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DRAFT

April 2, 1991

Dear Mr. Meed:

Thank you very much for your kind words of support for my efforts and policies regarding the Middle East. As I said in my recent Address to the Nation, "No one country can claim this victory as its own. It was not only a victory for Kuwait, but a victory for all the coalition partners. This is a victory for the United Nations, for all mankind, for the rule of law, and for what is right."

Kuwait is now liberated. Iraq has accepted all of the multinational coalition's terms for ending the hostilities. A profound lesson has been taught to those who would seek to emulate Saddam Hussein.

My thoughts and prayers have now turned to the restoration of peace and stability in the Gulf and in the Middle East as a whole. Bringing peace to this troubled region is a daunting challenge, but one that we all should commit to accomplishing. I would welcome your continued support for our efforts.

Sincerely,

George Bush

Benjamin Meed
United States Holocaust Memorial Council
2000 L Street N.W.
Suite 588
Washington, D.C. 20036-4907



1980
United States
Holocaust Memorial Council

United States Holocaust Memorial Council

Read, then
Talk to Bobbie
about it

January 31, 1991

The Honorable George Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I just walked from the White House into the offices of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. Sitting so close to you in the Cabinet Room, I wanted so much to speak to you. But more, I wanted to hear everything that you were saying. Sitting now in the Council's offices and reflecting upon your words, I must tell you that the world would be different if fifty years ago there had been people in the White House like you who are so determined to save humanity.

As Americans, most of our involvements have been to save other nations, and through them, to save ourselves. As a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and as the President of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, thank you for your stand, your deeds and your encouraging words. I believe Mr. President, that you will be remembered as the President who truly established a new order of respect between nations.

We know that you are dealing with an unpredictable murderer who has no regard for human life. We know also the enormity of the decisions you face with such an enemy. May God bless you and the people surrounding you. With your victory, the world will be indeed a different place.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Meed
Chairman
Museum Content and
Days of Remembrance Committees



Kathy Javon

Tel: (212) 239-4230

Fax: (212) 279-2926

American Gathering/Federation of Jewish Holocaust Survivors

אגודת קאטור צוואנעווקס פערעראציע פון דער שאריות הפליטה

122 WEST 30TH STREET . SUITE 205 . NEW YORK, N.Y. 10001

BENJAMIN MEED
President

February 28, 1991

The Honorable George Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In this hour of triumph for the cause of freedom, we commend your leadership, steadfastness and courage which you and the Armed Forces have exemplified to achieve victory of "Operation Desert Storm".

The same armies, which brought us liberty, have added another golden leaf to their historical record, and have defeated gloriously the most dangerous tyrant of our days.

The community of Jewish Holocaust survivors of the United States, today proud American people, expresses its gratitude to you, our President, and as Commander-in-Chief of all men and women in uniform who have become heroes in the service of a great cause.

Respectfully yours,

Benjamin Meed
President

American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors

Winsky

March 10, 1992

I am pleased to send greetings to all those who are gathered at the United States Capitol for the 1992 Days of Remembrance Ceremony.

As this ceremony reminds us, each of us has a solemn obligation to help in preserving the memory and the meaning of the Holocaust. Although we will be haunted forever by the terror of those dark days, let us also remember the brave heroes and martyrs who fought against the evils of Nazism. Their courage and their sacrifices must not only strengthen our faith in the ultimate triumph of good but also challenge and inspire us to denounce affronts to human life and dignity wherever and whenever they occur.

Through their efforts to erect a Holocaust museum, the members of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council are playing a leading role in efforts to teach younger generations about this horrifying chapter in history. In so doing, Council members are also helping to show why we must not and will not tolerate bigotry and hatred today -- whether it be in the form of racism, anti-Semitism, or anti-religious activity.

I commend the Council and its supporters for their commitment to this worthwhile cause, and I join with all of you in remembering and praying for the victims of the Holocaust.

CALL SARA BLOOMFIELD FOR PICK UP
653-9220

GB/WJB/TD/SMG/tpm
cc: B.Butterfield-93/T.Donovan/CF
EVENT: APR 16
DUE: MAR 1

Corres.#: 612289

Windy

30

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*over
post.*



B ' N A I B ' R I T H

COMMISSION ON
CONTINUING
JEWISH EDUCATION

April 6, 1992

Ms. Cathy Jeavons
Associate Director
Office of Public Liaison
Old Executive Office Building, Room 129
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. Jeavons:

Last spring, B'nai B'rith, at the request of the Speaker of Israel Knesset and the Yad Vashem Memorial Center in Jerusalem, conducted a Holocaust commemoration program entitled "Unto Every Person There Is A Name." In 83 cities throughout the United States, B'nai B'rith members gathered at courthouses, city halls, public libraries, synagogues, and Holocaust memorials to recite the names of Jews who perished in the Holocaust. Each program included a brief description of the Holocaust and the chanting of the traditional memorial prayer. All who participated found the reading of names to be a very moving and meaningful experience because it helped them to think of the victims of the Holocaust as individuals.

In Washington a successful program was held on the steps of the Capitol. Your office contributed to its success by preparing a letter from President George Bush. Ms. Bobbi Kilberg attended the ceremonies in Washington and read the letter. Enclosed is a copy of that letter.

Because of the huge success of last year's program, the speaker of the Israel Knesset and Yad Vashem have again requested B'nai B'rith International to coordinate this world-wide program in the United States. We have accepted and are now making plans to conduct "Unto Every Person There Is A Name" on Sunday, April 26, 1992, from sunrise to sunset, in scores of communities throughout the United States. This year's focus will be on the one and a half million child victims of the Holocaust.

(more)

INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
1640 RHODE ISLAND AVENUE, NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20036-3278
202-857-6580 FAX 202-857-0980

Ms. Cathy Jeavons
April 6, 1992
Page Two

We again plan to hold our local Holocaust program at the Capitol and would be pleased if your office would be kind enough to prepare another letter and send a representative to read it.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I shall look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah Amster". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Deborah Amster
Program Coordinator

enc.

cc: Dan Mariaschin

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 11, 1991

I am pleased to send greetings to the members of B'nai B'rith International and to all those observing Yom Hashoa in remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust.

It is fitting that we take this opportunity to remember the millions of innocent men, women, and children who died at the hands of the Nazis during World War II. In so doing, we affirm that it is our memory of the past that fuels our determination to fight the evils of bigotry, religious persecution, and tyranny.

Today, as the names of those who died in the Holocaust are read aloud in 83 cities throughout our land, we are reminded that each victim was -- like each of us -- a precious member of the human family. The sound of their names is a poignant tribute, one that personalizes this horrific event and helps to guarantee that those who lost their lives will not be forgotten. By continuing to stand firm against bigotry and hatred, by remaining ever vigilant in defense of liberty and justice, we will keep faith with all of them and maintain the sense of solidarity that must prevent genocidal terror from ever happening again.

Barbara joins me in commending you for participating in this important event.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "George Bush".



United States Holocaust Memorial Council

FAX TRANSMITTAL COVER SHEET

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United States Holocaust Memorial Council

Executive Director

Program Background

In June 1940, France fell to Hitler. More than four million people -- refugees from across Europe as well as French citizens -- were suddenly trapped in the "unoccupied zone," the southern French provinces where the Vichy government was obligated by Armistice Article 19 to "surrender on demand" anyone the Gestapo wished to interrogate, imprison, intern in concentration camps or return to Germany for trial or murder. Panicking, thousands fled to Marseilles, where many of the refugees hoped to find a way out of France.

As described by Victor Serge in his Memoirs of a Revolutionary, Marseilles in the summer of 1940 embraced a "crowd of refugees of first-rate brains from all those classes which have ceased to exist through the mere fact of daring to say no, most of them rather quietly, to totalitarian oppression. In our ranks are enough doctors, psychologists, engineers, educators, poets, painters, writers, musicians, economists and public men to vitalize a whole great country. Our wretchedness contains as much talent and expertise as Paris could summon in the days of her prime, and none of it is visible, only hunted, terribly tired men at the limit of their nervous resources."

Among these "hunted and terribly tired men" were some of the great artists, poets, writers and intellectuals of the twentieth century: Andre Breton, Marc Chagall, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst Jacques Lipchitz, Henri Matisse; Lion Feuctwanger, already in an internment camp; Franz Werfel and his wife, Alma Mahler Gropius Werfel; Thomas Mann's brother Heinrich and his son, Golo; Hannah Arendt.

-2-

Also, in Marseilles and at great risk were Konrad Heiden, whose truthful biography of Hitler made him an obvious target for Nazi reprisals, German Social Democratic leader Rudolph Breitscheid, former German Minister of Finance Rudolph Hilferding, and Italian Socialist Party leader Guiseppe Modigliani. There were others, scholars, journalists, scientists, Nobel-Prize winners, world renowned intellectuals, what Daniel Bell termed "the flower of European culture" desperately cornered individuals "at the edge of the water, waiting anxiously for their fate to be decided."

For many, fate came in the form of another individual in Marseilles in August of 1940, an American by the name of Varian Fry who, together with a small group of unlikely associates, succeeded in assisting more than one thousand artists, musicians, writers, scholars, politicians, labor leaders and their families to leave France either legally or illegally. Their effort came to be called "Operation Emergency Rescue," the official name given to what ultimately emerged as the evacuation and preservation of civilization at risk.

The Varian Fry story is not merely a tale of heroism in wartime; it is the story of a man who reached beyond himself in a moment of extraordinary challenge, who perceived the need but underestimated the risk, and who, despite both personal idiosyncrasies and enormous obstacles, saved the lives of individuals whose contributions to our culture have been widely celebrated, yet whose own efforts in assuring their escape from certain death have gone unacknowledged for half a century.

Bookish and intellectually condescending, Varian Fry was hardly the kind of person one would choose to play the Scarlet Pimpernel. Yet, there he was, the New York-born stockbroker's son, a classicist educated at proper New England prep schools and at Harvard, an editor on leave from the Foreign Policy Association, being sent -- almost as a last resort, because no one else could be found -- as the representative of the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC), a group dedicated to helping the intellectual elite of Europe escape the Nazi terror. Armed with a list of names of those considered to be in gravest danger -- a list of 200 odd names whittled down from numerous lists submitted by among others, Thomas Mann, Jacques Maritain, Jules Romains, and the then director of the Museum of Modern Art, Alfred Barr -- the thirty-two year old Fry arrived in Marseilles in mid-August, 1940 for what was to be a three-week mission.

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Three weeks stretched into thirteen months, ending only with Fry's forcible expulsion from France; during that time, Fry's moral passion and intellectual acuity were catalyzed by the immediacy of the very real threat, the urgent, often hysterical needs of his "clients," and the recognition that there was no one else to do the job, into the ingenious, even audacious establishment of an underground escape organization operating under the benign cover of an American relief agency, the Centre Americain de Secours (CAS).

Consumed with the urgency of his task, Fry found it difficult to make his colleagues in New York appreciate both the delicacy and the enormity of his challenge. Operating of necessity in the realm of illegalities -- covert escapes, forged documentation -- Fry was perceived as a liability by most, though not all, American consular representatives in France. Though risking his personal security in the face of both Gestapo and Vichy officials, Fry did what was necessary to save as many of the refugees, on and off his list, as possible.

There was Chagall, stubbornly refusing to leave France, who only after a brief, though frightening encounter with the Vichy police and an assurance from Fry that indeed, there were cows in America, agreed to accept the assistance of the ERC. There were Andre Breton, Max Ernst and a host of other mad, engaging and colorful Surrealists who lived with Fry in a chateau on the outskirts of Marseilles during the winter of 1940/41, the Villa Air-Bel, renamed by one of the inhabitants the "Chateau Espere-Visa."

There were the clients -- Hilferding and Breitscheid among them -- who for reasons of pride, fear or both, refused Fry's repeated pleas to risk the escape into Spain, and who in refusing, signed their own death warrants. And, there was the almost incredible tale of the Heinrich Manns and the Franz Werfels, personally escorted out of France by Varian Fry. The elder brother of Thomas Mann, barely able to make the steep, thistly climb, was virtually carried by his wife, whose stockings were blood-stained and shredded by the time they reached the Spanish frontier. Alma Mahler Werfel insisted on escaping undercover wearing a blindingly white dress and in spite of Fry's insistence on taking only essentials, brought along twelve valises! The excess was characteristic of the owner, but the contents were a piece of history: for inside these suitcases were her husband's draft manuscript of The Song of Bernadette, and the original score of Anton Bruckner's Third Symphony.

-4-

After returning home, Fry was unable to reconstruct his life. He had been too changed, utterly altered as a person, and his "re-entry" into daily life was at first difficult, and ultimately, impossible. In 1945, Fry published Surrender on Demand, a book documenting his Marseilles experience. Though critically hailed, the book did not appeal to a general readership already sated with stories of war and gallantry in action. His marriage dissolved; his professional efforts were stymied. Attempts at business, script writing, and motion picture production failed miserably. A second marriage ended in divorce. Deeply depressed, bitter and despairing, Fry tried again to renew his life, looking forward to a new job as a Latin teacher in a Connecticut high school. Only one week after school began, on September 12, 1967, he died suddenly, alone in bed, of a heart attack. On the sheets beside him were manuscript pages of his revised chronicle of the months in France. The investigating police officer who found him referred to the papers as an apparent "work of fiction."

There was one brief moment of recognition for Fry, twenty-seven years after Operation Emergency Rescue and exactly five months before his death. Appreciation came not from the United States, but from France. At the insistence of Andre Malraux, indebted to Fry because he was the only one who had been willing and able to establish a line of contact between Malraux and DeGaulle during the war, the French Government on April 12, 1967, awarded Fry the Croix du Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor.

There are times when the circumstances of history turn great men into small men, and small men into heroes. Such was the case with so many of the refugees caught in France in the summer of 1940, and with Varian Fry, an ordinary man transformed by extraordinary events. Caught in the lethal tempest of war, frightened and desperate men of exceptional talents trusted him with their lives.

By virtue of Fry's actions, some of the great people of our century were able to lead out their lives, free from fear and persecution, as citizens of a free nation, and within that freedom, to create, contribute and prevail. We owe Varian Fry the courtesy, if not the obligation, of our gratitude.

~~Weapons~~

Commercial Films

① The Music Box - Nazi War Criminals

② Triumph of the Spirit - Auschwitz ^{Beresin}

- Greek Jew

- boxer

- based on a true story

she thinks this is good

daily life for people in the camps

William Dyer

③ Enemies - A Love Story

* ① Holocaust survivor

some sexual

✓ Weapons of the Spirit ⇒ ^{more} uplifting

- objection is its a little long

- ~~Alm~~ / Mr. B. ~~Smith~~

- documentary

- positive story

- mainly children

- helped by poor Tompkins

Point
Gunnery

W. ~~Smith~~

④ Amalgam to Care

* Alm interviews people who helped



United States Holocaust Memorial Council

Executive Director

VARIAN FRY 1907 - 1967

- June 14, 1940 France falls
- June 25, 1940 Emergency Rescue Comm. (ERC) established in New York
- August 15, 1940 Varian Fry goes to Marseilles with a list of 200 intellectual, cultural and political leaders trapped in Vichy France and a few thousand dollars hidden in his socks; plans to stay one month to rescue these refugees; sets up American relief agency as cover operation.
- August 29, 1941 Fry taken into custody by French police and expelled; After almost 13 months, he had been in contact with approximately 20,000 refugees; gave protection to more than 4,000, and actually rescued over 1,000 people, including Hannah Arendt, Marc Chagall, Andre Breton, Marc Chagall, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Jacques Lipschitz, Heinrich Mann, Wanda Landowska, Alma Mahler Gropius Werfel, etc.
- April 12, 1967 Awarded the Croix du Chavalier of the French Legion of Honor
- September 12, 1967 Died, alone, in bed, and basically unacknowledged.

nized faces I had not seen since the old days of the *Secours Américain*, Rue Grignan, Marseilles. They understood what Jacques Lipchitz meant.

Legendary figures pass before our eyes, monolithic figures onto which we project our dreams. Heroes of flesh and blood are complex creatures, born sometimes to shine brilliantly only for their short and finest hour. Varian Fry went to Marseilles to his appointed task and fulfilled his mission, not less glorious because it was brief. Let the record speak.

It is roughly estimated that the Emergency Rescue Committee handled some two thousand cases, representing in all over four thousand human beings. Of these more than one thousand were sent out of France by legal or illegal means. For the others, the Committee intervened directly in getting them liberated from jail or concentration camps, found places of hiding or false identities, or simply paid them a weekly allowance for as long as possible.

Here follows a partial list of some of the better-known names, those that I have been able to locate. Many were well known forty years ago; others will still be recognized today. To these should be added the hundreds whose courage—and survival—have enriched the quality of our national life.

Art

Marc Chagall, painter
 Marcel Duchamp, surrealist painter
 Max Ernst, surrealist painter
 Wilfredo Lam, surrealist painter
 Jacques Lipchitz, sculptor
 Lipchitz, photographer
 André Masson, surrealist painter
 Charles Sterling, formerly director of the Ingres Museum of Montauban, later assistant curator of the Metropolitan Museum of New York
 Bruno Strauss, art critic
 Paul Westheim, art critic
 Ylla, animal photographer

The Theater and Music

Hans Auficht, theatrical producer
 Edward Fendler, conductor
 Erich Ior-Hahn, pianist
 Heinz Jolles, pianist
 Siegfried Kracauer, film critic
 Wanda Landowska, harpsichordist
 Lotte Leonard, singer
 Polakoff-Litovzeff, theatrical producer

Writers, Publishers, and Editors

Hannah Arendt, writer in political and social sciences
 Georg Bernhard, editor of the *Pariser Tageszeitung*
 André Breton, surrealist poet
 Heinrich Ehrmann, economist
 Lion Feuchtwanger, novelist
 Leonard Frank, novelist
 Giuseppe Garetto, novelist
 Oscar Goldberg, Hebraic scholar
 Hans Habe, novelist
 Konrad Heiden, biographer of Hitler
 Wilhelm Herzog, anti-fascist writer
 Berthold Jacob, pacifist, journalist, kidnapped in Lisbon
 Jean Malaquais, novelist
 Golo Mann, historian
 Heinrich Mann, writer of historical novels
 Valeriu Marcu, historian
 Walter Meining, poet
 Hans Natonek, humorist
 Hertha Pauli, novelist
 Benjamin Péret, poet
 Alfred Polgar, essayist
 Hans Sahl, novelist
 Jacques Schiffrin, publisher of the Pléiade editions of the French classics
 Victor Serge, novelist
 Franz Werfel, novelist

Science and Philosophy

De Castro, Secretary of the Faculty of Science at the University of Madrid
 E. S. Gumbel, statistician
 Jacques-Salomon Hadamard, mathematician

- Alfredo Mendizabel, professor of philosophy at the University of Madrid
Otto Meyerhof, physiologist, winner of 1922 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine
Boris Mirkin-Guetzovich of the Sorbonne
Peter Pringsheim, physicist
Bruno Strauss, psychiatrist

Political Militants

- Walter Benninghaus, German Social Democrat
Franz Boegler, German Socialist
Ladislav Dobos, Hungarian anti-fascist
Klaus Dohrn, Austrian monarchist
Bedrich Heine, German Socialist
Otto Klepper, former Minister of Finance of Prussia
Fritz Lam, German Socialist
Giuseppe Modigliani, leader of the Italian Socialist Party
Heinrich Mueller, German Syndicalist
Wilhelm Pfeffer, German Socialist
Gustavo Pitaluga, former vice-president of the Health Commission of the League of Nations
Friedrich Stampfer, former Socialist deputy to the Reichstag and editor of the Berlin *Vorwaerts*
Hans Tittle, German Socialist
Arthur Wolff, lawyer



AMERICAN HERITAGE

Sponsored by the Society of American Historians

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LeMoyné Billings was John Fitzgerald Kennedy's best friend from Choate to the White House—and that makes him part of history.
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Most surveys of American painting begin in New England in the eighteenth century, move westward to the Rockies in the nineteenth, and return to New York in the twentieth. Now we'll have to redraw the map.
- 42 HIGHBROW, LOWBROW, MIDDLEBROW—NOW: An Interview With Russell Lynes by John Brooks *Our fascination with categorizing ourselves was fed in 1949 by a famous essay and chart that divided us by taste into different strata of culture. Now Russell Lynes, the man who invented these classifications, brings us up to date.*
- 49 SCIENTISTS AT WAR: THE BIRTH OF THE RAND CORPORATION
by Fred Kaplan *During World War II, America discovered that scientists were needed to win it—and to win any future war. That's why RAND came into being, the first think tank and the model for all the rest.*
- 65 THE MAN WHO DIDN'T INVENT BASEBALL by Victor Salvatore
Abner Doubleday had an eventful life, but as far as we know, he never gave a thought to the game with which his name is so firmly linked.
- 69 THE OLD BALL GAME by John Thorn
A portfolio of rare photographs recalls baseball's rough-and-tumble vintage era.
- 76 BASEBALL'S GREATEST SONG by John W. Ripley
... illuminated by the hand-tinted slides that made it a hit.
- 82 ESCAPE FROM VICHY by Donald Carroll
One of the most ingenious and least known rescue missions of World War II was engineered by a young American dandy who shepherded to safety hundreds of European intellectuals wanted by the Nazis.
- 94 THOREAU'S VACATION by Joseph J. Thorndike, Jr.
He only took a week, and he went by rowboat, but his journey on the Concord and Merrimack rivers inspired a classic portrait of New England in the shadow of the Industrial Revolution.
- 102 THE STRANGE FATE OF THE BLACK LOYALISTS by R. D. Eno
Thousands of them sided with Great Britain, only to become the wandering children of the American Revolution.
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ESCAPE from



VICHY

One of the most ingenious and least known rescue missions of World War II was engineered by a young American dandy, Varian Fry, who shepherded to safety hundreds of European intellectuals wanted by the Nazis

by Donald Carroll

From this station at Cerbère, France, the refugees began their clandestine trek over the Pyrénées.

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

ALL WARS, great and small, can be counted on to produce four things: misery, death, destruction, and refugees. As far as the first three are concerned, the Second World War differed from its predecessors only in scale. In the matter of refugees, however, the conflict produced a wholly new phenomenon: the mass transplanting of the intelligentsia of one continent to another continent. To quote Laura Fermi, herself a distinguished refugee and the wife of the great physicist Enrico Fermi, what took place in 1940 and 1941 constituted "a unique phenomenon in the history of immigration."

Indeed, historians have argued that in the eighteen months between the German conquest of France and the American entry into the war, the United States enjoyed a cultural and intellectual windfall of unprecedented proportions. It *was* without parallel both in its scope and in its consequences. But it wasn't a windfall.

There was someone up there shaking the tree. His name was Varian Fry. It is not a name you are likely to have come across, for it turns up principally in footnotes to scholarly works and brief paragraphs of tribute in memoirs. Thus has one of the most remarkable rescue missions ever undertaken remained shrouded in obscurity for more than forty years.

Varian Fry hardly seemed handpicked by destiny to deliver Europe's artists and intellectuals from the Gestapo. The son of a stockbroker, he was born in New York City on October 15, 1907, and grew up in suburban Ridgewood, New Jersey. As a child he was moody, introverted, and an accomplished hypochondriac.

