Introduction

They were deaf, blind and dumb, imprisoned in their ruins as in a fortress of willful ignorance, still strong and capable of hatred, still prisoners of their old tangle of pride and guilt.

—Primo Levi, "The Truce"

The end of the World War II not only brought with it the destruction of a genocidal German nation state, it also signified the end of an entire people's understanding of itself. So bitter was the defeat, so devastating the losses, so violent the reprisals, so one-sided the responsibility, so complete the stripping of the community's ideals that there was very little upon which its members could call in order to organize the complex set of emotions, pathologies, and desires that accompanied the loss. "For the overwhelming majority of the population the entire system of coordinates that determined everyday life under National Socialist rule was derailed."[1] Moreover, the physical environment, especially the cities, from which many had fled and to which they now returned, had been altered completely. The bombings and battles transformed Berlin from a modern metropolis to a peculiar wilderness of rubble. And yet, as Primo Levi indicates, many German attitudes remained untouched.

Germans had, at least temporarily, lost their sovereignty. The cultural institutions that had sustained both the violent regime and the private support of it were dismantled by the Allied powers. All public utterances, whether mediated through the press, radio, literature, universities, theater, or

music, were silenced. The Allies then began a thorough and deliberate process of filtering the voices that were allowed to speak. They sifted through journalists to find those least tainted in the regime. They investigated university professors in order to find those who were less implicated in Nazism. Because of the special place film held as a propagandistic tool in the Nazi state and because of the economic potential Germany held as a market for Allied cultural products, the film industry was the last among the media to be allowed to reenter the public sphere. Germany had a highly developed film industry and film-going public. The Allies both wanted a piece of this market and wanted to prevent those who had run the Nazi film culture from reestablishing hegemony.

Rubble films (*Trümmerfilme*) are products of German cinema stemming from the early postwar period, roughly 1946–1949, during which Germany lay in physical, political, and moral chaos. As Thomas Brandlmeier has noted, "the films regarding the past that appear in Germany in shock waves after 1945 are considered generally by German film historians as a kind of miscarriage, both in terms of film and intellectual history."[2] They are topical films from a time often regarded as devoid of topics. For my purposes, they are films that take the *mise en scène* of destroyed Germany as a background and metaphor of the destruction of German's own sense of themselves.

A subset of rubble films are the *Heimkehrerfilme*, films about the return of soldiers from the war. Given the defeat, occupation, and dismantling of Germany, the fate of those who fought to defend it would become fodder for many tales. The *Heimkehrerfilme* offered vivid portrayal of the postwar crisis in male subjectivity, which also had a noticeable impact on the ways in which women and children were portrayed.

Most histories of modern Germany are categorized according to the regimes under which they were made (the Weimar Republic, the German Democratic Republic, the Berlin Republic). In breaking the past into these neat units, history tends to forget times of transition such as the rubble period, between the defeat of the Third Reich and the establishment of the two Cold War German states. This amnesia is unfortunate. Between the end of the war and the beginning of the Berlin airlift this pariah community metamorphosed from the very definition of evil to "the last bastion of freedom" in the face of communist (or, for that matter, capitalist) onslaught. The films of the period tell us much about how that transformation occurred.

For more than fifty years, scholarship on German film has centered on

its role as national narrative. Much of this focus can be traced to the stated intentions of National Socialism to instill a sense of a traditional and powerful community in the German cinematic imagination. The Nazis attempted to create a unity of nation and people with the help of the cinematic image. Later generations of filmmakers sought to counter that tradition with a national cinema of their own. Work on German film has covered extensively the aesthetic influence of the Weimar era. Recent works by Eric Rentschler and Linda Schulte-Sasse explore the uses and abuses of the cinematic image in Nazi Germany.[3] In German, Peter Pleyer's important dissertation from the early 1960s continues to prove a valuable source of information on filmmaking in the rubble period, as does Bettina Greffath's 1995 doctoral thesis.[4] Heide Fehrenbach has shown the effects of the church's fight for cultural hegemony on the West German film industry of the 1950s.[5] Scholars have also explored extensively the New German Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s.[6] In 1999, a valuable volume on East German cinema appeared in English.[7] To date, however, there has been no comprehensive study in English of early postwar German filmmaking and its treatment of Germany's Nazi past.

