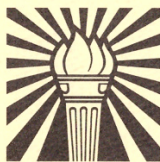


**THIRD WORLD VIEWS
OF THE HOLOCAUST**

**SUMMARY
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM**

William F.S. Miles



Northeastern
U N I V E R S I T Y

The Stotsky Professorship of Jewish Historical and Cultural Studies

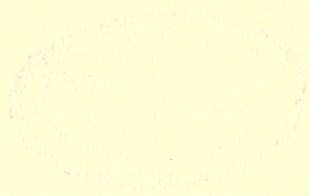
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THIRD WORLD VIEWS OF THE HOLOCAUST

Summary of the International Symposium

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THIRD WORLD VIEWS OF THE HOLOCAUST

Summary of the International Symposium
Exploring the Impact of the Shoah on Intellectuals and Activists from
Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean

William F.S. Miles

Boston
The Stotsky Professorship of Jewish Historical and Cultural Studies
Northeastern University
Symposium Website: www.violence.neu.edu/symposium.html
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Preface and Acknowledgments

From April 18th-20th, 2001, a pioneering international symposium on *Third World Views of the Holocaust* was held at Northeastern University. At an open forum in the Raytheon Amphitheater on the Boston campus a dozen prominent scholars, writers, intellectuals and activists hailing from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean reflected on the multiple ways in which the Shoah influences their own thinking, writing, and activity today. Including, as it did, speakers coping with much more recent genocides than that euphemistically framed as the "Final Solution," the deliberations were as sobering as they were illuminating.

Conceived before the Oslo Accords and their promise for Israeli-Palestinian peace had totally collapsed, and convened before the United Nations Conference against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (the so-called Durban Conference) revived the libel of Jewish/Zionist racism, the symposium aimed to assess the contemporary relevance of the Holocaust for the non-Western world. Its outcome belied the preconceived notion that among Third World intellectuals hostility towards Israel and the Jewish world is ingrained and endemic, that sensitivity to the Holocaust is conditional and politically framed, and that there is little sympathetic consciousness of the Shoah among peoples and societies not directly affected by it.

8719 Understandably, the outpouring of scholarship on the Nazi Holocaust in recent years has reflected a primarily Eurocentric, or at least Western, perspective on this tragedy. Holocaust scholarship has been most pronounced in the academies of Western Europe, North America, and Israel. Long-running or recurrent international Holocaust conferences, such as organized by the *Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches* in the United States, *Yad Vashem* in Jerusalem, and *Remembering for the Future* in Oxford, are similar in their sharing of a Northern or Western geo-historical approach. Ad hoc attempts to widen the scope of Holocaust scholarship do occur, such as hinted in the title of the May 2000 conference at Brandeis University: *The Impact of the Holocaust on Contemporary Society*. Yet the "contemporary society" that the Brandeis conference focused on was, yet again, Western society - primarily Israel, Eastern Europe, and the United States. The Shoah is thus ineluctably cast as a peculiarly European (if not German) phenomenon whose major immediate impact has been in the West and, indirectly, in the Middle East. (Indeed, it is largely on account of the Middle East conflict - and the Third World's traditional identification with the Palestinian cause - that scholars of the Shoah have traditionally eschewed examining how the Holocaust is perceived in the developing world.) As a result, traditional Holocaust scholarship has tended to underestimate the extent to which the Shoah has also affected worldviews in non-Western societies. Yet the legacies of the Shoah do not "belong" merely to the West.

Whereas other scholars and scholarly fora have approached genocide from a comparative perspective, the symposium at Northeastern uniquely addressed how the Holocaust paradigm per se has been integrated into non-Western worldviews. It helped advance an interdisciplinary and transregional awareness of this cataclysmically formative event. For as instances of "ethnic cleansing" continue to stain humanity even at the advent of the millennium, the Nazi Holocaust of European Jewry still stands out as the touchstone of twentieth century genocide. Scholarly debate on the uniqueness of the Shoah notwithstanding, it is difficult to assess, examine, or reflect upon modern mass extermination of civilian populations without reference to Hitler's "Final Solution" of the Jews. Indeed,

scholarly treatments of all other twentieth century genocides (from Armenia to Cambodia to Rwanda) invariably invoke the Nazi "model" of mass murder as the counterpoint for discussing these other cases. From their international vantage presenters were thus asked not to equate or compare the Shoah, but to *engage* it.

Regrettably, genocide has recurred in other parts of the world, the holocaustal experience failing to impart whatever cautionary lesson the post-War world had hoped it would. Genocide, in its relentless universality, demands that all peoples bear witness. Third World views of the Holocaust are interlinked with Western concern for contemporary genocide in the South. They also represent a globalization of Holocaust consciousness. In however modest a way, Northeastern's international symposium on Third World Views of the Holocaust not only reflected that enlarged consciousness of the Holocaust but strove to advance it.

Organization and Dissemination

Clustering by geographical region was rejected in favor of thematic groupings into four panels: 1) The Shoah's Impact Beyond Europe and America; 2) Pursuing Justice and Preserving Memory; 3) Shoah in Third World Literature; and 4) Problems of Politicization. Following each speaker's initial presentation of 20-25 minutes, the other panelists were accorded ten minutes of question and commentary; the audience was then invited, for another ten minutes, to provide its own feedback. The speaker then was allotted five minutes of response. Full proceedings of the symposium (transcription of the presentations and discussions) may be accessed at: www.violence.neu.edu/symposium.html. An order form for edited videotapes of the symposium may be found at the back of this booklet.

Without the generous endowment of the research professorship set up by Dr Bernard A. Stotsky, the symposium would not have even been conceived. Established within the College of Arts and Sciences in 1991, the Stotsky Professorship of Jewish Historical and Cultural Studies is intended to support the pursuit of "broad ethical, cultural, and social issues arising out of the suffering and heroism of the Holocaust, as well as to encourage new approaches to the problem of social justice and modern Judaism."

A major co-sponsoring funder of the symposium was the Brudnick Center on Violence and Conflict, whose mission is to "seek solutions to problems of hostility and hatred based on group differences." Professors Jack Levin and Gordana Rabrenovic placed not only the resources of the Brudnick Center (including its website) at the disposal of the symposium, but the benefit of their considerable planning and organizational skills. Dean James Stellar of the College of Arts and Sciences was also a major supporter; hence, this acknowledgment of the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies. Other institutional sponsors included the Departments of Political Science and African-American Studies, The Spiritual Life Office, the International Scholars' Forum, The Holocaust Awareness Committee, and the Jewish Studies Program. Most of the work on this symposium summary was accomplished during a 2001-2 sabbatical leave at the Research Center on Local Powers in the Caribbean (CRPLC) at the University of the French West Indies (UAG).

With a generosity matched only by modesty, a recent masters degree graduate of the department of political science anonymously contributed major funds, enabling not only the symposium itself but the dissemination of its proceedings. Graduate students enrolled in my

concurrent seminar *Comparative Genocide* painstakingly transcribed the presentations and discussions upon which this summary is based. They are Joseph Coelho, Anthony Demestihias, Maureen McCallion, Cynthia Newton, Peter Richardson, and Wendy Surinach. Special thanks also go to Terry Beadle, Christopher Bosso, Christina Braidotti, Vincent DiFiore, Will Holton, Lisa Kolbe and, of course, Janet-Louise Joseph.

Finally, infinite gratitude goes to all the guest speakers who accepted the call to the symposium. Several of them traveled great distances; some of them are still coping with recent genocides; and at least one had to overcome deep-seated reticence in engaging our sensitive subject publicly. In the Talmud (*Pirkei Avot*) it is said that "the wise one learns from all people." Thanks to our symposium guests, we may add: the wise one learns from all peoples.

William F.S. Miles
Stotsky Professor of Jewish Historical and Cultural Studies
and Professor of Political Science
Northeastern University, Boston

Schoelcher, Martinique
April 13, 2002

Panel 1

The Shoah's Impact Beyond Europe and America

Xu Xin (People's Republic of China)

“Holocaust Studies in China”

Xu Xin, Director of the Center for Judaic Studies at Nanjing University and President of the China Judaic Studies Association, was the first of the international speakers to present. An expert on Judaic studies, Professor Xu has authored books on *Antisemitism* (1996) and on the *Chinese Jews of Kaifeng* (1995); he is co-editor-in-chief of the Chinese edition of the *Encyclopedia Judaica*. In addition to Chinese and English, Professor Xu reads Hebrew and Yiddish. His historically rich and fascinating talk illustrated how even such disparate and seemingly unconnected cultures as the Jewish and Chinese have, in recent years, begun to find common ground through the Shoah. In particular, Holocaust studies provide a framework for the Chinese to revisit and cope with their lingering pain from the Nanking massacre.

