

WEEK OF REMEMBRANCE

Is it really significant that the city of San Francisco has officially proclaimed next week a "Week of Remembrance" -- to remember the victims of Nazism, to remember the nature of Nazism, to remember what we have to do to keep it from happening again?

A week's activity is obviously not going to do the trick. However, it may express at least two ways in which the U.S. of the 1980s is different from the Germany of the 1920s.

To begin with, the Jewish state of mind is different. If nothing else, the survivors of Nazism among us would not allow it to be otherwise. They lead the way, with the support of the organized Jewish community. Among other things, it was the Jewish Community Relations Council Committee of Remembrance, the majority of whose members are survivors, which planned the opening, sacred event of the week: the Yom HaShoa observance at Temple EmanuEl on Sunday, April 13th, at 7:30 p.m. Most of the participants will be survivors -- but it is a community event, supported by the whole community. No Jew should be absent.

The Jews in general and the survivors in particular know that it is first *their* trust to remember, and to act on that remembrance. But they also know that it is finally not enough for *them* to remember and to act on that remembrance. The Holocaust must be part of *human* memory; and anti-Nazism must be a value built into the human agenda, not just the Jewish agenda. A second significance of the "Week of Remembrance" is that it proclaims anti-Nazism as an *official value* of our society, and of our public officials. That is a marked difference from the Germany of the 1920s.

It is not just a matter of proclamations. When a synagogue was attacked in the Sunset district, and the JCRC took the immediate position that it was a serious symptom of anti-semitism, the official establishment responded. The Mayor took every action suggested to her, some of them unprecedented. Overcoming its severe manpower problems, the Police Department changed procedures and provided resources, including Inspector Tom Dickson, one of the most dedicated anti-Nazi law enforcement officers in the country.

But the public expression of official values is important too. The Mayor's Committee Against Nazism will hold a rally against the Nazis -- and the larger group which spews hatred against Jews and others, the KKK -- at noon on April 19th at the Bethel A.M.E. Church, 916 Laguna Street. The Mayor and representatives of all religious and civic segments of the society will be there to expose and oppose Nazism.

It "so happens" that the local Nazis plan to hold a rally at exactly the same time. They will not have the support of a dog-catcher, but the courts, while expressing contempt for the Nazis, have upheld their right to hold such rallies. Indeed, some say that those court decisions are themselves one index of the difference between the Germany of the 1920s and the U.S. of the 1980s, the strength of our constitutional liberties being a bulwark against Nazism.

However, it does seem to violate common sense that a dozen people in Nazi uniform can create such a ruckus, costing the taxpayers thousands of dollars, as in Walnut Creek a few months back. If American Nazism comes, it will not come in a German uniform, but nevertheless, those uniforms are uncommonly offensive. They trigger justifiable and often uncontrollable anger. Somehow the law should be able to come closer to common sense on this one. Unfortunately, the public appearance of this hated uniform also draws the opportunistic presence of some left-wing groups which are often themselves anti-Jewish and anti-Israel. *They* attack the Nazis in order to get media publicity.

But, for every *minute* of media attention the Nazis may get on that account, anti-Nazi messages will get *hours* of media attention. It is another significance of the proclaimed Week to come that every major radio and TV station will be running anti-Nazi programs, as will the public schools.

Earl Raab

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The media attack on Nazism during the week will be bracketed by two important symbolic events: the Yom HaShoa observance on the night of the 13th at Temple EmanuEl; and the Mayor's Committee anti-Nazi event at noon on April 19th at Bethel A.M.E. Church. Support for both will be significant.