



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Preserving American Jewish History

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series E: General Alphabetical Files. 1960-1992

Box 86, Folder 12, NBC "Holocaust" - England, 1979.



draft 2

~~WFOKANDX~~ ENGLAND

~~From~~ Even though the British media turned thumbs down upon Holocaust, the British viewing audience turned its ~~televisionz~~ televisions on: 19 million saw the show, and only Roots gained a bigger audience.

The series, which was aired on BBC-1 from September 3rd to 6th, was generally criticized as yet another product of the American entertainment production machine--an aspect of U.S. culture which the British, whose cultural preferences are partially rooted in ~~the~~ the nation's aristocracy, have never looked upon with favor. This view was put perhaps most bluntly by Tom Bell, the British actor who played Eichman in the series. In a pre-airing interview, Bell told the Evening Standard that the show was "a soap opera designed to be spectacular and make money."

CRITICAL PRESS

Most criticism, though negative, was not so biting. That same article also quoted another English actor, Cyril Shaps--who is Jewish--as saying that at first he wondered "why are they doing this," but that he then "read about one or two books which denied that the extermination of the Jews ever took place and I was glad it was going to be made."

claimed it was "abysmal,"

The Daily Telegraph ~~called it~~ and that the violence was "indistinguishable from a thousand Westerns," ~~and~~ and The Daily Express agreed, saying that "the Buchenwald concentration camp looks almost out of Ideal Homes," ~~and~~ Still, the Evening Standard wrote that "Publishers also hope to make a profit, but books are not spurned for that reason... any popularisation inevitably involves some vulgarisation." This, it wrote, is "the price for mass exposure."

The Standard also ran a man-in-the-street interview segment after the first show, and all five men- and women-in-the-street ~~were~~ favored the show. "It shows the bare facts which we should all know," said one respondent," and the ~~the~~

least favorable respondent said that "I know all about what happened," but concluded nonetheless by saying "But you can never forget, can you?"

And while one critic wrote "we cannot go on fighting the war interminably," another admitted that "this is our civilization we see paraded before us."

The closing installment was followed by a discussion whose participants complemented both the show's producers and the BBC for buying it, but ^{which} one reviewer felt ~~the discussion~~ was "confused" and lacked depth.

TASTE, NOT POLITICS

reverse
The series stirred up some debate, but the issue was one of taste rather than of politics. Thus, Variety could report that Holocaust was "No big deal here," while the Jerusalem Post's London correspondent could write of an "enormous controversy" over the series.

enter quiet & redo
The debate manifested itself in the calls that came in to the BBC about the show: ^{the switchover ... into late into} it received 50 calls each of the first two nights, and 30 more the following day, and a BBC spokesman stated that "the reception was very mixed, but most of the callers seemed more concerned with the style and presentation ... than the content."

"On Sunday, the majority of the calls were anti. But Monday's exaggerated press reports of the response prompted a reaction from people who thought the series good," said a BBC spokesman. ^{however,} ~~But~~ The overall reaction led one spokesman to conclude "It would appear that the Jewish tragedy is a less emotive issue in Britain than it was when it was shown in America."

There were, however, other indications that the series did touch many Britons deeply. The most frightening of these was the suicide of one woman after watching the show. Fanny Geddall, an 81-year old Jewish grandmother who was haunted by what befell her husband's family in the Polish ghettos and death camps took an overdose of pills after the first episode. Though she was herself born in Engla-d, she left a note for her son and his wife saying that after watching the program, she wanted to leave the world.

Other viewers called it a nightmare, and one said she "could not sleep thinking about the awful things I had seen."

THE JEWISH RESPONSE

Another kind of indication that the series had moved a lot of people came in the ~~large number of~~ letters to the editor ^{Section 2} in the London Jewish Chronicle, ~~which ran several letters,~~ most of ~~them~~ ^{which supporting ed} ~~supported~~ the series or ~~contemplating the message of the holocaust.~~ ^{ed its}

rewrite H

One noted that Jews ~~are~~ "in Russia are being mentally massacred, in Arab countries physically tortured," and another ~~was~~ was moved to ponder "why?" without finding any answer. Still, another letter stated that "A Jew with the basic knowledge of the atrocities will not find the programme informative."

