

# MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



Vol. 39-No.5

ISSN 0892-1571

May/June 2013 - Iyyar/Sivan 5773

## HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL RACES TO COLLECT NAMES OF VICTIMS

BY ARON HELLER, AP

With a hand on her chest, 82-year-old Rivka Fringeru battled back tears as she reeled off a list of names she has rarely voiced in the past 70 years: her father, Moshe, then her mother, Hava, and finally her two older brothers, Michael and Yisrael.

All perished in the Holocaust after the Harabju family from *Dorohoi*, Romania, was rounded up in 1944 and sent to ghettos and camps. Only Rivka and her brother Marco survived, and like many others, they spent the rest of their lives trying to move on and forget.

Now, Yad Vashem, Israel's national Holocaust memorial and museum, is asking them to remember.

Decades after the Holocaust, experts have documented the names of about 4.2 million of the roughly 6 million Jews who were killed by the Nazis in World War II, and officials are going door to door in a race to record the memories of elderly survivors before their stories are lost forever.

It is a painstaking process, complicated by trauma, attempted cover-ups and limited record-keeping.

The Names Recovery Project has been Yad Vashem's flagship mission in recent years. It's a vigorous campaign to complete a central database of Holocaust victims' names by encouraging survivors to fill out pages of testimony about those they knew who were killed.

The outreach effort has taken on a greater sense of urgency, with volunteers spanning the country to engage the fewer than 200,000 remaining survivors in Israel and etch the names of their dead relatives into the pages of history. Elsewhere — primarily in the United States and the former Soviet Union — testimony also is being collected from those unable to do so online.

With the passage of the years, Fringeru's recollection of the details of her traumatic past has become sketchy, but the emotions remain raw. Her voice quavered as she tried to trace her memory,

often taking a break to compose herself with a sip of water. Her voice was low and her gaze was pained as she stared at her lone memento — a faded family portrait on a cracked piece of cardboard.

After the war, she moved to Israel and later married, and had a daughter, two granddaughters and six great-grandchildren. On occasion, she would bring up an old memory with Marco, who died 10 years ago, but largely kept them to herself, even shielding stories from her immediate family.

"Why suffer? Why go back into that trauma?" Fringeru said.

Now widowed, she lives with her partner Baruch Bruner, 88, a widower and fellow

brother's wife was named Malka. Wroclawski added each smidgen of data onto the single black-and-white page.

"This is a virtual tombstone, this is a place where we can remember the person," she said. "We are bringing that person back to life in a sense, their memory at least, in the act of recording and gathering information."

Yad Vashem's goal is to collect the names of all 6 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The memorial's very name — Yad Vashem is Hebrew for "a memorial and a name" — alludes to its central mission of commemorating the dead as individuals, rather than mere numbers as the Nazis did.

to six years, it will be able to reach the 5 million mark. Even the most optimistic, however, don't believe it will go much higher.

Contrary to popular belief, the Nazis did not keep meticulous records. They kept tabs on the identity of Jews in Germany, Austria, and elsewhere in central Europe, but ordered the wholesale murder of communities elsewhere that were not documented. They also tried to cover up many of their crimes.

Yad Vashem has essentially completed its database on German Jewry during the Nazi era. Its main struggle has been documenting the victims in Poland and eastward, primarily in the former Soviet Union, the site of large scale executions and mass destruction of villages where records were not kept. Limited archival material has allowed researchers to retrace some of them, but the names of many have probably been lost forever.

Because of these difficulties, the actual number of victims remains unclear. Based on records, census data, deportation orders, and other documents, most scholarly research estimates the number of Jewish victims of the Holocaust at 5.5 million to 6 million. Some estimates run higher, and some lower.

The figure of 6 million that is commonly used is attributed to Adolf Eichmann, the mastermind of the Nazi "Final Solution" to destroy European Jewry.

"Our goal is to keep collecting name after name to get as close as we can to 6 million, and we will continue to invest time and resources into getting there," said Yad Vashem Director Avner Shalev, whose voice is often heard in radio ads beseeching survivors to come forward. "This has huge historical and emotional significance ... it makes the historical record more accurate, and by having a name it helps give a human face to those who weren't treated like humans."

While the main goal is for commemoration and research, Yad Vashem says the database also serves to combat Holocaust denial. The emphasis on filling out a signed testimony in person, rather than submitting a name, gives the database more detail, depth, and authenticity — like sworn testimony in court.

"It is of incredible importance that we have the documentation," Wroclawski said. "Usually when we are finished, you can really see that it's almost like a stone has been lifted from their hearts. They know that it is being passed on."

Despite the draining effort, Fringeru said she was pleased she did it and left behind a remnant that would outlive her.

"It's important that people know," she said. "I hope that now they (my family) won't be forgotten."



In this photo taken May 5, 2013, Holocaust survivor Rivka Fringeru, 82, right, holds her chest as she speaks to Cynthia Wroclawski, director of the Yad Vashem names collection project, as they sit at her living room in Rehovot, central Israel.

Holocaust survivor. Only after he sought out Yad Vashem and filled out Pages of Testimony about his extended family did she relent and do the same.

To help them through the process, the director of the names project, Cynthia Wroclawski, made a pair of house calls to their modest home in this city south of Tel Aviv.

Wroclawski patiently waited for the details to emerge. Eventually, some did. Fringeru's father owned a grocery store; one brother was a shoemaker and had six young children who also died. The other

The project began in 1955, but over the following half-century, fewer than 3 million names were collected, mostly because the project was not widely known. Many survivors refrained from reopening wounds, or they clung to hopes that their relatives might still be alive.

Yad Vashem began incorporating names from other collections around the world. A big boost in names came from archival sources, such as prewar census records and data derived from analysis of books, documents, and tombstones.

The names are commemorated in the museum's Hall of Names, a cone-shaped room whose walls are lined with bookshelves containing folders upon folders of testimonies. Until 2004, more than half of the allotted folders remained empty.

That year, the online database was launched, providing access to information in English, Hebrew, Russian, Spanish and German. The number has since surged to 4.2 million names, and the Internet search function has allowed grandchildren to research their families, leading to several emotional reunions between relatives who had thought each other to be dead.

Yad Vashem hopes that in the next five

### IN THIS ISSUE

Chelmno and the Holocaust: The history of Hitler's first death camp.....	4
What FDR said about Jews in private.....	5
Escaping the train to Auschwitz.....	6
Why one Auschwitz survivor avoided doctors for sixty-five years.....	7
Photo highlights from the ASYV Annual Spring Luncheon.....	8-9
New Yad Vashem Square unveiled.....	10
"The music connected us to the lives we had lost".....	11
The little ones that got away.....	12
Survivor returns to Poland to dig up family history.....	13
The tragic missed opportunity to stop the Holocaust.....	14
Shining a light on the Holocaust saga of Bronislaw Huberman.....	16



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM APPOINTS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rabbi Dr. Eric M. Lankin has been appointed Executive Director/CEO of the American Society for Yad Vashem (ASYV). Founded in 1981 by a group of Holocaust survivors, and spearheaded and led by Eli Zborowski, of blessed memory,



from 1981 through 2012, the American Society for Yad Vashem, with offices in New York City and Los Angeles, works in partnership with Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, to support its efforts in the areas of commemoration, remembrance, education, research, capital improvement, and special projects.

Rabbi Lankin has served various American Jewish organizations with distinction, including Emunah of America as its (national) Development Director; Jewish National Fund, as Chief of Institutional Advancement and Education; and UJC (now known as Jewish Federations of North America), as a department director. For fourteen years, Rabbi Lankin served as a congregational

rabbi in Elkins Park, PA; West Hempstead, NY; Miami Beach, FL; and Harrisburg, PA. He has been a significant leader in Holocaust education in his congregations, connected to the tragedies of the Holocaust through his wife's parents, Herbert, of blessed memory, and Marion Achtentuch, who both lived under Nazi tyranny in Germany and Austria and lost seventy members of their families in concentration camps.

Born in Philadelphia, he received his bachelor's degree from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, a master's degree and ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary, and a doctorate from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. For six years, Rabbi Lankin served as a chaplain in the United States Navy Reserve.

Leonard A. Wilf, Chairman of the Board of ASYV, comments, "We welcome Eric Lankin as our professional leader, and have great confidence that his training and experience in Jewish communal leadership will inspire and guide the American Society for Yad Vashem to continued success in Holocaust education in the United States and support for the critical efforts of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. I look forward to a long and successful relationship for years to come."

Rabbi Lankin and his wife Jeanne, a psychotherapist and clinical social worker, have four children and one granddaughter and live in central New Jersey.

## GERMANY COMMITS TO ADDITIONAL \$800 MILLION FOR HOME CARE FOR HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

The German government has agreed to significantly expand its funding of home care for infirm Holocaust survivors and relax eligibility criteria for restitution programs to include Jews who spent time in so-called open ghettos.

The agreement, reached after negotiations in Israel with the Claims Conference, will result in approximately \$800 million in new funding for home care for Holocaust survivors from 2014 to 2017. This is in addition to \$182 million for 2014 that already has been committed.

In 2015, the amount will rise by 45 percent, to approximately \$266 million, and then to \$273 million in 2016 and \$280 million in 2017. Because the sums are set in euros, the actual amounts may change depending on currency fluctuations.

The \$84 million increase in funding between 2014 and 2015 will represent the largest year-over-year increase since the program began with 30 million euros (approximately \$36.6 million) in 2004, though a bigger percentage increase took place in 2010, when funding doubled from 55 million euros (\$68 million) to 110 million euros (\$136 million).

"With this new agreement, the Claims Conference will be able to both increase the number of beneficiaries, thus eliminating waiting lists of survivors for home care, as well as increase the number of hours per person to a minimum level of dignity," Claims Conference board chairman Julius Berman wrote in a letter to the board.

In negotiations, which took place in Israel, Germany also agreed to relax eligibility criteria for the Central and Eastern European Fund and the Article 2 Fund, through which the German government gives pension payments of approximately \$411 per month to needy Nazi victims who spent significant time in a concentration camp, in a Jewish ghetto in hiding, or living under a false identity to avoid the Nazis.

Until now, only those who were interned in closed-off ghettos were eligible for pensions. As of January 1, 2014, pensions will be available also to those forced to live in any of 300 specific open ghettos, such as those in *Czernowitz*, Romania, where Jews lived under curfew, lost their jobs, and were subject to persecution.

Germany also agreed to discuss, in negotiations to take place this fall, possible special aid for child survivors.

The session was the first time since restitution negotiations with Germany



German officials lay a wreath at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem as Claims Conference officials look on, May 2013.

began in Luxembourg in 1951 that talks were held in Israel. For decades, the negotiations were held only in the German capital. In recent years, sessions also were held in New York and Washington.

Before they began negotiating, German representatives met with survivors in Tel Aviv, *Bnei Brak* and Jerusalem, visiting private homes where survivors are receiving home care, a senior day center, and a soup kitchen. They also took a guided tour of the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial and museum in Jerusalem. The negotiations were held in a classroom at Yad Vashem.

## DUTCH BOUNTY HUNTERS PREYED ON JEWS DURING HOLOCAUST, STUDY SHOWS

Dozens of Dutchmen preyed on Jews for cash during the Holocaust, according to a new study.

The research by Pinchas Bar Efrat showed that as many as 80 bounty hunters roamed the Netherlands during the German occupation during World War II.

Led by two men, Wim Henneicke and Willem Briede, authorities paid the bounty hunters five guilders for every Jew they brought in — the equivalent of a week's pay for unskilled laborers.

The research by Bar Efrat, 82, a Dutch native who two years ago received his doctorate in philosophy from Hebrew University, showed that authorities raised the bounty to 7.5 guilders and later to 40 toward the end of World War II.

Bar Efrat's findings are based on months of research he conducted at the Dutch national archives in The Hague. The group, known as the Henneicke Column, also extradited Dutchmen who hid Jews from the Nazis, the research showed.

The group extradited thousands of Jews, many of whom were murdered by the Nazis. Bar Efrat's research added new details about the Henneicke Column to previous studies, including one by Dutch journalist Ad van Liempt.

Wim Henneicke was assassinated by the Dutch resistance in 1944. Briede was sentenced to death in absentia after he escaped Holland in 1945 and settled in Germany, where he died of natural causes in 1962.

## FRENCH NAZI HUNTER: SWISS HOLOCAUST RECORD BETTER THAN BELIEVED

Swiss authorities turned away only 3,000 Jewish refugees during the Holocaust and not 24,500 as believed, French Nazi hunter and historian Serge Klarsfeld said.

Klarsfeld told Switzerland's *Der Sonntag* newspaper that the figure of 24,500 came from imprecise archive material processed by the authors of the 1999 Bergier report on Switzerland's Holocaust-era record. The Bergier commission, which named the figure of 24,500, did not possess information that specified the rejection of Jews or the reasons for denying people entry, Klarsfeld said.

Recently, the Swiss SRF television station aired a documentary that suggested the Swiss government turned down refugees despite knowing of German leader Adolf Hitler's extermination plan and the existence of German concentration camps as early as 1942, the year the Nazis decided on the Final Solution.

Klarsfeld called on Switzerland to create a new commission to examine the question of the acceptance and rejection of Jewish refugees at the Swiss border during the war years.

Klarsfeld also noted that 30,000 Jews were admitted into Switzerland at the same time.

"It should be known how many Jews managed to find refuge in Switzerland and how many were turned away and what happened to them. This is about Switzerland's image in the world, and that's important for the country," he said in the *Sonntag* interview.

Klarsfeld is famous, along with his wife Beate, for their success in tracking down the infamous Gestapo commander Klaus Barbie in Bolivia in the 1970s. The 77-year-old now devotes himself to researching the destiny of French wartime Jews, according to the Netherlands-based news agency IEDE.

## HOLOCAUST-ERA BOOKS OF ESTHER UNVEILED

Three Books of Esther kept in the attic of a house in the Warsaw ghetto during World War II have been returned to Jewish hands.

In honor of Purim, the Shem Olam Institute for Holocaust education, documentation, and research unveiled the rare holy items, which were in Polish possession for dozens of years and were located and brought to Israel in the past year.

The three Books of Esther are said to be at least 77 years old and are part of a collection of Holy Scriptures, Passover Haggadot, and different prayer books preserved throughout the years in the attic of a building in the ghetto.

The building was one of the only ones to survive the war and was renovated later on. Yet its upper part remained intact, apparently due to the fact that there was a hidden space that had not been discovered.

Several years ago the attic collapsed, and the holy books were found under the rubble. A small and hidden synagogue was also discovered on the premises, with many ritual objects.

At first the items were handed over to the Polish police, but Shem Olam officials operating in the country managed to get their hands on them. Most of the books were found burnt, but the three Books of

Esther had survived.

"During the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto, the Germans likely passed by the houses with flame-throwers and set fire to the buildings," says Shem Olam Director Rabbi Avraham Krieger. "This building was torched too, and so was part of the attic."

According to Krieger, "One of the books was in a metal cylinder, and may even



Book of Esther kept in ghetto.

have been in the center of the fire and nearly melted, and another Book of Esther was found almost intact."

