



While You Are Sleeping Kiedy ty śpisz

Director: Andrzej Wajda
Writers: Andrzej Wajda, Konrad Nalecki, Jerzy Lipman
Poems: Tadeusz Kubiak
Photography: Jerzy Lipman
Camera Operator: Stefan Matyjaszkiewicz
Poland 1953
11 mins
Digital (restoration)

A Generation Pokolenie

Director: Andrzej Wajda
Production Company: Film Polski
Production Manager: Ignacy Taub
Assistant Directors: Kazimierz Kutz, Konrad Nalecki
Screenplay: Bohdan Czeszko
Based on the novel by: Bohdan Czeszko
Director of Photography: Jerzy Lipman
Camera Operator: Stefan Matyjaszkiewicz
Editor: Czesław Raniszewski
Art Director: Roman Mann
Set Decorators: Jerzy Skrzepinski, Józef Galewski
Costume Designer: Jerzy Szeksi
Make-up: Zdzisław Papierz
Music: Andrzej Markowski
Music Performed by:
Philharmonic Orchestra of Warsaw
Sound: Józef Koprowicz
Artistic Consultant: Aleksander Ford
Cast:
Tadeusz Lomnicki (*Stach*)
Urszula Modrzynska (*Dorota*)
Tadeusz Janczar (*Jasio Krone*)
Janusz Palusziewicz (*Sekula*)
Ryszard Kotas (*Jacek*)
Roman Polanski (*Mundek*)
Zbigniew Cybulski (*Kostka*)
Ludwik Benoit (*Grzesio*)
Jerzy Krzowski
Zofia Czerwińska
Stanisław Milski
Tadeusz Fijewski
Juliusz Roland
Kazimierz Wichańiarz
August Kowalczyk
Hanna Skarzanka
Cezary Julski
Zygmunt Zintel
Poland 1955
87 mins
Digital (restoration)

Restored by DI Factory and reKINO

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SIGHT AND SOUND

Andrzej Wajda: Portraits of History and Humanity

A Generation Pokolenie

When the 28-year-old Andrzej Wajda made *A Generation*, his debut feature, he was clearly in thrall to the Italian non-realists. He eschewed the contrivance of studio filmmaking, preferring to work on location with young, untested actors. The opening shot, a long pan across a bleak, urban landscape accompanied by haunting pipe music, wouldn't look out of place in a Rossellini film. The nostalgic voiceover, in which the narrator recalls his Warsaw childhood, is the same device Fellini uses in *I vitelloni*.

At first, as we see three boys playing with a knife, this seems to be shaping up as a typical rites-of-passage story. But the gentle beginning belies the harshness of what follows. Bohdan Czeszko's screenplay, based on his own novel, is set in Warsaw in 1942, during the Nazi occupation. There is very little idyllic about the lives of the youngsters. If they transgress or join the resistance, they are liable to be executed. The protagonist Stach (Tadeusz Lomnicki) knows as much. He sees a friend shot by a Nazi sentry merely for trying to steal some coal. Walking the streets, he comes across the bodies of two patriots, hanging from a gallows in a public square. (Wajda shows him staring transfixed at their dangling legs.)

Just occasionally, a hint of agit-prop seeps into the storytelling. The young communists are portrayed as idealistic heroes. Some of the dialogue, notably when a Marxist oldtimer in the carpentry workshop explains to Stach how he is exploited by his capitalist boss, sounds as if it was drafted by apparatchiks. Wajda was making the film for the government, who clearly regarded it as first and foremost a propaganda exercise. However, the energy and lyricism of the filmmaking counters the didacticism. As Roman Polanski, who plays one of the youngsters, put it, 'for us, it was tremendously important. All of Polish cinema was beginning with it... we worked night and day. Wajda believed in what he was doing. This was something utterly new in Poland (it was the time of Stalinism) that film was different, young.' (Quoted in Bolesław Michalek, *Andrzej Wajda, Paris, 1964*.)

