"Before My Very Eyes"

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This year’s Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day was held on 27-28 April 2022 under the banner: "Transports to Extinction: Deportations of the Jews During the Holocaust."

The events held on the Mount of Remembrance and across Israel mixed customary and innovative ceremonies. Educational materials developed by the International School for Holocaust Studies (with original podcasts, testimonial films and historical videos) were uploaded to Yad Vashem’s website, and all of Yad Vashem’s social media channels in various languages shared a variety of content dealing with the central theme and the stories of the torchlighters – Zvi Gil, Shmuel Blumenfeld z”l (the torch was lit by his son, Aryeh), Olga Kay, Arie Shilansky, Shaul Spielmann and Rebecca Elizur.

In addition, the public who visited the Mount of Remembrance were offered tours of the Holocaust History Museum, as well as “Behind-the-Scenes” presentations by Yad Vashem staff across the campus. Online, a 360-degree tour of the Holocaust History Museum was accessible to members of the public around the world, as well as a free webinar, entitled “The Abuse and Trivialization of Holocaust Memory” – which addressed how the Holocaust is being misused and abused in everyday references, to the point where it is losing significance. Holocaust historian Efraim Zuroff addressed the more than 200 participants on current manifestations of Holocaust distortion.

Additionally, Yad Vashem was honored to welcome many leaders of countries around the world, including President of the Bundestag Bärbel Bas, who filled out a Page of Testimony for a Holocaust victim.
HOLOCAUST MARTYRS’ AND HEROES’ REMEMBRANCE DAY 2022: IMAGES FROM THE MOUNT OF REMEMBRANCE

Youth Movement Ceremony in the Valley of the Communities

Names Reading in the Hall of Remembrance

Wreaths were laid in Warsaw Ghetto Square

The six Torchlighters at the Opening Ceremony

Above, clockwise from left: Behind-the-Scenes presentations of the “Gathering the Fragments” campaign, the “Flashes of Memory” exhibition, the Art Collection and the harnessing of technology for the sake of memory.
On 30 August 1944, Avraham Benkel and his 14-year-old son Shmuel were deported from the Lodz ghetto on the last transport to Auschwitz. "The Germans addressed us, and said that in Germany, too, they would establish a fur workshop and that we would work there in the same way we worked here," Benkel testified. "Later on, it became clear that this was false, and that they were sending us to Auschwitz, not to Germany… As soon as we arrived at Auschwitz, we heard from the Jews unloading us from the cars that here, people were sent to the crematoria… they separated me from my son… I saw him standing on the other side, waving to me. I waved back. I never saw him again." Benkel was the lone survivor from his family.

By the summer of 1944, the demise of Nazi Germany seemed inevitable, but despite this, the machinery of extermination relentlessly continued to operate at full strength. While parts of Europe had already been liberated, the last Jews were being deported from areas still under the control of the Germans.

Utilizing documentation, photographs, artworks and testimonies from Yad Vashem’s Collections, the online exhibition tells the heartbreaking stories of individuals, families and communities who were brutally pushed into cattle cars and transported on a journey full of unbearable torment, degradation, abuse and pain. Masses of Jews from across Europe were deported in the last months of the war from their homes, transit camps and the last ghettos still standing, and were taken to the crematoria… they separated me from my son… I saw him standing on the other side, waving to me. I waved back. I never saw him again.” Benkel was the lone survivor from his family.

DEPORTATIONS OF JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST
NEW ONLINE EXHIBITION FEATURES STORIES OF THE LAST DEPORTEES

In advance of Holocaust Remembrance Day 2022, under the banner “Transports to Extinction: The Deportation of the Jews During the Holocaust,” Yad Vashem uploaded to its website a new online exhibition that brings the stories of the last deportees during the Holocaust – Jews that were transported from June 1944 until April 1945 from the Netherlands, Hungary, Greece, France, Poland, Italy, Czechoslovakia and Germany.
The exhibition tells the heartbreaking stories of individuals, families and communities who were brutally pushed into cattle cars and transported on a journey full of unbearable torment, degradation, abuse and pain.

On 17 August 1944, a day before the evacuation of the Drancy concentration and transit camp near the French capital by the Germans prior to their retreat from France, a group of 51 Jews was taken out of Drancy. They were Jewish underground members, who had been caught by the Germans in April and July 1944: members of L’Armée Juive (AJ), the Jewish Communist underground, the Dutch-Jewish Underground Hechalutz and others. The Germans gathered them clandestinely, for fear that their comrades would try and rescue them, and attached them to a German evacuation train bound for Buchenwald. Alfred (“Zippi”) Frenkel, a member of Hechalutz was on from the train. “The French resistance wanted to prevent the train’s departure, and they bombed the railway tracks,” he related. “From the first days, we considered escaping from the train, and made arrangements after we figured out how it could be done. Ours was the last train car. The police were in the car in front of us... We opened one side of the rear section of the car, and prepared to jump out in order. We held a lottery. I got number 23; somebody jumped out every five minutes until we reached number 19.” Unfortunately, the escape was halted because the railway tracks had been bombed and the train came to a standstill. “Zippi” survived Buchenwald and other camps, and immigrated to Israel.

The exhibition also features the story of the last transport from the Terezin ghetto to Auschwitz, on 28 October 1944. Among the deportees was Kurt Gerron, one of the most successful artists in Germany in the interwar period. He had starred in and directed dozens of films, plays and cabaret performances. On 1 April 1933, the day of the national boycott on German Jewry, Gerron and his Jewish colleagues were thrown out of the UFA cinema studio in Berlin. Gerron was in the middle of directing a film. Before the day’s shooting began, the production manager gathered the workers and told the Jews to leave the studio. Gerron left in tears, his back visibly shaking. The same month, he moved to Paris. Some two years later, he went to Vienna and then to the Netherlands. He settled in Amsterdam, where he continued to direct films. Even after the German occupation of the country, he continued to work in his field. In September 1943, he was arrested, and sent with his wife Olga to the Westerbork concentration and transit camp in northeastern Netherlands, where he continued his theatrical-cabaret activities. In October 1944, he was deported to his death at Auschwitz. Most of the deportees had been murdered by the end of the war. Few survived against all odds and managed to return to life in the shadow of loss and harrowing memories. By revealing their stories, sharing and disseminating them online, they are remembered as people, each unique in his or her own way. No longer anonymous, no more a face in the crowd, but people each with a name, identity and life story.

The author is a researcher and Online Exhibitions Coordinator in the Communications Division’s Digital Department.
After more than six decades of decay and long years of renovation, the Rumbach Street Synagogue is one of the most outstanding Jewish monuments in Hungary, and home to a Yad Vashem exhibition on children in the Holocaust.
The students were posed with dilemmas from their everyday lives corresponding to the main themes of the exhibition – family, friends, education, identity, life events and more. As the workshop continued locally in the classrooms, student groups discussed these dilemmas from the point of view of the Jewish children presented in the 27-panel exhibition.

"'Stars Without a Heaven,' which features personal stories of children facing the hardships of the Shoah, turned out to be a perfect starting point for deeper discussions with youngsters about paying attention to and taking responsibility for each other, loyalty, empathy, the power of relationships, the importance of a strong identity, and more," said Noa Mkalton, Director of the International School’s Overseas Education and Training Department. "These values were crucial not only in the lives of those children affected by the Shoah, but also today, in an often fractured and dissonant society."

