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THE LARGEST DIPLOMATIC EVENT IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY

Dozens of world leaders attended the Fifth World Holocaust Forum on January 23 at the Yad Vashem remembrance center. It was established to preserve the memory of the six million Jews murdered on an industrial scale by the Nazis and their accomplices during World War II.

Almost a million Jews were gassed, starved, worked to death and killed in medical experiments at Auschwitz, which was in Nazi-occupied Poland.

ment to remembering the *Shoah*, for your commitment to the citizens of the world, who believe in the dignity of man."

He said their countries should not take for granted the common values that people fought for in World War II, such as democracy and freedom, adding that Jewish people "remember, because we understand that if we do not remember then history can be repeated."

"Anti-Semitism does not only stop with Jews," he warned. "Racism and anti-Semitism are a ma-

the international community to "join the vital effort of confronting Iran."

"We have yet to see a unified and resolute stance against the most anti-Semitic regime on the planet," he said.

Netanyahu warned that, today, Iran "openly seeks to develop nuclear weapons and annihilate the one and only Jewish state."

"Israel salutes [US President Donald] Trump and Vice President Mike Pence for confronting the tyrants of Tehran, who subjugate their own people, who threaten the peace and security of the entire world," he added.

"I call on all governments to join efforts in confronting Iran. Israel will do whatever it must do to defend its people and the Jewish future."

Iran has repeatedly called for the eradication of the State of Israel, but says that it is not anti-Semitic. It has also denied that it wants nuclear weapons.

In his address, Prince Charles warned that "hatred and intolerance still lurk in the human heart" and said people "must be fearless in confronting falsehoods and resolute in resisting words and acts of violence."

"The Holocaust must never be allowed to become simply a fact of history," said Prince Charles, who was among seven key figures given the honor of addressing the hall, on the first day of his first official visit to Israel.

"We must never cease to be appalled, nor moved by the testimony of those who lived through it. Their experience must always educate, and guide, and warn us. The lessons of the Holocaust are searingly relevant to this day. Seventy-five years after the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, hatred and intolerance still lurk in the human heart, still tell new lies, adopt new disguises, and still seek new victims."

France's Mr. Macron said anti-Semitism was "resurfacing" and expressed total determination to fight against it.

But he also stressed that "no one has the right to invoke [those killed by the Nazis] to justify division or contemporary hatred."

Vice President Mike Pence addressed the Forum with the following words: "On this occasion, here on Mount Herzl, we gather to fulfill a solemn obligation — an obligation of remembrance: to never allow the memory of those who died in the Holocaust to be forgotten by anyone, anywhere in the world.

"The word 'remember' appears no fewer than 169 times in the Hebrew Bible — for memory is the constant obligation of all generations.

"And today we pause to remember what Pres-

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World leaders at the the Fifth World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem.

Some 75,000 Polish civilians, 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war, and 25,000 Roma and Sinti, as well as Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals and political prisoners, were also put to death there.

More than 40 dignitaries attended and laid wreaths, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President Emmanuel Macron, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, US Vice President Mike Pence and the Prince of Wales, who is making his first official trip to the Holy Land.

In the opening address, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin thanked them "for your commit-

lignant disease that dismantles people and countries, and no society and no democracy is immune to that."

P rime Minister Netanyahu said the Jewish people had "learned the lessons of the Holocaust — that we cannot take threats to annihilate us lightly; to confront threats when they are small; and above all, even though we greatly appreciate the help of our friends, to defend ourselves by ourselves."

Israel's prime minister has vowed that "there will not be another Holocaust." He also called on

THE LARGEST DIPLOMATIC EVENT IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY

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ident Donald Trump rightly called the 'dark stain on human history' — the greatest evil ever perpetuated by man against man in the long catalogue of human crime.

"The faces of a million and a half children reduced to smoke under a silent sky for the crime of having a single Jewish grandparent. The night Elie Wiesel called 'seven times sealed' consumed the faith of so many then, and challenges the faith of so many still.

"Today we remember what happens when the powerless cry for help and the powerful refuse to answer."

At the end of his speech the vice president said:

"Today we remember not simply the liberation of Auschwitz but also the triumph of freedom — a promise fulfilled, a people restored to their right-

ful place among the nations of the Earth. And we remember — we remember the long night of that past, the survivors and the faces of those we

Never again."

In his speech at the Forum, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier noted: "The Eternal Flame at Yad Vashem does not go out. Germany's responsibility does not expire. We want to live up to our responsibility.

"We fight anti-Semitism! We resist the poison that is nationalism! We protect Jewish life! We stand with Israel!"

"Here at Yad Vashem, I renew this promise before the eyes of the world. And I know that I am not alone. Today we join together to say: No to anti-Semitism! No to hatred!"

Steinmeier closed his remarks by saying, "Who knows if we will ever hear again the magical sound of life? Who knows if we can weave ourselves into eternity — who knows?" Salmen Gradowski wrote

these lines in Auschwitz and buried them in a tin can under a crematorium. Here at Yad Vashem, they are woven into eternity."



Holocaust survivor Rose Moskowitz (left), accompanied by Colette Avital, lit the Memorial Torch at the Fifth World Holocaust Forum at the Yad Vashem remembrance center, Jerusalem.

lost, the heroes who stood against those evil times. And today we gather nearly 50 nations strong, here in Jerusalem, to say with one voice:

"NO HATE. NO FEAR."

"No Hate. No Fear." These are the words that blazed on the signs and motivated masses to march across the Brooklyn Bridge on a winter day. More than 20,000 people took to the streets on Sunday, January 5th, to support the Jewish community

of Rabbi Rottenberg in Monsey, New York. One of the victims remains in a coma. Throughout the week of Hanukkah, Jews in Manhattan and Brooklyn experienced numerous other anti-Semitic incidents, many including physical violence. In response, the Jewish community, along with its supporters, decided to stand up to hate and

sponsored by the UJA-Federation of New York, the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the New York Board of Rabbis. People of all backgrounds responded to this call to action. There were school groups, religious organizations, religious Jews, secular Jews, non-Jews, public figures, politicians from both sides, civic leaders and beloved Holocaust survivors. Many supporters of the American Society for Yad Vashem were present, including members of our Board, YLA and staff.

As the crowd arrived at Cadman Plaza, we heard remarks from a number of public figures, including Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Standing in front of the Brooklyn War Memorial, he stated, "Never again. Never again is a pledge each of us must take, every one of us, Jew and non-Jew alike — that we will never allow what happened before to happen again." Remarks were followed by performances by singer Matisyahu and a capella group The Maccabeats. The crowd was visibly moved when Matisyahu performed his popular song "One Day." Even hours into the rally, you could still see people coming off the bridge to enter the plaza. For anyone there that day, participants and observers alike, it was a sight to see: thousands of people of all ages and all backgrounds trekking across the iconic Brooklyn Bridge with a common purpose — to stop the hate, to take a stand, and to proudly let the world know that nothing can bring the Jewish people down.

BY JILL GOLTZER



Members of the American Society for Yad Vashem community at the rally in Cadman Plaza.

amid an alarming spate of anti-Semitic attacks in the tri-state area. Four people were killed in a shooting attack on a kosher grocery store in Jersey City on December 10th. Just weeks later, five people were stabbed by a man who targeted a Hanukkah celebration taking place at the home

let the world know that we will not be forced to hide our faith or pride in our heritage.

Masses of people assembled by the courthouses in Foley Square before marching across the Brooklyn Bridge and convening in Cadman Plaza for a large rally. The Solidarity March was

FIRST TRANSPORT OF JEWS TO AUSCHWITZ WAS 997 YOUNG SLOVAK WOMEN AND TEENS

When Nazi Germany occupied much of Poland at the outbreak of World War II, the parents of Erna and Fela Dranger sent their daughters over the border from their home in *Tylicz* to the eastern Slovakian town of *Humenné*. Their cousin Dina Dranger went with

but Macadam discovered typos on the list — now held in the Yad Vashem archives — making the actual tally 997.)

In vivid detail, Macadam takes readers into the frigid, snowy towns and villages in eastern Slovakia just as the town criers announced that Jewish teenage girls and unmarried women up to age 36 must report to central locations such as schools and firehouses to register for work service. The girls were shocked when they were locked inside these buildings and forced to strip in front of Slovakian and Nazi officials.

Loving parents, assuming their daughters would be home for Shabbat dinner, were left confused and worried. The wealthy father of Magda Amster from *Prešov*, who realized the danger, pulled every string he could to rescue his daughter, but to no avail. The scene of his

racing in his car after the transport train before it crossed the Polish border is heartbreaking.

The book then follows these previously sheltered young women from loving families to Auschwitz. It was not yet the largest Nazi concentration camp and killing center when they arrived on March 26, 1942. There was little there, and the young women were forced to build the camp under grueling conditions. With bare hands, they cleared land, dismantled buildings, moved materials and did agricultural work. It wasn't long before many of the girls, overseen by 999 female prisoners transferred from the overcrowded *Ravensbruck* concentration camp, started dying from accidents, disease, malnutrition or suicide on the electrified fence.

