

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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MISSION OF DEDICATION AND COMMEMORATION

Twelve participants joined Yad Vashem and the American Society for Yad Vashem (ASYV) for their first boutique mission, April 24–28, 2022, for annual donors of \$10,000 and more. Andrea and Loren Weiss from Scarsdale, New York, chaired the delegation. Loren serves as chair of the New York Tristate Region.

The mission was bookended by two significant events — the dedication of Yad Vashem’s new Education Center for Holocaust Education on the Ariel Sharon IDF Training Campus in the Negev, and the official commemoration of *Yom Hashoah* on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem. In between, the delegation had private tours of Yad Vashem, learning that it is much more than a museum; meetings with Israeli high-tech and venture capital leaders to appreciate the role and impact of the *Shoah* in Israeli society today; and a discussion with Nachman Shai, Minister of Diaspora Affairs, to better understand the influence the *Shoah* plays in Israeli government policy. ASYV leader Bruce Taragin, whose wife Michelle and mother-in-law, Batya Kahane, were part of the mission, and his partner at Blumberg Capital, Yodfat Harel Buchris, hosted the mission for dinner, along with other business colleagues of theirs. The mission also included lighter moments, too — walking tours of the Old City in Jerusalem and the White City in Tel Aviv.

“Before My Very Eyes,” the new Education Center for Holocaust Remembrance is a cutting-edge educational facility, piloting new pedagogical models to educate and inspire young people of today and tomorrow. Ten thousand combat support soldiers train at the campus annually, most coming from families not directly touched by the *Shoah*. The curriculum focuses on values and leadership as a way to teach the lessons of the Holocaust. Major support for
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Nancy and Sam Shamie lighting a memorial flame during the official *Yom Hashoah* ceremonies.



Unveiling “Before My Very Eyes” at Ir Habahadim. At right, lead donors Sharon and David Halpern. At left, Dani Dayan, chairman of Yad Vashem.

SOUTH FLORIDA WOMEN'S LUNCHEON

More than 40 women came together to remember the past and celebrate the future at the first annual South Florida Women's Luncheon on May 19th. The event, hosted by Ilana Brodsky in her beautiful home, brought together women of all ages from across the area to enjoy an afternoon under the Florida sun and learn more about Yad Vashem.

Participants had the opportunity to hear from hidden child/survivor Anna Freedman, who told her inspirational story of survival.

Anna shared her experience of being hidden by two separate families during the war and her mother's fight to get her back after liberation. Her message to those present was one of hope and promise for the future. In keeping with the theme, the women also enjoyed participating in a hands-on flower-arranging presentation and brought home beautiful centerpieces to adorn their own tables.

The event was a beautiful afternoon in support of Yad Vashem and its sacred mission. Planning is already under way for ad-

ditional events in the fall and for making this luncheon a yearly event. The luncheon committee included Ilana Brodsky, Erica Bernstein, Helena Chackman, Stephanie Draznin and Erica Lichy.

This successful luncheon is the latest event sponsored by the Southeast Regional office of ASYV. More events are being planned including educational, social and family programs. For more information on how to become involved in upcoming activities in the southeast, please contact Denise Herschberg at 561-306-5872.



Luncheon participants heard from hidden child/survivor Anna Freedman.



From left to right: Event Committee members Helena Chackman, Erica Lichy and Ilana Brodsky, Southeast Regional Director Denise Herschberg, speaker Anna Freedman, and Amy Cooper, National Campaign Director.

FAMILY OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR AND RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS FROM POLAND VISIT YAD VASHEM

"I wanted to fill in the blanks about my family's history, that only they knew."

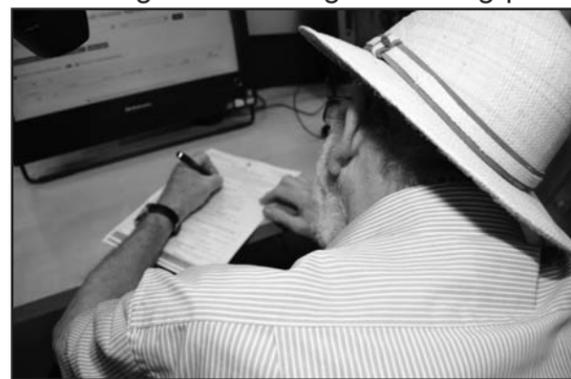
Dr. Isidore Zuckerbrod

Dr. Isidore Zuckerbrod, son of Holocaust survivors Dawid and Matylda Zuckerbrodt, and Renata Szyfner, daughter of Eugeniusz Szyfner and granddaughter of Eugeniusz's mother Katarzyna Szyfner — both recognized as Righteous Among the Nations for helping save Jews during the Holocaust, including Dr. Zuckerbrod's parents — visited Yad Vashem in May.

The emotional meeting took place at Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, in Jerusalem, in the presence of descendants of the survivors who are alive today because of the heroic actions taken 76 years ago.

In March 1942, after the liquidation of the *Mielic* ghetto, Dawid and Matylda Zuckerbrodt found refuge with Katarzyna

and Eugeniusz Szyfner, along with other Jews including the Heller family, who had been hiding there since the autumn of 1941. Eugeniusz arranged a hiding place



Dr. Zuckerbrod fills out two Pages of Testimony in memory of his brother and sister murdered during the Holocaust.

for the couple and several other Jews on their property.

Renata Szyfner recalled:

"My father, who was in his late teens during the war, was very handy, and he built a hiding place for the Jews they res-

cued in the loft of the chicken coop. It was very important to him also to create an escape route into the forest for them in the event they were discovered by locals or the Nazis."

The Szyfners, who were motivated by altruistic and humanitarian considerations, looked after their Jewish charges devotedly, without expecting anything in return, until August 1944, when the area was liberated by the Red Army.

During their visit to Yad Vashem, Zuckerbrod and Szyfner exchanged information and stories that they had heard as children from their parents.

Renata and Isidore related:

"The versions we have individually fill in the missing gaps; they overlay each other like a woven tapestry and provide a clearer picture of the events that took place 78 years ago."

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"BEFORE MY VERY EYES"

In April Yad Vashem inaugurated "Before My Very Eyes," the Yad Vashem Educational Center for Holocaust Remembrance at the Ariel Sharon IDF Training Campus in the Negev. The new center comprises a specially curated overview of the *Shoah*, as well as interactive exhibition areas that present value-based exhibits connected to the Jewish experience during those terrible years, in order to encourage soldiers and other visitors to reflect on their role in society today.

The establishment of the center allows teams from Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies to develop and carry out educational programs as an inherent part of IDF training activities, with respect to the preparation and as part of the service of the individual soldiers. The center, the fruit of cooperative endeavors and long-standing dialogue between educators at Yad Vashem and the IDF's Educational Corps, aims to deal with the subject of the *Shoah* in a comprehensive and enduring manner. Dealing with the story of the Holocaust as a pivotal event in the history of the Jewish people, alongside examining values such as Jewish identity, mutual responsibility, leadership, heroism and attachment to the Land of Israel, will allow the next generations of soldiers and commanders to commit to passing on the torch of remembrance and becoming con-

structive contributors to an ethical global society.

Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan said:

"As the years pass from the events of the *Shoah* and fewer survivors remain among us, Yad Vashem has developed this new interactive educational center to inspire young men and women at different stages of their military service through an in-depth study of the Holocaust. Against the backdrop of rising global anti-Semitism and growing Holocaust distortion and trivialization, our responsibility is to provide the youth today with historically accurate accounts of the Holocaust. In addition, the new center highlights several individuals who can serve as role models to the leaders of tomorrow. The center will be a platform for the discussion of authority and ethics arising from Holocaust commemoration, as well as the importance of Jewish continuity — which will in turn bring to the fore the many meanings that can be taken from Holocaust remembrance vis-à-vis the identity of IDF soldiers as both Israelis and citizens of the world."

Head of the IDF's Technological and Logistics Directorate Major General Michel Yanko remarked:

"This center is not only a commemoration of those who were murdered; it is also a promise to the survivors — to carry the torch, and to pass it on. The fact that the Israel Defense Forces have chosen to have this educational center on the Ariel Sharon IDF Training Base in the Negev is a symbol of the transition from the *Shoah* to Rebirth. For me, the son of Panel Yanko, a survivor of the deportations and of the Holocaust, it not only connects with my



Photos from before the Holocaust featured in Yad Vashem's new educational center "Before My Very Eyes."

family's legacy, but it is also the closing of a circle. There are no words to describe the importance of this center and the contribution it will have to educating generations of soldiers and military personnel."