Professor Xin began his overview of Holocaust consciousness in China by summarizing recently released archival evidence about a plan to establish, in 1939 near Beijing, a settlement for Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis. Not to be confused with the 10,000 strong colony of Jews in Shanghai, the plan was ultimately superseded by the official outbreak of the War. Nevertheless, coming at a time of Japanese invasion, and following the infamous massacres against Chinese civilians in Nanking, such willingness nevertheless to assist European Jews is noteworthy.

Following the War, despite the news of murdered kinsmen circulated among the Jewish refugees of Shanghai, China was more concerned about recuperating from its own suffering at the hands of the Japanese. A Chinese version of the *Diary of Anne Frank* sold about half a million copies and “shocked” the Chinese public. Yet the Communist takeover in 1949, and the absence of diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and the People's Republic of China, precluded any formal study of the Holocaust in the PRC. This state of affairs precluded discussion of even the Eichmann trial. “Politics and ideology played a decisive role in society in all fields, including academia and education.”

President Nixon's visit in 1972 heralded unprecedented access in China to books and movies about the Shoah. “The horror and the genocide of European Jews began to appear fairly frequently in many translated books,” specified Prof. Xin. Some Chinese scholars began to focus on the Holocaust, a tendency that accelerated in the 1990s after normalization of relations with Israel. The Simon Wiesenthal Center succeeded in airing a documentary on Chinese television and in mounting a traveling exhibition on the Shoah. Siting of the Wiesenthal exhibit in the Memorial Hall of the Nanking Massacre was especially powerful, with upwards of 80,000 visitors. “People for the first time realized that during the Second World War Chinese people and Jewish people suffered the same... Stories were identical about how Nazis killed Jews and Japanese killed Chinese.” A Chinese-produced documentary in 1998, and China's presidential visit to Israel (including Yad Vashem) in 2000, were also evoked by Professor Xin as recent examples of the raising of Shoah-consciousness in China.

With regards to Chinese teaching and scholarship, the last decade has seen an outpouring on books and articles dealing with Jewish history and Israel, the Holocaust figuring as part of this wave. Professor Xin himself has run workshops on Jewish history for university professors. “There are many conferences and they all... relate the Holocaust to the suffering

of Jews, providing reasons for the Chinese to understand the necessity of the building of the Jewish State.” In recent years study of the Shoah in China has moreover been linked to a broader consciousness over human rights. Courses on the Holocaust are now offered at the university level, and the Shoah is the object of postgraduate theses.

Three fellow panelists posed questions to Professor Xin: Shawkat Toorawa on the translation of “Holocaust” into Chinese; Edward Kissi on pre-university teaching of the Shoah; and Chivy Sok on the potential danger of working on human rights issues in China, even as they arise through study of the Shoah. From the audience, Professor Zhu Hong of Boston University evoked the remarkable evolution in official Chinese attitudes towards Zionism, Tan Miening's popular romantic novel about a Sino-Jewish girl and, “from the perspective of historical memory,” the benefit that “the Chinese nation as whole” may derive from the “inspiring” manner in which the Jewish people commemorate the Holocaust.

In response, Professor Xin spoke to the difficulty of establishing both a specific and meaningful translation for the Shoah. The Chinese word for “massacre” is commonly used; “but in most cases Holocaust is translated into ‘killing Jews by Nazis.’” Given that overall treatment of the Second World War even in university textbooks is rudimentary, there is not yet instruction on the elementary and secondary levels about the Holocaust. Nor does instruction about the Holocaust within the context of human rights violations pose danger to scholars. To the contrary, such an approach permits an illuminating cross-cultural perspective for the Chinese. Professor Xin elaborated thus:

“We try to emphasize that, for Jews, life is given by God” and therefore must be enjoyed. “Each life is important, each human being individual, unique.” Therefore, “we should respect human rights.” Jewish philosophy and theology, according to Professor Xin, thereby counters Buddhist-influenced Chinese thought, according to which “life is pain and suffering. This life doesn't mean anything. What we live today is not all important because we try to prepare for the next life.”

A related contrast, evoked by respective Jewish and Chinese attitudes towards their respective suffering in the Second World War, concerns collective memory. Jewish memory, according to Xu Xin, is much longer than it is in the Chinese psyche. “Jews try to remember major historic events, like Passover.” But for the Chinese, historical pain is more often suppressed by letting “bygones be bygones.” Professor Xin's ultimate hope is that the popularization of Holocaust studies in China will enable his own compatriots to finally come to grips, in an appropriate manner, with their own victimization by Axis aggressors during the last World War.

Locksley Edmondson (Jamaica)

“Reparations: Pan-African and Jewish Experiences”

Locksley Edmondson is a former Dean of Social Sciences at the University of the West Indies and founding member and former president of the Caribbean Studies Association. A political scientist, Dr. Edmondson is currently Professor in the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University. He subsequently participated in the United Nations-sponsored Conference on Racism in Durban in summer 2001. In his animated talk, Professor Edmondson situated Nazi racism and the fight against Hitler within the context of anti-colonialism. While acknowledging differences between survivors of the Holocaust and descendants of the slave trade, he stressed that both coexist within our “age of reparations sensitivity and controversy.”

From the perspective of the colonized - societies long inculcated with the so-called superiority of the Western world - the where and the when of the Holocaust are particularly significant: the middle of Europe in the middle of the twentieth century. That the Shoah emanated from as advanced a culture as Germany, according to Professor Edmondson, “forces us to reflect seriously about the nature of civilization, the nature of modernization, and the nature of development.” Indeed, vis-à-vis the colonized world, the Nazi Holocaust held out to all the shallowness of moral claims to European rulership. Hailing from a country that originates with genocide (“there is not a trace of the Arawak Indians,” the pre-colonial inhabitants of Jamaica), Edmondson is particularly sensitive to the link between European power and its genocidal potential.

The Second World War and the fight against Hitler profoundly affected both Jews - the archetypal minority of Europe - and colonized peoples the world over. The Allied struggle against the world's foremost anti-Semite (albeit to curb expansionism rather than combat racism) necessitated recourse to colonial troops, subjects who would later militate in favor of promised self-determination and help “loosen the seams of Western imperialism.” They and their political leaders were particularly sensitive, claimed Prof. Edmondson, to the parallel between European racism against Jews and European racist thought in the colonies. In this context Edmondson invoked the Martinican writer Aimé Césaire, according to whom “Hitler . . . applied to Europe colonialist procedures, which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs in Algeria, the coolies of India, and the Blacks of Africa.” (Edmondson also cited German Jewish writer Hannah Arendt, who traced Nazi thought and practice to colonial depredations in nineteenth century Africa.)

As a Pan-Africanist, Locksley Edmondson naturally invoked apartheid South Africa as another instance of Africa's most “technologically and economically developed country” being (in the context of its constitutionalized racism) “by far the most underdeveloped system of social relations on the African continent.” Edmondson was the first of several speakers to invoke the apparent incongruity - given the history of the Holocaust - of Israel's support for Pretoria during the apartheid years.” What made it even more outrageous,” he declared, “was that many of these pro-apartheid architects were pro-Nazi.”

While “Jewish reparations have been the most prominent [and] legitimated in principle,” others' claims (Aborigines in Australia, Japanese-Americans) have since come to the fore. Anticipating the UN Conference on racism in South Africa, Edmondson contrasted the difficulties attendant with reparations claims for descendants of the slave trade vis-à-vis

those for victims of Nazism: the generations passed, the multiplicity of claimant states. For sure, acknowledges Edmondson, “the Holocaust is much closer in time than slavery. But when you add colonialism to the historical equation, the wrong in quest of Black reparations is much more contemporary.” Still, “the United States and many other governments are very supportive in principle and in practice of Jewish reparations claims, but are not so for Black claims. There are certain common Black interests,” he concluded, “even though the ways in fulfilling them may not be always identical.”

Professor Edmondson's spirited presentation precipitated several questions and comments, from both fellow panelists and members of the audience. Nadim Rouhana asked about Black reparations claims outside of the United States while Xu Xin inquired whether African and South American countries invoke the Jewish experience to support their requests for compensation. With respect to lack of U.S. government support for Black reparations, Kinue Tokudome added that the U.S. is not supportive of former slave laborers of Japanese corporations during World War II, either. Questions put to Professor Edmondson from the audience dealt with: the emphasis on reparations in the Pan-African movement; non-financial types of restitution; current representatives of past victims and perpetrators; and the link between slavery and Shoah.

