

# JERUSALEM Yad Vashem

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*Humor and Melody*

Art Focus: Cabaret at the Westerbork Camp

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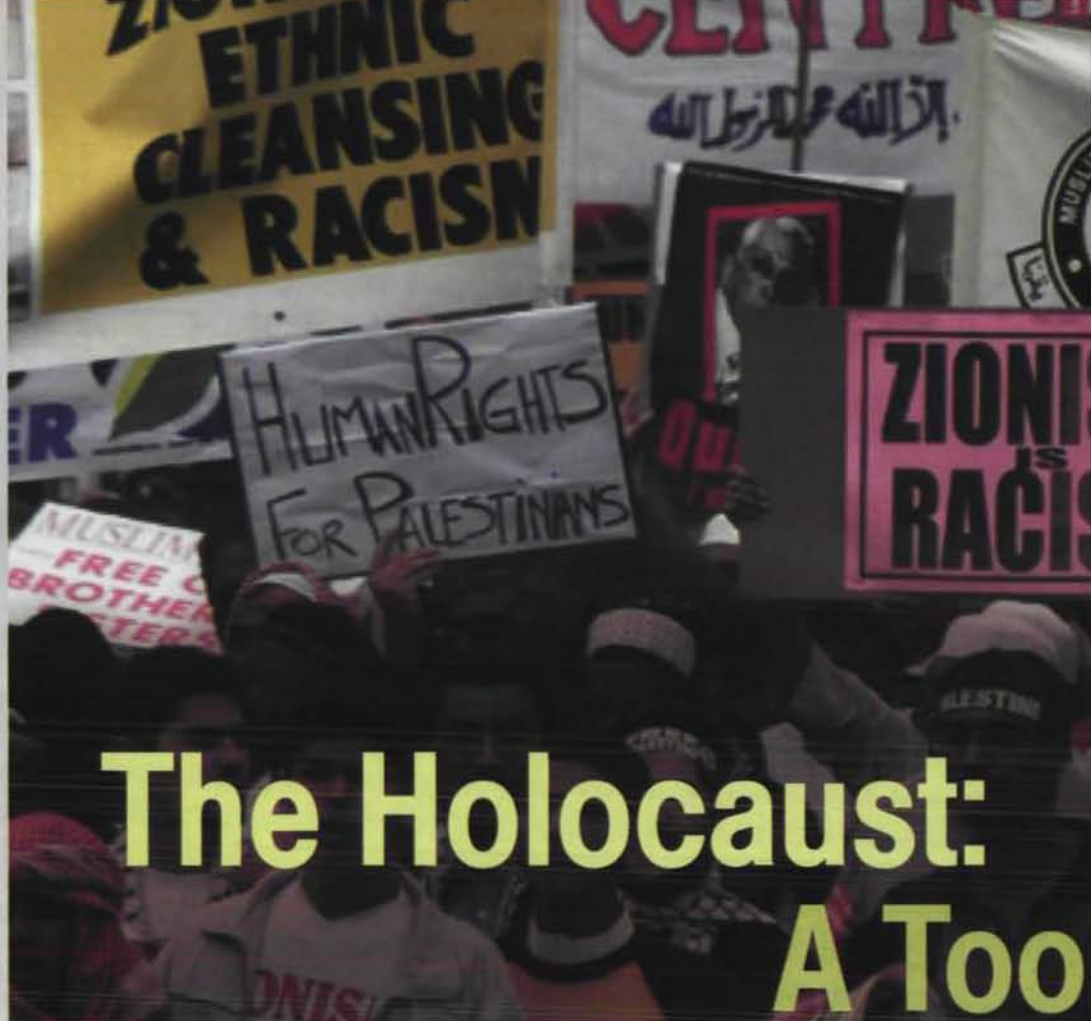
The end of the year 2001 has seen the Middle East peace process in a state of collapse, the US recovering from devastating terrorist assaults, and the world economy battling recession. Humanity has been beaten and battered—held captive, once again, to immeasurable upset and unrest. In the shadow of these recent calamities, where does the Holocaust—humankind's greatest aberration—fit in?

This very question is probed in the opening article of the winter edition of *Yad Vashem Jerusalem* through interviews with four leading Holocaust and antisemitism specialists. While the opening article cites some of the more alarming ways in which the Holocaust is currently being misused, "The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors: An International Conference" touches upon positive applications of the Holocaust, through survivors' educational initiatives and humanitarian lessons.

Extracting the positive from the depth of despair is a theme revisited throughout this edition. The story of life from behind the barbed wires is recounted in "Humor and Melody: Cabaret at the Westerbork Transit Camp" and the ingenuity and strength of extermination camp inmates is recalled in "Escape Under Fire: The Sobibor Uprising."

As we enter the new year, we must mourn our past losses, yet never shut out the possibility of hope and the enigmatic, all-powerful resolve for life.

Cover: Page from *Humor and Melody* album containing photographs and illustrations from the Westerbork cabaret (see article, pages 10-11).



# The Holocaust: A Tool

by Kobi Rivlin

Since September 2000, the Middle East has been plagued by a resurgence of violence (*Intifada*), mirrored by deadly fundamentalist extremism played out on the world stage. Simultaneously, the Jewish people have been encountering a new wave of antisemitism and anti-Zionist rhetoric, unmatched—according to certain authorities—since the dawn of the Holocaust.

In September 2001, the United Nations held the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa. Texts likening Zionism to racism and equating the Israeli treatment of the Palestinians with the German genocide of six million Jews during the Holocaust were drafted and almost incorporated into the conference's final declaration of nations. Following the 11 September terrorist attacks in the US, widespread



Rabbi Michael Melchior

rumors surfaced throughout the Arab world insisting the violence was part of "a world-wide Jewish conspiracy." Anti-Israel sentiments were also expressed in the Western world with assertions that the US had been targeted because of its continuous support for Israel.

Concurrent with these recent events, the subject of the Holocaust—which has peaked in public interest in the past decade—has emerged for the most part as a platform for anti-racist objectives, but occasionally as a tool to further political aims.

**"Today we are encountering the mask of a 'new antisemitism'—a combination of classic antisemitism and that of Bin Laden and fundamentalist Islam," says Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister of Affairs, Rabbi Michael Melchior.**

*Yad Vashem Jerusalem* discussed today's key trends in relation to the Holocaust and antisemitism with four leading specialists: Deputy



# for Newfound Antisemitism?

Minister of Foreign Affairs for the State of Israel, Rabbi Michael Melchior; Director of the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism at Tel-Aviv University, Professor Dina Porat; Academic Advisor at Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research, Professor Israel Gutman; and Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, Avner Shalev.

For several decades, the memory of the Holocaust was used as grounds to aid and protect the State of Israel as well as Jews worldwide. Recently, the term *Holocaust* has expanded to include multiple contexts, among them those that condemn the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

According to Porat, "the meaning and status of the Holocaust have changed in the last decade not so much for the Jewish people [and Israel], but for other countries and peoples. Today, the Holocaust serves mainly as a cultural code of education, democracy against fascism, protection of human rights, and an ultimate symbol of suffering.

"In Durban the Holocaust was blatantly used as such a symbol when various state representatives stressed that the conference declaration should not indicate 'do not forget the *Holocaust*,' but rather 'do not forget all *holocausts*...' This phenomenon was also apparent in how demands

for compensation for slavery were based on the model of Holocaust survivor claims. The centrality of the Holocaust today as part of the greater world culture creates a reality in which anyone can use the Holocaust for his own interests—be they educational, political, democratic goals, or even unfortunately, anti-Israeli propaganda."



Professor Israel Gutman

Gutman detects an explicit danger in applying Holocaust terminology to unrelated contexts: "[These recent applications] are attempts to view the Holocaust as one of many events that occurred over many generations, rather than a unique phenomenon of antisemitism and persecution against Jews. People are trying to exploit events like the Israeli/Arab conflict and manipulate the historical facts. We must remember, though, that the Holocaust was civilization's betrayal of the Jews. Something like this had never happened to any other nation, at least not without a direct conflict triggering it."

It was not the phrasing of the term *Holocaust* nor the issue of compensation, but rather the anti-Zionist, anti-Israel street demonstrations in Durban that drew media attention. Demonstrators distributed T-shirts and flyers with antisemitic messages and held signs with slogans such as: "Zionism = Racism" and "Israel the Apartheid State."

According to Melchior: "In Durban any remaining delineation between Jews, Israelis, and Zionists vanished... [The antisemites] believe we are all made of the same flesh, and they want to injure us all. One hundred and sixty-three countries were represented at Durban. They all attacked Israel alone, instead of dealing with the critical issues around which the conference was meant to be based."

Gutman views these occurrences as a warning sign: "A renewed antisemitic campaign has been launched in which there is an attempt to attach a global character and dimension. The preparations for the Durban conference as well as the hushed whispers and blatant propaganda regarding the 11 September disaster were attempts to revive the barbaric cruelty evidenced during the peaks of antisemitism and apply it to human dilemmas which require human solutions."

In Shalev's opinion: "There is not a shadow

of doubt that these rumors and expressions are based on the same basic antisemitic views and legends outlined in *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*... In the 1990s, the [instigating] parties wanted to divert the historical discussion in Holocaust research to marginal factors, thus escaping the most fundamental causal element of the Holocaust—antisemitism.”

Porat also believes that antisemitism is at the foundation of the rumors and incitement against Israel: “We at the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism at Tel Aviv University, do not see a renewal in the Jewish conspiracy theory. Indeed, it has been alive and active for many years. Currently, other than Holocaust denial, the conspiracy theory is the main tool used for antisemitism. It is constantly present, however alters its form, as evidenced most recently with these [anti-Israel] rumors... The Durban conference participants’ willingness to condemn Israel alone, derived largely from antisemitic foundations, but was also precipitated by oil, political, and economic interests.”

Even when considering these political/economic interests, many were surprised by European representatives and NGOs support of anti-Zionist and antisemitic ideas.