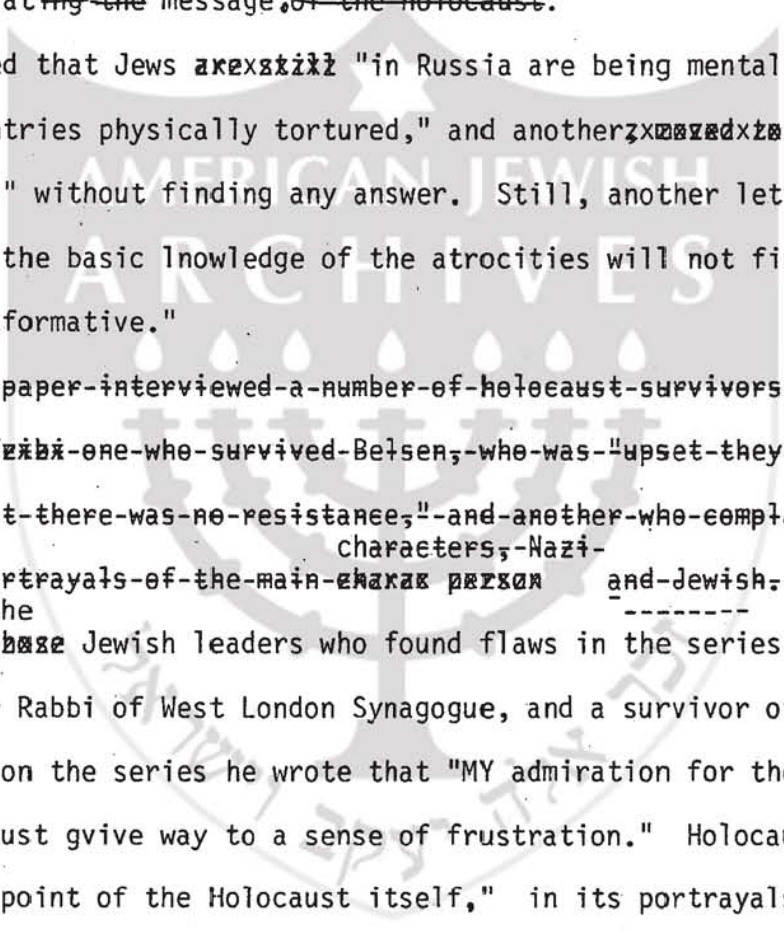
~~One newspaper interviewed a number of holocaust survivors, including a~~ ~~one who survived Belsen, who was "upset they were stressing--~~ ~~the fact that there was no resistance," and another who complained of the~~ ~~characters, Nazi-~~ ~~portrayals of the main~~ ~~and Jewish.~~ ~~-----~~

One of the ~~among~~ Jewish leaders who found flaws in the series was Rabbi Hugo Gryb, senior Rabbi of West London Synagogue, and a survivor of Auschwitz. In ^{large} an essay on the series he wrote that "MY admiration for the sheer daring of the conception must give way to a sense of frustration." Holocaust, he felt, "missed the point of the Holocaust itself," in its portrayals of its main characters.

Also displeased was Dr. Nahum Goldman, honorary president of the World Jewish Congress. In an interview with PAP, the Polish news agency, he argued that "It is sheer nonsense to compare Poles with Nazis" because of their great suffering under the Nazis.

But Rabbi Cyril Harris, Chairman of the U.K. Council of Ministers, said that the series did more ~~harm~~ good than harm, and Rabbi J.J. Kokotek, the Chairman of the Council of Reform and Liberal Rabbis, reported that he was impressed

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by the show despite its ^{flaws} ~~"too sympathetic portrayal of Nazi characters."~~

Kokotek, in fact, felt that the show's reach was large enough to provide an important opportunity to his fellow religious leaders. Along with the Office of the Chief Rabbi and Dr. Solomon Gaon (the Haham), Kokotek asked all ministers to give sermons on the Holocaust. A similar call also emanated from the Council of Christians and Jews.

