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**The politics of memorialization: Creating a holocaust memorial
museum in New York City**

Saidel, Rochelle Genia, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1992

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**THE POLITICS OF MEMORIALIZATION:
CREATING A HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM IN NEW YORK CITY**

by

ROCHELLE G. SAIDEL

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Political Science in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1992

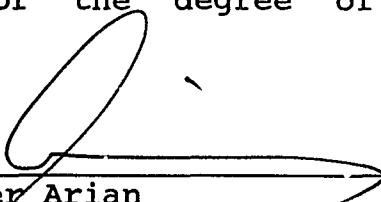
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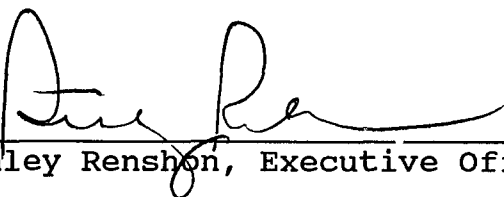
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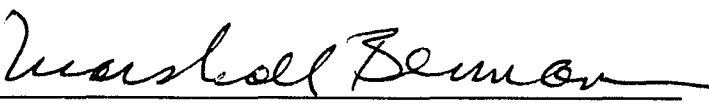
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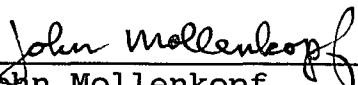
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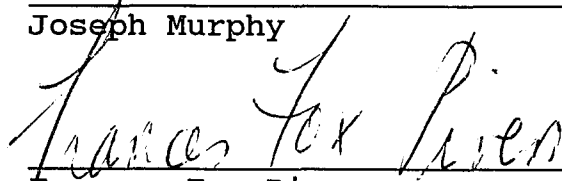
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Abstract**THE POLITICS OF MEMORIALIZATION:
CREATING A HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM IN NEW YORK CITY**

by

Rochelle G. Saidel

Sponsor: Professor Asher Arian
Reader: Professor Marshall Berman

This study of how government intervention affects the implementation of a project of an interest group analyzes the political processes of the 45 year impasse in completing a major Holocaust memorial in New York City. Using as a case study the 1981-1991 effort to create such a project, the study develops a new concept for analyzing long-term public-private projects. This study develops and uses a so-called **Mutagon** to analyze the complicated and changing political coalition that has endeavored for ten years to create a Holocaust museum.

The **Mutagon** concept augments existing interest group theories, (e.g., iron triangle and issue network theory) which do not adequately account for: changes in political coalitions during long-term projects; the possibility of an interest group having to deal with both a governor and a mayor; the conflicts of interest when elected officials are part of the interest group.

The **Mutagon** concept is summarized as follows:
Government policy for a long-term city-state public-private

project emerges from a changing polygon consisting of the interest group, mayor, governor, and other officials. Although the **Mutagon** is working for closure, it may instead create an impasse because of: 1. changes within this polygon that occur over time (e.g., when a player enters or exits); 2. the top-heavy structure of a political alliance that sometimes has two heads; and 3. the complex relationship among the players.

Using the **Mutagon**, the study also builds on existing literature on citizen participation, agenda setting, and political symbolism, by demonstrating how changes over time in a political alliance must be taken into account. The study traces the history and pre-history of the New York City project, including failed attempts since 1946 to create a major Holocaust memorial, and the emergence of the Holocaust as a "hot" agenda item for President Jimmy Carter and then for Mayor Edward I. Koch. The study also analyzes the changing stages in the **Mutagon** coalition, including the sharing of power between Koch and Governor Mario Cuomo, and how these changes have affected the prospects for implementation and the projected museum's image and way of remembering.

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Without the help and encouragement of many people, it would not have been possible to complete this task. First of all, I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Asher Arian, and my reader, Professor Marshall Berman, both of whom supervised this dissertation with wisdom, keen insights, infinite patience, encouragement, and kindness. I also appreciate the input of the other members of my committee: Professors John Mollenkopf, Frances Fox Piven, and Joseph Murphy. The Menhart Spielman bequest to the City College Jewish Studies Department provided financial support, for which I am grateful.

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Archival research was carried out at the archives of the Jewish Labor Bund, the YIVO Archive, the American Jewish Committee library, the New York State Library, the President Jimmy Carter Library, the archives of the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO), the offices of the Jewish Community Relations Council, and the New York City Municipal Archives. I thank the staff members in all of these institutions for their kind cooperation. In addition, I thank Marian Craig and Jim Sleeper for providing background material.

I also thank New York State Senator Manfred Ohrenstein for giving me the opportunity to see first hand the activities of the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, while I was a member of his staff.

Most of all, I thank my husband, Dr. Guilherme Ary Plonski, for seeing me through this endeavor with loving and generous patience, encouragement and support; and my parents, Florence and Joseph Saidel, who have always had confidence in me and never gave up hope they would finally be able to say, "My daughter, the doctor."

PREFACE

When I chose as the subject of this dissertation the case study of the effort to create a major Holocaust memorial museum in New York City, I did so with deep personal interest in the subject and with the expectation of analyzing a successful project. I chose the topic because I have had a lifelong commitment to Judaism, and specifically, since 1977, to studying and writing about the aftermath of the Holocaust.

My interest in the Holocaust solidified in 1977, when I attended one of the first Nazi war criminal hearings in the United States and spoke with survivors who were witnesses. This led to my writing many articles and a book on this specific aspect of the Holocaust. As part of my responsibility on the staff of Senator Manfred Ohrenstein from 1981 until 1989, I organized a permanent exhibit in the New York State Museum in Albany which detailed the odyssey of Holocaust refugees who were interned in Oswego, New York, and kept him abreast of the progress on the New York City Holocaust museum project.

I thus began following the project closely almost from its initiation by Mayor Koch in 1981. At that early date, and even in 1988-1989 when I chose the project as a case study for my dissertation, it seemed destined for ultimate success. However, the intricacies of the political coalition behind the museum, the changes in this coalition over time,

and other circumstances have created problems that as yet have prevented the museum from becoming a reality. In an effort to understand why this project has been so problematic, I developed and coined the concept of the **Mutagon**.

Studying and writing about the Holocaust and its memorialization can be depressing because of the subject matter. A study of the successful creation of a Holocaust museum, with its evocation of the history being recreated, would be heartbreaking enough. Because I cannot write about a successful conclusion and because the path to the creation of this museum has been so torturous, it has been even more difficult to deal with.

There have been efforts to create a major Holocaust memorial in New York City since 1946, and all of them have failed. It is ironic that this city with its huge Jewish population, which was the first Jewish community to attempt to create a major memorial in the United States, still does not have one. It is my personal hope that this project will succeed, and that in the not too distant future the victims of the Holocaust will be suitably remembered in New York City.

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW AND LITERATURE REVIEW

"There's no monument in New York....
 In the dark silent night
 They throng without lament,
 Wreath New York's expanse
 Of steel and concrete;
 Carry water, sand, cement
 To build a monument
 For themselves---
 The s i x m i l l i o n..." Wolf Pasmanik¹

This study of how government intervention affects the implementation of a project of an ethnic interest group in the United States will analyze the political processes of the 45 year impasse in completing a major Holocaust memorial in New York City. Using as a case study the 1981-1991 effort to create such a project, the study will develop a new concept for analyzing long-term public-private projects. (During these ten years, the New York City project was first the Mayor's Holocaust Memorial Task Force--1981-1982, then the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission--1982 through 1985, then the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission--from early 1986 on. Earlier attempts to create a major Holocaust memorial began in 1946.) The new concept takes into account: 1). the shifts in political alliances that occur over time; and 2). the top-heavy structure of a public-

¹"There Is No Monument in New York", translated from the Yiddish by Samuel Kreiter, World Union Press, mimeographed release, New York, 1964? (undated), used with permission of WUP editor David Horowitz.

private project that involves both city and state governments.

The ways in which the New York City and State governments intervened--from the genesis of the idea for the latest memorial museum project in 1981 and throughout the implementation stage--are extremely complex, with an intricate interplay of various organs of City and State government. The question of whether the Commission is private, State- and City-connected, or both, is also complex. This study will examine how government intervention has changed over ten years, and how these changes have affected the structure of the combined interest group and government influences that are creating the project.

IRON TRIANGLE AND ISSUE NETWORK THEORIES

The literature on the structure of interest group-government alliances is limited, and dominated by iron triangle and issue network theories. Iron triangle theory is usually applied to interest groups operating vis-a-vis the Federal government. This analysis of three-way interaction involving members of Congress, agency heads, and special interest lobbies was often employed in the 1960s and 1970s and continues to be utilized in the 1990s.² According to this theory, there is a solid trilateral bond formed by the

² For a recent example, see Graham K. Wilson, Interest Groups, Basil Blackwell Ltd., Oxford, 1990, p. 60 and passim.

interest group, its advocates in Congress, and in the executive branch agency. Government policies emerge from this closed triangle of interests, with congressmen passing favorable legislation, agency bureaucrats implementing these mandates, and special interest groups supporting the helpful elected officials (e.g. with votes and campaign contributions).

According to Harold Seidman's iron triangle analysis³, there was no significant weakening of the triangular alliances that unite interest groups with their agents in Congress and in the executive branch's bureaucracy. He said that "[congressional] staff develop alliances with the executive branch bureaucracy and the bureaucracies representing interest groups."⁴ With regard to Richard Nixon's presidency, Seidman said Nixon was initially naive and that "discovery of the triangular alliance among departments, congressional committees, and clientele groups, known to any reasonably sophisticated observer of the Washington scene, came as a rude and nasty shock."⁵

In analyzing President Ronald Reagan's relationship with Congress, David Everson wrote about "Reagan versus The 'Iron Triangles'" He said: "The specific issues involved in the

³Harold Seidman, Politics, Position and Power, 1980, Oxford University Press.

⁴Ibid., p. 43.

⁵Ibid., p. 116.

Reagan program would be fought out in Congress in decisions involving organized interest groups, government bureaus, and congressional committees and subcommittees." According to Everson, Reagan's plans to cut the budget and deregulate had to pass through the iron triangles of interlocking government and private interests that protect their favorite programs.⁶

Writing about the viewpoint of an official in a Federal executive agency, rather than a President, Graham K. Wilson said:

"Thus, the agency leader is often obliged to engage in a complex balancing of the wishes of the White House, Congress and interest groups linked to legislators on the relevant committees. Occasionally, particularly in agencies which rarely attract controversy, an 'iron triangle' emerges in which the agency acts to please its attendant interest groups so as to please the relevant congressional committees, whose members in turn are eager to please the interest groups representing their constituents."⁷

Hugh Heclo and Anthony King critiqued iron triangle theory, and instead developed an issue network theory. Writing in 1978, Heclo said that "the iron triangle concept

⁶David Everson, Public Opinion and Interest Groups in American Politics, Franklin Watts, New York, 1982, pp. 200-201.

⁷Wilson, p.60.

is not so much wrong as it is disastrously incomplete."⁸ He defined an issue network as "a shared-knowledge group having to do with some aspect (or, as defined by the network, some problem) of public policy." According to Hecllo, participants in issue networks are shifting, fluid and anonymous, unlike the iron triangle concept of a defined small circle which forms to promote specific narrow issues. He believes issue networks are less interested in material gain than iron triangles and often are more interested in intellectual or emotional commitment. According to his definition of issue networks, they consist of "political technocrats" who become zealots for narrow interests and prefer open arguments to closure.

King said of issue networks: "The traditional interest groups have not disappeared; instead they have been joined by all manner of committees, organizations, and alliances owing their raison d'etre not to considerations of self-interest, even corporate self-interest, but to a disinterested concern with the common weal."⁹ (As examples he listed Green Peace, Friends of the Earth, Nader's Raiders, and Common Cause.) King said that in the 1960s and 1970s there was "increasing

⁸Hugh Hecllo in The New American Political System edited by Anthony King, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, D.C., 1978, pp. 87-124.

⁹Anthony King in The New American Political System edited by Anthony King, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, D.C., 1978, (pp. 371-395), p. 377.

professionalization of both governmental and interest-group politics, and the development of issue networks so porous in their structure that it is sometimes hard to know where government ends and nongovernment begins, who is the person being lobbied, who the lobbyist."¹⁰ Regarding coalition building, he said this language no longer described American politics and that the primary message of his book was that "fewer and fewer cohesive blocs are to be found in the American polity."¹¹

THE MUTAGON: BEYOND IRON TRIANGLES AND ISSUE NETWORKS

As this dissertation will demonstrate, these iron triangle and issue network theories are not adequate for analyzing the structure of the political forces behind the New York Holocaust memorial museum or any long-term public-private project involving both city and state governments. First, these two theories concern themselves with interest coalitions on a Federal level, not a state or city-state level. Although they might be adjusted to analyze political alliances on a state or city-state level, they are generally used for the relationship between the President (and executive agencies), the Congress, and interests. Even if the theories were adjusted for state and city-state politics, however, the New York City Holocaust memorial museum is not

¹⁰Ibid., p. 387.

¹¹Ibid., p. 390.

being created by a political alliance that can be analyzed as an iron triangle or an issue network. This alliance must be analyzed as a far more complex and changing polygon. This polygon consists or consisted of the former and present mayor, the governor, past and present Battery Park City Authority (BPCA) officials, interest groups (including the officially appointed New York City and then the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, and a myriad of survivor organizations, heads of major and minor Jewish organizations, developers, administrative staff of the Holocaust Commission and museum, architects and exhibit designers, consultants, and Community Board One--each with its own factions, agendas and issue networks); and, to a lesser degree, the City Council, the Board of Estimate, the State Legislature, and the City Planning Commission.

At different times, the influence of each of the components of the polygon has increased or diminished. In addition to the varying influence of each of the concerned parties over time, some new alliance partners were added along the way and others faded away. No one was ever officially removed from office or membership in the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, as there is no provision for such removal. A distinguishing characteristic of the polygon is that beginning in 1986 it has had two heads with power of appointment to the Commission--the mayor and the governor. (After Mayor Edward I. Koch, the founder, left office at the

end of 1989, there were no further appointments by either the new mayor or the governor.) Thus its structure will be analyzed not as an iron triangle or an issue network, but as a changing and for much of the time a two-headed geometric polygon that will be called a "**Mutagon**". (In Latin mutare means to change; the syllable "-gon", from the Greek, means having angles or sides.)

In addition to not accounting for changes in a long-term project, iron triangle and issue network theory are not applicable to this case because the interrelationships between the components of this alliance are more complex. There are: two executive branches (the mayor and the governor); Battery Park City Authority (which is more autonomous than most agencies of the executive); two legislative branches (the New York State Legislature, and the New York City Council), which have a much less significant role than the executive branches. The major interest group involved, the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, was officially appointed by the mayor and then the governor (unlike the interest groups in iron triangle and issue network theory).

The three sub-heads, or co-chairmen, of the **Mutagon** also have conflicts that make the polygon complex: Then Mayor Koch appointed two of the co-chairmen, powerful Republican real estate developer George Klein and Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau. When Governor Mario Cuomo became

a Founding Co-chairman in 1986, he appointed the third co-chairman, New York State Senate Minority Leader Manfred Ohrenstein. Besides being a leader of the State Democratic Party and creating an anti-development image among his constituents (potentials for conflicts with Klein), Ohrenstein was indicted in 1987 by none other than co-chairman Morgenthau. (All charges were finally dropped in September 1991.) Thus the relationship of the players is much more intertwined, conflictive and also more amorphous than a triangle or issue network, and there are many more possibilities for interplays and power plays. (On paper there is a fourth co-chairman appointed by Cuomo, Peter Cohen, but he is not a player. See Chapter 13.)

While the implementation of the Holocaust project cannot be adequately analyzed as the creation of issue networks, two components of issue networks discussed by Heclo and King can be applied. Regarding the tendency of issue networks to build coalitions, King said this language no longer described American politics and that there were a decreasing number of cohesive blocs. Likewise, there is no coalition building between the members of the Holocaust Commission and other interest groups. The Commission, which would be the component of the **Mutagon** that might be considered part of an issue network, does not want to build coalitions. With regard to other interest groups creating major Holocaust memorials in the United States, i.e., the national memorial in Washington,

D.C. and the Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, the Commission views them as competitors--not allies. Nor have other museums in general been considered allies or part of a coalition, e.g. to lobby together for funding. As for other groups that have sought to be memorialized as victims of Hitler, the Commission sees the New York museum as a Jewish memorial and offers them only minimal recognition. There is perhaps a self-righteous sense of justness of purpose that precludes the Commission or its leaders from seeking out others to form a coalition or network.

Another aspect of issue networks, as defined by Heclo, is also applicable to the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission. As mentioned earlier, Heclo believes issue networks are less interested in material gain than iron triangles and often are more interested in intellectual or emotional commitment. This statement could be made with regard to the Commission leaders, with reservations. They are committed to the project emotionally and are not seeking material gain. However, as will be clarified later, they are also reaping their own political benefits from associating themselves with the project.

One characteristic of Heclo's issue network analysis does not apply to the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, although it would appear to be the case. Heclo said issue networks prefer open arguments to closure. Despite the years of delay in completing their museum, the Holocaust Commission

seeks to complete their project as soon as possible. Unless they do so and come to closure, they will not gain professional prestige, prominence in the organized Jewish community, or other political advantages from their participation in the project. Furthermore, in addition to the opportunities for personal political gain, the past and present leaders of the project appear to be sincerely interested in the importance and necessity of their cause (like those in King's examples, op. cit.).

Heclo speaks of overlooking webs of influence, while we look for the few with power. In the case of the Holocaust memorial, there are, in fact, the few with power. They head a complex and changing **Mutagon** that cannot be analyzed by either an iron triangle or an issue network theory. While the political forces working to create the museum have some aspects that could be analyzed according to one or both of these theories, neither is suitable and a new concept is necessary.

This new so-called **Mutagon** concept can be stated as follows: Government policy for a long-term city-state public-private project emerges from a changing polygon consisting of the interest group, the mayor, and the governor, with other elected and appointed officials involved to a lesser extent. Although the **Mutagon** is working for closure, it may instead create an impasse because of: 1. the changes within this polygon that

occur over time (especially when a new major player enters or an old major player leaves); 2. the top-heavy structure of a political alliance that at some stages has two heads; and 3. the complex relationship among the polygon's web of players.

PRE-HISTORY OF THE MUTAGON

Using this new concept, the **Mutagon**, to analyze the structure of the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission and its political allies, this study addresses the issue of why, more than 46 years after the end of World War II and after a lengthy period of great interest in the Holocaust, there is still no major Holocaust memorial in New York City. Instead, this city, which has had the largest Jewish and the largest Holocaust survivor populations in the United States, has seen a series of failed attempts that began in 1946. Since 1981, a Holocaust Memorial Task Force, and then a Commission, originally appointed by Mayor Koch, has been working to create such an institution. However, more than ten years later, at the beginning of 1992, none yet exists and there is not even a hole in the ground. In order to analyze why the current project has been at such an impasse, it is necessary to examine the politics behind earlier and current attempts, how the issue of Holocaust memorialization was placed on United States and New York City governmental agendas, and the

project's changing structure of players, allies, and processes.

Related events that preceded Koch's creation of a Holocaust Commission will be reviewed to place the current project in historical perspective: e.g., the emergence of the Jewish community as an interest group in the United States (Chapter 2); the increased importance of memorialization of the Holocaust for the Jewish community (Chapter 3); the many earlier attempts, beginning in 1946, to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City (Chapters 4, 5 and 6); and President Jimmy Carter's national initiative (Chapter 7).

Earlier failed attempts to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City were structured much more simply than the **Mutagon**. They were begun by individuals and small, disorganized interest groups. They failed partially because all of Mayor Koch's predecessors from William O'Dwyer in 1947 through Abraham Beame in 1977 publicly said they supported the idea of a Holocaust memorial, but none of them made the idea his own and aggressively led the effort. It always remained a private endeavor (although a small parcel of City land for a site was offered more than once).

The first attempt to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City began in 1946-1947. In Riverside Park at 83rd Street there is an engraved stone, placed there in October 1947 and intended as a cornerstone, which says: "This is the

site for the American memorial to the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto battle April-May 1943 and to the 6 million Jews of Europe martyred in the cause of human liberty." But 45 years later, neither an "American" nor a major New York memorial yet exists. They are both separate works in progress: The national memorial is under construction on the Mall in Washington, D C. and slated for a 1993 opening, but the New York memorial is still not off the ground in Battery Park City.

When the first Holocaust memorial was being planned in Riverside Park in 1946-1947, the Jewish community was only loosely organized, its foremost purpose was the creation of a homeland in Palestine, and it was still in shock and denial over the losses of the Holocaust. Anti-Semitism was still a real threat in the United States, and accusations of Communist connections were also real and growing threats (See Chapter 4). In retrospect, it is more remarkable that an effort at memorialization was begun in the political atmosphere of 1946-1947, than that it failed.

By the time of the second major attempt to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City in the 1960s, the Jewish community was much more organized than in 1947. A committee was again formed, and this time the effort had the backing of Jewish organizations, rather than individuals. Several sites and designs were considered by the memorial committee and by the City. Mayors were supportive, but there was still not

enough political advantage from such a memorial for the City administration to strongly back it. Other priorities in the organized Jewish community were also a factor in the failure. The community itself gave up the project and focused on helping Israel, especially after the 1967 Six Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

By the end of the 1970s, the situation had changed, and memorialization of the Holocaust had gained increasing acceptance in the organized Jewish community. After this culminated with Carter's 1978 announcement of a national memorial, there was political advantage from strongly backing a Holocaust memorial in New York City. Koch, encouraged by his political entrepreneur Herbert Rickman, was then able to intervene and coopt the issue of Holocaust memorialization to gain political favor in the Jewish community in New York City.

In 1978 a presidential political entrepreneur proposed to President Carter that such a project might help him strengthen his position in the organized Jewish community on a national level. This external intervention by the Federal government for a national Holocaust memorial project in turn gave the then dormant New York project legitimacy and made it more important for New York City's established organized Jewish community. In 1981 the mayor of New York City created his own narrow interest group, a Task Force and then a Memorial Commission, for the purpose of building a memorial

and at the same time strengthening his position vis-a-vis the established organized Jewish community in New York City. The mayor's specific "interest group" included some of the old players who had been trying to create a Holocaust memorial for many years, but he added people who would give him control and influence, especially in the person of his powerful chairman.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL REASONS FOR THE MUTAGON'S IMPASSE

The study will analyze the internal and external reasons why the project has not yet succeeded. Internal reasons flow from the unwieldy and changing structure of the **Mutagon** responsible for implementation, and the length of time the project has dragged on. They include: changes in political alliances over time (including new elected and appointed officials); having at the helm (for much of the time) both the mayor and the governor, sometimes with different agendas; other priorities (especially fundraising crises) in the organized Jewish community, which influence Commission members and potential donors; disagreement among the sub-heads and subgroups that comprise the Commission; the politics of site selection; and the personalization of the project by one major player.

Notwithstanding these internal problems, a positive influence should have been the fact that since the 1970s the idea of memorialization had grown in the organized American

Jewish community (including New York City). As will be demonstrated in Chapter 3, this was because non-Orthodox segments of the community were seeking a new secular link with Judaism in the United States, the community generally had underlying fears of history repeating itself, and a number of new historic events brought these fears closer to home. However, although the idea of Holocaust memorialization increased in importance, there still was not enough interest to successfully complete a project by the beginning of 1992.

The major external reason for failure to create the earlier Holocaust memorial projects in New York City (from 1946 through the 1960s) was the lack of interest on the part of government officials who had given approval but not real commitment to helping with implementation. The issue was not "hot"; i.e., there was little political capital to be gained from supporting it. The increasing importance of Holocaust memorialization for the organized American Jewish community, which began gradually in 1961 and was heightened later in the decade and in the 1970s, acted as a catalyst for government interest and intervention. Ironically, this very intervention later held up the New York memorial project even more.

The Commission that Koch had originated became City-State in 1986, when Governor Cuomo retroactively became "Founding Co-chairman" along with Koch, and the new structure

of political allies was initiated. The dissertation will analyze the negative effects of this **Mutagon** in its new form: the State government's trying to influence the final outcome of the project, the governor's policies producing bureaucratic problems and delayed implementation, friction between the City and the State over the project, and the election and appointment of new State and City government officials disrupting the continuity of the project's implementation. Governor Cuomo's and BPCA's intervention to block a deal and to drastically increase rent for the museum resulted in delays and unexpected new decisions by the Commission.

As Pressman and Wildavsky said, there was the emergence in the "decision path of numerous diversions not intended by the program sponsors. The paths of required decisions, as we can see, were soon characterized by more unexpected elements than expected ones: they were anything but straight lines leading directly to goals."¹² Another diversion of the decision path was caused by "Black Monday" on Wall Street, October 19, 1987, and subsequent economic crises in New York City. The economic climate both dropped property values in Battery Park City and wiped out many potential donors, resulting in new decisions on the best way to fund the museum.

¹²Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, Implementation (Second, expanded edition), University of California Press, 1979, p. xix.

In addition to these negative aspects, the study will also evaluate the positive effects of the mayor's, and later the governor's, intervention on the project in New York City. It will show how the gift of government resources such as land and money initially helped legitimize the project and attract more private money. Government support such as providing skills, and the indirect positive impact of the mayor's (and later the governor's) connection also at some stages helped to overcome bureaucratic problems within the government.

AGENDA SETTING

The dissertation will analyze the factors that led to an awareness that memorialization of the Holocaust has political value in the United States, and how politicizing this memorialization is in accord with the American political system. It will offer a new **Mutagon** concept for interest group politics that involve both city and state governments, going beyond iron triangle and issue network theories.

In addition to adding to the literature on the structure of interest group-government alliances, this **Mutagon** concept also builds on the established body of work on agenda setting and public policy, which are related to the structure of interest group politics. The changes in the complex coalition, i.e., the **Mutagon**, that is the political force behind the creation of the Holocaust memorial museum in New

York City have affected the agenda setting for and delayed implementation of the project. The coopting of an idea and creation of a specific interest group by an elected official, and the subsequent usurping of the idea and group by another official, have led to more than ten years of stagnation.

This case study of the New York City Holocaust museum is a deviant case study¹³, because the project should have been destined for smooth sailing. Unlike earlier attempts in New York, the current project was placed on the agenda by the City administration (Mayor Koch) and then eagerly embraced by a well-established and organized Jewish leadership (including developers and other supporters of Koch). Rickman, the political entrepreneur who formally initiated this project for Mayor Koch in 1981, had as his precedent President Carter's creation of the President's Commission on the Holocaust three years earlier, which gave the City project added prestige.

Moreover, by 1981 memorialization of the Holocaust had become a hot item for the major Jewish American organizations. In the 1980s, the politics of memorializing the Holocaust became a "growth industry". Until the early 1970s, it was not on even on their agendas. Nor was it a priority when it was finally placed there. After 1978, when

¹³As an example of a deviant case study, see Seymour Martin Lipset, Martin Trow, and James Coleman, Union Democracy, The Free Press, New York, 1956, which analyzes why the political structure of the International Typographical Union, unlike most other unions, is democratic.

Holocaust memorialization was placed on the agenda of the United States Government, the idea became more important for the organized Jewish community and thus ripe for adoption by Koch. By that time a number of unrelated factors had converged to make memorialization of the Holocaust an appropriate issue for elected officials and candidates to place on the agenda: e.g., the 1967 Six Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War had brought images of another Holocaust to the fore; Menachem Begin, who masterfully used the Holocaust for his own political purposes, became Prime Minister of Israel in June, 1977; leaders of survivor organizations, realizing their biological clocks were ticking fast, began encouraging other survivors to share their stories; the much-publicized television program Holocaust was the first major network airing on the (fictionalized) subject of the Holocaust in 1978; children of survivors reached adulthood and began asking questions about their parents' past; secular American Jews who were disillusioned with Israel were seeking a substitute secular tie to Judaism; the United States Justice Department in 1977 set up a Special Litigation Unit to investigate and bring to trial Nazi war criminals living in the United States. When President Carter's people were searching for a domestic issue that would mend fences with

Jewish voters in 1978, the issue of the Holocaust "arose in the primeval soup". It was an idea whose time had come.¹⁴

According to John W. Kingdon, patterns of public policy are determined by what gets on the agenda. His four stages for the setting of federal public policy are: setting an agenda, specifying alternatives, choosing officially (e.g., by legislative vote), and implementing the choice. He says we need to know what made the soil fertile, rather than the origin of the seed, and that solutions often search for problems. Kingdon's model has three streams: problem recognition, policy formulation and refinement, and politics. When these three streams come together at a critical time, an issue suddenly "gets hot" and policy entrepreneurs go into action.¹⁵ Kingdon's model will be used to analyze how memorializing the Holocaust got on the agenda of the United States government, and subsequently on those of New York City and New York State.

As a result of President Carter's agenda setting in 1978, by 1989, a major national Holocaust memorial museum was beginning to rise on the Mall in Washington, D.C. Meanwhile, in 1981, Koch, running for reelection, had followed President Carter's lead and created his own Mayor's Task Force on the

¹⁴John W. Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1984, pp. 122-123.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 92-94.

Holocaust. (He had expressed interest in creating a memorial at least two years earlier, but did not act on the issue.)

GENESIS OF THE MUTAGON

Koch's intervention began when Rickman approached developer George Klein in the Spring of 1981, an election year, and suggested the creation of a Mayor's Task Force. Klein took the chairmanship and in July 1981, 28 Jewish communal leaders, survivors, Holocaust scholars, and other prominent and wealthy Jews were named as members. In 1982 this Task Force recommended a permanent commission, and in 1983 the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission was appointed by Mayor Koch. In 1986 Governor Cuomo became (retroactively) a Founding Co-chairman along with Koch, and at this point the **Mutagon** changed its form and became two-headed. Cuomo was allowed to appoint additional Commission members and a co-chairman, and the name was changed to the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission. Because he offered to house the museum in Battery Park City, which he controlled through Battery Park City Authority, a State entity, the power structure of government intervention changed dramatically.

Mayor Koch, like President Carter, did not create his Holocaust Commission in response to pressure from Jewish interest groups. Instead, these two elected officials coopted the issue of the memorialization of the Holocaust and used it to please the organized Jewish community, and thereby

obtain Jewish votes and financial backing for their respective upcoming elections. Carter, and then Koch, created a specific Holocaust memorialization interest group that could potentially bring in votes and money. When Cuomo's political entrepreneur, Meyer S. (Sandy) Frucher, decided that Cuomo, too, could and should have a piece of the pie, the City-State **Mutagon** became a reality.

Koch's coopting the project should have made it more likely to succeed than earlier efforts to create a major Holocaust memorial in New York City, because he had a vested interest in its success and gave it active governmental backing. As will be shown, however, a series of setbacks delayed completion of the memorial during Koch's term as mayor. The most significant setbacks were caused by the intervention of Governor Cuomo and several of his high level officials, after the two-headed polygon structure became a reality. When Koch left office at the end of December 1989, there was still not even a hole in the ground for his proposed Holocaust memorial and museum. His absence after so prominently linking himself with the project, and Cuomo's shifting interest as he looked toward a possible national election for President, will be analyzed as factors that impeded implementation.

POLITICAL POWER AND THE MUTAGON

After Rickman, Koch's liaison to the established organized Jewish community, suggested the creation of a Mayor's Task Force on the Holocaust in 1981 (an election year), Koch and Rickman chose George Klein as its chairman. He was not only a multimillionaire developer and major Koch campaign contributor but also a vice president of the New York Jewish Community Relations Council. At this time, the **Mutagon** had not yet grown another head, i.e., Cuomo. Koch, as founding chairman, was at the apex, with sole power of appointment. Klein, as sole chairman of the Task Force, ran the show, working closely with Rickman.

Political entrepreneurs such as Rickman and Klein (and other developers who were members of the Holocaust Commission and major contributors to Mayor Koch's campaigns) knew how to use their political resources to increase their power and promote their agendas. The creation of the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission gave Rickman, Koch, Klein and others the opportunity to use the issue of Holocaust memorialization to increase their potential influence in the organized Jewish community. They used their political resources efficiently to promote the idea and at the same time to increase their own power by associating themselves with the project and appointing members. These were professional political "players" who knew how to use the slack resources to their advantage. At Rickman's suggestion,

Koch appointed Klein, his rich long-time friend as chairman. Klein was then in a position to encourage his friends, other wealthy developers, to be generous both to the effort to create a Holocaust memorial and to Koch's mayoral campaign.

To an extent, the "player" aspect of the **Mutagon** concept of government-interest group structure can be analyzed using Robert Dahl's and Edward C. Banfield's theories of citizen participation. Unlike iron triangle and issue network theories that analyze political alliances on a Federal level, these studies deal with power in local government. However, like iron triangle and issue network theories, these theories of local citizen participation and power do not account for changes in political alliances when projects are long-term; nor do they account for both a mayor and governor sharing power.

In Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City¹⁶, an examination of political influence in New Haven, Dahl explores how the inequality of resources affects ability to influence government in the "democratic" American system. The political alliance behind creation of the New York Holocaust memorial can be analyzed according to Dahl's theory that New Haven's political system, like that of most pluralistic democracies, has three important characteristics: slack resources, or a gap between actual and potential

¹⁶Robert Dahl, Who Governs?, Yale University, 1961, pp. 305-310.

influence; a small band of professional political players that organize their lives around political activity; and a built-in self-operating limitation of influence of all participants (e.g., when an incumbent loses an election). Dahl's analysis does not take into account, however, a situation such as that of the New York Holocaust museum project, which changed its structure over the years and for some time had two prime political players at the helm--Koch and Cuomo. In this case, the built-in self-operating limitation of influence that occurred when Koch lost his reelection bid in 1989 was distorted by Cuomo's earlier intervention and subsequent takeover of some of Koch's power vis-a-vis the project.

Likewise, Banfield's classic study of Chicago in the 1950s¹⁷ is useful but limited for an analysis of the Holocaust project's **Mutagon** structure. His analysis of the politics of site selection is of special interest because from the beginning site selection was a major component in how the players' influence affected the implementation of the Holocaust museum. The location was originally the U.S. Custom House, and then more than one site was considered at Battery Park City. However, Governor Cuomo's intervention made the New York City situation more complex than the one analyzed by Banfield. Just when the City administration had

¹⁷Edward C. Banfield, Political Influence, The Free Press of Glencoe, New York, 1961.

secured the Custom House as a site, Cuomo's political entrepreneurs dangled the promise of a better deal in Battery Park City (with Cuomo as project co-chairman). Koch's acquiescence and the Holocaust Commission's ensuing decision to change to this site led to further complications and stagnation.

Banfield's analysis of civic controversies in Chicago, to an extent, can also explain how creation of the Holocaust museum is affecting other Jewish institutions and groups in New York City who feel threatened by usurpation. According to Banfield, these controversies arise "out of the maintenance and enhancement needs of large formal organizations. The leaders of an organization see some advantage to be gained by changing the situation. They propose changes. Other large organizations are threatened. They oppose, and a civic controversy takes place."¹⁸

In the case of the New York City Holocaust project, the problem with this analysis is that it does not account for the possibility of two heads of the same organization seeking competitive advantages for themselves. In this case, the controversy is internal as well as with outside organizations that feel threatened. For example, when one founding co-chairman (Cuomo) proposed changes, the other one (Koch) could feel threatened. There is competitive "maintenance and

¹⁸Ibid., p. 263.

enhancement" with other institutions, and also within the Commission.

Banfield said informal centralization is attempted, in order to accomplish a major project. In order to do so, the actions of many people who have independent authority must be concerted for a proposal to be adopted: "The proponents of the proposal try to concert these actions by exercising influence--by persuading, deceiving, inveigling, rewarding, punishing, and otherwise inducing; meanwhile the opponents exercise influence...."¹⁹ This model can only be used to an extent for the New York City project. While it is true that the proponents have in some ways and at some times concerted their actions to achieve their goal, at other times, the internal actions have been anything but unified. In fact, at times one part of the **Mutagon**, usually the governor (or his agency, BPCA), acted more like the "opponent exercising influence" than like a proponent. Unlike Dahl's and Banfield's analyses, the **Mutagon** is a changing construct which was two-headed during crucial years. Governor Cuomo and Mayor Koch were jointly in control, but were competing for power and not always working together in harmony for the benefit of the project.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 307.

HOW CHANGES IN THE MUTAGON CHANGED THE PROJECT

Because there was government intervention first by Mayor Koch, and then by Governor Cuomo, in efforts to create a Holocaust memorial museum in New York City, the content and philosophy of the project was affected. Their intervention and the location of the project in the United States, and specifically, in New York City, give the museum's concept a particular slant. Like interest group and citizen participation theories, theories of social construction of reality and political symbolism are useful but limited for analyzing how plans for the New York City Holocaust memorial project have evolved.

There are specific governmental demands and also a kind of self-censorship by the interest group to emphasize the positive aspects of the United States' historical record with relation to the event being memorialized. In addition, there has been an attempt by the governor's office, which has been resisted by the Commission, to make the museum less completely Jewish. As will be shown, this culminated in the First Amendment (i.e., separation of Church and State) being cited in the 1991 Memorandum of Agreement between BPCA and the Holocaust Commission.

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's theory of "social construction of reality" analyzes how the historical reality created in a museum is a reflection of where the museum is located. Their central hypothesis is that "knowledge" is

different in different societies, and that a sociological study must deal with what is considered knowledge in a particular society. The authors state that "reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the processes in which this occurs."²⁰ In other words, "reality" is not the same everywhere.

Karl Deutsch calls his analysis the "feedback model of consciousness"²¹, rather than the "social construction of reality". However, the concept is virtually the same: groups (such as creators of memorials) select certain aspects of experience and attach symbols to them, which may distort the message being conveyed, to suit the preference of these groups. Deutsch speaks of the selective interests of the person who knows, and concludes that knowledge is a point at which subjective and objective elements meet.

Using Berger and Luckmann's and Deutsch's theories, it can be demonstrated that the specific conception and evolution of this Holocaust museum could only occur in New York City. In New York City the museum's viewpoint, or way of remembering, is influenced by the large, organized Jewish population. This concentration of nearly two million Jews,

²⁰Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, N.Y., 1966, p.1.

²¹Karl W. Deutsch, The Nerves of Government, The Free Press of Glencoe, Collier-Macmillan Ltd., London, 1963.

many of whom are prominent in government, real estate development, finance, the arts, public relations, higher education and other "worlds" that make New York "move and shake" gives the City an ambience that is uniquely Jewish in the United States (which does not negate the influence of other ethnic groups in what Mayor David Dinkins calls the "beautiful mosaic"). The humorous term "Jew York" arose with good reason. As Nathan Glazer said: "One could live a completely Jewish life from a sociological point of view and yet have no connection with any Jewish institution, religious or non-religious. It was here [New York City], in other words that one could have only Jewish friends, eat Jewish food, follow Jewish mores and culture patterns, and yet have little consciousness of being a Jew."²²

The "social construction of reality" and "feedback model of consciousness" theories are important tools for partially understanding the planned content of the New York Holocaust museum. However, unlike the **Mutagon** concept, they do not take into account the possibility of the imposition of a new "reality" or "consciousness" as a result of a changing political coalition. First Mayor Koch opened the door by providing an opportunity to create a Holocaust memorial. The leaders he chose to carry out the task expected to be able to significantly control the content of the memorial museum and

²²Nathan Glazer, American Judaism, 2nd ed. revised, Chicago and London, 1972, p. 118.

make it uniquely Jewish. Because New York is such an ethnically Jewish city, they thought politicians and elected officials would approve of a particularistic Jewish memorialization of the Holocaust. They further thought that in New York City in the 1980s, the Holocaust was a powerful symbol which would give the powerful Jewish community the ability to make political demands for a uniquely Jewish approach. Koch, who needed to please Jewish sources of campaign money and influence (and may also agree with the parochial concept), approved of the narrow Jewish concept of the memorial.

Later, once the proposed museum became City-State and the **Mutagon** changed and became a two-headed structure, politics interfered and changed the "reality" or "consciousness". Berger and Luckmann's and Deutsch's theories do not analyze such a situation. After Governor Cuomo intervened (by offering Battery Park City as a site), he learned too late how parochial was the scope of the planned museum and exhibits. Fearing criticism from separation of Church and State advocates, and requests for parcels of land or air rights from other religious groups, he tried to change the message of the "reality" of the museum. For example, he insisted that the name of the museum be changed, and "The Museum of Jewish Heritage-A Living Memorial to the Holocaust" thus became "A Living Memorial to the Holocaust-The Museum of Jewish Heritage". Governor Cuomo's

office was concerned about the Jewish "image" the museum's original name conveyed. His association with it would be helpful with his Jewish voters in New York City and State, but could be detrimental if he decided to run for President. He decided to walk the tightrope of pleasing both his local and potential national electorates, by keeping the name but reversing it to minimize the Jewish component.

Distortion to change "reality" or "consciousness" can be both a cause and an effect of government intervention. For example, if the museum makes the recreation of history (i.e., the social construction of reality or feedback model of consciousness) too particularistically Jewish, a governor can renege on a promise of free rent on government land. Likewise, if the museum creators know they are subject to government intervention, they are likely to recreate history in a way that the government will accept.

Like other politicians before him, most notably President Carter, Mayor Koch captured the powerful symbol of the Holocaust soon after its emergence as a "hot issue" and began using it to gain approval from Jewish constituents. After the mayor was sure his constituency was in place, he formed the Commission. Once Koch appointed a Commission to carry out his idea for memorialization, leadership of this Commission in turn tried to use the power of the symbol to increase their own influence in the Jewish community and in their negotiations with the government. Governor Cuomo then

got on the band wagon and pretended to be there from the beginning. At this point, despite the powerful political symbolism of the Holocaust, the project failed to go forward smoothly. The governor's office, in fact, took discretionary political action that stymied the project (and did not please his supportive audience).

Using the **Mutagon** concept, the dissertation analyzes the reasons for delays and restructuring plans. For example, one direct result of the delays caused by the **Mutagon** was a vicious circle: no visible progress because of insufficient funds, and unsuccessful fund raising because there was no concrete progress. In addition to the structure of the political forces responsible for the project, the richness of Jewish culture, the high level of organization of the Jewish community, and the concentration of the population are discussed as possible reasons for delaying the project, rather than facilitating it. As Pressman and Wildavsky said: "People now appear to think that implementation should be easy; they are, therefore, upset when expected events do not occur or turn out badly. We would consider our effort a success if more people began with the understanding that implementation, under the best of circumstances, is exceedingly difficult."²³

With few exceptions, thirty years ago, the Holocaust was spoken of in whispers or ignored. There were virtually no

²³Pressman and Wildavsky, p. xix.

university courses, books, movies, television programs or Holocaust centers and museum exhibits. It has become a multimillion dollar industry here, with a national memorial museum rising on the Mall in Washington, D.C., a national association of Holocaust centers, a national network of children of survivors, national gatherings of survivors, national academic conferences, courses in many universities, public school curriculums in some states and cities, hundreds of fiction and non-fiction books, movies, and television programs. Yet, more than 46 years after the end of World War II, there is still no major Holocaust memorial in New York City, the center of the organized Jewish community in the United States.

The dissertation will analyze why this is so, including: the history of earlier attempts to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City; how memorialization of the Holocaust was placed on Jewish organizational and government agendas; how the idea was coopted by President Carter, Mayor Koch, and Governor Cuomo; the structure of the political forces behind the memorial museum project in New York City and how this structure has changed. It will explain how government intervened in efforts to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City, and how this intervention at first seemed to facilitate and but then impeded implementation of the project. A **Mutagon** concept of changing State-City and private political forces will be developed to demonstrate why

the project has not moved forward smoothly.

PART ONE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**CHAPTER 2: THE JEWISH COMMUNITY'S EMERGENCE AS AN INTEREST GROUP IN THE UNITED STATES AFTER WORLD WAR II**

"Jewish life without committees would be like lox without bagels." Albert Vorspan¹

Before using the **Mutagon** concept to examine how government intervention and changing circumstances affected the attempt to create a Holocaust memorial museum in New York City between 1981 and 1991, it is necessary to understand the historical background and setting in which this intervention has occurred. The first effort to create a major Holocaust memorial in New York City was in 1946, and the first local government intervention on the issue of Holocaust memorialization was not until 1981, following the Carter Administration's in 1978. The intervention by Carter at that time and the subsequent intervention by Koch did not happen in a vacuum. Nor did Governor Cuomo's joining the band wagon in 1986, which altered the structure of forces behind the New York City memorial project.

These governmental interventions to create Holocaust memorial projects were directly related to two developments, the history of which must be traced to place the **Mutagon** in context. The first development, the rise of the American organized Jewish community as an interest group since the end

¹My Rabbi Doesn't Make House Calls, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, 1969, p. 23.

of World War II, will be analyzed in this chapter. The second development, the emergence of Holocaust memorialization as an issue for this interest group will be analyzed in Chapter 3.

Although the dissertation is a case study of the efforts of a specific narrower interest group--the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission--to build a Holocaust memorial in New York City, background on the broader interest group, i.e., the established national organized American Jewish community, is relevant for the following reasons: 1. Unless this broader interest group was in place and influential, the Carter Administration would have had no reason to intervene on the issue of Holocaust memorialization (which gave Koch increased impetus for initiating a New York city project). 2. From 1946 until 1978, various plans for Holocaust memorials in New York City were intended to be for a national memorial. 3. Almost every national major American Jewish organization has its headquarters in New York City, and government intervention in a project of interest to the organized Jewish community in New York City therefore has national implications. 4. After President Jimmy Carter created his President's Commission on the Holocaust in 1978 and the Commission began deliberating on an appropriate memorial, New York City was considered as a possible site. (Ultimately Washington, D. C. was chosen instead. See

Chapter 7.) 5. Koch's intervention in New York City very closely resembled that of Carter on a national level.

The effort of the American Jewish community to organize as an interest group after World War II had the same two key items on the agenda as during the war: the rescue of Jews from countries where they are endangered, and the creation of a Jewish homeland in Israel--with the emphasis on the latter. However, after the war, the effort was intensified.

One reason for the organized American Jewish community's intensifying their attempt to become an influential interest group after World War II may have been their guilt feelings about not doing enough to influence the government to rescue Jews during the war. During the war, even after reports on the death camps had been received, organized efforts continued to emphasize a Jewish homeland, rather than rescue. The time frame of this dissertation begins in 1946, with the first attempt to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City. Therefore, what the organized Jewish community did or did not do during World War II is beyond its scope. However, their ineffectiveness in rescue efforts is mentioned and their activities during the war are summarized here, because they led to subsequent organizational skills after the war.²

²There is a considerable literature on the organized American Jewish community's rescue efforts (or lack of them) during World War II. See, e.g., books by Bauer, Feingold, Goldmann, Lookstein, Medoff, Morse and Wyman listed in Bibliography.

During the war and until Israel became a reality in 1948, the issues of the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine and the rescue of the victims (refugees, and then survivors) of Nazi Europe were intertwined. The organized American Jewish community's strongest argument for the creation of a Jewish state was that it could provide a haven for Europe's Jewish refugees and survivors (and prevent the United States from bearing that burden). After the creation of the State of Israel, the organized Jewish community continued to link the need for a Jewish homeland with rescue. The argument has been that a secure Jewish homeland, Israel, is necessary to prevent another Holocaust and to rescue Jews from lands of oppression, especially the Soviet Union (and, again, prevent the United States from bearing that burden).

The first attempt to unify as an interest group was on January 23-24, 1943. Henry Monsky, the president of B'nai B'rith, invited delegates from 34 national Jewish organizations "to seek agreement on the role the American Jewish community would play in representing Jewish demands after the war." (This is incredible in retrospect. The genocide in Europe had been reported by then, but instead of clamoring for the United States government to rescue Jews during the war, the leaders of the organized American Jewish community were planning for afterward.) This was the first endeavor to create an umbrella organization that would serve

as a central channel to communicate the consensus of organized American Jewish opinion to the American government. The 32 organizations that sent representatives to this meeting formed the American Jewish Conference, which held its first session on August 29, 1943. The Conference, which represented 1.5 million Jews directly and another million indirectly, overwhelmingly endorsed the 1942 Biltmore platform, which had called for a reaffirmation of the Balfour pledge to establish a Jewish homeland.³ Although this was at the height of World War II and the Holocaust, the major issue was creation of a homeland in Palestine. Throughout the war, the emphasis was on Zionism, with rescue efforts connected and secondary (because a homeland was necessary for the rescue of European Jewry).

The American Jewish Committee resigned from the American Jewish Conference almost immediately, and the American Council for Judaism was anti-Zionist. The American Council for Judaism "viewed any friendly gesture toward Israel by an American Jew as evidence of divided political loyalties."⁴

"Patrician" Jew Arthur Hays Sulzberger, owner of The New York Times, and others who feared being accused of divided

³Melvin I. Urofsky, We Are One, Anchor Press, Garden City, 1978, pp. 21-33.

⁴Naomi W. Cohen, Not Free to Desist, Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1972, p. 311.

loyalties, founded this anti-Zionist organization in the early 1940s.⁵

When the Zionist effort was organized as the American Jewish Conference in 1943, it was headed by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, who had led the American Zionist movement from the beginning. After the more aggressive Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver took over in 1944, he formed the American Zionist Emergency Council to lobby on the issue. For the 1944 presidential elections, both the Democrats and Republicans had strong pro-Zionist planks in their platforms.

The American Zionist Emergency Council began to do what an interest group does, lobbying elected officials and candidates on the issue of a Jewish homeland. It spread the Zionist message with a monthly political bulletin, Palestine, sent to more than 16,000 educational, political, and religious leaders. It also "orchestrated an extensive campaign of personal contacts" with editors, church and educational leaders, political candidates, congressmen and senators, and "at critical junctures flooded the White House, the State Department, and congressional offices with literally thousands upon thousands of letters and telegrams."⁶ The emphasis continued to be Zionist, rather than a plea to rescue Hitler's victims.

⁵Peter Grose, Israel in the Mind of America, Schocken, New York, 1984, p. 226.

⁶Urofsky, pp. 33-34.

After the war, the picture began to change, and the bid to organize as a powerful interest group was stepped up dramatically. Most experts on the American Jewish community support the idea that efforts to organize after the war were related to the realization that not enough had been done during the war. For example, Arthur Hertzberg said the American Jewish community learned that during the war they did not have enough power to rescue the Jews of Europe. He said that "during the Holocaust, Jews had not been powerful enough among all the factions and fractions of America to make the President and Congress feel their Jewish pain. In the 1940s, this knowledge was not yet spelled out in public. Jews continued to speak the language of goodwill, and of 'Americans all,' but Jews would spend the next two decades making sure that power in America was not the monopoly of the uncaring."⁷

Urofsky said of the early post-war years:

"American Jewry, stung by the full awareness of the Holocaust, moved from a passive endorsement of a Jewish homeland to a near-unanimous commitment to active work for its realization....And in the face of vested interests opposed to the Zionist dream, American Jewry mounted one of the most intense and successful lobbying efforts in American politics....More than at any other

⁷Arthur Hertzberg, The Jews in America, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1989, p. 300.

time in its history, American Jewry stood united behind the Zionists [in 1945-1948]. On the eve of Jewish statehood, 955,000 men and women formally belonged to one of dozens of Zionist organizations. In addition, millions of other American Jews endorsed the Zionist position through their membership in groups affiliated with the American Jewish Conference or through any of the more than fifty national agencies engaged in practical work in Palestine or political support of Zionism in the United States."⁸

Seeking Jewish statehood was thus still the *raison d'être* for the stepped up lobbying from the end of World War II until 1947-48, as it had been during the war.

Another reason for the stepped up political activities of the organized Jewish community after World War II, which was related to their guilt, was the fact that this community had become by default the largest and most powerful Jewish community in the world. As Daniel Elazar said:

"American Jewry had become the foremost Jewish community in the world, larger by far than any other functioning Jewish community; indeed, it was ten times larger than its nearest functioning counterpart. It owned the bulk of the wealth that world Jewry could mobilize to undertake the tremendous tasks of relief and reconstruction confronting it as a result of the

⁸Urofsky, pp. 94 and 126.

Holocaust, tasks which increasingly came to be concentrated in the development of the new state of Israel....At the same time, American Jewry confronted a new situation at home: barriers against full participation in American society rapidly fell away..."⁹

Elazar was explaining both a push and pull into becoming a powerful interest group. On the one hand, the American Jewish community had the responsibility, through guilt and default, of taking on a world leadership role to fight for a Jewish homeland, security at home, and the rescue of Jews in the aftermath of the war. On the other hand, after the war ended and the full impact of the genocide of the Jews of Europe was revealed in the United States, the atmosphere changed: overt anti-Semitism diminished, and the government became more receptive to the demands of the organized American Jewish community.

Leonard Fein explained the general involvement of Jews in politics as follows:

"Politics, for Jews, is the displacement of Jewish motives onto public objects. What are those motives? To be a Jew means to belong to a people, not merely to adhere to a doctrine. It means, more specifically, to

⁹Daniel J. Elazar, Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1976, p. 166.

belong to a people that has perforce developed special sensitivities, through the course of its wanderings, to the acts of rulers and governments. It means, therefore, that the Jew as Jew has learned to pay attention to the political, to engage with it in order to ensure that princes and parliaments do not, wittingly or casually, do harm to one's people."¹⁰

Although his explanation does not deal specifically with the situation at the end of the war, it captures the reasons behind the intensified effort by the American organized Jewish community to create a strong interest group at that time.

In 1946 a new Zionist Political Action Committee was created. There is evidence that by 1947 the organized Jewish community had met with some success in making its presence known as an interest group seeking to influence the Federal government. Harry Truman, at least, took them into account during his campaign for President: "In November 1947 two political advisers, James H. Rowe, Jr. and Clark M. Clifford, presented Truman with a state-by-state plan for a campaign strategy. Rowe acknowledged that 'Jews hold the key to New York, and the key to the Jewish voters is what the Administration does about Palestine.' But New York was

¹⁰Leonard Fein, Where Are We?: The Inner Life of America's Jews, Harper & Row, New York, 1988, p. 222-223.

probably the only state in which Jews would vote as a bloc."¹¹ The issue continued to be a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and the large concentration of Jews in New York City, then the city with the largest Jewish population in the world, was a target for seeking the support of Jewish voters.

In November 1947 the United States and the United Nations accepted the partition plan that ultimately created Israel. According to Urofsky: "The success of the Zionist effort in 1947 represented nearly five years of work, organization, publicity, education, and the careful cultivation of key people in different fields....securing the help of influential men and women in the press, the church, the arts, and above all, the government."¹²

For the 1948 presidential elections, President Harry Truman, Governor Thomas Dewey, and Henry Wallace all issued pro-Zionist statements. (Truman won 75 percent of the Jewish vote, with Wallace receiving 15 percent.)

Even the first attempt to create a major Holocaust memorial in New York in 1946 (see Chapter 4) had a Zionist orientation. The ceremony to unveil the cornerstone for this original (uncompleted) New York Holocaust memorial in Riverside Park was held on October 19, 1947, right before the United Nations vote to create Israel on November 29. Because of the timing of the memorial ceremony, it seemed likely it

¹¹Grose, p. 218.

¹²Urofsky, p. 147.

was at least partially connected to Zionist efforts to convince the public that a Jewish homeland was a necessity. This assumption there had been a Zionist connection to this first attempt to create a New York Holocaust memorial was verified when the unpublished memoirs of the man who had led this effort were discovered in an archive. He had written: "My decision to hold the dedication ceremony in September or October [1947] was chiefly influenced by the acute situation in Palestine where a bitter fight raged between the Jews and the English which caused the United Nations to put the Palestine question on the agenda before the Assembly in October, 1947."¹³

In 1954, six years after the birth of Israel, an official Jewish pro-Israel lobby was created. The Zionist factions' Emergency Committee, which fell apart after the 1948 War of Independence, had been reorganized in 1949 as the American Zionist Council (composed of the fourteen leading Zionist organizations). In March 1954 the Council established the American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs, an organization created specifically to lobby Washington on issues concerning Israel (called AIPAC-American Israel Public Affairs Committee from 1959). For the first time, pro-Israel lobbying was coordinated by a single office.

¹³Adolph R. Lerner, "The Case of the Memorial", Unpublished manuscript, undated, archives of YIVO Research Institute, New York, p. 4.

Throughout the 1950s the American Jewish community continued to become more organized, with Israel the central issue. The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (Presidents' Conference) umbrella was formally established in 1959. Starting in 1955 leaders of twenty organizations began meeting on a regular basis and laying the foundation for the creation of the Presidents' Conference.¹⁴

The organized Jewish community in the United States today is being defined here as that part of the Jewish population (of just less than six million¹⁵) that is in some way connected with a constituent organizations of the Presidents' Conference. The Jewish community is not monolithic. Many Jews are unaffiliated and/or dissent from views represented by the Presidents' Conference or some of its constituents. Often these constituent organizations

¹⁴On March 5-6, 1955, representatives of the following 20 national Jewish organizations met at the Shoreham Hotel in Washington: American Jewish Congress, American Trade Union Council for Labor Israel, American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs, American Zionist Council, B'nai B'rith, Hadassah, Hapoel Hamizrachi, Jewish Agency, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish War Veterans, Labor Zionist Organization of America, Mizrachi Organization of America, National Community Relations Advisory Council, Progressive Zionist League, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Union of Orthodox Jewish Organizations, United Synagogue of America, United Zionist Labor Party, Zionist Organization of America, Zionists-Revisionists of America. ("Conference of Presidents" file of American Jewish Committee Library, New York)

¹⁵In 1988 the Jewish population of the United States was estimated at 5,935,000 by Barry A. Kosmin, Paul Ritterband and Jeffrey Scheckner, American Jewish Yearbook 1989, American Jewish Committee, New York, and Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1989, p. 233.

disagree with each other. Although only about 40 percent of the Jews in the United States are affiliated with a Jewish organization today, the Conference of Presidents claims to speak for the Jewish community, mainly on issues of foreign policy. Since the Presidents' Conference can legitimately speak for only this organized 40 percent but there is no spokesperson for the unorganized others, the effectiveness of the organized Jewish community as an interest group must be traced through the Presidents' Conference.

Elazar said the Presidents' Conference was established because "increased American Jewish involvement in the concerns of the Jewish people as a whole [had] sharpened the need for a communal voice that speaks as one, at least in the field of foreign relations."¹⁶ He analyzed the Presidents' Conference as "a structural device that has been developed to coordinate a weak multiple-element oligarchy, in those areas in which the constituent groups are willing to coordinate." He defined oligarchy as when "a substantially closed group of individuals enjoy a virtual monopoly of power by reserving control over all significant decision making", and said oligarchy, in several varieties, is "far more prevalent in the American Jewish world than autocracy."¹⁷

According to the 1990 brochure of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations:

¹⁶Elazar, Community and Polity, p. 216.

¹⁷Ibid., 320-322.

"The purpose of the Presidents' Conference is to strengthen the US-Israel alliance and to protect and enhance the security and dignity of Jews abroad. Toward this end, the Conference of Presidents speaks and acts on the basis of consensus on issues of national and international Jewish concern, as the most all-embracing coalition of the world's largest Jewish community....It also serves as the representative body to which officials of the Executive and Legislative branches of the American government, Israeli leaders, foreign statesmen and Jewish communities in other lands turn in dealing with issues of mutual concern."

From 1968 on, AIPAC, the official pro-Israel lobby, was permitted to inform Congress the Presidents' Conference (then with 22 member organizations) had endorsed, in principle, AIPAC's views. By 1974 the Conference of Presidents had 32 member organizations, and by 1978, 37 members.¹⁸ In 1990 there were 46 constituent organizations, and eight official observers¹⁹. Memorialization of the Holocaust is not one of

¹⁸A review of the early history of AIPAC and its relationship with the Conference of Presidents can be found in I. L. Kenen's Israel's Defense Line, Prometheus, 1981, pp. 106-113.

¹⁹Affiliated organizations in 1990 were: AIPAC, American Gathering/Federation Jewish Holocaust Survivors, American Jewish Congress, American ORT Federation, American Zionist Federation, American Zionist Youth Foundation, AMIT Women, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, Association of Reform Zionists of America, B'nai B'rith, Central Conference of American Rabbis, Emunah Women of America, Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot, Hadassah, Herut

the "Major Areas of Activity" listed in the 1990 brochure. In fact, it is never mentioned. This topic is dealt with in the Joint Program Plan of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC), a member organization of the Presidents' Conference (discussed later in the chapter).

Elazar said the President's Conference began to be eclipsed by AIPAC in the 1970s, and that "today a new balance is in the making".²⁰ His analysis is inaccurate for two reasons: First, obviously, if AIPAC, the official pro-Israel lobby, is informing Congress that the Presidents' Conference has endorsed its views, they are working together and not competing. AIPAC is, in fact, an important member of the Presidents' Conference. Second, the two groups are and have been closely linked for maximum strength as an interest

Zionists of America, Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish National Fund, Jewish War Veterans, JWB, Labor Zionist Alliance, Mercaz, NA'AMAT USA, National Conference on Soviet Jewry, National Committee for Labor Israel, National Council of Jewish Women. National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, NJCRAC, Rabbinical Assembly,, Rabbinical Council of America, Religious Zionists of America, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, United Israel Appeal, United Synagogue of America, WIZO USA, Women's American ORT, Women's League for Conservative Judaism, Women's League for Israel, Workmen's Circle, World Zionist Organization/American Section and Zionist Organization of America. Observers are: American Jewish Committee, American Sephardi Federation, Council of Jewish Federations, Development Corporation for Israel, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Joint Distribution Committee, Poalei Agudath Israel, United Jewish Appeal.