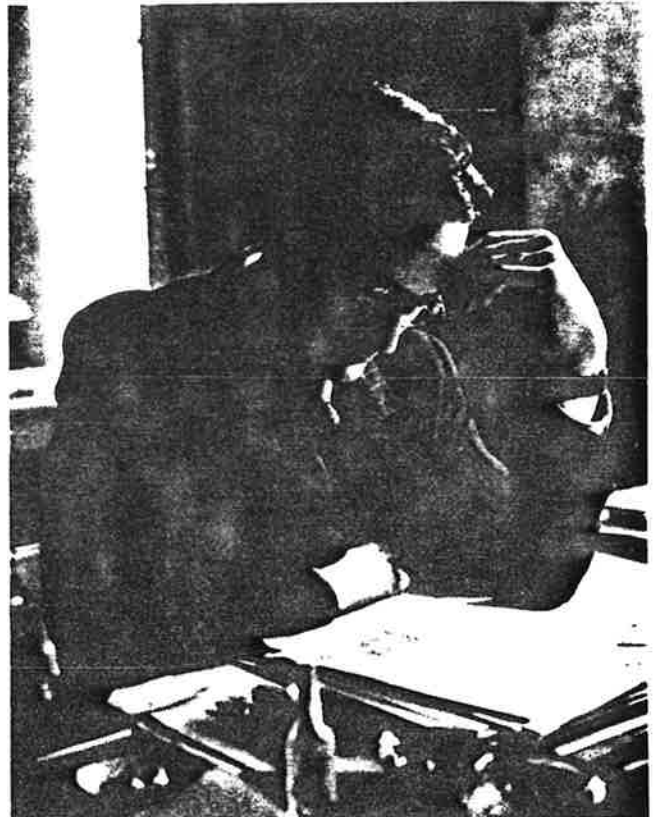
In an effort to awaken his interest in his schoolwork and schoolmates, Fry's parents sent him away at the age of fourteen to Hotchkiss, the distinguished private school in Lakeville, Connecticut. There he found himself challenged for the first time both intellectually and socially. And his response to these challenges, typically, was to find new ways of isolating himself. He displayed an extraordinary gift for languages, particularly Latin, and an equally extraordinary intolerance for those not similarly gifted. Socially he went to even greater lengths to put distance between himself and his peers. He became an exceedingly fastidious dresser, and he cultivated an interest in good food and wine, though his budget (and his age) seldom permitted him to test his newfound expertise—and his fragile stomach punished him whenever he did. He developed a protocol of eating to which he would adhere however inappropriate the circumstances; he would, for example, insist on a knife and fork when served a sandwich in a snack bar. And he took up smoking. That is, he took up cigarettes, which he thought looked good in his hands; he never inhaled.

Of course, this erudite and precociously jaded sophisticate attracted few friends and much ridicule, so much in fact that one day in the middle of his third year at Hotchkiss he showed up at his father's office in Manhattan and announced that he had "resigned" from school. A few weeks later he was enrolled in another Connecticut prep school, Taft, which he found more to his liking.

In the fall of 1926 Fry entered Harvard. Suddenly exposed to the seductive freedom of being able to choose where and how he wanted to live and what courses he wanted to take, his do-it-yourself sophistication let him down.

His academic performance became erratic as his intellectual arrogance became more abrasive; his behavior became more eccentric, his sartorial idiosyncracies more pronounced. His only triumph came in September 1927, at the start of his sophomore year, when he founded, with his friend Lincoln Kirstein, *The Hound & Horn*, a literary magazine of enough merit to have its appearance hailed in *The New York Times*. But Kirstein soon wearied of Fry's pedantic tantrums, and Fry became irritated with Kirstein's lack of "moral passion" on issues involving the correct use of English. They quarreled, and Fry left the magazine.

Fry arrived in Marseilles on August 15, 1940. He had with him two suitcases of clothes, a list of two hundred names, and three thousand dollars in cash taped to his leg.



Varian Fry sits at his desk in the rue Grignan office of his Centre Américain de Secours in Marseilles, about 1940.

During his senior year he fell in love with Eileen Hughes, an editor at *The Atlantic Monthly*. A maternal woman seven years his senior, she was as gentle, patient, and tolerant as he was not. They were married in June 1931.

After Fry's graduation the couple moved to New York City. While Eileen taught English at Brearley, a private girls' school in Manhattan, Fry worked as an assistant editor at *Scholastic* magazine, for which he also wrote articles and book reviews. Then, in 1935, he was offered the chance to succeed Quincy Howe as editor of *The Living Age*, a prestigious review of international affairs. The only condition that Howe attached to the appointment was that Fry should first go to Germany and inform himself about what was happening under the Third Reich.

And so it was that the dapper twenty-seven-year-old found himself on the Kurfürstendamm, the broad thoroughfare running through the heart of Berlin, on the evening of July 15, 1935—a night on which the Nazis orchestrated a savage anti-Semitic pogrom. For the better part of that evening Fry looked on in disbelief as Nazi toughs swarmed up and down the Kurfürstendamm in a murderous frenzy, beating and kicking Jews, dragging them out of shops, pulling them out of cars, pummeling them, spitting on them, hurling rocks, chairs, tables through their windows, screeching insults at them as they fell under the blows. And singing:

*Wenn Judenblut vom Messer spritzt,
Dann geht's nochmal so gut!*

("When Jewish blood spurts from the knife,
then things will go even better!")

On his return to the United States, at last equipped with a cause worthy of his moral and intellectual passion, Fry mounted a furious campaign both in print and from speakers' platforms to warn Americans of the threat Hitler represented.

In 1937 Fry quit his post at *The Living Age* and moved to the Foreign Policy Association, where he continued to warn of the coming of another Great War. Convinced by the spring of 1939 that it was inevitable, he began to write a pamphlet entitled *The Peace That Failed*. He was working on the final chapter when the Germans invaded Poland in September.

Immediately he joined the American Friends of German Freedom, a group that was raising money for the anti-Fascist cause in Europe. Its chairman was the distinguished theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, but the real moving force behind its work was an Austrian emigré named Karl Frank, a veteran of the anti-Nazi underground. Although he and Fry were strikingly dissimilar, they became fast friends on the basis of their shared conviction that the United States should be prepared to go to any lengths, including war, to bring down Hitler.

In 1939 this was far from being a popular view in America and it became even less popular in the spring of 1940, when the "Phony War" along the Maginot Line turned into the *Blitzkrieg* that engulfed Denmark and Norway, then

Holland, Belgium, and France. By late May, with the German armies striking deep into French territory, and with Franco in power on the other side of the Pyrénées and Mussolini on the other side of the Alps, it was clear that soon—perhaps in a matter of days—the entire continent of Europe would be a Fascist garrison. For the preceding seven years intellectuals from all over Europe had been pouring into France to escape the Gestapo. Now the Germans were closing in fast. For these refugees, their former haven could become a Nazi slaughterhouse.

Fry and Frank decided they would conduct a fund-raising campaign to bring to the United States as many of these refugees as possible. And to launch it, they came up with the idea of holding a big luncheon to which they would invite various dignitaries as guest speakers. After booking a banquet room at the Commodore Hotel for June 25, they started sending out the invitations.

Meanwhile, the news from France became grimmer by the day. On June 10 Italy entered the war against its reeling neighbor. On June 14 the Germans occupied Paris. On June 17 the French government, on the run in Bordeaux, capitulated. Then came a long, suspenseful week of waiting to hear what armistice terms Hitler would impose.

The news came through on June 24, the day before the luncheon at the Commodore. In the words of the headline in *The New York Times* that morning: NAZI SHADOW FALLS ON HALF OF FRANCE UNDER TERMS. The Germans were to occupy roughly the northern half of France, plus a corridor running the entire length of the country's Atlantic coastline, while the French government of eighty-four-year-old Marshal Pétain was to be left in nominal control of the south. That was good news, such as it was. The bad news was contained in Article XIX of the armistice agreement: The French were obliged to "surrender on demand" anyone the Germans wanted.

PERHAPS BECAUSE OF the obvious implications of this provision or perhaps because of the number of illustrious figures who had agreed to put in an appearance at the Commodore—including the radio commentators Elmer Davis and Raymond Gram Swing—the luncheon on the twenty-fifth was packed, and thirty-five hundred dollars was raised for the purpose of helping the most endangered intellectuals to escape.

Money alone, however, would not save them. Clearly some sort of rescue operation had to be mounted as well. Erika Mann, daughter of the great German novelist Thomas Mann, urged that an organization be set up to send someone to France to arrange the escapes in person. Everyone agreed, and the Emergency Rescue Committee was established on the spot.

As soon as the luncheon was over, the new committee's members, including Karl Frank and Varian Fry, held their first meeting and tackled their first problem: Who would be willing and able to undertake such a risky mission? After hours of fruitless speculation and argument, Fry grew impatient and, half-facetiously, volunteered to go himself.

The others, much to his surprise, warmly endorsed the idea.

For the next several weeks Fry worked feverishly to prepare for the trip. He coaxed a passport out of the State Department, which at that time took a dim view of Americans traveling to Europe. He coaxed a letter of introduction out of his friends at the International YMCA, a letter identifying him as a relief worker, because the French authorities took a dim view of anyone who wanted to enter France without having some kind of official business. He quizzed refugees and other recent arrivals from Europe about conditions in the “free” part of France, now governed from Vichy. He spoke to Eleanor Roosevelt, enlisting her support for his efforts—specifically with the American consuls in France. He conferred with Thomas Mann, Jacques Maritain, Jules Romains, and many others, who provided him with the list of names of those whom it would be his job to save from the Nazis.

Fry arrived in Marseilles on Thursday, August 15, 1940, after traveling overland by train from Lisbon. He had with him two suitcases of clothes, a list of two hundred names in his pocket, and three thousand dollars in cash taped to his leg. Immediately he installed himself in Room 307 at the Hotel Splendide, which sits at the bottom of the vast stone staircase that spills down from the Gare St. Charles.

WITHIN HOURS word of his arrival was racing through Marseilles. As the Czech writer Hans Natonek later recalled in his memoirs: “Like the first bird note of a gloomy morning, a rumor ran around the cafés. It was said that an American had arrived with the funds and the will to help. It was another distraction in a city in which rumor abounded, a city in which black-market operators sold hysterical men berths on ships which did not exist to ports which, in any case, would have denied them entry. But the rumor persisted and grew. It was said that this American had a list . . .”

If Marseilles was ready for Fry, however, he wasn't ready for Marseilles. Indeed, it would have been a miracle if he had been. Today, long after the story of Vichy France has become a matter of public record as well as private memory, one still can find Frenchmen who steadfastly refuse to believe that their compatriots could have so dishonored themselves in their abject eagerness to please their conquerors. Even the Nazi leaders were said to have been taken aback by the collaborationist zeal of the French.

Pétain decreed null and void the old French law protecting minorities against libel and slander on the basis of race or religion, and daily, in posters, in newspapers, in broadcasts from Radio Vichy, a torrent of vilification poured forth against Jews and other “traitors.”

The Vichy government issued one ominous decree after another. One of the earliest ordered an immediate census taken of all Jews. This was followed by a law prohibiting them from holding elected office and banning them from the judiciary, the military, the civil service, the news media, banking, teaching, and any position where they might

“influence cultural life.” Similarly, all Jewish-owned businesses had to be registered, for possible “Aryanization.” Shortly thereafter a statute was enacted authorizing prefects of police to arrest foreign Jews without cause and have them interned in any of the growing number of French concentration camps, where they were to be segregated and, if desired, formed into forced-labor gangs. Then it was announced that all foreigners between the ages of eighteen and fifty-five could be so interned.

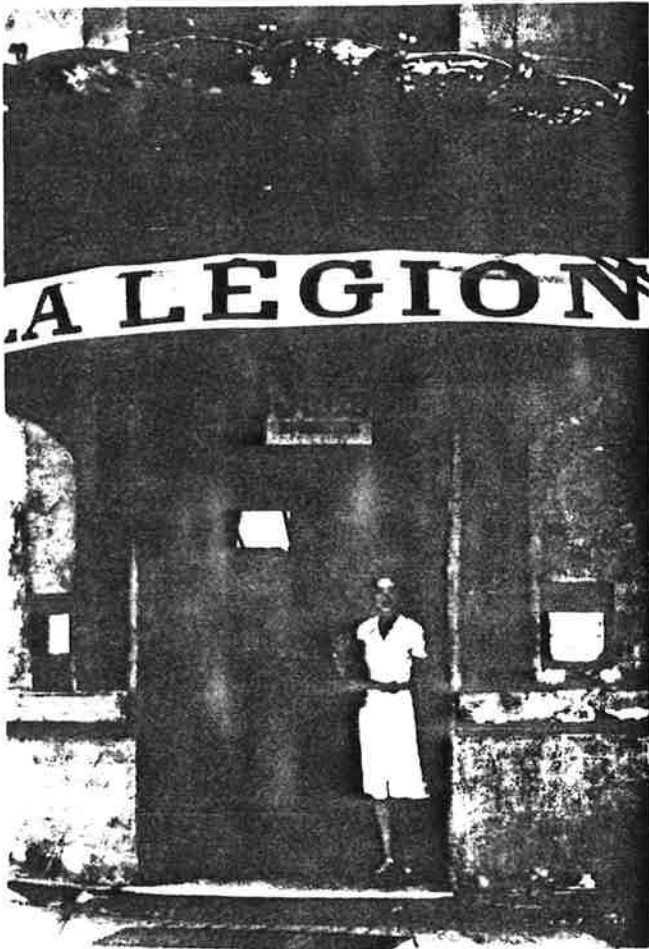
No one was allowed to leave the country without an exit visa—and all applications for exit visas were handed over to the Gestapo. Consequently, for those in the greatest danger if they remained in France, the very act of asking to leave was sufficient to guarantee instant arrest, internment in a concentration camp, and ultimately, deportation to Germany.

Small wonder, then, that when Fry arrived in Marseilles, he found the city's swollen refugee population gripped alternately by panic and despair. Day after day, throughout the hot summer, they had been crowding the cafés, sitting for the most part in stricken silence, picking their way through the hundreds of pitiful newspaper advertisements: “Mother seeking infant daughter who disappeared on the road north of Limoges. . . .” “Please help me find my wife, last seen in Tours on June 21st. . . .” “Small reward for anyone who knows the whereabouts of my parents. . . .”

It was the relative silence in the streets that first struck Fry about Marseilles. Though gorged with people, the ordinarily clamorous seaport was hushed. Ignoring his fatigue after the long and uncomfortable train journey from Lisbon, Fry moved quickly to establish contact with as many people on his list as he could find. The first ones he located were the Czech novelist Franz Werfel, whose *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* had been an international best seller, and his already legendary wife, Alma Mahler Gropius Werfel. They were staying in a hotel down near the harbor. Fry found them distinctly unappealing: Werfel, a fat little man with thick glasses, was full of whining self-pity; his wife, of imperious self-importance.

Much more congenial was the aristocratic and soft-spoken Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann's older brother, who at that time was probably better known as a writer, at least in Germany and France, than his brother. Indeed, such was the respect he commanded that in 1932 he had been put forward by the social democratic press as a candidate for president of the German Republic, and in 1933, when Hitler came to power, Mann was the first person to be stripped of his German citizenship. He and his young wife, Nelly, were staying in a hotel right across the street from the Splendide.

THE NEXT NAME Fry checked off his list was that of Lion Feuchtwanger, a distinguished historical novelist whose books, with primarily Jewish themes, were anathema to the Nazis. Feuchtwanger, who, like Mann, had been deprived of his German citizenship in 1933, had the most interesting refuge of all: he and his wife, Marta, were



At the Marseilles headquarters of La Legion, the French veterans organization, civilian Jews were forbidden.

Pétain decreed null and void an old French law protecting minorities, and daily in the press a torrent of vilification poured forth against Jews and other "traitors."

living comfortably with the American vice-consul, Harry Bingham. Feuchtwanger had found sanctuary there because Eleanor Roosevelt, a great admirer of his work, had seen a photograph of him confined in the St. Nicolas concentration camp near Nîmes, and she had cabled the consulate in Marseilles to take whatever steps were necessary to save him. However, as the consul-general was determined not to take any steps that might compromise American neutrality or complicate America's relations with Vichy (or for that matter, to do anything that might please the Roosevelts—he still had, in 1940, a portrait of Herbert Hoover above his desk),

Bingham had taken it upon himself to help ensure Feuchtwanger's survival.

After these initial contacts, it was only a few days before Fry had managed to get in touch with a majority of the people on his list. Actually, so efficient was the refugee grapevine that most of them found him before he could find them. Likewise, he recruited some much-needed helpers from among those who came to the Splendide to volunteer information or assistance. Two were to become crucial to the success of his operation: Albert Hirschman, a baby-faced twenty-five-year-old German economist whom Fry nicknamed Beamish, and Miriam Davenport, an attractive and energetic young Smith graduate from Boston who had been studying art history at the University of Paris when the war broke out and who was determined not to return to the United States until she could take her Yugoslav boyfriend back with her. With the thirty-two-year-old Varian Fry as their ringleader, this improbable little band of conspirators proceeded to launch one of the most audacious rescue operations of the war.

The first order of business was to establish a cover for the operation and, if possible, to get some sort of official sanction for it. So Fry went to see the secretary-general of the prefecture and spelled out his plans for setting up an American Relief Center to aid needy refugees. Whether it was the fact that the plan sounded innocent enough, or the fact that Fry certainly looked innocent enough in his pinstriped suit embellished with a silk handkerchief and a boutonniere, the secretary-general gave his blessing to the enterprise. A few days later the *Centre Américain de Secours* opened its doors in an abandoned handbag factory in the rue Grignan.

There, from early in the morning until late at night, Fry and his two young cohorts interviewed refugees. The basic information about each—plus the name of someone who could verify the information—was written down on an index card. Addresses, however, were omitted, as such information could be fatal if the cards ever fell into the wrong hands. Some refugees were given money for food, and perhaps a letter of introduction to the American consulate or a bona fide relief agency; others, principally the ones on Fry's list, were told to stand by for news of possible "travel plans."

After the last of the refugees had departed each day, Fry, Beamish, and their secretary, Lena Fishman, would adjourn to the bathroom, turn on all the taps to foil any attempts at electronic eavesdropping, and there they would talk over any special problems that might have arisen during the day. When the discussion was over, Fry and Beamish would hide the most incriminating documents—usually by loosening the screws on the mirror inside the closet door and sliding the papers behind the mirror before tightening the screws again. Whatever cash was on hand was counted and placed in a bag to go home with Beamish to his hotel. Finally, Fry would spread the index cards in careful disarray on one of the desks so he could later tell if they were tampered with, and they switched off the lights and left.

The biggest problem facing Fry in those early days was to



This picture of novelist Lion Feuchtwanger in a French concentration camp alerted Mrs. Roosevelt to his danger.

The problem was to find a way to get out of France illegally—that is, to slip across the border undetected, without an exit visa—and yet still enter Spain legally.

find an escape route. The most obvious—by sea—was also the most perilous. The available boats were often unseaworthy and the traffic in and out of the harbor at Marseilles was subject to tight restrictions and closely monitored. Further out, Italian and German fleets patrolled the Mediterranean, adding their hostile presence to the hazards of the open sea. And even if a boat survived the crossing to North Africa, there was still a considerable risk of being captured and returned to France.

That left the Pyrénées. Although the Spanish and Portuguese had repeatedly compromised their neutrality in their willingness to accommodate Hitler, they still were prepared, most of the time, to allow refugees to travel through their countries on transit visas, so long as they had an ultimate

destination such as the United States. The problem was to find a way to get out of France illegally—that is, to slip across the border undetected, without an exit visa—and yet still enter Spain legally.

Beamish knew a way. He had fought briefly with a Republican unit in Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War, and he remembered that in the mountains above Cerbère, a fishing village in the southeast corner of France that was about 240 miles from Marseilles, the French and Spanish frontier posts were situated so that neither was visible to the other. It was possible, he told Fry, to climb the mountain on the French side without being seen by the guards there while also managing not to overshoot the Spanish border station, where it was necessary to get the *Entrada* stamp in one's passport.

Beamish drew Fry a sketch. This map, drawn in pencil on a little scrap of paper, was to become a crucial document in the cultural history of our time.

But there were other, more formal documents that were needed before an escape attempt could even be contemplated—a *carte d'identité*, for example, which was required of anyone traveling in France, and of course a passport. As very few of the people on Fry's list could risk traveling under their own names, this meant that the American had to acquire a large number of passports and blank identity cards, and he had to find a skilled forger who could make them usable.

Blank identity cards were easy to come by. The government itself saw to it that they were in wide circulation. Like any fascist regime, Vichy wanted to keep close tabs on everyone who fell under its sway. The passports, however, were another matter. They were available from only two sources: the black market, where the price was high, and the Czech consul, a man named Vochoč, who had stayed on the job after the German takeover of his country for the sole purpose of helping refugees from Nazism. Fry made abundant use of both sources.

To forge the documents, he engaged the services of a diminutive Austrian cartoonist named Bill Freier. Freier, who had fled to France when the Germans entered Vienna in March 1938, spent his days drawing portraits of people he saw down by the Vieux Port and his nights in his hotel room altering passports.

Freier would take a black-market passport—usually a Dutch or Belgian one, because they were less likely to be scrutinized—and with a razor blade carefully remove the original photograph, replacing it with a picture of the person who would be using the document. Then, with a very fine brush, he would painstakingly reproduce the stamp that made the passport official. This part often took hours, because Freier insisted on replicating the stamp exactly from a real one in another passport, taking particular care to copy all the imperfections and blurs. Finally, if the passport seemed a little too pristine for the number of entries recorded in it, Freier would quickly age it with the help of a few drops of water, some cigarette ash, and fine sandpaper.

The first to make use of Freier's handiwork was Konrad Heiden, the man who had revealed Hitler's true nature to the

world in his masterful biography, *Der Führer*. Of all the refugees, "probably none was in greater danger than Heiden," Fry wrote later. "I couldn't take the responsibility of letting him travel through Spain under his own name." According to the papers that Fry gave Heiden, the man who left Marseilles was a businessman named Silbermann. He made it to Lisbon.

Following Heiden, in rapid succession, were Emil Gumbel, the great mathematician whose outspoken pacifism had once provoked a riot at Heidelberg; Hans Natonek, the anti-Nazi Czech journalist; Dr. Otto Meyerhof, the Nobel Prize-winning biochemist; and the novelists Leonhard Frank, Alfred Polgar, and Hertha Pauli. They, too, made it safely to Lisbon. Fry's underground railroad was in business.

While most refugees would have done anything to be able to get on it, there were a few who had misgivings. The most prominent among these were Franz Werfel and Heinrich Mann. The pessimistic Werfel probably would have had misgivings about any plan, but in this case his worries were justified; he had suffered a serious heart attack two years before, and he was overweight, with dangerously high blood pressure. The rigors of the journey, and especially the climb up to the border, might be too much for him. Mann, who was almost seventy and in frail health, was also concerned about his ability to endure the long, strenuous trip. Fry finally persuaded them by volunteering to go with them.

