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CEREMONY HONORING RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS IS A HISTORIC EVENT

An extraordinary Yad Vashem remembrance event took place on Holocaust Remembrance Day at the Embassy of Israel in Washington, DC. Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer, joined by Yad Vashem Council Chairman Rabbi Israel Meir Lau and American Society for Yad Vashem Chairman Leonard Wilf, hosted the posthumous bestowal of Righteous Among the Nations recognition upon four persons who risked their lives during the *Shoah* to rescue endangered Jews. This was the first time that such a ceremony was held recognizing Americans as Righteous Among the Nations on U.S. soil. The ceremony was attended by President Barack Obama.

Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, chairman of the Yad Vashem Council and himself a Holocaust survivor who was rescued by Righteous Among the Nations, in his speech recalled the terrifying six years he spent as a young child during the Holocaust, totally disconnected from the outside world. "But in this dark tunnel, there were some stars — the Righteous Among the Nations," to whom many Jews owed their lives. "As far as we are unable to forget the horror, we are also commanded to remember the people who risked their lives to save us."

Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem Leonard Wilf, in his remarks said, "In the very first years after the Holocaust, when the Jewish people were still grappling with the aftermath of the horrors they endured, there was an understanding that along with memorializing and documenting the mass murders and destruction, the Jewish people would

honor and remember the unknown and silent heroes of the *Shoah*. These were the rarest of men and women who did not go along, or stand silently by, as their neighbors, friends, and countrymen were rounded up and targeted for death. At risk

our children.

"Many elements of this ceremony make this so distinctive — it is the first time in history that an American president has joined with Yad Vashem to honor United States citizens as Righteous Among the

carry a timeless lesson for us all."

Pastor Chris Edmonds, who accepted the Righteous Among the Nations award on behalf of his late father Roddie Edmonds said that "on this noble occasion, my mother, Mary Ann and our family are blessed



(Left to right) Leonard Wilf, chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, and Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, chairman of Yad Vashem's Council, welcome President Barack Obama to the Righteous Among the Nations ceremony.

to their own and their families' lives, Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds, Lois Gunden, and Walery and Maryla Zbijewski were guided by a strong sense of morality to save Jewish children and adults, who survived and whose descendants and families are here tonight. In doing so, they are identified by Yad Vashem and the State of Israel as Righteous Among the Nations, true exemplars of courage and heroism for us and

Nations; it is the first time that American citizens are being recognized on American soil; it is the first time a U.S. soldier has been so recognized; and tonight we distinguish the fourth and fifth Americans out of more than 26,000 Righteous Among the Nations honorees.

"As the son of two Holocaust survivors who grew up in this country, this event, with its bond to American citizens who demonstrated enormous acts of bravery, gives me a strong sense of pride. My family and I have dedicated ourselves to furthering Holocaust research and education both in Israel and in the United States. As chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, I am humbled by the great task to which we commit ourselves, to ensure that the world never forgets.

"Tonight, not only do we give honor to these incredible men and women; we also proclaim that despite the years that have passed, these stories

to receive the remarkable honor Righteous Among the Nations on behalf of my father Roddie Edmonds.

"Thank you, Yad Vashem and the nation of Israel for bestowing such a high honor on Dad.

As the first U.S. serviceman to receive the award, and the first recognized for protecting American Jews, our family is forever grateful.

We are proud of him and humbled that he joins a small minority of ordinary people who mustered extraordinary courage to uphold the goodness and dignity of humanity.

My Dad, like Ms. Gunden and the Zbijewski's are heroes!

"In a defining moment, when evil demanded their conscience and their very souls...they refused to follow the crowd...but instead bowed to no one...and did what was right...

My father's legacy, like all of the "Righteous", is the children, grandchildren
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WORLD MARKS INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Poland — Under the imposing entrance gate of the Nazi extermination camp Auschwitz, almost 300 survivors and hundreds of dignitaries remembered its liberation 70 years ago and paid homage to the 1.5 million Jews and other prisoners slaughtered there.

A huge tent spanned illuminated train tracks on which cattle trains had once brought prisoners from all over Europe to the entrance, known as the death gate, at the very spot where one former prisoner told an audience of 3,000 he had witnessed enough atrocities to “keep me awake until the end of time.”

Survivors from around 19 countries and dignitaries — including the French president, François Hollande, and the German president, Joachim Gauck — crossed snowy train tracks to lay candles at the selection ramp where prisoners had been chosen, often on the whim of SS guards, either for the gas chambers or for slave labor.

An audience watched the moving scenes on television screens as grandchildren and children escorted their relatives across the concrete platform, which glistened with ice and falling snow and was flanked by a row of flags in the blue and white striped material of the camp’s prison uniforms.

The Polish president, Bronislaw Komorowski, called Auschwitz a

In an eloquent address, 86-year-old Polish writer Halina Birenbaum, who was led to the podium by her grandson, described Auschwitz as a “bottomless pit of hell that I couldn’t get out of,” recalling her impressions as an 11-year-old of the “grey bone faces with legs like sticks wearing muddy clogs, nothing reminding you of anything remotely human.”

She said that even if she could have, trying to forget her experience had never been an option, because “it’s only in my memory that can I be next to my loved ones.”

She was given a standing ovation by President Hollande and other guests, many of whom wiped away tears.

Ninety-three-year-old Kazimierz Albin captivated the audience with an account of his escape on the evening of February 27, 1943, one of the 10% of breakouts that were successful. He remembered the “excruciating yell of the siren” as he ran through the icy river Sola, and named Harald Fritz, the SS guard who had greeted him and 727 fellow political prisoners as they arrived at Auschwitz with the chilling message: “For the Jews, two weeks; for priests, a month; for the young and healthy, three months ... the only way out of here is the chimney.”

Roman Kent, 86, fought back tears, his voice cracking, as he told political leaders to strive to ensure no repeti-

streets of Paris and Budapest and London; once again, Jewish businesses are targeted, and once again Jewish families are fleeing Europe,” he said.



Survivors along with officials sit in a tent raised at the entrance of the Birkenau Nazi death camp.

The screeching sound of the shofar, a pitchless ceremonial horn, then filled the air, followed by a recitation of the Kaddish. Survivors spontaneously embraced each other as David Wisnia, an 89-year-old survivor from Philadelphia who as a teenager had been forced to sing for SS guards, chanted the funeral prayer “El Male Rachamim,” his powerful voice resounding around the tent’s walls.

USA — Marking the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged everyone to denounce political and religious ideologies that set people against people.

“The Holocaust was a colossal crime,” said Mr. Ban in a message. “No one can deny the evidence that it happened. By remembering the victims and honoring the courage of the survivors and those who assisted and liberated them, we annually renew our resolve to prevent such atrocities and reject the hateful mentality that allows them.”

During the Second World War, six million Jews were systematically rounded up and exterminated. The Nazis also murdered Sinti and Roma, political prisoners, homosexuals, persons with disabilities, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Soviet prisoners of war.

“From the shadow of the Holocaust and the cruelties of the Second World War, the United Nations was established to reaffirm faith in the dignity and worth of every person and to uphold the rights of all to live in equality and free from discrimination,” the UN chief recalled.

“These principles remain essential today,” he continued. “People worldwide — including millions fleeing war, persecution and deprivation — continue to suffer discrimination and attacks. We have a duty to remember the past — and to help those who need us now.”

Mr. Ban further indicated that for more than a decade, the Holocaust

and the United Nations Outreach Program has worked to educate young people about the Holocaust, noting that many partners — including Holocaust survivors — continue to

contribute to this work. “The memory of the Holocaust is a powerful reminder of what can happen when we stop seeing our common humanity,” he warned. “Let us all speak out against anti-Semitism and attacks against religious, ethnic or other groups. Let us create a world where dignity is respected, diversity is celebrated, and peace is permanent,” he concluded.

In a separate message, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said the Holocaust will “forever remain a terrible scar on the human conscience.”

“Its hideous reality of planned and deliberate mass murder must lead us to deep reflection on the roots and spread of such violence,” stressed Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein. “Today, as we commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, I hope that all of us can reflect on the need to continue to combat racism and religious or ethnic intolerance in every form, and with all our might.”

A Holocaust memorial ceremony took place at UN headquarters in New York, hosted by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Cristina Gallach. Following remarks by UN officials and representatives from the diplomatic community, a video tribute was made to Sir Nicholas Winton, who rescued 669 children from the Holocaust on the Czech *Kindertransport*. The event also included a performance by the United States Military Academy at West Point Jewish Chapel Choir.

Israel — In remarks marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu underlined the persistence of anti-Semitism, but also noted how different the condition of the Jews is today as a result of the existence of Israel compared to the period during World War II. He also called on the civilized world to stand with Israel, saying that Iran and Islamic movements such as Hamas and the Islamic State have declared their intention to



Delegations and survivors make their way to lay candles during the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

“wound that is open and hurting,” and said it had signaled the collapse of civilization, “when German Nazis launched a real death industry and a human being was reduced to a tattooed camp number.”

He expressed “gratitude and respect” towards the Ukrainian soldiers of the 101 Lviv infantry division who were the first to enter the camp on January 27, 1945. But his pointed reference to Ukraine and his failure to specifically mention Russia’s Red Army, coupled with his reference to the “two totalitarian regimes” (Nazi and Soviet) that held Poland in their grip for decades, will further infuriate Russia’s leaders, who had already made clear their anger at not being given an official invitation to the memorial ceremony.

tion of the Holocaust, because “we do not want our past to be our children’s future.” He then repeated the sentence because it was “the key to my existence.”

The billionaire philanthropist Ronald Lauder, who has donated millions towards the preservation of the remains of Auschwitz, including the mountains of shoes and suitcases of prisoners, as well as the eight tonnes of human hair which is on display at the memorial museum, said that the anniversary had taken on a different significance following the recent attacks in France in which four Jews were killed, and the rise of anti-Semitism, which had made Europe “look more like 1933 than 2015.”

“Once again young Jewish boys are afraid to wear yarmulkes on the

WORLD MARKS INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

commit another Holocaust against Israel.

The Holocaust would “probably not have happened” had a Jewish state been established at the time, “since we would have been able to act against those who sought to eradicate our people,” Netanyahu said in a Hebrew statement on his Facebook page.

Later, in an English-language video clip also posted on his Facebook page, the prime minister said: “Preserving the memory of the Holocaust is more important today than ever, for in this period of resurgent and sometimes violent anti-Semitism, it is commemorations like this that remind us all where the oldest and most enduring hatred can lead,” he said.

“Unfortunately, in Europe and elsewhere, Jews are once again being targeted just for being Jews. Around the world, Jewish communities are increasingly living in fear. We see anti-Semitism directed against individual Jews, and we also see this hatred directed against the collective Jew, against the Jewish state. Israel is targeted with the same slurs and the same libels that were leveled against the Jewish people since time immemorial,” the prime minister added.

Germany — The guest of honor at the German Bundestag’s hour of remembrance was Ruth Klüger, an Austrian Auschwitz survivor who fled from the United States to accept the invitation to speak in front of the Bundestag.

She spoke of “the coldest winter of her life” in 1944 and 1945, when Auschwitz was liberated. She had spent months leading up to the liberation working as a forced laborer.

She lied about her age when she arrived at Auschwitz — she was 12 but was tipped off by another prisoner to say she was 15 — which landed her a spot on the work crew. Other prisoners who arrived with Klüger weren’t so lucky, and were sent to the gas chambers at Auschwitz. This would have likely been Klüger’s fate had she not been sent to work.

Prior to Klüger’s speech, Bundestag President Norbert Lammert opened the hour of remembrance by announcing the opening of a new exhibit outlining the history of the more than 13 million men, women, and children from all over Europe who were forced to work for the Nazi regime.

German politicians spoke in front of a full house in the German Bundestag to mark Germany’s annual recognition of its role in the Holocaust of World War II that saw 6 million Jews and other minorities killed at the hands of the Nazi regime.

Two days earlier, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who

recently admitted that anti-Semitism in Germany is “more widespread than we imagine,” opened an exhibition of Holocaust art in Berlin featuring 100



Ruth Klüger.

works by 50 Jewish Holocaust inmates and survivors, on loan from Israel’s Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem.

Belgium — “It pains me that Jews again live in fear in Europe today, are not safe to go to a synagogue or a Jewish school, and that some consider leaving Europe for good because they feel not safe,” said European Parliament President Martin Schulz as he addressed a ceremony marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day in the European parliament.

Several Holocaust survivors were present.

Echoing numerous other European leaders, including President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, Schulz declared that “Jewish life is part of our culture and part of our identity” and that “without the Jews, Europe would not be Europe. Therefore it hurts that in today’s Europe, Jews again live in fear.

“It is unacceptable that Jews are reluctant to wear their traditional clothes and display religious symbols in the public because of fear of reprisals and aggression.

“Jews are again killed because they are Jews,” Schulz, who is from Germany, said, recalling the terrorist attacks in *Toulouse*, Brussels and Paris.

