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Professor Susan Rubin Suleiman Gives the 2006 Hilberg Lecture

By Dan Green

On Monday 30 October 2006, Dr. Susan Rubin Suleiman, C. Douglas Dillon Professor of the Civilization of France and Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University, addressed a diverse crowd of undergraduates, graduate students and interested members of the community when she delivered the annual Raul Hilberg Lecture. In her talk, entitled “‘Oneself as Another’: Identification and Mourning in Writing about Victims of the Holocaust,” Suleiman explored several complex, theoretical aspects of subjectivity as they relate to Patrick Modiano’s 1997 work, *Dora Bruder* (Gallimard-Jeunesse: Paris, 1997; University of California Press: Berkeley, 1999).

Suleiman began her lecture by drawing attention to the fact that its title echoes a work by Paul Ricoeur, in which the philosopher investigates identity as experienced by the human subject. Ricoeur conceives identity as arising from the dialectical tension between *idem* and *ipse*. According to Ricoeur, *idem* is the notion of continuity of the self (selfsameness), and *ipse* is that portion of the self that can initiate something new (selfhood). Ricoeur

envisions identity as a balance between these two opposing tendencies; without either of them, human subjectivity as we know it could not exist. The latter concept of *ipse* is what we know as autonomy; it allows a person to make decisions, to make promises and keep contracts, and to initiate something new. But the idea of initiating something new rests on the former notion of *idem*, a self that persists throughout an individual’s entire life. Thus Ricoeur seeks to balance the continuity of the self with an individual’s changing identity in his theory of subjectivity.

Suleiman restated the dialectical relationship between these opposing tendencies of identity as she articulated the problem of alterity at the center of this theory of human subjectivity. That is, how does one resolve the notion of an identity that is continuous throughout one’s life with the common sense experience of physical, emotional, and intellectual growth during one’s lifetime? According to Suleiman, the problem of alterity within identity has three dimensions: *ipse*, inter-subjectivity, and conscience. The *ipse* is that part of identity that allows

for personal growth and change. It allows an individual to initiate something new and different within what would otherwise be a static environment (i.e. a homogenous culture); it allows the individual to interfere in the culture in which she finds herself enmeshed. However, alterity in identity does not end there; it also exists between individuals as intersubjectivity, which concept describes how an individual both emulates others and evaluates the self against others, necessitating a sense of the other in order to apprehend a sense of self. And finally, alterity in identity exists as the self relates to itself. This is the notion of conscience, and it has its basis in alterity in that an individual evaluates her actions against her idea of who she should be; for one to perform this evaluation, at least two alternate nodes of identity must exist within the same individual.

Suleiman further explained that each of these dimensions of the problem of alterity contains a passive component. In each of these, there is a self that is acted upon, and a self that performs an action. It is this idea of acting upon another that she uses to transition between the heavily theoretical introduction about identity and her discussion of writing about victims of the Holocaust. In his novel *Dora Bruder*, Patrick Modiano blurs the genres of biography, fiction, and autobiography as he reconstructs Dora Bruder's identity. In this project, Suleiman traced for us the complex dialectic between self and alterity, between sameness and difference, through which the author simultaneously identifies with his subject and distances himself from her. For example, Bruder exists as one instant in a series: she is a French Jew. In this respect, she is the same as Modiano. And yet because she was part of a group that was hunted, caught, and deported to Auschwitz, Bruder is very different from the author that sketches who she was. Suleiman showed us how Modiano moves through three phases of identification (appropriation, empathy, and ethical consciousness) as he reconstructs Dora Bruder.

Suleiman noted that identity formation always contains an aspect of appropriation, in which the focus is on the self. One says, "I am like others," but the emphasis is on the "I," and not on the other. This is a normal part of development: as an individual identifies with others through common characteristics, she appropriates certain characteristics of

another's identity. Suleiman remarked that this aspect of identification can be pathological when one cannot successfully negotiate where the self leaves off and the other begins, giving rise to delusions on an individual level and fascism on a societal one. She illustrated this type of identification in the opening chapters of Modiano's book. It begins with the author reporting that as he perused an old copy of *Paris-Soir*, he ran across an advertisement in which family members seek information about Dora Bruder's disappearance. Then Modiano launches into a two page digression about his own life before returning to Bruder's disappearance.

The digression is triggered by geographical proximity, as the author is intimately familiar with that section of Paris named in the advertisement, but there are other points of identification. The various confluences between Bruder and Modiano are instances of appropriation that allow the author to connect with his subject. Modiano's appropriatory identification with Bruder allows him to reflect on his own experience; that is, by claiming certain elements of Bruder's biography and identifying their importance to his life, he uses Bruder's experience to analyze his own. Suleiman nodded toward the problems of the appropriatory aspect of identification in fiction, acknowledging that it can remain a purely sensational device used only for shock value, or it can block any kind of real connection between individuals if no difference is acknowledged. Modiano would have been exploiting Bruder if his writing about her produced only his autobiography. Suleiman was adamant that Modiano avoids merely appropriating Bruder's identity and using her suffering to his own ends by recognizing the differences between author and subject.

Suleiman pointed out that empathy operates through such recognition of sameness tempered with an awareness of difference. With empathy, identification of one's self with others moves away from the exploitation of appropriation by placing the emphasis on the other, and removing it from the self. When one is empathetic, the suffering is always the other's; there is always space between the other with whom one identifies and the self. Suleiman illustrated that empathy exists in thoughts like, "That person could be me, and so what happens to her matters to me." While empathy is precipitated

by the apprehension of sameness that occurs as appropriation, it also allows for individuality through a recognition of difference.

