

## **Building the Pillars - The CHGS in 2013**

Dr. David Frey, Director, Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies

2013 marked the point at which the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at West Point transitioned from ideas and initiatives to a true center and program. The year included the first ever interdisciplinary elective on genocide ever taught at West Point, the publication of the first Center-produced work, and the incorporation of Coast Guard into CHGS projects. The spring of 2014 will witness the offering of a new Holocaust elective; an exhibit on America's response to Nazi book burning, the first public exhibit hosted by the West Point library; and the possible visit of a Nobel Laureate. 2013, and the 2013-14 academic year, mark the point at which the pillars began to rise from the Center's foundation.

The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies' mission includes operation as an interdisciplinary center at West Point and as an inter-academy center and Department of Defense asset. The work of the Center was boosted by the addition of Atrocity Prevention to Joint Doctrine in August 2012. As it has since 2011, the CHGS convened the Mass Atrocity Education Workshop at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC in late spring. The workshop, which was geared to West Point alone when it began in 2011, is now structured to create content, lessons and curricula for all the service academies, allowing each to incorporate Holocaust and genocide studies into their broader course offerings. Sixteen lawyers, historians, ethicists, psychologists, sociologists, and political scientists from West Point, Navy, Air Force, and, for the first time, the Coast Guard Academy gathered with top Holocaust and genocide scholars, Museum experts, policymakers, and the Defense Department's Senior Advisor on Atrocity Prevention to learn about mass atrocity and develop teaching materials. From Ervin Staub's discussion of post-genocide reconciliation programs in Rwanda to a State Department official's explanation of how publicly accessible satellites could be used for genocide detection to the Policy Director of the Center for Genocide Prevention's (CGP) discussion of the CGP's early warning project, the workshop covered topical and cutting-edge work done in the field of genocide studies and prevention.

The 2013-14 academic year has been, and promises to be, a momentous one for the CHGS. In the fall of 2013, Dr. Frey began teaching XH415, Genocide and "Ethnic Cleansing". Explicitly interdisciplinary, the course includes segments on psychology, law, sociology, anthropology, economics, political theory, geography, and of course, history. Six external guest lecturers, including Rwandan genocide survivor Eugenie Mukeshimana, social psychologist Jim Waller, and award-winning Armenian genocide author Peter Balakian supplement a stable of West Point faculty from Law, Social Sciences, History and Philosophy who are contributing to this innovative course. The course will conclude with a mass atrocity table top exercise prepared jointly with the Peacekeeping and Security Cooperation Institute at the War College. In the spring, Dr. Frey will teach XH405, The Holocaust and Its Legacy, which like XH415, will feature lecturers from multiple disciplines, as well as a study of perpetrator, victim, bystander and witness behavior in Washington, DC. The course is timed to correspond with the opening of the "Fighting the Fires of Hate" exhibit, which the CHGS and West Point's Jefferson Library are co-hosting, from April to June 2014. This exhibit, which will be open to the public and concerns the responses of American's to Nazi book burnings in the 1930s, is the first exhibit to be hosted in the Jefferson Library.

Late 2013 will also see the electronic publication of "Ordinary Soldiers: A Case Study in Ethics, Law and Leadership for Tomorrow's Officers." This project, an outcome of the Mass Atrocity Education Workshop, uses case studies from the Holocaust, specifically from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 691<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment of the *Wehrmacht*, to teach history, ethics and the Law of Armed Conflict to future officers. A cooperative effort involving the Holocaust Museum, scholars from the

University of Nebraska and the University of Vermont's Holocaust Studies Center, and faculty from the service academies, the online product will include DVD on the history of antisemitism in Germany and the rise of Nazism, as well as a short documentary by military historian Geoff Megargee explaining how the *Wehrmacht* became enmeshed in atrocities on the Eastern Front. The latter video, made specifically at the request of the CHGS, will be used in capstone HI 302 and MX 400 classes. The "Ordinary Soldiers" material has been incorporated into ROTC programs in Vermont, New Jersey, New Hampshire and Nebraska, and in several courses at West Point and the Air Force Academy.

During the summer of 2013, four cadets, led by Dr. Amy Krakowka and MAJ Dylan Malcomb, embarked on a study of the relation of water to vulnerability, including mass atrocity, in Uganda, funded by the Army Research Office. Conceived of and co-organized by the CHGS, the Center for the Rule of Law, the Department of Geography and Environmental Engineering and the Network Science Center, this multi-year endeavor is the first stage of project meant to develop an interdisciplinary model for considering both the macro and micro impacts of water difficulties and their relations to violence. The projects first results will be published in a white paper this fall. This model of inter-departmental cooperation has spread, attracting interest from Math and Engineering, and next year's study, which includes groups going to both Uganda and Ethiopia, promise to include an even wider variety of cadets. Secondary benefits include the establishment of a standing relationship between Makerere University in Kampala and West Point, and increased AFRICOM and State Department interest in our project. Examples such as this, the "Ordinary Soldiers" project, and the Mass Atrocity Education Workshop provide a sense of the creative ways the Center has brought scholars and cadets together and the rapid expansion of the Center's reach.

The CHGS has continued to sponsor cadet internships and travel. Our bellwether trip for cadets, the American Service Academy Program, took four West Pointers to Poland for intensive study of the Holocaust. For the second year, the CHGS supported a history major as an intern at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the Hague. The Center, the History Department, and the Department of Law ran a series of visits for well over 100 cadets to the Holocaust Museum in DC, including a novel program on the legal profession under the Nazis for Honors Law Majors. In addition, the CHGS organized lectures and talks for cadets in multiple departments and programs. The repertoire included lectures by Holocaust and Rwandan genocide survivors, discussions with conflict economists, social psychologists, historical geographers, historians, writers, activists, and the AFRICOM J-5. The 2013 Day of Remembrance ceremony, which featured survivor and psychologist Dr. Jack Terry, focused on the role of the US Army as a liberating force, and once again attracted over 300 distinguished guests, survivors, liberators, faculty, cadets, top Academy leaders, and nearly 40 local high school students involved in Holocaust study.

News about the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies is available at the CHGS website <http://www.usma.edu/chgs/SitePages/Home.aspx>. Fundraising for CHGS, which is reliant entirely on private donations, continues. As its slate of projects expands, the need for support becomes ever more imperative. Dr. Frey is happy to address any questions about CHGS activities. Donations and fundraising matters, however, are handled by Mr. Freed Lowrey or Ms. Ally Gosselin at the Association of Graduates.