

Auschwitz: Fifty years later

OSWIECIM, Poland — A half century later, it was as if the unburied dead of Auschwitz-Birkenau were talking back to the living through Moshe Stern.

His voice soaring in unbridled anger, the Israeli cantor's prayer for the dead recalled the boys and girls "killed, destroyed, expunged by the Nazis and their helpers."

They were the aunts and uncles that Rivkah Young never met. They were the 33 members of Blanche Major's family taken away on July 7, 1944, and sent to the cyanide showers. They were, by the time the Nazis were done, 1.5 million brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers.

Fifty years after Soviet soldiers liberated Auschwitz, the world Jewish community was holding a ceremony of its own at the world's biggest Jewish graveyard, a place where human ashes still linger in fields and ponds.

The main commemorations are planned for Friday. But they were organized chiefly by President Lech Walesa's office, and many Jews felt they did not adequately reflect Auschwitz's symbolism as the Holocaust's chief charnel house.

About 300 people attended Thursday's separate ceremony: mostly Jews, but also Gypsy survivors of Auschwitz-Birkenau and other concentration camps. People who were tortured, starved, humiliated and still feel fear.

German President Roman Herzog, a boy during World War II, was the only head of state. He wore the same dark suit and fedora as the German Jewish leaders he accompanied. He barely spoke, pain etched on his face.

Walesa spoke earlier Thursday in Krakow at Jagiellonian University, where 184 professors were seized by the Nazis in 1939, where 184 professors were seized by the Nazis in November 1939 and deported to Sachsenhausen, a concentration camp just outside Berlin.

Some Jewish leaders ignored the university ceremony, including the president of the European Jewish Congress, Jean Kahn, and Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Peace Prize winner who headed the U.S. delegation.

Likewise, no official Polish representative attended the Jewish observance, where Kahn accused Walesa's office of organizing "a nationalist celebration" that diminished the Holocaust's Jewish dimension.

But prominent Jews including Wiesel, an Auschwitz survivor, were determined to mend relations with Poles and none suggested a boycott of Friday's main ceremony.

Wiesel and Israeli Knesset Speaker Shevah Weiss said they met with Walesa and agreed that a peace declaration to be released at the main ceremony would acknowledge Jews were the main target of the Nazi genocide plan symbolized by Auschwitz.

Nine in 10 of the 1.5 million people killed at the largest Nazi camp complex — people gassed, starved, clubbed, hung, shot, worked to death in outlying armaments and chemical plants — were Jews.

But half of them were Polish Jews, and Auschwitz was initially built for Polish opponents of the Nazis — who were intent on eradicating Poland as a state and settling it with the Aryan race.

After the war, Communist authorities in Poland understated the extent of Jewish suffering under the Nazis. Bad feelings and misunderstanding still linger between many Polish Catholics and Jews.

At Auschwitz-Birkenau on Thursday, wrinkled survivors leaned on canes or sat down on mounds of earth and tried to steel themselves against horrific memories.

Where the crematoria once churned, they heard speeches in Yiddish, Hebrew, Polish and English.

"I feel the fear and astonishment as I walk here 50 years later," said Wiesel, walking beside the train tracks where cattle cars full of Jews from all corners of Nazi-occupied Europe arrived for slaughter.

"You cannot imagine what it was for them to arrive here at night and to see the immensity, the infinity of this place. Dogs barking, shots being fired, people falling to the ground, walking, walking."

Deadly reach of Auschwitz

More than 1.5 million people were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau marked for enslavement or death. This week marks the 50th anniversary of the liberation of 5,200 survivors.



AP/Wm. J. Castello

Dispute arises over witnesses prosecutor falls ill, hospitalized

LOS ANGELES — The last-minute defense witnesses who claim they have evidence that could exonerate O.J. Simpson include heroin addicts, thieves, felons and "a court-certified pathological liar," a prosecutor said today.

A dispute over the witnesses and the sudden illness of a prosecutor threw the murder trial into turmoil again, and delayed the rest of the defense's opening statement at least until this afternoon.

Arguing for more time to investigate the witnesses, prosecutors bitterly questioned their honesty and accused the defense of misconduct. Defense attorney Johnnie Cochran Jr. countered, "They cannot shut me up."

Hours before being hospitalized for chest pains, Deputy District Attorney William Hodgman expressed outrage Wednesday when Cochran mentioned the new witnesses that he claimed could clear Simpson and were ignored by investigators.

Thumping his finger on a lectern, District Attorney Christopher Darden

told the judge today: "Had we known about some of these witnesses, we could have informed counsel that they are heroin addicts, thieves, felons, and that one of these witnesses, one of their so-called material witnesses, is the only person I have ever known to be a court-certified pathological liar."

