

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY: THE INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF NAZI WAR CRIMINALS IN THE UNITED STATES AND HOW IT RELATES TO OUR CHILDREN

BARBARA GUTFREUND ARFA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE ON HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

The Education Department of the American Society for Yad Vashem and its Young Leadership Associates held its eighteenth annual professional development conference on Holocaust education on March 13, 2016. This year's program was generously supported by the Barbara Gutfreund Arfa Endowment Fund for Holocaust Education.

This program is a collaborative effort with the Association of Teachers of Social Studies of the United Federation of Teachers, the Educators' Chapter of the UFT Jewish Heritage Committee, and the School of Education of Manhattanville College. Participants in this year's program, which included educators from all five boroughs of New York City and from the tri-state area, received in-service credits for completing the conference. The program also included a display of the educational unit developed by the International School of Holocaust Studies, "Keeping the Memory Alive: International Poster Competition." This educational resource, along with our array of traveling exhibitions, is available to schools to enrich their educational programs on the Holocaust.

Through teaching we warn about the consequences of extreme and baseless hatred and prejudice. We educate to promote tolerance in the hope that through our efforts, future generations will make sure that the Holocaust, a low chapter in human his-

tory, will not repeat itself. This conference, organized by Dr. Marlene W. Yahalom, Director of Education of the American Society, has proven to be a strong vehicle to promote the mission of Holocaust remembrance and memory through education over the years. The conference was created by Caroline Massel, founding chair of the Young Leadership Associates of the American Society, in 1999.

Caroline Arfa Massel opened the program with very poignant remarks about the creation of this program and the establishment of the Barbara Gutfreund Arfa Endowment Fund for Holocaust Education in memory of her mother, Barbara Gutfreund Arfa, ז"ל. Ron Meier, executive director of the American Society, gave greetings on behalf of the American Society and spoke about the importance of this program in its efforts to raise Holocaust awareness through



Eli Rosenbaum, the former director of the US Department of Justice Office of Special Investigations, and current Director of Human Rights Enforcement Strategy and Policy, delivering the keynote remarks.

be taught and sustained in our educational communities.

Eli Rosenbaum, the former director of the US Department of Justice Office of Special Investigations, and the current Director of Human Rights Enforcement Strategy and Policy in the new Department of Justice section, was our keynote speaker this year. He spoke about the importance of ethics and responsibility, and their continuous presence in his work that included bringing Nazi criminals to justice, and currently incorporates these themes in addressing the enforcement of human rights. Shani Lourie, our colleague from the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem, spoke about Facing Moral and Ethical Dilemmas in a World of Chaos.

Our program and theme, "Ethics and Responsibility: The Investigation and Prosecution of Nazi War Criminals in the United States and How It Relates to Our Children," offered educators strategies on how to incorporate Holocaust studies into their lesson plans and curricula to enable students to realize the importance of seeking justice for Holocaust victims via the ongoing effort to bring Nazi war criminals to justice. This theme also helped educators focus on how to sustain the need for promoting ethics in students' daily lives and how to offer relevant connections to the Holocaust in this process. The workshop topics complemented the theme of the program: Using Survivor Testimonies in the Classroom; Ripples from the Holocaust — Learning about the Second Generation; Echoes and Reflections; and The Holocaust Liberator Experience through Testimony. Shani Lourie, our colleague from Yad Vashem, presented the workshop on Echoes and Reflections at our program.

The American Society for Yad Vashem
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education.

Carolyn Herbst, past president /past chairperson of the ATSS/UFT, emphasized that this conference is a valuable resource for increasing awareness and sensitivity to intolerance and injustice. Carolyn remarked on the challenge of teaching this topic without reducing the topic to numbers and statistics, and emphasizing the human elements of the events — victims, rescuers, perpetrators and bystanders. She underscored the importance of educators realizing how this topic must

THE MIRACLE BABIES OF MAUTHAUSEN, 70 YEARS LATER

In *Born Survivors*, British author Wendy Holden tells the harrowing tale of three mothers who gave birth in the Nazi camps, and the children who, against all odds, survived.

BY JENNI FRAZER,
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Wendy Holden thinks *Born Survivors* is the most important book she has ever written, and as the author of more than 30 books she would know best. But the British writer goes further. The book, she says, is not just important, but she feels she was destined to write it.

Born Survivors is a meticulously told work of the true stories of three babies born to Jewish Nazi concentration camp inmates as World War II stuttered and stumbled to an end.



Eva Clarke with her mother Anka in Prague in 1945.

In April 1945, Priska, weighing only 70 pounds (31 kilos), delivered Hana on a table in a factory before she and 1,000 other women were deported to Auschwitz. Rachel, just as gaunt as Priska, gave birth to tiny Mark in an open coal wagon, halfway through a seemingly interminable 17-day train journey to the Austrian concentration camp of *Mauthausen* with hardly any food or water. Anka gave birth to Eva on a cart full of dying women as all three mothers arrived at the camp's gates.

Miraculously, the babies, and their mothers, survived through a combination of luck, circumstance and perseverance. None of the mothers was aware of the others dire situation, and

none of the three surviving children knew — each believing they were the only ones to be born in the camps — until they met for the first time 65 years later.

Holden is a former war correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* in the UK and has vast experience writing about violence and oppression.

"My father fought the Japanese in Burma and my mother lived through the London Blitz," she says, adding that she has always had a great curiosity about World War II and the Holocaust. But she freely admits that even though she has written many books with harrowing scenes, she cried copiously through the writing of *Born Survivors* — even though it is one of the few Holocaust-related books with a relatively happy ending.

The genesis of the book was an obituary Holden happened to read online, which mentioned that the woman who had died had been pregnant in Auschwitz — although her baby had not survived. Intrigued, Holden looked everywhere she could to see if anyone had tackled this subject before — and, surprisingly, nobody had.

"That was my first piece of luck," says Holden. The second was discovering that Eva Clarke, the youngest of the three "babies" she would write about, lived not that far away from her, in Cambridge, England.

"I contacted her to see if she would be interested in my telling her story. And Eva replied, 'I've been waiting for you for 70 years,'" says Holden.

The "babies," Eva, Mark Olsky and Hana Berger Moran met for the first time at a ceremony in 2010 to mark the 65th anniversary of the liberation by American forces of the *Mauthausen* camp in Austria, where they instantly bonded. All three were eager to have their stories recorded, and Holden regards the book as a legacy and testament to their survival.

Holden's journalistic background came into full flourish as she began the mammoth research behind the book. Her study, she laughs, "began to look like Churchill's wartime bunker. It was just covered everywhere with maps and books as I plotted out how to tackle the book."

She turned into a "forensic detective" and visited 11 countries in pursuit of essential witnesses to the three young mothers' remarkable experiences. Inevitably, she says, though

who brought food and drink — and even baby clothes when they heard the cries of newborns — to the train wagons. (There were a number of other babies on the train besides Hana and Mark, but none are believed to have survived.)

After learning about the *Horni Briza* response, Holden wrote to the town's mayor asking if she could talk to him about what happened there during the war. The mayor agreed to the meeting, and to her surprise, when



The three "babies" in Wendy Holden's *Born Survivors* — Eva Clarke, Mark Olsky and Hana Berger Moran.

she thought she had learned so many stories about the Holocaust, things still cropped up during her research which amazed her.

One such story came from the small town of *Horni Briza* in the Czech Republic, then Czechoslovakia. A "death train" carrying hundreds of Jews, including the three young mothers — two of whom had already given birth at that point — stopped there en route to *Mauthausen* on April 21, 1945.

It was a rainy Saturday night and the stationmaster of *Horni Briza's* train station, Antonin Pavlicek, was appalled by the conditions of those on board. After prolonged arguments with the Nazi officer in charge of the train, Pavlicek managed to organize an astonishing humanitarian effort the next day by the local townspeople,

she arrived — expecting only to see the mayor — she was led into a room with 10 other people, including two elderly men aged 84 and 79, who had been young boys when the train stopped in *Horni Briza* in 1945.

"They spoke about what they saw, which no one else in *Horni Briza* had ever heard them discuss," Holden recalls, "how they saw the train stop and how they watched the stationmaster arguing with the SS commander in charge of the train."

Of the three mothers, Hana's mother Priska and Mark's mother Rachel died several years ago. Anka, Eva's mother, died aged 96 just six months before Holden made contact with her "baby."

"But I felt I knew Anka — and Rachel and Priska," says Holden. "I really felt it was such a privilege to chronicle their stories."

WHAT IF THE HOLOCAUST HAD NEVER HAPPENED?

BY RENEE GHERT-ZAND,
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

"Things could have been much worse had the cataclysm of the Holocaust not happened," said Dr. Jeffrey S. Gurock recently over lunch at a Jerusalem café.

A statement like this is hard to swallow if you don't realize that his new book, *The Holocaust Averted: An Alternate History of American Jewry, 1938-1967*, deals with counterfactual history, a speculative exploration of what-ifs, and the author is in no way dismissive of the murder of six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis.

What Gurock demonstrates in his book is that World War II was a major turning point in American Jewish his-

tory, and that many positive things came out of it for American Jews as well as for US-Israel relations. Had key moments in the run-up to and during the course of the war played out differently, the Holocaust might not have happened. Gurock posits that instead, Jews in America would have had to "run for cover." They would have had to assume — and maintain — a low profile, never achieving the level of empowerment and agency that we associate with American Jews today.

This is the first time that Gurock, a professor of Jewish history at Yeshiva University and author and editor of 14 books, including *Orthodox Jews in America* and *Jews in Gotham: New York Jews in a Changing City*, has tried his hand at counterfactual histo-

ry. "It is, at the very root, the idea of conjecturing on what did not happen, or what might have happened, in order to understand what did happen," wrote Jeremy Black and Donald M. MacRaild in their study guide, *Studying History*.

"I'm going out on a limb in a way, but people won't saw it off," said Gurock. "I'm emphasizing turning points in history, and I am using primary sources and important secondary sources."

Gurock is not the only Jewish historian pursuing counterfactual history. Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, a professor at Fairfield University, whose specialization is the history and memory of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, administers the Counterfactual History Review blog and is editing a forthcoming book titled *What Ifs of Jewish History*. In

addition, several counterfactual history panels were offered at the Association for Jewish Studies Conference in Boston in December 2013.

The idea for *The Holocaust Averted* came to Gurock when he and his wife were visiting the old Jewish quarter of *Krakow*, Poland, six years ago. The fact that much Jewish culture was all around them, but that Jews were nowhere to be seen, struck a deep chord for Gurock. He started to wonder what Jewish life would have been like in present-day *Krakow* had the Holocaust not taken place and the Jews of the city not been virtually wiped out.

When the author came across an article by a WWII military scholar about how the remilitarization of Germany

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BARBARA GUTFREUND ARFA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE ON HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

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has recently been awarded the 2015 President's Award by the Association of Teachers of Social Studies/United Federation of Teachers for the Society's contributions to social studies education nationally. This is the first time this award was given to an organization.

The American Society received the award to acclaim the ATSS/UFT recognition of the valuable part the American Society plays in social studies education and in recognition of the American Society for turning to the ATSS/UFT to assist the American Society for studying the Holocaust to the public schools of New York City. This award also acknowledges that the ATSS/UFT commends the American Society for implementing best educational practices in using documents, inquiry, and critical thinking and action for studying the Holocaust.

Dr. Yahalom spoke about the "importance of empowering educators to transmit the lessons of the Holocaust to their students through education. As an institution, Yad Vashem is a symbol of both destruction and rebirth. Through education, these parallel messages are conveyed to the community at large. One of the ways in which we provide teachers with enrichment about this subject is to provide resources to teach about this subject, but also to offer connections between this subject and other fields of study. In this way we hope to raise awareness and

make the information more relevant to students. As educators we are aware how the events of the Holocaust include a wide array of challenges to teachers and students because of the complexity, horror, content and obligation to remember that the subject presents."

