

NAZI IDEOLOGY  
AND THE  
FEATURE FILMS OF THE THIRD REICH

by  
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OF THE THIRD REICH

BY

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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For my parents, whose encouragement and support were invaluable to me.

Also, for my dear friend Benny Claman. You are remembered and loved.

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Influence is not only a sure sign that something is art, but the degree of influence is also the only measure of the value of art.

—Tolstoy

We are convinced that films constitute one of the most modern and scientific means of influencing the masses. Therefore a government must not neglect them.

—Joseph Goebbels

Public opinion as we understand it cannot exist in a police state; its place is taken by an official image of the world expressed through the media of mass communications.

—David Welch

## ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to answer several questions regarding the use of feature films in the Third Reich to convey Nazi ideology. Primarily, the feature film of Nazi Germany is analyzed as a reflection of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. The economic, political and ideological history of the pre-1933 German cinema is considered, along with the relationship between the powerful sectors of the German film industry and Joseph Goebbels. The traditional viewpoint that Nazi film policy represented a break with the film industry's pre-1933 era is examined. Further, the operation and interrelationship of ideological apparatuses such as the *Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*, the *Reichsfilmkammer* and the *Reichskulturkammer* are analyzed to determine their impact on the Nazi feature film. Specifically, Goebbels' relationship with the film industry is analyzed to determine whether it was hostile and forceful or mutually cooperative. Goebbels' views on art and film propaganda are also examined to determine if Goebbels wanted the cinema to produce apolitical entertainment films, basic propaganda films, feature films with National Socialist characteristics, or some combination thereof. Finally, an analysis of various feature films is performed to determine their National Socialist ideological content, and a particular attempt is made to analyze the selected feature films within their original socio-political, historical and ideological conjuncture.

It is this author's conclusion that at least some, probably most, and possibly all Nazi feature films demonstrate aspects of the Nazi *Weltanschauung* in varying degrees of intensity. Goebbels did not wish to replace feature films with crude propaganda films, but sought to use the feature film as a major method of ideological indoctrination; to this end he created powerful and extensive

ideological apparatuses and established close ties with the major political and financial interests within film industry. Far from representing a major break with the film industry's past, the operation of the industry during the Third Reich represented an intensification of existing monopolistic trends for the purpose of establishing the German film industry as an equally profitable and ideologically powerful enterprise.

It is the author's belief that a chronological survey of events, followed by an analysis of statistics and government statements and a review of selected feature films is the best approach to fulfilling the thesis' objectives. Wherever possible, the author has tried to rely upon well-documented, factually accurate and unbiased sources.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: THE GERMAN FILM INDUSTRY TO 1933	14
CHAPTER 3: GOEBBELS AND THE GERMAN FILM INDUSTRY	25
3.1: Goebbels, Hitler and the use of film propaganda	25
3.2: The Early Years: 1933-36	34
3.3: The Crisis Returns	48
3.4: The Nationalized Film Industry: 1937-42	52
CHAPTER 4: PROPAGANDA AND THE VIEWING CONJUNCTURE	66
CHAPTER 5: ENEMIES OF THE REICH	72
5.10: Racism and the International Conspiracy of Enemies	72
5.11: Anti-Semitic Films	74
5.12: The British: Friend or Foe?	85
5.13: The Soviets	92
5.14: Anti-Reich Elements	96
5.141: The Anti-Polish Campaign	97
5.142: The "Euthanasia" Films	101
CHAPTER 6: <i>DER FÜHRER</i>	107
CHAPTER 7: BLOOD AND SOIL	119
CHAPTER 8: PARTY FILMS	129
CHAPTER 9: <i>KOLBERG: THE LAST FILM DER NATION</i>	146
CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION	156
BIBLIOGRAPHY	163

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

An integral part of political studies must concern the analysis of visual images created by political organizations. As political activity has become increasingly visually-oriented with the advent of mass media technology, the images created by governments and other groups contain growing amounts of valuable information about world outlook, political programs and ideologies. Perhaps nowhere is this better demonstrated than by the National Socialist use of the cinema to indoctrinate the German people and those under Nazi rule with the official Nazi world outlook or *Weltanschauung*. Despite its enormously evil nature, the National Socialist movement recognized the value of powerful images and made a pioneering effort in the political use of film. Other elements of the mass media were not neglected in the mad quest to shape the spirit of the German *volk*, but like Lenin, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda, believed that film was the most powerful instrument of ideological indoctrination.

Since National Socialism was an enormously visual and iconographic movement, and especially since the cinema was Goebbels' preferred method of ideological persuasion, the study of Nazi cinema should warrant considerable attention. However only recently have political researchers turned to film as a means to enrich their understanding of the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. Compared to the masses of general literature on National Socialism, little has been written about the use of cinema as an ideological instrument. The comprehension of the Nazi movement suffers from this lack of research, since the feature films of the Third Reich offer an informative visual account of the extremely eclectic and pragmatic Nazi political programme and *Weltanschauung* that were ultimately

subordinated to Hitler's leadership. Although some authors recognize the importance of films in deciphering the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, much research contains biases and subjective analyses that hinder the study of this important part of National Socialism.

David Hull's *Film In the Third Reich* is the clearest example of the subjective, biased approach that claims to demonstrate how Goebbels' forcefully subverted an industry that "seems to have ignored politics as much as possible...".<sup>1</sup> According to Hull, "...the industry was in a state of shock within a few months of the establishment of the Nazi government."<sup>2</sup>, while "cautious revolt was in the air in various artistic fields."<sup>3</sup> Hull also states that prior to 30 January, 1933, "...the industry organizations were difficult to infiltrate and control."<sup>4</sup> In his analysis of Nazi *Spielfilme*, or feature films, Hull injects extremely subjective remarks such as "corny", "pure trash", "bizarre", and so on, and does not consider the ideological significance of Nazi features from the original political, socio-cultural and historical conjuncture surrounding the film's release. The result of this subjective approach often leads to the incorrect classification of feature films containing elements of the Nazi *Weltanschauung* as "apolitical entertainment".

While it is possible to be sympathetic with Hull's bias in consideration of the atrocities committed by the Nazis, the significance of the Nazi era demands as objective an approach as possible. The deficiencies of the subjective approach obscure the understanding of how Goebbels used financial, legal and administrative methods coupled with a close relationship with the German film industry, to use the German film industry to produce National Socialist feature

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<sup>1</sup>D. S. Hull, *Film In the Third Reich, A study of the German Cinema, 1933-45*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1969), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

films that played an extremely important ideological role in Nazi Germany. Significantly, Goebbels recognized that within feature films the optimum level of propaganda was not necessarily the maximum level, and throughout the features of the Nazi era the intensity of the National Socialist ideological content ranges widely. Goebbels ordered the production of several *P-Filme*, or propaganda films which made no attempt to hide their Nazi contents, but the far more subtle *Tendenzfilme* was the usual vehicle of choice. *Tendenzfilme*, or films exhibiting National Socialist qualities, used analogies to present Nazi viewpoints on a wide range of topics, and because the intensity of their Nazi content varies so widely, they are the most difficult group of Nazi films to interpret. An additional group of films were the *Staatsauftragfilme*, or State-sponsored films, which were extremely elaborate productions containing Nazi viewpoints which again ranged in intensity.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine National Socialist feature films as a reflection of the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. Are National Socialist elements discernible in the feature films of the Third Reich, and how were they inserted? If Nazi elements exist, how are they represented within the films, and how do they relate to the Nazi *Weltanschauung*? How many feature films carried elements of the Nazi *Weltanschauung*? Are these elements specific to the Nazi outlook, and if so, why are they significant?

Since the *Filmwelt* underwent rapid and massive changes from 1914-1932, its economic, political, and historical background must be considered to better understand Goebbels' relationship with the industry. What were the economic advantages and difficulties of the film industry during this period, and was the industry used for ideological or political purposes? How did the financial health and political activity of the industry affect its relationship with Joseph Goebbels, and did the industry possess a popular *Filmpolitik*?

If National Socialist tendencies are to be discerned in the films of the Nazi period, then it is crucial to understand how they were inserted. Further, it is essential to understand Goebbels' attitudes and beliefs on film propaganda, and his function within the various ideological apparatuses set up within the film industry. Specifically, several questions must be considered: (1) What were Goebbels' beliefs on propaganda, art and the power of cinema to influence audiences? (2) How did Goebbels' views on propaganda and art compare with Hitler's views, and in what areas did the two men agree or disagree? (3) What ideological apparatuses were created and what was Goebbels' position within them? (4) How did these apparatuses insert a National Socialist character into feature films? (5) What additional legislation was created to assist in the control of the industry? (6) What degree of ideological control did these apparatuses and the legislation provide, and what were their advantages or disadvantages? Finally, how did the industry react to the control?

In examining the ideological content of feature films, no attempt will be made to permanently "fix" a film's meaning or to deny alternate readings. Further, the possible influence of films on public behaviour will not be examined. Instead, feature films will be related to their respective social, political and historical conjuncture, and every attempt will be made to consider how the films may have been read by the audiences within the Third Reich. The primary questions examined are: what is the ideological content of the feature films under examination; what is the relationship between the films and their respective conjuncture; and why should the conjuncture of the film be considered?

In considering the above questions, some concepts must be defined. Specifically, "feature films", "propaganda" and "National Socialism" must be considered.

This thesis defines feature films as all dramas, comedies, romances, adventures and any other films popularly considered entertaining but capable of containing an ideological message. Feature films exclude all documentaries, newsreels, short *Kulturfilme*, experimental films, instructional films and any other films not intended for widespread public exhibition. Throughout this thesis, analyses of documentaries and other non-feature films have largely been excluded except where their brief mention facilitates the understanding of related feature films.

Propaganda is a difficult term to universally define, and entire books have been devoted to the definition of this topic. John Grierson, a noted writer on the documentary, defined propaganda as "the art of public persuasion".<sup>5</sup> In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler considered the function of propaganda as calling the masses' attention to "certain facts, processes, necessities, etc., whose significance is thus for the first time placed within their field of vision."<sup>6</sup> Hitler further explained: "The more modest its intellectual ballast, the more exclusively it takes into consideration the emotions of the masses, the more effective it will be [in persuading the masses]."<sup>7</sup> Goebbels agreed with Hitler about the purpose of propaganda, but insisted that propaganda could be carefully disguised under art, music and other seemingly innocuous vehicles to provide an even more effective method of ideological persuasion. Although Goebbels' concept of propaganda is further delineated in Chapters 3 and 4, this thesis considers propaganda as the means by which Goebbels sought to influence the actions, thoughts and beliefs of the masses. Through propaganda which promoted stereotypes, apparent truths, and powerful emotions such as fear and hate,

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<sup>5</sup>John Grierson, quoted in Robert Vas, "Sorcerers or Apprentices: Some Aspects of the Propaganda Film", in *Sight and Sound*, (Autumn 1963), p. 199.

<sup>6</sup>Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Ralf Manheim, trans. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), p. 179.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 180.

Goebbels sought to instill a Nazi *Weltanschauung* in German citizens; its purpose was to ideologically control the way Germans interpreted their surroundings and to contribute to their functioning as obedient servants of the Nazi régime.<sup>8</sup> The political value of implanting the Nazi world-view in the German masses was indispensable, if the Nazis were to proceed with their wildly barbaric and warlike political actions. It was essential to have the masses believe that the political behaviour of Hitler's government was necessary and beyond reproach.

The National Socialist perceived the Western world to be in a state of spiritual, racial and cultural decay. Liberalism was a "Jewish invention", and liberal societies embodied a "smash and grab" way of life characterized by greed and selfishness. Opposite the German *Völkisch* society where the individual supposedly sought to give to the good of the community, in the liberal society the individual only tried to grab for himself. The liberal democracy was another so-called "Jewish invention" which was ultimately doomed to fail since it was believed that only the *Führer* or leader, was capable of directing the masses. On a more global level, world history was perceived as an eternal struggle between the Aryan "Master Race" (*Herrschaft*) and the other lower enemy racial groups. Only the Aryan created culture; all other races were considered "slave races" that either maintained, destroyed or perverted what culture the Aryan had bestowed upon them. Regarding Germany, the National Socialist perceived the liberal and supposedly "Jewish dominated" Weimar Republic as extremely dangerous; if the decay of German society was not

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<sup>8</sup>Within this thesis, it is understood that the Nazi *Weltanschauung* and Nazi ideology are inseparable: one could not functionally hold the Nazi *Weltanschauung* without believing related elements of Nazi ideology. It is the ideology that makes the world-view or *Weltanschauung* possible. Further, neither the Nazi *Weltanschauung* nor the ideology are static elements but are ultimately subject to Hitler's leadership. Please see the following definition for clarification.

stopped, Germany would also fall prey to the subhuman races.<sup>9</sup> Thus, National Socialism was an absurdly nationalist, racist, anti-democratic and anti-liberal movement, but it lacked a clearly definable ideology or political programme since the movement's many components derive from various sources. A considerable part of the movement is based on *Völkisch* concepts originating from an old German intellectual tradition whose roots lie partly in eighteenth century romanticism. Some prominent philosophers who contributed elements later found in National Socialist thought include: Richard Wagner, Paul de Lagarde, Fichte, Hegel, Jahn and Treitschke.<sup>10</sup> A grossly misinterpreted and carefully edited version of Nietzsche's writings was also claimed by Nazi "scholars"(!) as fundamental in the Nazi world view. Still other elements of National Socialism derive from the arcane, mystical and racist thought of Armanic philosophers such as Guido von List, Lanz von Liebenfels, H. P. Blavatsky, and Arthur de Gobineau. Houston Stewart Chamberlain's 1899 racist work, *Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (*Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*) also influenced the thought of many Nazi officials, but again it is probably impossible to establish any one source as particularly influential. Many authors have thus turned to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as a guide to Nazi thought, but while it does forecast many key Party actions in the Third Reich, some of the concepts expressed in *Mein Kampf* were later altered or abandoned. Alfred Rosenberg was commissioned by Hitler to act as the Party's ideologist, but his doctrines were often ignored.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, National Socialism was a pragmatic doctrine which operated according to the wishes of the *Führer*.

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<sup>9</sup>It is interesting to note that the National Socialist considered some of the most admired modern art as the betrayal of national values by "greedy Jewish artists and international art dealers" – a completely ridiculous statement!

<sup>10</sup>For an in depth analysis of the roots of the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, please consult Peter Viereck. *Metapolitics: The Roots of the Nazi Mind*. (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965).

<sup>11</sup>From his Nuremberg prison cell in 1946, Rosenberg condemned Hitler for not practising Rosenberg's "pure theory".



Therefore, this thesis relies on the actions of the Nazi Party during the Third Reich and a cautious reading of *Mein Kampf* to help discern elements of National Socialism in the feature films of the period. Where the term "Nazi ideology" is found, it refers to concepts which, although not always exclusive to Nazism, may be considered prominent within the NSDAP in the context of 1933-45.

Essential to the examination of Nazi ideology within feature films in the Nazi period is a brief survey of the major works on the topic.

Siegfried Kracauer's 1947 work, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* deals with the German films and film industry from 1918 to 1933. Kracauer analyzes the films of the 1918-1933 era as a reflection of deep psychosocial dispositions within the German society of the period. In recent years Kracauer's thesis is increasingly criticized by many authors on methodological grounds, since in a democratic society the connection between the psychosocial tendencies of the masses and the film media is tenuous. Kracauer deals little with the Nazi era but provides an interesting analysis of film devices and Nazi newsreels, and a general discussion of *Filmwelt* developments in the Weimar period. Unfortunately, Kracauer's examination of the pre-Nazi industry lacks an in depth political analysis, although he does indicate some authoritarian tendencies within the films and *Filmwelt* from 1930-32.

David Hull's *Film in the Third Reich: A Study of the German Cinema 1933-1945*, published in 1969, has already been suggested as a highly subjective, biased approach that attempts to interpret the films and the *Filmwelt* of the Third Reich. According to Hull, the "Nazi bullies"<sup>12</sup> forcefully subverted a politically innocent film industry and ordered the production of "trashy" and "corny" feature

<sup>12</sup>Hull, p. 7.

films. Hull also states that the majority of Nazi features were apolitical, escapist entertainment providing relief to a war-weary people. Hull's analysis suffers partially from poor source material, much of which is taken from the New York Times or Nazi publications which may be factually inaccurate. However, most of Hull's film synopses are useful, since they provide good plot and scene detail although this is often misinterpreted. While Hull's synopses contain highly subjective remarks, these can usually be overlooked.

Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel's *The German Cinema* provides a concise summary of events within the *Filmwelt* during the Weimar and Nazi eras. Kracauer's psychosocial theories and his analysis of the Weimar period are suggested as a considerable generalization. The authors conclude that a limited degree of cooperation between the industry and Goebbels occurred around 1932-33, but the ideological operation and function of the RMVP and associated bodies of legislation and administration are examined only briefly. Films from the pre-Nazi era are reviewed and several Nazi features are discussed as representative of Nazi themes, but the authors state that the majority of Nazi features were escapist and politically harmless entertainment features.

H. H. Wollenberg's *Fifty Years of German Film* is a short recount of the commercial-industrial tendencies, artistic and spiritual trends and political influences from 1895 to 1947. Wollenberg concludes that during the period 1895-1947, the above three factors have been active, at times together, sometimes in opposition, and during some periods individually, although by the Third Reich politics was clearly the prevailing factor. Significantly, Wollenberg, who was involved in the German film industry, attacks Kracauer's psychosocial thesis and states that the main purpose of film in the Third Reich was to convey ideological messages to the masses.

Francis Courtade and Pierre Cadars' *Histoire du Cinéma Nazi* examines Nazi feature films as representative of the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. The ideological apparatuses under Goebbels' administration are seen as vital to the insertion of ideological messages in films. The *Filmwelt* is suggested as collaborating with the Nazi régime to produce technically excellent and ideologically dedicated feature films, although the authors classify some films as apolitical entertainment.

Erwin Leiser's *Nazi Cinema* is the written version of his German language film *Deutschland, Erwache!* (*Wake up, Germany!*). Leiser believes that most of the Nazi features contained propaganda carefully hidden under the guise of entertainment, and numerous film reviews expose how Nazi features contained various concepts of the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. Goebbels is also discussed as an intelligent but evil propagandist who made film the most important propaganda weapon of the Nazi régime.

The work of M. S. Phillips is significant, and two main sources are quoted in this thesis. Phillips' 1971 article "The Nazi Control of the German Film Industry" surveys the methods and men involved in the Nazi control of the *Filmwelt*. Specifically, Phillips argues: (A) the organs of control closely reflected and were determined by the conventions and economic situation of the German motion picture industry; (B) total state control was not the aim of the Nazis, but was forced on them by economic factors; (C) the men involved in the control reflected two aspects of totalitarian cultural dictatorship—(1) the need to find a balance in the selection of key personnel between the politically reliable and the artistically talented; (2) the need for Joseph Goebbels to rule through men who were personally dependent on his support for their careers. Notably, Phillips states that only a few features contained propaganda, whereas most were entertainment oriented. However, in Phillips' 1978 article, "The German

Film Industry and New Order” Phillips contradicts his earlier statements by admitting that feature films were a major weapon of long term ideological indoctrination. The article claims that Goebbels sought to reorganize the film industry on a permanent, monopolistic basis to further the Nazi revolution across Europe, rather than to make money. The majority of the article is outside the scope of this thesis, although Phillips’ discussion of the industry’s economics and politics is occasionally pertinent.

Julian Petley’s *Capital and Culture: German Cinema 1933-45* challenges the conventional view that the NSDAP’s policy towards the film industry produced a decisive break with the past. Petley argues that the economic development of the German cinema after 1933 was only an intensification of the monopolistic tendencies emerging in the Weimar period. Powerful political and financial interests within the German film industry co-operated with the Nazi government to establish the industry on a healthy profitable basis as well as an extension of governmental control. The industry was quite happy to give up a degree of artistic freedom in return for financial aid, and non-Jewish sectors of the industry had little to fear from Goebbels’ administration since they were instrumental in setting up the Chamber of Film which worked to their ends. The feature films of the Third Reich were not escapist entertainment, but ideologically dedicated productions that were created by the complex ideological apparatus of the RMVP and its associated bodies. Further, Goebbels was not interested in replacing the industry’s features with crude propaganda, but in carefully mixing the two to assist in the spread of Nazi ideas. Petley attacks analyses of Nazi feature films which classify them as “entertainment” and “propaganda”: such a classification denies the ideological function of the RMVP and its associated bodies. Instead, Petley claims that analyzed within their original social, political and historical conjuncture, Nazi

feature films contained varying intensities of propaganda that are often missed if the films are examined from a post-war context. To Petley's credit, extensive use of statistical tables are used to reinforce his claims.

David Welch's *Propaganda and the German Cinema: 1933-1945* suggests that Nazi film propaganda contained many themes which dramatized the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. However, Welch states that after 1943 Goebbels largely abandoned his ideological orientation in favour of escapist entertainment. Powerful political and financial interests within the German film industry are suggested as cooperating with Goebbels to reestablish the industry on a solid financial footing. Ultimately this reorganization created a monopolistic system of control and organization which maintained profits, increased cinema attendance, produced a high standard of technical proficiency but contributed little stylistically to the film industry.

The prominent German sources of this thesis include Jürgen Spiker's *Film und Kapital* and Wolfgang Becker's *Film und Herrschaft*. Both are strongly similar to Julian Petley's work in their emphasis on the economic and ideological aspects of the Weimar and Nazi *Filmwelt*. Quoting from vast numerous statistical tables compiled from many sources, Becker and Spiker show how monopolistic trends within the film industry of the Weimar period were greatly strengthened in the Third Reich. Contrary to Hull, powerful financial and political interests within the film industry are clearly documented as assisting Goebbels in his quest to turn the *Filmwelt* into an ideological apparatus for the NSDAP. Becker and Spiker's analyses are complemented by Gerd Albrecht's *Nationalsozialistische Filmpolitik: Eine Soziologische Untersuchung über die Spielfilme des Dritten Reiches* and Joseph Wulf's *Theater und Film im Dritten Reich: Eine Dokumentation*. Albrecht's work documents Goebbels' desire to mix art and ideology, and shows how feature

films contained the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. Wulf demonstrates how Nazi ideas hid behind the mask of entertainment, and provides a valuable compilation of Nazi film reviews, Party documents, and magazine articles from the Third Reich.

Other than these major works, the majority of other articles, books, diaries and autobiographies examine the thesis topic only briefly. With the exception of Petley, Phillips and possibly Welch, much of the existing literature in English lacks an in depth analysis of the economic and ideological functioning of the ideological apparatus erected by Goebbels and the *Filmwelt*. German sources, however, focus more closely on the industry's economics and the operation of the various ideological apparatuses within the Third Reich. It is the goal of this thesis to respond to the aforementioned questions through synthesizing and interpreting the information contained among the various sources.

A brief historical survey of the economics, politics and developments within the German film industry prior to 1933 may now be undertaken to determine if and how the industry was prepared to co-operate with the National Socialist régime.

## CHAPTER TWO THE GERMAN FILM INDUSTRY TO 1933

Although it is incorrect to state that the German film industry held any universal *filmpolitik* prior to 1933, Goebbels' film policies were far from unwelcomed by the industry's non-Jewish sector. To best understand Goebbels' relationship with the *Filmwelt*, the history, economics and politics of the film industry to 1933 must be examined.

The German film industry was massively underdeveloped until the close of the First World War. Prior to 1914, German film companies existed only on an extremely limited scale, and in 1914, only 15 percent of the films shown in Germany were German.<sup>1</sup> Even in 1915, German newsreels relied heavily on French film footage<sup>2</sup>, and one of the largest film companies in Germany was the Danish-owned Nordisk films (NF). In 1915 the largest German film company, Projektions AG Union (Pagu), merged with NF, providing it with facilities in the production, distribution and exhibition branches of the film industry. Nordisk was part owner of the enormous film studios at Babelsberg, and by 1916 Nordisk owned 56 German cinemas and produced 25 percent of all films made in Germany.<sup>3</sup> The war was especially advantageous to Nordisk, since it allowed the politically neutral company to buy out British, French and Italian film operations in Germany, and further expand its hold on the German market. At the same time, the war brought import restrictions and several small German companies were created to fill a gap in the expanding market. The number of cinemas in Germany increased from 2446 in 1914 to 3130 in 1917; the number

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<sup>1</sup> M. S. Phillips, "The Nazi Control of the German film Industry", *Journal of European Studies*, vol. 1 (March 1971), p. 38, Julian Petley, *Capital and Culture: German Cinema 1933-45*, (London: British Film Institute, 1979), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Otto Kriegk, *Der deutsche Film im Spiegel der Ufa*, (Berlin, Ufa Buch Verlag, 1943), p. 52, quoted in Phillips, "The Nazi Control of the German film Industry", p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Petley, p. 29.

of production companies increased approximately five times, and the number of film distributors increased twofold.<sup>4</sup>

The foreign dominated film industry was a source of considerable discomfort for German film companies, but attempts to boycott NF films and block the foreign intrusion yielded little success. In 1916 however, powerful nationalist and military elements within the German government realized the potential of the film industry and it sought to use it for propaganda purposes. On 19 November 1916, the government helped amalgamate several small German film companies into the newly founded Deutsche Lichtbild Gesellschaft (Deulig), created to "publicize the Fatherland and the German film at home and abroad".<sup>5</sup> Although it helped set up Deulig, the German government was not directly involved in its management, and did not provide any of the initial capital, which was instead supplied by two industry giants, Alfred Hugenberg and Ludwig Klitzsch. Notably, a similar arrangement would occur some twenty-one years later under the Nazi régime. Hugenberg had far reaching connections in German industry; he was a director of Krupp and president of an association of mining interests; he possessed a controlling interest in Germany's largest publishing company, Scherl Verlag, and was especially interested in publicising the work of the Rhine-Ruhr heavy industry through various mass media.<sup>6</sup> Klitzsch was also a director of the Scherl Verlag, and had previously used film to publicise the work of heavy industry in the Rhine-Westphalia; on 9 February, 1917 Hugenberg appointed him director of Deulig.<sup>7</sup>

Deulig was highly successful financially, and concentrated on making *Kulturfilm* and short publicity films for the government and private industry.

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich von Zglinicki, *Der Weg des Films*, (Berlin: Rembrandt Verlag, 1956), p. 328.

<sup>5</sup> Henning von Böhmer and Helmut Reitz, *Der Film in Wirtschaft und Recht*, (Berlin: 1933), p. 6, quoted in Phillips, "The Nazi Control of the German film Industry", p. 38.

<sup>6</sup> Petley, p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.



However, on 30 January, 1917, the German High Command subordinated all film groups producing propaganda to the Bild-und Film Amt (Bufa), a "proto-propaganda ministry" that intended to restructure the entire German film industry for military-nationalist purposes.<sup>8</sup> Again, a similar event would occur under Goebbels's administration. Since Nordisk was still operating strongly in Germany, a head of Bufa, Dr. Meissner, suggested to Ludendorff that NF's assets could be confiscated and used to create a massive new company. Ludendorff consulted the director of the Deutsche Bank, Emil Georg von Stauss, who agreed to help finance the venture, but deciding that sound relations with Scandanavia were important, NF's assets were not directly confiscated. Instead, NF was forced to merge with the Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft (Ufa), founded on 18 December, 1917.<sup>9</sup> Nordisk was given stock in the new company, but was unable to convert the stock into cash for two years, and as a result, NF lost significant funds when its shares were finally sold. The remainder of the total Ufa stock of 25 million Marks was held by the Deutsche Bank and Dresener Bank, private investors, and the government, which held 8 million under conditions of secrecy.<sup>10</sup> Hugenberg and Klitzsch were not involved with the foundation of Ufa in any way; von Stauss was made chairman of the new company, a significant act since previously he had been involved in a campaign against Deulig.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 32, Phillips, in "The Nazi Control of the German film Industry" cites the date as 14 February 1918 (p. 39) while H. H. Wollenberg, *Fifty Years of German Film*, (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1972), p. 12 quotes Ufa's founding as November 1917.

<sup>10</sup> Phillips, "The Nazi Control of the German film Industry", p. 39. states that the Deutsche Bank and Dresener Bank held 10 million Marks and the government 5 million, but in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (University of East Anglia, 1974) he cites the government as holding 8 million Marks shares (p. 12). For more information on the NF takeover, please consult E. Neergard, *History of the Danish Film*. (Copenhagen: 1963).

<sup>11</sup> A campaign was launched against Deulig in 1917 by competitors of companies competing with firms advertised by Deulig. Apparently major companies in the chemical, electrical and ship-building industry believed that Deulig gave their competitors an unfair advantage. Since the Deutsche Bank had major interests in the companies protesting Deulig, the bank financed the

Ufa immediately became Germany's best and largest film company, in part due to NF's considerable assets that included Pagu's facilities and cinema chain. Other German film companies feared Ufa's power, especially since it soon took over other competitors, such as the famous Messter Konzern. Even Deulig was forced into an agreement with Ufa, and in the Third Reich Ufa's strength continued to upset its competitors. Significantly, however, Ufa was not particularly large in comparison to Hollywood companies.<sup>12</sup>

Following the peace, the government was forced to give up its share in Ufa, which were taken up by the Deutsche Bank, since von Stauss sensed the potential for astronomical profits. As inflation set in around 1920, the film industry's growth indeed exploded; a massive export boom made it extremely profitable to export or "dump" films on foreign markets in exchange for hard currency. While production costs rose during the inflationary period, these were almost always offset by the profits, and the number of production companies increased at a nearly geometric rate. In 1911 there were 11 production companies; in 1918, 131; in 1920, 230; in 1922 360.<sup>13</sup> The number of film distributors also increased: in 1911 there were 19 distributors; in 1918, 55; in 1920, 75, in 1922, 135.<sup>14</sup> During the boom, only a fraction of German production companies' costs were covered by the home market, which expanded considerably since people realized their money would soon be worthless.<sup>15</sup> Significantly, the German government undertook to protect the

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campaign. Hence von Stauss' involvement represents a cooperation between the ideologically motivated government and the profit motivated investors, a significant theme later occurring in a stronger form in the Third Reich.

<sup>12</sup> Messter Konzern was founded by Oskar Messter, popularly regarded as the father of German film from his projector manufacturing company dating to 1896. See Wollenberg, p. 7-8.

<sup>13</sup> Wollenberg, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Petley states during 1921-23, 30-40 percent of the production costs were covered by revenues from the home market (p. 32); Phillips states a figure of 10 percent (p. 40). See also Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 132.

German film industry and home market from foreign competition, and in September, 1920, a *Kontingentgesetz* (Quota Law) was passed to limit the number of imported films to 15 percent of the total films shown in Germany.<sup>16</sup> In 1935, Goebbels acted similarly, although his reasoning was derived less from profit than from ideological considerations.

Ufa flourished and expanded throughout this inflationary period; in 1921-2 Ufa paid a dividend of 30 percent, while in 1922-3 a dividend of 700 per cent was paid, although inflation must also be considered.<sup>17</sup> Ufa continued to swallow competitors during the boom, notably acquiring Decla-Bioscop AG in 1921, and in the same year Ufa's capital stock rose to 200 million Marks.<sup>18</sup> However, the Dawes Plan of 1924 re-established Germany on the Gold Standard, and the boom immediately collapsed. The export trend was suddenly reversed, and foreign and American films began to flood the German market.<sup>19</sup> The government responded with a quota system whereby for every foreign film imported, a German film had to be produced. This led to the production of innumerable *Kontingentfilme*, low-quality films produced *en masse* to obtain quota certificates allowing foreign films to be imported.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the German film industry was faced with rising costs: in 1912 an average feature film cost approximately 12,000 Marks, whereas by 1927 a similar feature cost 175,000.<sup>21</sup> The German market also suffered from an oversupply of films, and the industry estimated that it could not profitably deal with more than 270-300

<sup>16</sup> On 1 January 1921, 180,000 metres of imports were allowed. Wollenberg, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Petley, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>19</sup> For extremely thorough accounts of the German film industry in the 1920's, please see Jürgen Spiker, *Film und Kapital*, (Berlin, Verlag Volker Spiess, 1975), pp. 1-60; Julian Petley, pp. 29-46; Phillips, "The Nazi Control of the German Film Industry", pp. 37-45.

<sup>20</sup> Many American and foreign companies set up facilities in Germany exclusively to produce *Kontingentfilme* that would never be shown, an action the Nazis denounced as American cultural imperialism.

<sup>21</sup> Spiker, p. 143, Petley, p. 34.

films in 1924.<sup>22</sup> In comparison, the market was overburdened by 90 percent in 1924; 68 percent in 1925, 48 percent in 1926 and 29 percent in 1927.<sup>23</sup>

To offset the losses of the production sector, many large companies relied upon their distribution sector for survival. Smaller companies which did not have distribution interests usually went bankrupt as a result of the above mentioned difficulties, and overall the production and distribution sectors of the industry became concentrated in several larger firms.<sup>24</sup> Even in the exhibition sector, rising costs caused many cinema owners to sell out to larger companies, and the number of cinemas owned in groups increased from this crisis period until well into the Third Reich.

Ufa and its larger competitors Emelka and Terra hardly escaped financial difficulties. By 1925 Ufa had overextended itself from both elaborate productions and corporate expansionism, and incurred significant losses in the fiscal year of 1924-5. Unable to obtain further loans from either the government or the German banks to which it already owed funds, Ufa accepted an unfavorable agreement with Paramount Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn Corporation which brought a loan of 17 million Marks at 7.5 percent interest.<sup>25</sup> The agreement established a jointly-owned distribution company, Parufamet, and Ufa agreed to take 40 films from both companies in return for Paramount and Metro-Goldwyn accepting 20 Ufa films for distribution in the U.S.. Ufa also accepted a deal with Universal Pictures which brought a loan of \$275,000 U.S. in return for Ufa distributing 50 of Universal's features.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Spiker, p. 38, Petley, p. 34.

<sup>23</sup> This is a ratio of supply versus demand. Spiker, p. 38. Petley, p. 34.

<sup>24</sup> Small film companies had great difficulty securing Bank loans, since they often had few assets, and even when a loan was obtained, the interests rates often approached 10 percent a month. For statistics clearly indicating the industry's gradual concentration, please see Spiker, p. 39-42.

<sup>25</sup> Kracauer, p. 133, Phillips, "The Nazi Control of the German film Industry", p. 40, Petley, p. 36. Many other German film companies entered into similar deals with American firms eager to exploit the German market.

<sup>26</sup> Petley, p. 36.

In 1927, however, Ufa again faced financial ruin when it had to repay its considerable debts to the Deutsche Bank, but was bought out by Alfred Hugenberg who was now the leader of the nationalist and racist Deutschnationale Volkspartei (DNVP). Hugenberg possessed a controlling interest in Ufa, with other stock purchased by Hugenberg's right-wing colleagues, including Ludwig Klitzsch. Hugenberg made no attempt to disguise his extreme right-wing politics, and openly admitted that he used his various publishing concerns for political ends; however with Ufa he realized that profitability came before propaganda. No overt propaganda features were produced, and Ufa was re-organized, its administration streamlined, and its expansionist tendencies temporarily curtailed. Under Goebbels' supervision, Ufa remained a profit driven enterprise but focused on producing "artistically political" feature films discussed in Chapters 4-8.

Although the financial situation of the industry improved by 1928, the coming of sound films and the stock market crash of 1929 dealt a nearly lethal blow to the corporate survivors of the 1924-27 crisis. The cost of converting to sound films was enormous, since the equipment was expensive, film production costs rose<sup>27</sup> and license and patent fees were costly. Although various sound systems existed, the Dutch owned Tobis Tonbild Syndikat held the European rights to the widely used Tri-Ergon system, but Ufa had fortunately acquired a license for the system around 1923-4.<sup>28</sup> When Tobis merged with the German Klangfilm company to form Tobis-Klangfilm<sup>29</sup>, Ufa was able to conclude an agreement that exempted it from license charges. Many firms could not afford these new expenses and went bankrupt, while others entered into a Hire-

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<sup>27</sup> In 1926, the average feature film cost 175,000 Marks; in 1929, 179,371 Marks; in 1932, 273,484 Marks. For more statistics, please see Spiker, p. 54.

<sup>28</sup> Wollenberg, p. 23 The Tri-Ergon system quickly became an industry standard.

<sup>29</sup> Under this agreement Tobis concentrated on the production sector and Klangfilm on the reproduction sector.

Purchase agreement with Tobis that allowed a firm to use Tobis-supplied equipment and pay it back over time. In the event many production companies were unable to meet their obligations and Tobis thus acquired their assets, building Tobis into a major competitor on the German market. Further difficulties occurred with the decline of cinema receipts: in 1928 receipts totaled 274,976 million Marks; in 1930, 243,900 million, and in 1932, 176,400 million.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the industry's taxes were extremely high: in 1932 film producers paid 1.5 million Marks in tax, film distributors 55 million Marks (mostly sales tax), and cinema owners some 23 million marks.<sup>31</sup> The end result of increasing license, equipment and production costs coupled with taxes and decreasing audience figures spelled disaster for the film industry. Film production and distribution became increasingly concentrated: numerous companies gave up, some merged with larger competitors and many remained independent but worked on a contract basis for one of the major film companies.<sup>32</sup> A lesser concentration occurred in the exhibition sector where some individual cinema owners sold out to larger companies, and in 1931-2 an estimated 2,000 cinemas changed hands.<sup>33</sup>

Although by 1932, the complexities of sound films and improved Quota Laws reduced the number of foreign films entering Germany, the industry as a whole was near financial ruin. The Brüning government appeared more interested in fighting inflation than in assisting the industry, and in late 1932 the film industry's main representative body, the Spitzenorganisation der Deutschen Filmindustrie (SPIO) devised a plan to save the industry.<sup>34</sup> It is important to note

<sup>30</sup> Spiker, p. 55.

<sup>31</sup> Böhmer-Reitz, p. 14., quoted in Phillips, "The Nazi Control of the German film Industry", p. 43.