Attempting to explain these unforeseen reactions Shalev comments: “Following many years of suppression, silence, and denial in various European countries, the Holocaust was finally confronted in recent times. This confrontation resulted in many opposing feelings. One reaction in Europe was to view it as part of a healthy process of coping with the past, while adopting modern, democratic values. In Western Europe, though, this process was accompanied by right-wing radicalism, an increase in antisemitism, and a new wave—seeping beneath the surface—that tried to allay the guilt of the murderers, collaborators, and others who stood idly by during the Holocaust.

“This new wave has resulted in extreme criticism and unbalanced media coverage of Israel, as well as the empowerment of traditional antisemitic forces. Of course, Arab fundamentalist propaganda has also aided this new wave in two main ways: Holocaust denial and the use of Holocaust terminology against Israel. Antisemitism was mainly an illness of Christian

society. Now, due to the Israeli-Arab conflict, it plagues parts of Islamic society too.”

Gutman supports this view: “The murder of the European Jews was not an act of one Hitler, but was possible only in a Europe seized by anti-Jewish ideas. It could not have been executed without those enthused by the spirit of Nazism and without the people’s silent acceptance and—to a certain extent—will.”

“In every generation antisemitism wears a different mask so as to hide its ugly face. Today we are encountering the mask of a ‘new antisemitism,’ which is a combination of classic antisemitism and that of Bin Laden and fundamentalist Islam,” says Melchior.

This being the case, what can be done today to combat this ‘new antisemitism?’ Should it be confronted in new, innovative ways or should the current educational and public relations apparatuses continue to be used?



Arner Shalev

and the final declaration of nations at the Durban conference [omitting all antisemitic, anti-Israel references]. We must, however, increase the number of public relations emissaries and ensure that they directly access the large media networks.

“I believe there is wide support for Israel and a deeper understanding of the Muslim world, especially after 11 September. Educational programs on antisemitism do not need to be expanded in places like Yad Vashem. Such institutions should focus on soliciting support, explaining the State’s position, and presenting a proportionate outlook on the current situation.”

Shalev explains Yad Vashem’s perspective following the recent events: “Yad Vashem continues to strengthen the bodies fighting antisemitism by providing accurate Holocaust materials and current research. In addition, we are preparing educational tools and explanatory activities in conjunction with Israel’s Foreign Ministry of Affairs so as to effectively deal with the recent events.”

Melchior argues that new ways must be found to cope with the situation: “The events that preceded and took place at the Durban conference revealed a new type of antisemitism which requires a new approach. Therefore, we reinstated the activities of the Forum for the Coordination of the Struggle Against Antisemitism which I have the honor of heading... and established a small response team. Also, we set up an international forum of well-known figures who believe the danger of antisemitism is a danger to democratic society as a whole, and are willing to harness themselves to action on the educational, public relations, and legal levels... The antisemites do not rest for a single moment; we cannot afford to either.”

There are various ways of addressing the recent events, whose long-ranging implications are yet to be determined. Perhaps Gutman sums it up most effectively with his suggestion: “I do not know whether it is necessary to ring all the bells right away. Nevertheless, it is important that we identify the sources of the hatred, are aware of the lies, and are alerted to the potential [for evil] that is ensconced in the latest wave of antisemitism.”



Professor Dina Porat

**“We do not need to emerge from the recent events feeling the whole world is against us; this is unproductive and erroneous,” states Dina Porat, Director of the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism.**

Porat believes “we do not need to emerge from the recent events feeling the whole world is against us; this is unproductive and erroneous. There have also been some very positive events lately, such as the Pope’s visit to Israel, the Stockholm Conference, Irving’s loss in the libel case [marking a victory over Holocaust deniers],



Posters displayed at Durban conference

One evening in July 2001, while watching a Russian television program dedicated to the search for missing persons, Holocaust survivor Yefim Sklarsky (formerly Fima Shtraim) was shocked to spot a familiar face on the screen. There before his very eyes was Svetlana Shukaliuk, the adopted daughter of his beloved rescuer, Valentina Varnavina. Her voice cracking with emotion, Svetlana was holding up a picture of a young child, imploring anyone who knew of the child's whereabouts to notify her immediately. Through heavy tears, Yefim identified the child in the picture; it was a photo of himself as a young boy, taken while he was under the care of Valentina Varnavina.



## A Rescue from the Wreckage Valik



Yefim (Valik) Sklarsky and Svetlana Shukaliuk at a Yad Vashem ceremony, November 2001

In early July 1941, during the first days of the war between Germany and the USSR, Valentina Varnavina boarded a train heading east to escape the impending military threat in her native town, Zhitomir. On the train, a young Jewish woman, Bluma Shtraim, sat next to her with her two young boys, Ilya and Fima. The two women who looked familiar to each other, began exchanging particulars. Valentina learned that Bluma's husband was a Red Army junior officer who had been drafted to the front on 22 June, the morning the war began. With her husband gone, Bluma decided to flee Zhitomir with her two children, hoping to reach relatives in the interior of the USSR.

Sadly, Bluma did not manage to reach her relations. While passing through central Ukraine, their train was bombed and she was killed.

While other passengers tried desperately to escape the burning train, Ilya and Fima remained rooted next to their mother's body. Seeing the two helpless boys, Valentina grabbed them and tried to remove them from the horrifying scene. Three-year-old Fima could not run, so Valentina lifted him up and carried him. In the turmoil of the escape, 10-year-old Ilya got lost.

# Valentina

and

# Valik

Having failed to find the older boy, Valentina began her long journey home. As she wondered what to do with the three-year-old, little Fima clung to her even more tightly, caressing her with his tiny hands. Valentina, who did not have any children, knew at that moment she could not desert him.

A few days passed until the two somehow managed to return to Zhitomir. On approaching her apartment building, Valentina wondered how to explain the boy's presence to her neighbors. She decided that initially, she would conceal Fima until he was able to respond to a new, less Jewish-sounding name—"Valik." Before introducing the boy, she told her neighbors that her "nephew" was due to arrive shortly from the village; a few days later she emerged with "Valik" in public. Thus began Valentina and Valik's new life together.

Over time, the two became very attached to one another, all memories of Valik's life prior to the war seemingly forgotten. But Valentina remembered: as well as his black, curly hair, the child was circumcised, and Valentina lived in great fear that her secret would be revealed.

In November 1943, the Soviet Army liberated Zhitomir. One day, several months later, an unexpected visitor appeared on Valentina's doorstep. To her great surprise, it was Ilya, Fima's elder brother. Ilya had miraculously survived the war by wandering alone in the territory occupied by the Romanian fascists in Kopyagorod. Following liberation, he had asked to be transferred to an orphanage in Zhitomir, determined to find his younger brother.

Locating Fima had not been easy, given that Ilya had not even known the full name of the woman who had disappeared with him almost three years earlier.

After the brothers' initial reunion, Ilya continued to visit Fima at Valentina's house. On one of his visits, Ilya brought a letter from his father, who had survived his service in the Red Army, and had located Ilya in the orphanage.



Upon reading the letter, Valentina realized that her "Valik" would soon have to leave. In 1946, the brothers' father was released from the army and Fima was sent to live with him. Over the next several years, Fima maintained close contact with Valentina, visiting her and calling her "mother." To reduce her pain, Valentina adopted a baby from the orphanage, named Svetlana.

Years passed. Fima, Ilya, and their father moved to another city. Meanwhile Svetlana grew up, raised her own family and moved to western Ukraine. In the 1980s, when elderly Valentina could no longer look after herself, she moved in with her daughter. Thus the relationship between her and "Valik" ended. At age 76, Valentina Varnavina died.

The Shtraim brothers immigrated to Israel in the early 1990s. A few years later, Yad Vashem received their testimony, along with their request to recognize Valentina Varnavina as a Righteous Among the Nations. On 18 November 2001, a moving ceremony was held at Yad Vashem, wherein Valentina Varnavina was recognized as a Righteous Among the Nations—her deeds honored posthumously.

There were tears in the eyes of all present as Yefim, the little boy in the picture, and Svetlana, the grown woman who arrived specially from the Ukraine, stood reunited at long last in a ceremony dedicated to the beloved memory of Valentina Varnavina.

*The author is responsible for the FSU section of the Righteous Among the Nations Department*

# The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors:

## A n I n t e r n a t i o n a l C o n f e r e n c e

by Shachar Leven

“ How do people who have experienced such cataclysmic events pick up the threads of their lives? From where do they obtain the strength to go on and how do they learn to trust others and to have faith in the future again?... Most important, perhaps, what lessons can the rest of us learn from [Holocaust] survivors about coping with tragedy and adversity?” (William B. Helmreich, *Against All Odds*)

In an attempt to confront these questions as well as honor the many achievements of Holocaust survivors, Yad Vashem, in association with the Centre of Organizations for Holocaust Survivors in Israel (COHSI) and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany are holding “The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors—the Moral and Ethical Implications for Humanity.” The conference falls under the framework of Yad Vashem’s third Holocaust and Education International Conference.

The initiative for this international forum came from Holocaust survivors: Zvi Gill of the COHSI conceived the idea which was backed by COHSI Chairman, Moshe Sanbar, and Raul Teitelbaum of the COHSI, as well as Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, Avner Shalev.

In the shadow of the Holocaust, survivors reestablished faith in humankind, successfully rebuilt their lives, and created new families. By extracting goodness from the depths of darkness and despair, they have bestowed the lesson of unyielding humanity to the young generation. Their contribution to a broken, post-war morality and virtue is the true legacy of the Holocaust. They wish to rekindle the belief in human dignity, tolerance, and mutual understanding, as well as strengthen the resolve against antisemitism, racism, hate, and incitement. This conference will enable survivors to share insights and objectives in a framework of educators

Background picture:  
Holocaust survivors wed in DP camp—Mittenwald,  
Germany, 1946



An English class for DP camp children—  
Berlin, 1945



Babies born in DP camp after the war—Bad Reichenhau,  
Germany

and scholars from around the world who understand the significance of this legacy and its implications for future generations.

