



Father Patrick Desbois

in conversation with Paul LeClerc

HOLOCAUST BY BULLETS

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LIVE from the New York Public Library

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PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Good evening. My name is Paul Holdengräber and I am the Director of Public Programs at the New York Public Library. I would like to warmly welcome everyone for the second evening of our Spring 2009 LIVE from the New York Public Library season. A quick but timely word about supporting this extraordinary institution, the New York Public Library. I would like to ask everyone present to consider becoming a Friend of the Library. Starting for as little as forty dollars a year, you are in. Please become a Friend of the

New York Public Library. Your support will get you a fifteen-dollar ticket for all LIVE events instead of twenty-five dollars. That is a ten-dollar saving each and every time. There's a membership table here. Please visit it after the event and join tonight. It will help our cause tremendously. Of course you can also do so online.

What is our cause, you may ask? Quite simply and joyously, to bring you live conversations, discussions, debates, to present you with the best thinking around town, what I like to call "cognitive theater." You will also want to have the pleasure of viewing the events on iTunes U, on our website, reading transcripts of past evenings, be they conversations between John Hope Franklin and President Clinton, Al Sharpton and Christopher Hitchens, Günter Grass and the late Norman Mailer, who made his last public appearance here. Zadie Smith, Krista Tippett and Stuart Brown, Toni Morrison, Alfred Brendel, Jan Morris, Robert Badinter, Jhumpa Lahiri and Mira Nair, Werner Herzog, and many, many, many more and the list goes on, so check it out.

And what events are coming up, you might ask? Week after next, we will be hosting a tribute to the late John Updike with David Remnick, ZZ Packer, Sonny Mehta, Lorrie Moore, and many others. Shortly after that, a conversation with Thomas Friedman, Andrei Codrescu will interview Henry Alford and Mark Twain—this will be actually my first impersonification of Twain. Follows a two-part series this spring copresented with *Bookforum* entitled Cultural Obituaries, on the death of Black Nationalism and the death of boom culture. A two-part evening will follow with Alex Ross, Barbara Isenberg, and Frank Gehry, followed by Alex Ross interviewing the composer and conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen and much more.

Join our e-mail list, but also, and here's something brand-new, a week old, please join our blog at www.nypl.org/blog. Ask questions of the talent before the event and after. Aby Warburg, you may remember, spoke eloquently of the afterlife of the work of art. Now the time has come, I think, to speak of the afterlife of LIVE conversations. Let us hear your voice. We want to read what interests you, where you agree, and why not let us hear your dissenting voice as well? We have a sign-up sheet at the information table. Any questions not asked today during the event can be asked afterwards. And I will ask and urge Father Patrick Desbois and Paul LeClerc to answer those questions later on.

After the conversation, please join Father Patrick Desbois for a book signing. As always, many thanks to our independent bookseller, 192 Books. I would also like to particularly thank Alessandra Bastagli, senior editor at Palgrave, who in no small way was instrumental in making sure this evening took place. Alessandra, I hope you know how grateful I am to you. Thank you also to Lauren Dwyer, also from Palgrave, for all your precious and timely help, and to David Black and Stephanie Blair. My thanks always go to Meg Stemmler and Kim Irwin, who are closely with me on all matters LIVE from the New York Public Library.

It is a great honor now to welcome Father Patrick Desbois to the New York Public Library. And no less of an honor to have the president of this great library, Paul LeClerc, be in conversation with Father Patrick Desbois. Father Patrick Desbois is the author of *Porteur de mémoires*, provocatively translated into English as *Holocaust by Bullets*. This book was awarded the National Jewish Book Award. *The Holocaust by Bullets* is the story of Father Desbois' heroic mission to investigate the murder of Ukrainian Jews by Nazis during World War II. He and his

team have visited the sites of these murders and interviewed surviving witnesses, many of whom were recruited by the Germans to assist in the executions. Father Patrick Desbois is the secretary to the French Conference of Bishops for relationships with Judaism, an adviser to the cardinal, Archbishop of Lyon, and an adviser to the Vatican on Jewish religion. Grandson of a deportee of the Rawa-Ruska camp, Father Desbois has set out to investigate the mass murders of Eastern European Jews by Nazis during the Second World War. I urge you all to find out more about Father Desbois' work by going to his Web site, www.holocaustbybullets.com. I repeat www.holocaustbybullets.com.

Paul LeClerc is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the New York Public Library, which consists of ninety-one libraries that serve a more varied set of constituencies and has the broadest mission of any library in the nation, perhaps in the world. Dr. LeClerc is the author or coeditor of five scholarly volumes on writers of the French Enlightenment. I might add that I know him to have a particular love of Voltaire, particularly for *Candide*, so our proximity to Bryant Park has always seemed quite natural and fitting to me. Paul LeClerc's contribution to French letters and culture have earned him the order of Academic Palms in 1989 and the French Legion of Honor in 1996. Now it gives me great pleasure to present to you Father Patrick Desbois and Paul LeClerc. Before they come up to the podium we're going to show you a small, short video of seven minutes.

PAUL LECLERC: Well, I think we should begin by applauding this extraordinary man who's with us.

(applause)

PAUL LECLERC: Thank you very much to all of you for coming this evening, and Father Desbois, thank you very, very much for spending time with us at the New York Public Library tonight. I urge you all to read this book. I can tell you honestly that it is a brilliant piece of work, not at all easy to read and not at all easy to learn of the extraordinarily inhuman things that were done by, as Father Desbois says in the book, “one human being to another” consistently across a landscape that is absolutely enormous. As Father Desbois told me a short while ago, Ukraine is not a small country—it’s as big as France, it’s as big as the state of Texas. It has sixty thousand inhabitants. [editor’s note: As of 2008 the population of the Ukraine is 45,994,288]—as many as France does—and it is, as he describes in the book, a country of cemeteries.

I kind of like the lights up high for the whole room. Can you do that? Thank you. We’re going to talk for a little while, he and I, and maybe for a half-hour, forty minutes or so, and then we’ll open it to questions from you, and I’m sure that everyone will have a question on her or his mind, and we’ll entertain as many of those as we can before we move to a book signing. Father Desbois, I think this is your first book and you told me as we were walking down the hall that in this book there are about one-tenth of the things that you could have written about. How did you make the selection between what was appropriate to put down on paper and what you thought was best kept in your own heart or in your mind?

