

# MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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## SURVIVAL AND RESISTANCE

### Thirteenth Annual Professional Development Conference on Holocaust Education

The Education Department of the American Society for Yad Vashem and its Young Leadership Associates convened the Thirteenth Annual Professional Development Conference on Holocaust Education. This year's conference is the largest in recent years, with close to 200 educators from the tri-state area, plus Texas and Ohio, in attendance. The Association of Teachers of Social Studies / United Federation of Teachers, which once again co-sponsored the Conference, points out that "[t]his conference is an in-

This year's keynote speaker was Professor Terri Warmbrand, who delivered remarks on "Unknown Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust." Other presenters at the conference were Peppy Margolis and Helene Alalouf.

Opening the conference was Jeremy Halpern, Chairperson of the Young Leadership Associates and himself a grandchild of survivors. He was joined by his daughter Brianna, who was the first Fourth Generation to ever join us at an Education Conference.

Jeremy Halpern said in his opening remarks: "...it gives me great pleasure to be here this morning with so many distinguished professionals in the field of education, as well as the students who will take these lessons into their fields of choice. I am particularly pleased to have my wife Abbi and my daughter Brianna here with me today.

"I am a grandchild of Holocaust survivors, or what is termed a 'Third Generation' person, two generations removed from the Shoah. Brianna, our eldest, has already volunteered to help here today. She and her siblings, members of the 'Fourth Generation', are blessed by having their survivor great-grandparents still with them, a unique privilege experienced by very few, and one which we are so grateful for.

"As you can imagine, I grew up with survivors' memories imparted to me by my survivor grandparents. The stories of their survival and that of the Holocaust are part of who I am and what I do. It is the goal of the Young Leadership Associates to make sure that these stories are never forgotten, and it is the reason that we gather here today for such an important event.

"As time moves forward and the incomparable horrors of the Holocaust recede farther into history, I know that it is my generation's sacred duty, indeed that of future generations as well, to keep memory alive. It is our collective responsibility to make

sure that the memory of those who perished is not forgotten and that the story of survival, resistance, and heroism is told and retold. Abbi and I do our best to pass this message and commitment to our children. And I know that the educators in this room do the same, every day, with our children and the children of so many; to pass along the information you receive here today, to make sure that the lessons of the Holocaust are not forgotten by future generations.

"All of us are here today for this precise reason – remembering and reminding. Through education we can convey the lessons of history, the calamitous consequences of hatred and prejudice. Our job is to educate new generations towards tolerance and acceptance with the hope that

also marks our organization's 30th anniversary. How befitting that we should have such an auspicious occasion."

"I am delighted to see all of you here and tell you that this is a record-breaking year in our Seminar's number of participants. This seminar has been growing with each passing year and has become an event which we know long-time educators as well as students-in-training look forward to attending," said Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem.

"As you know, the goal of the American Society for Yad Vashem is to provide you at this seminar with the resources to best educate your students, helping form them into understanding and sensitive members of the community. Through teaching



Caroline Massel, Chairperson, Young Leadership Associates of the American Society for Yad Vashem; Jeremy Halpern, Chairperson, Young Leadership Associates of the American Society for Yad Vashem; Brianna Halpern, daughter of Abbi and Jeremy Halpern; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem; Elizabeth Mundlak-Zborowski, Cultural Director of the American Society for Yad Vashem.

is a valuable resource for increasing awareness and sensitivity to intolerance and injustice, especially in today's world."

This year's conference focused on Survivors and Resistance, a look at the experiences of those who survived and the people who tried to help during the darkest hour of humanity.



Participants of the conference during discussion.

they will learn to prevent such horrors from happening again. It is our hope that these lessons will increase awareness and respect for each other's differences.

"I am delighted to be part of this 13th Annual Professional Development Conference, sponsored by the American Society for Yad Vashem. In Jewish tradition, thirteen is a most lucky number; it marks the point of a person embarking upon maturity and coming into one's own. It is the largest seminar ever, with the largest number of participants, both teachers and students. This event has come into its own. This year

the Holocaust, our program aims to raise ethical questions and help students find sources of strength, hope, and renewal. It is our hope that these lessons will increase awareness, tolerance, and respect for each other's differences.

"As a survivor, this year's theme, 'Survival and Resistance,' is very close to my heart, as it is for my wife, Dr. Elizabeth Mundlak-Zborowski. Each story of survival is different and unique to each survivor. My story is different than my wife's. She was smuggled out of the ghetto as a

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May those  
who attend  
your Seder feast  
be blessed  
with everything  
life has to offer...  
And so may you!



Happy Passover!

## COMBATING HOLOCAUST DENIAL, UN LEADS DELEGATION TO AUSCHWITZ CAMP

In February top United Nations officials led a visit by 150 eminent personalities and representatives of 40 governments to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest and most notorious of all the Nazi death camps, to combat denial of the Holocaust of millions of Jews and others during the Second World War.

"As the poet and philosopher George Santayana said, 'those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,'" said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, who led the visit with Bertrand Delanoë, mayor of Paris, and the Aladdin Project, which seeks to counter all forms of denial and promote a rapprochement of cultures, particularly between Jews and Muslims, based on mutual respect.

"The genocide of the Jewish people was a unique and paradigmatic event that helps us to understand other historical genocides and other atrocities worldwide that originate in racism and hatred. If we understand them, we can avert them in the future," she added.

She, too, stressed the vital need to counter Holocaust denial.

"We must always remember the millions of innocent Jews and countless members of other minorities who were systematically murdered at Auschwitz and the other death camps. We must counter anyone, anywhere, who seeks to deny the Holocaust or diminish its significance," she told a news conference in Paris ahead of the visit. "Every day of the year, the United Nations strives to heed the lessons of that horror."

Among those in the delegation were President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference; former German Chancellor

Gerhard Schröder; former Croatian President Stepan Mesic; former Mauritanian President Mohamed Vall; and Mevlut Cavusoglu of Turkey, president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Representatives of the heads of state of Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, and Turkey also participated, as did the mayors of 12 cities in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

"The purpose of the visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau is to underline the horrific consequences of Nazi and Fascist ideology on the Jewish people and countless members of other minorities, and to inspire political, religious, and intellectual leaders around the world to combat the denial of the Holocaust and all forms of intolerance and dehumanization," UNESCO said in a news release.

The Paris-based agency has strengthened its education program on Holocaust remembrance and human rights thanks to new funds received from Israel. The program develops school curricula and provides training for teachers about the Holocaust and human rights, with the goal of promoting a culture of peace.

This year, UNESCO organized two exhibitions at its Paris headquarters; "The Shoah in Europe," giving an overview of the Holocaust from the rise of Nazism to the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals in 1946, and one presenting the original manuscript of the diary kept by Sorbonne student Helen Berr from April 1942 to February 1944. Helen and her family were deported to Auschwitz in March 1944.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau camp was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites in 1979.

## MACEDONIA OPENS HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL CENTER

A memorial museum devoted to Macedonian Jews who were victims of the Holocaust during World War II opened in the capital Skopje.

The inauguration ceremony was marked by symbolic placing of three urns with ashes of Macedonian Jews killed in the Treblinka concentration camp in Poland, where 7,148 of them lost their lives after being deported there in 1943.

The urns were carried by Macedonian soldiers who marched through the center of Skopje followed by several hundred people.

"The lessons of the Holocaust in your country must serve as an early warning system to those of your neighbors, where anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial are resurgent," Shimon Samuel of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre said at the ceremony.

The memorial center, built in an area once populated by the Jewish community, was inaugurated in the presence of Macedonian President George Ivanov, Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Moshe Ya'alon and

officials and diplomats from neighboring countries.



People attend the opening ceremony of the Holocaust Memorial Centre for Macedonian Jews in Skopje.

"The only surviving member of the 81-strong Misrahi family was my father," Viktor Misrahi, one of the rare survivors, told AFP.

"Today, the ashes of our people were brought back here from Treblinka, and they will remain here, at their home," he added.

Only an estimated 200 Jews live in Macedonia today, most of them in the capital Skopje.

## UK GOVERNMENT APPOINTS FIRST-EVER ENVOY FOR HOLOCAUST-RELATED ISSUES

The British government has appointed its first-ever envoy to deal with post-Holocaust issues. Foreign Secretary William Hague announced that Sir Andrew Burns, a former ambassador to Israel, would take the job. Hague said his country was committed to preserving the memory of the Holocaust and would support efforts to make sure that the lessons of this period in history are not forgotten.

Burns will oversee efforts to resolve outstanding issues and claims related to property and art restitution. He will also take part in education efforts and promote re-

membrance and research about the Holocaust. Burns' appointment was applauded in Israel. "We think it's a very positive and important step ... and we wish him a lot of success in his work in promoting Holocaust education and fighting for the rights of the survivors," Estee Yaari, a spokeswoman for Yad Vashem, was quoted by AP as saying. "The Holocaust is an issue that is part of all of our history."

Recent international efforts have focused on providing restitution to aging victims of Nazi persecution.

## ISRAEL RECOGNIZES FIRST SALVADORAN FOR SAVING JEWS DURING HOLOCAUST

Israel's Holocaust memorial on March 1 added a Salvadoran diplomat to its list of gentiles who risked their lives to help save Jews during World War II.

Col. Jose Arturo Castellanos defied his government by issuing thousands of visas and fake documents to as many as 40,000 Jews, helping many escape death at the hands of the Nazis.

Castellanos was the first Salvadoran to be added to the Yad Vashem memorial's list of "Righteous Among the Nations."

Castellanos, who died in 1977, served as El Salvador's consul general in Geneva in the 1940s. He and a Jewish colleague, George Mantello, often doled out the lifesaving documents without the knowledge of the Salvadoran government.

In the aftermath of World War II, in which the Nazis and their collaborators murdered 6 million Jews, many survivors fled to Israel. Three Jews who were aided by Castellanos joined dozens of Salvadorans bearing their nation's flag for Tuesday's ceremony in Jerusalem.

Yitzhak Mayer, 83, was a Jewish teenager in Hungary when he and his family were given El Salvador citizenship pa-

pers. Amid oppression, the documents gave him a feeling of safety.

"Police would stop you, and if you were hiding, you were afraid that you will be detected and have to identify yourself,"

Mayer said. "If you have a very official diplomatic document, it always helps."

Salvadoran Foreign Minister Hugo Martinez, who was in Israel on an official trip, said he was emotional and proud to meet people who might have been saved by his countryman.

"This is something that not only Col. Castellanos but the country of El Salvador has contributed to humanity," he said.

The granting of the Israeli memorial's highest honor for non-Jews to a Salvadoran citizen focuses attention on ties between the two small nations on opposite sides of the globe.

In recent months a number of Latin American nations

have unilaterally recognized a Palestinian state — a move that Israel rejects. Although El Salvador says it is committed to peace through negotiations, the Palestinian Authority has said it is in discussions with El Salvador over possible recognition.

Still, El Salvador is one of the only countries in the world with an embassy in Jerusalem, which Israel claims as its capital but most of the international community does not recognize.



El Salvador Foreign Minister Hugo Martinez rekindles the eternal flame at the Hall of Remembrance at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial.

## COUNTRIES SIGN PACT TO FIGHT ANTI-SEMITISM, HOLOCAUST DENIAL

More than 80 countries signed an agreement to cooperate in the fight against anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial.

The Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights signed the agreement at Israel's Foreign Affairs Ministry.

"This agreement is a step that doubles the power of 87 states' cooperation in the fight against the de-legitimization of Israel and anti-Semitism towards Jews around the world," said Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon, who signed the agreement on behalf of Israel. "There are those who deny the Holocaust and are preparing for the next Holocaust. We must remember the Holocaust so that the horrors will not

return, and we will make the world a safer place."

Israel was selected to lead the task force for the first time in 2010.

The task force, established a decade ago at the initiative of the Swedish government, aims to promote the remembrance of the Holocaust through education, research and memorial sites. It is composed of 27 member countries, mostly European. Six international organizations belong as observers, including the United Nations and the European Union.

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which has 57 members, deals with educational programs and monitors instances of xenophobia, mainly anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

## ISRAELIS HONOR ABORIGINAL ACTIVIST WHO LED PROTEST AGAINST HOLOCAUST

Fifteen descendants of the Aboriginal activist William Cooper were in Jerusalem for the announcement of a new academic chair at the Holocaust History Museum of Yad Vashem named in honor of their forefather.

Less than a month after *Kristallnacht*, the night of ransacking of Jewish shops and homes across Nazi Germany, Mr. Cooper led a march from his home in the Melbourne suburb of Footscray to the German consulate to denounce the "cruel persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazi government of Germany." German officials in Australia refused to accept the written denunciation from Mr. Cooper after the march on December 6, 1938, but 72 years later his actions are being acknowledged with a professorship for

the study of resistance during the Holocaust.

Mr Cooper's grandson, Uncle "Boydie" Turner, his great-grandson, Kevin Russell, and 13 other descendants were in Jerusalem for the event, organized through the Australian Israeli Leadership Forum.

Uncle Boydie Turner, now 82, said the family had been trying to get recognition for Mr. Cooper for a long time. "We've always known about this story ... we've always wanted other people to know about it," he said.

*Kristallnacht* — "the night of broken glass" — is seen by many historians as the start of the Holocaust, and it was widely reported around the world. However, Mr. Cooper's march is believed to be the only private protest organized at the time.

## ITALY'S FIRST HOLOCAUST MUSEUM TO BE BUILT IN ROME

BY LISA PALMIERI-BILLIG,  
JERUSALEM POST

Mayor Gianni Alemanno and the municipal authorities of Rome announced the construction of a Holocaust museum as a focal point in the city's 10-year "Stati Generali" plan for major projects in the city.

Italy's first Holocaust museum, based on preliminary plans drawn by architects Luca Zevi and Giorgio Maria Tamburini, will be built in the central area of *Villa Torlonia*. The 2,500-square-meter building – estimated at a cost of 19 million euros, to be covered by the city – will be part of a designated 4,000-sq.m. area adjacent to both former dictator Benito Mussolini's villa and the two millennium-old Jewish catacombs that will be restored and opened for visits. The museum's director, Marcello Pezzetti, has a vast plan in mind, specifically aimed at increasing Italians' awareness of their own role in the Holocaust.

