

# The social and political role of the movie in Germany 1919-1939

Maturaarbeit 2006  
Gymnasium St. Antonius  
Appenzell

Hansi Wolf  
Schönenbühl 8  
9050 Appenzell

Supervisor:  
Josef Küng  
Schönenbühl  
9050 Appenzell



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## 1. Introduction

“The social and political role of the movie in Germany 1919-1939”. What can be made out of this subject? Why is it of interest?

Firstly this topic gives insight into the life of the interwar years or at least how it is portrayed in the movie. It shows dreams, ideals but also the problems of the people of this time. The hope for peace can be felt, the resistance against the economical crisis and the resulting unemployment can be seen and even the first tendencies to National Socialism can be recognised. This leads the film later into the net of manipulation of the Nazis with the propaganda movies as a part of the control state. The movie was at that time an important instrument of power, respectively a force that needs to be controlled and supervised. It eventually ended up as a film machinery of vast dimensions.

Furthermore, but also connected with the Third Reich, many movies nowadays aren't preserved in a complete form or only in bad quality (namely with tears, marks and stains). Their existence is often proved merely through written notes. On one hand this is because of the destruction of threatening cultural assets through the Nazis but also of the desolation of the Second World War.

Today there exist several institutions which occupy themselves with the preservation of these documents of earlier times. The 'Wilhelm Friedrich Murnau Stiftung' engages in the restoration and archiving of old movies and thus protects an important piece of culture. Many films give an interesting insight into the life of that time, moralistic values and ideals are therefore from today's point of view not mere feature films but documenting media. In addition the film industry in Germany was at that time one of the largest and most pioneering ones and created as brilliant directors as Fritz Lang, Wilhelm Friedrich Murnau and Georg Wilhelm Pabst, whose movies would remain classics.

Following statistics shall clarify the enormous popularity and therewith the influence of German movies towards the end of the 20ies. Germany counted approximately 62 million inhabitants in 1925.

year	number of visitors (in thousands)	rental companies	production companies
1925	271'492	373	297
1926	332'367	No data	327
1927	337'342	No data	328
1928	352'533	513	433
1929	328'328	475	424
1930	290'357	466	405
1931	273'113	499	425

**Statistic of the number of cinema visitors and of rental and production companies<sup>1</sup>**

year	long movies			short movies			film censorship			
	G	USA	other	G	USA	other	rated	approved	youth ban	general
1925	212	216	90	16	391	31	2'748	1'981	737	30
1926	185	216	86	4	337	16	2'768	2'098	656	14
1927	242	190	94	3	394	26	3'173	2'594	574	5
1928	224	199	94	8	422	2	3'483	2'804	668	11
1929	183	142	91	5	316	11	3'327	2'622	687	10
1930	146	79	59	1	97	7	3'037	2'644	380	7
1931	144	85	29	10	12	-	2'658	2'314	324	7

**Statistic of the produced movies in Germany, the United States and other countries and rated movies of the censorship<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Wolffsohn, Karl: Jahrbuch der Filmindustrie, Berlin 1933, und Jason, Alexander: Der Film in Ziffern und Zahlen, Berlin 1925, in: Albrecht, Gerd: Sozialgeschichte des Films, p. 361-362

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Jason: Handbuch der Filmwirtschaft, 2 Bde., Berlin 1930/32, in: Albrecht, Gerd: Sozialgeschichte des Films, p. 360-361

Germany represented a shiny example for the art of film after the First World War and outpaced qualitatively as well as quantitatively even the United States. However, the movies were exposed to a harsh censorship especially under the Third Reich. Many Films were mutilated and many are only preserved in a cut version.

My matura paper will occupy itself – the focus on the influence of the movie on the human – with the following points:

- The situation after the First World War and the launch of the UFA (Universum Film AG), which will play a decisive role in the Third Reich
- The movie and its struggle in establishing itself as a form of art in society
- The proles movies that try to portray the life of the workers with all its joy and suffering
- A confrontation of right and left winged films and the last cinematic cries for help before the Third Reich
- Propaganda of the Nazis and the UFA as a film machinery
- Leni Riefenstahl: what she created in her career before the Nazis and her role in the Third Reich

My work concentrates itself on Germany. Single movements in the movie – if not of greater relevance for the film or the people – will not be considered in particular. Also socially and politically relevant movies and genres will receive special attention.

As for my approach to the topic it is to add that I mainly based myself on the movies of the interwar years but also on literature and my survey on the propaganda movies. To get the necessary information straight out of the movies themselves was my main concern. That way the proximity to the movies and their intentions is provided and furthermore hints can be found of the zeitgeist of the interwar times. Therefore a few short reviews to the films I've seen can be found in the appendix. These give an insight into the topics of the films of that time but can also be regarded as a small film guide for interested readers.

The result of the survey on the propaganda movies can be found as well in the appendix. They mainly serve as a foundation for my interpretation of the functionality of the propaganda movies in the Third Reich.

Finally I'd like to thank Dr. Josef K ung for his indispensable supervision, support and work as a reader and the students of the matura classes who took part in the survey.

Also I'd like to thank my sister Johanna for her efforts as a reader and everyone else who has helped me with advice and support.

## 2. The years after the First World War

One could say that a cultural film movement started in Germany not until after the First World War. That's because the first actual German movie industry existed only after 1910. However, the first ever showing of a film was performed by the bioskop of the Skladanowsky brothers in Berlin the first of November 1895. With this showing the idea of commercial cinema was launched but was only followed by less widespread mobile cinemas.<sup>3</sup> However, the movie gained relevance during the First World War, namely as an instrument of propaganda. Anti German films were greatly influential on the masses abroad. In Germany however only few movies with political engagement and quality could be named. Naturally this circumstance was counteracted by the government so production companies were set up such as in 1916 the Deulig (German cinema company) and 1917 the Bufa (the ministry for pictures and movies).

As the United States entered the war and the market was flooded with American movies, the rudimentary constitution of the government wasn't sufficient anymore. General Ludendorff himself ordered in 1917 a fusion of the most important film companies and constitutions. Out of that emerged the UFA (Universum Film AG) which had the aim to succeed over the domestic production and to at least hold pace with abroad countries. After the flight of the emperor and the end of the First World War the UFA was turned into a private company.<sup>4</sup> Thus the German movie could begin to define itself and to evolve. The German film industry shall outpace the United States and receive international importance. German directors will earn fame all over the world and will be greatly demanded artists.

The German movie started mainly with the proles movies and expressionistic films which were founded with 'Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari' in 1920 by Robert Wiene.



**Img. 1: 'Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari': Dr. Caligari, his fair attraction the somnambulist Cesare and Jane**

<sup>3</sup> Kracauer, Siegfried: Von Caligari zu Hitler, p. 21

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 42-43

### 3. The sound film as a new challenge

#### 3.1 The sound film

As the sound movie was born in 1922, the audience was fascinated of this old but still new feeling medium called film. The figures on screen have learned to speak. The always with an interruption disturbing intertitles wouldn't be necessary anymore and thus belonged to the past. But soon the appeal wore off. After several sound films the magic of the new technology was gone for the audience and the low quality of the movies couldn't really convince. The outdated silent films however promised the known quality with a lot of excitement and emotions. The reason for the failure of the sound movie was its total orientation on the silent film, which then again based itself on the theatre. Like this, the potential of the sound film naturally couldn't be fully used so in the beginning only a small part of the movies were produced as sound movies and the production companies clutched more on to silent films. Anyway, the studios and the cameras as well as the technical equipment in the cinemas needed to be renewed which involved additional problems.

