

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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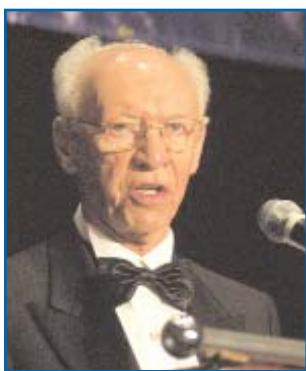
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WHOEVER SAVES A LIFE, SAVES HUMANITY

ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER OF THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM

“OUR MISSION WILL BE PERPETUATED BY SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS”



ELI ZBOROWSKI, Founder and Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem

Good evening and welcome to the Annual Tribute Dinner of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem. It is my pleasure to warmly welcome the dais guests, members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of national organizations and all of our many friends and supporters who have joined us this evening.

I would like to recognize two special guests. We are privileged to have with us our friend, colleague and partner, Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, and the Hon. Isaac Herzog, the State of Israel Minister of Social Affairs and Services who is our Guest Speaker.

The theme of this Dinner, “Whoever Saves a Life, Saves Humanity,” has been central to the lives of our two honorees. Fanya Gottesfeld Heller owes her survival to two Christians who hid her and her family from the Nazi death squads; and Tovah Feldshuh, a world-renowned actress, has used her creative talents to portray the life of Irena Gut Opdyke, a Christian rescuer, in the award-winning Broadway play, *Irena’s Vow*.

While the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem were not officially inaugurated until 1981, our activities on behalf of Yad Vashem began in 1964. That year the first *Yom Hashoah* commemoration, held on the 27th day of Nissan, in accordance with the Israeli law, was sponsored by major Jewish organizations and by religious institutions from all streams of Judaism. This event took place at Young Israel of Forest Hills and led to commemorations in every Jewish house of worship throughout the United States. In 1971, we commissioned the first Yad Vashem traveling exhibition on the history of the Holocaust. And shortly thereafter, in 1973, we launched *Martyrdom & Resistance*, the first newspaper devoted to remembrance.

Just as we have been dedicated to the capital expansion of Yad Vashem as well as to research and educational projects, we have simultaneously been committed to the development of a strong infrastructure for our organization — one that will ensure that our mission will be perpetuated by successive generations.

Children of survivors have served on our Board for the past two decades. Ira Drukier, Leonard Wilf, David Halpern, Cheryl Lifshitz, Dr. Axel Stawski, Melvin Bukiet, Harry Karten, and Lili Stawski were among the first of their generation to become active. This planning has borne fruit. Our entire Executive Committee, consisting of 20 people, is of that age group.

Our two chairs for this evening are descendants of survivors and exemplify this endeavor. Mark Wilf is a son of our Benefactors Joseph and Elizabeth Wilf. We are proud to have Mark on our Executive Board.

Caroline Massel, whose survivor grandparents, Regina and Salo Guttfreund z”l, were among my best friends, has been the central force behind our Young Leadership Associates. Starting in 1997, with a small core group, the Young Leadership Associates now proudly boasts a membership of 800 young people, many of whom do not have a direct family connection to the *Shoah*, but view remembrance as a historical imperative of the Jewish people.

I turn to my friend and colleague, Avner Shalev, Chairman of Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, and say to you and to all those present,

“My friends, these young people, already active, provide us with assurance that successive generations will continue the work that we began and will carry the torch of remembrance with dignity and pride as part of the National Remembrance Authority — Yad Vashem.”

“THE HOLY MISSION OF YAD VASHEM MUST BE CONTINUED”



ISAAC HERZOG, the State of Israel Minister of Social Affairs and Services

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. First of all I would like to dedicate a few words to a great person, Eli Zborowski, for creating and leading this organization. And I also want to say a few words about Avner Shalev. Those of you who set foot on the grounds of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem in the last twenty years could see the incredible development and the outstanding success of Yad Vashem, and this is all due primarily to the hard work of Avner and his team.

I want to congratulate today’s honorees — both great ladies — who exemplify the stories of our lives.

I am happy to be here on behalf of the Israeli government. I am carrying a certain lineage. My grandfather, Yitzhak Herzog, following the war, was travelling around Europe for six months on a rescue mission to save Jewish children who lived in monasteries or with Christian foster parents. He found and rescued 15,000 Jewish kids. My father, Israeli President Chaim Herzog, was a British officer who fought all major battles of WWII in Northern Europe and participated in the liberation of *Bergen-Belsen* concentration camp.

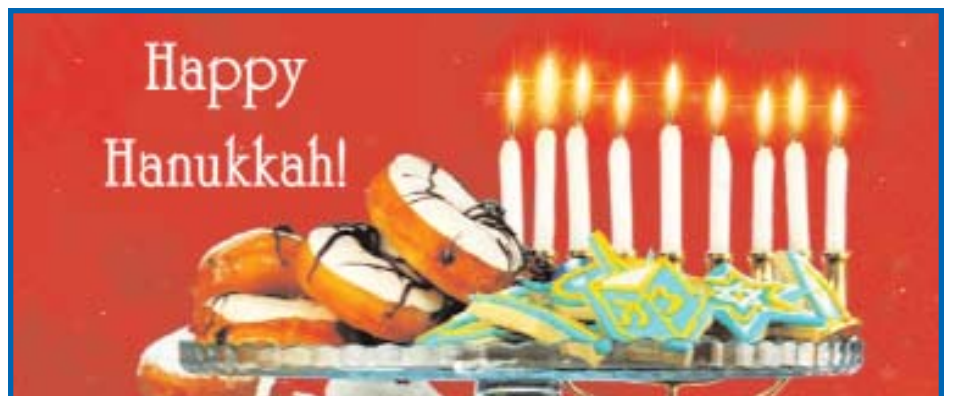
Seventy-one years after *Kristallnacht*, there are people around the world who deny that the Holocaust ever happened, who want to destroy the state of Israel, who deny Israel the right to exist. Following WWII the international community decided to change the rules of the game to make sure that another Holocaust would not happen again. A series of international laws designed mostly by Jewish professors were passed to ensure that the international community has enough power to contain people who act viciously against other people and nations. But all of a sudden, in our time, the same tools that were handed to the international community after the war are being used by enemies of Israel, by Holocaust deniers, to destroy our country. Seventy-one years after the onset of the events that led to the Holocaust, we still need to remind young people around the world that the Holocaust did happen, and that is where Yad Vashem fits in.

Yad Vashem exemplifies not only the commemoration and the study and the research, but Yad Vashem is also at the forefront of combating Holocaust denial, hate for Israel, and anti-Semitism. I am very proud to be affiliated with Yad Vashem. I think that the role of my generation, as the young leaders who are here today, is to make young people around the world understand that the Holocaust was not just another catastrophe; it was a philosophy of hatred aimed at the Jewish people, a philosophy of eradication of Jews. Our role is to transform the lessons of the past into today’s reality.

I would like to thank all of you for supporting Yad Vashem. This is a holy cause that stems out of the earth of Jerusalem. Each and every leader of the world who sets foot on Jerusalem’s soil, first and foremost is brought to Yad Vashem. We confront them with the story of the Holocaust; we want their hearts to burn with pain, and we want them to understand the full scope of *what* went on in the Holocaust. For that the holy mission of Yad Vashem must be continued, and for this we are gathered here tonight. To commit ourselves eternally to the empowering, fostering, and strengthening of Yad Vashem. To make sure that it will teach generations of people until the end of time a lesson of the most horrific tragedy in the history of humankind, to explain the story of Israel and the plight of Zion, and to make sure that someone on Earth defends the true rule of law and the true rules of human rights.

IN THIS ISSUE

American Society for Yad Vashem Annual Tribute Dinner.....	1, 8-9, 16
Does new German memorial honor Nazis, ignore Jews?.....	3
A vow fulfilled.....	4
Schindler’s apprentice.....	5
Preserving the faces of the Holocaust.....	6
The Jew who bargained with Eichmann.....	7
A prayer book’s journey.....	10
New light on Nazi crimes.....	11
A believer in heroism, to Jews’ lasting gratitude.....	12
Revisiting the sham of <i>Theresienstadt</i>	14
German car firm “used hair from Auschwitz”.....	15



ISRAELI LEADER BENJAMIN NETANYAHU BLASTS HOLOCAUST DENIERS

At the same podium where Iran's Holocaust denier had stood the day before, Israel's prime minister held up the minutes of the Nazi meeting where the "final solution to the Jewish question" was agreed upon.

Then Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spread out the construction plans for the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps signed by *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler.

Netanyahu turned to his audience at the United Nations General Assembly and asked: "Is this a lie? This June, President Obama visited the *Buchenwald* concentration camp. Did President Obama pay tribute to a lie?"

"And what of the Auschwitz survivors whose arms still bear the tattooed numbers branded on them by the Nazis? Are those tattoos a lie?"

Netanyahu provided a dramatic rebuttal



to the "systematic assault on the truth" launched by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has called the Holocaust a myth.

The Israeli prime minister said the Iranian fanatic threatened to scuttle the UN's mission to promote peace and security.

Netanyahu commended delegations from the U.S. and other nations that walked out on Ahmadinejad's disjointed address Wednesday night calling Israel and the U.S. "warmongers."

"To those who gave this Holocaust denier a hearing, I say on behalf of my people, the Jewish people, and decent people everywhere: Have you no shame? Have you no decency?"

"What a disgrace! What a mockery of the charter of the United Nations! Perhaps, some of you think that this man and his odious regime threaten only the Jews.

OPENING OF HOLOCAUST MASS GRAVE BEGINS IN GERMANY

Excavation of a suspected mass grave believed to contain the remains of more than 750 murdered Jews has begun near the town of *Jamlitz*, some 120 kilometers southeast of Berlin.

The Hungarian historical website, *Mult Kor.hu*, reports that the majority of the victims were Jews deported from Hungary by the Nazi's government at the late stages of World War II. *Nation News*, however, claims the site holds the remains of "Men and women from Poland and Ukraine." Excavation was prevented under the previous East German government and since the reunification of Germany legal battles over land ownership have prevented the opening of the suspected gravesite. German historians believe the site is that of the *Lieberose* camp, one of the satel-

lite camps of the *Sachsenhausen* concentration camp complex. Excavations began on April 22, the 64th anniversary of the liberation of *Sachsenhausen*.

If the site is that of *Lieberose*, records indicate the SS shot 753 Jewish men and women there because they were not well enough to be force-marched away from the camp before the approaching Soviet Red Army.

Peter Fischer, spokesman for the German Central Council of Jews, said: "There is no doubt that this is the historically authentic place of one of the worst massacres around Berlin."

Archaeologists, pathologists and prosecutors will examine the grave site. After the completion of the dig, it is expected the site will be turned into a Holocaust memorial.

HOLOCAUST REFUGEE MUSEUM OPENS IN ITALY

A museum commemorating Jewish Holocaust refugees has opened near the Italian town that gave them shelter on their way to Palestine.

The Museum of Memory and Welcome was inaugurated in January near *Nardo*, in southern Italy. Israel's ambassador to Italy and Rome's chief rabbi, Riccardo Di Segni, joined local officials for the ceremony.

Between 1943 and 1947, as many as 150,000 Jews fleeing Europe for Palestine, then still under British control, found shelter in and around *Nardo*, in the heel of Italy's boot.

The museum is in the seacoast village of *Santa Maria al Bagno*, one of the main refugee centers, where Jewish institu-

tions, including a synagogue, canteen, orphanage, and hospital, were set up.

Three newly restored murals painted by one of the refugees, Romanian-born Zivi Miller, form the centerpiece of the museum. The murals were painted on a long-abandoned building.

One mural is of a lighted menorah; one depicts the journey of Jews from southern Italy toward Palestine; and the third shows a Jewish mother and child asking a British soldier to allow them to enter.

Di Segni in his speech thanked local officials for keeping to the opening date "despite the grave international situation." Local media said police stopped four neo-fascist youths who tried to distribute anti-Israel flyers during the ceremony.

AUSCHWITZ INMATES' NOTE DISCOVERED

A message written by Nazi prisoners and placed in a bottle was discovered by builders working near the site of the Auschwitz death camp.

The bottle was discovered April 20 hidden in a concrete wall in a school that prisoners had been forced to reinforce, according to an Auschwitz museum official.

The official told reporters that the message was written in pencil, dated Sept. 9, 1944, and signed by seven inmates from Poland and France. At least two survived the Holocaust, the official said.

"They were young people who were trying to leave some trace of their existence behind them," said the museum spokesman.

The note's authenticity has been verified and the museum will receive the note soon.

Meanwhile, the Czech government voted to contribute about \$100,000 toward the repair and upkeep of the former death camp. It is the second country after Germany to promise funds following a Polish plea for help.

POLISH CITY ERECTS MEMORIAL TO KINDERTRANSPORT CHILDREN

A monument was unveiled in the Polish port city of *Gdansk* remembering 10,000 Jewish children evacuated to Britain to save them from the Nazis.

The bronze memorial commemorating a program known as the *Kindertransport* shows five children with suitcases. It went up in front of the main train station in *Gdansk*, a city on the Baltic Sea coast that at the time was *Danzig*, a free city lost to Germany after World War I.

The children were sent to foster homes in Britain after the *Kristallnacht* pogrom on

November 9, 1938, in which Jewish businesses were ransacked across Germany and about 30,000 Jewish men were rounded up. The children were saved from the Nazi ghettos and death camps, but most never saw their parents again.

The children came mainly from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and *Danzig*.

The monument was designed by Frank Meisler, a sculptor who was himself on one of the transports and who has also designed *Kindertransport* monuments in Berlin and London.

DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER TO HONOR HOLOCAUST HEROES

Filmmaker Michael King is producing and directing the feature-length documentary *The Rescuers, Heroes of the Holocaust*, which focuses on the efforts of non-Jewish diplomats.

The film will be shot throughout Europe and will retrace the route of thousands of escapees from the Nazis as they fled to

China, Portugal, Argentina, Japan, Britain and the United States.

Among those to be profiled in the film are Princess Alice of Greece, who hid Jews in her palace in Athens, and Portuguese diplomat Aristides de Sousa Mendes, who ignored orders and issued visas to thousands of Jews in France.

POLAND TO PUBLISH ONLINE LIST OF WWII DEAD

Historians are set to publish an online list of some of the estimated six million Polish citizens who died at the hands of Nazi Germany during World War II.

"The list will be posted at www.stratysobowe.pl, and will initially contain 1.9 million names. There will also be an appeal to Internet users to provide us with extra details," Polish historian Andrzej Kunert told AFP.

Around six million Poles are believed to have died during the 1939-1945 Nazi occupation of their country. The figure includes some three million Jewish Poles, who made up half of the overall victims of the Holocaust.

The Internet list, which is the result of three years of painstaking research and comparison of different databases, ranges from Holocaust victims, Poles who died in combat in the resistance at home and fighting the Nazis under Allied command, to civilian victims of German reprisals. The next step, Kunert said, is to expand the list to at least 3.5 million names, notably via more research in Germany's archives.

But the 10-year project could end up listing still more names, he said. The Internet project is financed by Poland's culture ministry and the Institute of National Remembrance, set up in 1998 to investigate historical crimes.

