

THE RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

— ” —

We do not know
what a Jew is.
We know only
human beings.”

Historian André Trocmé



Deportation from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka and Majdanek extermination camps after the Uprising was quashed. April-May 1943
Yad Vashem Collections

SHOAH

THE HOLOCAUST

The Holocaust (Shoah) was an unprecedented genocide, total and systematic, perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its collaborators with the aim of obliterating the Jewish people, culture and traditions from the face of the earth. The primary motivation for the Holocaust was the Nazis' anti-Semitic racist ideology. Between 1933 and 1941, Nazi Germany pursued a policy of increasing persecution that dispossessed the Jews of their rights and property, and later branded the Jewish populations under their rule and concentrated them into designated areas. These methods gained broad support in Germany and across much of occupied Europe, and resulted in the uprooting of the Jews from all areas of life – civilian, social and economic – in their countries of residence.

By the end of 1941, Nazi policy had developed into a comprehensive, systematic mass murder operation that the Nazis called "The Final Solution to the Jewish Question". Nazi Germany designated the Jews of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East for total extermination. In Europe, alongside the murder of millions of Jews by shooting, millions more were gassed to death in extermination camps.

By the end of World War II in 1945, close to six million Jews had been murdered, including approximately 1.5 million children.



Photograph that a German soldier sent from the front, depicting German policemen executing Jews. On the back of the photo, the soldier wrote: "Jews during an Aktion, Ivangorod, Ukraine, 1942".
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Courtesy of Jerzy Tomaszewski



Since its founding in 1953, Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, located on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem, has been dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust. Through its collections, documentation, research and education about the horrors of the Holocaust, Yad Vashem aims to instill the significance of the Holocaust in the coming generations.

Curators: Traveling Exhibitions Department, Museums Division, Yad Vashem

Consultants: Righteous Among the Nations Department and the International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem

Design: Yad Vashem Graphic Studio, Information Technology Division, Yad Vashem

LOCAL RESPONSES TO PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS

The fate of the Jews in the territories of the Reich, and in Nazi-occupied and collaborating countries was determined both by German and collaborationist policy, and by the attitude of the local populations.

In the majority of cases, the locals chose to ignore the persecution and murder of their Jewish neighbors, despite having lived side by side with them for centuries.

The terror that the Germans instilled in the local populations, coupled with the human tendency towards conformism, led the silent majority to focus on their own personal hardships and not to take an interest in the fate of the Jews. This indifference was also apparent amongst those who understood the situation. Alongside these responses were hostile reactions that derived from a general consensus regarding Nazi policy and its antisemitic characteristics. Sometimes, the Jews' untenable situation was even exploited in order to make a profit: they were blackmailed with threats of denunciation, and their property was looted after their deportation. Cooperation with the Germans manifested itself in informing on hidden Jews, taking part in their arrest, and even in their murder.

There were those who felt empathy for the hunted Jews, but the fear of reprisal and the lack of belief in their ability to alter the fate of their Jewish acquaintances led them to settle for moral support. Those who actively tried to assist Jews and to save their lives constitute a marginal phenomenon, in numerical terms.

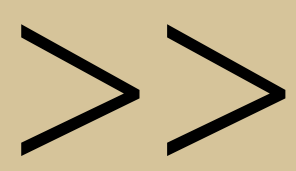
This exhibition is dedicated to them.



Auction of household goods belonging to Jewish families deported on 22 October 1940 to the Gurs camp in France. Lörrach, Germany, November 1940
Stadtarchiv Lörrach

The hair of three Jewish women is shorn in front of a curious crowd. Signs hung around their necks read: "I have been removed from the global community". Austria, 8-13 November, 1938
bpk





LOCAL RESPONSES TO PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS



Lazar Levy... was fired from his place of employment. Would that his non-Jewish colleagues had expressed their wish for him to keep his position... But they did not make this gesture. Fear has become a civic value."

Jacques Biélinky, 20 February 1942, France



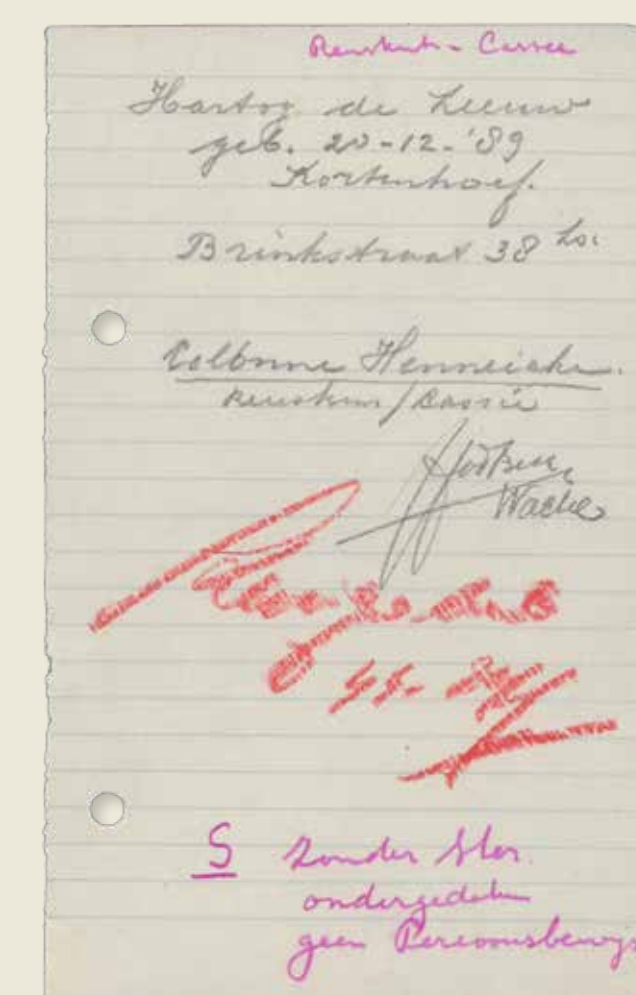
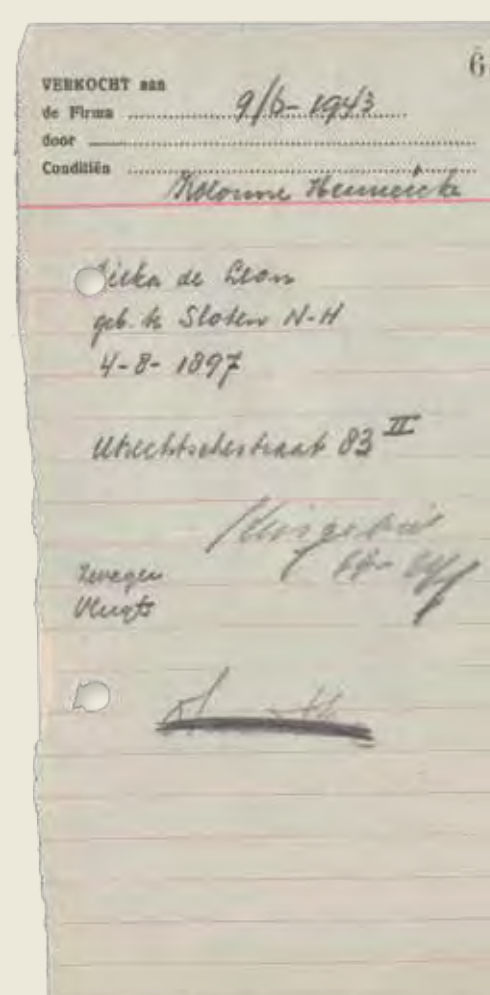
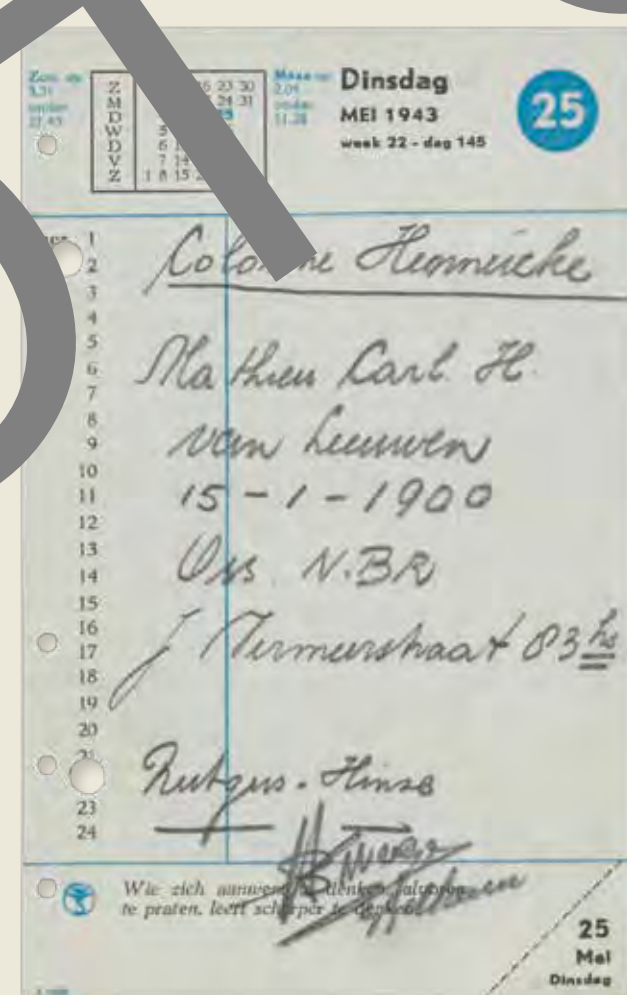
The German Army enters Zagreb, Yugoslavia (today Croatia), April 1941
Yad Vashem Collections



Pogrom perpetrated against the Jews of Lwów by the local population. Ukraine, July
Yad Vashem Collections



Lithuanian civilians and German soldiers look at the corpses of dozens of Jews murdered by Lithuanian nationals in the course of the pogrom at the Lietūkis Garage in Kaunas, Lithuania, 27 June 1941
Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (DÖW)



Notes attributed to members of the *Colonne Henneicke*, a group of Dutch collaborators who helped the Germans to find Jews in hiding. For every Jew turned in, the informant would receive a payment of 7.50 guilders. Inscribed on the notes are the names of Jews caught by members of the group and handed over to the Germans. The notes are signed by SS men, confirming the "receipt" of the Jews. The Netherlands, 1943

NIOD Instituut voor Oorlogs- Holocaust en Genocidestudies, Nederlands



2.



3.



1.

1. Slovak militia men close the doors of the deportation train to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. Žilina, Slovakia, 1942
Yad Vashem Collections

2. Romanian gendarmes and collaborators during the deportation of the Jews of Briceva to Transnistria. The man in the white shirt, who played a central role in the deportation, was the principal of the state elementary school. Romania (today Moldova), summer 1941
Yad Vashem Collections

3. Germans and Hungarian gendarmes deporting the Jews of Koszeg to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. Hungary, 1944
Yad Vashem Collections

THE RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

The State of Israel, acting on behalf of the Jewish people, entrusted Yad Vashem with the duty of recognizing and commemorating the deeds of those non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust period. These individuals were willing to sacrifice their freedom, and sometimes even their lives, for no remuneration of any kind. In recognition of their selfless actions, they are awarded the title of Righteous Among the Nations.

Rescue attempts were carried out in a variety of different ways: finding escape routes and smuggling people across borders, assistance with obtaining forged documents and principally, offering refuge. The motivation for offering aid stemmed largely from moral considerations: conscience, faith, or a combination of the two, compelled them to act. Sometimes the assistance was an act of defiance against the Nazi regime. Throughout the rescue process, the rescuers' constant companion was the fear of betrayal. Some lived in the shadow of this terror for weeks, months and even years. The slightest slip on the part of the rescuers bore the inherent danger that their neighbors and acquaintances – those who wished them ill or who couldn't resist the lure of financial benefits bestowed on informants – would report them to the authorities. The penalty for assisting Jews ranged from imprisonment in concentration camps to the execution of the rescuers and sometimes even their entire family. In addition to the erosion of the rescuers' social connections, their financial resources also dwindled while accommodating the Jews under their protection.

After the war, some rescuers chose not to reveal their deeds to acquaintances and neighbors, in the knowledge that their wartime actions would not be viewed favorably.



Anna Baçal collection & Mateusz Szpytma collection / digital collections of the Ulma Family Museum / Poles Saving Jews in World War II in Markowa

Jozef and Wiktorja Ulma, both farmers, lived with their children in the village of Markowa in Poland.

From the fall of 1942 until the winter of 1944, the Ulmas hid the Szall and Goldman families in their home. Following their betrayal by a man who had hidden the Szall family in the past for payment and refused to return their belongings, the Germans carried out a raid on the Ulma home on the night between 23-24 March 1944. They murdered the hiding Jews, and the entire Ulma family – Jozef and pregnant Wiktorja, and their six young children. "As a result, there was a enormous panic among the Polish peasants who were hiding Jews. The morning after 24 corpses of Jews were discovered in the fields. They had been murdered by the peasants themselves, who had hidden them for twenty months" (Testimony of Yehuda Erlich). Despite this incident, other Poles chose to continue to shelter the Jews under their protection.

