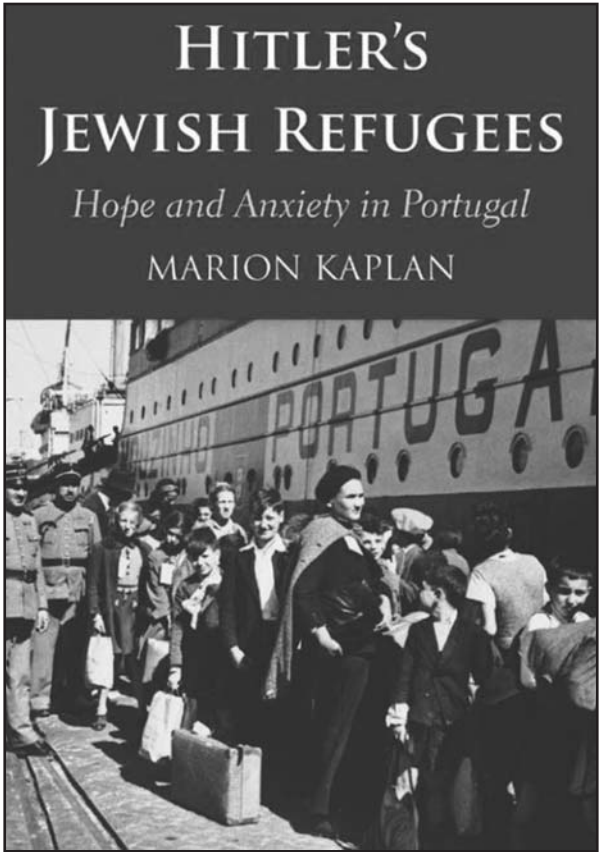
# HITLER’S JEWISH REFUGEES

*(Continued from page 5)*

it to Portugal, there was the Lisbon Jewish community that “immediately” did all it could — even though they were few in number. There were various international organizations that helped Jews with food, shelter and clothing, along with financial support to help them further on their journey. There were the Portuguese people who, as noted earlier, frequently helped refugees. Less known is the work of businessman and philanthropist Wilfred Israel, “the fifth generation offspring of the family behind one of the largest and oldest Berlin department stores.” Among other efforts, he “tried to relocate refugees from Lisbon to Palestine.”

Unfortunately, however, what with all the endless waiting done, Portugal also gave refugees time to think . . . and mourn all their losses — family, friends, beloved possessions, their very identity. Not surprisingly, this resulted in a sadness difficult to assuage. Letters and letter-writing home helped some. It kept up a tenuous connection with all that “was,” even though it was obvious that letters

from home left out a lot — self-censored and censored — and also causing not a



few refugees to wonder about just exactly what was happening there. Meeting with

other refugees over coffee also helped. In fact, Kaplan particularly notes how cafés became exceptionally popular in conservative Portugal — even letting in single women where once only men were considered “acceptable” customers. In short, here again, refugees found some solace, sitting for hours and speaking in their native tongue, discussing the latest rumors from home, and commiserating about the various difficulties they were having at consulates.

“Living in limbo” — it really is a wonder that “hope” generally survived among them. For refugees had hopes of leaving Portugal. They even had hopes of seeing their families from back home again. Newspapers in Portugal didn’t really lead them to think otherwise.... I suppose you might say they were “lucky” here too, in that, as Kaplan writes, refugees with only “partial information . . . could not grasp the entirety of the Final Solution.”

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

## THE JEWS WHO SURVIVED THE SHOAH WITH A FAKE IDENTITY

*(Continued from page 4)*

baum, and her aunt, Rachel Kohn.

The family were taken in by a couple, Joseph and Leonie Morand, who hid them for more than two years; both were later named as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem.

“My mother became a heroine to me,” Charlotte says today. The forged documents sound unlikely to have convinced anyone, since “the original [ID card] had been stamped with a (circular) stamp of the local authority and this stamp also covered part of the holder’s photograph. The new photo now lacked the quarter-circle stamp of the original.”

Undaunted, Yeshaya Englander, Charlotte’s grandfather, “who was very artistic,” filled in the missing quarter circle using colored crayons. Nevertheless, Hudes and her sister-in-law, both young women, defiantly showed these amateurish papers to *Wehrmacht* officers — and got away with it.

Unlike Brenda Pluczenik’s children, Charlotte, born in 1937, and her brother Henry, five years older, did not assume new names. “I was just Charlotte to everyone. The whole village knew [that we were Jews] and they did not give us away. I was

able to play outside with the other children. We were very lucky.”

The family — except for grandmother Leah Englander, who had been ill and who died in hospital in Antwerp before the end of the war — survived and eventually reunited with Charlotte and Henry’s father in London, in 1947.

Perhaps one of the most devastating stories in the exhibition is that of Ida Krayz, who survived among Ukrainian partisans using a false identity.

Ida, who was director of an orphanage in Kiev on the outbreak of war, married in 1934 and gave birth to her son, Welwele-Walentin, a year later. Her husband Jefim was recruited to the Red Army and sent to fight for the Russians.

