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David Roskies
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Dear David,

Your book put me in mind of several things.

The connection you mention between the coming of spring, Easter and programs makes me think that when he wrote, "April is the cruellest month," Eliot was probably right in ways he hadn't intended.

In so far as the book is about the necessity and difficulty of witnessing it reminded me of the prose introduction to Anna Akhmatova's "Requiem" in which she describes the lines of women waiting in the cold outside the prison for a chance glimpse of their fathers, husbands or sons:

In the fearful years of the Yezhov terror I spent seventeen months in the prison queues in Leningrad. One day somebody "identified" me. Beside me, in the queue, there was a woman with blue lips. She had, of course, never heard of me; but she suddenly came out of that trance so common to us all and whispered (everyone spoke in whispers there): "Can you describe this?" And I said: "Yes, I can." And then something like the shadow of a smile crossed what had one been her face.

1 April 1957, Leningrad

Of course in the situation you describe the woman with blue lips is also dead.

And that brings back a section of Robert Frost's long and philosophical - but not very good - poem "New Hampshire:"

How are we to write
The Russian novel in America
As long as life goes so unterribly?
.....
We get what little misery we can
Out of not having cause for misery.
It makes the guild of novel writers sick
To be expected to be Dostoievskis
On nothing worse than too much luck and comfort.
.....
No state can build
A literature that shall at once be sound

And sad on a foundation of well-being.

That was written in 1923 but it still describes the problem of writing - of writing great - in America and to some degree I think the problem of post-Holocaust Jewish writers.

At any rate Against the Apocalypse is a wonderful accomplishment. Mazel tov.

I spoke to David Shriner-Cahn. We have copies of books by our other members for sale in the Ansche Chesed office and I told him we should have yours. Let me know if he doesn't get in touch with you.

Best to you & Shana -

Bill