

Ina Merkel

Narrative Patterns in Anti-Fascist American, Soviet and European Films (1940–1950)

Abstract

After a brief period of confrontation in cinemas of post-war Germany, neither the German war crimes nor the Holocaust committed against European Jews nor the Nazi terror against politically dissenting people were present in a notable way. This concerned not only German movies, but also the cinematic interpretations of war and National Socialism by the Allies and other European countries, which could only be seen on German screens very sparsely, with a long delay or in their statement defused. Going out from this systematic de-thematizing of German cruelties the presentation will focus on the question which cinematic interpretations of Nazism circulated in the realm of the US, the Soviet Union and Europe's liberated countries, and to work out general narrative patterns. Surprisingly, despite the ideological differences and different war experiences of the producing countries, the narratives of decency and resistance are similar. They form – so the thesis presented here – a *dispositif* whose strategic function it was to secure the alliance against National Socialism.

1 Introduction

1945 was a year of shocking discoveries. A trace of violence led from the liberated European countries, from the borders of the Third Reich deep into the interior of the country and into the direct neighborhoods of the German population. Indescribable brutality and incomprehensible murderousness of the Germans came to light. An entire country was littered with hundreds of small and large camps, behind whose barbed wire fences millions starved, suffered and died. The allied armies liberated thousands of wavering skeletons, famished men, women, and children in agony. They discovered mountains of bodies, mass graves, ash fields. The troops were horrified and shocked by the scale of the crimes that were appearing before them. The two breaches of taboo, the mass murder of civilians and prisoners of war and the desecration of the corpses, was as unbelievable as inexplicable, at least these were two terms that determined public discourse.

Crimes were a frequent topic in the first daily newspapers published by the occupying powers after the end of the war. Survivors reported on torture and murder in radio broadcasts, and corresponding subjects appeared again and again in the Allied newsreels, even though for minutes only. The first literary attempts were made as early as the 1933 in exile and were reissued in Germany shortly after the war. The occupying powers sought to shed light on the matter and fought against the wall of silence with detailed reports and photographic evidence.¹

In contrast to the print media, radio, and literature, in post-war German cinema neither the German war crimes nor the Holocaust against European Jews nor the National Socialist terror against political dissidents, were really present after a brief phase of confrontation. This concerned not only German film, but also the cinematic interpretations of war and National Socialism of the Allies and other European countries, which could only be seen on German screens very sparsely, with a long delay or softened in their statement. Most of the films made in the USA and the Soviet Union before 1945 on Nazi Germany were not shown to German audiences. Only a few films from the liberated European countries, which were made after 1945 on the German occupation, ever reached German cinema. Films on anti-Semitism and the genocide of European Jews played hardly any role in German cinema's programme.² In addition, German-German differences emerge: the general absence of communist political struggle and Eastern European occupation in West German cinema and of civic resistance and conduct of war in Western Europe in the cinema of the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ) and later GDR. In other words: the anti-Fascist films of the Allies and the occupation films from the liberated European nations were hardly present in the German post-war cinema programme.

1 For example in using newspapers: *Die Neue Zeitung* (Amerikanische Militärregierung); *Tägliche Rundschau* (Sowjetische Militärregierung) and *Hamburger Nachrichtenblatt* (Britische Militärregierung) – newsreels: “Welt im Film” (USA/GB); “Nowosti Dnja” (USSR) – literature: Hans Beimler, *Ein Leben für die Freiheit, Moskau und London 1933*, München 1947; Willi Bredel, *Die Prüfung, Moskau 1933*, Berlin 1946; Wolfgang Langhoff, *Die Moorsoldaten. 13 Monate Konzentrationslager*, Zürich 1935, München 1946; Eugen Kogon, *Der SS-Staat*, München 1946.

2 A search on www.filmdienst.de resulted in the following: Between 1945 and 1960 about 8 000 of the films produced worldwide were screened in German cinemas in East and West, of which 242 were classified as war films. These were examined according to the table of contents. Films with a merely military connection (war events, battles, military milieu, captivity of war, etc.) were excluded from the examination. 60 films from this sample can be assigned to the topic dealt with here, that is 3 %. Of these 13 films deal with interiors of Nazi Germany, 16 with the German occupation regime and 16 are dedicated to anti-Semitism, 10 of which deal decisively with the genocide of European Jews. This statistical overview, even if it is not one hundred percent reliable, proves the marginality of the topic in German cinema.

And even only a few of the German post-war films that dealt with the subject at all were successful at that time. Therefore, it can be assumed that the immediate German past was more or less systematically de-thematized in post-war cinema.

For many years, cinema and film policy were not in German hands, but under the control of the occupying powers. Even before the end of the war, they developed strategies and made decisions about which films should be shown in Germany. Cinema was a central element of the Allied reeducation policy. After a short phase of confrontation, in which so-called atrocity films³ were shown to the German audience, documentaries with which the Allies wanted to shed light on the crimes of the Nazi era, the extermination of the Jews, the war, the dictatorship, and their backgrounds, they changed their policies. The atrocity films and war documentaries were not having the desired effect. The audience reacted in a reserved, bored, disbelieving and negative way. The public's indifference also affected the first German films, which were more about "quiet heroes" ("In jenen Tagen", Western Germany 1946/1947, SBZ 1947) and about the effort to preserve decency and a little humanity under the conditions of the dictatorship ("Rotation", DEFA⁴ 1949, FRG 1957). Only a few of the German films on the subject were successful ("Die Mörder sind unter uns", DEFA 1946; "Ehe im Schatten", DEFA 1947). Cinema functioned first and foremost as entertainment and not as an educational institution.⁵

3 This meant documentary films about concentration camps that had been taken by the Allies after the liberation of the camps to document the crimes. Among others: "Auschwitz" (USSR 1945), "Les Camps de la mort" (FR 1945) and "Death Mills" (USA 1945), in detail: Ulrike Weckel, *Zeichen der Scham. Reaktionen auf alliierte atrocity-Filme im Nachkriegsdeutschland*, in: *Mittelweg* 36,1 (2014), pp. 15–25.

4 German Film Corporation, founded 1946 on the initiative of the Soviet Military Administration together with German anti-fascists.

