SPRING 2015

THE FACE OF THE GHETTO: PICTURES TAKEN BY JEWISH PHOTOGRAPHERS IN THE LODZ GHETTO

MORE THAN JUST GAMES: CANADA AND THE 1936 OLYMPICS BOOK LAUNCH

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: A LIFE REMEMBERED
SAVE THE DATE

Annual General Meeting and Book Launch

Wednesday, June 17, 2015 | 7 PM

Dayson Board Room, Jewish Community Centre
950 West 41st Avenue, Vancouver

More Than Just Games: Canada and the 1936 Olympics
By Richard Menkis and Harold Troper

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS, SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING DIVISION, 2015
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Please join us to celebrate the launch of the book that began as an acclaimed VHEC exhibit, co-researched and co-wrote by Richard Menkis and Harold Troper. The authors will be in attendance.

Everyone welcome

Cover: © State Archive in Lodz
At this time of year, our members are accustomed to receiving a special gift from the VHEC — a book or a film — to kick off the Centre’s Annual Fundraising Campaign.

For this year’s campaign we have chosen to highlight, throughout this issue of Zachor and in the letter enclosed within, the variety of ways in which the Centre promotes Holocaust education and remembrance now and into the future.

The articles in this issue reflect the scope and impact of the VHEC’s activities:

- **Collection** — A sample of the powerful teaching materials contained in the VHEC’s archive is featured in our Annual Campaign letter. The Centre is currently engaged in projects to digitize, preserve and support access to our remarkable holdings, which will support teaching about the Holocaust in the years ahead.

- **Education** — A piece by last year’s Kron Sigal Award recipient, Jinny St. Hillaire, details the far-reaching effects of the VHEC’s educational resources and programs, most recently at the VHEC’s district-wide Symposium on the Holocaust in Abbotsford.

- **Exhibits** — The VHEC, in partnership with the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Vancouver, is the proud host of a new teaching exhibit travelling to Vancouver from the Topography of Terror Foundation in Berlin: *The Face of the Ghetto: Pictures Taken by Jewish Photographers in the Litzmannstadt Ghetto, 1940-44*.

- **Legacy Projects** — The after-life and broad impact of the Centre’s initiatives, including the Ontario tour of our *Shanghai: A Refuge During the Holocaust* exhibit, are also highlighted in this issue. A University of Toronto Press publication, realized with support from the VHEC’s Wosk Publishing Endowment Fund, is a remarkable legacy of the Centre’s 2010 teaching exhibit, *More Than Just Games: Canada and the 1936 Olympics*, co-researched and co-written by historians Richard Menkis and Harold Troper.

- **Commemoration** — We are pleased to publish the powerful remarks of the son of Holocaust survivors, Hymie Fox, delivered at the VHEC’s recent Yom HaShoah program affirming that Holocaust remembrance is an intergenerational and community-wide undertaking and responsibility.

- **Survivor Services** — “Tuesdays with Stan,” the affectionate term for volunteer lawyer Stan Taviss’ sessions to offer local Holocaust survivors assistance with restitution claims, is an example of the socialization and support offered by the VHEC.

- **International Networks** — Whether through relationships with esteemed scholars such as historian Sir Martin Gilbert z’l, the subject of a moving tribute by Keith Morgan, or through the Centre’s role in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the VHEC is an active participant in a broad international community dedicated to Holocaust education, research and remembrance.

Through these and other activities, the VHEC is committed to engaging all British Columbians in learning about the causes and consequences of discrimination, racism and antisemitism. This is timely, urgent work.

We quite simply could not build on our successes without you and your ongoing and generous support. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Nina Krieger
VHEC Executive Director
Following the invasion of Poland in 1939, the Nazis imposed a ghetto in the city of Lodz, which they renamed Litzmannstadt after a First World War German general. From 1940 to 1944, more than 180,000 Jews and 5,000 Roma and Sinti lived in the cramped quarters, with many working in factories that supported the war effort.

Among other things, it was illegal for Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland to own cameras. Inside the Lodz ghetto, a handful of Jewish photographers were exempt from these laws. Under the leadership of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, Mendel Grosman and Henryk Ross served as official ghetto photographers in the statistics department of the Jewish Council. Noted prewar photographers who specialized in colour imaging and sports photography, respectively, Grosman and Ross were officially assigned a twofold task: to produce worker headshots for identification cards; and to document the productivity and efficiency of the ghetto labour industry, which was producing goods for the German war effort. But at great personal risk, the photographers captured intimate moments of family, childhood and community on their cameras. Taken in defiance of Nazi law and often in secret, the photographers captured moments that humanized ghetto Jews and their fight to survive. Approximately 12,000 of these images survived the Holocaust, while most of the individuals on film did not.

Lodz stands as the most documented of all the ghettos under Nazi rule. Collections held in the Lodz State Archive, the Art Gallery of Ontario and various archives and museums provides a nuanced and complex picture of daily life under Nazi occupation. Supplemented by personal accounts of life in the ghetto, The Face of the Ghetto travelling exhibit from the Topography of Terror Foundation in Berlin provides entry points for considering the dehumanizing conditions of the ghetto and for learning about the bravery, resistance and compassion of the individuals within it.

