



Lucovnicova Olga (Kobetz Odri)
Master of Arts

THE HOLOCAUST DOCUMENTARY FILM CHRONICLES AS A POWERFUL TEACHING TOOL IN CREATING AN OPEN, TOLERANT AND DEMOCRATIC

Films based on Holocaust photo and video archives – a powerful teaching tool in creating an open, tolerant and democratic society

Abstract

This report argues that documentary films are the best way to illustrate the Holocaust phenomenon in the context of contemporary society. Thus, through systematisation and combination of photo and video archives documentary films reconstruct the historical line of the World War II, revealing fascism premises, development and outcomes. Consequently, movies are an important tool in revealing the roots of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping in any society. Hence, it contributes to deep understating of the European Union's fundamental values importance, such as democracy, the respect of human rights, equality, freedom and the rule of law.

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Introduction

In the context of XXI century, the Holocaust, genocide of six million European Jews, is extremely important topic to study in order to build a conscious, democratic and prosperous society. First, the globalization leads to concentration of people from different ethnic groups in limited space, forming megacities. As a result, the tension based on ideological, cultural and social issues grows up. Since 1975 the number of urban agglomerations with a population over 10 million grew from just three to 37. Moreover, by 2030, a projected 730 million people will live in cities with at least 10 million inhabitants, representing 8.7 % of people globally. In addition, the developed world became more dangerous. In 2015 deaths from terrorism have increased massively, although globally there was a slight fall. The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2016 reveals that there was a 650% increase in fatal terror attacks on people living in the world's biggest economies in 2015. Secondly, the Holocaust is the best-documented genocide in the world. Thus, at the Nuremberg trial there were submitted over 3,000 tons of records. Decade later, the United States National Archives in collaboration with the American Historical Association published 62 volumes of finding aids to the records captured by the US military at the end of the war. On the one hand, Holocaust is the large-scale illustration of consequences of hate, prejudice and racism. On another hand, it reveals the danger of silence, indifference and ignorance to the oppression of others.

One of the most effective methods of teaching the Holocaust is through visual images. Over 100 years ago scientists from all around the world, discovered that visual information is remembered and reproduced faster and

easier than textual information. This phenomenon is called “the effect of image superiority”. Recent experiments have proved that people are able to memorize over 2500 consecutive images with the 90 % reproduction accuracy. In addition, the neuroanatomist R.S. Fixot found that when our eyes are open, our vision accounts over 2 billion firings per second of electrical activity of the brain. At the same time, he mentions in the American Journal of Ophthalmology, that 50 % of our neural tissue is directly or indirectly linked to the retina. Thus, visual materials are very important part of studying process, which help to memorize and visualize the past historical events.

Hence, photo and video archives are the strongest illustration of disastrous consequences of intolerance, racism, hatred and extremism of the World War II. Moreover, by being a direct connecting branch between the viewer and the Holocaust victims, they provoke a strong emotional impact on humans. In addition, photographs are perceived as a direct expression of reality. Thus, the entire Nuremberg courtroom was redesigned, to install the projector and screen, for the ability to use photo and video materials during the process as important evidences of the Holocaust.

Finally, film is best tool in systematisation of the Holocaust photo and video archives. It allows the chronological reconstruction of the past events. Since the Holocaust was a part of the totalitarian Nazi regime, propaganda and anti- humanist ideas, it is critical to teach it through systematic chronological historical line, revealing it’s causes and effects. Thus, a documentary film based on photo and video archives is the best way to provide a comprehensive and authentic understanding of history. In addition, cinematography, viewed as a universal language of expression, can force the viewer to unconsciously come to conclusions set up by the film director. As a result, the proper use of video and photo materials can contribute to needed changes in human’s conscience and society in general.

I. The socio-psychological impact of documentary photographs on society

It is like writing history with light and my only regret is that it is all so terribly true.