She added that "our own awareness of Holocaust survivors should include

resilience of the human spirit."

Dr. Yahalom told the participants that "as educators, by sharing the responsibility of teaching the lessons of this event to future generations, you make a positive and meaningful contribution to Holocaust education and remembrance, since your efforts help secure the historically valid memory of this event for

meet these challenges, we offer teachers connections between this event and contemporary issues. In this way, we hope to raise awareness and make the information more meaningful and relevant to our students."

She also acknowledged the inspirational leadership of Leonard Wilf, chairman of the American Society, and how "through programs such as the Conference we can teach participants about the many themes to consider in this undertaking: the multifaceted contours of human behavior, the dangers of extreme and baseless hatred, the role of the Holocaust in public memory, the lives of the heroes and the victims, and the overarching challenge to make sure neither group is forgotten."

She concluded with a request to Conference participants — that when we teach our students about the Holocaust, we need to urge to them to consider the following: "the moral decision-making in a world defined by collective injustice; the role of documentation, testimonies and primary sources as a memorial to the victims; the value of personal testimony as a way in which the victims, knowingly or not, wrote themselves into history; and finally, the danger of indifference to evil."

For more information about ASYV educational programs and events, and traveling exhibitions, contact Marlene Warshawski Yahalom, PhD, Director of Education: mwy@yadvashemusa.org.



Conference participants listen to the remarks delivered by Dr. Marlene W. Yahalom, Director of Education.

the changing image of Holocaust victims who survived and who perished. For those who perished, we need to consider how they want to be remembered. For those who survived, we should realize how they have been transformed from victims to heroes. They are our eyewitnesses to history, and their resistance efforts are symbols of the strength and of the

future. Documenting the Holocaust, and preserving its memory, is the driving force behind Holocaust history. As educators we are aware how the events of the Holocaust include a wide array of challenges to teachers and students because of the complexity, horror, content and obligation of remembrance this subject presents. To

CHURCHILL, JESUS AND THE HOLOCAUST

BY DR. RAFAEL MEDOFF,
ISRAEL NATIONAL NEWS

At the unveiling in Jerusalem of a bust of Winston Churchill that took place in November, speakers praised the late British leader as a stalwart friend of the Jewish people during their darkest hour.

Rabbi William F. Rosenblum probably would not have agreed.

Rosenblum's name is long forgotten now. But in April 1944, at the height of the Holocaust, he delivered one of the boldest critiques of Churchill's Jewish policy ever heard.

Here was the setting:

On March 19, 1944, the Germans had occupied Hungary. The last major Jewish community in Europe that had been untouched by the Holocaust, 800,000 in number, was now within Hitler's grasp. *The Washington Post* ominously reported that the Jews in Hungary could expect "the same ruthless treatment meted out to their co-religionists in other countries."

If there was any hope of some Hungarian Jews escaping, they needed a haven to which they could flee. America's doors were almost entirely shut. Palestine was much closer —

but since 1939, the British White Paper had kept all but a handful of Jews out of the Holy Land.

The White Paper was due to expire on Friday, March 31, 1944. That weekend, Jews around the world anxiously wondered whether Prime Minister Churchill would continue the immigration restrictions or scrap them.

In their Shabbat sermons, rabbis throughout the United States appealed to the Churchill administration to open the doors of Eretz Yisrael to Hungary's Jews.

Rosenblum was an unlikely player in this drama. He had been a lawyer, social worker and businessman in interwar Nashville, Tennessee. A chance meeting with a prominent Reform rabbi, William Rosenau, convinced Rosenblum to leave his profession and become a rabbi.

Rosenblum was ahead of his time in some respects. He was, for example, chairman in the 1930s of the "American Pro-Falasha Committee," the first organization to work on behalf of Ethiopian Jewry.

Rosenblum does not seem to have been involved in Palestine affairs, nor did he hold positions in Zionist organizations. In fact, his mentor, the aforementioned Rabbi Rosenau, was later

one of the founders of the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism.

But one did not have to be a card-carrying Zionist to recognize the terrible threat to Hungarian Jews and the urgent need to find them a haven.

And so it was that at Shabbat morning services on April 1, Rosenblum rose in the pulpit of his synagogue, Temple Israel in New York City, to make the startling suggestion that if Jesus suddenly appeared, he too, as a Jew, would be barred by the Churchill government from entering the Holy Land:

"One cannot help wondering what would happen if the Messiah did return to earth. Would his admission to Palestine be referred to the generals of the armies, the prime ministers of the nations, or the conscience of Christian civilization?"

(The "generals" he mentioned were the Allied generals who had been quoted in the press as claiming that Jewish immigration to Palestine would result in Arab attacks on Allied soldiers in the Middle East.)

Then Rosenblum went further: "And one cannot help wondering what the fate of the Redeemer would be in a world that has so glibly turned its back upon his teachings and upon

his very own people."

For Rabbi Rosenblum to sarcastically suggest that Churchill would have barred a resurrected Jesus from Palestine was quite a jab — especially coming just one week before Easter, the holiday when Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead.

And for Rabbi Rosenblum to broadly accuse the Christian world of turning its back on the teachings of Jesus, by abandoning the Jewish people, was equally bold.

But Winston Churchill gave him ample reason to speak those strong words. Despite anguished appeals from Jews around the world, Churchill refused to alter the White Paper policy, and his Foreign Office repeatedly undermined opportunities to rescue Jewish refugees from the Nazis.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr. went so far as to characterize the Churchill government's position as "a sentence of death" for Jewish refugees.

No doubt both Rabbi Rosenblum and Secretary Morgenthau would have been surprised, to say the least, by some of the things that were said about Churchill's Jewish policy at the bust dedication in Jerusalem.



BOOK REVIEWS

THE HOLOCAUST IN THE SOVIET UNION

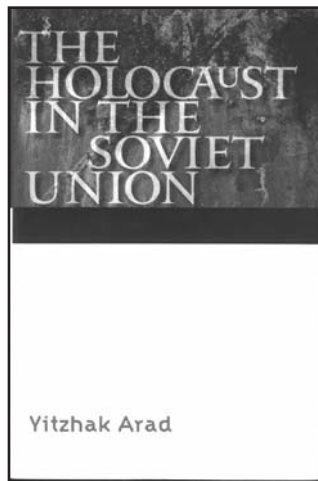
The Holocaust in the Soviet Union. By Yitzhak Arad. University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, and Yad Vashem: Jerusalem, 2013. 700 pp. \$30.53 softcover.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

Needless to say, what with critiquing books for this paper for almost twenty-five years, this reviewer has read many volumes on the Holocaust. So how does Yitzhak Arad's *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* particularly differ? In telling the comprehensive and highly detailed story of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union (including the 1939–1940 annexed territories), no other book so very clearly and fearlessly reveals how guilty so very many Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Latvians and Estonians were in the death of their Jewish neighbors. For as we learn, they not only frequently helped or actually did the murdering — sometimes even before the Nazis arrived; they often eagerly identified who the Jews were among them, allowing the Nazis to carry out their unspeakable genocide with greater ease and thoroughness! Interestingly, as far as actually killing Jews was concerned, the Lithuanians and Ukrainians, especially, would prove so brutally “good” at it that they would be exported all over the Soviet Union and its annexed territories to do

their bloodthirsty work!

Thus, for example, a murderous anti-Semitic pogrom perpetrated by the Lithuanians themselves took place in *Kaunas* (known to Jews as *Kovno*), Lithuania, during the very first days of the war even before the Nazis and their murderous *Einsatzkommandos*, subunits of *Einsatzgruppen* — assigned specifically to kill Jews — appeared. Then once these Nazi killing units appeared, the Lithuanians voluntarily helped them or, more murderously “ambitious,” had the “opportunity” to join a special “*Erschiessungskommando*, or shooting unit, consisting of 50 to 100 Lithuanians, under the command of the Lithuanian Lieutenant [Bronius] Norkus. He and his unit were under the command of [Obersturmführer Joachim] Hamann, together with whom they carried out shooting [operations] against the Jews.” In *Kaunas*, too, “there was Police Battalion no. 1, under the command of Colonel Andreas Butkumas [which] was the main Lithuanian force that carried out the exterminations” of almost 10,000 *Kovner* Jews on the saddest day in *Kovner* Jewish history,



October 28, 1941, remembered as *Digroise aktsye* [The Big Action]. Nor was this the end of their inhuman “labors.” Soon we read how Lithuanian collaborators moved on to help the Nazis murder Jews in Belorussia . . .

Still, the national group most “helpful” to the Nazis was undoubtedly the Ukrainians. Indeed, they seemed to have been everywhere! Ukrainian murderers were active in *Lutsk*, *Dubno* and *Kremenets* — all in the *Volhynia* and *Polesie* region “between the two world wars [and]... part of Poland.” Ukrainian murderers were active in the *Kamenets-Podolsky* region, “part of the Soviet Ukraine between the two world wars.” Ukrainians

eagerly assisted the Nazis at *Babi Yar* in Kiev. Ukrainians helped murder the Jews in the Crimea. Ukrainians were involved in the massacre of Jews in eastern *Galicja*, including *Stanislav*, *Ternopol* and *Lvov*. The Romanian Jews met up with the Ukrainian collaborators, too, and a witness said of

them, “More than anything else, these wanted to rob, to torture and kill.”

Nor, according to Arad, could helpless and hapless Jews hope to escape these anti-Semites if they had thoughts of making their way to surrounding forests to hide or, later, join partisan groups. Many guards helping the Nazis were Ukrainians, known for their brutality. And Jews escaping could meet up with gangs of them. Additionally, if Jews met up with the wrong partisan group, death could result. Many partisan groups were exceptionally anti-Semitic.

Finally, another point made very clear in this volume is that most of these killings were done openly. Non-Jewish villagers and townspeople knew what was going on. In fact, oftentimes they would come to watch . . . and then gingerly run off to make their own all that had belonged to the Jews, fighting each other for each item and each home.

In sum, Arad's book is a must-read for anyone in any way interested in Holocaust studies. The research, the use of primary sources, the organization of all the material — it is beyond admirable.

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

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING JEWISH BOOKS OF ROME

BY MICHAEL FRANK, TABLET

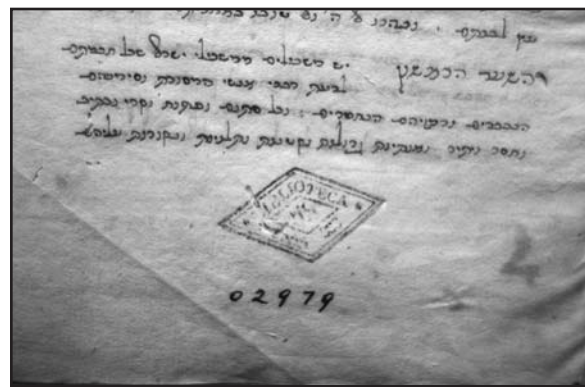
“This book is entirely the work of my hands, for I copied it for my own use. I am Nachman, son of Rabbi Samuel Foa. I copied it in the year 5315, when I was 15 years of age, in the house of the generous person Samuel, son of Moses Kazis.”

A flash of the personal tucked into a colophon; the colophon framed with casual undulating lines; these doodles at odds with the meticulous pages of Italian-style Hebrew calligraphy that follow in young Nachman's compilation of the work of Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra, the great medieval Spanish grammarian and commentator on the Bible; the text, in several places, blacked out, FBI-style, by Vatican censors, as was commonplace in mid-16th-century Italy; the pages worm-eaten, almost translucent, and bound in creamy vellum: Here is an early Hebrew manuscript like dozens — hundreds — of other early Hebrew manuscripts.

