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GDR Films

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Mr. Peet has never before visited the United States but has made many successful lecture tours of England.

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GDR FILMS

The following information on GDR Films, which were announced in previous issues of the Bulletin, is reproduced from the January 1976 calendar of the Pacific Film Archive which was sent to us by John Hess, editor of Jump Cut, A Review of Contemporary Cinema. Films can be rented beginning March, 1976 through Audio Brandon, 34 MacQuesten Parkway, Mount Vernon, N.Y. 10550.

FILMS FROM THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC 1946-1974

Presented in Association with The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and By Special Arrangement with the State Film Archives of the G.D.R., DEFA (the G.D.R. Film Industry), and MacMillan Audio Brandon Films. American distributors of most of the films in this series.

This series of 21 films from the German Democratic Republic will be presented throughout January and February 1976; the films were selected by the Museum of Modern Art's film curator, Adrienne Mancina, who wrote the following introduction to the Cinema of the G.D.R.:

"On September 4, 1974, nearly thirty years after the Second World War, the United States and the German Democratic Republic formally established diplomatic relations. Whatever image we have of the GDR comes from media other than cinema, for only three or four of the productions from East Germany have opened in movie houses in the United States—and that was in the late forties.

"This program of selected films (from approximately 600 feature films produced to date) begins with the first feature of the new German Democratic Republic, *THE MURDERERS ARE AMONG US*, and includes the most recent productions. The selection offers a rare opportunity to discover significant images and themes of a nationalized socialist industry. These cinematic signals make no pretense at objectivity—what national cinema ever did?—but we can nevertheless glean valuable information about the value system and concerns operating in that country. If we remember the tremendous problems facing the German Democratic Republic after the holocaust of the war, we can appreciate the monumental task not only of rebuilding a nation devastated morally and physically, but also the challenge of educating a people to a particular socialist viewpoint. This fundamental didactic need for a new political education permeates all aspects of the form and content of this cinema. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that this is a cinema shaped by the force of a political ideology.

"German cinema had been one of the major world cinemas. At the end of the war, few of its veteran contributors remained in the country. The film industry was nationalized under DEFA (Deutsche Film-Aktien-Gesellschaft), and the primary task of reconstruction was essentially anti-fascist; with slight variations, this awareness can be traced through most GDR films as late as 1968 (*FAREWELL AND I WAS 19*). Under this very broad category of films that endeavored to forge a new historical consciousness, certain themes seem to have priority: the reconciliation of feelings of loss and outrage within a new, intricate social situation; an exploration of the recent and not-so-recent past for the economic and psychological seeds of fascism; the reprehensible results of a politics of racism; the complex problems of rehabilitation and reconstruction; the workers' movement as a force for resistance to oppression and injustice; the examination of education as a bourgeois tool to mold a conformist,

militarist society. Even such classics as Richard Wagner's *THE FLYING DUTCHMAN*, Georg Büchner's *WOZZECK*, and E. T. A. Hoffman's *THE DEVIL'S ELIXIR* are recreated from a socialist point of view. Thus the socialist realism of East German cinema can be studied as a cultural extension of a government that had the enormous task of unifying a shattered nation and declared its belief in a democratic, humanist society constructed on the firm foundation of socialism. It is not the purpose of this program to question the reality of these commitments, but it is necessary to consider these stated national goals since they are reflected in the cut and fabric of the cinema from the German Democratic Republic.

"Since 1969, more attention has been paid to relevant contemporary problems: marriage, education, and the re-education of juvenile delinquents, unwed mothers and fathers, the responsibility of young people. One of the more interesting recent films, *THE NAKED MAN IN THE PLAYING FIELD*, by the experienced director Konrad Wolf, meditates on the role of the artist and his relation to the community for which he creates. This personal, psychological film attempts to deal with an inner as well as an external reality, and in so doing may foreshadow another trend in the cinematic future of the German Democratic Republic.