In his response, Professor Edmondson discussed the racialization of transatlantic slavery (in contrast to previous patterns of slavery, which occurred without dehumanization of Blacks). A parallel change was the redefinition of Jews from an ethno-religious into a racial group: “there is definitely a link between rising and expanding anti-Semitism, and rising Black racism in the context of transatlantic slavery.” Professor Edmondson used the occasion to expand on three linkages between reparations claims for victims of the Shoah and of slavery (and colonialism): 1) renewed willingness to compensate slave laborers of the Nazis; 2) current restitution of property stolen from Jews at a time of OAU demands for the return of artifacts taken by the colonial powers; 3) similar need for public recognition of historical misdeeds for the purposes of “moral repair.” For sure, “not all Blacks agree on reparations”; but, Edmondson pointed out, neither did all survivors of the Holocaust in Israel accept the principle of reparations from Germany.

In winding up his response Locksley Edmondson reiterated that “reparations are not simply a monetary transaction,” a position taken by many within the Jewish as well as Black communities. In the case of the latter, they could take the form of a permanent African seat on the UN Security Council and “more recognition of African contribution to civilization.” Edmondson's final words touched on the evocative concept of diaspora: those of Africa should also be brought “to the table of human equality.”

Shawkat M. Toorawa (Mauritius)

“Meditations of a Multicultural Muslim”

Departing from the traditional mold of academic presentations, Shawkat Mahmood Toorawa delivered a largely autobiographical account of his exposure to Jews, Judaism, and the Shoah as a Muslim growing up in various parts of the world. Before taking his new position with the Department of Near Eastern Studies and the Program in Jewish Studies at Cornell University, Dr. Toorawa taught at the University of Mauritius, his native island in the Indian Ocean. A teacher of Arabic literature, Dr. Toorawa's publications include a co-authored book on pre-modern Arabic autobiography, a forthcoming book on classical Arabic literary culture, and a co-edited volume on law and education in Islam. Particularly at a time of re-stoked religious tensions, his moving memoir testified to the too often unrecognized Muslim empathy for victims of the Holocaust.

The son of Muslim Mauritians of Indian origin, Toorawa spent his early childhood in Britain and France. There he was tutored in Arabic and Islam by a Senegalese graduate of the University of Cairo. His first knowledge of Nazis arose in the context of the history of his English school in Paris: the principal had rebuffed their attempts to occupy the premises. Formal religious schooling – about Moses as well as Muhammad, about Exodus as well as crucifixion – occurred in primary school. Conscious of his distinction as a religious minority, the young Shawkat was imbued with a sense of nonjudgmental difference.

Dietary rules brought the Toorawa family in contact with the kosher butchers and restaurants of the Algerian quarter in Paris. He already began to understand that “being Jewish was a lot like being Muslim – belief in one indivisible God, attention to ritual and diet.” Later, he would appreciate “a shared and intertwining history that created affinities and empathies... hard to find in mainstream French and European culture.” Before moving to Hong Kong and Japan, the Toorawa family performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. It was there, among fellow pilgrims from the Mascarene islands and South Africa, that he first encountered open anti-Semitism. Shortly thereafter, in the wake of the Yom Kippur War of 1973, he became conscious of the effort to link the Palestinian cause with Islam, and Zionism with Jews from around the world and in all historical epochs. “This is an elision of identities and histories, a monolithizing” that Toorawa has constantly rejected.

It was at the international school in Singapore, one of a handful of Muslims in a predominantly Christian expatriate student body, that Shawkat was embraced by, and reveled in, an atmosphere of religious diversity and respect. It was also in Singapore that the Toorawas befriended “the best optician” in town – Isaac Benjamin, whose family members had been killed by Nazis.

The Toorawas learned of the Benjamin's family tragedy when Singapore aired the television series “Holocaust.” This series created a “sensation on an island [Singapore] that still remembered its own Japanese occupation, and that had a Jewish population.” For Shawkat, viewing “Holocaust” was a dark revelation. He also began to wonder why his own relatives in Mauritius, an island with no Jews (and where the local Creole word for Jew – *zwif* – means “thief”) trivialized and demonized that which was Jewish. His answer: “Simply, they were collapsing their theology with political ideology.”

With Shawkat's move to the U.S. in the early 1980s to pursue higher education, he found himself as a Muslim minority (and erroneously taken for an Arab) in an environment where

Jews were noticeably present. Countering the assumption that he held the same theo-politics as all one billion Muslims worldwide was a constant challenge. In the late 1980s Shawkat's research took him to Cairo. From there, he visited Bethlehem, Hebron, and Jerusalem; struck by the number of Mercedes Benzes circulating in Israel, he was informed that they were part of a reparations package from the German government.

Upon his return to Mauritius in the 1990s, Toorawa was surprised to learn of the detention of over 1600 Jews on his native island during the Second World War, when Britain refused them entry into Palestine. (A Jewish cemetery still stands near the detention site.) It was then that he insisted that his reluctant sisters-in-law watch *Fiddler on the Roof*, a film that piqued their interest in Jewish history and culture. It was also in Mauritius that Shawkat, along with many other Mauritians, saw *Schindler's List*, a movie that “forever changed” many of his fellow islanders' views of “Jews, the Holocaust and its wrenching aftermath.” Banning of *Schindler's List* in most Arab, and many Muslim, nations distressed Toorawa: “Once again,” he observed, “the issue of Palestine ha[d] been elided with the Shoah in the most insidious of ways.”

Insidious elision is also a strategy of several of the leaders of the Nation of Islam, which Toorawa condemned for both its racialism and trivialization of the Holocaust. Other organizations and individuals which “use the word Islam, hide behind it, and thereby taint it” in their distortion of the Holocaust, include Radio Islam (and its website), the South African Radio 786, Yacoub Zaki of the Muslim Institute in London, and “scholars” in Iran and Egypt who have hosted European Holocaust deniers Jürgen Graf and Roger Garaudy. For Shawkat Toorawa, “It is crucial for Muslims to dissociate themselves from revisionists and deniers, and to denounce them in the strongest possible terms.”

He concluded with a quote from Sanaullah Kirmani, which begins: “As a Muslim I take the event of the Holocaust as the moral negation of the Ruler of all. These evil perpetrators deny the rule of the Almighty...”

The ensuing discussion began on a somewhat tense note as Nadim Rouhana challenged the “impressionistic” approach adopted by Toorawa. Such impressions could, the Arab-Israeli professor claimed, “contribute to further stereotyping of the Muslim and Arab world.” Professor Rouhana noted that, just two weeks before the current symposium, Arab intellectuals pressured the Lebanese government to cancel an international Holocaust denial conference that was to take place in Beirut. He also complexified the *Schindler's List* affair by noting that the final minutes of the film (which take place at the Mount of Olives cemetery in Jerusalem), “connects the Holocaust with the Zionist enterprise.” From the audience, Professor Samuel Bernstein indirectly questioned Rouhana's separation of Zionism from Jewish culture, and asked if Toorawa had ever directly “engaged with an anti-Semite.”

To Prof. Rouhana, Professor Toorawa defended his impressionistic approach on two grounds: avoidance of the sterility of purely academic discussion, and the impossibility (given current Muslim discourse) of doing so otherwise. There are monolithic positions in the Muslim world, he maintained, and these need to be recognized and studied. With regard to the Beirut conference, Toorawa averred that activism among Jewish organizations had played a part in its cancellation; and with regard to the banning of *Schindler's List*, he denied that by speaking about the ban he was stereotyping the Muslim world.

Professor Toorawa delineated the anti-Semitic beliefs he has often heard. (In his initial presentation he had identified Durham, North Carolina, as one of the most openly anti-Semitic places he has ever lived). He noted that he has had discussions with Muslims who

believe Islam arose because Jews failed correctly to worship God. Concerning the relationship between Zionism and Judaism, Toorawa affirmed the inextricable linkage between the two ever since the establishment of the State of Israel. At the same time he advocated, within a Muslim context, teaching Jewish history, culture and religion separately from the Zionist narrative.

“There is a perception among many Muslims,” Shawkat Toorawa summarized, “that Jews are the enemy or demons of some kind. It comes from political... and possibly racist ideologies. Those who claim that [it] is an Islamic position need to be called to task.” In view of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, words such as these bear heeding.

Panel 2

Pursuing Justice and Preserving Memory

Gerald Gahima (Rwanda)

“Nazi-Hunting and the Prosecution of Genocide in Africa”

With Gerald Gahima the symposium was enriched by the reflections of a man whose daily work consists of punishing genocide and who has grappled specifically with the lessons of the Shoah. Prosecutor General of the Republic of Rwanda, Gahima is in charge of prosecution for acts of genocide that were committed in his country between 1990 and 1994. Mr. Gahima's visit to the Simon Wiesenthal Centre and Yad Vashem (Israel's Holocaust Museum) in Jerusalem was the subject of the BBC documentary, “Pursuit of Justice.” In a delivery characterized by precision and intensity, Gerald Gahima placed the ongoing proceedings against genocidaires in Rwanda within the context of the Nuremberg Trials and post-War international law. He emphasized that obtaining justice for survivors, even if not wholly attainable, is absolutely critical for the future viability of the devastated society.