5 This topic is dealt with in depth by Ina Merkel, *Kapitulation im Kino. Zur Kulturpolitik der Besatzungsmächte*, Berlin 2016. Cf. also on general issues and mentality: Stephan Buchloh, *Zwischen Demokratisierungsbemühungen und Wirtschaftsinteressen. Der Film unter der Besatzung der westlichen Alliierten*, in: *Jahrbuch für Kommunikationsgeschichte* 8 (2006), pp. 162–193; Brewster S. Chamberlin, *Kultur auf Trümmern. Berliner Berichte der amerikanischen Information Control Section Juli-Dezember 1945*, Stuttgart 1979; Gabriele Clemens (Ed.), *Kulturpolitik im besetzten Deutschland 1945–1949*, Stuttgart 1994; Jennifer Fay, *Theaters of Occupation. Hollywood and the Reeducation of Postwar Germany*, Minneapolis-London 2008; Michael Hanisch, "Um 6 Uhr abends nach Kriegsende" bis "High Noon". *Kino und Film im Berlin der Nachkriegszeit (1945–1953)*, Berlin 2004; Horst Möller/Jan Foitzik (Eds.), *Die Politik der Sowjetischen Militäradministration in Deutschland. Kultur, Wissenschaft und Bildung 1945–1949*, München 2005; Reinhard Rürup (Ed.), *Triumph und Trauma. Sowjetische und postsowjetische Erinnerungen an den Krieg 1941–1945*, Berlin 2005.

In the Western zones, therefore, the original re-education project was soon abandoned or modified, with the focus no longer on films that showed the National Socialist past, but rather on films that focused on the attractive American present. In the Soviet-occupied zone, the occupying power acted more offensively and continued to insist on the screening of war and occupation films, with limited success. This leads to the conclusion that the American, Soviet and European filmmaking on this topic of the war and post-war period was only partially perceived in Germany and is still only partially known today. Moreover, the audience in East and West was influenced very differently: while in the East mainly Soviet and Eastern European films were present, American and Western European productions dominated in the West. This division of cinema not only reflects the different social systems and their ideologies but also affected that the unequal German warfare – the extraordinarily violent war of extermination in the East and the ‘normal’ war of conquest in the West – has inscribed itself unevenly in the collective memory.

The fact that post-war German-German cinema – with certain differences between East and West – was primarily characterised by a de-thematisation of German crimes, internal terror and the extermination of the Jews well into the 1950s is certainly decisively due to the much-described suppression of the immediate past. But not all films have been rejected. For example, the Soviet war film “Zhdi Menya” (USSR 1943, SBZ 1945), which reports about a young woman whose husband is missing at the front, was a surprising success and moved the German women to tears. There is – so my thesis – a reason for the rejection beyond the dismissal of the confrontation with the German crimes, and it has something to do with the narratives in which it was told.

The following analysis of films from the 1940s and 1950s aims to work out general narrative patterns and to ask about their aspiration to interpretation and explanation. A sample of films⁶ was processed in which the dictatorship of the Third Reich and its occupation policy were addressed from the different perspectives of the nations participating in the war, the occupied and the liberated. The films were treated here essentially as a serial source, i. e. no close reading using paratexts was undertaken. The aim was to include as many different national perspectives as possible. War films were left out of consideration; only films that took place inside Germany and films about the German occupation were included. Films dealing with anti-Semitism and the genocide of Euro-

6 Based on the research on filmdienst.de (see note 2) all available films were included into the sample but not all of them could be discussed here because it would go beyond the scope. However, their availability on DVD or Internet platforms speaks volumes to their importance as historical documents and testifies their continuing popularity. See also the filmography index of this volume.

pean Jews play a small role in both categories. The selection dealt with here represents a discursive field that was only presented in this multifaceted form at international film festivals. The screening of most of the films remained limited to the respective national audience. Nevertheless, the different narratives are interrelated and interwoven. How these interdependencies and transnational transgressions are reflected in the narrations is of particular interest.

2 Insights of Nazi Germany

The first anti-Fascist films that tried to give an insight into life in the Third Reich were driven by the motives of describing the catastrophic effects of political and racist terror on the everyday lives of Germans and mobilizing the public against National Socialism. Emigrants wrote most of the scripts or book templates. Some of the Soviet and American films will be treated here as examples.

The dramatic stories focus on victims of the dictatorship, friendly, good-natured people who – sometimes against their will – become heroes and begin to resist offensively, even if it can cost them their lives. They are at least morally supported, sometimes also actively, by acquaintances, friends, neighbours; people who have kept their decency, “the good Germans” as they were called in the contemporary press. In this basic constellation, the anti-Fascist, humanist counter-world, and the ideals they represent gain considerable representation in the portrayal of German circumstances. The opponents are often roughly drawn as representatives of power, as sadists, fanatics, and careerists or brainless followers, as people who have lost the ability to empathy. In this constellation of figures, a decisive moment of National Socialist rule is sometimes missed: the enthusiastic approval of broad masses, their willing participation and joyful denunciation. Rather, National Socialist Germany appears as a country in which an entire population is oppressed by a horde of militant and violent terrorists. For a long time, neither the Americans nor the Soviets could have imagined that masses of Germans supported the regime without compulsion and accepted and even supported the dissolution of democratic institutions, the suppression of the law, the discrimination and finally the extermination of the Jewish population. In effect, the films with their emphasis on inner-German resistance do not dramatize the German state of affairs but tend to trivialize them involuntarily. A distinction must be made between Soviet and American interpretative patterns – these are the two film nations from which the few productions originate, even if German and Jewish intellectuals played a decisive role in both film industries.

2.1 From the Soviet Perspective

In 1938 Lenfilm Studio produces the film “Professor Mamlock” (USSR 1938, SBZ 1947) after a successfully performed play by the Jewish communist Friedrich Wolf who emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1933. The film tells the story of a Jewish doctor, a brilliant surgeon and proud war veteran who, despite the increasing anti-Semitism in his immediate environment, abstains from all political statements and expects the same from his family. He believes he can thus escape the attention of the new rulers. But this soon proves to be a fallacy. After the National Socialists came to power, he was harassed by some of his colleagues and finally chased out of the clinic. He is led through the streets of his city in a white doctor’s coat, smeared with the capital letter “Jew”. When he was later called in as a specialist for a complicated operation on an SS leader, he hoped he would be rehabilitated, but was disappointed. Meanwhile, his son is active in the communist resistance against the will of his father and is expelled from the house. One day he is arrested and brutally interrogated by the Gestapo. He can escape and supported by a large crowd of people standing up to the raiders, he manages to disappear. Mamlock, who is about to kill himself with his old pistol, hears the noise from the street, lets go of his suicide attempt and makes a blazing speech from his balcony in support of his son. In this, he scours his political apathy as a mistake and calls on the crowd to resist. The SS shoots him, his son becomes the leader of the anti-Fascist underground movement. In contrast to the play, in which the son is thrown out of his home by his father and Mamlock takes his own life, in the film the resistance and the professor’s turning away from his a-political attitude play a central role.