The government rescued this building from ruin, hoping that life would return within its walls. Hungarian President Katalin Novák
"THE DOUBLE GEOGRAPHY OF DISLOCATION"

DEPORTATIONS DURING THE HOLOCAUST: RESEARCH AND MEMORY

Leah Goldstein

In such a car, which was designed to transport ‘eighteen horses’ according to the sign on the door, were a hundred of us – adults, children, sick, elderly, in indescribably crowded conditions... In every car there was a bucket with water for everyone and another bucket for toilets; so much of the water reserve was soiled as we boarded the train.”

Simon Grinbaud, deported from the Drancy transit camp in France to Auschwitz-Birkenau in September 1942

In line with the annual theme for Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day on 12 May 2022 Yad Vashem’s International Institute for Holocaust Research held an online day symposium on the subject of “Deportations during the Holocaust: Research and Memory,” Moderated by Dr. Joel Zisenwine, Director of Yad Vashem’s Righteous Among the Nations Department and former Director of Yad Vashem’s "Deportations of Jews" online research project, the symposium featured opening remarks by Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan, and fascinating presentations by veteran Holocaust historians as well as emerging researchers in the field. The topic of deportations is, as Prof. Christopher Browning (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) explained in his lecture, a relative “latecomer” to Holocaust historiography. At first gaining little focus in the shadow of Nazi war crimes trials and the unprecedented phenomena of mass concentration and death camps, only after many decades did deportations begin...
The previously-held notion that deportations occurred during specific years of WWII alone and that they were only used to transport victims to their ultimate deaths is being challenged.

to be investigated – mostly as the "machinery of destruction," playing a necessary function in the overall Nazi genocidal vision of the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question."

But more recently, the subject has been investigated from many other angles – spatially, geographically and chronologically – and the findings have deepened the once-scarce understanding of this critical component of the Holocaust.

In his keynote lecture, Prof. Tim Cole (University of Bristol) first looked at the geographical chronology of Holocaust historiography. Citing Prof. Raul Hilberg's monumental contribution to understanding the Holocaust, he pointed out that the first chapters to be investigated by researchers were actually the closing chapters of the Shoah: the concentration and death camps that began their notorious function, the accepted picture was actually reversed: murder was brought to the world.

Prof. Cole then turned to the critical element that has only recently been added to many historical studies: the introduction and inclusion of the voices of those who experienced it. Using survivor testimonies as well as the rare pieces of evidence left behind by a handful of victims, he explained that as well as their displacement, deportations involved the victims' disorientation in both time and space. This "double geography of dislocation" was thus both physical and emotional, and historians - such as those working on the "Transports to Extinction: Holocaust (Shoah) Deportations Database" - are endeavoring not only to map out the exact routes of an estimated 2,000 deportations that span the entire Holocaust period, but also to understand - and give voice to - the experience of them from the victims' viewpoint, as their world was reduced to the inside of a wagon, boat, horse-drawn cart or line of marching, dying prisoners. This is made all the more challenging by the dearth of official documentation and testimonies from Eastern Europe, as Cornelia Shati-Geissler, who currently heads the Deportations of Jews research project, as well as other researchers on the project (Avi Kotsere-Burg, Chaim Moykopf, Marta Marzanska-Mishani and Dymitr Kolotilenko) so ably demonstrated in their presentations.

Chronologically speaking, too, the previously-held notion that deportations occurred during specific years of WWII alone, and that they were only used to transport victims to their ultimate deaths, is also being challenged. Victims – including a minority of non-Jews as well – were transported before the outbreak of WWII and, towards its conclusion, were taken out of the death camps to provide much needed slave labor for the failing German war machine. Historian Deborah Hartmann illustrated this new perspective in her fascinating look at how the Memorial and Educational Site at the House of the Wannsee Conference has exhibited the topic of deportations over the last three decades, most recently spread throughout the exhibition

to reflect it being "part of the entire process… a crucial element that connects forced immigration to mass annihilation."

Further, claimed Prof. Cole, the deportations themselves became sites of murder, as many victims suffocated or starved to death, or were shot, clubbed, bayonetted or bombed along ever-decreasing distances as the war drew to its inevitable end. The unique case of Greece – with one of the highest murder rates in Europe during the Shoah, and its three separate occupations zones – was brought by Yad Vashem educator Lea Micha in her lecture "Down to the Last Jew: The Deportation of Greek Jews to Auschwitz." Although many of the witness accounts collected by the Deportations Project staff upon which Micha bases her teaching are patchy and confused, they are nevertheless, as Micha concluded, "a source of information and confirmation, and a way to record the psychological milieu of the deportees."

"Deportation as a procedure was indispensable for the killing of over half of the victims of the Holocaust, but on an individual basis it took many forms depending on place and time," concluded Prof. Browning, "Each was a discrete event and deserves to be identified and researched, and its historical record preserved."

The Symposium took place with the generous support of the Gutwirth Family Fund.

The "Transports to Extinction: Holocaust (Shoah) Deportation Database" is generously supported by: The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany; The estate of Isaac Jacques Cohen of France, survivor from Thessaloniki; SNCF - Société Nationale des Chemins de fer Français; The Canadian Society for Yad Vashem; and other partners.
On 25 April 2022, “Before My Very Eyes," the new Yad Vashem Educational Center for Holocaust Remembrance at the Ariel Sharon IDF Training Campus in the Negev, was officially opened. Created in cooperation with the IDF Educational Corps, the Center aims to teach Israeli soldiers about the Holocaust, inspire them by the ways in which the Jews dealt with the challenges during that period, and encourage them to reflect on their own roles in society – today and in the future.

What are your moral obligations to your country and people? How can you best handle the responsibility of national service and leadership? In which ways can you become a constructive contributor to society – today and in the future?

These deep, personal and conceptual questions offer a microcosm of those encountered by young people in Israel and around the globe, who today are flooded with information and often struggle to find their place in a complex world. When talking about soldiers serving in Israel’s Defense Forces, these issues become all the more focused.
In April 2017, Yad Vashem’s Education Corps, in partnership with the IDF, educated tens of thousands of members of the IDF and security forces in Holocaust Studies, programs, and Yad Vashem, an integral part of its educational activities. Holocaust studies are rounded citizens as well as programs aim to help shape future leaders.

Osnat Nir (ON): IDF educational program from within an army base. The single room could host approximately 30,000 soldiers annually. In contrast, the new Center enables around 60,000 soldiers to participate in programs per year, with multiple groups able to participate in activities simultaneously and flexible spaces which allow for different focuses and repeat visits.

Which main elements define the Center?
Shani Lourie-Farhi (SLF): The new Educational Center was created to give an educational response to the needs of the young soldiers and their commanders, and is centered on a value-based discourse regarding the central issues in the prewar Jewish world, as well as how they coped during the Holocaust.

The architecture and design bring soldiers from their physical, exhausting training into an experiential learning space. Soldiers arrive with a range of religious, ethnic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, not to mention levels of familiarity with the Holocaust. As young people today typically consume information in a less hierarchal, less formal way, the displays allow an active learning experience, using technology to reveal more information throughout the visit.

“The Center will be a platform for the discussion of authority and ethics arising from Holocaust commemoration, as well as the importance of Jewish continuity.” Dani Dayan

How is the visitor experience enhanced?
SLF: In designing the Center, decisions were made based on how much time the groups would spend there, at what points they would be sitting, standing or moving around, and how much they would be actively participating or speaking, or passively listening or watching a screen.

ON: Furthermore, the eight stories presented in the Center are not solely representative of geography or specific groups, but rather were created to speak to the soldiers - a young adult population - so they focus on either young adult leaders or those that influenced them.

In what ways does the Center enable around 60,000 soldiers to participate in programs annually? In contrast, the new Center will be opened to civilian groups from the Israeli south, helping to create new and effective educational models for the young people of today and tomorrow, in Jerusalem, throughout Israel and around the world.