Modiano takes great care to maintain this difference after the initial recognition of sameness. The similarities between Modiano and Bruder (e.g. French Jews, familiarity with a particular section of Paris) allow for a very strong connection, and may even provide the impetus for Modiano's meticulous research into and reconstruction of Bruder's life, and yet he always maintains the distance between them. Modiano's speculation about what happened creates a historical narrative that also has the effect of maintaining this distance. His quest to find information is always in the first person, creating a meta-historical, investigative narrative that allows the focus to remain on Bruder. And yet, Suleiman explained, the movement into novelistic discourse shows the instability of Modiano's narrative; that is, his consciousness is always seeking identification with Bruder, and it is always seemingly ready to conflate his story with hers.

By keeping his own identity in tension with Bruder's, Modiano is able to convey simultaneously the sameness and the difference between himself and his subject. Amid this tension, Modiano's use of the plural second person (*vous*, you) moves the reader toward the third aspect of identification that Suleiman introduced in the beginning of her lecture: ethical consciousness. The use of the plural, general pronoun signals a movement out of the narrative to include another, or more accurately the many possible others that comprise Modiano's readers. Ethical consciousness is precisely this realization of and concern for others and it is only possible as identification of sameness is tempered with difference and extended beyond a single instance of alterity. Modiano's narrative moves further toward this ethical consciousness in his proliferation of names. As the author lists many others who were arrested, he moves the narrative beyond the singular instance of Dora Bruder to recognize the collective significance of many lives like hers. By connecting this entire host of Holocaust victims with the many readers of his book, Suleiman believes Modiano lives up to his responsibility as a writer to compensate for the destruction of memory.

As Professor Suleiman closed her lecture, she

recognized that Modiano's work stands against the renovations of old streets, against the planned amnesia of governments, and against those who attempted to erase all evidence of the crimes that were committed. Modiano evokes the road that Dora Bruder and many like her traveled. In a sense, he rebuilds the road and excavates the camp in a way that highlights her connection to a community of people who are like her, and connects her to a wider community of people who are also different from her. Suleiman concluded that Modiano's book is a project of mourning. It is a eulogy to the *dur mort* of French Jews during World War II; however, it does more than just remember them. As the work endlessly mourns the loss of Dora Bruder, it also endlessly creates a likeness of her identity to fill the space formerly occupied by a stranger's name. Through the processes of identification, Modiano forges a personal connection to a particular French Jew who died in the Holocaust, and by maintaining an empathetic difference between his subject and himself, he is able to write toward a contemporary ethical consciousness. In this sense, Suleiman sees the book as performing the work of mourning in psychoanalytic terms: Modiano not only remembers victims of the Holocaust, he also builds an ethical consciousness that can fill the void left by their loss.

Professor Michael Wolffsohn Addresses UVM

By Dan Green

On Tuesday, 10 October 2006, Dr. Michael Wolffsohn, Professor of Modern History at The University of German Armed Forces in Munich, Germany, visited the University of Vermont as part of a delegation lead by the German Consul General to the New England States, Dr. Wolfgang Vorwerk. On behalf of German Federal President Dr. Horst Köhler, the Consul General presented *Emeritus* Professor of Political Science Raul Hilberg with the *Bundesverdienstkreuz* [Knight Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany], which is the highest tribute the Federal Republic of Germany can pay to individuals for services to the German nation. President Köhler awarded the Knight Commander's Cross to Hilberg for his accomplishments as a preeminent Holocaust

scholar and teacher. In conjunction with his visit, Professor Wolffsohn gave a lecture to the public entitled “Germany and the Jewish World: History as a Trap.”

Wolffsohn began his lecture by describing for the audience his qualifications as an analyst of German-Jewish relations. Besides being a history professor, he is also German and Jewish. It comes as no surprise that the complex political relationship between Germany and Israel derives from the Holocaust, and Wolffsohn’s relationship to these two countries begins in Israel in 1947, shortly after that seminal historical event. His parents, he informed us got out of Germany just in time. His grandparents were not so lucky, and were in Dachau during *Kristallnacht*. In 1954, his family moved to Germany from Israel, something that was not generally done. Growing up, Wolffsohn experienced two Germanys: an anti-Semitic, Nazi one, but also an ordinary, decent one full of ordinary, serious people. After his service in the Israeli Armed Forces, he faced the decision of either going back to the bifurcated Germany where he had grown up, or staying in the country where he was born. He felt, and not for the last time, the conflict between his two Germanys, the conflict one feels as a German Jew.

Wolffsohn asked us what this phrase means exactly. What does it mean to identify oneself as both a German and a Jew? It is both an ideological designation, as well as a specific demographic. In 1933, there were 250,000 German Jews; 3,000 of them survived the Holocaust; of these, more or less half left and roughly half stayed in West Germany. Among those survivors who remained in Germany, Wolffsohn is quick to point out a sense of guilt, not only from having survived, but for having stayed behind in a land of perpetrators. Although the majority of those who left wanted to go to the U.S., most were denied permission to resettle there. Britain and France were also reluctant to accept refugees, while Israel, sensing an impending conflict with its new Arab neighbors, encouraged immigration. Therefore, many Jews emigrating from Germany after World War II landed in Israel. This group was hard-pressed economically, they needed to rebuild not only their homes but some social structure, and they always had to struggle with a structural dilemma in their very identities: the

ideological conflict between being both German and Jewish.