According to Jeremy Hicks, this is the first film to deal with the persecution of the Jews.⁷ Its reception was problematic. In the Soviet Union, the film was initially shown very successfully to more than 16 million viewers; after the German-Soviet non-aggression pact of 1939, it was removed from the cinemas in order to be screened again with the attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941. Then it disappeared again for a short time from the cinemas because the presentation of the Germans seemed too positive. In western countries, it was considered a communist propaganda film. After start-up difficulties with censorship in the UK and the USA, however, it was also very successful in the West. Two days after the *première* in New York, the *Reichskristallnacht* had taken place, so the film was suddenly perceived as a very topical commentary on the events. “Professor Mamlock” won a prize for best foreign film in the USA and was nominated

⁷ Jeremy Hicks, *First Films of the Holocaust. Soviet Cinema and the Genocide of the Jews*, Pittsburgh 2012.

for the New York Critics' Prize, but in other states (Ohio, Massachusetts) it was banned because of communist-Jewish propaganda. When the film was shown in East Germany in 1947, the critics were quite impressed, but criticized the milieu depiction and that the anti-Fascist attitude of the population had been overly benevolent.

A second Soviet film, "Chevolek No. 217" (USSR 1945), deals with the history of the Soviet citizen Tanja, who was captured in 1941 and deported to Germany for forced labor. The immigrant perspective no longer plays a role here; one's own experiences under the conditions of war are to be presented. The focus is on the treatment of Soviet citizens as subhumans, their enslavement, and annihilation.

In a framework story, the protagonist Tanja, who stands in a cordon in Moscow and watches the march of German prisoners of war across the Red Square, tells the bystanders, who look pityingly at the exhausted and ragged figures, full of outrage about her experiences in Germany. After the Germans invaded their city in 1941, she and her friends were deported to Germany. They were then numbered and offered for sale to German businessmen and entrepreneurs in a kind of slave market. Tanja, number 217, is bought by a petit bourgeois family who runs a grocery store for 15 marks only. From now on she will be exploited, humiliated and mistreated by this family. From today's perspective, the representation of the petty-bourgeois milieu seems like a caricature driven to its peak: quarrelsome, envious, intriguing, and greedy people. The housewife trains her like a dog, makes her work very hard, and punishes her with beating and deprivation of food. Son and daughter have to be served; the landlord molests her. After a short time, Tanja is exhausted and desperate. Only the renewed contact with her girlfriend, who has to work in a factory, helps her to get through the torture. In the confusion of a family quarrel in which she is accused of stealing money, she finally reaches for the kitchen knife and kills her landlord and his son in cold blood. She manages to escape back to the Soviet Union under the protection of a bomb attack.

Since forced laborers and prisoners of war were treated as traitors in the Soviet Union after the war and often again disappeared in camps, it is surprising that the film in a way takes sides for these people. Of course in a very pathetic and patriotic way. Despite his pathetic tone, "Chevolek No. 217" met with recognition from the international film public. It was nominated for the Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1946, the director Michail Romm won the International Grand Prize of the Association of Film Authors. In Germany, in 1947 it only performed in special shows for a selected audience.

The German conditions are depicted in this film in a very simplified way; the Germans are convinced of their racial superiority without distinction and present themselves as "master race". The resistance against the Nazi regime here no longer comes from within and is no longer to be expected from there. There are no more good Germans in this narrative. Thus the narrative pattern corresponds more to the genre of the occupation

film, in which individual heroines and heroes defy the German superiority, which behaves extremely brutally towards the population in the occupied territories, at the risk of their lives. The experiences of the Soviet Union with the Germans' war of plundering and extermination against their country are inscribed in this narrative. An experience the Americans don't share. In contrast to Soviet films, American films hold on to ideas of internal German resistance until the end of the war when they deal with insights of Nazi Germany.

2.2 From an American Perspective

According to Ben Urwand's study,⁸ the National Socialists succeeded for many years in preventing anti-Fascist films from being produced in Hollywood. He identifies "The Mortal Storm" (USA 1940 – FRG 1957) – after a bestseller by Phyllis Bottom – as the first American film that takes a critical look at what is happening in Germany, a kind of Professor Mamlock in American. However, at the request of censorship, the Jewish theme was disguised. After massive interventions in the script, there is only talk of non-Aryans, and the professor, who in the script initially had to leave university for racial reasons, is now arrested as a defender of scientific truths against ideological stubbornness and interned in the concentration camp where he perishes.

The film is about the dissolution and destruction of a very harmonious German-Jewish academic family living together in a small Bavarian university town on the edge of the Alps. The father is a highly respected professor of natural sciences, his wife a noblewoman. From her first marriage come two grown-up sons, who are lovingly turned towards the stepfather. The family also includes two children, a 19-year-old daughter and a twelve-year-old son, and a housekeeper. They maintain a bourgeois household with many guests, including students and colleagues of the professor. In the course of the seizure of power by the NSDAP, this group differentiates itself: the daughter's fiancé (a student of the father) and the stepsons become strapping Nazis and distance themselves from the father, the housekeeper resigns for fear of reprisals. On the other hand, another friend of the family, one of the students, leaves the university because of the intolerable political atmosphere and retreats to his farm in the mountains, from where he helps the persecuted to leave the country illegally. His mother and a young maid represent a peasant-Christian

8 Ben Urwand, *The Collaboration. Hollywood's Pact with Hitler*, Cambridge 2013. Urwand shows very impressively how the Germans successfully intervened in the US film industry to prevent anti-fascist productions.

milieu that remains decent even under political pressure. The professor, who is no longer allowed to teach at the university – not for racial reasons, but because the students boycott his school of thought – is one day picked up and taken to the concentration camp, where he succumbs to the strains. When the mother flees to Austria with the two children, the daughter, who has separated from her Nazi fiancé, is caught on the train with her father's manuscript and placed under police surveillance. On her escape across the green border, she is chased and shot by her former fiancé.

The film, in whose script two emigrants (Hans Rameau and Georg Froeschel) have collaborated, attempts to present German circumstances in a differentiated way. Even straight National Socialists, like the former fiancé and one of the stepsons, ask themselves at some point whether this is still right, what is happening there. Because the racist background of the events is suppressed, the humanistic attitude and the liberal thinking remain as motives for persecution. As the fiancé explains at one point in the film, anyone who is not for the National Socialists is regarded as an enemy. These too were grounds for persecution in the Third Reich, but in contrast to arbitrary discrimination based on racial attribution, they have a weak effect here, because no direct political activity is linked to them.