999 clearly illustrates how the women of the first transport had an advantage over the Jews who arrived later, many of whom were immediately sent to the gas chambers — including many of the girls' own family members. Those of the women who managed to survive the initial shock of adjusting to the nightmarish conditions learned how to keep themselves and their friends and relatives alive. Getting a job in a

camp office, or in the sorting details called "Kanada," allowed the women minor privileges not afforded other inmates.

"My mother was tough, but in a good way. She learned how to survive from day one. Her survival was probably due 90 percent to luck, but the other 10 percent was likely due to her personality," Akiva Koren of *Haifa* suburb *Kiryat Motzkin* told *The Times of Israel* about his mother Erna Dranger, who secretly took food and other items from the pockets of victims' garments she sorted in Kanada.

Macadam, who splits her time between New York and England, spoke passionately about why she wanted to write this book in a recent conversation with *The Times of Israel*.

"It's never mentioned that the first transport consisted entirely of young women. Some were teenagers as young as 15. Why has this been ignored?" Macadam said angrily. "This work is about defending their history and memory."

Macadam, who has a Quaker background, initially learned about the first transport to Auschwitz from Rena Kornreich. Kornreich, also originally from *Tylicz*, Poland, was on that transport and survived the Holocaust along with her sister Danka.

After meeting Kornreich in 1992, Macadam penned her Holocaust memoir, *Rena's Promise: A Story of Sisters in Auschwitz*. The well-received book, originally published in 1995 and updated in 2015, was one of the first accounts of women's lives in the camps.

Macadam, 60, was not finished digging into the history of the first transport and the lives of the young women. Determined to compile as complete a list as possible, she worked with the USC Shoah Foundation to identify 22 names — both survivors and nonsurvivors. (It was only later that she discovered the original Nazi list of 997 from the first transport at Yad Vashem.)



From left: an unidentified girl, Anna Herskovicova, another unidentified girl, Lea Friedmann and Debora Gross (Adela's sister), c. 1936.

them. Erna, 20, and Fela and Dina, both 18, found jobs and settled in with the local *Humenné* Jewish community. At some point, Fela moved on to the Slovakian capital of Bratislava with a friend.

The girls' parents thought they had sent their daughters to safety. But on March 25, 1942, Erna and Dina were among the nearly 1,000 teenage girls and unmarried young women deported on the first official transport of Jews to Auschwitz.

Told by Slovakian authorities that they would be going away to do government work service for just a few months, the Jewish girls and women were actually sold to the Germans by the Slovaks for 500 Reichsmarks (about \$200) apiece as slave labor.

Fela, in the western part of the country, was not on that first transport. However, it wasn't long before she was forced to join her sister and cousin in Auschwitz, arriving there on April 23 on the eighth transport from Slovakia, the first satellite state to deport its Jews.

Very few of the 997 girls on that first transport — or any of the other early transports — survived the more than three hellish years until the end of the war. Erna, Fela and Dina Dranger beat the odds, with the sisters going on to raise families in Israel and their cousin Dina settling in France.

The story of what happened to these and the other women on the first transports to Auschwitz is told in *999: The Extraordinary Young Women of the First Official Jewish Transport to Auschwitz*, a compelling new book by Heather Dune Macadam. (The Nazis had planned to deport 999 Jewish women on the initial transport,



Linda Reich (prisoner #1173 from first transport) shown at center of photo from *The Auschwitz Album*. Female prisoners in the *Aufräumungskommando* (order commandos) sort the confiscated property of a transport of Jews from Subcarpathian Rus at a warehouse in Auschwitz-Birkenau, May 1944.

In 2012, Macadam went to Slovakia for the marking of the 70th anniversary of the first deportation. "It was like a pilgrimage," she said.

Next to a memorial at *Poprad* train station, from which the young women were deported, Macadam left her list of 22 names and a letter she had requested from the then-chief rabbi of Great Britain, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. In his letter, Sacks mentioned all the Jewish victims of the Holocaust and referred to Rena Kornreich
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THE ARCHIVE THIEF

The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust.

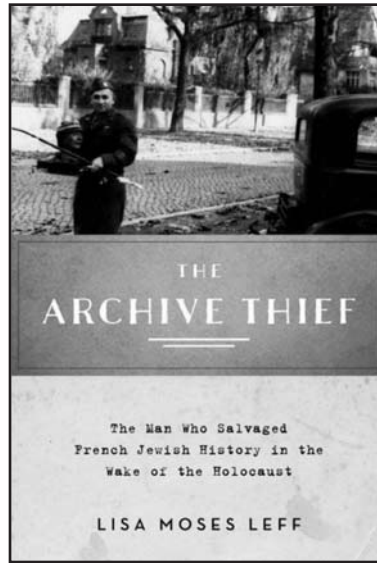
By Lisa Moses Leff. Oxford University Press: New York, N.Y., 2018. 286 pp. \$19.95 softcover.

In the book by Lisa Moses Leff entitled, *The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust*, we are presented with two absorbing and thought-provoking tales. The first is about a man with a passion for Jewish diaspora history, dedicated to the search and, oftentimes, the rescue of unique historical documents. For example, in Berlin after the war, he lost no time in “amass[ing] an impressive archive of materials from the abandoned Nazi ministries that documented their crimes against the Jews.” He immediately and expeditiously arranged for these papers to be sent to New York’s Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institute (the Jewish Scientific Institute, or YIVO), an academic institute “dedicated to the study of Jewish life, particularly in the Yiddish-speaking world.” Thus, because of him, the material was made available to researchers and scholars.

The other tale Leff tells us is of that selfsame man, Zosa Szajkowski, who, with the years, became increasingly disappointed with his position in life, or rather lack of it. For, regardless of the unique documents he found before, during and after the war; regardless of all the effort he put into to sending these countless boxes of materials back, generally to YIVO; regardless of how many articles and books he wrote based on these materials, frequently opening up whole new areas of research, he felt he had little to show for his work. Recognition was, in his eyes, slight, and money was forever a problem. Hence in the 1950s, Szajkowski became an archive thief, stealing documents from one state archive or library, using them for his articles and books, and then selling them to another library or institute — all to support himself and the “collecting” and writing he enjoyed.

Did Szajkowski’s earlier years hint at the illegitimate turn his work would take? No, not really.

The young man who at sixteen left his poverty-stricken Russian Polish hometown in 1927 for Paris and soon came under the mentoring influence of Elias (Ilya) Tcherikower, the chair of YIVO’s history department and its chief archivist, fell in love with research and scholarship. For that matter, Leff tells us how Szajkowski had “a nose for sources [documents] that would become his trademark.” Indeed, he left no stone unturned when it came to research. One early and important result: He became “a major contributor to the large, multi-authored project



that Tcherikower was editing in Paris, a collection of historical studies called *Yidn in Frankraykh* (Jews in France), finally published in early 1942 in New York.” Moreover, the love he had for this kind of work even saw him doing it while he was in the French Foreign Legion. (The immigrant Jew, Szajkowski, had voluntarily joined up in 1939 when he was told by French-Jewish leaders that doing so would offer him some kind of protection.) This time the topic of research was Jews in the Legion. And the source material he collected here became the basis of more articles and books he would write. Then, when he was injured in battle and sent to a hospital in the *Comtat Venaissin*, a region around the Carpentras, a part of Petain’s France, Szajkowski found another topic that excited him. “Whereas Jews had been expelled from France proper in 1394 and readmitted only centuries later, Jews had

lived in the four towns of *Avignon, Carpentras, Cavailon* and *L’Isle-sur-la-Sorgue* continuously since medieval times” . . . and little if anything was known about them! Not surprisingly, Szajkowski went looking for documents on the story of this region and used this research to write “an impressive series of studies.” Finally, he arranged to send the documents he found and the Tcherikower archive, chock full of documentation on the pogroms perpetrated on the Jews in Ukraine from 1918 to 1921, to YIVO in New York. (Tcherikower and his wife were already in New York.)

When in 1941 Szajkowski finally made it to America, helped by YIVO, he felt duty-bound to enlist and ended up in Europe again. However, even though he was a soldier now, he still concerned himself with salvaging important documents. “He helped reestablish YIVO Committees in Paris and Brussels.” Szajkowski himself discovered Jewish periodicals printed underground during the war and had them sent to YIVO. In fact, because of him YIVO would come to have “one of the largest collections in the world on the experiences of French Jews in WWII.”

In Berlin he began sending material back, too. But this time, he had no legitimate claim to it (at other times, it appears he did) — this includes the documents he found in those “abandoned Nazi ministries.” Of course, he wasn’t the only one doing so. Things were in such an uproar that lots of records and Judaica, looted from across Europe by the Germans, were somehow “lost.” But might this just be where Szajkowski’s “illegitimate” habits were born? Perhaps; who can say? Disappointment can lead to many things. In sum, Szajkowski became a thief . . . but he was also a man who salvaged Jewish history.

A unique book, *The Archive Thief* will be of interest to scholars of the Holocaust, scholars of history generally, archivists and all those who wonder where the primary documents they use come from.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

HOW I FOUND MY BUBBY

Surrounded by children and older women, an adolescent girl tilts her head and grins. Unlike most Jews in the “transport,” she does not have a Jewish star affixed to her clothes. Her name is Bella — Baila in Yiddish — and she seems to be showing off the new Passover dress made by her aunts.