²⁰Daniel J. Elazar, People and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of World Jewry, 1989, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, p. 78.

group: AIPAC is the mechanism whereby the major Jewish organizations can lobby by proxy, without registering as lobbyists or agents of a foreign government and thereby losing their tax-exempt status. Unofficially, member organizations of the Presidents' Conference ask their members to lobby their representatives and the administration. Officially, however, only AIPAC lobbies.

AIPAC has a reputation as one of the most effective lobbying organizations in Washington, dealing strictly with issues relating to Israel. Urofsky said of AIPAC: "I.L. Kenen, and his successor, Morris J. Amitai, have made the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee a respected voice in Washington. When necessary, AIPAC can also call upon the national Jewish organizations for letter, telephone, and telegram campaigns to impress Congress or the White House with just how important Israel is to their constituents."²¹

One of the twenty original organizations that met to form the Presidents' Conference is NJCRAC. An umbrella in its own right, NJCRAC was founded in 1944 as a voluntary association of Jewish community relations agencies. (It originally had no "J" in its initials, because the word "Jewish" was then not part of its name. This reflected the organized Jewish community's fear, at that time, of displaying a high profile.) NJCRAC was founded by the Council of Jewish Federations, which is itself the umbrella

²¹Urofsky, p. 445.

for local Jewish federations throughout the United States.²² NJCRAC portrays itself as "the instrument through which its constituency of 13 national and 117 community Jewish agencies jointly determine: the issues of concern; what positions they should take on them; how they can most effectively carry out those positions; which of the issues should be given priority attention in the coming year."

The umbrella organization describes the purpose of its Joint Program Plan (first issued annually in 1953) as "a product of the Jewish community relations field's national planning process. It is designed to serve as an advisory guide for use by member agencies as an aid in their own program planning. Each agency may accept or reject, modify or expand any of the Plan's recommendations, according to each agency's particular roles, scope, concerns, resources, priorities, and needs."²³ NJCRAC is the component of the President's Conference under whose jurisdiction issues such

²²For a detailed analysis of the complicated web of the organized Jewish community in the United States, see Elazar, Community and Polity.

²³Joint Program Plan for Jewish Community Relations, 1989-1990, National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, New York, p. i.

In 1990 the constituent organizations were: American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith-Anti-Defamation League, Hadassah, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish War Veterans, National Council of Jewish Women, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, United Synagogue of America-Women's League for Conservative Judaism, Women's American ORT; and local Jewish community relations councils and committees throughout the United States.

as memorializing the Holocaust fall, and this topic first appeared in NJCRAC's Joint Program Plan for 1972-1973 (See Chapter 3).

By 1960, when John F. Kennedy was elected President, both the Presidents' Conference and AIPAC were in place and working in tandem on their agenda for what was in the best interest of Israel, as perceived by the organized American Jewish community. Kennedy's election was a milestone in the organized Jewish community's effort to become a mainstream interest group, because the election of a Catholic (whom they had strongly backed) broadened the opportunities for political power by non-Protestants in the United States. As Charles Silberman said, Kennedy's election was:

"an event that symbolized the transformation of the United States from an essentially Protestant to a religiously pluralistic society. Since that time there has been a steady decline in prejudice of every sort, and Jews, among others have been the beneficiaries. The reduction in hostility toward Jews has been accompanied, in fact, by a growth in positive attitudes. In 1940, for example, 63 percent of Americans said that Jews as a group had 'objectionable traits'; by 1981, when a Gallup poll asked Americans to rate Jews on a ten-point

scale, 81 percent had favorable and only 8 percent had unfavorable opinions."²⁴

Furthermore, because the Jewish community had so strongly backed Kennedy it was in a favorable position with his administration. (He received 82 percent of the Jewish vote; he carried New York by 384,000 votes, with Jewish precincts giving him a plurality of more than 800,000.) As Urofsky said:

"The understanding that marked relations between the Kennedy administration and American Jews reinforced the sense of belonging that characterized Jewish life in the early 1960s....In the closely fought election Jewish votes played a significant role, perhaps the significant role in electing the nation's first Catholic President....Kennedy reportedly told David Ben-Gurion in New York in 1961, 'You know, I was elected by the Jews of New York, and I would like to do something for the Jewish people.'"²⁵

Kennedy did not live to see the 1967 Six Day War, when he clearly could have paid this "debt". The war brought an enormous resurgence of support for Israel from the organized American Jewish community. In addition to lobbying Washington for help, a 1967 emergency fundraising campaign by

²⁴Charles E. Silberman, A Certain People: American Jews and their Lives Today, Summit Books, New York, 1985, p. 109.

²⁵Urofsky, pp. 333-336.

United Jewish Appeal raised \$240 million, and \$190 million worth of Israel Bonds were purchased. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the Six Day War was one of the earliest catalysts for the emergence of the organized American Jewish community's interest in memorializing the Holocaust.

By the late 1970s, the individual major Jewish organizations, the Presidents' Conference, and AIPAC were cohesive and working more aggressively and knowledgeably in the political arena. In addition, Jewish PACs (Political Action Committees) were raising money for targeted candidates who were pro-Israel. Kennedy's election, the 1967 Six Day War and 1973 Yom Kippur War, and the ethnic movement age of the 1960s had all increased the ability of the organized Jewish community to function as an effective interest group. Menachem Begin, who took over as Prime Minister of Israel in June, 1977, was a master at using the Holocaust for Zionist and his own Likud Party political purposes. This, and other events which will be analyzed, made the organized American Jewish community receptive to the idea of memorializing the Holocaust. This new receptiveness in the Jewish community opened a policy door for elected officials and candidates in the United States to make political use of the idea of memorializing the Holocaust. In order to utilize the issue effectively, President Jimmy Carter and then Mayor Koch created their own specialized interest groups to support such memorialization.

Carter desperately needed an issue to appeal to the organized Jewish community in 1978, when he created his President's Commission on the Holocaust. When he ran against Gerald Ford in 1976, the organized Jewish community (which cannot legally keep its tax-exempt status and support a candidate, but nevertheless informally makes its views known to its constituents) was wary of this Southern Baptist unknown. Ford, however, won only 28 percent of the Jewish vote. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 7, the American Jewish community then came to believe between 1977 and 1980 that their 1976 fears about President Carter had not been unfounded. It was an effort by the Carter Administration to assuage these fears of the Jewish community--a community that was then ready to acknowledge the importance of memorializing the Holocaust--that led to creation of the President's Commission on the Holocaust in 1978.

Carter's attempt to capture the vote of the Jewish community in the 1980 presidential elections did not succeed. Only 45 percent of the Jewish electorate voted for Carter, the "lowest Jewish vote for a Democratic candidate since Franklin D. Roosevelt brought Jews firmly into the Democratic fold". Fifteen percent of Jews voted for John Anderson in 1980, and a high 39 percent for Ronald Reagan.²⁶ Despite his initiation of a national effort to memorialize the Holocaust, Carter had a hard time keeping the Jewish voters

²⁶Silberman, p. 345.

voting Democratic in 1980. More than one in four Jewish voters who had voted for Carter in 1976 voted for Reagan in 1980, and the Jewish Democratic traditional majority was reduced to a margin of four to three.²⁷

Although Carter's creation of a national President's Commission on the Holocaust and subsequent U.S. Holocaust Memorial Commission did not win him the Jewish vote (nor the presidency) in 1980, he will be recorded in American and Jewish history as the President who placed on the agenda of the United States government the issue of memorialization of the Holocaust (see Chapter 7). Carter's government intervention in an area that had previously been the private domain of the American Jewish community was the first step in the Federal, New York State, and New York City governments' ability to influence how the American Jewish community would memorialize the Holocaust.

SUMMARY

In order to place the **Mutagon** of political forces working to create a Holocaust museum in New York City in historical perspective, the emergence of the organized American Jewish community as an interest group has been reviewed. At the time of the first attempt to memorialize

²⁷Theodore H. White, America In Search for Itself: The Making of the President, 1956-1980, Harper & Row, New York, 1982, p. 414. In New York State in 1980, the official vote compiled by the Federal Election Commission was 2,893,831 for Reagan, 2,728,372 for Carter, and 467,801 for Anderson.

the Holocaust in New York City at the end of World War II, the American Jewish community was not yet well established as an interest group. Efforts of the organized American Jewish community to lobby the United States Government to rescue Jews from Europe during the Holocaust were weak and ineffective. Perhaps to compensate for this, after the war, national Jewish organizations made a concerted bid to become a strong interest group. The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations was formally established in 1959, and AIPAC, its pro-Israel lobby constituent, was created (with a different name) in 1954. Today they form the core of what could be called the organized American Jewish community as an the interest group (although statistics show there really is no such entity). AIPAC and the Conference of Presidents have the kind of relationship with their agents in Congress and in the executive branch that can be analyzed using either iron triangle or issue network theory (see Chapter 1). The Jewish community members who are members of the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, however, are part of a much more complicated interest group-government relationship: a changing City-State-private coalition, or a two-headed **Mutagon**.

CHAPTER 3: WHEN AND WHY THE MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST BECAME AN ISSUE FOR THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

"Dear love, Auschwitz made me more of a Jew than ever Moses did."
Dannie Abse¹

In order to understand why a **Mutagon** of political forces would be interested in creating a major Holocaust memorial museum in New York City, it is necessary to trace the increasing significance of Holocaust memorialization for the organized American Jewish community. Memorialization of the Holocaust became the project of a complicated City-State-private **Mutagon** headed by the mayor of New York City and the governor of New York State after the issue had become important for this community. When President Jimmy Carter intervened on the issue in 1978, it was already beginning to be "hot" in the organized Jewish community, and Carter's placing it on the national governmental agenda made it even hotter.

Before the subject of Holocaust memorialization was placed on the Federal, and then the New York City and State agendas, it had to have become significant for the organized American Jewish community. Otherwise, President Carter's political entrepreneurs, and then those of Mayor Koch and Governor Cuomo, would not have chosen memorialization of the Holocaust as their agenda item for attracting Jewish votes

¹"White Balloon", a poem, in Present Tense, March-April 1990, Vol. 17, No. 3, p. 40.

and money. Therefore, before explaining how Holocaust memorialization evolved into the project of a City-State-private **Mutagon** in New York City, it is necessary to trace when and how this subject emerged and became important for the organized American Jewish community.

Interest in the Holocaust and its memorialization did not emerge instantly or follow a straightforward path. Various historical, psychological, political and cultural factors all interacted to bring about the organized Jewish community's gradual and growing interest in studying and memorializing the Holocaust. Some key events are possible to pinpoint, but, as will be demonstrated, not all historians of the Holocaust and the American Jewish community agree on which historical event was most significant. The community's interest in the Holocaust did not suddenly appear where it had not been before. Latent awareness was pushed to the forefront by specific occurrences and also by the passing of time.

Starting with the Adolph Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961, and with more intensity during Israel's Six Day War in 1967, the organized American Jewish community gradually began to face the Holocaust and its implications for their present and their future. There was a proliferation of books, college courses, movies, and commemorations, beginning slowly in the 1960s. (One of the few earlier exceptions was The Diary of Anne Frank, published in English in 1952, made into

a movie in 1959, and dramatized on Broadway in between.) The popularization of the subject of the Holocaust culminated in the NBC miniseries Holocaust in April, 1978 (the month before President Carter announced his President's Commission on the Holocaust).

Once President Carter had made memorialization of the Holocaust an official program of the United States government, this action caused a reaction. The organized Jewish community jumped on the bandwagon, applauded the project, and made the issue of the Holocaust more prominent on their agenda. Holocaust survivor and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel said that when Carter made memorialization of the Holocaust government policy he changed the social psychology of the country. The subject became aggrandized in the Jewish community, and survivors who had been considered second class by the community suddenly gained new status.² In the 1980s, after Carter's intervention, the number of books, movies, television programs, symposia, courses, and Holocaust studies institutions continued to grow more rapidly.³

²Interview with Elie Wiesel, New York City, August 8, 1990.

³David M. Szonyi, An Annotated Bibliography and Resource Guide, National Jewish Resource Center, New York, 1985, gives a comprehensive listing of books, audio-visual materials, exhibits, curricula, memorials, research centers, speakers bureaus, etc. In 1990, Social Studies School Service published its 32 page catalogue, "Teaching the Holocaust: Resources and Materials", which offers for sale to schools books, audio-visual materials, curricula, etc., only on the subject of the Holocaust.

After the organized Jewish community's general interest in the subject of the Holocaust emerged in the 1960s, and before Carter intervened in 1978, the community had not been catalyzed into creating a major national memorial or a memorial museum. There had been small groups of individuals attempting to do so at different times in New York City since 1946, but, for the most part, the major Jewish organizations were not enthusiastic about these projects (see Chapters 4-6). (No record was found of any attempt to create a major Holocaust memorial in the United States earlier than the first New York City 1946-1947 effort). After 1973 the national organized Jewish community encouraged small local memorials in the Joint Program Plan of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council. However, there was no national Jewish program or organizational platform for a major national memorial until after President Carter placed this specific item on the Federal agenda. As is documented in Chapter 7, in the case of the Federal Holocaust memorial, the organized Jewish community was a reactor and not an actor.

Not unlike John Kingdon's analysis of agenda-setting in the Federal government⁴ (see Chapter 7), in the national organized Jewish community, too, an idea whose time had come rose in the "soup". Beginning in the 1960s and continuing

⁴John W. Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1984.

through the early 1970s, the idea of memorialization of the Holocaust gradually took hold in the bureaucracy of the Jewish community. By the mid-1970s the concept of memorialization (but not a national memorial) was firmly on the community's agenda. Kingdon's three streams had come together: problem recognition, policy formulation and refinement, and politics. These three streams came together at the critical time of two major wars during which Israel faced possible annihilation, and a policy window was created for the Holocaust. The problem was that Israel, which was the focus for the American Jewish community, first had its existence endangered by two wars and then used policies of occupation that diminished it as a symbol of Jewish identity for many secular American Jews. Policy formulation and refinement resulted in the memorialization of the Holocaust becoming an important alternative and complement to Israel for the community.

This led to the politics of the organized American Jewish community's supporting Israel's use of the Holocaust to excuse the country's behavior. Regarding Israel's utilization of the Holocaust as a rationalization (e.g., for its West Bank policies, requests for economic aid, or arguments against Arab countries receiving military aid) the organized American Jewish community, through the Presidents' Conference and AIPAC, has supported Israel's position. This position, especially after Menachem Begin became Prime

Minister in 1977, has been that Israel deserved special treatment and could behave in a special way, because of the Holocaust. As Boaz Evron, an Israeli leftist writer, said: "The exploitation of the memory for these purposes has been developed into a fine art. Almost any Israeli official appearance abroad involves an invocation of the Holocaust, in order to inculcate in the listeners the proper feelings of guilt."⁵ Conor Cruise O'Brien, an Irish journalist, made the same point from his perspective as a non-Israeli and non-Jew: "Among Gentiles interested in Israel, there is impatience with Israeli Holocaust consciousness--and especially with what is seen as the exploitation of the Holocaust by Israeli leaders, since 1977 especially by Menachem Begin."⁶

The progression with regard to the organized American Jewish community's general interest in the Holocaust and specific interest in creating memorials was as follows: Until the 1960s, there was virtually no interest in commemorating the Holocaust or in creating memorials. The New York City effort that began in 1946 was an exception. Then the 1961 Eichmann trial and the 1967 Six Day War began changing this situation, and general interest in the Holocaust grew. Some communities such as Philadelphia

⁵Boaz Evron, "Holocaust: The Uses of Disaster", New Outlook Discussion Paper, Israel, undated, pp. 8-9.

⁶Conor Cruise O'Brien, The Siege, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1986, p. 318.

created small Holocaust memorials or monuments in the 1960s. In New York City, a number of memorials were attempted by Jewish groups in the 1960s and early 1970s (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6). In the 1970s, the issue of memorializing the Holocaust began to be institutionalized in the organized Jewish community, and more localities began building small memorials. It must be emphasized, however, that the community did not request that the Federal government create a national memorial.

Although the community's interest in memorializing the Holocaust was gradual, most experts agree the 1967 Six Day War was the event that turned the tide. The connection between the Hitlerian Holocaust and the possibility of another in Israel was so frightening and blatant that it could not be ignored: Creation of a Jewish homeland, the Zionist post-World War II argument in 1945-1947, had been for the purpose of bringing survivors of the Holocaust to redemption. Then, in 1967, this very redemption was threatened with the possibility of another genocide. Even the creation of a Jewish homeland in Israel seemed not to be saving the Jewish people from the possibility of annihilation. And if the Jews could be destroyed in Israel, perhaps they could also be destroyed in the United States. This was the reason the Six Day War so powerfully raised Holocaust consciousness in the American Jewish community.

The connection between the Holocaust and the Six Day War in the minds of American Jews is accepted by most scholars. For example, historian Jacob Neusner said in 1979 that the Six Day War had marked the beginning of interest in the Holocaust. He said: "What turned an historical event into a powerful symbol of contemporary social action and imagination was a searing shared experience. For millions of Jews, the dreadful weeks before the 1967 war gave a new vitality to the historical record of the years of 1933 to 1945--the war and its result."⁷

Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, Director of CLAL, The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, and one of the first advocates of education about the Holocaust, also cited the Six Day War (and, to a lesser degree, the Eichmann trial) as the catalyst for interest in the Holocaust in the organized American Jewish community. He said that in the 1950s the subject of the Holocaust was all but totally neglected by the community. "People were 'ashamed' of the 'sheep to the slaughter' idea," he said. "I think a great deal of the credit for the turning point was the Eichmann trial. By turning point, I mean it moved the Holocaust from the sense of shame to the sense of pity, compassion and feeling. And it gave it significant publicity, although the ground was still not saturated, and the publicity was soaked

⁷Jacob Neusner, "A 'Holocaust' Primer" in National Review, August 3, 1979, pp. 976-977.

up and didn't show up on the surface." (Greenberg's analogy compares the situation to planting seeds in dry soil, which needs to absorb water deep in the ground before irrigated topsoil can produce vegetation.)

In 1962, Greenberg, a professor at Yeshiva University, wanted to teach a course on the Holocaust there, but the faculty and administration showed little interest. He said he finally was able to "sell" the idea to the dean after he renamed the course "Totalitarianism and Ideology in the Twentieth Century". He said his research in 1962 found only one existent course on the Holocaust, at Brandeis University. Greenberg believes the Six Day War was the breakthrough. "There was a tremendous urgency that the Holocaust is coming again," he said. "I think 1967 opened the emotional floodgates."⁸

Holocaust historian Saul Friedlander also targets the Six Day War as the beginning of interest in the Holocaust here. "In the late 1960s, there was a change," he said. "It's difficult to explain. Elie Wiesel and Raul Hilberg couldn't find publishers in the early 1960s. Why the change? The Six Day War. There was a need for definition by the community. They were losing their Zionist dream, and this led to the centrality of the Jewish experience of the

⁸Interview with Rabbi Irving Greenberg, April 19, 1990, New York City.

Holocaust. It wasn't meant to be that way, but two things came together and made it happen."⁹

Melvin Urofsky connected the Six Day War with the emergence of interest in the Holocaust in the organized American Jewish community as follows:

"The rapidity and extent of Israeli victory could only be matched by the reaction of American Jewry during the tense weeks of crisis in May and the actual days of fighting, and by the emotional outburst which erupted following the victory. But the joy of the victory must be seen in contrast to the gloom and despair which characterized American Jewry during May 1967...the imagery of the Holocaust dominated American Jewry--the fear that twice in their lifetime the Jewish people would be slaughtered and would be able to do nothing about it."¹⁰

Charles E. Silberman said of the connection between the 1967 war and the Holocaust:

"To American Jews--indeed, to Jews everywhere--it appeared as though another Holocaust was in the making; equally important, it looked and felt as though once again the world would sit idly by while Jews marched to their death. Before 1967 American Jews had paid little

⁹Saul Friedlander, address, Society for the Advancement of Judaism, New York, February 4, 1990.

¹⁰Melvin I. Urofsky, We Are One, Anchor Press, Garden City, 1978, p. 350.

attention to the Holocaust of the 1940s. Some, perhaps, felt guilty over their inability to prevent the dreadful event or, failing that, to rescue more than a handful of people; others needed the healing balm of time before they could come to terms with what had happened; most were simply too caught up in their own lives and in the exciting move from the margins of American society to its mainstream."

Silberman said the Holocaust was rarely mentioned, and that Wiesel's Night was rejected by more than six publishers although it had been acclaimed in France. He said that even after the Eichmann trial in 1961, "which turned the Holocaust into front-page news in American newspapers", discussion of the subject was "desultory".¹¹ (Wiesel finally got his book published in English in 1960, and Eichmann's capture and trial at around the same time must have helped to make it popular.)

"Desultory", or unmethodical, is perhaps a good description: there were discussions, and even heated arguments in some circles in the Jewish community. For example, Hannah Arendt's vindictive account of the Eichmann trial in The New Yorker (published as a book, Eichmann in Jerusalem, in 1963) started a controversy that lasted throughout the early 1960s. Arendt's conclusion was that

¹¹Charles E. Silberman, A Certain People: American Jews and their Lives Today, Summit Books, New York, 1985, pp. 182-183.

Jewish leaders, as well as Eichmann, were guilty, and that the Jews went to their death like sheep to the slaughter. However, reactions and arguments about specific books or occurrences are not the same as an organized effort to institutionalize the Holocaust and its memory as a primary and major issue for the organized Jewish community. This did not occur until later.

Leonard Fein, too, linked the Six Day War and awareness of the Holocaust. He said that in 1967, "The fear was precise, and 'another Auschwitz' was its name. Back then, no one yet knew how resourceful and how tough and how skilled at war the Israelis had become. So, when some Arab leaders boasted that the Jews would be driven into the sea, the Jews of America felt terror, as Jews."¹² Michael Berenbaum, project director for the museum being built by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council in Washington, concurred about the important influence of the Six Day War. He also mentioned the "drive the Jews into the sea" statement of Arab leaders, and said: "American Jews felt their vulnerability and pulled out all the stops."¹³

Samuel Norich, Director of YIVO Research Institute, believes both the 1967 and 1973 wars in Israel caused interest in the Holocaust to emerge in the Jewish community

¹²Leonard Fein, Where Are We?: The Inner Life of America's Jews, Harper & Row, New York, 1988, p. 18.

¹³Interview with Michael Berenbaum, March 12, 1990, New York.

in United States. He wrote: "The memories, the literary and visual images of European Jewry's destruction took on a special valence in American Jewry's self-understanding during the 1960's and 1970's. The Eichmann trial and Elie Wiesel's books figured in this, but nothing figured more importantly than the visible danger, in 1967 and again in 1973, that Israel might be destroyed. We, all of us, brought the traumas of the 1940's to the events of the '60's and '70's, and we came to see the Jewish people as increasingly imperiled."¹⁴ Even though Israel was victorious in both wars, the fear of annihilation that came before the victories evoked the Holocaust and helped to institutionalize its memorialization in the organized American Jewish community.

Wiesel was the only Holocaust expert who said he did not believe the 1967 and 1973 wars had any influence on the emergence of Holocaust memorialization in the United States. He said: "We worked on it...My first book came out here in 1960, which means eighteen years, after all, [until Carter intervened]. In the meantime, I was teaching and writing, and other people were. In 1960 nobody read, nobody cared. Then it accumulated. There were television programs, the Eichmann trial in 1960, other trials later on. Things happened....The Israel wars didn't have anything to do with it." Asked how the idea of Holocaust memorialization grew so

¹⁴Samuel Norich, "What Holocaust Centers Tell Us About Ourselves", The Forward, New York, March 6, 1987, p.5.

much since 1960, Wiesel said: "A convergence of events. Between 1960 and 1979, there was a very small group of people who worked on this. Beginning in the 1960s, I would go around literally from conference to conference, from convention to convention, from community to community to speak about this. Because nobody else did. When other people began, I stopped. For the last twenty years or so, I don't really speak about this subject. But at that time, nobody did it, so I did. I didn't speak about museums or memorials--only about the need to remember."¹⁵ Although Wiesel said the 1967 and 1973 wars in Israel had no effect on the emergence of interest in the Holocaust in the United States (and seemed to imply he was taking credit for it), the wars were the very reason that the "very small group of people who worked on this" began to gain a sympathetic ear.

It is important to emphasize that before 1967 there was very little published here on the Holocaust. Wiesel's Night, copyrighted here in 1960, was one of the first works that talked about life inside the camps. (Other early books were The Diary of Anne Frank, 1952, and Raul Hilberg's The Destruction of the European Jews, 1961.) As Wiesel and others said, he had great difficulty finding a publisher here, although the work had already been successfully published in France. Except for Wiesel, most experts (e.g., those cited above) say the date for the emergence of interest

¹⁵Wiesel interview.

in the Holocaust was the 1967 Six Day War (reinforced by the earlier Eichmann trial and the 1973 Yom Kippur War). There is no exact moment that the subject exploded on the scene, but evidence indicates the issue most dramatically started attracting the interest of the organized Jewish community after the 1967 war, and increased after the 1973 war. By the middle of the 1970s, commemorating the Holocaust was beginning to become a "hot" item in the organized American Jewish community.

Soon afterward, three unrelated occurrences helped to firmly entrench the issue of memorialization of the Holocaust in the agenda of the organized American Jewish community: 1) In 1977, Begin became Prime Minister of Israel. More than any previous leader, he used the evocation of the Holocaust to defend Israel's existence and its policies. The major American Jewish organizations, led by the Conference of Presidents, followed suit. 2) In the summer of 1977, the Immigration and Naturalization Services division of the United States Justice Department set up a Special Litigation Unit to prosecute alleged Nazi war criminals living in the United States. That year Congress also requested an investigation to determine whether United States government agencies had obstructed investigations and prosecutions of alleged Nazi war criminals; and on May 15, 1978, the General Accounting Office of the House of Representatives issued its

report.¹⁶ 3) In March-April of 1978, NBC television broadcast the series Holocaust, which (albeit in a kitsch, soap opera format) brought the subject into living rooms across the country and gave it a national grassroots acceptability.

Perhaps the best evidence of formally placing a domestic issue on the Jewish agenda on a national scale is the Joint Program Plan of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC), the national umbrella organization under whose institutional jurisdiction an issue such as memorializing the Holocaust falls. NJCRAC first formally placed the idea of memorializing the Holocaust on its agenda in 1972-1973. That year there was a section entitled "Interpreting the Holocaust" in the organization's published annual Joint Program Plan. This short section encouraged local community relations organizations to observe the thirtieth anniversary of the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto.¹⁷ While there were earlier various efforts to commemorate the Holocaust by organizations, local Jewish communities and survivor groups in the United States, placement of the idea on the agenda of NJCRAC

¹⁶Rochelle G. Saidel, The Outraged Conscience: Seekers of Justice for Nazi War Criminals in America, State University of New York Press, Albany, New York, 1984, p. 7.

¹⁷Joint Program Plan for Jewish Community Relations, 1972-1973, National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, New York, p. 11.

institutionalized memorialization nationally in the American Jewish community for the first time. (In the 1961-1962 Joint Program Plan, there was a section on the Eichmann trial, recommending that Jewish community relations agencies "cooperate in studying and assessing all the effects of the Eichmann trial and in interpreting its meaning and its lessons."¹⁸ This is NJCRAC's only reference to the Holocaust in program plans prior to 1972.)

Beginning in 1973-1974, NJCRAC's Joint Program Plan had a section entitled "Commemorating the Holocaust". Among other recommendations, it suggested that local communities create "visual memorials to the Holocaust, such as permanent exhibits, monuments, plaques [and] signs...." and develop local archives (pp. 12-13). These recommendations were the same in the Joint Program Plan for 1974-1975 (p. 14), 1975-1976 (pp. 20-21), 1976-1977 (p. 16), 1977-1978 (p. 23) and 1978-1979 (p. 13). Only in 1979-1980, after President Carter had appointed his President's Commission on the Holocaust, was there a major shift in NJCRAC's section on the Holocaust. It had never before recommended or even mentioned creation of a national Holocaust memorial in the Joint Program Plan. Now that Carter had put the issue on the federal agenda, NJCRAC came out in support of it. (Afterward, the issue of commemorating the Holocaust continued to appear in the Joint

¹⁸Joint Program Plan for Jewish Community Relations: 1961-1962, "The Eichmann Trial", pp. 15-16.

Program Plan. Depending on the year, it varied from a small "Continuing But Urgent" segment to a major section on "Lessons of Bitburg" in 1985-1986.)

Irving "Yitz" Greenberg described the eleven years between the Six Day War and the 1978 NBC Holocaust miniseries as "soaking the ground" (like a farmer preparing to plant seeds). "The miniseries never would have been produced or had the reverberations, but for this ten years before of saturating the ground," he said. "It took ten years of saturating the ground, building up a scholarly following, building up a religious consciousness. And then it was like striking a match, when you had saturation with benzene. And it blasted off."¹⁹ (At this point, the President's Commission began.)

In addition to the opinions of experts and the agenda of NJCRAC, another indicator of when memorializing the Holocaust became important for the organized American Jewish community is the coverage of the subject in books about the American Jewish community. When Nathan Glazer wrote his classic American Judaism in 1957, memory of the Holocaust was totally absent. As Neusner wrote in 1979, to point out the recent emergence of the topic at that time: "Describing American Judaism in the mid-1950s, the great sociologist Nathan Glazer managed to write an entire book without making more than passing reference to the destruction of European Jewry. The

¹⁹Greenberg interview.

contrast with the 1970s is striking. Now there is no way to address the Jewish world without referring to 'the Holocaust.'²⁰

Even in the 1960s and for much of the 1970s, the subject of remembering the Holocaust was absent from most scholarly analyses of the American Jewish community. As Silberman said: "When Commentary conducted a symposium on 'the condition of Jewish belief' in 1966, for example, its editors did not so much as mention the Holocaust in the five long questions it sent to the participating rabbis and theologians, nor did more than a handful of the thirty-eight respondents raise the question on their own." He said that by contrast, "In May and June of 1967, however, the Holocaust was on almost every American Jew's mind...."²¹

Six years before Neusner's article and seven years after the Commentary symposium, in 1973, the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Publication Society of America published The Future of the Jewish Community in America, a book of essays prepared by leading academics for an American Jewish Committee task force on the future of the Jewish community of America. Although Neusner said there was no way in the 1970s to leave the Holocaust out, he was writing in 1979. In 1973 it was still barely mentioned in a book by leading scholars of the community such as David Sidorsky and

²⁰Neusner.

²¹Silberman, pp. 182-183.

Daniel Elazar. Sidorsky, a prominent professor of Jewish history who edited this book, wrote that four recent major events "presumably" then affected the formation of identity in the Jewish community. "The first is the Holocaust, and although it may be claimed that memory has dimmed its impact, it may also be true that only now is the realization of the event, which traumatized awareness by its overwhelming enormity, becoming absorbed into consciousness."²²

Sidorsky therefore recognized that the Holocaust had become somewhat important, but he was hedging his bets. Furthermore, the subject was virtually ignored by all of the experts on the American Jewish community who contributed chapters to his book. There was only one other reference to the Holocaust in Sidorsky's book, and it was a comment on the lack of interest in the subject. Seymour Fox said in the 1973 book: "The Holocaust is barely mentioned in our classrooms."²³ (This was generally the case in the early 1970s, as contrasted with special curricula in many states, beginning in the 1980s.) In an article entitled "Decision-making in the American Jewish Community" in the same book, Elazar did not even mention memorialization of the Holocaust as relevant to decision-making (although he did refer to the

²²David Sidorsky, David Sidorsky, ed., The Future of the Jewish Community in America, American Jewish Committee and Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973, p. 20.

²³Seymour Fox, *Ibid.*, 262.

resettlement and rehabilitation of Europe's Jews).²⁴ Glazer's 1957 book, the 1966 Commentary symposium, and Sidorsky's 1973 book are typical of virtually all books on the American Jewish community between the end of World War II and the Yom Kippur War: the subject of the Holocaust or its memorialization is not discussed as relevant or important for the organized American Jewish community. Between Sidorsky's writing in 1973 and Neusner's writing in 1979, there was a giant leap in interest in the Holocaust.

Soon after the 1973 war the picture had changed dramatically. The Israel wars were the catalyst for interest in the Holocaust not only because they evoked the possibility of another Holocaust, another genocide of the Jewish people. There was another side to the aftermath of the Six Day and Yom Kippur wars. Israel's image changed in the minds of many individual American Jews and non-Jews, including decision-makers in Washington. Instead of the poor defenseless David, Israel had suddenly become Goliath.

The leaders of the organized community were able to use the new interest in the Holocaust in connection with their support of Israel's policies: for them, emergence of the memorialization of the Holocaust was a way of saying, again, that Israel (i.e., the redeemer of the remnant of Holocaust survivors) was the victim, and not the victor or aggressor. During both wars, there was the fear that Israel might be

²⁴Daniel Elazar, *Ibid.*, p. 279.

destroyed--that a new Holocaust would result in mass murder of Jews. This fear brought memories of the Holocaust out of the closet--even for people who had no personal recollections.

Linking the Holocaust with Israel helped the organized Jewish community hold the interest (and donations) of some American Jews who, in the wars' aftermath, questioned Israel's policies. When questions about the occupation and Israel's treatment of Arabs got in the way, community leaders could invoke the Holocaust. The Holocaust was easier to "sell" than post-occupation Israel, because there was no question of who was victimizing whom.

After the wars, many secular Jews who had considered Israel their strongest connection with Judaism became disillusioned with Israel's policies and were searching for a new non-religious link. Memorialization of the Holocaust became their new symbolic affirmation. This substitution of the Holocaust for Israel among some American Jews was not acceptable to the organized American Jewish community, which continued to support Israel and its policies. Therefore leaders of the community utilized memorialization of the Holocaust in connection with explaining the need for Israel's existence. This was one reason it became an important issue on the community's agenda. Today the organized American Jewish community still links the idea of memorializing the

Holocaust with the importance of the existence of a strong Israel.

Arthur Hertzberg said the Holocaust was evoked by the American Jewish community in the 1970s, in order to remember anti-Semitism and the vulnerability of Israel:

"The Holocaust was a shattering memory. It evoked guilt, compassion, and fear. It said to American Jews, in an essentially optimistic time, that being Jewish is to know that life itself is often about tragedy, suffering, and murderous hatred. Even the new State of Israel, the center of Jewish hope and power, was not merely about glory and triumph; it was endangered by Arab enemies. Jews were called to rally to Israel in the name of the slogan 'Never Again.'"²⁵

Hertzberg said in the 1950s and 1960s it was widely believed that the effort for Israel would somehow keep the next generation of American Jews Jewish. But then, he said, "In the 1980s, the observance even of the new Jewish mitzvah, the commitment to Israel, was becoming more tepid." Hertzberg said this cooling process was evident even at the time of the 1973 war. "American Jews were less involved than they had been in June 1967. Contributions were just as massive, but there were fewer volunteers among the young. Some American Jews had already begun to question Israel's

²⁵Arthur Hertzberg, The Jews in America, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1989, p. 382.

policies. In 1973, a few hundred Jews had banded together in an organization that was named Breira ('alternative') to insist that Israel should make peace on the basis of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza."²⁶ (Breira and other alternative movements are not analyzed here, because they are not part of the organized American Jewish community as defined in Chapter 2--those organizations belonging to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. The organized Jewish community attempts to discredit, rather than encourage, the activities of the alternative peace movement.)

The major American Jewish organizations did not substitute the Holocaust for Israel; they used the memory of the Holocaust to gain support for Israel, and they made space in their agenda for institutionalizing Holocaust memorialization. This was complemented, however, by the phenomenon of many American Jews shifting their focus from Israel to the Holocaust. It is difficult to paint a clear picture of this shift, because there was another influence: it happened at a time when Americans in general were searching for and finding their ethnicity. In 1960, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, an Irish Catholic, was elected President, and in 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. had "a dream". Black was becoming beautiful in the 1960s, and other hyphenated Americans were seeking their roots.

²⁶Ibid., p. 384.

At this very time, Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza became painful for many American Jews in the wake of the 1967 and 1973 wars. Thus the prevailing mood of ethnicity in the United States at that time--reinforced by disillusionment with Israel--created both the need and opportunity for the Holocaust's emergence as an issue. As Fein said: "Along comes the Holocaust, and makes us special. It's not the kind of special we'd have chosen, but there it is, ours by right, and awesomely substantial. If you have the Holocaust, what more do you need?"²⁷ In other words, the Holocaust is a hard act to follow.

Jeshajahu Weinberg, Director of the museum being built in Washington by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, said: "Why the preoccupation with the Holocaust now? It is not enough to say that it was Wiesel, although he had an important role in popularizing the Holocaust in the United States. The issue matured in the mid-1970s. Secular Jews in this country had a problem. During the 1970s, a period of flourishing ethnicity, secular Jews had a problem knowing what their center of ethnicity was." (The search for identity also helped Jewish ethnicity--including the subject of the Holocaust--flourish.)

Weinberg, an Israeli, said that since 1948 American Jews "thought that such support for Israel as financial, tourism, sending their children there for programs created the Jewish

²⁷Fein, p. 63.

content for them. But a few years after the Six Day War, the glory was over and there was the divisiveness of the politics of occupation." Weinberg said: "The stock of Israel diminished and the Holocaust became the Jewish content for American Jews--a way to remain Jewish as a secular Jew." Weinberg said that American Jews who had projected all of their ideals on Israel and in the 1970s had become aware that Israel was not the idealistic country they had perceived it to be, adopted the Holocaust as its replacement."²⁸

At a 1990 lecture, Hertzberg also connected emergence of interest in the Holocaust to the climate of ethnicity that was part of the 1960s in the United States, and to still unresolved fears of anti-Semitism among the American Jewish community. He asked:

"Why the emergence of the Holocaust in the American Jewish experience? The subject was treif [non-kosher] in the 1940s, because American Jews were breaking out of ghettos. They didn't want to appear to be victims. It came on in the 1960s, because the role of Jews in America changed. It was the era of Kennedy, Blacks, Vietnam. It was easier to speak in your own name. The Holocaust is central here because anti-Semitism is the only way American Jewish consciousness can objectify the Jewish religion. Everything else in Judaism is

²⁸Interview with Jeshajahu Weinberg, March 14, 1990, Washington, D.C.

subjective here. The only thing alienated American Jews can get het up about is anti-Semitism, because it's a threat to life and to their vision of themselves."²⁹

Thus, because of disappointment with Israel's policies, fear of anti-Semitism, and the climate of ethnicity in the United States, the Holocaust arose as the new symbol of Jewish identity.

Evidence of the rise of the issue of the Holocaust is the proliferation of "Holocaust centers", beginning in the late 1970's and 1980's. According to Norich, of the 84 entities commemorating the Holocaust that are listed in the 1985-1986 Directory of Holocaust Centers, Institutions, and Organizations in North America (published by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council), 41 of them did not exist in 1977.³⁰ In the most recent Directory, published in 1988 (after Norich's article), there are 98 listings of Holocaust institutions in the United States, including 19 museums, 48 resource centers, 34 archival facilities, 12 memorials, 26 research institutes and five libraries.³¹

The overwhelming institutionalization of memorialization of the Holocaust may, in fact, eventually bring about a weakening in some American Jews' ties to the Jewish

²⁹Hertzberg, lecture, Society for the Advancement of Judaism, February 4, 1990.

³⁰Norich.

³¹Directory of Holocaust Institutions, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, Washington, D.C., 1988, p. vii.

community. If many Jews are secular, and the secular ethnic manifestation of organized Judaism emphasizes mass murder and the past, will future generations want to remain linked to the Jewish community? Fein warned in 1988: "The danger is that we will come (have come?) to see the Holocaust as the most important thing that ever happened to us, even the richest, the one most filled with consequence and implication."³²

As James E. Young wrote in 1991:

"Holocaust museums are increasingly becoming the centres for historical education, activism and fundraising. Consequently, instead of learning about the Holocaust through the study of Jewish history, many Jews and non-Jews in America learn the whole of Jewish history through the lens of the Holocaust. Without other kinds of museums to a Jewish past, even to current life in the Diaspora to offset them, Holocaust memorials and museums tend to organize Jewish culture and identity around this one era alone....As a result, not only will the Holocaust continue to suggest itself as a centre of American Jewish consciousness, but it will become all that non-Jewish Americans know about a thousand years of European Jewish civilization."³³

³²Fein, p. 62.

³³James E. Young, "Holocaust Memorials in America: The Politics of Identity", in **Survey of Jewish Affairs, Vol. 10**, ed. William Frankel, Basil Blackwell, London, 1991 (page

Referring to the centralization of memorialization of the Holocaust in the organized American Jewish community, Saul Friedlander asked: "Will this be the core in the future, or can we go beyond it?"³⁴

SUMMARY

Before 1960, the organized Jewish community was virtually unconcerned about memorializing the Holocaust. Therefore an American president, a New York City mayor or a New York State governor would not have sought to use this issue to gain political favor in the community. There was no overture from any elected official, no iron triangle or issue network, and no **Mutagon** of political allies dedicated to creating a memorial. The community's interest in the Holocaust emerged somewhat with the 1961 Eichmann trial, and then, much more powerfully, with the 1967 Six Day War. The 1973 Yom Kippur War reinforced this. After the wars, the Holocaust began to replace, or at least join, Israel as a focus for secular American Jews. Israel remained the prime issue of importance for the major American Jewish organizations, but they integrated the Holocaust into rhetoric about Israel (especially after Begin became Prime Minister in 1977). Despite growing interest in commemorating the Holocaust, the organized American Jewish community did

proofs 1-13), p. 12.

³⁴Friedlander, 1990 lecture.

not seek a national Holocaust memorial from the Federal government. Instead, as is detailed in Chapter 7, President Carter proposed the idea to them. After Carter announced creation of a national memorial in 1978, memorialization of the Holocaust became official United States policy and therefore even more important to the organized American Jewish community. This background is necessary for understanding what led to Mayor Koch's naming a Task Force on the Holocaust in 1981, followed by a Holocaust Memorial Commission in 1982, for the purpose of building a Holocaust memorial museum in New York City. When Governor Cuomo joined Mayor Koch as a "founding" co-chairman of the project in 1986, the structure of the political forces responsible for carrying out the project, the **Mutagon**, changed into a polygon with two heads.

CHAPTER 4: EARLY ATTEMPTS TO CREATE A MAJOR HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL IN NEW YORK CITY: 1946-1965

"This is the site for the American memorial to the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto battle April-May 1943 and to the six million Jews of Europe martyred in the cause of human liberty."¹

The *Mutagon*, the political alliance that has been endeavoring from 1981 to 1991 to create a Holocaust memorial museum in New York City, has a long and complicated pre-history. Although memorializing the Holocaust was not formally on the agenda of the organized American Jewish community until 1973-1974, in 1946 and in the early 1960s two significant but unsuccessful commemorative efforts began in New York City. They did not succeed, primarily, because they were not projects backed by the organized Jewish community, the topic did not yet have any political value for American government officials, and the sponsoring groups thus had difficulty building the political alliances necessary for implementation. The first attempt, in 1946, was begun by one vigorous and dedicated person who had a small organization to use as a power base to try to interest others. Individuals, rather than Jewish organizations, backed the effort.

In the 1960s, by contrast, some major Jewish organizations joined the spearheading group. However, they did not give the project priority and appropriate political

¹Plaque in Riverside Park, between 83rd and 84th Streets, dedicated October 19, 1947.

alliances were not forged. Ultimately both projects failed, but, as will be demonstrated, they helped to set the stage for later government intervention into memorialization of the Holocaust. When Mayor Edward I. Koch's administration intervened to "initiate" a memorial in 1981, the idea already had a history of 35 years of plans and attempts in New York City. Prior to Mayor Koch's tenure, interest groups came to New York City mayors to request a memorial. In the case of Koch, he coopted the idea, made it his own, officially intervened, and came to the Jewish community. He created the public-private political alliance that became the **Mutagon**.

An analysis of the pre-Koch attempts to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City will shed some light on why they did not succeed. Variables that account for the early failures to create a Holocaust memorial include: the interest groups' inexperience in forming political alliances, the political climate, financial problems, lack of interest and other priorities in the Jewish community, the subsequent lack of political benefits for government officials, the psychological inability of survivors and other Jews to face the Holocaust, disagreements within the interest group seeking to create a memorial. The government did not intervene in those early attempts, because there was no serious interest yet in the organized Jewish community, and thus no political gain from coopting the project. Mayors and other elected officials gave lip service and limited

assistance and promised to cooperate, but they did not make the project their own, as Koch later did.

The first attempt to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City (and probably in the nation) was in 1946-1947, in Riverside Park between 83rd and 84th Streets, along the Hudson River. The effort was coordinated by a group called American Memorial to Six Million Jews of Europe, Inc. Mayor William O'Dwyer was Honorary Chairman of the National Committee of Sponsors, and Robert Moses, as Park Commissioner, was a member ex-officio. The mayor was supportive and designated a piece of City land for the memorial, but otherwise was not closely linked with the project. Powerful Park Commissioner Moses was also generally supportive of the idea. The list of sponsors was long and prestigious, including many congressmen, professors, Jewish and non-Jewish clergymen who lent their names but were not actively involved. Unlike later attempts to build Holocaust memorials in New York City, this project was not officially sponsored by a consortium of Jewish organizations or by the City; nor was the issue "hot". There was no iron triangle, issue network or **Mutagon** of political allies working together on the project.

This first attempt at a memorial was really a single-handed effort. The initiator and guiding spirit was Adolph R. Lerner, a Polish Jewish refugee who was a journalist and publisher. He was vice president of the National

Organization of Polish Jews in New York, a group of refugee professionals.² He had fled Vienna when the Nazis took over Austria in 1938, going first to France and then to the United States. During 1943 and 1944 he worked at the official Polish news agency in New York, editing bulletins that arrived from the Polish underground.

Lerner had enough political savvy to know he could not do the job single-handed, and that he needed an interest group behind him. In January, 1946, Lerner presented his idea for a memorial to the National Organization of Polish Jews in New York, suggesting that a memorial "in tribute to the Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto and the six million Jews slain by the Nazis, be erected in New York City."³

On February 6, 1946, Lerner used the organization's name to submit a written request to Mayor O'Dwyer, asking him to find an appropriate site for an "eternal light" memorial dedicated to the fallen heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto. In response, the mayor invited Lerner and a delegation from the National Organization of Polish Jews to City Hall, where they met with Comptroller Lazarus Joseph. (Rather than getting involved personally, the mayor delegated his Jewish comptroller.) A few days later, Lerner and two other members

²S. L. Shneiderman, "To Memorialize the Six Million: The Monument Controversy", Congress Bi-Weekly, February, 1965.

³A. R. Lerner, "The Case of the Memorial", Unpublished manuscript, undated, files of YIVO, New York, p. 1.

were invited to visit Stuart Constable, Chief Designer of the Park Department. Constable told them Commissioner Moses had approved the proposal and would be glad to cooperate. At that meeting, Arthur Szyk, a member of the delegation, suggested that Jo Davidson would be the best sculptor for the project. (There is no record of why Davidson was chosen.)⁴

On April 18, Lerner received a letter from Moses which said:

"Frankly, I am not very sympathetic to the idea of another ETERNAL LIGHT [a light above the Torah ark in synagogues, which was how Lerner had described the proposed memorial to O'Dwyer]. I am sure, however, that you can find a suitable place in one of the parks for a fitting Memorial, if it is to be designed by a first-rate sculptor, assisted by a competent architect. I understand that you have been considering Jo Davidson as the sculptor - you could not find a better man. It is impossible for me to make any final decision on the Memorial, or its location, until I see models and plans of the Memorial. The Art Commission will undoubtedly make the same request."⁵

With Moses, who controlled the parks, lauding the committee's first choice of Davidson as the designer, the project seemed likely to go forward. As will be seen, however, Lerner and

⁴Ibid., p. 2.

⁵Ibid.

his committee did not seem to understand how to capitalize on their choice of Davidson and push the project through.

On April 27, 1947 "Eternal Light Monument in the City of New York in Memory of Six Million Jews of Europe" became a corporation. Lerner then invested time in trying to shore up what could have become the interest group angle of an iron triangle. He spent more than a year trying to get the support of all of the Jewish organizations, without success. "Individually nearly all the Jewish organizations made me believe that they were wholeheartedly for the project, but finally I came to the conclusion that all my efforts to bring them together for a unified action were in vain," he wrote. "I had several meetings with the representatives of the NCRAC [National Jewish Community Relations Council] member agencies who in general had expressed themselves in sympathy with the sentiment...but many of them felt that they were not directly concerned as organizations."⁶ This is evidence of the lack of interest of the established organized Jewish community in the subject of Holocaust memorialization at that time. As was stated in Chapter 3, NJCRAC did not place the topic on its agenda until 1973-1974, 26 years after Lerner sought their support.

Davidson wrote to Lerner on April 16, 1947 that he would prepare a model, putting "my heart and soul into the creation of this Monument." He said: "Such a monument would be a

⁶Ibid., p. 3.

symbol of the Unconquerable spirit of all freedom loving people, and a warning to tyranny that we shall not forget." Davidson and Constable chose the site in Riverside Park, between 83rd and 84th Streets. Edward Banfield's or other analyses of the politics of site selection do not apply here: According to Lerner's account, Davidson said he and Constable had seen an old bearded Jew standing on that spot in contemplation and decided it was ideal. On May 2, 1947, Lerner received a letter from Moses stating this site had his approval. He also granted permission for a dedication ceremony.⁷ The City, however, retained veto power over the design.⁸

At a May 20, 1947 meeting, the name of the organization Lerner created was changed from the Eternal Light Monument to the American Memorial to Six Million Jews of Europe, Inc. Two days later a certificate of the corporation's name change was filed with the New York State Secretary of State. Lerner was reelected president at this meeting. On May 28, at a meeting in Borough President Rogers's office, Lerner reported on plans for dedicating the Riverside Park site on October 19. Efforts to raise funds for the dedication almost ended in failure, until a wealthy acquaintance of Lerner's named I. Rogosin joined the group, pledged \$1000, and promised to get

⁷Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁸Wolf Von Eckhardt, Eric Mendelsohn, George Braziller, 1960, p. 30.

most of the rest of the necessary \$6000 from friends.⁹

On September 23, 1947, Moses wrote to Lerner: "You may be sure you will have the full cooperation of the Park Department." Lerner said: "I was very happy about this and felt a deep gratitude and love for [Moses]."¹⁰ Moses has been criticized for being an "anti-Semitic Jew" who did not even want to acknowledge his Jewishness. At this point, however, perhaps moved by the impact of Hitler's genocide of the Jews, he seemed genuinely interested in bringing a memorial to fruition.¹¹ Despite his expressed support, however, there is no record of Moses trying to push the project through (as he did with so many other projects he decided he wanted).

On October 19, 1947 a ceremony was held at the site, where a plaque (intended as a cornerstone) was dedicated. Soil from concentration camps and a proclamation from the Chief Rabbi of Palestine were among items placed in a box beneath the cornerstone. According to newspaper accounts, some 15,000 people attended the dedication ceremony. Lerner, then Chairman of the Memorial Executive Committee, was quoted in a September 17, 1947 press release that the memorial "would be a living American symbol of democracy and

⁹Lerner, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 11.

¹¹Moses's anti-Jewish attitude is documented in Robert A. Caro, The Power Broker, Vintage Books, 1975, pp. 411-412.

brotherhood, and would inspire the fulfillment of the world's obligations to those who survived the Nazi holocaust." As was stated in Chapter 2, Lerner had Zionist motives for dedicating the site right before the United Nations vote on the partition of Palestine. In his press release, Lerner seemed to be saying that the Holocaust was the reason the world (i.e., the United Nations) had the responsibility for creating a Zionist state.

The plaque in Riverside Park, surrounded by a metal fence, remains today, and says: "This is the site for the American memorial to the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto battle April-May 1943 and to the six million Jews of Europe martyred in the cause of human liberty." Lerner's statement and the plaque seem to balance the distinctively Jewish aspect of the Holocaust with a more universal message of "democracy and brotherhood" and "the cause of human liberty". In the political climate of the 1990s, when the ethnicity of groups is proudly displayed and Jews in the United States are less insecure about anti-Semitism, the statement that "the Jews of Europe died in the cause of human liberty" seems not only historically false but unfair to the victims. They did not "die" for "the cause of human liberty"; they were murdered in a rationally planned genocidal national policy, merely because they were Jews. The effort begun in 1946 never materialized beyond this plaque.

On November 26, 1947, the memorial committee met at the

Hotel Roosevelt. At that time Rogosin was elected Chairman of the Board and Lerner was appointed executive director, with a salary of \$600 a month. An Advisory Art Committee was set up, and a decision was made to launch a fund raising campaign to raise \$600,000. On March 11, 1948, the American Memorial to Six Million Jews of Europe, Inc. wrote to Jo Davidson, sculptor and Eli Jacques Kahn, architect, to confirm arrangements for construction of a monument in Riverside Park. Davidson was supposed to deliver a scale model no later than July 1 of that year, which then needed approvals from the Art Commission, Park Department, and Board of Directors of the American Memorial committee. Davidson was to receive a maximum of \$15,000, of which \$5000 was enclosed. Kahn was to render preliminary architectural and engineering services, for a maximum of \$5000. Subsequent stages were to be arranged after approvals of the scale model.¹²

In April, 1948, the campaign to raise \$600,000 for the memorial was announced in a local newspaper.¹³ Mayor O'Dwyer wrote to Lerner on July 26, 1948 that "your campaign to obtain funds to erect this monument has my wholehearted approval and I am confident that our liberty-loving and generous citizens will respond to your appeal." He added:

¹²Lerner, pp. 19-20.

¹³"Drive Underway for Riverside Drive Memorial", West Side News, April 1, 1948.

"This will not be a monument of bronze or concrete but rather a spiritual citadel inscribed: It shall not come to pass again!" Despite this glowing rhetoric, there is no evidence O'Dwyer helped with fund raising efforts or made any further commitment to the cause.

On October 20, 1948, a year after the Riverside Park ceremony, the American Memorial to Six Million Jews of Europe, Inc. organized a first anniversary ceremony at City Hall. Emphasizing the need for funds was clearly on the agenda, because Lerner said in his address: "With the encouragement of our great Mayor and of eminent leaders of our religious and cultural institutions I urge all of you to give us your continued financial and moral support to the end that the magnificent Memorial we are planning will rise before many months have passed."¹⁴

Models by Davidson and Eli Jacques Kahn went on exhibit at the Jewish Museum in November, 1948. Lerner said at that time, however, that the committee had asked other sculptors to submit models, and the committee had not yet made a decision.¹⁵ There is no further record, but this statement seems politically unwise, considering Moses's support of Davidson. Lerner seems to have lost his chance to have Moses as a staunch ally for the project. Davidson's original

¹⁴A. R. Lerner, Address, October 20, 1948, Archive of YIVO, New York.

¹⁵The New York Times, November 23, 1948, fragment of clipping in archives of YIVO, New York.

design depicted the April 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and he did at least the one scale model that was displayed.¹⁶ The memorial committee was not pleased that, after months, Davidson's model was no more detailed than "the same little figures which he had in November 1947". The artist, however, insisted that the model be submitted to the City Art Commission. The Art Commission rejected the Davidson design.¹⁷ There is no available record of the reasons for their rejection, nor of any lobbying attempt on the part of the memorial committee.

After this initial impasse, the memorial committee held a competition for design of a memorial. Artists that included Davidson, and also Eric Mendelsohn and Ivan Mestrovic, Percival Goodman, William Zorach, Leo Friedlander, and Chaim Gross, submitted proposals. Models were exhibited at the Jewish Museum in October, 1949, and at the Museum of Modern Art for one month in January, 1950. On June 17, 1951 the Art Commission unanimously backed the design by Mendelsohn and Yugoslav sculptor Mestrovic.¹⁸ On July 18 of that year, the American Memorial to Six Million Jews of Europe, Inc. announced approval by the Art Commission of this

¹⁶This is documented in press releases and news articles of that time; and in Wolf Von Eckhardt, Eric Mendelsohn, George Braziller, 1960; and in Bruno Zevi, Erich Mendelsohn, Rizzoli, 1985.

¹⁷Wolf Von Eckhardt, Eric Mendelsohn, George Braziller, 1960, p. 30.

¹⁸Shneiderman.

much more universal design. The sculpture was to be of an eighty-foot pylon of two tablets on which the Ten Commandments would be inscribed, a 100-foot wall of bas-relief depicting humankind's struggle to fulfill the Commandments, and a giant carving of Moses.

Although Lerner's committee had obtained a site from the City Park Commission, placed a cornerstone in a public ceremony attended by government officials and thousands of people, engaged a top rate architect-sculptor team, and received official approval of the City Art Commission, this first effort to create a major Holocaust memorial in New York City failed. The main reason for this failure was that the organized American Jewish community, and therefore, the government, did not have the subject of Holocaust memorialization on their agendas. Therefore there was no possibility of forming a strong interest group-government coalition to see the project through. According to S. L. Shneiderman, a journalist who was involved with the project, leaders of Jewish organizations urged at the time that any money raised in the American Jewish community should be used for rehabilitating survivors rather than creating a memorial, and this resulted in fund raising difficulties.¹⁹ If this is accurate, the organized Jewish community hindered, rather than encouraged, the effort to create the first Holocaust memorial in New York City.

¹⁹Ibid.

Lerner complained of always having to scrape for money. He expressed his "disappointment in not succeeding to move the leading Jewish civic and religious organization[s] to a unified participation in the project. Although the leaders of various religious groups of Jewish faiths joined as sponsors of the Memorial project, and also the leaders of various civic organizations became sponsors, I missed the active support of a number of leading civic Jewish organizations of which the attitude was rather aloof." In addition, he referred to disagreements within the committee, with Rogosin using a narrow base for fundraising and himself wanting a mass appeal.²⁰ He also said the contract with Davidson and Eli Jacques Kahn "became a source of the most distressing intrigues and quarrels, and has created situations which never ceased to threaten to destroy this whole project."²¹ Rebecca Read Shanor said the project failed because of lack of funds, but she did not elaborate on why the funds were not forthcoming from the organized Jewish community.²² The fact that memorialization of the Holocaust was not on the community's agenda is the main reason there was not a forceful private-public coalition on behalf of the project, nor successful fund raising efforts.

²⁰Lerner, pp. 16-17.

²¹Ibid., p. 19.

²²Rebecca Read Shanor, The City That Never Was, Viking, 1988, p. 219.

One reason the organized Jewish community did not aggressively support creation of a Holocaust memorial in the early 1950s was this was the time the Jewish Agency was negotiating with West Germany for reparation money for survivors of the Holocaust and for Israel. The community did not want to anger West Germany at a time when Israel was trying to extract hefty guilt payments. In March of 1951 Israel Prime Minister Ben-Gurion had submitted a claim to the four occupying powers of Germany--the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union--for \$1.5 billion, his price for Jewish property looted and burned by the Nazis. When the powers refused to deal with him and told him to deal directly with Germany, Ben-Gurion said he would do so. He then asked Jewish Agency Chairman Nahum Goldmann to negotiate with Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of West Germany, Goldmann was promised more than \$800,000,000. (There were also negotiations with East Germany, but no agreement was reached.)

Another reason the community may have been cautious about supporting a Holocaust memorial was the then pervading political climate of the Cold War. The old ally, the Soviet Union, was now the enemy, and the old enemy, Nazi Germany, was now the new ally, in the form of the Federal Republic, or West Germany. The United States was from the end of the war even secretly bringing into the United States known Nazi war criminals (e.g., through Project Paperclip) to get a

technological edge on the Soviet Union. In the paranoid climate of that time, the organized Jewish community was afraid an activity that was anti-Nazi, i.e., anti-German, could be construed as pro-Communist. They may also have been afraid a memorial would draw attention to the fact that so many resistance fighters and heroes had been Communists. This was not an atmosphere in which the conservative establishment Jewish organizations wanted to actively support and raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for a monument that would be both specifically Jewish and anti-German.

The organizations had reason to be cautious, because this was the era when Senator Joseph McCarthy began his infamous investigations of people he considered Communists, and many Jews were high on his list of targets. In March 22, 1947, Truman issued Executive Order 9835, which launched a program to search out "infiltration of disloyal persons" in the United States government. Between this time and the end of 1952, some 6.6 million people were investigated. Meanwhile, external events such as the 1948 Berlin blockade, the 1949 Communist victory in China and the Soviet Union's explosion of its first atomic bomb, and the 1950 beginning of the Korean War were portrayed as signs of an international Communist conspiracy. As Howard Zinn said, the Truman administration "established a climate of fear--a hysteria about Communism--which would steeply escalate the military budget and stimulate the economy with war-related orders.

