

(April I, 2013)

SAMUEL PISAR

Author and narrator of the libretto “Kaddish - A Dialogue with God” for Leonard Bernstein’s monumental Symphony No.3, which he has performed with renowned orchestras in many capitals of the world, Samuel Pizar was 10 years old when Hitler and Stalin dismembered his native Poland. After 6 years of Soviet occupation and Nazi internment in Auschwitz, Dachau and other infernos, he was one of the youngest survivors of the Holocaust, and the only one of his family and his school, when the U.S. Army liberated him in 1945.

Retrieved from the ruins of Europe by French and Australian relatives, he resumed his studies in Paris, graduated from Melbourne University and earned doctorates from Harvard and the Sorbonne. In the 1950’s he began his career at the United Nations, before becoming an adviser to President John F. Kennedy, the State Department and Committees of the Senate and the House. In 1961, was awarded U.S. citizenship by a special Act of Congress.

As an American, French and British lawyer, Pizar counseled governments, multinational corporations, the International Olympic Committee and personalities ranging from Steve Jobs to Elizabeth Taylor. He has presided at world conferences on law, trade and diplomacy, and addressed global leaders at the Davos Economic Forum, The Council on Foreign Relations, the European Parliament and the Nobel Foundation. A trustee of Washington’s Brookings Institution, founder-chairman of Yad Vashem France, director of the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah, he is today an ambassador and special envoy of UNESCO for Holocaust and genocide education.

Pizar was one of the first to militate for normalized economic, cultural and human ties between East and West. At the height of the cold war he helped shape strategies that inspired the Nixon-Kissinger policy of détente. A defender of freedom and human rights he took up the causes of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov and other dissidents and refuseniks. In the 1970s, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

His books, translated into 20 languages, include “Coexistence and Commerce,” acclaimed as a work that “charts an enlightened course for Western policy” (Senator Edward Kennedy) and “has a vigor that could revive the tired spirits of any jaded businessman or diplomat (The Financial Times). His Memoir, "Of Blood and Hope,” was greeted as a “soaring triumph of the human spirit” (Business Week) and “a great book that makes the reader vibrate to varied, changing and awesome emotions” (Le Monde).

A recipient of many academic and civic distinctions, Pizar is a Grand Officer the French Legion of Honor, an Officer of the Order of Arts and letters, a Commander of Poland’s Order of Merit and an Officer of the Order of Australia, awarded in the name of Queen Elisabeth II. At the 50th anniversary parade of Victory in Europe, President Bill Clinton publicly recounted his traumatic childhood and miraculous liberation by GIs on a German battlefield.

Samuel and Judith Pizar (former chair of the American Cultural Center in Paris) have four children, all dedicated to public service - two of them at the Clinton and Obama White House.