There is also a narrative of resistance in this American film. In contrast to Soviet film, it is not constructed as a protest or combative confrontation, but very reservedly as individual obstinacy or stubbornness of the peasant milieu. It is not a question of political convictions but of insisting on universal human values and moral categories such as sincerity and decency. To this decency belongs that one does not give up his sense of justice, that one does not deny his attitude (a later persecuted teacher refuses to sing along a Nazi song in the pub), that one fights honestly, man against man, and above all that one helps the weaker. This is a form of resistance that could be called civic courage. Since the Jewish background is disguised and German anti-Semitism, which represented a decisive moment in the ideology of racial superiority, is not named, the drama lacks depth. The actual scandal, the arbitrary discrimination, and extermination of a group of people, the breach of civilization, had not yet been addressed.

This is already distinctly different in the immediately following anti-Fascist films: In "Escape" (USA 1940) an American frees his Jewish mother from a concentration camp; in "The Great Dictator" (USA 1940, FRG 1958⁹, GDR-TV 1980) a Jewish barber, who is mistaken for the dictator of a fictitious country, uses the opportunity to end the war; and

9 Two test screenings organized by American cultural officers in 1946 prompted them not to show the film in the immediate post-war period. The reason for this was the low response rate to the questionnaires, which was interpreted as a rejection of the film.

in “The Man I Married” (USA 1940) a young American woman goes with her German husband and seven-year-old son to Germany, where he quickly mutates into a National Socialist until he discovers that he too is of Jewish descent. From now on, it is impossible to imagine the American narrative about the Third Reich without the Jewish theme, but it rarely becomes the central motif.

Just as the lethal anti-Semitism of the German regime was initially suppressed, American anti-Fascist film avoided naming the political, even communist resistance. The film adaptation of the novel by Anna Seghers “The Seventh Cross” (USA 1944, BRD-TV 1972, GDR-TV 1986) is an example of this. The story deals with the escape of seven prisoners from a concentration camp and describes their flight through Nazi Germany in 1936. The concentration camp commander erects seven crosses on which the prisoners who have been recaptured are to be martyred to death. Only one cross will remain empty at the end. The seven prisoners come from different backgrounds (teacher, writer, acrobat, a Jewish merchant, manufacturer, etc.) and only the survivor Georg Heisler is a communist, which is not told in the film. He can – and this is crucial for his survival – fall back on his comrades who have organized themselves underground. However, this motif is eliminated from the film. The resistance remains exceptionally vague in its aims and actions, its political convictions. On the other hand, German society is marked in a very differentiated way; there are many decent people who risk their lives for the refugee merely because they feel that the murderous concentration camp regime is inhuman and unjust. While the concentration camp wardens and Gestapo officers are barely distinguishable, the “good Germans” are portrayed as characters with outstanding characteristics. The focus is on Paul, a friend of the a-political type, who takes a somewhat positive view of the regime, because it has provided him with a secure job and financially supports the three children. But he does not hesitate for a second to help his old friend in distress. Above the events lies an atmosphere of fear and mistrust: everyone can be denounced by anyone at any time, even by their children, who appear almost entirely as enthusiastic Hitler Youth. The film provides a moving insight into a society that is authoritarian, even if the potential for resistance in the film may seem disproportionately high.

This expresses a hope for the internal German resistance, which even in the last year of the war – at least in the film studios – seemed to be stable. The last production before the end of the Second World War, which deals with German society, is a prototype of this: “Hotel Berlin” (USA 1945). It is an adaptation of a novella by Vicky Baum, a popular Austrian-Jewish writer who had already emigrated in the USA in 1932 for political reasons. The film presents German society shortly before its downfall as a kind of microcosm. In a fictitious hotel in Berlin an illustrious spectrum of protagonists of the Third Reich gathers: SA and SS officers about to leave the country; a *Wehrmacht*

officer who was involved in an assassination attempt against Hitler; a hostess who spies for the SS; a large number of “little people” who express their despair helplessly with defeatist remarks; a “great” artist popular among the Nazi big ones, who becomes a traitor out of fear; a former opposition activist who was broken by the Gestapo and has become a disillusioned drinker; a refugee from the concentration camp who is to lead the underground movement; a Jewish woman who dares to run around without a star to get the terminally ill husband medication, and a hotel staff who sympathizes with the concentration camp prisoner. Reception, waiters, and bellboys work together with the underground. The hotel even hides three American airmen operating in the hinterland. For the narrative, the existence of an underground movement is central. It wants to overthrow the National Socialist regime from within. In the film, it is presented as well organized, perfectly networked in the population and very capable of action. One prints masses of leaflets, has fake passports and is equipped with weapons. The film not only paints the picture of a broad resistance movement, but it also conveys the idea of a fatalistic, critical to an oppositional attitude of large sections of the population. It provides still a picture of “good Germans”. The film thus spreads an optimism that was belied by the fierce war of endurance and the experiences with the German population that American troops have had to make since the invasion in September 1944.¹⁰ The Americans met almost exclusively a-political Germans who rejected all blame and claimed to have known nothing of the crimes of the regime. Not a trace of resistance, no good Germans nowhere. The obviousness with which a widespread German resistance is assumed in the film corresponds to the narrative pattern of the occupation film, which I will refer to in the next chapter.

2.3 From a German Perspective

Of the narratives presented by American and Soviet films, especially the motif of the basic decency of many ordinary people and the figure of the a-political protagonist entangled in events against their will can be found in post-war German films. These are retrospective interpretations of life in the Third Reich that reflect the experiences and attitudes of the directors over the last twelve years.

For example, Helmut Käutner, a director who was able to continue making films in the Nazi era largely undisturbed, varied the motif of decency in seven episodes in

10 At the time the film was started, there was basically no information from inside Germany. In this respect, the film expresses wishful thinking.

his first post-war film “In jenen Tagen” (Western Germany 1946/1947, SBZ 1947). One episode deals with the tragedy of a German-Jewish couple that constantly quarrels, but then first reconciles in the face of the pogroms and riots against their shop and then commits suicide together. In contrast to the discovery of the mass extermination of Jews in Auschwitz and other concentration camps, which had been carefully hidden from the eyes of the German population, *Reichskristallnacht* took place in public and was still present in the collective memory. Therefore, the presentation of these events in the film after 1945 was unproblematic, as the audience’s consent to “Ehe im Schatten” (DEFA 1947) shows.

However, in the closing commentary of the film it says from the perspective of the storyteller, a car:

“Yes, gentlemen, I have not seen much of those days, no great events, no heroes, only a few fates and only fragments of them. But I’ve seen a few people ... time was stronger than them, but their humanity was stronger than time. There have been and always will be these people. At all times. And remember that when you get to work.”