"Italy, like Austria, was a partner of Nazi Germany – not a victim, as the populace generally holds. Unlike Germany, we have never even begun the process of soul-searching. Italians don't feel involved – they do not consider themselves as having collaborated," he explained.

"This museum, which will cover global Holocaust history but will have a special section on Italy, will speak directly to Italians, and not just Italian Jews," he continued.

"When the Nazis, aided by Italian Fascists, raided the ghetto of Rome on October 16, 1943, they knew very well what the fate of all the 1,125 deported would be," he asserted, adding, "We will be telling a story that will, unfortunately, unveil a black heart, but the formation of contemporary Italian identity – including that of new immigrants – must incorporate this knowledge."

The museum will be divided into three sections: archives, a library, and a vast video collection. It will cost approximately \$30 million.

The section on Italy promises to draw extreme interest, with documentation on the

country's most famous controversial wartime issues. It will explore both the positive and negative roles of the Vatican – its proverbial silence during the 1943 deportations, contrasted with the opening of its institutions to thousands of Jewish refugees; and its helping Jews by providing false documents, but also helping Nazis flee to South America after the war. Evidence will be shown regarding traitors, as well as righteous Italians who risked their lives to save Jewish fellow citizens.

The conversion and resignation of Rome's chief rabbi, Israel Zolli (later known as Eugenio, Pope Pius XII's first name), at the height of Nazi persecutions will be addressed, as will the stories of many other Italian rabbis who, unlike Zolli, stayed on to care for their communities until their bitter end as martyrs.

Another section will focus on the ongoing work of Patrick Desbois, a Catholic priest who has uncovered and dug up previously unknown and hidden mass graves in northeastern Europe where Nazis murdered over 1.5 million Jews in the towns and hamlets of Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, and other countries.

Pezzetti and Leone Paserman – president of the Shoah Museum Foundation – plan to characterize the new museum as a place for research and work-in-progress, particularly for students and teachers. Courses will be organized, and there will be many temporary exhibitions and events.

The mass murder of Gypsies, the mentally and physically disabled, homosexuals, political prisoners, Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others will be part of the permanent exhibition.

In addition, there will be events touching on the Holocaust's relevance to more recent history, linking it with knowledge of other genocides and racist persecutions such as in North Africa under the colonialist powers, Armenia, Biafra, Sudan, Communist Russia, and China under Mao Zedong.

## NAZI HUNTERS GIVE LOW GRADES TO 13 COUNTRIES

A new report by a prominent Nazi-hunting group gives more than a dozen countries, including Hungary, Ukraine, and Canada, low grades for bringing suspected Holocaust-era war criminals to justice.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center gave top marks to Germany – the first time any country besides the U.S. has been given an "A" grade for prosecuting suspected Nazi war criminals.

The report covers the period between April 2009 and March 2010.

The director of the Weisenthal Center's Israel office, Efraim Zuroff, said Hungary received a failing grade for not imprisoning Dr. Sandor Kepiro, a Hungarian military officer convicted in 1944 in the mass murder of civilians.

He called Canada's efforts "a terrible failure" for not extraditing former Nazis even after stripping them of citizenship.

The center gave a failing grade to Ukraine, saying it "has to the best of our knowledge never conducted a single investigation of a local Nazi war criminal, let alone prosecuted a Holocaust perpetrator."

But in a related development, Ukraine rescinded the National Hero of Ukraine award given to Stepan Bandera, a nationalist partisan whose group briefly fought for the Nazis.

In all, nine countries received failing grades from the center and five received "Ds."

Zuroff noted that counterintuitively, perhaps, the number of new state-launched investigations has risen in recent years,



Hungarian Sandor Kepiro is currently the SWC's most wanted Nazi suspect.

even though 65 years have passed since the end of World War II.

A total of 456 new cases were opened in the period covered by the recent report, compared with 315 the year before and only 63 in 2006–2007.

Germany received its top mark for convicting, in 2009 and 2010, the first two Nazi war criminals since 2002.

"People assume because of the age of the defendants that nothing will actually happen," Zuroff said, but "passage of time does not diminish the crimes of the killers."

## BUTCHER OF LYON KLAUS BARBIE SERVED AS WEST GERMAN SPY

Klaus Barbie, the Nazi war criminal also known as the "Butcher of Lyon" for his hideous treatment of Jews in Nazi-occupied France, was a paid agent of the German intelligence service BND during the 1960s, according to news magazine *Der Spiegel*. After the war, in which he had served as SS officer and as the head of the Nazi police *Gestapo* in Lyon, France's third-largest city, Barbie fled to Bolivia and lived there under the name Klaus Altmann from 1951. He was recruited by the BND – West Germany's foreign intelligence agency – in 1965.

A file on Barbie, whose code-name was Eagle, says he was of "complete German attitude" and a "committed anti-Communist." He provided at least 35 reports and was seen as a reliable source, although it is not yet known what kind of information he gave the agents. Payments for his work were made to him via a branch of the Chartered Bank of London in San Francisco. A few weeks after he was recruited, he took over the Bolivian arm of a German company which operated globally, selling decommissioned weapons from the German military. According to BND records, he was supposed to report whenever the Bolivians were running short of weapons or ammunition.

The agency ended its work with Barbie in the winter of 1966–67, seemingly on fears that he could become a blackmail target of other intelligence services over the murders he committed as a Nazi official. In the early 1970s, the French Nazi hunters Beate and Serge Klarsfeld tracked Barbie

down in Bolivia and obtained his extradition to France in 1983. He was convicted of crimes against humanity and sentenced to life in prison. He died in 1991.

As local head of the *Gestapo*, Barbie personally tortured prisoners and was responsible for the deaths of up to 4,000 people in Lyon. In April 1944, he ordered the deportation to Auschwitz of a group of



44 Jewish children from an orphanage at *Izieu*. Barbie was also reported to have worked as an officer for Bolivian intelligence and helped to plan concentration camps and formulate torture and repression techniques to fight anti-government rebels while Bolivia was under a dictatorship.

The revelations about him come only a week after the newspaper *Bild* cited newly released documents as showing that German intelligence services knew that Adolf Eichmann was hiding out in Argentina eight years before Israeli agents kidnapped him there in 1960. Eichmann, one of the main executors of Adolf Hitler's "final solution," was brought to Israel for trial, where he was convicted and executed in 1962.

## ISRAEL, UNESCO TO JOINTLY PROMOTE HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Israel and UNESCO have signed an agreement to promote Holocaust education and combat its denial.

The agreement signed in Paris between Israel and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization commits to the establishment of a center within the organization devoted entirely to developing and promoting Holocaust education and combating its denial worldwide. The center will function in accordance with resolutions adopted at the U.N. General Assembly in New York and UNESCO, according to Israel's Foreign Ministry.

Israel will fund part of the project "after reaching understandings with UNESCO regarding its treatment of political issues on the agenda," according to the Foreign Ministry.

UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova and Nimrod Barkan, Israel's permanent delegate to UNESCO, signed the agreement.

B'nai B'rith International praised the agreement reached between Israel and UNESCO.

The agreement "will provide the important framework needed for UNESCO to implement the teaching of Holocaust awareness and remembrance while strengthening the relationship between Israel and UNESCO through a cooperative partnership," the organization said in a statement. "Increased attention to Holocaust education is essential to combating anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiments, as well as the Holocaust denial and glorification recently experiencing an alarming resurgence worldwide."

## JEWISH GROUPS BEGIN HUNT FOR UNMARKED HOLOCAUST GRAVES

Jewish organizations are to search for countless unmarked graves of Holocaust victims across Eastern Europe.

The groups think that more than two million Jews were rounded up by the German military and shot, with their bodies left in unmarked mass graves.

The shootings took place before the Nazis organized mass killings at the gas chambers of death camps.

The plan is to memorialize and protect sites in Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, and Poland.

After Hitler invaded Russia, hundreds of thousands of Jews were routinely killed by the advancing army, even before the formal industrial killing in death camps began.

In Berlin, Jewish organizations said they would try to identify graves.

They said teams would be "driving up and down the back roads of small villages... knocking on doors and asking the elderly to recount what they saw during the war."

Last December, researchers made a preliminary inspection of five sites in Ukraine.

One of them, where 5,000 Jews were shot and dumped, is now a swamp.

Jan Fahlbusch of the American Jewish Committee, who is in charge of the effort to memorialize the graves, said it was important that the people who live there know what happened in their home villages.

"There's a lot of ignorance among the local population and it is important to raise awareness of the crimes of the past," he said.



# BOOK REVIEWS

## THE WARTIME DIARY OF EDMUND KESSLER

The Wartime Diary of Edmund Kessler. Edited by Renata Kessler. Introduction by Antony Polonsky. Academic Studies Press: Boston, 2010. 250pp. \$30.

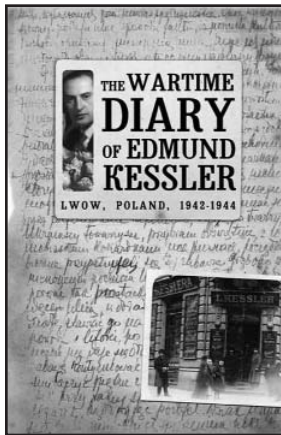
REVIEWED BY OMER BARTOV

This is a rather extraordinary little book, largely the product of years of research, travel, and careful stitching together of details and contributions by Renata Kessler. The heart of this volume is the wartime diary of her father, and a set of his poems (as well as one possibly by his wife Fryderyka), both written in German-occupied *Lwów* (*Lemberg, Lvov*) in 1942–1944, when almost the entire Jewish population of the city was murdered by the Nazis and their local collaborators. The diary takes up a mere 32 pages, and the poems another 33. The rest of the text includes several introductions, and a remarkable account by Kazimierz Kalwinski, the last surviving son of Katarzyna and Wojciech Kalwinski, who sheltered 24 Jews in a bunker under their pig shed in the last two years of the German occupation, among whom were Edmund and Fryderyka, as well as Leon Wells. The volume ends with several reflections, of which the most important is Renata Kessler's account of her search for her parents' fate and, as she sees it, also for her own identity.

What makes this book so remarkable is precisely its eclectic nature and the contradictions between the various perspectives, recollections, and interpretations of the nature of the event. Edmund Kessler's own diary, the majority of which is devoted to

the early days of the German occupation, beginning on June 30, 1941, is a detached, relentless and searing account of almost fantastic violence. Kessler carefully reconstructs the manner in which such violence quickly accelerated from humiliation and beatings to torture and murder, as the city's gentile population discovers that there was a license to kill Jews. Once such permission is given, one discovered that "the indifference of man to man is beyond belief."

These mechanisms of human behavior were triggered by the overwhelming presence of the German occupation and the growing realization that the new rulers were determined to use, abuse, and ultimately murder the Jews. But the specifics of how, and how quickly, this awareness translated in mob violence are described succinctly and insightfully in Kessler's terrifying text. As Kessler notes, "the Ukrainian mob, encouraged by the behavior of the Germans, is further prodded by rumors spread about the bestial tortures Jews supposedly inflicted on arrested political prisoners" (p. 34). Yet another element allowed the violence to spiral out of control. The Metropolitan of the Greek Catholic Church in *Lwów*, Andrey Sheptytskyi (Andrzej Szeptycki), subsequently became known for his rescue of Jews and condemnation of Nazi genocidal policies and Ukrainian complicity.



ity. Yet according to Kessler, this charismatic religious leader's initial response was quite different. Thus he writes that during those early days,

"The Ukrainian archbishop preaches a sermon in which, instead of calming the excited mood and taming their barbarous instincts, he demagogically incites the mobs, and in the name of their sacred religion, calling upon the population to retaliate against the Jews for their supposed bestial murder of political prisoners, even though these prisoners included some Jews too" (p. 34).

Given this additional spiritual and moral support, all hell broke loose in the city. "A fanatic mob orgy of bloodshed and pillage began." And yet, as Kessler insightfully remarks, "it took place according to a certain system," whereby "the orchestrators... were the Germans. It was they who decided when to begin the pogrom, when to stop it, and how long to torture the victims." Indeed, the Germans "act capriciously toward their Ukrainian subordinates, even beating them when they are slow or overzealous in carrying out orders. They thus emphasize that they are the masters while the native Ukrainians and Poles exist merely to carry out their commands" (pp. 34–5). Nevertheless, it was Ukrainian militiamen, "abundantly equipped with torture instruments – iron-shod clubs, sticks, shovels, hammers,

hatchets, rubber nightsticks, and knuckle-dusters," who perpetrated much of the violence. As Kessler observes, "the sight of blood does not weaken the lust to kill, on the contrary, it stimulates it," while "the public enjoys gaping at this spectacle, at this martyring of innocent people." Although, according to Kessler, "rarely does someone cast a disapproving glance at the assassins or reacts with pity or disgust," there are nevertheless "instances of individuals who actively defend a publicly beaten and humiliated woman or warn a Jewish passerby against the death waiting for him at the next step." When "someone loudly protests in defense of the bestially beaten Jews or even puts up an active resistance to his assailants... he is quickly silenced and called a stooge for the Jews." But such courageous expressions of empathy and humanity were, notes Kessler, "isolated instances" (p. 35).

The account of this early pogrom, in which Jewish citizens of *Lwów* were forced to exhume and wash the bodies of murdered political prisoners, and were then beaten to death or shot in large numbers, is as harrowing as it is detailed. Despite its relentless horror, it should be read by anyone who wishes to understand how the Holocaust unfolded in these regions of Eastern Europe. Kessler also makes a strong point about Jewish responses to this violence, noting, "the Jews generally behave passively... with a dumb resignation." They "seek no explanation" for the violence, for "they know it is sufficient that

(Continued on page 15)

## LEGACY OF LIFE: A MEMOIR OF THE HOLOCAUST

Legacy of Life: A Memoir of the Holocaust. By Israel Joe Sachs. MavenMark Books, LLC: Milwaukee, 2010. 259 pp. \$16.95.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

Each and every story of Holocaust survival chronicles a miracle. For Hitler, Germany's industry of death had everything diligently and devilishly worked out. In sum, German *pünktlichkeit* (accuracy) was determinedly harnessed to see to the systematic ghettoization, organized concentration, and final cold-blooded extermination of the Jews. Put simply, no Jew was to escape Nazism's tentacles.