THE MURDERERS ARE AMONG US (DIE MORDERER SIND UNTER UNS)

The first great German post-war film, Wolfgang Staudte's *THE MURDERERS ARE AMONG US*, emphasizes one of the most difficult problems facing the nation—the former war criminal who, after the war, makes himself a model citizen in the hope that his record while in uniform will be forgotten. The film was conceived and scripted by Staudte himself, and was remarkable not only for its subject, a significant one for the period, but also for its use of the ruins of Berlin, its sparse music score by Ernst Roters, and perhaps above all for the performance of a young actress new to the screen, Hildegard Knef, who played Susanna. The film is full of imaginatively visualized moments, created out of a deep experience which the film-maker shares with his characters. (Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, *The German Cinema*) With Ernst Wilhelm Borchert. (1946, 84 mins, 35mm, English titles)

JACOB THE LIAR

The first film from the G.D.R. to win a prize at the Berlin Film Festival (Best Actor award in 1975 for Czech actor Vlastimil Brodsky), *JACOB THE LIAR* was hailed in the American trade journal *Variety* as "an adult fable for the mass audience and a major breakthrough that should find its public everywhere." Writing in the British journal *Films and Filming*, Ken Wlaschin considered *JACOB THE LIAR* "surprisingly enjoyable in its presentation of the adventures of an old man in a Warsaw ghetto in 1943 and his success in keeping people alive and happy by pretending to hear good news on a non-existent radio, Brodsky's one-man imitation of the BBC for an inquisitive small girl is sheer delight, including an interview with Winston Churchill and full symphonic concert." The screenplay is adapted by Jurek Becker, from his own novel, shortly to be published in the U.S. by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; Becker and his father were the only members of their family to survive the ghetto and concentration camps. Directed by Frank Beyer. (1974, 95 mins, 35mm, English titles)

WOZZECK

In their history of *The German Cinema*, Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel note of the first post-war DEFA films: "Films with a freer, more fantastic style were also being produced. *WOZZECK* (1947), based on Büchner's dramatic fragment about the victimized Prussian private soldier, was directed successfully by Georg C. Klaren in a near-surrealist style, with Kurt Meisel as Wozzeck." In his adaptation, Klaren added a framing story in which Georg Büchner appears to explain his "Wozzeck"; in addition the end of the dramatic fragment has been changed—Wozzeck is sentenced to death. Nonetheless, West German critic Harald-Dieter Budde is not alone in considering this *WOZZECK* "one of the most expressive and artistically valuable post-war films." (1947, 96 mins, 35mm, English titles)

MARRIAGE IN THE SHADOWS (EHE IM SCHATTEN)

The premiere of *MARRIAGE IN THE SHADOWS* took place October 3, 1947, simultaneously in all of the four occupation zones of Berlin. It opened in New York in 1948, and remains one of the most successful post-war German films. The screenplay was based on the tragic story of the marriage of the actor Joachim Gottschalk and his Jewish wife, the actress Meta Wolff, who were driven by persecution under the Nazis to commit suicide together during the war. Directed by Kurt Maetzig. With Paul Klinger, Ilse Stappart, Alfred Bathoif. (1947, 96 mins, 35mm, English titles)

THE BLUM AFFAIR (AFFARE BLUM)

THE BLUM AFFAIR is based on a celebrated murder trial of 1926 that carried Dreyfus-like overtones. It opened theatrically in New York in 1949 to excellent reviews. Writing in the *New York Post*, Archer Winsten commented: "THE BLUM AFFAIR is an extraordinarily perfect picture. Regarded simply as a detective story, it has tremendous pace and excitement. It moves in a direct, hard line of narration without the local adornments of art or atmosphere. But it is not simply a detective story... It was a local Dreyfus Case, and all the elements that were to blossom so hideously under Hitler are here shown in their earlier setting. Thus the structure of crime and detection is reinforced with the steel of social comment." Directed by Erich Engel. With Hans Christian Blech, Gisela Frowe, Kurt Ehrhardt, Arno Paulsen. (1948, 109 mins, 35mm, English titles)

ROTATION

The destiny of a single working class family under the Nazis is the theme of *ROTATION*, which begins in the 20s, a time of crushing unemployment, and ends in the inferno in Berlin in May 1945. In 1949, the G.D.R. paper *Neues Deutschland* criticized the film for ending abruptly in 1945, without an indication of the new horizons of the future. However the same reviewer praised Wolfgang Staudte's direction for avoiding: "without exception, any editorializing... and the pitfalls of the banal." With Paul Kser, Irene Korb, Karl-Heinz Dieckert. (1949, 83 mins, 35mm, English titles)

STRONGER THAN THE NIGHT (STARKER ALS DIE NACHT)

According to French film historian Georges Sadoul, this film deals with "the clandestine resistance of an anti-Fascist against the Nazis, soon after Hitler's rise to power. It ends with his arrest and execution. This is one of the best East German films: beautiful, quietly moving, and totally ungratuitous in its effects." Directed by Slatan Dudow, who is best known in this country for his collaboration with Brecht on the 1932 film KUHLE WAMPE. With Heiga Goring, Kurt Ohgmuller. (1954, 112 mins, 35mm, English titles)

