

the book reporter

THE ABANDONMENT OF THE JEWS: America and the Holocaust 1941-1945. By David S. Wyman. Pantheon, N.Y. \$19.95. 444 pgs.

NONE IS TOO MANY: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948. By Irving Abella and Harold Troper. Random House, N.Y. \$17.95. 336 pgs.

**THE WARSAW GHETTO IN
PHOTOGRAPHS: 206 Views made
in 1941. Edited by Ulrich Keller,
Dover, N.Y. \$8.95. 131 pgs.**

A REFUGE FROM DARKNESS; Wilfrid Israel and the Rescue of the Jews. By Naomi Shepherd. Pantheon, N.Y. \$18.95. 291 pgs.

THE NUREMBERG TRIAL. By Ann Tusa and John Tusa. Athenaeum, N.Y. \$22.95. 519 pgs.

THE OUTRAGED CONSCIENCE
Seekers of Justice for Nazi War
Criminals in America. By Rochelle
G. Saidel. SUNY, N.Y. \$29.50
Hardback; \$9.95 Paperback. 246
pgs.

Reviewed by ISIDORE HAIBLUM

Between June 1941 and May 1945, five to six million Jews were killed by the Nazis and their collaborators. No large scale American rescue mission was ever mounted to save them during this time. Few U.S. newspapers sounded the alarm. Jewish groups could not unite in a joint rescue effort. The church remained silent. As did President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

And so the murderers had help. Why and how this could happen has been meticulously explored and documented by David S. Wyman—a Christian—in his stunning book *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941-1945*. Prof. Wyman spent 15 years researching the topic. He visited over 60 archives. The results are a highly readable and quite irrefutable indictment of an era.

"Compelling & Engrossing"

A CONSTANT REMINDER. By Isaac Charchat. Shengold Publishers, Inc. N.Y., 1984. \$20.00. p. 459

The biblical commandment *zachor*, to "remember," long predated George Santayana's famous dictum that those who forget history are condemned to repeat it. It has also taken on a compelling new meaning since the Holocaust. The process of remembering the Nazi war against the Jews, carried on formally by Holocaust historians and chroniclers, is also aided by the growing literary genre of memoirs and historical novels that use the years before, during, and after as backdrop.

This first novel (recently nominated for the 1985 Notable Books list of the American Library Association) by shipping magnate Isaac Charchat, tells the story of post-World War I Germany and the events leading up to the Second World War. It is also the story of Benjamin Isaacson, a young Swedish

(Photo: Wide World; courtesy PBS: "Heritage: Civilization and the Jews, 'Out of the Ashes'.")

JEWISH SURVIVORS OF THE BUCHENWALD CONCENTRATION CAMP at their liberation in April, 1945.

Among Wyman's main revelations are these:

The American and British governments had scant interest in rescuing large numbers of Jews. They wanted them neither in Palestine nor on these shores.

President Roosevelt waited 14 long months after learning of the Nazi mass murder of Jews before lifting a finger. When a delegation of Orthodox Rabbis came to beg intervention, he would not see them. A publicity campaign launched by The Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, and an angry memorandum from a group of humanitarian Treasury Department officials—all non Jews—finally forced Roosevelt to act. He created an almost powerless War Refugee Board. Only the selfless dedication of its members led to the saving of 200,000 Jews. Of these, only 21,000 were allowed to enter the United States.

The War Department in 1944 refused to bomb the Auschwitz gas chambers and railroads leading to the camp. Yet, they bombed industrial targets within five miles of the gas chambers.

The State Department stalled while Jews perished. When efforts by refugee-aid agencies and Eleanor Roosevelt compelled them to allow 5,000 Jewish children trapped in France to enter the United States, they responded by erecting so many roadblocks that only 137 were actually rescued. They ignored an offer to free 70,000 Rumanian Jews. Instead they tightened immigration procedures and put pressure on Latin American governments to follow suit.