The goals of this book are twofold. First, I seek to provide a critical reading of a set of films made in Germany between 1946 and 1949, thereby filling in a significant gap in German film history. Among the more than fifty feature films that were made in that period, I have chosen those that share the fundamental *mise en scène* of a destroyed and defeated Germany. These films, which range from romances and family melodramas to gangster films and detective stories, constitute a cycle of films insofar as they are all problem films whose problem is the long shadow cast by the legacy of the Third Reich. The films under consideration are:

The Murderers Are among Us (*Die Mörder sind unter uns*, dir. Wolfgang Staudte, 1946)

Somewhere in Berlin (*Irgendwo in Berlin*, dir. Peter Pewas, 1946)

Razzia (dir. Werner Klingler, 1947)

In Those Days (*In jenen Tagen*, dir. Helmut Käutner, 1947; released in English-speaking countries as *Seven Journeys*)

Marriage in the Shadows (*Ehe im Schatten*, dir. Kurt Maetzig, 1947)

And the Heavens Above (. . . *Und über uns der Himmel*, dir. Josef von Báky, 1947; released in English-speaking countries as *City of Torment*)

Between Yesterday and Tomorrow (*Zwischen Gestern und Morgen*, dir. Harald Braun, 1947)

Film without a Title (*Film ohne Titel*, dir. Rudolf Jugert, 1947)

Street Acquaintance (*Straßenbekanntschaft*, dir. Peter Pewas, 1948)

Long Is the Road (*Lang ist der Weg*, dir. Herbert Fredersdorf and Marek Goldstein, 1948)

Morituri (dir. Eugen York, 1948)

'48 All over Again (. . . *Und wieder '48*, dir. Gustav von Wangenheim, 1948)

The Blum Affair (*Die Affaire Blum*, dir. Erich Engel, 1948)

The Apple Is Off! (*Der Apfel ist ab!*, dir. Helmut Käutner, 1948)

The Ballad of Berlin (*Berliner Ballade*, dir. R. A. Stemmle, 1948)

Love '47 (*Liebe '47*, dir. Wolfgang Liebeneiner, 1949)

The Last Illusion (*Der Ruf*, dir. Josef von Báky, 1949)

My second purpose is to evaluate how Germans of the period treated their immediate past using a medium that had been so exploited by National Socialism. While all of the films presented here make the Nazi past a part of their plot line, either directly or indirectly, not all do so with equal honesty or reflection. The ways in which they are both revelatory and concealing are of critical importance. By intervening in the discourse on the memory of World War II and the Holocaust, these films played an important role in the formation of a collective attitude toward the past, one that shaped many public debates in Germany in the decades thereafter.

The rubble films' treatment of the past is far from morally satisfying to today's viewers. These films only rarely confront the institutions, traditions, and assumptions that led to the catastrophe that was postwar Europe. At best, they mention them; at worst, they lie about them. Helmut Käutner's episodic *In Those Days* tells seven stories of innocent Germans, while neglecting to portray the culpability of others. Most of the films treat the question of guilt as just one problem among many in the postwar period. Worse yet, the rubble films often conflate the wrongs committed during the Third Reich with the Germans' own postwar suffering. The black market is represented as being as distressing as, or even worse than, the presence of war criminals. The German refugees from Silesia and the former German soldiers returning from war often occupy the same symbolic position as the survivors of the death camps.

Early postwar German filmmakers were, I argue, usually so emo-

tionally involved in the hardships of life in postwar Germany that they were largely blind to other concerns such as personal or collective responsibility for the crimes of the war. Thus these films can be seen as training films for the attitude of dismissal regarding the Holocaust that has often prevailed in public discourse in Germany in the ensuing fifty years: "We have so many current problems, why dig up that past again?"

Insofar as I take on the task of discussing Germans and their relationship to their Nazi past, I tread on both fertile and dangerous ground. In so many ways the Nazi question is the easy one. Germans, both individually and collectively, committed the acts that led to the creation of the legal category of "crimes against humanity." I do not try to explicate the history of those crimes. But that history, coupled with the upheaval and material despair of the postwar years, defines the moral situation of postwar Germany.