This combination of policies would permit more aggressive actions abroad, more repressive actions at home."²³

McCarthyism made the Jewish community especially afraid, because it had a decidedly anti-Semitic element to it. By the summer of 1950, the prosecution of (Jewish) accused spies Ethel and Julius Rosenberg was a major component in the anti-Communist mood of the country; they were found guilty of espionage and executed on June 19, 1953. Naomi W. Cohen's history of the American Jewish Committee quotes a 1947 office memorandum of that organization which said: "For a number of years, anti-semitic activists have assiduously promoted the smear that Jews are Communists. They have found this to be the most effective line with which they were left, since the decline of organizational activity. The acceleration of the anti-Communist campaign has come as a windfall to them, and our reports indicate a steady procession of anti-semitic operators from their regular sphere of activity onto the bandwagon of the general anti-Communist movement." Cohen named Gerald L. K. Smith, Conde McGinley, and Upton Close as among these "hatemongers".²⁴

Many of those accused by McCarthy and others were Jewish, and Jewish organizations and individuals were thus

²³Howard Zinn, The Twentieth Century: A People's History, Harper and Row, New York, 1980, p. 128.

²⁴Naomi W. Cohen, Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906-1966, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1972, p. 346. See Chapter 13, pp. 345-382.

extremely sensitive to past and present accusations of "international conspiracy", Communist party membership, and disloyalty. Some major Jewish organizations bent over backward to prove their loyalty, even offering to sell out their suspect members. For example, in 1953 there was a letter of understanding between such organizations as the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish War Veterans and American Jewish Committee and the House Unamerican Activities Committee, in which the Jewish organizations offered to draw up dossiers for the Committee.²⁵

This was the political climate of the United States at the time that the group called the American Memorial to Six Million Jews of Europe, Inc. was trying to create a Holocaust memorial in Riverside Park. And New York City was one of the cities most affected by the Cold War and McCarthyism. It had a concentration of leftist, socialist, and Communist individuals and organizations, many of them Jewish. Although then Mayor O'Dwyer lent his support to the idea of the 1947 project, he would not have dreamed of initiating the creation of a Holocaust memorial or aggressively supporting one: this

²⁵"Part I: Open Letter to the Jewish People of the United States" by the Editors; "Part II: Memorandum of the ADL (July 3, 1953); "Part III: The Harap Testimony Before the Unamerican Activities Committee, Jewish Life, September 1953. Charles R. Allen, Jr., "A Talk with Velde Collaborators: An Interview that Reflects a Policy of Appeasement by Three Jewish 'Defense' Organizations toward the McCarthyite Danger to Democracy", Jewish Life, October, 1953, New York. Also, Naomi W. Cohen, Not Free to Desist, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1972, p. 354.

was not the time for gaining political advantages from intervening and placing such a memorial on a governmental agenda. The major American Jewish organizations, themselves, were not aggressively supporting the idea nor backing it financially. To the contrary, there is evidence they were opposed, as such a project would take away from fund raising efforts for Israel and for resettlement of Jewish refugees.²⁶

The Holocaust survivors, themselves, were in no mental or financial condition to organize the creation of a memorial in the decade following the war. Psychologically, it would take many years for some of them to begin talking about their experiences. (Some never were able to do so.) They were beginning new lives in a strange country with a different language--a feat that is difficult even without having suffered near death. In addition, as Elie Wiesel said, the survivors were considered "second class citizens" by the organized Jewish community at that time, and their leadership in such an effort would not have been well received by the community.²⁷ As new Americans, survivors were also "walking

²⁶Letter from A. R. Lerner to Emil Shneiderman, February 24, 1965. Memo from S. L. Shneiderman to Richard Cohen, American Jewish Congress, April 21, 1977 (about April 18 meeting). Memorandum from Victoria Free to Richard Cohen, "Notes from a press conference at the Jewish Community Relations Council-March 24, 1977", March 25, 1977. Archives of YIVO, New York (archival box filed under "American Memorial to Six Million Jews of Europe).

²⁷Wiesel interview, August 8, 1990.

on eggs" to show gratitude to their adopted country and to prove they had no connection with their countries of origin, most of which had become Soviet-bloc. They were looking forward rather than backward. (Survivors and survivor groups were involved in later efforts.)

A national fundraising drive for \$500,000 to finance the Riverside Park memorial was not announced until September, 1952, five years after the dedication ceremony. There has been no published history or analysis of why the project failed, and almost everyone active in this first attempt to create a Holocaust memorial is no longer alive. From the history of the project, the following factors emerge as components in the ultimate failure of the project: the Cold War political climate of the time; financial problems, lack of interest and other priorities in the organized Jewish community; the subsequent lack of political benefits for government officials; the psychological inability of survivors and other Jews to face the Holocaust; disagreements within the interest group seeking to create a memorial; and inability to raise sufficient funds. The combination of these factors made it impossible to form a political coalition that might have moved the project forward at that time. A coalition such as the **Mutagon**, which followed the initiation of Mayor Koch's 1981 project, was not even a gleam in anyone's eye.

The paranoia caused by the Cold War and connected fear

of anti-Semitism are likely reasons that statements the committee made about the project were not distinctively Jewish. The universal approach of the group sponsoring the memorial was underscored by Rabbi David de Sola Pool, a member of the Advisory Design Committee for the Memorial committee, who wrote: "The monument will seek to express, as only an artist can, the aspiration of man toward the moral law of a universal God and the ideal of brotherhood and love among men." While he said that the Nazi atrocities must not be forgotten, he added: "The memorial is not 'a strictly Jewish memorial.' It does, indeed, record the sacrifice of the six million Jews who lost their lives under Nazi rule. But the remembrance of them belongs to all men for whom nazism is repugnant and odious. Many Christians are associated with the memorial...."²⁸

After the failure of the first project in 1952, ten years elapsed before a new effort was mounted. Meanwhile, the Cold War continued, but the domestic political scene was changing. In 1954 the Supreme Court had struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine with the Brown v. Board of Education decision. Rosa Parks had sat down in the white section of a bus in Alabama in 1955 and had been arrested. This set off a boycott and other actions that resulted, in November, 1956, in the Supreme Court's outlawing segregation

²⁸D. De Sola Pool, letter to the editor, The New York Times, June 20, 1952.

on local bus lines. In 1960 the first Catholic in American history was elected President. By the summer of 1963, Martin Luther King had told 200,000 black and white Americans assembled in Washington, D.C., "I have a dream...." In August, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law.²⁹

Between 1962 and 1965, in this new atmosphere of civil rights demonstrations and legislation, and ethnic pluralism, there was a second attempt to create a major Holocaust memorial in Riverside Park. The new struggles for human rights for Blacks in the United States and the new climate of ethnicity may have consciously or unconsciously influenced this renewed effort to memorialize the violation of the human rights of Jews by the Nazis.

This next effort in Riverside Park was not by the same people as the 1947-1952 attempt. In fact, two different groups were trying to erect two different memorials in Riverside Park in the early 1960s, both designed by sculptor Nathan Rapoport. Some leaders of Holocaust survivor groups were involved in this second attempt, although the real emergence of survivors as a visible united group did not occur for almost twenty more years. (It might be possible to do a rational analysis of competing interest groups to explain why one memorial in Riverside Park was not enough at this point. However, the following classic Jewish joke

²⁹Zinn, pp. 152-162.

explains the situation better, by placing it in the irrational context of Jewish communal life: A Jew was shipwrecked on a desert island and build two mud huts. When he was rescued, he explained to his puzzled rescuers why he needed two of them. They were both synagogues, one of which he refused to enter.)

The first, broader based group consisted of Polish Holocaust survivors, the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO), with the backing of 34 Jewish organizations. This WAGRO effort, which was the stronger of the two, was headed by survivor Vladka Meed, representing WAGRO and the survivors, and Benjamin Gebiner of the Workmen's Circle. Using the WAGRO organization headed by her husband, Benjamin Meed, as her base, Vladka Meed, along with Gebiner, brought together a coalition of 34 major and mostly minor survivor organizations to create the Memorial Committee for the Six Million Jewish Martyrs and Heroes.³⁰ Rapoport's design for WAGRO, submitted to the group on October 13, 1964, was a Torah scroll, with bas reliefs of Holocaust episodes.

³⁰In addition to WAGRO, memorial sponsors were: American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish War Veterans, B'nai B'rith, Workmen's Circle, Farband-Labor Zionist Order, New York Board of Rabbis, National Council of Jewish Women, Bergen-Belsen Association, Club of Polish Jews, Jewish Nazi Victims of America, Federation of Polish Jews, Association of Yugoslav Jews, United Galician Jews of America, United Rumanian Jews of America, World Sephardi Federation, World Federation of Russian Jews, World Federation of Hungarian Jews, Danish-American Jewish Committee, Bulgarian Claims Committee, World Federation of Ukrainian Jews. (Files of WAGRO, New York City.)

According to the artist, "On this scroll is written in sculptural language the history of the Jews. It tells of martyrdom, fight and of liberation."³¹

On November 12, 1964, WAGRO and 25 representatives of Jewish organizations met with Mayor Robert F. Wagner and Parks Commissioner Newbold Lewis to request that a memorial be erected. As with Mayor O'Dwyer, a group approached the mayor; he did not intervene and approach the group. Besides the mayor, this group had already sought other political support in the State Legislature. New York State Senate Minority Leader Joseph Zaretzki accompanied them and spoke on their behalf. However, there is no further record of his involvement and the triangular political coalition never evolved.

Rapoport was present at the meeting with the mayor and gave him a photograph of the planned Torah scroll monument. At about the same time, WAGRO announced that pianist Artur Rubinstein would assume chairmanship of its memorial committee, the Memorial Committee for the Six Million Jewish Martyrs and Heroes.³² As is common for Jewish and other causes in New York City, a famous superstar had been enlisted to add glamor and gain publicity. This did not, however,

³¹Letter from Nathan Rapoport dated October 13, 1964, files of WAGRO, New York.

³²WAGRO translated reprint of articles in Yiddish Daily Forward, November 14, 1964 and The Day-Jewish Journal, November 15, 1964, files of WAGRO, New York.

give the group enough clout to carry out their project.

In December 1964 WAGRO retained Rapoport to create a sketch and scale model of the sculpture, based on earlier diagrams and illustrations. The clay scale model was to be completed in approximately three months, and payment was to be \$2000.³³ On January 19, 1965, WAGRO called a meeting at the Statler Hotel in New York, which was attended by almost 80 representatives of Jewish organizations and chaired by Dr. Joachim Prinz, president of American Jewish Congress. Prinz said the purpose of the meeting was "to create a broad organizational and moral basis for the efforts to erect the memorial". He pointed out there were memorials in Warsaw, Israel, Paris, Amsterdam and a new one in Philadelphia, but not in New York, the largest Jewish community in the world.

Vladka Meed, who spearheaded the project for WAGRO, reported on the group's warm reception by Mayor Wagner on November 13, 1964. She said the mayor had pledged his full support and reiterated the City's promise of the Riverside Drive site. There were, however, powerful opposing forces. She pointed out, that she was concerned about the position of the Commissioner of Parks, Newbold Morris. She reported that Morris had recently written to Rapoport and expressed his idea that "a public park is a place for enjoyment and recreation and not for exposing users of a park to the tragedy and horrors of one of the most dreadful chapters of

³³Agreement, files of WAGRO, New York.

human history". She said it was WAGRO's "unshaken belief" that the united Jewish organizations would be able to overcome these difficulties. (The major Jewish organizations were not, however, "united" in giving this project priority financial or political backing.)

At this meeting, Rapoport unveiled his model. It was to be two scrolls cast in concrete, 26 feet high and 40 feet wide. In addition to bas-reliefs representing the Holocaust, names of camps, ghettos, and sites of Jewish resistance would be inscribed. There would also be provision for an auditorium, museum and library. Thus, as early as 1964, the concept of a Holocaust memorial in New York City included a museum. The estimated cost was \$1,000,000 (which seems too low) and members of WAGRO pledged the first \$100,000.

The following resolution was adopted by the Conference:

"Representatives of 32 major Jewish organizations assembled on the 19th of January, 1965 at the Statler Hotel, New York City, express their full support and devotion to the idea of a proper Memorial for the Six Million Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust, in New York City. This resolution is subject to the ratification by the respective organizations.

"The Conference authorized Dr. Joachim Prinz and WAGRO to form a Steering Committee from among the organizations, and to present to the Steering Committee

a detailed program of further action."³⁴

The second proposal for a Holocaust memorial in Riverside Park in the early 1960s was sponsored by a much narrower-based group, the Artur Zygelboim Memorial Committee, supported by some Jewish labor groups. The Zygelboim committee's proposal, which had been commissioned in 1962, was a figure with outstretched arms, engulfed in flames and thorns. It was much more specific than Rapoport's design for WAGRO. This sculpture commemorated the heroic suicide of Zygelboim, a Jewish Bundist labor leader who was a member of the Polish parliament-in-exile in London. When he learned about the death camps and his family's fate in 1943, he killed himself to protest against the world's indifference to the mass destruction of Polish Jewry and the defeat of the Warsaw Ghetto fighters.³⁵

Vladka Meed's warning to the WAGRO meeting about the negative attitude of the Commissioner of Parks was soon to prove accurate. At the New York City Art Commission's January 28, 1965 meeting at the home of its president, Arnold Whitridge, the Commission unanimously rejected both of Rapoport's designs for Riverside Park.³⁶ The minutes show

³⁴"Conference of Jewish Organizations for the Memorial to the Six Million Martyrs and Heroes: Summary Report" [of January 19, 1965 meeting], files of WAGRO, New York.

³⁵Shneiderman.

³⁶The Art Commission consisted of seven members appointed by the Mayor and four ex-officio members. Of the appointees, there had to be one painter, one sculptor, one architect and

that submission 10894--Riverside Park, Manhattan, Warsaw Ghetto Monument Certificate 10803 (represented by Exhibits "2287-AV" and "AW") and submission 10895--Riverside Park, Manhattan, Zygelboim Memorial Certificate 10804 (represented by Exhibits "2287-AX" and "AY") were disapproved.³⁷

Eleanor Platt, a sculptor who was an Art Commission member, was a forceful opponent. She wrote to other Commission members before the meeting: "The [Zygelboim] figure is depicted in so tragic a posture that it does not seem to be appropriate for location on park land intended for recreation and relaxation. It does not seem to be desirable to confront children with sculpture of such distressing and horrifying significance, worthy as it might be in a more relevant place. I can reach no other conclusion than that a public park is not a proper place for it." She wrote that the Torah scroll sculpture was "excessively and unnecessarily large".

Platt also wrote that placement of either of the memorials "would set a highly regrettable precedent" because it might provide an opening for other "special groups" who

one landscape architect. The other three appointees were to have no connection with the fine arts. The Mayor was an ex-officio member.

³⁷Minutes, Special Meeting of New York City Art Commission, January 28, 1965, archives of YIVO, New York, archival box filed under "American Memorial to Six Million Jews of Europe, Inc." A copy of the original disapproval of the Zygelboim Memorial Certificate 10804 is in the archives of The Bund, Zygelboim biographical files, New York.

wanted to erect memorials on public land. She asked: "How would we answer other special groups who wanted to be similarly represented on public land? In an attempt to treat all equally we could well end up with a profusion of such memorials and become responsible for a progressive violation of the basic concepts for park land use."³⁸ An editorial in The New York Times supported the decisions of the Art Commission, on the basis that city parks are not the proper place for monuments. "Each new installation brings one more invasion of the open land that was carefully landscaped and preserved by men of vision as long as a century ago," the editorial said.³⁹

Dr. Emanuel Scherer of the Zygelboim committee protested and said his committee would continue to press for the statue. After the Art Commission's rejection, however, the Zygelboim group transferred their effort to the creation of a memorial in the New Mount Carmel Workmen's Circle Cemetery in Brooklyn, where Zygelboim's ashes had been brought from London and interred on September 24, 1961. (In April 1972, a memorial stone with a flame motif on top of it was unveiled there.) The statue that Rapoport had designed for the WAGRO committee ultimately found a home in Israel in 1971, at the apex of Martyrs' Forest in the Judean Hills near Jerusalem.

³⁸William E. Farrell, "City Rejects Park Memorials to Slain Jews", The New York Times, February 11, 1965, p. 1.

³⁹"Memorials in the Parks", editorial, The New York Times, February 13, 1965.

Mayor Wagner was sent a telegram of protest by the executive committee of Workmen's Circle, drafted at a special meeting. The telegram asked Wagner to intervene, reverse the Commission's decision, and "immediately to call a public hearing to determine whether the Municipal Arts Commission should not be reversed and censured."⁴⁰ Dr. Prinz, chairman of the steering committee for WAGRO and 34 other Jewish organizations supporting construction of the scroll sculpture, sent a telegram to Wagner expressing "profound shock" and urging the Mayor to intervene.

Rabbi Max Schenk, president of the New York Board of Rabbis, also sent a letter to the Mayor, referring to Platt's description of the memorial backers as a "special group". He said: "We Jews who live in New York do not consider ourselves a 'special group.' We happen to be almost three million inhabitants of this city of eight million, an integral part of the warp and woof of America's greatest community." The memorial steering committee met on February 15 at the Wellington Hotel to discuss their next step.⁴¹ This next step was a February 24 meeting of the steering committee, headed by Rabbi Harold H. Gordon of the New York Board of Rabbis, with Wagner.

Platt had really stepped on a sore toe when she called

⁴⁰Farrell, February 11, 1965.

⁴¹Farrell, "2 Jewish Leaders Protest Art Ban", The New York Times, February 12, 1965, p. 31.

the Holocaust memorial committees, i.e., the Jews of New York City, a "special group". They considered themselves an integral and influential part of the City's power structure. Therefore, they expected speedy and adequate intervention from Mayor Wagner to reverse the situation. The mayor's response, however, was typically weak. He issued a statement on March 6, 1965, in which he said:

"The distinguished committee with which I met is not committed to any particular design, nor any specific structure, nor any designated location. This is a project in which I, personally, have been deeply interested. As far back as 1947 my late father [U. S. Senator Robert F. Wagner] enthusiastically supported such a memorial and it was my honor to represent him when the plot of ground was dedicated for this purpose on Riverside Drive. I have also been one of the first sponsors of the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO) who initiated the present project.

"What happened during the Nazi period is unparalleled in the annals of mankind. The Six Million destroyed were part of all mankind. We fought a world war to defeat a government that made such horrors not only possible, but a reality. The world cannot afford to forget the Six Million. A memorial to these Six Million would serve to remind all of us of our share in the guilt of indifference and our responsibility to

prevent a repetition.

"All New Yorkers are proud of our varied population and the major faiths to which they adhere. While the representatives of one of the major faiths seek the funds to establish the memorial I believe that it is a project in which the entire community should - and would want to - share. The Committee has assured me that it has taken the responsibility for raising the funds for the memorial. Similar memorials have been erected in prominent places in Paris, Philadelphia and Warsaw. I can assure the distinguished Committee and my fellow citizens that the City of New York will provide the appropriate site for this very necessary memorial in a location readily accessible to millions of residents and visitors."⁴²

Wagner's weak reaction is evidence that once again a memorial committee did not have their political forces aligned and ready to move the project forward. Wagner clearly was not ready to take a stand and put himself in the forefront of efforts to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City. In making this statement, which never mentioned the unfavorable action of the Art Commission, Wagner promised the Steering Committee that the City would still provide a site. He made it clear that funding would be private and

⁴²Press Release, City of New York, Office of the Mayor, For Release: PM papers, March 6, 1965 and AM papers, March 7, 1965. Files of WAGRO, New York.

that a Holocaust memorial would be beneficial for the whole City and not only for the Jewish interest group that had approached him. He also made it clear that the location and design were both unspecified. Dr. Prinz, Steering Committee chairman, said the Mayor's statement was a confirmation "that a monument will be built in an appropriate and accessible place in our city." A spokesman for the Art Commission said the sponsors of the memorial would have to resubmit plans after a site had been agreed upon with the mayor.⁴³

On February 24, 1965, the same day the Steering Committee met with Wagner, Lerner, originator of the 1946 project, wrote from Rome to his colleague Shneiderman. Lerner had read in the international edition of The New York Times that new models for a memorial had been submitted to the Art Commission. Lerner asked Shneiderman to inform Dr. Prinz "of all details about the history of the [first] Memorial project and without waiting and struggling for a new approval by the Art Commission, he should go ahead with building of a monument based on the [Mestrovic-Mendelsohn] models already approved....Also, if I would have the documents that I left with you, I would write to Mayor Wagner and remind him that the model of Mestrovic and Mendelsohn has already been accepted and therefore there is no necessity for

⁴³Farrell, "Mayor Promises a Monument Site", The New York Times, March 7, 1965.

new models."⁴⁴ There is no further documentation of whether Lerner's idea was pursued.

Lerner also asked Shneiderman a pointed question in his 1965 letter: "I would be grateful if you inform me how it happened that suddenly the Jewish organizations became interested in the erection of the Memorial - when I struggled for seven years to get their help the answer I got was 'it is more important to care for the living'."⁴⁵ Lerner could not know then that this attitude had not yet changed and would continue to hinder efforts to create a Holocaust memorial for many years.

SUMMARY

Beginning in 1946 and again in the early 1960s, there were two unsuccessful attempts to create Holocaust memorials in Riverside Park in New York City. Neither project had a broad enough or strong coalition of political forces, and the respective mayors offered only a site and lip service. In the first case, the effort was really a "one man band" who created an interest group that was mostly on paper. At one point this group appeared to have the approval of both Mayor O'Dwyer and powerful Park Commissioner Robert Moses, which

⁴⁴Letter from Adolph R. Lerner to Emil (S.L.) Shneiderman, Rome, Italy, February 24, 1965. Archive of YIVO Research Institute, New York, file labeled "American Memorial to the Six Million Jews of Europe, Inc."

⁴⁵Ibid.

might have made successful implementation possible. However, the Art Commission, which the group did not court, rejected the project of Davidson, the artist favored by Moses. Although it then approved Mendelsohn's model, Lerner could not raise sufficient funds, his weak coalition fell apart, and the project did not move forward.

The second major attempt, in the 1960s, had a somewhat broader base of major Jewish organizations. At an early stage it also had the support of a leader of the State legislature, as well as the mayor. However, as in the first case, all of these political allies offered little more than lip service. This coalition, like the first one, was too weak and never took hold firmly enough for the interest group to achieve its goal. Again the project was vetoed by the Art Commission. Mayor Wagner refused to intervene and the project did not move forward.

In both cases, the issue of Holocaust memorialization was not on the agenda of the organized American Jewish community, and therefore the interest group was not powerful enough to rally the required political forces. As will be demonstrated, the issue became politically "hot" in the 1970s. This led to Mayor Koch's initiation of an alliance of political forces in 1981 to once again attempt to create a major Holocaust memorial in New York City. This changing alliance, or **Mutagon**, then remained at an impasse for more than ten years.

**CHAPTER 5: THE QUEST FOR A NEW YORK CITY HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL
CONTINUES: 1965-1974**

"The Six-Day War and other events of the sixties released the Holocaust genie from the bottle in which it had been trapped for over 20 years. But once the genie was out of the bottle, it could not be recaptured and stuffed back in...."

Aviva Cantor¹

In 1965 a new phase began in the history of attempts to create a major Holocaust memorial in New York City. Like the earlier projects, this cannot be analyzed as an iron triangle, issue network, or a Mutagon. The City government, i.e. the City Council president and mayor, did intervene for the first time, both in site selection and in design of a memorial. However, this was not cooperative intervention at the request of an interest group that had formed an alliance with the government. Nor was it a step that was intended to win the organized Jewish community's favor. In fact, the community's and the memorial committee's reactions were vehemently negative at one point. (Unlike Mayor Koch in 1981, then Mayors Robert F. Wagner and John Lindsay did not intervene to coopt the project and make it their own.)

The 1965-1974 time frame covered in this chapter was one of startling change in the organized American Jewish

¹Aviva Cantor, unpublished manuscript (p. 973), Jews and Relationships: A Feminist Analysis, Chapter 15--"Denying, Exploiting, Identifying with--And Doing Everything but Confronting--the Holocaust: Why American Jewry Became 'Holo-centric'", forthcoming, Harper, San Francisco, 1992.

community's interest in the subject of the Holocaust: At the beginning, in 1965, before the 1967 Six Day War, the Holocaust was still not on their agenda. At the end, after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the subject was getting hot, and for the first time commemorating the Holocaust had been officially placed on the community's agenda in 1973-1974 (see Chapter 3).

Meanwhile, the attempt to build a major Holocaust memorial in New York City went through a number of phases. Following the Art Commission's rejection of the Rapoport memorials and its aftermath, there was a brief and problematic interlude of government intervention by the City. First the City suggested and then reneged on a new location at Times Square. Then the City endorsed a new design for a memorial in yet another location, across from Lincoln Center, without consulting the Memorial Committee. The intervention became official and two-pronged on September 1, 1965 when Mayor Wagner supported the suggestion of City Council President Paul Screvane that Times Square replace Riverside Park as the site of the Holocaust memorial. Screvane had suggested a paved mall between 45th and 46th Streets, south of the mall with memorials to Father Duffy and George M. Cohan. Screvane said: "A suitable memorial, at the crossroads of the world, can be a constant reminder that unless each generation of Americans not only jealously safeguards, but enlarges, its inheritance of personal liberty

and dignity, a retrogression to bigotry, intolerance and human degradation can occur." (Ironically, nineteen years later The Wall Street Journal would suggest that George Klein, co-chairman of the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission and developer of Times Square through the Urban Development Corporation, build a Holocaust memorial there-- rather than in Battery Park City. If the journalist knew this early history of site selection, he did not mention it.²)

This was not a decision made as the result of an interest group-government alliance of any kind. Instead, it was a case of the mayor and City Council president telling an interest group what the government had decided without the group's request or even their input. Leaders of the Committee for the Memorial for the Six Million were reportedly pleased with the idea of locating a Holocaust memorial at Times Square in 1965, even though they had not participated in the decision-making process for the relocation. Rabbi Max Schenk, President of the New York Board of Rabbis, said: "We feel this is ideally located." Rabbi Harold Gordon, also with the Board of Rabbis, said the Committee was studying new sketches for submission to the Art Commission, and that the Committee expected to work closely with the Art Commission to get an idea of what kind of

²Raymond Sokolov, "Rm to Let. Landmark Bldg. 77,000 Sq. Ft.", The Wall Street Journal, October 3, 1984, p. 28.

memorial would be satisfactory.³ However, by November, 1965, the City had shifted the promised site to the northern end of Lincoln Square Park, across from Lincoln Center at Columbus Avenue and 65th Street. On November 23, the Committee wrote to Mayor Wagner and formally accepted this site.

Then, in December, for the first time, the City intervened in design selection, choosing Cain and Abel as a memorial theme without consulting the Committee. The Memorial Committee was appalled to learn that the City Art Commission had proposed a design for the Lincoln Square Park site, not approved by the Committee and deemed completely unsuitable. The Committee objected to both the theme of the design and the lack of participatory process. The interest group had not even been offered the opportunity for input or review.

The Committee met for three hours on December 30 to discuss the Art Commission's proposal. Dr. Joachim Prinz, Chairman of the Committee for the Six Million, told The New York Times after the meeting, "We are against the theme, not the art." The proposed memorial was a 30 foot high slab of granite or marble, on which would be a scene in bronze, depicting Cain slaying Abel (designed by sculptor Neil Easton). Objections by committee members were on the ground that Nazis were not brothers of the Jews, and that Cain's

³Martin Tolchin, "Times Square Memorial Urged", The New York Times, September 2, 1965.

murder of Abel was universal and not applicable. By saying they were not against the art, Prinz was clarifying that the Committee was not disputing the artistic quality of the design, but the subject matter.⁴

On December 30, Prinz released a statement that said: "The design proposed by the City Art Commission as a memorial to the Jewish victims of Nazi murder was never approved by the Committee for the Six Million. This Committee represents thirty-four national and local Jewish organizations that have joined hands in the effort to erect a fitting monument to the Jewish martyrs of 1933-45. The cost will be borne entirely by the Committee. The campaign for the erection of such a memorial was originated by the Committee. It seems reasonable, therefore, that the City Art Commission should consult closely with the Committee for the Six Million, and that together a fitting tribute to be erected in this city be agreed upon jointly." The statement said many members organizations of the Committee had rejected the design and theme when the Art Commission released it to the press earlier in the month, and that the Committee planned to conduct an international design competition.⁵

After their rejection of the City Art Commission's Cain

⁴"Monument to Jews Scored at Meeting", The New York Times, December 31, 1965.

⁵"Statement Made by Dr. Joachim Prinz, Chairman of Committee for Six Million", December 30, 1965, files of WAGRO, New York.

and Abel motif for a Holocaust memorial near Lincoln Center in December 1965, the Committee to Commemorate the Six Million Jewish Martyrs more aggressively sought to create a Holocaust memorial at another site. There still was no alliance with the City government regarding a memorial. By March 16, 1966 Benjamin Gebiner, then acting chairman of the steering committee, said the committee was "wrestling with the Manhattan Borough President's office and the Parks Commissioner regarding a suitable location." These officials had feared the Lincoln Center location would obstruct traffic, and again wanted to change the site. The Committee, meanwhile, had decided the Riverside Park site was "hidden in the bushes", and they wanted a better, more prominent location.

Gebiner said he hoped to meet soon with Borough President Constance Baker Motley and Parks Commissioner Thomas Hoving or their representatives to resolve the question of a site. He added that afterward, there would be a design contest and a fund raising drive for the project. The committee also was planning a "memorial shrine" to house documents and artifacts. "We are in the initial stages of our project. But we are confident of struggling through these conflicts and achieving an appropriate memorial," Gebiner said.⁶ Gebiner, an attorney and officer of Workmen's

⁶Helen Sutton, "Memorial to Jews: Where and When?", New York Journal American, March 16, 1966, p. 46.

Circle, and Secretary Vladka Meed, a survivor representing the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO), wrote to the Art Commission on March 22, 1966. They said: "Our committee did not authorize any person or any group to submit in our behalf for your consideration any model for the erection of a monument commemorating the six million martyred Jews, annihilated during the Nazi period. We call to your attention that a sculptor's model for such a monument, on the theme of Cain-and-Abel, was rejected by our committee." The letter asked for cooperation in erecting an appropriate monument.⁷ This was late in the game to begin building political bridges.

In August, 1966, Vladka Meed and Gebiner wrote from the Committee to Commemorate the Six Million Jewish Martyrs to its affiliated organizations to bring them up to date. They seem to have made progress in forging alliances that would move the project forward. The letter announced that the Steering Committee had chosen from a number of possibilities suggested by the City an area in Battery Park. The letter said:

"During the last few months, we have been engaged in discussions with the New York Dept. of Parks, for a suitable site on which to erect our proposed memorial. We must state that Commissioner Thomas Hoving was most

⁷Letter dated March 26, 1966 from Benjamin A. Gebiner and Vladka Meed to the New York City Art Commission, files of WAGRO, New York.

cooperative and understanding.

"It was pointed out to us, that the previously assigned corner of Lincoln Center on 66th Street and Columbus Avenue, is a very small and noisy triangle with heavy traffic; a danger to any public gathering and unsuitable for a memorial.

"We also met with Borough President Motley. The Battery Park site was her suggestion.

"The several sites available in New York were considered by the Steering Committee at a series of meetings before the choice was made of Battery Park, on the basis of its unique historic significance and because it looks out on the Statue of Liberty and is visited daily by thousands of tourists and New Yorkers."⁸

Almost the same wording as the last paragraph was used, some twenty years later, to encourage acceptance of and then to describe the site of the Living Memorial to the Holocaust-Museum of Jewish Heritage, which the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission was planning at adjacent Battery Park City in the 1980s and early 1990s. Like the earlier attempts to create a major Holocaust memorial in New York City, the effort begun in 1965 failed. The history of these failed

⁸Letter from Benjamin Gebiner, "Chairman pro. tem." and Vladka Meed, "Sec'y pro. tem." to "Dear Friend", August 1966, stationery of Committee to Commemorate the Six Million Jewish Martyrs, files of WAGRO, New York.

projects documented and analyzed here is the pre-history of Mayor Koch's coopting the idea of Holocaust memorialization in 1981.

Gebiner and Meed's August 1966 letter (op. cit.) advised participating organizations that the Committee to Commemorate the Six Million Jewish Martyrs was organizing its own art committee of "prominent citizens". Rabbi Moshe Davidowitch, Chairman of the National Council of Art in Jewish life, was to be coordinator of the art committee, and David Lloyd Kreeger, a Washington attorney, Jewish community leader, and arts patron, was to be chairman. This was a belated but smart move: the Committee was actively asserting its own expertise in the selection process for a design, by appointing leaders whose art credentials would impress the City Art Commission. In the same letter, Leon Joelson, "prominent industrialist" was named as chairman of a new financial committee and participating organizations were reminded to pay their dues of \$100 for administrative purposes.⁹ The fact that both Kreeger and Joelson were prominent and wealthy should have helped the Committee's prestige, giving it more clout with both the organized Jewish community and elected officials.

While the participation of Kreeger and Joelson did not lead to successful implementation, after they became involved the Committee did have more say in the decision-

⁹Ibid.

making process. (This may have been coincidental.) On October 13, 1966, Arthur Rosenblatt, design consultant to Parks Commissioner Hoving (under Mayor Lindsay), sent Gebiner a map of the suggested site for a monument. "I think the site is a proper one as it is also adjacent to the Emma Lazarus memorial tablet, and I suggest your committee consider it," he wrote.¹⁰ Following a reply from Gebiner, on November 21, 1966, Rosenblatt sent him a letter of agreement on the site. He enclosed a site plan of Battery Park marking the exact limits of the site, and asked for a meeting to discuss the choice of an architect and sculptor, and the method of financing the project. He reminded Gebiner the total cost, as well as perpetual maintenance, would be borne by the Committee.¹¹

On February 18, 1967, the Committee issued a press release announcing Kreeger's chairmanship of the art committee, which consisted of seventeen architects, art historians, museum curators and others prominent in the art field.¹² According to the press release, this committee

¹⁰Letter from Arthur Rosenblatt to Benjamin A. Gebiner, October 13, 1966, files of WAGRO, New York.

¹¹Letter from Rosenblatt to Gebiner, November 21, 1966, files of WAGRO, New York.

¹²Members of the Art Committee were: Harry N. Abrams, publisher of art books; H. Harvard Arnason, vice president of the Guggenheim Museum; Thomas S. Buechner, director of the Brooklyn Museum; David Finn, president of the Jewish Museum; Rene d'Harnoncourt, director of the Museum of Modern Art; Emily Genauer, art critic for the New York World Journal Tribune; Bruce Glaser, director of Gallery of Israeli Art;

would commission the design of the memorial, in consultation with "leading Jewish historians and religious and cultural personalities". The press release also announced an educational and fund-raising campaign "to gather support for whatever proposal is finally approved". Kreeger was quoted that New York, "the world's political, business, and cultural center, with the largest Jewish population in the world, will at last have a suitable memorial for our generation and future generations."¹³

Records of this effort indicate it was much more sophisticated and organized than the former ones, more savvy in public relations, dealing with government officials, and raising money. However, an event intervened that changed the project's prospects for success: the June 1967 Six Day War. Pressman and Wildavsky would call this a "diversion" in the "decision path".¹⁴ Thus the very event that nearly every scholar credits with creating an atmosphere that made the

Percival Goodman, architect; Robert Hale, retired from the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Dan Hunter, director of the Jewish Museum; Philip Johnson, architect; Louis I. Kahn, architect; Sherman E. Lee, director of the Cleveland Museum of Art; Abram Lerner, curator of the Hirshorn Collection; Thomas M. Messer, director of the Guggenheim Museum, Charles Parkhurst, director of the Baltimore Museum of Art; Meyer Schapiro, professor at Columbia University (and, at that time, at the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University).

¹³Press release, February 18, 1967, files of WAGRO, New York.

¹⁴Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, Implementation (Second, expanded edition), University of California Press, 1979, p. xix.

idea of Holocaust memorialization possible in the United States also took away the potential funding to make such memorialization possible at that time. Under the direction of the United Jewish Appeal, a massive fund raising effort was mounted, with an emergency campaign to support Israel during and after the war. In the wake of such crucial financial needs for living Jews, the idea of a monument to dead Jews seemed frivolous to Jewish communal leaders. The Six Day War raised consciousness of the Holocaust, but this new consciousness encouraged the organized Jewish community and individual American Jews to give money to support Israel--not to give money to a project that memorialized the Holocaust.

Despite the dry financial prospects for its project, the Memorial Committee carried on its business throughout 1967-1968. A meeting was called for December 27, 1967 at the Wellington Hotel, at which architect Louis Kahn of Philadelphia presented his design for a memorial to the participating organizations. With the Kreeger connection the Committee was able to interest this important sculptor. (At some time in 1967, the umbrella group's name on the letterhead changed from "Committee to Commemorate the Six Million Jewish Martyrs" to "Memorial to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs, Inc." This was only to make the language of the name smoother, and not a reflection of any substantive

change in the committee.¹⁵⁾ Department of Parks Commissioner August Heckscher wrote to Gebiner on March 22, 1968, formally advising him of the department's approval to erect a monument in Battery Park. His letter referred to an informal presentation that Kahn had already made to the Municipal Art Commission.¹⁶

On the same date, Gebiner and Vladka Meed wrote to representatives of participating organizations, informing them that Kahn's model had been delivered to Heckscher and to the New York City Art Commission for approval. A meeting was called for April 10, 1968 at the Wellington Hotel, "at which time detailed reports will be rendered about our accomplishments up to now and plans for the future will be made." The letter said that final arrangements would be discussed for a ground breaking ceremony to be held at Battery Park on April 21. The ground breaking was later announced for May 5, 1968.¹⁷

This time the Committee had made a conscious effort to win the required government approvals. The decision to use Kahn as the designer was not only aesthetic but political, according to Vladka Meed. She said the Kahn abstraction did

¹⁵Interview with Vladka Meed, May 7, 1990, New York.

¹⁶Letter from August Heckscher to Benjamin A. Gebiner, March 22, 1968, files of WAGRO, New York.

¹⁷"Dear Friends" letter dated March 22, 1968 signed by Gebiner and Meed, and "Dear Member" undated and unsigned letter, files of WAGRO, New York.

not satisfy all of the survivors, some of whom wanted something more graphic. But with the famous name of Kahn and the abstraction, the committee thought they would have a better chance of getting through the City Art Commission. They therefore decided to go ahead with it.¹⁸ (It is important to remember that the Art Commission had approved the Mestrovic-Mendelsohn design for Riverside Park in 1951, and this project was never carried out. Approval of the Art Commission was not a guarantee for successful completion of a memorial.)

The memorial was formally approved by the City Art Commission in March 1968, and by October of that year, a six-foot scale model was on display at the Museum of Modern Art. (The project architect for the Kahn design was Marshall Meyers of Philadelphia.) A museum press release described the design as follows: "It consists of seven glass piers each 10' square and 11' high placed on a 66' square granite pedestal. The center pier has been given the character of a small chapel into which people may enter. The walls of the chapel will be inscribed. The six piers around the center, all of equal dimensions, are blank." The minimalist design of the proposed memorial prefigures Maya Ying Lin's Vietnam memorial in Washington, D.C. Architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable characterized the design as "beautiful, and chilling". She said: "There is about it a silent, almost

¹⁸Vladka Meed interview.

frozen formality, a crystalline sense of the eternal emptiness of death....This is architecture and, at the same time, sculpture, and it is symbolism of the highest order, timeless and contemporary."¹⁹

This new committee was operating in a political climate quite unlike that of the original 1947 attempt--a climate that should have nurtured the concept of a Holocaust memorial. Civil rights and anti-Vietnam protests reverberated throughout the country during the 1960s. The My Lai massacre on March 16, 1968 (which, on a smaller scale, was not unlike such Nazi massacres as Babi Yar or Ponar) may have increased at least subliminal consciousness of the Holocaust. In addition to civil rights and Vietnam movements, there were other groups standing up for their rights, e.g., a women's movement, a prisoners' movement, an Indian movement. As Howard Zinn said of this era: "There was a general revolt against oppressive, artificial, previously unquestioned ways of living. It touched every aspect of personal life: childbirth, childhood, love, sex, marriage, dress, music, art, sports, language, food, housing, religion, literature, death, schools."²⁰ These movements, particularly those bringing ethnicity to the forefront of American consciousness, should have provided fertile ground

¹⁹Ada Louise Huxtable, "Plan for Jewish Martyrs' Monument Here Unveiled", The New York Times, October 17, 1968.

²⁰Howard Zinn, The Twentieth Century: A People's History, Harper and Row, New York, 1980, p. 237.

for creation of a memorial which could be described as a manifestation of Jewish ethnicity in the United States.

Within this political mood of movements, ethnicity, and struggles to understand unnecessary killings in Vietnam, the Art Commission approved the design of the Committee to Commemorate the Six Million Jewish Martyrs in March, 1968. The leaders of this effort to create a Holocaust memorial do not recall making any connections between the civil rights struggles and revelations of war horrors of the time and their own project, nor do their limited available records provide any evidence. Gebiner said the upheavals of the 1960s had nothing to do with the committee's work.²¹ However, these crucial issues of that time, which affected both the consciousness and consciences of Americans in general, could not have been absent from the minds of the committee members.

Copies of correspondence show that the effort was organized as follows: A committee of participating Jewish organizations was nominally behind the effort, including major national organizations, survivor groups, and the New York Board of Rabbis. Twenty-eight organizations are listed on the letterhead, whereas the 1947 letterhead listed only individuals. The return address of the Memorial to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs, Inc. is that of American Jewish

²¹Benjamin A. Gebiner, interview, April 26, 1990, Bayside, New York.

Committee, which demonstrates that this memorial committee, unlike the one in the 1940s-50s, was linked to major Jewish organizations. However, this appearance of a broad and unified interest group of major Jewish organizations was more window dressing than reality. Correspondence reveals that crucial decisions were made by the Steering Committee, mainly by Gebiner (representing Workmen's Circle) and Vladka Meed (representing WAGRO and, from 1968, the Jewish Labor Committee), with strongest secondary support from American Jewish Committee and American Jewish Congress. As documented above, the other components of the "broad base" of participating organizations received such news as site selection as a fait accompli.

The theme of the memorial was described by Art Committee Chairman Kreeger in a letter to Kahn: "The monument is envisioned as one which will reflect and evoke the emotional, psychological, and historical impact of the tragedy of the period....It should also deal with man's struggle to retain his dignity under the most horrendous of circumstances, and express hope for a better future, where man will not merely survive but prevail."²² The theme thus was to be both particularistic and universal.

The cost of the memorial was projected to be at least \$1,300,000, but the dedication ceremony originally scheduled

²²Rebecca Read Shanor, The City That Never Was, Viking, 1988, p. 219.

for April 1968 never took place. Asked why, Gebiner said: "We were confronted with a terrific budget....it pertained to the question of raising millions of dollars. And it didn't move." He said that not only did the New York Jewish community never succeed in voluntary efforts to raise the money needed for creation of a monument here, but that it was also the fault of the Holocaust survivors living here. "I also accuse the survivors who had among them many people of great means who talked a lot about monuments and the Holocaust, but when it came to brass tacks there was no response," he said. "And it began to peter out little by little and that's all."

Gebiner's analysis is not fair to the survivors he accused, because the memorial was not their responsibility, but that of the organized Jewish community. They were only a small part of the community, and there were non-survivors with equal or greater wealth who contributed substantially to other Jewish causes but not to this one. The most significant reason for failure to raise funds was probably, as already stated, the Six Day War. Gebiner said something else, however, that was more to the point: "Every major organization that participated in this committee had their own problems for raising money for their own causes and own organization." This statement highlights two problems: 1. It was extremely difficult for a new organization to come on the scene and raise funds for a new cause, in competition

with the highly structured Jewish communal organizations that were already in place. 2. These organizations, although they put their names on a letterhead, had other priorities for which they were already raising funds. Gebiner singled out American Jewish Committee as the only organization that contributed a considerable amount of money to the memorial, but all they paid was part of Kahn's fee of some \$17,000. The reasons the memorial failed, he said, were lack of money, self-sacrifice and devotion.²³ To put it another way, it failed because the interest group behind it was very narrow and the major Jewish organizations had no real commitment to push for it. Without the backing of the organized Jewish community, it held no political value for elected officials, and it was therefore difficult for the small interest group to build a public-private coalition for successful implementation.

Insufficient funding was clearly a major issue. On October 23, 1968, Jerry Goodman, then of the American Jewish Committee, reported to Bertram Gold, the organization's Executive Vice President, on a small meeting of Memorial Committee members. Raising the necessary \$1.5 million had been discussed, and an appeal for large gifts had been suggested (with a small number of people underwriting the entire project). This would be supplemented by a public

²³Gebiner interview.

subscription campaign.²⁴ Soon afterward, Kahn presented the Memorial Committee with his bill, for a total of \$17,687.93, some of which had been owed to him for more than a year.²⁵

Kreeger wrote from Washington to Gebiner on December 3, 1968 of his embarrassment at the delay in paying Kahn's bill. He urged that each of the constituent organizations contribute from \$500 to \$2500 in the next two weeks, and he suggested that a chairman should be selected "who has been active in Jewish and philanthropic affairs in the New York area."²⁶ His suggestions were not followed.

By July 18, 1969 not much had happened in the fund raising area. Goodman wrote to Kreeger on that date about a meeting of "some of the national [Jewish] agencies involved, or interested". He said: "At that meeting the problem was put squarely on the agenda and while several ideas were analyzed, the most concrete proposal was made by Bert Gold. While it is very tentative, he has succeeded in interesting a few leaders of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies in New York to discuss the project and see if it can be connected to their work, and their fund-raising. At the

²⁴Memorandum from Jerry Goodman to Bertram Gold, October 23, 1968, Records Room of American Jewish Committee, New York.

²⁵Bill from Louis I. Kahn to Committee to Commemorate the Six Million Jewish Martyrs, November 6, 1968, Records Room of American Jewish Committee, New York.

²⁶Letter from Kreeger to Gebiner, December 3, 1968, Record Room of American Jewish Committee, New York.

present stage there is no commitment, merely a willingness to talk....At the same time, Ben Gebiner has been urged to secure money from several of the agencies to settle the short-range debt to Lou Kahn."²⁷

The idea of the Federation's involvement did not seem to get anywhere. The leaders of Federation would consider such a project competitive with their ongoing local programs and United Jewish Appeal commitments to Israel. As explained earlier, they used the Holocaust to fund raise for Israel and immigration, not to fund raise for a memorial. In June, 1971, Kreeger and the American Jewish Committee were still corresponding about where to find the relatively small amount of money for Kahn. Between May and November of 1971, Gold wrote to all of the major American Jewish organizations, asking for contributions to the memorial, especially to pay Kahn. In the end, he received some money from them, and American Jewish Committee paid the rest of the money due.

By December 16, 1971, Kahn had finally been paid and the Memorial Committee tried to go forward. At a meeting that night, a fund raising campaign task force was set up under Julius Schatz of American Jewish Congress. Schatz reported that someone connected with the Bergen-Belsen survivors had pledged \$25,000 and WAGRO had promised to match this. The Farband had committed themselves to a campaign to raise

²⁷Letter from Goodman to Kreeger, July 18, 1969, Records Room of American Jewish Committee, New York.

\$50,000, and The Forward Yiddish newspaper had committed itself to a fund raising campaign. The major Jewish organizations, none of which had made a commitment, would be "approached for a financial commitment". The projected date for completion was April 1973, the 30th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.²⁸

All of this scrambling for funds never produced the necessary financial backing, because the major American Jewish organizations had other priorities and never gave the idea of a Holocaust memorial the necessary funding. The small amounts promised by the smaller groups mentioned above could not get the job done. According to Gebiner, Israel was always the first priority, and the memorial could not compete for financial attention.

Vladka Meed concurred that Israel was the first priority. She said: "The momentum for the Kahn project ended with the 1967 war emergency campaign. Then we started again, and again there was an emergency in 1973." She did not, however, blame the major Jewish organizations for the project's failure. "You can't accuse the organizations," she said. "To create such a project, you need individuals with money. You need a group of dedicated people with financial resources to complete the project." (A survivor herself, she did not say, as Gebiner did, that those individuals should be

²⁸Memorandum from David Geller to Bertram Gold, December 17, 1971, Records Room of American Jewish Committee, New York.

survivors.) Meed also pointed out that the project had not really gotten underway before the emergency of the Six Day War. "When the Jewish community faced other priorities and the construction of the memorial hadn't really started, there were emergency campaigns and none of the national organizations were able to undertake financing the memorial," she said.

Even while the meager fund raising efforts continued until the end of 1971, Gebiner and Vladka Meed had already written to Mayor John Lindsay on May 18, 1971 thanking him for his cooperation but calling a halt to their activities. They wrote:

"At this moment, the American Jewish community is confronted with the responsibility of standing by the side of Israel and Soviet Jewry, and is rendering every possible assistance to insure their survival. It is incumbent upon us, therefore, to desist at present from any other major fund raising. We are sure that you understand our attitude and the responsibility on our part.

"We are, therefore, asking that the City of New York, and you as the mayor, publicly announce that this site will be reserved for the above project, so that at a future date, when the crises are lifted, and hopefully it will be soon, we can resume our sacred work to create a remembrance and a reminder that our six million Jews

did not die in vain."²⁹

Ten days later, Marvin Schick, Assistant to the Mayor for Intergroup Relations, replied to Gebiner and Vladka Meed: "As your letter indicates the Mayor believes that Battery Park is a suitable site for the Memorial. In view of your decision not to proceed right now with the project, we believe that it would not serve any purpose for the Mayor to make a public statement now." He said the Mayor had asked him to be available to meet with them about "this noble endeavor which is so much needed to remind our people of what happened a generation ago and also to teach them of the evil that can result from group hatred."³⁰

Mayor Lindsay clearly did not want to make a public statement in support of a moribund project, and he had assigned his liaison to the organized Jewish community to smooth things over for him. At that time the strong support of a Holocaust memorial would not have given him much credit with the organized Jewish community. When Schick was questioned about the episode (for this study) in 1990, he either could not or did not want to remember details.

Thus, in the era of movements, the movement to memorialize the Holocaust did not succeed. Gebiner, Vladka

²⁹Letter from Benjamin A. Gebiner and Vladka Meed to Mayor John V. Lindsay, May 18, 1971, files of WAGRO, New York.

³⁰Letter from Marvin Schick to Benjamin A. Gebiner and Vladka Meed, May 28, 1971, files of WAGRO, New York.

Meed and others active on the committee stated in interviews that the June 1967 Six Day War, and then the 1973 Yom Kippur War, interrupted the project, because many committee members and the major Jewish organizations felt all fundraising should instead be directed toward Israel's needs. They did not seem angry or bitter about past failures, and were looking forward to the completion in the 1990s of Holocaust memorials in Washington, D.C. and New York City.

Julius Schatz, who was involved with the memorialization effort in the 1960s (representing American Jewish Congress), was one of those who mentioned the Six Day War as a prime reason fundraising efforts for the memorial failed. He also recalls that there were continuous heated discussions about a monument versus a museum. Finally, there was an agreement to "go for whatever was possible in terms of money." At that point the money situation required a monument rather than a museum.³¹

An undated and unsigned draft in Vladka Meed's files, which seems to be written in 1973-74 and addressed to representatives of participating organizations, recommended that fund raising cease. The letter said:

"For the past year and a half, our committee has endeavored to launch a fund raising campaign for \$1,000,000 to construct the monument. What has

³¹Telephone interview with Julius Schatz, New York City, March 19, 1990.

happened? During these crucial months Israel has been attacked by the Arab world supported by the Soviet Union. Every dollar and every tangible support have been expended to keep Israel alive and to preserve the security of her 2 1/2 million people. America has been in the midst of a severe financial crisis, and a stock market which has been heading into a tailspin.

"In the face of these unforeseen crises, the steering committee for the Memorial for the 6,000,000 has unanimously recommended a suspension of the campaign to raise a million dollars for the monument. To do otherwise would be an interference with the massive efforts to ensure Israel's urgent requirements for defense and survival."

The draft also said:

"We favor at this time a decision to launch a more modest campaign to create a museum and center which would encourage research, exhibits, visitation and remembrance. We pledge to fulfill the sacred task of remembrance of our 6,000,000 martyrs and we further pledge that at such time when Israel's existence is ensured, we will then reactivate our campaign to build a monument in New York City worthy of the heroism and sacrifice of our 6,000,000."³²

A letter dated May 1974 may be the final version of the

³²Undated draft, Files of Vladka Meed, WAGRO, New York.

above draft. This letter addressed to "Dear Friend and Colleague" recapitulated the history of ten years of efforts, beginning with Nathan Rapoport's rejected design for Riverside Park in 1964. It said that a broad coalition of Jewish organizations had decided to pursue two goals: a suitable monument on a desirable site, and a memorial center for activities and programs related to the Holocaust. The Memorial Center committee failed because of the huge sum of money required. The Monument Committee had tried to raise \$1.5 million for the Kahn memorial in Battery Park. (This was not a "huge" sum, as the letter said. In fact, it was a small amount for a major piece of public art.)

"This necessitated the reorganization of the committee to create a new structure with professional staff and a major fund-raising campaign. There were numerous meetings with leaders of national Jewish agencies and unproductive searches for a campaign chairman and fund-raiser," the letter said. It mentioned the difficulty of raising even the \$17,000 owed to Kahn for his preliminary work, saying that only four organizations helped to pay it: American Jewish Committee, WAGRO, American Jewish Congress and ILGWU (International Ladies Garment Workers Union--which is not listed as a participating organization on the letterhead).

The letter went on: "With the worsening economic situation, cost estimated for the monument increased as inflation mounted. Israel's struggle for survival in recent

years (The Six Day War, War of Attrition, and Yom Kippur War) and the crisis of Soviet Jewry have further complicated our task by making it more difficult to raise funds." It also pointed out another setback: Louis Kahn had died on March 17, 1974.

Unlike the draft, the letter did not call for a suspension of the campaign to raise money for the memorial. Instead, it said the committee was stalemated. "We are unable to proceed further without the firm commitment and financial help of the organized Jewish community toward a monument or memorial center. Nevertheless, it is our hope that you will give serious thought to alternatives and arrive at practical ideas to help create a project which will memorialize the heroism and martyrdom of the Six Million in a dignified and meaningful manner." The letter was signed by the Executive Committee: Benjamin Gebiner, Chairman; Vladka Meed, Secretary; Julius Schatz, American Jewish Congress; David Geller, American Jewish Committee; and Joseph Mlotek, Workmen's Circle.³³

Schatz said that after the committee had given up on Battery park because of the lack of funds, they approached the Jewish Museum on Fifth Avenue, with architectural designs for a Holocaust library to be built on top of an addition to

³³Letter from Executive Committee of Memorial to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs, Inc. to representatives of participating organizations, May, 1974, files of WAGRO, New York.

the museum. The museum, or its parent organization, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, never acted on the proposal.³⁴ A memo dated June 13, 1972 in Vladka Meed's files verifies that the committee contacted Dr. Gerson Cohen, then Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, about this idea.³⁵ People connected with the Seminary said the idea was rejected because the Seminary wanted to remain an autonomous institution.

SUMMARY

During the years 1965-1974, the political climate of movements and ethnicity was ripe for the creation of a Holocaust memorial in New York. In 1965 Mayor Wagner and the City Council president intervened in the project to mandate site changes, and the Art Commission arbitrarily imposed a monument design without consulting the Memorial Committee. Neither the interest group nor the government entities tried to build a political coalition to get the job done. The Memorial Committee seemed not to know how to build political alliances to achieve their goal, and the City officials did not include the interest group in the decision-making process. After the Memorial Committee refused to accept the Art Commission's design in 1966, both the City government and the committee began acting more like an iron triangle. In an

³⁴Schatz interview.

³⁵Vladka Meed files, WAGRO, New York.

effort to win over City officials, the Memorial Committee named a blue ribbon art committee and contracted internationally famous sculptor Louis Kahn to design a memorial. Mayor Lindsay's Park Commissioner and the Manhattan Borough President both cooperated with the committee to find a suitable site, and the Art Commission accepted the Kahn design. However, memorialization of the Holocaust had not yet emerged as an important issue for the organized Jewish community and the interest group, which seemed impressive on paper, was in reality very narrow. When the 1967 Six Day War, and then the 1973 Yom Kippur War, got in the way of fund raising efforts, the committee itself decided to temporarily abandon the project. When Koch launched his political alliance to create a Holocaust memorial museum in 1981, he inherited a pre-history of this and earlier failed attempts.

CHAPTER 6: FINAL EFFORTS TO CREATE A HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL BEFORE MAYOR KOCH TAKES OVER THE IDEA: 1975-1978

"The days when people held their breath at the mention of the Holocaust are gone. As are the days when the dead elicited meditation rather than profanation." Elie Wiesel¹

When Mayor Edward I. Koch interceded in the issue of Holocaust memorialization and announced his Mayor's Task Force on the Holocaust in July, 1981, there was no interest group in New York City actively seeking to create a memorial. The Memorial to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs, Inc., the last such group, had dissolved itself three years earlier. Vladka Meed's and Benjamin Gebiner's May 1974 letter had not definitively killed the Memorial Committee, but on June 29, 1978 it was officially dead. On that date, the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO) wrote to the Memorial Committee (attention: Vladka Meed) saying that the work of the committee should end. The letter said:

"For years we have had the opportunity of working together with your committee trying to establish a permanent memorial in New York City. Unfortunately, we were not successful, although we know that honest and sincere attempts were made by your committee. As matters have developed lately, we know, an overall national committee will be created to establish a permanent memorial under the auspices of President

¹Elie Wiesel, A Jew Today, "A Plea for the Survivors" (1975), Vintage Books, 1979, New York, p. 241.

Carter. Therefore, we think, the work of the Memorial for the Six Million Jewish Martyrs should be concluded." The letter pointed out that WAGRO was one of the major contributors to the Memorial Committee, and requested that available funds be returned to WAGRO. It concluded that WAGRO was looking forward to working with Vladka Meed or the memorial committee to establish a permanent memorial in the United States.²

This letter from WAGRO is signed by Robert Born, Treasurer, and Hirsh Altusky, Executive Secretary. It could have been signed by Benjamin Meed, who is Vladka's husband and also president and founder of the organization. When WAGRO headed a coalition of Jewish organizations to try to create the rejected Rapoport memorial in Riverside Park, Vladka Meed was secretary of the project and was representing WAGRO. After 1968, she worked for the Jewish Labor Committee and considered that entity, rather than WAGRO, the Jewish organization with which she was most closely affiliated. Now WAGRO, as one of the participating organizations but no longer the spearheading one, is writing to her as executive secretary of the Memorial to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs, Inc. The illusion of the "broad base" of support has come full circle. While the major American Jewish organizations had given the project lip service, most of the real work was

²Letter from Robert Born and Hirsh Altusky of WAGRO to Vladka Meed of Memorial to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs, June 29, 1978, files of WAGRO, New York.

done by Vladka Meed and Gebiner, with Julius Schatz of American Jewish Congress and several staff members of American Jewish Committee the only representatives of major Jewish organizations who gave consistent support. American Jewish Committee was the major source of limited emergency money for the project. (See Chapter 5.)

It is significant that the 1978 letter ending the Memorial Committee indicates the idea of a major memorial in New York City was shelved because President Carter had announced his President's Commission on the Holocaust in 1978. The influence of the Federal project on the one in New York City will be analyzed in Chapter 7. It is important to note here, however, that in 1978 President Carter's intervention on a national level had an indirect effect on the effort to create a memorial in New York: it was the final death blow to an already dying project.

Before Carter's intercession in 1978, there were yet other Jewish community efforts to create a major Holocaust memorial in New York City during the 1970s. WAGRO itself (not the Memorial to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs, Inc.) tried to establish a Holocaust memorial in New York City at that time. An undated WAGRO memorandum, which is probably from 1975, says "it is high time that the city which is the home of the largest Jewish community in the world should have a permanent shrine and museum of the Holocaust to serve as a reminder to the world that the impossible and unspeakable

could happen again if we do not teach future generations of the horrors of the Nazi era." The memorandum proposes that a building being sold by New York City be acquired for this purpose. The building (parcel no. 18, section no. 1, block 197, lot 1) is located on the northeast corner of Lafayette and White Streets, and is a 3-story former firehouse, Engine Co. 31.

The memorandum wants to "involve in this project the entire Jewish community of New York. Above all, this museum should serve to present a warning to future generations that the atrocities of World War II must not be repeated against any people, regardless of race, color or creed." In the closing paragraph, "We appeal to all men of good will who sympathize with our objectives to lend us their support. We are urging the people of the City of New York and the entire Jewish community to help us realize this dream."³

By this time, in around 1975, commemorating the Holocaust was already on the agenda of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC). The 1973 Yom Kippur War had reinforced the Holocaust consciousness that emerged with the 1967 Six Day War. However, nothing ever developed regarding this proposal, according to WAGRO's files and WAGRO president Meed. Perhaps one important reason was that it was a narrow-based effort led by a survivors' group.

