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Яків Сусленський

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Ministry of Public Education of Ukraine
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under the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine
Society "Ukraine"
International Society "Ukraine-Israel"
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YAKOV SUSLENSKY

THEY WERE TRUE HEROES

About the participation of Ukrainian citizens
in the rescuing of Jews from Nazi genocide
(English edition slightly revised)

Kyyiv
Society "Ukraine"
1995

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This will be the first book dedicated to this topic, among the editions ever published in Ukraine. Its author turns both the joyful and sorrowful pages in the annals of Ukrainian-Jewish relations during World War II; he relates a penetrating, touching story about courageous Ukrainian men and women who saved Jews during the Holocaust, even though they were fully aware of what would await them, and their close and dear ones, if they were discovered.

This book contains a large amount of original information, along with documents that were either kept secret or made public in the traditional Soviet, distorted, way; testimonies by eyewitnesses to those tragic events, copies of photographs and letters. All this material became a part of our national history thanks to the author's many years of painstaking research, which took him to a number of countries.

The team of publishers, and the author, recommend this edition as an accessory in the course of instruction, at grade schools, colleges and institutions of higher learning.

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- ***SOCIETY "UKRAINE"***
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A special gratitude to Mr. *Ivan Stebelsky* for his generous contribution.

The team would also wish the best of health and every success to the sponsors of this book - initiators and patrons of art/literature on Ukrainian soil, who can contribute in promoting goodwill, mutual respect and friendship among nations and ethnic minorities, including Ukraine and other countries across the globe.

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Citizens of Ukraine - Righteous Gentiles

Volume I.

1993

Published under the general supervision and editorial care of **I.F. Kuras**, Director, Institute for National Relations and Politology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine Academician.

"Blessed is he who does not join
The assembly of the evil,
Who does not walk on sin's dark path
Or consort with the Devil;
But in God's law his heart and will
Have found a glorious shield;
Serenely will his spirit stand
As, in a fertile field,
A tree upon a river bank
With branches green and fair,
Covered with fruit; so shall that man
Mature in goodness there.
Of wicked and ungodly men
All trace shall disappear,-
Like ashes scattered o'er the earth
When stormy winds are drear.
And the unrighteous shall not rise
With just men from the tomb;
For good men by their deeds shall live,
The bad meet endless doom."

(From TARAS SHEVCHENKO'S "The Psalms of David", translated by C.H.Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell)



A WORD TO THE READER

Dear friends!

The book you are holding in your hands is a very interesting and instructive one. It serves to continue the humanistic trend in educating the history of Independent Ukraine. This book was written by Yakov M. Suslensky, Chairman of the Board, Association for Jewish-Ukrainian Contacts in Israel, and it is its first edition in English. The author tells us about events little known to the general public, even though marking one of the most tragic periods in the history of our long-suffering people, World War II. This book is about the heroism of Ukrainians who, at the risk of their own lives, and those of their close and dear ones, saved Jews from Nazi genocide. Those courageous people were true heroes who heralded Good and Humaneness, and who are the national pride of Ukraine.

It is with an even greater chagrin that one realizes now how little is actually known about such people here in Ukraine. A story about them is important the more so that there have been both cheerful and disheartening entries made in the age-old annals of Ukrainian-Jewish relations. However, the main thing that served to unite these peoples, so different as to their social character, religion and culture, was their common historical destiny which guided them along their respective roads to Calvary.

These roads took them through periods of shared joys and hair-raising tragedies, mutual sympathy and misunderstanding, support and disrespect, anti-Semitism and Ukrainophobia. These pages of history must not be forgotten, lest we make such mistakes again.

Being well aware of the past helps one better understand the current realities and determine one's guidelines for the future. Here the starting prerequisite should be the fact that the common past of these two

peoples, despite its overall tragic coloration, couldn't but result in mutual spiritual influence and enrichment. Personally, I feel confident that this factor will be a guarantee of a comprehensive development of genuine friendship and mutual assistance between the Ukrainian and the Jewish people, as well as between their ethnic communities in the United States, Canada and other countries. To this end, I would like to emphasize that this praiseworthy activity is of utmost importance for us in our Independent Ukraine, too.

Our memories, therefore, should be kept clean and truthful, enriching our souls with Good and Humaneness and drawing people of different nations closer together.

Precisely this noble goal is the imperative leitmotiv of Ya. Suslensky's book. The author was the trailblazer in his search for those Ukrainian rescuers. He visited a number of countries and has already made a list of more than 400 citizens of Ukraine who rescued Jewish lives. Trees have been planted in honor of many of them in the Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations in Jerusalem.

The current transformations in the sociopolitical life of Ukraine have substantially changed the condition of the ethnic Jews. Today, the Jews of Ukraine constitute the second largest - after the Russians - national minority, numbering over 480,000 persons (0.9 percent of the population). They are adequately represented in every sphere of the economy and culture, and they make a worthy contribution in the construction of a sovereign Ukraine, in strengthening its economic and intellectual potential.

Today, 20 cultural public associations are functioning in Ukraine; 29 religious Judaic communities and societies are officially registered. For example, the Society for Jewish Culture operates offices in almost 70 cities.

Jewish schools, synagogues and theaters are being opened, and there are newspapers published for the Jewish part of the population.

The Institute of Jewish Material Culture, the study room of Jewish history and culture under the Institute for National Relations and Politology, the Solomon International Jewish University, and a team of fellow researchers specializing in the Jewish language/dialects and literature of Kyyiv's Pedagogical University (named after Dragomanov), as well as a separate course of study at the Karpenko-Karyi Institute of Theatrical Art (Kyyiv), have been formed along these lines. For the first time in the history of Ukraine a Jew was elected mayor of Vinnitsa town.



During the visit of the President of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk to Israel. In the Yad Vashem Hall of Remembrance, near the Eternal Light. January 12,1993

The Jews responded with heartfelt thanks to the Ukrainian people when they learned that the Memorial Week marking the 50th anniversary of the Babi Yar tragedy had been adopted as a week of nationwide mourning over an international common grave, as the first open tribute to the Jewish people in recognition of its horrible ordeals. It was further decided to build a new memorial on the site of the Babi Yar massacre. The BOOK of MEMORY was published in Ukraine to perpetuate the memory of the genocide victims. A second volume is now being prepared.

A decision was also passed in regard to the restoration of the Memorial Wall which was barbarously destroyed at the Bake Cemetery in Kyyiv. Work has been started to restore and preserve the graves of outstanding Judaic figures. Memorial plaques are attached to buildings in which prominent cultural personalities of the Jewish people lived. In August 1992, the general public of Ukraine honored the memory of the fallen members of the Jewish Antifascist Committee.

A fresh impetus is being given to the campaign for tracing down the names of the righteous, the true heroes of the Ukrainian people.

We must give these efforts our government support, for it all relates to the honor and dignity of the entire Ukrainian nation; it all adds up to

the uprooting of the age-old stumps of Ukrainophobia and anti-Semitism blocking the road to mutual respect and fraternity among all people. That's why the foundations "Babi Yar Memory" and "Memory of Victims of Fascism in Ukraine" deserve every praise. Their enthusiasts have already located and made lists of the names of more than 1,100 Ukrainian citizens who saved Jews during the war. There is every reason to expect there will appear new books and films telling about these and other , so far unknown, heroes. Like church bells calling out to people to pray, they will call on people of all nationalities to dedicate their efforts to benevolent and good neighborly ends.

Such editions will serve as handbooks at grade schools, institutions of higher learning and the other educational establishments of our country, and at those within the Ukrainian and the Jewish Diaspora, during classes in the history of relations between the Ukrainian and the Jewish people, of their mutual assistance, particularly during the hellish years of Nazi barbarism.

Our people's memory makes it imperative that such cozy Gardens of the Righteous be laid out not only in Kyyiv, but also in many other cities, towns and villages of Ukraine, scenes of 530 other Babi-Yar-like massacres. The names of the righteous will be given to thoroughfares, squares, and will shine in gold print on memorial plaques, monuments and statues. There is also reason to expect that deputies at all levels, people of good will and with restless hearts will surround the righteous and their families with sincere care and respect, and will initiate regular meetings of such righteous heroes and their rescued Jews with residents of towns and villages, particularly with the younger generation.

Let us hope that it will be so... Actually, it is such hopes that this book awakens in one's heart. The book that you, my dear friends, are about to read.

While expressing my sincere gratitude to the author, Mr. Yakov Suslensky, as well as to all those who sponsored and otherwise helped realize this project, I feel confident that this book will find a way to the hearts and minds of Ukrainians and citizens of different countries inhabiting our common planet-wide home.

President of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk

September 10, 1993

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Yakov Suslensky, the author of the book, the founder and chairman of the Board Association for Jewish-Ukrainian Contacts in Israel.

Yakov M. Suslensky was born on May 10, 1929, in the town of Ananyev, Odessa Region. In 1941, he was evacuated to Astrakhan, whence he moved to Samara, to work at the local aircraft plant till the end of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. In 1953, he graduated from the Faculty of English Language, Odessa Institute of Foreign Languages. He worked as a schoolteacher in Moldavia (currently Moldova) and Ukraine. In recognition of commendable pedagogic activities, he was conferred with the prestigious title "Excellent Worker of Public Education of Moldavia".

In 1970, Yakov Suslensky was arrested on charges of "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" and sentenced to 7 years of imprisonment. In reality, it was because he, together with other human rights activists, campaigned for the implementation of the Declaration of Human Rights, and spoke for a just solution to the national question, for humaneness and pluralism in the economy, ideology and politics.

He served the undeserved term in one of the GULAG camps of the USSR. In 1975, together with other inmates convicted on similar charges, Yakov Suslensky launched a campaign demanding the status of political prisoners. After all their petitions remained unanswered the inmates assumed the status without permission from "upstairs". They refused to work, tore off their tokens and ignored the commands of the camp authorities. "It was then", recalls Suslensky, "that a large group of prisoners - there were 66 of us - was transferred from the camps in Moldavia and Perm Region to the Vladimir Penitentiary. It was considered the worst punishment of all, because that place had the cruelest regime.

After he was released in 1977, Suslensky emigrated to Israel. There he taught English at school. Since 1987, he has been on pension for reasons of health. Currently, a resident of Jerusalem.

In 1979, in Israel, he organized the Society for Jewish- Ukrainian Contacts, and has since remained at its head. The Society's multifaceted activities contribute to the normalization and development of relations between the Jewish and the Ukrainian people, fostering their friendship and mutual respect.

Yakov Suslensky dedicated his memoirs "On Jewish-Ukrainian Relationships in Camps and Prisons for Political Prisoners of the USSR" to the implementation of the ideals of genuine fraternity and mutual assistance between Ukrainians, Jews, Russians and people of different nationalities. While voicing his sincere gratitude to his friends from Ukraine who had to suffer undeserved punishments, he recalls:"When after repeated stays in the dungeon I became mute, lost my memory and coordination of movement, Mykola Budulak looked after me like a brother. He would help me dress, and once took me to the doctor. Oles Serhiyenko would help me down on the stretcher, and Zinoviy Antonyuk and Hrihoriy Prykhodko would carry me to the bath or to the walking grounds. They were utterly physically exhausted and sick themselves, yet they would carry me all the way to the third floor, spending what was left of their energy... It's something one can never forget."

Among the inmates with whom Yakov Suslensky made friends behind the barbed wire of the GULAG labyrinths after Stalin's era was Levko Lukyanenko, a prominent champion of free and independent Ukraine (he used to be the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to Canada, Honorary Chairman of the Republican Party of Ukraine). And many others. All of them knew Suslensky well and respected him, because among other things, he was a voluntary, reliable and resourceful liaison man between the Ukrainian and Jewish inmates. The author of this book, while being greatly indebted to these true friends and comrades in the struggle for human rights, would like to extend his gratitude to the whole of Ukraine, and to the Ukrainian and Jewish ethnic communities in different countries. He does his utmost to bring Jews and Ukrainians closer together, and to join them in friendship. Yakov Suslensky has dedicated all his life to this noble cause, and this exciting story is proof enough.

On March 30, 1993, the President of Ukraine signed a special decree granting Suslensky the prestigious title "Merited Worker of Culture of Ukraine", in recognition of his meritorious contribution in the propagation of Ukrainian culture in Israel and the development of Ukrainian-Israeli relations.



FOREWORD

Dear friends,

I wrote this book about Ukrainians who saved Jews from Nazi genocide. Its main purpose is, without overlooking the complexities and sensitive aspects in Jewish-Ukrainian relations during WWII, to draw the reader's attention to those courageous and daring citizens of Ukraine who saved Jews from total destruction, even under the severest of conditions.

Indeed, this book is about such daughters and sons of the Ukrainian land. It was written after a long search and analysis of a tremendous amount of documents and eyewitness accounts. What made it so difficult was the fact that more than five decades separated us from those horrible events. Many of those who had saved or had been saved were no longer among the living. If they had stories to tell, they took them to their graves. But others told about their sufferings and how they had been rescued, contributing the information to the Yad Vashem Memorial Center. Finally, most of the Jews thus saved were still living in the former Soviet Union, but the local authorities did their best to obstruct access to information. At the time there was no way one could expect any cooperation from the Soviet administration, even in such noble cause. It was especially true during those long years when, under a UN resolution, Zionism was associated with racism. This discriminatory resolution was annulled only in 1992. It should be pointed out that Ukraine was among the most active initiators of the annulment of that shameful instrument.

I had to start on my search (it was in the 1980s) outside the USSR. Shortly afterward, in Israel, the US, Canada and other countries, I located more than 100 Jews who had been saved by Ukrainians. Still later, several dozen of them were recognized as the Righteous Among

the Nations. Currently, Yad Vashem personnel is working on a number of cases. I have personally compiled and handed over to them more than 400 eyewitness accounts.

This book includes only a part of them, and also letters, newspaper publications, etc.

Naturally, in this book the main emphasis is on Righteous. I selected the most characteristic examples, although I could have cited ten times as many (and I have the material). However, this edition is just the first attempt; it is the first in a series of publications about the Ukrainian rescuers. There is every reason to expect that new books will come off the presses to perpetuate the people's memory of the immortal feats of all the Righteous of Ukraine.

May their lofty examples of selfless humanism, courage and sincere benevolence, even when faced with death, reach deep into people's hearts and serve as a firm foundation upon which to build friendly Jewish-Ukrainian relations. May people of different nationalities learn from these examples the generosity of heart, noble aspirations, and the readiness not only to protect citizens of the world against death, injustice or humiliation, but also to sow the seeds of that which is Good.

Saving Jews during the Nazi occupation was the most vivid manifestation of good will. The world knows many examples of such acts, among different peoples of Europe.

In one of my articles dedicated to the Righteous Among the Nations, I addressed words of admiration to the Danish people, but I would like to point out that the conditions in which people were rescued in Ukraine were totally different than in Denmark, where the punishment meted out for such acts of mercy wasn't as severe as it was in Ukraine. In Denmark, there weren't any street posters threatening death for rescuing Jews. In Ukraine, such posters were found in every city and town.

By 1979, very few citizens of Ukraine had been acknowledged by Yad Vashem as the Righteous Gentiles. It meant that many of those who saved Jews and helped them survive hadn't been found as yet. In 1987, after the Society for Jewish-Ukrainian Contacts had been in existence for seven years, and following a long period of search, the situation changed radically. My card index files were now filled with hundreds of names of rescuers from Ukraine. I am sure that many new names will be entered there, particularly in view of the situation which has developed since Ukraine proclaimed its independence, and since diplomatic relations were established between our countries. Today there

is every opportunity to carry on this search for the Righteous rescuers on a broad scale, at a government level, involving the general public.

I also consider it necessary to stress that we still lack good organization in elucidating the search for such Righteous in different countries. Thousands of people are engaged in tracing down war criminals. They are supported by the government of many countries. However, I'm not sure that one will find 10 or 15 experts in any given country, or as many volunteers, who are engaged in the search for the Righteous Among the Nations.

Yad Vashem runs a catalogue based on countries of origin, rather than ethnic distinctions. Out of the 2,800 names of the Righteous listed in the Polish catalogue, almost one hundred belong to Ukraine. Often, the surviving witnesses overlook the nationality of their accounts. All they seem to remember is the name of the country where they were born,-Poland. In many cases, however, the events they describe took place in Western Ukraine. Besides, names alone aren't enough. For example, how can you possibly know that a certain Janina Berger is of Ukrainian, and a Mariya Levchuk of Polish, parentage? Sometimes it is very difficult to ascertain the nationality.

My method of investigation (incidentally, it determines the special character of this book) considerably differs from that applied by the authors of other such books. Often, I received information from Jews who had been saved, and from Ukrainians who had saved Jews, or from both such sources at the same time. Besides, I have at my disposal additional material, information and photographs. I correspond with many people. I succeeded in engaging them in the activities of the Society for Jewish-Ukrainian Contacts. I help elderly people, and sometimes function as their go-between, in regard to Yad Vashem. I took part in the ceremonies of planting trees and honoring the memory of the Righteous Gentiles in Jerusalem. I often visit different countries whose citizens helped the rescuers of Jews, and record their stories on tape.

Of course, every author has his own ways and techniques. Thus, Anton Maria Keim, author of *Yad Vashem. Die Judenretter aus Deutschland* (Munich, 1983), offers a brief account of 120 instances in which Jews were saved by Germans. All his information comes from the Yad Vashem archives.

Another book, *Righteous Among Nation (How Poles Helped the Jews 1939-1945*), by Wladyslaw Bartoszewski and Sofia Lewin (London, 1969) is based on articles and documents published previously (e.g.,

German orders, appeals of the Polish underground resistance movement, publications by Jewish organizations, etc.).

Without doubt, my method of investigation is much more complicated. While gathering information and material provided by people, rather than by libraries or archives, I wasn't always sure that this or that rescuer would be recognized by the Yad Vashem's Special Commission for the Designation of the Righteous. So far as I was concerned, eyewitness testimonies, photos, other material, references to witnesses and their corroborative accounts were convincing proof that the given person had indeed taken part in the rescuing of Jews. My book contains not only stories about the rescuers already listed among the Righteous Gentiles, but also information and documents submitted for consideration and awaiting the Yad Vashem's decision.

Often when collecting such material, one encounters obstacles and complications. An especially disheartening situation emerged when Ms. Raissa Guberuk applied for recognition as the Righteous Gentiles in regard to certain Ukrainians she knew. She sent the testimony to Yad Vashem. Before the petition was submitted for deliberation, a representative of the Special Commission (an elderly person) voiced his desire to meet with Ms. Guberuk in person. The woman was seriously ill at the time, so she could only talk on the phone. This, however, proved insufficient, and as a result, one sick person had to wait for another, an elderly one. Too bad that the matter couldn't be settled in any other way, and that the sick woman had to start on a long journey. If the case involved a war criminal, whatever the country, probably a whole police convoy would be sent for the man. Unfortunately, Raissa Guberuk died and never met with the commission representative, and so the names of Yevstafij Guberuk, Hanna Trukhan (Kovalchuk) and Vera Kucher (Russian by nationality) were never entered into the lists of the Righteous Gentiles.

As far as I know, Jews were rescued in an organized manner only by priests and monks, under the guidance of Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky. I couldn't find a single leaflet or a message of appeal signed by any organization, party, movement or government agency, calling on the fellow countrymen to save Jews. So under the circumstances the heroism displayed by those citizens and families of Ukraine who rescued Jews was even more praiseworthy, because they did so with their hearts and souls, for the sole reason of humaneness.

During the Nazi occupation only the scum of society and Nazi collaborators, as well as characters who for various selfish reasons wanted to get even with Jews, would actively cooperate with the Nazi

murderers terrorizing the Jewish populace. Therefore, it is totally erroneous and very dangerous to resort to any generalizations on such basis. However, one should bear in mind that, say, five or six inveterate Nazi hirelings at a village, town or on a city street would be enough to wipe out all the neighboring Jews. But against this macabre background the deeds of the Righteous Gentiles look especially humane and selfless.

* *
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My friends and I were lucky, because we met with dozens, nay hundreds, of good and courageous people. From conversations, newspapers and letters we learned about numerous cases when Jews were rescued by citizens of Ukraine, at different periods.

Every martyr who has survived the Nazi occupation has his own memories of contacts with Ukrainians. Fragmentary recollections, of course, are not enough to make any generalizations, but they should also be taken into account when analyzing the given situation. Zelik Broiderman, for example, recalls with warm and grateful words Stepan and Roman Polishchuk (father and son), soldiers of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, and others. Roman was in command of a UIA detachment where 50 Jews fleeing from genocide found refuge, and who together with the soldiers fought in combat. Z. Broiderman writes in recollection, "I want to be objective, so I can't say today, whether such humane attitude to us was the UIA's general policy, or maybe it came from the unit under Roman Polishchuk's command... The soldiers of that UIA unit figl ting for the independence of their land were the only people who helped us, and thanks to whom we could live through that darkest period in man's history."

Unforgettable is also the word for other memories that are exceptionally important in analyzing the relations between Ukrainians and Jews. Thus, the book "History of Jewish Pogroms in Ukraine" by S.I. Gusyev-Orenburgski (Harbin, 1922), with Maxim Gorky's Closing Remarks, contains a strikingly realistic account of that savagery. It reads, in part: "In Lubny, the pogrom was averted only because some one hundred armed Petlurists met the ***pogromchiks*** and, after losing fourteen of their men, saved the town from the pogrom."

I can't help but cry reading things like that. Just imagine, a handful of brave humanists challenging the cutthroats, saving Jews at the cost of their own lives, and at the same time saving one's belief in humaneness!

But do we Jews know the names of those 100 heroes, and those of the fourteen that fell?..

B'nai B'rith held a banquet in honor of Volodymyr Klodnytsky, a Ukrainian artillery officer who had helped prevent a pogrom in the town of Khmelnyk (Vinnytsa Region), saving the lives of 15,000 local Jews...

Barbara Diebert, one of my correspondents, told me about her grandfather, the Rev. Volodymyr Levytsky who, back in 1905, in the town of Obukhiv (Kyyiv Region), had saved many Jews from pogroms...

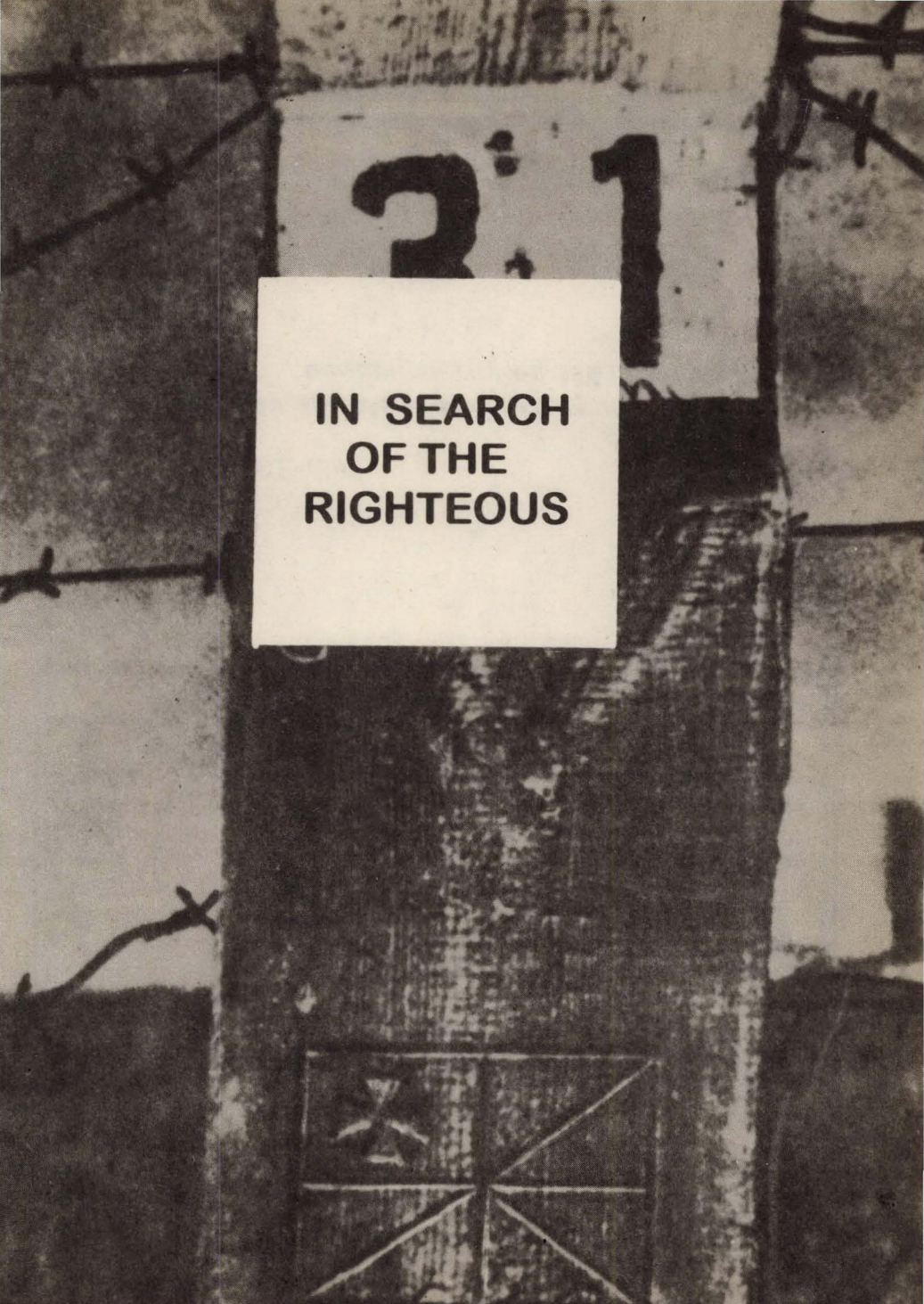
In Petro Odarchenko,s article about Yevhen Chykalenko we find these lines, "During the Revolution of 1905, Chykalenko struggled against the Russian Black Hundred and defended Jews; his son was wounded in a clash with pogromchiks."

Valerian Fedorchuk sent me a letter from Sweden, in which he wrote about his father, Petro I. Fedorchuk, who had on two occasions prevented a pogrom in Rivne, in 1918. During WWII, he saved Jews from the Nazis in that town.

I could cite a lot of other facts and examples.

It is our duty to perpetuate the memory of all those citizens of Ukraine who, at the risk of their own lives, saved Jews from extermination.

This book tells about only some of these wonderful people. In the next edition, I would like to continue my story about the Righteous Gentiles. I am confident that the further search for such rescuers will bring the expected results. This process will be facilitated by the spreading of relevant information among both Jews and Ukrainians, as well as by the assistance of corresponding organizations. These tasks are very complicated, but the target set is an extremely noble one. It consists not only in honoring the memory of the Righteous Gentiles of Ukraine, but also in helping the process of friendship and understanding between the two peoples. Polish publicists Wladislaw Bartoszewski and Sophia Lewin once stressed, "The world can be saved only by overcoming hatred and by preserving the eternal memory of all that which previously united people, and which continues to unite them today." Well said!


IN SEARCH
OF THE
RIGHTEOUS

"When there is no just estimation of virtue and vice, people become worse."

(ARISTOTLE)



THE PRIDE OF UKRAINE

Jews were saved from genocide not only by Ukrainians, but also by Russians, Byelorussians, Poles and by people of other parentage. But they were all children of one mother, Ukraine. That's why they are all mentioned in this book as U k r a i n i a n - the way one would refer to the Americans, French, Canadians, or citizens of any other multionational country, in a similar context. People treated Jews well, because they were inspired to do so by prominent writers, artistic and cultural personalities. Back in 1891, the brilliant Russian author Leo Tolstoy wrote that the Jew is a symbol of eternity, who can be destroyed neither by slaughter nor tortures; who could be wiped off the surface of the earth neither by fire nor the sword of Inquisition; who was the first to proclaim His Word; who had kept the Prophecy for so long until he finally shared it with the rest of mankind. This nation cannot disappear. The Jew will live forever, because he is the embodiment of eternity.

Sincere respect for the Jewish nation is found in the writings of Taras Shevchenko, the Great Kobzar; Ivan Franko; Lesya Ukrainka, and many other writers and poets, both past and present (e.g., Pavlo Hrabovsky, Mykola Bazhan, Pavlo Tychyna,Maxim Rylsky, Ivan Drach, Dmytro Pavlychko, Petro Osadchuk, Stanislav Zinchuk).

Thus, Dmytro Pavlychko wrote in "The Righteous Woman": (*Pravednytsia*):

The Nazis are in town,
People are rounded up,
Jews are herded to the forest.
Wind is blowing through empty homes,
Carrying the sticky smell of blood.

Mother's standing on the threshold,
Whispering to her son.
They're talking with their eyes,
Telling more than words can tell.
Her son is stiff with fear:
Mother's hiding in the winecellar
A family of Jews; she never asked him
If it was Okay. 'But don't you know, mom?...'
'I do, son.'
'The Nazis will kill us!'
'I know, my son.'
'They will, for hiding...'
'I know, my son.'
'They shoot on the spot!'
'I know, my son.'
And beneath the floor, in the dark,
Ears are pressed against the stone wall,
Palms, elbows, and eyes
Are glued to the wall,
Like a pile of potatoes
With put out shoots.
And the Jewish family can hear
The mother speak to her son,
'To ward off suspicion,
Go work for the Huns.'
And the son replies,
'No, mother, better lock me
Down that cellar, with the Jews.
I won't work for those hangmen and hoods!'
But then he went; he couldn't stay
Inside the dark and silent home,
Where stifled sobs filled the nights,
Where bloodshot Jewish eyes
Glittered through cracks in the floor.
And so he went...
And in solemn Jerusalem
The Yad Vashem dignitaries
Honoring the Righteous woman,
Greeting and praising her,
Planting a tree in her name,
Do not know why she's crying,
Sobbing, covering her face.