Well, not exactly. Sprinkled through the pages of Nachman's book are a handful of diamond-shaped stamps identifying it as having once belonged to the library of the Jewish community of Rome, a collection confiscated

by the Nazis on October 14, 1943, loaded on a freight train headed for Germany, and not seen since.

So, what is this manuscript doing in the Jewish Theological Seminary



A diamond-shaped stamp identifying a book as having once belonged to the library of the Jewish community of Rome.

Library in New York City, and why is there one other like it, an anthology of Kabbalistic and philosophical writings, on a nearby shelf? What happened between 1934, when these volumes were listed in a partial inventory of the Roman collection drawn up by a man called Isaia Sonne, and 1965, its date of accession to the JTS? How did it and its companion survive, these two books nearly alone, from a fabled library that dates back to the Middle Ages?

There are no definitive answers to

these questions — not yet, anyway. But they do frame quite a story.

The aftermath of the Holocaust sometimes feels like a violent river whose waters have taken decades to recede. First there were the survivors. Then there was the property to be reckoned with. Then, and continuingly, the art. Now the books are coming into sharper view.

In his recent book on the Holocaust, *A World Without Jews*, Alon Confino uses the word “bibliocide” to describe the public burning of books that began with the work of banned (and far from exclusively Jewish) authors in May 1933. The Reich's focus soon narrowed to Jewish texts, culminating in the widespread destruction of Hebrew Bibles ordered by Hitler in November 1938. In addition to setting fire to 1,400 synagogues and shattering Jewish shop windows — the particular act that gave *Kristallnacht* its name — Nazi storm troopers relieved synagogues throughout Germany of their Torah scrolls, which they took into the streets. Sometimes they trampled, kicked, drowned or burned them;

sometimes they forced Jews to. Spectators dressed up in the robes of rabbis and cantors and danced around the fire while military bands provided music to muffle the sobs of distraught onlookers. “The Nazis showed panache in announcing their identity by burning books, before they burned people,” Confino observes dryly.

A parallel story was unfolding alongside all this flamboyant bibliocide, however. As early as 1937, even before *Kristallnacht*, officials of an agency known as the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, or RSHA (Reich Security Head Office), planned to establish a library of Jewish books and began looting volumes from rabbinical seminaries throughout Germany. A second agency, the *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg*, or ERR, was active outside of the Reich's borders and occupied itself with collecting artwork, ritual silver and musical instruments; it also had a special unit dedicated to the vacuuming up of Jewish books. Some of these were to supply material for the Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question, which was founded by the Nazis' chief racial theorist, Alfred Rosenberg, who intended to tell the

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WHEN A PIECE OF PAPER MEANT LIFE OR DEATH

BY DR. RAFAEL MEDOFF, JNS

“It is a fantastic commentary on the inhumanity of our times,” journalist Dorothy Thompson wrote at the height of the 1930s European Jewish refugee crisis, “that for thousands and thousands of people a piece of paper with a stamp on it is the difference between life and death.”

Seventy-five years ago, President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s newly appointed assistant secretary of state sent his colleagues a memo outlining a strategy to “postpone and postpone and postpone” the granting of that “piece of paper” to refugees. Breckinridge Long’s chilling memo, more than any other single document, has come to symbolize the abandonment of the Jews during the Holocaust.

Long, a personal friend of Roosevelt’s and a major donor to his first presidential campaign, was rewarded with the post of U.S. ambassador to Italy. Long’s dispatches to Washington from Rome in the early and mid-1930s praised the Mussolini regime for its “well-paved” streets, “dapper” black-shirted storm troopers and “punctual trains.” Eleanor Roosevelt once remarked to the president about Long, “Franklin, you know he’s a Fascist” — to which an angry FDR replied, “I’ve told you, Eleanor, you must not say that.”

In early 1940, Roosevelt promoted Long to the position of assistant secretary of state, putting him in charge

of 23 of the State Department’s 42 divisions, including the visa section.

Long joined a department that was well schooled in suppressing immigration. From 1933 to 38 — the first five years the Nazis were in power — the Roosevelt administration had gone out of its way to restrict Jewish immigration from Germany to levels far lower than what the law allowed.

As a result of the extra requirements and layers of bureaucracy, the German quota of 25,957 was only 5 percent filled in 1933, and 14 percent filled in 1934. The only year that Roosevelt permitted the German quota to be filled was 1938-39, and only then because of tremendous international pressure, following the German annexation of Austria and the *Kristallnacht* pogrom.

By the time Long assumed his post at the State Department in early 1940, the old practice of actively suppressing immigration below the quota had returned. In addition to the administration’s general hostility toward immigration — especially Jewish immigration — there was now the added fear of Nazi spies reaching the U.S.

The quick collapse of France in the spring of 1940 triggered a wave of

alarm in the U.S. about German “fifth columnists” undermining the U.S. from within. The press was filled with wild stories about Hitler planning to send “slave spies” to America. Attorney General Robert Jackson complained to the cabinet about “the hysteria that is sweeping the country against aliens and fifth columnists.”

But FDR himself was fanning the flames. In a series of remarks in May and June, he publicly warned about what he called “the treacherous use of the ‘fifth column’ by persons supposed to be peaceful visitors [but] actually a part of an enemy unit of occupation.”

The notion that German spies would reach America disguised as refugees was baseless. There was only one instance in which a Nazi successfully posed as a Jewish refugee in order to reach the Western hemisphere — and he was captured in Cuba and executed.

On June 26, 1940, Assistant Secretary Long composed a memo explaining to his colleagues how to keep out the Jews.

“We can delay and effectively stop for a temporary period of indefinite length the number of immigrants into the United States,” he wrote. “We could do this by simply advising our

consuls to put every obstacle in the way and to require additional evidence and to resort to various administrative devices which would postpone and postpone and postpone the granting of the visas.”

Long’s plan was to use the “postpone and postpone” method as a temporary measure, until a way could be devised to make it permanent. And that’s exactly what happened.

Three days after Long’s memo, the State Department ordered U.S. consuls abroad to reject applications from anyone about whom they had “any doubt whatsoever.” The new instruction specifically noted that this policy would result in “a drastic reduction in the number of quota and non-quota immigration visas issued.”

It worked as intended. In the year to follow, immigration from Germany and Austria was kept to just 47 percent of the quota, and the following year it was held to under 18 percent.

Then, in June 1941, the Roosevelt administration adopted a harsh new policy, known as the Close Relatives Edict. It barred the entry of anyone who had close relatives in German-occupied territory, on the grounds that the Nazis might hold those relatives hostage in order to force the immigrant to become a spy for Hitler. No such cases were ever discovered, but in the meantime, countless Jews with relatives in Europe were automatically declared ineligible for immigration to America. Another “piece of paper” helped trap millions of Jews in Hitler’s Europe.



Former U.S. assistant secretary of state Breckinridge Long, the author of a memo that has come to symbolize the abandonment of Jews during the Holocaust more than any other single document.

FRANCE, US AGREE ON HOLOCAUST COMPENSATION

BY KAREN DEYOUNG,
WASHINGTON POST

France has agreed to pay reparations to American survivors of the Holocaust who were deported to Nazi death camps in French trains, after a year of negotiations with the United States.

The agreement includes a \$60 million lump sum payment that will be distributed to eligible survivors, their spouses and, if applicable, their heirs. Stuart Eizenstat, the State Department’s special advisor for Holocaust issues, who negotiated the agreement for the Obama administration, said it is unclear how many will apply for compensation.

But based on estimates and amounts paid in other French programs, survivors “could receive payment well over \$100,000,” with “tens of thousands of dollars” for spouses of those who died in the camps or since World War II, he said.

Amounts for heirs of camp survivors who have since died will be based on the number of years they lived after their release. Eligible claimants can choose to be paid an annuity rather than a lump sum.

The agreement closes a loophole

preventing some citizens of the United States and a number of other countries from receiving benefits from French compensation programs.

The agreement is also intended to close the door on pending state and federal legislation that would ban France’s state railway, known by its initials SNCF, or its foreign subsidiaries from winning contracts in the United States.

The French Embassy said in a statement that the agreement was the result of “the spirit of friendship and cooperation between our two countries,” and that “both sides will do everything possible to ensure that compensation is paid as quickly as possible and with as few formalities as possible.”

SNCF officials have formally expressed regret on a number of occasions for the railway’s role in carrying up to 76,000 people from France to the Nazi camps during the war. But the state-owned company has denied that it acted voluntarily in cooperating with the Nazis, noting SNCF was placed under German command in 1940.

Holocaust survivors in this country have pursued compensation for more than a decade in class-action law-

suits. After those cases were dismissed on the basis of sovereign immunity for government-owned companies, survivors have pressed for legislation banning SNCF and its subsidiaries from obtaining contracts in the United States.

In an indirect reference to any future lawsuits and legislation, the French Embassy’s statement said that “the two governments consider this agreement to be the comprehensive and exclusive mechanism for responding to requests relating to Holocaust-era deportations from France, or any actions initiated in this regard, notably in the United States.”

Eizenstat said members of Congress and Holocaust groups have been briefed on the terms of the agreement, and “we have reason to believe they’re all supportive.”

US Representative Carolyn Moloney, a New York Democrat who authored legislation that would allow Holocaust victims living in this country to sue SNCF, and led opposition to public rail contracts for it, called the agreement “a breakthrough in a decades-long struggle for justice waged by Holocaust survivors who were brought to death camps on SNCF trains hired by the Nazis.

“This settlement will deliver fair compensation to these victims and to the loved ones of those who did not live to see this deal finalized.”

Abraham Foxman, director of the Anti-Defamation League, also welcomed the agreement, which must be ratified by the French Parliament. He called it “an important recognition by the government of France of the suffering of those who have been excluded for decades from the French Holocaust victims compensation program.”

Those who apply for the new compensation program will have to sign a waiver agreeing not to pursue any lawsuit, Eizenstat said. As part of the accord, he said, the United States agrees to support French sovereign immunity in any lawsuits.

Under its terms, the United States government is in charge of administering the program and distributing awards. Those eligible, Eizenstat said, will be able to apply online and at US consulates in Israel, Canada and other countries.

Although SNCF is not a party to the agreement, he said, the company has said it will make a \$4 million contribution over the next five years to Holocaust museums, memorials and education programs.

SURVIVORS' CORNER

JEWISH COUPLE SURVIVED THE HOLOCAUST HIDDEN BEHIND A CHURCH ORGAN

BY MARCO WERMAN, WGBH

Mirjam Geismar knows what it's like to be a powerless child. She was a young Jewish girl in World War II Holland. I met Mirjam — and her daughter Daphne Geismar — in New Haven, Connecticut, where they live. About 70 years ago, Mirjam's own story of suffering ended when the war ended.

For nearly three years, though, she didn't see her parents. Didn't know where they were. And didn't know if she would ever see them again, or what the future held.

Curiously, before Mirjam was separated from her parents during the war, she was seeing into the future — in her dreams. She had one recurring nightmare that a German shepherd — a dog once associated with the Nazis — was chasing her.

On August 19, 1942, the day of her parents' anniversary, Mirjam came home from school.

"I went to my bedroom, and I saw my parents coming, and they said we have to tell you something. And then they said, it's gotten too dangerous. The Germans are somehow going to find us, we have to find hiding places. And we found one for you," she says.

At the age of 11, Mirjam got on her push scooter, and left her parents and her two sisters. The first family she stayed with, she knew.

"I had braids. And before I was sent to this first family — on my scooter — they changed the name from Mirjam to Manya, because Mirjam was so obviously Jewish. And they cut off my braids — I had long braids — because they supposedly made me look more Jewish," Mirjam says.