On 13 September 1995, Jozef and Wiktorja Ulma were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations.



...If I was in the midst of
an ocean of hatred,

Facing a world in flames
on the verge of collapse,

Would I give shelter to
a foreigner?

...Would my family be prepared
to live in perpetual fear in the
street,

amongst the neighbors

...Amid whispered gossip
and muttered rumors and the
hopes of informants,

And all this – not for one night,
not for a month,
but for years!"

Haim Hefer

Yehuda Bacon (Czechoslovakia, 1929)
To the Man who Restored my Belief in Humanity, Prague, 1945
Gouache, charcoal and pencil on paper | 22.1X30 cm
Collection of the Yad Vashem Art Museum

Born in Prague, Přemysl Pitter helped Jews in a variety of ways during the Holocaust: by collecting and distributing money, by sending aid packages to the concentration camps, and even by hiding Jews in his apartment. After the war, he brought Jewish children to recuperation centers, where he took responsibility for their education and their physical and emotional rehabilitation. In one such treatment center, he met the young Yehuda Bacon, who dedicated this painting to him.

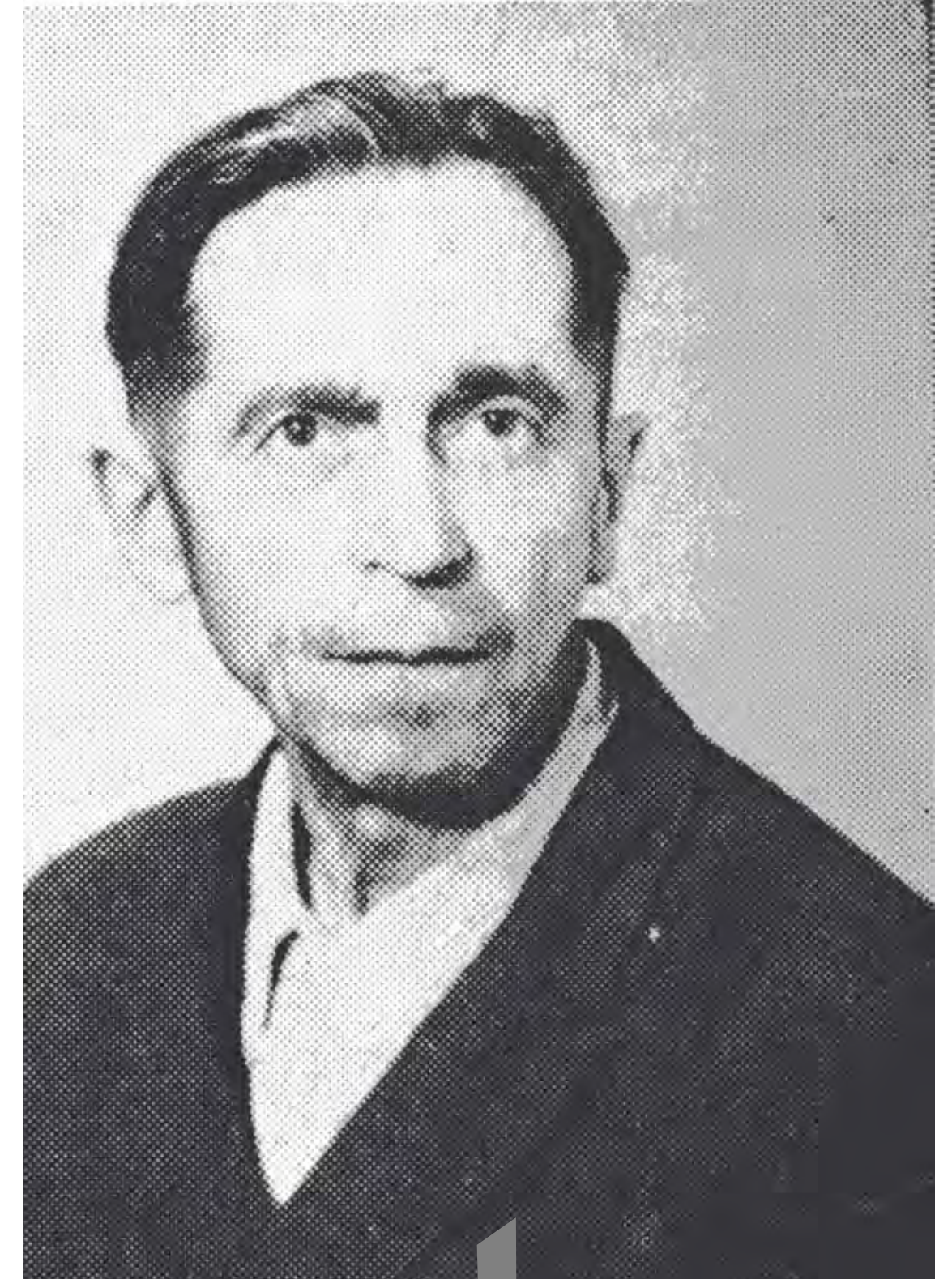
Přemysl Pitter was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 13 October 1964.

ANTON SUCHIŃSKI

”

I DIDN'T KNOW HIM BEFORE,
BUT IT IS DUE TO HIM THAT I AM HERE
TODAY TO TELL THE STORY.”

Eva Adler Halperin



Anton Suchiński
Association of Survivors from the Zborów Ghetto and the Vicinity in Israel

Anton Suchiński lived alone in a small house on the outskirts of Zborów, Ukraine. He was poor, and single. His health was failing, he couldn't read or write, and was the butt of neighborhood mockery on account of his kind heartedness, his easygoing nature and his love of people and animals.

Every time an *Aktion* was perpetrated in the Zborów ghetto, Suchiński would offer refuge in his home to Yitzhak Zeiger and his family, acquaintances from prewar days. Yitzhak and his wife Sonia were always ambivalent, due to Suchiński's reputation as the "village idiot", but when rumors abounded about the impending liquidation of the ghetto in the summer of 1944, they made the decision to entrust him with their lives. Yitzhak, Sonia and their children, as well as an elderly family friend and an orphaned acquaintance, Eva Halperin, all moved in with him.

After some time had passed, Suchiński's neighbors discovered that he was concealing Jews in his cellar. They started blackmailing them and even murdered the elderly friend. Terror that the neighbors would return, bringing Germans with them, prompted the Jews to leave. On parting, Suchiński made them promise to return if they couldn't find refuge elsewhere.

Unable to find permanent shelter and suffering from the bitter cold, they came back to Suchiński, who welcomed them with open arms, declaring: "Come, come inside! Stay with me, come what may." He now concealed them together with another Jewish girl, in an underground hide-out, and despite his impoverished state, he made sure they had food to eat, sometimes even relinquishing his own rations and going to sleep hungry.

Suchiński's neighbors assumed that the Jews had returned to his cellar, and informed on him to the Germans. The Germans threatened him at gunpoint, demanding that he hand over the Jews, but he courageously stood his ground, indicating his empty cellar.

Suchiński succeeded in sheltering and saving all six Jews until the area's liberation in July 1944.

Anton Suchiński was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 10 September 1974.



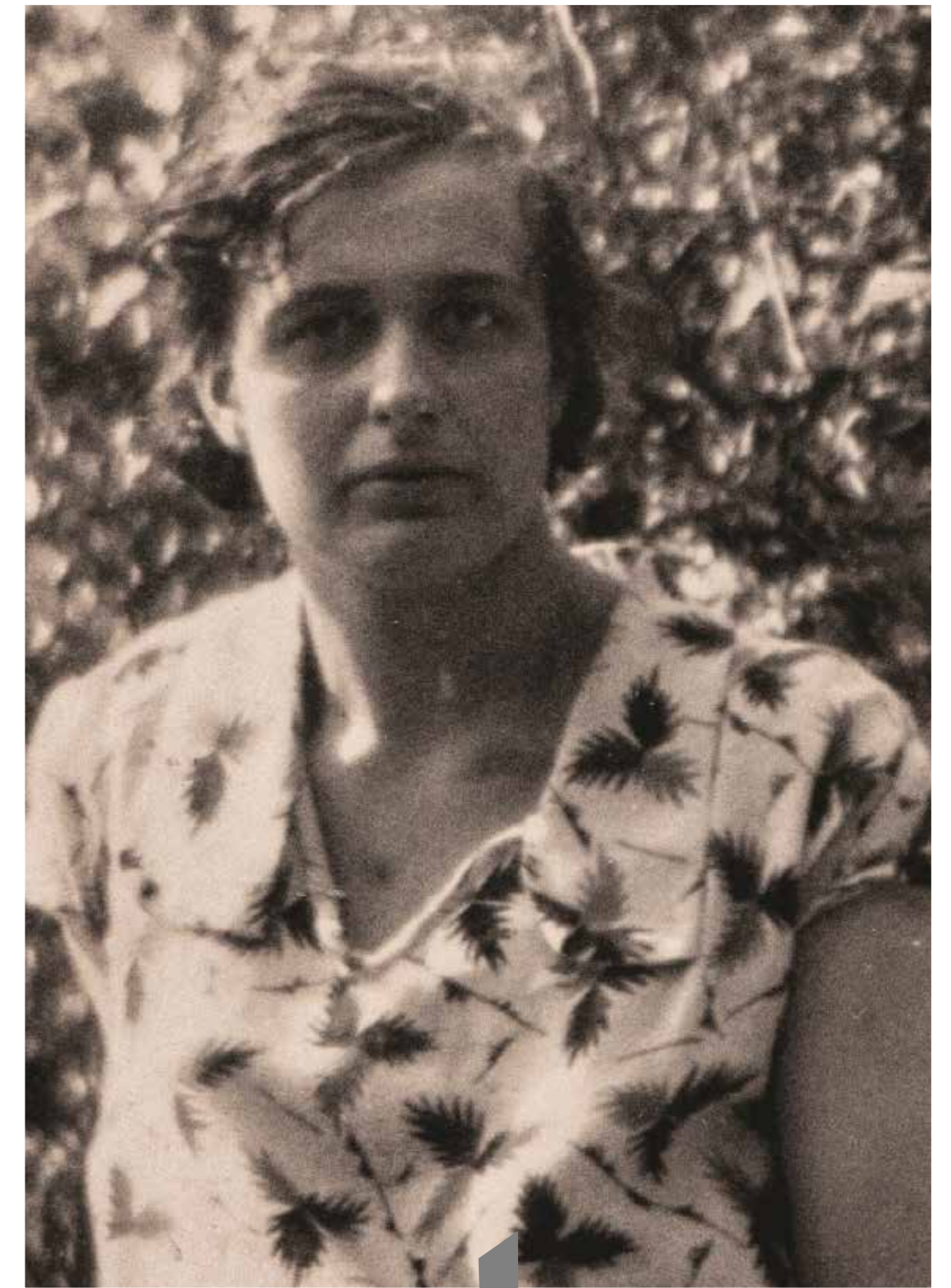
The entrance to the hide-out where Anton Suchiński concealed the Jews
Private Collection Baruch Adler, Ramat Gan, Israel

ADÉLAÏDE HAUTVAL

— ” —

THE FACT THAT I AM STANDING HERE TODAY ON THE WITNESS STAND PROVES THAT EVEN AT AUSCHWITZ IT WAS POSSIBLE TO BEHAVE LIKE A HUMAN BEING.”

From the testimony of Adélaïde Hautval, in response to the claim that it was impossible to refuse to participate in medical experiments.



Adélaïde Hautval, 1930s

Adélaïde Hautval was a psychiatrist by profession.

In the spring of 1942, she was arrested while trying to attend the funeral of her mother in the Alsace region of France without the requisite permits from the Germans, and was sent to prison in Bourges. While in prison, she voiced her criticism regarding the treatment of Jewish inmates, and her anticipated release was revoked as a result. Hautval was sent to a number of camps and prisons in France, until her deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau in January 1943.

At Auschwitz, Hautval tried to help female Jewish inmates sick with typhus by hiding them in the upper bunks, where she treated them clandestinely. A few months later, Hautval was sent to Block 10, where experiments were carried out on Jewish prisoners. When she understood the significance of the “medical” treatment she was ordered to administer, she refused. In answer to medical team chief Dr. Wirths’ query, “After you are a doctor, can you see that these women are totally different from you?” she responded: “In this camp, many people are different from me. You, for example.” In response to a German prisoner who tried to persuade her to participate in the experiments in order to stay alive, Hautval replied: “If I do this, I will go out of my mind. In any event, I will not live.” After she refused to take part in the experiments that Dr. Mengele was performing on twins, she was sent to Birkenau.