They don't know, but that Jewish family does,
For they have had their Calvary time.
The woman is crying after her son,
Who returned home dressed as a Hun,
Who had turned traitor while with the Nazis,
And who shot himself, to ward off suspicion."

At that time of ordeal and genocide, honest and courageous citizens of Ukraine followed the call of their hearts and extended a helping hand. While unwinding this story about them, I wish to stress that their exceptional courage could not only be compared to that of the antifascist heroes and their feats, but should also be praised and honored nationwidely. Those Righteous Gentiles acted unarmed, without feeling the shoulder of the comrade-in-arms, without commands from officers or rations provided by the quartermaster's squads. What made it even worse was that the Righteous and their families were under the constant threat of death, and their only moral support came from their inherent humaneness and good will.

It was while thinking along these lines that I made up my mind to send a letter to the then US President Ronald Reagan.

A MESSAGE ADDRESSED TO RONALD REAGAN, AND NOT ONLY HIM

I will always remember that day in September... I had spent a long time thinking hard about good and evil in man's soul, about what lay in store for our planet and its multilingual inhabitants, and on that day, for the first time in my life, I wrote and addressed a letter to the president of the world's greatest power. The letter was mailed from Jerusalem, dated September 22, 1986.

Mr. Ronald Reagan
The President of the United States
Washington, D.C.

A few lines about myself.

I am a new immigrant in Israel. I came to Israel from the Soviet Union in 1977 after I had spent seven years in prison for my anti-Soviet

and Zionist activities, as the KGB described my "crimes". I am a teacher, 57 years of age and married.

In this country, I have founded the Association for Jewish-Ukrainian Contacts with the aim of trying to improve relations between these two mutually most hostile nations.

Now, the main point of the letter: your predecessor, President Carter, gave his consent to the formation of the Office of Special Investigations within the Department of Justice. The aim of the OSI is to search for war criminals and bring them to justice. Crimes against humanity should never be forgotten. The criminals committing such crimes should be punished.

No less important, in my opinion, is the search for noble and brave people who during those horrible years of Hitler rule in Europe, at the risk of their own lives helped those doomed to total annihilation survive.

Peace, democracy and humanity - that's what we need in this world. Still, little is being done to develop humanity in human beings.

We punish war criminals in order to warn and to frighten potential future criminals. Why not teach the young generation by showing them positive examples of real heroes of our times - those who, without weapons, opposed the cruel system?

Hundreds if not thousands of people are involved in the search for war criminals. Millions of dollars are spent annually on this purpose. And only few people, mostly volunteers, are trying to find the modest heroes who, now old, are dying away with every passing day, without reward or a warm word of gratitude.

While it is not too late please help establish an Office of the Search for the Righteous among nations. It will need less money and be more effective than the OSI. Do this noble thing and your name will be listed among the greatest humanitarians of our times.

Yours sincerely ***Yakov Suslensky.***

I waited for an answer from the White House with the impatience of a young man in love awaiting a message from his sweetheart. I waited till Ronald Reagan's last day in office, but nothing happened. Perhaps one of the cogs in the US government machine went askew, or maybe no one bothered to bring my letter to the attention of the then Resident of the White House. Personally, I am sure that Mr. Reagan would have supported my idea, since he is known to have done a great deal for the triumph of wisdom and justice on our planet. Be as it may, my message remains topical today. I would like to take this opportunity to address the presidents and government of all countries, and the United Nations,

this world's most influential body, and ask them to do their best not only to detect and severely punish war criminals, but also to help locate and worthily reward those humanists of different countries who saved Jews from genocide under the savage Nazi occupation.

What we are talking about isn't only uprooting age-old and widespread evils like interethnic animosity; we are talking about mutual understanding, respect among all the residents of this planet; we are talking about the raising of this and the future generations, showing them the genuine examples of feats performed by men and women, whom we consider as true heroes of the nation, and for whom the highest virtue was to be h u m a n .



Miriam Ritzer (shown in this photo) and her mother were hidden by Yakiv Sukhenko. He, his friend Ivan Shevchenko and ten Jews hidden by them were shot by the Nazis during one of the occupation-time round-ups

A REMINDER FROM CALVARY

Citizens the world over are still greatly indebted to those kind-hearted and courageous people who died of Nazi bullets or were hanged by the Nazis only because they had saved Jews, their fellow countrymen, friends, neighbours, compatriots. Those champions of humanism and good will defended the honor of mankind in the most horrifying conditions, and one's heart bleeds at the thought that their sacred names are not as yet inscribed in gold in the undying memory of the peoples of all continents!

A Jewish saying has it that when people are silent, it's stones that speak. It reminds the terrestrials that they are still indebted to the fallen Righteous Among the Nations. These people weren't properly honored after their death, and even their names gradually fade from our memories. Ironically, their names are found in Nazi posters addressed to the occupied population, listing those executed as a warning to the living. True, their names are also mentioned by those they saved. Rubin Grosser, for example, recalls that in the village of Lukiv (Volyn Region) where he was hiding, thanks to some kind-hearted residents, there was a woman, mother of three, who gave shelter to a couple of Jewish kids. The Nazis found out, shot the Jewish children, and hanged the woman and her children in the marketplace. But where to find the name of this woman who can rightfully be called a real heroine? Maybe there is a statue or memorial in the place where she and her children were put to

death, or maybe her fellow countrymen, at least her fellow villagers, remember it? Maybe her name is entered into the Book of Glory revered in her native land? Alas, the answer is no, on all counts. And only the stones that saw it all speak, nay cry out her name. The stones that saw her death throes and how she suffered watching them kill her children and then hunt down the Jewish kids. They hunted them down, pounced on them, and never let them out of their eager claws.

In 1989, an unusual edition came off the presses in Canada. It was an English collection of articles under the title *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective.* One of the authors, an Israeli historian named A. Weiss, touches on the events of WWII in Western Ukraine and condemns Ukrainophobia. In particular, he tells how he and his family were saved by a Ukrainian woman who kept them in hiding for 22 months in Borislav.

According to Mr. Weiss' estimation, the Nazis executed over a hundred Ukrainians for hiding Jews in Eastern Galicia (Halychyna) alone. It is hard to say how many such executions took place all over Ukraine, because, unfortunately, no one kept such sad statistics.

Dr. I. Litwak, whose testimony is rendered in this collection, claims that the Nazis simultaneously hanged 20 Christians, from the village of Babiyivka, in the marketplace of the town of Dolyna. The martyrs were kept hanging for more than a week, as a warning for the local residents, and a note attached to one of the gallows read, "the same will be done to whoever helps a Jew."

On March 1, 1944, a horrible sentence was carried out in the town of Sambir (Lviv Region). Even now, 50 years after the event, one is filled with hatred against the Nazi savages, reading the text of a poster informing the residents that the following persons had been executed, because they had hidden Jews and otherwise assisted them:

"... 5. Krushkovska, Mariya... Ukrainian ...
6. Dmytrovska, Sophia ...
7. Zubovych, Stephen ... Ukrainian, married ...
8. Kachmar, Mariya ... Ukrainian ...
... 10. Maslyaha, Anna ... Ukrainian ...
11. Nazar, Mariya ... Ukrainian ...
... 16. Kulyak, Mykola ... Ukrainian ... married.
17. Kovalchuk, Mikhailo ... Ukrainian ...
... 27. Sush, Nastasia ... Ukrainian."

Like true heroes, these people became immortal. Locating and honoring such champions of good will is of tremendous political and educational importance, and every step must be taken to perpetuate

their sacred names in the people's memory. Our mind, heart and conscience demand that they be honored posthumously, because they deserve this honor and every praise, having died a martyr's death. Their deeds will always call on the people to uphold the ties of selfless mutual assistance, and to strengthen friendship between the Jewish and other peoples, for their mutual benefit.

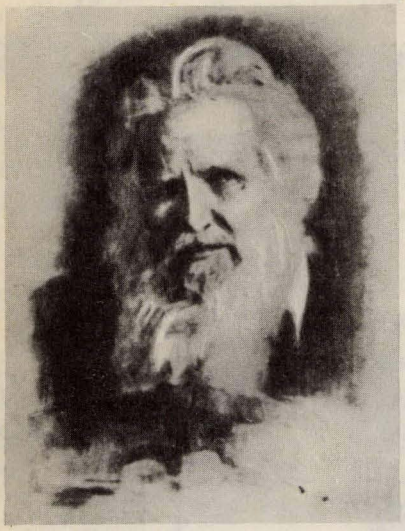
People of firm principle and good will are deeply concerned about the fact that, because of the time that has elapsed since the events, and because there isn't sufficient information, a lot of the worthy names are still left out of the lists of the Righteous Gentiles. Another extremely disheartening aspect is that, as a result of various ideological stereotypes, prejudices and falsifications, the names of true rescuers are often smeared with malicious allegations, discrediting reproaches, and suchlike.

A graphic example is found in the case of the unrecognized Righteous Gentile Andrew Sheptytsky, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

Here again, prejudiced attitudes, political intriguing and distorted representation of the circumstances, prestige and other factors serve as the obstacles in recognizing the Righteous role played by this prominent clergyman. Such factors in the end hamper the truth and justice, casting the shadow of doubt on the noble names of those that served the good of the Jewish people at the time of its hardest ordeal. This is precisely the topic of our next story.



UNACKNOWLEDGED RIGHTEOUS GENTILE



Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, prominent religious figure of the 20th century.

The storm was raging over the concentration camp of Yaniv. The rain and the wind hadn't stopped during the evening, and then the storm had broken out. The camp grounds looked more like a swamp. The gutters were overflowing, the muddy water rushing through them bubbling and gurgling. It looked as though God had become angry with the land defiled by the Nazis and allowed nature to wash off its face that death factory where innocent people died day and night only because they were born Jewish. The guards huddled up atop the watchtowers with searchlights and machineguns, and even the frenzied police dogs were quiet, hiding in dry crannies.

"Our Lord is giving me this last chance of escape," whispered David Kahana, one of the many inmates. Pressing his entire emaciated body to the soaked earth, he started to crawl toward the nearest corner of the barbed wire fence. Earlier during the day he had noticed that some of the bullets of the guards shooting down a group of inmates had cut through the wire. The gap, his only hope, was still there, unpatched.

An eternity seemed to have passed while he got through the first row of wire and disentangled himself from the second one. Any moment now he would be caught in the bean of the searchlight that was inexorably approaching him. Then he heard a dog barking... David dived

into the mud head first and froze... Shortly afterward, he crawled out of the mud and dragged himself as far as the log barracks in Lviv's suburbs. He headed for Mount St. George and the residence of Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, for he believed that he could find refuge only there, behind the sturdy gate. When an utterly exhausted David knocked on that gate it was opened by a monk who recoiled in horror and slammed the gate in his face. David heard the boots of a Nazi patrol, a short distance from where he stood. The gate opened again, another monk materialized and pulled David inside.

"Brother Mykola nearly fainted," he explained. "He took you for an apparition." Indeed, the escapee, clad in rags, covered with dirt and blood, could scare anybody stiff.

However, David was brought to the metropolitan's study dressed as he was. The clergyman embraced him, kissed him and immediately ordered him to be bathed and given fresh clothes to dress as a monk.

It was late, but Metr. Sheptytsky waited until the escaped prisoner was made to look human again. The man felt his soul unburden for the first time, but the prelate looked at him and broke down. Weeping, he asked David to tell his story and about the concentration camp. The hair-raising account took two hours. Then the prelate invited him to join him in prayer. David helped his benefactor out of the wheelchair and then eased him down to his knees, in front of the crucifix. They both prayed, each addressing his own God...

Kahana was hidden in Count Sheptytsky's private library. He was served meals there, and only during the night could he leave his hiding for a walk in the metropolitan garden. In the fall of 1943, Andrew Sheptytsky would send the accompanying monk away, and David would take over, pushing the wheelchair along the cozy alleys. Those were unusual rendezvous, during which the two discussed politics, philosophy, theology... The metropolitan found an interesting interlocutor in David, because before the war he had served as a Jewish chaplain with the Lviv garrison, had been the rabbi of one of the local synagogues and taught Jewish theology at the city's higher schools.

On that fateful night of his escape, Kahana's meeting with Sheptytsky wasn't the first one. Fate had taken him to Mount St. George earlier, when the Nazis had started Jewish roundups and mass shootings, when the Jews had been gathered in a ghetto and forced to wear yellow badges, forbidden access to the city on pain of death. The Jewish clergy were resolved to preserve the holy books and scrolls kept at the synagogues, and various other precious records. All this could be safely hidden only at the Catholic monasteries and churches.



David Kahana (right) is heartfully thankful to Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, his brother Climentius, and other Righteous Gentiles who lent a hand in saving the Rabbi's life.

Through Dr. Kostelnyk, Kahana had asked for an audience with Sheptytsky. Finally, one night, his beard shaven off, without the yellow badge on his jacket, he found himself in the metropolitan's study. The prelate was reclining in his wheelchair, lost in thought.

"I see, my son, that some misfortune must have brought you here. Please, be seated and tell me all about it."

After Kahana told him about the sufferings of his people, the metropolitan cried.

"I know this," Metropolitan Sheptytsky spoke sadly. "I have sent several messages to all the priests, ordering them to read the letters to their congregations. I warned my flock that whoever would help the Nazis persecute or kill Jews would be consigned to perdition. I have also addressed letters to all the German officers representing the occupation authorities, and I've written personally to Himmler, voicing my protest against the usage of Ukrainian soldiers in anti-Jewish actions.

These young Ukrainians enlisted to fight the Communists, but instead of sending these young fellows to the front, the Nazis use them

in the killing of defenseless Jews. My son, I can only pray for your people, and hope that my prayers will be heard. But tell me, is there any way, other than praying, I can help you?"

Kahana asked the metropolitan to save the children whose parents had been murdered by the Nazis, and whose death was imminent.

Metropolitan sent for his brother, Klementiy, and for the Rev. Josepha, Mother Superior of the local convents. Both turned out ready and willing to help. Since the Nazis checked every Christian monastery, ordering every boy to strip, looking for those circumsized, it was decided that the first rescue operation would involve mostly Jewish girls.

The operation was carried out on the night of August 14, 1942, when 100 Jewish children, including the sons of rabbis Chameides and Lewin, and Kahana's daughter, were taken out of the ghetto and brought to the monasteries and convents. There they were hidden and given false certificates of baptism as Ukrainians, with appropriate new names. Eventually, they were placed in cloistered schools and Catholic monasteries, in and around Lviv. Those children survived the Nazi occupation only thanks to the courage of priests and monks who, at the risk of their lives, hid them and saved them from German spies and agents provocateur.

Mother Superior Josepha also rescued Kahana's wife; she had her dressed as a nun and issued with an appropriate ID card. It was through her that Kahana built the main liaison between the ghetto and the cloistered community. When the ghetto was liquidated his wife would uphold contacts between the Jewish escapees and the hierarchs of the Ukrainian Catholic Church...

But now Rabbi David Kahana kept to his hiding on Mount St. George. Every evening he would be with the metropolitan in his wheelchair.

After the war, David Kahana served as a colonel with the Polish Army and was in contact with an underground Zionist organization, through which he helped many a Ukrainian Catholic clergyman, then under persecution, in getting into the US occupation zones in Germany and Austria. Later, Kahana would spend 15 years in the Armed Forces of Israel, becoming the Chief Chaplain of the Air Force.

Early in the 1960s, an article appeared in the press. It was titled "The Forgotten Epic of Count Sheptytsky", written by Leo Heiman. Actually, it serves as a source of factual information about the rescue of D. Kahana and his family.

"When I brought up the name of Count Andrew Sheptytsky, Chaplain Kahana was visibly moved," writes the author of the article (by

the way, the article is accompanied by the following words: " O my God, I ask You to glorify Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky as one of Your saints."). "For a moment the clock of history seemed to turn back from July 1962, in Israel, to July 1942, in the Ukrainian city of Lviv , where Nazi officers amused themselves by using Jewish children for target practice. Placing his right hand on the Holy Book, Colonel Kahana said:

'I am willing to swear on the Bible that Count Sheptytsky was one of the greatest humanitarians in the history of mankind, certainly the best friend we Jews ever had. I say this not just because he saved my wife, my child and myself, but because he was instrumental in rescuing hundreds of other Jews from certain death.

'When I met him (Kahana went on to say), he was about 80, paralyzed and near death, but not broken in spirit. He was well past the need to seek "respectability insurance" or political gain. And he was aware that when the Nazis found Jews hiding in a church or monastery, they shot all priests and monks, and either razed the buildings or converted them into barracks. If the Metropolitan was willing to risk his priests and churches, he was moved by true Christianity, by love of our Jewish people, and by a sense of national responsibility. He realized that the enemies of the Ukrainian people would blame the actions of pogrom mobs and ragtag militia on the entire Ukrainian nation. He, therefore, decreed that it was the sacred duty of every nationally-conscious Ukrainian priest to save as many Jews as possible... In 1942, when Jews were being butchered in the gas chambers of Aucshwitz and Treblinka and slaughtered in the lime-filled pits on the outskirts of a thousand towns and cities, Sheptytsky predicted the creation of an independent Jewish state in the Holy Land...

' When I tell you that Andrew Sheptytsky was a saint, I do not exaggerate. I am a professional officer, with 20 years of military service - 5 in the Polish Army and 15 in the Israel Armed Forces. I am an Orthodox rabbi and a doctor of philosophy and theology. I know human nature and I know that the qualities which make a saint are so rare as to be almost non-existent. But Count Sheptytsky possessed them all...

'Besides the Count's brother Clementiy, the Ihumenia Josepha and the hundreds of Ukrainian clergy who risked their lives to save Jews, there was Fr. Marko, a village priest who rescued more than 40 Jewish children from Nazi firing squads. Later, I had an opportunity to help him escape to the United States, where he now lives... I compiled a list of over 240 such priests and monks who had rescued Jews from the Nazis. But this list is not complete...'"

David Kahana's testimony is complimented by Kurt Lewin's article "Archbishop Andrew Sheptytsky and the Jewish Community During the Second World War". Below are excerpts therefrom.

"Before 1939, there were approximately 100,000 Jews living in Lviv, members of an old community which traced its origin to the 13th century. In its time the community had numbered many scholars who were widely known, as well as artisans and craftsmen whose work was valued in many quarters. Being old, the Jewish community in Lviv had weathered many storms through the years: the Tartar raid in the 13th century, the Cossack wars in the 17th, and the Polish pogroms of 1919..."

"However, the Jewish community in Lviv could not weather the storm of the Second World War. Its members died in the gas chambers of Belzec, were shot in the ghetto and killed in the Janowski concentration camp and, when the holocaust ended, only 300 were registered with the Jewish Committee...

"The Metropolitan Sheptytsky headed the Church, which had united with Rome in the 16th century. A scion of the old nobility, whose title dated back to the 13th century, the Metropolitan Andrew dedicated his life to his Church and to the welfare of the Ukrainian people. He reorganized and revitalized the Church in the parishes of his diocese, and set out to restore the rich Byzantine tradition in which the Greek Catholic had its origin and roots in liturgy... Under his aegis, education and guidance appeared in backward Ukrainian villages. Schools and hospitals were built for the use and benefit of his people, paid for by the revenues from the landed estates held by the Sheptytsky family in Galicia. In fact, a princely income from private holdings was devoted to the education and improvement of the community, while the owner of the property went about dressed in a clean and carefully mended monk's habit..."

The beginning of the 20th century saw a dangerous situation take shape in Galicia, as it became the scene of friction and discord, quickly progressing into open hatred between different national and religious groups. The surge of Ukrainian nationalism was subsequently used in German politics to step up anti-Polish and anti-Jewish propaganda.

"In the midst of this political whirlpool (K. Lewin writes further on), the Metropolitan Andrew did not limit himself to spiritual matters. He reasoned with the Ukrainian nationalists, he tried to bridge the gap between the Ukrainian factions, in an attempt to prevent a hopeless bloodbath... as early as 1933, he bade the Ukrainians to beware of becoming pawns in a German game... To the Jews the Metropolitan

Andrew had always been a friend, respecting their heritage with compassion for their sorrow and suffering. The Jews responded with deep affection. Whenever the Metropolitan visited a township or village, he was met by the Ukrainian community led by its priest and by the rabbi and the elders of the Jewish community..."

In the formidable years of Nazi occupation, priests and nuns, on Andrew Sheptytsky's instructions, helped Jews, giving them food and shelter. "But most important of all (K. Lewin continues), they gave moral support to those whom they hid, and hunted Jews... were made to feel wanted and thus allowed to regain faith in humanity... For 2 long years no outsider knew about the Jews who were hidden in each and every cloister, and even in the Metropolitan's private residence.

"The monks and nuns... unquestionably executed the instructions given by the Metropolitan Andrew or Father Proto-Hegumen Klementiy, and the Superior of each cloister led his monastery or her convent in this noble understanding.

"Father Superior Marko Stek was in charge of 'operation save the Jews' at the... monasteries. To accomplish this task, he first carefully paved the way for reception of individual Jews sometimes by a convincing talk, and sometimes even by a resort to monastic discipline. Then the requisite documents had to be prepared, and finally, the 'naturalized Ukrainians' had to be provided with an escort and transported from place to place...

"While the Studite Fathers looked after the men, girls and women were cared for by the Studite nuns headed by Mother Superior Josepha. But it is impossible to omit Mother Superior Monika... from the list of those who saved Jewish children. At the convent in Pidmykhailivtsi, Mother Monika gathered the boys and girls, helping them to adjust... to the new circumstances of life. All those sheltered by Metropolitan Andrew survived the war in spite of constant searches, informers and other dangers.

"It should be stressed that Metropolitan Andrew and his brother exerted no religious pressure whatsoever... Approximately 150 Jews survived, thanks to Metropolitan Andrew...

"In the autumn of 1943, Rabbi Dr. David Kahana and the author (Kurt Lewin) arrived at the monastery of St. Josaphat, near Mount St. George. A short time afterward, Father Superior Nykanor informed the assembled monks that from now on 2 Jews were to stay with him. He stated that it would be advisable if one member of the monastery were to take the whole responsibility on himself... All the monks realized that they were in mortal danger and that one of them was called upon to

risk his life for men of a different faith. Father Nykanor, a tall, soft-spoken man, still showing traces of a year and a half spent in a German prison, then asked for a volunteer. As one man, the whole monastery stood up - Brother Varlaam, Brother Ambrose, Brother Patrick, Brother Joseph the cook, Brother Modest the carpenter. Last but not least there was Brother Theodosius who, in addition, conducted a private crusade against the Germans by hiding 2 Jewish families at the factory where he worked...

"After the German retreat, the Metropolitan helped those he had sheltered to start life anew. The children were placed with the few remaining Jewish families, but only after approval of the foster parents by Rabbi Dr. Kahana. Brother Proto-Hegumen Klementiy stated: ' The children are a trust left to me by their dead parents; I can release them only to the care of responsible people.'

"The pitifully few survivors gathered on Yablonovska Street, where a Jewish committee was organized. there was no one to give aid or comfort except the Metropolitan Andrew, who sent food, clothes and blankets to the committee.

"Slowly the survivors dispersed. Today they live in Israel and England, the United States and Australia. But to all these far places they took with them the memory of Metropolitan Andrew and his brother Klementiy, and that memory will remain in their hearts till the day they die.

"In those tragic times a great and noble man lived on Mount St. George. He had a heart full of compassion for human suffering and misery. He truly earned the name 'friend of the Jews', as he had described himself many years before all these events, and he proved it in the darkest hour at the risk of his own life. His name will be inscribed forever in the annals of Jewish history."

The following is an excerpt from the article "Sheptytsky and the Jews" by Dr. Shimon Redlich, Director of the Research Center for Russia, Eastern Europe and Jewish Relations, Ben Gurion University, carried by *The Jerusalem Post Magazine* (December 13, 1985):

"Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, archbishop of Lviv and head of the Ukrainian Uniate Church for over half a century, died in November 1944, at the age of 79. Spanning different periods and changing regimes, his life more than once touched upon Jews and Jewish- related issues...

"As far as knowledge of Jews and Judaism is concerned, they were part and parcel of Sheptytsky's world. At the age of 20 he began studying Hebrew, and he travelled to the Holy Land in 1905 and 1906.

He also extended his philanthropic activities to the Jews, as is shown by a letter in Hebrew addressed to the leaders of one of Galicia's Jewish communities."

After the establishment of the Nazi regime, he was especially disturbed by the demoralizing and dehumanizing effect of Nazi behavior on the local Ukrainian population, particularly the youth whom the Nazis used in their campaign to exterminate the Jews.

"Particularly revealing evidence of Sheptytsky's changing view of the Nazi regime (continues Sh. Redlich) is to be found in a letter to the Holy See, dated August 29-31, 1942. It should be borne in mind that a massive deportation from the Lviv ghetto proceeded this letter, in which he wrote:

'Gradually the [German] government instituted a regime of truly unbelievable terror and corruption... For over a year, not a day has passed without the most horrible crimes being committed... The Jews are the primary victims.'...

"Sheptytsky's famous pastoral letter, issued in November 1942 and symbolically entitled 'Thou Shall Not Kill', condemned all forms of murder. While he did not explicitly mention Jews, it is quite clear that he intended to warm Ukrainians not to participate in Nazi anti-Jewish activity... during a meeting in September 1943 with Dr. Fredlic, a French collaborator with the German Foreign Ministry, he accused Germany of inhuman behavior towards the Jews...

"The task of the historian is to bring to light the 'real' Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, avoiding both the completely negative and the over-laudatory approach. He was a highly complex personality interacting with complex circumstances... unfulfilled hopes, shattered expectations and grave disappointments..."

Sheptytsky's attitude to the Jews was determined by complex interethnic relations. He tried to maintain and uphold relations among people of different nationalities, at a time when the unprecedented Holocaust was going full blast. Still, his words and deeds in relation to the Jews served as a vivid testimony to the existence of fraternity among fellow humans.

Of quite some interest is the following sworn testimony, given by one of the direct participants in the rescuing of Jews, namely Ivan Hirnyj, driver in the employ with the Metropolitan residence.

AFFIDAVIT

Name: Ivan Hirnyj

Date of birth: December 23, 1911

Place of birth: Village of Baterijka
Nationality: Ukrainian
Citizenship: Naturalized citizen of the United States of America
Occupation: Automobile mechanic, now retired
Address: 113 Douglas Street
Yorkers, New York 10703
United States of America

My name is Ivan Hirnyj. I was employed from 1941 to 1944 as driver and chauffeur by the office of Metropolitan-Archbishop Count Andrew Sheptytsky of the Ukrainian Catholic Church (Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church), with quarters in Lviv, Halychyna (Lvov, Galicia).

I remember the Metropolitan as an extraordinary honest and kind person who did everything in his power to help those in need, even when his deeds placed him in grave and mortal danger.

My duties included driving a 1.5-ton truck and a passenger automobile. Father Johan Peters obtained all registration forms necessary for permission to operate both vehicles from the German authorities in Krakow. Father Peters German by birth... performed spiritual duties for the Diocese of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. He was under direct supervision of Father Klymentij Sheptytsky.

The truck, a Ford model, was formally registered with the printing shop of the Diocese and was assigned to transport sacramental wine and other church supplies throughout the See of Lviv. The car, a Packard, was provided for the Metropolitan's personal use in view of his physical disability - he was partially paralyzed and was confined to a wheelchair. I was given official documents which identified me as the Metropolitan's personal driver and was therefore allowed to travel even on Sundays, when all other civilian traffic was strictly forbidden. Both vehicles were supplied with gasoline at all times, since they were operated with the expressed authority of the Metropolitan.

I took my instructions directly from the Metropolitan's brother - Abbot Klymentiy Sheptytsky, who was provided with quarters in one of the numerous buildings on the grounds of the residency. Father Klymentiy was the person who would send me on various trips into the countryside...

On one of these trips I was instructed by Father Kotiv, also on the staff of the residency, to pick up six men from a monastery, which had an entry gate on Petra Skarhy Street. (The grounds of

the Metropolitan's residency held, in addition to the Cathedral of Svyatoho Yura - e.g., St. George's Cathedral - and official quarters of the Metropolitan, also numerous buildings for the monks and nuns, plus other buildings.) Father Kotiv confined in me that these six men were Jewish and he warned me of the danger of my mission. Nevertheless, I agreed to drive these people to the monastery of Univ. We travelled under the pretext of making a delivery of equipment for the printing shop at the residency. All six were provided by Father Kotiv with documents which identified them as specialists of the printing shop. When we arrived at the monastery of Univ one of the monks there told me to pull up at an old threshing barn and to let my passengers off, which I did. I saw approximately fifteen people in that barn - men, women and children. They were all Jews. I recall the fact that access to this monastery was possible only when the roads were dry - once it rained, passage to it became next to impossible.