The orphanage was evacuated deeper into the Soviet Union, but Ida did not succeed in getting far enough away from Kiev. She returned to Kiev to rescue her son and mother Miriam, using the name Lidia Wladimirowna Tyszczenko.

But Ida soon learned the tragic news that her mother and son had been taken to *Babi Yar*, the pit of mass murder on the edge of the city. Neighbors told her: “Two thousand children were buried alive at *Babi*

*Yar*. The earth has been moving above those little ones for three days.”

A heartbroken Ida wandered between villages and towns under her assumed Ukrainian identity, in constant danger of being found out and handed over to the Germans. At one point she joined the Russian partisans, “with her dubious credentials and wearing a cross around her neck.”

Extraordinarily, she survived, and after the war discovered that her husband Jefim had been killed in the first days of fighting in the Kiev area. She moved to Poland and remarried, to Avraham Pinkert, a Yiddish theater actor and director. Avraham and Ida had two children, and they moved to Israel in 1957.

Many of the forged documents telling these remarkable stories are on show in the exhibition, which went online this week to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

The fake papers, saved by the survivors, are incredible fragments of lives saved in the most extreme of circumstances, sometimes on a day where a sliver of colored pencil could make the difference between life and death.

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BY JENNI FRAZER,  
*The Jewish Chronicle*





ASYV board co-chairs Mark Moskowitz and Adina Burian.

# 2022 YLA

The 2022 YLA Gala brought together over 250 young professionals from various fields of education. This year, the night included a smorgasbord, premium cocktails, and a “famous” upscale tequila bar, sponsored by Michael and Erica D.

The evening featured a special Yad Vashem exhibit named “Auschwitz-Birkenau: Documentation of the arrival of a transport of Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau.”

Additionally, there was a large Remembrance Wall where guests could learn about those who perished in the Holocaust, as well as names recorded in Yad Vashem.

Jill Goltzer received a special tribute in recognition of the tremendous impact she has had on the Media. Most notably, Jill increased the Yad Vashem USA Instagram following to a new level. She has fostered many meaningful relationships with survivors and their families.

Each guest left with a beautiful shabbat candle lighting set made by the YLA. Every single man, woman and child who was murdered in the Shoah will have their own lighting candles in their honor.

The YLA Gala celebrates community and demonstrates a clear commitment to the future.

The Young Leadership Associates (YLA) is an active group of young professionals, victims, preserving the legacies of survivors, and helping to ensure the future of the Jewish people.

The 2022 YLA Gala was co-chaired by Alicia Chetrit, Sophie Kraus, Shnay and Joshua Gelnick.



Honoring Jill Goltzer.





# A GALA

onals in support of our mission of Holocaust remembrance and ed-  
open bar, live DJ, an auction with dozens of prizes, and of course, a  
istenfeld.  
schwitz — A Place on Earth,” depicting the only known visual doc-  
kenau.  
ests acknowledged the names of family and/or family friends who  
hem’s Central Database of *Shoah* Victims’ Names.  
endous impact she had as Director of Young Leadership and Social  
n account to over 20,000 followers, furthering awareness on a global  
ors and their families and stays a part of the ASYV family.  
le by Alicia Chetrit and generously sponsored by Sophie Krakowski.  
*Shoah* had a name and a story, and guests were invited to consider  
r message: “We Are Still Here.”  
young professionals dedicated to honoring memory of Holocaust  
ure a secure Jewish future.  
kowski and Ari Sarna in partnership with the YLA Co-Chairs, Rachel



2022 YLA Gala Committee.



Photos by Sarah Merians Photography.



# A JEWISH GIRL WAS SAVED BY A UKRAINIAN FAMILY DURING WORLD WAR II. NOW HER GRANDCHILDREN ARE RETURNING THE FAVOR.

Cousins and Ukrainian refugees Lesia Orshoko and Alona Chugai are among the millions who are running for their lives as Russian forces invade their country. But in a wartime twist of fate, the cousins landed in Israel to a friendly face — someone who was repaying a decades-old kindness.

The friendly face was Sharon Bass, whose Jewish grandmother was sheltered and saved by Lesia's grandmother in Ukraine during the Holocaust.

Sharon said it was her honor to take in the cousins and return the immeasurable kindness from nearly 80 years ago.

It felt like history repeating itself, she said. But in this case, it's an inversion of the norm. Jews have been persecuted throughout our entire history. We've been killed, kicked out or forced to flee from every country we've stayed in long enough. But this time we have the privilege and responsibility of providing a safe haven for other fleeing refugees.

Sharon, 46, said that when she saw the attacks in Ukraine, her thoughts immediately turned to her grandmother, Fania Rosenfeld Bass, and her remarkable survival as she hid from the Nazis.

Fania was a teenager in the Ukrainian town of *Rafalowka* when the Germans invaded, forcing Jews into ghettos and slave-labor camps. Most of her family was killed, including her parents and five siblings, whose bodies were dumped into unmarked, open pits in the forest of *Rafalowka*. Her youngest sister was just 6. But Fania fled and survived, and would return, years later, with other survivors and her daughter Chagit in tow, to create a memorial at the site of the slaughter.

