6. A Holocaust Survivor's Bearing Witness

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The Decision to Write My Holocaust Memoirs

I had long known that one day I would have to write about my Holocaust experience. I would have to tell what happened to us, my mother and me and many others who had followed, or rather had been led down a similar path during those miserable years. I had to bear witness.

I was not aware that I actually was resisting writing my memoirs of what happened to us. I hid behind the principles that a psychoanalyst should remain anonymous about very personal matters, that making public as would writing papers and a book about my memoirs would violate that principle, a principle with which I am in accord. Of course it makes sense; we want to know what drives the patient as little influenced as possible by what drives us. In my Institute the principle was held to so vigorously that when in 1979 I was invited by CBS to do a television series on parenting (Parens, Scattergood, et al., 1979)—I was then well into our parenting optimizing prevention work and had been talking about it by then for several years (Parens, Currie, & Scattergood, 1979; Parens, Pollock, et al., 1974)—I consulted with the Director of our Institute[1] to seek his advice on whether or not I should accept such an invitation, which would require my exposing my views on parenting and all that goes with it, including myself, on television 3 times a week for 3 months. Would that not go counter to the principle of self disclosure? He did not hesitate: "Of course you should do it! Do it for psychoanalysis!"

[1] I am indebted to the late O. Eugene Baum, M.D., for his wise counsel.

In addition, facilitating my resistance, I felt justified to not reveal this part of my past, knowing that once I made this tortured part public, one that draws much sympathy from many in our communities, some of my patients would in turn experience yet another resistance-inducing factor in them. As one patient eventually said to me after she had read my memoirs, “You shouldn’t have written that book…” and went on to tell me that she found it too painful. She had felt compelled to read it and empathized painfully with my experience. Another patient long after analysis told me she had read my book; automatically—and wrongly—I asked her, “any thoughts?” She smiled, I think incredulous that I would ask, and turned away. More than one has said to me, “After what you’ve been through, how can I tell you about my problems?!” This one is not so difficult to deal with. Since a number of these patients have been traumatized within their own families, I tell them that having been traumatized by their own mother or father, from whom one expects love and protection is much more hurtful than having been traumatized by one’s enemy, who in our case—given the long history of discrimination and pogroms against the Jews in Europe and specifically, the Third Reich’s human rights denying, anti-Semitic 1935 Nuremberg Laws—we knew was determined to demean and harass, and even destroy us. These concerns, genuine as they are however, served my resistance. It was a fortuitous falling into place of three factors that led to my finally get down to write.

First, when I turned 70—decade anniversaries especially do this—time seemed now to become a reality that, while I have and continue to be in good health, I can no longer take for granted. There is ample evidence in everyday life that personal catastrophes happen and it became more difficult then to deny that such may happen to me. While I have long advocated facing the fact that some day something sudden or predictive of the end of my life will happen to

me, or to those my vintage that I love, even as I readied myself to start writing, I delayed. Now, urgency set in.

Second, when I was 71, I had been reading several of Primo Levi's books. The poem with which he opens *Survival in Auschwitz* (1996)—the unfortunately revised title of the English edition of his book about his year in Auschwitz which originally carried the title of the poem, "If This Is a Man"—struck me deeply and activated in me what had long been waiting to happen. Here is that poem:

> You who live safe
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> In your warm houses,
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> You who find, returning in the evening,
>
> Hot food and friendly faces:
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> > Consider if this is a man
> >
> > Who works in the mud
> >
> > Who does not know peace
> >
> > Who fights for a scrap of bread
> >
> > Who dies because of a yes or a no.
> >
> > Consider if this is a woman,
> >
> > Without hair and without name
> >
> > With no more strength to remember,
> >
> > Her eyes empty and her womb cold
> >
> > Like a frog in winter.
>
> Meditate that this came about:
>
> I commend these words to you.

Carve them in your hearts

At home, in the street,

Going to bed, rising; [and Levi concludes:]

Repeat them to your children,

Or may your house fall apart,

May illness impede you,

May your children turn their faces from you. (p. 11, emphasis added)[2]

Levi's admonition, especially the last line, really hit me, and heightened my resolve to act.

The third factor was the upcoming 60th anniversary—another decade anniversary—of my mother's having been sent to Auschwitz, August 14, 1942. On that anniversary, August 14, 2002, I started to write my Holocaust memoirs. It started a flooding of memory, of wide-ranging emotion, sadness and quiet rage, miserable itching and scratching, rumination for the 16 months it took me to write this three-part work. First published copies of the book came out 21 months after I started to write.