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: First it was not easy to write this book because when we arrived in a farm in Ukraine, when we meet with the people who were forced, by example to dig

the grave, or to carry the Jews from the village to the mass grave by cart with horses, or to bring back the suits and to sell the suits and so on, these people—it's the first time they speak since '42, and you know they are poor people, so there is no image, no symbol, no allegory. So most of the time—I would say—they also—to explain by example, I will give you an example to be concrete. A girl she told me, "I was in my farm. Suddenly a German arrived, I was twelve years old, and he asked me to climb in the trees and pick up the pieces of corpses of Jews who came from the explosion and to hide them in the mass grave." And she will give you the maximum of details.

And my question was how to transmit that to Western population was very far from here. When you go outside, you will not meet geese, dogs barking, and horses, and also to transmit the horror of this genocide, because it was not normal shootings. Jews were really massacred one by one by—you know they established this law in July '41—one bullet, one Jew, one Jew, one bullet. It was a request of the Wehrmacht to make economy of ammunitions. So because of that, if the Jews were only injured, there were pushers who pushed the Jews in the mass grave. And, by example, every farmer in the village says, "I remember the mass grave after the shooting was moving during three days," or "it took three days for the mass grave to die," and for me it took one year to accept, to understand. So I think the main challenge in this book was how to transmit the truth so that it can be accessible for people who are living now in modern country very far from these very wild stories.

PAUL LECLERC: What I found particularly interesting was the challenge that you faced because there were very rich and abundant records that existed, millions of pages of documents

in microform in the Holocaust Museum in Washington that were documents assembled by the Soviets when they invaded and then all the records by the Germans themselves, who were meticulous in their record-keeping of what they were doing. And yet at the same time I think you asked yourself a question as to how reliable these—the records of these particular inquests were by the Soviets—and you set yourself out, I think, not only to document but really to prove in a comprehensive kind of way what really happened. And can you talk a little bit about, since we are a library rich with archives and you've spent a lot of time yourself as a researcher in archives, can you talk about the relationship between archival material and its sufficiency or insufficiency, and then what you had to establish as a kind of methodology and a set of protocols, and I realize that the methodology evolved as the process evolved. And so how did you put yourself between the land and the landscape of Ukraine and the archives that exist in many different parts of the world, but that you had access to in Israel and in Washington and in other places?

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: First, to let you know that I am not alone anymore. We built a small team, nine person, nine researchers in an association called Yahad-In Unum, “together” in Hebrew and in Latin. I have one researcher who works in Washington, in Holocaust Museum Washington Research Center. There are sixteen million of pages of Soviet archives.

PAUL LECLERC: Sixty, 6-0?

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: Sixteen, 1-6.

PAUL LECLERC: Still a lot.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: Still a lot, yeah. In each village, immediately after the Germans left the village, they did a small investigation in the village. All they did is a local judge interrogated all the neighbors of the mass grave like we are doing nowadays. All these papers are written by hand, because we have the first version before it's treated by the KGB in Moscow. The second source is the German archives. The German archives are archives of justice in fact. So the German people will speak only when they are put on trial. So it's not so much useful. Because, by example, they say, "Oh, oh, yeah, I was in so-and-such village, yeah, perhaps, yes, we shot Jews in this village," and that's it.

What we do we collect all these archives and we classify them by village—Soviet archive, German archive. When we arrive on the ground, nine person, Franco-Ukrainian team, the first old lady that we meet, we stop the car, one of my translators, Svetlana, goes outside, and she will raise always the same question, "Madame, you were here during the war?" and if she says, "Yes," we say, "Oh, you can help us." Because in Soviet Union never a negative question, because it remembers them KGB. Only positive question. And me I wait in the car hidden with the other people and sooner or later Svetlana goes to the house of a witness. It means somebody was forced by the Nazis to be at the mass grave, to make the black job. When I see we don't move anymore, I arrive, my translator says, "Here is a priest."

PAUL LECLERC: You wear your collar.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: Yeah, yeah, with my collar and so on. “Here’s a priest—you will work with him, we are in association, Yahad,” and so on. And she always asked, “It will be shown in Ukraine?” No, no, no, it’s not for Ukraine, it’s for the big museum of America, of Israel.” “Oh, it’s okay.” And I say, “You were really here at the mass grave,” and you saw in the small movie the witnesses. They remember everything, so suddenly, they say, “Yes, yes, they forced me.”

By example, an old lady, she was sitting on a bench in front of her house, it was the summer, and she said, “Yes, I remember they forced me between every shooting to walk down in the mass grave with fourteen Ukrainian girls and to walk on the corpse so that it will be more space for the others to be shot.” And she told me, “At the end I saw all my school arriving—it was a Jewish school—and they shot them in front of me and I had to walk on their corpse like the others.” At this moment, I know it’s true, so I call my team, we arrive, professional team, cameraman, photograph, historian, and we make an interview. I would say it’s not an effective interview, it’s to rebuild the crime. By example, “where from was the cars of the Germans were arriving, from this road or from this road. Where did they park? Did they speak German or Russian? Oh, they didn’t speak Russian, so who was the translator? Oh, it was somebody from the village. Who was him?” and so on and so on, and, little by little, we bring them until the time of the shooting. If they can walk, we bring at the end of the day all of the witnesses around the grave, to confront them with a camera.

And if it’s clear, my ballistic specialist, he looked for cartridges, because the Germans they didn’t care to let evidences, so all the cartridges are still on the ground and they are five

centimeters and each cartridge has the name of the bronze and the date of fabrication, so we transmit them after to scientific police to have a real statement. We discovered also that the Jews before the mass grave they are asked to undress and most of the Jewish girls refused to give their jewels to the Germans so they hide them, either the wedding rings, Magen David, and so on. And so sometime near a mass grave, we find twenty, thirty wedding rings, or Magen David, was the last thing that this Jewish girl left before to die, so it's in confronting the evidences, German archive, Soviet archive, oral memory, ballistic investigation, and artifact that we can make a statement.

PAUL LECLERC: So that technique then, I think is immensely successful in for the first time creating an irrefutable documentation about what happened in that specific place and then the case builds village after village after village across this enormous country. And I think the sum total of Jewish victims that you've identified at this point is 1.5 million people, which is on top of the 6 million that we conventionally talk about, is that not the case? When we talk—most—when we talk about the Shoah, until your work, I think we've talked the 6 million, I think, is does not include the victims—

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: Part of them was included, but part of them was not included.