The Face of the Ghetto raises important questions about the obligation and responsibility placed on visitors to museum exhibits dealing with complex and sensitive subject matter. Visitors must bear in mind that the individuals featured in photographs were in vulnerable positions, and continually fighting for their lives. The exhibit prompts student groups and adult visitors to think critically about the role of photography in teaching about the Holocaust. At first
glance, a viewer may be captivated by the aesthetic of the photographs. But while beauty is alluring, it is important to look beyond the surface and think about the underlying ethical implications of these photos. Are you looking at a picture of children playing, or is there something more than meets the eye? What exactly defines childhood “play,” especially play within a ghetto?

The photographers resisted taking photos of scenes they perceived as being dehumanizing to their fellow Jews. Mendel Grosman refused to photograph a family carrying a wagon filled with human waste until he was asked by the patriarch to take a picture and, “Let it remain for the future, let others know how we were humiliated.” This family was thus photographed at their most vulnerable, in a situation and setting where their dignity and pride could be easily lost. In freedom, would they have allowed such photos to be taken? And would we, as museum visitors, want such pictures taken of ourselves and then placed on public display?

When the negatives and slides were recovered after liberation, few contained captions, dates, credits, or identifying details about individuals photographed. There is, however, one recognizable face of the ghetto. Bronia Sonnenschein (née Schwebel) was born in Galicia, Poland, and raised in Vienna, Austria. Following the Anschluss (German annexation of Austria on March 12, 1938), the Schwebels returned to Poland and were later interned in the Lodz ghetto. An educated woman who spoke several languages, Bronia became a valued secretary for Rumkowski, which likely prolonged her family’s time in the ghetto. In August 1944, the family — parents, sister Paula, Bronia and her husband, Eric Strauss — were among the final transports to Auschwitz. Bronia, her mother, and sister survived. Her father and husband did not.

After brief stops in Prague and Israel, Bronia settled in Vancouver where she eventually became a founding member of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre. As a dedicated Holocaust Survivor Outreach Speaker for the VHEC for more than twenty years, Bronia shared her story of survival with thousands of students in BC and across Canada. Bronia passed away in 2011.

While reviewing the exhibit slides, VHEC staff recognized one of the unnamed faces as Bronia. Research in the VHEC archive confirmed that the photo was taken at the September 18, 1943 double wedding ceremony of Bronia to Eric Strauss and Mary Schifflinger to Ignaz Jelin. Rumkowski presided over the ceremony. The dresses worn in the photo were borrowed from the ghetto dress factory, where Bronia’s sister worked. Of subjects in the photograph, only Bronia survived.

This photographic exhibit illustrates a rarely seen story of Jewish resistance, courage and self-preservation in the Lodz ghetto. The Face of the Ghetto: Pictures Taken by Jewish Photographers in the Litzmannstadt Ghetto, 1940-1944 is on display at the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre through October 16.

Lauren Vukobrat recently graduated with a Master’s in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester in the UK. She currently works as the Administrator at the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre.

Dr. Adara Goldberg is the Education Director at the VHEC. She has a background in Social Work and holds a PhD in Holocaust History.
Wonderful tributes from around the world poured out following the recent passing of Sir Martin Gilbert, Churchill’s official biographer and renowned Holocaust historian.

When I heard of his death on February 3rd, after a lengthy illness, I shed tears for a man I proudly called a mentor and a friend. This man, who authored some 90 books in his 78 years, was a major influence on the writing of the Holocaust biography *Ruta’s Closet*, which I coauthored with the late Ruth Kron Sigal.

Online archives are full of accounts about how the prolific British-born historian chronicled the life of Sir Winston Churchill and dedicated his life to reminding us all about the lessons of the Holocaust. Google his name to discover more about his scholarly achievements, for I will dwell no more on them here. Instead, I offer some personal insight on his humanity because obituaries show only glimpses of his generosity.

Gilbert had a long association with our country, having evacuated to central Canada after the outbreak of the Second World War. He would return many times after completing his education in the UK and even serve as an adjunct professor at University of Western Ontario, home to his third wife Esther Gilbert, née Goldberg. The Churchill Society of British Columbia hosted him over the years. He also had a long association with the late Rudolf Vrba, the Auschwitz escapee who later made his life in Vancouver. And I recall listening to Sir Martin at the Schara Tzedeck Synagogue in 1998 when he spoke on behalf of Israel Bonds.

This encounter came shortly after I interviewed Ruth Kron Sigal about her family’s Holocaust experiences in Shavl, Lithuania, for *The Province* newspaper. Her story haunted me, particularly the loss of her sister Tamara in the *Kinderaktion* of November 1943, when upwards of 700 children were transported to their deaths at
Auschwitz. A couple of years later we agreed to write a book and her dear friend, Robert Krell, suggested I talk to Sir Martin Gilbert.

“At a child survivors’ event in Jerusalem in the 1990s, Gilbert singled out Ruth in his speech,” recalls Dr. Krell. “He had looked at the notes posted on the boards outside asking if anybody knew of this or that person’s whereabouts. He thanked her for continuing to inquire about Tamara after all the years had passed.”

It made a deep impression on Ruth, who later told her story to the historian. As a British-born lad, I was in awe of knights and lords of the realm. I needn’t have been because after mentioning Dr. Krell and Ruth he immediately invited me to his London home.