³Memorandum from WAGRO, undated, but reference to 30 years after Holocaust places it circa 1975, files of WAGRO, New York.

As Elie Wiesel said, until President Carter placed the issue of Holocaust memorialization on the agenda in 1978, the major Jewish organizations did not consider survivors an important interest group within the greater Jewish community.⁴

Meanwhile, WAGRO soon started yet another effort to obtain space for a Holocaust memorial center, at the New York Cultural Center at Columbus Circle (according to correspondence in their files). On December 9, 1976, Benjamin Meed wrote to Charles G. Bluhdorn, Chairman of the Board of Gulf and Western Industries. He congratulated him for buying the building and donating it to the City of New York, but expressed "sadness" that WAGRO was "undercut" from its own attempts to obtain the building. The letter said: "Within the last two months the abovementioned building was called to our attention [as a site for a Holocaust center] and we visited it several times. We met with Mr. John J. Rowan, Vice President of New York Urban Servicing Co., Inc. Meetings were held on several levels within the Jewish community to work out plans of purchasing and maintaining such an institution. Naturally, our basic obstacle was obtaining the necessary funds and we are afraid we missed a unique opportunity." Meed asked Bluhdorn to include "our

⁴Interview with Elie Wiesel, August 8, 1990, New York. Also see his A Jew Today, chapter entitled "A Plea for the Survivors" (written in 1975), Vintage Books, 1979, New York, pp. 218-247.

project of remembrance" in the cultural center. A copy of this letter was sent to Mayor Abraham D. Beame.⁵

Meed tried to form a political alliance with Mayor Beame to achieve his goal. He actively pursued the mayor to gain his ear and approval, but neither he nor his WAGRO group had enough power or influence to win the mayor's support. At that time, along with the copy of the letter to Bluhdorn, Meed sent Beame a letter with a "special appeal" to include WAGRO as a "participating group in the New York Cultural Center. I feel that if you agree in principle, the details should be worked out in conference." He requested a meeting with the Mayor or his representative, and with the Commissioner of Cultural Affairs.⁶

Michael Mehlman, then Administrative Officer for the Department of Cultural Affairs, answered Meed's letter on December 29, 1976. (The level of the respondent to WAGRO's letter to Beame is an indication the issue was not high on the mayor's agenda.) Mehlman said it was premature to make decisions about public use of the building at the present time, and that the interest of WAGRO would be considered in due time.⁷ (i.e., "Don't call us, we'll call you.") In

⁵Letter from Benjamin Meed, President, WAGRO, to Charles G. Bluhdorn, December 9, 1976, files of WAGRO, New York.

⁶Letter from Benjamin Meed to Mayor Abraham D. Beame, December 10, 1977, files of WAGRO, New York.

⁷Letter from Michael Mehlman to Benjamin Meed, December 29, 1976, files of WAGRO, New York.

response to a letter and phone call, Meed received another letter from the Department of Cultural Affairs on January 19, 1977, this time from Janet Langsam, Deputy Commissioner. She reiterated it would be difficult to then discuss programmatic uses of the building. She suggested: "There are, fortunately, many other attractive real estate opportunities in the City of New York which I am sure you can explore and I hope the fact that you were not successful in acquiring the New York Cultural Center will not dampen your enthusiasm for a most worthwhile endeavor."⁸ This was a polite "goodbye" to Meed from the Beame administration. (i.e., "Don't call us, and we won't call you.") The political alliance WAGRO sought with Beame at that time never got anywhere.

At around this time, a powerful new player arrived on the Jewish communal scene in New York City: the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York (JCRC). This umbrella and coordinating body was organized in 1975 and officially established in 1976. The lineup of players was a formidable list of New York City movers and shakers: The first president was Richard Ravitch, a developer who later became Chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and head of Koch's Charter Revision Commission. Real estate developer Jack Weiler was honorary president, and developer George Klein (who later would head Koch's Task

⁸Letter from Janet Langsam to Benjamin Meed, files of WAGRO, New York City.

Force on the Holocaust) was a vice president. Other vice presidents included Maxwell M. Raab, Daniel S. Shapiro, and Laurence A. Tisch. Irvin D. Husin was secretary and Irving Silverman was treasurer. Malcolm Hoenlein, a masterful political entrepreneur who went on to run the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, was the executive director.

The officially stated purpose of JCRC was "to serve as the central coordinating and resource body for the metropolitan area Jewish community. By 1990, as the umbrella agency for 62 major civic, communal, educational and religious organizations, the agenda of the JCRC was a catalogue of Jewish activities, issues and programs reflecting the concerns, needs and aspirations of the Jewish community of New York. The broad range of issues addressed by the JCRC include: Israel and international concerns, domestic and urban affairs, government relations, intergroup relations, anti-Semitism and discrimination, Jewish security and neighborhood stabilization."⁹

One of the unofficial, unstated purposes of JCRC was to serve as a power base for politically hungry Hoenlein and his wealthy and well-connected backers, who were, for the most part, developers. These developers who backed the founding of JCRC in 1976 became more powerful in the City after Koch

⁹Information sheet, Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, 1990.

won the mayoral election in 1977 and took office in 1978. After Koch took office, only three years after the height of New York City's 1975 financial crisis, he made deals and alliances with developers that made them one of the most influential groups of "movers and shakers" in the City. Most of these developers are Jewish, and were appointed by Koch to the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission when he created it in 1982.

One hallmark of the Koch administration was its giveaways to developers. Jim Sleeper describes the Koch era as one of "abdication of government's legitimate 'police powers' over burgeoning development" and "abandonment of any civic mission broader than what 'development' might define".¹⁰ Between the time the development boom began in 1981 and 1987, about 45 million square feet of new commercial space were built in Manhattan. The Koch administration made developers enormously wealthy and powerful by offering tax incentives (\$1.3 billion in 1981-87), zoning variances (e.g., greater building density and height in exchange for public amenities), and sale of City property to the highest bidders without regard for planning. Developers, in turn, were among the largest contributors to Koch's campaigns. For example, in 1985 half of the \$9 million in campaign gifts to Koch and the other members of the Board of Estimate (i.e., the

¹⁰Jim Sleeper, "Boom and Bust with Ed Koch", Dissent, A Special Issue: In Search of New York, Fall 1987, New York, p. 437.

Comptroller, City Council president, and five borough presidents) came from 175 donors, most of them developers, brokerage houses, and their attorneys.¹¹

One of the developers who backed the creation of Hoenlein's JCRC, its first vice president George Klein, soon emerged as an important force among developers in New York City. His office building at 59th Street and Park Avenue, begun in 1977, was the first new office building in New York City in five years (following the financial crisis of 1975). Hoenlein and Klein began seeking power in the Jewish community and influence in City Hall at around the same time, and found an open door after Koch was elected in 1977. Someone close to the situation said that Klein and Hoenlein "made each other" politically in New York's organized Jewish community.

The reciprocal close relationship between Klein and Hoenlein enabled them to help each other build a pyramid of power in the establishment organized Jewish community, and in their dealings with the Mayor's office. Klein became Koch's personal friend, and Herbert Rickman, Koch's liaison to the organized Jewish community, was also closely connected with Hoenlein and Klein. (Dahl's analysis of how a pyramid of power is created and reinforced applies here. See Chapter 8.)

¹¹Ibid., p. 448.

JCRC soon got into the act of creating a Holocaust memorial in New York City. At a March 24, 1977 press conference, JCRC president Ravitch listed among issues of concern for the Jewish community of New York a serious effort to commemorate the Holocaust. (JCRC was an affiliate of the NJCRAC community relations umbrella, which had been suggesting this since 1973-74 in its Joint Program Plan.) At that time, JCRC had 20 constituent member organizations and 50 others with applications pending. S. L. Shneiderman, who had worked on the 1947 Holocaust memorial ceremony in Riverside Park, was present at the press conference. He interjected at the press conference that he had archives on previous attempts to establish a Holocaust memorial, and "some of the organizations you [JCRC] represent killed it."¹²

On April 7, 1977, Ravitch sent letters to Shneiderman, Benjamin Meed and "a selected group of individuals" to meet in his home, 1021 Park Avenue, on Monday, April 18 to hear Gideon Hausner, chairman of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem (and prosecutor at the trial of Adolph Eichmann). The purpose of the meeting was to "discuss the conceptual framework and preparatory steps for initiating a 'living' [Holocaust] memorial." The letter also said:

¹²American Jewish Congress memorandum from Victoria Free to Richard Cohen, "Notes from a press conference at the Jewish Community Relations Council-March 24, 1977", March 25, 1977, Archive of YIVO, Files of American Memorial to Six Million Jews of Europe, Inc., New York.

"Over the past thirty years, numerous attempts have been made to create a proper memorial to the six million martyrs of World War II. For a variety of reasons, New York City remains the only major Jewish community in the world without a commemoration of the Holocaust. [This was an exaggeration for two reasons: New York was not the only one, and it was not without any commemoration.]

Recognizing the unique opportunity presented by the creation of the Jewish Community Relations Council and the fact that the passage of time mitigates against the possibility of this long sought dream becoming a reality, representatives of the Survivors' organizations and other concerned persons approached the JCRC to undertake this project.

The General Assembly of the JCRC authorized the President to appoint an organizing committee to explore the possibilities and develop plans."¹³

This meeting raises a number of questions: Which representatives of which survivor organizations had approached JCRC, or did JCRC, in fact, approach the survivors? Was JCRC's takeover of the project approved by the Committee to Commemorate the Six Million Jewish Martyrs, which did not officially cease functioning until a year later? Was JCRC stepping in to institutionalize the effort

¹³Letter from Richard Ravitch, JCRC, dated April 7, 1977 to Benjamin Meed (in WAGRO files) and to S. L. Shneiderman (in YIVO archive), New York.

and render powerless any potential attempts by smaller groups (such as WAGRO or the earlier Zygelboim committee)? Was JCRC, then a new umbrella group, using the issue of memorializing the Holocaust (which had then recently begun getting "hot") as a means of making itself more important in the Jewish community and with the City government? Was there already any informal discussion between JCRC and Edward I. Koch, who was to run for mayor that coming Fall?

No files, archives or interviews provided concrete answers. However, there is an unconfirmed report that when Koch ran for mayor for the first time in 1977, creation of a Holocaust memorial in New York City was on his laundry list of items of interest to the organized Jewish community. Manny Behar, who worked on the 1977 campaign, said he wrote this item into the campaign platform, but no evidence is available. Behar did not, however, remember any connection between the idea and JCRC's project.¹⁴ If Koch, in fact, did make mention of a Holocaust memorial in 1977, he then shelved the idea until 1981. Hoenlein (saying he did not remember) refused to discuss JCRC's early history regarding a Holocaust memorial, and the organization's files from 1977 were not accessible.

The presence of Hausner, chairman of Yad Vashem, at the Spring 1977 JCRC-sponsored meeting is an indication that

¹⁴Telephone discussion with Manny Behar, December 20, 1990.

Ravitch took the idea of a memorial seriously. Of all of the Holocaust memorials in the world, Yad Vashem Heroes and Martyrs Memorial Authority in Jerusalem is recognized as the memorial, complete with exhibitions, historical and art museums, archives, shrines and artifacts. Yad Vashem is a government museum, established by law in 1953 for the purpose of commemorating "the disaster and its heroism and to promote a custom of joint remembrance of the heroes and the victims." It is still the major Holocaust memorial, not only in Israel, but in the world. (Yad Vashem has been described as "second only to the western wall in its sacredness as a shrine of the Israeli civil religion. It is the place to which foreign dignitaries are taken to celebrate and solemnize their relationship to Israel by sharing its identification with the victims of the Holocaust. Yad Vashem is the major memorial to the Jews and Jewish communities destroyed in the Holocaust. It is maintained as a religious institution. Visitors are expected to cover their heads...."¹⁵)

Ravitch recalled that the subject of a memorial came up after one of the survivor groups joined the newly formed JCRC. (Based on the history of this issue, it is likely the group was WAGRC.) Ravitch agreed JCRC should do something in New York, and this led to the meeting in his apartment. "There was a city-owned site on 43rd Street and First

¹⁵Charles S. Leibman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, Civil Religion in Israel, University of California Press, 1983, p. 151.

Avenue," he said. "I remember that in a relatively compressed period of time I had an architect by the name of Davis, Brody do some sketches. I also had a meeting with Dr. [Yitzhak] Arad of Yad Vashem, and we got [Ernest] Michel very much involved. I even remember flying to Florida once with him to try to solicit a major contribution from a wealthy guy in Miami. We were on the verge of some very serious fund raising for this. All we wanted from the City was the conveyance of that property."¹⁶

Ernest Michel, a German Holocaust survivor who for many years headed Federation-UJA's fundraising operation in New York City, has been active until today in efforts to create a memorial. He is co-chairman of development of the current Commission. Ravitch was on Koch's original Task Force, but was not active on the issue after he became MTA director in 1981.

The timing of the meeting in Ravitch's home should have been conducive to the success of a Holocaust memorial project: On April 7, 1977, the very day Ravitch sent out invitations to the April 18 meeting, Yitzhak Rabin announced his resignation as the Prime Minister of Israel. On May 17, 1977 Menachem Begin's Likud Party became the largest party in the Israel Knesset, and Begin formed a cabinet in June. Begin, much more than the earlier Labor government, used Holocaust rhetoric to verify the existence of Israel and

¹⁶Richard Ravitch, interview, May 4, 1990, New York.

defend its policies. His election, combined with the 1961 Eichmann trial and the 1967 and 1973 wars, can be pointed to as a turning point in increased awareness of the Holocaust in the organized American Jewish community. Furthermore, Hoenlein, the JCRC director, was close to Begin's Likud Party. This combination of circumstances, however, was not enough to make the JCRC initiative successful.

Shneiderman, who attended the meeting in Ravitch's home, reported on it to Richard Cohen, then Public Relations Director of American Jewish Congress. Shneiderman had been invited as the correspondent for the Israeli newspaper Al Hamishmar and the New York Yiddish Jewish Daily Forward, but he also seems to have been "spying" for American Jewish Congress. He said the meeting was "devoted to a project of establishing a 'Living Memorial to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs.'" According to Shneiderman, there were about 30 people, including representatives of survivor groups and religious organizations, and "probably potential contributors to a fund of about 25 million dollars for the erection of a building, preferably in the vicinity of the United Nations." He said that Ravitch had outlined the project as an institute for research on the Holocaust, with archives, a library, a museum, exhibits, and auditoriums for lectures. Shneiderman added that, as far as he knew, there were no representatives of American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith or YIVO. (This information was important for American

Jewish Congress, which was, no doubt, keeping tabs on potential competing organizations.)

According to Shneiderman's report, the various participants at the meeting were seeking to protect their own "turf" and particular interests: Benjamin Meed, whose WAGRO ran yearly Holocaust commemorative services on Yom HaShoah (a day of Holocaust commemoration designated by the Israel government as the 22nd day of the Hebrew month of Nisan), suggested that the projected memorial have a meeting room for 30,000 people to house his commemoration. Eli Zborowski, a resistance group survivor who heads the International Society for Yad Vashem, suggested the new institution be called Friends of Yad Vashem. Both proposals were rejected. As Banfield said of civic controversies in Chicago, controversies arise "out of the maintenance and enhancement needs of large formal organizations. The heads of an organization see some advantage to be gained by changing the situation. They propose changes. Other large organizations are threatened. They oppose, and a civic controversy takes place."¹⁷ Like civic organizations, the major Jewish organizations have as one of their prime concerns their own "maintenance and enhancement", and their self-serving stances at this meeting reflect this.

¹⁷Edward C. Banfield, Political Influence, The Free Press of Glencoe, New York, 1961, p. 263.

Shneiderman wrote that Michel announced he was attending in a private capacity, as a survivor. When asked if UJA would directly support a fund raising initiative for a Holocaust memorial, Michel answered with a categorical "no", according to Shneiderman.¹⁸ (Michel said thirteen years later that he never had any negative reaction from Federation-UJA leadership about building a Holocaust memorial, and that some leaders of Federation-UJA have been major supporters of the current project.¹⁹ However, this is not the same as Federation's putting the issue on their agenda and making an allocation for it--something that was never done in New York City.)

Shneiderman also said in his report that completion of the 1947 monument was prevented by "active opposition" from the UJA and the Jewish Federation (then separate organizations). He added that Jewish Agency representatives had hinted Ben-Gurion was opposed in 1947, because a Holocaust memorial would hamper fund raising efforts for Israel. No empirical evidence to prove or disprove his allegations has been found. Shneiderman reported that when he told participants at the meeting the "painful" story of the Riverside Drive attempt in 1947, most of those present

¹⁸Memorandum to Richard Cohen, American Jewish Congress, from S. L. Shneiderman, "Living Memorial for 6 Million Jews", April 21, 1977, archive of Yivo Research Institute, file of American Memorial to Six Million European Jews, New York.

¹⁹Interview with Ernest Michel, May 8, 1990, New York City.

were "astonished". Ravitch announced at the end of the meeting that he would immediately open a bank account for the JCRC project, and hinted the first seed money would be a seven figure sum.²⁰

By the Fall of 1977, JCRC and its executive director, Hoenlein were clearly in the lead in efforts to establish a Holocaust memorial in New York. This was when Koch first ran for mayor and won, but no records or interviews substantiated any collaboration between him and JCRC on this issue at that time. On September 26, 1977, Ravitch wrote to Benjamin Meed as one of "a few key individuals" to come to a meeting in Michel's office to discuss the design and conceptual framework of a proposed Holocaust memorial. Ravitch would be reporting on developments of the past few weeks, "in hope that we can then develop plans to bring this to fruition." (The date of the meeting was inadvertently omitted from the letter.)

On November 6, 1977, Yitzhak Arad, Chairman of the Directorate of Yad Vashem, wrote to Hoenlein at JCRC, outlining how he thought JCRC should proceed with the memorial. Responding to a request by Ravitch, on December 12, 1977 John Zuccotti of the law firm of Tufo, Johnston, Zuccotti & Allegaert reported on the State and City regulations that would affect JCRC's proposal to build a Holocaust monument and museum. The proposed site was on

²⁰Ibid.

City-owned land at the southeast corner of First Avenue and Forty-second Street. In addition to outlining the complicated demapping and Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) processes, Zuccotti warned of organized opposition. He predicted this would come from the community, objecting to the loss of playground space, and from the United Nations, over loss of potential development space. (Kurt Waldheim, whose own Nazi past was later exposed, was then Secretary General.)

Zuccotti analyzed the situation with a keen understanding of the political implications of pursuing the project. He wrote to Ravitch: "In addition, the opposition may invoke the argument that the monument is a mere give-away of City land to a special interest group. Notwithstanding its lack of merit, the argument may have some impact on the relevant political actors. This is because they will be sensitive both to the suggestions of local ethnic or religious groups that the City provide them with land for some pet project, regardless of its merit, and to the constraints imposed on the City by the fiscal crisis. JCRC should take exceptional care, both in the land disposition agreement and in its public relations effort, to elaborate the importance of the monument to the intellectual and cultural life of the City and to its tourist industry, and to

articulate fully the value of the consideration being given for the land."²¹

Zucotti's political savvy is impressive. This is the first documentation of a Holocaust memorial committee in New York City's having a sense of the project's effect on other interest groups. This is not a case of worrying about anti-Semitic reactions, as in the 1946-1950s attempt. It is a case of being sensitive to the interests of competing groups--both those that would not want the memorial intruding in the neighborhood, and those who would want the City to give them the equal opportunity to build a memorial or similar project. Banfield's "maintenance and enhancement needs" again applies. JCRC was proposing changes which could threaten other large organizations. If they opposed, a civic controversy would take place.²² Zucotti was warning JCRC that they should try to avoid such a controversy.

The next month, Koch took office as mayor of the City of New York, and a new chapter was about to begin in the long, long saga of efforts to create a Holocaust memorial. At this point, however, the New York City story took a detour through Washington, D.C. Ravitch said that when he learned the President's Commission on the Holocaust was to be formed, and

²¹Letter from John E. Zuccotti to Richard Ravitch, December 12, 1977, Municipal Archive of the City of New York, Rickman files.

²²Banfield, p. 263.

then it began with Wiesel as chairman, he concluded it was "absolutely silly" to try to compete with a Presidential Commission dealing with this and planning a national memorial. "I thought we'd never raise the money in competition with what they were doing, and the project was sort of aborted," he said. "The last thing I remember is having a conversation with Elie Wiesel, and saying the symbolism of having the memorial across the street from the United Nations was overwhelming, and that's what I thought the Presidential Commission ought to recommend."²³ After this discussion with Wiesel (which must have been in 1978), Ravitch said JCRC dropped the idea of pursuing a Holocaust memorial. No empirical evidence indicates JCRC tried to make a political alliance with Mayor Koch after he took office in 1978, in order to carry the project forward.

Ravitch, however, was not the only New Yorker who thought the President's Commission on the Holocaust should recommend that the national memorial be in New York City. On September 29, 1978, Mayor Koch wrote to President Jimmy Carter, offering him full support for creation of a National Holocaust Memorial. Koch then asked Carter to consider locating the memorial in New York City. He enumerated the reasons this would be a good idea: Families of many New Yorkers were touched by the Holocaust and it would have an enthusiastic community; New York has the largest Jewish and

²³Ravitch interview.

survivor communities outside of Israel; most national Jewish organizations are headquartered in New York; New York is the diplomatic capital of the world; New York City has been known as a haven for the oppressed; New York City is an amalgam of many heritages.

"In short," Koch wrote, "a Holocaust Memorial located in New York City would not only serve as a reminder of the world's past indifference to human rights, but as a visible symbol of continuing efforts to protect and promote human dignity and rights." Then, with typical Koch chutzpa, he said he had "taken the liberty of enclosing a list of people who, in my opinion, would be particularly helpful in planning and realizing the Memorial." He closed by telling Carter not to hesitate "to ask my help and the help of all New Yorkers in bringing the National Holocaust Memorial to completion. I look forward to working with you on this."²⁴

No response from Carter was found, but history records that the national Holocaust memorial was destined for Washington, D.C. and not New York City. Before analyzing Koch's intervention in the issue in New York City, by creating his own Holocaust Commission, the next chapter will examine how its precursor, the President's Commission on the Holocaust (and subsequent U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council) came into existence.

²⁴Letter from Mayor Edward I. Koch to President Jimmy Carter, September 29, 1978, Municipal Archives, Rickman files, New York.

SUMMARY

When Carter's President's Commission put the issue of Holocaust memorialization squarely on the agenda of the United States government in 1978, there had already been a history of 32 years of failed attempts to create a memorial in New York City, the center of Jewish life in America. Leaders of the last efforts before Carter's seemed to understand better than their predecessors that political alliances are necessary in order to carry out a project that requires governmental cooperation and approval. However, they still were not successful. WAGRO failed to get Mayor Beame to intercede and make space for a Holocaust memorial in the Columbus Circle cultural center in 1977. JCRC, which was established in 1976 as an umbrella organization for community (including government) relations, began a different effort in 1977 to build a memorial near the United Nations. WAGRO became a member of JCRC and encouraged this move. A number of the founders of JCRC were wealthy and power-hungry developers, who became much more wealthy and powerful after Koch took office at the beginning of 1978 and became their staunch political ally. One of these developers, JCRC officer and Koch ally George Klein, later became chairman of Koch's Task Force on the Holocaust. After Carter announced in 1978 that he would create a national Holocaust memorial, JCRC abandoned the idea of building a major memorial in New York City. Thus, by the end of 1978 there was no interest

group of any kind operating to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City.

PART TWO: THE POLITICS OF CREATING A HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL MUSEUM IN NEW YORK CITY

**CHAPTER 7: PRESIDENT CARTER INTERVENES AND PLACES HOLOCAUST
MEMORIALIZATION ON THE GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA**

"The Holocaust memorial was born out of politics and it was born out of domestic political crisis." Presidential Aide Mark Siegel¹

In 1977-1978, President Jimmy Carter was in trouble with the organized Jewish community. The efforts of his high level staff members to "mend fences" after his hard line statements and decisions on Israel led to his intervening on the issue of Holocaust memorialization and subsequently creating the President's Commission on the Holocaust in 1978.

Carter's problems began on March 9, 1977, only two months after his inauguration. That afternoon he told a Town Meeting and press conference in Clinton, Massachusetts that a Palestinian homeland was one of the major elements for peace in the Middle East, and that United States policy called for Israel's return to the pre-1967 borders with only insubstantial changes. The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (Presidents' Conference), which claims to speak for the organized Jewish community, expressed

¹Interview with Mark Siegel, March 16, 1990, Washington, D.C.

its displeasure to the Carter Administration both publicly and privately.²

As a result of the organized Jewish community's profound indignation about the March, 1977, Town Meeting, Carter named Mark Siegel as his liaison to the Jewish community. Siegel, who was deputy to Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan, assumed this additional responsibility. "That Spring, I was determining in a very systematic way how the community could be involved in the decision-making process with respect to the Geneva peace conference," he recalled. "I laid out a lot of political steps so that the Jewish community would have trust and confidence in the President and the Administration, because at some point in this process faith would be required. It was not going to be easy. I sequenced a lot of things. One of the things I said the President should push for was passage of the Genocide Treaty, as a confidence-building measure. Other measures were regular meetings with the community, with major Jewish organizations."³

At this point, Siegel hit upon an idea that was to make history and ultimately have a crucial effect on efforts to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City. "I was aware that the United States was the only western country that did not have an official memorial to the victims of the

²"Report for the Year Ending March 31, 1978: Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations", New York, p. 3.

³Siegel interview.

Holocaust," he said. "I suggested in a memo to Hamilton Jordan that went on to the President that it was long overdue, and that it would be well received in the community." When they responded favorably, Siegel asked Ellen Goldstein, who was working for Chief Domestic Policy Advisor Stuart Eizenstat, for a briefing memo on kinds of memorials. He said she responded quickly that many countries had memorials, but the United States did not. She added that none was being planned or publicly discussed, and this would be a very novel idea. "She proceeded to do a good deal of research on it, talking about the kinds of memorials that existed around the world", Siegel said.⁴ The idea was then shelved until March, 1978.

Meanwhile, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, then Chairman of the Presidents' Conference, said on June 7, 1977 he was concerned by what appeared to be an "erosion" of Carter's "commitment to Israel." He said American Jews were "worried about the expectations Carter is raising in the Arab world." Three days later, The New York Times reported in an article by Bernard Gwertzman that Carter was "stung" by the criticism of American Jews and was taking steps to repair the

⁴Mark Siegel, Stuart Eizenstat and Ellen Goldstein all said in March 16, 1990 interviews that a national Holocaust memorial was Siegel's idea originally. Siegel's first memo has not been found by any of them or by the Carter Library. However, the Carter Library does have a copy of Ellen Goldstein's June 21, 1977 reply to the Siegel request for a briefing on Holocaust memorials. His original memo to Jordan and Carter must have been written between March and June 21, 1977.

relationship. His creation of the President's Commission on the Holocaust the next year was part of his attempt to do so.

On July 6, 1977, Carter met with more than 50 American Jewish leaders to discuss his views on Israel and peace in the Middle East. Afterward, Schindler, speaking as Chairman of the President's Conference, said he was reassured.⁵ On August 8, 1977, however, Carter announced that the United States was in contact with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and that the PLO would be an acceptable participant in the Geneva peace talks. He said the PLO would only have to say they recognized United Nations Resolution 242, and that the Palestinians have additional status than that of refugees. The Presidents' Conference reported it was "deeply disturbed by this deterioration in the American position."⁶ On October 1, 1977, the situation deteriorated further. The Carter Administration and the Soviet Union released a joint statement on the Middle East, calling for Palestinian representation at the Geneva Peace Conference, and speaking of the "legitimate rights of the Palestinian people." Schindler sent a telegram to Carter, saying he was "profoundly disturbed", and this was "a shocking about-face of the President's public pledges."⁷

⁵"Report for the Year Ending March 31, 1978: Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations", New York, pp. 7-8.

⁶Ibid., pp. 9-11.

⁷Ibid., p. 12.

In early 1978, President Carter announced his proposal to sell jet warplanes to Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia as a package. He stated at a White House press conference on April 25, 1978 that if Congress rejected the sale of planes to any of the three countries, he would withdraw the entire package.⁸ Siegel said that in early 1978 he was growing increasingly uncomfortable with his role as liaison to the Jewish community. "It was my clear opposition to the sale of the F-15s to Saudi Arabia, and it was expected of me to sell this sale to the Jewish community, and it became untenable for me," he said. "Ultimately in March 1978 it led to my resignation, which unlike most resignations of public figures was not an exchange of happy letters. I laid out my views in a resignation that was quite public. At that point there had been great tension developing within the Jewish community on a range of issues--a Palestinian homeland, the Geneva peace conference, the sale of F-15s to Saudi Arabia, and there was a real crisis in relations between the White House and the American Jewish community." Siegel said he was "afraid my resignation fueled that fire," because people thought it proved their fears about the Administration. After he left in early March, relationships between the Carter

⁸David Friedman, "Senators say if Carter wants all or nothing on his plane package deal he way wind up with nothing", Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin, April 26, 1978, vol. 45, no. 82, New York, p. 1.

Administration and the organized Jewish community therefore deteriorated further.

Siegel places the initiation of "the politics of the Holocaust memorial" at this point, March 1978. He had put forth the idea almost a year earlier, but there had been no action on it. "As the situation [vis-a-vis the Jewish community] continued to deteriorate in March and April, 1978, apparently what happened in the White House was to decide what to do to repair this hemorrhage," he said. "And the idea of the Holocaust memorial was resurrected at that point. And I must say I was not pleased, because what was done was at the height of the battle with the Senate over the F-15s, a very ugly battle with [Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew] Brzezinski making a number of unfortunate comments [e.g., that he would "break the back" of the Jewish lobby on Capitol Hill] that some people determined to be anti-Semitic."⁹

A memorandum from Ellen Goldstein to Stuart Eizenstat, dated March 28, 1978, corroborates Siegel's recollections. She wrote: "Some time ago, Mark Siegel asked me to research a question he had concerning a U. S. memorial for the victims of the Nazi holocaust. The results of my research are contained in the attached memo [from Goldstein to Siegel, dated June 21, 1977]. While many countries outside of Eastern Europe have memorials or plans for memorials, there

⁹Siegel interview.

is in the United States no official memorial or plans for a memorial. Even though some of these countries had no concentration camps within their borders, many of their citizens are survivors of such camps. The United States certainly has its share of Nazi survivors as well."

Goldstein's memo said a column by William Safire on March 27, dealing with Nazis and Skokie, Illinois, had reminded her of Siegel's original request. "I have no idea how far Mark's idea or proposal, if indeed he had one, travelled in the White House, but I bring it to your attention now," she wrote. "If the Administration were to advance, in some way, the construction of a memorial built with private and/or public moneys, it might be an appropriate gesture in honor of Israel's thirtieth anniversary and a symbol of the United States' support of Israels' [sic] birth and continued life. The idea deserves consideration on its merits, although such a move might appear to some people to be glib public relations."

Eizenstat hand wrote on the memo that it was an interesting idea and he wanted to sit down and discuss it.¹⁰ Thus it is possible to pinpoint the date when a national Holocaust memorial became "an idea whose time has come" and was placed on the agenda. It is also possible to document

¹⁰Memorandum from Ellen Goldstein to Stuart Eizenstat, Subject: Holocaust Memorial, March 28, 1978, The White House, Washington, D. C., archive of the Carter Library, Atlanta (DPS-Eizenstat Collection).

that the initiation of the idea was for political purposes. As John W. Kingdon said, patterns of public policy are determined by what gets on the agenda. He asks why, after many years, a particular time proves right for an issue to emerge. He lists four stages: an agenda is set, alternatives from which a choice will be made are specified, an authoritative choice is made (e.g., by legislative vote), and there is implementation. Participants (parties, elected officials, staff, and media) and processes (problem recognition, policies generated, and politics of reelection) affect both agenda settings and alternatives.¹¹

According to Kingdon, we need to know what made the soil fertile, rather than the origin of the seed. He rejects incremental theories, and is closer to the "garbage can" model. He says solutions often search for problems. In the case of a national Holocaust memorial, the soil was made fertile for at least four reasons: 1. Carter desperately needed a positive issue to mend fences with the Jewish community. 2. The idea of memorializing the Holocaust had recently emerged as a pertinent issue in the organized American Jewish community. 3. The idea had even become "Americanized" by the airing to a mass audience of the miniseries Holocaust on NBC television at about that time; the number of books being published on the subject had also

¹¹John W. Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 184.

increased. 4. The issue of the presence of Nazi war criminals in America had been placed on the national agenda in 1977, with the creation of a Special Litigation Unit in the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Systematic denaturalization and deportation hearings of accused Nazi war criminals (some of whom had worked for the United States Government) were beginning.¹² A memorial was a much less embarrassing way for the government to address the Holocaust.

Kingdon's model for the processes of Federal agenda setting has three streams: problem recognition, policy formulation and refinement, and politics. These three streams operate largely independently, but come together at critical times: a problem is recognized, a solution is available, and the political climate is right for a change. There is an opportunity for pushing a proposal, a policy window, at the time that an issue suddenly "gets hot"¹³. Policy entrepreneurs willing to invest resources in the hope of future return then go into action. (There is a "tipping point" in coalition-building, with people and groups joining for fear they will be excluded from possible benefits.)

Kingdon's model can be used to analyze the Carter Administration's decision to memorialize the Holocaust as

¹²See Rochelle G. Saidel, The Outraged Conscience: Seekers of Justice for Nazi War Criminals in America, SUNY Press, Albany, New York, 1984, pp. 3-8, 103-138; and Charles R. Allen, Jr. Nazi War Criminals in America: Facts...Action: A Basic Handbook, Highgate Press, New York, 1986.

¹³Kingdon, pp. 92-94.

follows: In 1978, the issue "got hot". A policy window had opened and the streams came together: the problem of addressing the Holocaust in a way that would divert attention from a much more volatile item already on the agenda (the beginning investigations of utilization of Nazi war criminals by the government) and from Carter's foreign policies that had enraged the organized establishment Jewish community; the policy of Holocaust commemoration; and the politics of reelection, of finding a domestic issue that would appeal to Jewish voters, whose support for Carter had badly eroded. The need for such an issue had been placed on the agenda, policy entrepreneurs went into action as documented above, a Holocaust memorial in Washington was chosen from the alternatives, an official act created the President's Commission on the Holocaust, and the implementation phase began.

Following Goldstein's memorandum to him, on April 4, 1978 Eizenstat wrote a note by hand to "B", mentioning that the idea of a memorial should be discussed with Hyman Bookbinder, American Jewish Committee's Washington representative, and others, "to make sure it will be well received."¹⁴ This further documents that the purpose of the project was to appeal to the Jewish community, with whom Carter was having problems. The Carter Administration

¹⁴Note from Eizenstat to "B", April 4, 1978, Carter Library, Atlanta, Ga., DPS-Eizenstat collection.

initiated the creation of a political alliance with the organized Jewish community on the issue of Holocaust memorialization, for the purpose of improving his image and winning their support.

Eizenstat (and White House Counsel Robert Lipshutz) next wrote a memorandum to Carter on April 25, 1978. The subject was "Holocaust Memorial". The memo stated there was no official American Holocaust memorial and that there was then stronger support than ever to create one, "among many Americans--not just Jewish-Americans." Reasons they listed included the recent television program, Holocaust; the creation of memorials in other countries; and the aging of the "thousands of concentration camp survivors in this country". Only the first reason would probably make "many Americans" amenable to the idea, and even this cannot be proven. Nevertheless, these were Eizenstat's rationalizations to Carter.

He added there would soon be a White House celebration of Israel's 30th anniversary, and that the creation of the State of Israel was closely tied with the Holocaust. "If you are interested in pursuing an official U.S. memorial to the Holocaust victims, that date would seem an appropriate time to announce plans for such a memorial," Eizenstat wrote. "The memorial would serve not only as a reminder to all Americans of the millions who died in the Holocaust, but also of the birth of Israel and its continued life."

The memorandum said there were questions to be resolved about what the memorial should be, where it should be located, how it should be funded and what would be the role of the Federal government in sponsoring or maintaining it. It then recommended a fifteen member committee of "distinguished Americans, both Jewish and non-Jewish" to be appointed by the President to resolve those questions, and to make recommendations within six months. It concluded that there should be "sufficiently wide support" so that private funds would be used to pay for the building, and in whole or in part, for the maintenance. "We do not believe that any federal dollars will need to expended. However, for other reasons, we might want to have the government contribute toward the memorial, if not through direct expenditures then at least through the gift of land." (It would follow from the above history of the situation that these "other reasons" would be to please the alienated organized Jewish community.) There is a handwritten notation on the memorandum: "I concur--and so does Cy, Z. B." (indicating that Brzezinski and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance were consulted and approved of the plan).¹⁵

Eizenstat said in an interview that the idea of a President's Commission on the Holocaust came to his attention through Goldstein, who got the idea through Mark Siegel. He

¹⁵Memorandum from Stu Eizenstat and Bob Lipshutz to the President, "Subject: Holocaust Memorial", April 25, 1978, The Carter Library, Atlanta, Ga., DPS-Eizenstat collection.

said, "As one who lost relatives in the Holocaust, it seemed compelling to me. I mentioned it to President Carter and sent him a memo [above]. The President's major concern was financial. It didn't take a lot of arm twisting. We talked about the idea of a Commission and a suitable memorial. He asked who should be the chairperson, and I said that only one person, Elie Wiesel, was suitable. I called Wiesel, and he was out of the country. When I found him, he was very excited, agreed, and came to see the President."¹⁶

Wiesel, who later resigned as chairman, said the Commission was created for political purposes. He said that in the beginning it was a political act, because Carter wanted to ingratiate himself with the Jewish community and he realized this subject was important. Wiesel said that Carter's desire to get the Jewish vote was behind the idea, and that Eizenstat was the person who engineered it.¹⁷

Asked whether the purpose of creating a Holocaust Commission was political, Eizenstat hedged and said: "Every decision has political and substantive aspects. Sometimes you make a decision that is not political, or you try to minimize the politics. This, to me, was long overdue, because of revisionism, lack of records, and survivors dying.

¹⁶Interview with Stuart Eizenstat, Chief Domestic Policy Advisor for President Carter, March 16, 1990, Washington, D.C.

¹⁷Interview with Elie Wiesel, August 8, 1990, New York City.

I felt it was extremely strong substantively, or I would not have recommended it even if it had good political aspects. Politically, it showed the President's sensitivity to Jewish concerns at a time when some Jews were still not comfortable with a Southern Baptist. It was not done for political reasons, but we knew it should be popular in the Jewish community."¹⁸

Siegel was more direct about the political implications of the President's Commission on the Holocaust: "The Holocaust memorial was born out of politics and it was born out of domestic political crisis. I know that's the case. I know that's what happened," he said. He added that it went on to do very good things, he was happy it is being built, and "every time I go by that site I feel wonderful." Nevertheless, it was created for political purposes.¹⁹

As Eizenstat had suggested in the April 25 memorandum to Carter, the President announced at the May 1, 1978 Israel 30th anniversary celebration at the White House that he was appointing a commission to recommend to him an official American Holocaust memorial. He followed Eizenstat's lead, both in tying the memorialization of the Holocaust to Israel, and in connecting the memorialization to the United States, and to a broader symbol of human rights violation. At the May 1 ceremony, which was attended by Israel Prime Minister

¹⁸Eizenstat interview.

¹⁹Siegel interview.

Menachem Begin and 1000 invited guests, (most of whom were American Jewish community leaders, government officials and rabbis), Carter referred to the Holocaust as "the ultimate in man's inhumanity to man". He said the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis died in part "because the entire world turned its back on them", and that a memorial would "insure that we in the United States never forget." He added that "we will never waver from our deep friendship and partnership with Israel and our total, absolute commitment to Israel's security."²⁰

The creation of a President's Commission now moved quickly, especially since during the last week of April, Senator Wendell Anderson (D-Minn.) had introduced a bill to establish a national memorial to victims of the Holocaust. This bill would have authorized the President to appoint an eleven-member commission to develop plans for design, construction and location of a memorial. Evidence indicates the President's staff wanted to "beat the Senate to the punch" so credit would not be diluted. This is proven most directly by a July 20, 1978 memorandum from Eizenstat and Lipshutz to Tim Kraft, which included the following paragraph:

"We would like to get a memo to the President shortly after his return from Bonn. (emphasis in original) Senator

²⁰Helen Silver, "Carter Moves to Create a Memorial to the Victims of the Holocaust", Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin, May 3, 1978, p. 3.

Anderson, who had introduced legislation to form a similar commission before the President's announcement, is getting pressured to pursue his legislation because of apparent White House lack of interest. David Rubenstein and Ellen Goldstein from Stu's staff will be available to assist you and your staff in preparing a memo for the President."²¹

An earlier memorandum from Goldstein to Eizenstat on May 2, 1978 also indicates pressure to initiate the implementation phase. Handwritten across the top is a note (most likely by Eizenstat): "Ellen: Please set up [a staff meeting] ASAP. Let's move on this." This memo, too, mentions the proposed Anderson legislation. Goldstein said the staff should "move quickly and wisely" to fulfill Carter's "public commitment" to create a Holocaust memorial."²² A day earlier, the day of the White House ceremony, Eizenstat had written to Carter, telling him he had spoken with several senators and congressmen, who thought announcement of a Holocaust commission was a good idea and appropriate at that time. On the bottom of this memo, Carter wrote by hand: "Stu, Bob--Be careful not to make any

²¹Memorandum from Stu Eizenstat and Bob Lipshutz to Tim Kraft, "Subject: President's Holocaust Memorial Commission", July 20, 1978, p. 5, Carter Library, Atlanta, Ga., DPS-Eizenstat files.

²²Memorandum from Ellen Goldstein to Stu Eizenstat, "Subject: Presidential Commission on the Holocaust Memorial", May 2, 1978, Carter Library, Atlanta, Ga., DPS-Eizenstat files.

promises--JC".²³ The President thus was willing to make vague commitments, but not ready to back them with concrete and specific action.

Carter's staff, however, was ready to move ahead with specific action. They began creating a political coalition, under their control, that would get the project started. On May 10, 1978, Goldstein wrote to Eizenstat, presenting a "rough agenda" of issues that needed to be resolved before the Commission could be named and begin to work. She was concerned about the choice of Commission members, and said: "Clearly, the most important issue to settle is whether the Commission is to be a 'blue-ribbon' panel, but there are also other issues about Commission members that must be resolved: Jewish and non-Jewish proportion, bi-partisan participation, federal arts officials, etc. She included a list of possible candidates. As a possible chairman, she suggested Arthur Krim, who had the following qualities: "keen political skills, articulate moderator, Democrat, consummate fundraiser, and he is highly regarded and respected." Political considerations were thus clearly spelled out in black and white. (Furthermore, Eizenstat's statement that Wiesel was the "only person" considered "suitable" for the chairmanship was not accurate.²⁴)

²³Memorandum from Stu Eizenstat to the President, May 1, 1978, Carter Library, Atlanta, Ga, DPS-Eizenstat files.

²⁴Eizenstat interview op. cit.

Goldstein then implied that the Administration staff, rather than the Commission, would be making some crucial decisions: "We may want to further influence the Commission's decision concerning what the memorial should be, where it should be located and how it should be funded. Many believe that, in order for it to be an 'official' memorial, it must be in Washington. It is also accepted that the memorial should not be just a marble statue, but educational as well. However, the Commission must be careful not to add further to the competition and rivalry, both for funds and recognition, in this area." She said funding would be private, but the government "must have a significant role in this effort."²⁵ Goldstein did not explain what she thought this "significant role" should be.

By July 20, 1978, the project had moved forward. Eizenstat and Lipshutz wrote a memorandum to Tim Kraft, saying they had contacted members of the Jewish community about the choice of Elie Wiesel as chairman of the Commission. They wrote: "Wiesel is the undisputed expert on the holocaust period and his appointment would be without controversy, but his political and fundraising abilities are not clearly established." Again, the considerations were political. Also included was a list of recommendations for

²⁵Memorandum from Ellen Goldstein to Stu Eizenstat, "Subject: Briefing Memorandum Re: Memorial Commission Meeting", May 10, 1978, Carter Library, Atlanta, Ga., DPS-Eizenstat files.

advisory board members, and for the Commission itself. The memo said the Commission should include camp survivors, a rabbi, and recognized leaders, including representatives from the arts. They pointed out they had included four women and a black.²⁶

On September 9, 1978, Eizenstat and Goldstein sent President Carter another memorandum, recommending that he sign a congressional resolution (H. R. 1014) that designated April 28 and 29 as "Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust". They suggested that the President's Commission on the Holocaust, which he had promised to appoint on May 1, also be announced at the same time.²⁷ Linking the announcement of the President's Commission with the Congressional resolution reinforced the creation of an iron triangle of sorts for nationally memorializing the Holocaust.

On September 18, Lipshutz and Eizenstat sent Carter a memorandum with their list of 24 recommended Commission members, with Wiesel as chairman. (Coincidentally, the Camp David accords providing a framework for peace between Israel and Egypt were signed the day before.) Then, on November 1, 1978, Goldstein sent Eizenstat, Lipshutz and Ed Sanders (then liaison to the Jewish community) a memorandum with specific

²⁶July 20, 1978 memorandum op. cit.

²⁷Memorandum from Stuart Eizenstat and Ellen Goldstein to The President, "Subject: Enrolled Resolution H. R. Res. 1014-Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust", September 9, 1978, Carter Library, Atlanta.

political considerations regarding the public announcement of the Commission: 1. Announcement would be on Monday, at the recommendation of the Press Office. (Monday is a usually a slow news day, and thus good for getting press coverage.) 2. Courtesy calls would be made to Congressional offices. 3. It was necessary to think about the possible roles of the religious press and the Washington Jewish community. In addition, it stated Wiesel was chairman and Irving "Yitz" Greenberg would be the Commission's executive director. The 34-member Commission included survivors, Holocaust scholars, elected officials, and other prominent Jews and non-Jews.²⁸

(Wiesel said Carter's Commission continued to be political

²⁸Memorandum from Bob Lipshutz and Stu Eizenstat to The President, "Subject: President's Holocaust Commission", September 18, 1978. Memorandum from Ellen Goldstein to Stu Eizenstat, Bob Lipshutz and Ed Sanders, "Subject: Holocaust Commission", November 1, 1978, Carter Library, Special Advisor-Moses Collection, Atlanta. Members of the President's Commission on the Holocaust were: Elie Wiesel, Chairman; Congressman James J. Blanchard, Hyman Bookbinder (American Jewish Committee's Washington Representative), Senator Rudy Boschwitz, Professor Robert McAfee Brown, Dr. Gerson Cohen (Chancellor of Jewish Theological Seminary of America), Senator John C. Danforth, Professor Lucy Davidowicz (Holocaust historian), Kitty Dukakis, Benjamin Epstein (Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith), Rabbi Juda Glasner, Justice Arthur J. Goldberg, Professor Alfred Gottschalk (Hebrew Union College), Congressman S. William Green, Father Theodore Hesburgh (University of Notre Dame president), Professor Raul Hilberg (Holocaust historian), Senator Henry M. Jackson, Professor Norman Lamm (head of Yeshiva University), Frank R. Lautenberg, Congressman William Lehman, Senator Claiborne Pell, Arnold Picker, Rabbi Bernard Raskas, Hadassah Rosensaft (survivor), Bayard Rustin, Marilyn Shubin, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Congressman Stephen J. Solarz, Senator Richard B. Stone, Sigmund Strochlitz (survivor), Mark Talisman (UJA-Federation Washington representative), Telford Taylor, Glenn E. Watts, and Congressman Sidney Yates. There was also an advisory board of 27 additional people.

after its creation, because there was not a single Republican on it.²⁹ However, at least one member, Congressman S. William Green, was a Republican.)

On November 1, 1978, President Carter signed Executive Order 12093, officially establishing the President's Commission on the Holocaust. The charge of this Commission was to submit a report "with respect to the establishment and maintenance of an appropriate memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust, to examine the feasibility for the creation and maintenance of the memorial through contributions by the American people, and to recommend appropriate ways for the nation to commemorate April 28 and 29, 1979, which the Congress has resolved shall be 'Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust.'"³⁰

By signing this Executive Order, which created an interest group and included means of memorialization designated by both the President and Congress, Carter created an iron triangle with a twist. According to iron triangle theory, there is a solid trilateral bond formed by the interest group, its advocates in Congress, and in the executive branch agency. Government policies emerge from this closed triangle of interests, with congressmen passing favorable legislation, agency bureaucrats implementing these

²⁹Wiesel interview, August 8, 1990.

³⁰Report to the President: President's Commission on the Holocaust, September 27, 1979, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., p. 1.

mandates, and special interest groups supporting the helpful elected officials (e.g. with votes and campaign contributions).

Harold Seidman said there was no significant weakening of the of triangular alliances that unite interest groups with their agents in Congress and in the executive branch's bureaucracy. He said that "[congressional] staff develop alliances with the executive branch bureaucracy and the bureaucracies representing interest groups."³¹

The reason Carter's Holocaust memorialization iron triangle had a twist is that Carter created the interest group, and the executive sought out alliances both with the interest group and with Congress. According to Seidman, the relationship between an agency and its constituency (i.e., the interest group) is based on mutuality of interests, generally established by provisions of laws enacted by Congress.³² In the case of the Holocaust Commission, the iron triangle was somewhat different than that analyzed by Seidman. Here, the President, rather than Congress, initiated the legal means for uniting forces to accomplish his goal. He even created an interest group, and then included ten members of Congress as part of the 34-member Commission, or interest group "angle" of the triangle.

³¹Harold Seidman, Politics, Position and Power, 1980, Oxford University Press., p. 43.

³²Ibid.

Seidman did not account for such a blend: in his model, Congress is one angle and the interest group is another angle of the triangle. In the case of Carter's Holocaust Commission, almost a third of the interest group are also members of Congress. (Likewise, the New York **Mutagon** has a blend of elected officials as interest group members.)

The main purpose of the Commission was to recommend a suitable memorial to Carter, and its first meeting was held February 15, 1979 in Washington. As Commission member and Congressman Stephen J. Solarz told his constituents: "There are no constraints on what we may recommend other than the limits of our own imagination and the requirements of good taste. We are free to recommend that the funds for such an endeavor be public or private or both. If a physical structure--be it a monument or a museum--is going to be constructed, we can suggest that it be built in Washington or New York or any other location we deem suitable."³³

On March 25, 1979, Solarz held a public hearing in his Brooklyn district to hear what his constituents recommended as an appropriate memorial. On April 6, 1979, another member of the Commission and of Congress, Rep. Green, conducted a similar hearing in his Manhattan district. Herbert Rickman, Special Assistant to Mayor Edward I. Koch, said he testified at the Green hearing that the national memorial should be in

³³Congressman Stephen J. Solarz, "Remembering the Holocaust", Community Report, undated (February or March, 1979), Washington D.C. and Brooklyn, N.Y.

New York City. "We fought against having it in Washington. We fought to have it here in New York," he said. "I remember testifying for the City and organizing others to testify for the City at a hearing in New York by the President's Commission. We made a very telling argument that this is the largest Jewish city, largest survivor city in the United States--that it really belonged here. Also because of the heavy tourist concentration, that it belonged here. When we went down to defeat on that, then we began in earnest to plan for it [a different memorial] in New York City."³⁴

Records of the two hearings reveal that most of the scholars, authors, religious and organizational leaders and survivors who testified did not address the issue of location. Because they were testifying before a Presidential Commission, they seem to have taken for granted that the site would be Washington, D.C. There are only three people whose recorded testimony made a "pitch" for New York City as site of the proposed memorial, and Rickman's is the strongest. His prepared remarks for the March 25 Solarz hearing, speaking on behalf of Mayor Koch, said: "How appropriate such a memorial would be in the City which is the center--symbolically and factually--of immigration to the United States. New York City is also the center of Holocaust research. Nowhere else can one find resources such as those

³⁴Interview with Herbert Rickman, March 30, 1990, New York.

of our academic and intellectual communities and our great libraries and archives. Nowhere else are there centers such as the YIVO Institute, Leo Baeck Institute, Yeshiva University or the Oral History of the Center for Holocaust Studies....Not only does New York have the largest Jewish community of any city in the 4,000-year history of the Jews; among our residents is also the largest group of Holocaust survivors. Obviously, New York is the place where such a living memorial belongs, in a setting both appropriate and enduring."³⁵ According to handwritten notes from the April 6 Green hearing, Rickman presented similar remarks there. Notes from the April 6 testimony of Malcolm Hoenlein, then Executive Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York (JCRC), reveal that he, too, advocated New York as the site. His reasons included: New York City is the major center of scholarship of the Holocaust, the media center, the business capital, and has 17 million visitors per year. He said the commitment of the mayor was paralleled by that of the whole Jewish community, and that all groups were ready to join the effort.³⁶ Congressman Marvin Greisman, who then represented the Lower East Side,

³⁵"Remarks by Mayor Edward I. Koch (Delivered by Herbert P. Rickman, Special Assistant to the Mayor)", March 25, 1979, Brooklyn, N.Y., Archives of U.S. Holocaust Memorial Commission, Washington, D.C.

³⁶Untitled and unsigned handwritten notes from April 6, 1979 hearing held by S. William Green, archives of U.S. Holocaust Memorial Commission, Washington, D.C.

sent a letter to Green outlining his proposal to establish a Holocaust Memorial "both in the nation's capitol [sic] and in New York City - the heart of America". More specifically, he said the memorial should be on the Lower East Side.³⁷

In all of the testimony available from the 1979 hearings, only Rickman, Hoenlein and Greisman advocated that the national memorial be in New York City. All three of them had an obvious vested interest: it would have been a real coup for the mayor and for the head of the umbrella of local Jewish organizations, and, of course, for the Congressman representing a heavily Jewish district. For many others who testified--e.g., heads of other Jewish institutions, most with their own programs for Holocaust education--a new major institution could be viewed as competition. They therefore would have had no desire to push for its location in New York City.

It is significant to note that George Klein did not testify nor send a written statement for either hearing, according to the records of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Commission. There is no documentation, but it is common knowledge in Jewish communal circles in New York City that Klein and Hoenlein were extremely close. Klein was a founding vice president of the JCRC, which Hoenlein created as a power base for himself and its founders, many of whom

³⁷Letter from Congressman Marvin Greisman to Congressman S. William Green, April 5, 1979, files of U. S. Holocaust Memorial Commission, Washington, D.C.

were real estate developers. Klein was also close with Mayor Koch, who described him as a "old friend".³⁸ Rickman, Koch's political entrepreneur to the organized Jewish community, was in a position to bring together Hoenlein, Koch, and Klein to launch the Mayor's Task Force on the Holocaust, after the national project selected Washington as its site. It is likely that Hoenlein encouraged Klein to become involved with the Mayor's Task Force on the Holocaust in 1981, although no one seems able to or wishes to recall the exact circumstances through which this occurred. Because of the interconnection between the players, Rickman's and Hoenlein's appearance at the 1979 hearings could be said to be setting the stage for Klein's entrance on the scene two years later. JCRC had dropped the idea of creating a New York City Holocaust memorial in 1978, after Carter announced the national project. Now both Koch (and Rickman) and JCRC wanted the national project to be located in New York City, so they could have a piece of the pie.

Although Rickman said he tried hard to have the Federal Holocaust memorial located in New York City (and Mayor Koch wrote to President Carter so requesting, as documented in Chapter 6), this possibility apparently was never realistic. Rabbi Greenberg, the first director of the President's Commission, said: "I don't think it's correct that New York

³⁸Interview with Edward I. Koch, May 18, 1990, New York City.

was considered. I wasn't privy to the first conversation that Stuart Eizenstat had with President Carter, but the idea of New York City as an alternate to Washington for the Federal memorial was never seriously discussed." He said the idea of a national memorial in New York "didn't make any sense at all." Greenberg explained that in the thinking of the President's Commission, "the Federal government was Washington, close to the White House, and New York was a different constituency, if you will."³⁹

Hyman Bookbinder, a member of the Commission, recalled that the idea of New York City as a location was quickly dismissed. "At the very first meetings, there was a question of location," he said. "But this was one of the first things decided and is in the minutes. The decision was made that the memorial was national and should be in Washington."⁴⁰ Eizenstat concurred: "I think it was always assumed the memorial would be in Washington, but it was up to the Commission, which was monitored by presidential staff."⁴¹ At its second meeting on April 24, 1979, the President's Commission recommended the memorial should be in Washington, it and approved this decision at a third meeting on June 7.

³⁹Interview with Irving Greenberg, New York, April 19, 1990.

⁴⁰Telephone interview with Hyman Bookbinder, March 16, 1990, Washington.

⁴¹Interview with Stuart Eizenstat, Washington, D. C., March 16, 1990.

On September 27, 1979, the President's Commission presented its official report to President Carter. The report said: "Location: The Commission resolved that the memorial should be built in Washington, D. C., the capital of the country and the seat of government, for the materials to be presented by it affect all Americans...."⁴²

On October 7, 1980, Public Law 96-388 was enacted by the 96th Congress, establishing the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, which would "plan, construct, and oversee the operation of, a permanent living memorial museum to the victims of the holocaust"....and "develop a plan for carrying out the recommendations of the President's Commission on the Holocaust in its report to the President of September 27, 1979...."⁴³ This set in place the second implementation phase (following that of the President's Commission's work) of the Federal plan to create a Holocaust museum. (The government was to provide the site, but funding was, for the most part, to be private.)

SUMMARY

Carter's creation of the President's Commission on the Holocaust and subsequent United States Holocaust Memorial Council are analyzed here only as background for the related creation of the Mayor's Task Force on the Holocaust and New

⁴²Report to the President, September 27, 1979. p. 11.

⁴³Public Law 96-388, Washington, D. C., October 7, 1980.

York City Holocaust Memorial Commission. When Carter intervened on the issue, he did so for political reasons, to ingratiate himself with the disgruntled organized Jewish community. He created an iron triangle of sorts, with members of Congress also part of the interest group--the President's Commission on the Holocaust. There were efforts by the City to have the Federal memorial placed in New York. When these efforts failed, they led to an agenda-setting stage for a major Holocaust memorial in New York City. The Federal enactment of Public Law 96-388 in October, 1980 gave a legal precedent and added legitimacy to Koch's efforts to establish a Mayor's Task Force in 1981.

Chapter 8: MAYOR KOCH INTERVENES AND CREATES THE MAYOR'S HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL TASK FORCE

"George Klein is an old friend, he's a very proud Jew, he's a very rich man, and he was an immediate candidate to be involved--by virtue of all of that." Edward I. Koch¹

The complicated *Mutagon* of political forces trying to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City in the late 1980s and early 1990s began as a unilateral act by Mayor Edward I. Koch in 1981. Unlike President Jimmy Carter's 1978 initiative, the beginning of Koch's involvement with Holocaust memorialization is difficult to document. There is no "smoking gun" of staff memoranda in the Municipal Archives (where they legally should be, if they existed). Staff memoranda in the Carter Library make it possible to trace the allegedly step-by-step political thinking behind the creation of the President's Commission. In New York, where the cast of players was much smaller (mainly Koch and his Special Assistant Herbert Rickman, probably with behind-the-scenes maneuvers by Jewish Community Relations Council-JCRC head Malcolm Hoenlein), the absence of such documentation is evidence that decisions were informal and oral. A high level JCRC staff member who worked with Rickman confirmed there would be no written records about the genesis of such a project in New York City (as there are for the Carter Administration).

¹Interview with Edward I. Koch, New York, May 18, 1990.

It is also difficult to pinpoint the origin of the idea for three other reasons: 1. The President's Commission, and even the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council which succeeded it, had been set in place before Koch announced creation of his Task Force in July, 1981. The existence of the Federal project, by virtue of its very existence and because of factors analyzed in Chapter 7 and this chapter, affected and sometimes intervened in the New York City process. 2. New York City is the Jewish capital of the United States. It has the headquarters of most of the national Jewish organizations, the largest number of Holocaust survivors outside of Israel, the largest and most concentrated Jewish population, and historically has been the seat of Jewish American culture. This wealth of Jews and things Jewish, which has created a density and diversity of minor and major Jewish organizations that are often at each other's throats, frequently results in organizations and their affiliated "machers" (leaders) seeking and taking undeserved credit. 3. In New York City, unlike Washington, D. C., there was a record dating back to 1946 of attempts to create a memorial. Koch, therefore, unlike Carter, was not starting with a "clean slate". Although this was the first time a New York City mayor created a Jewish interest group for a Holocaust memorial project, interest groups had tried to influence five other mayors before Koch. Historically, they were actors,

but with the Koch Administration, they became reactors. As will be demonstrated, Koch made the idea his own.