“The people of Rwanda can relate to what happened to the victims of the Holocaust,” Mr. Gahima declared. “We understand the disappointment” that a people feels “when the entire world abandons them to destruction, and stands by and does nothing. We too have come to the realization that a people targeted by genocide owe themselves, and the future generations, a duty to do whatever it takes to ensure their survival.”

For sure, there are differences between Nazi-occupied Europe in the 1940s and the Interahamwe of Central Africa in the 1990s. But in both instances, according to Gerald Gahima, inter-ethnic tension deteriorated into genocide only because a government in place desired and organized it.

For an audience presumably less familiar with the genocide in Rwanda than with the Shoah, Gahima related how one-seventh of the population (mostly Tutsis) was massacred in a mere hundred days, a catastrophe sanctioned and facilitated by government resources. Meting out justice to the perpetrators remains critical, whether the perpetrators be aging Nazis or Hutus in hiding. The reason goes beyond the simple legal imperative of punishing crime. First and foremost, “there must be justice to commemorate those who died.” Nothing can undo the harm done to victims of genocide, the prosecutor admitted. At the most, we can commemorate them; pursuing and prosecuting the perpetrators is the strongest form of commemoration.

Secondly, there is an ongoing duty to the “remnant” who have survived. To alleviate their fears of a genocidal reoccurrence (as well as the fears of other potential victims), society has a duty to punish the perpetrators. “There must be justice to eradicate impunity.”

Thirdly, the rebuilding of post-genocidal society requires the restoration of rule of law. Only a society based on law can be truly viable: applying the law to punish mass murder is a fundamental step in this direction.

Fourthly, Gahima asserted, pursuing justice is critical for achieving reconciliation, especially for a nation in which survivor and perpetrator continue to occupy the same territory.

It is here that Gahima acknowledged a fundamental difference between the Rwandan and Nazi genocides. With the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Jewish people had the opportunity to live in their own country, “without having to think about coping or living or coexisting with [their] former enemies.” Not so in societies like Rwanda. There, reconciling former enemies is unavoidable.

Having delineated the need for justice, Mr. Gahima proceeded to outline the obstacles in its pursuit, both for Jewish and Tutsi victims of genocide.

With regards to the Nuremberg trials, “the fact that only twenty-two people were tried for the murder of six million people displays a serious lack of commitment... to bring to justice the perpetrators of the Holocaust.” Out of national pride, subsequent governments (e.g., Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian) downplayed the role of their citizens in perpetrating genocide. That Jews, resettling in the West and Israel, did not constitute a political force in post-War Europe also lessened the probability of prosecution. Cold War calculations also eclipsed the pursuit of post-Holocaust justice, and the U.S. itself became haven to war criminals whose scientific prowess was valued in the struggle against Communism. Many war criminals simply melted in among the mass of immigrants to the West and adopted new identities. There has been little political will to prosecute these crimes, and the passage of time renders the task all the more problematic.

Gerald Gahima sees many of these same problems playing out in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide. Organizers of the genocide are in countries with which Rwanda has no extradition treaty, countries (such as France) that had supported the previous government. Western disinterest in this African genocide also tempers post-war justice. As a result, “these [war criminals] are adopting new identities and it's difficult to trace them.” There is indeed an international court (in Arusha, Tanzania) trying the genocidaires, but due to mismanagement and lack of cooperation from other states, “its outcome is not entirely satisfactory.” Lack of political will still characterizes the world at large when it comes to punishing genocide. But, he concluded, “Like the victims of the Holocaust, we believe that there must be accountability for genocide... to ensure that [genocide] does not happen again.”

Fellow African Edward Kissi suggested that, rather than using the judicial process, a more indigenous mode of achieving “moral compensation” is through a truth and reconciliation commission, à la South Africa. Inasmuch as “the Holocaust presents us with an opportunity to talk about accomplices to genocide,” he also invited the special prosecutor to comment on those African countries that have armed the genocidaires. Chivy Sok wondered what is “suitable punishment” for genocidal crimes while Lockley Edmondson inquired as to the factors leading to the breakdown in peaceful relations between Tutsis and Hutus.

From the audience came questions about rule of law and growth of democracy throughout Africa; and about punishing lower-level perpetrators when civic society as a whole is incriminated.

Gerald Gahima responded to Edward Kissi by admitting the impossibility of bringing to justice the leadership of countries that supplied arms to the genocidaires. To Chivy Sok he revealed his personal transformation from categorical opposition to capital punishment to qualified support of it, at least with regards to major leaders behind the genocide. “But you cannot kill everyone who committed murder,” he acknowledged to her. “Ordinary people” are therefore tried in informal courts and receive relatively lenient punishment. As for Locksley Edmondson's question, Gahima said that “1994 was the culmination of a long history of killings” beginning in 1959. But the “critical factor” transforming mere hatred and prejudice to mass murder is genocidal government: people “with political power using it for personal advantage, for [their] own ends.” The government needed a scapegoat, settled on the Tutsis, and blood began to flow.

Roberto Cabrera (Guatemala)

“Justice and Reconciliation? Accounting for ‘Dirty Wars’ in Light of the Shoah”

Roberto Cabrera, a medical doctor and mental health specialist, riveted the audience by describing his initial incredulity over the genocide of the Jews and his subsequent engagement with genocide in his native Guatemala. A graduate of the masters program in Public Health at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, from 1987 to 1997 Dr. Cabrera worked with victims and survivors of massive human rights violations in rural areas of Guatemala (mostly Mayan), for whom he established a mental health program. From 1997 until 2001 he promoted the Recovery of Historical Memory Project with the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala, helping victims overcome the effects of violence by recovering their voice and memory. To promote hope and life after communal death: this, according to Dr. Cabrera, is the shared imperative following the Holocaust of European Jewry and the “Dirty Wars” of Latin America.

Dr. Cabrera’s first reaction to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, was one of outright disbelief: “It didn’t happen,” he thought. “The Jews are lying.” His second reaction was one of displacement: relief that, even if such genocide was real, it had transpired not in his native Latin America but rather in far away Europe. His third reaction was of perplexity: if their parents had indeed experienced such trauma, “How could children be laughing in the streets of Jerusalem?”

Upon his return to Guatemala Cabrera was astonished to discover that a genocide – the so-called Dirty Wars against the Mayan people – *had* recently occurred in his own country, with the silent complicity of the local media and international community. A visit to the northwestern highlands opened his eyes. The doctor found his “medicine to be useless, powerless... Something had happened to [his] people.” For the next four years he tried to heal the wounds of mass death by collecting testimony among the survivors. In the process, he chronicled symptoms of the aftermath of the Dirty Wars: “fear, silence, anger, grieving, psychosomatic illness [and much] social expression of violence... People were criminalizing the victims.”

Because it did not assign any individual responsibility for atrocities, Dr. Cabrera was very critical of the United Nations-sponsored Truth Commission that, as the Cold War drew to an end, was set up in Guatemala. In contrast a Catholic Church-initiated project issued a report documenting 55,000 human rights violations. It also issued a community handbook to encourage discussion and healing among survivors. Despite these local efforts, Dr. Cabrera maintains that there can be no justice without the help of the international community: Guatemala’s own governments have ignored the Church’s findings and recommendations.

Dr. Cabrera then recalled his recent visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. “There is a link [there] between the Holocaust and the Guatemalan genocide,” he concluded. “I could smell death, fear, and pain. But” – as in his own country – he “could also see life coming from death, and [at last] understand how children in Jerusalem, and any descendent of Holocaust survivors, can laugh, can hope, can live.” To be sure, he cautioned, the link does not make survivors of the Shoah and the genocide in Guatemala “equal in suffering.” But in both tragic cases, the mass atrocities are followed by hope and the will to live.

Dr. Cabrera’s comments encouraged Edward Kissi to note that the United Nations did not include “political groups” among those protected by its genocide convention. They also prompted him to make an impassioned summary declaration: “‘Third World Views of the Holocaust’”: Is there a view? Yes there is! The view is that what happened in Rwanda, what happened in Ethiopia, what happened in Guatemala [and] Cambodia tells all of us how little we have learned since 1939. It is an indictment on all of us that we have not fulfilled the claim that never again shall we allow these things to happen!”

Locksley Edmondson asked about the involvement of external governments and parties in the Guatemalan genocide and consideration of restitution or reparations. Recalling the shooting of the former mayor of Nagasaki after he mentioned the possible responsibility of the Emperor for World War II, Kinue Tokudome asked if there have been threats or harassment following the issuance of Cabrera’s group’s report. From the audience Adam Strom recalled the psychological dimension of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and asked if, in Guatemala, therapists and grievance counselors have also been made available.