So, at five o'clock on Thursday morning, September 12, 1940, a small group gathered in a corner of the Gare St. Charles in Marseilles. There were Varian Fry, Franz and Alma Werfel, Heinrich and Nelly Mann, and Thomas Mann's son Golo, who had been in hiding at Harry Bingham's villa. There was also, despite Fry's pleas that they bring only essential luggage, a pile of twelve suitcases—all of them belonging to Alma. At 5:30 A.M. the six of them, plus Alma's luggage, boarded the train.

It was late afternoon when the train pulled into the station at Cerbère. After checking Alma's bags with a porter at the station, they moved into a hotel for the night. At breakfast the next morning Alma presented Fry with another unwelcome surprise: she had put on a blindingly conspicuous white dress in which to climb the sunlit mountainside. To make matters worse, Nelly Mann went into a mild panic when she realized that it was Friday the thirteenth.

After a tense breakfast Fry led the group up to the town cemetery, a walled-in enclave of ornamental tombs perched in isolation on a mountain overlooking the bay. There he explained once more the exact procedure and once again checked to make sure that none of them was carrying anything that might arouse suspicion. Sure enough, there was something. Heinrich Mann, whose passport identified him as Heinrich Ludwig, had the initials HM on his hatband. "When I began scratching the initials out of the hatband with my penknife," Fry wrote later, Mann said miserably, "We are obliged to act like real criminals." Fry supplied the group with American cigarettes for pacifying the police and bade them farewell. He returned to town to accompany Alma's

luggage on the short train ride through the international tunnel to Port-Bou, in Spain.

Before sundown they were all reunited in the train station at Port-Bou. Two days later they were all in Lisbon.

ONCE IN LISBON, Fry set about doing the two things that he could not do in Marseilles: he sent a complete report on his activities to the Emergency Rescue Committee in New York (all communications out of France were read and censored by the authorities), and he interviewed refugees he had helped to escape to see if they had encountered any unexpected hazards along the way.

Each person had a different story to tell, but the only tale that really unnerved Fry was the last one: a group that had tried to cross the border the day after Fry had done so said that they had found Cerbère swarming with Germans. They therefore had spent the night in the mountains west of town and had only managed to escape by approaching the Spanish frontier post from the inland side. What troubled Fry about this was that several other refugees, including Lion Feuchtwanger, had also been scheduled to leave in the days following Fry's departure. What if they had walked into a trap?

A few days later, as he was preparing to return to Marseilles, Fry's question appeared to have been answered by a headline in *The New York Times* which he saw in the American embassy in Lisbon:

FEUCHTWANGER IN BERLIN
STILL HELD BY POLICE—BEHEADING
IN PARIS IS DENIED

Back in Marseilles, Fry learned to his great relief that the story was untrue. Feuchtwanger was, in fact, safely in Lisbon. Nonetheless, the story could so easily have been true that Fry decided at once to change the escape route. The question was how to find a new way over the Pyrénées.

The answer was provided by a young German couple, Johannes and Lisa Fittko. Johannes Fittko had been a prominent journalist and an active Social Democrat in Berlin up until 1933. Then, shortly after Hitler came to power, the Nazis passed a law decreeing the death penalty for anyone who could be considered the "intellectual author" of a capital crime. Within only a few weeks it was used to get rid of Fittko. A Nazi was murdered in Berlin—by other Nazis, as it turned out—and the crime was blamed on an article Fittko had written in *Die Aktion*. The newspaperman was forced to flee to Prague, where he found out that he had been condemned to death *in absentia*—and where he met Lisa.

For the next seven years Fittko continued to turn out articles against the Nazis while the Gestapo pursued him and Lisa across Czechoslovakia, Austria, Switzerland, France, Germany, Holland, and finally France again. Like so many others, they had ended up in Marseilles. But unlike most, they had a great deal of experience in slipping across borders with the Gestapo at their heels. Thus, when Beamish met them one day in Marseilles and discovered that they had already scouted the eastern Pyrénées for their own escape, he

immediately brought them to Fry. The American's passionate persuasiveness convinced the Fittkos to delay their departure by several months in order to help guide Fry's people over the border.

Thus at the end of September the Fittkos left Marseilles for Banyuls, a town a few kilometers up the coast from Cerbère, where, with the help of identity papers impeccably forged by Bill Freier, they moved into a large house and did farm work in local vineyards along the border. That house would soon become a transit hotel for waves of writers, artists, and scholars fleeing Europe.

"So that no police agent could present himself to F____," Fry wrote at a time when he still didn't dare use Fittko's name, "... we also gave each of our departing protégés half of a torn strip of colored paper. On the end of each strip there was a number. F____ had the other half, with the same number on it. If the numbers agreed, and the two pieces of paper fitted each other perfectly, he knew that the person was what he represented himself to be." Fittko would take "his friends" out into the fields with him ostensibly to work or picnic, and they would simply fade into the hills. "In the course of about six months," Fry wrote, "F____ passed more than 100 people over the frontier this way. Not a single of them was ever arrested, or even questioned by the police."

At about this time, two

other problems, which had been with Fry from the beginning, started to become critical. One was getting money into France to finance his operation; the other was getting messages out. To deal with the money problem, he approached a well-known Corsican gangster in Marseilles, a man who had the same problems as Fry but in reverse: he had friends who wanted to get money *out* of France. So the young idealist and the old hoodlum made an arrangement. Every time one of the Corsican's friends wanted to transfer a sum of money out of the country, Fry would cable the Emergency Rescue Committee to pay that sum in dollars to a bank account or designated agent in New York, and then the Corsican would hand over the money to Fry in francs. It was as simple as it was symmetrical.

Fry's solution to the communication problem was more homespun. Whenever an important message needed to be sent to New York, Fry would type it out on light airmail paper. The paper was then cut into thin strips—each containing a single line—and these were glued together end to end. When the glue had dried, the long, slender message was rolled up tightly and placed in a condom. Next, Fry would make a slit near the bottom of a half-empty tube of toothpaste, slip the message inside, and then roll the tube up so that it looked like every other half-used toothpaste tube. The "tubegram" was then given to

In spite of the growing police surveillance that his activities attracted, Fry succeeded in organizing during twelve months the escapes of nearly 1500 men and women.



Johannes and Lisa Fittko delayed their own escape to guide others to safety.



Albert "Beamish" Hirschman, right, shows a refugee a map of the escape route.

a refugee to deliver when he got to America. It is a tribute both to the cleverness of the scheme and to the scrupulousness of the refugees that not one message failed to get through.

By such means Varian Fry succeeded, between the fall of 1940 and the late summer of 1941, in organizing the escapes of nearly fifteen hundred men and women. He succeeded in sending to these shores artists such as Marc Chagall, Jacques Lipchitz, André Masson, Wilfredo Lam, and Max Ernst; musicians such as Erich Itor-Kahn and Wanda Landowska; scholars and scientists such as Otto Meyerhof, Peter Pringsheim, Emil Gumbel, Fritz Kahn, and Jacques Hadamard; writers such as Hannah Arendt, André Breton, Konrad Heiden, Heinrich Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, and Franz Werfel.

He succeeded in spite of the growing police surveillance—and harassment—that his activities inevitably attracted. He succeeded in spite of the constant lack of cooperation, even discouragement, he received from American consular officials in Marseilles. He succeeded in spite of the demoralizing and debilitating effects of the hunger that came with the food shortages in the winter of 1940–41, during which time he lost almost fifty pounds. He succeeded in spite of the reluctance of some, like Lipchitz, to leave behind their beloved Europe. He succeeded in spite of the arrogant attitude of others, like Chagall, that anything short of death would be preferable to living in a cultural wasteland like America. (After the passage of Vichy's anti-Jewish laws, however, Chagall reconsidered. He asked Fry if there were any cows in America and was assured there were. Fry wrote, "I could see from the look

of relief on his face that he had already decided to go.")

Varian Fry's work came to an end on Friday, August 29, 1941, when he was taken into custody by agents of the *Sûreté Nationale*. After being held incommunicado overnight at police headquarters, he was taken to Cerbère for his second and last trip through the international tunnel into Spain.

At Cerbère, Fry had the last, bitter laugh on Vichy. Because his passport had expired, his exit visa and all the other visas were invalid. And since he didn't have the right papers, they couldn't throw him out. So for the next five days he sat in cafés drinking wine and arranging for the continuing work of his committee while the Americans, French, Spanish, and Portuguese labored to get his expulsion papers together.

On Friday, September 5, his new passport arrived with all the necessary visas in it. It rained that night in Cerbère. It was still raining the next morning when the train disappeared into the tunnel under the mountains over which he had sent so many to freedom.

When he got to Lisbon, Fry wrote a letter to his mother explaining why he had lingered so long in France. He had stayed, he said, because it took courage to stay—"and courage is a quality I hadn't previously been sure I possessed."

On the same day, he wrote to his wife, Eileen, "Now I think I can say that I possess an ordinary amount of courage."

TO PARAPHRASE Euripides, those whom God wishes to destroy, He first makes heroes. Almost from the day Varian Fry stepped ashore back in New York, his life began to fall apart. He had trouble finding a job, and whenever he did find one, he couldn't keep it for very long.



U.S. vice-consul Harry Bingham sheltered refugees in his villa.



Cartoonist and document forger Bill Freier and wife on a Marseilles street.



Miriam Davenport and Fry work late at night at the rue Grignan office.

He couldn't even join the Army: when he tried to enlist he was told that his chronic stomach problems were "psychogenic." Sorry, they said, but he wouldn't be able to stand the pressure of being in Europe during wartime.

In the face of such setbacks his marriage to Eileen began to buckle and in a matter of months collapsed completely. Now lonely and frustrated, the contrast between his successes in France and his failures back home began to haunt him. He tried writing his way out of his gloom, hammering out one article after another recalling his experiences overseas. While the articles frequently contained penetrating analyses of the situation in Europe, they were not always publishable. Many, in fact, were rejected.

Wounded but undaunted, Fry decided he would write a book about his time in Marseilles. Thus began another cycle of disappointments. Many of the key people on whom he was depending for critical dates and information proved impossible to track down. Others wanted to forget about the whole business and just get on with their lives. Some, including people who had once begged on their knees for Fry to save them, were too busy to be bothered by his modest requests for help.

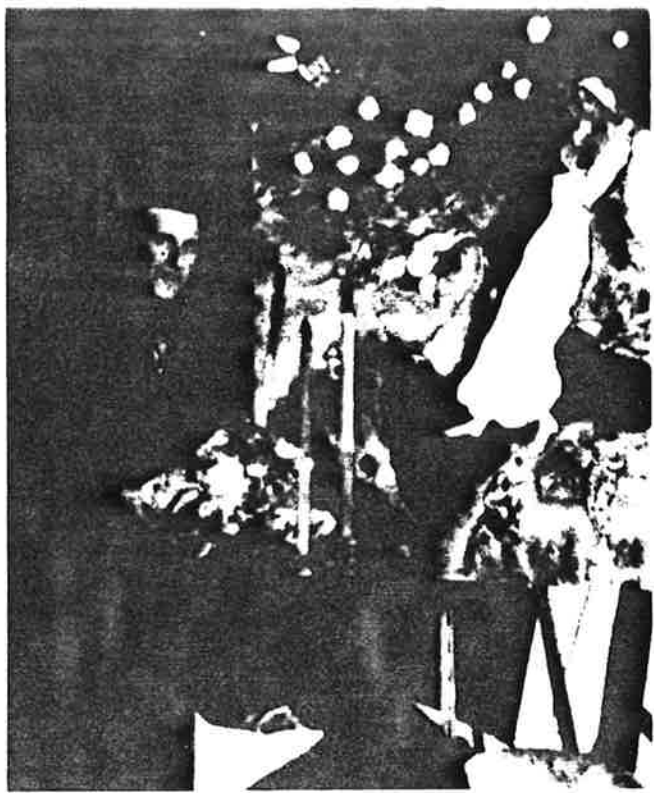
He persevered nonetheless, and his book, *Surrender on Demand*, was published in a small edition by Random House at the end of the war. For whatever reason—the rather schoolmasterly prose, the timing of its publication—the book failed abysmally. Few people, it seemed, cared what Varian Fry had done. He was shattered.

Although he had a small income from his free-lance writing (he was contributing editor at the *New Republic*), it was hardly enough to live on, so he applied for a regular job with every publication he could think of. He even wrote *Coronet* and the *Chicago Daily News*. They all turned him down.

And there was more bad news still to come. In 1947 Eileen was found to have lung cancer. Though they were now divorced, Fry had remained devoted to her, and he was devastated. At the same time, perhaps because it took his mind off his own suffering, he began to develop a new strength, a new sense of purpose. After Eileen was hospitalized, he went every day to the hospital and sat by her bedside, chatting with her, reading to her, trying to cheer her up. She died in early May of 1948.

Then in 1949 he met Annette Riley. She could hardly have been more unlike Eileen. Where Eileen had been mature, wise, maternal, Annette was bouncy and naive—and almost twenty years younger than Fry. The daughter of the head of the philosophy department at Vassar, she also had the kind of lively, unspoiled intellect and curiosity that Fry found irresistible. They were married in 1950.

The early years of their marriage, during which they had three children, two sons and a daughter, were among the happiest of Fry's life. Then things started to go sour. The sound-recording studio he was running failed, and he had to take up free-lance writing again as well as teaching Latin and Greek. But he had trouble finding magazines that wanted to publish his work, and he couldn't hold down a teaching job for



Marc Chagall, a reluctant refugee, was at work on this painting when Fry arrived to explain escape plans.

Varian Fry's rescue of the intellectuals came to an end on Friday, August 29, 1941, when he was taken into custody by agents of the Sûreté Nationale.



From left, Jacqueline Breton, Jacques Lipchitz, and André Breton confer with Fry before their escape to Spain.

more than a year or two—not because he wasn't a good teacher but because he had a tendency to denounce his colleagues for being bad, lazy teachers.

Once more he began brooding, now more bitterly than ever, about the way his work in Marseilles had been forgotten, about the way he had been rejected and snubbed by some of the very people whose lives he had saved. As his unhappiness grew, he took it out on Annette, the children, his colleagues, anyone who came within striking range of his despair.

Then, at last, came the recognition for which he had been waiting for more than twenty-five years. On April 12, 1967, in a brief ceremony at the French consulate in New York, he was awarded the Croix du Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor.

Convinced that the world was finally ready to hear his story, Fry set out again to write a book about that year, long ago, when the fate of so many of Europe's writers and artists was in his hands. He dug out old notes. He looked up old comrades. He contacted as many of the former refugees as he could find. And he moved out of New York City.

The Joel Barlow High School in Redding, Connecticut, had offered him a job as a Latin teacher, an offer he had eagerly accepted. Not only was it a good teaching job but it also gave him an opportunity to make a graceful exit from a marriage that now lay in ruins. Above all, it gave him an opportunity to go off alone and write the book that would earn him the respect and admiration he felt were his due.

He found a large house in Easton, Connecticut, a few miles from Redding, and in the late summer of 1967 he moved in. He was in exceptionally good spirits, looking forward to the teaching as well as the writing. He began both a few days later.

On Tuesday morning, September 12, only a week after he had started his new job, Fry failed to show up at the school. School officials called his home, but there was no answer. The next day, when he again failed to appear, they became worried and notified the police. A young officer named Richard Schwartze was sent to investigate.

The front door was unlocked, Officer Schwartze reported, and there was a light on in the bedroom upstairs. There he found Varian Fry, dead of a heart attack. He was lying in bed, a pillow propping up his head. In his hand he held his glasses, unfolded, as if he had just taken them off, tired of reading. Next to him were manuscript pages of his book. Questioned by a reporter for a local newspaper, Officer Schwartze described the manuscript. "It appeared to be a work of fiction," he said.

The Rescuers Today

HARRY BINGHAM was transferred at his own request from Marseilles in 1941, first to Lisbon and then to the American Consulate in Buenos Aires. He returned to Washington in 1945 and the next year resigned from the foreign service. He now lives on his four-hundred-acre farm near Salem, Connecticut.

JOHANNES AND LISA FITTKO didn't get out of France until October 1941 and weren't admitted into the United States until 1948, by which time Johannes Fittko was in failing health as a result of living wretchedly in Cuba for seven years while waiting for an American visa. They went to Chicago, where Fittko worked as a printer until he died in 1960. Lisa Fittko still lives there, in a small apartment by Lake Michigan, where she devotes her time to social causes and the nuclear-freeze movement.

BILL FREIER was arrested by the Vichy police in 1941 and handed over to the Germans, who shipped him to a death camp near Auschwitz. Somehow he survived, though he weighed barely seventy pounds when the camp was liberated. Then he proceeded to walk across France until he found his wife and the four-year-old son he had never seen. Shortly after they were reunited, however, the accumulated horrors of the past four years overwhelmed them. She went insane and died in an asylum in 1953. Today Bill Freier is one of France's most popular cartoonists; he lives, with his second wife, outside Paris.

MIRIAM DAVENPORT returned to the United States in 1941, after a complicated and hair-raising detour to Yugoslavia, where she collected, and married, her Yugoslav boyfriend. They were divorced in 1946, after which she married William Burke, an art historian at Princeton, who died in 1961. She now lives with her third husband, Dr. Charles Ebel, a professor of ancient history, in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. She got her Ph.D. in French literature in 1973. She occupies herself now by doing research in her field and by painting, growing roses, hunting ducks in season, and writing lengthy, funny letters all year round.

ALBERT HIRSCHMAN ("Beamish") was in the Pyrénées checking on the escape route when the police came looking for him at Fry's office in Marseilles. Fry got word to him in time, and he headed over the mountains rather than back to Marseilles. Settling in the United States, he spent two years at Berkeley as a Rockefeller Fellow in economics and then joined the U.S. Army, serving with an OSS intelligence unit in Italy. By serving in the American army, he became a naturalized citizen, moved to Washington after the war, and worked for the next six years as an economist with the Federal Reserve Board, helping to devise and administer the Marshall Plan. He went on to teach at Yale, Columbia, and Harvard and to write several books on economic development and international trade that have come to be regarded as classics. Today he and his wife live at Princeton, where he is a professor of social science at the Institute for Advanced Study, and his beaming cordiality continues to justify the nickname Fry gave him forty-three years ago.

☆ For years, Donald Carroll, the author of eight books, kept running across the name of Varian Fry in reports about artists who had escaped Nazism and come to America. Finally his curiosity was so aroused that he went to work digging out Fry's story.



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by HENRY and ELIZABETH URROWS

VARIAN FRY

The civilian as war hero.

A fastidiously dressed American editor with a background in classics slipped into Marseilles in mid-August of 1940. France had fallen to Nazi Germany eight weeks earlier. The steamy city was jammed with demobilized French soldiers and sailors, interned British, German officers, and refugees from the occupied north.

Varian Fry had come to help 200 European intellectual and political leaders escape Nazi vengeance. "I was at a complete loss about how to begin, and where," he wrote later. "My job was to save certain refugees. But how was I to do it? How was I to get in touch with them? What could I do for them when I found them?"

Fry had traveled from New York with \$3,000 in cash taped to his leg. He would disburse all of it within a fortnight and would learn to live by his wits. Harried by French police and hampered by uncooperative American Foreign Service officers, he discovered untapped reserves of nerve, leadership, and endurance. For more than a year he directed an improvised rescue operation that extended protection to more than 4,000 artists, scholars, statesmen, and others whose lives were in jeopardy. He provided financial assistance to about 600 and arranged the legal or secret departures of at least 1,200. A short list of artists and writers who owed their freedom to Fry would include Hannah Arendt, André Breton, Marc Chagall, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Wanda Landowska, Jacques Lipchitz, Heinrich Mann, André Masson, and Alma Mahler Gropius Werfel. Among the others, perhaps less known today, were the pianists Heinz Jolle and Erich Itor Kahn, the statistician Emil Gumbel, the animal photographer Ylla, and Konrad Heiden, whose biography of Adolf Hitler landed him on the Gestapo's most-wanted list.

Fry came from a privileged background. The son of a New Jersey stockbroker, he attended Hotchkiss and Taft before entering Harvard with the Class of 1930. Fry's college years



Mostarmind: Varian Fry at the rue Grignan office of the Centre américain de secours, Marseilles, 1940.

were both sybaritic and serious. He concentrated in classics and, with his classmate Lincoln Kirstein, founded *Hound & Horn*, a literary quarterly that aimed to please Harvard's philistine indifference to first-rate new writing. University Hall must have found him a trifle irksome: his grades were erratic, and in June of his junior year he was arrested for stealing a large For Sale sign and posting it in front of President Lowell's house. An illness in the spring of his senior year forced him to finish his degree requirements at summer school.

After a year of graduate study, Fry married British-born Eileen Hughes, then an editor at *The Atlantic Monthly*. They moved to New York, where Fry worked for *Scholarship* magazine. In 1935 Quincy Howe '21 chose Fry to succeed him as editor of *The Living Age*, stipulating that the young man should first visit Germany. When Fry arrived there in July he was horrified by a bloody pogrom. The next day he was told by Ernst ("Putzi") Hanfstaengl '09, the government's foreign press chief, that Nazi radicals planned to solve "the Jewish problem" by exterminating Jews. Returning to America, Fry used his influence as an editor, writer, lecturer, and radio commentator to denounce Nazi crimes against humanity.

When France fell to the Nazis in June 1940, the armistice agreement required the collaborationist Vichy government to "surrender on demand" any former resident of the "Greater Reich" (all territory overrun by the Nazis). That

imprisoned thousands of creative artists, educators, political leaders, journalists, and professionals who had taken refuge in France. On June 25 the American Friends of German Freedom, in which Fry was active, held a large luncheon in New York. A plea for funds by the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr raised \$3,500, and the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC) was launched.

By this time, ten million refugees were choking the roads and cities of defeated France. The ERC's first step was to



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VARIAN FRY *continued*

identify intellectual and political figures who might be rescued and to appoint an agent to help them reach Lisbon or Casablanca en route to the Americas. A subcommittee canvassed officials of museums, publishing firms, émigré organizations, and universities and came up with a list of 200 Europeans believed to be trapped. Fry, then an editor with the Foreign Policy Association, impulsively volunteered to serve as agent. His dandied dress and careful speech struck some ERC members as almost precious. But Paul Hagen, who had been a courier to the German underground, was won over by Fry's ready command of languages, broad familiarity with contemporary arts, and firm political convictions. At length he was given the assignment. Fry left New York in mid-July, having taken a one-month leave from his job. Just before his departure he bought a dress suit and boiled shirt at Brooks Brothers. Months later, on short rations in Provence, he ruefully told a friend that he ought to have spent the money on vitamins.

In Marseille Fry met with Dr. Frank Bohn, who was on a similar mission for the American Federation of Labor. Bohn described conditions of oppressive confusion. Although the French were not giving exit visas or safe-conduct passes to Marseille, where American visas were obtainable, the police paid little attention to refugees, and the Gestapo had not yet moved in. Refugees with overseas visas could get Portuguese and Spanish transit visas, then make their way to the frontier and cross on foot. So far none had been arrested. Some police seemed sympathetic.