The recollections of Rickman, Koch's political entrepreneur who created his Holocaust Task Force and Commission, do not fit the chronology of the documentable facts: Rickman said: "Elections were in 1977 and Koch was elected. During the transition, I had a firm commitment in my own mind that we were going to create a memorial. I reached out to the survivors, such as Ben Meed and others. No one was encouraging at the time, because of their bitterness over earlier experiences. They said it would take a miracle. The mayor had given me the tacit okay to go ahead, although he was not very involved. The idea was that it had to be Jewish and not just bricks and mortar. The concept from the very start was a living memorial." (In other words, it would be a museum rather than a monument, and the historical framework of the museum and its component educational programs would have a particularistic Jewish approach to the Holocaust.) "We then began in the early days of the administration, in 1978, to assemble people, ideas, talking to leaders of the community, to gauge the support."²

There is no evidence that such early discussions took place. Neither the files of the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO), the Municipal Archives, nor other

²Interview with Herbert Rickman, March 30, 1990, New York City.

available files in JCRC or elsewhere show any record of a meeting between Meed, JCRC leaders, or other survivors or community leaders and Rickman at this time. Although no staff memoranda exist regarding creation of a Holocaust memorial during the early Koch years (before April 1981), there should have been copies of letters, especially in the WAGRO files, if such a meeting had taken place. If Rickman had written to or spoken with Meed, who heads WAGRO, in 1978, there is no available documentation. Meed's first specific recollection is of a June or July 1979 meeting. The first letters on file are from Meed to Koch on June 26, 1979 and to Rickman on July 17, 1979 (see below). Since the written record in Meed's archives shows Meed corresponded with elected officials about this issue for many years, the absence of records of such correspondence with Koch or Rickman before June 1979 could indicate Rickman's recollected chronology is not accurate. If there was informal oral discussion, no one but Rickman remembers it. While it is possible and even likely such an item would be included, no one and no archive had written evidence.

The only other person with an early recollection of the subject is 1977 Koch mayoral campaign aide Manny Behar, who said the idea of a Holocaust memorial was included in the "Jewish laundry list" of Koch's Jewish New Year message that

year. Behar, then a college student, said he wrote it in, and that Koch was never consulted about it.³

The first available record of Koch's public expression of support for a memorial was April 1979, two years before he set his Holocaust Memorial Task Force in place. At the commemoration of the 36th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, sponsored by WAGRO on April 22, 1979, Koch said in front of thousands of attendees: "Yes, Mr. Meed, a living, permanent memorial to the victims of the Holocaust must rise here in New York City. It belongs here. And here it will eventually be built. I support this undertaking as a Jew, as a New Yorker, as mayor of this city, and as a human being who, with all of you, is totally committed to commemorating the searing inhumanities of the Holocaust, so that never again will they befoul and shame the history of mankind."⁴

WAGRO's annual Holocaust memorial service, which has drawn thousands of participants each year, may have helped to convince Koch that creating a memorial was a good idea politically. Meed said Koch became involved with the idea of a memorial because of his annual participation in the WAGRO commemoration. "I think the commemoration had a tremendous

³Telephone interview of Manny Behar, December 21, 1990.

⁴Remarks by Mayor Edward I. Koch at commemoration of the 36th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, Temple Emanuel, Fifth Avenue, New York, 1:30 p.m. on April 22, 1979. Municipal Archives, New York, record group Mayor Koch, subgroup Herbert Rickman.

influence on Koch," he said.⁵ Meed was referring to the emotional content, which may have influenced Koch. However, the huge attendance with standing room only and thousands of people listening to loud speakers outside would also influence any astute political candidate such as Koch. These attendees at the WAGRO memorial service were potential voters and political contributors, and they were committed to commemorating the Holocaust.

Shortly after the 1979 WAGRO memorial ceremonies, then Comptroller Harrison J. Goldin stepped briefly into the picture. He wrote to Meed on June 14, 1979 that he had told Koch about Meed's idea of using the Cultural Center at Columbus Circle for a Holocaust memorial. Goldin said Koch had suggested that Meed send the City a written proposal.⁶ (Meed had originally presented this idea to the Beame administration in 1976. See Chapter 6.) On June 28, 1979, Meed sent such a proposal to both Koch and Governor Hugh L. Carey. He wrote: "The purpose of this memorandum is to present a proposal for the establishment of a suitable memorial in New York City to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust in World War II." He pointed to the precedent of the President's Commission:

⁵Interview with Benjamin Meed, May 7, 1990, New York City.

⁶Letter from Harrison J. Goldin to Benjamin Meed, June 14, 1979, files of WAGRO, New York.

"The significance of commemorating the victims of the Holocaust recently has been given an added recognition by the President and Congress of the United States in establishing, on November 1, 1978, the President's Commission on the Holocaust and its Advisory Board [of which Meed was a member]. This Commission expressed itself in favor of setting up a living institutional memorial which would contain meeting spaces, archives, libraries, exhibitions, and other educational facilities related to the Holocaust. This memorial most likely will be created in Washington.

"We, however, believe that a similar memorial should also be created in New York City, the site of the United Nations as well as the site of the largest single Jewish urban community in the world."⁷

The letter went on to state that WAGRO had "conducted an extensive review of the different opportunities in New York City for the implementation of the proposal to establish a suitable memorial", and had concluded the New York City Cultural Center at Columbus Circle was "the most promising opportunity". It closed by saying: "Recently we have congratulated President Carter for taking the initiative in establishing the President's Commission on the Holocaust. Similarly, we are now looking toward Governor Carey and Mayor

⁷Memorandum from Executive Committee of WAGRO to Mayor Koch and Governor Carey, "Subject: Holocaust Memorial in New York City", June 28, 1979, files of WAGRO, New York.

Koch in expectation of their support and leadership in establishing a Holocaust memorial in the city of New York."⁸ Meed's appeal to both the mayor and the governor could be seen as a clue to the way the issue would develop in 1986, with both elected officials heading the **Mutagon** responsible for building a memorial.

In a letter dated two days earlier, June 26, 1979, Meed had written to Koch asking for an appointment to discuss the New York Cultural Center at Columbus Circle as the site for a permanent Holocaust memorial.⁹ This idea was later vetoed by the donor of the building. On September 21, 1979, the president of Gulf and Western Foundation, which was about to give the Columbus Circle Cultural Center property to the City, wrote to Koch and said the company refused to have it used as a Holocaust memorial. The letter said: "As worthy as such a memorial might be, it would be a complete perversion of the reason we bought the building in the first place."¹⁰ (The reason for the purchase and gift to the City was for use as a cultural center.)

Although Rickman said the Koch Administration was thinking about a Holocaust memorial from the very beginning of his first term, which began in January 1978, there is no

⁸Ibid.

⁹Letter from Benjamin Meed to Mayor Koch, June 26, 1979, files of WAGRO, New York.

¹⁰Letter from Samuel J. Silberman to Koch, September 21, 1979, files of WAGRO, New York.

substantial evidence of Koch's interest in a memorial until his April 22, 1979 speech and his response to Meed's June 26 and June 28 letters. Meed's letters that year may have planted the seed, following Carter's intervention on the issue a year earlier, but Koch still did not act for two more years. Furthermore, Meed was not a major player in the organized Jewish community in 1979. His power base, WAGRO and the annual commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, was connected with but not particularly important to the community. (After he headed the first International Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in Jerusalem in 1981 and the first American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in 1983, he became more prominent.) Koch thus did not act in response to Meed's suggestion that he create a Holocaust memorial. When he did initiate a memorial project in 1981, it was not at the request of Meed or of other leaders of the organized Jewish community. When he finally acted on the issue, he took the lead, coopted the idea and made it his own at a time that was politically expedient. As head of his effort, he chose George Klein, a major developer who was his close friend, political ally, and a founding officer of Hoenlein's JCRC.

Meanwhile, in response to Meed's June 26, 1979 letter about Columbus Circle, a meeting with Rickman evidently took place on July 16. On July 17, Meed wrote to Rickman, thanking him for the meeting of the day before, at which they

had discussed "the proposal for a holocaust memorial in the city of New York". This letter is the first available written evidence that the Mayor's office was thinking about a New York City Holocaust Commission. Meed wrote: "I should also like to refer to the proposal to establish a Mayor's Commission on the Holocaust." (Meed then suggested that survivors, including WAGRO members, be part of the commission, and he offered to recommend specific names.)¹¹

Koch's intervention in 1981, in creating a Holocaust Task Force and subsequent Commission, was both beneficial to survivors in particular and the organized Jewish community in general, and to Koch himself. It was not an iron triangle or an issue network. Instead it was the initial stage of the ensuing *Mutagon*, a polygon of political forces that changed over time and created an impasse for ten years. It was a two-way reciprocal political contact between the organized Jewish community of New York City and the mayor. The community, especially Chairman Klein and the survivor community, gained prestige from this recognition by the mayor of the importance of a major memorial project. The survivors, whom even the organized Jewish community had treated as "second class citizens" (whether out of guilt or

¹¹Letter from Benjamin Meed to Herbert Rickman, July 17, 1979, files of WAGRO, New York.

fear of their being different¹²) suddenly became first class. Klein had a visible and prominent role as the community's leader for the project. But Koch, too, gained prestige among his constituents in the organized Jewish community by intervening and making the project officially one of the City government.

Koch's intervention in Holocaust memorialization was mutually beneficial for him and Jewish communal leaders. As Robert Dahl said of "democracy and power" in his analysis of New Haven: "The relationship between leaders and citizens in a pluralistic democracy is frequently reciprocal: leaders influence the decisions of constituents, but the decisions of leaders are also determined in part by what they think are, will be, or have been the preferences of their constituents."¹³ According to Dahl, leaders need the support of subleaders and of voting constituents, so they shape their policies to insure a flow of rewards to those whose support they need.¹⁴

Edward C. Banfield also analyzed how government intervenes and creates its own interest group to advocate its ideas. He said the situation is often a "two-way street":

¹²Interview with Elie Wiesel, August 8, 1990, New York City. See also his book A Jew Today, Vintage Books, New York, 1979, chapter entitled "A Plea for the Survivors", pp. 218-247.

¹³Robert Dahl, Who Governs? (Democracy and Power in an American City), Yale University, 1961, pp. 89-90.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 102.

Organizations that want something from government use "civic leaders" or civic organizations as their intermediaries to political leaders, and political leaders also use "civic leaders" as intermediaries, for example, by appointing them to commissions (such as the Holocaust Commission). Often the political leader has already made up his mind as to what the decision of a commission will be, and he "uses his intermediaries for other purposes than those that are publicly announced" (e.g., to obtain campaign contributions). According to Banfield's classic study of how influence and power operated in Chicago in the 1950s, political leaders use these civic leaders for the following purposes: to communicate or negotiate with constituent groups, to create a favorable climate of public opinion, to legitimate plans, to disarm criticism and direct it away from themselves.¹⁵

Dahl's and Banfield's analyses can be applied to Koch's Holocaust memorial project to an extent. In the case of the New York City project, however, there is another dimension to the reciprocity or two-way street. As in their cases, Rickman's decision to encourage Koch to support a Holocaust Memorial Task Force and subsequent New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission was based on Rickman's determination that this was a preference of a powerful constituent group--the organized Jewish community. Dahl's and Banfield's analyses,

¹⁵Edward C. Banfield, Political Influence, The Free Press of Glencoe, New York, 1961, p. 276.

however, do not take into account another aspect of the New York City case. Rickman and Koch went one step further: they crafted from this larger interest group, the organized Jewish community, a Task Force and then Commission that included powerful and wealthy Jews whom they were also courting for another purpose--real estate developers and attorneys.

Thus the reciprocity between Koch and the real estate development-related members of the Commission worked on two levels at the same time: on one level, they began a project to help each other memorialize the Holocaust; and on a second level, at the same time, they were working together to become wealthy. Koch gave them tax incentives and zoning concessions, and they gave Koch the bulk of his campaign contributions. Jack Newfield and Wayne Barrett said of Koch's connections to Klein and other rich and powerful real estate developers: "The dollars rolled into the 1981 Koch campaign coffers in the millions, primarily from the very real estate interests that had gotten fat on the tax abatements granted by his administration. It didn't hurt that the man collecting contributions as Koch's campaign finance chairman was the former deputy mayor who'd awarded the abatements, Peter Solomon."¹⁶ (Both Rickman and Koch said they personally are committed to memorializing the

¹⁶Jack Newfield and Wayne Barrett, City for Sale: Ed Koch and the Betrayal of New York, Harper & Row, New York, 1988, p. 182.

Holocaust¹⁷, and their project's political expediency does not negate this.)

While there is no written record of how the idea of the Task Force originated, both Rickman and Meed said the idea came from Rickman, on behalf of Koch. Meed said: "I met with Herb Rickman. I remember it was in a coffee shop near City Hall, and we discussed the creation of such a commission. Herb Rickman was the man who kept the contacts. He came to me." Meed does not remember the date of the meeting to which he referred.¹⁸

After July 1979, no record has been found about creation of a Holocaust Commission or Task Force until April 22, 1981, an election year. The idea seems to have fallen between the cracks for two years. Koch said:

"If you're the mayor of the City of New York, you have to be bouncing a thousand different things in the air at the same time. Then it depends on what the pressures are, who talks to you, whether something suddenly becomes predominant because the editorial writers are writing about it. I cannot tell you what the pressures were at that time. I only know that there were several things that I've always wanted to be identified with, as having been instrumental in creating them. One was the Holocaust museum, doing it here in

¹⁷Rickman interview; Koch interview.

¹⁸Meed interview.

New York City, I thought it was very important. The second one I always wanted to do something about was a ticker tape parade for the Vietnam veterans and a monument to them. I did both the ticker tape parade and monument, and the Holocaust museum--at least I moved them along."¹⁹

Rickman said he was "hazy" on the details and had not looked at the files in years. He blamed the announcement by Carter of creation of his President's Commission on the Holocaust for "sidetracking" the New York project. He said: "I know the community knew we were doing it and there was excitement about it. And then, lo and behold, word came that there was a commission that had been created by Carter to determine where this would take place--and we got sidetracked because we then tried to get the [national] memorial in New York."²⁰

Carter's initial announcement was May 1, 1978. The first proof of preliminary discussions between Rickman and Holocaust survivors (i.e., Meed) is June-July, 1979, and the Task Force was not formed until two years after that. This discrepancy in timing cannot be accounted for. It is evidence that Mayor Koch's creation of a Holocaust Memorial Task Force was not placed on the agenda as early as Rickman claims. It was not, in fact, publicly announced until July

¹⁹Koch interview.

²⁰Rickman interview.

1981, perfect timing to help Koch in his bid for reelection that fall. After 35 years of requests by Jewish individuals and organizations for help from a mayor in creating a Holocaust memorial in New York City, this mayor was now making the issue his own. To use an analysis similar to Dahl's (above), Koch's decision to create the Task Force was determined in part by what he thought his Jewish constituents wanted, or what he thought would be most effective in arousing and mobilizing public opinion on his behalf.

After Koch's political entrepreneur, Rickman, had been influenced by what he thought the organized Jewish constituency wanted, he finally began by April, 22 1981 to set the agenda for a Holocaust Memorial Task Force on the Holocaust. This is the date of the first available memorandum on the subject.²¹ This memo has neither a "to" or "from" on it, but its placement in Rickman's section of the Koch records at the Municipal Archives indicates he was at least involved. Since the subject is a meeting with George Klein and both Rickman and Koch give Rickman credit for asking Klein to head the project, it is likely the memo is from or possibly to Rickman.

The memorandum states the Task Force should exist for four to five months, beginning with a target date for its

²¹Unsigned memorandum, "Meeting with George Kline [sic] Re: Holocaust Memorial Task Force", April 22, 1981, Stationery of the Office of the Mayor, Municipal Archives, Mayor Koch Accession Record Group, Special Assistant Herb Rickman Subgroup, New York.

announcement on May 3, 1981. The Task Force's scope would be to determine the nature, site and financing of a Holocaust memorial, and to recommend a permanent body for developing the memorial. A press conference was planned for May 3, with clearance needed from all members before the public announcement. The memo reported that Klein wanted political officials to be included as members "to demonstrate the seriousness (and political clout) of the task force". These elected officials were to be listed as "ex-officio", with "lay members" as the Task Force members. An executive committee would be designated to do much of the work.

According to this memo, Klein seemed to think he had a lot of influence regarding the initiation of the Task Force. He not only asked for inclusion of political officials, but also said he would like the first meeting of the Task Force to be held at Gracie Mansion. Klein was, however, mentioned in another section of the memorandum, entitled "Issues to be cleared with the Mayor". The issue that needed to be cleared was Klein's "involvement with [Republican] Richard Rosenbaum's campaign". This section of the memo demonstrates that the creation of the Task Force indeed included political concerns.

"Klein wasn't anyone's idea but mine," Rickman said. "And it wasn't because Klein was a developer. At that time developer was not a nasty word, and Klein was not the developer that he is now. He was only a beginner. It was

because Klein was a survivor. He certainly had a passion and a commitment. It was not an easy sell in those days--no one wanted it. And we very much wanted access into money, and we thought that he would give us that access. And the survivors felt strongly about him. They knew him, they knew his reputation. And I checked very carefully. There were no negatives on him. In that period, he did not have the stature that he has now. And he certainly was not a major figure in the development community, as he is now. If we did not have his expertise in building and development, lord only knows how much it would have cost us in the long run."²²

Koch explained the choice of Klein much more succinctly: "He's an old friend, he's a very proud Jew, he's a very rich man, and he was an immediate candidate to be involved--by virtue of all of that."²³ Koch had chosen his rich "old friend", a prominent developer closely tied with JCRC and the organized Jewish community, rather than Ben Meed, whose influence and power base were limited to survivor organizations.

Klein, in fact, is not a survivor, as Rickman stated. He was born in Vienna, and came here as a small child with his parents after Kristallnacht, November, 1938. His credentials among leaders of survivor organizations stem from his father's leadership in Orthodox rescue efforts (i.e.,

²²Rickman interview.

²³Koch interview.

Vaad Hatzalah) during the war. Although Rickman said Klein was not a "major figure in the development community" in 1981, in fact he was a major figure from at least 1977. His office building at Park Avenue and 59th Street, begun that year, was extremely important to the future of real estate development in New York City. This project gave Klein prestige as an important developer, because it was the first new office building begun there in five years (following the fiscal crisis).²⁴

On July 6, 1981, Koch sent out letters of appointment to the Mayor's Task Force. As Dahl says of New Haven Mayor Lee's creation of a Citizens Action Committee for urban redevelopment, Koch's task force was supposedly a structure of citizen participation, but it was deliberately created by a mayor to endorse his proposals.²⁵ One function of both Lee's and Koch's group of subleaders was to sell the project to the community, to assure acceptability.

Koch said Rickman was responsible for Task Force appointments: "Probably Rickman did that. These are leading New York Jews." These 28 "leading New York Jews" were invited to Gracie Mansion on July 22, 1981 for the first meeting of the Holocaust Memorial Task Force. Task Force members were: George Klein, Chairman (President, Park Tower

²⁴"First New Office Building in New York City in 5 Years", The New York Times, August 4, 1977, Section 2, p. 1.

²⁵Dahl, Who Governs?, "Chapter 10: Leaders in Urban Redevelopment", pp. 115-140.

Realty Corp.); Elie Wiesel, Honorary Chairman; Rabbi Chaskell Besser (Agudah Israel and close to Klein); Kenneth J. Bialkin, National President of Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and attorney (partner, Wilkie Farr & Gallagher); Leonard David (Founder and a Director, Colonial Penn Group); Yaffa Eliach, Holocaust scholar (Center for Holocaust Studies, Brooklyn); Murray Finley (President, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union); Judge Marvin Frankel (managing partner, Proskauer Rose Goetz & Mendelsohn); Alan Greenberg (Chief Executive Officer, Bear Stearns & Co.); Rabbi Irving Greenberg (Director of National Jewish Resource Center and ZACHOR Holocaust Resource Center); Judah Gribetz (partner, Mudge Rose Guthrie & Alexander); Ludwig Jesselson (President, Phibro Corp.); Leonard Lauder (President, Estee Lauder, Inc.); Benjamin Meed (President, WAGRO); Bess Meyerson; Ernest Michel (Campaign Director, UJA-Federation); Rabbi Israel Mowshowitz (former President, New York Board of Rabbis); Richard Ravitch, past President of JCRC (Chairman, Metropolitan Transportation Authority); Rabbi Alexander Schindler (President, Union of American Hebrew Congregations); Rabbi Arthur Schneier (Chairman, World Jewish Congress--American Section); Irving Schneider (Executive Vice President, Hemsley-Spear Corp.); Beverly Sills (General Director, New York City Opera); Bernice Tannenbaum (immediate past national President, Hadassah); Laurence Tisch, President, JCRC (Chairman of the Board, Loews Corp.); Peggy

Tishman (past Vice President, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of N.Y.); Marvin Traub (Chairman of the Board, Bloomingdales); Walter Weiner (President, Republic National Bank of New York); and Solomon Zynstein, President of American Federation of Jewish Fighters, Camp Inmates and Nazi Victims (president, Zynn Fashion). The Advisory Council consisted of Rickman; Henry Geldzahler, Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs; Malcolm Hoenlein, JCRC Executive Director; Karl Katz, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Office of Film and Television; and Howard Rubenstein, President of Howard Rubenstein Associates.

With few exceptions, none of the people named to the Task Force were expert in Holocaust education. Only Wiesel (whose position was merely honorary), Eliach and Greenberg were Holocaust scholars. Eliach, Meed, Zynstein and Michel were survivors, with Michel also heading the UJA-Federation's fundraising operation in New York City. Rabbis represented each of the three major branches of Judaism. Other than that, the members were mainly men who were wealthy and well-connected in both the Jewish and business, financial, real estate or legal communities. (When the ensuing Commission was formed, many more developers were appointed by Koch.) Only five of the 28 Task Force members were women. In addition to the famous and glamorous Meyerson (not yet Cultural Affairs Commissioner) and Sills, Eliach was a scholar and survivor, and Tannenbaum and Tishman were

communal leaders--the latter also from a real estate developer's family.

Whereas President Carter's political entrepreneurs who initiated the national project in Washington, D.C. insisted the members of the President's Commission of the Holocaust include non-Jews, Koch, on the contrary, appointed only Jews to his Task Force. He said of this decision: "This is the Jewish Holocaust. The Museum in Washington is not." He said there were no pressures from other groups to be included, and that the project was all privately funded.²⁶ (He did not mention that the possibility of using City land, which has monetary value, would also give the project public funding.)

Rickman insists there was nothing political about the appointments or about the timing of creating the Task Force. However, during the months preceding the 1981 mayoral election, any such action was political per se. Koch's naming these prominent and mostly rich members of the Jewish community to a Holocaust Memorial Task Force at that time could only have helped him win the 1981 election with 75 percent of the vote, including 73 percent of the Jewish vote.²⁷ It is also likely to have helped him obtain campaign contributions from wealthy members of the organized Jewish community, although no study has been made of any

²⁶Koch interview.

²⁷In 1977, Koch won 65 percent of the Jewish vote. Figures were provided by Jerry Skurnik, Director of Operations for both campaigns.

correlation between announcement of the Task Force and contributions. (Board of Elections records on campaign contributions are destroyed after five years.) Klein was at the very top of Koch's list of contributors when he ran for election in 1981 (and for governor in 1982).²⁸

Following the Task Force's Gracie Mansion breakfast meeting on July 22, a press release the next day announced that Koch had named this committee to develop a plan for creation of a permanent Holocaust memorial. The press release said Koch had "acted at the request of a number of Jewish groups and communal organizations in announcing the formation of the task force at that time." There is no evidence to support such a statement. It was, in fact, Rickman, who initiated the project on Koch's behalf. This is consistent with Dahl's analysis of Mayor Lee's deliberately creating a Citizens Action Committee to support his proposals. Koch's Holocaust project was initiated by the mayor, and was then eagerly embraced by the organized Jewish leadership. They did not come to him with the idea.

The July 23 press release said Koch had asked the Task Force to report to him by December 1, 1981, with recommendations on the nature of the memorial, its location, how to fund raise to build it, and the method of continuing the work of the Task Force and carrying the project forward.

²⁸Edward I. Koch, Mayor, Warner Books, Simon and Schuster, 1984, pp. 297-298.

It concluded with a quote from Koch: "The city of New York, which has the largest Jewish community of any city in the 4,000 year history of the Jews, also has the largest group of survivors of the Holocaust outside Israel. Here we must have a living memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, a place in which to pledge a renewal, a reaffirmation of the oath: never again."²⁹ This is not a bad "campaign pitch" in what he himself has just described as the city with "the largest Jewish community of any city in the 4,000 year history of the Jews."

Klein, and other developers in New York City who became members of the Holocaust Commission and major contributors to Mayor Koch's campaigns, were in a position to effectively use their political influence and build upon this strength to then gain even more influence and power. Some members of the Commission, and especially Klein, used their political resources to the fullest. The members of Koch's Task Force had the political resources for influencing government, and the political savvy to use these resources to increase their influence even more.

The creation of the Holocaust Memorial Task Force and subsequent Holocaust Memorial Commission gave Rickman, Koch, Klein and others the opportunity to use the issue of Holocaust memorialization to increase their potential

²⁹Press Release, Office of the Mayor, July 23, 1981, no. 203-81, Municipal Archives, files of Mayor Koch, subfile, Rickman, New York.

influence in the establishment organized Jewish community and New York City's developer community (the two of which often overlap). They used their political resources efficiently to promote the idea of a memorial museum in the community and with elected officials. At the same time they were able to increase their own power in the community and in the political arena by associating themselves with the project. Membership in the Task Force gave them more status as "players", and as professional political players, they knew how to use the slack resources to advantage.

As Dahl said, a political resource is only a potential source of influence, and most citizens hardly use their resources. The more active the form of participation, the fewer people who participate. Those with political confidence are more likely to make an attempt, and these people are the "better off". Dahl said: "The large contractor who constructs buildings, streets, highways and other expensive projects is likely to participate more through financial contributions than party activity."³⁰ This could be a description of Klein and other developers on the Task Force.

At the suggestion of Rickman, Koch had appointed Klein-- a rich and prominent developer, philanthropic Jew, and friend--as chairman of the Task Force. Klein was then in a position to encourage his friends, other wealthy developers,

³⁰Dahl, Who Governs?, p. 295.

to be generous both to the effort to create a Holocaust memorial and to Koch's mayoral campaign. Reciprocally, Klein was later to get with Koch's backing millions of urban renewal dollars for his Times Square redevelopment project. Klein thus had the opportunity to use slack resources with high efficiency, gaining influence with Koch and the Jewish community, and thus building up his own resources even further with the community, Koch, and his development projects. Koch said there were many developers named to the Holocaust Memorial Commission (that succeeded the Task Force) because of Klein's connections. He said of the heavy developer involvement: "That's for money. You have to raise a lot of money for this. And George Klein is a developer, so they would be his personal friends."³¹

According to Dahl, the political systems of most pluralistic democracies have three important characteristics: slack resources, or a gap between actual and potential influence; a small band of professional political players that organize their lives around political activity; and a built-in self-operating limitation of influence of all participants. Using slack resources with high efficiency leads to more actual influence, and this creates building blocks for obtaining even more resources.³²

³¹Koch interview.

³²Dahl, Who Governs?, pp. 305-310.

While Koch was using the Task Force and later Memorial Commission for his own political ends, Klein and some of the members who had the skills of political players were thus able to use their appointments to build up and upon their own resources. For example, in addition to Klein, Meed also used his connection with the New York project to increase his resources in the Jewish community. As head of WAGRO, a chief organizer of the 1981 World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council in Washington, he was able to add his affiliation with the Task Force to increase his power among survivor organizations. He also was able to use the new strength given to survivor organizations by all of these activities to increase the power of survivor organizations in the organized American Jewish community. By 1987, the American Gathering/Federation of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, which grew out of the World Gathering, was a member of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Two Advisory Council members, Hoenlein and Rubenstein, are also examples of political players who used the Task Force to expand their resources efficiently. As Executive Director of JCRC and a close ally of (JCRC Vice President) Klein's in the Jewish community, Hoenlein volunteered to provide staffing for the fledgling Task Force. He was thus able to work behind the scenes and recommend appointments to the subsequent Commission through Klein. This increased his

power in the organized Jewish community. Rubenstein's political public relations firm had the Koch campaign and many developers (including George Klein's Park Tower Realty) as important accounts. His connection with the mayor increased his power with the developers, and vice versa. His firm's volunteer public relations work for the Task Force and subsequent Holocaust Commission gave him a vehicle for further connecting himself with the interests of all of these clients, and his power increased. The built-in self-operating limitation of influence occurred for Koch and Rickman when Koch lost his reelection bid in 1989. Dahl's analysis of this characteristic of "pluralistic democracy" does not take into account, however, a situation such as that of the New York Holocaust museum project, which changed its structure over the years and for some time had two prime political players at the helm--Koch and Governor Mario Cuomo. In this case, the built-in self-operating limitation of influence that occurred when Koch lost his reelection bid in 1989 was distorted by Cuomo's earlier intervention and subsequent takeover of some of Koch's power vis-a-vis the project (see Chapter 10). (The use of the Holocaust memorial project as a tool for building power does not mean the above political players were not also committed to the memorialization of the Holocaust for its own sake.)

As chairman for the Task Force, Klein, guided by Rickman and Hoenlein, began this newest attempt to create a Holocaust

memorial. On October 2, 1981, he wrote to Task Force members that "we want to proceed with all deliberate speed to carry out the mission of the Mayor's Task Force on the Holocaust Memorial." He said that since the July 22 meeting in Gracie Mansion "we [he does not identify who "we" are] have explored possible locations, financing and various ideas, and there are some exciting possibilities." Klein's letter recommended dividing the work into four committees: Content of the Memorial, Location, Funding and Budget, and Inventory of Resources (to avoid duplication of what was already available in New York City). He then announced that four people had already agreed to chair three of these committees: Judah Gribetz for Inventory of Resources, Rabbi Irving Greenberg for Content of Memorial, and Irving Schneider for Location. It was perhaps a preview of the fundraising problems that were to ensue that the Funding slot was not filled. Interestingly, the letter says, "I am discussing with some members the Chairmanship of the Funding Committee." The "I am", however, is crossed out by hand and "we are" is substituted. The use of "I am", changed to "we are" only at the last minute could be another preview of problems to follow. Most Commission members interviewed did not want to be quoted but said that a major problem in the history of creation of the memorial museum was George Klein's failure to delegate responsibility and his view of this as "his" project.

Klein said in the letter that committees would meet in early October, with the entire Task Force meeting toward the end of October and again in November. He said the goal was an end of the year report to the Mayor, but he would need "full cooperation to meet our timetable." The letter added that Klein's 499 Park Avenue office would be the temporary mailing address for the Task Force, and that Rabbi Greenberg and Hoenlein had agreed to supply staffing.³³

There is no further archival material until January 20, 1982. A letter with that date informed Task Force member Meed that a public hearing would be held on February 1, 1982, regarding the creation of a memorial, at the request of Mayor Koch. The letter said notices of the hearing had been sent to "every Jewish organization, community and Holocaust group in the City," and asked Meed if he would be able to attend and help chair the meeting. The letter added that the draft report, which was to have been finished by the end of 1981, was almost complete, and would be sent for Meed's comments "shortly".³⁴

The only available report with a date at more or less this time is entitled "Mayor's Task Force on the Holocaust: Ideas for a NYC Holocaust Memorial Center". It is dated

³³Letter from George Klein to Task Force members, October 2, 1981, files of Municipal Archive, New York City, Record Group Mayor Koch, Accession 82-27, Subgroup Special Assistant Herb Rickman.

³⁴Letter from George Klein to Benjamin Meed, January 20, 1982, files of WAGRO, New York City.

December 1981, and appears to be a report of the committee headed by Rabbi Greenberg, which was to have explored content of the memorial. The report recommends that a Holocaust memorial center should address: the culture of European Jewry that was destroyed, a detailed factual account of the destruction of European Jewry (including resistance), and how this could have happened in "the supposedly civilized twentieth century". The report calls for an exhibition center for the general public, a scholarly archive that would become "America's Holocaust scholarship center", and a survivors' space, with personal taped memoirs and memorabilia. It says that "only through a sophisticated holistic approach can this museum fully realize the idea of uniting the scholarly and the popular", and adds that the proposal can be scaled down according to funds and can be an ongoing project with additions in years to come.³⁵ This modest preliminary proposal eventually became a **Mutagon** at an impasse: a grandiose project that included a complicated and changing political alliance; intricate real estate deals; the hiring of top level sophisticated fund raising, public relations and design professionals; and a projected budget of more than \$100 million.

³⁵"Mayor's Task Force on the Holocaust: Ideas for a NYC Holocaust Memorial Center", no author cited, December 1981, (Record Group Mayor Koch, Acc'n 82-87, Subgroup Special Assistant Herb Rickman), Municipal Archives, New York City.

The Mayor's Holocaust Memorial Task Force held hearings on February 1, 1982 in the Board of Estimate Chamber at City Hall, with Klein as chairman and Rickman making opening remarks. Rickman said the purpose of the hearing was for the Task Force to "solicit opinions from all concerned New Yorkers on this vital memorial." He made it clear, however, that this memorial was not for "all" New Yorkers, but for the Jewish community. He said: "It is our hope that this memorial to the Jewish martyrs of the Holocaust will encourage other groups who perished through genocidal campaigns during this century to establish memorial task forces along similar lines, and we will be proud to work with them as we have with the Jewish community."³⁶ This was a politically polite way of excluding the Armenians, Gypsies, homosexuals, Poles, Ukrainians, and any other group that had ideas about being included in this exclusively Jewish memorial.

After the hearing, which had given interested parties the opportunity to present their ideas, and thus added a veneer of "participatory democracy", the Task Force moved forward and recommended the establishment of a permanent Holocaust Memorial Commission.

³⁶"Remarks by Hon. Herbert P. Rickman, Special Assistant to the Mayor, Introducing Public Hearings of Mayor's Holocaust Memorial Task Force", February 1, 1982, (Record Group Mayor Koch, Acc'n 82-87, Subgroup Special Assistant Herb Rickman), Municipal Archives, New York City.

SUMMARY

The first available record of Koch's public expression of interest in creating a Holocaust memorial was in April 1979, although he may have included the issue in his Jewish "laundry list" of campaign promises in 1977. Koch's special assistant, Rickman, met with WAGRO head Meed in July 1979 and the subject of creating a Holocaust Commission was discussed. Koch did not act on this idea until Spring 1981, an election year. When he did so, he chose to head his Mayor's Task Force on the Holocaust millionaire real estate developer George Klein, who was a founding vice president of JCRC. Of the 28 members, most were wealthy men with connections to both the Jewish and business-finance-real estate communities. Banfield's and Dahl's analyses of local power can be applied to an extent. However they do not account for a second agenda between the players, nor for the changes in political alliances over time. In addition to forming an alliance to create a Holocaust memorial museum, Koch and Klein were also helping each other gain power and money through real estate deals and campaign contributions.

Koch's Mayor's Holocaust Memorial Task Force met for the first time on July 22, 1981, and held a public hearing on February 1, 1982. The political alliance between this Task Force and Koch was not an iron triangle or issue network; it was the initial stage of a **Mutagon**. It can best be described as a reciprocal arrangement or two-way street between the

mayor and New York City's organized Jewish community, especially the developer community and JCRC. This Task Force was the first step in an evolving political alliance, a **Mutagon**, that for more than ten years created an impasse rather than successful implementation of a major Holocaust memorial museum in New York City.

CHAPTER 9: THE TASK FORCE BECOMES THE NEW YORK CITY HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL COMMISSION

"There is not anybody I know who is opposed to a museum of the Holocaust in New York City. [But for] an enormous neo-Renaissance palazzo--dedicated to a manifestation of power, money and nothing but money--to be transformed into a museum of the Holocaust is displeasingly, offensively ironic." Brendan Gill¹

On September 14, 1982 Mayor Edward I. Koch's intervention in the effort to establish a Holocaust memorial in New York City was formalized. This effort, which had been unsuccessfully attempted by Jewish community groups and individuals since 1946, was now officially a "permanent" project of the government of the City of New York. At this point Koch was fully in control of the project, for which he created the interest group and chose or approved its co-chairmen and members. At this initial stage, the Mutagon's structure was simple: Koch and his political entrepreneur, Herbert Rickman formed a political alliance with an interest group they had created, for the purpose of creating a Holocaust memorial museum. The chairman of the interest group was developer George Klein, who both received political favors (for his development projects) from Koch and returned these favors in the form of major campaign contributions.

¹Brendan Gill, chairman of the New York Landmarks Conservancy and a leader in efforts to revive the Custom House, as quoted in The New York Times by David W. Dunlap, "Plans for Custom House are Presented to Board", August 2, 1984.

During the last week of August and the first week of September, 1982, Koch sent letters to prospective members and officers of the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission. The letters said a permanent Commission was being created upon recommendation of the temporary Task Force, and stressed the importance of New York City as the site of a major memorial: "Because New York City is regarded by all as the cultural and spiritual nucleus of American Jewry and is home to the largest number of Holocaust survivors, it is fitting that a Memorial be erected....It is tragic that the City with the largest Jewish population in the world outside the state of Israel, still does not have a fitting memorial to the six million martyrs lost in the Second World War."²

The letters said the first meeting of the Commission was scheduled for September 14 in City Hall, and that a press conference with the mayor would follow. Invitees were asked to call Herbert Rickman, the Mayor's Special Assistant (and the project's midwife), to tell him whether they would serve and whether they would attend this first meeting.

According to Rickman, the mayor's office "had always said from the beginning that we did not want the dollars and cents to come from government. It had to be privately raised. We were very clear on that. What the City was offering was our services, help in the selection of a site,

²Record Group Mayor Koch Acc'n 82-27, Subgroup Special Asst. Herb Rickman, Municipal Archives, New York City.

and the imprimatur of the administration--plus the help in putting together the Task Force. And as we put together the Task Force, we also prepared to put together the Commission." Except for the possibility that a site would be City-owned land and the time Rickman and others put in while on the City payroll, it is true no public money was involved. Rickman said developer George Klein, who had headed the Task Force, informed him he would not continue alone at this point and wanted a co-chairman.

Rickman said he then began the search for one, and at that time Henry Morgenthau, the father of Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau, was being hailed as having been the only Jew in government during World War II who spoke up about saving Jews from extinction. (The elder Morgenthau had been President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of the Treasury and did have an important role in urging rescue efforts. It is unclear why Rickman said he was then "being hailed". As mentioned in Chapter 8, Klein's father, too, had an important role in rescue efforts, through the Orthodox Vaad Hatzalah. Ironically, they had in common as their qualifications for being co-chairmen their fathers' histories and their political support of Koch.)

Rickman continued: "And I knew Bob [Robert M. Morgenthau] then to be a very passionate Zionist. I recommended him to Klein, and Klein thought it was wonderful. And I went in to the mayor and the mayor thought it was a

terrific idea. I called Morgenthau and he accepted it. So that was the dual chairmanship at that point."³ Koch said Morgenthau was appointed "because of his name, and his stature and his desire".⁴ However, he was also a Koch-allied Democrat, to balance Klein. (Klein was a political ally of Koch's but was known in the organized Jewish community as a prominent Republican and a strong supporter of President Ronald Reagan.) Morgenthau refused to be interviewed and said he had "no inside information" on the Commission. He said he became Co-chairman, because the mayor asked him and he said "yes".⁵

At the September 14 meeting in City Hall, Klein said the proposed Holocaust memorial would be "strictly Jewish", and would be financed through an endowment fund because it was "too holy for fundraising". He mentioned as two possible locations the Huntington Hartford Museum at Columbus Circle and the U.S. Custom House at Bowling Green. Klein announced that he and Morgenthau were to serve as co-chairmen, with Elie Wiesel and former United States Senator Jacob Javits as honorary chairmen. Koch's title became Founding Chairman.

³Interview with Herbert Rickman, March 30, 1990, New York City.

⁴Interview with Mayor Edward I. Koch, May 18, 1990, offices of Robinson, Silverman, Pearce, Aronsohn & Berman, New York City.

⁵Telephone conversation with Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau, December 21, 1991.

Klein said he had asked the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research on Fifth Avenue and 86th Street and the Center for Holocaust Studies Documentation and Research in Brooklyn to sell their buildings, join the memorial museum to be created, and contribute funds from their property sales to the Commission's planned endowment fund.⁶

A press release from the mayor's office said the Commission had more than 100 members and "includes Holocaust survivors, scholars, rabbis, business, political and cultural leaders and interested citizens." The press release said the Task Force report, released at the September 14 meeting, recommended "a memorial with a museum, archives and educational facilities. The proposed memorial center will be housed in an existing building in the city and established with between \$30 million and \$40 million in private funds." Possible components of the memorial were to be: a museum with exhibits on the Holocaust and Jewish life before Hitler; computer data banks, video consoles and other equipment to encourage active participation by visitors; archives, including written and oral testimonies; a monument outside; a special area inside for prayer, mourning and contemplation; an educational program for schools and the general public.

The press release said: "The Commission will cooperate and coordinate its efforts with other Holocaust Centers

⁶First meeting of New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission, City Hall, September 14, 1982, remarks by George Klein from author's notes.

across the country, especially with the planners of the proposed national Holocaust Memorial in Washington, D.C., and, if possible, with Holocaust centers around the world. The commission may invite existing centers of Holocaust study and research in New York City to join the Memorial center."⁷

Thus the **Mutagon** entered its second stage, with two co-chairmen, both Koch's political allies in a broader arena, heading the Koch-created interest group. Koch, as mayor, represented the government side of the Holocaust project's political alliance; but as titular "Founding Chairman" and the real creator of the Commission, he also represented the interest group side. This duality of Koch's role is but one manifestation of the **Mutagon's** complex relationship among the polygon's web of players.

As will be demonstrated in later chapters, many of the goals articulated by Klein and the mayor's press release at the original meeting did not come to fruition: Klein's "holy" endowment fund was eventually supplemented by a massive and growing (and not sufficiently successful) fund raising campaign with well-paid professionals and consultants; the cost of \$30 to \$40 million dollars increased by more than an additional \$100 million when the idea of building a museum from scratch eventually replaced the plan

⁷Press Release, Office of the Mayor, September 14, 1982, no. 244-82, Record Group Mayor Koch Acc'n 82-27, Subgroup Special Asst. Herb Rickman, Municipal Archives, New York City.

for a museum in an extant building; solely private funds were augmented by air rights donated by the State. The Huntington Hartford Museum at Columbus Circle, which Klein mentioned as a possible site, had already been ruled out by owners Gulf and Western, and they would not acquiesce; the Custom House, then only a gleam in Klein's eye, was obtained and later abandoned by the Commission. The Commission, instead, opted for Battery Park City, which changed the **Mutagon** dramatically and added Governor Mario Cuomo as a retroactive "Founding Co-Chairman", equal to Koch.

Other projections for the future also did not come to pass: The YIVO institute was not interested in merging, and the Brooklyn Center did not do so until 1990, after serious financial problems made independence impossible. Cooperation with the Washington, D.C. project turned into competition, with some key staff people playing "musical chairs" (e.g., New York consultant Jeshajahu (Shaike) Weinberg became director in Washington, and New York project director David Altshuler came from Washington). In September 1982, however, none of these developments (nor the fall of Commission members Bess Meyerson, Ivan Boesky, Associate Chairmen Donald Manes and Stanley Simon, and finally of Koch, himself) were foreseen. The **Mutagon** was only at the beginning of its tortuous path, which led to ten years of impasse.

With the exception of Associate Chairpersons, who were all current or past City, State and Federal elected officials

(and many of whom were coincidentally Jewish), all of the appointees named to the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission were Jewish.⁸ The Associate Chairpersons were appointed by virtue of their office, and not on their merit as individuals.

Rickman said: "We labored long and hard to create a very balanced Commission, and I'm very proud of that because we did most of the work in our office (i.e., on government time, with the government creating the interest group). We made certain we had representation from the survivor community and from every major sector of the Jewish community--Zionists, non-Zionists, Reform, Orthodox, left wing, right wing. It truly reflected the community as a whole--even geographically. We strove to have representation from the outer boroughs as well. They were appointed by the mayor, but I worked on them with George and then we submitted

⁸Associate Chairpersons were Attorney General Robert Abrams, Congressman Joseph Addabbo, State Senate Majority Leader Warren Anderson, Former Mayor Abraham Beame, City Council President Carol Bellamy, former Governor Hugh Carey, City Council Majority Leader Thomas Cuite, Senator Alphonse D'Amato, State Assembly Minority Leader James Emery, State Assembly Speaker Stanley Fink, Staten Island Borough President Anthony Gaeta, Brooklyn Borough President Howard Golden, City Comptroller Harrison J. Goldin, Congressman S. William Green, former Governor Averell Harriman, former Mayor Vincent Impellitteri, former Mayor John V. Lindsay, Queens Borough President Donald Manes, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, State Senate Minority Leader Manfred Ohrenstein, State Comptroller Edward V. Regan, Bronx Borough President Stanley Simon, Manhattan Borough President Andrew Stein, former Mayor Robert F. Wagner, Sr., and former Governor Malcolm Wilson.

them to the mayor and we had no problem with any of them."⁹ According to Rickman, he and Klein chose the people to serve on the Commission, with Koch's approval.

The Commission was not as "balanced" as Rickman said it was. The 66 members appointed to the original Commission (not including the Associate Chairpersons) can be divided in four categories: 1. high level officers and philanthropists of the organized Jewish community; 2. developers, real estate attorneys and high level members of the financial sector (with these two categories often overlapping); 3. less than ten Holocaust survivors; 4. only three Holocaust scholars. The first category included Morris B. Abram, Julius Berman, Ivan F. Boesky, Rabbi Chaskell Besser, Kenneth J. Bialkin, Rabbi Gerson Cohen, Dr. Saul Cohen, Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk, Judah Gribetz, Marvin Josephson, Rabbi Norman Lamm, Herman Merkin, Paul Milstein, Richard Ravitch, Abraham Ribicoff, Judge Simon Rifkind, Felix Rohatyn, Howard J. Rubenstein, Lewis Rudin, Dr. Raymond Sackler, Irving Schneider, Rabbi Arthur Schneier, Daniel Shapiro, Leonard Stern, Bernice Tannenbaum, Herbert Tenzer, and Peggy Tishman. With the exception of the rabbis, most of these people are also part of the second category. Other New York "movers and shakers" included union leader Barry Feinstein, close Koch associates Kenneth Lipper and Bess Meyerson, Brooklyn College president Robert Hess, and Beverly Sills. Survivors included Sam

⁹Rickman interview.

Bloch, Jack Eisner, Yaffa Eliach, Ernest Honig, Leon Jolson, Benjamin Meed, Ernest Michel and Eli Zborowski, and child of survivors' leader Menachem Rosensaft (Bloch's son-in-law). The scholars of the Holocaust were Henry Feingold, Rabbi Irving Greenberg, and survivor Yaffa Eliach. Only seven members were women.

The vast majority of the Commission was comprised of Jewish men who were rich and/or well-connected to Jewish money (especially in the real estate development and financial sectors) and establishment Jewish organizations in New York City. The survivor community was not as well represented, and many of the appointed survivors, themselves, were wealthy and/or well-connected. Scholars of the Holocaust, who should have been prominent in such an undertaking, were scarcely included. (One of the three, Yaffa Eliach, could triple in the categories of scholars, survivors and women.)

Not only was the Commission not nearly as broad-based as Rickman stated, but the "left wing" he spoke of was nowhere in sight. The members were, in fact, very linked to the generally conservative establishment Jewish organizations and Koch supporters. Rosensaft, a Labor Zionist who was later criticized for meeting with Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat, could be considered "left wing", but he was invited as head of the children of survivors network, which was not at all a "left wing" organization.

Because it was comprised of so many powerful and rich New Yorkers in general and members of New York's Jewish community in particular, and because it was officially empowered by the mayor (who was also part of the interest group), the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission was seemingly in a position to move government and accomplish its goal and create a memorial. The relationship was one of tacit mutual cooptation: high level leaders of the Jewish community were getting the mayor to build them a Holocaust memorial, and the mayor was getting these leaders to back him politically and financially. The leaders and the mayor could pretend the idea of the Holocaust memorial museum was pure, noble, and above politics, while, in fact, it was an integral part of the mayor's political outreach to the community. The structure of this political alliance cannot be analyzed as an iron triangle or an issue network; at this stage the **Mutagon** was still a mutual admiration society, or a reciprocal two-way street (complicated by the fact that the mayor created and was part of the interest group).

By the Spring of 1983, Koch's Commission was in full swing. Not unrelated was the first American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust survivors, which took place in Washington, D.C. on April 11-14. The presence of President Reagan at this event and the surrounding publicity for an event at which thousands of survivors met for the first time in the United States made the idea of a Holocaust memorial even more

acceptably "American", legitimate, and important. Moreover, since this event specifically heightened attention for the national memorial being planned in Washington, D.C., it is likely that Rickman and Klein realized their own New York project needed an immediate boost of publicity.

On May 3, 1983, before consultation with or approval by the Commission, Klein wrote to Gerald Carmen, Administrator for the General Services Administration (GSA), requesting that the Custom House be the site of a memorial. The letter, which began "Dear Gerald", said:

"Relative to our recent discussion, I am at this time formally requesting, on behalf of the New York City Holocaust Commission, the use in whole or in part of the Old Customs [sic] House located at Bowling Green.

"As you know, our Commission, initiated by Mayor Edward I. Koch, seeks to establish in New York City a museum and memorial dedicated to the millions of victims of the Holocaust. I am certain that you agree that such memorial is appropriate and would surely be welcomed by many people as a fitting tribute.

"We, of course, are prepared to abide by all applicable federal standards related to the use of the building and are prepared to submit a formal proposal in the near future...."

Copies of the letter were shown being sent to Senators Moynihan and D'Amato, Congressman Theodore Weiss, local GSA

Director William Diamond, and Commissioner Richard Hasse.¹⁰ By trying to win support from congressional allies and an executive agency, Klein, representing the **Mutagon**, was trying to form an iron triangle on a Federal level so the Commission could achieve the local political goal he was seeking--obtaining the Custom House. This iron triangle, or solid trilateral bond formed by an interest group, its advocates in Congress, and in the executive branch agency, had as its interest group angle the **Mutagon**--the local interest group-government alliance. To complicate the case further, Senators D'Amato and Moynihan, who were approached as the congressional angle of the triangle, were also Commission members. As was often the case, according to many Commission members, Klein acted first (in consultation with Rickman or Koch) and then asked for rubber stamp approval from the Commission. This approval was formally granted at a meeting of the Commission that took place in City Hall on June 8, 1983, with Mayor Koch and 53 members and associate chairpersons (or their representatives) attending. Minutes, which were sent to Commission members on June 24, included the following information: Klein presided, with co-chairman Morgenthau sending his regrets, because of "unavoidable circumstances".

¹⁰Letter from George Klein to Gerald Carmen, May 3, 1983, Record Group Mayor Koch Acc'n 87-45, Subgroup Special Asst. Herb Rickman, Municipal Archives, New York City.

According to the minutes, in addition to Koch, former Mayors Wagner and Beame (Commission Associate Chairmen), Council President Bellamy, Bronx Borough President Simon, Comptroller Goldin, and Governor Cuomo's representative, Rabbi Israel Moshowitz, pledged their support of the Commission's activities. The State Department of Education had approved the incorporation of the Commission as a not-for-profit corporation (on June 3), and procedures should be complete and filed with the Secretary of State by June 17, 1983. Dr. David Blumenfeld had been appointed as Executive Director of the Commission, which was now headquartered at the offices of the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC). The Law Department of the City of New York had ruled the Commission is "an official City commission" and is entitled to use the seal of the City of New York on its letterhead. (The "schizophrenic" private-public status of the Commission, of which JCRC headquarters and a City seal were components, will be analyzed in Chapter 15.)

Most significant in the minutes was information about the Custom House. Klein reported that "A number of sites were given consideration, but it was determined that the Old Customs [sic] House located at Bowling Green would best serve the requirements of a memorial museum." (Who did the "determining" is not addressed.) The U.S. Custom House was vacated by the Federal government in 1973 when customs service operations were moved to the World Trade Center.

Built in 1907, it is considered one of the finest examples of Beaux-Arts architecture in the United States.

Klein said that a letter of intent to lease space had been sent to the GSA and that on June 3 a meeting had been held in the Regional Director's office, which requested that the Commission prepare and submit a proposal for use of the space. He then introduced Charles Forberg, an architect, who presented "preliminary concepts" of the museum. The minutes said: "Using schematic charts and blown-up photographs of the Old Customs House, Mr. Forberg indicated that space requirements would consist of the second (rotunda) floor, the first floor and the lower level. This would allow five floors above for federal government use. One basic prerequisite is to develop a plan whereby the Holocaust museum center space is a self-contained unit, that separate ingress and egress be provided for the federal facilities and for the Holocaust Memorial facilities." Klein, whose business depended on his ability to sell proposals for development, clearly knew how to present his proposal to the Commission in a professional and persuasive manner.

The minutes said: "After discussion, clarification and further elaboration of the preliminary plan, it was unanimously approved that the Co-Chairmen, George Klein and Robert M. Morgenthau, or either of them, be authorized to further develop a proposal and to enter into discussion with the General Services Administration and the New York City

Department of Parks, in behalf of a corporation to be formed, to be known as the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission, Inc., with a view towards obtaining a lease for such space in the Old Customs House and for use of Bowling Green Park as may be needed for the establishment of a Holocaust memorial and museum. Assurances were given that no decision would be reached without the final approval of the full Commission and that other sites would not be precluded from consideration should the need arise."

The minutes added that Klein "cited the urgency for financial support of the project", and he asked members of the Commission to serve on one of four committees: Finance, Building Contents and Program, Building Construction and Development, Memorial Park (in front of building).¹¹

The Certificate of Incorporation, to which the minutes referred, was signed by the State Attorney General's office on June 8 and by Donald J. Sullivan, a Justice of the Supreme Court, on June 10, 1983, and then filed with the Secretary of State, under Section 402 of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law. The purposes of the corporation included (but were not limited to) the following functions: "(a) To perpetuate the memory of the six million Jews who died in the Holocaust; to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust not only as they died, but as they lived; to communicate the uniqueness of the

¹¹"New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission, General Meeting-Official Minutes, June 8, 1983" with cover letter dated June 24, 1983.

Jewish experience in the Holocaust; to teach the history and lessons of the Holocaust to all people for generations to come. (b) To create a Holocaust memorial in New York City. (c) To conduct lectures, seminars and other educational programs and to publish articles, papers and research materials. (d) To raise funds...." Signators, as initial directors of the corporation, were: Klein, Morgenthau, Dr. Irving Greenberg (who headed Zachor/National Jewish Resource Center in New York and was an early director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council), Judah Gribetz (an attorney active in Democratic politics and Jewish communal affairs), Benjamin Meed (survivor and head of WAGRO Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization), and Ernest Michel (survivor and head of the Jewish Federation's fundraising). The firm of Weil, Gotshal & Manges, represented by Ira Millstein and other associates, provided free counsel for the incorporation and other legal matters.¹²

On December 6, 1983, the Holocaust Commission sent to the GSA Regional Office a memorandum regarding the Commission's "informal proposal" to lease space in the Custom House. The stated purposes were somewhat different than those listed in the Certificate of Incorporation: "a. To perpetuate the memory of the 6,000,000 Jews who were murdered by Nazi Germany in the Holocaust. b. To commemorate the

¹²Certificate of Incorporation of New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission, Inc., files of the Commission, New York City.

lives of the victims of the Holocaust by creating a record of Jewish life, society and culture in Europe. c. To portray the arrival of Jewish immigrants to New York City and to restore to memory the vigorous traditions and lifestyles which formed a trans-Atlantic bond between European Jewry and the Jewry of New York City. d. To support and encourage the widest dissemination of educational materials and curriculum, so that future generations would gain knowledge of the history and lessons of the Holocaust. e. To provide for appropriate commemorative ceremonies and remembrance programs honoring the memory of those who died in the Holocaust." Portrayal of Jewish immigration to New York City was not mentioned in the earlier document, and may have been an attempt to "Americanize" the image of the museum for the GSA and the Federal government. An intended use of space was appended, including square footage figures prepared by architect Forberg. The request was for 86,200 square feet for the Commission's project, and referred to a November 18, 1983 letter from GSA to the Commission, regarding the project and the square footage available.¹³

On February 11, 1984, three months after GSA's letter to the Commission and nine months after Klein's (first name basis) letter to GSA administrator Carmen, GSA officially and

¹³Memorandum to GSA, Region 2 from New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission, December 6, 1983, "Re: Informal Proposal to Lease Space in the Old U.S. Custom House at Bowling Green", files of Commission, New York City.

publicly announced the availability of space. A display ad in the real estate section of The New York Times said of the Custom House: "The U.S. General Services Administration is offering to lease approximately 80,000 square feet of space on three floors of the building, including the Rotunda, to a non-profit cultural/educational institution. The space will be offered on an "as is" basis and the potential user will be required to rehabilitate it for its intended use--subject to architectural control by the government." Proposals were to be received no later than May 9, 1984.¹⁴ The Commission had thus begun their "homework" of creating a Federal iron triangle of support nine months before availability of the space was publicly announced.

Soon after the GSA's official announcement, Klein and Morgenthau (who always co-signed Klein's letters, although he was never as involved as Klein) took credit for this availability. They wrote to Commission members on February 24, 1984: "After an arduous effort on the part of our Executive Committee, and with the superb help of government officials and friends, we are pleased to inform you that the GSA has finally consented to offer for lease approximately 80,000 square feet to a non-profit cultural/educational institution." But the battle was only beginning, because other "cultural/educational institutions" were also

¹⁴The New York Times, February 11, 1984, New York City.

interested in the space and trying to align their own political allies.

One weapon in the Commission's arsenal was a slick 24 page brochure describing the need for a memorial museum, Jewish beginnings in lower Manhattan (site of the Custom House), the suitability of the Custom House as a site, intended components of the memorial museum, architectural drawings of the museum in the Custom House, plans for reaching out to the community and networking with other Holocaust institutions, and, of course, the prestigious list of members and officers, headed by Founding Chairman Edward I. Koch. This was to serve as a public relations and fund raising tool in the Commission's effort to win the Custom House. The new brochure was announced in the February 24 letter, and described as the basis for the proposal to be submitted to GSA by May 9, 1984.

The letter also said: "Obviously, during the next two months much must be done. Building plans must be formulated, our fundraising effort must commence and public support must be encouraged. We, therefore, will be calling on our Commission members to lend us their assistance. By such a coordinated effort, we are confident that we stand an excellent chance of being successful. We now have the real opportunity of achieving our goal of building a 'living

memorial' which is both impressive and befitting our great city."¹⁵

Rickman said: "We had pretty much targeted the Custom House Building, and the Mayor was in agreement with me that it was a suitable site. The Custom House became our target. We thought that would be the best site possible for the memorial. And what we did was, we pretty much put it on hold as far as the Feds were concerned. I reached out to Senator Moynihan's office and they were very supportive [as was Senator D'Amato's office]. The American Indian [museum] were trying to get hold of it then. It wasn't so much that we were stopping American Indian, but we had a strong commitment to keeping it in Washington Heights and to making sure it expanded its operations there and became an important vital part of the community." (A 1978 letter from Koch to the director of the Museum of the American Indian stresses the importance of this policy for the Koch Administration.¹⁶)

Koch, Rickman, Klein and others on the Commission used their influence, which their affiliation with the Commission had increased, to gain the support of a broad range of elected officials. Since many of these officials were

¹⁵Letter from George Klein and Robert M. Morgenthau to Commission members, February 24, 1984, files of Senator Manfred Ohrenstein, New York City.

¹⁶Rickman interview. Regarding Indian museum, see letter from Mayor Koch to Dr. Roland W. Force, June 1, 1978, Files of Mayor Koch, Subgroup Rickman-1978, Municipal Archives, New York City.

already connected with the Commission as Associate Chairpersons, it was easy to create a Federal iron triangle of support and the "sell" was not difficult. D'Amato, who was close to the Republican Reagan Administration, and Klein, a high level contributor to Reagan, were influential in getting the Federal government to agree to lease the space. D'Amato told the JCRC at the time: "I am convinced that this much-needed and long-awaited memorial to six million people would find an appropriate home in this historic structure." He said: "In New York City, we now have the leadership and the means to place before Christian and Jew, young and old, a living memorial to the people who where exterminated by the Third Reich."¹⁷ (D'Amato used the word "people" instead of the more specific and appropriate word "Jews" two times in two consecutive sentences.)

In the next few months, the Commission leadership continued to solicit support from elected officials, favorable press, and private funding from contributors in the Jewish community. On May 8, 1984, a meeting of the Commission was held in the Tent Room of the Regency Hotel, "to bring the Commission up to date on the progress being made regarding our site (Custom House) acquisition proposal". Klein asked for and received formal approval to make a proposal to the Federal government to lease approximately

¹⁷Eric Greenberg, "Custom House in N.Y. may become Holocaust memorial", The Jewish Week, March 9, 1984, New York City.