Fania wasn't spared by accident or coincidence. Her life was very actively saved by a courageous non-Jewish Ukrainian woman named Maria Blyshchik. Maria and her extended family hid Fania during the last two years of the war, until shortly be-

fore *Rafalowka* was liberated by the Red Army in February 1944.

Fania relocated to Israel and started a family, telling the story over and over to her children and grandchildren, letting them know about the good people who held on

the invasion, describing them as "part of the family" and "even closer than a blood connection."

As soon as the situation turned bleak in Ukraine, Sharon began brainstorming how to get them to safety in Israel. She explained that "neither I nor they could imagine the situation would develop like it did — into war — but when it did and it was time for action, we decided the best thing to do would be to bring them here to a place where they can be safe."

At first, Sharon encountered a lot of bureaucracy and red tape. Then, Sharon shared the extraordinary story with Roy Rubinstein of Israel's YNETnews. Suddenly, people were captivated and eager to help. Israel is a tiny country, roughly the size of New Jersey, and it often operates like a small village. Public pressure began to mount. The story got an even wider audience when StopAntisemitism, an Instagram page, translated some of Roy's reporting.

In short order, Sharon's plea for help reached a former head of the Jewish Agency, and from there, Israel's Foreign Ministry, where senior politicians got personally involved to help her cut through the usual red tape.

Hauntingly, Lesia and Alona's visa approval came through on the third anniversary of Fania's death. She lived to be 97.

Once the bureaucracy was out of the way, there were still the logistics on the ground. Lesia and Alona had to make their way out of Ukraine. They went first by bus from their homes in the small towns of *Volodymyrets* and *Borova* to the Polish border, and then on to Warsaw, where they boarded a plane for *Munich*. From there, Sharon and a friend of Alona's split the cost of the cousins' flights to Tel Aviv. They landed in Israel on March 6.

Hearing Fania's daughter Chagit tell me about their arduous journey out of Ukraine, (Continued on page 13)



Fania, left, and Maria in 1999.

to their humanity and quietly rebelled against the horrors of the war. Fania and Maria's family, who stayed in Ukraine, lost touch in the immediate aftermath of liberation and for years following. But then technology made communicating easier, and the families reconnected in the 1990s and have been in regular communication since.

Sharon grew up hearing the story of Maria's bravery and Fania's survival. She said she didn't hesitate for a moment to reach out to Lesia, 36, and Alona, 47, last month to offer help when the war broke out.

I spoke by phone with Sharon to ask her about getting the cousins out of Ukraine and into Israel. She explained that the families were in frequent contact even before



# “TELL THE CHILDREN THAT DADDY LOVED THEM SO MUCH”

*“I will always wait for you, wherever I am. My memory will always be with you, in whatever form it takes.... I do not believe in death — because my life is conducted by love.... But in wars — people’s fates are not in their hands.... We will not part — neither in life nor in death.... Always tell the children, that their Daddy loved them so much, as only a father can love his children....”*

**T**hus wrote Konrad Emanuel Hirsch in a will of sorts that he left to his wife and their children in January 1940. Hirsch handwrote these words on a slip of paper during his service in the French Foreign Legion in Algeria, in the event that he did not make it home.

Ultimately, Hirsch did return from Algeria, and was reunited with his wife Edith and their daughter Miriam in *Saint Gaultier* in southern France. Two years later, he was deported, and wrote a letter to his family: “We are going to an unknown destination. Maintain courage and hope.”

The letter and will are part of a collection of documents and photographs donated by Miriam Rosen (née Hirsch) to Yad Vashem. The collection features correspondence, documents and photographs that outline Rosen’s childhood in the south of France, and her life in a children’s home after the war. They tell the story of a girl who grew up in the shadow of war, through her experiences as a refugee, in hiding and under a false identity, as well as the resourcefulness of her parents during this difficult period.

Helga-Yvonne-Miriam Hirsch was born in Paris in 1934. Her triple name reflects three periods of time in her life: as a German, in France, and in the Jewish state.

With the Nazis’ rise to power, Konrad Emanuel and Edith Hirsch understood that their future lay beyond the borders of Germany. The two underwent “professional re-training,” and acquired skills they hoped would help them acclimatize better in another country: Konrad Emanuel trained as a photographer and Edith as a chocolatier. They ultimately chose to journey to France, and settled in Paris. There, Konrad Emanuel specialized in taking pictures of the children of established professionals in the city. It was during this period that their two children were born: Miriam and René Pierre Mordechai. Their father often took pictures of them at the end of his work day, and so the collection includes many photographs that show Miriam as a happy young girl.

During the 1930s, with the expansion of the racist decrees against German Jewry, the Hirsch extended family also left Ger-

many, with some settling in British Mandatory Palestine. However, Miriam’s grandmother, Clara Lanes, remained in Berlin. From correspondence between family members in the collection, it is clear that Edith Hirsch, Lanes’ daughter, tried to bring her mother to France with the assistance of the Red Cross, but her efforts were in vain. Lanes was eventually deported to *Theresienstadt* and from there to *Majdanek*, where she was murdered in 1942.