Other British ^{Jewish also} leaders saw the show's merits as outweighing its flaws. Martin Savitt, Chairman of the Board of Deputies defence committee, believed that ~~despite its flaws,~~ ^{it} "if it generates discussion about what really happened, it will have done its job."

Two other committees of the Board of Deputies, the Yad Vashem and the Radio and Television Committees, held ~~a panel discussion at the Woburn House~~ ^{open meetings} ~~on the program~~ ^{several days after the airing of the series} in London about two weeks after the series was shown, at which four experts considered the show and the era of horror.

Historian Martin Gilbert; author-journalist Terrence Prittie; Jewish Agency representative Dr. S. Levenberg; and the Rev. Dr. Isaac Levy participated, and all four tended to recapitulate the criticisms of the series. Levy provided perhaps the most interesting comment, complaining of the olfactory inadequacies of the media--"you cannot smell anything" on television, ~~adding that~~ ^{adding that} no show could really depict the "ultimate horror," and Prittie was the most optimistic in his comments, saying that "maybe out of this film will come something extra--another look at Nazis and wartime Germany and also at the Germans who resisted."

THE CHRISTIAN PRESS

The Christian media offered a large range of reactions to the series, stretching from the supportive to the seriously antagonistic.

The Roman Catholic Tablet writer "found that often I couldn't watch at

all, that I trembled so violently and my heart thudded so fast that I thought I might become a later-day victim," and she Xcommended the show ~~for~~ for young viewers attention.

But the Methodist Recorder felt that "in this instance fiction underplayed the reality of the background."

The Christian World critic ~~found~~ felt a sense of "unreality" in the confluence of "romanticized violence and sentimentalized fa-ily life," which, however, was shattered for the reviewer when the actual shots of the emaciated bodies and squads of camp prisoners were shown. "Suddenly the memory is jolted and we recall the revulsion and anger we once felt when the first pictures of the Nazi atrocities reached us." ~~But~~

The non-secular response which caused the biggest stir was a feature article in the Church of England Newspaper by Colin Evans, who suspected the show "was made with strong Jewish backing ~~in~~ in order to keep alive the white hot hate engendered by the events it records." After a disclaimer of "even the slightest anti-Jewish feeling," Evans ~~contended~~ contended that Christians and Jews are "divided in one respect. Revenge and retribution figure pr-eminently in their inteepretation of life, whereas our ideal... is reconcilliation and peace without compromising justice." Christians, he assereted, ~~do~~ do not "persist with the hate and the thirst for revenge."

The art-cle reused a vigorous response, including one letter to the editor which was "appal led" over the "smug cpndemnation of Jewish desire for justice..." and which asked "is it not sheer insolence to ask the Jews to forget."

