

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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CORPORATE GROUPS MARK INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY WITH ASYV

Over the course of one week's time at the end of January, the American Society for Yad Vashem (ASYV) had the privilege of presenting original programming to three different corporate groups. EY (Ernst & Young), Ralph Lauren and Spotify all invited ASYV to participate in programs to

son in New York, Los Angeles and the UK as well as online, to hear from ASYV Board of Directors member and Education Committee chair Caroline Massel. As a granddaughter of survivors, Caroline was able to share the personal story of her grandparents' survival as well as the importance of Holocaust education and commemoration

EY was made possible by ASYV Tristate Committee member, Young Leadership Associates (YLA) board member and EY employee Alan Scharf, who is also a grandson of a survivor.

Friday, January 27, found ASYV partnering with Ralph Lauren, thanks to Jordana Urman, director of global brand marketing



Stanley Stone, ASYV executive director, alongside ASYV board member Caroline Massel, and Tristate Committee member and YLA board member Alan Scharf at the EY event.

help them commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which fell on Friday, January 27.

On Monday, January 23, over 1,000 worldwide EY employees gathered in per-

today. Caroline also articulated the uniqueness of Yad Vashem's mission to give back the names and stories to those Jews who were murdered, ensuring that future generations don't forget. This opportunity with

at Ralph Lauren, incoming co-chair of YLA and a granddaughter of survivors. Jordana arranged for ASYV to conduct a program with over 200 Ralph Lauren employees

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Jordana Urman presenting at Ralph Lauren headquarters.

THE YLA CORNER:

FEATURING RACHEL ORBACH

Q: Share something about your family story.

A: My grandfather Lothar “Larry” Orbach (to me, my “Opapa”) passed away in 2008 when I was only nine years old, and while there are a myriad number of questions I wish to ask him, he left behind his legacy in his autobiography *Young Lothar*, which details my grandfather and his mother’s miraculous survival in the secret, ragtag network of the Berlin Underground. While his mother was hidden by courageous resisters, 18-year-old Lothar survived in plain sight under the Aryan identity of “Gerhard Peters” in a *Judenrein* (free of Jews) Berlin. From losing his father at the hands of the Gestapo to participating in the notorious death march from Auschwitz to *Buchenwald*, my grandfather never allowed the darkness to extinguish his youthful light, surviving against all odds to share his death-defying tale.

Q: Why you are personally involved in ASYV/YLA?

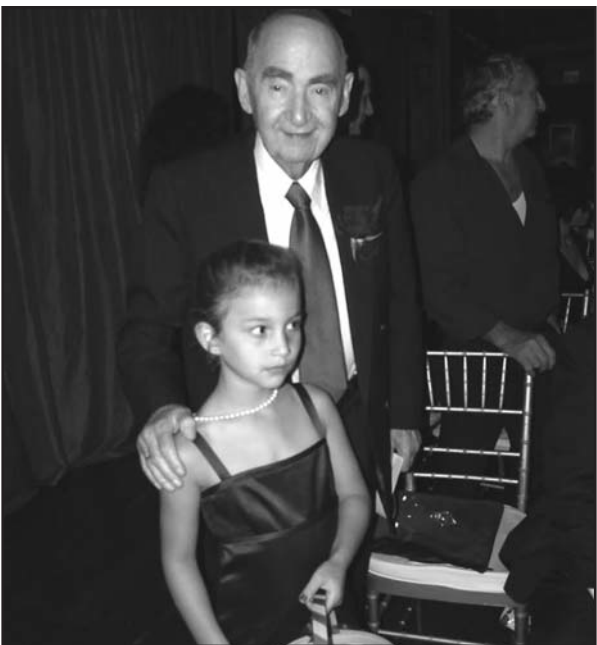
A: Today, with the drumbeats of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism escalating world-

wide, modern times have left me stuck between an anti-Semitic rock and an anti-Israel hard place. In these increasingly intolerant times, “Never Forget” has become an unfortunate platitude. As Holocaust ignorance — and denial — has become more rampant, I joined Yad Vashem’s YLA to discover other like-

minded Jewish young professionals dedicated to the mission of acting as a microphone for our ancestors. As the number of living Holocaust survivors subsides over time, it’s ever so clear that it is up to us youngsters to share their stories and ensure that “Never Forget” remains a reality.

Q: Why Holocaust remembrance is important?

A: In *Young Lothar*, one quote from my grandfather’s memoir remains engraved in my memory: he “wanted to become that man, balding, gray-haired, pot-bellied, perhaps, and maybe the father of a family. But how could I get there from here?” While my grandfather’s wish became a reality, it’s difficult not to consider the six million individuals who too wanted to live until they were balding, gray-haired and pot-bellied with families of their own, yet never had the opportunity to see this wish come to fruition. Holocaust remembrance is on the behalf of these six million individuals, and by commemorating them, we’re working to prevent such horrors from happening to any other six million people anywhere.



Rachel Orbach and Lothar Orbach.

CORPORATE GROUPS MARK INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY WITH ASYV

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and executives participating virtually as well as in person at their New York City headquarters. Jordana moderated the event and introduced Toby Levy, a Holo-



ocaust survivor who shared her personal story of survival. Toby delivered a poignant message that just one person choosing to act against hate and injustice can save a life and that we must never lose hope. Of special note is that this is the third year in

a row that ASYV has partnered with Ralph Lauren, and it looks forward to a meaningful continued relationship.

It is also thanks to Jordana Urman that on Monday, January 30, ASYV had a chance to partner with Spotify to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day. A cohort of over 100 employees participated virtually in the program hosted by YLA member and Spotify Product Manager Natalie Karafiol. Natalie spoke about the importance of remembrance and commemoration and introduced Jordana to speak about the dangers of hate going unchecked. Jordana then introduced Holocaust survivor and former National Director of the Anti-Defamation League Abe Foxman as the keynote speaker. Abe delivered the critical message that every individual has the power to save a human life and explained the reason why he chooses to focus on humanity, courage and decency when sharing his story of survival.

Programs like the ones conducted at EY, Ralph Lauren and Spotify, and those scheduled in the coming months with Palantir, Tapestry and Columbia Business School, afford ASYV with a unique opportunity to reach new cohorts of people, many of whom have never heard from a survivor or contemplated the history of the

Holocaust. At the core of its mission, ASYV is committed to helping people learn about the Holocaust and keep its memory and lessons alive. By increasing knowledge and awareness, it can help ensure that the



history of the Holocaust remains relevant and that remembering the past helps us all shape a brighter future.

If you or someone you know might be interested in bringing a similar ASYV program to your place of work, please reach out to Amy Cooper at acooper@yadvashemusa.org or 646-970-4959.

NEW LEADERSHIP FOR YLA

Speaking with the incoming co-chairs of ASYV’s Young Leadership Associates reveals the deep sense of passion and purpose that’s inherent in their accepting the responsibility of leading this dynamic group of young professionals. Jordana



Sophie Krakowski.

Urman and Sophie Krakowski both lay claim to being grandchildren of survivors, and to hear each of them speak about the awesome responsibility they feel to promote Holocaust education and remembrance is to understand just how well each is suited for the job.

The similarities only continue from there, as both women hail from the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area; Jordana is originally from Englewood, New Jersey and currently lives in Manhattan, while Sophie has been a New Yorker all her life. Both are marketing executives in the fashion industry; Jordana is the global marketing director of Ralph Lauren’s Home Business, and Sophie is the director of marketing at Vivrelle, a handbag and jewelry membership club. And interestingly, both are granddaughters of survivors on one side of their respective families, and for both, it’s the paternal side.

Jordana’s grandfather was in Auschwitz

and was ultimately liberated from *Mauthausen*. Her grandmother was hidden in the beginning of the war but ultimately had to turn herself in, spending the remainder of the war in *Grunberg* concentration camp (a subdivision of *Gross-Rosen*). Jordana explains that she herself is named for her grandfather’s two sisters who were murdered in the Holocaust, and perhaps that is one reason why she feels such an innate connection.