<sup>32</sup> By 1934, 35 of the 49 production companies were partly owned or working for the three major film companies who made 77 (60 percent) of the year's 129 feature films. Spiker, p. 42.

<sup>33</sup> Phillips, "The Nazi Control of the German film Industry", p. 41.

<sup>34</sup> Prior to SPIO's formation in 1923, the heads of German film companies formed an association, the "Verband der Filmindustriellen" to maintain professional standards. The Cinema Owner's Association, the "Reichverband Deutscher Lichtspieltheaterbesitzer" was previously created

that SPIO was dominated by Hugenberg's ally, Ludwig Klitzsch, who had been appointed head of SPIO in 1927. Under Klitzsch, SPIO was transformed from an informal organization into a highly influential, nationalist<sup>35</sup> and organized association; according to Klitzsch, the German film industry had "given itself the task of serving cultural and at the same time national ends".<sup>36</sup> The objective of the SPIO Plan was to correct the financial situation and increase profits, and the Plan urged that a ministry of film be created to supervise the re-organization, concentration and rationalisation of the production and distribution sector.<sup>37</sup> SPIO was to be turned into a coercive administrative body that would ensure that film production equipment was made available only to those approved by SPIO, and that films would be distributed and exhibited only by those agreeing with SPIO's policies. In the exhibition sector, the SPIO Plan called for the reduction in the number of cinemas to increase profits, and in addition SPIO would ensure that the cost of patents, licenses and stars' fees was reduced. If necessary, the new administrative body would enact legal sanctions against uncooperative companies. Unfortunately, the SPIO Plan never clarified the state's role in the industry, or how SPIO's proposals were to be enacted: this was left to Joseph Goebbels who later implemented many of SPIO's ideas.

Before summarizing the developments in the film industry to 1933, Weimar Germany's previous censorship and entertainment tax system must be considered. Although in 1918 all film censorship was prohibited, innumerable short pornographic films were being shown under the premise of sexual education.<sup>38</sup> In May, 1920, a censorship law was passed to prohibit obscene

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in 1912, and film makers had a trade union, the "Dachorganisation der Filmschaffenden Deutschlands" (DACHO).

<sup>35</sup> Significantly, Tobis was not represented in SPIO due to its foreign ownership.

<sup>36</sup> Spiker, p. 72, quoted in Petley, p. 45 (translation by Petley).

<sup>37</sup> The details of the SPIO Plan are taken from Petley, pp. 45-6.

<sup>38</sup> Kracauer, p. 45-6, Wollenberg, p. 14.

films, films that offended religious beliefs, or that depicted excessive violence or sexuality. Further, a film could be banned if it was liable to endanger public order or safety, or injure German prestige or relations abroad.<sup>39</sup> However, the law explicitly stated that films could not be banned on account of religious, ethnic, political or social viewpoints.<sup>40</sup> Responsible for administering the 1920 law were two censorship offices, or *Prüfstelle*, located in Berlin and Munich, with the Berlin office serving as an *Oberprüfstelle*, or appeals office.<sup>41</sup> Although the law was usually adhered to, it became increasingly reinterpreted around 1930 by film censors who discriminated against liberal social and political values.<sup>42</sup> As for the government's entertainment tax system, a *Filmkammer*, or Film Office, established in 1926, awarded *Prädikate* which qualified for a reduction in the entertainment tax. The predicates were, in order of descending monetary value: *künstlerisch* (Artistic), *volksbildend* (Popularly Improving) and *Lehrfilm* (Instructional). Under Goebbels, this system would be highly expanded but the basic operation was retained.

From this brief historical summary, several factors must be noted. First, the film industry was frequently subservient to nationalistic and right-wing political ends, with the exception of the early and mid-1920's.<sup>43</sup> Second, the industry had undergone some concentration towards an oligopolistic situation, and had become acutely aware of the importance of profits. Third, considerable right-

<sup>39</sup> Phillips, "The Nazi Control of the Film Industry", p. 43.

<sup>40</sup> Dr. Ernst Seeger helped draw up this law, and as will be seen, assisted Goebbels in the Film Law of 1934. For the text of the 1920 law see Phillips' Ph.D. dissertation, p. 33.

<sup>41</sup> Phillips, "The Nazi Control of the German Film Industry", p. 43.

<sup>42</sup> Wollenberg, p. 14. See also Paul Monaco, *Cinema and Society*, (New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing, 1976), p. 53.

<sup>43</sup> Of significance was the foundation of the Phöbus Film Company with secret funds from the Reichswehr administered by Captain W. Lohmann. The purpose of Phöbus Film was apparently to "direct the interests of the German public to the questions of defence and maritime prestige, and to enhance Germany's name abroad through sales to foreign countries.". When the affair became public in 1927 Phöbus Film was dissolved amidst considerable scandal. See F. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics, 1918-1933*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 285-6.



wing elements already existed with SPIO and Ufa's management, although the industry as a whole could not be categorized as right-wing in nature. Fourth, the SPIO Plan, the censorship system and the *Filmkammer* laid much of the groundwork for the Goebbels' administration, and the financial ignorance of previous governments later helped Goebbels win allies in a film industry that he promised to assist financially. If all factors are considered, Goebbels' operation of the film industry as a profit motivated, politically-oriented industry is less alien to the industry than is often thought, and does not represent a decisive break with the industry's past.<sup>44</sup> Concisely stated, the German film industry was ready to be used in the most "ignominious act of cultural vandalism of the Twentieth Century".<sup>45</sup>

Since the film industry's pre-1933 financial and political trends have been clarified, the industry's functioning and change under Goebbels' administration will now be examined.

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<sup>44</sup> For example, David Hull states: "Needless to say, the industry was in a state of shock within a few months of the establishment of the Nazi government". Hull, p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> This phrase owes much to Peter Adam, (writer and producer), *Art in the Third Reich*, (London: BBC Television Productions in association with Allcom Film and AV GmbH, Germany and De Levita Productions, Holland, 1989), videocassette, 120 mins..

## CHAPTER 3

### GOEBBELS AND THE GERMAN FILM INDUSTRY

By December 1932, the German film industry was on the brink of financial destruction. Powerful sectors of the industry were ready to cooperate with the National Socialists in return for much needed financial aid, and with the film industry's assistance, Goebbels began to re-establish the industry on a more sound financial basis. With SPIO's help, Goebbels also erected powerful ideological apparatuses to insert National Socialist ideology into feature films. Under Goebbels' supervision, the feature film would become one of his most powerful propaganda weapons. However, some of the literature on this period suggests that Goebbels forced the industry into submission, a factually erroneous assertion. Goebbels exercised tact and cunning in his relationship with the film industry, and if the ideological content of Nazi feature films is to be understood, this relationship and the operation of ideological apparatuses must be clarified.

#### 3.1: Goebbels, Hitler, and the use of film propaganda

Of the Nazi leadership, Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels was probably best qualified to oversee the film industry's operation. Even Hitler, a talented orator and leader, does not appear to have possessed Goebbels' skill with film propaganda, although this is a seldom recognized and often confused matter. Whereas Goebbels preferred a subtle, almost invisible blending of art and propaganda, Hitler favoured a blatant form. This caused some friction, but Hitler largely allowed Goebbels to do as he wished with German films, possibly due to Goebbels' background.

The “little doctor” as some refer to him, attended the universities of Bonn, Freiburg, Würzburg and Heidelberg from 1917 to 1921 where he focussed on Art History, Literature, Drama, and Philology. In 1922, at Heidelberg, he received his Ph.D. with the thesis “Wilhelm von Schütz as a dramatist. A contribution to the history of the drama of the romantic school.”<sup>1</sup> Upon his graduation, and unable to find employment as a journalist or theatre assistant, Goebbels joined the NSDAP in 1922, and by 1926 he was appointed by Hitler as the *Gauleiter* of Berlin, becoming elected to the Reichstag as a National Socialist Deputy in 1928.<sup>2</sup>

From 1921 to 1926, Goebbels experimented unsuccessfully in the fields of literature and drama. His first attempt was in 1921, when he wrote *Michael*, a novel unpublished until 1929, when the Nazi press Eher Verlag thought it “good policy” to print it on a small scale.<sup>3</sup> Shortly after *Michael*, Goebbels wrote a play in verse called *The Wanderer*, which remained unpublished. Although seldom mentioned, Goebbels became an avid cinéophile during these years, and viewed innumerable films.<sup>4</sup> According to research from Goebbels’ surviving diaries of 3 August 1925 to 16 October 1926, Manvell and Fraenkel estimate that somewhere around May, 1926 Goebbels was able to see Sergei Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin*, a film he raved about even in the 1930’s.<sup>5</sup> During a speech to the film industry on 28 March, 1933 Goebbels remarked:

This [*Battleship Potemkin*] is a marvellous film without equal in the cinema. The reason is its power of conviction. Anyone who had no firm political conviction could become a Bolshevik after seeing the film. It shows

<sup>1</sup> Willi Boelcke, *The Secret Conferences of Dr. Goebbels*, (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970), p. vii. See also Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, *Dr. Goebbels, His Life and Death*, (London: William Heineman, 1960), pp. 9-18. Of note, Goebbels’ advisor was the “outstanding literary critic” Friederich Gundolf, of Jewish extraction.

<sup>2</sup> Boelcke, p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> Manvell and Fraenkel, *Dr. Goebbels, His Life and Death*, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> The majority of these films likely were seen after 1926, when his *Gauleiter* appointment resulted in a moderate salary. Previously Goebbels’ finances were very poor.

<sup>5</sup> Manvell and Fraenkel, *Dr. Goebbels, His Life and Death*, p. 63. Note, these diaries consist of several notebooks that are preserved in the Hoover Institution at Stanford University in California.

very clearly that a work of art can be tendentious, and even the worst kind of ideas can be propagated, if this is done through the medium of an outstanding work of art.<sup>6</sup>

Around 1930, Goebbels openly encouraged the use of films to increase Party membership, and was recognized as an “inveterate film addict”, demonstrating an enormous familiarity with the films, achievements, and people of the national and international cinema.<sup>7</sup> Following his 13 March, 1933 appointment as Reichsminister of Propaganda, Goebbels demonstrated his understanding of the film industry and their achievements at his first major speech to the *Filmwelt* on 28 March, 1933.<sup>8</sup> Speaking to prominent film figures at a SPIO-DACHO meeting at Berlin’s Kaiserhof Hotel, Goebbels told the audience that the new government was stable and prepared to assist the *Filmwelt* financially, and that both he and Hitler enjoyed films immensely.<sup>9</sup> To legitimize his statements, Goebbels listed four films he suggested German filmmakers should emulate: *Battleship Potemkin*, *The Nibelung Saga*, *Anna Karenina*, and *The Rebell*.<sup>10</sup> Each of these films is recognized as important in the cinema’s development, and each includes extensive effort by Jewish actors, writers, or producers, although it is uncertain if Goebbels intended to imply anything further. *Battleship Potemkin* is especially notable for its political theme and use of techniques that rely on the collision and montage of various images

<sup>6</sup> David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema: 1933-1945*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Most authors agree that following his appointment, Goebbels became increasingly obsessed with his role in the German cinema. As Manvell and Fraenkel note: “For Goebbels the development of the cinema became the most absorbing of his duties. Before long he was to come completely under the spell of the cinema, seeing films privately night after night either at the Ministry or at one or other of his luxurious homes which were all equipped for projection.”. Manvell and Fraenkel, *Dr. Goebbels, His Life and Death*, p. 145.

<sup>9</sup> Welch, p.16. Welch summarizes Goebbels’ speech based on the original text which Welch published in full in his Doctoral dissertation, “Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933-45”, (University of London, 1979), pp.45-52.

<sup>10</sup> Welch, p. 16/17. See also Manvell and Fraenkel, *Dr. Goebbels, His Life and Death*, p126/127.

to provoke “a violent emotional response”.<sup>11</sup> From these examples, and inconsideration of the remark that “even the worst kinds of ideas can be propagated, if this is done through the medium of an outstanding work of art.”, Goebbels’ understanding of filmic propaganda is evident.

David Hull, however, believes that Goebbels’ speech was made “early in May” and was aimed at getting the industry “in line”.<sup>12</sup> Though Hull mentions the four films cited above, he interprets the speech as extremely threatening. Goebbels apparently informed his audience that “the national government would prohibit no films if the producers would do their duty.”, and threatened, “these films had better meet certain national standards of quality.”<sup>13</sup> Following Goebbels, Adolf Engl and Arnold Raether supposedly warned the industry’s Jews they were “through for good” while telling the “disappointed audience that the government had no plans for the subsidy of the industry” and was going to “issue permits for companies and cinemas, which would only go to those who in the last fourteen years had favoured the Nazi principles.”<sup>14</sup>

Hull’s claims do not withstand logical analysis. First, Goebbels had no reason to threaten the *Filmwelt* which was prepared to co-operate with him. Second, Engl’s sharply anti-semitic speech would have been contradictory and embarrassing to Goebbels, if it had followed his praise of Jewish- influenced films such as *The Rebell* or *Battleship Potemkin* . Third, the issuing of “permits” to “faithful companies” never occurred. Finally, Goebbels always maintained a cordial relationship with the industry’s top executives, and on repeated occasions he reaffirmed his conviction that art and politics could be intricately

<sup>11</sup> Pam Cook (ed.), *The Cinema Book*, (New York: Pantheon,1985), p. 204.

<sup>12</sup> David Hull,p.22.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.23.

<sup>14</sup> Please refer to Hull, p. 23 for the full description.

blended into a potent form of propaganda. On 10 November, 1933, at the inauguration of the Chamber of Culture, Goebbels stated:

What we want is more than a dramatisation of the Party's programme... We want a profound marriage of the spiritual nature of the heroic concept of life with the eternal laws of art... *National Socialism can in no circumstances be a license for artistic failure*. On the contrary, the greater the idea to be expressed, the higher the demands made on the artist.<sup>15</sup>

Knowing the German public demanded certain levels of quality, Goebbels recognized that propaganda must be interesting to the audience and draw their attention or it would lose much of its power.<sup>16</sup> Further, audiences had to be in cinemas of their own free will; not only would this increase propaganda's chance of persuasion, but otherwise the film industry would fail completely as a profit oriented enterprise. Goebbels believed that propaganda should be presented in a subtle fashion to escape the critical or doubtful faculties of the mind, for if it was presented openly, Goebbels feared propaganda would be recognized for its true intention. Therefore, filmic art had a careful mission:

The best propaganda is not that which is always openly revealing itself; the best propaganda is that which as it were works invisibly, penetrates the whole of life without the public having any knowledge at all of the propagandist initiative.<sup>17</sup>

Goebbels felt covert film propaganda so powerful, that he stated in 1941: "the modern cinema is a national educational tool of the first order. The scope of its effect is almost comparable to that of primary schools."<sup>18</sup> In the same statement, Goebbels added that films were "a valuable factor" to the political

<sup>15</sup> Erwin Leiser, *Nazi Cinema*, (New York: Mac Millan, 1974), p. 35.

<sup>16</sup> Doob, Leonard W., "Goebbels Principles of Propaganda", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, (Fall 1950, p. 419-427). Doob quotes Goebbels as stating: "Feature pictures should provide entertaining and absorbing plots which might evoke and then resolve tension; simultaneously they should subtly affect the attentive audience not through particular passages but by the general atmosphere.", p. 427.

<sup>17</sup> Leiser, p. 124.

<sup>18</sup> Goebbels, "Der Film als Erzieher. Rede zur Eröffnung der Filmarbeit der HJ, Berlin, 12 Oktober 1941" in *Das eiserne Herz, Reden und Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1941/42* (Munich, 1943) pp. 37-46 quoted in Karsten Witte, "How Nazi Cinema mobilizes the classics: Schweikart's *Das Fräulein von Barnhelm*" (p. 103) in Eric Rentschler (ed.), *German Film and Literature: Adaptations and transformations* : New York, Methuen, 1986).

leadership of the Reich, and even outside of Germany, films were intended to carry the National Socialist *Zeitgeist* : "Let the world learn to look upon our films", commented Hans Steinbach, Press Chief of the *Reichsfilmkammer*, "as a herald of the German way of life and a messenger of our ideology. There can be no art but that which has firm roots in our ideology."<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately Steinbach's statement has encouraged some authors to confuse Goebbels' ideas on film propaganda with Hitler's ideas. Richard Grunberger, author of *A Social History of the Third Reich* comments:

...he [Goebbels] had the elasticity of mind to discard his own blueprint for politicizing the German screen, once he grasped the fact that conveyor-belt brownshirt epics were box office poison...<sup>20</sup>

As indicated, Goebbels clearly recognized the danger of "brownshirt epics"; it was Hitler who ordered their production against Goebbels' will. In a conversation with actress Tony van Eyck, Hitler stated:

Certainly, on the one hand I want to exploit the film fully as an instrument of propaganda, but in such a way that every viewer knows that today he's going to see a political film. Just as in the Sportpalast he doesn't expect to hear politics mixed with art. It makes me sick when I see political propaganda hiding under the guise of art. Let it be either art or politics.<sup>21</sup>

Goebbels displeasure with overt Brownshirt films was evident after the May 1933 screening of Franz Seitz's *SA-Mann Brand*. In a speech on 19 May, 1933 to the National Socialist Trade Union, and the Fighting League for German Culture Goebbels remarked: "The SA's rightful place is in the streets and not on the cinema screen."<sup>22</sup> Later in the year, Goebbels tried to ban another

<sup>19</sup> Welch, p.6.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich*, (London: Penguin Books, 1971)p. 478.

<sup>21</sup> H. Traub, *Der Film als politisches Machtmittel*, (Munich: 1933), p.27, in Welch, p. 44.

<sup>22</sup> Welch, p. 76, cited from the *Völkischer Beobachter*, 20 May 1933, in Welch, p. 76. Please note: hereafter the National Socialist Trade Union will be referred to as the NSBO, (the *Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellen Organisation*), and the Fighting League for German Culture referred to as the KfDK, (*Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur*).

Brownshirt film entitled *Hans Westmar, Einer von vielen*, which was a militaristic and graphic dramatization of the life of Horst Wessel, a Nazi martyr.<sup>23</sup> *Hans Westmar* totally violated Goebbels' demands for a subtle mixing of art and propaganda, and on the morning of the film's première, Goebbels tried to ban the film by stating that it did not do sufficient justice to the national memory of the life of Horst Wessel.<sup>24</sup> In the *Licht-Bild-Bühne* of 13 October, 1933 Goebbels remarked:

We National Socialists see no value in our SA marching on the stage or screen, their place is on the streets. Such an ostensible show of National Socialist ideology is no substitute for real art. Therefore it is so difficult as to be almost impossible to make a film that is truly equal to the spirit such an exalted organization as the SA. I have informed the film-makers who have contacted me that their films will be released only if they fulfil the claims of great art... The figure of Wessel in this film did not correspond to the wonderful memory that the German public have of this great National Socialist.<sup>25</sup>

Obvious again is Goebbels' desire to blend art and propaganda in a subtle and insidious fashion. The statement that the film "did not correspond to the wonderful memory" of Horst Wessel was merely an excuse to ban the film while not directly offending Hitler's views on propaganda. Despite Goebbels' displeasure, Hitler ordered the film to be shown, although the original title was changed from *Horst Wessel* to *Hans Westmar: Einer von vielen*. The film was finally released on 13 December, 1933.

Goebbels must have also realized that art and propaganda had to be mixed subtly for other reasons. The export of German stormtrooper films ran a considerable risk of financial failure with foreign audiences and Jewish film distributors in the United States and Britain who were likely to refuse German

<sup>23</sup> The genesis of this film comes from Hans Ewers' biography of Horst Wessel. According to Welch, "It would appear that Hitler liked the novel and asked that Ewers be commissioned to write the scenario for the film version." See Welch, p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> *Licht-Bild-Bühne*, 13 October, 1933, in Welch, p. 76.

<sup>25</sup> *Licht-Bild-Bühne*, 13 October, 1933, in Welch, p. 77.



productions, an event that caused serious difficulties in 1935-36.<sup>26</sup> Also, if Germany was to get back on her feet industrially and militarily, films that did not depict militaristic violence to foreign and neighboring audiences would be beneficial. Unfortunately, it is unknown if Hitler and Goebbels ever discussed these considerations.

However, it is apparent that Hitler differed from Goebbels in key areas, possibly a result of his earlier experience. Although in his youth Hitler painted watercolours in Vienna and Munich, his abilities were recognized as meagre, and further, Hitler never advanced above the equivalent of a high-school education, while Goebbels studied at noted German universities. The consequences of their diverging paths is evident in Hitler's somewhat basic discussion of propaganda and art in *Mein Kampf*.<sup>27</sup> While in later years Goebbels' work was subject to Hitler's approval, Hitler largely did not interfere, perhaps due to recognition of Goebbels' skilled abilities. A few instances outlining Hitler and Goebbels' relationship should be noted, to clarify Goebbels' attitudes to propaganda.

As films such as *Hans Westmar*, *Hitlerjugend Quex* and *SA Mann Brand* have shown, Hitler was quite blunt in his methods of propaganda. Equally, he was little interested in disguising them, for during the formation of the RMVP, Hitler wanted to call it the Ministry of Propaganda.<sup>28</sup> Claiming that such

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<sup>26</sup> This was less a result of German films and more due to the openly anti-Semitic nature of the Nazi régime.

<sup>27</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971, translated by Ralf Manheim), Please refer to pages 258-263 for a discussion on art, and pages 176-182 for Hitler's views on propaganda. Specifically: "The receptivity of the great masses is very limited, their intelligence is small, but their power of forgetting is enormous. In consequence of these facts, all effective propaganda must be limited to a few points and must harp on these in slogans until the last member of the public understands what you want him to understand by your slogan. As soon as you sacrifice this slogan and try to be many sided, the effect will piddle away, for the crowd can neither digest nor retain the material offered." (pp.180-181) Evident from readings in *Mein Kampf* is a focus on oratory, that would not have translated well into visual arts.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War 1939-1945*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979) p.13.

bluntness would be “counter-productive”, Goebbels suggested the “Ministry of Public Education” (*völkserziehung*) would be a more fitting title. Although Hitler would not change his mind, he allowed Goebbels to add “People’s Enlightenment” (*Völkeraufklärung*) to the title, *Reichsministerium für Völkeraufklärung und Propaganda*. This is a small issue, but it is indicative of a relationship that occasionally limited Goebbels’ liberty. While Hitler and Goebbels sometimes differed, their relationship stayed on cordial terms until Hitler’s suicide on 30 April 1945, whereupon Goebbels became the new Reich Chancellor. Overall, both men appear to have recognized that they needed each other to succeed politically: Goebbels needed Hitler and his Party as a source of power, while Hitler needed Goebbels’ intelligence and ability to increase his personal influence. Certainly if Hitler disapproved of Goebbels’ propaganda, he did nothing to stop it, perhaps because saw *Hans Westmar*, *Hitlerjunge Quex* and *SA Mann Brand* were box-office disasters. Further, Hitler must have recognized Goebbels’ ability to achieve results: by 1942, Goebbels had turned the film industry into one of the Reich’s largest industries. Hence even in Goebbels’ sometimes promiscuous personal life, Hitler seems to have sheltered him.<sup>29</sup> The Baarova affair of 1939 best suggests that Hitler recognized Goebbels’ worth and sought to retain him. Lida Baarova was a young Czech actress with whom Goebbels had an affair that almost ended his marriage.<sup>30</sup> When Hitler learned of the affair, he forced Goebbels to end it and told him that “He was a prominent and indispensable servant of state” and “could not indulge in private scandals.”<sup>31</sup> While Goebbels was unhappy about this forced separation, he continued to serve his *Führer* to the best of his ability.

<sup>29</sup> Numerous authors suggest Goebbels advanced the careers of many young female starlets, in return for sex.

<sup>30</sup> Manvell and Fraenkell, *Dr. Goebbels, His Life and Death*, p. 172. See also Balfour, p.51.

<sup>31</sup> Manvell and Fraenkell, *Dr. Goebbels, His Life and Death*, p. 170.

### 3.2: The Early Years: 1933-1936

30 January, 1933 marked the Nazi *Machtergreifung*, and shortly afterwards, Hitler began his programme of *Gleichschaltung* or “co-ordination” that permeated every level of German society. *Gleichschaltung* can be described as a coerced adoption, among all groups, companies, industries and people, of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. Whether it was a swimming club, women’s organization, or actor’s association, it made no difference: all groups were brought into line with the National Socialist viewpoint. The Nazi *Weltanschauung* seldom promised a wealthier life materially, but a richer spiritual and cultural existence that gave the whole of life a deeper meaning. Hitler alleged that public life had become contaminated and corrupted during the Weimar years, and it was therefore the government’s duty to restore the health of the nation:

In conjunction with the political decontamination of our public life, the government will embark on a systematic campaign to restore the nation’s moral health. The whole educational system, theatre, film, literature, the press and broadcasting— all of them will be means to this end... They will all be harnessed to help preserve the eternal values which are part of the essential nature of our people.<sup>32</sup>

Within the *Filmwelt*, *Gleichschaltung* was effected through laws, decrees and other processes that created complex state mechanisms capable of regulating the film industry’s operation. During this process, Goebbels at once befriended the *Filmwelt* while obtaining a stranglehold on it. Although Goebbels treated the industry’s Jews in an utterly monstrous fashion, it will be seen that Goebbels sought the respect and co-operation of the industry through exhibiting a deep interest in its work, and more importantly, through financial assistance. Unlike Rosenberg, Goebbels did not seek the industry’s immediate

<sup>32</sup> Leiser, p. 34.

nationalisation for several reasons. Primarily, nationalisation was economically and politically impossible for the new National Socialist government. Since the government was still establishing itself financially at this early stage, the huge cost of nationalisation was prohibitive, and the bureaucratic apparatus required was unwieldy.<sup>33</sup> Still, radical organisations like Rosenberg's KfDK demanded the immediate nationalisation and re-organisation of the *Filmwelt*, and the banning of all films that did not portray the *völkisch Weltanschauung*.<sup>34</sup> Had Rosenberg changed the industry in this fashion, the shock wave of fear might have flushed the *Filmwelt* of much creative talent, thereby reducing its use for propaganda. As it was, Goebbels' own programme of *Gleichschaltung* caused an exodus of some of the industry's finest talent, the majority of which was Jewish. Among those who left were: Albert Bassermann, Liesl Bergner, Elsa Brandström, Fritz and Adolf Busch, Erich Charell, Ernst Deutsch, Marlene Dietrich, Oscar Homolka, Karl Freund, Fritz Kortner, Henry Koster (Kosterlitz), Fritz Lang, Wolfgang Langhoff, Lotte Lehmann, Peter Lorre, Ernst Lubitsch, Carl Mayer, Max Ophüls, Lilli Palmer, Max Reinhardt, Eugen Robert, Richard Tauber, and Conrad Veidt.<sup>35</sup> Many talented artists remained however, such as Hans Albers, Willy Fritsch, Otto Gebühr, Heinrich George, Veit Harlan, Emil Jannings (who won an Oscar Award in 1926), Werner Krauss, Gustav Ucicky, and Paul

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<sup>33</sup> The nationalisation of UFA, Germany's largest film company, would have been especially difficult, since it was effectively owned and controlled by Alfred Hugenberg, the media giant who not only supported Hitler prior to 1933, but also acted as Reichsminister of Finance for the first year of the new government. Also, Germany's large banks such as the Deutsche Bank and the Dresdener Bank held considerable ownership among the film companies. Since the National Socialist government depended on the support of the banks, it would have been unwise to nationalise companies in which the Banks had significant investment. Marcus Phillips also notes the film industry's importance to the Reich's economy, and suggests that upset within the industry could lead to financial problems. See M.S. Phillips, , p. 45.

<sup>34</sup> Welch, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> Hull, p. 127, also in Manvell and Fraenkel, *The German Cinema*, (New York: Praeger, 1971) p. 71, and in Pierre Cadars and Francis Courtade, *Le Cinéma Nazi*, (Paris, Eric Losfeld: 1972), p. 17

Wegener.<sup>36</sup> In spite of these internationally recognized artists, Hull implies Germany's remaining film industry was now devoid of talent and "in a state of shock", a biased interpretation incorrectly based on linking the drop in film production in 1933 to an "industry virtually closed down".<sup>37</sup> Though film production dropped slightly in 1933, it was mostly due to the innovation of sound films that were both expensive to shoot and to show. Although sound films began to be produced in 1928-29, the financial burden of equipment changeover brought a slump in film production that lasted for several years. In addition, the industry was also trying to reduce the total number of films produced, so as not to oversaturate the market and reduce profits. As indicated in Chapter Two, this trend began around 1925. Production and cost figures indicate the overall trend:

Table One: Film Production and Rising Costs, 1928-32 <sup>38</sup>

Year	Number of films	Production Cost	Ave. Cost per film
1928	224 (all silent)	39 200 000 RM	175 000 RM
1929	183 (8 sound)	32 825 000 RM	179 372 RM
1930	146 (101 sound)	35 650 000 RM	244 178 RM
1931	144 (142 sound)	39 400 000 RM	273 611 RM
1932	132 (all sound)	36 100 000 RM	273 485 RM

Evidently, the 114 films of 1933 were not out of order, although the change in government and the formation of complex state ideological mechanisms during this time undoubtedly had some limited effect. Yet contrary to Hull, Goebbels enjoyed a very close, cooperative relationship with the industry's top executives; not the forced "subversion" that Hull tries to suggest. It would be incorrect to state that a universal *filmpolitik* existed within the entire industry, but

<sup>36</sup> See also John Gillet's article, "Germany: A Lost Decade" in *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 41, no. 4, (Autumn 1972), pp. 224-6.

<sup>37</sup> See Hull, p. 20: "Needless to say, the industry was in a state of shock within a few months of the establishment of the Nazi government." See also Hull, p.37, and the chapters: "Subversion of the Film industry" and "Goebbels Shows his teeth"

<sup>38</sup> Jürgen Spiker, p.54 .

the most powerful sectors of the industry were sympathetic to the Nazi cause since Goebbels was prepared to help revitalize the industry financially. Also, the major industry organizations were already Nazi dominated. In the *Reichsverband Deutscher Lichtspieltheatre* (German Cinema Owner's Association) Nazi elements demanded the appointment of Adolf Engl, a prominent National Socialist, to the association's board around early February.<sup>39</sup> On 18 March, 1933 the entire board resigned, leaving Adolf Engl firmly in control. The film industry's trade union, *Dach-organisation der Filmschaffenden Deutschlands*, (DACHO), also became co-ordinated with National Socialism on 2 May, 1933, when it was disbanded, along with all other trade unions, by a presidential decree.<sup>40</sup> Though Hull suggests it "evaporated", DACHO was absorbed by the NSBO and fell under Party control.<sup>41</sup> In turn, the NSBO was absorbed into a more neutral Nazi trade union, the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront*, the only trade union allowed.

Although somewhat forceful methods were used to coordinate the *Reichsverband Deutscher Lichtspieltheatre* and DACHO, the most powerful and influential group, SPIO, was sympathetic to the Nazi cause since 1927. Ludwig Klitzsch, Hugenberg's ally and fellow right-wing radical, was firmly in control of SPIO. As Petley notes, "it was under Klitzsch that the nature and the structure of the organisation began to change from a fairly loose association into the most influential and highly organized group in the industry."<sup>42</sup> Curiously Hull suggests that "SPIO ignored Goebbels", while Goebbels "began to take steps" against it.<sup>43</sup> In reality, early 1933 found Goebbels meeting with

<sup>39</sup> *Film Kurier*, 18 March 1933. in J. Wulf, *Theatre und Film im Dritten Reich. Eine Dokumentation* (Gütersloh, 1964) p. 266, see also Welch, p.11.

<sup>40</sup> Welch p. 11, see also Hull, p. 22, and Petley, p. 49.

<sup>41</sup> See Hull, pp. 22-23. DACHO's amalgamation with the NSBO was not wholly to Goebbels' liking, because the NSBO was tied to Rosenberg's KfdK, a radical element that Rosenberg wanted to play a role in restructuring the German film industry.

<sup>42</sup> Petley, p. 45.

<sup>43</sup>Hull, p.22.

representatives from SPIO and the major banks to arrange better financing for future film production. These actions were made clear to the industry: on 19 May, 1933 Goebbels reiterated his promise to provide financial assistance and indicated that he was working on an improved version of the 1932 SPIO plan.<sup>44</sup> Further, Goebbels openly stated that he would not tolerate radical groups like the KfDK that sought to nationalise the film industry and shatter its capitalist nature. Far from Hull's suggestions, Goebbels was sensitive to problems, fears, and desires of the industry.

On 1 June, 1933, the *Filmkreditbank*, a private limited liability company with a capital of RM 200,000 was announced.<sup>45</sup> Ludwig Klitzsch held RM 120,000 on behalf of UFA, the Deutsche Bank and Dresdener Bank held RM 25,000 each, the *Reichskreditgesellschaft* (Reich Credit Company) held RM 20,000 and the Commerzbank RM 10,000.<sup>46</sup> In mid-June, UFA's shares were quietly transferred to SPIO, which later became the *Reichsfilmkammer*; in less than a year, all the banks would transfer their shares in the *Filmkreditbank* to the RFK, a part of Goebbels' RMVP. But even before the FKB became a *Staatseigene* company, its board included noted National Socialists: Walther Funk, a member of Hitler's government; Arnold Raether, Head of the Film Section of the RMVP; *Ministerialdirektor* Posse of the Ministry of Economic Affairs; Johannes Kiehl, from the Deutsche Bank and Disconto Gesellschaft A.G.; Dr. Hans Hinkel<sup>47</sup>, from Tobis; Adolf Engl, from the Reichsverband Deutscher Lichtspieltheater; and

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<sup>44</sup>Petley, p. 50.

<sup>45</sup> Petley, p.53. Few authors recognize that the FKB was not originally formed as a government office, although it functioned as a *staatsmittelbar*, or "indirectly state controlled" company. The concept of the FKB had emerged from the SPIO Plan of 1932, and Petley credits *Staatssekretär* Walther Funk with assisting the realization of the FKB through acting as a negotiator between the government and the film industry. Please note: the *Filmkreditbank* is hereafter referred to as the FKB.

<sup>46</sup> Welch, p. 14, also in Petley, p. 53. The Deutsche Bank actually held more control than the figures indicate, since it had significant interests in UFA, while the Dresdener Bank had interests in Tobis.

<sup>47</sup>Hinkel was a member of the SS and was later responsible for *entjudung* — the removal of the industry's Jews.

Dr. Fritz Scheuermann, who was appointed the head of the Film Chamber in September 1933.<sup>48</sup>

Goebbels evidently wanted the FKB set up in a covert fashion, since the bank operated as a private corporation for under a year, and the transfer of shares to the RFK was performed quietly, perhaps to reduce any alarm within the industry over the complete Nazi control of the capital it needed so badly to survive. As a mechanism of control, the FKB could eliminate undesirable members of the *Filmwelt* through finding reasons to deny funding.<sup>49</sup> This was not difficult: before the FKB would finance a film, the producer had to show that he could raise 30 per cent of the funding, and convince the board that the film would be profitable. In addition, the producer had to guarantee that the film would be distributed nationwide.<sup>50</sup> If the FKB was convinced on all counts, financing was granted and the film remained the property of the bank until the loan was repaid. To Goebbels' credit as an administrator, the *Filmkreditbank* acted as a mediator between the producers and the major banks, allowing the government to largely escape from loaning its own precious capital. Hence, the FKB was far more than a bank; it was an instrument of ensuring political and ideological conformity.<sup>51</sup> Significantly, however, no evidence exists to suggest that the *Filmwelt* resisted this censorship mechanism; instead, the FKB was a huge success. In 1934, the first year of the FKB's operation, the bank financed 40 per cent of the total films produced, and by 1936, the bank financed 82 films,

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<sup>48</sup>Petley, p. 53. Note the close cooperation between the heads of the industry and the new government.

<sup>49</sup> See Welch, p. 14-15, also Petley, pp. 51-55, Phillips, p. 54, Spiker, p. 102

<sup>50</sup> Although the FKB was claimed to assist the small and medium sized film producer, the underlying intention of the FKB seems to be otherwise: smaller companies could rarely ensure national distribution, resulting in an increasingly oligopolistic situation around 1937. This assisted Goebbels in the *Kautio-Treuehand* buy-out of 1937-39, to be discussed in Section 3.3.

<sup>51</sup> Welch, pp. 14-15, also in Petley, By 1936 the FKB had separate offices to examine the political and cultural content of the films as well as offices to work out production schedules and oversee distribution.



or 73 per cent of the total.<sup>52</sup> Also by 1936, the FKB managed to make a profit of RM 9,000, an unusual event, since it was not set up with that expectation.

On 14 June, 1933, with the help of the former SPIO and the SPIO Plan of 1932, Goebbels created the *Reichsfilmkammer*, an office directed at the ideological control of the *Filmwelt*, but best understood in the context of its superior offices, the *Reichskulturkammer* and the RMVP.<sup>53</sup>

Founded on 13 March, 1933, the RMVP was the center for the bureaucratic administration and distribution of propaganda directives to all related propaganda offices. With a staff of approximately 1,000 persons, Joseph Goebbels directly oversaw the RMVP's operation.<sup>54</sup> The RMVP was divided into several departments, some of which supervised the operation of a separate lower office, or *kammer* assigned to it. Bramsted indicates the number of RMVP departments began at five and increased to 14 by 1942, but for the purpose of this thesis, only a few of the departments will be mentioned.<sup>55</sup>

The most overreaching was Department I, which initially looked after administration, although by 1942 it had separated into three subsections of law, budget and personnel. Department II was a generalized office of propaganda, intended to create and distribute various propaganda campaigns to the lower offices such as the RKK. Department II was also responsible for planning public events such as the christening of ships, state funerals or weddings, like Herman Göring's marriage in 1935.<sup>56</sup> In the early years of the RMVP's operation, a sub-

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<sup>52</sup>Wolfgang Becker, *Film und Herrschaft*, (Berlin: Verlag Volker Spiess, 1973) p. 40, also in Petley, p. 54. See also Bundesarchiv Koblenz, *Akten des Reichsministeriums für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*, R55/484, *Filmkreditbankbilanz*, 1943, in Welch, p. 15, and in F. Pflughaupt, "Filmwirtschaft im Dritten Reich", *Jahrbuch der Reichsfilmkammer*, (Berlin: 1937, p. 152) in Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p. 54.

