Series E: General Alphabetical Files. 1960-1992
Box 86, Folder 16, NBC "Holocaust" - Italy, 1979.
Reports of the huge response to The Holocaust program showing in Germany and America stirred a great interest in the program in Italy. Even before its Italian showing, the program generated much commentary in Italian newspapers and journals. When the program was shown, it played to huge audiences, although not quite record-breaking ones, and it quickly became enmeshed in partisan politics. But, even though Mussolini had been Hitler's ally, the Italian response was not comparable to the German one—perhaps because of the absence of widespread anti-Semitism in that period and the general public disregard for Mussolini's racial laws.

This was how the Italian press interpreted the nation's less than passionate reaction to Holocaust.

Holocaust, which was shown on Channel One of national television, was broadcast over a five week period beginning on May 20th, 1978, played to 16.6 million Italian viewers on its first night, and this figure was followed by even larger ones—20.8 million, 19.3 million and 21 million and 21 million. In a nation of some 54 millions, this represented a huge proportion of the viewing aged audience.

Unlike Germany, where, the Italian press told its readers, the citizens were largely unaware of their own national past, the Italians had never been allowed to forget World War II. The political parties had kept the memory of the War and its attendant horrors alive as part of their strategy for combating contemporary neo-fascist parties. The political alignment in Italy—25% Communist and 50-60 percent anti-Fascist Socialist, Social Democrat and Christian Democrat—has seen to that. Thus, unlike Germany, the program failed to ignite a national furor that bordered upon catharsis.

Still, the first two installments of Holocaust have inspired big news-
big newspaper headlines and partisan comment from political candidates reported the New York Times, which added, "but seem to have been taken in stride by many Italians."

Spokespersons for the political parties each addressed the series in terms of their own priorities. Thus Marco Pannella, the leader of the Radical Party said that "I do not know when the film will get around to August 1939 when Nazis and Stalinists united to strike at Poland and to massacre Jews, anti-Fascists and opponents of the Third Reich." And Antonello Trombadori, a Communist Party official asked "At what point did Catholic discrimination against Judaism and the atheistic racism of the Nazis converge?" (The Communist Party is not friendly to the Church.)

Of course, the spokesman for the National Democracy, a neo-Fascist group, felt otherwise. Pietro Cerullo charged that the decision to show the series in the middle of an election campaign would benefit both the Christian Democrats and the Communists and that the scheduling represented "the worst kind of partisanship" by the state-run network.

But there were others who felt differently. Holocaust was shown on Sunday evenings in the middle of a heat spell, as well as in the middle of an election campaign. Some people in the industry feared that many potential viewers would miss the series because they would be coming home from the beach at the time it was on the air. They wondered whether RAI Television had tried to sabotage the showing by its timing.

The airing, though it generated none of the ASTONISHMENT it did in Germany, was met with "deep interest and much sympathy," reported the Jewish Chronicle of London. But no guilt. Critics provided two reasons for this. The first was that many Italians had lived through the experiences and found vicarious identification with Nazi-inflicted sufferings too painful. The second was stated by Il Messaggero, the Rome Daily: "During the four evenings dedicated to 'Holocaust'" (in Germany) "the streets of the cities were
The fact that our streets are deserted only on the occasion of a national soccer match it suggested, could be due because "Italian anti-semitism was confined to only a fanatic minority. The masses do not feel indirect guilt nor involvement in the horrors...."

As elsewhere some papers criticized the slowness to "Hollywood style," newspapers carried various stories on how the Italian government intervened, even under Fascism, to protest and save Jews, an ongoing debate about anti-semitism past and present, was a constant staple on the nation's news broadcasts.

An article in Il Giorno, for instance, described some of the cases where Italians ignored Mussolini's 1938 racial edicts, and cited several documents showing the ways in which this proved consternating for the fascist officials. One such document was an irate report from an SS commander in France about how "the Italian military authorities and police protect the Jews with every means at their disposal," sheltering 1000 Jewish refugees along the Ligurian coast "in the best hotels" with all necessities and no restrictions.

A telegram from then then young diplomat Roberto Pucci, now Italy's Ambassador to England, in which he noted that Italian citizenship would be granted to Jews born in the occupation zone, those living there, and those only having close relatives, or property, there. With this device, he was able to prevent deportations by the Nazis.

