Holocaust Eyewitnesses: Is the Testimony Reliable?

Inevitably, when anyone questions the genocide of European Jewry, the eyewitness testimony is raised as proof that the genocide happened. However, most of the eyewitness accounts of the Holocaust story have proved to be extremely unreliable and at times even laughable. See for yourself.

By John Wear

John Demjanjuk, a naturalized American citizen, was accused by eyewitnesses of being a murderous guard at Treblinka named Ivan the Terrible. Demjanjuk was deported to Israel, and an Israeli court tried and convicted him primarily based on the eyewitness testimony of five Jewish survivors of Treblinka. Demjanjuk’s defense attorney eventually uncovered new evidence proving that the Soviet KGB had framed Demjanjuk, and that documents supposedly showing him to be a guard at Treblinka were Soviet forgeries. The Israeli Supreme Court ruled that the eyewitness accounts were not credible and that Demjanjuk was innocent.

Another example of false witness testimony of the holocaust story occurred in the case of Frank Walus, who was a retired Chicago factory worker charged with killing Jews in his native Poland during the war. An accusation by Simon Wiesenthal that Walus had worked for the Gestapo prompted the U.S. government’s legal action. During Walus’ trial 11 Jews testified under oath that Walus had murdered Jews during the war. After a costly four-year legal battle, Walus was finally able to prove that he had spent the war years as a teenager working on German farms. An American Bar Association article published in 1981 concluded in regard to Walus’ trial that “...in an atmosphere of hatred and loathing verging on hysteria, the government persecuted an innocent man.”

It would be impossible for me to discuss every eyewitness account of the Holocaust story. To illustrate the unreliability of eyewitness accounts of the Holocaust story, I will analyze the eyewitness accounts of probably its three most famous survivors: Elie Wiesel, Simon Wiesenthal, and Viktor Frankl.

ELIE WIESEL

Elie Wiesel, whose autobiography Night written in 1956 helped him win the Nobel Peace Prize, never mentions homicidal gas chambers in his book. Instead, Wiesel writes that Jews were killed en masse by being thrown alive in burning pits. If there had actually been homicidal gas chambers at Birkenau, one would think that Wiesel would have mentioned the gas chambers in his autobiography. Also, if there had been burning pits at Birkenau, these would have shown in some of the Allied aerial photographs taken of Birkenau in 1944.

Wiesel also mentions in Night that he had surgery on an infected foot in January 1945. The German authorities at Birkenau gave Wiesel and other hospital patients unfit to travel the option to remain in the camp. Wiesel and his father decided to evacuate Birkenau and travel to Buchenwald with the Germans rather than be liberated by the Russian army. If Birkenau had been a place of mass exterminations, why would Wiesel choose to travel?
All three of these men are considered "best witnesses" to the "holocaust." Left, perhaps the planet's biggest liar, Elie Wiesel, used photo fakery to "prove" he was an inmate in Buchenwald. Evidently he was never even in Buchenwald at all, yet he has made millions on books and speaking engagements telling people about the "horrors" he saw there. Middle, famous Austrian Jewish "Nazi-hunter" Simon Wiesenthal claimed he had a concentration camp tattoo but would not show it to anyone. Photos of his arm didn't show any tattoo at all. Was he even in a camp? He stands accused of making millions of dollars by flagrant lying. Right, Viktor Frankl, another shady fellow, had a best-selling book in which he described his extensive experiences in Auschwitz—yet he was ultimately forced to admit he spent four days or less there.

with his supposed killers? Also, why would the German authorities at Birkenau leave behind thousands of witnesses to their genocide if a policy of genocide had actually taken place at Birkenau?

That Wiesel survived his internment at Buchenwald is, of course, the result of a miracle. Wiesel states: "In Buchenwald they sent 10,000 persons to their deaths each day. I was always in the last hundred near the gate. They stopped. Why?" Today no credible historian believes that 10,000 Jews per day were executed at Buchenwald.

A remarkable witness himself, Wiesel assures us that he has met other remarkable witnesses. Wiesel states in one of his books that after Jews were executed at Babi Yar in Ukraine: "Eyewitnesses say that for months after the killings the ground continued to spurt geyser blood. One was always treading on corpses." Wiesel repeats this claim later with some embellishment: "Later, I learn from a witness that, for month after month, the ground never stopped trembling; and that, from time to time, geyser of blood spurted from it." This story lacks all credibility.