POPE OPENS WORLD WAR II-ERA ARCHIVES

The chairman of Yad Vashem thanked Pope Francis for giving scholars access to the Holy See's World War II-era archives.

Dani Dayan, who met with Francis at the Vatican, said the pontiff described the



Dani Dayan offers Pope Francis a gift during a private audience in the Vatican.

archives' opening as "an issue of justice." Francis visited the memorial during a 2014 pilgrimage in Israel.

The Vatican, in its account of the meet-

ing, didn't say what Francis told his Israeli visitor. But its official media quoted Dayan's account of the pontiff's words.

"When I thanked him for opening the archives of the Vatican of the relevant period of the Holocaust for our researchers, he said very clearly that to open the archives is to make justice," Dayan said.

Historians long clamored for access to the Vatican archives of letters and other documents spanning the years of Pius XII's 1939–1958 pontificate, which overlapped with World War II.

Over the decades, many have criticized Pius for not speaking out at the time against the mass deportations and systematic murder of Jews. The Vatican has long contended that Pius worked quietly behind the scenes to save lives during the Holocaust.

But scholarly examinations of the wartime archives so far suggest that the

people the Vatican worked hardest to save were Jews who had converted to Catholicism or who were children of Catholic-Jewish marriages.

Vatican media quoted Yad Vashem's Dayan as saying Francis told him that the Catholic Church isn't afraid of history.

"The Holy Father went on to say that he is well aware that, as in other organizations, in the church there were people who did the right thing and those who did not," Dayan said.

Yad Vashem archivists are gathering information from the Vatican archives, with the goal, the Holocaust memorial said in a statement, of bringing it back to Jerusalem for further study "and hopefully shed light on the experiences and fate of many Holocaust victims."

As the meeting concluded, Dayan invited Francis to again visit Israel and Yad Vashem.

Dayan told Vatican Radio that the two men, each natives of Buenos Aires, conversed in Spanish, and that Francis was "very clear in condemning anti-Semitism" and in combatting it as an "ally."

THE PHYSICAL SCARS OF THE HOLOCAUST

How abandoned sites across Europe remain as a reminder of how Jews were systematically murdered during World War II

It was one of the most horrifying events in world history, resulting in the systematic murder of six million Jews as well as people from other groups considered by the Nazis to be inferior.

But while the Holocaust ended as the Second World War finished in 1945, the physical traces of that horrific period remain around Europe in gloomy abandoned sites that serve as a reminder of the genocide.



Rita Weiss, born in Romania, survived being sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau and Stutthof concentration camps. Speaking at her home in Tel Aviv, she said: "I had to survive, I had to stay alive because I had to tell, must tell, what happened."

Now, photographer Marc Wilson has gone on a remarkable journey around 130 locations in 20 countries over six years to visit the areas and listen to the stories of survivors in English, French, Hebrew, Polish, Dutch and Russian.

He has collated 360 images for his new book, *A Wounded Landscape: Bearing Witness to the Holocaust*, which document some of the 40,000 sites that were occupied by the Nazis between 1939 and 1945.

Mr. Wilson studied areas where Jews were killed along with the Roma, gay people, those with learning difficulties, the physically disabled, Jehovah's Witnesses, Communists, and more than three million Soviet prisoners of war.

He said: "These sites persist today throughout these countries. Together they formed a pathway to genocide: destroyed communities and ghettos, internment camps, transit camps, labor camps, sub-camps, concentration camps, extermination camps and displacement camps.

"They are connected by the landscapes that surround them, and the forced journeys made between them. At these sites,

individual killings and slaughter on a mass scale took place, the numbers involved almost beyond our understanding.

"These are sites where literal life-or-death decisions were made, but they are also sites of hope, survival and memory."

Ben Barkow, former director of the Wiener Holocaust Library at the University of London, said: "The Wiener Library has numerous opportunities to see artistic responses to the Holocaust, and I can state unambiguously that Marc's work is among the finest and most sensitive that we have seen in many years."

The book has 736 pages and features a foreword by James Bulgin, who is the head of content at the Holocaust Galleries at Imperial War Museums.

Mr. Wilson told *MailOnline* that he had "wanted — or perhaps without realizing it felt the need — to make a piece of work about the Holocaust for over 20 years now, ever since I started taking photographs."

He continued: "It is something I felt was of great importance, to talk about, to share, to start conversation about. But to be honest I simply never felt I could make the right photographs that a subject matter like this demands, or even therefore talk about it in the right way.

"I did not have the right voice or visual language. In 2015, after I had completed my previous book, *The Last Stand*, I felt, finally, that maybe I now did. A visual language that I hoped would be sensitive enough to talk about this tragedy.

"A quiet enough voice, but still insistent, to talk about a history that I felt does not need to be 'shouted' about but must not be ignored, forgotten or even worse, denied."

He added that he had ideas about how he wanted to make the book and what he wanted to talk about, and took these with

him to the first location he visited in the southeast of France.

However, this all changed on his first late afternoon photoshoot, when he covered his head with a darkcloth and "peered through the ground glass screen of my large format camera, which felt completely and utterly wrong to me," adding: "I felt that I was gazing, objectively. And it was not right."

Mr. Wilson continued: "My initial thought was to photograph these locations from a distance, on the wider landscape around them, as I had done in my previous work, but these images I was making were objective, wrong, cold, calculated.

"But I already knew what I had to do and had avoided thinking about. So the next morning I went over the former internment camp boundary, climbing over the mass artworks border that surrounded it and into the space itself.

"And there, after two hours of searching for the Barrack 'K12,' the former children's barrack, I found my voice. The fading paintings on the walls, made by the children over 70 years ago with paint provided by a Swiss Red Cross worker, cracked roof tiles on the ground and some small flowers in the surrounding grass.

"I was told what I needed to do. To tell the stories of those children. One of those children. And more. Stories of individuals who could then reflect the stories of a countless hundred others, 1,000 others, a million others.

"I made work there, and back in the UK spoke with others, showed them what I was doing, had conversations and began to plan the time ahead."

Asked what it felt like to visit the places, Mr. Wilson said: "Throughout making this work, over the six-year period, I was al-



The house of Amon Göth, the notoriously sadistic commandant of *Plaszow* concentration camp in Poland. The Austrian Nazi officer was also known as an adversary of Oskar Schindler, who shielded Jews during the Holocaust. He was hanged in 1946.

ways very aware how lucky I was that I had this choice to visit these locations. I had the choice to make work there for a number of weeks and then return home.

"So I let them wash over me, both the locations themselves but also the details of events that I knew had happened there, that I had been told about, from someone

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A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR'S SECRET SADNESS



In my earliest memories of my mother, I see her braiding the chalah for our Friday night meal, cutting and laying sheets of strudel dough across the dining room table, feeding the goose she kept in the attic of our home in Kassa, Hungary, for her decadent foie gras. But I also remember her sorrow — for the mother she'd lost when she was only 9, and also, I sensed, for the woman she herself had become. A woman who created everyday feasts and bountiful picnic baskets, yet was starving inside. Even today, I hear her moaning in front of the portrait of her mother that hung over the piano in our living room. "Help me, help me," she'd cry as she cleaned and dusted.

In May 1944, when I was 16, my mother was killed in the gas chamber on our first day in Auschwitz. My father also died in Auschwitz, but I have never known exactly when. I was still reeling from the loss of my parents, and struggling with my guilt for having survived, when, just two years after the war's end, I became a young mother. I was also determined, after so much pain and loss, to be a source of life. I resolved never to freight my children with my sorrow or trauma. For decades, I never spoke of the death camps, never told anyone, including my children — especially my children — that I was a survivor.

Audrey, my younger daughter, has said she was aware of my sadness when she was growing up. She knew I went into the bathroom to cry. Sorrow was present and palpable in our house, but it wasn't acknowledged or explained. "We ended up being pretty private. There's a lot we didn't tell you," my elder daughter, Marianne, has said. "If we were in pain, you'd be sad for us, and that put you in pain." Audrey's dominant impression was that in our family, "we just didn't touch the sadness."

