

VT-887 Transcription

"The Holocaust: Lessons for a Pluralistic Society".

31 March 1981.

Randolph Braham:

Good evening, I'm Randy Braham, Director of the Jack B. Eisner Institute for Holocaust Studies at the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. The institute was established under a grant from the Holocaust Survivors' Memorial Foundation. [01:00] Acting in cooperation with CUNY TV, the institute is proud to inaugurate a series of lectures dealing with a variety of Holocaust-related topics. These lectures were videotaped from the previous semesters, when they were offered as part of the free university lecture series of the institute. The views expressed by the speakers are theirs alone, and do not necessarily reflect those of the institute, or of the graduate center.

We begin this television series with a lecture by Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, the National Interreligious Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee. Rabbi Tanenbaum has lectured at major universities, seminaries, religious and educational bodies in the United States, [02:00] Europe, and Israel, and at numerous national and international conferences. He is the author or

editor of several books, and of numerous articles, a pioneering leader and thinker international and interreligious relations, and social justice movements for the past 30 years. Rabbi Tanenbaum will lecture tonight on the Holocaust, lessons for a pluralistic society. Ladies and gentlemen, Rabbi Tanenbaum.

Marc Tanenbaum:

The theme, as Professor Braham has indicated, that I have been asked to talk about this evening is that of the Holocaust, [03:00] its lessons for a pluralist society. This is a very difficult theme. For many Jews, and I dare say, for some of you in this hall this evening, this is an impossible theme. Because, as you look at the series of this lecture series, virtually every speaker has spoken about the Holocaust in all of its amplitude. Historically, theologically, sociologically, demonologically. Essentially, from within the Jewish perspective. There's now a culture within which the Nazi Holocaust is [04:00] faintly glimpsed, grasped at for knowledge and insight within the Jewish community, that has led to a consciousness among Jews, not only here, but in many parts of the world, certainly in Israel, even in the Soviet Union, Europe and elsewhere, in which the Nazi Holocaust is perceived, understood, as indeed, in its primary level, it must be understood, as uniquely a Jewish issue. And rightly, it needs to

be understood in that sense, in its primary meaning, because the Nazi Holocaust, the final solution, was proposed, uniquely, singularly, [05:00] as integral to the foreign policy and the domestic policy of Nazi Germany and the German nation, solely for Jews. No other people. Slavs, Gypsies, others, were conceived of in terms of their murder, massacre, extermination, as being central to the carrying out of the fundamental purposes *the raison d'etat [sic]*, of Nazi Germany. And that is a fact, even though it must be acknowledged that in the process of carrying out that psychopathic, diabolical scheme of the final solution, [06:00] six million Jewish men, women, and children were put to death, but also, 35 million other human beings were killed, slaughtered, died, as Simon Wiesenthal insists on reminding us, as a result of World War II.

But what will be difficult for Jews to cope with, even, I dare say, many in this room, is the paradoxical reality that if we continue to persist in perceiving and in elaborating, exposing the Nazi Holocaust only as a Jewish issue, we will, in fact, [07:00] have given Hitler the final victory. Because underlying Hitler's notion of his ability to be able to carry out the final solution against the Jews, was the consciousness as we see throughout his table talk, and in much of his public declarations, that because this is solely an issue for Jews,

about Jews, affecting Jews, the rest of mankind has no interest, no stake in this, and therefore, one can go about massacring Jews as if they were animal sub-human creatures, and there will be no consequences for Nazi Germany and the rest of the human family.

During the course of the preparation of the NBC TV series [08:00] on Holocaust, about which, as you know, there is much controversy, and about which, I had my own concerns in the course of serving as the consultant to NBC, and to Gerald Green, and others, I knew that with all its efficiencies, and with its inaccuracies, some of which became almost impossible to take hold of during the course of that incredibly complex production, I knew, after watching the first three hours of that production that Holocaust, with its limitations, had to be shown. Not for the sake of Jews. Jews did not need the NBC *Holocaust* to remind them of the moral duty of saying *kaddish* for the *kedoshim*. It was the fact that, among the 220 million American people, the vast majority of them [09:00] knew almost nothing about the facts of the Nazi Holocaust, and those who knew something about it, tried to repress the magnitude of that evil, in order to evade the questions of their responsibility of where were they, what did they do, and how would they respond, God forbid, if

there were other episodes of a diabolical anti-Semitic character against Jews.