Dr. Cabrera responded by affirming American, Argentinian, Chilean, and Taiwanese weapons and training support for the Guatemalan secret police during the genocide. He was especially distressed to note that, during a U.S. Congressional ban on aid to the Guatemalan army, it was Israel that substituted... The Report did indeed spark retaliation, beginning with the assassination of its Co-ordinator two days after publication. Other threats ensued, but “we cannot answer only for ourselves. Just closing our office and going home would have been like betraying the [people] once again.” Such risky and “radical pastoral work,” added the doctor, has meant that “for the first time in many years people felt that the Catholic Church was on their side.”

The question about therapy allowed Dr. Cabrera to describe the mental health program for survivors that he helped institute: two thousand facilitators in seven regions throughout Guatemala. The model has since been adopted in Zimbabwe and East Timor, with Guatemalan training and inspiration. But with regards to reparations, the doctor sounded a cynical note: “Guess what? The message in Guatemala is that if you want to do something bad, do it massively, so you don’t have to pay.” The best that one can realistically hope for is moral recognition. Even though President Clinton came to Guatemala and apologized for U.S. complicity, Cabrera’s own “state has not stood up in front of the people and said ‘What we did was wrong...’ There is no one to give forgiveness, because nobody is asking for forgiveness.”

Chivy Sok (Cambodia)

“Commemorating the Shoah and the Killing Fields”

Chivy Sok was the first of three female speakers at the symposium. A child survivor of the Killing Fields of Cambodia, she was resettled in the United States while still young and went on to earn advanced degrees in international affairs. Ms. Sok is currently coordinating the national campaign to establish the first *Killing Fields Memorial and Cambodian American Heritage Museum* in the United States. It is a position that has put her in contact with members of the Jewish community and sensitized her to the vocabulary of Holocaust. Her poignant treatment of the dilemma of the relocated survivor, and the second generation, resonated for all those familiar with the aftermath of the Shoah.

Chivy Sok began with a harrowing recollection of the takeover by the Khmer Rouge of Phnom Penh when she was six years old: forced labor and communal living with little food or amenities. Following the Vietnamese invasion, she lived as a refugee with her mother until coming to the United States. For many Cambodians, this was an experience fraught with great trauma and stress. Even today there are mental health implications. Example: “A lot of women who can’t see have seen horrible crimes committed in front of their eyes.”

Relocation assistance by the Jewish (and Catholic) communities of Chicago resulted in a familiarity with the history of the Holocaust and acquaintance with actual Shoah survivors. Parallels with the experience of these others is striking: “Many of the [Cambodian survivors] have not been able to talk about their experiences for a long, long time.” Sok’s decision to study human rights and undertake a career in social justice was “heavily influenced” by having gone through the Killing Fields. Her current campaign to establish a Cambodian genocide memorial and education center is also modeled after that of the Jewish experience with Holocaust museums and commemoration sites around the United States. Help from the Jewish Federation – including the pairing of a Holocaust survivor with one from the Killings Fields as part of a “visibility campaign” – are part and parcel of this project.

The decision to use such a (Hollywood-popularized) term as the “Killing Fields” – and not “Cambodian Holocaust” – was the result of much reflection and debate. “For the practical purposes of respecting a community that has been so helpful to us,” she explained, “we made the deliberate decision not to use the term.” As a survivor, she is sensitive to the wish that “the Holocaust” not be used to describe other genocides.

This point generated considerable comment and discussion on the part of co-panelists and audience alike. For Nadim Rouhana, it was an “instrumental logic” that belied the universality of the lesson that Ms. Sok otherwise wished to project. For Locksley Edmondson, reserving “holocaust” for the Jewish experience is “unacademic, unintellectual, and could be politically very dysfunctional.” From the audience Northeastern professor Samuel Bernstein stated that there were “aggressive” appropriations of the term that tended “to discount the importance” of the Holocaust whereas an M.I.T. colleague claimed that in the United States “the word is policed and bounded.” Jack Nussan-Porter, a child of Shoah survivors, testified as to how gratified he was “to see and hear Third World people talking about the Holocaust in a respectful way,” adding that “within the Jewish community we must be more sensitive to your genocides without necessarily negating our own uniqueness.”

On another note, Edward Kissi invoked parallels between Pol Pot’s Cambodia and Hitler’s Germany: notions of race and purity, revolution, expansion. Xu Xin inquired about connections with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the purpose of the Khmer revolution. A student asked about the reaction within Cambodia itself to memorialization abroad.

Chivy Sok responded by invoking the Khmer term that means “the time of Pol Pot,” and disavowed any censorship with respect to the word Holocaust. She expressed hope that similar forums will diffuse tensions over vocabulary and increase inter-group cooperation and collaboration. Creation of an agrarian society was an underlying motive of the Pol Pot revolution. Within Cambodia itself, she said, there is little education about the Pol Pot years: children often react in disbelief when their parents and grandparents tell them of their experience under the Khmer Rouge.

Panel 3

Shoah in Third World Literature

Kinue Tokudome (Japan)

“Japanization of the Holocaust”

Kinue Tokudome has not only analyzed the place of the Holocaust in the literature of Japan but has herself contributed to it. Researcher and writer (both in Japanese and English), Ms. Tokudome is perhaps best known for her published interviews with survivors, scholars, and theologians of the Shoah. In her low-key but riveting presentation, she linked the major genocides by the central Axes powers during World War II – that of the Jews by Nazis, and that of the Chinese by the Imperial Army – in a way not usually considered by Holocaust scholars. By comparing post-War Germany’s reparations to the Jewish people with Japan’s reluctance to acknowledge its own criminal past, she put her finger on a very sensitive issue in modern Japanese politics. [Convenor’s note: while Japan is obviously not a “Third World” country as such, Kinue Tokudome’s profile well justified stretching the bounds conveyed by the symposium title.]

Ms. Tokudome’s interest in the Shoah was deepened as a result of hearing the testimony of a survivor of Auschwitz. So was her shame regarding the number of anti-Semitic books (including Holocaust denial) being sold in her country. After writing her own book on the Holocaust, she felt the need to work on her own country’s “dark history.”

Ms. Tokudome contrasted two ways in which the Holocaust plays out in Japanese discourse today. On one side are those who refer to the way “Germany faced its past squarely and took responsibility” as opposed to Japan, which has not come to terms with its own Second World War crimes. On the other hand are those who insist – instrumentally - on the uniqueness of the Holocaust. In such way, they downplay the large-scale killings committed by Japanese troops, attributing them to consequences of the heat of battle and not any state-sponsored or systematic policy. This group invokes the case of Chinue Sughira (the Japanese diplomat in Lithuania who saved thousands of Jews by issuing transit visas) as emblematic of the beneficence of the Japanese authorities of the time. “Interestingly,” noted Ms. Tokudome, “both groups are fully aware of how the comparison of Japan’s war crimes with the Holocaust can exert a powerful influence” on the current debate over Japan’s wartime history. The host of translated books on the Holocaust, the success of the Wiesenthal Center traveling exhibit, and the huge audiences for “Schindler’s List” all attest to contemporary Japanese fascination with the Shoah.

There is also the polemical fear in Japan, however, that “you just can’t touch the Holocaust.” Ms. Tokudome recounted a 1995 episode in which a publisher shut down its own magazine after the Wiesenthal Center notified advertisers that the magazine had run an essay denying the Holocaust. The upshot has been a stereotypical reinforcement in Japanese popular belief about “Jewish power.”

Ms. Tokudome then raised two related controversies: that of an approved junior high school history textbook whose treatment of WWII offended China and Korea; and, more directly related to the Shoah, the anomaly that the claims by former American POWs against Japanese companies and government are being rejected by the same U.S. government that supports reparations claims against Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

In this context, Ms. Tokudome invoked, by way of conclusion, her accompanying of a former American prisoner of war to the coal mine where he had slaved for three years. It is her duty as a writer, she said, “to let the Japanese people know... to make a difference.”

Ms. Tokudome's mild-mannered but intense presentation evoked many questions and comments from both fellow presenters and audience. Xu Xin asked if Japanese relate their country's World War II alliance with Nazi Germany to the Holocaust, and to their own views of Jews at the time. Locksley Edmondson highlighted the importance of worldwide white racism in the lead up to World War II as well as its manipulation by the Nazis to sanction alliance with Japan. Chivy Sok asked about the role of civil society in "Japan's effort to face its own history." Members of the audience asked about: the popularity of Anne Frank among Japanese girls; Japan's own race theories and racial identity; and the role of Japan's "imperial tradition" in stifling criticism of its wartime racism.