What was Yad Vashem’s role in the creation of the Center? Osnat Nir (ON): IDF educational programs aim to help shape rounded citizens as well as motivated, effective and moral soldiers. Holocaust studies are an integral part of its educational programs, and Yad Vashem, through the International School for Holocaust Studies, has educated hundreds of thousands of members of the IDF and security forces in partnership with the IDF Education Corps.

In April 2017, Yad Vashem opened the Holocaust Remembrance and Heroism Educational Center in the Ariel Sharon Training Campus: “The Human Image in the Shadow of Death.” This was both the first center Yad Vashem opened outside of its Jerusalem campus and also the first time the IDF allowed an external organization to operate a permanent educational facility.

The discussion rooms allow officers to delve into topics with their soldiers.
When we teach soldiers about ethics, we don’t just get better soldiers, we get better citizens.”

Col. (Ret.) Avi Motola, Former Commanding Officer of the Ariel Sharon IDF Training Campus in the Negev

“Before My Very Eyes” was opened in the presence of Head of the IDF Technological and Logistics Directorate Major General Michel Yanko; IDF Chief Education Officer Brig. Gen. Ofir Levius; Commander of the Ariel Sharon Training Campus Lieut. Col. Chai Kfir Magnez; Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan and his predecessor Avner Shalev; Yad Vashem CEO Brig. Gen. (res.) Tzvika Fayirizen and his predecessor Dorit Novak; Holocaust survivor Dr. Giselle Cycowicz; Yad Vashem Pillars David and Sharon Halpern; Director of Yad Vashem’s International Relations Division Dr. Haim Gertner and his predecessor Shaya Ben Yehuda.

“Before My Very Eyes” is generously sponsored by founding donors: Bob and Amy Book and Family, USA; The Wilf Family, USA; and David and Sharon Halpern, USA. The new Educational Center was also supported by: Rebecca and Harold Finger, Australia; Sam and Nancy Shame and Family, USA; Genesis Philanthropy Group; The Shnay Family, USA; Deborah and Martin Vine and Family, USA; Nicole Ligeti, USA; The Graham and Rhona Beck Foundation Israel; Itz Danon, South Africa; Tony and Cara Herbert, UK; The Itkin Family, USA; Jonathan Feldman; The Samson Charity Foundation, Germany; Stuart Ferster, UK; and anonymous donors.
In April 2022, Dr. Gilad Olshtein began his new role as Director of the International School for Holocaust Studies and Lily Safra Chair for Holocaust Education, replacing Dr. Eyal Kaminka, who headed the School since 2013.

Dr. Olshtein is one of the founders of Israel’s pre-military academies, and for over two decades directed the Nachshon Social Leadership Academy, while spearheading significant breakthrough educational projects elsewhere.

A longtime resident of Modi’in in Central Israel, Dr. Olshtein is on the board of the pluralistic Yahad School in the city, which is committed to the educational integration of pupils from a wide spectrum of backgrounds and communities. He is no stranger to Yad Vashem, having directed the School’s course for guides of Israeli groups visiting Poland and other projects.

“I enter my position as the School Director with a sense of mission and with a deep understanding of the importance of the International School at Yad Vashem, and of bringing the story of the Holocaust to the State of Israel and to the whole world,” said Dr. Olshtein. “As a student and participant in various educational programs and projects here, I always felt a sense of belonging, professionalism and commitment. The day-to-day work of the International School is an invaluable asset, and my role is to assist, nurture and promote its vital activities.”

In February 2022, the International School for Holocaust Studies signed an agreement with the Buenos Aires Holocaust Museum, which will see, among other developments, the expansion of educational programming, the sharing of archival resources, the promotion of academic research and the display of Yad Vashem traveling exhibitions throughout Argentina. The two institutions later held a joint event marking Holocaust Remembrance Day, with Chairman Dani Dayan - a native Argentinean - and Museum President Marcelo Mindlin both presiding over the event. The International School is also in the final stages of drafting an agreement with the Argentine Ministry of Education and, following the visit of the Argentine Minister of the Interior in April 2022, Yad Vashem is now drafting an archival agreement with Argentina as well.

“We are delighted that we have been able to reach such impactful agreements with our Argentinian partners,” said Richelle Budd Caplan, Director of the International Relations and Projects Department at the International School for Holocaust Studies. “We are currently preparing similar agreements with governmental bodies in El Salvador, Honduras and Peru – all of whom are keen to adopt our tailor-made programs for their own learning populations.”

In addition to its comprehensive and growing website in Spanish, Yad Vashem is continuing to expand its network of partners in South America, in order to enhance its endeavors and groups of “ambassadors” throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

In April 2022, Dr. Gilad Olshtein touring the Holocaust History Museum during his visit to Yad Vashem on 24 April 2022
The new course will enrich participants’ understanding of the history of the Holocaust through the participation of Spanish-speaking experts from Israel, Spain, Latin America and the US. In addition, Yad Vashem expert educators share their innovative pedagogical approaches to Holocaust education, and present ready-to-apply workshops for the classroom.

The video-based course, the first of its kind completely in Spanish, exposes learners step by step to the ideology and developments that lead to the systematic mass murder of 6,000,000 Jews – men, women and children. This is aided by the presentation of archival materials, visuals and footage, timelines, maps, artworks and specially developed materials, all of which aid in the understanding of main historical concepts and figures of the Holocaust.

In addition, the course discusses the impact of the Holocaust in Spanish-speaking countries, both during and after WWII: the migration processes of survivors; how they were received in different countries by governments and society; their adaptation to their new homes; and Holocaust commemoration in the Spanish-speaking world.

“Having worked extensively with partners in Latin-America and Spain for many years, we are aware of the need to continue to develop professional and high-level training programs in Spanish that present Shoah education in a relevant and accessible way, and that will serve to increase the reach of Holocaust education in Spanish-speaking environments,” explains Dr. Na’ama Shik, Director of Yad Vashem’s E-Learning Department. “This new course will provide access to Yad Vashem unparalleled resources for teaching the Holocaust, and provide opportunities for follow-up and mentoring in Holocaust education by Yad Vashem’s Spanish-speaking experts.”

The course discusses the impact of the Holocaust in Spanish-speaking countries, both during and after WWII.

Bracha Wiener was twelve years old when WWII erupted. She spent the war years hidden in the forests of Poland, in the vicinity of her hometown of Staszow. Bracha is one of the survivors who share their personal stories on Yad Vashem’s new Spanish-language free online course (MOOC): “The Holocaust: The Abyss of Humanity.”

From the testimony of Bracha Wiener, featured in “The Holocaust: The Abyss of Humanity”
At the Teresiano School in Asunción, Paraguay, Cristina Diaz Yampey, a middle-school Spanish Language and Literature teacher, and her colleagues carry out a project called “Discrimination Kills.” Based on the Diary of Anne Frank, this interdisciplinary project addresses the issue of discrimination: the work is read and discussed in Spanish lessons; manifestations of discrimination are analyzed in Ethics classes; and in History courses, the historical context of WWII is dissected.

After examining the characters in the diary and the situations they experienced, the students develop an audiovisual project in which they integrate the knowledge they have acquired during the project, bolstered by their own personal reflections.

Since Yampey participated in a Yad Vashem educational seminar in January 2020, “Discrimination Kills” has been conducted differently; the textbook I Wanted to Fly Like a Butterfly, which relays the story of Holocaust survivor Hannah Gofrit to younger students, is studied – either in the place of the Diary of Anne Frank, or in a complementary fashion – using the pedagogical approach of Yad Vashem, which teaches the Holocaust from the perspective of Jews before, during and after the Holocaust in an age-appropriate manner.