THE SUBMISSIVE (DER UNTERTAN)

An expressionistic satire, THE SUBMISSIVE is an adaptation of Heinrich Mann's novel about the "little superman" type in German culture: specifically the anti-hero of Mann's denunciation of the ruling class in late 19th Century Germany is the "lackey" Diedrich Hessling—who, as a child, lives in terror of his parents, his teachers and other schoolboys. As an adolescent, Diedrich determines that he will make others tremble before him. His further rise is chronicled in a fast-paced, visually experimental narrative. With Werner Peters, Paul Esser, Blandine Ebinger. (1951, 107 mins, 35mm, English titles)

LISSY

One of the few good DEFA films of the late 1950s, LISSY was reviewed in Variety in 1957, where Gene Moscovitz observed: "It examines the early growth of Nazism via a poor family during 1932-34. Ideological aspects do not swamp a growing drama of awareness, and the people remain real to give this a jolting effect... Lissy is a young girl whose weak husband turns to the Nazis when he is unable to find work. Film details her hatred of Nazism and her final desertion from her husband because of it as it grows into a scourge." Directed by Konrad Wolf. With Sonja Sutter, Horst Drinda. (1957, 88 mins, 35mm, English titles)

THEY CALLED HIM AMIGO (SIE NANNTEN IHN AMIGO)
The scenario for THEY CALLED HIM AMIGO deals with a fifteen year old boy—known as Amigo—who has rescued an escaped resistance fighter and is himself dragged off to a concentration camp. Director Heiner Carow proves extremely skilled in his handling of children, in this and in his later films THE LEGEND OF PAUL AND PAULA and ICARUS. With Ernst-Georg Schwill, Erich Franz. (1959, 62 mins, 35mm, English titles)

FILMS FROM THE GDR FOR RENTAL

The following films were among those listed in the Newsletter of the U.S. Committee for Friendship with the GDR, 130 East Sixth St. New York, N.Y. 10003 as being available for rent. Price listed does not include postage.

MAN IS AT THE CENTER OF ALL EFFORT (English)
Health care in the GDR. (15 min.) \$5.00

COURSE NORTH EAST (English) Water sports, training of sailors, water sport school. (15 min.) \$5.00

UND DEINE LIEBE AUCH (German) A feature film from the early sixties, portraying two brothers reacting in opposite ways to the building of the wall in Berlin. Interesting political and psychological study of that period. 90 min. \$15.00

ICH WAR 19 (German) A feature film of the last days of the war. The son of an anti-fascist German returning with a unit of the Red Army to Germany. Directed by Konrad Wolf. 120 min. \$15.00

I WAS THERE (English) An extravaganza about the World Youth Festival in Berlin, 1973. 50 min. \$10.00

25 YEARS GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (English)
<https://newprairiepress.org/gdr/vol2/iss1/4>
A 25th anniversary of the GDR in its 25 years of
DOI:10.4148/gdr.v2n1.323

existence and the celebration. 25 min. \$5.00

WEIMAR IS WORTH A VISIT (English) Presents the epoch of German Classicism and preserves its wealth of literature. It shows education of modern man, the progressing literature, the fine arts and philosophy of the period between 1750 and 1850. The Weimar National Research and Memorial Center of the classical German literature is featured. 40 min. \$10.00

MUSEUM CITY BERLIN (English) 30 min. \$10.00

LEIPZIG (English) About the founding of the city, fair, Bach, St. Thomas Church, Goethe and other celebrities, the old and new universities, etc. 30 min. \$10.00

THEIR OWN FACTORY (English) Features workers of an Automobile Works in a small town south of Berlin, the everyday events and the festive highlights in the life of a socialist work-team. Members of the team give their views on the co-determination and responsibility of workers in the GDR. 40 min. \$10.00

EVERYTHING LIES IN THEIR POWER (English)
Developments and prospects of the intellectual and cultural life of the working class and the integration of culture and art in all spheres of social life. The film conveys an idea of the way of living and the living conditions of GDR citizens and makes visible the scope of the concept of culture in a socialist country. 40 min. \$10.00

GESTERN WAREN SIE NOCH KINDER (German) Youth in a small town of an agricultural cooperative. 40 min. \$10.00

UNSER LAND DIE DDR (German) A beautiful tour through the scenic beauty of the country. 40 min. \$10.00

