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LETTER FROM CHERVIN

By Bernard Kabakow, M.D.

Earlier this year, during a medical teaching mission to Minsk as part of Jewish Health Care International, I had the opportunity to visit Chervin, the shtetl where my father was born, and to reunite with my remaining family there and in Minsk, the capital of Belarus. One of my cousins, a retired engineer, had traced our family ancestry seven generations, back to 1720. It is of interest that several boys were stated to have died as infants, but later appeared alive as adults; this was a ploy used frequently by Jews to avoid conscription of their male children into the Czar's army. Our family name, Kabakov, means "roadside inn" in Russian, but actually derives from the Hebrew "kadosh ben adoshin" (martyr son of martyrs).

Chervin, a small town of 4,000 inhabitants located sixty kilometers east of Minsk, was originally settled in the twelfth century; Jews began arriving there in the mid-eighteenth century. In the 1880s, my grandfather, a tailor, and his brother, a carpenter, came from Minsk to Chervin, or Igumen, as it was known then. By the early 1900s more than two-thirds of the shtetl's population were Jews; there were synagogues and a Jewish club with a drama circle, and Yiddish was the language of the marketplace.

The great Yiddish poet and playwright H. Leivick (né Leivick Halpern) was born in Chervin in 1888. He went to *cheder* with my father and his cousins. Leivick was arrested in 1906 for illegal revolutionary activity and was exiled to Siberia.

My father was conscripted into the Czar's army in 1914. He was captured during World War I, spent two years in a German prison camp, escaped, and returned to Chervin. There he joined the Red Army and fought for Trotsky for four years before deserting and emigrating to the United States in 1920. He told me that the reason he left was that instead of one Czar there were 100 commissars. My grandparents remained in Chervin until 1929, when their house was taken over by the Communists; then they, too, emigrated to the United States.

On 2 July 1941, the German army captured Chervin and confined the some 2,000 Jews in a ghetto consisting of wooden houses without running water, heat, or indoor toilets. The Jews of Chervin, together with others from surrounding areas, remained in those houses, which still stand today, until 2 February 1942, when they were all marched three kilometers to a clearing in the forest, were made to dig their own mass graves, and were machine-gunned to death. My great-uncle Moshe, his two daughters Zina and Lisa, and Lisa's five-year-old daughter Clara were among those murdered.

The monument erected by the Soviets at that site reads: "Here are buried the remains of over 2,000 Soviet citizens, shot by the German Fascist barbarians on 2 February 1942." One month later, on 2 March 1942, the Germans marched 5,000 Jews from the Minsk ghetto, including all the children from the Jewish Orphanage, to a large gravel pit near a hillside and machine-gunned them to death. A memorial was erected at the site by the Jewish community of Minsk, and was inscribed in both Russian and Yiddish (the only memorial in the Soviet Union to have such a bilingual inscription) with the words: "A memorial for all time for 4,000 holy martyrs (*kedoshim*) who were killed at the hands of the bloodthirsty enemies of the human race, the Fascist murderers and hangmen." Stalin attempted to have the Yiddish inscription removed, but he was opposed by a group of Jewish war heroes and the memorial remains as originally inscribed to this day.

My uncle, David Segalovich, was among some 100 Jews hanged by the Nazis. His wife, my aunt Olga, and their two young children, ages four and nine, were placed in the Minsk ghetto. She managed to survive by working as a slave laborer in a German radio factory.

In late June 1943, as the Russian army was advancing on Minsk from the east, all the remaining Jews in the Minsk ghetto

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and an adjacent ghetto that contained Jews from Hamburg, Vienna, and Czechoslovakia were placed in railroad cars bound for the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The Russian air force bombed some of the tracks and partisans destroyed others, enabling the Jews to flee from the railroad cars and hide in an adjacent field of rye. It was early July and brutally hot, and there was no food or water to be had. My aunt, who was a physician, taught her children to drink their urine to prevent dehydration. After several days they were found by Russian soldiers and brought back to Minsk. They survived the war, and the two children, now sixty-five and seventy, emigrated to the United States recently.

What is left of *Yidishkayt* in Chervin? Physically, only the remains of the Jewish cemetery, which was bulldozed by German tanks in 1941; only a few stumps of tombstones can be seen sticking up out of the ground, with difficult-to-read Hebrew inscriptions. Out of a former population of over 2,000 Jews, there remain only seventeen today, including my cousin Anna, a physics teacher in the local high school, who lives in a wooden house built by her grandfather over 100 years ago. Anna's father, Aaron Kabakow, came home from the war a hero and was named chairman of the draft board in Chervin. Despite this, during Stalin's reign of terror he had to bake matzos secretly in his own oven. When I asked Anna whether there was any anti-Semitism in Chervin now, she replied, "No, there are too few Jews."

The monument in Chervin commemorating the massacre of 2 February 1942. Photo Courtesy of Bernard Kabakow.

LETTERS HOME

Stanley L. Burns, M.D.