“My participation in the seminar at Yad Vashem enabled me to contact survivors, or their close relatives, who kindly agreed to relay their experiences to the children who take part in the project,” explains Yampey. “This encounter is an impactful and emotional experience for both the students and the staff at our school.”

Reflecting on the words of Elie Wiesel, that “What hurts the victims the most is not the cruelty of the oppressor, but the silence of the bystander,” Yampey relates: “This expression is sadly a reality in which we still painfully live: one of indifference, which today is still latent in our society, because we are afraid of speaking the truth and being rejected for it. Unfortunately, we have not learned enough from history.”

Abigail Park, an eighth-grade student at Yampey’s school, agrees. “The project showed me that we are habitually discriminating against each other to the point that we are even unaware of it,” she comments. “This project helped me reflect on the different types of discrimination that happen everywhere, and my exposure to them on a daily basis.”

“We are proud of the work of our graduates and their projects across the world, and we are always ready to provide professional and material assistance and to make the meanings of the Holocaust relevant to every community,” said Dr. Noa Mkayton, Director of the International School’s Overseas Education and Training Department. “We thank Cristina Diaz Yampey and the “Discrimination Kills” team for their dedication and commitment to this effort, and their sound approach that follows our tried-and-tested pedagogical guidelines.”

The author is Head of Educational Programming for Spanish and Portuguese Countries, International School for Holocaust Studies.
In November 2021, a group of police cadets in the city of Tulua, Colombia, donned Nazi paraphernalia, including swastikas and SS uniforms, during what was intended to be a cultural exchange event between Colombian and German police forces. Photos of the event uploaded to Facebook were quickly discovered and removed, with the German and Israeli consulates condemning the actions, and requesting that the event be thoroughly investigated.

The President of Colombia offered a formal apology and the head of the Tulua police training academy was fired.

But for Yad Vashem, this was not enough, and, at the request of Israel’s Foreign Ministry, acted to make a deeper change in the Colombian police. Through diplomatic channels, and with the support of the Confederation of Jewish Communities of Colombia, the International School for Holocaust Studies’ Educational Programming for Spanish and Portuguese-Speaking Countries – headed by Eliana Rapp Badihi, and alongside Educational Coordinator Yechiel Chilewski – suggested a series of educational seminars for police cadets in the Latin-American country. The pilot program, focusing on police-in-training, has its parallels with a similar program conducted by Yad Vashem with cadets in Germany.

A number of hybrid seminars and workshops took place between mid-March and the beginning of May 2022, focusing on the Jewish people, historical antisemitism, the “Final Solution,” Holocaust denial and distortion, and testimonies from Holocaust survivors residing in Colombia. The workshops, in particular the unit on Bialystok, examined the acts and decisions of uniformed perpetrators during the Holocaust in addition to the dilemmas of the persecuted Jews, and the reactions of their non-Jewish neighbors. After analyzing these different actions and reactions, the participants were invited to reflect upon the dynamics of violent events and symbols today, and their role within contemporary events.

The cadets responded in particular to the testimony of Gitel Chajikowski-Plac, a Jewish educator in an orphanage in Bialystok, by comparing their own experiences with her courageous actions. While Chajikowski-Plac saved children from her orphanage, risking her life under Nazi occupation, the cadets viewed their work as dedicating their own lives to the protection of Colombians.

“We are willing to do what takes to go out, risking our lives… helping others. This is an important value for us, as police officers, to have,” said one cadet. Another, echoing messages of “Never Again,” said: “This hatred must end. We, as public servants, and I, as a police officer, must ensure this revolution.”

“We hope that this series will serve as merely the beginning to something greater,” said Rapp Badihi. “Our aim is that other countries, not only in the region, but also around the world, will see it as a basis upon which to build their own training programs and engage more thoroughly with Holocaust education, in order to combat antisemitism in the training of their police forces.”

The author is Administrative Assistant in the International Relations and Projects Department, International School for Holocaust Studies.
During a recent three-month fellowship at Yad Vashem’s International Institute for Holocaust Research, Dr. Lev Topor focused on the topic of online Holocaust denial on anonymous platforms such as the dark web – online content that isn’t indexed by search engines and that requires special software or authorization to access.

Dr. Topor raises several interesting insights from this line of study. First, Holocaust denial is very similar in nature to mis/disinformation, or “fake news,” online. Indeed, he claims, the same tactics are used to disseminate antisemitic propaganda as to spread fake news. Second, while Holocaust denial originates mostly in antisemitic or neo-Nazi circles, it is frequently espoused by non-extremists – members of the public who consume pseudo-scientific and pseudo-authentic information from the dark web. “This information is perceived by many as a “red pill” [a gateway to the truth] simply because it was published or leaked on the dark web, and so they chose to believe it over reliable academic research,” explains Dr. Topor. “Even if they do not blame Jews or deny the Holocaust, they still believe distorted information that, generally and over time, will downgrade the scale and extent of the Holocaust.”

With all this in mind, Dr. Topor stresses that “Holocaust education, even from a young age, is crucial. Once a person is more aware and educated about the topic, they will be less likely to believe mis/disinformation about the Holocaust spread by antisemites and neo-Nazis.”

Dr. Topor suggests that his research could even enhance studies of antisemitism, racism and genocide. “I can see how my investigations may be further developed through psychological study,” he concludes. “This could also contribute to the general study of mis/disinformation about minority groups that suffer from hate – mainly Jews, but also others.”

Leah Goldstein

From Dr. Topor’s forthcoming book: Phishing For Nazis: White Supremacy Conspiracies and Communities on the Dark Web (Routledge)
In honor of its fiftieth volume, *Yad Vashem Studies* is producing two special issues on the topic of the experiences and fate of the Jewish elderly before, during and after the period of Nazi persecution.
**RESEARCH**

The first issue of this volume (50:1) features a number of articles on the topic, including the fate of elderly Jews in Nazi Germany as well as in German-occupied Polish and Soviet territories, and how elderly survivors were received in the United States. Emmanuelle Moscovitz, who works in Yad Vashem's Archives Division, is the author of a previously unresearched topic: the General Chaplaincy of the Jews of France and the efforts of its rabbis in aiding the elderly during WWII. These rabbis, who were all French citizens, had served as military chaplains during the 1939-1940 campaign against Germany. With the fall of France in June 1940, the chaplains were sent to the southern unoccupied zone to serve the demilitarized Jewish soldiers and the dispersed communities bereft of religious guidance. Very soon, however, their efforts were focused on the thousands of Jews of foreign nationality detained in French internment camps.

The article brings to the forefront the specific challenges faced by the elderly Jews in France's southern zone, and help to fill a void that has yet to be the topic of any in-depth research – mostly due to the dearth of sources dealing specifically with this group. Considering the advanced age of the subjects, postwar testimonies and memoirs are scarce; among those who had survived the war, most died before testimonies began to be recorded systematically in the 1960s. And yet, the topic of the elderly Jews during the Holocaust in France warrants a particular focus, as this group was among the first and last of the detainees in French internment camps and hospices.

Among the 7,000 Jews deported from the German provinces of Baden and Palatinate to the French unoccupied zone on 22 October 1940, forty percent were over the age of sixty, and over 200 were over the age of eighty. The advanced age of the first detainees prompted Rabbi René Kapel to make a plea for help to the Chief Rabbi of France as early as September 1940: “The sick and the elderly will never be able to adapt to existence in these conditions.” Indeed, a month after the arrival of the Jews to Gurs camp, a chaplaincy reported stated that 118 burials had taken place in Gurs, an average of five deaths a day.

