

MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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SALUTE TO HOLLYWOOD BENEFIT GALA

The American Society for Yad Vashem (ASYV), in partnership with the Jewish Life Foundation, hosted its third annual Salute to Hollywood Benefit Gala on Monday, June 6th, at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, Beverly Hills. The inspirational evening brought together 350 new and returning supporters of Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center. Emcee Mike Burstyn opened the event by introducing singer Michael Libow, who led the audience in the national anthems and Holocaust survivor Jack Nagel for *Hamotzi*, the blessing over the bread. Leonard Wilf, chairman of ASYV, kicked off the program by welcoming all of our guests. Among those in attendance were some of Yad Vashem's most esteemed supporters — Sheldon and Miriam Adelson, Patrons of the Mount of Remembrance; Fela Shapell and the Shapell family, who, along with David Shapell, z"l, are pillars of Yad Vashem; and Susanne, Edward and Elissa Czucker. Edward and Elissa served as the Gala chairs and worked tirelessly to ensure the evening's success.

For many years, the Hollywood community has been an essential partner in spreading the mission of Holocaust education and remembrance. Starting in 1945, the year that marked the end of World War II and the liberation of the concentration camps, films and documentaries struggling with the incomprehensible reality that was the Holocaust have been produced.

Inspiration for this year's ASYV Gala came from a new source in the Hollywood community. Last December, The Hollywood Reporter published its groundbreaking story,

"Hollywood's Last Survivors." The writers inspired us with their treatment of each survivor's story, demonstrating great care and respect for every individual name, photo and memory. The beautifully written article mirrors Yad Vashem's personal approach to

and Janice have challenged us to do better and to be better through this article, which shines a bright light so that we will not forget these stories." Peter Flax, principal author of "Hollywood's Last Survivors," said, "Hearing these stories is an experi-

moving introduction Goldwyn stated, "[Meyer] has never failed to speak out so that the sacrifices [of our people] are not lost to the sands of time. He is dedicated to effecting change in the world, so that the power of love and tolerance can subdue evil." Both of these individuals have had a profound influence in the Hollywood community and were featured in The Hollywood Reporter's article.

We also had the pleasure of honoring philanthropist David Wiener. A survivor of Auschwitz, David built his real estate empire from the ground up with hard work and determination. David is a true leader in the community — his generosity knows no bounds. Adam Milstein presented David with our Lifetime Achievement Award and the evening concluded with guests singing "Happy Birthday" to Wiener, celebrating his 90th birthday, and wishing him a huge Mazal Tov on his marriage the day before the event.

These three Holocaust survivors, as well as the others who were able to join us at the gala, truly enhanced the evening.

Those strong men and women survived under such dire circumstances and have taught us the meaning of perseverance and determination. It is on their shoulders that we are able to thrive and hope for a better future.

This message was brought home after hearing from Yad Vashem representative Irena Steinfeldt, director of the Righteous Among the Nations Department. Irena recounted stories of inspiring heroes from the entertainment industry in Eastern Europe who saved Jews from the horrors of the Holocaust. The Righteous, along with our survivors, have established a foundation of kindness and charity that we can only hope to emulate for generations to come.

Thanks to our generous supporters and new friends in the community, this was our most successful event yet in Los Angeles. We surpassed our fundraising goal and have set new records for the future. We look forward to planting roots in the community and growing our Yad Vashem family.



Presentation of the Vanguard Award to *The Hollywood Reporter* and its EVP and group publisher, Lynne Segall (left), and President and CCO, Janice Min (second from right). Presenters Jeffrey Katzenberg, (founder and CEO of DreamWorks Animation, second from left) and Leonard Wilf, chairman of ASYV (right).

telling the story of the Holocaust, and in so doing, furthers our goals of spreading knowledge of the Shoah to new audiences.

At the gala we were delighted to honor The Hollywood Reporter (*THR*), its president and chief creative officer, Janice Min, and executive vice president and group publisher, Lynne Segall. Jeffrey Katzenberg, founder and chief executive officer of DreamWorks Animation, presented them with the Vanguard Award. In his remarks, Katzenberg said, "Lynne

ence I'll never forget. They illuminate the deep truths of the past and the future with intimate details." *THR* and its staff are true champions of Yad Vashem's mission to restore the memory and dignity of six million Jewish victims and the thousands of survivors alive today.

With deep appreciation for their contributions, we had the privilege of celebrating outstanding Holocaust survivors who have worked throughout their lives to further the cause of Holocaust remembrance and education worldwide. Branko Lustig, Oscar-winning producer of *Schindler's List*, was presented with our Legacy Award by Phil Blazer, founder and president of Jewish Life Television. Branko's personal journey took him from Nazi death camps to triumph at the Oscars; in 2015 Branko presented his Oscar for *Schindler's List* to Yad Vashem. Actor Tony Goldwyn presented Meyer Gottlieb, former president of Samuel Goldwyn Films, with our Legacy Award. In his

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THE LESSONS OF *BERGEN-BELSEN* REMAIN UNLEARNED

BY LYN JULIUS,
THE JERUSALEM POST

On April 15 the world was marking the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the notorious *Bergen-Belsen* concentration camp. More than 50,000 prisoners, mainly Jews, died there — of starvation, overwork or disease or following gruesome medical experiments. Anne Frank was probably the most famous victim. She and her sister perished of typhus in the camp just one month before liberation.



Jewish Holocaust survivors return to Libya from concentration camp *Bergen-Belsen*.

Among the prisoners liberated on that glorious day in April were several hundred Libyan Jews, deported to *Bergen-Belsen* via Italy. A photo exists of these survivors, dangling their legs out of a railway carriage on which they had scrawled, "Going home" and "Back to Tripoli."

According to *The Jews of Libya* by Professor Maurice Roumani, some 870 out of the 2,000 Jews in Libya with British passports were deported to Italy as part of the "sfollamento" policy to send away foreign nationals. Members of the same family could be dispersed to Morocco, Tunisia or Algeria — then under pro-Nazi, Vichy French control.

Two transports of 300 Jews, and another 120, were shipped from Libya to *Naples* then placed on cargo trains to *Bergen-Belsen*, and arrived on May 25, 1944. Jews arriving from Libya in *Bologna* were taken by train to *Innsbruck-Reichenau*, part of the *Dachau* camp system, in July 1943.

Reaching *Bergen-Belsen* relatively late in the war, the Libyan Jews survived. Some were exchanged for German POWs. They received packages from the Red Cross and obtained some relief in their working conditions. They even managed to keep kosher, exchanging cooked food for dry bread. One Jew, Zion Labi from *Benghazi*, started a school.

The deportation of Jews from Libya to the northern shores of the Mediterranean gives the lie to the widespread misconception that the

Holocaust touched only European Jews.

Although their suffering cannot be compared to the horrors inflicted on the Jews of Eastern Europe, Jews in North Africa were not spared the impact of the war. Some 2,500 Libyan Jews were shipped by the Italian Fascist regime to the notorious *Giado* labor camp. One-fifth died of typhus or starvation.

Neighboring Tunisia came under direct Nazi control for six months. Some 2,000 Tunisian Jewish men, wearing the obligatory yellow star,

inal at *Nuremberg*.

He was indicted, judged and convicted by Yugoslavia for crimes against humanity, arising from his pivotal role in the *Handschar* and *Skanderbeg* SS divisions, which deported Balkan Jews from Kosovo, Macedonia and Thrace. But the Allies shrank from offending the Arabs. The mufti remained a hero for tens of thousands.

Nazi Germany lavished money and propaganda on the Arab world in the hope of fomenting an anti-colonial uprising. It funded the Muslim Brotherhood, established in Egypt in 1928. Its founder, Hassan al-Banna, made the Nazi concept of the Jew as the epitome of all-embracing evil, overlaid with traditional anti-Jewish Koranic prejudice, the core of the Brotherhood's ideology. By the war's end, the Brotherhood had a million members.

Shortly after the *Belsen* survivors had returned to Libya, the Jews of Tripoli and outlying villages suffered a vicious three-day pogrom, which claimed the lives of 130 and made thousands of Jews homeless.

How was this possible barely six months after news of the terrible extermination of the Jews of Europe had reached the Arab world? The November 1945 Libyan riots were a spillover from disturbances in Egypt in which five Jews were murdered. While some blame the clash of Zionism and Arab nationalism, historians report that the rioters in Libya did not shout anti-Zionist slogans. The mob did not even know what Zionism was, a Jewish Agency report stated. It is noteworthy that the Egyptian rioters, incited by the Muslim Brotherhood, targeted Coptic, Greek Orthodox and Catholic institutions as



Muslim Nazis.

well as Jews.

It is common to view the mass exodus and spoliation of a million Jews from the Arab world as revenge for the displacement of Palestinian Arabs in 1948. A more plausible explanation is that Nazi-inspired blood-and-soil nationalism, and xenophobic

Islamism, which had entrenched themselves in the Arab world over the preceding decade, aimed to destroy, or at best exclude, non-Muslim minorities from public and political life.

In 1947 the Arab League drafted a plan to treat its Jewish citizens as enemy aliens, before a single Palestinian Arab had fled.

Barely three years after the end of World War II, Arab League member states emulated Nazism with their *Nuremberg*-style laws, criminalizing Zionism, freezing Jewish bank accounts, instituting quotas, and imposing restrictions on jobs and movement. Violence and the threat of violence did the rest. The result was ethnic cleansing of age-old Jewish communities in a single generation.

The ghost of Nazi-inspired, anti-Jewish bigotry was never exorcised: after World War II, the Arab world gave safe haven to Nazi war criminals on the run. They became military advisors and spin doctors of Jew-hatred.

Adolph Eichmann, Nazi architect of the "Final Solution," hoped his "Arab friends" would continue his battle against the Jews, who were always the "principal war criminals" and "principal aggressors." He hadn't managed to complete his task of "total annihilation," but the Muslims could still complete it for him.

Not only has the virus of Nazi anti-Semitism never left the Arab and Muslim world; it has grown exponentially. Muslim immigrants have carried the virus of Jew-hatred back into European countries. Saudi petrodollars have financed the spread of Islamism, with its implicit anti-Semitism, worldwide.

Eichmann would have been pleased to see that the Arab world is effective-

ly *judenrein*: there are no Jews in Libya, and no more than 4,000 in the rest of the Arab world today. The Muslim Brotherhood and its local Palestinian branch Hamas, al-Qaida, Islamic State and assorted Islamist groups still carry the torch for an ideology born in the Nazi era.

NEVER TOO LATE: NAZI HUNTERS TIRELESSLY PURSUE 50 ELDERLY WAR CRIMINALS

BY IAN JOHNSTON AND
ANDY ECKARDT, NBC NEWS

In their search for justice that has endured for decades, the biggest challenge Nazi hunters face is time.

The knowledge that war criminals are escaping prosecution through death by natural causes means their task has never been more pressing.

Recently, German state police arrested a 93-year-old man accused of being a guard at the Auschwitz concentration camp. Hans Lipschis is the first suspect to be facing charges as part of a drive launched earlier this year to track down 50 suspected Auschwitz guards who are believed to be living in Germany.



Hans Lipschis.

Most of those involved in the murder of about six million Jews in the Holocaust and still alive will now be in their 90s, a ripe old age for people who carried out one of the most heinous crimes in the history of humanity.

But that doesn't stop Kurt Schrimm, director of Germany's Central Investigation Center for Nazi Crimes. His agency employs 20 people, including seven focusing on the Auschwitz cases.

"Someday there will be no more Nazi criminals to go after, and then our organization will shut down," he said. "But until then, we will exhaust all investigation possibilities."

After years of frustration, Nazi hunters have also been given fresh hope by a German court's landmark ruling that has made it simpler to prosecute cases by opening the door to charges of "accessory to murder."

Efraim Zuroff, Israel director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Jerusalem, said he planned to ask German companies to help fund a renewed campaign to find the remaining war criminals and take advantage of the ruling, which came during the successful prosecution of John Demjanjuk.

Demjanjuk, an autoworker who lived in the U.S. for years after the war, was convicted in 2011 of 28,060 counts of being an accessory to murder and sentenced to five years in prison.

Although he died a free man in a nursing home in Germany — he was released pending his appeal — the

court's ruling that he could be convicted on his service record alone was "a total game-changer," Zuroff said.

