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By Richard Trank

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TOP STORY



Jonathan Glazer, 'The Zone of Interest' Kevin Winter/Getty Images; Everett

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Twenty-six years ago, I had the great fortune to stand on the stage of the Shrine Auditorium and accept the Oscar for best feature documentary during the 70th Academy Awards. It was for the *The Long Way Home*, a very personal story as it recounted what many of my relatives and hundreds of thousands of Jews endured after the Holocaust, forced to live in Displaced Persons camps while the British government kept them from emigrating to what was soon to become the state of Israel. Others who were trying to make their way to the United States and other places were stymied by strict immigration laws that kept them in the DP camps, many located in the same Nazi death camps where they had supposedly been "liberated" at World War II's end. They were the fortunate ones. More than 50 members of my family, including my grandparents and my youngest uncle, perished at the hands of the Nazis.

Eventually, my family and others made new lives for themselves after Israel was declared a state in 1948. They raised children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Then, 75 years later, the worst attack on the Jewish people since the Shoah was committed when Hamas terrorists breached the southern border of the country, murdered more than 1,200 people, sexually assaulted women and children, and kidnapped more than 240. Toward the end of October, the Israeli army attacked Hamas in Gaza, determined to wipe it out forever so that an atrocity like this will never happen again. In the subsequent months, we have watched pro-Hamas and anti-Israel forces unleash a campaign of worldwide antisemitism the likes of which has not been seen since the Nazi era. Synagogues, schools, Holocaust museums, as well as other Jewish institutions and businesses, have been attacked and vandalized. In the United States, Jewish university students have been physically and verbally harassed. Many have taken to hiding their identity as Jews. Even the 96th Academy Awards, held at the Dolby Theatre on March 10, were not immune. Thousands of anti-Israel demonstrators flooded the streets surrounding the venue and the entrance was blocked, causing the start of the awards broadcast to be delayed. But the most upsetting moment at this year's Oscars came later.

One of the more celebrated releases of the year, *The Zone of Interest*, based on the novel by the late British novelist Martin Amis, had been nominated for multiple Oscars including best adapted screenplay, best

director, best international film and best picture. When it won the award for international film, its director, Jonathan Glazer took the stage and gave a speech that to many ears, including mine, equated Israel with the Nazi death machine his film was about. "Our film shows where dehumanization leads, at its worst," he said, flanked by his co-producers. "It shaped all of our past and present. Right now, we stand here as men who refute their Jewishness and the Holocaust being hijacked by an occupation which has led to conflict for so many innocent people."

Many in the audience applauded loudly. Others sat on their hands stone-faced. It became one of the most talked-about moments of the evening and all I could think about was my family and friends living in Israel whose lives have been turned upside down since Oct. 7.

There is no one I know in Israel who is rejoicing about the war that the Jewish State has been forced to fight because of the Hamas attack. I have not heard one person in my large family or friend circle express happiness about how in the Israel Defense Force's efforts to eradicate Hamas, 30,000 innocent people have reportedly been killed and many more injured. But I was forced to hear Hamas supporters chanting "From the river to the sea" when I found myself stuck in a New York city traffic jam in December caused by one of their protests — a chant calling for the genocide of my family and friends and all Israeli Jews.

Upon hearing Glazer's words, I thought about the assistant camera operator who has worked on three of my films, and whose 79-year-old father was kidnapped. This man had been spending his retirement years volunteering to drive Gazans needing medical care into Israel, care which Hamas could not provide for them despite billions in aid that has been sent to the area since the terrorist organization took control of it in 2006. I thought about the young people I have met in the last few weeks who survived the massacre at the Nova music festival. And then I reflected on this incredibly arrogant man who equated Israeli Jews to Nazis, and then left the Dolby Theatre with his statue when the awards show ended to party the night away.

Now that the afterparties are over, I have a few questions for the celebrated filmmaker: Can you explain the dramatic antisemitism around the world since Hamas invaded Israel on Oct. 7, an act its leaders have promised to do again and again and again? Can you help me understand how on International Women's Day, women's groups largely ignored how Jewish women were sexually abused by Hamas? Can you give me an idea, as a British citizen, why British Jews, in recent polls, have said that if they

could, they'd leave the U.K. because of the onslaught of Jew hatred they have been facing since Oct. 7? How have the streets of Central London become "a no-go zone for Jews every weekend" because of massive anti-Israel demonstrations held by pro-Palestinian protesters?

Eighty years ago, at the 16th Academy Awards, no Oscar winner accepted his or her statue with a speech equating what the Allies were doing to win World War II with the Nazis. No attendees wore swastika pins in sympathy with Hitler's Reich. However, during last night's broadcast, there were those in their tuxedos and designer gowns wearing red pins in support of a Cease Fire Now and Palestinian flags on their lapels. At least there were also those in the audience who wore yellow pins, remembering the remaining hostages, including my assistant camera operator's 79-year-old father.

Jonathan Glazer made a powerful film based on an incredibly powerful book. Sadly, his arrogant performance accepting his Oscar has diminished that achievement for people like me as well as my family and friends. He can return to England to what I assume is a very comfortable home while many of his fellow British Jews continue trying to figure out a way to leave the U.K. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis are homeless in the south and now in the north, under attack by Hamas' ally Hezbollah, backed by Iran. It's unclear whether these facts trouble Jonathan Glazer as he calls for people to "resist" and equates Israel with Nazi Germany. One thing I do know is that many Jews around the world were outraged and disgusted by what the Oscar winner had to say at this year's Academy Awards. And joining that group, I would say that if we are going to resist or refute anything, it's statements like the one issued by Jonathan Glazer.

Richard Trank is an Academy Award-winning documentary filmmaker who has written and directed 14 feature and short subject documentaries. He is the principal writer/director of Moriah Films, the Simon Wiesenthal Center's film division.



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1399 South Roxbury Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90035
310.553.9036