Following the German invasion of France, and with her husband serving with the Foreign Legion in Algeria, Edith Hirsch found herself alone with her children in occupied Paris. Understanding the increasing danger to her family, she paid a driver to take her family into the southern unoccupied zone of France, amid an influx of refugees. While they were on their way, German bombings intensified and the convoy was forced to stop. Edith told her children to lie flat and pray in French and



Konrad Emanuel Hirsch, his wife Edith and their daughter Miriam, Paris, 1930s.

German, as she believed this was their end. After the bombings ceased, most of those around them had been killed.

Edith and her children were accepted as refugees in the town of *Saint Gaultier*, where Konrad Emanuel joined them upon his return from Algeria. Despite the family’s difficult living conditions, Miriam remembers many happy moments from this period with her father, such as riding a bicycle to obtain agricultural produce, or her father’s explanations of the stars in the sky. At the same time, Konrad Emanuel found a job repairing the roads damaged by the

bombings and organized a makeshift farm for himself and his family.

In February 1943, local police officers arrived and arrested Konrad Emanuel. He went with them, despite his wife’s pleas, and although he was given an opportunity to escape, based on the understanding of Miriam and Edith. Konrad Emanuel was transferred to the *Gurs* detention camp and kept in touch with his family through letters. A month later, in March, he was deported to *Drancy*. After the war, the family discovered that the unknown destination he referred to in his last letter was *Majdanek*, where he was murdered.

**A**fter her husband’s arrest, Edith acted quickly: She organized a hideout for her children and obtained forged identification papers. She went to *Lyon*, to live under an assumed identity with her brother-in-law, Hans. Following a letter from Miriam to her mother complaining of the lack of care in their first place of refuge, the children lived for some 18 months on a farm in *Saint Gaultier* owned by Suzanne Morand-Baron, who was later recognized as Righteous Among the Nations. Morand-Baron was devoted to them, and Miriam remembers her and the farm experience warmly — among her recollections are her brother playing with rabbits in the yard. At one point, fearing the loss of their Jewish identity, Edith sent Hans to pick up the children and bring them to her in *Lyon*. The separation from Morand-Baron was difficult for the children.

The Hirsch family, now known by their false last name, Martin, was in *Décines* at the time of liberation. At this point, Edith and her two children moved to a Jewish children’s home in *Érondelle*. There Edith assisted in the preparation of the students, most of them Polish orphans, for immigration to Israel.

In March 1948, the family arrived in Israel aboard the *Sirenia*. Miriam married Shmuel Rosen, and they named their eldest son Emanuel, after Miriam’s father.

“All of these letters, documents and photos are of great historical value,” said Miriam in a recent interview. “The experiences of Jews in France during the war are less well known to the public, compared to what happened in Poland, Hungary and other places. I knew that it was not possible to guarantee that this material would be kept secure if it remained in the possession of my family. It was clear to me that Yad Vashem is the right place for it to be preserved properly, and for my story to be told to the world.”



# BABYN YAR: REBURYING THE HOLOCAUST WITH BULLETS

Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko's famous 1961 poem *Babi Yar* begins: "Over Babi Yar, there are no monuments."

Resulting in what can be fairly termed the most attention ever paid to the largest mass shootings of Jews in German-occupied Europe, Russian aggression recently caused unspecified damage to the still-under-construction *Babyn Yar* Holocaust Memorial Center. The strike was symbolic of unfinished business: the decades it took for recognition of the Holocaust by bullets in Soviet killing fields and the constant anti-Semitic attacks against the *Shoah*. The site

Jews died "by systematic, merciless executions" that were at first considered random murders, owing to infrequent reports, and to accounts of other Jews dying from starvation or disease, or as part of other groups. It was an ominous sign that the political affairs director for the World Jewish Congress said at the time that many Jews "complain now as a sheer matter of habit," in response to American Jews grumbling over the disinterest shown by the Allies.

The postwar history of the site is rife with significant controversy encased within political intrigue as a memorial was sought. In March 1945, the Ukrainian gov-

