

The Holocaust Historiography Project

Remarkable Nonsense about the Holocaust

Jewish children burned alive at site of Auschwitz crosses

By HAIM SHAPIRO

JERUSALEM (July 31) - Jewish children were burned alive at the very spot where Polish Catholics are now setting up crosses at Auschwitz, according to Naphtali Lavie, the former Israeli consul in New York.

Lavie, a Holocaust survivor, who now serves as vice-chairman of the World Jewish Restitution Organization, was reacting to a report in The Jerusalem Post this week about the erection of some 50 new crosses close to the fence of the concentration camp.

MK Shevah Weiss (Labor), another Holocaust survivor, sent a letter to the Polish president asking him to immediately intervene and ensure the removal the crosses.

[...]

Lavie said that the burning of the Jewish children was unparalleled among all terrible outrages committed against the Jews throughout their history.

"We know of cases of children being burned alive during the crusades, but not in such numbers," he said.

The documentation for the crime has come in the form of testimony by a Polish Christian, Krystyn Olszewski, of Warsaw, who himself had been imprisoned in Auschwitz for trying to transport arms to a Polish resistance unit.

He related the incident to Lavie and his testimony was later recorded in writing.

"We were both weeping as he told it to me," Lavie recalled this week.

According to his testimony, in February or March of 1944, Olszewski was part of a work crew that had been sent to dismantle makeshift barriers which the guards had constructed to protect their platforms from the freezing winds and blizzards.

At one point, he had been sent up to the tower to take down the barrier materials, while the other workers waited below. It was there that he first heard the children wailing.

"While tearing down the plate that was nailed to the barrier and the roof beam, a gust of wind brought a strange, distant cry of high-pitched children's voices," he said in his testimony, which has been translated to English.

Olszewski related how, as he deliberately prolonged his struggle to dismantle the plate, he saw a truck filled with naked children waving their arms. The truck was slowly rolling toward "the pit," a place where the Germans burned corpses of those who had been gassed, but whose bodies could not be accommodated by the crematoria.

As he covertly watched, the kapo urged him to finish the job.

"I saw that the truck, which meanwhile had turned around, turned out to be a dump-truck. At this very moment the screaming throng of children was sliding down the raised truck-bed to the flaming pit. This was the last thing I saw.

"After I climbed down, nothing could be seen or heard. Gusts of wind brought the smell of smoke but no one thought it strange," Olszewski said.

With his testimony, Olszewski enclosed a drawing of the lay-out of the camp.

"I am willing to participate in the investigation aimed at determining the exact site of the crime, which in my view, was the climax of the Holocaust," he said.

Lavie said this week that he had received confirmation that the Germans burned Jewish children alive at Auschwitz from two other survivors, Polish Chief Rabbi Pinhas Menahem Joskowicz and Rabbi Menashe Klein, rabbi of the Ungvar community in the Jerusalem suburb of Ramot. Both said they had personally seen Jewish children being thrown into fires.

Prof. Yisrael Guttman, the historian of Yad Vashem, had also heard of such instances, Lavie said. He said that even survivors found it difficult to believe and said such a thing could not happen.

"If I had not heard this additional testimony, I myself would not have believed it," Lavie said.

Lavie said that the period in question had been one when, according to the testimony of the Eichmann trial, the Auschwitz commander, Rudolph Hess [*sic*], had asked to slow down the transports, complaining that he could not dispose of the bodies quickly enough. In response, Eichmann had pressed him to work faster and faster.

He described the selection, where the men were sent to work and children three to seven were immediately sent to be murdered.

"I was at Auschwitz in 1941, when it wasn't yet that bad," Lavie said.

Lavie is convinced that the site of this outrage was where the crosses are now being erected. The pits in question, he said, were those where the bodies of Russian prisoners of war, who had been gassed, were burned.

"This is not a place for an Auschwitz museum, but for a Jewish memorial, where Jews can come and say kaddish," Lavie said.

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Send all questions and comments to webmaster@historiography-project.org.