The Experience of Writing My Holocaust Memoirs

I did not ask: "Why should I write about what happened to us?" I felt, that the Holocaust impacted those who were victimized very differently, and that bearing witness meant to tell of the particular things that happened to us, in their various malicious forms. We need to tell those who want to know; but also and especially the many who do not want to know but should not be let free from making it part of their reality; and we must counter those who deny it—to add just

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[2] "If This Is a Man," from *Survival in Auschwitz* by Primo Levi (translated by Stuart Woolf). © 1959 Orion Press, Inc. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

one more voice to challenge their denial. In addition, the Holocaust impacted us along various distinguishing parameters: one's age, family circumstance, losses, camp incarceration—which included significant levels of harshness from detention and its consequences, to slave labor, and to death camp brutality and murder—or whether one was a hidden child or a child in a protected group home, or even experienced a sequential combination of these. Sure there were experiences we all had in common, such as malignant prejudice against us, loss of house and home, incarceration in camps or ghettos or compelled emigration, humiliation, starvation and miserably unsanitary conditions, and so on. To bear witness, individual accounts would be the only way to fill out in detail just what large numbers of *Homo sapiens* of this era did to others, to us. What was our Holocaust experience, my mother and me? If I spoke about what happened to us, I'd be telling what some others among us experienced too.

Nor did I ask: "How should I write about what happened to us?" It was August 14, 2002, the 60th anniversary of my mother's having been sent from Rivesaltes[3] (one of four concentration camps[4] in the southeast corner of France's frontier with Spain) to Drancy (outside of Paris) and from there, on August 14, 1942, to Auschwitz. In 1945, according to Serge Klarsfeld (1978), only one person of her convoy was alive. Having told my family I wanted to start to write on this

[3] I later learned that this was the first convoy to be sent by the Vichy France government to the death camps East upon Nazi-German requisition. This was while the unoccupied zone was still "Free France"; the Germans invaded this heretofore unoccupied zone 3 months later in reaction to the Anglo-American forces landing in North Africa. It is well-established that the Vichy government of the unoccupied zone of France was collaborationist with Hitler's plans for Europe, including its anti-Semitic laws abolishing human rights and French citizenship for Jews (Bailey, 2008).

[4] In the Pyrénées Orientales Department (a "province" where France has a frontier with Spain, Perpignan its principal city), there were four concentration camps: Rivesaltes (the most infamous), Argelès, St. Cyprien, and Barcarès. At the time the Vichy government spoke of them as "camps de concentration"; so do Marrus & Paxton (1983). Currently historians and others speak of them as "detention camps." Rivesaltes became the hub in the Free Zone from where the Jews in that "Free Zone" were deported to Auschwitz starting on August 9, 1942.

day worked well with their plans to be off somewhere with their children. I just started to write. But I quickly realized that in wanting to speak of what we experienced, that I would speak mostly of my mother and me. I, therefore, had to account for the fact that I could not include my father and my brother in what I started to say since by then we had not been together for years. I had to start with a brief chapter about our family history. But once I started to tell what happened, feelings, memories took over and drove the narrative. I let it happen.

It was not my intention to write a history of what happened. I am not a historian like Nora Levin, William Shire, Marrus and Paxton, Saul Friedlander, or Denis Peschanski.[5] How else could I share what happened, what a child survivor, and therefore many like this child survivor experienced? There are great Holocaust writers, foremost Primo Levi and Eli Wiesel; I am not a writer, nor a good historical storyteller like Irene Nemirovsky (*Suite Française*, 2006), nor a serious news carrier like Rudi Vrba (*I Escaped from Auschwitz*, 2002). There are many serious Holocaust autobiographies told by teachers, commercial designers, and others like Anna Ornstein and Saul Friedlander. I did not think of, nor did I take any models. I just needed to speak with my own voice—which has characterologically become that of a psychoanalyst. As I said, "feelings, memories took over and drove the narrative." I since have said that I wrote self-analytically. It turned out to be, as my wife Rachel said it would be, a self-analysis. She was right; I was doing what I ask my patients to do: to say whatever comes to their mind, whatever they feel. And I value having done it that way—with its repetitions, self-preoccupations, perhaps even self-indulgences. And as I wrote in *Renewal of Life: Healing from the Holocaust* (2004), the emotional experience of writing it brought with it a fulminating numullar eczema, traces of which continue to this day. I believe I developed this skin reaction as a somatic manifestation of

