



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 1, NBC "Holocaust" - impact, 1980.



IMPACT OF "HOLOCAUST" ON GERMANY - - -  
"A MORAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EARTHQUAKE"

by: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Interreligious Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee and consultant to the NBC-TV series on "Holocaust".

Nothing - no book, no TV documentary, no film, no lecture - has touched the soul of modern Germany on the moral watershed tragedy of the Nazi Holocaust as has the NBC-TV series, "Holocaust." That dramatic but factual conclusion has emerged from a series of overseas telephone calls that I had with public officials in West Germany, and in particular, with leaders in the village of Oberammergau, last Thursday following the viewing of the third installment of "Holocaust."

According to reports from West Germany in major American newspapers, an estimated 13 million people, or 39 percent of the 34 million people in the viewing audience, watched the third of the four installments last Thursday night. This was up from 13 million viewers, or 36 percent last who watched the second installment, and 11 million, or 32 percent, who watched the first installment.

The viewing audience for each of the three installments was more than double the predicted 15 percent that was expected to watch the program over Westdeutsche Rundfunk (WDR) of Cologne, the regional station coordinating the telecasts. (The number of people watching the last installment was not available at the time of this report.)

The German officials I spoke with said that the figures reported in the American newspapers were underestimated, and that, in fact, some 20 million people had seen the second installment. That means that one in three potential regional viewers were exposed to the "Holocaust" account. "That audience broke every record for regional television in German," one official told me. "The program has created a moral and psychological earthquake of unprecedented proportions."

More than 20,000 people called the WDR television offices following the Tuesday night showing, and two-thirds of the callers were in favor of "Holocaust" being televised in Germany. Many of the viewers told the TV station authorities that they either could not go on watching it, and some said that they could not sleep and had to take valium or sleeping pills so powerful was the program's impact.

One authority told me, "The experience with the program already has been quite extraordinary. Nobody, even the most sympathetic in the TV industry, expected such an emotional reactions. It has staggered everybody."

The effect has even spread to East Germany where, according to reports, many living beyond the West German regional broadcasting range are demanding to see the series. Regional television broadcasts can be received in East Germany and in areas along the boundary, but most East German viewers are beyond their range. According to reports, among the East Germans who had seen the program and called to express their reactions, positive comments outnumbered negative comments 6-2.

I spoke with several people in the village of Oberammergau who are involved in an effort to revise the anti-Semitic version of the Oberammergau Passion Play scheduled for production in April 1980. Hans Schwaighofer, director of the Rosner text of the Passion Play, told me: "Practically everybody in Oberammergau has watched the first two installments of 'Holocaust.' The impact has been tremendous. There is a feeling of shock throughout much of Oberammergau. Many people are walking around the streets of the village saying, 'God's sake!' and shaking their heads in disbelief. How did we let that happen?"

The Oberammergau Town Council has sent around a questionnaire to all the villagers inviting them to sign up for the 1980 Passion Play. In light of the shocked feeling in the village in the wake of 'Holocaust' many are refusing to answer the questionnaire, and it is now being extended for another eight days.

Several hundred of the younger villagers, identified with Rosner text have indicated that they will refuse to act in the Daisenberger version of the Passion Play which has been condemned by Christian and Jewish authorities alike as "structurally anti-Semitic." Some Oberammergau officials told me that they now hope that the reaction to 'Holocaust' will play an important role in influencing the rejection of the anti-Jewish Daisenberger text of the play.

There were a good number of negative and hostile reactions of Germans who asked, "Why reopen old wounds? We should forget all this. It is enough time already."

Heinz Galinski, head of the Jewish community in West Berlin, said that "the reactions of the Jewish community throughout West Germany had been positive" adding that he had received many calls from Jews and non-Jews alike. There are about 27,000 Jews in West Germany today, a tragic remnant of the more than 500,000 Jews who lived in pre-war Germany.