Decency also plays a central role in Kurt Maetzig’s film “Ehe im Schatten” (DEFA 1947, very successful also in the Western Zones), in which a famous actor stands by his Jewish wife despite all hostility and takes his own life together with her after years of loneliness, social exclusion, threat, and fear. Maetzig was banned from filming because of his Jewish mother.

For Wolfgang Staudte, the figure of the a-political becomes the central character of his first post-war films “Die Mörder sind unter uns” (DEFA 1946) and “Rotation” (DEFA 1948/1949, FRG 1957). After the Nazis came to power, Staudte had problems with his work permit for political reasons but was able to work in commercials and as a dubbing artist and even evade being called up for military service. In “Rotation”, a father becomes the helper of the Nazi regime despite his beliefs and decent attitude until he decides against it shortly before the end of the war. Kurt Maetzig also dedicates himself to this character in “Die Buntkarierten” (DEFA 1949 – FRG-TV 1975). The book was written by Berta Waterstradt, a Jewish Communist who was imprisoned for illegal work and later had to perform forced labor. It tells a family story from the turn of the century to the post-war period, set in a proletarian Berlin milieu. Here it is the son who, after a long period of unemployment, allows himself to be corrupted by the Fascist ideology in order to perish in the end in the war.

In these German films it is no longer an outsider who stays away from the events and becomes their victim – as with Professors Mamlock and Roth – or someone who realizes in time that he cannot stay out of them – like Paul in “The Seventh Cross” – but it is now

someone who becomes a follower and thus, unwillingly, an accomplice. This character drawing corresponds to a communist pattern of interpretation. In the Soviet occupation zone, the German population was accused of their a-political behaviour. To have stayed out in times of dictatorship was considered inexcusable. And a second element of the film narratives is striking: the resistance potential of the German population is reduced to a small group of particularly brave people, if not even to individuals. The creeping de-solidarization of the population is clearly shown, the gradually growing fear of the terror regime, the omnipresent denunciation and the immediate benefit of Germans from the exclusion of Jewish and politically committed colleagues. The picture drawn after the war by German filmmakers who were exposed to political or racial persecution but did not leave Germany and directly experienced the change in mood and everyday behaviour is significantly more negative than in the American and early Soviet model.

3 Occupation Films

With more than 30 productions from ten countries, shot between 1942 and 1950, occupation films form the largest group of films dealing with the National Socialist regime. Not only do they come from the occupied and then liberated countries, but there is also a multitude of American and British productions on this subject. Produced before the end of the war, they had a propagandistic function: to show American and English audiences what it was like to live in occupied Europe, how beastly the Nazis were and how the occupied nations were resisting them. The occupation films produced after the liberation are about regaining dignity. The focus is on heroic national resistance against the German overpower. The spectators are given a feeling of – national – community and unity with which they can identify, even if they may have stayed still or were not particularly exposed during the occupation. The stories are packed with knowledge, scriptwriters and directors have experienced the occupation first hand.

Rarely did interest in these early films extend beyond the national borders of the country in which they were produced. Few films received international attention, and occupation films reached German-German cinema only in exceptional cases, usually with a significant time lag. Here, too, a refusal to confront the German public with the war crimes can be observed.¹¹ Films from Eastern Europe were not or much later shown in

11 More than half of the occupation films never appeared in German cinema (e.g. “Sekretar Raykoma” (USSR 1942); “Commando strikes at Dawn” (USA 1942); “Ona Zashchishchaet Rodinu” (USSR 1943); “Tomorrow we live” (GB 1943); “Paris after Dark” (USA 1943); “Jericho” (FR 1946);

Western Germany, and films from Western Europe were not or much later shown in Eastern Germany. This changed only with the much more differentiated representations from the mid-1950s, which in turn were only allowed to run in the GDR much later (e.g. "Kanal": PL 1956, FRG 1958, GDR-TV 1973).

There is a wide variety of cinematic approaches to the subject, yet a basic narrative pattern can be discerned: At the center of the plot is a population suffering under the occupation, which – in the form of exposed heroines and heroes – defies and resists the German power, which as heavily armed *Wehrmacht*, *SS*, and *Gestapo* is almost overpoweringly present. The oppression, exploitation, and looting of the defeated people is named as the primary German motive for the war. Very prominently the Nazi ideology is depicted. In particular, ideas of the master race, anti-Semitism and the superiority of the Aryan race are discussed.

Despite the different national references of the films, which reflect the different German warfare, the staging strategies are similar. The contempt and brutality of the German occupying forces, which often enough increases into sadism, is naturalistically heightened and painful realistically shown in detail. On the one hand, there is the occupying power, a uniformly acting, soulless German troop, which undoubtedly executes every order and which is commanded by a fanatical officer with sadistic disposition – the antagonist. In the end, he often proves to be a coward – driven into a corner by partisans, resistance fighters or the Allied troops. Only in a few films do Germans get more human traits, doubts; or even human emotions are allowed. On the other hand, they show individual heroes who rebel against the state of affairs and engage in an unequal fight. Resistance often develops out of the situation in which humiliation is no longer endured, and the accumulated rage breaks out uncontrollably. This endangers the plans of the organized resistance, who operate with defined hierarchies and command structures and with support from outside, the Red Army, the British or Americans.

The films show how the occupation generates solidarity across social and political borders and how the occupied population offers the heroes fundamental and profound,

"Odette" (GB 1950) etc.), also not internationally awarded films like "Muzi Bez Kridel" (CSR 1946, Grand Prix Cannes). A few of the early Soviet and Eastern European films were only shown for a short time in the Soviet Zone and also there; they were not shown at all in the Western zones (e.g. "Raduga", USSR 1944, SBZ 1945); "Soya" (USSR 1945, SBZ 1945); "Nepokoryonnye" (USSR 1945, SBZ 1948). American, French and Italian occupation films – with a few exceptions (like "Paisà", IT 1946, FRG 1949; "Manon", FR 1949, FRG 1950) – are only shown on German screens after a long time (e.g. "Edge of Darkness" (USA 1943, FRG 1977); "Casablanca" (USA 1943, FRG 1958, GDR-TV 1984); "Hangmen also die!" (USA 1943, FRG 1958, GDR-TV 1984); "Roma Città aperta" (IT 1945, FRG 1961, GDR 1968), "De Rode Enge" (Denmark 1945, GDR 1956); "Bataille du Rail" (FR 1946, GDR 1956, FRG 1973).

reliable support. The few exceptions – mostly female collaborators and traitors – confirm the rule. However, because a battle in this constellation of power seems hopeless from the outset, and the protagonists often go to certain death, they are not necessarily guaranteed the approval of the community for which they fight. This leads to interesting dramatic conflicts. On the one hand, actions from the underground endanger non-participants because the Germans take hostages from the population indiscriminately and punish them collectively. Even a successful act will result in the death of more innocent people. Secondly, the oppressed community is not united against the enemy in national unity across class boundaries. Not only because there are collaboration, cowardice, and self-interest of individuals, there are also mental imprints, pacifist attitudes and quite common survival strategies from which resistance seems futile. It is the greatness of some occupation films to show this differentiation – which does not bestow to the national honour – at a very early stage.