PAUL LECLERC: But in reading your book I saw that the methodology that you finally arrived at, which you've just described, is one that was built almost by discovery, piecemeal, so first—first, there was the beginning with witnesses, then having them take you to sites, and then at a certain point the ballistic evidence, and then I think it was a real revelation to you to find

how people were requisitioned. Because the kind of language that was always used was, as you say in the book, in the passive tense. “They were taken,” “this happened,” “that happened.” But the question that you asked and that you find answered is who took them and talk a little bit about the notion of being requisitioned. What kind of people were requisitioned, and ultimately I think we’ll come back and say what effect did that have on them, especially, because all the witnesses that you talked to were all children at the time.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: Most of the witnesses that I meet were children between six years old to sixteen in the time of the killing and I discovered that the first thing that the Nazis did in a village is they went to see the mayor and they asked, “How many Jews in the district?” And you knew in the Soviet Union, Jew was written in the passport, like Tatar, like Armenian, like other minorities so it was easy. For example in the district the mayor said there are 1,670 Jews, and they also the addresses. Automatically the Nazis asked the mayor to make requisition of children, by example to have fifty children to dig the grave. The day after, this German, he is a specialist of the digging of the grave. He will calculate the volume of the grave according to the number of victims he wants to kill. You must understand also that the mass grave are killing machine, because people are thrown alive. Some mass grave are very long with stairs, so that the Jew have to walk down and lay on the corpse to make an economy of time. It has been called Sardenpackung. Other mass graves are round, because they want to shoot them with machine gun, etcetera.

Afterward, when it’s finished, he phone to the region to ask the killing unit to come. The killing unit will come in the city but in the city they will phone to everybody who has a pistol, to

Wehrmacht, to Ukrainian police, to German police, to German gendarmerie, to form a unit of killers. They will sleep the night in the village and on the morning they will surround the village and make an announcement that the Jews are deported to Palestine or to Kiev or to where—it depends. Mainly to Palestine. Of course it's a trick. I met one witness. She told me, "I was watching at the window and I saw one of my neighbor entering in the column to be shot and she told us, 'don't cry, don't cry, we go to Palestine,'" and she told me, "I was with my cow earlier behind the church and I saw the grave. I knew where was Palestine."

So finally after one moment they say to these people to walk. They are in column five per five and they have one hundred meters before the mass grave to undress. Here are waiting other children who are required by the mayor with their cart and horses—they immediately to charge the suit the suits in their cart and they bring back the suits in the school to sell them the day after. After the Jews very quickly five per five are brought in front of the killers, why five per five, because one bullet, one Jew, and most of the time there are five shooters. In one village we saw they shot in one day one thousand five hundred person with three shooters. Near the mass grave are pushers, German peoples with uniforms and gloves to throw the people in the mass grave. Very quickly the same children fill the mass grave with sand. It took me perhaps one year to accept that.

One day one old man he told me "I was fulfilling the mass grave with sand and suddenly somebody from the mass grave took my spade with their hand." And I said, "What? Because the Jews were alive?" And he told me, "Of course they were alive."

So, you know, the main difficulty of this duty was also to accept, to know, when the mass grave is first filled, they bring back all the suits, the suits of the men in one class, the suits of the women in another class, the suits of the children in a third class, and they sell them by auction. I met many witnesses who said after three days all the district was suited in Jew. After they bring the furniture of the Jewish houses village by village inside the school, too. Four weeks ago I was with my team of Yahad-In Unum in a village, it was Christmas, also the Christian Orthodox Christmas, and the guy he was required to dig the grave, he remembered the size, four meter by four meter. After he was hidden behind a bush to look at the execution and after he was required to take all the furniture of the Jewish houses and he was remembering that many house have few floors, you had to find ropes to bring all the furniture through the windows, etcetera, and to sell them in the synagogue, and after he proposes to make the meal of Christmas.

And it's also very difficult for Yahad because the team has not to show anything—anything.

PAUL LECLERC: Any emotion—you can't have any emotional reaction.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: You can have, but you must not show it. If you move even one eye, they understand that you are from West, you are not from their world, they stop to speak. So if you make (**gasp**), it's finished. At the beginning I stopped many interview.

PAUL LECLERC: Because it was too overwhelming.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: No, I said it was too much, it's too much. By example, one woman she was from Sataniv. They called this city Sataniv because it was a Jewish city and the other neighbors called it Sataniv.

PAUL LECLERC: But that comes from Satan, as you say, right? I mean, it's a village named for Satan.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: And it's a big city today. Sataniv. And she told me in our city, the Germans did an example—because it was a Jewish city they didn't shoot the Jews, they brought all the Jewish community alive in huge Turkish cave under the market and they closed the gate with two meters of earth. She told me the market was moving during seven days because the Jews tried to escape. It was in July '42. I remember I asked of this woman, “when did you reopen the gate?” She told me, “in '54 because we had to renew the market.” I remember this day I stopped the interview for the moment, I needed to breathe, but now all my team I would say we tried to stay strong enough not to move and to say okay.

By example, another woman, she told me “my brother was forced by the mayor to keep the Jews during the night and if one Jew escaped he had to shoot him.” I was very quiet this day. I said, “Your brother, he came back alive?” “Yes.” “And how many Jews tried to escape the first night?” “Two.” And I understood immediately that he had to kill him. And I say, “but it was a man or a woman,” “he told me two men,” and I said, “What did he do with the corpse?” “Here I will show you.” And we discovered the graves.

PAUL LECLERC: And how old would that child have been?

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: He was fourteen. So you see sometime also, you know, the Nazis they used the Soviet system of requisition to have black workers. They changed the mayors but they kept the Soviet system of requisitions and what was our main discoveries in Yahad-In Unum was to see the imbrication between the Nazism and the Soviet requisition system.

PAUL LECLERC: Tell us a little bit about the Soviet requisition system. I'm not sure—

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: You know, in every municipality. You must understand that the Jews have never been killed in big cities. Even if they are from Mykolajiv, Lvov, and Ternopil, they bring them in small village to isolate them, to kill them. Because the Nazis were not sure, they were not feeling safe. They were afraid of the Soviet partisans, so they isolated the Jews in the village. In every village, the mayor in Soviet system he has around him a council, not elected people. When he wants something—by example, he wants to have ten workers to bring back the grass of the field, it's a Soviet way of cultivating. Okay, every ten person in the village, there is a guy called desiatnik. The desiatnik is the representative of the Party for ten person one person. Chosen by the mayor. When he says “I want fifty children for tomorrow to dig the grave,” or to do anything, he send somebody from the council who will go to see the desiatnik in their street and say tomorrow, fifty person. The desiatnik in the night he knocks at the door, you, you, you. At the morning at eight. They are not to know what for they are requisitioned.