In 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, a new chapter opened in the history of German Jews. Some 200,000 Jews came to the newly United Germany voluntarily, invigorating communities with a sensibility not so much burdened by the “survivor’s guilt” they found, and also sparking a huge integration effort. The Democratic ideology of the new Germany was certainly not anti-Semitic, but it still clashed with the vestiges of an older, anti-Semitic one. And much like the time during which he grew up, Germany still exhibits an ambivalent relationship toward its Jews. The difference is that now, there is a commitment to Democratic principles in Unified Germany, propelled in part by Hilberg’s work on the history of the Holocaust.

As for German-Israeli relationships, Wolffsohn reported that while the German government has been steadfast in its commitment to Israel, there has been tension between the two countries in recent decades. In 1953, Federal Germany signed a restitution agreement that saved Israel. There were not yet funds coming from the U.S., and when Israel attacked Egypt, the Eisenhower/Dulles administration demanded that Germany cease its restitution payments. Germany maintained that the funds it had promised to Israel were non-negotiable. This unwavering position regarding German-Jewish relations and the pledge to help Israel when they need it has become a cornerstone of the new German identity. Currently, Germany is patrolling the Lebanese coastline. It is believed that a foiled July 2006 terrorist attack was a response to German support of Israel in 2005 against the growing nuclear threat posed by Iran. In a 1996 Israeli/Syrian agreement, Israel requested German troops to patrol the Golan Heights, certainly a sign of a trusted, dependable relationship. In 1991, Germany agreed to deliver 5 submarines to Israel, after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein attacked them. Since the initial restitution agreement, Germany has remained committed to aiding Israel.

Israel had viewed Germany positively until 2003, when Germany voiced criticism of George W. Bush. Most Israeli criticism of the German government since then has been in an effort to persuade its two partners to get along. Wolffsohn informed us

that German public support for the government's pro-Israeli policy, on the other hand, had been dropping since a 1981 Israeli attack on Iraq, after which an estimated sixty five percent of the German public viewed Israel as the greatest threat to world peace. Wolffsohn suggested that the conflict over the pro-Israeli policy caused among Germans by Israeli actions emanates from differences in the lessons concerning power, the nation, land, and religion that each nation had taken away from its involvement in the Holocaust.

Regarding power, both the German and the Jewish people learned to say, "Never again." To Germans, this means never again using force as a means to realize a political ideology. To Israelis, Wolffsohn suggested "Never again," means partly, "We will never again be victims." Sometimes this refusal to be victimized manifests in a will to strike first. Because of these different historical lessons taken from the Holocaust, Germans cannot necessarily understand Israel's aggressive defense of its borders. Likewise, the two countries are at odds regarding nationhood. Whereas Germany is moving toward a more cosmopolitan post-nationalism, Israel is invested in promoting nationalism among its citizens to ensure its continued independent sovereignty. Furthermore, as a result of the Holocaust, Germany learned to give up land to make peace, while in its short history, Israel has learned it needs to procure more land to succeed in securing itself as a nation. And lastly, religion in modern Germany has become unpopular as the country has become secular to the point of atheism, whereas Israel is a theocracy firmly rooted in the Jewish religion.

These four aspects of history are now poised to mire the relations between Germany and Israel that have been largely favorable since the Post-World War II era. The opposing, but equally valid lessons that each nation has learned from history are now coming into conflict with each other. Different solutions to historical problems and tensions are producing new problems, and thus the lessons of history threaten to trap the development of positive relations between Germany and Israel.

What's in a Name?

by David Scrase

The "land," or state, of Schleswig-Holstein is generally known to have been somewhat "brown," or sympathetic to National Socialism. Considering its largely rural nature, Schleswig-Holstein saw substantial action; the agricultural state is of strategic importance as it is the site of the Nord-Ostsee-Kanal (formerly known as the Kaiser Wilhelm Kanal and usually referred to in English as the Kiel Canal), which links the North and Baltic Seas and provided a valuable transport route in the northern theater of war. Schleswig-Holstein was not only the location of the Kiel, there were also U-boat havens, a torpedo research and manufacturing station, and an important center for decoding in Flensburg, an equivalent of Bletchley Park in England. Furthermore, the urban center of Hamburg, and the ports of Cuxhaven, Wilhelmshaven and Emden were not far away. After the war, when the three western occupational zones were amalgamated to form the first Bundesrepublik Deutschland, which comprised a bulwark keeping communism at bay, Schleswig-Holstein was just one part of the alliance ranged against the Soviet Union. The young democracy, with a Bundeswehr in place of the old Wehrmacht, rearmed itself, building a navy and an air force.