Some time later I drove to Yakhtoriv again, to an orphanage managed by nuns, and brought close to thirty Jewish children, little girls, with me in the truck. On another occasion when Father Kotiv was accompanying me, I was provided with a pass which testified that the fifteen girls with me were homeless children and that I was driving them to an orphanage. When the Germans stopped us en route, I showed my pass and we were allowed to proceed.

I also drove from Lviv to Kalush (Kalusz), to a small factory which produced clogs made of wood with leather tops, the type of footwear which was worn by the inmates of concentration camps. These clogs were sent to "Solid", a stove in Lviv. I do recall the time when I was instructed to drive eight Jews to that shoe-factory. They too had been provided with documents testifying them as highly-qualified specialists of that factory.

I remember a number of other trips that I made together with a young nun. We would drive six to seven girls from Lviv to Yakhtoriv each time, to that orphanage, to that monastery. Metropolitan Sheptytsky had issued orders to help these people, to provide them with false identity papers, which thus saved them from the Germans by proving that they were Ukrainian. And Father Kotiv would gather and place them in the printing-shop, he would give them identity cards, which certified them as employees of shop.

This entire set-up with the factory near Kalush was similar to what was being done at the Public Hospital on Petra Skarhy Street

and at the printing-shop on the grounds of the residency. All refugees masqueraded there as employees, as personnel attached to the various institutions of the residency. They were all supplied with official documents which proved them to be employees of the hospital, of the printing-shop, etc... That German monk, Father Peters, would therefore issue employee documents to these people on behalf of the Metropolitan's office.

A large number of people were kept hidden from the German authorities in Ukrainian monasteries - in Univ, Yakhtoriv and other localities. Many refugees were secluded in the hospital on Petra Skarhy Street, in the printing-shop, in other institutions of the residency. Right near my own residence in Lviv there was a certain convent, located on a side-street off Lychakivska (Lycakivska) Street. The nuns of this convent took care of a municipal orphanage which housed boys only and where large numbers of Jewish boys were provided with a place to hide. These same nuns provided shelter for Jewish girls within their own convent, dressing them up in habits and providing them with personal documents which identified them as Ukrainian nuns.

I experienced it many times over during my trips, driving into and out of Lviv, ostensibly to bring food and the like for the hospital, while also transporting Jewish people to safe places, that we were being constantly protected by the authority of the Metropolitan. As a result, when at the end of 1943 and the early part of 1944 the German authorities began to conduct searches for Jews even inside the monasteries, in the convents, they would find monks and nuns only, since all Jewish refugees hidden there were provided with proper religious attire... I was told that among those hidden within the Metropolitan's own residence there were prominent Jews, in fact, according to Father Kotiv, one of these was a well-known medical doctor and another was a leading rabbi.

I, Ivan Hirnyj, hereby certify that the above statement concerning Metropolitan-Archbishop Count Andrew Sheptytsky's actions in saving the lives of innocent people, including Jews, is the whole truth and that it is a true account, as translated from Ukrainian, of the interview conducted with me by Mr. Yakov Suslensky on October 19, 1982, in New York City.

A group of former prisoners of Zion addressed a message to Yad Vashem urging the recognition of Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky as

the Righteous Among the Nations. This letter, signed by 17 persons, was carried by *The Jerusalem Post* on June 12,1985:

A MAN WHO CARED

... All of us, the signatories of this letter, have passed through Soviet prisons and camps, and our human destinies crossed the destinies of representatives of many Soviet nations who fought for their national identity. Ukrainians were dominant in numbers among them...

We heard our Ukrainian friends talk about the metropolitan of the Uniate Church, Andrew Sheptytsky, who saved Jews during the war, and about a monument supposedly erected to honor him in Tel-Aviv. Our friends do not know that there is no monument in Tel-Aviv [and that there isn't] even a little tree blooming in the spring, in the Avenue of Righteous among the Nations at Yad Vashem. Why is this so? Why do hundreds of trees stand like guards near the tablets bearing the names of those who saved even one Jewish life (sometimes a spouse or a close friend), while there is no tablet with the name of the man who risked his own life saving hundreds of Jewish lives?

Two factors are considered before some one receives the title Righteous among the Nations: Has the rescuer risked his or her life? Secondly, were his or her motives humane or material? No one, not even those who oppose awarding the title to Andrew Sheptytsky, doubts his humane motives, moreover his directives and his personal example which inspired other Ukrainian priests to do the same, and as a result of this, many paid with their lives.

Why there is no tree, no tablet?

Sheptytsky is blamed for not preventing the bloody pogrom of the Jews in Lviv, when Germans and nationalists entered the city. Let us ask: could he have done it? Was it possible to stop a mob that had just seen thousands of fresh corpses of Ukrainian nationalists (as well as some Jews), left by NKVD firing squads retreating from Lviv, when the population identified Jews with the Soviet authorities, interrogators, courts and commissars? Sheptytsky sent many of his relatives and associates into the streets to calm the mob, while he himself hid Jews that day. Can one throw a stone at him?

Metropolitan Sheptytsky is blamed for the congratulatory telegrams he sent to Hitler after the Germans had occupied Lviv and Kyyiv. This political matter should not influence the matter, but we will consider it. Metropolitan Sheptytsky was the spiritual leader of Western Ukrainian Catholics, whose land in 1941 was caught between the Moscow Scylla and the Berlin Charybdis. In the year after the Soviet regime moved into Western Ukraine, it left no doubts that the national leaders of Ukraine could not expect freedom, independence or even mercy from Russia. And so its leaders turned to Germany as the only power capable of liberating Ukraine... the telegrams were sent on the heels of creation of an Independent Ukrainian Government, on June 30, 1941. Were there many people then who cared [about] what would happen to the Ukrainian Jews? Some may have actually thought "the less Jews, the better".

Sheptytsky felt responsible for the fate of Ukraine, as well as his duty as a human being to God and his conscience, and he did care. In his pastoral message to the Ukrainian people, on the day Ukrainian independence was proclaimed, he called for wise and just leadership to protect the interests of all Ukrainian citizens "regardless of their nationality or religion". One must be deaf and blind not to understand who were the people that the wise pastor wanted to protect.

For those for whom the above is not enough, we would like to quote from the letter of Metropolitan Sheptytsky to the Pope, dated August 31,1942....

"All the country now recognizes that the German regime, perhaps even to a greater extent than the Bolshevik, is evil, indeed even Satanic evil... not a single day has passed without most horrible crimes being committed. Jews are the first victims... As if a gang of madmen or rabid wolves has assaulted the poor nation."...

As for those who reproach Sheptytsky for "collaboration" with the Germans, let them remember that the title of "Righteous" was awarded in 1962 to a German industrialist (and Abwehr official), Oscar Schindler, who used the slave labour of prisoners from occupied lands, but at the same time saved Jews, doing whatever he could for them.

Did not the Swedish diplomat Raul Wallenberg cooperate as a part of his official duties with the anti-Semitic regimes of Germany and Hungary? Maybe we should start digging into his telegrams and reproach him for not leaving his post to wait till the troubled times

were over, so as not to blacken his reputation? But Wallenberg used his legal position and, while cooperating with the authorities, managed to save thousands of people, providing them with needed documents.

Even the Jewish Agency was represented officially in Hitler's Germany while there was a chance to save even a single Jewish child. And was there not an Israeli Embassy in Moscow, in Stalin's bloody time, when Jewish culture was strangled and Zionists shot? Is it not clear to everyone that there is a difference between forced and ideological collaboration?

What else can one demand from Metropolitan Sheptytsky?

We fully understand the feelings of those who in the dark night of the occupation of Ukraine lost their relatives and friends, but we Jews cannot be ungrateful and not differentiate between the many who killed us and the few who saved us.

(signed)

Hillel Butman
Yakov Suslensky
Michael Heifetz
Efraim Volf
Yuri Mandrik
Sender Levinson
Israel Zalmanson
Wolf Zalmanson
Michael Korenblit
Arye Khnokh
Shlomo Drezner
Mikhail Frenkin
Arye Vudka
Victor Kagan
Joseph Meshener
Barukh Shilkrot
David Takser

Enough documented evidence, it would seem, for granting Andrew Sheptytsky, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church the title "Righteous Among the Nations". But still, no positive reply from the officials concerned.

Among other things ignored by these officials remain the fact that Metropolitan Sheptytsky, during that horrible period of Nazi occupation, badly afflicted by arthritis and condemned to his wheelchair, remained active. At that time his contacts were kept effective through a number of go-betweens.

Most of the statements made in his name, at the time, and being now approached with a degree of doubt, as well as some of the documents belonging to the same period, lead one to understand that these statements and documents were actually made without the Metropolitan being involved, in any way.

However, there is the well-known pastoral letter, titled "You Shall Not Kill", which Metropolitan Sheptytsky did write in 1942. This

message produced quite an impact on the Ukrainian Catholics. David Prital, Secretary General of the Public Committee for Solidarity with Soviet Jews (currently resident of the Maale Khamisha Kibbutz), was saved by a Ukrainian Catholic named Ivan Yatsiuk. According to Mr. Prital, not only Mr. Yatsiuk, but the whole village gave refuge to Jews. The said pastoral letter has it that mass annihilation of people is a cataclysmic event and the greatest danger to mankind. To those that disobey His Commandments His punishment will follow with the greatest mishap for all mankind. The letter admonishes that a murderer excludes himself from the community of man, and that he commits a grave error in the face of God; that he will be punished as Cain was, for spilling his brother's blood. The letter also states that the decrees of the Synod of Bishops of November 26 to December 3, 1942, related to the very issue of the genocide occurring at the time and exhorted people to cease or face the wrath of God.

In 1942, when the Wehrmacht forces had reached the Volga and the Caucasus and the Third Reich's victory seemed imminent, Metropolitan Sheptytsky addressed a letter to Himmler in which he vehemently protested against the genocide of Jews and noted that he held the Nazis responsible for incorporating Ukrainians in their actions and thus making professional murderers out of them.

This was a manifestation of deep love for his fellow man and great courage on the part of the Metropolitan. Himmler ordered A. Sheptytsky's arrest, but Otto Frank and Karl Liasch, who governed Galicia, were able to talk the SS Reichsfьhrer out of it; the fact that the Metropolitan was held in such esteem by the population couldn't be ignored, and his arrest would cause great repercussions.

Among the letters I received was one from Mrs. Ilana Meyronne, the daughter of A. Sheptytsky's Hebrew teacher. She wrote, in part:

"...my father always had kind words about him, mentioning also how friendly he was to Jews. I met him too. I remember a kindly bearded man who envied me, a child, such knowledge of Hebrew. "Ms. Meyronne had Sheptytsky's photograph dedicated to her father in Hebrew.

Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky died on November 1, 1944, in Lviv. Among those attending the funeral were Jews whose lives he had saved. People were dressed in mourning clothes; they came to see off on the last journey their rescuer and benefactor, a noble, principled and holy man. In paying tribute to his shining memory one is reminded of the truth that "He who saves a soul saves the world". These words are engraved on the medal which a "Righteous Gentile" receives. One is

also reminded of an inscription which arrests the visitor's attention at the Yad Vashem Museum:

"The Jewish people will never forget the 'Righteous Among the Nations' who endangered their lives in order to save Jews from the Nazi murderers and their collaborators.

Well, Jews ought to feel ashamed that there is an exception from this sacred rule... "In their praiseworthy deeds they saved the honor of mankind."

There are more than 1,000 signatures under the petition addressed to Yad Vashem, concerning Andrew Sheptytsky's recognition as a "Righteous Gentile". They all belong to honest people, and the collection campaign continues. It gives one hope that his name will finally be justly acknowledged by the Jewish nation, and that it will become part of its memories as that of a true friend and righteous personality.

OUR HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR RESCUERS - KIND AND COURAGEOUS PEOPLE OF UKRAINE!

Dear Reader!

The following photographs were borrowed from family archives, but these are very special photos and they are without doubt of considerable historical value. This author was given these photographs by Jews who had lived through Nazi hell, surviving only thanks to the courage and good will of kind and brave fellow humans, citizens of Ukraine.

This book contains only a part of the photographs thus received. When contributing their photos, those who had been saved from Nazi genocide expressed the warmest of thanks to all those Righteous Gentiles with valorous hearts.

Once again, ***THANK YOU*** *for not letting our lives be cut short, for helping life triumph on earth.*

May all of you, Dear Friends, live long, happy, healthy and peaceful lives! May the best of success always come your way, and may your country live and prosper forever more!



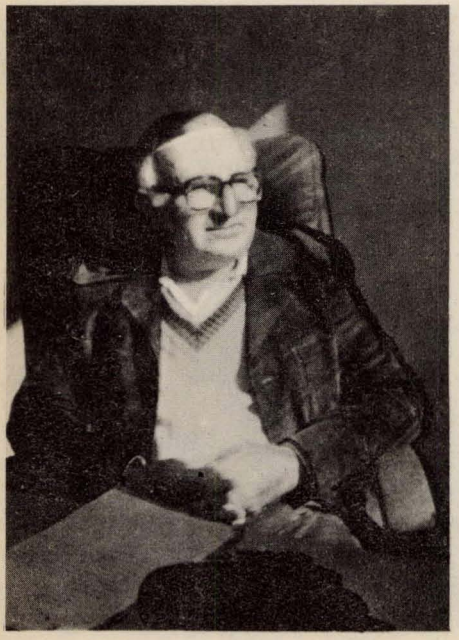
Roman and Julia Shchepanyuk (right) rescued the Weiss family in Boryslav.



Young Shevah Weiss, currently head of Israel's Knesset (Parliament), holding an Ph.D. in philosophy and political sciences. During his visit to Ukraine in June 1993, Mr. Weiss met with people who had saved Jews at Boryslav, and then he descended to the hiding place, where he, a young boy, and his family had hidden from the Nazis for more than two years, due to the loving care of their kind-hearted Ukrainian friends (who did so at the risk of their own lives). Shevah Weiss expressed his heartfelt thanks to all those who had helped him to survive. He also voiced his best wishes for the well-being of all citizens of Ukraine.



A most touching sojourn between friends whose friendship was tested and proven on a thin margin between life and death. "Righteous Gentile" Halyna Pavlychko (left) and the woman she rescued, Sophia Fisch.



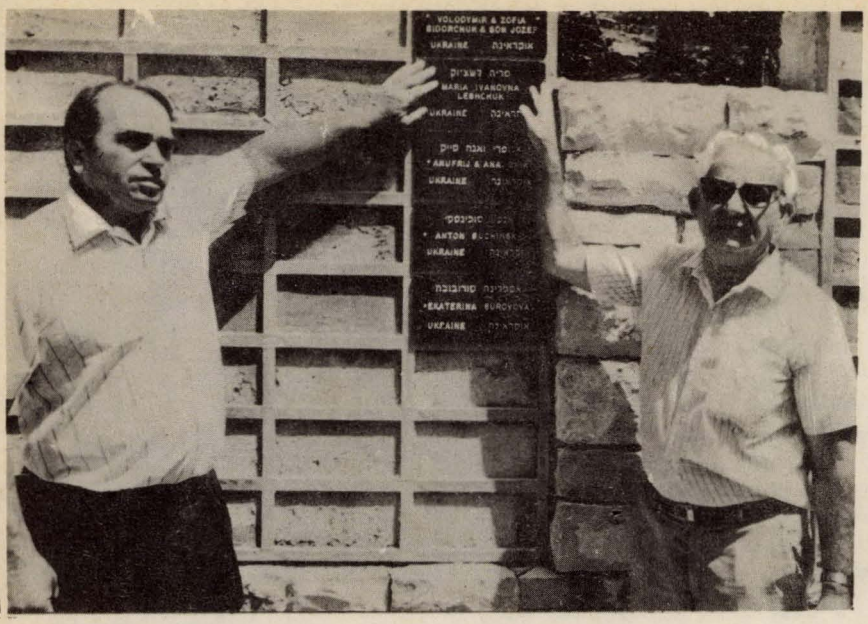
Dr. Aharon Weiss, Prof. Shevah Weiss' brother, currently on Yad Vashem staff, was also rescued by Ukrainians.



Stefan Drahan and Olga Nahliak gave refuge to 13 Jews. Stefan was killed in action during WWII, and Olga now lives in England, under the guardianship of the Jewish community of Nottingham. Photo: Olga Nahliak (center) with rescued Jews in Yad Vashem.



" Righteous Gentile" Olga Drahan (Nahliak) planting a tree in the Garden of the Righteous.



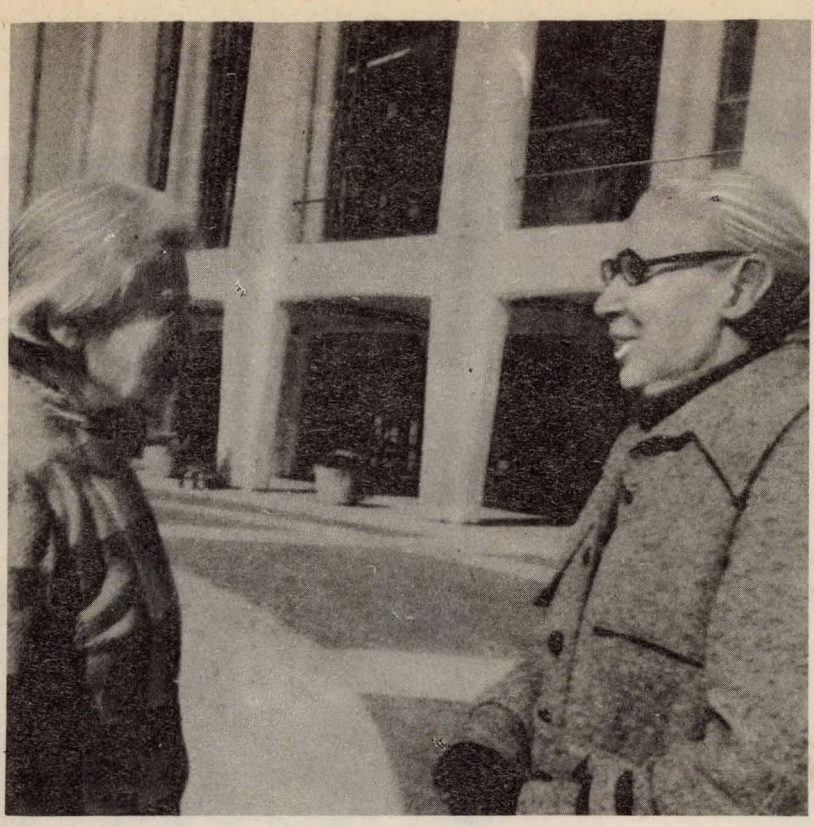
"Righteous Gentile" Ivan Leshchuk (left) and Menachem Dresher who was saved by Leshchuk and his mother, near the Wall of Remembrance in Jerusalem.



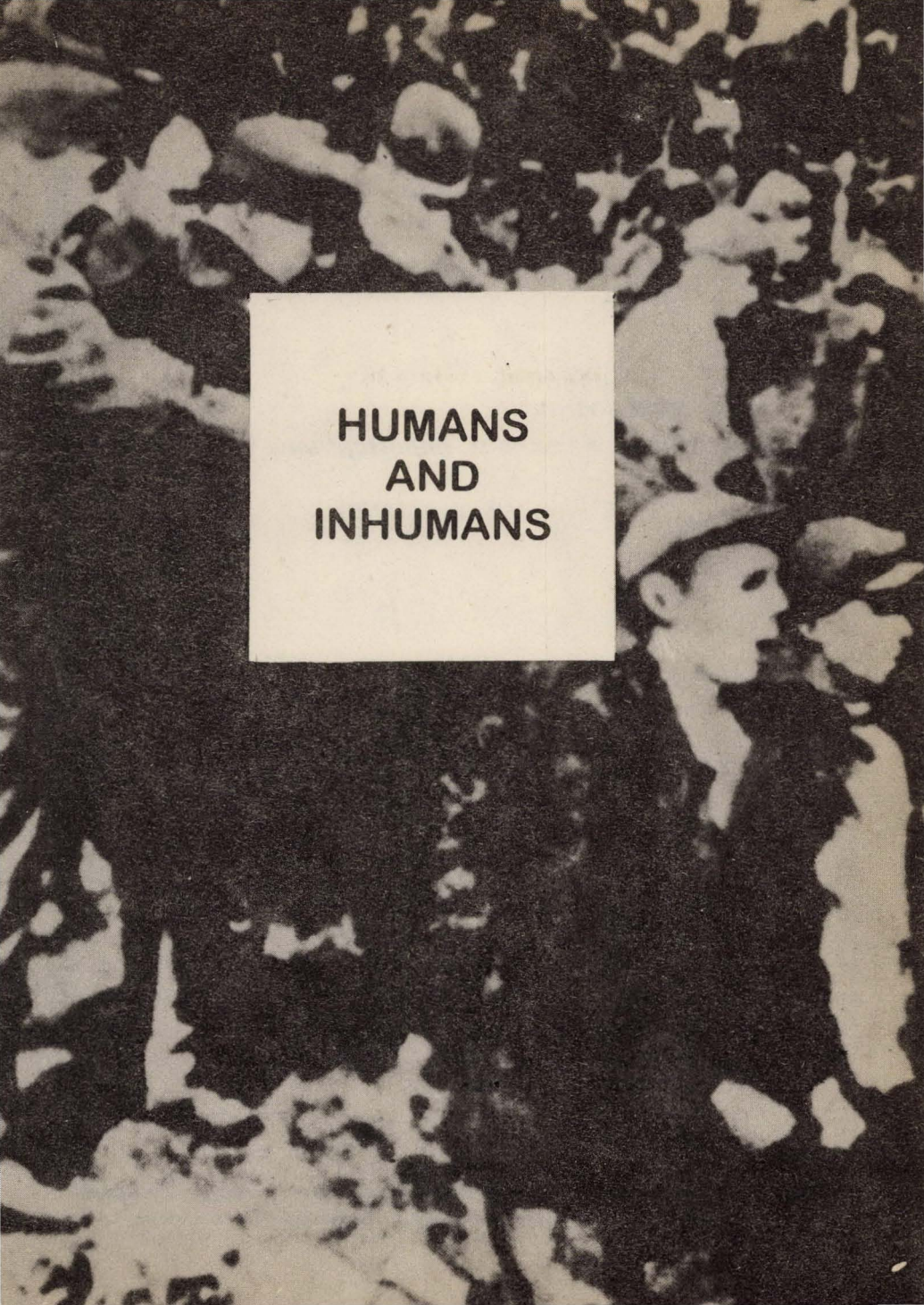
Volodymyr Sydorchuk and his family rescued Tsipora Ron in the town of Brody, Lviv Region.



Tsipora Ron.



Sharing memories, old but painfully vivid... Clara Zimmels (left) with her rescuer of Lviv, Halyna Korchynska-Yefremova.


HUMANS
AND
INHUMANS

"Of all man's virtues,
being human is the most important one."

(A JEWISH SAYING)

NAZI GENOCIDE - TRAGIC LESSON TO HUMANITY

In the "Report to the President" (President's Commission on the Holocaust, September 27, 1979) one finds these lines:

"The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic extermination of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators as a central act of state during the Second World War; as night descended, millions of other peoples were swept into the net of death. It was a crime unique in the annals of human history, different not only in the quantity of violence - the sheer numbers killed - but in its manner and purpose as a mass criminal enterprise organized by the state against defenseless civilian population. The decision was to kill every in Europe: the definition of Jews as target for death transcended all boundaries. There is evidence indicating that the Nazis intended - ultimately to wipe out the Slavs and other peoples; had the war continued or had the Nazis triumphed, Jews might not have remained the final victims of Nazi genocide, but they were certainly its first."

Exterminating the Jews was part of Hitler's plan aimed at finally "solving the Jewish problem". Its inhuman essence was summed up by the Nazi "super-hangman" SS Reichsführer Himmler when he declared: "Jews will be annihilated, and all members of our Party will certainly say, 'Wiping out the Jews, their extermination, is one of the clauses of our program, and it will be implemented.'"

They certainly did their best to implement it. With the help of gas chambers at Auschwitz and Treblinka, and mass shootings at Babi Yar near Kyyiv...

In Ukraine's Western territories with sizeable Jewish communities, the occupiers set up ghettos, provoked Jewish pogroms and using hirelings, in every way incited interethnic hostilities, but mainly they aimed at killing Jews. However, the bulk of the Ukrainian population did not take part in such atrocities. People sympathized with the Jews, and many risked their own and their families' lives to offer them a helping hand. Incomplete statistics show that at Babi Yar alone almost 100 Jews and 40 children of mixed families were saved by Kyyiv residents. An elderly Ukrainian woman named Nadiya Khomenko who was the nursemaid of three Jewish children refused to part with them at the time of deadly ordeal and was shot together with them at Babi Yar.

Being saved from Nazi beasts meant not only saving one's life; it also meant being spared unbearable sufferings and humiliations which the Nazi butchers inflicted on their defenseless victims even before their death; it meant avoiding being thrown half-dead into a common grave and buried there, with the earth heaving long afterward and stifled moans and shrieks being heard from within; it meant being spared the gallows or gas chamber.

Jankel Wernik, one of the few who miraculously survived the hell of Treblinka, left his testimony about Nazi savagery which is still unmatched in world history. May his hair-raising account - one rendered by an inmate condemned to death (he worked on a team responsible for burying bodies from gas chambers) - continue to stir up wrath in people's hearts and direct them against both Nazi and any other type of genocide, but may it also fill their hearts with gratitude toward all those saved at least one soul from such horrors and death!

"Between 450 and 500 persons would be let into such 25 cum chamber (recalls Wernik). It would be jammed with people, one pressing against the next. People would bring children with them, hoping they would be safer inside. On their way to death people would be clubbed and prodded with rifle butts, hit with iron sticks. Dogs would be sicked on them. Barking and snarling, they would attack the victims. Each, shouting and trying to avoid the clubs and the dogs, would hurry into the embrace of death, running inside the chamber. Those physically stronger would carry the weaker inmates. Then the doors would start the engine and connect the exhaust pipe. Fifteen minutes later everyone inside would be dead - not lying but standing, because there was no room to lie. They would stand there leaning against one another. No more shouting. Mothers and children in mortal embraces... I hated staying alive., but I had to live to tell the world about that horror and savagery."

Jews being transported westward understood the mortal danger of being part of those trainloads of death. Few managed to escape, or at least to save a child. But it happened. A Jewish mother pushed her 5-year-old daughter out of the box car, hoping some one would find her. The guard shot, wounding the little girl but she lived to be picked up by women from a Ukrainian convent.

There she was surrounded with maternal care, especially on the part of Mother Superior Josepha.

In fact, precisely this humane, self-sacrificing motive prevailed in each case of saving Jews. Their rescuers performed every such feat not for the sake of glory but in the name of life, the life of every particular Jew who found himself on the Devil's conveyer of death. It is a sacred duty for any citizen of this civilized world to locate such Righteous Gentiles and perpetuate their memory.

Israel was the first country to impose on itself this mission, and it was there that the Yad Vashem Remembrance Authority was established.

"YAD VASHEM". PERPETUATION OF THE MEMORY OF MARTYRS AND TRUE HEROES.

Yad Vashem is an educational establishment and the world's largest Holocaust research center. It was founded under the Knesset Martyrs 'and Heroes' Remembrance Law (August 19,1953).

The Garden of the Righteous on the grounds seems to grow even more beautiful with every passing year, as though symbolizing the triumph of life over death and good over evil. It is laid out around the compound and is tended with loving care. every tree here was planted in hour of a particular Righteous Gentile, or such family as helped Jews escape Nazi genocide.

The whole compound was built on the Mount of Remembrance. It includes the Hall of Remembrance, the Documentary Museum, the Hall of Names, one for the remembrance of children victims of genocide, a synagogue, a library, the Research Center, the Publishing Department and the Museum of Exterminated Jewish Communities. Spacious basement premises of the administrative building house the archives - a staggering amount of testimonies and documents. The

library contains a large number of books and periodicals dealing with the Holocaust, Jewish resistance, humane aid to Jewish martyrs.

There is a learned concept as to the notion "Righteous of the World" ["Righteous Gentile" or "Righteous Among the Nations"]. Its origin "dates far back in Jewish history. In the Talmud we find it written that, the righteous among the nations has a place in the world to come' - referring to those gentiles who kept the seven precepts of Noah and thus refrained from wrongdoing... Over the years the expression 'righteous among the nations' acquired additional nuances and was applied to those gentiles who showed compassion towards Jews and the Jewish people. Two examples from Jewish history: King Cyrus of Persia who permitted the Jews to return from the Babylonian exile to rebuild the Temple, and Sultan Saladin who treated his Jewish subjects kindly, while in the Talmud we read of two Roman citizens who sacrificed their own lives in order to save Jews from death.

It was only after WWII, however, that this notion was given a more profound meaning. When the world at large, and in particular the Jewish people, became aware of the magnitude of the Holocaust and were shaken to their core by the destruction of European Jewry, there came to light stories of the rescue of Jews by their gentile neighbors who knowingly endangered themselves in order to save Jewish lives. They did so abiding by the dictates of their conscience, resisting the Nazis, displaying exceptional courage and power of spirit.

These rescuers were as a beam of light to the pursued and restored in Jews their belief in the existence of humaneness.