Stanley Burns was with the troops that liberated Dachau. He wrote these letters home to his family in Proctor, Vermont. Burns was a member of the permanent camp staff after its liberation on 29 April 1945. The letters are reproduced here as written.

14 May, 1945

Dear Mom and Dad,

I am going to try to dash a quick one off here, sort of on the sly.

I had three swell letters from you today, and let me tell you, they were some morale builder. My morale could stand a little building right now. You have probably been wondering what the score is with my telling you that even though the war is over, there is still plenty of work for this outfit. I can clear you up on that right now, I guess. When the war ended we moved back to the Dachau concentration camp, just outside of Munich. Being in the most notorious of all Germany's concentration camps should in itself explain the low ebb feeling I have probably been putting into my letters of late. I won't try to describe things to you, for such things are sickening to think about. All I will say is that you can believe anything you read about these places, for with my own eyes, and with my own nose, witnessed everything that correspondents write about. I believe I have seen many things that aren't fit to write about. For days I was under an emotional shock after coming to this place. Any feeling I ever had for the German people as human beings has vanished. I actually cannot convince myself that human beings could have done such things.

You can probably understand now why I was wondering what will be done with the outfit now that V-E day has come and gone. Ordinarily I would say that we would be shipping out for the Pacific war in a month or so, but we have a big job cut out for us here, caring for all these ex-German prisoners, the most pitiful cases you can imagine. There is no surgical work being done, so I am in charge of a ward at night. It is not as interesting as surgery, but it has its good points, and at least it isn't that old rush, rush, rush that we have had for almost seven months in the field.

We have rather ritzy sleeping and eating quarters. We took over the SS officers' area and boy, did they ever live like kings. Quite a difference between the life of an SS trooper and the common Wehrmacht, I can see.

There are beaucoup souvenirs to be had around here and I have picked up some. Mostly small things like Nazi arm bands, S.S. pins and so forth. They will probably all seem like so much junk right now, but a few years from now I will have something to show I was over here. One thing I got was a common, porcelain beer mug from a Munich Beer hall. Nothing fancy, but I have been wondering if I shouldn't send it to old Westy!

Next time you write, let me know how many war bonds and how much cash you have received from the War Dept. in my name. A lot of money has been taken from my pay this past year and from what [you] tell me, you have hardly received any of it. While in the states I bought two twenty-five dollar bonds, and since I have been across, six fifty dollar bonds. Besides that I have sent

home at least one hundred fifty in cash. Let me know what you have received and if it doesn't tally within reason, I'll do a little inquiry.
Love,
Stan

Dachau, Germany
16 May, 1945

Dear Mom and Dad,

I got myself a shower and haircut this afternoon, so I feel like a new man right now. The water in the shower was about as cold as the Otter Creek in March, but it served the purpose alright. Rather hard to stay under it for more than two seconds without beginning to look a little cyanotic though.

Took a little jaunt the other day with one of the drivers of this outfit. I can now say that I have been in Austria. I visited the town of Innsbruck, where Hitler and Mussolini met back in the old days and made the earth tremble with their decisions. I also saw Brenner Pass, was right up in it. In my mind there is no country as beautiful in Europe as there is right around that section. The mountains, the Alps, still had plenty of snow fields left on them. It practically made me drool to see those snow covered peaks. So near; and yet so far.

It is amazing to watch these patients respond to good medical and humane treatment. When we first received them, they were nothing more than animals. They not only looked like animals, but they acted like animals. They could think only of themselves. This ward was a madhouse with clamors for food, blankets, pillows, water and even crazy things like lemonade, for a great many were crazy with fever. After a couple of days the place became typically Army, all orderly and neat. It may not seem like much to read about it, but to see it happen was just like watching a human being grow from infancy to manhood in three days. They got over their animal like selfishness and couldn't do enough to make things easier for us and the really sick patients. I really think that our decent humane treatment had almost as much to do with their recovery as did our medical treatment.

When our ambulances went to the compound the first time to get patients, the men had to literally drag the patients into the ambulance, for they thought they were going to the crematorium in the extermination camp. Now that the news of the food and treatment has gotten around, our ambulance drivers have to guard their vehicles when they go to the compound hospital, because so many try to stow away.

I can imagine that you are wondering what kind of diseases I am being subjected to while working here at the concentration camp. Well, there is every type disease imaginable, typhus seems to have reign though. One thing I want to make plain to you is that there is no need to worry about my catching anything. Leave it to the army to be cautious and thorough. I have had so many shots in the arm for this and a million other things that I doubt if there is anything left on earth I could catch now, unless it was a cold.
All for now.
Love,
Stan

28 May, 1945

Dear Mom and Dad,

I just got through reading an old time magazine telling about the atrocities uncovered at various German concentration camps. After what I have seen, I can honestly say that what the public is seeing and hearing is tame, as compared to the real thing. This is how bad things really are.

Well by this time you have had the thrill of seeing Betty graduate Phi Beta Kappa, and I'll bet it <u>was</u> a thrill too. Now it is <u>two down</u> and <u>one to go</u>. I wonder when and how I will ever graduate.