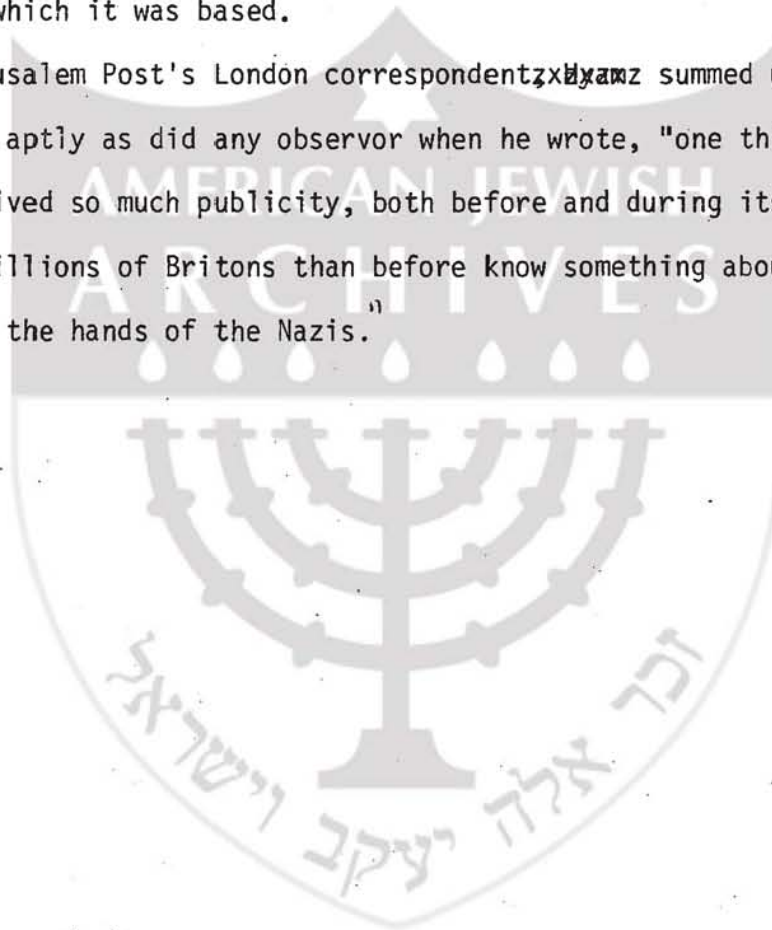
Another response, signed by Phillip Schofield (Rev), contended that the issue "is not a Jewish/German problem, much lessa Jewish/Gentile one; it is the old story of evil..." ~~We would respectfully suggest that it is unhelpful to write of Jews~~

He called the letter's contention "unhelpful" and asks by what justification Evans asserted that "revenge and retribution figure prominently" in the Jewish interpretation of life.

MILLIONS ^{MORE} ~~OF~~ BRITONS KNOW ~~WERE~~ NOW

Despite the widespread criticisms, there were no reports of significant opposition to the film's being showed, the need for such a show, or the truth upon which it was based.

The Jerusalem Post's London correspondent ~~zlyamz~~ summed up England's reaction as aptly as did any observer when he wrote, "one thing is clear--the series received so much publicity, both before and during its showing, that many more millions of Britons than before know something about what the Jews suffered at the hands of the Nazis."



ENGLAND

draft 1

The showing of Holocaust in Great Britain succeeded in attracting an audience of some 19 millions, ~~zxxvaxdxxnlyzxtaxBxatxxinxzaxdixnxxaxxiwxingffigure~~ a viewing figure second only to that which ~~viewed~~ Roots attained. This ~~attainment~~ ^{achievement} is all the more striking for the fact that Holocaust received an almost universally negative critical reception both before and during its showing.

The series, which was aired nightly on BBC-1 from September 3rd to 6th, was generally criticized ~~for being~~ yet another product of the American ~~commercially minded~~ entertainment production machine--an aspect of American ~~popular democracy~~ ^{culture} which the British, whose cultural biases are in part rooted in their own nation's aristocracy, ^{have} never ~~took~~ looked upon with favor. This ~~interpretation was~~ view of the series was put perhaps most bluntly by Tom Bell, the British actor who played Eichman in the series. In a pre-airing interview, ~~he~~ Bell told the Evening Standard that the show was "a soap opera designed to be spectacular and make money," and ~~he added that under the circumstances, he felt that was "really disgusting."~~

But most reactions, although critical, were not quite so biting. That same article also quoted another English actor, Cyril Shaps--who is Jewish--as saying that he first wondered "why are they doing this, what's the poitn," but that he then "read about the one or two books which denied that the extermination of the Jews ever took place and I was glad it was going to be made."

The Daily Telegraph's Richard Last, however, complained that "abysmal standards mark 'Holocaust,'" ~~after the first episode was shown, he said~~ and that the violence had "the desanitized look indistinguishable from a thousand Westerns." after the airing of the first episode.