Many refugees had not left, however—either because they were still in French concentration camps or were waiting for overseas visas. Some were hesitant to use false passports or

Just before his departure for France, Fry bought a dress suit and boiled shirt at Brooks Brothers. Later he ruefully told a friend that he ought to have spent the money on vitamins.

risk the trip through Spain for fear of arrest and deportation to Germany. Those in greatest danger had the greatest reason to fear recognition—the sculptor Jacques Lipchitz, the painter Marc Chagall, and novelists Heinrich Mann and Lion Feuchtwanger, for example.

From a room at the Hotel Splendide, Fry wrote everyone for whom he had an address, asking them to call on him. The German author and translator Hans Sahl later wrote of his interview with "a friendly young man in shirtsleeves" who

put his arm around my shoulders, nicked money into my pocket, drew me over to the window, and whispered out of one corner of his mouth, like a rather poor actor playing the part of a plottor: "If you need more, come back again. Meanwhile I'll cable your name to Washington. We'll get you out of here. There are ways. You'll see—oh, there are ways. . . ."

[T]ears were streaming down my face, actual tears, big, round, and wet; and that pleasant fellow, a Harvard man incidentally, takes a silk handkerchief from his jacket and says, "Here, have

this. Sorry it isn't cleaner." You know, since that day I have loved America, because these things are done so casually and yet with tact and practical common sense.

"It wasn't true that I could get visas quickly," Fry wrote in his 1945 memoir, *Surrender on Demand*.

but the refugees believed it, and they began coming in droves. I had to get help, not only to handle the crowds, but also to advise me on the political views and intellectual merits of the candidates. Most of them were complete strangers to me, and I had to be careful not to help a police spy or a fifth columnist, or a communist masquerading as a demagogue.

Soon Fry had a staff. Its first member was Albert Hirschman, a 26-year-old economist who had fought in the Spanish Republican and French armies. Fry dubbed him Beanish because of "his impish eyes and perennial pout, which would turn into a broad grin in an instant." Hirschman became Fry's specialist on illegal matters. It was he, wrote Fry,

who found new sources of false passports when the Czech passports (supplied by the Czech consul) were exposed and couldn't be used any more. It was he who arranged to change and transfer money on the black market when my original stock of dollars gave out. And it was he who organized the guide service over the frontier when it was no longer possible for people to go down to Corbères (a fishing village where French and Spanish border posts were out of each other's sight) on the train and cross over on foot.

Another staffer was Franz von Hildebrand, an Austrian Catholic monarchist. He had worked with an Austrian relief committee in Paris and could advise on nonsocialist refugees. A co-worker described him as the only man she had ever met "who was both in the Almanach de Gotha and on the wanted list of the Gestapo," an aristocrat whose "infectious cheer and goodwill lifted the spirits of the most doctrinaire and depressed Marxists." Fry, Hirschman, and von Hildebrand would interview sixty or seventy refugees a day, from eight in the morning until midnight or later. Then they would decide what action to take in each case—meeting secretly in the bathroom with the taps running—and write cables to New York. Copy had to be carried through garbage-strewn alleys to the police station, and then to the night window of the post office. In the morning the grind began again.

The work had kept growing. Letters began arriving from all over the unoccupied zone, many from concentration camps. By the end of Fry's second week, the lines outside his door were so long that the hotel manager complained. Henceforth refugees would wait in the lobby. One day the police took everyone in the queue to the station house to question them about Fry. As a cover Fry and Bohn called on the secretary general of the prefecture and asked permission to form a small committee to help distressed refugees. It was granted, provided the committee did nothing illegal. A Jewish leather-goods merchant who was going out of business contributed an office on the rue Gngnan, and the *Centre américain de secours* opened at the end of August.

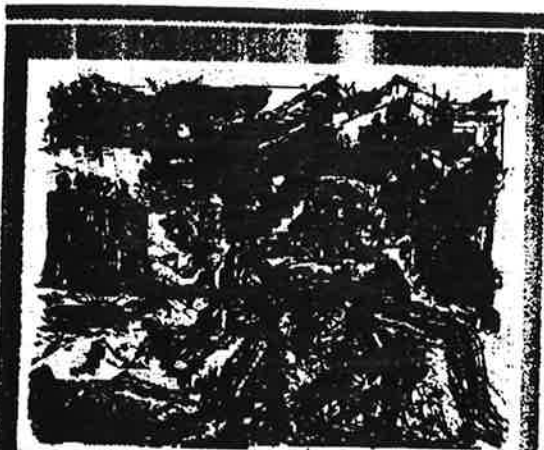
Fry had already overstayed his one-month leave. His staff had continued to grow and now ranged from a dozen to twenty. Bill Freier, once a popular cartoonist in Vienna, skillfully forged the prefecture's rubber stamp on identity cards. Heinz Oppenheimer kept records that could withstand police scrutiny. Daniel Bénédite, who had been a police administrator in Paris, was office manager. Wiktor von Hildebrand left for America via Lisbon, a journalist named Marcel Chaminate

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became the intermediary with French authorities. Marcel Verzeanu, a young Romanian physician, was hired to treat the many refugees who were on the edge of emotional breakdown.

To refugees who couldn't be helped in other ways, the staff gave meal tickets supplied by the Quakers. When cash ran out, Fry and his aides were able to generate local sources of income. Plenty of Frenchmen were trying to get money out of the country, and they gladly exchanged their francs for dollar credits. In early September Fry escorted a group of refugees to Cerbère and over the Pyrenees to Madrid and Lishon; the party included the Heinrich Manns, the Fauchvangers, Thomas Mann's son Golo, and the novelist Franz Werfel and his wife, Alma Mahler Gropius Werfel. From Lishon Fry was able to send a full report to the ERC in New York, and on his return trip he called on the British ambassador in Madrid and obtained \$10,000 earmarked for the escape of British servicemen. About 300 were eventually smuggled out to Syria, North Africa, and Gibraltar.

Fry's achievements owed little to his own Foreign Service. Back in Marseilles he learned that the city prefecture had complained about his activities to Consul General Hugh Fullerton, who had informed the State Department. A reply cable from Washington stated that the government could not countermand the activities, as reported, of Dr. Bohn and Mr. Fry and other persons in their efforts to evade the laws of countries with which the United States maintained friendly relations. Fullerton advised Fry to leave France before he was arrested or expelled. Fry ignored the advice. Long afterward the late Harry Bingham, then a young vice consul in Marseilles, described Fullerton as "fairly pro-German, a man who thought the Nazis would win the war, and not sympathetic to refugees." Fry subsequently vented his frustrations with the foreign Service in "Our Consuls at Work," published in *The Nation* of May 2, 1942:

Nice, December, 1940. The young vice-consul in charge of visas here is fond of trick questions. A few weeks ago he put this one to a German Jew from the camp at Gurs: "What would you do if you were admitted to the United States and someone asked you to do something against the interests of the Italian or German governments?"

The man from Gurs thought a moment. "I would do what was in the interests of the United States," he said.

"Visa refused," the vice-consul snapped. "We don't want anyone in the United States who is going to mix up in politics."

Bewildered and heartbroken, the man went back to Gurs. He is still there, wondering why his answer was wrong.

Marseilles, May, 1941. I had come to see the vice-consul about Largo Caballero's visa.

"Who's Caballero?" he asked.

I explained that he had been prime minister of Spain.

"Oh," the vice-consul said. "One of those reds."

I told him that Caballero had been an uncompromising enemy of the Communists.

"Well," the vice-consul said, "It doesn't make any difference to me what his politics are. If he had any political views at all, we don't want him. We don't want any agitators in the United States. We've got too many of them already."

American visas became harder to get. Early on, Albert Einstein told Eleanor Roosevelt that the State Department had "erected a wall of bureaucratic measures between the victims

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VARIAN FRY *continued*

of Fascist cruelty and safety in the United States." ERC leaders had shared their refugee list with Mrs. Roosevelt when she heard of delays, she prodded the State Department.

Fresh problems drained Fry's energies. Spain closed its frontier. Franco tightened the screws; by the fall of 1940, French Jews could no longer hold public office, military commissions, or any position that could "influence cultural life." Foreign Jews could be arrested and sent to concentration camps without explanation or the right of appeal. Foreigners between the ages of 18 and 55 could be put into forced-labor gangs. German army officers and Gestapo agents visited French concentration camps and picked out inmates to be sent to Germany.

Fry and his staff found a healing weekend retreat in Villa Air Bel, an eighteen-room Second Empire mansion half an hour by trolley from Marseilles. He later wrote, "During the *été de la St. Martin*, the French equivalent of our Indian summer, the days were felt, the sky was blue, and the sun so warm that, on Sundays, we often had lunch out-of-doors. But there was not only the house, the view, and the garden; there was also the company we assembled." His guests included André Breton, the dean of surrealism, demobilized as a French army physician; the painter Max Ernst, out of internment camp; Wifredo Lam, the black Cuban painter who had been one of Picasso's rare students; and the apostate Bolshevik novelist Victor Serge. Peggy Guggenheim and Consuelo de St. Exupéry became resident guests. Surrealist reunions saw the *Deux Magas* crowd taking part in games, exhibitions, and auctions. Serge named the place "*Château Expère Visa*."

In an effort to free those refugees on the ERC list who were in concentration camps, Fry sent Bénédicte to visit the camps and report on conditions. Dysentery was endemic, typhoid epidemic. Lice, fleas, and bedbugs were rife. Over the protests of the U.S. consul general, Fry and Marcel Chamade took Bénédicte's reports to Vichy and left copies with embassy and ministry officials. For two weeks everyone at the American Embassy was "too busy" to help. Finally Fry was told by the third secretary, "We can't do anything for you, Mr. Fry. You don't seem to realize that the *Sûreté* has a dossier on you."

When Marshal Pétain visited Marseilles in December, the *Sûreté* raided Villa Air Bel and herded the residents into a docked ship with 600 detainees. Vice-consul Bingham got all but one of the Air Bel group out four days later. But Fry was tailed for a fortnight by eight policemen working in shifts.

In January 1941 the center moved to larger quarters in a former beauty parlor. Many clients continued to get exit visas, but there were saddening reverses. Two former German cabinet officers had their papers cancelled just before taking ship for Martinique. One later died in prison, the other in a concentration camp. When the British seized another ship bound for Martinique, Vichy cancelled all sailings. Fry found that Marcel Chamade was writing a column for a pro-German paper and fired him. A former worker at the center betrayed Daniel Bénédicte to the police.

Consul General Fullerton again told Fry that the police would arrest or expel him if he did not leave France voluntarily. Fullerton said he had asked the State Department to ask the ERC to recall Fry. He subsequently informed Fry that the ERC had acquiesced, but when Fry queried the committee he was told it had never consented to his recall. Fry was understandably amazed when Fullerton helped him out by intervening to have Bénédicte released, on the grounds that his confinement would hamper the work of a private American

organization. Playing for time, Fry founded a committee of patrons that included Pablo Casals, André Gide, Anstide Maillof, and such Americans as Henry Luce and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr. But on August 29, 1941, with the approval of the American Embassy, the Interior Ministry ordered Fry's expulsion. As an undesirable alien, he was to be conducted to the Spanish border and *refoulé*—pushed out. Two detectives took Fry to his office to clear out his desk and at the villa to pack. He was then escorted by train to Cerbère.

Once across Spain, Fry spent six months in Lisbon trying to improve escape routes. Then he returned to New York. In the meantime, the work of the *Centre américain de secours* went on. Jean Gemähling directed it until his arrest in November. Daniel Bénédicte took charge until June 1942, when the police shut the center down for subversive activities. Even then its staff continued to provide refugees with hideouts and money.

What was left of the staff went underground after November 11, 1942, when the German army took over France's "unoccupied" zone. Gemähling became one of the heads of French Resistance intelligence. Bénédicte formed a woodcutting camp that became a guerrilla center. He was jailed and condemned to death by the Gestapo, escaped when the Allies landed on the Mediterranean coast in August 1944, and became an adjutant to Free French forces during the liberation. In his book *La Fifière Marseillaise* (1984), Bénédicte wrote that under Fry's leadership the center had been in contact with 20,000 refugees. Rather than limit his assistance to the 200 persons on his original list, Fry had given protection to more than 4,000. After he left, the center still managed to provide money to 150 men and women, slip out 49 more British servicemen and refugees, and arrange for more than 400 people to reach the Americas legally.

Fry had a hard time finding work when he returned to New York. He tried to enlist, but the army rejected him because he had chronic stomach trouble. Ironically, army doctors doubted that he could stand the pressure of wartime conditions in Europe. Fry's marriage collapsed, and he drifted from one job to another. For the rest of his life he remained a frustrated man. Writing, teaching, film production, a stint as editorial director for Coca-Cola Export: nothing seemed to work out. He married a second time, fathered three children, and cultivated his pleasures: roses, bird-watching, good talk, wines and food, languages. In April 1967 the French government made him a chevalier of the Legion of Honor. The belated recognition lifted his spirits. He started writing a second book of war memoirs and moved out of New York to begin a new job teaching high-school Latin in Redding, Connecticut. But in September, just short of his sixtieth birthday, Fry suffered a fatal heart attack.

His postwar career was undramatic, but those he reached enriched the world immeasurably. Jacques Lipchitz flew from Rome to speak at Fry's memorial service in New York. At cataclysmic moments of history, he observed, individuals with exactly the constellation of needed qualities come forward. But the demands of ordinary life can be too much for them. Varian Fry, said Lipchitz, "was like a race horse hitched to a wagonload of stones."

Henry Urrous '38 and Elizabeth Urrous are freelance writers based in Longboat Key, Florida.

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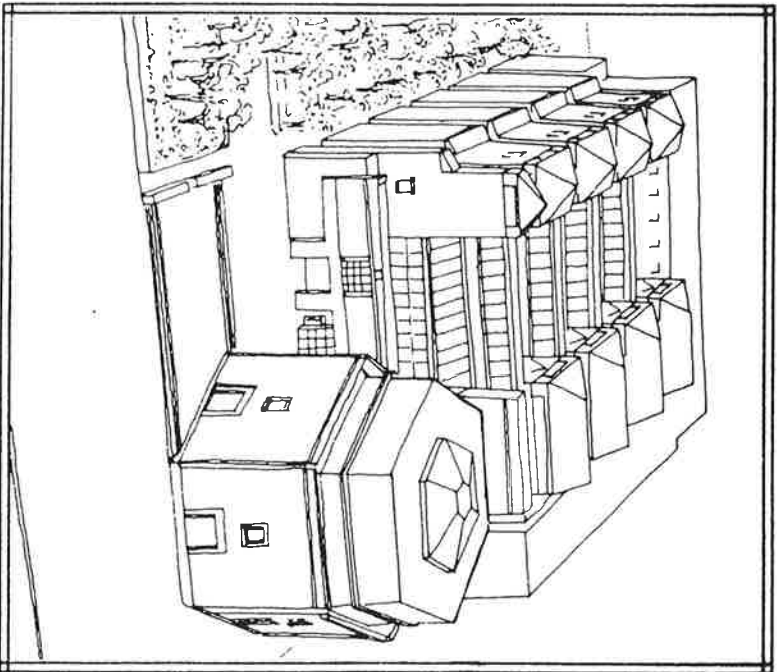
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U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council

Sam Eskenazi
Director of Public Affairs

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Black and white photo with caption: 'Elizabeth Koenig, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum librarian, center, shares her childhood autograph book from Le Chambon with the Ambassador of France, Jacques Andreani, left, and with Peirre Sauvage, writer...'

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Black and white photograph taken during presentation of Elizabeth Koenig's autograph book donation to U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

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OCT-29-89

Film Recalls 'Conspiracy of Goodness'

By JUDY CHICUREL

WHILE the song "Never Going to Dance Again" weaves through the background, Rudy Appel of Woodbury and Jack Lewin of Woodmere sit in J. Sprat's, a restaurant in Westbury, drinking wine and glancing through wartime photographs.

Mr. Appel and Mr. Lewin were two of the 5,000 Jews sheltered from the Nazis in Le Chambon, a small farming village in France. The poignant tale of the village's effort was made into a movie, "Weapons of the Spirit," winner of the 1988 Los Angeles Film Critics Award for best documentary. The film will have its Long Island premiere Wednesday and Thursday at the New Community Cinema in Huntington.

Pierre Sauvage, the film's creator, was born 45 years ago in a hospital outside Le Chambon but was kept ignorant of the circumstances of his birth, and his Jewish heritage, until he was 18 years old.

'Work of a Rebellious Child'

His parents were not enthusiastic about the movie project. "This was the work of a rebellious child who was re-creating his past and staking out a claim to it," Mr. Sauvage said in an interview in August, when the film was shown for the first time in New York City. "I was deprived of memory, and that probably generated an almost compulsive need to reconstruct a part of a past that I was not raised with."

When he began filming in 1982, Mr. Sauvage said, the people of Le Chambon were disinclined to publicize their "conspiracy of goodness," and Mr. Sauvage had to describe in the movie the events that took place in the village during the Holocaust.

Both Mr. Appel and Mr. Lewin have seen the movie several times and are pleased with its accuracy, although they are quick to point out that Philip Hallie was the first to sing the praises of Le Chambon in his book "Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed."

"The Syosset-Woodbury Clergymen's Association ran the film at Syosset High School and asked me to speak afterward," said Mr. Appel, an exporter active in the cause of Soviet Jewry. "I asked the audience, 'If it was 45 years ago, what would you have done?' In Le Chambon, everyone knew what to do — and they did it."

In Le Chambon, he said, the situation was easier than it was in parts of Poland and Germany.

"Those who hid Jews lived in fear of their neighbors," Mr. Appel said. "Sometimes their own children turned them into the Gestapo. In Le Chambon, there was none of that fear, since everyone was doing the same thing."

Quoting a line from the film — "In Le Chambon, they really believe that to help a Jew is to hasten the kingdom of Christ" — Mr. Appel said they also believed it was a "necessary preamble to hastening the return of Christ."

Both Mr. Appel and Mr. Lewin pointed out that the French Huguenots, Protestants who comprised about 2 percent of the French population and had been subjected to persecution by French Catholics, really believed that the Jews were the chosen people of God.

And both men remember André Torcme, a pastor who led the village in providing refuge and shelter, as an extraordinary man.

"He was of German extraction," Mr. Appel said. "It was he and his wife, Magda, who still lives in France, who galvanized the people of Le Chambon. Across the door of their church were the words 'Love One Another.'"

"And they meant it. They would have helped anyone in need, if the cause was just."

"There was no formal organization involved. In the film, Magda Torcme says, 'If we had a system of organization, we would have failed.'"

"In church, Pastor Torcme would say, 'Three Old Testament people will arrive this morning,' and a farmer would say, 'I'll take them.' That's how it was. The most difficult thing was feeding us because everything was rationed."

"But they did it," Mr. Lewin said.

Some Pleasant Memories

Seeing the movie brought back good memories, Mr. Lewin said.

"One couple I knew saw the movie and said, 'It looked like you kids were having too good a time,' he said. "Maybe we were too relaxed in some ways."

"We knew enough that we shouldn't get caught, that in the best case we would receive a prison term, and in the worst case, death. But we didn't know they'd be killing 10,000 Jews a day."

"Back then," Mr. Appel said, "things were kept secret. Most people don't know that Dachau, one of the most infamous extermination camps, opened in April of 1933. Why didn't we do anything about it?"

"My family was in Germany for 600 years. That we can trace. Both Rudy's and my father fought in World War I on the German side, but it didn't matter."

"By 1939, half the Jews in Germany were still there, either because they didn't want to leave or there was no place to go. Nobody wanted us."

Mr. Appel and Mr. Lewin, at the ages of 17 and 15, respectively, arrived in Le Chambon in September, 1942, courtesy of a Jewish rescue organization that worked with the Red Cross and was financed with American funds. Both had been in internment camps when the Vichy Government made arrangements to turn Jews over to the Nazis.

"Those in the internment camps were the first to go," Mr. Lewin said. "The Red Cross came into Camp De Gurs, where my parents, my brother and myself were interned, took out the children under age 16 and put them in Le Chambon."

"It was like heaven for us; no one was mistreated in the camp, but the food was poor and a lot of people died of hunger."

"When we got to Le Chambon, we didn't even know that other Jews were hidden there. That was the beauty of it."

Both men were hidden in a home for orphan children run by August Bohne, who was in charge of the Swiss Red Cross.

"Once, in the middle of the night, Gestapo collaborators raided the home, and August told them to get lost," Mr. Lewin said. "He said the home was neutral.

"They disappeared, but we were shipped into the woods, where we stayed for a full day and night. When we got back to the village, we were scattered among people's houses, but we couldn't go near the windows during the day."

Eventually, the boys were allowed back into the home. But in 1943, during a roundup, Mr. Lewin was among those taken by bus to Le Puy, the provincial capital.

"They kept everyone but me," he said, "because I was too young. And one other fellow. I think he was only half-Jewish.

"Dr. Forestier, the village physician, picked me up and brought me back to Le Chambon, but it was getting too dangerous. This time, they hid me for about six or seven weeks at a Salvation Army camp on a farm — there was a little of everything in Le Chambon — but I was sick and tired of being hidden."

False Papers

"I got my false papers, and Reverend Torcme's son took me by bicycle to a Swiss border town where, dressed like a Boy Scout, I continued on the train to Switzerland.

"I was sitting across from German soldiers at one point, but the Nazis liked uniforms and so they left me alone."

Switzerland was already swollen with refugees from all parts of Europe, and was ready to send Mr. Lewin back to France.

"But I stayed," he said. "I went to a hotel school, and came to the States in 1946, where I opened a catering business."

Before the war, Mr. Lewin had studied to be a cantor.

"But when I got here," he said, "I had to make a living. I used to be very Orthodox, but not any more. I saw too

**A French farming
village sheltered
5,000 Jews.**

much."

Mr. Lewin's parents, who had urged him and his brother to leave the internment camp, died in Auschwitz.

"They wanted to get rid of us so that we would be safe," Mr. Lewin said. "After the war, my brother found me in Switzerland. I passed him by on the street and didn't know him, he looked so bad."

Mr. Appel stayed in Le Chambon until the liberation of France, after which he was reunited with his mother, who also had been in hiding. They came to the United States in 1946, where Mr. Appel started his export business.

"We've both done pretty well," said Mr. Lewin, who, having retired from the catering business, now runs a bakery with his wife and daughter.

"If Hitler could see us now, he'd turn over in his grave."

Name in a Newspaper

The two old friends found each other in 1986, when Mr. Lewin saw Mr. Appel's name in a newspaper article about Russian Jews.

"I said to my wife, 'I know this guy,'" he said. "So I called him up and we became friendly."

Both men attended a Chambon survivors' reunion in 1986.

"There were 120 people from all over the world," Mr. Appel said. "It was very moving."

They plan to return to Le Chambon in September 1990, when the village will receive a citation from an Israeli organization that commemorates Christians who aided Jews during the Holocaust years. The village also will have a tree planted in its honor in the Forest of the Righteous in Israel.

"Pastor Torcme and his wife, Magda, have already received citations," Mr. Appel said, "as well as their cousin, Daniel Torcme, who was in charge of a home for older students in the village.

"When the Gestapo made a successful raid on the school and captured 12 students, he volunteered to go with them and died in Auschwitz."

The title of the movie, "Weapons of the Spirit," Mr. Appel said, was taken from a sermon by Pastor Torcme, who, after the fall of France in 1940, said, "We shall resist evil by the weapons of the spirit."