<sup>53</sup> Hereafter the *Reichskulturkammer* will be referred to as the RKK.

<sup>54</sup> Ernest K. Bramstead, *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda, 1925-1945*, (Michigan State University Press, 1965) p. 61.

<sup>55</sup> The following description is largely based on Bramstead, pp. 62-65.

<sup>56</sup> See Grunberger, p. 337 for a photograph of Göring's wedding. As Grunberger states, "probably the greatest social occasion in the history of the Third Reich."

office, Dept IIa was set-up to facilitate the removal of Jews (*entjudung*) from German cultural industries and associations. Shortly after its creation, Dept IIa was transferred to the RKK, where *entjudung* was the responsibility of Dr. Hans Hinkel, a member of the SS who by May 1935 became the RKK's general secretary.<sup>57</sup> Hinkel initiated and supervised the operation of a "non-Aryan" cultural organization, designed to segregate Jews, negroes, and other foreign elements from the "pure" German cultural life. When *entjudung* was complete, the "non-Aryan" organization was shut down, Jewish cinemas and theaters were outlawed, leaving Jews with the choice of emigration or "re-settlement" camps.

The RMVP's other departments were concerned with respective spheres of propaganda: film, theater, radio, fine arts, literature, music and the press. Department V was the Film Department, and its task was to oversee German film production in its artistic, economic, and technical aspects, including "the harmonious co-operation of all forces engaged in the film industry".<sup>58</sup> Effectively, this meant a close working relationship with the *Reichsfilmkammer* on all matters relating to film production. Department V would advance specific goals in propaganda, finance, and policy, but it was up to the RFK to refine and implement the directives of the Film Department.

Set up on 22 September, 1933 the *Reichskulturkammer* was subordinate to the RMVP but superior to the RFK.<sup>59</sup> The responsibility of the RKK was to ensure co-operation and coordination among the seven separate chambers, or *kammers*, of film, theater, press, literature, radio, fine arts and music, since Goebbels realized that to be maximally effective, the various chambers had to

<sup>57</sup> Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p. 47, also in Boelcke, pp. 86-89, Welch, p. 16.

<sup>58</sup> Bramstead, p. 65.

<sup>59</sup> Welch, p. 12.

complement each other and work as a unified voice.<sup>60</sup> But a criminal function of the RKK was also to eliminate Jews from all cultural industries: in addition to the formation of a "non-Aryan" cultural organization, any person involved in the production of a "cultural product" or *kulturgüte* had to become a member of the RKK and any other relative chambers. A film actor for example, would have to become a member of the RKK as well as the RFK, and if he was also active within the theater, membership within the *Reichstheaterkammer* was compulsory. Obviously Jews and other politically undesirable persons were disallowed membership and forced to join the "Non-Aryan" cultural organization if they wanted to continue their work at all.

In ambiguous official terms, the *Reichsfilmkammer* was responsible for "furthering the realm of German films, of regulating economic and social affairs of the occupations concerned, and of effecting a just balance between their members."<sup>61</sup> In practice this consisted of the filmic implementation of propaganda in an artistically pleasing fashion, while exercising close control over the financial and industrial operations of the film industry. To help coordinate the RFK with the RKK and RMVP, Goebbels appointed Arnold Raether vice-president of the RFK. Raether was also the head of the Film Department in the RMVP and the head of the Film Section within the NSDAP Propaganda Office. Raether was not an accomplished artist, but he possessed a degree of skill with administration, and was a reliable party member. Similarly, RFK president Dr. Fritz Scheuermann was unique among the *kammer* presidents, for he lacked the artistic experience that characterised others like Richard Strauss, the president of the *Reichsmusikkammer*.<sup>62</sup> Both Scheuermann and

<sup>60</sup> Unpublished manuscript of Joseph Goebbels now at the Hoover Institute on War, Peace and Revolution at Stanford University, p. M828, in Doob, p. 428.

<sup>61</sup> Bramstead, p. 81.

<sup>62</sup> Petley, p. 56. Also in Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", pp. 47-48. In late 1934 Scheuermann and Raether were replaced by Dr. Oswald Lehnich and Hans Weidemann

Raether functioned as administrators; evidently Goebbels thought it better to appoint experienced financiers who were friendly with the industry and could ameliorate its financial difficulties. Since the film industry reacted best to financial stimuli, this arrangement also served Goebbels' interests through manipulating the finances of the industry to reinforce government control.

Scheuermann and Raether supervised the ten offices of the RFK that were largely formed out of the old SPIO, although the operation of these offices or "sections" closely resembled that of the RMVP.<sup>63</sup> Section I concerned general administration, legal, financial, and personnel matters, while Section II ran a Press Information Service, interacted with foreign press, and established a national film library.<sup>64</sup> Section III gave artistic advice regarding creative films, scenarios, casting and presentation, and Section IV worked on economic and financial matters requiring assistance from the FKB. Sections V and VI advised on technical aspects and film export respectively. National film distribution, film renting and the requirements of cinema owners was assigned to Section VII. Section VIII should be noted for its role in eliminating unnecessary competition between cinema owners, admission price control, and entertainment tax. Sections IX dealt with technical matters concerning patents and the arrangements for raw materials, while Section X concerned propaganda content in cultural, educational, and documentary films. Section X was given the task of setting up open-air travelling theatres, an especially important task that spread the ideological power of Goebbels' programme to rural places

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respectively. S.S. Oberführer Lehnich was a Party member since 1927 and was particularly experienced in economics.

<sup>63</sup> The structure of the RFK was largely mapped out by the SPIO Plan, further suggesting a cordial relationship between Goebbels and the *Filmwelt*.

<sup>64</sup> The following description is taken from Bramsted, pp. 81-82. See also Leiser, p. 14-15, Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p. 48.

without a cinema, and also provided a needed degree of escapist relief during the heavy air-raids of the war years.<sup>65</sup>

As Petley notes, the *Führerprinzip* (authoritarian leadership principle) is obvious throughout the organization of the RFK, RKK, and RMVP.<sup>66</sup> All institutions and personnel were directly answerable to Goebbels, while at all times a handful of his trusted advisers oversaw the operation of the RFK. By allowing specialists to work specifically on their areas of expertise, a high degree of quality could be maintained while allowing Goebbels a more direct and therefore precise level of control within respective areas. The logical institutional set-up allowed unfamiliar administrators to learn institutional organization, while the maintenance of former SPIO members within the framework of the RFK reconfirmed to the *Filmwelt* that the National Socialists wanted a re-organization rather than a “seizure” of the industry. Significantly, film specialists were given considerable freedom to focus on their respective field for important reasons.<sup>67</sup> Primarily, Goebbels realized that artistic temperments did not allow artists to be controlled in the same way as civil servants. Artists had to be more carefully and gently handled; although artists could be replaced by Party members, there was no advantage if the replacement was artistically inept.

On 16 February, 1934 another important ideological alteration was made to the film industry. A new Reich Cinema Law, (*Reichslichtspielgesetz* ) gave Goebbels the legal authority to intervene in the censorship of all films, public and private.<sup>68</sup> Hull states this new law “completely hamstrung filmmakers”, and

<sup>65</sup>Although this is not to suggest that the films shown after air-raids were non-ideological.

<sup>66</sup>Petley, p. 57.

<sup>67</sup> This reconfirms Goebbels' oft-repeated assertion that “the artist must not be bothered”.

<sup>68</sup> Phillips suggest Goebbels and Dr. Ernst Seeger, former head of the *Oberprüfstelle* , collaborated to draft the legislation.

claims many thought "Goebbels had gone too far".<sup>69</sup> However, most film makers seemed to have welcomed the financial implications of the 1934 law,<sup>70</sup> and the *Reichslichtspielgesetz* was mostly a legal recognition of powers Goebbels previously possessed in function, with some minor changes. Under the 1934 law, the previously separate *Prüfstelle* offices of the Weimar era were incorporated into the RMVP, and this new office would ban, pass, or classify films under a greatly expanded *Prädikate* system initially established in 1926.<sup>71</sup> Under this system, a passed film could be awarded a *Prädikate* that denoted its political, artistic, national, or cultural value: the higher the film's *Prädikate*, the lower the entertainment tax. If the film was judged of high value in several categories, the entertainment tax was either reduced proportionately or eliminated. Similarly, a higher *Prädikate* also meant that the producer would receive a larger share of the film's profit, an appealing proposition. Under the 1926 film legislation, three *Prädikate* were awarded: Instructional, Popularly Improving and Artistic.<sup>72</sup> The 1934 Law greatly expanded the *Prädikate* system. Rank ordered from highest to lowest value, the *Prädikate* were as follows:<sup>73</sup>

- (a) Politically and artistically especially valuable
- (b) Politically especially valuable
- (c) Artistically especially valuable
- (d) Politically valuable
- (e) Artistically valuable
- (f) Culturally valuable
- (g) Valuable for Youth
- (h) Nationally valuable
- (i) Film of the Nation
- (j) Instructional

<sup>69</sup> Hull, p. 44.

<sup>70</sup> By 1937 the *Prädikate* system was estimated to have saved the industry RM 10 million. *Jahrbuch der RFFK*, 1937, p. 152, quoted in Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p. 50.

<sup>71</sup> The new office retained the name of *Prüfstelle*.

<sup>72</sup> Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p. 44.

<sup>73</sup> See Welch, p. 20-21, Petley, p. 99, Sington and Weidenfeld, p. 212, Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p. 50, Courtade and Cadars, p. 21.

- (k) National education
- (l) Commendable<sup>74</sup>

*Prädikate* (a) was the most valuable financially, since it exempted the film from all entertainment tax and allowed the producer the largest bonus possible. *Prädikate* (b) through (l) rewarded successively lower tax exemptions. The industry responded well to the new system: Courtade and Cadars state that from 1934-36, 24 per cent of all films were given *Prädikate*, between 1939-42, this increased to 40 per cent.<sup>75</sup> Clearly this relationship did not “hamstring” film makers, but was mutually rewarding; Goebbels received the films he desired while the film industry benefitted financially.

The *Reichslichtspielgesetz* also created the *Reichsfilmdramaturg*, a new censorship office superior to the normal *Prüfstelle*. The *Reichsfilmdramaturg* existed within the RMVP and oversaw film censorship with three objectives: (1) to ensure a consistent level of National Socialist content within films; (2) to determine if and how a film is suitable for youth; (3) to award *Prädikate*.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, the *Dramaturg* was to reclassify, by 31 December 1935, all films created before 30 January 1933.<sup>77</sup> The *Dramaturg*'s censorship powers were formidable, and a film could even be banned on account of an actor's racial or political past. The *Dramaturg* also operated as a *vorsenzor* or “pre-censor” to whom compulsory “treatments” or synopses were forwarded before scripts were written, and if the treatments were passed, then an entire script was written and re-submitted.<sup>78</sup> If required, the *Dramaturg* could override the *Filmprüfstelle* and

<sup>74</sup> Petley claims this category was instituted on Sept 1, 1942. See Petley, p.99.

<sup>75</sup> Courtade and Cadars, p. 21. After 1938 no theatre owner could refuse a *Prädikate* film if a distributor offered one. Even today, the basic *Prädikate* system remains in effect with different classifications.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>77</sup> This was an amendment made to the law on 3 July, 1935. Courtade and Cadars, p. 26.

<sup>78</sup> Welch, p. 18. The powers of the *Reichsfilmdramaturg* were defined as “Der Reichsfilmdramaturg hat die Aufgabe, die Filmindustrie in allen wichtigen Fragen der Filmherstellung zu beraten, die ihm vorzulegenden Manuskripte und Drehbücher zu prüfen und rechtzeitig zu verhindern, das Stoffe behandelt

supervise every stage of film production, although this does not seem to have happened very often.<sup>79</sup> When the film was finished shooting, it would be submitted to the *Prüfstelle* for examination and either sent back for further changes or accepted and possibly awarded a *prädikate*. Evidently the entire process of censorship was found to be slow; on 13 December, 1934 the compulsory "treatment" was made optional.<sup>80</sup> Further, Welch suggests that by 1935 the process of censorship and the passing of films became a mere formality, often taking place only days before a film's release. This suggests several possibilities: (1) Goebbels' personal consultation with the filmmakers may have been sufficient to elicit the types of films he wanted, thereby making the *vorzensor* a wasteful effort; (2) the financial power of the *Filmkreditbank* may have encouraged National Socialist films; (3) the *Reichsfilmkammer* may have been sufficiently powerful; (4) the *Filmwelt* did not resist Goebbels to the degree Hull suggests.

Following the 1934 *Reichslichtspielgesetz*, the next major step was the silencing of the film critics. On 28 November, 1936 Goebbels forbade negative film reviews and criticism,<sup>81</sup> claiming:

If a work of art and its presentation contain a National Socialist idea, we favour it. If the opposite is the case, we have not only the right but the duty to be against it. Art criticism is not primarily an aesthetic question, but a political one. Until very recently the majority of theatre critics have neglected this point.<sup>82</sup>

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werden, die dem Geist der Zeit zuwiderlaufen." *Licht-Bild-Bühne*, 3 February 1934, in Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p. 49.

<sup>79</sup> Welch, p.18 Goebbels obviously was the ultimate censor next to Hitler, and in 1935 the law was amended to legally allow Goebbels to ban any film he felt was not in the public interest.

<sup>80</sup> Welch, p.18 The second amendment to the 1934 law came on 28 June, 1935 when Goebbels was given the legal authority to ban any film he felt was not in the public interest.

Although in practice Goebbels had previously possessed this ability, this represented another step toward his legitimization of power.

<sup>81</sup> Welch, p.22 Since 22 Sept 1933 all critics were answerable to Goebbels, but the parameters of their work was not completely delineated.

<sup>82</sup> New York Times, 16 March, 1937, p. 15, in Hull, p. 97.



Of his pre-war actions, this was the most overt in terms of forceful control, and the foreign press noted and criticised this development. The new “positive criticism” was the culmination of a trend Goebbels initiated earlier in May, 1936, since he likely recognized that criticism exposing his propagandistic initiatives might weaken the effect. If ideological films were to be most effective, they had to exist within an ideological vacuum; no alternate viewpoints could be allowed. In May, Goebbels forbid the publication of all reviews of concerts, plays, and films on the morning after the performance.<sup>83</sup> Since this achieved little, Goebbels replaced “critical” reviews with “descriptive” film reviews ( *kunstbetrachtungen* ).<sup>84</sup> *Kunstbetrachtungen* were designed to entice the reader into attending the performance, while eliciting expectations of the film that acted as a foil to the propaganda presented.<sup>85</sup> A review of the film *Jud Süß* ( *Jew Süß* ) is an excellent example:

Clean shaven and dressed like a gentleman, the Jew Süß Oppenheimer contrives to be appointed Finance Minister to the Duke of Würtemberg... Matching one another in treachery, the court Jew and Minister Süß Oppenheimer and his secretary outbid one another in tricks and intrigues to bleed the people of Würtemberg... The Jew Süß Oppenheimer violates the beautiful Dorothea Sturm which confirms the extent of his guilt... Jew. hands off German women!<sup>86</sup>

This type of descriptive review elicited an expectation that further empowered the film as anti-Semitic propaganda, and *Jud Süß* became a box-office hit, exceeding Goebbels’ wildest expectations.

### 3.3: The Crisis Returns

<sup>83</sup>Hull, p. 94. also in Welch, p.22. Welch claims the ban applied to reviews written for the evening of the première. Both authors mention that the law was ineffectual, since reviews were published the following afternoon after the performance.

<sup>84</sup> Welch, p. 22.

<sup>85</sup> Descriptive reviews actually assisted the film industry, through enticing people into seeing the film. They were not, as Hull suggests, intended to stem a rising number of bad reviews. See Hull, pp. 96-97.

<sup>86</sup> Leiser, p 80/81.

Not all National Socialist films were financial successes, however, and by 1936-37 high export losses put the industry in a state of crisis which became critical in the fiscal year of 1936-37. In 1934-35, 12-15 per cent of the industry's income came from exports; in 1936-37 this fell to 6-7 per cent.<sup>87</sup> Compared to 1932-33 when exports accounted for 40 per cent of the industry's income, the drop to 6-7 per cent was quite alarming. Despite the 1935 formation of a national export company, *Deutsche-Export GmbH*, the situation continued to decline. Growing political hostility toward Nazi Germany was a major contributing factor, partly resulting from Germany's aggressive drive toward remilitarization: Hitler's implementation of compulsory military service on 16 March, 1935, the regaining of the Saar on 1 March, 1935, and the occupation of the Rhineland on 7 March, 1936 exemplify this trend. At the same time, German films became introverted and nationalistic, making them more appealing to German audiences and less so to foreign viewers. Further, Germany's growing anti-Semitism, *entjudung* and elimination of *entartete Künstler* offended many foreign film distributors who increasingly refused to handle any German films.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, Germany's reduction of foreign film imports on ideological or anti-Semitic grounds complicated international quota requirements, and reduced the acceptance of German exports.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>87</sup> *Jahrbuch der RFK*, 1937, p. 124, in Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p. 53.

<sup>88</sup> This reaction is noted by several authors as being particularly common in the United States, where film distributors were supposedly mostly Jewish.

<sup>89</sup> Compared to pre-1933, Germany generally reduced imports from 1933 on, but low German production saw increased imports in 1935, 1937, 1942. American films were important to the German exhibitors, but the statistics do not show that after 1939 most "foreign films" originated in neutral, axis, or German occupied countries. The following data for 1935-1938, is taken from the Institut für Konjunkturforschung, printed in the *Jahrbuch der Reichsfilmkammer*, 1939, p. 199, in Phillips, p. 48., Data for 1939-1944 is taken from Spiker, p. 198. Note, 1938-45 German figures include Austrian production. Please see next page for table.

Year	Total Films	German Films	Foreign Films	American Films
1935	188	92	96	41
1936	176	112	64	28

In addition to falling exports, rising production costs were another crippling factor that worsened during 1935-37.

Table Two: Production Costs of German Feature Films, 1933-1937.<sup>90</sup>

Year	Number of Films Produced	Total Cost in Millions RM	Average Cost in RM	Percent Increase in cost from prev. Year
1933	114	28.5	250 000	
1934	129	32.2	249 612	-1%
1935	92	36.3	394 565	58%
1936	112	50.7	452 678	15%
1937	94	50.5	537 234	19%

The reasons for rising costs are varied. From 1933-1935, salaries paid to top film stars and directors rose by up to 200 per cent: top salaries ranged from RM 200,000 to RM 350,000.<sup>91</sup> Since foreign discrimination against German films led many German artists with an international reputation to leave Germany, major film companies, perhaps at Goebbels' encouragement, raised salaries to retain talented artists. The *Filmkreditbank*, combined with Goebbels' demands for artistically excellent films was another major influence on rising costs. Through the FKB, financing became easier to obtain and facilitated the production of larger, costlier productions. Rather than tightening their purse strings, film companies appear to have gambled on better returns through more

1937	172	94	78	39
1938	162	100	62	36
1939	145	111	34	Not Avail. to 1944
1940	103	85	18	-
1941	81	67	14	-
1942	87	57	30	-
1943	101	78	23	-
1944	77	64	13	-

<sup>90</sup> Bundesarchiv Koblenz (hereafter BA), Akten der Ufa-Film GmbH in Liquidation, R1091/431, as cited in Welch, p. 32., Also in Spiker, p. 143.

<sup>91</sup> Wolfgang Becker, *Film und Herrschaft* (Berlin: Verlag Volker Spiess, 1973), p. 115-116.

elaborate productions that might be awarded a high-ranking *prädikate* and become box-office hits. Goebbels' slogan, "*Kunst vor Kommerz* " only encouraged this behaviour. Other factors include rising patent costs for sound technology, and increasing taxes imposed by the *Reichsfinanzministerium*.<sup>92</sup> Though audience figures rose in this same period, they never offset rising costs. Attendance and receipt figures also suggest this:

Table Three: Attendance, Receipts and Taxes, 1933-34 to 1937-38.<sup>93</sup>

Note: Attendance figures and receipts given in millions, taxes in millions RM.

Year	Attendance	Percent increase	Receipts	Percent increase	Tax	Percent increase
1933-4	245	-	176.3	-	16.0	-
1934-35	259	6%	194.6	10%	15.6	-3%
1935-36	304	17%	230.9	19%	17.6	13%
1936-37	362	19%	282.1	22%	21.1	20%
1937-38	430	19%	309.2	7%	23.5	11%

Although audiences increased, German cinemas did not play to full houses. Only 8.6 per cent of Germans went to the cinema once a week, compared to 34.2 per cent and 41.3 per cent in the United States and England respectively.<sup>94</sup> Further, the seating capacity in the Reich during 1936 was approximately 1,943,041 seats, and presuming every cinema gave two performances every day, one years' total audience could have been a maximum of 1,418,419,930 persons, whereas in 1936-37, only 362,000,000 persons attended.<sup>95</sup> Further, an increase in funds from receipts does not represent improvement in the industry's finances. From every mark spent in German cinemas in 1936, film producers were receiving about 16 pfennigs.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> This caused Goebbels some anxiety. The *Jahrbuch der Reichsfilmkammer*, 1939, p. 197 lists taxes paid in millions RM as follows: 1933: 16.0, 1934: 15.6, 1935: 17.6, 1936: 21.1, 1937: 23.5. Quoted in Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p. 53.

<sup>93</sup> Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p.53.

<sup>94</sup> Petley, p. 60.

<sup>95</sup> This figure is limited in accuracy— many cinemas showed films thrice daily.

<sup>96</sup> Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p. 54.

The end result of the increased costs, low export figures and mediocre attendances were major losses, especially in 1936-1937. The director of Tobis, Ferdinand Bausback, estimated a loss to the entire industry at RM 10.5 million; Ufa's director, Ludwig Klitzsch, estimated a loss of RM 12-15 million, and The Frankfurter Zeitung estimated a loss of RM 8-10 million during 1935-36.<sup>97</sup> Hull cites a loss for 1936 of RM 9 million.<sup>98</sup> These financial losses eliminated many small production companies and resulted in an increasingly oligopolistic situation: by 1935-1936, the four major film companies, Ufa, Terra, Tobis and Bavaria accounted for nearly 81 per cent of all film production.

Table Four: 1935-1936 Film Production by Company<sup>99</sup>

Firms	Productions	Com-missioned Productions	Total Productions	% Share of German Production
Tobis				
• Europa		16	16	
• Rota	2	12	14	
• Syndikat		11	11	
			(41)	38
Ufa	19	5	24	22.2
Bavaria	9	2	11	10.2
Terra	1	10	11	10.2
Remainder			21	19.4
Total Productions: 1935-36	31	56	108	100

### 3.4: The Nationalised Film Industry: 1937-1942

In January 1937, financial crisis forced Goebbels to restructure the film industry to maintain the profit motive while stabilizing the industry's finances through increased government mediation of the *Filmwelt*'s financial and

<sup>97</sup> Petley, p.61; *Jarhbuch der RFK*, 1937, p. 152, in Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p. 54.

<sup>98</sup>Hull, p.96. He suggests this loss resulted from low-grade Nazi pictures, a suggestion completely ignorant of decreasing exports and increased costs.

<sup>99</sup> Petley, p. 62, Note: Europa, Rota, Syndikat were all subsidiaries of Tobis

corporate activity. To accomplish these ends, Goebbels used the privately owned trust company, Kautio Treuhand GmbH, to raise the share capital of the major film companies through an indirect state buy-out of existing shares. Kautio was owned by Dr. Max Winkler, a government trustee who, since 1919, had worked for successive German governments to further the government's holdings in various companies, particularly with foreign based German newspapers. Winkler set up Kautio on 17 January 1929, not, as some authors suggest, at the request of Goebbels in late 1936.<sup>100</sup> Kautio was originally used as a trust company for the government's holdings in foreign newspapers, and also as a trust for funds allocated to Brüning's and Hindenburg's election campaigns. Winkler, however, does not appear to have been politically active; instead he focussed on his work and adapted himself to each consecutive government.<sup>101</sup> Despite his previous government work, Goebbels entrusted Winkler with important tasks, evidently recognizing that Winkler's skills in covert corporate takeover were invaluable.<sup>102</sup>

In early 1937, Winkler began to covertly buy out stocks of the major film companies, transforming them from publicly to privately owned, limited liability corporations that Winkler administered in compliance with Goebbels' directives. Although the companies were purchased by government funds, they were legally owned by Winkler, and the companies were therefore referred to as *Staatsmittelbar*, or indirectly state controlled, since Kautio was little more than a

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<sup>100</sup> Petley, p. 65. See also Welch, p. 33. Welch implies that Kautio was set up in late 1936: "In 1936 the shaky financial position of the two major film companies, Ufa and Tobis, gave the RMVP the opportunity they had been seeking. Winkler's method of control was to establish a trust company, Kautio Treuhand..."

<sup>101</sup> Wolfgang Becker, p. 139.

<sup>102</sup> Goebbels seems to have accepted Winkler's apolitical nature, recognizing that Winkler felt a duty to his work as defined by the state. In August, 1946 Winkler was cleared of any crimes due to "lack of evidence" and the prosecution was unable to prove that he enriched himself personally by his activities. Please see a report of the trial in *Die Welt*, 8 August 1946, in Phillips, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p.55. Note also, Winkler worked closely with the Allies to dismantle the film industry in the immediate post-war years.

secret front for Goebbels' administration. The heads of the companies were answerable to Winkler, Winkler answered to Goebbels, and to a degree Goebbels was forced to accept input from the Finance Ministry since it supplied needed finances. This takeover should not be seen as a forceful act to control the industry: quite the opposite, Winkler was always diplomatic, fair and on good terms with the industry's heads.<sup>103</sup> Thus, rarely did corporate organization change; usually Winkler simply became the majority shareholder, and worked in close cooperation with the heads of the industry. Although the government now had greater input in the industry's operation, most companies were happy to accept this, since otherwise they would have faced financial ruin. A mutually rewarding relationship existed between the government and the industry, since in return for producing ideologically correct films, the film industry was in a better position than ever to make large profits. Far from nationalising the industry in a non-profitable fashion, Winkler's reorganisation maintained and strengthened the profit motive vital to attaining the industry's cooperation.<sup>104</sup>

To reorganize the industry, the Reich Finance Ministry supplied funds to the RMVP, which secretly gave the funds to Winkler, who purchased a majority of shares in major film companies. Winkler held no official position within any film company, but his close relationship with the companies' heads allowed him and Goebbels significant input into the industry's finances and operation.<sup>105</sup> This arrangement was hidden from public view until 1942 with the formal reorganization of the film industry, and some authors suggest many company employees were unaware of the change in ownership until that time. From 1937 until 1942, Winkler diplomatically bought control of almost every significant film

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<sup>103</sup> In Winkler's 1946 trial, several former shareholders defended Winkler, claiming he never used force or threats during negotiations.

<sup>104</sup> Please see Becker, p. 132, and pp. 130-140.

<sup>105</sup> Some members of the various company's boards (like Willy Imhof and Bruno Pfennig) were close associates of Winkler.

company in Germany and Austria, and by 1940-41, the list of *Staatsmittelbar* film companies was extensive and included the following:<sup>106</sup>

1. Tobis Tonbild Syndikat AG, Berlin
2. Ufa (Universum Film AG), Berlin
3. Terra Filmkunst GmbH, Berlin
4. Tobis Filmkunst GmbH, Berlin
5. Wien-Film GmbH, Vienna
6. Bavaria-Filmkunst GmbH, Munich
7. Ostmärkische Filmtheatre Betriebe GmbH, Vienna
8. Deutsche Lichtspielbau GmbH, Berlin
9. Tobis Sascha Filmverleih GmbH, Vienna
10. AB-Film Aktiengesellschaft, Prague-Barrandow
11. Elektafilm AG, Prague
12. Continental Films, Paris
13. N. V. Internationale Tobiscinema, Amsterdam

The control of these companies cost the government dearly, reconfirming the extreme importance of films to the National Socialist régime. By the end of 1939, the government had spent in excess of RM 64,886,900 to secure ownership in major film companies.<sup>107</sup> However, this was not to increase Goebbels' control over a rebellious industry as some authors suggest. State instruments such as the FKB and the Reich Film Law already afforded Goebbels an extremely high degree of influence; the transfer of ownership was merely intended to guarantee financial health and profit within the industry, since Goebbels recognized that financial problems were just as significant an enemy as ideological non-conformity. Goebbels believed that truly great films designed to promote Nazi ideology could not come from an industry plagued by destructive corporate competition and economic crisis. The object of the *Verreichlichungsprozess*, or corporate takeover, was to help the industry out of financial crisis, moderate unfruitful competition between the major companies, and boost corporate capital and the availability of financing. The

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<sup>106</sup> Petley, p. 69/70. Also in Courtade and Cadars, pp. 28-29.

<sup>107</sup> Petley, p. 66.



*Filmwelt* welcomed these goals for reasons of economic self-interest, and Winkler pursued these objectives with a diplomacy and care that went a long way to promote goodwill between the industry heads and the government. Increasing corporate capital and facilitating financing was not intended to make the industry dependant upon the state, but to re-establish it on a profitable basis.

Several of Winkler's actions from 1935 to 1942 show how these goals were pursued. Since the film industry was in part suffering from the rising costs of the sound patent monopoly held by the foreign-owned Tobis Tonbild Syndikat AG, Winkler purchased 52 per cent of its Dutch-owned mother company, Intertobis.<sup>108</sup> Tobis was immediately influenced by Winkler, and by 1937 Tobis was controlled by Kautio, hence the majority of profits from the sound patent monopoly were channelled back into Germany, rather than into Holland. In addition, Winkler re-organized Tobis by making the technical and sound patent sectors separate from the production and distribution sectors. The first two sectors remained as Tobis Tonbild Syndikat AG, while the production and distribution sectors became known as Tobis Filmkunst GmbH. The smaller distribution subsidiary of Tobis-Rota was separated from Tobis and merged with the bankrupt Terra Film AG (a former Ufa subsidiary) to form the production company Terra Filmkunst GmbH.<sup>109</sup>

Ufa, Germany's largest film company, was purchased by Winkler in March, 1937, and the majority of shares were obtained through Alfred Hugenberg, who willingly sold out to Winkler. Hugenberg undoubtedly realized that he stood in the way of the government's plans, and the critical finances of the industry made his shares in Ufa increasingly poor investments with little or no return. By

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<sup>108</sup> Petley, p. 70 By 1940 Intertobis was wholly owned by Kautio.

<sup>109</sup> See Petley, pp.70-72, and Welch, p.33.

November 1938, Winkler held almost all Ufa's shares, and Hugenberg was replaced on the board of directors by von Stauss, a key figure who possessed significant influence within German industry, and greatly assisted the government in industrial relations.

With the Austrian *Anschluss* of 1938 and the occupation of Czechoslovakia, Winkler re-organized both national film industries into two separate film companies, Wien Film and Prag Film. Wien Film was founded on 16 December 1938, and both companies became part of the larger German *Staatsmittelbar* industry, with their operations co-ordinated under Winkler's direction.

To finance the *Staatsmittelbar* companies, Winkler set up a new financing company called Film Finanz GmbH, which possessed significantly more financial resources than the *Filmkreditbank*, due to its backing from the Reich Finance Ministry and the powerful Reich Credit Company, or *Reichskreditgesellschaft*. Set up in 1924, the *Reichskreditgesellschaft* acted as a house bank for all nationalised industrial holdings.<sup>110</sup> Like Kautio, all of these holdings were owned by a single company, Vereinigte Industrie-Unternehmungen AG. The operation of Film Finanz GmbH was similar to the FKB in that a board of representatives from the *Reichskreditgesellschaft*, the RMVP, the RFM, Kautio, and the *Staatsmittelbar* film companies determined financing. The first allocations of funds by Film Finanz occurred in November 1937, and allotted RM 10 million to Tobis and RM 6 million each to Ufa and Terra.

By 1940, Winkler controlled all the major film companies on Goebbels' behalf, while some smaller firms remained independently owned. However, the work of independent firms became increasingly insignificant. In 1939, *Staatsmittelbar* firms produced 62 per cent of all film production; in 1940, 65

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<sup>110</sup>Petley, "The Nazi control of the German Film Industry", p. 74.

per cent; in 1941, 70 per cent; and in 1942, 86 per cent.<sup>111</sup> While 14 per cent of 1942's films were made by non-*Statsmittelbar* firms, it must be remembered that all of the politically significant and "epic" productions were created by companies like Ufa, Tobis, Terra, or Bavaria.

To ensure a future supply of competent film personnel, and to demonstrate his commitment to the film industry, Goebbels established the State Academy of Film, or the *Deutsche Filmakademie* at Babelsberg in spring 1938. Located between Berlin and Potsdam, Babelsberg was the site of the massive Ufa studios, so the school was well placed to make use of the available resources.<sup>112</sup> At an estimated cost of RM 20 million, the intention of the school was also to increase the quality and technology of German film and to ensure a continuing interest in the art so important to Goebbels' ministry.<sup>113</sup> The *Filmakademie* was divided into three faculties: an artistic faculty under Wolfgang Liebeniener, and technical and economic faculties. Hull states the school was to offer 32 courses such as "*Weltanschauung* : Nazism as parent of the new German screen art" and "Nazi administration".<sup>114</sup> Welch lists courses such as scenario-writing, direction, set and costume design, photography, sound recording, acting, film distribution, house management, and laboratory work, among the 23 courses offered.<sup>115</sup> The *Filmakademie* was never finished however; it was closed on account of war in 1940.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Phillips, p. 57. Note the increasing concentration of the industry: of 49 small companies producing 1-2 films in 1933, there remained less than 15 in 1939. Of seven companies producing 3-5 films in 1933, two existed in 1939. See also Courtade and Cadars, p. 28.

<sup>112</sup> Hull claims construction began on 21 February (p. 126) while Courtade and Cadars state 4 March. (p. 25) For photographs of studios, please refer to Courtade and Cadars, pp. 29-31. In 1991, previously unknown film archives and scripts were uncovered at this site.

<sup>113</sup> BA R2/4281, *Niederschrift der Bavaria Filmkunst Aufsichtsratssitzung*, 4 October 1938, in Marcus Phillips, "The German film industry and the New Order" in Stachura, P. D. (ed.), *The Shaping of the Nazi State*, (London, 1978), p. 260.

<sup>114</sup> Hull, p. 126.

<sup>115</sup> Welch, p. 34.

<sup>116</sup> In March 1941 Hitler ordered that a prestigious Berlin cinema under construction be redesigned to include a bomb-proof auditorium with a capacity of 3,600 people. (BA R2/4826,

By 1941 the Kautio scheme appeared to have increased profits and stabilised the finances of the film industry, but problems still existed. By late 1941 Germany's war conquests created a virtual monopoly for the German film industry in Europe, with over 8,300 cinemas in German hands.<sup>117</sup> Despite the assets occupied studios and cinemas in France, Poland, Ukraine and Latvia brought into the German film industry, they failed to greatly offset rising costs and materials shortages.<sup>118</sup> In addition, the Kautio arrangement was unable to completely limit inter-corporate rivalry for prestigious directors, actors, and actresses, a significant factor in the industry's increasing costs.<sup>119</sup> Exacerbating rising costs was increased profit taxes imposed on all industries in September 1939, the result of the government's belief that no industry should amass large profits from the war.<sup>120</sup> This was consistent with National Socialist ideology, but functionally too, revenues from increased profit taxes could be returned to the war effort. However this caused Goebbels and Winkler some anxiety, since it limited the economic strength of the industry.<sup>121</sup> Compared to the crisis of 1936/37, the industry was healthy, but during 1940/41 narrowing profit margins failed to provide the large returns Goebbels and Winkler were seeking. In 1940/41 production costs rose by 68 per cent and the combined gross profit of the *Staatsmittelbar* companies fell by 12 per cent, but the average gross profits

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Geschäftsbericht der Deutsche Lichtspielbau GmbH, 23 May 1941., in Phillips, "The German film industry and the New Order" p. 278.

<sup>117</sup> BA, R2/4799, in Welch, p. 35.

<sup>118</sup> Phillips, "The German film industry and the New Order", p. 269-271, See also Courtade and Cadars, pp. 32-33. In November 1941 Winkler formed *Zentralfilmgesellschaft Ost GmbH* (ZFO) to purchase cinemas and take over studios in Riga, Reval, and Kiev. In 1942/43 ZFO receipts totaled RM 6.5 million and equipment value was approximately RM 7 million (Becker, p. 217) Similarly in France, Winkler-appointed agents set up *Continental Film srl.* in October 1940.

<sup>119</sup> The government continued to allow the payment of extremely high salaries to top rated entertainers until 1945. However, during 1940-41 the corporate bidding for stars threatened the overall economic health of the industry.

<sup>120</sup> This tax was increased in 1941.

<sup>121</sup> The increased profit taxes constrained the industry from producing the increasingly grandiose productions demanded by Goebbels, and the limitation of profits made rising costs more difficult to deal with, while preventing much reserve capital to be amassed.

per film increased by 25 per cent.<sup>122</sup> The most serious problem though, was the shrinking supply of feature films: production declined by 29 per cent in 1940/41 compared to 1939/40, and threatened to decline even more.<sup>123</sup> Film imports were unable to fill this gap: European film production was almost entirely Nazi-controlled, Italian films were too few, and American films were withdrawn in 1942.<sup>124</sup> A report commissioned by Winkler in mid 1941 revealed that the RMVP was commissioning too many large-scale productions requiring disproportionately high amounts of finance and time to produce, thereby yielding a low rate of return while slowing production time. Further, the tedious censorship process required frequent rewriting and retaking of scenes, actions wasteful of material and time. Average preparation and shooting time increased by 170 per cent from 1939-40 to 1940-41.<sup>125</sup>

To correct these problems, Goebbels and Winkler massively restructured the industry in late 1941 to centralize its supervision and streamline its operation. Winkler separated all production, exhibition, and distribution sectors regardless of company and amalgamated like sectors into separate groups dedicated to production, exhibition, or distribution. No longer was there inter-corporate rivalry; instead Goebbels created a massive film monopoly owned by a new holding company, called Ufa-Film GmbH, or Ufi to distinguish it from the former Ufa.<sup>126</sup> This reorganization did not affect the capitalist principle, but re-organized the industry from a cartel-like configuration to a totally profit driven monopoly. The re-organization into a holding company also gave the industry

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<sup>122</sup> This data is from R2/4791 and R2/4792, in Welch, p. 36.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 36; also in Phillips, "The German film industry and the New Order", p. 278.

