



Walking with the Enemy (2013)

A World War II drama that arouses family memories about the Holocaust in Sziget and Kolozsvár.

By Robert Herschkovits

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1515208/?ref=tttext_exst_tt

<http://www.walkingwiththeenemy.com/>

A World War II drama, the movie seems to be directed and produced in Romania, but it is about the Jews in Hungary, particularly Budapest before, during and after the war.

Normally I would say enough with these tear-jerkers, this one being pretty poorly acted and full of clichés: death trains, death marches, labor camps, death camps, loading cattle cars, crematoriums, ghetto, round-ups, Auschwitz, yellow stars, hiding in churches and giving up Jewish children to nuns. We have had our share of these thru the years and those who didn't get it till now, most probably will not get it at this point.

But throughout the movie as one scene unfolds after the other I started to see bits and pieces of my father's stories and the rest of the family's horrible trip thru that dark time in our history. Suddenly the movie was life, death, and everything in between, and stories that were just about to fade away from my memory came back with forceful vengeance, loud and clear.

My father was not one to detail what he went thru, never said much and except one long weekend I spent with him and my son Ohad in Eilat, I have been pretty "shielded" like most of my generation. This occasion was after my mother's passing and I guess he felt that it's time. Maybe it was time, before it was too late.

The film portrays Jews being proud "equal citizens" in pre-war Hungary (after all they won Nobel prizes, Olympic medals for their homeland, and served with courage in the Austro-Hungarian Army during World War I, as did my grandfather, my father's father, who came back damaged enough from that war to become abusive as I found out later...)

The ruthless Hungarian Gendarmes and the fascist Arrow Cross-Nyilasok started hunting down Jews before, during and after the Germans' arrival.

My father's younger sister Eva, the only surviving sibling at this time, after being removed from her house in Sziget, turned around to see the neighbors storming and emptying the house... She told me how she was deported, how she survived (that by itself is beyond human comprehension) life in camps, about liberation, repeated attempts to return home and find out about the rest of the family....

She told me about her aunt who was married to a bar/hotel/restaurant/whorehouse owner across the train station in Sziget, who was always happily and dutifully entertaining the Hungarian gendarmes showering them with champagne and whores, only to be the first one to be picked up by them, and sent away..... loyal customers/friends.....

My father told me about being taken to labor camp with Hungarian soldiers and officers in charge, where they dug and blasted the rocky mountain to create and build anti-tank obstacles for the German army in case of Russian invasion. The Russian invasion eventually came but down in the valley, not on top of the Carpathians....

How after liberation he came back to Sziget and in the neighbor's house in a glass cabinet saw the robbed porcelain and silverware with his mother's monogram (my Grandmother), pieces that were robbed from their house, just next door.

How going to Kolozsvár to see what happened to his older sister Hajnal's house found it to be occupied by the postman who was entrusted to look after the property and now threw my father out: this was his house now.... And to find out that his sister Hajnal and her son, Robert (my namesake) perished at Auschwitz...

And to find out that this sister's husband who was taken to a labor camp was shot on sight by the advancing Russian army who didn't have time to find out why exactly are there Jews, prisoners, dressed in Hungarian uniform, so they were killed....

And the movie just goes on and on and on.....All these and endless many many more scenes are seen throughout the movie and managed to deeply move me and rekindle the eternal question: no, not why, that question cannot be

reasonably answered. But rather : did my father and his generation have the right to protect, shield, and hide from me and my generation all the horror?

I certainly wish I knew more, heard more and earlier in my life.

Is visiting a Holocaust museum, reading a book on the subject, watching a movie or a documentary about it here and there really enough?

So as to prevent this from happening again? I don't know that answer. I have no right to demand or ask why did our parents shield us, I have not been there, I have no right to judge....but I now know clearly one thing: "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it" said Winston Churchill. Boy, was he wrong. So wrong.

Given a chance all will repeat the same anywhere and anytime, and seeing the latest news from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, The Ukraine, and endless other corners of the world, the savagery is only getting more brutal.

And Jews in particular who watch the latest demonstrations of the Neo Anti-Semitism in Europe or other places (sometimes disguised as anti-Israelism), need to worry more than the others.

Just go see the movie... (and let me know what you think)