This isn't easy to hear. I don't like the image of myself as emotionally distant and fragile. Often, our impulse as mothers is to

give our children what we didn't have growing up and to shield them from pain. Now, after a lifetime of experience as a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, and as a clinical psychologist, I've seen the ways protection can backfire. If we give children too much support, they might not learn that they're capable. If we give them too much safety, they might not learn how to protect themselves. I have asked each of my daughters about their experience of this; they're far enough apart in age, and grew up in such different circumstances, that they had very different childhoods.

Marianne was born in Czechoslovakia, into the family wealth and status of my husband, Béla. When I met Béla at a tuberculosis hospital in the Tatra Mountains soon after the war, I had no idea that he was from one of the wealthiest families in Prešov (a city in modern-day Slovakia), where his father had once been mayor, or that we would start our family in his childhood home, a 500-year-old mansion that was once a monastery. But when Marianne was two, we gave up our portion of the family fortune, fled the new Communist government, and emigrated to America.

We settled in Baltimore, Maryland, where Béla worked unloading boxes in a warehouse, and I did piecework in a garment factory to help pay for the tiny rooms we rented at the back of a house. As she went to school, Marianne became our little ambassador to the New World, teaching us the English language and American culture. And perhaps this outward-facing role that she played in our family helped inoculate her from the secret sadness that pervaded our home.

I was busy denying the past; Marianne inadvertently discovered it. By the time she was 10, she'd read every book in the children's section of the public library, so she began combing the bookcases in our house. One day, she sat us down on the couch and opened a book, one we thought

we'd kept hidden behind others. "What is this?" she asked, pointing to a picture of naked, skeletal corpses piled in a heap. I ran to the bathroom and vomited. I heard Béla say, "Your mother was there."

I hated that she knew. And I hated that I couldn't work up the courage to talk to her about it. I was too afraid that if I spoke of the horror, it would drag me back there, and her with me.

Marianne has told me not to feel guilty about this. She has described to me a number of her friends in New York whose parents were survivors, and who grew up with constant family conversation about the war. The Holocaust was in their consciousness at all times. "There's some relief that we were never confronted with the truth of [your past] until we were older," she said. "As a young kid I felt incredibly safe and loved. I felt very secure, and that was wonderful."

On the surface, Audrey had a more stable family life than Marianne, but that did not necessarily make her feel secure. She was born in Baltimore, but we moved when she was young to El Paso, Texas, a cosmopolitan border city where being an immigrant family was more mainstream. Béla established himself as an accountant, and I went to college and became a high school teacher.

I'd thought my silence about the past would be a buffer for my children. Yet in hiding from the past, I wasn't free of it. I remember walking past Audrey's room in our El Paso home one day when an ambulance drove by with its siren blaring. Audrey dived under the bed. I realized she'd picked up the startle response from me. Even now, I freeze when I hear that wailing alarm of emergency. In trying to give my children freedom from my trauma, I'd only reinforced it.

Then came a time of rupture. When Audrey was still young and living at home,
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THE INCREDIBLE HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR WHO HID IN A SANDPIT TO AVOID THE NAZIS

On a September night in war-torn Holland, Nazi troops stalked a crèche counting Jewish children to be sent to concentration camps.

Among those at the center was six-year-old Ruth Lachs, whose heartrending story had already seen her torn from her home and separated from her parents.

Thanks to a remarkable feat of courage, Ruth found herself hiding in a sandpit and in dead silence avoided detection — an act which saved her life.

Mrs. Lachs said: “My life was saved by good people who chose to be brave and heroic at a time when it would have been

arrived in Amsterdam with only the clothes they could carry and a small amount of cash. But after the Nazis invaded, Ruth and her family were once again in peril and persecuted.

“Daily freedoms which were once taken for granted were snatched away, and our lives became a misery,” she recalled.

By 1942 rumors had begun to circulate of Jews being rounded up and transferred to a transit camp and ultimately on to death and slave labor camps.

Ruth’s father turned their attic rooms into bedrooms, and at night the family hid, hoping the Germans would think the flat was empty.

care of them, ultimately saving Ruth’s life.

Each night Nazi troops came to count the children for deportation. But Ruth’s nanny told her to dress quickly and hide in the sandpit.

She recalled: “My nanny promised she would return for me if I stayed still and kept quiet. It was very dark as I crouched in the corner and I was shivering with the cold. She was true to her word, and as soon as the Germans had left she came back for me.”

Following her escape Ruth was aided by a clandestine group of Dutch students who protected Jews from being sent to the death camps.

She was taken to the south of Holland and placed with a Christian family. Her brother, who had contracted polio, was forced to stay behind.

Just a week later Ruth contracted polio and needed hospital treatment. But without identity papers she was again in grave danger. However, she was saved by the courageous medical director of the hospital, who saw that she was treated secretly, and after her discharge she was returned to Amsterdam by the underground student movement.

There she was placed in a home for disabled children, whose heroic matron hid a number of Jewish children.

After the war ended Ruth was reunited with her parents, who had survived in hiding, with help from the Red Cross. Tragically, her brother had been taken to Auschwitz, where he had died, aged just three.

The remaining family stayed in the Netherlands until the death of Ruth’s father; then they moved to England.

Ruth said: “Looking back, I never forget where I would have been without the bravery of those who helped me. Those who were courageous in the face of terror. Thanks to them I sit here now, a wife, a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother. My family are the legacy of my extraordinary survival and of the ordinary people who chose to do good though they were surrounded by evil.

“Just as we must never forget the horrors of the Holocaust or the six million who were murdered by the Nazis, so we must remember that there were those who gave life and hope. I thank them today and always for my survival.”

BY BRAD MARSHALL, *Bury Times*



Ruth and Werner Lachs.

so much easier and so much safer to turn away.”

Ruth was born the daughter of a businessman in *Hamburg*, Germany, in March 1936. Her first years were happy and typically Jewish.

But on November 9, 1938, the family’s lives were turned upside down after *Kristallnacht*, when hundreds of synagogues and thousands of Jewish businesses were destroyed or damaged, dozens of Jews were killed and tens of thousands rounded up and put in camps.

Mrs. Lachs said: “People thought it could never happen in Germany, but when they watched their synagogues being burnt to the ground and the men being marched away to concentration camps, it was a wake-up call.”

Her father moved the family to the Netherlands. They were forbidden to take any of their possessions when they left, and her father was forced to sell his business for a nominal amount of money. They

As more and more people were rounded up, the family was once again forced to flee, seeking the help of a neighbor — a member of the Underground Workers, who helped Jews to find safety.

Ruth, then aged six, and her brother were separated from their parents and placed with a foster family — a kind-hearted couple who treated them as if they were their own children.

To obscure her Jewish heritage Ruth changed her name to Rudy Klein and pretended to have been orphaned.

But in September 1943, after they were denounced by Dutch Nazi sympathizers, German troops knocked on their door, and Ruth, her brother and her foster mother were arrested and interrogated.

The two children were taken to a crèche, while their foster mother was later released.

In what Ruth calls “an extraordinary twist of fate,” the children’s former nanny was working at the crèche and took extra

THE PHYSICAL SCARS OF THE HOLOCAUST

(Continued from page 4)

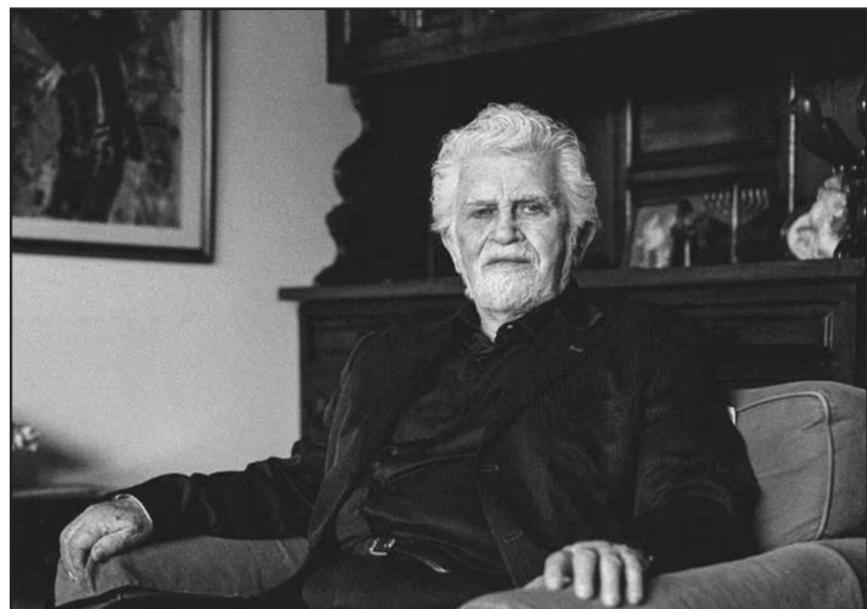
who was there, during the war, in our conversations.