Given the flagrant display of antisemitism at the United Nations' September conference in Durban, as well as the hatred evidenced in the acts of terror inflicted upon the United States, the international conference will be even more timely. Who better to raise their voices in an emphatic response against hatred and inhumanity, than Holocaust survivors? Their dedication to society in spite of humanity's past failures best illustrates how justice and morality can prevail. We must acknowledge their crucial lessons at this critical time.

The conference will open on a significant date—8 April 2002—the eve of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day. As Yad Vashem's *Yom HaShoah* opening ceremony is marked by the lighting of six torches, survivors will pass the torch of remembrance and education to the next generation as part of the international conference. Notable personalities—who have demonstrated great understanding and have acknowledged the important lessons of the Holocaust—will address conference participants. Their words will resonate to the world at large and will carry the message of the survivors' legacy.

The official sessions of the conference will take place between 9-11 April. Topics for the morning sessions are: "The Survivors Look to the Future with Hope: Building New Worlds and Reaffirming Faith in Mankind," "The Literature of Survivors: A Seminal Contribution to Humanity," "Faith in God and Man After Auschwitz: Theological Implications," "Tikun Olam: Combating Antisemitism, Denial, Racism, And Genocide," and "The Moral and Ethical Implications of the Holocaust for Humanity." Invitations have been accepted by the following speakers: Per Ahlmark; Professor Emil L. Fackenheim; Professor Israel Gutman; Professor Moshe Halbertal; Imre Kertesz; Beate and Serge Klarsfeld; President of Poland, the Hon. Aleksander Kwasniewski; Professor Lawrence L. Langer; the Hon. Tom Lantos; Chief Rabbi of Israel, Israel Meir Lau; Rabbi Dr. Israel Miller; Dr. Samuel Pisas; Simone Veil; Professor Elie Wiesel; and Professor Szewach Weiss.

Afternoon sessions will be devoted to pedagogical workshops given by educators from throughout the world. To date, over 200 participants from 20 countries (including seminar graduates of the International School for Holocaust Studies) are registered. Over 120 abstracts for workshops have been submitted, and between 600 and 800 people are expected to participate in the conference.

Pedagogical workshops will span the continuum of educational disciplines. Theatrical and musical presentations will be showcased. The representation of the survivor in literature, as well as works written by survivors will be examined. Videos, pre-recorded survivor testimonies, as well as writing workshops for aiding survivors in documenting their stories will be incorporated into the afternoon sessions.

The Holocaust was a deadly aberration in the annals of history that humankind has been left to grapple with and try to understand. We can recall the past, but that is not enough. We can applaud the survivors for their tremendous strength and achievements, but that too may be inadequate. It is only by conveying the survivors' lessons of hope and triumph over pain and despair, that we can effectively perpetuate the survivors' true legacy.

There is a time for silence and a time to be heard. This is the time for survivors to voice their message and for future generations to translate their words into action.

## Recent Highlights at the International School for Holocaust Studies

- 22 October – Course for educators from Hungary
- 5 November:
- 31 October – Teacher-training seminar for educators from Ashkelon
- 30 January:
- 4 November – Teacher-training seminar for educators from Safed
- 12 May:
- 4-8 November: Seminar for Holocaust survivors
- 6 November – Teacher-training seminar in conjunction with the Diaspora Museum
- 22 January:
- 7 November: Workshop for students from the Hebrew Union College
- 8 November: Workshop on the subject of *Kristallnacht* for students from Israel's religious sector
- 8 November: Workshop on the subject of *Kristallnacht* for students from Israel's secular sector, in conjunction with Irgun Olej Merkas Europa (the Association for Immigrants from Central Europe)
- 9-20 November: Course for educators from Poland
- 9-21 November: Course for educators from Austria
- 11 November: Workshop for teachers from Ashdod
- 11 November: Workshop for leadership coordinators of the Youth Movement Committee
- 13 November: Workshop for administrators of Eshkolot Payis (advanced learning centers for the faculties of science, technology, and art)
- 22 November: Lecture for students from the Shechter Institute for Jewish Studies
- 25 November- Course for educators from the Ukraine
- 6 December:
- 2-6 December: Seminar for Holocaust survivors
- 11-13 December: Course in the French language for priests
- 12 December: Workshop for 250 teachers participating in Yad Vashem teacher-training seminars in Israel
- 16-17 December: Teacher-training seminar for educators accompanying youth trips to Poland
- 19 December: Workshop for school principals in Ashkelon
- 23-24 December: Course for members of B'nai Brith from France
- 24 December: Workshop for students from Israel's religious sector for the commemoration of the memorial day *Yom HaKaddish HaClali* on: "Heroism and Resistance" and "Holocaust Art"
- 25 December: Israeli religious youth movements' symposium in commemoration of *Yom HaKaddish HaClali*
- 25-27 December: Seminar for 12th grade students from Yavne School, Paris
- 3-15 January: Course for educators from Russia, the Ukraine, and Belarus

“ The Holocaust is almost universally recognized as a preeminent symbol of ‘radical evil’ in human history,” according to Christopher Browning—Professor of history, world-renowned author, and eminent Holocaust scholar. “It is the yardstick by which other atrocities and genocides are now measured. Given the vast increase in scholarship on the Holocaust in the past two decades, I certainly do not see it as a lesson of the past that is not being learned or about to be forgotten. Unfortunately, as a paradigmatic event it inevitably has also been politicized, both exploited on the one hand and trivialized or denied on the other for various agendas.”

# Investigating the Symbol of Radical Evil

## An Interview with Professor Christopher Browning

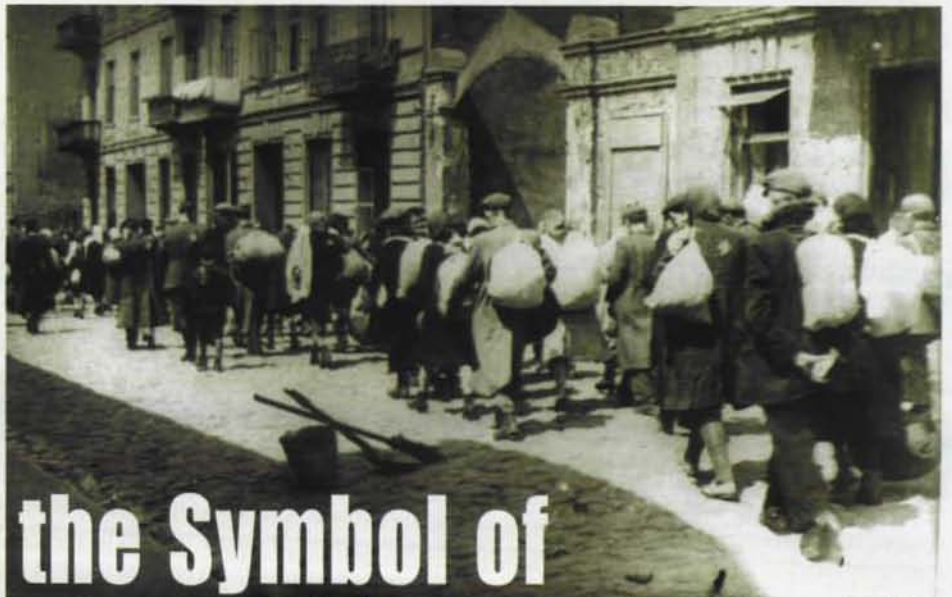
Over the past three decades, Browning has focused the better part of his time investigating this “symbol of radical evil.” As well as his teachings and publications, he has testified in numerous trials (both of accused Nazi criminals and Holocaust deniers) developing a complex and inexorable relationship with the Holocaust, and consequently with Yad Vashem—the Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority.

The Holocaust was not always at the forefront of Browning’s interests. It was not until he began his Ph.D. that his curiosity was piqued. While preparing a German history course, he read Hannah Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and became fascinated by her concept of the “banality of evil”:

“I had read little about the Holocaust, and Arendt obviously had taken (and in some cases clearly misused) information from Hilberg’s *The Destruction of the European Jews*. Thus I turned to Hilberg’s book, and reading it was a life-changing experience... At that time the topic had no academic legitimacy in the US.”

His early readings inspired Browning to focus his Ph.D. dissertation on the role of the German Foreign Ministry, and particularly its cadre of so-called “Jewish experts” in the Final Solution. Initially he was warned that such a topic had “no professional future,” but the faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison—especially Robert Koehl and George Mosse—supported him. His first book was published in 1978, just as American consciousness of the Holocaust was radically evolving.

Since then, Browning has published



# Radical Evil



Two pictures related to topics covered in Browning’s *Origins of the Final Solution*. Above: Deportation of Jews from the Lodz ghetto, Below: Einsatzgruppen mass shootings—1941

numerous books on the Holocaust, including the controversial and groundbreaking *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. His most recent work is *Origins of the Final Solution: September 1939-March 1942* as part of Yad Vashem’s multi-volume, comprehensive *History of the Holocaust*.

Yad Vashem first contacted Browning in 1983 to author this publication. He spent two years conducting research in Jerusalem, mainly at the Yad Vashem Archives. (The publication was delayed somewhat due to the flood of new sources unexpectedly emerging after 1989 following the revolutions in Eastern Europe.) It is due to be released in English by Yad Vashem in conjunction

with the University of Nebraska Press and in Hebrew by Yad Vashem within the next two years.

To date, Yad Vashem’s multi-volume comprehensive *History of the Holocaust* remains a work-in-progress. Many of the volumes detailing events of the Nazi genocide of the Jewish people in Europe have already been published. Three volumes on the evolution and stages of Nazi Jewish policy are still incomplete: *Comprehensive History of the Holocaust: Germany, Origins of the Final Solution: September 1939 - March 1942*, and *Implementation of the Final Solution, 1942-1945*.