What's more, there were debates on how the movie should develop further as a form of art. It emerged that the sound movie should be recognised as an independent, new medium – contrary to the silent movie which oriented itself on the theatre because of the restraint of the absence of words respectively the interrupting intertitles. The theatricallity of facial expression and gestures had to replace the word in the silent film but the content was not to be cut back too much. That's why the sound films only considered attainment was the word. The usage of noises and music – to create tension or also for aspects of content – weren't considered.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Schopen, Edmund: Das Kulturproblem des Films, München 1929, in: Albrecht, Gerd: Sozialgeschichte des Films, p. 207-209

### 3.2 Film as art and as instrument of education

Besides the new sound film there were also a few other controversial points about the movie:

Is the film in fact art? Like every new medium the movie had to endure this issue. In the beginning the voices of the adversaries of the movie were loud but not later than the film 'Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari' the opposing party went silent. This movie distinguished itself as an extremely visual creation which committed itself fully to expressionism. Every single camera angle was so elaborated



**Img. 2: 'Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari':  
Cesare kidnaps Jane at night**

that the actors had to move fast during the change of position in order to not destroy the composition. The formula: "The movie image needs to become graphic!" shaped every picture and justified the medium film eventually as art.<sup>6</sup>

But the discussion went on with the educational qualities of the film. Should the movie be used even as a tool for teaching at schools?

Before the advent of television the news were shown in the cinemas. The cinema programme often consisted of a newscast followed by one or more feature films. But also the movie received recognition for its documentary value, however, it was considered as a medium for rubbish and shallow entertainment since a longer time.

To establish the didactic movie as an instrument for education and to finally eliminate the prejudices, an international congress for cinematographers was held in 1926 in Paris. Regulations and standardisation of the didactic, cultural and documentary movie as well as the general movies were discussed there. For instance a „national didactic film commission“ was to be used to classify according movies in following categories: films of research, didactic films for higher education, didactic films for elementary and high school, films for the instruction of the public (documentary film).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Dahlke, Günther und Karl, Günter: Deutsche Spielfilme, p. 39

<sup>7</sup> Imhof, Gottlieb: Internationaler Kinematographenkongress, Berlin 1927, in: Albrecht, Gerd: Sozialgeschichte des Films, p. 175

The success and the overtly approval of the didactic film can also be illustrated with the number of publications: 461 films of the category didactic, advertising and cultural films were produced in 1923, on the other hand there were 253 long and 94 short feature films. In 1925 already 1253 didactic movies were facing 212 long and 16 short feature films. In 1928 the number of didactic, advertising and cultural films was even increased on 2370 while the feature films stayed with 224 long and 8 short ones relatively on the same level.<sup>8</sup> These numbers refer only to the German movie productions.

## Zeitungsausschnitte

*Filmkritiken werden oft gesucht von neu anfangenden Organisationen, Bilderbühnen, Volksbühnen usw.*

*Filmkritiken finden sich in der Presse wie Sand am Meer. Der einzelne Zeitungsausschnitt hat wenig Bedeutung für eine objektive Beurteilung; erst die Summe vieler Aeußerungen aus den verschiedensten Lagern gibt ein anschauliches Bild. In der Sammlung*

## „Inhalt und Urteil“<sup>56</sup>

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Spezialmodelle für Schulen

Img. 3: Adverts from the book 'Kurble!':  
The film was already early considered as a  
cultural possession that needs to be archived and  
protected.

<sup>8</sup> Janson, Alexander: Zahlen sehen uns an, Berlin 1931, in: Albrecht, Gerd: Sozialgeschichte des Films, p. 353

## 4. The proletarian movie

One of the possibly most used subjects in film is the miserable life of the working class people. The grief in the proletarian quarters is depicted in many variations on the screen after the First World War. The major part of those movies portrays the life of simple people that are about to fail, may it be because of their seeming redundancy, a socially not acceptable love or the drama of the daily routine. The stories therefore often end with the death of the protagonist, mostly with suicide. However, there are also happy endings which don't want to let the audience step out of the cinema in depression and resignation but to show them that there's also another way out of the misery. Solidarity and mercy are the main slogans, the viewer shall be motivated for those virtues. In spite of democratic and sometimes communistic tendencies the proletarian movie doesn't try to impose a political opinion.

Several of those movies are based on literary works; even a few Berthold Brecht novels found their way on the screen, for example: 'Mysterien eines Frisiersalons', 1923, by Erich Engel, 'Die drei Groschen Oper', 1931, by Georg Wilhelm Pabst and 'Kuhle Wampe oder: Wem gehört die Welt?', 1932, by Slatan Dudow, who received from Brecht himself a script and who will be mentioned later. It needs to be added that the first named movie script, which was written by Brecht, showed in comparison to the play even stronger anti-capitalist criticisms. It presented itself as a whole more revolutionary, hence the film company strictly excluded Brecht from the collaboration – out of fear of problems with the censorship. Berthold Brecht couldn't win the following lawsuit.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, Berthold Brecht was more than content with his script for 'Kuhle Wampe' and wanted to fully support this political project in form of a movie. Regardless of his effort the movie never got as much response and recognition as 'Die drei Groschen Oper'.

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<sup>9</sup> Dahlke, Günther und Karl, Günter: Deutsche Spielfilme, p. 247

A thematically very intense movie, which also serves as a perfect example of the proletarian movie, is 'Scherben', 1921, by Lupu Pick. This film's focus is on a signal man's family who lives in the regular monotony of the daily routine from which they'll never free themselves. However, as an inspector requests for accommodation in the signal man's house and is permitted to stay there, the daughter can't resist the charm of the noble but arrogant inspector. By surprise the mother finds the couple together and flees thereon to a saint image at the edge of the woods and, plagued by sorrow, freezes to death in the snow. The daughter however tries to stick to the inspector who repulses her gruffly. She avenges herself by telling her father about the incidents, who in the mean time found the corpse of his wife. He strangles the inspector and confesses his act in front of passengers of a train in transit. The daughter is driven by madness and strays like a fury through the land. The final image are the shards, which allegorises the broken lower-class universe.

With 'Scherben' Lupu Pick wanted to form an antipole against the expressionistic movie, whose foundation was 'Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari'. "In my movies", so Lupu Pick, "I try to overcome the expressionistic delirium and to inspire myself more from the everyday process of life. The technology concerns me aswell to a specific degree like the decoration; what interests me most however is the drama of the small people."<sup>10</sup> For the directors of the proletarian movies it is unreasonable to concern themselves with art, symbols and fantastic stories if the conflict starts in front of the own door with the common people. No matter how visionary, artistically path-breaking and thematically sinister 'Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari' was, the film makers of the proletarian movies criticised it and demonstratively tried to stick truthfully to reality.