Not only did the rescued wish to show their gratitude to their saviors but the Jewish people as a whole wanted to honor each of those to whom the precept "Love the neighbor as thyself" was sacred.

Yad Vashem operates a special department dealing with the "Righteous Among the Nations". It collects documentary material concerning cases of rescuing Jews during WWII. Survivors send their testimonies to this department and provide information about their rescuers. Jews living outside Israel must notarize their signatures under such testimonies at the Israeli Embassy or Consulate in the country of residence. Naturally, Jews in the former USSR, prior to, the renewal of diplomatic relations with Israel, had practically no opportunity to fulfill their humane duty and thus express their gratitude.

There is the Special Commission for the Designation of the Righteous. It is made up of Yad Vashem officials, Holocaust survivors, historians and lawyers. The Commission follows strict legal procedures in studying documents, hearing and discussing testimonies, whereupon

it decides on whom to confer the title "Righteous Gentile" on the basis of documented evidence. To date, more than 7,000 rescuers of Jews, men and women of different nationalities from all parts of Europe, have been conferred with this prestigious title. So far the biggest number of "Righteous Gentiles" have been discovered in Poland and Holland(over 2,000 in each country). They run their own clubs there, hold meetings and conferences, and all this is supported by the government.

To this end, special credit is due the Danish people. Ordinarily the title "Righteous Gentile" is granted an individual or a family. In this particular case, however, recognition was given an entire nation. The Danish people saved the majority of the Jewish population in Denmark.

It is a generally known fact that when the Nazi savages ordered all Jews to wear clothes with ethnic insignia, to help "finally solve the Jewish problem", the King of Denmark was the first to turn up wearing such insignia (even though he wasn't a Jew). His selfless courageous example was quickly followed by the rest of the Danish citizens who not only deeply sympathized with the doomed but also did all they could save them. On one night alone Danish people brought 7,200 Jews over to neutral Sweden by boats.

After the Commission approves the recipient of the title "Righteous Gentile", a special ceremony is in order, whereby the recipient is presented with a Scroll of Honor by the resident Israeli Ambassador. There are three degrees of Honor conferred on the Righteous Among the Nations: (a) Presentation of a Scroll; (b) Presentation of a Scroll and the planting of a tree in the name of the recipient; (c) Presentation of a special Medal and Scroll, and the honor of planting a tree in the Garden of the Righteous on the Mount of remembrance in Jerusalem.

Every such tree is of an evergreen variety, so its leaves are green throughout the year, and it serves as worthy symbol of the Righteous Gentile. It is though the ancient Psalmist could foresee the occasion when he wrote, "And he shall be like a tree planted and watered that brings forth its fruit in its season, and whose leaves do not wither." Too bad, there is no longer any room left round Yad Vashem to plant any more such trees, so the names of Righteous Gentiles are temporarily inscribed upon the Great Plaque of Honor.

If the Righteous Gentile comes to Israel to receive the title, the ceremony is held following a certain solemn order. At 11 a.m. sharp, the rescuer, the survivor(s), the guests and the representatives of the Yad Vashem authorities gather in the Hall of Remembrance and ceremony begins. The Director of the Department of the Righteous

calls the names of the rescuer and the survivor(s) and asks them to come down to the eternal light. During one such ceremony, on May 13, 1985, Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, Head of the Department of the Righteous, said:

"Friends, we have gathered in this Hall of Remembrance at Yad Vashem to consecrate the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. Today we honor the Righteous Among the Nations sons and daughters of the Ukrainian nation: Janina Kowalyk and her late mother Karolina Kowalyk, Halyna Melnyczuk and her husband Edward Melnyczuk, Orest Zahajkewycz and his late father Bohdan Zahajkewycz, Petro Firko and his wife Julia, Mychajlo Svystun, his wife Palaha and their son Vasyl, Zinaida Kuznetsova, who at the risk of their lives saved our brethren in danger. I have the honor to call upon Fela Lieber and her daughter Bertha, Esther and Itzhak Shefler, Martin Wilf, Dov Lieblein and Yakov Suslensky, representing Yosif Feldman who was rescued by Zinaida Kuznetsova, to join me for this ceremony".

The right to rekindle the eternal light is bestowed on the rescuers. As they did, Dr. Paldiel continued:

"As we rekindle the eternal light in this Hall of Remembrance, before the sacred remains of our martyrs, we unite with the blessed memory of six million of our people who died a martyr's death at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators; of the Jewish communities destroyed in a wicked attempt to eradicate the name and culture of Israel. We remember with veneration the heroic and persistent struggle of the masses of the House of Israel, on the threshold of destruction, and we also remember the Righteous Among the Nations who risked their lives to save Jews from persecution and death."

In deep silence the cantor recites Kaddish for the 6,000,000 innocent victims... The entire ceremony on the Mount Remembrance is long afterward remembered with deep emotions...

Unfortunately, most of the Jews in the former USSR who had survived the Holocaust could not inform Yad Vashem about how they had been saved and who were their rescuers. It was only in the late 1980s that Jews could visit Israel and learn about Yad Vashem and its activities.

This author was amazed when at the end of the 1970s he inquired about the number of Ukrainian Righteous Gentiles and found only several names. He was positive that the number of Ukrainian rescuers of Jews was bigger by far, and the only reason was lack of information and the absence of properly organized research. It was then this author decided to pay most serious attention to this exceptionally important

problem. Before long this author became convinced that every story, every testimony concerning any instance of such rescue was an historic account.

While telling about Yad Vashem's remarkably extensive and exceptionally important activities, I consider it my duty also to express certain remarks. The many years of experience show that steps must be taken to improve the entire system of searching for and locating rescuers, the procedures of submitting petitions for recognition and supporting testimonies, as well as the procedure of granting the title "Righteous Gentile". In certain countries all such matters ought to be resolved with the help of government agencies and public organizations, with extensive media coverage, including radio and television. Most importantly, in voting for or against the grinding of the lofty title "Righteous Gentile" one must listen to the voice of wisdom, logic and justice, bearing in mind the complexity of past political situations.

WHEN GOOD PEOPLE TRIUMPH

It was with touching respect that US President George Bush mentioned the Ukrainian Righteous Gentiles in his speech at Babi Yar in 1991. The Holocaust happened, he declared, because the good people turned their eyes away from the unprecedented evil. The Nazis were defeated when the good people opened their eyes and, mustering up their courage and their faith, launched a struggle for democracy, freedom, decency and justice.

Among the good people in the front ranks of that struggle were not only heroic combatants of many nationalities but also valorous rescuers of Jews, the Righteous Gentiles, in different countries. However, whereas thousands of books have been written about them and hundreds of films made, most of the Righteous Gentiles still remain in the shadow. To this end, it seems worth to quote from Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk's memorial speech at Babi Yar (October 5, 1991). "The ashes of the victims of genocide knock at our hearts," he said. "Can this be ever forgotten? Never. The death of memory is the death of the soul. While bowing our heads low in memory of every fallen victim, we pledge to combine efforts to do our utmost to prevent a repetition of this tragedy in our land and anywhere else throughout the planet. We are urged to do so by the thousands of victims over

whose mortal remains we are standing. This ardent call must be our oath, a norm of our life, for us the living, and for the generations to come."

Once again, those kind-hearted, well-wishing people saved Jews from genocide because their conscience told them to do so, and no intimidation or threats of punishment by death by the Nazis could stop them. There are a great many archival documents, documented testimonies, press publications, reminiscences of surviving participants in the great tragedy which unfolded in Europe in the mid-20th century to help revive in our memory the hair-raising picture of the Holocaust.

Below are only two documents of this inexhaustible multitude of material. The first is Proclamation by the Head of Przemysl County.

Przemysl, 27 July, 1942

To the Ukrainian and Polish population of the town and County of Przemysl.

I am making the following announcement in order to further the expulsion of the Jews ordered by the SS and Police Chief in the District of Krakow:

1. The expulsion of the Jews in the county and town of Przemysl will begin on Monday, 27 July, 1942.
2. Every Ukrainian or Pole who does anything to interfere with this campaign to expel the Jews will be shot dead.
3. Every Ukrainian or Pole encountered in the Jewish residential district in the act of looting Jewish homes will be shot dead.
4. Every Ukrainian or Pole who tries to hide a Jew, or to assist him in hiding, will be shot dead.
5. It is forbidden to acquire Jewish property either for payment or without.

Transgressions against this order will be punished with all severity.

Kreishauptmann
Dr. Heinisch.

The other document is an article from an occupation-time newspaper published in Lviv (April 11, 1942).

It is unfortunate that the rural population continue - nowadays furtively - to assist Jews, thus doing harm to the community, and

hence to themselves, by this disloyal attitude. Villagers take advantage of all illegal ways, applying all their cunning and circumventing regulations in order to supply the local Jewry with all kinds of foodstuffs in every amount... They enter furtively the filthy and pestridden homes of the Jews, where... they conduct their mean deals in bread, butter, poultry, potatoes, etc. Together with the money, they carry away from these homes pests, and germs of diseases and distribute them over the village.

The rural population must be cut off and separated from the Jews, once and for all, must be weaned from the extremely anti-social habit of assisting the Jews. At a time when the broadest Aryan masses restrict their needs to a minimum in the name of a supreme cause, the Jewry cannot be allowed to lead a luxurious life for the money they once extorted from the Aryan population by usury and exploitation.

What attracts one's attention in reading the above misanthropic piece is the fact that in its own way it testifies to the humane attitude of the rural populace - mainly Ukrainians and Poles - to Jews, even under those horrible conditions of Nazi occupation. It becomes evident from the very first line: "It is unfortunate that the rural population continue ... to assist Jews." And further on: "Villagers ... applying their cunning ... supply the local Jewry with all kinds of foodstuffs..." Without doubt, the occupiers had sufficient information to arrive at such conclusions. In other words, hard as they tried to intimidate the gentile population, many citizens of Lviv Region continued to assist fellow countrymen stricken by tragic fate.

The above newspaper piece also testifies to the barbarian principle of Nazi propaganda trying to cut off any form of aid to the Jews, resorting to open threats. However, the essence of such threats ensues from the closing paragraph, meaning simply that all the available foodstuffs had to be supplied to the insatiable Third Reich, whereas the Jews had to die, if not from bloody reprisals then from hunger.

Naturally, such proclamations and threatening recommendations weren't an exception but rather a general rule applying to the whole occupied territory. And if one adds to this the numerous announcement of executions of Ukrainian citizens who had tried to save Jews, it becomes understandable in what horrible atmosphere of sheer terror those brave spirits had to act to save Jews and spite Death himself.

MYTROFAN US

The following is a letter sent to Yad Vashem by Abram Chernomasov.

I am a Jew and I am 75 years old. During World War II I was saved by a Ukrainian, Mytrofan Us by name.

I knew him before the war and our relations were not friendly. In 1941 I was called up to the Soviet army and on February 19,1942, I was taken prisoner by the fascists. As a prisoner of war I was sent to a concentration camp near Rivne (Ukraine). In the camp I met Mr. Mytrofan Us who recognized me but did not betray. More than that, from our first meeting he was friendly towards me... though he knew that I was a Jew and a communist. He whispered, "Your name is Andrey. Rely on me." He helped me a lot. Our camp was guarded by Ukrainian police and some Ukrainians suspected I was a Jew. If they had been sure of that, Mytrofan would have been killed along with me. So he risked his life by concealing my party membership and nationality.

I am convinced that Mr. Mytrofan Us who, I think, is still alive, is worthy to be nominated as one of the "Righteous Among the Nations".

I am enclosing a more detailed description of his help during my life in the camps.

I hope my desire will be realised...

(January 20, 1982)

RESCUE OF THE GREAT RABBI

The following testimony was written after WWII by Dr. M.Shkilnyk, who during the Nazi occupation had been the mayor of the town of Peremyshlany. Obviously the author does not regard his deeds as heroic but tries objectively to describe the role he played in rescuing Aaron Rokach, the Rabbi of Belz.

Writing about an episode the authenticity of which is upheld by the Jewish United Hias Service in Tel-Aviv (Israel), I'm hoping that the described act of mercy will be a contributing factor toward the clarification of Ukrainian-Jewish relations... There are hundreds and even thousands of such instances. The attitude of the

population of Western Ukraine was one of opposition toward the mass anti-Jewish actions of hostility. The sympathy of the Ukrainians was with the suffering Jewish population...

The Great Rabbi - as he was called by the Jewish people - was Aaron Rokach, the Rabbi of Belz. He was known not only in Western Ukraine but in the entire Jewish world. In Belz he was visited by great personalities not only of the Jewish world, but also by famous personalities of the Christian world, among them members of royal families.

The Jewish population went to him for advice in the most important family matters and political problems... He had wider fame and enjoyed greater confidence that any other rabbi...

I do not know exactly when the physically weak resettled in the city of Peremyshlany... The arrival and residence of this rabbi was held in greatest secrecy. I learned of it only after I had become the mayor of Peremyshlany, the city where for 17 years I had served on the judicial bench...

About a week after the arrival of the German army, as I was sitting in my legal chambers, S.Hishchynsky, the Secretary of the Municipal Council, burst in upon me and, terrified, told me that the Jewish quarters were ablaze and that anti-Jewish pogroms had commenced. Surprised by this incredible bit of information, I prepared to go to the site of the trouble, only to have the secretary bar my path, saying, "I will not let you go - the German soldiers have spread gasoline over all four of the synagogues, set fire to them, and are now snatching Jews and throwing them into the conflagration and encouraging the worst elements of the population to physical attack upon the Jews. If you interfere with the acts of the German soldiers, you will only succeed in exposing yourself to great danger."

I'm briefly mentioning this episode because the son of the Rabbi of Belz perished in this pogrom - he was thrown alive into the burning synagogue. This was a tragic blow to the rabbi, because this was the only descendant in the line to keep the rabbinical line...

A few days later, a Jewish delegation came to see me. From it I first learned that the Rabbi of Belz was in Peremyshlany - and of the death of his son. It also informed me that an armed band had entered the dwelling of the rabbi, robbed it completely, taking even an antique silver and gold religious object, a mink coat... and the other items, and that similar pilfering and robbery was occurring in

the city more and more often. Disturbed by this unpleasant report, I immediately summoned the commander of the city police... Within 24 hours the police returned all the rabbi's belongings to me and I returned them to him.

The plight of the Jewish population became more tragic every day: Jewish Council (Judenrat) and Jewish police - strictly under the jurisdiction of the Gestapo - were created, frequent monetary contributions were requested, household belongings were confiscated, forced labor was established, the strongest Jews were removed to concentration camps, the Ghetto was established. Famine, epidemic, executions - all this created great fear, hell which even Dante could not describe. Here I must state that both the Ukrainian as well as the Polish population of the city sympathized deeply with the suffering of the Jews and showed many acts of mercy and sacrifice; and one must remember that aid to Jews was punishable by death or confinement in the concentration camps...

In the midst of such circumstances a delegation representing the rabbi and the entire Jewish population once again came to see me and requested me to save the life only of the rabbi... Upon some reflection I told the delegation that I could not do this, for they themselves were well aware of the consequences for me, should it become known that I hid a rabbi. I stated that I deeply sympathized with the tragic position of the Jewish population and the problem of the Rabbi of Belz perplexed me deeply. I could give no other answer to a delegation consisting of a number of people because of the importance of the question and the need for secrecy.

However, the desire to rescue the rabbi persecuted me, in spite of the knowledge of the great risk to my family and myself. Walking down the street, I noticed an empty three-story building... with an attic apartment, the inhabitants of which had been transferred to the Ghetto. It seemed to me that this attic would be a good hiding place for the rabbi.

The City Council employed an only Jew - an electrician - who was very trustworthy and cooperative. He was the only Jewish expert who had escaped liquidation and was preserved almost like a showpiece. I summoned him and told him that I was designating the mentioned building as a storage for electrical equipment, and that he would be exclusively responsible for the whole building. I ordered that an appropriate billboard be hung at the entrance doors

and told him he could locate someone in the attic quarters to serve as a watchman against theft. The electrician surmised whom I had in mind. He fulfilled my orders well and served as good liaison between the "arrested" rabbi and the outside world.

After some time I decided to visit the rabbi and make his acquaintance. I entered his quarters after midnight and we greeted each other cordially. The rabbi thanked me for the assistance but was greatly depressed by the sorrow which had befallen him and the Jewish population. He spoke little - but eagerly listened to my report of contemporary local and world situation.

One day at the end of August my wife phoned me to come home, because some high officer of an unknown army ... wanted to have an important but private talk with me. At home I found a Hungarian colonel who told me that on the authorization of the Minister of Defense in Budapest he had a certain mission to perform, but that he would talk about this to me "only eye to eye".

When we were alone the colonel asked me whether I could point out to him the dwelling of the Rabbi of Belz and arrange for a talk with him. For a minute I remained silent. The thought flashed through my mind that this was a bit of Gestapo provocation and that the end had come for both the rabbi and myself. Finally, I answered that I knew of no rabbi and did not know if any such person resided in the city. However, I did say that I could name a person who could possibly know of such things and perhaps this person could contact him with the rabbi.

In a few days the electrician notified me that the rabbi asked me to visit him. I complied with this request and found the rabbi in a much better frame of mind than formerly; he was calmer and talked freely. He treated me to dried fruit and good Tokay wine - all this he had received from the Hungarian Jews through this colonel. He was supplied with money and food to the extent and he told me that I no longer needed to provide him with food. We sincerely bade each other farewell, not realizing that this was our last meeting.

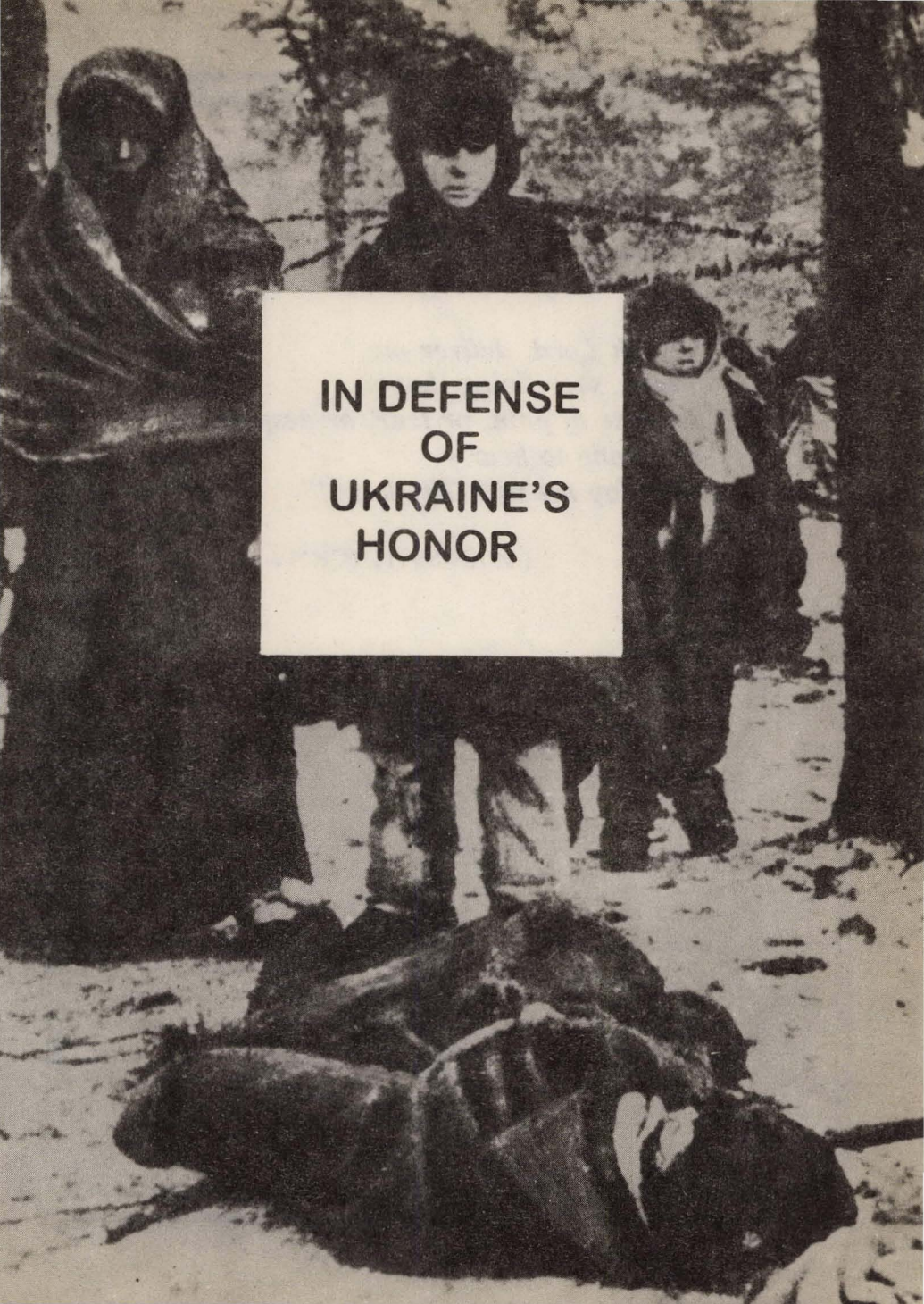
Not long after that the electrician brought me the news that at night two Gestapo officers had taken the rabbi into a car and out of the city - he did not know where. For a few months I was confronted by the riddle as to whether the rabbi had been liquidated by the Gestapo or taken away so that his life could be spared. The Mystery was clarified when one autumn evening in 1943 an elegant lady, in whom I recognized the rabbi's sister or

cousin, visited me. From her I learned that the rabbi had been taken to Bokhnia near Krakow where he still resided, but that recently his stay there becoming dangerous, and that he would like to return to Peremyshlany, under my guardianship. I explained to her that this was impossible, that the Ghetto had been liquidated some time ago... and that the trustworthy repairman had shared the fate of all other Jews. I advised her that with the help of the Hungarian Jews the rabbi be taken to Hungary. She was satisfied with this advice and said that she would act accordingly.

A few years later I received news from Israel that the Great Rabbi had successfully made the trip from Bokhnia to Budapest, and from there to the 'Promised Land" - independent Israel. I, after a great deal of danger, found myself in free Canada."

Rabbi Aaron Rokach managed to survive . At the end of 1944 he succeeded in reaching Palestine. Here he established a school for the followers of the Belzer Rabbi. He was depressed that he couldn't have a direct heir. His nephew became his successor. In the first years after his arrival, Aaron Rokach was a frequent guest of the publisher Boruch Feldenkreis. This author had a talk with Mr. Feldenkreis who corroborated the main events laid down in the above testimony.

After the Shkilnyks settled in Canada, Aaron Rokach found out their address and sent M.Shkilnyk a letter of thanks, along with his blessings. The family thinks that the colonel dressed in a Hungarian uniform might have been Raoul Wallenberg.



IN DEFENSE OF UKRAINE'S HONOR

"... Oh Lord, deliver me
From sacrificing honor,
Because of pain, or fear, or despair
Too strong to bear -
Pray slay me with Thy hand!"

(IVAN SVITLYCHNY)



IVAN STEBELSKY

Not only the well-known materials, but even the case of Ivan Stebelsky, a rank-and-file merchant, serves as an example by which one can trace that malicious destructive force of cruelty and injustice which is aimed primarily against the honor and dignity of people who haven't as yet been recognized for their acts of courage and mercy.

Ivan Stebelsky was accused, by both Soviet and foreign periodicals, of having fought in the ranks of both the SS Division Brandenburg and a special unit formed at the beginning of the war in Krynica, Poland.

"What must be checked is whether Stebelsky had been a member of either battalions "Nachtigall" or "Roland", which left a trail of blood on their way to Kyyiv and Babi Yar."

(Information Bulletin, No.23, Vienna, Jan.,1983)

AFFIDAVIT OF SERVICE

I, Leczko Nowak, of 6/5 Gladston Garden Double Bay in the State of New South Wales, retired businessman, make oath and say as follows:

1. I have known Ivan Stebelsky for some 45 years.

2. During the German occupation in World War II Ivan Stebelsky was a shop proprietor in Borislav where he lived with his family.

3. During that period Ivan Stebelsky sided and assisted not only myself and my family but many other Jewish families, to hide from the German occupants. This he did on many occasions with full knowledge that if he were caught he would be executed.

4. To the best of my knowledge Ivan Stebelsky was not a member of the German Army nor a member of the Ukrainian Division formed by the Third Reich."

(Signed and dated 12.28.83)



Ivan Stebelsky (right) and his wife Sophia during a meeting with Yakov Suslensky. Denver, USA, 1984

Over the past several years Ivan Stebelsky had been working on the project of a Babi Yar Park commemorating the victims of Nazi terror.

Ivan Stebelsky was the Chairman of the Ukrainian Committee which was directly involved in the memorial project, together with the Jewish Committee. The name "Babi Yar" speaks for itself as a symbol of unheard-of Nazi genocide, the site of a massacre of thousands of people - Jews, Ukrainians and people of different nationalities.

It was thanks to Ivan Stebelsky's tremendous effort, his right approach and the good name he enjoys among the Jewish population that a common language with the Jewish Committee was found and effective cooperation established.

Of course, this fact could not go unnoticed in the former USSR, especially by the KGB which hated any kind of Jewish and Ukrainian understanding, and so they resorted to an action designed to ruin the unity of effort and goal between the Jewish and the Ukrainian communities of Denver...

But what about Ivan Stebelsky? Who is he, in all truth?

This author regrets to say that Mr. Simon Wiesenthal, who

performs a great job hunting down war criminals, this time swallowed the bait of Soviet fabrication and wrote a short item in the Information Bulletin concerning Ivan Stebelsky and questioning this innocent man's integrity.

Let us refer ourselves to hard facts. Proving his alibi, Ivan Stebelsky states that, since the summer of 1941 till the summer of 1944 he lived in Borislav, making his living as a business partnership manager. He was not a member of any military units or police, and nor did he ever take part in any atrocities committed against Jews or other nationalities. On the converse, during the first two years I.Stebelsky helped two Jews working in the same partnership. When in the summer of 1943 the situation was getting extremely dangerous and the two Jews could be arrested any time, he warned them and advised them to go into hiding. Both of them survived the Holocaust. One of them lived until quite recently in Australia and he mailed Mr. Stebelsky legal depositions, in which he stated the true facts.

The other witness, Munish Maier, unfortunately passed away in Haifa, Israel, in 1982. But his two brothers, Joseph and Chanan, are still alive and they know Ivan Stebelsky very well. They heard the story about his help from their deceased brother on more than one occasion.

As for those special organisations collecting evidence and information about war criminals, there is absolutely nothing incriminating Ivan Stebelsky in their archives.

Two of his former business partners from Borislav are still alive in New York. They are prepared to testify in his behalf and deny the fabricated accusations.

Efraim Volf, a citizen of Israel, is among the many honest people to have raised his voice in defense of the Jews. In a letter to Simon Wiesenthal, while praising his many-faceted and important endeavors in exposing Nazi war criminals and their accomplices, he stressed that many a Ukrainian were wrong in regarding his, Wiesental's, activities as being aimed against the Ukrainian nation, or that his accusations were based on KGB-supplied evidence, being thus of dubious authenticity. Because of such circumstances the anti-Semites could reach their target and lead the broad masses of the people astray.

"As one who suffered o lot for the Jewish national cause", Efraim Volf wrote in part, "I appeal to you and call on you to declare publicly that your activity is directed not against the Ukrainian or any other nation, but against individuals of Ukrainian or any other origin who committed crimes against humanity during the period of Nazi domination in Europe. You should also stress that the documents of the

KGB do not play a decisive role in your accusations and that you use them only with considerable caution.

"As a native of Ukraine and supporter of Jewish-Ukrainian friendship, I call on you as a native of Galicia and a supporter of Jewish-Polish friendship and suggest that you come out in support of Jewish-Ukrainian friendship, too."

U.S. Congressman Ken Kramer also rose in defense of justice and sent a copy of Ivan Stebelsky's letter to the U.S. Attorney General.

This author repeatedly turned to Mr. Simon Wiesenthal who had collected countless documents, on the basis of which thousands of war criminals have been indicted and convicted. And yet among these documents there were also the groundless accusations against Ivan Stebelsky. The Association for Jewish-Ukrainian Contacts and its numerous supporters finally proved these accusations to be false and defended the good name of the righteous gentile from Ukraine. Mr. Wiesenthal left him alone.

Now the above is yet another convincing evidence of good will being reciprocated by the Jews and Ukrainians, of their desire to lend a helping hand to one another, at the time of ordeal - the way the Righteous Among the Nations did.

* *
*

From the bloody mist of the worldwide slaughter of fellow humans, started by the crazy Führer, there emerge the shining figures of those who snatched doomed sons and daughters of the Jewish nation from the road to Nazi Calvary. Those brave spirit risked being also sent on that road when they lent them a helping hand, sharing the last crust with them, comforting them with the warmth of their homes and their hearts.

The concept of good will and mercy is an age-old tradition with the Ukrainian people. However when the time came to reveal this spirit under most tragic conditions, when the margin between life and death was thin, this trait was upheld by the most representatives of the people, the truest of heroes who deserve recognition and respect on the part of every honest citizen of the planet.

These righteous gentiles performed their feats without any overdramatic fervor, without oaths or expectation of reward. They were simple and modest people who did what their conscience told them to do.