Despite the shared general dramatic situation, occupation films tell very different stories and report very individual fates. They cannot be assigned to any genre either, but make use of the conventions of melodrama, adventure and espionage film or intimate chamber play. Occupation films often go with adventure romanticism, even if they end tragically. Love stories are often interwoven, especially in American films they generate the central conflict. Some films apply a documentary style.

3.1 The Image of the Occupation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

The Soviet occupation films are, as American viewers shockingly stated during the war, of a strong realism that leaves nothing out: Torture, hostage-taking, forced labour, rape, the murder of children, theft of food, etc. cold-bloodedly ordered by soulless officers, carried out by murderous soldiers. The Germans in these films enjoy the misery of the occupied; they splurge, celebrate, drink and eat, beat, murder and torture and sometimes become sentimental. This narrative pattern is prototypically found in “Raduga” (USSR 1944, SBZ 1945): In the deepest winter of 1943, a pregnant woman returns to her village in Ukraine to give birth. It is occupied by Germans, who do their dreadful business here: bodies dangle on lampposts, the families are starving, the milk is taken away from small children, farmers’ wives have to serve the Germans, and the villagers wear numbers around their necks. The extremely sadistic commander lets the prisoner drift through the snow half-naked for the soldiers’ pleasure and tortures her to learn something about the partisans. But she remains silent, even after he snatches the newborn from her and shoots it in front of her eyes. Villagers who give bread to the prisoner are imprisoned for it. The young woman will be executed. Sometime later an attack of the Red Army begins, and

the village is liberated. The commander and his Ukrainian mistress are shot dead, and the German soldiers are beaten by incredibly angry women until the Red Army officer intervenes, arrests them properly and has them taken away.

A similar scenery can be found in other Soviet occupation films. "Soya" (USSR 1944) – a true story – e. g. about a partisan who gets captive, is tortured with glowing cigarettes but betrays nothing and finally is hung publicly on the village square. The young girl is very proud and goes to her execution with her head held high. There she takes the floor and addresses the paralyzed villagers with a call for resistance: "Heda, comrades! Why so sad? Be bolder, fight, beat the Germans, smoke them out ... I'm not afraid of death, comrades! Happy is he who gives his life for his people!" Soya is a very heroic character, she is propagandistically built up as a heroine of the Soviet Union, and the film makes a decisive contribution to this. "Nepokoryonnye" (USSR 1944, SBZ 1948) deals with the massacre of over 33 000 Ukrainian Jews in the ravine of Babi Yar. A family hides a Jewish child in great danger. The danger comes not only from the German soldiers but also from the daughter's fiancé, who entered the police force among the Germans. In this film, the Germans are drawn as a randomly beating, constantly shouting mass that indiscriminately arrests, shoots or drives women and old men to work. Not to obey their orders means certain death. Therefore, the resistance takes place entirely in hiding with the partisans, to whom those who are still in some strength are trying to flee. After all, the partisans also save the Jewish child. In these three Soviet occupation films, the heroic protagonists are women. In "Nepokoryonnye", too, the daughter takes the initiative and establishes the connection to the partisans, and she is also caught and executed by the Germans.

Also in the USA films about the resistance struggle in the Soviet Union ("Days of Glory": USA 1944) and in Czechoslovakia ("Hangmen also die!": USA 1943, FRG 1958, GDR-TV 1984) were produced. "Days of Glory" is inspired in detail by Soviet occupation films: a rural setting in the deepest winter, Germans taking their houses, their food and even their winter clothes from the Russians, the hanging of captured partisans, etc. But the story is fundamentally different. It is about an extraordinarily well organized partisan group, a commander who falls in love with a dancer who has gotten behind the front and yet pursues only his fighting goal, and about a consistently determined, self-sacrificing Soviet population. The melodramatic framing and a figure drawing reminiscent of cinematic representations of Russia in the 19th century ("Anna Karenina": USA 1935) make the story seem to have fallen out of time, and the narrative loses its strength.

In contrast, "Hangmen also die!" is staged as a political thriller. It is about the assassination of Heydrich in 1942, the "Hangmen of Prague" and chief architect of the Holocaust. Heydrich was head of the Reich Security Main Office and deputy Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, a radical anti-Semite who, since the beginning of

the war in the occupied territories, pushed forward the ghettoization and annihilation of the Jewish population and ruled with an iron hand. The assassination was one of the most spectacular actions of the Czech resistance coordinated from the UK. The film is loosely based on this event: the assassin hides after the crime in Prague. In revenge, 400 Prague citizens are taken hostages, who are to be killed if the assassin does not turn himself in. Faced with this conflict, he decides to give up his hiding place. But the resistance succeeds in extraditing a traitor to the Germans as the murderer instead, and in ending the executions with which they had already begun. In fact, all the male inhabitants of the village of Lidice were shot in retaliation, the women were sent to the concentration camp, and the place was razed to the ground.

Despite the clear anti-Fascist diction, the effect of American films is not as strong as the strict realism of Soviet films. Their documentary style was aimed at recording the crimes and showing the world how brutally and violently the war was waged by the Germans. The film historian Rob Edelmann assumes that they influenced neo-realist Italian film.¹² A number of Polish and Czech films, as well as French and Italian occupation films made after the liberation can also be classified in this film style.

In contrast to the early Soviet occupation narratives, which focus on individuals who defy the occupying forces, collective heroes are developed after the war. So in “Muzi Bez Kridel” (CSR 1946) and in “Ulica Graniczna” (PL 1948): both films that were not shown in Germany. Here it is children and young people who act out of a naive sense of justice and thus support but also endanger the resistance struggle of adults. They experience the work of the occupying power as a direct intervention in their lives and develop a real hatred for the Germans. In “Muzi Bez Kridel” the boy Jirka lost his family in the Lidice massacre. He lives with his uncle, who works as an engineer at a military airport and is active in a resistance group that systematically carries out acts of sabotage, which the boy does not know. Jirka, who also gets a job there, is full of thoughts of revenge. He gets a grenade, is caught by the Gestapo and shot in front of his neighbour. As a result, the whole structure of resistance is shaken: resistance fighters are uncovered and arrested, traitors are discovered and killed. When the Gestapo arrests any number of people and takes them hostage, the uncle identifies himself as a resistance fighter and is shot.