It was a clear day in late May of 1944 when 16-year-old Bella Solomon — my grandmother — stood for “selection” at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Those thick chimneys are for bakeries, the new arrivals were told. Families will be reunited after disinfection, and make sure your luggage is marked.

The photograph of my grandmother appears strangely sanitized. There is no sense of the hell-upon-arrival described by Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi. It’s daytime, so no floodlights are pointed at people emerging from boxcars under the whip. No dogs are trained on the victims.

The image of my grandmother is one of 197 photographs in the so-called *Auschwitz Album*, one of the most important but poorly understood primary sources of the Holocaust. Although I’ve



Bella (Baila) Solomon after the war (left) and in *The Auschwitz Album*.

known about the album for at least 20 years, I did not consider searching within its pages for

my grandmother until 2015.

For reasons unclear to historians, an SS photographer (either Ernst Hoffman or Bernhard Walter) documented the 11-step “processing” of Hungarian Jews during several days that spring. The camp had just been modified to handle a record influx of 424,000 Hungarian Jews, most of whom were murdered upon arrival. Innovations included extending the train tracks into the camp itself to hasten the process.

The Auschwitz Album is arranged into 11 chapters, each of them given a title corresponding to “special handling” procedures. Chronologically, the album begins with victims being unloaded from boxcars. It ends in “the grove” where Jews selected for death — mostly children and the elderly — waited among the birch

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FIRST TRANSPORT OF JEWS TO AUSCHWITZ WAS 997 YOUNG SLOVAK WOMEN AND TEENS

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and the other women on the first transport in particular.

Slovak relatives of Adela Gross saw her name on Macadam's list and contacted her. For 70 years, they had had no knowledge of what had happened to the lovely, red-headed Adela from Humenné.

"I realized that this was a bigger story and that I wanted for people to have closure. There were other stories and other families out there suffering," Macadam said.

Since it is believed that the Nazis did not keep full records on the first transports of women, and that any documentation that might have existed was destroyed as the Allies advanced, Macadam based her research for 999 on recorded survivor testimonies, memoirs and scholarly works such as *Auschwitz Chronicle* by Danuta Czech. She cross-referenced sources to create as accurate a timeline and portrayal of events as possible.

95-year-old survivor Edith Friedmann, who now lives in Toronto, provided Macadam with a wealth of information in lengthy on-camera inter-

views. The relationship between Edith and her sister Lea, who were 17 and 19 respectively when they were deported on the first transport, is central to the book. Although permanently disabled from tuberculosis, Edith survived, while Lea did not.

"Edith still suffers from survivor's guilt because Lea died and not her. She's a biologist and she wonders whether there was something in her DNA that enabled her to survive, while her bigger, stronger older sister could not," Macadam said.

"At the same time, it was important to me to portray the girls as real, three-dimensional people. Edith's honest reaction at the time of Lea's death was that she was glad she herself was still alive," she said.

It was often familial bonds that helped the girls survive. Fela Dranger's son Avi Isachari said his aunt Erna — whom he described as an "an iron woman" — got his mother a job in Kanada, enabling the two to find food and undergarments.

"My aunt Dina also had a special sense for commerce. She could make money from nothing but would always share with others," Isachari said.

The Dranger women survived Auschwitz longer than almost anyone else, and the scars of the experience were forever imprinted on them. They may not have spoken to their children about Auschwitz, but their behavior did.

"My mother collapsed after my birth and my aunt had to take care of me," said Isachari, who lives in *Netanya*.

"She was physically unwell and had other bouts of mental illness. I remember her going down to the entrance of our apartment building and screaming about Nazis coming to kill her," he said.

Isachari and Koren said they were extremely grateful to Macadam for sharing their mothers' stories through her work.

"The book gave me a lot of things I didn't know or understand about my mother," Isachari said.

"It's made us very proud. I have a grandchild, so our family is now fourth generation [Holocaust survivors]. I am going to make sure that everyone gets a copy of Heather's book," Koren said.

BY RENEE GHERT-ZAND, *The Times of Israel*



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ANTISEMITISM 2020: IS HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF?
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2020 | 7:00pm – 9:00pm



Dr. Robert Rozett
Director of the Yad Vashem Libraries

A world-renowned expert on antisemitism, Dr. Robert Rozett will be speaking at the United Nations 2020 International Holocaust Remembrance Day Commemoration in January 2020. He has guided many dignitaries through Yad Vashem and frequently represents Yad Vashem in international forums concerning the Holocaust and contemporary antisemitism.

R.S.V.P. by January 27, 2020

WOMEN AND RESISTANCE IN THE HOLOCAUST
MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2020 | 7:00pm – 9:00pm

<p>Dr. Na'ama Shik Director of the Internet Department at the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem</p>	<p>R.S.V.P. by March 17, 2020</p>
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SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL: ART DURING THE HOLOCAUST
WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2020 | 7:00pm – 9:00pm

<p>Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg Curator & Art Department Director, Yad Vashem Museums Division</p>	<p>R.S.V.P. by April 30, 2020</p>
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ORGY OF MURDER

More than 200,000 Jews were killed, directly or indirectly, by Poles in World War II, says historian Jan Grabowski, who studied the brutal persecution of the victims. His conclusion: there were no bystanders in the Holocaust.

In January 2017, the Polish-born historian Jan Grabowski won a lawsuit he filed against a Polish website. About 18 months earlier, the site had launched a savage attack on him under the headline, “*Sieg Heil, Mr. Grabowski*,” accompanied by a photograph of the Nazi propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels.

That followed the publication of a favorable report in a German newspaper about Grabowski’s book *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland*. The book describes the Polish population’s involvement in turning in and murdering Jews who asked for their help during the Holocaust.

Grabowski’s book was first published in his native land in 2011, and two years later in English, by Indiana University Press. A revised and expanded edition, in Hebrew translation, has now been published by Yad Vashem.

The research underlying the book is the fruit of a three-year archival journey embarked upon by Grabowski in pursuit of a phenomenon called “hunting for Jews.” The term, which originates in the German word *Judenjagd*, refers to the murderous search for Jews who succeeded in escaping from the ghettos and sought haven from their compatriots in occupied Poland.

Grabowski’s book concentrates on a rural region of southeastern Poland called *Dabrowa Tarnowska*. Of its population of 60,000 on the eve of the war, 5,000 were Jews, almost all of whom were deported to the death camp *Belzec*. Of 500 who managed to escape and hide among the Poles, only 38 survived the war. All the others, as Grabowski discovered, were betrayed and murdered in direct or indirect ways by their Polish neighbors. The events described in *Hunt for the Jews*, notes the historian Timothy Snyder (author of *Bloodlands*), constitute “an inquiry into human behavior in dark times from which all can learn.”

Drawing on Polish, Jewish and German records from the war and postwar periods, Grabowski was able to document the local population’s involvement in turning over and murdering the Jews who sought their help — but also the heroism of Poles who tried to rescue their Jewish neighbors and sometimes paid for it with their lives.

Between these two extremes, Grabowski also found more complex cases: of Poles who helped Jews not for altruistic and moral reasons, but out of greed. In this connection, his study challenges

the prevailing opinion, according to which most of those who proffered help were “righteous.” He describes no few instances in which Poles saved Jews and then extorted money from them, and in some cases murdered them if they didn’t get what they wanted.

That was the tragic story of Rywka Gluckmann and her two sons, who in 1942 were given shelter by Michal Kozik in *Dabrowa Tarnowska* county. Until a short time before the Russians entered the area and freed its citizens from the German occupation, he allowed them to remain in his house, as long as they paid him. But when the money ran out, he butchered all three with an ax. Jews who were hiding across the way heard the cries of people being murdered, and the next day they learned that the Gluckmanns were dead, as a local resident, Izaak Stieglitz, testified after the war.

A better fate befell a Jewish dentist, Jakub



The Polish Ulma family, which hid Jews during the Holocaust and was murdered by the Nazis.

Glatztern, who found shelter in the home of a Polish woman. When his money ran out, Grabowski writes, he turned to his last remaining option: He decided to extract one of his teeth, in the crown of which he had hidden a diamond. He asked the woman’s husband for pliers. “He gave me old, rusty pliers. I had to remove the tooth together with the root, otherwise I risked breaking the diamond. So I removed the tooth with the

root — without an injection, without a painkiller. I took it and said to her, ‘Mrs. Karolak, here is the diamond. As long as I stay under your roof, you will feed me.’” For starters, she gave him a pork sandwich and some vodka.

Sexual exploitation and rape were also forms of “payment” that were sometimes included in the “transaction” between a Pole and a Jewish woman whom he saved. Testimony to that effect was given by Szejna Miriam L., a Jewish woman of 20. In June 1943, she was turned over to the Gestapo by the man who promised to save her. In her interrogation she related that the man, named Grabacz, “promised to help and that very night he had intercourse with me.” She gave him a diamond ring, a gold watch, a wedding ring and clothing, but the next day she was arrested by the Gestapo. “Now I know that I am doomed and that Grabacz betrayed me,” she told the Nazi interrogators before being sent to Auschwitz.

A debate is raging in Poland about the role of the local population in the Holocaust. At its center is the question of whether the Poles were victims of the Nazis or collaborators with them, and where they are to be placed in terms of rescuers, murderers or bystanders in relation to the fate of their Jewish neighbors.