- Woodrow Wilson

The invention of photography gave people the opportunity to document in details the instantaneous reality and preserve it for a long period of time. In addition, it provides the possibility of easy and fast data transfer world-

wide. Thus, soon after it's discovering by Nicephore Niepce, photography made a wide amount of changes in society. In the book "Photography: The Whole Story", Juliet Hacking mentions that soon after the adaptation, spread and commercialisation of photographic processes, it removed a wide range of fields owned by fine arts, due to it's propriety of capturing surrounding world in small details, which was impossible before. People preferred photographs instead of paintings, because they assured the authenticity of real subjects and events. At the same time, photography is an exceptional instrument for fast and cheap information transfer. Indeed, expenses spend on the photograph execution are cheaper and faster than any other way of information capture, as it's speed of capturing counts in milliseconds. In addition, the image copying process is fast and easy. Thus, photography became a primary tool for documenting reality and spreading the information.

The way photography has influenced the society is critical. It made possible to unveil the cruelty, social issues and injustice happening all around the world. An eloquent example is Alice Seeley Harris' photographs of the injuries sustained by the Congolese natives at the hands of the agents and soldiers. In the 23 years of the Leopold II domination, 10 million Africans were tortured due to the exploitation of the Congo Basin natural resources. From 1898 to 1905, Alice Seeley Harris taught English to children in Congo. At the same time, she used to take photographs of Congolese life, as well as injuries and atrocities caused by soldiers on local population. Later, these photographs were used in one of the first human rights campaigns. Alice presented her images at 200 meetings in 49 cities from the United States via magic lantern screenings. In addition, the American daily paper, *New York*, used her photographs to illustrate the atrocities happening in Congo.

The spread and revealing of Harris' photographs forced people in Europe to face what was really happening in Congo. People of the highest level started to sign up and give money to help victims. Under the public pressure, Leopold ceded administration of the Congo Free State in November 1908 to the Belgian government. After the return to Congo from 1911 to 1912, Alice noted improved conditions in the treatment of natives and later produced a book, "Present Conditions in the Congo". Soon thereafter, hundreds of Alice's African documentary photographs were displayed at the Colonial Institution.

Congolese people are not the only ones who have taken advantage of the power of photography. Today, there are known hundreds of iconic photo-

graphs which contributed to the rise of people's awareness on social issues happening all around the world. Even though, the horror and atrocities captured in such photographs as "The Napalm Girl" by Nick Ut, "Burning Monk" by Malcolm Brown, "Saigon Execution" by Eddie Adams or Holocaust photo and video archives are on the limits of photographic ethics' questions, they do not show anything more or less than the reality caused by human's hands.

II. The documentary film – a complex and powerful tool of influencing the human's subconscious

The ability of capturing and preserving the movement, approaches cinematography to reality, causing a strong impact on human's subconscious. The tremendous effect of cinema on mankind was evident from the presentation of the first known video footage created by Lumiere Brothers. Maxim Gorky, published his impressions about Lumiere's films, in the Nizhny-Novgorod's daily newspaper:

«Suddenly something clicks, everything vanishes and a train appears on the screen. It speeds straight at you—watch out! It seems as though it will plunge into the darkness in which you sit, turning you into a ripped sack full of lacerated flesh and splintered bones, and crushing into dust and into broken fragments this hall and this building, so full of women, wine, music and vice.» This confession of Maxim Gorky became the most famous literary responses to film. It elucidates the huge impact of cinema on humankind. In fact, motion picture transposes the viewer in the middle of action from film. Thus, the public becomes a part of movie, living all moments next to the main character.

Documentary films based on Holocaust video and photo archives are the best tool for systematic, chronologic and structural studies about it. Film is a universal language of expression, where all existing arts are mixed up to reflect the main idea. In the contrast to photography, film has more means of expression. In addition, to perceive the information provided through film, we use all major human senses. This fact accelerates and increases the sense of perception, highly influencing the human's subconscious and directly attempting short and long-term memory. In that case, it is important to make difference between television format film and artistic documentary movie. If first has just informative significance, the second, includes the artistic search, symbols and metaphors used in storytelling to sensitize the viewers feelings rather than just telling the facts.

