

THE BULLETIN OF



THE CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST STUDIES

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

Volume 11, Number 1

Fall, 2006

Leonard & Carolyn Miller Continue to Support Our Endeavor

For some ten years now, Leonard and Carolyn Miller have been generous and active supporters of UVM's Center for Holocaust Studies. They established an endowment in 2001 and have now made a major gift to the Center that will have far-reaching effects. The gift of five million dollars will be used in two ways: it will cover a major part of the expense incurred by the Billings renovation project, and it will establish funding for teaching lines in Holocaust Studies specifically.

Once construction on the Dudley Davis Center is complete, renovations on Billings will begin. The building, designed by Henry Hobson Richardson and named for Charles Billings, was the University's library when Leonard Miller was an undergraduate at UVM. It became the Billings Student Center in 1963 after the Bailey Library (now Bailey-Howe Library) was built. The building will, in part, revert to its original bibliotechnical function, housing the Special Collections archives. In addition, Billings will also house Vermont Studies and the Center for Holocaust Studies. These two programs will be situated in the gallery of the North Lounge. Discussion of the nature of the teaching positions has begun.

We are exceedingly proud to have enjoyed the support of Leonard and Carolyn Miller over the years and are honored to be the recipients of such a generous gift. We thank them both most heartily on behalf of not

only the Center and the community, but on behalf of all the future generations of students who will benefit from their largesse and support.



*Leonard Miller
Photo: Sabin Gratz*

Jewish Life in Nazi Germany: The Fourth Miller Symposium

*by Dawn A. Palladino
The University of Vermont*

The Miller Symposia have a history of bringing together scholars and research, students and faculty, the interested and the interesting. This past April's symposium at the University of Vermont was no exception. As always, many warm thanks are extended to Leonard and Carolyn Miller, after whom the Symposium is named, for their continued support and generosity.

The day began with a welcome from the President of the University, Daniel Mark Fogel. Longtime Director of the Center for Holocaust Studies at UVM, Professor David Scrase, then introduced Konrad Kwiet. Emeritus Professor Kwiet is Deputy Director of the Centre for Comparative Genocide Studies at Macquarie University in Australia, where he held the Chair of German from 1992 to 1999. Kwiet gave a forceful and lively introduction to the day's speakers.

Jürgen Matthäus, with whom Kwiet has co-authored a book, gave the first presentation entitled "Evading Persecution: German-Jewish Behavior Patterns after 1933," in which he discussed one specific Jewish reaction to persecution by Nazi Germany: the Family Law Novella. This was a legal means of sanctuary for Jews. If a woman was willing to denounce her child's father on the birth certificate and claim that the child was the illegitimate offspring of an Aryan, the child's status could be changed to "Mischling" (i.e., half-Jewish) or "Aryan." Of course, this had to be proven in a court of law. Because a Jew's word was not admissible evidence, an Aryan had to corroborate the testimony. Other evidence could include documented genealogy, blood, and appearance. More than four thousand citizens were "upgraded" in status because of the Family Law Novella.

Some Germans complained that the Family Law Novella was a waste of government time and money, and expended too much effort on the part of half-Jews; others, however, thought the law was necessary if preserving pure bloodlines was the true purpose of the Nazi racial policy. The Family Law Novella offered a means of escape for thousands of Jewish citizens through legal intervention against unlawful discrimination. Some families found it difficult to deny their heritage and proclaim adultery; others thought that evading death was more important. At the war's end, many cases were still being processed, evidence that despite its distastefulness, the law saved many lives.

The day's next speaker, Avraham Barkai, in his lecture "Jewish Self-Help: The Dilemmas of Cooperation, 1933-1938," described another method of escape employed by some families. During the Holocaust, many Jewish organizations attempted to fight anti-Semitism and also to en-

courage Jewish self-help and education. The Zionist Organization of Germany went further than encouragement, and created Havara Farms, which made possible the emigration of approximately 53,000 Jews to Palestine. Acceptable applicants were young people who could help to develop the country of Palestine. If one could obtain one thousand Palestinian pounds, he or she could emigrate without a visa. Unfortunately, this goal was far beyond the reach of some Jews. Hitler approved of emigration and for a time allowed the farms to operate. Tens of thousands of people were still waiting for visas by the time emigration was no longer an option.

Marion Kaplan's lecture "Changing Roles in Jewish Families under Attack" addressed how the Holocaust altered gender and family roles. She described how women began to support the family financially and spiritually during the crisis while still caring for the children and helping their husbands. Women in general became more assertive. Some even attempted to free their husbands from jail and to get their families to safety by obtaining emigration visas. Many children were taken out of school in order to help in the home, but those who were kept in city schools often suffered discrimination and rejection from their peers. Older children kept the harsh realities from their parents, and some of them, unaware of the hardships their children faced, simply encouraged them to stiffen up when complaints were voiced.

Some enforced traditional gender roles more strictly, clinging to familiar ideas. For example, some continued to keep female children home to help with the housework, and refused to believe that the Nazis would torture or arrest women. Interestingly, it was women who usually saw the subtle, first signs of trouble, such as the ineffective boycott of Jewish businesses, or the reprieve for World War I veterans. Wives stressed the importance of flight to their husbands; however, many men did not want to leave their jobs. Furthermore, working primarily with other Jews prevented some men from seeing what was happening in the larger world around them.

After the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in November 1938, many perceptions were drastically altered. Unfortunately, by then it was too late for many to leave. Some Zionist and Quaker groups tried to help children emigrate, but many adults, especially the elderly, were left behind. Most people felt that the children were the future of the Jewry, and it was necessary to "save the young and succor the old." 82.5% of Jews under 25 years of age were able to leave Germany; however, fewer women than men escaped. The reasons for this are numerous: for example, women could find work more easily than men, and parents sent more sons to safety than daughters, keeping many female children behind to help care for aging family members.

Beate Meyer's lecture "Between Self-Assertion and Forced Collaboration: The Reich Association of Jews in Germany, 1939-1945" discussed three major phases in

which the Reich Association attempted to aid the Jewish population. The first phase, “enforced emigration,” occurred between 1939 and October 1941. In this stage, Nazi and Jewish efforts worked in conjunction, and approximately 70,000 Jews emigrated from Germany. Most of them were young, affluent, fluent in multiple languages, or had relatives in other countries. The elderly, ill, and those unable to work were often unable to leave; these individuals were the prime concern of the Reich Association.

After October of 1941, emigration was no longer possible, and organizations such as the Reich Association were forced to give the Gestapo lists of Jewish names from various communities. The Association was also required to collect money from the Jews to cover the expense of their own deportations, to support the Jews who remained, and to organize the postal service in the ghetto.

In May of 1942, Reinhard Heydrich was assassinated; 250 Jews were shot. After that, many Jews from Berlin were arrested, deported, and brought to concentration camps, including the functionaries of the Association. By June of the same year there were few opportunities to save Jews. One year later, all staff members of the Reich Association had been deported. Many of them continued to help Jews in any way possible from within the ghettos. Some were still given responsibilities by the Nazis, such as compiling deportation lists, and deporting Jews married to non-Jewish citizens after the spouse had died. Some of the functionaries were killed or arrested by the allies after liberation, but the members of the Reich Association of the Jews in Germany had an overwhelmingly strong sense of responsibility and self-assurance throughout the Holocaust.

Michael Brenner gave the final lecture of the 2006 Miller Symposium entitled “Jewish Culture in Nazi Germany: A Reassessment.” Brenner discussed the early years of Nazi rule. During the Weimar Republic, research in the field of Jewish history had grown as never before. Jewish and non-Jewish men and women pooled vast stores of knowledge. After gaining power, the Nazis initially supported research about Jewish culture, as long as separation from “Aryans” was promoted. The Nazis eventually took over the “exploration of knowledge” regarding Jewish history, because they alleged Jews were not objective about their own history, and therefore could not produce thorough and scientifically accurate information.

Because many Jews left Germany during this period, those who remained became the culture-bearers of the population. To reinforce their solidarity, many attempted to reverse the assimilation process and began to identify more with their Jewish roots. For example, Jewish theater became popular, as it gave Jews the opportunity to both socialize and connect with a specifically Jewish artistic endeavor. These plays were also a chance for Jews to reclaim their heritage and values through art.

