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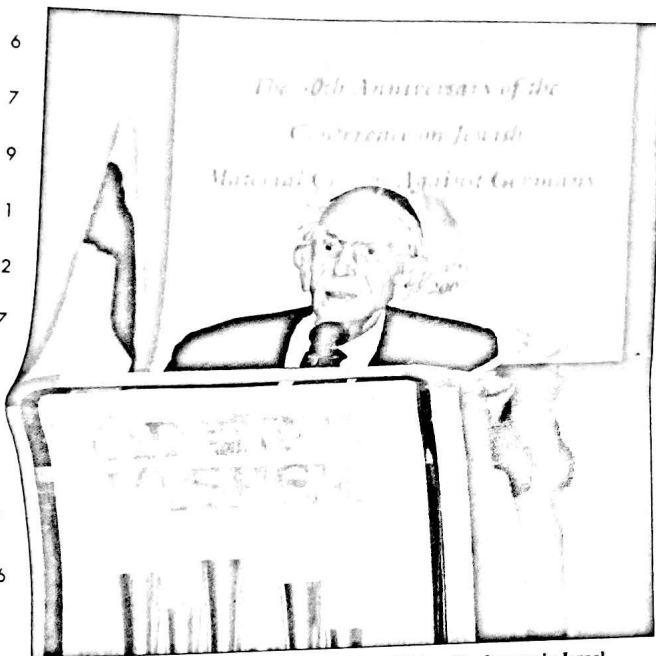
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„Der Rabbi hat den Laden zusammengehalten“

Rabbi Israel Miller verlässt sein Amt als Präsident der Claims Conference



Rabbi Israel Miller beim 50-Jahr-Jubiläum der Claims Conference in Israel.
Foto: Claims Conference

Von ANDREAS MINK

Nach 20 Jahren im Amt will sich der Präsident der Claims Conference, Rabbi Israel Miller, nicht mehr zur Wiederwahl stellen. Seine Position soll in diesem April neu besetzt werden. Miller, 1918 in Baltimore, Maryland, geboren, ist nach Nahum Goldmann, dem Gründer der Organisation, der zweite Präsident dieser gemeinsamen Plattform von 24 jüdischen Verbänden aus aller Welt. Seit dem Oktober 1951 vertritt die Claims Conference gegenüber Deutschland offiziell die materiellen jüdischen Ansprüche auf Entschädigung und Restitution von Eigentum. Informationen des Aufbau zufolge bewerben sich Israel Singer vom World Jewish Congress und Julius Herman, der langjährige Rechtsberater des Bundespräsidenten, um die Position des neuen Präsidenten.

Rabbi Israel Miller lebt heute in Israel. Raber er ist der Yeshiva University in Manhattan eng verbunden, der er heute noch als Senior Vice President Emeritus angehört. Hier absolvierte er seine Ausbildung, ehe er eine Laufbahn als Seelsorger antrat, die ihn zu einem prominenten Vertreter des organisierten Judentums in den USA machte. Miller hat im Zweiten Weltkrieg als Geistlicher in der U.S. Army gedient. Er war Präsident der American Zionist Federation, Vorsitzender der Organisation jüdischer Geistlicher der US-Streitkräfte und Präsident der Conference

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Zwangsarbeit: Neuer Streit, neue Klagen

Die deutsche Stiftung zur Entschädigung ehemaliger NS-Zwangsarbeiter ist in den vergangenen Tagen erneut unter Druck gekommen. Zum einen fordern US-Opfer-Anwälte Nachzahlungen von der deutschen Wirtschaft, zudem soll die Stiftungsinitiative der Unternehmen ihre Bücher öffnen. Die deutsche Seite nimmt diese Ansinnen mit Empörung auf. Es ist ihr anscheinend gelungen, im Kuratorium der Stiftung eine Mehrheit gegen diese Ansinnen zu finden. Momentan ist offen, ob die US-Anwälte nun wieder vor die US-Gerichte ziehen, um dort den Kampf gegen die Stiftung weiterzuführen. Schwieriger für die Deutschen dürften aber neue Verfahren in Kalifornien, Kanada, Frankreich und Slowenien sein – in all diesen Staaten prozessieren ehemalige Zwangsarbeiter gegen deutsche Firmen oder den Staat. Die Hoffnungen der Deutschen, die NS-Entschädigungen abschliessen zu können, haben sich damit erneut zerschlagen. **AM**

“Being an Occupier Makes You an Oppressor, Whether You Like it Or Not”

The Growing Faction of “Refuseniks” among Israeli Army Reservists

By FRITZ WEINSCHENK

It started with a notice on the bulletin board of Hebrew University in Jerusalem and rapidly mushroomed into a national debate.