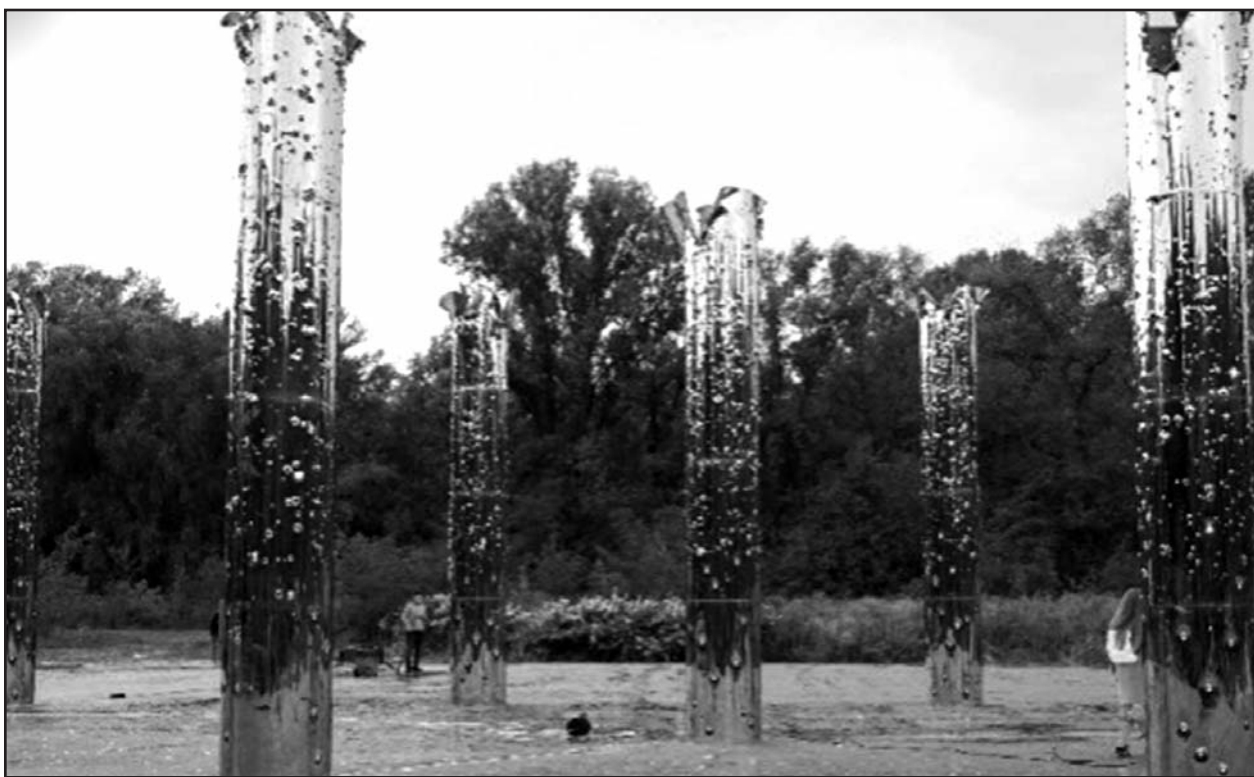
initiating a "closed competition" for monuments in memory of Soviet citizens and soldiers who perished during the Nazi occupation of Kyiv. In response, a memorial park to be built on bridges over the *Babyn Yar* ravine, along with other entries that would memorialize Jews, were rejected as "Zionist." The location became a person-made memorial with no official recognition, when Russian and Ukrainian writers, many of whom were jailed, gave impassioned speeches — including the unveiling of the above *Babi Yar* poem — to 1,000 people decrying the suffering of the Jewish people and the necessity of the struggle against anti-Semitism.

On August 24, 1991, Ukraine's Declaration of Independence was approved. Jews looked to it with the hope that it would mark the end of state-sponsored anti-Semitism. Finally, 50 years after the *Babyn Yar* massacre, authorities for the first time admitted publicly that most of the victims were Jews. The man who would become the first president of independent Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, delivered a speech that stressed that Jews were killed in *Babyn Yar* only because they were Jews.

Despite the continued Russian threat, the Ukraine government moved forward with reforms. It was in Israel where the dam was broken: then-Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko spoke to the Knesset in 2015, emphasizing that *Babyn Yar* is a shared, open wound of Ukrainians and Jews; recognizing that 1.5 million Ukrainian Jews perished during the Holocaust; and apologizing to the children and grandchildren of Holocaust victims for Ukrainian "collaborationists."

Finally, on the evening of October 6, 2021, the sacred ground saw the opening of the memorial that is not just for the memory of Nazi horror but also to symbolize continued repression of and anti-Semitism against Jews by the Soviet Union, Russia and the Ukrainian collaborationists. With Ukraine's Jewish president, Volodymyr Zelensky, as a witness, the chair of the memorial's advisory board and former refusenik and ex-member of the Israeli Knesset Natan Sharansky said, "*Babyn Yar* is not only the symbol of the Holocaust by bullets, but it is the symbol of the efforts of the Soviet Communist regime to raze the Holocaust memory."

BY MICHAEL B. SNYDER,  
*The Algemeiner*



The *Sefirot* installation at the *Babyn Yar* Holocaust Memorial Center, made up of 10 stainless steel columns, which feature over 100,000 holes, shot with bullets of the same caliber as those used by the Nazis to murder 100,000 Jews and non-Jews at *Babyn Yar*, Ukraine.

has become a rallying point for Jewish outrage against Russia; reasons for outrage, however, have long existed.

Before the *Wannsee* Conference that decided that the answer to the "Jewish Question" was the total destruction of European Jewry — and also prior to the German invasion of its then ally the Soviet Union during "Operation Barbarossa" in June 1941 — there were 160,000 Jews living in Kyiv, thought to be about 20 percent of its population. Approximately 100,000 Jews immediately fled or were already absent serving in the Soviet army.

As part of German advances following this surprise attack, *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile groups of Nazis killing largely by bullets) pushed west, slaughtering 4,200 Jews in *Kamenetz-Podolsk*, 6,000 in *Lomzha*, Poland, 25,000 in *Odessa*, and then 33,771 (along with 19,000 non-Jews) just outside Kyiv, in the *Babyn Yar* ravine.

ernment and Communist Party agreed to build a monument in the form of an abstract large black granite form that would not recognize Jewish victims. The Soviet Ukrainian Ministry of Culture halted the program with its refusal to build any monument at all, hoping to sweep away the atrocities altogether.