On second thought, though, Israel Joe Sachs's autobiographical *Legacy of Life: A Memoir of the Holocaust* chronicles more than a miracle. For, while this reviewer has critiqued other such volumes, none

of them has been about someone who survived almost six years under the Nazi boot. Moreover, none of them has been about someone who basically did much of this surviving all alone... sans brother, mother, or father.

And yet, Sachs surely drew this emotional strength of his from his loving family. There was his father, a master tailor in *Przyrow*, Poland. There was his mother, an accomplished seamstress. There was his brother,

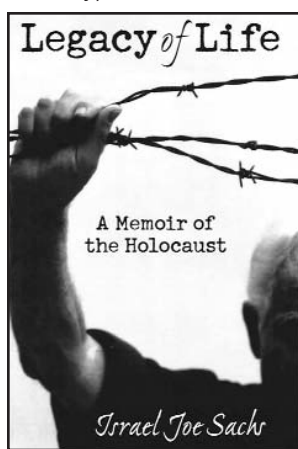
born in 1925, a year older than Sachs. Then, too, there was the wider family of caring uncles, aunts, cousins, and even many friends that gave warmth and security regardless of local anti-Semitic acts.

But then, in 1939, after the family had moved to an area just outside *Sosnowiec*, the war came and with it the brutal and sustained Nazi persecution of the Jews. Sachs's family, like all Jewish families, tried its best to stay alive and together. In the end, however, our author was taken away by the Hitlerites, shoved into a packed railroad car, and left alone. He never saw his parents again. By accident, he did see his brother again... under the saddest of circumstances...

At this point Sachs's tale turns to the years he endured backbreaking labor in Nazi slave labor camps. We read of the intense and relentless cold and hunger he suffered. We read of his fear of punishment for just about anything. We read of his fear of reporting to "sickbay" — often the first step to deportation, Auschwitz, and extermination. And then there was his overriding loneliness.

Still, in the midst of all this, there were moments of kindness. Fellow Jewish slave laborers helped as best they could when Sachs took ill. A good turn the author did for another was remembered with

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## MEMORIES AFTER MY DEATH

Memories after my death. By Yair Lapid. Keter-Books: Jerusalem. 2010. 414 pp. In Hebrew.

REVIEWED BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

Author Yair Lapid, well-known Israeli journalist and media personality, has honored his legendary late father Yosef (Tomi) Lapid (1931–2008) in a most creative and revealing way, in this posthumous "autobiography" that allows us a riveting entry into the fascinating life of a Holocaust survivor who rose to become one of Israel's most colorful and leading politicians.

Tomi Lapid, founder of the now defunct *Shinuy* Party, served as Justice Minister and Deputy Prime Minister under Prime Minister Arik Sharon, and in July 2006 was appointed Yad Vashem's chairman by his friend Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Born as Tomislav Lampel to a well-off Jewish family in *Novi Sad*, Yugoslavia, in 1931, Tomi survived the destruction of both the Yugoslav and Hungarian Jewries. Of the eighty thousand Yugoslav Jews less than ten thousand remained, whereas five-hundred ninety thousand of Hungary's eight hundred twenty-five thousand perished.

His father, lawyer and journalist Dr. Bella Lampel, was taken to Auschwitz and murdered in *Mauthausen* with paternal

grandma Hermina and ten other relatives lost in Auschwitz.

Tomi's first embedded brush with war's horror was at age nine on April 5, 1941, the day of the Hungarian invasion of Yugoslavia. While his resourceful mom, Katalina, who later protected both of them in the Budapest Ghetto, was visiting family in Budapest, he and father Bella escaped to Belgrade, experiencing that night a German air raid. They were lucky to make it out of a burning house, dodging falling debris. Eventually, following Bella's loss of his lawyer's license, the family moved to Budapest.

Tomi credits Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat and heroic Righteous Gentile, with saving his mother and other young women who were on a death march. Adolph Eichmann, the German officer responsible for the deportation of Hungarian Jews so late in the war and whose signature on March 19, 1944, sent Dr. Bella to Auschwitz, faced an eight-month trial in Jerusalem which ended on December 13, 1961, with a death sentence. Tomi, who covered this historic trial for the daily *Maariv*, regards it as "the end of the silence era" (p. 156), as his friend, prosecutor Dr. Gidon Hausner, also a former Yad Vashem chairman, pointed a blaming finger at the man in the glass box, in a moment that finally made Tomi a true Israeli.

The survivors were enabled to begin

(Continued on page 12)



# HOLOCAUST: THREE MIRACLE BABIES

BY HELEN BURCHELL, BBC

Three babies born just days before the liberation of a Nazi concentration camp have been reunited at a Holocaust Memorial Day event in Cambridge.

Eva Clarke believed she was the only baby born at *Mauthausen* camp, until Internet searches revealed that two others were alive and well in America.

Mark Olsky, Hana Berger Moran, and Eva were born within days of each other.

"I always grew up thinking that I was a miracle baby, and now there are three of us," said Eva.

*KZ Mauthausen-Gusen* in Austria was one of the largest labor camp complexes in German-controlled Europe.



Anka Bergman, Eva Clarke, Mark Olsky, and Hana Berger Moran.

In April 1945, three heavily pregnant women were among those being transferred by train from *Freiberg* and *Auschwitz* to the camp.

Each had been careful to disguise her pregnancy for as long as possible.

There was only one outcome for prisoners unable to work, and very few babies born in camps lived more than a few days.

"Our mothers were all very strong women, and we are very grateful for that," said Eva Clarke, now aged 65.

She lives in Cambridge with her 94-year-old mother, Anka, and has spent years working with schoolchildren to educate them about the Holocaust.

## EVA'S STORY

Eva's father, architect Bernd Nathan, was shot in *Auschwitz*, and his wife, 27-year-old Anka, spent eight months in the same camp before being transferred by train to *Mauthausen*.

By this time, she was just days away from giving birth.

"We were on the train for about 20 days," said Anka.

"There was no food, no water, no hygiene. We were like sardines – and dirty – because it was a coal wagon."

It was only when the train eventually stopped that Anka realized where she and the other prisoners were being taken.

"We knew about *Mauthausen*. So many people were taken hostage and they never came back," she said.

"When I saw the sign at the station, my birth pains started, but we had to get off the train."

She recalled the kindness of a local farmer, who was helping to transport the prisoners to the camp.

"I must have looked like something he had never seen," said Anka, who described herself as "a scarcely-living, pregnant skeleton with a shaved head."

"But he took pity on me and gave me a glass of milk.

"And I must tell you now that never in my life do I touch milk, but this glass of milk was like an elixir.

"It was marvelous. I think at the time that may have saved my life.

"That glass of milk brought my humanity back," she said.

Eva was born in the farmer's cart, weighing just 3 pounds and surrounded by "women with typhoid fever and covered with lice."

Anka remembered that her baby daughter was completely still and did not make a sound.

When the cart reached the first aid station at *Mauthausen*, a doctor, who was also a prisoner, cut the umbilical cord and smacked her, and only then did Eva begin to cry.

"My baby was wrapped in newspaper because there was nothing else there," said Anka.

"I was given a bunk for myself, which was a miracle as all the rest slept anyhow.

"And I had my baby in my arms in the paper, and I was the happiest person in all the world."

Eva tells her mother's story regularly, and maintains that it was only because of Anka's strength – and the fact that the camp was liberated by the American army days later – that she survived.

"A baby that small would be straight in an incubator these days," she said.

"There were no incubators. I was wrapped in paper, but perhaps I had the

best incubator. My mother just held me all the time."

## HANA'S STORY

Many years later, Eva would discover that she was not the only baby born at *Mauthausen* camp in April 1945.

Like Anka, Hana Berger Moran's mother had stayed alive by disguising her growing belly.

"She was a spitfire, and so adamant to bring this child to life," said Hana, who now lives in California.

"She managed to conceal her pregnancy. Her rags were big and she told me she always wore a big black coat."

Hana was born as her mother was being transported from *Freiberg* sub-camp.

"The other women prisoners at *Freiberg* had sewn two items for me from their rags," Hana said.

"One was a little shirt and another was a little hat. The clothes bore the crest of the *Freiberg* camp and are now in the Washington Holocaust Museum."

Eva only found out about Hana in 2009, when she read her story in a newsletter published by the Veterans' Association of the American 11th Armored Division – the unit that liberated *Mauthausen*.

Within 24 hours the pair were sharing their stories by email, and began making plans to travel together to a *Mauthausen* memorial service to be held in spring 2010.

## MARK'S STORY

Having spent years trying to find out more about other survivors from *Mauthausen*, Mark Olsky eventually gave up.

"I knew the information was out there, but this was before the Internet was invented and it was very difficult."

Originally from Poland, Mark's mother was being transported on the same train from *Freiberg* to *Mauthausen* when Mark was born.

"My mother actually went into labor right in the middle of one of those coal cars," he said.

"The train was stopped at the time, in the middle of Czechoslovakia, and some of the locals brought the prisoners some food."

Years later, Mark's own son decided to take up the search for more information about his family history.

Again, he came across the miraculous stories of Eva and Hana on the army veterans' website.

"It was so similar, I could not believe it when he told me," said Mark.

He quickly got in touch and the three Holocaust babies met for the first time at the *Mauthausen* memorial in 2010.

## HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

On 27 January 2010 Eva, Hana, and Mark told their remarkable stories at a Holocaust Memorial Day event at Cambridge's Guildhall. Eva's mother Anka was in the audience.

"Having been brought up as an only child I am so delighted, because I call these people my brother and sister," Hana said.

"We feel such a sense of togetherness. Like a family."



*KZ Mauthausen-Gusen* was liberated days after the babies' births.

"I am amazed that we survived and I continue to live my life as best as I can, and to fill those shoes that are so empty. Every day is a promise."

Mark agreed: "Even though it goes back 65 years, it feels like I've found a whole new family," he said.

However, the fact that the three of them and their mothers had survived was tinged with sadness, he said.

"I'm hesitant to say I feel good about the fact that we survived, because it just happens to have been less bad for us.

"There are so many more who didn't make it. So many who were unlucky and for no good reason were killed in the war."

Both Hana and Mark have now returned to the United States, but the three will continue to talk, to email, and to share their stories so that future generations never forget about the Holocaust.

"I think it's very important to remember all those thousands and thousands of people who died, who were killed," said Eva.

"And especially all those thousands who have never had one single person remember them because all of their families, and their communities, were destroyed.

"It's my duty to tell that story."

# RESTORING POLAND'S JEWISH PAST

BY NOAH KLIEGER, YNETNEWS.COM

Sixty-five years after Jewish cemeteries were demolished by the Nazis, they are now being restored and renovated by the unlikelyst of volunteers - Polish inmates.

Hundreds of prisoners from some 50 Polish jails have been spending the last few months renovating and performing restoration work on Jewish cemeteries as part of a special and unprecedented collaboration between Israel's Prison Service and the Polish prison service. More prisons are scheduled to join the project in the future.

It should be noted that the prisoners participating in the project have volunteered to do so after learning of its significance from their wardens.

The project was first conceived in 2005 when Israeli and Polish prison service representatives met during an international conference and decided to cooperate in various fields.

The Polish representatives later told their Israeli counterparts that the warden of a prison in *Lublin* had initiated the renovation of a local Jewish cemetery and that dozens of prisoners volunteered to take part in the effort. The Israelis were also told that the plan had been coordinated with Poland's chief rabbi and the Director of Poland's Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage, Monika Krawczyk.

The Israeli Prison Service officers immediately saw the project's huge potential and shortly thereafter made the offer to their Polish counterparts to turn the initiative into a national project.

Last November a special ceremony was held marking the completion of the first



Jewish cemetery in Warsaw.

stage of the unique collaboration in the Polish city of *Radom*. A monument built by the Polish prisoners using old Jewish tombstones was unveiled.

An interesting story lies behind these tombstones. During the German occupation, a Polish tombstone maker decided to move 70 gravestones from the local Jewish cemetery to a warehouse near his house. Choosing the most extravagant headstones, he planned on selling them when the

time came. In doing so, he in fact saved them.

The Germans used the thousands of tombstones that remained in the cemetery to build a runway for their fighter jets and

to pave a road from the city to the airport. After the war, the Communist regime prohibited citizens from holding on to items of historical value, thus preventing the Polish tombstone maker from selling his treasure.

The tombstones were discovered only decades later when Haim Kintzler, chairman of the *Radom* Jews association, visited his hometown and learned of the cemetery's sad fate. When he discovered the hidden tombstones, he recruited the help of the mayor of *Radom* and together they convinced the tombstone maker's sons to return them to the municipality, which promised to feature them in a special new museum.

It took Kintzler 13 years to realize his plan and showcase the tombstones. While the municipality could not afford to keep its promise, a solution was found with the help of the organizers of the Polish cemeteries renovation project. It was decided that a monument featuring the tombstones would be set up to mark the special project.

# SURVIVORS' CORNER

## HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR BELIEVES IN FATE

BY SEANA K. MAGEE, KYODO NEWS

Holocaust survivor Samuil Manski believes strongly in fate, having been in the right place at the right time after fleeing Europe with a visa granted by a Japanese diplomat before ending up in Boston.

"How can you not believe in fate?" asked Manski, 90, during a recent interview. "I don't fight fate."

He vividly recalls what happened almost 70 years ago and hopes the world will not forget what he endured.

For almost 1½ years he journeyed away from his native Poland, living in Lithuania, traversing the Soviet Union, entering Japan and winding up in Massachusetts, living with his father.

A lifesaving piece of paper issued by Chiune Sugihara, at the time Japan's deputy consul general in Lithuania, is what gave him that chance.