**Img. 4: 'Scherben': Father and daughter after the death of the mother**

<sup>10</sup> Dahlke, Günther und Karl, Günter: Deutsche Spielfilme, p. 54

Another proletarian movie is 'Die freudlose Gasse', 1925, by Georg Wilhelm Pabst. The story centres itself on the alley "Melchiorgasse" in Vienna and gives an insight into the various social classes: the proletarians, the middle-class and the rich. The differences are depicted unvarnished in direct leaps from the foyer of a luxurious hotel to the women queuing in front of the butchers in the Melchiorgasse. Only in the as a clothing store camouflaged night club the classes mix in form of voluptuous, decadent rich men and the poor, bewitching girls. Hunger, poverty and prostitution is thematised in 'Die freudlose Gasse'. Because of its direct reference to reality the movie is counted to one of the first films of the Neuen Sachlichkeit.<sup>11</sup>

Some well known and expressive women can be found among the main cast. Greta Garbo, whom later awaits a steep path in her career, acts the daughter of the court counsellor. Greta Garbo is one of the greatest movie legends which Hollywood ever produced.

The persona of Mizzi, who flees from her parents, is played by Asta Nielsen. She acted in many other proletarian movies like in 1927 in 'Dirnentragödie' by Bruno Rahn.

The proletarian movies show a strong link to the literary naturalism and realism. Their ambition is – like in literature – to analyse social problems broadly and precisely. Like in naturalism the realisation of the idea is less affected by artistic ambitions than by detailed approach.

Also the Neue Sachlichkeit can be found in the proletarian movies, for example like mentioned before in 'Die freudlose Gasse'.

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<sup>11</sup> Dahlke, Günther und Karl, Günter: Deutsche Spielfilme, p. 116

## 5. The last liberal movies and the first national socialist movies

### 5.1 Conservative movies

However, soon strong right tendencies showed up: In the movie this expresses itself in the much debated 'Fridericus Rex' film series of the UFA, which is centered around the Prussian king Friedrich II. The four part series started in 1922 with 'Fridericus Rex' and ended in 1930 with 'Das Flötenkonzert von Sanssouci'. There were even demonstrations and protests at the screening of the last named movie.<sup>12</sup> Although the film neither directly represents an ideology nor makes postulations, it still shows an undeniable sympathy towards the anachronistic circumstances of a monarchy and the conservative thinking. The UFA committed itself to further "right winged movies", since they promised more profit due to a bigger audience.

At any rate, 'Das Flötenkonzert von Sanssouci' provoked fierce discussions between left and right wingers what actually made the film famous in the first place. Monarchistic-conservative thinking was read into it, others saw heroic glossiness in the actually neutrally told historic story.

Disgusted by those political debates some cinema visitors demanded on the movie to become art again and to serve as a form of expression: "[...] as for we stand in for the depoliticisation of the cinema. It's not the the cinemas job to flame up political differences. We want art and no politics!"<sup>13</sup> A few years later the movie will almost solely be abused as a political instrument of power in Germany.



**Img. 5:** Advertisement poster of 'Das Flötenkonzert von Sanssouci'

<sup>12</sup> Dahlke, Günther und Karl, Günter: Deutsche Spielfilme, p. 240

<sup>13</sup> 'Potemkin' in Front; Artikel der LICHTBILD-BÜHNE, Berlin 1926, in: Albrecht, Gerd: Sozialgeschichte des Films, p. 142

## 5.2 Liberal movies



**Img. 6: 'Mädchen in Uniform':  
Manuela with Fräulein von Bernburg**

discipline and a strict education to „soldier mothers“ are set in contrast to the female sexuality and the underlying homoerotic. The actually very lively and bright girls are forced into anachronistic woman roles and have to live according to obsolete shibboleths. The individual breaks over the inflexible, conservative beliefs of the society, like here the school girl who won't be accepted because of her love to the much idolised teacher. Not only mentionable but even remarkable is that almost the whole film crew consisted of women who, because of the financial limitations, received their wage not until the movie made money in the cinemas.<sup>14</sup>

As a counter movement to the conservative 'Fridericus Rex' movies there were a couple of jolting liberal movies. Such a film is 'Mädchen in Uniform', 1931, by Leontine Sagan. The story is about the life of a girl that suffers under the unmerciful small mindedness of the boarding school in which she's forced to live after the death of her parents. The only person that can soothe her desperation is her school mistress and supervisor of the dormitory assigned to her. Militarism in form of steely



**Img. 7: ‚Metropolis‘**

seemingly senseless work. That provides the industry with the necessary impulse – and the magnates can wallow in money. The guiding principle that gets cited over and over again in the movie is the “unification of heart and brain”. Fritz Lang here-with wants to express that the society as a structure is an own entity that can exist neither without the labourer (represented by the heart) nor without the industry

Especially Fritz Lang tried over and over again to point out injustice and social perversion and to reveal dark visions. Thus the science fiction movie 'Metropolis', 1927, hits the ravages of time: Metropolis, the flourishing superindustrial city appears to be wonderful and perfectly well functioning from the outside, but in fact it's a total Moloch. While the beautiful and rich in the “eternal gardens” high above the town enjoy their lives, the labourers have to do their miserable,

<sup>14</sup> Toeplitz, Jerzy: Geschichte des Films Band 2, p. 218

Dahlke, Günther und Karl, Günter: Deutsche Spielfilme, p. 279



**Img. 8: 'Metropolis': Industrial magnate and the scientist in front of the devilish machine**

ishes but shall be rebuilt with the “unification of heart and brain”.

tycoons (the brain). Therefore every part should have equal rights. This injustice is made clear in form of a human machine, which, as a Doppelgänger of a Mary like resistance leader, is supposed to protect the present system. This machine represents on one side the industrial and technological progress but is at the same time linked with the infernality. Her place of origin is furnished with an upside down (that means baneful) pentagram. The demonic charm of this Doppelgänger brings chaos to Metropolis. The super city per-

Another movie of Fritz Lang, 'M – Mörder unter uns' (engl. 'M – Murders among us'), 1931, shocked the Nazis with its title and worked up a sweat for the censorship. For this reason the movie became famous with the other title 'Eine Stadt sucht ihren Mörder' (engl. 'A city searches its murderer'). However, the movie remained thematically at a social criticism and the question of justice and injustice.



**Img. 9: 'M – Mörder unter uns': The child murderer discovers terrified the mark “M” on his back**

While the title 'M – Mörder unter uns' suggested very anti national socialist tendencies, the movie stays away from political subjects in its content. 'Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse', 1933, should pursue exactly the other way. It's actually a continuation of 'Mabuse der Spieler', 1922. The second "Mabuse" continues the story of the first part and narrates about the villain, who now leads a group of criminals out of the psychiatry to rise the "reign of crime". "Humanity needs to be thrown into an abyss of terror", demands Mabuse. The parallels to Hitler are unmistakable. Fritz Lang commented about that in 1943 in a film foreword of the American premiere:



**Img. 10: 'Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse': Mabuse with his dangerous, mesmerising gaze**

„This movie should – like in a parable – point out Hitlers methods of terror. The paroles and articles of faith of the Third Reich are laid here into the mouth of criminals. With that I hoped to tear away the mask of the teachings behind which hid the will to destruction of all what's precious to the people.“<sup>15</sup> 'Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse' was Fritz Langs last movie in Germany. He left for America and refused offers from the Nazis for work as a director.

