

Learn lesson of 'Skokie'

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By ITZHAK HOFFMAN

THE STRUGGLE of the Jewish community and others in Skokie against the threat of the Nazi march in 1977 has put Skokie on the map of awareness throughout the United States. Now it has been immortalized on film. We, even those among us who are supposed to be more alert than the rest, innocently thought that Jewish hatred in its epidemic form was a phenomenon of the past. We believed that with the Holocaust, anti-Semitism had reached its last murderous peak and later passed away. So terrible and gruesome was that last atrocity, so remote from any logic and human conception, that it would have been difficult to believe it had survived in the modern world.

In the 30 years that have passed since the fires were put out in the Auschwitz incinerators, we have raised a whole generation to whom anti-Semitism was only a phenomenon of history. Everywhere around the world the doors opened up for the Jews. Everywhere, anti-Jewish hostility went into hiding.

THE WARNING signs of recent years, anti-Zionism, anti-Semitism, increase of the KKK and Nazi activities must force us to raise our antennas again for fine tuning. We have to awaken our senses and interpret the symp-

toms correctly. They can no longer be ignored.

What the Skokie situation symbolized had been cast aside shortly after the events themselves took place. It passed like a bad dream which nobody wants to recall. If the movie "Skokie" did nothing else, it at least brought into focus, throughout many communities around the country, some serious issues that merit our further examination. The unsatisfactory or unfair treatment of some of the major characters in the movie version notwithstanding, this picture still speaks better than thousands of words.

JANET, THE teen-age daughter of the fictional Feldman family in the movie, "Skokie," was portrayed as a student at Niles East High School. Her struggle to come to terms with her own identity suffers as a result of not understanding and not knowing really what the Holocaust was all about.

While Holocaust study exists in the Niles Township High Schools (on a very limited ineffectual basis), and is offered as a course at the High School of Jewish Studies at the Mayer Kaplan JCC, one might have expected a concentrated effort to teach the youngsters of the community about the Holocaust and its related issues. As many Skokie residents have already discovered, being from Skokie makes one a focus of attention, curiosity and questions around the country. (I was asked about it in Israel!)

BETTER EDUCATION about the

Holocaust will enhance understanding and prevent identity and community crises which are brought about by a lack of ability to feel and understand the issues. That is one way of saying "Never Again!" but there are other ways. While Yom Hashoah (The day of Memorial of the Holocaust), does take place to a greater or lesser extent in synagogues, organizations and some churches in the community, it is more or less a private individual effort. An attempt last year to have a village-wide commemoration suffered from poor attendance.

There are ways to make the statement that Skokie may want to make. Skokie high schools should offer in their curriculum a comprehensive course in the study of the Holocaust. An elective course as part of the social studies program can be a step in the right direction. What has been done until now is simply not enough. Many public schools around the country have been teaching the Holocaust; why of all places not in Skokie?! Skokie can organize an international conference of the lessons of the Holocaust. It can sponsor seminars and workshops on the Holocaust's history, causes, effects and implications.

What lies beyond the movie is not docu-drama or fiction. It is a reality that has to be faced by actions which express the values, beliefs and quality of life in the community. Let's hope that another movie, "Skokie II," will not have to be made.