The narratives of these films seldom depict directly the perpetration of war crimes. Rather, they tend to pursue a litany of issues regarding collective responsibility and passive moral failure. Most Germans supported the regime at one point or another; some were guilty more of sins of omission, willful ignorance, and neglect; others shared the xenophobic attitudes of their neighbors but did not act upon their prejudices; and still others—and this is the category that implicates the film industry the most—profited from a cooperative relationship with the Nazi regime. The fact that most filmmakers of the rubble period shared in the responsibility and moral debt to one degree or another interferes with each film's ability to confront German wartime experiences and actions.[8] But we must also keep in mind that just because Germans were perpetrators, this does not mean that they did not themselves suffer. Certainly, they brought most of that suffering upon themselves. But to ignore the Germans' own postwar anguish is also a failure to pursue the truth. These issues lie at the heart of the rubble films.

In order to understand the place of these films in German historiography, we must ask how they intervene in the narration of history. To paraphrase Hayden White's definition of the task of narrative history, filmmakers had to find a way to fashion the experiences of the recent past into structures of meaning that would then make sense to them.[9] And, indeed, that which "makes sense" was in flux in postwar Germany. The significatory structures upon which German filmmaking had been built were in disarray and filmmakers were at a loss to imagine new ones. Thus, filmmakers had to determine not only the content of historical narratives, but also the form they took.

However, one of the conclusions we can draw from studying rubble films is that, while many of the conditions of production changed overnight, the end of the war did not fundamentally change film culture, at least not at first. The choices of filmic style the directors made were often informed just as much by habit as by concern for new realities. Almost all of these men (this is one of the few eras in German filmmaking where there were no active women feature-film directors) were successful members of the industry before 1945. Just as the agitators who founded the "New German Cinema" in the 1960s charged, there was no discernable difference between the personnel of the industry during and after the war. Almost everyone, from producers and directors to actors and technical staff, found roles for themselves in the downsized and decentralized postwar industry. To the extent that there was blacklisting, it was generally temporary. For example, the one-time artistic director of the dominant film company of the Nazi era, Wolfgang Liebeneiner, shows up again after the war as a director. Thus, it is easy to imagine that the stories these filmmakers tell are influenced by their own ambiguous ideological backgrounds and that they were guided by filmmaking practices established under Nazi management. And, given their drive to legitimate themselves in the new political climate of occupied Germany, we certainly have reason to believe that the pursuit of truth was not always the highest priority among the filmmakers.

Any approach used to study rubble films must be able to evaluate the complex historiographic issues at stake in these films as well as provide a critical appreciation of their aesthetic accomplishments and failures. Likewise, it must reveal something about the potential meanings the original viewers would have attributed to the films. The existing scholarship on these films tends to treat them as transparent historical documents reflecting directly the attitudes of the filmmakers and the audience. This line of inquiry has a long and storied tradition in Germany. Its origins lie in the work of Siegfried Kracauer, whose psychological interpretive model continues to inform German film scholarship. Much of what has been written on the topic of the relationship between German history and film takes up explicitly psychological arguments about both the history of film and filmic depictions of the past. Anton Kaes makes a Freudian connection when he refers to the history films of the late 1970s and early 1980s as the return of a repressed historical discourse.[10] Eric Santner, similarly, sees those films as an acting out of a trauma not yet worked through.[11] Both make more than passing reference to psychologists

Alexander Mitscherlich and Margaret Mitscherlich's 1969 book, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*.[12] The Mitscherlich's thesis is that Germans failed to mourn the losses incurred through their defeat in the war and thus entered into a mass melancholy.

One of the problems with both of these Freudian models is their need to view films as direct psychological reflections of the audience. Kracauer's model has been used to discuss film as a mass-consumed product that is therefore representative of the mentality of those who consume it.[13] Such scholarship often neglects the nuances of the relationships among the filmmaker, the film, and the spectator. For instance, most communication in film is predicated on conventional expectations and the extent to which those expectations are met or thwarted. Thus, films at best reflect a kind of dialogue that occurs between filmmakers and their audiences. Also, films are polysemic texts. Even the worst film (and some of the rubble films are in contention for that title) combines many different media at once to provide a richness of text that cannot be reduced merely to a memorandum on societal attitudes of the moment. But, however reductive the model seems, it does highlight the need to understand the nexus of the social and the psychological significatory structures of these films.