While warning that “the demons of the past” were making a return to the shores of Europe in the form of rising anti-Semitism and racism and that there is a need not to repeat the mistakes of the past, Schulz also hailed the “miracle” of the fact that more than 100,000 Jews live in Germany once more.

He said it was the responsibility of Europe’s leadership “to fight” the “demons of anti-Semitism, of ultra-nationalism, of intolerance.

“Some insult, threaten and attack people because they are Jewish or express support for Israel. They desecrate Jewish cemeteries, smear hate speech on synagogues, or spit on young people wearing a *kippa*.”

Schulz said, “our message is clear: Jewish friends, we stand with you

against those who spread hatred. Europe is your home today, every day and forever,” concluding his address with the pledge “Never Again!”

The ceremony was organized by the president of the European Parliament in partnership with the European Jewish Congress (EJC). EJC President Moshe Kantor insisted that a new type of anti-Semitism “has taken the form of anti-Israelianism that boycotts Israeli products. It is dangerous for Jews, for Israel and for Europe,” Kantor said, in a reference to a recent decision by the EU to label Israeli products from Israeli settlements. “This is similar to putting a yellow star,” he said. He expressed appreciation for recent comments by Martin Schulz in which he marked his opposition to the labeling of West Bank products.

In statements made in honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini called for the Holocaust to “forever be seared into our collective memory.”

“It is not only a responsibility towards the Jewish people, it is a responsibility towards mankind, towards future generations, towards Europe itself. If we forget the dark history of our continent, we run the risk of underestimating how crucial it is to preserve peace, unity and diversity inside our continent,” she stated.

However, Mogherini admitted that more than 70 years after the Holocaust, there is still anti-Semitism in Europe.

Great Britain — At the main event marking Holocaust Memorial Day in the UK, there were many moving words spoken, but it was the cheerful insistence of Zigi Shipper that “I was always lucky all my life” which left many in the Guildhall discreetly dabbing at their eyes.

By the time Shipper was liberated in May 1945, by a circle of British tanks surrounding the barge onto which he was about to be loaded — it was to be towed out to sea and then blown up with all Jews packed into it — he was just 15.

Shipper’s children, grandchildren and two-year-old great-grandson were among the 650 politicians, religious leaders, representatives of Jewish organizations and community groups, and survivors of the Holocaust — and of other genocides, including Cambodia, Bosnia, and Sudan — in the audience.

Sir Peter Bazalgette, chair of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation, called the survivors “primary witnesses to one of the cruelest episodes in 20th century history,” and Shipper

was one of several who spoke, including Susan Pollack, who survived the horrors of Auschwitz at 13: “The experience shut me down, shut me off from the world: I survived as a robot,” she recalled.

By 1945, Shipper had already spent years living with his grandparents in one room in the Łódź ghetto in Poland, working 12-hour shifts in a metal factory, almost starving, eating horses or any food he could get hold of. He had jumped off a lorry supposedly taking him to another factory in Germany and hidden, when he was surprised to find it packed with women, children and babies.

He had watched his grandmother taken away, never to be seen again, in Auschwitz. He had survived several labor camps, and a death march when he was suffering from typhus and felt he could not walk 15 centimeters, let alone 15 kilometers. There was not a hint of self-pity in his account: “I have had the most privileged and wonderful life,” he said.



The chief rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, at the Holocaust Remembrance Day event in the Guildhall, London.

The day — celebrated on January 27, the date Soviet troops liberated the Auschwitz concentration camp, months before the war officially came to an end — was marked by commemorations worldwide, and by more than 3,600 events across the UK.

The announcement from the prime minister, who later met Holocaust survivors at a reception in Downing Street, that a site in the riverside gardens beside the Palace of Westminster has been chosen for a new Holocaust memorial was welcomed by many at the Guildhall.

He also announced that the government would continue to fund the work of the Holocaust Educational Trust.

A statement from the trust said the commitment sent a clear message about the determination of Britain to ensure the legacy was preserved for generations to come. “With education comes remembrance — this special place will give people somewhere to remember and reflect. When we no longer have survivors among us, this memorial will help to ensure that their experiences are never forgotten.”



BOOK REVIEWS

THE POLISH UNDERGROUND AND THE JEWS

The Polish Underground and the Jews, 1939-1945.

By Joshua D. Zimmerman. Cambridge University Press: New York, N.Y., 2015. 454 pp. \$118 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

Sadly, when most Jews who survived the Holocaust — and even those who study it — think of the Polish Underground during World War II, they have nothing much good to say. To put it bluntly, the Poles are generally remembered as being ruthlessly anti-Semitic, opportunistic blackmailers or, worse still, heartless murderers no better than the Nazis. Thus ironically, at the outset, Joshua Zimmerman, the author of the conscientiously written and thoroughly documented book, *The Polish Underground and the Jews, 1939–1945*, notes that, in fact, he was drawn to this topic when he was surprised at reading about how the wife of acclaimed Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal was saved by the Polish underground! In sum, he immediately realized there was much more to the story here.

So, what is the story? Has the Polish Underground been maligned? Is it just lies that have been spread by those with a hidden agenda? Were

they really an altruistic, caring group who have suffered from bad publicity? It seems that the best that can be said is that it depends.

First off, the Home Army, the Underground's military wing, "represented a cross-section of Polish society as a whole with members drawn from all social classes and from all regions of prewar Poland."

More specifically, since the hundreds of thousands in the organization ranged politically from "socialists to nationalists," the anti-Semitism, part and parcel of what some believed in before the war remained and influenced their actions during the war. Hence there were some Underground units of the Home Army that not only saved Jews but welcomed them as fighting members. At the same time, there were others — right-wing nationalists and other extremists — who not only robbed Jews they found, but killed them. Then, too, there were the individual actions of the members of Underground units that made a difference . . .

Another factor impacting the Polish/Jewish relationship during the

war was an unexpected change in Polish leadership. While Władysław Sikorski — an individual who continually spoke of the "government's commitment to full minority rights and the rule of law" — led the Polish government-in-exile alongside the "apolitical" commander of the Polish Underground, Stefan Rowecki, Jews could hope for compassion and even

some form of measured assistance. Indeed, the Polish government-in-exile came out strongly against "any and all" Poles "particip[ating] in anti-Jewish actions organized by the Germans" even as the Underground kept that government and, through them, the world informed about what was happening to the Jews, including

the "emerging Nazi plan of [their] industrialized mass murder." For that matter, the Underground would form its own Jewish aid organization, "code named 'Żegota.'" But all that quickly changed in 1943 when Rowecki was arrested, Sikorski was killed in a plane crash and, most particularly troubling, a right-wing nationalist, Tadeusz Komorowski, became the

head of the Polish Underground. His hostility to the Jews was obvious.

Finally, since Polish Jews knew that the only thing that could possibly save them from certain death at the hands of the the Nazis was the arrival of the Russians, and since many Poles saw the Russians as Communists come to swallow up their country and make it part of their Communist Empire, the hatred a good many of them had for Jews only grew... and palpably so. In fact, for many Poles, Jews were or became synonymous with Communism: not only a "foreign element" in their midst, but "unpatriotic" vis-à-vis their beloved Poland and, put simply, nothing but traitors! Hence Zimmerman presents us with the unbelievable and harrowing picture of some extremist Polish Underground units eagerly making agreements with the Nazis to hunt down and kill Jewish partisans — enemies of them both!

Needless to say, this is an absorbing, thought-provoking, and fascinating book that should be in the library of any serious student of the Holocaust.

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



DACHAU IN THE FIRST DAYS OF THE HOLOCAUST

Before Auschwitz: Jewish Prisoners in the Prewar Concentration Camps.

By Kim Wünschmann. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 2015. 376 pp. \$45.00 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY JAMES ROSEN

In the predawn hours of April 12, 1933, not three months into Adolf Hitler's tenure as chancellor of Germany, a group of drunken SS officers barged into the "Jewish block" of the *Dachau* concentration camp, an abandoned munitions factory site located in a wooded area two miles from the Bavarian town of that name, and awakened the prisoners by firing pistols into the air. The SS officers had restlessly anticipated the event, with one of them, Robert Erspenmüller, the camp's deputy commander, having earlier boasted to a policeman he knew that "in the next [few] days he would kill some Jews" as a "trial of strength."

Later that morning, at roll call, four prisoners were called by name to step forward for special work duty. Rudolf Benario and Ernst Goldmann were prominent young Communists in their native Furth. Arthur Kahn held no Communist affiliation, but had been swept up in the recent wave of Nazi arrests grouped under the misleading label "protective custody." The fourth,

a Communist named Wilhelm Gesell, joined the other three in repeatedly loading debris onto a wheelbarrow and pushing it to the camp's gravel pit. SS guards, who had assumed control of the camp from the Bavarian State Police the day before, beat the men as they worked.

At noon, the men's ordeal ended — or so they thought. Within a few hours, Gesell was replaced in the "punitive labor" detail by Erwin Kahn, a Jewish businessman who had no Communist or labor-movement affiliation (and no relation to Arthur). Unlike the other three men, who had all arrived on site the day before, he had spent three weeks interned at *Dachau*, writing to his wife that his treatment under the custody of the Bavarian State Police had given him "nothing to complain about." He looked forward to sorting out the reason for his detention, which had not been provided when a Nazi storm trooper arrested him on the streets of Munich in mid-March.

Finally, when the prisoners had been assembled for the purpose of receiving their mail — an amenity still

observed at that early stage of things — an SS officer named Hans Steinbrenner, known for his brutality, interrupted the proceedings to demand that Benario, Goldmann, and Arthur and Erwin Kahn report for more work in the gravel pit. A contingent of SS men marched the four outside the camp's walls, to the woods nearby, and shot them. All died instantly, except for Erwin Kahn, who

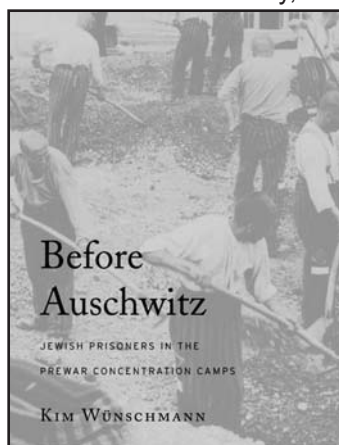
was taken to a nearby hospital and died from his injuries four days later. Though postwar investigation of the incident was compromised by incomplete evidence and self-serving testimony, it was established that Erspenmüller and two other SS guards, Hans Burner and Max Schmidt, committed the murders. The next morning, *Dachau's* remaining prisoners, alarmed by the sound of the shots and fearful of what they portended, were informed that the four had been killed while trying to escape.

As historian Kim Wünschmann notes in *Before Auschwitz: Jewish Prisoners in the Prewar Concentration Camps*, an event like

this must be considered in the context of its own time and not in light of subsequent events. "We must not forget," she says, "that what might seem 'normal' or 'common sense' at later stages of camp history evolved out of deeply unsettling and 'abnormal' first-time situations — origins and precedents whose consequences and impacts were entirely unclear." She writes:

"In the early concentration camps, the first killing of prisoners was an event of enormous significance. It constituted a radical break in the camp experiences of both inmates and guards, a point of no return after which nothing was as it had been before. . . . To the prisoners, the first murder signaled that, inside the camp, they bore the real risk of losing their lives. From this point on, they knew that the guards would not stop their abuses at the ultimate border of death. The SS and SA men, on the other hand, for the first time tasted the overwhelming and unbound "power to kill." More than before, the camp personnel were now held together by a shared criminality . . . a camaraderie of crime structured by its very own codes of honor and morality."

The circumstances surrounding these murders — the unprecedented
(Continued on page 14)



GRANDSON OF INFAMOUS NAZI SPENDS LIFETIME MAKING AMENDS FOR NAMESAKE'S ATROCITIES

BY TAL BASHAN,
THE JERUSALEM POST

I had to reread the email I received from Masaryk University in *Brno*, the Czech Republic, to make sure I understood it correctly:

"In commemoration of International Students' Day, which falls on November 17 — the day the Nazis closed down all the universities in the Czech Republic in 1939, and the day students in Prague protested against the Communist regime in 1989 — we are holding a major event and we would like to invite you to be one of two keynote speakers on a panel titled 'Humanity and Barbarism in the Holocaust and in Europe today.'" I was okay with everything up until the next point in the email. "The other keynote speaker will be Mr. Rainer Höss, the grandson of Nazi war criminal Rudolf Höss, who, like you, also has a family connection with Auschwitz."

Rudolf Höss? As in the commandant of Auschwitz — the chief commanding position within the SS service of a Nazi concentration camp? His grandson? No way. I was freaked out and closed the email, the instinctual reaction to that name by a child of Holocaust survivors.

The next thing I did was call my 92-year-old mother, who survived Auschwitz and *Bergen-Belsen*. "I don't see what the problem is," my mother told me in her matter-of-fact Czech. "Rainer is his grandson. He hadn't even been born yet when all of this took place."