Well-researched and articulate, the five lectures complemented one another, and the question and answer sessions

often involved the entire panel of speakers. Despite the breadth of the symposium’s topic, it was possible for the speakers to paint a relatively complete picture of Jewish life in the Nazi era. In the face of the overwhelming threat of Nazi extermination, Jewish culture provided a bulwark of survival. It gave some the strength and courage to persevere through inhuman circumstances, while it supported the infrastructure through which individuals and organizations worked to save lives. Through their culture, Jews could remain a united people.

Dr. Norman Goda and the Allied Prison at Spandau

*by Amanda Tanney
The University of Vermont*

Dr. Norman Goda addressed the University of Vermont and the surrounding community on Tuesday, 27 June 2006. Dr. Goda is the chair of the History Department at Ohio University. He is also a congressional consultant for US government declassification efforts under the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act of 1998, and a well-known scholar in the field of Holocaust Studies. His lecture, entitled “Nuremberg’s Secret Legacy: The Allied Prison at Spandau,” was based on his book, *Tales from Spandau: The Nuremberg Criminals and the Cold War*. Both discuss the political problems with security at the prison, as well as how the themes of martyrdom and national memory in the wake of the Holocaust affect the current political climate.

Dr. Goda began his lecture with a brief introduction to the Allied prison at Spandau. The first, and perhaps most critical, Nuremberg trials occurred during 1945 and 1946. These resulted in twelve death sentences and seven infamous imprisonments (those of Konstantin von Neurath, Walther Funk, Erich Raeder, Karl Dönitz, Baldur von Schirach, Albert Speer, and Rudolf Hess). Control of the prison at Spandau was shared by the United States, the USSR, Britain, and France, which led to strained political relationships among all parties.

The politics of the prison are complicated; however, Dr. Goda attempted to make them clearer by outlining each country’s objectives in prosecuting the trials. As they unfolded, basic ideological differences among the Allies, and hence the fears of each country’s leaders, complicated sentencing negotiations. In addition to the threat of escape, the Allies shared the fear that should any of the war criminals be imprisoned, they would found new political movements while incarcerated, as Hitler and Stalin had done. The Soviet Union advocated execution for all of those convicted at Nuremberg to limit the possibility that a “Fourth Reich” could arise. When it became apparent that some of the Nazis on trial would not be executed, the Soviets demanded strict measures: solitary confinement, censorship of all communication, and meticulous screening of prison

personnel. The Soviets wanted the prisoners isolated completely to prevent "Hitler's Shadow Government" from influencing political constituents in Post-war Germany.

The British, on the other hand, felt the Allies should not treat the German prisoners as the Nazis had treated inmates in the concentration and death camps during the war. The British were of the opinion that solitary confinement was illegal and illogical, thus they resisted the urge toward severity that the USSR favored. They preferred to have the prisoners active and at least a part of a prison culture (e.g., doing garden work, participating in chapel services, and interacting with each other) despite the dangers that such contact among the prisoners and the guards presented.

The issue of the ethical treatment of the prisoners while seeing justice done was directly related to the fear that the inmates could gather support to build a "Fourth Reich." This incessant fear of German nationalism precipitated both the harsh measures recommended by the Soviets, and the more humanitarian policy advocated by the Western Allies. If treatment was too lenient, the prisoners' chances of gaining political support and communicating with interested parties outside the prison increased; if it were too harsh, the Allies risked focusing a growing feeling of victimization in defeated Nazi Germany on the inmates at Spandau. At this point, Dr. Goda cited an article in a West German magazine as evidence that many Germans felt the Allied prison at Spandau was unjust and illegal.

Ideological differences of opinion about what was necessary, and what was ethical, in the administration of justice continued to mark the development of Allied policy at the prison. Generally, the Soviets, taking every opportunity to show force and unrelenting watchfulness in their dealings with the prisoners, looked on with indignation as the Western Allies agreed on policy among themselves. As the prisoners grew older and fewer, their treatment renewed debate. Despite Soviet objections, the Western Allies were sympathetic to the families of von Neurath and Raeder, and they were released from Spandau due to declining health. Eventually, Hess was the last one alive in the prison. The Allies maintained that Hess had to serve his life sentence, which he did until he hanged himself in 1987. Public reaction to his continued internment, and finally to his suicide, was indicative of exactly what the Allies feared.

Hess' plight became a humanitarian cause as he aged. Those Germans who were frustrated by the hard political and economic times protested his continued imprisonment as unfair and cruel. After his suicide, people in similar circumstances as their predecessors, and those who would see the banner of "White Power" taken up again, rallied around images of Hess, proclaiming that he was a victim. The Allies were keenly aware that "martyrdom" could have been conferred on any of the inmates at Spandau in the delicate political atmosphere that emerged in Post-war Germany. Thus, much of the policy arising from the Nuremberg ver-

dicts was an attempt to avoid precisely that reaction. Even at the end, the Allies were afraid that any of the surviving family members might want a large, state funeral. Such a spectacle, full of pomp and circumstance, could fan the dying embers of wounded German pride, however long-cooled, thus engendering a new nationalist movement.

In the final section of his lecture, Dr. Goda focused on the legacy of the prison in relation to some elements in the current German political climate, and in relation to the continuing issue of international justice. The visual supplements to his lecture were perhaps most poignant as he showed images of German, neo-Nazi groups marching with signs of Hess as recently as last year's anniversary of his death. These groups still use the occasion of Hess' death to publicize their political views and to try to win support. Regarding the issue of international justice today, the Nuremberg trials introduced the legal term "crimes against humanity," as it also marked the first time political officials were tried for perpetrating them. The Hague and the Geneva Conventions were influenced by the precedent set in the trials. And finally, the trials set the stage for others of a similar nature, especially those of Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein. The political pressures surrounding the Nuremberg Trials played out in the negotiations surrounding the prison in Spandau, but their resolutions continue to affect world politics even now as different nations seek justice beyond their borders.

Dr. Goda then took questions from the audience. Most of the questions, unsurprisingly, dealt with the theme of international justice. For example, one audience member asked which country's laws were used in the judicial process and how was it possible to create a fair trial. The other questions dealt mainly with memory and martyrdom. Some wanted to know whether the neo-Nazi movement was as dangerous as the original Nazi movement. Others wanted to know how Goda thought the trials and the reappearances of Nazism affect the youth of today. The ensuing discussion was interesting, even if it left complex questions unresolved. At one point in the concluding discussion, Dr. Goda seemed to advocate execution of all those convicted at Nuremberg, justifying his view with the advantage of hindsight. He stopped short, however, of advocating capital punishment in issues of international justice by emphasizing the political expedience of execution. He simply stated that to have not executed the leaders of Nazi Germany necessitated dealing with the political fallout. The ethical questions raised by capital punishment were reserved for another lecture. Dr. Goda's presentation illuminated the difficulties of the Nuremberg trials and the process of international justice more generally. He made apparent the difficulty of balancing not only the competing desires of the Allies in exacting retribution, but also of balancing punishment and martyrdom in the national psyche of a defeated Germany. He left the audience to ponder questions of justice in all their complexity.

Dr. Emanuel Tanay Speaks about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

By Emily Butler

The University of Vermont

Throughout the last week in June, members of the UVM community were privileged to hear numerous personal accounts from survivors of one of the darkest periods in history, the Holocaust. A survivor of this period, Dr. Emanuel Tanay, a forensic psychiatrist at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, spoke of his personal experiences as a Jew in Europe during World War II. Dr. Tanay discussed what he considers to be myths associated with the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. He also delved into the mental processes behind these misconceptions.

Tanay was five years old and living in Poland in 1933 when Hitler came to power. His father was a dentist in Vienna and very politically active. In 1939, when Tanay was eleven years old, Poland was defeated by German troops. This was his "first encounter with brutality." He recalls seeing a "human river" in the streets of his town, along with German planes flying overhead. This was to be the beginning of his turbulent experiences resisting and avoiding the Nazi regime. Before Tanay was thirteen years old, the formation of ghettos for Jews in Nazi-occupied territory was announced. These were described as nothing but "urban prisons" for Jews while they awaited deportation to one of the labor or death camps. They were kept from moving outside of the ghetto by barbed-wire fences and force.