Hautval and other prisoner-doctors endeavored to protect the inmates in their care, so that they would not be sent to the gas chambers: they minimized the gravity of the patients’ illnesses and altered diagnoses. Hautval did not know if she would survive the war, and her attitude to the subject was recalled by many prisoners: “Here, we are all under sentence of death. Let us behave like human beings as long as we are alive.”

Hautval was eventually transferred to the Ravensbrück camp, and liberated in April 1945, by which time her health had been irrevocably compromised.

Adélaïde Hautval was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 18 May 1965.



Strip of fabric, with the words, “Friend of the Jews”.

Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine - Mémorial de la Shoah, Paris, France

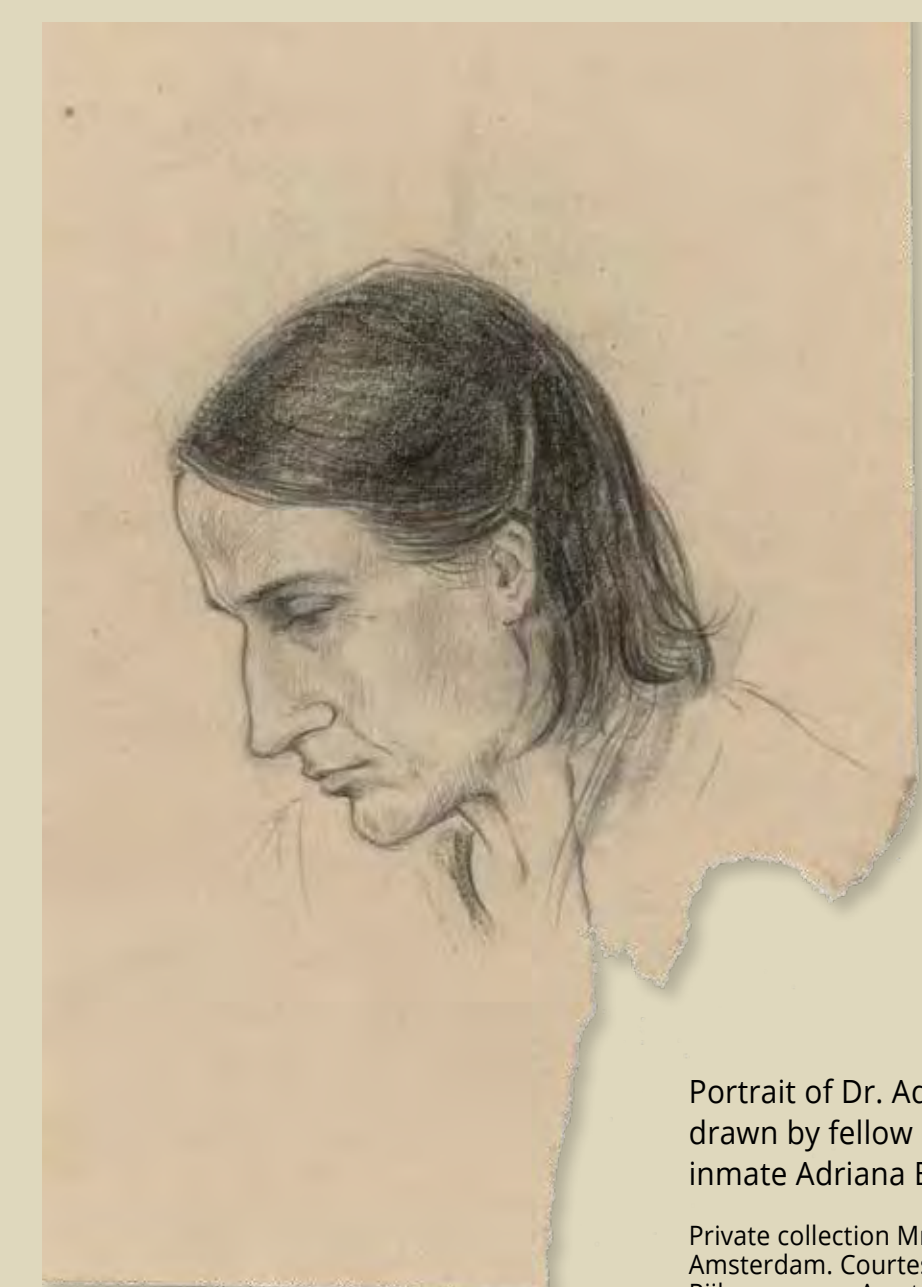
After she protested the treatment of Jewish prisoners in Bourges, declaring: “The Jews are people like everyone else,” a member of the Gestapo ordered Adélaïde Hautval to wear a Yellow Star and a piece of fabric similar to the strip of fabric depicted, saying: “Since you defend them, you will share their fate.”

| Name | Date | Notes |
|------------------|------|--------------|
| Gagliardi | | |
| Volonati | | |
| Favre | | |
| Adélaïde Hautval | | Leave inside |
| Marsalet | | |

Registry of prisoners in Bourges.

On line 999, where Hautval's name is recorded, the words “Leave inside” are written in pencil above the designated release date.

Conseil départemental du Cher - Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation du Cher



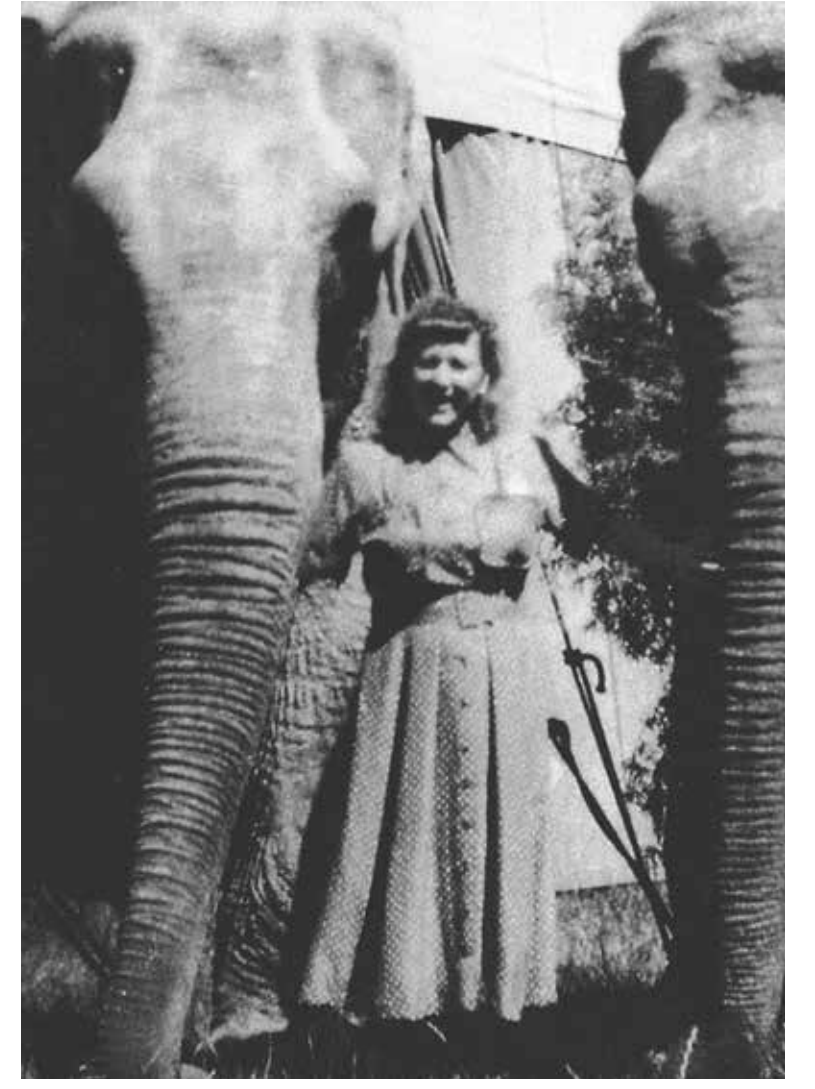
Portrait of Dr. Adélaïde Hautval, drawn by fellow Ravensbrück inmate Adriana Breur

Private collection Mrs. D. Breur, Amsterdam. Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

ADOLF AND MARIA ALTHOFF



Adolf Althoff with his horses, 1955
Der Clown und die Zirkus reiterin – MALIK Publication



Maria Althoff with the elephants
Der Clown und die Zirkus reiterin – MALIK Publication

— ” —

I COULDN'T SIMPLY PERMIT THEM TO FALL INTO THE HANDS
OF THE MURDERERS. THAT WOULD HAVE MADE ME A MURDERER."

Adolf Althoff

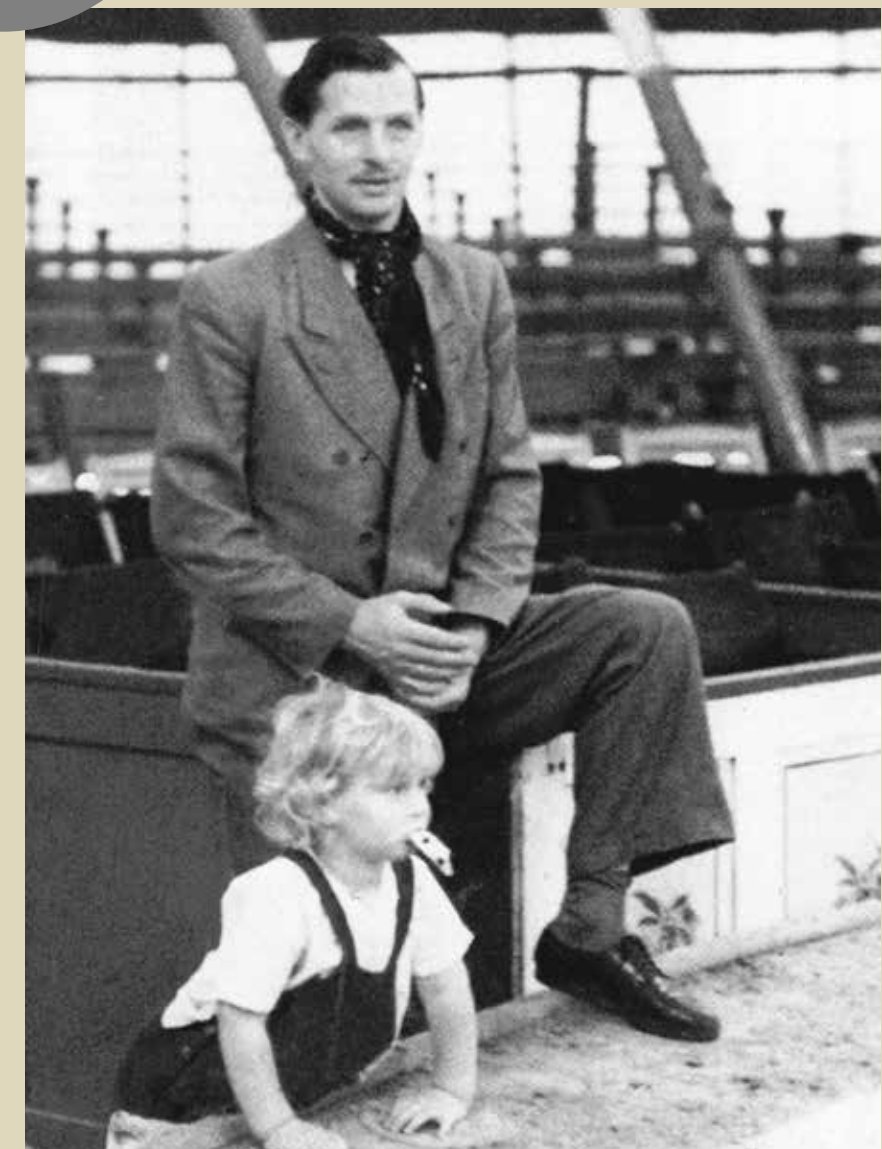
Adolf Althoff was descended from a long line of German circus-owners. When he grew up, he established a circus of his own, and managed it with his wife Maria, who was also born into a family of circus performers.

During the war, the circus traveled from place to place. In the summer of 1941, it stopped close to Darmstadt, where several shows were scheduled. One day, Adolf was approached by young Irene Danner, descendant of a well-known Jewish family of circus artists by the name of Lorch. Since the Nazis' rise to power, Irene and her sister had endured discrimination and humiliation by their teachers and fellow schoolmates, which culminated in their expulsion. Irene, a gifted dancer and acrobat looking for work, approached Adolf, asking for shelter with the circus. Adolf was aware of her Jewish identity but the Althoffs willingly took her in and employed her. When the deportation of German Jewry began, Adolf and Maria obtained shelter for Irene's mother and sister, who were living under assumed identities, and even for her German father, who had deserted the army so as to avoid parting from his Jewish wife.

Every time the circus arrived at a new place, the Gestapo would appear unannounced, looking for hiding Jews. The Althoffs worked on a system: Adolf would host them courteously, give them tickets for all the family and mesmerize them with tales of his performances with bears in Russia, while Maria provided them with food and free-flowing alcohol. At the same time, the Danners would be hiding in the space constructed especially for them in one of the circus wagons.