<sup>124</sup> Boelke, p. 628.

<sup>125</sup> BA R2/4792, RFM Vermmerk (II.V.1942) über die Winklerische Ausarbeitung "Die deutsche Filmwirtschaft im Kriege", in Phillips, "The German film industry...", p. 278.

<sup>126</sup> The Ufi holding company remained subordinate to the Kautio trust company.

an important tax shelter, since individual film companies were taxed differently than a holding company.

Under Ufi arrangement, the production sectors of all *Staatsmittelbar* firms were amalgamated into Ufa-Filmkunst GmbH, a new company formed from the old production sector of the former Ufa. Although amalgamated, the individual companies retained their former names, perhaps to disguise the state monopoly. The few non-*Staatsmittelbar* firms were incorporated into Berlin-Film GmbH, set-up by Winkler on 2 September, 1941. Hence, the industry's production sector was now financially independent of the sometimes unprofitable distribution sector, and all companies now shared equal access to a major distribution company, the Deutsche Filmvertriebs GmbH (DFV) set up on 2 January 1942.<sup>127</sup> DFV resembled Ufa-Filmkunst GmbH in that it joined all previously separate distribution companies, although the use of former corporate names was maintained. Similarly the exhibition sector joined formerly independent theatre chains under a new company, Deutsche Filmtheatre GmbH, (DFT), set up on 14 November, 1941.<sup>128</sup> A decree of 12 February, 1942 further assisted the DFT in purchasing theatres across the expanding Reich through limiting any one person to ownership of no more than four cinemas, while corporations were banned from owning any.

The immediate effects of this reorganization are significant, since the separation of the industry into three sections held economic and functional advantages hitherto unavailable. Previously, film companies often had a well-run production sector that was offset by inefficient distribution that narrowed the overall profit margin. Hence, separation held an economic advantage through freeing the industry's production sector financially. Since distribution was a

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<sup>127</sup> Petley, p. 82.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

largely unprofitable business, Deutsche Filmvertriebs operated as a non-profit service company to the production sector, offering equal distribution opportunities at minimal cost to all Ufa-Filmkunst's amalgamates. Meanwhile, Deutsche Filmtheatre, in addition to receiving former cinema chains, bought up the numerous theatres that entered the market following the decree of 12 February 1942. DFT's operation is particularly noteworthy since it served important economic purposes through regulating ticket prices and channeling ticket revenues back into the industry instead of into private hands. It is also probable, although difficult to document, that regulation of ticket prices may have increased audiences through maintaining overall lower prices than would otherwise have occurred in a non-monopolistic system. This seems logical since Goebbels' propaganda would then have reached larger numbers, assisting the propaganda campaign. Economics aside, the tripartite Ufi system also allowed Goebbels centralized control over the industry by facilitating more direct control and input over individual sectors. This was in part accomplished through the February, 1942 installation of a new office, the *Reichsfilmintendanz*, headed by Dr. Fritz Hippler.<sup>129</sup> The selection of subject matter, casting, direction, shooting schedules and optimum use of studio time was all performed in consultation with the heads of the *staatseigene* companies, Hippler, Winkler, and Goebbels. The *Reichsfilmintendanz* was to concentrate on artistic and organizational matters, while the RMVP film department, in cooperation with the RFK, focussed on political matters like censorship and *Prädikate* allocation.

A few general comments should now be made on the industry's overall status from 1942 onwards. As indicated, the industry continued to pursue profits in a monopolistic fashion: an official Ufi statement said: "Competition between

<sup>129</sup> Fritz Hippler was the producer of the virulently anti-semitic, *Der ewige Jude* (1940). A demonically evil, pseudo-documentary, *Der ewige Jude* claimed to show the true lifestyle of Jews, "the lowest form of human life".

the companies may exist only as artistic rivalry. Any self-seeking on the economic level will be halted.”<sup>130</sup> Profit figures suggest the re-organization’s success, and Ufi not only operated independently of State aid but deposited significant profits into the State’s coffers. The net profit for all sectors in 1942-43 was RM 18 million, while 1943-44 returned a similar figure. The following table shows significant profitability among Ufi’s subsidiaries:<sup>131</sup>

Table Five: Net Profits for Ufi Subsidiary Production Groups, 41/42 to 43/44

<b>Production Companies</b>	<b>1941/2</b>	<b>1942/3</b>	<b>1943/4</b>
Tobis-Filmkunst	22,022	25,092	38,097
Terra-Filmkunst	14,423	18,402	33,309
Bavaria-Filmkunst	7,735	11,829	20,757
Wien-Film	549	9,477	21,659
Berlin-Film	-551	1,649	8,352
Ufa-Filmkunst	-44	-1,252 <sup>132</sup>	9,679
<b>Overall Totals</b>	<b>44,134</b>	<b>65,179</b>	<b>131,853</b>

Evident from the above figures was Goebbels’ belief that the motivational force of profit was the best method of achieving maximum artistic and propaganda output from the *Filmwelt*, and top managers, directors, and actors/actresses continued to receive huge salaries until the final weeks of the war.<sup>133</sup> Overall, the 1942 reorganization appears to have been a satisfactory long-term solution, although the profit figures and film production of 1944-45 would indicate to the contrary. However, these figures cannot be taken as legitimate indicators of the industry’s health since the worsening war situation caused severe shortages of raw film stock, destroyed innumerable studios and

<sup>130</sup> Becker, p. 202.

<sup>131</sup> Spiker, p. 234. Note: Table Five measured in hundreds RM.

<sup>132</sup> The negative numbers are the result of the expensive productions undertaken by Ufa, thereby requiring a longer time period to generate profit return.

<sup>133</sup> Under the 1942 reorganization, actors and directors were required to sign long-term contracts to avoid escalating bidding for their services. The financial independence of the film industry was also desirable to Goebbels since it freed him from any constraints of the RFM.



cinemas, and conscription decreased the manpower available to the industry.<sup>134</sup> Also, the numerous military defeats and overall gloom caused the censorship process to become increasingly strict, slowing film production and forcing the industry to generate new topics to ameliorate morale. Despite these problems, audience figures grew steadily until the the last months of the war when the industry and its cinemas lay in ruins.

Table Six: Cinema Attendance and Receipts in Germany, 1938-44.<sup>135</sup>

Year	Tickets Sold (in Millions)	Gross Receipts (in million RM)	Average cinema visits per year (over age 15)
1938	441.6	353.3	8.4
1939	623.7	476.9	10.5
1940	834.1	650.0	13.3
1941	892.3	725.7	14.3
1942	1,062.1	894.2	14.3
1943	1,116.5	958.6	14.4
1944	1,101.7	951.3	14.4

Table Seven: Audience Figures in Millions, in Germany, 1932-1944.<sup>136</sup>

Year	Attendance	Year	Attendance
1932-3	238.4	1938	441.6
1933-4	244.9	1939	623.7
1934-5	259.4	1940	834.1
1935-6	303.9	1941	892.3
1936-7	361.6	1942	1,062.1
1937-8	396.4	1943	1,116.5
		1944	1,101.7

<sup>134</sup> By April 1945 the Allies advance and the destruction of war cost the industry an estimated loss of RM 30 million. (Phillips, "The German film industry and the New Order", p.272 .

<sup>135</sup> Source: P. Pleyer, *Deutsche Nachkriegsfilm, 1946-8*, (Munster, 1965), p. 462; also G. von Pestalozza, *Film-Statistisches Material* (Weisbaden, 1952), p. 13, both quoted in Welch, p. 35.

<sup>136</sup> *Jahrbuch der Reichfilmkammer*, (Berlin: 1939), P. Pleyer, *Deutsche Nachkriegsfilm, 1946-8*, (Munster, 1965), p. 462; also G. von Pestalozza, *Film-Statistisches Material* (Weisbaden, 1952), p. 13, quoted in Welch, p. 31, 35. See also Spiker, p. 197, 231.

As the above tables demonstrate, audience figures more than quadrupled during the Third Reich, and several factors account for this dramatic increase. Most importantly, huge publicity campaigns urged Germans to go to the cinema, indicating the ideological and financial value of the cinema to the Nazi régime. Further, the National Socialist character of the feature films may have attracted larger audiences by reconfirming the correctness of the Nazi political programme in questioning minds. Undoubtedly the German public sought reassurance, and this is exactly what the feature films of the Third Reich offered. In addition to its ideological intentions, the cinema almost certainly offered the masses relaxing entertainment, particularly during the tiresome and anxiety-filled war years. Another factor accounting for increasing audience figures is the decreasing availability of material goods which resulted in increased funds that could be spent in cinemas.

Now that the monopolistic, capitalist and ideological structure of the industry has been clarified, an examination of the viewing conjuncture of Nazi feature films may be undertaken.

#### CHAPTER 4 PROPAGANDA AND THE VIEWING CONJUNCTURE

Before discussing the feature films of the Nazi period, consideration must be given to the socio-political, historical and cultural conjuncture surrounding their release. In much of the current literature on the Nazi cinema this factor is ignored, resulting in a reductionist classification system of “political” and “apolitical” categories. As Hull states: “the number of propaganda vehicles, based on postwar censorship bans, was 1942 = 19; 1943 = 13; 1944 = 8; 1945 = 6. This is interesting in that it indicates the increasing number of entertainment films that the public demanded and the decrease in propaganda pictures which Goebbels was willing to budget”.<sup>1</sup> Richard Grunberger suggests: “Government and governed thus arrived at a consensus about the prime function of the cinema: to facilitate escapism or *Wirklichkeitsflucht..*”, while Zeman remarks: “A large sector of the industry went on producing entirely apolitical films: indeed, the initial enthusiasm of the Nazi film-makers to put across their message gradually cooled off.”<sup>2</sup> In *The German Cinema*, Manvell and Fraenkel state: “German films became escapist and politically harmless, or nondescript; and notable for the absence, rather than the presence, of a swastika.”<sup>3</sup>

Obvious in the above analyses is the requirement for a film to make explicit reference to National Socialism to be considered political. The underlying theory holds the director as a dictator who creates meaning and message through manipulating the text and images of the film. Accordingly, the audience supposedly receives this message in an addresser – addressee relationship existing in abstraction from the surrounding environment, and the audience assumes an inactive role in interpreting the film’s message and meaning.

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<sup>1</sup> Hull, p. 207

<sup>2</sup> Grunberger, p. 478; Z. A. B. Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, (Oxford University Press: 1973), p. 47

<sup>3</sup> Manvell and Fraenkel, *The German Cinema*, p. 72; see also pp. 96, 68, 69.

Hence *Ohm Krüger* is considered political since Nazi slogans are imbedded in its dialogue, while *Der zerbrochene Krug* and is viewed as entertainment because it lacks politically explicit text and images.<sup>4</sup>

Misleadingly, this simplistic analysis examines films out of their original context, and fails to recognize that a film's meaning cannot be singularly determined through a set of textual characteristics. Comparatively, Joseph Goebbels demonstrated a deeper understanding of the ideological cinema when he suggested that a film's meaning is created in the complex interplay between the text of the film and the social, cultural or political conjuncture surrounding the audience. Opposite the views of Hull, Zeman and others, Goebbels denied that films required explicit reference to National Socialist doctrine to be ideological, and even advised against it:

In general one doesn't bother to talk much about those things that are necessary to life, since their very necessity makes them a matter of course. For example we don't bother to talk much about the air which we breathe in and out, although we couldn't live two minutes without air. For us, air is a matter of course and we regard talking about it as superfluous: it is there, it surrounds us, it is an element of our lives. National Socialism, which concerns basic attitudes and the spiritual and holy character of the Nation, is akin to the air's function concerning the human respiratory organs. We breathe it in and breathe it out. We live in its atmosphere. We see how it is gradually materialising in every sphere, in every circumstance, question and person. An art which tries to ignore this will not be understood by the people. There is no sphere which can shut itself off from this commonly shared atmosphere. This means, then, that the problems thrown up by National Socialism now engage the whole nation. These are problems with which we German people are wrestling amongst ourselves but are also problems which we as a nation have to argue out with other peoples. Their influence governs and determines our daily lives. These problems include a certain attitude and outlook as embodied in the German people. Problems which must be tackled with by the arts today are, so to speak, out there on the streets. Only those who don't want to see these problems will find it difficult to participate artistically in various areas. I do not in the least want an art which proves its National Socialist character merely by the display of National Socialist emblems and symbols but, rather, an art which expresses its attitude through its National Socialist character and through raising National Socialist problems. These problems will penetrate the hearts of the German and other peoples more effectively the less ostentatiously they are handled. Overall, it is a fundamental characteristic of efficacy that it never

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<sup>4</sup> The story of *Ohm Krüger* recounts the struggle of the Boers against the British.

appears as intended. The moment that propaganda is recognized as such it becomes ineffective. However, the moment that propaganda, message, bent or attitude as such stay in the background and appear to people only as storyline, action or side-effect then they will become effective in every respect..."<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, this thesis maintains that films should not be classified merely by analyzing their textual characteristics, but through the use to which a film is put, to its function within a particular situation, to its place within cinema conceived as a social practice in a specific historical conjuncture.<sup>6</sup> As Steve Neale elaborated: "particular [political] positions... are a product of textual address in conjunction with the immediate discourses that necessarily surround it within the apparatuses that support it...".<sup>7</sup> The ideological apparatuses surrounding the viewing audience and the film play a significant role, and a film with seemingly apolitical text can serve a political function when viewed in its original relationship to the apparatuses and historical conjuncture surrounding it.

Under National Socialism, *Gleichschaltung* multiplied ideological apparatuses in German society; everything took on a political bent, whether it was a swimming club, school band or automobile society.<sup>8</sup> Even shovels became politicized, changing from the companion of the down-trodden worker to the Labour Service's tool to expand, build and beautify the new Reich. In this atmosphere, "entertainment" films could scarcely avoid politicization, since the formerly autonomous apparatuses surrounding their consumption, exhibition and production were subordinated to Goebbels' command.

The apparatuses influencing film consumption were Nazi dominated, largely through the *Prädikate* system and the film critics who were important in

<sup>5</sup> Excerpt from Goebbels' speech to the RFK at the Berlin Krolloper on 5 March, 1937: Gerd Albrecht, *Nationalsozialistische Filmpolitik: Eine Soziologische Untersuchung über die Spielfilme des Dritten Reiches*, (Stuttgart: 1969), p. 456-7 in Petley, p. 101

<sup>6</sup> Steve Neale, "Propaganda" in *Screen*, vol. 18, no. 3, (pp. 9-40), p. 39

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34

<sup>8</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, (London: New Left Books, 1974), p. 347 in Petley, p. 96; see also Neale, pp. 34-37

manipulating and influencing the meaning of films.<sup>9</sup> *Prädikate* established certain expectations and preconceptions within the viewer, while film “critics” wrote descriptive reviews that helped define the film’s meaning and significance, through highlighting the film’s action, characters and plot.<sup>10</sup> *Kunstbetrachtungen* avoided discussing the film’s true political intentions, but alerted the viewer to the “good” and “bad” characters of the film: *Die Rothschilds* was described as an historically based drama about a Jewish conspiracy operating in Britain during the Napoleonic wars, but Goebbels expressly forbade any reference to the film’s anti-Semitic nature.<sup>11</sup>

In the exhibition sector, the majority of German theaters were owned by Deutsche Filmtheater GmbH. and distributed films from Deutsche Filmvertriebs, allowing Goebbels control of exhibition and distribution. Goebbels could determine where, when and how long films would run for, including the contents of descriptive programmes that were frequently handed out to audiences.<sup>12</sup> An example of Goebbels’ intervention was the series of re-runs that he ordered in October 1944. “In recognition of the gravity and stature of our times”, the following films were shown nationally:<sup>13</sup>

Table One: 1944 Film Re-runs (by film and date of original production)

<i>Affäre Roedern, Die</i>	1944	<i>Germanin</i>	1943
<i>Annelie</i>	1941	<i>Kameraden</i>	1941
<i>Bismarck</i>	1940	<i>Kampfgeschwader Lützow</i>	1941
<i>Carl Peters</i>	1941	<i>Katzensteg, Der</i>	1937

<sup>9</sup> Please see Chapter Three for list of film predicates.

<sup>10</sup> The 1936 control of the film critics increased the ideological power of feature films. As Balfour states (p. 423): “Immunity from challenge also makes it possible to get away with the Big Lie...”. Regarding film critics, Press Chief Alfred Berndt stated: “Judgement of art work in the National Socialist State can be made only on the basis of the National Socialist viewpoint of culture. Only the Party and the State are in a position to determine artistic values by appeal to the National Socialist artistic standpoint.”. (Hull, p. 96)

<sup>11</sup> See Boelcke, p. 332: Minutes from 25 April 1940 meeting: “5. Bei der Vorpropaganda für die Filme “Jud Süß” und “Rothschild” soll in der Presse nicht von antisemitischen Filmen geschrieben werden.”

<sup>12</sup> As a feedback mechanism, Goebbels appointed Security Service (*Sicherheits Dienst*) observers to report on audience reactions during the showing of certain films. However, some authors suggest Goebbels put only limited faith in these reports.

<sup>13</sup> Petley, p. 99

<i>Choral von Leuthen, Der</i>	1933	<i>Leinen aus Irland</i>	1939
<i>Degenhardts, Die</i>	1944	<i>Ohm Krüger</i>	1941
<i>Diesel</i>	1942	<i>...Reitet für Irland</i>	1941
<i>Die Entlassung, Die</i>	1942	<i>Rothschilds, Die</i>	1940
<i>Friedrich Schiller</i>	1940	<i>Schwarzer Jäger Johanna</i>	1934
<i>Fuchs von Glenarvon, Der</i>	1940	<i>Standeschütze Bruggler</i>	1936
<i>Grosse König, Der</i>	1942	<i>Stukas</i>	1941
<i>G.P.U.</i>	1942	<i>Trenck, der Pandur</i>	1940
<i>Heimkehr</i>	1941	<i>U-Boote westwärts</i>	1941
<i>Herrscher, Der</i>	1937	<i>Über alles in der Welt</i>	1941
<i>Jud Süß</i>	1940	<i>Unsterbliche Hertz, Das</i>	1939
<i>Junge Adler</i>	1944	<i>Unendliche Weg, Der</i>	1943
<i>Kaiser von Kalifornien, Der</i>	1936	<i>Verräter</i>	1936
		<i>Ziel in den Wolken</i>	1938

Within the production sphere, Goebbels' control was extensive and complex, as demonstrated in Chapter Three. The ideology of feature films was synchronized with that of the mass media and socio-cultural activities in the greater realm of an extremely politicized society. Recognizing the "masses" were far from a homogenous group, Goebbels varied his propaganda's form but rarely its intention: in film, propaganda ranged from the crude to the sophisticated, and Goebbels always sought an optimum level and method to influence as many people as possible.<sup>14</sup> As Goebbels stated: "All art has a message. Art has an aim, a goal, a direction.... Thus I don't want art for the sake of a message but to insert the message into the greater overall design."<sup>15</sup> Few films were exempt from ideological tendencies, but as the following table shows, the intensity of a feature's National Socialist character did not always share a logical relationship with the film's box office success.

<sup>14</sup> An "optimum" level of propaganda did not always correspond to a "maximum" level, as Goebbels noted.

<sup>15</sup> Albrecht, p. 456-7, in Petley, p. 102 The "greater overall design" seems an allusion to the nature of totalitarianism in seeking not the control but the complete change of men and society. Hence I disagree with suggestions that escapist, "apolitical" films became commonplace and served an ideological (as opposed to a political) function through relaxing the audience. Only a few late war features may have been more focussed on relaxation than National Socialist content. As Fritz Hippler wrote: "In a total war nations fight each other as wholes, and every expression of a nation's being is a weapon in the war— no matter whether it weakens the enemy nation's fighting spirit or stimulates that of one's own country; that is to say, by offering diversion, concentration and relaxation." (Leiser, p. 60)

Table Two: Top Grossing Feature Films of the Third Reich<sup>16</sup>

Title	Year Produced	Gross Profit
<i>Die Grosse Liebe</i>	1942	RM 8 million
<i>Wunschkonzert</i>	1940	RM 7.6 million
<i>Frauen sind doch bessere Diplomaten</i>	1941	RM 7 million
<i>Wiener Blut</i>	1942	RM 7 million
<i>Annelie</i>	1941	RM 6.5 million
<i>Judd Süß</i>	1940	RM 6.2 million
<i>Der Grosse König</i>	1942	RM 6 million
<i>Hochzeit auf Bärenhof</i>	1942	RM 6 million
<i>Die Entlassung</i>	1942	RM 6 million
<i>Ohm Krüger</i>	1941	RM 5.5 million
<i>Ich klage an</i>	1941	RM 5.3 million
<i>Operette</i>	1940	RM 5 million
<i>Quax der Bruchpilot</i>	1941	RM 5 million
<i>...reitet für Deutschland</i>	1941	RM 5 million
<i>Heimkehr</i>	1941	RM 4.9 million

Since the viewing conjuncture and the ideological apparatuses of the film industry have been clarified, this thesis will now examine the elements of the Nazi *Weltanschauung* that the ideologically oriented film industry inserted in the feature films of the Third Reich. The first group of films to be examined concerns the negative treatment of enemies by the German cinema.

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<sup>16</sup> Leiser, p. 62-63



## CHAPTER 5 ENEMIES OF THE REICH

In Nazi eyes, world history was a deadly struggle between Aryans and alien races, and it was the task of the Nazi cinema to indicate who was to live and who had to die. More importantly, cinema was used to turn the senseless slaughter of the so-called "inferior races" into a glorious and righteous act that would benefit racial Germany. It was absolutely vital to generate and maintain a deep hatred of everything foreign; dissent and compassion had to be eradicated to facilitate mass murder.<sup>1</sup> Further, the Party valued hatred's ability to unify people into a singular, patriotic mass, especially since it provided the government with an appearance of legitimacy and purpose.<sup>2</sup> To elicit such powerful hatred, and to force the individual to commit to the Nazi cause<sup>3</sup>, a technique of stereotypical comparisons contrasted the differences between Aryans and the subhuman enemy. As will be seen throughout the following chapters, Nazi cinema never ceased to compare good and evil, human and non-human, creator and destroyer.

### 5.1: Racism and the International Conspiracy of Enemies

As George Mosse noted, "Racial thought and its consequences are fundamental to the whole cultural drive of the Third Reich. Once this has been understood, everything else will follow."<sup>4</sup> A basic Nazi belief held that only the Aryan was capable of creating culture; other races only maintained what interracial breeding with Aryans had bestowed upon them, while Jews

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the Nazi "euthanasia" programme, where compassion was amplified to assist in the killings.

<sup>2</sup> Leif Furhammar and Folke Isaksson, *Politics and Film*, trans. Kersti French (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), p. 200-201.

<sup>3</sup> Welch, p. 238.

<sup>4</sup> Mosse, p. 60.

destroyed and perverted culture.<sup>5</sup> The Jew was supposedly guilty of cultural fraud, since any culture he seemed to possess was stolen from the race that he parasitically attached himself to.<sup>6</sup> For the Nazis, Weimar Germany represented a growing "Jewification" of the once pure German race-soul by the Jewish characteristics of liberalism, Bolshevism, democracy, immorality, cowardice, decadence and evil. "To strip the world of its soul," Rosenberg wrote, "that and nothing else is what Judaism wants. This, however, would be tantamount to the world's destruction."<sup>7</sup> If Germany's "Jewification" was not arrested, the Nazis believed, the blood of the Aryan race would become irreparably corrupted, and humanity would descend into the mists of barbarism. The preservation, reparation and expansion of the *völkisch* community was the main theoretical goal of National Socialism, exemplified in part by the Nuremburg Laws, Citizenship Laws and the Hereditary Health Law.<sup>8</sup> In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote:

Thus, the highest purpose of a folkish state is concern for the preservation of those original racial elements which bestow culture and create the beauty and dignity of a higher mankind. We, as Aryans, can conceive of the state only as the living organism of a nationality which not only assures the preservation of this nationality, but by the development of its spiritual and ideal abilities leads it to the highest freedom.<sup>9</sup>

The Nazis claimed that foreign nations were already mongrelized through interbreeding with Jews and had succumbed to the Jewish evils of liberalism, democracy, or Bolshevism. In many cases Jews were believed to be in secret

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<sup>5</sup> Hitler wrote, "the highest purpose of a folkish state is concern for the preservation of those original racial elements which bestow culture and create the beauty and dignity of a higher mankind.". *Mein Kampf*, p. 394. It was also theorized that each race possessed a soul, and each soul different characteristics. The Aryan race-soul was the most beneficent, noble and creative.

<sup>6</sup> See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p.302-04.

<sup>7</sup> Alfred Rosenberg, "The Earth-centred Jew Lacks a Soul" in , Alfred Rosenberg, ed., *Dietrich Eckart: Ein Vermächtnis* (Munich: Verlag Frz. Eher Nachf., 1928) in Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, p. 78  
The collapse of the ancient world was believed due to racial mixing.

<sup>8</sup> Membership in the Germanic community was directly related to blood, rather than geography, hence these laws barred Jews from German citizenship despite their existence in Germany for hundreds of years.

<sup>9</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 394.

control of foreign countries, since they supposedly possessed the ability to disguise themselves as indigenous members of their "host country".<sup>10</sup> Given their destructive intentions, Germany was perceived as surrounded by innumerable enemies that continually threatened her survival. In 1934, Friedrich Bubenden summarized the situation:

Again, again, and again will there be this struggle between God and the devil, between light and darkness. It will come to an end only with the final redemption of the world. Until then, we who call ourselves German and who feel in our blood that we are Germans must persevere in this struggle, even if it costs us our lives! We do it as did Albert Leo Schlageter, for the sake of Germany.<sup>11</sup>

In *Michael*, Goebbels wrote: "All of German history is nothing but a continuous chain of battles of the German soul against its enemies.", and the film industry frequently dramatized this statement.<sup>12</sup> In many of the following films, Jews are portrayed as a sly race-enemy, and stereotypical anti-Semitic images are linked with the those of Americans, British, Soviets or others, to compare the evil nature of the "Jewified" world with that of the clean Aryan. It logically followed that Germany's perceived encirclement by racial enemies made war and genocide inevitable and necessary.

#### 5.11: Anti-Semitic Films

Inevitably, postwar analyses of Nazi cinema classify anti-Semitic and xenophobic features as overt propaganda, without considering that anti-Semitic, xenophobic and nationalistic sentiments permeated Germany and neighboring countries during the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries. Anti-

<sup>10</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 305-6.

<sup>11</sup> Friederich Bubenden, ed., *Deutschland muss leben: Gesammelte Briefe von Albert Leo Schlageter*, (Berlin: Paul Steegemann Verlag, 1934) in Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, p. 116. Note, Albert Leo Schlageter was a *Freikorps* hero.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Goebbels, *Michael: Ein deutsches Schicksal in Tagebuchblättern* (Munich: Zebra Verlag der NSDAP, Frz. Eher Nachf., 1929) in Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, p. 105

Semitism held a certain legitimacy in pre-war European society;<sup>13</sup> as early as 1700, it found acceptance across Europe in countries such as France, Hungary and Russia.<sup>14</sup> Although anti-Jewish pogroms occurred in Russia in 1881-82, Germany and Austria became the nucleus of the anti-Semitic movement with numerous societies and newspapers devoted to the subject. As Hitler noted during his stay in Vienna, anti-Semitic pamphlets and speeches could hardly be avoided. Since anti-Semitism and xenophobia were accepted concepts among many Germans, this thesis encourages the examination of anti-Semitic and xenophobic films within their respective historical conjuncture, instead of the post-war conjuncture of stigma and shame. If this can be done, the following films seem much less "overt" and in line with Goebbels' demands for covert propaganda.

*Jud Süss, (Jew Süss, 1940)*

The best known anti-Semitic feature film is Veit Harlan's *Jud Süss, (Jew Süss)* released on 24 September, 1940.<sup>15</sup> Although the film claimed to be historically accurate, it was a grossly distorted and virulently racist interpretation of the life of Joseph Süß Oppenheimer, born in Württemberg in 1692 to the Freiherr von Heydersdorff and the daughter of a Jewish cantor in Frankfort am Main. To increase its influential power, Goebbels wanted this film to be received as an historically and factually based example of the Jewish Problem. Any reference to the film as anti-Semitic propaganda was forbidden, and Goebbels directed the critics to emphasize *Jud Süss'* faithfulness to historical reality. In

<sup>13</sup> Witness the widespread reading of Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, an anti-Semitic and racist work.

<sup>14</sup> For a thorough analysis see Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction, Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

<sup>15</sup> In postwar years this film became a powerful piece of evidence in Harlan's trial for crimes against humanity, although ultimately he was acquitted. Surprisingly, the film's origins seem to lie not with Goebbels, but partly with Ludwig Metzger, a Württembergian who tried unsuccessfully to interest several film companies with the idea in 1921, and with Lion Feuchtwanger's 1925 novel, *Jud Süss*.

Paris, *Le Parisien* of 21 February, 1941 wrote: "Ce film n'est pas un produit de l'imagination, mais correspond tout entier à des faits historiques qui sont plus dramatiques que tout ce que l'on peut imaginer."<sup>16</sup> Similarly, on 1 March, 1941, Robert de Beauplan, a critic for the film magazine *Illustration* wrote:

*LE JUIF SUSS* est une production de premier ordre par son intérêt dramatique, par la qualité de ses images et la valeur de son interprétation. Il respecte, d' autre part, scrupuleusement la vérité historique, les moindres détails du scénario et de la mise en scène s'appuient sur une documentation sûre.<sup>17</sup>

In Germany, similar critiques appeared, but with an exposing twist. The *Völkischer Beobachter* described it as an historical film "which provides an awesome picture of the general situation" and praised it for its "complete avoidance of bias, and its clear demonstration of how a previous attempt in miniature to subjugate a country foreshadowed the latter aspirations towards domination of the whole globe."<sup>18</sup>

As the film begins<sup>19</sup>, a title reads: "The events portrayed in this film are based on historical fact.". The first scene opens as Duke Karl Alexander (Heinrich George) swears upon the Constitution of Würtemberg to "care for the general welfare of the land and to increase it...to act without falsehood, in accordance with the old Würtemberg loyalty and honesty (and) ...to lead government business together with Council.". In need of a gift for his wife, the Duke sends a messenger to Süß' town, since no Jews are allowed within Würtemberg. In the town scene, unshaven Jews walk in narrow streets, and a half-dressed Jewish woman leans out of a window to see the messenger's carriage. Süß Oppenheimer has a greasy beard, and wears traditional Jewish

<sup>16</sup> Courtade and Cadars, p. 193.

<sup>17</sup> Courtade and Cadars, p. 193.

<sup>18</sup> Leiser, p. 84.

<sup>19</sup> The author's synopsis is based on an uncut copy of *Jud Süß*, produced by Terra, directed by Veit Harlan, 90 minutes, obtained from International Historic Films, videocassette #198.

dress, but reveals a huge safe filled with jewellery. Recognizing that opportunity exists in Württemberg, Süß shaves off his beard and departs to see the Duke, managing to obtain a ride from the beautiful Dorothea Sturm (Kristina Söderbaum) the Aryan daughter of the noble Councilor Sturm (Eugen Klöpfer). On the way to Württemberg, these lines are spoken:

DOROTHEA: If I could I'd like to travel the whole world! Weren't you once in Paris?

SÜSS: Yes...

DOROTHEA: In Versailles?

SÜSS: Yes.

DOROTHEA: (*overwhelmed*). Oh I envy you! Where else?

SÜSS: Oh... – London, Vienna, Rome, Madrid...

DOROTHEA: (*surprised*). Oh...!

SÜSS: ...Lisbon...

DOROTHEA: My Goodness! – that's nearly the whole world. Where was it best?

I mean, where did you feel most at home?

SÜSS: (*smiling*). At home? Everywhere!

DOROTHEA: (*surprised/confused*). Everywhere? Have you no home then?

SÜSS: Oh yes – the world!

DOROTHEA: But surely you must have felt happiest somewhere?

SÜSS: I think that I've never felt so happy in my whole life, ravishing lady, as here in Stuttgart near you.<sup>20</sup>

DOROTHEA: (*a trace of shock and disgust*) Oh!...

Süß manages to slip through the gates of Württemberg in his "civilized" disguise, and ingratiates himself with the Duke through through a gift. Süß asks for nothing in return, except for the opportunity to serve the Duke. In the following scene, the city Council rejects the Duke's requests for more money, an opera, a ballet and a bodyguard. Süß learns of these wishes and provides gold and jewels, a ballet and a brutish-looking Negro bodyguard who seems intended to demonstrate the Jewish camaraderie with the "lower races". Eventually Süß presents the Duke with a bill for 352,000 thalers, and knowing that he cannot pay, Süß asks for control over Württemberg's roads for 10 years. Thereafter, the film depicts huge tax increases and general chaos as Süß

<sup>20</sup> Welch, p. 286-7.

gradually extends his powers and convinces the Duke to lift the ban on Jews. Eventually, Süß rapes Dorothea, who then drowns herself, and when the story becomes known, Süß is arrested and hung. At the execution, where Süß appears with a beard and speaks German with a Jewish accent, Councilor Sturm reads a statement to the people:

The State Council announces the wish of the Württemberg people that all Jews should leave within the next three days. Given in Stuttgart, February 1738. May our descendants hold onto this law so that they may be spared the suffering and harm to their lives and property and to the blood of their children and their children's children.

Councilor Sturm is the film's Aryan hero who exemplifies the *Führer's* qualities with his fairness, leadership, strength and willpower. Even after Süß's huge list of charges is tallied, Sturm accords him a fair trial: "after a trial lasting a month, we have found you guilty...". Ultimately, Süß is hanged because he violates an old law of the Reich: "If a Jew make a union of the flesh with a Christian girl he will be put to death by the rope.". Sturm emphasizes that this is the only reason, since Süß' other crimes do not carry death sentences, and in reference to a fictional system of Jewish justice he remarks: "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, – that is not our way!".<sup>21</sup>

The purpose of *Jud Süß* was to instill hatred and violence toward Jews<sup>22</sup>, and Süß is therefore cast in the Jewish stereotype: he lusts after money and power, craves the defilement of Gentile women, destroys the health of Württemberg society and enslaves its citizenry. As Sturm states, Süß is guilty of "blackmail, profiteering, sexual indecency, procuring, and high treason...", and the Jewish stereotype is reinforced through five main anti-Semitic themes.

<sup>21</sup> An ironic statement considering that following Heydrich's assassination attempt in Prague 27 May and his subsequent death on 4 June, Hitler had the entire Czech village of Lidice razed.

<sup>22</sup> On 30 September, 1940, Heinrich Himmler ordered that all SS and Police were to see *Judd Süß* ; thereafter the film was repeatedly shown to the SS before they were sent into action against the Jews. Leiser, p. 84.

First, the Jewish desire for world domination is shown through the corruption of the Duke.<sup>23</sup> As he increasingly relies upon Süß, the Duke's character undergoes a "Jewish" decline toward alcohol, women, money and deception. At the ballet, the Duke singles out a black-haired girl (who is presumably Jewish) from a group of blond-haired dancers, and in a private room, the two commit adultery, a trait of the Jewish stereotype. Near the end of the film, the Duke comments that "The Constitution is just trouble" as he dissolves the Council in violation of his original oath. Before he can be prosecuted, however, the Duke dies from a heart attack during a drunken rage.

Second, Nazi racial theory claimed that Jews camouflaged themselves as members of their "host" society, and as "proof" Süß is deliberately shown in both an Aryan "disguise" and in his "true" dress. The intention of this comparison was to demonstrate "what Jews were really like": during his interaction with the general public, Süß appears "clean shaven and dressed like a gentleman" but in his conferences with Rabbi Loew and at his trial, he appears with a beard and a generally unsanitary appearance. Even Süß' speech changes; in public he speaks proper German, but in private his speech is a Yiddish-sounding dialect.

Third, during his conversation with Dorothea about his travels, Süß states that his home is "the world" and seductively charms her, a reference to Nazi theory that saw Jews as nomadic "parasites" and "seducers" who traveled the world in an effort to corrupt it and defile Aryan women.<sup>24</sup> This theory becomes

<sup>23</sup> In a private conference with Süß, Rabbi Loew remarks: "If you want to rule over Gentiles, take control of their money...", where Süß replies: "If I control the Prince, I control the people!". The film also shows scenes from the *Purim* festival, claimed as a Jewish celebration of revenge on Gentiles.

<sup>24</sup> Julius Streicher's newspaper *Der Stürmer* attempted to portray the Jew as an immoral and dangerous sexual pervert, who innocently enticed his victims only to savagely defile them and "steal them from their people". Once a woman had intercourse with a Jew, she was no longer considered an Aryan. Hence, Dorothea's suicide represents adherence to Nazi morality, since she recognizes that she has been racially "stolen" from her people and stripped of her virginity before marriage.



especially apparent when Süß rapes Dorothea, who then “purifies” herself by committing suicide. Both events reinforce the Nazi stereotype of the Jew as a sexual animal, and the belief that once an Aryan girl has been defiled by a Jew, she is no longer of pure blood.