100,000 square feet at the Custom House "for the creation, development and building of a memorial to the Holocaust."¹⁸ Again, the full Commission meeting was a rubber stamp procedure, after Rickman, Morgenthau, a few others, and mostly Klein had already placed "all the ducks in a row".

One purpose of creating the Commission was to have a body of leaders from the Jewish establishment linked to the Mayor, and in a position to demonstrate their approval for decisions he and Special Assistant Rickman had already made. (Koch was generally close to the organized Jewish community, outspokenly pro-Israel and anti-Jessie Jackson, and accused of engendering black-white--which often was black-Jewish--polarization.) Like Robert Dahl's analysis of Mayor Lee's Citizens Action Committee for redevelopment¹⁹, the main function of Koch's (and later also Governor Cuomo's) Holocaust Memorial Commission was to sell the project to the community and to assure acceptability (and funding). Both groups are supposedly structures of citizen participation, but they were deliberately created by a mayor to endorse his proposals. As Dahl said, the relationship between leaders and citizens is often reciprocal in a pluralist democracy: leaders influence decisions of constituents, but leaders'

¹⁸New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission, General Meeting-Official Minutes, May 8, 1984.

¹⁹Robert Dahl, Who Governs?, Yale University, 1961.

decisions are also influenced by what they think constituents want.²⁰

In the case of the Commission, the situation was somewhat different than Dahl's analysis. One community leader--George Klein--had as large a role in shaping policy as the mayor and Rickman in this two way street. Furthermore, as time went by and the **Mutagon** political coalition changed, the mayor was no longer in control of the Commission or the project. The many changes in structure of the alliance and the length of time that passed led to impasse, rather than implementation.

In the beginning, in the case of the Holocaust Commission, Koch and Rickman thought the organized Jewish community wanted a Holocaust memorial, and, more specifically, they then thought the Custom House would please the Jewish leadership. Klein certainly wanted it there, and pushed hard for it at this point. At the May 8 meeting, he "indicated that the Commission is indeed fortunate that the Custom House, a quality, landmark building, is being made available for public use." He said the May 9 deadline for proposals had been extended to May 24, 1984. He also said that because the Federal government had allocated \$28 million for general renovation and many supplies would be donated for the museum, only \$5 million was needed to build it. Klein added that the Federal government could not grant use of the

²⁰Dahl, Who Governs?, p. 90.

facility without the approval of the mayor of New York City (the creator and Founding Chairman of the Commission).²¹

Construction Committee Chairman Irving Fischer, a developer, reported that a team of architects and engineers led by James Stewart Polshek had inspected the Custom House, with work donated by developers on the Commission, including Klein. Klein announced that he and Leonard Stern had each agreed to make \$500,000 contributions over the next five years, and introduced a newly hired professional fund raiser, Bernd Brecher. Klein said the goal was \$40 million--\$15 million for renovation and \$25 million for an endowment fund to preclude yearly fund raising. He asked that the Executive Committee be empowered to determine a realistic amount of rent for the GSA proposal before submitting it.

(This "Executive Committee" was not defined on paper. It changed over the years, but always consisted of Klein, Morgenthau, Rickman, the official incorporators, and a few others. Generally, Klein and Rickman made the decisions and then rounded up enough members of the Executive Committee to make the decision official and "democratic". The names listed on the New York City Holocaust Memorial Museum's Provisional Charter, granted April 27, 1984, are Klein, Morgenthau, Irving Greenberg, Judah Gribetz, Benjamin Meed and Ernest Michel--the same as those on the June 1, 1983

²¹Official Minutes, May 8, 1984, op. cit.

Certificate of Incorporation of the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission.)

Between July and October 1984, when GSA made its decision about the Custom House, letters on file indicate there was a letter-writing campaign orchestrated by either the Commission, the mayor's office, or both. William Diamond, GSA Regional Director received letters of support for a Holocaust museum from Jewish organizations and elected officials that included: National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, American Jewish Congress, Senator Moynihan, Senator D'Amato, Mayor Koch, and Governor Mario Cuomo. Executive Director Blumenfeld said the Commission had 60 letters of endorsement from major Jewish organizations.²² At this stage, there was a Federal iron triangle of political forces aggressively working to obtain the Custom House, with the local **Mutagon** as the interest group angle of this iron triangle. Ironically, while Cuomo had sent a letter to Diamond urging that the museum be in the Custom House, his political brokers were already beginning to think about siting the project in Battery Park City and making the governor Koch's equal partner.

Meanwhile, five other groups were also vying for the space, and one serious contender emerged to challenge the

²²Copies of letters listed are in files of author. Blumenfeld statement in "Hope Rises for N.Y. Holocaust Memorial" by Julius Liebb, Jewish Press, October 5, 1984, New York, p.2.

Holocaust Commission in seeking support from the local Community Board, elected officials, and the press. At a Community Board 1 meeting on July 31, 1984, most of the six competing applicants made presentations, with Executive Director Blumenfeld appearing for the Commission. The other proposal under serious consideration by GSA was that of an arts consortium, to make the Custom House a cultural and educational center. Plans included an Ocean Liner Museum, seven theaters, restaurants and a half-price ticket booth. The consortium included the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York, the Byrd Hoffman Foundation, the Center for Arts Information, the Cultural Council Foundation, the Dance Theater Workshop, the Kitchen Center, the Ocean Liner Museum and the Theatre Development Fund. The Community Board did not make a recommendation at the meeting, but complained they had only learned of GSA's plans to lease the space one week earlier.²³

A New York Times editorial, Governor Cuomo's head of the New York State Council on the Arts--Kitty Carlisle Hart, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts Frank Hodsoll, and others publicly supported the arts consortium. Hart's support may have been a precursor of Cuomo's later recommendation that the Holocaust project be housed elsewhere, in his Battery Park City. The Times said: "But

²³David W. Dunlap, "Plans for Custom House Are Presented to Board", The New York Times, August 2, 1984.

is the Customs House, extravagantly decorated with statuary symbolizing civilization's triumphs, appropriate for a Holocaust memorial? In the midst of its celebratory art, somber revelations of depraved inhumanity may seem discordant, even trivialized."²⁴ Hart said: "I would like to express my support for the proposal which would bring together under one roof some of the most respected and productive arts organizations in New York."²⁵ The Wall Street Journal said: "Perhaps the mayor should consider putting the city behind a fresh and dramatic plan instead of encouraging the commission to pay rent in perpetuity to the federal government for a space that would never, legally or sentimentally or architecturally, be its own." The article suggested that Klein use part of the property he would develop in Times Square (through the Urban Development Corporation) and build there as a Holocaust memorial a replica of a wooden Polish synagogue.²⁶

GSA's decision, scheduled for August, was delayed until October. Meanwhile, Blumenfeld spoke at Community Board 1's public session on September 12, 1984, to advocate the Commission's project. Despite his oral and written

²⁴"What to Do With the Customs [sic] House", editorial in The New York Times, August 11, 1984.

²⁵Owen Moritz, "A split on Bowling Green", New York Daily News, June 30, 1984.

²⁶Raymond Sokolov, "Rm to Let. Landmark Bldg. 77,000 Sq. Ft.", The Wall Street Journal, October 3, 1984, p. 28.

arguments, the Board voted eighteen to three in favor of a cultural center. The Board's vote was only a recommendation. Endorsements for the Commission, on the other hand, came from the elected officials who also sat on the advisory board of Diamond, the GSA regional administrator who was to make the final decision.

On October 17, after six months of lobbying and competition between the Holocaust Commission and the arts consortium, GSA announced the Commission would be awarded a lease in the Custom House. Diamond said the Commission was chosen because its "proposal was the strongest and the best deal for the Government, based upon the amount of money offered." He said the Commission would provide \$5 million toward the restoration of the building, and that a twenty year renewable lease had not yet been negotiated.²⁷ The facts that Koch, Cuomo, Moynihan, D'Amato and Congressman Ted Weiss sat on Diamond's advisory board, all endorsed the Commission's project, and all but Weiss were on the Commission, were clearly in the Commission's favor. Their Federal iron triangle had prevailed.

Rickman said of the GSA decision: "We won the Customs House, despite local criticisms from people like Brendan Gill who felt it was ill-suited for our purpose and they wanted to

²⁷Joseph Berger, "Custom House Will be Museum on Holocaust", The New York Times, October 18, 1994, p. B3.

use it for other purposes."²⁸ The year 1984 thus ended on a high note for the Commission. It had \$47,719 in the bank for operating expenses (as opposed to \$23,741 a year earlier)²⁹, and now that the Custom House was in its hands, it was going "full steam ahead" to complete the Holocaust memorial museum by Spring 1986.

SUMMARY

In September 1982 Mayor Koch launched his New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission, headed by developer George Klein and Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau. At this stage the **Mutagon** was still a reciprocal two-way street between the Commission leaders and the mayor, as his earlier Task Force had been. Of the 66 members named to the Commission, all were Jewish and most were rich men well-connected to the organized Jewish community; many were real estate developers and their attorneys. In May 1983 Klein single-handedly (with Koch's approval) wrote to the GSA requesting the Custom House as the Holocaust memorial museum site. A Federal iron triangle of political forces was mobilized to obtain this site, including Congressmen, Senators, and other elected officials, major Jewish organizations, and board members of the GSA. The **Mutagon**--at

²⁸Rickman interview.

²⁹Report by Eisner and Lubin, Certified Public Accountants, March 21, 1985, New York City.

that stage, the mayor's office and the Commission--was the interest group angle of this Federal iron triangle. In October 1984, despite strong opposition from an arts consortium, the Holocaust Commission was chosen to be awarded a lease for the Custom House. Governor Cuomo was among the elected officials who supported the Commission's bid.

CHAPTER 10: GOVERNOR CUOMO INTERVENES AND THE HOLOCAUST COMMISSION BECOMES CITY/STATE

"The Custom House, I believe, is a particularly fitting site for this significant endeavor." Mario Cuomo, July 27, 1984¹ "Objections have been raised that this building is an inappropriate place to house the museum." Mario Cuomo, April 5, 1985.²

The early part of 1985 was an ambivalent and pivotal time for the Holocaust Commission, influenced by the intervention of Governor Mario Cuomo in processes that since the Spring of 1981 had been the province of the Koch Administration. By the beginning of 1985, Governor Cuomo's political broker began negotiating with the Commission for the site of the memorial museum to be changed from the Custom House to Battery Park City. The work of the Koch Administration and New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission Co-Chairman George Klein to create a Federal iron triangle of forces and obtain the Custom House was about to be negated. Likewise, Koch's reciprocal two-way arrangement with New York City's organized Jewish community, the beginning stage of a changing polygon, was about to change drastically. The **Mutagon** was about to become a monstrous polygon of political forces with two heads sometimes at odds with each other.

¹Letter to William Diamond, GSA Administrator.

²Michael Oreskes, "Battery Park City Offers Holocaust Museum a Site", The New York Times, April 5, 1985, p. A1.

Cuomo's public reason for intervening and grabbing a piece of the "Holocaust pie" was his belief in the importance of memorializing the Holocaust. It is not possible to document the reasons behind the public stance, but they appear to have been: 1. to take away some of the glory from his old rival, Koch; 2. to ingratiate himself with the organized Jewish community; 3. to find a suitable public museum, in keeping with his plan to give Battery Park City "a soul"; 4. to seek a different use for the Custom House, more in keeping with his own purposes.

Cuomo's chief power broker for the change was Meyer S. (Sandy) Frucher, who was his close friend and president of Battery Park City Authority (BPCA). Assisting Frucher were Ellen Conovitz, the Governor's Appointments Secretary, who has close ties to the organized Jewish community, and Rabbi Israel Mowshowitz, the Governor's director of community affairs, whose unofficial title was liaison to the organized Jewish community. (As a former president of the New York Board of Rabbis, Mowshowitz had been named to Koch's Task Force and original Commission in his own right. He later also served as Cuomo's representative on the Commission.)

Perhaps Frucher (who also has close ties to the organized Jewish community) saw himself as a latter-day Stuart Eizenstat, performing for Cuomo the same act of ingratiation with the Jewish community that Eizenstat organized for President Carter in 1978 (see Chapter 7).

Cuomo, however, already had good relations with the Jewish community in New York State. The idea of making him prominent in a major Holocaust memorial project--which was on a scale to compete with the national memorial--may have been to give him a more national connection with the Jewish community, in the event he would decide to run for President.

Frucher could not give a specific date for his entrance into the project, and recalled it as follows:

"At a point in time there was a lot of controversy associated with going to the Custom House. I saw a piece in the paper and it described the controversy. I read in the newspaper there was a lot of controversy associated with the Holocaust museum going to the Custom House. So I did two things: One, I had lunch with Brendan Gill [chairman of the New York Landmarks Conservancy] to determine whether or not there was any great opposition to the notion--or his opposition within that community--about this Holocaust museum. He said no, it was really the location [in the Custom House]. He thought the building wasn't appropriate although the project was appropriate. I then met with the head of the Municipal Art Society, Kent Barwick, and determined the same thing from Kent. And then I called the governor and said that there might be a proposed compromise associated with all of this--and that is to somehow move them to Battery Park City, and thereby save

the Custom House. The governor said that he thought it was a good idea and I should pursue it. And then I met with George Klein, and a subsequent meeting with Klein, [Robert M.] Morgenthau and Judah Gribetz. We walked around the site. The initial proposal was to put them in a park that was to be in the southern tip of Battery Park. In the master plan there was an idea for a public institution in the park, like a museum."³

No doubt Frucher, who was one of Cuomo's top political advisors and closest friends and "plugged in" to the Jewish community, also discussed with the governor the political benefits of such a move. He insisted for the record, however, that his primary motive was other than political. Asked whether his deal with Koch, Klein and Morgenthau for the governor to become Koch's equal "Founding Co-chairman" was for political purposes, Frucher said: "I was not unmindful of the fact that making him a co-founder had some residual benefits. But it wasn't being driven by that. It was being driven by inequities and unfairnesses. If the State was going to be the principal player in securing the land and putting it together, at that point it became necessary and appropriate to have the governor do it. But I was not unmindful of the political benefits."⁴ The State

³Interview with Meyer S. (Sandy) Frucher, New York City, February 4, 1991.

⁴Ibid.

would have no other reason for becoming the "principal player", except for the purpose of giving the governor political benefits with the Jewish community, but Frucher would not say so.

Almost from the beginning of 1985, there were two simultaneous scripts being played out with regard to site selection. Publicly, the Custom House venture proceeded, with its Federal iron triangle of forces in place. Quietly, meanwhile, Frucher was negotiating with Commission co-chairmen Klein and Morgenthau and Koch's political broker, Herbert Rickman, to create a two-headed **Mutagon** and move the site of the Holocaust museum to Battery Park City. In mid-January, 1985, there was already a public clue that negotiations with BPCA were underway. In New York Magazine's "Intelligencer" column, philanthropist Brooke Astor was reported to be lobbying against placing the Holocaust museum in the Custom House. She reportedly told both Koch and Morgenthau she was opposed, and then said the mayor agreed with her. Koch then told the magazine "he hadn't told Astor he was against the memorial--only that 'everyone has pointed out that there are problems with that site and there may be alternatives.'" New York then went on to report: "One of those is Battery Park City. The president of that state development, Sandy Frucher, said he is talking with Morgenthau and the commission's co-chairman, developer George Klein, about putting the museum on a three-acre site there.

'We proposed this before,' he said. 'Now that they have one bird in hand, they're looking at our offer.'⁵ (There is no evidence of any earlier offer by Frucher.)

Five weeks later, The Jewish Week, the Jewish Federation-linked establishment newspaper reported: "The memorial commission is negotiating a lease with the U.S. General Services Administration for the Custom House after it was chosen last October to occupy the site over several other museum commissions and arts groups. Designs for a three-level 'living museum' include a chapel and meditation room, video and computer-based study centers and exhibit space devoted to the rise of Nazism, Jewish resistance and the birth of the State of Israel." The article said renovation of the Custom House was already underway, and that the museum was expected to open in about three years (a year and a half more than the original Spring 1986 target.) Commission director David Blumenfeld is quoted, defending the site as "very appropriate". He also said that "the fact that it was a customs house fits in with the immigration theme. The beauty of the murals and the building in a way commemorate the beauty of European Jewish art and of the old world ambiance." BPCA was not mentioned in this story.⁶ The two

⁵Mary Anne Ostrom, "Intelligencer: Mrs. Astor Argues Against Holocaust-Shrine Site", New York Magazine, January 14, 1985, New York City, p. 10.

⁶Adriel Bettelheim, "City's Holocaust Museum seeks exhibits, funds" The Jewish Week, February 22, 1985, New York City, p. 13.

articles reflected the two-pronged negotiations then taking place: one between Koch's office and Commission leaders and the Governor's office, and the other between Commission leaders and the General Services Administration (GSA). The appearance of the Custom House story in the Federation-linked Jewish Week at that time is an indication this was the negotiation the Commission wanted publicized.

On March 1, 1985, the Commission was still communicating with the GSA, providing information that had been requested. A proposed schedule of meetings between Commission and GSA personnel was included, with dates running to May 21, 1985. That date was said to be the deadline for lease negotiations, extended from February 20.⁷ (This extended deadline bought time for a decision regarding BPCA.) A March 3 story in the Daily News said that "the memorial commission is still negotiating a home for the museum. Although use of the Customs House at Bowling Green was approved by the General Services Administration, the state is negotiating for a possible site in Battery Park City."⁸

In the midst of these wheelings and dealings for a site, the New York City Holocaust Memorial Museum (which is different from the Commission) became a legal entity. On February 15, 1985, the Trustees of the New York City

⁷Letter from David L. Blumenfeld to John M. Marcic, GSA, March 1, 1985, Commission Files, New York City.

⁸John Webb, "To keep the memories alive" Daily News, March 3, 1985, New York City, p. 12.

Holocaust Memorial Museum signed a "Statement of Organizational Action of Trustees in Lieu of Organization Meeting". Signators were the same as those who incorporated the Commission: Klein, Morgenthau, Dr. Irving Greenberg, Judah Gribetz, Benjamin Meed and Ernest Michel. The Statement elected officers, who were: Koch, Founding Chairman; Jacob K. Javits and Elie Wiesel, Honorary Chairmen; Morgenthau and Klein, Co-chairmen of the Board; Blumenfeld, Secretary and Executive Trustee; and Ira M. Millstein, Counsel. These men constituted the "Board of Trustees", which the by-laws said could not exceed 25 people. They were empowered to designate from their number three or more trustees to constitute an Executive Committee. The first officers were appointed by Koch (who thus still controlled the **Mutagon**), and thereafter the trustees were to elect the officers at annual elections.

Although the Commission and the Museum were officially two separate entities, the same men controlled both, and Koch was in command. Now, the governor wanted to step in and take away as much of that command as possible. The politics of site selection became crucial, because whoever controls the site of the museum has tremendous power over the Commission and the Museum Board of Trustees. By accepting Battery Park City as the site, Koch, Klein, Morgenthau and company would allow Cuomo to suddenly wield power in a project where he formerly had virtually none.

The political importance of site selection is analyzed by Edward C. Banfield, who presented six case studies of political influence in civic controversies in Chicago: construction of a branch hospital, the merger of county and city welfare departments, extension of rapid transit lines, construction of the Fort Dearborn Project civic center, creation of a permanent branch of University of Illinois, and creation of an exhibition hall. All of these case studies are similar to each other and to the creation of the Holocaust museum, in the use and intermeshing of influence by public officials, interest groups, media and private entrepreneurs. Banfield analyzes many factors that influence the choice of the site for his six case studies: e.g., how they will affect business, elected officials, neighborhoods, the alternative sites not selected, government services.⁹

Site selection has been a major component of creation of the Holocaust museum from the beginning. Consideration of how the site of the museum would affect elected officials was crucial, because the Custom House site was chosen by the Koch-affiliated Commission leadership, and Battery Park City was chosen by the governor's political broker. As part of the deal for the land, he was to become an equal "founding co-chairman" (retroactively) with Koch. The choice of Battery Park City thus enhanced the governor's position and

⁹Edward C. Banfield, Political Influence, The Free Press of Glencoe, New York, 1961.

diminished Koch's. (The effects on business, the neighborhood, and the site not chosen were less important in this case than in Banfield's study. With or without a new Holocaust museum, both Battery Park City and the Custom House had the capacity to flourish--neither site solely depended on it.)

Banfield's questioning whether the "scientific" evaluation of a chosen site is important for public relations and/or as a means of stalling initiation of a project is also relevant for an analysis of the Holocaust project. Experts evaluated the Custom House and deemed it highly suitable, a conclusion that was publicly seconded by all elected officials and Commission leadership. This "scientific" or "expert" evaluation was used for public relations, to promote the obtaining of and public acceptance of the Custom House. Initiation of the project was then stalled while the experts determined that in fact Battery Park City would be a better location. A public relations campaign was then launched by the Commission to convince the organized Jewish community that this second site was better.

Meanwhile, encouraged by the leadership of the Commission, on February 25, 1985, City Councilwoman Susan Alter's (D-Brooklyn) resolution, which placed the Council's "moral support" behind the concept of establishing a Holocaust Memorial, was approved by the City Council. Alter said the resolution (no. 1063-A) did not cite the Custom

House, because it was not meant to focus on a specific project.¹⁰ She did not say publicly that the Commission's indecision between the Custom House and Battery Park City at that point precluded her from being specific. Most of those who testified at Alter's hearing were Commission members, including Rickman, Klein, Meed, Michel, former Congressman Herbert Tenzer, Judge Simon Rifkind, Rabbi Judah Nadich, Henry Feingold, and Menachem Rosensaft.¹¹

Because Alter's hearing was intended as a gesture of support for the Commission, she did not invite testimony from representatives of groups that would be expected to be negative, e.g. emigre Polish or Ukrainian societies. The testimonies, in fact, were orchestrated by David Blumenfeld, who then was the Commission director. Just as an iron of triangle of support for the Custom House was built on a Federal level with GSA and members of Congress, in this instance the **Mutagon**--i.e., the Commission and the mayor's office--was using the City Council to give the appearance of local unity and acceptance of the project. (The Alter resolution was merely good public relations, as a resolution

¹⁰Stewart Ain, "Council approves concept of city Holocaust memorial", Long Island Jewish World, February 28, 1985.

¹¹"New York City Council Adopts Resolution Urging City to Establish a Holocaust Memorial Center", Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin, March 1, 1985, New York City, p. 4.

by the City Council then had no power to impact on the **Mutagon.**)

The Federal iron triangle and local support, however, had already been undermined by the governor's intervention. Exactly how Cuomo got into the act with his Battery Park City offer is not clear, except that Frucher was his broker. Koch's explanation was: "We needed them [the governor]. The Holocaust is bigger than anybody I know of, and the more people you can bring in, and help, the better off you are. So the issue became where would it be--before a decision was made that the Custom House was not the best place. And we needed Battery Park City. You can't do Battery Park City without the governor, and the governor was very desirous of being involved. So it was a natural marriage made in heaven."¹²

This explanation makes it sound like Koch and the Commission decided Battery Park City would be a good location, and then they sought out the governor. However, according to Rickman and others, Frucher, on behalf of the governor, sought out the Commission and "made them an offer they couldn't refuse". Frucher corroborated this. He said he not only had the idea for moving the project to Battery Park City, but that he also evolved the idea from the museum's standing alone in the park to its being part of an

¹²Interview with Mayor Edward I. Koch, New York City, May 18, 1990.

apartment building, and thereby generating some revenue for the Commission. Frucher said he went to Klein with his idea for a museum-apartment complex, and Klein liked the idea. "During the course of that, two things happened," Frucher said. "One, if it was going to become a State project, it seemed appropriate to reconstitute the Commission; and the mayor, who had originally been the founder, in this new construct would share the honorary founder role with the governor."¹³

Koch would not or could not say exactly how the governor got involved. "I can only tell you everyone agreed Battery Park City would be a better place than the Custom House," he said. "You'd start from scratch and build your building. In the Custom House, there was the problem of murals that are extraordinary, but don't fit in, and they'd have to stay there." Asked whether the governor came to him and the Commission, or they came to the governor, Koch said: "I think this was probably all done through Klein and Morgenthau doing it, but I don't have a recollection of how we brought the governor in. I suspect it was they who initiated it."¹⁴

It was not, however, Klein and Morgenthau but Frucher who "brought the governor in". Frucher said: "I made the offer of Battery Park City to the Holocaust Commission, but I did it with the knowledge of the [governor's] chamber. I

¹³Frucher interview.

¹⁴Koch interview.

personally spoke to the governor about it and to Michael Del Giudice, who was the secretary at the time. There was an effort to do it within the chamber. Del Giudice served as an intermediary and we were able to work it out so that the State was able to do it."¹⁵

Unlike Koch, Rickman (the Mayor's Special Assistant responsible for the project) specifically stated the initiative was the governor's. "The Reagan Administration awarded us the Custom House, and no sooner did that happen than the governor interceded," he said. "And the governor at the time, as we understood it, had strong interest in using the Custom House for his offices, or for offices that would be part of the State Executive. The building would be shared by the governor's office and some other institution. The Indian Museum was again being mentioned. And we were given an offer that we could not refuse--and that was Battery Park City--which means a complete shift to a different kind of institution."¹⁶

Rickman, like Koch and Frucher, cited the problems with the incongruity of the architecture and decoration of the Custom House and the theme of the Holocaust. He said: "The deal of the governor and the State was a brilliant one for us. Not only did we get a site in a very attractive

¹⁵Frucher interview.

¹⁶Interview with Herbert Rickman, New York City, March 30, 1990.

location, but we got a commitment to do the exterior shell of the building. The State was going to do nothing in the interior, but they would do the building as part of the deal. As I remember it, Battery Park [City] Authority had in its mandate the creation of a museum. And they had a lot of leeway here. So we were not just going to get a site. We were going to get either the entire exterior or help toward the entire exterior. It meant a great deal of production cost reduction."¹⁷ (There is no record of the State or BPCA offering to provide the exterior of the building. The promise was for air rights above the museum, where the Commission could build an apartment house to offset the museum costs, and token rent of one dollar per year.)

The possibility of the new site was announced on April 5, 1985 in The New York Times, with Cuomo prominent in the lead sentence, as he "announced plans yesterday to put a museum and memorial to Holocaust victims in a new apartment building at Battery Park City." The governor is mentioned four times in the article, before Koch is finally named in the sixth paragraph. At this point, in the print media, the governor has taken over as the prime player, and Koch's

¹⁷Ibid.

position vis-a-vis the project has diminished.¹⁸ The **Mutagon** was evolving and changing shape.

In a July 27, 1984 letter to GSA Administrator William Diamond, Cuomo had written to "express my wholehearted support and endorsement of the proposal of the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission to acquire leased space for the establishment of a 'living memorial' in the U.S. Custom House." He wrote at that time: "The Custom House, I believe, is a particularly fitting site for this significant endeavor. Not only is the Custom House's grandeur and size ideally suited to a memorial of this importance, it is a building endowed with a feeling of tradition and Old World dignity which reflects the venerability of pre-war European Jewish civilization so brutally destroyed by the Nazis....I, therefore, urge you to approve the leasing of the U.S. Custom House to the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission, so that it can be put to the noble purpose for which it is preeminently suited."¹⁹

By April 5, 1985, Cuomo was telling the press, "Objections have been raised that this building [the Custom

¹⁸Oreskes, The New York Times, op. cit. See also, Kevin Freeman, "New Location Approved in Principle for NYC Holocaust Museum and Memorial", Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin, April 12, 1985, p. 3; and B. George Allen, "Proposed Holocaust hall at Battery", New York City Tribune, April 10, 1985.

¹⁹Letter from Governor Cuomo to GSA Administrator William Diamond, July 27, 1984.

House] is an inappropriate place to house the museum."²⁰ Since nothing in the Custom House had changed in the nine months since Cuomo had written the letter to Diamond, the change must have occurred in the heads of Cuomo's political entrepreneurs who dealt with the Jewish community. They determined that a connection with memorializing the Holocaust would be politically good for Cuomo, because of the power of that subject for the Jewish community. They then found a way of linking him with the project underway: by making a generous offer of land and air rights to the Commission, in exchange for Cuomo's becoming founding co-chairman.

As Banfield said of the structure of influence, government is decentralized from a formal standpoint, and has many possibilities for absolute vetoes. Therefore, government could not function without an informal centralized network of influence. Political leaders are willing to pay a price to such people of influence as newspaper publishers, civic leaders, and other elected officials, in order to get their support. Chicago Mayor Daley and others "paid" to overcome decentralization, and they "traded" with other people who had influence. Cuomo and his entrepreneurs did likewise with Koch and the Commission. None of the players was willing to explain why Koch, who was getting full political credit for creation of the Commission and the planned Holocaust museum, was suddenly so willing to share

²⁰Oreskes, op. cit.

the limelight and the political benefits of the project with Cuomo. However, circumstances had placed Klein in a unique position to wield considerable "political influence" with both the mayor and the governor. After a bitter Democratic primary battle for mayor in 1981 and another for governor in 1982, Koch and Cuomo were far from close political allies. Klein, who was Koch's friend and at the top of his list of contributors to both of those campaigns, surely must have had an important role in bringing them together for the Holocaust Commission and museum.

In 1982 Klein had been designated as the developer of the Times Square redevelopment project in Manhattan. He was strongly backed by Koch, and both the mayor and governor endorsed and praised the project, which is connected with the State Urban Development Corporation (UDC). In 1984, the project came before the City Board of Estimate for approval, and both the governor and mayor testified glowingly on its behalf. In 1984, Klein's agreement with UDC made him liable for all site acquisition costs up to the modest sum of \$88 million. Anything beyond that would be reimbursed, with interest, by the City, and Klein also had to pay about \$25 million for subway improvements. The Village Voice said that Klein, "the heir to the Barton's candy fortune must see this as the sweetest deal of his life."²¹ (It may be

²¹D.D. Guttenplan, "Klein's Square", Village Voice, December 15, 1987, New York City, p. 20.

coincidental that BPCA, the State agency responsible for the new site for the Holocaust museum, was organized as a subsidiary of UDC.)

Klein's position as the designated developer for a highly visible huge project that involved both the mayor and the governor gave him leverage to act as a middle man between them. They had both placed their bets on him to make a success of the Times Square project, and thus to increase their own political positions. Thus, in early 1985, Klein was in a unique position to make a "shiddach", a betrothal agreement, between the mayor and the governor about the creation of a Holocaust museum.

The wheeling and dealing--in Banfield's term, the political influence--that led to the Commission's accepting Cuomo's proposed site change is reflected in an article in The New York Times: "Mr. Frucher has been negotiating aspects of the plan for months with the Holocaust Commission and developers. He said the Holocaust Commission would be renamed the New York City/New York State Holocaust Memorial Commission. Either directly or through a nonprofit subsidiary, the commission would sign a lease with the Battery Park City Authority for the site at the southern end of the complex." The article said an architect's rendering had been done by James Stewart Polshek, dean of the Columbia School of Architecture, showing an apartment tower with a residents' separate entrance over the museum. Frucher is

quoted that the ground breaking is expected in the Fall of 1986, making the site change a fait accompli before the Commission voted.²²

This vote formally took place on May 2, 1985, when a general meeting of the Commission was held at the Regency Hotel on Park Avenue. The executive committee of the Commission, which was empowered to make final decisions, had already approved the change of site, "in principle, subject to further negotiations", during the week of April 8.²³ Once they had made their decision, they rounded up all of their heavy players in the luxurious setting of the Regency's Tent Room to get their decision rubber stamped. Seated at the head table were Rickman, Rabbi Mowshowitz (representing Cuomo), Senator Javits, Comptroller Harrison J. Goldin, Morgenthau and Klein. Former Mayors Beame and Wagner were also present. (Neither Koch nor Cuomo attended.)

Phil Rosen, an attorney from Weil, Gotshal & Manges, presented a legal report: BPCA would control the land until 2069, giving a developer group that included some members of the Commission the right to build a 525,000 square foot building. 400,000 square feet would be a residential building and 125,000 would be a memorial museum. The residential portion would either be sold as condominium units or rented, depending on market conditions. Profits would go

²²Oreskes, op. cit.

²³Freeman, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, op. cit.

first to the developer group to pay back costs, and the remainder would be used by the Commission as a full-term endowment for the museum. BPCA would give the Commission two separate leases, one for the apartment building's land and one for the museum. Rosen said the advantages of "this scheme" are "terrific". The new building would be built as the Commission wished, and once construction costs were paid back, there would be an endowment forever. Rosen added it was "politically advisable", because the State and City governments want it, and the Federal government is amenable. He said BPCA had already voted the week before and approved, with a letter of intent, and the mayor, governor, and New York City Legal Department had given full approval. Rosen added that the approval of the Public Authority Control Board was also needed, and they would meet on May 8. He said zoning approval was needed by May 20. The GSA deadline for the Custom House was May 21, and the Commission wanted the BPCA deal approved by May 20.

Klein announced that a group of developers, which he said represented 80 percent of the developers in New York City, had agreed to "join forces and oversee completion of the project". They included himself (Park Tower Realty), Zeckendorf, Fred Rose, Burt Resneck, Mack, and Leonard Stern. He said the risk was whether the apartments would sell, but if all went well, the Commission could build a major museum, have an endowment fund, and not raise a great deal of money.

Polshek then gave an architect's report, pointing out that Site 14, the designated site at the southernmost tip of Battery Park City, was "forever protected by sea and land, with a view of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. He explained the museum would have its own identity and seem separated from the apartment tower. He made a strong pitch for the project, emphasizing that buildings in New York are "often wedded together invisibly" and that the 34 story high apartment tower would be a "background building". This explanation was always used by Commission leaders whenever critics of the project pointed out the incongruity or even the obscenity of putting a luxury apartment tower above a memorial to the Holocaust. (It is a reflection of the impotence of the full Commission that they read of Polshek's plan in The New York Times before they heard about it from Commission leaders.)

After Polshek spoke, Klein presented another reason for moving the site. He said the Custom House rental would be \$600,000 annually and BPCA was charging only \$1.00 per year. Although he did not enumerate how, he said that the total savings to the Commission would be \$7 to \$8 million a year, if they chose Battery Park City. He asked that someone move that the Commission approve entering into a lease with BPCA, and said the Commission would be converted into a New York City-New York State Commission. The mayor and the governor were to become founding chairmen, and both were to have

rights of appointment to the Commission. In other words, there would be two heads instead of one--a City-State-private **Mutagon** would be created.

During a question and answer session, Klein said the developer group, not the Commission, would have legal responsibility for the financing of the apartment building. "No one will make any profit," he said. "This is not a gimmick. The developer group will assist in the development. The bank won't accept the signature of the Commission--it has no money." Someone asked whether the Commission could build a museum without an apartment house at Battery Park City, if enough money were raised. Klein said "no". He said the State was giving the Commission the ability to build apartments--which is usually done with bidding--without bidding. There was to be an arbiter to determine what the cost would be to build the apartment tower. The Commission would get the rights to build the museum free, and pay a fair price for the right to build the apartment house, for which they had the air rights.

The motion to move to Battery Park City was made by Senator Javits, and seconded by Cuomo's representative, Rabbi Mowshowitz (which would seem to present a conflict of interests, on his part). It said: "Resolved, that the Commission continue its discussions with Battery Park City Authority and commence lease negotiations with the Authority for a ground lease of Site 14 at Battery Park City." The

motion was accepted unanimously. Mowshowitz then said the governor had initiated the idea, and he asked for a formal motion to thank him (which showed exactly where his interest was). This was agreed to, only after it was decided to also thank Koch. Klein closed the meeting by stating the Commission was determined to open the memorial museum in two and a half to three years.²⁴ At the end of 1985, the Commission had only \$115,000 in assets, \$50,000 of which came from a special grant from the New York State Legislature.²⁵

After the May 1985 meeting of the full Commission, which voted to move the site to Battery Park City, there is no record of any action until 1986. On August 21, 1985, however, Eric Lane, New York State Senate Democratic Leader Manfred Ohrenstein's counsel and liaison to the governor's office, wrote to Del Giudice, the governor's Secretary. Lane said he was "writing to make some suggestions with respect to the planned proposal to reconstitute the New York City Holocaust Commission into a New York State and City Holocaust Commission." Lane pointed out Ohrenstein's role in creating a Holocaust exhibit and resource center in the New York State Museum, for which the Senator had obtained \$300,000 in State

²⁴"New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission, General Meeting, Official Minutes, May 2, 1985" and "Memo from Rochelle Saidel to Senator Ohrenstein, May 3, 1985 meeting of NYC Holocaust Commission".

²⁵"New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission, Inc., Report as at December 31, 1985, Eisner & Lubin, Certified Public Accountants", New York City.

appropriations. He then suggested that Ohrenstein be appointed by the governor as one of the co-chairpersons of the new board.

On February 24, 1986, the six directors of the Commission gave their unanimous written consent for the name to be changed to the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission. This removed the word "City" from the title, and, in effect, also removed Koch as sole titular head of the project. It was no longer a "City" commission, and therefore he was no longer in charge. The name change was officially approved by the State Commissioner of Education, who had granted the Commission's provisional charter, on March 7, 1986.

On April 21, 1986, a special meeting of the Board of Trustees of the museum (then called The Museum of Jewish Heritage), and a concurrent meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Commission were attended by trustees Klein, Greenberg, Meed and Michel. The following resolutions were adopted: State Senate Minority Leader Ohrenstein, whose district is Manhattan, was elected a trustee and a co-chairman of the board of both corporations; Cuomo was elected a Founding Chairman of both corporations; the lease between BPCA and the corporation, dated January 16, 1986, was approved; any one of the co-chairmen of the boards could execute the lease; and David Altshuler was elected project director of the corporation.

As will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, the addition of Ohrenstein, as well as Cuomo, complicated the structure of the Commission and the roles of the players. The **Mutagon** not only gained a new retroactive Founding Co-chairman (Cuomo), but also a new Co-chairman head. Frucher said Ohrenstein was appointed by Cuomo because he "had been so intimately involved with sustaining the Holocaust Commission through legislative action and because he had a strong personal feeling about it, felt strongly that he should be one of the three co-chairs." Frucher described Ohrenstein's appointment as "a combination of institutional as well as political realities". He then was more explicit, saying, "Fred went to the governor and insisted on it. I engineered that with Klein and Morgenthau."²⁶ It must have been a difficult selling job, because Koch said he was not especially happy about it. He said: "Manfred Ohrenstein imposed himself. By that I mean he was not my choice."²⁷

About a month after the new appointments, on May 23, 1986 the Provisional Charter of the New York City Holocaust Memorial Museum (granted April 27, 1984) was amended to change the name of the corporation to the Museum of Jewish Heritage. Then, in October, 1986, there was a second petition for amendment to the Provisional Charter, requesting that the name become "The Museum of Jewish Heritage-A Living

²⁶Frucher interview.

²⁷Koch interview.

Memorial to the Holocaust". The reason for the name change could best be summed up by a comment by project director Altshuler at a June 16 meeting of the Commission: "How can you sell luxury apartments over a museum named the Holocaust Museum?"²⁸

At this June 16 meeting, the new names of the Commission and museum were announced by Klein. He said Cuomo, now a "founding co-chairman", had appointed 50 new commission members, many from outside New York City. Altshuler was introduced as the new project director, and Shaike Weinberg, formerly of Bet Hatfutsot Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv, as consultant. (Weinberg later left the New York project and became director of the museum being built in Washington, D.C.) Projected completion for the museum was in three years, Spring of 1989.

Klein said there was now a developers committee of "90 percent of the big developers in New York City", and that the museum would cost about \$90 million, with about \$10 million in materials donated by construction firms. He said the apartment tower would cost about \$100 million, and that income from sales should be about \$160 million (assuming prices went up in the future). The shortfall to pay for completion of the museum was \$20 to \$25 million. Klein also said the Commission had embarked on an endowment fund

²⁸Notes of author, Commission meeting, Regency Hotel, New York City, June 16, 1986.

campaign to pay for operating costs forever. They were trying to raise \$40 million, and had already raised \$8 million.²⁹

At this point, after Cuomo had rewarded "everyone and anyone" with appointments to the Commission, the full Commission became even more of a rubber stamp. Cuomo-appointed members were from as far away as Buffalo and never came to meetings. Some of the newly appointed legitimate Holocaust experts were from out of the State or even from other countries. For the most part, Cuomo appointed people who were from New York State (outside of New York City) and were in three categories: 1. anyone who Conovitz was convinced had credentials making him or her knowledgeable about the Holocaust (and some were "lightweights" at best); 2. Jewish communal leaders from throughout the State to whom Cuomo owed political favors (in payment for campaign help); 3. a small number of Holocaust survivors.

The pivotal event of 1986 was the public lease signing ceremony between the Commission and BPCA, on September 4 (see Chapter 11). Fund raising efforts were intensified, especially toward the end of the year. Meir Rosenne, Ambassador of Israel to the United States, was even brought to speak at a high level fund raising supper given by Mr. and Mrs. Ludwig Jesselson (who themselves pledged \$500,000) on

²⁹"Memo from Rochelle Saidel to Senator Ohrenstein, Report on NY Holocaust Memorial Commission meeting 6/16/86", New York City, June 17, 1986.

December 17. This was the apex for the Commission, which began showing signs of trouble by the end of the year. By December 31, 1986, the Commission had \$1,674,148 in contributions and \$7,432,900 in pledged donations for a total of \$9,107,048. In addition to Klein, Commission members S. Daniel Abraham, Leonard Stern, Peter Kalikow and Howard Ronson each pledged \$1 million.³⁰ Klein had previously pledged \$500,000, and was now doubling his commitment. However, as will be shown, at about this time the project gradually began to deteriorate.

SUMMARY

At the beginning of 1985, BPCA head and Cuomo's political broker, Sandy Frucher, began courting the Holocaust Commission away from the Custom House and toward Battery Park City. While the Commission and its Federal iron triangle of forces that had obtained the Custom House appeared to be going forward with that deal, a second deal was being made to move the site to Battery Park City and make the governor an equal founding co-chairman with Koch. Frucher made the Commission a deal they could not refuse, with air rights for an apartment tower over the museum and a museum rent charge of a symbolic one dollar per year. The decision to move to Battery Park City, which was approved by the full Commission

³⁰New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, Year End Fundraising Status Report, December 31, 1986.

in May 1985, was made official by the Board of Trustees on April 21, 1986. It is unclear why Koch agreed to share his project with Cuomo, but Klein was in a position to act as a middle man. With Cuomo as a new Founding Co-chairman and Ohrenstein as the governor's newly appointed Co-chairman (serving with Klein and Morgenthau), the project became that of a City-State-private **Mutagon** with two heads and three sub-heads. A public lease signing ceremony at Battery Park City on September 4, 1986 was the Commission's high point.

CHAPTER 11: THE HOLOCAUST MUSEUM AS A REAL ESTATE DEAL

"The profits from this [condominium] are being used--a la MOMA--to pay for the construction of the museum. I find something profoundly disquieting about this arrangement.... Clearly some mixes are incompatible. One wouldn't add a condo at a cemetery, at the Lincoln Memorial, at Treblinka itself." Michael Sorkin¹

The deal that Governor Mario Cuomo and Battery Park City Authority (BPCA) offered the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission at first seemed like a dream come true for the Commission. This intervention by New York State, which changed the site of the project and the structure and size of the political alliance, later became a nightmare, after circumstances changed and the State reneged on promises. The **Mutagon**, the changing polygon of political forces attempting to implement the Holocaust museum, was becoming embroiled in an impasse. As will be demonstrated, both the more complicated structure of the political alliance and the extended time frame for the project's implementation resulted in a stalemate.

The plan to move to Battery Park City was probably difficult for Mayor Koch to accept (although he did not admit this when interviewed), because he was forced to share the political glory associated with the project with Cuomo. But George Klein and the other leaders of the Commission, who were trying to create what they deemed the best possible

¹Michael Sorkin, "Reconstructing the Holocaust", The Village Voice, June 23, 1987, New York, p. 94.

museum at the least cost, were overjoyed with the governor's offer. Battery Park City, the biggest and most expensive real estate venture in New York City, was real estate development at its apex, and this was where Klein wanted to be.

It was at this point that the plans for the museum took off in a new direction and became a real estate venture, created by a two-headed **Mutagon** of political forces. (The Commission subsequently dropped the word "City" from its name as part of the deal with Cuomo and became the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission.) The **Mutagon** not only had two heads, Koch and Cuomo, but these two heads were both playing dual roles. They were dealing with the Commission as respective heads of New York City and New York State, but they were also part of the Commission--its Founding Co-chairmen.

Once Klein had jumped at BPCA President Meyer S. (Sandy) Frucher's idea of a luxury apartment tower on top of the Holocaust museum--following the Museum of Modern Art's method of the tower paying for the costs of the museum--there was no serious opposition from the executive committee. If such an arrangement seemed obscene, or at least inappropriate, any whispered questions were drowned out by Klein's enthusiasm and ability to promote the plan. From the very beginning, he had architect Polshek's firm portray it in two and in three dimensions, and then emphasize how the entrances were

different and the complex would seem like two different buildings. Mega-developer Klein knew how to sell a new development project to his "clients", the Commission.

In private discussions among cynics familiar with the Commission's project (i.e., support staff, Jewish journalists, and a few members who were not developers), there were sarcastic comments about naming the apartment complex "Treblinka Tower" and the surrounding streets "Auschwitz Avenue and Birkenau Boulevard". This reflected their gut feeling that the idea of the combination of luxury apartments and a Holocaust museum was not a fitting setting for memorializing Hitler's six million Jewish victims. However, ideological and philosophical discussions had no place in the meetings of the executive committee, presided over by developer Klein. The only serious discussion about the combination was about whether the market value of the apartments would be affected because of their location over a museum with an unpleasant theme. This was a real estate deal.

Since this deal was for a site in Battery Park City, some background on BPCA is necessary: A public benefit corporation, BPCA was created by the New York State Legislature in 1968 to develop Battery Park City, a 92 acre landfill site at the bottom of Manhattan, along the Hudson River. It is bounded by Pier A and Battery Park on the south and Chambers Street on the north. In 1979, following a

hiatus caused by New York City's fiscal crisis, BPCA prepared a development "Master Plan" that zoned the property for different types of development: 42 percent residential, with 14,000 housing units; nine percent commercial, with six million square feet of office space opposite the World Trade Center; 30 percent open space, including public parks, plazas and esplanade; and 19 percent streets and avenues.

The Master Plan and design guidelines were prepared by BPCA and Cooper, Eckstut Associates. The designs of private developers who respond to BPCA's Requests For Proposals (RFP) must follow these Master Plan guidelines. Battery Park City includes the \$2.5 billion World Financial Center, a four-building office complex of 6 million square feet that houses the headquarters of Merrill Lynch & Company, Dow Jones & Company, the Home Insurance Company, American Express Company, and Oppenheimer & Company.

In 1979 then Governor Hugh Carey, Koch, and Richard Kahan, then president and chief executive officer of both the State Urban Development Corporation (UDC) and BPCA, signed a memorandum of understanding. This allowed the UDC to condemn the site, which was City-owned landfill. (UDC is a State agency which condemns City property to be used for redevelopment.) UDC then owned the land, which was released from the City's financial and planning control. The City received in exchange one dollar and future profits and tax

equivalents. Ownership was to revert to the City after BPCA bonds and funds advanced by the State had been paid off.²

Revenue collected by BPCA from the commercial and residential developments is the principal source for repayment of outstanding bonds in the amount of \$200 million issued in 1972 and \$185 million issued in 1986. The revenue will also support \$400 million net in bonds issued to provide funds for low and moderate income housing, under the Housing New York Program. This program, passed into law in 1986 by the State Legislature, (section 1974 of the Public Authorities Law), created the Housing New York Corporation, to develop low income housing. It also authorized BPCA to assign excess revenues to secure bonds and notes issued by the Housing New York Corporation for use by the City of New York to subsidize low income housing. When Battery Park City is complete, there will be a working population of about 31,000 in the offices and 20,000 to 30,000 residents in the apartments.³

Olympia & York Developments Ltd., the Canadian-based company owned by the Reichman family, developed and manages the four office towers. Although the family was instrumental

²Brendan Gill, "The Sky Line: Battery Park City", in The New Yorker, August 20, 1990.

³Information on BPCA from "Battery Park City Fact Sheet", office of Ellen Rosen, BPCA, New York City, 1986; and Manual for the Use of the Legislature of the State of New York, 1986-1987, Gail S. Shaffer, Secretary of State, Albany, N.Y., pp. 713-714.

in rescue efforts during the Holocaust and is philanthropic to Jewish causes, Olympia & York is one of the few Jewish development companies in New York City that did not donate money to or become involved with the creation of the Holocaust museum in Battery Park City.

The supposed implementation phase of the Holocaust memorial museum began in August 1986, when the Holocaust Commission and BPCA began to plan jointly for a public lease-signing ceremony on September 4 at Site 14, the southernmost site. This was designed as a highly visible event, which would engender good press and stimulate fund raising. Personal letters of invitation were sent to all past and potential contributors. In addition, 2,000 invitations were mailed to Commission members, elected officials, survivor organization leaders, major Jewish organizations leaders, top contributors to United Jewish Appeal/Federation, clergy, the Mayor's personal list, the Jewish Community Relations Council list, museum associates, BPCA invitees, Community Board One, Holocaust organizations, financial sector leaders, university presidents and union leaders. Phone calls were made to elected officials, the Executive Committee, the developers committee, major contributors and other key people associated with the projects. (The developers committee included most of New York's successful Jewish developers: Larry Fisher, Eugene Grant, Peter Kalikow, Earl Mack, Martin Raynes, Burton Resnick, Howard Ronson, Frederick Rose, Stephen Ross, Jack

Rudin, Larry Silverstein, Sheldon Solow, Jerry Speyer, Leonard Stern, Robert Tishman, Fred Wilpon, William Zeckendorf Jr. and Morton Zuckerman.) Howard Rubenstein's office sent out a press advisory and coordinated the press operation, working with press personnel from BPCA and new Co-chairman Senator Manfred Ohrenstein's office.⁴

A long agenda for the event was organized. Speakers included: Frucher; "Founding Co-chairmen" Governor Cuomo and Mayor Koch; Co-chairmen Klein, Morgenthau and Ohrenstein; Senator Alfonse D'Amato; Elie Wiesel; Ernest Michel; and architect James Stewart Polshek. Rabbi Haskell Lookstein, president of the New York Board of Rabbis, gave the invocation, and Cantor Joseph Malovany chanted a concluding memorial prayer. The press release said ground breaking was "anticipated" in Spring 1987, with an opening "projected" for 1989.⁵

Meanwhile, J. Philip Rosen of Weil, Gotshal & Manges, the Commission's pro bono attorney, was examining the leases for the museum and for the apartment tower. He wrote to members of the executive committee on August 29, clarifying certain points in the leases. He emphasized that the base

⁴"Memorandum to George Klein, Robert Morgenthau, Manfred Ohrenstein et al from David Blumenfeld, August 20, 1986, re: Lease Signing Ceremony".

⁵Press release, "Lease Signed for Site of Holocaust Memorial Museum at Battery Park City", BPCA, September 4, 1986.

rent for the land for the museum was \$1.00 per year.⁶ One paragraph discussed the right of the Commission to assign completion of the apartment tower to a developer, The lease provides for this, only with the consent of BPCA. The lease, however, specifically forbids assignment to Klein or his Park Tower Realty. "The Authority wanted this express prohibition in the Lease so that even the appearance of any sweetheart arrangement between Mr. Klein, as co-chairman of the Commission, and the Authority is avoided," Rosen wrote. He also emphasized that the scheduled completion date of all buildings was to be December 15, 1989.⁷

The 165 page lease for the apartment tower at Site 14, which was signed with great fanfare on September 4, is between BPCA and the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, Inc. The scheduled construction commencement date was April 15, 1988,⁸ and the lease was to expire on June 17, 2069. From commencement of the lease until "Rent Commencement Date", base rent rate was \$1.00 per anum. For each lease year (or portion thereof) from rent commencement date up to but not including the first appraisal date, base rent was \$1,234,800 per anum. For the lease year commencing on the first appraisal date and for each lease year until the end of

⁶Letter from J. Philip Rosen to Executive Committee, August 29, 1986, New York City, p. 1.

⁷Ibid., p. 3.

⁸Lease between BPCA and New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, signed September 4, 1986, p. 4.

the term, rent was to be an amount per annum equal to six percent of the fair market of the land--not less than \$1,234,800. For 15 years thereafter, base rent would not exceed \$1,420,020 per annum.⁹

The second lease, for the museum, (which was also signed at the ceremony) is between BPCA and "Museum of Jewish Heritage"--not the Holocaust Commission. (These are two separate legal entities, although their boards of trustees are identical.) The Commission is responsible for the completion of the apartment tower (either by building it or finding an outside developer to do so) and the museum board is responsible for building the museum. Under Article 3, section 3.01 (a) the museum lease says: "For each Lease Year beginning on the Rent Commencement Date and continuing thereafter throughout the Term, Tenant shall pay to Landlord, without notice or demand, the annual sum of \$1.00 per annum (collectively, the "Base Rent")."¹⁰ The term is until 2069. Thus, BPCA expects to collect fair rental from the Commission for the apartment tower, but only \$1.00 per year from the museum. Neither the Commission nor the museum was paying any money for the lease of the land from BPCA. The museum and the air rights to build the apartment tower over it were to cost the museum only \$1 a year.

⁹Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰Lease between BPCA and Museum of Jewish Heritage, September 4, 1986, New York City, p. 9.

The purposes for use of the land for the museum were set out in Section 23.01 of the lease: "Subject to the provisions of law and this Lease, tenant shall use, occupy and operate the Premises on all Business days during Business Hours continuously and without interruption throughout the Term as a museum, conference center, exhibition area, library facilities, archives and facilities for exhibitions, scholarly research and other purposes consistent with the purposes specified in Tenant's Certificate of Incorporation, in accordance with the Certificate or Certificates of Occupancy for the Premises, the Master Development Plan and the Design Guidelines, and for no other use or purposes."¹¹ Through the terms of the lease, the State, through its entity, BPCA, imposed on the Commission and the museum the regulations concomitant with choosing New York State land as a site.

In an earlier section, the lease had said: "'Business Days' shall mean any day which is not a Saturday, Sunday or a day observed as a holiday by either the State of New York or the federal government and, as long as New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, Inc. is the Tenant, the following Jewish holidays: Rosh Hashanah (both days), Yom Kippur, Succoth (first two (2) days), Shmini Atzereth, Simchas Torah, Passover (first two (2) days and last two (2) days) and

¹¹Ibid., p. 51.

Shavuoth (both days).")¹² As will be demonstrated in a later chapter, this definition of "business days" was to cause future friction between the governor and the Commission.

As soon as the lease was signed, raising money and how to go about developing the site became the two most important topics in discussions about implementation. At a meeting of the executive committee immediately following the lease signing, Klein said he estimated the museum would need \$85-\$95 million to open. He anticipated \$65 million from the sale of apartments, and thus said \$30 million more was needed in donations. In addition, he wanted \$30 million donated for an endowment fund, for perpetual expenses and upkeep. He suggested setting an announced fund raising goal of \$75 million. The possibility of "flipping", or selling rights to develop the apartment tower to a developer, was also discussed.¹³

At an October 6, 1986 meeting of the executive committee, professional staff and "Commission invitees" held in Klein's office, he announced that the proposed budget for the museum until May 31, 1987 was \$7,795,000. This included \$3 million for architects and consultants, \$1,181,000 for a "design team", \$1,750,000 for "exhibit fabrication", \$869,000

¹²Ibid., p. 1.

¹³Notes of author, September 4, 1986 meeting at BPCA construction office, following lease signing.

for research, collections and administration, and about \$1,000,000 for construction and "soft costs". A list of "top prospects" for donations was handed out, and a "Division of Top Prospects" was divided among Klein, Morgenthau, and Michel.¹⁴

By December 1986, the project was already not being implemented in a manner that boded success. One significant clue to the Commission's problems was a December 1 letter from architect Polshek to Klein. He wrote:

"I am concerned about the future of The Museum of Jewish Heritage and the Memorial to the Holocaust. As we both agreed when we spoke last week, there is a general ennui--a sense of drift and lack of direction.

"For the past year and a half since we have been working together, your energy and leadership alone have held the effort together. But since the signing of the lease, you have become more and more isolated and the Executive Committee more fragmented. Obviously Fred Ohrenstein and Bob Morgenthau can put little time into this--this leaves you alone. The perception is that you have time, money, staff, and freedom from conflicts of interest--all enabling you to be a one-man band, raise 30-40 million dollars, oversee the design of the

¹⁴"Memorandum from George Klein, Robert M. Morgenthau, and Manfred Ohrenstein to Executive Committee, Professional Staff, and Commission Invitees", September 12, 1986, New York City.

building and exhibits and be the political and spiritual arbiter of its content. This is obviously absurd. You cannot be expected to do this and I do not believe any one person--even you--could do it under any circumstances."

Polshek then went on to say this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that should not fail. He offered the following suggestions for implementation: reorganize the executive committee, with only five or six committed people that meet once a week with an agenda that includes progress reports on all phases of the project; hire an executive director; develop an immediate short term fund raising strategy; call in all pledges at once; get the Commission to commit itself to moving ahead to the point of actual construction.

He concluded: "It has always been my observation that nothing tests the reality of a project or moves it along better than the necessity to spend money. The aura of reality created by the forward movement of architectural, engineering and exhibition design documents will energize the entire effort."¹⁵

Implementing a Holocaust memorial museum in New York City, the center of the organized Jewish community in the United States, sounds like it should be an easy job: The

¹⁵Letter to George Klein from James Stewart Polshek, December 1, 1986.

large Jewish population, concentration of Jewish wealth, largest survivor population outside of Israel, and highly organized structure of the community should all contribute to the project's being politically beneficial to the governor, mayor and other elected officials, and therefore easy to implement. By December, 1986, however, the implementation had hit a number of snags.

Perhaps this was inevitable. As Pressman and Wildavsky said: "People now appear to think that implementation should be easy; they are, therefore, upset when expected events do not occur or turn out badly. We would consider our effort a success if more people began with the understanding that implementation, under the best of circumstances, is exceedingly difficult."¹⁶

The implementation phase was difficult for some of the very reasons that sound as though they should have made it easy: Because the Jewish population of more than two million is so vast, many Jews in the New York City metropolitan region are blase about their affiliation with the organized community. In a small town with a small, isolated Jewish community, Jews often feel the need to "belong", but in New York City this need is often met simply by living in the ethnically Jewish "atmosphere" (with synagogues, cultural events, ethnic food and restaurants, organizations, many

¹⁶Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, Implementation (Second, expanded edition), University of California Press, 1979, p. xix.

other Jews, etc. easily and plentifully accessible). Thus the large Jewish population does not necessarily mean that most individuals in this population are largely active, affiliated Jews who would be financially or otherwise interested in supporting the project.

As the center of organized Judaism, New York City is a difficult locale to initiate a new, competing organization or major project--competing for both financial contributions and attention. Even the large concentration of survivors does not necessarily contribute to success, because their number is great enough to have their own competing groups and power-hungry leaders. Polshek also alluded to another serious problem with implementation: Klein made this project too much his own personal effort, which some potential major contributors and other Jewish leaders resented.

Thus the governor stepped into what Frucher and his other advisors said was politically important for him in the organized Jewish community, but he also stepped into a project that only seemed easy to implement on the surface. Pressman and Wildavsky explained why some of the above factors can cause delays and retrogression in implementation: "Our normal expectation should be that new programs will fail to get off the ground and that, at best, they will take considerable time to get started. The cards in this world are stacked against things happening, as so much effort is

required to make them move. The remarkable thing is that new programs work at all."¹⁷

In the case of the Holocaust museum, the new program worked as well as Pressman and Wildavsky's "normal expectation"--for at more than five years after the first lease was signed, it did not get off the ground. The main reasons are enumerated above. In addition, there was a vicious circle that impeded implementation: no visible, concrete progress (e.g., a temporary exhibit or lecture series in another location, a ground breaking ceremony) because there was not enough money; and insufficient success with fund raising because there was no concrete progress. This was compounded by the lack of a master plan for fund raising. Polshek had alluded to all of this in his letter.

At a December 4, 1986 meeting of the executive committee, there was a sense that the project was drifting. Klein announced that the Commission needed three to four million dollars in the bank to move forward, that Polshek had been owed half a million dollars for many months, and that interior designers Chermayeff and Geismar (who had been hired for the project) would also need to be paid. He described the project as in a "crisis stage". When the need for a finance committee and chairperson was emphasized, Klein kept coming back to himself and to other developers, rather than expanding the fund raising base. This, again, was a

¹⁷Ibid., 109.

reflection of his personalizing the project too much for its successful implementation.