Sophie’s grandfather spent the war years in the *Petrikov* ghetto and later three different camps, while her grandmother spent time in hiding before emigrating to Israel. Sophie describes having always felt a strong connection to Holocaust education and appreciative of its importance in the story of the continuity of our people. Sophie could even say she was born for this role, as she grew up knowing that the American Society for Yad Vashem was founded in her grandfather’s living room. She proudly shares that every generation of her family has eagerly gotten involved in helping to keep the memory and lessons of the Holocaust alive.

Both Jordana and Sophie express a clear passion for Holocaust education.

Jordana’s commitment to fighting anti-Semitism through education is what drew her to Yad Vashem and ASYV. She believes that education is the only sustainable way we can impact our world and ensure that the events of the past never repeat themselves. Jordana hopes to help ASYV scale the impactful programming it’s been conducting at corporations across the US and worldwide, featuring survivors and educating about the dangers of unchecked hatred.

Sophie is equally enthusiastic about education and believes that our greatest teachers are the precious survivors who remain and can provide first-person testimony to this awful chapter in human history. She not only

hopes that ASYV can convene interested community members for salon events to hear these testimonies, but wants to expand YLA’s reach to bring these testimonial accounts to younger and unaffiliated communities. Sophie believes that using eyewitnesses to educate the next generation is an opportunity that is not to be missed.

ASYV’s Young Leadership Associates was inaugurated in 1997, and since that time has been a natural way for young people to get involved in promoting Holocaust education and remembrance. Jordana and Sophie want to ensure that young professionals continue to enter through this portal, and that they find meaningful programs and projects with which to engage both during their active YLA years and beyond.

Jordana and Sophie will be stepping into big shoes, as Rachel Shnay and Josh Gelnick prepare to pass the reins of leadership to them this coming September. And while expectations will be high when that transi-



Jordana Urman.

tion takes place, there is no doubt that the incoming YLA co-chairs will be stepping into their new role with a commitment and passion that will most certainly set them on the path for great success.

YLA BOOK CLUB: *DETERMINED*

On February 1, 2023, members of the Young Leadership Associates and the general ASYV community were privileged to attend a remarkable book club program. The book selected, *Determined*, was written by Holocaust survivor Avraham Perlmutter, z”l, over many years and published in 2014. A documentary film based on the book was later written, directed, produced and edited by Dr. Perlmutter’s daughter Dr. Keren Perlmutter and released in 2020 to critical acclaim. Sadly, Avraham died in 2022, just 1½ weeks shy of his 95th birthday. And so, we were joined by Keren, who is carrying on her father’s legacy by speaking to audiences around the world and telling his story in such an inspiring way.

camps to families to a variety of hiding places. The book chronicles these experiences in detail. Always in danger and often dependent on the kindness of strangers, Avraham finally arrived in *Venlo* and encountered a priest by the name of Pastor Henricus Vullinghs. Avraham would come to know the man as a brave and righteous person. Pastor Vullinghs saved the lives of so many people, Jews and gentiles alike, and tragically lost his life at *Bergen-Belsen*. The church of Pastor Vullinghs was in the tiny village of *Grubbenvorst*, close to the border with Germany. There were approximately 240 families in the village, and 42 of them were hiding Jews. Avraham was fortunate to be placed with a family named Beijers. They were a religious Catholic family of parents (Peter and

The book is aptly named *Determined* because throughout Avraham’s life, he showed remarkable grit and determination. After liberation, Avraham stayed with the Beijers family until January 1945, when British soldiers from the Jewish Palestine Brigade offered to bring Avraham to his parents, who had made it to Palestine. Though sad to leave the Beijers, Avraham was eager to be reunited with his family, and so he bade them good-bye. Sadly, Avraham’s mother died in Palestine just two weeks before his letter arrived announcing his survival, so she did not get to see him or his sister, Thea, who had endured Auschwitz and a death march during the war. It was a devastating blow to Avraham, but miraculous that he was reunited with the rest of his family.

Avraham thrived after the war, first working in the family business, and then as a soldier during the Israeli War of Independence. Eventually his spirit of determination led to a desire to further his education. Despite not having gone to school for most of his childhood, he moved to the United States, attending Georgia Institute of Technology and Princeton University (where he met Albert Einstein), and ultimately earning a Ph.D. in aeronautical engineering from the University of Pennsylvania. The book tells the rest of his story — his professional success, his marriage and his beautiful family — all testaments to Avraham’s fortitude.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the book and this presentation was that Avraham never forgot the kindness and bravery of the Dutch people who took him in and saved his life. In 1994, Avraham made certain that Pastor Henricus Vullinghs as well as Peter and Gertrude Beijers all received the well-deserved designation of Righteous Among the Nations bestowed by Yad Vashem and the government of Israel. The families remain close to this day, and subsequent generations have traveled back and forth and stayed at each other’s homes through the years.

We were very fortunate to have two members of the Beijers family, Henk and Jerome (the grandson and great-grandson of Peter and Gertrude, respectively), join us via Zoom from the Netherlands for the book club presentation. Henk shared how he grew up hearing the story of his grandparents’ kindness and bravery, and it was an inspiration to him. He has passed this on to his son Jerome, and they spoke about how special it is to be able to share the story together. Jerome spoke of how he

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Perlmutter and Beijers families.

Avraham was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1927 and lived with his parents and older sister, Thea. As a young child, he had an adventurous and fearless spirit that would serve him well in his adolescence. In March of 1938, he witnessed Hitler as he entered Vienna just two days after the *Anschluss*. In November 1938, he personally experienced the devastation of *Kristallnacht*. Avraham’s parents had been trying to find a way out of Vienna for some time, but after that fateful November night, they redoubled their efforts. They were finally successful at placing Thea and Avraham on a *Kindertransport* train to relatives in the Netherlands. In January 1939, the train left the station, and as he waved good-bye, Avraham had no way of knowing that would be the last time he would see his mother. Over the course of the next six years, from age 11 to 17, Avraham — eventually separated from Thea — spent time in over a dozen different places, from refugee

Gertrude) and six grown children (which included Mientje, Sraar, and Harri, who also lived in the house at the time), and though they had never met a Jew before, they willingly took in Avraham. They treated him as a son, and he enjoyed helping them on their farm. Avraham was fortunate to find such a wonderful family. They showed unbelievable bravery in the face of extreme danger, providing him with a hiding place to protect him from discovery, bringing him food and water, and assuring his safety. Several times during Avraham’s time with the Beijers, Nazis would appear and demand the whereabouts of Jews, but they never told. As the war neared its end, German soldiers came and stayed in the village, making it even more dangerous for both Avraham and the Beijers. Finally, in November of 1944, 17-year-old Avraham embarked on a perilous journey to freedom, avoiding mines, artillery shells and bullets, to reach a nearby village that had been liberated by the Allies.

STREET MURAL PROJECT HONORS UNKNOWN “RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS” IN THEIR HOMELANDS

In the year ahead, buildings around the world will be festooned with elaborate murals that celebrate “Righteous Among the Nations” who rescued Jews during the Holocaust.

In the initiative launched by the group Artists 4 Israel, the first two murals were installed earlier this year on buildings in Portugal and Greece. Fund-raising pending, the group’s vision is to celebrate hundreds of additional heroic “upstanders” with murals around the world.

“The purpose of the project is to force people to interact with the Holocaust, to learn and to find pride in fighting against anti-Semitism,” said Artists 4 Israel’s CEO Craig Dershowitz. “The beautiful murals are a psychological trigger,” he said.

In addition to people who see the murals in person, millions are reached through social media platforms curated by famous street artists enlisted for the initiative, said Dershowitz.