~~Other reviewers used words like "banal" and "schmaltz"~~
The Daily Express agreed with this, claiming that "the Buchenwald concentration camp looks almost out of Ideal Homes," and the Daily Mail called it "almost ~~Other critics used words like "banal" and "schmaltz."~~

unberably bland."

Still, the Evening Standard wrote that "Publishers also hope to make a profit, but books are not spurned for that reason... any popularisation inevitably involves some vulgarization of the subject." "Mixing fact and fiction," it wrote, is a danger, but is also "the price for mass exposure."

And while one critic wrote "we cannot go on fighting the war interminably," another admitted that "this is our civilization we see paraded before us."

~~The Evening Standard (which tended to be the most pro-Holocaust of the major newspapers)~~ ^{It also} ran a man-in-the-street interview section after the first show, and all five men- and women-in-the-street were supportive of Holocaust. "It shows the bare facts which we should all know," said one respondent, and the least favorable of the five respondents told the interviewer that "I know all about what happened," but concluded saying "But you can never forget, can you?"

The closing installment was followed by a discussion which was complementary both to the series' ~~and~~ producers and to the BBC for buying Holocaust, but which apparently lacked much depth or passion: one reviewer called the discussion "confused."

TASTE, NOT POLITICS

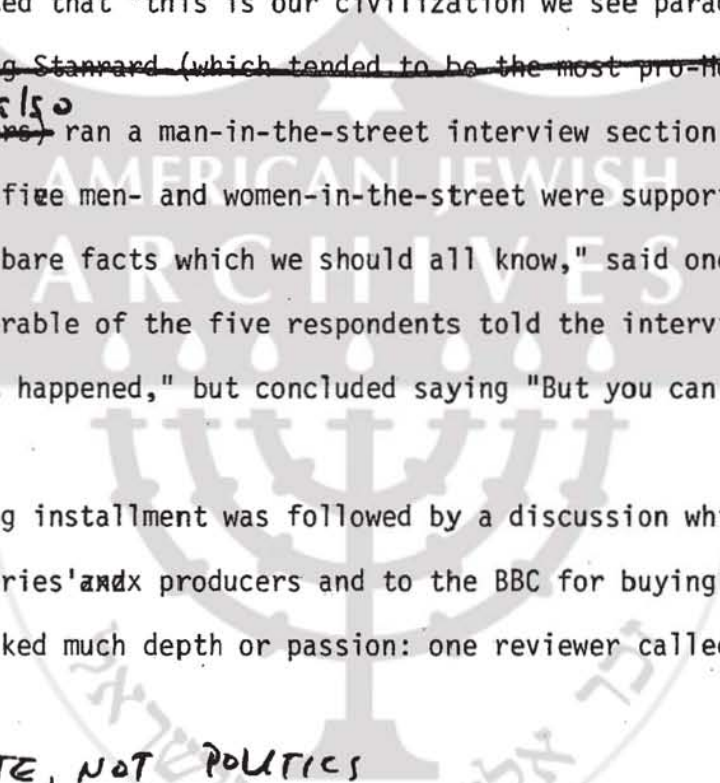
Variety magazine reported that the series was "No big deal here," and only ~~and those few~~ ^{and those few} ~~in the Daily Express~~ ^{in the Daily Express} a few articles in the press perceived any "controversy" over the show; ^{That is!} Yet one of these, which ran in the Jerusalem post under a London dateline, had seen "enormous controversy"; (albeit over standards of production.) Similarly, the Daily Express perceived a controversy over what it called "the glorification of pain."

^{But if} ~~And the London newspaper reported that~~ ^{the disagreement was one of taste, not politics, it still earned} ~~that "Switchboards have been~~ ^{the BBC} ~~switchboards had been~~ ^{public.}

kept busy for hours late last night following the first part"of Holocaust. It reported that a BBC spokesman stated that "the reception was very mixed, but

re-order

But if



most of the callers seemed more concerned with the style and presentation... than the content."