Later, she was transferred to another home — people she didn't know — and then a third where she stayed for the rest of the war. At the third hiding place, the full extent of the fear she and the people hiding her were feeling was undeniable.

Home number three belonged to Tante Nel, a single mother. She had a daughter of her own. And she was already harboring a Jewish boy. Tante Nel wanted to help. She also needed some income, and hiding Jewish kids would bring her some money.

But near the end of the war, food was so scarce that you needed a relative fortune just to feed a small family. Tante Nel resorted to things like mashed tulip bulbs mixed with flour to keep herself and her charges from starving.

As scary and untethered as daily life was for Mirjam, it all became kind of routine.

Mirjam says they slept in a hiding

place at night under the kitchen floor, only accessible through a trap door.

There were some books in Dutch that Mirjam read over and over. *Winnie the Pooh*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Occasionally, a teacher would slip by the house and go over reading, writing and arithmetic with the kids. Strange knocks on the door, though, were rarely answered.

Mirjam knew her parents were still alive. But she didn't know where they were.

Her parents had sorted out hiding places for their three girls. But they struggled to find shelter for themselves.

"They went house to house like begging, where they knew somebody. Ended up at his sister's house who was married to a non-Jew. His sister was a teacher. So was her husband. They didn't have any children. They went there to beg, ask if they could stay there for a while. And his sister said 'no.'"

Before the war, Mirjam's father had held an important job as the chief pharmacist of the city of *Rotterdam*. He knew people. But not even his own sister would risk hiding

of the church, and said, 'I would like you to create a place for this Jewish couple to hide,'" Daphne says. "And the caretaker said, 'Well, I never told you this but there's another Jewish family that's been hiding in the attic for a year already.' So they made a second hiding place, so there were mirror images on either side of the organ pipes."

Two and a half years living behind a church organ. That's bound to have some consequences.

"That's why my parents hated organ music after the war," Mirjam says.

They hated organ music, but they survived. On a personal level, though, the conditions they found in that church crawl space completely re-ordered their lives.

"They had to lay in bed the whole daytime, because people who visit in the church could hear them walking if they would be," Mirjam says. "And they slept sometimes for 24 hours they were in that bed. Well, if you have a good marriage it goes really well maybe. If it's an in-between marriage, it's not the best, but if you have a terrible marriage it's murder."



(Center front) Mirjam Geismar de Zoete; (center left) father Chaim de Zoete, with daughter Judith; (center right) mother Sophia de Zoete, with daughter Hadassah.

him. There was another option.

Mirjam's parents ended up being sheltered in a church.

"The pharmacist in *Rotterdam* who helped my father with medication, also found out about the church," Mirjam says.

That pharmacist introduced them to the minister of the Breeplein church in *Rotterdam*. And he agreed to take them in. The church is still there today, with a plaque out front explaining its role hiding Jews during the war.

I asked Mirjam if her parents were physically in the church. "In the roof," she says.

Mirjam's daughter Daphne has become kind of the keeper of her parents' and grandparents' history. She knows their story well.

"The minister went to the caretaker

mother was asleep, and "right below the attic was another little room behind the organ pipes, so nobody came up there, and that's often where my grandfather would go to read.

"He was there (in the room) and he suddenly heard this commotion that was actually the other family hiding on the other side of the organ pipes," Daphne says. "And they were saying 'Quick, quick, get into your hiding places.' So, my grandfather looked out into the nave of the church and he saw the Dutch Nazi police searching the church. He knew he had to get into his space very quickly and without anybody hearing him. There was a ladder and he crawled up into the space and then he would throw the ladder up and catch it.

"He couldn't pull it up because it would grate along the side and make too much noise. He got the ladder up, closed the trap door and was very happy to see that my grandmother was sleeping and she would be quiet. The SS did come up to the space right below where he was, and as they were there he saw this spoon from lunch teetering on the edge of the stones and could have fallen or not. It happened not to have fallen."

Daphne says her grandfather heard them searching around in the pipes of the organ, and then they left.

It's just one of many incredible stories that emerged from war. The stories of the ones who survived. By sheer luck in many cases. Many Jews thought that all they had to do was hide, be quiet, and things would be fine once the war was over. Mirjam's family did.

"We just said, we'll be quiet, we'll survive, and we'll come nicely together," Mirjam says. "And somehow it worked for me. But it didn't work for many, many people. Many more."

So why do we tell these stories? I asked Mirjam that. And her answer, basically: Because stories are the only thing the survivors have.

"That's the only way you've got to fight it back," she says. "What else is to do? You feel you have to do something. So you tell the story, maybe. If it helps one person, it's worth it, I suppose. Especially if it's your child."

And so Mirjam told Daphne, her daughter. And Daphne tells her daughter. And they tell me. And I tell you.

When the war ended, Mirjam and her two sisters were brought out of their hiding places and taken to the church in *Rotterdam*.

Her family did come back together. Sheer luck. But somewhere in that luck lies some hope.

Mirjam's parents couldn't tolerate organ music again. But her father never lost his taste for Mozart.

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING JEWISH BOOKS OF ROME

(Continued from page 4)

“true” history of the Jews in Germany with the aim, in time, of justifying the Final Solution.

Rosenberg’s institute landed in the former Rothschild Library in *Frankfurt*; when the Allies began bombing the city in 1943, much of the library was transferred to the village of *Hungen*, where in 1945 six different repositories were later discovered to house 1,200,000 items. Between 1939 and 1945 it is estimated that the Nazis seized nearly three million books.

In all this relentless looting, packing, transporting, organizing, categorizing, sequestering, and (after the war) returning of the calligraphed and printed word, the story of the library of Rome is one of the least explored — and most haunting. The actual plundering appears to have been described in just one contemporaneous account, Giacomo Debenedetti’s taut *October 16, 1943*. It did not draw serious attention from the Italian government until 2002, when the Tedeschi Commission was established. Made up of historians, archivists and government officials, the commission spent nine years probing the library’s fate, in the end producing a 43-page report that con-

cluded by more or less throwing up its hands at the complexity of the problem.

Another reason that books present a particularly challenging case has to do with where their confiscation fits into the timeline of one of the most brutal seasons in two millennia of Roman Jewish history: They were taken two weeks after SS Lt. Col. Herbert Kappler demanded that the community produce a tribute of 50 kilograms of gold within 36 hours, in exchange for which, he assured them, no harm would come to the city’s Jews; and two days before — despite the gold having been delivered — the first deportations began. Understandably, more significant matters than stolen books were on the minds of the witnesses and, after them, survivors, detectives, archivists and scholars.

What did the library consist of, and why do people care so passionately about it almost 75 years after it vanished? One helpful thing to know is that there were actually two separate Jewish libraries, both of which were housed in the upper floors

of the synagogue building in *Lungotevere de’ Cenci*. The first, the Rabbinical College Library, was a larger teaching library that had come to Rome from *Florence* when the college transferred there in the 1930s. It consisted of prayer books, liturgical texts, copies of the Talmud, and works of philosophy and literature amounting to perhaps 10,000 volumes in all, and was largely (though not entirely) recovered and then returned to Rome after the war.

The second, or community, library was assembled in the early 20th century from an array of private families, confraternities and synagogues, among them Talmud Tora’, which alone contributed 4,728 of the estimated 7,000 total volumes. It contained precious early manuscripts and incunabula; volumes issued by the Soncino brothers, who printed the first Hebrew Bible; works by other early notable printers such as the Constantinople-based Bomberg, Bragadin and Giustiniani; texts from 17th- and 18th-century Venice and *Livorno*; a rare 1488 Hebrew-Italian-Arabic dictionary; nearly 50 editions printed in the Levant before 1614; and, of course, the two books that are now in New York.

These particulars are drawn from the 1934 inventory by Isaia Sonne, who at the time lamented that he had been permitted to see only the second-best items in the collection. His capsule summary nevertheless speaks to the erudition and wide-ranging connections of the community, which despite having been confined to a ghetto for 300 years had survived in Rome continuously since envoys of Judah Maccabee came to the city in the second century BC. “According to testimony given by those who at the time worked with the collections,” the Tedeschi Commission said in its report, “the abundance and quality of the library was remarkable.”

Debenedetti draws an acidic portrait of the events of that sober fall morning in 1943:

“It would be interesting to know more about the strange figure who appears at the offices of the Jewish community on October 11. He too is escorted by SS troops and appears to be just another German officer, but with an extra dose of arrogance that comes
(Continued on page 11)

WHAT IF THE HOLOCAUST HAD NEVER HAPPENED?

(Continued from page 2)

gained crucial strength between 1938 and 1939, he realized that had Germany gone to war a year earlier than it actually had, things might have turned out differently for European Jewry — and consequently also for Jews in America and what was then Mandatory Palestine.

Accordingly, Gurock’s alternate World War II history starts with British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain refusing to appease Germany’s Hitler in *Munich* in September 1938. In this alternate scenario, Germany ends up starting the war in Europe a year earlier, with its forces facing stiff opposition from the Czechs.

Gurock, relying on historical sources, presents many other key World War II events as taking place differently than they really did. For instance, an account of a meeting of Japanese leaders shows that some of them were firmly opposed to bombing Pearl Harbor. The author has these voices prevailing, and offers readers a striking image of American sailors sunning themselves on the deck of the USS *Arizona* on December 7, 1941.

In *The Holocaust Averted*, Hitler is assassinated, and Franklin D. Roosevelt does not serve a third term as US president and is succeeded by the staunch noninterventionist Robert A. Taft. The Jews of Germany suffer under Nazism, but with Hitler’s army suffering major defeats, the horrors of the Holocaust never come about and European Jewish communities stay intact. With the Jews of Europe rela-

tively safe, American Jews never become enthusiastic about Zionism. Without American Jews having served in the US military during World War II (since in Gurock’s alternate history the US never enters the war), they never fully enter American society and stay on the margins because of social anti-Semitism carried over from earlier decades of the 20th century.

Dr. Shalom Salomon Wald, author of the recently published *Rise and*

answered that he was quite sure the State of Israel would not have been created. (In Gurock’s book, Israel exists, but it is less powerful and less allied to the US than in reality).

“There would be no State of Israel, only a strong Jewish community in the Land of Israel,” Wald said. “I’m a Zionist, so it is not easy for me to say that.”

According to Wald, in the absence of the Holocaust, there would have

Jews (which he estimates would have reached 28–32 million by now) would have been much different from what it is today, with Spanish possibly being spoken by the majority of Jews.

While historians look back in history to understand what happened (or in the case of counterfactual history, what did not, or could have happened) Gurock said the ultimate purpose of *The Holocaust Averted* is to get American Jews to think about their present and future.

“The book teaches important lessons about the postwar and contemporary Jewish condition. It emphasizes what World War II meant for Jewish empowerment and Jewish activism,” he said.

“No matter what anyone may think about [US President] Obama’s relations with Israel, there has never been an explicitly anti-Zionist US president. We’ve never faced the challenge of supporting Israel as outsiders in America,” he added.

The America presented in Gurock’s alternate history is a nonpluralistic one. It’s an America in which the price of acceptance is to give up one’s Jewishness.

“The challenge for American Jews now is not the survival of Jews, but rather the survival of Judaism,” Gurock said 70 years after the end of the Holocaust.

“In real life, you have a choice of affirming your Jewishness in an America that accepts you, or of discarding it.”



From left to right: Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler, Mussolini, and Ciano pictured before signing the Munich Agreement, which gave the *Sudetenland* to Germany.

Decline of Civilizations: Lessons for the Jewish People, told *The Times of Israel* he believes doing counterfactual history like this is worthwhile, but with limits. Wald’s book, while not focused on speculative history, does have a chapter on the impact of fortune and chance events on history.

