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Series E: General Alphabetical Files. 1960-1992

Box 83, Folder 7, Holocaust memorial council, 1980.

**THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**

**date** June 2, 1980  
**to** Marc Tanenbaum  
**from** Hyman Bookbinder  
**subject** Holocaust Council

I have seen your letter to Monroe Friedman. Your reference to Elie Wiesel's comments about your service on the Council only adds to a pretty dismal picture of the operation that resulted in the final selection of 50 (!) members, plus 10 members of the Congress. I don't know how many more — scores, if not hundreds — were at one time or another in and out of the process. It was not only normal politics/patronage in an election year, but it was also terrible Holocaust-movement politics, and, as you know, escalating ethnic/religious politics. The whole exercise over the past few months was so distressing that I was quietly advocating an indefinite suspension of the whole project, at least until after the election and after some of the troubling policy questions were more fully worked out outside the arena of an official body — the Polish-Jewish dialogue, for example.

As I think you know — Bert does know — I refused to serve on the new Council and turned down the initial requests from Sanders and Wiesel and Eizenstat — not out of any basic disagreement, but a feeling that I did not want to use up valuable time in the intrigues and petty maneuverings of these many elements, that I'd done about all I could to get basic consensus on the uniqueness/universality argument, and that I should make room for others who were anxious to serve. I mentioned you several times in the early discussions as one who could make a bigger contribution at this time. In the end, however, I was persuaded to accept, on the basis of what seemed to be genuine expressions of the need for me to continue serving as the conciliator, and also for the Washington effort that had to be made with Congress, etc.

We have just had our first meeting of the new Council. While I continue to be appalled at the organizational monstrosity that seems to have been created — the 60 members, about a dozen sub-committees, a coordinating committee of almost 20 members, etc — honesty compels me to say that the over-all quality of the membership is quite good. About 40 of the members were present and each made a brief comment. It looks like quality was not sacrificed as the many pressures for places were being honored. At least I think and hope so. My own brief comment was to this effect: While the basic recommendations of the original Commission still seem to be valid, I have scaled down my own expectations and I urge the new Council to do so too. Let's find out as quickly as possible what consensus can be reached and proceed to implement those things on which there is such consensus — leaving the rest to the many private groups and centers around the country.

As you will see from the list attached, there are now some Poles and others -- so that we have made some progress on this central issue. But even though there is a consensus developing that "uniqueness" and "universality" are not necessarily dichotomous, there were indications at this first meeting that the conflict will continue to surface as specific ideas are considered.

Finally, I think that your absence from the Council may turn out to be fortuitous. As you know, one of our principal recommendations is for a Committee of Conscience -- and I am personally proud to have chaired the sub-committee that made the recommendation. When we start listing names of the "outstanding moral leaders of our time" for service on this committee, I intend to nominate you. The fact that you are not on the Council should help rather than hurt the prospects for agreement on such nomination.

encl.

HB:dw

cc: Bert Gold  
Abe Karlikow  
Ira Silverman



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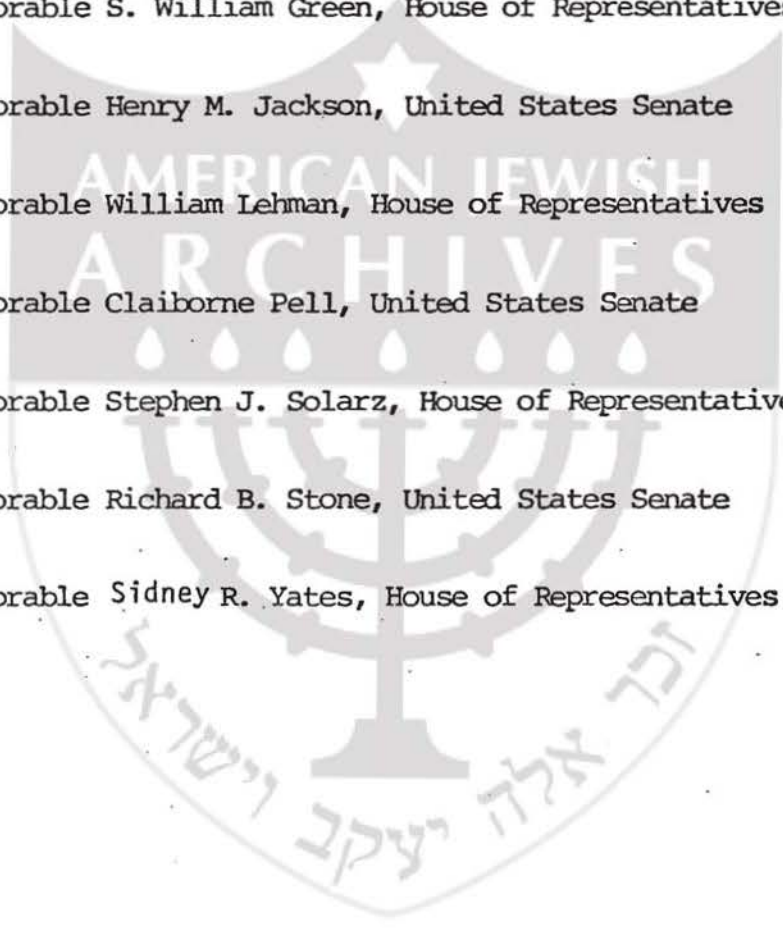
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memorandum

**THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**

**date** August 29, 1980  
**to** Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum  
**from** Rabbi A. James Rudin  
**subject**

Professor Elmo Scoggin of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary is a long-time friend and single-handedly was able to get the Southern Baptist Convention in 1972 to pass a resolution condemning anti-Semitism.

I have stayed in touch with Elmo over the years and he has sent me a copy of his recent address given last April on Holocaust Day. I think some of it might be appropriate to be re-printed in the Interreligious Newsletter.

AJR:FM  
Encl.



cc: Judith Banki  
Inge Gibel  
Bill Galnick



HOLOCAUST DAY - יום השואה

Beth Meyer Synagogue  
Raleigh, North Carolina  
April 13, 1980

*By B. E. Bergin*

Have you been elected sheriff or something? Why do you wear that yellow star for a week every Easter season? What is the meaning of "six million plus Juden?" Is it not embarrassing, that star? Why must you irritate old wounds? Keep alive old and unpleasant memories? Why can't you let us forget the past and build the future?

These are among the many questions that are thrown at me because of this yellow star every year at this season.

No! I haven't been elected sheriff! I must wear this star voluntarily in memory of those who were forced to wear it, and I must wear it until none will need to ask why!

Yes! It is an embarrassment! It is the most embarrassing thing of all history. My mind cannot imagine anything more embarrassing.

I must keep alive old and unpleasant memories because every future is built on the past. What Santayana said is literally true, "They who forget--or ignore--the past are doomed to repeat it." God forbid that the world ever shall see again anything even remotely like the holocaust that is remembered on this

יום השואה.

Also, I must wear this star every year at this season as a memorial to the more than six million Jews--over a million of them innocent little children--who perished in the holocaust. The

obscurity of obscenities to me would be for them not to be remembered by this Christian.

As a Christian in more than name, one whose ideal is to follow his Lord in obedience, I will love my neighbor and help to bear his burden. My Jewish neighbor must not be allowed to bear alone the burden of keeping alive the memory of those millions of holocaust victims.

As a practicing Christian I must confront myself and my fellow followers of the Jew, Jesus Christ, with the disturbing questions, why the holocaust? How could it happen?

The ultimate blasphemy is the idea that the destruction of European Jewry was God's will! God had nothing to do with it! It came out of the bottomless pits of Hell!! Every true Christian knows that to be a fact. Any attempt to state Christian theology so as to make God party to the holocaust is a perverted and calumnious sacrilege.

The New Testament states categorically that "God is no respecter of persons." The "Jewish Problem", then, is not a God-made problem. It is a man-made problem. It is largely the by-product of anti-Semitism, which itself doubtless has pre-Christian roots, but which has been kept alive for twenty centuries by some Christians, aided and abetted for over twelve centuries by some Muslims.

The "Jewish Problem", then, is a human problem. The idea of a "final solution" to the "Jewish Problem" is an insult to the whole human family, and the engineers of the holocaust are guilty

of the most heinous of crimes possible against all humanity.

But I, as a Christian, must ask myself are they more guilty than those who permitted it to take place? Are the actual perpetrators worse men and women than those who tolerated it and were indifferent to it? If there is an unpardonable sin, it is the sin of indifference.