Something just happened that will give you a good laugh. I am sitting in our day room, a good twenty feet from a corner where three fellows have been laboring over a bung in a 20 gal. keg of famous Munich beer they had just rolled down the hall. Evidently the beer got well shaken up, for when the bung popped, the beer squirted a good <u>18 ft</u> and only 2 feet short of the letter. Some stuff they drink over here!

Love,
Stan

31 May 1945
Dachau, Germany

Dear Mom and Dad,

I had a day off today and took a ride on the mail truck to Augsburg. It must have been a beautiful town in its day, but is very much a rubble at present.

The German doctors, nurses, and technicians are gradually relieving us of our duties on the hospital ward. Rumors are out that we will be moving out before the end of the week, most probably into tents. This move will be what is called a "staging area," usually preceding a P.O.E. [Point of Embarkation]. If my mail begins to come thru again with a censors signature and stamp on it, then you can give up hope of my being home for a year or two; for I'll be on my way to C.B.I. [China, Burma, India]. If my mail isn't censored within the next month or so, either I am headed for the States, or else things haven't been decided yet.

It really riles me to work with these German doctors. I have been acting as a sort of go-between for an American major and German captain. Even with my little bit of German I have had to tell the Kraut off for being so insolent. I can't help thinking that these Jerries aren't paying enough.
Stan

Bad Mergentheim
Germany
June 6, 1945

Dear Grandma,

Your V-mail letter which arrived a few days ago reminded me that it has been quite some time since I have written you. Probably Mother has told you that even though this war is over I have been working long hours helping to clean up the ill famed Dachau Concentration Camp. Words cannot describe the misery and outrageous things that went on there. Rather than to try to

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In the spring semester of 2003, Bernard and Gina Gotfryd once again visited the campus to speak to our students. During one of the classes they attended, a student, Jennifer Bell, made this sketch of Gina.

I first knew Chaim Engel as a friend of my parents. The two families were drawn to each other after overhearing each other's accents on the shore of a lake in Connecticut, one Sunday afternoon late in 1957. It was only a few weeks after the Engels had come to the United States. In the years that followed, as the two families met, I intuitively knew that Chaim was different from many other family friends. It eventually registered for me that he and Selma had both been in concentration camps. Years later I heard the story of Sobibor, read the book and saw the movie. The Sobibor uprising, one of the biggest escapes from a Nazi camp, and the August 1943 escape at Treblinka, another death camp in Poland, are often cited to contradict claims that Jewish prisoners died without resistance.

In its obituary for Chaim Engel, *The New York Times*

REPORTS

SUMMER SEMINAR 2003

Kristina Guarino

On the morning of Monday 23 June class began like any other, with the passing out and discussion of the syllabus. I marveled at how much was going to be crammed into our week—eight eyewitness testimonies from hidden children, survivors of death camps, rescuers, and those who were displaced as a result of the Holocaust, nine scholarly presentations, one musical performance. In addition, two keynote speakers would participate in the Center for Holocaust Studies summer lecture series.

To kick off the week, our "host," Robert Bernheim, a Holocaust historian and former teacher at CVU, began by speaking about the unique and universal aspects of the Holocaust in relation to other acts of genocide. The presentation was a wonderful model for teachers, demonstrating a clearly outlined and creative point of entry into teaching about the Holocaust.

Following Robert Bernheim's introduction, Frank Nicosia, professor at St. Michael's College, and, like Bernheim, a board member for the Center for Holocaust Studies gave a clear and succinct overview of the history of European anti-Semitism stretching from the sixteenth century through the Holocaust, and also spoke about the rise of the Nazis to power. His talk summarized two chapters he had written for *The Holocaust: Introductory Essays*, edited by David Scrase and Wolfgang Mieder—the primary text for the course.

Following Professor Nicosia's historical perspective Professor Jonathan Huener, a member of the history department at UVM, shared his insight into the Nazi invasion of Poland and the establishment of the ghettos. After examining the Program of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, as it was recorded on 24 February 1920, and looking at Hitler's 13 February 1945 reflections on his policies toward the Jews, we watched *The Story of Chaim Rumkowski and the Jews of Lodz*. Together these three items illustrated the amazing attention the Nazis paid to detail; they also illuminated the chaos and impulsivity that accompanied the Holocaust. It was an enlightening presentation.

At the close of class on Monday afternoon any apprehension about sitting in class for eight hours a day, five days in a row, had subsided. I was overjoyed to have the opportunity to embark on this week-long journey through the Holocaust.

Tuesday was a day of personal testimonies by Gabe Hartstein, Simon Barenbaum, and Aranka Siegal. Hartstein, currently a resident of Burlington, Vermont, was seven years old and living in Budapest, Hungary when the Holocaust started for him. He spoke of "that Sunday morning," when the Germans began marching in the streets of Hungary and recalled being impressed —so much so that he and his friends started playing German soldiers. It wasn't long before he learned of his Jewish identity and learned firsthand the ramifications that accompanied such an identity. His story, intertwined with that of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved over 100,000 Jews from certain extermination by the Nazis, made for an effective and valuable presentation.