Another collection of Books of Esther obtained by the Shem Olam Institute, along with a variety of ritual objects, was found in the *Łódź* ghetto, in a building used during the war as a conference hall. The hall's wooden floor broke about a year ago, and the treasure was found underneath.



## YAD VASHEM'S SHALEV NAMED DEPUTY CHAIR OF INTERNATIONAL AUSCHWITZ COUNCIL

Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev has been appointed a deputy chairman of the International Auschwitz Council.

The International Auschwitz Council, which was established by Poland in 2000, is an advisory body to the Polish prime minister on issues related to the preservation and functioning of the Auschwitz site and other Holocaust memorials.

Its chairman is Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, named by Yad Vashem a Righteous Among the Nations, as well as a historian, writer, and former foreign minister of Poland.

The council is composed of 21 members from Poland, Israel, the United States, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom who serve six-year terms. Shalev joins Polish Holocaust historian Dr. Barbara Engelking as a deputy chairman.

"As the events of the Holocaust recede into history, there are growing challenges in preserving the authentic sites of the Holocaust, where the murders took place," Shalev said. "This is especially so if these sites are to serve as tools in meaningful Holocaust remembrance and education and in shaping Holocaust remembrance in future generations."

## LVIV TO STOP USING JEWISH HEADSTONES AS PAVEMENT

The city of Lviv in Ukraine has agreed to remove Jewish headstones currently used as pavement.

The grave markers, from cemeteries destroyed by the Nazis during their occupation of Ukraine in the 1940s, will be moved to the only cemetery that was not destroyed during the Holocaust, according to Spirit24, a Netherlands-based news agency.

The Soviet Red Army, which moved in on the heels of the retreating Nazi army, used the headstones as pavement, according to Meylakh Sheykhet, Ukraine's representative in the Union of Councils for Jews in the former Soviet Union, who has lobbied for the headstones' removal for years.

He told Spirit24 that the local market was built by the Soviet authorities in 1947 from Jewish headstones, which were placed horizontally and covered with asphalt.

Viktor Zaharchuk, a local resident, showed the Spirit24 film crew some headstones with Hebrew writing that were directly placed on the ground as pavement.



Graves at a Jewish cemetery.

The city was considering several designs for a monument at Lviv's only remaining Jewish cemetery, Spirit24 reported, though it is unclear whether that monument would incorporate the headstones after they are removed.

## HOLLAND SEEKS EU HERITAGE LABEL FOR NAZI CAMP

The Dutch government has asked the European Commission to recognize the Peace Palace and the former Nazi transit camp *Westerbork* as heritage sites.

The Peace Palace in The Hague, which houses the International Court of Justice, was opened 100 years ago "to prevent the kind of war to which the camp so painfully attests and must continue to do so," the Council for Culture, a government advisory body, wrote in a recommendation to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet adopted the recommendation and requested that the European Council give the two locales the European Heritage Label — a designation reserved for "sites which have played a key role in the history and the building of the European Union," according to the European Commission.

In total, nearly 100,000 Jews, or 70 percent of Holland's pre-Holocaust Jewish population, were transported from

*Westerbork* to Nazi extermination and concentration camps, including Auschwitz, *Sobibor*, *Bergen-Belsen* and *Theresienstadt*, according to Yad Vashem. The premises of the former Nazi camp have been made a national memorial.

According to Yad Vashem, *Westerbork* was established in October 1939 by the Dutch government to detain German Jewish refugees who had entered the Netherlands illegally.

Meanwhile, the municipality in whose jurisdiction *Westerbork* lies, *Midden-Drenthe*, reportedly has rejected a plan to place memorial cobblestones in front of the homes of Holocaust victims — an ongoing project taking place in municipalities across Europe for the past 20 years.

The public broadcaster NOS quoted unnamed city officials as saying the municipality "does enough to commemorate the Holocaust already."

## YAD VASHEM HONORS CARDINAL WHO RESCUED JEWS

Yad Vashem has named the World War II-era Archbishop of Florence, Cardinal Elia Dalla Costa, as "Righteous Among the Nations" for his help in rescuing hundreds of Jews from Nazi persecution.

Yad Vashem said that the cardinal "played a central role in the organization and operation of a widespread rescue network."

The Nazis began to deport Jews after the German occupation of Italy in September 1943. A major rescue effort in Florence was begun by the city's Jewish leader Rabbi Nathan Cassuto and Jewish resistance fighter Raffaele Cantoni. The operation soon became a joint Jewish-Christian effort, with the cardinal offering guidance.

Cardinal Dalla Costa recruited rescuers

among the clergy and supplied letters asking monasteries and convents to shelter Jews. He sheltered Jewish refugees in his own palace for short periods before they could be taken to safety.

Yad Vashem said the cardinal was part of a network that helped save hundreds of local Jews and Jewish refugees from areas previously under Italian control.

Survivor Lya Quitt testified that she received help from the cardinal after she fled to Florence from France in September 1943. She was brought to the cardinal's palace and spent the night with other Jews sheltered there before rescuers took them to different convents in the city.

The cardinal died in 1961 at the age of 89. The cardinal's medal will be kept at the Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem.

## CASINO RETURNS NAZI-LOOTED ART TO JEWISH HEIRS

A German casino will return a 300-year-old Dutch painting despoiled by the Nazis to German-Jewish art dealer Max Stern's estate, one of his beneficiaries announced.

"It's the first time that a German organization has returned a painting to us," said Clarence Epstein, director of special projects at Concordia University in Montreal, one of three schools to which Stern bequeathed his collection.

"It is proof that Germany is starting to accept that righting the plundering of artworks is important and a priority for them."

Since 2002, Concordia has sought to recover more than 400 paintings lost to Stern at the hands of the Nazis through a forced sale in 1937.

Stern himself shuttered his *Dusseldorf* gallery in December of that year, and fled to London before settling in Canada.

The bulk of his estate following his 1987 death was bequeathed to Concordia, McGill University in Montreal, and Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Dutch portrait painter Juriaen Pool II's "The Masters of the Goldsmith Guild in Amsterdam in 1701" is a large-scale painting of some of Amsterdam's most important citizens and the ninth Nazi-looted artwork to be returned to the university heirs.

It is to be repatriated at a ceremony at the Amsterdam Museum, which recently opened a children's wing in a space that

was once occupied by an orphanage where Pool was raised.

Epstein refused to identify the casino, which has requested anonymity.

But he said the return of the painting is the fruit of six years of research by the Max Stern Art Restitution Project, with support from the Holocaust Claims Processing Office of the New York State Department of Financial Services.

It all started in 2004 when Sothebys auction house contacted Epstein's office regarding the status of the painting.

This eventually led to the discovery of a letter that Stern wrote in 1937 in the Netherlands Institute for Art History.

A photograph of the painting accompanied Stern's letter requesting information about the portrait, leaving no doubt as to its ownership, according to Concordia.

This revelation convinced the casino to return the painting to Stern's beneficiaries, Epstein said.

The Max Stern Art Restitution Project is now focused on recovering some 40 other paintings it has identified as once belonging to one of Canada's most important art dealers and collectors. Talks with a dozen people or groups, including German museums, are progressing, Epstein said.

He praised the German government for providing resources to museums to help identify Nazi-looted artworks, but lamented "recurring problems" with auction houses and private galleries.

## BULGARIAN MPS "REGRET" HOLOCAUST DEPORTATIONS

Bulgaria's parliament has, for the first time, expressed regret for the deportation of 11,000 Jews to their deaths during the Holocaust.

The resolution, published by Bulgaria's parliament, was issued ahead of the 70th anniversary of the start of deportations from areas controlled by Bulgaria, an ally of Nazi Germany during World War II.

The text of the resolution reads: "Beyond dispute, 11,343 Jews were deported from northern Greece and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. We denounce this criminal act, undertaken by Hitler's command, and express our regret for the fact that the local Bulgarian administration had not been in a position to stop this act."

It also lauded Bulgarian authorities for having "refused the deportation of over 48,000 Jews, Bulgarian citizens, to the death camps" — a historical event that is a source of pride to many Bulgarians.

Though an ally of Germany during the war, Bulgaria was the only Eastern European country that saved its Jews from the Holocaust. This act of salvation is a unique chapter in the history of the Holocaust, but its full story remained

largely unknown until the fall of Communism in Bulgaria in 1989.

The Shalom Organization of Jews in Bulgaria had repeatedly demanded that the state take responsibility for the deportations.

"The Bulgarian government must assume the moral responsibility for the Nazi death camp deportation of ethnic Jews from the



Members of the Jewish community pray during a service at the Sofia Synagogue.

regions of Thrace and Macedonia regardless of the fact that Bulgaria saved its almost 50,000 Jews," the group's chairman, Maxim Benvenisti, told The Associated Press before the declaration.

A memorial sign near parliament for the deported Jews was unveiled on March 10, after which a solemn ceremony was held at the Sofia Synagogue.

## AUSTRIA ADMITS SOME OF ITS ACADEMICS WERE NAZIS

Seventy-five years after the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, the Austrian Academy of Sciences has acknowledged that many of its scientists were members of the Nazi party and that some of its students served in the SS.

The acknowledgement comes in the wake of a study by historians, which also reveals that 21 Jewish scientists were excluded from the Academy during World War II.

The 21 scientists who were banished include three Nobel laureates: Richard Martin Willstätter, who won the 1915 Nobel Prize for Chemistry; Victor Francis

Hess, who won the 1936 Nobel Prize for Physics; and Erwin Schrödinger, who won the 1933 Nobel Prize for Physics.

Out of the 21 banished Jewish academics, nine were murdered by Nazis during the war, the study found.

Out of about 60 members of the Academy, three-fifths identified with the Nazi movement, the Academy has acknowledged.

After the fall of the Third Reich, the Academy suspended the Nazi members, but as of 1950 all of them were reinstated, including a former SS commander.





# BOOK REVIEWS

## CHELMNO AND THE HOLOCAUST: THE HISTORY OF HITLER'S FIRST DEATH CAMP

Chelmno and the Holocaust: The History of Hitler's First Death Camp.

By Patrick Montague. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 2012. 291 pp. \$67.57 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

Chelmno camp is unique in the annals of Nazi history. It was "the first camp established by the Nazi regime for the sole purpose of committing mass murder." It is also unique in the annals of human history. It was the first such heinous place to exist on the face of this earth! How did it happen? How was it organized? How did Chelmno become the "template" for all the other Nazi camps like it to follow, camps like Treblinka, Sobibor, and Belzec? How did it become the "bureaucratic catalyst and operational prototype" for Hitler's Final Solution? All these questions and more lay at the very heart of the exceptionally detailed and conscientiously researched volume by Patrick Montague entitled *Chelmno and the Holocaust: The History of Hitler's First Death Camp*. And no archive, no book, no individual of the very few who could in any way shed meaningful light on these many questions would be left out in Montague's obvious determination to tell the entire story, the unvarnished truth of this "human slaughterhouse" called Chelmno, regardless of how brutal and disturbing the information proved to be.

Thus, through Montague we learn that the root of all this evil can be found in 1933. It was then, with a Germany ruled by Hitler, that the mass murder of innocent people quietly began with euthanasia, which itself started with the sterilization of disabled German citizens. Soon the fog of war would allow Hitler to escalate his plan of ridding Germany of all those he consid-

ered "useless eaters" and hence, according to him, of absolutely no use whatever to the Reich. In 1939 German children born with deformities were euthanized. Shortly thereafter, adults suffering from illnesses considered incurable — the mentally ill, the invalids, and those "continuously hospitalized" — were added to the list. These last actions, most especially, pleased Hitler, for they freed up doctors, nurses, hospital staff, and the hospital beds he needed for his injured soldiers, those most valuable to him!

Importantly, in the process of "organizing" all of the above, Hitler concomitantly discovered and nurtured those individuals who would increasingly help him in his murderous activities — for, quite obviously, Hitler could never have done all his devilish work alone. He gained knowledgeable co-conspirators: doctors, chemists, and researchers. (Interestingly, they were all sworn to silence as regards their work. Hence, they all had to know that what they were involved in was very wrong, to say the least!). Thus, through trial and error, gas was found to be the best killing method with gas vans, in the early years, especially "convenient" when it came to getting to the victims and later delivering their lifeless bodies to out-of-the-way mass graves. He developed a loyal cadre of Nazi officers and soldiers who would willingly follow his orders regardless of how inhumane and gruesome. Thus were created the well-run rolling "death chambers" (eventually there would be more than one

van), with diligent "workers" in place, soon to be let loose on Hitler's prime target — the Jews.

Interestingly, Chelmno would be the collusive product of two rabid anti-Semites: Arthur Greiser, the Provincial Governor of the Warthegau (generally today's Western Poland), appointed by Adolf Hitler upon the conquest of Poland,

and Hitler himself. For Greiser, eager to rid himself of the many Jews in his province to make room for German settlers and create a proper German province, approached the Nazi leadership with this, his "local [Jewish] problem." The result: Herbert Lange, a "fanatical Nazi," promoted continuously for his outstanding work murdering people, and already in Poland utilizing gas to euthanize mentally and physically disabled

Poles as charged by Hitler, was gingerly assigned to Greiser. Lange would "solve" Greiser's problem by creating the nightmare that was Chelmno . . .

With that, Montague's comprehensive work clearly reveals to us, step by heart-breaking step, just how Chelmno came to be. Most importantly, he tells us how the gassing procedure was adapted to its new assignment. A major change was that the van would no longer go to victims, but instead, victims would come to the van to be asphyxiated, totally unaware of the van's evil purpose. He tells us how "carefully" the location was chosen. It was isolated yet centrally positioned within the Warthegau, and "accessible by road and

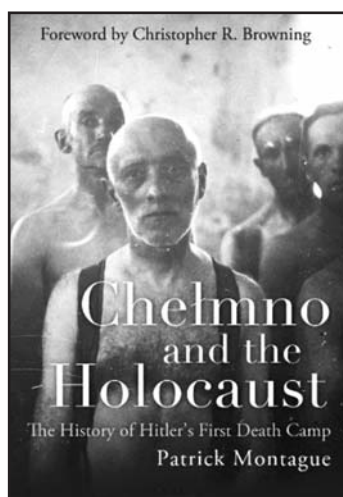
by rail." He relates to us how the area was adapted to its new assignment.

Chelmno utilized "pre-existing structures" already on the property. Other camps like it to follow were built from the ground up. (In fact, we learn that any and all changes regarding the assembly-line "working" of all these death camps would be made as needed — for example, the adaptation of stationary gas chambers for future death camps.) He tells us of the nearby forest that would become the hellish gravesite of more than 150,000 people — practically all of them Jews from Chelmno, its surrounding region, and, most especially, the Lodz ghetto — all of them buried and later exhumed to be ruthlessly cremated. Finally, he reveals to us just by whom and precisely how murder was accomplished on a grand scale, offering up detailed maps and never-before-published testimony, and naming names throughout.

Needless to say, Montague's book is a major addition to the literature of the Holocaust — thorough, fearless, and filling a substantial void! For, sadly, till now much of Chelmno's bitter story remained untold, what with its six actual survivors and the destruction of the camp before the Allies could get to it. Indeed, *Chelmno and the Holocaust* is a "must read" for serious students of this unimaginable period seriously unafraid to read and know the truth!