We talked for hours and even cooked together for a family member due to visit that night! As I was ready to depart he fixed me with a look I’m sure many a more learned student had witnessed before me.

“Keith, you must tell this story and spread it as widely as possible because it is a very important one,” he told me. “I will help you in any way I can but you must use your journalistic skills to make this story accessible to all, not just academics.”

Gilbert’s books are full of personal stories about real people with whom we can all relate. Indeed, he told some of Ruth’s story in his 2002 book about rescuers, The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust.

Dr. Krell observes: “Many historians concern themselves only with dry facts and forget about people but Martin put humanity back into history.”

A recent tribute from historian Dr. Warren Dockter reinforced this observation and mirrored my personal experience. He wrote: “When I began my PhD on Churchill’s relationship with the Islamic world, Martin Gilbert welcomed me into his home in London, where we spoke about sources and ideas for hours. His motivating philosophy,” he said, “has always been to write history from the human perspective, never to neglect the person known as ‘the common man’ — whether man or woman, or child.”

The next time I visited to tell Gilbert I was having a tough time getting to certain officials in Lithuania and Israel, Cherie Blair and her Prime Minister husband Tony had just left. She was seeking his advice on a book she was writing.

“You could have entertained Tony while we did our business,” Gilbert said. He wasn’t joking. To him one person was no more important than another was when it came to research. His next line confirmed that.

“Anyway more importantly, let me arrange to open some doors for you.” And he did. If he had not done so then and offered counsel so often then I doubt that Ruta’s Closet would have seen the light of day.

The last time I saw him was a couple of years ago when his dear wife Esther took me to see him in the Golders Green nursing home he moved into after a debilitating stroke. He smiled but could say nothing.

I prefer to recall an earlier meeting in 2009, when I knocked on his door with the final manuscript in my sweaty hands. He grabbed it almost impatiently and began to read it voraciously, flipping the pages in a silence I dared not break. He finally looked up after what seemed like an eternity spent reading the three chapters on the Kinderaktion. I gulped and asked if he would consider writing the foreword.

“Of course I will; the honour is mine after all your hard work,” he responded. (Just a week later he supplied a foreword about which an author could only dream.)

Then he jumped up and asked: “Will you come shopping with me? — I’ve nothing in the house and my wife is returning from Israel tonight.”

What followed was an extremely funny visit to the local Waitrose supermarket, the story of which I have dined out on many times since. Sir Martin Gilbert had always been a driving force in Holocaust studies but that afternoon I learned that he loved also to drive the supermarket cart, the control of which he would not willingly share!
My parents were both Holocaust survivors. They both tried to keep the knowledge of the Holocaust from my brother and from me, yet try as they did, the Holocaust permeated our everyday lives in ways they could not anticipate.

There were three ways in particular that affected me, related to nighttime, holidays, and death.

Nighttime
During the daytime my mother could control her words, her stories and her thoughts. But during the nighttime her ability to control her thoughts was lost. Once or twice a week, at night, I could hear my mother screaming. When I was little I thought she was having a simple nightmare; but later on I understood this differently. She had no control over her thoughts at night.

I wanted to ask her to tell me about them, but how could I? She had worked so hard at protecting her children during the daytime, how could I tell her all her work was for naught.

Holidays
Passover and Rosh Hashana were always celebrated at home with just the four of us, my parents, me and my brother. There were 72 people in my father’s family. My father had one brother who survived the Holocaust. My uncle had one daughter, my only female cousin. I never knew how large my mother’s family was. She had one sister who had survived and my aunt had two sons who were the same age as my brother and me. They were my only two male cousins and they lived close by, yet not once did we have any of the extended family over during the holidays. Much later I understood why. We needed space at our table for the uncles, aunts, cousins, parents, and grandparents who died in the Holocaust but who came to us — to sit with us — at the table every holiday. There was no room for the living, so we celebrated alone, the four of us.

Death
Death was all around us, yet no one died. My mother and father were always lighting yahrzeit candles in memory those who had passed away, yet no one died in our everyday lives. I did not understand that death is a normal part of life. It was only when my parents both passed away fourteen years ago that I understood death has two forms: physical death and death of memory. My parents, though not alive, are still very much a part of my thoughts. Our responsibility is to prevent the final death, the death of memory, for the victims of the Shoah.

Nighttime, holidays, death.

Alan Ginsberg was a singer, poet and lyricist, whose famous work is Howl, a poem written in 1955.

I have taken the liberty to paraphrase a few of his words.

Holy, holy, holy.
Holy, holy, holy are the survivors who are still with us today, who help us remember.
Holy, holy, holy is today; Yom HaShoah, which serves as a bookmark in the cycle of life.
Holy, holy, holy is the VHEC which educates about the innumerable evils that did happen, that does happen, and that can happen.
Holy, holy, holy are you who are here tonight and keeping memory alive so that the final death, the death of memory, does not happen.
It all started almost 17 years ago. Some survivors approached Roberta Kremer, who was then the Executive Director of the VHEC, inquiring about what Restitution and Reparation Funds were available to them. She responded by writing a grant proposal to the Law Foundation of British Columbia; this was successful and the money received was used to hire a young lawyer. I conducted the interviews of the candidates, and we hired Ms. Marla Morry, who then carried out extensive research. A small book emerged, replete with information, deadlines and application forms, all in English, but in "legalese." At this time, I was already retired from the practice of Law, and I volunteered to help.