[5] See Friedlander (2007), Levin (1968), Marrus and Paxton (1983), Peschanski (2002), and Shirer (1959).

emotions long repressed as well as that of reliving in a self-analytic process the turmoil this trauma wrought. I take some comfort in my dermatologist's observation that there may have been wisdom in my soma selecting the outer layer of my body for reactivity rather than some more vital interior system. Perhaps a greater degree of sublimation and distancing from inner turmoil might have spared me such a psychosomatic symptom. But then, I would not have born witness to the experience of at least some Holocaust survivors. Friends who are also child survivors do not want to think about what they went through; several do not read nor watch programs about the Holocaust. Several others I know in our field write about their experience indirectly, some in the third person, even while a key theme of their professional writing can be linked to their Holocaust experience.

The Problem of Not Knowing

A factor that I felt heavily at the time of the writing is the knowledge that has long been part of my life, that there is so much I do not know about my roots, about my family, my prehistory. In the writing, I came face to face repeatedly with the problem of "not knowing." This is part of a multi-factorial dilemma: "knowing/not knowing." There is (1) not knowing, ever, and (2) having known but not remembering with certainty. On the other hand, there is, knowing with certainty, even when what is historically reported is at variance with it. A good example of the latter is a discussion I had with Denis Peschanski (2002), Professor of Social History at the University of Paris who wrote a history of the French "internment camps." Peschanski questioned my report of the sequence of the camps Savic[6] and I were in. According

[6] Savic, now Sam Chirman, M.D., was in both Récébédou and Rivesaltes at the same time as I.

to the documents he studied, Récébédou was not opened to foreign Jews until into 1941. But Savic and I are unequivocal, that we were in Récébédou (outside of Toulouse) from late September or very early October 1940 and were then transferred to Rivesaltes (near Perpignan) in very early January 1941. The point I stress here is that many documents were destroyed, I believe to hide what many French did not want to remember or reveal to the world about their collaboration with the German Nazis, which many French have decried—much has been said and there is more to be said about this but this is not the place for it.[7] Peschanski is open to my insistence on this point.[8]

More nagging is "not knowing." "Not knowing, ever" is the most troubling. Had I known I would never see my mother again when we said goodbye in 1942, I would have asked a thousand questions about everything, from more than the little I know about my father and my brother, why my parents divorced, who and where my grandparents were, my uncles and aunts, my cousins, about so many things I do not know about, as I said, my roots, my prehistory. I have two photos of my mother, and two of my father and my brother. Where exactly did I come from? Knowing it was Lodz (Poland) is not enough. Because I do not know where my father was born, where he and my brother lived, nor exactly what work he did (other than that he merchandised in furs), nor my brother's birth date, nor the names or addresses of where my grandparents lived, I

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[7] Pertinent is that Bailey (2008) learned that when the Germans retreated from the Pyrénées Orientales Department they destroyed bridges, petrol reserves, food reserves, but they made sure to leave intact their files on those French who had collaborated with them. My guess is that they left it to the French to take their wrath out on one another.

[8] Another example of "knowing with certainty" is that Germaine Masour, Directrice of the Home I was in in St. Raphael (Southern France), confounded it with another Home she directed, in which she encountered a degree of difficulty with some challenging teenagers; she did not in St. Raphael. This fact interested the French historian of the OSE (*Oeuvres de Secours au Enfants*), Katy Hazan, who is currently reconstructing a history of the OSE Homes during the era 1940-1945. Germaine Masour was a wonderful human being who devoted herself to saving children.

have been unable to trace what became of them. Many agencies want to help us find; but to find, one has to have sufficient information to begin with. Just a name and a large city are not enough.

And then there is "knowing, but not remembering with certainty." Of course none of us remembers all important things with certainty. But when one needs to know, and not remembering enough is troubling, it is distressing to have no one to turn to, to fill in the details. Not knowing leaves a vacuum in one's life, in addition to all the losses of family, home, and the like. As I said in *Renewal of Life*, "No…this life, as of June 1942, was not the life I was living before the war…My original life…had been shattered" (p. 92). This is a sentiment experienced by many child survivors.[9]

Not knowing enough of my origins may have played a part in my wanting to write about what happened to us for my sons, their wives and my grandchildren so they may know as much of their origins as I can tell them. This, attached to the paradox as I noted in *Renewal of Life*, that I want them to know and at the same time, I want them to forget about it.

