

Speaker: Holocaust can teach positive thinking

By Jody Beem
Staff Reporter

The Holocaust of World War II doesn't need to be a message of death, said Dr. Livia Rothkirchen, a visiting professor who spoke on the universal and educational aspects in teaching the Holocaust Tuesday. Rothkirchen's speech was a part of a two-day conference dealing with Holocaust issues.

"It depends on the way of presenting it," Rothkirchen told an audience of about 75 people.

The message of the Holocaust should

be one of equality, democracy and human rights, she said. This message will come about if people who teach the subject are sensitive to the stress it can cause students, she said.

Different documents also present the Holocaust in a different light, she said. Historians tend to use more documents from the German government because these were made available to the public shortly after the war. The German documents, she said, overwhelmingly show some kind of alien land of darkness of human experiments, exhaustion, cruelty, plagues

and starvation.

"In a phrase, they point out man's inhumanity to man," Rothkirchen said. Documents, journals and diaries

They lead people to think that the victims went 'like sheep to slaughter.'

—Rothkirchen

from the survivors of concentration camps didn't begin to surface until the

1960s, she said. Probably people didn't feel able to talk about their experiences until time passed, she said.

The works from the survivors show another side to the Holocaust, she said.

"There was a will to live, a desire for spiritual wellness that the German documents don't show," she said.

The German documents produce a false view of the Jews, she said. They lead people to think that the victims went "like sheep to slaughter" or "meekly went to death," she said.

A better way to view the Holocaust, she said, is to see Germany as a strong, giant force that the Jews resisted too late and with too few people.

"German terrorism and a lack of Jewish opportunity rendered resistance unless without massive outside help," she said.

When students are taught the Holocaust with care, she said, they can use it to learn empathy, solidarity, intrigue, outrage and values.

Students use the Holocaust to gain respect for life and family ties, she said.

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