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With this image we go Inside the Yad Vashem's memorial for children. The names of young people lost in the Holocaust are recited during the hours the museum is open. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD For fifty years [Wladyslaw Szpilman](#) did not talk about his experiences after the war was over and his book was published.

He initially returned to Radio Poland but soon became a very [popular composer](#) (scroll down 40% to hear excerpts) as well as [performer](#). His children had no idea their father had written anything—let alone a book that had been withdrawn by the Communist-controlled Polish government because it contained, among other things, positive words about a German soldier.

In the 1990s, Szpilman's son [Andrzej](#) happened upon his father's earlier-published book. He was shocked at what he read. Thanks to Andrzej's efforts, the book was republished—first in German, then in English.

Although Wladyslaw never saw Wilm again, he was able to [meet members of his family](#), including Hosenfeld's son Helmut. And the movie, based on Szpilman's objectively dispassionate account, is acclaimed as one of the best films released in 2002.

Vlad (as his friends called him) would not consider himself a hero, nor does the movie. He was a survivor who observed horror and recorded what he saw. In his [review of *The Pianist*](#), Roger Ebert notes that is more than enough to make this a terrific movie.

Israel's Holocaust [remembrance museum](#), with its [sobering section](#) dedicated to lost children, is called Yad Vashem. The road leading to it is named Avenue of the Righteous. [Along that avenue](#) trees have been planted in honor of Gentiles (like [Oskar Schindler](#) and [Raoul Wallenberg](#)) who saved Jews during Hitler's reign of terror.

[Before](#) his death on July 6, 2000 (at age 88), [Szpilman](#) (scroll down 50% to watch a video interview) and his family tried very hard to convince the decision makers at Yad Vashem to plant a tree for Wilm Hosenfeld (whose [biography](#) was published in 2003).

That request—at least initially—was denied. Hosenfeld was a German [Wehrmacht](#) officer, so Yad Vashem (through its Commission for the Designation of the Righteous) needed to investigate his background. Did he commit any war crimes? Did he help anyone beyond Szpilman?

In 2008, investigation results proved that Wilm Hosenfeld deserved to be designated as "Righteous Among the Nations." He received that posthumous honor on November 25, 2008.

We close this story with Wilm's words. On June 16, 1943—extremely upset by Jürgen Stroop's orders to destroy the Warsaw Ghetto and its people—Hosenfeld [wrote this in his diary](#):

Innumerable Jews have been killed like that, for no reason, senselessly. It is beyond understanding. Now the last remnants of the Jewish inhabitants of the ghetto are being exterminated. An SS Sturmführer boasted of the way they shot the Jews down as they ran out of the burning buildings. The entire ghetto has been razed by fire.

These brutes think we shall win the war that way. But we have lost the war with this appalling mass murder of the Jews. We have brought shame upon ourselves that cannot be wiped out; it is a curse that cannot be lifted. We deserve no mercy; we are all guilty. I am ashamed to walk in the city...

EDITOR'S NOTE:

We are exceedingly grateful to Wilm Hosenfeld's family who provided us with pictures and facts about their father and his diary (before Yad Vashem's investigation was concluded).

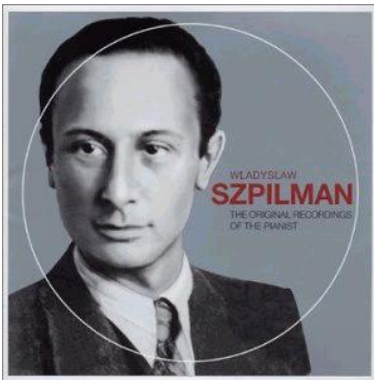
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Media Stream



Wladyslaw Szpilman - Original Recordings

CD-cover image, online courtesy Amazon.

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Szpilman Meets Hosenfeld Family Members

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Yad Vashem - Remember the Children

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial museum in Jerusalem, has a very moving memorial to around 1.5 million children lost to the Holocaust during World War II. This image depicts the scene of the Children's Memorial.

In addition to viewing this scene, of candles commemorating the loss of so many children, visitors to the museum hear the names, and ages, of each child who died in the Holocaust. Their names—and the names of their countries—are repeated during all hours that the museum is open to the public.

How did this memorial come about?

Abe and Edita Spiegel, who were originally from Ukraine, were imprisoned at Auschwitz where they lost their 2½ -year-old son, Uziel. He, like so many others, was murdered at the infamous Nazi concentration camp.



The Spiegels, who survived the war and moved to America, wanted to honor their lost son—together with the sons and daughters of so many other parents—so they donated the funds to build Moshe Safdie's architectural plan for this Children's Memorial.

The memorial itself is hollowed-out from an underground cavern. Dark inside, the cavern allows visitors to see so many candles—representing around 1.5 million lost children—as they shine like stars in the firmament.

Who were these 1.5 million children? The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum tells us more about who they were and where they were from:

The Germans and their collaborators killed as many as 1.5 million children, including over a million Jewish children and tens of thousands of Romani (Gypsy) children, German children with physical and mental disabilities living in institutions, Polish children, and children residing in the occupied Soviet Union.

Some Jewish and some non-Jewish adolescents (13-18 years old) had a greater chance of survival, as they could be used for forced labor.

The Children's Memorial is a deeply moving place which causes visitors to pause as they reflect on how many young children were killed during the Holocaust.

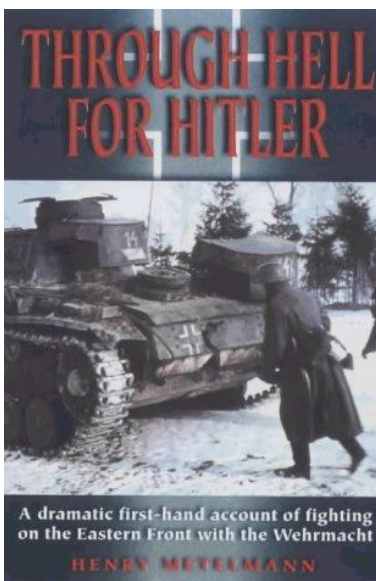
Click on the image for a better view.

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Through Hell For Hitler - by Henry Metelmann

Book-cover image online, courtesy Amazon.

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