Manski, his mother, brother, and sister and three relatives were among upward of 6,000 Jews granted visas by the diplomat, reportedly in defiance of Tokyo's orders.

"At that time he (Sugihara) had to be in that particular place and I had to be in that particular place at the same time and the conditions were ripe for something like this," Manski said. "To me it matters that I am here. . . . It is a part of fate."

The Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact meant his eastern hometown of *Lida* fell under Soviet control.

"The fact that *Lida* was occupied by the Russians rather than by the Germans saved my life," he wrote in *With God's Help*, a book he penned at the urging of his family and which was published in 1990.

The Polish native never saw a Nazi, but they later killed his grandmother, grandfather and other relatives after he fled.

"When you get an opportunity, you take it," Manski recalled of his New Year's Eve escape into neighboring Lithuania in 1939.

Because of work with the Soviet military, he knew when to cross the border. Fearing he could be shot for desertion, he got a doctor's note after feigning illness by smoking and standing near a fireplace.

Manski, his cousin, and another girl slipped into Lithuania but were caught and held until bribes won their freedom.

Once safely in the Lithuanian town of *Ejszyski* with relatives, they secured fake papers to remain there. As the year wore on the Soviets swallowed up the country.

So when rumors circulated that a Japanese diplomat was handing out transit visas to travel through Japan to *Curaçao*, an island in the south Caribbean Sea, his mother jumped at the chance.

On August 9, 1940, Manski received his visa. His oldest son, Chuck, now proudly displays the passport and the handwritten visa at his Chicago home.

"To this day, I am not certain why the Japanese took the trouble to issue visas to us Jewish refugees," the elder Manski wrote. "Whatever the reason, again God was with us."

With their visas, the family set off for Japan in January the following year but had to leave their 82-year-old grandmother behind.

In the dead of winter they boarded the Trans-Siberian Railway to begin the lengthy ride to *Vladivostok*, where they took a "cattle boat" for western Japan.

On the second day of the "rough" crossing, they landed in *Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture*, on February 24. "My first impression was of a fairyland, with small houses, flowers, clean streets and very polite people," he wrote after setting foot in Japan.

They then headed for *Kobe* to secure visas for the United States.

With time on his hands, the young man often roamed the city. What stood out was that every time he turned around "there were people behind you, showing the way to go."



Holocaust survivor Samuil Manski holds a certificate of the Japanese government's gratitude for years of spreading the story of Chiune Sugihara, a wartime Japanese diplomat in Lithuania who granted lifesaving visas to Jews.

He also remembered periodic rumors sparking fears the Nazis would convince their Japanese allies to send them back to Europe.

On April 30, their documents were finally approved.

Happily, the family boarded the *Heian Maru*, landing in Seattle on May 18. Shortly afterward they headed for Boston.

Filled with ambition, Manski plunged into his new life, taking classes to improve his English, working part-time, and then graduating from college.

In 1946, he married Estelle, started a family and was well on the road to becoming a successful hosiery salesman.

As life moved on and his three sons grew up, he appreciated how the visa had brought him a new life. Yet he did not think about Sugihara, whom he had never met in person, until a *Boston Globe* reporter interviewed him by phone in the early 1990s.

"So all of a sudden a bell starts ringing in my head," the former salesman said, adding that the idea to build Sugihara a memorial at Temple Emeth near Boston "began to cook."

Finally, after he collected enough money, the memorial was unveiled April 30, 2000.

Sugihara's image is etched on black marble with a passage from Samuel 17:10 describing him in English, Hebrew and Japanese as a "valiant man whose heart is like that of a lion."

On top of tirelessly working with Israeli and Japanese diplomats to keep the story alive, Manski has spent time in local schools as well, often working with other younger temple members.

Despite an unbridled enthusiasm, his declining health has prevented him from making more appearances. There are tentative plans, however, to link him with college students via webcasts.

For his hard work Manski was awarded a certificate of appreciation last July by Japan's consul general in Boston.

"Mr. Manski takes it as his role to relay the Sugihara story to the next generation," said Masaru Tsuji, former Boston consul general who is now in Japan.

As a lightning rod for preserving the past, Manski also seems determined to rightly honor individuals such as Sugihara.

## LAST TWO SURVIVORS OF TREBLINKA DEVOTE LAST YEARS TO MEMORY OF VICTIMS

BY ARON HELLER, AP

They are believed to be the last two survivors of the most chillingly efficient killing machine of the Nazi Holocaust: the *Treblinka* extermination camp in occupied Poland.

Samuel Willenberg and Kalman Taigman, 87-year-old Israelis, are devoting their final years to trying to preserve the memory of the 875,000 people systematically murdered in a one-year killing spree at the height of World War II. Almost all of them were Jews.

Only 67 people are known to have survived the camp, fleeing in a brazen revolt shortly before *Treblinka* was destroyed. Following the recent death of a prominent chronicler, Israel's national Holocaust memorial says the two Israeli men are now the final living link to one of the most notorious death camps in human history.

"The world cannot forget *Treblinka*," said Willenberg. "Soon there will be no one left to tell," added Taigman.

*Treblinka* holds a notorious place in history as perhaps the most vivid example of

the "Final Solution," the Nazi plot to rid Europe of Jews.

Along with the lesser known *Belzec* and *Sobibor* camps, it was designed with the



Samuel Willenberg and Kalman Taigman.

sole intention of exterminating Jews, and *Treblinka* was by far the deadliest. Victims, transported there in cattle cars, were gassed to death almost immediately upon arrival.

Only a select few — mostly young, strong men like Willenberg and Taigman, who were both 20 at the time — were spared an immediate trip to the gas chambers and assigned to maintenance work instead.

On Aug. 2, 1943, a group of Jews stole some weapons, set fire to the camp and headed to the woods. Hundreds fled, but most were shot and killed by Nazi troops in the surrounding mine fields or captured by Polish villagers who returned them to *Treblinka*.

The survivors became the only source of knowledge about *Treblinka*, because the Nazis all but destroyed it in a frantic bid to cover their tracks.

Willenberg said he was shot in the leg as he climbed over bodies piled at the barbed

wire fence and catapulted over. He kept running, ignoring dead friends in his path. He said his blue eyes and "non-Jewish" look allowed him to survive in the countryside before arriving in Warsaw and joining the Polish underground.

Later in life, he took to sculpturing to describe his experiences. His bronze statues reflect what he saw — Jews standing on a train platform, a father removing his son's shoes before entering the gas chambers, a young girl having her head shaved, prisoners removing bodies.

"I live two lives, one is here and now and the other is what happened there," Willenberg said in an interview at his Tel Aviv apartment. "It never leaves me. It stays in my head. It goes with me always."

His two sisters were murdered there. He described his survival as "chance, sheer chance," choking back tears. "It wasn't because of God. He wasn't there. He was on vacation."

In all, the Nazis and their collaborators killed about 6 million Jews during the Holocaust. The death toll at *Treblinka* was second only to Auschwitz — a prison camp

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# AUSCHWITZ SHIFTS FROM MEMORIALIZING TO TEACHING

BY MICHAEL KIMMELMAN,  
THE NEW YORK TIMES

For nearly 60 years, Auschwitz has told its own story, shaped in the aftermath of the Second World War. It now unfolds, unadorned and mostly unexplained, in displays of hair, shoes and other remains of the dead. Past the notorious, mocking gateway, into the brick ranks of the former barracks of the Polish army camp that the Nazis seized and converted into prisons and death chambers, visitors bear witness via this exhibition.



Efforts are under way to update the exhibitions at Auschwitz. Above, Piotr Cywinski, the director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Now those in charge of passing along the legacy of this camp insist that Auschwitz needs an update. Its story needs to be retold, in a different way for a different age.

Partly the change has to do with the simple passage of time, refurbishing an aging display. Partly it's about the pressures of tourism, and partly about the changing of generations. What is the most visited site and the biggest cemetery in Poland for Jews and non-Jews alike, needs to explain itself better, officials here contend.

A proposed new exhibition at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum here, occupying some of the same barracks or blocks, will retain the piled hair and other remains, which by now have become icons, as inextricable from Auschwitz as the crematoria and railway tracks. But the

display will start with an explanatory section on how the camp worked, as a German Nazi bureaucratic institution, a topic now largely absent from the present exhibition, which was devised by survivors during the 1950s.

Back then they wished to erase the memory of their tormentors, as the Nazis had tried to erase them, so they said as little as possible in their exhibition about the Germans who had conceived and run the camp. They focused on mass victimhood but didn't highlight individual stories or testimonials of the sort that have become

commonplace at memorial museums as devices to translate incomprehensible numbers of dead into real people, giving visitors personal stories and characters they can relate to. Those piles, including prostheses and suitcases, also stressed the sheer scale of killing at a time when the world still didn't comprehend, and much of it refused to admit to, what really happened here.

As Marek Zajac, a 31-year-old Polish magazine editor who serves as secretary for the International Auschwitz Council, pointed out: "People who visited after the war already knew what war was, firsthand. They had lived through it. So the story of a single death did not necessarily move them, because they had seen so much death, in their families and in the streets, whereas the scale of death at Auschwitz was shocking."

The new exhibition would go on to describe the process of extermination, leading visitors step by step through what victims experienced, and end with a section on camp life, meaning the "daily dehumanization and attempts to keep one's humanity," said Piotr Cywinski, the bearish, red-bearded 39-year-old Polish director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

"If we succeed we will show for the first time the whole array of human choices that

people faced at Auschwitz," he explained. "Our role is to show the human acts and decisions that took place in extreme situations here — the diversity of thinking and reasoning behind those decisions and their consequences. So, we may pose the question, should a mother give a child to the grandmother and go to selection alone, or take the child with her? This was a real choice, without a good solution, but at Auschwitz you had to make the choice."

A barrack once used for sterilization experiments, one of the few left nearly undisturbed since the war, may be reopened, and a new visitor center, replacing the cramped one in use today, constructed to handle crowds. There will be few bells and whistles, Mr. Cywinski insisted, few if any videos or touch-screens in the main galleries, which would be impractical for masses of people. Nothing must overshadow the evidence of the site itself, he stressed.

"The more we use special effects," he said, "the more we draw attention away from the authenticity of this place, which is unlike any other."

All or nearly all visitors will be shepherded by guides to field questions and keep crowds moving.

That changes to Auschwitz must entail first of all calculating how to move increasingly large masses of people more efficiently, effectively and swiftly through the site is an uncomfortable turn of history lost on no one here. An explosion of mass tourism, dark tourism and education programs in Europe and elsewhere that send students abroad, has tripled the number of visitors to Auschwitz over the last decade. Some 450,000 people visited Auschwitz in 2000. Last year, that number was 1.38 million.

The increase — most obvious during warm months in the long, crawling lines and oceans of visitors pouring into and out of the

narrow barracks onto fleets of buses to Auschwitz II, or *Birkenau*, the vast extermination camp the Nazis built a few miles away — has strained an antique exhibition conceived when not many people came. Today, travel agencies in *Krakow* hawk day-long tours combining Auschwitz with the pic-



Exhibitions of shoes, suitcases and other items taken from those murdered at Auschwitz illustrate the scale of the killing.

turesque *Wieliczka* salt mine, with its rock salt chapel, sculptures and chandeliers.

"We must take into consideration that more and more people just drop by," Mr. Zajac said. "We may not endorse this tourism, but we don't charge admission. This is a cemetery. You don't charge admission to a cemetery."

The gradual passing of survivors has also meant that Auschwitz faces a historical turning point.

"Teenagers now have grandparents born after the war," Mr. Cywinski noted. "This is a very big deal. Your grandparents are your era but your great-grandparents are history."

"The exhibition at Auschwitz no longer fulfills its role, as it used to," he continued. "More or less eight to 10 million people go to such exhibitions around the world today, they cry, they ask why people didn't react more at the time, why there were so few righteous, then they go home, see genocide on television and don't move a finger. They don't ask why they are not righteous themselves."

"To me the whole educational system re-

(Continued on page 15)

## BULGARIAN ATROCITIES DURING WWII

BY MARCIA IKONOMOPOULOS

The Bulgarians were forever singing their praises and distorting history by stating that they "saved their Jews." In 2008 the President of Bulgaria apologized in Israel and acknowledged their complicity in the murder of 11,000 (actual figure was 13,000). The JCC in Manhattan was to show the film "The Optimists" (about the "Righteous" Bulgarians) but canceled the showing after protests from Greek Jews that the panel discussion did not include someone to present the other side of the story...a victory for justice.

In light of the fact that Greece is suing Germany for reparations due to the massacre of Greek Christians, I am going to propose that they do the same against the Bulgarians. Below are some excerpts (and history) demonstrating the brutality of the Bulgarians in the Bulgarian Zone of Occupation in Greece.

The Bulgarian Army entered Greece on 20 April 1941 at the heels of the Wehrmacht and eventually occupied the whole of north-eastern Greece east of the *Strymon* River (eastern Macedonia and western *Thrace*), except for the *Evros* prefecture, at the border with Turkey, which was occupied by the Germans. Unlike Germany and Italy, Bul-

garia officially annexed the occupied territories, which had long been a target of Bulgarian irredentism, on 14 May 1941.

Throughout the Bulgarian zone, Bulgarian policy was that of extermination or expulsion, aiming to forcibly Bulgarize as many Greeks as possible and expel or kill the rest.

A massive campaign was launched right from the start, which saw all Greek officials (mayors, judges, lawyers, and gendarmes) deported. The Bulgarians closed the Greek schools and expelled the teachers, replaced Greek clergymen with priests from Bulgaria, and sharply repressed the use of the Greek language: the names of towns and places were changed to the forms traditional in Bulgarian, and even gravestones bearing Greek inscriptions were defaced.

Large numbers of Greeks were expelled and others were deprived of the right to work by a license system that banned the practice of a trade or profession without permission. Forced labor was introduced, and the authorities confiscated the Greek business property and gave it to Bulgarian colonists. By late 1941, more than 100,000 Greeks had been expelled from the Bulgarian occupation zone. Bulgarian colonists were encouraged to settle in Macedonia by government credits and in-

centives, including houses and land confiscated from the natives.