<sup>15</sup> Dahlke, Günther und Karl, Günter: Deutsche Spielfilme, p. 318

Another, at that sinister time like a jewel twinkling film is the 1932 released 'Kuhle Wampe oder: Wem gehört die Welt?' by the Bulgarian Slatan Dudow and Berthold Brecht as script writer. It tells the story of a girl whose brother kills himself because of his unemployment and the resulting pressure of the parents. After that the family is forced to move out of their accommodation, for which the rent has been due since months. Their only alternative is the workers camp "Kuhle Wampe".



**Img. 11: 'Kuhle Wampe': Workers with the bicycle in search of a vacancy**

In 'Kuhle Wampe oder: Wem gehört die Welt?' the simple workers are in the centre. They meet at a sport festival, sing songs about solidarity and sacrifice their last spare money for their association and its members. After the sport festival the workers take the city rail back home. A newspaper report about the burning of coffee in Brazil arouses a fierce political discussion in the train. Conservative, obviously wealthier passengers argue with the young workers about the sense and nonsense of this action. One of the workers points at the passengers, says that none of these people will change the world: "And this gentleman here, he won't change the world either. He likes it the way it is anyway." "And who will change it?", asks that man back. "Those who don't like it.", replies a worker colleague to that.

'Kuhle Wampe' doesn't take up the goal to show the need and poorness of the working class but opposes the Materialism with the Socialism and stresses the strength and the solidarity of the proletariat. Additionally, the movie shows hidden reactionary tendencies: The sport festival has got traits of a revolutionary action, the film seems to call for deeds. Even if directors like Fritz Lang and Georg Wilhelm Pabst were awaited with a great resonance for their movies, they never made it to advance further with the content than with an ironic closing sentence or a big question mark. Therefore 'Kuhle Wampe' tread on new land: The film goes up to the fronts with its conclusion, manages to make a clear and direct call for a change.

'Kuhle Wampe' was forbidden after its first release, but was allowed to be shown for a short time in a new cut version. However, already during the shooting there were actions of the Nazis to prevent the filming, but in vain on account of sympathising communists.<sup>16</sup> Hertha Thiele plays like in 'Mädchen in Uniform' the main character.

Despite those last warning movies, a political shift to the right in Germany couldn't be prevented, although the film was considered as an effective means of expression. It was even attributed to be able to establish ties: At an international convention of film associations – in 1923, with participation of the UFA – the then active Imperial Chancellor Stresemann formulated his conception of the political, international en-

<sup>16</sup> Dokumentarfilm zu ‚Kuhle Wampe oder: Wem gehört die Welt?‘

deavours: “The task of a nation is to unite civilisation and culture to an ideal whole”.<sup>17</sup> Those motifs, continues Stresemann, were followed by the film 'Die Nibelungen', 1922, by Fritz Lang, who would be able to accomplish even more: “Out of this reason I hope that this film will become an elected medium to bring closer the people of the world and to be a brick in this big bridge, which bridges the inner life, the intellect from us to all other nations.”<sup>18</sup>

Under the Nazis however, the film received a totally new interpretation. With the



**Img. 12: 'Die Nibelungen': Siegfried with dwarf king Alberich**

background music of Richard Wagner the film was abused as a race propaganda because of its folkish aspects. Epic images and heroism gave the rest for the film's popularity in the Third Reich. The author Edmund Schopen on the other hand responds to this bridge building aspect of 'Nibelungen' in his text about “The problematic aspect of the film”, especially in the context of a documentary movie about the life of the

Eskimos: “They created out of themselves a 'new art', which from the innermost of its nature demanded the new notion of humanity as a requirement as well an aim with necessity to the living condition just like the technology of the culturally bonding transports from the steam boat to the aeroplane, from the cable to the radio programme. Radio and film, listening to the radio and watching television abolished the illusion of the separation of the people and the distance of the continents. They made us being at home everywhere. And further than that the film created a new supranational pictorial language of the thought, which bridged the division of language and became an exoteric world pulpit of ideas.”<sup>19</sup> The film is thus capable of connecting ideals with art and culture and to bring closer the people of the world. Despite the earnest effort of film makers the ascendancy of the National Socialists couldn't be prevented. A such uneven fight wasn't to be won in any case. From now on the film will forfeit several years of its freedom.

<sup>17</sup> Fraenkel, Heinrich: Der Wendepunkt; Artikel der LICHTBILD-BÜHNE, Berlin 1924, in: Albrecht, Gerd: Sozialgeschichte des Films, p. 103

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p. 103-104

<sup>19</sup> Schopen, Edmund: Das Kulturproblem des Films, München 1929, in: Albrecht, Gerd: Sozialgeschichte des Films p. 209-210

## 6. The National Socialist film

### 6.1 The UFA

The big beginning in the Nazi propaganda made the UFA, whose onsets are described in the first chapter. It started with the 'Fridericus Rex' film series, which brought in much money because of its conservative colouring. It went further with Alfred Hugenberg, a rich businessman, who bought up and commercially rehabilitated the UFA during an economic crisis. He was the chairman of the "German National People's Party" as well, which transformed later to the NSDAP, and adjusted the UFA, to bring together two threads, to his politics. This for example was the case in 1930 with the film 'Der blaue Engel' by Josef von Sternberg, which already provided problems since it was based on Heinrich Manns 'Professor Unrat'. A film version of the novel "by a man of the left wing and markedly enemy of the political line Hugenbergs [...] was, mildly said, a bold undertaking".<sup>20</sup> However, the UFA was still too much profit oriented than politically, why such a collaboration was even possible at all. But later on the UFA should devote its entire interest to the state, how it was declared by the UFA in the annual general meeting of 1932.<sup>21</sup>

Already at that time the status of the UFA was immense. The UFA owned a four halls including sound studio which was build in 1930 and had means of 115 theatres in Germany until the autumn of 1931 as well as the widest rental business which provided over two thousand sound film theatres. In both the years 1930 and 1931 twenty UFA films came to the showing. Therefore the UFA was a huge trust which contained subsidiary companies; 6 production businesses, 5 rental companies, 37 theatre companies, 19 foreign subsidiaries and 4 other firms.<sup>22</sup>

Other film trusts on the other hand were dispersed or nationalised and absorbed by the UFA. The smaller companies were swallowed by the UFA so that in the Third Reich one can speak of a centralised film industry. This should, supported by the censorship, provide control over this medium to prevent criticism of the system. The German film art had to experience an enormous set back in the Third Reich.



Img. 13:  
Old and new logo of the Universum Film AG

<sup>20</sup> Toeplitz, Jerzy: Geschichte des Films Band 2, p. 195

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. 200

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, p. 193

## 6.2 Lack of directors

What the politics demanded from the film described the National Socialist politician and home secretary Wilhelm Frick as following: “There are so many possibilities for films which educate the people to what we need so urgently today: decency, discipline and strength for defending.” As a perfect example he named the 'Fridericus Rex' film 'Das Flötenkonzert von Sanssouci'.<sup>23</sup>

However, it was hard to get hold of competent directors which committed themselves to National Socialism. Furthermore, most of the renowned, German directors fled to abroad countries. Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau emigrated to America already in advance, film makers like Fritz Lang, Slatan Dudow and Richard Siodmak went into exile at the latest of Hitlers takeover. Another director, Georg Wilhelm Pabst, planned on going abroad as well. He however stayed out of necessity in Germany because of the outbreak of the war during a visit at his relatives and started shooting movies for the Bavaria Filmstudios. His following films didn't carry a political message anymore and couldn't come near to the quality of his earlier movies.