Galinski said the "timing of the showing was perfect. It comes at a time when there is talk again of the Auschwitz lie," a reference to the Nazi effort to revise history and claim that the genocide of Jews never took place, "when some students are making jokes again about Jews, when the statute of limitations on Nazi war crimes of murder is an issue and at a time when everybody seems to be preaching 'let us forget.'"

Perhaps the most significant response of all to "Holocaust" was that of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. In a debate in the lower house of the West German Parliament last Monday, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt commended the "Holocaust" series, said that the film is a "must" in connection with the current controversy over extending the legal time limit under which Nazi war criminals can be prosecuted. He added that the series encourages critical and moral reflection which "is important in view of the decision each of must make for himself in the course of this year on the statute of limitations."

Based on the impact already registered, the American Jewish Committee now plans to carry out a systematic study of responses to the entire series in Germany as well as in the 15 other countries in which the film is being shown, and then an intensive follow-up educational program in German religious and secular school systems. I have no hesitation in saying that if this "Holocaust" series had achieved nothing other than the impact that it has already had in Germany, it more than justifies all the investment of time and energy in helping bring its message before millions of Germans who might otherwise have avoided facing the tragedy of the Holocaust.

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D R A F T

Dear

I have been engaged in a study of world-wide reaction to NBC's "Holocaust" under the direction of Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum through the auspices of the American Jewish Committee. After reading through well over 100 articles on foreign reactions and an equal number specifically relating to American reaction from all constituencies I have become sensitized to world-wide trends in criticism of "Holocaust".

A general theme in the articles, strongly expressed by those who reacted positively as well as those who reacted negatively was the commercialization of an historical event as deplorable as the Nazi holocaust. Those who were opposed to the film labelled this commercialization as typical Hollywood exploitation, the product of monetary motivation. Those who were in general supportive of the film expressed that the commercialization trivialized the events of the Nazi atrocities.

I do not expect that the commercial aspects of "Holocaust" can be eliminated; that is the nature of the television medium. What I do suggest is that the promotional devices be altered. I am not referring to sponsors, although there is much that could be improved regarding commercial presentations during the actual airing of "Holocaust" this September. It is the internal NBC promotional spots designed to attract viewers which require more consideration. A more thoughtful and more thorough approach could diminish opponents' views that NBC's motivation is completely financial, rather than educational and artistic. More importantly, it would lend a seriousness of purpose and integrity to the film not only for those who are in favor of NBC's "Holocaust", but to those who have little knowledge of the event and for whom this September's screening might be their first viewing of "Holocaust".

Since I do not know what promotional plans for "Holocaust" are as the September airing date nears, my recommendations and criticisms are limited to what has been shown on the network to date. I feel strongly that advertising "Holocaust" in the "Fall line-up" format detracts from the seriousness of its subject and mars "Holocaust's" propedeutic potential with the impression that it is entertainment, not unlike the other shows in the same promotional sequence.

I propose that "Holocaust" be promoted independently, much the same way it was in 1978. I am fully aware that the expense incurred for a more independent for advertising format for "Holocaust" would be greater, but I do believe the additional investment is preferable to creating the sensibility of "Holocaust" as entertainment. It seems to me, although I am not versed in marketing techniques, that there are more effective ways of creating a large viewing audience for "Holocaust". Since the film had such a large share of the viewing audience for its first American showing it would be logical to gear some of the promotion to the significance of a second viewing (or a thorough viewing). The television audience which has not seen "Holocaust" should not be attracted with a view toward entertainment, but rather with the knowledge that NBC's "Holocaust" has had tremendous impact on a world-wide scale and is a significant and serious attempt to describe history. I am certain it is possible to concretize these concepts.

However, my chief concern is that the use of the short promotional spots now being employed is dropped. I must reiterate that these ads (which I am sure are well-intentioned) are actually demeaning because they treat "Holocaust" as <sup>the world's</sup> any TV drama. This has detrimental effects for those who are knowledgeable and for those who are not. For the former, the present promotional spots are offensive in that they lend a ~~frivolous~~ <sup>carnival</sup> tone to this <sup>tragic</sup> event in history; and for the latter this

promotional schema tends to minimize the reality of the Nazi holocaust by closely identifying it with other programming which is more entertainment oriented.



