Yehuda Bauer's Contribution to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)*

Richelle Budd Caplan



Professor Bauer was a gifted teacher, yet I believe that I learned more from him outside the classroom. He always instructed us to interweave primary sources when researching history. However, in the conference room he taught me how to solve disagreements over coffee with one's interlocutors, as well as how to deftly express nuance in the English language.

For more than three decades, I had the privilege to study under Professor Yehuda Bauer in various professional capacities: as my professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; editor-in-chief of *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*; director of Yad Vashem's International Holocaust Research Institute; independent advisor for the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF); Honorary Chairman of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA); and as a world-renowned speaker who gave talks—usually without notes—in classrooms, parliaments, online, and in various forums.

In May 1998, Professor Yehuda Bauer began his formal association with the Swedish government as an advisor to the ITF. However, Bauer's connection with high-ranking Swedish representatives had already begun several months earlier. Since I may be the only person who attended that first May 1998 ITF meeting who is still actively involved with IHRA, I shall try to shed some light on how our Israeli professor became connected to this international forum.

On August 22, 1997, Swedish Minister Thage Peterson's office convened a meeting to discuss various ideas "in the wake of the disturbing findings of the poll of Swedish youngsters." (See Fig. 1.) Bauer attended this meeting together with Israeli Ambassador to Sweden Gideon Ben

^{*} Formerly known as the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, or the ITF.

Ami and Mr. Henrik Bachner, a member of the Jewish community. After he returned to Israel, he updated Yad Vashem's Chairman at the time, Avner Shalev about this discussion. Bauer appears to have clearly understood that the Swedish government was planning a serious initiative to promote Holocaust awareness on a national level.

Bauer, together with Shalev, issued a follow-up letter to Peterson on September 1, 1997, outlining several avenues of possible cooperation between Yad Vashem and Swedish institutions, "through the good offices of the Israeli embassy, and with the involvement of the Jewish community." (See Fig. 1.)

On November 25, 1997, Shalev wrote another letter to Minister Thage Peterson outlining proposed educational programming for Swedish educators (see Fig. 2). An additional two-page written proposal was included with the letter, which suggested the use of teaching kits and multimedia tools. Bauer, who was copied on Shalev's letter, undoubtedly encouraged the development of this written proposal.

On December 9, 1997, Sweden's "Living History Project" plan was outlined by Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson. In a letter from Swedish Ambassador John HM Hagard, Hagard wrote that their goal was to stimulate "discussion on such values as compassion, democracy and the equal value of all people, using the Holocaust as a point of departure." (See Fig. 3.) This national initiative sought to organize Holocaust memorial ceremonies on January 27; provide parents and the general public with a book about the Holocaust; support educators with trainings and tools; buttress research and instruction on the Holocaust and genocide on the university level; support Holocaust survivor groups; erect a Holocaust memorial in the Swedish capital; encourage study tours to the Auschwitz Birkenau State Museum in Poland; and more. In this memorandum the Swedish government stated that it would allocate 15 million Swedish krona for these Holocaust initiatives aimed to foster Holocaust education, remembrance, and research.

A short time thereafter, in early December, Professor Bauer attended the London Conference on Nazi Gold. During this international gathering of representatives from some forty countries, he met the director-general for Political Affairs of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ulf Hjertonsson. On the sidelines of this conference, Hjertonsson apparently briefed Bauer about components of the Living History Project plan.

Following this discussion Bauer wrote Hjertonsson another letter, dated January 7, 1998. In Bauer's words Hjertonsson "kindly encouraged"

the Israeli professor to contact him concerning "the programs of teaching about the Holocaust, genocide, and problems affecting education about democracy in general." In this missive Bauer noted that he was aware of the "varieties of programs" initiated by Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson and that he was "very appreciative of this effort." In his typical savvy diplomatic manner, Bauer underscored that "we have no wish to try and teach our Swedish friends what to do and how to do it"; politely suggesting, once again, some areas where Yad Vashem "could be of some help." Bauer also referred to his earlier exchange with Minister Thage Peterson, mentioning that he was "aware of the Riksdag meeting on January 7, 1998," in Stockholm and extended Yad Vashem's sincere interest to cooperate (see Fig. 4).