Just after his thirteenth birthday and the celebration of his Bar Mitzvah, Tanay and his family were sent to the Warsaw Ghetto. This was an environment where "any German could shoot any Jew, at any time, no questions asked." Just before the deportation of a large portion of the ghetto population to various camps was to occur, Tanay's father gave him a false Christian birth certificate with which to travel, and instructions on how to escape to a monastery. He followed his father's instructions and hid, assuming the identity of a young man studying for the priesthood. His mother and sisters were also given false papers with which to make their own escapes. In November of 1943, Tanay escaped to the mountains of Hungary. In March 1944, he met up with the Zionist underground, but was shortly caught and put in a camp in the Ukraine. While thus interned, he tried to escape, got caught, and was moved to a prison in Budapest. In January 1945, Tanay was liberated by Romanians.

Tanay's personal account served as an introduction to the main thrust of his talk. At this point, he broached the topic of post-Holocaust mentality in Europe and the larger world, and its relation to the "myths" that arose around the events of the Shoah, especially those that pertain to the character of the Jewish people. Myths are created through

the processes by which the mind "resolves conflict between reality and an image" of that reality, according to Tanay. In the case of the Holocaust, certain myths arose among certain groups to resolve conflicts between the reality of what happened to the European Jews, and the image that the group would like to believe depicts the truth of the Holocaust. In the context of his lecture, Tanay illustrated some of the inconsistencies between these myths and his personal experience of WWII as a Polish Jew.

The first myth Dr. Tanay discussed was that Jews "went like sheep to the slaughter" and did not fight back. He believes this myth derived from Palestinian Jews who became bystanders during the Holocaust. This myth serves to pacify their own guilt for not taking a more active role in helping European Jews. Tanay argued that by projecting the image of helplessness onto European Jews, non-European Jews avoided some of the guilt resulting from an inability to do anything about the matter. The myth of European-Jewish resignedness toward the intended destruction of one's self, family, and neighbors arose among non-European Jews as a way to protect the self-images of members of the latter group. Tanay suggests that it is as if non-European Jews created the myth of complacency to the point of complicity to shift any focus away from their own helpless attitude toward the destruction of their European kin.

This view does not reflect reality mainly for two reasons, according to Tanay. Firstly, the very act of survival, of saving one's own skin from the Nazis, and, if one were lucky, to help a few others to do the same, was not being merely shepherded to the slaughter. The project of survival for a Jew in WWII Europe generally, and in the concentration camps in particular, did not allow any room for complacency toward the Nazi Regime. Secondly, surviving the intended destruction of a race, whether through forced compliance or not, is perhaps the most effective act of resistance regarding the European Jews as a people, and proverbial sheep do not resist. By thwarting Hitler's efforts to attain the "Final Solution," one resists the persecution inflicted upon every single European Jew.

A second myth about Jews during the Holocaust derived from Christian faiths. Tanay maintains that in reality, much of Christianity teaches hate and spite toward those who are believed to have persecuted Christ. This "theology of hate" in part allowed the Holocaust to occur, as victimizing the Jewish people was often a result of such hate mongering. As a group, Christians stood by as Jews were killed by the hundreds of thousands. According to Tanay, Christian rescue efforts were not common, and they were certainly not as widespread a phenomenon as believed by many today. This myth, like the previous one, also serves to assuage guilt; and again, this guilt is a function of conflict between "reality" and "self-image." In order to save the image of the Christian as benevolent and responsive to human suffering, the myth of widespread Christian rescue efforts arose.

Perhaps the most intriguing myth that Dr. Tanay discussed is the one surrounding the uprising that occurred in the Warsaw Ghetto. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising was one of several underground movements to resist the Nazis during the early forties. This uprising in Warsaw was in anticipation of a massive liquidation of the ghetto populations and a desire to resist death in the camps. On 19 April 1943, 750 members of the ZOB, the Jewish fighting group responsible for the uprisings, began an armed resistance against the German officers in the ghetto. This resistance lasted nearly a month and was ended in May of that year. Fifteen German soldiers were killed, and 56,000 Jews captured, 7,000 of whom were immediately shot, those remaining were sent to concentration camps.

Dr. Tanay discussed the mythologizing of the resistance offered by the ZOB in Warsaw, and some of its implications. While not disputing any of the foregoing facts, he cited other evidence that sheds a different light on the events of the Uprising. The underground movement, Tanay stated, started with one revolver among its approximately 220 members. By the time of the final uprising, the organization had 50 revolvers to arm its constituents. Finally, of all its members, only about 200 were active in the revolt. Dr. Tanay asked, "What could the ZOB have hoped to accomplish, given these conditions, especially when the entire Polish Army had failed to resist Hitler?" Germans actually welcomed armed resistance, as it gave them an excuse to use their superior force, a reaction that must have been expected. Dr. Tanay likened the situation to one of rational suicide: leaders of the ZOB chose death in the ghetto over death in the camps. It was an act born of desperation not of heroism. It was an act born from a sense that death was inevitable, not of any urge to resist death altogether. Dr. Tanay asks, "How is this suicide heroic?"

The aggrandizement of the resisters' heroism derives partly from the decision by the Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority in 1950 to celebrate this uprising in remembrance of all the Jews who fought and died during the Holocaust. Those who did not fight and die, but who offered other forms of resistance were not commemorated. Dr. Tanay begins to poke holes in assumptions about resistance as he pushes on the idea of what it meant to resist Nazi persecution during the Holocaust. Why were the Jews who took part in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising celebrated as representative of all Jewish resistance? Who is a martyr and who is a hero? Here, Dr. Tanay re-emphasized his earlier point that to outlive Hitler's persecution is, in fact, resistance; furthermore, it is the only successful resistance.

The decision to celebrate as heroic these particular Jews, according to Dr. Tanay, propagates one myth in reaction to the idea that European Jews went easily to the slaughter. It creates a discourse that seeks to find martyrs and heroes in a group that is decried as weak by others. In other words, this myth allows Jews to imagine an identity more palat-

able to the popular sense of courage and heroism, rather than see the act of survival as it truly was. Dr. Tanay suggests that the commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising helps to build a mythology of strength through armed resistance that contradicts another myth of passivity among European Jews.

Tanay said that in order to be a real hero of the Holocaust, one needed to have "the courage to endure." This is what it took to be a survivor, not a warrior. It did not guarantee survival, but was necessary for it. The Jews could not have reduced the Germans by force, but the persecuted constantly out-witted their persecutors. The reality of Holocaust survival for European Jews was neither going "like sheep to the slaughter," nor was it a war-story of brothers-in-arms; it sometimes required flight and invisibility, but it is no less courageous and heroic for that. Tanay indicated that he has achieved much in his life thus far: he is active and well-known in the academic community; in his role as forensic psychiatrist, he has worked on highly publicized trials, such as those of Ted Bundy and Sam Sheppard; his memoir has been published, and he continues to reach many people through speaking about his experience of the Holocaust. As he concluded his lecture, Dr. Tanay told us, "Despite all of this good fortune, my biggest accomplishment is that I will die of old age, and not because I'm a Jew."

Meeting Survivors in "The Holocaust and Holocaust Education"

by Erica Dietrick and Brendan Burke
The University of Vermont

This was the thirteenth consecutive year that the University of Vermont Center for Holocaust Studies has offered its summer seminar "The Holocaust and Holocaust Education for Teachers of Grades K-12." Students consisted of undergraduates with an interest in teaching after graduation, graduate students, middle and high school teachers, and members of the general public with an interest in the subject matter. The course was presented by members of UVM's History Department, the German and Russian Department, Holocaust survivors, as well as community members. Moreover, a group of students taking the graduate-level section of the seminar, which was offered for the first time this year, was able to put into practice some of the ideas that they had discussed.

The week-long seminar began with an introduction by Robert Bernheim, the interim Director of the Center for Holocaust Studies and member of the Department of history. His lecture, entitled "The Twisted Road to Auschwitz-Birkenau?" provided historical context surrounding Nazi Germany in Pre-war Europe and Hitler's plan for the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question." He framed his lecture with a question to emphasize that disagreement in historical interpretation occurs, drawing upon the recent de-

bate between Daniel Goldhagen and Christopher Browning, regarding the degree to which the Holocaust was perpetrated by “ordinary men” or “ordinary Germans,” to illustrate his point. To set the stage for the week, Bernheim used the image of a mosaic to describe the study of the Holocaust: the multitude of sources at our disposal to help us build a picture of the Nazi Holocaust are like the tiles of a mosaic, they can all add something to the composition of our understanding. Sources range from documents kept and maintained by the Nazis, to eyewitness testimonies of Holocaust survivors, and post-war legal proceedings, on the one hand; to case studies by historians, political scientists, and Holocaust scholars, on the other. Throughout the week, the scholars and survivors who spoke to the class provided each student in the seminar with the knowledge necessary to create a mosaic that corresponds to his or her motivation for taking the course.