"As opposed to machine guns, or to weapons of the mind," Mr. Lewin said.

NY TIMES
10-29-89



The New York Times: Barton Silverman



Rudy Appel, left, and Jack Lewin in Westbury, and Eva Héritier holding Pierre Sauvage in Le Chambon, France, in 1944. Mr. Sauvage, one of the Jews sheltered there, is creator of "Weapons of the Spirit," a documentary.

The Washington Post

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1990



BY HARRY NAJTCZYK—THE WASHINGTON POST

Above,



Name: *Marya Petranker*

Date of Birth: *October 21, 1922*

Place of Birth: *Musisch, Germany*

Place of Residence: *Seminoleway, Poland*

We have a close-knit, happy family life within this cosmopolitan city. My parents are always going to Jewish community events. On Sunday and other Christian holidays, people throw stones at us as they go to church. We know we are Jewish, and we know we aren't liked.

1939: Poland is divided; the Germans have invaded western Poland, while the Russians have marched into our eastern town. We had to register with the Russians. My father's job has been taken away, filled by a Ukrainian. Without his income, my dreams of medical school are shattered.

1940-1944: The Germans occupied Sztetka-wow in 1941. My sister Celia was shot by the Nazis; so were my parents. The Germans shot 38,000 of the 40,000 Jews in our town. I am alive only because I have a new, non-Jewish identity. With my forged papers, I am Filizka Heiman's-da, a Roman Catholic Pole. I work for Mullerstein's company. Hans Frank, the German governor of Poland, met me and thought I was ethnically German. He was so impressed with me, that he said, "I wish that all German girls would bloom like this little Baltic German girl."

1945: I met my husband Norman in Carow after the war had just ended. He too was going to a Catholic Pole. We moved to America after the war—our life in Poland was definitely over. Our daughter was born in 1956, her two sons in 1983 and 1988.

A sample identity card similar to those to be given to museum visitors.

Passing On The Memory of

The Holocaust

Museum Staff Gathers History's Fragments

By Judith Weinraub
Washington Post Staff Writer

The ground is cold and hard at the excavation site just off the National Mall not far from the Washington Monument. The wind tears across the compact plot next to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, revealing nothing at all of architect James I. Freed's powerful design for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

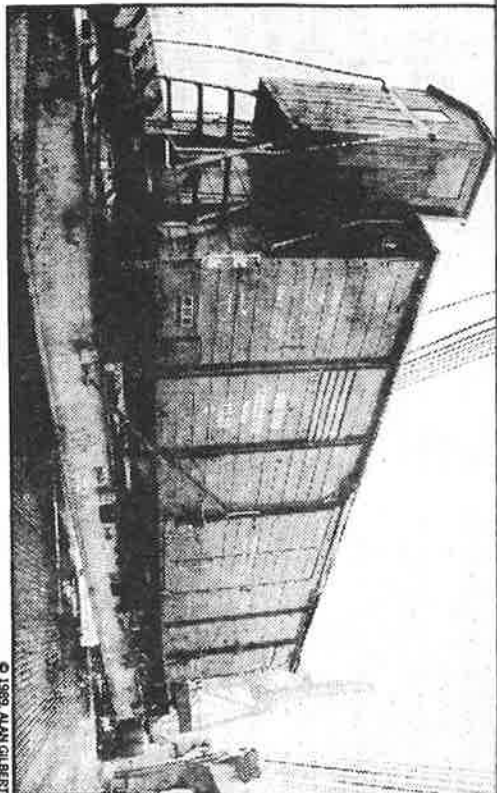
The construction of what will be the world's largest museum telling the story of the Holocaust has only just begun. In fact, it will be more than three years before it is ready to receive its first visitors.

But not far away in a downtown office building, the Holocaust Museum staff is going about creating the museum in quite another way. Persistently, tenaciously, crisscrossing continents to seek out and retrieve objects and testimony history had often forgotten, they are building the museum's collections.

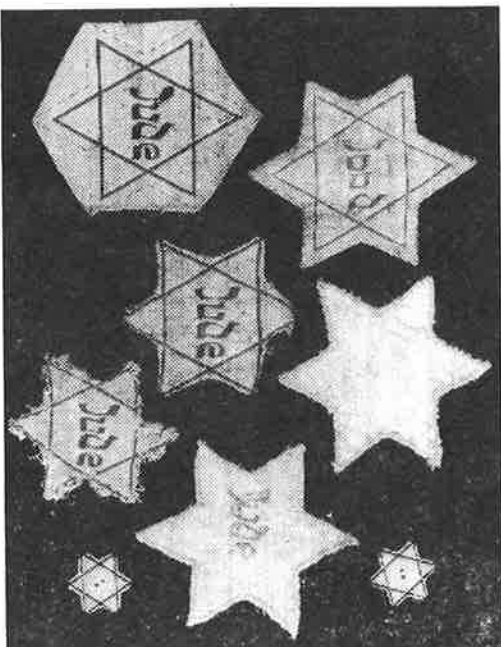
It is not an ordinary way to start a museum. For this is a museum of honor and remembrance, not acclaim or celebration of a collection or collector. It is a museum driven by the story of the Holocaust, a story that Congress, which in 1980 unanimously voted to establish it, agreed must be told.

How little the world really knows of the Holocaust, how devoid of everyday detail is our knowledge of the events of less than 50 years ago that systematically exterminated as many as 11 million people—Jews, Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, political prisoners. How devoid of physical evidence.

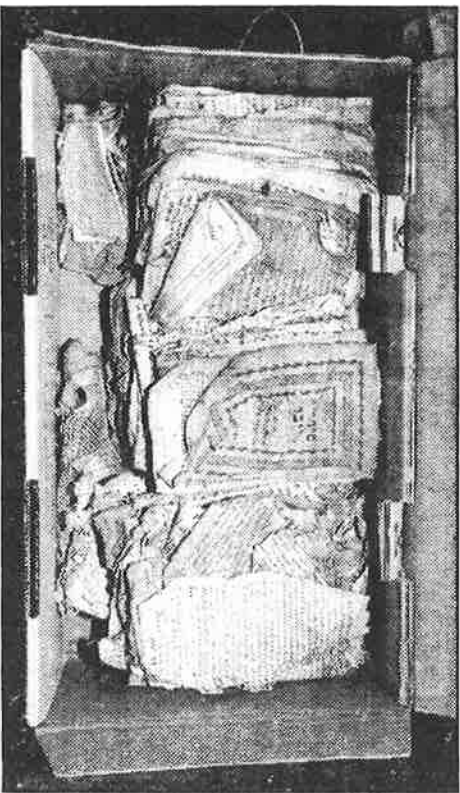
"Most museums deal in the beautiful," explains Michael Berenbaum, the academic and theologian who is project director for the museum. "We are dealing with the anti-beautiful, the anti-precious. This is a very different type of museum, a museum in which the collection was designed to



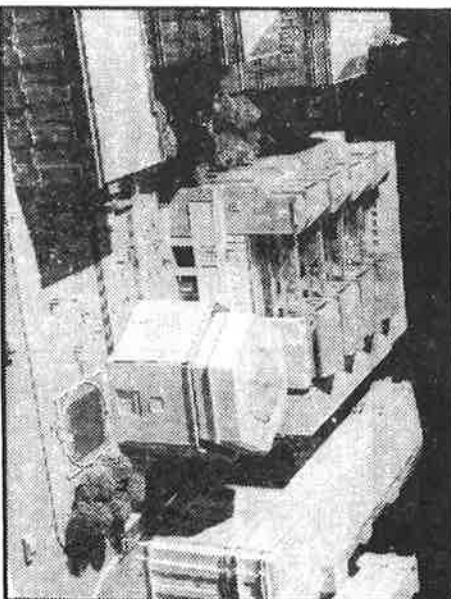
Applebaum, left, and Martin Smith, right, boxcar used to transport Jews to Treblinka.



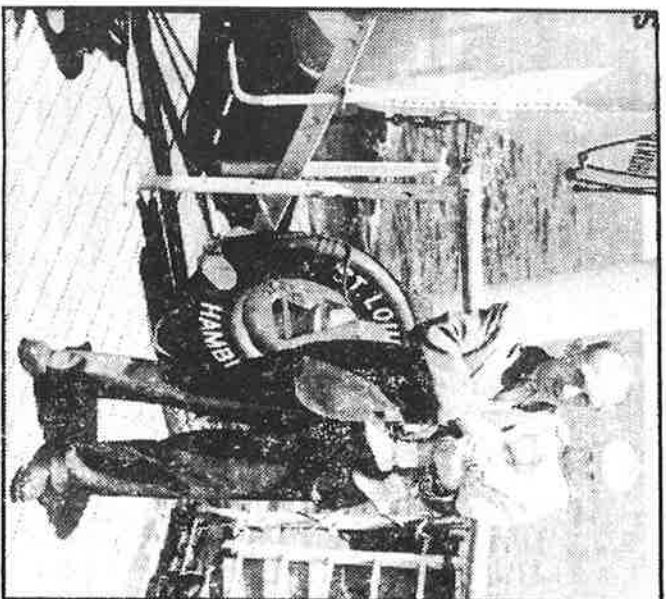
Right, Star of David patches worn by Jews; below, confiscated Hebrew prayer books.



Mechel and Ruth Blumenstock on the ill-fated SS St. Louis, whose 734 passengers were sent back to Europe in 1939.



Model of the Holocaust Museum and Hall of Remembrance.



The Holocaust Museum

MUSEUM. From CI

tell a story. We went after our collection only after we knew what story we wanted to tell."

"This is not a normal museum," agrees Ralph Applebaum, director of design.

Indeed a normal museum would not display, as this one plans to do, railroad ties that led to a death camp—or hang photographs from a private collection of each of the approximately 4,000 people who were killed in one Russian village on a single day in 1941—or gather up personal effects, from potato peelers to take passports, of ordinary people who were murdered—or seek out oral histories of those who survived.

Nor do normal museums issue identity cards to their visitors.

But Applebaum and Martin Smith, director of the permanent exhibition, wanted to personalize the exhibition, and find a way to turn a global story into a story of individuals. Hence the identity card project: a card much like the ones Jews and other people considered undesirable by the Nazis were required to carry.

Upon entering the museum, a visitor will be able to punch into a computer and receive an "identity card" of an actual person of the same age and sex caught up in the Holocaust. "It is a small synthesis of history—so that as you are going through massive events with overwhelming scale and impact, you know what it means in human terms," says Smith. Relying on data from the oral histories the museum continues to amass, as well as its growing collections of archival materials and photographs, computers will update the card with relevant details at different stages in the exhibition.

But most dramatically, by the end of a tour a visitor will know as much as is known about the life of the person who inspired each card. They will also know whether the person lived or died.

Most of them were ordinary people, guilty only of being who they were. And most died.

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Until a few years ago, the Holocaust Museum, which will be built with money raised privately on land donated by the federal government, had no collections policy. It simply accepted what was offered. The result was a collection of mostly small things, personal effects, notes and objects that could be

never even think to look for: a rain gutter filled with bullet holes; rudimentary wooden stools found in a French bar made by survivors who created seat cushions out of the only material they possessed—a blanket from the camps.

Throughout, international cooperation was essential. Some of the objects are on long-term loan through formal agreements with institutions throughout Eastern Europe; others have been donated.

Now, less than two years later, these are some of the approximately 10,000 objects the museum has gathered: large objects like Boxcar 11688-G—one of the German freight cars used by the Nazis to transport Jews from Warsaw to the death camp at Treblinka; a barracks used by Hungarian women at Auschwitz; a Danish rescue boat that ferried hundreds of Danish Jews and resistance fighters from the coastal fishing town of Blisbro to safety in neutral Sweden; a builder's cart from the "model" camp at Theresienstadt, where it transported piles of bodies; consists of the poison gas Zyklon B, from Majdanek.

There are smaller, more personal objects too—the kinds of things that belonged to people as people: a marriage certificate, letters, postcards, a traditional Gypsy costume, a young German Jewish boy's report card from 1935 to '38, nail brushes, toothbrushes, shoe brushes, a photo album from the ill-fated SS St. Louis, which set out for Havana in May 1939, only to have to return its 734 passengers to Europe and probable death when it was denied landing on this side of the Atlantic.

And there are things that belonged to people as victims: the identifying markings that concentration camp residents wore on their uniforms (yellow Jewish stars, purple triangles for Jehovah's Witnesses, pink triangles for homosexuals); 2,000 pairs of children's shoes from a pile of tens of thousands in Majdanek; striped prison jackets; crematorium rubble.

There will also be objects from everyday life: the single round mazo and mazo cover taken by a family in Breslau when they fled; a pew from a German country synagogue; a sign advertising Jewish sacramental objects.

There are also documents and records, photo files, oral histories, written narratives, newspaper accounts, archival materials. After a series of breakthrough agreements negotiated by Miles Lerman, many of the archival



A Tattered Belt, Bearing Silent Witness

BY ARNOLD REINBERG

Each object in the Holocaust Museum collection—curator Susan Morgenstein calls them "survivor objects"—is replete with memory.

Before being donated to the museum, many of these pieces had already been gathered together in private collections. But others—some of the most poignant—were gifts from individual concentration camp survivors who until recently had been unable to part with these silent witnesses to their past.

Like the once-colorful appliqued felt belt found by Ruth Krautwirth Meyerowitz on the muddy grounds of Auschwitz.

Meyerowitz was 13 when her mother, father and brother were forced to leave Frankfurt in 1943, one of the last Jewish families from that city to do so. Separated permanently from their father at the train station in Frankfurt, she and her 9-year-old brother were somehow allowed to remain with their mother at Auschwitz. Stripped of their clothing and possessions, their heads shaven, dressed in the

camp-issued rags, they clung to each other.

In the early months at Auschwitz, the young Ruth Krautwirth saw her brother transferred to the men's barracks, and her mother secretly nurse her through typhus, forcing her daughter to stand up and be counted in the daily roll call. Camp work assignments followed, including a particularly privileged one working in the sheds where confiscated property was sorted. The goods in decent condition—clothing, blankets—were counted, bundled up and sent off to the German war effort; the ragged or useless items were returned to the camps.

It was on the ground outside one of these sheds that Meyerowitz found the cotton-wool blue belt she rescued and then wore—as a gesture of defiance—for the remainder of the war. By then she had been issued a striped concentration camp dress, much too long for a teenager, especially one growing more emaciated day by day. Others housed up and belted their dresses

with cast-off rope, whatever they could find. She had her "magic" belt. She wasn't getting thinner, she explained to her worried mother. The belt was stretching.

"Ornament, of course, was forbidden," she says now. "But it wasn't a major crime. Just *having* had to be done surreptitiously."

About a year and a half ago, soon after the Jewish holidays, Meyerowitz, who now runs a fur business in West Orange, N.J., with two of her sons (the third is a rabbi), donated her belt to the Holocaust Museum. Her husband, Harry, had died, and she was moving to a smaller home. "The belt was really ragged and faded and dirty. I figured if anyone would find it among my possessions, they would just throw it out," she explains. "This way my grandchildren will be able to see it in the museum."

And if the belt could speak, what would she want it to say to her grandchildren?

"Am Yisrael chai," she says proudly. "The Jewish people live."
—Judith Weintraub

The heart and soul of the museum will be found in its permanent exhibition, which will occupy the top three floors of the building. For the last 15 months, designing it, and targeting objects for the collection, has been the responsibility of flunnaker Martin Smith and designer Ralph Applebaum, the team selected by Weinberg, the museum's director.

Weinberg, who for eight years was the director of the Beth Hatenetsov Museum of the Jewish Diaspora and has been a senior consultant to two other Jewish history museums, explains his unusual decision to bypass museum professionals when seeking a director for the permanent exhibition. "Our major problem was how to use the museum to tell a story," he says. "It needed an unusual visualization."

The full story of the Holocaust had been told many times in words, but not in the 3-D environment that Weinberg envisioned—not even at Yad Vashem, the Jerusalem museum devoted to the Holocaust.

counts and Montelone News of the period, maps—even physical environments created to evoke a gas chamber and a crematorium.

The primary researchers who have combed Europe for objects for the museum's permanent collection are Charlotte Hebbbrand, a 24-year-old American of German parentage who lived in Germany until she was 13, and Jack Nowakowski, 35, a Polish emigre who, trained as an architect, was the director of the Polish Museum in Chicago for seven years.

Neither is Jewish. And neither was born until well after World War II. But each has a European connection: Hebbbrand grew up in Munich, where her family—unlike those of her friends—actively discussed events of the war years. Nowakowski's mother is a Jew who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto. Each also has the comparative

wakowski took the job at the Holocaust Museum a little over a year ago, at first she didn't like the idea. It was only recently that she came to terms with it and gave him the only concrete reminder of her past—her *kemerkar*, her identity card.

Inevitably, in dealing with objects that have managed to survive with luck and difficulty, the question emerges of how to care for them. Is it a museum's obligation to restore them to their original condition, or conserve them? To use artificial means to protect them from any additional distress or to let their often fearful condition be a part of the story?

Although the policy of the museum is most definitely to secure the objects and to prevent them from disintegration (and, in fact, to apply the latest preservation technology to objects on long-term loan), the staff is not altogether at one with these questions. "Any object

tion of mostly small things, personal objects, bits and pieces that could be hidden (and therefore preserved) in a coat pocket. But their intimate scale made it difficult to achieve the high impact that was envisioned.

Then about two years ago, after a change in the leadership of the museum, Berenbaum, as acting project director, chaired a team of eight (including curators, interpretive historians, an archivist and a theologian) who put together an outline for the permanent exhibition. The team's scheme focused on three periods: 1933-39 (the Nazi assault on the targeted peoples, their resistance, arrest and attempts at escape), 1939-45 (the actual Holocaust), and from 1945 to the present (the liberation of the camps and the survivors' reentry into normal life).

In May 1988, that "story line" was accepted by the museum's content committee. With that decision the collecting began on a more aggressive basis.

Since then, many people have played significant roles in the process: among them, Jeshajahu Weinberg, the museum's senior consultant since July 1988, and director since last May; Berenbaum, the design team of Smith, an award-winning British documentary filmmaker, and Applebaum, a New York-based designer with a specialty in museum exhibits, visitor centers and educational environments; the museum's curator, Susan Morgenstein, who until 1986 was the director of the Judaean Fine Arts Gallery; and the Judaean Museum at Washington's Jewish Community Center; Miles Lerman, a survivor and businessman who has negotiated most of the loan agreements with other countries; and a team of researchers.

The task, of course, was daunting. Many people doubted that the artifacts that would tell the story could be found. The museum was looking for things that, until then, few had thought to collect. "We wanted things of size and substance that would make sense," explains Smith, "some of the physical realities."

The search was conducted in several ways: by issuing a continuing call for artifacts through organizations that might have survivors (the first was in 1987); by researching and targeting the specific kinds of things they wanted, and by literally going out and looking for things.

Serendipity played a role as well. Those involved in the search often visited places to be told. "There is nothing left," Butch recalls Smith, "something would catch our eye in a corner, and strike us as appropriate." As a result, they have amassed things one would

breakthrough agreements negotiated by Miles Lerman, many of the archival materials were obtained for the museum in microfiche form from the archives of Eastern European countries that had been closed to Western eyes since 1945. (Last month, for example, a team went to the Soviet Union to photocopy material from 35 different archives in areas of Soviet territory that the Nazis occupied, from Riga in the north to Odessa in the south.)

"We need to tell the story in a non-challengeable manner," explains Lerman, who was a resistance fighter in southern Poland during World War II. "We need to be accurate, correct, factual. Most of us who have survived are still alive now, but in 20 or 30 years, we won't be. And as unbelievable as it is, there are still those who would like to question the validity of the whole story."

There is also a considerable body of Holocaust art—prints, drawings, paintings, posters, illustrations that Morgenstein describes as work "made out of time," records and chronicles made by artists acting as reporters, who instead of working in their own styles, intentionally depicted what was going on around them. The work—portraiture, scenes of daily life, anti-Nazi protest—includes examples from both inside and outside the transport and concentration camps, by both well-known and lesser-known artists. Most of it was done clandestinely.

Some of the collection will be incorporated in the permanent exhibition. The rest will be stored for temporary exhibits, study and safekeeping.

All are treated not only with reverence, but with the respect and the special treatment that curators give to relics from the past. The smaller objects—such as drawings, maps, photographs, oral history tapes, books, fabrics—are stored with meticulous care in vaultlike rooms where air, humidity and dust are carefully monitored. The larger objects are stored with similar care and security off-site.

Over the more than three years that Morgenstein has cared for the collection, she has found that many people have asked her how she can endure it. Isn't it too depressing? She has a simple answer. "These are objects that must be saved and stories that must be told," she says. "This was a period of destruction, not grandeur. It never occurred to me that it wasn't an important thing to do. That doesn't mean you don't have days when you are deeply affected. But if you refused to do it, how indeed would this ever get done?"

is a Jew who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto. Each also has the comparative youth that helps them keep a semblance of emotional distance from their work.

Separately they have scoured Eastern Europe—Heidelberg in Germany, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and Nowakowski in Poland—with a "hunting list" of things targeted by the design team for the permanent exhibit. Things as varied as a bicycle-rocket from the Warsaw ghetto (motorized transportation was banned there) and medical instruments used during Nazi experiments.

Their list has frequently been filled out by the discovery of witnesses to history no scholar would have dreamed of: a toy stroller that was completely flattened during the leveling of the Warsaw ghetto; a group of prayer books partially burned during Kristallnacht and abandoned in the attic of a house that had once been a synagogue; road paving created out of tombstones plundered from Jewish cemeteries.

Although their specific tactics vary from country to country, their general procedure involves several steps: first, research sorting out where the kinds of things they wanted were likely to be; then going through official channels, visiting camp sites, memorials, official institutions and museums; then luck and always persistence. One contact leads to another, and being optimistic helps.

Each sees their job as a good one, a rare opportunity to contribute to making the events of the Holocaust known, and, frankly, to be in on the planning stages of a museum. Much of their task has been patient, scrupulous detective work. But as they scoured Eastern Europe, they have encountered chastening reminders of the past. At the Treblinka killing site, Nowakowski saw human bones, still there and sticking out of the ground. At Lidice in Czechoslovakia, Heiberbrand found old street signs and broken cups that spoke of a life not known since the Nazis leveled the town in 1942. "Any handful of earth you would take, you would find something," she recalls. At Ravensburg she found tiny dolls made of rags, toy chessboards made out of bread, somehow still preserved. "They were very ordinary things, crude," she says. "But placed in that kind of context, they have unbelievable meaning."

But the find with the most poignant meaning of all has to be Nowakowski's. His mother, who spent the war years in hiding, was too fearful later on to raise her son as a Jew. She had lost virtually her entire family during the war and felt he was safer as a Catholic—even after all those years. When No-

term family, the staff is not altogether at one with these questions. "Any object will deteriorate over time," says curator Morgenstein. "A major purpose of the program is to stabilize them. We work with the best specialists who assess the objects and suggest a determination about treatment. The objects themselves tell you what they need."

Smith and Applebaum, who are there to get the permanent exhibition in shape and will not remain on the staff once that it is done take a somewhat different view. "Conservation, yes, restoration, no," says Smith. "And I'd prefer to have them in the condition we found them. I would rather have the object on display rotting for 30 years than tarred up for 200."