They know only the time. They receive a small paper. “You must be in front of the municipality at eight.”

PAUL LECLERC: This was well before the Germans ever came.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: It was before the Germans arrived. It was the Soviet system, the regular Soviet system of requisition. It took me years to discover that. Nobody wanted to speak because the NKVD was checking the articulation between the mayors and these people and I met last January finally the first desiatnik. She was a woman. She did that during years. And I said, “You did that voluntary or not?” She told me, “I will explain you. I was forced to make requisition one day, of corn another day, of cows the third day. And one day I said to the NKVD—NKVD was another name of KGB—and say, ‘there is nothing anymore for requisition in the village.’” The guy of NKVD has told her, “ooh, good thing. Next meeting with the mayor you will publicly that there is nothing anymore for requisition.” So it was a meeting, the normal meeting, and she said to the mayor in a small meeting in the municipality. “You know, Mr. Mayor, we cannot make any more requisitions. The people have nothing anymore in the farm.” She was sent ten years in Siberia.

So you must understand that these people were being requisitioned by the system. They have never been found guilty by Soviet justice, because everybody knows, that when you are requisitioned, even if it’s for a killing, you have no choice—it’s that or Siberia.

PAUL LECLERC: I see.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: And so the Nazis used this system. And until now nobody understood why they arrived to sleep one night the day after they have workers because without the Soviet system, no Holocaust by bullets.

PAUL LECLERC: That's an amazing insight into the workings of this whole operation. They requisitioned adults, too, though, not only children—they requisitioned adults and prisoners of war and hostages of all kinds. So, I mean, it was a massive kind of operation but what was clear was that as they launched this program in the Ukraine, which was different from what was happening in Poland and other places. They had a very finely worked out—the Germans had a very finely worked out set of protocols, a kind of whole administrative system as to what would happen when, who would go into the town, how the whole operation would work, the creation of a ghetto as you write and so on and so forth.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: Yeah, but you must understand that in ways we imagine that Berlin phoned to Kiev, Kiev phoned to Lvov phoned to village. It was not working like that. It was a completely decentralized Holocaust. At the leadership of each killing unit was a guy with a PhD in law. It was a condition. Himmler put this condition because he said it's necessary that this guy can decide what is good or no according to German law. So it was completely decentralized. Browning in his book *Origin of the Final Solution* but the last book he wrote he said the problem for Himmler was not to order Holocaust but to coordinate Holocaust.

You must understand also that it was an order to kill the Jews, that also an authorization to kill the Jews. It was legal to kill Jews and Gypsies. I will give you the worst example I met. I was in a family two months ago in Sataniv because I came back three times—in some cities, we have to come back three, four times to know the truth and said, “Oh, Father, come visit my house it was a Jewish house. So you see it’s near the synagogue and they had a tunnel to hide and to run away if the Germans arrived and so on.” I said, “Okay, can I open the camera?” “Of course, Father, no problem.” “How did you get the house?” “Oh, it was easy because we found this house empty. The two babies were dead, their heads crushed against the wall, and the teenager was in the entry with a bullet in the stomach. He was dead and the mother never came back, so we took the house.” “Okay, what did you do with the corpse?” I only stay at this ground, you see, I don’t enter in. “I don’t remember. We put them far away, I don’t remember.” Okay, so the camera it was not feeling good at all. I went outside the house. The neighbor arrived running. “What did he tell you?” Because the people speak in public—you know, it’s not an intimate interview. “He said that he put the corpse far away.” “He’s lying, come with me in his garden.” We entered in his garden, two meters from the gate, and she stood and she said, “The corpse are under my very feet.” He reopened the gate and like nothing, said, “she says the truth.” I reopened the camera like nothing, and I said, “Ah, do you remember the names of victims?” “Yeah, of course, they were all my schoolmates,” and he began to write the list of the names on the wall with a paper. I had to go back again. I understood very clearly that this family killed the Jews themselves.

Here you feel very bad. I found five houses like that in Sataniv, so don’t forget when you cut the law not to kill you change completely a society. It was an authorization to kill so you could kill. The worst of the worst—a grandmother, a Ukrainian grandmother, her daughter married a Jew.

She was Catholic and very upset of this wedding. the guy went to Red Army like everybody. The Jews were Soviet citizens. One day the daughter went to the market. She had six children. The grandmother she brought the six children to the Gestapo and they had been shot and she came back and she finished her life in her bed like everybody because it was legal. You must understand there were official killing by the Nazi. The unofficial killing by the Nazi because they didn't declare anything to Berlin, because they wanted to have official reports very well done but they were far from Berlin and the unofficial killing of the neighbors. That was a genocide.

It was so difficult for my team. Very frequently people ask me, "Why you have a bodyguard? A priest doesn't need a bodyguard." I said, "You don't realize without bodyguard, it would have been finished in no time. One day in Kovil somebody shot to us from a window. And it's very frequent with my team that there is an explosion of violence around.

PAUL LECLERC: It's frequent.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: Very frequent, very, very frequent. Without a bodyguard it would be impossible.

PAUL LECLERC: That's not in the book.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: I cannot write everything, you know. My book will be also published in Russian one day and I want to keep my visa.

PAUL LECLERC: Wow.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: You must understand if I wrote everything, it would be absolutely the end of my researches, absolutely the end. So the researches will be accessible for students. We opened a study center in Paris accessible for people to prepare PhD with [inaudible] and we have a convention of [inaudible] and because we have an oral memory archive and all the artifacts so anybody can study that it's accessible to those people and to the families. That we were even to check with the deniers and the anti-Semite people that's why it's not open window. It's less open than your library.

PAUL LECLERC: We're going to get to the deniers in a little while and we're going to get to your feelings as a priest about recent events in the Vatican and a recent decision by the Pope, and we're going to get as well to your identity as a Catholic priest doing this work, because that's one of the more intriguing aspects of the kind of work that you do. But let's stay a little bit with your findings. One of the things that you document in the book that you say is really a kind of unwritten chapter in the Holocaust is the use of young Jewish women as sex slaves. Talk a little bit about that?