In *Origins of the Final Solution*, Browning focuses his scholarship on Nazi population and resettlement policies and ghettoization in Poland



(the “laboratory” for Nazi racial policies) in 1939-1940. Between 1941-1942, the focus is on the Nazi “war of destruction” against the Soviet Union, the decision-making process for the Final Solution, and the initial steps toward implementation of the Final Solution (building the first killing centers, executing the first deportations to Lodz, Minsk, and Riga, and initiating the Nazi bureaucracy). His key sources were gathered from surviving German documents, as well as post-war court records. Jewish sources (such as Czerniakow’s diary and the chronicle of the Lodz ghetto) were utilized for sections of the book that deal with ghettoization.

The book is comprised of two parts. The first section argues that Nazi racial policy in Poland resulted from the Nazis’ ideological vision of realigning the demographic map of Eastern Europe to create German *lebensraum*. This was achieved through the mass “ethnic cleansing” of Jews and Poles. The Jewish populations under Nazi control were targeted for total expulsion in a succession of “resettlement” plans—first to the “Lublin reservation,” then to Madagascar, and finally to the Siberian or Arctic wastelands of the Soviet Union. Each of the so-called “resettlement” plans culminated in mass death (or in Nazi terms “decimation”). None of these schemes came close to implementation, and local German occupation authorities in Poland bore the consequences.

The most preferred solution to the demographic problem was ghettoization. Death rates among the ghettoized Jews soared as a result of starvation and epidemic. Local German authorities

discussed options: “attrition” through starvation or “production” through harnessing Jewish labor. More often than not, those advocating “production” through the creation of ghetto economies initially prevailed, though food supplies to the ghettos remained inadequate.

The second part of the book details the manner in which planning for a “war of destruction” radically affected Nazi policies. Resettlement schemes initially led to vague



Professor Christopher Browning

notions of genocide through an unspecified combination of execution, starvation, and expulsion and then to concretize plans for the Final Solution, i.e. systematic mass murder of every last Jew within the Nazi grasp.

Browning contends that the peaks of radicalization in Nazi Jewish policy correspond to those of Nazi victory euphoria (victory over Poland and approval of the “Lublin Reservation” in September 1939, victory over France and approval of the Madagascar Plan in May/June 1940, the first point of presumed victory over the Soviet Union and the decision for the total destruction of Soviet Jewry in mid-July 1941, and the second point of presumed victory and the decision to extend total mass murder to the Jews of the rest of Europe in late September/early October 1941). Further, enthusiastic participation in the East’s racial imperialism project by the German population along with various administrators, troops, and policemen was a vital precondition for Nazi readiness to implement the Final Solution.

Browning’s multi-year project has yielded a work of scholarship that is not only comprehensive in its content, but also highly comprehensible. In the words of the author, “I hope that the book will not only be useful to scholars and experts in the field but also accessible and informative to general readers.”

## OCTOBER:

- 1938: 5 October Passports of German Jews marked with the letter “J.”
- 28 October 15,000-17,000 Polish-born Jews expelled from Germany to Poland; most interned in Zbaszyn.
- 1939: 8 October First Jewish ghetto established in Poland in Piotrkow Trybunalski.
- 1941: 15 October Deportation of German and Austrian Jews to ghettos in the East begins.
- 1943: 1-2 October First arrests of Jews in Denmark in preparation for deportation. The majority of Jews go into hiding and within three weeks are smuggled in boats to Sweden. In total 7,200 Danish Jews rescued.
- 1944: 7 October Sonderkommando uprising at Auschwitz. One gas chamber is blown up and all those who participated in the revolt are killed.



Rosh Hashana card sent from the Lodz ghetto in 1940

## NOVEMBER:

- 1939: 23 November Order effected by Hans Frank instructing all the Jews in Poland to wear the yellow badge.
- 28 November Document issued outlining the regulation for the establishment of the *Judenracte*.
- 1941: 24 November Model camp established in Theresienstadt. Deportation of Jews from Bohemia and Moravia to Theresienstadt.
- 30 November 30,000 Riga Jews arrested and subsequently shot at Rumbuli forest.
- 1943: 3 November Germans kill 42,000-43,000 Jews in “Operation Harvest Festival” (*Erntefest*) in the Trawniki, Poniatowa, and Majdanek camps.
- 1944: 25 November Germans stop gassings at Auschwitz.



Jewish prisoners being marched through the streets of Baden-Baden by SS and local police—*Kristallnacht*, 10 November 1938

## DECEMBER:

- 1940: “Oneg Shabbat” Jewish underground archives established in the Warsaw ghetto.
- 7 December Japanese attack Pearl Harbor; US enters war.
- 8 December The first extermination camp—Chelmo—becomes operational with the introduction of gas vans.
- 1942: 4 December Council for aid to Jews (*Zegota*) established in Poland.
- 17 December Allies condemn German mass murder.



Candle lighting ceremony for Chanukah—December 1943, Westerbork camp

by Yehudit Shendar

“And I thank you, *Herr Kommandant*, for permitting us to have this evening.” With these words of gratitude to camp commander A.K. Gemmeker, theater director Max Ehrlich closed another cabaret evening on the Westerbork Theater stage (see illustration page 11).

The Westerbork Theater was contained within the same transit camp—Westerbork—from where 100,000 Dutch Jews were deported to death camps in the East between 1942-1944. Under the shadow of weekly deportations and with the encouragement of the camp commander, classical concerts, recitals, and cabaret shows (that gained wide popularity) were performed on the camp's theater stage. A great number of participants took part in the productions, as cast members or stage crews. All those involved clung to these performances as if to life preservers, for as long as the shows went on, their names would be omitted from the deportation lists.

Gemmeker was proud of his Jewish protégés—the highly talented celebrities of Berlin's cultural milieu interned in Westerbork—boasting of them to the German officers and officials who visited him in the camp. He was also aware that the performances enabled him to create the illusion of “normal life” within the confinement of the barbed-wire fences.

The most spectacular show produced on the Westerbork Theater stage was *Humor and Melody*, which premiered on 4 September 1943. Comprising 18 separate skits, the cabaret production presented a satirical rendering of daily life in the camp.

In further appreciation to camp commander Gemmeker for allowing the production to continue, director Max Ehrlich (see bottom photograph page 10), and playwrights and composers, Willy Rosen and Erich Ziegler, dedicated a magnificent album of photographs with hand-drawn embellishments from *Humor and Melody* to the camp commander. Ehrlich, Rosen, and Ziegler's signatures appear on the album's dedication, dated 27 September 1943. Many of the illustrations contained therein were drawn by the Dutch Jewish stage designer, Leo Kok. Kok arrived at Westerbork in the summer of 1942 and joined the set design team as its director.

In one of the album's photographs of the theatrical skit “Magdalene, Behave Yourself,” (see top photograph page 10) actress Catharina Frank (today known as van-den-Berg) appears in a short skirt, first from the left. Catharina van-den-Berg was deported from Westerbork to Theresienstadt in June 1943. A year later, on orders from camp headquarters, all shows on the Westerbork Theater stage were halted. Most of the production staff including Ehrlich, were deported to the East. Leo Kok, who had just married fellow inmate Kitty de Wijze in the winter of 1943, was deported with his wife to Theresienstadt on 5 September 1944.

Within the interval of a few months, Catharina van-den-Berg and Kitty Kok found themselves in the same camp once again. By virtue of luck the two women were among the few Dutch Jews to survive the Holocaust. Nonetheless, they did not completely escape the cruel mark of death; both of their husbands perished. Catharina's husband, Jacques, did not accompany her to Theresienstadt. He perished after being deported from Westerbork to Sobibor, only weeks following the birth of their only son, Clarence. In October 1944, Leo Kok was included in a deportation from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz, where he perished.

“The show must go on” assumes an entirely different connotation when applied to the Holocaust. The stage of the Westerbork Theater was a manifestation of the total absurd. The paramount of Jewish talent performed repeatedly for auditoriums packed with Jewish prisoners, while Nazi camp commanders filled the front rows. Simultaneously, every Tuesday trains were bound eastward for the journey of no return.

“The show must go on,” except in the realm of the Holocaust. In the reality of the *Shoah*, the show continued only until the last of the Jewish talent, too, was slated for deportation. In the shadow of the gas chambers, the cast of the Westerbork Theater was sentenced to the same fate as its brethren. Thus, the Jewish people lost incredible talents—actors, musicians, and artists—who

by miraculous advent managed to kindle hearts only moments before they were eternally silenced.

**Epilogue:** In December 1998, Catharina van-den-Berg came to Yad Vashem to donate two paintings by the artist C. Burešova to Yad Vashem's art collection. The paintings depict her and her son, Clarence, who was born within the barbed-wire fences of Westerbork camp. Thanks to her, Yehudit Shendar became acquainted with the album *Humor and Melody*, housed in the Yad Vashem Archives (AM4/1168).

The author is the Senior Art Curator, Museums Division

# Humor and

Cabaret at

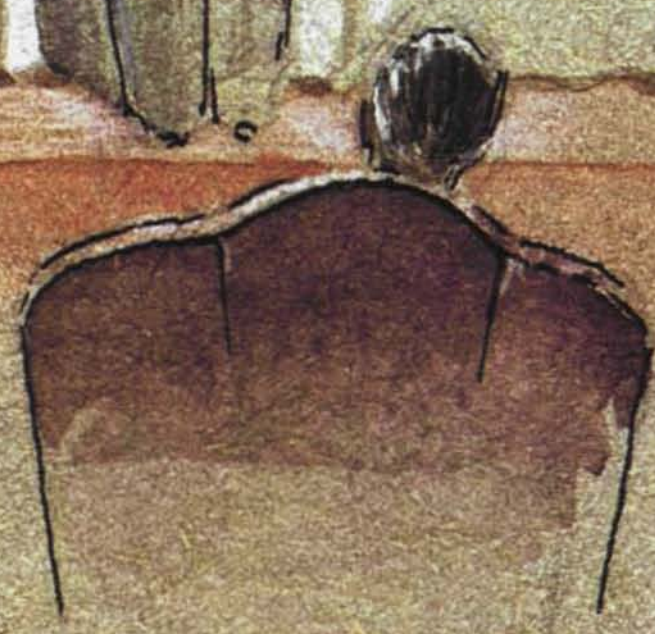


„MAGDELEIN, DU SOLLST STETS ARTIG SEIN!“



# Melody

the Westerbork Transit Camp



The Yad Vashem Archives are currently carrying out a new, large-scale project that much resembles a complex puzzle. Aimed at researching and reproducing records on anti-Jewish policy and antisemitism from 1933-1945, the project is being conducted

mailed to the magazine depicting raided houses or desecrated synagogues with a note on the back: "We taught them!"

