

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: A Costly and Dangerous Mistake

By Theodore J. O'Keefe

Hard by the Washington Monument, within clear view of the Jefferson Memorial, an easy stroll down the Mall to the majestic Lincoln Memorial, has arisen, on some of the most hallowed territory of the United States of America, a costly and dangerous mistake. On ground where no monument yet marks countless sacrifices and unheralded achievements of Americans of all races and creeds in the building and defense of this nation, sits today a massive and costly edifice, devoted above all to a contentious and false version of the ordeal in Europe, during World War II, of non-American members of a minority, sectarian group.

In the deceptive guise of tolerance, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum promotes a propaganda campaign, financed through the unwitting largesse of the American taxpayer, in the interests of Israel and its adherents in America.

How did the federal government allow the creation of such a monstrosity? What is its meaning for American policy and for American values? And what must the American people do to regain control of the land their servants in Washington handed over to a foreign interest, and to establish an enterprise thereon, whether a museum or otherwise, informed by and conducted according to American principles and interests?

Origins

In the late 1970s, during the presidency of James Earl "Jimmy" Carter, a propaganda campaign to promote the "Holocaust," the alleged systematic slaughter of some six million Jews by the Germans during the Second World War, was organized and carried out from Hollywood and New York. As Benjamin Meed, an important functionary of the Council that controls the Holocaust Museum, wrote in 1990: [1] Almost a dozen years ago, a new phenomena [sic] developed. The Holocaust was introduced into schools, colleges, and universities. Television broadcast programs on the Holocaust and millions of Americans watched them. Soon, Americans took great interest in the lessons of the Holocaust, its uniqueness and its universal message.

Why the urgency of this campaign? Two factors were paramount: first, the beginnings, more than three decades after the end of the Second World War, of an objective, scholarly assessment of the facts of the alleged German policy to exterminate European Jewry. [2]

Second, the need to justify Zionist theory and practice in the face of unprecedented international resistance to Israeli intransigence (including the famous UN General Assembly Resolution that equated Zionism with racism), and to defend Israel's aggressive policy under the leadership of the former terrorist, Prime Minister Menachem Begin. [3]

The US Holocaust Memorial Council

In 1978 President Carter, his administration beleaguered at home and abroad, succumbed to pressure from the new "Holocaust" lobby (and thus America's influential Israel-first minority) by creating, through executive order, the President's Commission on the Holocaust. Two years later, on October 7, 1987, Congress passed -- unanimously -- a law establishing the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, charged principally with constructing and overseeing the operation of "a permanent living memorial to the victims of the holocaust" and with providing "for appropriate ways for the Nation to commemorate the Days of Remembrance, as an annual, national, civic commemoration of the Holocaust ..." [4]

A priceless tract of public land was turned over to the Council, and, after years of costly delay (during which the Council's budget swelled from \$2.5 million to over \$18 million a year), the US Holocaust Memorial Museum was finally completed and opened, to great media fanfare, in April 1993.

A Sectarian, Alien Agenda

Besides soliciting tens of millions of dollars in tax-deductible donations to finance the Holocaust Museum, the US Holocaust Memorial Council has busied itself with promoting an agenda of unalloyed support for minority, Zionist ends.

The membership of the Council, a US federal agency, has been overwhelmingly Jewish since its founding in 1980. The Council's two different chairmen -- Elie Wiesel and Harvey Meyerhoff -- have both been committed to

the support of the State of Israel, and the chairs of the Council's most important committees have been likewise Jewish and Zionist.

The chief fund-raiser for the Holocaust Museum [and later Council Chairman], Miles Lerman, was formerly American vice chairman for the State of Israel Bonds Organization, promoting tax-free investment in a country which receives by far the largest amount of US foreign aid per year. Working the same wealthy Jewish-Americans he has long dealt with in his fund-raising for Israel, Lerman has helped raise nearly \$160 million in tax-deductible contributions. The biggest donors have been rewarded by having various components of the museum named for them (e.g. the Wexner Learning Center).

Nor is erecting and operating the Museum the only function with which the Holocaust Memorial Council has been charged. Another of its duties is to commemorate the "Days of Remembrance for Victims of the Holocaust," which Congress has raised to "an annual, national, civic commemoration of the Holocaust." Like the Israeli Yom ha-Shoah ("Day of the Holocaust"), on which they are based, the Days of Remembrance are dated according to the lunar Hebrew calendar, and thus, like Passover or Chanukah, fluctuate from year to year. These foreign days of lamentation are currently celebrated, under the flag of the Republic, to prayers and chants in Hebrew, across the land in governmental settings from the Capital Rotunda to city halls.

Need it be stated that no group of American victims of persecution, let alone another foreign group, enjoys any such federally mandated and tax-supported day, or days, of recognition?