“With the ‘Righteous’ mural project, we have the opportunity to educate via positivity, by celebrating the heroes of a nation and giving citizens the chance to emulate their actions,” said Dershowitz.

Until this new “Righteous” project, in its more than a decade of operation Artists 4 Israel has concentrated on bringing hundreds of artists to Israel, where they have painted bomb shelters in the south and created tattoo art on the bodies of wounded veterans and terrorism survivors.

“It is always important to look past the art and at what message the art is communicating,” said Dershowitz.

When German forces landed on the Greek island of *Zakynthos* in 1941, the local mayor was ordered to supply a list of the Jewish population for deportation.

Mayor Loukas Karrer, in coordination with church leader Archbishop Dimitrios Chrysostomos, instead devised a scheme to rescue nearly all of the island’s 275 Jews.

While Chrysostomos went to negotiate with the Germans, Karrer burned the list of Jews living on *Zakynthos* and wrote his and the archbishop’s names on a piece of paper. Karrer then joined the meeting with the Germans and handed the paper to the archbishop, who in turn passed it to the Nazi administrator.

“Here are your Jews. If you choose to deport the Jews of *Zakynthos*, you must

also take me, and I will share their fate,” said Chrysostomos, who was under gunpoint for much of the encounter.

After the confrontation, the mayor and the archbishop immediately warned the island’s Jews. Most of them went into hiding in villages and were able to survive the Holocaust with assistance from neighbors.

To celebrate the rescue of the Jews of *Zakynthos*, Artists 4 Israel commissioned artist Kleomenis Kostopoulos (KLE) to honor the rescuer duo on the side of a building in *Patras*, Greece.

“Murals are one of the most important forms of contemporary expression and

“A New Memory Across the Portuguese Skyline” depicts Sousa Mendes, Portugal’s consul-general in France during the war. In that role, he defied his government’s orders by issuing Portuguese visas for up to 30,000 Nazi refugees, including 10,000 Jews.

“I remember as soon as I spoke with my father about this project, straightaway he mentioned Sousa Mendes as a hero and he told me that everybody here — it’s going to be unanimous — everybody will like the project, will like the wall, especially the older generations,” said Mr. Dheo. “They



Street mural honoring Aristides de Sousa Mendes near *Porto*, Portugal.

communication in public spaces,” said Kostopoulos of the project, completed in March. “Today, more than ever, we must revisit our history in Greece by bringing it to the streets and putting it in their faces,” said the artist.

Called “Memory for Blessing,” the *Patras* mural blends portraits of Mayor Karrer and Archbishop Chrysostomos alongside images of the island’s Jews.

In Greece, at least 80% of the Jewish community — some 70,000 people — were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau and other killing sites. The wartime story of *Zakynthos* contrasts starkly with — for example — the Greek island of *Rhodes*, where only 151 Jews survived the Holocaust from a community of 2,000.

Also earlier last year, Artists 4 Israel worked with artist Mr. Dheo to commemorate diplomat Aristides de Sousa Mendes with a mural near *Porto*, Portugal.

know what he did.”

After rumors of Sousa Mendes’s actions made their way to Lisbon, he was dismissed by the Portuguese government and left destitute with a large family to support.

“If thousands of Jews are suffering because of one Christian [Hitler], surely one Christian may suffer for so many Jews,” said Sousa Mendes after his dismissal.

In 1966, Sousa Mendes was the first diplomat recognized as “Righteous” by Yad Vashem. But not until 1988 — 34 years after his death — was he granted total rehabilitation by the Portuguese government.

Dershowitz said Artists 4 Israel has two murals lined up for United States locations in 2023, pending funding. The first will commemorate Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds of Knoxville, Tennessee, who refused a Nazi order at gunpoint to identify his unit’s Jewish soldiers in a German POW camp.

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YAD VASHEM UNVEILS “THE BOOK OF NAMES” AT THE UNITED NATIONS

It's a book filled with the names of 4.8 million murder victims. The blank pages at the end, though, are especially haunting.

In recognition of this year's International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yad Vashem unveiled an installation at the United Nations headquarters in New York City.

This massive exhibition, called “The Book of Names”, includes the alphabetically arranged names of 4.8 million Holocaust victims whose identities are known to Yad Vashem. “The Book of Names” is 26.45 feet in length, 6.56 feet high and 3.3 feet wide. It concludes with empty pages in commemoration of 1.2 million Jewish victims who remain unidentified.



The Book of Names, at U.N. Headquarters in New York.

“We search archives all over the world and have incredibly ingenious ways to register names of victims. We know that we will never be able to recover all the names, but we make an effort to do that,” Dani Dayan, Yad Vashem chairman, told JNS. “When the Nazis tried to deprive the Jews of any sense and resemblance of being human beings, and put numbers on their arms instead of names before murdering them, we thought it’s our duty to give each one of them a name, a face and a history.”

Whenever possible, The Book of Names also includes the birth dates, home towns, and circumstances and places of death of the victims.

This exhibition is part of the United Nations Outreach Programme on the Holocaust. The opening event took place on January 26, with Secretary-General An-

tónio Guterres, Dayan and Israeli Ambassador to the U.N. Gilad Erdan.

The exhibit also features a video clip highlighting the importance of remembering the names of Holocaust victims, and the reasoning behind the Names Recovery Project. An accompanying explanatory panel includes information about the Holocaust.

It is actually the second copy of The Book of Names. The original is housed at the Jewish Pavilion in Auschwitz. Dayan told JNS that it is Yad Vashem’s intention to produce a third copy, which will travel to exhibitions in major capitals and population centers around the world.

Dayan said that New York City Mayor Eric Adams offered to place The Book of

Names in City Hall this year, and the exhibit is in demand elsewhere, but Guterres requested last year that the event be held at the U.N.

“We think it’s significant that it will be inaugurated in the place that was intended to be a place of peace and of preventing another genocide. Even if the United Nations does not always fulfill that mission, we thought it’s important to do it in that specific place,” Dayan said.

Last year, Erdan shepherded through the U.N. General Assembly a resolution aiming to combat Holocaust denial and distortion, though several member states dabble in Holocaust denial, and anti-Semitism at the global body still runs rampant.

“The United Nations was established to ensure that the Holocaust — humanity’s darkest hour — would never be repeated,”

Erdan said. “Nevertheless, rampant anti-Semitism is once again on the rise, and Holocaust denial is increasing in volume and intensity. Even at the U.N., a member state [Iran] openly calls to wipe the Jewish state off the map, while openly denying the horrors of the Holocaust.”

Dayan said that Yad Vashem works with dozens of member states, along with governments at federal, provincial and city levels.

“But in my last meeting with Secretary-General Guterres, I offered to train U.N. personnel, both in the headquarters and under different agencies. I even made the point in suggesting that the first such agency should be UNRWA,” said Dayan, referencing the U.N. agency which works closely with Palestinians and in which the school textbooks are anti-Semitic and Holocaust denial and praise of the Nazis are voiced by some employees.

Dayan said his general offer received a positive response “in principle, but they are still yet to convert it to something substantial and concrete.”

Outside of the U.N., there are two other international events sponsored by Yad Vashem. An exhibition in the German Bundestag is to include 16 objects and artifacts from Yad Vashem’s collection, linked to each of the 16 states that make up the Federal Republic of Germany. Additionally, Israeli President Isaac Herzog visited the European Parliament in Brussels for the opening of an exhibition there.

The Book of Names was on display in the U.N. headquarters through February 17 before being installed permanently in Yad Vashem’s Museum Complex on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem. It will be open to the public there in time for Israel’s Holocaust Remembrance Day, starting on the evening of April 17.

Dayan said that work will continue to try to fill those remaining pages of the book, with Yad Vashem scholars assessing that in the next few years, there will likely be some 400,000 additional identifications of Holocaust victims.