Fourth, Süß is shown to be active in evil sciences when he arranges for an old Jewish astrologer to tell the Duke his fortune. Known only to the audience, the astrologer’s predictions are complete fabrications designed to lead the Duke further into Süß’ trap. The scene was designed to cast Jews in a devilish light, since official Nazi policy regarded astrology with deep suspicion. Ironically however, National Socialism employed the occult to a considerable degree, and several prominent Nazis were fascinated by mystical doctrines: Heinrich Himmler secretly employed astrologers for personal ends, and even Goebbels quietly hired the Swiss astrologer Karl Ernst Krafft to work on the prophecies of Nostradamus.<sup>25</sup>

Fifth, the stereotype of the Jew as a fast-talking, cunning, and even charming manipulator is reinforced, and both Süß and Rabbi Loew use persuasive speeches that employ confusing manipulation of facts and figures. Although to the audience their arguments appear sheer nonsense, their filmic opponents become confused and give them the benefit of the doubt, implying that Jews should never be trusted.

Overall, *Jud Süß* is a demonic production that used comparative techniques to demonstrate the seriousness of the “Jewish danger” and the need for anti-Semitic action to save Germany.<sup>26</sup> While post-war analyses often

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<sup>25</sup> See Wilhelm Wulf’s *Zodiac & Swastika*, (London: Arthur Barker Limited, 1973). Wilhelm Wulf was the personal astrologer to Heinrich Himmler.

<sup>26</sup> A much more evil film of this nature was *Der ewige Jude*, translated by many as *The Eternal Jew*, although Erwin Leiser claims it was known in context as *The Wandering Jew*. This film was produced as a pseudo documentary claiming to depict the full extent of the Jewish Problem through showing “unquestionable evidence” of the Jews in their “natural state”—the Nazi controlled ghettos in Poland. Although released in public theatres, this film was a documentary along the lines of *Sieg im Westen*, and therefore has been excluded from this thesis. For

describe *Jud Süß* as overt propaganda, its original conjuncture within a highly anti-Semitic society should be remembered, as well as its box-office success. The film returned an impressive profit figure of RM3.17 million, and Goebbels awarded *Jud Süß* the *Prädikate* “Artistically and Politically Especially Valuable” and “Valuable for Youth”.<sup>27</sup>

*Die Rothschilds* (*The Rothschilds*, 1940)

Another famous anti-Semitic film was Erich Waschneck's *Die Rothschilds*, which premièred on 17 July, 1940 in Berlin. The film is almost as anti-British as anti-Semitic, but is included in this section because it focuses on the Jewish Rothschilds family, who are merely imbedded in the “host nation” of England. Like *Jud Süß*, *Die Rothschilds* is an historical drama that claimed to be based on a true story, although it was really a gross perversion of history. Set in 1806, the films claims to describe the history of the treacherous House of Rothschild:

In 1806 the ‘Landgraf’ of Hesse escaping Napoleon has to entrust his fortune of £6,000,000 to somebody for safekeeping. He deposits the money with the Jewish banker, Meyer Amschel Rothschild in Frankfurt. The abusive use of this money becomes the foundation for the power of the Rothschilds. Amschel Rothschild sends the money to his son Nathan in London who is not respected by his business rivals. But Nathan ruthlessly outwits all of them. He gets money to Wellington in Spain with the help of his brother in Paris—Nathan is the first to receive news that Napoleon has escaped from Elba and the only one to gamble all he possesses on the reinstatement of Louis of Orleans. He is a joke in Society— nobody takes him seriously but his Jewish hirelings and the British Minister of Finance. “Lord” Wellington is again sent to fight Napoleon. He has very little time for war—the ladies keep him busy! But he has time enough (just as Fouche has in Paris) to confer secretly with Rothschild who implies that Wellington will be well rewarded if Rothschild is the first to know about the outcome of the battle. The moment Rothschild hears that Napoleon is beaten he spreads news that the English cause is lost. A panic follows—everybody sells Government Bonds—Rothschild buys them. The poor lose their money. The few honourable rich Englishmen (one of them is pictured as extremely decent due to the fact that he is married to an Irish women!) lose all they

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synopses see Manvell and Fraenkel, *The German Cinema*, p. 88-90; Leiser, p. 85-88; Welch, p. 292-300.

<sup>27</sup> BA, R2/4829-30, quoted in Welch, p. 314.

own. The star of David lies over England—over the part that Nazi Germany fights.<sup>28</sup>

Several Nazi elements are evident in this synopsis. Foremost are the themes of the Jewish quest for power and the desire for money, which leads the Jew to “trick and swindle” honest people out of their finances and even their lives. A caption from the film’s programme reads: “While nations are bleeding on the battlefields, the Jew speculates at the Stock Exchange.”<sup>29</sup> The film suggests that the English have lost the racial struggle with the Jews, and except for a few Englishmen, the blood of England has been corrupted. Hence, England appears as an enemy, maintaining the Nazi belief that the ring of enemies encircling Germany were Jewish controlled and bent on world destruction. This intensifies the importance of the Nazi mission to save Germany, and at the end of the film a star of David is shown superimposed on a map of England. A caption beneath the image reads: “As this film was completed, the last descendants of the Rothschilds were fleeing Europe. The struggle against their accomplices, the British Plutocracy, continues.”<sup>30</sup>

Another theme again portrays the Jew as a “race defiler”, as exemplified by Wellington, who is too busy with his immoral and promiscuous lifestyle to fully attend to the battle against Napoleon. At one point a Rothschild also states: “to make a lot of money, we have to take a lot of blood.”<sup>31</sup> Following Nazi beliefs, the Rothschilds try to camouflage their real appearance under the garb of a

<sup>28</sup> Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force, (SHAEF) *List of impounded films* (Deposited in the BFI Film Catalogue Library), p. 217, quoted in Welch, p. 263.

<sup>29</sup> Courtade and Cadars, p. 192. In *Hitler gives the Jews a town*, a 1944 pseudo-documentary about the “model” concentration camp at Theresienstadt (Terezin), Jews are seen to be enjoying life at the “model camp” while German soldiers were dying and suffering at the front(!). See Leiser, p. 88-9.

<sup>30</sup> Hull, p. 160, Courtade and Cadars, p. 193.

<sup>31</sup> Leiser, p. 80, Courtade and Cadars, p. 192.

cultured peoples, but some English bankers of presumably “uncorrupted” blood recognize the Rothschilds’ origins.<sup>32</sup> As Nathan’s secretary Bronstein remarks:

BRONSTEIN: Nathan, will you finally realize that you can’t obscure the fact that you were born in the Jewish alley in Frankfurt. I tell you (*spoken with a Jewish accent*), as you climb higher and higher, as you become an important person in England, you will still remain a big lad from the Jewish alley in Frankfurt.

NATHAN: Bronstein, look here, you look like a beggar, you’re miserable and not very clean [typical Nazi stereotypes!]—but you’re son will call himself a Gentleman and you’re grandson can even perhaps be a Lord in this country, and everything that accompanies such a title. This can all be accomplished with money.<sup>33</sup>

As in *Jud Süß*, the final impact of the film reinforces Nazi stereotypes, supports the necessity of war against the “international Jewish conspiracy”, and appeals to Germans for support in *entjudung*. Especially noteworthy is the manipulation of the film to suit the political climate surrounding its release. In the 1940 version, *Die Rothschilds*’ anti-British theme was partially muted by the English recognition of the Rothschilds as Jews in disguise. However, on 2 July, 1941 the film was re-released as *Die Rothschilds Aktien von Waterloo*, where the British were portrayed as the accomplices of the Jews.<sup>34</sup> This alteration resulted from the changing relationship with Britain, since in 1940 Hitler still hoped for a peaceful settlement with Britain. By 1941, all hope had vanished, and *Die Rothschilds* was released with an altered emphasis, demonstrating the relationship of the film industry to the National Socialist government.

*Robert und Bertram (Robert and Bertram, 1939)*

<sup>32</sup> The bankers seem portrayed in a sympathetic light, but are arrested and imprisoned for trying to foil Nathan Rothschild’s activities (thus suggesting the police/state authority may also be corrupt). One man remarks: “You say Rothschilds—I say England—its the same thing!”

<sup>33</sup> Welch, p. 266.

<sup>34</sup> Welch, p. 268. Apparently this was done through eliminating the scenes where the English recognized the Rothschilds’ Jewish origins.

Hans Zerlett's *Robert und Bertram* was an anti-Semitic comedy set in 1839 that suggests that it is acceptable to steal from Jews to help Aryans. David Hull summarizes the film thus:

Robert (Rudi Godden) and Bertram (Kurt Seifurt) are two vagabonds lately escaped from jail. They learn that the daughter of the local inn keeper is being forced into marriage with the Jew Biedermeier, a friend of another Jew, Ipelmeyer, who owns a mortgage on the inn. They gain access to the betrothal reception by offering to wash glasses, and hearing the girls plight, decide to set things straight. They steal the horses of the local police and rush to Berlin.

Once there, they succeed in installing themselves in the house of Ipelmeyer (Herbert Hübner). During a costume ball, Bertram entertains the guests with a song while Robert tries to steal jewelry and at the same time pay court to the grotesque Frau Ipelmeyer (Inge Straaten). Ipelmeyer is drugged by mistake, and the two manage to frisk him and his guests of jewels and money before making a getaway. They send the loot to the inn keeper's daughter, enabling her to pay off the mortgage and also marry the man of her choice— a loyal soldier in the army of the local prince. Robert and Bertram continue on their journey, and at the end of the film are welcomed into heaven by an angelic choir.<sup>35</sup>

Hull states that the film was re-released in 1942 with a different ending, where Robert and Bertram join the King's army, and march under the girl's husband.<sup>36</sup>

The reviews of Welch, Leiser, Hull and Courtade and Cadars suggest the film's heroes are a comic duo, while the Jews are grossly caricatured, back-alley vagabonds who try but are unable to hide themselves behind the mask of a civilized peoples. An interesting demarcation is made between Aryans and Jews. Even Aryan convicts like Robert and Bertram are more noble than the lowly Jew, who is portrayed as the real criminal. In a strange twist of Nazi morals, Robert and Bertram steal everything they can from Ipelmeyer's house, but this is shown as acceptable since Ipelmeyer, it is claimed, acquired his wealth through theft. When a guest at the party remarks that the house must have cost a fortune, the reply is: "it cost more than that, but not to Herr

<sup>35</sup> Hull, p. 158-9.

<sup>36</sup> See also Courtade and Cadars, p. 189.

Ipelmeyer, to the people he has swindled.”<sup>37</sup> Hence, Robert and Bertram's acts are justified, since they are simply returning stolen property to its rightful owner—the German people. Underneath this veil of comedy, other Nazi stereotypes abound. The Jew is portrayed as a materialist, and a racial and economic threat through his lust for money, power and “pure” women. Ipelmeyer's manipulative control of a mortgage and his attempt to disguise himself as a legitimate citizen is intended to warn Aryans that the Jews threaten to destroy the clean, good life. Apparently the film's mixture of comedy and racial warnings left viewers unenthusiastic or confused, since *Robert und Bertram* incurred a loss of RM 120,000.<sup>38</sup>

#### 5.12: The British: Friend or Foe?

Germany's filmic relationship with Britain directly reflects the changing politics of the era, since only after late 1940 did the most virulently anti-British films emerge. Comparatively, pre-war films usually portrayed the British as an honourable peoples, even though they may have been cast in enemy roles, such as in Karl Ritter's *Verräter* (*Traitor*) of 1936. During the first year of the war, an uncertain relationship with Britain existed: Hitler wanted a separate peace with Britain, but by August 1940 this clearly was an impossibility. *The Rothschilds* seems to reflect the political confusion of this time, since it did not portray the British favorably, but recognized that there were still some honourable British citizens. *Der Fuchs von Glenarvon*, released in April 1940, portrayed the British similarly. However, from late 1940 onward, Nazi features emphasized the British as cultural vandals, the polar opposite of the creative Aryan. Britain became a racially corrupt “plutocracy” that wanted world

<sup>37</sup> Leiser, p. 76, also Courtade and Cadars, p. 190.

<sup>38</sup> The figure is based on four financial reports by Kautio Treuhand GmbH, in BA R2/4829-30, quoted in Welch, p. 314.

domination and the enslavement of foreign nations, while caring nothing for the health or welfare of anyone but themselves.<sup>39</sup> The changing relationship with Britain is chronologically observable.

In 1934, Paul Wegener directed *Ein Mann will nach Deutschland*, a film that follows a young German's desire to return to Germany from America at the announcement of the Great War. Suggesting a highly patriotic theme, the German finally returns home and is sent to the front, where the British are "a worthy enemy that has to be respected".<sup>40</sup> Erwin Leiser notes, "They are enemies against their will, and enemies who respect each other."<sup>41</sup> In a British prison camp sequence, a British officer tells his German prisoners, who long to return to Germany, that such internment is offensive to him, "both as an officer and a gentleman".<sup>42</sup> Significantly, German prisoners appear well-dressed and healthy, unlike later films such as *Ohm Krüger* in which the British were shown to run barbaric and unsanitary camps.<sup>43</sup>

Released in 1934, *Die Reiter von Deutsch-Ostafrika* depicts two young men, a Brit and a German, who share several adventures, and a common interest in a pretty woman, who ultimately ends up with the German. At the onset of the First World War, the two must oppose each other in battle, and the British officer is forced to burn the houses of German settlers, but following the peace the two are again close friends.<sup>44</sup> Such a portrayal seems to echo Hitler's admiration for the English, whom he felt were a racially similar group to Germans. Significantly, *Die Reiter von Deutsch-Ostafrika* was banned by Goebbels in

<sup>39</sup> Goebbels used the "plutocracy" concept to mean a "kind of political and economic leadership, in which a few hundred families rule the world.", Welch, p. 262.

<sup>40</sup> Welch, p. 258.

<sup>41</sup> Leiser, p. 95.

<sup>42</sup> Welch, p. 258.

<sup>43</sup> See Hull, p. 58 for a photograph of Willi Schur, Karl Ludwig Diehl, and Hermann Speelmans inside a British camp.

<sup>44</sup> See Hull, p. 58, Welch p. 258.

February 1940 due to its pacifism, but it was re-released in March, after protest from Ufa over the film's profitability.<sup>45</sup>

1935 marked the signing of the Anglo-German naval treaty, and the release of Gerhard Lamprecht's *Der höhere Befehl*, a film set in 1806 during the Napoleonic wars.<sup>46</sup> Honour and patriotism seem to play a heavy role in both the English and the Prussian sides, and it is significant that this film depicts Britain as Prussia's ally against Napoleon. Notably, Russia's part against Napoleon is unmentioned, possibly due to the bothersome Franco-Soviet alliance over Czechoslovakia in September 1934. At one point in the film, Lord Beckhurst, an envoy from the King of England, states: "One day, the alliance between Austria, England and Prussia will triumph. Then, Europe will be liberated!".<sup>47</sup>

In 1936, Karl Ritter released *Verräter*, a spy film that seems anti-British, but as Leiser notes, "the film makes a clear distinction between the British patriot who spies for his country and his German associates who betray theirs."<sup>48</sup> The British espionage occurs in the prototype sections at three separate factories making aircraft, weapons and tanks. The British spies do not trick or cheat any of the German employees as a Jewish character might, but simply take advantage of employee's carelessness to acquire national secrets. At the end of the film the spy ring is broken, and the factories return to their work. According to a review in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the film demonstrated that everyone who occupies a place of responsibility in German society must treat it as such, or they risk becoming traitors by not protecting national information.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> BA, R1091/1033a No. 1407, 6 March 1940, quoted in Welch, p. 258.

<sup>46</sup> For synopses, please see Welch, p. 258, Courtade and Cadars, p. 108-111.

<sup>47</sup> Courtade and Cadars, p. 110.

<sup>48</sup> Leiser., p. 96. See also Welch, p. 258-9, Courtade and Cadars, p. 175-76, Hull, p. 106.

<sup>49</sup> The feature may have been intended to complement *Actung, Feind hört mit!* (*Beware! The Enemy is Listening!*), an instructional film released near the same time. Please see Courtade and Cadars, p. 176.



In April 1940, Max Kimmich's *Der Fuchs von Glenarvon* portrayed the British as the oppressors of the Irish. Gloria Grandison (Olga Tschechowa), is a young Irish woman who belongs to a secret Irish society, and confides the society's plans in her husband, a British judge played by Ferdinand Marian.<sup>50</sup> Although Judge Grandison, "the fox of Glenarvon", claims to be sympathetic to the Irish group, he is actually a traitor who informs the British authorities of the group's plans. When some of the group are arrested, the blond-haired Irish Baron Ennis lures the judge into a swamp where he is secretly killed. Later, the Baron's brave actions against the English win him the heart of Gloria, suggesting the triumph of the blond Aryan over the dark-haired Brit. Judge Grandison may have been intended as a Jewish character, since Ferdinand Marian also starred as Süß Oppenheimer, although *Jud Süß* did not début until some months later. Further, Jews were often likened to foxes: a children's storybook of the 1930's was entitled "Trust No Fox and No Jew".<sup>51</sup> Although a Jewish reference could have been more clearly portrayed, the exact intentions of this film remain unclear in our conjuncture.

*Ohm Krüger* (*Uncle Krüger*, 1941)

From 1941 onward, the British became the undisputed enemy, as demonstrated by *Ohm Krüger*, released on 4 April 1941. Like *Jud Süß*, *Ohm Krüger* claims to be an historically accurate film, but it is another distortion of history. *Ohm Krüger* was the first film to receive the title "Film der Nation", and Emil Jannings, who won an Oscar award in 1926, received a state prize for his

<sup>50</sup> Courtade and Cadars describe her as: "à l'âme fière et au cœur pur", p. 172. The synopsis is taken from Courtade and Cadars, p. 172, Welch p. 269, Leiser, p. 97.

<sup>51</sup> Frederic V. Grunfeld, *The Hitler File*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), p. 240.

role as Paul Krüger. The total cost of *Ohm Krüger* exceeded RM 5.5 million<sup>52</sup>, making it an especially expensive feature at a time when most producers were trying to keep costs down.<sup>53</sup> However, as many authors note, the cast and technicians behind the film represented some of the best the Reich could offer.

The basic story of *Ohm Krüger* combines an anti-British theme with the *Führer* role of Jannings, who acts as the caring father of the oppressed Boers. As the *Illustrierter Filmkurier* noted, the film shows that "Britain is the brutal enemy of any kind of order and civilization", and that Britain "decides to commit one of the most obscene acts in the history of the world."<sup>54</sup> Told through a sequence of flashbacks from Krüger's death bed in a Swiss hospital, the film recounts the struggle of the Boers against the British who want to take over their land.

Almost every image, phrase and character is an attack on the British. Among the images presented: a British concentration camp, where in filthy and overcrowded conditions prisoners are indiscriminately bayoneted and fed tins of rotting meat; a camp commandant, who looks like Churchill and gorges himself on mounds of food; a screen caption telling the audience that 26,000 women and children were murdered in this camp<sup>55</sup>; and an evil looking Kitchener who denies the applicability of "certain military conventions", calls for "an end to woolly humanitarianism", and demands the burning of houses and farms.<sup>56</sup> During the fighting, Krüger goes to Britain where he meets Queen Victoria, who is portrayed as a drunken witch who sips whiskey from her teacup. Buckingham palace is gaudily decorated, presumably with plunder from

<sup>52</sup> Courtade and Cadars cite a budget of RM 5.4 million, p. 82. This made *Ohm Krüger* one of the most expensive films of the Third Reich.

<sup>53</sup> Welch, p. 273. Goebbels justified the cost of this film through its "important mixture of art and politics" but cautioned other producers that such an expenditure was not to be considered normal.

<sup>54</sup> *Illustrierter Filmkurier*, cited in Leiser, p. 99.

<sup>55</sup> Hull, p. 182-3.

<sup>56</sup> Leiser, p. 99.

previous British exploits, and Victoria seems uninterested in the conversation until Krüger mentions that gold has been found, whereupon she states: "If there's gold to be found, then of course its our country." and "Why should they not give us the gold and let us take over the government?".<sup>57</sup> Returning to South Africa, a woman who complains about rotten meat is shot by "Churchill", and Krüger's son Jan is caught lurking around a camp while trying to find his wife. He is sentenced to death by hanging, and seconds before death Jan shouts, "I die for the Fatherland" a typical statement of Nazi martyrs. Following the execution, women prisoners charge the camp guards only to be shot,<sup>58</sup> and when the massacre is over, the camera pans over the corpses, and the sound of a crying child is heard as the image fades into a field of crosses.<sup>59</sup> The film is best summarized by a statement from Paul Krüger: "That is how the British overran and degraded my people. We were a small people, but one day a greater nation will rise to crush Britain. They will crush England; only then will the world be a better place to live in."<sup>60</sup>

The anti-British theme and the warning to Germans can hardly be missed. Ferdinand Marian plays "the Jew" Cecil Rhodes, and the lust for money and power mixed with internal corruption are traits seen in a different form in *Jud Süß* and *Die Rothschilds*. As for "obscene acts", it is ironic, although typical, to accuse the enemy of crimes the Nazis themselves pioneered. Politically, the impact of such scenes attempts a justification for Hitler's attack on England and a familiar allusion to the "encirclement of enemies" theory. This was accentuated by the *Führer* image of Krüger, and a press directive of 4 April,

<sup>57</sup> Manvell and Fraenkel, p. 94

<sup>58</sup> Welch, p. 276.

<sup>59</sup> Welch, p. 276.

<sup>60</sup> Welch, p. 276. For a complete synopsis see Manvell and Fraenkel, p. 92-96., also Welch, p. 270-9 and Courtade and Cadars, p. 80-88.

1941 suggested the film be seen as “what it means to be a popular national leader in an historically difficult hour.”<sup>61</sup>

*Germanin* (*Germanin* , 1943)

Max Kimmich's *Germanin* is also set in Africa, and premièred on 15 May, 1943. The German is seen as a creative, beneficent force, whereas the Brit is a brutal conqueror and purveyor of destruction. The film begins in the jungles of Africa in 1914, where the British destroy a German medical laboratory working on “Bayer 205”, a superior drug in combating sleeping sickness.<sup>62</sup> The German Dr. Aschenbach returns to Africa in 1923 to administer the drug to the natives, but the British view him as a threat and stop him from helping the local population. Aschenbach's lab and his supplies of the new drug, “Germanin” are destroyed, but suddenly both the Doctor and the British commandant acquire the sleeping sickness. Sacrificing his life for his cause, Aschenbach uses the only surviving ampoule to cure his enemy and secure the privilege to re-establish his lab. Overall, the film demonstrates the necessity of sacrifice and significantly groups the once-admired British race with Jews and other cultural destroyers.

Two other films warrant brief mention: Max Kimmich's *Mein Leben für Irland*, (*My Life for Ireland* ), and Herbert Selpin's and Werner Klinger's *Titanic*. *My Life for Ireland* focuses on a group of Irish rebels who resist British oppression and cruelty<sup>63</sup>, while in *Titanic* , the British owners of the White Star line disregard passenger safety to achieve financial objectives.<sup>64</sup> Despite an anti-British bias,

<sup>61</sup> Press Directive (*Zeitschriftendienst* ) 101, no. 4317, 4 April 1941, cited in Welch, p. 277.

<sup>62</sup> Leiser, p. 103.

<sup>63</sup> The best synopsis of this film seems to be in Courtade and Cadars, p. 172-175.

<sup>64</sup> A synopsis exists in Hull, pp. 230-31, taken from an original programme. *Titanic* was distributed in 1950, where it ran for a short time in West Germany before being withdrawn due to its anti-

*Titanic* was never released in Nazi Germany, since Goebbels apparently felt the audiences would be too sympathetic to the British passengers.<sup>65</sup>

### 5.13: The Soviets

Anti-Communist and anti-Semitic thought were equally fundamental components of Nazi ideology. Perhaps due its origins with “the Jew” Karl Marx,<sup>66</sup> Communism was inextricably linked with Judaism, and the two were seen as a universal force of worldwide evil. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler described Soviet Russia as an irreversibly corrupt, racially worthless center of international Communism and Jewry:

Never forget that the rulers of present-day Russia are common blood-stained criminals; that they are the scum of humanity which, favored by circumstances, overran a great state in a tragic hour, slaughtered and wiped out thousands of her leading intelligentsia in a wild blood lust, and now for almost ten years have been carrying on the most cruel and tyrannical régime of all time. Furthermore, do not forget that these rulers belong to a race which combines, in a rare mixture, bestial cruelty and an inconceivable gift for lying, and which today more than ever is conscious of a mission to impose its bloody oppression on the whole world. Do not forget that the international Jew who completely dominates Russia today regards Germany, not as an ally, but as a state destined to the same fate.<sup>67</sup>

In the cinema, the projection of this concept was continually modulated by the NSDAP's political requirements of day. In 1933, the features *Hans Westmar*, *Hitlerjunge Quex* and *SA-Mann Brand* focused on the fight against Bolshevism within Germany, and indicated that German Communists received their orders from Moscow.<sup>68</sup> Excluding a temporary moratorium from August

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British bias. In East Germany, the film apparently enjoyed some success and the anti-British stance seemed to fall in line with the politics of the régime.

<sup>65</sup> Welch, p. 270.

<sup>66</sup> This was a popular Nazi style of reference to Karl Marx.

<sup>67</sup> *Mein Kampf*, p. 661.

<sup>68</sup> These films will be discussed in section 4.2–The Party.

1939 to June 1941 during the German-Soviet non-aggression pact, the films from 1934-45 alerted the *Völkisch* community to two important racial and national points. First, that “Germany is today the next great war aim of Bolshevism”.<sup>69</sup> Second, that “the fight against Jewish world Bolshevization requires a clear attitude toward Soviet Russia.”.<sup>70</sup>

*Friesenot* (*Frisians in Peril*, 1935)

The first major feature film to address the Bolshevik danger outside of Germany was Peter Hagen's *Friesenot*, released on 19 November 1935.<sup>71</sup> Goebbels was apparently pleased with the picture, and he awarded it the *Prädikate* “Artistically and Politically Especially Valuable”. Although banned during the German-Soviet non-aggression pact, it was later released in 1941 under the title *Dorf im roten Sturm*. David Welch provides an excellent synopsis:

Centuries ago Frisian Germans emigrated to Russia and settled on the lower reaches of the Volga. They were a peaceful, self-contained community, but good subjects of the Tzar. The Bolshevik Revolution changes everything. Soon, a “Red” Commissar with a contingent of troops arrives and imposes heavy taxes and ensures their collection quite ruthlessly. Fighting breaks out between the Bolsheviks and the Volga Germans when Mette, daughter of a Frisian, flirts with the Russian Commissar. As soon as the people are aware of this they drive the girl out of the village into the woods, where she perishes in the boggy moor. Before she dies, Mette realizes her sin and the price she must pay.

The Frisians are only maintaining their own strict, moral code, but the primitive Bolsheviks fail to understand this. As soon as Chernov, the Commissar, learns of her death he and his men indulge in a drunken orgy during which they plunder the Frisian's church and their homes and which culminates in the brutal rape of one of the German girls. Wagner, leader of the Frisians, has done his best to keep the peace but this is the final straw. The film ends with a blood bath in which all the soldiers are slaughtered. The Frisians then pack their few belongings, burn down their homesteads, and start their trek across the steppes to find a new home.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> *Mein Kampf*, p. 662.

<sup>70</sup> *Mein Kampf*, p. 662.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Hagen was *Reichsfilmndramaturg* Willi Krause.

<sup>72</sup> Welch, p. 242-43. This quotation appears taken from a review of the time.

Through stereotypes, *Friesenot* identifies the enemy and incites action against the Bolshevik menace.<sup>73</sup> The Aryan Frisian is contrasted with the Bolshevik *untermensch* : where the Frisian is a creative, ethical, pious and community-minded individual, the Bolshevik is a destructive, corrupt and materialistic anti-Christian. Like *Jud Süß* , the Bolsheviks are greedy tax-collectors, but they do not hide their true nature, being openly unshaven in appearance and barbaric in conduct. Embodying stereotypical Jewish traits, the Bolsheviks eat and drink in a frenzied, uncivilized manner and stumble about in a drunken rage. Above the Commandant's door hangs a sign stating "THERE IS NO GOD", and the Bolsheviks later desecrate a church. When a Frisian criticizes blasphemous anti-Christian drawings and the Commandant's sign, the Commandant replies, "You don't understand, there is no God in Russia."<sup>74</sup> As became typical of the Nazi cinema, the enemy is also shown to be a sexual monster, and the rape of the young German girl results in her racial purification through death.<sup>75</sup>

#### *GPU* (*GPU* , 1942)

Released on 14 August 1942, *GPU* addressed the dangers of the international Jewish/Bolshevik conspiracy but rejected the racial anti-Slavic approach of earlier films.<sup>76</sup> Goebbels apparently feared alienating or demoralizing Russians working in the German defense industry and external

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<sup>73</sup> *Heimattfilme* were features that portrayed Germans living under foreign oppression.

<sup>74</sup> Leiser, p. 41. See also Welch, p. 244.

<sup>75</sup> In an earlier scene, Mette's mother warned her of race defilement, since her father was "a Frisian, and our blood weighs more than foreign blood." Leiser, p. 41.

<sup>76</sup> *Kadetten* (*Cadets*, 1941) depicted Slavs as a subhuman people. See Leiser, p. 44, Welch, p. 250., Hull, p. 189., Courtade and Cadars, p. 148-149.

Russian groups who were sympathetic to the Nazi cause.<sup>77</sup> Thus, in *GPU* the “uncorrupted” Slav can be virtuous: the plot concerns a young Russian woman’s mission of vengeance to track down the Bolshevik GPU agent who murdered her family.<sup>78</sup> After joining the GPU and finding “Bokscha” (the original agent), the woman, Olga Feodorovna, reports him to Moscow as a traitor and he is killed. Her mission finished, Olga sacrificially returns to Moscow and reveals her personal mission, whereupon she is also killed. At the end of the film a young couple who earlier helped Olga are arrested by GPU agents but are saved when the *Wehrmacht* advance frees the city.

A Ufa brochure described *GPU* as a “full length, factually based documentary.”<sup>79</sup> while the cinema programme stated: “It is mid-1939. Like the threads of a spider’s web, the GPU spreads out beyond the Soviet ‘paradise’ to engulf many unsuspecting lands.”<sup>80</sup> True to *Mein Kampf*, *GPU* portrays Bolshevism as a Jewish tool of international terror, bloodletting and destruction. In director Karl Ritter words, *GPU* concerns “the terror organization of the GPU which had been established by the Jewish-Bolshevik criminals”.<sup>81</sup>

Certain instances highlight the Jewish influence behind Bolshevik terror. During a violin recital sponsored by the International Women’s League (a front for the GPU), an old man interrupts the Chairwoman’s opening speech when she claims the Women’s League is “totally unpolitical”.<sup>82</sup> Shouting that the League is a GPU front sponsored and organized by Jews in Moscow, the

<sup>77</sup> Welch, p. 251. In 1941 Goebbels ordered four films in Russian to be shown to Russian collaborators. The films addressed life in Germany, and their subjects were farmers, factory workers, the forest workers camp, the Führer and his people.

<sup>78</sup> GPU is translated in the film’s prologue as *Grauen* (horror), *Panik* (panic), *Untergang* (Destruction). See Courtade and Cadars, p. 185 and Welch, p. 252. For complete synopses of *GPU*, see Courtade and Cadars, pp. 185-188, Hull, p. 219, Welch, pp. 250-257, Leiser, p. 44-45.

<sup>79</sup> Courtade and Cadars, p. 187.

<sup>80</sup> *Programm von Heute*, no. 1837, 1942. cited in Welch, p. 252.

<sup>81</sup> *Filmwelt*, no. 13/14, 1 April 1942, quoted in Welch, p. 251.

<sup>82</sup> Welch, p. 252.



elderly man is dragged out of the audience and murdered by the GPU. In a scene demonstrating Nazi stereotypes of Jewish-Bolshevik immorality, Bokscha makes plans with Jewish associates to murder innocent Soviet citizens living in Finland as an excuse for a Soviet invasion. During a party at the Russian embassy, Jewish-Bolshevik decadence is displayed when “inferior” Negroes play “decadent” jazz music in front of appreciative guests. Finally, the familiar theme of sacrifice is recalled when shortly before death Olga states: “One must have the chance to die for something—I cannot live.”.<sup>83</sup>

It is ironic, although typical of Nazi propaganda that *GPU* displaces Nazi practices of murder, assassination, torture and expansionist policy on the Jewish-Bolshevik enemy. Despite *GPU*'s profit of RM1.16 million, SD reports of December 1942 indicate the film's barbarous image of the enemy was later disputed by returning soldiers and Germans having contact with Russian citizens. Significantly, *GPU* was the last major anti-Bolshevik film; after *GPU*'s mediocre success as propaganda, Goebbels confined the main anti-Bolshevik campaign to newsreels, whereupon the focus shifted to a fear campaign rather than stressing ideological and racial arguments. By concentrating on newsreels and shifting the propaganda focus, Goebbels prevented a weakening of the anti-Bolshevik campaign through avoiding contradictory stereotypes (ie: the popular stereotype versus that of the RMVP). Evidently, Goebbels discovered that “factually and historically based films” were best limited to more distant time periods or extremely isolated subjects, since the successful manufacture of a collective memory did not allow the coexistence of conflicting concepts.

#### 4.14: Anti-Reich Elements

<sup>83</sup> See respectively Hull, p. 219 and Leiser, p. 44.

Films were also used to legitimize National Socialist policies against “anti-Reich elements”. Two examples anti-Polish campaign and the euthanasia programme of 1939-45. Since these objectives would have been difficult to pursue without public support, the cinema undertook to modify public attitudes through stereotypes, fear and sympathy.

#### 4.141: The Anti-Polish Campaign

The suffering endured by Nazi-occupied Poland defies description. Poland had become the Third Reich’s *Lebensraum*, and untold numbers of Polish families were liquidated *en mass* to make way for the anticipated emigration of Germans. To legitimize their murderous campaign in the eyes of the German people, Nazi propaganda deliberately portrayed the Poles as racially inferior enemies who loved to kill and maim innocent Germans living in Poland. German communities were shown to be “trapped” by the oppressive Poles, and the German armed forces adopted a liberator-rescuer role. The public, it was hoped, would thus perceive Germany’s campaign not as aggressive and brutal, but as a justifiable defense against a racially corrupt world filled with “decadence, immorality, blindness, arrogance and destructive madness.”<sup>84</sup>

#### *Heimkehr* (Homecoming, 1941)

Released on 10 October 1941, *Heimkehr* was designed to instill the deepest hatred for Poles, and the film claimed to portray the struggle of a German farming community living in Poland. The story opens with the caption:

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<sup>84</sup> Courtade and Cadars, p. 214.

To a handful of people, whose forefathers emigrated East many, many years ago, for there was no room for them in the homeland...In the winter of 1939 they returned home—to a new strong Reich...What they experienced is valid for hundreds of thousands who shared the same fate.<sup>85</sup>

Beginning in September 1939, the film shows the Germans being harassed and brutalized by local Poles, who are often drunk, unsanitary, unshaven and uncivilized in behaviour. Numerous incidents displace Nazi crimes on the Poles: a swastika medallion is torn from the neck of a German woman who is then stoned to death; an elderly German doctor bleeds to death after a savage street beating; Polish police arrest German families because of their nationality, and the local school is burned down by a Polish Jew. When a group of Germans visits the Polish Governor to voice their concern, he turns them away, stating that England has “guaranteed” Poland’s freedom from German occupation.<sup>86</sup> Jews are also seen collaborating with racially inferior Poles to “murder this [German] minority and eventually to annihilate *all* German people!”<sup>87</sup> Moments before the *Wehrmacht* smashes Polish defenses and saves the Germans from impending execution, an intense conversation in a crowded basement prison highlights the film’s significance.<sup>88</sup>

**Father:** People locked in cellars and shot. Through the window with a machine-gun...Where’s the mouth that calls out that everything is upside down in the world, as upside-down as the people who live next to each other without living together? Where’s the mind that starts thinking about how we can make it different? Where’s the voice that wakes up the whole world from its sleep of death? Where? Where?

**Daughter:** In Germany!

**Father:** Yes that’s it, in Germany. You’re right my girl, the voice is heard all over the world now. It’s startling people now, and its only tragic that it has to speak with guns and dive-bombers. But there’s no other way. Because otherwise nobody would listen to the message that we must put a stop to all this goddamned selfishness. That you can’t be allowed, you just

<sup>85</sup>Welch, p. 135.

<sup>86</sup> Welch, p. 135.

<sup>87</sup> Welch, p. 137.

<sup>88</sup> See Leiser, p. 70-71.

can't be allowed to lie in your bed while someone else is freezing to death on the street. You can't be allowed to pat your stomach and have a satisfied burp—"My God, I'm full!"—while every hour, every minute, every second even, hundreds of thousands of human beings are moaning in the last agonies of starvation, if they can still moan at all. And now we're standing in this damp cellar waiting. You know what we're waiting for—yes, you know what it is. Perhaps we still have an hour's grace, or half an hour, or a quarter of an hour.

Throughout *Heimkehr*, the Jews and the Poles are portrayed as equals who conspire to destroy Germany. To accentuate the brutal image of the Poles, the peacefulness of the Germans is emphasized by the statements: "its only tragic that it has to speak with guns and dive-bombers. But there's no other way." and "you just can't be allowed to lie in your bed while someone else is freezing to death on the street." In a street scene, stereotypical Jewish merchants trade in the streets and denounce the Germans who tell them: "we don't buy from Jews!". When the German schoolhouse is burned down, a young Jewish boy is shown dowsing it in petrol and setting it alight. To stress the theme of an international Jewish conspiracy, an English-Polish camaraderie is shown, and England's "guarantee of Polish freedom" is mentioned. It is possible that the British-Polish friendship theme in *Heimkehr* intended to build on the Jewish-British plutocracy concept of *Die Rothschilds* of 1940.