That's true, I responded.

In the days leading up to my trip, I obsessively read everything I could find on radicalization and racism in Europe, about Höss the grandfather, who was responsible for killing at least 500,000 Jews, and about Höss the grandson, who is active in Holocaust education and preaches tolerance. There is nothing like a dialogue between the descendants of the victims and those of the perpetrators, so long as the latter want to make amends.

The Old Town Square in *Brno* is full of candles for the victims of the Paris terrorist attacks.

Someone has hung up Lebanese and Turkish flags — there were victims there, too, a passerby mentions.

Brno, the capital of Moravia, is a three-hour drive from Prague. It used to be ethnically German, and tens of thousands of Germans who lived there before World War II were deported en masse in 1945. In short, this is an appropriate place for my first meeting with Höss the grandson. We meet at a local café and drink Czech beer.

The organizers of the event are walking around us on eggshells, a little nervous about how the program

will turn out. Rainer Höss is tall and athletic and has a chiseled face ("I've been told a number of times that I look like my grandfather. It's not pleasant to hear, but there's not much I can do about it"). He's used to meeting with survivors, as well as children of survivors, and he speaks freely with me.

I, for one, am still keeping my distance.

To me, he's first and foremost the grandson of the man who commanded Auschwitz-Birkenau, the hell my mother was sent into in September 1943. Every once in a while I remind myself that Rainer was born in 1964, and that he isn't responsible for his family's horrific past.



Rainer Höss. He has made it his life mission to promote Holocaust education and tolerance.

The first question I ask him is, why didn't he change his name? "Before he was hanged, my grandfather wrote to my grandmother that she should change her name," Rainer explains.

"Both my grandmother and my father were in complete denial of his crimes, and so they adamantly refused to change their names. 'Höss will remain Höss,' my grandmother would say. I decided that if I kept the name, this would enable me to do my part in repenting in my grandfather's name. It's not so simple, of course — you need to always be careful about everything you say, because people are judging you. Sometimes people curse me on the Internet, and neo-Nazis are always trying to contact me. Ultimately, the name Höss is connected with Auschwitz, where millions of people were murdered."

For years, Rainer engaged obsessively in rehabilitating his family name. He researched his grandfather's and others' crimes, spent hours in archives, has had talks with groups of teenagers about tolerance and fighting racism, and gives (self-financed) guided tours of Auschwitz.

He's active in an organization called Footsteps, which was founded not

only so that people can learn about what happened in history, but also so that history doesn't repeat itself. Rainer also works with Khubaib Ali Mohammed, a German Muslim attorney, to bring to justice other Nazi war criminals who are still alive. "We work together — Christians, Muslims and Jews — and I'm very proud of that."

Rainer, 51, lives in Munich, is divorced and is the father of three children. He is a chef by profession. At the age of 15, when he found out who his paternal grandfather was, he ran away from home. By 18, he was already married with a baby. Today, his eldest granddaughter is 15 years old. One of his daughters is married to a Bosnian Muslim, "and I'm so happy for her — I'm in favor of pluralism," he says.

At the age of 21, Rainer cut off all contact with his family — his father, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles. His mother, who divorced his father in 1983, is the only person he's still in contact with.

Rainer's father, Hans-Jurgen Höss, who was born in 1937, one of Rudolf and Hedwig Höss's five children, grew up in a large villa near Auschwitz. There are color photographs that were taken during the war (with the new camera that Rudolf was given as a present by Heinrich Himmler), which show the Höss children frolicking in the garden and swimming in the pool at the villa, with the death camp and crematoria in the background.

"The villa is still there today — it's owned by a Polish couple that I'm in touch with. Many people don't know much about this house, such as the secret escape tunnel built by my grandfather that reaches from the crematoria to the house. A prisoner who worked for my grandfather told me that he would make the whole family practice using the escape tunnel at least once a week. The management of the concentration camp doesn't like to publicize this, because they're worried that neo-Nazis might turn this complex into a pilgrimage site."

Years after the war ended, Rudolf's children — and even his wife — claimed that they did not know what was taking place at the camp. "This is ludicrous, of course, because all of the servants at the house were prisoners from the camp," Rainer explains. "All the gardening, landscaping, construction and renovations were carried out by prisoners. Even my grandfather's barber was from the camp. My uncle used to use his slingshot to shoot rocks over the wall at the prisoners. There are prisoners who remember all of my aunts and uncles." Rudolf's wife, Hedwig, would later recall to friends how much she had loved living in Auschwitz, a

time in her life she recalled as being "heavenly, happy times."

"She was cold and tyrannical. When she would enter a room, it would all of a sudden feel like we were in a freezer," Rainer says.

Living 150 meters from the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp certainly had an effect on the Höss children: they all stayed supporters of Hitler and hated Jews. Rainer's father, Hans-Jurgen, who worked as an engineer for Volvo, was, according to Rainer, a cold and cruel man. "The home I grew up in was hell on earth. My father would beat me and my mother all the time. He ruled the home with an iron fist. We were not allowed to speak without permission. We were forbidden to cry or show any feeling whatsoever. If we ever disobeyed him, he would beat us to a pulp. My mother tried to commit suicide a number of times."

Rainer's first encounter with the "Jewish issue" was incredibly traumatic. "I was maybe five or six years old, when a boy from school invited me over to his house for 'Pesach-fest.' I had no idea what this was. So I approached my father and stood still until he gave me permission to speak, just like I always did. In a hesitant voice, I asked for permission to go to Chris's house for Pesach-fest. My father leapt from his chair and hit me so hard that he broke my nose, and then he locked me in my room. 'You will have no contact with those dirty Jews,' he screamed. The next day, I saw that there was a new sign hanging on our front door that read: 'No Jews allowed.'"

Until the age of 12, Rainer didn't know anything about his grandfather's exploits. "My family would talk about how he was such a brave soldier, and that he was killed defending the homeland. Leopold Heger, my grandfather's driver in Auschwitz, would come to our home and take long walks with me, while he told me about my grandfather's heroism. He would call me 'prince,' because 'your grandfather was like a king.'"

When he was 12, Rainer went on a school trip to the *Dachau* concentration camp. "My grandfather commanded this camp before being transferred to Auschwitz — I saw his name written on a plaque with my own eyes: Rudolf Höss. I ran home at the end of the day and asked my father if it was true, and he told me, 'That's a complete lie.' And I believed him, since at that age you still believe everything your parents tell you."

When he turned 15, Rainer came across a book at home titled *Men of Auschwitz*.

"When my father saw me take that book off the shelf, he bolted towards me, slapped my cheek and told me never to touch that book again. Of course, the next day, after my father

(Continued on page 13)

SURVIVORS' CORNER

HE ESCAPED DEATH AT THE HANDS OF THE NAZIS ... AND BRITISH BOMBERS

BY GENE WARNER,
THE BUFFALO NEWS

Henry Bawnik has no illusions about how he survived the Holocaust.

It wasn't brains. Or toughness. Or faith.

He has only one explanation: pure luck.

"Nobody wanted me alive, that's for sure," Bawnik said.

He certainly had the will to survive. He also was young and resourceful. But now, at almost 90 and looking back, the Amherst resident knows he cheated death, not once but several times, as a Polish Jew during World War II.

"It was luck, strictly luck," he said.

Bawnik's story is different from most Holocaust survivors'. Not only did he survive four Nazi concentration camps, but he also lived through an Allied bombing of three ships carrying concentration camp survivors during the last couple of days of the war.

That attack, killing thousands of prisoners, has gone largely unnoticed for 70 years.

Bawnik's journey began when he was rounded up on the streets of the Lodz ghetto at age 15. He spent four years in the camps, including the notorious death camp Auschwitz. He saw death all around him, his fellow camp inhabitants dying from shootings, beatings, the gas chambers and starvation.

Then, in the last days of World War II, Bawnik narrowly avoided death again, in perhaps the most cruelly

Bawnik was on the largest of the three, the *Cap Arcona*, a former German luxury liner. British pilots mistakenly bombed all three boats.

The British Royal Air Force had been told that many of Hitler's top Nazi henchmen were aboard the ships in an attempt to flee Germany. Swedish and Swiss Red Cross officials informed British intelligence one day before the bombing that prisoners were on board, but that message apparently never got through.

Only about 350 of the 5,000 prisoners on the *Cap Arcona* survived. The others either burned to death on the sinking ship or drowned in the chilly 45-degree waters of the Baltic Sea. Skeletal remains continued to wash ashore for 25 years.

Few people know the story about the *Cap Arcona*. Records of what happened May 3, 1945, have been sealed, not to be opened until 2045.

"Seven thousand people died on the last day of the war, and by mistake," Bawnik said. "How can you make sense of it? I'm bitter, but it was a mistake made during war. That's all you can say."

THE BEGINNING OF WAR

Bawnik was 13 when Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. He was living in Lodz with his mother, two older sisters and an older brother. His father had died earlier.

Within days, German soldiers occupied Lodz, which had one of the largest Jewish communities in Europe. Jews quickly became targets of beatings, property seizures and robberies.

"It started right away," he said. "Standing in line for food, they picked out the Jews. They said, 'The Jews have to come out.'"

His two oldest siblings, a brother and sister, soon fled, leaving only Bawnik, his mother and one sister, Regina.

On May 1, 1940, just eight months after Poland was invaded, the Germans sealed the Lodz Jewish ghetto. The idea of the ghetto, historians have said, was to put all the Jews in one place, to make it easier to find a "solution" to the "Jewish problem."

Hunger became overwhelming.

"You got one large loaf of bread, and almost nothing else for a whole week," he recalled. "The hunger started then."

As a 14-year-old with a big appetite, he ate his whole loaf in one day, nibbling on tiny morsels from his sister and mother the rest of the week.

"I looked like a *Muselmann*," he said, referring to a term for starving concentration camp inhabitants. "You looked like you had only skin, with no meat on the bones."

Bawnik remembered the roundup of Jews one day, maybe in August 1941.

"We didn't know where we were going. There were a couple thousand people in the roundup. They chose the young people that they could get work out of and put us in the warehouse."

That was frightening for the teen, but Bawnik was comforted by the sight of an older boy and former neighbor named David, whom he looked up to.

"They started beating us. It was terrible, terrible. They just kept on beating him and kicking him. I saw him die, and I saw them take him away. He was dead."

Bawnik had just learned his probable fate.

"That's my future," he thought. "I knew I couldn't get out alive. It was just a question of when."

HIS FIRST CAMP

A train took Bawnik to *Posen*, to the *Gutenbrunn* concentration camp, where prisoners were building railroad tracks.

He remembers the small touches of that life, like the dish he always carried under his arm, in case he found a little soup to eat.

"Then the dish was my pillow at night."

One day, while assigned to work with a Polish truck driver, he drove past a group of women from a nearby women's camp. He wrote a short letter, put it in a small box and threw it toward the women. It turned out that his female cousin saw the letter and gave it to his sister, Regina, who was working in that camp's kitchen. The next day, his sister sent him a bag of sugar and a loaf of bread.

"It was like you were in heaven," Bawnik said. "You can't imagine what hunger is unless you go a couple days without food."

Thanks to the kindness of the female camp's commander, Bawnik was able to reunite with his sister a few times.

"It was unbelievable," he said of the chance finding of his sister. "I didn't

know she was still alive."

He never saw her again.

There were horrible sights of cruelty at his camp. Two young brothers,



Henry Bawnik and his wife on their honeymoon in Lake Placid.

about 11 and 13, were executed for stealing potatoes from the field.

"They took them out to the courtyard and hanged them in front of everybody," he said. "I saw it. One of them survived after they hanged him. So they took him out and shot him."

At his first concentration camp, Bawnik learned about survival.

"Survival is a very tough thing to (think about) when the Germans were there," he said. "They could shoot you. They could do anything to you, and no one could help you."

THE DEATH CAMP

Sometime in 1943, he was taken to Auschwitz, where at least 1.1 million people ultimately were killed.

Including his mother, sister and cousin, he later learned.

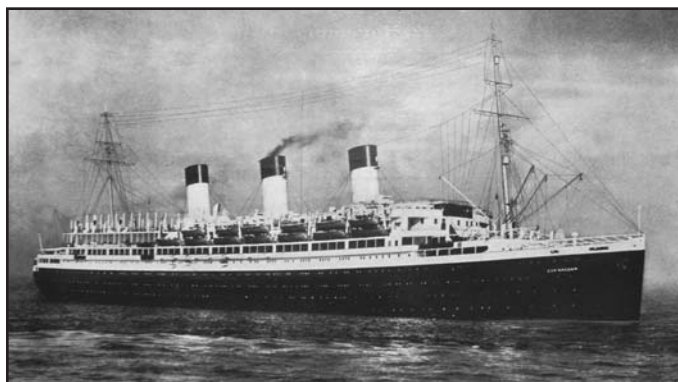
One little lie helped him survive. Bawnik, then 17, claimed he was 18, old enough to work as a laborer.