Wiesel does not seem to know that photos taken at Babi Yar shortly after the alleged mass executions of Jews show no indication of any mass grave site or any disturbance of the foliage or ground cover.8

SIMON WIESENTHAL

Famed Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal also reports a trip to a National Socialist camp hospital in his book The Murderers Among Us. Wiesenthal wrote that he tried to commit suicide by cutting his wrists while incarcerated by the National Socialists. Instead of letting him die, the National Socialists sent him to the hospital, where they nursed him back to health.9 If the National Socialists were intent on committing genocide against European Jewry, why would they make the effort to send both Wiesel and Wiesenthal to the hospital to restore their health?

VIKTOR FRANKL

Viktor Frankl's book Man's Search for Meaning has been ranked by the Library of Congress as one of the 20th century's 10 most influential books in the United States. Frankl describes his experiences at Auschwitz in this book as if he had spent many months there. In reality, Frankl was in Auschwitz only for a few days in October 1944 while in transit from Theresienstadt to a sub camp of Dachau. Frankl has admitted this to the American evangelist Robert Schuller: "I was in Auschwitz only three or four days... I was sent to a barrack, and we were all
transported to a camp in Bavaria."

Frankl's short time in Auschwitz is substantiated by the prisoner log from the sub camp of Dachau, Kaufering III, which listed Frankl's arrival on October 25, 1944, six days after his departure from Theresienstadt. Thus, Frankl's descriptions of his long stay at Auschwitz in *Man's Search for Meaning* are pure fiction.

**PREPOSTEROUS VERBOSITY**

The unreliability of eyewitness testimony of the Holocaust story has also been commented on by some historians. Jewish historian Samuel Gringauz criticized what he called the "hyperhistorical" nature of most Jewish survivor testimony. Gringauz wrote that "most of the memoirs and reports are full of preposterous verbosity, graphomaniac exaggeration, dramatic effects, overestimated self-inflation, dilettante philosophizing, would-be lyricism, unchecked rumors bias, partisan attacks and apologies."

Shmuel Krakowski, archives director of Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Center, confirmed in 1986 that more than half the testimonies of Jewish survivors on file there are unreliable. Krakowski said many survivors, wanting to be a part of history, may have let their imaginations run away from them. He stated that many of the testimonies on file at Yad Vashem were later proved to be inaccurate when locations and dates could not pass an expert historian's appraisal. Krakowski commented on the Jewish survivor testimony: "Many were never in the places where they claimed to have witnessed atrocities, while others relied on second-hand information given by friends or passing strangers."

Although seldom mentioned in the press, numerous eyewitnesses have reported that they did not see any evidence of genocide in the National Socialist concentration camps. One of the first to dispute reports of National Socialist genocide was Paul Rassinier. Rassinier was a French professor of history who was arrested during the war for passive resistance activities, which included helping to smuggle Jews into neutral Switzerland. Rassinier stated that although he suffered greatly during the war in the Buchenwald and Dora concentration camps, he never saw any evidence of homicidal gas chambers nor any program to exterminate the Jews. After reading sensationalized accounts he knew were false, Rassinier felt it was his ethical duty to tell the truth about the camps and refute the false claims being made in the world's press.

Rassinier wrote extensively about his own experiences and observations in the German camps. He also began to research the entire issue of National Socialist genocide against the Jews during the war. Rassinier concluded that the death toll in the camps was far lower than alleged. He also concluded that the deaths in the camps were not caused by a German program of genocide, but rather primarily by the poor conditions of the camps attributable to the economic collapse of Germany during a devastating war. Rassinier had nothing to gain personally from taking his unpopular position, and after suffering greatly in the German concentration camps, he then suffered intense persecution in postwar France for his courageous writings after the war.