Applebaum is only slightly less assertive. "The tradition of conservation has been to treat objects as precious voyagers from the past," he says. "We have some [objects] that we think should be left as a pile on the floor—the 2,000 pairs of shoes, for example, smelting and stinking, as they were left in the warehouse where they were found."

"It's a normal dialogue in every museum," he continues. "A conflict inherent in the field, but heightened here to extreme levels. And naturally, because of the federal nature of the project and the fact that with some objects the standard of care has been written into the loan agreement, there is a set of guidelines."

They are also aware that, left as they were found, there are problems from the past could bring problems to the present. The barracks, for example, was covered with carcinogenic creosote and is currently being assessed to determine treatment appropriate both to its own conservation and to public safety. "This is frustrating because we often responded to a patron that must now be taken away," says Applebaum of the general problem. "And we are concerned that we give the objects the right feeling and impact. But we must preserve their long-term stability."

"The outcome will be a compromise between the theatrical and emotive purposes and the preservation requirements. The objects here will survive the millennium—while the objects in Poland will be gone."

Are they comfortable with the compromise?

"There is almost nothing in this whole thing designed to give comfort," says Smith.

"But we are dealing with an unspeakably awful event. People must go away from the museum with the enormity of the event and the fact that it took place. If that happens, then all the time and energy and money spent on it will have been worthwhile."

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 1990



BY FRANK JOHNSTON—THE WASHINGTON POST

Elizabeth Koenig today and as a girl, second from left, in Le Chambon, France.

Trail to Le Chambon

World War II Survivor Elizabeth Koenig's Remarkable Journey

By Ken Ringle
Washington Post Staff Writer

When the lights went down at the French Embassy last night for the Washington preview of "Weapons of the Spirit," Elizabeth Koenig watched the film with more than passing interest.

For it tells the story of the little French village of Le Chambon, where Koenig spent four months of her girlhood 49 years ago, one of the first of some 5,000 refugees ultimately sheltered there in a unique and little-known "conspiracy of goodness" against the mushrooming horror of the Holocaust.

Tucked away on an inaccessible plateau

75 miles south of Lyon, the community of poor farmers, numbering only 5,000 itself, hid people, fed people and helped them on their way to freedom, a vital terminal on various underground railways from a France of Nazi occupation and Vichy collaboration.

"There were scattered individuals who did this sort of thing everywhere in Europe, of course," says Koenig, her blue, artist's eyes searching out for meaning through a curtain of gray-streaked dark hair. "But this was an entire community effort . . . by people so poor they had almost nothing to share but shared it all anyway. And risked everything to do so. I have never heard of that happening any-

where else. I'm not sure it could have happened anywhere but Le Chambon."

Most of the refugees were Jewish—and children—and the people of Le Chambon clearly found in them a kinship of persecution. A settlement of devout Huguenots, they were the descendants of French Protestants who had fled to their remote mountain region of southeast France from their own Holocaust 300 years earlier.

But theirs was a sympathy not widely shared. Elsewhere in France, Koenig says, "the French threw [non-French] Jews to the Germans like you would toss a dead mouse to a cat—to distract them and

See KOENIG, B6, Col. 1

Koenig's Journey

KOENIG, From B1

save their own lives."

If the story of Le Chambon is remarkable, the story of how Koenig got to and from there is even more so—an odyssey of hairbreadth escapes and happenstance that makes that of the Jastrow family in Herman Wouk's "War and Remembrance" seem almost tame in comparison.

Now librarian of the collection to be housed in the Holocaust Museum here, Koenig says she has struggled for half a century to understand the people and events that shaped that journey, with the survivor's guilt of having lived when so many millions did not. "I have so often felt unjustly privileged," she says, her eyes wandering over the paintings in her Virginia apartment that have been for her a kind of therapy. "Not privileged in money, but in the tiny things that so often made the difference."

The details of those tiny things are chronicled in a carefully inked journal she kept during her wartime wanderings, and in deceptively cheerful schoolgirl sketches of refugee-thronged highways and crowded bomb shelters. When those fail she turns to her husband for help—the story has been so often told—and when he can't help she says simply, "I can't remember."

"The whole thing was one amazement after another," she says, idly handling the worn pages of her 50-year-old journal. "But it all starts with my father. The reason we are here is because he understood the danger."

Koenig's father, she says, was a prominent Viennese journalist with a doctoral degree in international relations and—unlike many Jews—never a moment's illusion about the rise of Adolf Hitler.

Stationed in Berlin when the Nazis came to power, he was "very protective" and never told her of the dangers, but he didn't have to—she felt them instinctively the first time she saw the Nazis march. "I was only a child of 9 or 10 at the time," she remembers, "but there was such power and menace in that march no one could mistake it. I can feel that fear even now."

Her father immediately lost his job, and took his family back to Vienna to live with his wife's parents while he scrambled for work in any country he could. Five years later, however, the menacing brown shirts were marching in Vienna as well. Hitler's 1938 *anschluss* with Austria caught her father in France, and trapped his family behind a Nazi border.

"We were fortunate, though, because we had traveled and had passports," Koenig says. "Most Jews did not, and the difficulties in getting them once the Nazis took over were unbelievable." Via phone calls and letters her father implored them from Paris to flee immediately to any country to which they could get a visa. Britain and America had rigid quotas on refugees, and even France was difficult. "At one point he urged us to try Abyssinia. Another time it was Cuba. But we had only one thing in mind—to somehow join him in Paris."

Their first escape attempt was by tourist bus on a day trip into France from Baden-Baden, but "when we came to the French border they said, 'Why do you need luggage on a day trip?' And they wrote on our passports that we had attempted an illegal immigration, which made it very much harder for us thereafter."

From Baden-Baden they went to Saarbrücken to get a train into France, "and there was an SS officer on the platform. He looked at our passports and said, 'You won't make it to France—you have no visas.' And we told him my father was there and would surely get us in. And he looked at us and smiled. He was very, very ironic—I can still see his face—and he said, 'I will let you go, but if they send you back you will go straight to Dachau.'"

"The full meaning of that was not then known, but we knew it was some sort of forced labor camp and that terrified us. But we went anyway." The French sent them back. "And that same SS man saw us and he said nothing. But he smiled. And he directed us each to different rooms, where I was completely stripped, my mother was beaten and my brother was beaten. And then for some reason they let us go."

Shaken and increasingly fearful, her mother managed to contact her father, who told them to go to Cologne, where there was a French consulate. A French lawyer, he said, would arrange for them to obtain a visa there. But when they got to the consulate there was no visa, "and learning this my mother seemed to have lost all hope. She left us in a hotel, and went out to sit on a bench in the square so we wouldn't see her weep. But even the benches, by then, had signs that said 'Juden Verboten.' And so she had to sit somewhere else to weep." She was approached by a man who said he was a secretary in the French Embassy and asked if she had any jewelry she could trade for a visa. She did—enough for three. "And we got on a plane right there and flew to Paris and there was my father. I can still remember walking from the plane through that [airport] gate. We knew if we could walk through that gate we would be safe."

Two days later storm troopers raged through Germany beating and killing Jews in what became known as *Kristallnacht*, the start of a major escalation of terror against the Jews of the Third Reich.

For the next year, while her father wrote an economics newsletter from Paris to support his family, Koenig

then 14, attended art school there and improved her French, but when Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and France and Britain declared war in response, "the situation of Austrians in France became very ambiguous." Most, the French knew, were refugees from Hitler, but they were also technically citizens of an enemy state. Her father and brother were rounded up and interned until their loyalties could be determined, then released subject to service on demand in a French labor corps. They were working in just such camps in May 1940 when the German war machine roared into northern France, sweeping everything before it.

"My mother and I were very frightened. We had no way to get in touch with them," Koenig remembers, "and our concierge told us she had been ordered by the police to watch us and prevent us from leaving. But the day before the Germans got to Paris we decided we had to leave." They had no car and no money for train tickets, but Koenig had a bicycle. So they set out for Rambouillet, some 25 miles to the southeast. "We had decided my mother would travel by hitchhiking. But she was too shy to stop cars, so I, a young girl of 16, would stop the car, see where the driver was going, put Mother in the seat and then ride ahead to the same town on my bicycle.

"The roads were so crowded with refugees that my bicycle got there before the car. And then I realized we had not decided where in Rambouillet to meet. I was terrified to lose my mother. But somehow we found each other near the edge of the city. And after that we decided we would always meet at the *mairie*, the city hall of each town."

With no money for hotels, they "just went through the streets asking people if they could put us up, and somebody did. And the next day we set out the same way for Chartres."

Chartres, however, was under attack by German planes when Koenig got there, and she was ordered into a bomb shelter. When she came out she found policemen waiting beside her bicycle. "We were carrying almost nothing. But on the back of my bicycle in my little *musette* bag, they had found my sketch pad, a journal I was keeping in German and a copy of Goethe's 'Faust.' So they decided I must be a German spy."

The policemen took her to prison despite her protests, "but about 5 a.m. the next morning somebody opened the cell and said to run away because the Germans were almost there." Koenig located her mother, lost her in Vendome, just missed her father in Blois—where he was last heard from in his labor camp—finally collapsed under a tree as German bombs began raining down and woke up surrounded by Belgian soldiers who had paused in their retreat to help her. "And having no place to go I just continued south on my bicycle with the soldiers until the armistice came on the 26 of June."

On that day she remembers finding herself in a village about 60 miles north of Toulouse. "All of France had been fleeing south, you understand, and they had these centers to help feed people. . . . And there I came upon someone who told me he had seen my brother in Toulouse. And I got such a burst of energy from that news I climbed on my bicycle and pedaled there in three hours."

Normally a city of a million people, Toulouse was now swollen with refugees to double that size, "and of course I then realized I had no idea where in this huge city he was." After searching fruitlessly through the city's coffee houses she wandered by chance "exhausted and discouraged into this tiny little street, and at the end of the street, whom should I find but my brother there selling newspapers."

Her brother was 18 "and had a girlfriend. . . . It was arranged I stay somewhere else. But we were to meet the next morning at 10 a.m. at the post office, which was nearby. But he was late so I wandered in and asked them playfully didn't they have a letter for me in the *post restante* [general delivery]." To her astonishment, they did. It was from her mother, who was working as a nurse in the village of Pau, some 75 miles southwest of Toulouse in the Pyrenees. On the advice of a friend she had mailed off letters in care of general delivery to the 10 largest cities in France in a desperate effort to find her daughter.

"I begged enough money to take me and my bicycle by train part way to Pau, and planned to ride the rest. But when I got off I heard a man shouting in German and I asked him if by chance he knew my father. And he said he did but had no time to talk to me because he was searching for his wife and spoke very little French. So I told him I would speak French for him and help him . . . and afterward he told me my father was working near Limoges."

In the midst of what would soon become the greatest war in history, in a foreign country flooded with armies and refugees, Elizabeth Koenig, age 16 and penniless, had now managed to locate all three members of her family in a few days.

Koenig and her mother found her father and were soon installed with him in a village near Limoges. She had also managed to locate in Toulouse a young Czech student named Ernest, whom she had first met in a Parisian book store and who had often visited her and her family. Her father, however, remained convinced that Vichy France was unsafe. Jewish refugees were being encouraged to settle in camps, from which mysterious trains were heading east periodically "for other purposes," and he renewed efforts to obtain a special visa for the United States from friends in America.



BY FRANK JOHNSTON—THE WASHINGTON POST

Elizabeth Koenig with one of her paintings.

Meanwhile, Koenig received a letter from her former Latin teacher, who had left Paris before the Germans came for a village called Le Chambon, where she had obtained a job. She urged Koenig to come also, saying she could find work looking after children for a family there. "My father thought it safer for me to go, so I went," taking a series of trains and then a little narrow-gauge steam train up into the hills to the village.

There she was engaged as an *au pair* for the children of Andre Trocmé, Le Chambon's militantly pacifist pastor, who had stood alone earlier in urging the French not to fight the Germans and now stood equally alone in urging resistance "with the weapons of the spirit." He found, in the people of Le Chambon, fertile soil for his ideas.

"It was a village unique in its religious fervor," Koenig remembers. "The villagers were simple people who read the Bible every day and quite literally tried to live by it."

Koenig was one of the early arrivals, and soon moved from the Trocmé children to helping with other refugee children brought to Le Chambon by the Trocmés from a vast refugee camp at Gurs. They were put up in special boarding houses and a boarding school. Most of them spoke German, and she helped them with their French.



BY LARRY FOGEL—THE WASHINGTON POST

The villagers, she says, "were very modest and unassuming. But what I can't emphasize enough was how they accepted us. After all that we had been through, nobody asked who was Jewish and who was not. Nobody asked where you were from. Nobody asked who your father was or if you could pay. They just accepted each of us as individuals, taking us in with warmth, sheltering children, often without their parents—children who cried in the night from nightmares. And hiding a vigorous child in a small village is not easy.

...
 "There was an incredible spirit of solidarity about what they were doing. We were for them in every sense the chosen people."

Then in November of 1941, she got a message from her father. His friend in America had obtained visas for the family from among a special allotment of 1,000 stipulated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt for endangered European intellectuals. She was to meet her family in Lyon on their way to Marseille.

In Marseille they were advised by French officials to take temporary shelter in a resettlement camp, "but my father knew about them by now. He said we would not go in a camp under any circumstances. We would go hungry instead."

On Dec. 7, 1941, they received their exit permits and, after many adventures on and off Spanish trains, made their way through Spain and Portugal to Lisbon, where in February 1942 they boarded a Portuguese ship called the *Nyassa* for America.

She marvels today at the "one amazement after another" that led her to safety with those she loved. After the war she found one amazement more. Ernest, the Czech student she had last seen in Toulouse, was safe. They met in London after the war and were married, and have been together now more than 40 years. He had survived three years in Auschwitz.

But that's another story.

U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council



For Release: Immediately

Contact: Sam Eskenazi
Director of
Public Affairs
202/653-9219

**Memories of a Protestant Village that Sheltered Jews
From the Nazis are Preserved in a Childhood Autograph
Book at United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

by Dara Goldberg

"You know that I don't like a lot of smalltalk, and this is why briefly from the bottom of my heart, I wish you good luck for the rest of your life.... A big kiss and a warm handshake."

Lili

Le Chambon, 5 November 1941

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The messages read like those in any young girl's autograph book, but the handwritten sentiments and drawings in Elizabeth Koenig's childhood autograph book were penned in a very special place. It was Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, a small farming village nestled on a plateau in southern France, where what the residents considered an ordinary act of human kindness was in fact heroic and stands in stark contrast to the fear and evil that pervaded Europe during the Holocaust.

Elizabeth Koenig, recently appointed librarian of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., has donated her autograph book to the Museum in honor of "the good people of Le Chambon." In the Museum it will help to tell the story of the Protestant villagers who risked their lives without hesitation to save the lives of thousands of Jewish children.

-more-

The Museum is currently under construction on a site adjacent to the National Mall and is scheduled to open to the public in the spring of 1993.

The delicate but well-preserved hardcover book contains affectionate messages of farewell in French, German and Russian, plus drawings by Elizabeth's classmates and photographs of them. Koenig recalls hurriedly collecting the autographs, drawings and photos in November 1941 upon receiving a letter from her parents, who were in hiding, instructing her to leave Le Chambon immediately for Lyon -- for her father had finally secured exit visas for the family.

Koenig is quick to point out that the personal message from Magda Trocmé, wife of the pastor of Le Chambon, André Trocmé, occupies the first page in her book, a place of honor. "The Trocmé family was extraordinary," recalls Koenig, who served as an "au pair" girl for the family upon her arrival in Le Chambon. "They led the village in providing refuge to thousands of Jewish children."

The tale of this rescue effort is the subject of the award-winning documentary feature film, "Weapons of the Spirit," written, produced and directed by Pierre Sauvage, 45, who was born and sheltered in Le Chambon, before he immigrated to the United States with his family at age four. The 90-minute film is being shown in selected theaters across the country.

Sauvage, a resident of Los Angeles, said: "I'm proud to be associated with a Museum that will help us remember and learn from our collective past. The Museum is a timely institution. We are increasingly ready to face up to the truths of a uniquely revealing period..... It is especially fitting that Elizabeth Koenig is a part of this organization."

Koenig, born Elizabeth Kaufmann, fled to Paris with her family from Vienna, after the incorporation of Austria into the Nazi Reich in 1938. When the German army took Paris in 1940, she escaped with her family to the unoccupied south of France. At age 16, with her parents' agreement, Elizabeth found refuge in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, where after a summer with the Trocme family, she attended school and lived in a children's home run by a Swiss agency among the other young Jewish refugees.

"It was fortunate that I spoke both French and German," the Alexandria, VA., resident explained. "I was able to help the other children, who were of many nationalities. Most of them could only speak German. They were so traumatized; they had been uprooted from their native countries and then separated from families who were placed in internment camps."

Soon after her departure from Le Chambon, 5,000 Jews, many of them children, were brought to the town and hidden by the residents.

"I left Le Chambon with mixed feelings," she recalls. "I looked forward to being reunited with my family, but I didn't want to leave my friends. I had always wanted to join the resistance movement, but at the time I was too young.

"I had seen plenty of evil in the world before I came to Le Chambon," she said. "The people there took care of us in a way I no longer thought was possible, yet to them, it would have been unimaginable to have done anything less. They felt there was nothing special about their behavior.

"In the village there was an indescribable spirit among the inhabitants and the children," she continued. "Living in Le Chambon, even for the brief time I did, had a profound affect on me. I realized how selfish the world is and how good people can be. I was an idealist before I came to Le Chambon, but Le Chambon made me even more idealistic."

On December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor day, Elizabeth fled to Lisbon with her parents and brother on the last train out of France and then caught the last boat leaving for the United States.

She is still in contact with a number of the children who signed her autograph book in 1941, four of whom live in the Washington, D.C., area.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Council was established by Congress in 1980 to plan and build the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., and to encourage and sponsor observances of an annual, national, civic commemoration of the Holocaust known as the Days of Remembrance. The Council, which also engages in Holocaust education and research programs, consists of 55 members of all faiths and backgrounds appointed by the President, plus five U.S. Senators and five members of the House of Representatives.

The legislation establishing the Council and mandating the Museum provides for an unusual public/private partnership -- the Museum to be situated on federal land and all funds to construct the Museum to be raised from the private sector. A nationwide fund-raising campaign, A Campaign to Remember, has passed the halfway point toward its goal of \$147 million to build the Museum, mount its exhibitions, prepare its many and varied educational elements and establish an endowment.

The Museum is currently under construction on a site overlooking the National Mall and will open to the public in the Spring of 1993. The 250,000-square-foot, limestone and brick structure, with five above-grade floors and a below-grade concourse, was designed by the distinguished American architect, James Ingo Freed of Pei Cobb Freed & Partners. The central element of the Museum will be the 40,000-square-foot permanent exhibition telling, with the help of a multitude of artifacts from Europe, the story of the millions of Jews and others who were murdered by the Nazis. The Museum will also feature a computer-based learning center, the United States Holocaust Research Institute with a library and archive, two galleries for changing exhibitions, two auditoriums and America's national Holocaust memorial -- the six-sided Hall of Remembrance.

U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council



For Release:

Contact:

Immediately

**Sam Eskenazi
Director of
Public Affairs
202/653-9219**

**Diane Von Furstenberg Supports
U.S. Holocaust Museum Campaign**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Fashion designer Diane Von Furstenberg, center, Lily Halfin, Von Furstenberg's mother and a survivor of Auschwitz, are greeted by Miles Lerman, Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Campaign to Remember, at the French Embassy in Washington. The Ambassador of France, Jacques Andreani, and the Campaign co-sponsored the Washington premier showing of the film Weapons of the Spirit, which deals with the French village of Le Chambon whose citizens rescued thousands of Jews during the Holocaust. Von Furstenberg was one of the principal supporters of the event.

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5000 Christians save 5000 Jews

"Indisputable nobility."
- NY TIMES

Paris

Le Chambon

WEAPONS OF THE SPIRIT

A Film by Pierre Sauvage

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"★★★★☆"

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A FIRST RUN FEATURES RELEASE

WEAPONS OF THE SPIRIT

A Film by Pierre Sauvage

Film documents a righteous French town

Weapons of the Spirit, a documentary by Pierre Sauvage on a French town that saved 5,000 Jews during the Holocaust. 90 minutes. At the Carnegie Screening Room, 888 Seventh Ave., Manhattan. Opens Sept. 1.

By SUSAN GILMAN

When the inevitable question is asked — "Why did the world stand by and let the Holocaust happen?" — a salve of rhetoric is concocted to ease the guilt and brutality of its conspirators: "What could we do?" "We didn't know." "We were just following orders." "Times were different then." "Anyone would have done the same thing under those circumstances." "We had no choice."

The indifference that nourished the Third Reich is explained as human nature: In the face of evil, people put their own welfare first.

Yet in one small town, righteousness was not considered relative, optional or circumscribed. Nestled in the mountains of eastern France, Le-Chambon-sur-Lignon was a peasant community of stone farmhouses where people rose at dawn to milk their cows. In June 1940, the day after Germany invaded France, the town's pastor, a pacifist named Andre Trocme, told parishioners: "The duty of Christians is to respond to the violence that will be brought to bear on their consciences with the weapons of the spirit."

Comprised mainly of Protestants who remembered their past persecution as Huguenots, the population of Le Chambon refused to let its moral convictions be taken hostage by fascism. From 1940 to 1944 — while the collaborationist Vichy government deported 75,000 Jews to Germany — the town's 5,000 Christians risked their lives to shelter 5,000 Jews. No one was turned away. No questions

were asked. No one was missionized. And no one was betrayed.

In his powerful documentary, "Weapons of the Spirit," which will open Sept. 1 at the Carnegie Screening Room at 888 Seventh Ave. in Manhattan, filmmaker Pierre Sauvage returns to Le Chambon, where he was born while his parents were in hiding in 1944.

Through interviews with rescuers and Jews they saved, news footage, photographs and historical accounts, Sauvage pieces together an awesome testimony to the courage of the village, exploring how, in a world "suffering from a spiritual blight," it alone remained "a place on earth uniquely committed to survival."

The story suggests a miracle. Without any formal consensus or organization among them, the Chambonnaise spontaneously harbored Jews and incorporated them into the community. And while officials realized what was going on in the town, surprisingly little attention was paid. Although Nazis managed to seize some Jews in a raid, and three community leaders were placed in an internment camp while two others were killed, the Vichy prefect — and later the Nazi officer assigned to Le Chambon — curiously deflected Nazi activity away from the area.

Even when the Germans eventually set up headquarters in Le Chambon across the street from a building where Jews were being sheltered — and forced Roger Bonfils, the local innkeeper, to convert his pension into a convelescence home for soldiers — the Chambonnaise remained unflappable. Soldiers, returning to the hotel after strolling through the town, would tell Bonfils, "This place is full of Jews."

"No," Bonfils would reply, "they're tourists."

"The Jews kept coming and the people of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon kept taking them in," Sauvage reports. The righteousness of the town generated a protective magic,

affecting everyone who came in contact with it.