During the 1950s, attempts to physically erase *Babyn Yar* occurred under the guise of "residential planning." Liquid mud waste dumped over the mass grave as a primary weapon to bury the past proved so heavy that the dam abutting the land collapsed under its weight. The subsequent surge of water killed 145 people and destroyed 70 buildings in the area. A Jewish cemetery adjacent to the flood was paved over shortly thereafter to build a sports complex.

The Ministry of Culture of Soviet Ukraine continued to control decisions in the 1960s,



# FIRST PERMANENT HOLOCAUST EXHIBIT COMES TO MUSLIM-MAJORITY INDONESIA

In honor of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yad Vashem has opened the first permanent exhibition in Indonesia about the Nazi genocide of Jews during World War II.

It is one of Yad Vashem’s “Ready2Print” exhibitions aimed at promoting dialogue about the Holocaust in museums, educational and community centers, and places of worship around the world.

This particular exhibit, which opened in January at Shaar HaShamayim Synagogue on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, is called “The Holocaust: How Was

It Humanly Possible?”

According to the Yad Vashem website, the exhibit “deals with major historical aspects of the Holocaust, beginning with Jewish life in pre-Holocaust Europe and ending with the liberation of Nazi concentration and extermination camps across the continent.” It also documents the “remarkable return to life of the survivors.”

Richelle Budd Caplan, a representative of the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem, took part in the exhibit’s opening ceremony via video.

Israel has no official diplomatic relations

with Indonesia, which has the largest Muslim population in the world. Still, Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan said that “we will be happy to open an exhibition wherever there’s interest in the memory of the Holocaust and its commemoration, and all the more so in the largest Muslim country in the world.”

He added: “We see great importance in physically presenting Yad Vashem’s knowledge and content outside ... Jerusalem, and we are happy to cover new grounds like Indonesia.”

# A JEWISH GIRL WAS SAVED BY A UKRAINIAN FAMILY...

*(Continued from page 10)*

I found myself thinking of my own grandparents’ panicked flights from Vienna and Berlin to New York in the late 1930s. It all felt so familiar, wartime refugees running for their lives.

But Fania’s story couldn’t be more different from that of her descendants, and the same goes for Maria, the woman who saved her. Now the same story of a persecuted people needing help is playing out again, but in reverse for these families.

Israel has actually played an important role in the lives of Maria’s family for some time.

Lesia, Maria’s granddaughter, and Alona, Maria’s great-niece, have been to Israel before, and their extended families have had roots in Israel since long before the current war in Ukraine.

In 1995, Yad Vashem honored the entire extended family as Righteous Among the Nations, the award bestowed upon non-Jews who risked their lives to protect Jews during the Holocaust. In the years since, several of the extended family members have traveled to Israel to work for a few years at a time, with economic prospects in the “start-up nation” more promising than in Ukraine.

One of them has stayed permanently: Luba Blyshchik, one of Maria’s 10 children, began working as the elderly Fania’s caretaker almost 20 years ago, and continued to do so until her death in 2019. Luba’s mother saved Fania’s life; Luba helped to preserve it.

When I asked Sharon and Chagit if there were more members of the family beyond Lesia and Alona who wanted to emi-

grate to Israel, Sharon told me, “Yes, many more. Right now we are trying to work on rescuing two different women — one who has seven children and another one who has four.”

Leaving isn’t a simple decision. For Alona and Lesia, the decision was fraught. Sharon described their tears upon landing

still in danger.” Alona’s mother, father, brother and nephews are still in Ukraine.

There is guilt that comes with survival and escape, a psychological phenomenon that Fania’s family understands well.

For now, Alona and Lesia have received temporary visas. Sharon, along with her family, is trying to help them secure perma-



Ukrainian refugees and cousins Alona Chugai, left, and Lesia Orshoko, right, are greeted by Luba Blyshchik at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport on March 6.

in Tel Aviv and reuniting with Sharon as “complicated and full of mixed feelings.”

I spoke with Alona five days after she arrived in Israel, and she told me, “I’m happy to be here and in the warmth and security of the Bass family, who are like a second family to me, but I am also thinking of all the family I left behind in Ukraine who are

nent citizenship, and she says that for as long as they like, her house is their house.

She told me: “Maria didn’t put a time limit on how long she sheltered Fania, and neither should we.”

BY DANIELLA GREENBAUM,  
*The Washington Post*



# FRAUGHT FAMILY REUNIFICATION AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

As the Second World War ended, an estimated 150,000 to 180,000 child survivors of the Holocaust emerged from their hiding places or centers of internment. They were a tenth of Europe's prewar population of Jewish children, a fragment of an entire generation. In the months and years that followed, these child survivors began to search for their families, and some (we will never know exactly how many) were reunited with surviving mothers and fathers. But this was rarely the happy ending that we would like to imagine.