**P.S.** Interestingly, Szymon Srebnik, one of the few survivors of Chelmno, is the central character in Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah*.

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



## ANNE FRANK: THE BOOK, THE LIFE, THE AFTERLIFE

Anne Frank: The Book, The Life, The Afterlife.

By Francine Prose. HarperCollins Publishers: New York, 2010. 322 pp. \$11.98 paperback.

REVIEWED BY ROBERTA SILMAN,  
THE BOSTON GLOBE

When I got this book, I wondered how Francine Prose would untangle the provenance and legacy of this famous book — *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank. Its hold on us has inspired John Berryman, Philip Roth, Judith Thurman, and Cynthia Ozick, among others, and engendered adaptations for stage and screen. Everyone seems to want to have the last word on this beautiful, dark-haired, dark-eyed Jewish girl whose mischievous, intelligent face adorns the cover and whose photograph has become an icon of the Holocaust.

I need not have worried. Francine Prose, a highly intelligent novelist and critic, has outdone herself, drawing us into the life of the Frank family and their incredible ordeal, placing their story in a historical context where the Dutch are revealed as all too compliant with their Nazi conquerors, and telling us in straightforward, elegant prose how the various

versions of Anne's diary came to be, and how Anne's story has spread into the public domain, often by well-meaning but misguided people. She reminds us "how much art is required to give the impression of artlessness, how much control is necessary in order to seem natural, how almost nothing is more difficult for a writer than to find a narrative voice as fresh and unaffected as Anne Frank's."

Most important for posterity, Prose adds: "In a few more years, no one alive will have witnessed the scene of a Nazi arresting a Jew. There have been, and will be, other arrests and executions for the crime of having been born into a particular race or religion or tribe. But the scene of Nazis hunting down Jews is unlikely to happen again, though history teaches us never to say never."

Conceived as a series of letters written to an imaginary "Kitty," from May 1942 until August 1944, this poignant diary relates the daily lives of the eight people

hidden in *Het Achterhuis* (Anne's title, "the house behind" and sometimes called "the secret annex"), in Amsterdam during

World War II. It has been called a coming-of-age story because it covers the remarkable development of an unusually self-aware 13-year-old girl who started writing because "paper is patient" into the 15-year-old young woman who revised it in the spring of 1944 after hearing a radio announcement that there would someday be a museum to house such records. But a coming-of-age story implies a longer life. Anne and her family were betrayed in August of 1944;

she was sent to *Westerboerk* in Holland, then to Auschwitz, and finally to *Bergen-Belsen*, where she died of typhus a few weeks before its liberation by the British.

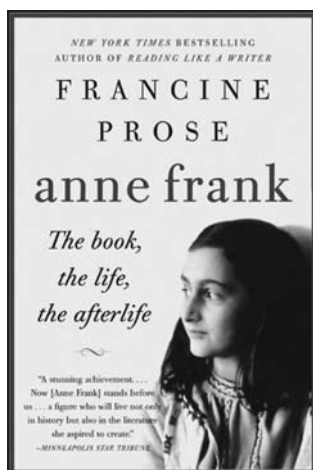
Most of us probably see the annex as a stage set. In reality it was the top floor of a warehouse formerly used as a laboratory. You got to it through a secret bookcase, and during the day there were people working underneath it. At night the hidden could go downstairs and stretch

their legs. Prose makes no bones about how hard it was to prepare this hiding place and how hard life in it was, and debunks those who see the diary as a sweet love story or a mother/daughter conflict. In it Anne reveals as much about the others as she does about herself — with humor and longing and curiosity that are nothing short of astounding.

Equally astounding is the tension in the book, because this is, primarily, a diary of fear. The hidden can look out the windows and observe the increasingly desperate Dutch people; they learn the fate of fellow Jews from the "helpers" (like the famously altruistic Miep Gies) who bring them food; they subsist on beans and spoiled vegetables with good cheer; they know the war's progress from their trusty radio. Yet they cannot know the end. In late 1943, Anne writes:

"I see the eight of us within our 'Secret Annex' as if we were a little piece of blue heaven surrounded by black, black rain clouds. The round, clearly defined spot where we stand is still safe, but the clouds gather more closely about us and the circle which separates us from the approaching dangers closes more and more tightly."

(Continued on page 14)





# PHOTOS FETE JEWISH FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM

BY REBECCA BENHAMOU,  
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Lost for decades, the work of three revolutionary Jewish photographers has gone on display in Paris, documenting both a breakthrough in war journalism and the mass involvement of Jews in the fight against Fascism.

Considered a priceless record of the Spanish civil war, the so-called Mexican Suitcase is composed of three boxes of negatives — a total of 4,500 pictures taken between 1936 and 1939 by Robert Capa, Gerda Taro, and David “Chim” Seymour.

Given up as lost near the start of WWII, the collection — part of the valuable material Capa was forced to abandon during the Nazi invasion of Paris — resurfaced in Mexico in 1995.

After years of secret negotiations with the descendants of a Mexican general who found the work, the lost negatives arrived in 2008 at the International Center of Photography in New York, where they were exhibited between 2010 and 2011.

Now showing at the *Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme* in Le Marais, Paris' old Jewish quarter, the recovered negatives are an homage to three Jewish photographers who laid the foundations of modern combat photography.

“What distinguished them the most from their predecessors is that they had a profound pro-Republican political allegiance and were not afraid to show it,” says cura-

tor Nicolas Feuillie. “You can feel the politics in the way they relate to photography — it's a form of partisan art.”

Like the men they immortalized through the lens, the three came to the Spanish civil war during a terrifying period, as the forces of Fascism gathered strength across much of Europe. Although their central subject was Spanish Republicans' losing battle against future dictator Francisco Franco, the trio also



After leaving Hitler's Germany, Jewish photographer Gerda Taro snapped this image at the funeral of Bela Frankl, a Hungarian Jew who died in the Spanish civil war while serving under the name General Lukacs.

captured the desperate efforts of Jewish fighters who had enlisted from across the world.

In 1933, the Hungarian-born Capa, just months removed from his 20th birthday, moved from Germany to France to escape the newly empowered Nazis. He

had initially wanted to be a writer, but turned to photography to earn a living.

In France, he met Taro — born Gerta Pohorylle — a left-leaning Polish-born refugee who would become his girlfriend and co-worker, and Polish photographer Seymour, whose original name had been Dawid Szymin.

Together, the three invented a new form of war photography, visceral and dramatic and close to the action.

“Unlike other war photographers, they actually took part in the conflict,” Feuillie explains. “They wanted to live and experience it as their subjects did. Because they used a Leica camera, which was lighter and more flexible, they could get closer to the front lines, and were directly involved in battles.”

In roll after roll of film, one can see Capa — born Andre Friedmann — move with his subjects. Some of his most iconic images include photos taken at the Battle of Teruel in 1937, where he documented hundreds of civilians fleeing the area.

Equally compelling is Capa and Taro's series of gelatin silver prints showing Madrid in ruins after a nationalist air raid. The couple photographed the capital's

deserted streets, the interiors of decimated buildings, and damaged façades jutting into the sky.

Sharing strong similarities with Capa's style, Taro's differs in her interest in more morbid subjects. She captured the essence of life and death in the trenches, taking photos of wounded fighters carried out on stretchers, corpses in the morgue, and soldiers who died on the battlefield.

As for Chim, he was particularly famous for portraits, and for his more human perspective on the conflict. From shots of textile-factory workers to egg sellers, he depicted how life continued off the battlefield.

Echoing his own political allegiances, he photographed key figures he admired in the war, such as the leftist writer and poet Federico Garcia Lorca and Dolores Ibarruri, the charismatic head of the Spanish Communist Party known as La Pasionaria.

He also made striking portraits of the smiling young soldiers of the International Brigades in Toledo in 1936, who posed proudly with their weapons or fired through barricades.

Scheduled to run until June 30, the exhibition features clippings from *Regards*, the illustrated weekly magazine of the French Communist Party — Capa, Taro and Seymour's employer during the Spanish civil war — and *Haynt*, a Warsaw Yiddish daily.

(Continued on page 15)

## WHAT FDR SAID ABOUT JEWS IN PRIVATE

**His personal sentiments about Jews may help explain America's tepid response to the Holocaust.**

BY RAFAEL MEDOFF

In May 1943, President Franklin Roosevelt met with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at the White House. It was 17 months after Pearl Harbor and a little more than a year before D-Day. The two Allied leaders reviewed the war effort to date and exchanged thoughts on their plans for the postwar era. At one point in the discussion, FDR offered what he called “the best way to settle the Jewish question.”

Vice President Henry Wallace, who noted the conversation in his diary, said Roosevelt spoke approvingly of a plan (recommended by geographer and Johns Hopkins University President Isaiah Bowman) “to spread the Jews thin all over the world.” The diary entry adds: “The president said he had tried this out in [Meriwether] County, Georgia [where Roosevelt lived in the 1920s] and at Hyde Park on the basis of adding four or five Jewish families at each place. He claimed that the local population would have no objection if there were no more than that.”

Roosevelt's “best way” remark is condescending and distasteful, and coming from anyone else it would probably be regarded as anti-Semitism. But more than that, FDR's support for “spreading the Jews thin” may hold the key to understanding a subject that has been at the center of controversy for decades: the American government's tepid response to the Holocaust.

Here's the paradox. The U.S. immigration system severely limited the number of German Jews admitted during the Nazi years to about 26,000 annually — but even that quota was less than 25% filled during most of the Hitler era, because the

Roosevelt administration piled on so many extra requirements for would-be immigrants. For example, starting in 1941, merely leaving behind a close relative in Europe would be enough to disqualify an applicant — on the absurd assumption that the Nazis could threaten the relative and thereby force the immigrant into spying for Hitler.

Why did the administration actively seek to discourage and disqualify Jewish refugees from coming to the United States? Why didn't the president quietly tell his State Department (which administered the immigration system) to fill the quotas for Germany and Axis-occupied countries to the legal limit? That alone could have saved 190,000 lives. It would not have required a fight with Congress or the anti-immigration forces; it would have involved minimal political risk to the president.

Every president's policy decisions are shaped by a variety of factors, some political, some personal. In Roosevelt's case, a pattern of private remarks about Jews, some of which I recently discovered at the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem and from other sources, may be significant.

In 1923, as a member of the Harvard board of directors, Roosevelt decided there were too many Jewish students at the college and helped institute a quota to limit the number admitted. In 1938, he privately suggested that Jews in Poland were dominating the economy and were therefore to blame for provoking anti-Semitism there. In 1941, he remarked at a

Cabinet meeting that there were too many Jews among federal employees in Oregon. In 1943, he told government officials in Allied-liberated North Africa that the number of local Jews in various professions “should be definitely limited” so as to “eliminate the specific and understandable complaints which the Germans bore towards the Jews in Germany.”

There is evidence of other troubling private remarks by FDR too, including dismissing pleas for Jewish refugees as “Jewish wailing” and “sob stuff”; expressing (to a senator) his pride that “there is no Jewish blood in our veins”; and characterizing a tax maneuver by a



President Franklin Roosevelt sits at the steering wheel of his automobile in Warm Springs, Ga., on April 4, 1939, as he parries questions at an outdoor press conference.

Jewish newspaper publisher as “a dirty Jewish trick.” But the most common theme in Roosevelt's private statements about Jews has to do with his perception that they were “overcrowding” many professions and exercising undue influence.

This attitude dovetails with what is known about FDR's views regarding immigrants in general and Asian immigrants in particular. In one 1920 interview,

he complained about immigrants “crowding” into the cities and said that “the remedy for this should be the distribution of aliens in various parts of the country.” In a series of articles for the Macon (Ga.) *Daily Telegraph* and for *Asia* magazine in the 1920s, he warned against granting citizenship to “non-assimilable immigrants” and opposed Japanese immigration on the grounds that “mingling Asiatic blood with European or American blood produces, in nine cases out of ten, the most unfortunate results.” He recommended that future immigration should be limited to those who had “blood of the right sort.”

FDR's decision to imprison thousands of Japanese Americans in internment camps during World War II was consistent with his perception of Asians as having innate racial characteristics that made them untrustworthy. Likewise, he apparently viewed with disdain what he seemed to regard as the innate characteristics of Jews. Admitting significant numbers of Jewish or Asian immigrants did not fit comfortably in FDR's vision of America.

Other U.S. presidents have made their share of unfriendly remarks about Jews. A diary kept by Harry Truman included statements such as “The Jews, I find, are very, very selfish.” Richard Nixon's denunciations of Jews as “very aggressive and obnoxious” were belatedly revealed in tapes of Oval Office conversations.

But the revelation of Franklin Roosevelt's sentiments will probably shock many people. After all, he led America in the war against Hitler. Moreover, Roosevelt's public persona is anchored in his image as a liberal humanitarian, his claim to care about “the forgotten man,” the downtrodden, the mistreated. But none of that can change the record of his response to the Holocaust.



# SURVIVORS' CORNER

## FAMILY SURVIVED HOLOCAUST BY LIVING IN A CAVE

BY TERRY MORAN, ABC NEWS

In the darkest days of the 20th century, as the shadow of the evil that was the Holocaust fell across Europe, the courage of one woman was the difference between life and death for a few Jewish families from a little Ukrainian village.

Esther Stermer lived in that village with her six children until Nazi forces came in late 1941.

More than a thousand Jews were rounded up and sent to camps, where most died.



Saul and Sam Stermer, 92 and 86, revisit for the first time, in October 2010, the cave where they hid during the Holocaust.

But Esther found another way.

Along with her family, including her sons Saul and Sam Stermer, 92 and 86 today, Esther spent nearly a year and a half

underground, living in the pitch black of two vast caves in Ukraine, along with 36 other Jews, to escape Nazi persecution.

"The secret is that we were in trouble," Sam Stermer told ABC News. "But we never did give in."

It is an astonishing story, one of strength and survival from the Holocaust, brought to light 70 years later in the documentary *No Place on Earth*. In October 2010, both Saul and Sam revisited the cave for the first time.

"It's a story about what people are capable of, both in love and achievement," Janet Tobias, who directed the film, said.

Saul and Sam credit their mother for saving their lives and keeping them safe for the more than 500 days they spent together in the darkness of the caves.

"We had a very smart mother," Sam said. "If I wouldn't have this type of mother, I wouldn't be alive."

So they made their own way, deep underground in nearby caves

that run for miles, living in total darkness, like the bats and mice down there, and all they had was one another, and their own ingenuity.

"You went to sleep and you had a pillow and you covered up with good blankets," Saul Stermer said. "What else you want? You were in paradise."

For the Stermer family, the caves provided the freedom they were robbed of during the war.

"We were free men," Sam said.

Once, German SS soldiers raided the first cave they hid in and their mother, Esther, faced them down.

"She came out and stood in front of the guy, the guy with the gun like this," Sam said. "And she says, 'What are you afraid of here? The Führer is gonna lose the war because we live here?' Can you imagine a Jewish woman to say just the word 'Führer'?"