"Until that point ... German prosecutors could not try a case unless they had evidence of a specific crime with a specific victim," he said.

"Demjanjuk was convicted solely for his service as an armed SS guard at a death camp," he added. "As a result, this opened up a whole new potential number of people to bring to justice."

"Once the Nuremberg trials had been completed [in 1949], the prosecution of Nazi war criminals never became a serious priority in any country outside of the Soviet Union," Zuroff added. "The failure to do more to hold

the perpetrators of the Holocaust accountable is naturally a source of frustration and disappointment for me personally, as someone who has devoted practically my entire adult life to that mission."

The Holocaust saw approximately six million Jews — about two-thirds of the pre-World War II Jewish population in Europe — murdered to fulfill Adolf Hitler's infamous "Final Solution."

Roma Gypsies, Slavic people such as Poles and Russians, Communists, socialists, disabled people, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals and others were also slaughtered in large numbers.

Zuroff said that no one really knew how many people were involved in the killings, let alone how many were still alive.

But, asked to estimate, he reckoned that "probably not more than 10 to 15 percent" of tens of thousands of Nazi war criminals had been brought to justice.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center publishes an annual "most wanted" list, and also rates countries based on their willingness to take action. Only the United States got the top rating in 2013; Germany was among five countries in the second-highest group.

Zuroff said that "to their credit" Germany was one of the few countries that would bring prosecutions.

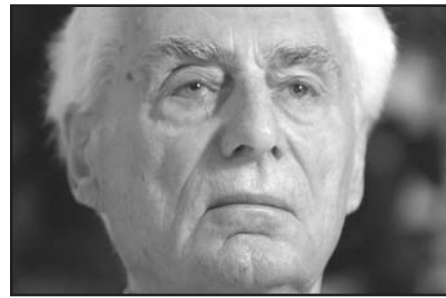
In contrast, Austria, which became part of Hitler's Third Reich in 1938, was "horrific, terrible, the worst," Zuroff said.

"They haven't succeeded in taking action against a Nazi war criminal in more than 30 years. It's not because there are no Nazis in Austria," he said. "There's a country that until 20 years ago ... got away with claiming they were Hitler's first victim. Austrians played a very leading role in the murders carried out by the Third Reich."

Zuroff said it was "impossible" to get prosecutions in the Baltic countries, "especially in Lithuania."

"They were the worst because they had a vast number of collaborators," he said. "They don't like punishing their own people and would prefer to think of themselves as victims of Communism and not killers of Jews, which they were. They were outstanding killers of Jews."

Avner Shalev, chairman of Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to victims of the Holocaust, said the survivors "live with the memories every day."



Helmut Oberlander is on the Simon Wiesenthal Center's list of most wanted Nazi war criminals.

"Bringing the perpetrators to justice sends an important educational and moral message to society at large: These kinds of crimes will not be tolerated, and there are no free passes," he said. "Although unfortunately many of the perpetrators escaped justice, nevertheless each trial sends an important message."

Germany and its allies controlled most of Europe during World War II, including Norway, France, Italy, Greece, the Balkans, Poland and deep into the then Soviet Union.

Lydia Brenners was just nine years old when she was caught up in a horrific massacre of Jews in *Novi Sad* in modern-day Serbia by Hungarian forces in 1942. Nazi-allied Hungary had annexed the area in 1941.

Brenners said she was forced to go with her father, mother and sister to

a local theater where many Jewish people were being gathered. They were taken in groups to the banks of the River Danube, where they were shot dead. A total of more than 1,200 civilians are thought to have been killed, according to The Associated Press.

"Slowly we came nearer and nearer [to the end of the line]," said Brenners, now 81 and living in *Rishon Letzion*, Israel. "Today I know it was for killing. Then ... I didn't know, maybe the older people understood."

"In the row behind me, there was an auntie of one of my girlfriends. I knew

her. She was holding a baby in her hands," she said. "After a few minutes ... [she] burst out with nerves and started to shout, 'I cannot bear it anymore.'"

"The soldiers came and took her," she said, despite efforts of others who surrounded her in an unsuccessful attempt to save her. "She did not come back from there."

But then came an order from Budapest to stop the killing, and Brenners and her family were released. They then took the train to Budapest that day and hid in the city until it was taken by Soviet troops toward the end of the war.

Brenners said years later she met a woman who said she was the child of her friend's aunt. The woman was still trying to find out how she survived.

Brenners said she remembered an officer on a horse — who was addressed as "Shanny" — overseeing the massacre and the gendarmes referring to lists of names when deciding who should be taken.

She said "Shanny" was a nickname for Sandor Kepiro, a gendarme officer accused of helping organize the killings.

Kepiro was given a 10-year prison sentence over the *Novi Sad* massacre by a Hungarian court in 1944, but this was overturned after Germany formally occupied Hungary later that year, according to The Associated Press.

Kepiro, who lived in Argentina after the war, admitted he was present and supervised the identities of those being rounded up, but denied know-



Sandor Kepiro.

ing they were killed until later, the news service said.

Kepiro was tried again in Hungary but acquitted in 2011, with a court ruling there was insufficient evidence against him, the AP reported. The prosecution appealed, saying the judges' decision was "unfounded," and so did the defense, which complained the ruling had not actually cleared Kepiro.

However, Kepiro died in September 2011, an innocent man in the eyes of the law, a hero to some in Hungary, but a killer who escaped justice to Zuroff and his fellow Nazi hunters.



BOOK REVIEWS

THE ORIGINS AND ONSET OF THE ROMANIAN HOLOCAUST

The Origins and Onset of the Romanian Holocaust.

By Henry Eaton. Wayne State University Press: Detroit, Michigan, 2013. 192 pp. \$29.95 softcover.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

According to Henry Eaton in his conscientiously researched and engrossing volume entitled *The Origins and Onset of the Romanian Holocaust*, “historians in Romania have often characterized their country as protecting its Jews during World War II and have described wartime dictator Ion Antonescu as a savior, pointing out that he rejected a German plan to deport Romanian Jews to the *Belzec* death camp.” How ironic! What a mean-spirited, deceptive mockery of historical fact! Then again, Romanians are not alone in presenting this fairytale-like story of their country during the war years. There are others who eagerly worked “shoulder to shoulder” with the Nazis and have, like them, also deftly manipulated the truth . . . going so far as to label themselves unwilling “victims” of Hitler’s actions and directives.

So what did really happen in Romania? What is the true story?

As Eaton tells it, anti-Semitism was always characteristic of this nation from its very inception in the mid-1800s. And it would only grow with the

years. The source of it was the Romanian Orthodox Church, which viewed and consistently presented the Jews as Christ-killers, “demonizing” them. Thus, the idea of Jews using the blood of murdered Christian children as part of some kind of “ritual” at Passover also found a “ready and willing” audience here. Another reason for Romanian anti-Semitism was “the growing number and commercial prominence of Jews in Moldavia in the mid-1880s.” Interestingly, non-Jews did not notice Jewish poverty — which was also very much in evidence. These anti-Semites only saw Jews — foreigners in their eyes — as taking their nation’s economy “hostage” and “exploit[ing] it at the expense of the natives.” Finally, as they were frequently pressured by world opinion, what completely irritated the Romanians was the very idea that the Jews of Romania be made Romanian citizens!

Throughout the years, aside from suffering from bloodthirsty outside invaders, including the Cossacks, Tartars, Turks and Russians, Jews in Romania suffered no less from their non-Jewish countrymen. Time and again the hate-filled rhetoric of the Romanian leadership — indeed, the

country’s “elite” — encouraged attacks on Jewish villages. All kinds of “hostile laws” were passed making it difficult for Jews to earn a living, get an education, and even dream of becoming true Romanians! Soldiering for Romania during World War I made no difference. In fact, during the inter-

war years, things got even worse for the Jews of Romania! It was during this time that the arch anti-Semite Corneliu Codreanu organized the Legion of the Archangel Michael, better known as the Iron Guard, alongside other Fascist “parties” that sprang up and wholeheartedly believed there must be a “solution” to the “problem” of

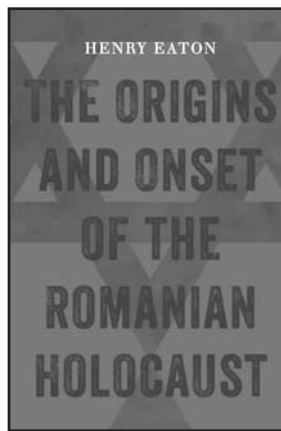
Jews in their country. Interestingly, “in 1930 Codreanu promised to ship Jews out of Romania in cattle cars as soon as he had the power to do so.” Finally, King Carol II passed laws in 1940 “similar to the Reich citizenship laws of 1935 making further drastic reductions in the status of Jews.” Needless to say, it’s not at all surprising that Romania would eagerly and willingly become an Axis partner.

Eaton goes on to relate how “under the fog of war” — specifically Germany’s invasion of Russia — Romanian soldiers, police and even

civilians took the opportunity to “purify” their nation. In other words, in places like *Iasi* with a large Jewish population, Romanians fell upon the Jews in a frenzy of “ethnic cleansing,” falsely accusing them of traitorous acts. Because of that, countless Jews were dragged to the local police station, where the Romanians, helped by the Germans, brutally tortured and frequently murdered them. Because of that, many more Jews were packed onto the freight cars of two trains, more like “ovens,” with no food or water, to travel for days condemned to die slowly. Nor did the Romanian murder of Jews end here. Under Ion Antonescu’s leadership, Romanian commanders would carry out “one of the largest single mass murders of Jews during the war in and around *Odessa* on March 22–24, 1941.” Indeed, when it came to murdering Jews, Romania was quite the Nazi partner — even as the Germans criticized the Romanians’ “sloppiness,” “cruelty and greed” in doing the devilish deed!

So why did Antonescu refuse to send his Jews to the *Belzec* death camp? After all, it did “fit” with his “philosophy”! I’ll let Eaton tell it in his book — a must-read for any study of the Holocaust.

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



WHEN POLAND EYED MADAGASCAR AS A FUTURE HOMELAND FOR JEWS

In *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*, Yale University historian Timothy Snyder examines the origins of the Holocaust in the mind of Adolf Hitler and the geopolitics of prewar Europe. To restore the “natural order” of the planet, Hitler believed, Jews had to be eliminated, and to eliminate them he first had to render them stateless by absorbing or overrunning the countries where they lived. “The German destruction of neighboring states,” Snyder writes, “created zones where . . . techniques of annihilation could be invented.” In this excerpt from his book, Snyder writes about prewar Poland, where Jews made up about a tenth of the population, and proposals to reduce the numbers of European Jews through mass immigration to Palestine or even Madagascar.

Naturally, there were Polish spies in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, some of them on a rather unusual assignment. On June 8, 1935, Polish military intelligence ordered its officers in Soviet Ukraine to make tours of all the battlefields of the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1919-

1920. Their task was not to prepare some new campaign, but to commemorate a past one. Jozef Pilsudski (the former revolutionary and leader of Poland since 1926) had died the month before, and a small bag of earth from each of the battle sites was to be discreetly gathered for his burial mound.

The end of a political life reopened the issue of the character of the Polish state. Pilsudski’s authority had been personal, and the old comrades (“the colonels”) who wished to succeed him had to contend with popular politics at a time of economic depression. Pilsudski’s old enemies, the National Democrats, chose to exploit popular anti-Semitism to mount a challenge to the regime that his associates established after his death. Their encouragement of pogroms, at the same time an act of racism and a violation of the law, was understood by both

sides as an attack on the state.

The new regime enjoyed greater formal powers than had Pilsudski himself, since it exploited an authoritarian constitution that had been conceived while he was still alive. Although most of his successors were not anti-Semitic by conviction themselves, they tried to ride out the challenge from the National Democrats by adopting anti-Semitic public policy. In so doing, Pilsudski’s successors compromised the basic moral premise of his politics: that Poland was a state and not a race.