After Professor Bernheim’s lecture, we were introduced to our first Holocaust survivor, Aranka Siegal, a well-known friend to many at the University of Vermont. She is also a woman dedicated to preserving the memory of both those who died and those who survived. Siegal preserves her story by speaking to others about her experiences as a teenager in a Hungarian ghetto, and at the Nazi camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Christianstadt, and Bergen-Belsen. One of our assignments before coming to class was to read her Newbery Award-winning book, *Upon the Head of the Goat: A Childhood in Hungary, 1939-1944*. Speaking with the author after reading her novel connected us to a survivor and a piece of literature in a way that is impossible in any other forum. Her story became more than a printed narrative. It took on a living aspect as her voice, recounting emotionally-charged events, rose and fell among those of us assembled in the room. For the rest of the week Siegal joined in our class, attending lectures and presentations.

Following Siegal’s testimony were six other survivor accounts that touched upon diverse themes and topics. We heard from Gabe Hartstein, Susi Learmonth, Henri Weinstock, Simon Barenbaum, Michael Bukanc, and Yehudi Lindeman. Gabe Hartstein discussed the topic of righteous gentiles in his personal account. He introduced us to people such as Raoul Wallenberg, who worked tirelessly to save the lives of others during the closing months of the Second World War.

The statement “I sometimes wonder if I’m making this up” became an especially poignant moment in Susi Learmonth’s testimony. She said it so simply, remembering the events preceding her departure from Austria in 1938, yet this idea about the diaphanous quality of memory became a recurring theme that complicated some of our own assumptions about history. Her eyes offered a window into the soul of a woman who represents a fading generation, a generation that witnessed the deaths of eleven million victims, some six million of whom were Jewish. The testimonies of survivors and intended victims such as Learmonth

are perhaps the strongest link between our generation and the nearly unspeakable atrocities of the Holocaust. But what happens when the people who remember that time are gone? Historians of this era continue to wrestle with this issue.

As the week continued, Bernheim reminded the class that the study of Holocaust history is a challenging task. Paraphrasing Holocaust scholar Yehuda Bauer, he reminded us, “as historians, we must research and analyze. But we also need to realize these are real stories of real people.” Studying history, in all of its abstractness, one can sometimes lose sight of those who lived the events under consideration. It can prove difficult to grasp that the events happened to people, and not only between the covers of a history text. The interaction with so many eyewitnesses to the Holocaust seemed to make history come alive in a way many of us had never experienced in a classroom.

As aspiring secondary educators, we had no idea what we were in for that week. We had come to learn for ourselves about a time in history that seems shadowed by neglect in high school curricula and haunted by seemingly unanswerable questions. We felt the need to learn about the Nazi Holocaust in a way that never happened for us in high school. Neither of us believes that our teachers willfully neglected teaching the Holocaust, but its de facto omission from the history curriculum at our schools continued the nebulous cycle of vagueness that often surrounds Holocaust education at many public schools. We feel the need to be prepared in our knowledge of the Holocaust for our own students. Visiting with some who survived the concentration and extermination camps reminded us of the humanity of those written about in texts, as it also reinforced our feeling that Holocaust education is an important and worthwhile endeavor.

“Our” generation, the grandchildren and great grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, witnesses, and combat veterans have a responsibility to bear witness. The message heard clearly by us was that we will soon be among the privileged few who have heard the personal accounts of actual Holocaust survivors. This seminar and the Holocaust Studies program exist now, and will continue for some time; survivors, however, will not. That fact is hard to bear.

Such was the CHS 2006 summer seminar: an intense, week-long class about the events of the Holocaust, in large part told by eyewitnesses who lived through it. We the audience, some twenty-five teachers, aspiring educators and students, both novice and expert, came with pens and paper to record what those willing to speak before us had to say. It is clear now that our experience in a classroom in Votey Hall can bridge the generational gap between the events surrounding World War II and the students of tomorrow. We the educators, in the role of this newly created generational link, bear the burden of carrying on these stories, and it is a responsibility in which we cannot afford to fail.

The World of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1906-1945



Dietrich Bonhoeffer

by *Elisabeth von Thadden**
translated by *David Scrase*
The University of Vermont

One morning during WWI—it was the winter of 1917-18—thirteen-year-old Emmi was whiling away an hour or so with two of her brothers playing a version of softball in front of their parents' Berlin house in Kunz-Buntschuh-Strasse. It would soon be lunchtime. A blond-haired, strong-looking boy from the neighborhood turned up, asked whether he could join in their game, and sure, why not? He looked nice. The boy, it turned out, had seven siblings, among them a brother who played the cello, and a twin sister who played the violin; he himself played the piano, and so with Emmi, who was learning the viola, they could form a quartet. It all worked out nicely.

Emmi's surname was Delbrück; the blond boy's name was Dietrich. Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His family had moved from Breslau to Berlin in 1912, when his father, a professor of psychiatry, had been offered a chair at the Friedrich Wilhelm University, which he accepted, taking over as head of the psychiatric clinic of the Charité Hospital at the same time. In 1916, the family had moved to a large house in Wangenheimstrasse not far from the Halensee railroad station. The upscale development of villas on the edge of the Grunewald was recent.

The Delbrücks were already living next door, having moved there in 1906 when they were expecting Max, their seventh child. With the cook, the maid, and the governess there were twelve people and they needed a roomy house. Because the father, Hans Delbrück, the historian and member of the Reichstag, did not hold architects in high esteem, he designed the house himself, collaborating with the contractor. Moreover, they situated the house right in the middle of the lot—which was highly unusual—so that the children could play in the front and the back yards. When one day the boys climbed up and sat down on the roof for a game of chess, causing a concerned neighbor to come round in alarm and point to the danger, father Del-

brück simply advised him “not to look.”

Much about this house was unusual. Her father, wrote Emmi much later in her memoir (*Emmi Bonhoeffer: Essay, Gespräch, Erinnerung*. Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2004), was “revolutionary,” and not only because he put the kitchen next to the dining room with two swinging doors rather than in the basement, where the kitchen was normally to be found.

Emmi's mother, Caroline Delbrück, the daughter of the surgeon Karl Thiersch, who developed the skin graft, and the granddaughter of the chemist Justus von Liebig, had brought money into the family and was a deeply religious church-goer. A kindly, gentle woman, people said, sixteen years younger than her husband. There were prayers before bed and grace before meals, but when one of the children wanted to know why their father did not go to church, Caroline Delbrück was candid: “It's too boring for him.” It is said that she later gave a different answer: namely, that his whole life was in God's service.

When Caroline Delbrück's eldest daughter, who worshipped Hitler, brought a Nazi into the house as a son-in-law, he got into a fight with Max Delbrück, who had many Jewish friends. In April 1933, the laundry was done by a “Jewish” laundry service. The daughter challenged her mother and presented her with a choice: “Either the Jews go, or your daughter goes!” Her mother is said to have responded quietly but clearly: “My child, I choose the Jews.” This altercation sickened her.

Not far from the Delbrück's lived the Harnacks with their seven children, the family of the liberal theologian Adolf von Harnack, who had been ennobled a few years earlier. His wife and Caroline Delbrück were sisters. Harnack was known for having, among other things, robbed the Apostolic Creed of its innocence in that he proved that it did not stem from the apostles themselves but was formulated only hundreds of years later. Whether or not a protestant minister professes the Apostolic Creed was for Harnack not the point—it was a matter of Jesus' teaching and life of love.

A Synthesis of Science, Bible, Politics, and Music

A little further away from the Harnacks lived the Dohnanyis, that is to say, the children, Hans and Greta, of the composer and pianist Ernst von Dohnanyi, with their mother Elisabeth Kunwald, who was also a pianist. She gave two of the Delbrück children piano lessons, and recommended that Emmi learn the violin. The father-in-law of both Dohnanyi children was to be Karl Bonhoeffer.