They foraged for food at night, and built showers and latrines deep underground until finally, in April 1944, the Russian Army liberated the area, and the five families (38 Jews in total) came back into the light, and back into a life out of the abyss.

Last year, for the film, they returned to the cave.

After the war, Saul and Sam Stermer made their way to Canada and founded a



Several Jewish families escaped the Holocaust thanks to the courage of Esther Stermer, front row, second from left.

successful contracting business, where they still go to work each day.

The ordeal of living a life underground, spending countless nights lying in a cavernous space, shaped how the Stermers lived their lives.

"We were just happy to survive," Sam said. "Then life started to turn normal, and that's it. We tried to get ahead. We tried to survive after the war."

Today, these 38 survivors now have more than 125 children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. They have a story, out of the darkness, where they found life.

"This is a completely different story, because it was a happy ending," Saul said.

## ESCAPING THE TRAIN TO AUSCHWITZ

BY ALTHEA WILLIAMS AND SARAH EHRLICH, BBC NEWS

On April 19, 1943, a train carrying 1,631 Jews set off from a Nazi detention camp in Belgium for the gas chambers of Auschwitz. But resistance fighters stopped the train. One boy who jumped to freedom that night retains vivid memories, 70 years later.

In February 1943, 11-year-old Simon Gronowski was sitting down for breakfast with his mother and sister in their Brussels hiding place when two Gestapo agents burst in.

They were taken to the Nazis' notorious headquarters on the prestigious Avenue Louise, used as a prison for Jews and a torture chamber for members of the resistance.

Today, Gronowski lives a two-minute walk from this building, where he was held for two nights without food or water.

"My parents had made a mistake — only one, but a serious one, which was... to have been born Jewish — a crime that, at the time, could only be punished by death," he says.

From there, Simon and his mother and sister were transferred to the *Kazerne Dossin*, a detention camp 30 miles away in *Mechelen*, Flanders.

"People were randomly hit sometimes just for the crime of 'looking Jewish,' so you had to keep a low profile," says Gronowski.

"For the smallest infraction, we could be beaten up and locked in a cell until we were deported. Sometimes they collectively punished the entire room of 100 of

us, or made us stand in the courtyard for hours, day or night whatever the weather."

Most of the prisoners knew they would be deported but had no idea, Gronowski says, that they would be executed en masse.

On April 18, Simon and 1,630 others, including his mother, Chana, were informed they would be deported by train the next day.

His father, Leon, had been in hospital when the Germans had raided their home a month before. His mother had quickly thought to tell them she was a widow.

His older sister Ita — born in Belgium and already 18 — had Belgian citizenship and was therefore taken in a separate convoy.

Simon, who like his parents and most of Belgium's Jewish population was stateless, remembers seeing her for the last time, crying and waving to him as they left.

"I didn't really understand what was going on and what deportation would mean. I was still in my own little world, where I was a boy scout," he says. "I thought to myself, 'Goodbye my Brussels, my Belgium, my father, my dear sister, my family and my friends.'"

Conditions inside the train were atrocious.

"We were packed like a herd of cattle. We had only one bucket for 50 people. How could we use it? How could we

empty it? Besides, it would have been impossible to get to it," says Gronowski.

"There was no food, no drink. There were no seats, so we either sat or lay down on the floor. I was in the rear right corner of the car, with my mother. It was very dark. There was a pale gleam coming from a vent in the roof, but it was sti-



Simon Gronowski, pictured aged nine with his parents, two years before he and his mother were arrested.

fling and there was no water to be had."

Soon after leaving *Mechelen*, the 20th convoy was attacked by three young members of the Belgian Resistance armed with one pistol, red paper, and a lantern.

They made a red light, a sign for danger ahead, forcing the train driver to brake sharply. This was the first and only time during World War II that any Nazi transport carrying Jewish deportees was stopped.

Robert Maistriau, one of the resistance members, recalled that terrifying moment later in his memoirs.

"The brakes made a hellish noise and at first I was petrified. But then I gave myself a jolt on the basis that if you have started something you should go through with it. I held my torch in my left hand and with my right, I had to busy myself with the pliers. I was very excited and it took far too long until I had cut through the wire that secured the bolts of the sliding door. I shone my torch into the carriage and pale and frightened faces stared back at me. I shouted *Sortez Sortez!* and then *Schnell Schnell flehen Sie!* Quick, Quick, get out of here!"

After a brief shooting battle between the German train guards and the three resistance members, the train started again.

Some had escaped from the opened wagon, and the mood among the remaining deportees had changed. Those who had dreamed of escape suddenly become more determined and more desperate.

An hour later, men in Simon's wagon succeeded in breaking open the door. Cool air flowed into the stifling, crowded carriage. Chana Gronowski gave her son a 100-franc note, which he rolled and slid into his sock, then she pushed him towards the door.

Simon was too small to reach the foot rail beneath the door by himself, so his mother lowered him down by his shoulders.

"My mother held me by my shirt and my shoulders. But at first, I did not dare to jump because the train was going too fast for me," he says.

"I saw the trees go by and the train was getting faster. The air was crisp and cool

(Continued on page 13)



## WHEN JEWS FLEEING THE HOLOCAUST SHARED THE SAME CANADIAN PRISON CAMPS WITH NAZIS

When Austrian and German Jews escaped Nazism by fleeing to Britain during the 1930s, the last thing they expected was to find themselves prisoners in Canada, interned in camps with some of the same Nazis they had tried to escape back home.

But that's what happened to some 7,000 European Jews and "Category A" prisoners — the most dangerous prisoners of war — who arrived on Canadian shores in 1940. Fearing a German invasion, Britain had asked its colonies and former colonies to take some German prisoners and enemy spies. But the boats included many refugees, including religious Jews and university students.

Though Britain alerted Canada to the mistake, it would take three years for all the refugees to be freed.

"It was a period where everybody was closing their doors," said Paula Draper, a historian who worked on an exhibit about the refugees currently on display at the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre. "But Canada closed its doors more tightly than almost anybody else."

While greatly overshadowed at the time by the enormity of the Holocaust, the refugee episode illustrates two characteristics of Canadian government policy that are difficult to imagine today: rampant anti-Semitism and restrictive immigration. The country is one of Israel's staunchest allies and has a relatively liberal immigration policy. In 2001, more than 18 percent of Canada's population was immigrant; in 2010, Canada admitted more legal immigrants than it had in 50 years.

This wasn't the case during World War II, when Frederick Charles Blair directed Canada's immigration branch. Blair believed an international Jewish conspira-

cy was trying to skirt Canadian immigration policies by sneaking the refugees into the country. Moreover, anti-Semitic attitudes among Canada's Protestant elite had hardened in the run-up to World War II, according to University of British Columbia historian Richard Menkis.

The Protestants believed ethnic minorities lacked Canadian values, a view similar to that of Quebecois nationalists, who believed the province should remain both French and Catholic. Jews



Worried about immigration, Canadian authorities did not want Jewish refugees from the Nazis to be free. So they housed them in camps, some of which held German prisoners.

faced quotas in universities, and were blocked from various professional fields and barred from certain neighborhoods.

"There were certain observers who thought that places like Toronto and the establishment there were as anti-Semitic as anything in North America," Menkis said.

After tiring of Canadian intransigence on the refugee issue, the British sent a high-ranking diplomat, Alexander Paterson, to assure the Canadians that the Jewish refugees posed no security threat. Paterson ended up spending more than

eight months in the country and cleared many of the prisoners individually.

By 1943, the last of the refugees had been released. Many went on to make important contributions to Canadian society, including two Nobel Prize winners. But as late as 1948, even after the horrors of the Holocaust had been revealed, a public opinion poll had Jews ranking near the top of a list of groups that Canadians least wanted in their country.

"This is how blind Canada was, blinded by racism, to the potential of all the people they might have been able to rescue from the Holocaust," Draper said.

Draper, who has taught in the Canadian Studies program at the University of Toronto's University College, began researching the internment of Jewish refugees in the 1970s. At the time, the Jewish community was reluctant to complain about this history given the fate of the Jews of Europe.

Even among the survivors themselves, who lamented their lost years of freedom, many were thankful just to have escaped the destiny of their European brethren.

"To be overly critical of a government's policy at the time, about this specific group, in light of the Holocaust," was hard to justify, Draper said.

But if criticizing the Canadian government in the aftermath of the Holocaust was somewhat taboo, today the internment camps have been largely forgotten. Moreover, given how far Canada has come, it can be easy to overlook the anti-

Semitism that led to them.

Beginning in the 1960s, much began to change in Canada. Hoping to placate French Canadians who felt shut out of society at large, the government launched a dialogue on biculturalism.

"A number of groups — with the Ukrainians in the lead — said, 'Well, biculturalism isn't enough,'" Menkis said. "That opened a whole discussion at the federal level about multiculturalism."

The Jewish refugees were held in eight camps across Canada, at least two of which also housed Nazi prisoners. Because they were not prisoners of war, the Jewish refugees fell outside the protections of the Geneva Conventions. As a result, they were sometimes treated worse than the Germans. In some camps, the Nazis had access to Christian clergy and enjoyed Christmas trees and decorations, while the Jews struggled to find menorahs or candles, and rabbis were hard to come by.

Jewish prisoners organized classes, taught each other English and Torah, published newspapers, and made art, pieces of which are on display at the Vancouver center's exhibit. The exhibit also features video testimony from survivors and artifacts from the camps, ranging from homemade board games to personal diaries to luggage brought from Britain.

Over time, the treatment of Jews in the camps improved; eventually they were reclassified from enemy prisoners to refugees. Upon their release, many returned to Britain to support the war effort.

"They were the first witnesses to the horrors of Nazism," Draper said. "They're the ones who knew more than anyone else what was happening to the people who didn't get out."

## WHY ONE AUSCHWITZ SURVIVOR AVOIDED DOCTORS FOR SIXTY-FIVE YEARS

BY CHRISTOPH SCHULT,  
SPIEGEL ONLINE

Sixty-five years ago, infamous Auschwitz doctor Josef Mengele removed Yitzhak Ganon's kidney without anesthesia. The Greek-born Jew swore never to see a doctor again — until a heart attack brought his horrific tale into the open.

He is a thin man. His wine-red cardigan is a little too big, and his legs are like matchsticks in his brown pants. Yitzhak Ganon takes care of himself. He's freshly shaven, his white mustache neatly trimmed. The 85-year-old sits on a gray sofa, with a cushion supporting his back. He is too weak to stand by himself, but he still greets a guest in German: "Guten tag."

Speaking is hard for him. "Slowly, Abba," his daughter Iris says, and brings him a glass of water. Her father has never in his life complained of any pain, she says.

One day he came back from his morning walk and lay down. "Are you sick, Papa?" Iris asked. "No, just a little tired," Yitzhak Ganon answered, before going to sleep. But after a few hours he was still tired. "I don't need a doctor," he told his daughter.

The next morning things were even worse. Ganon's wife and daughter called a doctor, who diagnosed a viral infection and told him to go to the hospital. Ganon

resisted, but finally realized his life was in danger. At some point he stopped fighting the doctor's orders.

### "JUST ONE KIDNEY"

His family brought him to the hospital in his home town of *Petach Tikva* near Tel Aviv. He had hardly been admitted when he lost consciousness. Heart attack, the doctor said. The blood clots



Yitzhak Ganon survived Auschwitz SS doctor Josef Mengele's medical experiments.

were cleared with the help of tiny balloons, and the doctors put five stents in him. "We thought he wouldn't survive the operation," said Eli Lev, the doctor. "Especially since he had just one kidney."

When Yitzhak Ganon came to, he told the doctors where he lost the other kidney — and why he had avoided doctors for 65 years. A reporter from the Israeli paper *Maariv* heard about the story. And now

Ganon is ready to tell his story to a German reporter for the first time.

He stretches his back and looks at a photo on the living room wall. It shows the Acropolis in Athens. "I come from *Arta*, a small city in northern Greece. It happened on Saturday, March 25, 1944. We had just lit the candles to celebrate the Sabbath when an SS officer and a Greek policeman burst into the house. They told us we should get ourselves ready for a big trip."

The 85-year-old slides the sleeve of his shirt up and uncovers his left forearm. The number 182558 is tattooed there in dark-blue ink.

The transport to Auschwitz took two weeks. His sick father died on the journey. Upon arrival, they had to strip and submit to an inspection. Ganon's mother and five siblings were then sent to the gas chambers.

Yitzhak Ganon was taken to the Auschwitz-Birkenau hospital, where Josef Mengele, the so-called "Angel of Death," conducted grisly experiments on Jewish prisoners.

Ganon had to lie down on a table and was tied down. Without any anesthetics, Mengele cut him open and removed his kidney. "I saw the kidney pulsing in his

hand and cried like a crazy man," Ganon says. "I screamed the 'Shema Yisrael.' I begged for death, to stop the suffering."

After the "operation," he had to work in the Auschwitz sewing room without painkillers. Among other things, he had to clean bloody medical instruments. Once, he had to spend the whole night in a bath of ice-cold water because Mengele wanted to "test" his lung function. Altogether, Ganon spent six and a half months in the concentration camp's hospital.

### "JUST FATIGUE"

When they had no more use for him, the Nazis sent him to the gas chamber. He survived only by chance: The gas chamber held only 200 people. Ganon was number 201.

On January 27, 1945, Auschwitz was liberated by Soviet troops. Yitzhak Ganon made it back to Greece and found his surviving siblings — a brother and a sister — and emigrated to Israel in 1949. He got married. And he swore never to go to a doctor again. "Whenever he was sick, even when it was really bad," his wife Ahuva says, "he told me it was just fatigue."

But now Ganon is happy he finally went to the hospital after his heart attack. One week later, he had another heart attack, and was given a pacemaker. "If the doctors hadn't been there," he says, smiling for the first time, "I would be dead now." Yitzhak Ganon has survived, again.



# PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE AMERICAN SOCIETY



Elizabeth Mundlak-Zborowski, Luncheon Chair; Abbi Halpern, 2013 Honoree; and Rebecca Hanus, Luncheon Chair.

The American Society for Yad Vashem's Annual Spring Luncheon honoring Abbi Halpern, a member of the third generation, for her commitment to the cause of Holocaust remembrance. The guest speaker, Abbi Halpern, shared memorable insights into the research and preparation necessary



Marilyn Rubenstein, Luncheon Honorary Chair; Abbi Halpern, Honoree; Elizabeth Mundlak-Zborowski, Luncheon Chair; Leonard Wilf, Chairman of the Board; and Rebecca Hanus, Luncheon Chair.





# TY FOR YAD VASHEM ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON

on was held on May 9th at the New York Marriott Marquis Hotel, leadership in the Young Leadership Associates and for her commitment. Alyson Richman, author of the best seller *The Lost Wife*, provided insight for writing a book about the Holocaust and its consequences.



Alyson Richman, author of *The Lost Wife* and 2013 Guest Speaker.



Gladys Halpern, Sharon Halpern, Marilyn Rubenstein, and Abbi Halpern.







# REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

## NEW YAD VASHEM SQUARE UNVEILED

A ceremony unveiling the new Yad Vashem Square took place May 1 in Jerusalem, at the entrance to the Mount of Remembrance, adjacent to the Yad Vashem museum. The square's new design, selected by a special committee of architects and artists, was created by Shlomo Aronson Architects, in conjunction with Prof. Yarom Vardimon, dean of the Faculty of Design at Shenkar College.

"It was important that the Square, which will be used as the main entrance to Yad Vashem, be designed in a modest and minimalist fashion," said Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev. "The Square serves as a gradual transition from the daily reality of the Jerusalem city streets to Yad Vashem: a visit which for many is a very meaningful and emotional experience."

The ceremony was attended by Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat; Leonard Wilf, chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem; and Zygmunt Wilf, trustee and secretary-general of the Board of the American Society for Yad Vashem. The Wilf families aided significantly in the construction of the square.

Following an example set by his parents Leonard Wilf, dedicated the garden plaza in memory of his mother, Judith Wilf, Holocaust survivor and lover of Jerusalem. Members of the Wilf family have been longtime active supporters of Yad Vashem, and were among the original founders of the American Society for Yad Vashem. In addition to the square, they have also contributed to the establishment of the Valley of the Communities, and endowed the new Holocaust History Museum as well as the entrance plaza in front of the visitors center. The Wilfs also underwrote Yad Vashem's ongoing project to record the testimonies of Holocaust survivors.

Beyond Yad Vashem, one of their most outstanding projects in Jerusalem was the renewal of Independence Park.



Dedication on May 1, 2013 of the Yad Vashem Square at the entrance to the Mount of Remembrance adjacent to Mount Herzl, generously endowed by the Wilf families. Left to right: Leonard Wilf, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem; Nir Barkat, Mayor of Jerusalem; Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate; Zygmunt Wilf, Trustee and Secretary General of the Board of the American Society for Yad Vashem.



Avner Shalev (center), Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, presenting Leonard Wilf (right), Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, and Zygmunt Wilf (left), Trustee and Secretary General of the Board of the American Society for Yad Vashem, with a key to Yad Vashem as a token of thanks upon the dedication of the Yad Vashem Square generously endowed by the Wilf families.



The Wilf Family Foundations underwrote the ongoing project to record testimonies of Holocaust survivors at Yad Vashem's Archives Division. Here Leonard Wilf (right), Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, and Zygmunt Wilf (second from left), Trustee and Secretary General of the Board of the American Society for Yad Vashem, are with Dr. Haim Gertner (left), Director of the Yad Vashem Archives, on a behind-the-scenes visit.



The Wilf families endowed Yad Vashem's new Holocaust History Museum, which opened in 2005. Here, from the second generation, Leonard Wilf (second from right), Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, and Zygmunt Wilf (center), Trustee and Secretary General of the Board of the American Society for Yad Vashem, are pictured with the families' recognition in the Museum, along with Shaya Ben Yehuda (left), Managing Director of Yad Vashem's International Relations Division; Avner Shalev (second from left), Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate; and Dorit Novak (right), Director-General of Yad Vashem.

## BEYOND LAMBS AND LIONS: JEWISH RESISTANCE IN THE HOLOCAUST

**Jewish resistance in the Shoah went beyond those who took up arms, to include spiritual resistance, acts of escape, hiding, and the forging of false papers, all in the context of war and the unique plight of the Jews stuck in it.**

BY DR. ROBERT ROZETT, DIRECTOR OF THE YAD VASHEM LIBRARIES

In the first decades after the Shoah, two extremes of Jewish response were commonly portrayed in public discourse: those who passively went to their deaths, offering no resistance, and those who took up arms against their persecutors. The former were mostly pitied and disparaged, and the latter were generally lionized as the displaying epitome of heroic behavior. Neither type of response was really understood in its complexity or in its context.

Since the 1970s, other aspects of Jewish resistance that had been investigated within scholarly contexts, but had remained marginal in terms of the public consciousness, began to come to the fore alongside the sole focus on Jewish resistance as armed resistance, adding another layer of complexity and context. Both spiritual resistance (underground educa-

tion, cultural events, religious services, and so on) and unarmed acts (escape, hiding, and forging false papers) began being regularly included in discussion about Jewish resistance, now often under

unfolding drama that engulfed them.

One of the most compelling aspects of Jewish resistance is the context in which it occurred. As the events of the Shoah evolved, *amidah* emerged from a



A street in Warsaw destroyed during the failed 1944 uprising against Nazi occupiers.

the rubric of the Hebrew word *amidah*, which roughly translates into taking "a stand." When teaching the Shoah today, both in Israel and in many other countries, significant space is given to *amidah*, since it emphasizes the fact that Jews were not mere dehumanized objects during the Shoah years, but active players in the

savage abyss that increased in savagery as time went on. The broad framework of the Shoah and, *inter alia*, Jewish resistance is the ferociousness of the war itself.

World War II not only encompassed much of the globe with fighting, but also engendered tremendous hardship along much of its length and breadth. The condi-

tions under which soldiers often fought, and the violence and privations they faced are hard for us to comprehend from our vantage point. What did it mean to fight in the sweltering jungles of Southeast Asia without enough provisions and plagued by hordes of insects, facing a nearly invisible enemy for whom the word surrender did not exist? What was it like to be on the Stalingrad Front in the winter of 1943, when temperatures plummeted to minus 40° C and when the landscape was a ruin of shell craters and destroyed buildings?

For noncombatants, the occupation by the Nazis and their allies in Europe and North Africa, and the Japanese occupation in much of Asia, were frequently as rapacious as they were ruthless. Millions were left to starve by policies that sequestered food for the conquerors and left the locals without enough to survive. Cruel forced labor was common and, although less common (if we do not include the Shoah), there were also incidents of mass murder. It is crucial to understand this overarching situation before delving into the more specific issue of Jewish responses during the period.

Within this global conflagration, the cir-

(Continued on page 15)



## “THE MUSIC CONNECTED US TO THE LIVES WE HAD LOST”

**Ed Vulliamy talks to Anka Bergman, 96, her daughter, Eva Clarke, who was born in a Nazi camp, and other survivors about life in Terezín, the camp where a wealth of imprisoned Czech musical talent suffered and played.**

ED VULLIAMY, THE GUARDIAN

The music had ended for the evening, and few people dared speak. Although beautiful, it had been hard to take at times. Every piece on the program had been written in the transit concentration camp of Terezín — which the Nazis called by its German name, *Theresienstadt* — an hour's drive from Prague. A grotesque and unique place within the history of the Holocaust, at any given time it housed 60,000 people, most of whom would be transported to Auschwitz. Yet it was also where, famously and surreally, the remarkable musical and theatrical life of Czechoslovakia was permitted, defiantly, to thrive; where great music was composed and performed by those condemned.

And at this concert in London three years ago, an artist called Helga Weissová-Hošková, who had survived Terezín and Auschwitz, took the stage for discussion and questions. At one point she was asked: “Were any babies born in Terezín?”, and replied: “I do remember a baby born on the ramp at the concentration camp of Mauthausen, when we arrived by cattle train from Auschwitz. A German soldier went and found a doctor in the camp, I don't know why, or what happened to the baby.” Silence followed, and a woman stood up and said, quite matter-of-factly: “Could I just say, I am that child.”

The woman born on the Mauthausen ramp who rose from the audience to speak is Eva Clarke, 67. She lives in Cambridge with her mother, Anka Bergman, who is 96. Mrs Bergman knew the man who founded and conducted the principal orchestra in the camp: Karel Ancerl. Ancerl also survived Auschwitz and went on to become one of the greatest conductors and interpreters of music — some say the greatest — of his generation with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra.

“How many of you know what a milliner is?” Eva Clarke asks students gathered in a hall at Long Road sixth-form college in Cambridge. No one raises a hand. “Well, I'm talking about a time when women wore hats, and my mother was apprenticed to a milliner, someone who made hats.” Eva stands beneath a projection showing the gulag of concentration and death camps, for the latest in her tireless rounds of presentations on the Holocaust and her own family history. She talks about how her German Jewish father — who had been awarded an Iron Cross, First Class, for valor in the service of the fatherland during the First World War — left his native Berlin, thinking Czechoslovakia to be safe: “It wasn't. But if he hadn't come he'd never have met my mother.”

She tells them about the encroachment of measures against Jews, as backdrop to her parents' romance and of her mother being a film-lover “comfortable with the fact that she was a good looking,” and shows a picture of the newlyweds smiling, wearing their yellow stars with “no idea what that would mean for them in the future.”

Eva's father, Berndt Nathan, was “transported” to Terezín first, and Anka followed, taking with her a box of his favorite doughnuts. At the camp, which Anka called “this awful, crowded place,” she was tasked to work in the kitchens, “therefore had

access to food. That was life, the search for food.” Men and women were rigidly segregated, yet Anka “managed to get pregnant,” as Eva Clarke puts it. The baby died, but then Anka conceived a second time.

“Which was an extreme danger,” says Eva. “Four other women had been forced to sign a document agreeing to surrender their babies once born, hearing for the first time a new word, ‘euthanasia.’” As well as which, there was this place, known in Terezín simply as “the East,” to which people were unceasingly “transported,” to disappear forever. “Once in Auschwitz,” says Eva, “to be pregnant was to be sent straight to the gas chambers.”

Eva Clarke continues the story of her mother's survival, and her own birth, to a rapt young audience, after which we drive through late winter sun to Eva's home in Cambridge, to which her mother recently moved from Cardiff. Now it is 96-year-old Anka's turn to tell her story.

Anka recounts how she left Terezín for Auschwitz, “knowing I was pregnant, to follow my husband.” She recalls asking



Eva Clarke, who was born at Mauthausen camp, with her mother, Anka Bergman, after the war, and today in Cambridge.

the question, “among the brick chimneys: ‘When will I see my parents?’”, and the hollow mirth that greeted it among those in her berth. “We'll all go up in smoke,” they replied. “You'll never see them again.” She became, she says, “thinner and thinner, while my stomach became bigger and bigger,” and was transferred to a factory near Freiberg where V2 “buzzbombs” were manufactured, “and where we were delighted to find bedbugs, which meant food and warmth.” Six months later, Anka was transported to Mauthausen on an open coal truck, where she went into labor. “You can carry on screaming,” said one German soldier, but another seems to have taken pity and fetched a Jewish doctor from within the camp: “And I gave birth to a healthy girl. I was in Mauthausen, but I was also in heaven. I suppose I should believe in God, I have lived so many miracles, but I don't. He was not there.” Mother and daughter escaped certain death only because when Anka arrived in Mauthausen at the end of April 1945, the approaching US army was so close the Nazis had dismantled the gas chambers. “The war was lost,” says Anka, “but if we had arrived just a few days earlier we would not be here.”

Anka tells also of “the most terrible moment of all,” when the bedraggled survivors “returned to Prague, which we had once called home, like ghosts — begging even the fare for a tram.” But members of her extended family had also survived, “and after we found the door, they welcomed us and treated us like gold.” After the annexation of Czechoslovakia by the

Soviets, Anka fled again with her second husband — to arrive as a refugee, “happy and lucky, in Cardiff.”

But there had been this other story, back in Terezín, of which Anka Bergman also speaks: that of the music, which the Jews of Czechoslovakia, and thereafter all Europe, brought with them within the walls of the camp.

“Czechoslovakia had been the most culturally vibrant nation in Europe,” recalls Anka. “Prague was on a level with Vienna, Berlin or Paris.”

It is impossible to overstate the importance of music in Czechoslovakia between the wars, and the effervescence of culture in the Bohemian capital. “It was indescribable,” recalls Anka. “When I came to this country, I realized what did not exist, and had existed then: music in the air, and a level of culture among the people you wouldn't get nowadays. Of course, you never expected to meet all these great musicians and composers: but suddenly there they were — in the camp. All these many gifted people in Terezín, putting their talents to work.

“It distracted us, to hear the performances,” continues Anka. “It connected us to the lives we had lived, and lost. Looking back, it's amazing to think how much pleasure they gave to so many people, under the most horrific of circumstances.”

Anka preferred traditional music, and “my favorite was *The Bartered Bride* [by Smetana] — our great Czech opera, and there were so many people there. It was a dress rehearsal, and the part of young Marenka was sung by a 48-year-old, very beautifully.” Anka also attended a famous performance of Verdi's Requiem, conducted by Rafael Schächter and accompanied by him on a harmonium. “Every time he rehearsed the choir, more people had gone, transported East,” she recalls, “but it was played, and when the music stopped, total silence. We were shattered — until the German officers started clapping in the front rows.

“At first the Germans thought they were being generous to the Jews, allowing us to play,” says Anka. “Then they saw how wonderfully the music was played, and presumably had the idea to stage performances, and make films, for the outside world.”

In 1943 the Nazis struck upon two entwined ideas. One was to stage *Brundibár*, a children's opera composed in 1941 by Hans Krása, invite a delegation from the International Committee of the Red Cross to see it, and let these distinguished guests be the judges of what they saw. The children sang, the orchestra played, and the Red Cross was delighted, underwriting Terezín with its international authority and a clean bill of health. Within

days, almost the entire cast of children had been shipped “East” to the gas chambers.

The second scheme was to produce a documentary entitled *The Führer Gives a City to the Jews*, for which Terezín was cleaned up and grotesque sequences filmed in which apparently happy inmates, in reality doomed to die, play football and cultivate market gardens. And of course there is music: the Terezín Orchestra plays, under the baton of its founder and conductor, Karel Ancerl. Here, his genius is exploited for a nauseating propaganda purpose — “but he could not do otherwise,” recalls Anka. But she knew him differently, for who he really was, her memories both intimate and epic.

“I distributed milk in Terezín, and would see Ancerl with his wife and child,” recalls Anka on the sofa in Cambridge, making this unimaginable history tangible. “I knew her from Prague — though not as well as I knew his second wife. And I knew him by name — he had begun to make his name as a conductor. So I would give them a bit extra, and more milk for the child, and we became the best of friends.”

An actress named Zdenka Fantlova, now 91, also spoke at that weekend's events. Mrs. Fantlova took the lead female role in a number of cabarets and plays in Terezín, and on October 15, 1944, aged 22, traveled with her mother and little sister in a cattle car to Auschwitz with the great composers themselves: Gideon Klein, Viktor Ullmann, Hans Krása, on what would be their last journey. Also with them was Rafael Schächter, who organized many of the concerts and accompanied on piano, and the brilliant young Ancerl.

Schächter produced a tin of sardines from his bag. “He was sitting opposite me,” says Mrs. Fantlova. “He took out his sardines and his last piece of bread. Sardines were a symbol; with sardines, you could buy cigarettes, anything — they were the highest currency on the black market. Now he put them in a dish, mixed them with bread and said: ‘This will be my last supper.’ I thought it seemed strange: how did he know what was to happen? But we got to Auschwitz and it was his last supper.”

Upon arrival, Schächter, Ullmann, Krása and Klein went first, directed straight to the gas chambers by Dr. Josef Mengele himself, wielding his cane and directing the arrivals to either forced labor or immediate death with a flick of the thumb.