“But also those that were murdered in the shooting pits, and in the gas chambers, by collaborators in hiding places, deserve to be remembered,” Dayan said. “And leaving the empty pages is a remembrance that they also existed, that they also were Jews, they also were human beings.”

BY MIKE WAGENHEIM, JNS

STREET MURAL PROJECT HONORS UNKNOWN “RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS”....

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“We are all Jews here,” Edmonds told the Nazi commandant, after which he threatened to have the Germans prosecuted for war crimes. By rallying his soldiers against German orders, Edmonds is credited with saving up to 300 American Jewish soldiers in the POW camp.

The second mural planned for the US will honor Irene Gut Opdyke, a Polish rescuer who hid Jewish families and later relocated to southern California. When 12 Jews she was hiding were discovered by a German officer, Opdyke agreed to become his mistress in exchange for not turning them in.

“You must understand that I did not become a resistance fighter, a smuggler of Jews, someone who defies the SS and the Nazis, all at once,” wrote Opdyke in her memoir. “One’s first steps are always small: I had begun by hiding food under a fence.”

Years after moving to California with her American husband, Opdyke wrote about her positive interactions with Jews as a child and how her daydreams became re-



Mural in Patras, Greece, by KLE, showing the rescue of Jews during the Holocaust.

ality after Germany’s occupation of Poland.

“In my fantasies, I was always caught up in heroic struggles, and I saw myself saving lives, sacrificing myself for others. I had far loftier ambitions than mere romance,” wrote Opdyke.

“Before Artists 4 Israel started the Righteous Among the Nations Global Mural

Project, I was familiar with only a few of the more famous ones,” said Dershowitz. “But as this program continues, I am learning of hundreds of heroes, each more brave than the next.”

BY MATT LEBOVIC,
The Times of Israel

YLA BOOK CLUB: DETERMINED

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saw the medal from Yad Vashem throughout his childhood and how wonderful it is to know he has a family on the other side of the world. Henk spoke about how important it is to transmit the lessons to future generations and to understand that although people have many perspectives, it is so important to respect all people.

Henk also mentioned the recent survey of young people in the Netherlands that showed 25% either didn’t know about the Holocaust or felt that the numbers were distorted. He emphasized that telling and retelling the story of his family is important given the rise in anti-Semitism and changing political winds.

Keren finished the presentation by pointing out that an act of kindness can have an impact for many decades into the future and that through her sharing her father’s story, its important messages have the power to inspire and influence people for

many generations to come.

In addition to Keren and the Beijers, we were fortunate to have Josh Perlmutter, Avraham’s grandson and Keren’s nephew,

join us as a co-chair for this event, carrying the mantle of the next generation. Josh spoke about the tremendous example his grandfather was for him and how he has also lived his life committed to showing the same determination his grandfather did. He spoke about how the Beijers ignored the risk they were undertaking and how he learned from everyone not to focus on the bad, but that there are really good people in the world. He emphasized how we must focus on

humanity, be kind to others, and seek out the goodness in people.

Additional thanks to Nicole Garay, our Young Leadership Associates co-chair for this book club program, who shared the story of her grandparents, Alex Garay and Sarlotte “Shari” Garay, who are also Holo-

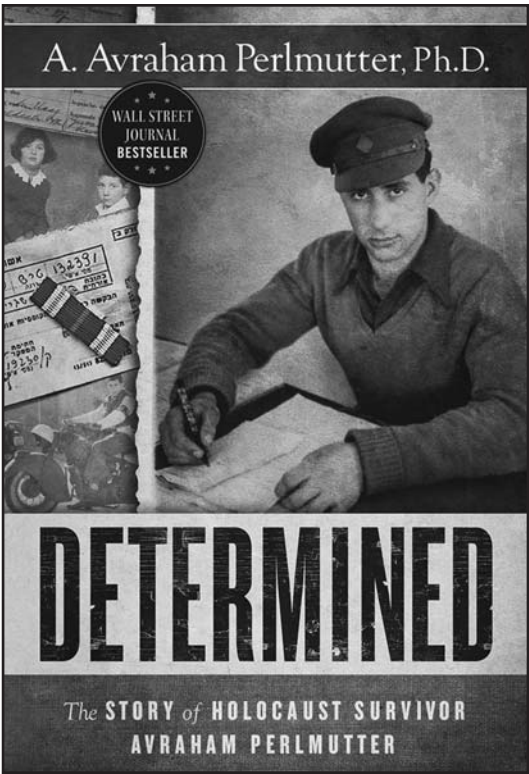
caust survivors. Her participation in ASYV’s activities helps to keep their legacy alive, and she is helping to establish a YLA presence on the West Coast.

The final words belong to Avraham as he explained on camera why he continued to tell his story and why he encouraged his family and the Beijers family to do the same. “My hope is that humanity has learned that people in the final analysis were brought onto this earth not to kill each other but to live with each other together in peace. Regardless of religion or background or wherever they come from, people are still people, and instead of hating each other, they should love each other and do things for each other. And if humanity could only learn that from all the experiences that unfortunately our generation went through in the Holocaust, we finally will have learned something. That is my hope for the future.”

To become more involved in the Young Leadership Associates or participate in a future book club event, please contact Sylvia at smoskovitz@yadvashemusa.org.

For more information about Determined and to purchase the book, please visit <https://www.determinedstory.com/>.

BY SYLVIA MOSKOVITZ,
ASYV Western Region Director



SIXTEEN OBJECTS FROM GERMANY TELL STORY OF HOLOCAUST IN NEW WAYS

Lore Mayerfeld was four years old when she escaped from the Nazis in 1941. Together with her mother, the little Jewish girl ran away from her German hometown of *Kassel* with nothing but the clothes she wore and her beloved doll, Inge. Mayerfeld found a safe haven in the United States and later emigrated to Israel. Her doll, a present from her grandparents who were killed in the Holocaust, was al-



Holocaust survivor Lore Mayerfeld poses next to her doll Inge as part of an exhibition with items from Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in the German parliament Bundestag in Berlin, Germany.

ways at her side until 2018, when she donated it to Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial.

More than 80 years later, the doll has returned to Germany. It is in Berlin as part of an exhibition opened just days before the country marks the 78th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp on January 27, 1945.

The exhibition, "Sixteen Objects", also marks the 70th anniversary of the Yad Vashem memorial, bringing back to Germany an array of items Jews took with them when they fled the Nazis. There are a black piano, a diary, a red-and-white-patterned towel, a stethoscope, a glitzy evening purse and a menorah among the exhibit's objects.

They were chosen from more than 50,000 items at Yad Vashem that are connected to the Holocaust. The exhibit's items represent Germany's 16 states, with one coming from each region. Each tells a unique story, but they all share themes of love, attachment, pain and loss.

"These are all absolutely familiar German objects, and they would have stayed that way had the Holocaust not happened," said Ruth Ur, the curator of the exhibition

and Yad Vashem's representative in Germany. "The idea of this exhibition is to return these objects back to Germany for a short while, to bring a new energy to the objects themselves, and also to the gaps they have left behind."

In one of the showcases, there's a nondescript piece of cloth. It's part of a flag that once belonged to Anneliese Borinski, who was part of a Jewish youth group in *Ahrensdorf* outside Berlin. She helped her group prepare for emigration and life in what would later become the state of Israel.

After the Nazis issued deportation orders, the 12 members decided to cut up their "Maccabi Hatzair" youth group flag into 12 pieces, and promised each other that after the war they would meet again in Israel to reassemble the flag. Only three survived the Holocaust, and Borinski was the lone member who managed to take her piece of the flag to Israel. In 2007, her son donated it to Yad Vashem.

Another item is a brown leather suitcase. On one side, "Selma Sara Vellemann from *Bremen*" is written in bold white letters.

