



המכה השמונים ואחת

Ha'makah ha'shmonim ve'ahat

The 81st Blow

David Bergman, Haim Gouri, Jacques Ehrlich, Miriam Novitch, Zvi Shner

Director David Bergman, Haim Gouri, Jacques Ehrlich, Miriam Novitch, Zvi Shner. **Screenplay** David Bergman, Haim Gouri, Jacques Ehrlich, Miriam Novitch, Zvi Shner. **Music** Joseph Mar-Haim. **Sound editor** D. Treuherz. **Editor** Miriam Gross. **Documentary footage** Miriam Novitch. **Photographic documents** Haim Chreiber.

DCP, black/white. 115 min. Hebrew, Yiddish, German.

Premiere December 1975, Jerusalem

The story of the eighty blows with which young Michael Goldmann-Gilad was nearly beaten to death by Commander Schwammberger in the ghetto of Przemyśl came to light in 1961 at the Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem through the testimony of a different witness. The Holocaust survivor Goldmann-Gilad had earlier experienced that no one in Israel believed his story. That people considered his report to be the product of his imagination, resulting from his terrible experiences, was like an eighty-first blow to him. The title of the film was consciously chosen, since it presents a kind of proof by evidence. Put together solely from historical photos and film footage, it tells of Jewish life in Europe, the rise of National Socialism, the German masses that cheered Hitler's and Goebbels' speeches, the anti-Semitic excesses, the first pogroms, the beginning of the war, deportation, selection and annihilation in the camps and finally the small acts of resistance and the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. Instead of explanations or commentary, one hears surviving witnesses' testimonies from the Eichmann Trial and music composed especially for the film.

Ha'makah ha'shmonim ve'ahat is the first part of an Israeli film trilogy – later came *The Last Sea* (1980) and *Flames in the Ashes* (1985) – that was made in the context of the Ghetto Fighters' House, a research, documentation and education institution in western Galilee founded by survivors

of the Holocaust and the Warsaw Ghetto revolt. The directing collective included the poet Haim Gouri, who had experienced Goldmann-Gilad as a witness in the Eichmann Trial. In 1975, *Ha'makah ha'shmonim ve'ahat* was nominated for an Oscar as Best Documentary Film; not until 2013 did another Israeli film have this honour. Films like this play an important role for an 'Israeli identity politics on the silver screen', as film scholar Yosefa Loshitzky calls it. By using solely archive material, *Ha'makah ha'shmonim ve'ahat* finds itself among important compilation films that reassemble and contextualise already existing material (including *Den blodiga tiden* by Erwin Leiser and *Obyknowenny faschism* by Michail Romm). Compilation as a technique and the use of archive footage are especially prevalent in the cinematic approach to themes of Nazi rule and the destruction of the Jews, notes the media scholar Matthias Steinle in his essay '*Das Archivbild*' (Medienwissenschaft, Issue 3, Marburg 2005). These images, which in the case of *Ha'makah ha'shmonim ve'ahat* support the statements of the witnesses, are surely fundamental for the film's documentary effect. But here the point is not superficially a critique of the sources, information about the origin of the pictures (many come from the perpetrators' archives) or detailed information on what is depicted. Rather, the archive image in this film turns from a document into a monument, from a piece of evidence into a memorial. Precisely because archive pictures are now available everywhere and foster the 'illusion of unmediated and unfiltered reproduction of history or past reality' (Steinle, pg. 296), it's worthwhile exploring them as phenomena of perception. In the face of the countless films that combine pictures of contemporary witnesses, commentaries and archive images like an audio-visual ready-to-bake mix, rediscovering *Ha'makah ha'shmonim ve'ahat* is worthwhile in several ways: as an object of research, as a document and as a monument.

Anna Hoffmann

The films *Ha'makah ha'shmonim ve'ahat* (*The 81st Blow*) and *Me'kivun ha'yaar* (*Out of the Forest*) are, in addition to their revival at the Berlinale Forum, part of the project 'Asynchronous. Documentaries and Experimental Films on the Holocaust. From the Collection of the Arsenal', which the Arsenal Institute for Film and Video Art e.V. is devoting to the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army.

David Bergman, born in Paris in 1931, emigrated to Israel in 1945. After studying Drama, he was a director at theatres in Paris and Brussels and directed the School for Theatre and Film in Ramat-Gan. He has also made several television films.

Haim Gouri, born in Tel Aviv in 1923, studied Literature in Jerusalem and Paris and then initially worked as a journalist. He gained renown as a poet and for a publication about the Eichmann trial (*Facing the Glass Booth*, 1962). Together with Jacques Ehrlich, Gouri made *The Last Sea* and *Flames in the Ashes*.

Jacques Ehrlich, born in Strasbourg in 1931, fled with his family to Switzerland during the Second World War. After studying Art in Paris, he emigrated to Israel in 1949. He later worked as an editor and as a professor at the School for Theatre and Film in Ramat-Gan.

Miriam Novitch, born in Yurtishk, Belarus in 1908, fought in the resistance in the Second World War. After the war, she emigrated to Israel. Novitch was one of the founders of the Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz and the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum. The museum's first curator, she assembled its collection of art and films. She died in 1990.

Zvi Shner, born in Łódź, Poland in 1912, fled to the Caucasus in 1939. In 1948, he emigrated to Israel. He was one of the founders of the Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz and the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum, which he headed until his death in 1984.