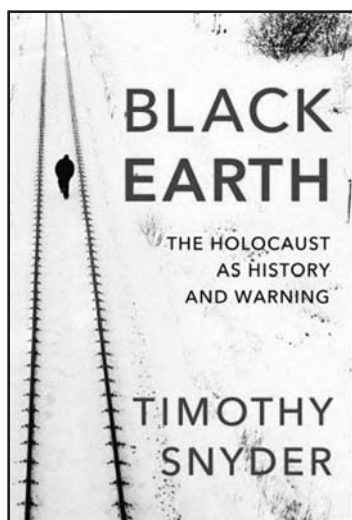
In 1935, responsibility for Jewish affairs was transferred from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Jews were no longer normal citizens to be integrated and protected by the state, but somehow aliens: a matter for the world at large,

objects whose future might be negotiated with foreign officials. Pilsudski’s electoral organization, which had been popular with Jews, was replaced by a party of power which excluded them.

This new Camp of National Unity (*Oboz Zjednoczenia Narodowego*, OZON), created in 1937, announced its preference for the emigration of about 90 percent of Poland’s Jews. Such policies, regarded as a loathsome betrayal of tradition and principle by much of the Polish center and left, were meant to prevent the pogroms organized by nationalists. The leader of OZON had a Jewish wife, something unthinkable for a Nazi. Nevertheless, by the standards of previous Polish practice, the change after 1935 was fundamental and unmistakable.

The man responsible for Jewish policy was Wiktor Tomir Drymmer, a close collaborator of Polish foreign minister Jozef Beck. With a background in military intelligence, Drymmer was formally in charge of both personnel and consular affairs in

(Continued on page 15)



THE HOLOCAUST WITHOUT JEWS

Attempts to universalize the specific suffering of Jews in the Shoah go hand in hand with efforts to delegitimize the Jewish state.

BY JAMES KIRCHICK, TABLET

In May, Israel marked Holocaust Remembrance Day, *Yom HaShoah*. As has been the custom for over six decades, a two-minute air raid siren was blared across the entire country and citizens from all walks of life interrupted their daily routines for a moment of solemn reflection. January 27 of this year also marked the decade anniversary of the United Nations–designated International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which member states are encouraged to commemorate. Though an Israeli initiative, International Holocaust Remembrance Day has gradually been subjected to the universalizing prescriptions of those who would water down the particularly Jewish aspect of the Nazi extermination of the Jews.



Jewish Police controlling Lodz ghetto.

The evolution of two different days of Holocaust commemoration and the ways they increasingly run counter to each other are symptomatic of the seizure of Jewish history and suffering for ulterior purposes. This victim displacement appropriates the most traumatic experience in Jewish history, pointedly erases the specificity of the events supposedly being commemorated, and then harshly chides Jews for inserting their own particularistic concerns into the discussion. At a certain point, these phenomena become a continuation of a specific form of oppression and erasure rather than an antidote to “hatred.”

Imagine a remembrance of slavery that did not acknowledge the suffering of African Americans — or a commemoration of the AIDS epidemic omitting the experiences of gay men. Such acts of dissociation would be inconceivable, the subjects of rightful denunciations and outraged protests. Yet in recent years, that is precisely what has been going on with regard to the Holocaust and its chief victims, the Jews. In April, Britain’s National Union of Students (NUS) — which claims to represent some seven million students across 600 campuses — debated whether it should even commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day. That this was a subject for argument is absurd enough; the actual

proceedings were scandalous. “Of course there shouldn’t be anti-Semitism,” said a student speaking against the measure, offering the sort of throat-clearing assertion from which anti-Semitism almost inevitably follows. “But it’s not about one set of people.”

The fracas took place against a backdrop of resurgent anti-Semitism in British higher education and politics. Earlier this year, a co-chairman of Oxford University’s Labor Party club quit after claiming that a large number of its members “have some kind of problem with Jews.” Meanwhile, at the same convention where it debated the propriety of commemorating the Holocaust, the NUS elected as its president a young woman named Malia Bouattia, who had previously opposed a declaration condemning ISIS, railed against the “Zionist-led media,” and advocated in favor of violent Palestinian “resistance” against Israel. Responding to critics in the pages of the *Guardian*, Bouattia began by noting that she is “the first black woman” and “the first Muslim” to be elected president of the NUS; the unspoken purpose of sharing these biographical details is that it is therefore impossible for her to be a bigot.

While the NUS measure endorsing Holocaust commemoration eventually passed, Darta Kaleja, a student at Chester University, no doubt spoke for many of her student comrades when she complained, to loud applause, that she wasn’t against commemorating the Holocaust per se but rather “prioritizing some lives over others. ... In my five years of UK education ... not once were the genocides of Tibet, Rwanda, or Zanzibar taught to me and my peers.” This is as logically fallacious as it is morally obscene; in no way does Holocaust remembrance obviate educational efforts about other slaughters. One might expect Kaleja to be of Muslim or Arab extraction, given the widespread resentment in those communities toward the memorialization of Jewish suffering. She is apparently from Latvia, however, where the locals did an especially thorough job of wiping out their Jewish neighbors without much prompting from the Germans.

The vociferous endorsement of Kaleja’s sentiments by a roomful of left-wing students demonstrates the confluence of three distinct types of Holocaust minimization: the Eastern European nationalist attempt to “obfuscate” the extermination of six million Jews by relativizing it as just one of many “genocides” committed during World War II, the traditional Arab-Muslim denial or diminishment of the Holocaust as a grossly exaggerated event that pales in compari-

son to Israeli crimes, and a new progressive narrative that expunges Jewish suffering in its account of an amorphous, context-free misdeed — no worse, and holding no more meaning, than any other episode of mass murder — inflicted upon some generalized notion of “humanity.” With respect to the latter, some go so far as to label the Holocaust an instance of “white on white crime” that, because its victims did not hail from the “global South,” is undeserving of recognition.

Sometimes, speaking of a Holocaust without Jews can be innocuous, the result of a muddle-headed utopianism that desperately avoids singling out any one group’s suffering as having been worse than any other’s. When Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau omitted any mention of Jews or anti-Semitism in his first commemorative statement for International Holocaust Remembrance Day, it was not due to any conscious bigotry on his part but a sort of purblind, mushy progressivism. Still, it is distressing that the sort of Holocaust revisionism that was always the sole province of the far right and Arab nationalists — simultaneously denying the *Shoah* while hijacking it to bully Jews as “the new Nazis” — is, in newfangled form, becoming a badge of progressive virtue.

To understand the perverse logic of the Holocaust without Jews, one must work backward from the political end goal of those pushing it: the delegitimization of the Jewish State. For if the Holocaust isn’t about Jews, then Jews have no claim on their history, or reason to fear anti-Semitism, or the need for a state. The complaint used to be that Jews abused the Holocaust as a shakedown. Now, the Holocaust — at least as much as it was a crime targeting the Jews above all others — doesn’t exist at all.

Labeling Muslims “the new Jews” of Europe when anti-Semitic crimes are at a post-war high — and almost entirely the doing of Muslims — is a particularly egregious form of this confiscation of Jewish history and inversion of reality. (In many schools across Europe, teachers report that they have difficulty teaching the Holocaust for fear of reprisals by Muslim students.) So too are the sanctimonious reprimands by soi-disant arbiters of good taste like the *Atlantic*’s Jim Fallows, who scold Jews for invoking the Holocaust to contextualize contemporary anti-Semitic incitement.

In this era of hypersensitivity about “cultural appropriation” (which, taken to its extreme, has seen college campuses erupt in protest over yoga classes and the serving of bad Asian food in dining halls), it’s noteworthy how often the greatest crime in

human history is casually manipulated by those who purport to be concerned with “oppression.” But to the mandarins of the progressive left, the Holocaust’s meaning is always and necessarily to be found in its “universalism.” According to this historical interpretation, the evil of the Nazis can be located in their abandonment of the European cosmopolitan tradition and descent into bestial particularism and nationalism — the very qualities that Israel, foremost among the nations, is charged with embodying today. This sleight of hand has the miraculous effect of clouding the causes of the Holocaust so that anti-Semitism is relegated to a background role, if it is mentioned at all. Harping on the fact of six million dead Jews, then, becomes weirdly tribal, even Nazi-like; asserting Jewish peoplehood is too close to asserting Aryan-ness, the disastrous results of which Europeans have been expiating for the past seven decades. It doesn’t matter that there is no Israeli Auschwitz, or anything even approaching it; the particularism and nationalism of Israel is enough to imply everything that has followed or at least could follow. Israel is the carrier of the European disease that wise Europeans have transcended through their enormous, Christ-like suffering, and formation of the European Union.

Last November in Sweden, the organizers of a *Kristallnacht* commemoration chose not to invite Jews lest the universal lessons of the Holocaust be marred by the official participation of the people who were its primary victims. Yet the left-wing



In occupied Poland, Jews were searched as a form of harassment.

activists who organized the rally had no problem with Palestinian flags or posters equating the Star of David to a swastika, both of which make annual appearances at an event ostensibly called to remember the genocide of Jewish people.

Erasing Jews from the history of the Holocaust makes the likening of them to Nazis more palatable. In the upcoming documentary film *Let My People Go*, Marcel Ophuls promises to expose modern-day Israel as he did Vichy France in his classic, *The Sorrow and the Pity*, telling similarly “unpleasant truths.” Ophuls teamed up with Eyal Sivan, an Israeli filmmaker self-exiled in Paris who speaks of anti-Zionist Jews as a righteous

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SURVIVORS' CORNER

SIBLING SURVIVORS OF SHOAH DIE WITHIN HOURS OF EACH OTHER

BY BEN FISHER,
THE JERUSALEM POST

"She would have lived to 100, but her mission was to take her brother up to heaven and watch over him," Jerusalem resident Felicia Mizrachi related about her 94-year-old mother, Sophie Helcman. The Holocaust survivor died last month only days after Sol, the younger brother she saved during the Holocaust. The two siblings were buried in a double funeral in Jerusalem.

The intertwined lives and deaths of Sophie (nee Adler-Fleigel) and Sol took a dramatic turn in their hometown of Radom, Poland, when World War II broke out.

The 17-year-old girl promised her parents, who were later killed along with one of Sophie's sisters by the Nazis, that she would protect Sol, who was four years younger.

Though she didn't look typically Jewish and her Polish was perfect, Mizrachi says that nevertheless, her mother had to wear a yellow star. She says that Sophie's life was saved by a righteous gentile.

Sophie became friends with a Polish girl who worked in her parents' department store.

She was someone who "didn't understand why Jews were different

and why the Nazis had decided to persecute them," Mizrachi explains.

SS officers would frequent the store and flirt with the Polish girl. One SS officer fell madly in love and came in daily to see her. One day, she propositioned the officer: "If you really love

ly inside.

In the ghetto, Sophie fell in love with Eliezer Helcman, nine years older. She decided to trust him and while she would take care of business outside of the ghetto, Eliezer and Sol spent time together inside the ghetto



Sophie (nee Adler-Fleigel) and Sol Helcman survived the Holocaust together and died on the same day some 70 years later.

me," she said, "there is something I need you to do. I need you to get me Polish papers for a girl my age. No questions asked."

Sophie knew nothing of her friend's plan until she received the papers that allowed her to leave the Radom ghetto to provide necessities for her family

and grew very close.

Eliezer Zev, Felicia's father, owned a liquor store in Radom, was well connected and was able to bribe a Polish officer to procure a Red Cross uniform for Sophie, which she used to fake a medical evacuation in which Sol was carried out on a stretcher.

Mizrachi doesn't know exactly how her father escaped the ghetto, but notes that he was owed many favors by Poles to whom he sold vodka.

Eliezer, Sophie and Sol hid from the Nazis for six years, splitting the time between Radom and Danzig and the countryside in between. "In trenches, in ditches, in toilets, in barns, in hay," Mizrachi says.

When the war finally ended and they were liberated, Eliezer and Sophie married in Danzig. Felicia's older brother Andre was born in Paris after the war; then the four of them came to America, where Felicia was born in Brooklyn.

After settling in Brooklyn, Eliezer and Sophie moved to New Jersey.

Sol stayed in New York (after a year-long foray at a kibbutz), but Mizrachi says that Sol was like an older brother to her and that the family saw Sol all the time. He never married and never had children, something Mizrachi calls a "scar of the war." Sol, who spoke six languages, became a translator and lived in the same third-floor walk-up apartment in Manhattan for 50 years.

Sophie and Eliezer helped found the first Orthodox synagogue, Shomrei Torah, in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, which Mizrachi says was massively important in her mother's life. They
(Continued on page 11)

THE ANGEL OF DEATH CHOSE MINIA JAY FOR THE GAS CHAMBER TWICE

A Holocaust survivor twice escaped with her life after being personally selected for the gas chambers by Auschwitz's "Angel of Death," Josef Mengele.