This suitcase was found in Berlin several years after the war. Yad Vashem researchers were unable to determine how the suitcase got to the German capital, but they discovered that a woman with the same name from the northern city of *Bremen* had lived in a retirement home in Berlin. In 1942, at the age of 66, she was deported to the *Theresienstadt* ghetto, and two months later she was sent to her death in the *Treblinka* extermination camp.

Beside each of the exhibition objects, Ur and her team put up life-size photos of buildings and street corners where the items' owners lived before the Nazis came

to power. The images show modern-day scenes instead of historic ones, a stark contrast to the devastation the Third Reich caused decades ago.

Six million European Jews were killed by the Nazis and their henchmen during the Holocaust. Some survivors are still alive today, but their numbers are dwindling due to sickness and old age.

Mayerfeld, the little girl who fled with her doll Inge in 1941, is one of them. She returned to Germany this week to attend the opening of the exhibition.

Looking at her blond, blue-eyed doll, the now 85-year-old woman pointed out that the doll was wearing the pajamas she wore as a barely 2-year-old toddler on November 9, 1938. On that date, she was hiding with her mother during *Kristallnacht*, or the "Night of Broken Glass," when Nazis — several ordinary Germans among them — terrorized Jews, vandalized their businesses and burned more than 1,400 synagogues.

"It's not a doll that you play so easily with because she's breakable. So my own children, I didn't allow them to play with her," Mayerfeld said. "She sat up on a shelf in my home and they would look at her and I explained, she's going to break, you know, just look and enjoy her."

Mayerfeld said it was important for her to come back to Germany and let the pub-



The suitcase bearing the name and date of birth of Holocaust victim Selma Sara Vellemann from *Bremen*.

lic know about her doll, her life and also what happened during the Holocaust.

"The world hasn't learned anything from this past war," she said. "There's so many people who say it never even happened. They can't tell me that. I was there. I lived it."

BY KIRSTEN GRIESHABER, AP

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM & YAD VASHEM

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OUR DUTY TO THE DEAD: REMEMBER THEIR NAMES

“Remember only that I was innocent and that, like all of you, mortals of this day... I too had a face marked by rage, by pity and by joy, an ordinary human face!”

Benjamin Fondane, a French Jew, wrote these poignant words in one of his final poems, *Préface en Prose*, before being murdered, shortly after his deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau in May 1944. Fondane’s plea for remembrance was frequently voiced by Jewish people persecuted by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II; an appeal for a solemn and everlasting commitment by all humanity to recall, in essence, every Holocaust victim. Fondane insisted that we never forget their

paign of mass murder. They also aimed to eradicate any trace of their culture and religion, of their very existence, down to the very last Jew. Even before arriving at the concentration and death camps, the Jews were marked as mere numbers by the Nazis and their collaborators. Once they had reduced the Jews to nameless masses, the perpetrators could more easily erase them.

By our understanding how the names and identities of the Holocaust victims were brutally stolen from them, we can better appreciate how important it is to remember them. Like Fondane’s, the final hope of many of the victims, aware that they were on the verge of death, was to be remembered. Thus, refusing to fade into oblivion,

cruelly and intentionally murdered simply because they were Jewish.

Sadly, less than 80 years following the murder of the Six Million, we encounter increasing ignorance and apathy worldwide regarding Holocaust awareness, especially among youth. We face an alarming proliferation of material in the physical and digital spheres which nefariously denies, distorts, trivializes and whitewashes the Holocaust. This disgusting phenomenon has moved beyond the fringes into the social mainstream. We are witnessing a rise in anti-Semitism cloaked in new disguises, maliciously portraying the Jewish people and its State of Israel as existential threats to global well-being and peace. Thus, it is incumbent upon us to buttress efforts to foster Holocaust awareness, remembrance and education. The world must be reminded where unchecked anti-Semitism ultimately leads.

The fact that The Book of Names was displayed at the U.N., which was instituted with the express purpose of averting future crimes against humanity, sends a clear message to all those who deny history or turn a blind eye to it. It fulfills the last testament of another young Jewish victim of the Holocaust, who at the age of 19 wrote so succinctly in his last letter (in Vilna, 1941): “I should like someone to remember that there once lived a person named David Berger.”

On this, the 78th anniversary of the liberation by Soviet troops of Auschwitz-Birkenau, where more than one million “nameless” Jews were slaughtered, we rekindle their identities by restoring their names. Our mission has never been more relevant, and our responsibility to keep alive the memory of the Holocaust and its victims will never abate. The Book of Names of Holocaust victims will help us, Jews and non-Jews, educators and statespersons, historians and influencers, citizens of the world, to convey the chronicles of this singular Jewish and human event. The names and the people they stand for serve as a beacon of light and warning against the mortal dangers of unconstrained anti-Semitism and racism, and exhort us to fulfill the vital 11th commandment: Remember.

BY DANI DAYAN,
Chairman of the World Holocaust
Remembrance Center



Visitors walk from the Hall of Names at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust remembrance center in Jerusalem.

humanity, their individuality.

Indeed, no two persons are identical. We each possess our own distinctive features, personality and traits, as well as the name given to us at birth. That name marks each of us as an individual, whose story — past and future — is forever unique.

Our names define us. Even when we leave this world, our names, and our stories, remain — for generations.

During the *Shoah*, the German Nazis and their collaborators sought not only to annihilate the entire Jewish people through an unprecedented and systematic cam-

they demonstrated their undying human spirit. It is our duty to ensure the eternal fulfillment of that hope.

This is why Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, has for decades worked tirelessly to gather the names of the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust and to commemorate them as individuals, down to the very last victim. The new Book of Names, inaugurated at the United Nations headquarters as part of the activities marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27, displays the names and identities of 4,800,000 men, women and children —

LAST TRAIN TO AUSCHWITZ

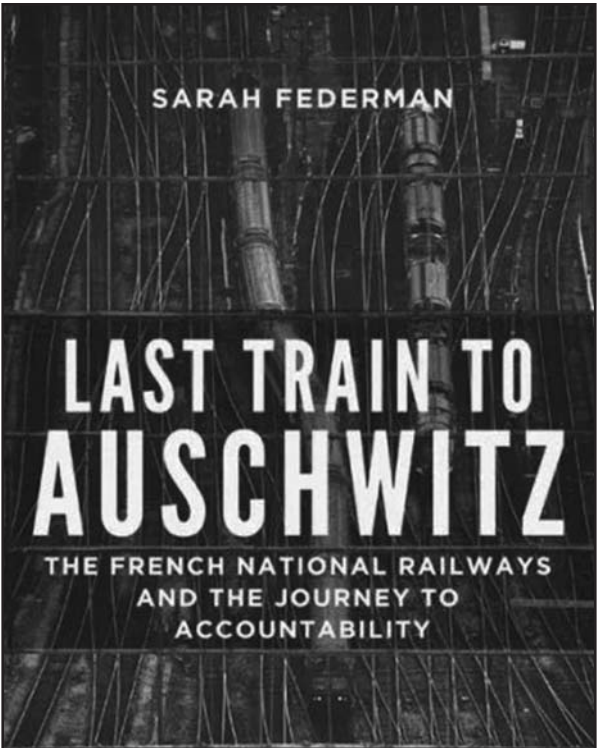
Last Train to Auschwitz: The French National Railways and the Journey to Accountability.

By Sarah Federman. The University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, Wisconsin, 2021. 302 pp. \$24.95 softcover.

Last Train to Auschwitz: The French National Railways and the Journey to Accountability by Sarah Federman is an exceptionally thought-provoking book. In short, it leaves the reader wondering if the *Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français* (SNCF), the French national railway, should be seen as hapless victim of the Nazis, as perpetrator eagerly collaborating with them, or as stalwart hero. It also, sadly, leaves the reader wondering if justice can ever really be served when it comes to the role played by the SNCF in the transport of approximately seventy-six thousand Jewish deportees —among them thousands of children — “to death camps in seventy-nine convoys ...”