In this situation, a revolt broke out on 28 September 1941. It started from the city of *Drama* and quickly spread throughout Macedonia. In *Drama*, *Doxato*, *Choristi*, and many other towns and villages, clashes broke out with the occupying forces. On 29 September, Bulgarian troops moved into *Drama* and the other rebellious cities to suppress the uprising. They seized all men between 18 and 45, and executed over three thousand people in *Drama* alone. An estimated 15,000 Greeks were killed by the Bulgarian occupational army during the next few weeks, and in the countryside entire villages were machine-gunned and looted.

The massacres precipitated a mass exodus of Greeks from the Bulgarian into the German occupation zone. Bulgarian reprisals continued after the September revolt, adding to the torrent of refugees. Villages were destroyed for sheltering "partisans" who were in fact only the survivors of villages previously destroyed. The terror and famine became so severe that the Athens government considered plans for evacuating the entire population to German-occupied Greece. The widespread winter famine of 1941, which killed hundreds of thousands in the occupied country, canceled

these plans, leaving the population to endure those conditions for another three years. In May 1943 deportation of Jews from the Bulgarian occupation zone began as well. In the same year the Bulgarian army expanded its zone of control into Central Macedonia under German supervision, although this area was not formally annexed nor administered by Bulgaria.

As a footnote, over 98% of the Jews of the Bulgarian Zone of Occupation in Greece (or, as the Bulgarians liked to call it, "New Bulgaria") died in *Treblinka*, sent there through the complicity of the Bulgarians. The only ones who survived were a handful who had survived slave labor in Bulgaria (most of the men taken by the Bulgarians from "New Bulgaria" to "Old Bulgaria" to work as slave laborers were thrown on the passing trains that held their relatives on their way to *Treblinka*, (accompanied by the laughter of the "righteous" Bulgarians) and some who had fled the Bulgarian Zone of Occupation to the German Zone because the Bulgarian occupiers were harsher than their German counterparts.

Marcia Ikonopoulos is Museum Director of *Kehila Kedosha Janina* and President of the Association of Friends of Greek Jewry.

# YAD VASHEM: IT'S I

## YOUNG LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATES OF THE AMERICAN



Caroline Massel, Chairperson, American Society for Yad Vashem Young Leadership Associates; Miri Ben-Ari, recipient of the Young Leadership Associates Remembrance Award; Jeremy Halpern, Chairperson, American Society for Yad Vashem Young Leadership Associates.

Over 700 people attended the American Society for Yad Vashem Young Leadership Gala at the United Nations Secretariat Building Pavilion in New York City.

This year's Gala honored Miri Ben-Ari with The American Society for Yad Vashem's Young Leadership Associates Remembrance Award on behalf of Holocaust remembrance. The event showcases the work of the Young Leadership Associates, and through this event benefits education programs sponsored by this group.

Ms. Ben-Ari is the CEO and co-founder of Gedenk ("Remember"), a non-profit organization that educates young people about the Holocaust. Ms. Ben-Ari is a Grammy Award-Winning violinist, originally from Israel, who performs with jazz, R & B and hip-hop. She has been recognized as a musical pioneer.

The Young Leadership Associates, a group of dedicated leaders and highly motivated young professionals, support Yad Vashem's efforts to remember the Holocaust and commemorate its victims and survivors through educational programs, social events, and activities.

We would like to thank this year's Gala Co-Chairs, Abbi & Jeremy Halpern, Jeff Weisberg, and the Young Leadership Associates Committee and the Event Committee, for their hard work and dedication in helping to make this year's Gala a success.

The American Society for Yad Vashem would like to thank Michael Zeiger of Admiral Gallery, Astor & Black, Bradford Portraits, Debbie & Michael Doppelt Jewelers, Zie-Childs, Nanette Lapore, Parker Fashion, the Pines family, Pioneers for a Cure, Galvanic Spa, Supersol, Thompson LES Hotel, Diane von Furstenberg Studio, and many others for their generous donations to our auction, which helped to make this year's Gala such a success.



Rebecca Hanus, Event Chair Emeritus; and Jaci Paradis, Co-Chair, 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Young Leadership Associates Gala.



Danielle Hoffer; Ben Hoffer, Member of the Event Steering Committee; and Aaron and Jen Hoffer.



Miri Ben-Ari, recipient of the Young Leadership Associates Remembrance Award, views the Tolkatchev Exhibit on display at the 2011 Young Leadership Associates Gala.



Emily Kaufman, Hannah Jacobson, and Ariel Zborowski.



# IN OUR HANDS NOW

## AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM ANNUAL WINTER GALA

Young Leadership Associates' Annual Gala on Thursday, March 24, 2011 at the Metropolitan

presented the Young Leadership Associates Remembrance Award in recognition of her work as a Young Leadership Associate of the American Society for Yad Vashem. Proceeds from the gala will benefit the American Society for Yad Vashem.

The American Society for Yad Vashem is an organization dedicated to promoting awareness of the Holocaust among young people. It is an organization that has created her own unique sound by a revolutionary fusion of classical style and contemporary music.

Young professionals, are an integral part of the American Society for Yad Vashem. They ensure the continuity of this mission at the American Society for Yad Vashem.

With the help of staff, Jaci Paradis, Barry Levine, and Laurie Kolin, along with members of the Steering Committee, we make this event a success.

We would also like to thank the following sponsors: Tishbi Wines, Lawrence Elbaum, the Halpern family, Rita Hazan, Hotel Roger Williams, MacKenzie Renaissance Hotels, Ari Schottenstein, Debbie & Steven Siegler, Shalom Bombay, Shalom Seasons, Wolf & Lamb, and [www.theMATCHBOOKonline.com](http://www.theMATCHBOOKonline.com) for their generous donations.



Jeremy Halpern, Young Leadership Associates Chairperson and Event Chair; Abbi Halpern, 2011 Young Leadership Associates Gala Event Chair; Miri Ben-Ari, recipient of the Young Leadership Associates Remembrance Award; Elizabeth Mundlak-Zborowski, American Society for Yad Vashem Cultural Director; and Eli Zborowski, Chairman, American Society for Yad Vashem.



Justin Pines; Nicole Pines Lieberman, American Society for Yad Vashem Event Chair Emeritus; and Elliot Pines.





# REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

## FOUR MILLION VICTIMS' NAMES IDENTIFIED

BY LEAH GOLDSTEIN

At the end of December 2010, Alexander Avraham, Director of Yad Vashem's Hall of Names, made an historic announcement: Yad Vashem has now collected two-thirds of the names of all Holocaust victims – four million names.

One of its central missions since its foundation, the recovery of each and every victim's name and personal story has resulted in relentless efforts – with the support of Jewish and other organizations worldwide – to reach a complete account of the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis and their accomplices.

The first endeavors in this colossal task led to the development of Pages of Testimony, one-page questionnaires designed to restore the personal identity of each individual Holocaust victim. Beginning in the 1950s, campaigns have continued throughout the years in Israel and among Jewish communities abroad requesting survivors, family members, or friends to submit Pages of Testimony.

"Pages of Testimony rebuild an individual's identity, beyond a reference on a deportation or camp inmate list," explains Avraham. "Those lists were created during wartime by the Nazis and their collaborators, for their own murderous purposes. It is our moral imperative not to leave the commemoration of our lost brethren to our enemies, who wished to destroy them. Today some 2.2 million of the names we have retrieved come from Pages of Testimony."

In the 1990s, Yad Vashem extended its efforts beyond Pages of Testimony, actively gathering and processing lists of names originating from deportation transports and camp and ghetto records. By organizing and encouraging common workshops and mutual exchanges of data, methodology, and expertise, Yad Vashem became the leading force in this attempt to

assemble all of the available knowledge concerning Shoah victims.

This second track for retrieving the names of Holocaust victims involves "mining" the archival materials in the Yad Vashem Archives for relevant missing data. The Archives house the largest collection of Holocaust documentation in the world: 130 million pages of documentation, 100,000 survivor testimonies, 400,000



2.2 million of the names of the Holocaust victims retrieved by Yad Vashem come from Pages of Testimony.

photographs, and 15,000 Righteous Among the Nations case files, as well as 25,000 artifacts and 12,000 pieces of art. Through intelligent cross-referencing of all of these elements, the life stories of more and more Holocaust victims are being reconstructed daily.

By the year 2000, an intensive computerization project resulted in the creation of a database containing close to 2.5 million names of Shoah victims. In November

2004, the Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names was uploaded to the Yad Vashem website (www.yadvashem.org) with some three million names, offering the general public full and free access to the victims' names in English and in Hebrew, and later also in Russian.

The Names Database is the result of decades of dedicated and painstaking work by Yad Vashem, in close cooperation with an ever-growing number of partners documenting the victims of Nazi persecution in Europe and beyond. Founded on a sophisticated technological platform, advanced search capabilities – including "soundex" (the indexing of words by their pronunciation) and the unique Yad Vashem – devised synonyms search, which allows for multiple spellings and names of the same person or location – were developed to maximize results.

The documents from which the data are extracted are often difficult to decipher, requiring a high degree of expertise in handwriting in various languages. Some 50 Yad Vashem experts trained in names cataloging digitally scan the documents, enter the relevant information and record the names within. The information is then uploaded to the Names Database, allowing online searches to be performed by visitors to the website. "The increasing interest of the global community in the human dimension of the Shoah is most evident on the Internet," adds Avraham.

"More than 10 million visits are registered annually on Yad Vashem's website, from over 200 countries and territories worldwide."

The retrieving of four million names is a significant accomplishment, but this obviously means that one third of the Holocaust victims remain to be identified. While in Western Europe in particular there were often lists kept of the Jews deported, in countries of Eastern Europe and areas of

the former Soviet Union, as well as Greece, much information is still lacking.

"During the last five years we have concentrated our names recovery efforts in areas where most of the names remain unknown," says Avraham. "We have made great progress. In 2005, we knew the names of some 20% of Jews murdered in Ukraine, today we know 35%; in Byelorussia the figure has risen from 23% to 37% today, in Poland (1938 borders) from 35% to 46%, in Hungary from 45% to 65%, and in Greece from 35% to 70%."

The active and urgent efforts to locate these names are being led by Yad Vashem's Shoah Victims' Names Recovery Project, through its ongoing worldwide Pages of Testimony venture, interviewing members of Jewish communities in the FSU and other countries, photographing gravestones, and extracting names from memorial books and synagogue plaques. The Project also collects documents and records from individuals and organizations, and creates new documentation – lists of names from various sources.

"Pages of Testimony and Project campaign material have been widely distributed to Jewish communal venues in Israel, America, Europe, Australia, South America and South Africa, encouraging people to investigate whether or not their loved ones killed during the Shoah are recorded at Yad Vashem," explains Cynthia Wroclawski, Manager of the Names Recovery Project. "The grassroots efforts of local Jewish communities are critical in accessing the millions of additional names that still linger in the memories of survivors or in the lore of their families. Through local outreach campaigns, the Project aims to ensure that no Shoah victim will ever be forgotten."

"No cemeteries, headstones, or traces of life were left to mark the loss of the majority of the six million Holocaust victims," concludes Avraham.

### OFFICIAL HOLOCAUST DAY POSTER SELECTED

A portrait of a Holocaust-era Jewish family covered by a black stain has been chosen as the official poster for 2011 Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Adva Lutatti, 29, won the competition for best poster and was honored by Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev and Minister of Information and Diaspora Yuli Edelstein.

No less than 180 posters designed by 259 artists were submitted to the competition, which was initiated by the Information and Diaspora Ministry and Yad Vashem. The designers were requested to design a poster based on the theme "fragmented memories," integrating belongings, documents, and photos from the Holocaust period.

Lutatti, a graduate of the Open University's Hasifa School for Design, designed a poster that shows an old photograph of a typical family, but with the family's faces covered and nearly invisible behind a black stain. "The poster presents two aspects of obliteration: the obliteration intended by the Nazis, and the obliteration brought on by the passage of time," the judges noted.

"This is expressed in the intentionally faded areas positioned dramatically in the photo. The black stain makes the poster a

perfect representation of what it needs to be – the people are gone, they have faded



(R.-L.) Adva Lutatti with winning poster, Minister Edelstein and Yad Vashem Chairman Shalev.

from the screen. Only fragments remain to tell us of the original."

The winning poster will be distributed in schools, IDF bases, and youth movement centers and by local authorities. It will also be placed in newspaper ads and billboards.

"The goal of the competition was to reflect the visual meaning the new generation gives to Holocaust remembrance," stated Yad Vashem chief Avner Shalev.

The designer, Adva Lutatti, explained that she chose to use a photograph that would be easy to identify with. "The picture creates a mirror image of ourselves, makes us feel like that could have been us."

### TRANSPORTS TO EXTINCTION

#### Launch of the New Shoah Deportation Database

BY LEAH GOLDSTEIN

My Dear,

*In a few minutes from now we shall pull out of the train station and set off toward infinity. Take care of Mother. My husband and I were given the chance to remain because we are workers, but our young son has to go and we don't want him to go on his final journey alone [so] we are going together to our deaths...*

*Our hair has turned white overnight; pray to God to save you from this thing that has happened to us. This is the final message from us...*

From "These are My Last Words: Final Letters from the Holocaust" (Yad Vashem, 2002)

In December 2010, Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research and Information Systems Division completed the first part of a comprehensive and groundbreaking new project: to construct an online database of each and every transport of Jewish victims carried out by the Nazi regime during the Shoah. Using a wide range of documents, including official Nazi documentation, survivor

accounts, and various studies carried out since 1945 on deportations, the "Transports to Extinction: Shoah (Holocaust) Deportation Database" aims to map the entire deportation process in Germany and occupied Europe during the war.

The project focuses on three key features. The first investigates the dates of each transport, its geographical origins, actual route, pick-up points, journey time, and type of vehicle used throughout the entire process. This information provides an accurate and detailed reconstruction of the event, taking into account various incidents that occurred along the way.

The second feature is the bureaucratic apparatus that was responsible for the deportations. This included officials in Nazi security services such as Adolf Eichmann, but also ordinary local policemen and officials who rounded up Jews in villages and towns across the continent. In addition, the project is investigating the degree of collaboration of civil organizations, such as European rail companies, in the deportation process.

