

ZACHOR: The Holocaust Resource Centers:
Activities, September, 1978 - February, 1979

Since its formal establishment on September 1, 1978, ZACHOR has been engaged in a broad variety of activities, including:

SHOAH: A Review of Holocaust Studies and Commemorations

Supported by a grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council and published by ZACHOR in conjunction with the University of Bridgeport, SHOAH is the only English-language periodical devoted to Holocaust studies and commemorations, written for both academics and laypersons. SHOAH appears quarterly and the first issue was published last May. It is edited by Jane Gerber, professor of Jewish history at Lehman College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and a Vice-President of the Association of Jewish Studies.

The second issue, which appeared in December, featured articles on "The New York City Holocaust Curriculum" by Perry Davis, special assistant to the Chancellor of the New York Board of Education, "The Use of Music as a Means of Education in Terezin" by Joza Karas, a violinist with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra and author of The Holocaust in Music, "Concentration Camp Art and Artists" by Leo Baeck Institute archivist Sybil Milton, and Irving Greenberg's "The State of Israel and the Challenge of Power to Jewish and Christian Theology."

The third issue, which will appear around March 1, features such diverse articles as "The Place and Contributions of Yad VaShem," "The Disease of Hunger in the Warsaw Ghetto," "Survivor Children" and "Vignettes of a Survivor."

Holocaust Studies Faculty Seminar

Since the early Fall, ZACHOR has sponsored the first interdisciplinary Holocaust Studies Faculty Seminar for scholars from a variety of disciplines in the Boston-Washington "corridor." The Seminar is held monthly at the City University of New York Graduate Center and usually involves 25-30 scholars. It is chaired by Henry Feingold, Professor of modern American and Jewish history at Baruch College and the City University of New York, and author of the acclaimed The Politics of Rescue. Each meeting of the Seminar consists of a 30-60 minute presentation, followed by an hour or more of discussion. The proceedings, which are taped, will be collected and published by ZACHOR in the Fall of this year.

At the Seminar's third and most recent meeting, on January 23rd, Lawrence Langer, Professor of English at Simmons College and the author of The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination and the recently-published The Age of Atrocity: Death in Modern Literature, spoke on "The Dilemma of Choice in the Deathcamps." Three excerpts from his paper, which is part of a forthcoming book entitled Versions of Survival: The Holocaust and the Human Spirit, are included in this newsletter. Following the discussion, Professor Langer indicated that many of the comments, questions and suggestions which his paper provoked would influence his work-in-progress.

The Seminar was inaugurated in October with a presentation on "The Destruction Process and the Jewish Response: Reconsiderations" by Raul Hilberg, Professor of political science at the University of Vermont and the author of the pioneering of The Destruction of European Jewry.

At the Seminar's second meeting in December, Henry Feingold spoke on "The Holocaust Witness as a Problem in Holocaust Historiography: The Case for Revision." His presentation evoked a great deal of comment and spirited discussion, among the 35 or so scholars present.

At the next meeting of the Seminar on February 28, the distinguished Canadian-Jewish philosopher Emil L. Fackenheim will speak on "The Commanding Voice of Auschwitz... and the Centrality of Israel: Reconsiderations and Developments."

Task Force on Holocaust Liturgy

As indicated in its name, the raison d'etre of ZACHOR is to "Remember." One of the most important and challenging ways of remembering/commemorating a communal event is through liturgy - prayers and other kinds of human religious expression which become part of the cycle of feast and fast, festival and repentance. Because liturgy is also a privileged path into communal consciousness, ZACHOR has established a Task Force on Holocaust Liturgy. The Task Force is currently examining ways the Holocaust is commemorated in existing Jewish liturgy, and will discuss ways of giving voice to the pain, questioning, anger, faith and doubt arising from this seminal event.

At its third and most recent meeting in January, Rabbis Chaim Stern, editor of Gates of Repentance, (the Reform Mahzor, or High Holiday prayer book) and Yehiel Poupko, author of an article on the Holocaust and Jewish observance in the forthcoming Third Jewish Catalogue, led a discussion on Poupko's thesis that the Holocaust must be injected into, and to some extent, transform all Jewish observances.

Other members of the task force include:

Rabbi Jules Harlow, editor of the (Conservative) High Holiday Prayer Book;

Rabbi Jack Reimer, Scholar-in-Residence at Congregation B'nai Emunah, St. Louis, and editor of Jewish Reflections on Death;

Professor David Roskies, a scholar on modern Yiddish literature and East European Jewish history and culture at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and author of Night Words;

Professor Byron Sherwin, a scholar in modern Jewish history at the Spertus College of Judaica (Chicago) and author of several study guides and teaching aides to the TV-special "Holocaust" published by the Jewish Welfare Board;

Michael Strassfeld, a co-editor of The Jewish Catalog and The Second Jewish Catalog, and editor of a new Haggadah commissioned by the Rabbinical Assembly.

ZACHOR Director Irving Greenberg, Associate Director Michael Berenbaum, and staff members Mary T. Glynn and David M. Szonyi are also part of the Task Force. The next meeting, on March 7, will focus on Roskies' "Modern Midrash," Night Words.