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: That was very difficult also to accept, to understand. As I told you there were a lot of nonofficial killing. If you see the reports of the Eizengruppen it is very clear, they arrive in a village, they shoot everybody, they make a report because they want to be well considered by Berlin. So they want in an emergency the paper that the city is Judenfrei because Himmler established a competition between Eizengruppen, Ordnungspolizei and the SS.

So everybody wanted to have the quicker reports. So they find other Jews, they kill them, but they don't declare. You saw in the small movie also the mass grave we opened. All these mass grave officially don't exist in German archives. All the Jews of Busk have officially been killed in another city. Why? Because they wanted a good report. I met in New York a survivor from Busk in a meeting. He told me, "I am from Busk." I say "You are the first Jew alive I meet from Busk," and I asked him, "How did you survive?" He told me, "We were one thousand six hundred sitting in the market. And one official German arrived from the region and he asked, 'how many Jews are still here,' and Soviet official said one thousand six hundred. 'Say, okay, I give you already the paper, Judenfrei.'" And this one now is in New York. But if they shoot people later they don't declare them. All this shootings that you saw, its women were hidden in the ghetto, we were children. They buried alive four hundred and fifty women and children, found in the ghetto by the gendarmerie, not by Eizengrup. So, first thing—

PAUL LECLERC: So the gendarmerie were the local Ukrainian police?

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: No, local German in this case. And the guy went back in Germany and was appointed to a very high position in the police of Germany. He died last year. We found him only this year, but dead. So, first thing, anybody with a pistol was asked to kill Jews. You could be Ukrainian or German or Polish or from anywhere. Secondly, the Nazi were far from Berlin. We always imagine it that the Nazi finally says the truth between each other and they says the truth to Berlin. By example, they don't kill people in secret. We always imagine it was in secret. They employed civilian. Officially we don't employ civilian. And third, they keep Jewish women in the Gestapo. It was in Busk, same thing. One guy, he told me, "There were

thirty-four Jewish women working in Gestapo.” And he gave me the list. I said, “How do you know the list,” and he said it was because he was working inside the Gestapo, the witness. So okay, and he said, “all the village saw them, because when you wanted to have a paper, you wanted to have it notarized, you go to the Gestapo and you see the Jewish girls who are here, cleaning the soil or something like that.”

I learned that at the end of the war all these thirty-four Jewish girls were pregnant. The killing unit of Busk as they knew them they didn't dare to shoot them. So they called a killing unit from Sokal to come and to kill them. It took me three days to find the mass grave. Nobody wanted to speak. I learned that these Jewish girls—they knew that they would be shot. So they asked the Nazis to make a tour in truck just before the shooting to say good-bye to all the village, so all the village saw them saying good-bye, and finally I found an old lady shaking like that in an isolated house near the forest, she told me, “they shot the Jewish women just here near to my house. But don't show yourself to my neighbor because he's a nationalist. He will beat me if I speak.”

You must understand that violence is strong and that the people who are the family of the killers I cannot even knock at the door. We have to pass around their house. Past is not past in Soviet Union. Soviet Union has frozen the time. For the people in their memory it's like one day before. One woman she was speaking because she saw a lady with children going to be shot and suddenly she stopped speaking, she run to her house, and I said, “What happened?” and my translator says, “She told us, ‘I stop to speak because you don't know the German, if they come back, you don't know what they will do to me.’” For them, past is not past. Very frequently also old people say, “I spoke to you but I am sure that they will send me to Siberia.” And always the

young children say, “Mommy, mommy, it is finished, Siberia,” but for old people nothing is finished. They saw so many things in the century.

PAUL LECLERC: It’s hard—I think it’s hard for me at least to imagine, you know, the extent of the psychological trauma that those children suffered by being requisitioned to do these unspeakable things. There is a—One of the ways that this book is brilliantly put together is that there is narrative by Father Desbois, then there are transcriptions of the interviews that he has had with a number of people of different communities, different villages, and then there are photographs—color photographs of the people that he talked to and some of the landscapes, and so you get almost a three-dimensional kind of texture of history here, but there are parts of it that I don’t think I could read aloud—they’re just too heartbreaking. And one of them is the requisitioning of this young schoolgirl that he talked about a few minutes ago who is described as a presser, like you press clothes, but she was requisitioned with her other classmates, these little girls, to walk upon the naked bodies in this mass pit that had just been killed or not killed, wounded, some of whom were her best friends, and it’s hard for me to imagine ever recovering from that kind of an experience and ever having any kind of a normal life afterward.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: They don’t recover. They don’t recover. You see the man who is crying inside his interview in the small movie. Why he cries, because it’s not also everything that we show here. In fact, after one moment they show was dark-skinned. For the Nazi to be dark-skinned was to be Jew. So they took him. He was naked in the line to be shot and suddenly his mother from the window saw he was in the line, so she run from the farm, because the farm is here and killing site is there, and she, “Is not Jew! Is not Jew!” And a local policeman

say, “sorry, he is not Jew,” he took him outside, and so for him and he is living now perhaps twenty meters from the mass grave.

And so you know, it is why the book was not easy to write, how to transmit all these horrors, to make conscious that the genocide it's a crime. Every person was killed by one person personally, no machine, no train, no gas chamber and this, it was a personal crime, and these Nazis were not superhero, were only criminal, like serial killers, every day killing different people differently according to their phantasm. One day we arrived in a village, they say, “Oh, no, the chief of the unit he was drunk so he refused the other German to shoot. He asked for a table with sausage and vodka, and he put all the guns on the table, and he asked the Jew to pass in front of the table and he was shooting like that. And so at the end of the day he made a public discourse that he shot one thousand five hundred thirty Jews I think I remember. And more than that, he asked for water. He washed his hands in front of everybody to show that it was not his crime, and he throw the water behind.” Every crime is different. It's a crime in fact. A genocide in this case is a personal crime every time. It's why **Yahad-In Unum**.