The victims themselves make up the third element of the project. Use of updated

(Continued on page 14)

## “NONE IS TOO MANY”: MEMORIAL FOR JEWS TURNED AWAY FROM CANADA IN 1939

BY KATHRYN BLAZE CARLSON,  
NATIONAL POST

Sol Messinger was just six years old when, as one of 907 German Jews aboard the M.S. *St. Louis* seeking a place to escape persecution, the ship was



The “Wheel of Conscience” monument by Daniel Libeskind. The monument, the first of its kind, memorializes Canada’s 1939 refusal of entry to the 900-plus Jewish refugees on board the M.S. *St. Louis*.

shunned first by Cuba and then by America. He remembers sailing along the Florida coast as Miami’s city lights disappeared into the dusky distance.

Canada did not want the refugees traveling on the vessel either — “none is too

many,” an immigration agent would say of Jews such as those aboard the ship in May, 1939. The *St. Louis* was within two days of Halifax Harbour when Ottawa, under pressure from high-ranking politicians within, refused to grant the Jewish families a home.

“Nobody wanted us,” Dr. Messinger, now 78 and a retired physician in Buffalo, N.Y., said in an interview with the *National Post*. “We were Jews, we were expendable ... It was terrible — terrible, terrible — of Canada and the United States, of all countries, to not let us in.”

Turned away thrice, the ship had no choice but to journey toward an uncertain fate in Belgium. Dr. Messinger, then just a boy, would celebrate his seventh birthday en route back to the very land his parents feared spelled disaster for their only son.

Dr. Messinger said the German crew had treated the passengers “as human beings,” even offering them “big breakfasts, and ice cream with mini-umbrellas pegged in the scoop.” Canada, though, would offer the family nothing.

He and his parents managed to survive the Holocaust — thanks to a “series of miracles,” he said — but 254 of the Jews turned away by the Mackenzie King government would not.

More than 70 years later, at Halifax’s Pier 21 — the very place where the ship would have docked had Canada welcomed it — a memorial designed by renowned architect Daniel Libeskind was unveiled on January 20.

“It’s important to remember the mistakes the country has made,” Dr. Messinger said of the memorial, the first of its kind.

Canada’s mistake nearly cost Dr. Messinger his life: En route to France from Brussels, his mother lay on top of him to block machine-gun fire that threatened to rain from German planes overhead. Then later, just weeks after his family fled southern France for America in 1942, the French rounded up the Jews and sent them to concentration camps.

Dr. Messinger said he appreciates Canada’s gesture in erecting the steel memorial, titled “The Wheel of Conscience,” which is part of a \$500,000 project initiated by the Canadian Jewish Congress and paid for by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

“What brilliant symbolism: the very facility through which these refugees could have entered and found refuge, only to have the door slammed in their face, will now feature an enduring memorial to their memory,” Mr. Libeskind, who was born to Holocaust survivors in Poland and whose projects include the Jewish Museum in Berlin, wrote in the *Ottawa Citizen* last fall.

For Bernie Farber, CEO of the congress, the Wheel culminates a decade of efforts to memorialize what has become known as the Voyage of the Damned.

“On this boat was the world: There were children, the elderly, young men and

women, brides and grooms, teenaged romances, it became a metaphor for life,” said Mr. Farber, whose mother arrived at Pier 21 in 1933. “[The *St. Louis*] was the



Sol Messinger, centre, fled Hamburg, Germany, with his parents in the hopes of landing in Cuba in 1939.

microcosm of the macrocosm of what was the *Shoah*.”

Mr. Farber explained that the congress has never asked Ottawa to apologize for the wrongdoings of those in power at the time — most notably Frederick Charles Blair, the head of immigration, and Vincent Massey, Canada’s high commissioner to Great Britain (and later Governor General) who, according to the 1982 book *None Is Too Many*, “worked through External Affairs to keep Jews out of Canada.”

“Within [the Jewish] tradition it is not really permissible to demand apologies,” Mr. Farber said. “It is more accepted for people to do *T’shuva*, which means to make amends.”

## MY COUSIN BETTY

My cousin Betty Berlin was born Bluma Basiskaus in 1928 in the Lithuanian village of *Daug*, now called *Daugas*. My grandmother Leah (Sklarsky) Quint, through whom I am related to Betty, also lived in *Daug* with her husband and 12 children. In the summer of 2004, I visited Betty at her home in Brookline, Massachusetts. While there I asked if she remembered my oldest uncle, Yakov Quint, who was living in *Daug* at the time the Germans with their *Einsatzgruppen* occupied the village in 1941. After a moment, in an emotional tone she said that she remembered “Yankel” and his family very well, adding that it was almost certain that they all met the same fate as six million other European Jews. Then, without any further questions from me, she spent the better part of the next two hours telling of her experiences during that eventful time in Jewish history.

Reports from Poland on the treatment of Jews by the Germans began reaching *Daug* in the period of 1939–1940. Betty said that most people did not believe what they heard and chose to remain in Lithuania hoping for the best. Besides, there were very few places that they could go, since the Russians had closed their border and traveling in any other direction would put them into German-occupied territory. A few lucky people obtained exit visas from the Japanese consul in Vilna and made their way to the Far East, where they survived the war. On June 22, 1941, Germany declared war on the Soviet Union; the German army entered Lithuania and immediately began rounding up Jews with the full cooperation of the local authorities.

That summer the village of *Daug* was occupied and the roundup of Jews began. All that were arrested were taken to the forest

and summarily executed, very likely including my uncle Yaakov, his wife and their children. In anticipation of the occupation, cousin Betty and her parents, sister, and younger brother fled to a nearby farm and hid in a barn. After several days with no food, her brother left the barn to find something to eat. From a crack in the barn wall, Betty saw her brother being captured and led away. That was the last they saw of him.

Shortly afterward, the police came looking for the rest of the family and they were also arrested. (Possibly they got the information from the boy through torture.) By then the summary executions had stopped and so they were spared. Betty’s father knew the police chief from before the war, and he was able to bribe him to send them to the Vilna ghetto, where many Jews were being held while their fate was being determined. During their confinement in the *Daug* police station, they noticed messages left on the cell walls by recent prisoners. One of the messages was from her brother to his family, saying, “You may end up here also. But I will never see you. Soon they are going to kill me.”

The time they spent in the Vilna ghetto was a period of unbelievable horror. Acts of barbarism were frequent and life was one nightmare after another. The guards would build bonfires in the square and throw Jewish babies into the flames while forcing the mothers to dance around the fires. Eventually, Betty, her younger sister Riva, and their mother Michla were sent to Latvia as slave laborers in an aircraft factory. They lied about Riva’s age since she was 11; children under 12 were put to death, as were the elderly, since they were of no use to the Nazis. Her father, Avraham, was sent to work in a factory in Poland.

Life in the factory between 1942 and 1944 was only slightly better than the ghetto. Food rations were barely enough to stay alive if you were a strong person. The weak never made it. Just to maintain discipline, every day the guards would randomly select one or two prisoners, take them outside, and execute them. When the tide of the war began to turn and the Russian army was moving westward, Betty, Riva, and Michla were transported to Auschwitz for “the Final Solution”.

The Auschwitz main camp, the *Birkenau* death camp and the *Monowitz* labor camp were liberated by soldiers of the Soviet Union under the command of Marshal Koniev, on January 27, 1945. Betty did not say much about the months in Auschwitz prior to their liberation, and I did not ask. However, she did tell about the hours just preceding the arrival of the Russians, when they could hear the sound of guns in the distance. The guards were quickly lining up prisoners for transport further west, and she, her sister, and their mother were among them. Suddenly, a quiet descended on the camp, and when they looked around, the guards and their dogs were gone. The gates were open, and many ran out and dispersed into the surrounding countryside. After a while, Betty’s group came upon a solitary farmhouse in the dead of night.

A woman came to the door but refused to let them in, so they forced their way in and spent the night there. In the morning they looked out and saw a column of Russian soldiers coming down the road. They were dressed in white winter combat uniforms and were led by an officer with a sword on horseback. They left the house and ran out to meet the officer, who by a stroke of good fortune turned out to be

Jewish. He warned them not to stay outside, as the locals were killing any Jews found on the street even though the Germans were long gone. He urged them to stay in the house and he would send someone to lead them to safety.

In a day or so, a member of the Jewish Brigade, a unit in the British Army, arrived unofficially and started out with this band of survivors on a trek from Poland to Italy. There they were assigned to one of the many camps in the British zone of occupation that had been set up to house those that had survived the Holocaust. Life was relatively good in this camp, and while there they were reunited with Avraham, their father. He had been badly injured in an Allied air raid while working in a factory in Poland but was now fully recovered. Twice while in Italy the family tried to immigrate to Palestine, and twice the British authorities turned them back.

At this point they made contact with our family in the Boston area, who helped them to come to the United States. They settled in Brookline and changed their name to Bass. Avraham found employment as a janitor and Betty was hired by my father as a seamstress in his upholstery shop. That is where I met Betty, and was quite amazed at seeing a Jew who spoke fluent Italian as well as Yiddish, and had many of the mannerisms of the first-generation Italians that I knew. They saved every penny they could and began buying real estate, eventually becoming prosperous and again proving that America is a land of opportunity for all who are willing to work.

Betty died of a heart attack in 2007 while at a family celebration. Her daughters Annette and Jackie and several grandchildren survive her.

Submitted by our reader Sumner Burstein.

**UKRAINE GIVES YAD VASHEM ACCESS TO HOLOCAUST-ERA ARCHIVES**

In a modest ceremony, with no media presence, a trailblazing agreement was signed last month between Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Authority and the archives of the Ukrainian KGB. The agreement is expected to upgrade historical research on the fate of hundreds of thousands of Jews who were persecuted and murdered during the Holocaust in the



A German soldier being received by Soviet Ukrainian women, 1941.

Soviet Union. The Ukrainian security services will supply Yad Vashem with invaluable World War II documents, including lists of deported and murdered Jews, the minutes of meetings held by officials of the Ukrainian security forces following the liberation of the concentration and death camps, and information on the trials of those involved in killing Jews.

"This is a real breakthrough; it is a major event of outstanding importance," Avner Shalev, chairman of the Yad Vashem directorate, told Haaretz.

In the next few months, the institution's researchers will visit the archives in Kiev to begin photocopying documents. Afterward, back in Jerusalem, they will catalog and process them, in an attempt to identify as many names as possible of Jewish Holocaust victims. These names will be added to Yad Vashem's database, which still lacks the names of some two million Jewish victims, most of them from Eastern Europe. Additionally, Yad Vashem is hopeful that the new documents will enable Holocaust researchers to retell the personal histories of other victims who up until now were identified only by a name.

**MEMORIES AFTER MY DEATH**

(Continued from page 4)

opening up with accounts of their trying experience, and the native Israelis commenced identifying with them. Tomi wisely stresses that in addition to speaking of the six million victims, we should also be cognizant of the survivors whose world as they knew it was lost. Another lesson; survivors like Tomi's mom were not aware that cultured people are capable of horrific crimes.

The late Congressman Tom Lantos, who chaired the Foreign Affairs Committee, and Tomi were in the Budapest ghetto, together looking for food. Their friendship continued, and when Tomi became an Israeli government minister, Tom, whose name was Tomislav Lantosh, came to Jerusalem to congratulate him on behalf of the United States. What an incredible saga of two persecuted children who were destined for prominence in their respective countries, even as Tomi rightly bemoans the fate of so many Jewish children in the Shoah that the world cruelly neglected.

Tomi, prior to working for *Maariv*, was with the Israeli Hungarian newspaper *Oykelet*, where he first encountered the controversial figure of Dr. Israel Kastner, who was head of the committee to save Hungarian Jewry, and as such negotiated with Eichmann and other high Nazi officials. Dr. Kastner was able to save one

The first-ever Jerusalem Marathon took place on Friday, March 25. Over 10,000 runners from 40 countries worldwide stepped off from the Knesset at seven in the morning. They ended the run at Sacher Park. The excitement and adrenaline that filled the air were palpable.

In the spirit of "firsts," a first-time joint project by The American Society for Yad Vashem and The Blue Card, an organization that helps needy Holocaust survivors in the U.S., formed a team of runners that participated in the marathon to raise funds and awareness for both organizations.

Undeterred by a terror attack that killed one woman and wounded 39 people on Wednesday afternoon when a bag exploded next to a bus stop across the street from the Jerusalem International Convention Center (Binyanie Ha'uma), the excited participants, numbers pinned to their chests, lined up at the starting point to begin the challenging course.

"Our answer to the murderous terrorists is that we will never stop running," Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat said at the Marathon's gala dinner on Wednesday night. "Jerusalem doesn't stop and won't stop. The real Jerusalem will be showcased in the marathon. A peaceful, happy and healthy city which is more beautiful than ever." Mayor Barkat, an avid runner himself, ran the half marathon.

The team consisted of 10 runners from all over the United States. The team captains were Gabi Hamani, Deputy VP of Bank Hapoalim's New York Branches, and Marshall Huebner, a prominent attorney at the firm of Davis Polk & Wardwell LLC in New York. Both Marshall and Gabi, a Sabra, said running in this marathon was a formidable challenge due to the hilly terrain of the Old City; however, it was an inspiring and unforgettable experience.

The team members were given a privately guided tour and special reception at Yad Vashem. They visited the world-famous Holocaust History Museum, and several other important memorial sites on the Yad Vashem campus. Their visit was covered by JLTV (Jewish Life TV) and, along with coverage of the marathon itself, will be made into a one hour special to be broadcast to thousands of homes in the U.S.

**RUNNING – REMEMBERING – CARING**

*The First Jerusalem Marathon*



Team co-captain Gabi Hamani addresses participants at reception.



Participants in the Hall of Names at Yad Vashem.



Marathon participants in the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem.

**SURVIVAL AND RESISTANCE**

(Continued from page 1)

baby and raised by a Polish family, and for part of her life believed these were her natural parents.