After Hartstein spoke, Simon Barenbaum of East Middlebury, Vermont shared with us his story about the Holocaust and its impact on him, a young boy in France. He was fourteen years old when the Germans entered Paris in 1940. His older brother was deported to a concentration camp and soon thereafter Simon was sent into hiding to avoid the same fate. He grew homesick after spending only two months in Normandy, and at the age of fifteen decided to return to Paris to be with his parents. Upon his return, his father was sent to Drancy; Simon and his mother soon followed. When the kindness and ingenuity of a fur worker eventually freed them from Drancy, Simon joined the French Underground, and was one of the first to greet American paratroopers on the shores of France. Today a monument stands in France commemorating the Underground—and therefore Simon—for its efforts and accomplishments in leading the Americans to the German strongholds. His story is an amazing one of strength, courage and perseverance. It is not shared without heartache, though. Simon's brother perished at Auschwitz.

Following Simon's story, Aranka Siegal offered the second Hungarian perspective of the day, as she shared with us the heartwrenching story of the years she spent in concentration camps. She recalled beginning to hear about the Holocaust at age nine, although she wasn't taken to the ghetto until April of 1944, at age thirteen. She "celebrated" her fourteenth birthday in Auschwitz and was liberated from Bergen-Belsen by the British Army at age fifteen, weighing a measly sixty pounds, and after having spent time in three different concentration camps. She shared with us her memories from the morning she did not pass inspection and was put in a group with the other "discards" from the camp, while her sister, who seemed to be holding up better than she, was selected for work detail. The girls were destined to be split up until a friend of their mother pulled a girl out of the work detail line to reunite her with her mother, and pushed Aranka into the line, saving her life. Following liberation Aranka did not return to Hungary. After living with a family in Sweden for three and a half years, she emigrated to the United States. Her story is a powerful one, written about in her two books, *Upon the Head of the Goat* and *Grace in the Wilderness*.

On Wednesday the day began with a presentation by David Scrase, the Director of the Center for Holocaust Studies and a professor of German at UVM. He shared with us a variety of literary resources people can explore for their own edification or for use in the classroom. He provided a written synopsis of each resource he mentioned, as well as the appropriate audience for each. His succinct and easy-to-follow presentation was an invaluable part of the course.

Scrase's presentation was followed by yet another personal account, that of Yehudi Lindeman, a hidden child in Holland during the Holocaust. In the fall of 1942,Yehudi's mother sent him away, at the age of four, to live with strangers. Yehudi, a child survivor of the Holocaust, denied that he had anything to do with the Holocaust until the mid-1980s. In his own mind he was just a kid and it was the adults who were the survivors. He remembers that after the war Jews didn't share their stories and didn't acknowledge a common bond. They were terribly humiliated—a bit ashamed, initially, to be Jewish. For Yehudi, the wounds were painful and present until he was fourteen or fifteen, but by twenty he was comfortable in his own skin. His story lent itself to a discussion of people's motivations to take Jewish people into hiding and was a beautiful introduction into Marion Pritchard's story.

Pritchard, a resident of Vershire, Vermont, was a rescuer during the Holocaust, working with the underground in the Netherlands to save the lives of Jewish people. One day, while sitting on

a park bench, she witnessed several German soldiers rounding up Jewish kids and throwing them into the back of truck. When two Dutch women tried to intervene they, too, were thrown into the back of the truck. Pritchard watched from a short distance away, but did nothing to help. She was ashamed of her inaction and this shame spawned her desire to get involved with the underground and actively save Jews. She doesn't think of herself as a hero, or as being particularly brave, but after listening to her story one cannot help but be overcome by respect and admiration for her. She is a truly remarkable woman.

Another personal testimony shared on Wednesday was that of Susi Learmonth, a resident of Corinth, Vermont. Learmonth was born in Vienna, Austria in 1926. On 12 March 1938 German troops entered Austria and annexed the country; Susi's life changed drastically. The park she visited regularly was restricted; the benches in the park were reserved for Aryans. Jews were no longer allowed to attend public school. Her father, a Jewish doctor, could no longer see Aryan patients. On 27 September Learmonth and her family left Austria on a train bound for Italy, en route to the United States. They arrived in the United States on 10 November 1938—*Kristallnacht*. Susi and her family were fortunate to have escaped such terror, but were unsure what life as refugees would hold for them. The one thing they were sure of was their desire to throw lifelines across the Atlantic, securing affidavit sponsors for Jews who still remained in Austria.

On Thursday morning Wolfgang Mieder, the chair of the Department of German and Russian at UVM, kicked things off with a presentation entitled *The Use of Language and the Third Reich: Hitler's "Mein Kampf" and the Diaries of Victor Klemperer*. He began with a discussion of the *Macht* and *Ohnmacht*, or power and powerlessness, of language. After that he showed slides of the Pied Piper and other fairy tales in German folklore, and helped facilitate an analysis of the language and imagery used. He spoke of the wonderful misuse of fairytales as effective manipulation tools for propagandists. Following the slides, a discussion of stereotypes ensued. The discussion then segued to Hitler and specifically the writing of *Mein Kampf*, the anti-Semitism throughout it, the propaganda surrounding it, and the proverbial language used in it. His talk was incredibly captivating and didactic.