Generally, any film goes through post-production process of filmmaking. Lev Kuleshov, the soviet film director and the founder of the world's first film school, considers montage as being the strongest part of film, which differentiate it from other arts. He believed that the film director can force the viewer to unconsciously come to conclusions set up in the editing, even if they contradicts the image or shooting circumstances. Thus, in right hands, video and photo archives included in film can become a strong tool of influencing and changing society.

Since 1940 were realized numerous fiction and documentary films which reflect the Holocaust issues. Based on them, we can analyze the perception and vision over Holocaust from one country to another. Most of documentary films were realized for informational purposes, with well-established chronological script line, followed by detailed comments. At the same time, a few film directors tried to go further and use cinematographic language to increase the emotional impact and change viewers' interpretations of graphic images through visual contrast, counterpoint, comparison and metaphors.

III. The artistic particularities of the film “Night and Fog” by Alain Resnais

Ten years after the liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps, Alain Resnais made one of the first documentary films on the Holocaust topic “*Night and Fog*”. The title is taken from the notorious “*Nacht und Nebe*” program of abductions and disappearances decreed by the Nazis on 7 December 1941. The film features the abandoned grounds of Auschwitz and Majdanek. In her film, Alain Resnais uses graphic and musical contrasts. Opening film credits are accompanied by gloomy, monotonous music by Hanns Eisler, which reflects the horror of the concentration camp. Immediately after, the musical mood changes into dynamic, cheerful and harmonious rhythm, introducing the viewer to the contemporary time. Alain mixes two time spaces- present and past, which are delimited by the colour field. Consequently, modern time is reflected through bright and vibrant colors of the green field, blue sky and sunny day. In contrast, the Auschwitz concentration camp looks like an alien gloomy construction established on the prosperous, fruitful and “peaceful” Earth. It's fence, pilings and buildings remind the history of terror, human sufferings and unreasonable cruelty. The film continues with Nazi's monochrome video footages of 1933 year, a retrospective of past events. The music is dynamic, but at the same

time trivial. Black and white somber graphic images show the development of the Nazi ideology. Over the background of crowds it is highlighted the figure of leader, Adolf Hitler. Monochrome images help to emphasize the idea of erased individual identity. The construction of future concentration camps looks like a notable and grandiose event, overshadowed by Michele Bousquest's comments, which reminds us about the Jewish youth who is occupied by own future, unaware of the upcoming nightmare. The film's turning point is the departure of convoys to Auschwitz. It is the last moment when the viewer can see well-dressed, healthy and elegant people wearing yellow stars on their clothes. The composition of the frame reflects the idea of the "last way". The perspective created by the endless wagons in motion is cropped up by the frame's edge or disappears in white emptiness, revealing the concept of *the unknown direction to nowhere*. The infinitely long train full of tortured people arrives to Auschwitz concentration camp. The black night sky, gloomy smoke, silhouettes of soldiers standing with shotguns, directs to the movie title "Night and Fog", as being it's visual representation. The film continues with explanation and detailed description of cruel, painful and atrocious life of prisoners. Besides hunger and starvation, it includes sadism, torture, executions, rape, scientific and medical experiments. In contrast, it is portrayed the totally different life of the Schutzstaffel on the same territory. The last film section includes just black-and-white images, which depicts the gas chambers and piles of bodies. The film finishes with the country liberation, discovery of the camps' horror, and the question "*who is responsible for it*".

To sum up, the film "Night and Fog" reveals two different realities. It shows our peaceful present and the horrifying past. Thus, through contrasting matter of the same subject, Alain Resnais shows that the history is created by people and the past leaves it's marks forever. The chronological line focused on the representation of the victims' starvation in time, increases the emotional impact by showing the fascism' effect on human-kind. At the same time, the film's atmosphere is dramatized with the level of cruelty and atrocities victims were subjected to. So the viewer can feel and understand properly the victims' sufferings.

IV. The Michael Romm's illustration of danger caused by the totalitarian regime. Principles of totalitarian propaganda and crowd behaviour in the documentary film "Triumph over violence".