In my latest book, *Survivors: Children's Lives After the Holocaust*, I found that the stories of child Holocaust survivors upended my assumptions again and again, and nowhere was this truer than around the emotive topic of family reunions. We are so used to encountering scenes of joy as families are reunited in Holocaust film and literature that it is challenging to accept the reality of a bleaker picture. The notion that family reunification was the best possible outcome for a survivor child is deeply seductive, particularly as so many survivor children found themselves with no remaining family members at the war's end. Children who found their way back to surviving mothers and fathers were frequently told how lucky they were. Yet of the 100 children whose stories I examine in the book, not one who was reunited with surviving parents described the experience as joyful. They often had far more painful postwar experiences than those who found themselves living in care homes, without family. Their stories expose just how deep is our desire to see the survival of a family in and of itself as a victory.

If we consider the complexities of the early postwar period, we begin to see why it was intensely difficult for surviving children and parents to find themselves together again. The reunified Jewish family was profoundly fragile. Parents and children had often been apart for years, and the war had changed them. They sometimes could no longer speak the same language. Children had acquired new wartime identities, particularly if they had survived in hiding: they may have had new names, new religious identities and new attachments to families who had hidden them during the war. If they were young enough,

they may have had no memory of their parents at all.

Moreover, parents had changed. They had experienced internment and concentration camps, forced labor, life in hiding or the anxiety-ridden experience of those who tried to pass as Aryan. Many were in a state of physical and emotional collapse by 1945. Adult Holocaust survivors faced

children had often needed to be obedient, quiet and good to stay safe. With that need gone, they could rebel. They withdrew emotionally from their parents, refusing to touch them or even to accept them. Henri O., who survived in hiding in the Netherlands as a very small child, was reunited with both his mother and father after the war. He was five years old. He recalled the discomfort of their reunion:

"When they turned up, I recognized my mother, and I said, 'You stayed away a very long time.' Yeah, two and a half years, half my life. Okay. And then somebody says, 'Why don't you want to sit on your daddy's lap?' So I sat on my daddy's lap. But it wasn't quite the same."

For some child survivors, one of the greatest frustrations in these reunited homes was the enforced silence around the wartime past. Many had urgent questions that surviving parents

did not want or could not bear to answer, particularly about murdered relatives. Those living with surviving mothers asked after their murdered fathers (or the reverse), and frequently had their enquiries rebuffed. In other cases, the enormity of a parent's own traumatic memories interceded in the daily life of the household. Cecile H., who had survived the war by escaping with her mother to neutral Switzerland, was reunited with her concentration-camp survivor father after the war:

"Father had found photos in the barracks or SS lockers when he was liberated, and had taken some because he was worried that no one would believe him. He hid these pictures in the house on top of a closet, and once I took those pictures and laid them all out on the floor, and I'll see those pictures until my dying day. [...] I kept having nightmares after that, and [my father] burned them. He said, 'I'm never going to talk about that again.' It was a difficult time for us, after the war."

When thinking about families after the Holocaust, we should be attuned to the incredible challenges that these families faced. We should consider what sorts of outcomes awaited children who went back to live with surviving parents, and how this felt to children, what it meant to them, and what role the memory of the recent past played in reconstructed households.

BY REBECCA CLIFFORD, HNN



At a children's home in Otwock, Poland.

staggering poverty in the early postwar period, and children who went back to live with surviving parents often found that their families lacked housing, food and clothing. In such circumstances, the additional burden of caring for a child could push a family to the point of collapse.

We can see this in the numbers. The American Joint Jewish Distribution Committee supported 120,000 child Holocaust survivors after the war, and a majority of these — 85,000 children — were living with a surviving parent or relative who was too impoverished to care for the child without financial aid. Children living in care homes intended for orphans also frequently had surviving parents. Surviving parents saw in such institutions an opportunity for their children to have a better quality of life than in the family home. These arrangements were often meant to be temporary, but they also extended the period in which children and parents grew stranger to each other — sometimes until too much time had passed for the relationship to be restored.

Many children struggled to trust survivor parents who were essentially strangers. Some felt anger that their parents had abandoned them, and further anger when these parents removed them from wartime rescue families in which they had felt happy and comfortable. Whether they had survived the war in hiding or in internment,



# HOLOCAUST DOCUMENTARY

## ABOUT EUROPEAN CHILD SURVIVORS

A Nazi almost murdered Anita Karl for the sin of trying to have a piece of chocolate. The German asked Karl and her cousin if they wanted a piece of candy. Her cousin was quicker; he sat her on his lap, handed her a piece of chocolate with one hand, took his gun out in his other hand and did something inexplicable.

This is one of several highly traumatic stories in the powerful new documentary *Against All Odds: Surviving the Holocaust*. Karl would be one of only 200 out of 150,000 Jews in the Lvov ghetto to survive.

Directed and produced by Paul Bachow, the film showcases the story of Karl and three other survivors. This no-frills documentary is simple and doesn't boast a big budget. It doesn't need to. It is an extremely potent film that makes you feel like the survivors are your family members telling their miraculous stories in your own living room.