Some might worry whether we can read the rubble films as products of actual postwar German culture at all, due to the omnipresence of the Allied censors in the filmmaking process. Are we seeing the products of German filmmakers' cinematic imaginations, or just what they were directed to create (or believed they would be directed to create) by outside forces? This question ultimately collapses into one of intentionality, a question that is fraught with difficulty under the best of conditions. Although the question of Allied control is addressed in detail in Chapter 1, the fact remains that whether or not these films reflected the values of even those Germans who made them, when they hit the screen they immediately gained access to the audience's imagination. Regardless of intention, the form in which the audience received them was the one that impacted cultural history.

Another useful model for observing and organizing historical narrative is that of "collective memory." First developed by Maurice Halbwachs, who died in Buchenwald, the notion of collective memory also suggests that what gets remembered and how it gets remembered are public issues that are potentially subject to intense contestation.[14] The collective memory model suggests that present concerns (whether those

of 1946 or 2001) determine the shape and content of what is to be remembered in the future. Rather than positing these films as a general representation of societal attitudes, Halbwachs's model suggests that these films help construct those attitudes. That is to say, the rubble films cast certain versions of history into the public memory of that period, versions that then serve as models for how that past is remembered. Throughout the book I examine how these films affect the general body of recollection about the Nazi past. While the rubble films themselves ultimately fell into obscurity, they represent a broadly received set of messages about the past that continue to be a part of how Nazism and the Holocaust are remembered in Germany.

Audiences tired quickly of the generally preachy rubble films. By 1947 reviewers used the term "rubble film," which had initially been descriptive, as a pejorative. Shortly thereafter, the rubble film cycle lost its sense of urgency. The growing polarizations of the Cold War changed conditions, and these films were no longer compelling to audiences. While stragglers continued to employ the berubbled *mise en scène*, they failed both commercially and critically. Rubble films were problem films about problems that the German public either no longer wished to solve or claimed to have already solved.

The German film industry was deeply implicated in the crimes of the Nazi era. It is surely unrealistic to expect that the path from Nazism to a full reckoning with the past would be a short one. The question we are left with in the end is not only one of successful treatment of history. The word *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, which the Germans use to describe the necessary approach toward their past, must be a process rather than a singular act. Rubble films certainly did not deal with the past in a fully satisfactory way. They provided their audiences with ways of thinking about the past that are sometimes deceptive and apologistic. But, at the same time, they represented small yet vital steps along the path to the liberalization of German culture and honest reckoning with the crimes of the Nazi era. German cinema in the shadow of the Third Reich reveals an important first step in the process of working the National Socialist past into the collective cultural imagination of postwar Germany.

1

Dismantling the Dream Factory

The Film Industry in Berubbled Germany

Until the unconditional surrender of the Third Reich effective at midnight on May 8, 1945, Germany had one of the strongest, most productive film industries in the world. A cartel of studios, producers, and distributors freed the theaters from competition and provided them with an audience positively disposed to domestic films. The film industry was implicated in the National Socialist capture and maintenance of power, and it benefited immediately from the war effort, which gave German films unprecedented access to the cinema market all over Europe. The films filling the schedules of movie theaters throughout the continent were not only the propaganda pieces we have come to associate with the regime but also a heavy fare of popular entertainment films, similar in look and feel to the Hollywood products of the era. In fact, the German film industry of the late 1930s and early 1940s enjoyed a success paralleled only by its American counterparts, and its monopolistic business practices were not radically different from those of the Hollywood studios during the same era.

The Nazis were engaged actively in supporting and controlling all artistic production, but the cinema held a special place in their imaginations and in their plans. As Eric Rentschler has put it, "Adolf Hitler and his minister of pro-

paganda, Joseph Goebbels, were keenly aware of film's ability to mobilize emotions and immobilize minds, to create overpowering illusions and captive audiences."[1] The Nazis achieved control over the industry and employed it to deceive, distract, and mold the German public. The four main German studios, which eventually became a part of the portfolio of Goebbels's propaganda ministry, produced more than a thousand feature films during the Nazi era, and cinemas and spectatorship grew steadily. In 1933 there were 5,071 cinemas and 245 million filmgoers in Germany. At the industry's peak in 1943, there were 6,484 cinemas with over 1.1 billion spectators.[2] Germany's heavily supported and protected film industry played a central role, both socially and politically, in Nazi Germany.