# Records of Hatred and Efficiency



Das Weib des Teufels

Die jüdische Dirne Luci Sara Kainer in Hamburg

The text attached to the picture reads: "Devilish woman. The Jewish whore Luci Sara Kainer in Hamburg"

in close cooperation with Germany's Federal Archive (Bundesarchiv), the Archives of the Länder, and various other German archives housing Holocaust-era records.

Trying to find even minimal biographical details about Jewish victims, locate some of the more remote official documents outlining anti-Jewish policy, and piece together the various strains of information is no simple task. Very rarely does one archive or institution contain only files pertaining to the specific time period and topic matter being investigated. Thus skilled archivists—adept at locating and assembling the necessary information—are invaluable to the project's proper execution.

Two main archival collections evidencing anti-Jewish policy and antisemitism are being reproduced within this framework: files from the office of the editor of *Der Stürmer* magazine and the *Vermögensverwertungsstelle* of the *Oberfinanzpräsident* Berlin-Brandenburg (declarations of property turned in by Jews to a branch of the Higher Tax Bureau of the Province of Brandenburg). Both sources will enable researchers to carefully scrutinize the appalling details of two of the cornerstones of German policy against the Jews: hatred and efficiency.

Owned and managed by Julius Streicher, who was hanged in his hometown of Nuremberg in 1946 on charges of crimes against humanity, *Der Stürmer* magazine had little journalistic integrity. Streicher's publication gave the vitriolic flavor to the work conducted by German bureaucrats who were proud of their indifference towards their Jewish victims. Characteristic displays of antisemitism including the wild and senseless amalgam of stereotypes, false accusations, hate speeches, and endless series of "Jewish" caricatures were the staple of *Der Stürmer*.

When WWII began, the number of anti-Jewish items in the office of the editor's archive increased, as soldiers and Germans living in occupied countries submitted anti-Jewish propaganda to *Der Stürmer*. Photographs were

## Collecting German Archival Information

The *Der Stürmer* collection contains items such as: photographs of Polish *shtetls* illustrating "Jewish types," newspaper clippings, posters, amateur "poetry," leaflets, caricatures, "scientific papers" on the Jewish world conspiracies, maps, postcards, etc.

Trying to reproduce the *Der Stürmer* files—currently held by the Municipal Archive of Nuremberg—proved problematic. This was due to the diversity of the materials and the large percentage of photographs contained in the collection. Ultimately the collection was scanned to CD-ROM guaranteeing high-resolution photographs and allowing researchers to jump back and forth between the vast array of materials. In most instances, the background details of the photographs remain unknown. The malignant intent behind the pictures, though, is extremely clear even when viewed on the computer screen more than half a century later.

The second archival collection is comprised of declarations of property Jews were required to submit to the Higher Tax Bureau of the Province of Brandenburg before leaving Berlin for emigration or for deportations to their deaths. Until recently the archival files were housed in the State Archive



14.0 cm breit  
11.5 cm hoch

Auf den Beuthener Märkte

Hier hocken jüdische Gauner in ganzen Massen umher und warten auf ihre nichtjüdischen Opfer.

The text attached to the picture reads: "In the Beuthen market many Jewish crooks hang around and wait for their non-Jewish victims"



The text on the barn reads: "Jewish hostel"

in Berlin; currently, they are contained at the Brandenburg State Archive in Potsdam. The folders in this record group relating to emigrants are blue; the vast majority of folders, though, are brown, submitted by Jews who were deported to their deaths.

The Higher Tax Bureau branch—*Vermögensverwertungsstelle* began operating in 1941, shortly before the deportations of Jews started, despite the fact that little remained to steal from the Jews at that point; the privately conducted appropriation of Jewish property before *Kristallnacht* together with the state-sponsored confiscation of Jewish property after 1938 had already claimed the better part of Jewish goods and assets.

Still, the German authorities wanted precise details about what they could expect from the people they were about to murder. The government's scrupulous calculations and greed are clear from the lengthy eight-page form each Jew was forced to complete. The forms called for information on every conceivable item of value: from bank accounts to underwear, from works of art to kitchen equipment. Those who had children were required to complete a second form detailing their possessions, down to their last pair of socks and only blouse. Most of the forms' questions were returned unanswered, since many Jews in 1941 were already poverty-stricken. The forms were often completed when the Jews were already at one of the assembly points in Berlin awaiting deportation: "You can tell because they were filled out with a pencil. After completing the form the deportee had to give it back. These pencil scribbles are his last sign of life," explains Anja Metzzenien, who has been working on the project from the start.

This collection of documents is not only moving—hinting at the tragic stories of many lives destroyed—but also invaluable, containing the last-known living addresses, dates, and places of birth of over 60,000 Jews. In an effort to preserve this unique collection—whose documents are literally falling apart—Yad Vashem, the State Archive of Berlin, and the Brandenburg State Archive in Potsdam are building a database containing the documents' most important information: names, addresses, birth dates, birthplaces, and information about Jewish shops and companies.

Presently, after nine months of work on the project, Yad Vashem's database team has compiled data from almost 30,000 files, adding to those that have already been computerized by Berlin archivists. Once the filming and archival filing are completed, 1.5 million pages will have been saved on more than 1,400 microfilms, providing future generations with a basis for research and learning.

*The author is the Manager of the Yad Vashem research project in Germany.*

Joseph Karmin, a Holocaust survivor and long-serving volunteer at Yad Vashem, has undertaken a monumental enterprise in recent years: one that solicits no rewards, but warrants much merit. Conceived of in January 1996, the Joseph Karmin Enterprise for the Translation of Holocaust Survivors' Testimonies—which to date boasts a staff of nearly 100 volunteers who have translated and transcribed some 4,500 testimonies—began modestly.

In 1996, after arriving at Yad Vashem from his home on Kibbutz Magen in southern Israel for the purpose of translating Yiddish and German testimonies, Karmin had a chance conversation with a Yad Vashem Archives' employee. The woman told him that following WWII Yad Vashem received a large number of Polish testimonies from the Jewish Historical Institute of Warsaw. Since their arrival, they had been sitting untouched on the shelves of the Yad Vashem Archives. This greatly troubled Karmin: "I felt that the materials contained in that particular Yad Vashem archive were unique and

to be commemorated for perpetuity. Volunteers meet periodically in groups of 10-15 at various locations across the country in order to receive new materials and for social purposes; new volunteers are always welcome.

"Many of the volunteers are elderly people, themselves Holocaust survivors, who consider this project their *raison d'être*," Karmin explains. "Some can barely see and use magnifying glasses to complete their work. Despite their years, I was confident from the outset that beyond all the white hair were clear and competent minds. We owe much gratitude to these people for their dedication to this important cause."

Indeed, the cause is of utmost importance. The testimonies provide scholars, educators, and students with essential documentation and previously unknown facts through first person, survivor accounts. The majority of testimonies recorded between the years 1944-1948 contain "hard to digest" information ranging from operations in extermination and concentration camps to the liquidation of the ghettos. Acts of Jewish resistance,

## Down to the Final Testimony

### The Joseph Karmin Enterprise

unparalleled. The testimonies were given by people who had just come out of the bunkers and hiding places—people raw with their experiences. Their testimonies expose all that occurred in brief, factual accounts. The notion that their stories might never be heard..."

Later that year, Karmin approached Yad Vashem Archives Director, Dr. Yaacov Lozowick, with a proposal that was part innovation and part (in Karmin's own words), "*chutzpah*."

"I told Dr. Lozowick that there were testimonies recorded in Polish that were screaming out... that would never know redemption unless we translated them into Hebrew. Although I, myself, do not speak Polish, I asked him to authorize me to organize a group of Polish-speaking volunteers to translate these testimonies."

Lozowick agreed, and soon after, Karmin began the enormous task of recruiting translators and typists to tackle the over 6,700 personal testimonies contained in Yad Vashem's M-49-E Warsaw archive. Initially there were only four translators, working on 12 files. Over the past six years, the four have multiplied into nearly 100, and the enterprise has expanded to include the translation of not only Polish, but German, Hungarian, and Yiddish testimonies from other archives in Yad Vashem.

Karmin has ensured that prior to translating, volunteers scan the testimonies for names of Holocaust victims. These names are then recorded onto Pages of Testimony by volunteer Limor Levy, who transmits them to Yad Vashem's Hall of Names



Joseph Karmin

accounts of Jewish rescue by Righteous Among the Nations, and the fates of survivors' friends, family, and entire communities are also recorded. Perhaps the most moving of all though, are the children's testimonies. Himself a child during the war years in the Transnistria region, Karmin identifies strongly with these accounts, marking each of the children's testimonies with an asterisk on his personal computerized index.

After six years of dedication to this cause, Karmin is delighted with the progress: "When I began this project, I had no idea that it would grow to take on such proportions. I simply knew that time was running out and if someone didn't act quickly, all those who knew Polish would disappear and we would miss this final opportunity to make worth of the testimonies. Today I can affirm that—time permitting—the entire archive will be translated down to the final testimony."

On Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), Jews around the world traditionally recite the *Unetaneh Tokef* prayer, expressing the day's supreme holiness and the Creator's imminent judgment. According to this emotive liturgy: "On the fast day of atonement it is sealed and determined...who shall live and who shall die... who shall perish by water, who by fire, [and] who by the sword..."