This led the ~~office~~ spokesman to conclude that "It would appear that the Jewish tragedy is a less emotive issue in Britain than it was when it was shown in America."



in America." The BBC received some 50 calls ~~each~~^{on} night about the show each of the first two nights of its airing, and received another 30 on the third day. The tenor of the calls themselves seemed to change from the first evening to the second, with a BBC spokesman noting that "On Sunday, the majority of the calls were anti. But Monday's exaggerated press reports of the response prompted a reaction from people who thought the series good."

Besides the large audience, there were other indications that Holocaust did touch ~~deeply~~ many Britons deeply. The most frightening ~~was~~ of these was the ~~reported~~ suicide of one woman after watching the show. * ~~But there were~~ Some viewers called it a nightmare, and one, ~~also others of a less intensely personal nature.~~ / ~~One viewer~~ a pensioner, reported that she "could not sleep last night thinking about the awful things I had seen. And even though the programme contains some horrific scenes, I feel I ought to watch it all the way through."

Jewish Response

Another kind of indication ~~was~~ that the series had moved a lot of people came in the large number of letters to the editor in the London Jewish Chronicle. Several letters supported the show, and one noted that despite the lessons humanity--and the Jewish portion thereof--had supposedly learned from the Nazi era, "Our people in Russia are being mentally massacred, in Arab countries, physically tortured."

Another letter-writer, moved to ~~contemplation~~ contemplation by the series, noted, that "...one is left with the question--why?" This author could not find a ~~means towards~~ an answer, but he had clearly been moved to wrestle with the question by the series.

But here, too, the reaction was not always positive. Wrote one reader, "A Jew with the basic knowledge of the atrocities will not find the programme informative."

Tribich in Evening News / Goldman

Among those Jews who found serious flaws in the show was Rabbi Hugo Gryn, senior Rabbi of West London Synagogue, a survivor of Auschwitz and other

add: p.3

①
The Evening News ~~under the~~ interviewed a number of Holocaust survivors, including Mrs. Maria Tribich, a survivor of Belsen, who said she was "upset they were stressing the fact that there was no resistance. They made far too much of it." Kurt Klappholz, a lecturer at the London School of Economics, told the Evening News that the Jews were presented as "dummies" and the Nazis as interesting characters. Klappholz was in Blechammer, a branch of Auschwitz.

Also displeased with the series, but for a different reason, was Dr. Nahum Goldman, honorary president of the World Jewish Congress. ~~Max~~ In an interview with PAP, the Polish news agency, he ~~asserted that the series~~ argued that "It is sheer nonsense to compare ~~the~~ Poles with Nazis. Poles suffered no less than we did. We suffered greater losses proportion-wise, but the Poles also suffered enormously." He noted that the Poles had no Quisling, and thought "the behavior of U.S. television is very unfair..."

⁴
England

concentration camps. In an essay he wrote on ~~the~~ Holocaust for the Jewish Chronicle, he noted that "It is too early to know... its impact on Jewish and non-Jewish viewers. But I hope that large numbers of people saw it and that its impact on memories and emotions is of the sort that this uniquely sensitive subject deserves.

"I hope so," he continued, "but I am by no means certain that this will be so.... I am glad that the subject itself has broken that barrier of silence which for too long has surrounded it... Now that the barrier has been breached I must hope that other programmes--more factual, more analytical, more reflective and indeed more sensitive--will follow.

"My admiration for the sheer daring of the conception must give way to a sense of frustration." Holocaust, he felt, ~~missed~~ "went on to miss the point of the Holocaust itself," by its portrayal of its main characters.

He criticized ~~the show~~ show for casting the "main Jewish protagonists in a generally heroic mold," when in fact "utterly defenceless and abandoned people do not act in the way 'Holocaust' depicts them." Similarly, he felt that the show's chief villain, Eric Dorf, "was certainly not like the killers I knew."

Other British leaders saw the ~~show's~~ show's merits ~~as outweighing its flaws~~ as outweighing its flaws. Martin Savitt, Chairman of the Board of Deputies defence committee,, believed that, though Holocaust was "pretty inept," "if it generates discussion about what ~~really~~ really happened, it will have done its job."