The documentary film "Triumph over Violence" by Mikhail Romm, reflects the totally new approach to the Holocaust issue. Romm's vision over

Holocaust is surprisingly complex and multisided. In the interview for the scientific magazine "Skepticism", Romm remarks that he decided to realize this film after he talked with young people about fascism. The discussion took place due to the international news transmission about the modern fascists from Argentina and West Germany. He assumed that war is a distant concept for young people born before and after it. Moreover, they have no idea what fascism represents. For young people it was difficult to believe completely what they heard or read about the Holocaust. Furthermore, they considered it dead, and some of them believed that information is too exaggerated. Considering the fact that "*Triumph over Violence*" was released just 20 years after the war was finished, we can assume that contemporary youth is even worse informed. Thus, the film's significance and importance increases over years.

Even though the film is monochrome, it reflects a wide emotional range and sentimental pattern. Vadim Abdrashitov in an interview notes: "*the film Triumph over Violence not only reveals the essence of the Nazi regime, but totalitarian regimes in general, demonstrates the principles of totalitarian propaganda, behaviour of the crowd, proclaimed humanist ideas*".

The documentary follows the tradition, which has been set up in soviet filmmaking by Esfir Shub, who was a pioneer in the use of video archives owned by foreign state in creation of original compilation films. Thus, in "Triumph over Violence" were used chronicles captured from the Ministry of Propaganda of Nazi Germany film archives, Hitler's personal photo archive and numerous amateur photographs taken by the Schutzstaffel soldiers. Mikhael Romm notes: "*out of a huge amount of material, we have selected everything that we seemed as the most striking and giving an impulse to reflect together*".

The film is divided into 16 chapters. It begins with children's drawings. It is notably that Romm's grandson is the author of the first image, happy cat. The diversity of images in forms of expression, on the one hand, and the similarity of dreams, desires and vision, on another hand, is surprising.

It can be related to the idea that the child is a white paper, on which parents, teachers and society leave certain marks. Additionally, it is associated with Hitler's passion to fine arts and his dream to become an artist. Together, they display the idea that no one is born with hate, stereotypes and intolerance. Overall, the one's personality is created over time under the various factors. Romm mentions in the same interview, for the magazine "Skepticism", that the idea to start the film with kids came in his mind from the start, so he wanted to establish the moral references, from the child's purity to the nonhuman fascists. The film continues with scene of students waiting for examination results, shot with the hidden camera. Romm mentions that in the beginning, he asked his polish colleagues to film lovers. Consequently, the request was accomplished, but the method of shooting was completely different from his expectations. Although, filmmakers from Warsaw have chosen attractive polish girls and modern guys, who did their best to illustrate love, on screen there was no real feelings. Thus, he gave all freedom to Kulish, soviet cameraman, to film young people with hidden camera. Thus, the film role reveals a complex palette of emotions, from tears to unearthly happiness. The camera operator used the telephoto lens to shoot close-ups from distance, as well as to reduce the depth of field, so to highlight people's silhouettes over blurred background. Thus, the viewer's attention focuses on individual emotions and the variety of their manifestations. The hidden camera divulges the beauty of sincere human worries. In addition, Kulish captures the interaction between people and the happiness for each other's success. Thereby, the idea of love as the highest form of humanity is exposed.

The film is accompanied by Romm's comments, creating the sensation of "tête-à-tête" dialogue. The spontaneous nature of comments manifested by the use of syntax, vocabulary and intonation, became one of the main distinctive features of the film. In order to increase emotional impact, the film director uses "on the edge" cinematographic techniques. Thus, the gunshot sound and archive photo of soldier, directing a blown pistol on the woman holding her child, interrupt the story line about love between children and mothers. This abrupt transition produces a strong emotional impact. The following footages, which express the maternal tenderness, are perceived totally different due to the "Kuleshov effect", a mental phenomenon by which viewers derive more meaning from the interaction of two sequential shots than from a single shot in isolation. The film continues with contrast alternation of motion pictures and freeze-frames, close-ups