Thus in chapter one of this volume, we are presented with evidence meant to prove the SNCF was itself a victim of the Nazis. Among other things, we read how when France fell in 1940, “thirty-five thou-

sand SNCF workers were taken prisoner, more than a thousand were killed, and many others fled.” We are told that during



the years of German occupation, ever-increasing Nazi control and strident demands made of the SNCF led to more of its workers “arrested, imprisoned, held hostage, or murdered,” even as the com-

pany’s “assets were plundered and destroyed.” Finally, we learn how, despite what some may believe, “the SNCF did not ‘profit’ during the war.” “By the summer of 1944. . . [it] was operating with a deficit of six million francs.”

Chapter two, on the other hand, offers up evidence of the SNCF acting in the role of perpetrator during the war years. Here, among other things, we read that, certainly in the early years of German occupation, the SNCF maintained a goodly amount of independence and, nonetheless, dutifully fulfilled Nazi requests made of them “on time and with relatively little supervision.” In fact, “many deportation trains left during the period of relative independence.” We are given to understand that the higher-ups in the SNCF most probably “knew the nature of their crimes.” Why else did they agree to the decision to use “smaller, less visible rail stations” as deportation hubs, thereby attracting less bystander attention? Finally, we learn that “the SNCF also demanded full payments when the Germans delayed or refused to pay in full.”

Chapter three, meanwhile, presents us with an SNCF that supposedly played the
(Continued on page 13)

WHY AN ARAB NATION HAS OPTED TO TEACH THE HOLOCAUST IN ITS SCHOOLS

The United Arab Emirates will soon become the first Arab nation to teach the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust in its schools, a historic move that has been praised in some quarters — but also criticized in others.

The UAE plans to include Holocaust education in the curriculum for primary and secondary schools, the country’s embassy in the United States tweeted recently.

The UAE says it will work with the Tel Aviv– and London-based Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education, and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial museum in Jerusalem, to help build a new curriculum, according to a report in the *Times of Israel*.

“Now we have the opportunity to reach new audiences, and Yad Vashem is working on paving the way to bring Holocaust awareness to the Arab-speaking world,” the organization’s spokesperson Simmy Allen told CNN. “Across most of the Arab-speaking world, until recently, there was little to no dialogue with Yad Vashem about the events and atrocities of the Holocaust,” he added.

The teaching of the Holocaust has been

largely absent from governments’ school curricula in Arab countries, but the UAE has been doubling down on Holocaust awareness since normalizing relations with Israel in 2020 in a pact known as the Abraham Accords.

UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah Bin Zayed visited Berlin’s main Holocaust memorial in late 2020 with his Israeli counterpart. In 2021, the first Holocaust memorial exhibition in the Arab region opened in Dubai, and last year, the foreign minister made a highly publicized visit to Yad Vashem, where he laid a wreath.

In an article published in Israel’s *Jerusalem Post* in 2021, Ali Al Nuaimi, chairman of the Defense Affairs, Interior and Foreign Relations Committee of the UAE’s Federal National Council for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, wrote that school curricula in the Arab world “have omitted critical parts of history in the West,” including the Holocaust, for too long. Muslims, he argued, “must liberate themselves from the burdens of history to move ahead toward the future.”

The move is “a natural outgrowth of the Abraham Accords,” Kristin Smith Diwan, senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf

States Institute in Washington, told CNN. “The UAE leadership has been engineering cultural change to support its strategic objectives,” she said. “Embracing ethnic diversity has accompanied the expansion of a global workforce, and interfaith dialogue has aided in countering pan-Islamism and religious extremism.”

It isn’t clear whether the UAE’s move will apply only to government-run schools or the hundreds of private schools in the country. The UAE’s ministry of education didn’t respond to CNN’s request for comment by the time of publication.

Approximately 90% of the UAE’s population of about 10 million is made up of expatriates, according to World Bank data, many of whom send their children to privately run schools that teach international curricula that often include Holocaust education.

Emiratis on social media were largely silent about the decision to teach the Holocaust, but Abdul Khaleq Abdulla, a prominent UAE commentator and political science professor, commented on the announcement in a tweet, saying there was no need for it.

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SOLOMON PEREL, JEW WHO POSED AS A HITLER YOUTH TO SURVIVE, DIES AT 97

His masquerade — a tale recounted in a memoir and in the film Europa Europa — saved his life. But “to this day,” he said, “I have a tangle of two souls in one body.”

Solomon Perel, a German Jew who saved himself from death by posing as a member of the Hitler Youth during World War II and later felt gratitude for the Nazi he pretended to be in order to live, died on February 2 at his home in Givatayim, Israel, near Tel Aviv. He was 97.

His great-nephew Amit Brakin confirmed the death.

Mr. Perel, who was also known as Shlomo and Solly, recounted his survival story in a 1990 autobiography. It was adapted into a German movie, *Europa Europa*, released in the United States in 1991, which won the Golden Globe for best foreign-language film.

Like many other Holocaust survival stories, Mr. Perel's began with Nazi oppression, which led his family to move in 1936 from Peine, Germany, to Lodz, Poland. After the German invasion on September 1, 1939, they were forced into a ghetto that would house as many as 164,000 Jews. He fled later that year with an older brother, Isaac, in the hope of finding relative safety in Soviet-controlled eastern Poland.

In Bialystok, where he parted with Isaac, Solomon was placed by a Jewish assistance organization in a Soviet orphanage in Grodno (now part of Belarus). He stayed for two years, until Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941; he recalled that the Jewish children at the orphanage were roused from their sleep and told to flee the German attack.

Solomon became one of many refugees captured by the German *Wehrmacht* in an open field near Minsk.

Fearful that his captors would learn he was Jewish and shoot him in a nearby forest, he dug a small pit in the soft ground with the heel of a shoe and buried his identification papers.

After waiting on a long line, Solomon was asked by a German soldier, “Are you a Jew?” Heeding his mother's last words to him, “You must live,” but not his father's, “Always remain a Jew,” he lied: “I'm not a Jew. I'm an ethnic German.”

Not only did the Germans believe him; they welcomed him into their unit under the name Josef Perjell, and made him an interpreter. One interrogation in which he

participated was of Joseph Stalin's son Yakov Dzhugashvili.

“I became a split personality — a Nazi by day and a Jew by night,” Mr. Perel told *The Week*, an Indian magazine, in 2019. He remained there until his commanding officer sent him to the Hitler Youth boarding school in Braunschweig, Germany, during the winter of 1941–42.



If anyone discovered he was Jewish, “they'd deal with me like cannibals,” he said in *Because You Must Live: The Story of Shlomo (Solly) Perel*, a part of the Survivors Testimony Films Series produced by Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial. He was relieved that the school's showers had separate stalls, which prevented anyone from seeing that he had been circumcised.

But, he said, “nobody suspected me because it was impossible to think that some Jewish boy would sneak into the center of that protected country.”

He became, to the young Nazis surrounding him, a true believer, absorbing the lessons of National Socialism, wearing a uniform with a swastika and a Nazi eagle on his chest and preparing for military service.

“I was a Hitler Youth completely,” he said in the Yad Vashem film. “I began telling myself, ‘Wow, I'm part of a force that's conquering the world.’”

But he could not switch off his real self entirely. In 1943, during the Christmas holiday, he received a holiday pass and took a train back to Lodz. For 12 days, wearing the black winter uniform of the Hitler Youth,

he searched for his parents in the ghetto.

He rode a streetcar, which Jews could not board, back and forth. He walked the city's streets. He saw men rolling carts piled with Jewish corpses. But he did not find his mother, his father or his sister, Bertha, none of whom he would ever see again. His brothers, Isaac and David, survived.

Solomon Perel was born in Peine on April 21, 1925. His father, Azriel, owned a shoe store. His mother, Rebecca Perel, was a homemaker.