When asked what he thought the Jewish world would be like today had the Holocaust not happened, Wald

been only about 100,000 Jewish refugees after World War II. The Bundists would have been the strongest faction among the Jews, but the Zionists would have still pushed for a Jewish state, which Wald said might have been established eventually. He also posited that there would be more anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe today than there actually is, and that the global distribution of

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM YOUNG LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATION

On February 25th, 400 young professionals came out to the Metropolitan Pavilion in New York City to support the American Society for Yad Vashem



Arielle Kane, Amy Winiker, Eillene Leistner, Rena Resnick, Ron Meier.



Susie Nussbaum, BatSheva Halpern, Abbi Halpern, Kimberly Cooper, Debbie Kaplan, Shira Stein.



Harry Karten, Miritte Edery and friends.



Barry Levine, Abbi Halpern, Leonard Wilf.



BatSheva Halpern, Josh Stein, Murray Halpern, Jeremy Halpern, Abbi Halpern, Shira Stein.



Gonen Paradis, Kimberly Cooper, Oren Wilf, Jessica Glickman Mauk.

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM ASSOCIATES WINTER GALA

Yashem. Over dinner and cocktails, they raised money for the annual Education Conference at the largest Young Leadership event of the year.



Corey Horowitz, Adam Bachner, Avi Felberbaum.



Isaac Benjamin, Barry Levine, Nicki Lieberman, Avi Lieberman, Avi Adelsberg.



Michael Shmueli, Natasha Ghadamian, Michelle Khakshoor and friend.



Young Leadership Associates' Board.



Alexandria Levine, Danielle Chazen, Mike Becker, Nadav Besner and friend.



Erica and Michael Distenfeld with friends.



REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

“DON’T FORGET ME”

CHILDREN’S PERSONAL ALBUMS FROM THE HOLOCAUST

BY DANA PORATH

“Here, too, you are enveloped in love and friendship. Remain loyal to your people, even when times are hard...”

These words were written in an album made for Jiri Bader by his friends on the occasion of his bar mitzvah, which he marked (albeit a

incarceration in *Terezin*, is one of eight such handiworks featured in a new online exhibition, “Don’t Forget Me: Children’s Personal Albums from the Holocaust.” Beyond the images of the albums’ pages and dedications within — from friends, family members and acquaintances met during the war while in hiding, fleeing or in captivity — the exhibition tells the story of each individual child and his or her family, as well as, where possible, the fate of those who wrote them messages of hope and love. The albums demonstrate that despite cruel and relentless persecution, and often under living conditions that defy the imagination, children remain children: composing words of encouragement to their friends and embellishing them with joyful illustrations; and writing of everlasting friendship, even though

in many cases their lives were brutally cut short. Jiri’s album was donated to Yad Vashem by his sister, Vera Weberova, who survived the Holocaust. Their mother Grete also survived, but Jiri and his father were deported and murdered in Auschwitz some six

months after he received the album.

Other albums were given to Yad Vashem for safekeeping by the owners themselves, decades after their creation. Natan Rom (né Norbert Kurzman, b. 1929, *Katowice*, Poland), immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1943 with a group that became known as the “Tehran Children.” The album, donated to Yad Vashem by Natan and his sister Ziva, contains dedications to

friend. “He knows from which port he has departed, but he doesn’t know which port he is destined for. An everlasting memento.”

Another album highlighted in the exhibition was created for Erika Hoffmann, who was born in Vienna and immigrated to the Netherlands with her family in 1939. In 1942, Erika went into hiding at the home of Corrie (Cornelia) Stolker in *Doorn*, Holland.

Jaap Spruyt, grandson of Righteous Among the Nations Sandor Stolker (Corrie’s brother) and his wife Maria, donated the album to Yad Vashem in 2014 after discovering it among his late mother’s belongings. The album bore heartwarming dedications, including from Corrie herself: “If life sometimes brings hardship and sadness, trust in God with all your heart.” Erika and her mother, grandmother and aunts were discovered and deported to *Sobibor* in May 1943, where they were murdered. The fate of her father remains unknown.



The first page of the album made for Erika Hoffmann, who was discovered in hiding in Holland and sent to *Sobibor*, where she was murdered.

year late) in the *Terezin* (*Theresienstadt*) ghetto. The album was illustrated by caricaturist Max Placek, a relative of Jiri’s, who came from Jiri’s home town of *Kyjov*, Czechoslovakia.

The album, bearing descriptions and drawings of Jiri’s childhood and



Lydia Suzana (Zsuzsa) Hönig, (b. 1932), wearing an outfit she wore when performing in *Novi Sad* in the 1930s: a tap-dancing routine in the style of Shirley Temple.

Dedication to Lydia by her friend Mira Moses, February 23, 1941: “Memento: When you hear the bell ring/And you hear that beautiful sound/At that moment, remember me.”

Natan written by children who made the journey with him. “Man is like a boat on the stormy ocean,” wrote one

PERUVIAN DIPLOMAT POSTHUMOUSLY HONORED BY YAD VASHEM

Peru’s consul in Geneva during World War II, José María Barreto, has become the first Peruvian to be named by Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust memorial institution, as Righteous Among the Nations, for helping to save Jews from the Holocaust.

By 1938, the government of Peru had given instructions to all of its consulates in Europe not to issue visas to foreign immigrants, with an emphasis on barring Jews in particular. Abraham Silberschein, the head of RELICO, a Jewish relief organization in Switzerland founded by the World Jewish Congress, originally approached Barreto, the consul general of Peru in Geneva, asking him to issue Peruvian passports for Jews under German occupation.

In the summer of 1943, the Swiss police asked for clarifications from the Peruvian embassy to explain the issuing of a Peruvian passport to a German Jew by the name of Gunther Frank. Barreto responded in a letter to the Peruvian ambassador that he had issued 27 Peruvian passports to 58

Jews (including 14 children) at the request of the Intellectual Refugee Protection Committee in order to save the lives of people in German concentration camps expected to be sent to death.

After the incident came to the attention of the Peruvian foreign minister, the ministry ordered the cancellation of the passports issued and closure of the Peruvian consulate in Geneva. In addition, Barreto was fired from his position and dismissed from Peru’s Foreign Ministry.

In a letter written on August 27, 1943, Silberschein described Barreto’s efforts: “Mr. Barreto, deeply moved by the suffering of millions of human beings in the occupied countries, wished to participate in helping to alleviate the plight of these innocent people, and decided to agree and provide us with a certain number of passports so that we could send them to different persons in the countries under German control. Mr. Barreto was convinced that by this highly humane deed he would save a number of people.”

UNESCO RECOGNIZES YAD VASHEM’S HOLOCAUST TESTIMONIES

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has added the Pages of Testimony collected at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial museum to its register of documentary heritage, which features items deemed to have “world significance and outstanding universal value.”

UNESCO established its Memory of the World Register in 1995, and it currently includes 299 collections and unique items from around the world.

Israel last year proposed to UNESCO that the Pages of Testimony, commemorating some of the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust, be recognized. The forms were filled out between 1954 and 2004 by the victims’ relatives and friends, many with accompanying photographs, and the collection currently encompasses some 2.6 million pages.

Yad Vashem launched the project of collecting and documenting testimonies in 1954, and has thus far managed to collect the names of about 4.2 million Holocaust victims. Many of the names were independently verified through other docu-

ments, such as community registries and Nazi documents. In recent years, Yad Vashem has also employed volunteers to go to people’s homes and collect testimonies.

“The Pages of Testimony project is a huge collective commemoration project for Holocaust victims,” Dr. Alexander Avraham, director of the Hall of Names at Yad Vashem, said. “This is an unprecedented initiative, both in its scope and in its attempt to recover names as a symbol of the humanity of man.”

“For many, these testimonies are the only remaining link to their loved ones who were murdered in the Holocaust,” added Avner Shalev, chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate. “The German Nazis and their accomplices tried to murder every Jewish man, woman and child and to erase any trace of their existence. Through this project of collecting names and testimonies, we can restore their names and identities. I call upon the public to commemorate their loved ones who were murdered in the Holocaust.”

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING JEWISH BOOKS OF ROME

(Continued from page 7)

from having a privileged and, regrettably, well-known “specialty’.”

This elusive, dread-inducing character makes his way into the synagogue building:

“While his men commence ransacking the libraries of the rabbinical college and the Jewish community, the officer, with hands as cautious and sensitive as those of the finest needlewoman, skims, touches, caresses papyri and incunabula, leafs through manuscripts and rare editions, peruses parchments and palimpsests. The varying degrees of caution in his touch, the heedfulness of his gestures, are quickly adapted to the importance of each work. ... In those aristocratic hands, the books, as though subjected to the cruel and bloodless torture of an exquisite sadism, revealed everything. Later, it became known that the SS officer was a distinguished scholar of paleography and Semitic philology.”

Debenedetti’s sensitive aristocrat was not the first Nazi to evaluate the books, either. In the preceding days two other uniformed officers who described themselves as Orientalists had come to inspect the library (and help themselves to cash from the community’s safe while they were at it). And on October 2 they visited the chief rabbi’s home, where they examined and confiscated the books and papers they found there.

When these scholar-plunderers apprehended the extent of the libraries and learned it would require several freight cars to move them north, they engaged Otto & Rosoni, a firm of carriers, to organize the transport. In the meantime they threatened death to anyone who removed so much as a single volume.

On October 14, a Captain Mayer oversaw the removal of all of the community library and a portion of the rabbinical library as the president, secretary and sexton of the community looked on. “Though the books, like all Holocaust victims, traveled in sealed cars bound for Germany,” Debenedetti’s translator Estelle Gilson reports in an afterword to *October 16, 1943*, “they were carefully treated — stacked in layers with corrugated sheets between and packed in wicker cases.”

Because there were so many books — the movers estimated 25,000 volumes in all, a figure that may be inflated — the Germans were unable to complete their pillaging in one day. It is possible that they ran out of time; but it is also possible that they were aware that more urgent dislocations were to follow two days later, namely the first roundup of Roman Jews (1,259 on October 16 alone). Nevertheless the books were not forgotten: On December 23 the officers returned to finish the job. When mem-

bers of the community appealed to Italian authorities for help, they did not even respond to the request.

“History has made it poignantly clear,” Gilson says, “that Jewish books had a far better survival rate than did Jewish human beings.” Certainly this obtains for many other Nazi-seized libraries, but the community library of Rome would seem to be the exception. Even the Tedeschi Commission could only “draw up various theories,” as they put it, as to its fate.

In investigating the rumor, which Gilson repeats, that the freight train

umes confiscated by the Nazis. The commission combed through archives in Germany, France, Israel and the United States, and also sent requests to the Soviet Union, where their investigation was restricted on account of the inaccessibility of many documents there.

The topic of the Soviet Union seems particularly charged. Because Nazi plunder was distributed among such a wide range of cities, it fell under different jurisdictions at the end of the war. Cultural treasures under the control of the United States or English military zones received more meticulous attention than treasures that fell under the control of the Soviets, a fact that has produced divided ideas about where the books might be located today.

One potential hypothesis, Grimsted believes, is that the community library was not evacuated from *Frankfurt* during the Allied bombing but stashed in one of two bomb shelters in the city that the Nazis were known to have retained. If that is the case, it may have been partially or totally destroyed, or merely lost. The *Offenbach* records may still hold revealing surprises too, she feels. And there is always the possibility that the library fell into private hands: “An individual person could have portions of this library, absolutely. They’ll come forward a generation, two generations from now. These discoveries are often driven by a gathering energy or a yearning on the part of the community for the puzzle to be solved. Or, let’s face it, a recognition that the plunder has actual monetary value.”