It was hypothesized that a defensive war against an enemy invading from the east would need flak units, and just such a training facility was established in the heart of Schleswig-Holstein in Rendsburg, a city of some 35,000 souls on the above-mentioned Nord-Ostsee-Kanal. As the new democratic Germany struggled to live down its recent history, it was very aware of the importance of language to this endeavor. It went to great pains to avoid the names and labels, the terminology and slogans of the Third Reich as it strove to change its image in the eyes of the world. For example, a magnificent poem by Johannes Bobrowski, perhaps the greatest postwar German poet to be published simultaneously in both East and West Germany, was not published in the west until recently for the simple reason that the word "Volk" figured prominently (but harmlessly) throughout the poem. In accordance with this linguistic sensitivity, the new flak training center in Rendsburg was given the

neutral title of the Truppendienstschule Fla-Truppen, or Military Academy for Flak Troops. It was formally opened on 7 July 1956, the same day the draft was introduced. For the local population it was simply called the “Fla-Schule,” the Flak School. For the first year of its existence it was run by the army. In April 1957, it came under air-force control, only to revert to army control in 1964, when it was renamed the “Heeresflugabwehrschule,” or Army Air Defense Training School. At this time, almost twenty years after the end of the war, it seemed safe to add the name of a pioneer in air defense, Generaloberst Günther Rüdell, to the barracks where the training school was lodged, giving them the appellation Generaloberst Günther Rüdell Kaserne.

The facility and the name remained intact until the end of the 1990s when the name Rüdell suddenly became controversial. Günther Rüdell had hitherto seemed to be a non-controversial career military officer. Born in 1883, six years before the Führer’s birth in 1889, Rüdell joined the Bavarian Army in 1902. He served throughout World War I, but did not see action, working instead behind the lines on air defense, a new department at that time, of course. His expertise lay in anti-aircraft artillery; his rank was Oberstleutnant, equivalent to a Lieutenant Colonel in the US Air Force. In the Third Reich he developed into *the* expert in flak and air defense, rising to the rank of Generalmajor, or Brigadier General, in the Luftwaffe. When he retired at the end of 1942 he was promoted to Generaloberst, equivalent to a 4-star General in today’s US Air Force. None of this could count against him in the postwar years. He was not a member of the SS, he was not assigned to any of the camps, and he had not served in the east. He was clean.

But when a history sleuth discovered that Günther Rüdell had been made an honorary judge of the notorious “Volkgerichtshof,” or People’s Court, there was such a furor that his name was stripped from the barracks’ title. On 8 May, 2000, exactly fifty-five years after the end of World War II and fifty years after the death of Rüdell, the barracks were renamed the Feldwebel Schmid Kaserne, or the Sergeant Schmid Barracks. Almost immediately thereafter it was ascertained that Rüdell oversaw only one case as a People’s Court judge, and that he

dismissed all charges against the accused, who was freed immediately. In 2002 Rüdell’s name was accordingly rehabilitated: a conference room in the officers’ quarters of the Feldwebel Schmid Kaserne was named the Generaloberst Rüdell Versammlungssaal. An assembly hall in the Sergeant Schmid Barracks was given the name General Rüdell? Who said the Germans don’t have a sense of humor—even if it is ironic or unintended? But a less flippant, indeed rather serious question remains: who was Sergeant Schmid?



Feldwebel Anton Schmid

Well, he was an Austrian, born in 1900 in Vienna, far from Schleswig-Holstein. For Schmid, unlike for many of his compatriots, being Austrian rather than German was important. It was for him a way to distance himself from the Nazis and their abhorrent actions. His father worked in a bakery. The family was poor. At age fourteen, Anton Schmid began work with the telephone company. In July 1918, he was drafted and saw action on the Italian front. After the armistice, he returned to his job at the telephone company, but left in 1919. After working in electrical installation and repair, he set up his own business in 1926 selling and repairing radios and cameras, as well as developing film. He continued to run this business until after the Anschluss in March 1938. By 1941, he had been drafted again, and soon after the attack on the Soviet Union, he was sent to Vilna in the summer of 1941. Here he was responsible for picking up stray German soldiers who had been separated from their units, and returning them to the same. At his disposal were a number of vehicles and buildings, both of which soon proved to be useful in a different line

of work that he pursued secretly.

Witness to the brutality of the round-ups, deportation, and murder of Jews from the Vilna ghetto and the surrounding area, Schmid dissociated himself from such actions and began to assist Jews who had been assigned to him as laborers. He hid Jews and provided them with papers exempting them from the round-ups. His actions did not go unnoticed: Andres Gdowski, a Catholic priest engaged in rescue work, referred a group of Jewish resistance fighters to him. By the end of 1941, Schmid was meeting clandestinely with them, using his trucks to transport Jews from the Vilna ghetto to Bialystok, where the deadly "Aktionen" had not yet started, and even releasing Jews incarcerated in the notorious Lokischki jail. At least two Jews, who had been provided with false papers, worked for Schmid as "Aryans." The 250-300 Jews removed to the short-lived safety of Bialystok during the three deadly actions of October, November and December 1941, were noticed and proved to be Anton Schmid's downfall. Under torture, an escapee revealed enough details of how he got from Vilna to Bialystok, and thence to the city of Lida, for the Gestapo to arrest Schmid.

Whether he was arrested in January 1942, or if he was arrested in February 1942 shortly after an attempt to hide from authorities whom he knew were suspicious of him, is still not clear. On 25 February 1942, Anton Schmid appeared before a military tribunal. His court appointed lawyer attempted to save him from the death penalty by saying that Schmid took the Jews from Vilna to Lida because he thought they would be more useful to the Third Reich there. But Schmid was not only a fervent Roman Catholic, but a principled one too. He freely admitted that he was trying to save Jewish lives. In December 1941, he had told a delegation of Jewish resistors, in response to their warnings of the great danger that he was in, that given the choice of "living as a murderer or dying as a rescuer" he would choose death. He had rescued, at least in the short term, some 300 Jews. He was sentenced to death and shot on 13 April 1942.