And you know, we show that now there is an exhibition in New York, within the Jewish heritage museum, we try to show to the people the witnesses, the artifact. But even to build an exhibition was not simple. It took us one year in Paris to know what we will show to the people. If we show nothing, they will think, “Okay, they have been shot.” If we show too many things, unconsciously people will blot, so we had to find. If you visit this exhibition, you will be drawn, we make people follow the criminal, from the beginning of the day that they arrive in the village, until the last moment, but it's not easy. You don't see bones, we don't see awful things, but you

follow the people until the last moment. Imagine that the witnesses who remember the last words of the dead people. Anna, she was hidden in a barrack with five other children and you see that in your exhibition. She was hidden in a barrack looking at the execution and suddenly she saw Yitsrik her boyfriend, with all the family naked, arriving to be shot, and Yitsrik saw that Anna was watching, so Anna turned and said, "Bye-bye, life." Sixty years after she remembers. And for us is surely the most difficult thing to accept, when they remember one person with the name, the family name, and their last words.

One family in Simferopol, four years old, a girl, a Krymchak girl, a Sephardic girl, Judeo-Tatar. Finally they arrested her. They tried to hide this small child during all the war. It didn't work. At the end they took her in a truck. They sent two neighbors in emergency with carts and horses to try to ask not to shoot this small girl. They shot in this place eleven thousand person. It's near Simferopol, capital of Crimea. And the neighbors they saw that she was naked in the snow, only the shoes, and it was minus seventeen. And she don't understand anything and she asked to the Nazi, "please give me back my coat, I will give you my shoes." And they shot the child.

You know, it's every time a crime, a personal crime. It's like because very frequently, people tell me, "Oh, it were war," It didn't war, it was a crime, with one criminal with witnesses, with assistant, and with one victim, because one bullet, one Jew, every person has been killed by one person, and we estimate that one German per three would cross the border, kill Jews and Gypsies.

PAUL LECLERC: We have no idea how many Gypsies were killed, do we?

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: Impossible. We found many mass graves of Gypsies, but never one mass grave has even a small souvenir, a small ziggurat, nothing. Killed like animals, buried like animals. We know only same story of the shooting, exactly the same story. They never shot according to what we find the Gypsies in the same place as the Jews and not the same dates. They shoot also the disabled people. We found in front of an orphanage, they built a huge mass grave, they asked all the children of the orphanage to go outside and they shot them and close them. And the worst is that two days the village made a big memorial with all the names of the children that they took outside one child was Jew and they put the corpse away without any name, nobody wanted to say where is the corpse because he is Jew.

PAUL LECLERC: And that happened how recently?

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: You must understand it's not like here, we are quiet, it's a very nice place, etcetera. Story is not finished.

PAUL LECLERC: You do at the same time tell a number of stories of Ukrainians who saved Jewish people and you have a note that indicates that four hundred of them were recognized I think by the state of Israel afterwards. So there are a few heroic stories and stories of—

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: There were two thousand three hundred Ukrainians who received the medal of Righteous among the Nations. We met with my team a few once. One day I was at the commemoration of Holocaust by the rabbi at Babi Yar. And I met an old lady, she

was dancer in opera. She said, “I have been saved by my nanny. My nanny was in fact a Christian. And she came with all the family to be shot, we didn’t know we were to be shot, we were thinking to be deported,” and suddenly the mother said, “take back the children, say it’s yours,” so the nanny took the children and went to see the killer and said, “they are not Jew, it’s mine.” So she was hurt by the killer, but not killed, and so she was asked to hide herself with the children behind the luggage, and she watched the killing of thirty-four thousand people in two days. And after she could go back home and now one of the children who is now a grandmother, she survived, and she was a dancer in the Ballet of Kiev. And she arrived to the commemoration it was a little daughter of her.

PAUL LECLERC: Let’s talk about you. You really learned about the Holocaust, the first photographs you ever saw of the Holocaust were in a library when you were young.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: I have a strong debt to the library.

PAUL LECLERC: Well, I think we all do. Libraries have, you know, have great enduring value as the sources of documentation and as in effect not only the preservers of documents, but also as a consequence of that function that we have, we in effect in a passive kind of way help become the conscience of humanity. But you tell a sort of circular story in the book that you inadvertently almost retraced the footsteps of your paternal grandfather, who was a French prisoner of war. And I don’t want to give the conclusion away, so I won’t, but he is there at the beginning with you as a boy and then he comes back at the end. A man who really never talked

very much about his experience in the war, and you don't know how he got back, from the camp back to the family home, but your education was all in public schools.

My education was all in Catholic schools. I have a Jewish wife and a Jewish child. You are a Catholic priest who came out of a very secular educational tradition and a secular orientation in France and nonetheless had a vocation to become a Roman Catholic priest, first serving as a parish priest, ultimately in Lyon, one of the major cities in France, and then through a variety of circumstances, you became deeply knowledgeable, through the kinds of study that you did in Israel, as well as elsewhere, in the Jewish faith, in the Jewish tradition, and Jewish history. You studied Hebrew and you became, through the course of a meeting with your cardinal, one of the—you became one of the key representatives of the Catholic church to the Jewish community in France, but then also an adviser to the Vatican in terms of Catholic/Jewish relations and in addition to those terribly important roles, which in and of themselves would make a hugely important career you have been with your team, but really through your work, I was going to say single-handedly, but it's not single-handedly, but were it not for you, the kinds of history—the kind of history that you've written—the documentation that you've created of the Holocaust in Ukraine simply would not have been written. So that's a very, very big package in you.

But let's talk about the Church today relative to the Jewish people and to Jewish history as well as to the Holocaust and more specifically let's talk about the most recent incident that has upset people worldwide I guess, about the rescission of an act of excommunication on a renegade English cleric who was a Holocaust denier and what is that act on the part of the Pope do to you, you who have seen the evidence, you who have been there with your hands in the ground, you

who have seen the bones, you've seen the bullets, who have talked to the witnesses, who has an encyclopedic knowledge of what happened in one country, and a deep, deep knowledge of what happened in other countries. Do you feel betrayed by the Pope in this particular action, just as a man, as a scholar, as a human being, as an advocate for the recognition of what happened to the Jews, and in fact for the being a Catholic champion for the Jewish people and their story during the war, how does it sit with you and how do you deal with that, if that's not too unfair a question to ask in public?

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: First, I could answer only in a diplomatic way because I am a diplomat for Vatican, and I will not. You know, it was first a shock. I came back just from Ukraine from a very, very difficult travel near the south of town of Ternopil and Lvov and we just found a small camp where they shot six thousand Jews and I even found back the guy who was serving the food every Monday on order to the mayor to the camp. I remember how they said the guards were playing with young babies—young children, Jewish children they threw them from the [inaudible] and the other were shooting in air and so on. We found all the mass graves. I took the plane with my team of Yahad-In Unum and I heard on the radio a certain Williamson was saying about the Holocaust never existed according to him and at a maximum two hundred thousand people were killed and no gas chamber.