First two, then seventy, then one hundred, and now over two hundred Israeli army reservists, both officers and enlisted men, many of them front-line fighters, have refused to serve in the West Bank and Gaza beyond the “Green Line,” the pre-1967 Israel border.

According to statements appearing in the Israeli media, these “refuseniks” decline to serve in the “territories” because, according to them, the Israeli forces are being used to “dominate, expel, starve, and humiliate an entire people.” The commands and directives issued to the soldiers posted in these areas, so the statement goes, have nothing to do with the security of Israel and serve only to “perpetuate our control over the

Palestinian people.” Alluding to the alleged shootings of teenagers, the razing of buildings of innocents, the refusal to pass women about to give birth through checkpoints, and other such incidents, one reservist said: “Being an occupier makes you an oppressor whether you like it or not. The price of occupation is the loss of the Israel Defense Force’s semblance of humanity and the corruption of all of Israeli society.”

While Prime Minister Sharon calls this action a “most serious blow to the orders of a democratically elected government,” and Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, the Chief of Staff, calls it “politically” rather than morally motivated, Zahava Gal-On, Legislative Whip of the leftist Meeret party in the Knesset, said that “these are our best soldiers and we have to understand what they are saying.” Meanwhile, rightist voices call them a “tiny minority” of the 480,000-odd reservists, “traitors in league with the terrorists,” and “deserters,” and

demand that they be court-martialed and jailed.

Anyone who has ever served in any armed forces knows that discipline is the cornerstone of the military. Without absolute obedience to orders, no army can field a meaningful force. The American “GIs”, from Normandy to Iwo-Jima, whose officers ordered them into withering artillery bursts, mine-fields and deadly machine-gun fire, were obeying iron-clad orders without question or hesitation. They moved “into the jaws of death” not only by force of their orders, but also by their conviction that they were fighting for the right and just cause.

However, where the cause becomes clouded by troubling questions and the orders become obviously immoral, doubts arise in the mind of the front-fighter who is being asked to risk life and limb, lead-

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WW II and After at the Berlinale

Films by André Heller and Istvan Szabo Focus on Individual Culpability



By ADAM J. SACKS

The Berlinale Film Festival, which ended on February 17, featured a number of movies—documentary and fiction films—that dealt with World War II from a number of perspectives. Four of these, made by an international group of directors, are reviewed below.

Michael Daëron's *Atlantic Drift*

Standing atop a cliff, a Greek Orthodox priest makes a gesture of blessing over the imperiled ship with an uncertain future, that lies below. This scene, recounted by an eyewitness, is one of the few hopeful images recalled by the voyagers of the last and biggest "illegal" transport to leave Europe for Palestine during the war. Although the Jewish refugees on board had managed to escape the Holocaust, the British Navy eventually ordered their imprisonment in a Napoleonic prison on Mauritius for up to five years. Their story is told in director Michel Daëron's new documentary *Atlantic Drift*, which premiered at the Berlinale International Film Festival. Daëron is known for his previous films covering such topics as the women's orchestra in Auschwitz (*La Chaconne d'Auschwitz*) and the Stalinist Gulag (*Contre-jour de Sibirie*).

This Franco-Austrian co-production is composed of diaries in three media, the written record kept by Ruth Sander at the time, the visual diary of watercolor paintings by Fritz Handel, and the kilometers of microfilm in British archives that form the "counter-diary" of the bureaucracy that went after the refugees. An interpretive soundtrack that functions as if the film were silent adds yet another dimension.