Irrespective of education or religious affiliation, righteous gentiles like Olena Hryhoryshyn loved their neighbor as they had been taught by

the humane precepts early in life. They probably didn't even realize that what they did was known under one simple but capacious notion of humanism. Yes, they were humanists of the highest order - and most importantly, it was manifest in their attitude not only to people of the same race or religion, but also to people of different nationalities and religious beliefs. To them, a Jew was one of the brethren, as much as a Ukrainian.

Fraternity has been proclaimed on our planet on so many occasions, and yet bloodshed, injustice, genocide and interethnic enmity continue to disgrace and defile the human race. As for our heroes, they, previously little if at all known in their native land, asserted the idea of fraternity and mutual help, paying the highest price of all. They raised high the honor and dignity of their nation and of the whole of mankind, counterbalancing Nazi cruelty and cinicism with their inherent decency and sympathy.

One cannot but admire those ordinary working men and women who, being denied their own rights by the occupiers, mustered up the physical and moral strength to resist an alien powerful state apparatus - The Third Reich - and challenged the Wehrmacht, armed to the teeth as it was, the formidable Gestapo and its hirelings. How unequal, for example, was the duel between Olena Hryhoryshyn, physically exhausted from hired work, and the Reich's punitive forces, a duel fought for the life of a Jewish girl, in which an ordinary Ukrainian village woman got the upper hand! It was a duel between two forces. One came pure and invincible from the bottomless people's sources, and the other, dark and deadly, was born of the Nazi plague which swept the earth in a devastating hurricane. And how many lives were cut short by it! Against its morbid statistics every life saved, despite the Nazi man-hunt, is a miracle.

The following accounts, testimonies and recollections are an eye-opener, a glimpse of the ever-shining galaxy of the giants of spirit who courageously stepped forth and covered Jews with their bodies and saved them from Gestapo claws.

Olena Hryhoryshyn

The village of Sheshory nestles cosily in the Carpathian Mountains, framed by an age-old forest and divided by the quick Pystyn river.

It was in this heavenly spot in the Ukrainian land that Donia Rosen grew. She was 12 now. She had become an orphan at an early age and now lived with her grandparents. With all her sensitive heart and inquisitive mind the Jewish girl absorbed stories and legends about Dovbush and his faithful friends, listened enchanted to Hutsul songs and watched their exotic rites and took in the luxurious beauty of the towering mountains and verdant valleys.

And then Donia's happy living was rudely interrupted by the swastika-wearing monsters in human form. The war burst in upon the quiet and prospering land. The Nazis herded the Jewish families from the neighboring villages all the way to Kosiv, but even there the captives knew no peace, being humiliated, persecuted, roughed up and killed. Posters were hung all over the city with legends like "Forbidden for Jews". And in the center of Kosiv there appeared a big billboard reading "Kill Jews! Jews are Our Evil."

On October 16, 1941, the Nazis and their hirelings surrounded Kosiv and began to drive the Jews to the city square. Those too weak to walk or unwilling to obey were shot on the spot. A bandit hit Donia's grandfather in the head with a club and the old man never rose from the ground.

When Donia and her relatives were brought to the Gestapo station it was announced that the first stage of the "action" was over, and so the victims were left to await the next stage. Meanwhile they were taken to a freshly made grave. Groans could still be heard from inside. After that the captives were released.

Death had spared them for the time being, but they presented a miserable sight. Children whose parents had been tortured to death were shouting and crying, calling the names of their close and dear ones. Adults, half-insane with despair, wandering over the city, trying to ward off haunting hair-raising visions.

The surviving Jews were locked in a ghetto. The day of September 19, 1942, was marked for the liquidation of the only remaining Jewish habitation, along with the inmates. Donia and her relatives hid in the loft, but a baby was crying and the sound gave their hiding place away to the hangmen. Donia was the only one to escape. But where could a defenseless girl seek refuge, confronted with Hitler's powerful war machine and his insatiable Empire of Death?

Came the night and Donia slipped out of the city, but it wasn't till she had reached the forest that she could heave a sigh of relief. The forest was like a reliable friend. It could protect her from the beasts in human form. Eventually, she reached the village of Mykytynets where a



Grateful people from different countries bow their heads low before this tree with tender leaves consecrating the name of the legendary courageous Ukrainian woman Olena Hryhoryshyn (Garden of the Righteous, Jerusalem)

woman named Paraskoviya Hryhoryshyn lived. The girl knew that the woman was a friend of the family. But her husband had been appointed village elder by the Nazis. Would the woman muster the courage to help?

Paraskoviya did have a kind heart. She spent long tearful nights thinking hard, trying to figure out a way to save the girl without exposing herself and her family to mortal danger. Paraskoviya taught Donia to pray in the Orthodox Christian manner, made her wear a pectoral cross and gave her village clothes. For some time the girl worked for the local miller, but fearing exposure returned to Hryhoryshyn who hid her in the loft. But it was winter and it was cold...

Paraskoviya turned to Uncle Stepan for advice. He agreed to help, although it turned out that the girl would be under the exclusive guardianship of his sister Olena.

This elderly woman, exhausted from hard work paid by the day, and from hard life, sought no reward but acted guided by her heart. She didn't have a home of her own, so she earned her living as a farm hand moving from towns to villages across Galicia. Olena not only agreed to

save Donia but treated her like a mother, was sensitive and tender to the girl. Looking after the little girl seemed to put fresh strength into the old woman. During the day she worked to earn a living, and in the evening she went to the forest for firewood to keep the ramshackle cabin warm (Stepan had allowed her and the girl to live there). For Donia this cabin became an oasis of life amidst the horrible desert of death.

Stepan, however, soon began to have second thoughts... No entreaties could soften his calloused heart, and so old Olena and small Donia found themselves homeless, dressed in rags, having no means of subsistence. After long ordeals Olena returned home alone, without the girl, lest her merciless brother should suspect something. Several days later, Donia quietly slipped into the cabin and hid in the niche of the stove, like a frightened little mouse.

Shortly afterward the Nazis staged a roundup. They surrounded the village and started searching house after house. They caught three Jewish women. When Olena learned of this she understood that she and the girl had to escape if they wanted to save their lives. Wrapping Donia in a warm blanket, she led the girl out of the village. Somehow the woman found the strength to carry a ladder on her back (it was necessary for the girl to climb a haystack when they found one) and it was thus the two plodded away through deep snow. Once they found a haystack the girl would climb the ladder to the top and hide there, away from the bayonets of German soldiers who would stick them in the stack, checking if anyone was hiding inside. Donia would stay atop the haystack during the day and in the evening Olena would take her home. But this was only the beginning of their trials... Late one evening a German and two policemen started banging on their door. Olena quickly hid Donia under the wooden bed and shrunk in the corner, stiff with fear. Either the battery in the flashlight was too weak or such was the will of the Providence, but the messengers of death didn't find another victim and left, dissapointed. A frightened Donia couldn't fully recover for a long time after that. She cried, but hers were tears of joy. Her eyes running, Olena whispered a prayer, thanking the Lord for delivering them from peril.

Followed cold and hungry days. But even though danger was always lurking somewhere nearby, life followed its triumphant course.

Once Olena forgot to bold the door and a village police stoolie happened to look inside the cabin. He spotted Donia and disappeared. There was nowhere they could hide. It was broad daylight and it was still winter. The bandits turned up almost immediately. They broke

down the door, grabbed Donia, beat her up and took her away. Olena ran after them, throwing her to her knees, begging of the bandits. They ignored her, except the package in her hand which they eyed hungrily. It was a suit which had once belonged to one of Donia's relatives. Several days before Paraskoviya had brought it, as though knowing that this expensive piece of clothing would come in handy as a ransom. Finally the bandits agreed to take the suit and let go of the girl. Once again Donia was more or less safe with her guardian.

Deep in her heart Olena always cherished love for fellow humans, especially for those befallen with a plight. To her Jews were as close as people sharing her religion. She saw evil only in a specific form. She branded the Nazis and their hirelings as bandits and Antichrists.

After the incident with the bandits Donia could no longer stay at the cabin. Olena made a hiding place in the thick of the forest. It was cold there - it was still winter - but the girl would be safer farther away from the man-hunters. Later when spring flood surrounded the hiding place Olena made a sort of dugout for her little martyr in a haystack. Sometimes she would take her home. It was on one such occasion that they were spied out by Lesz Szenkarek. He came with police. He wanted to shoot her, unless the woman gave away the girl's hiding place. Szenkarek trained his rifle on the woman, but the people surrounding them were so obviously opposed to his actions that the bandit thought better of it... A young policeman named Petro took pity of her when she got into jail. It was thus she regained her freedom.

After that the girl was afraid to go to the cabin and stayed in the forest. Olena brought her food every day, blizzard or rain or sun. It was the only chain of life linking Donia to the outside world. Thanks to her benefactor, she not only escaped death but preserved her belief in human kindness.

There seemed no end to their ordeals. Once again they had to transfer the girl's hiding place farther from the village, into the mountains. Here Olena built a cabin and it was here that she would hurry every night, bringing a little sack with food. When the girl fell ill, the woman took her to the village and hid her with some trustworthy people who looked after Donia until she recovered.

Thus passed three horrible years - balancing on the verge of death. The long-awaited day of liberation greeted Donia as she was staying with the Mykytiuks, a village family where Olena Hryhoryshyn had brought her. As for Olena, she had to hide from persecution far away, somewhere near Kolomyia.

Donia never saw her rescuer Olena again, but she would remember her with gratitude for the rest of her life.

After the war Donia Rosen settled in Israel. She tried to locate her rescuer in Ukraine, but couldn't find her.

In 1971, Donia Rosen published a book titled *The Forest, My Friend* and dedicated it to Olena Hryhoryshyn, the Ukrainian woman who became a second mother for the Jewish girl.

A tree was planted in her name at the Garden of the Righteous in Jerusalem. There is a tablet bearing the name of Olena Hryhoryshyn, this noble-hearted and courageous Ukrainian woman, and this name will forever be remembered and honoured by the Jewish nation.

MARIA BABICZ

The first Ukrainian to be conferred the title of Righteous Gentile after the foundation of Yad Vashem was a woman by the name of Maria Babicz.

Before the war she was over 50 and was a nursemaid with the family of Itzkhak Osipov, looking after his daughter born in 1941.

When the war broke out Itzkhak was conscripted to the Soviet Army. The Soviet troops were retreating to the east. Events were unfolding so quickly that his wife and daughter had no time to get evacuated from Rivne. With the coming of the Nazi mass shootings of Jews began not far from the city. When it was the Osipov family's turn his wife managed at the last moment to pass her daughter to the nursemaid, Maria Babizc, hoping that maybe she would survive.

Maria Babizc settled with her relatives. Later she recalled those hard years with indignation and disgust. The baby was not yet a year when it was left in Maria's care. Her neighbors poked fun at her late motherhood and often asked, "How did you contrive to acquire a child at your age?" Maria could only answer modestly, "In life anything can happen."

Poking fun, even ridiculting was all right by her, but there was a heavy weight on her heart. What if they found out? What would become of the child?

The brave Ukrainian woman saved the Jewish girl at the cost of inhuman effort and suffering and gave her over into the embrace of a happy father after the city had been cleared off the occupiers. After the war Itzkhak Osipov left the USSR. Maria's life was closely linked to that



Among the Ukrainian citizens who first planted trees at the Garden of the Righteous was this courageous rescuer, Maria Babizc (center). During the ceremony in Jerusalem (May 1962) she was presented with a Scroll of Honour

of this Jewish family. She loved the girl with whom she had gone through the horrors of Nazi genocide, and so she was happy to accept Osipov's invitation to come to live in Israel.

On May 1, 1962, Maria Babizc took part in the ceremony of planting a tree in her honour at the Garden of the Righteous in Jerusalem.

Maria Babizc is no longer among the living, but her name will stay alive in the grateful hearts and minds of the Jewish and the Ukrainian people.

ALEXANDRA DUDKO

Her story is in a way similar to the previous one. Alexandra Dudko was also a nursemaid with a Jewish family, and she, too, became the baby's second mother, only it happened even before the Nazis came, when Yezhov's cutthroats turned millions of children into orphans. The

story of this rescuer was laid down in a letter sent to Yad Vashem by the son of General Semion Turovsky who had fallen prey to Stalin's purges:

"I was born in 1933, in Ukraine. In 1936, my father, Semion Abramovich Turovsky, then "komandarm of the 2nd grade", was arrested and soon killed. He was a high ranking general and occupied a very high position. He took an active part in the revolutionary movement and on the Civil War in Russia in 1917-1921, and was much praised and decorated.

...In 1938 my mother was arrested, too, for being his wife - a close relative of an 'enemy of the people' - and she was sentenced to 8 years of imprisonment.

"My nurse, Alexandra A.Dudko, a Ukrainian, respected my father very much. She decided to keep me at her place till my mother was released. So I escaped the fate of many children of repressed high ranking authorities. They were deprived of the names given to them by their parents and were kept in special boarding schools. A.Dudko took me from Kharkov where we lived up to 1937 to Kyyiv where she had a one-room flat with seven people living in it. The address was: 5-B Basseynaya St., Apt.18.

"My nurse got a job in a Jewish kindergarten and worked there as laundress. She took care of me like a mother. She forced me to study Yiddish.

"In September 1941 Kyyiv was occupied by the Germans. After the Babi Yar slaughter, my nurse gave me her last name and even wanted to baptize me, but the priest refused to do it without an identity card (birth certificate). She did all this in order to save my life.

"The whole Jewish population of Kyyiv was liquidated. Jews were hunted down... I was different from other Ukrainian children, did not know the Ukrainian language, and of course there were people who could have informed against her...

"In 1943 we were evicted from our flat and had to move to the Vinnitsa Region. My nurse took me with her and gave me shelter among her relatives... Mrs.Dudko supported me till my mother was released in 1946.

"In 1950 my mother was again sentenced on a false accusation, this time to 25 years. And again Alexandra Dudko took care of me, helped me finish school and then college.

"I am very grateful to that kind-hearted woman to whom I owe my life. Alexandra Dudko died in the early sixties.

"I am applying for her recognition as 'Righteous Gentile' She deserves this honour."

IVAN YACCIUK

The Israeli newspaper *Maariv* carried an article titled "Righteous Among Nations". It is about the touching relationship between David Prital and Ivan Yacciuk who rescued him from Nazi genocide. A member of a kibbutz, David Prital is one of well-known activists campaigning for the defense of Soviet Jews, and one of the few Jewish survivors in Ukraine who owe their lives to the Ukrainian Baptists.

David maintains contacts with his rescuers. Among them was Ivan Yacciuk who was conferred with the title "Righteous Gentile".

Once a letter came at David's address from his rescuer:

"Dear and Highly Esteemed David,

"Your letter has brought me much delight... Many of my friends read your letter with tears of how the desert was made to bloom and now kibbutzim were built in it. It is very important news for me, because I see in it the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel. I am grateful to you for your concern in my fate and though you have been living in your Motherland for a long time, you nevertheless didn't forget me who belongs to a different nation. And now I am honoured with a tree planted in my name in Jerusalem, the Great City of Nations. I don't deserve such honour... I could have done more for your people, when hungry Jews, paving the roads, stretched out their hands begging those who called themselves Christians for bread.

"At my age I am already waiting for mercy from Heaven... I am 83. I feel that I am a passer-by in this world.. Childhood has passed, youth has fled by and now heavy old age has come.

"I visited ... (**the author crossed out the names because the message was written under the ignominious rule of Leonid Brezhnev - I.S.**) They are old and infirm. I showed them your letter. They cried like little children when they remembered you. They prayed for you and sent their regards and blessing. God bless you!"

In this letter one hears the voice of a wise 83-years villager. It was long before the politicians came to their senses and the diplomatic relations between the USSR and Israel were restored and this gray-haired man carried out his own mission of good will. At the sunset of his life he takes pride in having done something worthwhile, that he did save the life of just one son of the Jewish people. And how sincere and happy he sounds when writing about how the Israeli desert was made to bloom! Born to a tiller's family, Ivan Yacciuk couldn't but rejoice in

such laboriousness of the Jewish nation whom he not only wished but also did well, as best he could.

AN ANSWER TO A LIKELY QUESTION

Dear Reader, it would be only natural if, while reading one story after the next about how the Righteous Gentiles saved Jewish martyrs from their own Babi Yars, you began to wonder (especially if you are of the younger generation) about there weren't any Jews at the time who could, weapon in hand, protect their children and elderly parents, their families or those Jewish families that for some reason or other couldn't defend themselves against the Nazi plague?

The reason is that after the beginning of the war against Nazi Germany a considerable part of the Jewish population was evacuated to the east, while Jews who could and knew how to fight enlisted into the army. There were more than 500,000 Jews among the Soviet men and officers. Shoulder to shoulder with Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Georgians and soldiers of other nationalitties they fought the Nazis, striving to liberate all the oppressed nations from Nazi slavery as soon as possible, which, among other things, would save both the doomed Jews and their courageous rescuers from the claws of the bestial occupiers. However, it was only after the USSR, the U.S.A., Great Britain, France, Canada and other countries of the Anti-Hitler Coalition combined their combat efforts that is became possible to deal a finally devastating blow to the heavily armed Nazi hordes and reach a world historic victory over the Third Reich.

It was in the name of a sacred goal that Jews shed their blood, together with comrades-in-arms from different countries, in battles against the accursed enemy, displaying staunchness and bravery under fire, showing undying examples of heroism at all the fronts, in partisan units, and in the underground resistance movement.

Yakov Grigorievich Kreizer ranked with the most outstanding leaders during Warld War Two. He was one of the first prominent infantry commanders to be awarded the Order of "Hero of the Soviet Union". For exemplary command and for personal courage Army General Ya.T. Kreizer was awarded five Orders of Lenin, four Red Banner Orders, two Suvorov Orders; a Kutuzov Order, and a Bogdan Khmelnitsky Order.

In recognition of feats of arms during WWII a total of 149 Jews were awarded the highest title "Hero of the Soviet Union" (placing fourth among the recipients of this title representing other nationalities). Among these Heroes were Matvei G. Weinrub and his brother Ovsiy, both tank crew members. Incidentally, there were only 11 families each of which gave two such Heroes during the war. Matwei Weinrub showed his talent as a military leader and hero especially during the Battle for the Volga when in command of armored and motorized units as deputy to the legendary Vasili Chuikov, commander of the 62nd (8th Guards) Army.

On June 27, 1941, Senior Lieutenant Isaac Pres Presaizen of the 123rd Bomber Regiment repeated the immortal feat of Nikolai Gastello. Among the heroes who threw their bodies at enemy machine gun bunkers to cover the loophole with their bodies to stop fire there were five Jews - and one of these, Abram Lewin, did it on February 22, 1942, a year before this feat was repeated and made famous by Aleksandr Matrosov. The defense of the Fortress of Brest, this world-known combat exploit, was commanded by a Jew named Yukhim Fomin.

There is also the legendary name of Tatiana Markus (alias Markusidze), a woman who made herself famous as an underground resistance activist in Nazi-occupied Kyyiv. Together with her courageous mates she literally terrorized the occupation authorities and their hirelings. Nor was it accidental that the Berlin HQ ordered: "Find Tatiana Markusidze in Kyyiv and destroy her."

On September 21, 1991, marking her 70th anniversary, a memorial plaque was unveiled on the wall of Kyyiv School № 44, where the outsanding resistance soldier Tatiana Markus had studied.

In the Jewish ghetto of the Lithuanian town of Swienciany, a 15-years-old youth named Itzhak Arad headed an underground resistance group which stole weapons from Nazi soldiers and police. When the situation became too dangerous the group joined the partisans. Itzhak (alias Tol'ka) placed mines under rail tracks and derailed a total of 16 Nazi trainloads, for which he was awarded the medal "Partisan of the Great Patriotic War". Today, former partisan Tol'ka, Ph.D. (History), heads the world-known Yad Vashem Remembrance Authority.

In 1941-42, WWII battles were marked by special severity. By its Decree of October 5, 1942, in recognition of combat valor, staunchness and heroism of their participants, the USSR Supreme Soviet awarded orders and medals to 185,113 Soviet men and officers including 5,163

Jews (this is what placed the Jews fourth among the other nationalities awarded combat decorations).

Many other vivid and convincing examples of the important contribution made by the Jewish nation in the Great Victory over Nazizm could be cited. There is a grand memorial on top of Mount Herzl, dedicated to 200,000 Soviet Jewish soldiers who fell in battles against the Nazi invaders. The Flame of Memory of the heroic exploits of these people shall never die out!

BY THE DICTATES OF CONSCIENCE

Once there lived a peaceful Jewish family, quite remote from any politics. They were on good terms with their neighbors, Jews and Ukrainians alike. The head of the family, Boris Spektor, taught mathematics at a Ukrainian school, his wife, Dora Grinstein, taught chemistry at a medical technical school. Their two children, Fania and Grisha, enjoyed the simple joys of a happy childhood. Ukrainian and Yiddish were their daily languages and they all loved Ukrainian songs.

But then the war broke out... Fugitives... The Spektors only had the time to flee as far as Uman when the Nazis caught up with them and herded them to the Jewish ghetto in Tulchyn. Thence the Spektors were transferred to the Pechersk concentration camp over the river Buh, where thousands of Jewish inmates were dying of hunger and epidemics. Fania, then 7, would always remember dramatic scenes from camp life and human relations there.

The inmates were denied even meager camp rations; each had to get food using his own resources. People traded belongings for food with local farmers. However, it was more or less bearable, for so long as the camp was guarded by Romanians. Before long they were replaced by Germans with their "New Order" and men and women started being assigned hard exhaustive work tasks, while children and elders started being exterminated. On one such occasion, when the pit had been dug and the truck loaded with victims, there suddenly came the Romanian commandant's order to suspend the action.

Fania would time and again recall the most horrible episode in her life, when in the turmoil of inmates being transferred to a different place she lost her parents, and then there appeared that German guard who spotted the crying little girl. He gave her something to eat, found her parents and gave her a loaf of bread as a parting gift.

Fania would also recall her 4-year-old brother nagging her with a question, "Who are Jews?", and begging, "I want to go home, to my bed"... Nor would she ever forget those small rooms each jammed with 50 people. People slept on the floor, in a compact mass. Typhus fever was raging, killing poor martyrs by the hundreds and thousands.

She would remember the Yom Kippur of 1942, when the whole huge building seemed to shudder with people weeping. All personal misfortunes had merged into one big common grief, even though every such personal lot was a tragedy in itself... A very handsome man dressed in rags begged for a place near the stove. Then he would run out of the room and roll in the snow, until he was once found dead outside.

Another man, old and weak, the Germans made dance in the snow, until he dropped dead, too.

Still another man had a wife and four daughters. Hunger killed the wife and then the daughter, one after the next. The man tried to save the remaining daughter and they ran away from camp, but the daughter froze to death on the way. The man returned and wandered through the camp, singing, "Ich bin a tate on kinder" ("I am a father without children...")There was a little girl named Ritha who had lost her parents. She was a real tomboy and left camp to beg for food outside. Even the guard would let her out of the gates. She had nothing to trade for food, and so she begged. She survived and even saved her brother. The local population sympathized with the Jews and helped them as best they could.

Fania would later use the story of her family as an example of the merciful and sympathic attitude of the populace, in both Tulchyn and the neighboring villages.

Fania's father ran away from the Nazi camp and hid with some Ukrainians who helped him free his family, carrying the children out of the camp and hiding them at their place. In that Ukrainian home Fania's hideout was made in the stove. Once a woman living next door came and told them some people had been shot for giving shelter to Jews. Fania was so scared she couldn't speak for several hours. The Ukrainian hostess calmed and comforted the little girl, assuring her she would never give her away. Her mother Dora Grinstein was meanwhile hiding with other Ukrainian families but her ailing son was still at the ghetto. He had to be saved.

Dora's Ukrainian friends gave her village clothes and she brought her son to their farm. He was ill with mange which was hard to cure without special medications. In the village they used folk medicine - and

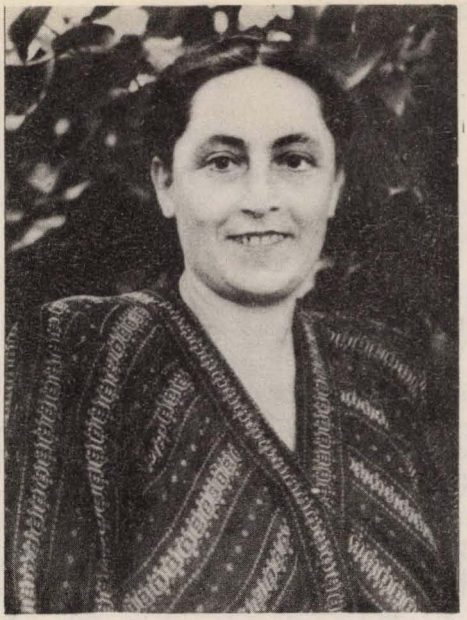
cured the boy! He owed especially much to Ivan Vursul from the village of Kleban. He gave shelter to Dora and when it was time for them to leave he gave her son his daughter's boots. Both during the occupation and after the war, until Fania's departure to Israel, the Spektors maintained friendly contacts with Ivan Vursul's family.

Shortly before the coming of the Soviet troops the Jewish family was once again threatened by death. The Spektors were saved by Ukrainian schoolteachers. Fania hid with Nina Andriyivna who was risking her own life and that of her two sons. She passed Fania off as a Ukrainian, even though her Jewish features were prominent. At the same time, her father and brother were hiding down the cellar of Alexandra Kindrativna, teacher of mathematics. This merciful woman's life followed a tragic course. Soon after the Nazis retreated her 17-year-old daughter died of tuberculosis. After that her husband and her son died. The Ukrainian woman's grief was sincerely shared by the Spektor family whom she had saved.

Indeed, there are good people still left in this world.



Boris Spektor



Dora Grinstein



Fania Spektor

OLGA CHERNOBAJ, LEONID BAK, FELIX RUDYK

On May 5, 1985, Yad Vashem received a petition from Alexander Maj asking for recognition as "Righteous Among the Nations" of three Ukrainians who had saved him from inevitable death at the hands of the Nazis.

In 1937, A. Maj was expelled from the Pedagogical Institute of Kyyiv, on charges of so-called Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism, even though the young man was never affiliated. In his search for a job he found himself in the village of Savintsy in Podillya and began working as a schoolteacher. He rented a room at Olga S. Chernobaj, whose husband, Vasyl Chernobaj, collective farm team leader, had been purged and died in 1937 as an "enemy of the people". The woman was full of energy, even though she was a thorn in the side of local authorities who hated her guts and took every opportunity to make her feel it. She was raising three daughters - Vira, Nadya and Lyubov.

Alexander's mother came to visit him before the war. In July the village was occupied by the Nazis. The landlady continued to treat her tenants with warmth and even refused to charge them for food and lodging.

In August, Alexander and his mother were driven out of the village and placed in a ghetto in the town of Sharivka. Because of insanitary conditions hundreds of Jews died of typhoid fever. The younger inmates (among them Alexander) were forced to work, gathering stones and paving the road. It was exhausting toil for the half-starved people. Many managed to run away to the forest. Alexander also escaped from that team of slaves and headed for Savintsy where he hid at the Chernobajs'. He stayed there for about a month and then returned to his mother at the ghetto. Olga Chernobaj gave him enough food which saved them from death by hunger. It was thus Olga Chernobaj saved them for a second time.

At the ghetto the regulations were severe. Unauthorized exit was punishable by death. The Nazis were getting prepared to liquidate the ghetto. Alexander was saved by one of his former students, Leonid Bak, member of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). He helped Alexander get out of the ghetto and then hid him at his house. Unfortunately, Maj's mother died suddenly prior to escape.

Shortly afterward, Leonid died, too. Alexander was offered a hideout by Felix Rudyk, his former colleague at school. He lived in the village of Udrievtsy, together with his wife and her parents. The Rudyks sympathized with Alexander but were afraid to keep him in the house. It was then Felix sent him to his brother.

It was thanks to these people that Alexander Maj survived Nazi hell.

MEMORY OF HEART AND PEOPLE'S WISDOM

How can one make universal human memory work daily for the good of people of all nationalities? An unambiguous question to this one of the acutest questions of modern times is found in the experience of the peoples of the world. But this answer also makes it imperative that all the dictates of the science of Good be taken into account in the fullest measure, and that every citizen all over the world act for the good of all nations without exception.

Unfortunately, the Jews found themselves as a nation being precisely one such exception. If it hadn't been for the Jews' remarkable staunchness and the valorous merciful acts of the Righteous Gentiles, the centuries of Jewish history would have been a story about this people's ultimate annihilation. The heart and mind of every honest individual will without doubt be captivated by the following striking comparisons. At the beginning of our era the number of Jews approximately matched that of the Chinese: some 7,000,000. Today, there are more than 1,300,000,000 Chinese, out only 14.5 million Jews - almost 100 times less! Such is the result of age-old repression, pogroms, persecutions and policies of genocide against our nation.

This undeniable truth is dawning on citizens in different countries where innocent Jews suffered from injustice, humiliation, were declared persona non grata, ruthlessly driven from places of long habitation, or were simply butchered en masse. The peoples of these countries, aware of the tremendous guilt of their fellow countrymen, of both the current and past centuries strive to make amends to the Jewish nation.