As the Allies began to make inroads into German territory in the final months of 1944, they passed laws halting or radically limiting German cultural and religious activity. On November 24, 1944, the four triumphant powers—the United States, France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union—passed Law 191 of the Military Government, Germany, which states:

> The printing, production, publication, distribution, sale and commercial lending of all newspapers, magazines, periodicals, books, pamphlets, posters, printed music and other printed or otherwise mechanically reproduced publications, of sound recordings and motion picture films; and the activities or operation of all news and photographic services and agencies, of radio broadcasting and television stations and systems, of wired radio systems; and the activities or operation of all theaters, cinemas, opera houses, film studios, film laboratories, film exchanges, fairs, circuses, carnival houses and other places of theatrical or musical entertainment and the production or presentation of motion pictures, plays, concerts, operas, and performances using actors or musicians are prohibited.[3]

With actions such as these, the Allies transformed the German film industry from an industrial superpower to a cottage industry in a matter of weeks. As a part of Law 191 the Allies dissolved Goebbels's infamous ministry, the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, and its portfolio. Thus, almost six months before the war's end, the Allies completely blacked out one of the primary forces the Nazis had used to create the strong sense of community in Germany.

Not only were all theaters and cinemas taken over, they were also closed, thereby cutting off Germans' ability to see films, as well as the flow of capital back into the industry. Cinema owners were prevented

from using their theaters for any purpose whatsoever. The studios were turned into storage spaces and barracks for invading soldiers. The stock of films owned by the German distribution companies was confiscated. Film stars were restricted from appearing in public. All raw film stock and film equipment was confiscated and, in some cases, taken as war bounty. By the time of surrender on May 8, 1945, the once powerful German film industry had ceased to exist.

Having obtained Germany's unconditional surrender, the Allies amended Law 191 on May 12, 1945. The amendment set up a licensing system for print media as well as for all broadcasting, film presentation, and performance activities. Four regional occupational zones replaced the Allied Supreme Command of the Invasion and were established under the sovereignty of the United Kingdom, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Each zone then set up its own military government and policies of governance. Control of cultural activities came under the command of each separate military government. Initially, there was little commerce or even movement among the four zones due to the overall disrepair of the systems of transport and communication as well as a consensus among the Allies that decentralization of power in Germany was necessary. Even before the Allied victory, tensions between the Western Allies and the Soviets were manifesting themselves, leading to even less cooperation between the Soviet zone and its Western counterparts.

The ruling body of the American sector, the Office of Military Government of the United States (OMGUS), pursued a bifurcated policy of both economic colonization and reeducation. The latter was not to be a process of self-discovery but of acceptance of history as told by the victors. This policy was especially evident in the mission of the Information Control Division, the branch of OMGUS charged with overseeing the Germans' reentry into public discourse. The overriding directive of the Information Control Division was to

> provide the Germans with information, which will influence [changed on April 16, 1947, to "enable"] them to understand and accept the United States program of occupation, and to establish for themselves a stable, peaceful, and acceptable government. Such information will impress upon the Germans the totality of their military defeat, the impossibility of rearmament, the responsibility of the individual German for war and atrocities, the disastrous effects of the structure and system of National Socialism on Germany and the world, and the possibility that through work and cooperation Germany may again be accepted into the family of nations.[4]

While this was the policy only in the American sector, it not only influenced the other Allies' decisions, it also affected any media product that hoped to be allowed into the American sector. This policy both set out guidelines for how Germans were to behave in the present and mandated what their relationship to their history would be. By 1946, when German filmmakers were allowed into the public sphere to tell their history, they had to compete with the rest of the world for the attention of the German audience. However, there is no real indication that, had they been given more freedom initially, they would have constructed more honest or critical version of the past.

Shortly after the capitulation of the German forces, ships and planes were sent to Europe by the thousands to retrieve the victorious soldiers. Those vehicles not only carried provisions for the occupying forces, they also contained thousands of publications readied by the Americans for use in reeducating Germans. Along with political writings of the American founding fathers, the occupational forces also distributed canonical works of American literature deemed representative of the ideals they wished to instill in the Germans, such as the writings of Benjamin Franklin and James Fenimore Cooper. This literature was also meant to fill a void left by much of the German literature that was to be removed from bookstores or restricted in libraries.

