"Discrimination is a part of society. We have to be aware of it and fight it. Hitler didn't invent it, he only took a sophisticated approach in using it."
—Dr. Alfred Apsler

Prisoner, escapee

# *Victims discuss morality of Holocaust*

At first, their similarities seem apparent. Both Diana Golden and Dr. Alfred Apsler are Jewish and survived Hitler's rule of Germany. They both came to America, made a life for themselves and raised families.

Later, as one listens to them speak, their differences come into focus. Not only were their wartime experiences different, but their ideas about what it is to be Jewish also differ.

Both survivors spoke last week to Dr. Donald Epstein's class, "Holocaust."

For Golden, like many victims, the war meant the death of many of her relatives and most of her village. Her conflict with the Nazis began on her home island of Rhodes. "As Italy fell to the Allies, the Germans began taking desperate measures. As long as we were with the Italian government we were never physically threatened," she said.

"First they asked that all the Jewish men come to the German police office," she recalled. "We thought that they needed a work party and that by 6 or 7 o'clock, they'd return."

After 24 hours another announcement came: All women and children report to the police office. "No one stayed behind," Golden said, "We joined the men and the Nazis prepared two boats. By now, we had a sense of hopelessness. At that time, we thought that they wouldn't bother with us."

They landed at Port Piraeus. "We spent two days in Greece," she stated. "While we were sitting, waiting, my grandmother died. We were glad. She had been suffering and was delirious. We were loaded into boxcars in Athens. Always they were yelling, 'Shnell! Shnell!' ("Fast! Fast!"). There was no room in the railroad car, not even standing. Once a day they would unbolt the doors and take out the dead. My father died in Hungary. The last time I saw him he was being carried out by four men."

The train had arrived at Auschwitz and they began unloading it. "We were met by what appeared to be the German SS, black outfits, boots and whips. There stood the German officer. That was the last time I saw my mother, little brother and aunt.

"The fact that our relatives were killed in such a horrible way became the end for many.

"Each day we would see people die. I was determined not to let that happen to me. I had two younger sisters whom I had to help."

Golden was moved to a factory in the south of Germany. Later, the group she was in was loaded into boxcars. "They took us from place to place. We ended up in Czechoslovakia."

Remembering the many tragedies, "I boil inside," she said. "There is this destructive force down inside of people that can be brought out. There are people with magnetism who will exploit people for power."

"We have to respect freedom and not abuse it. We have to live by it and practice it. We live in a free country where most of us are very complacent about freedom. Public opinion is what does everything, and that can be manipulated very easily," she said.

For Apsler the war was painful in a different way. He was born a native of Vienna, Austria. After Germany invaded Austria at the outset of World War II, Apsler reasoned that he should make any attempt possible to leave.

"I left Vienna in September of 1938," he began. "All the elements of Hitler's emotionalism took place; expulsion, storm troopers and concentration camps."

Apsler, with two friends, collected what they could and left disguised as tourists. After escaping, he lived in Switzerland for more than a year, waiting for immigration papers to America. The rest of his family died.

"At that time, the immigration system was very discriminatory," he said. "Thousands of people could have been saved if other countries would have accepted them."

For Apsler, one of the hardest problems has been dealing with the actions of his country and his immigration to America. "I'll never be 100 percent American, but I still consider it my country. I am somewhat bitter that America refused to save these people who were being murdered."

"In fact, some of us feel we are guilty because we are German," he continued. "It is quite an adjustment. I still don't feel comfortable around Germans over 50 years old. Whenever I'm near one, I feel edgy.

"Discrimination is a part of society. We have to be aware of it and fight it. Hitler didn't invent it, he only took a sophisticated approach in using it.

"We have to watch for emotionalism on the national level. We know that it can happen. We know that, that is why we have to see that we don't forget what has already happened."

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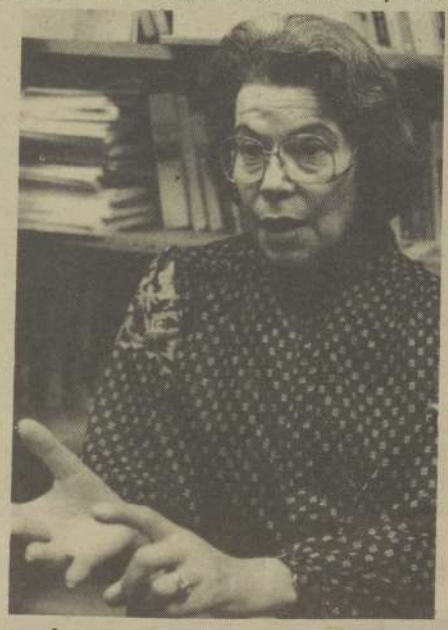

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