Karl was staying in a home with a gentile woman when she saw a teenage boy shot and killed, his blood splattering the window. She asked the woman what took place.

"Oh, don't worry; he's just a Jew," Karl recounts the woman as telling her, not knowing her true religion.

Because Karl's mother had gone to a public school and had stayed for Catholic-school classes, she was able to convince authorities that she was Catholic and used an ingenious plan on a train to overcome the problem of not having documents to prove she was not a Jew.

Karl and her mother would see Jews that had been hanged to death with signs that read: "This is what happens to the Jews who try to escape."

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Gerald Beigel was one of three family members who survived, while 32 were murdered by the Nazis; and his mother and sister were on the last train to Auschwitz. Living in Berlin, his parents thought of Adolf Hitler as "crazy" and didn't think he would last long in power. Of course, they were wrong.

Still, they attempted to get a visa for America but were told they would not receive it until 1947 or 1948. And so, he took off his Jewish star and went out, risking his life to go to the movies on many occasions.

When he eventually ended up at a death

camp, despite being told to go to the left — meaning the gas chambers — he ran after his brother, who was told to go to the right. He survived two death marches, and after his leg was wounded and a doctor said they would have to amputate it, he said he'd rather die than have them do so. Beigel also recalls on his 17th birthday, he and his father celebrated with the only food they had: a cooked piece of potato peel.

He also tells of being carted away with two corpses about to be thrown in a fire, injured and barely able to move. But he did, and somehow, his life was spared, and he survived Auschwitz and *Dachau*.

\*\*\*

Ryszarda Rozenblum, born in 1929, was one of maybe 11 who survived out of initially more than 75,000 children in the Łódź ghetto, the last remaining ghetto in German-occupied Poland.

The head of the ghetto suggested making a camp for youth that comprised about 1,000 children.

There, at first, they got a little bread and soup. Then children were taken to a school, and she'd sing "Hatikvah" to others

1931, tells of how many Jews committed suicide. Anti-Semites would later throw him into the Danube Canal, but he was able to get out of the freezing water. He tells of how Jews didn't believe they would be exterminated because they made up about half of the total doctors and lawyers. His father wanted to give him a Hebrew name but was told that because of rampant anti-Semitism, it wouldn't be a good move, and so the person suggested the name "Walter" to his father.

Ironically, a beating by the head of an orphanage he was staying in saved his life. Afterward, his mother was able to send him to an unlikely destination for safety as he took on the fake name of Michael Pepperman. He was on the last transport out of Hungary in 1942 before Adolf Eichmann told the Hungarian leader not to allow any more Jews to leave.

I have seen many Holocaust documentaries. Some have graphic scenes; this one does not. Some have extensive research; this one does not. Some have a slew of talking heads and expert historians; this one does not. And yet, this documentary somehow made me angrier and more

moved me in a more profound way. Perhaps because many of those include positive aspects of what the survivors made when they came to America.

In this film, each story ends when the war ends. There is something known as "Holocaust fatigue," when people have seen so many films or read so many books that they feel the market is saturated and they can't handle any more information. But make room for one more film — this film. *Against All Odds: Surviving the Holocaust*

is extremely riveting, dynamic in its simplicity and harrowing in its storytelling, but with a resounding message.

It is impossible to watch films like this and not wonder what you would have done had you been in a similar situation — being Jewish in the time of the Holocaust. What would it be like to live underground in secret, knowing one false move, breath or word could mean certain death? Survival guilt here is implied and not expressly stated. The film is well edited and hard-hitting, and could (and should) be used in schools. The saga of these Europeans turned Floridians is truly something to see.

BY ALAN ZEITLIN, JNS



Holocaust survivors as depicted in a new documentary, *Against All Odds: Surviving the Holocaust*.

and work four hours a day. Her brother was 13; she was 11. Fortunately, a rabbi gave her father good advice that resulted in saving her life. Her brother and parents, two sisters and about a total of 100 family members would be killed at *Chelmno*, Auschwitz and other death camps.



She recalls crying out, "Oh God, where are you now?" She was eventually saved, as depicted in the film, in a unique way.

When the Red Army came in, the Germans fled. In tears, as she saw she was alone, a young Russian soldier told her: "We will take revenge for you, don't cry."

\*\*\*

Walter Lebensohn from Vienna, born in





# ZBOROWSKI Legacy Circle


**The Legacy Circle, named in memory of Eli Zborowski, is open to anyone who includes ASYV/Yad Vashem in their estate plans.**

This includes:

- Bequest by will
- Making ASYV/Yad Vashem a beneficiary of a Charitable Remainder Trust or Charitable Gift Annuity
- Donating a paid-up life insurance policy
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**By including ASYV/Yad Vashem in your estate plans, you assure a future in which Holocaust remembrance and education can serve as a powerful antidote to Holocaust denial, distortion, hate and indifference.**

**With your support, ASYV can strengthen the efforts of Yad Vashem as together we remember the past and shape the future.**



The American Society for Yad Vashem, founded in 1981 by a group of visionary Holocaust survivors, was led by Eli Zborowski, z"l, until his passing in 2012.

**For further information about the Zborowski Legacy Circle, please contact:**  
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