Let no one understand me to say here that there ever has been the equal of the holocaust. It is the most horrible, but only the latest in a long litany of horrors visited upon the Jews by successive persecutors, Babylonians, Egyptians, Romans, Saracens, Crusaders, Spanish Inquisitors, Russians, and countless millions of un-named others who watched and did nothing to stay the brutal slaughter of fellow human beings solely because they were Jews.

It grieves me to have to be so pessimistic, but now I must look at a very troubled present and a dismal future prospect. To do so I must use the figure of the holocaust as prelude.

As long as we live in a social and political context that not only tolerates but encourages national and international terrorists like the Ku Klux Klan, the resurgent Nazi parties, and the P. L. O.: Megolomaniacs like Idi Amin, Muamar Khadaffi, and the Ayatollah Ruchollah Khomeini; world exporters of revolution and turmoil like the Russians and their Cuban puppets; and moral and political cowards like many of the leaders of western nations, including some of our own, the holocaust is indeed only a prelude to a much more horrendous catastrophe.

What brave heroes they are who seize the infant's building

at "Misgav Am" or the day school at Maalot or an apartment building at "Kiryat Ha Shemoneh," who place a bomb in Mahaneh Yehudah or a Tel-Aviv bus station, who attack a bus on a public highway or march in Nazi uniform through a community of holocaust survivors in Skokie. Are they any more despicable, however, than those oil producing Arab states that finance the P. L. O. with millions of dollars annually, or than the Iranian Mullahs who exact two dollars extra from the west for every barrel of oil they sell in order to support those international bandits? Are they in turn any more at fault than those rudderless western nations who abandon ethics and morality to political expediency and peddle their most sophisticated tools of war to those same Arab states, whose actual defense needs are minimal, and who make these weapons available to the murdering, marauding professional killers?

This same morally and ethically deficient international climate makes possible the "peddling of pious piffle" about human rights in a way that involves no real risks. Has it ever occurred to the leaders of the western nations that in the ultimate sense the Jews of the world are human and that they have rights, including the right to self-hood, people-hood, nation-hood? Or have we given in finally to the Goebbels' thesis that the Jews are sub-human, that they are animals? It certainly would seem so when we are roused to righteous indignation over the idea of Israeli Jewish residents in Hebron in 1979 while forgetting that Jews were massacred in their own homes there in Hebron fifty years earlier in 1929.

Has the world had its conscience seared over so completely that it will fall for the double deception that indeed the Jews are a non-people while the "Palestinians" are in fact a people? How un-historical and ill-informed can Brzezinski, Vance and Carter be? The Israeli have no rights to settle on the so-called "West Bank", even on public lands, some of which lands they formerly owned and to which they have historical rights dating back three-and-one-half millennia. The Russians, however, have rights to Latvia, Lithuania, Transylvania, Estonia, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Cuba, Ethiopia, Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan and wherever else they want to be, in spite of the fact that not in one single instance do they have historic rights there.

Why do not the Americans and their allies direct their righteous indignation against these big international bullies? Why not a Camp David meeting between the Hungarians and the Russians? The Poles and the Russians? The Russians and the Czechoslovakians? It is much easier to push little Israel around, especially if there is an underlying, though perhaps sub-conscious, feeling that this people, Israel, is really a non-people, a "fossil."

I declare to you in fear and trembling that unless we Christian people the world over decide to practice the gospel of Jesus Christ which we preach so piously, no matter the cost; unless we demand that the leaders of the so-called Christian nations conduct the affairs of their nations by the very highest ethical and moral standards of the Judeo-Christian ethic, then not only



was the holocaust just prelude, it was only the opening bars to the death-dance of the human race!

Is the alternative despair? Have we gone so far down into hell's abyss that the way is irreversible? Edmund Burke's statement comes to mind, "the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing!" That is one sin I refuse to bear! I will not be guilty of doing nothing! Five weeks ago today I stood, as I do every February, all-be-it this time in a foot of snow, before the יָד וְשֵׁם Yad VeShem Memorial on--הַר הַחִיכָרוֹן --Har Hazikaron on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Every year I take about fifty young ministers there as the last official stop on a study tour of Israel. It is always heart-rending and traumatic. I tell you quite unashamedly that my body shakes with sobs. But I come away each time with new determination and hope. Here is what makes that possible:

(1). The memorial demonstrates that even in the darkest days of man's history there are a few righteous and good people who oppose evil at any and all costs. Though their number was pitifully and tragically small during the Holocaust, there were those "righteous ones" who are remembered by the little memorial grove at Yad VeShem. There I renew my covenant annually with God and with every surviving Jew that I will never give up the struggle!