HOLOCAUST TRAUMAS STILL CAUSE DISTRESS FOR MANY SURVIVORS

BY JUDY SIEGEL-ITZKOVICH,
THE JERUSALEM POST

More than 60 years after World War II, many Holocaust survivors in Israel and the US have been found to experience psychiatric problems such as anxiety, emotional distress and sleep disturbances, according to a study published Thursday in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*.

Researchers based in Jerusalem and the US held face-to-face interviews with 145 European-born Jews who had survived the Holocaust. Of these, 55 had been in concentration camps and 36 in ghettos or in hiding, while 54 had fled their countries to escape the Nazis.

Anat Shemesh and Dr. Itzhak Levav of the Health Ministry, Asaf Sharon and Jenny Brodsky of the Myers-JDC - Brookdale Institute in Jerusalem, and Dr. Robert Kohn of Brown University in Rhode Island also interviewed a comparison group of 143 European-born Jewish Israelis who had not been exposed to the Holocaust.

They found that anxiety disorders, emotional distress and sleep disturbances were more frequent among Holocaust

survivors than among the control group. However, symptoms of depressive disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder were no more common among Holocaust survivors than among the comparison group.

"The Second World War ended in 1945, yet for some – but not all – of those who survived the Holocaust the psychopathological impact seems to have been present over the years, and even six decades later," the researchers wrote. "The reported sleep disturbances are noteworthy and

could result from repeated and traumatic imagery or dreams regularly appearing during sleep."

Severe adversity, such as that experienced during the Holocaust, can affect people in different ways as they get older, they noted. In later years, feelings attached to the encapsulated memories of the adverse past events might return, possibly reactivated by other events such as Holocaust Remembrance Day, visits to the extermination camps in Europe, or war, they concluded.

"In older individuals, who often engage in retrospection, past memories might vividly evoke those early years of deprivation, losses and persecution, and as a result repressed or suppressed feelings might emerge," they wrote.



A Holocaust survivor during a ceremony at Yad Vashem.

GERMAN "GHETTO PENSION" REQUESTS TO BE RE-EVALUATED

Nearly 70,000 rejected German Social Security claims from Holocaust survivors are to be reopened.

A monitoring group established by the Claims Conference and German Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs will check claims turned down since 2002, with the oldest claimants being processed first.

The re-evaluations follow years of lobbying and three court decisions this summer that liberalized payment criteria for Germany's 2002 "ghetto pension" law, which applies to survivors of Nazi-occupied or-incorporated ghettos who performed "voluntary and remunerated work."

The Claims Conference, which does not process or administer the claims, joined with other survivor organizations to press for the changes because "inconsistent and overly strict interpretation of eligibility criteria by local German authorities resulted in widespread denial of claims."

As of now, the kind of payment received for work in ghettos — such as money, food or clothes — is no longer a decisive factor, and remuneration need not have been provided directly to the claimant. In addition, ghettos in *Transnistria* are to be covered.

ANTI-SEMITIC VANDALISM AT CHICAGO CEMETERY

Nearly 60 headstones at a Chicago Jewish cemetery were spray-painted with anti-Semitic graffiti.

Swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans such as "juden ras" (German for "Jews out"), "Aryan Power" and a Star of David hanging from a gallows were found on headstones at the Westlawn Cemetery in northwest Chicago. About 46,000 people

are buried there.

The vandalism likely occurred on Jan. 6, according to Sheriff Tom Dart, who called the damage a hate crime.

"What they did here is especially despicable," Dart said at a news conference last Friday afternoon, the *Chicago Tribune* reported. "The desecration of graves has a level in the circle of hell that goes to the very bottom."

PROJECT TO SURVEY HOLOCAUST-ERA MASS GRAVES

A new project will survey mass graves and Jewish cemeteries in the Baltic states where Jewish communities were largely destroyed during World War II.

The aim is to identify and repair the neglected sites from the Holocaust era, which often are the last reminder of once-vibrant Jewish communities, according to a statement released Monday by Lo Tishkach-Do Not Forget, a project coordinated by the Conference of European Rabbis, the continent's main Orthodox rabbinical association, and sponsored by the Conference for Jewish Material Claims against Germany.

Youth groups in Latvia, Lithuania and

Estonia will assemble geographical data, take photos and report on the condition of the sites. Of particular importance for the program is assessing the need for fences or demarcations in keeping with Jewish law. Local governments will be encouraged to contribute financially to the protection and improvement of the sites, the statement said.

The "identification and protection [of the cemeteries] is fundamental to the battle against Holocaust denial," Lo Tishkach Executive Director Philip Carmel said.

The Genesis Philanthropy Group and the Claims Conference are supporting the project. Lo Tishkach was launched in early 2008.

DOES NEW GERMAN MEMORIAL HONOR NAZIS, IGNORE JEWS?

BY TOBY AXELROD, JTA

A controversy has erupted in a German town over a new memorial that critics say honors SS soldiers and ignores Jewish Holocaust victims.

The interfaith German-Israeli Society says the memorial unveiled Nov. 15 in *Grossburgwedel*, near *Hannover*, recognizes members of the notorious Blackshirts. But the mayor of *Burgwedel*, which has jurisdiction over *Grossburgwedel*, rejects the charge.

"We were accused of honoring SS members, and we are definitely not doing that," Mayor Hendrik Hoppenstedt told JTA.

While five members of the SS Blackshirts are among those named on the memorial, he said, they were never charged with any war crimes and are not receiving any special honor.

The concept of dual remembrance is controversial in Germany.

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan caused a stir by joining then-Chancellor Helmut Kohl for ceremonies at *Bitburg* Cemetery, where the graves of SS soldiers lie alongside those of regular soldiers. And in 1993, Berlin rededicated the *Neue Wache*, a central memorial honoring soldiers and victims that has remained

controversial.

"It is always a strange aftertaste when you put them together," said Kay Schweigmann-Greve, head of the *Hannover* branch of the German-Israeli Society.

Towns and cities throughout Germany have war memorials, but *Grossburgwedel* had nothing for its World War II soldiers.



The memorial in *Grossburgwedel*.

When older residents of *Grossburgwedel* proposed the idea some years ago, Hoppenstedt said, the town decided to have two memorials: one for civilian victims, the other for military ones.

Local Jewish leaders were consulted, and Michael Fuerst, head of the State Association of Jewish Communities in *Lower Saxony*, told the mayor that his organization did not want Jewish names

A new encyclopedia documents the history of the Holocaust in the former Soviet Union.

The book is a project of the Russian Holocaust Center and Rosspen publishing house.

Ilya Altman, leader of the project and co-chair of the Russian Holocaust Center of Moscow; Alla Gerber, president of the Moscow Holocaust Foundation; and Anatoly Podolsky, director of the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies, presented the encyclopedia at a seminar on the Holocaust.

Leaders of the project, scientists, former prisoners of ghettos and concentration camps, and educators participated in the seminar at the Institution of Political, Ethnic and National Studies of the Ukraine's National Academy of Sciences in Kiev.

The "Encyclopedia of Holocaust on

the territory of the USSR" features newly discovered and mostly unpublished photos, facts and recollections. The book also contains documents that shed new light on Jewish life during the occupation and Holocaust.

The encyclopedia includes articles by nearly 100 authors from 12 countries, including biographical articles and those devoted to the key issues of the Holocaust.

The authors used materials from more than 70 archives and museums in the Russian Federation and former Soviet countries, as well as Israel, Germany, Poland, the United States, and France.

Some of the articles were written by former concentration camp and ghetto prisoners, as well as survivors.

One thousand copies of the book, in Russian, were printed.

AUSTRIAN TEENS HELD IN ATTACK ON SURVIVORS

Five Austrian teenagers were arrested in connection with a neo-Nazi attack on Holocaust survivors.

The survivors and others were attacked while commemorating the 64th anniversary of the liberation of a concentration camp near *Salzburg* on May 9.

Calling the incident one of the worst in postwar Austria, authorities said the incident also illustrated the growing right-wing extremism among Austrian youth. The teens involved apparently had no previous record.

Two people were wounded in the attack, in which teens allegedly fired plastic bullets from air guns and harassed visitors verbally, according to reports. One of the guns was found later near the scene, according to police.

The masked youths also allegedly shouted "Heil Hitler" and gave the Nazi salute, shocking a group of visitors from France and Italy, according to news

reports. Some of the visitors, including survivors of the *Ebensee* slave labor camp, were standing near a stone pit at the site when the incident occurred.

The arrested teens, who had fled the scene, range in age from 14 to 17 and come from the *Salzburg* area. They have been charged and released on their own recognizance. They reportedly admitted under interrogation that they had planned to disrupt the commemorative ceremony marking the liberation of the camp.

Austrian Interior Minister Maria Fekter described the case as a "very serious" example of rising right-wing tendencies. Alois Lissl, chief of the Upper Austrian security directorate, said the teenagers professed to be unaware that if convicted as youths, they could spend up to five years in prison for breaching the law that bans the Nazi party and any activities aimed at reviving it.

included since the other stone might bear the names of SS members.

"There was no problem with simple soldiers, but the Jewish community could not accept there being SS and *Gestapo* there," Fuerst told JTA.

Hoppenstedt said professional research was conducted to determine whether any of the soldiers "had any hints of war crimes in their files. We found nothing."

Clues that a sixth soldier had been in the SD, a so-called security service connected to the *Gestapo*, could not be confirmed. The decision was made not to excise any of the six names.

Fuerst said the mayor informed him immediately once a decision had been made.

"I told the mayor that I respected him, but that the Jewish community still could not approve of having Jewish victims on one stone and SS people included on the other,"

Fuerst said, adding that a main square in *Grossburgwedel* is named after Jewish doctor Albert David, who took his life in 1941 when the *Gestapo* came to arrest him.

Schweigmann-Greve in a statement said it was regrettable that local citizens, "given the choice of including members of Nazi organizations or Jewish citizens of *Burgwedel*, decided

against including the Jews."

Adding fuel to the fire, a left-wing blogger using the name Lindener Butjer has accused the town's mayor, a member of the conservative Christian Democratic Union Party, of ignoring Jewish and Gypsy victims while highlighting Nazi soldiers. The blogger called for a protest "against this form of institutionalized falsification of history."

"It is completely understandable that the Jewish community does not want to have its murdered relatives on a memorial with SS men," said Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Jerusalem office.

Zuroff told JTA in an interview that "the fact that someone was not charged with war crimes does not mean that they were not involved in war crimes. German persecution policy back then was far from comprehensive; it was quite lenient."

Fuerst said he had no complaint about how the city handled the matter and applauded the involvement of local teens in researching the history.

Conversely, he said he found the tactics of opponents "not good."

"They say that the town did not speak with me," Fuerst said. "That is not true."

Hoppenstedt said he hoped the memorial would "fulfill its purpose both for the families of those named, and for those who have no personal connection to that time, that they will see it as a symbol of what happened and what we have to do to prevent it in the future."



BOOK REVIEWS

DENYING HISTORY: WHO SAYS THE HOLOCAUST NEVER HAPPENED AND WHY DO THEY SAY IT?

Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why Do They Say It? By Michael Shermer & Alex Grobman. University of California Press: Berkeley, California, 2009. 334 pp. \$18.95 paperback

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

In a world where anyone can trumpet his own "facts" about anything, *Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why Do They Say It?*, by Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman, should be required reading for everyone!

Why? It clearly and definitively explains just how to identify the truth in a sea of "untruths." And with supposed "information" from everywhere daily bombarding all of us, we all need that ability.

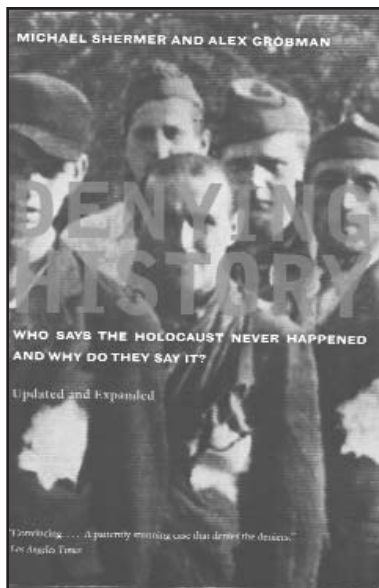
At the same time, *Denying History* should be of particular interest to readers of *M&R*. For, while telling us who Holocaust deniers are and why they are deniers, Shermer and Grobman, in an admirable study, painstakingly show us just how these individuals handle the truth. The result: It quickly becomes exceptionally obvious that deniers have a hidden agenda in which lies work best!

In sum, early on, the authors make plain to readers the method used by all conscientious and responsible historians researching anything. In order to confirm that what is supposed to have happened actually did, credible historians look for a "convergence of evidence." In other words, they look for many sources — and usually a variety of them, including written

documents, eyewitness testimony, photographs, etc. — to support any and all claims. (One piece of evidence can neither prove nor disprove anything!) Only then, with substantial evidence in hand, does the historian feel confident enough to turn claims into history.

That done, Shermer and Grobman zero in on their study of Holocaust deniers. They begin by introducing us to a number of "prominent" ones, among them, David Irving. Irving has written many books propagating fallacious views as regards the Holocaust. He also eagerly lectures on the same. The authors present Ernst Zündel, another dedicated denier. Zündel himself "publishes and distributes books, flyers, videos, and audiotapes through his Toronto-based Samizdat Publishers" — all spreading his lies as regards the Jews and World War II. And then there is Bradley Smith, whom this reviewer, also a professor, considers the most dangerous of them all. "Smith is best known for his Herculean efforts to instigate an 'open debate on the Holocaust . . .'"

Throughout the early 1990s Smith purchased a number of advertisements in college newspapers. The ads proclaimed:



"We debate every other great historical issue as a matter of course, but influential pressure groups with private agendas have made the Holocaust story an exception... Students should be encouraged to investigate the Holocaust story the same way they are encouraged to investigate

every other historical event." Sadly, many college newspapers ran the ad because student editors felt freedom of speech demanded it!

So, why are these individuals, and a goodly number more, deniers? It has to do with the deniers' obsession with Jews as conspirators. It has to do with the deniers' need to find an enemy upon whom they can saddle everything that, according to them, has gone wrong in the world. It has to do with the fact that Jews have always been the target of anti-

Semites; hence these anti-Semites (which is just what they are) find it easy to point to the Jews, once again, as the evil trouble-makers in the world. Thus, for deniers, the Holocaust is just another Jewish conspiracy, a way to make Germans feel guilty, a way to make the world feel guilty, a way for Jews to get money for themselves and for Israel.

Finally, the authors of *Denying History*

show us how deniers, very unlike conscientious and responsible historians, will do all they deem necessary to prove their points. Among other tactics, rather than looking for support for their own claims, deniers will joyously pounce on the slightest hint of disagreement in survivors' testimonies as regards a particular happening. Then, clutching that hint, they will use it to heartily discredit everything in a book or article written by a legitimate Holocaust historian. (Dear reader: Please note, not everyone remembers everything in the same way, nor does everyone experience everything similarly.)

Soon after doing this, deniers press their claims, supported, if at all, by the flimsiest of "evidence." Another common feat deniers use is quoting primary texts completely out of context or misquoting them. For, among other things, deniers don't mind at all mistranslating the German from primary texts to make words mean what they want them to!