Solomon was nearly eight years old when Hitler seized power in Germany in 1933, but his life did not change appreciably until two years later, when anti-Semitic laws stripped Jews of their rights and citizenship. He was expelled from school.

“It was my most traumatic childhood experience,” he said in *Because You Must Live*, “that barbaric expulsion from school because somebody considered me different.”

The family moved to Lodz after his father was forced by the Nazis to sell his store for nearly nothing. Solomon attended a Polish state school for Jews. It was after the Germans invaded Poland and Jewish families were ordered into the Lodz ghetto that he started on the path that led to his lifesaving masquerade as a Nazi.

Simmy Allen, a spokesman for Yad Vashem, said that Mr. Perel's life as a Jew among the Hitler Youth was more than unusual.

“We know of Jews using false papers and presenting themselves as non-Jews, even Aryans, during the Holocaust in different places throughout Europe, even in Berlin,” Mr. Allen said in an email. “But to be in the heart of the lion's den, under that level of scrutiny all the time and, in a sense, part of the ideology of the ‘enemy,’ as Shlomo was, is a very unique and rare position.”

Mr. Perel recalled how invested he had become in the Nazi philosophy even as the war turned against Germany.

“I was deeply involved in a world that had been forced upon me, my reasoning powers had finally been completely anesthetized,” he wrote in his memoir, published in English and French as *Europa, Europa*, “and my mental faculties were so befogged that no ray of reality could pene-

(Continued on page 15)

WHY AN ARAB NATION HAS OPTED TO TEACH THE HOLOCAUST IN ITS SCHOOLS

(Continued from page 11)

“There has been repeated talk about adding the topic of the Holocaust to our school curricula, despite the absence of any national value, educational (benefit), and knowledge need for (it),” he tweeted.

Much of the reaction from Arabs outside the UAE was critical, with some accusing the country of handing over control of its syllabus to Israel, while others questioned whether it would come at the expense of teaching the history of the Palestinians, particularly the *Nakba*. The *Nakba*, which means catastrophe in Arabic, refers to the establishment of Israel in 1948, which saw approximately 700,000 Palestinians forced to leave their homes.

“We don’t deny the Holocaust and we sympathize with its victims,” tweeted Dareen, a commenter on Twitter who identifies as Palestinian. “But including it in the curriculum for young students makes it easier for the occupation (Israel) to infiltrate the Arab people.”

The UAE, which has a sizable Palestinian community, has said in local media reports that its normalization with Israel would not affect its commitment to the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Yasser Abu Hilala, a former managing director at Al Jazeera, tweeted that teaching the Holocaust in the UAE was “useful for knowing the history and brutality of the West,” adding that “it is the same West

brace of Israel. A survey by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy in July 2022 shows that more than 70% in the UAE and Bahrain hold a negative view of normalization.

Analysts say that despite the gap between official and popular views on Israel, the UAE is likely to move forward with strengthening ties with Israel.

“The Emirati public might not be entirely on board, but the leadership has decided this is the path they will pursue and so they will continue to do so,” Dina Esfandiary, senior advisor for Middle East and North Africa at the International Crisis Group, told CNN. “They believe that they have greater influence over Israel and Israeli action by maintaining these good ties.”

Some Emiratis will be uncomfortable with coordination with an Israeli institution “in a sensitive area like education” since there is popular sympathy with the plight of the Palestinians,

said Diwan of the Arab Gulf States Institute.

“But this should not negate the value and importance of understanding the historical facts and context of the Holocaust,” she added. “Disinformation is a problem and serves no one.”

BY MOHAMMED ABDELBAR, CNN



Student rabbis carry in a Torah for a demonstration during lessons at the Jewish Hebrew School in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

from which Zionism spawned,” referring to the movement to create a Jewish state in the Middle East.

The involvement of an Israeli organization in writing the country’s syllabus brings an added layer of complexity. Polls have shown that the public in the Arab nations that have normalized relations doesn’t share its governments’ view in their em-

LAST TRAIN TO AUSCHWITZ

(Continued from page 11)

role of hero during the war. Interestingly, being cast in this role would come to particularly appeal to the organization, and hence was especially publicized after the war. “For years, a wall-size bronze mural” “was proudly displayed on the first floor of the SNCF’s headquarters....” “The mural celebrates the moment when the Allies landed at the Normandy beaches and some SNCF workers, in conjunction with the Resistance organizations, sabotaged their own trains filled with German armaments to thwart the German response to the Allied invasion.” In 1947 a popular French film appeared called *La Bataille du rail* that “immortalized the saboteurs and cemented the image of the SNCF Resistance fighter in French consciousness.” “On May 10, 1951, the SNCF received the government’s highest medal of honor — the *Légion d’honneur* — for acts of resistance.” Then, commissioned by the government, a book was written by “Paul Durand,

a son and grandson of railway workers,” entitled *La SNCF dans la guerre: Sa résistance a l’occupant* (*The SNCF during the War: Its resistance to the occupier*). Lost in all this, however, was the fact that during the war years “nothing was done to stop the convoys headed east to the death camps” — even after the Normandy invasion. For that matter, “most acts of resistance challenged the German occupation rather than Jewish ostracism and subsequent deportations.”

So the question stubbornly remains ... Was the SNCF a victim of the Nazis? Were its people perpetrators themselves? Were they heroes? Were they all of the aforementioned? Were they more of one than the other? Are they guilty of having helped in the murder of Jews? How guilty? How do we “measure” their guilt? And if they are guilty, how should they “pay” for their actions (or rather, inactions)? Is all this fair when so many other corporate organizations that are guilty of

crimes against Jews have escaped punishment and “hope to bury their pasts with the dead”? (Interestingly, the companies noted here in *Last Train to Auschwitz* include Ford, IBM, Hugo Boss, Siemens, Bayer, Fanta (Coca-Cola), J.P. Morgan and Barclays.) And then, after all is said and done, who should judge whether justice has been served? Federman examines all the above-noted questions and the controversies swirling around many of them in the five succeeding chapters of her absorbing volume, purposely left for the readers of these words to discover on their own... and ponder.

Needless to say, *The Last Train to Auschwitz* deserves a place in the library of any student of the Holocaust and, for that matter, any student of law who has ever thought deeply about crime, punishment and, most especially, justice.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN
Professor Emerita at Pace University.

THE LOST HISTORY OF *TYNEMOUTH'S* HOLOCAUST SAFE HOUSE FOR GIRLS

Number 55 Percy Park looks much like all the other town houses on a well-kept seafront parade in Tynemouth. But more than 80 years ago, it played a small yet significant part in the rescue of Jewish children from the Nazis.

Following a BBC investigation, a blue plaque was unveiled on the house to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day and to mark the property's forgotten past.

When Martin and Rosemary Anderson moved into their home in July 2017, they had no idea about what once took place within its walls.

"The previous owners, who'd lived here for a number of years, clearly didn't know, because a unique bit of history like that would have been a good selling point," Martin says.

During World War II, the Andersons' home served as a sanctuary for more than 20 Jewish girls who had fled Nazi persecution.

They came to the UK on the *Kindertransport*, the rescue effort in 1938 and 1939 which brought thousands of mostly Jewish refugee children to Britain.

The girls lived in the terraced house for about a year, but all trace of their presence there has since disappeared.

The story also appears to have been lost among *Tyneside's* Jewish community, which has dwindled in size since the 1940s but made a huge effort to rescue the girls.

"I think a lot of the *Kindertransport* was forgotten," says Brenda Dinsdale, honorary life president of Newcastle Reform Synagogue. "How old are the survivors now? We're an older community and there are very few people left who remember. We should have taken oral histories of these people, but we didn't."

However, the house was well remembered by those who found refuge in it. At least three of the girls from the hostel are still alive.

The youngest is Inge Hamilton (then Inge Adamecz), who came to the UK from Poland, in 1939, aged five.