The farewell letter that Anton Schmid wrote to his wife Steffi and his daughter Gerta is eloquent in its often un-grammatical simplicity:

I am glad that you , my dears, are both in good health and everything is okay. Today I can tell you everything about the fate that has caught up with me... Unfortunately I have been sentenced to death by the military court in Vilna... There's nothing that can be done except a plea for mercy, but I believe that will be turned down because they've all been turned down up till now. But, my dear Steffi and Gerta, chin up. I have come to accept my fate, that's how things have turned out. This was ordained up in heaven by our own dear God, and nothing can be changed. I am so calm today that I myself can't quite [missing word] it, but our dear God wants it and has made me strong. Hope he has given you both the same strength.

I want to tell you how it all happened. Here there were a great many Jews who were being rounded up by the Lithuanian militia and shot to death in a meadow outside the city, groups of 2-3,000 at a time. On the way there, they were smashing the children against trees and such like. You can imagine how I felt. I was ordered to head up the effort to bring the stragglers back to their units, I didn't want the job. 140 Jews were working in my buildings. They asked me to help them get away. I let myself [illegible] talked into it. You know how I am with my soft heart. I couldn't think otherwise and helped them, which was bad because of the court. You can imagine, dear Steffi and Gerta, that this is a heavy blow for us, but please forgive me. I was just behaving like a human being and didn't want to hurt anyone.

When you get this letter I won't be here anymore. I won't be able to write to you anymore, but be assured that we will see each other again in a better world with our dear Lord.

Anton Schmid was named Righteous Among the Nations in 1967. In 1990, a new apartment complex in the Brigittenan area (where Schmid had lived) was named the "Anton Schmid-Hof," at the unveiling of a plaque memorializing the event. At the ceremony of 8 May 2000, when the anti-aircraft training school was renamed in Schmid's honor, Germany's defense minister, Rudolph Scharping, said, "We are not free to choose our history, but we can choose the examples we take from that history. Too many bowed to the threats and temptations of the dictator, and too few found the strength to resist. But Sergeant Anton Schmid did resist..."



Excerpt from *DEAR OTTO*

by Susan Learmonth

DEAR OTTO is the story of a Viennese Jewish physician, who by dint of foresight and good luck was able to leave Austria six months after its annexation to Germany. Within months of settling in Boston Massachusetts with his wife, two daughters and mother-in-law, letters began to arrive from relatives and friends asking Otto to help them to leave Europe and secure the necessary documents to allow them to come to the United States. The book contains letters in translation, dated from 1938 to 1941, that detail the correspondence between Otto and various family members in Europe.

Otto was a refugee who became a rescuer. The letters document his efforts. He was able to send affidavits of support to his sister and her family, as well as to his brother-in-law, his wife and their child. However, for the rest of the letter-writers, he had to find affidavit sponsors, advance money for ship tickets, send cables to rescue organizations, and much more besides. He did all of this while trying to make a living for his family in a new country where he had to learn the language and pass the Massachusetts Medical Board Examination so that he could practice. He had wanted to write about his efforts but he became too sick and too old to accomplish this. He had saved all the original letters, which made it possible for me, his daughter, to take up what he could not finish. The book also gave me the chance to recall the creative ways in which wonderful people helped the family to graduate from being a group of newcomers to become a group of citizens.

Following are two brief excerpts from Otto's correspondence with his wife Fini's first cousin, Lisl, who was in France after the Nazis invaded:

Otto to Lisl (in French)

Boston

16 August, 1940

Dear Lisl,

I have found a friend who is willing to sign an affidavit of support for you for immigration to the United States. I beg you to answer immediately whether this will change your situation. I need your exact address. Since this is urgent, I ask you to send a cable.

Otto

Lisl to Otto (in French)

3 October 1940

...There is a notice at the consulate that special visas will not be given out after the 30th of October...the chances diminish daily. Before leaving, I went to a camp to see some friends. The situation looks desolate, I beg you to do as much as you can for those in camps. I await news from you in Lisbon, actually, it is difficult to get to Lisbon. If I don't succeed, I will return to Montauban and await the moment of departure there. Thousands of Jews of all nationalities wait in the south of France for some resolution to their situation. The expulsion of the Jews from Europe has begun and there is no place to go, everything is closed. Spanish Jews wait to go to Mexico, some have waited in camps for three years, it is their third winter. One must send aid to those whose only crime is to be Jewish or anti-fascist. We wanted nothing except the victory of France. One does not leave France voluntarily, but it is the only chance left for us.

I embrace you all,

Lisl

A great deal has been written about the Holocaust, mostly by survivors of the camps and by those who had been "hidden" children. *DEAR OTTO* is a look from the vantage of a fortunate family who successfully escaped, and of a man who, with the help of his wife, attempted to rescue seventeen families. Not all of his efforts were successful, but perhaps his letters gave some hope that rescue might still be possible.

Learmonth is currently working with Katherine Quimby Johnson, longtime associate of the Leonard & Carolyn Miller Center for Holocaust Studies, to publish the manuscript excerpted here.

Other Publications to Look for:

Francis R. Nicosia. *Useful Enemies? Zionism and Anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany*. (Cambridge University Press, early 2008).

Robert Bernheim and David Scrase, eds. *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*. (Berghahn Books).

