



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 9, NBC "Holocaust" - Canada, 1978.



CANADA

Holocaust was shown in Toronto by CHCH TV, an independent station, and many more Canadians saw the show on broadcasts picked up from American NBC affiliates. The series received substantial shares of the television-watching populace during its four night run ~~in April 1978~~ <sup>beginning on April 16, 1978.</sup> It averaged 53.5% of that audience, going from 46% on the first night to 53%, then 55% and, <sup>then climbed</sup> finally, to 60%.

In Toronto, at least, it was also possible to pick up the show on two other channels, 2 and 8.

There were some right-wing efforts mounted against the show, but they did not amount to very much: a Toronto group demanded that tapes of the program be seized and destroyed, and one dozen picketers marched in front of the

CHCH TV studio in Toronto. *And there were other indications of a Berne-Canadian response to the show that was less than joyful.*  
But the show did have larger problems of distribution in Canada. Neither of the two Canadian ~~TV~~ networks aired the series, <sup>and</sup> it was not shown <sup>at all</sup> in the Vancouver area. Still, a television poll released by A.C. Nielson Co. of Canada, indicated that some 2.5 million Canadians did see the series.

*In the one city in which a local station showed it, the*  
~~The program received a mixed critical reception in Canada, as it did in many other nations, and this lukewarm critical reception extended to the Canadian Jewish press as well as the secular press.~~  
*local Jewish paper took a curious stand on the show.*

The Toronto Globe and Mail ran several articles on the series. The day before the first installment was broadcast, <sup>commentator</sup> Blaik Kirby <sup>a</sup> wrote that it was made by "Jews with excellent TV qualifications," <sup>but that Holocaust was</sup> which ~~the reviewer still felt~~ <sup>was</sup> "weak drama."

On April 19th, the ~~same~~ newspaper ran a smaller story entitled "Holocaust is a Lesson," by the same author. Kirby still thought it was poor drama, but admitted that it "is having a major effect." <sup>however,</sup> ~~But~~ The effect he perceived <sup>was</sup> that it was "raising old angers, enmities, and quite likely fears. Some

Germans are complaining that it is close to hate literature." He worried "about the possibility... that the film's makers might be yielding to the temptation to cater to Jewish feelings," and asked, "does it inspire a new hatred for today's Germans, Poles and Ukrainians? I hope not... Even if Holocaust does inspire hatred--for some people, little excuse is needed--would that justify suppressing it? No, As unpleasant as it is, it appears to be a factually true though fictionally treated story of what happened."

The author does finally <sup>wind up endorsing the show</sup> ~~clear up the essay~~ by recognizing that there are "millions... who may never learn about it any other way." (Despite his closing warning--the classic quote, "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance," Kirby was the only <sup>regular</sup> reviewer in a major newspaper <sup>That this study found</sup> who veered close to calling for the suppression of the series (through his device of defending the show against such a proposition).

~~the~~ The Globe and Mail did not, however, restrict its critical voice on the topic to one reviewer. Three days after the series ended, it provided space for an article by W. Gunther Plaut, a Senior Scholar at Holy Blossom Temple, who saw far more virtue in the series. "Holocaust;" the article was titled, "it had to be told!" In an implicit reaction to Kirby, he wrote, "There are fundamentally different kinds of viewers and reviewers: those who were there and those who were not. And then, there are Jews and non-Jews. I am a Jew, and I was there, at least for part of it."

"My own reaction was mixed," he told his readers. "The series was in many ways successful. Though on the whole poor drama, it was starkly real in a trivializing medium."

"Artistically, it left much to be desired." But "Historically," he felt, it was "largely accurate," and therefore was "an important antidote to recent attempts to rewrite history and declare the murder of millions a Zionist fabrication."

~~Equally ambivalent~~ Not quite as ambivalent in its praise of the series