The most overt political aspect of *Heimkehr* is the daughter's final monologue<sup>89</sup> that juxtaposes the beauty of the German soil with the problem of space, mentioned by the opening title.<sup>90</sup> The speech's distinct *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil) theme contrasts the subhuman Poles with the beneficent Germans, and emphasizes an attachment to the "good warm soil of Germany" that holds "millions of German hearts which have been laid to rest in the earth". It is further meant to encourage a selfless defense of the Fatherland while

<sup>89</sup> The use of a monologue to speak to the film's audience is used throughout much of the Nazi cinema, including *Jud Süß*, *Kolberg*, and *Ohm Krüger*.

<sup>90</sup> Please see Chapter 7 for the complete speech.

illustrating how “marvelous” *Lebensraum* will be to the German families whose hearts do not have “the sweet knowledge” that they are “sleeping in Germany”. Further, the film justifies Hitler’s *Drang nach Osten* (Eastern campaign) and implies that Germany is not invading but reclaiming land that was originally theirs: “To a handful of people, whose forefathers emigrated East many, many years ago, for there was no room in the homeland...”.<sup>91</sup>

However, the real purpose of the film was to instill deep hatred and justify unspeakable brutality. As an RMVP Press Information Service directive stated in January 1940:

...The Attention of the Press is drawn to the fact that articles dealing with Poland must express the instinctive revulsion of the German people against everything which is Polish. Articles and news items must be composed in such a way as to transform this instinctive revulsion into a lasting revulsion...Similarly it must be suggested to the reader that Gypsies, Jews, and Poles ought to be treated on the same level. This is particularly important since there is no doubt that for a long time we shall be obliged to employ Poles as agricultural labourers in Germany.<sup>92</sup>

The tragic end result of Hitler’s campaign in Poland was the inhuman deaths of over six million people, or 18 percent of Poland’s population.<sup>93</sup> Those who were not killed were often forced to work as slave labour or were confined in filthy ghettos to await death through starvation and disease. To create *Lebensraum* for German farming families, a secret conference for publishing editors and government officials determined in 1940 that “In the Polish Reichsgau [region] 4 million Poles still live. We need only a small percentage of these. 200,000 German farming families must be moved there. Only 80,000 are available at present.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Prussia’s Polish territories were taken from her by the treaty of Versailles.

<sup>92</sup> J. Noakes and G. Pridham, (editors), *Nazism*, Volume 2, (New York, Schocken Books, 1988), p. 934.

<sup>93</sup> Noakes and Pridham, p. 922.

<sup>94</sup> 1940 conclusions of a report issued to all publishing concerns in 1940, BA, *Sammlung Sanger* 102/62, 9 February 1940., in Welch, p. 137.

Despite its nationalist and xenophobic justification of Hitler's Eastern policies, *Heimkehr* was one of the top grossing films of the Third Reich, although it failed to recover its enormous production cost of RM4.02 million.<sup>95</sup> Significantly, Goebbels awarded it the coveted *Prädikate* "Film of the Nation", "Artistically and Politically Especially Valuable" and "Valuable for Youth".

#### 5.142: The "Euthanasia" Programme

On 14 July, 1933 the Nazis enacted a "Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring" that legalized the sterilization of prostitutes, vagabonds, criminals and those considered congenitally ill.<sup>96</sup> Although Western nations such as the United States had enacted eugenics programmes some twenty years earlier, the Nazis extended their racial health campaign to murderous proportions. In October 1939, Hitler quietly signed a personal memo which authorized the liquidation of "hereditarily or congenitally ill" citizens.<sup>97</sup> Misleadingly referred to as the *Reichsausschuss zur wissenschaftlichen Erfassung von erb- und anlagebedingten schweren Leiden* (The Reich Committee for the Scientific Registration of Serious Hereditarily- and Congenitally-based Illnesses), this group murdered innocent mental patients through gassing, injections, starvation and "experiments".<sup>98</sup> Due to the

<sup>95</sup> BA, R2/4829-30, quoted in Welch, p. 315.

<sup>96</sup> Eugenics was a type of social Darwinist theory that was not Nazi in origin. Welfare recipients, criminals, mental handicapped people, etc., were believed to have a genetic flaw that could be passed on to their children. By 1 September 1939, 375,000 people had been sterilized, including 200,000 "feeble minded" persons, 73,000 schizophrenics, 57,000 epileptics and 30,000 alcoholics. Grunberger, pp.288-89.

<sup>97</sup> The killing of adult patients began sometime (the exact date is unknown) in June or July of 1939. Hitler's memo was backdated to 1 September 1939 and read:

Reichsleiter Bouhler and Dr. med. Brandt are charged with the responsibility to extend the powers of specific doctors in such a way that, after the most careful assessment of their condition, those suffering from illnesses deemed to be incurable may be granted a mercy death.

From E. Klee, ed., *Dokumente zur Euthanasie* (Frankfurt, 1979), p. 89. in Noakes and Pridham, p. 1021.

<sup>98</sup> The group's actions should not be considered euthanasia, since neither the patient nor the family gave consent, and most of the victim's families were told the death was from disease or natural causes. All bodies were cremated immediately.

controversial nature of the "T4" programme,<sup>99</sup> it was carried out in secrecy and the killing centers were based at six rural asylums.<sup>100</sup> A T4 statistician reported that by 1 September 1941, 70,273 people had been "disinfected" (ie: killed) and the resultant saving was RM 141, 775, 573.80.<sup>101</sup> In addition, 93,251 hospital beds and related medical facilities were free to treat incoming wounded soldiers. However, on 24 August 1941, Hitler canceled the programme after the Catholic Church publicly charged the Nazis with murder.<sup>102</sup>

From 1935 to 1941, several films were devoted to generating support for the eugenics/euthanasia campaign. Although *Ich klage an* was the only feature film, some earlier films warrant brief mention. The first films were amateur *Aufklärungsfilm* (education films) created by the Party *Rassenpolitische Amt* (Political Office for Race) in 1935 and entitled *Abseit vom Wege* (*By the Wayside*) and *Erbkrank* (*Congenitally Ill*). In 1991, Domino Films of Britain discovered two more films, *Was Du ererbt* (*What You Inherit*) and *Das Erbe* (*The Inheritance*) on a filmreel entitled *Laws of Heredity* located in the former East German Central Film Archive in Potsdam.<sup>103</sup> These short films were intended for Party meetings and for exhibition to personnel involved in the T4 operation. In 1937, T4 commissioned a far more advanced production called

<sup>99</sup> The office overseeing the euthanasia operation was Departement II of the Führer's Chancellery, and the operation was codenamed 'T4' after Dept. II's Berlin address—Tiergartenstrasse 4. Noakes and Pridham, p. 1021.

<sup>100</sup> The asylums were based at Grafneck, Brandenburg, Bernburg, Linz, Sonnerstein and Hadamar.

<sup>101</sup> Noakes and Pridham, p. 1041-42. The savings figure was based on a projected ten year period for the 70, 273 persons killed. (Note: postwar trial evidence put the total at 71, 088 persons.)

<sup>102</sup> The halt order merely caused the T4 operation to become more secretive: patients were transported in disguised postal buses, and mass gassing (carbon monoxide) was abandoned in favour of lethal injections and a combination of starvation and exposure to the elements. The exact number of killings from 1942-45 is unknown but suggested as "clearly tens of thousands" by Noakes and Pridham, p. 1048.

<sup>103</sup> On 4 February 1935 a national film archive was created at Harnack House in Berlin Dahlem, although the films were stored at Babelsberg. Most likely, the East German Central Film Archive is the re-named site of the former Nazi archive, since Potsdam seems to have absorbed Babelsberg.

*Opfer der Vergangenheit* (Victims of the Past ) that was shown across cinemas in the Reich. Adopting a documentary style, *Opfer der Vergangenheit* demonstrated the reasons for the eugenics programme and advocated sterilization and the humane termination of "life unworthy of life".<sup>104</sup> Amidst images of hard working men and scenes of animals, the spectator is told: "All life on this earth is a struggle for existence." and "In the last few decades mankind has sinned terribly against the law of natural selection.". As the camera shifts to grotesque images of severely disfigured mental patients, the commentary states:

This is what the descendants of the sick people look like. The costs of caring for the hereditarily ill siblings of this one family have so far been RM154,000. How many healthy people could have been housed for this sum? ... In the last 70 years our people have increased by 50 per cent, while in the same period the number of hereditarily ill has risen by 450 per cent! If this were to continue, in 50 years there would be one hereditarily ill to four healthy people...An endless column of horror would march into the nation...(The camera focuses on crazed-looking mental patients who trudge along in a line.).

Throughout the film death is suggested as both a welcome release for suffering people and as economic intelligence that would benefit healthy contributors to the community.<sup>105</sup>

*Ich klage an* (I Accuse, 1941)

<sup>104</sup> The following commentary is taken from segments of the film shown on 28 January 1992 edition of *The Fifth Estate*.

<sup>105</sup> In October 1939, *Dasein ohne Leben* (Existence Without Life ) was shown to those working on the euthanasia campaign. A professionally produced picture, the film employed a professor figure who openly called upon "a merciful destiny to liberate these regrettable creatures from their existence without life...". *Dasein ohne Leben* focused on the "immorality" of keeping mental patients alive rather than discussing the economic benefits. Among the lines spoken: "How cruel it is to keep the spiritually dead as living corpses until they reach old age!...Day in, day out in a night of madness...Deliver those you cannot heal!" .



Faced with growing criticism from a suspicious public, a major feature film was commissioned to address the euthanasia question.<sup>106</sup> Released on 29 August 1941, Wolfgang Liebeneiner's *Ich klage an* follows the tragic, but loving plight of a young doctor to save his dying wife from multiple sclerosis. Played by Heidemarie Hatheyer, Hanna Heyt painfully deteriorates into a bed-ridden invalid with a blank, unchanging stare, and eventually begs a close friend to give her a bottle of medicine to permit her to overdose. Although the friend refuses, the husband finally gives in to his wife's pleading and administers a sleeping drug. When the husband tells his friend of his actions, he is reported to the police and charged with murder. In a lengthy courtroom scene, arguments for and against euthanasia are examined, but the film ends just before the verdict is delivered, leaving the audience to "decide".

Significantly, *Ich klage an* abandons the economic arguments of *Opfer der Vergangenheit* in favour of a humanistic approach. Throughout the film, sympathy is generated for the incurably ill and death is suggested as the most moral and considerate action to "liberate" patients from their suffering. The following laboratory scene subtly implies that animals are treated with more consideration than suffering humans:

DOCTOR A: (*to another doctor*) Look! At last the mouse is infected!  
 (*A nurse rushes to see the mouse*)  
 DOCTOR B: The mouse is paralyzed! Isn't it wonderful? (*A limping white mouse is shown*)  
 NURSE: Poor creature!  
 (*After the doctors leave*)  
 NURSE: (*Gently picking up the mouse*) Poor creature, I haven't forgotten you...(*the sound of a jar lid is heard as the mouse is presumably placed inside*) Now you're released from your suffering.

In a subsequent scene, Hanna asks a friend to leave her medicine behind, reminding him that invalids are no longer human:

<sup>106</sup> The degree of collaboration between T4 and Goebbels in the film's conception and production remains uncertain.

HANNA: Please...leave the bottle behind...

DR. LANG: No...

HANNA: ( *lying in bed, with a blank-looking stare* ) ...I don't fear death, but I don't want to lie around like this for years, –no longer a person– just a lump of flesh. I will be a source of agony for Thomas.

The final death scene is portrayed as a profoundly moving and loving experience, where Thomas, at his wife's request, gives her the fatal drink. As he lovingly holds her hand, her final words are "I love you Thomas..."

In a Jury scene, every possible academic, religious, historical and moralistic argument for and against euthanasia is examined.<sup>107</sup> Predictably, the pro-euthanasia argument is found more persuasive, and its advocates are a compassionate and gentle cross-section of society including a gamekeeper, locksmith, schoolteacher and pharmacist. In the final scene, Thomas makes an impassioned statement to the court and the audience: "No, now I accuse! I accuse a law which hinders doctors and judges in their task of serving the people!". As the film fades to a close, Thomas states: "Now pass your verdict!"

In a 1965 interview, Wolfgang Liebeneiner suggested that the film was produced to test a new law that would legalize euthanasia.<sup>108</sup> However, given that 70,000 victims had already died by the date of the film's premiere, *Ich klage an* appears more as an attempt to facilitate the government's murderous actions through misleading the public into conceiving of euthanasia as a compassionate release given on a patient's request. In its original conjuncture, *Ich klage an* was probably a subtle vehicle for a National Socialist message, designed to stimulate Germans into "positive" discussion and reconsideration of

<sup>107</sup> The scene is too long to be quoted here, but must be consulted to understand the skilled handling of the issue and the emphasis on a higher morality. Please see Leiser, p. 143 for the complete text of the scene.

<sup>108</sup> *Der Spiegel*, No. 7, 10 February 1965, quoted in Welch, p. 126.

an important topic.<sup>109</sup> However, like *Jud Süß*, *GPU* and *Heimkehr*, *I Accuse* was just another incitement in the Nazi programme of mass murder.

Far from the negative portrayal of enemies however, the Nazi cinema was also capable of more positive campaigns, such as promoting *Führer* worship, as examined in the following chapter.

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<sup>109</sup> Significantly, Goebbels' press directive of 21 August 1941 stated: "*Ich klage an* is not to be discussed for the time being. If later, then euthanasia must not be mentioned." BA Sammlung Sängler, 102/63, quoted in Welch, p. 126.

## CHAPTER 6 DER FÜHRER

One of the most striking aspects of the Nazi régime was its pseudo-religious operation. Beginning with the epic *Triumph des Willens*<sup>1</sup> Nazi cinema never tired of glorifying the cult of the leader and the principle of leadership (*Führerprinzip*). It was crucial to the legitimization and operation of the Nazi regime to have a nationally-respected heroic leader, a superhuman “genius” figure who appeared strong, disciplined and infallible. The NSDAP realized this requirement as early as 1926 with the introduction of the compulsory “Heil Hitler!” greeting, but the March 1933 elections proved that the cult of the leader still required much work: at least two-thirds of all Germans did not yet perceive Hitler as the new *Führer* of Germany.<sup>2</sup> Henceforth, innumerable *Führer* and *Führerprinzip* films were produced, and like most Nazi propaganda, Hitler’s superhuman image was built on previously established socio-historical factors.<sup>3</sup> Most importantly, Germany had long been fascinated with the cult of the leader. Considerable amounts of *völkisch* literature glorified the mystical *Übermensch* (superman), and heroes like Frederick the Great and Bismarck were widely admired; between 1900 and 1910 some 500 “Bismarck Towers” were erected throughout Germany.<sup>4</sup> Further, the Weimar democracy was widely perceived to be totally bankrupt, and against inefficient parliamentarianism, Hitler offered a seductive alternative as a charismatic, orderly and strong leader.

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<sup>1</sup> The documentary-style *Triumph des Willens* is widely hailed as one of the ultimate *Führer* films, for it literally shows a God (Hitler) descending from the clouds to save the German people. For a detailed analysis of *Triumph des Willens*, please see Richard Meran Barsam, *Filmguide to Triumph of the Will*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> Ian Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> The mass’ attraction to Hitler was influenced by many factors. For a detailed analysis, please see Ian Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, pp. 1-82, and P.D. Stachura, ed., *The Nazi Machtergreifung*, (London: 1983), pp. 162-181.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, p. 15.

With the exception of *Triumph des Willens*, Nazi features never directly glorified Hitler, since to impersonate him was an act of blasphemy, and was far too overt. Instead, the more powerful technique of historical analogy was used, and as *Reichsfilmintendant* Dr. Fritz Hippler wrote:

The only possible subjects for a successful historical film are personalities and events from the past which people of today know about or can identify with, be interested in or find relevant. To put it in the broadest terms, this is as it were proof of the meaning of life, the authority and historical significance, the timeless authenticity of particular historical events, situations and personalities.<sup>5</sup>

The greatest advantage of the historical analogy was the flexibility it allowed film-makers to distort historical events to suit Nazi purposes. Historical “supermen” were deliberately endowed with a National Socialist *Weltanschauung* to encourage audiences to make favourable comparisons with Hitler. By recalling events familiar to German audiences, Hitler’s image was legitimized and increased by linking him to glorious heroes of a mystical past: Frederick the Great, Bismarck, Friedrich Schiller and Andreas Schlüter were projected as Hitler’s predecessors.<sup>6</sup> Further, to demonstrate the superiority of totalitarian rule and to accentuate Hitler’s strong image, the leader figure of the historical film was frequently compared with the weak and corrupt “Jewish parliamentarian”.

The best example of a model *Führer* was Frederick the Great, who was long hailed as a national hero. From 1922 to 1932, six films portrayed the Prussian king in an heroic light, and Goebbels quickly made the King the subject of four major films that glorified Frederick as an heroic and warlike genius. The first

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<sup>5</sup> Fritz Hippler, *Betrachtungen zum Filmschaffen*, (Berlin: Max Hesses Verlag, 1942) quoted in Leiser, p. 106.

<sup>6</sup> Hitler was also compared to a scientist in *Paracelsus* (1943), a poet in *Friederich Schiller (Der Triumph eines Genies)* (1940), and a sculptor in *Andreas Schlüter* (1942). In an address at a mass meeting in Münster on 28 February, 1940, Goebbels described Hitler “as the *Vollender* of an heroic tradition of the German idea of Reich, which Frederick the Great had begun and Bismarck had continued.” (Bramstead, p. 445).

film, *Der Choral von Leuthen* (*The Hymn of Leuthen* , 1933) depicted Frederick as a military genius who miraculously achieves victory in seemingly impossible situations. In 1935 and 1936, *Der alte und der junge König* (*The Old and the Young King* ) and *Fridericus* appeared. The prologue to *Der alte und der junge König* stated:

Encircled by European powers who are holding onto rights they regard as hereditary, Prussia is in the ascendant after decades of fighting for the right to exist. The whole world watches with astonishment and admiration as the Prussian King, whom they had first laughed at, then learned to fear, stands his ground in the face of overwhelmingly superior forces. But now they are intent on crushing him. Prussia's hour of destiny has come.<sup>7</sup>

The parallel to the Third Reich could hardly be missed, since Hitler had long claimed that an international conspiracy was trying to destroy Germany, and in the same year Germany began its rearmament campaign in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles.

#### *Der grosse König* (*The Great King* , 1942)

The greatest of Frederick films in both popularity and production cost was the elaborate *Der grosse König* of 3 March, 1942. Goebbels commissioned the film and participated extensively in its production, ordering several scenes to be re-cut to his satisfaction. To maintain continuity with previous *Fridericus* films dating to the Weimar period, Otto Gebühr was retained in his role as Frederick, and Hitler was so impressed with the picture that he had a copy sent to Mussolini.<sup>8</sup> The film was a deliberate attempt to compare Hitler with Frederick and the respective national situations of World War Two and the Seven Years' War. Demonstrating the *Führerprinzip*, the film's plot suggests that war can only

<sup>7</sup> Leiser, p. 113.

<sup>8</sup> A mechanism of propaganda favours linking certain actors to certain roles to provide continuity and reliability. Leif Furhammar and Folke Isaksson, *Politics and Film*, Kersti French, trans., (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 164.

be won if the community selflessly submits to the directives of the “genius” leader who always overcomes the greatest odds. The story of *Der grosse König* begins after the Prussian defeat at Kunersdorf, where Frederick’s army appears demoralized and his despairing generals demand peace.<sup>9</sup> Stating that “Those who are afraid can go home”, Frederick takes over command from Count Fink and continues the seemingly hopeless war.<sup>10</sup> After winning the battle of Torgau, Frederick achieves a three day alliance with the Russians, a seeming allusion to the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939-41. In the final scenes, Frederick wins the battle against the Austrians, and the conclusion shows a “deeply moved and profoundly grateful” King who presides over a recovering Prussia. The Prussian landscape is again beautiful, and flourishing crops and farms suggest the familiar *Blut und Boden* theme.

Although Goebbels forbid any review of *Der grosse König* from explicitly comparing Frederick with Hitler and from drawing “any analogy with the present situation”, the film’s intentions are evident.<sup>11</sup> Just as Hitler wore his Iron Cross, Frederick wears his Order of the Black Eagle, lives in extreme solitude and goes without sleep and food, in a demonstration of his total sacrifice for the nation. As Harlan remarked, “I wanted to show the harassed face of a man who after his defeat [at Kunersdorf] had almost collapsed under the weight of the responsibility he had shouldered.”<sup>12</sup> Goebbels had the King’s isolation particularly stressed to parallel Hitler’s increasingly infrequent public appearances during 1940-42. During the initial release of *Der grosse König*, Goebbels even arranged for a newsreel to show Hitler alone in his office

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<sup>9</sup> In an ironic foreshadowing of the 1944 attempt on Hitler’s life, the unsundering Frederick survives an assassination attempt as if by divine intervention. The implication was that Providence watched over the *Führer*, and Hitler made a similar claim after narrowly escaping death.

<sup>10</sup> Leiser, p. 115.

<sup>11</sup> Leiser, p. 114.

<sup>12</sup> Leiser, p. 113.

studying war plans. The implication was that in times of war the *Führer* devoted his total energy to victory, an enormous burden since he bore the nation's hopes. By showing the "unbearable" duties of the *Führer*, the individual was supposedly encouraged to make the greatest sacrifices for the final victory. As Hitler stated on 13 January, 1942: "It seems that people should make sacrifices for their great men as a matter of course. A nation's only true fortune is in its great men."<sup>13</sup> Nazi cinema portrayed death as the ultimate and most heroic sacrifice, and as Frederick remarked: "At Kunersdorf they preferred life to victory...instead of deserting they should have built a wall for me out of corpses, a wall of Prussian corpses!"

Although the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (Army High Command) was not impressed with the portrayal of Frederick's generals, Goebbels intended the scene to generate total faith in the superiority of the leader's judgment over normal reasoning. In a radio address on Hitler's fifty-third birthday, Goebbels praised the quality of *Der grosse König* and asked "what is the main lesson to be learned from the film?" before responding, "leadership turns the scales".<sup>14</sup> Alluding to the German difficulties of 1942, Prussian suffering was shown as a temporary hardship that could not be avoided on the road to final victory. Before a battle scene, Frederick the Great spouts Hitlerian dialogue:

FREDERICK THE GREAT: (*addressing his troops*) Germany is going through a terrible crisis. We live in a time which will change the face of Europe, and victory demands terrible suffering. But then the sun will shine again. Despite all my enemies I believe in the justness of our cause and in the courage of my troops! Into the Battle!

To encourage national solidarity, perseverance and a "total war" mentality, sacrifice was portrayed as both necessary and symbolic of an unshakable faith in the genius of the *Führer*. As the film's dialogue states: "Prussia will never be

<sup>13</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, ed., *Hitler's Table-Talk*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 206.

<sup>14</sup> Bramsted, p. 223.



lost as long as the King lives". The last major Seven Years War film until *Kolberg, Der grosse König* is best summarized by Goebbels comment, "it is a useful aid in the struggle for the soul of our people and in the process of achieving a lasting toughening of the German spirit of resistance which we need in order to triumph in this war."<sup>15</sup>

To demonstrate the brilliance of the supreme leader, many films used the "Jewish parliamentarian" as a foil. Genius figures in a long list of films like *Der Herrscher*, (*The Ruler*, 1937), *Robert Koch* (1939), *Friedrich Schiller* (1940), *Andreas Schlüter* (1942), *Paracelsus* (1943) and *Diesel* (1942), emphasized that "one hundred blockheads" could never replace one great man.<sup>16</sup> Other films, like *Mein Sohn, Der Herr Minister*, openly compared the greatness of the *Führerprinzip* with the corruption of democracy. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler laid the foundation of the anti-Parliamentarianism which many films later expressed. Hitler viewed democracy as a bankrupt system, "a lamentable comedy" that "must be counted among the symptoms of human degeneration".<sup>17</sup> Referring to parliamentarians as "idiotic incompetents and big-mouths", "leather merchants", "political bandits", "gangsters", and "cowardly scoundrels"<sup>18</sup>, Hitler wrote: "The intellectual level of what these men said was on a really depressing level, in so far as you could understand their babbling at all...".<sup>19</sup> Hitler concluded:

The Western democracy of today is the forerunner of Marxism which without it would not be thinkable. It provides this world plague with the culture in which its germs can spread. In its most extreme form, parliamentarianism created a monstrosity of excrement and fire.<sup>20</sup>...There is no principle which, objectively considered, is as false as that of parliamentarianism.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Albrecht, p. 82 quoted in Petley, p. 109.

<sup>16</sup> This is a continuous theme in *Mein Kampf*.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 81, 82, 83 respectively.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

*Mein Sohn, Der Herr Minister (My Son the Minister , 1937)*

Veit Harlan's *Mein Sohn, Der Herr Minister* compared parliamentarianism with the strength of the Third Reich. The following exchange between two ministers was designed to expose the corruption, inefficiency, lack of leadership and absence of responsibility inherent in the parliamentary system:

INCOMING MINISTER\*: Minister, I wish to follow an honourable custom of this House and bid farewell to you as the departing Minister.

OUTGOING MINISTER†: And I should like to follow an honourable custom of this House and, as they say, hand over to you, as the incoming Minister, my desk.

I.M.: I am sorry Minister, that you are leaving.

O.M.: Ha. you mean because you are displacing me. Aha, my dear fellow, that is the fate of every Minister who swims in parliamentary waters.

I.M.: Parliamentary government is the noblest institution that democracy has every produced.

O.M. Bravo, bravo. That has a delightful ring to it. I've said it myself at least three times in every election speech. But, frankly, neither of us really believes it.

I.M.: It is very important to me to raise the living standards of this country.

O.M.: But my dear sir, that happens automatically. If things go on as they are, in no time at all everyone in France will have been a Minister. For which he will afterwards receive a pension of 50,000 francs and live happily ever after. What more do you want?

I.M. You're very ironical.

O.M.: On the contrary, I'm only being honest. Now that I'm no longer a Minister. I can after all afford to be honest.

I.M.: I see as my most important duty as being to reduce unemployment. Because frankly, so far there hasn't been enough done in this field.

O.M.: I beg your pardon – the House has been permanently occupied with the question of unemployment. We have formed seven commissions and set up six committees. I myself have made at least thirty speeches on unemployment. Even with the best will in the world could one really do more? If the number of unemployed has risen in spite of that, well, God help us. what can we do about it? You won't be able to do very much to alter the situation either, young man. Well, now, to work again. I wish you better luck than I had. and don't overwork yourself!

I.M.: I consider myself responsible to Parliament, to my constituents, and above all to the people.

O.M.: Responsible! That's whimsy. What can happen to us, after all? Face to face with nothing – with a pension of 50,000 francs. Come on now.

\* Hereafter referred to as I.M.

† Hereafter O.M.

that's surely something that can be endured? But you have work to do. Sincerely, I wish you all the best.<sup>22</sup>

The inefficient, irresponsible Parliamentary democracy is shown as the polar opposite of the Hitler régime, and the corruption and instability of Weimar is claimed as proof. Democracy was portrayed as an alien "Jewish-Marxist disease" that lead only to destruction, whereas the German *Führerprinzip* represented the highest and spiritually richest form of life. As a war veteran tells a Weimar court in Karl Ritter's *Pour le Mérite* : "I have nothing in common with this country, because I hate democracy like the plague."<sup>23</sup>

### *Bismarck* (1940)

Identifying Parliamentarianism as an enemy of the Reich, Wolfgang Liebeneiner's *Bismarck* , released on 12 June 1940, compares Hitler and the Prussian Prime Minister.<sup>24</sup> Bismarck is portrayed a prototype *Führer* who is capable of seemingly impossible feats: he enlarges the army; concludes a military agreement with Russia to protect Prussia's eastern front; defeats Austria at war; outwits the French, and succeeds in having Wilhelm I proclaimed as Emperor of Germany.<sup>25</sup> In the final scenes, the *Reichskanzler* unifies separate German states into one strong Reich. Bismarck's actions are a deliberate parallel to the rearmament program of 1935, the introduction of compulsory military service on 16 March 1935 and the German-Soviet non-aggression pact of 1939. The war against Austria is a reference to Hitler's drive to incorporate German nationals into one Reich; the audience is reminded that under the

<sup>22</sup> Leiser, p. 50-51.

<sup>23</sup> Leiser, p. 52. *Pour le Mérite* was released by Ufa on 22.12.1938.

<sup>24</sup> Considered an unqualified success, *Bismarck* generated a net profit of nearly RM 2 million. It was later followed by a 1942 sequel, *Die Entlassung* (*The Dismissal* ).

<sup>25</sup> Leiser, p. 118-19, Welch, p. 168.

former Austro-Hungarian empire, the German population of Austria was dominated by Slavs and other foreigners. Further, the outwitting of the French seems a reference to the fall of France in 1940.

The parallel accomplishments are intended to demonstrate the superiority of the *Führerprinzip*. Bismarck is portrayed as a strong-willed genius of “iron and blood” against the backdrop of an unruly and ineffectual Parliament that fails to recognize the importance of his mission. Like Hitler’s dissolution of the *Reichstag*, Bismarck dissolves a Landtag filled with “Jewish-looking members” and imposes press censorship in an attempt to unify the separate Germanic states.<sup>26</sup>

BISMARCK: In our country everyone who has achieved something in his own field thinks he can make his voice heard in politics. Professor Virchow would scarcely allow a banker to amputate the arm of a sick man, but he would like to meddle amateurishly in politics even though he knows no more about it than a banker!...

JACKOBY: We’re going to bring in a motion to make the Minister answer for these remarks with his head and his power.

BISMARCK: I’ll willingly take on this responsibility, for in my politics neither my person nor my power enters into it. I intend to dissolve this Parliament, which has caused so much disorder and confusion, by order of the King until the conflict is resolved and Prussia is out of danger.

VIRCHOW: You are violating the constitution – the King is slandered! (*Uproar, Bismarck attempts to speak many times, then pulls newspaper out of his pocket and begins to read back to the MPs. Eventually order is restored.*)

BISMARCK: Gentlemen, it is you who are violating the constitution by your doctrinaire attitude. You have made an agreement between Parliament and the King unworkable, therefore the constitution is suspended. But the machinery of government must continue, the trains must run, the Post Office must deliver the mail, the civil servants must draw their salaries and you gentlemen, your allowances. Who is to look after all this? You? No! We shall have the government by the King, who alone has all the responsibility and power for this task.

VIRCHOW: Gentlemen, this is a black day in the history of our Fatherland. In this struggle for the ideals of liberty and progress Prussia has been thrown back into the darkness of the Middle Ages. No, gentlemen, let us go no further down this path. We are a nation of poets and thinkers, and we are proud of this!

BISMARCK: (*jumps up*) But don’t you see the irony in the words “a nation of poets and thinkers”? While you sit here dreaming, others are dividing the world up for themselves.

<sup>26</sup> Welch, p. 169.

VIRCHOW: I demand that you do not interrupt me. We don't want the world, all we want is freedom in our own country.

BISMARCK: But you haven't even got that! There is one country between Calais and Marseilles, and six frontiers between Hamburg and Munich.

VIRCHOW: The unity of heart and spirit is far greater than any law. This unity has already been achieved.

BISMARCK: (*To Roon*): "German Michael" has to be forced to accept his good fortune.

VIRCHOW: Herr von Bismarck and Herr von Roon may smile at my words. They are men for whom, in their own words, might is greater than right.

BISMARCK: I did not say that. Kindly do not twist my words!

VIRCHOW: I thank Mr. Chairman, I value facts – not words. Herr von Bismarck and Herr von Roon are enemies of the people and devoid of patriotism...but one thing I'll assure you of and establish in the face of history, you won't succeed in preventing the unification of Germany.

BISMARCK: It's an honour for me to be called an enemy of the people by Virchow. Herr Virchow does not know the people at all! He really meant "enemy of the Landtag!" (*Arguing continues, finally Bismarck closes the Landtag and dissolves Parliament*)<sup>27</sup>

Just as Hitler used the Enabling Act to protect the country from a Jewish-Bolshevik threat, Bismarck protects Prussia's health through dissolving a Parliament filled with Jewish-looking politicians. Virchow, afraid to take military action, meddling "amateurishly in politics" and drawing a costly "allowance", is the antithesis of the *Führer*. Bismarck's statement, "We shall have government by the King, who alone has the responsibility and power for this task." recalls Hitler's questions in *Mein Kampf*: "Mustn't the principle of parliamentary majorities lead to the demolition of any idea of leadership? Isn't the very idea of responsibility bound up with the individual?"<sup>28</sup> An SD report noted that the Parliament scenes had the desired effect on audiences, with one viewer remarking: "It's a good thing that we haven't still got such prattlers in Germany today!"<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Welch, p. 169-170. See also: Erwin Leiser, *Deutschland Erwache* (*Germany Awake*), produced and directed by Erwin Leiser, 90 min., 1968, on International Historical Films videocassette.

<sup>28</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 80.

<sup>29</sup> BA, R58/157, 27 January 1941, quoted in Welch, p. 171. For unknown reasons, Goebbels never paid much attention to the Security Service reports which detailed how audiences received films.

The cult of the leader continued unabated until the final year of the war, whereupon it intensified and ultimately concluded with Hitler's suicide on 30 April, 1945. It is significant that Goebbels increasingly relied upon historical parallels to promote Hitler as the icon of Nazi victory and power, since it exposes the irrational and religious character of National Socialism. Goebbels recognized that the movement would crumble without Hitler, and as the Third Reich neared destruction, he intensified his calls for Germans to remain faithful to the *Führer*. Even when all was clearly lost, Hitler continued to be promoted as a living God, a "savior" who would rescue a faithful Germany. On 31 December, 1944, Goebbels published an article in *Das Reich* which called Hitler "superior to any other leader in the world" and promised that Hitler would lead a faithful Germany into "a new epoch".<sup>30</sup> Later, as Berlin came under Soviet attack, an article by Helmut Sündermann ridiculously claimed that Germany could still triumph, because Hitler's leadership was "second to none in world history".<sup>31</sup> Although RMVP "Activity Reports" suggested that few Germans believed Goebbels' lies, Goebbels seems to have fallen under his own spell. In his diary entry of 23 March, 1945, Goebbels discusses Thomas Carlyle's "extraordinarily instructive and uplifting" book on Frederick the Great and remarks:

He [Frederick] too sometimes felt that he must doubt his lucky star, but, as generally happens in history, at the darkest hour a bright star arose and Prussia was saved when he had almost given up all hope. Why should not we also hope for a similar wonderful turn of fortune!<sup>32</sup>

Goebbels' hopes never materialized. On 1 May 1945, as Berlin lay in ruins, Goebbels and his family committed suicide.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Goebbels, "Der Führer" in *Das Reich*, 31 December, 1944, quoted in Baird, p. 241.

<sup>31</sup> Helmut Sündermann, "Let Us Force the Turning Point: We Can Do It" in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, 11 February, 1945., quoted in Baird, p. 242.

<sup>32</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, ed., *The Goebbels Diaries: The Last Days*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978), p. 215.

This thesis will now examine another aspect of the Nazi cinema, the glorification of the "Blood and Soil" motif.

## CHAPTER 7 BLOOD AND SOIL

Immediately prior to the Nazi *Machtergreifung*, German agriculture suffered terribly, a situation the Nazis deliberately exploited for their own advantage. New legislation was introduced to help German farmers,<sup>1</sup> and propaganda emphasized a centuries-old *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil) motif. Although used to expand Nazi support in the sizable peasant class, the Blood and Soil theme was a genuine component of Nazi ideology, and Nazi racial theory held that the virtuous blood of Nordic man was firmly rooted in the soil.<sup>2</sup> As Walther Darré, Minister of Agriculture, wrote in 1934:

One can say that the blood of a people digs its roots deep into the homeland earth through its peasant landholdings, from which it continuously receives that life endowing strength which constitutes its special character.<sup>3</sup>

*Blut und Boden* was also used to stress a common identity and national unity in a region conscious country. Further, *Blut und Boden* films helped legitimize Nazi culture through appealing to a common taste, but a major function of the theme was to rationalize the expansionist *lebensraum* doctrine.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Although the legislation did little to help the farmer in the long-term, the goals of the legislation (Debt Regulation Law of 1 June, 1933; Reich Food Estate Law [*Reichsnährstand*] of 13 September, 1933; Reich Entailed Farm Law [*Reichserbhofgesetz*] of 29 September, 1933) were relatively simple. First, the government wanted to secure *Nahrungsfreiheit* (nutritional freedom), thereby achieving maximum independence from a foreign food supply. By minimizing foreign exchange expenditure on food, money could be spent for foreign materials needed for rearmament. Second, legislation was to keep food prices stable, thereby stabilizing wages so as not to disrupt disarmament through a wage-price spiral. Third, the government viewed rural families as key child producers and as the backbone of defence. For a complete summary, please J. E. Farquharson, *The Plough and the Swastika: The NSDAP and Agriculture in Germany, 1928-45*, (London: Sage Publications, 1976), p. vi., and J. Noakes and G. Pridham, pp. 316-326.

<sup>2</sup> Early German nationalist and occult writers such as Guido von List and Lanz von Liebenfels placed particular emphasis on the link between the race and the soil, and their writings found considerable favour with the NSDAP and other nationalist and *völkisch* groups. For a more detailed account of National Socialism's relationship with nature, see Robert A. Pois, *National Socialism and the Religion of Nature*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

<sup>3</sup> Walther Darré, *The Peasant Formed German History*, quoted in Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, p. 150.

<sup>4</sup> Hitler outlined the *lebensraum* programme in *Mein Kampf*, pp. 131-140.