How Does It Feel to Have My Memoirs Read?

It is very important for me to have this book read. The book does not arise from my work but from my experience, an experience which has universal implications. In addition, I must have readers because without them I cannot bear witness. I cannot fulfill my responsibility to my people and to all who are subjected to genocide. Primo Levi has emboldened in my brain the

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[9] Yehuda Nir, a New York psychiatrist, is a teenager survivor of the Warsaw uprising. His memoir is entitled *The Lost Childhood* (2002). See also Isabelle Choko, Frances Irwin, Lotti Kahana-Aufleger, Margit Raab Kalina, and Jane Lipski (2005), whose book is entitled *Stolen Youth* (2005). It is one of the series sponsored and published by Yad Vashem and The Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project; printed in Jerusalem, Israel.

admonition *Zachor*[10] and “You must bear witness…or…may your children turn their faces from you!”

But what of the reader? While concerned for and with the reader, once I committed myself to tell my story, I could not think of what the reader would feel or think. A self-analysis is very private; I could not have written some of the things I did, if I was hampered by what the reader would think of it. I think that at a preconscious level our patients, and we, worry about privacy all the time. But I felt that to bear witness, I had to tell about my experience, not just facts already told many times. And I know that some readers want to know, not just the history of it, but, “What was it really like to be there?” Some are wise enough to know that empathy may not carry them close enough to the experience; approximate, they can, but really experience it? Of course, many do not want to experience it.

It would have been a mistake to try to write my bearing witness in a voice other than my own. Is it bearing witness if it is not in your own voice? I am grateful to my readers. I have gotten many very meaningful notes of appreciation, verbal and in writing. I treasure the ones in writing because they are hard proof of my bearing witness. Many readers have told me how difficult it was to read even as it fulfilled their need to listen to witnesses to work through some their share of the experience of being affected human beings, Jew and non-Jew. But I have also been dismayed by a couple who felt that I was repetitious, one even suggested that I complain too much. I think many readers recognized that I was unconsciously driven in the writing. Should I have prefaced the book with the statement that it is a self-analysis? I am considering this for the French edition due to come out soon. It is simply difficult. If you were silent, that created problems; if you spoke up, this created problems. Boris Cyrulnik, the renowned French

[10] “Remember” in Hebrew.

psychiatrist and author of many books, speaks indirectly about his experience by having made resilience to trauma one of his major areas of research; he tells me that in France it was just too difficult to write directly about what happened to him. Many survivors have encountered disbelief, counter-silence, even laughter—as to a fabrication told by an overzealous raconteur. Many French do not want to know, I believe, because they are then unavoidably confronted with "What did the French do during 1940-1945?" Rosemary Bailey (2008) speaks extensively about this. Even to this day, many in France distort what happened there. Some Poles say that more Poles died in Auschwitz than Jews! Interestingly, after a generation of silence, while many continue to deny it, many Germans more readily than others acknowledge what their Third Reich did—some experiencing profound shame about it (Bar-on, 1989, 1990, 1995; Goschalk, 1995).

Speaking to Others: Being Listened to When Telling

How I speak to others, as would anyone, is determined by the audience: speaking to adults, to children, to my family, especially to my own children.

Most adults know about the Shoah. Medium-size audiences (less than 50) give me a comfortable sense of connection with my listeners. Even a smaller group works best, say 10-25; I can look at them several at once. Audiences of 100-300+, while rewarding that so many would come to listen to yet another survivor, tend to challenge the feel of direct connection—I am not sure whether it is that seeming distractibility on the part of some listeners is more likely or whether I am just unable to feel intimacy with that large a number of people. So many, flatters; but it lessens the connection I want with the listener for this topic. Speaking to about 100 at a Barnes & Noble book signing, people strung out in clusters amid shelves of books seemed to

work better than such a number in an auditorium. It is clear that when I see responsiveness contingent with what I am saying, I feel that the audience wants to hear my tale and I then let myself go more easily. I am surprised at times with the strong level of attentiveness the audiences bring.

I confess that I like talking to kids better than to adults. Two reasons: First, I am very comfortable with kids. Sure, with many adults too. But I especially like kids; I love their responsiveness; they invariably amaze me; even to this day, after years of working with them, I find their questions at times so moving, so bright. I know that that's why I became a child psychiatrist and analyst; and I can easily talk to their level of experiencing. I think most child clinicians can do that. Second, to most, what I am telling them is new; many have only barely or not even heard about the Holocaust. Invariably, the teachers, usually social studies or history, prepare them for my lecture. In one school the teachers introduced me before I came through a YouTube piece of an interview we did for Thanksgiving. It is visible that it makes history real for them; I am a witness that it happened; some have said this to me. I like both, the younger ones, say 10 to 14, and the high school kids.