Thus, the Spaniards, ashamed of the conduct of their past rulers, now resolutely condemn Queen Isabella I and King Ferdinand V, responsible for the great Jewish tragedy when, 500 years back, after

terrible sufferings, the Jews had to leave Spain. Honoring the memory of all those innocent victims and martyrs and condemning those responsible for this tragedy of an entire people, Spanish King Juan Carlos proclaimed 1992 the Year of National Mourning.

While remembering, together with citizens on all continents the tragic events of such remote past, the Spaniards become increasingly convinced that hatred and national animosity are like boomerangs hitting back, affecting those directing such evil against fellow humans. After the expulsion of Jews from Spain, the latter (which together with England was then one of the greatest world powers) followed the hard road of decay and toward the end of this century had turned into a rank-and-file country among the European bodies politic.

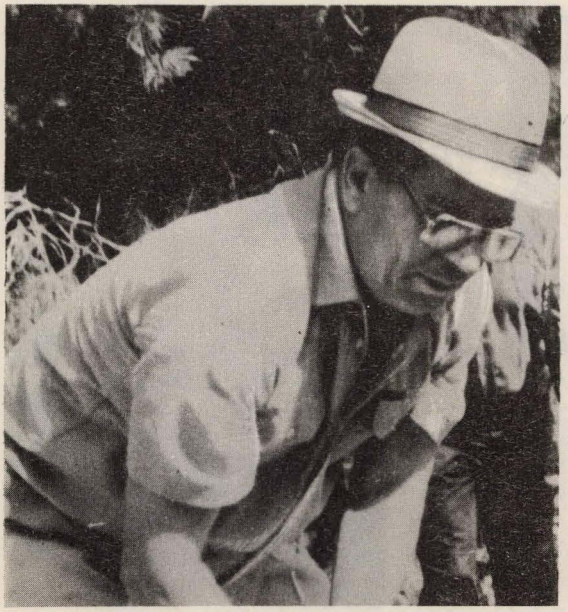
Without doubt, any honest and well-wishing inhabitant of the planet Earth will have sufficient reason to agree with the informative conclusions drawn by Serhiy M. Pravdenko, chief editor of "Holos Ukrainy".

"Jews made the whole of Europe, all the world shudder at the crime perpetrated by the Nazis and their hirelings against the Jewish people. And the world understood and repented. It was actually that repentance which brought forth the UN decision to form the State of Israel, when that people's age-old dream about the revival of their own body politic, in their own land, finally came true."

There is the memory of the heart and the wisdom and interests of contemporaries. This is precisely what makes it imperative that we work to help draw philanthropic conclusions from the entire experience of mankind, from all its tragedies, and that all the nations abide by them, constantly and consistently. Of course, it isn't easy to discuss with the older generation the atrocities of those responsible for Nazi genocide, because past horrors are still vivid memories for them. But it is important the more so elucidate and publicize the reasons for Jewish tragedies, arrive at sensible conclusions useful for this and the generations to come. It is with conviction in mind that I will now continue with my story about the Righteous Gentiles from Ukraine."



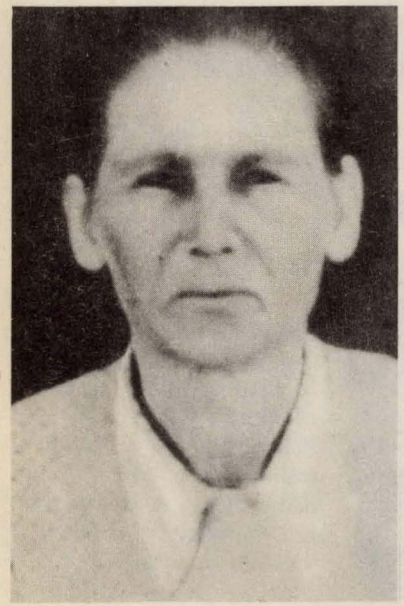
Dr. Paldiel presenting Yaroslava Levitsky with a scroll of the Righteous Gentile.
Abram Shapiro (third left) testified that she had saved almost 30 Jews.

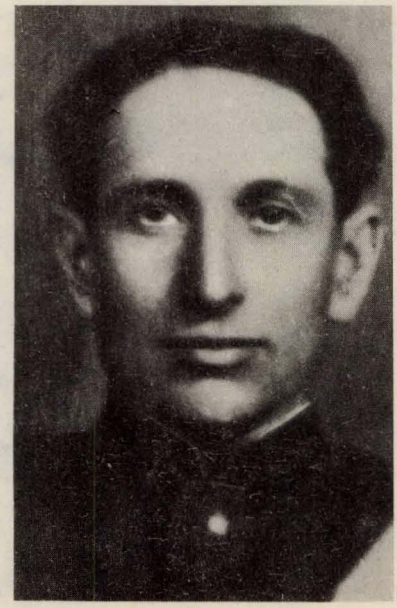


Yakov Menaker planting a tree at the Garden of the Righteous, in the name of Mefodiy P. Lypa and Pelaheya K. Melnyk, residents of vil. Katyuzhany, Murovano-Kurylovetsky District, Vinnitsa Region.









Mikhailo Svystun and his wife. Together with their son Vasyl they saved the family of Aaron Vilf (8 persons in all), and other Jews. On learning of this, Nazi hirelings killed Mikhailo. But the memory of this true hero will live forever!



The rescued family of Aaron Vilf. Photo taken in 1939.

Anna Fudar... It was in the village of Vilshany, Pervomaisk District, Kirovohrad Region, that she rescued from the Nazi plague a Jewish resident of Kyyiv named Nisim Gorodinski, currently author of several books.



Nisim Gorodinski, now a citizen of Israel

Rivka Kremer is dashing ahead with a cheerful smile, aware of the inimitable joy of being alive. Deep in her heart she cherishes undying gratitude to Mikhailo Vasylenko who saved her from Nazi hell



Righteous Gentile Mikhailo Vasylenko


THE MOST
IMPORTANT
OF ALL
SCIENCES

"What could be worse than a man learned in most sophisticated sciences but having no kindness of heart? He would use all of his knowledge toward an evilsome end."

(HRIHORIY SKOVORODA)



THE MAIN TRIAL

Talking of Righteous Gentiles from among people of mental labour - teachers, physicians, cultural figures - it becomes obvious that, by displaying courage and good will in saving fellow humans, they had passed the most complicated moral trial of life. Here the above quotation from the world - famous Ukrainian philosopher Hrihoriy Skovoroda seems quite appropriate. Yet another topical quotation belongs to the 16th century French philosopher M.Montaigne who said that if one hasn't learned the science of Good, learning any other sciences will only bring one harm.

For was it not toward an evilsome end - bloodshed and aggression - that the entire mental energy, all the educational and scientific potential of the Third Reich was directed ? Was it not Goebbels, the Nazi bloodthirsty ideologue with an Ph. D. who cynically declared, "When I hear the word 'culture' I grab for the gun."

The representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia who lent a helping hand to Jews in Nazi hell once again proved by their courageous deeds that they were the true flower of the nation, people with sensitive and kind hearts. While bearing the heavy cross of ordeals, their selfless merciful actions served as the highest moral standard for the entire world. Their names are worth of nation-wide memory and respect.

BOHDAN ZAHAJKEWYCZ, OREST ZAHAJKEWYCZ, HELENA MELNYCZUK AND HER HUSBAND EDWARD MELNYCZUK

M.Itzhak (Enzio) Shefler's speech at the tree - planting ceremony in Yad Vashem, May 13, 1985:

"We the family of Esther and Itzhak Shefler, praise God for, after forty years of separation, giving us the opportunity to meet our dearest people, our rescuers who are present here, having come together with our dear guests from the United States. Here they are, Helena Zahajkewycz-Melnyczuk and her brother Orest the children of a great and tested friend of Jews, the late Professor Bohdan Zahajkewycz.

"In 1943, after the liquidation of the Peremyshl Ghetto, the SS units 'Shupo' and the Gestapo were still searching for the remaining Jews who were hiding in the ghetto. Under the shroud of night we happened to find ourselves in front of the gate of the Zahajkewyczes. We knocked and they let us in. The professor and his noble family took upon themselves the most difficult and dangerous tasks in their lives: to save two persons - Jews - from inevitable death with which they were also threatened by the Nazi murderers. For eleven months - i.e., nearly a year, up to August 1944 - the Zahajkewyczes kept us in their house, in a shelter, and shared with us their bread which wasn't even enough for themselves. In spite of the danger that threatened them for rescuing Jews, they sheltered us until the arrival of the Soviet forces.

This heroic deed of the Zahajkewycz family was motivated only by their fine characters and the Christian idea of helping the sufferer.

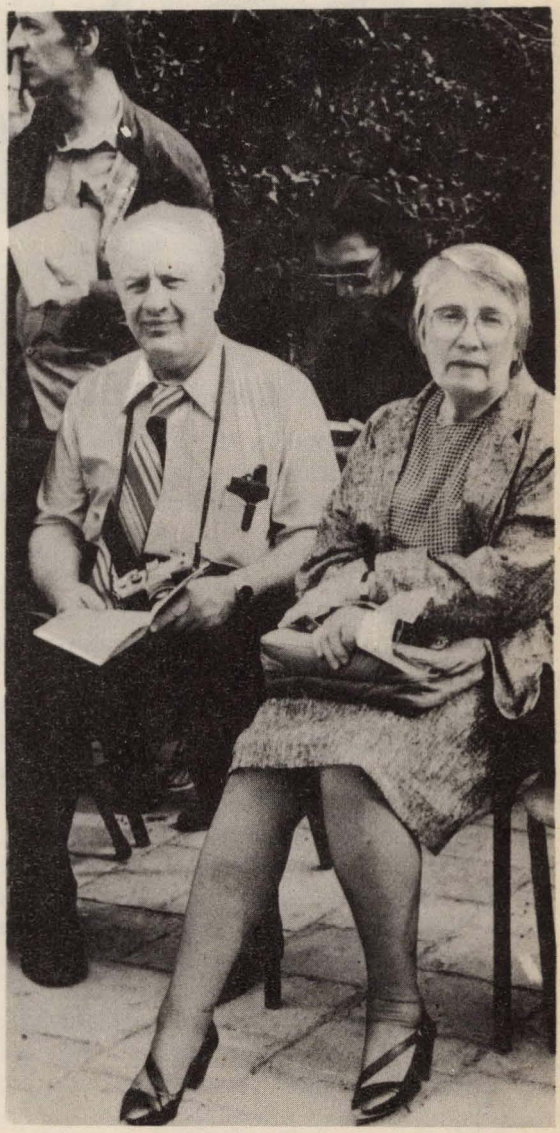
On this great holiday for us, I want to say to them and to similar Ukrainians: 'All honours to you!'"

From the recollections of Helena and Orest:

"In 1943, during the German occupation of Western Ukraine, we lived at 7 Tarnawski Street in Peremyshl with our father, Bohdan Zahajkewycz, and our 7-year-old sister Christine. Our mother had died the year before.

"Our father was a professor of Polish and Ukrainian literature in the town high school. He was a real Christian. When the Jews were in danger there was no question for us whether to save them or not. Father advised us to pray in order to keep our spirits high. Perhaps because of

that we experienced no fear when the German peeped in through the window suspiciously, nor when the maid, looking after our sick mother, threatened to report us, saying that we were giving shelter to Jews.



"Righteous Gentiles" Orest Zahajkewycz and Helena Melnyczuk during the ceremony of unveiling the monument to the victims of Nazism and Stalin purges. Jerusalem, May 1985. "



Rescued by the "Righteous Gentiles" from Ukraine: Esther and Itzhak Shefler (right) with their children and grandchildren.

"Our late father was an altruistic man loved by his students. He transmitted his ideals and morals to us children. Long before the war he proved himself to be the 'father of the Jews'.

The Orthodox Jewish community considered him to be their protector from persecution and ridicule.

"The Shefler couple weren't the only Jews whom we helped survive. Thus we gave temporary refuge to several Jews waiting for... the chance to slip underground. For this purpose Helena's identity card was used to buy train tickets to Warsaw...

"The Sheflers stayed with us for eleven months... It was a difficult task for them to get out of the ghetto... They crawled into the pile of corpses. They were shoveled with other bodies into a truck. On their way to the cemetery they fled searching for shelter.

"At the beginning we hid them in the cellar. Then we decided to build a hiding place for them in the flat...

"There were many ways they might have been discovered. The little Christine could have blurted it out. We told her the consequences, that we would all be killed if we were discovered. And she understood the danger and behaved properly...

"The other came from the police headquarters on the opposite side of the street, facing our house. Luckily the police chief was Father's former student and Father confided in him. And he didn't violate his trust.

"The third danger was the maid, mentioned above.

"It is needless to say that the whole atmosphere was full of danger. Some of our neighbours also took risks to rescue Jews, but they were discovered and shot together with the Jews they were hiding. But these facts didn't change our intentions.

"For protection, Edna (Esther) and Enzio were referred to as Stefa and Mishko respectively.

"The last but not the least participant of this drama was Edward Melnyczuk, then Helena's fiance. He also shared all their troubles and fears."

On January 23, 1975, the Commission for Designation of the Just of Yad Vashem resolved to award Bohdan Zahajkewycz (posthumously), his son Orest, daughter Helena and her husband Edward Melnyczuk Certificates of Honor and the right to plant a tree at the Garden of the Righteous.

MYKOLA SHRAMCHENKO

After the 1917 Revolution 10 - year - old Mykola Shramchenko became an orphan.

In her introduction to the book about Mykola Shramchenko the artist, Dorothea Pohlman Michelson writes that he "learned basic lessons of kindness and generosity from the impoverished Jewish family which accepted him as one of their own. He saw his foster mother divide the family loaf so that he shared equally with her own children. He learned Hebrew and has a deep respect for Jewish customs. His illustrations demonstrate his admiration for the long history and fortitude of the Jewish people".

Harold Helfer in his article "Artist in the Attic" describes that period in Mykola Shramchenko's life: "Although of the Christian faith, when the Nazis overran Ukraine, the artist helped many Jews escape by using his studio to create fake credentials and passports until he himself was finally suspected and thrown into a concentration camp".

Mykola Shramchenko spent three long years in the Nazi concentration camps, till the liberation by the US troops. As a religious

man and anti - Communist he decided to move to the USA, rather than return to Ukraine under Soviet rule.

He spoke of himself: "I survived the Bolshevik regime with its lawlessness, hunger, ferocity, violence and sacrilege. I lived through World War II and concentration camps. My experiences of the past harass me. I have to speak and to warn. Instead of words, I express myself in pictures, instead of a pen, I use my brush.

"How could I paint sunny landscapes of my country when the soil is wasted, as is the divine heritage of Christ. Yet without God, there is no love, no charity, no truth, and no law. Our Saviour is crucified daily in sacrilege and defamation, but His word is eternal. The Prodigal Son will return to his Father's dwelling."

In a letter to Dorothea Michelson its author, Perla Fox (in 1960-62 she was an art student at the school founded by Mykola Shramchenko), recalls her teacher with the warmest words of gratitude.

THE FAMILIES OF IVAN LADUNCHYK, MYKOLA KRAVETS, PETRO SEMENIV

The following are excerpts from the testimony of Klara Kark. "During the Holocaust several Ukrainians helped me survive. Their names should not be forgotten. At the risk of their lives they saved me from inevitable death. They fully deserve the honorable title of 'Righteous Among the Nations'. To my greatest regret I met them too late when my family - Mother, sister and two daughters - had already died of starvation. We had not been previously acquainted. It was only due to their humanity that they helped me, gave me shelter and supported me in overcoming hardships. Only kind - hearted people could pay attention to a meager, lousy, persecuted Jewess dressed in rags...

When I compare the behavior of many representatives of different peoples - Germans, Moldavians, Rumanians, Jews and Ukrainians - whom I met on my way in those hard days, I can state, taking into consideration my personal experience, that Ukrainians proved to be the most humane. Only due to their assistance and bravery did I manage to survive.

"From Bessarabia where I had lived with my family before the war, we were driven to the small town of Bershad in Ukraine.



Klara Kark.

"One part of the town was called Pisko-Bershad. A medical assistant, Ivan Ladunchyk by name, lived there with his wife and daughter Mila. He used to come to the Ghetto and we became acquainted. After that I often used to visit his family where I could get food and shelter. Once Mr. Ladunchyk warned me not return to the Ghetto: that day some partisans were hanged near the Ghetto. The Ladunchyks let me stay with them for the night. On another occasion they noticed some Rumanian soldiers in their vegetable garden. The latter were searching for the Jews who used to work for people. And they immediately hid me. Had they found me, prison and death would have been the fate both for the Ladunchyks and me.

"Jews were forbidden to appear at the market. Once I happened to be there during a raid. It seemed there was no way out. All of a sudden Mila Ivan's daughter noticed me. She and her mother wrapped me up with a shawl and I shouldered a sack of cabbage. Holding out their certificates to the police, they carefully mentioned, 'This is our housemaid' - and I passed the guard. The following is noteworthy: at the market many Ukrainians recognized me, but no one betrayed me...

"Before they [Germans] left they had killed Jews. Once I happened to stay in Ladunchyk's house when some Germans came. And the Ladunchyks saved me.

"Besides this family, two more families saved me from starvation and pursuit.

"One of them was the family of Mykola Kravets, the director of an alcohol factory. He was the first man who returned me to life after a bad disease, typhoid. He sheltered me and did not start eating until I, an itching, homeless Jewess - beggar sat next to him.

"The other was the family of Petro Semeniv. When I escaped they hid me in their garden, in the hollow of a tree, and later in their house.

"It is worth mentioning that all those noble people used to help not only me, but also other Jews from the Ghetto. Their names should remain forever in the grateful memory of our nation".

VOLODYMYR LANKO AND HIS WIFE

Yad Vashem received an application from Mr.Yakov Vaiskopf, which read:

"I, Yakov Vaiskopf, am writing this testimony which my late wife told me as she was the person who was rescued by Volodymyr Lanko (a Ukrainian) and his wife. I swear that every word is true.

"My late wife, Anna Abramovna Vaiskopf (maiden name: Greitserstein), was born in 1923. She was one of the few Jews saved during the Nazi occupation of Proskurov (now Khmelnitsk). The Germans, assisted by the Ukrainian police, killed almost the entire Jewish population of Proskurov. Those who survived were very few...

"Just because of the horrid background, the deed of Volodymyr Lanko shines as brightly as a star.

"In 1941, Mr.Lanko was about 30 years old. He was married and had two daughters. He lived in Proskurov, on Zavodskaja St. He saved several Jews. My late wife was one of them, for half a year she lay hidden under his bed. I don't know the names of the Jews for whom Mr.Lanko provided shelter, but my wife mentioned a girl wrapped in rags who was found by Mr.Lanko in the street, begging... There was also an agronomist and other Jews. Mr. Lanko was an agronomist by profession.

"My wife was amazed by how he had risked his own life and those of his wife and children, saving so many people. It seemed as if during those years he dedicated his life entirely to one aim: to save as many Jewish lives as possible. When his wife doubted if he was behaving sensibly, saving Jews, he said, 'I warn you, if you let out a hint to anyone about the hidden Jews and they are endangered, I'll divorce you...'

"...after the liberation of Proskurov by the Soviet troops Mr. Lanko was falsely accused of collaboration with the Germans. His wife begged Anna with tears to help her husband. Anna testified to his innocence and he was soon released. Mr. Lanko had known Anna's family long before the war broke out. He suggested that they stay in his house, but Anna's father couldn't believe the Germans would exterminate the whole people. During the first 'action' Anna's father Abram and her 7 - -year - old brother were killed. After that Mr. Lanko came to the ghetto again and warned the rest of the family - Anna, her mother and aunt - saying, 'When you stand in front of the ditch facing death, it will be too late.'

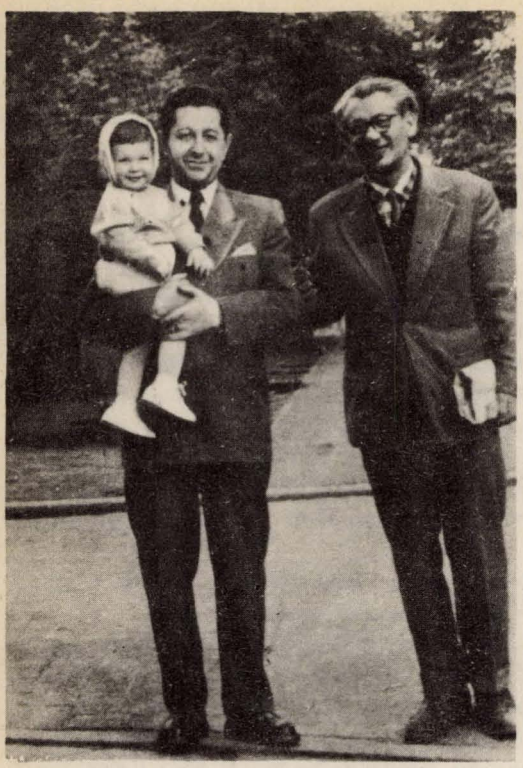
"At length they decided to follow his advice. But they were discovered and locked till the following execution.

"A Ukrainian polizei who fell in love with Anna decided to rescue her. He called her and asked, 'Do you have a place to hide?' She nodded. Then they both went to Mr. Lanko. He agreed to hide her. But he didn't trust the polizei and wrote an agreement which the polizei signed. It said that the polizei had brought Anna to Mr. Lanko and asked him to keep her till he could find out her nationality.

"When Anna and the others were in danger Mr. Lanko transferred them to a woman. He paid her for their stay and food. A few days later the woman evicted them from her house in broad daylight. They returned to Mr. Lanko. He then paid a train conductor for taking them to another place. Mr. Lanko supplied them with food and was always in contact with them...

"On coming to Israel, my wife wanted to appeal for Mr. Lanko's recognition as a 'Righteous Gentile'. But she was very sick and died of cancer.

"In her name and in the name of her next of kin who perished in the Holocaust, I beg you to honour Volodymyr Lanko and his wife. All honour to their memory!..."



Isidor Voloshansky (right) saved 39 Jews from the Nazi hangmen in the city of Drohobych.


FATHERS
AND
SONS

"Everything - people, objects, phenomena
- serves to educate one,
but most importantly, people do,
and among them parents, in the first place."

(A.S. MAKARENKO)



A STANDING EXAMPLE

...Children live by the laws of the family. Fresh out of the diapers, with their first conscious gesture, smile and spoken word they daily repeat their parents' actions. Parents raise their children and educate them by their conduct, family relations, and by their attitude toward other people. It is obvious whenever one analyzes the deeds of the Righteous Gentiles and their children during Nazi genocide. Here it seems worth remembering, once again, that the process of upbringing consists in the interaction, mutual influence and cooperation between children and grownups, and that the formulation of humane convictions and self - consciousness is an especially important factor therein. There is nothing more precious than the realization that you are necessary not only for yourself, but also for other people.

Suffice it to refer oneself to the well - known philosopher Kant who regarded self - consciousness as a necessary prerequisite of morality and moral responsibility. It is self - consciousness, humane persuasions that motivate people in active conduct the character of which depends on the moral principles instilled in the person in question. Even the self - preservation instinct can be dominated by the power of one's own persuasions.

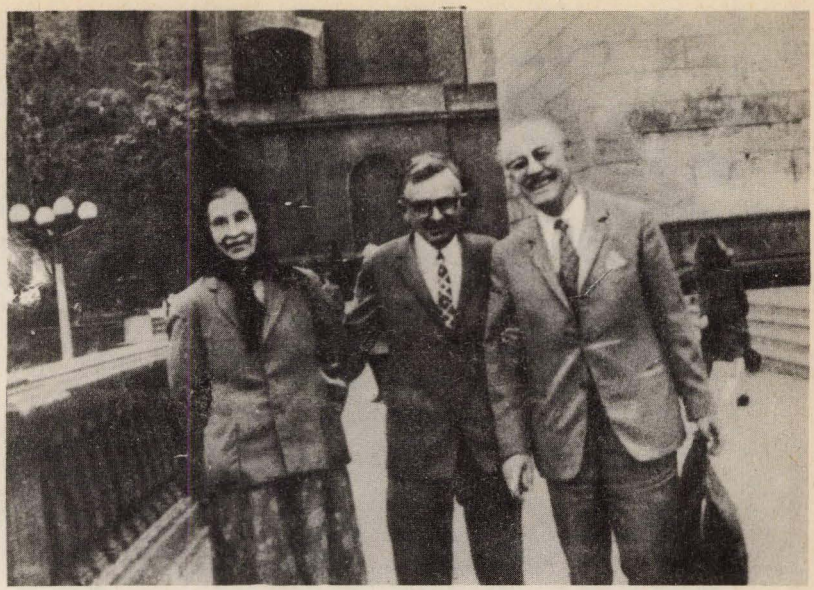
From the following stories you will learn about how Jews were saved by children together with their parents, under most hazardous conditions. It was the most important trial of life for the Righteous parents and their offspring, a long and deadly test of humanness, justice and courage.

PETRO FIRKO AND HIS WIFE JULIA, KAROLINA KOWALYK AND HER DAUGHTER JANINA KOWALYK (BERGER)

It was in Petro Firko's home, in the Western Ukrainian village of Zrotowice, that as many as 13 Jews found refuge. A double inside wall with entry into the attic was built there to hide them, and to let the inhabitants climb to the attic and have their meals and rest in the air. They were very cautious, but some of the neighbours must have reported them to the Gestapo. Suddenly the place was raided. Neither Petro nor his wife Julia were home. Only children were. The Jews hid in the bunker but left the playing cards on the table. The Gestapo men noticed them instantly. Besides, there was cigarette smoke in the room. The danger was growing by the minute. However, the host's 9 -years - old son Zenek was quick on the uptake.

"Mr. Officer, please Mr. Officer", he addressed the Nazi in command of the raiding party, tears in his eyes, "my friend and I were playing cards and smoking. Please don't tell daddy, he'll give me the belt. He's very cross. I'll never do it again... He burst into tears and wept so hard the unwelcome guests believed him.

It was thus a small boy used his wit to save both his parents and the doomed Jews. They were lucky, of course, for the Germans might have ignored the boy's tears. But the fact that the boy proved such a reliable assistant of his parents in the noble cause of assisting the Jews was by no means coincidental. In this and many other instances children always shared the grownups' concern for the victims, aware that leaving these helpless people to the Nazis' "mercy" would be an act of unpardonable cruelty. And of course they realized how dangerous it all was for them and their close and dear ones. However, it was precisely at such moments of ultimate truth that the parents' pedagogics yielded such good fruit. The children saw what their parents did and were eager to follow their example. They saw the noble valor with which their parents took the mortal risk, and they knew what suffering and death awaited the victims if they were discovered. And so the children, using their youthful resourcefulness, sought to help their parents in every such commonly risked and, without exaggeration, heroic deed.



"Righteous Gentiles" Petro and Julia Firko and one of the Jews they saved, Mr. Rosenzweig (right).

The war was a very heavy burden on the children's weak shoulders and in a way made them equal to their parents. Hundreds of books have been written and films made about all those "sons of regiments", boys and girls in the underground resistance and partisan movement. But what do we actually know about their coevals who, together with their parents, balanced on the verge of death as voluntary rescuers of Jews under the Nazi regime?

As for the Firkos, one of the Jews they saved, Isaak Jodel, testifies:

"We met Petro Firko and his wife Julia in Western Ukraine, in the small village of Zrotowice.

"We were in a concentration camp... 140 men and 6 women were brought from the Przemysl Ghetto for work. The men dug ditches for gas pipes from Piculisz to Sambor and the women kept house in terrible conditions.

"The Fircos were a very poor family. They shared with us whatever had to eat. We paid them very little.

"We stayed with them for 18 months. They saved seven people and some of their relatives saved another eight people. They sacrificed their



New York City. Israeli Consul Natalie Levi presenting Janina (Ivanka) Berger-Kowalyk (second left) with the Medal and the Certificate of "Righteous Gentile".

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lives for our sake and we feel it our duty to repay them."

The Firkos saved such sons and daughters of the Jewish people as Mr. Prich and his wife Klara; Mr. Igel and his three sons; Igel's daughter - in - law and her brother; Mr. Jodel and his wife, and Mr. Levi and his wife...

One can imagine Mr. Isaak Jdel's joy when he was notified by Yad Vashem that the Firko couple had been conferred with the highest honors and, on December 4, 1983, recognized as "Righteous Gentiles".

The Firkos' relatives Karolina Kowalyk and her daughter Janina were also courageous rescuers of Jews. They saved Dr. Sam Berger, Mr. Rosenzweig, Mr. and Mrs. Lieber and their daughter Bertha.

Menachem Lieber thus describes the selfless help rendered him by this family of mother and daughter who were united by their desire to help the sufferers:

"I was born in Ustszyki Dolina, on August 19, 1910. Until the middle of August 1942, I lived in Dobromil. During the annihilation of the Jews I was driven to the Przemysl Ghetto. I stayed with my uncle



"Righteous Gentiles", mother and daughter... For Julia Firko (right) her dear mother Karolina Kowalyk was always a living symbol of humaneness.

until October... at that time I was transferred to the camp. The camp was situated in a village not far from Przemysl. In January 1943, the camp was transferred to another village and I was transferred with it. In the concentracion camp I got acquainted with Dr. Berger and through him with our rescuer, Janina Kowalyk.