Rabbi Cyril Harris, Chairman of the U.K. Council of Ministers, said that the series did more good than harm, and Rabbi ^{J.J.} Kokotek, the Chairman of the Council of Reform and Liberal Rabbis, reported that he was impressed by the show despite his feeling ~~that~~ it was "too sympathetic in its portrayal of Nazi characters."

Kokotek, in fact, felt that the show's reach was large enough to provide

an important opportunity to his fellow religious leaders. Along with the Office of the Chief Rabbis, ~~the Haham (Dr. Salkamanz)~~ and Dr. Solomon Gaon (the Haham), Kokotek asked all ministers in the country to give sermons on the Holocaust. ~~They were~~ A similar call also emanated from the Council of Christians and Jews.

→ ~~(*)~~ Two other committees of the Board of Deputies, the Yad Vashem and the Radio and Television Committees, held open meetings to discuss the program several days after the airing of Holocaust.

* Fanny Geddall, an 81-year old Jewish grandmother who was haunted by what befell her husband's family ~~under the Nazis~~, took an overdose of pills after the first episode. / She left a note for her son and his wife saying that after ~~she~~ watching that "terrible programme," she wanted to leave this world.

Christian
Response →

But all was not tolerance and stiff-upper lip acceptance of a show perceived to be flawed: in Manchester, the showing of the last episode was followed by an outbreak of vandalism on Jewish property. The city, which has the ~~second~~ largest Jewish population in England after London, saw the smashing of windows at Mamlock House, headquarters of Zionist movement in the city, at one synagogue, and at the offices of two newspapers, the Jewish Telegraph and the Jewish Gazettee~~x~~

Shortly after the program's airing, the Jews College ~~organized~~ held a discussion on resistance and the experience of a child, with some 35 students from Jewish and non-Jewish ~~at~~ schools attending.

For
Lenses → The ~~Survivors~~ '45 Aid Society (survivors of the holocaust) also held a meeting soon after the series' airing, at which William Frankel, the former editor of the Jewish Chronicle spoke. Frankel contended that the mass media has a far greater impact on Holocaust teaching than do academic studies. Citing the reaction to the show in Germany, he said, "we should not even frown on

add 2

The Christian Press

The Christian media provided a large range of responses to Holocaust, ranging from the highly supportive, to the concerned-but-questioning to the offended and angry

The Christian media ~~provided~~ ^{offered} a larger range of responses to the series than did the ~~secular~~ ^{dailies, many for} ~~press papers~~. This ranged from the supportive to the ^{seriously} antagonistic, ~~and also included responses similar to the concerned but~~ ^{There are} ~~the secular press' concern over quality.~~

~~in the same way as did many secular newspapers when it wrote that~~ The Methodist Recorder asked much the same question as did many secular newspapers when it wrote that while "anything turned into scripted drama cannot be accepted as factual," in this instance fiction underplayed the reality of the background," ^{and}

~~And the Christian World critic felt a sense of "unreality" at the confluence of "romanticized violence and sentimentalized family life,"~~ ^{which} ~~this, however, was shattered for the reviewer when actual shots of the emaciated bodies and herds of victims in the concentration camps were shown. At that point, he reviewer wrote, "suddenly the memory is jolted and we recall the revulsion and anger we once felt when the first pictures of the Nazi atrocities reached us, in the forties."~~

~~Still, that critic felt the show missed the righteous motivation behind the horrors. In the absence of any understanding of how the "passionate belief in the master race... drove them into the depths of Hell," the show could "offer no explanation of the atrocities," he felt.~~ ^{But, felt the critic,}

But the Roman Catholic Tablet "found that often I- couldn't watch at all, that I trembled so violently and my heart thudded so fast that I thought I might become a latter-day victim," and she "commended the series for... young people..."