It was a shock. A shock, a double shock, first because it's a new denier. I know already about Forrestal and all those people, of course they are my enemy and but to see a bishop, somebody who says he's a bishop to say that it's a strong step. I was immediately reacting to say it could be the beginning of the banalization of denier, because now witnesses unfortunately disappear one

after the other, and I always said that when the witnesses will go on disappearing, the deniers will go on appearing, like rats in a boat, you know. You must know that we decided this year between [inaudible] to build a seminar, a symposium next June about secret operation 1005 that nobody studied. What was this operation?

In June '42 it's a very warm summer, all the mass grave all explode. So all the neighbors of the mass grave write to Berlin, "We cannot bear any more." So Himmler and Heidrich decided to appoint Nazi politburo for a secret intervention called 1005 to unbury all the corpse and burn them two thousand by two thousand in every village in front of everybody. Fortunately the Red Army arrived quicker than they were thinking so they had to stop. Why did it that, because they didn't only burn the corpse. They bought machines, special machines, bone crushers, to destroy the last bones in every village because they didn't want to count. They were afraid to be judged by the dead corpse. It was the building of the denial of this Holocaust.

For me it's very clear that Williamson, Ahmadinejad, Forrestal, and so on for different reasons, perhaps, they are only the sons of Himmler and Heidrich. And I said that very clearly in the media in France and I was very happy also that the two main cardinals of France, Paris and Lyon, condemn completely and said that there was no compatibility between to be a denier of Holocaust of course and to be a bishop and even to be a nice person. So we are in this position. It is not easy. I was happy that even his group, the Fraternity of Pius X, told him to stop. You know, this guy he was sent outside of Argentina, now he's in England and we know through the media that his contacts Irving with only one question, "how can I speak without putting on trial?"

You must understand that Himmler and Heidrich they knew that the Holocaust existed. They did it. They did it. So the deniers, it's to be a denier it's not an intellectual position, it's an anti-Semitic position, it's something else, it's the conclusion of hate in your brain. You know also that in France, like in Germany, it's forbidden to be denier, by law. So when somebody is a denier, he can go to jail. That's a big difference. That's why we are sure he will never land in France and in Germany now. But I am very afraid, never the mind, I still go on thinking that it's the beginning of the tsunami of the deniers, because it's a way to cut the bottom of the legitimacy of the Jewish people. You know, I never met a denier who loves the Jews.

PAUL LECLERC: This is my last question, and then we'll take some from the audience for about fifteen minutes or so. But staying with the same subject. You are an official adviser to the Vatican. Here we have a denier, but then here we have a Pope who made a decision to repeal his excommunication whether or not he knew about Williamson's position as a denier almost becomes irrelevant. So how do you relate to your—how do you relate to the Vatican on this? How do you communicate your feelings which obviously are enormously passionate and eloquent, persuasive, because you got more—you got more evidence in one pore of your body about what really happened than anybody imaginable, so what do you tell them in your official position?

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: Now you enter in actuality and no more in history. So concretely I received a letter last week from the embassy of friends to the Holy Sea in Roma if I accepted but an event could be built in the French embassy with different cardinals and to speak

about Holocaust. You know, I have diplomas. I went to university. Everywhere, it could be in a farm in Ukraine, it could be here, it could be in a house of a millionaire, I try to stay a very simple person who says directly the facts that nobody can turn around. So I will do the same. I will not speak about denier and that. I will tell them about what happened in this village to this boy. Because I don't do that in global to the Jewish people, I find back the mass grave where David, Gloria, Itshik, the family Hefner the daughter and that have been shot one by one. So my duty is to come back to the Vatican through this diplomatic way and to say here we are. That you know only there is an African proverb to say we cannot make drink a donkey that doesn't want to drink, so it will depend on the people who will come concretely.

I think, you know, also it depends if the people in their courses had an historical background, or if everything is inside theology. Where everything is inside theology, there is no place for history.

PAUL LECLERC: Well, I think those of us on your side, who are the vast majority, have to hope that you will break down the doors of that way of thinking and insert history into theology because otherwise I think we will have more murders and more tolerance of murder and injustice in the future. Father Desbois, thank you very, very much. This has been an extraordinary experience.

(applause)

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: If I could trouble you to if you have a question, and I insist rather on a question than a comment, I would very much encourage you to come up to the mike right in the middle—I know it's a little bit difficult to get there, but we are recording this event, and we will be also able to hear your question, which does matter.

Q: Hi, my name is Michael. I'm currently reading Amazon's new book, *Debating the Holocaust: A New Look at Both Sides* by Professor Dalton and my understanding from reading that book is that Holocaust revisionism started in France from the Left, [INAUDIBLE], who was a concentration camp survivor when he started questioning it in 1946, so I think it's unfair of you to suggest that [INAUDIBLE], who you claim is your enemy, is the creator of French Holocaust revisionism, which is not the case, and Israel is the first country in the entire planet, in 1986, to pass Holocaust denial laws because there are Jews in Israel—

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: What is your question?

Q: There are Jews in Israel who do not agree with the Holocaust narrative and there are also scholars in Israel that don't agree with the Holocaust narrative that's closer to bishop Williamson's suggestion that maybe gas chambers were not used as the murder question.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: What is your question?

Q: The question is that what about [INAUDIBLE] who's the father of Holocaust revisionism? He's also a concentration camp survivor.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: you must understand if you want to know about what I am doing, I am ready to invite you on the ground to meet with the witnesses, so if you want to meet with me after I'm ready and I can guarantee you to welcome in Ukraine, discuss with the people, look at the bones, the bullets, and to investigate. If you are ready to spend time on that, we are ready to meet each other. For the rest, I'm not competent. And you must also understand that I work with people who work on other genocide. I work with Armenians and I help them find that mass grave in Syria at the border of Iraq, last summer. I work with people who work on the genocide in Rwanda. I don't know if you have been in Rwanda, long time ago, full of mass graves, too. I work or people work on the mass violence in Bosnia, who are looking for the bones. We are connected to each other.

But I always thought that the people who deny a Holocaust don't take care of another genocide. It's very strange. But most of the deniers, there are—me, I'm from France. There are very few people that I know that deny the existence of Napoleon, even if they hate Napoleon, but I never met a denier of Napoleon. Even in Belarus, which is not the most open country, nobody denies Napoleon, but I meet a lot of deniers of the Holocaust of the Jews, so I always wonder why.