Shortly after Yom Kippur in 1943, a group of Jewish prisoners in the Sobibor extermination camp, determined to live rather than die, began devising a plan for a revolt. A couple of days later, during the afternoon of 14 October 1943, one of the most daring displays of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust began—the escape from Sobibor.

Sobibor was constructed in March 1942, as one of the three Nazi death camps erected during "Operation Reinhard." Located in the Lublin district

Jewish-Soviet prisoner of war, Pechersky had arrived in Sobibor from Minsk in September 1943.

The revolt began on 14 October, at approximately 16:00 with the gradual and silent liquidation of part of the SS camp staff. One by one, SS men were murdered as they arrived in set intervals for pre-arranged appointments at the Jewish artisan workshops.

In his testimony recorded in March 1964, Yehuda Lerner (a key participant in the revolt), states, "In the workshop I waited for [the German officer] with another one of our men. He arrived and came inside for his suit-fitting with the tailor. I sat with another young man and together we had axes between our legs. As soon as the German officer tried the suit on, we came from behind him and hit him hard in the head with an ax. We had done it."

For an hour and a half the clandestine uprising was executed according to plan. Yet within the

were opened, and everyone rushed through... We ran out of the workshop. All around were the bodies of the dead and wounded."

According to First Lieutenant Pechersky: "It was difficult to say for certain how many people escaped from the camp. In any case, it is clear that the great majority of the prisoners escaped. Many fell in the open space between the camp and the forest. We agreed that we should not linger in the forest, but divide up into small groups and go in different directions... The shots from machine-guns and rifles that rattled behind us from time to time helped us to decide on the direction that we needed. We knew the shooting came from the camp."

During the uprising, 11 SS men and a number of Ukrainian guards were killed. Approximately 300 prisoners managed to escape, but most were killed later as they fled. Those remaining at the camp were quickly liquidated by the Germans. All in all, only an estimated 50 Jewish prisoners who escaped Sobibor on 14 October 1943, survived the war.

Following the revolt, the Nazis closed the extermination camp. Between spring 1942 and fall 1943, 250,000 Jews were murdered in Sobibor.

Dov Freiberg was one of the few to survive the revolt at Sobibor. To this day, he continues to give testimony to students and teachers from around the world about his experiences as a Jewish teenager in the Sobibor death camp. In his reflections, highlighted in the award-winning CD-ROM *Return to Life* developed by Yad Vashem, Freiberg notes, "There is no doubt that after the war... while you are laughing and behaving wildly you experience some sort of flash very quickly. You see one picture from Sobibor, and that's enough..."

*The author is the Director of Overseas Programming at the International School for Holocaust Studies*

The topic of the escape from Sobibor has been further publicized in recent months due to the October 2001 release of filmmaker, Claude Lanzmann's *Sobibor, October 14, 1943, 4 p.m.* Lanzmann—who gained international recognition for his epic, nine-hour Holocaust documentary *Shoah* in 1985—based his second film upon interview footage from Sobibor survivor, Yehuda Lerner, that was filmed in 1979, but never previously screened. Shots of the former death camp site as it appears today and of various Polish cities and towns accompany Lerner's testimony.

Model of Sobibor made by Alexander Pechersky



## Escape Under Fire: The Sobibor Uprising

near Wlodawa, Poland, it was comprised of three main areas: administration, reception, and extermination. According to Gitta Sereny's *Into That Darkness* "From the arrival point at the ramp, all that was visible [of the extermination center] were the fences, camouflaged with evergreen branches, distant trees, and—to the left—the small cluster of barracks (now a bare and open space) known as Camp I..." Jews were deported to Sobibor from early May 1942; most were murdered upon arrival.

Following a number of prisoner escapes from Sobibor, camp commander Franz Reichleitner laid mines around the camp in the summer of 1943. The addition of the minefields greatly limited the chances for escape, thereby forcing the prisoners to conceive each stage of the uprising all the more carefully. A small group of Jewish prisoners ("the underground committee") who had been contemplating a smaller-scale revolt and escape for some time, named First Lieutenant Alexander (Sasha) Pechersky as commander of the revolt. A

ensuing fifteen minutes chaos erupted in the camp. Realizing what was happening, the remaining SS and Ukrainian guards began shooting at prisoners from atop the watchtowers, causing prisoners to flee toward the main gate and barbed wire fences. Although many prisoners made it past the camp boundaries, many more died in minefield explosions or from shots fired by SS and Ukrainian guards.

Another survivor of the revolt, Ada Lichtman recalls, "Suddenly we heard shots... Mines started to explode. Riot and confusion prevailed, everything was thundering around. The doors of the workshop



Commander of the revolt, Alexander Pechersky

## Honoring the Claims Conference Jubilee

On 27 November a special event honoring the 50th anniversary of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany was held in the Yad Vashem Auditorium. The event was organized by recipients of Claims Conference funding in Israel: Yad Vashem—The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority; The Ghetto Fighters' House—Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Heritage Museum; Massua—The Institute for the Study of the Holocaust; and Moreshet—Mordechai Anilevich Memorial Study Center for Teaching the Holocaust.

The Claims Conference currently allocates 80 percent of its funds to Holocaust survivors and the remaining 20% towards Holocaust remembrance through education, research, and documentation initiatives. A founding benefactor of Yad Vashem, the Claims Conference is a major supporter of the "Yad Vashem 2001" development plan.

The jubilee event commenced with welcoming remarks by Israel's Minister of Education, MK Limor Livnat; Chairman of the Jewish Agency, Sallai Meridor; Executive Vice President of the Claims Conference, Gideon Taylor; and Chairman of the Centre of Organizations for Holocaust Survivors in Israel, Moshe Sanbar. Speeches were delivered by Chairman of the Massua Directorate and Justice of the Supreme Court (ret.), Dr. Moshe Bejski; Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, Avner Shalev; General Director of the Ghetto Fighters' House, Simcha Stein; General Director of the Moreshet Directorate, Amira Hagani; and President of the Claims Conference, Rabbi Dr. Israel Miller. Miller accepted a certificate of honor on behalf of the Claims Conference presented to him by Edna Solodar, Chairperson of the Ghetto Fighters' House Directorate, and Professor Szewach Weiss, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council. Other participants included board members of the Claims Conference and representatives of the various commemorative institutions.



From left to right: Rabbi Dr. Israel Miller, Edna Solodar, and Professor Szewach Weiss

## Symposium on the Jedwabne Massacre with Professor Jan Tomasz Gross

A symposium marking the publication of the Hebrew edition of *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* was held at Yad Vashem on 25 November.

Written by Professor Jan Tomasz Gross and published by Yad Vashem and Yediot Aharonot in Hebrew, the book has spurred much controversy. For two years now, following the emergence of the book in its original Polish, a heated debate has been raging in Poland in which historical claims and political intent have been questioned. The incident raised by Gross is the murder of 1,600 Jews in

Jedwabne by their Polish neighbors. In a detailed account, Gross presents numerous descriptions, facts, and survivor testimonies, culminating in a shocking picture of the tragedy that took place in just one day.

The evening symposium was conceived by Yad Vashem in conjunction



From left to right: Professor Jan Tomasz Gross, Agnieszka Arnold, and Sergiusz Kowalski

with the Polish Institute in Israel—directed by Agnieszka Maciejowska. Polish Ambassador to Israel, H.E. Maciej Kozłowski, participated in the event and helped in its organization. Speakers at the symposium included: Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, Avner Shalev; Israeli Ambassador to Poland and Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, Professor Szewach Weiss; Academic Advisor at Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research, Professor Israel Gutman; Director of the film *Where is My Older Son Cain?* Agnieszka Arnold; and journalist, Sergiusz Kowalski. The evening culminated with a response by Professor Jan Tomasz Gross.

## Yad Vashem Council Meeting

On 28 October 2001, Professor Szewach Weiss chaired a meeting of the Yad Vashem Council.

Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, Avner Shalev, delivered opening remarks. Lectures were given by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel, Rabbi Michael Melchior, who spoke on "A New Wave of Antisemitic and Anti-Israel Sentiment and its Effect on the Understanding of the Holocaust" and World Jewish Congress Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, Dr. Israel Singer, who discussed "The Effects of Recent Events and the US Terrorist Attacks on Israel and on the

Perception of the Holocaust."



Dr. Israel Singer

Following his address, Dr. Singer spoke of the function of historical committees formed in reaction to disputes over plundered Jewish property in countries such as France, Holland, etc. To date these committees have exposed and amassed numerous archival materials. Dr. Singer explained that the materials should all be entrusted to the Yad Vashem Archives—the largest documentation center of the Holocaust period. Furthermore, part of the committees' extensive budgets should finance the transferring of these documents to Yad Vashem.

Yad Vashem Council members also heard lectures from Professor Szewach Weiss and Professor Israel Gutman, an Academic Advisor at Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research. The final two speakers discussed "The Jedwabne Massacre—the Historical and Public Debate in Poland, Israel, and Worldwide Prior to, During, and After the National Memorial Ceremony in Poland and the Speech by President of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski."

## New on the Yad Vashem Website: Commemorative Ceremony Initiatives

In preparation for Holocaust Remembrance Day 2001, programs designed to help educators plan commemorative ceremonies were launched on Yad Vashem's website. Due to the success of the initiative, resources to help educators create ceremonies for another two Holocaust memorial days—*Yom HaKaddish HaClali*: 10 Tevet and the liberation of Auschwitz: 27 January 1945—were posted on Yad Vashem's website in December 2001.

The memorial day, *Yom HaKaddish HaClali* is dedicated to those whose *yahrzeit* is unknown. Educational activities outlined for this day on Yad Vashem's website are suitable for students of all ages as well as youth involved in informal education.

Recommended activities for *Yom HaKaddish HaClali* begin with an overview of the significance of memorial days, both on a personal and national level. Guided imagery is used for students to better comprehend and perpetuate the seemingly unfathomable number of six million. The story of the Jews of Stanislavov—one of many communities destroyed during the Holocaust—is used as an example of other lost communities. Lizzy Doron's story, "*Yom Kippur*," is told to raise questions of how and what people choose to remember.