"We slept in the barracks," he said. "It was terrible. Three people in a bunk, two sleeping one way, the other in the middle sleeping the other way. Somehow you did it."

Others might have given up. He wanted to live.

"I knew I was going to die, but you fought to live. You work as hard as you can, so that they let you live, and then you hope they lose the war."

That formula worked for Bawnik,
(Continued on page 13)



The *Cap Arcona* was in the Baltic Sea carrying 5,000 concentration camp survivors when it was bombed and sunk by British fighter pilots on May 3, 1945. Only about 350 people survived.

ironic event of the Holocaust — the British bombing of the three prison ships in the Baltic Sea.

It was three days after Hitler committed suicide and one day before the unconditional surrender of German forces in northwest Germany. More than 7,000 concentration camp survivors who had lived through torture, slaughter and hunger were aboard the ships off the northern edge of Germany.

PSEUDO GESTAPO MAN TRICKED BRITISH NAZI SYMPATHIZERS IN WORLD WAR II

Eric Roberts, aka "Jack King," was a Nazi impostor working for UK intelligence whose role was to collect potentially lethal information intended for Nazis.

At the height of World War II, Hans Kohout wanted to give the Nazis advance word of a top-secret British tactic that could neutralize an enemy's air defenses, leaving major cities exposed to devastating air raids. Kohout, a naturalized British citizen, knew about it from his job at a plant doing defense-related work.

He passed the information to Jack King, who he believed was a Gestapo agent working undercover in Britain. Kohout expected King to give the information to the Nazis, so they could copy the technology.

But King was an impostor working for British intelligence, not the Gestapo, and Kohout's treasonous plan fizzled, according to secret intelligence files made public by the National Archives. The information never crossed the English Channel.

Time and time again, the low-key "Jack King" was able to convince British traitors that he was a Gestapo man, gathering up potentially lethal information intended for the Nazis.

"It was a brave undertaking, mixing with Fascists, pretending to be someone you weren't. It was dangerous work that could have gone wrong," said Stephen Twigge, a historian with the National Archives, whose documents revealed that King was actually Eric Arthur Roberts, a bank clerk without special training.

Twigge said King's work helped to neutralize a potential "fifth column" that might have damaged Britain's war effort. The files suggest the number of Nazi sympathizers willing to take action against British forces was larger than had been thought, he said.

"He was infiltrating a network, putting himself forward as the middle man in German intelligence," said Twigge. "He managed to flush them out and put a brake on their activities."

One of Roberts' handlers, identified only as T.M. Shelford, said many of the Nazi sympathizers in Britain were motivated by a dislike for Jews.

"Many people who were never members of the Fascist parties have been actuated by their anti-Semitic feelings to express the opinion that a German victory would be preferable to a British victory, since the latter would mean a victory for the Jews," he wrote in 1944.

The documents show Roberts had a solid if unspectacular career at Westminster Bank when Security Services asked for him in 1940. His boss sounded surprised by the high priority placed on his services: "What are the particular and especial qualifications of Mr. Roberts — which we have not been able to perceive — for

some particular work of national importance?" his supervisor wrote.

Roberts vanished for a time, re-emerging as Jack King, who had as one of his duties gently discouraging his contacts from sabotaging British soldiers and military installations.

The files reveal little about Roberts' methods besides proficiency at several languages. But he had only rudimentary German and visited the country only twice before the war.

He did display typical British reserve: field reports show Roberts was able to contain his utter disgust for those Brits willing to provide infor-

mation that could easily have led to more carnage on the home front.

In a 1942 report, he described meeting a woman identified as Nancy Brown in the Brighton area along England's vulnerable southern coast. He said her friendly manner made it "almost impossible" for him to believe at first that she would betray her country — but within an hour she was giving him sensitive military data.

"The fact that the items of information volunteered might have resulted in the deaths of many people counted for nothing," he wrote.

The material Roberts gathered was never given to police for possible prosecution, and Kohout and Brown were never charged with any crime. The information was used by the intelligence service to keep track of active Nazi sympathizers in Britain during the war.

Intelligence files do not reveal what Roberts did after the war, Twigge said.

"There was a lot of derring-do and at the end of the war, you basically don't say a single word about it," Twigge said. "And probably no one would have believed him anyway."



The Association of Teachers of Social Studies
United Federation of Teachers (ATSS/UFT)
UFT Jewish Heritage Committee/
The Educators' Chapter of the Jewish Labor
Committee

Barbara G. Arfa

**Professional Development Conference
on Holocaust Education**

Ethics and Responsibility: The Investigation and Prosecution of Nazi War Criminals in the United States and How It Relates to Our Children

*Keynote Address to be given by Eli M. Rosenbaum,
Director of Human Rights Enforcement Strategy and Policy, U.S. Department of Justice*

DATE: Sunday, March 13th, 2016
TIME: 8:30 AM–3:15 PM
8:30 AM Breakfast
9:00 AM Program Commences

PLACE: RAMAZ MIDDLE SCHOOL
114 East 85th Street
(Between Lexington and Park Avenues)
New York, New York 10028

REGISTRATION: Free of charge, registration required*

Workshop topics include: Survivors as Eyewitnesses — Personal Accounts of Children of Survivors — Teaching Liberation Using Testimony — Ethics and Responsibility and Seeking Justice

**In-Service credit available
All registered participants will receive COMPLIMENTARY educational resources
Kosher breakfast and lunch will be served**

***To register, please contact: Marlene W. Yahalom, PhD, Director of Education,
American Society for Yad Vashem
RSVP Tel: 212.220.4304 / Fax: 212.220.4308 / MWY@yadvashemusa.org**

**This Professional Development Conference is being generously supported by the
Barbara Gutfreund Arfa Endowment Fund for Holocaust Education**

CEREMONY HONORING RIGHTEOUS AMONG

(Continued from page 1)

dren, and great-grandchildren of these men.

I'm often asked why did your father do what he did?

Dad's life was guided by one eternal truth...that there IS a God...and that God is good, and his love, though free, has one essential responsibility... we must be good to one another....



Leonard Wilf, chairman of ASYV, gives his remarks at the event.

"And that's what Dad did! Along with Ms. Gunden, the Zbijewskis, and the enduring tribe we call the 'Righteous.'

"Their actions were founded on God's love and the extraordinary idea that all men are created equal. Tonight we honor them because they lived to ensure that idea.

While we honor them with words, nothing honors them more than their life-giving actions.

Our duty now is to take strength from their example and resolve to live as they did... 'lay-



Steven Spielberg introduces the president of the United States, Barack Obama.

ing down our lives' for human freedom and human dignity."

Mary Jean Gunden, accepting the award on behalf of her aunt, Lois Mary Gunden, expressed her deep gratitude to Yad Vashem and the people of Israel for this great honor.

"Our family was blessed to have Lois among us. She possessed an inspiring spiritual dignity and grace. Humble about her many achievements, we knew little about her

wartime activities.

"Her fluency in French allowed her to communicate with the 60 children in the home and their parents. Lois was grateful for every opportunity to 'add just another ray of love to the lives of these youngsters who have already experienced so much of the misery of life.'

"From contact with other relief workers from organizations such as the American Friends Service Committee and the Jewish organization OSE, Lois knew the dangers her children faced.

On August 9, 1942 she wrote: 'Mary Elmes informed me of the return of Polish and German Jews to Poland where death by starvation awaits them.'

"Learning that the three Landesmann children had been saved from deportation, on September 3, 1942 she wrote: 'When I heard

of how they were finally snatched from the fate hanging over them, I felt as if God must have had a hand in preventing anyone from coming after them during these two days; had they been taken to camp, all efforts would have arrived too late for any good.'

"Marking a year in Vichy, on October 31, 1942 she wrote: 'But my year's experience in relief work has taught me more than ever that one has to live only a day at a time. God's faithfulness towards those

who put their trust in Him can be counted upon throughout the particular problems of each day. Without the assurance of His abiding presence and His sustaining help, I would feel lost in an impossible tangle of circumstances.'

Lois refused an offer by the Resistance to leave France and avoid German detention. She, a pacifist, would not risk physical danger to those helping her, nor others that might be harmed in retaliation."

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered brief remarks via a video recording, thanking Obama for speaking at the embassy, as well as for advancing talks on extending and expanding U.S. defense assistance to Israel.

"We are forever indebted to [these Righteous] because of the Jewish children and Jewish soldiers who were saved due to their bravery," said Netanyahu.

The president of the United States was introduced at the event by Steven Spielberg, the Oscar-winning director of the Holocaust film *Schindler's List* and the founder of the *Shoah* Foundation.

Anti-Semitism is on the rise worldwide, and the United States must lead the fight against

it, President Barack Obama said in historic remarks at the Israeli Embassy.

"The Talmud teaches that if a person destroys one life, it is as if they've destroyed an entire world, and if a person saves one life, it is as if they've saved an entire world," said the president.

"What an extraordinary honor to be with you as we honor four Righteous individuals whose courage is measured in the lives they saved — one child, one refugee, one comrade at a time — and who, in so doing, helped save our world.

"I deliver a lot of speeches. Very rarely am I so humbled by the eloquence that has preceded me — not just in words, but in the acts that we commemorate today....

"To the survivors, families of the Righteous and those they saved, to all the distinguished guests: We gather to honor the newest of the Righteous Among the Nations and make real the call to 'never forget,' not just on this day of remembrance, but for all days and for all time.

"And at moments like this, as I listen to the extraordinary stories of the four that we honor, memories come rushing

back of the times that I've encountered the history and the horror of the *Shoah* — growing up, hearing the stories of my great-uncle who helped liberate *Ohrdruf*, part of *Buchenwald*, and who returned home so shaken by the suffering that he had seen that



President Barack Obama delivers his speech at the Righteous Among the Nations ceremony.



Wojtek Zbijewski, grandson of Polish Righteous Among the Nations Maryla and Walery Zbijewski, accepts the medal from Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer and Rabbi Israel Meir Lau.

my grandmother would tell me he did not speak to anyone for six months, just went up in his attic, couldn't fully absorb the horror that he had witnessed.

"Then having the opportunity to go to



Mary Jean Gunden, niece of American Righteous Among the Nations, receives the award from Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer.

Buchenwald myself with Wiesel, and seeing the place where he was held as survivors in the old *Wahem* with Rabbi Lau and hearing the voices in memory. And then taking a visit the Holocaust Museum children must know this and that we must never

"The four lives we claim on our moral imagination. and we are forced to ask same circumstances, How would we answer are you? Would we stay and Maryla Zbijewski they could have been home to a five-year-old for her like one of their and shelter and momently and music — a shi outside until her mother

"Would we have the vision of Lois Gunden? I simply hoped to 'add just a lives of these youngsters endured so much. And ing as many Jewish chil

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"Would of Master Edmonds he was just went about of duty, and joined in the choice of soldiers of Roddie and dared moral cor He was tr saved American quence. son, by th Christians greater Christiani

am a Jew....

"Here, tonight, we must that around the world, rise. We cannot deny Jews leaving major Eu

AMONG THE NATIONS IS A HISTORIC EVENT



Among the Nations Lois Gunden, accepts award from Rabbi Israel Meir Lau.

With my dear friend, Elie Wiesel, the Little Camp was a boy. Standing with his Warsaw ghetto. And then I was walking through Yad Vashem and seeing the faces of the lost, of blessed memory — because our story is a chapter of our history, and we repeat it.

How can we honor tonight make a difference of conscience, as well as our lives. We hear their stories, and we ask ourselves, under the stars, how would we act? God's question, where is the love of Walery? There, in Warsaw, they were shot for opening their doors to a girl. Yet they cared for her, gave her safety, warmth, of family, and she returned from the madness of war.

Her extraordinary compassion. She wrote that she was another ray of love to the children who had already been saved by housing and feeding her children as she could, her love always shone and still burns within the hearts of those she saved.

How do we have the courage to stand for Sergeant Roddie? I know your dad said he was just doing his job, but he went above and beyond the call of duty and so did all those who stood that line. Faced with a choice of giving up his fellow soldier or saving his own life, he looked evil in the eye and told a Nazi to shoot. His compassion never wavered. True to his faith, and he saved some 200 Jewish soldiers as a consequence.

It's an instructive lesson in the way, for those of us who are Jews. I cannot imagine a more powerful expression of faith than to say, I, too,

must confront the reality that anti-Semitism is on the rise. When we see some European cities — where

their families have lived for generations — because they no longer feel safe; when Jewish centers are targeted from Mumbai to Overland Park, Kansas; when swastikas appear on college campuses — when we see all that and more, we must not be silent....

"All nations that prize diversity and tolerance and pluralism must speak out whenever and wherever Jews and other religious minorities are attacked. In recent years, we've seen leaders in France, Germany, and Great Britain stand strongly against anti-Semitism. In Israel, President Rivlin has spoken eloquently about the need for tolerance and acceptance among all Israelis — Jewish and Arab.