During the entire period, none of the circus workers ever informed on the Danner family, except on one occasion, and although the Gestapo never found the family, Adolf fired the informant.

Adolf and Maria Althoff were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 2 January 1995.



Adolf Althoff and his son, 1946
Der Clown und die Zirkus reiterin – MALIK Publication

Irene Danner, during a performance, 1941
Der Clown und die Zirkus reiterin – MALIK Publication



METROPOLITAN DIMITRIOS CHRYSOSTOMOS AND LOUKÁS YIORGIOS KARRER



Metropolitan Dimitrios Chrysostomos
Yad Vashem Collections



Loukás Yiorgios Karrer
Yad Vashem Collections

”

IF YOU CHOOSE TO DEPORT THE JEWS OF ZAKYNTHOS, YOU
WILL HAVE TO TAKE ME TOO, AND I WILL SHARE THEIR FATE.”

Metropolitan Dimitrios Chrysostomos

In September 1943, after the Germans had invaded the Greek island of Zakynthos, the military commander approached the Mayor, Loukás Yiorgios Karrer, and demanded an organized list of names and addresses of all the Jews on the island, so that he could arrange their deportation to the extermination camps. The commander warned Karrer that if he didn't present the list within 24 hours, he would pay with his life.

Karrer turned to the local religious leader, Metropolitan Dimitrios Chrysostomos for assistance with this predicament. Chrysostomos ordered him to burn all the documents that could imperil the Jews of Zakynthos, and to warn them of the impending danger. Karrer hurriedly summoned the municipal staff with orders to instruct the Jews to escape to the mountains, where they would be assisted by underground activists and locals who had already been notified by Chrysostomos. Karrer then escaped to another island and lived there in hiding until the Germans had left Zakynthos.

Meanwhile, Chrysostomos implored the German commander to leave the Jews in peace, claiming that they were Greek citizens who had done no harm, and that the vast majority had already fled the island during the German invasion. When all his efforts to convince the commander were unsuccessful, he presented him with a piece of paper inscribed with just two names: his own and Karrer's, saying: "Here's the list of Jews you demanded."

Thanks to the actions of Chrysostomos, Karrer, the local population and the resistance activists who facilitated the escape and concealment operation, the Zakynthos Jewish community was the only Greek-Jewish community that survived the Holocaust almost in its entirety.

Metropolitan Dimitrios Chrysostomos and Loukás Yiorgios Karrer were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 13 March 1978.



Moshe and Esther Matza, 1930s



Moshe Matza's circumcision kit, which he used before the war and while in hiding in the village of Katastari.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Michal (Matza) Albel, Dvora (Matza) Levi, Shila-Shulamit (Albel) Cohen

Moshe Matza, his wife Esther and most of his children escaped to the village of Katastari following Karrer's message, and subsisted by selling haberdashery supplies. Despite the danger, Moshe continued to perform ritual circumcisions free of charge. Whenever the parents of the newborn were too impoverished to buy the infant a garment for the circumcision, Moshe would bring the pair of socks pictured, for the baby to wear at the ceremony. Moshe, Esther and most of their children survived. One of their sons, Aharon, who was living with his wife in Corfu, was deported with all the island's Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he was murdered.

LEOPOLD AND MAGDALENA SOCHA



SOCHA BELIEVED THAT THE HELP HE EXTENDED TO US WAS HIS GREATEST MISSION IN LIFE. IN THE DEPTHS OF HIS SOUL... HE FELT HE WAS CALLED BY GOD TO THIS ASSIGNMENT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REPENT FOR HIS SINS."

Krystyna (Kristine) Chiger, in her book, "The Girl in the Green Sweater"



Leopold Socha. Lwów, Poland (today Ukraine), October 1943
Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Krystyna (Chiger) Keren, New York, USA

Before World War II, Leopold Socha lived in an impoverished area of Lwów (then Poland). A reformed thief, Socha had used the city's sewage network as an escape route from the authorities, and found himself there once more when he started working for the municipal sanitation department.

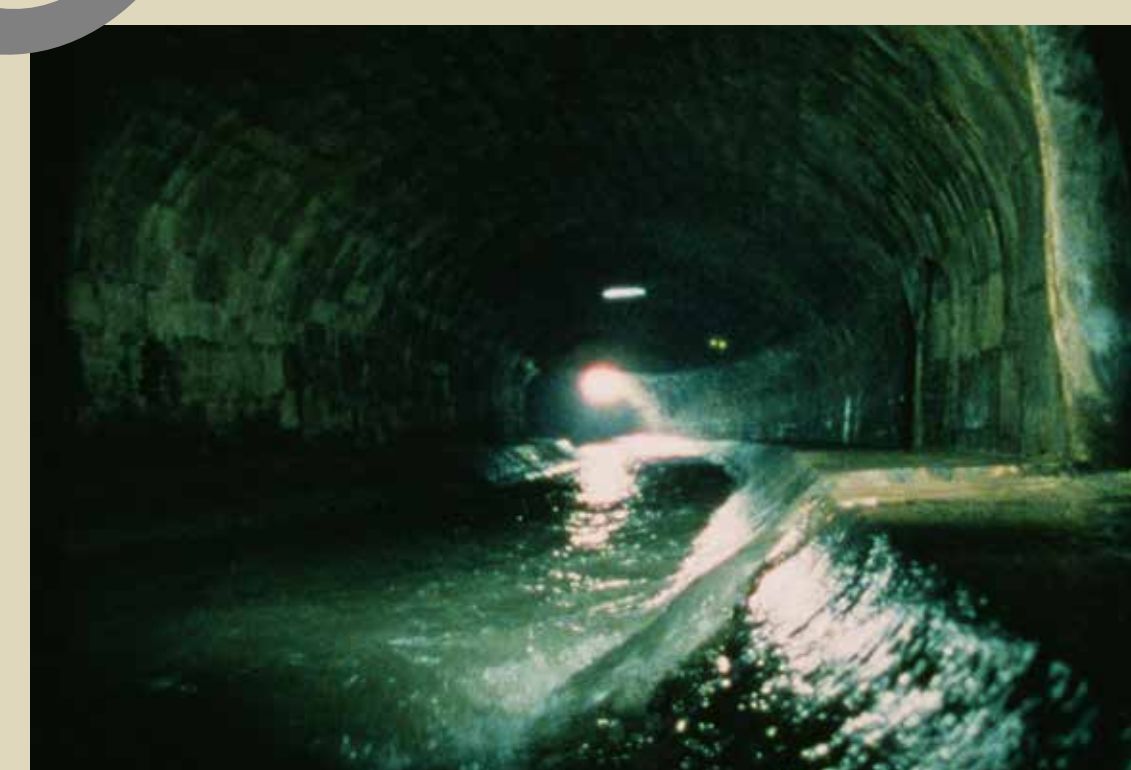
In the spring of 1943, Socha and his coworker Stefan Wróblewski came across a group of men in the sewage tunnels. These were Jews who were searching for an escape route from the impending *Aktions* in the ghetto. Socha and Wróblewski agreed to help the Jews and their families when the time came, in return for payment, and so, when the Lwów ghetto was liquidated, the band of Jewish escapees made their way down into the sewers, guided by Socha to avoid being spotted by the Germans. Socha and Wróblewski also offered to take care of their needs while they were hiding there. The two sanitation workers provided the Jews with food and drink, newspapers, and later on even a revolver, for self-defense, while Socha's wife, Magdalena, washed their clothes and bought provisions for them on the black market. When the Jews' money ran out, Socha reassured them, saying, "We will manage. You will all stay alive," and from that moment on, he and Wróblewski took care of their requirements at their own expense.

Socha admired the Jews' faith and customs, and made sure to provide them with candles for each Sabbath eve. Furthermore, on Passover 1944, he secretly delivered potatoes via the manhole on the street, so that they would be able to observe the laws of Passover and not eat *Hametz* (leaven). The Jews hid in the sewage tunnels for over a year, in very harsh conditions; some were swept away by the current and drowned. Others preferred to try their luck above ground, and were mostly caught and murdered. Of the 21 Jews who escaped the ghetto's liquidation by descending into the sewers, only ten survived to see liberation.

In May 1945, while on a bicycle outing with his daughter, Socha was run over by a truck and killed. Not all of Socha's acquaintances had approved of his wartime activities, and neighbors testified that while he was lying in the street, his blood streaming into the sewers, bystanders crossed themselves, saying that this was the reward for those who hid Jews.

Leopold and Magdalena Socha were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 23 May 1978.

Stefan Wróblewski was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 26 October 1981.



The sewage tunnel, as reconstructed for the purposes of the documentary film, "Light in the Dark".

Private Collection Robert Marshall, Perth, Australia

ANDRÉE GEULEN

”

NEVER AGAIN HAVE I FELT SUCH EXALTATION, SUCH SATISFACTION...
IMAGINE WHAT THIS REPRESENTED FOR A 20-YEAR-OLD WOMAN TO
GO TO SLEEP AT NIGHT AND THINK – ANOTHER FIVE CHILDREN SAVED;
ANOTHER FIVE CHILDREN SPARED DEPORTATION...”

Andrée Geulen



Andrée Geulen with two of the children she saved, at the first Hanukkah celebrations after liberation in Belgium, December 1944

Private Collection Andrée Geulen-Herscovici, Brussels, Belgium

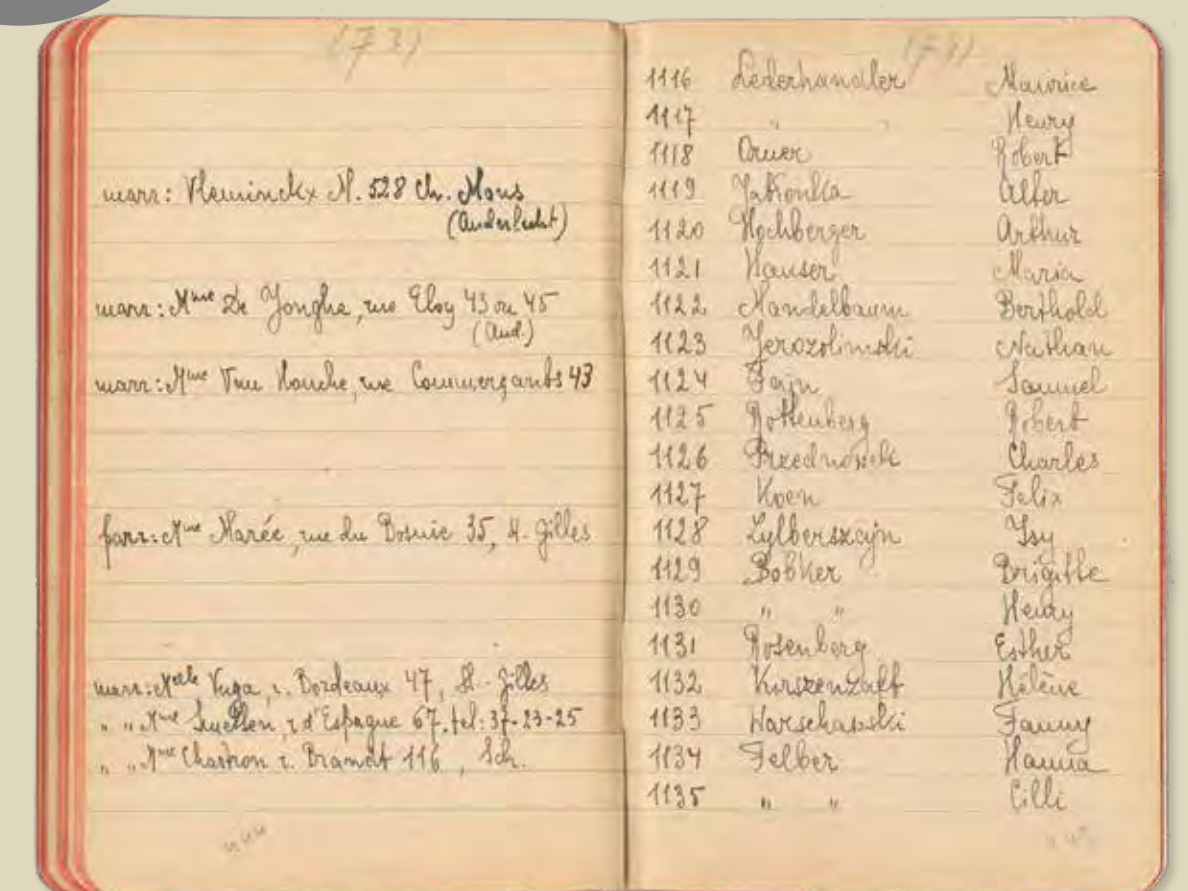
Andrée Geulen was a young teacher in Brussels, Belgium when she made the acquaintance of Ida Sterno, a Jewish activist in the *Comité de Défense des Juifs* – Jewish Defense Committee. One of the committee's missions was to rescue Jewish children by removing them from their homes and sending them to hiding places where they could survive in hiding. Ida Sterno enlisted Andrée Geulen for the task, which she willingly volunteered for. Odile Ovart, principal of the boarding school where Geulen taught, and her husband were harboring 12 Jewish children at the school. In May 1943, the Germans carried out a raid on the boarding school, and arrested the children, the Ovarts and the educational staff. When interrogated, Geulen was asked: “Aren't you ashamed to teach Jews?”, to which she responded: “Aren't you ashamed to make war on Jewish children?” When the interrogation was over, Geulen was released, but the Ovarts were deported to concentration camps, where they died.