Government intervention was the subject of two informal discussions (non-agenda items) at the meeting. The week before, Governor Cuomo's office had conveyed his displeasure (or that of his attorneys) with the name of the museum, "The Museum of Jewish Heritage-A Living Memorial to the Holocaust". Now that he was, in effect, the landlord, his intervention regarding the name could not be ignored. Although the reasons for his complaint were not spelled out in detail, they were with regard to the emphasis on "Jewish Heritage" and a possible Church and State conflict. Eventually, pressure from the governor's office forced the Commission to change the name of the museum to "A Living Memorial to the Holocaust: Museum of Jewish Heritage". (The name was officially changed in November 1987 at a special meeting of the board of trustees of the museum, and the next month a petition for an amendment to the provisional charter was filed with the Regents of the University of the State of New York. This was granted on April 22, 1988.)

The second item of government intervention concerned Koch, rather than Cuomo. Klein, Morgenthau and Michel said they were meeting with him soon to ask him to seek donations from potential big givers, principally the developers with whom he had close relations. They were also going to ask the Mayor to host a fund raising breakfast for developers on

January 10, 1987 in Gracie Mansion. The possibility of a dinner at Gracie Mansion for big givers a little later, in March or April, was also discussed. (This event did take place on March 23, 1987, with Henry Kissinger as guest speaker.) Any fund raising help from the governor was said to be contingent on compliance with his pressure for a name change.

At the meeting, Klein rattled off a lot of numbers about the lease for the apartment tower--that the lease was at a rate of \$40 per square feet, and that current bids were for as much as \$60 to \$117. He reminded the Commission the lease allowed them to either build the apartment building themselves or "flip" a set of plans and a contract. At one point his numbers had the Commission making \$35 million for doing nothing, and at another point the Commission could lose money. As he said, it all depended on the market. In other words, at that point the project's financial success was not assured and was nothing but a speculative real estate deal.¹⁸

The next year, 1987, could be called the Commission's year of "professionalization". Commission Executive Director David Blumenfeld, who had become superfluous, was eased out and the Commission no longer had a director. Instead, the museum director, David Altshuler, was in charge (with Klein

¹⁸Memo from Rochelle Saidel to Senator Ohrenstein, "Report on this evening's executive meeting of Holocaust Commission," December 4, 1986, New York City.

still the unofficial ultimate authority) Altshuler's three year contract for \$125,000 per year, plus moving expenses and twenty percent in lieu of benefits, was approved by the executive committee in November 1987.

Jeshajahu Weinberg had been hired as a consultant for the New York project in the summer of 1985 and was a key member of the professional team in 1987. He said he came at the request of George Klein, who wanted him because of his experience and reputation in creating The Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv. Weinberg said he told Klein that Klein couldn't "run the shop" and create a museum without a person on staff who knows the Holocaust. Weinberg therefore brought in Altshuler (who had worked on the Washington Holocaust museum project) as the project manager. Earlier, Klein had played the role of project manager. Weinberg said of Blumenfeld's departure: "He didn't know museums from a hole in the wall. Clearly he was not the guy to create a museum." He was carried for a long time until he ultimately resigned in 1988.

Like others who did not want to be quoted, Weinberg said one of the major problems with professionalizing the project was Klein's personalizing it. "George Klein is the moving spirit. With him, the project stands or falls", Weinberg said. He said Klein is much too possessive about the project and doesn't give the director enough leeway. "He [still] acts as the project director very much and keeps David

[Altshuler] as deputy," Weinberg said. "He shouldn't. David is talented and should have the power of decision. Klein is very restrictive."¹⁹ (In October 1988, Weinberg left his consultancy on the New York project and became a consultant for the Washington museum, of which he became director in April 1989.)

Besides Altshuler and Weinberg, professionals working on the New York museum project in 1987 included Ralph Schwarz, Senior Advisor; Karl Katz (of the Metropolitan Museum of Art), Museum Consultant; a grant secretary, a research team with associated free lancers; a Hall of Learning coordinator and computer specialist, with consultants; Polshek's architectural firm; Chermayeff and Geismar's exhibit design firm; David Edell and Linda Low, specialists in Jewish Federation big gifts, as fund raising consultants; and Luisa Kreisberg, a specialist in museum publicity, as public relations consultant.

In addition to the expanded staff and consultants, a Survivors Steering Committee and a Young Leadership Association were created (both for fund raising). A slick new booklet was created, primarily as a fund raising tool, and a news brochure began to be issued every other month. Fund raising was the prime concern: the campaign was headed by Peter A. Cohen, who was then Chairman and CEO of Shearson

¹⁹Interview with Jeshajahu Weinberg, Washington, D.C., March 14, 1990.

Lehman Brothers, Inc., Stephen Robert, Chairman and CEO of Oppenheimer and Company, Inc., and Rosa Strygler, a survivor. The announced goal was \$100 million, with \$70 million for construction and \$30 million for an endowment fund. At a January 12 meeting, the Survivors Steering Committee agreed to raise \$5 million among survivors.

At a September 15, 1987 meeting of the executive committee, only a few members were present, along with many of the newly appointed staff and consultants. Klein asked for approval to sell the air rights for the apartment tower, and, since there were no objections, he said he then assumed he had the approval of the executive committee. He said Frucher had told him BPCA was about to seek a RFP for a major hotel on the southernmost parcel east of the museum, and that in the next six to eight months there would be RFPs for the space between the north and south sections of Battery Park City, which were undeveloped. Klein said that based on this information, he thought the timing was right for selling the air rights for the apartment tower. He said he thought it was "impractical" for the Commission to build the apartments, and that flipping the contract would yield about \$110 per square foot for property for which the commission was paying only \$40 per square foot. Klein said the Commission would therefore make about \$28-30 million. There was discussion

about a November 9 symbolic ground breaking ceremony, to coincide with Kristallnacht.²⁰

Then an unexpected event occurred, which was to have a major negative impact on the project: Black Monday on October 19, 1987. After the stock market crash and subsequent loss of high-paying Wall Street jobs, luxury residential property in the Wall Street area, such as Battery Park City, dropped in value. Thus the bargain price the Commission had agreed to pay BPCA for the right to build the apartment tower was no longer a bargain. The November 9 ground breaking did not take place. At a November 12, 1987 meeting of the executive committee, there was still some talk about flipping the air rights for the apartment tower. Klein said that before Black Monday the profit would have yielded \$30 million, but now there was no assurance as to what property value was or would become. An RFP was being prepared, but Klein now said there was "no rush" to sell.²¹ On December 31, 1987, the total in contributions was \$3,770,646, with \$7,888,308 in receivables, for a total of

²⁰Memo from Rochelle Saidel to Senator Ohrenstein, "Exec. Committee Meeting of NY Holocaust Commission 9/15/87", September 24, 1987, New York.

²¹Memo from Rochelle Saidel to Senator Ohrenstein, "Exec. committee meeting NY Holocaust Memorial Commission, this morning", November 12, 1987, New York.

\$11,658,954²²--far short of the necessary amount, which continued to escalate as time went by.

Klein's push to sell the air rights in September was followed by his being in "no rush" to do so in November, as a result of Black Monday. An unexpected occurrence caused unexpected decisions to emerge: besides the changed decision on the air rights issue, there would be no further discussion of a possible ground breaking on November 9. Another serious effect of the crash was its influence on fund raising activities, drying up or reducing some potential philanthropic sources. As Pressman and Wildavsky said, there was the emergence in the "decision path of numerous diversions not intended by the program sponsors. The paths of required decisions, as we can see, were soon characterized by more unexpected elements than expected ones: they were anything but straight lines leading directly to goals."²³

During 1988 more "diversions not intended by the program sponsors" made the lines leading to their goals even more circuitous: the site changed, Frucher left the BPCA presidency, and the original deal of \$1.00 per year rent for the museum increased dramatically (see Chapter 12). In January, Altshuler sent a memorandum to the staff, with copies to Commission chairmen and others, recommending

²²New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, End of Month Statement--December 31, 1987.

²³Pressman and Wildavsky, p. 112.

breaking ground and beginning construction in the Spring. He said there would be a crucial executive committee meeting around March 15, which would decide whether to break ground and begin construction in early June. In the meantime, fund raising efforts would be stepped up.²⁴

At the March 15, 1988 meeting of the full Commission, a resolution was passed to authorize ground breaking and beginning of construction for June 1988. A second resolution authorized the launching of a capital campaign with a goal of \$70 million, plus \$30 million for an endowment fund; and a third, the establishment of inter-institutional links with related institutions.²⁵ The executive committee then met on March 29 to agree on how to implement these resolutions. A decision was reached to have the ground breaking take place on November 10, 1988.

SUMMARY

In 1986, after Governor Cuomo offered the Holocaust Commission the opportunity to own free air rights for an apartment tower over their museum (and pay only \$1 per year rent for the museum), the Commission moved forward to consummate the deal. Leases for both the museum and the

²⁴The Museum of Jewish Heritage, Memo from David Altshuler to Staff Planning Group, "Preparations for Decision to Break Ground and Begin Construction", January 18, 1988, New York.

²⁵New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, Minutes, Meeting held March 15, 1988, Regency Hotel, New York.

apartment tower were signed with great fanfare at the Battery Park City site on September 4, 1986. The governor, the new Co-chairman of the **Mutagon**, thus gained power in the polygon of forces trying to create the Holocaust museum. At this point the coalition of political forces, the **Mutagon**, was top heavy and "incestuous". The government angle had two government officials at the helm and the interest group angle had three Co-chairmen. The two officials in charge of the government angle, however, were also officers of the interest group angle. Moreover, two of the three Co-chairmen of the interest group were also elected government officials; and Koch's political entrepreneur, Herbert Rickman, and Cuomo's, Frucher, were members of the executive committee of the Commission.

During the following year, the Commission became more professional with increased staff and consultants, but raising money continued to be a problem. Despite, the increase in professionals, Klein continued to try to "run the show". He was, however, subject to the wishes of the powerful second head of the **Mutagon**, Cuomo. Cuomo's office began pressuring for a name change, to make the museum appear less Jewish, and therefore less subject to a Church-State conflict. The Commission acquiesced. In September 1987 Klein told the Commission the time was ripe for selling the museum's air rights. However, after Black Monday on October 19, he reversed this, and a planned November 9, 1987 ground

breaking ceremony never took place. Ground breaking was put off until June 1988, and then until November 1988. The longer the implementation phase languished, the more external and internal circumstances interfered and impeded the **Mutagon's** success.

CHAPTER 12: NEW YORK STATE AS A FICKLE LANDLORD

"When a man you like switches from what he said a year ago, or four years ago, he is a broad-minded person who has courage enough to change his mind with changing conditions. When a man you don't like does it, he is a liar who has broken his promises." Franklin P. Adams¹

With plans progressing for a November 10, 1988 ground breaking ceremony at Site 14, both the New York City and New York State Founding Co-chairmen of the *Mutagon* intervened and delayed implementation plans again. Commission co-chairman George Klein announced to the executive committee on June 27 that they had been offered a new deal by the governor and Battery Park City Authority (BPCA), based on a connection made by the mayor's office. NOGA, a Swiss firm, wanted to build a luxury hotel in Manhattan. (NOGA is owned by an internationally known philanthropic Jewish leader, the Swiss head of the World Sephardi Federation, Nessim Gaon.) Gaon had approached City Hall, and Koch deputy Robert Esnard had introduced him to BPCA, because such a project in Battery Park City would give New York City funds for low- and middle-income housing. BPCA president Meyer S. (Sandy) Frucher, who was also part of the *Mutagon* as a member of the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission's executive committee, then recommended Site 14, site of the museum and apartment tower.

¹Nods and Becks, 1944, quoted in The Cynic's Lexicon by Jonathan Green, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1984, p. 2.

At this point in the new deal the two heads of the **Mutagon**, Koch and Cuomo, were working in tandem: the deal seemed good for both of their images, as well as for the City, the State, and the Commission. Frucher, representing Cuomo and BPCA, suggested that the museum move to Site 13 (immediately to the north) and be free-standing, with the capability of selling the Site 14 air rights to NOGA. Klein said the market for selling air rights for an apartment tower was "very soft", and recommended this as a good deal. There would also be savings in building the museum, because without the apartment tower, the foundation could be shallower.

Mr. Gaon was to enter into a letter of intent with BPCA for the purpose of building a hotel or apartment house. BPCA would then give a letter to the Holocaust Commission, changing the site and giving a lease at \$1 per year for 86 years. The Commission would then enter an agreement with NOGA for transfer of the 400,000 square feet of air rights. NOGA would pay \$30 million for the transfer and a separate \$2 million donation. BPCA would also make the same offer to other developers. A State Environmental Impact Study (EIS) was necessary, with a ULURP (Uniform Land Use Review Procedure) for the hotel but not the museum, according to the BPCA attorney. Both projects would need to be approved by

the State Public Control Authority, which oversees the issuing of bonds for Battery Park City.²

Based on this new deal, in September 1988 the Commission was proceeding with plans for a November 10 ground breaking at Site 13, rather than Site 14. Newspapers reported on September 25 that the Koch administration had reached a preliminary agreement with NOGA, in which the Swiss company could build a hotel at Battery Park City in exchange for a \$50 million payment to BPCA, most of which would be passed on to the City to build low- and middle-income housing, and an additional \$30 million payment for the Holocaust museum.

At this point, however, Cuomo, one of the **Mutagon's** political allies, decided to withhold his support from this particular deal (although not from the Holocaust museum project). Cuomo's press officer announced the governor had not endorsed the deal. This reflected a conflict between Cuomo and the other Founding Co-chairman of the **Mutagon**, Koch. The governor felt City Hall had intervened on his turf, by unilaterally releasing information on the deal to the press. Possibly there was also friction between Cuomo and Frucher, although no one will admit this. At about the same time, Frucher, who had gotten the governor involved in the **Mutagon** for the Holocaust museum project, and had encouraged the NOGA deal for BPCA, announced he was leaving

²Memo to Senator Ohrenstein from Rochelle Sidel. "Report on Executive Committee Meeting of New York Holocaust Memorial Commission", June 28, 1988, New York.

BPCA to take a job with Olympia and York (developers of the World Financial Center in Battery Park City).³

Ultimately the ground breaking scheduled for November 10, 1988 did not take place, because Cuomo, one of the leaders of the **Mutagon**, at odds both with Koch (the other Founding Co-chairman) and with the Co-chairmen of the Commission, took control as the central decision-maker and blocked it. The governor prevented actors under his authority from acting (e.g., the Department of Environmental Conservation did not act to approve an EIS). This prevention of requisite action, in turn, stopped the Holocaust Commission from carrying out the action of breaking ground. The governor had said the announcement of the ground breaking was "surprising and premature", and that substantive questions needed answers before the project proceeded.⁴ By blocking the NOGA deal, one head of the polygon of political forces creating the Holocaust museum project was at least delaying the project, if not ultimately killing it. However the governor did not sever himself from the **Mutagon** coalition. Iron triangle and issue network theories do not account for such a situation in a political coalition.

³Thomas J. Lueck, "City and State at Odds on Battery Park Hotel Plan", The New York Times, September 25, 1988, New York, p. 38, and Neil Barsky, "Holocaust museum and hotel linked", Daily News, September 25, 1988, New York, p. 16.

⁴Ibid.

As Banfield said, in any given situation, there may be an actor who is autonomous and cannot be controlled.⁵ In the case of the museum, the mayor, the governor, and Commission co-chairmen developer Klein, District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau, and State Senate Minority Leader Manfred Ohrenstein, all had structures of control which were linked with each other in varying ways outside of the project. For the Holocaust museum, they were all supposed to be leading the effort and working together. However, because he controlled the site, Cuomo was able to act autonomously and create an impasse. Banfield said: "Control over an actor may be secured only by an exercise of power. Or, to say the same thing in another way, power is the ability to establish control."⁶ Clearly, by intervening in the NOGA deal, the governor established that he (and not the mayor or Klein or anyone else) could act autonomously and take control of the Holocaust project. He was supposed to be an integral part of a political coalition created to carry out the project, but at this point he became the obstacle.

Frucher recalled the NOGA deal as follows:

"I got a phone call from City Hall that said there was someone in New York who was looking to do a five star hotel, that was interested in doing it possibly at

⁵Edward C. Banfield, Political Influence, The Free Press of Glencoe, New York, 1961, p. 310.

⁶Ibid., p. 312.

the tip of Battery Park [City]. I met with this gentleman. His name is Nessim Gaon. He came in and said he wanted to build a five star hotel. Initially we talked about doing it and having within it the Holocaust museum. Then one thing led to another and the architect Jim [James Stewart] Polshek came up with the idea of moving it to a second site. Gaon would purchase the second site as part of the deal and would pay the Holocaust museum \$30 million. In exchange for that, he would get additional FAR [Floor/Area Ratio] on his site which would allow for him to recoup some of those dollars. We renegotiated the deal. The deal was probably one of the most lucrative deals that we had at Battery Park City. Unfortunately during my transition the deal was undone. That's the story."

Frucher said his leaving BPCA "killed" the Holocaust museum project.⁷ It at least weakened it, because he had been the project's broker with the governor, wearing the hats of both a government official and a Commission executive committee member.

Museum director David Altshuler agreed that Frucher's departure was detrimental. He said other high level members of Cuomo's staff considered the NOGA-BPCA-Holocaust Commission deal Frucher's "self aggrandizement". He said

⁷Interview with Meyer S. (Sandy) Frucher, New York City, February 4, 1991.

others on the governor's staff were not "so happy" with Frucher's NOGA deal, and that after he resigned someone (unnamed) went to the governor and said NOGA was dirty. This was compounded because "Sandy went over to the developers" and took a job with Olympia and York.⁸

Asked whether BPCA, i.e. the governor, reneged on the deal with the commission, Frucher remained loyal to his old friend, Cuomo. He said: "Yes, BPCA and the State did renege on the deal with the Commission. I don't know if it was the governor. I don't know who drove that." Frucher said there were many rumors, and "people on the outside" questioning NOGA's integrity. He said he raised that issue with Morgenthau, "who checked [NOGA] out, and they checked out." Frucher said there was a rumor about other real estate people (e.g. Peter Kalikow or Jerry Speyer) in the area wanting to stop the hotel, but he could not confirm this. Whether the governor "drove" the renegeing or it was one of his high level advisors (e.g., Fabian Palomino, then Chairman of the Board of BPCA and a very close personal friend of Cuomo's) is not important, because the governor must have approved the move.

By November 1988, after the governor's stonewall, the situation had deteriorated rapidly and the implementation phase was not moving forward. On November 2 Altshuler sent a memorandum to executive committee members, telling them a

⁸Interview with David Altshuler, New York City, December 20, 1990.

decision had been made the night before to postpone the ground breaking for the museum. (The letter does not say who made the decision; it was most likely Klein, with co-chairman Robert Morgenthau's, Koch operative Herbert Rickman's and Altshuler's agreement. Ohrenstein was not consulted.) A "Dear Friends" letter, which accompanied the memorandum, was sent to a wider mailing list. It said:

"We are writing to inform you that our groundbreaking, scheduled for November 10, has been postponed. As you may know from having read the papers a few weeks ago, we are awaiting approval by the Battery Park City Authority and the Governor's office of a plan that will result in a site change for the Museum to a plot immediately adjacent to the one it was originally to occupy. To date, the review of the plan has not been completed, and it would be imprudent for us to break ground without those approvals. As you know, we had chosen November 10 as our groundbreaking date to coincide with the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht, although actual construction was and still is scheduled to begin in the spring.

"We are very excited about the pending plan, for its successful conclusion will provide us not only with a freestanding Museum adjacent to our original site but also with a major addition of \$30 million to our capital campaign, permitting us to build and maintain the

institution we have so long anticipated. We are confident that in the very near future, when we do break ground and begin construction, we will have reason to rejoice, for we will at long last be on our way to realizing our dream of honoring the six million who died by erecting a permanent structure of public education that will memorialize them by remembering how they lived. We know we can count on your continued good support in this important endeavor."

The letter was signed by co-chairmen Klein and Morgenthau.⁹

Reading between the lines, the letter said the governor had intervened and prevented the ground breaking from taking place. This type of action cannot be analyzed as part of an iron triangle or issue network of support. Instead, an integral part of the **Mutagon** of political forces had used his autonomous authority to cause detrimental delays for a project he was supporting. The leaders of the Commission were fearful this intervention could not only delay but could possibly terminate their project, by disrupting momentum and drying up fund raising. They were therefore trying to assure their contributors and potential contributors that they, too, had power to control the situation, and that the implementation of the project was still a reality.

⁹Letter from George Klein and Robert Morgenthau to "Dear Friends", undated but fax paper dated November 2, 1988, New York.

As Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky said in their analysis of the failure of the implementation phase of the Federal Economic Development Administration's employment project in Oakland, "what seemed to be a simple program turned out to be a very complex one, involving numerous participants, a host of differing perspectives, and a long and tortuous path of decision points that had to be cleared. Given these characteristics, the chances of completing the program with the haste its designers had hoped for--and even the chances of completing it at all--were sharply reduced."¹⁰ The **Mutagon** polygon, unlike the iron triangle or issue network, is so complex that it has the capability of one of its leaders doing damage, while remaining part of the polygon.

The delay in the ground breaking was orchestrated by the Cuomo administration. Besides proving the governor and not the mayor was the lead player for BPCA affairs, his advisors needed to carefully determine whether his close affiliation with the Holocaust museum project was, in fact, good for his political future. The delay was very serious for the Commission, because its credibility was at stake. It was not a delay the other members of the coalition had anticipated or wanted, but was deliberately planned by the Cuomo administration (which was part of the pro-museum coalition).

¹⁰Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, Implementation, Second Edition, University of California Press, 1979, p. 94.

As Pressman and Wildavsky said: "Not all the delays were unplanned, accidental occurrences; some were caused intentionally by participants who wanted to stop an undesired action or to step back and reassess the development of the program."¹¹ At this point, after Frucher's departure, Cuomo (with his advisors such as Palomino) was reassessing his affiliation with the Commission and deciding whether he should be so closely connected with it.

At the end of September 1988 a new player entered the scene, which undoubtedly was a factor in the governor's stonewalling on the NOGA deal and delaying the Holocaust museum. After Frucher resigned, Cuomo appointed as president of BPCA David Emil, a 37 year old deputy commissioner in the State Social Services Department and the son of a prominent real estate developer. Although he is Jewish, he is not an actively committed Jew like Frucher. Emil acted as though this was just another real estate deal. Moreover, Frucher and Cuomo were close friends and political allies, with Frucher doing major behind the scenes work for Cuomo's campaigns. Emil lacked these personal ties with Cuomo. As The New York Times said of Emil's appointment: "To political mavens, the main question is not what sort of leadership Mr. Emil will give Battery Park City, a complex of offices and

¹¹Ibid., 122.

apartments in lower Manhattan, but rather what sort of relationship he will have with the Governor."¹²

A November 21 story in a weekly that serves lower Manhattan said Emil had told the newspaper that a new plan for use of Sites 13, 14, and 1 would be announced in early December. (Sites 14 and 1 are the southernmost sites, with Site 1 east of Site 14; Site 13 is adjacent to and north of Site 14.) "We are still working with the principals at this point. There is no final resolution of the treatment of sites 1, 13 and 14 yet," Emil said. He said board chairman (and Cuomo's special counsel and long-time friend) Palomino and other board members did vote to accept the NOGA proposal in August. However, they later shelved it because they had believed they were originally approving only a letter of intent, and not the transaction itself. Emil said: "We're discussing conceptual ideas and some specifics. It's like any other real estate deal." He added that he expected to seek a zoning change for commercial use of one of the sites to allow for construction of a hotel, but he declined to say which site. He also pointed out that the museum had controlled Site 14 since 1985, and had been unable to develop it.¹³

¹²Elizabeth Kolbert, "Albany Notes: Naming of Battery Park City Head Expected", The New York Times, September 18, 1988.

¹³Joanna Molloy, "Holocaust Museum Deal Expected", Battery News, November 21, 1988, New York, p. 14.

The transaction with NOGA and the Commission seems to have been a victim of the changing of the guard, with Emil replacing Frucher, who had made the NOGA deal and was close to Cuomo, Klein and the Commission. Frucher had been a member of the executive committee and an active participant at its meetings, as well as representing BPCA and the governor. He thus was part of three angles of the polygon. In fact, housing the Holocaust museum in Battery Park City had been his idea. While he had a "paternal" interest in the project, Emil was an outsider and representing only BPCA. Although it cannot be proven, Emil was also probably acting as a "fall guy" for Cuomo, whose interest in the project seems to have waned over time. Palomino took over from Frucher as the governor's personal representative to negotiate with the Commission. What Frucher had been willing to push through and implement as quickly and cooperatively as possible, Emil and Palomino wanted to stonewall. They did not want to be responsible for possible precedents engineered by Frucher that would make them, the governor and BPCA vulnerable to criticism.

In comparison with Frucher's deep personal involvement with the Holocaust project, Emil's apparent interest was only routine and his lack of knowledge was remarkable. When asked in an interview about the complicated and changing structure of the political coalition behind the project, he said: "Why are you asking me? I'm not involved in the Holocaust

Memorial Commission." He said he did not know the governor was a Founding Co-chairman, nor anything about the details of the Commission. He also did not know that appointments to the Commission had been made by the mayor and the governor.

Emil said: "My experience of [the Commission] is that it is a creature of a small group of people who are not politicians, and it happens to have politicians involved in it. It's really run by George Klein." Emil said he considered the Commission "indistinguishable from any not-for-profit entity in New York State. It has no greater or lesser governmental role--kind of like the Museum of Modern Art, in the sense that there are government officials who are interested in its successful activities for various different reasons because--in the case of the Holocaust memorial because of the commemoration of the event and so forth, in the case of the Museum of Modern Art for other reasons--but it essentially functions as a not-for-profit organization that has sort of ex officio political figures at various levels who have different interests." Emil said he had never heard of Herbert Rickman, Koch's political entrepreneur who had initiated the project and been heavily involved until Koch's departure at the end of 1989 (more than a year after Emil's arrival on the scene).¹⁴

¹⁴Interview with David Emil, CEO of Battery Park City Authority, August 5, 1991, New York City.

Besides Frucher's departure and his replacement by Emil, another possible reason for Cuomo's decreasing enthusiasm for the Holocaust museum project may have been his interest in running for President. Although promoting a particularistic Jewish museum in New York City was politically good for being reelected governor, it could appear somewhat parochial in a race for President. Palomino and another Cuomo counsel, Evan Davis, repeatedly told the Holocaust Commission co-chairmen and executive committee they were concerned about first amendment issues. They were concerned Cuomo would be accused of supporting a project that could be questioned with regard to separation of Church and State (see Chapter 14).

While The New York Post is not always an accurate news source, on December 8, 1988 it broke a story on the NOGA-Commission-BPCA situation that was to prove true in many respects. Primarily, the article revealed that BPCA had said for the first time that the Holocaust museum would have to pay for its lease. Instead of the previously agreed upon \$1 per year (in the lease for Site 14), the museum would have to pay "market rent for cultural institutions", according to Emil. Emil told the Post the amount would be "in the millions" over the period of the lease, running (as do all Battery Park City leases) until 2069. The rent for private non-profit arts groups that signed leases in the two previous years in buildings not owned by the city had averaged \$10 to \$12 per square foot annually, according to the article. For

the museum's 150,000 square feet on Site 13, this would make the annual rent between \$1.5 million and \$1.8 million per year.

Regarding NOGA, the Post said that, under Frucher, BPCA had passed a resolution on August 25 to take "all steps necessary and appropriate related to the development of parcels 13 and 14 in accordance with" letters of intent between the parties. But Emil, who had not been present at the August meeting and succeeded Frucher in October, said the vote "merely authorized me to investigate the NOGA deal". Palomino, Cuomo's special counsel and chairman of BPCA, told the Post: "We just authorized a letter of intent, talking about what we thought we intended to do....We had certain reservations." He added that the legislation that created BPCA required that it be paid rent on all parcels, which the museum would not have done under the NOGA agreement.¹⁵ (The original lease also did not require payment of rent, except for the symbolic \$1 per year. This symbolic payment seems to have fulfilled the letter of the law under Frucher's leadership, but not Emil's. Again, this may have been a reflection of Cuomo's shrinking interest in the project and grander ambitions to run for national office.)

In 1991, Emil explained the renegeing on the NOGA deal and the change from the \$1 per year rent as follows:

¹⁵Edward A. Adams, "Museum Jinxed Again: Holocaust memorial faces new delays at Battery Park City", The New York Post, New York, December 8, 1988, p. 73.

"There was a lease entered into in 1986 which allowed the Holocaust Memorial Commission and the Museum of Jewish Heritage to build a building on one of our sites--14, which would have contained the museum in the base and a residential building on top. And the actual rent that was paid under that lease was much more than \$1 a year--[it was] \$45 per square foot valuation of the property [for the residential portion of the complex]. But the thing you have to realize in order to understand the transaction from the economic point of view and from the Authority's point of view is that the Authority did not recognize the square footage of the museum for the purposes of our zoning calculations. In a nutshell we were allowing a bigger building to be built than might have otherwise been built. And we were getting paid for that portion of the building that would have been allowed on the site anyway. So we said to the Holocaust Memorial Commission, you can build a bigger building than the site currently allows and we won't charge you in excess of the what's presently allowed. Now, what then happened is the Holocaust Memorial Commission was unable to find a builder that was interested in building a residential tower on top of the museum."

Emil said the Holocaust Commission then looked for another transaction, in which they tried to sell the entire lease to NOGA. He said one critical problem for BPCA was

that there was no public bid process for the site. "Land here is for public bid, not through private deals," he said. "As regards the question of how rent came to be charged on Site 13, the position of the Authority and the position of the governor in this particular regard was, 'Look, we gave you a lease on Site 14. You chose to sell the site and you're going to make a \$30 million profit. That's what they got for the sale. Now you made a \$30 million profit and you want us to give you another one.'"

When it was pointed out to Emil that the Commission didn't sell the lease to NOGA, he offered the following scenario: "It didn't go through, but if they did sell it...we weren't going to give them another one. This could go on forever. We could give them every piece and soon they would have hundreds of millions of dollars." Emil then admitted this "seriously would ever happen", and said: "If that transaction had gone forward it was restructured through a negotiated understanding with the Holocaust Memorial through which essentially the Authority agreed to act as agent to sell the property for \$32 million. And the Memorial Commission agreed to rent the new site."¹⁶

At a December 14, 1988 meeting of the executive and development committees of the Holocaust Commission, the information in the Post was confirmed and amplified. Because Klein was out of the country, Morgenthau conducted the

¹⁶Emil interview.

meeting and Klein "attended" by speaker phone. Morgenthau reported as follows on a meeting he and Klein had held with Emil and Palomino a week earlier: BPCA had informed the Commission the NOGA deal was definitely off, and would be given no further consideration. BPCA intended to find more than one developer to bid on a deal that would place a residential apartment building on Site 14, with the museum moving to Site 13 (as in the NOGA deal). The apartment developer would pay the museum \$32 million for lease rights. BPCA had figured the rent for the museum at Site 13 should be \$10 million or more over the life of the ground lease, with the museum paying \$5 million (or half of the rent) up front. Another \$5 million would be paid later, including a share of the proceeds from museum admissions. BPCA had told Klein and Morgenthau it would be illegal to give anyone any site rent-free due to provisions in the 1972 bonding agreement. BPCA had also said they would know within two weeks whether they had developer interest or not for Site 14. If so, they would put out a challenge bid by mid-January 1989.

The loss of free (\$1 per year) rent was a major blow to the Commission. Other problems were also discussed at the meeting: The letter of agreement for the new lease was to expire at the end of December, 1988, with a requirement for the museum to submit schematics by then. Although they had not been developed because the NOGA deal had not been firm, it was expected that something could be worked up to meet the

legal requirements. If the lease was renewed, BPCA would want the museum to begin paying rent of \$100,000 per year. Frucher arrived toward the end of the meeting and said the governor was the Commission's friend and that "someone else" was causing the problems. He said the governor called him almost daily out of genuine concern about the museum. This seems highly unlikely for several reasons: 1. Frucher was no longer with BPCA and not in a position to know the exact status of the project; 2. This was not ever a project which the governor made a personal day-to-day priority; 3. Whoever the "someone else" was would have to be subordinate to the governor; 4. The governor had more important issues to discuss with Frucher on the telephone, such as campaign issues Frucher worked on for him. Perhaps in this context the museum was occasionally a topic of conversation.

Although the governor had distanced himself and Frucher had left BPCA, Cuomo remained "Founding Co-Chairman" and the **Mutagon** remained in place. There was still agreement there should be a Holocaust museum, but there were now negotiations within the polygon regarding the logistics of making it a reality. The executive committee authorized Klein and Morgenthau to go back to BPCA to obtain an extension of the lease and assurances that BPCA would put on the table by January 15 any names of potential developers for Site 14. They also wanted BPCA to agree to return to the NOGA deal, if no other developer emerged. As he had at earlier impasses,

Altshuler expressed fears about the project's losing momentum (and thus funding).¹⁷ Again, as Pressman and Wildavsky said, there was the emergence in the "decision path of numerous diversions not intended by the program sponsors."¹⁸

On February 15, 1989 the executive committee met and decided to approve BPCA's acceptance of an offer by a developer to build an apartment building on Site 14, the original site of the museum (with the museum free standing on adjacent Site 13). Although BPCA said they would have in hand three offers for development of an apartment building by January 15, one month after that date there was only one such offer. The name of the developer was not revealed at the meeting: Klein said he did not know the name and did not want to know.

Klein said he and Morgenthau had been meeting with Emil and Palomino. They had been told the idea of a hotel had been turned down by BPCA because it would have been subject to a change of zoning, an EIS, and approval of the Public Authorities Control Board. The new deal, which still needed approvals from the City and BPCA, would, like the NOGA deal, give \$32 million to the museum. Land would be rented from BPCA for about \$4 million. On March 1, BPCA would send a RFP for any deal that matched the one in hand. There would be a

¹⁷Memo from Meg Reed to Senator Ohrenstein, "Holocaust Commission Meeting - Executive and Development Committees - December 14, 1988", New York, December 15, 1988.

¹⁸Pressman and Wildavsky, p. 112.

sixty day waiting period, with a thirty day extension. BPCA would accept only bids materially higher than the one in hand. There would then be thirty days for analysis, and then two weeks for sealed and final bids between any parties that remained. Lease terms would be attached to the RFP (i.e., terms by which \$32 million would go to the Holocaust museum). For an apartment building, no EIS or rezoning was required.

Upon receipt of the \$32 million, the Holocaust museum would give to BPCA \$5 million for its required rental payment. This would leave \$27 million for the museum. Payment should be the next Fall, when the apartment house developer would sign the lease with BPCA. The museum had to pay an additional \$5.2 million to BPCA, for an 80 year lease (with no rental increases within the 80 years). This would be paid at a rate of 10% of any admissions contributions to the museum and interest from tax free bonds. BPCA had agreed that this portion of the rent would not commence until the museum opened. The museum was in default of its lease with BPCA, and BPCA supposedly would not renew it unless the Commission accepted the deal described above. Thus BPCA had made the Commission "an offer one cannot refuse"; the Commission had boxed itself into a corner, dependent on the wishes of the State government. The governor was still part of the **Mutagon**, but on his terms. Approval of the deal by the board of BPCA was anticipated within ten days, possibly

followed by a major press conference with the governor and the mayor.¹⁹

On February 23, 1989, there was no press conference, but there were press releases from BPCA, the Mayor, and the Commission. BPCA said it had authorized that day "a series of steps that will provide for construction of a 38-floor residential tower, development of a luxury hotel and construction of a memorial to the Holocaust and Museum of Jewish Heritage and will provide \$50 million of BPCA funding for New York City's housing program over the next three years." The press release said BPCA would issue a RFP for a 589,000 square foot residential tower of 360 feet in height for Site 14, with a minimum bid of rental payments of \$121 per square foot of developable area, which included a \$32 million payment to the Holocaust Commission. The RFP also required annual rent payments to BPCA of about \$3.8 million, to be adjusted for inflation and increased land value over the 80-year term of the lease. Prospective developers had 90 days to respond.

The press release also said BPCA was issuing an RFP for a luxury hotel or "mixed use hotel/residential use" on Site 1, which was "consistent with previous plans for Battery Park City". BPCA would seek the necessary zoning use changes. In addition, BPCA was entering into an agreement with the

¹⁹Memo from Rochelle Saidel to Senator Ohrenstein, "Holocaust Museum Update", New York, February 16, 1989.

Holocaust Commission, in which the museum would relinquish its rights to Site 14 upon receipt of \$32 million from the Site 14 developer and enter into a new lease with BPCA for Site 13. The Commission had agreed to pay rent of \$10.2 million, of which \$5 million was to be paid immediately.

Cuomo is quoted that "Under these agreements everyone is a winner." The press release did not refer to the fact that one of Cuomo's "winners", the Holocaust Commission, was now losing \$10.2 million, which it did not have to pay in the original agreement in 1986. Palomino is quoted about the "outstanding sites" and the "significant economic benefits from a first class hotel and tourist attraction in Lower Manhattan". He seemed to consider the memorial museum a mere "tourist attraction".²⁰

Koch, who had taken a back seat to Cuomo with regard to the project after the site changed to Battery Park City, issued a statement with a lead that said he had for many years "supported proposals for the creation in New York City of a museum and memorial to the victims of the Holocaust." The statement then praised the economic benefits from a new residential development, a first-class hotel and a new tourist attraction in lower Manhattan, plus the generation of \$50 million for affordable housing in New York City.²¹ A

²⁰Battery Park City Authority, News Release, New York, February 23, 1989.

²¹Office of the Mayor, Statement by Mayor Edward I. Koch, New York, February 23, 1989.

very brief statement by Klein and Morgenthau said the museum would benefit greatly from being freestanding, and also from an infusion of \$27 million in cash. They thanked Cuomo, Koch, Emil and Palomino--their partners in the Mutagon.²²

The New York Times reported, as Klein had announced at the February 15 executive committee meeting, that one proposal meeting the condition of contributing \$32 million to the Holocaust museum had already been received. The Times article named Property Resources Corporation (PRC), a developer that had already built a condominium project in Battery Park City, as the prospective developer. The article also stated that BPCA had said the letter of intent with NOGA had been terminated, and NOGA's good-faith deposit check was being returned. NOGA was quoted about considering the possibility of suing BPCA.²³

On April 4, 1989, Emil for BPCA and Klein and Morgenthau for the Commission and museum signed a Letter of Understanding that set forth the terms (as described above) by which a free-standing museum could be built, with the project receiving \$27 million (\$32 million from the developer of Site 14, with \$5 million given back to BPCA). Implementation could begin anew, after PRC or another

²²New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, "Statement by George Klein and Robert Morgenthau", New York, February 24, 1989.

²³Thomas J. Lueck, "Agency Revises A Museum Plan At Battery Park: To Require Donation by Condominium Builder", The New York Times, New York, February 24, 1989, p. B3.

developer was accepted by BPCA and signed a different Letter of Understanding with the Commission and the museum (obtaining Site 14 in return for a payment to the Commission of \$32 million).

Meanwhile, on May 9, 1989, Stephen Robert, Co-chairman of the Development Committee announced that \$17.2 million had been raised. Of this amount, only some \$7 million was in cash. A financial statement on May 31, 1989 revealed there was a contribution income of \$7,260,000, with \$10,335,000 in pledges receivable. With \$27 million anticipated from BPCA, funds to be raised were projected at \$66,600,650. This would pay for the projected costs of the museum, \$103,019,650; repayment of a \$2 million bank loan; and \$300,000 in architectural fees owed.²⁴

The Commission decided at a June 8, 1989 meeting to go ahead with a massive fund raising campaign to reach their goal of \$103 million. (This did not include \$30 million for an endowment fund.) Altshuler said that after 40 years of prehistory, before the mayor convened his Task Force, plus seven years on this project, "we are now poised to succeed." He said the Commission had to finish their work now, because distortions and trivializations were multiplying and survivors were disappearing. David Edell, the fund raising

²⁴Statement of Cash Receipts and Disbursements, June 15, 1983 to May 31, 1989, A Living Memorial to the Holocaust-Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York.

consultant said it was possible to raise \$100 million from the Jews of New York City.

Frucher (who was no longer working for the governor or BPCA) said the governor was committed to make the project work: "Make it a fait accompli, and then you'll get the \$27 million." He said the governor and the BPCA chairman and president had made a commitment that the Commission would receive the \$27 million, and it would be too embarrassing for them not to follow through. He said the \$5 million was to be paid back to BPCA (from the \$32 million to be received from the developer) "to satisfy a quasi-legal psychological situation," and that in return the Commission had a commitment. Klein said he hoped to have \$38 million in hand by November, including the \$27 million from BPCA. He then would hope to break ground in January 1990, and complete the museum by Yom HaShoah (April) 1992. Those present voted to approve moving forward with the project as planned, without any reduction in content.²⁵

The June 8 meeting was like a pep rally for a losing team. Everyone patted the other one on the back and said he had confidence the project would move forward. In reality, there were serious problems with finances, with fund raising, and with a deal being closed with PRC or another developer. The Commission was proceeding on the good faith of the

²⁵Memo from Rochelle Saidel to Senator Ohrenstein, "Holocaust Commission", June 8, 1989.

governor and BPCA that the deal with PRC would go forward, with no guarantees. A Commission leader later said off the record that Palomino had decided the NOGA deal was no good, but he did not want the governor to look bad by completely renegeing on the Holocaust museum project. Palomino had therefore stopped the NOGA deal and found PRC as a developer for the site. (This has not been proved. Palomino did not appear for a confirmed interview at his office, and then made an appointment for a telephone interview that he did not keep. He also did not answer questions that were given to him in writing.)

Meanwhile, fund raising methods had become diversified and intensified, and some were of questionable taste, e.g.:

1. Proposals were prepared for foundations, that included the Grace Foundation. In June 1981 Yeshiva University had cancelled a major fund raising dinner honoring J. Peter Grace, after the Jewish Telegraphic Agency revealed Grace had aided a convicted Nazi war criminal.²⁶
2. There was a direct mail campaign, using a personal appeal by popular television sexologist Dr. Ruth Westheimer. Although Westheimer is a refugee (also described as a survivor in the mailing, which she is not), using her for fund raising creates a disturbing mix of sex and the Holocaust.
3. An "Associates Division",

²⁶Rochelle Saidel, "Yeshiva U. Says it Cancelled Dinner Honoring U.S. Businessman Who aided Convicted War Criminal", Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin, June 2, 1981, p. 3.

created to attract younger donors, held events that also were questionably inappropriate for fund raising for a Holocaust memorial. For example, on October 23, 1988, an invitation was issued that said: "The Associates Division of The New York Holocaust Memorial Commission invites you to Rock and Roll The Night Away" at The Hot Rod, for a donation of \$125 to the Commission.

After June 1989 progress on the project barely crept forward for more than a year. In November PRC was chosen as the developer of the apartment building at Site 14, as a result of a RFP. The owners of PRC, Jerome Shatzky and Frank Lindy, then began searching for funding for their project. (BPCA, i.e., Palomino and Emil, had found PRC to develop the site before the RFP was issued.) PRC was supposed to put up the money for their project by April 5, 1990, and this was the second extension BPCA had given them. Because of the soft real estate market for luxury apartments, especially in the Wall Street area, Citibank had pulled out of financing. The museum therefore could not sign a lease with BPCA, because BPCA did not have the \$27 million from the developer. Meanwhile, in March 1990 the Holocaust Commission was trying to obtain money from such sources as Leonard Stern and was basically being told, "Don't call us, we'll call you". Altshuler said in March that if there was "no hole in the

ground by the end of June, we can all go home". He also said a \$27 million letter of credit from BPCA would help.²⁷

On April 19, 1990 an emergency meeting of the executive committee was held in the office of George Klein. Money (or lack of it) was the main agenda item. The committee decided to appoint a five member study group to explore how to scale back the day-to-day operations of the museum project. At that time there was a staff of 30, with a \$3 million annual budget. Almost \$11 million had already been spent. Another subcommittee was to be appointed to scale back the museum to \$50 million (from \$100 million). The committees were to report back in a month or less. Other suggestions were also made: that a State agency such as Urban Development Corporation or the Education Department float tax free bonds to cover the cost so a lease could be signed; and that Cuomo be asked to tell BPCA the Commission wants its \$1 a year lease back. The possibility of Howard Rubenstein, Morgenthau, Klein, and maybe Frucher and co-chairman Senator Manfred Ohrenstein meeting with Cuomo was discussed. (Koch, who had lost his reelection bid to David Dinkins in November 1989 was no longer actively in the picture, although he remained Founding Co-chairman. Nor was the new Mayor Dinkins showing signs of interest at this point.)

²⁷Telephone interview with Charles Dworkis, staff of Senator Ohrenstein, New York, March 23, 1990.

The status of PRC's apartment project was also discussed at the meeting. After PRC had been selected, its source of financing, Citibank, had pulled out. Now Citibank was back in, but with unrealistic restrictions. Citibank had written a letter saying it would guarantee \$150 million, if the developer came up with \$52 million (which would include a \$12 million letter of credit and \$40 million in cash). Citibank also wanted to be able to lay off \$75 million to a third party co-lender. Since virtually no one was doing this kind of residential financing at that time, it was an impossible condition for PRC to meet.

George Klein admitted that accepting the governor's original Battery Park City deal was a mistake. He said it was a decision made by very intelligent savvy people, but was based on emotion--on the desire to be the best and have the best museum in the best location. In retrospect, he said they should have stuck to the Custom House. It was anticipated that PRC would default and lose its \$250,000 deposit. Site 13 would still be for the museum, with the Commission selling the lease (with air rights) to Site 14. However, nothing would be built, as of then. The site, with air rights, was worth about \$30 million, but it seemed nothing was about to happen.²⁸

By August 1990, nothing had moved forward. Harry Albright replaced Palomino as president of BPCA that month.

²⁸Dworkis interview, April 19, 1990, New York.

Albright, CEO of Dime Savings Bank, is said to be close to the governor's son, Andrew Cuomo. (Andrew is also reportedly the governor's contact with Morgenthau.) Museum director Altshuler said that Palomino had "screwed up", and that Albright, starting with a clean slate, was more likely to "undo the mess". Altshuler said Albright had told Morgenthau that his first assignment from the governor is to fix our problem. (This means getting money for the development of Site 14, for which the museum owns the lease and air rights.) Altshuler said there were a number of possibilities for doing this: 1. Get a new developer. 2. Give concessions from the State's part of the deal. 3. Find a way for the Commission to get money in some other way than development of Site 14. 4. Give concessions to the Commission, such as less rent, or forgetting the \$5 million. "We are trying to be careful to stay out of how this is accomplished," Altshuler said. "But they [the governor and BPCA] got us into this and should get us out. They signed up NOGA and then threw him out. They got us out of the Custom House and into Battery Park City."²⁹

By the end of 1990, nothing had moved. Albright, the new BPCA chairman, had promised progress by Labor Day, but then he became seriously ill. He then pledged to resolve the situation by the end of the year, but got sick again. PRC

²⁹Interview of David Altshuler, New York City, August 9, 1990.

had been released from its pending deal. The Commission hoped to get some money from a deal including the sale of its lease and air rights, when the market improved at a later date.³⁰ In February 1991, the Commission was anticipating a new memo, just between the museum and BPCA. Altshuler said the Commission could then begin construction. He expected the memo in weeks, and the lease in months. He said there would be a ground breaking before the end of 1991, but there was no rush, as the museum needed to be redesigned. The museum was to go back to Site 14, and use only half of the site--that closest to the water. BPCA would get Site 13 back and could build one or more apartment buildings both on it and on the other half of Site 14 (when the market got better).³¹

The expected memo from BPCA finally materialized on July 26, 1991. As Altshuler had anticipated, it called for a new museum lease on half of Site 14 and terminated the 1986 leases for a museum and a residential building on Site 14. According to this new deal, the Commission will build a \$50 million museum on half of Site 14. BPCA will give the Commission \$10 million as a construction draw, probably by floating commercial paper. Later, when the other half of the site is leased to a developer for residential construction,

³⁰Interview of David Altshuler, New York City, December 20, 1990.

³¹Interview of David Altshuler, February 22, 1991.

BPCA will give the museum a minimum of \$10 million (depending on the deal), and will recoup this money from the developer. The museum has the half of the site that faces the Hudson River and Statue of Liberty.

Altshuler said of the newest memorandum of understanding that new external and internal designs for the museum would be necessary, but the concept would remain the same (see Chapter 14). He said that of the \$23 million the Commission had raised, about \$10 million was left. With this \$10 million and the \$10 million from BPCA, the Commission would need to raise \$30 million more to build the museum. The second \$10 million from BPCA (from the sale of the second half of the site) would be used to begin the endowment fund. The new target date to begin construction would be 1992, with the museum expected to open in 1994.³²

Thus the **Mutagon** entered a new phase. Cuomo, who (by coincidence or not) then seemed inclined not to run for President, and BPCA, which he controlled, made a new deal with the Commission which even involved a \$10 million investment. (An article the day before the memorandum was signed said: "Of 13 current and former Cuomo aides surveyed in the last week, none said they believed that Mr. Cuomo would run for President."³³) Meanwhile, ten years had gone

³²Interview of David Altshuler, August 5, 1991, New York City.

³³Kevin Sack, "Cuomo Seeking the Presidency? Yes, He Isn't, Maybe He Is", New York Times, July 25, 1991, p. B5.

by since Koch's initiation of the project, and time, itself, was an enemy. The first meeting of Koch's Task Force, the initial stage of the *Mutagon*, was on July 22, 1981--almost ten years earlier to the day. Costs had escalated, unforeseen problems had developed (such as the drop in real estate values), protagonists such as Koch had left the scene, and new players (e.g., Cuomo, Palomino and Emil) had caused further complications and delays in implementation. Cuomo and BPCA had then come up with a plan to "save the day". As Pressman and Wildavsky said: "The advantages of being new are exactly that: being new. They dissipate quickly over time."³⁴ In the case of creating a Holocaust memorial museum in New York City, there had been ten years of such dissipation.

SUMMARY

Between the Fall of 1988 and the Spring of 1991 there was virtually no progress on actually building the Holocaust museum. The *Mutagon* was at an impasse. First Frucher arranged a deal with NOGA, through which the museum would be free-standing on the next site and sell its lease rights for a luxury hotel on its original site. Soon afterward Frucher resigned as BPCA president and other high level political brokers in Cuomo's office decided the NOGA deal should not go forward. BPCA also reneged on the agreement whereby the

³⁴Pressman and Wildavsky, p. 130.

Holocaust museum was to pay only symbolic rent of \$1 per year, and the rental fee became some \$10 million. Cuomo remained part of the Mutagon building the museum, and retained his title as Founding Co-chairman. At the same time, his office and BPCA stonewalled and seemed likely to kill the project with which he was associated. The probable reason for this was that his political advisors thought the original deal had Church-State problems that could hurt him in a Presidential race. Since severing himself completely could also hurt the governor, especially in New York State, his staff found another developer, PRC, for a deal with the Holocaust Commission. This deal fell apart when PRC could not obtain financing. The latest plan then was for the Commission to scale down and build a museum on half of the original site. The Commission expected a memo of understanding from BPCA for the new deal by March 1991, but it was not delivered until July 26. This latest plan included a \$10 million contribution from BPCA and the total cost of the museum was expected to be \$50 million. With exterior and interior designs recommencing again, museum director Altshuler anticipated a 1992 ground breaking and a 1994 opening. With Koch still officially the Founding Co-Chairman but in reality out of the picture, the Mutagon now was an alliance with one head, as in the beginning. However, now that head was the governor and not the mayor.

CHAPTER 13: INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLES AND CONFLICTS WITHIN THE Mutagon

"Dogs in a kennel snarl at each other; but when a wolf comes along they become allies." Talmud: Sanhedrin, 105a.

This chapter examines the internal conflicts between various players in the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission's **Mutagon** of political forces. In the two theories most often used to analyze how interest groups create political alliances--iron triangle and issue network theories--there is a sense of harmony among the players for the greater good of a common goal. In the case of the New York Holocaust Commission's alliance with Mayor Koch, Governor Cuomo, and others over the years, the relationship within the alliance was more complex and subject to conflicts. There were also conflicts among members within the Commission. Furthermore, the fact that the governor, mayor, and Battery Park City Authority (BPCA) head were all part of the Commission itself--as well as the government officials with whom the Commission was dealing--causes the relationship between the various angles of the changing polygon of political allies, the **Mutagon**, to have built-in conflicts of interest.

For nearly one third of the **Mutagon's** ten year life the heads of the City and State governments shared the spotlight as "Founding Co-Chairmen". They had a say both as Commission officers and as elected officials with whom the Commission

was dealing. In addition, two of the four Co-chairmen were elected officials, and the third was a major real estate developer that had megabuck deals going with the City and the State. Because of the complicated structure and overlapping of roles, internal conflict is integral to this **Mutagon**.

While iron triangle theory generally makes a clear distinction between the angles of the triangle--interest group, executive branch, and congressional branch--Harold Seidman provided a good example of the conflicts of interest that can occur when elected officials are also part of the interest group. He said: "Intermingling of public and private duties places public officials in an ambiguous position. There are many unanswered questions. Do the secretaries of housing and urban development and agriculture serve as directors of the National Home Ownership Foundation in their official capacity, or as private citizens? To whom are federal officials accountable for their actions as directors if the foundation is not an agency and instrumentality of the United States, what then are its responsibilities to the president, the Congress, and ultimately, through them, to the people?"¹ Likewise, as Founding Co-Chairmen and members of the Commission members, as well as elected officials, to whom are the governor and

¹Harold Seidman, Politics, Position, and Power, Oxford University Press, New York, 1970, 1980, p. 299.

mayor responsible, regarding their actions concerning the Holocaust museum project?

While all of the players remained loyal to the basic idea of a Holocaust memorial museum, there have been varying intensities of loyalty and criteria for implementation, and changes in individuals' involvement over time. These differences have sometimes caused one player in the **Mutagon** to be at odds with one or more other political forces in the coalition. (Governor Cuomo's midstream cooling down, analyzed in the last chapter, is the most obvious example.) In addition, the complex structure of a **Mutagon**, with its large cast of city-state-private interest group players (and some people in more than one category at the same time), is subject to a number of conflicts between some of the players. While some of these conflicts evolved from circumstances that have nothing to do with the project at hand, they nevertheless affect the **Mutagon** coalition's unity.

The major players in the **Mutagon** have been: Mayor Koch, Koch political entrepreneur Herbert Rickman, developer George Klein, Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau, Governor Cuomo, Cuomo political entrepreneurs and BPCA officials Sandy Frucher and Fabian Palomino, New York State Senate Minority Leader Manfred Ohrenstein, and, briefly, Peter A. Cohen (who lost his job at Shearson Lehman). By the time of the **Mutagon's** latest phase in 1991, new BPCA officials David Emil and Harry Albright had also become part

of the **Mutagon**. After David Dinkins became mayor in 1990, at a stage of impasse and stagnation, he hardly became involved. If the newest deal, signed between BPCA and the Commission in July 1991, goes forward smoothly, he will no doubt jump on the band wagon. (This may cause new friction with Cuomo, who now has no competition from a mayor, as he did from Koch.)

Koch and Klein were closely connected, and there were no known conflicts between them regarding the Holocaust project. However, they had other business, including the multimillion dollar Times Square redevelopment project (see Chapter 8), which caused friction from time to time. Koch recalled in his autobiography, Mayor, how Klein came to see him in 1982 to complain about the administration's limitation of tax abatements for some of his other real estate developments, the building of skyscrapers on the East Side. Koch quotes Klein that this zoning change "is going to cost me millions of dollars. We acquired property. I have forty-eight million dollars in this property. And now you are going to make it impossible to build on it. We are going to sue!" Koch continued: "I said, 'Of course you should sue, George. I am not suggesting that you not protect yourself. I do what I have to do and you do what you have to do. We can still be friends. Don't be angry.'" [Klein] said, 'I am angry.' I

said, 'Well, I understand. But we are not going to change on this.' So he left."²

Klein was also involved in one of the Koch administration's scandals. Alex Liberman, who had been put in control of the City's leasing bureaus soon after Koch took office in 1978, was getting kickbacks from landlords to whom he issued leases for use of their property by the City. In order to receive this money, Liberman, a Holocaust survivor, used as a front (among others) his synagogue. During the investigation of Liberman, it was discovered that Klein donated \$5,000 to the synagogue, after Liberman had leased three floors from him in an old Brooklyn building that had not had a tenant for ten years. Klein insisted the money was unconnected to the lease and was never named as a bribe payer in Liberman's indictment.³ Thus Klein's and Koch's other interconnections, which all involved both of their obtaining money, would be likely to affect their relationship in the **Mutagon**.

While Koch and Klein were political friends with "one hand washing the other", Koch and Cuomo had been political enemies more than once. They ran against each other in bitter Democratic primaries, for mayor of New York City in

²Edward I. Koch, Mayor, Warner Books, New York, 1985, p. 297.

³Jack Newfield and Wayne Barrett, City for Sale: Ed Koch and the Betrayal of New York, Harper & Row, New York, 1988, pp. 211-228.

1981 (which Koch won) and governor of New York State in 1982 (which Cuomo won). As early as 1973, they were on opposing sides. Cuomo defended the development of a scaled down public housing project in Forest Hills (which would bring blacks into the neighborhood), and Koch sided with the opponents (white, and mostly Jewish).⁴ There was "no love lost" between them, and Koch must have let Cuomo become his equal "Founding Co-chairman" of the Holocaust project only because he had no other choice. From Cuomo's perspective, he may have wanted to be Koch's equal on the project as a way of stealing some of Koch's thunder with the organized Jewish community of New York City and State. Since there is no written record of the steps leading to the addition of Cuomo, and since Cuomo's broker, Frucher, and Koch's broker, Rickman, would say only what has been detailed here (see Chapter 10), there is no way of further documenting how and why the merger took place. It is common knowledge, however, that these two Founding Co-chairmen of the **Mutagon** were not political or personal friends. Although they are both Democrats, Koch is considered conservative, even "quasi-Republican", and Cuomo, a liberal.

Koch supporter Klein is very much a Republican, and was a high level backer of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush. Klein's partisan feelings temporarily prevented the

⁴Michael Harrington, "When Ed Koch Was Still a Liberal", Dissent Magazine ("A Special Issue: In Search of New York"), Fall 1987, pp. 595-602.

Congressman in whose district the Holocaust museum is to be built from becoming a member of the Commission. Although East Side Manhattan Congressman S. William Green (Republican) was a member, Congressman Ted Weiss (Democrat), whose district includes both the Custom House and Battery Park City, was not originally invited to serve. (Weiss is also a refugee from Nazi Hungary.) Klein kept him off of the Commission because Weiss had introduced a resolution in Congress to impeach Reagan. Ironically, then Commission director David Blumenfeld asked Weiss for his support in the quest for the Custom House in February, 1984, and did not understand why Weiss was "neutral". Weiss was not appointed an Associate Chairperson until June 1986, much later than other elected officials.⁵

Another Associate Chairperson and minor player in the **Mutagon**, then Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins, also had a disagreement with one of the Founding Co-chairmen, Koch, regarding the activities of the Commission. In 1986 Dinkins went against a request of the Holocaust Commission as a way of opposing Koch, whom he considered his political rival for a future mayoral race. Dinkins favored a local community group, The West Side Jewish Community Council (now defunct), which was engaged in an activity to which Koch's special assistant, Rickman was vehemently opposed. The

⁵Memos from Rochelle Saidel to Senator Ohrenstein, February 13, 1984 and June 17, 1986.

episode was trivial, but it was publicized in newspapers and is an example of how two members of the **Mutagon** were at odds about memorializing the Holocaust. The West Side group, then an umbrella for more than 65 Jewish organizations, decided to have a public ceremony on May 14, 1986 at the original Holocaust memorial site in Riverside Park at 83rd Street. School children would enhance the site by planting flowers. Rickman, representing Koch, said this simple ceremony would hurt the Holocaust Commission's fundraising efforts and he begged the group not to follow through with a public ceremony. When Borough President Dinkins was approached by the group and learned about Rickman's opposition, he was eager to support the children's planting project (and thus make Koch look foolish).⁶ One reason that Dinkins did not enthusiastically take a lead in the **Mutagon** after he was elected mayor was probably the project's close association with his old rival, Koch. He may yet get heavily involved if the newest effort begins to succeed and his advisors on the Jewish community deem it politically expedient. This will create a new conflict between him and Cuomo.

At some time in 1987 Peter A. Cohen, then chairman and chief executive officer of Shearson Lehman Hutton, was appointed a co-chairman, to serve with Klein, Morgenthau, and

⁶Ricki Fulman, "Park to recall Holocaust", New York Daily News, May 15, 1986, p. 2 reports on the event. The politics behind it were discussed in author's presence, in meetings with both Dinkins and Rickman in May 1986.

Ohrenstein. The idea behind this move, which was probably Klein's, was to have Cohen head fund raising efforts, especially in the financial sector. He was also named Campaign Co-Chairperson. From the beginning he was ineffective and his association with the Commission gradually faded into oblivion (although he is still officially a Co-chairman). Meanwhile, he was fired from his high level job, and in June, 1990 had hired a lawyer to negotiate his severance pay.⁷ One titular head of the **Mutagon** thus accomplished little for the cause and then lost the job that was the reason for his appointment.