"Meanwhile, governments have an obligation to care for the survivors of the *Shoah* — because no one who endured that horror should have to scrape by in their golden years. So, with our White House initiative, we're working to improve care for Holocaust survivors in need here in the United States. And with the compensation fund we helped create, claims are finally being paid that even more Jews deported from France during the Holocaust, including survivors here in America, can benefit from.

"But the task before us does not fall on government alone. Every faith community has a responsibility. Just as all religions speak out against those who try to twist their faith to justify terrorism and violence, just as all faiths need to speak out when interpretations of

you? That's the question that the Holocaust poses to us. We have to consider even in moments of peril, even when we might fear for our own lives, the fact that none of us are powerless. We always have a choice. And today, for most of us, standing up against intolerance doesn't require the same risks that those we honor today took. It doesn't require imprisonment or that we face down the barrel of a gun. It does require us to speak out. It does require us to stand firm. We know that evil can flourish



Pastor Chris Edmonds (right), son of Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds, accepts award from Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer and Rabbi Israel Meir Lau.

if we stand idly by.

"And so we're called to live in a way that shows that we've actually learned from our past. And that means rejecting indifference. It means cultivating a habit of empathy, and recognizing ourselves in one another; to make common cause with the outsider, the minority, whether that minority is Christian or Jew, whether it is Hindu or Muslim, or a nonbeliever; whether that minority is native born or immigrant; whether they're Israeli or Palestinian.

living them in our actions. As the book of Deuteronomy teaches us, 'Tzedek, Tzedek tirdof' — 'Justice, Justice you shall pursue.'

"I want to close with what I'm told is a Jewish legend. It's said that within every generation there are 36 virtuous individuals — individuals so honorable, so filled with compassion, that their good works sustain the very existence of the world. They are called *Lamed Vovniks*, and without them, society crumbles, according to the legend.

We don't know who they are. They're entirely indistinguishable, ordinary people — like Walery and Maryla and Lois and Roddie. You wouldn't necessarily recognize them in a crowd. But I believe that their generation — the generation of Schindler and Wallenberg and Karski — demanded a lot more than 36. It called for more than 26,000 Righteous Among the Nations. It called for the millions of heroes who did not go quietly and who stood up and fought back.

"And may we all strive to live up to their noble example, to be the *Lamed Vovniks* of our

generation, to do our part to sustain each other and to embrace the humanity that we share, and in so doing, save our world. May the memory of the lost be a blessing. And as nations and individuals, may we always strive to be among the Righteous.

Ambassador of Israel to the United States, H.E. Mr. Ron Dermer, thanked the President for attending the special event.

"Your presence is a testament to the unique relationship between Israel and the United



Members of the families of the Righteous Among the Nations with the representatives of the ASYV and attendees of the ceremony.

States... their religion veer in an ugly direction, so, too, must they speak out against those who use their faith to justify bias against Jews, or people of any faith....

"All of us have a responsibility to speak out, and to teach what's right to our children, and to examine our own hearts. That's the lesson of the Righteous we honor today — the lesson of the Holocaust itself: Where are you? Who are

It means taking a stand against bigotry in all its forms, and rejecting our darkest impulses and guarding against tribalism as the only value in our communities and in our politics. It means heeding the lesson repeated so often in the Torah: To welcome the stranger, for we were once strangers, too. That's how we never forget — not simply by keeping the lessons of the *Shoah* in our memories, but by

States... This is the first time that a sitting President has ever spoken in our Embassy in Washington."

Recalling the courageous acts of the Righteous, the Ambassador said: "In honoring these four righteous souls tonight, let us not only recognize their remarkable heroism. Let us hope that their light will inspire us to... build a better future for all humanity."



REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

YAD VASHEM AND HEWLETT-PACKARD SEEK TO BRING BIG DATA TO HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

BY SAM SOKOL,
THE JERUSALEM POST

The Holocaust memorial and research center is sitting on millions of documents and testimonials that it has to make relevant, and it does not have a way of quickly or efficiently sifting through such vast amounts of data.

Touring the museum's archives two years ago, David Lander, incoming vice president and general manager of tech giant Hewlett-Packard, began thinking about ways to make Yad Vashem relevant to the next generation.

"It's all about big data," he told *The Jerusalem Post* during the product of his musings — a "Hackathon" in which Israeli university students and HP employees competed to find the most innovative ways to merge cloud computing, Web applications and Holocaust history for what one challenger termed the "ADD generation."

"The challenge they faced at Yad Vashem was about how much data they had and how to make it relevant," he said.

Aside from Lander's passionate belief in the importance of Holocaust education, for HP the draw was obvious — a partnership with Yad Vashem would present it with significant advantages.

Yad Vashem has been working on digitizing its massive archives for several years, and has generated a wealth of data that includes video and audio recordings, scanned documents, databases and other types of

files. According to Lander, this collection will provide HP with a proving ground for the cloud computing and big-data-service technology it's aiming at corporations with similarly large collections.

During the Hackathon, programmers in casual attire ascended the stage in Yad Vashem's auditorium, pitching apps, websites and programs



Students from Germany visit the Hall of Names at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

capable of transforming vast and disparate sources of information into a user-friendly experience that can highlight individual victims and survivors of the Holocaust.

"You are too old. You aren't the main client," one software developer quipped to the audience, describing the 30 teenagers she had gathered in order to observe their online media consumption habits.

This testing led her to develop a mobile app.

"Most teens wanted to see a personal page of each survivor and what [memories and experiences] he col-

lected during and after the war," she said.

Ed Lewin, a trustee of Britain's Holocaust Educational Trust and an HP vice president, agreed, telling the *Post* he believed that "people want a personal experience, and the scale of Yad Vashem is daunting."

Another presenter showcased a website providing on-the-fly subtitling

of survivors' video testimonials collected by Yad Vashem, while another created an online program for Yad Vashem's digital collection that presented information as an interactive map and time line.

"We want to be relevant to our audiences," Yad Vashem's chief archivist, Dr. Haim Gertner, told the *Post*.

"We are dealing with very complicated and

fragmented data," Gertner said, "so the challenges of connecting such a huge amount of data... in a relevant way, when most of it was not created in the digital age, is a huge challenge that Yad Vashem is in the forefront of dealing with."

He said that over the past decade, his team had managed to digitize millions of items and get them online, yet there was still a long way to go. He added that Yad Vashem was interested in several of the proposals presented during the Hackathon.

"I'm sure this will enable us to continue connections with HP," he stated.

Yad Vashem chairman Avner Shalev described the challenge of trying to find "technological ideas and solutions that would provide accessibility to survivor testimonies — audio, video or written — from the Yad Vashem collections."

"Yad Vashem is relentless in its pursuit of innovation in the service of memory," he said.

"Through these efforts," he continued, "Yad Vashem hopes to bring the voices and stories of each individual survivor to the masses. For decades, we have looked for ways to make our immense archives and collections, which we have amassed over the years, more easily accessible to a global audience."

Speaking to participants, Education Minister Naftali Bennett made parallels between the technology used by those making the presentations and the interactive nature of the Passover Seder meal, which has kept the memory of the Exodus alive for thousands of years.

"The best example for remembrance exists in Judaism," Bennett said of the Seder, citing the "interactive" aspects of the meal in which children are encouraged to ask questions, as well as the "experiential" nature of many of the evening's customs that serve to make participants feel as if they had lived through the events being commemorated.

By adopting technology of the type presented at the Hackathon, he said, "we will be able to keep [the Holocaust] relevant for thousands of years to come."

YAD VASHEM HONORS FIRST EGYPTIAN AS "RIGHTEOUS GENTILE"

For the first time, Holocaust memorial center Yad Vashem has recognized an Egyptian national, the late Dr. Mohamed Helmy, as a "Righteous Gentile," for the assistance he gave Jews during the Holocaust, at great personal risk.

Helmy, born in Khartoum in 1901 to Egyptian parents, went to Germany in 1922 to study medicine and settled in Berlin. After he completed his studies, he went to work at the Robert Koch Institute in Berlin, but was dismissed in 1937. Not being of Aryan race, Dr. Helmy was forbidden to work in the public health system; he was also unable to marry his German fiancée.

In 1939 he was arrested, together with other Egyptian nationals, but he was released a year later because of health problems.

Despite his being targeted by the regime, Helmy spoke out against Nazi policies, and notwithstanding the great danger, risked his life and helped his Jewish friends. When the

deportations of the Jews from Berlin began, and 21-year-old Anna Boros (Gutman after the war), a family friend, was in need of a hiding place,



Irena Steinfeldt, Director of the Righteous Among the Nations in the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, displays the certificate and a medal that are given posthumously to Dr. Mohamed Helmy, an Egyptian physician who was living in Nazi Germany and saved Jews.

Helmy brought her to a cabin he owned in the Berlin neighborhood of Buch, which became her safe haven until the end of the war.

At times of danger when he was

under police investigation, Helmy would arrange for her to hide elsewhere. "A good friend of our family, Dr. Helmy...hid me in his cabin in Berlin-Buch from March 10 until the end of the war. As of 1942 I no longer had any contact to the outside world. The Gestapo knew that Dr. Helmy was our family physician, and they knew that he owned a cabin in Berlin-Buch," Anna Gutman wrote after the war.

"He managed to evade all their interrogations. In such cases he would bring me to friends where I would stay for several days, introducing me as his cousin from Dresden. When the danger would pass, I would return to his cabin....Dr. Helmy did everything for me out of the generosity of his heart and I will be grateful to him for eternity."

Helmy also helped Anna Gutman's

mother, Julie; her stepfather, Georg Wehr, and her grandmother, Cecilie Rudnik. He provided for them and attended to their medical needs. He arranged for Cecilie Rudnik to be hidden in the home of Frieda Szturmann. For over a year Szturmann hid and protected the elderly lady and shared her food rations with her.

A moment of great danger occurred when the Wehrs were caught in 1944, and during their interrogation revealed that Helmy was helping them and that he was hiding Anna. Helmy immediately brought Anna to Frieda Szturmann's home, and it was only thanks to his resourcefulness that he managed to evade punishment by showing the police a letter Anna had allegedly written to him, saying she was staying with her aunt in *Dessau*.

Dr. Helmy remained in Berlin and was finally able to marry his fiancée. He died in 1982. Frieda Szturmann passed away in 1962.

UNCOVERING HOLOCAUST PERPETRATORS WHERE FEW HAVE LOOKED

Muslim Nazis, female death camp guards, and Dutch “bounty hunters” are coming out of the archival closet, even as fewer Shoah eyewitnesses remain alive to testify.

BY MATT LBOVIC,
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

With new access to archives and other primary sources, historians are supplanting archetypal images of Aryan Nazi men as the Holocaust’s sole perpetrators. Previously obscured perpetrator “sub-groups” are being exposed one portrait at a time, ranging from women who guarded death camps to Dutch bounty hunters of Jews in hiding.

And as researchers uncover an array of Europeans involved in the murder of Jews and other groups during Hitler’s rule, perpetrators’ motivations are being individually examined.

Digging in 70-year-old files and knocking door-to-door for witnesses, scholars are honing the relatively new “Holocaust as local history” method. The trend departs from a generalized “Holocaust as universal history” approach by focusing on interactions between “ordinary” victims and perpetrators — zooming way in on the action, as it were, and exploring a site’s history before and after the war.



During the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in April of 1945, guards with the SS were paraded for work in clearing the dead.

Unsurprisingly, some of these investigations are ruffling feathers.

In Sarah Helm’s 2015 book, *Ravensbruck: Life and Death in Hitler’s Concentration Camp for Women*, the historian biographized the camp itself, where 132,000 women and children were imprisoned. Poring through postwar trial transcripts and archives opened after the Soviet Union’s fall, Helm shed light on *Ravensbruck’s* lesser-known function as an SS training camp for women to become concentration camp guards.

“The overwhelming majority of these female guards were easily able to get back into the social fabric of postwar zones of occupation, as they were not usually viewed with the

same disdain that men in the SS were viewed with,” said Daniel Patrick Brown, author of studies on the involvement of women in the all-male SS, including their training at *Ravensbruck*.

“It helped, of course, that the women did not have the ‘tell-tale’ blood tattoo that every SS man had,” added Brown in an interview with *The Times of Israel*.

Just as Anne Frank became a convenient, catchall symbol of Jewish victims, one particularly gruesome guard — Irma Grese, nicknamed “the blond beast of *Birkenau* and *Belsen*” — came to embody female perpetrators at large. The 2013 publication of Wendy Lower’s book, *Hitler’s Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*, helped expand understanding of women’s roles beyond the Grese stereotype.

According to Lower, half a million “ordinary women” from Germany’s “lost generation” — including teachers, nurses, and secretaries — worked near sites of genocide, as both assistants and even executioners.

“Nearly all histories of the Holocaust leave out half of those who populated that society, as if women’s history happens somewhere else,” wrote Lower in her introduction.

“The dramatic stories of these women reveal the darkest side of female activism,” she said. “They show what can happen when women of varied backgrounds and professions are mobilized for war and acquiesce in genocide.”