Bonhoeffer, Harnack, Delbrück, Dohnanyi—these names come together as a rare constellation. They belong to the world of the liberal German bourgeoisie, with a dash of nobility here and there, into which Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born on 4 February 1906—ten minutes before his twin sister, as he was wont to stress, and thus making him the sixth child of his parents. The political resistance to Hitler

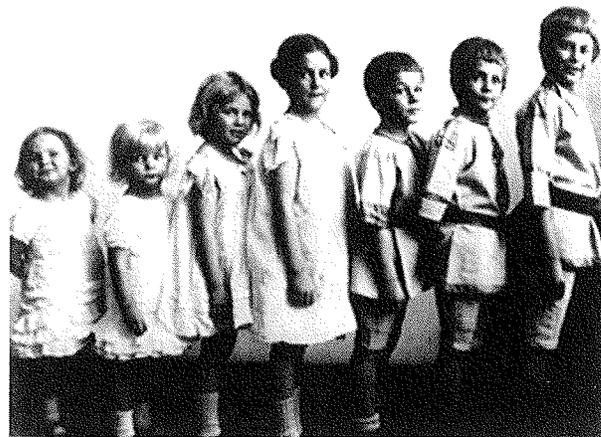
is indebted to the close connections of these families for several of its active members, and Germany's loss through the murder and exile of the children of these families was inestimable: it was the total loss of a culture, of a group of people that attempted to create a symbiosis of science, the Bible, music, humanism, and active politics. Essentially, it was a group of people for whom the human element alone counts.

To be sure, the majority of the German bourgeoisie was what made National Socialism possible. They believed in it, or, at the very least, they did not resist it. Countless scientists, artists, civil servants, Christians, too. It is therefore hard to see the history of the Bonhoeffer, Harnack, Delbrück, and Dohnanyi families as representative, and yet there is a possibility. The qualities of these families do not provide a kit from which resistance can be fabricated. They did not leave behind a recipe for us to follow, to imitate them. Any form of respect or admiration would have been alien to them. They together formed a chance constellation, perhaps no more and no less.

The history of this Berlin neighborhood, of these friendships, soon to be marriages, which began at the end of World War I and intensified during the hikes, the skating, the music-making, had by 1945 suffered an interruption that remains to this very day almost inconceivable: the theologian and minister Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed by the Nazis in April 1945 in the concentration camp Flossenbürg. His brother Klaus, the violinist and lawyer, was shot by the SS during the night of 22-23 April 1945. Dietrich's eldest brother, Karl-Friedrich, who had married Greta von Dohnanyi, survived. Ernst von Harnack, the Social Democrat and father of five children, was murdered in Plötzensee at the beginning of March 1945. His cousin Arvid Harnack, a lawyer, economist, and member of the Rote Kapelle resistance group, had already been executed in December 1942.

The lawyer Hans von Dohnanyi, whom Christine Bonhoeffer had married, father of three children, was murdered in Sachsenhausen concentration camp in April 1945. Ursula Bonhoeffer's husband, Rüdiger Schleicher, a secretary in the Air Ministry, father of four children, was shot, together with his brother-in-law Klaus Bonhoeffer. The lawyer Justus Delbrück survived the resistance but died of diphtheria in Russia as a prisoner-of-war in the fall of 1945. Max Delbrück emigrated in the nick of time and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1969. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's twin sister, Sabine, married the Jewish lawyer Gerhard Leibholz and accordingly left Germany with him in 1933. Emmi Delbrück, who had married Klaus Bonhoeffer, managed to find her way west to their three children after he was murdered.

But not so fast: it is still the time of the First World War, and they are all very much alive. In the Bonhoeffer's garden, there is a goat—in their Breslau house, there had been a room set aside for biological study of all sorts of small



The Bonhoeffer children

animals like reptiles, rodents, and beetles—and Paula Bonhoeffer, the mother of the eight children, an enlightened and progressive woman, and a trained teacher, home-schooled her own children, as well as the neighbors' children, for the first few grades—including study in religion.

For the Delbrücks, Manners Were Not so Important

Home-schooled because, according to biographer Ferdinand Schlingensiepen (*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2005), the Bonhoeffers were of the opinion that German citizens had their backbones broken twice: once in school and once by the military. Bonhoeffer's mother, the child of a court preacher, was the dominant personality in the household; his father remained in the background. It is said that he once disguised himself as a hired waiter at a masked ball so that he could observe the guests' behavior.

When they came to celebrate the seventh birthday of little Susanne in their vacation home, she expressed a desire to invite "lots of children." Her wish was granted, she extended the invitations, fifty-seven children came. At the end of the afternoon, the parents came to pick up their children—except for five whom Paula Bonhoeffer accordingly took back to their parents, who were poor and didn't have the courage to come for their children themselves because they had "nothing to wear." It then occurred to Paula Bonhoeffer that they had a laundry house on their property that was empty and could be converted into living quarters. She accordingly invited the destitute family to move in and look after the property during the Bonhoeffers' absence. And that is what happened.

The Bonhoeffers could come up with plenty of famous ancestors, but boasting was not for them. Just like the Delbrücks, they would invite people they could converse with, whom they found interesting. Other social considerations were unimportant. Every Sunday, after dinner, the Delbrücks and the Harnacks would all sit down together and the fathers would discuss what had happened during the week and describe their correspondence—in front of their children. For the Delbrücks manners were not so important;

for the Bonhoeffers more so. A tone of modest honesty quietly prevailed. "Whereas we Delbrücks were frightened of saying something banal," said Emmi later, "the Bonhoeffers were fearful of saying something 'interesting,' which would turn out to be not so interesting and therefore pretentious if not a little ridiculous."

The Bonhoeffer household was initially rather apolitical. It was not until 1923 that a circle of positively disposed individuals emerged to discuss the precarious, new Weimar Republic. The Bonhoeffer house in Wangenheimstrasse now became, like those of the Delbrücks and the Harnacks, a center for the discussion of political and philosophical questions. Harnack is reported to have said as early as October 1918 that "Democratization, which I heartily endorse, is in itself not enough, of course. If we do not fight against and stamp out arrogance, Mammon, Godlessness, and the lack of any idealism we will not be safe from Bolshevism either, because new liberal structures alone will not clear things up. Indeed they will simply be obliged to give way to ideas that are even more liberal if they are not sustained by public spirit, serious purpose, and a willingness to sacrifice."

In practice, the Bonhoeffers lived according to the same ethical premises. The right of might should not prevail. Strangers should be protected from all brutality. Father Bonhoeffer is remembered by his daughter Sabine as "fostering in us a respect for warmhearted, selfless, disciplined action and he expected us to stand up for those who were weaker." At the time of great hunger, that was not easy for the children. Years later, when he was visiting the US, Dietrich would remember how close suffering came, even to upper middle class children: "The number of suicides increased frighteningly... I still remember vividly passing a bridge on my way home from school during the winters of 1917-18 and 1918-19 and seeing almost every morning a group of people standing on the banks of the river, and everybody who passed by knew what had happened. These images weighed heavily on us small boys."

The sense of security that his parents fostered to counter such anxiety was clear to him. As a student, he told his sister Susanne once when they were hiking: "One day, I'd like to feel exposed and vulnerable. We aren't able to understand other unfortunates who are in this position. We always have our parents who smooth out all our problems. And no matter how far away we are, that provides us with such glaring security." All the same, this boy, for all his familial security, had his own experiences of how it is to be a sixth child or to stand out in some way. It is impossible not to notice how this ambiguous boy sought happiness at the piano, playing, composing, singing.

He shared with his two youngest siblings, inspired by the piety of the governess who was of the Moravian faith, a predilection for religious games, and with his twin sister he shared an interest in death, in burial, and in funeral corteges. How does it feel concentrating on the word eter-

nity? What kind of last words would come to the pious on their deathbed—surrounded, of course, by all the relatives? This was the sort of thing the twins used to discuss. Death was not at all frightening to the believer Dietrich, even if he undoubtedly preferred life. This longing for and interest in death, which the child experienced between the ages of eight and eleven, Bonhoeffer later worked through in a draft of a novel, in which the protagonist falls sick with the "natural" and "obvious" disease of the fear of death: "his sickness was that he looked upon reality as real."

When in early 1918 Dietrich's eighteen-year-old brother Walter was killed, death in all its reality dealt the family a shattering blow, so much so that for years, each new Christmas festivity began with a visit to the grave. Klaus Bonhoeffer's close and lifelong friendship with Justus Delbrück originated at the grave-sides of their two older brothers who fell in battle. Mother Bonhoeffer, who was especially close to Walter, remained for a long time a broken woman, and Dietrich, meanwhile, became perforce a caring protector for his little sisters. Little by little he moved closer to his mother, with whom he soon found an even closer link through religion.