# Board of Church and Society

## The United Methodist Church

January 12, 1981

TO: Friends and Colleagues of Dr. Herman Will

From: Hyacinth Gardner  
Administrative secretary to Herman Will

On December 31, 1980, Dr. Herman Will completed 37 years of service in relationship with the Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church and its predecessor bodies. These more than three decades began with service in Chicago, Illinois. Then he served as Associate General Secretary of the Board since 1960. He has also carried major leadership roles in the ecumenical community.

At a recent meeting of the Secretarial Council of the Board, the request was made that Herman's friends and colleagues be given the opportunity to contribute to a "Book of Letters". This will be presented to him during a staff retirement party to be held at the United Methodist Building in late February.

Letters should be written on 8½ x 11 inch letterhead or plain stationery of a similar size. They should be limited to one page, if possible, leaving a left hand margin of at least one and one quarter (1¼) inches.

All letters should be sent to me at the address below by February 15, 1981 at the latest. I know the time is short, but would appreciate your promptness in getting this together. It would be helpful if they were mailed flat.

I know it would mean a great deal to Herman to have letters from you, particularly as he moves into new spheres of ministry and service.

Letters should be mailed to:

Ms. Hyacinth Gardner  
Board of Church and Society  
100 Maryland Avenue, N. E.  
Washington, D. C. 20002

August 17, 1979

Dear Editor:

Welcome to New Orleans!

For many of you, it's a return trip to this gracious city which has been the site of two previous successful NBC Press Tours. We trust this visit will be equally productive and enjoyable.

This weekend will include 16 personality interviews and two luncheon press conferences. Featured at the Saturday lunch will be a marvelous lady, Barbara Cartland, author of more than 200 romantic novels and a delightful, outspoken person. With her will be Ed Friendly, producer of the NBC World Premiere movie, "The Flame Is Love," based on one of her books.

The Sunday luncheon is concerned with the repeat telecast of the internationally acclaimed HOLOCAUST and present to discuss the world-wide reaction to this distinguished program will be actress Tovah Feldshuh, producer Robert Berger, and Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, the noted Jewish religious leader who served as consultant to NBC-TV in the presentation of the program.

This kit contains a photo and biography of each personality and a description of the individual's show. The photos are arranged alphabetically on the left. On the right are the program descriptions -- also arranged alphabetically -- with bios of the interview subjects grouped behind their program stories. The only exceptions are the bios of two sports reporters at the bottom of the kit.

August 17, 1979  
Page Two

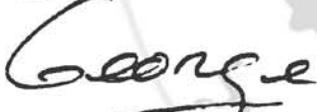
Directly behind this letter is a comprehensive schedule of events for Saturday and Sunday including the rotation interviews and rotation room assignments.

We have also arranged for the screening of two World Premiere movies Friday late afternoon and evening: "The Flame Is Love" and "Mirror, Mirror" with Janet Leigh. Please see Ernie Otto or check the bulletin board in the Hospitality Suite. Incidentally, there will be two telecopiers in the Suite.

The NBC Press Department staff members who will be here and can be contacted for assistance include: (East Coast) George Hoover, Curt Block, Owen Comora, Ethel Kirsner, Stan Appenzeller, Simone Harris, Rosemary Luzzi, Ernie Otto and (West Coast) Gene Walsh, Kathy Gilpin and Bill Stein.

Here's to an outstanding weekend.

Best



George F. Hoover  
Vice President,  
Press & Publicity



Gene Walsh  
Vice President,  
Public Information  
West Coast

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

The following is the agenda for the New Orleans Press Tour.

### FRIDAY, AUGUST 17

- 2:00 p.m. Hospitality Suite opens. Room 2138.
- 5:00 p.m. Program screenings begin. (See Ernie Otto or check the bulletin board.)
- 6:00 p.m. Buffet dinner in Hospitality Suite. (Dinner available until 8:30 p.m.)
- 12:00 Mid. Hospitality Suite closes.