The liberation of Auschwitz: 27 January 1945 is the day that many countries worldwide commemorate the Nazis' victims. Information included on Yad Vashem's website in observance of this day outlines two separate ceremonies designed for different age groups. Both ceremonies are based primarily on accounts of Jewish victims and survivors, however, texts recalling the stories of non-Jewish victims and survivors are also included.

The stages of the "Final Solution" are examined—both literally and metaphorically—through the symbol of the train constantly in motion: from the ghetto and the transitional camps to the labor, concentration, and death camps. The imperative for the post-Auschwitz generations to remember and address difficult, existential questions raised by the knowledge of Auschwitz is touched upon. The ceremonies integrate testimonies, letters, prose, poetry, and music.

## Annual Workshop with Researchers from Germany

On 21-23 November, the International Institute for Holocaust Research held its third annual workshop with researchers from Germany at Yad Vashem. This program of international cooperation has expanded considerably since its inception in 1999. This year, with the support of the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, six researchers were invited to spend a week at Yad Vashem, accessing the archives and library and attending a workshop with Israeli researchers. Nicholas Berg of the Simon-Dubnow Institute, Aleksandar Vuletić of the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt in Postdam, Armin Nolzen of Ruhr-Universität in Bochum, Alexandra Przyrembel of Freie Universität in Berlin, Isabelle Heinemann of Historisches Seminar at Freiburg Universität, and Marc Buggeln of Universität Bremen attended the workshop. Both research students and scholars were present at each session. During the presentations, many new and interesting topics were discussed ranging from "the Race Defilement" to "the Satellite Camps of Neuengamme Concentration Camp." Periods of intensive discussion followed each presentation.



On 31 October 2001, Croatian President, Stjepan Mesic (right), visited Yad Vashem and signed the visitors' book with the following words: "The Holocaust is a crime the monstrosity of which has no parallel in the history of humankind... We must not let ignorance replace the knowledge of the Holocaust in the awareness of the present and coming generations. In visiting Yad Vashem, I am paying homage to all the victims of the Holocaust, with the message that the memory must never pale." Pictured on left: Mesic's wife, Milka.



President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Holy See Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, Cardinal Walter Kasper, visited Yad Vashem on 21 November 2001. Pictured on left: Irena Steinfeldt, Executive Assistant to the Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate.



British Foreign Minister, Jack Straw (left), visited Yad Vashem on 20 September 2001. Pictured on right: Dr. Mordechai Paldi, Director of the Righteous Among the Nations Department.



Belgian Prime Minister and President of the European Council, Guy Verhofstadt (back right); EU Commission Head, Romano Prodi (front right); Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Louis Michel; and Secretary General of the Council of the European Union, Dr. Javier Solana visited Yad Vashem on 18 November 2001. Pictured on left: Irena Steinfeldt.



US envoy, General Anthony Zinni (right), paid an extensive visit to Yad Vashem while in Israel for top level Middle East truce talks. Pictured on left: Dr. Robert Rozett, Director of the Library.



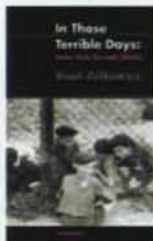
**Edi Weinstein, *Quenched Steel: The Story of an Escape from Treblinka, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2001, 180 pages.***

“ If I could only cry,” wrote Weinstein after the war, “but my heart has hardened like molten steel cast into freezing water and I am not able to weep over my sufferings.”

Edi Weinstein’s unique narrative of escape, *Quenched Steel*, combines the immediacy of postwar memories with the bittersweet perspective of age. Written in Germany in 1947, this memoir recalls the author’s escape from Treblinka, and his constant evasion of death: in a labor camp, from a bunker, and from a myriad of informers—Poles, Ukrainians, Germans, and Russians. The author credits his mother, whom he saw being taken away, with saving him when she appeared in a vision to an undecided rescuer.

Following the war the author was reunited with his father and they immigrated to the US.

**Josef Zerkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Notes from the Lodz Ghetto, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2001, 300 pages.***



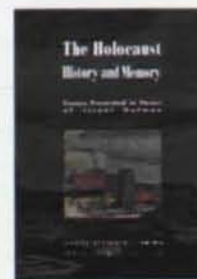
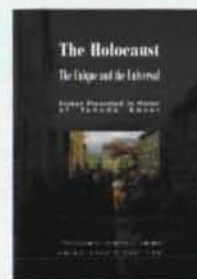
J osef Zerkowicz (1897-1944) was born to a prosperous *Hasidic* family in Konstanytown, near Lodz. Following his ordination as a rabbi, he devoted himself to Yiddish, researching the rich Jewish history and folklore and publishing articles in the Lodz Yiddish press, as well as abroad.

By the winter of 1940, the Jews of Lodz, including Zerkowicz and his family, were forced into an enclosed ghetto; Zerkowicz managed to continue his literary activities, documenting ghetto life as one of the mainstays of the ghetto archives. From January 1941 to the end of July 1944 he wrote nearly 50 articles and kept a personal diary. In August 1944, Josef Zerkowicz was deported to Auschwitz, where he was murdered.

Nachman Zonabend—one of several hundred Jews left behind in the empty ghetto—concealed a large amount of documentation from the ghetto archives, including much of Zerkowicz’s work. After the war, Zonabend retrieved the material and forwarded part of it to the Yad Vashem Archives and other organizations.

*In Those Terrible Days* contains only a small selection of Zerkowicz’s vast body of work. The writing styles range from reportage and literature, to plays and descriptive narrative, all expressing Zerkowicz’s vast knowledge of Jewish and general studies, and his rich use of language.

***The Holocaust: The Unique and the Universal, Essays Presented in Honor of Yehuda Bauer; and The Holocaust: History and Memory, Essays Presented in Honor of Israel Gutman, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2001, 372 pages and 408 pages.***



T he Institute of Contemporary Judaism of the Hebrew University and Yad Vashem joined forces for the publication of two books, *The Holocaust: History and Memory, Essays Presented in Honor of Israel Gutman* and *The Holocaust: the Unique and the Universal, Essays Presented in Honor of Yehuda Bauer*. The books—compilations of academic writings from researchers from Israel, Poland, the US, Germany, and Canada—form a humble tribute to the tremendous contributions to Holocaust research and instruction made by Professors Bauer and Gutman.

Although divided into two volumes according to the unique research areas of the tribute receiver, the two books were conceived of as one unit. This is due to the overlap in the professors’ areas of interest and in the common connections the two have with the books’ many notable contributors. Each volume is comprised of a selection of both English and Hebrew articles.

To order Yad Vashem publications please call: 972-2-644-3505, fax: 972-2-644-3506 or e-mail: [publication.marketing@yadvashem.org.il](mailto:publication.marketing@yadvashem.org.il)

## The Buchman Memorial Prize

T he annual Buchman Memorial Prize was established by the Jacob Buchman Foundation in memory of Buchman’s wife, Esther, and daughter, Hanaleh, who perished in the Holocaust. The award—granted by Yad Vashem to authors, artists, and researchers who demonstrate exemplary work in the field of the Holocaust—was presented in late December 2001 to Dr. Nachum Bogner for his book *At the Mercy of Strangers—The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland* and Amir Gottfreund for his book *Our Holocaust*.

In *At the Mercy of Strangers* Dr. Bogner discusses the rescue of children who adopted false identities within Poland’s Christian population (in the city, village, and monasteries) and the efforts various institutes made after the war to locate these children. The emotive, albeit restrained book contains innovative academic research, as until now this subject has not been dealt with.

In *Our Holocaust*, Gottfreund examines how two second-generation, Israeli-raised cousins cope with the Holocaust during different periods of their lives. The connection between Holocaust survivors who impart their personal recollections to those who hear their accounts in Israel today is emphasized. A focus is also placed on the constant battle encountered by Holocaust survivors to have the past remembered accurately, while trying to protect the young generation from the brutal knowledge of what happened.

## Dr. Gerhart Riegner (z"l)

Dr. Gerhart Riegner—the representative of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland who tried to alert the world to Hitler’s plan to murder the Jews of Europe—passed away on 3 December at the age of 90. His cable was dispatched from neutral Switzerland on 8 August 1942 to Rabbi Dr. Stephen Wise, President of the World Jewish Congress in the US, and Sidney Silverman, a British Member of Parliament in London. Despite Wise and Silverman’s efforts to pass Riegner’s information on to their governments, Riegner’s warnings were not heeded by the US and Britain. Riegner was plagued for the rest of his life by the knowledge that had the US and Britain acted immediately, millions of Jewish lives could have been saved.

### Correction

On pages 4-5 of *Yad Vashem Jerusalem*, Vol.24 in the article “To Know, To Feel, and To Remember,” the name of photograph and films curator, Nina Springer-Aharoni, was unintentionally omitted from the list of names of Yad Vashem’s new Historical Museum planning committee.

## U.S.A.

It was with much solemn remembrance of the events of 11 September that the **American Society for Yad Vashem** marked its 20th Anniversary with a Tribute Dinner on 4 November. The event's outstanding success was largely due to the devotion of **American Society Chairman, Eli Zborowski** and the **American Society** staff.

Over 1,000 guests including foreign diplomats, community leaders, and officers of the **American Society** attended the dinner, affirming their support for the **Society** and Yad Vashem. Many Holocaust survivors and their families were also present, demonstrating their determination and resilience.

**Zygmunt Wilf** and **David Halpern** were Dinner Chairmen for the event, which honored the Founders and Pillars of the **American Society**.

**Dr. Israel Singer**, Vice Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council delivered the invocation. A video presentation, *A Time to Build: The American Society Marks 20 Years*, highlighted the accomplishments of the **Society** over the past two decades. **Eli Zborowski**, Chairman of the **American Society**, along with Senior Vice Chairmen, **Sam Skura** and **Joseph Wilf**, as well as **Avner**



From left to right: **Eli Zborowski**, **Sigmund Strochlitz**, and **Sam Skura**

**Shalev**, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, made presentations to the honorees. **Sigmund Strochlitz**, National Vice Chair for Connecticut, responded on behalf of the honorees.