The onslaught of American cultural products was not confined to the literary arts. The American film industry, which had been so cooperative with the military during the war, was looking for a repayment for its efforts. Under the guise of a similar mission of reeducation, Hollywood also sent dozens of American films to fill the vacuum left by the removal of German films from circulation. Only unlike the publishing industry, whose products were often given away, Hollywood intended to make money in a market that had, for many years, been closed to American films. In a reversal of the war years, the European film market was now closed to German films.

The American occupational authorities imagined Hollywood film as a democratizing force, though just how this was to function is unclear. They did not set out to find the most didactic or socially relevant films available from Hollywood. Instead, they hoped that the most common of films would suggest supposedly ingrained American values of equality, justice, and hope that were lacking in the German tradition. Robert Joseph, an American film officer in Berlin, voiced this conception of the Germans most succinctly. "The film people who valorized Siegfried for

twelve years cannot understand that Joe Smith (for Germans, Johann Schmidt) is a guy who looks like John Garfield, thinks like Spencer Tracy, and acts like James Cagney, and that he is just as valuable as anyone else and not a bit more."[5] It is hard to imagine someone who behaves like James Cagney being a model for the ideal democratic subject.

OMGUS had prepared the way for Hollywood and was counting on a steady supply of re-released American films. The problem was that, in the months and years following the war, there was no money to be made. There was no Reich backing the value of the Reichsmark, and almost all activity was conducted on a barter market. While Germans still possessed currency, it was not convertible in any way that would be of value to the Americans. Through film, the occupational authorities had hoped to provide both distraction and education to the vanquished nation. But having discovered there were no profits to be made, Hollywood stemmed the regular flow of films late in the summer of 1945. Tensions between Hollywood and OMGUS were mounting on other fronts as well.

Hollywood, Expatriate Germans, and the Struggle for Control in the Western Sectors

If German filmmakers seemed generally happy no longer being under the watchful eye of the propaganda ministry, they were resentful about the supposed spoils the victors' studios were enjoying. Billy Wilder's first experience with postwar Germany provides a good example of the reasons that tension and distrust arose between the German and American film industries. A German immigrant and filmmaker who had become successful in Hollywood, Wilder returned in the summer of 1945 as part of a visiting crew of Hollywood officials. The trip was supposedly intended to seek out ways in which the industry could assist the military government. In reality, the team sought ways for the Americans to establish a monopoly in Germany.[6] Wilder represented the conflicts of interest that were inherent in the Hollywood encounters with OMGUS. One of his reasons for being in Germany was that he was under consideration for the job of overseeing the resumption of German film production in the American sector.

Wilder was asked to write a report about the state of the production facilities and personnel available for use in the industry. Before doing so, he wrote a report regarding the use of film in the reeducation process, in

which he expressed appreciation for the films being presented to Germans in order to expose them to their own guilt. Wilder himself provided technical assistance to the most famous of these, *The Death Mills*, which Germans were often forced to watch in order to receive their ration cards. Wilder argued that such films would only have a limited effect. In the summer of 1945, Germans were happy about the fact that theaters were open at all. Initial audiences showed appropriate respect and contrition while viewing these films, many of which were made up of footage taken as concentration camps were liberated. And yet, Wilder asked in late July, "will Germans come week after week in the cinema in order to play the guilty little school boy?" He presumed not. Likewise, he doubted that the initial films sent by Hollywood would serve their supposed purpose, namely democratic reeducation.[7]

As we shall see, the Russian impulse was to find ways in which the Germans could begin reeducating themselves about their history. Wilder presented a different model, one that showed his Hollywood colors. He pitched his own idea for a film that would serve as the ideal reeducation film: a romantic comedy between a German woman and an American G.I. (which eventually became his *A Foreign Affair*, released in 1946). Rather than the information films with which the Germans were being deluged, Wilder felt that entertainment films dealing with German–American relations would be the ideal propaganda.[8]

In Wilder's report on the German film industry, he laid out many of the existing barriers for the resumption of filmmaking, most of which were political in nature. Despite Wilder's private comments to the contrary, the report characterizes the Soviets as adamant yet reasonable adversaries interested in the general success of a postwar German film production. It shows both a concern about the activity in the Soviet zone and a willingness to cooperate with the Soviets in reshaping film culture in Germany. Wilder reported that the Soviets were insisting that any German film have access to all zones. Meanwhile the Soviets, who at that point were the Allied power placing the fewest censorship constrictions on the Germans, nevertheless insisted that all films shown in Germany be submitted to each of the film control boards for approval. Wilder and the Soviets agreed that a German film industry would be viable only if it could function in all zones. This would only be possible, according to Wilder, through the institution of a committee of the film officers from each of the four military governments that would govern the logistics of the industry.