Geulen and Sterno moved in together under assumed identities, and for the next two years, they were active in delivering Jewish children to hiding places in private houses and in institutions. Sometimes, the rescue took place at the height of a German raid: “We would pass the roadblocks with one child in a pram, holding the hands of two others. The soldiers would shy away from a mother with many children.”

Afterwards, Geulen would visit the children in their new homes to ensure that they had acclimatized and were being treated well, and took care of all their needs. Asked postwar if she had been afraid, Geulen answered: “At age twenty, one is fearless. For me, it was the right thing to do.”

Andrée would memorize the names and addresses of the children, and maintained clandestine notebooks, where she recorded their real and assumed names, their parents' details, and their hiding places. After the war, she used these notebooks to locate the children and to return them to relatives, as the parents of many of them had been murdered.

Andrée Geulen was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 2 August 1989.



Notebooks with lists of 1646 names of Jewish children hidden in Belgium by the *Comité de Défense des Juifs* (CDJ).

Yad Vashem Collections



Andrée Geulen (left) and Ida Sterno when they were social workers in the *Comité de Défense des Juifs* (CDJ), Brussels, Belgium

Kazerne Dossin Research Centre

VINCENT AND ANNA TÖKÖLY



Vincent (1960) and Anna (1946) Tököly
Yad Vashem Collections

— ” —

THEY WOULD REMAIN FOREVER ENGRAVED IN OUR HEARTS AS SYMBOLS OF HUMANITY AND OF SHEER GOODNESS, OF UNCONDITIONAL GIVING WITH NOTHING ASKED IN RETURN.”

Alice-Aliza Barak Ressler, in her book, “Cry Little Girl”

Vincent and Anna Tököly lived with their young daughter in the village of Jarok, near Nitra, Slovakia. In the fall of 1944, they heard a knock at the door, and opened it to find two girls – 8-year-old Agatha-Miriam Ressler and her 12-year-old sister Rachel - asking for a little food for themselves and their parents and sister.

Moshe and Olga Ressler and their three daughters, Alice, Rachel and Agatha-Miriam from Michalovce had succeeded in evading the deportations to the camps. Wandering from place to place, they reached the outskirts of Jarok, where they hid in a hut in the fields.

Vincent and Anna understood that the two girls were Jewish, and asked them to return to their hiding place, promising that they would take care of all their needs. Encouraged by the local priest, the village residents brought food to the Tökölys in the knowledge that it was designated for the Jews hiding in the area.

As winter approached, Vincent led the family to abandoned underground pits where the locals had once stored wine barrels, as this was a warmer and safer hiding place. Sometimes accompanied by Anna, Vincent would make nightly visits with food, encouraging the family with stories of the downfall of the German Army.

During a German manhunt for Jews on the run, a number of shots were fired into the pit where the Resslerers were hiding, and Moshe and Olga decided to look for shelter for their family in another village. They found a family in Cabai-Capor willing to hide them under the farm floor in return for payment, but after some two weeks, when their money ran out, the family informed on them to the authorities and stole their remaining possessions.

Shortly before their deportation to the camps, the Resslerers escaped from the building where they were being held. They returned to the underground pits in Jarok, where they were warmly welcomed by the Tökölys, who continued to look after them and take care of all their requirements until the end of the war.

Vincent and Anna Tököly were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 2 June 1993.



Agatha-Miriam Ressler's doll, which she safeguarded fiercely throughout the war period, believing that it was a good-luck charm that would ensure their survival.
Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Miriam Frumer (Agatha Ressler), Petah Tikva, Israel

Following their capture by members of the Hlinka Guard (Slovak militia that facilitated the deportation of Jews to the extermination camps), all the family's belongings, including the doll, were left in the home of the family who had denounced them. After the war, Agatha-Miriam insisted that they return to the house to look for her doll, which she found thrown amongst the informants' son's toys, broken and missing its arms and legs.

The Ressler girls: Alice-Aliza, Agatha-Miriam and Rachel, after the family's immigration to Eretz Israel (Mandatory Palestine) in 1947
Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Miriam Frumer (Agatha Ressler), Petah Tikva, Israel



CHIUNE-SEMPPO SUGIHARA

”

WHATEVER PUNISHMENT I RECEIVE, IT IS CLEAR TO ME THAT I HAVE TO ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH MY CONSCIENCE.”

Chiune-Sempo Sugihara

Chiune-Sempo Sugihara was born on the first day of the 20th century. It was his father's wish that he study medicine, but Sugihara chose to defy him and to learn English. After passing his Foreign Ministry exams, he also specialized in German, and in Russian, both language and culture.

In 1939, Sugihara was appointed Japanese Vice-Consul in Kovno (Kaunas) Lithuania. When the USSR annexed Lithuania in the summer of 1940, the foreign embassies were ordered to vacate their premises. While packing up, Sugihara discovered that many refugees who had chosen to flee Poland for Lithuania a year earlier when the war broke out, were now amassing at the gates of the consulate. In order to leave Soviet territory, the refugees needed to prove that they were in possession of entry permits to another country. Jan Zwartendijk, Acting Dutch Consul in Lithuania, had been stamping the refugees' passports to the effect that no visa would be required in order to enter the Curaçao Islands, which were under Dutch control. Now, all that remained in order to travel from the USSR to Curaçao was to obtain permits to pass through Japan.

Sugihara sent three urgent telegrams to the Foreign Office in Tokyo requesting permission to go beyond the accepted protocol and to enable the issue of transit visas for the refugees. The negative response arrived nine days later, by which time Sugihara had succeeded in issuing a considerable number of visas, but this did not deter him. In the clear understanding that continuing this course of action directly contravened the instructions being sent continuously from Tokyo, Sugihara and his staff embarked on a marathon endeavor to issue as many visas as possible before the consulate was vacated. They succeeded in issuing over 2,000 visas, some of them applicable to whole families.

Less than one year later, in June 1941, with the occupation of Lithuania by Nazi Germany, all escape routes from the country became impassable.

When Sugihara and his family returned to Japan after the war, he was one of many officials fired from the Japanese Foreign Ministry. It is possible that his actions during the last days of his service in the Japanese Consulate in Lithuania were material to the decision to dismiss him.

Chiune-Sempo Sugihara was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 4 October 1984.

Jan Zwartendijk was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 6 October 1997.



Chiune-Sempo Sugihara. Kovno, Lithuania, 1940
Yad Vashem Collections



Jews standing outside the Japanese Consulate hoping to receive transit visas.
Kovno, Lithuania
Yad Vashem Collections

”

“They stood there from morning till night, waiting for an answer... They stood all the time. And their small children together with them... I would see them from my window. When they saw me looking at them, they would put their hands together (as if praying).”

From the testimony of Sugihara's wife, Yukiko Kikuchi



Certificate issued in the names of Mozes and Klara Jaglom and their daughter Janett, stamped with a transit visa to Japan issued by Sugihara in Kovno in August 1940. The document also contains a transit visa to India, where the family eventually travelled after spending a few weeks in the city of Kobe, Japan.
Yad Vashem Collections



Menu of one of the dinners served on the ship "Haruna Maru" during the voyage from Vladivostok Port, Russia, to Japan. The menu is decorated with a Kitagawa Utamaro reproduction. The illustration left an impression on the young Janett Tocatly (Jaglom), and she kept it, along with other colorful menus. Many years later, Janett bought an original drawing by the artist.
Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Janett Tocatly Jaglom (Yaglom), Tel Aviv, Israel

ZEJNEBA AND MUSTAFA HARDAGA AND AHMED SADIQ-ŠARALOP

— ” —

JOSEF, YOU ARE OUR BROTHER; RIVKA – OUR SISTER;
AND YOUR CHILDREN ARE LIKE OUR CHILDREN.
FEEL AT HOME AND WHATEVER WE OWN IS YOURS.”

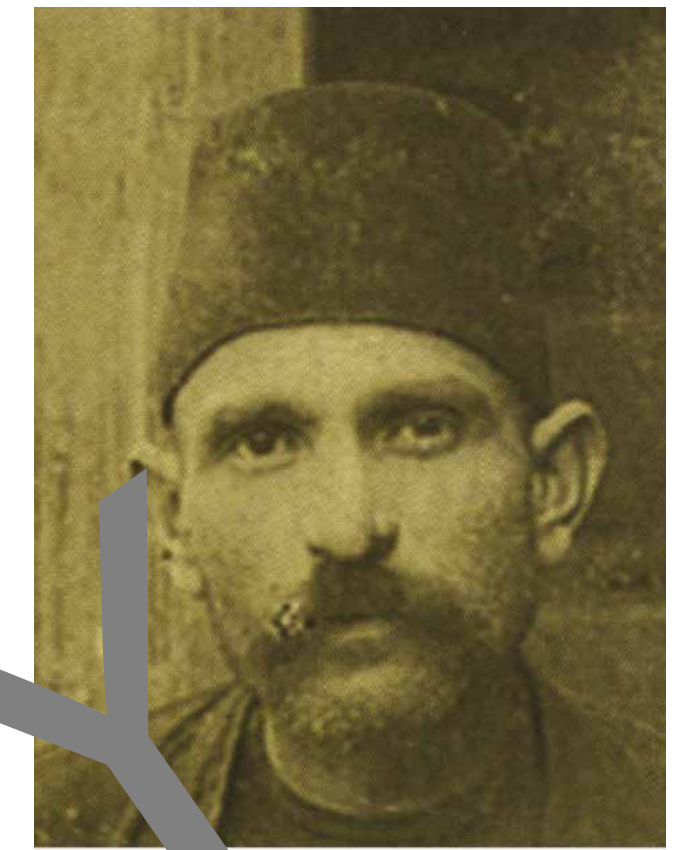
Mustafa Hardaga



Zejneba Hardaga and her children.
Boena (Tova) Kavilio, Josef and Rivka's
daughter, is sitting at her feet.
Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Sara Pechanac,



Mustafa Hardaga
Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Sara Pechanac, Israel



Ahmed Sadiq-Šaralop
Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Sara Pechanac, Israel

Zejneba and Mustafa Hardaga lived with Mustafa's brother, Izet, his wife, Bachriya, and their children in the city of Sarajevo, today in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Josef Kavilio established a pipe factory in a building owned by the Hardagas, and in time, the families became friends. When Sarajevo was occupied by the Germans in April 1941, the Kavilios' apartment was bombarded and destroyed. Hearing about their plight, Mustafa begged them to move in with his family. The Hardagas were observant Muslims, and the women of the house wore veils over their faces when outside, so that they would not be seen by other men. After the war, Zejneba recalled: "That was the first time an outsider had slept in our home. The first time we revealed our faces to others."

The Gestapo headquarters was situated opposite the Hardagas' home. During one of the searches of the house, the Kavilios had to hide in a wardrobe. Deeply troubled by the knowledge that their presence was endangering the Hardagas' lives, Josef and Rivka decided that Rivka would escape to Italian-controlled territory with the children while Josef searched for another hiding place in the city. Josef was informed on and imprisoned by the Ustasa, and sent to forced labor. Zejneba was apprised of this news, and together with her sister-in-law, they began to smuggle food in to Josef and the other prisoners. When Josef succeeded in escaping, he realized that the only safe haven for him was with the Hardagas, and he resumed living in their home for the next two months while the rest of the city's Jews were deported or murdered. Ultimately, Josef was able to obtain forged papers with which he escaped to Italian-occupied territory, where he was reunited with his family.

Zejneba and her household were not the only members of the immediate family who hid Jews. Her father, Ahmed Sadiq-Šaralop, born in Thessaloniki, had lived in Macedonia and Sarajevo in past years, and had forged connections with members of the Jewish community. Many of his friends were Jewish, and he even studied Ladino.

During the war, he lived in Konjic, Bosnia. One day, while drinking coffee at the railway station, Ahmed spotted his acquaintance Isidor Papo and his family boarding the train to Sarajevo. Ahmed tried to dissuade them, claiming that all the city's Jews had been deported. While Isidor Papo wavered, Ahmed reached in and pulled one of Papo's children out of the train's window, leaving them no choice but to get off the train and go home with him. There, they lived in hiding until they escaped to Italian-occupied territory. Ahmed paid for this act of bravery with his life: He was informed on, imprisoned and deported to the Jasenovac camp, where he was murdered. His burial place is unknown.