Mieder's talk was followed by yet another amazing presentation, this one given by Lois Price, focusing on music and survival during the Holocaust. Throughout her presentation, Price shared with us a variety of music and gave insight into what motivated prisoners to compose, sing, and perform. The music she chose to share was powerful and much more gut-wrenching than anticipated. Siegal, who had joined us for the presentation, sang along with some of the songs and frequently shared with us her own memories of hearing certain songs. At the end of the presentation Price was joined by two friends to perform *Three Warsaw Polonaises*, with Price on flute, Holly Thistle on violin, and Janet Green on cello. It was a brilliant performance and wonderful to "experience" an aspect of the Holocaust to which many of us had never been exposed.

After Price's presentation, Scrase returned to give a highly enjoyable, informative, and interactive presentation on the art of the Holocaust. He explained that art was not only a means of recording something, but that it embodied creativity and that as humans, we all need creativity in order to function. He gave a brief overview of the artistic tradition in a few of the camps and showed slides of various works of art. Because of his familiarity with all the works, Scrase was able to consistently point out important details that those of us who were unfamiliar with the works missed. His instruction and guidance created a wonderful learning environment for all.

Friday, the last day of the course, consisted of a variety of presentations, some by survivors, others by scholars. Steve Rogers, a senior historian with the Office of Special Investigations at the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. began the day with a presentation entitled *Tracing Nazi War Criminals and Holocaust Era Assets: Questions and Issues for Holocaust Studies in the 21st Century*. He made clear the distinction between war crimes and crimes against humanity, and specified that it is crimes against humanity that the Office of Special Investigations primarily deals with. His talk indicated that bringing perpetrators to court is a very long, tedious process.

A logical follow-up to Rogers's presentation was Craig Pepin's presentation entitled *The Nuremberg Trials and War Crimes in General*, which looked at how the Holocaust was represented at the trials. He shared with us the reasons for the trials and explained the four crimes that an individual could be charged with—war crimes, crimes against the peace, conspiracy, and crimes against humanity. The complexity that surrounded the trials was made evident.

After two scholarly presentations, the day, and the course, ended with two more individual testimonies. Henny Lewin spoke about growing up in Lithuania during the Holocaust and Henri Weinstock spoke about his experience as a hidden child in Belgium.

Following the German invasion of Lithuania Lewin and her family were sent to the ghetto. While working in the women's brigade, Lewin's mother was responsible for transporting clothes to Kovno. It was there that she made contact with a Catholic priest responsible for saving over 200 children from the ghetto. With his help, Lewin's mother smuggled three-and-a-half year old Lewin out of the ghetto in a suitcase. She was the first child smuggled out of the ghetto. Eventually, in the spring of 1944 Lewin's parents managed to escape from the ghetto; they went into hiding until the end of 1945, when they were reunited with Lewin.

Henri Weinstock, a hidden child during the Holocaust, shared with us an interview he did with *20/20* that offered insight into his years in hiding with a contingent of eighty-three children concealed by a Catholic nun in Belgium. He recalls that "the sheer pain of being abandoned was like death." In 1945 Henri was reunited with his father. His mother perished in a concentration camp.

struck by how urgent it is for these people to tell their stories.…They don't have a lot longer to tell their stories first-hand.… I feel privileged that I met them and heard their stories firsthand." Eric Stinebring shares a similar sentiment, "I think what was most important for me was meeting the survivors and

ber of the same year, led to a new centralized policy regarding the Jews. Jews who did not emigrate would be segregated and made to perform forced labor. The central government gave the municipalities authority to begin constructing ghettos, which some cities began immediately, while others waited until 1940-1941. Most municipalities employed forced labor in their public works divisions, especially parks, cemeteries, and street building. By 1941 forty cities and towns had created forced labor camps; these were especially prevalent in the areas around Cologne, Munich, and in Silesia. Gruner contends that these early municipal camps were important preconditions for the mass deportations. By providing sites for deportation centers and transportation, municipalities paved the way for the "Final Solution."

In sum, German cities and towns played an active role in radicalizing the persecution of Jews at the local level. Almost every department in every town was involved in the drafting and implementation of segregationist measures, local measures that affected national decrees. Gruner concludes that the mutual dynamic between the central and local governments was responsible for the speed and intensity with which anti-Jewish measures were radicalized.

In response to the number of cogent questions that followed the talk, Gruner discussed variations within the implementation he described in his talk. For instance, overall Berlin and Munich were forerunners. After that, it depended mainly on the department involved; Hamburg moved quickly to exclude Jews from receiving social welfare, while Leipzig and Dresden led the way in ghettoization. Individual civil servants were largely responsible for this variation, sometimes motivated by interdepartmental rivalries. Compliance appears to have been motivated by questions of institutional interest and personal benefit, all of which contributed to the radicalization of the persecution and to the stability of the Nazi regime. Instances of an individual civil servant ignoring anti-Jewish ordinances, such as the member of the Munich Department of Welfare who continued to provide normal assistance to Jews, and who was not sanctioned for his actions, show that it is always up to the individual how he or she should behave.