La Repubblica, another Rome daily, carried a large spread about a personal memoir by the son of the Italian Consul in Stuttgart in 1934, Italo A. Chiusano. He recalled his father's refusal to eat in restaurants that barred Jews and his reply to an SS official who told him about the Jewish "lack of creativity." To this, the article said, he replied that "Four men founded the modern world," and then cited "Four great Jews of German speaking origin"—Marx, Einstein, Freud and Kafka.

All this did re-sensitize the Italian people to the history of Nazi crimes. It also, suggested the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Rome correspondent, "perhaps
The showing of Holocaust was not without its critics. It was followed by a marked increase in neo-Nazi graffiti, including the one that read "Long Live Dorf!". The impact of the show was, to some extent, an age-related phenomenon. The New York Times, reacting with "like warm" response since many already read extensively about the Nazi period and the atrocities. But many schools held class discussions about the film, and teachers reported that interest was especially high among youngsters in their early teens, who had had little exposure to the events of the Nazi era.

Following the first installment of Holocaust on Channel One, Channel Two aired a documentary entitled "Palestinians of the Diaspora", included scenes of a refugee camp and the refugees spoke of "Zionist influence" on the American mass media, about their inability to visit relatives in Jerusalem, and about their suffering in the camps of Kuwait, Algeria, and Lebanon. It included scenes of a refugee camp and the occasional appearance of a Palestinian child. The announcement that preceded and followed each telecast, the Palestinian people were described as "The New Jews of History," she wrote.

The documentary consisted of interviews with Palestinians in the U.S., Damascus, and Amman. It laid the burden for Palestinian suffering at Israel's door. The "Zionist influence" on the American mass media, about their inability to visit relatives in Jerusalem, and about their suffering in the camps of Kuwait, Algeria, and Lebanon. It included scenes of a refugee camp and the occasional appearance of a Palestinian child. The announcement that preceded and followed each telecast, the Palestinian people were described as "The New Jews of History," she wrote.

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difficulties in obtaining American citizenship because of "FBI suspicions that we are terrorists. Interviewees accused Israel of napalming refugee camps and stressed their desire "to return to Palestine." One told the camera that "the holocaust of the Jewish people cannot be solved with another holocaust of the Palestinians."

This linkage was not confined to television. Il Messaggero published summaries of Holocaust's first segment and of the Palestinian documentary on its television page. It stated that the second show's theme "concerns another tragedy, that of the Palestinians who live in the hopes of being able to return one day to their land--by what coincidence--by the Jewish people themselves. Two parallel tragedies. Has nothing been learned by history?" it asked.

Channel One also broadcast two one-hour programs on the "Italian Holocaust," "as if to correct the stereotyped picture of the 'good Italian people' who rescued the Jews from the Nazi fury," reported the Jewish Chronicle.
Italy

1. J.T.A. - Rome 2.5.79. "Holocaust" series due in Italy. Being dubbed into Italian. Interest present now because of reactions generated in Germany. "Slick" Hollywood style. This quality however produced a "gut reaction" in Germany unlike previous documentaries. "Psychological reality moved the Germans. Italian newspapers - total lack of info on TV + in German school system. Political left enlightening Italian public on anti-Fascist + anti-Nazi stance of the left.

3. Special to N.Y. Times 6.3.79 - by Harry Tennis.

"Holocaust" inspired new headlines, partisan comments - but general public taking things in stride. Reaction varied - expectations? One question? "How did Catholic discrimination against Judaism and the atheist staunch of the Nazi era?" Also - the right accused TV in Italy of being "Holocaust" to influence votes away from neo-Fascist candidates. E. M. - national TV network. 18.5 million and for 1st night 1/3 of the population. Interest & discussion in classrooms.

5. J.T.A. - Rome 5.22.79 by Toni Calviere Biliac
"Holocaust" series on Italian TV. Followed by E. M. Palestinian series. "Holocaust" followed on air by
show entitled "Palestinians of the Diaspora" attempt to square persecution of Jews w/ people of the Palestinian Arabs. Palestinians described as "the new Jews of history" by S. Nasser - also compared Palestinian problem to the Holocaust - have in common the theme of tragedy.

J.T.A. - Gone 5/7/79 by Lora Salmen-Billig
"Behind the Headline: Italians Prepare for Holocaust Beg May 20/79, (Natalie TV, Channel 7) Italy probably most well-informed & most interested in its past. Reports on reaction to the country published as well as Italian behavior toward Jews during war. Al Lattanza - Jews founded the Modern world according to Chiusano. In Republica article - Marx, Einstein, Freud, & the

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