(2). At Yad VeShem I join again in renewed commitment with all good people, Jews and non-Jews, who are determined that the world shall not forget the holocaust.

(3). My testimony is made dramatically on the spot every

year to a company of young ministers, and through them to many more Christians in an ever-widening circle, that our Hebrew religious fore-bearers were right when they taught us early in Genesis that we are all one humanity and that we are our brothers' keepers.

(4). I find inspiration in the young heroes of today who endure unimaginable hardship and suffering to stand for what is right. One of these who inspires me deeply is Anatoly Shcharansky, thirty year old victim of a Russian show-trial in July of 1978. His crime was that he exposed the Russian failure to live up to the Helsinki agreement on human rights. When he stood to receive his thirteen year sentence, he made the following statement:

Five years ago I submitted my application for exit to Israel. Now I am further than ever from my dream. It would seem to be cause for regret. But it is absolutely otherwise! I am happy! I am happy that I lived honestly in peace with my conscience. I never compromised my soul, even under threat of death.

For more than two-thousand years, the Jewish people, my people, have been dispersed. But wherever they are, wherever Jews are found, every year they have repeated

"Next year in Jerusalem!"-- הַשָּׁנָה הַבְּאֵה בְּיְרוּשָׁלַיִם --

Now, when I am further than ever from my people, from my wife, Avital, facing many arduous years of imprisonment, I say, turning to my people, my Avital, "Next year in

Jerusalem!"-- הַשָּׁנָה הַבְּאֵה בְּיְרוּשָׁלַיִם --

Finally, referring again to the ancient truth of Genesis Chapter Ten, that we are all indeed one humanity, let us renew our covenant again with our religious forefathers and their heirs of our own day and say with them, "Be strong! Be strong! and let us strengthen each other!"

חֲזִיק חֲזִיק וְנַחֲמֵם אִתְּכֶם



# THE SOUTHEASTERN FLORIDA HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL CENTER, INC.

## "A LIVING MEMORIAL THROUGH EDUCATION"

May 1980

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum  
165 East 56th Street  
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Dear Marc,

I have happily been drawn into the work of the Southeastern Florida Holocaust Memorial Center and appointed to a committee looking for protectors and liberators of Holocaust victims to interview. The Center's primary project is to prepare a living memorial through oral histories, on video or audio tapes, of the experiences of survivors, protectors, and liberators, for use in the media, schools, and libraries. For various reasons we want to interview persons with these kinds of experiences who live in southeast Florida.

I am writing to all the persons I can think of who may know the names and addresses of protectors and liberators who may be willing to be interviewed and who live in this region. (This is the reason for the form letter, which I hope you will take as seriously as if it were a personal letter.) Please let me hear from you. Please send me any leads that we can possibly use. If the regional limitation on potential interviewees is too restrictive of your ability to make suggestions, please disregard it.

We have a very good start on a list of Jewish survivors living in this area. Names and addresses of non-Jewish survivors will also be most welcome.

Do you know of any persons or organizations that have already compiled lists such as we are in search of? Or already prepared such oral histories?

Thank you for whatever help you will be able to give.

With very best wishes to you,

Sincerely yours,



the Rev. Paul J. Kirsch, Ph.D.

P.S. If you do not know me, let me say that I am a retired pastor of the Lutheran Church in America and Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at Wagner College, Staten Island, New York.

*I am thrilled  
with this educational opportunity  
They love you  
here at Temple  
Beth El*

## NEH Grant for Holocaust Guide Resources and Programming

Last April Zachor received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for the compilation of a comprehensive handbook of resources and teaching aids available for Holocaust education. David Szonyi is serving as project director for this "Guide to Holocaust Resources and Programming." The first part of the Guide will bring together the basic aids for teaching and programming. It will list the best books, periodicals, films, speakers, research institutes, and travelling art exhibits. The second part will provide basic programming ideas. Information drawn from the experiences of small communities that have run Holocaust programs will also be included.