The protagonists are sucked into political resistance in spite of themselves. 'The others say you're tough but I think you're a kid,' Dorota (Urszula Modrzynska), the beautiful resistance leader tells Stach. At that moment, we realise just how young he really is. Wajda conveys both the exhilaration Stach and his friends feel when they have guns in their hands and their terror in the face of the violence and death they encounter. They are not allowed a childhood. As if to emphasise the fact, in one beautifully observed scene the smoke from the burning ghetto billows around the carousel at a funfair.

Just as Maciek (Cybulski) in *Ashes and Diamonds* is able to forget the political struggle for a moment when he has a brief affair, Stach too enjoys a short, doomed romance. The same mood of fatalism runs through both films. Wajda's heroes and heroines are attempting to resist the tide of history. It's a forlorn, even suicidal endeavour, but there is a very Polish heroism in their folly.

As the neo-realists discovered, bombed out cities provide superbly atmospheric backdrops. In *A Generation*, Wajda makes excellent use of the wasteland and rubble strewn streets of Warsaw. The chase sequence, in which Starh's friend Jasio (Tadeusz Janczar) flees his Nazi pursuers over roofs and down side streets, anticipates Maciek's equally forlorn dash for freedom at the

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Presented with the ICA and Ciné Lumière, who will
also be hosting screenings of Wajda's works in
February and March



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end of *Ashes and Diamonds*. Wajda shows Jasio caught at the top of a maze-like stairwell with nowhere left to go. It's a highly symbolic moment, even at a dead-end he refuses to surrender.

Geoffrey Macnab, *Sight and Sound*, February 1998

Back in July 1953, the novelist Bohdan Czeszko had argued fiercely with the 'Film and Screenplay Qualification Committee' about the adaptation of his book, *A Generation*, which concerns the activities of a group of youngsters during the Nazi Occupation. When eventually the screenplay was approved, Aleksander Ford was asked to direct it. He demurred, urging the authorities to allow Wajda to take the helm under his supervision.

Wajda recalls: 'I was like a producer on this film, because it was such a team effort. The entire group that created the film, they were all beginners – from Polanski the actor to Lipman the cinematographer. It was fantastic, because we were the "Generation" fascinated by cinema. I did not want to make an official Communist subject. The central committee of the Party had been assuming that *A Generation* would emerge as a *lumpenproletariat* film. It was scheduled to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Polish People's Republic. But we had shot the film the way we wanted, and in only a few months, on location mostly in Warsaw and Lódz. We had to do the interiors in the studios, because the lighting was too complicated.'

When *A Generation* was first screened for the Politburo in 1954, in a heavily guarded resort house surrounded by barbed wire in Konstancin, I found that the criticism of the "comrades from the leadership" was devastating. As a result, the film was delayed for many months and I was forced to reshoot certain scenes. The Party imagined that it would turn out to be a propaganda movie in the idiom of Sergei Gerasimov, and when they saw the result they raised a lot of obstacles and prevented the release for more than a year.'

In *A Generation*, a young apprentice named Stach (Tadeusz Lomnicki) is attracted to Dorota (Urszula Modrzynska), who runs an underground Communist group. They try to help the Jews, but Dora is eventually arrested and Stach finds himself compelled to lead the group. The film reeks of sadness, showing how war appears a beguiling game to Stach and his companions, and how gradually it converts them into bitter fighting machines: love and devotion to a cause are linked indissolubly in Stach's mind. When *A Generation* reached France, Ado Kyrou wrote in *Positif*: 'As far as I know, Wajda is, apart from Lizzani, the only director since the days of [Dieterle's] *Blockade*, some of the Borzage films and the pre-war Soviet cinema, who has integrated love into a revolutionary story or, more accurately, has not divorced these two primordial forces in man: love and revolt.'

Peter Cowie, *Revolution! The Explosion of World Cinema in the 60s* (Faber and Faber, 2004)

While You Are Sleeping

This fascinating short captures a bustling city at night and was shot by Jerzy Lipman, the cinematographer on *A Generation*.