“Each place visited will stay with me, but I don’t think it is possible to successfully make work on this subject, this type of subject, from a distance.

“Today these places might be remembered or forgotten. Marked with a plaque or built over with a shopping center, complete with McDonald’s and multiplex.

“But each of the 150-plus locations visited is full of a history, full of individual sto-

ries, and in almost all of these places, full of horror and tragedy.”



Shmuel Atzmon-Wircer is a Holocaust survivor who lives in Tel Aviv. He and his family escaped to Russia during the war, but were sent to a forced labor camp in Siberia. He has devoted much of his later life to Yiddish theater to preserve the language.

ries, and in almost all of these places, full of horror and tragedy.”

He said that throughout making the book, he had been very conscious of not placing one location over another, and not giving one story more importance than another.

But Mr. Wilson continued: “Some places

“In some locations it was a faint and delicate shadow of a painting on a wall, drawn by a child’s hand over 70 years ago, and in another, at the *Kulmhof* extermination camp in *Rzuchowski* forest, Poland, it was the human bone fragments seeping out of the sandy soil.

“Fragments of the murdered prisoners, whose bodies were burnt and crushed in an attempt to hide what had been done there. Each of these people, a murdered mother, father, child, grandparent, brother or sister, just like ourselves.”

He added that it took him “some time” to find the courage to meet Holocaust survivors, saying he wanted to “feel confident about what I could bring to their lives and thus

make them feel comfortable enough to share their lives with me.”

Mr. Wilson continued: “But each and every meeting, each one-hour or four-hour, or in some cases, two-day conversation, left an indelible mark on me. Their kindness and compassion, their gentleness and their strength.”

And asked if there was anything he was told by one of the survivors that particularly stood out to him, Mr. Wilson said: “I sat for days with these individuals, listening intently as they spoke to me in various languages, taking in each and every word, each glance, not asking questions looking for specific answers but simply listening.

“Hearing what they wanted to share with me, what they want the world to know. But if there is one sentence that I can share with you, it was spoken to me by Rita, in December 2017, aged 96.

“After she had told me the story of her childhood, her deportation from her village to an internment camp and on to a number of slave labor camps, the murder of her family and finally the death march from *Stutthoff* concentration camp in northern Poland, and her group being left to float on a open barge in the Baltic Sea, with no food or water, left, on purpose, to die.”

Rita Weiss, whom Mr. Wilson visited in Tel Aviv, told him: “In April 1945 they ordered us out of the camp. There was no train or bus, we were on foot. The death march.

“We came to the sea and there were barges. We waited to die in the sea. A barge with prisoners from Norway, Poland, Greece.... After one day and one night we did not know what to do. One man said we must begin to swim.

“We did not know where we were, which country, which sea, we just wanted to swim, so we did. We could die in the sea or we could die on the boat. I had to survive, I had to stay alive because I had to tell, must tell, what happened.”

BY MARK DUELL, *MailOnline*

EXHIBITION REMEMBERS ATHLETES MURDERED IN THE HOLOCAUST

Jewish News has teamed up with Chelsea Football Club to launch an exhibition honoring Jewish Olympic athletes murdered in the Holocaust.

The 49 Flames initiative, composed of portraits illustrated by British-Israeli street artist Solomon Souza, tells the extraordinary stories of 15 sportsmen and -women who perished during the *Shoah*.

The initiative tells the stories of cousins Alfred and Gustav Felix Flatow, German Jewish gold medalists at the first modern Olympics held in Athens in 1896, who both died of starvation in *Theresienstadt*.

It recalls the plight of German Jewish track and field athlete Lilli Henoeh, who set four world records and won 10 German national championships, in four different disciplines. In 1942, Lilli and her mother were deported to Riga, where they both perished.

It shines a light on chess player Salo Landau; Roman Kantor, a Polish Olympic épée fencer; and world champion table tennis player Gertrude Kleinova.

It also features contributions from Holocaust educators, *Jewish News* editor Richard Ferrer, Israel’s president Reuven Rivlin, human rights activist Natan Sharansky, the government’s anti-Semitism ad-

viser Lord John Mann, and Holocaust survivor Sir Ben Helfgott, a champion weightlifter who captained the British Olympic team.

In March of this year, a 12-meter mural by Souza was displayed at the Chelsea club’s home ground, Stamford Bridge, depicting three former footballers who were imprisoned by the Nazis, including Julius Hirsch, the first German Jew to be capped by his country — before he was murdered in Auschwitz; British prisoner of war Ron Jones; and the Hungarian, Árpád Weisz.

BY JACK MENDEL, *Jewish News*

MISSION OF DEDICATION AND COMMEMORATION

(Continued from page 1)

Ir Habahadim came from ASYV leaders and donors — Beth and Leonard Wilf, Sharon and David Halpern, Amy and Bob Book, Nancy and Sam Shamie, and Gabrielle and Jack Shnay. At a dinner following the ceremony at Ir Habahadim, Rachel Shnay, co-chair of ASYV's Young Leadership Associates, spoke about the meaning of Holocaust remembrance to a younger generation.

The delegation participated in Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day/*Yom Hashoah* ceremonies. *Yom Hashoah* is a national day of commemoration in Israel, on which the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust are memorialized. The central ceremonies, in the evening and the following morning, were held at Yad Vashem and broadcast live. Andrea and Loren Weiss laid a wreath on behalf of the delegation during the morning ceremonies, and new Yad Vashem Pillars Nancy and Sam Shamie of Detroit, Michigan, lit a memorial flame. A particularly powerful moment took place when the bus taking the delegation to Yad Vashem on *Yom Hashoah* pulled over to the side of the road as the memorial siren began blaring. Everyone got off the bus and stood in silence for two minutes, along with other Israelis who had stopped their cars or stopped on the sidewalk — one more example of how the Holocaust is part of the very essence of Israel.

The smaller delegation size enabled participants to engage with Yad Vashem's leadership and content experts in a more intimate and meaningful way. While none of the participants were second generation, all realized their connection to the Holocaust was much closer and significant than initially believed. Mark Hirsch from Scarsdale, New York, who attended with his wife, Jill, and Claudia Morse from New York, who came with her husband, Doug, submitted archival research requests on their families and experienced, firsthand, the scope and value of Yad Vashem's vast archives collection, learning details they never knew and raising additional questions about their families' experiences during the *Shoah*.

Throughout the mission, the delegation was joined by other ASYV leaders and major donors, including Adina Burian, co-chair of ASYV, and her husband, Lawrence; Steven Baral, co-chair of ASYV's Development Committee; and Iris and Shalom Maidenbaum.



Batya Kahane with Einat Dayan and Dani Dayan, Chairman of Yad Vashem, at a dinner hosted by her son-in-law, Bruce Taragin, and his Blumberg Capital partner, Yodfat Harel Buchris.



Mission chairs Andrea & Loren Weiss during a walking tour of the White City in Tel Aviv.



Claudia and Doug Morse lighting memorial candle in the Valley of the Communities.

PANEL DISCUSSION ON ANTI-SEMITISM

On Tuesday, May 17th, The American Society for Yad Vashem's Tristate Region hosted a cocktail reception and evening program in recognition of our Partners Circle.

The event, "Rising Antisemitism in 2022: Educating Against Hate & Yad Vashem's Role," featured Dani Dayan, chairman of Yad Vashem, and Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, in conversation with Michael Miller, CEO emeritus of the New York Jewish

Community Relations Council.

Each of the panelists shared his unique wisdom and vision of the lessons of the Holocaust and its relevance to our lives today and elaborated on how the legacy of the Holocaust has shaped society, politics and culture.

Loren Weiss, Tristate Region committee chair, opened with remarks and took the opportunity to express gratitude to the American Society for Yad Vashem supporters for their commitment and meaningful support.



Eran Broshy, Amy Cooper, Andrea Weiss, Dani Dayan and Dr. Haim Gertner.



Josh Gelnick, YLA co-chair and Michael Shmuely.