ZWISCHENFALL IN BENDERATH (German) Feature film. 90 min. \$15.00

THEN AND NOW (English) This documentary is dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the defeat of German fascism, with vivid scenes up to the present. 40 min. \$10.00

GDR MAGAZINE (English) SOCIALIST INVENTORS. Within one year seven million Marks were saved by inventions of workers at the GDR nationally owned enterprises. CONFLICT COMMISSIONS. Within the framework of work teams at the nationally owned enterprises, conflict commissions work as social courts. As organs of socialist jurisdiction they are formed by direct ballots. SOCIALIST

DEMOCRACY. At Guben young people have a problem. In the solution of this problem they are supported by their local people's representative bodies. 25 min. \$5.00

TRAVEL AND EXCHANGE

STUDY TOUR IN THE GDR

A unique study tour which focuses on the relation between church and state in the GDR and visits most of the places significant in Luther's Reformation will be conducted by Dr. Carl and Mildred Soule, June 28 to July 19, 1976. The Soules have led many tours to Eastern Europe, five of them to the GDR. Now retired from the United Methodist Office for the United Nations, Soule was one of the founding members of the American Society for the Study of the GDR and served as its president for two years. Currently he is a member of the Working Committee of the Christian Peace Conference (headquartered in Prague) and represents that organization at the UN. In the GDR the group will be served by Carl Ordnung, a special assistant to Gerald Gotting, head of the CDU and secretary of the Christian Peace Conference, and Rev. Martin Lange, pastor of a Berlin suburban church and chairman of the interdenominational Youth Council of the GDR. These two men will be responsible for contacts and conferences with persons in all walks of life.

The tour will include stops in Berlin, Potsdam, Magdeburg, Halle, Wittenberg, Leipzig, Erfurt, Weimar, Eisenach (Wartburg), Meissen and Dresden, with time divided equally between sightseeing, conferences with religious leaders and meetings with political officials. The tour fee of \$1250 includes air transportation from New York, bus transportation within the GDR, all hotel rooms and meals, excluding gratuities and beverages. Those who wish to continue the tour beyond the GDR into another country of Eastern Europe may do so at additional cost by contacting the travel service or the Soules. Mail requests for reservations or information to Dr. and Mrs. Carl Soule, P.O. Box 458 Lady Lake, Florida 32659 or to Menno Travel Service, 102 East Main St., Ephrata, PA. 17522.

SPECIAL INTEREST TOURS

The U.S. Committee for Friendship with the GDR is planning for group tours to the German Democratic Republic in 1976. The tours will include person-to-person visits and on-the-spot dialogues with GDR citizens from various walks-of-life, organized around such special interests as would attract trade unionists, various professional groups, artists, academics clergy, youth and, for the summer months, German language seminars for teachers and students.

Although tours are open to anyone who is interested, sponsors of the committee enjoy special travel discounts within the GDR. Interested persons should write to: U.S. Committee for Friendship with the German Democratic Republic, 130 East 16 St. (3rd floor) New York, N.Y. 10003.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Albrecht, Richard: Marxismus--bürgerliche Ideologie--Linksradikalismus. Zur Ideologie und Sozialgeschichte des westeuropäischen Linksradikalismus. (Berlin: Akademie-Vlg., Dez. 1975).

Apitz, Bruno: Der Regenbogen. (Halle: Mitteltdt. Vlg., Jan. 1976). Bruno Apitz gestaltet das Schicksal einer proletarischen Mutter in Deutschland der Jahre 1900-1920.

Arnold, Wolf: Die mehreren Leben des Anton Josef. (Halle: Mitteltdt. Vlg., Okt. 1975). In seinen Arbeiten geht es Wolf Arnold um psychologisch interessante Seiten im Denken und Verhalten einfacher Menschen.

Beetz, Dietmar: Visite in Guiné-Bissau. (Berlin: Vlg. Neues Leben, Nov. 1975). Zwei junge Ärzte aus der DDR, Peter und Klaus, nehmen Abenteuer und Strapazen auf sich, sowie Bombenangriffe, Hunger, Malaria, und unterstützen den Kampf gegen den portugiesischen Kolonialismus.

Blumensath, Heinz/Christel Uebach: Einführung in die Literaturgeschichte der DDR. Ein Unterrichtsmodell. (Stuttgart, 1975). (=Zur Praxis des Deutschunterrichts, 5.).

Braun, Volker: Gedichte. Hrsg. und Nachwort: Chr. und W. Hartinger. 2. erweiterte Aufl. (Leipzig: Reclam Vlg., Dez., 1975).