In the course of the First World War, Dietrich gradually lost his initial enthusiasm for it, but he found the victorious powers' attempt to blame only Germany for the war to be dreadfully wrong. How was the devastated land, full of starving and seriously wounded people, ever to get on its feet again? Bonhoeffer is said to have reacted to the death of Walter Rathenau—he heard the shots from his classroom in the Grunewald Gymnasium—with the question: where would Germany end up if it continued to murder its best leaders. Rathenau's niece, Ursula Andreae, was a classmate.

The Bonhoeffer family found the world of modern science more appropriate for its intelligent children than theology. Not so the undoubtedly gifted Dietrich, for he chose the path to theology while still a schoolboy. His eldest brother, Karl-Friedrich, who read Marx and was sympathetic to the Workers' Councils, decided to study the sciences; his brother Klaus, seeking justice within the existing system and fighting against a corrupt civil service, decided on law. Dietrich's turn to the church, which his brothers thought was provincial, and to theology, which was considered a dead-end in those modern times, was looked upon with suspicion if not annoyance by his brothers—especially because Dietrich seemed more inclined to become a minister than to embark on a brilliant career as a professor of religion.

Indeed, because of his experiences during and after the First World War, because of his desire to stand out from his older brothers, because of the theological background dating back to his grandparents on his mother's side, because of the boy's early openness to religious experience, and not least because he could rely on a network of people with links to the family, a decision in favor of evangelical

theology, the parish, the way to people's hearts through ministry, was made. Bonhoeffer quickly became convinced that theology had to prove itself in the modern world, had to become political. In 1942-43, just before he was arrested, he jotted down the words: "We need not geniuses, not cynics, not those who despise human beings, not cunning tacticians, but honest, simple, upright people." It was at this point that he found the perhaps unique synthesis of theologically based Christianity and political resistance that was to cost him his life.

Making Music Together Masked their Conspiratorial Meetings

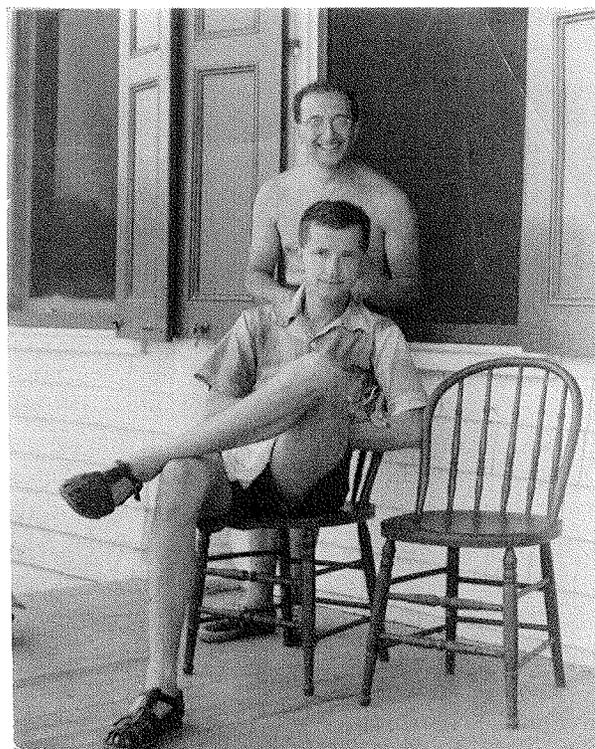
With just a few strokes, Bonhoeffer's friend and biographer, Eberhard Bethge, sketched an unsurpassed portrait of the man who died a martyr, a portrait of a physically active man who could not stand the gentle stroll, a man who would thoroughly throttle to death any sickness with medication (*Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Contemporary*. London: Fountain Books, 1977). In conversation, he spoke quickly and accent free; in anger, he spoke quietly; and as a preacher, he spoke hesitantly and ponderously. He concentrated on whatever lay before him, was a chain-smoker while working, and described extraordinary situations with marked understatement. He loved music and performing at social gatherings; and whenever his nephews and nieces were sitting in the garden, doing their homework, he would throw down chocolate from the window. He was used to being the superior, writes Bethge, not the victim.

He did not choose a wife until he was thirty-six and opted for a young Pomeranian lady of noble birth, Maria von Wedemeyer, whose company he almost never enjoyed alone—his arrest precluded any intimacy. This woman later became a successful mathematician and computer expert in the US. She survived two further marriages and divorces and never during her lifetime released the diary she kept during her time with Bonhoeffer.

That the members of the Bonhoeffer, Harnack, Delbrück, and Dohnanyi families all joined the Resistance together had its roots in the particular circumstances of these families; their spontaneous and normal relations with their Jewish neighbors, friends, and colleagues sharpened their perception of the great crimes perpetrated by the Nazis. The elevated social positions of the resistors allowed them to see and learn about these crimes early and inform others of them. This was especially true for Hans von Dohnanyi. The international nature of Bonhoeffer's church connections helped hide the conspirators' links abroad. Making music together masked their conspiratorial meetings. Their deep and intimate friendships dating from early childhood helped them to communicate through secret codes even when they were ultimately being tortured by the Gestapo. Their education and wide reading helped them to encode

messages and thus smuggle prison mail through the censor. And their Christianity provided the theoretical underpinnings for their actions.

Finally let us go back to beginnings, at the time of World War I. One day a Delbrück daughter came home from school and related how her teacher had said that significant fathers seldom had significant children, whereupon little Max Delbrück, who was scarcely tall enough to see over the edge of the table, piped up and said: "Ho ho, just you wait!" The children from the Grunewald did not have much time left to wait. But Max was right.



Max Delbrück (seated) with Salvador Luria, at Cold Harbor Research Facility. Delbrück, Luria, and Alfred Hershey won the 1969 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his research on bacteriophages, a class of viruses that infect bacteria.

** Elisabeth von Thadden is herself a member of a famous family that offered resistance to the Third Reich. This article was printed in the newspaper Die Zeit, 2 February 2006, in commemoration of the centennial of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's birth. — The Editors.*



Book Reviews:

The Family Whistle: A Holocaust Memoir of Loss and Survival.

Simon Eichel with Lee S. Kessler.
iUniverse, Inc. 2006.
\$15.95(Paperback), 170pp.
ISBN: 0595361336

*Reviewed by
Barbara Mieder
Milton High School*



Simon Eichel's memoir *The Family Whistle* differs in many ways from most survivor memoirs I have read. To be sure, the end result of Mr. Eichel's ordeal was the same as that of many Polish Jews in that he lost many of his closest relatives (including his mother and two siblings) to the horrors of Auschwitz. He found himself homeless and displaced after the war. And yet, Eichel's experiences between 1939 and 1945 set him apart.

Eichel reports that in 1939 the Nazis rounded up his two older brothers, and later him and his father, in their home in Chorzow (Königshütte), Upper Silesia. The soldiers ordered them to report for "work duty." Although the reader endowed with hindsight expects this exodus to end up in a concentration camp, it does not. Instead, the men, after being relieved of all their valuables, escape to the Soviet Union. During this ordeal, the fifteen-year-old Simon and his father are separated from Josel and Salo, Eichel's elder brothers.

At this point in the narrative, we learn of the book's title: while the family still resided in Chorzow, Eichel's oldest brother would whistle a short piece of the folksong "Horch was kommt von draußen'rein" when coming home late at night, after the front door of their apartment building had already been locked. When a family member heard the whistled strains of the song, someone would come down and let him in. In addition to being used as a signal to open the door, the family whistle also helped members locate each other in crowded situations. After the four men were separated in their escape from the Nazis, the two family halves were reunited in Lvov when Eichel and his father heard Josel whistling.

After this reunification, the Eichel men move steadily eastward, eventually arriving at an NKVD work camp in Siberia, 1000 kilometers north of the city of Omsk. It is here they spend the war years, at first harvesting wood to support the Soviet forces, and later practicing their learned trades of tailoring and barbering. During these years, they are totally cut off from news of the outside world, and they

live in hopes of returning to Poland. In fact, Eichel and his brother Josel continually fantasize about the wonderful meal their mother will prepare for them when they return, little suspecting what has happened to her and other family members in their absence.