The exception to the internal conflict between players within the **Mutagon** is the relationship between Klein and Morgenthau, who seem like "strange bedfellows". Morgenthau, a Democrat, is an "Our Crowd" rather assimilated Jew. His family lived in the United States for many generations, with roots in Germany. His father was in Franklin D. Roosevelt's cabinet and his grandfather served as United States Ambassador to Turkey during World War I. Following in their footsteps on a much lower level, he is a public servant as the elected District Attorney of Manhattan. Klein, a Republican, fled Nazi Europe as a child. He is an Orthodox Jew who inherited a fortune and has enhanced this wealth as a developer. Despite their different backgrounds, their

⁷"Chronicle: Negotiating severance for Shearson Lehman's ousted chairman", The New York Times, June 11, 1990, p. B12.

relationship as Commission Co-chairmen since 1982 seems to have been smooth and cordial. For the most part, Morgenthau has let Klein take the lead and then signed what needed to be signed. Klein seems to like being in charge, and Morgenthau seems to like taking a back seat to him. The result has been a harmonious partnership with no overt conflicts. Both Klein and Morgenthau were appointed by Koch.

The third co-chairman, Ohrenstein, was appointed by Cuomo. Circumstances made his relationship the most conflictive and problematic in the **Mutagon**. He, too, came to the United States from Nazi Europe as a young refugee. He was elected to the Senate as a reform Democrat from the West Side of Manhattan in 1960 and became Minority Leader in 1975. Koch did not want Ohrenstein to be a co-chairman, and so stated for the record.⁸ Frucher said Cuomo appointed him because Ohrenstein "insisted".⁹ These sentiments by the two Founding Co-chairmen of the **Mutagon** (and the government officials with whom the Commission was dealing) would in themselves indicate there were conflicts, but political expediency could overcome personal differences between Ohrenstein and the mayor or the governor. However, another conflict arose that was unresolvable and surprisingly did not

⁸Interview with Edward I. Koch, New York, May 18, 1990.

⁹Interview with Meyer S. Frucher, New York, February 4, 1991.

do significant damage to the Commission's image or implementation of its project.

On September 16, 1987, Ohrenstein was accused of payroll abuses and indicted by his Holocaust Commission co-chairman, District Attorney Morgenthau. By coincidence, he learned about the probability of the indictment on March 23, 1987. This was the very day of a high level fund raising dinner for the Commission held at Gracie Mansion, with Henry Kissinger as guest speaker. Both Ohrenstein and Morgenthau were also on the program, and the Senator was supposed to fly to Manhattan from Albany by helicopter, especially for this event. At the last moment he cancelled his appearance and remained in Albany.

The 564 count indictment included grand larceny, conspiracy and filing false documents. The New York Post headline on the day of the indictment was "Morgy Bags Ohrenstein". The next day the Post featured a photograph of Morgenthau, saying he thanked that paper for helping to expose Ohrenstein. It juxtaposed a photograph of the headline of the day before, which said "Ohrenstein Indicted".¹⁰ The next week the Daily News specifically focused on the fact that the two were Commission co-chairmen. With the catchy headline, "The Morgy and Manny Show", the article said the indictment "could cause some awkward moments

¹⁰"Morgy Thanks the Post for Baring Scam", The New York Post, September 17, 1987.

at the New York Holocaust Commission."¹¹ This was the only article that zeroed in on Ohrenstein's and Morgenthau's relationship as Commission Co-chairmen. This aspect of the case, which could have made "good ink" for the press, was never again picked up.

Although it was not reported in the press, the situation, indeed, caused some "awkward moments". Since Morgenthau was "the man in the white hat" and Ohrenstein, in "the black hat", the Senator chose to stay away from Commission meetings and avoid embarrassment. He made a conscious effort to keep the Commission's project out of his legal battle with Morgenthau, to protect both the project and himself. Klein, who remained publicly neutral, suggested to Ohrenstein that he call and check to see if Morgenthau was attending each meeting, before deciding whether to come. Ohrenstein was not pleased with this suggestion, and decided it was better not to come at all. He remained a Co-chairman, but the Commission started having communications signed only by Klein and Morgenthau.

In November 1990, 445 of the 564 counts in the original indictment were dismissed by the Court of Appeals, and in February 1991 Ohrenstein's trial was postponed indefinitely, but still pending. A Morgenthau spokesman said the delay was to await the outcome of efforts to first try another State

¹¹"The Morgy & Manny Show: DA and senator may meet as panel members", The New York Daily News, September 24, 1987, p. 11.

Senator, Howard Babbush.¹² In September 1991, Morgenthau dropped all remaining charges against Ohrenstein, and the Senator was exonerated.

Meanwhile, by 1990 Ohrenstein had gradually begun participating in some Commission activities. However, by then his two Co-chairmen and others on the Commission were not happy with him for two other reasons: 1) He was the governor's appointee as chairman, and the governor at that stage of the **Mutagon** had become a persona non grata for renegeing on the Battery Park City NOGA deal and \$1 per year rent. 2) Ohrenstein had from the beginning obtained a legislative grant of \$25,000-\$50,000 per year for the Commission from his supplemental budget "member item" allowance in the State budget. The Commission asked him in 1990 to allocate \$100,000 from the 1991 State budget, but he allocated nothing. Ohrenstein blamed it on Majority Leader Ralph Marino, who cut the budget of the Minority, but Commission leaders blamed Ohrenstein.¹³ (Both Morgenthau and Ohrenstein refused to be interviewed about the indictment and its effect on the Commission and their co-chairmanships.)

The governor's reputation within the **Mutagon** had gone from bad to worse after Frucher left BPCA and the NOGA deal

¹²Ronald Sullivan, "Senator's Trial Is Postponed Indefinitely: Delay May Hurt Case Against Ohrenstein", The New York Times, February 23, 1991, p. 27.

¹³Interview of David Altshuler, New York, February 22, 1991.

fell apart (see Chapter 12). By October 1987 the name of the museum had been officially changed to please the governor's office. It had been "The Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust". This had been deemed "too Jewish" by Cuomo's separation of Church and State experts such as counsels Evan Davis and Palomino. The name therefore became "A Living Memorial to the Holocaust - The Museum of Jewish Heritage". Then, in the summer of 1989 there was another attempt by the governor to try to make the museum appear more secular and less Jewish.

On June 28, 1989 there was a meeting of the Commission with Palomino, who represented BPCA and Governor Cuomo. The purpose of this meeting at Klein's office was that Palomino (i.e., the governor) was pressuring the Commission to have the museum open on Saturdays and Jewish holidays. Klein said before the meeting that he had absolutely refused to agree to this, but Palomino would put pressure on the Commission. Palomino presented his case very poorly. As two precedents for the museum being open on Saturdays and Jewish holidays, he named the Holocaust museums at Auschwitz and in Washington. The Washington museum was not yet open at all, because it had not been built. As for Auschwitz, it seems unnecessary to comment on his comparing a Jewish Holocaust museum in New York City and the Judenrein state museum at Auschwitz in traditionally anti-Semitic (and Judenrein) Poland!

The Commission had the legal right, incorporated in its by-laws, to observe the Jewish sabbath and holidays. On February 15, 1985 George Klein, Robert M. Morgenthau, Dr. Irving Greenberg, Judah Gribetz, Benjamin Meed, Ernest W. Michel, as officers of the Corporation, had signed the following statement of Organizational Action of Trustees in Lieu of Organization Meeting, adopted as part of the By-Laws of the Corporation:

"RESOLVED, that the following 'Statement of Policy' be, and the same hereby is, adopted to apply to all aspects of the Corporation:

'The mandate of the New York City Holocaust Memorial Museum is to establish in New York City of a perpetual living memorial to the 6,000,000 Jewish victims of the Holocaust [sic]. In upholding this solemn responsibility, the Corporation recognizes a sacred obligation on its part to respect the religious sensibilities of the Jewish community. Accordingly, all activities relating to the Corporation will conform with the religious laws, customs and traditions of the Jewish people.'"

The Commission listened politely to Palomino, but held firm. Whether BPCA could later force them to comply and open on Saturdays and Jewish holidays would remain to be seen. With the subsequently defunct PRC deal then up in the air, and the Commission dependent on BPCA bringing it to fruition,

the governor and Palomino were in a good position to make demands. There were evidently two reasons Palomino had urged that the museum remain open: 1. As already stated, Cuomo's legal experts (of which Palomino was one) were concerned with the issue of separation of Church and State. The Commission was closely linked with the governor and BPCA, and therefore Palomino and others were worried about an appearance of a State-linked entity being a religious institution. This was especially true after Cuomo began having aspirations to run for President. 2. The Catholic Diocese requested of BPCA land to build a church, with strong pressure from John Cardinal O'Connor.¹⁴ The Temple of Understanding, which was housed at Cathedral of St. John the Divine and had as its president Reverend James Park Morton, also requested free space from BPCA.¹⁵ The governor's pressure to have the museum open on Saturdays and holidays may have been to prove the museum was not a religious institution. Therefore, Cuomo would not have to give "equal time" (in this case, equal space) to the Jews, the Protestants and the Catholics.¹⁶

Palomino, the governor's old friend, confidant and counselor, did not like David Emil, Frucher's replacement in

¹⁴Letter from Chancery Office, Archdiocese of New York to David Emil, February 24, 1989.

¹⁵Letter from Linda M. Kirk to David Emil, New York City, April 21, 1989.

¹⁶Memo from Rochelle Saidel to Senator Ohrenstein, "Subject Holocaust Commission", New York, June 2, 1989.

1988 as BPCA president. Palomino, who at the time was chairman of BPCA's board of directors, in 1990 publicly called for an investigation of Emil's role in awarding a construction contract to a company that was not the lowest bidder. Soon afterward, Palomino resigned and his office was assumed by Albright. Emil was subsequently cleared of the charges by the State Inspector General's office.

In addition to the above conflicts between the leading members of the **Mutagon**, some of the less important players also had various problems, possible conflicts of interest, and unrelated but potentially harmful other affiliations that caused controversy in the Commission. For example, survivor and executive committee member Ben Meed wore too many hats.

As the president of the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO) which runs the largest Yom HaShoah memorial commemoration in the City, he always wanted the new memorial museum to have a space for his ceremony. Furthermore, he was active on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council and head of its content committee. Since the two museums were often both seeking the same artifacts, this put him in a position of having a possible conflict of interest. By the Spring of 1991, when the New York project was floundering and the Washington museum was rising on the Mall, his title for the national museum in Washington was Chairman of the National Survivors Campaign. Since the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council had in March 1991 opened a fund raising

office in New York City, competing for funds urgently needed by the New York Commission, Meed's role in fund raising for the Washington project was also a possible conflict of interest with his membership on the New York executive committee.

Commission member, Holocaust scholar and survivor Yaffa Eliach also wore more than one hat. Not only was she a member of the Commission's Academic Advisory Committee, but she also headed the Brooklyn Center for Holocaust Studies. For years the Commission tried to incorporate the Brooklyn institution (which has excellent archival material), but Eliach resisted. Finally, in August 1990 A Living Memorial to the Holocaust-Museum of Jewish Heritage absorbed the Brooklyn Center for Holocaust Studies. The reason for the merger was the Brooklyn institution's own serious financial problems.

Attorney and Commission member Menachem Rosensaft was president of the Second Generation organization of children of survivors. His family was very well connected to organized survivor activities. For example, his mother was active on the Washington project, and his father-in-law, Sam Bloch, on the New York project and the National Gathering of Holocaust Survivors. Rosensaft, himself, became president of the national Labor Zionist organization. However, in December 1988, Rosensaft engaged in an activity that made him a pariah among many of the Commission members, especially the

survivors: he met with Palestine Liberation Organization head Yasir Arafat to discuss a possible peace settlement with Israel. There was a general fear among most active Commission members that this would somehow rub off on the Commission's efforts and harm them.

Rosensaft said "some of the survivors who see things in stark terms weren't happy about it". However, he believes some people in the leadership of the survivor community "mellowed" after reading articles he wrote. "I've always refused to consider remembering the Holocaust or Children of Holocaust Survivor activities to be an all-consuming focus," he said. "Other things are equally important. I've been in the peace movement since the late '70s and have done what I believed had to be done."¹⁷ Since most other Commission members did not believe the things Rosensaft did (i.e., meeting with Arafat) "had to be done", there was a temporary but sharp conflict between him and some Commission members.

Howard Rubenstein, who refused to be interviewed, was himself a complex package of conflicting and overlapping interests. His highly political public relations firm had as clients both Koch and Klein's Park Tower Realty. He, himself, was a Commission member and his firm did some pro bono public relations work for the Commission. Thus one

¹⁷Telephone interview of Menachem Rosensaft, August 8, 1991, New York City.

Mutagon Founding Co-chairman, one Co-chairman, and the Commission as an entity were his clients.

Another internal conflict emerged because of Academic Advisory Committee member and Israeli Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer. Asked by museum director David Altshuler to evaluate a Preliminary Concept Study of the museum on June 24, 1987, he sent back a letter that was nothing less than threatening. It said:

"I must say I am absolutely appalled at the program and its basic concepts. Let me explain why, but please be advised that unless this is immediately and radically changed I wish to have my name taken off any list associated with your Museum forthwith, and I must also warn you that I shall take every opportunity--starting with my forthcoming visits to New York and Los Angeles this fall--to attack this outrageous design from every public platform I have, not least of which will be a major public international conference on the Holocaust in Britain in 1988 at which most of the Holocaust scholars, some 250 of them, will participate."¹⁸

Basically, Bauer objected to the use of the term "Holocaust" for the murder of non-Jewish, as well as Jewish, victims. He indicated in his letter that he had sent copies to eight

¹⁸Letter from Yehuda Bauer to David Altshuler, July 29, 1987.

other Holocaust scholars, survivors, and academics, both members and non-members of the Commission.

Altshuler responded with a placating letter, but added the following P.S.: "I am sorry that as a member of the Museum's Academic Advisory Committee, you did not see fit to communicate with us directly before making a cause celebre by circulating your letter to others."¹⁹ Thus this particular **Mutagon** was not without its politics of academia, as well as governmental politics. Just as prominent elected officials, such as Cuomo, tried to control the activities of the **Mutagon** at certain stages (see Chapter 12), there were also internal disputes among Holocaust scholars for power and control of the museum's message.

Finally, there was the "business as usual" maneuvering by heads of major Jewish organization on the Commission to protect their turf and influence the Commission to follow their particular philosophy. For example, Bernice Tannenbaum, a past national president of Hadassah (the Women's Zionist Organization) wanted the message of the museum to be more Zionist.

SUMMARY

The **Mutagon** endeavoring to create a Holocaust memorial museum in New York City is a long-term and changing political

¹⁹Letter from David Altshuler to Yehuda Bauer, August 5, 1987.

alliance. Because of the long time the project has languished, and because of changes in the cast of players and their roles over time, the members of the **Mutagon** do not always work in harmony. While, for the most part, they have supported the greater common goal of creating the museum, they have had differences among themselves. Both external and internal circumstances have contributed to these conflicts. Among the most significant causes for conflict were: Mayor Koch and Governor Cuomo sharing power as Founding Co-chairmen of the Commission, and also serving as the elected officials with whom the Commission must negotiate; the indictment of Co-chairman Ohrenstein by Co-chairman Morgenthau; the departure of Frucher from BPCA and his replacement by a much less involved Emil. All of these interpersonal and operational conflicts have affected the efficiency of the **Mutagon** in achieving its goals. Interpersonal relations, political differences and agendas, conflicts between Commission members that were unrelated to the activities of the Commission, Commission members "wearing two hats", protection of individuals' turf, and the complexity and changeability of the polygon of political forces working to create a Holocaust museum in New York City have all been causes for friction.

CHAPTER 14: WHY IS THIS HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER HOLOCAUST MEMORIALS?

"The mere choice of facts presented in an exhibition offers a definite point of view. When selecting historical data, one must consider what to exclude, what to emphasize and why....A statement made by a museum carries great weight. It implies final authority and eternal remembrance."
Martin Weyl, Director, Israel Museum¹

The framework for commemorating any historical event is affected by political considerations, and the Mutagon of political allies behind the effort to create a Holocaust memorial museum in New York City has significantly influenced the plans for implementing this project. The basic concept has remained the same since its inception, but the changing structure of the Mutagon over time has caused some changes in plans for the museum.

The conceptual plan for A Living Memorial to the Holocaust-Museum of Jewish Heritage, as the proposed museum is called, has four central themes: 1. "The World Before", the European and North African Jewish civilization which thrived for two thousand years before it was destroyed by the Nazis; 2. "The Holocaust", particularly as it was experienced by the Jews, both those who perished and those who survived; 3. "The Aftermath" of survival, including the plight of refugees, the establishment of the State of Israel, and the pursuit of Nazi war criminals; and 4. "Renewal in America",

¹Martin Weyl, "How Do Museums Speak the Unspeakable?", The New York Times, June 11, 1989, p. 38.

Jewish immigration to the United States from 1654 to the present.²

The first two of these themes began with the report of the "Mayor's Task Force on the Holocaust: Ideas for a NYC Holocaust Memorial Center", dated December 1981. Apparently a report of the original content committee headed by Rabbi Irving Greenberg, this document recommended that a Holocaust memorial center should address: the culture of European Jewry that was destroyed, a detailed factual account of the destruction of European Jewry (including resistance), and how this could have happened in "the supposedly civilized twentieth century". The report called for an exhibition center, a scholarly archive, and a survivors' space, with personal taped memoirs and memorabilia.³

The New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission's June 1983 Certificate of Incorporation also included the first two of the four current themes: "(a) To perpetuate the memory of the six million Jews who died in the Holocaust; to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust not only as they died, but as they lived; to communicate the uniqueness of the Jewish experience in the Holocaust; to teach the history and

²"A Living Memorial to the Holocaust--Museum of Jewish Heritage", brochure of the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, 1990, New York City.

³"Mayor's Task Force on the Holocaust: Ideas for a NYC Holocaust Memorial Center", no author cited, December 1981, (Record Group Mayor Koch, Acc'n 82-87, Subgroup Special Assistant Herb Rickman), Municipal Archives, New York City.

lessons of the Holocaust to all people for generations to come." When the Holocaust Commission sent the General Services Administration (GSA) Regional Office a memorandum asking to lease space in the Custom House on December 6, 1983, the stated purposes were somewhat different than those listed in the Certificate of Incorporation, including: a. To perpetuate the memory of the 6,000,000 Jews who were murdered by Nazi Germany in the Holocaust. b. To commemorate the lives of the victims of the Holocaust by creating a record of Jewish life, society and culture in Europe. c. To portray the arrival of Jewish immigrants to New York City and to restore to memory the vigorous traditions and lifestyles which formed a trans-Atlantic bond between European Jewry and the Jewry of New York City. The idea of Jewish immigration to New York City was not mentioned in the earlier documents, and may have been an attempt to "Americanize" the image of the museum for the GSA and the Federal government. This theme evolved into "Renewal in America", Jewish immigration to America, in the present concept plan. The fourth current theme, "The Aftermath" emerged over time and, like the other three themes, gives the museum a Jewish slant.

The literature on memorialization, found mostly in the fields of sociology and anthropology, analyzes how the particular locale of a memorial or a museum affects how that entity portrays history. For example, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's theory of "social construction of reality"

analyzes how the historical reality created in a museum is a reflection of where the museum is located. Their central hypothesis is that "knowledge" is different in different societies, and that a sociological study must deal with what is considered knowledge in a particular society.⁴ In other words, "reality" is not the same everywhere. The authors state that "reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the processes in which this occurs." ("Reality" is defined as "a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition", and "knowledge" is defined as "the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics".⁵) When the segment of reality under discussion is highly charged with emotion and affected by an interest group's conscious effort to deliver a political message, the differences become even more striking. Not only is knowledge different in different societies, but it is purposely made different to prove a point of view.

A dramatic example of how memorializing the Holocaust serves different purposes in different places is a comparison between Yad Vashem, the official Israel Government Holocaust

⁴Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, N.Y., 1966, p.1.

⁵Ibid., p. 1.

memorial and museum, and the Buchenwald Concentration Camp Museum, when it was part of the then German Democratic Republic. At Yad Vashem in Israel, Holocaust memorialization is a Zionist message: the culmination of the depiction of the Holocaust is the creation of the Zionist State of Israel. The exiles are ingathered from Holocaust to redemption. The message at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp Museum was remarkably similar, except that it was a Communist message: the culmination of the exhibits on the atrocities at Buchenwald was the creation of the Communist State of the German Democratic Republic. Ben Gurion is the hero of Yad Vashem, and Ernst Thalmann was the hero of Buchenwald. Nazi Germany was Nazi Germany, but the realities to be remembered--and use of this memorialization for political purposes--were very different at these two memorial sites.

Berger and Luckmann did not delve into the political or public policy reasons for "reality" being different in different societies. They came close, when they said: "When a particular definition of reality comes to be attached to a concrete power interest, it may be called an ideology....The distinctiveness of ideology is rather that the same overall universe is interpreted in different ways, depending upon concrete vested interests within the society in question."⁶

⁶Ibid., pp. 122-123.

In The Nerves of Government, Karl Deutsch's "feedback model of consciousness" theory⁷ has the same basic concept, but he addresses the political forces behind a project, rather than the locale. Deutsch's central idea is that political systems are dependent on communications processes, and these systems are similar to some aspects of communications equipment. He speaks of the selective interests of the person who knows. Deutsch concludes knowledge is a point at which subjective and objective elements meet. He presents a theory to help identify patterns of political actions and values, and speaks of a system of symbols by which selected data are recorded and used for later application. Deutsch defines a symbol as, "an order to recall from memory a particular set of things or events. Any physical work or event that functions repeatedly as such a command can thus function as a symbol."⁸

Deutsch does not use the term "social construction of reality", but his "feedback model of consciousness" theory is similar to Berger and Luckmann's: "In government and politics, will is a pattern of relatively consolidated preferences and inhibitions, derived from the past experiences of a social group, consciously labeled for a

⁷Karl W. Deutsch, The Nerves of Government, The Free Press of Glencoe, Collier-Macmillan Ltd., London, 1963.

⁸Ibid, p. 10.

relevant portion of its members, and applied to guide the actions, to restrict the subsequent experiences of that group and its members." (emphases in original)⁹ Thus groups (such as creators of memorials) select certain aspects of experience and attach symbols to them, which may distort the message being conveyed, to suit the preference of these groups.

To analyze the specific conception and evolution of the **Mutagon's** Holocaust museum project in New York City, Berger and Luckmann's (locale) and Deutsch's (selective interests) theories must be combined. In New York City the museum's viewpoint, or way of remembering, is influenced by the large, organized population of nearly two million Jews. (With 1,844,000 Jews, New York State has the highest number of Jews in America, and the highest percentage of Jews in any state's total population, 10.3 percent. The largest concentration is in New York City and its environs.¹⁰)

In addition to the size of the community, many members have high profiles in such fields as government, real estate development, finance, the arts, public relations, and higher education. The Holocaust project **Mutagon's** initiator, Mayor Koch, was himself an outspokenly Jewish mayor. His strong affiliation with the organized Jewish community, Israel, and

⁹Ibid., p. 107.

¹⁰Allison Kaplan, "Jewish Population in U.S. Steady, but Traditional Areas See Decline", Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin, August 30, 1990, New York, p. 4.

Jewish ethnicity were part of New York City's uniquely Jewish ambience in the United States.

Both the locale and the initial political alliance have given the New York City project a Jewish slant and a Jewish-American slant. In comparison, the museum under construction in Washington, D.C. is American, and more universal than Jewish. As Michael Berenbaum, project director for the Washington museum, wrote: "The [Washington] Museum will take what could have been the painful and parochial memories of a bereaved ethnic community [i.e., the Jews] and apply them to the most basic of American values. Located adjacent to the National Mall--surrounded by the Smithsonian Institution and the monuments to Lincoln, Jefferson, and Washington--the building and its contents are being designed with the neighbors in mind so that the Holocaust Museum will emerge as an American institution and will speak to the national saga."¹¹

Mayor Koch himself described the New York project as follows: "This is the Jewish Holocaust. The Museum in Washington is not." He said there were no pressures from other groups to be included, and that the project was all privately funded.¹² While there were some pressures, such as requests from gay, Polish, and Ukrainian groups, the New

¹¹Michael Berenbaum, After Tragedy and Triumph, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, p. 163.

¹²Interview with Edward I. Koch, New York, May 18, 1990.

York **Mutagon** responded with minimal recognition, keeping the slant essentially Jewish. The Washington project, however, has as part of its political alliance representatives of such groups as Armenians and Ukrainians. From its inception, the interest group that President Carter named to create a museum was deliberately not composed entirely of Jews. Its more universal and more American way of remembering reflects the locale in the nation's capital (as opposed to New York City, acknowledged as the nation's Jewish capital), and the Federal government's involvement. (See Chapter 7 for details on the background of the Washington project.)

In addition to including other victims of the Nazis and other genocides, the Washington museum is portrayed from an American, not a Jewish, perspective. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum includes the following description in a 1991 fund raising letter: "Your visit begins in the elevator where you will be transported back to April 11, 1945--the date American troops entered the Buchenwald concentration camp. (emphasis in original) An American liberator will appear on a video monitor and tell how what he saw that April afternoon changed the rest of his life." The letter begins: "Eisenhower knew that what he and his men saw in 1945 would be the only testimony many Americans would believe." The letter says the museum will be "A museum of American values", "a museum of American experiences", "a museum of American history", and "a museum of American people".

It also says of the museum:

"It is a story of how 6,000,000 Jews and millions of other people were systematically and ruthlessly exterminated...a story of the evil that 400,000 American soldiers died fighting against 45 years ago.

"Though primarily a story about the extermination of the Jewish people, it is also about the persecution of all people regarded as different or vulnerable (emphasis in original)--of priests and patriots, Polish intellectuals and Soviet prisoners of war, homosexuals and the handicapped, and even innocent children."¹³

The most simple but dramatic way to explain the differences in the "social construction of reality" and the "feedback model of consciousness" of the two museums is: for the New York project, the first part of the sentence above would be emphasized, rather than the second phrase. To paraphrase, the New York museum is planned as primarily a story about the extermination of the Jewish people and the richness of their life before and afterward, but it is also, to a much lesser degree, about the persecution of all people regarded as different or vulnerable.

Beginning with the name itself, "A Living Memorial to the Holocaust-Museum of Jewish Heritage", the New York project's way of remembering is more Jewish. Rather than

¹³Letter of invitation to become charter supporter, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C., Spring 1991 (undated).

emphasizing American liberators of concentrations camps, its September 1991 news brochure, for example, focuses on: mementos of six Jewish-American families who migrated to America and "maintained their [Jewish] heritage and a sense of [Jewish] continuity in the midst of transition and change"; a traveling exhibit of Holocaust memorials; a gathering of hidden Jewish children during World War II; and rare film footage of pre-war Jewish life in Poland.

Berenbaum, who rationalizes the pluralism and universalism of the Washington museum, said: "A national council funded at taxpayers' expense to design a national memorial does not have the liberty to create an exclusively Jewish one in the restricted sense of the term, and most specifically with regard to audience. A purely Jewish museum is the task of the American Jewish community operating with private funding and without government subvention, as is the case with the New York Holocaust Memorial (appropriately titled 'The Museum of Jewish Heritage')." ¹⁴

However, the New York museum (for which he omitted the first half of its name, "A Living Memorial to the Holocaust") is not being created by the "American Jewish community", as Berenbaum states. It is being created by a **Mutagon**, a political alliance that includes a government-created interest group, or Commission, of New York City and New York State Jews. This alliance also includes the City and State

¹⁴Berenbaum, p. 22.

governments, and always had as its site government-owned land (like the Washington project). Despite government involvement, the New York museum has a Jewish slant. This is because both the location and the original political alliance are more Jewish than the Washington project. As will be demonstrated, the Jewish mayor, initiator, and Founding Chairman of the Commission first shared power with, and then lost power to, a non-Jewish governor with national political aspirations. When the governor first became a retroactive Founding Co-chairman, the purpose of his involvement, as seen by his political liaisons to the Jewish community such as Sandy Frucher, was to ingratiate him with the community. Therefore, Cuomo's appointments to the Commission, like Koch's, were from the Jewish community. Later in this process, however, the governor's office made an effort to minimize the Jewishness of the project.

While the "social construction of reality" and "feedback model of consciousness" theories are important tools for partially understanding the planned content of the New York Holocaust museum, they do not take into account the possibility of the imposition of a new "reality" or "consciousness" as a result of a changing political coalition over time. When Mayor Koch initiated the Holocaust memorial museum project in 1981, the Jewish leaders he chose to implement it expected to be able to make the content uniquely Jewish. Operating in ethnically Jewish New York City, with

Koch's encouragement, they thought other elected officials would approve of a particularistic Jewish memorialization of the Holocaust.

When the proposed museum became City-State and the **Mutagon** changed, politics interfered and changed the "reality" or "consciousness". Berger and Luckmann's and Deutsch's theories do not account for such a situation, with a long-term project's political allies changing over time. After Governor Cuomo's political entrepreneur, Sandy Frucher, offered Battery Park City as a site, the governor became retroactive Founding Co-chairman of the Commission, equal to Koch. Frucher wore three hats: the governor's liaison to the Commission, president of Battery Park City Authority (BPCA), and member of the Commission's executive committee. Because of his deep personal commitment to such a project, his idea that it was politically good for the governor, and his close personal friendship with the governor, Frucher was able to smooth over any differences the Commission and the governor's office had about the museum's particularistic Jewish way of remembering.

The museum lease, signed by BPCA, the governor, and Commission Co-chairmen on September 24, 1986, in itself proves the museum was to be decidedly Jewish. It said: "Business Days" shall mean any day which is not a Saturday, Sunday or a day observed as a holiday by either the State of New York or the federal government and, as long as New York

Holocaust Memorial Commission, Inc. is the Tenant, the following Jewish holidays: Rosh Hashanah (both days), Yom Kippur, Succoth (first two (2) days), Shmini Atzereth, Simchas Torah, Passover (first two (2) days and last two (2) days) and Shavuoth (both days)."¹⁵

Although such a definition of business days in the lease should have warned them, the governor and other members of his staff seemed to become aware only later that the scope of the planned museum was parochially Jewish. As was detailed in Chapter 13, the "Jewish" definition of "business days" in the 1986 lease later caused friction between the governor and the Commission. He sent another trusted old friend and confidant, his counselor Fabian Palomino, to try to "undo the damage" almost three years later. On June 28, 1989, Palomino, who was chairman of the board of BPCA and also represented Governor Cuomo, met with the Commission. His purpose (i.e., his and the governor's) was to pressure the Commission to have the museum open on Saturdays and Jewish holidays. Co-chairman George Klein and others were polite but noncommittal to Palomino; after he left they made it clear among themselves that their by-laws gave them the right to close on Saturdays and Jewish holidays, and they were planning to do so. For them, these days were not "business days".

¹⁵Ibid., p. 1.

In October, 1986, the name of the museum (according to its provisional charter) officially became "The Museum of Jewish Heritage-A Living Memorial to the Holocaust". At the end of November, however, the governor's office conveyed his displeasure (or that of his attorneys) with the name of the museum. The reasons for the complaint were not given in detail, but they were related to the emphasis on "Jewish Heritage" in the name. The governor's office was worried about the appearance of a possible Church and State conflict. Eventually, pressure from the governor's office forced the Commission to change the name of the museum to "A Living Memorial to the Holocaust--Museum of Jewish Heritage". (The name was changed by the Commission in November 1987, and made official in the provisional charter by the Regents of the University of the State of New York on April 22, 1988.)

Cuomo feared not only criticism from separation of Church and State advocates, but also requests for parcels of land from other religious groups (such as he received from the Catholic Diocese and St. John the Divine). He therefore tried to change the image of the museum and make it appear less Jewish, by changing the emphasis in the name. Being linked with a narrowly Jewish institution would be helpful with his Jewish voters in New York City and State (where Jews account for twenty percent of the Democratic primary), but Cuomo was then seriously considering running for President. He decided to please both his local and potential national

electorates, by keeping the name but reversing it to minimize the Jewish component. The Commission, which knew it was now subject to the governor's wishes (because it had opted to build the museum in Battery Park City), accepted the change.

The new Memorandum of Understanding signed on July 26, 1991 between BPCA, the museum and the Commission, brought other changes, with language that was quite different than that of the original 1986 lease. This, too, reflected the wishes of the governor's office and new BPCA president David Emil that the museum should not appear to be a religious, i.e., a Jewish, institution. At this point, the original Founding Co-chairman, Koch, was completely out of the picture (although he retained his title). The **Mutagon's** shape had changed, and the new mayor, David Dinkins, had little or nothing to do with the project. The new "social construction of reality" and "feedback of consciousness" had changed with the change in the political polygon; the governor and BPCA were now in command of the situation.

According to the 1991 Memorandum, the museum to be established will be "an important cultural institution in the south residential neighborhood of Battery Park City, comprising a civic and cultural facility in furtherance of the public purposes the Authority was created to accomplish."¹⁶ In case the term "civic and cultural

¹⁶Memorandum of Understanding, Battery Park City Authority, New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, Inc., and A Living Memorial to the Holocaust: Museum of Jewish

facility" is not sufficient to clarify that the museum is not a religious, i.e., a Jewish, institution, the Memorandum then spells it out in no uncertain terms: "The Building shall be operated at all times during the term of the New Museum Lease in accordance with the then current requirements of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States."¹⁷ The museum no longer has "no business days" defined as Jewish holidays and Saturdays, as in the 1986 lease. Instead, "The Museum shall be open to the general public for at least 240 days per year."¹⁸ If the Commission chooses to close the museum on Saturdays and Jewish holidays, they may still do so. However, this religious aspect of the museum is not now documented in the new Memorandum, as it was in the old lease.

The following three new restrictions are even more telling, regarding the governor's concern about separation of Church and State:

"The Building shall not be used for sectarian instruction or as a place of religious worship, or in connection with any part of the program of a school or department of divinity for any religious denomination.

"The Museum shall not organize, sponsor, coordinate or supervise public or private, group or individual

Heritage, July 26, 1991,
New York City, p. 2.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 8

prayer in the Building, and no portion of the Building shall be designated as a place for any such prayer.

"The Museum shall not require any person to observe or conform to the laws or customs of any religion or denomination as a condition to the use and enjoyment of the Building or any facilities located at the Building."¹⁹

These three paragraphs are almost paranoid in their display of the fear that the museum will be a Jewish religious institution. From the inception of the current project in 1981, it had always been planned as a memorial project. A special space for remembering Hitler's victims was always included in the plan. If the museum provides such a special place for remembering those murdered in the Holocaust, is this considered a place for prayer?

In Jewish tradition remembering the dead is associated with prayer, and defining or separating the two is almost impossible. Only when the new architectural design for the scaled-down museum on half of Site 14 is ready and approved by BPCA will there be an answer to the question of whether a space for remembering is considered (according to BPCA) a space for praying.

Related to this is another question. The tradition of holding an annual Holocaust memorial ceremony in New York City began in 1944, even before World War II ended. On April

¹⁹Ibid., p. 8.

19, 1944, the first anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, more than 30,000 Jews gathered on the steps of City Hall to hear Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and prominent Jewish leaders honor the memory of those who had died in the uprising.²⁰ After the war, this evolved into an annual ceremony on Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day (the 27th day of the Hebrew month of Nissan), sponsored by the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO). Benjamin Meed, head of WAGRO and a member of the Commission's executive committee, stressed for years that New York City needed an appropriate site for such a ceremony (which has been held in various locations such as Temple Emanu-El, The Felt Forum of Madison Square Garden and the Javits Convention Center). From the inception of the New York City (later New York) Holocaust Memorial Commission, members of its executive committee assumed and informally discussed the idea that the annual ceremony would be held in or at the anticipated Holocaust Memorial Museum. Yom HaShoah commemorations always include prayers, such as Kaddish for the dead and the El Moleh Rahamim, the Jewish memorial prayer said at funerals. According to "the letter of the law" of the new Memorandum, it appears that Yom HaShoah commemorations will be prohibited.

²⁰James E. Young, "Holocaust Memorials in America: The Politics of Identity" in Survey of Jewish Affairs, Vol. 10, ed. by William Frankel, Basil Blackwell, London, 1991, p. 3 of page proofs.

The last paragraph quoted above is almost absurd. For example, there was always the provision for a restaurant or snack bar in all earlier museum floor plans, and it was always understood by the Commission's executive committee that only kosher food would be served. If the food is kosher in the new museum, does this mean the museum is requiring people to "observe or conform to the laws or customs of any religion or denomination as a condition to the use and enjoyment of the Building or any facilities located at the Building."? According to a strict interpretation, the answer would be affirmative, and perhaps the museum will thus be prevented from serving kosher food. Since eating kosher food for one snack or light meal should not be a problem for anyone, and eating non-kosher food is not possible for observant Jews (including some Holocaust survivors, Commission officers and members) who will visit the museum, this paragraph (at least in this interpretation) seems restrictive to a fault.

At this point it is impossible to further analyze the way of remembering in the forthcoming museum and how this will be affected by the **Mutagon**. New interior and exterior designs are yet to be developed. However, museum director David Altshuler said the original concept will stay the same, with these four main themes: "The World Before", "The Holocaust", "The Aftermath", and "Renewal in America".

SUMMARY

The particular way that a museum presents history is a reflection both of who is doing the remembering and where the remembrance is taking place. While the basic concept of the projected Holocaust memorial museum in New York City has remained the same for more than ten years, the **Mutagon**, the changing alliance of political forces behind creation of the museum, has had an effect on the museum's message and image. Since the inception of a Mayor's Task Force in 1981, this message and image have always had a particularistic Jewish slant. With the exception of elected officials designated because of their offices, all of the members of the original New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission were Jewish.

Berger and Luckmann's theory of "social construction of reality" analyzes how the historical reality created in a museum is a reflection of the museum's locale, and Deutsch's "feedback model of consciousness" theory addresses the effect of the political forces behind such a project. A combination of these two theories, which considers both where a museum is being created and who is doing that creating, is necessary for analyzing how the **Mutagon** has affected plans for the Holocaust museum in New York City. After Governor Cuomo joined the overtly Jewish Mayor Koch as a Founding Co-Chairman of the Commission in 1986, the **Mutagon** changed. The governor's legal experts then began questioning the possibility of a separation of Church and State conflict for

this project (to be located on land granted by the State). This led to a name change for the museum, and ultimately to a new Memorandum of Understanding in July 1991, in which the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was invoked by BPCA. There may be more significant changes in concept in the forthcoming new interior design, to be completed some time in 1992.

PART THREE: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER 15: THE MUTAGON AS A CONCEPT FOR ANALYZING POLITICAL ALLIANCES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC POLICY

"Once the Holocaust expanded beyond the private realm of Jewish memory and entered the public domain, it became subject to all of those forces that shape and reshape images in the public's consciousness and, by so doing, shape public memory itself."
Alvin H. Rosenfeld¹

This study has developed and utilized the so-called **Mutagon** concept to analyze the complicated and changing political coalition that has endeavored from 1981 through 1991 to create a major Holocaust memorial museum in New York City. The **Mutagon** concept augments existing interest group theory, which does not adequately account for: 1. changes in political coalitions over time during long-term projects; 2. the possibility of an interest group having to deal with both a governor and a mayor; 3. the conflicts of interest when elected officials are part of the interest group that deals with government.

The new concept for analyzing political coalitions on a state and local level, the **Mutagon**, was defined as follows: Government policy for a long-term city-state public-private project emerges from a changing polygon consisting of the interest group, the mayor, the governor, and other elected

¹Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "The Holocaust in Jewish Memory and Public Memory", Dimensions: A Journal of Holocaust Studies, Vol. 2, No. 1, Fall 1986, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, New York.

and appointed officials. Although the **Mutagon** is working for closure, it may instead create an impasse because of: 1. the changes within this polygon that occur over time (especially when a new major player enters or an old major player leaves); 2. the top-heavy structure of a political alliance that at some stages has two heads; and 3. the complex relationship among the polygon's web of players.

Using this **Mutagon**, this study analyzed the political processes during the 45 year impasse in efforts to complete a major Holocaust memorial in New York City. The study first analyzed the pre-history of the current effort, i.e., earlier failed projects beginning in 1946. More specifically it analyzed the genesis and changing circumstances of the current project, which began in 1981 and continued into 1992. During its first ten years, the stages of the New York City project were: 1. the Mayor's Holocaust Memorial Task Force--1981-1982; 2. the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission--1982 through 1985; 3. the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission--from early 1986 on; 4. an ultimate Memorandum of Understanding in July 1991, which gives the Commission one year to begin implementing the project or lose the opportunity to build in Battery Park City. The new **Mutagon** concept takes into account: 1). the shifts in political alliances that occur over time; and 2). the top-heavy structure of a public-private project that involves both city and state governments.

The study demonstrated that the ways in which the New York City and State governments intervened--from the conception of the idea for the latest memorial museum project in 1981 and throughout the attempted implementation stage--are extremely complex, with an intricate interplay of City and State government. The question of whether the Commission is private, State- and City-connected, or both, is also complex. This study analyzed how government intervention has changed over ten years, and how the changing structure of the combined interest group and government influences affected implementation of the project.

The **Mutagon** concept is necessary because literature on the structure of interest group-government alliances is limited, and dominated by iron triangle and issue network theories. As was detailed, both of these theories are generally applied to interest groups dealing on a Federal, rather than a state-city level. These iron triangle and issue network theories, therefore, are not adequate for analyzing the structure of the political forces behind the New York Holocaust memorial museum or any long-term public-private project involving both city and state governments. Not only do they deal with political coalitions on a Federal level, but they analyze a less complex and more stable polygon.

Hugh Heclo and Anthony King critiqued iron triangle theory, and instead developed an issue network theory. Heclo

said that "the iron triangle concept is not so much wrong as it is disastrously incomplete."² Likewise, issue network theory is not wrong but "disastrously incomplete" for analyzing a project such as the New York City Holocaust museum. Heclo defined an issue network as "a shared-knowledge group having to do with some aspect (or, as defined by the network, some problem) of public policy." According to Heclo, participants in issue networks are shifting, fluid and anonymous, unlike the iron triangle concept of a defined small circle which forms to promote specific narrow issues. An iron triangle is generally defined as a solid trilateral bond formed by the interest group, its advocates in Congress, and in the executive branch agency, with government policies emerging from this closed triangle. (Members of Congress pass favorable legislation, executive agency personnel implement these mandates, and interest groups support the helpful elected officials.)

As was shown, both the issue network and iron triangle theories are "disastrously incomplete" for analyzing the political alliance of the New York City project: it is much more complex, has changed over ten years of impasse, and consists of two levels of government--city and state. The **Mutagon** polygon for the New York City Holocaust museum project consists or consisted of the former and present

²Hugh Heclo in The New American Political System edited by Anthony King, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, D.C., 1978, pp. 87-124.

mayor, the governor, past and present Battery Park City Authority (BPCA) officials, and an interest group (which the government created). In addition to the interest group (the officially appointed New York City and then the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission), other interested parties have included survivor organizations, heads of Jewish organizations, developers, administrative staff of the Commission and museum, architects and exhibit designers, and consultants. At some phases, the City Council, the Board of Estimate, the State Legislature, and the City Planning Commission were also involved to an extent. Furthermore, many of the players wore two hats, especially those who were both Commission members and government officials with whom the Commission was dealing. The **Mutagon** accounts for changes in a complex coalition over time, while the issue network and iron triangle theories do not.

As was demonstrated, during the ten years since the initiation of the Holocaust project **Mutagon**, the power of various members and components of the polygon has increased or diminished. In addition, new partners joined the coalition and others drifted away. The by-laws of the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission are flawed, because there is no provision for removing anyone. While no one was ever officially removed from office or membership, a few people have resigned (e.g., Ivan Boesky) and others have merely lost interest. So much time has gone by since the inception of

the project that many government officials who were staunch advocates, the prime examples being Mayor Koch and Sandy Frucher of BPCA, are no longer in office.

At one phase beginning in 1986, the **Mutagon** polygon had two heads with power of appointment to the Commission--the mayor and the governor. The "Founding Co-chairmen", however, are not just the mayor and governor--they are a specific mayor--Koch, and a specific governor--Cuomo. After Mayor Koch, the original founder, lost the 1989 elections, he continued to retain his title, but the power shifted to the governor. Not knowing what title to give Koch's replacement, Mayor David Dinkins (who has shown little interest), the Commission decided to list his name on literature and stationery as "Mayor of the City of New York" and thus consider him an officer. Museum Director David Altshuler said that the governor who will replace Cuomo will be listed as "Governor of the State of New York", with Cuomo retaining his "Founding Co-chairman" title after he leaves office.

Using the **Mutagon** concept, it was possible to analyze the complex interrelationships within the political alliance creating the New York museum project. As was shown, this polygon includes: two executive branches (the mayor and the governor) BPCA, the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission (officially appointed by Koch and Cuomo), and others. The Commission has four Co-chairmen, one of whom, Peter Cohen, is only serving on paper. There were conflicts among the three

active Co-chairmen, especially after one Co-Chairman, Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, indicted another Co-chairman, New York State Senate Democratic Leader Manfred Ohrenstein. (Morgenthau dropped all remaining charges in September 1991.) The Co-chairman who has taken the lead and been most prominent is powerful real estate developer George Klein. Koch appointed Klein and Morgenthau in 1983; when Cuomo became Koch's "Founding Co-chairman in 1986, he appointed Ohrenstein (and later appointed Cohen, who then lost his job at Shearson Lehman, and "disappeared" from the Commission).

The Mutagon was employed to analyze why there is still no major Holocaust memorial in New York City--which has been home for the largest Jewish and the largest Holocaust survivor populations in the United States. More than ten years after initiation of the current project, at the beginning of 1992, there was still not even a hole in the ground. In order to understand why the current project has been at such an impasse, the following issues were analyzed: the politics behind earlier and current attempts, how the issue of Holocaust memorialization was placed on United States and New York City governmental agendas, and the project's changing structure of players, allies, and processes.

Related events that preceded Koch's creation of a Holocaust Commission were reviewed to place the current

project in historical perspective: the emergence of the Jewish community as an interest group in the United States; the increased importance of memorialization of the Holocaust for the Jewish community; the many earlier attempts, beginning in 1946, to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City; and President Jimmy Carter's national initiative.

As was shown, earlier failed attempts to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City were begun by powerless individuals and small, disorganized interest groups, and failed partially because none of the mayors before Koch made the idea his own and aggressively led the effort. They all remained private endeavors, with different parcels of City land made available for various failed projects over the years. The pre-history of the current project can be summarized as follows: 1. The first attempt to create a major Holocaust memorial in New York City began in 1946, but a memorial was never a priority for the organized Jewish community until President Carter made the idea official government policy (after interest in the Holocaust emerged). 2. Israel has been the community's first priority, with rescue of Jews ranking second and related to the first, and this has made fund raising for a memorial difficult. 3. Fear of anti-Semitism and McCarthyism inhibited the community's support of early efforts. 4. Although the 1967 and 1973 wars in Israel raised Holocaust consciousness in the organized American Jewish community, this was directed toward giving

money to help Israel, not to building a memorial. 5. Holocaust survivors were not influential in the Jewish community until about 1980. 6. A psychological healing time was necessary before the issue of the Holocaust could be dealt with, and this may have affected earlier efforts to create a memorial. 7. No single individual (or group) with both money and influence took the lead for earlier projects. 8. Because the issue of Holocaust memorialization was not major for the organized Jewish community until the mid-1970s, elected officials had no reason to give it priority before then. 9. Before 1978, neither the Federal nor the New York City government intervened and coopted the idea of creating a Holocaust memorial.

As was detailed, the situation changed, and around the mid-1970s memorialization of the Holocaust gained increasing acceptance in the organized Jewish community. After this culminated with Carter's 1978 announcement of a national memorial, there was greater political advantage from a mayor's initiating a Holocaust memorial in New York City. Koch, encouraged by his political entrepreneur Herbert Rickman, then coopted the issue of Holocaust memorialization to gain more political favor in the Jewish community in New York City. In 1981 the mayor created his own narrow interest group, a Task Force and then a Memorial Commission, both to build a memorial and to strengthen his ties with the organized Jewish community in New York City. He chose to

head this interest group his friend George Klein, a powerful real estate developer who was vice president of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York.

The study examined the reasons why the project has been at an impasse, stemming from the unwieldy and changing structure of the **Mutagon** responsible for implementation, and the length of time the project has dragged on. Included were: changes in political alliances over time (e.g., new elected and appointed officials); having at the helm (for much of the time) both the mayor and the governor; other priorities (especially fundraising crises) in the organized Jewish community; conflicts among the Commission members; the politics of site selection; and the personalization of the project by one major player (Klein). Although the idea of Holocaust memorialization increased in importance in the mid-1970s in the American Jewish community and remains central in the early 1990s, the **Mutagon** still was not able to successfully complete a project by the beginning of 1992. (An unrelated external reason for the delay in implementation was "Black Monday" on Wall Street, October 19, 1987, and the subsequent worsening economic conditions in New York City. The economic climate both dropped property values in Battery Park City and wiped out potential and actual donors, resulting in new decisions on the best way to fund the museum.)

As was shown, the shape of the **Mutagon** changed most drastically when Koch's Commission became City-State in 1986, and Governor Cuomo joined him as a "Founding Co-chairman". The dissertation analyzed the negative effects of this **Mutagon** in its new form: the State government's trying to influence the final outcome of the project, the governor's policies producing bureaucratic problems and delayed implementation, friction between the City and the State over the project, and the election and appointment of new State and City government officials disrupting the continuity of the project's implementation.

Besides these negative aspects, the study evaluated the positive effects of the mayor's, and later the governor's, intervention on the project in New York City. These included the gift of government resources such as land and money, and the indirect positive impact of the mayor's (and later the governor's) connection at some stages helping to overcome bureaucratic problems within the government.

In addition to going beyond iron triangle and issue network theories to add to the literature on the structure of interest group-government alliances, this **Mutagon** concept has also built on the established body of work on agenda setting and public policy, which are related to the structure of interest group politics. The study demonstrated how changes in the complex **Mutagon** coalition have affected both the

agenda setting for and implementation of the museum project, and led to more than ten years of stagnation.

As was shown, on the surface the project seems as though it was destined for smooth sailing. Unlike earlier attempts in New York, the current project was placed on the agenda by the mayor, who then created the interest group, including developers and other supporters of Koch. Furthermore, President Carter's creation of the President's Commission on the Holocaust three years earlier had set a precedent and memorialization of the Holocaust had become a hot item for the major Jewish American organizations before 1981. By 1977 various unconnected factors had come together to make commemorating the Holocaust a suitable issue for the agendas of American politicians: e.g., the 1967 Six Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War had brought forth visions of another Holocaust; Menachem Begin, who was skillful at using the Holocaust for his own political ends, became Prime Minister of Israel in June, 1977; leaders of survivor organizations, feeling their mortality, began urging other survivors to share their memories; the television program Holocaust was the first major (fictionalized) network airing about the Holocaust in 1978; children of survivors became adults and began wondering about their parents' secretiveness about the past; secular American Jews who were politically disappointed with Israel were seeking a substitute secular tie to Judaism; in 1977 the United States Justice Department established a

Special Litigation Unit to investigate and bring to trial Nazi war criminals living in the United States.

For these reasons, in John Kingdon's words, when Carter needed to court the Jewish community in 1978, the issue of the Holocaust "arose in the primeval soup". Kingdon's model for determining what gets on a government's agenda was used to analyze how a Holocaust project emerged on Carter's agenda, leading to Koch's creation of the New Ycrk City Commission. According to Kingdon, it is important to know what made the soil fertile, rather than the origin of the seed. His model has three streams--problem recognition, policy formulation and refinement, and politics--which must come together at a critical time, in order for an issue to suddenly "get hot".

As was detailed, Koch initiated the New York project when Rickman approached developer George Klein in the Spring of 1981 (an election year). Klein became chairman of a Mayor's Task Force, and that July twenty-eight other leaders of the Jewish community were named as members. In 1982 this Task Force recommended a permanent commission, and in 1983 the mayor appointed the New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission. In 1986 Governor Cuomo became Founding Co-chairman, along with Koch, and the **Mutagon** changed its form. Cuomo appointed additional Commission members and Co-chairmen, and the name was changed to the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission. Cuomo had offered to house the museum

in Battery Park City, which he controlled through BPCA, and he therefore became a powerful member of the **Mutagon**. When Koch left office at the end of December 1989, the structure of the **Mutagon** changed again, giving the governor more power. Koch retained his title, but became inactive. His absence after so prominently linking himself with the project, and Cuomo's shifting interest as he looked toward a possible national election for President, were analyzed as factors that impeded implementation.

The study analyzed how the original New York City Holocaust Memorial Commission gave Rickman, Koch, Klein and others the opportunity to use the issue of Holocaust memorialization to increase their potential influence in the organized Jewish community. They were able to both promote the idea and increase their power by being linked with the project and recommending or appointing members. After Koch gave the chairmanship to Klein, his rich long-time friend, Klein could then encourage other wealthy developers to be generous both to the Holocaust project and to Koch's mayoral campaign.

Robert Dahl's and Edward C. Banfield's theories of citizen participation were discussed as partial analyses of the "player" aspect of the **Mutagon** concept of government-interest group structure. While they--unlike iron triangle and issue network theories--analyze political alliances on a local level, they still do not account for changes in

political alliances when projects are long-term; nor do they account for a mayor and governor sharing power. Unlike Dahl's and Banfield's analyses, the Mutagon is a changing construct. For the Holocaust project the polygon was two-headed during crucial years, with Governor Cuomo and Mayor Koch jointly in control.

In addition to interest group theory, this study also analyzed how Koch's and then Cuomo's intervention in efforts to create a Holocaust memorial museum, and the location of the project in New York City, give the museum's conceptualization a particular slant. It was demonstrated that, like interest group and citizen participation theories, theories of social construction of reality and political symbolism are useful but limited for analyzing the New York City Holocaust memorial project. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's theory of "social construction of reality" was discussed as a relevant analysis of how the historical reality created in a museum is a reflection of where the museum is located. Karl Deutsch's related "feedback model of consciousness" theory was also cited as relevant for an understanding of why history is remembered the way it is, or why a museum has a particular slant. Berger and Luckmann's and Deutsch's concepts are virtually the same: groups (such as creators of memorials) select certain aspects of experience and attach symbols to them, which may distort the

message being conveyed, to suit the preference of these groups.

Berger and Luckmann's and Deutsch's theories were combined to demonstrate that both the locale in New York City and the changing shape of the **Mutagon** polygon of political forces affected the conceptualization and evolution of the Holocaust museum project. The museum creators' viewpoint, or way of remembering, is influenced by the large organized Jewish population of nearly two million Jews, many of whom are prominent in "worlds" that make New York "move and shake".

However, it was shown that, unlike the **Mutagon** concept, "social construction of reality" and "feedback model of consciousness" theories do not take into account the possibility of the imposition of a new "reality" or "consciousness" as a result of a changing political coalition. In the case of the New York City project, first Mayor Koch opened the door by providing an opportunity to create a Holocaust memorial. Both he and the leaders he chose to carry out the task wanted the museum to have a decidedly Jewish slant. Later, once the proposed museum became City-State and the **Mutagon** changed its structure, politics interfered and changed the "reality" or "consciousness". Berger and Luckmann's and Deutsch's theories do not analyze such a situation.

As was shown, after Governor Cuomo offered Battery Park City as a site and became a Founding Co-chairman, he learned too late that the planned museum and exhibits were recounting history with a Jewish viewpoint. Because of possible criticism from separation of Church and State advocates (and requests for land from other religious groups), he tried to change the message of the "reality" of the museum. First he insisted that the name of the museum be changed, and "The Museum of Jewish Heritage-A Living Memorial to the Holocaust" thus became "A Living Memorial to the Holocaust-Museum of Jewish Heritage". His association with the project could help him please Jewish voters in New York City and State, but could be detrimental if he decided to run for President. Therefore he compromised, by keeping the name but reversing it to minimize the Jewish component. The governor's concerns about the Jewish message of the projected museum ultimately resulted in BPCA's invoking the First Amendment (i.e., separation of Church and State) in the 1991 Memorandum of Agreement between BPCA and the Holocaust Commission.

This study concluded that the **Mutagon** political alliance--which changes, is long-term, has a complex interconnection of players, and includes both state and city governments--was largely responsible for the ten year impasse in creating a Holocaust museum in New York City. To arrive at this conclusion, the following methodology was used: Interviews were conducted with members, staff and officers of

the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, BPCA officials, leaders of earlier efforts to create major Holocaust memorials in New York City, initiators of the national project in Washington, museum directors at Yad VaShem in Jerusalem, and the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, and experts on Holocaust history and the American Jewish community. (Unfortunately, none of the three active Co-chairmen ever responded to countless requests for interviews.) These broad-ranging interviews were aimed at understanding the pre-history of the current project and why it has not yet been implemented.

In addition to some 30 interviews, research was carried out in archives that included the Jewish Labor Bund, YIVO, the American Jewish Committee archives and library, the President Jimmy Carter Library, the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO), the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), and the New York City Municipal Archives. An unpublished and richly detailed review of the first effort to erect a major Holocaust memorial in New York City (initiated in 1946-1947) was discovered in the YIVO archives and incorporated into this study. Likewise, original documents pinpointing the genesis of the Federal project in 1977, also unpublished, were found in the Jimmy Carter Library in Atlanta and used in the study. The Bund archive provided unpublished source material on one of the memorials planned for Riverside Park, and the WAGRO archives provided many

important bits and pieces of original source material on the 46 year history of failed efforts. Unfortunately, the old files of the JCRC were warehoused and inaccessible, and there were no data there on early history of the current project. This, however, was found in the Municipal Archives. Besides developing the **Mutagon** concept and building on interest group and related literature in political science, this study thus for the first time pulled together from various people and archives the entire history of attempts to create a major Holocaust memorial in New York City. It was necessary to put this history on the record in order to understand exactly how the current project emerged and began taking shape. As for information on the current project as it progressed, files, documents and other information were made available by the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission, BPCA, and the office of Senator Ohrenstein.

This study is an effort to move toward a broader understanding of government-interest group alliances. The **Mutagon** contributes to the body of literature on interest groups, citizen participation and political symbolism. As was demonstrated, this new concept is necessary to account for changing political coalitions during the course of long-term projects that involve city and state governments and interest groups. It builds on earlier works on interest groups and citizen participation, but provides a broader and changing analytical framework. One of the most important

conclusions to be stressed about political alliances is that for long-term projects, the shape of such alliances changes over time. The area of studies of long-term public-private city-state projects is very limited, and other case studies and empirical research should be carried out.

Regarding political symbolism, this study deals with how an interest group's project is affected by the political environment. The changes in the government's participation in the **Mutagon** at various stages, and the location of the project in New York City were analyzed as factors that affect the way the museum project was conceptualized and evolved. The plans for the museum's way of remembering history were shown to be influenced by both the changing political alliance and the locale of the project. Most studies of interest groups have focused on how the group influences the political climate in which it is operating, rather than the opposite. More studies are needed on how interest groups are affected by the political, social and cultural environment in which they are functioning, and this dissertation makes a contribution in this area.

This study developed and used a **Mutagon** to analyze the long-term and changing coalition of state, city and private political forces responsible for the latest effort to build a major Holocaust memorial museum in New York City. Even though the Holocaust has become a multimillion dollar industry in the United States, with a national memorial

museum rising on the Mall in Washington, D.C., a national association of Holocaust centers, a national network of children of survivors, national gatherings of survivors, national academic conferences, courses in many universities, public school curriculums in some states and cities, hundreds of fiction and non-fiction books, movies, and television programs, there is still no major Holocaust memorial in New York City, the center of the organized Jewish community in the United States.

The first attempt to create a Holocaust memorial in New York City was remarkably early, in 1946-1947. Today an engraved stone remains in Riverside Park at 83rd Street. Placed there in October 1947 and intended as a cornerstone, it says: "This is the site for the American memorial to the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto battle April-May 1943 and to the 6 million Jews of Europe martyred in the cause of human liberty." More than 45 years later this early effort and many later ones still have not produced a major Holocaust memorial in New York City.

After ten years of impasse, the **Mutagon** has in 1992 another opportunity to finally break this impasse and create a museum in Battery Park City. BPCA and the governor, at this stage the most powerful players in the **Mutagon**, have imposed a July 1992 deadline for implementation to begin. The Commission's ability to raise the necessary private funding by this deadline will be the key factor. Otherwise,

they will have to request an extension of the deadline from their partners in the Mutagon, BPCA and the Governor. At this stage, the prospects for sufficient private funding by the deadline are doubtful, and the State's reaction cannot be predicted. Although the Mutagon's complicated and long-term characteristics led to an impasse, it might still be possible to successfully implement this project--despite the concomitant problems.

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