

'Pogrom(s)' stands out in a flurry of Oct. 7 documentaries

By Phyllis Chesler

Oct. 7 is still happening, it's not even over yet, and already we are inundated by films, plays, songs, artwork, pop-up museums, gatherings and memorial-service concerts. Thus far, at least nine documentaries about Oct. 7 have been, or are about to be, released.



Tech entrepreneur and author Sheryl Sandberg released a quietly haunting interview-based documentary *Screams Before Silence* in late April. It is available on YouTube. Yariv Mozer's *We Will Dance Again: Surviving October 7th* was released on Sept. 26 and posted on BBC Two and iPlayer. Dani Rosenberg's *Of Dogs and Men*, premiered at the Venice Film

Festival earlier this year and will be distributed by Rai Cinema. (I have not seen either Mozer's or Rosenberg's films).

Finally, Pierre Rehov's *Pogrom(s): Could America Be Next?* will appear on Oct. 7, on major platforms such as Apple TV, Google Plus, Amazon Prime and Tubi TV.

Rehov's *Pogrom(s)*, is something of a masterpiece. The footage is extraordinary, as is the music and cinematography. The interviews are poignant, such as the one with Yossi Landau of Zaka, with expert insights from people like Mordechai Kedar (an expert on Islamist groups), Nitsana Darshan Leitner (president of Sherut HaDin), Michael Milstein (head of the Palestinian Studies Forum at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University) and others.

Rehov also includes an on-camera interview with Yuval Bitton, the former head of intelligence for the Israeli Prison Service. Bitton got to know Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar very well when he was incarcerated and helped save Sinwar's life. To our credit but also our detriment, this is what Jews do. We save lives.

Rehov's footage confirms how well Palestinian terrorists, even those with blood on their hands, are treated in Israeli jails. They are well-fed, decently housed, allowed to join each other for prayer five times a day, allowed to have visitors and mail, and are given medical and dental care. This footage makes me a little crazy as I think about how Hamas treats its prisoners, aka our precious hostages.

Pogrom(s) captures the historical hatred and violence against Jews by pagans, Christians and Muslims, which places Oct. 7 in "context." He reminds us that Muslims were the first to order Jews to wear a yellow patch, and many centuries later, the Nazis followed suit. In the film's vast sweep of history, Rehov also includes the Turkish Muslim genocide of the

Armenians (something that the Turks still refuse to acknowledge); the collaboration of Arabs with Nazis during the Shoah; and the well-funded disinformation campaign about this very history in secular Western universities and in mosques, churches and even in certain synagogues and Jewish organizations for Palestine.

Rehov's family had lived in Algeria for 500 years. Still, he heard about, witnessed and endured Muslim terrorist attacks, *farhuds* against native Algerians, French-born Algerians and Algerian Jews. He lost many relatives in one such Muslim pogrom and, in 1961, together with 250,000 other Jews, Rehov was exiled from his birthplace. He fled to France, where he was met with anti-Algerian and anti-Jewish hatred and was cursed as a "dirty Jew." Rehov eventually left France, came to the United States and then moved to Israel.

Rehov speaks French, Arabic, English and Hebrew, and thus, over the years, was able to go undercover into Gaza, as well as in Judea and Samaria. He acquired footage of Hamas training camps. As a *Mizrachi* (Arab) Jew, he understood early on that the fight for Palestine was really a fight to rid the Holy Land of Jews, to make it as *judenrein* as are almost all the other Muslim and Arab countries.

Rehov has been making films for a long time. Over the years, I've both interviewed him and reviewed some of his other films. Years back, HBO aired *Death in Gaza*, a propaganda film about the allegedly purposeful murder of British cameraman James Miller by the Israel Defense Forces in Gaza. I implored the head of HBO's documentary films division—with whom I had recently become acquainted—to balance the programming by showing one of Rehov's films. The cable network refused to do so. Thinking of what Hillel Cook, aka Peter Bergson, and Ben Hecht were able to do to oppose anti-Jewish propaganda in America during the Shoah, I once posted two of Rehov's films at my own website where it was viewed by 30,000 people within five weeks.

Although Rehov does not withhold crucial details of Oct. 7, he somehow manages to spare us the full horror of Hamas's own footage. We learn that first responders found "pieces of a girl, teeth in one place, scalp in another, entire families burned to a crisp, beheaded corpses with heads somewhere else, dead women tied to trees with barbed wire, and entirely naked, completely shattered pelvises. He talks about the more than 6,000 Gazans who happily looted homes and helped themselves to the food of their neighbors' who were being tortured and murdered in the next room.

"Sinwar is not mentally ill," Bitton tells viewers. "He knew exactly what he was doing."

I hope this film is required viewing at every college; at the United Nations and other world bodies; at Middle East conferences; in synagogues, churches and mosques; and at every Jewish organization.

My congratulations to Rehov, who produced and directed *Pogrom(s)*, as well as to Lisa Magnas, the producer of United States footage, and to Sophie Chemla, the film's production manager. May you all go from strength to strength.

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