An expert on the Holocaust in Ukraine, Lower has documented war-era atrocities throughout Europe. By investigating farther east than Soviet-era scholars were able to operate, and by widening the circle of perpetrators to include collaborators and bystanders, her work encapsulates current trends in *Shoah* studies.

After exhuming police records and other documents tied to the deportation of Dutch Jewry, Dutch journalist and historian Ad van Liempt

estimated that 15,000 Jews were captured in hiding by reward-driven Nazi collaborators. His 2012 book, *Jew Hunt*, exposed files on 250 Dutch police officers who organized units to locate and arrest Jews in hiding.

“Every large town in the Netherlands had such units,” van Liempt told *The Times of Israel* in an interview.

Though it is likely there were far more than 250 police officers who participated in anti-Nazi resistance activities, “the 250 who collaborated in this brutal way did much more harm to the reputation of the Dutch police than any other group in history,” said van Liempt.

During two decades of pursuing bounty hunters, the historian said he occasionally incurred the wrath of people who accused him of “being too critical.”

“But facts from the [police] files cannot be discussed or denied,” said van Liempt, who was born four years after the war.

As researchers look east, some are studying the role of Muslims recruited to the *Waffen-SS* in Yugoslavia. Up to 42,000 Muslim SS members and police troops were recruited by the Nazis, and thousands of them participated in the slaughter of Jews and Orthodox Christians in Bosnia and Serbia, respectively.

For decades, Muslims’ involvement in the Holocaust has been told in trope by a 1941 photo showing Hitler meeting with Haj Amin al-Husseini, the mufti of Jerusalem. Less remembered is that actual Muslim SS divisions, recruited in part by al-Husseini, were key perpetrators of the Holocaust in Bosnia. Muslim units also participated in the murder of Jews in Greece and Russia.

According to *IBM and the Holocaust* author Edwin Black, the slaughter inflicted by Muslim SS men in Eastern Europe was exceptional, even by Nazi standards, and involved a surprising collaboration.

“The *Ustasha* of Yugoslavia [was] a Muslim-Catholic alliance of Nazi killers so gruesome and beastly that even Berlin shrank in horror at the slaughter,” wrote Black in his 2010 book, *The Farhud: Roots of the Arab-Nazi Alliance During the Holocaust*.

“This berserk army of ghastly murderers, the *Ustasha*, and three related crack divisions of Arab-Nazi *Waffen SS* comprised of tens of thousands of Muslim volunteers, terrorized people of all faiths in Yugoslavia,” wrote Black. Among the camps staffed by Muslim SS men was *Jasenovac*, cited by survivors for unparalleled displays of brutality.

Religious motivations aside, a fresh source of information on perpetrators is coming from an unexpected source: their grandchildren.

The third-generation truth-seekers are a diverse bunch, including a black German woman who discovered that her grandfather was Amon Goeth, the pitiless Nazi commander made famous by the film *Schindler’s List*.

In her 2015 book, *My Grandfather Would Have Shot Me: A Black Woman Discovers Her Family’s Nazi Past*, Jennifer Teege focused as much on her notorious grandfather as she did on her grandmother, Goeth’s wartime lover. Throughout her life, Teege’s grandmother — Ruth Irene



Amon Goeth, the brutal SS commander of *Plaszow* concentration camp near *Krakow*, Poland.

Kalder — denied that Goeth committed atrocities, attempting to hide his actions from her daughter and granddaughter.

After stumbling upon the truth by accident in a *Hamburg* library, Teege, whose father is Nigerian, uncovered her grandmother’s role as both a bystander and a denier. She visited *Plaszow* concentration camp and *Krakow*, where Goeth brutally liquidated the Jewish ghetto.

“I want to see where my grandfather committed his murders,” wrote Teege of her plan to visit Poland. “I want to get close to him — and then put some distance between him and me,” said the biracial granddaughter of an SS monster.

In a few years, there will be no survivors or perpetrators alive to testify. To prepare for that day, researchers are digging deeper than ever into all kinds of archives, as well as literally digging at sites of mass murder for artifacts to bear witness in the future.

According to scholars, the role of Holocaust bystanders is an emerging priority. During three generations of collecting victims’ accounts and bringing perpetrators to justice, these involuntary witnesses received scant attention. When teaching the *Shoah* to young adults, some curricula — like “Facing History and Ourselves” — ask students to envision themselves as bystanders, emphasizing that group’s role in enabling genocide.

As intoned by the late Primo Levi, an Auschwitz survivor from Italy, “Monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common men, the functionaries ready to believe and to act without asking questions.”

THE MYTH OF THE GOOD NAZI

BY ADAM TOOZE, WSJ

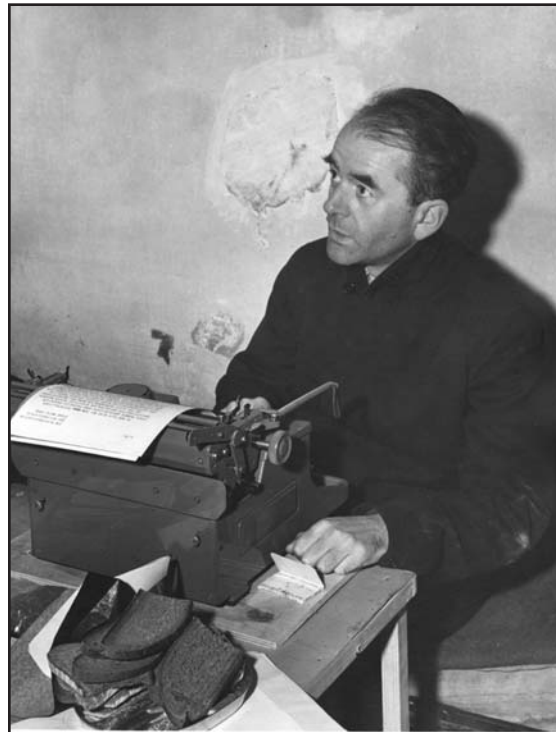
Just after midnight on October 1, 1966, Albert Speer, the former armaments minister of the Third Reich, walked free from *Spandau* jail. Barely acknowledging Margarete, his long-suffering wife, the mother of his six children and the once-proud bearer of a Nazi award for fertility, Speer faced the flashbulbs and cameras of the world's media from the back seat of a luxurious black Mercedes provided for the occasion by an old industrialist friend. Condemned by the *Nuremberg* Tribunal for war crimes and crimes against humanity, Speer was saved from the death penalty by an artful defense that separated him from the other Nazi ogres in the dock. He would spend the last 15 years of his life burnishing his image as "the good Nazi." After three best-selling books and lucrative interviews with *Der Spiegel* and *Playboy*, among others, he died in London on September 1, 1981, attended rather conspicuously by a beautiful young mistress, after a long morning of interviews with the BBC and dinner with the historian Norman Stone. Hitler's closest companion, the architect of Germany's wartime "armaments miracle," had seized his time in the spotlight. He had refashioned himself as a postmodern celebrity.

Already at *Nuremberg*, Speer had presented himself as a penitent prophet of a new age of technocracy. He used his closing statement in the dock to warn the world that the only forces that could "prevent unconfined engineering and science from completing the work of destroying human beings" were "individual freedom and self-confidence." In the aftermath of Hiroshima and Auschwitz, the conjunction of technology and power had become an obsessive theme of cultural commentary, one that offered Speer two advantages. It put Allied strategic bombing alongside him in the dock while distracting attention from more specific questions about his personal responsibility for the deportation of tens of thousands of Jews from Berlin and the murderous exploitation of concentration camp labor.

Paradoxically, while muddying the question of personal responsibility, Speer succeeded in crafting an image of himself as the indispensable mastermind of the Nazi war economy. Under his command from February 1942, production of tanks and fighter aircraft soared, and path-breaking technical innovations such as the V2 rocket poured off Nazi assembly lines. In 1945, before he was indicted, he seriously imagined playing a leading role in postwar reconstruction, even styling himself as a pioneer of European integration for having promoted the outsourcing of production to his collaborator

friends in Vichy France. At *Nuremberg* this was his defense: How could anyone put him, this forward-thinking, broad-minded, modern individual, in the same class as the drug-addled and rapacious Goering or an odious anti-Semitic creep like the publisher of *Der Stürmer*, Julius Streicher?

It was an image that, for the first decades after the war, dominated the historiography. But from the 1980s onward, the edifice began to crumble. Doubts were raised about Speer's denials of complicity in the Holocaust. In fact, it was shown, he had been involved both in the Aryanization of the German capital and the genocidal food allocation



Albert Speer photographed in his cell at *Nuremberg*, during the *Nuremberg* trials.

and labor-recruitment programs of 1942–43; and in 1944 he and his staff worked daily with the SS to select slave labor from the hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews arriving on the ramp at Auschwitz. In 1995, Gitta Sereny devoted a laborious but fascinating book to unpicking Speer's struggle with the truth, including his efforts to deny that he was present on October 6, 1943, in *Posen* when Himmler initiated the assembled *Gauleiter* into the horrific secrets of the extermination program. In the past 15 years a cohort of economic historians have dismantled the foundation of the Speer myth, showing how the "armaments miracle" was in fact an ordinary industrial process gorged on the violent mobilization of labor, raw materials and capital from all over Europe and wrapped in the magic cape of Goebbels's propaganda.

Martin Kitchen's *Speer: Hitler's Architect* does a workmanlike job of converting this revisionist historiography into biographical form. The result is a devastating portrait of an empty, narcissistic and compulsively ambitious personality. As Mr. Kitchen chronicles Speer's acquisitive rise to power and his compulsive self-fash-

ioning, he invokes Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*. Such high cultural references would, one fears, have suited Speer all too well. Reading the shopping lists of luxuries that Speer ordered from *Spandau* jail, including a Group One Dunhill pipe, foie gras with truffles, Beluga caviar and a Jaeger-LeCoultre watch, one is tempted to invoke instead *American Psycho*, Bret Easton Ellis's deathless evocation of a murderous, product-obsessed Wall Street yuppie. Even Speer's high-cultural aspirations, his patronage of classical musicians and his dabbling in religious profundity had a shallowness that haunted those who knew him well.

The Speer myth was not the creation of Speer alone. Mr. Kitchen's study is at its best in tracing the networks that helped to create him. As a young architect in the 1920s, Speer benefited from the support of Heinrich Tessenow, a noted architect and an advocate of arts and crafts. Having started life as an apolitical aesthete, Speer was swept up in the dynamic of Hitler's movement during the disastrous first winter of the Great Depression, joining the party in March 1931. With the advent of Hitler's regime, modesty was out of style, and Speer shifted allegiance to the luxury designer Paul Ludwig Troost. His first big break came first with the commission for the remodeling of Goebbels's villa in Berlin and the renovation of Hitler's

offices in Berlin. This brought Speer into daily contact with the Führer, who was taken with his youthful energy and charisma. His design for the enormous party rally ground at *Nuremberg* and the commission for the pompous new Reich Chancellery cemented Speer's place at Hitler's side. In January 1937, Speer and his Führer began planning their magnum opus, the reconstruction of Berlin as Germania, the capital of a new German Empire. It was to feature a triumphal monument more than 300 feet high, large enough to straddle Napoleon's Arc de Triomphe, and a Great Hall 16 times the size of St. Peter's in Rome, designed to accommodate 180,000 delegates.

Speer's plans for Berlin provided for not just the official apparatus of the Third Reich. He also made sure to designate luxurious new office space for Germany's corporations, including the electrical engineering giant AEG and the chemicals superconglomerate IG Farben. Dynamic technocrats who worked the angles between business, the Nazi Party and the state apparatus were key figures in Hitler's regime. Fritz Todt, the engineer-architect of the Autobahn, established himself as an indispen-

sable go-between. It was Todt whom Hitler picked in March 1940 to be his wartime minister for armaments and ammunition. Speer, meanwhile, took charge of building the capital's air-raid shelters and armaments factories. When Todt was killed in mysterious circumstances in the crisis winter of 1941–42, it was Speer to whom Hitler turned. With the *Wehrmacht* stuck deep in snowbound Russia and war with the U.S. looming in the West, it was now Speer's task to rally German industry to the war effort.

After 1945, the German business community constructed its own myth of innocence. But as we know from the library of histories produced by the slave-labor litigation of the 1990s, it is hard to think of any major industrial corporation that did not employ forced foreign labor. A shockingly large proportion even contracted with the SS for the use of concentration camp labor, including Jewish camp inmates. Nor were the businessmen merely narrow-minded profit maximizers "doing their job." As part of Speer's organization, they actively shaped and mobilized the German economy for war. Most were nationalists committed to German victory. Some were Nazi ideologues. They all had reason to fear Stalin's Soviet Union. But the system that Speer organized melded these impulses with a more abstract ethic: Its participants lived and died by the standard of "performance" (*Leistung*). Statistics and production records were their religion, technological improvement their mantra and disruptive innovation their magic. The obsession with short-term *Leistung* displaced any wider consideration of the strategic prospects for Germany in a global war, let alone any ethical examination of the methods that were used. The armaments miracle became an end in itself.