On March 11, 1998, Hjertonsson visited Yad Vashem, and further discussions about possible cooperation took place in Jerusalem. On April 1, Hjertonsson invited Bauer to attend an event in Stockholm scheduled on Thursday, May 7, titled "Tell Ye Your Children." On April 20, Bauer replied that he would "be delighted to prepare a short presentation of what Yad Vashem is doing in the sphere of education," as well as how he sees "the issues at hand." Bauer very much supported "the idea of international cooperation on all issues of education, research, and publication," stating that "the addition of Sweden and its participation in these efforts will be most welcome." (See Fig. 5.)

At the end of Bauer's letter, he emphasized that he "personally, and Yad Vashem as an institution, will be happy to cooperate." He also mentioned that a request had been made to the Swedish Prime Minister's office to permit an "educational expert" to accompany him to Stockholm at Yad Vashem's expense. That "educational expert" was me (see Fig. 5).

During the morning of May 7, Professor Bauer and I sat next to each other at the Tell Ye Your Children conference. At the time I was a junior staff member tasked to take copious notes and formulate a detailed trip report for Yad Vashem's administration. During the proceedings I passed a short note in Hebrew to Professor Bauer, asking him, "What do the Swedes want to do? Build a Holocaust museum?" he contended that "he had no idea."

On May 7, 1998, the ITF—now known as IHRA—was established in Stockholm. During the event, which included speakers representing the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States, Persson announced the Swedish government's keen interest for "increased international cooperation." After the morning session internal talks among

representatives of the three governments were led by Ulf Hjertonsson, with a view to "formulate a plan for continued joint activities." During this closed afternoon meeting, Professor Yehuda Bauer was officially asked by the Swedish government representatives to be a close advisor to the ITF (see Fig. 6).

Clearly no one who attended the May 7, 1998, meeting in Stockholm could have predicted what would follow, and how the ITF would gradually expand and develop over the next couple of decades.

On September 25, 1998, representatives to the ITF convened for the second time in person in Washington, D.C., including delegates from two new member countries: Germany and Israel. By this time it became clear that Professor Yehuda Bauer had assumed the role of an independent advisor to the ITF, even though he was still affiliated with the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem. Over the next few months, additional European countries would join these efforts.

When examining documents about the genesis of the ITF/ IHRA, it becomes clear how much Professor Bauer impressed Swedish officials—both professionally and personally. The rapport that he initially established in Stockholm, and beyond, ultimately propelled him to become the Honorary Chairman of an international body of thirty-five member countries.

In addition, these documents shed light on Professor Bauer's initial perception that Yad Vashem's educational expertise could assist the Swedish authorities. More than a year following his first meeting with Thage Peterson, it appears, however, that the Swedish government preferred to develop a multilateral structure to foster Holocaust education rather than a bilateral cooperation agreement.

Professor Bauer was strongly committed to the mission of the ITF/IHRA until his death at the age of ninety-eight. Despite his failing health, his dedication never waned, and his resolve to promote Holocaust Studies on the global level became ever more emboldened.

May his memory continue to inspire us at Yad Vashem, in IHRA, and beyond.

VAD VASHEM



לד ושם

שות תזיכרון לשנאת כלנכוכה Bedocurt Medves and Hubes Benombranes Authority המוכרון לשנאת כלנכוכה

Jerusalem, September 1, 1997

H.E. Minister Thage G. Peterson Prime Minister's Office Rosenbad 4 S-10333 Stockholm

Dear Mr. Peterson.

We would like to thank you for the opportunity you gave Prof. Yehuda Bauer to moet with you and your colleagues on August 22, in the presence of Ambassador Gideon Ben Amil and Mr. 11. Bachner of the Jewish community. As promised, we would the to summarize the ideas presented by Prof. Bauer, in the wake of the distrationg findings of the poll of Swedish youngsters.

It would seem that any oducational affort might well start at the top, with the establishment of an academic program at one of your excellent universities (Prof. Bauer in fact suggested this to the Rector of Uppsala University, who appeared to be receptive to these arguments). Such a program would form a basis for teaching the teachers, without which no real advance is likely in the long run. Prof. Bauer has suggested that the Holocaust should be regarded as the most extreme case of genecode and emphasized as such, and thus education would deal with the whole continuum of Holocaust, genecode, racism and inter ethnic conflict.