Ships were found by the Allies to rescue 100,000 Yugoslav, Polish and Greek refugees, to transport 425,000 German Prisoners of War to the United States. But none were available to save Jews.

Leaders Squabble

Meanwhile Jewish leaders squabbled among themselves. Wyman tells us:

The conflict between the Zionists and the (Irgunist) Bergsonites was one of numerous serious disputes that riddled organized American Jewry throughout the Holocaust . . . Zionist organizations regularly clashed with such non-Zionist bodies as the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Labor Committee. Zionists feuded bitterly among themselves, even breaking their movement apart for six months after the (Stephen S.) Wise- (Abba Hillel) Silver collision of December 1944. Orthodox non-Zionists quarreled with each other. Acrimony interfered with cooperation on rescue between the Joint Distribution Committee and Jewish organizations that claimed the JDC was holding back funds. Twice between 1941 and 1945, power struggles within the United Jewish Appeal nearly destroyed the combined fund-raising mechanism.

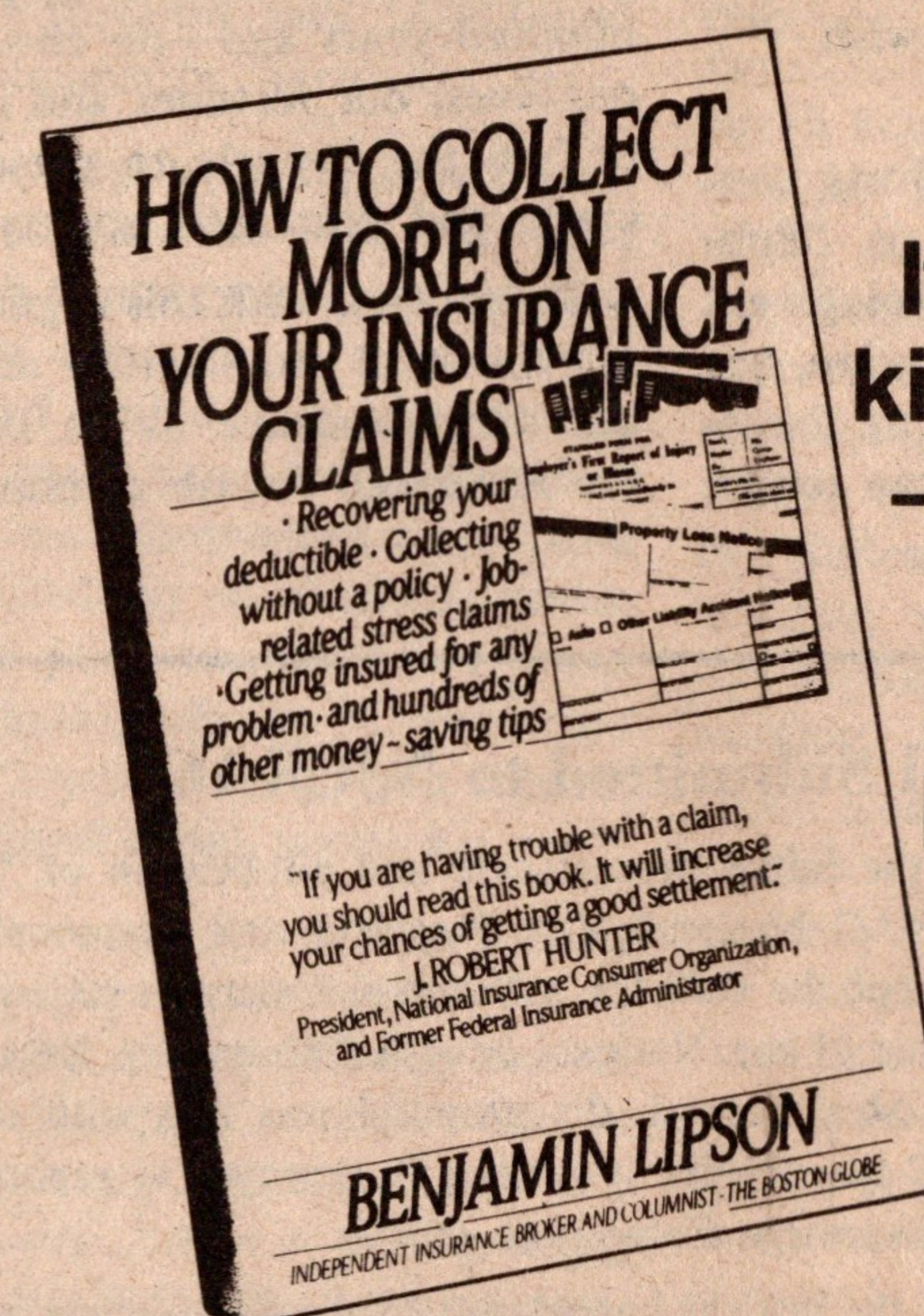
American Jewish leaders, Wyman shows, as a whole, failed to assign top priority to the refugee cause.