Dani Dayan, Malcolm Hoenlein and Michael Miller.



Dr. Haim Gertner, Dani Dayan, Malcolm Hoenlein, Adina Burian, Michael Miller and Stanley H. Stone.



Loren Weiss.



Event attendees listening to panel discussion.

FAMILY OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR....

(Continued from page 2)

At the end of their guided tour of the Holocaust History Museum, they entered the Hall of Names, the hallowed chamber at Yad Vashem containing over 2.7 million Pages of Testimony bearing the names of victims of the Holocaust. Isidore took a moment to search Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, which contains over 4,800,000 names of Jewish men, women and children murdered by the Nazis and their accomplices. In the Names Database, he found entries for several members of his family, including grandparents, but none for his two older siblings.

Dr. Zuckerbrod explained:

"My brother and sister had been in hiding in a separate location. They were murdered in the very place they were supposed to be safe. I never knew what really happened until now. Thanks to the stories Renata told me from her father, I now know the date of their death, so I can properly mourn them each year."

Szyfner added:

"Even after the war, my grandmother

and father cared for non-Jewish orphans and raised them as their own family. Goodness was in their blood."



Dr. Isidore Zuckerbrod and Renata Szyfner at the Wall of Honor in the Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations.

After liberation, the Zuckerbrods remained in *Krakow*. Their son Isidore was born eight weeks after VE Day on July 4, 1945. However, because of the anti-Semitic sentiment among the local population, they

decided to emigrate to England. Jankiel Heller, one of the other Jews rescued, returned to *Mielec*, where he was murdered in August 1945 by Polish nationalists.

Twenty-five years after the end of the war, Isidore Zuckerbrod visited Poland and went to meet Eugeniusz Szyfner. "I spoke no Polish and he no English, and even though I took a Polish guide and interpreter with me, he was suspicious. He thought the guide had belonged to the Polish Secret Police and didn't really talk with us," recalls Zuckerbrod.

On November 6, 1996, Yad Vashem recognized Katarzyna Szyfner and her son, Eugeniusz, as Righteous Among the Nations.

Director of Yad Vashem's Righteous Among the Nations Department Dr. Joel Zisenwine remarked at the reunion:

"It is vital that the next generations continue to perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust. The fact that you sought each other out and are here today standing in Yad Vashem illustrates how relevant the Holocaust is still today, almost eighty years after the end of World War II."

A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR'S SECRET SADNESS

(Continued from page 5)

Béla and I divorced. (Happily, we reconciled and remarried two years later.) By the time of our marital hiatus, Marianne had already left home, gone to graduate school, and become a child psychologist.

I would follow in her footsteps, but only after this unsettled period — during which I finally began to publicly acknowledge that I was a survivor. A fellow student at the University of Texas at El Paso had given me a copy of Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*. At first I couldn't bear to read a fellow Auschwitz survivor's story, but late one night, my curiosity got the better of me, and I opened the book. As I read, I didn't feel shut down or trapped, which had been my fear. Frankl's main premise was that "everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." This opened up the possibility that I, too, could choose — to tell my story, and to heal.

I still didn't talk directly about my past with either of my children, even as I began to write and speak about it to others. Audrey had learned about the Holocaust not from me but at Sunday school. Again, it fell to Béla to tell her that I'd been in Auschwitz. Perhaps out of loyalty to me and my silence, or because she shared my fear of reckoning with what had been hidden

away, Audrey always avoided anything that dealt with the Holocaust.

That finally changed a few years ago, on a trip we took together to Europe. We met a man whose grandfather had been a Nazi. As Audrey spoke with him, and spent time with him on a work project, she saw that, though born on opposite sides of an immense historical tragedy, they were walking the same path: figuring out how to live with a brutal past, and choosing the legacy to pass on.

"Sometimes I wanted it to be happier," Audrey has admitted. "The upside is, I became very independent. I got myself where I needed to go and did what I needed to do." Today, she is a business-leadership coach. "Resilience is in my DNA."

"Success, working hard, knowing how to figure it out — it's in the family genes," Marianne agreed. That makes me think of my parents' frustrated ambitions: my father, who longed to be a doctor but whose family couldn't pay for medical school; my mother, who had a career at the foreign ministry before she married my father but whose world seemed to contract when she became a wife and a mother. It seems that despite the loss and horror our family endured, each generation has grown stronger. Béla used to say that our children and grandchildren were the best revenge against Hitler. He didn't live long enough to meet our great-grandchildren, but how

proud he would have been of them.

Today, I am the bridge that connects my mother to my daughters and their daughters. Sometimes, talking to them, I feel in a flash my mother's presence. I see her packing food — flour, schmaltz — the morning the Hungarian Nazis tore us from our beds at dawn and imprisoned us in a brick factory, where we slept on the ground for weeks, awaiting transport to Auschwitz. In a moment of crisis, she had the foresight to pack the ingredients to prepare food. She had no way to know that soon, eight of us would share one loaf of bread, our only daily ration. I can hear my mother's voice in the dark and stench of the cattle car: "Just remember, no one can take away from you what you've put in your mind."

So I am the transmitter of my mother's recipes: chicken paprikash, székely goulash. In Auschwitz, when we were starving, we prepared food in our minds. We imagined the ingredients of sustenance. I'm still doing it, nearly 80 years later.

Either way — from what we had in childhood or from what we didn't have — we create nourishment. I eat and cook now because once I was starving. And so that I can pass on something from my parents. If I feed the generations to come, I can feel that my parents didn't die in vain.

BY EDITH EGER, *The Atlantic*

INNOCENT WITNESSES

Innocent Witnesses: Childhood Memories of World War II.

By Marilyn Yalom. Stanford University Press: Redwood City, California, 2021. 224 pp. \$16.25 hardcover.

Children remember. They may not remember details. That may be filled in later. They may not remember subtleties. That, too, may be filled in later. But they remember . . . especially those events that fill them with anxiety and fear. And often that can affect them in the future, even if they don't consciously and immediately realize it. In the volume entitled *Innocent Witnesses: Childhood Memories of World War II* by Marilyn Yalom, a compilation of such "first-person narratives," we plainly see this. The book itself is a result of the author's close relationship with these individuals as adults "and on decades-long conversations with them." An especially compelling piece in this work is called, "Escaping the Nyilas: Hungary's Holocaust." It tells us of a past life-or-death moment suddenly thrust back into consciousness sixty years later by a similarly powerful incident. At the age of thirteen Robert "Bob" Berger, a Hungarian Jewish boy, escaped deportation to live on his own in Budapest as a Christian on false papers. One day, he caught the eye of a Nyilas — a member of a home-grown militia group that collaborated with the Nazis and whose members were known to be eager helpers when it came to persecuting Jews. In the midst of this heart-pounding situation, Berger had to think quickly to save himself, particularly

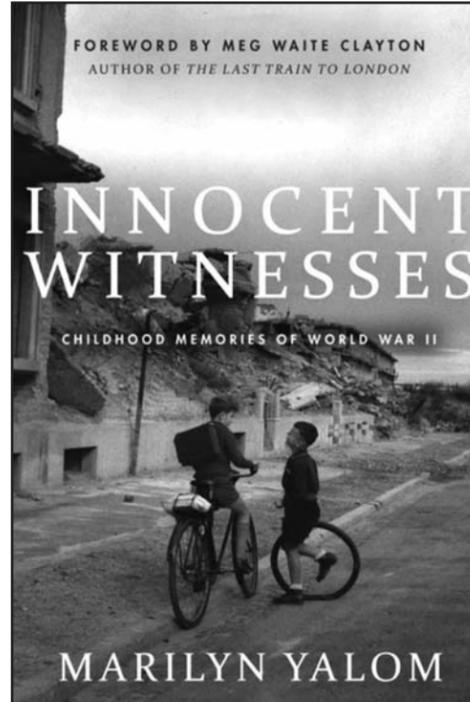
because he was carrying items that would immediately implicate him as a member of the resistance. Years later, in Caracas, Venezuela, he was again confronted by a situation that could have ended with Berger kidnapped and even worse. A young man approached him at the airport. He said he was "security." He seemed to want to be helpful. But something didn't feel right about the man. . . . Luckily, Berger got away from him. Once the adrenaline stopped pumping, Berger experienced a flashback. He remembered the Hungarian incident. . . and remembered, too, the guilt he felt and still feels for being unable to save an elderly Jewish couple already prisoners of the same Nyilas follower who almost captured him. And that nagging guilt led to nightmares. . . .