What persuaded me of the importance that the *Holocaust* program must be shown in America, with its deficiencies, was the fact that on the first night of the showing of the first three hours of the [rushes?] of the *Holocaust*, as they came out of the cameras, I brought together a group of 85 of the top Christian leaders in America at a seminar at NBC to view those first three hours. There were cardinals, archbishops, bishops, presidents of all of the Protestant denominations, [10:00] heads of the evangelical Christian churches, Greek Orthodox archbishops, Hispanics, black church leaders, and others.

After the first three hours of the program were shown, and we had a dialogue among the Christian and Jewish leaders who were present, the first person who asked for permission to stand up to speak was an Armenian archbishop, Torkom Manoogian, who happens to have become a very close and dear friend, here in New York. And Archbishop Manoogian stood up and said, "I want to thank NBC, and the author, and all those responsible for this production, and I want to tell you why, I, as an Armenian-Christian, feel that it is absolutely essential that this production and the facts of what happened during the Nazi

Holocaust be told and retold, not just for the Jewish people, [11:00] but for the millions of American Christians who know nothing about it, or choose to know nothing about it." And he said, "The reason I feel this way is because if you read the table talk of Adolf Hitler, there is a passage there, in which there is a description of the fact that a group of generals in 1941, came to Adolf Hitler during a course of a conference, where they were planning the Final Solution. And some of the generals turned to Hitler and said, after the plan was laid out for the systematic extermination of Jews, death camps, crematoria, death marches, some of the generals said, 'Hey, Furor, is it really essential to carry out this kind of massive murder of Jews? Isn't there an easier way of getting rid of them? Can't we [12:00] export them to another country, Uganda, elsewhere, Africa?' And Hitler turned to the German generals and silenced them with one expression," as the Armenian archbishop declared. He said to them, "Who remembers what happened to the Armenians?" And then Archbishop Manoogian declared, "A world that became indifferent to the massacre and the slaughter of half of the Armenian people in 1915 that developed the psychic numbness to be indifferent to the fate of our people, who were Christians, massacred by Muslims in the Turkish community, became a world that was prepared to become indifferent to the fate of six million Jewish men, women, and children." And then,

he said, "A world that remains indifferent [13:00] to what happened to six million Jewish men, women, and children, is a world that is psychologically prepared to become indifferent to the slaughter of human beings everywhere in the world." And he said, "We, as Christians, have a stake in the Nazi Holocaust, indeed, it happened on the wreckage of your people in Europe, but out of that wreckage, we must all together learn a lesson, otherwise, the human family will not survive."

It's something about that lesson to which I want to address myself tonight. And the way in which I want to come to try to uncover what, for me, are some of the crucial understandings of penetrating into the central dynamics, morally, spiritually, humanly, psychologically, of what happened in the Nazi Holocaust, and its meaning for humankind, [14:00] that I want to revert back to the oldest form of Jewish literary method for telling insights, truths about the human condition, to uncover some illumination about the meaning of human existence, and the value of human life. And that is, out of the genius of the Torah, and especially the rabbinic tradition, the rabbis, unlike the Christian philosophers and theologians who succeeded them, did not construct large systematic theologies, which become abstract and frequently irrelevant to the human condition. Instead, they told a *Midrash*, they told a parable, a story about

the human experience within which one begins to gain [15:00] some insight about the nature of human existence, as it affected the teller of that story, and those involved in it.

And I want to share with you, this evening, what, for me, are two modern *Midrashim*, two modern parables, which illuminate, at least for me, some of the profoundest insights into the meaning of the Nazi Holocaust, indeed, first and foremost for ourselves, the Jewish people, but beyond that, what, in fact, it must mean, now sooner rather than later, for the whole of the human family today. And I am persuaded, unless this experience is confronted, fully, profoundly, and unless some insight is gained from that which [16:00] we Jews know in our bones, there is a real danger, as to whether the human family will be able to survive beyond the end of the century.