Thus started one of the most personally rewarding chapters in my life—15 years, and counting, of “Tuesdays with Stan.” Hundreds of survivors have met with me. We have dealt with Swiss Banks, insurance companies, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, France and many other countries. In Germany alone, applications have been filed for the BEG Pension Fund, the Article 2 Fund, The Foundation (also known as the Slave Labour Fund), the Hardship Fund and we have also applied to Funds in at least six other countries.

My meetings with individuals were very intense, as survivors shared with me their family and personal histories. In many cases, these involved the emotional sharing of tragic memories. I want to thank all of the people that I met for placing their trust in me, and assure them that all of these memories will remain confidential forever.

I am enormously gratified that, so far, 221 applications have resulted in monies being granted to survivors, and on a number of occasions lifetime pensions have been obtained. Many survivors have told me that they have obtained a small measure of closure; this may be even more important than the money.

The Child Survivor Fund has just opened, and as I meet with people, it is my expectation that more monies will come to more of the survivors.
Social Justice teacher Jinny St. Hilaire describes how VHEC resources and programs have supported her teaching about the Holocaust.

Whether as a high school student, a history major at the University of Victoria, or an educator, I have always had an interest in the Holocaust. When I became a teacher 11 years ago in the Abbotsford School District, the opportunity to revisit and learn more about the Holocaust presented itself. I didn’t just want more information about the Shoah; rather, I was seeking ways to teach it that would be thoughtful and meaningful for my students. Over the years I have often visited the VHEC and used many of their classroom materials for guidance. The Centre’s teacher previews and conferences have provided useful tools and insight into teaching this challenging historical topic. I even had the great honour of being sent to the Yad Vashem International Educators Seminar in 2013, which was a life changing experience.

A few years ago, with the encouragement and support of the VHEC, I decided to start an annual district-wide symposium. On May 11th of this year Abbotsford hosted its third annual event.

Holocaust symposia are the culmination of the great educational commitment and support that the VHEC offers to all teachers. More than 700 senior students who are enrolled in Social Justice, Socials 11 and History 12 in the Abbotsford school district are invited to gather for a half-day program. There, they have three important experiences. First, they hear a lecture from a university historian — which introduces them to what is usually their first high-level talk. Second, they hear from a Holocaust survivor. Third, and perhaps most importantly is that they are able to engage with the survivor through questions and answers. The impact of this exchange is far greater and more meaningful to all those involved than a recorded video presentation. Simply put, students see, hear and connect with another human being. And in doing so, history truly becomes alive for them.

Many people and many hours are required for the smooth running of these sorts of events. Here, my Social Justice 12 students play a key role in running all aspects of the event — from the early planning stages up to and including the final thanks given at the end — and thus become stakeholders in the success of the day.

The symposia are perhaps the most public display of the VHEC partnership with educators. In the future, the Centre’s outreach work will become even more significant as our last survivors become unable to address such large groups. And then ultimately, when there are no more survivors left to tell their tale, the students that they have reached over the years will, by necessity, become the caretakers of these important stories. Accordingly, as educators, we must try and seize the opportunities we have today while we still can.

The VHEC provides an essential and extremely valuable role in Holocaust education in British Columbia. They provide educators with the rare opportunity to inform students about history through the words of eyewitnesses. History is often about ordinary people who make or who have to make significant choices. It is also about places and events that shape how the world is and will be. By linking these concepts with opportunities to meet with people who have lived through significant events, their history becomes the story of our neighbours and of our fellow Canadians. This recognition — namely that survivors provide us with a bridge between the continuity of time, between ‘then’ and ‘now’ — provides the foundation for future discussions and explorations of other historical events for even our present will one day be the past.

Jinny St. Hilaire is a Social Studies and Social Justice teacher with the Abbotsford School District. She is an alumnus of the Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies Summer Seminar and a 2014 co-recipient of the VHEC’s Kron Sigal Award for Excellence in Holocaust Education.
The past six months has proved to be a busy time for the VHEC’s travelling exhibits. Hosts have included both local venues as well as extensive tours across the country.

Shawnigan Lake School hosted Vancouver’s Schindler Jews as part of their second Holocaust and Genocide Symposium. During this daylong program, more than 600 students attended the symposium and viewed the exhibit on display. Beth Tikvah Synagogue recently hosted In Defiance: Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust as part of their Yom HaShoah commemorative program, which included an eyewitness and docent presentation that was attended by 60 visitors.

This article highlights the VHEC’s longest-running travelling exhibit tours to date.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs is the proud sponsor of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre’s travelling exhibit Shanghai: A Refuge During the Holocaust, which has appeared at various sites in and around Toronto over the last few months.

The exhibit opened at an event hosted by Hillel of Greater Toronto and the Chinese Students and Scholars Association at the University of Toronto. The event featured remarks from both sponsoring student clubs and Israeli Consul General D.J. Schneeweiss. In attendance were students, faculty, and community members, all of whom had the opportunity to learn about an important part of history and its impact on both the Jewish and Chinese communities.