Interestingly, larger groups of kids, like the 500 high school students at the Germantown Academy, do not feel inaccessible for me to connect with. I sense that I am telling them something they've not yet heard (much) about. But in addition, I tell them that the kind of thing that happened to me when I was about their age or even younger than they are now (the high school students), is something that they all know something about, prejudice and bullying. I try to personalize it with them and I explain to them my thoughts about how prejudice gets started, what some of the basic dynamics are—for example, that it includes the displacement or projection of loads of hostility we can't discharge against those who hurt us; that we then take it

out on less threatening individuals. I tell them that something can be done to prevent it, and that they are the next generation on whom society is going to depend to deal with it. I tell them that they are needed by society; that they need to think about prejudice and bullying and even begin to act to prevent it among themselves. Invariably, in all schools there are kids of different ethnic groups, and some nod when I say that I know some of them know exactly what I'm talking about. I have had some priceless questions from them. One that stands out is when a tall African-American high schooler asked me what he and his friends could do when, as they walk down the street, when whites come toward them and see them, the whites cross the street. I sympathized with his feeling offended, acknowledged how insulted he and his friends must feel, and told him this is exactly the kind of thing we all need to do something about, that they have to be part of the solution. Obviously I cannot answer all their questions; I just give them the best I've got.

If several kids in a hundred hear me and take me seriously, I feel it was worth my coming to their school to talk with them. I want more, but I am glad of the few who do more than just listen to what I am telling them. It brings to mind Margaret Mead's well-known remark that, paraphrasing, "one person can change the world," paralleling the well-known Jewish saying that, again paraphrasing, "a person who saves one life saves a universe." One high school girl from a Philadelphia suburb communicated with me months after I talked there and asked if I would read a 10-page paper she wrote responding to an assignment, topic of the student's choosing. She talked about the Holocaust with surprising sophistication, a very moving experience for me—which I know it also was for her. In fact, she subsequently played Anne Frank in the play by that name. But there is an aspect of telling and being listened to that is much more challenging, it is troubling.

Speaking to Those Near-Directly Afflicted by the Holocaust

As I said, it was difficult to write knowing that, while many want to know, to read, to see documentaries and movies—all toward achieving a degree of mastery over the challenges of life—there are many who do not want to know. They will not read, or watch documentaries, or the like. Some want to deny it happened for varied reasons.

But there are those who want to know while they also do not want to "know." They do not want to know to protect themselves against the pain of identification. The pain may be too large; they cannot listen. This is no where more pertinent than within families of survivors. I have lamented for years, and always will, the burden my Holocaust experience has caused those most important to me. As I wrote,

> One of the largest torments I continue to experience following from what happened to me is the pain and the burden this past has caused my wife and our three sons. No survivor has escaped this; we can't prevent it; *wives and kids cannot not be burdened by it*. Now my grandchildren have begun to ask me, with a note of seriousness and caution, "Zaida, were you in the war?" Their fathers know that I have long wanted them to know, and now that I want their children to know, that they can say to me, ask me, anything at all about what happened to me, to all of us. In the hope of helping them deal with this burden with the least possible injury, I have tried to facilitate our talking about what happened over there. I sense that my sons have tried to protect me and themselves by taking up the past with me, mostly only on specified occasions like the Jewish Holidays…
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> The sins of the father will be visited on the child…I understand how it happens…But what sins did I commit in all this? *The pains of the father will be visited*

> *on the child*. That's what applies to us; and it makes me weep. A father cannot have better sons than I have. And, I am hung in a paradox: I want my sons and my wife to put it all to rest; but I want us all to remember it, and I want to remind others of it, hoping they will not let it happen again, nor wish to perpetrate it again. (2004, pp. 169-170)