She was photographed with her sister Ruth and another girl after arriving at Liverpool Street Station, in a picture which became one of the defining images of the *Kindertransport*.

She has no memory of the photo being taken — nor does she remember her mother and baby sister, who stayed behind and were later killed by the Nazis.

"People say I look like Shirley Temple but don't ask me why I'm smiling," says

Inge, who now lives in south London.

"I don't understand how I could have been smiling after all that. Look at how serious my sister is. It really affected her."

Dasha Caminer was seven when she left what was then Czechoslovakia for *Tynemouth*. She is now 91 and lives in Australia.

"It was a hostel, a community of young people that were thrown together because of awful circumstances," she recalls.

"We always hoped that next year, the war will be over and we'll have a normal life again. It didn't happen that way. But you have to get on with life and look for the good things."

Both her parents were killed while she was in the UK.

Another of the hostel girls was Alisa Tennenbaum, who is now in her 90s and lives in Israel. She was 10 when she left Vienna, in Austria, with the

Kindertransport and remembers a frightening journey from London to *Newcastle*, a place she had never heard of.

"I was put on a train on my own and I was told to get off in Newcastle and I sat and cried and I repeatedly said 'Was ist Newcastle?'"

The story of Alisa and her fellow refugees' journey to the northeast of England begins after *Kristallnacht* in November 1938, when Jewish homes, businesses and synagogues were ransacked throughout Germany and Austria.

Following the attacks, the British government agreed to speed up the immigration process for children, although there were strict conditions and their parents were refused refuge.

In *Tyneside*, a committee was formed to try to help, led by jeweler David Summerfield and his wife Annie. Their granddaughter Judith Summerfield was very young during the war but has vague memories of the time.

She says they wanted to open a hostel for girls, who they thought were more vulnerable than boys, but it was a huge undertaking.

"Each girl had to be sponsored for £50 — the equivalent of about £3,000 today — at a time when there was very little money about," Judith says. "The house had to have the builders in, it had to be decorated, they had

to kit out the kitchen, and they had to recruit matrons to look after the girls."

The house was owned by Sylvia Fiskin, a member of the Jewish community.

It had been used as a holiday home, but she was happy to hand it over, says her grandson Paul Stock.

For Sylvia it would have been an easy decision, he says. "There's a concept in Jewish law called *tikkun olam* — repairing



This picture of Inge Adamecz (centre), her sister Ruth (left) and another refugee was taken shortly after they arrived in the UK.

the world — and there's also a concept of charity called *tzedakah*.

"My grandmother would have been conscious of this, and therefore it would have been the right thing to do."

The girls were cared for by two women from Vienna, who were themselves fleeing Nazi persecution. One was the celebrated cook Alice Urbach and the other Paula Sieber, a successful businesswoman.

The girls were well fed but, as was the norm at the time, the matrons ran a strict regime, according to historian and Alice's granddaughter Karina Urbach.

She says: "[Alice] thought looking after children would be easy — she had two sons — and she thought it would just be for a very short time, but it turned into seven years.

"When she looked at the children, she knew she might have to tell them their parents would never turn up again.

"The letters stopped usually after the parents wrote to say they were to go on a long journey."

The girls stayed in *Tynemouth* until 1940, when it was decided it would be safer to move them to *Windermere*, in the Lake District.

The committee expected to look after

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THE LOST HISTORY OF *TYNEMOUTH'S* HOLOCAUST SAFE HOUSE FOR GIRLS

(Continued from page 14)
them for a few weeks but instead paid for their care for seven years.
Nicola Woodhead, who is writing a PhD on the *Kindertransport* at the University of Southampton, says this was really unusual.

“A community of *kinder* being kept together for seven years was quite rare. If a hostel shut down, or they were forced to evacuate, often the children weren’t kept together.

“Sometimes children were moved several times. You don’t see many examples of a community funding a hostel, even after they were evacuated, and paying for their upkeep and keeping them all together.”

After the war, the girls were largely left to fend for themselves.
Most discovered their parents had been murdered. Many settled in other countries. Some — like Elfi Jonas, who died during the COVID pandemic — never spoke

about their experiences.
Her daughter, Helen Strange, recalls: “Even when I went to school, my mom used to say to me, ‘Don’t talk about your past.’”



More than 20 girls were rescued from Nazi persecution and brought to *Tynemouth*.

“I think as a child they’d been told the lower profile you kept, the less likely you were to be discovered. Even very close friends had no idea of her background.”
Elfi did keep in touch with her hostel friends, though, and in 1988 some of them

gathered for a reunion.
One of them, Ruth David, described it in her autobiography, *A Child of Our Time*. She wrote: “Oddly enough, in spite of our advanced years, we all saw ourselves as ‘girls.’”
“It was an unexpected delight. The intervening years made little difference. We were not among strangers.”
In 2022, Ruth’s daughter Margaret Finch and other descendants of those who lived in the house on *Tynemouth*, and those who had helped them, gathered there for their own reunion.

For Margaret it was a chance to offer her thanks, as she believes her mother would have wanted. “Without the kindness of the Jewish community here, it’s unlikely these girls would have got places on the *Kindertransport*,” she says.
“They would probably have faced the same fate as most of their parents — to have been murdered by the Nazis. As a child, my mother was too miserable to recognize, that but later in life she came to realize what the community had done for her and the other girls.
“She was very grateful.”

BY JOANNA LONSDALE AND JANE DOWNS, BBC

SOLOMON PEREL, JEW WHO POSED AS A HITLER YOUTH...



(Continued from page 12)
trate. I continued to feel just like one of them.”

As the war neared its end, Mr. Perel was sent to the Western Front, assigned to a unit guarding bridges. When American soldiers arrested him and his squad and briefly held him in a prisoner-of-war camp, his war was over. He was no longer Josef Perjell. He was once again Shlomo Perel.
Mr. Perel moved to *Munich*, where he was a translator for the Soviet Army during interrogations of Nazi war criminals. He emigrated to the British mandate of Palestine, fought in the Israeli war of independence and managed a zipper factory.
In 1959, he married Dvora Morezky. She died in 2021. He is survived by a son, Uziel, and three grandchildren. Another son, Ronen, died in 2019.
For many years Mr. Perel put his memories of the Holocaust aside. But in the late 1980s, after a near-fatal heart attack, he

began to discuss his past and to write his memoir.
The film adaptation, written and directed by Agnieszka Holland, starred Marco Hofschneider as Mr. Perel. It earned Ms. Holland an Oscar nomination for best adapted screenplay.
In addition to winning the Golden Globe for best foreign film, the movie was named best foreign film by the New York Film Critics Circle, the Boston Society of Film Critics and the National Board of Review. But the German Export Film Union declined to select it as its entry for an Academy Award for best foreign film — a decision that prompted many of Germany’s leading filmmakers, including Wolfgang Petersen and Werner Herzog, to sign a letter of protest that was published in *Daily Variety*.
Mr. Perel attended the film’s premiere in Lodz.
In 1992, he reunited with some of his former Hitler Youth comrades and revealed to them that he was Jewish. Some years

earlier, he had gotten together with surviving members of the *Wehrmacht* unit that had accepted him as a German.
He lectured about his experiences in Israel and around the world.
“He insisted on including, with every lecture or talk he gave, a message for accepting the other,” Mr. Brakin, his great-nephew, said in a text message, “including the one that is different, and a message against racism in any form it might take.”
But Mr. Perel never fully purged himself of the Nazi identity he had adopted.
“To this day, I have a tangle of two souls in one body,” he told *The Washington Post* in 1992. “By this I mean to say that the road to Josef, the Hitler Youth that I was for four years, was very short and easy. But the way back to the Jew in me, Shlomo, or Solly, was much harder.”
“I love him,” he said, referring to Josef, “because he saved my life.”

BY RICHARD SANDOMIR, *The New York Times*



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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:
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