Following the opening event, the exhibit travelled to the Bahen Centre and the Robarts Library at the University of Toronto, providing all students and faculty with the opportunity to learn about this important chapter in history.

Off-campus, the exhibit was on display at the North York Civic Centre where the general public had the opportunity to visit and view it. The eye-catching and moving pieces drew in members of the broader population interested in the connection between the Jewish community and Shanghai. One passerby remarked how the exhibit is a powerful demonstration of the far-reaching nature of the Holocaust.

As part of the Jewish Heritage Month programming, the exhibit is currently at its final location of the tour: Vaughan City Hall. The story of Shanghai’s Jewish community that is shared in the VHEC’s travelling exhibit has been a unique and impactful way to share the rich and diverse history of the Jewish community of Canada while also educating visitors on this dark chapter in history.
Wendy Long is a seasoned writer who worked for many years as a sports reporter for the Vancouver Sun. I am proud say that is also my daughter-in-law – Steve Nemetz’s wife. Sharing is the glue that cements friendships and groups such as the Child Survivors, who come together each month bound by a common bond, their Holocaust experience. We no longer have to bear the burden alone. We share not only our past and grieve our losses but we also celebrate the triumph of our survival and persist in our hope for a better world.

The piece that follows was written by Wendy, and read by Steven, at the annual Seder at the Richmond Golf and Country Club where each matzoh ball was the size of a baseball.

– Lillian Boraks-Nemetz

NO LONGER ALONE

BY WENDY LONG

A plane crashes into a mountainside in the French Alps, another disappears without a trace. A deadly virus ravages communities in West Africa and puts the rest of the world on edge. Closer to home, a long time friend dies suddenly. They say the only two sure things in life are death and taxes. I humbly submit that the prospect of hearing bad news on a daily basis could also be added. Now we have a trifecta of unsettling and persistent things to confront and confound us in this world just as sure as the sun will rise and the sun will set.

That is, indeed, the bad news. The good news is that no one has to endure all this alone. Poet John Donne once wrote that “no man is an island,” meaning as humans we need one another to survive and to thrive. If there is an upside to bad news it is that receiving it often sparks opportunities for good to come from the bad, notably in the ways people band together to help and support one another in crisis.

The wake of disaster often brings uplifting tales of heroism, selflessness and generosity. With disease there also comes care, compassion and commitment. A death can initiate much love to be discovered or re-affirmed in a gathering of friends and family.

Shared experiences. Shared emotions. Shared empathy. Imagine, if you will, what it must have been like for the Israelites when Moses imparted the good, and bad news, that are integral to this special time of Passover. Good news - the tenth plague will pass over the houses of the Children of Israel. More good news — Pharaoh is broken, the Israelites are no longer slaves and will depart from Egypt.

The bad news? Time to go — NOW!!! Don’t even wait for the bread to rise!

Such a sudden, mass exodus could not have been possible without cooperation and coordination, each person doing a part to help the greater whole - sharing food, helping the old and the very young along the way, fixing broken wheels and uplifting flagging spirits with support and camaraderie.

Times, both good and bad, are meant to be shared. Tonight our Seder plate includes charoset that represents the mortar that bound the bricks used by our ancestors in building work during the slavery in Egypt.

These special days, and those times when good or bad news befalls all of us, are like charoset, a kind of mortar that binds us together so that we are solid and strong. As individuals we can only go so far. Together, bound by tradition, faith, love and trust, we have the potential to rise above and circumvent whatever bad news comes our way and, perhaps, turn it into something wonderful.

And that, surely, is a bit of good news!

Wendy Long is a Vancouver-based journalist and freelance writer. She is the author of two books and her work has also appeared in newspapers and magazines across Canada and in the United States.
More than Just Games proves that the story of Canada and the 1936 Olympics is a compelling one that needs to be told.”
– Dana Herman, Ph.D., The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

With the 2010 Vancouver Winter Games as a backdrop, the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre engaged Richard Menkis and Harold Troper to co-research and co-write the text for an original travelling exhibition, More Than Just Games: Canada and the 1936 Olympics. Five years later, the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre is proud to host the launch of a scholarly book, published this Spring by the University of Toronto Press, at the VHEC’s Annual General Meeting (see inside front cover for details).

Held in Germany, the 1936 Olympic Games sparked international controversy. Should athletes and nations boycott the games to protest the Nazi regime? More Than Just Games is the story of the Canadian Olympic officials and promoters who were convinced that national unity and pride demanded that Canadian athletes compete in the Olympics without regard for politics. It is the story of those Canadian athletes, mostly young and far more focused on sport than politics, who were eager to make family, friends, and country proud of their efforts on Canada’s behalf. And, finally, it is the story of those Canadians who led an unsuccessful campaign to boycott the Olympics and deny Nazi Germany the propaganda coup of serving as Olympic host.

Written by two noted scholars of Canadian Jewish history, Richard Menkis and Harold Troper, More than Just Games brings to life the collision of politics, patriotism, and the passion of sport on the eve of the Second World War.

Richard Menkis is an associate professor in the Departments of History and Classical, Near Eastern, and Religious Studies at the University of British Columbia. He is co-editor with Norman Ravvin of the Canadian Jewish Studies Reader.