My first parable began in February of 1978. I was sitting in my office in the American Jewish Committee, and one day, I received, in early February, a telephone call, from a man named Dr. Leo Cherne. He is president of a group called the International Rescue Committee. International Rescue Committee was established in 1938, its primary purpose was that of trying to save Jewish DPs, as the madness of Nazism began to unfold. And subsequently, it has become involved [17:00] in providing

medical care and refugee relief service for refugees in many other parts of the world. On this day, Leo Cherne called me and said, "Rabbi Tanenbaum, we have been asked, as a semi-official government mission, to send a group of 14 American leaders to Southeast Asia, with a view toward carrying out a detailed study on the plight of the Vietnamese boat people, Cambodian refugees, the oceans, ethnic Chinese, and tribesmen." I had heard about Leo Cherne, I had heard about the International Rescue Committee, and I had read in the newspapers, fleetingly, as all of us had, about this incredible story of people coming out of Vietnam, getting into boats, setting sail out in the sea, and I suppose, as many of you, it was another one of those daily horror stories, which [18:00] somehow never penetrated beneath the level of consciousness to become part of one's self-understanding, one's sense of responsibility. And I said to Cherne, "In all honesty, look, Dr. Cherne, it seems to me, this is an important task, but frankly, I'm busy, I've got commitments over the next two-to-three weeks, if it's possible for this mission to leave in another several weeks, I'd be glad to try to go with you." And then Cherne declared, with an edge to his voice. "Listen, Rabbi, you don't understand what I'm talking about. There are 15,000 people leaving Vietnam every month. And the flow is increasing as oppression from the North Vietnamese grows greater. Sixty percent of the people leaving

Vietnam in these boats across the South China Sea are drowning, before the eyes of the world. They cannot wait for your schedule to conform to their needs, [19:00] they're drowning now, this minute." And as he talked, I said, "OK, Leo. Let's go."

The following week, 14 of us set sail for Southeast Asia. It was a delegation that consisted of James Michener, the novelist; Ambassador William Kasey, who's now head of the CIA -- he and I became very friendly during this tour, we shared rooms next to each other in Singapore, and Hong Kong, and elsewhere. And I told him subsequently, if I had ever had any idea that he was going to become head of the CIA, I'd have locked my door every night. (laughter) Ambassador Cecil Lyon, the former American Ambassador to Chile and Sri Lanka; Bayard Rustin, the great black civil rights activist, who is present to every Jewish concern, and every human concern; a bishop from the Roman Catholic church; a Protestant minister, representing the National Council of Churches; John Richardson, [20:00] a former Assistant Secretary of State, among others. We went to every country in Southeast Asia -- Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines -- into every refugee camp to carry out a fact-finding mission, and to bring back a report to the president of the United States, then Jimmy Carter, the secretary

of state, Brzezinski, and to the leaders of both congressional parties.

My parable begins on this February day, as our mission was in Jakarta, Indonesia. It was a boiling hot day that February, I came out to a rotten wharf in the center of the city of Jakarta, and there, at the bottom of that wharf, there lay a skiff, a battered, exhausted boat, at the head [21:00] of which, there stood a short man, brown-skin man, named [Yen Tang?], as I was to find out, together with his wife, his children, sisters. I jumped off this wharf onto that skiff, and I came over to Yen Tang, and I introduced myself to him, I told him I was Rabbi Tanenbaum, the American Jewish Committee, I'm here on this mission representing the American government in this unofficial capacity to carry out this fact-finding mission, I wanted to know his story. And Yen Tang proceeded to tell me this account.

He was sitting with his family one evening in their home in Saigon, the door broke open, and a group of North Vietnamese soldiers literally broke into his house, confronted them, and said, "The government of North Vietnam has determined that you are to be reeducated in the Collective Farm Program [22:00] for creating the new man of the new society." And Yen Tang began to object, and he said, "You have no ground for objections, those

are the orders of the government, there's no appeal. Be ready tomorrow morning for you, your wife and children, to leave, to go out to this Collective Reeducation Farm."