Yad Vashom can ofter years of experience in arranging three to four week long courses (a first group of Swedish teachers participated at a very short course recently), also, a couple of our educational experts would be happy to respond to any invitation - as we do with other countries - to participate, together with local educators, in courses for teachers

Yad Vashem now serves as a coordinating institution in an international Yad Vashem now serves as a coordinating institution in an international citort. After a first, very successful conference in October 1996, we hope that a second conference on the Holocoust in education will take place in October 1999, when we inaugurate the new building of the International School for Holocoust Studies. We will welcome Swedish participation We understand that Mr. Ulf Martensson of your Ministry is the person most closely associated with those efforts; on our part, it is Mr. Motti. Shalem, the Director of the International School for Holocoust Studies, at this address. address

Yad Vashem is also working on five multimedia CD-Roms for high school and junior college audiences (in English) covering the history of the Holocaust; one of which is already available, and the others will be ready within about two years at the most. A sixth one, which tells the whole story on one CD-Rom, and is intended for adults, should be ready within a year.

Our overall concept is that one has to deal simultaneously with adults (parents), students, teachers, and children. We do not claim to have all the answers, and are certain that each society has to produce and adapt its own programs. However, we also believe in international cooperation, and are ager to loarn from the experience of others and share with them whatever insights we may have

We do hope that we can establish such a cooperation and our Mr. Shalem, as well as the undersigned, will be exceedingly happy to remain in close touch with your office and other friends in Sweden, through the good offices of the Israeli Embassy, and with the involvement of the Je community

Very sincerely,

Ayma_ Shalky , Avner Shaley * Chairmah, Yad Vashem Directorate

Jehn de Brenes

Yehuda Bauer Chair, Int'l. Center for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem

Fig. 1: Letter from both Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev and Professor Yehuda Bauer to Swedish Minister Thage Peterson, at the Swedish Prime Minister's Office, dated September 1, 1997. Document in possession of the author and in the Yad Vashem administrative archive.

cc: Mr. Marcus Storch

Mr. Grdeon Ben Ami, H.E. Ambassador of Israel Mr. Jan Niselc, Chairman, Jewish Community

Avner Shalev

Chairman of the Directorate
cc: Professor Yehuda Bauer
Motti Shalem

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Fig. 2: Letter from the Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev to Swedish Minister Thage Peterson, dated November 25, 1997.

Document in possession of the author and in the Yad Vashem administrative archive.

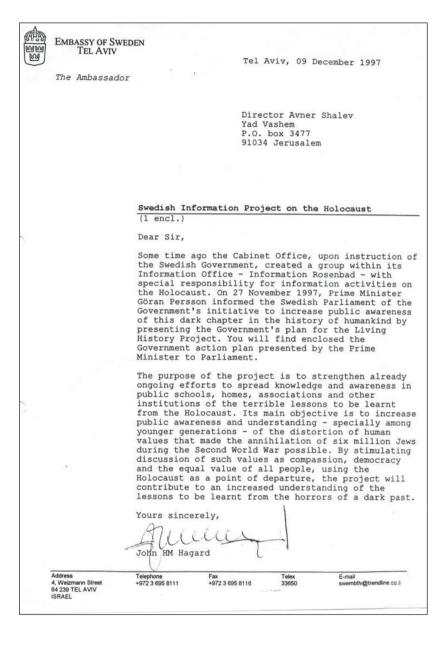


Fig. 3: Letter from the Embassy of Sweden in Tel Aviv, John HM Hagard, to Yad Vashem's director Avner Shalev, dated December 9, 1997. Document in possession of the author and in the Yad Vashem administrative archive.

YAD VASHEM The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority יד ושם רשות הזיסרון לשואה ולגבורה

The International Center for Holocaust Studies

המכון הבינלאומי לחקר השואה

פרופי יהודה באואר, ראש המכון

Professor Vehuda Bauer, Director

Mr. Ulf Hjertonsson Director-General for Political Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs Gustav Adolfs torg 1 S-103 23 Stockholm Sweden January 7, 1998

Dear Mr. Hjertonsson,

Dear Mr. Hjertonsson,

We met lately, at the London "gold" conference, and you very kindly encouraged me to write to you - which I am doing, through the good offices of our embassy in Stockholm - regarding the programs of teaching about the Holocaust, Denocide, and problems affecting education about democracy in general.