"Weapons of the Spirit" is that rare film about the Holocaust imbued with beauty and optimism. Filming his reunion with the people who saved his family — and juxtaposing recent interviews with photographs of the subjects 40 years ago — Sauvage gives history an immediacy and palpability that is both haunting and inspirational. He reminds us that, while the Holocaust ended just 45 years ago — and continues to infect the lives of all involved — the spirit that defied it also endures.

Yet most significant are the film's historical and moral implications. The success of one small village's efforts to remain just in the face of collective insanity is a condemnation of passivity and an indictment of all those who claim they would have done something if only they could have. Le Chambon is evidence that compassion and bravery are as viably a part of human nature as the tendencies toward evil, obedience and paralysis that are used to excuse the Holocaust.

And, tellingly, the Chambonnaise do not view their actions during World War II as anything particularly extraordinary. While others have scrambled to disassociate themselves from the Holocaust — or to advertise their participation in the resistance — the aged French rescuers shrug off their heroism.

"It was the human thing to do," says Henri Heritier, who sheltered numerous Jews and stashed forged citizenship documents in his beehives.

Georgette Barraud, who ran a boarding house that took in Jewish children, tells Sauvage: "It all happened so naturally. We can't understand the fuss."

Affirming the powers of righteousness, "Weapons of the Spirit" is a stunning documentary about people who followed their conscience instead of their leaders. The ultimate shield against the Final Solution, we are reminded, needs no qualifications.

A town of hope during the Holocaust

By Desmond Ryan
Inquirer Movie Critic

Review: Film

WEAPONS OF THE SPIRIT ★★★★★

Produced, directed and written by Pierre Sauvage; photography by Yves Dahan; music by Antonio Vivaldi and others; distributed by Friends of Le Chambon.

Running time: 1 hour, 30 mins.

Parent's guide: No MPAA rating (adult themes)

Showing at: YM and YWHA, Broad and Pine Streets, at 8:30 today only. Admission: \$7.50.

Malle's *Au revoir, les enfants* in striking a new compromise in the debate that has long troubled filmmakers approaching the subject of organized mass murder. Some believe that to dramatize events and focus on, say, the fate of one family — the approach of a film like *Sophie's Choice* — is to trivialize the enormity of the event. They prefer the relentless, objective style of Lanzmann's documentary.

But Malle and Sauvage explore a middle ground by taking us on a poignant, and at times unbearable, re-creation of their childhoods. *Au revoir, les enfants* is a thinly disguised fictional rendering of Malle's boarding school days in World War II and an evocation of the guilt he has carried through his life about the

Jewish boys who were taken away to the gas chambers.

I would recommend seeing Malle's incomparable film at the Ritz Five and then heading over to the YM and YWHA tonight for the one-night-only showing of *Weapons of the Spirit*. Sauvage himself will be on hand to field questions after the screening.

These two directors, burned in the years that shaped them, have made two searing movies. Sauvage's bitter-sweet memoir takes him back to Le Chambon, where he was born to refugee Jewish parents in 1944. Weapons of the Spirit manages the olympian feat of working both as the personal story of a man's search for his own lost past and as a film bulging with profound questions of morality, responsibility and religion.

He introduces us to the now aging peasants in a tightly knit community — some of whom have died since the film was completed. These are sturdy, stubborn folk of Huguenot stock, and they themselves were no strangers to persecution for centuries. Their charismatic pastor, Andre Trocme, was also that rarity in clerical circles, a man who insisted on practicing exactly what he preached, whatever the cost.

In a sermon to his stalwart congregation after the Nazis had stormed into France, Mr. Trocme spoke of Christian love and charity, and asked his parishioners to live up to their ideals. And to a man, woman and child, they did just that. Five thousand villagers saved the lives of five thousand Jews before the war was over. They did so in defiance of the occupying German army, the Gestapo and the collaborating police of the puppet Vichy regime.

There is something deeply touching and affirmative in listening to these people, now in the twilight of their lives, so casually of what they did. A woman who owned one of the positions where Jewish children could always find a bed says, "It happened naturally. We don't understand it any more."

Weapons of the Spirit is about the courage of ordinary people, Jewish and Christian. But its power comes from the questions of guilt and innocence and action and apathy it raises about the rest of a world gone mad. The villagers of Le Chambon saved them by what they did, because what they did is a terrible indictment of what millions of others did not.



In a 1944 photograph, Eva Heritier holds the infant Pierre Sauvage, the director of "Weapons of the Spirit."

Village That Spent The War Saving Jews

By Judy Stone
Chronicle Staff Critic

"The evil that men do lives after them," Shakespeare wrote. "The good is oft interred with their bones."

His words are still germane in a century that has seen unparalleled evil, but an extraordinary example of goodness does live on in "Weapons of the Spirit," a riveting documentary that opens today at the Opera Plaza.

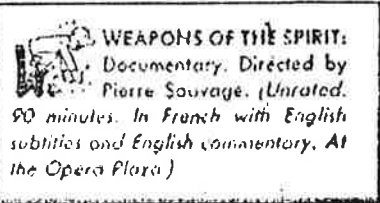
The villagers of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in South Central France did not think there was anything especially heroic about the fact that they saved 5,000 Jews during World War II. They did what they had to do, as a matter of course, and of conscience. Their acts stand out like an oasis of humanity in that dark time, but their kindness was as inexplicable as what drove other men to collaborate in mass murder.

A Village of Conviction

What made Le Chambon different? That was the puzzle film maker Pierre Sauvage wanted to untangle when he returned to the village where he was born in 1944, the son of a couple who had taken refuge there. Although the mystery remains unsolved, Sauvage presents a portrait of matter-of-fact morality that is an inspiration for those who despair at each new example of man's deadly intolerance.

While other Frenchmen willingly rounded up 80,000 Jews for deportation to concentration camps, the people of Le Chambon opened their doors to those who escaped the dragnet. Remembering the persecution of their own Huguenot ancestors in the 16th century, one peasant says simply, "We helped because they needed help." To comfort the defenseless was a vital part of their Protestant tradition. At the turn of the century, they had taken in homeless children; after the Spanish Civil War, they sheltered dispossessed refugees.

Their Huguenot heritage is commemorated in the art reproduced in the film, as well as in the sacred hymns these old villagers still sing with such deep feeling. They look embarrassed even to be asked about their wartime acts of courage. They seem oblivious to the risks they had taken. The film mak-



Sauvage recaps the racist atmosphere of that period with film clips of a war-time exhibition on "The Jew in France." It is a particularly disturbing reflection of that period in light of the recently reported resurgence of anti-Semitism there.

That kind of propaganda had no effect in Le Chambon. One peasant recalls that "the Prophets nourished our faith and conduct in the struggle against Nazism." When the farmers were told that several "Old Testaments" had arrived in the village, they knew the phrase referred to the Jews. One vigorous old woman declared that "the Jew had truly fallen among thieves."

In Le Chambon, they fell among people who took the scriptures to heart. The old-timers protected the Jewish resistance fighters who hid out in the village and helped a young man who turned out 50 false identification papers a day. One farmer hid the forged documents in an empty beehive, sure that no official inspectors would risk getting stung.

Even Nazis Were Moved

What Sauvage calls their "conspiracy of goodness" seems intraculously to have infected less sympathetic figures. The prefect, the official French Vichy authority, lied about what was going on in Le Chambon. The German officer responsible for that area did not alert the Gestapo or the SS. And German soldiers recuperating from the war on the Russian front observed but ignored the Jewish presence.

"Weapons of the Spirit" is a heartening page out of the past, a poignant reminder that good men and women don't have to surrender their beliefs even in the terror — or lethargy — of the times.

Wednesday, November 15, 1989



San Francisco Chronicle

Weapons of the Spirit

Understatement is the name of the game in Pierre Sauvage's quite extraordinary difficult to explain story of the descendants of Huguenot Protestants in the village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in the south of France. During the WWII occupation by the Nazis the inhabitants, inured by centuries of persecution by Catholic France, sheltered some 5,000 Jews, with no other explanation than, "We were used to it. It's a normal thing to do." This "conspiracy of goodness" meant that no one asked refugees "Are you Jewish?" and seemed impervious to the dangers of taking them in. Shot in color, sepia and black and white, this is Sauvage's homage to the people who saved his parents (he was born in 1943 in a hospital near the village). Its major irony being that the other Jews they helped appear to have forgotten them. But, being the Chambonnais, their only comment would still be, "We needed them because they needed to be helped." (Opera Plaza, SF)

Village's 'conspiracy of goodness' saved thousands

BY RHONDA ABRAMS
Bulletin Correspondent

MOVIE REVIEW

▲ Evil is inherently fascinating. As such, it is the focus of most movies, as well as most literature. Yet, even the television news. We are captivated by the many ways in which people are bad.

Goodness, on the other hand, is a far more elusive subject. Indeed, it is difficult to make the exploration of goodness interesting, let alone riveting.

But as *Weapons of the Spirit*, a film that examines the goodness of one small group of people during the Holocaust, is viewed, many in the audience literally sit on the edge of their seats, desperate to catch every word and nuance.

And given that *Weapons* is a documentary, which by its very form is less leeway for drama, it is quite a testament both to the talent of writer-director Pierre Sauvage and to the compelling nature of the true story of a small French village that saved thousands of Jews.

The film is playing in Berkeley at the U.C. Theatre, 2036 University Ave., through Sunday, and at the Opera Plaza Cinemas, Van Ness and Golden Gate, S.F., in an open run.

During World War II, the people of Le-Chambon-sur-Lignon and surrounding farming communities sheltered approximately 5,000 Jews — about one Jew for every 100 persons in which they conducted their "conspiracy of goodness," not one villager betrayed those activities collaborated with the Germans. No Jew was turned away.

Some Jews were hidden, and some spirited across the border to Switzerland in a version of the underground railroad. But many more openly walked the streets of Le Chambon, posing as tourists or students in a charade in which the entire village acquiesced, carrying forged papers provided by the villagers themselves.

Even when German soldiers were stationed in Le Chambon, the lifesaving measures continued unabated.

It is an amazing and absorbing examination of the best in human nature under the most fearful conditions. The people of Le Chambon were ordinary people who behaved in the most exceptional way.

The film probes, though doesn't satisfactorily answer, the question "Why did these people help while so many stood by?"

Part of the reason was the villagers' own history of religious persecution. As Protestant Huguenots in Catholic France, they had been subjected to centuries of hatred, and had developed a folklore of resistance to tyranny. Through the years they defined themselves as people to "obey God and not man men."

Another motivation for the villagers' response was their deep religious beliefs. These were people attached to their religion by more than sentimentality. They took the admonition inscribed over their church door — "Love One Another" — as a daily command-



Pierre Sauvage — who wrote and directed *Weapons of the Spirit* — was just an infant in 1944, shown here in the arms of Eva Héritier, daughter of rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust.

Certainly the leadership and personal dynamism of Le Chambon's Pastor Andre Trocme and his assistant, Pastor Edouard Theis, played some role in shaping and support-

"The responsibility of Christians is to resist the violence that will be brought to bear on their consciences...through the weapons of the spirit."

But it is impossible, and an injustice, to fashion the story of Le Chambon into a tale of individual heroic leadership. For the most striking aspect of the villagers' willingness to save Jewish lives was the matter-of-fact manner in which they all responded.

"I helped simply because they needed to be helped," said one villager. "It happened so naturally, we can't understand the fuss."

Weapons is not the story of a well-organized and structured resistance to evil. There were no heroics, though everyone was a hero. There were no secret plots, though not one villager betrayed the secret of the thousands of Jews.

Rather, and far more impressively, these were people who reflexively knew the right thing to do — and did it.

Sauvage shows us the ordinariness of goodness, and it is utterly captivating but also perplexing. For while it is reassuring that compassion and humanity can be ingrained in people, it makes even more difficult to comprehend those who respond to evil with apathy.

"To understand all the people who stood by, you need to understand the few who didn't," says Sauvage. While *Weapons of the Spirit* may not give a complete understanding of either, it is certainly an important, and very moving, examination of the human spirit, and a film not to be missed. ■

Weapons Of The Spirit - Superb, Haunting, Extraordinary

By LILLIE F. ROSEN

I want to tell you about a most beautiful, a noble, a most inspiring and inspired film and I don't know where to begin. A press release speaks of "an extraordinary document of man's humanity to man" - where the usual quotation deals with "man's INHUMANITY." If one lives long enough, one learns that there are people and there are PEOPLE. There are beings and there are HUMAN BEINGS. There are the dregs and there are MENSCHEN. WEAPONS OF THE SPIRIT is an unbelievably moving film that deals with "ordinary" people, who, by their acts during World War II and the Holocaust, are testaments, each and every one, of what decent, "ordinary" people are capable of, when they have a creed in life, standards by which they live (not just prate) and clear consciences that enable them to defy evil and reach out hands to unfortunates. This is a difficult film to watch and almost throughout, I was crying. Simultaneously, I felt proud to be a member of a group of human beings who could, at great risk to themselves, do so much to remind us that yes, no matter what, there really are decent, fine, upstanding human beings in the world. There are heroes and heroines in this movie, which is actually a large chunk from the life of its maker, PIERRE SAUVAGE, a Jew. In other words, it is fact, not fiction, not merely the product of someone's imagination, no matter how gifted and fertile that imagination might be.

This is an astonishing tale of a tiny village that cared, Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, in Nazi-occupied France, where five thousand Jews fleeing Hitler were given shelter, food and protection by five thousand Christians. Mr. Sauvage was one of those Jews and with this review, you will see a photograph of him as a baby in white outfit, held by Eva Heritier, the daughter of a couple who were among the rescuers of Jews in 1944.

The film reminds us that as the world stood by and did nothing (including America and the supposed lover of Jews, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull), some five thousand peasants, villagers, farmers, all non-Jews, gave refuge to Jews, shared their own meager food stores, lied when necessary to police and Nazi soldiers. No one was ever turned away and no one was ever betrayed - all this, under the noses of Vichy French collaborators, all within striking distance of the infamous Nazi S.S., and even as German soldiers walked the streets of Le Chambon.

Many, many questions are raised - how did this miracle (for it was nothing less than miraculous) occur, why, and who and what were the folks of Le Chambon who were unafraid and even when fearful at times, still did not hesitate or flinch from doing what their hearts, their consciences and their upbringing told them was right. This was, in other words, a tiny, tiny town, a hamlet, a place on earth uniquely committed to the survival of any Jews who came to them for help. There are many ballets, especially among Russian and Danish folk tales that deal with the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Yet, these stories are and remain fairy tales. Here we are watching and listening to riveting accounts of the triumph of good in a real life situation - a Holocaust, the likes of which the world had not seen before - and thus, by film's end, we feel we have taken part in a joyful and moving celebration of a human being's capacity for goodness.

Created with current scenes, flashbacks, interviews - it is a method used elsewhere in Holocaust movies - but this one is totally different, unique.

You see, the people of Le Chambon were Hugenots, who believed in and lived by the OLD Testament. They talk of Jews as the Children of God and when one seeks to praise them, they seem almost embarrassed. But let me tell you briefly about Pierre Sauvage, who tells us now that this film was a labor of love (understandably), a project he pursued for seven years and which he claims has transformed his life. He was born and sheltered in Le Chambon, at a time when much of his family was being tortured and murdered in the Nazi death camps and when he was four, he and his parents moved to New York City. That was in 1948. It was when he returned to Paris at 18, to study, shortly after learning for the first time that he and his parents were Jewish. His first real success as a film maker came when he decided to explore his Jewish roots.

In France, Mr. Sauvage, who also narrates, introduces us to many of the villagers - Henry and Emma Heritier, the peasant couple who sheltered the village forger and other Jews. We see them now, white-haired, aged, but filled with their own memories. Msr. Heritier says "when people came, if we could be of help..." no one asked questions - were you Jewish or not - did you have money to pay for your food or medicine or a room. Unlike the Polish peasants in "Voices from the Attic", who exacted money, jewelry, coins, etc., as the price of helping hide a Jewish family in the attic, the



Jewish and Christian youth at play during the winter of 1944 in Nazi-occupied France, as shown in "Weapons of the Spirit."

Pierre Sauvage's feature documentary about the unique, wartime Christian oasis of Le Chambon, France.

LeChambon villagers gave, gave, gave.

We meet Charles Givert, the old villager who sings the local Hugenot hymn and plays the harmonica; Georgette Barraud, who ran a boarding home that took in many Jews. "It happened so naturally," she declared, "we can't understand the fuss." There is the Englishwoman, Lesley Maber, who moved to Le Chambon before the war and who stated "People who seem very ordinary can do great things if they're given the opportunity" and Pastor Edouard Theis, assistant pastor for the village during the war who tersely said "For the Petain regime we had nothing but contempt." There is even an ironic touch in the comment of Magda Trocme, widow of Pastor Andre Trocme that "if we'd had an organization, we would have failed." We meet Nelly Trocme Hewett, American daughter of the Trocmes for whom the Jews "were part of the community and part of the school, just as we were." There was Marie Brotes, the Christian fundamentalist, for whom the Jews were the People of God. "And the Jews truly, had fallen among thieves." (The Nazis and French collaborators). The home of Adolphe and Aline Caritey became the headquarters of the armed resistance in Le Chambon, with Pierre Fayol, the Resistance leader in the district. Emile Seches ran the Jewish boarding home for children next door to the German headquarters, while Oskar Rosowsky, a Jewish teenager forged fake I.D.s for all who needed them, while Paul Majola, a young shepherd helped distribute the false papers where needed.

It is particularly touching that Marguerite Kohn, the ORTHODOX Jewess, who, with other Jews attended church merely to allay any possible suspicions, would not show up on Friday evening or Saturday and recalls how all her neighbors respected her and the strength of her faith. Lies were not considered important when necessary such as Roger Darcissac, the public school director who told authorities that there were no Jews in his school. "It was the human thing to do..."

The list of beautiful human beings could go on and on - Gentiles, Hugenots - who risked their lives at every moment and did so while figuratively, brushing away the idea that they were doing something unusual. Such, dear Journal readers, are what we call MENSCHEN. And as we watch the way all go about their diurnal tasks, as though nothing out of the ordinary was happening, we can sense palpably the bond that existed among all these people - Jews and Gentiles alike.

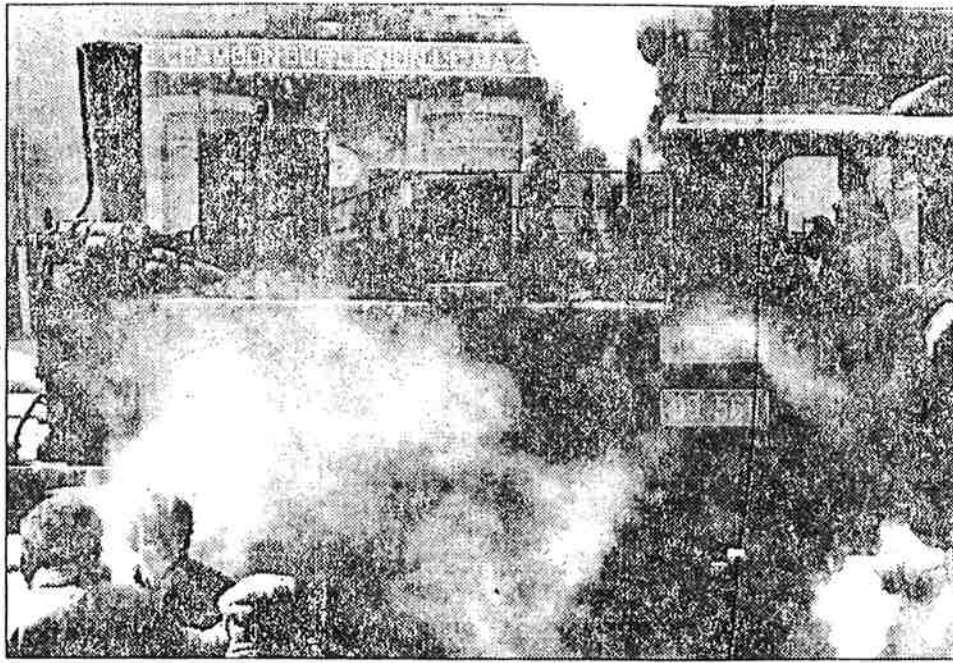
Strictly speaking, Mr. Sauvage does not have to uplift these folks; their actions speak louder than any words could. And so we have, in this ninety minute film, the personal history of a man, who was too young in the forties to realize just what was going on in his life. And when he returned to France, to search out his roots, he was fulfilling and completing his own personal odyssey, while laying out for us the true beauty, faith and strength of some of those around him. And both he and the comments of some of his "old" friends, tweak the consciences (or at least they should) of those who did nothing and forces us to think and feel about how religions can too often divide us, and morality, driven by fear, can go down the drain. Too often, Christians tend to forget they had no religion before the Jews; that whatever they do have comes from the basic Judaic faith. He asks many questions without actually asking them and leaves us to wonder - why, why did so many people do so little, when they could have attempted to stop the insane slaughter of the Jews. Of course, Polish peasantry (a la SHOAH) have the ready answer: "You Jews killed our Lord Jesus and God is punishing you through the Nazis." Thus do miserable excuses for human beings rationalize their hatreds and bigotry.

Well, speaking for myself, I never personally met the people in this film, WEAPONS OF THE SPIRIT. Yet I feel that they are friends and for what they did, like the tiny land of Denmark, to save Jewish lives, I have added them to my daily prayers.

This film will open on September 1st at The Carnegie Theatre on 7th Avenue between 56 and 57th Streets, east side of the street. I urge you most strongly not to miss it. I feel privileged to have seen it and credit must go as well to Barbara M. Rubin as co-producer, to Yves Dahan who handled the camera, to Matthew Harrison, Editor, Patrick Baroz who handled sound, to the post-production supervisor, Dominique Oren. Music that was used in the film included works of Antonio Vivaldi, Django Reinhardt, Maurice Ravel, Epleneire Collective Prd. and Giora Feidman, the klezmer man nonpareil.

Once again, please, PLEASE do not miss this film. You will leave the theatre feeling your heart and soul have been cleansed and lightened. Yes, indeed, there are decent people in this world, no matter what we see, hear and read. GO, GO, GO.

JEWISH JOURNAL (New York City), Sept. 1, 1985



In an early scene in the film, a steam engine like the one used in transporting the refugees arrives at the station in Le Chambon.

cinema — in particular “Shoah,” Claude Lanzmann’s 10-hour epic on the destruction of Europe’s Jews — has dwelt on the evil that was done during the war, Mr. Sauvage holds before his audience some of the few lights of goodness that flickered in the gloom. The question that emerges from his film is: Why, when so many in the world were indifferent, did these few villagers in France so naturally and effortlessly rise to the necessity to be good?

“When I went to Le Chambon in 1980, I was stunned by the simplicity of the people, by the casualness with which they discussed what had occurred,” Mr. Sauvage said. Initially, he said, he planned an entirely different project — a documentary on the failure of the Allies to bomb the railroad tracks leading to the death camps, that is, a film on a supreme instance of indifference. That alone was an important step for someone whose life had been lived virtually detached from a Jewish past. Mr. Sauvage grew up in New York, where his father was the correspondent for a French newspaper. After several years in France, he eventually went into television, working for a decade for the Los Angeles public television station. He made a first trip to Le Chambon as a young man, going with his parents in the 1960’s, but, somehow, that visit had little effect on him.