Gruner's talk provided food for thought, not only about the past and how we interpret it, but also about the nature of politics and self-interest. As a result, it has implications not simply for our view of history, but for our view of current events.

Yet there are others, like the six panelists who came to UVM that day who were different. Each was scarred and profoundly affected by what happened to them. Each of them went on to live

The second part of the lecture presented the crimes committed by the Wehrmacht on the eastern front either on its own or in conjunction with other forces of Nazi Germany like the SS or the "Sondereinsatztruppen."

For many years the first military campaign against Poland was believed to be a "clean" campaign in regard of the actions of the military. According to Megargee this is far from being true. From the beginning of the Polish campaign the command of the military issued orders to kill all of the Polish intelligentsia as quickly as possible, to destroy the infrastructure of the country and to exploit the Polish population as a labor force. In fact, leaders of the military provided the SS killing squads with detailed lists naming key Polish figures to be executed. Many officers regarded these actions as a valuable part of the "total war strategy."

Megargee added that some senior officers resisted those tactics, but as soon as their resistance became too obvious they were released from their duties or forced into retirement.

The German campaign against Russia, "Operation Barbarossa," which Hitler designated a "war of ideologies," was undeniably the most brutal campaign of the war. The military was involved in mass executions and other egregious crimes on the Eastern Front. Even before the campaign officially began, the high command of the Wehrmacht issued a decree stipulating the destruction of entire villages with all their population, beginning with the invasion of Soviet territory. These so-called "collective measures" were backed up by granting German soldiers immunity from charges of war crimes, meaning that if German soldiers killed a civilian they would not be punished. This decree also set out the so-called "Commissar Order," directing German frontline troops to take no prisoners, but to shoot every Soviet commissar on sight. In the first six months three million P.O.W.s were captured, of whom approximately 10,000 to 20,000 were killed right away because they were Jews or Communist party officials. 1.3 million prisoners died of starvation and malnutrition under German supervision. Altogether 3.3 million Soviet P.O.W.s died during the course of the war. The majority of these deaths resulted from the so-called "Hunger Plan" developed by the German military command. German soldiers on the front were ordered to confiscate food from Soviet civilians to feed themselves, with the long-term goal of starving the Soviet population to death.

The "Sondereinsatztruppen," which are believed to have killed about 1.5 million people by the end of 1942, could count on full army cooperation and support. In fact most of the army leaders knew about the mass executions. In addition, military intelligence supported them with information, maps, lists of names. Both officers and troops took part in the shootings. Those in command told their troops that the brutal killings were necessary to win the war and ordered that no pictures be taken of such actions. In addition to its other activities, the Wehrmacht itself was in charge of running various camps, mainly forced labor and P.O.W camps.

Megargee also took into account the drastic change in the German military justice system. During World War I the German military court sentenced forty-eight German soldiers to be executed, whereas during World War II 20,000 to 30,000 German soldiers were shot for insubordination or desertion, died in camps, or were put in small suicide attack squads.

According to Megargee one of the worst German war crimes was not directed against a so-called enemy but against the German soldiers themselves. Even though it was more than obvious during the last months of World War II that the war could not be won for Germany, the majority of military commanders ordered their troops to fight to the death, thus causing hundreds of thousands of unnecessary deaths. Megargee argued that many military leaders did not order their troops to surrender because they were obsessed with the *Dolchstosslegende*, mentioned earlier. Others truly believed that the war could be won and their sense of duty and especially their sworn oath to Hitler did not allow them to stop fighting. Other high level officers were bribed by the NSDAP, receiving double pay or a luxury estate for their families; in effect, their loyalty was bought.

Folksinger Performs Songs of the Holocaust at UVM

Courtney Magwire

On Thursday, 10 April 2003, musicologist Jerry Silverman performed a program of ballads and songs from the Holocaust in the University of Vermont Recital Hall. Many of the songs that Silverman performed appear in his book and CD set *The Undying Flame*, a compilation of 110 Holocaust-era songs in sixteen languages. Each song included in the book was translated from its original language into singable English. While putting together the musical arrangements, Silverman tried to keep as close as possible to the stylistic traditions of the songs. The songs and ballads that he chose for his performance at UVM reflect a wide range of experiences of the Holocaust and express the strength of the human spirit in the face of evil through messages of hope, resistance, and the will to survive.

"The Peat-Bog Soldiers," one of the earliest recorded songs dealing with concentration camp inmates, was composed by Rudi Goguel at the Börgermoor concentration camp in northwestern Germany. Although it was censored shortly after its 1933 debut during a cabaret presentation in the camp, it found its way into other camps and was subsequently published and then recorded in 1938. The first verse of "The Peat-Bog Soldiers" expresses the despair that the inhabitants of the camps had to face: "Here in dreary desolation, / We're behind the prison wall. / Far from every consolation, / Barbed wire does surround us all." The final verse, however, looks toward the future with steady optimism. It reads, "But for us there is no complaining, / Winter will in time be past. / One day, free, we'll be exclaiming, / Homeland, you are mine at last."