And now back to Nachman, son of Foa. So, how did his manuscript wash up out of this long river of time — time and space — onto Broadway and 122nd Street, a world away from where it was written and housed for 400 years?

Estelle Gilson writes that, in defiance of the German officers’ orders, the president of the community and his associates did manage to salvage a few volumes of the community library. A 1485 commentary on the Bible was hidden in a garden. A handful of books remained undiscovered in the synagogue; several others were overlooked in cupboards in the rabbi’s office.

If Nachman’s manuscript were one of these stragglers, though, its arrival in New York would still be perplexing. Might it have slipped out of the original transport, having been pilfered

by the sensitive aristocrat or his kind? Or is it, somehow, an escapee from the transport itself, which is lying in some German or Russian library basement or in a remote castle or a former bomb shelter or even a school? Or perhaps it was sold off from a hypothetical private collection ... though of course if it were, one would want to know what sort of collector-cum-Hebrew-scholar would hold onto such a patrimony in secret.

October 14, 1943, was two weeks after Rosh Hashanah. Three hundred ninety years earlier, on September 9, 1553, on Rosh Hashanah itself, an early, one might even say pioneering, form of bibliocide was perpetrated in Rome, when a papal bull issued by Julius III ordered all copies of the Talmud that then existed in the city, along with all literature based upon it, to be delivered to the Campo de’ Fiori, the same piazza where, in 1600, Giordano Bruno would be burnt alive for his freethinking ideas.

If he was living in Rome, it is altogether possible that young Nachman, who would have been 13 in 1553, witnessed what happened next. The Campo de’ Fiori was a meeting place, even then a market place, a direct link to the Vatican for pilgrims coming from the south. It was, and still is, also a 10-minute walk from the largely Jewish neighborhood by the Tiber where within two short years the Jews would be confined to the ghetto.

Picture Nachman heading north along a bend in the river as he makes his way to the piazza. Over the roofs of nearby buildings he sees an ominous cloud, a black bruise spreading in the sky. He hears the scene before he sees it: shouts; cries; the pop and crackle of burning paper. He approaches from the west, slipping in from the Piazza Farnese next door. He has to stand on his toes to see over the heads of the assembled crowd. Books and manuscripts, arriving by cart, in baskets, and in boxes, take easily, too easily, to flame.

Nachman is a student. He knows what goes into copying out a sacred Torah scroll or an anthology of exegesis: weeks, months, bent over parchment, a quill grasped just so, a hand tightened by cramps. All this effort, all this time, vaporized in minutes. As he watches, his heart twisting, studious Nachman vows to himself to do what he can to recover this lost knowledge. He will go home and practice his calligraphy so that one day before long he will be able to sit down in the house of the generous person Samuel, son of Moses Kazis, and copy out the commentaries of ben Meir Ibn Ezra. Little does he know that with this act of defiance he will raise a phoenix that compels us to this day.



Jay Rovner, manuscripts bibliographer at the Jewish Theological Seminary Library in New York, examines a volume confirmed by internal stamps to have belonged to the Jewish library of Rome.

WHY ONE OF THE HOLOCAUST'S WORST MASSACRES IS MARKED ONLY BY A CHARRED MENORAH

BY CNAAN LIPSHIZ,
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

On a muddy path in *Babi Yar* Park, Vladimir Proch negotiates deep puddles as he shadows two rabbis and a group of Ukrainian officials.

An 87-year-old Holocaust survivor, Proch lives near the Kiev ravine where Nazis and local collaborators murdered more than 50,000 Jews starting in September 1941. He has followed every twist of the 15-year saga to commemorate victims in a manner befitting the tragedy's scale, which even by Nazi standards was extraordinarily barbaric.

Sensing the clergy and officials are part of the latest effort to memorialize the victims, Proch approaches one of the rabbis, Yossi Azman, and asks him incredulously: "Do you really think we'll finally get a proper monument?"

Proch has good reason to be skeptical. Since 2001, numerous Jewish groups and tycoons have attempted but failed to win municipal support to upgrade a notorious site where Jewish victims are memorialized only by an unfenced 6-foot menorah.

Built near a construction-waste dump roamed by homeless people and packs of stray dogs, the menorah is still charred from a recent torching — the sixth assault by vandals on the monument in the past year alone. Swastikas adorn two entrances to a metro station near the memorial park.

Yet with the 75th anniversary of the *Babi Yar* massacre approaching, authorities and community representatives say they are determined to build a new monument and avoid the pitfalls that thwarted previous attempts — including funding prob-

lems, concerns about building atop and desecrating human remains, and internal feuding within Ukraine's fractious Jewish community.

The new initiative to commemorate the Holocaust at *Babi Yar* began officially last month, when Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk convened a standing committee of officials and community representa-



Stray dogs roam the *Babi Yar* monument on March 14, 2016, in Kiev, where Nazis and local collaborators murdered 30,000 Jews in 1941.

tives who meet every week. They aim to build a new monument by September 29, the anniversary of the day in 1941 when Nazis began marching Kiev's Jews to the ravine on the city's outskirts and systematically massacring them with machine-gun fire. By some estimates, 100,000 Jews, Roma, Communists and Soviet prisoners of war were murdered at *Babi Yar*, including over 33,000 Jews on those first two days alone.

The current memorial plan is an unambitious blueprint for two memorial paths that would connect the site of the menorah, situated on the park's

outer edges, to its center. One path will be dedicated to the Jewish victims, another to Ukrainians who risked their lives to save Jews.

The fate of the menorah, which Jewish groups placed here provisionally 25 years ago, is uncertain. One design, which is favored by the local municipality, features a stone wall integrated with replicas of personal

artifacts such as spectacles, shoes and bags — echoing the piles of clothing taken from victims before they were shot.

"It's just dignified enough to pass as decent," said Moshe Azman, an influential Chabad rabbi from Kiev and a claimant to the title of chief rabbi of Ukraine, about the new design.

"It's not fancy, not huge, not spectacular — and that's why it has a chance to succeed where previous plans failed," added Azman, the father of Rabbi Yossi Azman. Moshe Azman has attended meetings of the standing committee.

Rabbi Dov Bleich, another chief rabbi of Ukraine, said: "Any sort of halfway decent monument is better than the current reality at *Babi Yar*, which is just a disgrace."

The bare-bones design, estimated to cost a mere \$150,000, reflects economic realities in Ukraine. The country has rampant unemployment, and its national currency, the hryvna, is now worth a third of its value against the dollar in 2014. That year, the Ukrainian economy crashed when the government was toppled in a revolution, which triggered a still-ongoing armed conflict with Russian-backed separatists.

Bleich said several plans failed because they were too ambitious.

"In the current reality, but even before in a poor country like Ukraine, a \$30 million to \$40 million project is often just not viable," he said. "It's just not going to happen, or will take a long time to."

Babi Yar currently has three cornerstones that were placed here with great pomp over the past 15 years for Jewish commemorative projects that never materialized.

In 2001, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, or JDC, proposed building a Jewish community center near the actual gravesite. Religious Jews thought it improper. Jewish community leaders, meanwhile, complained that locals, not JDC, should be handling the commemoration.

In 2006, businessman and Jewish activist Vadim Rabinovich began advancing plans for a museum atop land he had bought near, but not on, (Continued on page 15)

ROMANIA STRUGGLES TO CONFRONT HOLOCAUST PAST

BY MIHAELA RODINA, AFP

More than 70 years after the Holocaust, the suffering of survivors in Romania is often overlooked or played down, even if the country has taken some steps toward recognizing what happened, historians and survivors say.

After denying its role in the Holocaust for years, in 2003 Romania set up an international commission of historians led by survivor and Nobel peace laureate Elie Wiesel to look into the matter.

Its report said between 280,000 and 380,000 Jews died during the Holocaust in territories run by the pro-Nazi Romanian regime of Ion Antonescu from 1940 to 1944.

But historian Alexandru Climescu said understanding of this dark chapter in Romania's history was still poor, and he warned against a tendency to put the blame for massacres and deportations to the Nazi

death camps on German forces.

He points to the case of two Romanian officers jailed after the war for their part in a notorious pogrom in *Iasi*, in the country's north, in which some 13,000 Jews perished in June 1941.

The two men were cleared posthumously in 1998 after an unusual appeal by the state prosecutor, who put the blame on the Germans, saying the two men were simply obeying orders.

"Acquitting those who were nicknamed the Eichmanns of Romania... is to deny again that the deportations in the north and the *Iasi* pogrom itself even took place," Climescu said.

Iancu Tucurman, 92, who survived the *Iasi* massacre — in which Jews were gunned down by guards and suffocated in overcrowded train wagons — also condemned the court's decision.

"In my wagon, 137 Jews were put on board instead of 45, the normal capacity for a wagon transporting

goods. After a nine-hour ordeal, only eight were still alive and got off the wagon," he said.

"If war criminals can win their legal cases, that means their crimes didn't take place," Tucurman added. "Can the victims also ask the courts to cancel their deaths?"

Alexandru Florian, director of the Elie Wiesel National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania, shares his indignation.

"Public institutions are sometimes contributing to the rewriting of history, and they are twisting it. Those two officers will now forever remain 'innocent' from a legal point of view," Florian said.

There are now around 5,700 Jews living in Romania, down from some 800,000 before World War II.

And while the Holocaust survivors interviewed by AFP said they do not experience regular anti-Semitism, polls suggest more than one in 10 Romanians say they don't want anything to do with Jews.

"For decades under the Communist regime there was an attempt to destroy the memory," said Liviu Beris, 88, another survivor.

"The mindset people have, formed under this regime, it can't change overnight."

Recognizing Romania's role in the Holocaust has been accompanied in recent years by more concrete measures, including school lessons and laws banning Holocaust denial, Climescu told AFP.

But he warned "symbolic acquittals" are still going on, giving the example of war criminals being made "citizens of honor" in some towns, streets still bearing Antonescu's name and museums showing the wartime leader in a heroic light.

"The biggest danger is that people who directly contributed to the persecution and extermination of Jews might be legitimized in the public view as symbols, martyrs and heroes," he said.

CHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS STUDY HOW TO PRESERVE THE MEMORY

When David Hershkoviz was a child, he used to wake up in the middle of the night to the sound of his mother screaming in her sleep, and he knew that she was reliving the horrors of the Holocaust.

In time, he learned of the traumatic wartime experience that haunted her most — being torn away from her own mother at the Auschwitz concentration camp's selection line, where at 21 she was forced into work and her mother dispatched to death.

"That separation never left her," said Hershkoviz, 54, his voice quivering as he choked back tears. "She said, 'I think my mother is angry at me because I left her. ... My mother never comes to me in my dreams. I haven't dreamed about her since we parted. How is that possible?'"

When his mother, Mindel, died two years ago, he wanted to carry on her legacy by bearing witness to the Holocaust. He found help in a first-of-its-kind course teaching the children of Holocaust survivors how to ensure their parents' stories live on.

Hershkoviz is one of 18 graduates of the Shem Olam Institute's inaugural four-month "second generation" course, where children of survivors study the history of the horrors their parents endured and how best to pass it on. The program aims to usher in a new stage of Holocaust commemoration in a post-survivor era.

The German Nazis and their collaborators murdered six million Jews during World War II, wiping out a third of world Jewry. Only a few hundred thousand elderly survivors remain, and the day is fast approaching when there will be no one left to provide a coherent first-person account of the ghettos and death camps.

That has become the central challenge for Holocaust institutes around the world as they rush to collect as many records and belongings as possible before the live testimony of survivors is a thing of the past.

Shem Olam looks to take this trend one step further, by recording not only survivors' biographies but also the emotional experiences that can be relayed through their children.