By juxtaposing images of foreign cultures living in cramped urban conditions with scenes of Aryans living in vast pastoral beauty, Nazi propaganda reinforced the need for new land by suggesting the cultural, racial and spiritual danger of overcrowding.<sup>5</sup> In *Die nordische Seele: Eine Einführung in die Rassenseelenkunde*, Ludwig Clauss argued that the Reich must expand or the race will die:

Under these circumstances [crowded conditions], the Nordic people are the first to languish, to die, first spiritually and then physically: they succumb because of the loss of physical distance and perish because of the lack of social distance...Nordic men cannot thrive between the stone walls of long lines of streets which deprive them of all distance – in other words, in the large city. If they cannot afford to take up residence beyond the city, then they succumb to emotional and psychological atrophy. Perhaps they are unaware of it, but they are forced to over-come an unconscious opposition; nevertheless, the Nordic soul is slowly stifled. The sins of that the parents have committed against their own soul-style is avenged in their children. Nobody who lives contrary to the law of his species goes unpunished.<sup>6</sup>

National overcrowding was increasingly portrayed as a serious threat that would result, as Hitler stated, in “starvation and misery” leading to “catastrophe”.<sup>7</sup> Although it had no factual basis, the fear of overcrowding seemed especially credible since Nazi society placed extreme emphasis on childbirth.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The best example is the pseudo-documentary *Der ewige Jude*, which showed overcrowded, squalid ghettos that the film’s commentary referred to as “Jews in their natural state”. To a small degree, the overcrowding theme was used to encourage city workers to migrate to rural areas to ameliorate a farm labour shortage.

<sup>6</sup> Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss, *Die nordische Seele: Eine Einführung in die Rassenseelenkunde*, (Munich, 1932), pp. 19-32, quoted in Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, p. 70-71. Similar arguments are made in *Mein Kampf*, pp. 131-140. Hitler wrote: “The acquisition of new soil for the settlement of the excess population possesses an infinite number of advantages, particularly if we turn from the present to the future. For one thing, the possibility of preserving a healthy peasant class as a foundation for a whole nation can never be valued highly enough.”, p. 136.

<sup>7</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 131.

<sup>8</sup> Motherhood was the highest duty of the woman in Nazi society. Hitler stated: “...as soon as procreation is limited and the number of births diminished, the natural struggle for existence which leaves only the strongest and healthiest alive is obviously replaced by the obvious desire to ‘save’ even the weakest and most sickly at any price...”, *Mein Kampf*, p. 132. Childbirth was therefore encouraged to prevent the “degeneration of the race”: §218 of the Civil Code prohibited abortion (of healthy Aryan mothers only); birth control centres were closed down; state financial incentives increased proportionately to family size; women were

The first *Blubo* films were short documentaries that focused on the rural life of the German peasant.<sup>9</sup> In 1933, the *Stabsamt des Reichsbauernführers* (The Staff Office of Agriculture) commissioned *Blut und Boden: Grundlage zum neuen Reich* (*Blood and Soil: Foundations of the New Reich*) for screening at Party meetings and lectures, though it later accompanied feature films across Germany.<sup>10</sup> Directed at the peasant classes, the film emphasized the “heroic” peasant lifestyle and the contribution of Germany’s farms as crucial to the survival of the new Reich. While the *Blut und Boden* film possessed an amateur quality similar to that of *Erbkrank*, a far more sophisticated feature film was created in 1936.

Produced by the *NS-Kulturgemeinde*, *Ewiger Wald* (*The Eternal Forest*) employed a ten man camera crew that included Guido Seeber and Sepp Allgeier, who previously supervised the photography of *Triumph des Willens*.<sup>11</sup> Beautifully photographed, the film is an impressive production artistically similar to Riefenstahl’s work.<sup>12</sup> Directed by Hans Springer and Rolf von Sonjevski-Jamrowski, the director of *Blut und Boden*, *Ewiger Wald* depicted, from a nationalist viewpoint, the seemingly eternal relationship between the German peasant and the forest. Throughout the film, the health of the German nation is reflected by the state of the forests, and the film’s time frame spans a 2,000 year

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encouraged to give up work to bear children; mothers with over four children were awarded bronze, silver or gold “Mother’s Crosses” (modelled on the Iron Cross) to commemorate their contribution to the Reich. Nazi women’s organizations were set up as early as 1933, including the *Deutsches Frauenwerk* (German Women’s Enterprise–DFW), *NS Frauenschaft* (NS Womanhood–NSF); and the *Reich Mutter Dienst* (Reich Mothers Service–RMD) in 1934; most notably Heinrich Himmler initiated the bizarre *lebensborn* programme to breed a “super-race” through controlled mating of “pure Aryan” women with SS men.

<sup>9</sup> *Blubo* was a popular term of reference for *Blut und Boden* films.

<sup>10</sup> Welch, p. 101.

<sup>11</sup> Seeber previously worked on the silent classics *Der Golem* (*The Golem*, 1914) and *Dirnentragödie* (*Tragedy of the Street*, 1927). See Welch, p. 110.

<sup>12</sup> This is the opinion of David Welch, p. 110, and Courtade and Cadars, pp. 57-58.

period ending in 1936. On 8 June 1936, the day of the film's première, the *NS-Kulturgemeinde* issued a revealing statement in the *Licht-Bild-Bühne* :

It must be stressed that the *NS-Kulturgemeinde* is not only concerned with the encouragement and preservation of art; no, it is much more a group for the promotion of a new heroic art.

The *NS-Kulturgemeinde* will show in *Ewiger Wald* –a film about our forests—just how well prepared it is for such a task! Our ancestors were a forest people, their God lived in holy groves, their religion grew from the forests. No people can live without a forest, and people who are guilty of deforesting will sink into oblivion...However, Germany in its new awakening has returned to the woods. All the laws of our existence make reference to the wood. The film *Ewiger Wald* sings this exalted song of the unity that exists between people and the forest from traditional times to the present.<sup>13</sup>

*Ewiger Wald* employs the German fascination with forests to show that the *Herrenvolk's* strength originates in the land and forests that peaceful Germans have repeatedly defended against warlike foreigners. As the film shows, foreigners are impure and corrupt since they have no respect for the land, and to emphasize the racial and cultural danger presented by neighboring enemies, scenes of war show the massive destruction of the landscape, symbolized by the felling of trees. A scene showing the aftermath of the Great War focuses on innumerable wooden crosses in a large graveyard, and Negro soldiers of the French Army are shown occupying the Ruhr as German trees are cut up and sent to France as reparations. During these scenes, the commentator remarks: "People, how can you bear this? How can you stand for this unthinkable burden, my folk? We will not give in! Let the flags lead us into battle!"<sup>14</sup> The film's aim is exposed through the depiction of war against enemies who are bent on the desecration of German forests. Scenes of Nazi youth playing in a new forest are then shown, reminding the viewer that new life requires new

<sup>13</sup> *Licht-Bild-Bühne*, 8 June, 1936, quoted in Welch, p. 105.

<sup>14</sup> Courtade and Cadars, p. 57.

land. To reassure viewers of final victory, the commentator concludes: "The people, like the forest, will stand for ever!".

Premièring on 21 July, 1936 and later winning a prize for the "Best Foreign Film" at Mussolini's 1936 Venice Film Festival, Luis Trenker's *Der Kaiser von Kalifornien* (*The Kaiser of California*) juxtaposes the peaceful German farmer with an American "asphalt culture" that rapes the land. *Der Kaiser von Kalifornien* was partially based on Blaise Cendrars' novel *L'Or* (*Gold*) and depicts the life of Johann August Sutter, a German national who founds a German farming community in California. Sutter's devotion to his farm causes it to expand and flourish, but when a nugget of gold is found on his land, he is bombarded by American gold seekers who trespass on his property and destroy his crops. Eventually an American company discovers Sutter's worth and tries to force him into selling his treasured farm so that it can set up a profitable, but ecologically devastating, mining operation. When Sutter refuses to sell, the company forces him to repay his mortgages on short notice, and threatens to repossess his land. Sutter takes the case to court and wins, although shortly after rampaging American miners burn down San Francisco and destroy his farm. In the end, Sutter is appointed as the Senator of California for his "pioneering efforts", but this does not ameliorate his unhappiness over the loss of his land. In the closing sequences, a commentator stresses the *Blubo* theme with the comment that Sutter's "heart still beats in the woods and rivers of California".<sup>15</sup>

Photographed in the United States, *Der Kaiser von Kalifornien* is an anti-American *Blubo* film that emphasizes the value of the soil through comparing scenes of virtuous and hard-working German farmers with the chaotic and decadent "asphalt culture" of the Americans. The way of the soil symbolizes the

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<sup>15</sup> Petley, p. 128.

beauty of work and a natural, “pure” and “valuable” humanity, while the crowded world of concrete skyscrapers and unbridled capitalism suggests a perverse and bankrupt culture. The appearance of the rough-looking American miners implies a lower racial origin and the collective thematic emphasis stresses American culture as a corrupt force that promotes greed, materialism, overcrowding and the desecration of the land, particularly since the pursuit of gold leads to the destruction of Sutter’s farm. The agriculturally destructive lust for gold and the American city lifestyle forges a strong link between American and Jewish culture, since Nazi mythology claimed the Jew to have no attachment to the soil.<sup>16</sup> Thus, through a comparative technique, *Der Kaiser von Kalifornien* reinforces the dangers of an overcrowded urban lifestyle, thereby helping to rationalize the *lebensraum* programme.

*Heimkehr*, previously discussed as an anti-Polish film, also contains *Blubo* themes. The Germans in *Heimkehr* live in a peaceful farming community, while the Jews and Poles are village dwellers. Following the style of *Der Kaiser von Kalifornien*, *Heimkehr* compares the “pure” and “natural” culture of the Germans with the “destructive madness” of the Poles. The opening subtitles emphasize the need for new land by dedicating the film “To a handful of people, whose forefathers emigrated East many, many years ago, for there was no room for them in the homeland...”.<sup>17</sup> In the final scene, the overcrowding theme is explicitly linked to death through images of a cramped cellar where the imprisoned Germans await execution. A German girl uses the blood and soil theme to raise the spirits of her fellow prisoners:

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<sup>16</sup> In 1937, two art exhibits claimed to show the culture of the Jew. The *Entartete Kunst* (*Degenerate Art*) display opened on 19 July, and *Der ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew* - not the 1940 film) opened on 8 November. Among various images of greed and lust for money, the Jew was shown as a creature that perverted and destroyed the beauty of nature, since he lacked a connection to the soil.

<sup>17</sup> Welch, p. 135.

Friends, we're going to get home, that's for sure. It's quite certain, somehow we'll get home. And why shouldn't we? Everything is possible, and this isn't just possible, it's certain. At home in Germany people are no longer weak, and there no longer unconcerned what happens to us. On the contrary -as Fritz is always telling me- they're very interested in us. And why shouldn't we be able to go home if that's what we want? Think of how it will be, friends, think of how it will be when everything around us is German and when you go into a shop it won't be Yiddish or Polish you here but German! And it won't only be the whole village that will be German, everything all around us will be German. And we'll be right in the middle of it, in the heart of Germany. Think of how it will be friends! And why shouldn't it be so? *We'll be living on the good warm soil of Germany.* In our own country and at home. And at night, in our beds, when we wake from sleep, our hearts will suddenly beat quicker with the sweet knowledge that we are sleeping in Germany, at home in our own country, and all around us is the comforting night and a million German hearts beating softly as one -you are at home, my friend- at home with your own people. It will be a really marvelous feeling for us, that *the seeds in the fields and the crops and the rocks and the waving grass and the swaying branches of the hazelnut bushes and the trees -that all this is German. Germans like us, and belonging to us, because it has all grown from the millions of German hearts which have been laid to rest in the earth and have turned into German soil. Because we don't only live a German life, we die a German death. And even when we are dead we are still German, a real part of Germany. A handful of soil for our grandchildren to grow corn in. And from our hearts the vines will grow high in the sun -the sun which doesn't burn them but shines brightly on them and gives the grapes their sweetness. And all around the birds are singing and everything is German.*<sup>18</sup>

The combination of the overcrowding and the blood and soil themes is an attempt to legitimize the *lebensraum* campaign through suggesting that every German ought to be able to experience the beauty of the open landscape where "the birds are singing and everything is German". Judging by the gross revenue figure of RM4.9 million, *Heimkehr* was one of the more popular films of the Third Reich, and Goebbels gave it the prestigious title "Film of the Nation".<sup>19</sup>

Veit Harlan's *Die Goldene Stadt* premièred on 24 November 1942 and was based on the play *Der Gigant* by the Austrian dramatist Richard Billinger, whose works frequently concern the plight of the peasantry. The "giant" in the play's title is the city, "a hostile force destroying those drawn to it from the

<sup>18</sup> Leiser, p. 71-72 (Italics mine.).

<sup>19</sup> BA, R2/4829-30, quoted in Welch, p. 315.

country”.<sup>20</sup> Shot in Agfacolour, *Die Goldene Stadt* depicts the downfall of the daughter of a broken marriage between a German peasant and a Czech woman who divorce because he refuses to leave his farm while she wants to return to Prague. Like her mother, Anna, played by Kristina Söderbaum, eventually leaves the farm to visit Prague, where she stays with her mother’s family. Although Prague’s architectural beauty is evident, the crowded city is a “web of intrigue and sensuality” that exemplifies what Goebbels called the “asphalt culture”.<sup>21</sup> Unlike “proper” women in Nazi society, Anna’s aunt is an aggressive woman who smokes and drinks, while her cousin Toni is an unruly but smooth “seducer”<sup>22</sup> who defiles Anna and leaves her for a rich older woman.<sup>23</sup> Pregnant and broken hearted, Anna leaves the city and returns to her country home where her remarried father disowns her. In typical Nazi fashion, Anna atones for her sins by drowning herself in a local swamp, crying: “Forgive me, father, for not having loved my native country as much as you did!”<sup>24</sup>

Although *Die Goldene Stadt* concentrates on comparing the *Blut und Boden* virtues of peasant life to the evils of the city, the film does not strongly advocate the *lebensraum* programme, probably because by November 1942 the hopes of a German victory seemed increasingly remote. As a result, the film’s ideological significance is often missed, and even Goebbels was at first concerned that the film was not political enough. In 1942, Harlan called the film “...one of those classic works which constitutes both a vehicle for ideas and the healthiest kind of entertainment.”, and in his autobiography *Im Schatten meiner Filme*, he wrote: “I explained to him [Goebbels] that the film was quite political in

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<sup>20</sup> Hull, p. 215.

<sup>21</sup> Petley, p. 133.

<sup>22</sup> Petley, p. 133.

<sup>23</sup> Hull, p. 216.

<sup>24</sup> Hull, p. 215, See also Courtade and Cadars, p. 284.

the way it treated the desertion of the countryside.”<sup>25</sup> Unlike Billinger’s play, the film adopts a racist anti-Czech theme and casts the film’s “evil” characters as Czechs, an especially interesting point given Goebbels’ earlier affair with the Czech actress Lida Baarova. The portrayal of Anna’s smoking and drinking aunt was clearly designed to offend anyone with Nazi morals, since in the anti-feminist Third Reich, women were to behave as obedient wives and good mothers. Physically resembling Süss Oppenheimer, Toni appears as a Jew, a sensual seducer who marries for money, not love. Hence, Anna’s suicide, an act Goebbels insisted the film include, atones for her race defilement and her sins against the Fatherland.<sup>26</sup>

Numerous other films contain *Blut und Boden* references but cannot be explored here. These films include: *Flüchtlinge* (1933); *Das Verlorene Sohn* (1934); *Das Verlorene Tal* (1934); *Das Alte Recht* (1934); *Ein Mann Will Nach Deutschland* (1934); *Peer Gynt* (1934); *Der Schimmelreiter* (1934); *Das Mädchen vom Moorhof* (1935); *Friesennot* (1937); *Der Berg Ruft* (1937); *Die Reise nach Tilsit* (1939); *Wasser für Canitoga* (1939); *Der Geierwally* (1940); *Waldrausch* (1940); *Der Strom* (1942); *Immensee* (1943); *Opfergang* (1944). Two Leni Riefenstahl films also deserve special consideration: *Das Blaue Licht* (1932) and *Tiefland* (1953). The former romanticizes the mountains and warns of city dangers, while *Tiefland* was an adaptation of Eugene D’Albert’s opera. Curiously, *Tiefland* was begun sometime in 1941, although apparently due to Riefenstahl’s poor health, it was shelved and finally completed in 1953, retaining the original actors.

<sup>25</sup> Veit Harlan, *Im schatten meiner Filme*, quoted in Courtade and Cadars, p. 284.

<sup>26</sup> Although Anna was in fact only half German, some interpreters of Nazi racial theory tried to suggest that the race of the individual was primarily determined by the father’s racial origin.



In addition to winning the support of the farmers, Nazi cinema also tried to win the support of former Communists while promoting a new National Socialist community; these aspects are examined in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 8 PARTY FILMS

In 1927 the NSDAP began the annual filming of Party rallies and special events, a tradition that climaxed with Riefenstahl's classic *Triumph des Willens*.<sup>1</sup> Although the first films were amateur documentaries<sup>2</sup> mostly intended for use at Party meetings, the government commissioned three curious feature films in 1933: *SA-Mann Brand*, *Hitlerjunge Quex* and *Hans Westmar*. Produced against Goebbels wishes and without his assistance, these films were designed to help Social Democrats and Communists identify with individual Nazis and hence with the movement as a whole.<sup>3</sup> Each of these films exemplifies the Hitlerian style of overt propaganda, and each "film is exploited entirely for propaganda purposes; there are no subtle pretensions of mixing art with politics".<sup>4</sup> Reconfirming Goebbels' belief that overt propaganda was doomed to failure, all three features were box-office disasters that demonstrated to the Party that their purposes were better served by films that appealed to the audience's artistic senses. Thus, later films such as *Der zerbrochene Krug* were far smoother productions that moved from encouraging audiences to adopt National Socialism to reaffirming Party support.

Released on 14 June 1933, Bavaria Film's *SA-Mann Brand* claimed to be "a picture of life in our own time" that presented "the glorious struggle and eventual victory of the SA".<sup>5</sup> Directed by the unknown Franz Seitz and employing an amateur cast, *SA-Mann Brand* was a low budget feature that made no attempt

<sup>1</sup> An excellent analysis of the documentary *Triumph des Willens* is Richard Meran Barsam, *Filmguide to Triumph of the Will*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> *Hitler's Flug über Deutschland*, (*Hitler's Flight over Germany*, 1933), *Deutschland Erwacht* (*Germany Awakes*, 1933), *Seig des Glaubens* (*Victory of Faith*, 1933).

<sup>3</sup> *Hans Westmar* was produced at Hitler's request. It is unclear but likely that *SA-Mann Brandt* and *Hitlerjunge Quex* were produced with some type of Party assistance. During 1933 Goebbels was still setting up the basis for the RMVP and was not in full control of film production.

<sup>4</sup> Welch, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> Thus read the film's opening subtitles. Welch, p. 48

to disguise its purpose, much to Goebbels' dislike.<sup>6</sup> A film review in Goebbels' propaganda paper *Der Angriff* openly attacked the film's poor quality:

...the director, Franz Seitz, has attempted to produce an epic account of the Unknown SA Mann, and in doing so, to recreate the glorious myth of the SA for the cinema screens. Unfortunately, Seitz and his team have neither the talent nor the competence necessary for a film of this importance.<sup>7</sup>

Despite Goebbels' protests, the film was awarded the *Prädikate* "artistically especially valuable" and "valuable for national education", indicating Goebbels' limited control during 1933.

The film begins in the late 1920's, where Weimar Germany is shown divided in Nazi and Communist groups. Fritz Brand is a young SA man who lives in a small apartment with his father, a Social Democrat, and his mother, a seemingly neutral but secret Nazi sympathizer.<sup>8</sup> Outside, street fighting is a daily event between the Communists and the Nazis, and the film deliberately contrasts the differences between the two groups. The Nazis are portrayed as innocent, fair and true Germans, while the Communists appear as a sinister force upholding a foreign ideology that undermines a strong and powerful Germany.<sup>9</sup>

Following a street battle where the Communists ambush and shoot at SA troops, Fritz returns home and argues with his father about the future of Germany and her need for leadership. In complete disagreement, Fritz decides he can no longer accept his father's viewpoints<sup>10</sup> and moves in with a

<sup>6</sup> Otto Wernike and Wera Liessem were the only experienced actors in the film; both had previously appeared in Fritz Lang's *Das Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (*The Last Will of Dr. Mabuse*). The idea for *SA-Mann Brand* seems to have been Seitz's although he undoubtedly received guidance and support from unknown members in the Party hierarchy.

<sup>7</sup> *Der Angriff*, 14 June 1933, quoted in Welch, p. 52.

<sup>8</sup> Details from *SA-Mann Brand* and *Hans Westmar* are largely taken from Welch, pp. 47-93, Courtade and Cadars, pp. 35-59, Leiser, pp. 34-45, and Erwin Leiser, *Deutschland Erwache* (*Germany Awake*), produced and directed by Erwin Leiser, 90 min., 1968, on International Historical Films videocassette.

<sup>9</sup> Welch, p. 49.

<sup>10</sup> A significant theme in *Hans Westmar*, *Hitlerjunge Quex* and *SA-Mann Brand* is the replacement of the biological family by the Nazi family. Although the Nazis claimed to support traditional family values, their propaganda covertly encouraged younger members to reject their own family for the larger Nazi community where Hitler was the ultimate father figure.

neighboring widow and her young son Erich, a Hitler Youth who cannot afford a Hitler Youth uniform. In the next scene, Fritz is fired from his job and trade union by Herr Neuberg, a Jewish official who cites Fritz's Nazi leanings as cause for dismissal. As Fritz becomes one of the millions of unemployed, the film returns to his new family. Erich's mother sews nightly to earn extra money to help buy the uniform, but when the kindly Nazi landlord hears of Erich's plight he gives Erich some money he keeps hidden in his copy of *Mein Kampf*. To encourage audiences to identify with individual Nazis, the film emphasizes the landlord's good nature by comparing him with his wife, Frau Hubner, a miserable woman who is identified as a Communist when she votes for List 6 at the end of the film.

The film now turns to spring 1932, where the Communists are plotting to massacre the SA. Fortunately for Fritz, his girlfriend, an ex-Communist, learns of the plan and informs him in time to foil the attack. Although Fritz is wounded in the battle, he is uplifted when he reads the headlines:

Ban On SA lifted from 17 June  
40,000 SA men march for Germany  
Adolf Hitler speaks to 60,000 in Darmstadt

Overjoyed, Fritz invites Erich to participate with his new uniform in an SA march, but the march is disrupted by a Communist ambush. Erich is shot and is carried back by Fritz to his mother, where he dies in her arms. In what would become typical Nazi fashion, Erich's death appears as a wonderful experience, and an enlightened-looking Erich whispers: "I go to the *Führer* in Heaven...".<sup>11</sup> Apparently as a result of Erich's death and other Communist atrocities, an outraged Germany "sweeps" Hitler to power.<sup>12</sup> Communists and other criminals including Herr Neuberg are arrested and the "Jewish-controlled" trade unions

<sup>11</sup> The *Führer* was a clever play on words to refer either to God or Hitler.

<sup>12</sup> Note the blatant attempt to cover up the NSDAP's mediocre support from the electorate.

are disbanded and replaced by the Labour Front. In the closing sequences there is a torch-light march through swastika-covered streets where excited crowds shout "Sieg Heil!" as the SA pass. The final scene is a close up of Fritz leading an SA troop overlaid with a transparent image of a swastika.

A striking feature of *SA-Mann Brand* is its open comparison of "good" and "bad" elements in German society, and its use of the basic human emotions of hate, fear and sympathy to appeal to the broad masses. Following Hitler's dictum that "All propaganda must be popular and its intellectual level must be adjusted to the most limited intelligence among those it is addressed to.", *SA-Mann Brand* contained a "modest intellectual balance".<sup>13</sup> There could be no doubt among viewers that Communists were heartless child-murderers who were allied with Jews and other foreigners.<sup>14</sup> The technique tried to force the viewer to consider the old German proverb: "If you want to know who you are, ask who your friends are.". Hence *SA-Mann Brand* asked: "Who do you count yourself among: the unruly, drunken and disheveled-looking Communists who provoke violence for a Jewish-Bolshevik cause, or the clean and orderly Nazis who strive to create a better Germany?". The intention was to encourage audiences to identify with individual Nazis and thereby identify with the movement. The beneficence, heroism, nationalism and discipline of the Nazis were calculated to find appeal with a German audience's cultural values. Through "exposing" Communism's corruption, decadence and foreign ideas, the film encourages non-Nazis to question their political allegiances and consider the Nazi alternative. The final scenes of cheering crowds suggest Communism as a minority viewpoint that goes against the will of the nation,

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<sup>13</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 180.

<sup>14</sup> In the film the Communist salute is "Heil Moscow" with a clenched fist.

thereby urging Communists to abandon ideas that millions of "true Germans" do not support.

Although it is unlikely that Communists would voluntarily see *SA-Mann Brand*, the Nazis realized that gaining the firm support of former Communists and Social Democrats was absolutely critical to the re-armament campaign. Therefore, the primary intention of *SA-Mann Brand* is not to attack Communism, but to suggest that German Communists had been misled by a foreign ideology. So as not to alienate leftist viewers, Fritz's ex-Communist girlfriend is advanced as an example of one who rejected her former ways and was welcomed into the Nazi camp. Further discussion of the Nazi's flirtation with Communists will follow.

Another main theme in *SA-Mann Brand* stresses Nazi iconography. The SA uniform represents order, community, dedication and connection with past glory, while the disheveled-looking Communists symbolize the chaotic Weimar Republic. The Nazi uniform's connection with past glory is emphasized in a scene where Erich, standing in his new uniform, admires pictures of his late father and Hitler, both in military dress. Erich reads a letter written by his father during the war, and the letter tells Erich, just as Hitler told millions of Germans, to fight for Germany's honour and to uphold the ideals of those who died at the Front. The entire scene plays on audience emotions and suggests the Nazis as the upholders and avengers of an "heroic Germany" that was "stabbed in the back" by Communists and Jews at Versailles.<sup>15</sup> In subsequent films, the Third Reich was often linked to pre-war Germany to create the impression of historical continuity and thereby entrench the régime's legitimacy.<sup>16</sup> The symbols of the two camps are also compared and emphasized. The Nazi and Communist

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<sup>15</sup> This was a myth Hitler tried to popularize throughout the Weimar era.

<sup>16</sup> Nazi films glorified pre-war Germany so that Nazi Germany seemed linked with the "good old days".

Headquarters are shown to be complete opposites, and the swastika-laden Nazi building is clean and neat, while the Communist's offices are run-down and decrepit. By its omnipresent visual association with the Nazi uniform, the strong SA and an immaculate building, the swastika acquires the aura of a religious symbol and represents a strong and healthy Germany.

Linked with religious-like Nazi symbolism is a theme of personal sacrifice, exemplified by Erich's death but exemplified throughout the film. Although Erich and Fritz are respectively cast as follower and leader, both are subject to considerable danger and are prepared to sacrifice their lives. In one scene, the camera focuses on Fritz, who reads a headline from *Der SA-Mann* : "Murdered by the Red Menace". Fritz tells his concerned mother that "A life doesn't count for much where a whole nation is concerned", and when Erich is shot, he tells his mother: "Please don't cry mother. You yourself have often said one must be able to die for one's Fatherland. Like Father."<sup>17</sup> Although the theme of sacrifice and martyrdom sets examples for Party followers and tries to win admiration for the heroism of the Party, it is also intended to generate audience sympathy by showing innocent Nazis falling victim to Communist plans.

Released on 19 September, 1933, and furthering the *Kampfzeit* (time of struggle) legends of heroism, sacrifice and bravery, *Hitlerjunge Quex* is a far more lavish production. Directed by the noted Hans Steinhoff, the film's overall production quality is far more sophisticated and the story again concerns the young martyr who rejects his drunken Communist father, fights the sinister Communists, and dies for National Socialism.<sup>18</sup> Due to the similar story, length constraints and the existence of several excellent analyses of this film, a

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<sup>17</sup> Welch, p. 58.

<sup>18</sup> The film is based on the life of Herbert Norkus, a Hitler Youth who was killed by the Communists while on an errand for the Nazis. He was subsequently hailed by the *Hitlerjugend* as a Nazi Martyr and hero.

discussion of *Hitlerjunge Quex* will be replaced by an examination of *Hans Westmar*.<sup>19</sup>

The background to *Hans Westmar* provides an interesting profile of Goebbels during his first year as Propaganda Minister. The film's story is based on a novel by Hans Heinz Ewers that describes the life of the Nazi hero Horst Wessel. It appears that Hitler was sufficiently impressed with the novel to request a film version be produced under the same title, and the newly formed *Volksdeutsche Filmgesellschaft* was chosen as the production company.<sup>20</sup> The film was completed by early October, and at a private screening in front of the Nazi hierarchy it was praised as an epic.<sup>21</sup> However on 9 October 1933, the day of the film's official première, Goebbels banned it, stating:

The memorial to our unforgettable Storm-Leader Horst Wessel demands only the best, and so in the interest of the whole nation it would not be just to allow a film to appear which did not portray these qualities before the eyes of the world.<sup>22</sup>

Goebbel's ban of *Hans Westmar* caused such an uproar within the *Filmwelt* that in an interview with the *Licht-Bild-Bühne* on 13 October 1933, Goebbels reiterated his statements of May: "We National Socialists see no value in our SA marching on the stage or screen, their place is on the streets. Such an ostensible show of National Socialist ideology is no substitute for real art.". The Party hierarchy was displeased with Goebbels' decision, and while he was forced to back down, the film's title was changed from *Horst Wessel* to *Hans Westmar: Einer von Vielen* (*Hans Westmar: One of Many*). The defeat of

<sup>19</sup> Please see Leiser, pp. 35-38, Welch, pp. 59-74, Courtade and Cadars, pp. 37-41, and G. Bateson, "An analysis of the Nazi film *Hitlerjunge Quex*" in M. Mead and R. Metraux, eds., *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 302-14.

<sup>20</sup> E. Hanfstaengl, *Hitler: The Missing Years*, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1957), p. 232, quoted in Welch, p. 75. Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstaengl, a close friend of Hitler's, was the assistant producer of *Hans Westmar* and composed the music.

<sup>21</sup> Jules Sauerwein, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4 October 1933, quoted in Welch, p. 75.

<sup>22</sup> *Licht-Bild-Bühne*, 9 October 1933, quoted in Welch, p. 76 It is an interesting and revealing occurrence that the Nazis should hail Wessel as a hero when in fact he was killed by the pimp of a Berlin prostitute he was living with in 1930!



Goebbels' ban is significant since it demonstrates that his position was not yet unchallenged, although following this incident his power seems to have solidified.

As the film opens Hans Westmar is in Viennese beer cellar, talking with two friends, a businessman and his daughter Maude, who have just returned from a lengthy stay in America. During the conversation, Maude asks Westmar if Berlin is as beautiful as Vienna, and the film shifts to images of crowded Berlin streets where the unemployed trudge about and doss-houses are overflowing. The scene shifts to two Communists who look over a filthy slum, but a distinction is made between the German, Ross, who regards the scene with horror, and his foreign counterpart, (Paul Wegener who is made to look like Lenin), who remarks: "This poverty is our greatest asset".<sup>23</sup> The camera then cuts to Westmar's house, where his mother makes it clear that she feels his studies deserve more time than the SA. The film's anti-intellectual stance is clarified as the scene changes to Hans' geography class where a Jewish-looking professor lectures on internationalism and praises Versailles for making Germany a borderless, "European" country where war is obsolete. The Nazi counterpoint is made in the following scene, where a hidden voice states: "Up with weapons!" as the camera zooms out from two crossed foils in a student fencing match. Meanwhile Hans tells his fellow students:

I'm telling you, all Germany is at stake down there on the streets. And that is why we must get closer to the people, we cannot stand aloof anymore. We must fight side by side with the workers—it's all or nothing!<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Wegener is recognized as an important actor in the German cinema who began his acting career in 1906 at the Deutches Theatre in Berlin, and later moved into films with his double role in the classic *Der Student von Prag*. As Felix Bucher described him, "An excellent actor, he loved acting great classic figures in the Reinhardt tradition." Felix Bucher, *Screen Series: Germany*, (New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1970), p. 195. In 1937 Hitler raised Wegener to the position of "State Actor".

<sup>24</sup> Leiser, p. 36, Welch, p. 78.

When a classmate counters that the workers reject Nazis because they are from a different class, Hans replies: "We simply cannot talk in terms of class any more. We are workers too, but we happen to work with our heads, and our place is next to our brother who works with his hands."<sup>25</sup>

To emphasize the danger of foreigners and their decadent ideas, a scene shows Hans and his friends, the businessman and his daughter, on a tour of Berlin night life. A night club is decorated in American style, signs are in English, and German beer is not available. A Negro jazz band<sup>26</sup> "vandalizes" the classic *Die Wacht am Rhein*, thrusting Hans into a rage where he declares "This is no longer Germany!". The comparative style of the film is again emphasized when the following scene shows Hans and an SA friend walking in a war cemetery where they discuss the millions of soldiers who died for Germany. Juxtaposed against the image of decadent nightclubs, the soldier's deaths seem in vain, but the admiration of the war dead by Westmar connects the Nazi régime to the old Germany and appeals to the sympathies of a Germany whose war wounds were still healing. Once again the film shifts to a Communist meeting where a Jew, Kupferstein, slanders the Nazis and suggests that they are in secret collaboration with big business to rob the workers. At the end of the speech Kupferstein raises his clenched fist and shouts: "Long live the Fatherland of the worker. Long live Soviet Russia!"<sup>27</sup> The impact of the speech implies the Communists as ridiculous liars who hail from an alien country, and when Hans tries to counter Kupferstein's allegations, a riot breaks out. On the way home, one of Hans' friends is murdered by the Communists, and the brutality of the event upsets Ross, although a Communist leader tells him to "leave such worries to Moscow".

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<sup>25</sup> Leiser, p. 36.

<sup>26</sup> The government of the Third Reich considered Jazz a decadent, perverted style of music.

<sup>27</sup> Welch, p. 79.

As the story progresses, Hans befriends Agnes, a young German woman whose drunken Communist father beats her. Although a Communist is portrayed as a drunken child-beater, the film suggests that the Nazis, symbolized by Hans, are ready to offer German Communists a better life: Hans gives Agnes some money and tells her to move out. Testament to Hans' bravery and commitment to the cause, Hans now lives in the Communist sector of east Berlin, where his recruiting efforts yield such success that the Communists try to kill him. Working as a labourer, Hans completely rejects his intellectual pursuits at school, against his mother's will. Avoiding several attempts on his life, Hans is eventually shot while addressing a Nazi rally. Westmar is buried as a martyr and a hero, and an SA colleague demands that his job be finished. The "job" becomes clear in the final scene when during an SA rally Ross appears. As the SA pass, Ross raises his clenched fist but opens it into a Nazi salute, thereby encouraging other German Communists to do the same.

Superficially, *Hans Westmar* is a glorification of the Nazi martyr Host Wessel, but the underlying theme is an appeal to Communists and the working class to convert to National Socialism. As *Blood and Soil* films suggest, the Third Reich saw the support of the lower class as vital to its success, and although the NSDAP had previously devoted only limited attention to this objective, the new government declared full employment as the foremost goal of National Socialist economic policy.<sup>28</sup> Clearly, if Hitler's new government was to achieve its objectives of re-armament and economic re-birth, a broad base of firm support was required, a difficult goal to achieve since during "System Time"<sup>29</sup> many workers felt closer to the KPD ( *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* ) than to the Nazis who seemed to focus on garnering support

<sup>28</sup> *Völkischer Beobachter*, 27 July 1933, in Schoenbaum, p. 123, quoted in Welch, p. 81.

<sup>29</sup> A common Nazi euphemism for the Weimar Republic.

from industrialists and the middle class. *SA-Mann Brand*, *Hitlerjunge Quex* and *Hans Westmar* represent an attempt to cast off the Party's élitist image and find shared goals and beliefs with workers who found proletarian dialogue attractive. Hence, Hans Westmar tries to bridge the class gap through his statements: "We simply can't talk about classes any longer... We are also workers..." and "We must fight, side by side with the workers!".

Though Communism is portrayed as the deadliest of opponents, the individual Communist was a potential Party member, and *Hans Westmar* is careful to sort Communists into three categories: the Party Boss who preaches Moscow doctrine, the Jewish parliamentarian Kupferstein, who spreads lies and hatred, and Ross, a German worker who has been "duped" by an alien Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy.<sup>30</sup> There is a continual tension between Ross, a true German, and foreign-looking Communists who preach the Party line. Ross is disturbed by the KPD's actions, but Party leaders always come up with a patent slogan to reassure him, and Ross somewhat reluctantly goes along with an ideology that is suggested as false and contradictory. By casting Ross as a German who rejects Communism in favour of a party that he can truly believe in, *Hans Westmar* encourages the audience to identify with and convert to National Socialism. That Ross was a former Communist is irrelevant, since the film suggested that German Communists were really good men who had been seduced by smooth-talking Jews who were secretly trying to destroy Germany. Like Fritz Brand, Hans Westmar has an ex-Communist girlfriend who symbolizes the close friendship the Nazis claimed to promise any German who adopted National Socialism.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Leiser, p. 35.

<sup>31</sup> Importantly, neither Westmar nor Brand displays any affection toward his girlfriend, since like Hitler, both considered their work their first priority and were above carnal desires.

*Hans Westmar* sympathizes with German Communists and indicates the “Jewish-Bolsheviks” as the true enemies. The magazine *Der Film* noted the film’s sympathetic stance toward German Communists:

The German worker is not bad, he has been manipulated by foreign elements [Jews] and even so-called ‘Germans’ who have tried to force the people into a foreign *Weltanschauung*. However the worker has rediscovered his Germaness, and it is a fool who does not pardon him today. But there shall be no pardons for the intellectuals who have tried to bring about the downfall of the Third Reich.<sup>32</sup>

Westmar’s Jewish geography professor is suggested as the real enemy, since he preaches internationalism, calls Germany’s borders obsolete and encourages Germans to become Europeans. These statements correspond to the Nazi stereotype of the Jew as an international destroyer of culture, and the teacher’s rationale that internationalism would prevent future wars is dismissed as an impressive sounding lie.