Seeking to reconcile what she witnessed at the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961 with her theory of the modern human condition, Hannah Arendt coined the controversial phrase "the banality of evil" to capture the thoughtlessness and incoherence of the Nazi personality. According to Arendt's archive, Speer's newly released *Spandau* diary was one of the last books that she read before her death in December 1975. Would she have seen Speer as a more telling instance of Nazi banality than Eichmann, one wonders? Or was Speer an example of something even more troubling, a leading perpetrator endowed, unlike Eichmann, with the ability to interpret his behavior in terms of larger social and technical forces, a disturbingly persuasive "thought leader" who helped to shape the myths of industrial and technological modernity — myths that both rationalized his own role and saved him from the hangman's noose?

HE ESCAPED DEATH AT THE HANDS OF THE NAZIS ... AND BRITISH BOMBERS

(Continued from page 6)

though many of his close calls with death awaited.

THE KILLER OF AUSCHWITZ

The next stop for Bawnik was *Fürstengrube*, only 19 miles from Auschwitz, where two lucky breaks again saved him.

When Bawnik and the other prisoners arrived, commandant Otto Moll greeted them. Moll already had a reputation as the “killer of Auschwitz,” running that camp’s crematorium.

Bawnik remembered part of Moll’s speech to the prisoners: “You’ll work hard, we’ll feed you well, but let’s do a little exercise.”

Just then, someone from the kitchen asked whether anyone in the group was a gardener.

“I raised my hand and said yes. I was taken to the garden, and 15 people were beaten to death while doing their exercises.”

Bawnik was ticketed for the coal mine at *Fürstengrube*. But his second cousin was an amateur boxer who became a *kapo*, a prisoner who got

them on the floor, like a seat or a bench, and you slept on them,” he said.

The cold wasn’t the only threat.

“You know what the worst thing was? You couldn’t even get any snow to melt in your mouth. We didn’t have any water.”

Yet on that same death trip, Bawnik also saw the best in mankind. It was at a railroad station in Czechoslovakia. People living in nearby apartment buildings threw bread and cake to the prisoners.

“It was unbelievable that there were still human beings who would do that,” he said. “We didn’t have any faith in humanity. It was the Germans. They weren’t human.”

HEADING OUT TO SEA

After a weeklong stay at the *Dora-Mittelbau* camp, the death march to avoid the approaching Allied liberators continued, before a more compassionate SS officer and camp commander (“He didn’t kill anybody that we saw”) took Bawnik and other prisoners to his family’s

sands of concentration camp survivors were on board, struck, bombing the *Cap Arcona* and two other prison ships, leaving them burning and sinking.

Once again, Bawnik was in a fortunate position. He was on the deck, away from the direction where the wind was blowing.

“After about two hours, we see the floor of the deck is starting to smoke, so we thought this was the end,” he said.

Then the ship started turning onto its side. Bawnik couldn’t swim, so after taking off his clothes, he ran to the high side of the ship to grab a rope. Somehow, the vessel stopped sinking, with about six feet of the ship still sticking out of the water.

But that didn’t last long. With the water quickly getting closer, Bawnik knew he soon would be joining the others in a cold, miserable death.

“Because it was so cold, I knew I was going to let go pretty soon,” he said. “I thought I had no chance at all. It was just a matter of minutes.”

Once again, fate, or the gods, or just luck intervened.

“All of a sudden, I looked up and saw a good friend of mine from the camps, Peter Abramowitz. When he saw me hanging from the ship, he said, ‘Henry, Henry, I’ll help you up.’”

And so he did.

As tugboats came to rescue the survivors, Bawnik thought he was headed to a new camp.

“What concentration camp are we going to now?” Bawnik asked the tug captain.

“There are no more concentration camps for you,” the captain replied. “The English are in town.”

The war in northern Germany ended the next day.

THE AFTERMATH

Bawnik eventually made his way to America, where he met his future wife, Linda Gordon, in Hartford. They have been married 66 years.

They moved to Buffalo in 1959 and have three daughters, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Bawnik worked as a dry-cleaning owner and operator, but his story went untold for decades, other than an article that his grandson, Jeremy Elias, wrote for the *Jerusalem Post*.

In the article, Elias recounted how his grandfather faced death as the *Cap Arcona* was sinking.

“Fighting for each day for the last five years, it would all end in a minute or two,” he wrote. “The exhaustion would be over. The struggle would finally end.”

He still wrestles with what happened to him and millions of others, including the sinking of the *Cap Arcona*. Several historical sites have reported that the British government sealed the *Cap Arcona* records for 100 years, to be opened in 2045.

GRANDSON OF INFAMOUS NAZI SPENDS LIFETIME MAKING AMENDS...

(Continued from page 5)

left for work in Sweden, I read the whole book. This was the first time that I read about what my grandfather did at Auschwitz. I was overcome with an intense mixture of shame, anger and sadness.”

He never suspected anything before then? “I knew they were hiding something from me, and I saw how my father reacted when I asked him questions, but to discover that your grandfather was the commandant of Auschwitz, that your father grew up breathing in the smoke from the crematoria, I never expected anything like that. The very next day, I packed a few things and left home. I went to live at a boarding school where I studied culinary arts. But I was just a kid with no framework and no family, so of course I soon got into drugs and alcohol.” When Rainer was just 16, he got his girlfriend pregnant, but when he turned 18 he married her and managed to create a normative and warm family with her. “I wanted so badly to form a new family, to disconnect from my family’s gene pool,” Rainer says.

Did your children ever ask about your grandfather, about their aunts and uncles? “I told them the truth from a pretty young age. I also told them they were welcome to contact my relatives whenever they wanted, but they didn’t. ‘We’re with you,’ they told me.”

“It’s interesting that concealment was very common among the second and third generation on both sides,” says Don Sperling, the moderator of the panel we were on.

“In my house, no one hid the truth, they just downplayed the horrors,” I respond, kind of shocked by the comparison of the two sides. But then again, the truth is that on both sides there were black holes of silence and secrecy.

After his parents divorced, Rainer began investigating his grandfather’s exploits.

“My mother went through a pretty difficult time herself. I would sit with her for hours and make recordings of her talking about her life. She would also cry a lot, and say over and over again how sorry she was. She herself didn’t know anything about my grandfather until 1963, when the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials began [which the movie *Labyrinth of Lies* was based on — T.B.] Following the trial, an article titled *The Gas Man from Auschwitz* was published, alongside a picture of the entire Höss family. My mother ran home and asked my father if that was really them. ‘Yes,’ he told her. ‘Do you have a problem with that?’”

Rainer began digging through all of his family’s documents, and then afterwards in archives in Germany and Russia.

(Continued on page 15)



Holocaust survivor Henry Bawnik and his wife, Linda, have been married for 66 years.

extra privileges for doing minor administrative work. The cousin recruited Bawnik to become a bricklayer, not a coal miner. That brought extra privileges, like going on night patrols with a German soldier and having more access to stealing a piece of bread or a bowl of soup.

“Because you were a professional, a bricklayer, you were treated well. You weren’t beaten to death. If I hadn’t been a bricklayer, I wouldn’t have survived. I would have starved.”

TRAIN TO GERMANY

His next close call came aboard a German transport train, in January 1945.

The trains, which typically transported cows or horses, had no seats, and each car carried some 100 to 150 prisoners. They traveled 10 days in the middle of winter in subzero temperatures, and the cattle cars were open. Not everyone survived.

“When somebody died, you put

German estate. Then, on the night of May 2, they were awakened and marched 13 miles to *Neustadt*.

“We thought we were going on a boat, to Denmark,” Bawnik said.

He was half right.

Instead, they boarded the *Cap Arcona*, a 225-yard-long former German luxury liner, sitting idle about two miles offshore in the Bay of *Lubeck*. So massive and impressive was this ship that it once was used to portray the *Titanic* in a 1942 German propaganda film.

Prisoners boarded in reverse alphabetical order, and when Bawnik’s turn came, the ship was full. The captain said there was no room, but the SS officer insisted that Bawnik board. So he went up on deck. Most of the prisoners, thousands, were packed tight in the ship’s hull, out of sight.

Bawnik was on board for only hours.

In midafternoon of May 3, 1945, the British bombers, unaware that thou-

DACHAU IN THE FIRST DAYS OF THE HOLOCAUST

(Continued from page 4)

appearance of the SS guards in the prisoners' barracks before dawn, the singling out of the eventual victims for punitive work and their removal from the grounds immediately prior to their deaths, all in the wake of Erspenmüller's dark vow of impending murder — strongly suggest that the killings were premeditated. Thus did *Dachau* become, in the words of German historian Jürgen Matthäus, "the first institution in which the Nazi slogan 'Jews, perish!' was officially put into action."

Matthäus's work may militate against Wünschmann's claim that the lives of Jewish prisoners in places like *Dachau* prior to the outbreak of World War II is "an under-researched topic." She asserts that in the vast literature about the Final Solution, "Historians have rarely given Jews' imprisonment in the [prewar] concentration camps more than a passing glance." The corpus of writings cited in the author's footnotes, including several hundred titles in German and English, suggests otherwise. And there is something a bit strained about the terms Wünschmann sets forth to stake her claim to scholarly uniqueness; until now, we are told:

"No all-encompassing monograph has brought together the wealth of empirical information unearthed by numerous local studies of individual camp sites and an analytical approach that not only illuminates the bigger picture of Jewish camp imprisonment, but also embeds it in the broader context of anti-Jewish persecution before the war [emphasis added]."

There is also, in the book's title, a violation of the very principle the author aptly insists we observe, as students of history, about considering events in their own temporal context. Wünschmann skillfully brings to life an entire universe of people, events and dynamics — a feat she manages through precise attention to detail and her maintenance of humanistic sensitivity for the feelings, motivations and perceptions of all relevant actors, the killers included. These elements deserve to be understood and framed in terms that do not render them mere antecedents to more monstrous atrocities. This the author accomplishes at all points — except on the cover and title page.

By and large, though, students of this dark chapter in twentieth-century history should regard *Before Auschwitz* as an important and finely written contribution to the literature on Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. While repeatedly taking pains to note the fragmentary nature of the evidentiary record, Wünschmann synthesizes from an enormous array of available sources: camp administration files, SS records, newspaper reports, prisoners' mail and memoirs, contemporaneous and postwar judicial proceedings, survivor testimony

and, as mentioned above, a large body of previous historical investigation.

In her effort to "reconstruct the reality of the imprisonment of Jewish inmates," Wünschmann is also mindful that some of the most extensive and seemingly reliable sources, such as survivor testimonies and memoirs, are freighted toward "unusual occurrences such as extreme manifestations of violence." She cites the writings of Paul Martin Neurath, a Jewish sociologist who was imprisoned at *Dachau* and *Buchenwald*, and who warned that a relentless focus on beatings and killings provides a "distorted" picture of the prisoner's life, which was instead dominated, he said, by "the 120 loads of gravel and the roll call and the construction of the bed and other routine jobs."



Survivors of *Dachau*, both young and old, cheer as the U.S. troops approach.

More than just an aggregation of violent anecdotes, *Before Auschwitz* uses statistical modeling and other tools of political science to establish, as best as can be accomplished in these murky circumstances, such basic data as fluctuating camp populations, average inmate ages, geographic concentrations of inmate and guard origins, and so on. This kind of research enables Wünschmann to tell us that Jewish prisoners of the prewar camps "were mostly of a mature age — in their thirties or older — when they arrived. . . . Almost one-third of them were over the age of forty." By contrast, she cites the work of historian Christopher Dillon in establishing that the average age of the *Dachau* SS guards declined, between 1933 and 1939, from twenty-five to twenty. "This means," she writes, "that Jewish prisoners, on average, were ten to fifteen years older than the young men who guarded and abused them — a fact not unimportant to bear in mind when analyzing their conflicting relations."

Wünschmann also describes how some camps, by virtue of their rural location — *Osthofen*, for example — were more likely to see guards and prisoners originating from the same towns, with the predictable consequence that lingering disputes about land, cattle prices or the affections of

a local girl sometimes played out, under dramatically altered terms and often with violent endings, in the confines of the camp. For the last page — indeed, her last sentence — Wünschmann saves her most arresting statistical insight of all, which is the fact that "most of the Jewish prisoners of the prewar period stayed alive and were able to escape Nazi persecution."

A research fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Wünschmann devotes an entire chapter to the experiences of Jewish women in the prewar camps, and occasionally delves into a kind of machismo psychology, virulent among the SS but hardly unknown to the prisoner populations, to explain various behaviors. Thankfully, this approach stops short of the most

And yet one of the author's most perceptive insights is how little the Jewish populations of *Dachau*, *Osthofen*, *Breitenau*, *Oranienburg* and the other prewar camps felt they had in common with one another — until their arrival at such places, their immediate segregation into "Jew companies" (barracks) and their targeting for abuse. "Here in the camp they distinguish between prisoners and Jews," observed the *Buchenwald* inmate Julius Meyer, wryly. "So, we are now officially the Jews."

