



# The Jewish Week

SERVING THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF GREATER NEW YORK

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## No Dearth Of Documentaries

*A thoughtful Central European travelogue, two World War II films among the intriguing offerings at expanded MoMA festival.*

### George Robinson - Special To The Jewish Week

Perhaps it is a reflection of the rising interest in documentary films or of the incredible range of high-quality nonfiction filmmaking currently available, but whatever the reason the Museum of Modern Art has expanded its annual "Documentary Fortnight" to five weeks this winter and — judging by the handful of films available for viewing at press time — they didn't have any trouble filling the extra time.

One of the most impressive of the feature-length films in the series is "New World" by Paul Rosdy. Rosdy may be familiar to Jewish Week readers for his first film, "Port of Last Resort," an excellent documentary on the Jewish colony in Shanghai, which was composed entirely of refugees from the Nazis. His new film is a much less conventional effort, a sort of travelogue through the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, from Bosnia to Ukraine, mixing footage he shot during the trip with silent-era newsreels.

The result is a poignant testimonial to the evanescence of human endeavor and a reminder of the grinding and brutal history of Central Europe. It is impossible for a viewer to see Sarajevo, Mostar, Timisoara, Czernowitz or Trieste and not be reminded of civil war, ethnic cleansing, the violent overthrow of a violent dictatorship — or the Shoah. Rosdy knows all too well the historical resonance of the place names in his films and one can't help thinking that the so-called "New Europe" is built on the graves of its predecessor.

This grim historical truth is nowhere more apparent than when he visits Stanislau, Ukraine, a city that once boasted a large Jewish population and over a dozen synagogues. Although, as the current rabbi points out, the one remaining congregation seems to be surviving, it is not a long drive to the mass graves where the Nazis murdered as many as 12,000 Jews in a single day. And this once beautiful spot was called, the rabbi notes, "the New World."

As might be expected, the series includes several new films about the war in Iraq, but there are also two documentaries about World War II and the anti-Nazi resistance that will reward viewers. "Poumy" is a half-hour profile of Andree "Poumy" Moreuil, a tough-minded French Jew who worked for the Resistance after her husband was captured in the fall of France. Moreuil is smart, funny and utterly frank, and this short film by Sam Ball is a reminder of the power of a single dedicated person under pressure.

"Lover Other" by Barbara Hammer, was unavailable at press time, but Hammer's ongoing documentation of lesbian history has been one of the joys of independent documentary in recent years and this tale of two women artists on the German-occupied Channel Islands sounds quite unusual.

"Documentary Fortnight Expanded" will run at the Museum of Modern Art (11W. 53rd St.) from Feb. 9-March 13. For schedule and ticket information, phone (212) 708-9400 or go to [www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org).