BY CAMILLA TOMINEY, EXPRESS

Minia Jay says it was a "miracle" she did not die at the hands of the evil SS officer, notorious for carrying out deadly experiments on prisoners.

Minia, 90, recalled how Mengele would be surrounded by an entourage as he picked people to be sent to the crematorium complex, where Zyklon B, a cyanide-based pesticide, was used as a weapon of mass murder.

"I was sent to the corner of this dark room by the crematorium," recalled Minia, now a great-grandmother.

"We were waiting to die, but then no transportation arrived from the ghetto so the guards couldn't be bothered to go through the process for just a few people and I was sent back."

The second time, she said, "We were selected naked and I'd lost so much weight you could count my ribs. I had tuberculosis so I knew I would

be picked.

"Mengele pointed at me and said, 'You, this way.'



Minia in 1954 with her daughter Denise.

"At that moment I could see I was not going to leave Auschwitz alive, but I was still a young girl so I decided to save myself.

"I was watching him like a hawk as he was continuing to select people.

When he turned, I turned.

"I could see this woman at the door, stopping people from escaping. If she had seen me I wouldn't be here today.

"I could see that those who had not been selected had been grouped into fives.

"A girl in one of the groups spotted me and put four fingers up — they were one short. I don't know how but I managed to stand with her and then we were all sent to work in Germany."

Minia remains close friends with the girl, Rela, now 80 and living in Israel.

Born in Warta, Poland, in 1925, Minia was 17 when she was separated from the rest of her family and sent to the Lodz ghetto in central Poland in 1942.

To this day she still does not know exactly what happened to her parents Jakob and Freida, and five of her six older siblings.

For her, however, being sent to Lodz was a lucky escape.

She said: "I didn't want to go. I was running back to my mother and she was pushing me, saying, 'Go, go, go.' I never saw her again."

However, in 1944 Minia was sent to

Auschwitz, where she soon encountered Mengele.

After being liberated in 1945, Minia and Rela were among 729 young Jewish people offered safe haven in Britain and were sent to the Lake District in a group of 300 children who became known as the "Windermere Boys."

Minia said: "We went from hell to heaven. I didn't speak a word of English but the people were so kind to us.

"In Auschwitz you weren't like a human being. I don't know how we survived it."

Twice-married Minia now lives in Golders Green, north London, and enjoys weekly bridge games at the nearby Holocaust and Jewish Care center.

"When I lost my parents it was terrible," she said.

"You didn't know if you wanted to survive.

"Now I have got my daughter, my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. That's the only thing that keeps me going."

RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS, AT HOME IN ISRAEL

The Jewish people have a debt they can never fully repay to those who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. But the Jewish state has gone some way to provide for them in their old age.

BY NATHAN JEFFAY, THE TOWER

In a Jerusalem apartment, an elderly woman misses a roommate like no other. Together, the two of them cheated fate and formed a bond that would make a Jewish woman and a priest's wife inseparable.

Galina Imshenik once used her status as a respectable Christian to shelter a young Jewish child, Elena Dolgov, during the Holocaust. Decades later, they ended up together in Jerusalem.

A set of three pictures on the wall of their apartment tells two life stories and one shared fate. There is a picture of the village in Belarus where Galina and her husband protected Elena throughout the Holocaust. There is a picture of St. Petersburg, where Elena lived afterwards. And there is a picture of Jerusalem, which the two women made their home in 1992.



Elena Dolgov and Galina Imshenik, Jerusalem, 2006.

During the war, Galina and her husband looked after Elena's every need and even taught her to treat them as parents. Elena's habit of speaking Yiddish was dangerous if other people were around, and the couple's determination to teach her Russian saved her life when the Gestapo questioned them and left with the impression that Galina and her husband were Elena's biological parents. Six decades later, Elena looked after Galina's every need, nursing her through a long illness until her death in 2011.

They shared the apartment in Jerusalem for almost 19 years. "It was a connection like a connection between mother and daughter," Elena says, recalling the holidays they celebrated together — both Jewish and Christian. "Our festivals were her festivals and her festivals became our festivals."

People with stories like Galina's, individuals who found themselves drawn to Israel after rescuing Jews during the Holocaust, live dotted around Israel, rarely telling their stories to the media. All of them were

born non-Jews and therefore free from persecution by the Nazis. But they put their lives at risk by helping Jews and later immigrated to the Jewish state. Galina did so with the woman she saved, but many others did so alone, and since the 1980s they have been guaranteed automatic residency based on their status as "righteous among the nations."

Around 130 people have come to Israel via this unusual route, and the state treats them with reverence. The poverty of Holocaust survivors is a source of constant controversy, but those classed as righteous among the nations receive the country's average salary as a monthly stipend from the government.

Today, only 13 are still alive.

In the northern Israel community of Kiryat Tivon, one wonders what Robert Boissevain would have thought if he saw his daughter living here.

His decision to hide Jews for two and a half years during the Holocaust cost his children dearly. They didn't just go hungry, watching their food shared with the fugitives, but they were also told not to play with or even talk to other children, lest their secret slip out.

But none of this bothered Robert's daughter Hester, who decided in her adulthood that she wanted to help the Jewish people once again.

In the early 1960s, the 27-year-old Hester, a newly qualified nurse, bought a one-way ticket and boarded a ship to Israel. "I thought that I can go somewhere with my profession, and remembered that in 1948 lots of

refugees were going to Israel and I recalled pictures of thousands of immigrants arriving in Haifa," she says.

As she speaks all these years later, she understates the unusual nature of her decision: "I said that if I would maybe go and help people with my profession where they need nurses, like Africa, why wouldn't I go to Israel where they also need people? So I went to the Israeli embassy in Holland and said I want to go to Israel."

Looking back on it now, she says it wasn't only about wanting to help, but also about finding a place where she felt comfortable. Hester lost a great deal in the war. Her home was destroyed and her family's wealth confiscated. Her father Robert was a fearless resistance fighter who ended up in prison and then in the concentration camps. He collapsed and died moments before liberation.

As well as feeling weighed down by history, Hester felt that postwar Holland wasn't the same country. "Holland changed after the war," she says. "It was destroyed and the country had to have a new life. But it was

too organized and I said that I didn't feel at home with all this organization, so I'll go to Israel."

In the young Jewish state, she certainly found an antidote to over-organization. Arriving on a kibbutz to take up her first position as community nurse, she found chaos in the clinic, "even discovering medicines and bullets in the same jars." Within days

she had the place shipshape, and was working far more than the required hour a day, offering counseling to "troubled" young people. She was soon cycling to two other locales to provide medical care and working in a hospital. She toiled 16 hours a day at four jobs until she moved to Kiryat Tivon and took a community nurse position in the mid-1960s.

When she retired after decades in nursing, she made another contribution to Israel, opening a cafe near her home that was operated entirely by people with disabilities. It made people rethink their relationship to disabled people, and gave its staff new skills and confidence. She helped to run the establishment until it closed two years ago.

The plethora of stories in Hester's family defies belief. There was the aunt who saved dozens of Jewish babies by carrying them away from the Nazis one by one in a backpack, and the banker uncle who managed to siphon off Nazi funds and pass them to Jews in hiding. And, of course, the story of her own parents and siblings.

Their role as rescuers began one afternoon in March 1943, when Hester's father phoned her mother Helena asking her to prepare dinner for guests at the *Haarlem* house where the family lived. That night, the Goldbergs arrived. They were an elderly couple and a daughter aged almost 30 from Russia, who had come to Holland through Finland and Germany looking for safety. "They came for dinner and stayed for two and a half years," recalls Hester, adding that for some of the time the family also sheltered a Jewish dentist.

Their neighbors were Nazi collaborators, heightening the need for effective subterfuge. Hester's father was fighting with the resistance, and her mother had to scrounge for food, devise plans for when soldiers called, run regular surprise drills, and preserve peace in the tense household. She sometimes served tulip bulbs instead of potatoes, and often cycled up to 75 miles — usually on metal wheels uncushioned by tires — to find food.

After the war, Helena remained in

Holland but visited Israel several times, including a 1980 visit during which she and her husband received the Righteous Among the Nations award from Yad Vashem. She lived until she was 97, sometimes visiting the Goldbergs. "I always think even today how she did it all," says Hester. "How she kept us all alive, where she got the strength from."



Jaroslawa Lewicka (right) together with one of the people she rescued.

Some righteous among the nations developed personal connections to Jews before or after moving to Israel, and even converted to Judaism. Hester fell in love with a Jewish man on a kibbutz, married him, and opted for conversion "for the sake of our kids." Other children of the "righteous" ended up marrying Jews. But the right of the "righteous" to live in Israel is automatic and does not require conversion or Jewish familial connections. Many of them have not changed their beliefs and traditions since relocating to Israel.

Jaroslawa Lewicka told her story for this article a few days after Christmas, which she celebrated at a church near her home in the northern Israeli city of Haifa. She took part in services and a festive meal. It was a potluck affair, but she feels the need to point out, for the sake of full disclosure, that she didn't make anything. Her fellow congregants forgave her, since she is, after all, 81 years old.

For decades, Jaroslawa lived under a Communist regime that suppressed religion. The city where she lives now is quite a contrast, home to an annual multicultural winter event called Festival of Festivals. "Now I live in Haifa, which is a city of three religions, Judaism, Islam and Christianity, and I go to a church with a priest who prays in Ukrainian, and no one bothers us," she says.

Jaroslawa arrived in Israel in very different circumstances than Hester. It was economics, not idealism, that brought her here. In 1989, a man she helped save, Avraham Shapiro, invited her to visit Israel, to meet him after five decades, and to visit Yad Vashem, where she would receive a medal as a Righteous Among the Nations. She recalls: "When I was here people started asking me about the economic situation back home, and it was very

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PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SALUTE TO HOLLYWOOD BENEFIT GALA



Leonard Wilf, chairman of ASYV; Phil Blazer, founder and president of Jewish Life Television; Legacy Award recipient and producer of the Oscar-winning film *Schindler's List*, Branko Lustig; Ron Meier, executive director of ASYV.



Presentation of Legacy Award to Holocaust survivor and Hollywood producer Meyer Gottlieb (center), by actor and family friend Tony Goldwyn (left) and Leonard Wilf, chairman of ASYV (right).



Ron Meier, executive director of ASYV (left) and Leonard Wilf, chairman of ASYV (right) with Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, real estate developer, and philanthropist, David Wiener.



Sheldon and Dr. Miriam Adelson, Yad Vashem Patrons of the Mount of Remembrance, at 2016 Salute to Hollywood Gala.



Fela and David, ז"ל, Shapell at the 2014 Salute to Hollywood Gala. Fela Shapell and Shapell family, Platinum Sponsors of the 2016 Gala, were in attendance at this year's Gala.



Shaya Ben Yehudah, director of the International Relations Department at Yad Vashem, Rita Spiegel, daughter of ASYV founders Abraham and Edita Spiegel, ז"ל, Gala Chairs Elissa and Edward Czucker.

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ASYV ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON

This year's sold-out Annual Spring Luncheon was held on May 18th at the Jewish Museum on 92nd Street. The event honored Jaci Paradis for her contributions to Holocaust remembrance and education and for her unwavering dedication to advancing our Young Leadership Associates. The guest speaker was Dr. Laura Barbanel, a psychologist, who spoke about teaching the Holocaust to your children.

Jaci Paradis was presented with the American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award by Chairman Leonard Wilf and Executive Director Ron Meier. She was recognized for her ongoing commitment to Holocaust education and commemoration which are central to her family. Jaci plans to continue working with the American Society for Yad Vashem to reach out to third-generation families to work together on a plan to educate children about the Holocaust. "Making sure that the Holocaust remains important to my children is very important. They won't have the benefit of speaking with survivors to hear the stories first hand. We need to develop a program that will help parents teach their children about the Holocaust in ways

that will make it important and meaningful," Jaci said.

The chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, Leonard Wilf, reminded us of the importance of continuing to raise awareness in the next generation. "It is a wonderful thing to see so many members of the third generation joining us here today as we honor Jaci Paradis, an active member of our Young Leadership Associates. Jaci's connection to Holocaust remembrance is deeply rooted. It is through dedicated people like her that I know the memories of the Holocaust will be passed on to the generations to come.