Harold Troper is a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. The co-author of None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews (with Irving Abella), his most recent book is The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s.

“More than Just Games proves that the story of Canada and the 1936 Olympics is a compelling one that needs to be told.”
– Dana Herman, Ph.D., The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE STUDIES

100 YEARS AFTER THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

BY ALEXIS HERR

On the 100th anniversary of the start of the Armenian Genocide, the Canadian Parliament adopted a landmark motion to recognize April as Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month. Two graduates of the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University reflect on what it means to teach this genocide today.

In the field of Holocaust and genocide studies, April is a month replete with anniversaries. April 24 is the commemoration day to remember the 1.5 million Armenians murdered by the Committee of Union and Progress in the Ottoman Empire, beginning in 1915 and continuing throughout the First World War. Thirty years later, on April 11, 1945, some 21,000 mostly Jewish prisoners were liberated at Buchenwald concentration camp by the United States military. And on April 6, 1994, a plane carrying then president Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda was shot down, killing all passengers on board. Hutu extremists in the ethnically divided country blamed the attack on the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a group of Tutsis, a minority population. This event triggered a 100-day campaign of murder that resulted in the death of an estimated one million ethnic Tutsis and Hutu moderates.

It is with these events in mind that I return to the first day of the Spring 2015 semester at Keene State College in New Hampshire, USA where I invited students in my Holocaust History and Armenian Genocide classes to fill out a survey. In addition to responding to prompts about their educational and professional goals, I invited each student to answer the following question: “What motivated you to take this course?” Students in the Holocaust class typically expressed a standing interest in the subject, offering remarks like, “I really enjoy learning about the Holocaust. I don’t know why but it has always interested me.” The widespread and accessible nature of information on the Holocaust (for better or for worse) often inspires students to take my class. Given the comparatively little information available to the general public on the Armenian Genocide, I was interested to see how students enrolled in my Armenian Genocide course would respond to the same question. Some of their answers surprised me.

I had expected answers like the one from this student: “This course sounded interesting and I had never heard about the Armenian Genocide before.” I was not surprised by the following answer, either: “The fact that it is still
VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

ZACHOR SPRING 2015

Indeed, in the 1960s and 1970s it was called a “forgotten genocide” for a reason. I had not anticipated, however, that so many of my students would express enthusiasm to take a course centered on a single genocide other than the Holocaust. One student wrote, “I was motivated to take this course because I was excited about the idea that one course would focus all its time on one specific genocide.” This response, and others like it, shocked me.

Both Adara Goldberg and I earned doctorates in European History from the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University (Worcester, MA, USA). While Adara accepted a position as Education Director at the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, I moved from Clark University, home to the world’s first doctoral program in Genocide Studies, to Keene State College, the first institution to offer an undergraduate major in Holocaust and Genocide Studies in the United States. I see a piece of myself — a shared passion and curiosity — in all of my students.

My students’ use of comparative analysis actually echoed the early academic treatment of the Armenian Genocide, which centered on similarities between the Armenian and Jewish cases. Over the course of the semester, perhaps inadvertently, my students acknowledged many of the comparative topics that characterized early scholarship on the Armenian genocide such as deportations, concentration camps, perpetrators’ dehumanization of victims, and death marches. Comparing the victimization of Jews at the hands of the Nazis and Armenians at the hands of the Committee of Union and Progress, scholars of the Armenian Genocide used the Holocaust as a “model” to prove that Armenians experienced genocide, too. My students’ need to spot the familiar signposts of the Holocaust within the landscape of the Armenian genocide lessened, however, as their comprehension and knowledge of the Armenian case increased.

This trend mirrors the scholarship of the Armenian Genocide. At Clark University’s Third International Graduate Students’ Conference for Holocaust and Genocide Studies: “Emerging Scholarship in Holocaust and Genocide Studies 100 Years after the Armenian Genocide,” 33 young scholars from 13 countries came together to share research on the centennial of the Armenian Genocide. Presented by the Strassler Center and the Danish Institute for International Studies, the conference provided a unique forum for discussing current trends in the field. Over the course of four days, nine panels, and a keynote event featuring The City College of New York Distinguished Professor of History, Eric Weitz, scholars discussed multiple cases of genocide and analyzed them through the lens of gender, resistance, rescue and genocidal processes.

With insight and guidance from senior scholars from the US, Danish, Australian and Turkish institutions, young scholars contemplated complex questions on the future of Holocaust and genocide studies: Why should we teach about genocide? Why does the ‘g’ word carry so much weight? Did genocide still happen if we refuse to acknowledge it as such? And what direction is this field heading in? While these questions still remain unanswered, the energy and commitment of emerging scholars to probing uncomfortable truths about history offers hope of one day creating a world free of genocide.

Two weeks after the conference, I returned to my Keene students’ first-day class surveys and re-read their answers to the question, “By the end of the semester, what do you hope to have achieved?” For both classes, the most popular response expressed a desire for a greater understanding of genocide. My students may be surprised to learn that after more than a decade studying this subject, my goal is the same.

Alexis Herr completed her PhD at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Clark University and lectures in the Holocaust and Genocide department at Keene State College, New Hampshire.
Fifteen years ago, the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust was held, bringing together high-ranking political leaders and officials from more than forty countries to meet with civic and religious leaders, Holocaust survivors, educators, historians and others who have dedicated their work to promoting Holocaust education, commemoration and research.