and wide shots, reality and past, life and death. The minute of silence is interrupted by Romm's comment/translation on the inscription written on the Auschwitz fence's pillar "Germany over all". In that context, Germany is not a symbol of one state, but a motif of terror, mass blindness and the polemic between reality and propaganda. Auschwitz's ruins are filmed with the red lens filter to darken the sky. It creates a gloomy, dramatic atmosphere, a metaphor of time burden. Details of the concentration camp reveal the pain captivated within its walls forever. The pile of shoes, cut off hair, children's potties, gaze chambers and ovens remind the human's suffer and smell of death. Meanwhile, the Hitler's biography is presented through the private photography collection. The rise to the power is showed gradually, from a politician who behaves hesitantly to a ruler chanted by crowds. The amount of his fans increases progressively from a group of people to uncontrollable crowds. Soldiers look like robots or zombies walking down the street. Another film's key point is the eagle, formal symbol of the Nazi Party, which stands above all. In contrast to atrocities happening in Germany, in film appear international news reportages, focused on the Royal families' leisure, sport competition and Hitler's visit to the Opera. All together, it reflects the idea of governance and journalists' ignorance, compared by film director with seals. Michael Romm confronts two contradictory realities – European daily life full of joy and the death camp prisoners' horror. The contrast between these archival footages creates the strong emotional effect on the viewer and the complex understanding of the specific historical time frame. Besides, the tension grows up worldwide. While Europe is stroked by protests, revolutions and provocations, in Germany the new order is set up by the night parade with fire in the name of Hitler. In this context, fire symbolize the transformation of humankind into savage. The burning of books epitomize the mass mind's eclipse and blindness. The first seeds of racism, intolerance and inequality are revealed in physical and biological comparison between people. After the sorting into right and wrong people, first are subjected to terrorization, torture and murdering. At the same time, during the "common soup", Hitler says, "If once I die, my spirit will remain alive". In the context of film, it symbolizes the spirit of discrimination, prejudice and unreasonable hate still persisting worldwide.

The narrative film line returns its leitmotiv – childhood. It reveals the gradual transformation of child into a Nazi, showing how fascism is born and developed. Jacques Fresco, American futurist and social engineer, mentioned in his interview, "If anyone were born in Nazi Germany, he would

become a Nazi, because of the lack of information and choice". In contrast, Romm shows "another Germany", with slogans "Fascism is poverty and war" used on parades and people fighting against fascism, despite the pressure. In addition, the film director confronts war's horror with the elite's wealthy life, concluding that some people die for idea, others for country, but the elite prospers. The final chapter exposes the military high-tech, rockets and nuclear bombs. Michael Romm hints to the idea that the repetition of history, in the contemporary context, would cause consequences more grave than before, and next time we will not have a second chance. Thus, the Nazi Germany must be seen as a negative phenomenon, which is important to analyze and prevent on time.

The last film sequence reflects the idea of new beginning. It shows the variety of children's emotions and occupations. The "Chicken Ryaba" fairy-tale told by a little girl becomes a symbol of the fascism's emergence and development. In the contrast to child's voice, the archive photographs of victims are displayed on the screen. Thus, the background girl's distant voice links to people's tough destiny.

V. The Post – Holocaust Reality through Films

The Post – Holocaust reality is an important part to analyze and study. It reveals the consequences and after marks of the genocide horrors. First film, which faces the Holocaust repercussions, is the film "Nuremberg: The Nazis Facing their Crimes", directed by Christian Delage. Being based on the restored courtroom footages, it has an incomparable significance. Thus, the documentary film reveals real perpetrators and victims. In addition, it represents the historical moment when the Holocaust photo and video footages were exhibited for the first time and captures its psychological impact on people. On the one hand, it acknowledges the viewer with people responsible for the war crimes, whose faces hit with ignorance and calmness. On another hand, it shows the contradiction between justice and injustice. The Nuremberg process faces the complexity and difficulties of impartial justice on the international level. Despite the fact that a large number of evidences and witnesses were collected, the process lasted almost a year. Moreover, defendants denied the Holocaust existence and their guiltiness till the end. Thus, the 90 minutes long film reveals all aspects of the post Holocaust reality, which are still valid for nowadays. First, the perpetrators' negation and the lawyer's efforts to prove their guiltlessness display the issue of the Holocaust denial. Second, the confession of Ernst Michel,

the Auschwitz survivor, reveals psychological and physical injuries faced by victims of the Nazi regime. Third, it shows the huge importance of photo and video materials for visualization of the Holocaust horror.