"We are here to give a different narrative of the Holocaust. We've heard the story of tragedy; we want to give the story of how people coped inside this living hell," said Avraham Krieger,



David Hershkoviz listens to Avraham Krieger, director of the Shem Olam Institute, as he speaks about the Torah scroll from the Warsaw ghetto in *Kfar Haroeh*, Israel.

the institute's director.

Krieger, himself a child of survivors, said the second generation grew up in homes that were haunted by the past and where the concept of a grandparent was nonexistent.

He believes that in 100 years, when people recall the Holocaust, they will be most interested in how people lived rather than how they died. He says it is his generation's responsibility to counter the myth of Jews meekly marching to their deaths.

"The story of the Holocaust is how a person copes in such an environment," he said. "An extreme reality, which has no parallel in modern history, of people who are in the most dire human situation and are still maintaining their humanity, still maintaining something from their values."

Deborah Dwork, director of the Strassler Family Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, welcomed the initiative, saying it would be very meaningful for future generations to have live contact with people who had personal relationships with survivors. She said there are still some Americans old enough to remember the powerful experience of meeting someone who was the child of a slave.

"That physical presence of a second-generation person will lend authenticity to the history and will give it another dimension," she said, before adding a warning. "I am a historian, so what I want to say to them though, is, 'You inherited the legacy of trauma, but it is not your history. ... The history your parents lived is their history, not yours.'"

Established in 1996, Shem Olam says it looks to provide an alternative to the more established Holocaust museums by providing the "story behind the story" and getting beyond the victimization to focus on issues of faith and resilience. Krieger said Shem Olam derives its name

from the same passage in the book of Isaiah that mentions Yad Vashem — the name of Israel's official Holocaust memorial. Yad Vashem is Hebrew for "a memorial and a name," while Shem Olam roughly translates into "everlasting name."

Located in a modest three-story building inside a Jewish seminary in the small central Israeli village of *Kfar Haroeh*, it features Holocaust-inspired artwork and artifacts collected from the destruction, such as a charred Torah scroll.

Shem Olam, which receives minimal state funding and mostly exists off contributions, focuses on documenting religious life in the Holocaust. It holds public lectures and arranges delegations to former Jewish communities in Europe. But its flagship project of late has been the second-generation outreach program.

"Today we, as second generation, know which camp my mother and father were in, and how much bread they got is an important story. But it is more important to find out what kind of person they were," said Krieger, 53. "We never really asked the tough questions of how our parents coped emotionally."

Besides finding a kinship with others who shared a similar background, Hershkoviz said the course helped him understand his mother better. She died at the age of 90 with 13 great-grandchildren, and though her biography is well chronicled, Hershkoviz is determined to keep her "emotional experience" alive as well.

"The most significant thing I have to pass on from my mom is survival and how she built a new family," he said. "I feel a responsibility to tell her story. There is no one else to do it."

FRANCE'S SECRET LINKS TO THE NAZI HOLOCAUST

Files detailing French collaboration in the murder of 76,000 Jews were made public for the first time after being locked away since the end of the Second World War.

BY PETER ALLEN, EXPRESS

The secret archives were opened as France faces up to its Nazi shame.

They relate to the so-called Vichy regime, led by Marshal Philippe Pétain from 1940 to 1944 after the country's defeat by Hitler's Germany.

There was often enthusiastic collaboration with the Nazis by French police and paramilitaries during the Holocaust.

Jews were rounded up as "enemies of the state" and sent to death camps in Germany.

Many victims came from major cities, including Paris, where occupying German forces worked closely with local officials.

Others came from the so-called "free zone" in southern France, which

was at first unoccupied and from where Pétain ran his puppet government in the spa town of Vichy.

A new decree says the newly opened archives can be "freely consulted" by civil servants and historical researchers — "subject to the declassification of documents covered by national defense secrecy rules".

Among the files will be disturbing evidence that French Jews were pinpointed and then betrayed.

Names of those responsible will be listed.

It comes six years after the French Council of State, the country's highest judicial body, said the Vichy government "held responsibility" for deportations and they could not solely be blamed on the Germans.

It ruled that Nazi officials did not force the French to betray their fellow



Nazis parade in occupied Paris.

citizens, but anti-Semitic persecution was carried out willingly — by organizations that included the Paris police and SNCF, the national railway.

Postwar French governments had previously refused to acknowledge any Vichy role in the Holocaust.

The Council of State ruling in 2009 called for a "solemn recognition of the state's responsibility and of collective prejudice suffered" by the deportees.

But it said there would be no payments for survivors or for the families of victims.

Lawyers around the world, especially in the US and Israel, are working to change that.

During his term of office, which ended in 2007, President Jacques Chirac made the most outspoken reference so far by a French head of state to involvement in the Holocaust.

He said: "These dark hours forever sully our history and are an insult to our past and our traditions."

"Yes, the criminal folly of the occupiers was seconded by the French — by the French state."

Today France has western Europe's largest Jewish community, with around 500,000 people.

Many of them are still discriminated and persecuted, and anti-Semitism remains prevalent in the country.

A BRITISH WAR HERO WAS ACTUALLY A GERMAN-BORN JEW

By COREY CHARLTON,
MAILONLINE

A man who decided to research his late British father's RAF wartime past was stunned to discover that he was actually a German Jew whose battles against the Nazis inspired the film *The Great Escape*.

Marc Stevens was just 22 when his hero dad Peter passed away in 1979, having emigrated to Canada in the 1950s.

All Mr. Stevens knew of his father, who spoke with a perfect English accent, was that he had been born Georg Franz Hein, in *Hanover*, Germany, to Christian parents.



Peter Stevens.

He also knew his dad had gone to England at the outbreak of war to join the RAF as a bomber pilot to fight the Nazis and that later he had served in MI6.

Before joining the RAF and piloting a Hampden twin-engine bomber with a crew of four, Peter had stopped using his German name and adopted that of a friend in England who had passed away.

Peter had married Mr. Stevens' mother — a French-Canadian Catholic — and passed himself off in later life as an Englishman once he moved to Canada in 1952.

But after his death Mr. Stevens was fascinated to discover why his dad was one of just 69 members of the RAF to be awarded Britain's Military Cross for valor in the Second World War.

His father also later worked for MI6 — a fact kept within the family until after his death, when it was corroborated by his former colleagues.

Like his determined father, Mr. Stevens stopped at nothing, getting secret files opened early, testimonies and debriefs from his dad's own war record to find out more.

The ripples of that light shone on Peter's past have even changed his ethnicity and inspired him to publish the book *Escape, Evasion and Revenge*.

Mr. Stevens, from Toronto, Canada, said: "Dad spoke with a highly cultured British accent, and passed himself off as an Englishman.

"The fact that he had served as an RAF bomber pilot only helped to reinforce that cover story. What I didn't

know, and only discovered in 1996, was that my father had been born Jewish.

"It all began with a lot of letter writing — initially to an author of POW escape books in England.

"He was the first to tell me that my father was actually Jewish, but I thought he was dead wrong about that.

"More letters were written to the RAF Personnel Department in England, hoping to be put in contact with any surviving members of Dad's bomber crew.

"Incredibly, I was able to contact, and later meet, two of Dad's crew whose lives he saved with his sang-froid flying skills. Numerous visits to Britain's National Archives eventually paid off.

"Using my father's RAF Pilot Logbook as a starting point, I discovered debriefs for each of Dad's 22 combat missions.

"In 1996, I finally tracked down and contacted my late father's little sister, who finally confirmed the rumors that my father was actually a Jew."

As Mr. Stevens' research continued, the more he unearthed about his dad's wartime exploits, including a stint at the infamous Stalag Luft 3 prisoner-of-war camp.

He said: "Dad became one of only two Allied prisoners authorized by the Escape Committee to trade with the Germans at the massive Stalag Luft 3, home of *The Great Escape*.

"Fans of the movie will recognize the James Garner character as 'The Scrounger,' a job partly filled by my father.

"In fact, Dad is named in the official history of Stalag Luft 3 as the Head of Contacts for the 'X' Organization in East compound of that massive POW camp."

Peter had ended up in the camp after being captured after an attack on Berlin on September 7, 1941.

Mr. Stevens said: "Dad and his new crew were ordered to bomb Berlin, the capital of Nazi Germany and the target with the best defenses in Europe.

"They made it to Berlin and dropped their bombs, but the aircraft was damaged by anti-aircraft artillery over the target, and Dad ordered his crew to bail out. Both gunners did, and it was later determined that one's parachute had failed to open. Sadly, his body was never found. That man, Sgt. Ivor Roderick Fraser, was just 19 years old.

"After his crew bailed out, Dad realized that his plane was marginally flyable, and the navigator stayed with him as he turned back to England. But there was a hole in each of the main fuel tanks, and they ran out of fuel and crash-landed near Amsterdam.

"Captured a day later, Dad and his navigator were eventually sent to separate prisoner-of-war camps. Of course, it was critical that the

Germans never realize his true identity, as they would have legally been able to execute him as a traitor to Germany.

"For the next three years and eight months, he was without any protection whatsoever under the Geneva Convention.

"Dad made escape his first priority, and he had a massive advantage. He

became a very active participant in great demand for most escape schemes.

"When he wasn't directly involved in escapes, he was always consulted by other prisoners who needed false documents prepared in the German language. On two separate occasions in December 1941, Dad got dressed up as a German guard, and escorted



The 1963 film detailed the larger-than-life escape attempt carried out by inmates of the POW camp. Pictured far left is James Garner, who played a character based on Mr. Stevens.

was, after all, a native German.

"The month after his capture, in October 1941, he was transferred with hundreds of other British POW's between two camps in northern Germany, locked in a cattle car with two armed Nazi guards.

"Using other prisoners to arrange a distraction, Dad and a Canadian pilot jumped off the moving train through a ventilator shaft.

"Unfortunately, another prisoner had done the same thing, and was noticed by the guards. Looking out, they saw Dad and his friend running for some nearby woods, and started shooting.

"With bullets whizzing by their ears like bumblebees, they were able to make it to the forest before the guards perfected their aim. The area was searched, but the Germans could not find Dad and his mate, and the train eventually left.

"Sleeping by day and travelling by night, Dad made his way to *Hannover*, and determined to go to his mother's house to get food, money and civilian clothing. Knocking on the door of his own home, he was told that his mother had committed suicide in July 1939, rather than submit to the Nazis. Despite the immense shock of that news, he went to see an aunt and uncle nearby, and obtained what limited help they could offer.

"Heading south toward Switzerland, he got as far as *Frankfurt* before he was challenged.

"Not having had the opportunity to get any forged identity papers, he admitted to being an escaped British officer, and he was sent back to a POW camp. Advising the senior British officers in camp of his German language skills, Peter Stevens

a group of ten British prisoners out the camp gate. Both times they had to turn back, but after the war in 1946, an English newspaper called it 'The Boldest Escape Attempt of the War.'

This daring escape attempt later earned him the Military Cross.

His Jewish heritage was something that gradually became more clear to Mr. Stevens as he researched his dad's history — after a poignant meeting in London in 1996 he learned his family had lost some 10 to 15 members to the Holocaust.

Mr. Stevens said: "Since I only discovered Dad was Jewish 17 years after his death, I can only guess as to his motives for not sharing it.

"Firstly, Dad never practiced the faith of his family after the age of six, when his father died and he was sent away to boarding school. According to his sister, he was never bar mitzvahed. So I don't know if he really even felt any affinity to his religion.

"Secondly, he emigrated from the UK to a very Catholic Quebec in 1952, and he was likely worried about latent discrimination, which was still very much in evidence in that society. After 1996, I asked my mother if she would have married him, knowing he was Jewish.

"She had close Jewish friends and was never anti-Semitic in any way, but she said honestly that she probably would not have done so in that place and time.

"That was no reflection on her, but rather on the societal norms of the day, in a place where even the government bowed to the Church.