Nobel Prize laureate Elie Wiesel served as the Forum’s Honorary Chairman and Professor Yehuda Bauer was the senior Academic Advisor to the Forum.

The Stockholm Declaration was signed by participating countries at the closing session of this conference and became the founding document of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). In this Declaration the participating states pledged their commitment to promoting Holocaust education, remembrance and research.

Over the years, IHRA has grown to include 31 member countries, eight observer countries and seven Permanent International Partners. It remains a unique organization, bringing together politicians as well as experts from the fields of academia, education, communications, and memorials and museums. Canada became a full IHRA member in 2009.

The national government of each member country appoints and sends a delegation to IHRA meetings that is composed of both government representatives and national experts. In addition to the Academic, Education, Memorials and Museums, and Communication Working Groups, specialized committees have been established to address antisemitism and Holocaust denial, the situation of the Roma and the genocide of the Roma, comparative genocide, and special challenges in Holocaust education. The IHRA is also in the process of implementing a multi-year work plan that focuses on killing sites, access to archives, educational research, and Holocaust Memorial Days.

On the 15th anniversary of the Stockholm International Forum, the participating countries come together to reaffirm their commitment to the Stockholm Declaration through the following statement, in the knowledge that much great work has been done but that antisemitism, xenophobia and genocide are not confined to the past but continue to be real threats:

Seventy years after the liberation of Auschwitz, the 31 member and eight observer countries of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), together with our seven Permanent International Partners, have collectively reaffirmed our strong and unqualified support for the founding document of our organizations, the Stockholm Declaration of the year 2000, and the solemn commitments which our governments then undertook.

The unprecedented character of the Holocaust will always hold universal meaning for us. We are committed to remembering and honouring its victims, to upholding the terrible truth of the Holocaust, to standing up against those who distort or deny it and to combatting antisemitism, racism and prejudice against the Roma and Sinti.

We are determined to continue to develop our international cooperation on Holocaust education, remembrance and research and the prevention of future genocides.

For more information about the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance please visit www.holocaustremembrance.com.

Nina Krieger, Executive Director of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, is a member of the Canadian delegation and the current Chair of the Memorials and Museums Working Group of the IHRA.
On April 24th, 2015, Dr. Robert Krell was honoured at the 12th Annual British Columbia Community Achievement Awards’ ceremony held at Government House in Victoria, BC, where he was received a BC Community Achievement Award medallion and certificate.

“These honourees exemplify what it is to go above and beyond; to do what needs to be done and to give without question their time and energy for the betterment of their communities,” said Mr. Keith Mitchell QC, representing the British Columbia Achievement Foundation.

In a personal letter received from the BC Premier Christy Clark, Dr. Krell was honoured for his many years of commitment to developing anti-racism, antisemitism and Holocaust education programs for people of all ages. By establishing the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre in 1994 and documenting Holocaust survivors’ testimonials, you have ensured that no one will ever forget what Jewish people went through during the war. Your work with child survivor groups is further testament to your dedication to helping people gather together, talk to one another and know they are not alone in dealing with the aftermath of what they and their families experienced.”
DECEMBER 23, 2014 – MAY 4, 2015

GET WELL
Ted Zacks, Full recovery. Birgit Westergaard & Norman Gladstone

MAZEL TOV
Regina Wertman, Happy Birthday. The Micner Family
Ray & Barbara Levin, Happy 60th anniversary. Ivan & Merle Linde
Andi Babins, Happy Birthday.
David, Cathy, Tyler & Shane Golden
Alex Buckman, Happy Birthday & Thank you. Celia Brauer
Max Chetner, On your Bar Mitzvah. Eddie & Debbie Rozenberg & Family
Billy Davids, Happy Birthday.
Mendy & Lana Landa
Carrie Diamond, In honour of your birthday, a donation has been made to the VHEC library for educational books. Beth & Leon Bogner
Mariette Doduck, On your Special Birthday. Gerri & Mark London
Ben Folk, On your Special Birthday. Mark, Debby, Barbara & Rachel Choi
David Goldman, Happy 65th!
Peppa Martin & Cole, Parris & Fraser, Arielle & Shea
Ed Lewin, Happy 60th! Lynne Oreck-Wener
Malka Pishansitskaya, Happy Birthday. Cathy & David Golden
Jack Singer, On your Special Birthday. Ivan & Merle Linde
Philip & Shirley Swartz, Happy 60th wedding anniversary. Alan & Becky Adirim, Rita Akselrod
Edith Vizer, On your very Special Birthday. Andrew & Betty Karsai
Robbie Waisman, Happy Birthday. Gerri & Mark London