**Img. 14: Fritz Lang**

The Nazis though wouldn't tolerate Fritz Langs departure. They made an offer to the director to work for the National Socialism. He however refused, particularly because his last and at the same time politically precarious film 'Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse' was banned in Germany so that the whole thing could be a trap. With his escape from Germany he left his wife, Thea von Harbou, who committed herself to the National Socialism and was further active in the film industry. It should be noted that she wrote the script for 'Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse'.

<sup>23</sup> Toeplitz, Jerzy: Geschichte des Films Band 2, p. 203

### 6.3 The mode of action of the National Socialist movie



**Img. 15: 'Hitlerjunge Quex': Quex proudly looks at himself with the given cap in the mirror**

Due to the lack of capable directors the first qualitative acceptable Nazi films were a long time coming. One of the first films that had been praised even by politicians was 'Hitlerjunge Quex' by Hans Steinhoff 1933. It's the story of a boy who grows up in a communist milieu but who joins the Nazis. On an excursion with the communists he gets confronted with the Nazis for the first time. From the first moment he's fascinated by their appearance. Later on he wants to hook up with them what eventually

succeeds after some complications. Brawls with the communists start, who want to avenge the treason of the boy who changed sides and they kill him. The story is based on a novel about true events. The film as well as the book celebrated a big success. Especially the youth but even more the Hitler Youth found an ideal in 'Hitlerjunge Quex' which they could emulate.

Within the scope of the matura paper I've done a survey in two school classes about the two National Socialist movies 'Hitlerjunge Quex' and 'Feldzug in Polen', 1938, by Fritz Hippler. The questions, further details and the complete results can be found in the appendix.

The survey yielded quite clearly that both films agitate on a very manipulative level. There's a great stress on dramaturgy and spectacular scenes, like one third of the respondents stated. More than every second named the representation of the Nazis or respectively the Germans as if they're the good ones, on the other hand the enemies (Communists, England and Poland) as evil. While the propaganda in 'Hitlerjunge Quex' can be seen in a rather naive kind of illustration of the two political enemies 'Feldzug in Polen' goes a different way. As a documentary film it seems apparently truthful, which 'Feldzug in Polen' is not at all. Racism and Nationalism dominate every word and try to incite the audience in the most primitive way. The big gaps in the coverage and the totally questionable illustration of war make the film an instrument of manipulation.

The means of effect of the National Socialist movie can be therefore described as follows:

Grandiose staging, spectacular images and dramatic music are meant to impress but also to distract from deeper reasons, coherences and possible points of criticism. This dramatic aesthetics are especially used in the in the films of Leni Riefenstahl. The political enemies are characterised with bad attributes in the sense of creating the concept of the enemy. The Nazis and the Germans are on the other hand glorified and placed above everyone else. Furthermore, the film adapts the whole National Socialist aesthetics with the usage of symbols such as the swastika and fire, the uniform fetishism, heroism and fanaticism. An emulation to the Soviet films can be seen in the German propaganda films despite their different politics. So was for example 'Panzerkreuzer Potemkin', 1925, by Sergej Eisenstein a very popular movie among the Nazis, which they used as a template for their propaganda.

## 6.4 Leni Riefenstahl

One of the most important and gifted characters of the National Socialist film was Leni Riefenstahl. She was one out of the small amount of talented film makers of the Third Reich, especially since most of the German artist fled into exile. Already in 1925 she participated for the first time in the movies as an actress in 'Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit – Ein Film über moderne Körperkultur' by Nicholas Kaufmann. A series of alpinist films followed: 'Der heilige Berg', 1926, by Arnold Fanck and 'Die weisse Hölle vom Piz Palü', 1929, by Arnold Fanck and Georg Wilhelm Pabst. These films already reminded very much of the Nazi aesthetics; they narrated of venture-some mountaineerings and heroic sportsmen. With 'Berge in Flammen', 1931, by Luis Trenker and Karl Hartl, the motif was finally connected with National Socialist thoughts. However, in this film Leni Riefenstahl didn't take part. At this time she much more started engaging in her work as a director. In 1932 her first film, 'Das blaue Licht', was released, in which she also took up the role of Junta. These alpinist movies were in fact as well a trigger of sympathies for Leni Riefenstahl among the leaders of the Third Reich. The founder of film sociology, Siegfried Kracauer, writes about 'Stürme über dem Montblanc', 1930, by Arnold Fanck: "The film depicts again the fright and beauty of the high mountains, this time with special stress on the majestic play in the clouds. (That in the opening scene of the Nazi documentary movie 'Triumph des Willens' from 1935 similar torrents of clouds surround Hitlers aeroplane on his flight to Nürnberg finally reveals the mergence of alpinistic and Hitler cult.)"<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Kracauer, Siegfried: Von Caligari zu Hitler, p. 271



**Img. 16: 'Olympia - Fest der Völker' – pure body cult**

the National Socialist propaganda movie per se. Its grandiose staging and the clever cutting still make it to be a classic in film art today.<sup>25</sup> 'Festliches Nürnberg', 1937, was supposed to continue 'Triumph des Willens' where it stopped. However, the film didn't receive nearly as much appreciation as 'Triumph des Willens'. Leni Riefenstahl further continued her success with the two part Olympia film: 'Olympia 1. Teil – Fest der Völker' and 'Olympia 2. Teil – Fest der Schönheit', both 1938. The films impressively document the XI. Summer Olympics in Berlin 1936 in their international focus but in a National Socialist interpretation. The body cult of the Nazis has been entirely transferred to the international spectacle.

In 1933 Leni Riefenstahl was entrusted in the first state project, 'Der Sieg des Glaubens', which was meant to document the Reich party congress of the NSDAP. In 1935 'Tag der Freiheit – Unsere Wehrmacht' followed, which let the German machinery of war shine. In 1935 Leni Riefenstahl shot another film about the Reich party congress of the NSDAP, 'Triumph des Willens', which was superior in all means compared to the previous Reich party congress.

<sup>25</sup> Kracauer, Siegfried: Von Caligari zu Hitler, p. 271-274

## 6.5 The end of the blossom of the German film

With the end of the Second World War also the National Socialist film perished. Because of the violent takeover of the film industry through the Nazis the German film art was suppressed. A last piece of it stayed with Leni Riefenstahl, but it also disappeared together with the Third Reich. After the Second World War Leni Riefenstahl continued working on old film material. With new movies she tried to bury her past in oblivion. It should be noted that she denied until her death to have worked in charge of the “Führers” and his ideologies and thus having made money with National Socialism.

Also the other great directors which searched the exile abroad didn't produce any works as significant as they did in the interwar times. Fritz Lang was only shooting qualitative mediocre films and couldn't reach the brilliancy of his earlier movies. Georg Wilhelm Pabst shared the same fate as Fritz Lang. Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau however couldn't give proof of his talent anymore since he died in an accident in March 1931.