"Rumors were spread that in other places the Germans had started to liquidate the camps. And we began to think how to save ourselves from death. Only due to our resquers Janina Kowalyk and her mother Karolina did we manage to survive." (As the reader already knows, they offered the Jews a hiding place in their home.)

Janina Kowalyk and her mother Karolina (unfortunately dead by the time) were recognized as "Righteous Gentiles".

After the war this family settled in the United States. In the spring of 1985 Janina (Jean) Kowalyk visited the USSR, found the Firko family and, acting on Yad Vashem's behalf, presented them with a Medal of the Righteous Gentile.

STEPHAN AND MARINA OMELIANUK

One cannot read Rubin Grosser's letter without being deeply moved by his story about the friendly family of the Omelianuks whose three children treated him as one of their own.

Mr. Grosser writes, in particular, that Stephan Omelianuk and he worked in the same co-operative society in the village of Lukow, in Volyn, until the Nazis invaded the territory.

"There were several 'actions' against the Jews (continues Mr. Grosser). After the third, in August 1942, I fled to Stephan's farm - there I was safe. His wife Marina used to bring me food 2 - 3 times a day. I stayed about a year. Then I joined the Russian partisans. The Omelianuks had three children, the eldest aged 10. They all helped their parents. The youngest (4) used to warn me when he saw his grandmother coming up the path: 'Rubin, go quickly, hide.' I didn't pay them anything. I was 23 - 24 at the time.

"Stephan found me after the war, through the Jewish agency in Jerusalem, since he knew I had two sisters living in Israel. When I sent him a parcel, to show my gratitude, he was insulted. "The only thing I want is a Russian - English dictionary", he wrote. I am planning to visit them in Ukraine...

"While I stayed with them, a simple - minded woman in the village, who had 3 children, brought two Jewish children and gave them shelter. Two days later the Germans searched her farm, shot the Jewish children and hanged the woman together with her three children in the market place... as a warning to other Christians. When I heard of it I told Stephan: 'I'm leaving, I have no chance of surviving and I don't want you and Marina to die with me,' but he refused to let me go."

Stephan and Marina Omelianuk were bestowed the highest honors - a Medal of Honor and the right to plant a tree at the Garden of the Righteous in Jerusalem.

It pleases one to realize that the Omelianuks' children grew to be worthy individuals. In the dark whirlpool of war and violence they met the challenge and properly passed their first and most important examination in life.

MYKHAILO AND KATERYNA LESKIV AND THEIR SON MYKOLA

Mykhailo and Kateryna Leskiv planted good seeds in the soul of their son Mykola. In most cases it is on such seeds that a good harvest of humaneness depends, in almost any given citizen. Dozia Blaustein tells about this family from the town of Jezierna, Zborov District, Ternopil Region, in her *Memorial Book of Jezierne* (Haifa, 1971):

"... I am one of the few survivors from my hometown, Jezierna.

" I am the daughter of Ben-Zion Blaustein and Rosa Lechowitz. The names Blaustein-Lechjwitz were well known in Jezierna... We were two children, an older brother, Moishe, named Munio, and myself.

"Before WWII, Jezierna had a beautiful and intellectual Jewish community, in which my parents... played a great role...

"On a rainy Friday, a few days after the occupation, the Nazis did what they called 'Aine Accie' and a great percentage of the male population were shot and buried, half dead and half alive, at the outskirts of the town. In that particular massacre my father and brother survived. Since that day life became a constant fear, and survival a struggle.

" Shortly after, the Nazis ... formed ... a ghetto in the city of Zborow. All the Jews from Zborow, except for the working male population, were sent there ... Life and the living conditions in the ghetto were unbearable. Food was getting scarce. Some Gentile people, with heart, used to smuggle some food into the ghetto. Between those bringing food was a young man from my home town by the name of Kola Leskiv.His father was a good friend of my father and during one of his trips mother asked Kola if he could hide us. Without giving it a second thought Kola agreed. It was hard to believe that without one word said or thought, this young man should sacrifice himself to hide two Jewish women, but we had nothing to lose; by staying in the ghetto we knew what was coming, and by leaving we had a chance to survive.

"At the end of April 1943, with the help of a Gentile family from Zborow, we escaped. We were quite lucky, for we made it to Jezierna, to the house of the Leskiv family. As Kola had promised, they accepted us and made shelter for us ... The Leskiv family shared with us every piece of bread they had.

"In May of 1943, the Zborow Ghetto was 'liquidated' and in July of 1943 the Camp of Zborow, where my father was kept, met the same fate. The day my father and brother died, Kola came to the attic to see

us. His grief was profound and I remember, as if it ware yesterday, his telling mother, 'Even if I have to give my life, I shall protect you and shelter you.' I shall never forget Kola and his smiling face, for he too met his Maker a year later.

"We stayed at the Leskiv home throughout the winter, until March of 1944. At that time the Russians were advancing and the battlefields were at the outskirts of Jezierna. The Leskivs' house was burned by the Germans ... We had nowhere to go but to the woods. We wandered from place to place and it seemed that God was guiding us out of trouble."

Indeed, they should thank God that He sent the Leskiv family to help the helpless victims at their time of ordeal. Just as Yanina Komendacky should praise the Lord for being rescued by the Baley family, and Sara Liebmann for Makar Wozniak and his four daughters ...

Memories that never die.

"I will always be grateful to you ...", Such phrases are found in almost every letter addressed by the survivors to their rescuers, the Righteous Gentiles, sensitive parents and courageous children. For the children, the parents' example of sympathy and mercy is unmatched.

NESTOR AND MARY BALEY, THEIR DAUCHTER VALYA KRAWEC

A latter from Yanina Komendacky reads:

"Dear Mary and Nestor:

"I am sure it will be a surprise for you to receive, after so many years, a letter from me. So, your address I acquired from Maria Lewchuk who lives in Sokal. She was here for a few days visiting with us. All those years I craved to get your adress in order to write to you, and at least it that way to express all these feelings I harbored toward you. In my memory it was always, and always will remain, this immense gratitude for you and for your family for what you have done for me by endangering your own life and the lives of your family.

"In those most difficult days of my life, the closest friends of mine foresaked me, and only in you I found understanding and so much needed help. I often ... recall those times and you as being so much a part of my life. Today it still stands in my memory that day, when after the war I returned to Oszczow - rescued, thanks to your goodness, from

the claws of death ... My daughter, Hela, also ... knows about everything you have done for me ... I'd like you Nestor and Mary, and your daughter, Valya, and also the rest of your family to know that in far away Poland there are two living hearts full of immense gratefulness and sweet remembrance ..."

In a letter to Valya Krawec (July 23, 1982) she wrote:

"Dear Mrs. Valya:

" I thank you wholeheartedly for your letter and for the funeral photos of your dear parents. These photos are also a dear souvenir for me that reminds me of the persons who at the grave times saved my life."

MAKAR WOZNIAK AND HIS DAUGHTERS YEFKA, ALEXANDRA, NADIA AND HAPKA

The following testimony was rendered by Sara Liebmann (nee Blumenkranc):

"I left Warsaw at the beginning of the war, and during the war I lived in the former Polish Ukraine [i.e., Western Ukraine], I was rescued by a Ukrainian peasant and his family. My rescuer's name was Makar Wozniak (now deceased). He was a widower and had four daughters: Yefka, then 18, Alexandra, 16, Nadia, 12, and Hapka, 10. Their old grandmother, called 'Baba', lived with them.

"My brother, Eli Blumenkranc, and myself settled in a small village between Kowel and Kaminez-Podolski. The village of Nesuchojie, near Zarzecze, had only one medical assistant (Feldscher), Antonczyk by name. The Ukrainian authorities, newly appointed by the Germans, had to organize a pharmacy, and not having any Ukrainian chemists, my brother, though Jewish, got the appointment.

"By the middle of 1942, one town after another in Western Ukraine went through the hell of German extermination of the Jewish population. Kowel was the nearest town to our village and there we lost the entire family of our Uncle Chil Ejbuszyc. Only one cousin of ours and Uncle Chil's niece were rescued miraculously by a young Polish friend who came to our village to tell us the whole story of the extermination and ask us to take our cousin, Hala, out of Kowel, because the Germans were looking everywhere for the Jews who might

have escaped. He said that he could not risk any longer keeping her in his house. We could find no other Ukrainian (willing to go to Kowel and to bring the Jewess over) but Makar Wozniak, the poorest peasant in the village, living outside the village, on a so called 'khutor', with an old grandmother and his four daughters ... He went with one of his daughters and with the clothes of a Ukrainian girl and got our young cousin Hala out and took her to his own hut, keeping her in the loft and risking his own life and those of his children. He had to supply his family by working on a small plot he possessed. Later he brought her over to our place.

"After a short while two Germans, with the help of Ukrainian militia, rounded up the village Jews, and while we shared the house with the village doctor - his surgery was on the one side of the house, our quarters and the pharmacy on the other - we were the last ones they called for. In the cellar my brother had prepared a wall made of firewood logs, where he put me and my cousin, himself being busy dispensing in the pharmacy to the very Ukrainian militia. At the last minute he closed the shop and jumped behind the logs in the cellar.

"A few minutes later the militia came for us, but as we had left all our possessions upstairs some of the young Ukrainian militiamen started robbing the place, so the two young fellows who were about to search the cellar turned away from the stepladder to take part in the looting. That saved our lives for the day, but then the Ukrainian authorities closed the premises and sealed the outer doors of the pharmacy, with us still in the cellar. At night our next-door neighbor, Feldscher Antonczyk, came in (he had a hidden door in his surgery connecting to our premises), and being a well known anti-Semite, we were sure the end had come. Yet he brought us a loaf of bread and a jug of milk; he knew all the time we were there, but then again, my brother had become great friends even with him.

"The problem was, we had to get out of there and find shelter somewhere, because the authorities were to come and take inventory of the pharmacy; so our cousin Hala decided she would go and try to find Makar's hut outside the village, as she had been there before and still wore her Ukrainian attire. Sure enough, she got there, but Makar was still busy threshing his harvest, so we were left waiting in the cellar without hope.

"The following day, a heavy rain came down and the little stream at the end of the garden behind the house turned into a torrential river; that was when two Germans came with a little boat from another village to see Mr. Antonczyk. While they went in ... my brother ... jumped out

through a little window in the cellar, ran through the garden, grabbed the little boat ... getting over to the opposite bank ... My brother ... found the lonely hut outside the village ... and the same night Makar with his daughter Yefka came over for me.

"Makar Wozniak never had enough potatoes, let alone bread, to feed his family through from one harvest to the next, yet he kept the three of us for nearly two years, and after the first half year another fellow Jew from the village, who was thrown out by another peasant when his money had run out, also came to Makar. The Jew's first name was Zuref; I don't remember his surname. I believe he eventually went to America, after having lost his wife and six children in the village. The four of us were kept upstairs, in the loft, approximately from August 1942 to February 1944, when the Russians returned to Ukraine ...

"Makar Wozniak ... would bring home once a sack of potatoes at Xmas, and ... he would send up ... the old 'Babuszka' with an iron pot of potatoes for us ... Xmas time, when the hut would be snowed under and no one from the village could call, the girls would heat water and we would come down and have a proper wash.

"The winter of 1943 was particularly severe, and up in the loft there was very little hay or straw left to cover up, because Makar had to feed the only cow and horse he possessed. Yet one of the little girls - Nadia - would come up and sleep with us, instead of staying in the warm house, just for company. We were afraid the kids might talk to other kids ... but not even the youngest kid of 10 - Hapka - breathed a word about us.

"The situation in the winter of 1943 got so hopeless, we did not have any news (newspapers), except that the Germans were pushing ahead to Stalingrad and several times we would ask Makar to let us go, seeing there was no end to our sufferings, nor to the risk to his family,but that ordinary peasant but not an ordinary man would keep telling my brother: "Iljich, don't be a hot head, the Russians will be coming back ...

"In January 1944, Makar came up with the news that the Germans were being pushed back; again we did not believe, but in February the whole village, together with Makar and family, moved out into the forest; there were partisans fighting the Germans all around and it was not safe to stay indoors. We could not leave the hut and join the villagers in the forest; being Jewish, we would not have a chance of survival. One night Makar came from the forest to stay the night with us and that was when it happened: we heard voices in Russian and sure enough, when Makar opened the door, there they were, our rescuers

the Russians. Makar did not let us come down, knowing that between the partisans there were ... anti-Semites, but he brought their commander up to the loft, who sure enough was Jewish ... he told us when to go out to the main where a regular column of tank drivers would be passing, and they took us to a township called Maniewicze ... Makar and his family will never be forgotten and his name will be revered as long as I live."

On June 17, 1984, Yad Vashem's Commission for Designation of the Righteous resolved to confer upon Makar Wozniak and his daughters its highest expression of honor, a Medal of Honor with the right to plant a tree in the Garden of the Righteous.

Every tree planted on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem bears the name of a rescuer of Jews and is dedicated to his/her family, too, because in every such case they all - the youngest and the eldest alike - protected the doomed Jews with their own lives. Behind every such name there is a folk epic about how the forces of Good and Evil, Life and Death met and measured their swords.

Alas, we do not know as yet the names of all such Righteous Gentiles. We are still indebted to them - both those rescued and those spared the deadly breath of the war. It was for us all that those people gave a priceless lesson in courage and noble spirit.

And now on to several more stories about the rescuers who in their deeds were guided primarily by their inherent outstanding humaneness.

ROMAN AND IRENE PARYPA, HNAT HORBLANSKI AND KIRYLO LUTAK

From Dr. Leopold Karp's testimony:

" ... In 1940, I was sent as a doctor to Lipowica to treat the peasants there and in the neighbouring villages. I met Parypa, who was a forest ranger, when treating his wife Irene who was very ill. I also met Lutak, who was the assistant of Parypa, and Horblanski, a logger.

"In 1941, Hitler invaded Russia and the area of Poland that was first occupied by the Russians and now came under Nazi occupation. Most of the Jewish population was immediately rounded up and sent to concentration camps. Some doctors, including myself were permitted to stay to treat the population, because of an outbreak of typhus.

"In July 1943, the Gestapo decided to round up the remaining doctors. My wife and I happened to be invited to the Parypas on the

eve of St. Ivan's Day, which is a Greek Catholic holiday. That night a very heavy storm prevented us from returning home. So we spent the night at the Parypas' home.

"The next day on our way home a peasant woman ran toward us and warned us that the Gestapo men were looking for us. We hid in the forest for the rest of the day and at night we were able to make contact with Lutak who took us into the mountains, to a hideout that he and Parypa had prepared some time earlier ... The hideout was a hollow formed by an uprooted tree with less than five feet headroom. There was a small fireplace for heating and cooking. However, we could use it only at night, because the smoke could lead the Germans to us. Parypa and Lutak used to bring food to us at night, about every two weeks.

"This arrangement continued for about four months, till the end of October. At that time a German Border Patrol was billeted in a house next door to the Parypas'. Because of this neither he nor Lutak could move freely and they couldn't bring food to us. Our hideout was also too near to the German Patrol.

"Horblanski now took over the care of our safety. He guided us to another hideout up in the Carpathian Mountains where we stayed for the next nine months. Horblanski and his 16-year-old son supplied us with food as often as they could come at night, and in the winter only during heavy snowfall, so that their traces would be covered over. This entailed a 4-6-hour round trip on rough terrain, in such zero temperature. The food given to us was what they could spare from their own meager supplies. They also brought us some warn clothing; in short, they took care of all our needs. No payments of any kind were made for the simple reason that we had no money. These people helped us out of friendship and humanitarian feelings.

"As an example of their concern, during an extended period of unfavorable weather conditions, they were not able to come to us. They knew that we must have used all the food we had. Finally, on Christmas night, it started snowing and Horblanski with his young son and son-in-law were able to make the trip up the mountains. They brought us food, ate a meal with us and prayed for our safety.

"These brave people, if they had been caught by the Germans, would have been instantly executed, and so would have been their families. Some other villagers also knew that we were hiding somewhere in the mountains, but nobody betrayed us.

"We stayed in our hideout until August 1944, when the Russian Army freed that part of Poland from the Germans. During the period of

our hiding we were totally dependent on our rescuers' goodwill and efforts. Without them we would not have been able to survive.

"For about a year after the war, till we left Poland, we continued friendly relations with all of them. When we reached the U.S.A. we corresponded with Parypa (the other two had died) and we managed to give some help by sending parcels to them.

"I feel that these brave people who saved our lives should be included in the list of 'Righteous Gentiles'.

"P.S. After the war I learned that Lutak had also saved a Jewish girl and her brother (I forgot their names), but he had never mentioned this to me ..."

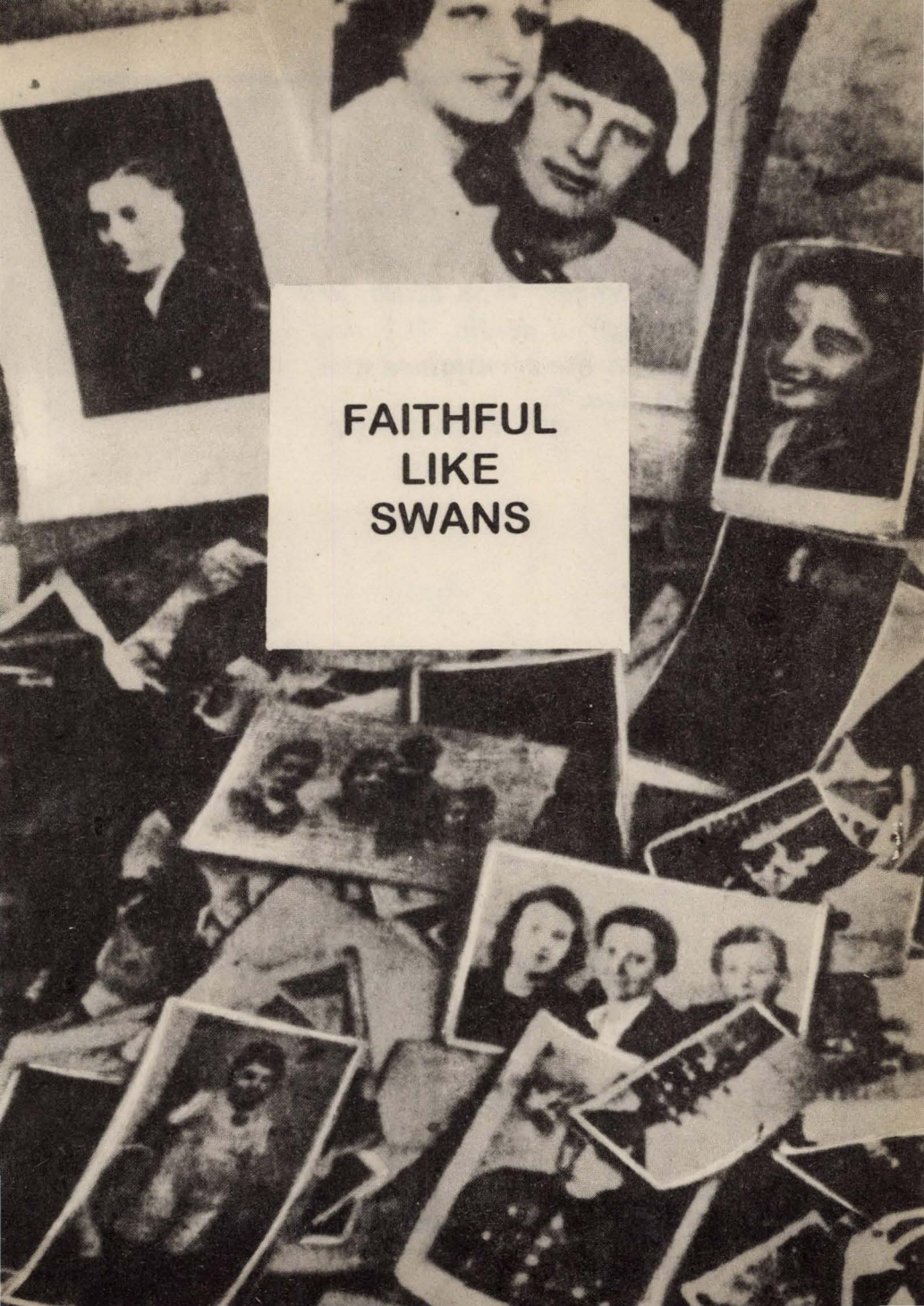
This is what Dr. Isiah Litwak wrote in his letter to Yad Vashem:

"In connection with Dr. Karp's letter to give my evidence about rescuers, 'Righteous Gentiles' Roman and Irene Parypa, Hnat Horblanski and Kirylo Lutak whom I mentioned among other rescuers of Jews in the Rozmiatow Yizkor-Book ...

"After the liberation, I had the privilege to meet and perceive them. It's a matter of fact that recently, having a nostalgic talk with friends, one of them, a Dolina Holocaust survivor, Klarsfeld, happened to mention his school friend engineer Romko Parypa and his wife Irene - what kind, lovely, decent and helpful schoolmates they had been.

"It came to my mind, and I said at that time, 'If there had been more Romkos, Hnats and Kirylos ... how many thousands upon thousands of Jews would have been alive today.' Finally, I want to add that Dr. Karp's testimony is the ultimate truth ...

"As a Holocaust survivor, with all my heart and conscience, I feel that these angels should be included in the list of 'Righteous Gentiles'."


FAITHFUL
LIKE
SWANS

"Love is stronger than death, and than the fear of death. It is only by love that life is sustained and set in motion."

(IVAN TURGENEV)



PEOPLE IN LOVE TRIUMPH

Who doesn't remember Shakespeare's wise generalization that there isn't a sadder story than that about Romeo and Juliet? However, it was back in the 16th century. Had Sir William Shakespeare lived in the years of Nazi genocide, he would have had every reason to revise the above generalization, and written many a much sadder story and world-known dramas about people in love - Jews, Ukrainians, Russians, Byelorussians, Poles ... Alas, there hasn't as yet appeared another Shakespeare to perpetuate such tragedies of love. But this world creative commission is still open, and waiting for a most talented writer, sculptor, composer ...

Let us hope that such creative personalities will eventually turn up, and that they will bear in mind that Jews and Slavs used to live, side by side, for over a thousand years. It is precisely this common age-old destiny, full of sufferings, as well as the gains of their national cultures, neighborly contacts and mutual assistance that can serve as firm and reliable bridges of rapprochement. These bridges could be destroyed neither by the Black Hundred's directives, nor by the pogroms in the Russian Empire, nor still - later - by the notorious "fifth column" (i.e., the one titled "nationality",in the Soviet passport) or any other discriminatory restrictions and persecutions of the Jews in the former USSR; these bridges proved strong enough to sustain the Nazi policy of Jewish genocide.

These bridges linked forever, by matrimonial bonds, the undying standard bearer of human rights and outstanding scientist Andrei Sakharov and Yelena Bonar, the great champion of a democratic and

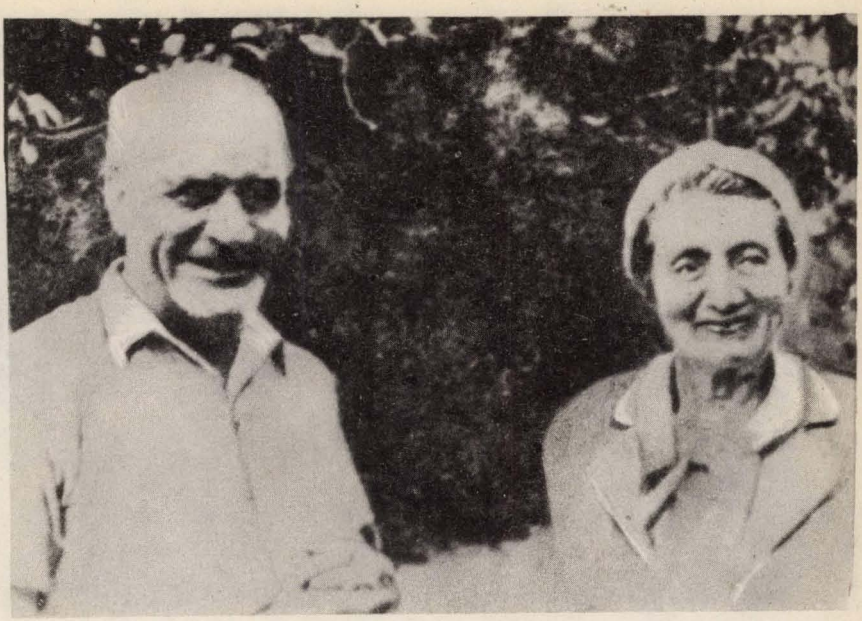
independent Ukrainian literary classic Volodymyr Vynnychenko and Rozalia Liwschitz, Kharkiv's bookkeeper Viktor Gladenko and Malka Datskovsky, and many other Slavs and Jews. Today, it is rather hard to find a Jewish family without close relatives from among the Ukrainians, Russians or Byelorussians ... It is a shame that modern official statistcs do not reflect the percentage of such mixed marriages in any given country, just as there hasn't as yet been found a term for such mixed relations ...

VOLODYMYR VYNNYCHENKO AND HIS WIFE ROZALIA

They loved one another like Romeo and Juliet and were faithful to one another like swans. May this true love of the righteous serve as an example for the rising generation. How interesting and instructive would be a book about the Vynnychenko family - Volodymyr Kyrylovich and Rozalia Yakovna. As a boy Volodymyr and other Ukrainian children befriended children from neighboring Jewish families. As he grew his friendly feelings toward the Jewish people matured and would stay with him for as long as he lived. This attitude manifested itself, for example, during his office as head of the Ukrainian government, in 1917-19. Among his ministers there were the Jews A. Margolin, A. Revutski, P. Krasny, and others. When Ukraine introduced its own national currency the 100-karbovanets banknotes had the denomination printed in Ukrainian, Russian, Jewish and Polish. A similar approach was practised in many other circumstances, too.

Volodymyr Vynnychenko's sincere respect for the Jewish nation was especially evident in his love for his wife, Rozalia. With the generous warmth of his faithrul heart and true love he protected her in the trying years of pogroms and the Civil War, and later defended her against anti-Semitic persecutions, especially under the rule of Nazi genocide.

On the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Babi Yar massacre, *The Jewish News* carried an extensive article titled "The Joys and Sorrows of Rozalia Vynnychenko". The author, Mykola Zhulinsky (currently Academician of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine), tells about the unity of views and sincere mutual respect of the Vynnychenko couple, particularly about Rozalia's deep love for her truest friend and dedicated partner in life, Volodymyr.



Wolodymyr Vynnychenko and his wife Rozalia.

Even after his death Rozalia dedicated many eloquent and moving entries to him in her diary. She even reproached herself, writing, "Could it be that all my love, my readiness to sacrifice my life for him were too weak to save the priceless treasure: his life? When was the fatal mistake made? What was it?"

On July 27, 1954, Rozalia wrote in her diary, "The Sunlit Day of His Birthday, the day when a true genius of Ukraine was born. Even though the Ukrainian masses know nothing about him, and the immigrants either keep silent or cast aspersions on his prominent personality, all this is only for the time being, and the day will shortly come when his name will be on the lips of one and all, and his memory will be lauded in the remotest corners of Ukraine."

These expectations could come true only in independent Ukraine. Today the memory of this outstanding son of the Ukrainian people is an undying shining star in the people's grateful hearts.

It is to the Righteous whose love and faithfulness were like those of swans that the next pages of this book are dedicated.



Leszko Nowak and his wife. He is a Jew and she is Ukrainian. As a young lady, she, together with Ivan Stebelsky, saved Leszko from Nazi. genocide.

STEPANIDA AND SIMEON

The *Krug* Magazine (Israel) published an article about a Ukrainian woman named Stepanida, of Kharkiv. People living next door called her "Dyetochka" ("Baby"), because it was her pet word. She was married to Simeon Ahss, a Jew. After the Nazis seized Kharkiv they rounded up the Jews and locked them up at the tractor plant. After that they proceeded to massacre them. Stepanida refused to part with Simeon and followed him to their death. "Whatever happens to you, happens to me," she said. The most horrible thing happened to the couple. Together with 30,000 other victims they were shot and thrown into a ditch ...

"Eternal glory to you, Ukrainian woman Stepanida who followed her Jewish husband Simeon on his way to death. You will be remembered forever!" wrote the author of the article, the late Abram Vishnevsky. "We the Kharkivites who survived have not forgotten you. To die for one's Motherland, defending other people, is a true exploit.

But she shared her loved one's inexpressible grief, and death ... It is an immortal feat!"

Such angelic selfless devotion, sanctified by true love, is capable of withstanding the cruelest of ordeals.

It was also in Kharkiv that a story about a man who didn't betray his true love in the face of death also began.

VIKTOR GLADENKO

He was a resident of Kharkiv and worked as a bookkeeper. In 1932 he married a Jewish woman named Malka Datskovsky. She was a widow and had three children. Victor adopted them all, and later a daughter was born. They named her Tanya.

In 1937, Gladenko fell prey to Stalin's purges. After three years of imprisonment he was released, and in 1941 Kharkiv was occupied by the Nazis.

On December 15, the Jews were ordered to leave the city and moved to barracks. Victor forbade the wife and children to leave. From then on, for the next two years, he had only one goal in life - to save his family.