Another ballad entitled "In Vilna Was Issued a Brand-New Decree" chronicles a spontaneous act of resistance by a group of four thousand Jews near Vilna, (Vilnius, Lithuania). The Gestapo rounded them up and transported them to the city of Vilna, under the pretext of transferring them to the Kovno (Kaunas, Lithuania) ghetto. While in transit, the Gestapo began killing the prisoners, who only then realized that they had been deceived by their captors. They defended themselves frantically and bravely against the armed Germans, using anything they could find as weapons, including their fists, iron bars, and clubs. Thanks to the courage of the Jews, approximately thirty of those marked for execution managed to escape.

The final song that Silverman performed during his concert was written by an American woman named Rosalie Gerut, whose parents survived the Lodz ghetto, Auschwitz, and Dachau. Hearing her parents' stories about the horror they experienced during the Holocaust profoundly influenced Gerut as a child. When we listen to the lyrics to her song "We Are Here," Gerut's commitment to social justice, and to helping those affected by the Holocaust, becomes evident. The song speaks of the importance of remembering the past. It also points out that survival and the will to survive are continued acts of resistance against injustice. Gerut writes, "We're here, our seeds are planted in the land. We're here, although they thought we'd die at their command. We're here,

Book Reviews

War & Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust. Doris L. Bergen. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003. 263 pages. Paper $29.95. ISBN: 0-8476-9631-6.

One approaches a new general history of the Holocaust with skepticism. Given the recent appearance of Yehuda Bauer's revised *History of the Holocaust* and *Holocaust: A History* by Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, both furnishing complete and compelling coverage of the topic, why publish something new at this time? Moreover, with so many current works providing in-depth coverage of various aspects of this complex topic, how can one hope to do justice to the Holocaust in fewer than 230 pages? Well, Doris Bergen quickly vanquishes such doubts. She has, in fact, written one of the best treatments of the Holocaust currently available. While *War & Genocide* may not convey the depth of analysis found in Leni Yahil or the wealth of detail provided by Raul Hilberg, it is a remarkably successful history possessing both the nuance and detail required to absorb student and expert alike.

Although Bergen's volume is a synthesis of pre-existing research and publication, it is constructed on a solid foundation of concepts that find reinforcement throughout the text. Several of these should be touched upon as they establish Bergen's position in Holocaust studies. First, Bergen argues that the Nazis' targeting of Jews necessitated a long-lived prejudice that was by no means unique to Germans. She claims that Hitler "could not simply have invented a category of enemies," presupposing that a "majority of the population" would "turn against them" (2). Jews—and one might add Gypsies, Poles, homosexuals, Afro-Germans, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Communists—were already the victims of deeply rooted prejudices. And yet, Bergen stresses, Hitler's racism—i.e., his anti-Semitism—was a new form of hatred, which viewed "the Jew" as a biological threat to the German (read

Nazis] that the overwhelming majority of the Jews they killed had come into their reach only because of the war" (pp. 26-27).

[3] See, e.g., Tobias Jersak, "A Matter of Foreign Policy: 'Final Solution' and 'Final Victory' in Nazi Germany," *German History* 21 (2003): 369-391.

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RESILIENCE AND COURAGE. Women, Men, and the Holocaust. Nechama Tec. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003. 448 pages. Cloth. $35.00. ISBN: 0-300-09355-1.

While the primary theme of this book is the exploration of the different and shared experiences women and men had when facing the ordeals of the Holocaust, Nechama Tec also focuses on the historical contexts that led to that phenomenon, as well as the chronological development within this era with its sociological, political, economic, and cultural substructures. The seven chapters cover the distinct stages towards the Nazi goal of Jewish annihilation, namely the identification, intimidation, humiliation, and dehumanization of Jews, life in the ghettos, and, finally, the situation in concentration camps as the last stage in the chain of destruction. At the same time, the author describes the many courageous efforts of Holocaust victims to survive by escaping and engaging in the resistance movement.

In this research on gender and the Holocaust Tec addresses the general female and male psychological make-up, the traditional gender roles as universal features of every society, and how they played out in times of extreme conditions. These collective and individual gender comparisons help understand not only the development of different coping strategies, but also the complexity of the undeniable interdependence of female/male actions/reactions and thus the essence of the human experience. Tec describes the female traits, roles, and expectations in any patriarchal society in normal times and how they significantly changed in the Nazi era. The intelligent, rational, aggressive, and competitive men, according to patriarchal principles, first represented a bigger threat to the Nazi regime than women and thus had to be more vigorously persecuted. In contrast, the submissive, cooperative, nurturing, self-sacrificing, and life-protecting women with natural survival instincts had learned to endure hardships, to adapt, and to accommodate and thus were more resourceful and better equipped to deal with hostile environments. Early on, Jewish men experienced psychological death through degradation; since men tend to give up when they cannot be in control, Jewish women had to take on traditionally male roles. Of course, many men were also physically absent, in work camps or in hiding. As the sole providers for and protectors of their own families and others these women became more visible and therefore more vulnerable. While Jewish communities were well aware of the assaults against men, the murders of women were less coordinated, therefore less noticed. After the first German military setback, however, when the Germans concentrated on winning the war against the Jews, the persecution of Jewish women was carried out in a more systematic fashion. Not only did they face forced labor and endure sexual assault, they also were punished as actual and potential mothers in the Nazi effort to stop the perpetuation of the Jewish race.