The onset of the deportations from France's unoccupied zone in August 1942 would mark a turning point. During this first wave of deportations in the summer of 1942, the elderly Jews (those aged over sixty) were – at least on paper – meant to be exempt from the deportation measures. However, the lists of exemptions were not always respected, and, for example, the first transport from Gurs comprised, as reported, “exactly 1,000 individuals, men and women aged 18-86.”

The conditions in the camps after the deportations of 1942 remained dire, and efforts were made to transfer the elderly Jews to hospices more suited to their specific needs. While the conditions in the hospices were an improvement, however, many elderly Jews felt even more isolated than ever, and letters of complaint were sent to the Chaplaincy. In one case, a request was made to return the elderly Jews to the South of France during the Holocaust in France warrants a particular focus, as this group was among the first and last of the detainees in French internment camps and hospices.

The reports written by the rabbis illustrate the specific challenges faced by the elderly Jews in France's southern zone, and help fill a void that has yet to be the topic of any in-depth research.

The reports written by the rabbis illustrate the specific challenges faced by the elderly Jews in France's southern zone, and help fill a void that has yet to be the topic of any in-depth research.
Unlike in Central and Western Europe, during the Holocaust most Soviet Jews were shot to death near their places of residence by firing squads composed of Nazi Germans and local collaborators. Nevertheless, at the same time, and in the same regions, other murder methods were also carried out, such as the use of gas vans.

Such was the cruel fate of some 50 Jewish children evacuated by the Soviet authorities, along with about 200 medical personnel and 1,500 other sick children, from convalescent homes in Ukraine as well as on the Crimean Peninsula to a convalescent home in the city of Teberda. In the summer of 1942, Teberda was occupied by Romanian forces, and in November 1942, the Germans entered the city. The Jewish children were forced to wear a badge on their arm with the Star of David emblem. On 11 December, all Jewish faculty members were informed that the next day they, along with the Jewish children, would be sent to forced labor in the mines. The next day, 54 Jewish children were gathered in a hall, where they were held for two days under inhuman conditions and then put in a gas van that drove away. An hour later it returned, empty. The bodies of the murdered children had been thrown into the Gonachkhir River. The story of the gassing of the Jewish children was later described to the research team of Yad Vashem's central digital system, this transition opens up a wide range of possibilities. Through the use of gas vans, the use of gas vans was extended to other regions within the territorial borders of the Soviet Union, as well as current research on the subject are presented.

Recently, the project has undergone a fundamental change: a move to a new technological platform, which houses all of Yad Vashem's other databases, such as the Names Database, the Righteous Among the Nations Database and the Yad Vashem Collections Databases. In addition to the updated design of the site, a much higher response speed and information retention within Yad Vashem's central digital system, this transition opens up a wide range of options for users: the ability to perform extensive searches across databases: specific divisions according to a variety of parameters such as time, geography, witness names and methods of murder; and a useful cross-referencing of the relevant information. Now, for example, a user can search the site and see the full results: the stories of 44 murders in gas vans. The same cases can be analyzed by geographical data, time periods, number of murders, operations and other data.

The connection of this important project to other Yad Vashem databases allows for the most comprehensive results possible,” explains Director of the Research Institute, Dr. Iael Nidam Orvieto. “For example, although most of the Jews of the Soviet Union were not sent to central extermination areas, this issue still comes up from time to time while researching murder sites. Thus, in the Belarusian capital of Minsk, Jews lived in the ghetto alongside others who had been deported from Western countries, Germany, and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. They were concentrated in a separate area called the 'Hamburg Ghetto' – and the link to the relevant page in the Deportations project is a natural progression.” In addition, alongside 23 murder sites in the vicinity of Minsk, the "Untold Stories" project displays other murder sites that were found some ten kilometers from the town of Dzerzhinsk. At the beginning of March 1942, five thousand Jews from the Minsk ghetto were transported by train to the area between Dzerzhinsk and Stankovo, where they were shot to death in pre-prepared pits. Even during the liquidation of the ghetto – which began in June and lasted until October 1943 – a number of deportations to the Majdanek and Sobibor death camps took place. Here, too, the connection to the Deportations Project helps give a more complete picture of the history of the Jews in Minsk during the Holocaust.

The author is a researcher and Coordinator in the Moshe Mirilashvili Center for Research on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union, International Institute for Holocaust Research.
In recent years, the voices of Holocaust survivors originally from the Soviet Union have been heard more clearly in Yad Vashem’s testimonies. The war raging in recent months in Ukraine, in areas where the systematic mass extermination of European Jews began, triggers memories from those days. These voices are an opportunity to listen to the memories of the Holocaust from a different perspective.
At the end of WWII, Jews in the Soviet Union were not recognized as a group with a story – and pain – of their own. In Israel, too, given the centrality of the Holocaust in consciousness, little attention was paid to narratives that deviate from the one already shaped regarding Jewish life before the war, the experiences of the Holocaust and its commemoration. Testifying in Russian allows people from the Soviet Union to share their memories – often, for the first time in their lives. This is how their story is given a voice in the history of the Holocaust. The documents and photographs accompanying the testimony provide it with the context and illustration that is almost beyond words.

"The Great War of the Homeland" – this is how WWII was burned into the consciousness of the Jews of the USSR, as part of the general ethos of the society in which they lived. This "Great War" began, for many of them, on 22 June 1941, the day Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Along with the German invasion, the mass extermination of Jews began in the newly occupied territories. The murders lasted from the summer of 1941 until the liberation of the eastern territories during 1944. Russian Jews were led to their fate, usually at killing pits. Communities were wiped out in their entirety – sometimes leaving no trace. Less than three percent of those left in the territories occupied by the Germans in 1941 survived until the war’s end.

Mikhail Portnoy, born in 1936 in Kiev, was brought to Babi Yar in September 1941. His testimony is a window into the massacre, from the point of view of a five-year-old boy: "Two stood next to me: one older, one younger, tall men, then they started firing from that side. I fell with them and the earth covered me… I have this question – is it possible that this German did not shoot me? He shot above me… and murdered these two… and I survived."

With the advance of the German army, some 16 million Soviet civilians – about 1.5 million Jews – were evacuated from the front: the organized withdrawal of the industrial, administrative and human infrastructure to the still unoccupied territories in the heartland of the Soviet Union. The chaos among the mass population movement exposed the evacuees to harsh living conditions. The plight of the children is evident in survivor testimonies – youngsters who raise themselves while their parents are absent or preoccupied with daily survival.

Mara Piratinsky (née Nelik), born in 1934, Odessa, was seven years old during the German invasion. She and her mother were evacuated to the city of Saratov on the banks of the Volga River. On the way, she saw those who had been killed and wounded by the bombings. In part of her testimony, Mara recreates the cries surrounding her during that harrowing journey: "Leave, throw away the dead, take the wounded!" Mara describes two terrified women she and her mother encountered on their way: "Their eyes were wild! Each one held a small child. Two more children clung to their skirts. And they both cried out… they had each lost a child."

Eva Vexler, born in 1936 in Kiev, fled with her family to Mordovia in the center of Russia’s European territory. In an episode during her testimony, she refers to expressions of compassion among strangers even during the evacuation: a lone girl who was taken under their care, until she was located by her relatives.
Soviet Jews were led to their fate, usually at so-called killing pits. Communities were wiped out in their entirety – sometimes leaving no trace.