"In her closing remarks, Luncheon Chair Danielle Karten reminded everyone of the importance of being involved in the American Society for Yad Vashem and in Holocaust remembrance. "We need to continue to recognize the survivors who are still among us," said Danielle. "Holocaust remembrance has to be part of us all and we have to pass along the stories and memories to our children and they must be prepared to pass them along to their children."



Three generations — Sara Bergman, Jaci Paradis and Miriam Booso.



Ron Meier, executive director of the ASYV; Jaci Paradis, honoree; and Leonard Wilf, chairman of the ASYV.



Shelley Paradis, honoree Jaci Paradis, and Joseph Paradis.



Sharon Halpern, Jaci Paradis, David Halpern and Gladys Halpern.



Danielle Karten, Luncheon chair; and Harry Karten.



Daniella Pomeranc; YLA Chair Abbi Halpern; Jaci Paradis, Rachel Shnay and Jessica Mauk.



REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

A WWII VACATION THAT SAVED TWO JEWISH BROTHERS' LIVES

Two Jewish brothers from Paris, Henri and André Herscovici, 11 and 9, respectively, were sent away for a vacation in the summer of 1942. The vacation wouldn't only provide them with fresh air, as their mother wanted, but it would save their lives.

In that same period, their mother and sisters were taken to the *Drancy*



Marthe Coche, *Blaindainville*, 1942.

internment camp and then later to Auschwitz, where they would eventually be killed by the Nazis.

While the Herscovici brothers were saved from the immediate Nazi threat, they truly owed their lives to Paul and Marthe Coche, the couple that ran the *Santé de l'Enfance* preventorium, where the summer program was that they had attended.

The Coches' institution for those with tuberculosis, at the Château de Beaurouvre in *Blaindainville*, was open to all those in need.

The couple were defenders of the ideals of social equality, and altogether housed almost 100 students from

Paris in their preventorium.

In the summer of 1942, one of the Herscovicis' neighbors, a Mme. Roby, wrote to them, saying "A black time lies ahead for you. Under no circumstances should you return here."

Seeing the Herscovicis' despair and helplessness (their father had joined the underground before the rest of the family was deported and would only be reunited with his sons after the war), the Coches did everything they could to provide for the young children and to protect them from being turned over to the Nazis and their allies.

Along with Henri and André, the Coches helped hide another 15 or so Jewish children, along with another Jewish dormitory supervisor. The

institution's adjacent farms provided enough fresh supplies for all the children during the war, and none of the Jews faced any discrimination during the three years that they remained there until the Allies liberated France.

Paul Coche died in 1953, and Marthe in 1972, and it wasn't until 1999 that Henri, who had made *aliya* with his father and André on the *Exodus 5707* in 1947, was discovered and approached by Marthe's children. Henri Herscovici testified on the Coches' behalf, and Yad Vashem recognized Paul and Marthe Coche as Righteous Among the Nations on May 5, 2003.

DUTCH CHRISTIAN COUPLE HONORED FOR HOLOCAUST-ERA BRAVERY

Dutch Christian Zionists who died as a result of their unrelenting efforts to save Jews from the Holocaust were recognized by Israel as Righteous Among the Nations.

A medal attesting to the distinction, conferred by the Jewish state through the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum, was given by Israel's ambassador to the Netherlands, Haim Divon, to Maya Schipper — a granddaughter of Johanna Engelberta Schipper-Kuiper and her husband, Klaas Abe Schipper.

From 1943 to 1945, the Schippers, a pastor and his wife from *Schardam* near Amsterdam, endured between them a total of at least four house searches by German Nazis and Nazi collaborators. In one search, they managed to avoid capture by hiding several Jews in secret hideouts in their home and in adjacent buildings. One of them, Ruth Lilienthal, concealed herself in a closet as Nazi troops searched for her.

Klaas Abe was arrested twice, for several months at a time. His health deteriorated severely, and he died in

1949 at the age of 42 as a result of the abuse. Prior to the war, he organized meetings to protest anti-Semitism, which he considered a sin against God's "chosen people." Questioned by the Nazis, he explained his theological motives but betrayed no concrete information.

While he was arrested and perhaps tortured, Johanna was traveling with two Jewish children and her own son between safe houses. Her family, which was ardently Zionist, was heavily involved in her rescue operation. She smuggled one of the Jewish children, whom she later adopted, from a Nazi-run detention center. A wanted person, she showed up at the Amsterdam facility, engaged the guards and talked her way in — perhaps thanks to her excellent German.

Johanna Schipper died in 1956 at the age of 59 from an infection that developed in a wound that she sustained in a vehicular accident while bringing fake passports to Jews.

RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE POCKING-WALDSTADT DP CAMP

The Yad Vashem Archives currently house some 125,000 video, audio and written testimonies, all of which enrich our knowledge and understanding of Jewish life before, during and after the *Shoah*.

One such testimony, given to Yad Vashem in 2009 by Miriam Griver, tells the story of her father, Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Meisels, who survived the Holocaust against all odds and went on to be an active rabbi in the *Pocking-Waldstadt* DP camp in Germany.

In 1945, Jewish-American soldier Sidney Chachmaister noticed a man lying prone on top of a mound of corpses at the *Pocking* concentration camp in Germany, weakly blinking his eyes. This was Rabbi Meisels, about whom Griver, chairwoman of Amutat Yesh (Child and Orphan Holocaust Survivors in Israel) recalled: "In 1942, my father was sent to forced labor because informants claimed he was hiding a refugee from Czechoslovakia. In the summer of 1944, he was deported to Auschwitz, and later put on a death march to *Flossenbürg*. Two days later, he reached *Pocking*."

After finding Rabbi Meisels and tending to him, the Americans appointed him the religious authority of the DP camp. "*Pocking* had been a forced labor camp. Many Jews

who worked there were murdered, their bodies flung into a large mass grave," said Griver. "My father decided to move them into a Jewish grave, based on lists he had with him. Little by little, he made sure that the non-Jews who perished were buried in a separate place, in a Christian ceremony conducted by a priest."

Beyond his work with the deceased, Rabbi Meisels worked hard to rehabilitate Jewish spiritual life in the camp. He obtained affidavits and helped the *She'erit Hapleita* — the surviving remnant of Holocaust survivors — immigrate to Eretz Israel. "He aspired not to leave any Jew on German soil," added Griver.

On Rabbi Meisels' initiative, a memorial was established at *Pocking* for those murdered in the Holocaust. In 1947, when a march of the survivors from the *Pocking* camp took place, a ceremony was held to inaugurate the towering memorial, which bore the names of those murdered. Aside from survivors from the DP camp, the American soldiers who liberated the camp and a local official were also present. After the DP camp was closed, Rabbi Meisels was offered a rabbinical position in Chicago. However, he declined "to remain in Exile," and emigrated to Israel with his family in 1949.

STORY OF HOW US SOLDIER SAVED 200 JEWS FINALLY TOLD

BY ARDEN DIER, NEWSER

Roddie Edmonds is the first US soldier to receive Israel's Righteous Among the Nations honor, 70 years after he risked his life to save 200 Jews. The native of Knoxville,

Tennessee, was captured in the Battle of the Bulge in late 1944 and held at German POW camp Stalag IXA, according to the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum. When the Nazis ordered all Jewish-American POWs to step forward on January 27, 1945, Edmonds — the highest-ranking noncommissioned officer at the camp — ordered 1,000 US soldiers to do so, regardless of their religion, per the AP. "They cannot all be Jews!" a German commander said, per Yad Vashem. "We are all Jews here," Edmonds replied, adding soldiers didn't need to divulge their religion under the



This undated photograph shows United States Army Master Sgt. Roddie Edmonds during World War II.

Geneva Conventions. The commander then put a gun to Edmonds' head.

"He said, 'I'll give you one more chance. Have the Jewish men step forward or I will shoot you on the spot,'" Edmonds' son, the Rev. Chris Edmonds, tells NPR. "They said my dad paused, and said, 'If you shoot, you'll have to shoot us all.'" The commander yielded. Chris Edmonds believes his dad's move saved 200 lives. Edmonds died in 1985 and his untold story nearly died with him. How it surfaced is fascinating: Some time after his father's death, Chris Edmonds read an article about Richard Nixon's purchase of a tony Manhattan townhouse from a man

named Lester Tanner — who mentioned that Edmonds saved his life. The son then embarked on a quest to find Tanner. Edmonds was honored as only the fifth American to receive the Israeli honor.

HOLOCAUST HAUNTS LITHUANIANS AS PAINFUL PAST COMES TO LIGHT

BY VAIDOTAS BENIUSIS, AFP

Lithuanians are taking an agonizing closer look at their forefathers' role in killing Jewish neighbors during the Holocaust, a dark chapter of the Baltic country's history that was hidden for decades.

A series of books and films has triggered national soul-searching by making the point that while Lithuanians were the victims of Nazi



Best-selling author Ruta Vanagaite.

and Soviet occupation of the country, at times they too were perpetrators of crimes, and their victims were Jews.

Best-selling author Ruta Vanagaite, who co-wrote *Our People (Musiskiai)* with top Israeli Nazi hunter Efraim Zuroff, is the latest to spark difficult discussions.

Writing the book turned out to be deeply personal and painful when she discovered her grandfather had collaborated with Nazis by working for a commission compiling lists of Jews in 1941.

"I want to break the silence, to open up the wound," Vanagaite told an audience recently at a bookshop in Vilnius, a city once dubbed the "Jerusalem of the North" for its vibrant Jewish life before the war.

"A mature nation must know its history so it is not repeated," the 61-year-old author said.

Two black-and-white photographs adorn the cover of her book: Jewish cyclist Isakas Nolikas who represented Lithuania in the 1924 and 1928 Olympics and perished in 1943, and Balys Norvaisa, a Lithuanian lieutenant who killed Jews.

Among the emotionally wrenching testimony in the book, an elderly woman told Vanagaite: "Many people wanted to help Jewish children, but they were afraid. Not of the Germans, but of their own."

Lithuania was home to a community of more than 200,000 Jews before World War II. But historians contend that around 195,000 perished at the hands of the Nazis and local collaborators under the 1941-44 German occupation, nearly the entire Jewish population.

Today there are around 3,000 Jews living in the EU and NATO member state of three million people.

A state-funded research center has identified 2,000 Lithuanians suspected of taking part in the Holocaust, either by killing Jews, by sending them to execution or by confiscating their wealth. The study is due to be released later this year.

At the same time nearly 900 Lithuanians hold the honorary title of "Righteous Among the Nations," awarded by Israel to gentiles who risked their lives to save Jewish

neighbors.

Critics argue that Vanagaite, also a public relations guru, exploited the Holocaust to gain publicity and failed to provide any new historical information.

But Zuroff, who has slammed Vilnius for being slow to prosecute suspected collaborators, insists that Vanagaite's own soul-searching is valuable.

There is "a good chance that it will help Lithuanian society because it is written not in an academic way but in a journalistic way" that is more accessible to readers, Zuroff, who works at Nazi-hunting Simon Wiesenthal Center's Jerusalem office, told AFP.

Respected Lithuanian author Sigitas Parulskis was among the first to hit a raw nerve when he focused on the genocide in rural Lithuania with his novel *Darkness and Partners (Tamsa ir Partneriai)*, earning him a local human rights award in 2012.

Film and theater directors have also focused on the Holocaust, notably the movie *Ghetto* by Audrius Juzenas.

The Holocaust was either distorted or ignored in Lithuania under five decades of Soviet rule. An honest examination only began after it became the first republic to split from the USSR in 1990.

The Soviet Union occupied Lithuania in 1940 under Moscow's secret pact with Nazi Germany, and later the Soviets deported over 17,000 Lithuanians to Siberia.

Anti-Semitic propaganda blaming the Jews for Soviet terror became rife.

Germany then drove out the Red Army when it invaded the Soviet

Union in 1941. Some Lithuanians hailed the Germans as liberators, hoping they would grant Lithuania a measure of sovereignty.

The Soviets returned in 1944, going on to deport and exile more than 275,000 Lithuanians, mostly to Siberia. Another 21,000 died in an anti-Soviet insurgency.