A few hours after Wednesday's session, Hodgman complained of chest pains and was taken to California Medical Center. He was in good condition and resting comfortably today; doctors said more tests were planned.

Deputy District Attorney Marcia Clark said the prosecution would be seeking an interruption in the trial and a chance for prosecutors to make additional opening remarks to the jury to counter surprises in the defense presentation.

Cochran angrily responded that the prosecution was overreacting and suggested that if prosecutors were better prepared for trial they wouldn't have needed the information turned over late by the defense.

Simpson trial update

Thursday, Jan. 26, 1995

- ▶ A hearing on witnesses took up all Thursday's court time. Prosecutors requested a 30-day continuance—an adjournment—to investigate witnesses the defense revealed just this week. It recessed the trial until Monday, although he may rule on the continuance Friday.
- ▶ William Hodgman, a key prosecutor, is hospitalized after complaining of chest pains Wednesday night.
- ▶ Simpson's book, "I Want to Tell You," hits bookstores Friday morning.

AP

Balanced-budget amendment clears test vote

WASHINGTON — In a striking triumph for the new Republican majority, the House gave tentative approval Thursday night to a balanced-budget amendment to the Constitution designed to eliminate chronic federal deficits.

The 293-139, bipartisan endorsement was five more than the two-thirds majority needed, with a final vote set for later in the evening that would send the measure to the Senate.

Supporters expressed confidence that they would also prevail there, despite the likelihood of a protracted battle, and would be able to submit the measure to the states for final ratification.

Cheers erupted in the chamber when Speaker Newt Gingrich, architect of last fall's GOP election sweep

in the House, announced the results. The vote came little more than three weeks after Republicans took control of the House and launched a 100-day effort to implement their conservative "Contract With America," with its promise of lower taxes and less government.

The measure drew the support of 221 of 230 Republicans. Among the Democrats, 72 voted in favor, 129 against.

As a result of years of deficits, said Republican Leader Dick Army of Texas, "Each and every one of our children today is endowed with 18,000 dollars of federal debt." Without the amendment, he said, "that indebtedness will grow larger and larger and larger."

Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt of Missouri, who opposed the mea-

sure, said the decision contained "the most important votes we will cast here in our service in the Congress, no matter how long we've been here or how long we will stay."

Democrats failed in an effort to force Republicans to unveil a detailed program of spending cuts, and failed again in a politically enticing attempt to exempt Social Security from spending reductions in the future. Republicans insist they plan no Social Security cuts.

The measure calls for a balanced budget beginning in 2002, or two years after ratification by three-quarters of the states. It requires a three-fifths vote in both houses to run a deficit thereafter. A similar three-fifths vote would be required to increase the federal debt, which now approaches \$4.7 trillion.

News... in a Minute

Influenza adds to quake fatalities

KOBE, Japan — More than 140 new influenza cases were reported Thursday among earthquake survivors crowded into temporary shelters, fueling fears an outbreak of disease could add to the misery of thousands of homeless Japanese.

The death toll from the Jan. 17 quake rose to 5,083 today as more bodies were pulled from the ruins of the shattered port city. Police said 51 people are still missing.

Nearly 300,000 people have been living in government buildings or sleeping in tents in near-freezing weather since the quake wrecked this city of 1.4 million people. The government has been criticized as having responded slowly to the quake.

Lt. Gen. Yusuke Matsushima, army commander for central Japan, wept openly today as he apologized for delays in rushing large numbers of troops to help in the rescue effort.

"It was regrettable we could not save more lives," the general said as he wiped tears from his eyes during a news conference. "I understand why people were so upset. People said, 'Why didn't you come help us sooner? Why weren't you there?' I understand, but it was the situation."

Salami to be tested for E. coli

WASHINGTON — Salami and other fermented dry sausage products will be routinely tested for a virulent strain of E. coli bacteria to prevent future outbreaks of foodborne illness, the government says.

The Agriculture Department's Food Safety and Inspection Service on Wednesday also presented the dry sausage industry with a list of steps to take assure its finished products are free of E. coli O157:H7. The makers may also use heat to kill the bacteria.

The actions followed an outbreak of food poisoning last November and December that sickened 11 people in Washington and three in California. The illnesses were traced to the San Francisco Sausage Co. in San Francisco, which recalled all its products.

The agency said it may never find the exact source of contamination. The outbreak was the first time a cured meat was implicated in an outbreak caused by the E. coli strain.

E. coli bacteria are killed by high temperatures in cooking, anywhere from 150 to 165 degrees, or by high acidity, and is usually a problem in undercooked beef. But dry salami isn't cooked.

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