Interestingly, the authors' ultimate goal in writing *Denying History* is not only to reveal deniers' tactics in contrast to legitimate historians' techniques vis-à-vis history, but most importantly, to prepare all of us to vociferously rebut deniers' outrageous claims! For according to Shermer and Grobman, both exceptionally knowledgeable in the area of Holocaust denial, a denier's claims left unanswered can easily come to be believed by a naïve and unknowing general public . . .

Dr. Diane Cypkin is a Professor of Media and Communication Arts at Pace University.

A VOW FULFILLED

A Vow Fulfilled – The Fran Laufer Story: Memories and Miracles. By Fran Laufer. Targum Press: New York, 2009. 210 pp. \$21.99 softcover.

REVIEWED BY MALKA FORSTER

Everyone loves a success story. We can't resist the vicarious thrill of escaping into the lives of real-life heroes who, against all odds, miraculously and heroically soar above. It's no wonder, then, that a book like *A Vow Fulfilled – The Fran Laufer Story: Memories and Miracles* has the power to capture our attention.

When I first saw the book's eye-catching cover, I thought that it would be like many other Holocaust books. After reading the book – in virtually one sitting – I was surprised. *A Vow Fulfilled* is more than a

Holocaust diary – it is a soul-stirring story of selflessness, strength, and ultimately success in the face of evil; it is a tribute to the human capacity to rebuild and to love after unthinkable horrors.

"Horrors" is an understatement. According to the book's flap, at age 9, Frimciu (Fran) was ensconced in the lov-

ing arms of her warm, Chasidic family. At thirteen, she was alone in the Nazis' lair, surviving on her wits and audacity. At fifteen, she was working at a labor camp, stealing a daily vitamin from her overseer to keep herself alive. At nineteen, she was in *Bergen-Belsen*, battling typhoid. And at twenty, she met the man who was to become her husband, her family, and her future.

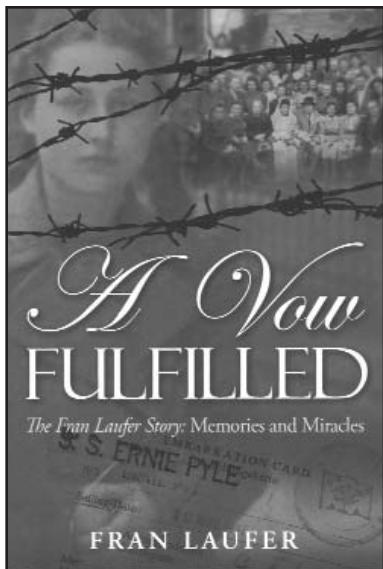
It seems inconceivable. How can a person who has suffered so continue to live – and not merely to live, but to live a Torah-filled life of meaning and purpose?

Fran Laufer proves that with faith and resilience of spirit, the impossible is possible.

A legendary philanthropist and founder of the famed Fran Laufer Collection, a unique collection of international antiques, now, in this book, she shares her saga of a journey from barbed wire to antique brass, and shows how one can rise even from the depths of degradation to accomplish incredible feats.

"We, the survivors, can only hope that we are leaving a legacy of courage, determination, and heroism." These are Fran's powerful and poignant words, and they

(Continued on page 15)



AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

IN THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

Day After Night. By Anita Diamant. Scribner, 2009. 304 pp. \$27.00 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY DEBRA SPARK, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

After 1945, some Holocaust survivors, unwilling or unable to return home, set their sights on Palestine. Given the 1917 Balfour Declaration, Jews might have expected to be received in the land of milk and honey with open arms. But not so.

In 1939, the British issued a "White Paper" that altered the promise of the Balfour Declaration by creating immigration quotas that kept Jews (at times quite literally) at sea; they weren't allowed off the ships that had transported them from Europe. Of those illegal immigrants who made it to shore, some even found themselves behind barbed wire once again, freed from a concentration camp only to land in *Atlit*, a British-run internment camp, located south of *Haifa* on the Mediterranean.

Though *Atlit* had its friendly aspects – food, Hebrew lessons, an infirmary and exercise classes – it was still imprison-

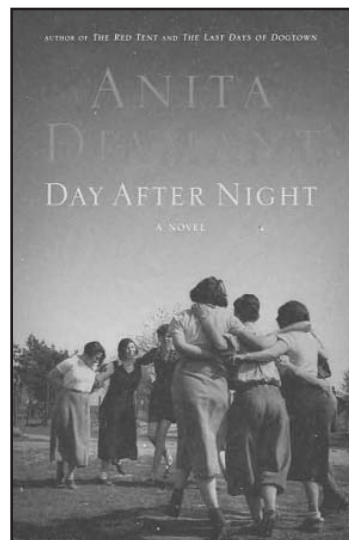
ment. Men and women slept in separate barracks; days were long and boring, the future uncertain.

In her latest novel, *Day After Night*, Anita Diamant imagines what life inside *Atlit* must have been like for its female inhabitants. She follows the fortunes of four Holocaust survivors in the months leading up to a dramatic nighttime liberation of the camp by the *Palmach*, the special forces arm of the Jewish militia.

As with the biblical heroines in her best-selling *The Red Tent*, Diamant's aim is to speak for those silenced by history. In this case, the untold stories belong to Shayndel, Leonie, Zorah, and Tedi, though the novel ranges even further to describe the hearts and minds of the camp's cook, the nurse, and others.

We first meet Tedi, a Dutch Jew who wants only to forget her past and embark on a new life in Palestine. Soon, though, Tedi fades into the background, as the plot is largely carried by Shayndel, a former resistance fighter; Leonie, forced into prostitution

(Continued on page 13)



SCHINDLER'S APPRENTICE

BY SHARON UDASIN, THE JEWISH WEEK

More than 60 years ago, little Leon Leyson steadied himself on top of a box each morning, climbing the makeshift step stool to operate the controls of a metalworking lathe machine that towered over his skinny 13-year-old body.

Today that pint-sized worker is 80, the youngest survivor of Oskar Schindler's factory in Krakow, the workplace that saved more than a thousand Polish Jews from death. He shared his story with New Yorkers for the first time Tuesday evening, at an event organized by Chabad-Lubavitch of Midtown. Only after Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* premiered in 1994, did Leyson begin speaking about his experiences working in Schindler's enamelware factory and how he and some of his family members were able to survive the Holocaust.

In Leyson's opinion, *Schindler's List* paved the way for the slew of World War II resistance films that have become popular in Hollywood today — films like *Defiance*, *Valkyrie* and *Inglourious Basterds*, which tell of survival rather than victimization. *Defiance* particularly strikes a chord with Leyson because he grew up very close to the story's location, he said.

"Ever since *Schindler's List* came out things turned a little bit," Leyson told *The Jewish Week* prior to the event. "There was more interest generated in those events like Schindler, those people who rescued Jews. Rescuers didn't come out and admit what they had done until *Schindler's List* came out."

While *Defiance* juxtaposes Jews as both rescuers and resisters, a movie like *Inglourious Basterds* allows Holocaust victims to fulfill lifelong fantasies of killing Hitler, according to Michael Berenbaum, director of the Sigi Ziering Institute and professor of theology at the University of Judaism.

"Most of us seldom face life-and-death choices, seldom face the decisions that are absolutely ultimate," said Berenbaum,

who is the former project director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. "We now understand that many victims and almost all survivors faced life-and-death situations almost routinely."

After the Nazi invasion of Leyson's town in northeast Poland, the Leyson family was forced to resettle in the Jewish ghetto of Krakow. Leyson's father, an accomplished toolmaker, was one of the first Jews that Schindler hired, after the elder Leyson lost his initial factory job on account of being Jewish.

"Eventually he hired one-by-one my family members who survived," Leyson said.

While his oldest brother escaped the invasion and somehow made it safely back to the family's hometown, Leyson's other two brothers and his sister all eventually ended up at Schindler's factory. Schindler actually removed Leyson's sister from *Brunnütz* concentration camp in Czechoslovakia simply by adding her to his list and thereby saving her life. "He was an extraordinary human being, not just for us but for everyone who was in his company," Leyson said.

"Everyone who was on Schindler's list probably thought they had some special relationship with Schindler."

"They realized that they were an extraordinary community that was going to survive communally," Berenbaum said. "They just had it bad enough for there to be a sense of shared destiny and good enough for them to have enough left to be

able to share and create community."

"The ties are also based on a lot less guilt because they survived together," he added.

But as the absolute youngest worker, Leyson felt that his relationship with the beloved factory owner was particularly special.

"I was little so I stood on a box so I could reach the controls better and see over the machine. I think maybe Schindler was a little bit amused about that," he said. "He used to stop and talk to me, ask me how I was doing. Sometimes after some of these visits he would actually order a double ration of food for me."

Leyson does recall seeing younger children playing at the factory, but they were too young to work and were eventually taken to Auschwitz at the end of the war. And he too, even as a worker, feared that he and his colleagues could be taken away at any second.

"I was skeptical the whole time about surviving," Leyson said. "Things were getting worse and worse. At one point I didn't think Schindler would be able to accomplish what he did. These Nazis were not stupid — they were just evil. And so he had to bribe a lot of Nazis and a lot of officials befriended him."

Scholars agree, noting that despite the workers' seemingly favorable situation, their survival was always hanging by a mere thread.

"It was the most fragile of triumphs that could've ended up in a very different way

at any moment," Berenbaum said.

After the war, Leyson spent three years in a displaced persons camp and was finally able to move with his parents to Los Angeles, while his brother and sister emigrated to Israel through the illegal *Aliyah Bet*. Leyson served in the American Army during the Korean War and then studied at Los Angeles State University — now Cal State Los Angeles — which led him to become an industrial arts teacher for the next 39 years. This past December, NBC's Los Angeles affiliate aired an Emmy-winning half-hour documentary on Leyson's life called *A Child on Schindler's List*, and Leyson will be displaying the statue at the Rodgers Center for Holocaust Education at nearby Chapman University.

"Once it became public who I was, everybody wanted to come and have me speak — the dam burst," said Leyson, whose public appearances first began at Chabad in Los Angeles. "I'm always amazed when people come to hear me — sometimes I think I'll show up one day and there will be nobody there."

But Leyson continues to speak to audiences nationwide, delivering powerful messages of survival and resistance, as a tribute to all of the victims and their selfless rescuers.

"Everyone who lived during that period of time resisted" — from opening up underground schools to staging rebellions to surviving concentration camps. "It's just not the kind of resistance that makes a splash. It was resistance. Believe me, no one came willingly."

Not a day goes by when Leyson does not think of Schindler and the time spent at his factory, and he was actually able to reunite with his hero 20 years after their first meeting — but this time, in California.

"When I tried to introduce myself he interrupted me and said, 'I know who you are, you're Little Leyson,'" he remembers. "Twenty years later, that gives you the idea what kind of guy he was."



Leon Leyson.

NAZI LEADER'S GRANDNIECE, JEWISH WOMAN FIND PEACE

BY ARON HELLER, AP

Bettina Goering ran away from home at 13, lived on a promiscuous commune in India and later fled to the U.S. and had herself sterilized. It was all part of an attempt to escape the legacy of her last name.

Her great-uncle was the infamous Nazi leader Hermann Goering. Adolf Hitler's second-in-command, he headed the vaunted *Luftwaffe* airforce and was a leading architect of the "Final Solution" to exterminate Europe's Jews.

His grandniece's odyssey to cleanse herself of the family's tarnished past has brought her to Israel, where a documentary about her relationship with a child of Holocaust survivors is being featured at the Jewish Eye film festival in this southern Israeli city.

Bloodlines records Goering's emotional encounters with Ruth Rich, an Australian artist whose brother was murdered by the Nazis and whose parents emerged broken from the Holocaust. The film has aired in Australia and will be screened next at the Boston Jewish Film Festival.

Goering, in an interview, said it was only thanks to her meetings with Rich, where she faced the pain of an angry victim, that she was finally able to break through from

a guilt-ridden life.

"I looked into the darkest darkness and there is nothing left to fear. I finally released it," she said. "It was the deepest kind of therapy you could do."

The 52-year-old Goering, a doctor of oriental medicine, has struggled with her identity her entire life. Her father, Heinz, was adopted by his infamous uncle after his own father died, and followed in his footsteps to become a fighter pilot for the *Luftwaffe*.

Heinz was shot down over the Soviet Union and returned from captivity in 1952 to find that his two brothers had killed themselves and the family's fortunes were gone.

Hermann Goering was sentenced to death along with 11 others at the Nuremberg trials in 1946, but he committed suicide by swallowing a poison pill in his cell the night before his scheduled execution.

Goering said her father, who died in 1981, never spoke about the Holocaust, or about his notorious uncle.

But her grandmother was less evasive — she adored him. As head of the Red Cross in Nazi Germany, she also hobnobbed with the regime's other top leaders and had many pictures of herself alongside Hitler.

"We would be watching a documentary on TV together about the Holocaust and

she would yell 'It's all lies, it didn't happen,'" Goering recalled.

The young Goering, baffled at how the systematic killing of 6 million Jews had occurred, rebelled.

At 13, she ran away and cut ties with the family. She became a hippie and then a communist and traveled the world. But her teenage years were marked by drug abuse, and her twenties included three nervous breakdowns.

Her journey also took her to India where she became a disciple of Osho, the new-age guru best known for promoting free love, before moving to the United States, where she still resides. There she married and changed her name. For this article, she asked to conceal it for fear of drawing attention, particularly from neo-Nazi sympathizers.

Still, she said she couldn't shake the ghost of her great-uncle. It was there every time she looked in the mirror.

"The eyes, the cheekbones, the profile," she said. "I look just like him. I look more like him than his own daughter."

The most drastic step she took was to have her fallopian tubes tied at age 30. She said she feared she would create another monster. "It's my bloodline and I didn't want to continue it," she said. "I didn't want any more Goerings."

Her only brother independently decided to have a vasectomy. She is now close with

him, but disconnected from the rest of the family. "It's all a part of this guilt," she said.

Through a common friend, she was introduced a couple of years ago to Rich, who was struggling with her own story of victimized parents and the ghost of a brother she never knew. Rich went through years of intensive therapy and escaped to art, where she painted dark troubling images of the demons lurking inside her.

Together, the two women began to heal.

In their first meetings, Rich said she felt contempt for Goering. "It was very intense and I definitely projected this on Bettina," she said. But ultimately, she said, they have formed a "great sisterhood."

Goering credited Rich for letting her finally shed a burden. The newfound inner peace gave Goering enough confidence to come to Israel for the first time.

At a screening this week, she faced tough questions from survivors at the film festival. Later, in a visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum, she watched the famous footage of Hermann Goering from the Nuremberg trials with less pain than ever before.

"The hardest part is admitting that I could have liked him. I was so shocked by that," she said. "Now I am accepting myself more for who I am, whatever that encompasses — the good, the bad and the ugly."

SURVIVORS' CORNER

PRESERVING THE FACES OF THE HOLOCAUST

JULIAN GUTHRIE,
SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

Artist Robert Sutz took pictures of Gloria Lyon, who sat patiently in her San Francisco home. With her strawberry blond hair pulled in soft curls up and off her face, Lyon had a sweet smile that belied the words she would speak.