German films nowadays can barely keep up with the quality and diversity of the films from the interwar times. With the total ideologisation and instrumentalisation of the film through the Nazis the industry as well as the cultural aspect was destroyed. The German film had perished.

Also, the Industry of today has only few international relevance, Hollywood rules the cinema halls and the evening program on television. Nevertheless one can often find German films from the interwar times on television because they represent an important piece of European culture.

## 7. Appendix

### 7.1 Surveys

Both films contained selected scenes of a total play time of 15 minutes. Prior to the film ‚Hitlerjunge Quex‘ preceded a dissertation about the topic „Hitleryouth“ which was held by myself for the basic history course.

#### Hitlerjunge Quex

Surveyed was the class 6B (13 students) on 18. 09. 2006

Questions:

1. With what means does the film try to manipulate the audience?

Answer	Times Named
display of „Good and Evil“ (hitleryouth and communists)	8
comradeship of the hitleryouth	4
readiness to help others of the hitleryouth	2
usage of national sozialist songs	1
patriotism	1

2. Which attributes are connected to the Communists?

Answer	Times Named
good and evil	4
violent	3
deceitful	2
cruel	2
tattered	2
smoke and booze	1
inconsiderate	1
weak	1

## 3. Which attributes are linked to the Nazis?

<b>Answer</b>	<b>Times Named</b>
comradeship	6
swastika	3
respectability	3
loyalty	2
strong company	2
good and right	1
uniforms	1
strength	1
obedience	1
cleanliness	1

## 4. What shall induce the youth to join the Nazis?

<b>Answer</b>	<b>Times Named</b>
comradeship	7
important for the future	3
responsibility for the fatherland	3
strong company	3
ideology	1
security	1
the possibility to accomplish something	1

5. What does the film want to accentuate in particular?

<b>Answer</b>	<b>Times Named</b>
strong company	4
comradeship	4
appreciation	2
the positive side	2
trust	1
correctness	1
good organisation	1
strength	1

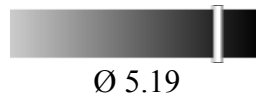
## Feldzug in Polen

Surveyed was the classes 6B (17) and 6C (18 students) on 25. 09. 2006

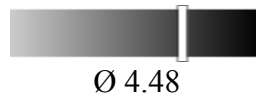
### Questions:

1. The film can be estimated as follows: (Values from 1 to 6 are to be assigned to a scale. In the first scale objectivity represents 1 and subjectivity 6. The value of 5.19 is therefore very subjective.)

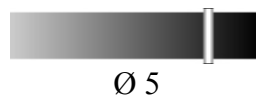
objective/uninfluenced – subjective/biased



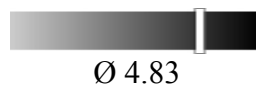
truthfully – falsified



factual/documentary – manipulative/subliminal



situation is being documented – message is being communicated



2. With what means does the film try to manipulate the audience?

<b>Answer</b>	<b>Times Named</b>
Poland and England are portrayed as evil (creation of the image of the enemy)	17
grandiose, dramatic music	9
heroism and braveness of the Germans	7
the quoting of the achievements of the Germans	6
leaving out the horrible sides of the war	6
exciting and seemingly irrevocable National Socialist commentary	5
glorification of Germany	5
spectacular scenes	4
justification of Germany's actions	4
one sided coverage	4
omission of facts	3
formulation (nuancing usage of adjectives, neologisms like „urdeutsch“)	2
intimidation through the claim of a threat emanating from Poland and England	2
jubilation of the people for the German Wehrmacht	1
exaggeration	1
film gains authenticity through its documentary character	1
portrays war as something good	1

## 7.2 Film Reviews

### Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari (1920, Robert Wiene)

Dr. Caligari, director of a psychiatry, disguises himself as a fair attraction exhibitor. His attraction is the somnambulist Cesare. In the night Caligari plans murders carried out by Cesare. The always sleeping somnambulist naturally won't be suspected, only written records of Caligari lead the inspectors on a trail.

The film became famous especially through its impressive expressionist aesthetics and it still influences artists nowadays. The expressionism is used for the portrayal of madness.

### Scherben (1921, Lupu Pick)

The family of a signal man leads a dreary, meagre life. One day however, an inspector arrives and asks for shelter. The daughter is mesmerised by his noble, mighty, but conceited charisma and has an affair with him. The mother finds out about this and dies full of sorrow in the snow close to a picture of a saint. After that the father kills the inspector and confesses his guilt in front of the passengers of the next arriving train.

### Nosferatu (1922, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau)

This movie is a sinister film version of the novel 'Dracula' by Bram Stoker. Hutter, the assistant of an estate agent, travels to Transylvania to negotiate about a deal with count Nosferatu. Already quite soon it's clear to him that the count is not a normal human. To his horror the count acquires a house near to Hutter's residence. He fears for his wife and rushes homewards in order to arrive in his home village before Nosferatu does. But Hutter is already too late, the count has brought perdition over the city. But Hutter's wife seduces Nosferatu, so that he misses the cock crow and burns in the bright sunlight.

The eerie images are only exceeded by Murnau's gruesome version of the figure of Nosferatu.

### Die Nibelungen: Siegfrieds Tod (1924, Fritz Lang)

'Siegfrieds Tod' is the first part of the film version of the Nibelungen Saga. Siegfried hears of Kriemhild, king Gunther's sister, and takes off to propose to her. On his journey he experiences many adventures and his reputation as a legendary warrior hurries ahead. Siegfried receives the permission to marry Kriemhild on the condition that he helps king Gunther to make Brunhild his wife. Siegfried supports Gunther at a fight to tame Brunhild, unnoticed thanks to his magic cowl. After the double marriage Hagen von Tronje murders Siegfried under approval of king Gunther. Kriemhild vows vengeance upon that.

Die Nibelungen: Kriemhilds Rache (1924, Fritz Lang)

'Kriemhilds Rache' is the second part of the film version of the Nibelungen Saga. The bitter, now widowed Kriemhild moves to the lands of the huns and weds with king Etzel. She seemingly forgives king Gunther and his following but forges in secret a plan for revenge. Kriemhild invites her tribe to the court of Etzel. When Hagen von Tronje kills Siegfried's son the situation escalates. Kriemhild incites her men on king Gunther and a horrible battling and murdering starts, leaving almost everyone dead. Both parts of the Nibelungen film stand out with their epic images and the heroic narration.

Der letzte Mann (1924, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau)

The porter of a luxury hotel is transferred to the attendance of the gents because of his infirmity of old age. His pride breaks because of this humiliation and in front of his family he ashamedly continues playing the role of the porter. A bizarre and over-stated happy end marks the end of the story.

The film impressed at the time of its making through its camera work of a 'unleashed camera' with much movement and dynamics but as well through its dramatic story telling. The decadent world of luxury meets the humbleness of the simple people which is best to be seen in the satirical happy end.