I am of course aware of the varieties of programs initiated by your prime Minister and his toam regarding teaching about the Holocaust, and about the teachbook boing prepared, and needless to say, my colleagues and I are very appreciative of this effort. You may remember that I met with Minister Thage Peterson when I was in Sweden last August, and I offered there our help in all this, especially as regards teacher training. I wrote a memorandum about possible cooperative projects which I am sure you will find in your files. I am enclosing a copy here, just in case.

I emphasized that we have no wish to try to teach our Swedish friends what to do and how to do it; but we do have some experience, and we are in the process of organizing an international network of educators, exchanging programs and information regarding teaching aids, and looking at the results of our efforts in the hope of learning from mistakes. Having read material regarding the plans now being executed in your country on these tolpics, let me aummarize very briefly where I think we can be of some help:

1. We have summer and winter international teachers' seminars where the problems of teaching the Holocaust are discussed (in Ruglish). We would very much xelcome Swedish participation, along with colleagues from many European and non-European countries who participate already.

2. I assume you will be planning teachers' seminars on the subject in Sweden, and we would be happy, if you were interested, to send one or two persons from here to such seminars to share our experiences with you.

3. We can send you English-language material on teaching the Holocaust. Ortiously, you will not use it as it is, but it may serve as a backg

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Fig. 4: Letter from Professor Yehuda Bauer to Swedish Director-General for Political Affairs Ulf Hjertonsson, dated January 7, 1998. Document in possession of the author and in the Yad Vashem administrative archive.

YAD VASHEM The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority יד רשם רשית הויסרון לפוזאה וכנבורה

The International Center for Holocaust Studies המכון הבינלאומי לחקר השואה

rofessor Yehuda Bauer, Director

פרופי יהודה באואר, ראש המכוו

4. We are developing multimedia CD-Roms to teach the HoloGaust. We will be happy to share these with you.

5. We plan on having an international education forum meet here in the summer, to discuss networking on educational issues. Colleagues from North Amorica, Britain, Germany, and some other countries plan to participate, and we would very much welcome Swedish representation.

Tam enclosing some relevant materials. I am aware of the Rikadag meeting on January 27, and of your intensive work on these issues. We will be happy to cooperate.

Very sincerely,

Yehuda Bauer

YAD VASHEM The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority ווווו יד ושם רשות האיכרון לשואה ולגבורה

The International Center for Holocaust Studies

המכוו הבינלאומי לחקר השואה

Professor Yehuda Bauer, Director

Mr. Ulf Hjertonsson Director-General for Political Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs Regeringskansliet FAX: 013-46-8723-1176 April 20, 1998

My dear Mr. Hjertonsson,

Your letter of April 1 reached me only today, for some reason, and therefore I am replying by fax.. I shall be delighted to prepare a short presentation of what Yad Vashem is doing in the sphere of education and how I see the issues at hand. Now as to the agenda: as you know, we very much support the idea of international cooperation on all issues of education, research and publication, and we have created appropriate instruments for some, if not most, of the topics that we all want to discuss in Stockholm. The addition of Sweden, and its participation in these efforts will be most welcome. The proper ways and means of effecting such cooperation should certainly be further discussed, and the fact that our American friends will participate should help. We are also in close touch with the British, and I wonder whether you have invited Steven Smith, the head of something called 'Beth Shalom' (the House of Peace), a non-Jewish initiative, now very massively involved in Holocaust education in Britain. He is probably the most impressive figure in Holocaust education in Britain today, and I would warmly recommend his participation. I am sure he can come on short notice. Another crucial country is of course Germany. A very great deal is being done there now, and they should not be left out. A survey of existing programs in the different countries, and ways to ameliorate them would, I think, be very useful, and Yad Vashem can provide some of this information and perhaps suggest ways of getting what is missing in this area.

A great deal is being done to preserve Holocaust survivors' testimonies: the Spielberg program has already got well over 20.000 video interviews,

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which will be deposited (in copies) at Yad Vashem and in Washington. In addition, there are thousands of video testimonies elsewhere, mainly in Israel and the US, and some 30,000 audios at Yad Vashem. The main problem is not the taking of these testimonies, but their computerization and analysis.

