



## Philip Jefferson

**Dark Lullabies** is a different type of movie. It also deals with relationships, though — of families, of generations, of peoples...

It was produced for the National Film Board by Irene Lillienheim Angelico, who is the daughter of two concentration camp survivors from Nazi Germany. It deals with the Holocaust, not so much "why did it happen?" but "how can the children understand it?"

Irene's parents wanted to spare her the horror of Dachau, so they seldom spoke about it. However she, as a Jew, as the child of survivors, has that history in her



*Co-director and co-producer of Dark Lullabies, Irene Angelico, explores impact of Holocaust on children of its survivors.*

being, and needs to know it.

So she sets out to discover something about it, after she has read a manuscript written by her father during those days.

She talks to other survivors of her age, and interviews Germans whose parents had been involved in the war.

The film is powerfully gripping. Film clips taken at various camps show victims going to the gas ovens. It was painful to watch, knowing that countries like Canada would not take in the Jewish refugees at that time.

A segment of the film shows her interview with two Neo-Nazi soldiers. It is spine chilling.

Irene uncovered some very important truths in her search. She went to Israel to talk to Jewish descendants there. Families had memories to share with her, but not trinkets or other mementos of their lives in the '30s and '40s. All had been confiscated and destroyed, along with the people who had died in Hitler's quest for "the Final Solution."

Irene also went to Germany to talk with people there. She found citizens who had grown up in a certain village for 20 years before discovering that what people had described as a "cemetery" had really been a camp and execution place.

When the Jews in their villages had disappeared in those days, their very existence had been erased from the minds of

their German neighbors, who had asked no questions.

She gained some insights into this seemingly incomprehensible response of a so-called Christian nation in a so-called Christian civilization at the time.

The political system demanded obedience, not questions. People acted on orders; the assembly lines of annihilation took away the sense of guilt; the camp guards did not count the bodies — the railway workers did. And so on.

I saw *Dark Lullabies* at a premiere showing in Halifax.

"An important film" is how it was introduced by a member of the Jewish community. Indeed it is!

I was deeply moved by it, and came home having to think about it, talk about it, write about it. Seldom have I seen a film so direct, so simple, and yet speaking so powerfully about our personal responsibility for the human relationships of this world.

The NFB does a great service to us all by making this film available for us to see. After the extensive reading we all did on the Zundel and Keegstra affairs, we need *Dark Lullabies*.

To know the past, to retell the stories of former years, enables us to understand our own true selves. For us who are Christians, hearing the scriptures of Old and New Testament brings the past into our present. Our eucharist, in fact, is a sacred re-calling of the Last Supper, making us known as the company of disciples of Jesus today.

### To be servants

At this season of Pentecost, we are again reminded of our task to be servants for peace and justice in our world, with its many and diverse peoples.

We are called to declare that men and women, Jews and Greeks, servants and families, Germans and Russians and Canadians all together are part of the human community, the family of God.

In these movies, I think Hannah shows us the way we should be going — caring for, supporting, trying to understand one another but accepting one another even when we don't understand.

That is the better way.

The sword fight until only one is left is not the solution. The Holocaust was not, either.

I like the words of Hymn 274 in the new Hymn Book:

"Let there be light,  
let there be understanding...  
perish the way of terror,  
hallow the world God made."