As long as they were not under occupation, Soviet Jews therefore faced the reality of war – the scarcity and the suffering – as part of general society. Even before the war, a mosaic developed that was different from the familiar one of Jewish identities in the Soviet Union as a result of Sovietization and the dismantling of Jewish life frameworks. The threats of war also sharpened the question of the standing of Jews within Soviet society. In Vexler’s testimony, these tensions and complexities emerge through the controversy surrounding Soviet propaganda and the credibility of its claims about the Germans. Her grandfather allowed himself to express skepticism towards the “Bolsheviks who do not believe in God.” In response, his granddaughter, Eva’s sister, was quick to warn him that she would have to report him to the authorities. This, while still addressing him in Yiddish as Zeidka (Grandpa). Her grandfather was ultimately brutally murdered by the Germans.

The “Great War” left many war orphans and widows. While the majority of the Jews in the German-occupied territories were murdered and a few managed to escape, in many families the fathers, and sometimes the mothers as well, enlisted in the war against the Nazis. About half a million Jewish soldiers fought in the Red Army. Many of them won titles of heroism and took part in the continued liberation campaign of Europe. About 200,000 of them did not return. Mikhail Portnoy, whose father was killed fighting in the Red Army, concludes his testimony with the experience of deprivation and pain typical of war children: “If Father had stayed alive, I would have been a different person.”

“The testimonies of Mikhail, Mara and Eva are joined by numerous testimonies of survivors and evacuees from the USSR collected on behalf of Yad Vashem in recent years,” says Director of Yad Vashem’s Archives Division Masha Pollak-Rozenberg. “In this way, our databases of knowledge about the fate of the Jewish people in the twentieth century are enriched with new documentation, which illuminates life before, during and after the Holocaust from wider perspectives.”

For more information on giving testimony: +972-2-6443888; testimonies@yadvashem.org.il
The new prize was awarded to Stigter for her film *Three Minutes: A Lengthening* (2021), which, according to the judges, is “a meditative and visually and narratively rich film that brings back to life three forgotten minutes filmed in 1938 in the Polish village of Nasielsk, as a result of the comprehensive and profound research that focused on the circumstances of the film’s production. The film tells the story of the village and its Jewish residents, who held a variety of world views, and lived together side by side, while returning to life the names and voices of some of those who appear in the film.”

“This film presents the kind of detective work in which Yad Vashem researchers and historians engage as they seek to identify people and places, and create meaningful context for otherwise obscure and opaque historical fragments,” said Liat Benhabib, Director of Yad Vashem’s Visual Center. “The choice to use images appearing in the original film exclusively, and the focus on the preservation and identification process creates a visual essay that also deals with the fascinating relationship between sound and image. *Three Minutes: A Lengthening* is a tight and unique work that places in the forefront the ‘archaeological excavation’ of a film, from the first generation of the history of filmmaking, as well as of victims and survivors of the Holocaust.”

Stigter, a respected author, cultural journalist and critic in the Netherlands, first came across the story in a Facebook post. The post noted that the footage was available to watch through the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. Stigter contacted writer Glenn Kurtz, Guggenheim Fellow and the grandson of David Kurtz, who shot the 1938 footage. The younger Kurtz had set out to restore the film and wrote a book based on his journey called *Three Minutes in Poland: Discovering a Lost World in a 1938 Family Film*. Stigter began by creating a video essay about the Kurtz material, by invitation of the International Film Festival, Rotterdam. The essay evolved into the full-length documentary that was screened at the prestigious film festivals of Venice and Toronto, receiving critical acclaim and public attention.

“I was amazed by the immediacy of the images, the color, and the joy in the footage,” said Stigter on receiving the award. “On the other hand, the knowledge that only a year or so later, all of this would be erased, would disappear, was devastating. I wanted those three minutes to go on longer.”

That’s how this whole project started.” Regarding the creative process, Stigter added: “I needed to construct a memory for each of the people in the film, based on all that was left: an image. My film protests against this erasure; it ensures that something remains, something that can be seen. At the end of my film, it was important for me to perpetuate the memory of everyone in it. It means the world to me that this effort has been recognized by Yad Vashem.”

The film premiered in Israel in May 2022, at Docaviv, the leading international documentary film festival in Israel, where Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan presented the new Yad Vashem Award. “Cinema – both in feature films and documentary form – continues to play a definitive role in Holocaust remembrance and awareness,” said Dayan. “With the rise of Holocaust distortion and misappropriation, this role will be even more crucial for today’s youth as they navigate the relevance of Holocaust memory in their own lives.”
In March 2020, the Vatican opened the WWII Archive for the Pius XII period, and made it accessible to researchers for the first time.

The Pius XII pontifical period spans from 1939 to 1958, making these archives vital for understanding the events of the Holocaust.

The newly accessible collections are dispersed throughout several archives, notably: the Archives for the Relations with the States (ASRS); the Archives for the Doctrine of the Faith (ACDF); the Archives for the Congregation of the Eastern Churches (ACO); the Archives of the central government of the Society of Jesus (ARSI); and the Vatican Apostolic Archives (AAV).

Yad Vashem has been surveying the material in these archives since the opening of the Pius XII collection in order to map out the documentation relevant to the Shoah.

Among the important collections of the Pius XII pontificate is that of the Commissione Soccorsi (Rescue Commission) held in the Vatican Apostolic Archives. The Commissione Soccorsi commenced its work in September 1939 in order to deal with the request for aid and relief sent to the Holy See by individuals, organizations and institutions. Comprising approximately 800,000 pages of documentation, the Commissione Soccorsi collection contains a multitude of relevant materials regarding individual Jews requesting aid from the Vatican; the war in various countries; humanitarian relief; and displaced persons, abandoned children and other postwar issues.

For Yad Vashem, these documents will help piece together individual fates of victims.

Recently, the Vatican Apostolic Archive and Yad Vashem signed an agreement, through which the entire collection will be digitized. The project will span four years, with the World Holocaust Remembrance Center receiving 200,000 scanned pages of documentation at the end of each year. The digital copies of this important collection will then be made available to researchers at Yad Vashem, enabling thorough and innovative exploration on a variety of topics relating to the Vatican, from micro-histories of individual victims to humanitarianism in general, as well various other Holocaust-related topics related to Italy and the Vatican.

"The digitization of the Commissione Soccorsi records is an exciting first acquisitions project by Yad Vashem of the newly opened Pius XII Archive, one of the most significant corpuses of Holocaust-related documentation in the world," says Masha Pollak-Rozenberg, Director of Yad Vashem’s Archives Division. "We eagerly anticipate utilizing these records for the sake of accurate Holocaust research, and look forward to even more Vatican collections being made available to historians in the near future."

"During this historic meeting today with His Holiness Pope Francis, I felt the weight of responsibility as someone who represents not only myself, and not only the present, but rather the entire Jewish people throughout history," said Dayan. "This is why I offered the Pope all of Yad Vashem’s expertise and influence - our abilities, materials and scholarship - in order to address the issues related to the Holocaust and the Church in particular, and on the worldwide stage in general."

On 9 June 2022, Dani Dayan met with Pope Francis – the first private audience of a Yad Vashem Chairman with a Pope in the Vatican.

Pope Francis last visited Yad Vashem in 2014, but this historic meeting had a different focus – to bolster collaborative activities between Yad Vashem and the Vatican in areas of Holocaust remembrance, education and documentation, and to discuss efforts to fight antisemitism and racism worldwide.

"Yad Vashem's "Acquisition of Archival Materials from the Vatican Archives: Digitizing the Commissione Soccorsi Collection" is generously supported by The David Berg Foundation."
Those Who Survived: The Resistance, Depортation, and Return of the Jews from Salonika in the 1940s
Rika Benveniste
NIS 127

Before WWII, more than 50,000 Jews lived in Salonika (Thessaloniki), Greece. More than 46,000 of them were deported to the Nazi death camps, and around 96 percent of them were murdered. The book tells the story of a few of the survivors. Using a vast wealth of personal testimonies and archival documents, it traces the trajectories of three groups of people – a group of about twenty young Jews from Salonika who joined the partisans; 100–200 Jews from Salonika who survived the Nazi concentration and death camps, subsequently becoming DPs in the Feldafing camp, Germany; and the fate of one family deported to Bergen-Belsen.