Then, he said, “two things happened. First I returned to Le Chambon at a key moment and, second, my son, who is now 9 years old, was born.” The son reminded him that he belonged to a chain of generations, of the importance of rootedness to a past. The visit in 1980 to the unpretentious villagers of Le Chambon, made just as he was re-attaching

himself to his Jewishness, brought him face to face with the issue that he would confront in “Weapons of the Spirit.”

“I realized that indifference was an extraordinarily important topic and that I had an opportunity to get some understanding of it in a much more productive way, and in a way that connected with my life,” he said. “I could portray people who are not indifferent, who are almost incapable of being indifferent.”

“To understand all the people who stood by, you need to understand the few who didn’t,” he said.

The view that emerges in “Weapons of the Spirit” on the key question of goodness is that the villagers themselves naturally and spontaneously rose to the occasion. They were mostly Protestants in Roman Catholic France with their own long history of persecution and thus were sensitive to the persecution of others. Equally important, they belonged to a generally fundamentalist sect and took literally such Christian injunctions as “love thy neighbor.” In his book on Le Chambon, Mr. Hallie emphasizes the role of Pastor Trocmé in inspiring and organizing the rescue of the Jews. But while Mr. Sauvage recognizes Trocmé’s indisputable nobility, he believes that the rescue was a collective effort.

“There were two types of rescuers during the war,” he said, returning to the topic of the righteous. “There were those that went out of their way to rescue. André Trocmé belongs in that category. Then there were those who did not go out of their way, but simply responded to the situation as it presented itself. The people of Le Chambon belong in that second category. The presence of the two explains what happened.” □

Arts & Leisure

C/S

Section

A Movie Maker Preserves Those Who Preserved Him

By RICHARD BERNSTEIN

THE FIRST THING TO KNOW about Pierre Sauvage's documentary film "Weapons of the Spirit," which tells the story of a small village in France where the lives of 5,000 Jews were saved in World War II, is that it is not the work of a dutiful child fulfilling, as the film maker put it, "the deepest aspirations of his parents."

Mr. Sauvage, now 45 years old, owes his life to the people of the village where his Jewish parents were given refuge during the war. And so, it could naturally be assumed that "Weapons of the Spirit" was a kind of homage carried out by one who was raised on the stories of the heroism that saved him.

But it happens sometimes that parents want to forget, or, at least to put behind them, the terrible circumstances that their children wish to remember. The fact is that Pierre Sauvage was raised until the age of 18 not even knowing that he was a Jew, not aware that he was born in the district hospital near Le Chambon-sur-Lignon because the

Pierre Sauvage's documentary records the wartime heroism of the French village that gave refuge to 5,000 Jews.

life of his Polish-born mother was in mortal danger elsewhere in occupied France. Moreover, when Mr. Sauvage decided to make his documentary film on the village that saved him, his parents expressed the wish that he not carry out the project. He did not obey that wish, and now that "Weapons of the Spirit," after seven years of effort, is complete — it will open in New York on Friday at the Carnegie Screening Room — Mr. Sauvage is inclined to see it as a kind of return trip through the labyrinth of identity.

"This was the work of a rebellious child who was re-creating his past and staking out a claim to it," he said in an interview at his home here. "I was deprived of memory, and that probably generated an almost compulsive need to reconstruct a part of a past that I



Seen in Pierre Sauvage's "Weapons of the Spirit" are Henri and Emma Héritier, two residents of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon who helped the film maker's family.

was not raised with."

The second thing to know about Mr. Sauvage's film is that, if his parents opposed it, the villagers who saved his family were far from enthusiastic about it themselves. Gradually, over time, Le Chambon has emerged in the Western conscience as one of those rare places during the war, where, as the historian Philip Hallie put it, "good was done."

Mr. Hallie wrote a book about the village in 1979 called "Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed," chronicling in particular the role of the village's Protestant minister, André Trocmé, in turning it into a refuge for the persecuted. Jewish groups in the United States, aware that numerous Jews were hidden by the deeply religious peasants of Le Chambon, furnished with false papers and escorted over the border into nearby Switzerland, have formally honored the village. But when Mr. Sauvage went there in 1982 to begin filming, he found a people disinclined to be turned into heroes.

"They were very reluctant," he said, referring to his efforts to interview the villagers on camera. "They were very wary. They believe that to appear to trumpet your deeds is to devalue them."

"The single most striking fact about these people," he said, "is the way they view what they did as being absolutely natural."

Nonetheless, the reluctant protagonists of Le Chambon and Mr. Sauvage himself are joined together in a documentary that now takes its place among the rapidly growing body of materials on the Holocaust. It is both personal history and history writ large, showing the rescue of the Sauvage family and the efforts of the unpretentious peasants of Le Chambon against the backdrop of the larger catastrophe in France, during which French collaborators with the authorities often outdid themselves to turn over Jews, both French and foreign, to the Nazis.

Although much in the recent Holocaust

NEW FILMS

★ New films recommended by *New York's* critic.

★ **WEAPONS OF THE SPIRIT**—(1 hr. 30 min.; 1989) First-rate documentary about the town of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, in south-central France, which sheltered as many as 5,000 Jews from the Gestapo during World War II. Why this town? The American documentary filmmaker Pierre Sauvage, who was born in Le Chambon (his parents had sought refuge there), devotes himself to this "conspiracy of goodness." Le Chambon, it turns out, was largely populated with descendants of Huguenots, France's Protestants; the town's memory of being a persecuted minority in Catholic France is part of its communal identity. But beyond this historical explanation, there is a core of decency hard to account for. When interviewed by Sauvage, the elderly survivors of the Vichy period respond with remarkable simplicity. The Jews, they say, may not have believed in the Gospels, but they were "people of God." They are a modest group of heroes, these peasants and storekeepers, but there's pride in their simple assertion of right and also a somber mystique of courage, nurtured in silence and opposition through generations. An incisive, moving, and morally instructive film.

ONE OF THE CORRUPTING SIDE EFFECTS OF A catastrophe like the Holocaust is that it accustoms us so thoroughly to the prevalence of evil that we may have some difficulty in accepting the possibility of goodness. Thus the chances of creditable behavior in a future crisis are undermined. In recent years, the network of viciousness that made the Holocaust possible has been thoroughly investigated. By contrast, the occasional episodes of resistance to the Final Solution remain something of a mystery—a challenge, too, since the very existence of such episodes, however marginal or exceptional, calls into question the acquiescence in evil that so many defined as necessity.

The town of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, in south-central France, sheltered as many as 5,000 Jews during World War II; since no other town in Vichy France practiced virtue on a comparable scale, the history of Le Chambon is as much an accusation as a stirring instance of moral courage. Why this town? The American documentary filmmaker Pierre Sauvage, who was born in Le Chambon (his Jewish parents had sought refuge there), devotes himself to this puzzle in his incisive and finally very moving *Weapons of the Spirit* (at the Carnegie Screening Room). Le Chambon, it turns out, was populated largely by descendants of Huguenots, France's Protestants; the town's memory of being a persecuted minority in Catholic France was part of its communal identity. Defiance and tolerance were the poles of its moral compass: Before the war, the town had taken in refugees of the Spanish Civil War and other outcasts. And once Le Chambon acted on behalf of the Jews, its behavior created momentum—what Sauvage calls "a conspiracy of goodness." The local Vichy prefect almost certainly protected the town; the *Wehrmacht* commandant in charge of troops convalescing in Le Chambon appears to have looked the other way.

But beyond the historical and circumstantial explanations, there is a core of decency in the Chambonnais that is hard to account for. When interviewed by Sauvage, the elderly survivors of the Vichy period respond with remarkable simplicity. Their kindness appears to be instinctive, their piety a generous form of Christian witness. The Jews, they say, may not have believed in the Gospels, but they were "people of God"—the ancestors, the characters of the Old Testament. They are a modest group of heroes, these peasants and storekeepers, but there's pride in their simple assertion of right and also a somber mystique of courage, nurtured in silence and opposition through generations. Some people, they remind us, do the right thing because it's the only thing they *can* do.

NEW YORK
MAGAZINE

Sept. 18, 1989

Movie Reviews

Poignant, Powerful 'Weapons of the Spirit'

In films today, the weapons of death and destruction are often before us. The weapons of the spirit—quieter instruments of mercy, reverence, compassion—we see much more rarely. Yet, these are what Pierre Sauvage celebrates in his inspiring documentary "Weapons of the Spirit" (Fine Arts), a chronicle of the French mountain village of Le Chambon and its extraordinary mass effort during the Nazi occupation.

Sauvage's story, told with a restraint that may make you weep, is one antidote to the blackness permeating such Holocaust documentaries as "The Sorrow and the Pity" and "Shoah." Against these now familiar portraits of widespread cowardice or complicity, Sauvage poses the ennobling example of the Chamboniers, who saved his life, the lives of his parents and of 5,000 other Jewish refugees, at least one for every inhabitant of the village.

What Le Chambon did is remarkable in itself. For the entire war, they refused to collaborate with the Nazis or their puppets, becoming, along with other mountain villages, a safe harbor for refugees. Simple mountain people, deeply Christian, many descended from France's persecuted Huguenot minority, they continuously risked death or prison to rescue people they barely knew. They shared their meager food, helped supply phony papers (forged locally and secreted in local beehives), welcomed the children into their schools and openly defied the Gestapo.

It was the pacifist pastor Andre Trocme, who later died in a concentration camp, who led Le Chambon's quiet revolt and who coined the phrase of the movie's title, telling his parishioners, as France collapsed: "The responsibility of Christians is to resist the violence that will be brought to bear on their consciences . . . through the weapons of the spirit." Trocme's flock never forgot this admonition. Not one Jewish refugee was betrayed there to the Gestapo, not by Trocme's Protes-



Film maker Pierre Sauvage and his father in 1944. Their lives and those of 5,000 other Jews were saved by French villagers.

tants, not by the town's Catholic minority, not by the Vichy representative, not even by the wounded German soldiers billeted at a local hotel—who probably knew, or suspected, everything. This was, for Sauvage, a vast "conspiracy of goodness" in which the unshakable faith of Le Chambon's shepherd gradually infiltrated everyone else as well.

Sauvage, a beneficiary of that goodness (another was Albert Camus, who wrote "The Plague" at a nearby farm) has obviously made this film as a partial recompense. Shot in a calm, unsentimental, elegiac style, it suggests the work of a director he admired as a critic, John Ford, in its celebration of the community, its revelation of the nobility of the commonplace, its idealism and even its sad irony: the way Le Chambon was later somewhat forgotten, even by those it saved.

Yet "Weapons of the Spirit" (Times-rated: Family) is one document—Philip Hallie's book on Le Chambon, "Lest Innocent Blood be Shed," is another—which ensures

the town's remembrance: and that of these fine, brave, truly admirable people, who, though they would disclaim the role, are part of our universal conscience. Watching their extraordinary faces, we may come to realize, that, if we were all more like them, there would be no Holocausts.

—MICHAEL WILMINGTON

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1989

Film: Kindness Amid the Nazi Horror

By JULIE SALAMON

Poland's Roman Catholic Primate Jozef Cardinal Glemp isn't doing his Solidarity friends a favor by reviving the image of the Jew-baiting Pole. Raising the old bugaboo about Jewish control of the media while slamming Jews protesting the presence of a Carmelite convent at Auschwitz, Cardinal Glemp seems to have forgotten what happened to Jews there, just a short drive from Krakow.

Jews aren't about to let him forget the Nazi mass murders of their people, and that's right. It's their moral obligation, but they also must devote energy to memorializing the noble non-Jews who risked their lives to protect Jews. One of the few films to deal with the subject was "Au Revoir Les Enfants," the lovely 1968 movie by French director Louis Malle—a Catholic—about his memory of a rural priest who eventually was deported to a concentration camp for hiding Jewish boys in his school.

A great many Holocaust survivors can report isolated incidents of kindness and bravery like the one Mr. Malle recalled in fictional form. Far rarer was what happened at the little French village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, where an entire town conspired to save Jews. Now Pierre Sauvage, a 45-year-old Jewish film maker who was born near Le Chambon, and spent his early months there, has commemorated the place and its people in an understated yet stirring documentary called "Weapons of the Spirit."

Mr. Sauvage's parents wanted so badly to forget the past they didn't raise him as a Jew. Yet after he discovered that his family was Jewish, at the age of 18, they did take him to visit Le Chambon. When he returned in 1960, intending to make a documentary about the Allied decision not to bomb the railroad tracks leading to Auschwitz, he decided instead to tell about what happened in Le Chambon, about what he calls "the conspiracy of goodness."

He doesn't insult Le Chambon's down-to-earth residents with sentimental treat-

ment though he clearly feels passionately about what they did for him. Most of the villagers who harbored the Jews have died; the rest are old and seem slightly bewildered by Mr. Sauvage's intentions. When he asks an elderly couple why they helped, they shrug. "I don't know," says the white-haired woman. "We were used to it." Another villager says: "It happened so naturally we can't understand the fuss." Finally: "It's a normal thing to do."

Of course in Nazi-occupied France—Le Chambon was 40 miles from the Vichy border—saving Jews wasn't the "normal" thing to do. It was abnormal—dangerous, life-threatening.

Mr. Sauvage provides the background that explains the overwhelming casualness with which the Chambonnais viewed their actions. They, too, are outsiders, Huguenot Protestants living in Catholic France who had themselves experienced isolation and persecution hundreds of years before. When the old woman said, "We were used to it," she probably was taking the long view.

Mr. Sauvage mixes up the imagery of Le Chambon today, a quaint provincial town, with photographs from the Nazi era. He fills in the historical context with words and with old news footage of Vichy France, including a cheerful account of an exhibit called "The Jew in France," which explained in detail "the harmful effect of the Jew in France." More than 13,000 people visited the exhibit in three days, the announcer declared.

The numbers may or may not have been true. In Le Chambon, where Jewish refugees arriving in the middle of the night were never asked what their religion was, the propaganda was irrelevant. Under the guidance of their pastor, Andre Trocme, these fundamentalist Christians practiced what Trocme preached. They loved their neighbors. By the war's end, the town's population included almost one Jew for every one of the 5,000 locals.

Mr. Sauvage, too, took his cue from Pastor Trocme, who encouraged his congregation to use "weapons of the spirit" to

fight evil. He roused other Jewish beneficiaries of Le Chambon's spirit to speak on film about how they were saved. Many of them had never acknowledged the good that had been done them, because they couldn't bear to remember the accompanying sorrow. In his capacity as film maker and the president of a charitable foundation called Friends of Le Chambon, Mr. Sauvage is performing a valuable function. He's reminding us that while the evil shouldn't be forgotten, neither should the good.

Newsweek

A Village's Conspiracy of Goodness

While the French Vichy government was eagerly collaborating with the Nazis—deporting 80,000 Jews to the death camps and confirming one's blackest view of human nature—in the poor farming village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon an altogether different response to the evils of the Holocaust occurred. There, during the war, some 5,000 Jews were saved by the inhabitants of a town that itself numbered only 5,000. How, asks filmmaker Pierre Sauvage in his moving and provocative documentary *Weapons of the Spirit*, did this “conspiracy of goodness” happen? What made Le Chambon—a town where not a single act of betrayal occurred—resist the virus that had contaminated most of Europe?

Sauvage's film is both an

enquiry into the nature of goodness and a personal odyssey. The filmmaker, a Jew, was born in Le Chambon in 1944, and he returned there to interview the men and women to whom he, and so many others, owe their lives. Questioning these devout people—most of them descendants of Huguenots—about their heroic deeds, he is repeatedly faced with a similar response: “We can't understand the fuss.” “We helped because they needed to be helped.” There is no false modesty in this. The people of Le Chambon found goodness natural, logical. What else could they do? These Protestant peasants believed that their deeds must match the words of the Old Testament. And as descendants of a greatly persecuted sect, the filmmaker sug-

gests, their own history of oppression made them innately sympathetic to the plight of the Jews.

Though the movie makes the point that the community's effort was more a spontaneous response than an organized mission, there is no doubt that spiritual leadership was provided by pastor André Trocmé, a pacifist who, on the day after France surrendered to Germany, exhorted his flock to resist the Nazis with “the weapons of the spirit.” The contagiousness of goodness even seemed to spread, curiously, to the Vichy officials and German soldiers in Chambon, who strangely failed to report what was occurring there.

There are mysteries here, which Sauvage in 90 minutes cannot fully explore. But

what an extraordinary story he has revealed, one that is both enormously uplifting and, because it is so anomalous, terribly sad. In making a hopeful film about the Holocaust, Sauvage reminds us of the vast majority who lifted not a finger.

DAVID ANSEN



Heroic: A La Chambon couple



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CREDITS

Produced, written,
and directed by

Pierre Sauvage

Co-Producer

Barbara M. Rubin

Camara

Yves Dahan

Editor

Matthew Harrison

Sound

Patrick Baroz

Post-production
supervisor

Dominique Oren

Music

Antonio Vivaldi

Django Reinhardt

Maurice Ravel

Ephemere Collective Prd.

Giora Feidman

Running Time: 90 minutes

**"AN AWESOME TESTIMONY. GIVES HISTORY AN IMMEDIACY
AND PALPABILITY THAT IS BOTH HAUNTING AND INSPIRATIONAL"**
Susan Gilman, Jewish Week (New York)

"FIRST-RATE. INCISIVE, MOVING, AND MORALLY INSTRUCTIVE"
David Denby, New York Magazine

**"ONE OF THE MOST PERSONAL AND INSPIRING DOCUMENTARIES
YOU'RE EVER LIKELY TO SEE"**
John Hartl, Seattle Times

"INCREDIBLE AND LIFE-AFFIRMING"
Candice Russell, Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel

"INSPIRING AND ENNOBLING. AN EXTRAORDINARY FILM"
Norman Lear

**"THE ASTONISHING STORY AND THE MEMORIES ARE BEYOND VALUE.
CAPTURES GOODNESS AND FAITH"**
Caryn James, New York Times

"REMARKABLE. UPLIFTING. EXCELLENT"
Stewart Klein, Fox Television

**"A FASCINATING CHAPTER OF HISTORY INTERSECTING AN
UNSURPASSINGLY PERSONAL SAGA. INTERNATIONALLY MARKETABLE"**
Todd McCarthy, Variety

"AN EXTRAORDINARY DOCUMENTARY, HIGHLY MOVING AND INSIGHTFUL"
Jay Reiner, The Hollywood Reporter

"FORCES US TO REASSESS THE MORAL CHALLENGES OF THE HOLOCAUST"
Laurence Jarvik, Tikkun

"ASTONISHING! A REALLY AWESOME FILM"
Dean Cohen, KPFK Radio (Los Angeles)

"AN EXTRAORDINARY FILM. THERE IS NOT A SINGLE FALSE NOTE"
Tom Tugend, Heritage

"IT LIFTETH MY SPIRITS--WHAT MORE CAN ONE ASK FROM A FILM?"
Dr. Henry L. Feingold, Professor of History, C.U.N.Y.

"GOD, IT'S A GREAT MOVIE"
Jude McGee, KFOX Radio (Los Angeles)

"A STUNNING ACHIEVEMENT"
Dr. Harry James Cargas, Catholic Holocaust Scholar, Webster Univ.

**"STRAIGHTFORWARD, INTELLIGENT, GRIPPING
AND NEVER POINTEDLY 'INSPIRATIONAL'"**
David Margolis, film critic, The Jewish Journal (Los Angeles)

"PERSONAL, REVELATORY, AND INSPIRING"
Annette Insdorf, Dimensions

"AN EXTRAORDINARY DOCUMENT OF MAN'S HUMANITY TO MAN"
Norman Corwin

IN ONE TINY CORNER OF NAZI-OCCUPIED FRANCE,
5,000 JEWS WERE SHELTERED--BY 5,000 CHRISTIANS!

"WEAPONS OF THE SPIRIT" (90 min., color) IS THE
ACCOUNT OF THIS UNIQUE CONSPIRACY OF GOODNESS.

FILMMAKER PIERRE SAUVAGE WAS HIMSELF BORN AND PROTECTED
IN THAT DEFIANTLY PEACEFUL VILLAGE: LE CHAMBON-SUR-LIGNON.

WINNER

Documentary Award, L.A. FILM CRITICS ASSOCIATION
Documentary Gold Hugo, CHICAGO FILM FESTIVAL
Red Ribbon, AMERICAN FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL
Audience Award, BELFORT (FRANCE) FILM FESTIVAL
Jury Award, BELFORT (FRANCE) FILM FESTIVAL
Jewish Subjects Award, ANTHROPOS FESTIVAL

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LONDON, FT. LAUDERDALE, HOUSTON, SYDNEY, MELBOURNE, YAMAGATA...

"SUPERBI"

Elie Wiesel

"STIRRED ME AS FEW EXPERIENCES HAVE IN A LONG TIME"

Bill Moyers

**"MOVING AND PROVOCATIVE. ENORMOUSLY UPLIFTING.
AN EXTRAORDINARY STORY"**

David Ansen, Newsweek

******1/2*--SIMPLE AND OVERWHELMING. INSPIRING"**

David Edelstein, New York Post

******--ASTONISHING. OLYMPIAN"**

Desmond Ryan, Philadelphia Inquirer

******1/2*--A TRULY UPLIFTING EXPERIENCE"**

Kathleen Carroll, New York Daily News

"INSPIRING AND INSPIRED, HAUNTING, EXTRAORDINARY. GO, GO, GO!"

Lillie F. Rosen, Jewish Journal (New York)

**"HEARTWARMING. A RARE AND STIRRING ILLUSTRATION OF THE
POWER OF RELIGION TO UNITE RATHER THAN DIVIDE PEOPLE"**

Kevin Thomas, Los Angeles Times

"ASTONISHING. A GIFT TO THE SOUL"

Susan Granger, WMCA Radio (New York)

(over, please)

EVEN DURING THE HOLOCAUST
THERE WAS ONE VILLAGE THAT CARED



Weapons
of the



Spirit

A FILM BY PIERRE SAUVAGE

"SUPERB" ELIE WIESEL

"AN EXTRAORDINARY DOCUMENT OF
MAN'S HUMANITY TO MAN" NORMAN CORWIN



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Jewish and Christian youth at play during the winter of 1944 in Nazi-occupied France, as shown in "Weapons of the Spirit," Pierre Sauvage's feature documentary about the unique, wartime Christian oasis of Le Chambon, France.



1988
United States
Holocaust Memorial Council

United States Holocaust Memorial Council

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we opened the spirit

Rene Sarvag

2/9/50

(documentary)

Sue Blomfield

Rabbi Nissenzon (Grand)

U.S. Holocaust Memorial
Council

- 1930s

Alfred Bron - funeral home

Varian Fry ~~not push~~ ^{some left to} ~~varian fry~~

Anteys Rege - anti-kisskipalies

Harmond 30th anniv. of Sabudari

→ Emphoring American aspect of Holocaust

* 30th Anniversary of Mauthausen
is in August

metals of freedom

~~report to~~
Sen. Lautenberg

* Rep. Bitterman

very enthusiastic

Some associates + some people he saved

Emergency Rescue Committee
has Intl Rescue Committee

(Liv Ullmann)

MONA - event of dinner
→ symposium of people who have survived