"I was 14 when I was sent to Auschwitz in 1944," Lyon began. "We had to line up without any clothes on and stand in front of Dr. Josef Mengele for selection. He had this little baton, and he wore a white glove. He indicated with that baton whether you should go to the left or to the right, to extermination or to work. I worked behind the gas chamber."

The next day, Sutz photographed Herman Shine, sitting shirtless in his



Artist Robert Sutz poses with some of the life masks he has made of Holocaust survivors.

kitchen in San Mateo. Still fit at 86, Shine is one of the few people to ever escape from Auschwitz, the Nazi death camp.

"I am alive thanks to not one but to a dozen miracles," said Shine, his left forearm bearing the faded black concentration camp tattoo of 70196. His shirt was off so the plaster bandages could go on his neck and face.

Shine and Lyon are among dozens of Holocaust survivors from across the coun-

try who have let Sutz create three-dimensional life masks of them — masks that will serve as another form of documentation to the murder of Jews by the Nazis. Last month marked the 70th anniversary of the start of World War II.

"My documentation is a little bit different," said Sutz, 79, who has completed the masks and heard the stories of 62 survivors, with dozens more interviews planned. "Future generations will be able to see what these survivors really look like."

With each mask, Sutz — whose father's family perished in Auschwitz and *Treblinka* — does a video interview.

"I've heard the worst stories imaginable," Sutz said. "Many told me of scenes where they were lined up in the morning and had to stand for hours. Every 10th person would be shot. The next day, it would be every eighth person killed by dogs."

"I've heard many stories, too, of wintertime in the camps," he continued. "A survivor told me of a prisoner who was caught sneaking bread back into the camp. The prisoner was stripped naked and put in a barrel. All of the other prisoners had to shovel ice in until he died."

The common thread among survivors, Sutz said, is "pure luck" — and "a tremendous desire to live to tell."

Lyon, whose family name is Hollander and who was born in Czechoslovakia, said she and her family had no idea what was happening when they were rounded up the day after Passover in 1944 and transported to camp.

"One day I was singled out by Mengele and put on a truck with 30 women," Lyon said. "We were all without clothes. The

driver, who was Hungarian and sympathetic, told us that we were going to the gas chamber, and that if we wanted to jump into the ditch on the way, to try to escape, that we should do so, but he said if we gave him away, he would die, too."

So on that dark and cold night in late December 1944, Lyon, without clothes or shoes, was the only woman to jump.

"I thought, the only way I will get out of here otherwise is coming out of that chimney as smoke," she said, her voice far away, back in the memory of that night.

Lyon spent the next 24 hours freezing in the ditch before sneaking back into a girls' barrack. The next morning, in another stroke of luck, everyone in the barrack was loaded on a train for another Nazi camp, *Bergen-Belsen*. That camp was liberated on Jan. 27, 1945. Both of Lyon's parents and three of her four siblings survived. One brother was beaten to death in Auschwitz three days before liberation.

Lyon said she was proud to spend a recent morning sitting for Sutz's portrait.

"What an interesting way of honoring those who are no longer here," Lyon said. "And I'm honored that my face will be one of the faces of the Holocaust."

Herman Shine, the Auschwitz escapee, says he has not stopped talking about what happened since the day he was liberated by the Russians.

As Sutz prepared his plaster bandages and plaster mix, Shine spoke of his life and escape. His wife, Marianne, whom he met in Auschwitz when he was 17 and she was 15, was nearby.

"I was born in Berlin in 1922," Shine said. "My mother was German, my father was Polish. One day in September 1939 — two weeks after the start of war — I was told to report to police headquarters to

register for the war. I was put on a transport truck. I never saw my mother, father, brother, and sister again."

First at *Sachsenhausen* and later at Auschwitz, Shine worked construction, building barracks. When he learned through a source that the camp was soon



Holocaust survivor Gloria Lyon with artist Robert Sutz.

to be "liquidated," as the Russians were moving closer, he and a friend plotted their escape.

"They were going to mow all of us down with special machine guns," he said.

He and his friend Max Drimmer — who now lives close by in Burlingame — escaped in September 1944. They spent three days hiding in a hole in the ground before walking 18 miles to a hiding place established for them by a Polish Catholic. They were on the run for 10 months, and finally liberated on Jan. 30, 1945.

As the tape went on his face for the mask, Shine was instructed by Sutz not to talk.

"There are still deniers of the Holocaust," Shine said, getting in a few last words before the plaster went on. "Fortunately, we are around to repudiate them. But there will come a time when all of the survivors are gone. That's why everything has to be written, documented, painted, and spoken of."

AUSCHWITZ MEMORIAL LAUNCHES FACEBOOK PAGE

BY MONIKA SCISLOWSKA, AP

To try to reach young people around the world, the memorial museum at Auschwitz has launched a page on Facebook, the social networking site usually home to news and photos about friends, funny videos, and the minutiae of modern life.

The page aims to be a forum for discussion, reflection and learning about the Nazi death camp, and many people have left a simple message in English, Hebrew and Polish: "Never again."

In one week since opening, the page has drawn more than 1,800 "fans," who have subscribed, and the number is growing by the hour. About 1,000 signed up on Thursday alone.

Pawel Sawicki, a spokesman for the Auschwitz memorial, said the museum viewed its venture onto the popular site as "kind of an experiment."

"Facebook is the tool that young people are using to communicate, so if we want to reach them, we should be using their tool," Sawicki told The Associated Press.

Other organizations that deal with the

legacy of the Holocaust already have ventured onto Facebook. The Simon Wiesenthal Center counts more than 2,000 "fans" on its site and also has used Twitter.

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum launched its Facebook page in 2008 and has more than 5,500 fans. It also is on Twitter and YouTube.

"Facebook is just another way to reach people," said David Klevan, the education manager for technology and distance learning at the Washington museum. "Just like museums often hold programs in coffee shops or other places in their local communities, this is where people gather — they gather on Facebook."

Efraim Zuroff of the Wiesenthal Center in Jerusalem said the idea of using the Internet is "to reach out to as many people as possible."

Although the Web is also rife with far-right sites that attempt to distort or deny the Holocaust, Zuroff said that was no reason for others to dismiss using it.

"The vehicle depends on the content," he said. "If the content is helpful, if the content is educational, there's no reason

not to use the vehicle."

There's been no suggestion that Facebook is an inappropriate place to discuss the Holocaust and Auschwitz, a potent symbol of Nazi Germany's attempt to eliminate European Jewry.

"I don't think Facebook is the worst place for education, and let's be honest — the world has changed," said Piotr Kadlczik, the head of Poland's Jewish community. "Facebook can be such a place, and I don't see anything dangerous or wrong about the Auschwitz museum having a profile on it."

Facebook turned five years old this year and has more than 175 million users worldwide. There are scores of Facebook groups dedicated to Auschwitz started by individuals, but the page — found by searching the site with the keywords "Auschwitz Memorial" — allows people to take part in discussions moderated by the memorial's staff.

So far, the site has seen no postings by Holocaust deniers, Sawicki said. If they do show up, they will be removed quickly, he said, adding that engaging such people in dialogue is "a waste of time."

The Facebook venture is not the museum's first attempt to take advantage of new technologies to reach a broader audience. It launched a Polish-language channel on YouTube in 2008 and an English-language page two months ago. Some 22,000 people have viewed the video so far.

"You can see that although many years have passed since the Holocaust, this is still an important reference point for people and that each generation has its own thoughts and reflections on it," Sawicki said.

Between 1940 and 1945, some 1 million people, mostly Jews, were killed or died of starvation, disease, and forced labor at the camp, which the Nazis built in occupied Poland. Sawicki said the memorial's 1 million annual visitors are primarily students and other young people.

There is an unofficial Facebook page dedicated to Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, which says it plans an official page in the coming weeks.

"We certainly view the Internet as a key tool in disseminating accurate, credible information about the Holocaust to as wide an audience as possible," said Yad Vashem spokeswoman Estee Yaari.

WITNESSES OPEN UP TO PRIEST ON HOLOCAUST IN SOVIET UNION

BY MARIA DANILOVA and
RANDY HERSCHAFT, AP

The Holocaust has a landscape engraved in the mind's eye: barbed-wire fences, gas chambers, furnaces.

Less known is the so-called Holocaust by Bullets, in which more than 2 million Jews were gunned down in towns and villages across Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. Their part in the Nazis' Final Solution has been under-researched, their bodies left unidentified in unmarked mass graves.

Shoah, French filmmaker Claude Lanzmann's documentary, stands as the 20th century's epic visual record of the Holocaust. Now, another Frenchman, Catholic priest Patrick Desbois, is filling in a different part of the picture.

Desbois says he has interviewed more than 800 eyewitnesses and pinpointed hundreds of mass graves strewn around dusty fields in the former Soviet Union. The result is a book, *The Holocaust by Bullets*, and an exhibition that ran through March 15 at New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage.

Brought to Ukraine by a twist of fate, Desbois has spent seven years trying to document the truth, honor the dead, relieve witnesses of their pain and guilt and prevent future acts of genocide.

About 1.4 million of Soviet Ukraine's 2.4 million Jews were executed, starved to death or died of disease during the war. Another 550,000-650,000 Soviet Jews were killed in Belarus and up to 140,000 in Russia, according to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Most of the victims were women, children and elderly people.

Begun after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the slaughter by bullets was the opening phase of what became the Nazis' Final Solution, with its factories of death operating in Auschwitz, Poland, and other camps.

Desbois devotes his 233-page book, published by Palgrave Macmillan in August, to his work in Ukraine, where he says he has uncovered more than 800 mass extermination sites, more than two-thirds of them previously unknown.

Since the book was written, he has expanded his search for mass graves into Belarus and plans to look early this year in areas of Russia that were occupied by the Germans.

Sometimes bursting into tears, old men and women from Ukrainian villages recount to Desbois how women, children, and elders were marched or carted in from neighboring towns to be shot, burned to death, or buried alive by German troops, Romanian forces, squads of Ukrainian collaborators, and ethnic German volunteers.

Even then, it was methodical, Desbois' research shows. First, Germans would arrive in a town or village and gather intelligence on how best to transport the victims to extermination sites, where to execute them, and how to dispose of their bodies.

"It was done as systematically as it was done elsewhere," said John Paul Himka, an expert on the Holocaust and Ukraine at the University of Alberta in Canada, who is not connected to Desbois' work. "You can read as they're figuring out the best way to do this, the best way to shoot ... it's absolutely systematic, no accident here."

Desbois' interviews and grave-hunting tie in to millions of pages of Soviet

archives, heightening their credibility, says Paul Shapiro of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, who wrote the foreword to Desbois' book.

Desbois' work also is having an impact on efforts to preserve Holocaust sites. In December of 2008, the 26-nation International Task Force on the Holocaust called on European governments to ensure the protection of locations, such as the mass graves Desbois is uncovering, according to Shapiro, who helped draft the resolution.

Among Desbois' key findings is the widespread use of local children to help bury the dead, wait on German soldiers during meals, and remove gold teeth and other valuables from the bodies. His work also has yielded evidence that the killings were most frequently carried out in the open, in daylight and in a variety of ways — shooting victims, throwing them alive into bonfires, walling up a group of Jews in a cellar that wasn't opened until 12 years later.

Desbois' witnesses are mostly Orthodox Christian, and he comes to them as a priest, dressed in black and wearing a clerical collar, taking in their pain and trying to ease their suffering. Many have never before talked about their experiences.

In the village of *Ternivka*, about 200 miles south of Kiev, where 2,300 Jews were killed, a frail, elderly woman, who identified herself only as Petrivna, revealed the unbearable task the Nazis imposed on her.

The young schoolgirl saw her Jewish neighbors thrown into a large pit, many still alive and convulsing in agony. Her task was to trample on them barefoot to make space for more. One of those she

had to tread on was a classmate.

"You know, we were very poor, we didn't have shoes," Petrivna told Desbois in a single breath, her body twitching in pain, Desbois writes in his book. "You see, it is not easy to walk on bodies."

Desbois, 53, a short, soft-spoken man with dark, thinning hair, says the stories give him nightmares. The most difficult is "to bear the horrors that the witnesses tell me, because often the people are simple, very kind, and want to tell me everything," Desbois said.

"You have to be able to listen, to accept, to bear this horror," said Desbois. "I am not here to judge the people's guilt; we are here to know what happened."

Desbois' small team includes a translator, a researcher, a mapping expert, a ballistics specialist, and a video and photo crew. He often joins his witnesses in their homes, leaving his shoes outside. He tends to a peasant's cow while the man tells his story.

Desbois has deep personal roots in his project, dating to 2002, when he first visited Ukraine to see the place where his grandfather was interned as a French prisoner in World War II.

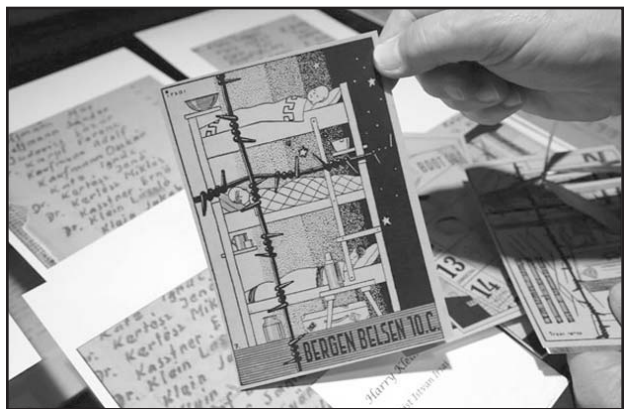
When he arrived, the locals told him of a stream of blood that had run from the site where the Jews were executed, and of a dismembered woman hanging from a tree after the Nazis threw a grenade in a pit full of people. When he was offered a visit to more villages, he did not hesitate.

"I am in a hurry to find all the bones, to establish the truth and justice so that the world can know what happened and that the Germans never left a tiny village in Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia without killing Jews there."

KILLING KASZTNER, THE JEW WHO BARGAINED WITH EICHMANN

BY RICHARD Z. CHESNOFF,
THE JEWISH WORLD

The history of the Holocaust runs fathomless with tales of personal tragedy. Yet few remain more dramatic — or more contentious — than the story of Rezso Kasztner, the heroic Hungarian Jew who tried to negotiate directly with the



Those rescued by Mr. Kasztner spent months at the *Bergen-Belsen* concentration camp before being taken by train to freedom in Switzerland. Drawings by one survivor, Istvan Irsai, on display at the YIVO Institute, chronicled life at the camp. Behind the drawing, a list of passengers on board the train.

Nazis to save a half million of his people from the gas chambers.

Kasztner ultimately failed in most of his grand ambition. But he did succeed in saving tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews, only to be accused in the postwar years of being a villainous collaborator.

Kasztner — and his brutal murder on the streets of Tel Aviv 12 years after the Holocaust had ended — are the subjects of a remarkable new film by prize-winning New York documentary director Gaylen

Ross. Entitled *Killing Kasztner, the Jew Who Dealt with Nazis*, the 116-minute film won rave reviews in Israel, where it was dubbed as "one of the ten best films of the year," and again at the Toronto Film Festival.