President Algirdas Brazauskas apologized for Lithuanian collaborators with the Nazis during his



The Paneriai memorial in memory of the 70,000 Jews of Vilnius and its environs killed by Nazis and their accomplices during World War II.

historic 1995 speech in Israel's parliament.

Lithuania's parliament passed a compensation package in 2011 for Jewish communal property seized by the Nazis and then kept by the Soviet regime.

It marked a milestone for the Baltic state's tiny Jewish community, but its leader says a great deal of work is still needed.

"There has been a tremendous amount of academic research about the Holocaust, but I think we lag behind in education," Jewish community leader Faina Kukliansky told AFP.

"The history of Lithuanian Jews must become an integral part of Lithuania's system of education."

SIBLING SURVIVORS OF SHOAH DIE WITHIN HOURS OF EACH OTHER

(Continued from page 6)

were one of the first Orthodox families in Fair Lawn.

"As a Jewish child in the United States, I couldn't understand why my mother was sending Christmas presents to Poland, with Christmas trees and Santa Claus," said Mizrachi, recalling her mother's ongoing contact with her childhood Polish friend, who had provided her with the papers decades before. "My mother, every couple of months, would send her money. Even if she had nothing."

Mizrachi married a Sabra — a Golani Brigade soldier she met in Manhattan — and in 1995, after 40 years of feeling that she didn't fit in New Jersey, made *aliya* with three children and a sheepdog. Her *aliya* was the result of her sensing that she has a higher calling and that she

would honor her parents and her family killed in the Holocaust by being "living proof that life goes on."

Some 16 years later, at 89 years old, Sophie made *aliya* and joined her daughter.

Mizrachi had tried to persuade her mother to move to Israel earlier, but Sophie had been reluctant to leave Sol.

So how did Mizrachi persuade Sophie to make the move? "I told her, the Messiah doesn't come to Fair Lawn, New Jersey."

One day, Mizrachi got a phone call from her brother in the States, who told her that Sol, who had been diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer, was not given much time to live. Sol's wish was to be buried next to Eliezer, who died in 1982 and is buried on Har Hamenuhot in Jerusalem.

As Mizrachi absorbed the news

while babysitting her grandchildren later that day, the assisted living facility phoned to say that Sophie was not doing well.

Mizrachi went to the home that night and slept in her mother's room. The whole night, Sophie fought demons, trying to get out of bed and speaking Yiddish. Mizrachi says that Sophie struggled with the demons because "she felt that her brother was dying," even though she'd been told nothing of his situation.

Over the next 24 hours Sophie's condition ranged from feverish and dehydrated to apparently fine, and a doctor placed her under observation that afternoon.

Mizrachi went home for Shabbat, where she received a phone call from her brother telling her that Sol had died.

Sol's body was to be shipped to

Israel for burial, arriving on Monday at 1:30 p.m.

Mizrachi's brother had not intended to accompany the body, but after Mizrachi let him know that Sophie was ailing, he decided to fly to Israel.

As Mizrachi spent Saturday night with her mother, Sophie began to drift again into sleepless delirium. On Sunday afternoon, an ambulance was called for Sophie, whose condition had deteriorated.

When Mizrachi saw her mother, she realized that she was trying to hold off dying until Sol's body arrived.

Sophie died Sunday night, just after Sol's body and her son had arrived in Israel. After the double burial for Sophie and Sol the next day, Mizrachi said, "She vowed to her parents that she would take care of her brother until the end, and she kept her vow."

RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS, AT HOME IN ISRAEL

(Continued from page 7)

hard, especially as my parents had just died." She started to find out about state programs that help the "righteous" relocate to Israel, and found that there was only one thing standing in her way: "I couldn't afford the airfare." Shapiro stepped in to cover the expense.

Today she has enough money to aid relatives facing harsh economic conditions in Ukraine. Like others who moved to Israel after saving Jews, she receives visits as well as practical and medical assistance from the Israeli charity Atzum, which has a project dedicated to helping them. "I feel extremely fortunate for the fact I live in Israel," Jaroslawa says. "I don't have the words to express it."

She believes it was Christian faith that pushed her family to hide Jews in their home, help Jewish refugees, and take food to the ghetto of *Zloczow* near their home. "It's the Christian faith that motivated me and my mother, and also concern for our neighbors," she comments.

She was only five or six when she started making grocery runs to the ghetto, wearing a backpack with food buried under notepads and schoolwork. She would slip in through a gap in a barbed-wire fence. Later, when the gap was closed, she would brazenly enter through the gate when guards weren't paying attention. "Of course there was fear, but the Germans never hit [non-Jewish] children," she says. This is why she took responsibility for the food drops: her mother had been spotted and beaten.

At home, there were several close calls, especially when Nazi officials hoped to make use of children who were too young to fully understand what was going on. Once her father hid a boy under the sofa, and he was there, playing with a toy soldier while a real-life Nazi officer was in the house, oblivious to the danger he and his hosts were in. The child remarked

afterwards that he had been scared "that someone would step on his hand."

Yael Rosen, one of the most dedicated volunteers helping the "righteous" with home visits and phone calls, finds Peotr Sanevich's biography one of the



Yekaterina Movchan-Panchenko receives an award honoring the Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem in 2001.

most moving. "It's a story of a deep bond that was rediscovered so many years later," she says.

For Peotr, moving to Israel was a case of repaying hospitality. He constructed a secret hiding place for two young Jews who arrived on his family's farm in Ukraine after narrowly escaping death. He knew what could happen if he helped them: An entire family from a nearby house had been burned for sheltering Jews. But for two years, he and his family kept young Buzya and David safe.

Peotr heard nothing from the Jews he saved for almost five decades. After the fall of the USSR, however, he started making enquiries. In 1993, the Israeli ambassador to the newly independent Ukraine got Peotr back in touch with them. David suggested that Peotr move to Israel and he did, together with his wife Olga, and Rosa, the youngest of his six children. They chose to live in David's city, *Beersheva*, in order to be close to him.

The Negev also became the unlike-

ly home of two other rescuers. Deep in the desert lies *Yeruham*, a small city dominated by the families of Jewish immigrants from Morocco and India. Among them lived Yekaterina Movchan-Panchenko and Galina Panchenko, two Christian widows whose first encounter with Jews came in the 1940s when they helped save two Jewish children from the Nazis.

The mother of seven-year-old Pavel and one-and-a-half-year-old Nina had already been murdered by the time they arrived at the Panchenko family home in what is now Ukraine. Yekaterina and Galina were just 19 and 11 respectively, but they sprang into action and helped keep the children safe, fed and healthy.

Police came knocking twice, demanding to see the children, but Pavel and Nina were hidden in the cellar. After surviving the war, the two children stayed in *Krivaya Ruda*, where they became parents and grandparents. But history took Yekaterina and Galina elsewhere, and shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union they moved to Israel and put down roots in *Yeruham*, where they lived until they died a few years ago.

Yael Rosen used to work full time with the "righteous," directing Atzum's program to care for them. Even since she moved on to a high-pressure job at a Tel Aviv museum, she still makes visiting them a priority. Asked why, she responds, "It's a huge privilege to know these people and be involved with them. They risked their lives to save Jews and there's never enough that we can do for them — anything we do is a drop in the sea."

She adds, "During the Holocaust, they cast their lot with the Jewish people and now, they're doing the same

again — they are part of the Jewish people in the good times and in the harder times."

No family knows the reality of this common fate better than the Shuranis. Tzipi Shurani's parents met under the most unlikely circumstances: Her father was a Jewish prisoner in a Nazi labor camp and her mother lived in a house next door to the fence. Latzi Shurani had already promised himself that he would marry Irena Csizmadia when the two of them dug their way toward each other, fashioning a tunnel that ended in the Csizmadia basement, through which he and more than two dozen other prisoners escaped. They did marry, and lived together contentedly in the Galilee. But when the second of two Hezbollah rockets hit their home during the Second Lebanon War of 2006, Irena suffered a serious stroke, and the active golden years that the pair were enjoying were suddenly torn away from them.

Nevertheless, they maintained the love that blossomed in the shadow of hatred. Latzi died two years ago. Irena is today in a home, unable to reflect on her life, but Tzipi says, "I wish every couple could be like my father and mother. They would always hold hands, and go everywhere together."

When "righteous" who moved to Israel die, their funerals — paid for from state budgets — are emotional and dignified affairs; the starkest possible contrast to the disdainful treatment given to gentiles who the Nazis caught and killed for helping Jews. Rosen recalls the funeral of one of the sisters who lived in *Yeruham*. "There was a priest conducting the ceremony, other people eulogizing her for saving Jews, and the setting was the Negev where a camel was walking by," she recalled. "It was very surreal and very moving being in the Israeli desert burying such a special woman from the Ukraine."

REMEMBER THEM

Poland and Germany. He was sent away to live as a farmer's son on the countryside. He pretended to be an altar boy in a church to avoid being identified as a *Jude* with a yellow star. He hid for months in someone's attic, speaking only through whispers. He was thrown into jail when he and his mother crossed the border to Hungary illegally.

The war ended, and little Abraham and his mother, Heline, had narrowly escaped death dozens of times. The rest of the family was not so lucky. Some, who lived in the ghetto, were shot when walking home. Some were rounded up in faraway places like *Babi Yar* and buried with screams still fresh in their throats. Some had numbers on their arms. Some came to Israel. Some never left Poland.

Abraham came to America and changed his name to Adi. His mother

remarried, and his last name, Freiburg, changed to Eisenberg. He excelled in school, became fluent in English, and went to university. He received a PhD in chemistry from Princeton, and went on to become one of the top 100 most influential chemists in the world. His son's Hebrew name is Eliezer. This Eliezer also sang in a lovely tone-deaf way to his daughter, me, whom he bore on his shoulders and took to synagogue.

Adi had many grandchildren, only one of whom bears the Eisenberg name. He is now eighty-one and is developing dementia. When his son and granddaughter took him to the Holocaust Museum over the summer, memories flooded back. He recalled horrific tales of death and darkness that survivors can know. As soon as he came home, however, the memories disappeared. Abraham asked his

son innocently, "What did we do today?"

I tell you only the story of Adi Eisenberg. I could recount stories about my maternal grandparents, whose families were persecuted for being Jewish in the Soviet Union — my grandmother who was separated from her parents and put into an orphanage for a while, my grandfather who had the war break out on his fourth birthday — both of whom survived the Siege of *Leningrad*. I could tell you about my mother who fled Russia to seek refuge in America or about my cousin who still has his yellow star.

How will we perpetuate their memory? Jew hatred did not die with the Holocaust, but neither did the Jews. We are all the children and grandchildren of survivors, whose stories we now hold and legacies we continue.

Remember them.

BY LEORA EISENBERG,
THE ALGEMEINER

Six-year-old Abraham Freiburg had fled with his mother and long entertained the notion that Tati — the Yiddish word for Daddy — was only missing and that they would soon find him. But "never again" came too late, because Abraham's father was no longer his lively Tati who sang him to sleep in that endearing tone-deaf way. His father was no longer his trusted confidant. His father was no longer the one who bore Abraham on his shoulders or walked to synagogue with him. Abraham learned soon enough that his father, Eliezer Freiburg, was dead, murdered at the hands of a Nazi whose face he had never seen.

Abraham spent the next eight years running between Hungary, Romania,

HEAD OF HOLOCAUST RESEARCH GROUP REVEALS SHOCKING NEW TESTIMONY FROM WARSAW GHETTO

The oft-repeated notion that Jews went willingly to the slaughter during the Holocaust is completely unfounded, a Holocaust commemoration activist told *The Algemeiner*, citing a number of documents which were recently uncovered by his organization detailing eyewitness accounts of Jews fighting back.

Jonny Daniels, founder and executive director of From the Depths, which works with Holocaust survivors, Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and the Polish government to preserve the memory of the Holocaust, said that one of several projects he is engaged in includes translating firsthand accounts that have sat untouched for years in Poland's governmental archives.

Daniels said his organization has "uncovered remarkable documentation that shows thousands of accounts of 'fighting back' from eyewitnesses" throughout the Holocaust, which he is working on cataloging, translating and publishing.

Recently, Daniels and his team came across an old Communist-era document written in the late 1940s. The document turned out to be an eyewitness account from a Jewish male in his 20s of an emotional tale of survival from the Warsaw ghetto

"which happened almost 73 years ago to this very day," Daniels said.