Declassification of Documents Related to Nazi and Japanese War Crimes Now Completed

By Robert Bernheim

In 1998, President Clinton signed into law the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act. In the years that have followed, the Nazi War Crimes and Japanese Imperial Government Records Interagency Working Group (IWG) located, declassified and made available to the general public over 8 million pages of documents relating to Nazi and Japanese war crimes. The IWG, comprised of scholars, representatives of seven Executive Branch agencies, and three presidentially appointed members of the public, completed its work on 31 March 2007, and released a detailed report to Congress in April. The work of the IWG constituted the largest-ever congressionally mandated single-subject declassification project, and cost close to \$30 million. The documents released through this declassification project are housed at the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland, and are providing scholars with much new information about who knew what and when they knew it.

Many of the declassified documents shed new light on or expanded knowledge of the role former Nazis played among Cold War intelligence services, including the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) and the Committee for State Security of the Soviet Union (K.G.B.). This includes the extent to which Soviets recruited former Nazis and then used them as spies within West German and American intelligence agencies. One of the most notable cases is that of Heinz Felfe, a former SS officer who oversaw counterintelligence within the Gehlen Organization (the West German intelligence service supported initially by the United States Army and then by the C.I.A.). Felfe, who was bitter over the British and American bombings of his hometown of Dresden in February 1945, had secretly agreed to work for the K.G.B. Until his arrest for espionage in 1961, he was personally responsible for exposing over 100 American operatives and for countless eavesdropping operations.¹

The newly declassified documents also reveal that the C.I.A. had knowledge of the whereabouts

and false identity of Adolf Eichmann, an SS officer and the head of the Jewish Affairs Office that helped design and implement the policy of extermination against Europe's Jewish population, who was wanted for war crimes. The files indicate that the C.I.A. had this information a full two years before the Israelis captured him in Argentina in 1960, and subsequently brought him to trial in Israel. The same documents, however, reveal that the C.I.A. never offered to share its intelligence on Eichmann's location and identity with its Israeli counterpart, a fact that caused some historians on the I.W.G. to question whether Cold War expediency trumped morality and the pursuit of justice.²

Overall, much of the documentation reveals that the Americans, greatly concerned with Cold War strategies and pressures, were more than willing to overlook the war crimes of defeated Germans and their collaborators in exchange for information about Soviet military and intelligence strengths and weaknesses during a period of great political, military, and economic uncertainty. The vast majority of the declassified documents, however, indicates that former Nazi informants provided little intelligence of value to the Western Allies, and that they often used their postwar protection to escape criminal prosecution.

The newly declassified documents also provide insight into what and when those at the top of the British and American intelligence services knew about the unfolding Nazi Holocaust in Europe, as well as how they reported and documented the Nazis' criminal behavior. While much of this information has been available to scholars from other sources over the years, these declassified documents demonstrate that authorities within the Allied intelligence agencies were aware of the scope and depth of the Nazi killing process in much greater detail than scholars have heretofore understood. From Joseph Goldschmied's lengthy report to the OSS (Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the C.I.A.) Oral Intelligence Unit in July of 1942 that "Germany no longer prosecutes the Jews, [...] it is systematically exterminating them," to the British-intercepted dispatches in 1941-1942 of Gonzalo Montt Rivas, the Chilean Consul in Prague, that Germany was instituting a program to create a Europe "freed of Semites," the documents available

at the National Archives indicate that those in authority knew much, but did not initiate any further intelligence studies about the Holocaust and its perpetrators during the course of combat operations in Europe.

Newly declassified documents from the C.I.A. files, however, also offer a limited and often anecdotal view of the scope and depth of knowledge of the Nazi Holocaust in Europe from the perspective of military intelligence agencies on the ground. Allied military intelligence officers produced a Basic Handbook: K(L)S (Konzentrationslager)-Axis Concentration Camps and Detention Centres Reported as such in Europe for the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (Evaluation and Dissemination Section G-2 Counter Intelligence), which was dated 7 May 1945, the day before the war ended in Europe. In contrast to the details available to the leadership of the OSS and MI-6 (British Secret Service), the Allied Intelligence services noted that the main Nazi concentration camps were as follows: Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau, Flossenbürg, Gross Rosen, Herzogenbusch [sic – probably meant as Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands], Hinzert, Mauthausen, Natzweiler, Niederhagen, Neuengamme, Ravensbrück, Sachsenhausen, and Stutthof.³ Only later in the document are the camps of Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, Chelmno (Kulmhof), and Bergen-Belsen, for example, mentioned.

The Basic Handbook comprises almost 150 pages, but close to 130 pages constitute appendices. The word “Jew,” however, hardly appears in anything but the appendices. On page A3, it is noted that there are nine camps for Jews in all of the Reich. These camps are not identified until “Annex A – Part Two - Alphabetical List of Concentration Camps with Details.” Even then, the word “Jew” is not necessarily included. The entry in the Basic Handbook for the most notorious extermination camp for Jews, Auschwitz-Birkenau, omits the largest victim group:

Auschwitz (Oswiecim) [...] BIRKENAU camp is definitely connected, as AUSCHWITZ makes use of BIRKENAU's gas chambers, though it is said to have 10 crematoria and 4 lethal gas chambers itself.

Capacity: In 1940: 40,000. A recent report claims 62,000 Jews and foreign workers to be employed in the

synthetic rubber plant and other enterprises around this town.

Inmates: One report gives the following figures as an outline of the camp's history:

1939/40 – Over 5,000 inmates

July 1941 – 8,000 inmates, all Poles. Mortality rate 20% for each 6 month period.

Late 1941 – 600 Russians and 200 Poles gassed.