In the piece entitled "Into Exile: Fleeing Czechoslovakia for England," we meet Susan Groag Bell, originally from "Troppau, a provincial town on the northern border of Czechoslovakia." Up to the age of twelve, she lived a "privileged" life. From an affluent home, she had everything a child could want. Her father was a successful lawyer. Her mother was his law clerk. But when the Nazis took over, everything changed. Because her grandparents were all Jews — Bell's own parents had

converted to Catholicism and she was baptized in the Lutheran church — she was thrown out of school. In fact, when that happened, Bell would vividly recall how the other students started "grumbling" "menacing[ly]" at her. Then, "suddenly," that "grumbling" "erupted into a long drawn-out howl." Luckily, not very long after that, Bell and her mother fled to England. Nonetheless, things didn't end happily. For, as it turns out, Bell never really recovered from the loss of her father, who never made it out of Czechoslovakia, and never really got over the shock inherent in the loss of "home" and all that word signifies.

Meanwhile, with the chapter entitled "Within the War Machine: A Nazi Childhood," Yalom gives her readers the opportunity to look at the war from a completely different and eye-opening vantage point. Winfried Weiss was the child of an officer in the German *Ordnungspolizei*, "the gendarmerie, which was the uniformed police force throughout Germany." In October 1940, his father was promoted to *Meister der Gendarmerie* and transferred to *Kitzingen*. On the one hand, looking back at those years, Weiss would remember good times: joyfully inter-

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THE HOLOCAUST ON THE HOOF

On August 28, 1942, Abraham Lewin, a middle-aged school-teacher trapped inside the Warsaw ghetto, received shattering news of the fate of fellow Jews, his wife Luba among them, who had recently been rounded up and deported to an unknown location. The crammed trains had gone to *Treblinka*, Lewin heard from a prisoner who had escaped from what was then the most lethal Holocaust camp, where most new arrivals were dead and buried within hours. In just a few weeks, more than 200,000 Jews from Warsaw were slaughtered there; such was the killers' frenzy that the grounds were strewn with discarded clothes and corpses. "God! Are we really to be exterminated down to the very last of us?" Lewin wrote that day in Warsaw. "This is without doubt the greatest crime ever committed in the whole of history."

How to explain this crime, the signature

crime of the past century, is a question that has occupied survivors and scholars ever since. Why did the Nazi regime murder up to six million Jews during the Second World War? The most common answer is that, consumed by murderous anti-Semitism, Hitler and other Nazi leaders developed an early blueprint for mass extermination and then put it into practice, relentlessly and unwaveringly. There was a "straight path," in other words, from the murderous rants of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* in the 1920s to the gas chambers in the 1940s. But as David Cesarani explains in his masterful synthesis of recent scholarship, historians now tend to see the path to the Holocaust as "twisted." In fact, they don't see a single path at all; there were many paths and dead ends, detours and reversals on the way to Auschwitz. Cesarani aimed to bring this conclusion to a wider readership, bridging the "yawning

gulf" between academic research, which has become ever more nuanced, and popular knowledge, which lags behind. Few were better placed to undertake such an ambitious project than Cesarani, a peerless public historian of the Holocaust. His book *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933–1949*, completed just before his sudden death, aged 58, is his legacy — his last major study and his finest.

In the prewar years, the new German rulers took countless steps to exclude Jews from the "national community," inch by inch, taking away their jobs, their property and their future; previously respectable members of society became paupers and outcasts. But what appears in retrospect like a coherent policy was anything but. As Cesarani shows, Nazi anti-Jewish measures were often improvised and muddled, driven by competing visions and political

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SARENKA, UNSUNG HERO OF THE WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

On the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, April 19, 1948, and just 21 days before the State of Israel's Declaration of Independence and the subsequent attack on Israel by seven Arab armies, the Ghetto Heroes Monument was inaugurated in the Polish capital.

This monument was created by sculptor Nathan Rapoport, who was born in Warsaw and was a member of Hashomer Hatzair, a socialist-Zionist, secular Jewish youth movement in Poland.

One side of the monument, which faces the spot where the *Judenrat* building used to stand, depicts subdued Jews being led to the slaughter. You can see a religious Jewish man who's holding a Torah scroll and is apparently leading the procession. The faces of the murderers can be seen only in the background.

The second side of the monument is composed of seven insurgents who are bursting out of flames along with one of the uprising leaders, Mordechai Anielewicz, who stands with a grenade in his hand. Anielewicz was clearly identified on the monument by his protégé from Hashomer Hatzair, senior Holocaust scholar Professor Israel Gutman.

Anielewicz is not, however, the only central figure in the monument. Above him, a bare-breasted woman is holding a baby high up in her arms toward the heavens — perhaps as an act of rebellion, or hope for the future.

This is perhaps the most famous monument in the world, and more groups on Holocaust trips and tourists hold ceremonies there than at any other location in the world.

In 2012, after his wife, Ruth, died, former Mossad agent Reuven Aloni moved into an assisted living facility.

His son, Ofer Aloni, who is an artist, exhibition designer and a philosopher, found an old tin box filled with photographs and letters written in Polish in his father's attic, as he was sorting through his father's belongings.

With help from other survivors, Ofer succeeded in identifying Anielewicz. Ofer's aunt Rachel Zylberberg, whom everyone called Sarenka (fawn in Polish), Zvi Braun, Moshe Domev and Aviva Anielewicz, Mordechai's sister.

Sarenka was born in Warsaw in 1920. She excelled in her studies and was active in Hashomer Hatzair. After the German invasion of Poland and the outbreak of World

War II, Sarenka fled with her sister, Ruth, Ofer's mother, to Lithuania, which by then had been overtaken by the Soviets. They



Ghetto Heroes Monument in Warsaw, Poland.

went to live on Hashomer Hatzair's *Kibbutz Hamanof* and later in Vilna, where Sarenka lived with her partner, Moshe Kopito, who was also a close friend of Anielewicz.

The movement granted Sarenka a permit to make *aliyah* to the Land of Israel, but she refused to leave Moshe behind, and offered the certificate to a colleague. In February 1941, their daughter, Maya, was born.

On June 22, the Germans attacked Soviet positions in eastern Poland in a mission called Operation Barbarossa, and within four days had occupied Lithuania.

On June 24, Vilna was overtaken, with its strong Jewish community of 80,000 people, which was one of the most important Jewish centers the world over. Many Polish Jews had reached Vilna as they fled the Nazis, and most kept on traveling further east toward the Soviet Union. Sarenka and Moshe, however, stayed put with their daughter in order to carry on with their Hashomer Hatzair leadership activity.

A week into the occupation, with help from Lithuanian collaborators, the Germans began sending groups of 500 Jews to *Ponary*, a small town near Vilna, where they shot the Jews to death inside huge pits the Soviets had dug to store fuel tanks. In July 1941, 5,000 Jews were killed in *Ponary*, and a total of 40,000 Jews had been murdered there by the end of the

year. Survivors who managed to stagger back to the ghetto in Vilna told others about the massacre.

Professor Dina Porat, the chief historian of Yad Vashem, writes in her book *Beyond the Reaches of Our Souls*, "The first survivors — mostly women — returned from the pits and described to us explicitly how they were murdering all the Jews.

"The *Judenrat* [the Jewish administration in charge of mediation between the Jewish community and the Nazi regime] refused to meet with the survivors, and many people had a hard time believing their outrageous stories. When Pesia Aronowitz reached the home of Dr. Mark Dvorzecki, she had a hard time convincing anyone that what she had experienced was the truth, although she did succeed in convincing the doctor. Once she realized everyone thought she was crazy, she stopped talking about it."

Sarenka's partner, Moshe, was murdered one day when he was out buying milk for their baby, and someone had informed on his whereabouts. At that point, Sarenka decided to place Maya with a Russian Communist doctor, a friend of hers who ran an orphanage. Sarenka would visit her daughter when she could, but at one point she moved into hiding at the Polish Dominican Convent of the Little Sisters in the forest with Abba Kovner, his mother, Chajka Grossman and another 16 Hashomer Hatzair leaders.

Sarenka and her comrades, who were all in their early 20s, soon understood that the Nazis had begun carrying out a systematic plan to exterminate all the Jews.