Ms. Tokudome responded by highlighting the dual perception of Jewry by the Japanese: respect tinged with criticism for its supposed "power." Official Japan did not share Nazi racial hatred towards Jews and in fact did issue transit visas for refugees. In the aftermath, it is the U.S. that has displayed a double standard in punishing Japanese vis-à-vis German war crimes. This is particularly evident with respect to post-war accountability of private corporations that employed slave labor. NGOs are indeed vibrant in her country, noted the Japanese writer, and they engage in such issues as human rights and justice for comfort women and former American POWs.

Ilán Stavans (Mexico)

"Versions and Perversions of the Holocaust in Latin America"

Born and raised in the Jewish community of Mexico, Ilán Stavans was one of the only presenters at the symposium to have been confronted with the legacies of the Holocaust since childhood. Holder of a doctorate from Columbia University and a masters degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary, Dr. Stavans is now professor of Spanish, creative writing, and Jewish studies at Amherst College; his published works include *The Oxford Book of Jewish Stories* and *The Inveterate Dreamer: Essays and Conversations on Jewish Culture*. Professor Stavans' ambivalent participation ("Are American Jews ready to look beyond their own nose to understand the echoes and impact of the Nazi genocide in the world at large? Are we ready for them to be ready?") served as reminder that North American Jewry is not the only repository of Shoah memory in the Diaspora. A region that has both hosted Holocaust survivors and harbored Nazi fugitives, Latin America has not yet come to terms, according to Stavans, with either its ancient Jewish heritage or its moral responsibility to resident witnesses to the Shoah.

Attending a Yiddish-speaking school in the Mexico of his youth, Holocaust consciousness emerged early, through seeing relatives' arms tattooed with concentration camp numbers and viewing such films as *Night and Fog*. But to his non-Jewish comrades, Jewry and Judaism remained strange, exotic, and subject to bizarre rumors: even in college, in the interest of comparative analysis (and to satisfy their masculine curiosity), Stavans' uncircumcised classmates would accompany him to the bathroom. Is the Otherness of the Latin American Jew about to change, "thanks" to the Holocaust?

Stavans' springboard for reflection was the unprecedented publication of a Spanish-language literary anthology treating both the Shoah and the "Dirty War" in Argentina. Steeped in the Jewish culture of Mexico, he had been quite familiar with both Jewish (including Shoah) literature as well as that on the overall repression in Latin America; but nothing that combined the two subjects. Stavans asked himself if he were witnessing "a new awareness in Latin America" - a region with one-fifth of the world's Jewish population - about Jewry and the Holocaust. If so, where would such an awareness lead?

For sure, as Stavans noted, there are enormous differences in the presence, role, and visibility of Jews from one Latin American country to the other: Mexico, with its small and discreet Jewish population, is no Argentina. Perhaps such differentiation contributes to the small part that Jews have hitherto played in the Latin American imagination. This is so despite parallel histories, beginning with the expulsion of Jews from Spain in the same year as Columbus's arrival in the New World. "Masked Jews" (i.e., marranos, conversos, crypto-Jews) are barely treated in textbooks of the region; relevant books are out of print. Even the most admirable of twentieth century Latin American intellectuals, Octavio Paz, makes virtually no mention of Jews in his otherwise sweeping, and exhaustive, collective works.

At the same time that Rigoberto Mechu's contested autobiography of indigenous resistance to repression arose, a parallel controversy surfaced concerning the memoir of an Ecuadorian Jewish survivor of Auschwitz. In this case, the ghostwriter of the Spanish edition demanded that the English language version acknowledge him rather as co-author; by implication, the memoir would be considered rather a novel. The issue galvanized a number of Latin Americanist academics and intellectuals (including Stavans) but the outcome -

publication with both names, without title page description of it as a memoir – was unsatisfactory. Given the dearth of English-language versions of Latin American accounts of the Shoah, the question “Are we getting truth or fiction?” becomes all the more poignant.

Following his initial presentation, Lockley Edmondson sought validation for his impression that modern Latin American, and particularly Argentinian, propensities to fascism may be linked to their attracting “more than a fair share of Nazis.” Nadim Rouhana, for his part, wondered at the relative lack of acknowledged connection between the Shoah and crimes against humanity in Latin America. Gerald Gahima, prompted by a previous panel’s mention of Israel as a supporter of apartheid South Africa, now asked about the position of the Jewish community in Latin America during the Dirty Wars. (“Informed attitudes of society of the past are shaped by how we behave today... The conduct of some of the members of the Jewish community or the State of Israel has affected the Jews in South Africa... People expect the Jewish people, having been victims, to be sympathetic to the problems, the sufferings of others.”)

From the audience Professor of Spanish Rita Schneider added her own reflections regarding the contradiction of growing up Jewish in Latin America: the polarization of opinion regarding the capture of Eichmann; the bombing of the Buenos Aires Jewish Community Center (followed by massive public outrage); the high proportion of Jewish “disappeared”; the heroism of a Jacobo Timerman, eventually ostracized by the Argentine Jewish establishment. Carol Ann Reed of the Holocaust Center in Toronto mentioned her own institution’s educational efforts linking the Dirty Wars to the Holocaust.

In response, Professor Stavans acknowledged the reluctance of Latin American Jews to wash their dirty linen in public. His own residence in the United States speaks to the self-exile that often follows criticism of the State of Israel or the status quo of Jews in Latin America (“the connection between the Sephardic and the Ashkenazi Jews has not been a happy one”). He frankly acknowledged that Jews have benefited from racial hierarchies in Latin American society, “from whiteness. This gives us a sense of protection and we don’t want to give this up.

“American Jews are looking elsewhere to understand their roots,” Stavans went on. The ghetto that we had when growing up and felt uncomfortable about is romanticized now, looked at nostalgically. It’s kind of the *shtetl* for American Jews. Shtetl dwellers wanted to leave as quickly as possible and yet American Jews book at travel agencies for trips that will enable them to find the site where a grandmother spent her days sewing and cooking. “It is ironic,” he concluded, “that a past so grim, so dark at times, can be a foundation of nostalgia. But what is memory if not a game of mirrors?”

Anita Desai (India)

A Reading from *Baumgartner’s Bombay*

Anita Desai, an award-winning novelist (Literary Lion award; Hadassah prize) is Professor of Writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After reading selected passages from her 1989 novel about a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany who finds sanctuary in urban India, Ms. Desai spoke about the origins of the book.

Of half-German parentage (German was her mother tongue), Professor Desai had long sought an opportunity to integrate her maternal and linguistic heritage in her writing. It was only later in life that, living in Bombay, she came to know of a curious European (shabby but rich, feeding cats but racing horses) that prompted her to create a (Jewish) German character.

After the man died Desai was asked to go through his letters to determine their importance. At the time, she did not find any. Only retrospectively, when reading about the Holocaust and British detention camps in India, did she realize (by recalling the stamped number on the letters) that this man had previously been a concentration camp prisoner. Research into the man’s case led her into a blind alley. “So,” explained the novelist, “I had to imagine a history for this man.”

In response to an audience question about her character’s temperament, Desai confirmed that she did mean for him to be an “entirely passive character. For the whole idea was to show how history sweeps people up and, like a juggernaut, often crushes them under its wheels.”

Panel 4

Problems of Politicization

Edward Kissi (Ghana/Ethiopia)

“Uses and Abuses of the Holocaust Paradigm in Ethiopia”

From the Ghanaian-born Edward Kissi, the symposium learned of one of the most egregious appropriations of the Shoah in the Third World for political purposes: the attempt by Ethiopian rebels in the 1970s to claim the mantle of embattled Jews in their struggle against the Mengistu regime. Given the venerable existence of an actual Jewish community in Ethiopia, such instrumentalist language did resonate abroad. Holder of a Ph.D. from Concordia University in Montreal and a Rockefeller research grant recipient, Dr. Kissi has long specialized in genocide studies: his affiliations include research fellow at the Center for Holocaust Studies at Clark University.

Dr. Kissi began by positing three approaches to Holocaust studies incorporated by the Ethiopian intellectual elite in the 1970s: historical (i.e., what actually happened to Jews in Nazi Germany); didactic (what non-Jewish people can learn from this experience); and political (how Jews and non-Jews alike can “use the Holocaust to advance individual and group causes.”) This third approach was unabashedly exploited by leaders of the various rebel movements then operating. Cognizant of the keen interest shown by Congressmen and other key leaders of Jewish descent in the plight of Ethiopian Jews under this Marxist regime in the Horn of Africa, “all political groups opposed to the Mengistu regime [cast themselves] as ‘Ethiopia’s Jews’- a vulnerable group resisting an oppressive state to uphold human rights.” Given the pre-revolutionary, imperial legend of royalty descended from the union of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, such a claim resonated particularly well.