In *Hans Westmar*, Jews are a scapegoat to absolve German Communists of guilt and to provide further definition to the Nazi programme. Against “Jewish internationalism” and the “murderous Jewish rabble”, Nazism is displayed as a national movement for the betterment of an independent Germany. The film deliberately exaggerates the murderous qualities of the international Jewish conspiracy to heighten the NSDAP’s legitimacy and to justify the Party’s radical actions like the Enabling Act. By polarizing Germany in two groups, “aliens” and “Germans”, the film appealed to workers by suggesting Nazism as a movement concerned not with class, but with German blood. Further, Jews like Kupferstein were portrayed as cowardly intellectuals to assure workers that Nazism was not an élitist intellectual movement, but a party to which every German could belong. To help audiences identify with Hitler and the NSDAP, Hans Westmar’s life is modeled on Hitler’s: at first a happy student who enjoys life in Vienna,

<sup>32</sup> *Der Film*, 16 December 1933, quoted in Welch, p. 85.

Hans becomes involved with the Nazis and rejects his intellectual pursuits to fight “alongside the worker” for a better, united Germany.

Although overtly propagandistic, *Hans Westmar* has been suggested by some authors as an unqualified success, but no audience or revenue figures exist to verify this statement.<sup>33</sup> Certainly Hitler and much of the Party hierarchy admired the film, and on its second submission to the *Prüfstelle* it was given the *Prädikate* “politically and artistically especially valuable”. This *Prädikate* was almost certainly against Goebbels’s wishes, since the film ignored his dictum that “The SA’s rightful place is in the streets and not on the cinema screen”. Following *Hans Westmar*’s release, no more overt Party features were produced, perhaps because Hitler feared losing Goebbels. Despite differences of opinion, Hitler recognized Goebbels as a talented administrator who could advance the Nazi cause, and Hitler apparently decided that Goebbels should be allowed to oversee the film industry’s future operation without further interference.<sup>34</sup>

In response to Goebbels’ demands for artistic excellence, the German film industry undertook filmic adaptations of historical German novels and plays. Though many adaptations vandalized the original texts, some plays and novels were transferred almost entirely intact. Two examples are Heinrich von Kleist’s plays, *Amphytron*, the Greek mythological story, and the comedy *Der zerbrochene Krug*, transformed respectively into the films *Aus den wolken kommt das Glück* (*From the Skies Comes Happiness*, 1934) and *Der zerbrochene Krug* (*The Broken Jug*, 1937).<sup>35</sup> *Der zerbrochene Krug* is of greater significance since it represents an attempt to legitimize and reaffirm

<sup>33</sup> Welch, p. 87.

<sup>34</sup> *Triumph des Willens* is the only notable example. One factor that resulted in the discontinuation of SA films was Hitler’s increasingly distant relationship with the SA, exemplified by the Röhm purge of 30 June 1934 (“The night of the Long Knives” where Röhm was replaced by Lutze).

<sup>35</sup> Leni Riefenstahl had planned an adaptation of Kleist’s *Penthesilea*.

support for the Third Reich through a clever historical analogy. Thus *Der zerbrochene Krug* is included in this section partially because its function is a logical progression from earlier films like *SA-Mann Brand*, *Hitlerjunge Quex* and *Hans Westmar* that sought to gain support for and promote the legitimacy of the new government. The film is also included because its National Socialist character is achieved not by marching SA men, but through skillful manipulation of the play's social and political anxieties that in the conjuncture of 1937 symbolized the recent history of German society.

Before analyzing the film, it is important to understand the reasons why a Kleist play was chosen. During the First World War, the reading of Kleist underwent a revival, since some literary critics began to exploit Kleist for nationalist purposes by claiming heroic, nationalist and militarist themes in Kleist's work. Although the validity of such readings is questionable, Kleist continued to be read into the twenties by nationalist and *völkisch* groups wherein he became increasingly popular, particularly on the 150th anniversary of his birth in 1927. Under the Nazi régime, Kleist's popularity was further boosted and he was hailed as both genius and German nationalist.

The film version of *Der zerbrochene Krug* seems to have originated in the mind of Karl Valentin, a little known-director who thought of the adaptation in 1935. Shortly after, the talented Emil Jannings took over the project since he loved Kleist's work and had played Judge Adam in two earlier stagings of the play, *Das königliche Schauspielhaus* and *Die Volksbühne*. Jannings "considered the film project an experiment in which he could demonstrate a way of adapting literature to film so that neither medium was betrayed".<sup>36</sup> Gustav Ucicky's experienced direction was coupled with camerawork by Fritz

<sup>36</sup> Emil Jannings, *Theatre-Film – Das Leben und ich*, (Berchtesgaden: Zimmer und Herzog, 1951), p. 12, quoted in Marc Silberman, "Kleist in the Third Reich: Ucicky's *The Broken Jug* (1937)" in *German Film and Literature, Adaptations and Transformations*, Eric Rentschler, ed., (New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 89.

Arno Wagner and a script by Thea von Harbou, both of whom were recognized as extremely competent in their respective fields. As Silberman notes: "... the film's artistic achievement can be attributed in large measure to the technical virtuosity of the camera and the superb acting."<sup>37</sup>

The simple story of *Der zerbrochene Krug* focuses on the corrupt Judge Adam who violates the people's trust as he tries to hide his guilt over the breakage of a valued jug. Adam, played by Jannings, is shown to be a clumsy individual who loves food, wine, and the company of young women. Adam's promiscuous life is illustrated when he suddenly leaves the bedroom of the young Eve, whose fiancé, Ruprecht, is heard to be approaching.<sup>38</sup> During his hasty exit through a window, Adam accidentally damages a large jug, and the next morning Eve's mother appears in Adam's court to demand that the intruder be brought to justice. Feigning surprise and total innocence, Adam suggests Eve's fiancé as the culprit, resulting in wild accusations between two parents and their children. A steady disintegration of trust exists between parent and child, paralleling Adam's increasing violation of the people's faith through his growing lies. Finally, as the play's chaos reaches its peak, Judge Adam's deception is revealed when Walter, Eve's father, discovers Adam's handwriting on Ruprecht's conscription order, kept in Eve's bedroom. In the final act, Adam is confronted in his courtroom and he flees into the street as the play's main characters and a group of laughing peasants watch.<sup>39</sup> As he runs, the clumsy and obese Adam slips into a canal where he stumbles around before pulling himself out and disappearing from view. In the final scene, as in the first, the camera shows a village where happiness and justice are restored.

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<sup>37</sup> Silberman, p. 93.

<sup>38</sup> Courtade and Cadars, p. 261.

<sup>39</sup> Silberman, p. 97.



Since it is not the film's text, but the action that serves a propaganda function in *Der zerbrochene Krug*, a number of scenes warrant further examination. The film as a whole represents a society whose social equilibrium has been interrupted but is eventually restored. At the beginning of the film the camera focuses on happy children playing in a street before shifting to a chiming town clock where carved figures of a medieval court move around and bow to a lord figure in the center.<sup>40</sup> Significantly, at the end of the film it is the same children who laugh as Adam splashes around in the canal, and the camera again focuses on the clock, but instead of wooden figures the play's cast appears and bows simultaneously to the audience and a justice figure. As in the beginning, social equilibrium and justice have been restored. A major symbol of the film is the jug itself, since the vessel is adorned with a beautiful village scene which is shattered by the corrupt Judge Adam. Silberman notes that "Adam is a vulgar, all-too-human, but funny figure who will probably get into trouble because of his excessive appetites." but misses the parallel with the Nazi stereotype of Jews.<sup>41</sup> Adam's love of wine, food, and young women combined with his repeated lying and deception may have been funny at the play's first staging in 1808, but to audiences in the Third Reich, such qualities could hardly have gone unnoticed. While physically Adam is not explicitly cast in the Jewish stereotype, his short and obese stature and clumsy actions do not suggest him as a member of the *Herrenvolk*. Hence, it is not unreasonable to interpret the broken jug as symbolic of a Germany that had been disrupted by non-Aryans who try to impose guilt on innocent Germans. The scenes of a fleeing Adam and the restoration of justice symbolize the exodus of aliens from Germany and the

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<sup>40</sup> Silberman, p. 97-98.

<sup>41</sup> Silberman, p. 97.

coming of the Third Reich, which is depicted as a return to the status quo and thereby legitimized.

Unquestionably, the film adaptation distorts the original play, but most of Kleist's dialogue remains intact. Like the play, the film's humour derives from Adam's inept attempts to cover up his own guilt, but through skillful photography and acting, the film imbues the play with a National Socialist character. Although it is not clear if the film enjoyed financial success, it was awarded the *Prädikate* "politically and artistically valuable", and curiously, it is reported as Hitler's favourite "Jannings film".<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps the ultimate Party film was *Kolberg*, examined in the following chapter. *Kolberg* was the last film of the Third Reich which ironically summarized the true meaning of National Socialism to millions of Germans: collective sacrifice and mass death.

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<sup>42</sup> According to Oskar Kalbus, Hitler enjoyed the film greatly and watched it regularly at the Chancellery when "he felt like watching a film or could not sleep". Kalbus quoted in Courtade and Cadars, p. 261.

CHAPTER 9  
KOLBERG: THE LAST "FILM DER NATION"

Following the winter of 1941-42, defeat increasingly became less a possibility than a certainty. Indicative of this trend is the huge decrease in the number of *Sondermeldungen* ("Special Announcements" proclaiming German military victories): in 1941, there were 65 *Sondermeldungen* ; in 1942, 19; and in 1943 only 2.<sup>1</sup> Realizing the mounting danger, Goebbels began a campaign of *Totaler Krieg* (Total War) on 18 February 1943 with a fanatical speech at the Berlin Sports Palace:

GOEBBELS: I ask you: Do you believe with the Führer and with us in the final total victory of the German people? I ask you: Are you determined to follow the Führer through thick and thin in the struggle for victory and to put up with the heaviest personal burdens?...Are you ready with the Führer and as a phalanx of the home front standing behind the fighting armed forces to continue this struggle, with a wild determination and impervious to all ordeals of Fate until victory is in our hands?...Are you and are the German people determined to, when the Führer orders it, to work ten, twelve, and if necessary fourteen and sixteen hours a day and to give your utmost for victory?...Do you want total war? Do you want it, if necessary more total and more radical than we can ever imagine it today?...Is your confidence in the Führer, greater, more faithful and more unshakable than ever before? Is your readiness to follow him in all his ways and to do everything necessary to bring the war to a victorious end absolute and unqualified?<sup>2</sup>

Following each question the frenzied audience screamed "Yes! Yes!" and "Sieg Heil!" amidst deafening applause. An impressed Goebbels concluded: "Therefore let the slogan be from now on: People arise, and storm, break loose!". From 1943 on, Nazi propaganda reassured the German nation of final victory although it warned personal sacrifices could be enormous. However, in reality the war became increasingly hopeless, and even Goebbels' diaries suggest the worsening situation. The entry of 3 March 1943 reads: "...Berlin had gone through a bad air-raid during the night. ...the most serious air-raid thus

<sup>1</sup> Bramsted, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 266.

far..."; on 22 September: "At the moment it looks very messy on the Eastern Front. ...there is a serious crisis..."; and on 27 November Goebbels describes enormous damage to Berlin and remarks: "Sometimes I'd like to close my eyes so as not to see all this horror."<sup>3</sup>

Goebbels almost certainly realized that the end was not far, but apparently believing in a divine miracle, he wrote to Veit Harlan on 1 June 1943:

I hereby commission you to make the epic film *Kolberg*. The film is to demonstrate, through the example of the town which gives it its title, that a people united at home and at the front will overcome any enemy. I authorize you to request whatever help and support you deem necessary from all army, Government and Party agencies, and you may refer to this film which I have hereby commissioned as being made in the service of our intellectual war effort.<sup>4</sup>

*Kolberg* premiered on 30 January 1945, amidst the ruins of Berlin and the besieged fortress of La Rochelle<sup>5</sup>, exactly 12 years after the founding of the 1,000 year Reich. More than the last extravagant film of the Nazi cinema, *Kolberg* is unique since it captures the death throes of Hitler's Germany. By showing how steadfast resistance can save a seemingly hopeless situation, the film encouraged the last German civilians to die for the *Führer*, and demonstrated the absurdity of last-resort propaganda. Hence, *Kolberg* is a grotesque incitement to mass suicide that clearly illustrates the perverse stupidity of Hitler and his followers, especially since no expense was spared during the film's production. As Harlan admitted shortly before his death in

<sup>3</sup> Lochner, pp. 269, 463, 531 respectively. Curiously, Hitler's late night "Table-Talk" conversations from 1942-44 almost completely avoid any mention of the worsening situation. As Joachim Fest noted, "Intellectually, too, he more and more lived in the past." J. Fest, *Hitler*, (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 670.

<sup>4</sup> Leiser, p. 122.

<sup>5</sup> A copy was flown into the surrounded fortress as a moral booster. Goebbels attached a letter to the commandant that read in part: "The film is an artistic hymn of praise to the courage and endurance which is prepared to make the greatest sacrifice for people and for homeland...My wish is that the film will be accepted by you and your courageous soldiers as a document of the unwavering resolution which, in these days of worldwide struggle, united with those fighting at the front, is willing to emulate the great example of its glorious history. Heil to our Führer!" Leiser, p. 123. Shortly following the film's premiere, La Rochelle surrendered, a fact that could not be made public.

1961, a "law of madness" prevailed: the total cost of the film was an unequaled RM 8.5 million, and 187, 000 soldiers were employed for *Kolberg's* battle scenes, more troops than in the actual battle of Kolberg in 1806-07.<sup>6</sup> Shot entirely in Agfacolour, 10,000 uniforms were made, 6,000 horses were used and ammunition factories worked overtime to supply the film's requirements. At a time when the deteriorating rail system was badly needed to transport supplies to the front, several trainloads of salt were brought to the set to transform fields and rooftops into a winter setting.<sup>7</sup> When Harlan asked the Admiralty for an additional 4,000 sailors to film a French attack sequence, he was initially refused, until his appeal to the RMVP secured them. Technically, the film employed the finest talents of the Third Reich, with Bruno Mondi supervising photography, and Norbert Schutze, of Lili Marlene fame, composing the soundtrack. Goebbels' willingness to ignore the enormous expenditure exposes his recognition of the gravity of the situation and his unshakable faith in the *Führer*, and it seems that the man responsible for poisoning the minds of millions fell victim to his own spell. Even in February and March 1945, Goebbels' diaries refer to the Seven Years' War as a symbol of hope for the crumbling Reich.<sup>8</sup> Tragically, Goebbels never accepted the situation as a dead end until hours before his suicide on 1 May 1945.<sup>9</sup>

Like so many Nazi epics, the story of *Kolberg* is loosely based on the events at the fortified town of Kolberg during the Napoleonic war of 1806-07.<sup>10</sup> Although Harlan and Alfred Braun are credited with the script, Harlan admitted in his autobiography that Goebbels wrote many of the speeches himself, and

<sup>6</sup> Information from Harlan's autobiography, quoted in Leiser, p. 128.

<sup>7</sup> Leiser, p. 129.

<sup>8</sup> Goebbels' diary entries of 28 February 1945, 2 March '45, 11 March '45, Hugh Trevor-Roper, ed., *The Goebbels Diaries: The Last Days*. (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978) pp. 12, 26, 102.

<sup>9</sup> Goebbels tried to negotiate a separate peace with the Russians in the hours before his suicide. See Fest, p. 749.

<sup>10</sup> Kolberg is now the Polish town of Kolobrzeg.

hence the film's dialogue deserves examination.<sup>11</sup> The film employs the names of the original people involved, but distorts historical facts: while in reality the French took Kolberg, the film has the French cease their assault after realizing the Kolberger's resistance could not be overwhelmed. Evidently Goebbels hoped the film's fantasy would become the reality of 1945, since *Kolberg's* resistance fighters are a civilian militia, resembling the *Volkssturm* units established in late 1944. In this sense, the film is directed more at the German people than the military, since Kolberg's military commander, Colonel Lucadou (Paul Wegener), is portrayed as defeatist and corrupt. Lucadou regards the civilian militia as something of a joke and states that he would rather surrender, whereupon the town's mayor, Nettlebeck (Heinrich George), denounces him. Nettlebeck's parallel to Goebbels' denunciation of *Wehrmacht* defeatists is not accidental, for it was no secret that increasing numbers of *Wehrmacht* officers shared Lucadou's attitudes, and Goebbels clearly wanted to discourage any talk of defeat as completely ridiculous.<sup>12</sup> Significantly, Lucadou is later replaced by Gneisenau, a young, brave and disciplined soldier who agrees with Nettlebeck that Kolberg must never surrender. Thus it is possible that the film tried to encourage the military to reject any talk of defeat by portraying Lucadou as a pathetic character.

The film begins with subtitles assuring the viewer of historical authenticity, before opening in Breslau, 1813, where columns of people march in the street, and a background choir sings softly:

With a death-like mood the great morning breaks. And the sun, cold and bloody, lights our bloody way. Within the next few hours the fate of the world lies, and the weak are already trembling and the dice are cast. Who is

<sup>11</sup> Harlan, p. 260, quoted in Welch, p. 228

<sup>12</sup> Some *Wehrmacht* soldiers resented the *Volkssturm*, and in the area of Schwiebus in January 1945, Army officers tore medals and insignia from the uniforms of the *Volkssturm* men and yelled insults at them. J. W. Baird, p. 242. Defeatists were also increasingly sentenced to death. Please refer to Goebbels' diary entries of 22 September 1943 and 12 November 1943 in Lochner, pp. 447, 510. See also Bramstead, p. 276-77.

cowardly? Remaining Idle? People rise up! People rise up! The storm is breaking!<sup>13</sup>

Inside the King's palace, Gneisenau, a great Prussian military commander, tries to persuade King Friedrich Wilhelm III to enlist the people in the cause of the war. The King has difficulty believing in such an idea, but Gneisenau shows the King the huge masses beneath his window and says: "The people rise, the storm breaks loose, your Majesty!"<sup>14</sup> Although Wilhelm III calls Gneisenau a "dreamer", the film portrays the King as the real idiot as he paces around in a confused, blank-looking gaze, muttering "Gneisenau...", until finally Gneisenau states:

I know reality, your Majesty. I looked it in the face many years ago at Kolberg, when our armies were falling and Napoleon was driving through all Germany, when one fortress after another was crumbling – then it was the citizens who saved the Prussians.

When the King responds: "You are the victor of Kolberg, Gneisenau..." Gneisenau corrects him: "Not I, Majesty. It was the citizens. They gave us soldiers the chance to hold the fortress." A reference to Goebbels' Total War programme, Gneisenau's words are cast as a prophecy of what the near future of Nazi Germany might be like if the citizens and the army worked together.

The film now recounts the story of Kolberg in 1806-1807, which is full of references to the German situation of 1945. As Kolbergers celebrate a harvest festival in the streets, the reserved Nettlebeck discusses Napoleon's approaching armies with two other men inside a local tavern. Nettlebeck's niece, a young, fast-talking and carefree man named Klaus shows his uncle a proclamation from Napoleon which reads: "A proclamation to the German people who fear for their property: I proclaim my intention to secure the

<sup>13</sup> Unless otherwise noted, subsequent film quotations are from *Kolberg*, produced by Ufa, directed by Veit Harlan, 118 minutes, (International Historical Films, Chicago) on videocassette.

<sup>14</sup> Gneisenau's words and the soundtrack are a reference to Goebbels' "Total War" speech.

happiness and prosperity of Europe...". Nettlebeck returns the paper in disgust, stating "You're not falling for that!" to which Klaus replies: "Your ideas of patriotism and honour are the kind of opinions that lead us one war to the next. I have a much wider view, I've become a citizen of the world!". The intention of the scene is designed to encourage German audiences to reject Allied appeals for their surrender, by linking Klaus with the "international Jewish conspiracy". Like Jud Süß, Klaus is also a "citizen of the world" who enjoys life's decadent pleasures but cares little for the health of the German nation. The film later reinforces Klaus' image as a conspirator when he is shown toasting to Napoleon in a farmhouse where drunken French troops dance wildly and swing from the chandeliers. Finally Klaus is shown as the ultimate coward, for when a French bombardment pounds the town, he becomes a screaming idiot shortly before he is hit by a shell.

Early in the story a conflict is established between the Nettlebeck and Lucadou, to allow the film to maximize its propaganda content through a comparative technique. Nettlebeck is cast as an honourable leader figure, a man of action close to his people, while Lucadou is an overly confident and arrogant military officer who compromises the town's security by refusing to allow citizens to assist in its defense: "I forbid you [Nettlebeck] to interfere with military matters! Speak for your citizens, that's your business. The defense of the city is mine!". Lucadou's incompetence is further exposed when young lieutenant Schill, an ally of Nettlebeck, inspects the town's defenses to discover that the cannons have been allowed to rust, and when Schill begins training civilians in a rifle drill, Lucadou shouts out his window: "People, go home, leave this foolish playing at war! What good will it do?". In a subsequent argument, Schill tells Lucadou "The salvation of the country rests with the citizens. Under attack there is no difference between citizens and soldiers". Goebbels almost



certainly intended these words as a response to any who doubted the abilities of the *Volkssturm* .

The film cuts to Napoleon's headquarters where Napoleon is outraged that Kolberg has not surrendered. The portrayal of a tormented Napoleon who calls Kolberg a "nest of mud" seems designed to make the audience delight in the results of the Kolberger's resistance, and hence fuel morale for the resistance of 1945. In a possible reference to Allied air-raids, Napoleon tells an officer to "Demoralize the morale of the people with your cannons", a remark destined to find appeal with German audiences who were repeatedly told that Allied "terror-raids" were trying to break the German spirit. Ironically, Napoleon's rage and desire to obliterate the city recalls Hitler's reaction to resistance in the Eastern territories.

The breaking point between Nettlebeck and Lucadou arrives when Nettlebeck orders a shipfull of cannons from Sweden. Lucadou confronts Nettlebeck as the shipment arrives and tells him that he has no intentions of resisting Napoleon, since "surrender is better than suicide". An enraged Nettlebeck draws his sword and tries to attack Lucadou, crying: "Surrender?! Never!", whereupon he is arrested and sentenced to death. During his stay in prison, Nettlebeck dispatches his niece Maria (Kristina Söderbaum) to give the King a letter asking for a new commander. On the day of his execution Nettlebeck is spared when Lucadou suddenly realizes that the execution will cause the townspeople to rebel, and shortly Nettlebeck's letter is answered: Lucadou is replaced by Gneisenau. In a speech that Goebbels could have delivered at a *Volkssturm* rally, Gneisenau proclaims:

Citizens of Kolberg, Prussians, Germans! A heavy fate hangs over our city and country! Stronger than Fate is the courage that bears it. No love is more sacred than love for one's country. No joy is sweeter than that of freedom. Whatever the sacrifice, we will not give up the sacred trust for which we fight unless we wish to cease being Prussians and Germans. You don't

wish to be less than your fathers, you have their example, now forge another! The best defense is attack!<sup>15</sup>

Following an intense battle sequence, Gneisenau asks an enormous crowd: "The French commander has demanded that I cease resistance. I told him that we would rather die than surrender. Anyone who thinks otherwise, tell me now.". Predictably, no one disagrees, a response Goebbels clearly wanted to elicit from the German nation in 1945. The film's ultimate incitement to mass suicide becomes clear during an exchange between Gneisenau and Nettlebeck:

GNEISENAU: 35,000 men, Nettlebeck, and 500 cannons, all aimed at this town. There's no point any more, we can't hold the town. Do you understand what that means? Everything we've experienced so far will be child's play in comparison!

NETTLEBECK: Commander!

GNEISENAU: It's all over, Nettlebeck, there's no point any more.

NETTLEBECK: And what is to happen?

GNEISENAU: We'll have to surrender.

NETTLEBECK: Ah... like Magdeburg, Erfurt, Stettin, and Spandau? All has been in vain... a disgrace.

GNEISENAU: It's no disgrace, if the soldiers have fired their last bullets. Even Blücher had to capitulate.

NETTLEBECK: But we haven't fired our last bullet yet! And Blücher didn't have to forfeit his birthplace, and you weren't born in Kolberg! You were ordered to Kolberg, but we grew up here. We know every stone, every corner, every house. We're not letting go even if we have to claw into the ground with our bare hands. In our town we don't give up! No, they'll have to cut off our hands to slay us one by one. You can't disgrace me by surrendering our town to Napoleon. I even promised our King that we would rather be buried under the rubble than capitulate. I've never pleaded to anyone, but I get down on my knees, Gneisenau. Kolberg must not be surrendered!

GNEISENAU: That's what I wanted to hear from you Nettlebeck. Now we can die together.

There is a tragic irony to this dialogue which disguises total destruction in terms of honour and heroism, while simultaneously exposing the horrors of total war through Gneisenau's final statement, "Now we can die together". Although

<sup>15</sup> The reference to "Germans" seems to expose the intended propaganda function of the speech.

in the film Napoleon's cavalry gives up its attack after realizing Kolberg's resistance was indestructible, the reality of 1945 was much more brutal. Yet Goebbels, like Hitler, seemed to believe in a final victory right until the end, for the last scene of the film returns to Breslau, 1813, where Gneisenau persuades the King to enlist the people in the cause of the war. Gneisenau's final remark suggests Goebbels' mindset of 1945: "In the year of freedom – from the ashes and rubble a new people will rise like a Phoenix, a new Reich."

Sadly, *Kolberg* contains familiar blood and soil themes, but uses them to reinforce Hitler's "scorched earth" policy. The Allies, like the French of 1806, were to find nothing useful in their advance, and if Germany could not win the war, Hitler wanted nothing left. On 18 March 1945, one day before Kolberg fell to the Russians, Hitler remarked to Speer:

When the war is lost the people will also be lost. This fate is inescapable. It is not necessary for us to concern ourselves with the basic essentials the people need for even a very primitive survival. On the contrary, it would be better to destroy even these. Because the country has proved itself the weaker force, and the future belongs to the stronger Eastern countries. Anything that survives the fight will in any case be inferior since all the good men have fallen.<sup>16</sup>

In one scene Maria sings a harvest song as images of men harvesting their crops and fishermen unloading their catch flash across the screen. However, some scenes later, Maria's family burns their house and farm to the ground because it offers the advancing French cover from the Kolberger's fire. Half of Kolberg is deliberately flooded to deny the French easy access, and Nettlebeck tries to ease Maria's sense of loss:

Yes, you have sacrificed everything you had, Maria – but not in vain. Death is entwined with victory. The greatest achievements are always borne in

<sup>16</sup> Speer recounted this statement during the Nuremberg trials, Leiser, p. 125. Strangely, around the same time, Hitler also remarked that the future of the German race belonged in the East, leaving Hitler's mental stability open to question. For an excellent account of Hitler's deteriorating mental and physical health, please see Fest, "Götterdämmerung", pp. 724-750.

pain, and when a person takes all the pain on herself then that person is indeed a great person. You helped us to win, Maria, you are great too!

A *Völkischer Beobachter* correspondent who reviewed *Kolberg* remarked on its “uncanny relevance to our times”, and commented: “What the citizens under Nettlebeck and the Prussian soldiers under Gneisenau did then we can do now.”.<sup>17</sup> Although the reviewer saw the film “as if it were a part of ourselves” *Kolberg* could not stop reality. On 17 March 1945 the fortress of Kolberg surrendered to the Russians, an event Goebbels noted with embarrassment in his diary of 18 march: “I will ensure that the evacuation of Kolberg is not mentioned in the *OKW* (Army High Command) report. In view of the severe psychological repercussions on the Kolberg film, we could do without that for the moment.”.<sup>18</sup>

In early summer 1945, as surviving Germans emerged from piles of rubble, and as death camp prisoners were finally freed, no new Reich emerged, and no Phoenix rose from the ashes. *Kolberg* had escaped obliteration, and was shown in Argentina as *Burning Hearts* and in Switzerland as *The Renunciation*.<sup>19</sup> A critic in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* appealed to the Swiss to reject this “retrospective infiltration of Nazi refuse”, but the Zurich *Filmberater* called *Kolberg* “a hymn to loyalty, but also to Prussianism”.<sup>20</sup> Although in the modern conjuncture *Kolberg's* propaganda content is increasingly misinterpreted, it remains the tragic last film of a régime that planned, delivered and encouraged mass death on an unimaginable scale.

<sup>17</sup> *Völkischer Beobachter*, 1 February, 1945: “Kolberg – Ein Film? Ein Beispiel!”, quoted in Taylor, p. 226.

<sup>18</sup> Trevor-Roper, *The Goebbels Diaries: The Last Days*, p. 167.

<sup>19</sup> Leiser, p. 132.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

## CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSION

By late 1932, the German film industry was on the brink of collapse. Although the industry enjoyed a short boom during the inflationary period, from 1924 onwards the German film industry suffered considerably: foreign competition, rising costs and the German Mark's return to the Gold Standard forced many small firms out of business, and still more companies were bought up by the giant Ufa, or one of the other large German film companies. Yet even the large companies were financially impoverished, and Ufa would have gone bankrupt if not for Hugenberg's intervention in 1927. With the arrival of the sound film in 1928, the industry again faced enormous costs resulting from expensive sound equipment and license fees, and declining audience figures only worsened the situation. Hence by 1932, the German film industry was characterized by monopolistic trends and financial difficulties that resulted in a centralization toward a few large but financially unstable firms. Combined with powerful right-wing political and financial influences within the film industry, the *Filmwelt* was largely prepared to co-operate with the Nazi régime in return for much needed financial aid.

The film policies of the Third Reich did not represent the "forced subversion" claimed by Hull, but rather an intensification of monopolistic trends established in the Weimar period. The SPIO Plan of 1932, the 1920 Film Law, the *Prüfstelle* and the *Filmkammer* were all incorporated into Goebbels' film programme, and the most powerful sectors of the industry, primarily Ufa and Tobis, cooperated with Goebbels to fashion the industry into a mutually beneficial enterprise. Although initially Goebbels used financial aid to ingratiate himself to film makers and to assist in the control of the industry, his long term objective was to establish the industry on an equally profitable and ideologically powerful basis.

Profitability was important to both Goebbels and the industry, since increased profits meant a more prosperous industry that could produce more extravagant and hopefully ideologically powerful productions; government funds otherwise devoted to these extravaganzas would be freed for use elsewhere, and financial independence would also liberate Goebbels from the constraints of the *Reichsfinanzministerium*. Falling film exports and rising production costs prevented the film industry from attaining high profitability in the 1930's, although during this time the ideological unsuitability of foreign films decreased formerly significant competition. In 1937 the industry was secretly restructured by Goebbels through Max Winkler's Kautio-Treuhand GmbH, which gradually bought out shares in the major companies and administered them as a government trustee. The major purpose of this restructuring was not to control a supposedly rebellious industry, but to help improve the industry's poor economic health. Profits increased gradually from 1938-41, but ultimately the film industry was never established on a truly profitable basis until its nationalization in 1942, which again was undertaken for mainly economic reasons.

The ideological control of the film industry was effected through several acts. Initially, the processes of *Gleichschaltung* and *entjundung* purged the industry of its ideologically disagreeable Jewish and leftist elements. Among those who left were many talented Jews and other famous individuals who were either doomed to a grim death resulting from their racial background or did not wish to tarnish their international reputation by working under a terrorist régime. The next major ideological step was the creation of the RMVP, the *Reichsfilmkammer* and the *Reichskulturkammer*. Goebbels directly oversaw the operation of the RMVP, which under his personal direction, created various propaganda themes that were disseminated by the mass media. The

*Reichsfilmkammer* and the *Reichskulturkammer* were subordinated to the RMVP and ensured a tight ideological linkage between the industry and the government, as well as the insertion of National Socialist concepts into feature films. This linkage was partially strengthened by the nationalization of the industry between 1937-42. In addition to these administrative bodies, the Reich Film Law of 1934 created legal guidelines which legitimized Goebbels' ideological role and allowed him to legally enforce his ideological directives if necessary. Whereas under the Weimar era the government's influence existed at the censorship and *Prädikate* level, Goebbels frequently participated directly in the selection of film topics and script writing. To make ideological film making even more appealing, Goebbels greatly expanded the financial incentives of the previous *Prädikate* system which was also enlarged to cover a broader range of political, cultural and artistic classes. By working closely with the powerful sectors of the industry, using an ideological apparatus that included *Filmwelt* personnel where possible, and by using financial incentives, Goebbels sought to effect a careful ideological control of the film industry. Implicit in his relationship with the industry was his recognition that artistic temperaments within the *Filmwelt* required more delicate means of control. The use of threats and force was an extremely unappealing option since the replacement of artists by politically reliable but inartistic Party members would shatter film's power as a propaganda medium: the intricate skills needed for successful film making were not easily learned.

While more research must be done on escapist entertainment features that served a political function by relaxing a war weary peoples, considerable evidence suggests that feature films primarily served an ideological function. It is the very nature of totalitarian systems to isolate the population from alien viewpoints, eliminate opinions different from those of the state and indoctrinate

the masses with an official view of the world expressed through the mass media. The propaganda system under Joseph Goebbels clearly followed the totalitarian model, and as Goebbels once stated: "We are convinced that films constitute one of the most modern and scientific means of influencing the mass. Therefore a government must not neglect them."<sup>1</sup> Ideological apparatuses influencing every stage of the production, distribution and exhibition of feature films multiplied during the Third Reich, and the RMVP, the Reich Film Chamber and the Reich Culture Chamber allowed Goebbels to insert varying degrees of National Socialist ideology wherever he wished. Further supporting the ideological purpose of *Spielfilme* was the decreasing exhibition of foreign films shown in Germany beginning around 1935 and culminating around 1940-41. The quality of foreign films was not a problem, but the inclusion of Jewish actors or directors and an alien ideological standpoint conflicted with the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. In addition, the replacement of film criticism in 1936 with descriptive film reviews represents a distinct attempt to manipulate the ideological conjuncture in which the films were viewed: Goebbels recognized that was vital to create a total ideological vacuum where only the state's viewpoint existed. Goebbels frequently manipulated the press to avoid mentioning the "real" purpose of a film. An example of this control is Goebbels' press directives which explicitly prohibited any reference to *Jud Süß* as an anti-Semitic film. Instead Goebbels felt it better to review these films as historically accurate documentaries in the hopes that this would create an image of truth rather than propaganda. Indeed, the desire to create an image of truth was partly responsible for Goebbels' continual demands for highly artistic *Tendenzfilme*, since it was not his wish to replace features with crude, and therefore boring, propaganda. Badly produced, uninteresting propaganda films

<sup>1</sup> Furhammar and Isaksson, p. 41.



would not attract or maintain audiences, and would thus lead to financial and ideological failure of the cinema.

Unfortunately, the space constraints of this thesis do not allow each of the 1,100 feature films of the Nazi era to be examined to determine their ideological content; even if length constraints were removed, the wartime destruction of films, the decomposition of films<sup>2</sup> and the capture of films by the Russians would not allow one to determine if all feature films contained the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. However, in consideration of the ideological apparatuses set up to influence the production, distribution and exhibition of feature films, the statements and conduct of Joseph Goebbels, the operation of the Nazi régime as a totalitarian state, and the film reviews presented herein, it seems logical to conclude that at least some, probably most, and perhaps all features of the Third Reich were ideologically tainted with the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. Admittedly, this conclusion may be challenged by the suggestion that only selected films have been reviewed, but the only defense against this accusation is to review all of the films produced, a clear impossibility. Nonetheless, a range of ideological themes, each varying in intensity, have been suggested by the film analyses of this thesis: the hatred of non-Aryans, invalids and other political enemies, the pseudo-religious allegiance to the *Führer*, the hatred of liberalism and democracy, the need for sacrifice for the benefit of the community, the race and the leader, and the strength of blood and soil can be discerned. Although the ideological interpretation of the films reviewed is not to deny alternate readings, this thesis has attempted to consider the films of the German cinema within their original social, political and ideological conjuncture. As Neale said:

The identification of any one text as propaganda can never simply be a matter of the reading off of a set of textual characteristics. What has to be

<sup>2</sup> Due to their decomposing nitrate film stock, many older films are now unviewable.

identified is the use to which a particular text is put, to its function within a particular situation, to its place within cinema conceived as a social practice.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis has attempted to demonstrate the representation of the Nazi *Weltanschauung* within the feature films of the Third Reich, but what is the greater significance of the cinema in the Third Reich? Primarily, the Nazi cinema allows a relatively fresh insight into the operation of the confusing and eclectic Nazi *Weltanschauung*. Many other avenues of Nazi ideology have been explored, but the dramatization of the Nazi ideology within the cinema provides an important opportunity to better grasp and interrelate the themes of Nazi political thought. Particularly since many analyses of the Nazi cinema fail to analyze films within their original conjuncture, and misinterpret Goebbels' relationship with the Party and the film industry, more work must be done in this area. In addition, the relationship between Goebbels, the Party, the government, the film industry and the film industries of occupied countries requires further original study. In relation to much of the existing literature on the Nazi cinema, and like Petley's study, this thesis represents an attempt to direct further objective study on the use of the feature film as an ideologically and politically significant instrument within the Third Reich.

In the larger world context, the Nazi cinema represents the first major example of the horrible political potential of the visual mass media. Yet the issue for the political researcher is not to be afraid of the mass media, but to fully recognize the visual media's capacity to convey political thoughts and ideologies. Political behaviour has always contained a large visual component, but as the number of television viewers grows worldwide, and as new telecommunications technologies allow increased ease of access to visual

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<sup>3</sup> Neale, p. 39.

information, political behaviour seems likely to become increasingly visually-oriented. Especially as the National Socialists made so obvious, visual images have a tremendous potential to convey information and ideology; hence it is not surprising that Democrats and Republicans, Liberals and Conservatives and other groups around the world are devoting increasing amounts of attention and finances to their visual efforts. The study of politics must adapt to this changing environment and analyze the images presented globally by governments and political groups. While it is improbable that a level of visual terrorism similar to the Nazi cinema will be seen again, the political study of images must be accorded proper recognition.

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