In her book titled *The Underground*, Grossman writes how the Hashomer Hatzair leaders discussed how imperative it was that they create a fighting organization that could send emissaries to all the Jewish communities throughout Eastern Europe to "tell them the bitter and cruel truth about the atrocities and the Nazis' extermination plan. We had to encourage them to defend themselves." In her book, Porat describes how Kovner claims that the first mention of a Warsaw ghetto uprising took place at the Little Sisters convent.

At a meeting at *Kibbutz Ha'ogen* in 1973 to mark the 30th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, Kovner vehemently criticized Polish Zionist leaders who fled from Poland to Vilna during the war, with specific mention of certain veteran Hashomer Hatzair members, which left

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THE HOLOCAUST ON THE HOOF

(Continued from page 11)

rivalries. It was only in the late 1930s, after the watershed of the *Kristallnacht* pogrom, that anti-Jewish policy was more centrally coordinated, aiming to “kick the Jew out of Germany,” as Hitler’s henchman Reinhard Heydrich declared. But there was still no definite plan. As late as autumn 1941, after the war had delivered millions more Jews into Nazi hands and the mass murder of Soviet Jews had begun, the regime was still unsure about its ultimate goal. “Were Jews to be expelled, placed in ghettos, or put to death?” asks Cesarani.

At times, he pushes his point — the Holocaust on the hoof — too far, and underplays the effectiveness of Nazi measures. But he is right to stress the open-ended nature of anti-Jewish policy until well into the war: it is not entirely fanciful to believe that, had the Third Reich defeated Britain and gained supremacy of the seas in 1940, Nazi rulers would have gone ahead with their monstrous scheme to dump Jews on the island of Madagascar. The fact that Auschwitz was not inevitable is crucial, not least for our understanding of Jewish reactions at the time: if even the Nazis themselves were not sure what the Final Solution would be, how could their victims have known?

The fate of the Jews was finally decided, Cesarani argues, in late 1941. The failure of the *blitzkrieg* against the Soviet Union had scuppered the last territorial “solution” still on the table: expulsion to Siberia. Meanwhile, Hitler’s reckless declaration of war against the United States — one of the centers of the Jewish world conspiracy, in his deluded mind — meant that holding European Jews hostage to deter the US from entering the conflict was now pointless. As Joseph Goebbels put it when

he summarized a secret speech Hitler made on December 12, 1941: “The world war is here, the destruction of the Jews must be the inevitable consequence.” Some historians would point to other pivotal moments during the decisive months of 1941–42, when the Holocaust took shape. And they would argue that Nazi leaders took some key decisions during times of euphoria, rather than at times of crisis and military failure, as Cesarani suggests. And yet, there can be no doubt that the Holocaust was inextricably linked to the war. After all, Hitler always saw the war as also a war against the Jews. As Cesarani concludes, the Holocaust “was rooted in anti-Semitism but it was shaped by war.” The course of the conflict also influenced the implementation of the genocidal program, which proceeded in fits and starts until Germany lay in ruins, and the great majority of Jews under Nazi control had been murdered.

Cesarani paints this picture of death and destruction with erudition and empathy, using a fine brush on a vast canvas. It shows the victims’ daily degradation and suffering, without flinching from the worst scenes, such as sexual abuse and rape (far more common than often thought, Cesarani emphasizes). It depicts the throng of perpetrators and bystanders, as well as the collaborators, who were driven by greed as much as by racism. “For the Germans 300 Jews are 300 enemies of humanity,” one local outside Vilnius wrote in 1941; “for the Lithuanians they are 300 pairs of shoes, trousers and the like.” This is just one of many voices of onlook-

ers and victims — taken from contemporary diaries and letters — to emerge from the book. The history of the Holocaust could be told through gut-wrenching SS statistics alone, such as the 46,191 pounds of golden wedding rings the killers robbed in Galicia. But Cesarani also puts faces to these figures, like that of Lewin, one of the 450,000 people in the Warsaw ghetto (where more Jews died than were deported from across France to death camps in the east).



The forced resettlement of Jews from villages and small cities in Warsaw District to the Warsaw ghetto.

Lewin’s diary encapsulates the dreams and fears of the victims, written when his own future was still uncertain. On June 2, 1942, he noted with an air of optimism that the Allied bombing raids on German cities made “the pulse beat faster,” raising hopes that “the war will be over soon.” But the war did not end fast enough to save him. “Over our heads hangs the perpetual threat of total annihilation,” Lewin wrote in despair on January 11, 1943, and a couple of days later, his voice was silenced forever.

BY NIKOLAUS WACHSMANN,
The Guardian

INNOCENT WITNESSES

(Continued from page 11)

acting with his friends, taking walks and playing fun games with his father, all the warm respect he received from his father’s colleagues because he was the *Meister’s* son. However, on the other hand, Weiss would also recall the deathly fear that gripped him when he heard whispered rumors about a “nest of Jews” “kidnap[ing] and kill[ing] Christian children” whose “small carcasses” were found “in a kosher butcher shop hanging from hooks like pigs and cows.” It was said that their blood was used to bake matzos. And then there was the time when, unbeknownst to his father — a father he could barely recognize from his

authoritarian stance and unfeeling demeanor — he watched from a distance as the father coldly directed a deportation of Jews “on the noon train” . . . and was left to make sense of it all.

Finally, the author herself is a good example of this phenomenon of children remembering particularly emotional events that occurred in their early years. For, even though she did not experience the war firsthand, and even though she spent most of her academic life working in a completely different field, Yalom writes that the feeling of owing a “debt,” of wanting to do something for those who went through the war, was always there. Why? She could never forget how, during those years, her own

mother endlessly worried about her sister in Poland, while she and her immediate family were safe and secure in America. Moreover, she could never forget how utterly distraught her mother was when she received the tragic news that her sister, with her husband and their child, “with braids like” Yalom’s own, had died in a concentration camp. In fact, Yalom writes how that “shattered” her “innocence.” The end result: the book here written . . . many years later . . . about people she knew and cared about.

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

PORTUGAL CONSUL WHO SAVED THOUSANDS FROM HOLOCAUST

Eighty years ago, a middle-aged, mid-ranking diplomat sank into deep depression and watched his hair turn grey in days, as he saw the streets of *Bordeaux* filling with Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis.

As Portugal's consul in *Bordeaux*, Aristides de Sousa Mendes faced a moral dilemma. Should he obey government orders, or listen to his own conscience and supply Jews with the visas that would allow them to escape from advancing German forces?

Sousa Mendes' remarkable response means he is remembered as a hero by survivors and descendants of the thousands he helped to flee.



Aristides de Sousa Mendes and a telegram from Portuguese dictator Salazar.

But his initiative also spelled the end of a diplomatic career under Portuguese dictator António de Oliveira Salazar, and the rest of his life was spent in penury.

Portugal finally granted official recognition to its disobedient diplomat, and parliament decided a monument in the National Pantheon should bear his name.

It was mid-June 1940, and Hitler's forces were days from completing victory over France. Paris fell on June 14, and an armistice was signed just over a week later.

Portugal's diplomatic corps was under strict instruction from the right-wing Salazar dictatorship that visas should be issued to refugee Jews and stateless people only with express permission from Lisbon.

For those thronging *Bordeaux's* streets hoping to cross into Spain and escape Nazi persecution, there was no time to wait.

"We heard the French had surrendered and the Germans were on the move," says Henri Dyner. He was three, but retains vivid memories of his Jewish family's flight from their home in *Antwerp*, as Nazi Germany attacked Belgium and invaded France and the Netherlands.

"What I remember is the sound of the

bombing, which must have woken me, and my mother telling me it was thunder.

"My parents turned on the radio and heard King Leopold telling Belgians we had been betrayed and attacked by the Germans. My father had been suspecting there could be a war since 1938. He had a plan, and a car," Mr. Dyner, now a retired engineer living in New York, told the BBC.

Eliezar Dyner, his wife Sprince and five other relatives, including a seven-month-old baby, drove away from the bombing and into France.

"My father avoided big roads, gave Paris a wide berth and stuck to the coast. He wanted to be only 10 miles ahead of the front all the time, because he thought it could be a quick war and why go too far when you might have to go back?"

After seeing German warplanes strafing French trenches and hearing the news of successive German victories, Henri's father realized by the time they reached *Bordeaux* there would be no return to *Antwerp* any time soon.