Museum's One-Sided 'History'

Although the Council during its early years made noises about recognizing the ordeals of non-Jews during the Second World War, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum is relentlessly Judeocentric. While here and there are nods to non-Jewish groups oppressed by the German National Socialists (although never to groups victimized by Germany's enemies, above all by Stalin's USSR), the larger holocaust of the Second World War, which claimed an estimated 75 to 80 million lives around the world, is ignored in preference to the Jewish ordeal. Thus, to cite just one telling example, the Museum's "Life before the Holocaust" exhibit refers strictly to Jewish life before the Holocaust. [5]

Where, in fact, non-Jews figure in the Museum, they figure largely as villains: the Germans and their allies and collaborators; the Western allies, including America, who refused to accept a large immigration before the war; the American political and military leaders who refused to authorize costly bombing raids on the Auschwitz "gas chambers."

Soviet Liberators?

The Museum's message that support for Jews is the sole measure of decency during the Second World War leads to anomalies which, in an American museum raised on ground hallowed to the principles of liberty on which this republic is based, can only be called shocking. That the victims of World War II atrocities by the Allies -- massacres such as the firebombing of Tokyo and Dresden, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Soviet slaughter of Polish prisoners at Katyn, the mass rapes carried out by the Red Army at the war's end -- receive no mention is deplorable. But the Museum's treatment of the armed forces which defended Stalin's savage Soviet tyranny is nothing short of grotesque.

Communists appear in this Museum only in the guise of "resistance fighters" and "liberators." For example, the submachine gun and false papers of Samuel Weissberg, a Communist Party member who rose to high rank in a Communist guerrilla group in North France, are on honored display, no less precious a relic in the Museum's permanent exhibit than the standard heaps of shoes and hair. [6]

Even more unsettling is the honor given to Stalin's notorious Red Army, which compiled a bloody and shameful record of atrocities across Europe during, and after, the war. As the US Holocaust Memorial Council's newsletter fulsomely puts it, "Flags will hang in the museum to honor the millions of Soviet soldiers who drove Nazi forces westward and who were the first allied forces to liberate and publicize the existence of the camps." In the words of Council chairman Meyerhoff, these martial banners of the Red tyranny have a single association: "Much more than simply wartime memorabilia, these military artifacts are a significant contribution to memory, one that will remind future generations of the pivotal role Soviet forces played in defeating Nazism ..." [7]

What must the millions of Americans originating or descending from the European nations -- Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia -- for which the Red "military artifacts" symbolize invasion, tyranny, oppression, and persecution of religion, think as they see the fierce armies of their persecutors hailed as "liberators"?

Israel in the Museum

Just as one might guess from the circumstance that the Museum's director, Jeshajahu Weinberg, and the head of its "Learning Center," Yechiam Halevy, were brought in from Israel, the Museum's treatment of the state of Israel is adulatory. An emotive tribute to the founding of Israel is an integral part of the exhibition. That the establishment of Israel, and its expansion in subsequent wars, has meant colonial occupation and oppression for millions of the land's native Palestinians, and dispossession and exile for millions more, goes unmentioned -- another grotesquery in an American museum supposed to instruct in the dangers of intolerance and disregard of human rights.

As for the momentous collaboration between Hitler's German state and the Zionist Jewish Agency in the 1930s, which through the Haavara Agreement enabled the transfer of vital capital and the influx of tens of thousands of highly skilled Jewish immigrants to Palestine -- that is passed over in utter silence. [8]

'Historical Correctness'

The Museum's skewed history is not simply a matter of one-sidedness and omission. It has further committed itself to a fixed and final interpretation of the surprisingly scanty and sometimes suspect evidence for a German policy of annihilating European Jewry, largely in gas chambers, in numbers approaching six million. This despite a considerable body of research and scholarship that has arisen over past two decades in many lands, and which contests, by academic means, the substance of the Holocaust "extermination thesis." [9]

That the US Holocaust Memorial Council is aware of the work of revisionist scholars is clear: the Council's literature is replete, not with substantive refutations of revisionist scholarship, but with slander and polemic. To cite one characteristic example, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter of May 1992 featured a front-page attack on Holocaust revisionism by Professor Deborah Lipstadt. In this article, Lipstadt decried the revisionists for producing material that looked scholarly, then lauded the US Holocaust Memorial Museum as "among the most efficacious ways" of "combatting this pernicious trend," while neglecting to specify a single error of revisionist scholarship. [10]

While the US Holocaust Memorial Council recognizes that there is a historical debate on the Holocaust, it takes official notice of the dissenting position only to attack it. That an American institution, supported by the taxes of all Americans, should commit itself to inflexible historical orthodoxy -- in the service of a single American minority -- is an intolerable imposition on our First Amendment rights, as well as a mockery of the Western, and American, ideal of objective scholarship.

