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.

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 commitment 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 malignant disease that dismantles people and countries, and no society and no democracy is immune to that.”

Prime 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 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 “opens 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 189 times in the Hebrew Bible — for memory is the constant obligation of all generations.”

“And today we pause to remember what Pres-

(Continued on page 2)
THE LARGEST DIPLOMATIC EVENT IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY

(Continued from page 1) President Donald Trump rightly called the 'dark stain on human history' — the greatest evil ever perpetrated 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.

Holed 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.

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.

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.

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!”

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 our own children 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.”

“NO HATE. NO FEAR.”

No Hate. No Fear.” These are the words 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 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 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 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.

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

“A”s 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.

“NO HATE. NO FEAR.”

By Jill Goltzer
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 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 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 satel- cate of Holocaust deportees in 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.

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, 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’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.)

Linda Reich (prisoner #1173 from first transport) shown at center of photo from The Holocaust 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 (Continued on page 5)
THE ARCHIVE THIEF

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


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 “amaas[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 Yiddish Vishnshaftlekher 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 of is 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. He 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 Yidden 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 soldier, 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 Contat Venaisin, 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, Cavaillon 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 the 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

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 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 a Hungarian Jewish 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 (Continued on page 7)
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 997 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 interviews. 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 “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 GHERTZ-ZAND, The Times of Israel*
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 community’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 Glückmann 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 Glückmanns were dead, as a local resident, Izaak Steiglitz, testified after the war.

A better fate befell a Jewish dentist, Jakub Glatsztern, 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 — 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 Szefna 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. “You can start by saying that about 36,000 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)

One of eight children, Bubby grew up speaking Yiddish, Czech and Ukrainian. Owning farm- land, the family hosted impoverished Jews for Shabbat and sent food to the needy. Znacova was not exactly a shetl, but there was no elec- tricity and news was announced in the town square.

My grandmother described herself as a wild child, always on the lookout for her “religious fa- natic” of a father. “When my father wasn’t there, I was there,” she told the Shoah Foundation in- terviewer. 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 had been imprisoned there. But I never con- sidered 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. Imme- diately, I wondered if any of the people identified in the album were also from Znacova. I exam- ined every caption in a Yad Vashem–published version of the album, and there were indeed peo- ple 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-

ties, 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 fac- tory. 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 ar- rivals 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 “se- lected” 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 sus- pected — 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 unit- ing 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 “Shna Yisroel” were shouted in their di- rection.

“I take a look, it’s my father,” said my grand- mother. “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 trans- ferred from Auschwitz to another camp. In Jacob’s case, that camp was Dora-Mittelbau in Germany.

Just following liberation, Jacob went into for- merly off-limits buildings in search of food, cloth- ing and medicine. Rummaging through drawers in a barracks, she came across a beige photo album titled Resettlement of the Jews from Hun- gary. 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 rab- bis 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 them- selves, survivors or relatives.

However, despite the fame of the album, there are quite a few gaps surrounding our un- derstanding of the carefully prepared photo col- lection.

“Known by all, no one truly questions or ana- lyzes [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
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.

“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
KITCHENER CAMP REVIEW

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. "But for many of the refugees, it transformed 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 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.

Weissenberg began investigating the camp's history after she "inherited [my father's] German suitcases. 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 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/I. 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." She set up a website and began collecting stories and memorabilia from descendants of Kitchener men. "Often they hadn't talked about it. 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."

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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 terribl 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
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”

Regarding 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 remnants 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, including 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.

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 LEOVIC, The Times of Israel

HOW I FOUND MY BUBBY

BY MATT LEOVIC, The Times of Israel

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

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Guest Speaker
DR. DAVID SILBERKLANG
Senior Historian at the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem
THE DOCTOR WHO HID A JEWISH GIRL — AND THE RESORT THAT WANTS TO FORGET

A
s the first snow began to fall in De-
cember 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 Bar-
bie — 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 thou-
dands 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.

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 occupa-
tion 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 Holo-
cust, 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 suit-
case, 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 lived there. Marion married a local ski instructor who was arrested by the SS in 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 concentra-
tion camp at the age of 27.

This may well be the reason that Marion se-
lected 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 re-
turned. Now pregnant, she narrowly avoided being raped and murdered by the SS on the way.

Hoping to learn more about resistance activi-
ties 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 living in Val d’Isère during the winter of 1943–44. Though they felt secure enough to move in a hair salon on the main street, opposite the Pétris’ chalet. The Pétri and Joffo families have re-
mained 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 any-
thing about it.

(Continued on page 15)
ORGY OF MURDER

(Continued from page 6) also know that close to 10 percent of Jews died 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 secret police. The 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 who had come across harrowing documents, such as the diary left behind by Stanislaw Zeminski, a teacher from the town of Dabrowa, which Grabowski reproduced in Grabowski’s book, states, “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 “incridible 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.”

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.”

F or the Germans, Jew-hunting depended on large-scale involvement by the local Polish population. Testimonies to this effect are found in Grabowski 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 government, the local Polish population. Testimonies to this effect are found in Grabowski 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.”

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According to a study conducted by Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance, an organization that operates under the auspices of the government, the whole Polish people: ‘There is nothing ‘national,’ or Polish, to the story — you can find very similar situations in Lithuania and Ukraine,'
The heroic actions of the Gianopoulou and Axiopoulos families saved most of the immediate Mordechai family members during the war. Mor recalled, “One day, the bells just kept ringing and ringing — that was the day the war ended.” After Shmuel’s death, and the authorities’ disappearance, the three sisters shared the food rations with the Mordechai family and 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 Beer-sheba. 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 and Melpomeni 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 Gianopoulou 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.

“Their story is inspirational,” Stahl said.

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

BY ILANIT CHERNICK, The Jerusalem Post
ORGY OF MURDER

(Continued from page 13)

ment 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, targeted group who feared, most of all, their own neighbors, seems lost on the advocates of "inviolable 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 story of 1,690 Jews from a village in the province of Poznań who were murdered by the Nazis for helping Jews escape.

In another place, the Germans offered 500 złoty for every Jew, according to the testimony of a Polish peasant 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 firemen 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 Poland 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 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 ROSE WHITEHOUSE, BBC News

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 tradition," he said. "Yes, the criminal folly of the occupiers was succeeded 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 collaborated 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 mountains 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 drama. "Trapped in the Holocaust, 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 ROSE 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

Robert Christopher Morton,
Director of Planned Giving at ASYV, who can be reached at: 212-220-4304; cmorton@YadVashemUSA.org

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