Zejneba, Mustafa, Izet and Bachriya Hardaga, and Ahmed Sadiq-Šaralop were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 29 January 1984.



Zejneba Hardaga, Rivka Kavilio, their daughters and Bachriya walking in Sarajevo, 1941. Zejneba and Rivka are linking arms to cover Rivka's armband, which identified her as a Jew.
Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Sara Pechanac, Israel



Forged ID card in the name of Vilhem Alojz, prepared for Josef Kavilio.
Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Tova Grinberg, Jerusalem, Israel

ERZSÉBET FAJÓ

”

DRIVEN BY THE DESIRE TO SAVE US, ERZSI DEFIED THE GERMANS... IT WAS HER STRENGTH AND HEROISM THAT GAVE US LIFE.”

Zsuzsanna Ozsvath (Abonyi)



Erzsébet Fajó, 1941
Yad Vashem Collections

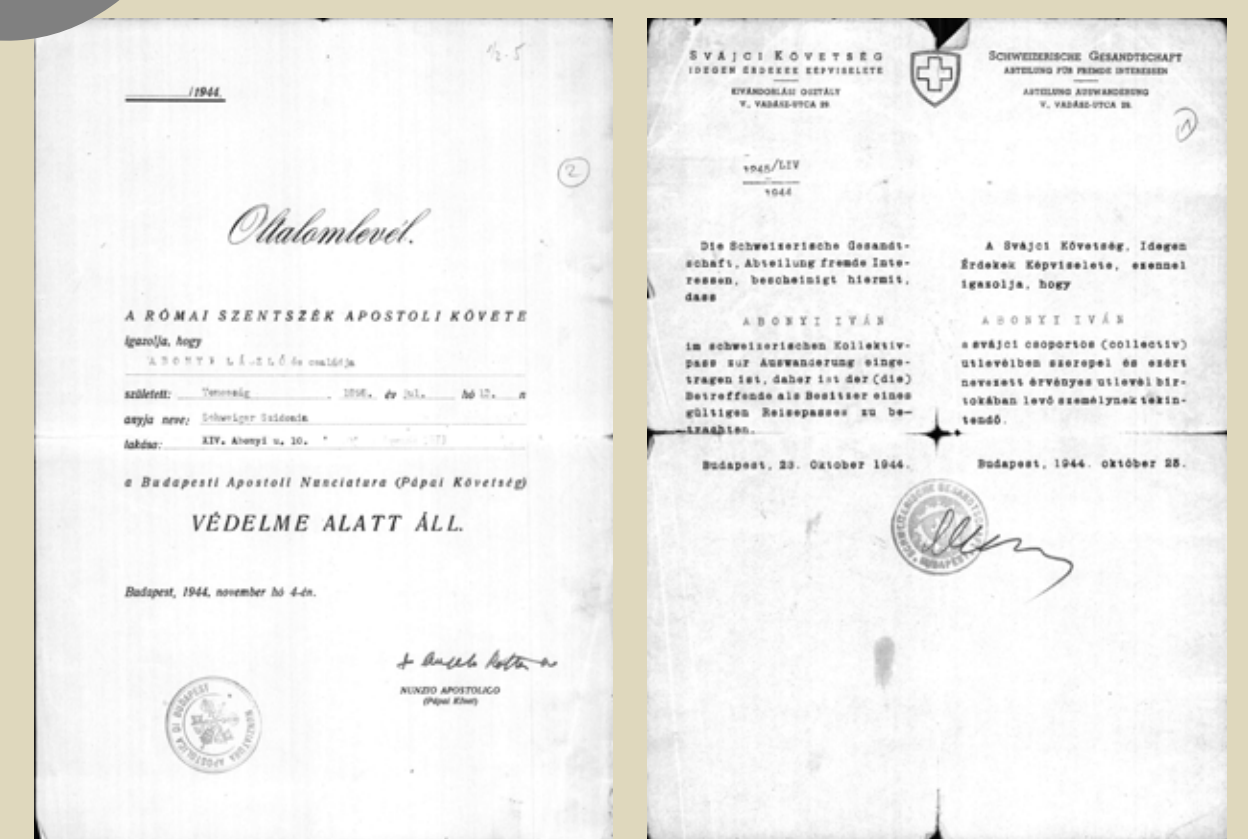
In 1931, Hungarian-born Erzsi Fajó was a 13-year-old girl who was forced to halt her studies in order to help support her family. She found work in the home of the Abonyi family as a nanny for the two children: Iván, age two-and-a-half and two-month-old Zsuzsanna. Over time, they became very attached to Erzsi, and she grew to love them. In 1941, the Abonyis left Beregszaba for Budapest, and Erzsi decided to leave her family and move with them.

When the Germans invaded Hungary in March 1944, Iván and Zsuzsanna's father pressed Erzsi to leave so as not to endanger herself. She consented, but from that moment on until liberation, this young woman with no resources or connections proved that nothing is impossible, and she did everything in her power to help the people she had come to regard as family. Due to the danger of walking in the streets wearing the Yellow Star, Erzsi made it her business to visit the Abonyis each and every day, and to bring them food, medicines, books and games for the children, as well as words of encouragement and consolation. She succeeded in organizing the father's release from the camp he had been taken to, and obtained letters of protection from the Vatican for the mother and children. When Arrow Cross men raided the building under Vatican protection and murdered the Jews living there, casting their bodies into the Danube, Erzsi managed to smuggle the Abonyis out and save them from this dire fate.

Some time later, Erzsi entered the ghetto where Iván and Zsuzsanna had been forced to move, and smuggled them out with the help of forged papers. From then on until liberation, she moved the different family members from hiding place to hiding place: the parents twice, Iván three times and Zsuzsanna five times. Only close to liberation did she succeed in reuniting the whole family under one roof. Until then, she visited each of them every day – in snow, driving rain, and under the hail of bombardment.

After the war, the Abonyis adopted Erzsi, and she officially became one of the family.

Erzsébet Fajó was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 26 June 1986.



Certificates of protection that Erzsi Fajó obtained for Iván Abonyi and his father, Laszlo.

Yad Vashem Collections



Zsuzsanna and Iván Abonyi. Budapest, Hungary, 1941

Yad Vashem Collections

MYKOLAS ŠIMELIS AND JADVYGA ŠIMELIENĖ

— ” —

MY DOOR IS OPEN, COME.”

Mykolas Šimelis



Mykolas Šimelis and Jadvyga Šimelienė with two of their daughters, Gražina and Ramutė. Lithuania.

The archives of the Yiddish Museum of Jewish History

Mykolas Šimelis was an impoverished forester who lived with his wife and five small children in the village of Tarpumiškis, several dozen kilometers from the city of Kovno (Kaunas), Lithuania.

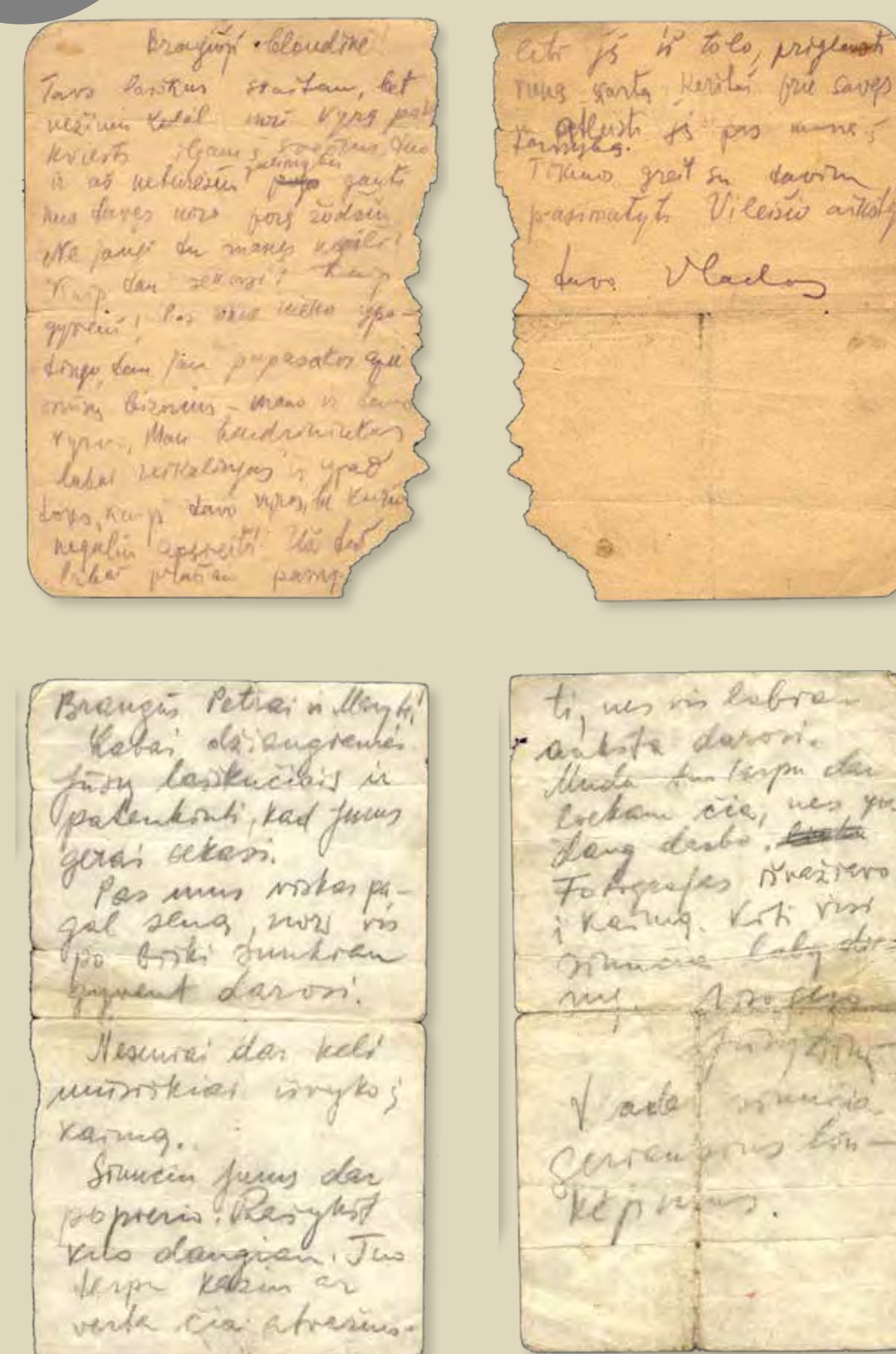
Prior to the outbreak of World War II, Mykolas had established trade connections with Meir Koren. In November 1943, Meir and his family decided to escape from the Kovno ghetto and recalled Mykolas Šimelis's offer of shelter. Meir approached Moshe Musel, who smuggled the Koren family and his own wife to the home of the Šimelis family. Some two months later, Moshe joined the group of hiding Jews, together with more people whom Meir Koren had asked him to smuggle out of the ghetto. From that moment on, Mykolas and Jadvyga gave shelter to 14 Jews for eight months, until liberation.

The hiding place was underneath the floor of the house, and was accessible from within a wardrobe. Mykolas and Jadvyga's five children – the oldest of whom was only eight, stopped playing with the neighborhood children and stood guard, warning every time someone approached the house. When Moshe Musel wanted to compensate the family and gave Mykolas his gold pen, Mykolas returned it, saying: “After the war, you will need it yourself.”

In April 1944, Jadvyga died following an unsuccessful medical procedure, and Mykolas was left alone to care for his five children and the hiding Jews. Returning home from the funeral, he was met with Germans hunting for Jews. Later on, he confessed to Moshe that for a moment he was tempted to simply turn and walk away, but then pulled himself together, and, comforted by the thought that “you only die once” he walked up to the Germans, told them he had just returned from his wife's funeral, and offered them a drink in her memory. The Germans drank, expressed their condolences and left.

The area was liberated in July 1944. Approximately one year later, Mykolas was murdered by Lithuanian nationalists who knew he had hidden Jews during the war. When the survivors learned of their rescuer's bitter fate, they tried to adopt the children, but their stepmother refused to allow it, and the children were brought up in orphanages.

Mykolas Šimelis and Jadvyga Šimelienė were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 4 April 1983.



Letters written in the ghetto by Chaim Yellin – leader of the “Antifascist Struggle Organization” in the Kovno ghetto – and Dima Galperin to Moshe and Polia Musel, who had escaped from the ghetto and were amongst those hiding in the home of Mykolas Šimelis. Mykolas would deliver the letters from the underground members to the Musels. The names of the writers and recipients were changed to underground names, and the information was written in code, so that if the letters were to fall into German hands, no harm would befall Mykolas.

Yad Vashem Collections

JULIUS MADRITSCH

”

THEY WERE NOT PLEASED WITH ME IN THE WEHRMACHT. FROM THE VERY BEGINNING I VOWED THAT I WOULD NOT SERVE A SYSTEM THAT HAD INFLICTED NOTHING BUT MISERY AND TEARS ON EUROPE.”