PAUL LECLERC: We'll go on, yes, ma'am.

Q: First, thank you for what you've done; it's stunning. I have two questions. In the video in the section with the mass graves, it said that only the top layer of the mass graves were touched and the other layers were left alone for religious reasons. Could you just clarify that? And then my

other question was you mentioned children who were requisitioned dealing with Jewish children that they'd gone to school with, but then you also mentioned the situation in the ghetto. And I was just wondering were there both situations where the Jews were separate and isolated, and other situations where they were integrated into the community?

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: For the first question, you know, I am engaged in Jewish/Catholic dialogue, and of course we are very careful to respect the Jewish laws and of course the Jewish laws according to the statute of the corpse, the dead corpse. In the Jewish tradition, we must not move a corpse when it is buried. And so we have been accepted—we never open the grave. We opened the grave only from Busk. That we made a twenty-seven days excavation with an official archaeologue of Ukraine who of course never knew of the genocide of the Jews. And under the shomer the eye of an Orthodox rabbi, that I asked from Israel as the president of Zaka , an Israeli organization. So in this case, as officially it was not a Jewish place of killing, we could open. But at the moment we could establish really it was Jewish victims, we had to stop. But nevertheless, in any case, we could not move one bone—it's the Jewish law. Not only for victims, if it was an accident it would be the same. That's the first thing.

The second question, you are right. In certain villages there were a Jewish school and a Polish school or a Jewish school and a Ukrainian school. But in most of the village, they were in the same school. Don't forget it was Soviet Union in East, so people couldn't organize themselves in religious communities. And you are right that in Busk it was only one school, so they were in the same school. When they did the ghetto, the German do the ghetto when they arrive, and the ghetto is not a Ukrainian structure—it's a Nazi structure. So they separated the population for a

while. But it's not ghetto like in Poland. In some villages, the ghetto is for one week, just it's a structure to prepare the killing. It's not a ghetto like in Warsaw or in Krakow, it's not the same story, in Eastern Ukraine, I mean.

PAUL LECLERC: Next question.

Q: About two years ago a book was released in France called *Les Bienveillantes* by Jonathan Littell and it was a book written as fiction about Ukraine and covered many of the things you talk about even though it was fiction. It was released today in America as *The Kindly Ones* and the person who reviewed it for the *New York Times* didn't like it at all. Now, Jonathan Littell in France was given the Goncourt and it was very, very well received in France. Would you like to comment on that, not necessarily the book itself, but the difference between a book like that would be received in France and in America?

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: But I cannot comment about the difference of reception. I can comment about the book itself, I read it. First, even if I didn't like it, I had no choice—professionally, I had to read it. First, it's a very, very, very well-documented book. I think the man who wrote this book he read any article that has been published mostly in Germany between '50 and '80, because I found back all the articles and when he tells you that Paul Blobel suddenly becomes mad in one night he wants to shoot everybody and is brought to a hospital, it's true. When he says that in this village they buried the people in the water, that's true. All that is extremely documented and for France in public opinion it was received as a first wave of sensibilization of what happened in East. Only what I don't like in this book for me personally is

the way sometimes the killing are described in a very obscene way and the other thing I don't like is that I don't understand why the writer had to put himself in the brain of an imaginary Nazi. Because I am afraid that some people who are very friendly with Nazi feel safe to travel like in a fiction that are a very long fiction. But never the mind, I would say I recommend the book to many people because by it they learn so many details about what happened, and everything that is said is true according to historians.

PAUL LECLERC: Thank you, we'll have one more question and then we'll move to a book signing.

Q: Merci beaucoup. We had the opportunity to see the exhibit down at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, and I recommend that everybody in the room who's interested go to see it. My question in terms of the Holocaust and the Vatican/Jewish relationship, would you please comment on the beatification of Pope Pius.

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: Pius XII. First, I can comment. It's only a comment. The archives are not completely opened. The archives in Vatican are open until '39 so we know everything about before he was Pius XII, at the time he was nuncio in Germany. First when they opened this amount of archives, there were not so many scholars who run to Vatican to study it. Because it's an amount. I know a lot of friends who are working in connection with Vatican archivists to push to open the rest of the archives from '39 to '45 before speaking of any beatification. And I don't know where will be the end. I know when the beatification happens it's after long, long processes, but when it begins to be public, it's very quick. So, but I know that

today and after Williamson affair it's a very, very sensitive subject. Me, in my point of view as historian I think that without reading all the archives, it's difficult to speak, because we always over valorize in my point of view, the relations between Pius XII and the Western countries—France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and so on. Holland. But I have read very, very few about the links between Pius XII and Poland and Ukraine where are unfortunately the biggest number of victims and Poland was a complete Catholic country and Western Ukraine, the Greco-Catholic archbishops named Stefan Stepinski sent five reports to the Pope at end of '41, beginning of '42, when he began to see the killings. The first four reports were censored by the Nazis but the last one arrived to Vatican. I don't know anything about an answer—it's inside the archives. And the correspondence between the Vatican and the annunciator in Warsaw would be very interesting to know. So I know now many historians who are friends with the Church, Jewish historian, who are willing to open only these few files to really know what happened on the burning place because Poland is a key question for that.

PAUL LECLERC: Now let me just say a few things in conclusion. Father Desbois's work is not over because now that so much work has taken place on the Ukraine, he's broadening his investigations into Belorussia and—

FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS: Belorussia and we are very near to do it in Poland, because one Jew per ten in Poland unfortunately has been shot because they were shooting before bringing people in the ghetto and there were many shootings inside the ghetto.

PAUL LECLERC: I have a sense that your work will never end, to be honest, and it is so terribly important. If you are interested in supporting his work, go to his Web site, www.holocaustbybullets.com. I do ask you as well, as Paul did, to support the New York Public Library. These are not easy times for us. And next year's going to be really, really bad as you can imagine. So if you value what you do, if you value what Paul Holdengräber and his team does, in bringing you these programs, become a Friend, it costs next to nothing and it's really important. I'd like to thank Paul for helping to arrange this wonderful evening. I'd like to thank you all for coming. This has been one of the great evenings in my life and I met one of the greatest people I think I'll ever meet. It's an honor to be with you, and I'm sure that we all feel the same way. Thank you so much.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Thank you, Paul. Thank you very much.

(applause)