To talk about it at home has been and still is a challenge. How much is too much? How much too little? With a wife and three sons, they do not all have the same measure of tolerance for hearing about what happened, each has her or his own psychic strengths, conflicts and burdens, and more. And it has been a challenge for me: Can I talk about it when I want? Of course not; I must heed each of them, where they are at a given moment with regard to their life and this question. Of course much has been said about this specific problem. And most critical, it applies to both the families of the victims and those of the perpetrators (see Bar-on, 1989, 1995; Goschalk, 1995). Boris Cyrulnik, himself a child survivor in France, put it essentially this way[11]: It is a polar problem: Those survivors who never or rarely talk to their mates or children may subject them to the *trauma of silence* (see Bar-on, 1989); those survivors who talk too much—overly listener-dependent, struggling to gain some mastery over their tragic experiencing—may subject their mates and/or children to the *trauma of engorgement* (French, meaning "saturation to the point of congestion"). Finding one's way between this Scylla and Charybdis is rendered more difficult the more the number of family members. Individual prescriptions are warranted: One child may want to know more; another less. Each wants to know more or less at different ages and at different times. Family talks and individual dialogue are often warranted. Foremost a reciprocal entente is needed. In addition, as with all pain-inducing topics, it is likely that not all details of the conversation will be absorbed. The parameters are many. "You never talked about

[11] In a Colloquium in Perpignan, near the Rivesaltes concentration camp, June 6-7, 2008.

it" has been leveled at me, when I did from when I felt my children were of age to hear about it, especially during the Jewish High Holidays and at Passover and Thanksgiving, holidays that lend themselves to such talk and thought.

The topic is preoccupying for the survivor(s) and those with who the survivor(s) is in a primary relationship.[12] I believe it is permanently emotionally invested and recorded in both *implicit* and *explicit memory*, by means of those factors and pathways that account for generational transmission of highly emotionally invested experiences that not only parents bring to their children, mates to their mates (which may be what Karl Abraham meant when he observed that couples who have long been married begin to resemble one another), but also that children over the years bring to their parents.

I believe that *traumatism* (Cyrulnik, 2008) caused the individual by the genocidal extermination of his/her family, be it of one or several of the family, can never be totally metabolized. Its inscription in the amygdala and forged pathways to the frontal cortex, I believe cannot be totally metabolized (i.e., totally suppressed and over0ridden by new neural pathways) by in depth analytic working through. It bears on Freud's (1939) conviction that "[we] bear the indelible stamp of [our] origin" (p. 199) rendered by massive psychic trauma (Brenner, 2004; Krystal, 1968). The degree to which traumatic losses that arise from genocide can be mourned is,

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[12] "I have written that *primary, secondary* and *tertiary relationships* depend on the level of emotional investment we make in them and that a measure of that emotional investment is the degree to which we mourn when such a relationship is lost (Parens et al., 1997). The loss is largest when it occurs within the nuclear family which consists of *primary relationships*, that is, relationships between parent and child, siblings, mates, grandparents and grandchildren, whatever the state of ambivalence in these relationships. *Secondary relationships* occur in wider family relationships where emotional investment is less and contact is occasional but meaningful; so are good friendships, strong student-teacher, patient-doctor relationships and the like. The loss of one of these is felt, but the work of mourning is not so large. *Tertiary relationships* have some meaning for us but their loss will not engender mourning" (Parens, 2008, p. 3).

I believe, limited. In this lies my questioning Kogan's observation arising from her clinical work with survivors and their children that they defend against mourning. Perhaps some do. But I think that in most cases the explanation may have more to do with the indelibility of massive psychic trauma. Kandell's important findings and theorizing on synaptic formation and the possibility of overriding old neural pathways by new ones is limited—while I believe we should not abandon trying to do so until long-term analytic efforts seem to hit the brick wall of indelibility.

Once our children (of survivors) internalize to a given degree and organize an emotional context of their parent's traumatism, they are likely to identify with what their parent went through and are left for life—hopefully less and less as they grow—to cope with these identifications and their parent's unavoidable occasional episodes of what Primo Levi (1996/1947) spoke of as "the pain of remembering": "the comrade of all my peaceful moments…the pain of remembering…attacks me like a dog the moment my conscience comes out of the gloom" (p. 142).