In a visit to Israel, Polish President Andrzej Duda referred extensively to the dark chapters in the Polish people’s past. A member of the ruling right-wing Law and Justice Party, he was elected in part on the basis of his promise to introduce “a new strategy in history policy” — namely, to rebuff those who “falsely accuse the Poles” of participating in the Holocaust, as he put it. However, in remarks he made in Israel, Duda took a more moderate stance, admitting that “historical truth is not always pleasant, and that is true for the Polish nation as well.” He added, “As in every nation, we had decent people but there were also mean people,” and “those who acted despicably and inhumanely should be utterly condemned.”

Poles who took part in the persecution of Jews during the Holocaust “removed themselves from the Polish people,” he asserted. Everyone can judge that statement according to his understanding, but according to data in Grabowski’s possession, the attempt to argue that the “mean” Poles were only a minority and not part of the Polish people is oversimplistic and possibly lets the whole Polish people off too easily.

I raised this sensitive, highly charged and painful issue in my conversation with Grabowski. I asked him, is it possible for historians to know how many Jews were killed directly or indirectly by Poles during World War II?

The reply is disturbing and haunting. Grabowski cites a huge figure: more than 200,000. “Precise numbers are very hard to come by,” he observes, but immediately goes on to explain his calculations. “One can start by saying that about 35,000 Polish Jews survived the war in Poland (excluding those who fled into the Soviet Union and returned after the war). We

(Continued on page 13)

HOW I FOUND MY BUBBY

(Continued from page 4)

trees. Those grove images were labelled, “Bodies that are no longer capable.”

“NOBODY GOT MARRIED WITHOUT ME”

Before I could find my grandmother in *The Auschwitz Album*, I needed to listen to her testimony. A few years after the release of *Schindler’s List* in 1993, both of my paternal grandparents gave testimony to Steven Spielberg’s Shoah Foundation. I was the first person in my family to view Bubby’s interview, although not until 2010. By then she had been gone for three years.

Born in 1927, Bubby came from the town *Znacova* in today’s Ukraine. The half-Jewish farming community was not far from the Hasidic center *Munkacs*, where Bubby and the Jews of her town would be imprisoned in a ghetto.



Auschwitz Album image altered to spotlight Bella (Baila) Solomon, May 1944.

One of eight children, Bubby grew up speaking Yiddish, Czech and Ukrainian. Owning farmland, the family hosted impoverished Jews for Shabbat and sent food to the needy. *Znacova* was not exactly a *shtetl*, but there was no electricity and news was announced in the town square.

My grandmother described herself as a wily child, always on the lookout for her “religious fanatic” of a father. “When my father wasn’t there, I was there,” she told the Shoah Foundation interviewer. She enjoyed sneaking into churches to see brides and grooms: “Nobody got married without me,” she said.

In addition to her multiple languages and sense of adventure, Bubby was adept at many forms of needlecraft. Unlike her siblings, she moved easily in non-Jewish society, so her mother sent her into town to sell produce. She loved showing off her clothes and was thin as a rail, Bubby said with her wide, saggy smile.

From the time I learned that my grandparents were in the Holocaust, I was told they were from Czechoslovakia. I knew most of Bubby’s family members were murdered at Auschwitz and that she had been imprisoned there. But I never considered my grandmother could be in *The Auschwitz Album* because those photographs

were of Hungarian Jews.

At the end of 2015, I had a breakthrough in my research: The region Bubby lived in had been under Hungarian control during the war. Immediately, I wondered if any of the people identified in the album were also from *Znacova*. I examined every caption in a Yad Vashem–published version of the album, and there were indeed people from *Znacova* and other towns in the Carpathian Ruthenia region.

Equipped with Bubby’s self-description as impish, very thin and free-willed, I scrutinized the image of a girl early in the album. I had noticed her before, the awkward girl with a gap between her teeth and that out-of-place grin at *Birkenau*. But now I saw myself in her eyes for the first time.

Immediately, I started comparing the image to my grandmother’s postwar photos. The similar-

ities, everyone agreed, were overwhelming. My grandmother’s self-description helped me find her among hundreds of women and children in the album.

“GIVE AWAY THE CHILD”

On the last day of Passover, “with the dishes out to be washed,” Bubby and the Jews of *Znacova* were rounded up and sent to the *Munkacs* ghetto.

For six weeks, they slept on the floor of a factory. On the day before Shavuot — May 27 — everyone was herded onto boxcars. There was a lot of praying, Bubby recalled of the journey, and the corpse of someone who died along the way was taken off.

After the chain of boxcars lumbered into *Birkenau*, the transport was unloaded. The arrivals were greeted by Hungarian Jewish women in white caps.

“Give away the child, the child is not gonna have what to eat,” my grandmother recalled the women saying. Some mothers handed babies to grandmothers or older aunts, assuming there would be better conditions in a “family camp.” After everyone was divided into “selection” lines, the SS photographer captured *The Auschwitz*

Album image with my Bubby.

According to my grandmother’s testimony, her mother and three younger sisters were “selected” for the showers, along with her father and two younger brothers. One of the brothers, Simon, was 15 years old, and he might have been able to get through selection — Bubby suspected — had he pretended to be one year older.

Because the SS was ordered to “process” nearly half a million Hungarian Jews in two months, there was no time to brand a tattoo onto my grandmother’s arm. With several transports arriving daily, the system began to sputter, so some steps were skipped. Most critically for the SS, the capacity of the “ovens” could not handle so many thousands of corpses each day.

“They had no room to burn them,” said Bubby in her testimony.

The overflow conditions played a role in uniting the paths of my grandmother and her father near the birch grove. As Bubby and her sisters were marching from the “sauna” disinfection building to the Hungarian women’s camp, the words “Shma Yisroel” were shouted in their direction.

“I take a look, it’s my father,” said my grandmother. “He saw us passing by and began to yell. He recognized us even without our hair. He did recognize us.”

“CONFORMITY TO THE EXPECTATIONS OF AUTHORITIES”

Like my grandmother, Lily Jacob of *Bilke* came to Auschwitz in one of those late May transports from Hungary. Also like my grandmother, Jacob was transferred from Auschwitz to another camp. In Jacob’s case, that camp was *Dora-Mittlebau* in Germany.

Just following liberation, Jacob went into formerly off-limits buildings in search of food, clothing and medicine. Rummaging through drawers in a barracks, she came across a beige photo album titled *Resettlement of the Jews from Hungary*.

Within its pages, Jacob saw the faces of her murdered relatives. She also found herself in a wide shot of women prisoners whose heads had just been shaved. There were close-ups of rabbis she knew from *Bilke* and a now-iconic image of her two younger brothers in matching coats and hats.

Since the 1960s, images from *The Auschwitz Album* have been used in thousands of books, articles, museums and documentaries, and served as evidence in the Eichmann trial and other proceedings. Remarkably, nearly three-quarters of the victims whose faces appear in the photos have been identified by either themselves, survivors or relatives.

However, despite the fame of the album, there are quite a few gaps surrounding our understanding of the carefully prepared photo collection.

“Known by all, no one truly questions or analyzes [the album] as one should any historical document, particularly using the tools of external and internal criticism,” wrote French historian Tal Bruttman in an academic paper on the album last year.

Calling *The Auschwitz Album* an “isolated document” among Holocaust sources, Bruttman

(Continued on page 11)

The American Society for Yad Vashem, (ASYV) Board and staff mourn the untimely passing of our beloved immediate past executive director, Dr. Ron Meier. For five years Ron led the ASYV with distinction and foresight. As a child of Holocaust survivors, Ron was passionate about the mission of Yad Vashem. He once said how grateful he was for having the opportunity to work for a cause that allowed his life and career to be in harmony. Ron embodied the highest standards in his profession and serves as a role model for Jewish communal service.

Our thoughts are with his family: his wife, Rabbi Joyce Raynor; their daughters, Rachel Meier and Jessica Werner; and their grandchildren, Mia and Blake.

May the family be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

Leonard Wilf
Chairman

Stanley H. Stone
Executive Director



January 30
Roberta Grossman

Greetings by the Consul General of Israel,
Dr. Hillel Newman



Screening of "Who Will Write Our History"

An award-winning filmmaker with a passion for history and social justice, Roberta Grossman has written, directed, and produced more than 40 hours of film and television. Grossman's films tell stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things in the name of justice.

Grossman wrote, produced, and directed *Who Will Write Our History*, about Emanuel Ringelblum and the secret archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, co-produced by Arte and NDR. In 2018, Grossman co-directed and produced the Netflix Original Documentary *Seeing Allred*, about women's rights attorney Gloria Allred. In 2014, Grossman directed *Above and Beyond* for producer Nancy Spielberg, about the American-Jewish WWII pilots who volunteered to fight for Israel in the 1948 War. That film won the audience award at more than 20 film festivals worldwide.

Grossman is the co-founder with Lisa Thomas of the non-profit production company Katahdin Productions. She is a three-time recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and is a panelist for the WGA Documentary Screenplay Awards. She is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, with a degree in honors in history, and she received an M.A. in film from the American Film Institute.