Julius Madritsch



Julius Madritsch
Courtesy of Gerhard Madritsch

Julius Madritsch, an Austrian by birth, specialized in textiles. In an effort to dodge the draft to the German Army, he travelled to Krakow, where the Germans appointed him as manager of clothes factories that had been nationalized and confiscated from their Jewish owners.

In 1941, he obtained a permit to establish a textiles factory near the ghetto. Together with factory manager Raimund Titsch, they began recruiting hundreds of Jews from the ghetto to work in the factory, in the full knowledge that most of them had no training in textiles. Later on, the two men opened another textiles factory close to the Tarnow ghetto, and there too, they enlisted hundreds of Jews for labor, most of whom had no experience in the field. In both factories, the workers were treated well, and given good conditions and decent food rations. Madritsch and Titsch even allowed the workers in Tarnow to smuggle food into the ghetto using the factories' vehicles.

Madritsch joined forces with Oswald Bouska, an Austrian police sergeant in Krakow, in order to assist the Jews. Bouska and his men would turn a blind eye when the numbers of Jews leaving the ghetto and returning after work didn't tally, which enabled those who wished, to escape from the factory. When Madritsch discovered that an Aktion to deport the children from the ghetto was imminent, Bouska smuggled the wives and children of the workers out of the ghetto to the factory in the dead of night, and in the morning, they dispersed and found different hiding places. When the ghetto was liquidated, Bouska helped the Jews to find shelter at Madritsch's factory.

After the liquidation of the ghetto, the factory workers were safe from deportation thanks to their jobs, but they were still imprisoned in the Plaszow camp in very harsh conditions. Madritsch obtained permission to transfer some 200 workers from Plaszow to Tarnow, and in the course of the move, and with Titsch's permission, some of them escaped. With the liquidation of the Tarnow ghetto, Madritsch succeeded in moving his workers to Plaszow, thus bringing the number of Jews protected from deportation to approximately 2,000.

In September 1944, the Plaszow camp was liquidated, and with it, the textiles factory. In the last minute, Madritsch and Titsch managed to add some 100 workers to Oskar Schindler's ammunition factory, thereby saving their lives. At the same time, Bouska, who tried to avoid being sent to the front, was executed in the Gross-Rosen camp.

Two months later, Madritsch was arrested and sent to Berlin. He was charged with disseminating false information about the conditions in the Plaszow camp, but was released, thanks to his connections.

Julius Madritsch, Raimund Titsch and Oswald Bouska were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 18 February 1964.



Sewing machine and tailoring ruler that belonged to Adolf Goldstein.

Adolf Goldstein, a tailor by profession, worked in Madritsch's textiles factory in the Plaszow camp, and even made suits for Oskar Schindler. When the camp was liquidated and the factory closed, he was one of those added to the list of Schindler's ammunition factory workers. Goldstein survived, and after liberation, he took the sewing machine and ruler with him, continuing to use them after immigrating to Eretz Israel (Mandatory Palestine).

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Ludwig Goldstein, Tel Aviv, Israel



Workers at Madritsch's factory

Yad Vashem Collections

GIOVANNI AND MARIANGELA DELLA NAVE



The Della Nave family after the war.
Seated front: Giovanni & Mariangela, surrounded by their children, daughter-in-law and grandchild.

Courtesy of Regina Zimet, Israel

”

ONE DAY, MARIANGELA ENTERED THE ROOM, AND SMILINGLY RELATED THAT PEOPLE IN THE VILLAGE HAD ASKED HER ABOUT THE SMOKE RISING FROM THE CHIMNEY IN THE ROOM. SHE IMPROVISED, SAYING THAT SHE WAS... SMOKING THREE SALAMIS. THE 'SALAMIS' WERE US."

Regina Zimet, in her book "Across the Bridge"

Giovanni Della Nave, a carpenter and farmer, and his wife Mariangela, lived with their four children in the village of San Bello, Italy.

On 30 December 1943, they were approached with the request to provide shelter for the Zimet family – Fischel, Rosalia and their daughter Regina – for a few days. The Zimets had fled from Germany in 1939 in an attempt to reach *Eretz Israel* (Mandatory Palestine). They reached the Della Naves sick and exhausted after being on the road for a long time, hoping to eventually cross the Swiss border.

When it became clear that the border crossing was heavily guarded, and that the Zimets didn't have anywhere else to turn, the Della Naves decided to harbor them until the end of the war, in the knowledge that if they were discovered, it could prove catastrophic for them. The young Della Nave children swore before a picture of the Madonna that they would not tell a soul about the guests. Initially, the Zimets would spend the nights in the cowshed, while during the day, they hid in a small room used for drying cheese slices. Later on, the family moved into the house, and when the neighbors started to suspect something, the Della Naves presented them as their refugee relatives from Calabria, whose house had been bombed. Most of the food and money that friends sent to the Zimets was stolen by the courier, and this compelled the already impoverished Della Naves to share their own meager rations with the Zimets.

Giovanni and Mariangela Della Nave hid the Zimets for approximately 18 months, until liberation. After the war, on parting with their rescuers, Fischel Zimet wanted to give them food, clothing and money. Giovanni accepted the food and clothes, but refused to take the money, saying: "No, Signor Phillip. We are brothers, and brothers don't give each other money."

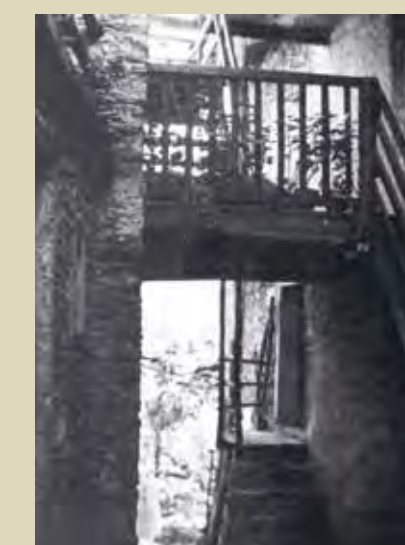
Giovanni and Mariangela Della Nave were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 23 July 2002.



Drawing made by Regina Zimet on the occasion of her father's birthday, on 26 January 1945.

The drawing depicts the Zimet family in their room in San Bello. Regina's father is cooking, her mother is spinning thread and Regina is drawing. At the top of the picture, Regina wrote: Today: watery chestnut soup, tomorrow: chestnut soup again and on a holiday – a plate of chestnuts!

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Efraim Levi, Ramat Efal, Israel



The Della Nave family house. On the left: the room where the Zimet family hid.

Courtesy of Regina Zimet, Israel



Page from Regina Zimet's poetry notebook.

Regina wrote the poem, "The Return" during the first days in hiding. The poem describes Mariangela Della Nave's concern for her eldest son, who was returning to the army after his furlough.

”

...Far from his birthplace, surrounded by danger, frozen and wounded did he return from the Front. He suffered so much during those three long years! I hope that the war will end soon and that Giovanni will come home to his mother...."

Eventually Giovanni deserted, and joined the Zimets in their room. Ultimately, he left the house and joined the partisans fighting in the area.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Efraim Levi, Ramat Efal, Israel

HENRY CHRISTIAN AND ELLEN MARGRETHE THOMSEN



Henry Thomsen
Friends of the Sound, Elsinore, Denmark



Ellen Thomsen
The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous

— ” —

THE MOTIVATION WAS JUST THE WISH TO HELP US"

Rachel Sara Posin, saved by the Thomsens
and other resistance activists

In 1942, Henry and Ellen Thomsen were living in the small fishing village of Snekkersten, where they ran an inn. In the initial stages of the German occupation of Denmark, they both joined the Danish resistance and became activists. The order from Germany to deport the Jews of Denmark arrived in the summer of 1943. The Danish resistance and the citizens of Denmark worked together to save the country's Jews by helping them escape to Sweden on fishing boats. Due to Snekkersten's proximity to Swedish shores, it is estimated that close to 1,000 of the approximately 7,000 Danish Jews and their relatives passed through there on their journey to freedom.

The Thomsens joined the rescue operation, and their inn became a secret meeting place for the resistance members, the Jews and the fishermen who ferried them across. Even when a local collaborator informed on a group of Jews to the Danish police, instead of arresting them the police directed them to the Thomsen's inn, knowing that they would receive shelter and assistance there.

The village's proximity to Swedish shores did not escape the notice of the Gestapo, who organized searches of the village in the hunt for hidden Jews. The Thomsens and other resistance members found alternative hiding places for the Jews in the houses of locals until they could be smuggled across the border. When the number of Jews seeking to escape grew and the fishermen couldn't keep up the pace, Henry Thomsen himself acquired a boat and started smuggling Jews in the dead of night under the pretext of "nocturnal fishing excursions".

On one occasion, after Thomsen succeeded in getting a police officer drunk, he admitted that the Gestapo was planning a raid on the village to hunt down underground members. Thomsen managed to warn his comrades, but he himself was arrested on suspicion of smuggling out Jews. He was acquitted due to lack of evidence, and decided to continue his rescue activities, but he was arrested again in the summer of 1944, and brutally tortured. He was deported to the Neuengamme camp, and after a few months of incarceration, he died there, at the age of 38.

Henry Christian and Ellen Margrethe Thomsen were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 29 August 1968.



The Thomsens' inn in Snekkersten
Friends of the Sound, Elsinore, Denmark



The boat that Henry Thomsen used to smuggle Jews out of Denmark
Friends of the Sound, Elsinore, Denmark

NINA LYSIUK

”

IF ANYTHING HAPPENS – RUN TO ME!”

Nina Lysiuk

28-year-old Nina Lysiuk was Bella and Mikhail Barshai's teacher. She lived with her parents and two young children in the city of Elisovo, Belarus.

Bella was 16 years old and her brother Mikhail was 12 when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in 1941. Their elder sister succeeded in joining those evacuated eastward, while their brother was murdered later that year by the Belarusian Auxiliary Police - Belarusian policemen who collaborated with the Germans. Bella and Mikhail's father was murdered by the Germans in one of the *Aktions*, and the children were left with their mother, Sara.

In April 1942, an *Aktion* was perpetrated in Elisovo, and the Barshais recalled that the children's teacher Nina had offered them shelter in the past. On the day of the *Aktion*, a neighbor burst into their house while Bella was alone at home. She stole Sara's sewing machine, believing they would all be murdered soon, and cruelly announced to Bella that this was her last day. Bella escaped while the shrieking neighbor urged the Belarusian Auxiliary Police and the Germans to run after her. She reached her teacher's house, and Nina hurriedly took her into a hiding place under the bedroom floor, where she met her mother and brother. When Bella's pursuers tried to break into Nina's house, she blocked the entrance way, and on being asked where Bella was, she pointed them in the opposite direction.

Sara and the children hid in hiding under the bedroom floor, but Nina's neighbors suspected that she was harboring Jews, and began to pay her visits with increasing regularity. Nina's young children stood guard and warned the family every time a neighbor dropped in. Meanwhile, posters had been hung around the city warning of the death penalty for anyone hiding Jews, and in light of the danger, Nina moved the family to a storeroom next to the house. She made contact with a neighbor, and he helped the Barshai family to escape the city and reach the partisans. Once there, they sent Nina a message that they had arrived safely.

Nina Lysiuk was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 2 June 1994.



Nina Lysiuk, 1948
Yad Vashem Collections



Fourth-grade class photograph, 1935
Second row from the top, sixth from right - Nina Lysiuk
Second row from the top, second from left - Bella Barshai

Yad Vashem Collections



Bedspread, one of two that Sara Barshai received as a wedding present from her relatives in the US.
The bedspreads and other possessions were looted by a neighbor's sons who worked for the Belarusian Auxiliary Police. When the Germans retreated, the neighbors also left. When they returned to Elisovo after the German surrender, the neighbors were forced to return all the Barshais' belongings to Sara and her children. Although they were destitute at the end of the war, the Barshais decided to give one of the bedspreads to Nina Lysiuk, in gratitude for saving their lives.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Rachel Iomdin, Kiryat Gat, Israel

MARIA AND FRANS PAKKER

— ” —

WE WERE SURE THAT IT WAS CRUCIAL TO MAKE PEOPLE [JEWS] DISAPPEAR IN A MANNER OTHER THAN THE WAY THE GERMANS INTENDED TO DO IT.”

Frans Pakker



Maria Pakker and baby Wim (Avraham) in a photo taken by Frans Pakker, which was added to the child's developmental diary.
Yad Vashem Collections

Frans Pakker, a postal worker and his wife Maria, a teacher, lived in the city of Almere in the Netherlands. They had no children. In the summer of 1942, Dutch Jews began to receive deportation orders, and many of them frantically searched for hiding places for themselves and their families. Believing they had a duty to help the persecuted citizens, the Pakkers took in three-month-old Avraham Pakker, son of Elias and Betty, with the assistance of the Dutch resistance. In order to avoid arousing suspicion, the Pakkers changed Avraham's name to 'Wim'. The neighbors were aware of the fact that the baby boy living with them was not their biological son, but apart from one inquisitive neighbor, no one inquired or interfered. The only person they revealed their secret to was the family doctor.