In *Bordeaux*, the consul had struck up a friendship with a rabbi. Chaim Kruger had also fled the Nazi advance from his

home in Belgium.

Consul Sousa Mendes offered the rabbi and his immediate family safe passage across the Spanish border, but then suffered a "moral crisis," according to historian Mordecai Paldiel.

Kruger refused the offer, as he could not abandon the thousands of other Jewish refugees in *Bordeaux*.

In a letter dated June 13, 1940, Sousa Mendes wrote: "Here the situation is horrible, and I am in bed because of a strong nervous breakdown."

"No one really knows what went through his mind in those two or three days," says Dr. Paldiel, who ran the Righteous Among the Nations department at Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial center for 25 years.

"Some say the duty of a diplomat is to obey orders from above, even if those instructions are not moral.

"Later on, in Lisbon, Sousa Mendes told a rabbi this: 'If so many Jews can suffer because of one Catholic, it's all right for one

Catholic to suffer for many Jews.' He was talking about Hitler, of course."

Whatever did go through the diplomat's mind, Sousa Mendes emerged on Monday, June 17, with a new determination.

According to his son, Pedro Nuno de Sousa Mendes, "he strode out of his bedroom, flung open the door to the chancellery, and announced in a loud voice: 'From now on I'm giving everyone visas. There will be no more nationalities, races or religions.'"

For Henri Dyner and his family, this was a lifesaver.

By chance Henri's mother knew the consul from his time in *Antwerp*, where she was a secretary at the British consulate.

The Dyner family had already tried and failed to obtain visas from US, British and Canadian authorities to leave France. Before his breakdown, Sousa Mendes had put them on a list in a request sent to the Salazar government.

"My mother recalls that he disappeared for a couple of days, and when he came out, his hair had gone grey," says Henri Dyner, who remembers queues of refugees outside the consulate in *Bordeaux* and camping in squares.

"My mother actually began to work for Sousa Mendes those days, helping with this kind of production line of visas all down a long table. Sousa Mendes saved our lives."

No one knows for sure how many transit visas were issued, allowing refugees to pass from France into Spain and travel onward to Portugal. But estimates range be-



Rabbi Chaim Kruger told the consul (R) he could not accept a visa and leave thousands of others behind.

tween 10,000 and 30,000, and most sought to cross the Atlantic to a variety of American destinations.

The US-based Sousa Mendes Foundation has identified some 3,800 recipients of these visas.

As if possessed with a sense of mission,
(Continued on page 15)

SARENKA, UNSUNG HERO....

(Continued from page 12)

Poland's three million Jews without any leadership.

"All of the veteran Hashomer Hatzair leaders left Poland for the Land of Israel," stated Kovner unequivocally, "leaving a serious leadership vacuum. Not even one emissary remained there during this crucial moment, and the young Jews had to face the atrocities on their own."

According to Ofer Aloni, it wasn't just plans for the Warsaw ghetto uprising that Sarenka and her Hashomer Hatzair comrades came up with during their time at the Little Sisters. Their ideas were a catalyst for youth throughout the world to engage in rebellions.

"The amazing insights Sarenka and her comrades came up with at the monastery were the main engine that helped bring about the creation of the State of Israel just three years after the *Shoah* came to an end," claims Aloni.

The Warsaw ghetto uprising broke out on the eve of the Passover holiday, and continued for an entire month until May 16. It was the first revolt of the people during World War II. Despite the paucity of their weapons, the resistance fighters succeeded in holding their position against the Nazis longer than any other uprising had.

Two groups fought separately with minimal coordination. There was the leftist ZOB faction, led by Mordechai Anielewicz and other Hashomer Hatzair leaders, as well as the right-wing ZZW faction, led by Pawel Frenkiel. Sarenka served as a commander and fought alongside Anielewicz.

On May 8, when the Germans discovered the large bunker at 18 Mila Street, which served as the ZOB's command center, most of the leaders and dozens of other fighters refused to surrender to the Germans. Instead, they all swallowed

cyanide pills in a massive act of suicide. Although his body was never uncovered, it is believed that Anielewicz died on that day at Mila 18, along with his deputy, Mark Edelman.

As soon as he discovered the bundle of



Rachel Leah Zylberberg (Sarenka).

letters, Ofer called me and told me the whole story over the phone. We met the same day, and he showed me everything he'd uncovered. We discussed what the implications of all this were.

He told me that it was imperative that he find his cousin Maya and share Sarenka's story with the whole world. In the six years that have passed, Ofer has devoted a great deal of time, effort and money to this task. So far, he has obtained Maya's birth certificate in Vilna and has given a number of interviews about his discoveries. He was even arrested for a few hours by the Polish police for disturbing the peace.

Ofer told me he took the letters and photographs he'd found in the tin box with him to the Ghetto Fighters' House at *Kibbutz Lohamei Hagetaot*.

"The Holocaust survivors there pointed out my aunt Sarenka in one of the photos. Then I went to Yad Vashem, where I met

with Aliza Shomron, who told me of the shock everyone had experienced when Sarenka returned to the ghetto and told them about the *Ponary* massacre. The letters were all written in Polish, so I couldn't understand what was written in them, so I took them to Professor Israel Gutman, and he pointed out one picture he believed was of Mordechai Anielewicz."

Aliza Vitis Shomron is a survivor who spent time in the Warsaw ghetto in 1942. She remembers the night Sarenka came back and told all the youngsters all the terrifying details of the *Ponary* massacre.

"We were all sitting on the floor, and then an emissary named Rachel or Sarenka arrived. She was only 22, but she had the hair of an old woman. She told us, 'All of the Hashomer Hatzair leaders were gathered in an apartment when, all of a sudden, we heard German cars coming and then stopping outside. There were screams and gunshots as they began evacuating the buildings all around us. They were taking everyone to the nearby forest in *Ponary*, where they were shooting us. Thousands of Jews were killed. They lined everyone up in lines — men, women and children — and then began shooting them.

"I've come back to the ghetto to warn you. We have information that the Nazis are killing off everyone in all of the ghettos across Poland, Ukraine and Lithuania. As a result, we've decided to get organized and defend ourselves. We will not go like sheep to the slaughter. Half of us will remain here in the ghetto, while the others will try to escape and join the partisans."

"Sarenka's words were so full of emotion, and at times her voice cracked. We just sat there silently, in shock, waiting for her to continue. Was it possible they were really killing all the women and children?"

BY URI MILSTEIN, *The Jerusalem Post*

PORTUGAL CONSUL WHO SAVED THOUSANDS...

(Continued from page 14)

the consul even signed visas on the road as crowds in *Bordeaux* began to form a human column southward toward the border town of *Hendaye*. He stopped at the consulate in *Bayonne* to issue more papers.

The foreign ministry in Lisbon began sending cablegrams to *Bordeaux*, ordering him to desist, amid reports from colleagues that he had "lost his senses."

Spanish authorities declared his visas invalid, but thousands had already made it across the Bidasoa river into Spain's Basque region.

Eventually, Sousa Mendes reported to

his bosses in Lisbon on July 8.

Among those who escaped occupied France thanks to his visas were surrealist artist Salvador Dalí, filmmaker King Vidor, members of the Rothschild banking family and the majority of Belgium's future government-in-exile.

Salazar's Portugal would later be praised for its role in allowing refugees to escape from Nazi occupation and repression, but Sousa Mendes was expelled from the diplomatic corps and left without a pension.

His family home in Cabanas de Viriato fell into ruin, though the exterior has since been restored.

"Sousa Mendes was mistreated by Salazar. He died in misery as a pauper, and his children emigrated to try to find a future somewhere else," says Henri Dyner.

Henri's family ended up in Brazil, before he moved to the US for professional reasons. But he remembers a man who had courage in his convictions.

"The way things are in the world today, we need more people prepared to stand up for what is right and take a stand."

On October 18, 1966, Yad Vashem recognized Aristides de Sousa Mendes as Righteous Among the Nations.

BY JAMES BADCOCK, *BBC*



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.

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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:

Robert Christopher Morton, Director of Planned Giving at ASYV
212-220-4304 or Cmorton@YadVashemUSA.org

American Society for Yad Vashem
MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE
500 FIFTH AVENUE, 42nd FLOOR
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10110-4299
Web site: www.yadvashemusa.org

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Stanley H. Stone
Editor-in-Chief

Yefim Krasnyanskiy, M.A.,
Editor

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