Then, Yen Tang said, that that night, they took council together, and they determined there was no future for them and their children. They felt their dignity as human beings was being taken away from them. No choice about the nature of their lives they had lived as urban dwellers for centuries as family in Saigon, now, they're to become automatically farmers at the will of the state. And so, they took all of their possessions and they fled through the night, through the forest, where they rendezvoused with brothers, and brothers-in-law, on the coast of Vietnam. And there, they took all of their possessions, [23:00] and they bought this battered skiff from a fisherman, they all climbed into it, they had nothing but a 10-cent compass to guide them. And they set sail across the South China Sea. And Yen Tang looked at me and he said, "And Rabbi, we set sail, we went over a period of four weeks, we stopped off at the coast of Philippines, they sent us back, we stopped off at Hong Kong, they sent us back." All of these great liberated third-world nations, with their ideology of self-determination and liberation wanted none of the refugees. And began pushing them all back into the sea.

Then, Yen Tang said, "As we were sailing the third week across the South China Sea, we began to run out of food and water. And my children began developing temperatures, their bodies were flaring, [24:00] flaring with fever, they began screaming in terror at night, they could not sleep. So crazed were they by hunger and by thirst, they began drinking seawater, and eating seaweed." And then he looked at me, and he said, "Rabbi, do you know what it means, literally, to see your wife and your children to begin to die before your very eyes?" And then he looked up at me with a passion in his face that seized his whole body, it was trembling as he spoke, and he said, "Rabbi, you know, it was unbelievable, the pain, the anguish of seeing your family starve before your eyes, but there was even something worse than that, worse than hunger and starvation. As we were sailing the third and fourth week, we were passed by, by 23 [25:00] cargo ships, all of them filled with cargo going to Singapore, which is the economic nexus of southeast Asia. We waved at them with a white flag with an undershirt to stop. First, we thought they would stop and pull us out of the water." And he said, "Not a single ship stopped to pick us up. None of them stopped to give us water, a bag of rice." Yes, he said, "There were three ships that slowed down, the crews came up and they began laughing. We were their entertainment, breaking the

boredom of their sailing at sea." And then, he turned to me, and he said, in exactly these words. He said, "You know, Rabbi, I was a high school teacher in a Catholic high school in Saigon, and during my training, our teachers used to talk about World War II, and some of the teachers referred to the experience of the Jews and Nazi Germany in 1930 -- now, we didn't hear too much about it, just a few things, some Jews were killed."

[26:00] He said, "I now know what it means to have been a Jew in Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. There is something worse than hunger and starvation. The knowledge that you are abandoned by the world. The notion that your life, and the life of your children and your wife, is absolutely meaningless. The awareness that human life has become worthless, that it is like the [fluxion?] in this water, and that the world can send cameras, and there can be stories about you, and it means nothing, that you are abandoned to die before the eyes of the world."

And as he said that, and I have to tell you exactly as that experience happened to me, I'm not sure how it happened, or why it happened, I don't know whether it was the broiling heat of 101, 102 degrees in Indonesia, or whether it was the exhaustion [27:00] of our traveling day and night through these camps, we were working 12-14 hours a day to cover all that territory, but as he was talking to me, almost like a television flashed back,

something began flooding into my head, as he began talking about being a Jew in Nazi Germany, suddenly, the figures, 1939, 1939, 1939. And in my head, suddenly, there was a connection with *St. Louis, St. Louis, St. Louis*. They were the first boat people of this generation. The Jews of Germany who got out of Hamburg, who, anticipating all of this madness in Vietnam, took everything they had, went to the American Consul General, were received by an official delegate of the Cuban government, who sold them, for their final possessions, landing [28:00] immigration certificates for Cuba, with the assurance that if they made it across the sea, onto *St. Louis*, that they would come to Havana, they would be received, and their lives would be saved. And so, 938 Jewish men, women, and children, having given up virtually all of their possessions to buy the landing immigration certificates, some 700 of them, keener in their understanding of human nature, and the kind of world in which they were living, did not trust the landing immigration certificates of Cuba alone, and they went to the American Consul General, and obtained visas, quota numbers, so that, God forbid, should something go wrong in Cuba, they would be received in the United States. And they set sail, not across the turbulent South China Sea, but across the tumultuous North Atlantic Ocean in March [29:00] of 1939. They came to Cuba, they landed in the

harbor of Havana, the captain of the ship was a Dutch Christian, a man of conscience.