“Ulica Graniczna” shows how everything changes in a Jewish-Polish-German mixed street by the occupation. The film tells of these changes using young protagonists, their friendships and – anti-Semiticly motivated – enmities, their solidarity, and their be-

12 Cf. Rob Edelmann, Mark Donskoi-Director, in: Film-Reference (URL: <http://www.filmreference.com/Directors-Co-Du/Donskoi-Mark.html>; 2. 11. 2020).

trayal. The occupying power is not personified more precisely in the film but forms the background for the increasingly threatening events. The film shows the establishment of the ghetto, the hunger and death there and leads to the uprising in which some of the children participate. In post-war Poland, the thematization of Polish anti-Semitism was perceived as problematic, there were fears that the film might harm Poland's image abroad, and it was therefore hindered from being shown.

3.2 The Image of the Occupation in Western Europe

The first films about the occupation of Western Europe come from the USA and the UK, they deal with the resistance in Norway: "Commandos strike at Dawn" (USA 1942), "Edge of Darkness" (USA 1943, FRG 1977) and in France: "Tomorrow we live" (GB 1943); "Paris after Dark" (USA 1943); "This Land is mine" (USA 1943), and here too a hard realism in the representation of violence prevails. Nevertheless, a decisive difference can be observed, which concerns the staging of the German occupying power: despite the aggressive, martial appearance, a certain civility in contact remains, not all rules of etiquette are suspended. For example, they knock or ring the doorbell and do not simply storm into the homes, the women are courted; the mistresses are kept happy and not treated contemptuously like whores. The German soldiers and officers of the Wehrmacht and even the SS do not behave as degradingly and disrespectfully towards the population as you can see in Soviet and Polish films, where Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, and Russians are treated like cattle.

None of these films do without a melodramatic plot. In times of violence and threat, love is not only passionate and unconventional, it also holds the occupied society together. It creates cohesion and arouses admiration because it is so noble. Unlike many Soviet films, the population under occupation is portrayed as highly differentiated socially and politically; there are always collaborators and traitors on the one hand and a great deal of patriotism, especially among ordinary people on the other.

"Edge of Darkness" (USA 1943) is about a fishing village in Norway, where an uprising against the occupying forces has just taken place, which ended deadly for most of those involved on both sides. The first scenes show the market square, full of corpses, the destroyed commander's office, houses shot to pieces, from which no sign of life comes. The events that led to this disaster are reported in the flashback: The German occupying forces ruthlessly plunder the place; daily shipments of fish, butter, blankets and winter clothing go to Germany. The inhabitants defend themselves with acts of sabotage and small insubordination, they hide people and wait for weapons from the English to finally strike back. In a meeting of the parish, after a discussion, a democratic vote is taken on

whether or not to oppose armed action. The resistance brings people from different social classes together, paradigmatically here in the form of love between a doctor's daughter and a fisherman. When the doctor's daughter is raped by a soldier, and an old teacher, who rejected his house to the Germans, is publicly humiliated in the market place, the situation escalates. The rage turns into open outrage, and there is an armed uprising. In the end, only a small group, including the lovers, manage to escape to the woods. The resistance, as it is drawn here, lies in the obstinacy and stubbornness of the Norwegians, who do not want to and cannot subordinate to the German commands.

This pattern is also found in the drawing of the French resistance milieu in the British film "Tomorrow we live" (GB 1943), which takes place in a small port city in Brittany. Here, the shooting of an elderly man who refused to make room for a German officer on the sidewalk triggers the armed resistance. Here too, a group of resistance fighters is waiting for the support of the British, and the social milieus mix in love. Here as well, long-term plans are thwarted by the spontaneous outbursts of individuals, and a mass slaughter takes place. Unlike the Norwegian population, which is depicted as very depressed, measured and seriously marked, the atmosphere in France is characterized by lightness, wit and *joie de vivre*. They enjoy fooling around and tricking Germans. In the middle of the film there is an enchanting cinema scene: during the German newsreel, viewers begin to grunt and squeak under cover of darkness, and shadows form in front of the screen: a V-sign, a fist punching Hitler in the face, and fingers tugging at the *Führer's* hair.

From the perspective of American and British cinema, the occupation is a ruthless and violent affair, taking on unprecedented proportions and thus going far beyond previous experience. The resistance is correspondingly hard. Germans, traitors, and collaborators are shot in cold blood, and factories and trains are blown up. The German occupying power is very brutal but also somewhat helpless. The presentation has an idealizing effect with regard to the broad participation of all strata of the population in resistance. Also, the good ending love stories in this ensemble seem strangely misplaced.

After the liberation, the occupation period could now be depicted from a separate perspective. The Italian, French and Danish filmmakers use more realistic modes of presentation.

Undoubtedly one of the most famous occupation films is "Roma Città aperta" (IT 1945, FRG 1961, GDR-TV 1968). The focus lies on the effects of the occupying power on everyday life: Hunger and misery, the black market, arbitrary arrests, raids, hostage-taking, torture, and mass executions are omnipresent. As the war draws to an end, the occupying power becomes more dangerous. Against this background, the resistance movement takes action, supported by the inhabitants of a working-class district, priests, businessmen and shopkeepers who transmit messages and hide fighters. Even the children of the district have joined forces and undertake dangerous acts of sabotage; they collect

weapons and build bombs on their own. The milieu also includes women who are endured by Germans. One will eventually betray the man she loves – although she also hates the Germans.

Award-winning and nominated for an Oscar, the performance of “Roma Città aperta”, was banned by the FSK in 1950 in the FRG because it showed “the historical truth overdrawn” and “inciting” effects had to be feared. The dubbed version approved in 1961 was still intended to weaken the statement: the communist became a socialist, the torture scene was cut, and the text changed. In the Italian original, a German officer who heads the execution squad says to the SS commander, who boasts of making everyone speak with torture: “We [the Germans] are no more than murdering, murdering, murdering. We have corpses all over Europe. And hatred grows unstopably out of their graves. Hate, hate, hate everywhere, we become exterminated by hate. Without hope.” In the German dubbed version this becomes a much more general question: “Is there nothing else but to murder, murder, murder? ...”.¹³ Because “Roma Città aperta” is one of the few occupation films that has been disputed about its screening, these changes shed light on the atmosphere in post-war Germany. Sixteen years after the end of the war, it was difficult to admit that crime was part of everyday business during the occupation and no exception.

