

# ***“7 Days in Entebbe”***

*By Helen Lutz*

When my girls were little and in need of an occasional babysitter, one of my friend’s daughters would come over and stay with them. Lisa was a smart high school girl taking a class in Sociology. Her mother suggested she talk with me about a paper on which she was working since one of my degrees is in Sociology. Lisa wanted to understand the social implications of a historic event – Woodstock. That was the first time I can remember feeling ‘old.’ Now I find it interesting to watch movies based on historic events after having lived through them and the new film “7 Days in Entebbe” intrigued me.



Air safety and the lack thereof predate our TSA going back years and years. Airplane travel of years gone by was much different than current protocols. Everyone could walk to the gate to say goodbye or greet passengers, just the boarding pass was needed to board the plane. Smoking was allowed just about everywhere to include on airplanes and when traveling, one could count on a pillow and a meal or at least a snack. There were also a fair number of airplane hijackings since no one scanned for guns or knives or box cutters or bombs.

In 1976 an Air France jet traveling from Tel Aviv to Paris was hijacked after a brief stop in Athens, Greece. “7 Days in Entebbe” tells the story from the side of the hijackers and their reasoning. We first meet German revolutionaries Wilifried Böse (Daniel Brühl) and Brigitte Kuhlman (Rosamund Pike) as they join their fight with those of Palestinian revolutionaries teaming up to hijack the airliner. It doesn’t take long for them to figure out that they are in way over their heads with their causes being very different.

Air France Flight 139 ultimately ends up landing in Entebbe, Uganda with the blessing of the Ugandan President Idi Amin (Nonso Anozie), which the terrorists considered well out of range of any possible rescue giving them the upper hand in negotiations. The dilapidated terminal at the far end of the airport complex is where the frightened passengers disembark being herded into the filthy accommodations to wait – and wait.

Director Jose Padilla and writer Gregory Burke try to take us into the minds of the hijackers. Idi Amin helps to gain the release of many passengers who are not Israeli but the Palestinians use the Israeli captors as their bargaining chip lobbying for the release of their political prisoner freedom fighter compatriots. Meanwhile Wilifried and Brigitte recognize that this brings back the old and bitter feelings of the Holocaust pitting Germans against Jews, which was never their intent.

Like most of nations, Israel has no intention of giving in to terrorist demands, so what’s Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (Lior Ashkenazi) to do? Uganda is beyond reach when it comes to a normal rescue and is a sovereign country headed by a hothead; yet over 100 innocent lives hang in the balance.

Remembering the tension that existed during this event, the rescue mounted by the Israelis was bold and incredible; however, this portion of the story is lackluster. As the story develops we get bogged down in the hijackers’ thoughts and dialog as well as in a side story of one of the young Israelis soldiers assigned to the rescue mission and his dancer girlfriend. Padilla uses the Batsheva Dance Company placed in a semi circle to convey the idea of an attack, but the lack of any background as to the performances leads to confusion and frustration on the part of the audience.

“7 Days in Entebbe” depicts a historical event that began to spark the idea that not everyone in the world is nice and that our idea of security needed to be updated – it took the World Trade Center years later for us to finally get the idea. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats ... I give “7 Days in Entebbe” ONE 1/2 HARTS. Too much time is spent on the dance without much in the way of character development. The elite planning and execution of the rescue is a disappointment.