Tec also describes the internal structures of the ghettos, often a highly fragmented community where social conflicts shattered the traditional social order. Women and men were equally involved in organizing cultural events in order to create a more dignified present. They also combined forces in preparing for armed resistance, which allowed them to dream of a more human and meaningful future. Women found temporary respite and self-fulfillment by contributing to the welfare of others. But these self-sacrifices often hastened their deaths, whereas men, unable to adjust to new circumstances, frequently died severely depressed and broken.

Tec not only discusses gender-specific responses to ghetto life but also provides extensive insights into the broader effects of the Nazi machinery of annihilation. Historical data and memories of personal experiences are effortlessly interwoven. Interviews with survivors reveal that women were more inventive in finding hiding places and more accepting of their losses when they encouraged their children to flee. Most men had to live in hiding since circumcision put them at a higher risk of being discovered on the Aryan side. Physical exams were required for work placement and one had to apply in person to obtain a *Kennkarte* (an ID card used by Poles as a work permit). Since East European Jewish women were traditionally confined to domestic spheres they blended more easily into non-Jewish settings as maids and governesses. Interviewees also stated that, generally, Christians were more willing to help women. Since these numerous personal stories often describe similar experiences of and responses to the catastrophic wartime events, the analyses of the role and function of gender during the Holocaust become repetitive. Redundancy compromises the effectiveness of statements and conclusions.

Life in the concentration camps was an equally horrific experience for women and men, but they responded differently to different acts of terror. Generally, male prisoners were treated more harshly (the hard physical work was designed to kill) and they were emotionally weaker than women, who possessed a stronger will to survive. Women developed better life-sustaining coping skills by defining themselves in relation to others, by being able to share their resources, and by being more knowledgeable about food and hygiene. Only the fate of mothers of small children and pregnant women was irrevocably predetermined.

In the last chapter, Tec discusses the development of resistance movements in Nazi-occupied countries, their inherent hierarchies, and the effects of social, cultural, economic, and political conditions on the partisan struggle. Only men were considered fit for combat; men occupied leadership positions. Here, too, women assumed subservient roles again as couriers and liaisons. Anti-Semitism prevailed in Soviet detachments, in which women were considered the officers' property. As well, these detachments followed the Soviet model of reversing the previous social order. Men who belonged to the pre-war Jewish elite had to carry out the least desirable jobs; the more valued military duties were given to the uneducated poor.

Tec bases her findings on wartime diaries, postwar memoirs, archival materials, and, above all, numerous interviews with survivors, which she conducted in six languages over a period of ten years. *Resilience and Courage* offers valuable insights into the different experiences and coping strategies of women and men during the Holocaust.

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Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction. Götz Aly and Susanne Heim. Transl. A.G. Blunden. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. 378 pages. Cloth. $29.95. ISBN: 0-691-08938-8.

In this newly translated work, Götz Aly and Susanne Heim look at a group of perpetrators and collaborators within Nazi Germany that the research has generally neglected until recently, namely university-trained (and often university-affiliated) sociologists, economists, demographers, and technocrats. Aly and Heim assert that the decision to eliminate entire population groups in Eastern Europe was directly shaped by academic and technocratic debates on overpopulation and efficiency. Moreover, they offer the provocative thesis that the fusion of these arguments with Nazi racial theory, and the collaboration between their academic supporters and the Nazi party, was a necessary precondition to mass murder. Although at times the thesis is overstated, this study remains the best introduction available in English on the role of the social science intelligentsia in the Holocaust.

In the eyes of the groups Aly and Heim study, virtually all of Eastern Europe suffered from overpopulation, which led to economic inefficiencies as well as social problems. Involvement with the Nazis, as well as the acquisition of huge new territories in the East created the preconditions for destruction: "…[the] wishful thinking of the planners beat a path where action would later follow. In calling for 'solutions' and 'relief' they anticipated in thought the mass murder that was to take place in reality" (p. 71). Furthermore, a good number of them entered into government

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The Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont

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2003 Hilberg Lecture

"The Holocaust:
The Christian Clergy as Rescuers"

Sir Martin Gilbert

Monday, 3 November 2003
8:00 p.m.
Campus Center Theater,
Billings Student Center

Overflow seating in Ira Allen Chapel, Billings Student Center

ADA: For accommodations please contact Sally Knight at 802-656-3166 before 25 October 2003.

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