And when they landed and a delegation came from the Cuban government, the Dutch Christian captain went down to them with a parcel of all of the landing immigration quota numbers and said, "I have the honor of presenting to you these landing immigration quota numbers for the people on my ship." And the Cubans turned to the Dutch Christian captain and they said, "Sorry, they're invalid." And the Dutch Christian captain said, "What do you mean, they're invalid? They paid for them; they have certificates of having paid \$2,000, \$3,000, \$5,000 for these quotas from your government." And they said, "They cannot land, we have a message from our president, Dr. Fredrico Bru, that if these Jews are to land in Havana, you must turn to the Jews in New York to raise \$1 million, [30:00] and we want it by tomorrow morning in 24 hours, otherwise, we send them back." And as an aside, the Cuban delegates said to the Dutch Christian captain, "We know the Jews in New York can do that, they can raise \$1 million, they do it all the time. They can do it if they really care about these Jews here." The Dutch Christian captain went back to the ship, radioed the Joint Distribution Committee, the JDC, HIAS, told them what the conditions were, and they flew a crew into Havana, and they began negotiating with the president

of Cuba, Fredrico Bru, please take them in, give us time, give us 48 hours, 72 hours, and we will have the money. And Fredrico Bru turned to them and said, "I want the money tomorrow on this table, or they go back." The JDC and the HIAS [counciled?] together, they sent back to New York to try to raise the money, they said [31:00] get us time, we will try to raise the \$1 million, try to buy time. They then sent cables to every government in Latin America, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Uruguay, Paraguay: Take them in, a few of them, a few hundred of them, give them time. And if you do not receive them, you will send them, surely, back to their certain death in Nazi Germany. Most of the governments in Latin America did not even bother to answer the cablegram. The few who did respond, answered in a modern-day version of that lovely New Testament phrase, "Sorry, there is no room at the inn."

And so, the great Christian government of Cuba pushed the ship out to sea, and this boatload of 938 Jewish boat people, the first of its generation, came out of Cuba. The Dutch Christian captain took them to the harbor of Miami. He had at least 700 quota numbers, maybe they could be saved. [32:00] The boat landed outside of Miami, it anchored outside, with that incredible scenario of Jews there, desperate, wondering whether they're going to live or die, and listening to the music coming

from the hotel Fontainebleau, and other hotels on Collins Road. They contact the Immigration and Naturalization Service, they contact the Cordell Hull. Cordell Hull consulted that other great American, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a great man in many other ways. But that great humanitarian FDR, and Cordell Hull determined that they were not going to interfere in the internal affairs of Nazi Germany. And the quota numbers given them as valid American documents, were rescinded. As some of you know, four elderly Jews on that ship who had had all they could take of the humanity of western Christian civilization, [33:00] jumped overboard and committed suicide. They could not tolerate the notion of living in that kind of world.

The *St. Louis* was sent back to Europe. France took a couple hundred, the Netherlands took a couple hundred, England took a couple hundred. And then, the Nazis made their sweep into the lowlands, and all of them in Europe, together with the other six million, ended up in the death camps, and the crematoria. As Elie Wiesel wrote, "The sky became their cemetery [34:00] as the smoke of their bodies ascended into heaven."

I was a much younger person then, and I remember attending a rally for the *St. Louis* boat people in Madison Square Garden. All of our great Jewish leaders were there -- Steven Wise,