Visits to concentration camp sites are important, if they are properly prepared. If they are not prepared properly, they can be a disaster. For that you need teachers, and for teachers you need teacher seminars and university programs. I think we can contribute something to that discussion as well.

On the Internet you raise two separate issues: one, the use of Internet for spreading information and knowledge; the other, the whole issue of Holocaust denial and neo-Nazism, which of course is not limited to the Internet I think we should discuss both issues, separately The idea of government conferences sounds very appealing. We have had academic meetings, but never on a governmental level, and that might be a very useful change for the better. I am not, as you know, a politician or a governmental representative, so I am expressing my view as an independent academic: without governmental involvement, we are doing independent neatternic: without governmental involvement, we are doing only half the job. In other words, I am with you on this. I am no expert on international police activities, but I think you are quite right to draw attention to this, in the hope something can be done. In sum, I personally, and Yad Vashem as an institution, will be happy to cooperate. We asked the office of your Prime Minister (from which we got). the first invitation) to permit us to bring - at our expense - an educational expert with me, Ms. Rachel Budd-Kaplan (whom you met al our meeting here). I hope that can be arranged.

With warmest personal regards,

Fig. 5: Letter from Professor Yehuda Bauer to Swedish Director-General for Political Affairs Ulf Hjertonsson, dated April 20, 1998. Document in possession of the author and in the Yad Vashem administrative archive.

83 6958116 PAGE 881 84/20/90 17:43:88 ; IID Stockholm Z +46 B 723 11 76→ Prime Minister's Office Press Release REGERINGSKANSLIET 28 April 1998 Prass Secretary The Stockholm Meeting on the Holocaust -Ingrid Iremerk "...Tell ye your Children" +45 R 405 4R5R +45 70 590 94 88 On Thursday, 7 May, the Swedish Government is to host an international Press Secretary meeting to discuss how countries could cooperate to disseminate information Leif-Ake Falk about the Holocaust. The background to the meeting is the Swedish Living +45 8 405 4861 History project, the book entitled ".. Tell ye your Children" and a proposal for 146 70 595 45 85 increased international cooperation that Prime Minister Göran Persson made in letters to President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Tony Blair in January The meeting will open on the morning of 7 May with a seminar with speakers representing the governments of the USA and the UK. Guests from the USA include Mr Bennett Freeman, Seniot Adviser to the Under Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs, Mr Stuart Eitenstat, who heads the international investigations into Jewish assets, Dr William Slavy, Chief Historian at the US Department of State, and Mt Ralph Gronewald, Director of External Affairs at the USA Holocaust Museum in Washington. Guests from the UK include Mr Anthony Layden, Head of the Western European Department, FCO, Ms Gill Bennett, Chief Historian at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Dr David Cesarani, Director of Studies and Educational Activities at the Wiener Library in London, and Lord Janner, Chairman of the Holocanst Educational Trust in London, Professor Yehuda Bauer from the Yad Vashem Institute and Mr. Ephraim Zuroff, Director at Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Israel will also participate. The seminar will be opened by the Prime Minister, Göran Persson, and will close with a discussion led by the Minister for Immigrant Integration, Lars Engavist. The semmer is open to representatives of the media. In the afternoon, the Stockholm Meeting will continue with internal talks between the government delegations led by UIF Hjertonsson, Director-General for Political Affairs at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The purpose of these talks is to formulate a plan for continued joint activities The meeting will close with a press conference at 16.00 in the Rosenbad Conference Centre (Reventoris konferencenter), where the meeting also will take place, entrance from Dronninggatan 1. A more detailed programme for the meeting will be sent out later. Press credentials will be required for those attending the seminar and the press conference. 6 mg/, ng prancippine ministry ni nity se 8,000 5 Best dates D. Polancia into history, 8-31; 6-25 Yahyitadır 146 Platif (1909) 445 6 757 11 75 Ander Line on Partylette d

Fig. 6: Press Release from the Swedish Prime Minister's Office, dated April 28, 1998. Document in possession of the author and in the Yad Vashem administrative archive.