

Earl Raab

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THE NAZI RALLY AND "HOLOCAUST"

There were exactly eight Nazis at their "rally" at City Hall last Saturday. Aside from them and the Trotzkyites, there were about ten people in attendance, mostly Jews.

It had been arranged for a number of anti-Nazi messages to be broadcast to millions of people on Friday and Saturday on three different TV stations -- and for Holocaust stories in the daily press. If the local Nazis were going to get any news treatment for their rally, it was going to be massively outweighed. And it was.

The Nazis were deeply disappointed. They were disappointed that no lawyers had tried to stop them from meeting at City Hall. The Nazis could have parlayed those court cases into months of media attention. And they would have come out victorious. They were disappointed that there was no more active fuss at their rally, because that is why they held it. As it was, they were blitzed on the media. In these circumstances, they are losing membership. At the moment, even their "phone message" is disconnected because of lack of funds.

But, beginning the next night, the Holocaust series reminded us that we cannot be either complacent or inactive about what tragedy history might bring us. We just have to be alert to the different forms in which that tragedy can come. History does not repeat itself exactly; only in principle.

For example: At the same time that the Nazis were holding their "rally," another group was having a ceremony across the square, on the steps of the library.

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The ceremony marked the presentation to the library of a series of Holocaust pictures, by the Mayor's Committee for Continuing Education Against Nazism. A significant cross-section of the non-Jewish community was represented. Gerry Sherry, editor of the Catholic Monitor, the Archdiocesan newspaper, presided. Verna Canson, Regional Director of the NAACP spoke. The Mayor's Committee against Nazism comprises the leaders of the Protestant, Catholic, labor, black, Asian, Latino communities of San Francisco, along with almost every public official of note. Pre-Nazi Germany did not have such a unanimous array of influentials standing with the Jews against Nazism. And in other ways as well, Germany of 1928 was quite different than America of 1978.

This does not mean that it can't happen here. It only means that if it happens here, it will happen in a different way, and in a different costume than it did in Germany. And if it happens, it will happen in the Middle East and in the Soviet Union before it happens here.

Right now those who are serious about preventing Holocaust should look to the fact that the Jews in Israel are today the most vulnerable to physical danger. And there is a current serious threat to their security: the proposed sale of F15s to Saudia Arabia. That is a substantial military threat, but it is more than that. There is an effort to make this proposed sale a political test of American Jews.

If we fail that test, one of Israel's flanks will have been laid bare. If we fail that test because of indifference, we will be guilty of the same kind of indifference we saw in pre-Nazi Germany. You will be hearing more of this

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issue from your synagogues and organizations. But, to begin with, it is up to every one to write his or her Congressman and the California Senators, as well as the President, to protest the sale. Ten thousand letters from the San Francisco area would mean that we care -- and that would have an effect. If you need more information, call your synagogue or organization, or the JCRC.

After all, the "Holocaust" series was finally not so much about Nazism as it was about Israel. That is, the series started with 1935, when the game was already lost. It did not explain the origins of Nazism; but it did explain the origins and the necessity of modern Israel. In that sense, in the defense of Israel, we still have occasion to fight Hitler and his prophecy.