Israeli Ambassador to the UN, **Yehuda Lancry**, Israeli Ambassador to the US, **David Ivry**, and **Avner Shalev** conveyed greetings. A video montage featuring images of Yad

Vashem was projected throughout the evening.

**Leonard Wilf** introduced the evening's guest speaker, the **Hon. Ehud**



From left to right: **Ehud Olmert**, **Leonard Wilf**, **Zygmunt Wilf**, and **Joseph Wilf**

**Olmert**, Mayor of Jerusalem. **Rabbi Michael Miller**, Executive Vice President of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, read a proclamation from the **Hon. Rudolph Giuliani**, former Mayor of New York. Messages were read on behalf of the President of Israel, **Moshe Katsav** and the Prime Minister of Israel, **Ariel Sharon**.

A 20th Anniversary Tribute Journal with the theme, *Eit Livnot—A Time to Build*, was published and distributed at the Dinner.

The first meeting of the **American Society for Yad Vashem** Texas Chapter was held at the Holocaust Museum Houston in October. **Mindy Mitzner**, **Pearl Monk**, **Wolf Finkelman**, and **Lea Weems** hosted the meeting. Director of the Yad Vashem Museums Division, **Yehudit Inbar**, addressed those in attendance and discussed plans for Yad Vashem's new Historical Museum, scheduled to open in 2004. Other speakers included survivor, **Wolf Finkelman**, and **Ahavia Scheindlin**, President of the Holocaust Museum Houston. **Scheindlin** expressed appreciation to Yad Vashem for lending diaries to the local museum for its new diaries exhibition. Guests also included **Edith Minberg**, **Ira Mitzner**, **Meir Monk**, and **Leon Cooper**, a "Schindler survivor."

As part of its *Kristallnacht* program, Temple Israel of Great Neck, Long Island displayed Yad Vashem's "No Child's Play" traveling exhibition. Arrangements were made by the Temple's Shoah Committee, including Yad Vashem supporters **Joseph and Batsheva Eden**, **William and Jerry Unger**, **Milton and Eileen Putterman**, Committee Chairman, **Jack Levine**, and former chair, **Joan Mandel**.

In preparation for the 20th Anniversary events in Israel, a delegation from the **American Society** visited Israel as an expression of solidarity during these difficult times. During the two-day visit, **Eli Zborowski**, Chairman of the **American Society**; **Joseph Wilf**, Campaign Chairman of the "Yad Vashem 2001" masterplan; Vice Chairman, **Mark Palmer**; National Vice Chair, New Jersey, **Sam Halpern**; Executive Board Member, **Arie Halpern**; and Vice

Chairman and Second Generation representatives, **Ira Drukier** and **Axel Stawski** visited the construction sites of the "Yad Vashem 2001" masterplan. The delegates were updated on construction and budget plans, and met with various heads of departments. The delegation endorsed Yad Vashem's actualization of the masterplan and reaffirmed its support for 1/3 of the masterplan's cost. Also participating in the delegation was **American Society** Development Director, **Shraga Mekel**.

The Education Department of the **American Society** and the Young Leadership Associates will be sponsoring the Fourth Annual Professional Development Conference on 27 January 2002. The theme of the conference is "Altered Intellectual Landscapes: Lessons from the Past." Workshops will use Yad Vashem's educational resource materials.

Yad Vashem supporter and **American Society** Executive Board Member, **Nathan Katz** of New York, recently attended a Yad Vashem event in Israel on the occasion of the Hebrew publication of his memoirs *Teach Us To Count Our Days*. Friends who formerly resided in Shavel (Siauliai) and nearby towns in Lithuania before and during WWII attended the event. **Katz** and his wife, **Sima**, were honored by **Shaya Ben Yehuda**, Managing Director of the International Relations Division, on behalf of Yad Vashem.

Recent visitors to Yad Vashem included **Stephen Shalom**, past President and life trustee of the UJA-Federation of New York and **David and Bernice Weiss**, their children, and grandchildren.

## CANADA

The **Diamond Foundation** in Vancouver has contributed generously toward Yad Vashem's new Historical Museum.

The **Kaufmann Foundation** in Montreal will be supporting the Yad Vashem Library, and the Pedagogic Center in the International School for Holocaust Studies.

**Professor Szewach Weiss**, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, addressed a gathering on behalf of the **Canadian Society for Yad Vashem** at **Yochanan Twine's** Toronto home in November. **Weiss** also spoke to the Toronto Jewish community as part of Toronto's Holocaust Education Week.

## ENGLAND

While in Israel for the event marking 50 years since the foundation of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, **Ben Helfgott**, Chairman of the **National Yad Vashem Charitable Trust**, visited Yad Vashem. The **National Yad Vashem Charitable Trust** recently transferred donations to Yad Vashem for the support of educational programs.

Yad Vashem recently received a generous donation from the estate of the late **G. Palmer**.

**Shulamit Imber**, Pedagogical Director of the International School for Holocaust Studies, will give teacher-training workshops in England in preparation for the marking of Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January. From 21-24 January, she will work with educators from the **National Yad Vashem Charitable Trust**, the Imperial War Museum, and Beth Shalom.

## GERMANY

The **Freundeskreis of Yad Vashem in Germany** has been successfully reinstated as a German non-profit organization. **Retired Judge Ines Henn** provided legal assistance, and assisted in drafting a new charter. Professor **Rita Suessmuth**, former President of the Bundestag, has agreed to chair the **Freundeskreis of Yad Vashem in Germany**.

## FRANCE

**Dr. Jacques Eloit**, President of the French Committée for Yad Vashem in Nice-Côte d'Azur, visited Yad Vashem in November and met with **Avner Shalev**.

**Lida Klarsfeld**, daughter of **Serge Klarsfeld**, was a guest at Yad Vashem and visited the "No Child's Play" exhibit.

**Jeanne Sigee** of Paris, who is supporting the French edition of the *Gurs Haggada* visited Yad Vashem. There, she unveiled a plaque in memory of family members who perished in the Holocaust.

## SWITZERLAND



Dr. Rolf Bloch at Yad Vashem

Dr. Rolf Bloch of Bern, President of the Swiss Society for Yad Vashem, visited Yad Vashem in October and familiarized himself with new developments. In a meeting with Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, Avner Shalev, Dr. Bloch discussed the Swiss Society's work plan for 2002.

## AUSTRIA

Rudolphine Steindling, close friend and donor to Yad Vashem, has established a fund to provide seminars for senior IDF officers in memory of her husband, **Dolly Steindling**. **Dolly Steindling** (ז"ל), fought in the French Resistance and was active in the liberation of France and Austria.

## LIECHTENSTEIN

The Liechtenstein Society for Yad Vashem was inaugurated in December, under the patronage of His Serene Highness, **Prince Hans Adam II**. General Secretary of the Principality of Liechtenstein, **Norbert Hemmerle**, was instrumental in the Society's establishment.

## LATIN AMERICA

A ceremony honoring **Frida and David Weisz** of Venezuela was held in September at the International Institute for Holocaust Research. Together with their family, they funded the Spanish translation of the *Wolfsberg Rosh Hashana Prayer Book (Mahzor)*. Director General of Yad Vashem, **Ishai Amrami**, and Head of the International Institute for Holocaust Research, **Professor David Bankier**, were present.

**Simy and Sadia Cohen** and **Nicole and Salvador Chocron** of Venezuela are supporting the "Connections" Jewish Heritage and the Holocaust educational program. **Mery Alter de Bechar** is financing an educational project in memory of her husband, **Shmaryahu** (ז"ל). **Rebecca Lustgarten**—who has worked tirelessly to strengthen the memory of the Holocaust—has



From left to right: Jaques Perlow, Berel Aizenstein, Ben Abraham, Mauricio Sommer, Horacio Lewinski, Ishai Amrami, and Jack Terpins

contributed towards Yad Vashem's educational activities. **Eva and Nicolas Fainsod** of Mexico donated two paintings by the Jewish artist **Gyorgy Beifeld** to Yad Vashem's Art Museum.

**Jack Terpins**, Chairman of the Confederação Israelita Brasileira (Confederation of Jewish Organizations in Brazil) and the incoming Chairman of the Latin-American Jewish Congress, visited Yad Vashem. Accompanying him were Brazilian delegates to the World Jewish Congress, **Ben Abraham**, **Jaques Perlow**, **Berel Aizenstein**, **Mauricio Sommer**, and **Horacio Lewinski**.

## SPAIN

**Max Mazin**, his wife, **Atara Mor Zilberstein**, and family visited Yad Vashem in November. **Mazin**, who founded the Comunidad Israelita de Madrid and B'nai Brith in Spain, is the Honorary President of the Spanish Jewish Community and Chairman of B'nai Brith in Spain.

## ISRAEL

**David Azrieli** recently garnered commercial sponsorship for the funding of scholarships towards the publication of Holocaust survivors' memoirs in Israel.

Despite Israel's volatile security situation, Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies exposed future teachers from the Israeli Arab, Druze, Circassian, and Bedouin sectors to the legacy of the Holocaust. The **Israel Society for Yad Vashem** raised funds for this endeavor through an anonymous philanthropic fund.

**Marcel Amerilio**, through the assistance of **Yoram Berger**, Chairman of the **Israel Society**, made a recent donation to Yad Vashem.

As part of the Society's continuous activity with Israeli philanthropic funds and financial bodies, the Society has continued to transfer donations from the Caesarea Foundation to Yad Vashem towards the construction of Yad Vashem's new Hall of Names.

**Fella Shapira** made a donation towards educational materials being promoted by the International School for Holocaust Studies.

**Dr. Mike Cohen** has been appointed Deputy Director of the **Israel Society for Yad Vashem**.

# YAD VASHEM JERUSALEM

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*„Humor und Melodie!!!“*

MAX EHRlich.

RUD WERNER BRESLAUER.