To help pass the time during these years, Eichel begins to write down memories of his early life in Chorzow. Interspersed with reports of life in Siberia, we learn what it was like growing up Jewish in what was already a very anti-Semitic Poland.

At the end of the war, now a young man of 21, Eichel returns to Poland with his father, his brother Josel, and his brother Salo (who is accompanied by his new Russian wife). In Chorzow, they learn that all their relatives have perished in Auschwitz and that their home is occupied by an unknown Polish family. The shock of this discovery was so great that Eichel cannot describe it at all in his memoir. He writes, "I have absolutely no recollection of that day. I'm shocked that this is so. And I guess shock is really the right word. We, all of us, must have been in a state of shock. What else could explain it?"

With nothing to keep him in Poland, Eichel moves on to a displaced persons camp in Germany. The end of the book relates his experiences here (where he meets and marries his wife Mary) and his journey to the United States, where he becomes a successful businessman.

Eichel learned, as so many survivors did, that a crucial element of survival was the support of family. He recalls, "we were stronger because we were together. And we stayed together because of the leadership of my father." This memoir is as much a tribute to the love and wisdom of Eichel's father, as it is a tale of how these four men survived the horrors of their experiences.

Above all, the book is a fascinating account of a Jewish survivor who, although targeted by the Nazis, did not end up in a concentration camp or hiding in Europe, but working in Siberia. It is a gripping story of a young man's journey—a journey not only from Poland to Siberia, back to Europe, and then to the United States—but also a journey from adolescence to manhood, and a journey of self-identification. As Eichel becomes a man in the calamity of the Holocaust, he comes to view himself more as a Jew than as a Pole.

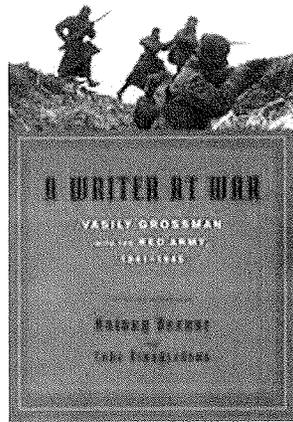
The book contains an enlightening preface by David Scrase and a poignant prologue by Simon Eichel himself. It is a worthy addition to the memorable accounts of survivors, showing one more time how ingenuity and luck enabled a few to thwart the Nazi plans for their destruction.



A Writer at War: Vasily Grossman with the Red Army, 1941-1945.

Edited and translated by Anthony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova. New York: Pantheon Books, 2006. \$27.50(Hardcover), 378pp. ISBN: 0375424075

Reviewed by
Robert Bernheim
The University of Vermont



In the corpus of literature on the Holocaust, very little about the Red Army's first encounters with Nazi crimes against Jews in Eastern Europe, as it drove formations of German armed forces back towards Berlin in the last half of the Second World War, has appeared in an English translation aimed at a large readership. *A Writer at War: Vasily Grossman with the Red Army, 1941-1945*, edited and translated from the Russian by Anthony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova, is a remarkable exception. The 378-page collection of Vasily Grossman's wartime writings and notes from 1941-45 while he was a special correspondent with the Red Army newspaper, *Red Star*, the most widely read newspaper in the USSR during the wartime era, includes a number of detailed, personal, and often poignant accounts of the Nazi Holocaust in Ukraine and Poland. These reports illustrate the scope, depth, and impact of the Holocaust as it was experienced in two regions that were central to the Nazi plan to annihilate the Jews of Europe.

Grossman, his second wife, Olga Mikhailovna Guber, and her two sons were in Moscow on Sunday, 22 June 1941 when the Germans unleashed the largest land invasion to date. Led by four Panzer groups with coordinated air strikes, behind sweeping curtains of artillery barrages, more than three million German troops smashed through the first lines of Soviet western border defenses. The Nazis encircled almost three full Soviet armies, captured hundreds of thousands of Red Army troops, and appeared well on their way to the key cities of Leningrad, Moscow, and Kiev by the start of August. Grossman, who had immediately volunteered for the military but was rejected as unfit, eventually joined the war effort as a combat correspondent. Within seven weeks of the commencement of hostilities, he was posted to the collapsing front in Gomel, a city southwest of Moscow.

Grossman's work as a war correspondent is lucid and penetrating, and his personal notes offered few moral placebos in the first year of the German invasion. His prose is descriptive, but economical in its language, and lacks no power for its starkness. Grossman's wartime writing, how-

ever, masks a deep personal investment in following the German retreat. He had failed to evacuate his mother from Berdichev, his childhood home. At the onset of hostilities, Olga had discouraged her husband from arranging passage for his mother, due to a lack of space in their Moscow apartment. Grossman's mother had also refused to leave, as she was taking care of a niece who was unable to live on her own. When it became clear that the German invasion would soon overrun Berdichev in early July 1941, Grossman had an opportunity to get on a train and persuade his mother to return with him. He delayed, and his window of opportunity closed forever, causing him to reproach himself for the rest of his life. After learning that his father and his only child, Ekaterina Korotkova-Grossman, a daughter from his first marriage, were safe, he spent the rest of the war seeking answers to his mother's fate.

As the Soviet Army advanced, recovering territory that had been lost to the Nazis, Grossman moved with them. Eventually, he was able to return to Berdichev in search of his mother. Once there, he visited execution sites near the airstrip and what had been the temporary ghetto of Yatki. He interviewed dozens of eyewitnesses to the German massacres that had occurred in the summer and early fall of 1941. From these conversations, he learned that the local, non-Jewish, Ukrainian population had collaborated with the Germans in the murder of some 20,000 to 29,000 of Berdichev's 30,000 Jews. Among these victims were his mother and most of his extended family. Grossman turned out a detailed article, "The Killing of the Jews of Berdichev," about his findings in his former hometown. The full article, however, never appeared in print. Soviet censors wanted to de-emphasize the role of collaboration by Soviet citizens, as they also sought to blend all of the Nazis' victims into a single, nondescript mass. Despite the Communist Party's tight control of information, Grossman did all he could to focus on the personal suffering of Jews within the context of the collective crime as he continued to record the aftermath of the Nazi invasion.

Grossman was one of the first correspondents to visit the remains of the Warsaw and Lodz ghettos in the wake of the German retreat, and his interviews with survivors, as well as his observations and acumen about the conditions surrounding their endurance, are invaluable to scholars and lay readers alike. They offer details of life and death under Nazi occupation that are devoid of political spin. As trust grew between Grossman and the survivors of Poland's two largest ghettos, they related to him what they had seen during the course of the war, and he wrote it down.

He wrote the first report in any language on the operation, destruction, and aftermath of Treblinka II, one of the three special "Operation Reinhard" extermination camps designated primarily for Jews in the eastern half Poland. The Red Army uncovered close to 40 survivors of the camp, and Grossman interviewed them all. The resulting article, "The Hell of Treblinka," is considered by scholars to be

one of his finest pieces of writing, and was part of the evidence exhibited at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials.

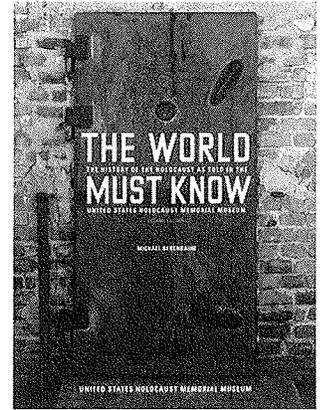
Grossman was the longest-serving combat correspondent at Stalingrad, and continued with Soviet forces all the way to Berlin in the spring of 1945, detailing the progress of the Red Army as they uncovered atrocity after atrocity in the wake of the Nazi retreat. The articles he wrote for *Red Star*, certainly made his by-line familiar to the literate. At the front for almost four years, Grossman was an astute observer, and he honed his craft to become one of the most celebrated and recognized authors in twentieth-century Soviet letters. He recorded his observations, interviews, and encounters with soldiers, civilians, and Party members in this series of notebooks, which served not only as the basis for his articles, but also for his later novels.

Anthony Beevor, as editor of Grossman's wartime writings, largely allows these words to speak for themselves. In this collection of Grossman's work, Beevor occasionally provides insightful, historical and political context. He also provides readers with an introduction, glossary of terms, several maps, and numerous photographs of Grossman throughout the war, as well as a thorough bibliography of Grossman's written works. This reader, however, was left wanting more detailed maps and footnotes covering the prodigious correspondent's postings on the front for over 1000 days, as well as specific information about how Grossman's notebooks came to Beevor's attention. Still, it is riveting material, and it fills a gap in scholarship about the Red Army's advance toward Eastern Europe.

