

ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT RICHARD C. LEVIN OF YALE UNIVERSITY AT THE NATIONAL CIVIC COMMEMORATION OF THE DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 5, 1998

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, April 23, Members of Congress joined with representatives of the diplomatic corps, executive and judicial branch officials, and hundreds of Holocaust survivors and their families to commemorate the National Days of Remembrance in the rotunda of the United States Capitol. The keynote address at this solemn ceremony was delivered by the distinguished President of Yale University, Dr. Richard C. Levin's meaningful words served to remind us all of our communal responsibility to educate our children and grandchildren.

Dr. Levin is the twenty-second President of Yale University. Prior to his outstanding service in this office, he added to the University's unparalleled reputation through his efforts as the Frederick William Beinecke Professor of Economics at Yale. In addition to teaching a wide variety of courses on subjects ranging from the oil industry to the history of economic thought, President Levin served on dozens of major committees and rose in the administrative ranks to become the chairman of the economics department and the dean of the graduate schools at Yale before his October 2, 1993 inauguration as President of the University.

Mr. Speaker, I insert President Levin's thought-provoking remarks for the RECORD, and I urge my colleagues to take note of their meaning and importance.

"BLESSED IS THE MARCH. . ."

(By Richard C. Levin)

The main camp at Auschwitz was situated, not in remote isolation, but in a densely populated region. To the east, immediately adjacent to the camp, was a pleasant village, complete with a hotel and shops, built to house SS troops and their families. One mile farther east was the town of Auschwitz, intended by the very men who ordered the construction of the camps to be a center of industrial activity, a focus of German resettlement at the confluence of three rivers, with easy access to the coal fields of Upper Silesia.¹

In his chilling work on the origins of Auschwitz, Robert-Jan van Pelt documents the Utopian vision that drove the systematic planning for German colonization of the East. In December 1941, Hans Stosberg, the architect and master planner, sent his friends a New Year's greeting card. On the front he wished them "health, happiness, and a good outcome for every new beginning." The card's central spread depicted his drawing for a reconstruction of the central market place in Auschwitz. The inscription on the back of the greeting card connected Stosberg's current project with National Socialist mythology:

"In the year 1241 Silesian knights, acting as saviors of the Reich, warded off the Mongolian assault at Wahlstatt. In that same century Auschwitz was founded as a German town. After six hundred years [sic] the Führer Adolf Hitler is turning the Bolshevik menace away from Europe. This year, 1941, the construction of a new German city and

the reconstruction of the old Silesian market have been planned and initiated."

To Stosberg's inscription, I would add that during the same year, 1941, it was decided to reduce the space allocated to each prisoner at the nearby Auschwitz-Birkenau camp from 14 to 11 square feet.

How, in one of the most civilized nations on earth, could an architect boast about work that involved not only designing the handsome town center depicted on his greeting card but the meticulous planning of facilities to house the slave labor to build it?

This is but one of numberless questions that knowledge of the Holocaust compels us to ask. In the details of its horror, the Holocaust forces us to redefine the range of human experience; it demands that we confront real, not imagined, experiences that defy imagination.

How can we begin to understand the dehumanizing loss of identity suffered by the victims in the camps? How can we begin to understand the insensate rationality and brutality of the persecutors? How can we begin to understand the silence of the bystanders? There is only one answer: by remembering.

The distinguished Yale scholar, Geoffrey Hartman, tells us, "the culture of remembrance is a high tide. . . . At present, three generations are preoccupied with Holocaust memory. There are the eyewitnesses; their children, the second generation, who have subdued some of their ambivalence and are eager to know their parents better; and the third generation, grand-children who treasure the personal stories of relatives now slipping away."²

The tide will inevitably recede. And if there are no survivors to tell the story, who will make their successors remember and help them to understand? Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, along with those of sister museums in other cities, are educating the public about the horrors of the Shoah. Museums, university archives, and private foundations are collecting and preserving the materials that enable us to learn from the past, and it is the special role of universities to support the scholars who explore and illuminate this dark episode in human history. Our universities have a dual responsibility: to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and to seek a deeper understanding of it.

This is a daunting and important responsibility. To confront future generations with the memory of the Holocaust is to change forever their conception of humanity. To urge them to understand it is to ask their commitment to prevent its recurrence.

In the words of Hannah Senesh, the 23 year-old poet and patriot executed as a prisoner of the Reich in Budapest, "Blessed is the match that is consumed in kindling a flame." May the act of remembrance consume our ignorance and indifference, and light the way to justice and righteousness.

FOOTNOTES

¹Robert-Jan van Pelt, "Auschwitz: From Architect's Promise to Inmate's Perdition," *Modernism/Modernity*, 1:1, January 1994, 80-120. See also Deborah Dwork and Robert-Jan van Pelt, *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.

²Geoffrey Hartman, "Shoah and Intellectual Witness," *Partisan Review*, 1998:1, 37.

THE CENTENNIAL OF THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 5, 1998

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of the Centennial of the oldest social work training program in the nation, I hereby offer congratulations to the Columbia University School of Social Work. Evolving from a summer program organized by the Charity Organization Society in New York, the school of Social Work has a long and distinguished history of pioneering research, informed advocacy and exceptional professional training.

It is a remarkable accomplishment that social workers have played key roles in every major social reform movement, from settlement houses to labor reform, to the New Deal, to civil rights and voter registration. Many of the things we take for granted today—Social Security, child labor laws, the minimum wage, the 40-hour work week, Medicare—came about because social workers saw injustice, acted, and inspired others.

Throughout the century Columbia's faculty, students and alumni have worked tirelessly to address both the causes and symptoms of our most pressing social problems. National movements, such as the White House Conference on Children and the National Urban League, have emerged from projects undertaken by the School's faculty and administrators in cooperation with professional and community organizations. The entire nation has benefitted from the work of people like Eveline Burns (Social Security); Mitchell I. Ginsberg (Head Start); Richard Cloward (welfare rights and voter registration); Alfred Kahn and Sheila B. Kamenman (cross-national studies of social services) and David Fanshel (children in foster care).

As your School, and indeed the social work profession, move into their second centuries, they will be challenged to respond to social change, new social problems, family change, and evolving societal commitments. Now more than ever, we will need well-trained and dedicated social workers to work with troubled children and families, organize communities for change, conduct cutting-edge research, administer social programs, and alleviate society's most intractable problems.

It is with appreciation and admiration that I extend my best wishes to the Columbia School of Social Work on its Centennial and look forward to its future activity and achievement.

HONORING DETECTIVE WILLIAM CRAIG, NORTH MIAMI POLICE DEPARTMENT

HON. CARRIE P. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 5, 1998

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on Friday, May 15, 1998, Detective William E. Craig will retire from the North Miami Police Department after a quarter-century of protecting its citizenry. He has received numerous commendations during his service and is highly regarded by his peers.