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 18

- 9:00 a.m. Buffet breakfast in Mystik Den/Patio.
- 10:00 a.m. Rotation interviews begin.
- 12:00 Noon Lunch in Evangeline Room. Interview with Barbara Cartland and Ed Friendly, "The Flame Is Love."
- 2:30 p.m. Rotation interviews resume.
- 4:30 p.m. Hospitality Suite opens.
- 7:00 p.m. Cocktails and dinner at Brennan's Restaurant.
- 10:00 p.m. Hospitality Suite re-opens.
- 12:00 Mid. Hospitality Suite closes.

### SUNDAY, AUGUST 19

- 8:30 a.m. Buffet breakfast in Mystik Den/Patio.
- 9:30 a.m. Rotation interviews begin.
- 11:30 a.m. Lunch in Evangeline Room. Interview with Tovah Feldshuh, Robert Berger and Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum, "Holocaust."
- 1:00 p.m. Rotation interviews resume.
- 3:00 p.m. Press Tour concludes.
- 4:00 p.m. Hospitality Suite opens.
- 10:00 p.m. Hospitality Suite closes.

INTERVIEWS, SATURDAY, AUGUST 18

Press Room I

Press Room II

Press Room III

10:00	Bert Parks Mary Ann Mobley Albert Marks "Miss America"	Dr. Tom Cottle "Hot Hero Sandwich"	Beverlee McKinsey "Another World"
10:30	Gary Collins "Kid From Left Field"	Bert Parks Mary Ann Mobley Albert Marks "Miss America"	Dr. Tom Cottle "Hot Hero Sandwich"
11:00	Beverlee McKinsey "Another World"	Gary Collins "The Kid From Left Field"	Bert Parks Mary Ann Mobley Albert Marks "Miss America"
11:30	Dr. Tom Cottle "Hot Hero Sandwich"	Beverlee McKinsey "Another World"	Gary Collins "The Kid From Left Field"

12:00 Lunch: Evangeline Room, Lobby Level, Press conference with Barbara Cartland and Ed Friendly, "The Flame Is Love."

Press Room I

Press Room II

Press Room III

2:30	Bryant Gumbel John Naber Sports/Olympics	Betty Rollin "Women Life Us"	Sharon Gless "The Last Convertible"
3:00	Nigel Ryan White Paper	Bryant Gumbel John Naber Sports/Olympics	Betty Rollin "Women Like Us"
3:30	Sharon Gless "The Last Convertible"	Nigel Ryan White Paper	Bryant Gumbel John Naber Sports/Olympics
4:00	Betty Rollin "Women Like Us"	Sharon Gless "The Last Convertible"	Nigel Ryan White Paper

INTERVIEWS, SUNDAY, AUGUST 19

Press Room I

Press Room II

Press Room III

9:30	Kate Mulgrew "Kate Columbo"	Don Johnson "From Here To Eternity"	Barbara O "Freedom Road"
10:00	John Barbour "Real People"	Kate Mulgrew "Kate Columbo"	Don Johnson "From Here To Eternity"
10:30	Barbara O "Freedom Road"	John Barbour "Real People"	Kate Mulgrew "Kate Columbo"
11:00	Don Johnson "From Here To Eternity"	Barbara O "Freedom Road"	John Barbour "Real People"

11:30 Lunch: Evangeline Room. Press conference with Tovah Feldshuh, Robert Berger and Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum, "Holocaust."

Press Room I

Press Room II

Press Room III

1:00	John Femia "Hello Larry"	LeVar Burton "US Against the World"	Janet Leigh "Mirror, Mirror"
1:30	Tovah Feldshuh "Beggarmen, Thief"	John Femia "Hello Larry"	LeVar Burton "US Against the World"
2:00	Janet Leigh "Mirror, Mirror"	Tovah Feldshuh "Beggarmen, Thief"	John Femia "Hello Larry"
2:30	LeVar Burton "US Against the World"	Janet Leigh "Mirror, Mirror"	Tovah Feldshuh "Beggarmen, Thief"