Then came Ancerl, and behind him, young Zdenka, and her mother and sister. Ancerl was, says Mrs. Fantlova, “right in front of us. We had walked from the train, and he was with his wife and child. He was carrying his son, who had been born in Terezín. Guards with dogs grabbed the child from him, pushed it to his wife and kicked him to the floor. Karel rose and dusted himself down. We walked for two miles or so, until we reached three SS officers, boots polished, badges like mirrors. The one in the middle I only later learned was Mengele. And without any emotion, casually, with a wave of his white glove, he sent Ancerl's wife and child to the left, and Karel to the right. We didn't know what it meant — and he disappeared into the crowd, looking back at them.”

Then came Zdenka's turn. And there was Mengele. “He motioned my mother to the left and she disappeared into the crowd. I did not wait, I grabbed my younger sister and joined the line to the right. We were next up. Behind me were a young mother and her child, carrying a

(Continued on page 15)



# THE LITTLE ONES THAT GOT AWAY

BY ALLAN HALL, MAILONLINE

They were the children of the damned — Jews who had no place in the New World Order of Adolf Hitler and his storm troopers.

Their parents were rounded up and shipped off to die as the Nazi regime — which came to power 80 years ago in Germany — set about the systematic “cleansing” of the country.

But there were good people too; people who looked beyond the religion of an innocent child and risked death by guillotine to hide them from the roundup squads.

Now the heart-moving stories of 15 of these children are told for the first time in a book published in Berlin called *You Don't Get Us*.

The survivors include Rahel Renate Mann, 75, who still lives in Berlin where she was hidden all those years ago.

She was thrown out of hospital in June 1937 hours after she was born because of her mother's Jewishness; her mother Edith later had her baptized in the hope that it would save her from the Holocaust to come.

They lived in a tiny apartment with a Jewish star pinned on the door by the local Gestapo thugs.

When her mother was at work little Rahel played with Frau Vater, who acted as the Nazi spy for the building on the other residents, but who nonetheless liked Rahel.

The Nazis came in 1941 and took her mother away, but Rahel was saved by the



Rahel Mann pictured in 1939 and outside her Berlin home earlier this year. She was among the many Jewish children hidden from the Nazis during WWII.

Vater family and fostered to another Jewish family in the building.

Then the Nazis came the following year for them. “Mr. Vater saved me by saying I was his niece,” she said.

After this she went underground, passing from family to family, from cellar to secret cellar, staying one step ahead of the death squads shipping all Jews off to be exterminated in the death camps in occupied Poland.

She remembers a pastor called Eitel-Friedrich von Rabenau of Apostle Paul Church. He told her about Jesus, sang Hebrew songs with her in the darkness of her hiding place in the church crypt. “For the first time,” she says, “I felt loved.”

When she was seven, the Gestapo arrested the pastor and Rahel was given back to the Vater family. Frau Vater built a secret compartment in the family cellar.

“I spent all day on a cold stone floor sitting on a mattress, just a sliver of light coming in through a nailed-down, grimy window,” she said.

“I could not cry, talk, make any noise at all.” She taught herself to read using a children's book, and a friend of the Vater family came to stay with her sometimes to

pass the boredom.

“This was 1944 and the air raids were pummeling Berlin now,” she recalled. “I was taken up after a particularly heavy one and breathed fresh air for the first time in a year.

“There was barely a house standing and there were dead bodies everywhere. The image has always haunted me.”

Then in 1945, after several more months in the cellar, the Russian soldiers arrived and hauled her out of her hiding place. She was reunited with her mother shortly afterwards, but she was deathly ill with TB from a concentration camp.

“I felt so guilty as I grew up and learned about the Holocaust,” she said. “I thought; ‘Why did I live when so many had to die?’ When I was 17 I tried to kill myself by throwing myself underneath a car, but the driver stopped and gave me a clip around the ear. It brought me to my senses.”

She went on to live for a decade in Israel before returning to her native Berlin, where she now acts as a helper for the terminally ill in a hospice.

“My childhood taught me the value of living every second of your life,” she said. “I survived the Nazis and that is the greatest gift of all.”

Eugen Herman-Friede had Jewish parents who separated early. His mother went on to marry a non-Jewish man, Julius Friede, and it was only after Eugen started school that he learned of his roots.

He went to school but was booted out in 1936, aged 10, because he was branded a “Jewish pig.” Later he was forced to wear the yellow star on his clothes — the Nazi branding of Jews as “outsiders.”

In 1942, the Nazis closed all Jewish schools and he was sent to perform forced labor for the Reich. In 1943, weakened from lack of food, he decides to become a “U-Boat” — the Nazi term for Jews, 6,000 in all, who went into hiding in Berlin.

He said goodbye to his girlfriend Helga Weissblut, 16. He would never see her again: she was shipped off to be murdered at the ultimate Nazi death factory of Auschwitz.

He lived in numerous hideouts, coal sheds, and cellars until he reached the non-Jewish family Winkler, whose son was in the Hitler Youth but who had come to detest the Nazis. “They were warm-hearted, courageous, and unselfish,” says Eugen today.

“Ask yourself: would you be willing to put your neck on the block of the guillotine for people you didn't know?” He was even able to wear the Hitler Youth uniform to walk about in and was photographed in it.

The Winklers founded a resistance group, but it was informed upon, and in December 1944, Eugen was arrested with his parents; but they were not executed, as the Gestapo wanted more information about the resistance group.

They were still in prison when the war ended. “Now I make it my business to tell people I wasn't the hero, but those people who gave us food and shelter and hope,” he said.

“I was already doomed: they chose to defy doom when they could have looked

the other way. That made them heroes.”

Rolf Joseph, now 92, says he had a normal childhood with his brother Alfred in Berlin's working-class *Wedding* district — until the day in 1933 when the Nazis came to power and the teacher wore a “brown-shirt” uniform instead of a suit and tie.

“And he had a cane,” he said. “And he liked to hit the Jewish children with it a lot.”

During his apprenticeship as a carpenter he recalls cycling home from school on November 9, 1938, and seeing flames light up the sky. This was *Kristallnacht*, the Night of the Broken Glass, when the Nazis instigated a statewide pogrom against the Jews.

“When I saw our synagogues burn,” he said, “I knew I had to go.” He tried to persuade his father to leave, but the stubborn WWI veteran, who fought for the Kaiser in the trenches in France, said, “Nothing will happen to us.”

On June 6, 1942, Rolf and Alfred were on the corner of their street when they saw Gestapo men bundling and kicking their parents into a car to take them away. They never saw them again.

“Suddenly we were homeless,” says Rolf. “Our apartment was sealed, we had only the things we carried on our backs.” They, too, went underground, first spending three weeks sleeping under leaves in the city's Tegel Forest before seeking more permanent help.

Alfred found shelter with the family of a former girlfriend, Rolf with a rag-and-bone woman. “She was a strange woman with many quirks, but a good heart,” he recalled.

He was stuffed into a cellar in the *Wedding* district, not far from where he used to live, and ventured out cautiously once a week to meet his brother — 11:00 am every Wednesday. But on one autumn day in 1942, Alfred didn't turn up.

“I was wondering what happened when suddenly there was this sharp voice at my shoulder,” said Rolf. “I turned around and saw a soldier in uniform. ‘Why aren't you in the *Wehrmacht*?’ he barked. ‘I told him I worked in the munitions industry.’”

The soldier demanded his papers; Rolf produced a bad fake of an ID card bearing the name Paul Wagner. “Well, Mr. Wagner, you had better come along with us,” said the soldier, motioning to a comrade sitting in a nearby car.

“Are you Jewish?” asked the soldier. Rolf nodded and his fate was sealed — he was delivered to the *Burgstrasse* Gestapo office in the center of town.

Rolf went on: “I was interrogated for hours. They wanted to know about where my brother is and where I hid.”

He said nothing, and was moved to a basement cell and told to strip. “We get everything in the end, you know,” said a Gestapo torturer, who proceeded to beat him with a bullwhip.

“You remember that address of your brother now?” he asked after administering 25 lashes. There came 25 more lashes. The silent Rolf was thrown into a cell known as Bunker Number One, where he could not sit upright, and he heard low voices outside saying; “The transport to Auschwitz leaves tomorrow....”

The next morning, Rolf Joseph was chained together with five other young

men and driven in a van like the one which had taken his parents away.

Above the driver's cab, Rolf saw a toolbox, and he stole a pair of pliers with the aid of his fellow prisoners. They were in his pocket when he and the rest were deposited at the *Pulitzstrasse* train station.



Rahel Mann with her mother.

A long freight train composed of cattle cars waited for them. “They were bedecked with straw and buckets for the necessities were in the corners.” Thousands were crammed into the cars, then the doors were shut and the whistle blew.

The train rattled towards Auschwitz. Using the pliers he managed to free himself from his handcuffs and those of his fellow prisoners. All six of them then pried a plank loose from the wagon and jumped into the night air as the train crossed into Poland.

But they were betrayed by a shepherd as they walked back to Berlin, and arrested again by the Gestapo. And at *Burgstrasse*, Rolf was again severely beaten by the man with the bullwhip, beatings which have left him with epileptic seizures to this day.

In the Gestapo HQ he scratched his body all over, claiming he had scarlet fever. “That was a really good idea — the Germans were really scared of infections,” he said. Weighing 93 pounds, he was shipped to a Jewish hospital; his fellow escapees were shot.

At the hospital, with a guard outside his door, he managed to jump out of the second-floor window by squeezing past the bars. But he had broken bones in his back by the time he dragged himself to the old hiding place with the rag-and-bone woman — to find his brother sheltering there.

The two survived in her cellar sanctuary until it was hit by an RAF incendiary and they had to move out to the suburbs near *Bernaui*, where the old lady owned some land, and they built an underground bunker to live in.

One morning in late April 1945, Russian soldiers came face to face with Rolf and Alfred Joseph in their hiding hole. “You SS? Nazi?”, they asked in broken German.

“No, no,” said Rolf Joseph. But they brought him to their CO, who happened to be Jewish. “He asked me to say a prayer in Hebrew and I did and he said we were free men.”

Now, as Berlin remembers the Nazis and their takeover of power 80 years ago, Rolf did not live to see the anniversary or the book. He died two months before it was published, but before he passed away he said: “I remember every day. The dead, the hopeless and the heroic.

“People who gave us life because they found it in their hearts to act with dignity towards other human beings.”



# SURVIVOR RETURNS TO POLAND TO DIG UP FAMILY HISTORY

BY MATT LEBOVIC,  
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

“Remember to carry on a Jewish life and Jewish traditions,” Israel Arbeiter’s father told his adolescent son just minutes before half the family was deported to *Treblinka*.

It was October 27, 1942, and the Nazis were “liquidating” the *Starachowice* ghetto, south of Warsaw. Amid the frantic shouting and herding of men, women and children onto cattle cars, Israel’s first instinct was to join his parents and younger brother in line with the kids and elderly.

Israel’s father, sensing the unthinkable, ordered his son back to the line with young people capable of work. Within days, Israel’s parents and brother were murdered at *Treblinka*, and the teenage Israel — called *Izzy* — began a horrific journey through some of the Holocaust’s most notorious killing sites.

A new documentary called *A Promise to My Father* follows Arbeiter during an eight-day return to Europe and the places where his family lived and died.

Arbeiter always urges fellow survivors to share their experiences with young adults as often as possible, and *Promise* allows the 87-year-old to connect with a larger audience than ever. Like other “testimonial” documentaries produced by the new World War II Foundation, the film will air on PBS later this year.

“How can you put five and a half years of living under such terrible conditions into a film of one hour?” Arbeiter rhetorically asked audience members after the screening. “Still, telling the story of what happened is the first responsibility of all survivors.”

Arbeiter grew up in Poland’s *Plock*, a town on the Vistula River with 700 years of Jewish history. The middle one of five boys, Arbeiter recalls “a good life,” with his mother referring to her sons as “my basketball team.”

Even after Germany invaded Poland in

1939, Arbeiter’s parents believed Jews would be treated fairly, drawing on memories of the German army during World War I. As Jewish persecution expanded, Arbeiter’s father asked his sons to bury the family’s Shabbat candlesticks and other heirlooms in the basement.

More than 70 years later, and with his adult grandson accompanying him, Arbeiter returned to *Plock* with the *Promise* film crew to dig up the candlesticks. For Arbeiter, the candlesticks were a cherished family heirloom, and retrieving them to pass on to descendants would symbolically fulfill the unspoken promise made to his father in 1942.

Despite the best efforts of his shovel-wielding grandson, a slew of Polish helpers, and Arbeiter himself, the family’s buried candlesticks remain lost. The building he grew up in has been condemned and will soon be destroyed, lost to history like most of Arbeiter’s family and the ritual objects they shared.

Arbeiter’s visit to his *Plock* family home and attempt to dig up the past is one of several emotional scenes in the film. Perhaps most haunting of all is Arbeiter’s nighttime walk around *Treblinka*, where his parents and a brother were gassed along with an estimated 900,000 other Jews starting in 1942.

At one point, Arbeiter stands alone in the former death camp’s memorial field and recites the mourner’s prayer next to a stone inscribed with the name of his town. The stone is one of 17,000 jagged granite monuments rising from the ground, each inscribed with the name of a town, city, or country from which victims were sent to *Treblinka*.

*A Promise to My Father* also recounts the love story between Arbeiter and his wife, Anna, whom he met after falling ill at a forced labor camp. Anna helped Arbeiter recover his health, a favor he was able to return when the two were reunited at Auschwitz in 1944.

Selected upon arrival to work, Arbeiter pulled a “toilet wagon” around the camp to empty latrines. He credits the assignment with exposing him to all aspects of Auschwitz, and allowing him to smuggle food, shoes, and other items to inmates, including Anna.

Arbeiter’s visit to Auschwitz comes halfway into the documentary, and 68 years after he first entered the death camp as a 19-year-old. Wearing a 2004 World Champion Boston Red Sox hat, Arbeiter explains various sites within the



The Arbeiter brothers — their mother’s “basketball team” — grew up in *Plock*, Poland, before World War II.

*Birkenau* killing complex, including the barracks where he lived and the separate women’s camp where Anna was held.

During his visit to Auschwitz, Arbeiter encounters a group of Slovakian teenagers touring the camp. Showing them his tattooed inmate number and calling Auschwitz a “death factory,” Arbeiter urges the teens to tell their families about the visit and what they learned.

Izzy and Anna’s wedding took place in 1946, a year after Anna was liberated from Auschwitz and Arbeiter “borrowed” a Polish motorcycle to locate her in Germany. The couple’s first daughter was born in 1948, and the Arbeiter family made its home 4,000 miles away from Auschwitz, outside Boston.

Like most survivors who moved to America, Arbeiter worked hard to feed his family, learn English, and cope with an unimaginable past. The Arbeiters have

lived in their Newton, Massachusetts, home for 40 years, long enough to witness the birth of three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

A natural leader and convener, Arbeiter recently left the presidency of the American Association of Holocaust Survivors of Greater Boston after six decades of service. During these decades, he testified at Nazi war crimes trials, fought tirelessly for survivor reparations, and helped found the internationally recognized New England Holocaust Memorial.

Though he says he will never be able to forgive the generation of Nazi perpetrators, Arbeiter has long urged people not to hold the children and grandchildren of Nazis accountable for the Holocaust. He has traveled to Germany and Poland several times, and maintains warm relations with German diplomats and educators. For his work in repairing German-Jewish relations, Arbeiter received Germany’s Order of Merit in 2008.