Only The Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, spearheaded by Irgunists Peter H. Bergson (Hillel Kook) and Samuel Merlin—along with author Ben Hecht—emerge somewhat as heroes. They labored tirelessly to alert the nation to what was happening in Europe. The group's right-wing origins, however, caused the Jewish Establishment to oppose it at every turn.

In America indifference and anti-Semitism carried the day. Prof. Wyman asks: "Would the reaction be different today? Would Americans be more sensitive, less self-centered, more willing to make sacrifices, less afraid of differences now than they were then?"

A remarkable and utterly devastating book.

The same story is replayed in *None Is Too Many* by Irving Abella



and Harold Troper. Their aptly titled book offers a close and dispiriting look at Canadian immigration policy toward the Jews of Europe between 1933-1948.

During the Great Depression entry to Canada was severely restricted. The indigenous population—mostly past immigrants themselves—hardly needed more competition for what few jobs were available. Orientals, blacks and Jews were deemed by the government the least desirable candidates.

The economic situation underwent a considerable change for the better during World War II. But not the attitude of Canadian officials toward the Jews. Again—as in the United States—bigotry held sway. Less than 5,000 Jews were admitted, arguably the worst record of all possible refugee-receiving states. How this came about is traced step-by-step by the authors who deservedly won the National Jewish Book Award for their efforts.

“Unbearably Poignant”

In *The Warsaw Ghetto in Photographs* we are shown some of the horrors that befell our brothers and sisters who remained trapped in Europe. In sections headed "Beggars," "Children," "Victims of Hunger and Typhus," "Burials," and 10 others—including one on the Lodz Ghetto—we are given to view a series of stark black and white photographs which are utterly harrowing and just about unbearably poignant. They bear better witness to what was done than many voluminous tomes.

(Continued on page 18, col. 1)

ISIDORE HAIBLUM writes essays and reviews and does interviews for a variety of publications. He has just completed his tenth science fiction novel, *The Hand of Ganz* (New American Library).

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The story of Wilfrid Israel demonstrates what a determined effort, even one made by a single well placed individual, could do to save Jewish lives. Israel died in 1943 while returning from a rescue mission; his plane, which also carried the actor Leslie Howard, was intercepted and shot down by the Luftwaffe. But by then Israel had managed to rescue thousands. An enigma for many who knew him, the British born German business man—he directed as many as 2,000 employees—was involved in the arts in Weimar Germany, was known by such diverse personalities as the writer Christopher Isherwood and Chaim Weizman. One of the first to divine the true intent of the Final Solution, Israel dedicated his life to opposing it. In this he encountered the usual Allied indifference. But Israel would not give up. One of his projects ultimately saved 10,000 children.