This is why, at the 2007 International Psychoanalytic Association meetings in Berlin, I felt compelled to make a comment that seemed to have struck some listeners, some with appreciation, some with skeptical surprise, but also one, a Holocaust survivor herself, who—hearing about my comment indirectly—misunderstood what I meant. What happened is that in the course of an eloquent and sensitively done presentation by a well-regarded colleague, the adult daughter of a Holocaust survivor, several other children of survivors verbalized painful difficulties they experienced in their homes by the fact that their parents manifested behavioral symptoms and troubling reactivity which caused their children much distress over the years. There was an edge of anger in the tone of one child of survivors, a man very pained by his life

with his traumatized parents, with which I empathized, that touched directly my pain as a parent-survivor. He also seemed to me to imply that his parents could have been more aware of their growing child's experience. There are many instances where this is known to be the case. Facilitated by the fact that I felt the audience as sympathetic and accepting, and troubled by the younger man's years of pain, I welcomed the chance to address him. I wanted him to know that I am a parent-survivor, that while I know that many parents have been so emotionally handicapped by their Holocaust experience that they transmit blatantly, sometimes disturbingly, their suffering; and that even those among us who struggled to protect our mate and children are aware that by virtue of the trauma that was inflicted on us, we have burdened our children and our mates with that past. And that I weep about it. It cannot be avoided, I said, and I fear that children cannot, not be burdened by it. We can't make our ever-present-near-the-surface pain go away.

I do not mean that Holocaust survivors or their mates or their children are constantly experiencing that pain. It is an old ever to be sensitive scar that cannot fully heal. But many of us and our mates and children, and the evidence is ample, are gratified, even highly so, emotionally rich, human beings. Many among us have effected very good, useful lives, professionally, familially, socially, and individually. And our children are well on their way to such kind of life. But they will, from time to time, feel pain, and perhaps realize that one of the roots of this pain lies in their parents' past. But I believe that the good times may and can, as they have, far outweigh the bad.

On Hearing Others Talk about the Holocaust

Ahmadinejad says the Holocaust did not happen. He is not the first; he will not be the last.

Some hold that the Holocaust is unique, that it cannot be compared with, or talked about with other genocides. In many ways the Holocaust is unique; but if we think ahead, I feel that we must think of genocide—"How do we stop genocide?"—among which the Holocaust was unique.

First, it was unique in that unlike the other 20th century genocides, the Holocaust was law-abiding. The government of the Third Reich opened the way to it with its infamous Nuremberg Laws of 1935. This was the spring board for what eventuated not only in Kristallnacht on 9-10 November 1938, but also in the Wannsee Conference on January 24, 1942, where the "Final Solution" was decided in a meeting that lasted 90 minutes. The infamous Nuremberg Laws set up by the government of the Third Reich were also adopted on October 4, 1940 by the government of Vichy France, several months after France's armistice with Germany. It should be noted that Vichy France was not directly governed by the Third Reich; it was governed by France. Laws degrading citizenship and human rights as these, while a step backward in both Germany and France, are, however, not unique to what happened in the Holocaust era. Such laws disallowing citizenship for Jews long existed in Europe prior to the 1800s. But Europe is not alone in its shameful history; legal denial of such human rights long existed in the US with regard to blacks. In the face of this fact, it is not easy to hold that the 1935 Nuremberg Laws made the Holocaust unique.

The second step taken by the Third Reich is more likely to lead to consensus that the Holocaust is unique: It is that the then-German government sponsored the "Final Solution." But it would never have reached its known dimensions had not France and a number of other

European countries collaborated handsomely in its execution. The Third Reich instituted it to render Europe, and especially Germany, *Judenrein* ("clean of Jews") in the service of making the Aryan people the "master race." I find it incredible that the leaders of the Vichy French government (Marshall Petain and Pierre Laval) were convinced that the Third Reich duly represented and was to be the future of Europe (see Bailey, 2008).

A third distinction the Holocaust holds as compared to other genocides is the number of human beings destroyed by it. The figures are staggering: 11,000,000 were murdered in the Third Reich's camps, of which 6,000,000 were Jews; among the others, 3,000,000 were Russian prisoners of war and the remaining 2 million were Romas, Seventh Day Adventists, political prisoners, and others. The total murdered in the four other genocides of the 20th century: in Armenia (1,500,000) in 1915; in Cambodia (about 2,000,000) between 1975-1979; in Rwanda (800,000) starting April 1994 in 100 days; in Bosnia (8,000) July 11-12, 1995; come to about 4,308,000. Yes, in this too the Holocaust is unique.

This distinction of the government mandate with regard to the Holocaust and the staggering numbers murdered as compared to the other genocides of the 20th century, however, is felt by many among us as well as by institutions, including the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, to not warrant separating out the Holocaust from the other genocides. Of course, for each ethnic population victimized by the genocide of its people, that genocide will become part of that ethnic culture and history, that people's "chosen trauma" Volkan (1988) proposed. But if our wish is to prevent genocide, then genocide as a human phenomenon has to be addressed. It is to the advantage of all the murdered, of whatever race, religion, ethnicity, political denomination to focus our collective concern on genocide wherever it takes place. And, it also has a bearing on

the world wide abuse—even if not murder—of masses of humans on the basis of malignant prejudice (Parens, 2007) against them, as has happened in all corners of the globe.