Although Maria did not have children of her own, she could identify with the pain and desolation she knew Wim's mother was experiencing, and therefore decided to write down everything that happened to him, and to record developmental milestones in a special notebook that became known as "Wim's book". Maria hoped that Wim's parents would survive the war, and that after they were reunited with their son, they would be able to fill in all the missing details of their time apart using the notebook. As the end of the war approached, Maria and Frans worried that the presence of the notebook in their home could place them all in danger, so they wrapped it up in canvas and buried it in the ground.

From the beginning, Maria and Frans had decided that if the child's parents didn't survive, he would grow up as their son, and that if they returned and demanded him back, they would hand him over immediately. So it was, that at the end of the war, after some three years in hiding, Elias and Betty Pakker returned, and were reunited with their son. Despite their efforts not to become too attached to Wim, and despite the fact that Maria gave birth to a son of her own approximately a year before liberation, she found the parting from little Wim very painful.

Maria and Frans Pakker were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 25 January 2009.



"Wim's book" – as written on the cover of the notebook in which Maria recorded baby Avraham's development. On the first page of the notebook, she wrote:

— ” —

"Wim came to us on 24 November 1942.

We took him in a portable crib. We don't know where he came from, but we will try to make a healthy boy of him."

[The photographs from] December 1943:

[Top right] - "No, wait a moment!"

[Top left] - "Can I go out?"

[Bottom] - "I also like 'Liga' [Dutch company that makes cookies]"

Yad Vashem Collections

Maria Pakker and baby Wim (Avraham) in a photo taken by Frans Pakker, which was added to the child's developmental diary.

Yad Vashem Collections



RODDIE EDMONDS

— ” —

WE ARE ALL JEWS”

Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds



Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds, 1940
Private collection of Chris W. Edmonds, Tennessee, USA

Roddie Edmonds was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA. He served in the US Army and held the rank of Master Sergeant in the 422nd Infantry Regiment. Even prior to being sent to the front, Edmonds had made a powerful impression on his soldiers due to his modesty, his self-confidence, his calmness for his men, and above all, his faith in God.

In December 1944, Edmonds and his men fell into German captivity in the course of the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes Forest. Edmonds was imprisoned in Stalag IXA near Ziegenhain in Germany, and due to his rank, was made responsible for over 1,000 men in the prisoner-of-war camp.

In January 1945, an order was issued over the camp loudspeakers, instructing all American Jewish POWs to assemble the next day in front of the barracks. At the same time, rumors that the Germans were murdering Jews spread like wildfire, and it was clear to all the prisoners that the Jewish inmates were in grave danger. True to his orders to resist the enemy and to ensure the safety of his soldiers, Edmonds instructed all the American soldiers – Jewish and non-Jewish alike – to report together the next day, while he and other commanding officers stood in the front row.

When the German officer saw that all the POWs had assembled, he turned to Edmonds, saying: “They cannot all be Jews,” to which Edmonds responded: “We are all Jews here.” Furious, the officer drew his gun, aimed it at Edmonds’s forehead and shouted: “You will order all Jews to step forward, or I will shoot you right now!” Without flinching, after a few seconds Edmonds replied: “According the Geneva Convention, we have to give only our name, rank, and serial number.” After this retort, the German officer turned around and left.

Edmonds’s refusal, at mortal risk, to hand over his Jewish soldiers to the Germans, saved their lives.

Roddie Edmonds was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations on 10 February 2015.



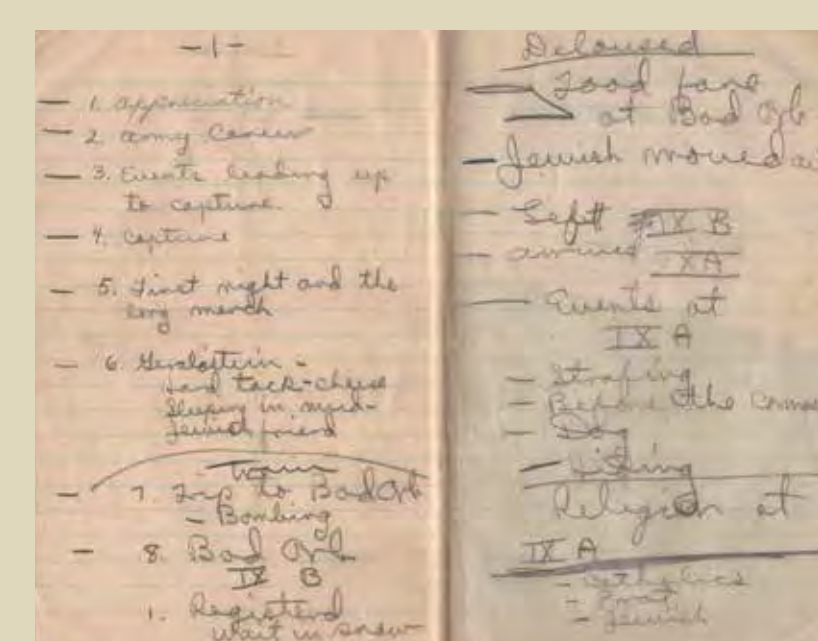
Stalag IXA, Ziegenhain, Germany, 1942
Trutzheim Memorial and Museum, Germany



Diaries that Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds wrote during his period of captivity.

The diaries contain lists of names and addresses of other POWs, as well as sketches of the logo of the restaurant that Edmonds planned to open with his fellow prisoners after their release.

Private collection of Chris W. Edmonds, Tennessee, USA



— ” —

The feeling aroused in me was not compassion or duty, but hatred of the system that wanted to repress me and to rob me of my dignity and honor. In my heart I said to my little son: 'Child, you may have to wait a little longer for your mother, but when she returns she will be able to look you in the eye.'

Dr. Ella Lingens, Austria

— ” —

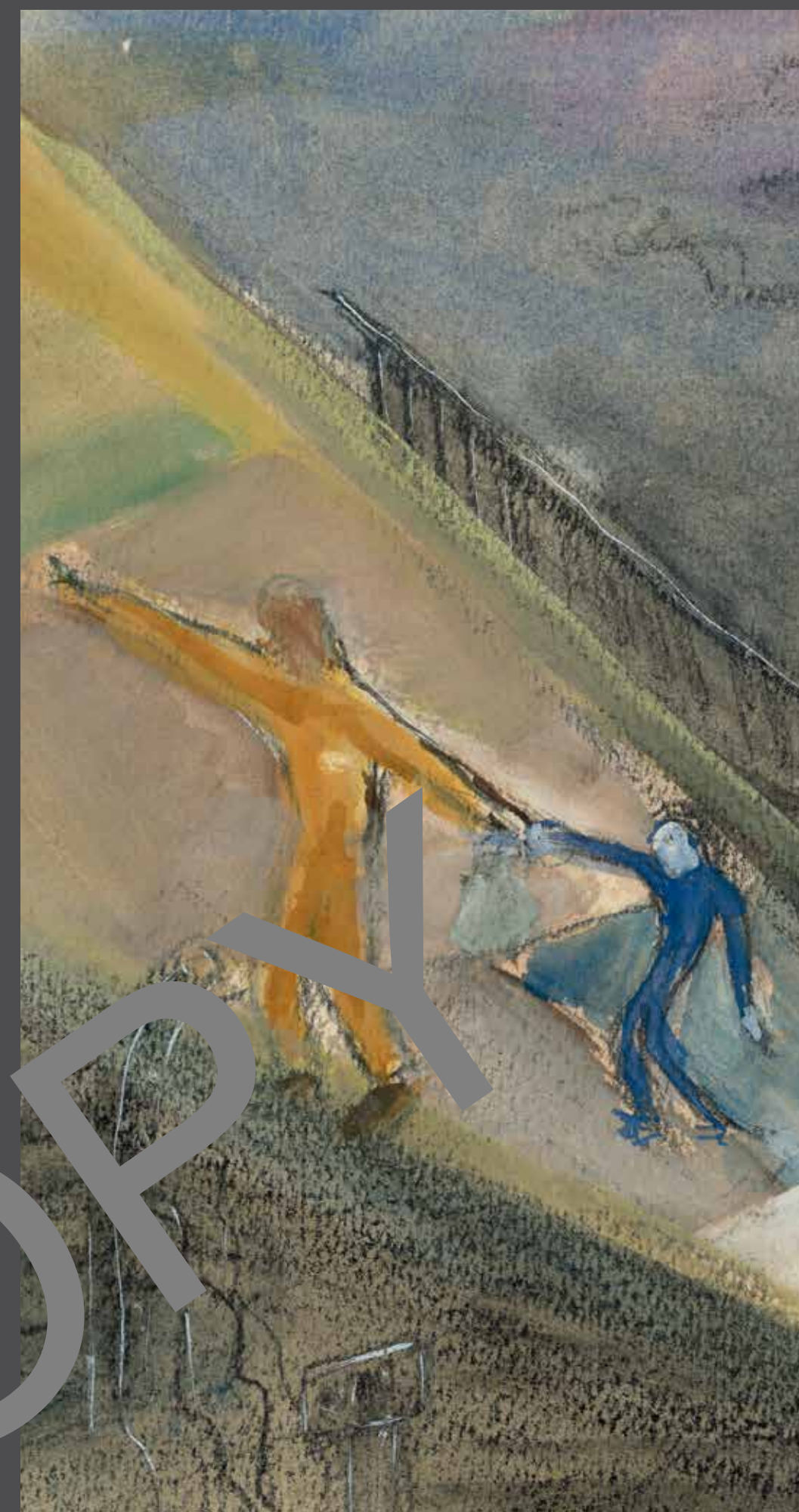
Most of my life is already behind me.
These children still have theirs to live."

Antonin Kalina, Czech Republic

— ” —

I have been told that since I am responsible for all the children at the Petit College, I do not have the right to make myself vulnerable to possible arrest by the Germans. But do you not think that if that happened and I should indeed be killed, I would not thereby bequeath to my students an example worth far more than all the lessons I could teach?"

Lucien Bunel, "Father Jacques", France



— ” —

I know that when I stand before God on Judgment Day, I shall not be asked the question posed to Cain: 'Where were you when your brother's blood was crying out to Me?'

Imre Báthory, Hungary

— ” —

Those who remain silent in the face of murder become accomplices. Those who do not condemn the crime, condone it. Our feelings towards the Jews have not changed. We have not ceased to consider them Poland's political, economic and ideological enemies... However, our awareness of these feelings does not exempt us from the obligation to condemn the crime."

Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, Poland

— ” —

How could I then seriously contemplate bureaucratic schemes and calculations? My personal well-being, measured against the fate of those thousands, was so marginal and insignificant that I never even took it into consideration."

Paul Grüniger, Switzerland

— ” —

I only did what many Danes did, nothing special. It seemed perfectly natural to help people in mortal danger."

Gerda Valentiner, Denmark

THE RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

In a world of total moral collapse, a world in which indifference and hostility prevailed, there was a small minority who regarded the Jews as fellow human beings who came within the bounds of their universe of obligation. These individuals mustered extraordinary courage to uphold human values, and to rescue hunted Jews with no expectation of remuneration. These were the Righteous Among the Nations.

The initiative that led to the Righteous Among the Nations recognition program was born out of the Holocaust survivors' need to express their gratitude to the people who had saved them; a need that had arisen while the Holocaust was still raging. Indeed, the raison d'être of this international program is the expression of gratitude on behalf of the Jewish people and the State of Israel to those non-Jews who endangered their lives in order to rescue Jews during the Holocaust, and in so doing reaffirmed both the sanctity of life and our faith in humanity. Yad Vashem was established officially in 1953, with the passing of a law in the Israeli Knesset. Since then, alongside the identification of perpetrators and bystanders, there has been a unique and unprecedented attempt by survivors to pay tribute to people who stood by their side during the darkest time in their history. The recognition of the Righteous Among the Nations is one of Yad Vashem's duties, as stipulated by law.

Since the recognition program's inception in 1963 until 1 January 2022, Yad Vashem has recognized over 28,000 individuals from 51 countries as Righteous Among the Nations, and hundreds more are added each year. The exact number of people who acted to rescue Jews, at risk to their own lives and for no remuneration, is unknown.

”
[Lorenzo] constantly reminded me by his presence... that there still existed a just world outside our own, something and someone still pure and whole... for which it was worth surviving.”

Primo Levi describes his rescuer, Lorenzo Perrone

”
Whosoever saves a single life,
saves an entire universe”

Claire Kohlman, her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren with Serge Mangnan, grandson of her rescuer, Jeanne Albouy.

Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations, Yad Vashem, 4 March 2013