Daniels shared the story publicly for the first time with *The Algemeiner*.



Warsaw ghetto uprising monument at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

A group of Jewish boys blockaded themselves in a building inside the

ghetto and were shooting at Nazis walking past. One of the little-known ways the Nazis would enter the buildings of the ghetto was by using a human shield, a Jew. One of the survivors told of the time that while blockaded inside the room, they suddenly heard a knock on the door. Sitting quietly, the boys heard the sweet old voice of an elderly Jewish man calmly call out to them in beautiful, poetic Yiddish: "My children, the time has come. I am knocking on this door asking for safe passage. Alas, behind me stands a group of Amalek (evil people). Shoot me and then kill them. Better I die by the bullet of Jewish heroes than by the bullet of evil." The young men did just that. By giving his life, the old pious Jew saved those young Jews fighting, allowing them to live another day.

According to Daniels, "this story is perhaps the most harrowing of accounts we have ever uncovered."

Other remarkable testimony uncovered by From the Depths shows how many Jews worked to ensure that their last moments on earth would not be spent in vain. In one case, eyewitness accounts tell of malnourished and downtrodden Jews getting off the trains at the *Treblinka* concentration camp after being told it

would "be a better place," Daniels related. "They realized that this would be their final stop and they fought back, taking sadly a futile stand before they were murdered." In other cases, "Jewish women refused to be stripped naked, paraded and often raped by their Nazi tormentors. Instead, they would attack the Nazis and, in some accounts, even kill the Nazi bastards before they were murdered themselves."

"One of the questions I always heard growing up and which was actually asked in one of my first interviews in Poland over two years ago is, 'Why didn't the Jews put up more of a fight? Why did they go like sheep to the slaughter?' After a few years of living the subject, speaking with survivors, saviors and eyewitnesses, I can unequivocally say that the Jews fought back," Daniels said.

The uncovering of these stories of heroism and survival by From the Depths highlights an important issue facing the future of Holocaust memorialization, Daniels said. "The same way we are losing survivors of the Holocaust, so too are eyewitnesses passing away at a rapid rate," he said. "We have a handful of years left to interview and speak to these people before it is too late."

THE HOLOCAUST WITHOUT JEWS

(Continued from page 5)

minority akin to anti-Apartheid Afrikaners or members of the French Resistance. To capture the full enormity of the Jewish State's depravity, the two traveled to Germany to meet with what Robert Mackey, the blogger then of the *New York Times*, called "young Israeli dissidents" who had fled the Jewish State, in the words of Sivan, "seeking refuge from Israel's politics in Berlin."

For the dwindling true believers in a postnational Europe, it is hard to imagine a story that could be more satisfying than Jews fleeing their Nazi-like nation-state for the utopia of Berlin, whose residents have learned the lessons of their past as the stiff-necked Jews manifestly have not. For anyone not quite so enamored of the EU, it is hard to imagine a story that at once is so magnificently self-flattering, and lets Europeans off the hook so completely for their repulsive historical crimes — while further enabling the deeply ingrained anti-Semitism that made those crimes so deadly.

Today's progressive narrative of the Holocaust without Jews is not altogether different from the last great leftist attempt to deny the truth of the *Shoah*. After WWII, the Soviet Union and its puppet Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe solemnized the Nazis' victims as "anti-Fascists," lumping in together the six million Jews who were, by dint of their birth, singled out for execution, alongside the Communists and

socialists who were targeted because of their political disposition. Emphasizing the specifically anti-Semitic nature of the Holocaust, Communists worried, would work against their political purposes, as the populations over which they ruled were quite anti-Semitic themselves — and had by and large looked away, or even eagerly participated, as their

power, usually under the guise of "anti-Zionism." In his 1971 study *Anti-Semitism without Jews*, Hungarian-born Austrian writer Paul Lendvai detailed the cynical ways that Communist governments incited their people against imaginary Jewish threats in lands almost entirely depleted of their Jewish populations — and how those conspiratorial hysterias



Hitler Youth members overseeing Jews made to scrub the streets in Vienna, Austria, 1938.

Jewish neighbors were carried off to the gas chambers. Ever amoral, the Communists utilized anti-Semitism in much the same way Muslim regimes have exploited Jew-hatred to mobilize discontented populations; from the 1952 "Doctors' Plot" to the infamous Slansky trial that same year to Poland's 1967–1968 Jewish purge, Communist authorities raised the phantom menace of nefarious Jewish

spoke to a deeper societal sickness having little to do with Jews. "The very fact that what we are witnessing is essentially an anti-Semitism without Jews is an all the more alarming symptom of moral pollution and political disintegration," he wrote. "The fewer Jews there are, the more the fight against racial hatred becomes primarily, almost exclusively in the interest of non-Jews."

If anti-Semitism without Jews is a marker of "moral pollution and political disintegration," then so too is the Holocaust without Jews an indicator of ethical rot. The lessons of the Holocaust are indeed universal, and Jews — contrary to the anti-Semitic stereotype of a selfish people hungry for the world's pity — have been at the forefront of applying its lessons to latter-day manifestations of bigotry, intolerance and genocide. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, for instance, has an entire center devoted to the prevention of genocide, and practically no commemoration of the Holocaust — be it a book, a film or a religious service — lacks mention of contemporary struggles against injustice.

Yet the Holocaust's universal meanings are not inconsistent with an appreciation of its singularity, both in terms of process (the first and only time a modern state carried out an industrial-scale, mechanized mass murder with the aim of exterminating an entire people) and victims (primarily, but not exclusively, Jews). Indeed, these unique aspects of the Holocaust complement one other in distinguishing the event from any other crime against humanity. Without independently acknowledging both the universality and the historicity of the Holocaust, we will fail to understand what happened, and to whom — and how to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again, to anyone.

AZNAVOUR'S FAMILY SAVED JEWS FROM NAZIS

Charles Aznavour's family hid Jews in their home during the German occupation of Paris in World War II, French-Armenian singer reveals in new book.

BY AVNER SHAPIRA, HAARETZ

"I knew the chains/I knew the wound/I knew the hate/I knew the hurt/ the thirst and hunger/I knew the fear/from one day to the next."

So go the lyrics to Charles Aznavour's song "J'ai Connu," from his 50th studio album, released in 2011. The song, told from the perspective of a Jewish prisoner in the Nazi concentration camps, doesn't describe the singer's direct experiences during World War II. But Aznavour, who will celebrate his 92nd birthday later this month, did have some personal awareness of some of the horrors depicted in the song, as the son of refugees who survived the Armenian genocide and rebuilt their lives in Paris after losing most of their relatives.

Although Aznavour's life has been extensively chronicled, up to now he has said very little about an especially humane and heroic chapter in his and his family's life: their decision to shelter and save Jews, Armenian deserters and underground activists in their home during the German occupation of France during the war, and their involvement in anti-Nazi activity.

Now Aznavour has decided to tell the whole story, in Hebrew, in a self-published book, *Matzilim (Tzadikim) Ve'Lohamim (Righteous Saviors and Fighters)*, by genocide researcher Prof. Yair Auron. The latter spoke at length with Aznavour and his sister, Aida Aznavour-Garvarentz, who told him about their lives under the German occupation and what led their family, especially their father, to take part in rescue missions despite the many risks. The book, which will also be translated into French and Armenian, recounts a specific case, but offers a moral lesson on human behavior under conditions of widespread terror, and political and ideological violence. Above all, it is the moving story of survivors of one genocide who, at great personal risk, felt compelled to help victims of another.

In an interview conducted by email, Aznavour emphasizes the common threads that bind the Armenians and Jews.

"We come from the same pain and the same suffering, and without the annihilation of the Armenians in 1915-1918, the annihilation of the Jews in the Holocaust would not have been possible, because the Germans learned from their predecessors," he writes.

He cites what Hitler told the commanders of the German army in August 1939, on the eve of the invasion of Poland, as he tried to dispel their anxiety over the use of extreme violence: "Who talks about the annihilation of the Armenians anymore?"

Auron says German officers who

were involved in the command of the Turkish army in World War I and signed orders to expel the Armenians later served in high-ranking positions in the Nazi leadership and took part in the annihilation of the Jews.

Aznavour says he knew many Jews when he was a child in Paris.

"We grew up together in the Le Marais district, where many refugees and immigrants — including many



A portrait photograph of the Aznavour family in the 1920s. Charles' father, Mischa (center), is next to his wife, Knar.

Jews and Armenians — lived in the period between the two world wars. My father's stall in the market was next to the stalls of some Jewish vendors.

"Armenian peddlers, including my father, looked after the stalls of the Jews after they were arrested in the mass deportation of Parisian Jews ["the roundup"] in July 1942. So taking in and hiding Jews in our home during the war was a very natural thing for us to do: they were our neighbors and friends," he adds. "We had a life together. We were there for them and they were there for us."

In his three previous autobiographical works, Aznavour made very little mention of these acts of salvation. He told Auron he didn't think they were so special and didn't want to be perceived as immodest. But the professor convinced him of the importance of telling the story. Now the singer says, "I'm very proud of my family's story and the beautiful, noble humanity of the act of rescue. Nothing makes me happier than to think that my dear parents saved people's lives."

BURNING THE UNIFORMS

Aznavour was born in Paris on May 22, 1924, not long after his parents first arrived there. His father, Mischa Aznavourian, was born in Georgia in 1895 and lost his entire family in the Armenian genocide. His mother, Knar Baghdasaryan, was born in Izmir in 1904, and only she and her grandmother out of her entire family survived the genocide.

The couple fled Turkey on an Italian ship that brought them to *Thessaloniki*, Greece, where their eldest daughter, Aida, was born in 1923.

The family had many Armenian friends in Paris, among them a couple named Mélinée and Missak Manouchian. The latter was the military

commander of the underground group known as L'Affiche Rouge (The Red Poster), which was the first to carry out armed resistance actions against the Nazis. Aznavour's family aided the group on many occasions and also hid the Manouchians for several months while they were being hunted by the French police and Gestapo.

The first time the family hid someone during World War II was when a

Aznavour and his sister say there were days when 11 refugees were all hiding in the family's apartment simultaneously. They hid in different corners of the house, and at night had to sleep on the floor.

The family prepared false papers for them, and one of the tasks assigned to the two children was to burn the deserters' German uniforms and dispose of them far from the house.

How aware were you of the political significance of hiding wanted people in your family home? How aware of the danger were you?

Aznavour: "My parents knew the danger was there every day, but my sister and I only grasped it later. We were 'crazy' young people. We were living out our youth and we followed in our parents' footsteps. Only after the war did we realize how great the risk really was."

Auron dedicates a large part of his book to the activities of L'Affiche Rouge — whose story is barely known in Israel, despite significant Jewish participation in it.

The group, which was associated with the French Communist Party and whose members were mostly immigrants without French citizenship, was active in 1942-1943 as part of the French Resistance, and carried out armed attacks against the French police and Gestapo, inflicting casualties among the Germans.

It was named after the red propaganda poster the authorities distributed against it, which included photographs of 10 members who were apprehended.

The group had about 200 members; 67 were arrested, including 34 Jews and three Armenians. Of the 23 who were sentenced to death, 12 were Jews and two Armenians, including Missak Manouchian.

When Manouchian was arrested, his wife found refuge with her friends the Aznavours, after other friends refused to take her in. Aznavour says his parents' close friendship with the Manouchians was part of the special kinship shared by Armenian survivors. He has vivid memories of the couple from his childhood — "Missak taught me to play chess," he recalls.

He says that although his parents didn't officially belong to the Resistance, they aided much of the underground's activity. His mother helped a group transport weapons that were hidden in a baby carriage.

When Manouchian was arrested, he sent a postcard to Aznavour's mother, telling her that her son would bring honor to the Armenian people and glory to France. His words helped reassure his mother and planted hope for her son's future success.