Years of Defiance: The Herbert Baum Group and Jewish Resistance in Berlin
Charlotte Holzer
NIS 68

Charlotte Holzer was a nurse by training. Her efforts to improve the working conditions at the city’s Jewish hospital led her to establish contacts with Communist activists. Following a chance encounter with Herbert Baum, Holzer joined his resistance group. The Baum Group organized and executed an arson attack, and although it caused only minor damage, the Nazis hunted down, tortured, and murdered most of its members. Holzer managed to evade the initial wave of arrests, survived imprisonment, and made a daring escape from a Nazi camp on the eve of her execution. Hiding under false identities, she was subsequently reunited with her daughter and eventually remarried.

Danna J. Azrieli
NIS 68

David J. Azrieli was born in Maków Mazowiecki, Poland. This gripping account of survival describes his travels, always one step ahead of life-threatening danger, which took him to the Soviet-occupied zones of Poland and later to Ukraine, Tashkent and Buchara. He subsequently served in the Anders Army, before making his way from Baghdad to the frontiers of British Mandatory Palestine. The memoir chronicles his studies at the Technion, his experiences as a soldier in the War of Independence, and his realization that most of his family had been lost in the Holocaust. This story is all the more remarkable given Azrieli’s later achievements as a successful real estate developer and philanthropist.
NEW BENEFACTORS:

ANN (ANIKO) AND GABOR (GABY) NEWMARK z”l

Ann (Aniko) Newmark, together with her children George (Monique, Hudson and Marielle) and Susan Winthrop (Marc, Jackson and Kaitlyn) became new Yad Vashem Benefactors through their generous support of the Names Collection Center in memory of their beloved husband, father and grandfather, Gabor (Gaby) Newmark z”l.

Gaby and his parents were the only members of his extended family to survive the Holocaust, and he believed passionately in remembering not just his own Hungarian family members who were murdered, but also all those whose names may have been forgotten.

Gaby was an agile 13-year-old teenager when he was deported to Auschwitz. His strength and physique helped him survive; he was chosen by the barbaric Dr. Mengele to be put to work instead of being sent to his death. He maintained this athletic passion throughout his life, first playing for the Hungarian national soccer team, and then as a soccer official and a lifelong New York sports fan.

Gaby built a successful business based on honor, integrity and respect. In his early years in the US, he did not speak about the atrocities he endured during his childhood, instead choosing to express pride in his family, his business, his love of Judaism and his community. Only when his grandchildren entered their curiosity-filled teenage years, did Gaby begin to tell stories of his time in Hungary and his experiences during the war. In November 2017, Gaby was called to the Torah along with his eldest grandson Jackson in a shared Bar Mitzvah – completing the Jewish circle of life which the Nazis tried in vain to sever.

Yad Vashem welcomes Thomas Guttman as a New Benefactor in the Yad Vashem circle of friends.

The Guttmann family’s support of Yad Vashem’s Art and Book Store, located in the Square of Hope at the exit of the Holocaust History Museum, honors Thomas’s parents, Ladislav and Margit Gutman.

Having survived the Holocaust, they carried great burdens and were able to overcome unimaginable hardships, and ultimately succeeded in building a new life in the United States.

Thomas is grateful to be able to generously support various philanthropies, such as the American Friends of Magen David Adom.

Thomas Guttmann chose Yad Vashem’s singular commitment to commemorating and studying the Holocaust as the most significant place to memorialize his parents’ remarkable journey from Nazi terror to freedom.

THOMAS GUTTMAN
RECENT VISITS FEBRUARY-MAY 2022

Yad Vashem recently welcomed distinguished guests from around the world, who toured its extensive campus and reaffirmed their commitment to expanding Holocaust remembrance and education in their respective countries.

President of the Austrian National Council Wolfgang Sobotka, 16 May 2022

Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg, 30 March 2022

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, 30 May 2022

Kosovo Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz, 9 May 2022

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, accompanied by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett during his visit, 2 March 2022

Bundestag President Barbel Bas, 27 April 2022

Slovak Foreign Minister Ivan Kozlo, and Speaker of the Slovak National Council Boris Kollár, 13 April 2022

Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt, 23 March 2022
On 6 April 2022, Yad Vashem hosted a high-level Uzbek delegation led by Uzbekistan’s Ambassador to Israel H.E. Mr. Feruza Makhmudova and Chief Archivist Ulugbek Yusupov, which culminated in signing an important agreement regarding access to Holocaust-era archives.

Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, a government operation began to evacuate eastern industrial centers, military establishments and professionals required to continue the war effort against the Nazi forces. At the same time, an organized evacuation of a civilian population to the east of the country began to the Soviet territories that were outside the scope of the threat of Nazi occupation, including Uzbekistan. Among the approximately 1.5 million Soviet citizens who fled to Uzbekistan in 1941-1942 were also many Jews.

The delegation to Yad Vashem included directors of historical museums and universities, as well as heads of the Jewish community in Uzbekistan and representatives of the Israel-Uzbekistan Friendship Association. The guests toured the Holocaust History Museum and the Yad Vashem Archives, and at the end of the visit, the representatives of the parties signed an agreement for archival cooperation.

The new agreement will allow Yad Vashem to map and photograph valuable documentation that is not yet available to the general public, and to advance research on evacuation of Jews during the war and their absorption into Uzbekistan. The collection of documentation in the Uzbekistan archives is expected to take several years, and will be done in partnership with the United States Holocaust History Museum in Washington, DC.

During his speech at the signing ceremony, Archivist Yusupov stated: “The Uzbek people helped the Jewish people during the war. In the history of our people, there are many common pieces of history. Our visit today, which was unique, has paved the way for a close rapprochement between the peoples.” Yad Vashem Archives Director Masha Pollak-Rozenberg said: “In the fall of 1941, my grandmother escaped from the German occupation of the city of Kharkov in Ukraine. She came to Uzbekistan and survived. Jews left in Kharkov were murdered in the winter of 1941-1942. For me, signing the agreement today has personal and general significance.”

The author is Director of the Archival Acquisitions Department, Archives Division.
American Society for Yad Vashem Co-Chair Adina Burian and American Society Board Member Lawrence Burian came with thirty friends and family, including Lawrence’s mother Ruth, for an unveiling and dedication ceremony of the Educators’ Balcony at the International School of Holocaust Studies. The group attended a specially prepared presentation and film of the testimonies given by Andrew and Tibor Burian (Lawrence’s father and uncle). They were accompanied by Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan, International Relations Director Division Dr. Haim Gertner and Director of the US Desk Chen Harkov.

During the official Holocaust Remembrance Day Wreath-Laying Ceremony, American Society Co-Chairs Adina Burian and Mark Moskowitz laid a wreath on behalf of the American Society for Yad Vashem; American Society Board Member Loren Weiss and his wife Andrea represented the American Society “Mission of Dedication and Commemoration”; and Young Leadership Association (YLA) Board Member Rachel Shnay laid the American Society YLA wreath.

New Yad Vashem Pillars Nancy and Sam Shamie were honored with lighting the Eternal Flame on Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The American Society’s “Mission of Dedication and Commemoration” took place from 24-28 April. Chaired by Andrea and Loren Weiss, the twelve Mission delegates were offered a rare opportunity to view a wide range of Yad Vashem’s unique behind-the-scenes work and explore the relevance of Holocaust education and commemoration today. Highlights included the dedication of Yad Vashem’s new Center for Holocaust Education at the Ariel Sharon IDF Training Campus in the Negev (see pp. 18-23), and attending the official Holocaust Remembrance Day state ceremonies.