From the extensive French film work on the occupation, which was criticized by André Bazin for cultivating the resistance movement as a legend, two films stand out due to their way of presentation: the docudrama “Bataille du Rail” (FR 1946, GDR 1956, FRG-TV 1973) and the chamber play “Le silence de la mer” (FR 1949, GDR-TV 1983, FRG-TV 1994). “Bataille du Rail” is conceived as a kind of film report documenting how the French railway fought against the occupation regime. With technical understanding and precise knowledge of the lines, signal boxes, stations, and locomotives, it was possible to smuggle people across the border and to disturb the transport of German troops and materials. Scenes recreated with amateur actors testify to the risk that railway workers at all levels up to the top of the administration took. The film also tells of the humour, of team spirit and mutual support, as well as of taking hostages and executing innocent people in order to put moral pressure on the railway workers. Despite the realistic representation and the renunciation of a story, the representation has a heroizing effect.

Quite differently the drama “Le silence de la mer”. A German officer is forcibly accommodated in the house of an elderly man and his niece. They do what he asks, but they don’t talk to him or look at him. It’s like he’s not even there. The officer is educated, speaks French and is interested in the culture of the country. Night after night he seeks

13 Bonus material from the DVD version of *Zweitausendeins*.

the conversation, after politely knocking, he enters their salon, warms his hands at the fireplace and gives the two ever longer speeches about his enthusiasm for art and culture, but they remain silent. One day he drives to Paris, at first, he enjoys the round trip in a carriage like a tourist. But gradually the German occupation catches his eye: German signposts, the lettering, and flagging of buildings, the presence of uniforms and army vehicles. He discovers a notice about the execution of hostages. In the officers' mess he argues with his comrades, while he dreams of a Franco-German brotherhood, they are convinced of the inferiority of French. Back home he tells the uncle and niece about his experience, he is outraged about his comrades and decides to volunteer for the Eastern Front. He asks their forgiveness. For the first time, the uncle looks him in the face, and the niece says quietly: "Goodbye". In this stylistically very puristic form, the overwhelming nature of the occupation and the mentality of the resistance are symbolically summed up without the need for further military confrontation or words. The film was not a great success, although the book, published under the pseudonym in Paris in 1942, was extraordinarily popular.

4 Conclusion

Films about the Third Reich and the occupation period do not form their genre with specific conventions. The stories were staged as melodramas, thrillers, espionage, love or adventure films. The anti-Fascist film also had to work for a broad audience. But this rarely succeeded beyond the respective national audience. Although the outrage at the criminal Nazi regime dominated European discourse across borders, the subtle and gross differences of French, Italian or Danish, Polish, Czech or Soviet occupation regimes that emerged in the films are of importance. The narratives of resistance were also ideologically coloured, and there were considerable differences between Soviet and American patterns of interpretation and explanation for the breach of civilisation.

In the Soviet model of explanation, dictatorship and war were understood as typical forms of imperialism and its extraordinary violence as a characteristic of capitalist greed for profit and imperialist aspiration for expansion – that is, as system-based. Anti-Jewish and anti-Slavic racism was subsumed under anti-Bolshevik ideology, interpreted as part of the struggle against socialism as a world order. That the (intelligent) German workers did not oppose but instead participated was explained by the theory of manipulation: they were deceived, manipulated, seduced, against their own real interests. But how could this be achieved so comprehensively?

In the American discourse, social-psychological explanations were prevalent. They assumed a German social character, which arose from centuries of imprinting on obe-

dience to authority, subservience, and feelings of superiority, which were systematically trimmed into the German people by kings, philosophers, and poets and finally merged into blood and flesh. The Americans were also convinced of the manipulation thesis. The National Socialists' propaganda seemed to have been extremely effective. That something like this was accepted or even shared by the (smart) bourgeois-liberal elites needed explanation.

How can these two, here very roughly characterized patterns of interpretation be recognized in the narratives of the here discussed films? In contrast to documentary films, where explanations of this kind were argued through by a narrative voice from offstage and underpinned with corresponding images, feature films are committed to a dramatic structure and thus inevitably more ambiguous. However, most striking are not the differences but the similarities in *mise-en-scène*:

Firstly, the element of violence dominates in the representation of the Germans. On the level of the figures, it appears individually motivated, based on personal convictions or pathological sadism. But on the level of the atmospheric violence, it gains a systemic character, is paradigmatically inscribed in the National Socialist regime and is based on the ideology of racial superiority.

Second, similar narratives of resistance are developed. They range from silence and evasion to denial of obedience and disagreement and finally to sabotage, murder and active military action. Any form of resistance is dangerous and can end in death; the protagonists take a high risk. At the same time, the resistance is presented as inevitable. German power is so dominant and repressive, the breach of civilisation so profound and so destructive for one's own life, the National Socialist ideology so unacceptable and intolerable that dignity can only be regained through resistance. From the Soviet perspective, political resistance is emphasized; from the American perspective, national identity is in the foreground. But this seems to be the only difference.

The narratives of violence and resistance can be found in all the films considered here, regardless of where the story takes place, whether in Germany, the Soviet Union or Western Europe, regardless of whether they are German Communists, Ukrainian women, Polish Jews or Italian children and regardless of the perspective from which the films are made. This indicates that they are powerful *dispositif* within which different discourse positions with limited reach have unfolded. In the Foucaultian sense, which understands a *dispositif* as a kind of formation whose primary function at a given historical time had been to respond to a state of emergency ("urgence"),¹⁴ the strategic role of the *dispositif* of

14 Cf. Michel Foucault, *Dispositive der Macht. Über Sexualität, Wissen und Wahrheit*, Berlin 1978, pp. 119–120.

violence and resistance consists in securing the alliance against National Socialism across ideological and system boundaries. This was an indispensable prerequisite for winning the war against Germany. And even after the war, the dispositif of violence and resistance was essential, for it ensured moral survival in the post-war period and formed the basis for a new beginning. It offered strategies for many people to deal with their shame about failure, cowardice and timidity. For the films showed the effort and courage that it had meant to defend oneself or even to stay decent.

The films discussed here did something indispensable as an art form in and for the confrontations of their time and in particular for dealing with these horrific experiences of violence: they offered viewers a sounding board for their own experiences and thus survival strategies. They did this primarily for the victims of National Socialism; they helped them to legitimize their survival: the emigrants, the survivors of the concentration camps, the many small people who had somehow fiddled through and also the resistance fighters who had risked not only their own lives but also those of many uninvolved people. But in the land of the perpetrators, the films had no chance. In the dispositif of violence and resistance they took the other side.