A Center for Education?

Council Chairman Meyerhoff has stated: "The Museum is primarily an educational institution." [11] From the Council's own literature, however, it is clear what Meyerhoff means by education. The "role-playing" for children as well as adults who visit the Museum (visitors issued "identity cards" bearing the name and alleged fate of various Holocaust victims); the high-tech computer and video effects, and the recordings of speech and music that augment the Museum's tendentiously described artifacts; and the Museum's goal, as proclaimed by its Zionist fund-raising chairman, Miles Lerman, of insuring that "Children in Dubuque, families in Tucson, and schoolteachers in Atlanta will learn the history and the lessons of Auschwitz as thoroughly as they learn the history of their own communities": all these show that the US Holocaust Memorial Museum is a propaganda enterprise that seeks to indoctrinate all Americans in a uniquely and partisanly Jewish (and Zionist) version of not merely the past, but the present and the future. [12]

The American Response

What is the American response to a partisan museum constructed in a place solemnly consecrated to the heroes and the values of our Republic, to be lavishly operated with taxpayer dollars at a time when, even in our country's capital, thousands sleep homeless in the shadow of our national monuments? What is the American response to an ambitious propaganda agenda that aims to impose a sectarian "Holocaust remembrance" in schools where our children cannot pray, in town halls and federal buildings from which the religious symbols of the majority are banned in the name of freedom of worship?

Over two centuries ago, Thomas Jefferson wrote: "To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical." [13]

Nearly 150 years ago, Abraham Lincoln said: "I insist, that if there is anything which it is the duty of the whole people to never entrust to any hands but their own, that thing is the preservation and perpetuity of their own

liberties and institutions." [14]

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Council that runs it, as agencies of the government in which the American people is sovereign, must be removed from the special interest that now controls it.

The scope and purpose of the Museum must be expanded, from its present one-sided emphasis on foreign Jewish sufferings, real and imagined, in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s to a compassionate yet realistic concern for all victims, but above all for American victims, of historic injustice.

The Museum must be made a place where Americans of every heritage, and scholars of every viewpoint, may gather, educate, and be educated, without accusation and in the absence of propaganda. Until it is, the men and women who founded and built and suffered and fought and died for America, of every race, nationality and creed, will rest uneasy.

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Notes

1. *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter* (Washington, DC), August, 1990, "Survivors Play Major Role in Establishing the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum," p. 1. Meed is president of the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors, and chairman of the Council's Content and Days of Remembrance committees.
2. In 1976, Professor Arthur Butz's book *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century: The Case Against the Presumed Extermination of European Jewry* was first published in England; in November 1978 Professor Robert Faurisson's article, "The Problem of the Gas Chambers," was published in the Paris daily *Le Monde*. Professor Butz has commented on the simultaneous and independent appearance of a variety of earlier academic criticisms of the wartime propaganda version of Jewry's ordeal in "The International Holocaust Controversy," *The Journal of Historical Review*, Spring 1980, pp. 5-22.
3. By resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on Nov. 10, 1975, Zionism was condemned as "a form of racism and racial discrimination."
4. Public Law 96-388, 1, Oct. 7, 1980, 94 Stat. 1547.
5. Statements regarding the Museum's permanent exhibit, except where otherwise noted, are derived from the floor plan and photographs in United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, a brochure published in 1991 by the USHMC.
6. *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter*, "French Resistance Fighter's Weapon Will Help Tell Story of Underground Movement," Sept. 1991, p. 4.
7. *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter*, "Russian Embassy Presents Flags of Liberating Units to Museum," Fall 1992, p. 6.
8. For the most complete account of relations between the Nazis and the Zionists, see Francis Nicosia, *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question*, (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1985). See also: M. Weber, "Zionism and the Third Reich," *The Journal of Historical Review*, July-August 1993, pp. 29-37.
9. The most complete survey of Holocaust revisionist writings to date is Carlo Mattogno's "The Myth of the Extermination of the Jews -- Part II," in *The Journal of Historical Review*, Fall 1988, pp. 261-302.
10. *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter*, May 1992, "Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth," p. 6.
11. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter*, Nov. 1991, "Wexner Family Donates \$5 Million to Fund Interactive Learning Center," p. 1.
12. The "identity cards" and other features of the Museum are described in the brochure cited in note 5, above. Lerman's statement is in a fund-raising letter mailed out by the Museum to potential Jewish contributors in 1991.
13. From "A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom," 1779, in *Jefferson: Magnificent Populist*, edited by Martin Larson, (Greenwich, Conn.: Devin-Adair, 1981), p. 319.
14. "Speech at Peoria, Ill.," Oct. 16, 1854, in *The American Intellectual Tradition*, Vol. 1, edited by David Hollinger and Charles Capper (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), p. 382.