"Today, I am very proud to be the son of one of the bravest men I ever met."

VOICES OF HOLOCAUST VICTIMS, SURVIVORS COME TO LIFE

BY JOHN MASON,
REGISTER-STAR

A story of Austria's role in World War II, from the perspective of one family that lived and died in it, is told in the documentary, *Shadows from My Past*.

Co-director of the documentary Gita Kaufman was a 4-year-old when she and her family escaped Austria on the eve of being deported to the *Dachau* concentration camp 75 years ago, in March 1940. Prior to that, their lives had become unbearable.

"I remember being 3 and suddenly having the rug pulled out from under me," Kaufman said. "The Nazis came and disrupted our lives altogether."

They banged on the door and pulled her father out of bed, saying, "We're arresting you because you're a Jew."

They didn't arrest him, though. Instead they took him out to the Danube, threatened to throw him off the bridge, then made him wade into the river up to his waist and sing Jewish songs. Then they brought him onshore and beat him on the head with a lead pipe. In the dark, he held his hands over his head.

"The Austrians were more vicious than the Germans," Kaufman said. Because of the beating, her father went for a long stay in the hospital, and this probably saved his life, she said. The Nazis would come to their building, bang on the door, and say, "Where's the Jew?" and go away without finding him.

And, "by some miracle, when he got back, the papers came to get us the hell out of there," Kaufman said. Thanks to Paula Forman's grandfather and his brother, Isadore and Samuel Sobel, they had the papers and tickets on a luxury liner to the U.S. Due to his beating, her father was nearly deaf for the rest of his life.

"Her parents were refugees from Austria about to be sent to concentration camps," Forman said. "My grandfather and his brother, although they didn't know them, sent money by whatever means they could." The two brothers had come from Poland at the beginning of the 20th century.

"My grandparents were not very political and not very religious," Forman said. "But I remember there were stories of bringing as many people as he could afford over from Europe in the nick of time. I'm proud of my grandfather and granduncle — it was the right thing to do."

The Weinrauchs came to New York City and settled in Kingston, where a cousin had a factory they could work in.

"It was impossible to get jobs in the

Depression," Kaufman said.

The stories of her early life in Austria might have been forgotten if it had not been for a shoebox full of letters Kaufman found in her recently deceased mother's drawer in 1984.

The letters were from Gita's parents' relatives and friends in Austria, left behind in Nazi territory when the Kaufmans fled to the U.S. Kaufman said she recalled times when the letters arrived — they were always occasions for excitement, she said — but later on, her mother always told her they had been lost.

When she discovered the letters, in a prayer book in the shoebox, she asked other friends and relatives in the United States if they also had letters from Austria, and she assembled quite a collection.

Kaufman said the letter writers were teachers, businessmen, doctors and lawyers, who thought they were safe. The letters reveal the eclipse of their safety, and revealed to Kaufman just how much she'd lost in terms of a family.

"The letters were moving," she said. "The family I came from were caring, passionate, intelligent people, very

Her collection of letters became known about, and Kaufman received a grant from the Bruno Kreisky Foundation for Outstanding Achievement in the Area of Human Rights and an invitation to speak and read the letters at the University of Vienna.

"They were unique," she said. "It was a whole family — mothers, uncles, grandparents — asking for help, trying to get out of there." She was part of the Austrian Cultural Forum. There she met Oliver Rathkolb, a historian, "a good guy who wanted to teach the truth of Austria's history," she said. "I believe he felt the letters showed the history of the Holocaust in a first-person way. It's a complicated and difficult subject."

This was a time at which Austrians were reassessing their history. "In Vienna they stopped teaching history at World War I," she said. "Now that is changed."

Kaufman began interviewing Austrians to plumb their memories of the war.

"For years they were saying they were the first victims," she said. "But the Nazis had very little resistance when they came in. Crowds greeted Hitler in his beautiful car with swastikas enthusiastically."

Kaufman's husband was Curt Kaufman, a noted photographer who had worked for years on Hollywood films.

"This film could not have been done without my husband," Kaufman said. "He said, 'We've got to get all these interviews on film.' We saw the value of these films, very historical." Kurt

Waldheim, who served as secretary-general of the United Nations and then as president of Austria, before his role in the Nazi secret service became public, turned them down for an interview for four years before they met someone who could serve as an intermediary.

"The stories were so fascinating we kept going back and forth (from the U.S. to Austria)," Kaufman said. "We raised the money mostly ourselves, with small donations here and there."

Curt taught himself cinematography. They began weaving readings of the letters in with the interviews of Austrian resisters, collaborators and witnesses.

The resulting film deals with Gita Kaufman's mixed emotions on returning to Vienna. It focuses, Kaufman said, "on the beginnings of the Holocaust, from 1939 to 1941, when Adolf Eichmann arrived in Vienna and began his terrorism."

WHY ONE OF THE HOLOCAUST'S WORST MASSACRES...

(Continued from page 12)

the gravesites. But that plan, too, was brought to a halt by critics like Meylakh Shoychet, Ukraine director for the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union. Shoychet and Vitaly Nachmanovich, the secretary of the Public Committee for Commemoration of the Victims of *Babi Yar*, argue that the construction would disturb human remains in violation of halachah, Jewish law.



Vladimir Proch, a Ukrainian Jew, standing near Kiev's *Babi Yar* monument, March 14, 2016.

Fears of desecrating human remains are a common issue when dealing with Europe's countless Jewish mass graves and cemeteries. The halachic complication is especially present at *Babi Yar* because of the nature of the executions there.

After the initial slaughter — the Nazis shot Jews who were lying down in layers on the bodies of their dead brethren — smaller groups of Jews were executed and buried here from 1941 to 1943. During that period, the Nazis had bodies exhumed and burned, and the ashes were scattered in a bid to hide their crimes, making it impossible to pinpoint all the graves at the sprawling *Babi Yar* Park.

"The whole place needs to be treated like a cemetery because that's what it is," Shoychet said.

All the victims at *Babi Yar* are commemorated in a massive monument that authorities built in 1976 for all "Soviet citizens" killed there. But a monument recognizing Jews as specific victims of the Nazi genocide was only approved after the fall of the Soviet Union.

For Jews, *Babi Yar* is highly significant because it is the first massacre of its scale perpetrated during the Holocaust and the third or fourth largest overall. In a 2006 speech at the site, Meir Lau, a former chief Ashkenazi rabbi of Israel, described it as Adolf Hitler's trial balloon for the final solution.

Had the international reaction to *Babi Yar* "been a serious one, a dramatic one, in September 1941 here in Ukraine," Lau said, the fate of Europe's Jews "would perhaps have come to a different end."



Under Nazi rule, Austrian Jews were forced to wear stars.

aware of what was going on. No one could make up those letters.

"They begged to be rescued before the axe fell on their heads," she wrote in an email. "Their pleas are in the letters.... But what could I do about it, now that the years of Nazi terror were long over, and the people who wrote the letters were dead?"

Most of them were not as lucky as Gita's family. Her mother tried to save her own brother, who was trying to escape, but they didn't have the \$150 he needed for ship's passage, and he was arrested in France. A nephew who made it to Holland also ended up in a concentration camp, Kaufman said.

According to the letters, one family member was sent to *Dachau*, near Munich.

"Every day ashes came from there," Kaufman said. "They sent the ashes to the families. They wanted them to pay money for them."

HOLOCAUST MEMORIES STITCHED TOGETHER

BY ANNE JOSEPH,
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

To mark the 70th anniversary of their parents' and grandparents' liberation from the Nazi concentration camps at the end of World War II, a group of families have stitched together — literally — their memories of the Holocaust through a vibrant patchwork of quilts.

The four "memory quilts," currently on display at London's Jewish Museum, each depict stories of survival, panel by panel, of "The Boys" — a group of 732 child survivors (which actually included 80 girls) from Eastern Europe.

According to the '45 Aid Society, an organization formed by the survivors after the war, the UK government offered at the time to allow 1,000 Jewish orphans from the camps to settle in Great Britain, but sadly only the 732 could be found. Many stayed to rebuild their lives, but others went on to Israel, North America and Australia.

"From terrible destruction comes these amazing lives," said Abigail Morris, the museum's director. "The beauty of these magnificent quilts speaks for themselves."

The quilt project was conceived several years ago by Julia Burton — whose father is one of the "The Boys"

"We were asked to produce something of importance in our lives that represented our story," explained 73-year-old Joanna Millan (née Bela Rosenthal), one of the 80 female "Boys."

Born in Berlin, Millan was deported in June 1943 to the German concentration camp *Theresienstadt* (located in what is now the Czech Republic), where she remained until liberation in May 1945. At just age three, she arrived in England where she was eventually adopted.

For the quilt project, Millan's teenage granddaughter helped design her square, which is embroidered with purple flowers that weave in and around a large yellow Star of David. Her birth name, Bela, floats at its apex, and a girl's head, covered by a mass of wavy brown and red hair, tilts slightly, her gaze focused on a few colorful butterflies with tiny birds hovering above her.

"[It] represents myself as a young girl alone, arriving in a strange country," Millan explained. "The first things I remember seeing when I came to England in spring were carpets of bluebells."

Each of the four quilts is just over 6 feet high, with 156 individual squares in total. Exhibited together across one wall, they are a mesmerizing, colorful collection of images that have been painstakingly stitched, painted, photographed, penned or glued. Each square is a reminder not only of lost families and communities, but also of the group's strength, survival and continuity.

Born in Poland in 1930, Solly Irving was the sole survivor of his family. His square depicts a tree of life, with the green, regenerative leaves representing the subsequent generations of his family. Their names are written in Hebrew in distinguished gold lettering, with the brown leaves depicting the names of those family members who perished in the Holocaust.

Describing the design, Solly's daughter Hazel Irving said: "The leaves show how, although they tried, the tree was not killed off and continues to grow, from my father...[up to his] two great-grandsons."

For Burton, together with her team of creative volunteers, which included designers, embroiderers and Sheree

Charalampous, the project would prove to be demanding and intense, as they quickly realized that some people needed more help than anticipated. So, they established weekly quilt workshops to assist those sur-



Julia Burton, daughter of one of "The Boys" and memory quilt exhibit organizer.

vivors and their families who were struggling to translate their ideas onto fabric.

At the same time, they tried to reach as many of "The Boys" and their families around the world as possible. This too proved challenging, as the databases of both the Second Generation and the '45 Aid Society were out of date.

Despite the considerable obstacles, all 732 "Boys" have been represented on these quilts. Maps of Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland were made to include the names of those for whom the only information they had was a place of birth. The prewar map of Poland is in itself a remarkable piece of art; its shape has been created out of the 350 names of the Polish "Boys" in calligraphy. Yet there were also names about which they knew nothing, not even a date of birth. Their names have been stitched into the borders of the quilts.

The quilts were unveiled in May at the annual reunion on the anniversary of "The Boys" liberation. Since then they have been exhibited at the UK's Festival of Quilts as well as at the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre in *Nottinghamshire*. A book, *The '45 Aid Society Memory Quilt for The Boys*, has also been produced, which contains the stories behind the squares.

Burton hopes that the quilts will travel to museums, galleries and synagogues abroad, but she is also keen that a permanent home is eventually found for them.

The quilts exude joy and energy, Burton said, "They are a fitting tribute to the lives that "The Boys" created. They are a celebration of life."



Holocaust survivor Solly Irving's quilt design.

— while working as an art volunteer in a home for the elderly. It is there that Burton met textile artist Sheree Charalampous, who had shown her a quilt she had made with those suffering from dementia.

In 2013, when the Second Generation — a group made up of the children and grandchildren of "The Boys" — were considering how to commemorate the 70th anniversary of their liberation, Burton recalled this particular quilt, and the organization agreed to create something similar.



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