September 1942 – More than 120,000 persons had passed through the camp. Mortality had risen as over 80,000 are said to have died or been shot.

May 1943 – “At least two trains of 20 car loads each arrived daily”.

1944 – Another report states that 150,000 names were listed as having passed through this camp.⁴

Such omissions reflect several factors including limited inter-agency communication on evidence for potential war crimes, proto-Cold War suspicions impacting timely fact-sharing to and from Soviet military and civilian intelligence agencies, and poor coordination within the counterintelligence branches responsible for interrogating German POWs among others.

While there are gaps in the recently released material, there is still much ground for scholars to explore in the newly declassified documents at the National Archives. Furthermore, with the War Victims and Tracing Information Center in Bad Arolsen, Germany set to open its files in the near future, there will be even more new material for Holocaust scholars to examine in the years to come.

Notes:

¹ Richard Breitman, Norman J.W. Goda, Timothy Naftali, and Robert Wolfe in their book, U.S. Intelligence and the Nazis (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005) explore more than the Felfe case. These historians served on the I.W.G., and had access to the declassified documents before their release to the public.

² Scott Shane, “C.I.A. Knew Where Eichmann Was Hiding, Documents Show,” The New York Times, June 6, 2006, electronic edition. At a press conference announcing the second release of 27,000 pages of C.I.A. documents, Timothy Naftali, a professor at the University of Virginia, was incensed that the U.S. did not want to provide such information in order to protect a member of the West German cabinet who might be exposed as a war criminal if Eichmann were to offer testimony to the Israelis.

³ National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 263, Records of the Central Intelligence Agency, Subject Files, Box 2, 2nd release, p. A2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. A18.

We Will Remember

The Editors

While arguments about the “uniqueness” of the Shoah continue, most historians agree that there have been other genocides. Although WW I may have been the first global war, it was not the first brutally modern war, nor, despite its well known moniker “The War to End All Wars,” did it stop major warfare. Likewise, the Holocaust was neither the beginning nor the end of genocide. Hitler underscored human weakness and memory lapses when he asked rhetorically, apropos the “Final Solution,” whether anyone a mere two decades after the event remembered the Armenian slaughter. We remember here two events that preceded the Holocaust, namely the “Nanjing Massacre,” which the Japanese carried out as they invaded China just two years before war was declared on Germany and only four years before the Japanese were brought into the global conflict, and the prolonged campaign to wipe out the Armenians.

The Politics, History, and Memory of the Nanjing Massacre

By Erik Esselstrom

In December 1937, the city of Nanjing, then the Nationalist capital of China, fell to the advancing imperial army of Japan. The spate of indiscriminate murder, rape and carnage that ensued in the city during the next several weeks set the tone for a relentless campaign of Japanese destruction in China that would drag on for almost eight more years, and which would help to escalate an essentially European war to a world war. As the seventieth anniversary of this “Nanjing Massacre” approaches later this year, the political struggle over its historical definition and public memory is raging in East Asia as fiercely now as it ever has.

In fact, the event will be commemorated in three films released during 2007, all of which reflect the political agendas of their producers and distributors. Hong Kong filmmaker Yim Ho gives us “Nanking, Christmas 1937,” a depiction of stoic Chinese endurance in the face of outrageous Japanese violence. The film was inspired by the bestselling 1997 book *The Rape of Nanking* by Chinese-American writer Iris Chang. In response, director

Satoru Mizushima proffers the standard right-wing, ultra-nationalist denial of Japanese brutality in the city in a production entitled “The Truth about Nanjing.” Finally, an American documentary film, “Nanking,” directed by Bill Guttentag and Dan Sturman, takes the typically American approach of placing Westerners at the center of the narrative, focusing on the role played by Americans and Europeans in setting up a safety zone within the foreign quarters of the city where terrified Chinese residents were able to escape from the marauding Japanese military force.

Why is there now such keen interest in the topic after seventy years have passed? The interpretation of what happened in Nanjing in 1937 has profound relevance within the context of nationalist political imperatives in China and Japan today. Since the ruthless crackdown on domestic political dissent at Tiananmen in June 1989, the Chinese Communist Party has increasingly sought to cloak the bankruptcy of its socialist ideological foundation with the promotion of nationalist pride vis-à-vis a bond of victimization by Japanese war-time brutality. As evidence of this, one need only look at the spring of 2005 when the ruling Chinese Communist Party organized anti-Japanese demonstrations in cities across the country to protest the content of Japanese school history textbooks, while simultaneously sending police and army units to crush demonstrations of resistance by Chinese farmers driven off their land by state development programs. The anti-Japanese demonstrations sponsored by the ruling Party at once promote nationalism and distract attention from their own immoral actions by focusing Chinese unrest on Japan.

Since the collapse of the spectacular affluence of its 1980s economy, conservative segments of Japanese society, too, have turned to nationalism as a cure for post-Cold War social malaise by advancing what they see as a less “masochistic” view of Japan’s modern history, in which the aimless youth of society can take a renewed semblance of pride. Once only the agenda of fringe conservative historians, in late 2006 the Liberal Democratic Party of Prime Minister Abe Shinzô led the movement to pass revisions to the 1947 Fundamental Law on Education that will, for all intents and purposes, compel public schools in Japan to promote patriotic

sentiments in students through regular curricular instruction. Put simply, the ruling political elites of both China and Japan are locked in a battle to manipulate the popular memory of the wartime past to serve the interests of their current political agendas, and contemporary representations of the Nanjing Massacre cannot be understood outside of that light.