add 2 page 2

But the non-secular response which caused the bi-gest stir was a feature article in the Church of England Newspaper by Colin Evans. In No To The Holocaust, Evans ~~wrote~~ suspected that the show "was made with strong Jewish backing in order to keep alive the white hot hate engendered by the events it records." Despite a disclaimer of even "the slightest anti-Jewish feeling," Evans continued: "We Christians share much with our brothers and sisters of Israel, but we are divided in one vital respect. Revenge and retribution figure prominently in their interpretation of life, whereas our ideal (though we fail in it again and again) is reconcilliation and peace without compromising justice." What Christians refuse to do, he wrote, "is to persist with the hate and the thirst for revenge."

The article roused a vigorous response, which included one letter to the Church of England Newspaper ~~which contended~~ whose author felt "appalled" over the "smug condemnation of Jewish desire for justice".. ~~Wazaxaxaxaxaxaxax~~

"We, as a 'Christian' (?) community have done nothing to deserve the right to speak to any Jew in such terms," the letter said, and it asked "is it now sheer insolence to ask the Jews to forget?" He worried that articles like Evans' are "just the thing to stir up ~~wh~~ that latent antisemitism characteristic of many people who like to call themselves 'Christians'", and that, he said, "is the justification for keeping the memory of the holocaust alive.^x Israel does not need that, but we do."

Another letter, ~~from~~ signed by Phillip Schofield (Rev), ~~argued~~ took issue with "my good friend Colin Evans," and argued that "there is not a Jewish/German problem, much less a Jewish/Gentile one; it is the old stor- of evil ~~from~~ which is not limited to ethnic or religious groups."

"I would respectfully sugest that it is unhelpful to write of Jews keeping

'the white hot hate engendered by the events it records' wsen unquestionably there are thousands of Jews whose primaru ~~wazz~~ concern is to ensure that the events of the 30s and 40s will not be repeated. With what justification does Colin assert that 'revenge and retribution figure prominently in their intrepertation of life.' ~~ƳazkabsizatezthezmemorykzofxthezHolozcausz, zhexzxxz wrotezxxzlixzazranzlxazrxzskx~~ The events, Schofield felt required to remind Evans, did happen/.



the creative writer's license to mix fact with fiction," despite the flaws this engenders, because of the impact which mass media presentations can have.

OVERVIEW

(*) A panel discussion, held two weeks after the series was shown, at the Woburn House in London, brought four experts together in consideration of the show. Historian Martin Gilbert; author-journalist Terrence Prittie; Jewish Agency representative Dr. S. Levenberg; and the Rev. Dr. Isaac Levy participated, and all four tended to recapitulate the criticism of the series that had already widely been made.

Gilbert attacked the portrayal of the Jews response to the camps as being sheep-like while the portrayal of the Nazis, he said, was of "very decent chaps."

one of the factory industries of the ~~Levy~~ Levy, who was at Belsen after its liberation by the Allies, complained that the ~~electronic media~~ *reproduce none of the* could ~~provide~~ no olfactory concomittments of the camps--"you cannot smell anything," he said-- adding that no show could really depict the "ultimate horror," and Levenberg noted that the film missed the horror imposed on many non-Jewish victims. Prittie, however, hoped that "maybe out of this film will come something extra--another look as Nazis and wartime Germany and also at the Germans who resisted."

Despite the ~~frequency with which the series was charged with commercialism and historical errors~~ *criticism*, there were no reports of significant opposition to the film's being showed, the need for such a show, or the truth which it was based upon. The Jerusalem Post's London correspondent, Hyam Corney, summed up England's reaction as aptly as did any observer when he wrote, "... one thing is clear--the series received so much publicity, both before and during its showing, that many more millions of Britons than before know something about what the Jews suffered at the hands of the Nazis. ~~And for this reason alone, the Jewish community on the whole is pleased that it was shown, despite its glaring faults.~~"

Judging by the general stir the series caused, Holocaust, despite the querellousness with which its production standards were met, certainly moved a great percentage of the British viewing audience to rethink the Nazi era and the holo.