[Abahilla?] Silver, Malcolm Goldman, and they made great, impassioned speeches, the sum total of which was "[Rataver, rataver, rataver?]." . Save them before they are sent back to their certain death in Europe. And the eloquence was magnificent. Moving to tears, but in that place, packed, only with Jews, 18,000 Jews in Madison Square Garden, I felt the impotency, [35:00] the impotency of that kind of rhetoric alone. And something happened to me, as a *yeshiva bocher*, child out of Jewish Hebrew schools. As I began to walk away, something began to churn in me, and I began hearing a phrase in my head from the book of Leviticus, Chapter 19, paraphrase, it became in my head. If there is one lesson to be learned from that *St. Louis* boat people episode of 938 Jews who perished, most of them, you shall not stand idly by while the blood of your brothers and sisters cry out to you from the Earth. And I wasn't clear about what it all meant, but I was determined, somewhere in my conscious, that somehow, some way, if it were ever given to me, to have the capacity and the power [36:00] to stand against this callousness, the human suffering, this indifference to the value of human life, that I would be prepared to turn myself inside out, to go to the ends of the earth, out of the depths of Jewish tradition and conviction, in order to try to break this cycle of dehumanization.

That's why I went to Southeast Asia four times in the past three years. We came back with recommendations to the president of the United States, one of which included a recommendation that the first thing he do is to send the ships of the Seventh Fleet, that were steaming off the Philippines, and Manila, doing nothing but showing the flag, into the South China Sea, with instructions that nobody should be allowed to drown, with the Seventh Fleet present. And the president turned to us when we came back, and he said, "My God, why [37:00] didn't I think of that? It's the most obvious thing in the world." And in our presence, he called in an executive aide, and dictated an order to the commander of the Seventh Fleet, that within this week, I want ships to go in, and helicopters, with instructions that nobody is to be allowed to drown in the South China Sea. If people are hungry, they're to be given food, if their boats are without petrol, you're to give them petrol. Literally, within three weeks, no one drowned as a result of neglect.

And then it became radical chic, because America began doing it, suddenly, Italy began sending in ships, and France began sending in ships with instructions to save people. No one drowned from accident in the South China Sea today. If It happens, it's the freak event of a monsoon, or someone where no one can get to them, but it is now the policy of the civilized community that

they do not stand by while human beings die before the eyes of the world. [38:00] That's a lesson I learned a child born in the shadow of the Nazi Holocaust. I became aware of the fact that there is an ecology in the world that does not have to do simply with plants and trees. There is a moral ecology in the universe that a world which becomes conformed to the possibility that the norm for human existence is callousness, indifference, spectatorship, will create an international climate in which Jews will be able to perish, and millions of other human beings. The lesson which Jews have to testify out of the Holocaust is that that central instruction, which emerges out of the depth of the exodus and Sinai, [39:00] the teaching, which changed the consciousness of the human condition, namely, that every human life is sacred. In biblical language that every human life is created is created in the sacred image of God, that no human being is expendable, that no human life can be sacrificed for anyone else's program, or project, or revolution, or violence, or terrorism. That every human life is of infinite preciousness, that every human being is an end in himself or herself, and can never be allowed to become an end, a means to anyone else's end. That teaching, today, is more relevant than at any time over the past 2,000 years. There is, today, in the world, and I am persuaded it is because the world has refused to face, civilized nations and churches [40:00] have refused to understand the

magnitude of the challenge of the Nazi Holocaust, not only for the Jews, but for western Christian civilization, and humankind itself. The Nazi Holocaust took place, not in a primitive desert, not in a place of animists, pagans, Bedouins; it took place in a country of ancient Christian civilization. It took place in Germany, which is the country of Goethe and Beethoven, of the finest minds, the flowering of Christianity, and of western Christian culture. It took place in a society, which had the most advanced science and technology, it took place in a country which mobilized all of its PhDs. It was PhDs who ran Auschwitz, and Birkenau, and Bergen-Belsen. They were not mad men, marginal people, psychopaths, [41:00] they were doctors of the most advanced surgical training who carried out experiments on pregnant Jewish young women and others.