The "public" story of the voyage is accompanied by the personal second-generation odyssey of Fritz Handel's son Shlomo. Paintings are all he has left of his father, since the elder Handel committed suicide before Shlomo's birth on the day he learned of his own parents' deportation. In a dramatic encounter with a survivor in Israel, Shlomo learns about his father's last days, a topic his mother, who also features in the film, guarded in silence.

Atlantic Drift refers to the Danube steamships with over 3500 Central European Jewish refugees from various countries. After waiting nine months in Bratislava, the ships set sail in September 1940, but were unable to avoid notice by the British Secret Service. As early as Budapest, they made sure that the journey was obstructed by administrative details, despite the fact that they were fully aware that the passengers were Jews fleeing Hitler's Europe.

The ship on which the film focuses was so overloaded that traffic direction was required on board to prevent the vessel from tipping. With six toilets per gender, the wait for use took half the day. When dysentery and typhus broke out, it was kept secret by the doctors at first. The dead, including children, were thrown overboard during the night.

Just as the ship approached Haifa, it ran out of coal, and the passengers began to saw off bits of the ship itself for fuel. The sight of British destroyers in the port appeared to confirm the ship's successful escape, but new troubles were on the horizon. Documents unearthed in British archives by an Israeli survivor reveal that British officials had consulted with Winston Churchill in deciding whether to send the ship back to Europe or even to sink it. The surveillance cameras show the officials deciding on deportation and internment for the refugees once they had successfully landed in Haifa.

Two weeks after the aborted landing, the refugees arrived in Mauritius and were imprisoned. An eyewitness recalls the feeling that pervaded the group: "Wann werden wir endlich wieder Menschen sein?" ("When will we finally be human beings again?") Overseen by an anti-Semitic chief officer in the old state prison, the passengers were soon prey to epidemics. If this is an Exodus story, it is a cruelly distorted one—an escape to freedom on a ship that received no safe landing nor place of rest.

Refugee crises and closed borders

According to director Michel Daëron, who spoke after the screening of his film, the first shot fired by the Allies after the German invasion of Poland, was not against German forces, but fired by the British Navy against a refugee boat. When faced with the refugee crisis, the response of the Western powers was to close borders, reduce quotas and even to set out on a chase. Citing the contemporary predicaments of a boat filled with Kurds turned away in France, or the Afghans expelled from Australia, Daëron hopes his film will provide a historical perspective for contemporary asylum politics. Yet the film has already been refused by the BBC.

André Heller's *Im Toten Winkel*

The documentary, *Im Toten Winkel* (in the Blind Spot), presented at the Berlinale, focuses on the memories of a single employee, a secretary with an unusual boss—Adolf Hitler. One of the last eyewitnesses on the side of the perpetrators, Traudl Jung, remained silent for over fifty years. She finally revealed her story while in the late stages of the illness which led

to her death during the very week of the Berlinale.

Jung worked for Hitler from 1942 until the regime's final collapse—from the Wolf Lair Headquarters, to Berchtesgaden, to the special train, to the Berlin bunker. Hitler dictated his final will and testament to her. The director and interviewer André Heller was born in Austria in 1947. He is the son of Austrian-Jewish emigrants, and one of the most successful international multimedia artists. Describing his own perspective, he said "The last address of many relatives was Auschwitz. I have often reflected on what my father—who was psychologically and physically devastated by the Hitler years—would have thought if he could see me sitting here. I could not have ended the conversation, had Frau Jung been a Nazi or remained one." In fact, Frau Jung's experiences left her with a hatred of Nazism, and an inability to forgive the naive young girl recalled in her memories—memories that come to the surface because they could no longer be repressed.

No archival material was used in the film and the interview proceeds without commentary, fixed on the face of the secretary. Heller's questions are edited out. The ten hours of the exchange that were shortened to 90 minutes for the film will be made available to historians.

As the title implies, Traudl Jung believes she worked in a blind spot, having remarked little of the megalomania and barbarism attributed to her boss. Much of her testimony focuses on the private life of the Nazi ruler. She comments on Hitler's appearance—he was "a friendly, older man," in a "harmless, peaceful atmosphere"—and reveals her unbroken fascination.