A spur to such ethnic appropriation was the visit by U.S. Congressmen who, in the course of assessing the extent of famine in the Horn, showed considerable interest in the plight of the Ethiopian Jews. This fueled a debate in anti-government literature about American intentions and the meaning of “Jewishness.” The latter was defined by the rebels, according to Kissi, as “vulnerability and resistance to state repression.” Given Israeli military aid to the Mengistu regime, the claim of “Jewishness” – linked to invocation of the Holocaust – aimed to alter foreign policy then linking Addis Ababa and Jerusalem. Describing Ethiopia under Mengistu as fascistic, a “Hitlerite state,” and a giant “concentration camp” were polemical means to that end. As gauged by Congressional hearings on human rights, U.S. media coverage of the conflict, and eventual appropriations of food aid, this stratagem by Ethiopia’s anti-establishment “educated elite” seems to have worked.

Following Dr. Kissi’s spirited delivery, Dr. Cabrera and Chivy Sok offered comparable examples of Holocaust imagery in efforts to heighten consciousness of genocide in Guatemala and Cambodia. Prof. Rouhana wondered if using the Holocaust framework and imagery “to instrumentally reach Israel through Jewish-American groups” is not itself a form of anti-Semitism. Shawkat Toorawa reminded the symposium that such “terms acquire a political life of their own because they function within a kind of particular discourse.” According to Locksley Edmondson, “those of us who are living in developing countries of the Third World will always have to enter into the debate in a subservient role” and such “appropriation of the word will lead to dangers in terms of human rights.”

“We can hardly predict where the particularization or universalization of the Holocaust will lead,” responded Edward Kissi. Even if its instrumentalization is problematic, use of the Holocaust paradigm at least indicates that “knowledge of the Holocaust has spread beyond Europe and America,” including Africa.

Nadim Rouhana (Israel/Palestine)

“The Holocaust and Psychological Dynamics of the Arab-Israeli Conflict”

Intellectual honesty required an Arab perspective to “Third World Views of the Holocaust.” With Professor Nadim Rouhana, an Israeli-Palestinian social psychologist, the symposium was privileged to a rigorous analysis that situated Holocaust consciousness within the context of current Middle Eastern politics. Professor Rouhana, currently with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel Aviv University, sought to delink what he views as a legitimate need for Holocaust commemoration from its more contestable instrumentalization within “the Zionist narrative.” Only by disentangling the Shoah from Zionism, argued the Ford, Rockefeller, USIP, and Carnegie-grantee, can Arabs appreciate the horrors of the Holocaust, and Jews empathize with the displacement of the Palestinians.

Professor Rouhana began by presenting himself as a bicultural individual, the Palestinian product of Israeli education, culture and (leftist – including Arab-Israeli) politics. He well understands the trauma of the Shoah for the Jewish psyche and the key role it plays in the psychological dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is for this reason that “disentangling” Zionism from Holocaust consciousness is, for him, an imperative “political and cultural project.”

Three major developments characterize modern Jewish history: the emergence of Zionism, the Shoah, and the establishment of Israel. “Each of these developments is momentous by itself,” stated the Arab-Israeli professor. “To have all three of them happen within a half a century is an almost unprecedented drama of both horrible loss and spectacular revival.” And, he went on, “if not for the horrendous brutality of the Holocaust, and the indescribable human suffering and loss, one would say even some beauty.”

Yet the “sense of historical justice” embedded in this narrative is “disturbed” by the reality on the ground: the “uprooting of the indigenous population” and their displacement. Israel, in order to avoid the moral implications of these facts, has engaged in a massive and sophisticated process of “denial.”

While acknowledging the existence of Arab anti-Semitism, Professor Rouhana distinguishes it from the racist variety that developed in the Christian West. More importantly, the “packaging” of Zionism as an ideology with the “painful history” of the Shoah facilitates the confusion of criticism of Zionism with anti-Semitism. Although some expressions of anti-Zionism indeed stem from anti-Semitism, some of them are indeed legitimate. Mutual appreciation of each other community’s deepest psycho-political preoccupations – Shoah on one side, Al-Naqba on the other – is indispensable for there to be reconciliation between Palestinians and the people (Jews) they delicately refer to as “our cousins.”

Ilan Stavans reinforced Nadim Rouhana’s thesis by stating that “the Holocaust is about excess – excess in destruction, excess [particularly among American Jews] in ideology.” The Mexican-born professor called for a revaluation of Jewish history that goes beyond Zionism and the Holocaust. Edward Kissi reiterated that, at least in Africa, views of the Holocaust, and attitudes to Jews generally, are shaped by perceptions of Middle East politics. He asked what would be the future view of the Holocaust if the Arab-Israeli conflict escalates. Locksley Edmondson expressed the view that Arab anti-Jewishness did not precede Zionism

and asked about the influence of Israeli revisionist scholars. He also asked about the role of reparations as a possible solution to the conflict.

Speaking as a Rwandan Tutsi who well “appreciates why there is an Israel,” Gerald Gahima commiserated, “If you have been through a genocide, you owe yourselves a duty to make sure that these things never happen to you again.” Still, he insisted, “Sometimes Israel gets away with things that we in other countries” – even victims of genocide – “cannot.” The self-declared friend of Jews went on: “I’ve got to remind those who study the Holocaust and want these things to be remembered, that the things we do today are going to affect the perception of this terrible tragedy in years to come... Third World views of the Holocaust will be affected by contemporary events... We cannot isolate the present from the past, or the past from the present.” Shawkat Toorawa evoked the “position of privilege” that only members of particular groups enjoy in raising and presenting issues of acute sensitivity.

In response to Edward Kissi, Nadim Rouhana offered the challenging hypothesis that if Palestine had been appropriated by some other people and nationalist movement, “then the Jewish people... would be in full alliance with the Palestinians. Palestinians would be appropriating the Holocaust as many other people are doing.” The Palestinian scholar continued: “The Holocaust should be seen, experienced, respected, identified with, regardless of what Israel is doing. I honestly mean that.” To Locksley Edmondson, Rouhana affirmed the existence, not only of revisionist Israeli historians, but of revisionist social and behavioral scientists. He also maintained that reparations and compensation cannot be independent of the right of return. Rouhana’s ultimate goal for Israel/Palestine is “a place of one person, one vote; all equal before the law; all equal as groups, as individuals.”

Concluding Comments

Steven Katz (USA)

To balance the “universalist” perspective of the Shoah undergirding the symposium, one of the foremost scholars of the “uniqueness” school, Professor Steven Katz, was invited to provide concluding observations. Steven Katz is Professor of Religion and Director of the Center for Judaic Studies at Boston University.

Scholars of the uniqueness position have traditionally taken the position that the singular characteristics of the Shoah make it an unprecedented and fundamentally incomparable phenomenon, placing it outside the range of “ordinary” history and within a specifically Jewish framework. Professor Katz’s own approach – best represented by his prize-winning *The Holocaust in Historical Context* - is to demonstrate the uniqueness of the Holocaust by comparing it to other genocidal events within “ordinary history.”

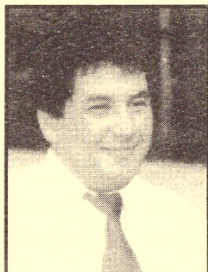
In his concluding observations Professor Steven Katz argued that the thematic comparison of other genocides to the Holocaust speaks to the uniqueness of the Shoah: no other tragedy serves as universal referent against which all other cases can be discussed. The Holocaust is perverse testimony to modern man, to the belief that there are no limits to what human beings can do. This is what Katz called the “Promethean” symbolism of the Shoah. He then went on to distinguish between “moral judgments and phenomenological analysis.” While there is no hierarchy in the evil of mass murder (and the evil of genocidal murderers), there are different empirical “shapes” and operative ideologies distinguishing the genocides. Thus, the possibility of “remaking” Cambodians into docile Communists or Guatemalan indigenes into servile laborers left open the possibility of life – a possibility not extended to Jews condemned to death by Nazi ideology.

Katz felt compelled to correct the historical image of a so-called Golden Age prevailing between Jews and Arabs prior to Zionism, an impression imparted in discussion by Professor Edmondson. “According to Muslim law, Jews are not equal - they are dhimmis...communities of faith that have an authentic, but inferior, revelation.”

Katz invoked the seemingly “mythic” quality of Jews, Jewishness, and Israel: they hold a disproportionate place in the consciousness of the Third World, as well as the West. Rigorous historical research is necessary, he added, so that monumental events not be turned into “caricatures.” The Holocaust, he said in closing, also serves as “a profound opportunity to meditate on the need for judgment built on truth,” a stimulus for “unbiased, open and non-apologetic study,” and a prod for “real ethical commitment.”