Rezso Kasztner was a dashing Budapest journalist, a Zionist leader who became active in Jewish community affairs. He faced a horrible dilemma. The

Nazis had invaded Hungary in 1944. Europe's last intact Jewish community was scheduled to be the next victim of the Final Solution. Murder-mastermind Adolf Eichmann had already set up shop in Budapest and was wasting no time in preparing to pack Hungarian Jews into Auschwitz-bound cattle cars.

Kasztner entered into a bizarre "blood for wares" negotiation with Eichmann himself. Hitler's war machine was deep in trouble. In exchange for \$10 million in cash and 10,000 trucks ("for use only on the Eastern Front"), Eichmann promised he would halt the Hungarian killings.

Predictably, Kasztner failed to get Anglo-American backing for the scheme. But he gambled for time and ultimately raised a multimillion-dollar ransom of gold, jewelry, diamonds, and cash that did buy tens of thousands of Jewish lives. Among them: 1,684 Jews who boarded a train in Budapest that finally reached the safety of Switzerland. A Jewish community committee chose those who made it to freedom. They included some members of

Kasztner's own family (though not him). For the most part, the passengers were a representative range of the Hungarian Jewish community, from ultra-orthodox rabbis to secular scholars, from some of the wealthy and prominent who'd supplied the ransom to workers and penniless members of Zionist and socialist youth groups.

It was the only incident during the Nazi slaughter when the Germans allowed any Jews to escape.

To those he saved and their descendants, Kasztner became a hero, a Jewish Oskar Schindler who made a difficult but responsible moral choice. To others, especially those whose families were not chosen to be saved, Kasztner became an unforgivable villain, a man who played G-d, consorted with the devil and actually caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Jews by withholding crucial information from the general public about the Auschwitz death camp.

Accused after the war of being a collaborator by another Hungarian Jew, he was the center of a tendentious libel trial that rocked Israel during the early 1950s and eventually was gunned down in Tel Aviv by a man convinced Kasztner had betrayed his own people.

But had he? For more than 50 years, there has been little or no discussion of Kasztner. While Schindler, Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg and others became icons of righteousness for their role in saving Jewish lives, Kasztner was almost a taboo subject. His work was unmentioned in Israeli textbooks. Holocaust museums paid scant if any attention to him. When his name was raised, it triggered rage and bitter debate. Indeed, in *The Final Days*, Steven Spielberg's Academy Award-win-

ning documentary about the Hungarian Holocaust, Kasztner's name is never heard, his face never seen.



A still from the film shows a scene from a trial in Israel, which aired allegations that Malkiel Grinwald had libeled Mr. Kasztner, accusing him of agreeing to the rescue in exchange for keeping quiet about the extent of Nazi atrocities in Hungary.

Was Rezso Kasztner a heroic rescuer of his people or a cold-blooded rogue collaborating with its worst enemies? Through reenactments of his politicized trial, accusations after 50 years by Kasztner's assassin, Ze'ev Eckstein, that there was a conspiracy, and a stunning confrontation between the now-free killer and Kasztner's daughter, audiences can finally judge this forgotten man for themselves.

WHOEVER SAVES A LIFE

ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER OF THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM



Tribute Dinner Guest Speaker Hon. Isaac Herzog, Minister of Social Affairs and Services of the State of Israel (center), with (l to r) Michal Herzog; Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; and Elizabeth Zborowski.



Fanya Gottesfeld Heller, recipient of the 2009 Yad Vashem Education Remembrance Award (center), with (l to r) Natasha Hanina; Dr. Jacqueline Heller; Miriam Hanina; Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; and Ben Heller.



(l to r) Joseph Wilf, Vice Chairman, American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; Elizabeth Wilf; Elizabeth Zborowski, Cultural Director; and Eli Zborowski, Chairman, American & International Societies for Yad Vashem.



Jeremy Halpern, Young Leadership Associates Dinner Committee Chair and Member of the Board, delivers greetings from the Hon. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel.



Guest Speaker the Hon. Isaac Herzog, Minister of Social Affairs and Services, State of Israel, delivers greetings from the Hon. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel.



Barry Levine, Young Leadership Associates Dinner Committee Chair delivers greetings from the Hon. Shimon Peres, President of the State of Israel.



Close to 1,000 guests attended the 2009 Annual Tribute Dinner at the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers.

FE, SAVES HUMANITY

& INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM



Tovah Feldshuh, Recipient of the 2009 Yad Vashem Remembrance Award (center), with (l to r) Caroline Massel, Dinner Chair and Young Leadership Associates Chairperson; Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate; Elizabeth Zborowski, Cultural Director; and Eli Zborowski, Chairman, American & International Societies for Yad Vashem.



Cheryl Lifshitz, Executive Committee, American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; Michal Herzog, Minister Isaac Herzog; Stella Skura; and Elizabeth and Eli Zborowski.



Herzog, Minister of Social Affairs and Services, greets guests at the 2009 Annual Tribute Dinner.



Caroline Massel, 2009 Dinner Chair and Young Leadership Associates Chairperson, greets guests at the 2009 Annual Tribute Dinner.



Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem; Hon. Isaac Herzog, Minister of Social Affairs and Services of the State of Israel; Leonard Wilf, Chairman, Board of Trustees; and Tovah Feldshuh, recipient of the Yad Vashem Leadership Remembrance Award.



Guests at the 2009 Annual Tribute Dinner.



Members of the Young Leadership Associates of the American Society for Yad Vashem at the 2009 Annual Tribute Dinner.



REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

HOW MUCH DID THEY KNOW?

REAL-TIME MEDIA REPORTS DURING WWII

BY ESTEE YAARI

One of the most troubling issues about the bystanders' role during the Holocaust has always been what they knew about the Nazis' plans for the Jews — how this information was related to them and, of course, when.

Did the average Frenchman in Paris know what was happening to the Jews being deported from his country? What about the Poles, who witnessed trainloads of prisoners being transported across the land? In Europe, was there any way to know what was actually happening? The Allies have come under criticism for not doing enough to rescue European Jewry — but did they actually have enough information to compel them to act?

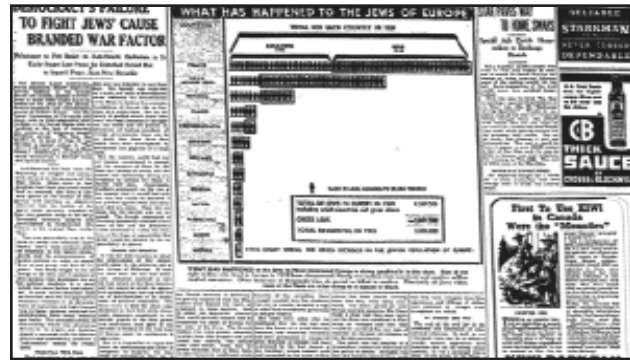
These questions and more were tackled at a recent weeklong scholarly workshop held by Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research. Examining how the Holocaust was reported in various media — particularly in Europe — during WWII, researchers from Israel, Canada, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the UK, Hungary, Russia, Holland and the United States came together for in-depth discussions of how the various media reported the Holocaust as it unfolded.

"For the very first time, this workshop brought together serious research on real-time media coverage of the Holocaust," explains Prof. David Bankier, Head of the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem.

"In fact, some of the research presented

was undertaken specifically for the event. Looking at a diversity of media as well as geographic areas, the workshop helped clarify what bystanders knew about the Holocaust in real time. It also provided greater insight into the Nazis' use of the media to manipulate public opinion."

The Germans targeted their propaganda — posters, films, newspapers and newsreels — at specific populations. Dr. Kerstin Stutterheim, who examined newsreels in Germany, and Dr. Roel Winkel, who looked at a cross-section of newsreels in various countries in Europe, pointed to German propaganda strategy,



by which the populace was so conditioned to anti-Semitism in the late 1930s and the war years that by the time Jews were being deported, local populations were already accustomed not to think about Jews at all. Thus in Germany and other areas of Europe, once the war began and the anti-Jewish policies of the Nazis were gaining momentum, a striking element of the newsreels was the lack of reference to Jews. In Western Europe, Jews disap-

peared from neighborhoods and newsreels at the same time.

Yet, noted Dr. Jan Grabowski, the situation in Poland — where the death camps were located — was different. Poles received their information either from German-directed propaganda or from the clandestine Underground publications. Posters and news reports became increasingly anti-Semitic, warning Poles that Jews were dangerous agents of death. Tellingly, Grabowski pointed out that when reports of the mass murder of Jews were delivered through the Underground press, or via the BBC Polish broadcasts, local Underground operatives urged the London-based news service to stop broadcasting items sympathetic to the Jews, as it harmed the Polish cause.

"The bystanders in Europe knew what was happening," stated Prof. Bankier. "Even if it was not spelled out — and it never was — years of propaganda had conditioned the people of Europe to understand the meaning of Jews being loaded onto a truck to an 'unknown' destination."

Turning his attention to the Canadian media, Dr. Ulrich Frisse of the University of Western Ontario studied two major media outlets, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the Toronto *Daily Star*, and concluded that at least in these media, the Holocaust was reported.

Indeed, in 1943, the *Star* ran a chart seeking to answer the question, "What has happened to the Jews of Europe?" While the Bermuda Conference was taking place in April 1943, political activist Watson Thomson spoke on the CBC national radio network about the mass extermination of Jews by SS squads in the Soviet Union and the extermination camps in Poland. He condemned Canada's indifference toward the Jewish victims and called for the immediate rescue of European Jewry. Dr. Frisse was careful to note that this kind of presentation was not necessarily representative of all the Canadian media, and that indeed, the press in Quebec, for example, was not so sympathetic to the plight of the Jews.

Participants agreed that more studies needed to be conducted, particularly a comparative examination of what was happening in the Allied countries. Most of the researchers agreed that a topic that requires further study is how the media reports on the Holocaust influenced people's positions vis-a-vis the Jews during the war.

"The workshop was a most rewarding ten days which allowed me to meet many distinguished Holocaust scholars in a vibrant atmosphere," said Dr. Colin Shindler, who presented a paper on "The March of Time: Inside Nazi Germany 1938." "The experience inspired me to start the research for a new television drama as soon as I returned to Cambridge."

A PRAYER BOOK'S JOURNEY

BY DEBORAH BERMAN

This is the story of a prayer book and the souls it touched as it journeyed across the borders of war-ravaged Europe to new beginnings in Brazil, and then, decades later, finally brought comfort and closure to a bereaved brother in the United States.

The book is a *sefer kinot*, a prayer book containing liturgical prayers for recitation on *Tisha B'Av* — the Jewish day of fasting and mourning for the destroyed Temples. It was originally published in 1836 in *Rodelheim*, Germany. While a Yiddish inscription names the original owner, by the 1930s the prayer book was owned by the young Heinz Eschwege, who took it with him when he and his brother Alfred were forced to flee their hometown of *Manheim*, Germany as the Nazi occupation took hold.

Immediately following liberation, the *sefer kinot* found itself up for sale at a Brussels market, among other books left behind by their Jewish owners. It became one of several Jewish titles bought for 10-year-old Samuel Rozenberg by his father. Samuel had been in hiding in the village of *Quaregnon* under the assumed identity of Paul Allain, and survived the war thanks to the kindness of Maurice and Lea Pierart (honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations in 1994). His father bought the books to bolster his son's knowledge of Jewish customs and rituals

after spending such a long time with a non-Jewish family.

The books made a tremendous impact on Samuel; he cherished them and kept them with him as he began a new life in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1950, where he studied medicine and



became a respected member of the Jewish community. Year after year Rozenberg used the *sefer kinot*, read the name inscribed and wondered about the identity of its previous owner.

"As I became older, the shadow of Heinz Eschwege followed me," Rozenberg explained. "Every *Tisha B'Av* eve I would read from the prayer book my father

bought me, and wonder: 'What happened to the owner of this book?'"

In 2005, after returning from *Tisha B'Av* services, Rozenberg decided to try to find out more about Heinz Eschwege. Searching on Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, he

tragic fate. Heinz was first taken to the *Malines (Mechelen)* concentration camp, situated in a former barracks by the river in the Belgian city. On 4 April 1944, he was sent on transport number 24 to Auschwitz. With the Allied forces closing in, Heinz died on 29 January 1945 in the *Mittelbau* concentration camp during a death march.

"I had no choice but to send Alfred the prayer book, which I had kept in my possession for 60 years," explained Rozenberg. "I did so with pride and deep satisfaction, but also filled with sorrow to have finally discovered the sad fate of Heinz Eschwege."

Alfred Eschwege has recently submitted a photograph of his brother, which he had received from another *Shoah* survivor, to Yad Vashem. The photograph has been attached to the Page of Testimony, and completes Alfred's efforts to preserve the memory of Heinz Eschwege whose life was cut short by Nazi brutality at such a young age.

When Alfred Eschwege received the book from Rozenberg, he was deeply moved. "I was at a loss for words," he recalled. "The book is the only remaining tangible object I have that belonged to my brother." In an emotionally charged e-mail to Rozenberg, Eschwege wrote: "I cherish Heinz's prayer book above all my other possessions. Thank you again, from the bottom of my heart. It's not very often that you find people with a kindness like yours."

found that a Page of Testimony had been submitted for Eschwege in 1990 by his brother, Alfred. Surprised and delighted, Rozenberg decided to contact Alfred, currently residing in New York. Through him, Rozenberg finally learned what had happened to the prayer book's owner.

After the war ended, Alfred succeeded in finding out the details of his brother's

NEW LIGHT, LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE, ON NAZI CRIMES

BY EDWARD ROTHSTEIN,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

At first it seems like an anomaly. You walk up to the campus entrance from the enormous parking lot that defines Queensborough Community College as a commuting institution, and the first structure that greets you, just before the administration building, is the new Harriet and Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Research Center and Archives. The \$5.5 million building, which was dedicated in a public ceremony this week, is clad in glass, steel and the distinctive sand-colored limestone quarried near Jerusalem. And inside its new permanent exhibition space is bathed in daylight from the windows and translucent walls, creating a deliberate contrast to the dark subject of mass murder.

The effect is unexpected. It causes you to pay attention, this anomalous light, even if the glare dims the ghosts of photographs projected on the walls, and even if it makes the videos of Queens Holocaust survivors appear less vivid in image if not in personal detail. The light almost allows you to miss the room's somber allusion: the way the rectangular geometry of a glass wall suddenly gives way to skewed lines and irregular shapes, invoking the shattered windows of *Kristallnacht*, the night in 1938 when Jewish shops and synagogues were smashed and burned all over Germany and Austria.

It seems that Charles Thanhauser of Tek Architects, who designed the building, means this natural light to cast an inverse shadow over the narrative. The light shows where this exhibition is meant to lead, and why the center itself has been given pride of place at the gateway to the college, in Bayside. But understanding this requires some exploration of the center's ambitions.

Though I have some qualifications, its modest 2,000-square-foot permanent exhibition gives an impressive capsule history of the fate of Jews during the Nazi period, recounting events without distortion, sentimentality and (for the most part) homily. The gallery serves as a prelude to the rest of the center, which includes two smaller changing exhibitions: currently, one is about other genocides of the last

century; the other displays artworks by Samuel Bak. There is also a 5,000-book circulating library and archives storing videos, photographs, artifacts and other materials.

The center has been at Queensborough for about 24 years, growing out of a class about the Holocaust taught by William Shulman, who was the history department's chair-

is halfway toward raising a \$5 million endowment.