Although she still uses the term *Führer* and speaks of "andersrassischen Menschen," (people of another race), without compunction, she claims to have heard the term "concentration camp" only once, and "Jew," never! She insists that she never had to write anything involving politics or the military.

This film raises the question whether Hitler's personal obsessions—his addiction to cleanliness, for instance, so that he washed his hands after every time he stroked the dog, or his refusal to display flowers because, as he put it, he wanted no corpses in his room—are interesting or

helpful in coming to grips with the Nazi terror. Traudl Jung carries on about these details even when describing the last days in the bunker. What she has to say is that it was then that smoking was allowed in Hitler's presence for the first time.

Andrzej Wajda's *I Remember*

I Remember, featured as part of the 32nd International Forum for Young Film, a festival running adjacent to the Berlinale, is a Polish-language documentary directed by Andrzej Wajda. It is part of the Broken Silence Series, an international documentary project, produced by James Moll. This is a collective project which consists of five documentary films intended for prime-time television broadcast in their respective countries. The four Polish survivor testimonies in *I Remember* were drawn from among hundreds collected by Steven Spielberg's Shoah foundation.

The documentary is filmed in black-and-white without any connective narration. Wajda also does without archival images of the Second World War or the Holocaust. It is the survivors' memories alone that provide the imagery and the drama. One speaker recalls dancing in the park before the war after hearing on the radio that the conflict had been avoided. Another remembers how his girlfriend was hanged after the German invasion. One young Jewish boy hid by wearing a Hitler Youth uniform only to be betrayed by the Yiddish ghetto songs he hummed, and the Yiddish words he uttered in his sleep.

In some cases, there was the danger of blackmail by Poles who were bribed to turn Jews over to the Germans. In contrast, another recollection concerned the father of a friend who was killed in Warsaw for hiding Jews. Yet the son still took the survivor in after he escaped from the train on the way to Treblinka.

Running throughout the film is footage of the famous "March of the Living" as a symbol of hope and the improving dialogue between young Jews, Poles, and Germans. There is also scenes of Pope John Paul II praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, another powerful symbol of reconciliation.

Noemi Schory's *The Secret*

The visit of the Pope to Israel also appears in another film dealing with the Polish-Jewish problematic Israeli filmmaker Noemi Schory's film debut entitled



The late Traudl Jung, who recollects her time as Hitler's secretary in André Heller's *Im Toten Winkel*.

Photo: Berlinale

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The Secret. It examines the plight of modern-day Polish-Catholics who discover their Jewish background. Ultimately, the film explores the strange ties between Catholics and Jews that developed during the period of fear and hiding during the war, and continued long after.

The war was a time when being marked as Jewish meant a death sentence, but one "new" Polish-Jewish student still puts it bluntly by declaring, "I am H I-Jewish positive." In a nation where national identity and the Catholic faith are almost inextricably linked, "new Jews," can face rejection.

The phenomenon of discovery was a familiar one for the director. She had recently learned who her real mother was and that she had been born with a different name. For some in the film, the identity search begins with a consuming suspicion. One man circles a synagogue feeling compelled to enter. Discovery is often accompanied by personal breakdown. One man asks, "Where do I belong? What do I really know about myself?" A researcher in the Jewish Historical Institute described the case of an eldest son who was denied the inheritance of his father's farm because his father did not want the farm to go to a Jew.

Perhaps the most moving and revealing case in the film is that of a priest to whom we are introduced as he is putting on his collar. He recalls being aware that he did not resemble his parents. When he told them that he thought he might be Jewish, he spoke of his readiness to commit suicide if that fact were to be confirmed.

Perhaps in a process of compensation, he decided to become a priest, a move which his father was strictly against. In fact, when his real parents had handed him into the safety of the Catholic family before they were killed, his mother had vowed that her son would become a teacher or a priest if he survived. Unknowingly, the son fulfilled her promise.

The priest now has a special shrine that brings together a Menorah and an image of Jesus. He has moved beyond the narrow idea of choosing a single identity, and seeks to mediate between various identities. The Pope encouraged him in this effort when he responded to a letter the priest had sent him out of fear of being deprived of his post after his discovery.