The best way to picture the post- Holocaust reality is through individual stories. "The Portraitist" is the documentary film, which shows the story of Wilhelm Brasse, who despite of his resistance to obey the Nazi regime, was captured and forced to take photographs of the Auschwitz concentration camp prisoners. The "identity pictures" shot by him reveals the fear, hopelessness and suffers hidden behind victim's deep sight. After the liberation, Wilhelm could not continue his work as photographer. He affirms that the horror of cruelty and atrocities made by SS supervisors pursued him all his life.

The film director Claude Lanzmann had a totally new approach to the Holocaust issue interpretation. He brings survivors back in war times through physical space. The whole film is a "tet-a-tet" dialogue between the spectator and survivors. Visiting places of their difficult childhood long after the war, induces sincere emotions and detailed testimonies from the first person. This dramaturgical method approaches the viewer to victims and the Holocaust horrors. Thus, the spectator can feel the whole terror survivors passed through. The contemporaneous views and landscapes contradict with victims' stories and memories. The overlapping of the bloody past and the peaceful present creates the strong emotional impact on the viewer.

Conclusion

Holocaust should be taught in the context of contemporaneous social issues, such as globalization, continue growing democracy, disappearance of limits between nations and cultures. In these conditions the risk of intolerance, hate and fascisms is overwhelming. That makes "Holocaust" a part of our present, not just a moment from the past.

Holocaust photo and video archives best reveal the danger of today's social issues. In addition, the visual learning is one of the most efficient studying methods, which helps students to comprehend the scale of potential danger derived from fascism. Due to the documentary side of photo and video archives, their informative value is incomparable. Combined with the cinematographic language, documentary chronicles become a powerful teaching tool. Thus, documentary films have informative significance and high emotional impact.

Nowadays, there is a big amount of various documentary and fiction films based on World War II. They interpret Holocaust from different views

and sides. Thus, some films tend to reflect Holocaust through numbers and dates, presenting it as the biggest genocide ever known and crime over whole nation. At the same time, other movies are based on individual stories of Holocaust victims. It is very important to highlight and systematize films, which are best for the studying process in the meaning of informational value and level of the emotional impact. In that context, the film "Night and Fog" by Alain Resnais is a good introduction into the "Holocaust" topic. Being made ten years after the end of war, when the Holocaust topic was sufficiently studied and assimilated, it reflects an individual approach instead of trivial documentary research. The use of two different color fields and time spaces in film, deepens the viewer to the "Holocaust" issue and emphasizes the awareness over intolerance. The film "Triumph over violence" by Michael Romm opens wide the problem of fascism. Starting with the pureness of children the movie shows the metamorphosis of humanity into inhumanity. Instead of focusing on atrocities, Romm shows the feature of humankind and strikes the viewer with the contrast between beauty and horror, pushing the spectator to meditate on human being and fascism "cause- effect" topic. At the same time, films, which elucidate the post-holocaust reality, acknowledge the viewer with contemporaneous issues related to this topic. Moreover, they reveal the risk and circumstances of the "Holocaust denial" appearance, the first step of ignorance and blindness over contemporaneous social issues.

Finally, today's youth is used to receive the big amount of information in a short time. Thus, films became the most efficient ways of information transition. At the same time, every chosen film should be analyzed in details, to point out the key elements related to the "Holocaust" topic. Some people argue that the "Holocaust" should be excluded from the studying process because of its cruel content which can affect the youth's psychology. Although, there is a big difference between learning about the Holocaust horror or being a part of it. I strongly believe that ignoring our past is not the key to success and only acceptance and acknowledgement can be the right way to the bright future of our world.

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