But there are other challenges on hearing people talk about the Holocaust, challenges of greater and lesser dimensions. During the 2007 meetings of the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA) held in Berlin, I was moved by the number of sessions in which our German colleagues talked about the Holocaust, about Germany's responsibility for it. For years soon after the end of World War II, the challenge of "reparation" for the terrible losses wrought by the Holocaust, continued to bring Germany's role in it out in the open, to world view. Germany's Heads of State acknowledged it. But it took the French 50 years before Jacques Chirac, then President of France spoke out about the shame of the French Vichy government's collaboration with the Third Reich's "Final Solution." On July 16, 1995 he said,

> These instances, it is difficult to bring them to mind because these black hours sully forever our History and have damaged our past and our tradition. Yes, the crazed criminality of the occupant was seconded by Frenchmen, by the French State. France, land of light and asylum, France that day achieved what is irreparable: she delivered those who sought asylum there to their murderers.[13] (Author's translation)

I was grateful, but I was furious. It took the French 50 years before their President could formally admit what they did. And according to Rosemary Bailey, who rather recently interviewed a number of them, many French to this day claim that they were in the Resistance, which is highly improbable. What do you do when you love a country, and its people do to you

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[13] *"Ces moments, il est difficile de les évoquer parce que ces heures noires souillent à jamais notre Histoire et sont une injure à notre passé et à notre tradition. Oui, la folie criminelle de l'occupant a été secondée par des Français, par l'Etat Français. La France, patrie des lumières et d'asile, la France ce jour-la accomplissait l'irréparable, elle livrait ses protéges à leurs bourreaux."*

and those you love what the French did to us, and they cannot face up to what they did! My experience is that more Germans, who I know and do not know, acknowledge what they and their parents did than do the French. I feel that of course the blame lies most with the Germans and their forebears; but the French, Austrians, Hungarians, Poles, and Russians among others were eager collaborators! As I wrote,

> Transports from France to Auschwitz started on March 27, 1942. According to Marrus and Paxton(1983), at the outset of their odious collaboration, the Vichy-French plan executors worked with such alacrity and efficiency that they sent their first train convoy before the Germans were ready to receive and temporarily house them, causing an embarrassment for the poor German Nazis! But by August, the time convoy #19 was shipped out, the dispatching to the Death Camps in Poland of Jews who had sought refuge in France seems to have proceeded smoothly. And since the "Final Solution" once set in motion in January 1942 called for expeditiousness, no doubt the transfer of my mother and others from Rivesaltes via Drancy to Auschwitz probably took no more than [five] days. Once there, extermination was efficiently expedited. (2004, pp. 116-117)

We all know that after years of silence, many Germans, especially challenged by their third generation offspring's questions began to openly acknowledge their role in the Holocaust, and the shame that comes with it. Again, given the blame ascribed to them, the Germans could not tell their children, "We didn't do anything wrong." The world had pointed it out to them and many people the world over still ascribe the Holocaust only to the Germans. Our own universe, the psychoanalytic world, held such an opinion as well and it was not until 1983, nearly 40 years after the massive genocide that the IPA met in Germany, in Hamburg, for the first time since the

war. This is why there is cause to celebrate the fact that even within our own psychoanalytic world, the acknowledgement by the Germans is so welcome.

But comments about the Holocaust, even benign ones, trigger in me alert, and the negative ones create a ripple in my sensitized threshold of Holocaust-attached pain and rage. This past summer, shopping in a small resort town, standing in line ready to pay for the few items I bought, the customer in from of me registered a minor complaint, even with some humor, to which the young woman at the cash register responded: “Oh my God, it’s okay, let’s not start a Holocaust over this.” I was shocked. Without thinking, with a serious tone I said to her, “Please choose your words more carefully!” She looked at me a bit surprised—perhaps she thought I was making too much of her naïve comment. The customer behind me added a brief comment of agreement with me. But simultaneously I felt compelled to add: “I was there!” The young woman turned serious and embarrassed, apologized. For those of us who were there, we will always be acutely sensitive to any comment about the Holocaust.

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