"In my case, after my father was murdered, my mother, my brother, my sister, and I were saved by righteous people who hid us for two years at a grave peril to their own lives. Each minute of each day was fraught with fear of being discovered. Fear was part of daily existence.

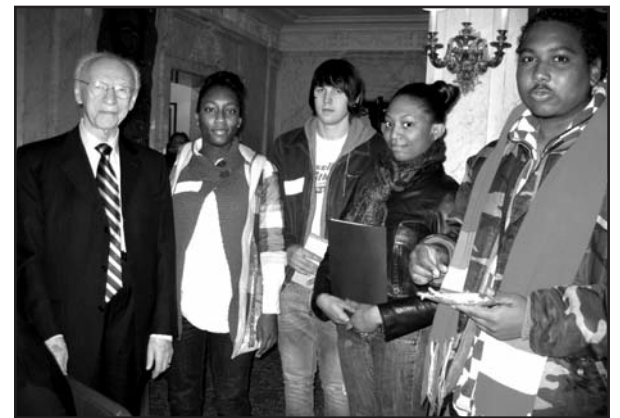
"The people who saved us, whether the family who raised Elizabeth or those who hid my family, were exceptional; it was not the normal and prevailing behavior towards Jews. For their compassion and courage they were declared 'Righteous Among the Nations' by Yad Vashem. If not for them, we would not be here today.

"In looking back we can say that survivors, as well as the righteous who helped people survive, and those who actively fought in countless ways against the evil forces of that time were all resisters.

"Studying the Holocaust is important to students today in a world of growing Holo-

caust denial and anti-Semitism and will enable young men and women to think about the responsibilities they have as individuals when confronted with prejudice and intolerance.

"The aim of the American Society for Yad Vashem hosting these education conferences is to transmit the lessons of this



Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, with a group of conference attendees.

historical event to present and future generations. Teaching about the Holocaust in an age-appropriate and historically accurate manner will promote greater sensitivity and understanding to reduce hatred, intolerance, and prejudice, prevalent in today's society."

*Israel Zoberman is spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach.*

## OUTRAGE AT GROWING TRADE IN HOLOCAUST ARTIFACTS

BY ALLAN HALL, MAIL ONLINE

A thriving trade in Holocaust artifacts from the millions of Jews killed by the Nazis is outraging Jewish groups worldwide.

Internet sales of the yellow stars Jews were forced to wear, dolls allegedly cuddled by children in death camps like Auschwitz and the paper money used in ghettos in Poland are part of the latest craze for millenia collectors.

Recently, a curiosity shop in Montreal, Canada, was condemned by Jewish groups for selling a bar of soap allegedly made from the fat of Holocaust victims.

The beige bar of soap, inscribed with a swastika, was displayed in a glass case with a card that said "Poland 1940."

The store owner, Abraham Botines — himself Jewish — claimed the soap was "made out of people... the fat of people" and said he believed it was important to display and sell such items to "remember the Holocaust."

Alice Herscovitch, director of Montreal's Holocaust Centre, said: "The sale of objects which glorify Nazis and hatred, to me, do nothing."

"They certainly don't help us remember. This is disgusting."

"These Holocaust items, they should not be out there in a promotional, sales kind of way."

The bar of soap — which is likely to be a fake, as postwar research showed the Nazis did not make soap from death camp victims — is one of thousands of sought-after Holocaust-related items for collectors.

Concerns have been raised that the items could be falling into the hands of right-wing fanatics.

In December of last year, a neo-Nazi from Sweden organized the theft of the



This doll allegedly from a Jewish child at *Buchenwald* concentration camp is on sale for around \$2,500.

"Work Sets You Free" sign above the gates of Auschwitz, where 1.2 million Jews were gassed during World War II. The sign was later recovered.

The Jewish Memory website, based in the U.S., said it collects from Germany, Poland, and other European countries to offer Holocaust artifacts for sale.

It states: "Until now there is no place where there are gathered different samples of badges, armbands, uniforms, patches worn during World War II in concentration camps and Jewish ghettos."

"If you have some items of that period please do not hesitate to send us pictures and description of the items you have."

"A very sad reminder of a very sad time, but nevertheless a real piece of Jewish history to teach your children or for the avid collector of these items."

"The items from this period of history help people to remember those horrible times and never repeat them again."

The site currently has an "extremely rare Jewish Holocaust wood doll from concentration camp Auschwitz" for sale at \$2,500.

It also offers a pair of wooden clogs allegedly worn by a prisoner at the *Buchenwald* concentration camp in Germany for \$5,000 (£3,400), several cloth yellow stars, and another wooden doll allegedly from a child at *Buchenwald*.

Another website, Historama, operates out of Israel and currently offers ghetto work permits, arrest warrants, and money. Most of the ghetto Jews in occupied Poland were killed.

Dr David Silberklang, of the Yad Vashem Holocaust center in Israel, said: "It's an indignity to the people who were killed and to the event."

"This is not a commercial event. It's an event that affected all of humanity in the most horrible way — changed history in the most radical way."

"And I think that there's something, kind of cheapens the memory of all that, the significance, by turning it to something commercial."

## UKRAINE UNVEILS NAZI RECORDS ON LOOTING

Ukraine made public records chronicling Nazi looting from Holocaust victims across Europe, in an online release that a prominent reparations group says could help trace stolen works of art to their rightful owners.

Ukraine's State Archives posted some 140,000 pages of documents from the Kiev headquarters of Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi minister in charge of occupied Soviet territories. The records cover Nazi looting from 1940 to 1944 in Belgium, northern France, the Netherlands, Italy, Yugoslavia, and the occupied Soviet territories, and relate to plunder from Jewish communal and private collections, Soviet museums, libraries, and other sources.

"Sixty-five years after the end of the war, our knowledge of the extent of Nazi plunder is still incomplete," Julius Berman, chairman of the New York-based Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, said in a statement.

"With the publication of these records, we can help facilitate rightful restitution of looted objects and fill in the gaps in this important piece of history," he said.

The documents are currently available only through a Russian-language search engine. There are plans to translate the website into Ukrainian, German, and English, Wesley A. Fisher, the director of research with the Claims Conference, said.

The Ukrainian collection is the largest stockpile of Rosenberg's records, which were scattered after the war, and are also stored in 29 locations in nine countries, including the Federal Archives of Germany and the U.S. National Archives. By providing online access to the Nazi files, Ukraine's State Archives have joined an international project to post records related to the looted cultural property that already includes state archives in the United States, Germany, Britain, and France.

## THERE IS A MIRROR IN MY HEART: REFLECTIONS ON A RIGHTEOUS GRANDFATHER

A Special Installation by Sebastian Mendes

"I could not have acted otherwise, and I therefore accept all that has befallen me with love."

Aristides de Sousa Mendes

On February 17, 2011, over 100 people attended a special installation and a reception for the opening of the above exhibit, at the Yeshiva University Museum in New York City.

The project was jointly sponsored by the Young Leadership Associates of the American Society for Yad Vashem and the Yeshiva University Museum. Our thanks to Ben Hoffer, YLA Event Chairperson, and Jeremy & Abbi Halpern, and Caroline Massel, Chairpersons of the YLA, for their leadership and support of this project. The Young Leadership Associates of the American Society for Yad Vashem include many Third Generation young professionals who are dedicated to the Society's mission and work tirelessly on behalf of remembrance and Holocaust education.

The exhibition is inspired by one of the greatest rescue acts of the Holocaust, performed by the artist's Portuguese grandfather, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, who saved tens of thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish refugees from the Nazis in the first year of WWII. Though de Sousa Mendes was posthumously named one of the "Righteous Among the Nations" by Yad

Vashem and celebrated as his native country's "greatest hero of the twentieth century," his story is little known among the general population. Through this multimedia exhibition, a large and varied audience may learn about one of the most heroic and righteous individual acts of the twentieth century and be inspired by a grand-



Sebastian Mendes at work.

son's effort to echo and pay tribute to his grandfather's legacy through art.

The project offers a personal artistic response to the events of June 1940, when de Sousa Mendes, then serving as the Portuguese Consul General in Bordeaux, France, acted against the explicit orders of his government and issued handwritten transit visas to thousands of refugees. "There Is a Mirror in My Heart,"

which opened in January 2011, gives form to this act of heroism through the universal language of visual art. Created by Sebastian Mendes, de Sousa Mendes's grandson, the project also expresses the human need to understand, honor, and reflect on family history. The remarkable actions taken by the elder Mendes, a devout Catholic ultimately cost him his job, his professional titles, and his family's livelihood. Sebastian Mendes's lifelong fascination with the actions taken by his grandfather and their impact on countless lives has shaped the concept and content of this project — a feature of the exhibition and performance that will resonate among visitors of all religions. Mr. Mendes acts as a personal guide throughout the exhibit, explaining his inspiration for each of the pieces he created.

Sebastian Mendes, a distinguished artist working in the north-west United States, is an

Associate Professor at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington. He is currently Yeshiva University Museum's Artist in Residence, and a Visiting Professor at Yeshiva University's Stern College for Women.

"There Is a Mirror in My Heart" is open through July 24th at the Yeshiva University Museum, located at the Center for Jewish History at 15 West 16th Street.

## LEGACY OF LIFE: A MEMOIR OF THE HOLOCAUST

(Continued from page 4)

food — a priceless commodity in the labor camps. For that matter, German civilians Sachs worked for from time to time might surreptitiously leave some food for him. All of this mattered when it came to survival.

In 1945, at nineteen years of age, Sachs was liberated by the Russians. Not surprisingly, like many other survivors, he went looking for relatives, particularly his parents. He asked everywhere. He went to displaced persons camps searching for them. Sorrowfully, he came to the realization that they were gone . . .

Thus at nineteen, Sachs went on to make a life for himself . . . courageously, resolutely, and thoughtfully. It is to be admired.

*Legacy of Life* is an absorbing book and a meaningful addition to Holocaust study. It is a book that testifies to the fact that something more than a miracle is possible!

It is no less a testament to the strength of the human spirit to endure, hope, and survive.

It reminds me of what my mother used to say, translated here from the Yiddish: On the one hand, a person is weaker than a fly; on the other hand, a person must be stronger than iron!

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

## EICHMANN TRIAL VETERANS REUNITE

Fifty years after Nazi criminal Adolf Eichmann was brought to justice, the men who captured, investigated and prosecuted the Holocaust mastermind held a rare reunion in the Jerusalem hall where his famous trial took place.



Rafi Eitan.

The 1961 trial, in which Eichmann sat inside a bulletproof glass booth and calmly listened to the testimonies of some who survived his efforts to kill them, was a watershed moment for the young state of Israel.

Until they heard gripping public testimony of Jews who survived extreme torture and deprivation, many Israelis looked down on the survivors as weak victims, at

odds with the macho image of the “new Jew” of Israel. The emotional descriptions of the horrors they survived changed the perception for many and allowed more survivors to go public with their lingering pain.

It also opened Israeli minds to stories of underground Jewish resistance fighters and doomed but courageous ghetto uprisings.

Six million Jews were killed by the German Nazis and their collaborators during World War II, many of them following Eichmann’s blueprint for liquidating the entire Jewish population of Europe.

“This trial told the story of what really happened to the Jewish people. If it weren’t for the trial, people wouldn’t be talking about six million today,” said Menachem Resch, a retired police detective who was on the special task force that questioned Eichmann.

The event brought together an aging fraternity of spies, police detectives, lawyers and witnesses who all played a part in bringing the infamous Nazi leader to trial. The daring agents who captured Eichmann are now well into their 80s and needed assistance climbing the stairs to the stage of the Gerard Behar Center – a Jerusalem auditorium that served as the trial’s venue.

Those who took the stand against Eichmann said their testimony made its mark on history.

“I’m glad I did it so that people will not forget. The memory is very important to the Jewish people,” said Avraham Aviel, 82, who testified about surviving a firing squad before a death pit in Poland. “The trial is a reminder of the past and can serve as an example to prevent tragedies in the future.”

Eichmann, a top deputy of Adolf Hitler, is known as the “architect of the Holocaust” for his role in coordinating the Nazi genocide policy. He attended the Wannsee Conference where Nazi leaders drafted the “Final Solution to the Jewish question.”

After the war, Eichmann escaped to Argentina. In May 1960, after extensive surveillance, Israeli Mossad agents nabbed him there.

Rafi Eitan, the head of the operation, recounted how he and fellow agents shoved Eichmann into a car and spirited him to a safe house. In the back seat of the car, Eitan searched Eichmann’s body for distinctive SS scars on his arm and stomach. “And once I felt it I was convinced. This is the man – we got Eichmann,” he said during a panel discussion at the reunion.

The team waited in Argentina for six days before an El Al plane whisked Eichmann to Israel.

Avraham Shalom, later a Shin Bet security service chief, was also part of the capture team. He said Eichmann was polite and calm.

“To think that this was a man who treated humans like nails or pieces of stone was

unexplainable. It is still inexplicable....” he said, his voice choking with emotion.

Eichmann was found guilty on 15 criminal charges, including crimes against humanity and crimes against the Jewish people. He was hanged the following year



Gabriel Bach.

at an Israeli prison, the only time Israel has carried out a death sentence.

Gabriel Bach, who later became a Supreme Court justice, was the deputy prosecutor in the case. He said he met Eichmann after reading the autobiography of Hitler deputy Rudolf Hess, who described how Eichmann chastised him for hesitating to order the shooting of 1,000 Jewish children. Eichmann explained that there was no point in killing the adults and sparing children who could repopulate the race in the future.

“Obviously, it was not easy to remain calm in the face of such a man,” Bach recalled.

## LAST TWO SURVIVORS OF TREBLINKA DEVOTE LAST YEARS TO MEMORY OF VICTIMS

(Continued from page 6)

where more than a million people died in gas chambers or from starvation, disease and forced labor.

Taigman said he recalls the uprising vividly, and that resisting the Germans was a “dream” for the prisoners.

He entered *Treblinka* holding the hand of his mother, who was quickly pulled away from him and murdered. He left watching a Nazi flag burning in the distance from a blaze they had set — a small piece of revenge after nearly a year of torment.