Die freudlose Gasse (1925, Georg Wilhelm Pabst)

The setting is the Melchiorgasse in Vienna. The misery can be seen here in every corner. However, a few streets away there is a luxury hotel in which decadent parties take place. These two worlds meet up though in a night club, disguised as a fashion boutique. There young women try under the renouncement of their honour to earn money to free themselves from their poverty. Three women, whose stories are interwoven, try to escape their misery.

The film shines with its main characters, played by charismatic, strong women. The story appears to be as if taken out of real life and the intention of the film is moving and touching.

Faust (1926, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau)

In this film version of the tragedy by Goethe the old academic Faust wants to know 'what holds the world together in its innermost'. In his desperation he makes a pact with the devil Mephisto, who tries to bring Faust together with the pious Gretchen and rejuvenates Faust for that. Gretchen gets pregnant and eventually becomes a child murderer, driven by madness.

The film features a few impressive scenes – like when the devil haunts the city – but disappoints as a whole and seems uninspiring and half hearted.

Tartüff (1926, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau)

This film is based on a comedy by Molière. On the basis of the telling of the following story, a grandson wants to save his grandfather from a legacy hunter: A wealthy nobleman returns at home after a long journey. With him he's got Tartüff, an apparently virtuous philosopher. The nobleman demands of his spouse and his servants to be in awe in front of the well respected guest. The wife soon sees through the lustful hypocrite but her husband doesn't want to understand. With her skills in seduction she lures the true self of the trickster while her appalled husband follows the scene through the keyhole. He chases Tartüff out of his house who later emerges as a wanted prisoner.

Baroque interiors and the brilliant, quirky character of Tartüff make the film a unique comedy.

Metropolis (1927, Fritz Lang)

In the 'eternal gardens' of the rich people reigns felicity and abundance. But below the industrial city Metropolis the workers have to drudge for the industrial magnates. Their work seems senseless, is hard and composed of long shifts. An underground movement forms around Maria, the 'saint of the oppressed'. She has the 'unification of heart and brain' as an aim, which means that she wants to bring the rich people and the workers together and to abolish injustice. The most important man in Metropolis, Fredersen, wants to prevent this undertaking and orders a doppelgänger of Maria to be created. This machine brings doom to Metropolis, the city perishes. In the end however the two groups are united and a new Metropolis is to be built.

The very humanist story cries for justice and the images stay until today futuristic and visionary.

Die Büchse der Pandora (1929, Georg Wilhelm Pabst)

Lulu, a stunningly beautiful dancer and artiste, is being adored by all the men that surround her. She's the secret lover of Dr. Schön who plans to get married with a different woman. But Lulu won't allow that. Dr. Schön's son Alwa asks him why he won't marry Lulu. His father replies that one shouldn't marry such women. Eventually he gives in, femme fatale Lulu turns his head. However, Dr. Schön despairs of her soon after the wedding and wants that she kills herself. Lulu kills him instead. She's being taken before court. Her admirers release a fire alarm so that Lulu could escape. She flees abroad with Alwa, her new lover. There she's being blackmailed by the men because of her crime.

'Die Büchse der Pandora' shows interesting ideas but Lulus character misses a pronounced personality. As a main character – and even more as the central element of the film – her actions appear not too calculated. The sorrows of the men seem unimportant and the analogy of Lulu and Pandora therefore seems very vague.

Die drei von der Tankstelle (1930, Wilhelm Thiele)

Three friends find out one morning that their tavern went bankrupt and that their furniture will have to be pawned. The only thing left to them is their car but which runs out of fuel on a busy country road. The idea follows immediately: They open up a filling station on the road. Lilian, a rich and attractive girl becomes their regular customer and all three of them fall in love with her. She however only loves Willy, who she eventually conquers thanks to her cleverness.

'Die drei von der Tankstelle' is an entertaining film musical, from which the song 'Ein Freund, ein guter Freund' reached great popularity.

Fridericus Rex: Das Flötenkonzert von Sanssouci (1930, Gustav Ucicky)

The courier of the king Friedrich II. sacrifices himself for his service. His wife on the other hand feels left alone at home. She meets up secretly with another man. Her husband gets wind of this affair and king Friedrich II. is worried about his important man. He organises a dinner with the couriers wife, who wanted to meet with her secret lover, and clarifies her duties. The frame of the story are the political events of Prussia.

The film is wonderful from the point of view of the costumes and the settings but shows a few monarchistic tendencies.

Menschen am Sonntag (1930, Robert Siodmak)

The scene is Berlin: Lay actors play the roles of people in every day life. A man asks out a woman for Sunday. At the arranged time they meet up, the woman takes her best friend with her and the man his colleague. The wife of the later one meanwhile sleeps away the whole Sunday at home. That way the four of them set off to go to lake Nikolas to enjoy their free time, to fool around and to fall in love there.

A very simple but still rememberable film. The Sunday of the five characters, played by people from next door, feels very close to reality. The beautiful pictures of Berlin, inhabited by denizens who enjoy their free day, radiates the charm of this metropolis.

Tabu (1931, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau)

A tribe celebrates a rite on an island in the Pacific. The young man Matahi sadly watches Reri. She's supposed to become priestess on a different island. Their love isn't allowed, it's a taboo. They flee from their people with a boat to a different island. Here the couple encounters the exploitative world of capitalism. They lapse into alcoholism and run into debts. In the nights they're being haunted by the reproachful village elder in their nightmares. In a trance Reri follows him on a ship to return to the lost paradise. Matahi tries to swim after the boat and holds unto the boarding rope. The village headman cuts off the rope with a knife and thus seals the fate of the couple.

The wonderfully beautiful pictures and the foreign culture in 'Tabu' bewitches the audience. Furthermore the film touches in its subject matter which seems to be understandable for all people and cultures through its emotionality.

Berlin Alexanderplatz (1931, Phil Jutzi)

In the film version of the novel by Alfred Döblin protagonist Franz Biberkopf steps from the prison back into the freedom of life. He decides to start a new life. But the world doesn't mean well with him and soon already he starts to commit thefts and searches company with scoundrels. One of those, Reinhold, even almost kills Biberkopf and takes away all dear and precious from him. However, Franz Biberkopf doesn't let himself down – he compares himself to a tumbler toy – and continues selling newspapers on Alexanderplatz.

The film's quality is rather mediocre and misses the intentions of the novel.

M - Mörder unter uns (1931, Fritz Lang)

A child murderer is up to no good at night in Berlin. The police is helpless and the criminals are nervous because of the tightened razzias. With the help of beggars the criminals eventually manage to trace down the murderer. Later one is supposed to be judged by a self appointed tribunal. The child murderer pleads for his inner compulsions for the performed acts. However, in the last moment the police saves him from the self justice of the criminals.

A dark, morbid film which calls attention with the brilliant role of the paranoid child murderer and the question for right and injustice.

Mädchen in Uniform (1931, Leontine Sagan)

Manuela arrives at a strict boarding school after the death of her parents. There she's supposed to be raised to be a 'soldiers mother'. She's being assigned to the dormitory supervised by the idolised Mrs. von Bernburg. From her she can also find human warmth and understanding. She doesn't want to hide her fondness to her teacher, which is why a catastrophe approaches: Manuela is to be banished from the boarding school and the teacher to be laid off. But Manuelas suicide attempt opens the eyes of the narrow minded boarding school director, who thereupon leaves the school.