A Writer at War: Vasily Grossman and the Red Army, 1941-1945 is, without doubt, an excellent addition to the body of historical literature on both the Soviet responses to the German invasion and the occupation of the USSR during the Second World War. Grossman wrote from the perspective of the front-line soldier, and as such, he details the impact of the Nazi Holocaust on portions of the Soviet Union and Poland that would otherwise be impossible to attain. Grossman chronicled the impact of what Hitler called a clash of two ideologies and a war of extermination for a longer period than most combat correspondents of his era, and his observations about the "ruthless truth of war" (pp. 344) are some of the most distressing and powerful to appear in English translation. Beevor's comprehensive look at Grossman's wartime oeuvre serves as a reminder of the brutal costs and the totality of war along what the Germans called the Eastern Front.

The World Must Know: the History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Revised Edition.

Michael Berenbaum.
Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.
\$29.95(Paperback), 260pp.
ISBN: 080188358X.



Reviewed by Carroll Lewin
Emerita Professor of Anthropology,
The University of Vermont

The federally funded (\$40 million annually) United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which opened in Washington D.C. in 1993, has grappled with both its *raison d'être* and its diverse constituencies since its inception. The second edition of *The World Must Know*, a reiteration by Michael Berenbaum of the scope and mission of the museum, allows us to ponder a number of related questions: To what extent does the museum, like the other Holocaust memory sites, fulfill diverse visitors' needs to understand the trauma and the discontinuities of history? As an attempt to answer demands for authenticity and the relocation of truth and history, to what extent does the museum represent a cultural appropriation of the Holocaust to fit the "American experience" and, presumably, "American values?" The volume addresses these questions by providing two intertwined narratives: that of the Holocaust itself and, implicitly, that of the museum. Both narratives demonstrate how knowledge formations and the logics of representation, embedded in all memorial museums, strive to deal with struggles over historical truths and practices. The complexity of memory work on the Holocaust and the exigencies of memory culture emerge in the interstices of the narratives.

Tracing the history of the Holocaust, *The World Must Know* self-consciously parallels the chronological treatment in the museum's permanent exhibition. The interspersion of photographs and other documentary evidence in the text echoes the physical experience of a visit to the museum. On one level, the volume is a super-sized, beautifully produced guide-book, but at the same time, a rather masterful capsule of Holocaust history. Like the museum, the text sequentially tracks the origins and the outcome of the genocide while consistently touching upon American involvement (e.g., the liberation of the camps) and dis-involvement (e.g., the controversy over whether or not to bomb Auschwitz). Readers are treated to both a concise rendering of the Holocaust and an introduction to an ex-



perience of the museum. Scholars might regret lacunae within, or some homogenization of historiographical debates (e.g., eliding the differences between the works of Christopher Browning and Daniel Goldhagen), but those with minimal background are provided with a brief, well constructed introduction to the Holocaust. First person accounts (including that of Marion Pritchard) generously intertwined with Berenbaum's narrative, parallel attempts in the museum to "personalize" the Holocaust. Helpful to both neophyte and veteran scholars are two Bibliographical Notes, the second of these updating sources since the first edition. They nicely highlight the wide range of Holocaust topics. Readers of *The Bulletin* will note the prominence in the "Notes" of Raul Hilberg's work, as well as the roster of Hilberg lecturers at UVM.

Particularly relevant to the narrative of the museum's mission are forewords by Berenbaum, and by former and present directors, Jeshajahu Weinberg and Sara Bloomfield. All three emphasize the continuing concern over the focus of the museum, the presence of diverse audiences, and the roles of scholarship and activism in genocide awareness. Herein lies a forum for considering how public memorials and commemorative projects become spaces that can be used alternatively. While the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum clearly commemorates the Jewish victims and survivors of the Holocaust, it has also allowed for the exposure of contemporary concerns about other genocidal incidents and precursors to genocidal activities. Here, Holocaust memory and American humanitarian conscience coincide. Thus, in 2004, the Committee on Conscience at the museum declared its first-ever "Genocide Emergency" regarding Darfur, Sudan as the African genocide came into American consciousness. The other side of the dual mission of the museum came to the fore in 2006 when a chorus of protests emerged over Germany's reluctance to release data about Nazi victims in the enormous files of the International Tracing Agency in Bad Arolsen, Germany. According to the *New York Times*, 20 February 2006, Paul Shapiro, Director of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the museum, accused Germany of engaging in Holocaust denial by "exerting a stranglehold" on the process of releasing these files. In other words, the museum aspires to document and memorialize the victims of the Holocaust, and it also uses the example of the Holocaust as a forewarning of present and future genocides. Memory work is embedded not only in a culture of memory about six million Jews, but in the hope for lessons applicable to other times, places, and circumstances.

It is in this area that outreach, along with memorialization and scholarship, becomes a focal point of the museum. The text of *The World Must Know* tells the story of the Shoah, as does the museum; however, the museum also raises a more general awareness while it educates myriad non-Jewish visitors. Here "American lessons" are learned from the Holocaust, highlighting the museum's uniqueness as a lo-

cus of Holocaust memory. This becomes apparent from a perusal of the most recent Annual Report of the museum. About one-half of the report is devoted to the (predominantly Jewish) names of donors (about \$14.5 million in contributions for Fiscal Year 2004-5). The other half of the report summarizes scholarly and outreach activities. Outreach audiences are composed of predominantly non-Jewish visitors, including the armed forces, police, teachers, clergy, foreign dignitaries, and the like. Indeed, the photo on the book's cover is of a young, African-American, D.C. policewoman lighting a memorial candle at the museum. The title of the report encapsulates the dual function to which the museum aspires: "Out of Memory, Conscience. Out of Conscience, Responsibility."

Berenbaum's volume elucidates the mission of the museum with a narrative of the Holocaust that strives dually to memorialize and to provide warnings to humankind. That discussion still surrounds the museum's *raison d'être*, as Berenbaum acknowledges, is a healthy sign. Both the textual and physical versions of the museum represent a self-conscious conjunction between an "Old World" event and a "New World" consciousness. The tension in this conjunction is inherent to the conceptualization of the museum itself, and it should continue to inform the museum's mandate to remain a vibrant institution devoted to creating a "never forget" consciousness in Jews and non-Jews alike.

The Bulletin of the Center for Holocaust Studies is published semi-annually by the Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont. Please send all correspondence, including changes of address, to:

The Center for Holocaust Studies
University of Vermont
Old Mill Annex, A301
94 University Place
Burlington, VT 05405-0114

E-mail us at: uvmchs@uvm.edu,
or visit our website at:
<http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmchs>.

The Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont was established in 1993 to honor the scholarly and pedagogical legacy of Raul Hilberg, *Emeritus* Professor of Political Science at The University of Vermont. His monumental work, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, changed the way historians and students around the world view the Holocaust. Since Dr. Hilberg began his research in the late 1950s, what was a reluctance to confront the facts of the Holocaust has given way to a hunger for the truth.

The Bulletin of the Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont Volume 11, Number 1

Contents:

Leonard and Carolyn Miller	page 1
Jewish Life in Nazi Germany	page 2
Dr. Norman Goda	page 3
Dr. Emanuel Tanay	page 5
Meeting Survivors	page 6
World of Dietrich Bonhoeffer	page 8
Book Reviews	page 12

Editors:

Robert Bernheim
Dan Green

Contributors:

Dawn Palladino is a junior majoring in Sociology at the University of Vermont.

Amanda Tanney is a sophomore majoring in Russian at the University of Vermont.

Emily Butler is a senior majoring in Anthropology at the University of Vermont.

Erica Dietrick is a senior majoring in Political Science at the University of Vermont.

Brendan Burke is a senior majoring in Secondary Education at the University of Vermont.

David Scrase is Professor of German at the University of Vermont.

Barbara Mieder teaches German at Milton High School.

Carroll Lewin is *Emerita* Professor of Anthropology at the University of Vermont.

Robert Bernheim is Interim Director of the Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont and a lecturer in the History Department.

The Center for Holocaust Studies
University of Vermont
Old Mill Annex, A301
94 University Place
Burlington, VT 05405-0114

Non-profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Permit No. 143 Burlington, VT
--