March 26
Dr. Na'ama Shik

"Women in Resistance: The Heroic Role of Women in the Holocaust"

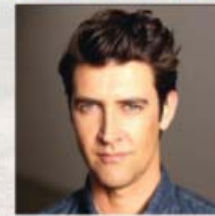
Dr. Na'ama Shik is a Holocaust historian and Holocaust Educator. She received her PhD from Tel Aviv University, writing on "Jewish Women in Auschwitz-Birkenau 1942-1945." She's been lecturing, teaching and working at The International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem since 1999, where she serves as the director of the E-Learning department.

In her research, she deals with subjects concerning women in the Holocaust, Jewish women in the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, sexual abuse, early Holocaust testimonies, the life of female Auschwitz survivors after the Holocaust and trauma. Dr. Shik has published numerous articles throughout the world in different languages.



Q & A moderated by Guy Nattiv

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SKIN



Grandchild of
Holocaust Survivors



February 27
Dr. Steven J. Ross

"Hitler in Los Angeles: How Jews Foiled Nazi Plots Against Hollywood and America"

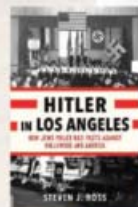
Q & A moderated by
Frank Mottek of KNX 1070 AM

Professor of History at the University of Southern California, and the Myron and Marian Director of the Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Life. His most recent book, *Hitler in Los Angeles: How Jews Foiled Nazi Plots Against Hollywood and America* was named a Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in History for 2018 has been on the *Los Angeles Times* Bestseller List for 21 weeks.



Ross' Op-Ed pieces have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *Time*, *International Herald-Tribune*, *Hollywood Reporter*, *Huffington Post*, *Daily Beast*, and *Politico*.

Free book included with purchase of ticket.



Registration: \$100 for all three events or \$50 per event

Package includes a copy of Dr. Ross' book

Seating is limited

For security reasons, NO tickets will be sold at the door

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HARROWING PAINTINGS BY HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR SHOWING HELL HANDED OVER TO AUSCHWITZ MUSEUM

A collection of 19 paintings made after the war by Auschwitz survivor Edith Hofmann has gone to the Auschwitz Museum collection.

The striking images depict the harrowing fate of fellow prisoners from the artist's own experience.

Agnieszka Sieradzka, of the museum's art collection department, said the works present life in the camp, punishments, deaths during escape attempts, marches of death and recollections and portraits of people the artist remembered.



Edith Hofmann.

"The bright colors and wildly deformed characters provoke anxiety and fear," Sieradzka said of Hofmann's work.

"They are a metaphor for the pain and suffering through which the artist must have gone.

"In conjunction with the poems that accompany them, the pictures represent the extremely personal witness account of a woman who went through the hell of the concentration camps."

Edith Hofmann was born in 1927 in Prague.

In 1941, she was deported along with her family to the *Litzmannstadt* ghetto in Łódź, and from there in 1944 to the Auschwitz II-Birkenau death camp.

After several weeks, she was transferred to *Christianstadt*, a subcamp of the *Gross-Rosen* concentration camp.

During the March of Death she was evacuated to *Bergen-Belsen*, where a month later she was liberated by the British Army.

She started studying art in the 1970s and showed her work in a variety of places.

"For my mother, art was a way of tackling the trauma," said Hofmann's daughter, Amanda Steart, who gave the works to the museum collection.

Edith never returned to the Auschwitz memorial site but wanted her paintings to go to the museum after her death.

BY EWAN JONES, *The First News*



THE FORGOTTEN HAVEN: KENT CAMP THAT SAVED 4,000 GERMAN JEWS

It is a nearly forgotten chapter in 20th-century history: the rescue of thousands of Jewish men from the Nazis, brought to a camp on the outskirts of the medieval town of *Sandwich* in Kent as darkness fell across Europe.

The *Kitchener* Camp rescue began in February 1939, and by the time war broke out seven months later, about 4,000 men — mainly German and Austrian Jews — had arrived by train and boat. Although the story of the 10,000 Jewish children brought to the UK on the *Kindertransport* is well known, the *Kitchener* Camp has received much less attention.

"It's not even well known in [UK] Jewish communities," said Clare Weissenberg, an exhibition curator at the Jewish Museum in London.

After the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in November 1938, when Jews and their property were violently attacked, about 30,000 Jewish men were rounded up and taken to *Dachau*, *Sachsenhausen* and *Buchenwald* concentration camps.

The Central British Fund (CBF), a Jewish aid organization in the UK now known as World Jewish Relief, persuaded the British government to admit some refugees. Adult men were brought to the UK on condition they would not be granted UK citizenship, they must not work, and they must emigrate onwards to the US, Australia and elsewhere.

The CBF organized transport and rented a derelict army base at *Richborough*, near *Sandwich*, to house the men. Their first task was to transform the site into a small town. They built or

refurbished 42 accommodation huts, shower and toilet blocks, two synagogues, a medical clinic, a post office and shops.

The men were not interned; they could request a pass to leave the camp. They played football against local teams and visited nearby beaches, and some illicitly worked for cash on Kent farms. Nine editions of a newsletter, the *Kitchener Camp Review*, were published.

At the time, the population of *Sandwich* was 3,500. The arrival of 4,000 refugees could have been overwhelming, but they were largely welcomed. Hundreds of people attended concerts performed by refugee musicians, and local children visited the camp to play table tennis.

The men expected their families to follow them to the UK. Some women were granted "domestic service visas" enabling them to escape the Nazis, but arrivals abruptly ended with the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939.

Nearly all *Kitchener* men were categorized in tribunals as "friendly aliens," with the words "refugee from Nazi oppression" stamped on their papers. "Enemy aliens" were interned.

After the start of the war, 887 *Kitchener* men enlisted in the Pioneer Corps. But after the Dunkirk evacuation in May 1940, public opinion turned against German-speaking refugees, whom some suspected of being spies or saboteurs. Those not serving in the war effort were interned or deported to Australia and Canada. The *Kitchener* Camp was closed.

Weissenberg began investigating the camp's history after she "inherited [my father's] German suitcase. I saw references to the *Kitchener* Camp and thought, 'What on earth is that?'"

She set up a website and began collecting stories and memorabilia from descendants of *Kitchener* men. "Often they hadn't talked about it. Many of the men lost wives, children, parents — survivor guilt is a huge thing. Many families didn't know much about the history," she said. "As a child [of Holocaust survivors], you knew ... not to ask, almost to protect your parent."

An exception was Lothar Nelken, who had been a judge in Germany before being stripped of his position under the *Nuremberg* Laws and interned in *Buchenwald* concentration camp. "He wrote a diary throughout the war. I grew up knowing about his experiences in *Buchenwald*. He never kept secrets, he shared his memories," said his son, Stephen.

On Thursday, July 13, 1939, Lothar Nelken wrote: "At around 9 pm we arrived in the camp... We were welcomed with jubilation. After supper we were taken to our huts; Hut 37/II. I chose an upper bunk. One hut sleeps 36 men. The beds are surprisingly good. One sleeps as if in a cradle."

In 1973, Clare Ungerson discovered a plaque in *Sandwich*, "but the wording was very strange, referring to refugees from Nazi oppression." The daughter of a German Jewish refugee, Ungerson "realized it must refer to Jews, but I'd never heard of this camp."

After she retired, she researched and wrote a book, *Four Thousand Lives*. In terms of the terrible history of the time, the *Kitchener* Camp may be a small detail, she said, "but it's not small to the many descendants of *Kitchener* men, who would not exist if those men hadn't been rescued."

BY HARRIET SHERWOOD, *The Guardian*



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HOW I FOUND MY BUBBY

(Continued from page 7)

wrote, “[The album] was designed to show the smoothness of operations and their conformity to the expectations of the authorities.”

In part through a painstaking cataloging of dozens of train carriages built in four European countries, Bruttmann confirmed the presence of at least seven deportation trains in the album. Additionally, he determined the photos could not have been taken in one day, as claimed in some printed versions of the album.

“IT’S IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY ANYTHING MORE”

“**R**egarding the Lili Jacob album, it’s impossible to confirm or not confirm anything,” said Pawel Sawicki, head of press relations at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum.

Like the guides he works alongside, Sawicki refers to the document as “the Lily Jacob album,” and not *The Auschwitz Album*. This is because there were several albums made about the death camp, including one of the camp’s SS officers at their retreat near the camp.

Sawicki has an encyclopedic knowledge of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and he created a fascinating book in which *Auschwitz Album* photos were juxtaposed with his photos of the same locations. To make the matches, he paired features from the old images — such as fence posts and chimneys — with remains of the camp today.

At the end of May, I brought a group of college students to Auschwitz-Birkenau for a service-learning mission. *The Auschwitz Album* photos, I told them, were taken exactly 75 years ago, in-

cluding the one of my grandmother. I spoke about the confusion in dating the photos and shared what Sawicki told me.

“When we look at the images and compare the types of train cars and length of the shadows, we can see that there are at least two different periods of the day and two different transports. But it’s impossible to say anything more,” said Sawicki.

In 2002, Nina Springer-Aharoni of Yad Vashem was one of several scholars who wrote essays for the book, *Auschwitz Album: The Story of a Transport*. Since we now know the photos depict several transports, the title is a misnomer.

In Springer-Aharoni’s essay, “Photographs as Historical Document,” she provided readers with insights into the photos, including when they were taken.