The film also suggests that, in certain cases, the newly-found Jewish identity is a wish-fulfillment, the product of a desire for a moral cleansing that Jewish identity can imply in the Polish context. The consequences for publicly demonstrating this identity vary in contemporary Poland. Indeed, the complexities of the Polish-Jewish relationship in the past has left its heirs with a personal situation that refuses to conform to neat categories and strict separations.

Istvan Szabo's *Taking Sides*

Hungarian director Istvan Szabo's newest film, *Taking Sides*, begins with the interruption by an air raid of a performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in the Berliner Dom. Conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler, the embodiment of the possessed artist, presses on until the lights go

out. Szabo, who has long been concerned with the fate of the artist under totalitarianism, is perhaps best known known for his Oscar-winning film adaptation of *Mephisto*. Klaus Mann's study of actor Gustav Gründgens.

In discussing why he took on the case of conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler, Szabo explained that "in Central Europe, our life is only ruined by politics and politicians, and is always influenced by ideologies. How does one live under repression? How can one survive? These are questions we have to pose because we have no other choice."

Taking Sides focuses on a US Army major, played by Harvey Keitel, whose job it is to interrogate and "make the case" against Furtwängler in preparation for his denazification hearing. After having fought in the war and witnessed the liberation of the camps, this character is consumed with his mission. He, himself, is a jazz fan and a supporter of American popular culture. He refers to the great conductor as the "bandleader." The film implicitly sets versions and definitions of culture against each other and explores their relation to democratic forms of thinking and acting.

In the film, Keitel's secretary is the daughter of a German officer who was involved and ultimately killed in the July 20th plot against Hitler. Observing the Keitel character is the young officer, David, a German-Jewish refugee who has returned to Germany in an American uniform. He had developed a love for Beethoven through hearing Furtwängler

as a child in Leipzig. Both he and the secretary, with whom he falls in love, are captivated by Furtwängler and begin to move to his defense.

Furtwängler had chosen to stay in Germany during the Nazi period, although he had a relatively good chance of finding work elsewhere—the international language of music is not limited to national context. Others left or had to leave, such as Arturo Toscanini, or the German-Jewish conductors Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer. Goebbels and Göring competed over Nazi cultural policy and Furtwängler benefited from this conflict by being protected by Göring. Although the conductor was made a Prussian state official, he used his position to assist Jewish musicians privately. Not included in the film, is his meeting with Arnold Schoenberg in his Paris exile, when the composer counseled Furtwängler to return to preserve cultural values.

While the film is an adaptation of a theater piece by Ronald Harwood, and the settings for the dense scenes of dialogue are focused and sparse, there are also striking re-creations of the rubble landscape of post-war Berlin. Equally convincing are the black-market scenes, and the images of open-air concerts and café life taking place in bombed-out churches and buildings.

The former orchestra members who come for interviews with the Major all recite the same predictable story of how Furtwängler avoided saluting Hitler at his birthday concert. All ask the secretary if she is related to the "great patriot."

The Major also comes into conflict with a Russian cultural officer, a director of the Leningrad Art Museum, who wants, more than anything, to win Furtwängler over for the Linden Opera House in East Berlin. What is implied is that this Soviet representative understands the compromises required to make a career under a dictatorship.

Complicity in the Nazi appropriation of German culture for the legitimization of their crusade is, ultimately, the damning accusation against Furtwängler. The Nazis were able to mask barbarism with culture, and were able to tap into the European pride in that culture to convince Germany and others in Europe to resist Bolshevism and American mass culture. This glowing shield of German music protects the genius and ultimately allows his transgression and weakness to be attributed to the feelings of a nationalist. Soon after his hearing, Furtwängler returned to work in Germany. He was never to conduct in the United States.

Taking Sides closes with real archival footage of the conductor shaking Goebbels' hand. The camera zooms in on Furtwängler as he shifts his handkerchief to the hand that had grasped Goebbels' in an attempt to clean it. Through this ambivalent gesture, he tries to symbolically protect himself from the blood and the dirt of the regime, but he is already in too deep.



A scene from Istvan Szabo's *Taking Sides*.

Photo: Berlinale

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