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To: Ms. Claudia Eller – Editor-in-Chief of *Variety*

Re: Open Letter to the Editor

Jay Weissberg’s Review of *Dara of Jasenovac* Is Misleading, Harmful, and Offensive to All Victims of the Holocaust

Jay Weissberg’s recent [review](#) in *Variety* magazine and his characterization of the Serbian film *Dara of Jasenovac* as propaganda trivialize an important, albeit little known part of the Holocaust history. While acknowledging the truth of the facts on which the film is based, J. Weissberg suggests that because the film is about Serbs and is told with unflinching directness, it somehow propagates a nationalist message about “Serbian victimhood.” The reviewer’s cynicism is an unconscionable affront not only to the victims in the featured Jasenovac WWII concentration camp, but to all victims of the Holocaust.

Holocaust history is simply not complete without its Jasenovac chapter. Its horrors transcend the region where they unfolded, just as they transcend the boundaries of one nation: thousands upon thousands of Jewish and Roma prisoners were tortured and perished there alongside the Serbian ones.

The reviewer moreover neglects to tell his readership that this film is a collaborative effort - a product of many years of extensive research on the part of its director, Predrag-Gaga Antonijevic and its executive producer Michael Berenbaum, a renown Holocaust scholar and the director of the Sigi Ziering Institute at the American Jewish University where he is a professor of Jewish studies.

Antonijević and Berenbaum took part in an online discussion that accompanied a virtual screening of the film hosted by the Miami Jewish Film Festival, reported in the [Sun-Sentinel Jewish Journal on January 29](#). Hearing what the film’s creators had to say in their own words will help the readers understand the true significance of this untold story. Excerpts of this discussion follow.

“Knowing this is a story that had to be told, I talked to Michael Berenbaum a few years back, and he discussed all the aspects of the camp, since Michael is very familiar being a historian of this whole area,” Antonijevic said, further adding: *“We pretty much decided to use facts which are historically proven and documented. In other words, we did not want to allow any kind of superficial fiction to enter the story, because the events are so gruesome and so hard by themselves. It was absolutely unnecessary to try to add to it, because it was our duty to let the history present itself.”*

Berenbaum added, *“Many of the details, large and small, are taken from the actual experience of camp inmates, and this is the rare time that a film takes us inside the camp, most especially the children’s camp of Jasenovac. The power of the film lies in the story being told through the eyes of a child who loses the innocence of childhood and is forced to experience what no child and no adult should have to go through.”*

Antonijevic further explained what he sees as the purpose and motivation for the film: *“The film is about a little-known concentration camp complex, and it’s always important, now more than ever, that we’re reminded how humanity can end up in a dark place if people start to apply the criteria of race, religion, and gender discrimination.”*

Jay Weissberg’s recent review in *Variety* does an injustice to the powerful message and artistic qualities of this movie and carries the risk of discouraging the telling of other less known, but immensely important stories waiting to be told.

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CC: [The Simon Wiesenthal Center](#)