

Why remember the Holocaust if the Jews don't remember the Liberators?

Why remember the victim when we do not remember the liberator? If it is was not for the liberator, then the victim would be forgotten.

Jews have neglected to honor the liberators while crying for sympathy for being the victims.

Honoring the victim is a dead end of memory. There is nothing positive in the memory of the dead unless we remember their life as a memorial to live in the future.

The first heavy rumblings of the American tanks approaching Mt. Ettersberg, on whose backside the notorious Nazi Concentration Camp of Buchenwald was built, were easily heard by the S.S. guards at 11:00 am April 11, 1945. 1,200-1,500 S.S. guarded the Camp from the outside. The Communists were their prisoner trustees running the Camp from the inside.

No one ever said the S.S. were stupid. They deserted their posts like the frightened rats they always were. Some S.S. donned prisoner uniforms as disguises, others dressed in women's clothing. Except for a few score, they S.S. simply ran. The Communist prisoner trustees "rose in revolt" barely minutes before the first American units arrived.

The American soldiers expected heavy fighting to continue. A few advanced into the Camp. They were confused, horrified, even frightened by the incompressible nightmare they encountered.

Buchenwald was liberated.

It would be a few more days before the Americans fully controlled the Camp from the Communists. The last to be liberated were the Jews in the swampy, filth hole at the bottom of the mountain, a separate site the Germans called the “Das Kleine Lager”, “The Little Camp.” My father was one of those last to be liberated.

Political expediency turned Thuringia, the German State where Buchenwald is located, over to the newly established East German Government under Russian Communist oversight. The liberation narrative changed from the Americans as liberators to the Communists alone as liberators.

The East Germans put Buchenwald to active use as a Camp for the people they did not like. Many more died there.

Today, after the reunification of Germany, Buchenwald is an educational Memorial to the horrors of National Socialism, Nazism. The Jewish story is a central part of the narrative, with a unique memorial having been built in 2002 for the “Little Camp” by the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad with significant help from the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation. But no memorial was built for the American liberators.

The only memorial in Buchenwald to Americans is for seven American flyers who died in the Camp during Nazi control.

No Jewish group, not even non-Jewish organizations, thought to create a memorial to the liberators of the surviving remnants inside the Camp.

There are 44 memorials in Thuringia to Russians. Nothing for the liberators of Buchenwald, Thuringia and all of Germany for the actual liberators – the Americans.

April 11, 2020 is the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Buchenwald.

Having been to Buchenwald many times, I knew that the historical interpretations about the liberation are not told honestly, or fully. The Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation realized that an honoring memorial was needed, an American Liberators’ Memorial. It would be the first ever.

Funding was not the central concern. If necessary, the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation was going to pay for it. Support and political will would be needed from outside.

JASHP began reaching out to who we thought were natural allies, the Jews.

None were interested. We reached out to Holocaust Museums, major Jewish organizations anywhere, and more. We were turned down repeatedly for one poor reason after another. Most thought it impossible, and not worth the time or the effort to have their names associated with a failed effort, even before they knew if it would fail or succeed. One even wanted to know how much money was in it for them to lend their name as a supporter.

JASHP changed directions and reached out to and received political supporting letters from Senators, Congressman, the VFW, the American Ambassador, from Susan Eisenhower, the granddaughter of President Dwight Eisenhower who was the overall commander of the American armies in Europe. We wrote to and received a letter of support from Chancellor Merkel of Germany.

Ambassador Grenell wrote: “The horrors that took place at Buchenwald during World War II must never be forgotten. Nor should the heroism of the men who liberated the prisoners there on April 11, 1945.”

Susan Eisenhower wrote: “The importance of having a memorial to the American liberators of Buchenwald is undeniable.”

From Chancellor Merkel’s office: “The Federal Government and the Chancellor personally attach the highest importance to the memory of the Shoah and to bearing the special responsibility that this entails for our country.”

JASHP is working with a Jewish veteran’s group in Britain towards a similar objective. We are working to place the first-ever memorial honoring the British Liberators of Bergen-Belsen. We are encountering identical problems, as JASHP has, eliciting Jewish support for the effort in the U.K.

Both memorial efforts must be approved by their respective review commissions. Belsen will review the proposal early June. Buchenwald will review the proposal, July 3. Neither are guaranteed approvals. Just last week, the

Thuringische Landeszeitung wrote a very positive article about JASHP's effort to do what is right.

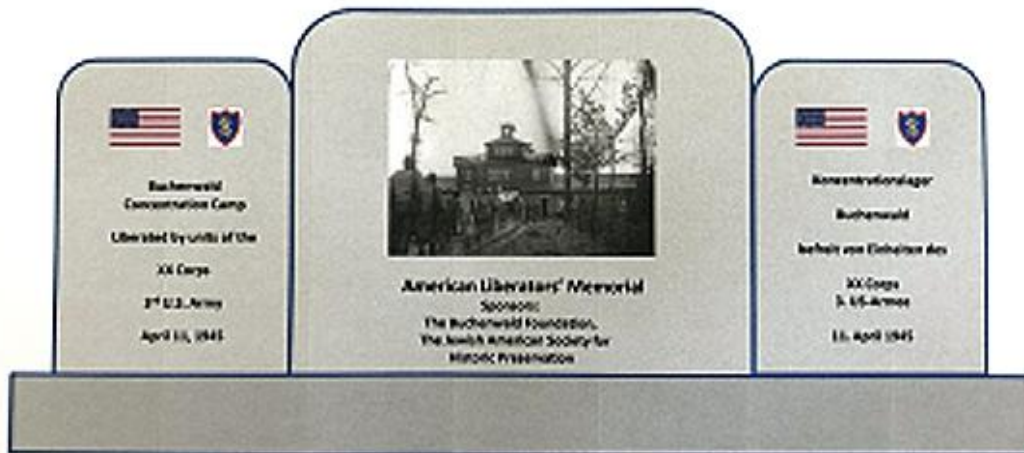
Memory is very easy to lose. The Jews speak of Holocaust memory, yet every year the attendance at Yom HaShoah ceremonies diminishes. The Jews cannot even come up with a single, simple halachically mandated Holocaust prayer.

The Path to Memory of the Holocaust not taken so far begins with honoring those who made Jewish survival possible. The Liberators, many of them Jewish and non-Jewish soldiers, paid the ultimate price. They ended Nazism and its quest to control the world. If the Liberators had lost, there would not have been any Jews to remember anyway.

Even at this late time, we continue to seek support.

This Memorial Day, whether the Germans approve the first ever Memorials to the Liberators of Buchenwald and Bergen Belsen, we remember them.

1945-2020
75th Anniversary
Interpretive Memorial



96"L x 42"H x 8"D
Granite – Curtain Design

JASHP
Nov. 6, 2018

Proposed Memorial – Minimal Text – with Iconic Image

www.JASHP.org