Thies Christophersen was another witness who said the alleged genocide of Jews during the war never happened. Christophersen supervised about 300 workers, many of them Jewish, at Auschwitz from January to December 1944. On a number of occasions during this period he visited Birkenau, where allegedly hundreds of thousands of Jews were being gassed to death. In a memoir first published in Germany in 1973, *The Auschwitz Lie*, Christophersen wrote that during the time he was at Auschwitz he did not notice the slightest evidence of mass gassings. In March 1988 at the Ernst Zündel trial in Toronto, he also successfully answered numerous pointed questions by the prosecuting attorney about his experiences at Auschwitz.

After *The Auschwitz Lie* was published, Christophersen received thousands of letters and calls. He wrote in regard to these letters and calls:

"Many of those who contacted me can confirm my statements, but are afraid to do so publicly. Some of those are SS men who were brutally mistreated and even tortured in Allied captivity. I also immediately contacted those who claimed to know more about mass gassings. My experiences were precisely the same as those of French professor Paul Rassinier. I have not found any eyewitnesses. Instead, people would tell me that they knew someone who knew someone else, who talked about it."

In most cases the alleged eyewitnesses had died. Other supposed eyewitnesses would quickly begin to stammer and stutter when I asked a few precise questions. Even Simon Wiesenthal had to finally admit before a Frankfurt district court that he was actually never in Auschwitz. All of the reports I have heard about are contradictory. Everyone seemed to tell a different story about the gas chambers. They couldn't even agree about where they were supposed to have been located. This
is also true of the so-called scholarly literature, which is full of contradictions. . . .

Another eyewitness who did not see any evidence of genocide of the Jews is Dr. Wilhelm Stäglich. Dr. Stäglich, a German judge, visited Auschwitz several times during the Second World War as a German orderly officer of an Anti-aircraft Detachment. Dr. Stäglich published the following account of his visits to Auschwitz:

On none of these visits did I see gassing installations, crematoria, instruments of torture, or similar horrors. The camp gave one the impression of being well kept and very well organized. . . .

The camp reminded me of the German Labor Front camp in which I served out my six-month stretch in the Labor Service, except that Auschwitz was, of course, considerably larger. . . . None of the inmates behaved as though they were in fear of mistreatment, let alone death.

On the later point, one encounter with inmates especially sticks in my memory. As some comrades and I were standing near the camp one evening, we caught sight of a big gang of inmates returning to camp from work in the industrial plants. They were escorted by a relatively small contingent of SS-men—mostly older people—and seemed to be thoroughly undisciplined.

They talked loudly among themselves, laughing all the while. Two or three inmates dropped out of line when they spotted us, opened their flies, and made water. Although this gesture could have been interpreted as a sign of contempt for German men in uniform, the SS guards ignored it completely. Later, whenever I heard that mortal terror prevailed in the concentration camps, I had to recall this incident. That is hardly the way people are in constant fear of death behave.16

Another credible eyewitness is the Austrian-born Canadian Maria Van Herwaarden, who was interned at Birkenau starting in 1942. Van Herwaarden testified at the 1988 Ernst Zündel trial that she saw nothing at Birkenau that resembled mass murder. She did testify, however, that many of the inmates at Birkenau died of typhus and some inmates committed suicide.17 No prosecution witnesses were called during this trial because the prosecution knew of no survivors who could withstand cross-examination by Zündel’s defense attorney.

While I know that National Socialist Germany did not have a program of genocide against European Jewry, I am equally certain that the inmates in the camps suffered tremendous hardships. This point was driven home to me in 1999, when I met a Jewish lady who had spent her early childhood years in four different German camps during the war. She barely survived Bergen-Belsen, where she contracted typhoid and was very close to death when the British army took control of the camp. Her experiences in the camps had been so traumatic that she still had major psychological damage from her internment 54 years after the war was over.

However, if National Socialist Germany had conducted a program of genocide against European Jewry, she would have been executed, since as a little Jewish girl she was too young to contribute to the German work effort. She was living proof that Germany did not have a program of genocide against European Jewry.

ENDNOTES:

1 An excellent account of John Demjanjuk’s trial is provided in Sheftel, Oram, Defending “From the Terrible,” Washington, D.C., Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.
4 Ibid., pp. 98-100.
8 Ball, John C., Air Photo Evidence, Delta, B.C., Canada: Ball Resources Services Limited, 1992, p. 108.

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