In *A Refuge From Darkness* Naomi Shepherd unravels the mys-

tery that was Wilfrid Israel. Her book reads like a suspense novel, but it is all true. Israel slept with a twelfth-century Khmer buddha at the foot of his bed. He was a pacifist, a dissident Zionist, a cosmopolitan all rolled into one. He was also heir to a huge business dynasty. He could have continued to live a safe life of privileged wealth. But Israel, the great-grandson of Britain's first Chief Rabbi, chose to aid his people. He emerges from this biography as a true hero of our times.

By the close of World War II Hitler, Himmler, and Goebbels were all dead. But 22 leaders of Nazi Germany were still alive. And they were held to account in what was the most famous trial of the century. In *The Nuremberg Trial* Ann and John Tusa have written a thoroughly engrossing history of that trial, one which brings the many participants skillfully to life.

The Allies who had shown such indifference to the fate of the Jews when millions of lives hung in the balance, now reversed themselves. Nazi atrocities toward the Jews suddenly became a paramount moral and legal issue. And who bore responsibility for the murder of the Jews was decided in a stirring courtroom drama.

"Important and Useful"

So we are there as the hot-tempered American prosecutor Robert H. Jackson, whose cross-examination talents left something to be desired, is repeatedly bested by defendant Goering. And we see how Maxwell-Fyfe, a competent and experienced British Barrister—though hardly brilliant—marshals his facts in such a way as to crush Goering. We look over the shoulder of the Soviet prosecutor Rudenko, whose voice is soft and gentle, but whose words are, "harsh, assertive, harassing." This is a slice of history. And we become privy not only to the actual trial proceedings but to their background, as well, the frantic behind-the-scenes in-fighting. But what we have here is much more than a first-rate historical narrative. It is also an examination of the processes that create international law. All of which makes *The Nuremberg Trial* an important and very useful book.

"Soon after World War II," Rochelle Saidel writes in *The Outraged Conscience*, "Nazi war criminals and collaborators began to make their way to the United States." Simon Wiesenthal estimates the number as more than 3,000. Currently some 400 cases are under investigation; less than 40 have so far been brought to court. How did these Nazi war criminals manage to enter this country in the first place? Why were some of them employed by the U.S. government? And why did it take so very long to initiate action against them?

Saidel answers these questions and much more. "The only dedicated effort to bring Nazi war criminals and collaborators to justice," she writes, "has come from less than three dozen individuals, acting out of a sense of moral outrage." No cloak-and-dagger operatives are to be found among this assemblage. Charles R. Allen—a WASP—is a left-wing writer; he was one of the

first, and most persistent of the Nazi hunters. Elizabeth Holtzman led the fight in Congress. A host of rabbis, and some very private citizens, refused to let the issue die. Saidel tells it all with great conviction. Her book, which is as topical as today's headlines, is a major weapon in the fight against the murderers among us. It shows us what still remains to be done.

There is a sad—and inescapable—moral here. When the chips were down, the Jewish People stood alone. In this they were hardly unique. Throughout history, the same fate has laid low numerous other minorities. But few of these were as utterly homeless and as totally dependent on the good will of a host nation as were the Jews. Now, rising out of the Holocaust, there is Israel, and this catastrophe need never repeat itself. The tragic events which helped bring Israel into being remain the best reason for its present and future existence.

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film

(Continued from page 17)

The incidental meetings between the three heroines, who are otherwise unconnected, seem almost artificial. *Enormous Changes* also has a few technical flaws, such as a muffled soundtrack. But all in all it compensates by offering strong performances and an honest, moving glimpse into the "enormous changes" all of us must make at certain moments—as women and as people, as daughters and as mothers, as wives and as lovers. "If a person changes his (or her) place, he changes his fortune," say the rabbis. Through these stories, we see that that can mean also a psychological "place."

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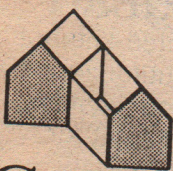
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