The curators of the new main exhibition are Mr. Flug and the center's assistant director, Ayala Tamir. KPC Design conceived the displays, dividing the Nazi era into five chronological sections, each portrayed on a four-sided, freestanding column. You walk around them, assisted by a timeline that also becomes a multimedia



The modest 2,000-square-foot permanent exhibition gives an impressive capsule history of the fate of Jews in Germany during the Nazi period.

man. But until now the center had been housed in the basement of the college's library and displayed its exhibitions at the Student Union Building. Under the direction of Arthur Flug for the last four years, the center has presented public lectures, along with shows on subjects like American cartoonists' treatment of Nazi Germany, or the Christian clergy members who saved Jews; each exhibition's materials are preserved in shipping trunks for loan to colleges and other Holocaust centers.

This new structure heightens the center's visibility. It was built under the guidance of the college's president, Eduardo J. Martí, and received financial support from the city and New York State, along with private donations, including a \$1 million gift from Harriet Kupferberg, a long-time supporter of the college. The center

screen. Each column displays photographs and facts, quotations from some of the survivors we meet in the videos, and artifacts, ranging from a Jewish teenager's prewar diary to a Hitler Youth dagger.

"Full and Rich Lives; 1919" one is labeled, giving a portrait of Jewish life before the Nazi era; "Ghettos Formed; 1938; *Kristallnacht*" reads another, on which we read about the "forced isolation and control" of the ghettos. "Extermination; 1943; Germany Declares Itself 'Judenrein'" reminds us that 18,000 people were killed in just one day in 1943 in the camp at *Majdanek*, Poland.

The survivors in the videos may provide some of the most indelible images. Steve Berger, who was forced by the Nazis into work as a machinist, recalls being taken to replace his broken glasses. He had to choose from thousands piled in one room;

they had been shipped from Auschwitz. Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld remembers a rare train conductor in the midst of the relocations of the Jews, who fished Mr. Schonfeld's phylacteries out of the trash where an SS officer had tossed them and returned them to the young man.

Unfortunately, we are not given enough biographical material about these people to understand who they are or how their excerpted stories fit together. And while their accounts are powerful, it is frustrating that we are missing other specifics and have to guess so much, particularly because it is in the details that the full scale of the Holocaust can be felt.

But these survivors provide one reason for the center's refusal to shroud itself in darkness. The exhibition opens with a slide show of European Jews before the Holocaust engaged in the most mundane activities: going on a picnic, shopping in a street, gathering for celebrations. All that was destroyed, but another set of photographs appears at the exhibition's end labeled "Life After the Holocaust," showing similar normality in the lives of survivors. This is an account of restoration, of emergence into light.

This is a little too glibly bright of course, and, unfortunately, to a certain extent, that is also true of the center's larger vision, which is not that different from those of other institutions and educational treatments of the Holocaust, even at the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. In his dedication speech Mr. Martí said that the building was "not a museum."

"It is not a memorial," he continued. "It is a laboratory." It provides the tools to help the 15,000 students at the college learn the "lessons of the Holocaust."

Those lessons teach tolerance, the importance of combating prejudice, the need to speak out when any group is mistreated. In videos here, students who served as interns and interviewed survivors describe how those talks have made them more enlightened, more aware of prejudice and hatred. One of the other exhibitions at the center shows just how difficult these lessons are, describing other genocides of the past century: in Armenia, Ukraine, China, Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur.

(Continued on page 13)

TENNESSEE PROFESSOR SUES GERMANY FOR NAZI ART SEIZURE

An 82-year-old Holocaust survivor and his family are suing the German government over an extensive art collection, including paintings by El Greco and Peter Paul Rubens, seized by the Nazis and sold at auction during World War II.

The lawsuit is unusual because it is seeking damages for lost art rather than the return of items that once belonged to Holocaust victims, lawyers said. The suit estimates the 400 or more works would be worth "tens of millions" of dollars today.

Retired economics professor Fred Westfield said he was celebrating his 12th birthday when he last saw his uncle, Walter Westfeld, a renowned art collector. Two days later came *Kristallnacht*, when Nazis looted and burned Jewish synagogues and businesses across Germany and Austria.

The young Westfield fled Germany shortly thereafter as part of a British refugee program in response to *Kristallnacht* that brought about 10,000 Jewish children to England. He later moved to the United States with his par-

ents, when the family anglicized its name by adding an "i".

Walter Westfeld, though, was arrested a few days after *Kristallnacht* on currency violation charges for trying to move his art work to the United States, and the Nazis auctioned hundreds of his paintings and tapestries to pay his fine, the lawsuit says.

Among the items were an El Greco that Adolf Hitler wanted for his personal collection, paintings by Dutch masters Frans Hals and Peter Paul Rubens and works by French impressionist Camille Pissarro.

Westfeld remained in prison and concentration camps until he was killed in the Auschwitz death camp in Poland.

In 2004, Westfield said he was doing an Internet search for his uncle's name and learned the Boston Museum of Fine Arts was looking for Walter Westfield's descendants.

A museum archivist was trying to find out if the Nazis illegally sold "Portrait of a Man and a Woman in an Interior" by the 17th-century Dutch master Eglog van der Neer, he said.

"It was essentially my uncle's money

that made it possible for our family to survive," said Westfield, who retired from Vanderbilt University in Nashville. "His heirs have a right to what was taken away from them. We are not trying to recover particular pictures because we really don't have the resources to find the 400 or more items auctioned off at the demand of the state's attorney in *Dusseldorf*." The lawsuit, filed in Davidson County Chancery Court, says today's Germany is responsible for the actions of Hitler's regime and wants a jury to award an unspecified amount for the loss to Westfield's heirs.

Lempertz auction house in *Cologne*, Germany, claimed the property was destroyed during bombing in WWII, but the lawsuit includes a copy of the December 1939 sale catalog and price list.

The conversion and sale were part of an integrated policy in which Jews were deprived of their artwork on fabricated grounds to appear as if the government was just enforcing laws, the goal being to raise substantial liquid funds on sale for the government and party offi-

cial," the lawsuit says.

Overton Thompson III of Bass Berry & Sims law firm in Nashville and Vanderbilt law professor Jeffrey Schoenblum filed the suit October 3, 2008.

"Westfeld had much of his entire art collection taken and he was treated in such a horrific manner before he was exterminated," Schoenblum said. "Our hope is that the matter can be resolved without pursuing lengthy litigation. Germany needs to remedy for what was done with respect to this prominent art dealer and his property."

Schoenblum said the lawsuit is unusual because it seeks payment rather than the art works. Previous cases, such as a claim against Elizabeth Taylor for a Vincent van Gogh painting, have sought to have the art returned from current owners to the family's estate.

For now, Westfield's family and attorneys are waiting to see if the German government accepts litigation papers. Under the Hague Convention, the country has three months to accept the lawsuit or reject it on grounds that it is a sovereign government, Schoenblum said.

A BELIEVER IN HEROISM, TO JEWS' LASTING GRATITUDE

BY JOSEPH BERGER,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

The walls of Dr. Tina Strobos's light-filled apartment here are dappled not only with paintings but also with the many plaques she has received from Jewish organizations, even though she is not Jewish.

Dr. Strobos, a sturdy 89, is honored every so often for the quietly valiant things she did almost 70 years ago as a medical student during the German occupation of the Netherlands: working with her mother, she hid more than 100 Jews who passed through their three-story rooming house in Amsterdam.

That sanctuary, which included an attic lair that was never discovered, was just a 10-minute stroll from a more famous hide-out: Anne Frank's at 263 *Prinsengracht*. Indeed, the question of why the Franks did not have an escape hatch for when the Gestapo barged in gets her fairly worked up.

At her home, the Jews were stowed away on the upper floors with quick access to the attic, which had a secret compartment for two or three people to cram into. "A carpenter came with a toolbox and said: 'I'm a carpenter from the underground. Show me the house, and I'll build a hiding place,'" she recalled.

There was an alarm bell on the second floor so she or her mother, Marie Schotte, could alert those above. They drilled their fugitives in how to scramble out a window to a roof and make their way to an adjoining school, which was not likely to be raided.

Dr. Strobos, who was honored by the Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center, based in Westchester, retired in May as a psychiatrist and retains a nobility of manner that suggests a life she feels has been largely well lived. Her memory is keen enough to retrieve the tasty details that bring her escapades to life.

She recalled carrying news and ration stamps by bicycle — at great risk, and

often cold and hungry — to Jews hidden on farms outside the city. She also ferried radios and stashed boxes of pilfered guns for the Dutch resistance. She was seized or questioned nine times by the Gestapo and was once hurled against a wall and knocked unconscious.

Why would she take such gambles for people she sometimes barely knew?

"It's the right thing to do," she said with nonchalance. "Your conscience



Dr. Tina Strobos in her Westchester apartment.

tells you to do it. I believe in heroism, and when you're young, you want to do dangerous things."

But such an outlook has an origin, what Donna Cohen, the Holocaust Center's executive director, calls "learned behavior." Dr. Strobos comes from a family of socialist atheists who took in Belgian refugees during World War I and hid German and Austrian refugees before World War II. Dr. Strobos had close Jewish friends and, for a time, a Jewish fiancé, Abraham Pais, who went on to become a particle physicist, though not her husband.

The Nazis required Dutch Jews to wear

stars and carry identity cards stamped with a J. So Dr. Strobos patched together false papers by swiping documents from gentile guests and inserting new photographs and fingerprints. As roundups increased, her six-bedroom row house, at 282 *Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal*, became a way station; most Jews stayed briefly, until the underground network could find them more durable refuges.

"We never hid more than four or five

at a time," she said. "We didn't have enough food."

Among the people who lodged with her was her close friend Tirtsah Van Amerongen, a blonde who passed for a gentile, and her sister and brother-in-law. She hid an Orthodox couple with five children, who brought their own kosher food. She helped Jews in other hideouts, including a prominent impressionist, Martin Monnickendam, who painted her portrait, which now hangs in her apartment, at a residence for older people.

"You can see he's a troubled type," she said slyly as she showed off the portrait.

The Gestapo banged on her door many

times, she said, sometimes accusing her of concealing Jews and searching the rooms for two or three hours. A Dutch spy in the Gestapo headquarters would sometimes alert her to an impending raid.

"You're going to have a visitor tomorrow," he would say," she remembered. "I never knew who he was, but he was always right."

Erudite and fluent in German, with a talent for striking a sweetly innocent pose, she learned to charm the Germans.

When she suspected that the Gestapo knew that a prominent factory owner had lived in her home for a year, she surrendered his name but insisted that she believed he had been a gentile.

"Some Jews are like violets in the woods," the Gestapo agent advised her. "They hide by having blue eyes and blond hair."

Another time the Gestapo told her that it always identified Jews by the look of the inside corners of their eyes.

"My mother and I were not laughing, but my God, they were really nuts," she said.

During the five years working for the underground, she took interludes to study medical books at a hospital.

"You have to be a little bit selfish and look after yourself; otherwise you just die inside, you burn out," she once told an interviewer. "There's just so much you can do for other people."

After the war, she and her first husband, Robert Strobos, a medical student, traveled to New York on a Fulbright scholarship, and she studied child psychiatry. They divorced in 1964. In 1967 she married Walter Chudson, an economist, and they lived on a saltwater inlet in Larchmont, N.Y. She has two sons and a daughter by her first husband and two stepchildren.

In the decades since her wartime experience, she has spoken out on issues like the torture of terrorists, which she argues is not only cruel but also ineffective.

"Even when they scared me to death and hurt me, it confirmed me that I should not say anything to them," she said.

NAZI WAR CRIMES TRIAL "COULD BE LAST OF ITS KIND"

The forthcoming trial in Germany of John Demjanjuk could be the last occasion on which a Nazi war crimes suspect faces prosecution.

But the legacy of decades-old efforts to bring the perpetrators of World War II atrocities to justice means that those who commit similar offenses in the 21st century will not be able to hide from their past so easily, according to a leading war crimes prosecutor.

Many leading Nazis such as Hermann Goering, Rudolf Hess, and Albert Speer were prosecuted by the main Allies — the U.S., the Soviet Union, and the U.K. — shortly after the end of the war at the Nuremberg Trials.

South African judge Richard Goldstone, formerly the chief U.N. prosecutor for war crimes in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, told CNN that Nuremberg had been the "first attempt of any importance to hold war criminals accountable" and had laid the foundations for the development of modern humanitarian law.

Yet many lower-ranking servants of the Nazi regime and its allies were able to escape punishment for their crimes, assuming new identities, fleeing Europe or even finding employment with Soviet or western security agencies as determination to bring them to justice waned with the advent of the Cold War, according to Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Simon

Wiesenthal Center.

"These murderers walked into small cities and killed men, women, and children and walked away without a trace," Hier told CNN.

"The sad thing is that had the world wanted to prosecute Nazi war criminals after Nuremberg, and had (countries) put



John Demjanjuk.

up the budget and the resources then every one of these elusive criminals would have been brought to justice."

But Goldstone said that the creation in 2002 of the International Criminal Court marked a "very important step forward" to ensure that future atrocities would not be so quickly forgotten.

While previous tribunals investigating crimes in Rwanda and Yugoslavia were ad hoc creations set up by the U.N. Security Council, the ICC is a permanent

institution with a specific remit to investigate and prosecute cases of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Goldstone said that developments in humanitarian law and the evolution of international justice meant that modern institutions were more sophisticated and fairer than Nuremberg had been, recognizing the rights of victims to representation but also ensuring a fair trial for defendants.

The jurisdiction of the ICC is currently recognized by 108 countries — though not by the U.S., Russia or China. But Goldstone said the court was "moving quickly" towards universal ratification and said U.S. President Barack Obama's new administration was likely to be more cooperative and friendlier to the ICC than predecessor George W. Bush had been in office.

Demjanjuk, an 89-year-old native Ukrainian deported from the U.S. in May, is alleged to have been a guard at the *Sobibor* death camp in Nazi-occupied Poland and is accused of being an accessory to the murder of more than 29,000 people.

Hier said Demjanjuk's extradition marked the culmination of greater efforts in the U.S. since the late 1970s to send

suspected war criminals to face trial.

An Office of Special Investigations was established in 1979 to hunt for war criminals on U.S. soil, while legislation allowed even suspects who had acquired U.S. citizenship to be extradited for lying on their naturalization papers about their Nazi pasts.

But he said Demjanjuk's trial could be the last of its kind — and not just because of the age of suspected war criminals still at large.

"You can't just have a trial with documents. You have to have living witnesses," Hier said. "Most of those witnesses are very old, most of them are well into their 80s and beyond and they have to be in sufficient good health that they can be questioned and travel to take part in the trial."

But Hier said it was very important that former Nazis be pursued to the grave, living out their final years with the fear that their past crimes could still catch up with them.

"(Nazi hunter) Simon Wiesenthal talked about two kinds of justice. There is the justice of handcuffs and putting someone on trial. But there is also a psychological fear of a knock on the door," he said.

"Every Nazi war criminal should live every night of his life with the possibility that in his case there will yet be a knock on the door."

FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE GHETTO: RECOGNIZING THE RESCUERS

BY DR. LEA PRAIS

Anton Schmidt (1900-1942) was a proud Austrian with a zest for life. He detested Hitler and Nazism, and when, as a *Wehrmacht* serviceman in Vilna, he became aware of the mass murders in *Ponary*, he resolved to dedicate himself to rescuing the persecuted. Schmidt helped many people forced into labor in his unit, as well as Polish prostitutes who were closely watched, but was particularly captivated by the members of the pioneering Zionist youth groups. On the eve of the civil New Year, 1942, he invited them, including their leader Mordechai Tenenbaum, to his apartment, and amid the wine-drinking and doughnut-eating he wished them success in fulfilling their dreams. However, he stressed that first and foremost they must leave the ghetto. To make this happen, Schmidt called on all the resources at his disposal and, taking severe personal risks, smuggled most of them to locations where they would be safe, at least for the time being. Some remained in Vilna; Tenenbaum and his circle were moved to *Bialystok*, where they led the Underground; others fled to Voronovo and Lida; and a few made it to Warsaw. Schmidt himself was arrested in January 1942 and executed for his actions.

In the middle of 1942, members of the *Dror* youth movement in Warsaw found out what had happened to their benefactor, and decided to commemorate him in some way. In his memoirs,

Yitzhak (Antek) Zuckerman wrote that Lonka Kodzhibrotzka, *Dror's* liaison officer, had passed on a report about Schmidt to the ghetto's underground *Oneg Shabbat* archives. In a note, written in Yiddish over five pages, was a description of the "figure of the German philosemite, who risked his life to rescue the Jews of Vilna from their murderers."

The title was "Anton Schmidt – From the Series: The Righteous Among the Nations." Thus it turns out that the pioneers and *Oneg Shabbat* archivists were the first to apply the Talmudic term "Righteous Among the Nations" (Tractate *Baba Batra*, 15b) to non-Jews who had put their lives at risk to save Jews during the Nazi occupation. In time, this term became universally known.

In 1945, in Mandatory Palestine, Mordechai Shenhavi defined the rescuers as "Righteous Among the Nations." In 1953, the Knesset passed the Yad Vashem Law, containing a special clause defining non-Jews who risked their lives to rescue Jews as Righteous Among the Nations. Eleven years earlier, in Vilna, Tenenbaum had told Schmidt that in the Land of Israel he would receive a gold Star of David.

Schmidt replied, "I will wear it with pride." In 1964, Yad Vashem posthumously recognized Anton Schmidt as a Righteous Among the Nations. And thus, Schmidt earned the prestigious recognition for a second time.

The author is a Project Manager at the International Institute for Holocaust Research.

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST IN THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

(Continued from page 4)

during the war; and Zorah, "an angry little Pole" who has lost faith in everything in the face of her concentration camp experiences.

The story moves forward in part by moving backward, telling what happened to the women during the war, but mostly the narrative focuses on community life inside *Atlit* – the delousing showers that greet new arrivals, the flirtations and gossip that sustain daily life – and the psychology of the various characters as they try to handle their fear, anger, memories, and new sympathies.

Though at times the characters themselves feel a bit one-note, they don't read as false, exactly – just less like fully realized fictional creations than representatives of what must have been thought and experienced by *Atlit* women at the time.

On occasion, one feels that it is a person of contemporary sensibility, rather than a 1940s woman, who is parsing the wounds of the war and the political implications of the Jews' arrival in Palestine. In part, this is because the women are so clear-minded about their emotions. (Would they have been able to analyze themselves so well?)

In part, it is because the inmates' argument about the Jews' rights to the land seems fueled by contemporary concerns rather than the desperation of the times. During one discussion of the Arabs, a man admits that he never even knew there were Arabs on the land. A Hebrew teacher dismisses the Arabs as "peasants," but Zorah asks whether we must "become like all other nations and oppress our neighbors?"

Though these tears in the fabric of Diamant's fictional world distract, the circumstances, setting, and generous sensibility of her book compel all the same. It's interesting to get the facts, to learn, among other things, how the immigrants arrived at *Atlit*, how the Jewish agencies tried to infiltrate the camp and how Jews already residing in Palestine claimed prisoners as family members in order to spirit them away.

There are lovely descriptions of the land, particularly in the opening chapter, and Diamant's effort is always to portray her main characters sympathetically.

It is clear that much of what Diamant presents is informed by her thorough knowledge of *Atlit* itself. If the details of the text didn't convince, her acknowledgments page certainly suggest that she has done her homework.

One senses, too, Diamant's expertise on Jewish tradition – Diamant is the author of many books on contemporary Jewish practice – and her familiarity with both Holocaust experiences and the psychology of Holocaust survivors. Indeed, the factual details of the novel are so persuasive and interesting (if troubling) that they make one long for the nonfiction book Diamant might also have written.

In the actual novel, the post-*Atlit* fate of Shayndel, Leonie, Tedi, and Zorah functions as fascinating epilogue. In the yet-to-be-written book, one might learn the stories of the true inhabitants of *Atlit* – the very material, one imagines, that got Diamant started on her novel in the first place.

NEW LIGHT, LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE, ON NAZI CRIMES

(Continued from page 11)

The broad lesson of tolerance also provides one impetus behind the growth of Holocaust centers; it is partly why this one was placed at the forefront of the Queensborough campus, where students represent more than 140 nationalities. Mr. Flug explained in an interview how the center also helped develop a "hate crimes" curriculum now being introduced into New York City schools.

But this approach is worth examining. Similar lessons, after all, can be drawn from many kinds of injustice; here they seem inadequate to the scope of the evil. They also strip away the Holocaust's particularity and may even encourage the proliferation of Nazi analogies. Isn't only

killing, intolerance does not necessarily lead to it.

Bland humanitarian lessons also make the scale of the events seem manageable, as if it were possible to eliminate hatred and prejudice with appropriate teaching. The idea of a "hate crime" fits with this view. It asserts that hatred itself is criminal and deserving of punishment, that it is something that can be eradicated as society takes on work once left for religion.

But the concept is misguided. Hatred does not make murder or assault worse; it only provides a motive. Hatred itself is not criminal. It is acting on the basis of hatred that is criminal. In other contexts, society punishes the act rather than the thought, attacking discrimination



The main gallery includes a century-old Torah scroll rescued from *Czestochowa*, Poland.

the Holocaust that becomes diffuse this way; a museum about black slavery I have seen ends with broad homilies about justice and prejudice.

Why, though, is it necessary to generalize so sweepingly? Does an art exhibition have to justify its attention to a painter with lessons about beauty? Isn't there something in the particular that should be attended to because it is not general? Does it make sense to say that lack of tolerance is a major cause of the Holocaust? While tolerance might help prevent mass

in deed, not prejudice in belief. That is how it should be here as well. Anti-Semitism helped cause the Holocaust, but it is in the workings of law and deed, in turning belief into practice, that the Holocaust turned exceptional.

Queensborough's new center shouldn't bear the burden of this criticism, since it doesn't slight the Holocaust or its particularity. But as that history recedes and lessons become broadened and amplified, the risk is worth keeping in mind.

ROMANIA DEDICATES MEMORIAL TO VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

Romania unveiled a monument in memory of 300,000 Jews and Gypsies killed during the Holocaust in the country, which at times in the past had denied that the extermination even occurred.

President Traian Basescu said that it was the nation's duty to "recognize the genocide during World War II" and to honor the victims.

Mr. Basescu was joined by Holocaust survivors and other leaders during the ceremony to unveil the marble and concrete tomb-like monument, which cost \$7.4 million.

Only about 6,000 Jews live in Romania today. The country's role in the Holocaust and in the deportation of Jews was ignored by the Communists who once controlled Romania, and it was minimized by subsequent governments after the collapse of Communism beginning in 1989.

"This monument is full of symbolism — hundreds of thousands were killed who would have contributed to the cultural and economic prosperity of Romania," said Rabbi Menachem HaCohen, Romania's chief rabbi.

Romanian authorities set up the Elie Wiesel International Commission on the Holocaust in 2003 after a ministry in the Social Democratic government denied that there had been a Holocaust in Romania.

Some Romanians still admire Marshal Ion Antonescu, a pro-Nazi leader whose administration was responsible for the deaths during World War II. They see him as a hero who fought against the Soviet Union to recover Romanian territory.

"It is important that Romania acknowledges its past; it's not an easy past," said Radu Ioanid, who has written several books on the Romanian Holocaust. "There are still people opposing this."

Historians have documented several pogroms in Romania, including one in June 1941 in the northeastern city of *Iasi*, where as many as 12,000 people are believed to have died as Romanian and German soldiers swept from house to house, killing Jews. Those who did not die were beaten, put on a train in stifling heat and taken to a small town. Of the 120 on the train, only 24 survived.

REVISITING THE SHAM OF *THERESIENSTADT*

RON FEINBERG, THE JERUSALEM POST

The film is grainy and in black and white. It jumps about, slowing down at odd moments and growing dim occasionally. But it's the people that hold your attention. They walk about, wearing fashionable clothes, nodding a stiff hello when they spot a friend. They watch a soccer match, sit briefly outside a small cafe, listen to a concert.



The *Theresienstadt* ghetto was established in Czechoslovakia as a model Jewish settlement that could be shown off to the international community. Propaganda films showed the comfortable conditions of the ghetto to counter stories of the miserable conditions of other ghettos.

It's all a sham, of course, part of a bogus documentary produced by the Nazis during World War II at *Theresienstadt*, the concentration camp an hour north of Prague in what was then Czechoslovakia. And it's one of the reasons you should visit this place if you're traveling through eastern Europe.

The Holocaust continues to sound a melancholy note in the major cities of the region. Warsaw, *Krakow*, Budapest and Prague are remarkable, warm and charming, filled with cobblestone streets and

intimate cafes, grand boulevards and monuments, fine art and fine food.

But in each of these cities is a reminder of the Jews who were murdered during World War II, initially forced into ghettos, eventually transported to death camps across the region.

But it's in *Terezin*, near Prague, that one of the most unique, if bizarre stories of the period can be found. And it's all captured in the grainy film produced by the Nazis.

The city – created in the 18th century and named for Maria Theresa of Austria – was taken over by the Gestapo in 1940, renamed *Theresienstadt*, and quickly turned into a ghetto. Jews from Czechoslovakia, Germany, Austria, and Holland were transported to the site and its population soared. The city that had been home for 7,000 residents before the war would at one point hold 60,000 inmates. Men and women were separated, housed in barracks that were packed with bunks that were three tiers high. There was little

food, even less medicine. Sanitation was poor. Rats, lice, flies, and fleas were part of daily life. So, too, death.

Nearly 150,000 Jews spent time at *Theresienstadt*. Only 17,247 survived the war. The large number of dead became such a problem, that a crematorium was built in 1942 to deal with the corpses. Yet the Nazis portrayed the ghetto as a model Jewish settlement.

The charade was tested – and refined – in the summer of 1944 when a commission of Red Cross officials was allowed to visit the camp to make sure that inmates

at *Theresienstadt* were living under humane conditions. The ruse became necessary after Jews from Denmark were sent to the camp the previous winter and Red Cross officials in Denmark and Sweden began making inquiries about their whereabouts and health.

Over the next several months, the camp was gussied up in certain key areas. Some living space was enlarged and painted. Drapes were hung and furniture added. Grass and flowers were planted. A playground and sports fields were built. And a month before the orchestrated visit, 7,500 inmates – mostly orphans and the sick – were sent to Auschwitz and their deaths so *Theresienstadt* would appear less crowded.

An elaborate script was created that would have groups of inmates strolling along a central street, window shopping; others would be taking part in a soccer match, while yet others would be chatting and singing as they headed off to work.

On June 23, 1944, the Nazis had everything in place as the commission was escorted through the camp. The inmates played their parts to perfection, knowing they had little choice but to cooperate. Camp officials were so happy with the result, they decided to put it all down on film and use the movie for propaganda purposes.

What remains today is a series of black and white vignettes – inmates at a concert; inmates sitting outside a

cafe; inmates cheering a soccer match. The actors smile occasionally for the camera, hiding the hideous truth of the Holocaust from view. But look closely enough and you can see the future in their faces.

Only a few months after the commission reported that inmates at



Pictured here are a group of children in the *Theresienstadt* ghetto. The photo was taken during a Red Cross visit on June 23, 1944. Approximately 13,000 children were sent to *Theresienstadt*. The majority were deported to death camps and only a few hundred survived.

Theresienstadt were being treated fairly, transports to Auschwitz picked up speed. Over the last weeks of September and early October, the camp was nearly emptied. Only 400 inmates remained at the beginning of 1945.

By the time the International Red Cross took charge of the camp the following May, the damage had already been done. Over 30,000 inmates had died in the camp of disease, starvation, and abuse. Nearly three times that number had been shipped off to the Nazi killing factories in the east.

STOP USING HOLOCAUST REFERENCES IN PUBLIC DEBATE

A group of prominent religious leaders called for an end to the use of "inappropriate Nazi and Holocaust references" in public debate.

In an open letter to religious leaders, politicians, pundits and the public, the group wrote that it has seen "an alarming number of public figures use the Nazis and the Holocaust as metaphors in public debate on issues critical to this country," listing a number of recent examples.

"The Nazi regime that perpetrated this mass genocide was one of the most horrific in world history," says the letter, organized by the Interfaith Alliance and signed by Jewish, Christian and Muslim clergy and faith leaders. "There is no place in civil debate for the use of these types of metaphors. Perpetrators of such language harm rather than help both the integrity of the democratic process and the credibility of religious commentary."

The letter also asks those involved in public debate to generally "help restore civility to our national dialogue."

Among the 15 signatories are Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; Rabbi Jack Moline of Agudas Achim Congregation in Alexandria, Va.; Rabbi David Gelfand of Temple Israel of the City of New York; Imam Mahdi Bray of the Muslim American Society Freedom; and Sayyid Syeed of the Islamic Society of North America.

YAD VASHEM AND ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM & EDUCATION CENTER SIGN COOPERATION AGREEMENT

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust remembrance and education center in Jerusalem, and the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center (IHMEC) signed an important agreement to pursue and promote a close and cooperative relationship in several key contexts, including education, publications, museum activity and commemoration.

"I am delighted to have hosted the Illinois Holocaust Museum's leadership here on the Mount of Remembrance, and look forward to our cooperation in the future," said Avner Shalev, chairman of Yad Vashem. "With over five decades of experience in Holocaust commemoration, documentation research, and our cutting-edge work in education, Yad Vashem is pleased to cooperate with the Illinois Holocaust Museum in their important activities."

The agreement was announced during a two-day working visit to Yad Vashem by a senior delegation from the Illinois Holocaust Museum, including the Chairman of the Museum's Board of Trustees J.B. Pritzker, the Museum's

Executive Director Richard Hirschhaut, and Museum Interior and Exhibition Co-Conceptual Developers Michael Berenbaum and Yitzhak Mais. They met with Shalev and senior Yad Vashem staff in order to explore avenues of cooperation.



(right to left) Director of Development, American Society for Yad Vashem Shraga Mekel; Illinois Holocaust Museum Interior and Exhibition Co-Conceptual Developers Michael Berenbaum and Yitzhak Mais; Chairman of the Illinois Holocaust Museum's Board of Trustees J.B. Pritzker, Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev; Illinois Holocaust Museum Executive Director Richard Hirschhaut; and Executive Director of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation Jennifer Levine visit the Hall of Names at Yad Vashem.