SYMPATHY
In memory of Leo Wertman. Joe Wertman
In memory of Marguerite Glaser. Michael & Tamar Glaser
In memory of Jack Margalit. Sharon and Irving Kates
In memory of Hena Vaynshteyn. Cheryl Rimer
In Memory of Ruth Kron Sigal. Keith Morgan
In memory of Jacques and Saya Lewin. Claude Romney
In Honour of Frida and Gershon Silver. Gita Silver
In memory of Susanne Lewinski, Bob & Nancy Bluman
Marie Doduck, Two books have been donated to the VHEC library in memory of Sarah Hauptman. Stuart Michelson
Helman Karsai, In memory of your mother, Klara Noik. Andrew & Betty Karsai
Josh Kleinman & Family, On the loss of your mother, grandmother and great grandmother, Yetta Kleinman. Peter & Marla Gropper, Aylee & Sol Azouz & Hyemie & Rome Fox
Jon Lever & Family, In memory of your father & grandfather, Robert. Robert Haber
Ben Folk & Family, In memory of your wife, mother & grandmother, Rose. Robert Haber, Sally & Sid Coleman, Karen, Les, Courtney, Bailee & Brayden Cohen, Robert & Marilynn Krell, Shaina Sidi, Carole Fader & Family, lida Kaplan, Odie Kaplan, Lily Hersh
Elizabeth Nicholls, In memory of your father, Bill Nicholls. Lew Pullmer & Nora Ferera-Pullmer
Chris Friederichs & Family, In memory of Rhoda Friederichs. Ron & Estarisa Laye & Family
Allan Nortman, In memory of your Uncle. Judy & Neil Kornfeld
Jocy Lowy
Jack & Marion Chivo, In memory of your brother, Pierre Matthies. Debbie & Sheldon Goldberg
Peter Cooperberg, In memory of your mother, Miriam Cooperberg. Beth & Leon Bogner
Ben David & Family, In memory of Ben’s Father, Eddie, Mira, Naomi & Aliya Rozenberg
Mr. & Mrs. Paul & Debby Ferwick, On the loss of your beloved Mother. Danny & Vera Wollner
Avi Dolgin & Family, In memory of Ruth Hess Dolgin. Ron & Estarisa Laye & Family
Sam Shamash & Family, In memory of your wife & mother, Tracy. Howard Ehrlich & Leo Herrera, Rome & Hyemie Fox & Family

Nadine, Allan, Sam & Eli Landa
Maria Rozenberg & Aaron Landa & Family, In memory of your mother and grandmother, Dora Rozenberg. Nadine, Allan, Sam & Eli Landa, Mark, Jacob, Talya & Nirit Rozenberg, Debbie & Eddie Rozenberg, Mira & Mark, Naomi, Aliya & Eddie, Rome & Hyemie Fox & Aylee & Sol, Danya & David & Aiden
Mariette Doduck, On the loss of your sister, Sara Hauptman. Florence Morris, Philip & Shirley Swartz, Biana, Yossi & Judy Sharabi, Gabriel and Shirley Hirsch
Esther Brandt in memory of your sister, Sara. Biana, Yossi & Judy Sharabi
Bernard Rozen, in memory of your sister, Sara. Biana, Yossi & Judy Sharabi
Katrina Braelston, In memory of Eddie Braelston. Tamar, Gary & Joce Lowy

ZACHOR SPRING 2015
VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE
OUTREACH SPEAKERS
Janos Benisz, Lilian Boraks
Nemetz, Alex Buckman, Mariette Doduck, David Ehrlich, Serge Haber, Jannushka Jakoubovitch, Chaim Kornfeld, Robert Krell, Inge Manes, Bente Nathan Thomsen, Claude Romney, Martha Salcudean, Louise Sorensen, Peter Suedfeld, Tom Szekely, Robbie Waisman, Coordinator: Rita Akselrod

DOCENTS
Jenna Litsky & Family, On the loss of your Aunt. Gloria & Robbie Waisman
Steve Rom, In memory of your mother, Gertie. Lew Pullmer & Nora Ferera-Pullmer
Lorraine Sandler, On the loss of your Sister. Marty & Estelle Kosoy
Alix Seeple, On Courtney’s passing. Marla & Peter Gropper

SPECIAL PROJECTS
Irving Sirlin, On the passing of your Wife. Robert & Marilyn & Family
Heather Sirlin, On the loss of your Mother. Helen, Jason, Alex & Catherine Rivers
Yael Stein, On the loss of your father, Bill Gluck. Robert & Marilyn Krell, Frieda Miller & Danny Shapiro, Bob & Gisi Levitt
Diana & Elliot Steinberg, On the loss of your mother and grandmother, Sandy. Allan & Nadine Landa
Eric Toker, Remembering the legacy of those who have passed. Ruth Beer
Gloria Waisman, In memory of your brother, Marvin Lyons. Jacques & Lila Mydlarski & Family
Jonathan & Shelley Zbarsky & Family, On the loss of your beloved Mother & Grandmother. Anita Shafran & Family

STUDENT INTERNS
Jami Styan, Queen’s University
Sam Watkins, University of British Columbia

TEACHER ADVISORY
Jonathan Friedricks, Kit Krieger, Tom Morton, Peter Seixas, Jinny St. Hilaire, Andrea Webb, Anna-Mae Wiesenthal

Our apologies for any errors or omissions
The Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre is dedicated to teaching about causes and consequences of discrimination, racism and antisemitism. Please contribute generously to the VHEC’s Annual Campaign and join us in this important and timely work.

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THE FACE OF THE GHETTO

Pictures Taken by Jewish Photographers in the Litzmannstadt Ghetto 1940-1944

May 14 – October 16, 2015

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