“I relied on the testimonies of the many survivors identified in the album at the time,” Springer-Aharoni told *The Times of Israel*. “Most of the survivors did not [name] an exact date, but they stated specifically that they arrived on the eve of the Shavuot holiday, including Lily Jacob,” said the retired Yad Vashem museum curator.

“I also tried to check the date according to the names of the ghettos from which the transports were deported and trains departed, plus 2 to 3 days — the duration of travel and arrival to Auschwitz. It seemed correct to follow the majority of the survivors, and record the date as May 27–28, 1944, on the eve of Shavuot,” wrote

Springer-Aharoni in our exchange.

My grandmother said she was taken from the *Munkacs* ghetto on the eve of Shavuot. So she was not on the same transport as Lily Jacob, who — in any case — was deported from a different ghetto. Bubby’s transport would have arrived one or two days after the holiday in which Jews commemorate the receiving of the Torah, during a week in which more than 20 deportation trains were processed at *Birkenau*.




Yisrael and Zelig, the brothers of Lily Jacob, in *The Auschwitz Album*.

Within hours of her smile being frozen in time by an SS photographer, my grandmother learned the law of Auschwitz. The chimneys were not for bakeries, and families would not be reunited.

Her father’s “Shma Yisroel” shouted near the gas chambers were his last words to her. Bubby never saw him, her mother or her five younger siblings again.

BY MATT LEBOVIC, *The Times of Israel*



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THE DOCTOR WHO HID A JEWISH GIRL — AND THE RESORT THAT WANTS TO FORGET

As the first snow began to fall in December 1943, Huguette Müller and her sister Marion quietly left the French city of *Lyon* and traveled up into the Alps, to one of the highest ski resorts in Europe.

The city was no longer safe, as Klaus Barbie — the SS leader who became known as the Butcher of *Lyon* — had begun to intensify his search for Jews. The two young women pinned their hopes of survival on the village of *Val d'Isère*, just a few kilometers from the Italian border.

Huguette had already had to flee from *Nice*, which had been a haven for Jews while it remained under Italian control. But in September 1943, when Italy dropped out of the war, the Nazis swooped along the Riviera making thousands of arrests.

One of them was Huguette's and Marion's mother, Edith, seized as she attempted to obtain false papers for herself and Huguette. She was deported in late October and gassed on arrival in *Auschwitz* — a fact the sisters would only learn after the war.

Aged 15, Huguette had made her way to *Lyon*, to live with 23-year-old Marion. And now they were both on the move again.

In the winter of 1943, though, the mountains were also a risky place to hide. German soldiers recently relocated from the Russian front were based in *Val d'Isère's* Hotel des Glaciers. They pillaged hotels and restaurants and burned chalets to the ground if they found someone who'd been drafted to work in a German factory and failed to go. Locals still refer to the occupation as *la terreur*.

The SS was also on the lookout for suspicious strangers. So why the sisters went to *Val d'Isère* puzzles Huguette, now 92. One possibility is that Marion had been advised to go there by her future husband, Pierre Haymann, a member of the French resistance. But they found themselves in serious danger when, not long before Christmas, Huguette slipped and broke her leg.

The village doctor said the break was so bad that the teenager needed to be moved to the hospital in *Bourg-Saint-Maurice*, down in the valley. Scared that questions would be asked and their cover blown, Marion panicked and punched him in the face.

On a foggy morning in San Francisco, Huguette takes a sharp intake of breath, and continues telling the story of how she survived the Holocaust, under the doctor's care.

"I think I was there for six months, I can't quite remember — all I knew was that it was safe," she says.

Neither Huguette nor Marion ever spoke

about their time in the Alps. Marion waved her hand dismissively whenever asked about it.

Only one photograph of that period remains. Marion died in 2010, and as her daughter-in-law it fell to me to empty out her house. In an old suitcase, alongside her wartime papers, there was a picture of her standing next to a mountain chalet in the snow.

It's only now, 76 years later, that Huguette has decided that she wants her story to be told.

Both sisters were born in Berlin in the 1920s and fled to France from Germany with their parents in 1933, soon after Hitler came to power.



Frédéric Pétri in 1936.

While Marion had false papers, Huguette did not. Their parents had been careful to get her baptized, so there was no telltale J for *Juif* on her *carte d'identité*, but it did say she had been born in Berlin. That would have been enough for her to be arrested and sent to her death on arrival at the hospital in *Bourg-Saint-Maurice*.

Huguette says the doctor explained that without the right medical care she would end up with one leg shorter than the other. "I replied it was better to limp than be dead," she says. So, remarkably, he offered to care for her, for six months, in his own house.

Why a total stranger was prepared to risk his life for a teenage girl he had met moments before is a mystery. If he had been caught, he and his family would have been imprisoned or shot.

It's a mystery to Huguette too.

"When I returned to *Val d'Isère* in the 1970s to find him and thank him, it was too late," she says. "His widow answered the door and said he was dead. That was that. And now I can't quite remember his full name."

A quick Google search reboots her memory. It reveals his name in seconds. The main roundabout in *Val d'Isère* is *Rond-Point Dr Pétri*. The doctor, Huguette confirms, was Dr. Frédéric Pétri, who lived in a large chalet with his mother and sis-

ter. "He was very nice," she says. "He carried me into the garden when the weather got better."

A genealogy website reveals that Pétri went on to become mayor of *Val d'Isère*, welcoming royals and celebrities to the slopes, among them Princess Anne and the Empress of Iran. But he never mentioned to anyone that he had hidden and nursed a Jewish girl during the war.

His daughter, Christel, is not surprised by the revelation. "He was driven by a passion, not for plastering broken legs, but for caring for people," she says. "He was profoundly generous, and all his life he did everything he could for others."

Today, *Val d'Isère* stretches for three miles along a narrow mountain plateau, but in the 1940s it was a tiny place with fewer than 150 residents. "My father's house was on the main street," she says. "To hide a Jewish girl was a very dangerous thing to do." Christel is also surprised that the sisters chose to hide in such a small place. The answer, she thinks, lies in why her father came to *Val d'Isère* in the first place.

In 1938, passionate about winter sports, the young doctor decided to join his friends, among them world-class ski champions, who had founded the resort a few years earlier. Like many of the young men who ran the hotels and ski schools, he was born in Alsace, a region of eastern France that before World War I had been occupied by the Germans. Christel believes this instilled a dislike of Germany that was only reinforced by the two years he spent in a prisoner-of-war camp near *Stuttgart*, from 1940 to 1942.

When the Germans arrived in the Alps in September 1943, the young men and women of *Val d'Isère* turned the best weapons they had against them — their skis. Adept at crisscrossing the mountain passes, they set up a resistance network. One of the group was Germain Mattis, a local ski instructor who was arrested by the Germans in June 1944 and died in a concentration camp at the age of 27.

This may well be the reason that Marion selected *Val d'Isère* as a place to hide. Her future husband Pierre Haymann was not only a member of the resistance, but his family was from Alsace. He may have had connections in the resort.

Trusting the doctor, Marion left her sister in *Val d'Isère* to recover and went to join Pierre in *Toulouse*. The break would take six months to mend, so it was not until June 1944 that she returned. Now pregnant, she narrowly avoided being raped and murdered by the SS on the way.

Hoping to learn more about resistance activities in *Val d'Isère*, I sent a number of emails and left posts on the resort's Facebook page. I got only one reply, from a member of a famous Paris hairdressing dynasty — Roby Joffo — whose uncle, Joseph Joffo, wrote one of France's best-known Holocaust memoirs, *A Bag of Marbles*.

Roby's father, Henri, and his uncle Maurice (Joseph Joffo's elder brothers) were also lying low in *Val d'Isère* during the winter of 1943–44, though they felt secure enough to work in a hair salon on the main street, opposite the Pétris' chalet. The Pétri and Joffo families have remained close ever since.

Roby is adamant that there were other Jews hiding in the valley. He makes a number of calls to *Val d'Isère*, but nobody seems to know anything about it.

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ORGY OF MURDER

(Continued from page 6)

also know that close to 10 percent of Jews fled the liquidated ghettos in 1942 and 1943 — which would give you a number of about 250,000 Jews who tried to survive in hiding. Subtract the first number from the second and you will see the scale of the ‘dark’ territory, in which the Poles, for the most part, decided who lived and who died.”

There is no doubt, he writes in his book, “that the great majority of Jews in hiding perished as a consequence of betrayal. They were denounced or simply seized, tied up and delivered by locals to the nearest station of the Polish police, or to the German gendarmerie.”

A whole mechanism was set up to hunt Jews, he says. It operated under German supervision, but all those on the ground were Poles: villagers who conducted “night watches,” local informers, policemen, firefighters and others. Together, Grabowski maintains, they created a dense web that made it almost impossible for those hiding to escape discovery.

Grabowski emphasizes that the actual number of Jews murdered by Poles is even higher than his estimate. “[My] count is very, very conservative,” he notes, “because I have not included here the human toll of the Polish ‘Blue’ police, who were a deadly force not only after the liquidation of the ghettos but during these so-called liquidation actions.” To support his argument, he recruits Emmanuel Ringelblum, the historian of the Warsaw ghetto, who said that the “Blue” police alone were responsible for “hundreds of thousands of Jewish deaths.”