Auron says there were many other Armenian families, like the Aznavour family, who saved Jews during the Holocaust. Twenty-four of them have been recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations, but there were even more.

friend of Aznavour's father brought his brother to them — a Romanian Jew who lived in Germany, was accused of subversion and was sentenced to death. He had managed to escape to France disguised as a German soldier, and he knew that the Gestapo was after him. He found refuge in the family's three-room apartment at 22 rue de Navarin, in Paris' ninth arrondissement. At the start of the war, Aida recounts in the book, "We understood that the Jews were going to be the victims of brutality. We looked upon the Jews with sadness and sorrow. We knew what genocide was." She says her parents showed no hesitation in taking in the Jewish refugee, "even though it was clear that if the Nazis found this man in our house, they'd kill us right away. We told him that our home was his home, and we treated him warmly, like a good friend who had to extend his stay. For a few days, he even slept in the same bed as Charles."

SHELTERING 11 REFUGEES AT A TIME

The two Aznavour children, who were 16 and 17 at the start of the German occupation in 1940, pitched in to help, not knowing then that they would go on offering shelter to strangers. But then a woman came to the family, asking them to hide her Jewish husband, whose name was Simon. He had escaped from the *Drancy* internment camp, where the Jews of Paris were sent before being sent to the concentration camps outside of France.

For a while, the family also sheltered another Jew, and later on their apartment also served as a hideout for Armenians who'd deserted after being forcibly drafted into the German army.

WHEN POLAND EYED MADAGASCAR AS A FUTURE HOMELAND FOR JEWS

(Continued from page 4)

the Foreign Ministry. He was also the head of its emigration office, charged with arranging the exit of citizens. Poland's official position was that European maritime empires should either permit Poland access to resources in their overseas colonies or allow Polish citizens to migrate to such places. This analysis had a force that went beyond Jewish policy. At a time when rural unemployment exceeded 50 per cent, Warsaw was pushing for the right of all of its citizens to emigrate. In the case of Jews, Polish diplomats pointed to the dramatic consequences of frozen migration routes. Before the First World War, roughly 150,000 Jews left Europe each year; in the 1930s the figure was a small fraction of this. In "trying to find an outlet for its surplus population" the Polish government had "in mind the Jews first of all."

The question of the settlement of European Jews was a general European one, in which Poland occupied a position somewhere between the Nazi one (Jews must be eliminated, and emigration seemed the practical way to achieve this) and the Zionist one (Jews had a right to a state, which would have to be created from an existing colony).

The question of where European Jews might settle had been open since the 19th century, and very different sorts of politicians and ideologists proposed the same places. The island of Madagascar, a colonial French possession off the southeast African coast in the Indian Ocean, was introduced to the discussion by the anti-Semite Paul de Lagarde (actually a German named Boetticher) in 1885. This idea could be considered with greater or lesser hostility or sympathy. It had supporters in Great Britain and, of course, among Germans, including the Nazi leadership. Only in France could one say "Madagassez les Juifs," but not all of those who considered the idea in France were enemies of the Jews. Zionists also considered Madagascar, although most rejected it.

Polish authorities also allowed themselves to be tempted by the prospect of colonizing Madagascar. The idea of settling Madagascar with Polish citizens was first raised in 1926; at that time the idea was the emigration of Polish peasants from the overpopulated countryside. A decade later, after Pilsudski's death, the idea returned in a Jewish variant. Beck proposed the emigration of Polish Jews to Madagascar to French prime minister Léon Blum in October 1936, and Blum allowed the Poles to send a three-man exploratory delegation to the island.

The representative of the Polish government thought that about 50,000 Jews could be settled immediately — a significant number, but not one that would have affected the pop-

ulation balance in Poland. The delegate from the Jewish Emigration Association thought that 400 families might settle. The agricultural expert from Palestine thought that even this was too much. The inhabitants of Madagascar rejected any settlement from Poland. French nationalists, for their part, were concerned that the Polish colonization project would succeed and that the island would become Polish. Meanwhile, the pro-Madagascar propaganda of the Polish regime backfired: when told that the island was suitable for colonization, Polish nationalists demanded "Madagascar only for the Poles!"



The offices of Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer* in Gdansk, circa 1935. An anti-Semitic poster in the window reads "Die Juden sind unser Unglück!" ("The Jews are our misfortune.")

Beck and Drymmer expressed a special interest in the future of Palestine, a former Ottoman possession that was under British authority. The decline and fall of the Ottoman Empire had been a lesson for many European statesmen. Whereas Hitler tended to see the creation of Balkan nation-states from the Ottoman Empire as a positive example of militarism, Poles understood the same history as national liberation that would spread from Europe to Asia. Whereas European territories taken from empires after the First World War generally became nation-states, Asian territories tended to become part of the French or British empires, sometimes in the form of "mandates" from the League of Nations. These were places judged not ready for sovereignty, and thus allotted to the great powers for political tutoring. Palestine, taken from the defunct Ottoman district of South Syria, was such a mandate. Although the territory had a rather small Jewish minority when the British took control in 1920, British policy presented Palestine as a future Jewish National Home. This was in line with the hopes of Zionists, who hoped that one day a deal for full statehood could be struck.

Hitler's Jewish policy forced all of the powers to clarify their position on the future of Palestine. About 130,000 German Jews emigrated in the years

after Hitler came to power, some 50,000 of them settling in Palestine. Their arrival reduced the demographic advantage of local Arabs, who tended to consider Palestine as part of some larger Arab homeland. Thinking that a continuation of Jewish immigration could lead to the success of Zionism, Arab leaders organized political action: first riots in April 1936, then the formation of strike committees and a general strike that lasted through October. This meant that 1937 was the moment of truth for the European states with a declared interest in the future of Palestine: Great Britain, Nazi Germany and Poland.

London at first reacted to the Arab disturbances with a proposal for the partition of Palestine. When this led to further political chaos, the British restricted Jewish immigration to a quota. As the world was seen from London, Palestine was only a tiny part of the vast Arab and Muslim territories of the British Empire. Pleasing Jews over Palestine could mean alienating Muslims throughout the Near East and southern Asia.

Berlin specified in 1937 its own attitude toward Zionism and a possible State of Israel. Palestine had appealed to the Nazi regime as a place where Jews could settle so long as this had no clear political implications for the Near East. But in spring 1937 the German consul in Jerusalem was concerned lest the creation of a State of Israel from Palestine weaken Germany's position in the world. The German foreign minister circulated the official position to all embassies and consulates that June: Jewish statehood in Palestine was to be opposed, as a State of Israel would become a node in the world Jewish conspiracy.

The Polish position differed from both the British and the German. London favored Jewish statehood (at some distant and undefined point) but opposed much further Jewish migration for the time being. Berlin opposed Jewish statehood, but wanted Jews to leave Germany as soon as possible for some distant and undefined place. Warsaw wanted both massive emigration of Jews from Europe and a Jewish state in Palestine. In public the Polish foreign minister and other diplomats called upon the British to ease immigration restrictions and create a Jewish National Home as soon as possible. The Poles had very specific ideas of what such an entity should be: "A Jewish, independent Palestine, as large as possible, with access to the Red Sea." This meant both sides of the River Jordan; in private, Polish diplomats even raised with British colleagues the issue of the Sinai Peninsula, in Egypt. In 1937, the Polish armed forces began to offer arms and training to the Haganah, the main Zionist self-defense force in Palestine.

FRANCE TO PAY INTO COMPENSATION FUND FOR US VICTIMS OF HOLOCAUST

France is to pay \$60 million to mainly American victims of the Holocaust who were transported by train from France to Nazi death camps during the Second World War.

The two countries issued a joint statement announcing the coming into force of a compensation agreement drafted in December 2014 after years of legal wrangling. The settlement creates a fund to compensate thousands of non-French citizens, their spouses or descendants who were not covered by a settlement program that France put in place in 1946.

"The United States will administer and distribute this amount to eligible



The Shoah memorial in Paris, which lists the 76,000 Jews deported from France during the Holocaust.

Americans, Israelis and other foreigners and their families who were not entitled to make claims under the existing French program," the statement by the State Department and the French foreign ministry said.

"In turn, the United States will ensure an enduring legal peace for France with regard to Holocaust deportation claims in the United States," it said, alluding to lawsuits brought in the US against the French state rail company SNCF.

Requisitioned by the Nazi regime in Germany, SNCF trains transported 76,000 Jews across France to the death camps from 1942 to 1944. About 3,000 survived, according to the rail company.

Lawsuits brought in US courts nearly cost SNCF its commercial contracts in the United States. There have been calls for SNCF itself to compensate US victims. But the French foreign ministry argued in December that the SNCF was an instrument of the deportation but had never been held responsible.

"It is the responsibility of French authorities to assume the consequences," it said, noting that SNCF was not part of the negotiations that led to the compensation agreement.

SWISS UNDER PRESSURE OVER ART THAT JEWS WERE FORCED TO SELL

BY CATHERINE HICKLEY,
THE ART NEWSPAPER

Pressure is growing on Swiss museums to accept that works of art sold by Jewish refugees to help them escape from the Nazis were forced sales, and that the works should therefore be returned to their heirs. Speaking in Zurich last month, Ronald Lauder, the president of the World Jewish Congress, proposed a plan of action, which he described as “long overdue.”



Curt Glaser sold his Munch painting, which was trapped in Berlin, for a “ridiculously low” price to the Zurich Kunsthaus during the Second World War.

Lauder said he had turned his attention to Switzerland after Cornelius Gurlitt bequeathed his entire collection — some of which had been looted from Jews by the Nazis — to the Bern Kunstmuseum. The museum has said it will refuse to accept any Gurlitt works with tainted or unclear provenance, and that they will remain in Germany for further research.

Whereas the German government has pledged to return any art in Gurlitt’s hoard that had been “lost due to Nazi persecution,” Swiss museums have traditionally rejected claims for what they term *fluchtgut* (flight assets) — art sold by Jewish refugees to fund their escape or to start new lives after losing the rest of their possessions, their homes and their livelihoods under the Nazis.

One of Lauder’s demands was that Switzerland treat *fluchtgut* claims in the same way as claims for looted art. “Could it possibly make any difference if the painting was taken off the wall by a Nazi or if its Jewish owner was forced to sell that same painting to one of Hitler’s art dealers for almost nothing?” he asked in his speech at Zurich’s Kunsthaus.

The argument has simmered for

decades. The heirs of the Jewish art historian Curt Glaser, for instance, approached the Kunsthaus about a *fluchtgut* painting in its collection in the 1990s. Suspended from his job and evicted from his Berlin apartment, Glaser had escaped Nazi Germany in 1933 for Switzerland. After the Second World War broke out, he pleaded with the Kunsthaus director to rescue an Edvard Munch painting still in Berlin by purchasing it. Glaser wrote saying he would view any offer “from a different perspective than

before the war.” The painting, *Music on Karl Johan Street* (1889), still hangs in the Kunsthaus. Glaser sold it “for a ridiculously low price,” says David Rowland, the New York-based lawyer who represents Glaser’s heirs. “And, of course, he used the funds to flee Europe. The problem has been that the Swiss have been unwilling to recognize *fluchtgut* cases.”

The Swiss culture minister Isabelle Chassot pointed out last year that the country is the only one to draw a dis-

“*Fluchtgut* cannot be treated the same way as art that was sold in Germany and Austria,” says Marc Fehlmann, the head of collections at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin and the former director of the Oskar Reinhart Museum in Winterthur, Switzerland. “The Jewish refugees who sold art in Switzerland had full access to the proceeds, and Switzerland was a free country. Why isn’t Ronald Lauder talking about the art that was sold by refugees in the US and the UK?”

A *fluchtgut* case has, in fact, arisen in the UK. In March 2012, the Spoliation Advisory Panel issued a recommendation on a claim for 14 watches and clocks at the British Museum that a Jewish refugee had sold at Christie’s in London in 1939. Though the panel found the conditions of the sale met the minimum requirements for a forced sale, it said the price was not under value and that the moral strength of the claim was insufficient to warrant restitution or compensation.

Even though the UK *fluchtgut* claim was ultimately rejected by the court, the claimants could appeal to an independent panel in Britain; in Switzerland, no such body exists. Another of Lauder’s demands is that Switzerland establish such a commission.

“Each case has to be looked at individually,” says Olaf Ossmann, a



Edvard Munch, *Music on Karl Johan Street* (1889).

inction between *fluchtgut* and art lost due to Nazi persecution, and called for the latter term to be applied. Many in the Swiss museum community and art trade oppose that.

Swiss lawyer who specializes in Nazi-looted art. “Was the sale voluntary? Would it have happened without the Nazi regime? Did the seller get the money? Did he get a fair price?”

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