The group was also given in-depth tours of the Holocaust History Museum, the Museum of Holocaust Art, the Yad Vashem Archives, and the International School for Holocaust Studies.

"The strengthening of the ongoing relationship between our two institutions furthers the global significance of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center," said Pritzker. "Our cooperative relationship will allow us to share Yad Vashem's wealth of knowledge about the Holocaust with our Museum's patrons."

The agreement notes that "emphasis will be placed upon optimal realization of Yad Vashem's unsurpassed expertise and knowledge in Holocaust-related research, education and commemoration, together with the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center's promising and vital new position, in its region and elsewhere, as an effective catalyst for enhanced, widespread Holocaust remembrance."

"We are grateful for this opportunity to work closely with Yad Vashem to enhance our institution's offerings to our patrons," said Hirschhaut. "The cooperation with Yad Vashem will enable the Illinois Holocaust Museum to best commemorate the Jewish experience before, during, and after the Holocaust."

NEW COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH PROJECT AT YAD VASHEM

A new, comprehensive research project documenting 101 killing sites in areas of the former Soviet Union has been uploaded to Yad Vashem's website, www.yadvashem.org.

Marking Holocaust Remembrance Day, "The Untold Stories: The Murder Sites of the Jews in the Former USSR" chronicles the murders of thousands of Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators in 51 different communities whose Jewish populations were massacred during the Holocaust.

The "Untold Stories" is a project of Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research, which tells the hitherto untold stories of the destruction of the Jews of the former USSR.

It is generously supported by Dr. Moshe Kantor, Chairman of the Board of Governors, Russian Jewish Congress (RJC), and uploaded to the Internet at his initiative and in partnership with the RJC.

The new project began with the collection and registration of all the murder sites in the former USSR being studied by researchers at Yad Vashem. From this pool of data, 51 different communities whose Jewish populations were murdered – in Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia and Russia – were chosen. The historical background serves as the central feature of the site, from which links branch out to a variety of primary and secondary

resources, primarily from Yad Vashem's Archives and private collections – documents, photographs, letters, maps, illustrations, video testimonies, Pages of Testimony, film clips, lists of victims and stories of Righteous Among the Nations – which together create a multi-dimensional historical and human portrait.

"While the world knows about Auschwitz and even *Babi Yar*, more than a million Jews were murdered in towns and villages that remain relatively unknown," said Avner Shalev, Chairman of Yad Vashem. "In some locations thousands were gunned down, in others a dozen men and women tortured and killed. This important project sheds light on what happened in these communities, some of which were a cra-



Lubny, Ukraine. A mother with her two children at the assembly point awaiting, with other Jews from the town, their execution, October 16, 1941.

dle of Jewish life for centuries, whose names still resonate in Jewish communities around the world. The use of all the sources available makes this project invaluable to all those who seek to know what happened."

The project contains 139 video clips, of which over 80 are witness accounts, most of them from the collection of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education (formerly the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation) founded by Steven Spielberg. There are also 1,459 photographs (including scans of original documents).

"The Untold Stories" features chilling testimonies of people – at the time primarily children – who climbed out of the killing pits and managed to survive. It also sheds light on local Jews' attempts, after the war, to memorialize the murdered Jews and destroyed communities, even as the Soviets were seeking to quell any feelings of Jewish identity.

GERMAN CAR FIRM "USED HAIR FROM AUSCHWITZ"

One of the pillars of German industry, the giant but debt-crippled Schaeffler car parts supplier, was accused recently of using hair shorn from at least 40,000 Auschwitz death camp prisoners to make textiles at its factories in Nazi-occupied Poland during the Second World War.

The highly disturbing allegations were contained in new evidence unearthed by Polish historians at the Auschwitz museum, who said they had found rolls of fabric made from camp inmates' hair at a former Schaeffler factory in Poland's southern region of *Silesia*.

The discovery was the latest in a series of damaging blows for the ailing Schaeffler concern, which employs 200,000 people worldwide. The company is currently saddled with debts and faces the prospect of bankruptcy.

In February, Maria-Elisabeth Schaeffler, the concern's flamboyant and usually fur-coated millionaire owner, appeared at a trade union rally and wept openly as she appealed to the government of the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, for a state-funded bailout. In an attempt to clear up rumors about the company's wartime role, Mrs. Schaeffler recently admitted to

using slave laborers at its factories during the Second World War. However, the company's officially published history still only begins in 1946.

The company's own historian dismissed the allegations and said there was no evidence to support the theory that Schaeffler processed death camp inmates' hair industrially during WWII.

But Dr Jacek Lachendro, a historian at the Auschwitz museum, told Germany's *Der Spiegel* television channel that 1.95 tons of cloth made from inmates' hair had been discovered at a former Schaeffler textile and army tank parts factory in the town of *Kiertz* (formerly *Katscher*) after the Germans withdrew at the end of the war.

The amount of cloth, which was pictured on *Spiegel* television as rolls of closely-woven brownish fabric, was said to have derived from the hair shorn from some 40,000 Auschwitz prisoners.

Dr Lachendro said that subsequent analysis of the hair showed that some of it contained traces of the Zyklon B gas used by the Nazis to murder millions. Former workers at the factory in *Kiertz* who were interviewed on the program said that they remembered two

wagonloads of human hair being delivered to the company in 1943.

Hair was routinely shorn from prisoners, usually on arrival, at the death camps. The Nazi war machine used it to make army blankets and socks for U-boat crews. The Auschwitz museum on the site of the former death camp displays a store filled to the roof with inmates' hair originally intended for so-called "human recycling."

The *Kiertz* textile factory where the hair is alleged to have been processed formerly belonged to the Jewish-owned Davistan AG concern on which the Schaeffler empire was founded after it was taken over by the brothers Wilhelm and Georg Schaeffler. Their company made armaments for the Nazi war machine, but after the Second World War it re-emerged as one of Germany's main suppliers of parts to the car industry, specializing in needle roller bearings.

However, the devastating impact of the credit crunch coupled with Schaeffler's misjudged hostile takeover of the tire giant Continental have since plunged the concern into its worst crisis since the war.

RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS FROM FRANCE POSTHUMOUSLY HONORED AT YAD VASHEM

Louise Roger, a Righteous Among the Nations from France, was posthumously honored at Yad Vashem.

Her grandchildren, Robert Roger and Marie-Terese Roger, received the medal and certificate of honor on her behalf.

The event took place in the presence of Dr Ehud Leob, who was rescued by Louise Roger, as well as Avner Shalev, chairman of Yad Vashem, and France's Ambassador to Israel, Christophe Bigot.

On October 22, 1940, the Jews of *Baden* and *Palatinate*, Germany were deported to France, where they were put in detention camps.

Among the deportees were the Odenheimer family: Julchen and Hugo

Odenheimer, their six-year-old son Herbert (now Ehud) and his grandmother, Sophie.

Sophie died in the *Gurs* Camp where the family was interned. Julchen and Hugo were deported to Auschwitz in September 1942 where they were murdered.

In early 1941, Ehud was removed from the detention camp with several dozen other children and brought to a children's home run by O.S.E., the Society for Rescuing Children, a Jewish organization in France.

He was hidden with several different Christian families until he arrived at the home of Jules and Jeanne Roger. By the end of 1943, Jules' underground activities increasingly endangered the young Jewish boy hiding with them, and the

Rogers decided to move Ehud to the home of Jules' mother, Louise, in the village of *Argy*.

Ehud lived with Louise under an assumed identity, Hubert Odet, until the end of the war.

He took part in the daily activities of the household, working on their farm, studying in the local school, even serving as a choirboy in the local church.

"Grandma" took care of Ehud, providing for all his needs and providing him a safe haven, despite the difficulties and risks.

Louise Roger died on June 24, 1947. Jeanne and Jules Roger were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations in 1989.

EU CONDEMNS IRANIAN PRESIDENT'S REPEATED HOLOCAUST DENIALS

"The presidency of the European Union condemns statements by President Ahmadinejad at the Quds Day rally in Tehran where he repeated denials of the Holocaust and of the right to exist of the state of Israel," the Swedish EU presidency said in a statement.

"Such statements encourage anti-Semitism and hatred. We call on the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran to contribute constructively to peace and security in the Middle East."

Ahmadinejad told a crowd at Tehran University that the Holocaust was a lie based on an "unprovable and mythical" claim.

Germany's Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier immediately condemned the remarks, calling Ahmadinejad a disgrace to his country.

"With his intolerable tirades, he shames his country," and his "anti-Semitism ... must be collectively condemned," he said.

Countries including Britain, France and the United States have also condemned Ahmadinejad's statements. In Britain, Foreign Secretary David Miliband described the comments as ignorant and abhorrent. In Washington, a White House spokesman said the speech only served to further isolate the Islamic Republic.

During celebrations marking the end of Ramadan, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei blasted Israel, Western powers, and foreign broadcasters, saying that a "Zionist cancer" was gnawing into the lives of Islamic nations.

A VOW FULFILLED

(Continued from page 4)

characterize exactly the life that Fran and her husband Simon built for themselves after the hell of Hitler's death camps – a life of courage, determination, and heroism.

Notwithstanding the tribulations of financial setbacks and a stillborn baby, a daughter's divorce and a son-in-law's untimely passing, and despite their ever-present haunting memories, the Laufers worked tirelessly and selflessly to fulfill the vow they had made to their martyred families: to raise a new generation of Jews in a Torah-true fashion.

They succeeded in doing more than just that. The financial empire they built facilitated the creation and support of numerous Jewish institutions: *Rivkah Laufer Bikur Cholim*, Young Israel of Hillcrest and Deerfield Beach, the Great Synagogue in Jerusalem, the Chasidic dynasty of *Bobov* and *Mesivta Tifereth Jerusalem*. Their dedicated support of yeshivos and synagogues enabled them to spearhead the resurgence of Jewish life in the post-war world.

As Fran recounts her experiences, her gentle Polish lilt can virtually be heard on each page of the book, telling of pain, of a fierce desire to live, and of the heartwarming adoration felt for the husband who was everything to her. In a voice full of faith and gratitude, she tells the story of a woman who, together with her husband, forged a new life for themselves and filled it with profound love for and dedication to their family, their community, and the Jewish people.

These are the years in which survivors are emerging to tell their stories. This story, depicting a woman of valor who turned a horror-filled youth into an incredibly meaningful life, will surely be counted among them as an invaluable contribution to Holocaust literature.

WHOEVER SAVES A LIFE, SAVES HUMANITY

ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER

OF THE AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU: THE WORK OF YAD VASHEM IS AS IMPORTANT AS EVER

Dear Friends,
I am pleased to send warm greetings from Jerusalem to the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem on the occasion of your Annual Tribute Dinner.

This September, I spoke at the United Nations only a day after a Holocaust denier was given a hearing at the General Assembly. The original architectural plans of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp which I held up in my own speech were given to me this August when I visited Germany. They have joined the over 125 million pages of documentation held in the Yad Vashem archives.

Even though the Holocaust took place within living memory, there are those who would deny the undeniable. That is why the work of Yad Vashem is as important as ever. Its documentation and research bear witness to the horrors of the past but also serve to educate for the future. Your support and dedication to the American and International Societies for Yad Vashem is invaluable in ensuring that this important work continues.



SHIMON PERES: YAD VASHEM PROVIDES AN ENVIRONMENT FOR REFLECTION

Dear Mr. Zborowski,
It is with distinct pleasure that I convey my heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of the forthcoming Annual Tribute Dinner to be held by the American Friends of Yad Vashem.

This event serves to highlight the vital role of Yad Vashem in promoting Holocaust awareness, education and research. At a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise, and Holocaust denial is rampant, reminding the world of the dark hours of our history is indeed essential. Yad Vashem provides an environment for reflection, a place in which to commune with those who are no longer with us, but whose voices can still be heard. This is where the memory of the victims of Nazi horrors can live on for ever more, and where their names are inscribed in perpetuity. Yad Vashem is also where the Righteous Among the Nations are honored – men and women of valor whose heroic actions saved so many of our Jewish brethren, evidence of the compassion and dignity of human kind, a symbol of hope for our tomorrow.



WLODZIMIERZ CIMOSZEWICZ: IT IS OUR FUNDAMENTAL MORAL DUTY TO REMEMBER

Dear Mr. Chairman,
I am very honored to be invited for the 25th Annual Yad Vashem Tribute Dinner. Since I plan to be on that day in Berlin to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Wall, let me address you and the distinguished guests with this letter.

As a Pole who understands how fortunate were my ancestors who lived together with our Jewish brothers for generations and how tragic was the [fate] of the Victims of the Holocaust I am deeply convinced that it is our fundamental moral duty to remember. And it is a privilege of the Survivors to remember those who helped them.

I fully share the Dinner's motto. This is true that those who helped their Jewish friends and neighbors not only saved the individuals but also saved humanity. Following the activities of Yad Vashem which I had a chance to visit in Israel as the Prime Minister of Poland I would like to express my deepest respect and support for this noble Institution.

I wish you all to continue your precious mission for many years to come.



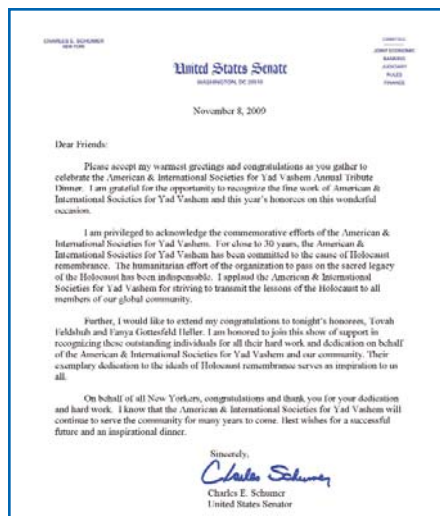
CHARLES SCHUMER: YAD VASHEM IS COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE OF HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE

Dear Friends:
Please accept my warmest greetings and congratulations as you gather to celebrate the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem Annual Tribute Dinner. I am grateful for the opportunity to recognize the fine work of American & International Societies for Yad Vashem and this year's honorees on this wonderful occasion.

I am privileged to acknowledge the commemorative efforts of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem. For close to 30 years, the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem has been committed to the cause of Holocaust remembrance. The humanitarian effort of the organization to pass on the sacred legacy of the Holocaust has been indispensable. I applaud the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem for striving to transmit the lessons of the Holocaust to all members of our global community.

Further, I would like to extend my congratulations to tonight's honorees, Tovah Feldshuh and Fanya Gottesfeld Heller. I am honored to join this show of support in recognizing these outstanding individuals for all their hard work and dedication on behalf of the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem and our community. Their exemplary dedication to the ideals of Holocaust remembrance serves as inspiration to us all.

On behalf of all New Yorkers, congratulations and thank you for your dedication and hard work. I know that the American & International Societies for Yad Vashem will continue to serve the community for many years to come. Best wishes for a successful future and an inspirational dinner.



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*1974-85, as Newsletter for the American Federation of Jewish Fighters, Camp Inmates, and Nazi Victims
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