The background to Grabowski’s research consisted of the numerous and well-known stories of many Poles about the war period, which often included statements like, “The Germans arrived and took the Jews away.” One of the goals of his book, he writes, “is to answer the question about how exactly the Germans knew where to look for the Jews, and to uncover the circumstances surrounding the detection and death of unfortunate refugees hidden in the villages and forests of the Polish countryside.”

He found the answer in archives, where he came across harrowing documents, such as the diary left behind by Stanislaw Zeminski, a teacher from the town of *Lukow* in eastern Poland. He documented the war’s atrocities until he himself died in the *Majdanek* death camp, probably in 1943.

Zeminski’s diary, which was found after his death in a garbage heap in the camp, eventually reached the archive of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

“For me, the situation was even more tragic,” Zeminski wrote, “because the orgy of murders was not only the deed of the Germans, and their Ukrainian and Latvian helpers. It was clear that our [i.e., Polish] policemen would take part in the slaughter (one knows that they are like animals), but it turned out that normal Poles, accidental volunteers, took part as well.”

What he wrote next makes for difficult reading. He provides testimony by Polish peasants who surrounded a nearby village and launched a hunt for Jews, as Zeminski puts it. They did it, he writes, to obtain prizes offered by the German

occupiers: vodka, sugar, potatoes, oil — along with personal items taken from the victims.

“Local inhabitants were actively involved in pulling out Jews from the bunkers in the ghetto,” Zeminski wrote in his diary, which Grabowski quotes in his book. “They pulled out the Jews from the houses; they caught them in the fields, in the meadows. The shots are still ringing, but our hyenas already set their sights on the Jewish riches. The [Jewish] bodies are still warm, but people already start to write letters, asking for Jewish houses, Jewish stores, workshops or parcels of land.” People, he noted, “volunteered for this hunt willingly, without any coercion.”

The “heroes” of Grabowski’s book, those who took part in the “hunt for the Jews” and turned it into a national sport, were people like Jozef Koza-czka, from *Dabrowa*, who established a large hiding place for 18 of the city’s Jews — and then, at his own initiative, turned them all over to the Germans.

Another “hero,” Michal Witkowski, from *Lusowice*, caught a Jewish girl who was hiding in his barn and delivered her to the nearest police station, where she was executed. On the way he took from her a small package she was holding that contained two sweaters and a small box with a needle and thread. He was sentenced to six years in prison after the war.

Thanks to trials that were held of people like him by the postwar Communist regime in Poland, Grabowski was able to uncover many details about the part played by the Poles in persecuting Jews in the war. The book’s more than 300 pages are filled with jolting testimonies that portray the Polish villagers as heartless monsters who were ready to kill their neighbors for a bottle of vodka without batting an eyelash. Grabowski describes an “incredible level of violence, which evolved into an orgy of murder.” He backs up his conclusions with testimonies from contemporaries, both Jews and Poles.

“In those tragic days we could once again see the animal-like instinct of the Polish peasant,” a young Jewish woman, Chaja Rosenblatt-Lewi, testified shortly after the war. “It was not enough [for them] to kick the Jews out; they even went after those who hid in the woods, and in the fields, taking away their last possessions. Even if they did not kill them themselves, they denounced them to the police, and the police finished them off,” she said. She noted that the hunting of Jews by Poles in the areas adjacent to the ghettos became such a commonplace spectacle that “even dogs got used to the sound of gunfire, and stopped yapping.”

Explaining the background to the phenomenon, Grabowski told me that at the height of the war, Jewish life was perceived as worthless by many Poles — so much so that “many ceased to view the murder of Jews as a crime.”

How did that happen? “Many Polish peasants saw the Jews through the prism of a centuries-

old mixture of various anti-Semitic cliches and prejudice fostered by the teachings of the Catholic Church,” he says. In this connection, he notes that the archives of the Catholic Church in Poland remain “closed and sealed,” so that the full and precise picture of the institution’s contribution to the persecution of the Jews is not known.

To this he adds the appearance of “a virulent strand of 19th–20th century nationalism,” combined with “a fairly substantial Jewish presence” in Poland — in some of the areas that he researched in the country, Jews constituted 50 percent of the population. Another factor in the list of reasons for the Jew-persecution by the Poles was the horrors of everyday life under occupation.

“The combination of these three factors, I argue, created an ugly climate in which hate could grow,” Grabowski says. Nevertheless, he emphasizes, he is not submitting an indictment



German and Polish police, Poland, 1943.

of the whole Polish people: “There is nothing ‘national,’ or Polish, to the story — you can find very similar situations in Lithuania and Ukraine.”

For the Germans, Jew-hunting depended on large-scale involvement by the local Polish population. Testimonies to this effect are found in German documents as well. One of them was a “working memorandum” issued by the Warsaw-area SS and police commandant in March 1943, titled “Concerns: Arrest and liquidation of Jews who remain in hiding.” The document, which is reproduced in Grabowski’s book, states, “In order to succeed, one has to involve the *Sonderdienst* [Special Services], the Polish Police and the informers. It is also necessary to involve the broad masses of Polish society.” The document added, “Persons who have helped to apprehend the Jews can receive up to one-third of the seized property.”

To achieve their goal, Grabowski explains, the Germans developed a system of prizes and punishments, which they intertwined in their propaganda against “the Jewish threat.” Punishment for hiding Jews, for example, could be death, arrest or fines. “Peasants, firefighters, elders and Polish rural youth were forcibly made parts of the German system and were subject to brutal German reprisals and equally brutal German discipline,” Grabowski writes. At the same time, he observes that the “deadly efficiency” of this system depended on “the zeal and willingness of its participants.”

According to a study conducted by Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance, an organization that operates under the auspices of the gov-

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HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS REUNITE WITH RESCUER AT YAD VASHEM



The heroic actions of the Gianopoulou and Axiopoulos families saved most of the immediate Mordechai family members during the war.

There was not a dry eye in sight as siblings Sarah Yanai and Yossi Mor embraced the woman who saved their lives in Greece during the Holocaust.

On November 3, Melpomeni Dina (née Gianopoulou) reunited with Yanai and Mor (whose family name had been Mordechai) in an emotional meeting when they introduced their rescuer, 92-year-old Dina, to almost 40 family members.

The meeting took place at Yad Vashem, the meeting facilitator, and was sponsored by the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous.

With tears streaming down her face, Dina told Mor that his grandson, currently serving in the IDF, “resembles you as a child.”

“You are no longer that small boy that I remember,” Dina added, crying and laughing at the same time.

After the two embraced Dina, Yanai told reporters that she was so happy.

“There are no words to describe this feeling,” she said. “It is very emotional for us to be together again.”

Dina responded that it had been “so long” and invited the siblings to come back with her to Greece.

The Mordechai family lived in *Veria*, Greece, a small town of 600 Jews near *Thessaloniki*. Today, they reside in *Ramat Hasharon* and *Beer-sheba*.

As the Germans rolled into *Veria*, Dina and her older sisters Efthimia and Bithleem Gianopoulou risked their lives for almost two years to help the Mordechai family, and together with members of the Axiopoulos family, gave them refuge and provided them with food, including Miriam (Mari) Mordechai and her children: Sarah, Asher, Shmuel, Rachel and Yossi.

Efthimia first met the Mordechai family while studying to become a seamstress with the Mordechai mother, who did not charge her for lessons since she had been orphaned at a young age.

Efthimia grew close to the Mordechais and visited them regularly, even after they went into hiding. When their location was compromised, Efthimia arranged for them to move to her home in *Veria*, where she lived with her two younger sisters, 15-year-old Bithleem and 14-year-old Melpomeni. In one room, they accommodated all the Mordechai family members.

“They were a very poor family,” Mor explained. “They saved us because they loved my mother for her good heart.”

“She [Dina] reminded me how we used to play together,” Mor told reporters. “Thanks to her, we have our large and beautiful family.”

As the war continued, the three sisters shared their food rations with the Mordechai family and

anopoulou and Axiopoulos families saved most of the immediate Mordechai family members during the war.

Dina told reporters that seeing Mor and Yanai’s descendants was incredibly moving for her and expressed that her and her sisters’ actions “were the right thing to do.” Mor and Yanai both said they were feeling “very emotional and excited” about the special get-together.

Mor’s grandson, Imri Dor, told *The Jerusalem Post* that he was “super excited” to meet Dina.

“I’d heard so much about it growing up, and it’s really special to finally put a face to the name,” he said. “She is a great inspiration, I hope that I will have the same courage. I’m so proud to be here,” he added.

Stanley J. Stahl, the vice president of the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, explained to the *Post* that “to the best of my knowledge, this is the last reunion [of rescuers and survivors] that will ever take place.”

She said that since 1992 she has been organizing such reunions once a year, but today, either the rescuers have died, the survivors have died or they are too frail to travel.

“It makes me feel sad,” Stahl added.



Descendants of the Mordechai family and Righteous Among the Nations rescuer Melpomeni Dina on the balcony exiting from Yad Vashem.

sheltered them despite the risk to their own lives.

With food supplies scarce and expensive, Bithleem and Melpomeni farmed a piece of land they owned in a swamp near *Giannitsa*, around 40 kilometers from *Veria*. They would return from working the land, carrying the provisions on their backs for all 10 people.