Yad Vashem Pillar and American Society Board Member Steven Baral and Tova Weinberg met with Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council Rabbi Israel Meir Lau and Dr. Haim Gertner at the Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day Opening State Ceremony.
On 23 March, Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan (right) presented Eitan Neishlos (center) with archival research on the Neishlos family from Riga, Latvia. Eitan presented the written testimony of his grandmother, Tamara Ziserman (née Kantorovitch) z”l.

On 27 March 2022, the American Society’s Education Department held its twenty-fourth Barbara G. Arfa Conference on Holocaust Education. The theme for this year’s program, organized by Director of Education Marlene W. Yahalom PhD, was “Without A Trace: The Obligation of Memory.” The keynote speaker, Prof. Yehuda Bauer, spoke on “Reflections on Transports to Extinction,” and Yad Vashem educator Lori Gerson presented The Auschwitz Album. The Conference is generously supported by the family of Barbara G. Arfa z”l.

On 17 April, Steven and Amy Roth marked their son Zach’s Bar Mitzvah together with his brother Josh in a meaningful Twinning ceremony, and commemorated Steven’s father Julius Roth z”l with a plaque in the Yad Vashem Memorial Cave.

In March, Yad Vashem was delighted to host award-winning actor, producer and director Henry Winkler (center). Winkler’s parents immigrated from Berlin to the US in 1939, but many of his family were murdered during the Holocaust. Winkler and his wife Stacey toured the Holocaust History Museum and Mount of Remembrance grounds together with close friend Caroline Aaron (third from left) and her husband James Foreman.

The Belz family visited for a meaningful Twinning Ceremony in the Yad Vashem Synagogue. Bat Mitzvah Lily Brody is the great-granddaughter of Benefactors and dear friends of Yad Vashem and American Society Board Member Jack Belz and his late wife Marilyn z”l.

Michelle and Randy Fine and family visited Yad Vashem in April for Jacob’s Bar Mitzvah Twinning Ceremony in the Yad Vashem Synagogue.

Yad Vashem mourns the loss of Holocaust survivor Mark Palmer, 96, beloved husband of Myrna z”l; devoted father of Stephen (Sharon) and Brandon (Loren) Palmer; cherished grandfather of Jason (Yoori), Michael, Jaclyn, Shira and Carly Palmer; and proud great-grandfather of Jordan and Jake. Mark lost his entire family during the Shoah. He later became a business owner and one of the founders of the American Society for Yad Vashem. May his memory be for a blessing.

Yad Vashem mourns the loss of Holocaust survivor Halina Kleiner, born in Częstochowa, Poland. Halina survived labor camps, a concentration camp and a death march. Throughout her life, she was committed to sharing her story and promoting educational opportunities for younger generations. She is survived by her loving husband of 73 years, Leon; daughters Susan and Nina (and predeceased in 1975 by son David, z”l); five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. May her memory be for a blessing.

USA

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On 18 April, a ceremony was held in the Yad Vashem Synagogue to honor Yad Vashem’s new Benefactors Brian and Lee Joffe (center). Following a behind-the-scenes tour of the Archival Collection, Brian and Lee, surrounded by their family and friends, unveiled the plaque for their dedication of the Yad Vashem International Book Prize for Holocaust Research in memory of Brian’s parents, Benny and Tilly Joffe z”l and their plaque on the Benefactor’s Wall, in the presence of Head of the International Institute for Holocaust Research and incumbent of the John Najmann Chair of Holocaust Studies Prof. Dan Michman (left), Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan (second from right) and International Relations Division Director Dr. Haim Gertner (right).

On 9 May, Yad Vashem Benefactors Michael and Jacqueline Gee (second and third from right), and Jacqueline’s sister and brother-in-law Rosalyn and Nicholas Springer (third and fourth from left), visited the Museum of Holocaust Art and were given a behind-the-scenes tour of the Archival Collection by International Relations Division Director Dr. Haim Gertner (left). In addition, they met with Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan (center). They were accompanied by Director of the English-Language Desk Searle Brajtman (second from left).

On 3 May, Paul Bronfman and his partner Maybelle Pacak toured the Holocaust History Museum and the Children’s Memorial.

International Relations Division Director Dr. Haim Gertner speaking to the delegation. Front row, left to right: Deutsche Bahn Head of Corporate Communications Dagmar Kaiser, Deutsche Bahn Head of Economics, Politics and Regulation Frank Miram, Deborah Feldman, Dr. Richard Lutz, Claudia Lutz, Dr. Kristina Eichhorst and Dr. Jochen Bittner. Second row, left to right: German Society Program Manager Lukas Geck, Ruth Ur and Britta Bäumler of Deutsche Bahn.

Dr. Beatrice Gorawantschy (left), Director of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Israel Office and Philipp Paul Burkhardt (right), Research Fellow in the Israel Office, visited Yad Vashem on Holocaust Remembrance Day and laid a wreath on behalf of the Canadian Society National Executive Director Jonathan Allen (right) at the Holocaust Memorial at Earl Bales Park.

Kai Diekmann (left), Chairman of the German Friends of Yad Vashem, visited Yad Vashem for Holocaust Remembrance Day and laid a wreath on behalf of the German Friends together with Deutsche Bahn CEO Dr. Richard Lutz (right).

Left to right: Dr. Richard Lutz, Dani Dayan, Director of the German-Speaking Countries Desk Ruth Ur and Dr. Haim Gertner.
Yad Vashem welcomes Marcelo Goldin as the new Director of the Latin America, Spain, Portugal and Miami Spanish-Speaking Desk.

Marcelo immigrated to Israel from Argentina in 1986 and performed his military service in the IDF Engineering Corps. He earned his BA and MA at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. After a career in journalism, he joined Keren Hayesod – United Israel Appeal, working closely with the Spanish-speaking world. He is married to Eti and has three children. “I am very proud to join this wonderful organization, which keeps alive the memory of our brothers and sisters in many ways,” he stated. “This goal is extremely important for the future of the Jewish people and the world.”

Yad Vashem would like to sincerely thank outgoing Desk Director Perla Hazan, and wishes Perla and her husband Moshe the best of luck in this new stage of their lives.

COSTA RICA

Chairman of the Society of Friends of Yad Vashem in Costa Rica Philip Unger was honored to say the mourner’s prayer Kaddish at the “Unto Every Person There is a Name” public names-reading ceremony in the Hall of Remembrance.

Dr. Norman Hines, Karen Hines, Joaquin Caliva, Philip Unger, Isaías and Grettel Medelewitz, Vivian Unger and guests were greeted by Perla Hazan after a tour in the Holocaust History Museum on Holocaust Remembrance Day.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS WITH ICEJ

Following a two-year hiatus, a Christian Leadership Seminar was held once again at Yad Vashem. The thirty participants, who came from the US, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, took part in the Holocaust Remembrance Day State Opening Ceremony and attended lectures at the International School for Holocaust Studies.

Sari Granitza spoke at Connect Church in Charlottesville, VA — an advocate and good friend of the Christian Friends of Yad Vashem.
The activities, projects and events which you have just read about are made possible in large part thanks to the generous support of our donors. In these difficult times, when there is a worrying rise in antisemitism and Holocaust denial around the world, Yad Vashem is doubling its efforts to commemorate the Holocaust, disseminate its universal implications and strengthen Jewish continuity. Yad Vashem is deeply grateful for your generosity in supporting its vital work and welcomes both new friends and established supporters as partners in our shared mission.

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