Politicians in both Japan and China will benefit from the cultivation of nationalist sentiment, and the different narratives about war-time events in Nanjing will affect the political climates within their countries of origin by directing public sentiment down specific avenues. As for the motivation behind the American documentary of the events in Nanjing, perhaps the directors merely retell it through Western eyes to appeal to a Western audience, but perhaps more is at stake in presenting Westerners as providing a safe haven to the oppressed. Whatever the case may be, the fact remains that a public, postwar retelling of a war-time event affects the cultural perception of that event. Furthermore, the popular media affects the current political climate by eliciting public support for a particular interpretation of an historical event as it circumscribes its cultural and political meaning within a narrative that claims to tell the “truth.” The fact that three films can tell very different tales, while each commemorates the Nanjing Massacre, shows how the political struggle to establish the meaning of historical events can be waged in a public forum. For a thoughtful analysis of the function of the Nanjing Massacre as a contested postwar political memory, see Joshua A. Fogel, ed., *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography* (University of California Press, 2000) and Takashi Yoshida, *The Making of the Rape of Nanking: History and Memory in Japan, China, and the United States* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

Remembering the Armenian Tragedy

by Joseph M. Becker

The Armenians have lived in the southern Caucasus, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, since ancient times. In the early fourth century C.E., they were the first people to adopt Christianity as a state religion. For much of their long history,

however, they have been under foreign rule. The last independent Armenian state (before the present-day Armenian Republic) fell in 1375, and by the early sixteenth century most Armenians were subjects of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman inter-communal relations were comparatively peaceful for most of the history of the empire. Differences among subjects always existed, but only occasionally did these lead to conflicts and violence. For the most part, Armenians enjoyed religious, cultural, and social autonomy under Ottoman rule.

Both the scale and frequency of violence among Ottoman communal groups increased during the nineteenth century, an era of intensifying xenophobic nationalism, particularly in the Balkans. Separatist demands to break away from Ottoman rule and to establish independent nation-states gained strength as ethnic distinctions became more important among Ottoman Christians, which process was accelerated by the emergence of the separate church organizations. In fact, the history of the nineteenth-century Balkans could be told as a story of struggle among various Christian ethnicities to assert their independence and establish their own states: In 1833, the Greek state was established; following nearly constant, violent uprisings of different scales and the Russo-Ottoman war of 1876-77, Serbia-Montenegro and Rumania emerged as independent kingdoms in 1878; Bulgaria was created the same year as an autonomous principality, and it gained full independence in 1908. The disintegration of the Ottoman Balkans was supported by various European powers, but especially by imperial Russia, which was aiming to gain influence in Central and Southern Europe. By the early twentieth century, the Ottoman state had lost nearly all of its possessions in the Balkans and millions of Balkan Muslims had been killed or forced to leave their lands for Anatolia.

By no means justifying the violence directed at Armenian communities, this historical background is critical to understanding the concerns of contemporary Ottoman authorities in regard to non-Muslim peoples in Anatolia. Violence directed against Armenian communities began with massacres in 1895-96, and similar events recurred in 1908, 1909, and 1912. The worst atrocities, however, took place between 1915 and 1916, when an estimated

600 to 800,000 Ottoman Armenians died during and after forced deportation from eastern Anatolia to Syria and Mesopotamia. As World War I erupted in 1914, the Ottoman government became increasingly concerned about the Armenian nationalist demands in eastern Anatolia, as well as strong Armenian collaboration with Russia, which resembled developments in the Balkans that preceded the emergence of independent states in this region during the nineteenth century. During the course of the war, Armenians from the Caucasus region of the Russian Empire formed volunteer battalions to help the Russian army fight against the Ottomans. Also, early in 1915 these battalions recruited Ottoman Armenians from behind the border. In response, the Ottoman government ordered the deportation of about 1,750,000 Armenian civilians, mainly from eastern Anatolia (those living in select Western Anatolian locations and Istanbul were largely spared). Officially, this was meant to curb support to Armenian resistance; possibly, this may have been an effort to thwart future claims of demographic concentration in the region by reducing the number of Armenians in eastern Anatolia. Those deported often walked, and on the way, many suffered malnutrition or disease that often ended in death. Others were killed at the hands of bandits, Ottoman civilians, as well as Ottoman officers and soldiers. A growing number of historians, including Turkish scholars, suspect the existence of a coordinated program of killing pursued by government authorities, while a sizable minority (mostly, but not exclusively Turkish) believes that the atrocities should be seen as bloody civil strife between Muslims and Christians in the larger context of warfare between the Ottoman and Russian Empires in eastern Anatolia. This latter group claims that hundreds of thousands of Muslim civilians were killed by Armenian bands and Russian units that included Armenian troops, ostensibly illustrating that casualties were not one-sided.

While the Ottoman government during World War I subscribed to a powerful ideology of Turkish nationalism, its complicity in the atrocities against its own citizens had more to do with the perceived threat of the emergence of an independent Armenian state in eastern Anatolia and the instability that such a development would create in

an already reduced and much weakened Ottoman state.



The Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont was established in 1993 to honor the scholarly and pedagogical legacy of Raul Hilberg, *Emeritus* Professor of Political Science at The University of Vermont. His monumental work, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, changed the way historians and students around the world view the Holocaust. Since Dr. Hilberg began his research in the late 1950s, what was a reluctance to confront the facts of the Holocaust has given way to a hunger for the truth.

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