The film impresses with its humane statement and through the usage of the element of the female (homo-)sexuality, which was very daring at its time.

Kameradschaft (1931, Georg Wilhelm Pabst)

The film's based on a true event but placed into the times after the first world war. In a French coal mine close to the border an accident happens in which the workers are entombed. The help from the French could only arrive late, for a few victims even too late, therefore behind the border German workers want to organise a group of helpers. After a few conflicts, which are the criticism of the hostility between Germany and France, the German helpers find their way to the French ducts. After the rescue the workers discover that comradeship is the most important thing and that no agitator will ever make them have a war between each other.

Resulting from the project of Imperial Chancellor Stresemann for the better understanding between Germany and France the film treats a big issue in the times before the Third Reich.

Kuhle Wampe oder: Wem gehört die Welt? (1932, Slatan Dudow)

A labour boy goes on search for work daily on his bicycle, but always returns home without success. His parents don't show any understanding for that and treat him like a failure and slacker. In his desperation he kills himself. His family is forced to leave the flat because of debts and moves to the worker camp "Kuhle Wampe". The story continues by following the every day life of the daughter.

With few means but great support by the scriptwriter Berthold Brecht the film became one of the by the Nazis most feared, liberal films.

Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse (1933, Fritz Lang)

The police stands before a series of unsolved murders and terrorist attacks. A police man who apparently has disclosed the secret, is found gone mad. By chance the commissar finds in a psychiatry the recordings for the attacks on the writing desk of professor Baum. In the end it turns out that the in the clinic interned Dr. Mabuse gives instructions to a whole group of robbers under usage of hypnosis on Professor Baum. This film is an exciting crime thriller, which however represents a razor sharp, daring criticism under the consideration of the political developments.

Hitlerjunge Quex (1933, Hans Steinhoff)

Heini, the son of a violent alcoholic, goes on an excursion with the communist party. He can't really enjoy it there and he gets into contact with the Hitler Youth. He's very impressed and fascinated by them but his communist father won't hear of it. But Heini still succeeds after a few problems to join the comradely Hitler Youth. There he receives the nickname "Quex". In an ambush he gets killed by the communists for treason.

'Hitlerjunge Quex' represents a naive and manipulative propaganda but which still shows well the reasons why the adolescents were enthusiastic about the Hitler Youth.

Triumph des Willens (1935, Leni Riefenstahl)

The propaganda film 'Triumph des Willens' documents the party congress of the Nazis of 1934 in Nürnberg. Speeches which support an abominable ideology can be seen among others by Hitler, Goebbels and Rosenberg. But also gigantic marches and stagings are recorded. The Führer is being glorified, but even more Germany and the National Socialism.

'Triumph des Willens' features gigantic images but at the same time propagates a horrible ideology.

Olympia 1. Teil – Fest der Völker (1938, Leni Riefenstahl)

'Fest der Völker' is the first part of the recordings of the XI. Olympic Games in Berlin of 1936. The film starts with a dramatic staging of the carrier of the Olympic torch. Greek temples can be seen and sports people pose like Greek statues. The torch carrier runs with the fire and after long scenes of landscapes the flame ignites the fire in the stadium. The competitions of the Olympic Games follow.

Olympia 2. Teil – Fest der Schönheit (1938, Leni Riefenstahl)

'Fest der Schönheit' is the second part of the recordings of the XI. Olympic Games in Berlin of 1936. Like the subheading of the Olympia films reveals, the first part concentrates on the meeting of different nations. The second part however is dominated by beautiful images of more diversified kinds of sports like rowing, gymnastics and horse riding.

The Olympia film features impressive images, especially the dramatic beginning of the first part with the posing athletics appeal on the audience. The body cult is being used in the film to the full extent. In the end however the film represents barely anything more than a document for the XI. Olympic games.

Feldzug in Polen (1939, Fritz Hippler)

This is a documentary movie about the campaign in Poland. The approach of the Germans in the war, their problems but also their victories and achievements are treated. 'Feldzug in Polen' is an ideological instrument for the justification of war. The spectacular images indicate with their quality the relevancy of propaganda films in the Third Reich.

### 7.3 List of sources and literature:

#### Films

Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari (1920, Robert Wiene)  
 Scherben (1921, Lupu Pick)  
 Nosferatu (1922, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau)  
 Die Nibelungen: Siegfrieds Tod (1924, Fritz Lang)  
 Die Nibelungen: Kriemhilds Rache (1924, Fritz Lang)  
 Der letzte Mann (1924, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau)  
 Die freudlose Gasse (1925, Georg Wilhelm Pabst)  
 Faust (1926, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau)  
 Tartüff (1926, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau)  
 Metropolis (1927, Fritz Lang)  
 Die Büchse der Pandora (1929, Georg Wilhelm Pabst)  
 Die drei von der Tankstelle (1930, Wilhelm Thiele)  
 Fridericus Rex: Das Flötenkonzert von Sanssouci (1930, Gustav Ucicky)  
 Menschen am Sonntag (1930, Robert Siodmak)  
 Tabu (1931, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau)  
 Berlin Alexanderplatz (1931, Phil Jutzi)  
 M - Mörder unter uns (1931, Fritz Lang)  
 Mädchen in Uniform (1931, Leontine Sagan)  
 Kameradschaft (1931, Georg Wilhelm Pabst)  
 Kuhle Wampe oder: Wem gehört die Welt? (1932, Slatan Dudow)  
 Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse (1933, Fritz Lang)  
 Hitlerjunge Quex (1933, Hans Steinhoff)  
 Olympia 1. Teil – Fest der Völker (1938, Leni Riefenstahl)  
 Olympia 2. Teil – Fest der Schönheit (1938, Leni Riefenstahl)  
 Feldzug in Polen (1939, Fritz Hippler)

Others:

Kuhle Wampe oder: Wem gehört die Welt – documentary film

## Literature

- Albrecht, Gerd: Arbeits- und Lesebuch zur Sozialgeschichte des Films *in den Jahren 1918 bis 1932*, Institut für Medienforschung Köln, Köln 1976
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- Toeplitz, Jerzy: Geschichte des Films, *Band 3 1934-1939*, Henschelverlag, Berlin 1980

## Illustrations

- Images 1-2 were taken directly from the movies
- Image 3:  
Advert from the Book ‚Kurble!’, published by Andor Kraszna-Krausz, Halle 1929, in: Gerd, Albrecht: Sozialgeschichte des Films, p. 266
- Image 4 was taken directly from the movie
- Image 5: [www.dhm.de/lemo/objekte/pict/d2a11428/index.html](http://www.dhm.de/lemo/objekte/pict/d2a11428/index.html)
- Images 6-12 were taken directly from the movies
- Image 13:  
[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/de/7/73/Altes\\_Ufa\\_Logo.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/de/7/73/Altes_Ufa_Logo.jpg)  
[www.grimme-institut.de/scripts/preis/agp\\_2005/images/logos/ufa.gif](http://www.grimme-institut.de/scripts/preis/agp_2005/images/logos/ufa.gif)
- Image 14:  
Dahlke, Günther und Karl, Günter: Deutsche Spielfilme, p. 351
- Images 15-16 were taken directly from the movies