“It was hell, absolutely hell,” said Taigman, who lives in a retirement home south of Tel Aviv. “A normal man cannot imagine how a living person could have lived through it — killers, natural-born killers, who without a trace of remorse just murdered every little thing.”

Taigman, who wandered in the Polish countryside for nearly a year after his escape, said his most lasting memory of *Treblinka* is fellow prisoners who had to remove bodies — often their own relatives — from gas chambers.

*Treblinka* holds such a powerful grip on the Jewish psyche that the will of a recently deceased Holocaust survivor in Israel instructed her children to cremate her body and sprinkle her ashes at the Polish memorial site — so that she could finally be reunited with her relatives who perished there.

After the war, Willenberg and Taigman made their ways to Israel, where they pursued careers and raised families. Willenberg became a surveyor in Israel’s Housing Ministry, while Taigman was an importer. The survivors have maintained their special connection, meeting each other often over the years.

David Silberklang, a senior historian at Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, said that in contrast to other camps where Jews were also used for industrial labor, *Treblinka* truly represented the essence of the Nazi Final Solution.

“*Treblinka* had nothing, just killing, and they almost finished the job. These camps left us almost nothing,” he said.

Without the survivors, he said, “it would just be a black hole, we would know nothing. With them, we know quite a lot,” he said.

One of the men most responsible for documenting the atrocities was Eliahu Rosenberg, who was tasked with removing bodies from gas chambers and dumping them into giant pits. He passed away in September 2010, but before his death recounted his experiences in a video testimony to Yad Vashem.

“It poisoned, choked people within 25 minutes, all would suffocate. It was terrible to hear the screaming of the women and the children. They cried: ‘Mama!’ ‘Tata!’ (Dad)” but in a few minutes they choked to death,” he said.

“The crematoriums were train rails which lay on a concrete base. On them were wood planks, we called it ‘grills.’ We threw the body parts onto those ‘grills,’ and with a match everything burnt. And we stood there ... and it burned all night, all night long.”

After the revolt, the Nazis attempted to destroy all evidence of their atrocities. The camp structures were destroyed, the ground plowed and planted over. Today, all the remains at the site are a series of concrete slabs representing the train tracks, and mounds of gravel with a memorial of stone tablets representing lost communities.

The two remaining survivors have returned to lead tours of the site. Taigman made the trip just one time, saying it was too painful to go back again, while Willenberg has gone on several occasions.

“There are only two of us left. After we go, there will be nothing,” said Willenberg. “All I will leave behind are my sculptures and, most importantly, my daughter and my grandchildren.”

## TRANSPORTS TO EXTINCTION

(Continued from page 10)

deportation lists along with additional demographic data derived from archival sources enabled the Institute’s researchers to present a socioeconomic profile of the victims, as well as that of the Jewish communities on the eve of their destruction.

The result of the project is an online database accessible from the Yad Vashem website in English and in Hebrew, which provides a broad overview of the deportation practice, as well as detailed information regarding specific transports and/or victims. A unique conglomeration of Yad Vashem resources and databases, including those of the Archives Division, Commemoration and Public Relations Division, Hall of Names and Libraries, the site allows researchers, family members and Holocaust students access to a comprehensive collection of documents, photographs and names relevant to the transports.

“The deportation of the Jews from their homes was a central component, or stage, in the implementation of the Final Solution,” notes Dr. Joel Zisenwine, Director of the Deportations Project. “In their testimonies, many of the survivors relate to the horror that news of an upcoming deportation would engender, and more so, describe in great detail the traumatic experience of the actual transport. We therefore view each transport-deportation as an historical event in and of itself, and not merely a technical process that simply moved Jews from place to place. As such, the new database will provide researchers with a range of testimonies found at Yad Vashem, and will also guide them on to further resources in

order to continue their studies.”

The first stage of the project has reconstructed some 50 transports from Vienna, Austria, between 1939 and the beginning of 1943, the first of which departed for *Nisko*, Poland, in October 1939. For the next four years, some 50,000 Jews were deported from the city. “Vienna was chosen as our first focus because the mechanism of deportation there was developed by the Central Office for Jewish Emigration, established by Eichmann already in the summer of 1938,” explains Zisenwine.

“The Office later became an agency of deportation, which coordinated the confiscation of the Jews’ property, their concen-



Jews board a train during the deportation of the Jewish community of Macedonia, March 1943.

tration in designated areas, and their eventual deportation out of Austria.”

The next stage, already under preparation, will cover the transports from Germany, Bohemia and Moravia (the Protectorate) to *Theresienstadt*. And after that? “The project aims to research deportations from the whole of Europe as well as the Mediterranean basin (*Saloniki*),” says Zisenwine. “For the next few years we are concentrating our efforts on points of departure from central and western Europe, the beginnings of the most traumatic journeys the victims would ever take, whether they ultimately survived or not.”

## AUSCHWITZ SHIFTS FROM MEMORIALIZING TO TEACHING

(Continued from page 7)

garding the Holocaust, which really got under way during the 1990s, served its purpose in terms of supplying facts and information. But there is another level of education, a level of awareness about the meaning of those facts. It's not enough to cry. Empathy is noble, but it's not enough."

This is the theme to which officials here return often. Auschwitz, they say, must find ways to engage young people (some 850,000 students came last year), so they leave feeling what the director called "responsibility to the present."

Exactly how that might be accomplished, if it can be, he admitted remains to be fleshed out in the questions and historical information presented by the exhibition and the tour guides. The very notion that people increasingly see Auschwitz as ancient history, that the site, with its haunted ruins, might no longer speak for itself but needs to be made relevant to a new century — all this reflects a wider change in education and scholarship about the Holocaust, and also the special burden felt by officials at Auschwitz. "Auschwitz is a pillar of postwar Europe," Mr. Cywinski said, "and the key to understanding today."

Each generation has gotten the stories it wants from the site. Under Communism, Auschwitz served as a national memorial to Polish political prisoners, who were the camp's first victims. *Birkenau*, where hundreds of thousands of Jews from Poland, France, Germany, Hungary, the former Soviet Union and elsewhere were murdered, lapsed into neglect, because it didn't fit the narrative.

After the Berlin Wall fell, painful struggles between Roman Catholics and Jews erupted over what was in effect symbolic "ownership" of Auschwitz, as a place of martyrdom and mourning, which led, among other things, to the creation of the international council, a board of advisors under the authority of Poland's prime minister, which includes survivors, museum directors, clergy, scholars, and representatives of Jewish, Roma, and other groups.

The international council could convene as early as June to review the proposed changes to the exhibition; an international competition would follow for a designer, and perhaps by 2015, Mr. Cywinski said, a new exhibition might open. The \$20 million cost, including necessary preservation work on the buildings, would be paid by the Polish government.

Mr. Cywinski is also looking to raise some \$160 million more for an endowment to preserve the whole of Auschwitz and *Birkenau*, which requires millions of dollars a year in conservation. Germany has committed \$81.5 million, Austria \$8 million, and the United States pledged \$15 million, so far.



Flowers for victims of Auschwitz, left in January during ceremonies marking the 66th anniversary of the camp's liberation.

"This may sound boring," Mr. Zajac said, "but I believe tending to this place is a debt to the victims. I sometimes meet students whom I met here years ago, now grown, who say they were changed by their visit, who became responsible people, dedicated to charity, leading ethical lives."

He said many of them feel compelled to return: "They feel ashamed to admit this because it sounds weird, but they miss the place. They need to go back."

"I share this feeling," he continued. "When I am at Auschwitz I start looking at the world and at my own life. I remind myself of what's important, which is so easy to forget. In the kingdom of death you can find the meaning of life. At the biggest cemetery in the world I know what I live for."

## EUROPEAN UNION PROJECT AIMS TO ESTABLISH NETWORK OF HOLOCAUST ARCHIVES

BY NIR HASSON, HAARETZ

David Pastel was a Jew of Polish origin who emigrated to France before World War II, as shown in a number of documents that piece together his fate during the Holocaust. He was caught early in the war and put in an internment camp at *Beaune-la-Rolande*. On June 28, 1942, he was sent to Auschwitz.

He survived the camp but was murdered in January 1945 in a death march. The local priest decided to bury the dead in a mass grave. Because he didn't know their names, he asked his assistant to register the numbers tattooed on their arms. The numbers were later put on gravestones.

A Holocaust researcher interested in documenting Pastel's fate would have to go to four archives in four different countries to collect the information. At the Yad Vashem archive in Jerusalem, a document on which Aharon Pastel, David's son who survived the Holocaust, registered information on his father can be found. There is also a photograph of father and son from before the war.

At Paris' Holocaust museum, researchers will find Pastel's registration card from *Beaune-la-Rolande*. The document expelling him to Auschwitz is at the International Tracing Service at *Bad Arolsen*, Germany, where researchers will also find a photograph of Pastel during a Passover seder at the camp. At the Auschwitz Museum in Poland, the researcher will find the list of the buried, as it was taken down by the priest's assistant.

But now a new European Union project aims to create a unified network of Holocaust archives to make it easier for researchers and the public to find information.

The European Holocaust Research Infrastructure Project was inaugurated in

Brussels. "The nature of the events of the Holocaust is that their documentation is spread all over the world because the Nazis tried to destroy not only the Jews but also the memory of Jews," said the director of the Yad Vashem archive, Dr. Haim Gertner. "Before you could reconstruct what happened, you had to make an enormous effort to collect every piece of information."

In the project are 20 archives and research institutes from 13 countries in Europe and Israel. This includes Yad Vashem, which houses the most important archive containing more than 130 million documents.



A memorial plaque marking the mass grave in Poland.

The European Commission has funded the project to the tune of 7 million euros.

"This is an important and even historic project, especially at a time when there is a struggle over different narratives of memory of the previous century," Yad Vashem chairman Avner Shalev said. "Europe is establishing here that it wishes to see the Holocaust's unique standing in the joint European historical narrative."

The idea is to use technology to preserve and document the *Shoah*. The project aims to create a kind of shared language that will enable the various documents to "talk to each other."

The project will include a database that lists the collections. A specially designed thesaurus will try to overcome the language barrier — so many of the documents are in different languages. A list of 5,000 key words will be translated into all the relevant languages.

## THE WARTIME DIARY OF EDMUND KESSLER

(Continued from page 4)

they are Jews." Attempts to bribe the perpetrators were largely ineffective. When the chief rabbi of the city "proceeds to visit the head of the Ukrainian church with a request for help and intervention," according to Kessler "he is received coolly and indifferently... The Metropolitan does not intend to intervene with the authorities in defense of the Jews." Upon returning to his home, the rabbi was beaten by the militia and dragged to one of the prisons (pp. 36–7).

While the diary goes on to describe many other horrors, the account of the first pogrom in *Lwów* provides crucial insight into the complex, increasingly violent, and ultimately murderous interethnic relations in Eastern Europe, and especially in Eastern Galicia, during the German occupation.

Kessler writes in a detached manner, as if he were observing events from afar, chronicling them rather than being subjected to them. There is an eerie quality to the diary because we know that he was, in fact, right there in the midst of all the blood and gore, an assimilated, middle-class and middle-aged Jewish citizen, who suddenly found himself in hell on earth. For this reason, the poems that follow the diary provide another chilling, and very different,

layer of experience and expression. Here all detachment is gone. Rather than chronicling the events, the poems provide glimpses of psychological agony, ranging from horror at the extent of the destruction to the enforced intimacy of hiding underground in filth and endless fear. This can be seen in the following extracts from two of the poems:

*The ghetto, the Lwow Ghetto, is burning.  
Our people drowning in rivers of blood.*

*Our blood is streaming from the mouths  
and ears of the victims,*

*Blood which the earth has massively absorbed,  
Blood which fertilizes the earth.*

*Golden sheaves of flames rise to the  
skies.*

*The azure blue of the heavens turns red,  
The earth joins with the sky in a sea of  
fire and blood (p. 73).*

*In our cellar hole,*

*In the blackness of existence,*

*We live broken and humiliated,*

*Awaiting rescue. Bodies heaped to-*

*gether, Legs bent,*

*Pale, chalk-white faces,*

*Animals, no longer human.*

*Eyes staring vacantly,*

*We lie in a row, Forced into mutual em-*

*brace...*

*At the brink of human existence,*

*We lead a subterranean life. Because  
Without this shelter Death's choking grip  
awaits us.*

This second poem leads us to the other, apparently contradictory extreme of the book. For Edmund Kessler, his wife, and 22 other Jews were saved from certain murder by the heroic acts of an entire Polish family, who hid and fed them for almost two years. The account of this rescue by Kazimierz Kalwinski, the last remaining son of the family, written over five decades later, is remarkable for its insistence on a detailed reconstruction of the difficulties and hazards of putting up and hiding such a large number of people.

What does this complex account of death and survival in German-occupied *Lwów* tell us about the Holocaust? Most importantly, I would argue, it demonstrates that local conditions largely dictated the manner in which the German genocide of the Jews was perpetrated and experienced. Overviews of the Holocaust tend to focus on the dynamics of organizing a continent-wide genocide by a mighty industrial state with a modern and effective bureaucracy. Studies of Jewish fate in the *Shoah* often examine conditions in the large ghettos, labor camps, or

concentration and extermination camps. Debates about the role of local collaborators, as well as the contentious part played by the Jewish councils and police, veer toward ideological, national, and ethnocentric positions, at times evoking similar prejudices to those that were at work during the event. To be sure, Kessler also makes some bitter statements about the *Judenrat* and Jewish police in *Lwów*, which can be found in many other accounts. But what is crucial in his diary is the degree to which it meticulously reconstructs the transformation of a normal society (though one already greatly disrupted by the previous two years of Soviet rule) into one of savage, unrelenting, and murderous dehumanization and violence, in which all citizens become complicit in one way or another, as victims and perpetrators, losers and winners, often changing roles more than once. And, that this slim volume also contains a no less meticulous account of how one family chose to save a number of very specific Jewish individuals simply out of a sense of shared humanity in the face of a world where such sentiments seemed to have been crushed under the jackboots of the Nazis and their numerous collaborators.



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