One day, little Shmuel became gravely ill. Bithleem took him and his sister Sarah to the hospital, but he died at age six.

After Shmuel’s death, and the authorities’ discovery of the family’s hiding place, Melpomeni’s family helped the Mordechai family flee to the Vermio mountains, continuing to provide for them until the war’s end.

“Church bells would be rung by locals when the Nazis were searching the mountains to warn us,” Mor recalled. “One day, the bells just kept ringing and ringing — that was the day the war ended.”

On April 12, 1994, Yad Vashem recognized Melpomeni Dina as one of the Righteous Among the Nations. The Axiopoulos were recognized as such in 1989. The heroic actions of the Gi-

However, she shared excitement about this meeting being the first to take place in Israel, explaining that such meetings usually take place at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York.

“One of the beautiful things about doing it in Israel is that you get to see the future generations: they [Mor and Yanai] got to have most of their family here for the reunion — including two grandchildren in [IDF] uniform,” Stahl said. “They saved this family so Israel could be a nation.”

For the director of the Righteous Among the Nations department, Dr. Joel Zisenwine, these events are important because, as time goes on, there are “less and less survivors and rescuers.

“It’s quite rare and unique to see this coming together of rescuer and survivor, and descendants [of survivors], at Yad Vashem, which is an authorized commemorative organization for the Holocaust, and this makes it more meaningful,” he said.

“This living testimony is deeply moving,” Zisenwine added.

BY ILANIT CHERNICK, *The Jerusalem Post*

ORGY OF MURDER

(Continued from page 13)

ernment and with its funding, about 700 Poles were executed by the Nazis for helping Jews hide. One of the best-known cases was that of the Ulma family, peasants from the village of *Markowa*, who hid a few Jews. The entire family — parents (the mother was pregnant at the time) and their six children — was murdered by the Germans together with the Jews in hiding.

The Polish authorities are using the Ulma family cynically, Grabowski says, in an attempt to present a false picture to the effect that the rescue of Jews was widespread in occupied Poland — a narrative, he adds, that has the support of a large majority of the Polish population. Against this background, “The fact that the Poles who saved Jews were very few, and that they were a tiny, terrorized group who feared, most of all, their own neighbors, seems lost on the advocates of ‘innocent Poland,’” he asserts.

What about the rewards? Testimonies collected by Grabowski show that in some cases the Polish peasants negotiated directly with the Germans in this regard. His book relates the case of Bronislaw Przedzial, from the small village of *Bagienica*, who demanded two kilograms of sugar from the Germans for the Jews he found while scouring nearby forests.

In another place, the Germans offered 500 zloty for every Jew, according to the testimony of

a Jewish survivor. One peasant, Grabowski writes, who was sentenced to prison after the war for complicity in the murder of two Jews, said that the notorious Gestapo commandant in the city of *Nowy Sacz*, Heinrich Hamann, “asked us what it is we wanted for having killed these Jews.” To which one of the Poles replied, “Whatever you see fit, although I, personally, would be happy with some clothes.”

The Poles sometimes complained about the quality of the “prizes” they received. Grabowski tells about a peasant who buried the bodies of Jews who had been shot and afterward took away a dress, shoes and a kerchief. “But only afterward did I find out [*sic*] that there was a bullet hole in the back of the dress,” he complained.

But it wasn’t only simple and ignorant peasants who took part in hunting down Jews. According to the postwar testimony of a firefighter named Franciszek Glab, from the town of *Lipnica*, his superior ordered him and his fellow firefighters to search for Jews in hiding.

“Although we had information that they were hiding in *Lipnica*, we found no one,” he related. “Later on, [someone] told us that there were some Jews in [the village of] *Falkowa*. We went to *Falkowa* and there we found one Jewess in the house of Kurzawa and another Jew at Fryda’s place. We roughed up the Jews real good and the same day we brought them to the Polish police.” A few days later, he added, “all of

us were called in to report to the Gestapo in *Nowy Sacz*, where we received two ex-Jewish coats each, as a reward for our diligent work.”

Locating the Jews who were in hiding in Polish homes was not an easy task. The wife of Jan Kurzawa, in whose barn the firefighters found a Jewish woman, related that at first he refused to inform on her, and that it took “a tap of an axe on his head to make him talk.”

Grabowski also emerged with a more general insight from his comprehensive research, which included a lengthy stay as a research fellow at Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies. He is now convinced that the commonly used term “bystanders” — to describe the indifferent response of the majority of the local population, in Poland and elsewhere in Europe — should be removed from the historical lexicon. His conclusion from the many testimonies he read is that it was impossible to remain neutral and indifferent, particularly in occupied Poland, where the Holocaust reached the very doorstep of so many homes.

“The general lesson,” he says, “is that no one who went through World War II in Eastern Europe emerged without wounds and scars of one kind or another. There were no ‘bystanders’ to the Holocaust — everybody acted, one way or another, became involved.”

Some took an active part in the hunt of their own free will. Others did so under coercion. And there were those who watched, from behind the curtain, as Jews were led by Polish peasants to the police station or were murdered by them.

BY OFER ADERET, *Haaretz*

THE DOCTOR WHO HID A JEWISH GIRL

(Continued from page 12)

About 75,000 Jews were deported from France to concentration camps and death camps between 1940 and 1944. Only in 1995 did French President Jacques Chirac acknowledge French responsibility. “These dark hours forever sully our history and are an insult to our past and our traditions,” he said. “Yes, the criminal folly of the occupiers was seconded by the French, by the French state.”

Only two French officials were convicted for crimes against humanity. One was Paul Touvier a local intelligence chief who served under *Lyon* Gestapo boss Klaus Barbie; he was convicted in 1994 for having ordered the execution of seven Jews 50 years earlier. The other was Maurice Papon, jailed in 1998 for his role in the deportation of 1,690 Jews from *Bordeaux*. (Papon had gone on to serve as Paris’s police chief and as a government minister.)

Barbie himself, a German, was extradited from Bolivia to France in 1983 and convicted on 41 counts of crimes against humanity in July 1987.

Christel is not surprised by the eerie silence. She says no one ever spoke about what happened during the war, and as a result even the families who still live in *Val d’Isère* today have no idea that members of the French resistance operated in their town.

The war divided communities, explains Jane Metter, who researches the period at Queen Mary University of London. For those who col-

laborated and those who resisted, “the only way to carry on living with your neighbors after the war was to forget what had happened.”

For Frédéric Pétri to have hidden Huguette was, she says, “a 100% dangerous thing to do”



Marion, Tim and Huguette.

and an act that would not necessarily have been applauded after the liberation either, as “the region was a highly Catholic, conservative, right-wing society.”

The archives in *Annecy*, not far from *Val d’Isère*, are full of letters written to the authorities during the war, often anonymously, denouncing people for acts of resistance.

Two months after the sisters left, *Val d’Isère* was liberated. But the local resistance carried on the fight, supporting the partisans in Italy, which

was still occupied by the Germans. Once again Pétri would place his life on the line for a total stranger. On a winter’s evening in November 1944, he set off to rescue a group of British soldiers who had been led over mountain passes by the partisans. Trapped in a snowdrift without adequate clothing, they were freezing to death.

When Pétri finally found them, only one of the soldiers, Alfred Southon, was still alive. He was barely breathing, but Pétri refused to give him up for dead. He carried him back to his chalet and, with the help of his mother, cared for him until he was well enough to leave.

This was also a potentially unpopular move, as many people resented what they saw as Britain’s abandonment of France at *Dunkirk* and the bombing raids on French cities. Just as Dr. Pétri had said nothing about hiding Huguette, he did not mention this adventure to his family either, until Southon became a celebrity in the UK when his story was told in a 1953 BBC radio documentary.

Marion married Pierre, and after the war they settled in Paris with Huguette and their two small children, Francois and Sylvie. The marriage did not last, and Marion then began what she called her “second life” in London with husband Joe Judah, and their son Tim.

The history of World War II still haunts France. Huguette’s decision to revisit the darkest period of her life has offered *Val d’Isère* a chance to address its past, but it appears it isn’t one the resort is ready to take.

BY ROSIE WHITEHOUSE, *BBC News*



ELI ZBOROWSKI LEGACY CIRCLE



The American Society for Yad Vashem was founded in 1981 by a group of Holocaust survivors and led by Eli Zborowski, z”l, for more than thirty years. Our Legacy Circle is named in memory of Eli Zborowski, z”l, who was greatly respected for his work and accomplishments on behalf of Yad Vashem and is missed by all who knew him.

The Eli Zborowski Legacy Circle is open to anyone who includes Yad Vashem in their estate plans. This includes a bequest by will, funding a

Charitable Remainder Trust or Charitable Gift Annuity, donating a paid-up life insurance policy or contributing an IRA or retirement plan.*

By including Yad Vashem in your estate plans, you assure a future in which Holocaust remembrance and education will serve as a powerful antidote to Holocaust denial, distortion, hate and indifference.

“I did not find the world desolate when I entered it. As my fathers planted for me before I was born, so do I plant for those who will come after me.”

The Talmud

For further information about the Eli Zborowski Legacy Circle, please contact

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*ASYV now has nearly 100 individuals and families who have joined the Zborowski Legacy Circle.

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