In one of the film’s most uplifting encounters, Arbeiter locates a German woman who risked her life to give him and fellow prisoners bread as they walked to and from their forced labor assignment each day. During another, more tense encounter, Arbeiter sits with a former Hitler Youth member who claims the Holocaust was totally hidden from the German people.

Approaching 90 and struggling to maintain his health, Arbeiter acknowledges that he will probably never visit Poland or Germany again. He sees *A Promise to My Father* as a final farewell to his family, a rare opportunity to share his story with the world.

Although Arbeiter did not recover the Shabbat candlesticks buried under his Polish home seven decades ago, he cites his grandchildren and great-grandchildren as the fulfillment of his father’s last request — to survive and maintain Jewish life.

## ESCAPING THE TRAIN TO AUSCHWITZ

(Continued from page 6)

and the noise was deafening. I remember feeling surprised that it could go so fast with 35 cars being towed. But then at a certain moment, I felt the train slow down. I told my mother: ‘Now I can jump.’ She let me go and I jumped off. First I stood there



Detainees were taken from *Kazerne Dossin* directly to the death camp.

frozen. I could see the train moving slowly forward — it was this large black mass in the dark, spewing steam.”

But the train slowed to a stop for a second time that night and the German guards began shooting again, this time in Simon’s direction. “I wanted to go back to

my mother but the Germans were coming down the track towards me. I didn’t decide what to do, it was a reflex. I tumbled down a small slope and just started running for the trees.”

Simon walked and ran all night, through woods and over fields.

“I was used to the woods because I’d been in the cub scouts. I hummed ‘In the Mood’ to calm myself, which was a song my sister used to play on the piano,” he says.

Simon wanted to get to Brussels and his father, Leon.

Simon knew he risked arrest but, by dawn, he knew that he would need help. With torn, muddy clothes, he knocked on a village door and told the woman who answered that he had been playing with friends and had got lost. At the time, Belgians who failed to turn in Jews to the Gestapo would be shot, and the woman took Simon to the local police officer.

For the first time, Simon was terrified. “The sight of this man in his uniform with his gun in his belt, terrorized me. I was sure he would bring me back to the Germans. He asked me what had happened and I kept telling him that I had got lost and I was playing with children and that now, I had to go to Brussels.”

The policeman, Jan Aerts, had guessed Simon came from the Auschwitz convoy.

The bodies of three escapees were lying in the police station at that very moment. However, Aerts had no intention of betraying Simon. His wife fed him and gave him clean clothes.

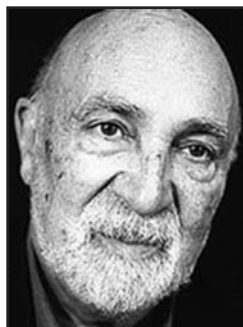
Aerts arranged for Simon to catch a train back to Brussels, where he arrived that evening. Simon was reunited that night with his father, a shopkeeper, although they spent the remaining years of the war hidden separately by Catholic families.

Chana Gronowski was sent to the gas chambers on arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Simon’s

sister Ita, 18, arrived in Auschwitz on the next but one convoy, and also died there.

In all, 25,483 Jews and 351 Roma were deported from *Kazerne Dossin*. Of the 233 people who attempted to escape from the 20th convoy with Simon Gronowski, 26 were shot that night, 89 were recaptured, and 118 got away.

The 20th convoy was unique in that there was an attempt to rescue the deportees. It was unique in being the only convoy from which there was what could be called a mass breakout. According to some sources, it was also unique in that although 70% of the women and girls were killed in the gas chambers immediately on arrival, the remaining women were sent to Block X of *Birkenau* for medical experimentation.



Simon Gronowski.

As for the three young Belgian Resistance members who stopped the train, Youra Livschitz was captured later and executed. Jean Franklemon was arrested soon after and sent to *Sachsenhausen* concentration camp, where he was freed in May 1945. He died in 1977. Robert Maistriau was arrested in March 1944. He was liberated from *Bergen-Belsen* in 1945 and lived until 2008.

Jan Aerts was declared a “Righteous Gentile” by the Yad Vashem museum in Jerusalem. Leon Gronowski died within months of the end of the war.

Simon Gronowski paid his way through university. He chose to be a lawyer because, he says, the Nazis had tried to dispossess and demean him, and he saw the law as the best way of countering that. Today he lives in Brussels and still practices law. He has children and grandchildren. He plays jazz.

For more than 50 years he hardly spoke about his past, but Maxime Steinberg, a Belgian historian and specialist in the persecution of Jews in Belgium, persuaded him to write a book.

Simon Gronowski’s story, and those of many others, is also told in the new *Kazerne Dossin Museum and Documentation Centre of the Holocaust and Human Rights*, which opened in December.



# THE TRAGIC MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO STOP THE HOLOCAUST

BY LESLIE LARSON, MAILONLINE

The slaughter of six million Jews during the Holocaust remains among the darkest periods of human history, but one author is exploring what could have been, had the Vatican used its platform to speak out in condemnation of the Nazi regime.

Though Pope Pius XII has been labeled Hitler's Pope for his failure to denounce the Third Reich, author Peter Eisner points to his predecessor, Pius XI, and his attempts to build a church campaign to stand in opposition to oppressive regimes sweeping across Europe.



Pope Pius XI.

Pius XI, branded a fearless leader wise to the dangers of Hitler's ideology, enlisted the help of an American Jesuit civil rights activist and was in the midst of composing a Catholic encyclical to denounce the Holocaust, but his message was muted due to his untimely death in 1939.

In his book *The Pope's Last Crusade*, Eisner paints a picture of a divided church in the lead-up to World War II, with many seeking to thwart the strong-willed pontiff resolved to use his position to speak on behalf of the oppressed and the marginalized.

As Hitler and Mussolini ruled with terror across Europe, the pope used increasing-

ly damning language to denounce their regimes, but many Catholic leaders feared retaliation for the statements.

He sought to take a more formal stand with the composition of an encyclical, an edict sent to Catholics worldwide, to formally call for the end of the atrocities.

With the help of an American Jesuit, Fr. John LaFarge, the Holy See was moving toward announcing a definitive Catholic campaign against the racist ideology and religion of nationalism that was being preached.

LaFarge had worked among the impoverished African-American community in southern Maryland and then moved to New York to report for the Catholic magazine, *America*. In this role, he wrote extensively of the evil of the myth of racial superiority and caught the attention of the activist pope.

Fr. LaFarge was summoned to the Vatican to meet with the pope, and he spent time in Paris drafting a document and sent a draft to the pope for his consideration.

But other factions working within the walls of the Vatican worked actively to suppress the message, and just days before Pius XI was set to launch a campaign targeted at the immoral movements pervading Europe, he died in February 1939.

With his death, his declaration failed to reach the millions of Catholics and even nonadherents who looked to the religious leader for guidance during the turbulent period.

Hitler felt "he could go to any length with the Jews, without fear of attack from any church," Irish politician Conor Cruise O'Brien wrote in 1989, according to Eisner's account.

"Had Pius XI been able to deliver the encyclical he planned, the green light

would have changed to red. The Catholic Church in Germany would have been obliged to speak out against the persecu-



Cesare Orsenigo, the Vatican's representative to Nazi Germany, meets with Adolf Hitler and Joachim von Ribbentrop in early 1939. He is accused of advocating for "compromise and conciliation" with the Nazis.

tion of the Jews. Many Protestants, inside and outside Germany, would have been likely to follow its example."

Instead, Cardinal Pacelli, who had worked for the pope as his secretary of state, became the new pontiff, Pius XII, and ensured the message never saw the light of day, reportedly ordering that correspondence and written messages from Pius XI be burned.

Pius XII has been judged for not using the institution of the church to speak for those who could not speak for themselves, choosing to stay neutral in the face of glaring evil.

In a 1972 report about the encyclical that was never released, the editors of the *National Catholic Reporter* stated, "we must conclude that the publication of the encyclical draft at the time it was written might have saved hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of lives."



Bishops doing a Nazi salute in honor of Hitler with Joseph Goebbels (far right) and Wilhelm Frick (second from right).

In an effort to repair his tarnished legacy, the Vatican has recently released new documents about clandestine efforts the Vatican undertook to try to protect Jews under the watch of Pius XII.

According to a new book by British author Gordon Thomas, *The Pope's Jews*, instructions were given to priests to issue baptism certificates to hundreds of Italian Jews, and convents and monasteries were used to hide more than 4,000 Jews across Italy.

Though individual efforts by Catholics across Europe are laudable, the church's unwillingness to use its worldwide influence to stand up to evil is a mark of shame that remains today.

Under Pope John Paul II, the Vatican formed a joint commission in 1999 with scholars from the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation to study questions about Pope Pius XII during the war.

But the joint study yielded little, since the Vatican would not release records

from the war period, and the commission disbanded after a year.

Bits of information have been released since 2003, but Eisner says that without the facts about what actually occurred during the war, it is difficult to review the issue and move toward reconciliation.

## WALLENBERG'S HOLOCAUST MISSION TO RESCUE HUNGARIAN JEWS FROM NAZIS WAS NO FLUKE, SAY RESEARCHERS

World War II hero Raoul Wallenberg's appointment for a mission to rescue Hungarian Jews from the Nazis may not have been as random as previously thought.

U.S.-based Wallenberg researchers Susanne Berger and Vadim Birstein said they have obtained new material that suggests the Swede was well connected with Swedish decision-makers and Hungary's resistance movement before he was sent to Budapest in 1944.

"He was not some green, naïve guy who started from scratch when he was in Budapest," Berger told *The Associated Press*. "There was a very strong push for him from numerous quarters, it now seems."

Wallenberg is credited with saving thousands of Jews in Budapest by distributing false Swedish passports or giving shelter in diplomatic enclaves. He vanished after being arrested in Budapest by the Soviet Red Army in 1945, but the Russians have never explained why they detained the Swedish diplomat.

It's well known that Wallenberg's work as a Swedish diplomat in Budapest was a cover for his true mission as secret emissary of the U.S. War Refugee Board, created by U.S. President Franklin D.

Roosevelt in a belated attempt to stem the annihilation of Europe's Jews.

But Berger and Birstein said diary notes and other documents they obtained last year from the daughter of Hungarian diplomat Antal Ullein-Reviczky, a key figure in Hungary's resistance movement who was linked to U.S. and British intelligence officials, challenge the widely held belief that the choice of Wallenberg for the assignment in 1944 was largely accidental.

Ullein-Reviczky's guest lists and notes from dinner parties and other social events, in both Stockholm and Budapest between 1943 and 1944, show that Wallenberg frequently socialized with influential people that would make his appointment possible, the researchers said.

Among them were Sweden's Foreign Minister Christian Gunther and senior Foreign Ministry official Erik Boheman. Wallenberg also met with senior politicians, business executives, and others within Hungary's social elite whom Berger described as "the core group of anti-Nazi sentiment."

"All that would have caught Soviet attention," the researchers said in a statement, noting that many of Ullein-Reviczky's acquaintances have been found in

Wallenberg's contact book.

"It is very likely that Soviet intelligence representatives in Stockholm and Hungary reported to Moscow in some detail about Raoul Wallenberg's activities in the years 1943-1945," they said.

Ingrid Carlberg, a Swedish journalist who will publish a book on Wallenberg this year, called the new information "very interesting."

Carlberg said the findings support her own theory that Wallenberg's contacts with figures linked to Western intelligence services "triggered Stalin's irritation" and help explain why Moscow would have viewed him with suspicion.

The Soviets initially denied Wallenberg was in their custody, but then said in 1957 that he died of a heart attack in prison on July 17, 1947.

After the Soviet collapse, that version of events was challenged by Alexander Yakovlev, the one-time chairman of a presidential panel investigating the fate of repression victims. In 2000, Yakovlev said he had been told by a former KGB chief that Wallenberg was killed in *Lubyanka* prison. The Russian government, however, has never formally retracted the initial Soviet version.

## ANNE FRANK...

(Continued from page 4)

Only Otto Frank survived.

In the section of the book titled *The Afterlife*, Prose unravels the agonizing story of how the plays and movies were made. She says, "On the page [Anne] is brilliant; on the stage she's a nitwit." She follows Anne's story into the present, with information about the Anne Frank Foundation and its museum; she tells of the simplifiers who insist that this is a work that promotes tolerance and understanding, and the even more dangerous Holocaust deniers, in all their iniquitous glory. This section is emotionally wrenching because Prose glosses over nothing, never forgetting the millions who, like Anne, might have made even greater contributions and reminding us to honor works of art by those who endured great suffering:

"Given the choice, we would have been willing to live without the diary if it had meant that neither Anne Frank nor anyone like her, or anyone unlike her, had been driven into hiding and murdered. But none of us was given that choice, and the diary is what we have left."

Prose is clear-headed, tough, and fair, and her book, though in places immensely sad, is superb. It should be cherished alongside the masterpiece that inspired it.



## “THE MUSIC CONNECTED US TO THE LIVES WE HAD LOST”

(Continued from page 11)

doll. She asked, ‘Mama, will we be there soon?’ ‘Yes,’ my mother said, ‘very soon.’ And the girl jumped for joy.”

Seventy years later, Zdenka sits beside the window of a mansion block flat overlooking Hyde Park in London; by an extraordinary twist, a plaque on the building identifies it as the location where a plot was hatched by the exiled Czech underground to assassinate the Third Reich’s emissary to Prague, Reinhard Heydrich, in 1942.

Zdenka grew up learning the piano and became embraced by a bohemian set and an older man in Prague, who would take her to concerts, the theater, and luncheon in restaurants. Among the last things Zdenka did in the household of her later childhood, before being transported to *Terezín* on January 20, 1942, was to play Dvorák’s *Waltz in D Major*.

Much of the time in *Terezín*, Zdenka was, as she puts it, “dancing under the gallows” — performing in plays such as *The Last Cyclist* by Karel Svanek, an allegory of the Holocaust written in *Terezín* in 1943, Gogol’s *The Wedding* and *Georges Dandin* by Molière, “which didn’t quite fit,” she judges. She heard performances of *Brundibár*, and those same shattering accounts of Verdi’s *Requiem* conducted by Schächter. “We were in a camp, but seeing friends, having discussions and rehearsals. I remember the concerts and plays, and working in the kitchens, but I do not remember sleeping.

“I think the quality was so high,” posits Zdenka, “because people were playing only for the love of the music, in such a place — for moral support more than for entertainment. There was no money involved, no jealousy — everyone was equal, playing to the best of their ability in the moment. Viktor Ullmann used to say that the urge to play and create in *Terezín* was the urge to live.”

Zdenka recalls performances of the Verdi *Requiem*, conducted by Schächter. “At one point, almost half the huge choir had vanished, transported to the East. People urged Schächter: ‘Give up on this,’ but he wouldn’t. He wanted it performed, and it was. The Germans would invite distinguished guests from Berlin, and one time Adolf Eichmann himself came. When the music ended, Schächter bowed to the singers, but not to the audience, which included Eichmann and the German officers. And Eichmann said: ‘Interesting. Very interesting.’ I suppose the Germans thought, ‘Let them play, they’ll soon stop smiling.’”