Look around the world today. The refusal to face the fact of the capacity of the most advanced Western Christian society on the whole of the European continent, the country where, in Aachen, the seat of the Holy Roman Empire sat, the country where Martin Luther brought about the Protestant Reformation, to bring about a pure brand of Christian life and morals, refusal to face the capacity of how that kind of barbarism took place, I am persuaded, is part of the causal chain, which has led to a human condition today, where there is a Cambodia. Cambodia did not

take place 40 years ago, it took place over the [42:00] past five, six years, in 1974, there were eight million Cambodian people. They are people of incredible sensitivity, and culture, and delicacy. You simply have to go into Cambodia, as I did, last year, February, to see the kind of madness which is the Nazi legacy to the human family which has refused to cope with that. Under the Pol Pot regime, a country of eight million people that created the great religious monuments of Angkor Wat and elsewhere, that society, where Pol Pot, who held up Adolf Hitler, as his model, who created statues, of Hitler in Nampan, like, whose whole ideology was based on a Nazi ideology, Hitler believed, in [de-Aryanization?] [sic] for the purification of the German race, Pol Pot created de-westernization, Year Zero. and anyone associated with western culture civilization [43:00] was shot on the street, more than half of the population of Cambodia was destroyed before the eyes of the world, three-to-four million people. And the reaction to them was the reaction, almost identical, to the reaction of what happened to the Jews in Nazi Germany. Go to the United Nations, and see, ever since 1975, whether a single word was said that no, after the Nazi Holocaust, we have learned something: you don't stand by while human beings are massacred like sheep. Not a single word at the United Nations about the massacre of half of Cambodia. Go to Uganda, where under President Idi Amin [for life?], this man,

who with 5% of the Muslim population, oppressed 85% of the population, which was Christian, half-Roman Catholic, half-Protestant. Whose palace guard, not incidentally, were the PLO. Idi Amin, who created an [44:00] Adolf Hitler Park in the center of Kampala, who attacked Christian ministers for singing Jewish songs on Sunday, because they refer to the peace of Zion, this Idi Amin massacred 500,000 black Christians, estimated, 500,000 black Christians, good Roman Catholics and Protestants. Not only was a word not said by almost anyone in the international community, but in fact, Idi Amin, you remember, was invited to come to the United Nations, that last forum of peace and justice in the world, was treated as a conquering hero. And so imperious was his majesty present for life, that he sat on a throne in the United Nations, not veining to want to read his own speech, but had an aide read his speech for him. And he preached a sermon about how the American people must loosen themselves from Jewish power, the Jewish lobby, and how the blacks must carry out the [45:00] their revolution in accordance with his model. This Idi Amin massacred, and the epidemic of dehumanization goes on. I don't want to go through the whole litany of destruction. Ireland, you know, not Africa, Ireland, day in and day out, day in and day out, Catholics kill Protestants, Protestant massacre (inaudible). Now, only now, are American Irish-Catholics and Protestants, beginning to raise the question about what is

happening to their people in Ireland, they're beginning to ask the American government to do something, and you can hardly hear it. As if for 12 years, the massacre of Christians and Ireland Catholics and Protestants meant nothing to them. As if that were their old-age home. It is the country from which they got their language, their culture, their faith. Everything they are in the terms of their identity. They closed the key on the old age home and threw it away, it has nothing to do with them.

So rampant becomes the callousness to [46:00] human suffering in so many parts of the world, and now Afghanistan, thousands upon thousands of people, day in and day out. Lebanon, 50,000 Muslims, Christians, massacred. Do you see people marching in the streets of New York, the United Nations, about Lebanon? And it'll go on, it'll get worse. I met this afternoon with the Lebanese-Christian (inaudible) Jewish organization begging for help. His father was massacred by the PLO, he was formerly a supporter of the PLO, now, he's learned something.

And what I'm trying to say, my friends, is that, that, which Robert J. Lifton has called after Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, psychic numbing, the anesthetization of human conscience, which could have been dealt with, had people faced the ultimate meaning of the Nazi Holocaust, not simply as a Jewish obsession,

as some Christians say, why do the Jews [47:00] keep observing this? Why can't they forget? I once said to a Christian who said that to me, the Jews will begin, the Jews will begin to forgive, never forget. The Jews will begin to forgive when you begin to remember.

Finally, the lesson that we have learned is that if you look into every situation in which this kind of destruction take place, and if the world had paid attention, what began, not only in Nazi Germany, but in western Christian Europe for the past 1,900 years, it would've begun to have gotten some clue to the process of dehumanization, which has taken place, which ultimately lead to Auschwitz.