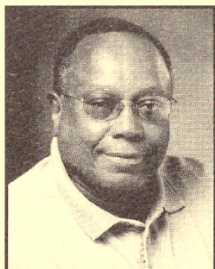
Biosketches of Presenters

Roberto Cabrera, a medical doctor and mental health specialist in **Guatemala**, obtained his Masters Degree in Public Health at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. From 1987 to 1997 he worked with victims and survivors of massive human rights violations in rural areas, setting up a Mental Health Program whose principal clients were Mayan Indians. From 1997 until recently, Dr. Cabrera was with the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala, promoting its Recovery of Historical Memory Project (REMHI). This Truth Commission for Guatemala is designed to help victims recover their voice and memory, and thereby overcome the effects of violence.

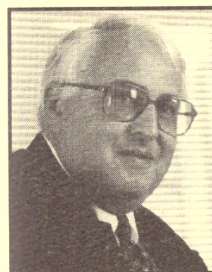


Anita Desai, award-winning novelist from **India**, is the author of *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1989), the fictionalized biography of a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany who finds sanctuary in urban India. Ms. Desai has authored eight other adult novels (as well as three juvenile ones). *Baumgartner's Bombay* netted Desai the Hadassah prize; she also holds the Literary Lion award from the New York Public Library. Previously the Purington Professor of English at Mount Holyoke College, Desai is currently Professor of Writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Locksley Edmondson, former Dean of Social Sciences at the University of the West Indies from 1976-1980, is of **Jamaican** origin. A political scientist, Dr. Edmondson is currently Professor in the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University. Among his numerous publications are a United Nations University working paper on "Intellectual and Cultural Creativity in the English-speaking Caribbean" and a chapter on "Africa and the Developing Regions" in the UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. VIII. He is a former President of the Caribbean Studies Association and a former Vice-President of the International Congress of African Studies.

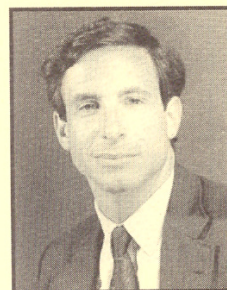
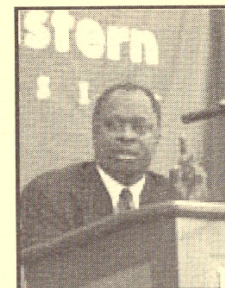


Since 1999 **Gerald Gahima** has been the Prosecutor General of the Republic of **Rwanda**, in charge of prosecution for acts of genocide and other violations of humanitarian law that were committed in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994. He also spearheads the country's efforts to bring to justice perpetrators of the genocide now living abroad. As Deputy Minister of Justice he was responsible for the rebuilding of his country's judicial system following its widespread devastation caused by warfare in 1994. Mr. Gahima's visit to the Simon Wiesenthal Centre and Yad Vashem (Israel's Holocaust Museum) in Jerusalem was the subject of the BBC documentary, "Pursuit of Justice."

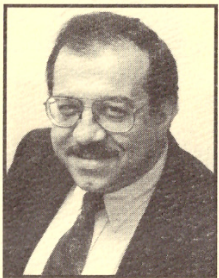


Steven Katz is Professor of Religion and Director of the Center for Judaic Studies at Boston University. His *The Holocaust in Historical Context* (vol. 1), which received a 1994 award by the American Association of Publishers, is a classic in Holocaust scholarship. Prof. Katz has authored and edited fifteen books and he is editor of *Modern Judaism*. Since January 1998 he has directed the program in Prejudice and Racism at the University of Capetown in South Africa. In 1999 Professor Katz was awarded the prestigious Lucas Prize from the University of Tübingen, a distinction he shares with the Dalai Lama.

Edward Kissi, who hails from **Ghana**, has trained his Africanist analysis on **Ethiopia**, where he conducted fieldwork as a Rockefeller grantee and has lectured as visiting researcher. He holds a doctorate in history from Concordia University in Montreal and has been a fellow at the Genocide Studies Program at Yale and the Center for Holocaust Studies at Clark University. Dr. Kissi is a contributor to the recently published Encyclopedia of Genocide. His languages include Amharic and Khmer. Edward was one of sixteen scholars invited to a conference on comparative genocide organized by the Guggenheim Foundation, in Barcelona, Spain, in December 2000.

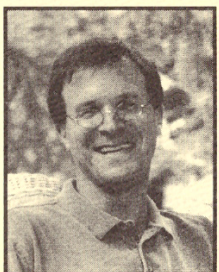
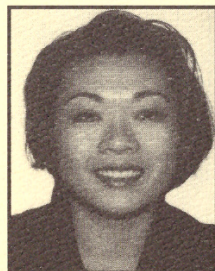


Convening the Symposium was **William Miles**, Professor of Political Science and, since 1998, the Stotsky Professor of Jewish Historical and Cultural Studies at Northeastern University. Four-time Fulbright scholar, he has authored books on the West Indies (*Paradox in Paradise*), West Africa (*Hausaland Divided*), South Asia (*Imperial Burdens*), and the South Pacific (*Bridging Mental Boundaries*), and has contributed to *The Journal of Genocide Research*, *Journal of Holocaust Education*, and *Diaspora*. Winner of the National Bible Contest, Miles represented North America in the International Bible Contest in Israel. His commentaries air on National Public Radio's program "All Things Considered."



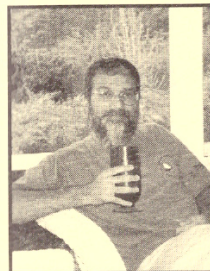
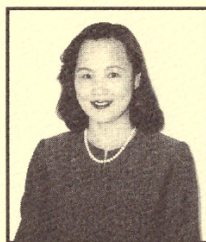
Nadim Rouhana, a **Palestinian** citizen of Israel, is author of *Palestinian Citizens in a Jewish State: Identities in Conflict* (Yale University Press, 1997). A social psychologist by training, Dr. Rouhana has also published numerous articles in scholarly journals on the psychological dimension of Arab-Jewish relations in Israel. His work has been sponsored by the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Carnegie Corporation and the United States Institute for Peace. He co-chairs a Harvard-based think tank of high-ranking Israelis and Palestinians who publish concept papers geared to policy makers. Professor Rouhana is currently teaching in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel Aviv University.

A child survivor of the Killing Fields, **Chivy Sok** was separated from her parents and worked in a child labor camp until Vietnamese forces invaded **Cambodia** in December 1978. Resettled in the United States, she went on to earn advanced degrees from the University of California at Santa Barbara and Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. She is former director at the Center for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia. Ms. Sok is currently working at the Cambodian Association of Illinois on a national campaign to establish the first Killing Fields Memorial and *Cambodian American Heritage Museum* in the United States.



Ilán Stavans, born in **Mexico**, is professor of Spanish, Jewish studies, and creative writing at Amherst College. He is founder and editor-in-chief of the award-winning cultural review *Hopscotch: A Cultural Review*, published by Duke University Press. His publications include *On Borrowed Words: A Memoir of Language* (Viking), *The Hispanic Condition* (HarperCollins), *The Oxford Book of Jewish Stories* (Oxford University Press), and *The Inveterate Dreamer: Essays and Conversations on Jewish Culture* (University of Nebraska Press). Prior to obtaining his doctorate from Columbia University, Dr. Stavans earned a masters degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Kinue Tokudome is a writer and researcher from **Japan** and recent visiting scholar with the Institute of Social Science at the University of Tokyo. She holds a degree from the University of Chicago. Among her many publications, both in Japanese and English, is a chapter in Alan Rosenbaum's second edited collection (2001) *Is the Holocaust Unique?* Ms. Tokudome is also the author of *Courage to Remember. Interviews on the Holocaust*, in which she relates her poignant conversations with survivors, scholars and theologians of the Shoah.



Before taking his new position with the Department of Near Eastern Studies and the Program in Jewish Studies at Cornell University, **Shawkat Mahmood Toorawa** taught at the University of **Mauritius**, in his native island. In addition to Arabic, which he teaches, Dr. Toorawa speaks French, Mauritian Kreol, Spanish and Bohora Gujarati. His publications include a co-authored book on pre-modern Arabic autobiography, a forthcoming book on classical Arabic literary culture, and a co-edited volume on law and education in Islam. He translates contemporary Syro-Lebanese poetry and drama, and publishes on multiculturalism in literature.

Xu Xin is Director of the Center for Judaic Studies at Nanjing University and President of the **China** Judaic Studies Association. He is also Professor at the Nanjing School of Foreign Studies. An expert on Judaic studies, Professor Xu has authored books on *Antisemitism* (1996) and on the *Chinese Jews of Kaifeng* (1995); he is co-editor-in-chief of the Chinese edition of the *Encyclopedia Judaica*. In addition to Chinese and English, Professor Xu reads Hebrew and Yiddish.