It is not among the author's principal aims to weigh in on the great historiographical debate of the last generation of Holocaust studies: the question of what, at bottom, motivated the mostly Christian citizens of Europe's most culturally and technologically advanced country, at a time of post-Enlightenment modernity, to organize and participate in the innumerable cruelties known as the Holocaust. Wünschmann does cite approvingly the work of Karl Schleunes, whose pioneering 1970 study *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz* stands as a foundational text for "the functionalists" — that is, those who argue that the Final Solution, commenced in earnest after Germany launched its invasion of the Soviet Union, was not foreordained by the Nazis' earlier oppression of the Jews, nor even by Hitler's worldview, but emerged, rather, as the last in a series of policy experiments undertaken in response to external events.

Inadvertently, however, Wünschmann provides support for the other school of thought — "the intentionalists," exemplified by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen in his controversial 1996 best seller *Hitler's Willing Executioners* — when she quotes from an article that Hitler published in March 1921. "Let us stop the Jews from undermining our nation, if necessary by keeping their germs safely in concentration camps," the future dictator wrote, adding: "In short, clean our nation of all poison above and below." Only a few years would pass before the publication of *Mein Kampf* in 1925, in which Hitler lamented how "millions" of German deaths on the front lines of World War I could have been prevented if "twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas."

To the early inhabitants of the camps, a straight line to Auschwitz, or something like it, may have been discernible within a few months of Hitler's assumption of power. Kasimir Dittenheber, an inmate at *Dachau* who heard with his own ears the shots that killed Rudolf Benario, Ernst Goldmann, and Arthur and Erwin Kahn, later wrote that the four had been "defenseless" and "selected" for their fate, even though none had shown any intention of escape. "Now we knew it," Dittenheber would write, "and we knew that this murder would be followed by others."

polarizing features of gender studies and makes for some of this volume's most enlightening observations. Again, she cites Neurath, who arrived at *Dachau* in April 1938 and whose memoir provides a veritable taxonomy of the "honorable" and "shameful" reactions a prisoner could exhibit in the face of beatings by camp guards. "If he cries and weeps, he is considered a weakling," Neurath wrote, adding that the expectations of other prisoners, reflecting their own backgrounds and times, demanded that the stricken should "remain silent and stolid, both before, during, and after the beating."

While the Nazis' first deportations to the camps focused as much on "political" prisoners as on Jews — brutal roundups of Communists, Bolsheviks, members of the labor movement, and journalists and lawyers who had bravely inveighed against Hitler and the brownshirts — Wünschmann demonstrates authoritatively that the Jews existed at the bottom of the prisoner hierarchy, suffering most acutely as outcasts among outcasts. "From the beginning," she writes, "Jews in the early concentration camps were exposed to an extreme degree of violence, manifested most strikingly in a stark overrepresentation of Jews among the deaths."

GRANDSON OF INFAMOUS NAZI SPENDS LIFETIME MAKING AMENDS FOR NAMESAKE'S ATROCITIES

(Continued from page 13)

He even located Holocaust survivors who worked in the Höss villa at Auschwitz, including his grandfather's barber: Josef Paczynski, who wasn't even a barber by profession, but a metal worker.

"One day, they got rid of my grandfather's regular barber, an SS officer, and were looking for someone to volunteer to replace him, and so Paczynski volunteered out of a desire for self-preservation.

Hodys disappeared overnight, so it's possible that somewhere out there is another one of Rudolf Höss's children. Hodys died in 1964."

With help from the Institute of Contemporary History (IFZ), Rainer succeeded in finding Hodys's estate, which was located in a storage room of the executor of her will in Vienna. "Inside a box, we found gloves with my grandfather's initials on them, uniforms and a ring with his initials on it that was made of gold taken

In Israel, rumors began circulating that he was interested in selling items in the archive. "But that's just not true. I handed everything over to the IFZ, on condition that they be used for research purposes only. The IFZ is currently preparing a traveling exhibition with these documents called 'The documents of the Auschwitz commandant.'"

Gradually, Höss abandoned all other activities. He sold his catering business and now devotes all of his time and money to Holocaust and tolerance education.

"The current situation in Europe highlights the lessons of the Holocaust. In Germany alone, there are 360,000 active Nazis. In all of Europe, there are more than 2.6 million Nazis," Rainer says. He works alone ("I can't trust anyone") and is careful not to take personal donations, "since that would just generate gossip. All donations go directly toward projects."

About a year ago, Rainer joined Ben Lesser, an American businessman who survived the Holocaust and founded an organization called Zachor. Together they are working on a project called Six Million Screams. "People ask me how I can be friends with someone whose grandfather murdered my

found that the children of survivors are more belligerent towards me. You yourself told me that your mother is the one who persuaded you to meet me," Rainer says to me.

I did begin to wonder how the entire time we'd been talking, I was the one asking questions, whereas Rainer had never asked me anything about what had happened to my mother.

"Over the years, I've learned that some people view my questioning as an invasion of their privacy. Some people have responded by telling me, 'Why would you be interested in what happened to my parents at Auschwitz? Your grandfather didn't seem to care.' So now, I let people tell me their story if and when they feel comfortable doing so."

Oh, yes, and one more thing. The panel was a huge success. One thousand two hundred people filled the auditorium, and many more tuned in to listen to the broadcast live on the Internet. Apparently, the discussion taking place between the daughter of a Czech woman who survived Auschwitz and the grandson of the notorious Rudolf Höss interested many people, although it was quite clear to me that Höss was the main attraction.



Rainer Höss and Tal Bashan visit a candlelight vigil in Brno.

"Every day for two years, he would come to the villa and give my grandfather a shave and a trim. For two years, Höss didn't exchange even one word with Paczynski, but when he would leave, he would be given another helping of food, which helped Paczynski and his friends survive."

Rainer spent hours and hours looking through archival information, and this is how he found out about his grandfather's mistress, Eleanore Hodys, who was probably not Jewish, and was impregnated twice by the commandant.

Dr. Glauberg, a Nazi doctor who experimented on Jewish women in the camps, carried out the first abortion. "When my grandmother found out about the affair, she called Himmler and told him to deal with it straight away. At the time, my grandfather had been in the hospital, having just been in an accident.

"They put Hodys in solitary confinement, preparatory to being taken to the gas chambers, but then my grandfather suddenly came back and ordered her brought back." When Hodys once again got pregnant, she was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. "Somehow she managed to escape to Vienna.

"I managed to locate a man who was her neighbor in Vienna, who corroborated that she did indeed arrive pregnant. After she gave birth,

from the teeth of Jewish prisoners. My daughter, who's a dentist, helped me investigate this.

"It turns out there were 153 grams of gold in the ring. If you consider that the average person had between one and five grams' worth of gold fillings in their mouth, quite a lot of Jews died to make that ring."

Over the years, Rainer became more and more obsessed with his family's personal connection to the Holocaust, and his marriage suffered as a result.

"We used to go to Bavaria every year for vacation. I would tell my family that I was going out for a bike ride, but really I would take a taxi to the central archive and spend hours there," Rainer says with a smile. "One time, my oldest daughter followed me, since she suspected I was meeting a lover. I love researching and figuring out how all the puzzle pieces fit together to form a big picture. Over time, I discovered that my grandfather did not operate in a vacuum.

"He had many contacts in a number of different camps, like Mauthausen and Buchenwald. Auschwitz was actually much more complex than most people know. There was one main camp, but there was also IG Farben, a chemical factory, and a sub-camp called Buna."

At one point, Rainer received the rights to his grandfather's archive, which consisted mostly of documents and photographs.



Rudolf Höss shortly before his trial.

family," Lesser writes. "The answer is simple — you can't control the reality you were born into, but you can choose which reality you want to live in.

"I see before me a strong, courageous and caring man who is trying to make amends for what his grandfather did."

Rainer wears a Star of David necklace around his neck that he received from a Holocaust survivor. He does not hide how proud he is to have relationships with Auschwitz survivors. "Somehow, I manage to connect with them well. They carry with them such wisdom. I have

After all, there are many, many children of Holocaust survivors, but not so many grandchildren of senior Nazi officials who want to atone for the atrocities performed by their grandfathers.

"Have you two known each other for a long time?" the reporter from the Czech radio station who interviewed us after the event asked me. "You look like old friends." We looked at each other, and couldn't help but burst out laughing. "So I guess there's a place for humor in all of this," the reporter continued. "Of course there is," we replied. "Black humor. We're just getting ready for our joint tour."

HOLOCAUST ART COLLECTOR SEEKS TO REPATRIATE WORKS TO POLAND

BY MAGDALENA OSUMI,
THE JAPAN TIMES

Writer Michiko Nomura was bursting with anger at what she saw during her first visit to Holocaust memorials in Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1989.

Human hair, shoes and prosthetic limbs taken from victims at Nazi concentration camps were displayed as "victims' belongings."

"Most painful was to realize their names would forever remain (unknown)," Nomura, 78, recalled of the 1989 visit. Around 11 million people died in the Holocaust.

Since then, Nomura has fought to memorialize the victims in a way that lets her relate their story to the people of Japan. She acquired 19 paintings and drawings by Mieczyslaw Koscielniak, a Polish survivor of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, and uses them and other artworks to spread understanding of what happened.

Artwork of the prisoners, telling of their lives, struggles and hopes, represents the sole remaining evidence of the Holocaust, she believes.

As 70 years have now passed since World War II, Nomura is considering returning the artworks to Poland. Her advancing age, she said, is also a factor.

"At this age, it's become hard for me to take care of these pieces. It's about time."

She plans to donate the works to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, a memorial and museum co-founded by Koscielniak in what is now *Oswiecim* in Poland.

Born in 1937, Nomura, too, experienced war. When she was an elementary school child, she and her family lost their home in the firebombing of Tokyo in 1945.

So when she visited a tiny museum in Prague in 1989, a dozen drawings in particular caught her eye. They were done by children interned in a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia before the youngsters were sent to camps such as Auschwitz, Nazi Germany's largest concentration camp, where most of them perished.

Some drawings showed children forced into slave labor, sick and starved,

locked up in small cells, their heads shaved. But others were colorful and full of memories from a circus, playground, school or children's homes.

She said the drawings depict the victims' lives, both during and before the war.

"I wanted to share that with people from Japan," she said.

A year later she managed to borrow several drawings from Prague, and exhibited them nationwide. She still has replicas of the images for display.

In 1993, when Nomura was working on a book to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, she was perusing stocks of photos at museums in Israel and Germany depicting Jews transported to the camps, and felt disappointed that "all were taken by the perpetrators."



"The Dying Father Kolbe," a watercolor by Mieczyslaw Koscielniak, portrays Catholic priest Maximilian Kolbe, who gave his life when Nazi officers picked another inmate to die of starvation as a form of collective punishment.

"I thought the victims themselves must have left something to document their lives," she said.

Nomura contacted the Auschwitz museum and was introduced to works by five survivors. Among them were two Polish artists — Jan Kowski and Koscielniak, who died in 1993.

Urszula, Koscielniak's widow, offered to present Nomura with 19 of his drawings.

The Gestapo arrested Koscielniak in 1941 for a political painting he did, and he was sent to Auschwitz. But owing to his talent, he was assigned work useful to the Nazis: He would evaluate paintings confiscated from

Poles, paint portraits of SS officers and design posters.

Using art materials supplied for his work, Koscielniak secretly documented the reality of the camp — slave labor, torture and death.

The drawings, smuggled out of the camp with help from underground organizations, depict prisoners tortured by SS troops. Some portray one of the artist's contemporaries at the camp, Saint Maximilian Kolbe, a priest inmate who volunteered his life in place of a stranger's.

Also in the collection are sketches of U.S. Army General Dwight Eisenhower and General George Patton, whose troops Koscielniak joined upon liberation.

Initially, Nomura thought Japan — and her home — "might not be the right place" for storing works of such a high historical value, but she decided to take care of them anyway.

Money she earned working as a family court mediator helped her maintain the works, but managing them turned out to be very costly.

"My friends tell me how different my life would have (been) if I hadn't spent all my time and money on taking care of the works," she said, recalling that the costs of renting suitable storage facilities exceeded the rent on her home.

"Giving up (Koscielniak's works) is like losing a son who cost me a lot of effort throughout all these years," she said with sadness.

Nomura has now owned the works for two decades. During that time, she has organized exhibitions and lectures to spread understanding about the Holocaust's victims.

She has also written about and exhibited the works of Kowski, a survivor of five concentration camps who after the war settled in the United States. Until their deaths she maintained a correspondence with Kowski's and Koscielniak's widows.

"I've felt obliged to speak on behalf of those who are not able to do so," she said.

Although she will return the artworks to Poland, Nomura plans to continue conveying the horrors of war to the younger generation.

She says many young Japanese know little about the Holocaust.

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