Or, in a microcosmic level, a study was done by Professor Gordon Allport of Harvard University called "The Study of Prejudice." In the early 1920s, there were a series of lynchings of blacks in the South, and field workers from Harvard [48:00] went into the communities to see how that took place, how were blacks lynched, what went on? And they found that in every instance, where there was massive lynching of blacks, it was always preceded by what Gordon Allport called verbal violence. In every one of those Southern communities, it always began with a campaign on the part of the Ku Klux Klan, or that mentality, to

begin talking about blacks, not as human beings -- niggers, coons, nightriders. And for a period of weeks, they began making caricatures out of blacks, emptying them of their humanity, making them into caricatures empty of humanity, and therefore, not fit objects for human compassion, and caring, and human response. And Allport said that once you empty a human being of his humanity, it is a very small thing for that caricature to be hung, and swung from a tree, and not to call for any kind of sympathy [49:00] or human response.

If that is what led to the lynching of blacks in that tragic episode, that stain on American history, can you imagine what has happened to the Jewish people across the past 1,900 years? It begins with the image of the Jews, and that verbal violence, which began in ancient Palestine and spread throughout the whole of the diaspora, the Jews as Judas, the Jews as the betrayer of God, and of mankind, who would sell God himself in the Christian version for 30 pieces of silver. And then, the image of Jews as Judas, and the Pharisees as legalists, which became the dominant conception of the Jews religiously in western Christian civilization for 1,900 years, then became secularized -- Shylock, Fagin. And then, if you look at the Nazi literature, and we have, at our library in the American Jewish Committee, the most extensive collection [50:00] of Nazi propaganda against

the Jews, including all of the [Streicher?] cartoons, all of the toys the Nazis produced for children, to play with Jews on the checkerboard -- kill six Jews, make three moves forward. Jews were so dehumanized, emptied of their humanity, that they became the image of the devil and Satan himself.

And so, as one looks at this reality, beginning with verbal violence, its implications for us today is what is happening with Israel at the United Nations, when Zionism is racism, that's the beginning of the campaign of the dehumanization of Israel, the delegitimization of Israel, verbal violence, to empty Israel of its humanity, to make it into a caricature, filled with diabolic content, an object of hatred, rather than of respect. And if you look at the absence of pluralism in so much of [51:00] the rest of the world, in Africa, Asia, Latin America, my friends, we all have a stake in this, precisely because of the Nazi Holocaust. We live at a moment in human history, where, even if we wanted the luxury of isolating ourselves from the rest of the human family, to say this is our own problem, we will deal with this ourselves, the fact that we live in an age of nuclear proliferation, whether it's now the capacity of the United States and the Soviet Union alone, if they do not create another single ICBM, the United States alone today, has the capacity with our own ICBMs, and our trident

submarines, to destroy the human family 15 times over. And the Soviet Union, now, has even a greater capacity.

At the heart of the story that is taking place today in the world, is an effort to recover [52:00] this fundamental assertion which began with our people, and our tradition, at exodus at Sinai, namely, an effort to reverse the cycle of dehumanization, depersonalization, to assert again, in powerful ways, that (*Hebrew*) [52:20], that every human being is created with sanctity, is infinitely precious, is not expendable to global strategies. If governments don't have the capacity to understand that, the people themselves must assert themselves to take that in hand. And what we are saying out of our presence, and in our memorializing the six million, as we will on April 20th, is indeed, we come to honor the memory of our dead, but we're also coming to raise the consciousness of the whole human [53:00] family. That what we memorialize, they had best not take for granted. Because at stake in what we are honoring, in upholding the memory and the dignity of their lives, and asserting the responsibility that every Jew has for one another, (*Hebrew*) [53:20], is a model, a paradigm, for how every member of the human family must begin to behave toward one another. And unless that lesson is learned, the potential for human disaster is great, and therefore, when we observe *Yom Ha'Shoah* this year,

we are, in fact, more than we care to acknowledge, behaving in the tradition of Isaiah, who commanded that Israel must remain *Or LaGoyim*, a light unto the nations, not in terms of arrogance, not in terms of special privilege, but the sense of service, of bringing [54:00] humanity back to its senses, while there's still time. Thank you. (applause)

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