During the first winter of the war the living conditions in Kharkiv were unbearable. The cold was severe. There was no fuel, no running water. The sewage systems were out of order. To get a bucket full of water people had to wait in line since the middle of the night, and stand there for long hours. But hunger was worst of all. Axe in hand, Victor wandered through the city, looking for a dead horse, to chop off a chunk and bring it home. His Aunt Oksana would often bring whatever food she could spare. It was, however, clear that they wouldn't last till the spring; they had to get out of the city and into the country.

The occupation authorities started confiscating radios from the population and the Jews were ordered to get registered and to wear armbands with the Magen David, the six-pointed Star of David...

One of Malka's daughters, Dina Glitman, testified in her petition for bestowing the title "Righteous Gentile" on her stepfather Gladenko, Viktor Nikitich, of Ukrainian parentage:

"The Germans entered Kharkov on October 24, 1941. On December 14, announcements were posted all over the city with the following message: All Jews must assemble within 24 hours on the grounds of the tractor plant. Any Jews caught after that time will be summarily shot. Children of mixed marriages are included in this order, as are those sheltering Jews.



Victor Gladenko was posthumously awarded the title "Righteous Gentile".

Certificate of the "Righteous Gentile" issued in the name of Victor Gladenko. →



Victor Gladenko's wife, Malka Datskovsky, with her daughters Dina, Tanya and Golda.

YAD VASHEM



יד ושם

תעודת כבוד

DIPLÔME D'HONNEUR

Le présent Diplôme atteste qu'en sa séance du 26 Mai 1983 la Commission d'Hommage aux Justes des Nations, établie par l'Institut Commemoratif des Martyrs et des Héros Yad Vashem, sur la foi des témoignages recueillis par elle, a rendu hommage à

Viktor Nikitich-Gladenko

qui, au péril de sa vie a sauvé des Juifs persécutés peudant la période de l'Holocauste en Europe, lui a décerné la Médaille des Justes parmi les Nations et l'a autorisé à planter un arbre en son nom dans l'Allée des Justes sur le Mont du Souvenir à Jérusalem.

זאת לתעודה שביעיבתה
ביום יד סיון תשמ"ג
החליטה הוועדה לציון
חסידי אומות העולם
שליד רשות הזיכרון יד ושם
על יסוד עדויות
שהובאו לפניה, לתת כבוד
ויקר ל

ויקטור ניקיטין-גלאדנקו

על אשר בשנות השואה
באירופה שם נפשו בכפו
להצלת יהודים נרדפים
מידי רודפיהם ולהעניק לו
את הצדליה לחסידי אומות
העולם ולהרשות לו
לנטוע עץ בשמו בשדרות
חסידי אומות העולם על
הר הזיכרון בירושלים.

Fait à Jerusalem, Israël, le 23 Octobre 1983

ניתן היום בירושלים, ישראל
כ"ז חשון תשמ"ד

בשם רשות הזיכרון יד ושם
FOUR L'INSTITUT YAD VASHEM

בשם הועדה לציון חסידי אומות העולם
POUR LA COMMISSION DES JUSTES

"We all left our little house on Khamovaya Hill and moved in with my stepfather's friend Vasiliy Baranovsky and his wife Yevdokia Zaitseva. Police and SS patrols roamed around the town, searching out Jews. It became imperative that we leave town. My stepfather applied to the mayor for gentile identity cards for my mother and elder sister. Vasiliy Baranovsky, Yevdokia Zaitseva and our acquaintance Tanya Kutsenko agreed to witness and sign the required declarations. They all placed themselves in great jeopardy; had they been discovered contravening the regulations, they, too, would have been shot. Having fled the city, we hid out in villages in Kharkov, Sumy and Kursk regions."

Only Malka's son David wasn't with them. Before the war he had left to visit with his mother's parents in Oleksandria (Kirovohrad Region) where he had been shot, together with 250 local Jews, by the Nazis and their collaborators.

From the testimony of Maria M. Sokil, Jewish resident of Kharkiv, included in *The Black Book* (Tarbut Publishers, 1980): "The fascists showed their worth already on the first day, hanging several people in the squares and looting homes."

The barracks back of the Kharkiv tractor plant turned into a common grave of 15,000 Jews.

The fugitives went through a lot of sufferings - cold, hunger and betrayal by their Kharkiv neighbors... Eventually they found themselves in the village of Viry in Sumy Region, where Viktor's relatives lived. They were met with warmth and cordiality. They managed to send the necessary papers to Victor and he came from Kharkiv to join the family. But there were evil people in the village, too. They reported to the police. Malka was summoned to the precinct to have her identity paper verified. There the chief of police told her she had to see the German commandant the very next day. The danger was growing. Luckily for them all, Viry's burgomaster was Victor's schoolmate who, it turned out, was secretly in contact with the partisans. On his advice, the family stole out of the village at night. They found temporary refuge in Sumy, with Victor's cousin, and later, with the help of their friend Alexandr Bondarenko, found shelter in Glushkovoye, in Kursk Region. But even that quiet remote village soon found itself in the whirlpool of war, because it was near the site of the Battle on the Kursk Bulge. Before they knew it an artillery shell hit their ramshackle cabin, wounding Dina's head seriously. Again pain, suffering and fear. But liberation came shortly... Alas, the head and rescuer of the family, Victor

Gladenko, wasn't destined to share their great joy in full measure. He had been sick for quite some time and died in 1946.

Years and decades have passed since then. Malka, Dina and Tanya emigrated from the USSR. After they learned about the existence of Yad Vashem they decided to perpetuate their husband's and father's memory.

His daughter Tanya wrote about her father as "a man who helped everybody. He was one of the finest people you can imagine."

On October 23, 1983, in a ceremony recognizing Victor Gladenko as a "Righteous Among the Nations", a tree was planted in his name by his wife Malka and his daughter Dina in the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem. It was thus the bright memory of this wonderful man was perpetuated.

His memory was also honored at the Israeli Consulate in Philadelphia in March 1984. Presenting the "Medal of the Righteous" to Tanya Trub-Gladenko, Consul General Pinchas Gohen said:

"What your father did was an act of heroism that certainly needs to be remembered. Gladenko risked his life in order to save Jews. The heroism of your father is memorable, especially at a time when silence ruled the world and basic moralism did not prevail..."

Up to 25 persons took part in the rescue of Gladenko's family. Had he been destined to receive the medal himself, he would have probably said something like, "I'm receiving this medal in my name, but it really belongs to many other Ukrainians and Russians."

TANYA KUNTSEVICH

Tetyana V. Kuntsevich lived in a village, not far from the town of Berezhany in Ternopil Region. She was a widow and had two children: a seven-year-old daughter and a four-year-old son.

She gave shelter to Zeev Shotenberg and his wife. Tanya fell in love with Zeev's married uncle, and this feeling inspired her with courage and resolution.

When toward the end of 1943 the Redlichs had been discovered and threatened with exposure to the police, Tanya decided to help them. The lives of Shimon, his mother Hanna and the Fishels, her parents, were in mortal danger. It took unwavering courage and extraordinary kindness of heart to shelter six Jews, considering the circumstances.

Before setting with Tanya the Fishel-Redlich family had hidden on the Ghetto grounds. Food had been supplied by the Polish blacksmith Stanislaw Kadogni and his son Karol. The latter helped Hanna and Shimon move from the Ghetto's shelter to Tanya's. But the kind-hearted Poles failed to transfer Hanna's aged parents.

Dr. Redlich recalls those tragic events:

"It was a normal January night. The roads were covered with snow. the cold reached the marrow of my bones. Since birth Mother limped on her left leg, and it was difficult for her to walk. I too was walking with difficulty. My muscles had atrophied from a long stay in the attic. Tanya, who came out to an appointed place, carried me on her back and in this way we ... got safely to Tanya's house... The following night we were expecting my grand parents... Grandpa put on a woman's dress and together with Granny started at an appointed time. On their way they met Polish children who teased them... The matter became worse when it came out that one of the 'old women' was a man. 'Yids! Yids!' shouted the children. Somebody ran to the local police station. Grandpa and Granny were tortured throughout the night, but they didn't betray anybody. The following morning they were shot in the yard of the local police station."

Shimon and his mother Hanna remained in Tanya's home for half a year. In June 1944, the Soviet troops drove the Germans away from that territory and they were able to leave, headed for Lodz. On the way they met dozens of Jews who had been sheltered by their neighbors, Ukrainians and Poles.



Jewish woman Raisa married her rescuer Mykhailo Huberuk.



Natalia Rozenberg (nee Uniyat). During the occupation the Uniyats sheltered a young Jewish fellow named Andrei Rozenberg. They fell in love and no danger, mortal as it was, could extinguish its flame. Eventually Natalia and Andrei got married and now they live in Israel.


THE BIGGEST
ORDEAL

"A good man living next door is better than a distant relative."

(A JAPANESE SAYING)



Good neighborly relations are an age-old folk tradition, and it primarily implies that at a time of ordeal people living next door will always lend you a hand. The worst such ordeal came under Nazi genocide.

It was then a neighborly helping hand was so badly needed; as the Nazis were killing innocent humans en masse, this help wasn't only badly needed - it was vital, in that it saved at least some of the doomed. If different nations - and primarily their leaders - could act as good neighbors on this planet, if they abided by one calling, namely to act for the benefit of one and all, we would have never known any wars, conflicts, and innocent blood would have never been shed.

ANDRIY KVASHA, HIS WIFE YEVDOKIA AND THEIR CHILDREN PETRO AND YEVGENIA

Children from two families in the Donbass (Donetsk Coal Basin), one Ukrainian and the other Jewish, made as good friends as their parents had. They continued to live like good neighbors and friends, and when the war broke out Andriy Kvasha's family, true to the unwritten law of neighborly relations, came to the rescue of their Jewish friends. Mrs. Babinsky (Konovalova) tells about this family in her letter to the Director of Yad Vashem:

"During World War II my late mother, Maria Markovna Konovalova (maiden name Ginzburg) was rescued by a Ukrainian family named Kvasha. All the members of Mr. Kvasha's family - father Andriy (b. 1889), mother Yevdokia (1894), son Petro (1924), daughter

Yevgenia (1921) - were involved in saving my mother. Of the Kvasha family probably only Petro and Yevgenia are still alive. We parted with them in 1944, when we moved from Yenakievo (Donbass) to Bukovina...

"When the Germans occupied Yenakievo my parents were moved to the ghetto which was located in Krasny Gorodok. In the summer of 1942, the Germans started to annihilate the Jews in the ghetto en masse. Most of them were thrown alive into a mine. The mine was in the village of Verovka where they all perished. My father, an invalid of the Civil War in Russia, was among them.

"A day before the liquidation of the ghetto, the Kvasha family learned what the Germans were planning to do with the Jews and warned my mother. The relations between our family and Kvasha were always good, we children were schoolmates.

"My mother decided to escape with their help. The ghetto was closely watched by the German guard. At night, dressed only in her underwear, my mother crossed the narrow river nearby. On the other side of the bank, Andriy and Petro were waiting for her. They brought a peasant dress for her, hung a cross around her neck and took her to the village where Yevgenia lived. There she was sheltered. Then they moved her from one village to another, so that she could not be recognized and betrayed.

"In saving my mother the Kvashas risked their own lives. Mother didn't pay them anything and they did all that only out of good will. In 1944, when the town was liberated, I found my mother alive. Mother died in New York after we arrived there with the last emigration.

"I appeal for the recognition of the Kvasha family as 'Righteous Gentiles'."

HRYN BABIY, HIS MOTHER, SISTER ANIELA AND STACH YURECZKO

Dr. Shave (Isiah) Litwak addressed a similar petition to Yad Vashem. He testified:

"I am gladly doing my moral obligation and will try to help the three rescuers to be included in the list of 'Righteous Gentiles'.

"From our hometown Rozmiatow we were exiled to four different towns: Dolina, Bolechow, Kalush and Halizc. I went to Dolina. During

the liquidation of the Dolina Ghetto (Judenrein) I fortunately succeeded in escaping to Bolechow, then I came to Striy, where I lived at the ghetto for nearly one year. One month before the liquidation of the ghetto... I found shelter at the barrel factory in Bolechow, where I lived incognito till June 6, 1943, when the Striy Ghetto started being liquidated. From there... I finally came to the Dolina forest and joined Hryn Babiy's partisan group.. the last four months till the liberation by the Russians I was given a hiding place by a Ukrainian friend of mine, Stach Yureczko in Rozmiatow...

"To frighten off anyone who might have considered giving help or a hiding place to a Jew, the murderers hanged twenty Gentiles - neighbors from around the Babiyowka forest - in the market place in Dolina. Among the innocent victims were Babiy's mother and sister Aniela. They were left hanging for more than a week, a sign attached to each body, reading, 'This will happen to everyone who will give any help to a Jew'."

GRIGORY ZABASHTANSKY

The following letter, filled with heartfelt gratitude to her rescuer, Grigory Zabashtansky, was sent to Yad Vashem by Fira Kaplun:

"I, Fira Kaplun, was born in 1928, to the family of Israel Kogan. I am appealing for the recognition of the resident of the town of Brailov, Vinnitsa Region, Grigory Zabashtansky as a 'Righteous Gentile'.

"In the years of World War II Mr. Zabashtansky on many occasions helped our family and other Jewish families and assisted in our survival. During the German occupation, at the risk of his life, he transferred all the members of our family from the German zone of occupation (Brailov), where the Jews were to be totally annihilated, to the Rumanian zone (Zhmerinka Ghetto), where the Jews had a chance of survival.

Sheltering me and my cousin Hanna Kulik (the only child of the Kulik family to survive), Grigory Zabashtansky used the house of his Ukrainian friend, Mr. Zasadnyuk, in the village of Kozachevka. The latter gave us shelter and hid for two and a half months. Though the attitude of the Zasadnuyk family toward us was friendly and we were well fed, they used anti-Semitic expressions in their speech and we found it hard to live with them...

"Grigory remained a devoted friend of our family until my father's death and our emigration to Israel. Now he lives in Brailov...

"For his brave and human deeds in the hard years we underwent, Grigory Zabashtansky deserves recognition from our people."

These and other petitions, letters and documents testify that different people, citizens of Ukraine, struggled to save the life of Jewish martyrs. Their rescuers weren't rich, far from it, but they shared their honestly earned bread with their fellow countrymen like brothers, even though their religious affiliations and national belongings differed. If they were discovered by the Nazis or their hirelings, they would have nothing with which to buy freedom, and together with those they tried to rescue they would find themselves before a Nazi firing squad or on the gallows.

Love for one's neighbor and the readiness to help the sufferer were inherent in every such righteous Ukrainian man or woman, ranging from the hired laborer Olena Hryhoryshyn to Prof. Bohdan Zahaykewycz to the world-known Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky.



Bertha Hoffmann was a small girl when she found shelter and paternal care in the home of a brave Carpathian man named Yu.Balaban.



The Stefaniv family gave shelter to two Jewish women, Shulamith Enger and Brurja Frankfurter. Rescuers from that family, Oksana Petrenko (second left) and her granddaughter Vira (first right), together with those they saved. Photo taken in Jerusalem, during the rescuers' visit there.



Highly prestigious awards decorate the chest of Pavlo Mykytenko, resident of Chernivtsi, former activist in the struggle against the Nazi occupiers. Together with his parents, Nykyfor and Oleksandra, they saved from the Nazi murderers two Jewish girls, Tania Shneider and Sonia Pjatigorski.



Fedir M. Kalenchuk rescued the Krancberg family from the Nazi hangmen. The solemn presentation of awards at Yad Vashem (1967).



Ivan Dovbenko (currently resides in Poland) saved Rosa Gipshman and other Jews.



GOOD DEEDS
ADD TO THE
NUMBER
OF GOOD PEOPLE





Jerusalem. The Garden of the Righteous Gentiles. View of the trees planted to commemorate the Righteous Gentiles of Ukraine.

SEEDS SOWN

No other seeds yield such bumper crops of humaneness that the seeds of good deeds and mutual respect. Their courageous sowers, the Righteous Gentiles, travelled the road to their own Calvary and all their feats of humanism help people all over the world in enriching themselves with wisdom and good will. This truth is perceived with special keenness by the rescued Jews, their children and grandchildren and fellow countrymen. The entire Jewish nation cherishes lasting gratitude to all such rescuers and strives by good deeds to add to the number of good people, for the benefit of the Ukrainian, Jewish and other nations.

Good deeds give birth to other good deeds. The ideals of the Righteous Gentiles are currently embodied in the activities of Ukraine's prominent political leaders, also in the endeavors of the Society "Ukraine-Israel" and other progressive public organizations. They are all resolutely opposed to anti-Semitism and any attempts to provoke animosity between the Jews, Ukrainians, Russians and people of other nationalities.

There is a Law on the National Minorities in today's independent and democratic Ukraine. It provides for the cultural rebirth and an all-round development of all the nationalities and ethnic groups in this country. In the Word to Reader, at the beginning of this book, President Leonid Kravchuk tells about the first attainments in the process of reliving the Jewish nation in this rich and beautiful Ukrainian land.

Here is more on the subject - fresh information and data from the annals - of how the seeds sown yield good crops. First and foremost, it is the historic visit of President of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, to Israel in January 1993. It was historic, indeed. In his series of articles for *Holos Ukrainy*, organ of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, its chief editor Serhiy Pravdenko makes justified generalizations:

"This visit to Israel teaches us such simple truths as the importance of having one's own historical memory, loving one's own land and

people. Only such memory and love can give rise to a respect for other peoples and an understanding of their destinies and interests.

"President of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk, both during the official ceremony of meeting President of Israel Chaim Herzog, and in meetings with Premier Itzhak Rabin, Foreign Minister Shimon Perez, addressing the Knesset, at luncheons and meetings with the business circles, stressed that Ukrainian politics as such had started being created only recently, after the Referendum of December 1, 1991. All that had been done in Ukraine before that date, including the situation with the Jews, wasn't Ukrainian policy, because it was determined outside Ukraine.

"It was with utmost respect and big hopes that both sides discussed the current and future relations and cooperations between the two countries...

"The business aspect of these relations and mutual respect during the summit meeting was especially evident at the Yad Vashem Remembrance Authority, where an example of great moral strength was given. It was there and then that six citizens of Ukraine received Certificates of 'Righteous Gentiles'. Such certificates are presented to individuals who during World War II rescued Jews from inevitable death. It wasn't easy, because if discovered, the rescuer and his/her family were ruthlessly killed by the Nazis. Anyway, Yosip Sydorchuk's parents of Brody (Lviv Region) did it. They gave shelter to a Jewish girl. She survived the Holocaust and eventually found Yosip.

Likewise, the parents of Stephania Korniyenkova and Yaroslav Kut had the courage to hide Raphael Shlikhter (now Shalev), take good care of him, and eventually have him sent to a local partisan unit. The man had crawled out of the ditch with dead bodies, after a Nazi 'action' and somehow got to their place that same night. They dressed his wounds, took good care of him and put him back on his feet. He went back to the front and eventually entered Berlin with the victorious troops. In 1947, he emigrated to Israel, and now he has found his rescuers. The parents of Valentina Kliots of Bar, Vinnytsa Region, saved Nikolai Mosenzhnik and his son Mikhail. The man also remembered them. There are other examples, many of them... They all testify to what the relationships between the Jews and Ukrainians were really like in Ukraine; to people's self-sacrifices that were done simply and matter-of-factly. People capable of such deeds, when threatened by death, are capable of raising their children and grandchildren in the spirit of mutual respect." (*Holos Ukrainy* January 19, 1993.)

...On through the historic pages echoing with good deeds.

Late in October 1992, the world's first Jewish Congress of Ukraine was held. Two rabbis attending on behalf of Kyyiv's religious

communities blessed those present to successfully solve the issues on the agenda.

The Congress discussed at length and depth the condition and prospects of the development of culture and education of the Jews in Ukraine, also matters pertaining to the struggle against anti-Semitism, unity of the Jewish movement and strengthening of friendly contacts with people of all nationalities.

Attended by 225 delegates from 72 cities and towns of Ukraine, the Congress founded the All-Ukrainian Council of Gentile (Christian) Rescuers of Jews during Holocaust, the Ukrainian Association of Former Ghetto and Camp Inmates, and the Ukrainian Coordinating Committee for Jewish Charity.

Honorable awards were received by 48 citizens of Ukraine, who under most difficult and mortally dangerous conditions had saved Jews during the Nazi occupation.

A Ukrainian woman from Yahotyn, Kyyiv Region, named Vira Korovchenko organized a group of activists and with their help set up a City Society for Jewish Culture.

Ukraine's periodicals, radio and TV companies increasingly often dedicate their programs to the development of culture, art and education of the Jewish nation; to the firm friendly contacts between the Ukrainian and the Jewish people and their diasporas in different countries.

The grand structure of Kyyiv's Brodsky Synagogue (until recently it housed a puppet theater) is known far outside Ukraine

According to the newspaper *Jewish News*, on November 23, 1992, the Commision for the Return of Religious Buildings under Kyyiv City Administration resolved to the Brodsky Synagogue premises to the Jewish religious community.

Until it is transferred to a different building, the puppet show will peacefully coexist with the new - or old, to be precise owners of the premises.

On November 26, for the first time after a 66-year interval a religious service was performed there to celebrate the return of the synagogue to its rightful proprietors.

In November 1992, the Kyyiv Synagogue in the Podil downtown section of the capital was the venue of a conference of the religious communities of Ukraine. It was attended by delegations of rabbis from Israel, the US, Canada and various towns and cities of Ukraine.

In 1993, the International Solomon University started functioning in Kyyiv. It is named after the world-known Jewish sage and politician of the 10th century B.C., author of several books of the Holy Bible, including the Song of Songs.

In an interview with *Holos Ukrainy*, Prof. Alexander Tetalbaum, Ph.D. (Technology), President of ISU, said that this Ukraine's first institution of higher learning answers world standards and is open for gifted young people of both sexes, from both Ukraine and other states (and not only of Jewish parentage). The University's Council of Trustees was formed, too, presided over by Volodymyr Hryniov, Deputy Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Among its members are prominent Ukrainian and Jewish, foreign politicians, cultural figures, scientists, religious leaders and businessmen. An International University Research-and-Consultative Council is in the process of formation.

In 1993, classes started at its 7 departments (e.g., Humanities, Economy, Law, Natural Studies, Biology, Medical Engineering, and New Technologies). Here the students are taught by topnotch specialists of Ukraine and other countries.

These and many other facts are well known in Israel. They are met with utmost approval among the people. It gladdens one heart to realize that here, again, the truth that good deeds add to the numbers of good people proves its worth. Another evidence of it is found in the activities of the Association for Jewish-Ukrainian Contacts. It continues to expand its work, helped by people arriving from Ukraine. Its branches are effectively functioning in Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, Haifa and in other cities in Israel, as well as in the USA, Canada, Germany, France and Australia. The Association's offices are being set up in Kyyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, Odessa, and elsewhere.

There is no exaggeration in referring to the first Ukrainian-Jewish Scientific Conference, held June 7-9, 1991, in Kyyiv, as a truly historic event. Together with the scientists and scholars, it was attended by people representing various trends in the public life of Ukraine, Israel and the Ukrainian and Jewish diasporas. The conference outlined the main common tasks and ways of implementing the decisions passed.

An even bigger impact was made by the First Jewish-Ukrainian Forum in Jerusalem (September 1992), organized by the association for Jewish-Ukrainian Contacts and the International Society "Ukraine-Israel". Besides the Israeli statesmen, politic and scientific figures, the Forum was attended by 12 People's Deputies (MP's) of Ukraine, noted Ukrainian writers, Righteous Gentiles, former inmates of Stalin's and Brezhnev's concentration camps, men of science, culture, art and sports.

The reports, speeches and discussions during the plenary sittings were interesting and informative. Constructive work was done by the Historical, Philosophi-political, Economic and Culturological sections. A special topic on the agenda, "Chernobyl Catastrophe" attracted special interest of the delegates. In the course of the discussion it was

stressed that Israel's aid in overcoming its consequences was of the exceptional importance.

Guests from the Ukrainian State met with Israel Minister of Foreign Affairs Shimon Perez, visited the Knesset, where they were received by the head of the Israeli Parliament Prof. Shevah Weiss.

Important information was exchanged concerning the activities of the Parliaments. Both sides expressed confidence that their cooperation would continue to expand, for the benefit of the two nations and their diasporas. An agreement was reached on the creation of an interparliamentary group.

Dmytro Pavlychko, a prominent Ukrainian poet and public figure stressed in his speech that the First Jewish-Ukrainian Forum would in every way further the relations between Ukraine and the State of Israel.

The delegates enjoyed the traditional Jewish hospitality which was touchingly sincere, both during the forum sittings and while on sightseeing trips in the Promised Land.

While writing all this, I cannot but recall that only some ten years back the Israeli press refused to carry out articles about Ukrainians. Now the situation has changed for the better. Increasingly often, such articles appear in various newspapers and magazines, just as there are growingly favorable conditions for the promotion of Jewish-Ukrainian contacts. In a way, this situation was confirmed by the visit to Israel of a Ukrainian parliamentary delegation. I was present during numerous meetings between the delegation and our President Chaim Herzog, at the Knesset, various ministries, on city streets and squares. In every such case one could clearly see that the Israelies were well disposed toward the esteemed guests. These meetings were remarkably friendly and sincere. The People's Deputies spoke with enthusiasm about the process of building an independent Ukraine and the ways of surmounting the huge obstacles...

Friendship between the Ukrainian and the Jewish people continues to grow. Israel renders tangible aid to the victims of the Chernobyl tragedy, especially children. Businessmen, industrialists, farmers, prominent scientists of Israel are expanding contacts with their Ukrainian counterparts, striving to assist Ukraine in solving its most complicated problems. For example, experts at the Israeli research complex for conversion of solar energy into electricity willingly familiarized the Ukrainian Mps and scientists with the experience of this world's only powerful project.

On January 17, 1992, the Conference Hall of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine hosted a news conference given by Samuel Pogoriles, Ph.D. (Agriculture), professor of a number of universities in Israel, England and the US. Among those present were the President of

Ukraine, the Prime Minister, and ministers of the Ukrainian State. The guest spoke about the main aspects of the Program of Emergency Actions, suggested by Israeli scientists for the creation of high-technology agriculture in Ukraine. The noted professor placed special emphasis on the uniqueness of Ukraine's environment, which wasn't totally destroyed even by Chernobyl, since any kind of soil can be practically decontaminated. He further promised help in reaching an agreement with the World Reconstruction and Development Bank in Washington, in terms of granting Ukraine preferential farming credits. The scientist even quoted interesting statistics. In Israel, the ratio of farming producers, compared to the rest of the population, is 1:82; in the US, it is 1:85 (by comparison, in Ukraine it is 1:12). The crux of the matter is the availability of high technology, genetic engineering, and of course, the development of private land ownership.

Many other such examples could be cited. They all testify to the Israelis' sincere desire to help Ukraine in every possible way. Our two long-suffering nations have no reasons to bear grudges against each other. For centuries Jews and Ukrainians have lived side by side, and they all know only too well that it's high time an end were finally put to anti-Semitism, Ukrainophobia, and to all that which gives rise to any interethnic animosity. The people's age-old wisdom time and again reminds one that all humans on our planet should make better and fuller use of the rich potentials of their respective countries for their all-round development.

Precisely this motivation calls upon us to expedite our efforts in looking for new, yet undiscovered Righteous Gentiles. And nor should we ever forget that with every passing year their number becomes smaller. Who, besides them, can recall how the doomed were snatched from the claws of the brutalized savages of the 20th century? Who else can personally testify to the life-giving courage and goodness of heart of the rescuers? The only other witnesses - lofts and cellars, double walls and basements, dugouts, bunkers where Ukrainian citizens used to hide the innocent martyrs doomed to total annihilation - will never speak in their behalf. And nor will speak the streets and squares of cities, towns, townships and villages where the exposed Righteous Among the Nations breathed their last on the Nazi gallows. Nor still will any testimony come from the thick of the forest or from the groves with trees and hollows where the rescuers did their holy deeds, hiding fellow humans from death. Their rustling leaves seem to whisper with the groaning voices of the suffering victims, and with the soft insistent voices of the Righteous: "People, remember us! This memory is needed not by us, but by the present and coming generations!"

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In writing this book this author used quotations from literary works by Taras Shevchenko, Dmytro Pavlychko, Gusyev-Orenburgsky, Donia Rosen; also articles carried by the newspapers Holos Ukrainy (nos. 195, 204, 422, 457), Pravda (No. 268322), Osvita (No. 4209), The Jewish News (nos. 5, 12, 13), Hadashot (No. 3), Vozrozhdeniye (nos. 3, 19); documentary materials - letters, photographs, testimonies of rescuers and rescued Jews, kept in the Yad Vashem archives and those of the Association for Jewish-Ukrainian Contacts.

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ANY REPRINTS FROM THUS BOOK ARE POSSIBLE
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By this book the International Society "Ukraine-Israel", jointly with the Association for Jewish-Ukrainian Contacts, and creative association LITOPYS starts the series UKRAINIAN CITIZENS - "RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS". A second book of the series is now being prepared for publication.

The author and the publishers would appreciate fresh information concerning the Righteous Gentiles (e.g., original letters, testimonies, relevant documentation and photos).

Any such contributions will be acknowledged with gratitude at:

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