The Guide is designed for teachers and students on all educational levels from high school to graduate school, for rabbis who want to further the awareness of the Holocaust through education, for heads of programs or committees who are just beginning to think about the Holocaust, and for speakers who are unaware of the range of possible topics. The Guide is being compiled at a time when there has been a quantum increase in Holocaust education, commemoration and programming. Because of the wealth of helpful information to be included, it will be an invaluable resource for those involved in these efforts.

## Zachor Develops Exhibit on the Holocaust

The greatest men of vision have eyes also in the back of their heads. What they see before them is transfigured by what they have seen behind them. They carry, like a knapsack strapped to their collective backs, the precious souvenir memories of their personal and collective past.

Such a man is Jeffrey Boyko, who believes in the faith and progress which is in the American tradition.

At the same time, the memory of those who never reached America, who died in the Holocaust, still haunts him. And the past, he believes, only repeats itself.

Desiring to do his utmost to keep America's consciousness of the Holocaust alive both among Jews and non-Jews, Boyko, head of TSI Industries in New York, has become the major benefactor of Zachor's travelling exhibit project. "Of course," he said, "there is Yad Vashem in Israel, but for those for whom that is inaccessible, I would like to offer another means of facing and understanding the Holocaust."

Irv Frank, chairman of ZACHOR, has noted that while there are hundreds of Holocaust exhibits each year, the limited material utilized leaves no room for group participation. As the network of the Holocaust resource centers grows, it becomes more important that there be first-quality materials for national use.

Though America has national memorials to its presidents and anonymous war heroes, due to guilt, negligence or simply lack of sufficient respect for the histories of its minority groups, it has not ever established a national shrine in memory of the Holocaust. Boyko hopes that soon the President's Commission on the Holocaust will mandate such a permanent exhibit or memorial. In the meantime,

without usurping its eventual role, the travelling exhibit will tour the United States as Zachor's latest national Holocaust project.

The intention of the travelling exhibit is to make a statement which is simultaneously emotional and intellectual. To decide on the most effective means of concretizing this Holocaust memorial metaphor, Zachor's staff consulted with the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Jewish Museum. Because no similar exhibit exists in this country, Zachor has hired Abba Kovner as its program consultant. He is one of Israel's most noted poets and educators and the man who conceptualized and directed the creation of the Bet HaTefutsot, the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv.

The Zachor staff and Jeffrey Boyko hope that by using a variety of themes and methods the travelling exhibit will achieve some of the same educational impact as does Bet HaTefutsot. "I think," said Boyko, "that there is now a need for this kind of exhibit that would stimulate new interest in the Holocaust and would extend and deepen the concern of others...As any historical event recedes in time, there is a natural drift in consciousness to be expected. We can not allow that to happen with the Holocaust. To combat that drift we should start with the young...We must face the Holocaust."

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## Poet/Survivor Kovner Named Consultant

What makes a poet an appropriate program consultant to the Holocaust Travelling Exhibit?

Abba Kovner, one of Israel's most noted poets, has had an unusual history, and as a survivor of the Holocaust he has his own special connection to it.

Born in the Crimean city of Sebastopol, Mr. Kovner moved to Vilna as a young man. During the Holocaust, he was first hidden in a convent. Later, he was in the Vilna Ghetto where, in 1940, he, his wife Vitka, and a group of friends organized the United Partisan Organization, the first armed resistance to the Nazis in the ghetto. After the ghetto's destruction in 1945, he moved to Palestine, but soon returned to Europe and worked on behalf of Bricha, the effort to help

"illegal" immigrants reach Palestine. After being captured by the British and interned in Egypt, he wrote his first long poem "Ad Lo Or" ("Until there is no more light").

In 1948, Mr. Kovner settled permanently in Israel. After fighting in the War of Independence as part of the Givati Brigade, he joined Kibbutz Ain-Hahoreshe, where he lives today. In Israel he has published nine books of poetry, in 1970 winning the Israel Prize. **A Canopy in the Desert** (published in the United States by University of Pittsburgh Press), was translated from the Hebrew by Shirley Kaufman.

Mr. Kovner conceptualized and directed the creation of the Beth HaTefutsot, the Diaspora Museum, in Tel Aviv. This accomplishment has brought worldwide acclaim.