Mrs. Fantlova’s account of life in Auschwitz is as searing as any, for its descriptions of the “showers”; the lashing with whips; hunger, rations, and imagined feasts — and the chimneys, forever smoking. In Auschwitz, “We lived in a constant state of high alert. Things were constantly happening, and you had to be prepared for when your moment came, and to resist it. There was some bravery and some luck in survival. Sometimes you do something brave, you say to yourself: ‘Go!’ at a certain moment — it’s a different level of thinking. In order to survive, something else takes over, which most people never know they have, and do not need. It is an ability to make decisions that is close to a form of madness.”

On the epic death march from Auschwitz — through the snow, “colder and hungrier than can be imagined” — Zdenka accompanied Gideon Klein’s sister, Elisa. “And when we reached the river *Oder*, it was frozen. The Germans said:

‘Those who can will go on. Those who cannot go on must stay.’ Elisa Klein said: ‘I’ll stay,’ and we thought that would be the last of her. But she was found by the Russians, and at the end of the war I met her in Prague.”

Mrs. Fantlova was eventually taken to *Belsen* and, after liberation, spent time in Sweden before moving in 1949 to Australia, “when it was an empty colony at the end of the world. What disturbed me was that the moon was on the wrong side of the sky, and I couldn’t change that.” There she pursued her career as an actress, and in 1956 Karel Ancerl visited Melbourne with the Czech Philharmonic. “I was in the front row,” says Mrs. Fantlova, “so now there was no iron curtain between us. And there he was, an elderly man with gray hair. I thought: ‘No one can see what I can see: my last picture of this man, being separated from his wife and child by Josef Mengele.’ He was now playing Dvorák’s Ninth Symphony, and I was crying so much I had to leave.”

However, “next morning, Karel came to see me. It was so wonderful, I almost cried again, but I didn’t — we talked about music, we drank coffee, 12,000 miles from home and that last picture of him in my mind, from Auschwitz. I could hardly believe we were the same people as before, as in *Terezín* and Auschwitz. But of course we were. He could not stay with me long; he had to return to Prague, where, soon after, the Soviets invaded. He left for Canada then, and I never saw him again.”

Like that of the Holocaust itself, the story of *Terezín*’s music revealed itself only slowly over time — and was not widely known until Czech violinist Joza Karas published a book in 1985, *Music in Terezín*. “Incredibly, these composers were not known,” says Amelia Freedman, artistic director of the Nash Ensemble chamber music group. Once enamored of “the quality of this music, of the very best kind”, she put herself to work, “researching not only the music but the story itself.” She was struck above all by the children’s drawings, and the filmed performance of *Brundibár*. “Of the 42 children who did those drawings, 40 went to the gas chambers. For the performance of *Brundibár*, the children sang so wonderfully before most went to Auschwitz, and it made me cry: the Germans knew what was going to happen to them but the Jews did not. I learned that Adolf Eichmann was in the audience, and so of course was the Red Cross, on that infamous occasion in its history.”

“Everyone,” muses Mrs. Fantlova, “has different reactions to the aftermath of that experience. If you take a hundred survivors, you get a hundred answers. For me, *Terezín* and Auschwitz were like a previous life. It is as if I had died and been born again. After the camps, this second life is simpler. It is without fear. As a survivor, you get to know yourself — who am I? How much can you take? My memory is completely free — I do not lock it anywhere, but neither do I think about it. There is a safety valve which tells your brain, ‘Don’t dwell on that!’ You cannot afford to dwell on it.”

However, she says: “Sometimes it comes back at unexpected moments. I was standing at South Kensington underground station this winter, and a gust of cold wind crossed the platform. It suddenly reminded me of that cold. I felt myself slipping back, but stopped. ‘Zdenka,’ I told myself, ‘this is not cold. You have a coat, and gloves.’ I took a deep breath and I was not cold at all. I need to remind myself how bad it was. By comparison, life is easy.”

## BEYOND LAMBS AND LIONS: JEWISH RESISTANCE IN THE HOLOCAUST

(Continued from page 10)

circumstances of the Jews had their own unique and pitiless aspects that reached their crescendo with the advent of the Nazi policy to annihilate them all. Except for the relative few who left behind written sources, we cannot assess events from the perspective of the six million murdered Jews. But today, from scores of thousands of eyewitness accounts, we do know a great deal about the deadly situation into which Jews were plunged. Accounts describe the misery in *Lodz*, *Warsaw*, and other ghettos, where starvation, disease, forced labor, and humiliation, were ever-present. There is forceful testimony regarding the unbearable tension before deportations from the transit camps in Western Europe, as well as surrealistic descriptions of the actual murderous *Aktionen* on the Eastern Front written by the few who miraculously survived the shootings. Gripping depictions of the Sisyphus-like struggle to live and maintain human dignity within the crushing omnipresence of death in Auschwitz, and the other extermination and most labor camps, are available to anyone who wants to try to absorb them.

Certainly, among all the conquered people during the war, Jews were not the only ones to offer resistance. But many specifics of Jewish resistance, its scope and aspects of the chasm from which it emerged, were particular to the Jews. A good example of some of the differences may be seen in the two uprisings in Warsaw. When the Poles began their uprising in late summer 1944, it was part of a larger military plan devised between the Polish Government-in-Exile in London and rebel leaders in Poland. With the end of the war in Poland in sight, it was meant primarily to influence the future shape of the Polish nation. Even though their colleagues in London had become doubtful, the rebels calculated that they had a real chance of military success when they

launched the uprising.

On the other hand, when the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto launched their uprising at the height of the war, on April 19, 1943, without any meaningful external aid, they harbored no illusions about



Jewish partisans at the end of WWII.

defeating the Germans. For the ghetto combatants, fighting was primarily for the sake of the fighting itself — for a few lines in history, for revenge for the deaths of most of the ghetto inhabitants, to not give up their lives cheaply — and with maybe a vague notion that some could escape the ghetto to continue to fight in other places. Unlike the Poles, who could wait for an opportune time to fight, the circumstances of the Jews in the ghetto afforded no such luxury. Unquestionably these differences influenced the way each understood the resistance they offered, as well as their goals.

The mere fact that there was widespread *amidah* during the *Shoah* is nothing short of remarkable, given the wider cataclysm of the war and the specific circumstances in which the Jews found themselves. As an expression of the struggle to stand tall and preserve human dignity in the most inhumane situation imaginable, the phenomenon of Jewish resistance is eminently worthy of our reflection as we mark *Yom Hashoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day) and the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

## PHOTOS FETE JEWISH FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM

(Continued from page 5)

Taro, sadly, would become more than a groundbreaking figure in war journalism — she was also the first female reporter to die on the battlefield, at the Battle of *Brunete* in 1937. On display in Paris is the telegram sent by the Republicans’ 39th division to Paris’ *Ce Soir* daily newspaper, announcing her death on the front line.



Capa, with Taro in Paris in 1936, never recovered from her death in Spain.

“It was such a huge loss for Capa,” says Feuille. “He never fully recovered.”

The exhibition also highlights the involvement of thousands of Jewish intellectuals and fighters in the conflict. Of the 35,000 volunteers who joined the Republican forces between 1936 and 1939, a full 20 percent, or 7,000, were Jewish.

Coming from all over Europe, the United States, and Palestine, they were mostly Communists, socialists, and left-leaning Zionists.

“To these militants, who often had to flee

their own country, joining the International Brigades was the most obvious thing to do,” wrote Michel Lefebvre, the co-author of 2003’s *International Brigades: Recovered Images*.

“The fight against fascism had to go through Madrid, and they had to be part of it.” Lefebvre reports that many Jewish intellectuals and artists supported Spanish Republicans off the battlefield, among them Einstein and Russian painter Marc Chagall — who wrote, in a letter addressed to Jewish volunteers in Spain in 1937, “Your names will shine in history.”

Killed while documenting the First Indochina War in 1954, Capa has since become one of the most influential figures of photojournalism, as well as a hero of fiction, including in Romain Gary’s *The Roots of Heaven* (1973) and Susana Fortes’ *Waiting for Robert Capa* (2011).

“He was a lady’s man, much more charming and charismatic than Chim ever was,” Feuille says. (Chim, for his part, would be killed by an Egyptian machine gunner four days after the signing of the Suez War armistice in 1956.)

“It is not surprising that his passionate yet short relationship with Taro, and his career, have aroused the interest of writers,” Feuille says of Capa. “He was such a bon vivant. Reporting was like a drug to him, and to Taro and Chim. They were addicted to the action, the adrenaline. And eventually, it killed them.”



# SHINING A LIGHT ON THE HOLOCAUST SAGA OF BRONISLAW HUBERMAN

BY ELISA SPUNGEN BILDNER, JTA

This is the Holocaust story you don't know. Almost guaranteed.

Bronislaw Huberman, a Polish-Jewish violin prodigy from the late 19th into the 20th century, is the protagonist, joined by familiar names such as Albert Einstein and the acclaimed (non-Jewish) conductor Arturo Toscanini. It is the tale of the founding in 1936 of what would become the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and how Huberman, its founder, saved more than 1,000 Jews in the process.

*Orchestra of Exiles*, a new documentary produced, written, and directed by Oscar-nominated filmmaker Josh Aronson, tells the saga, which is almost unknown outside of Israel.

No book in English chronicles the story, which Aronson assembled primarily from the violinist's archives in Tel Aviv.

Even Aronson, a concert pianist himself and married to a professional violinist, had never heard of Huberman when he was approached by a musician friend who said she had a terrific idea for a movie.

"As a documentary filmmaker who has made more than one film, this happens often. Usually, it's someone telling you



Bronislaw Huberman, played by Thomas Kornmann, holding auditions for the Palestine Symphony in a reenactment scene in *Orchestra of Exiles*.

about a family drama, or a dull little story .... You are always very polite," Aronson said in an interview.

"Bronislaw WHO? I have no idea what you are talking about," Aronson recalls telling the friend, Dorit Grunschlag Straus, when she broached the topic of a documentary about Huberman's pre-World War II heroics.

Yet because of Huberman, Straus' father, the Viennese violinist David Grunschlag, survived the Holocaust along with his parents and two sisters, when Huberman guaranteed him passage out of Europe to play in a world-class orchestra of exiles he was assembling in Palestine.

"In a cultural aha moment that would change the course of history, Huberman saw the opportunity both to save Jews and to found the orchestra that would become the great Israel Philharmonic,"

Aronson said.

Huberman, who had launched his European career at the age of 12 by playing the Brahms Violin Concerto before the composer himself, had played before heads of government, kings, princes — in those days, says Aronson, top society lionized classical musicians. Through this privileged access he learned of the threat that Hitler's rise posed to Germany, as well as the reticence of other nations to intervene diplomatically.

Influenced by his own brushes with Polish pogroms in the 1880s and the Zionist inklings of Einstein, a fellow violinist who later helped him raise funds for the orchestra, Huberman acted when musicians were fired in Germany after Hitler came to power in 1933.

Canceling all of his engagements in Germany — he never returned — Huberman dedicated himself to convincing the most accomplished Jewish musicians in Europe to relocate to create an orchestra in the Tel Aviv desert.

"One has to build a fist against anti-Semitism," Huberman says in the film. "A first-class orchestra would be that fist."

From 1934 to 1936, he auditioned, he accepted, he turned down musicians. In his homeland of Poland, Huberman conducted blind tryouts to assure himself that his choices would be based solely on musicianship.

"It would be a misnomer, though," cautions Aronson, "to say he was in a god-like position." One can't look at history in hindsight, he says; no one, including Huberman, foresaw concentration camps, and Jews were used to the vicissitudes of anti-Semitism.

Toscanini entered the story after he refused to honor a gig in Germany that he had accepted before Hitler's ascension. When Huberman learned of the maestro's principled resistance to Fascism, he immediately asked him to conduct the opening concerts in Palestine, which he did.

The de facto leader of the Jewish community in 1930s Palestine, David Ben-Gurion, also played a supporting role — actually, non-supporting — in the drama.

In 1936, Huberman balked at bringing over the 70 musicians and their families because Ben-Gurion would only extend temporary entry documents to them rather than the precious permanent ones

desperately needed. Ben-Gurion believed that only workers would build Israel, not urbane performers who would get off the boat, take one look at the camels and sand, and make a beeline back.

World Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann intervened, and the Palestine Symphony held its first concerts in December 1936.

For Aronson, who calls himself a classic twice-a-year Jew, the project offered



Director Josh Aronson instructing Henk Reinicke as little Broni Huberman in the Oscar-nominated filmmaker's documentary *Orchestra of Exiles*.

the opportunity to immerse himself in Holocaust history, something he had never done. It's not that he grew up in a family that was unaware. His father, Aronson says, would never set foot in Germany and didn't like the fact that his son owned a Volkswagen.

But for the year he researched Huberman and the Israel Philharmonic, Aronson read books he had never read, and explored Yad Vashem and the Holocaust museum in Washington.

"I gave myself the education on this painful topic that I was too intimidated to go after years ago," Aronson said.

Aronson says that in producing the documentary, he was fortunate to meet the aristocracy of Israel — the octogenarians who saw Zionism at its beginnings — as well as musicians who create music today at the highest levels. Among those interviewed for the film were artists such as Itzhak Perlman, Joshua Bell, Pinchas Zukerman, and Zubin Mehta. (I won't spoil a final anecdote: Good story embedded in the movie about Bell, whose violin teacher worshiped Huberman.)

In the end, how many Jews did Huberman save? Aronson suggests about 1,000, but notes that some Israelis claim it was closer to 3,000 after tallying players, parents, wives, and others swept along.

There are no records, he says, since Huberman didn't need or want accolades.

"He was doing this because he saw intolerance and, unlike so many who did nothing, felt compelled to act," Aronson said. "Maybe because he had such a big heart."

International Society for Yad Vashem  
MARTYRDOM AND RESISTANCE  
500 FIFTH AVENUE, 42ND FLOOR  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10110-4299  
Web site: www.yadvashemus.org

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POST  
PAID  
NEW YORK, N.Y.  
PERMIT NO. 9313

## Martyrdom & Resistance

Rabbi Eric M. Lankin, D.Min.,  
Editor-in-Chief

Yefim Krasnyanskiy, M.A.,  
Editor

\*Published Bimonthly  
by the International Society  
for Yad Vashem, Inc.  
500 Fifth Avenue, 42nd Floor  
New York, NY 10110  
(212) 220-4304

### EDITORIAL BOARD

Eli Zborowski\*\*  
Marvin Zborowski  
Mark Palmer  
Sam Skura\*\*  
Israel Krakowski  
William Mandell  
Sam Halpern  
Isidore Karten\*\*  
Norman Belfer  
Joseph Bukiet\*\*

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



**A bequest to the American Society for Yad Vashem helps keep the memory of the Six Million alive...**

Please remember us in your trust, will, estate plan or with the planned gift. It's your legacy... to your family, and your people.

For more information, or for help with proper wording for the bequest to ASYV, please contact us at 212-220-4304.