Given the conditions in August 1945, shortly after the Potsdam Conference, it would seem that Wilder's remarks must have been either disingenuous or uninformed. To be sure, the Soviets were the most friendly toward reestablishing filmmaking in Germany. And yet, one of the first things that any visitor to Germany in the summer of 1945 would have noticed was the discord between the U.S. and Soviet occupational authorities. And, even if the two larger powers would have been able to agree, the French were also in no hurry to see Germany unified economically or otherwise.

If Wilder's recommendations had a hidden agenda, what was it? In part, Wilder may have been trying to prove his suitability for the job of film officer, a position OMGUS was preparing to create. The post would centralize film policy in the American sector. And yet, it is hard to imagine why Wilder would want such a post, having established for himself a stellar reputation in Hollywood. Given his solid standing within an industry determined to take over the German market, why would he propose a solution for rebuilding the German film industry that was the most reasonable and positive one for the Germans? It was, I believe, a foil. That is, it was an attempt to make Hollywood look like it was cooperating in the reeducation effort by proposing the best solution knowing that it was politically impossible.

Why would Billy Wilder, a member of the Hollywood establishment, put up such a façade? In June 1945 the major Hollywood studios had formed the Motion Picture Export Association (MPEA), a lobby group whose goal was to recapture international markets. As Thomas Guback puts it, "In bringing together the majors and allowing them to act in concert through a single organization, the MPEA presented a 'united front' to the nations of the world, and by legal internal collusion prevented possible ruinous competition among American film companies overseas."[9] The film industry clearly was gearing itself up immediately after the war to expand if not completely take over foreign markets. And while OMGUS and the American government in general may have been grateful to Hollywood and willing to assist it in its mission, this mission also ran contrary to OMGUS's more idealistic attempts to foster democratic discourse on German soil. More directly, the cartel being formed by the major studios was problematic for OMGUS, which was trying to maintain alliances with the British and French while at least appeasing the Russians. The MPEA's formation also threatened to justify Soviet claims of American capitalist imperial-

ism. Hollywood seemed to understand these machinations and coordinated its own policies with those of the government.[10]

Taken together, Wilder's film pitch and his proposal for the rebuilding of the German film industry can be seen as the bait-and-switch policy of Hollywood's major studios. The job of film officer ended up being filled by successive representatives of Hollywood interests. However, the Americans' choice of Eric Pommer turned out to be one much more satisfactory, at least initially, to the Germans than to the Americans.

Meanwhile, Hollywood was conceiving of ways to reap financial benefits from its newly won access to the German market. A complicated arrangement between Hollywood and OMGUS meant that the studios were receiving no royalties on the films they were showing in Germany. The money was frozen in OMGUS accounts and was neither retrievable nor convertible. As Johannes Hauser notes, the MPEA proposed a solution, namely: "the employment of Reichsmarks for the outright acquisition of German motion picture theatres, for the production by them in German studios of newsreels for release both in Germany and other countries, and for the purchase of German raw stock to make positives of pictures to be shown in Germany as well as outside of it."[11] In other words, the Hollywood studios proposed to use the resources gained through the large market share they had immediately following the war to consolidate permanently that oligopoly.

Late in the summer of 1945, the Information Control Division rejected the MPEA's suggested solution, after which Hollywood refused to send enough films to meet the demand in occupied Germany. Given the need for entertainment and the fact that Germans had not yet been allowed to make films, a procedure was established whereby German films made before 1945 could be put through a censor system and then re-released. Thus, by autumn of 1945, German films were again appearing in the theaters, but only if they met the detailed standards published by OMGUS:

> No German films may be shown in the United States Zone of Occupation which glorify the ideology of Fascism, Nazism, or racial distinction; glorify or idealize war or militarism; politically subvert or pervert German history; glorify or idealize the German Army; seem derogatory or uncomplimentary of or ridicule Allied peoples, their governments, their political or national leaders; deal with German revenge; ridicule or criticize religious feelings and religious attitudes; glorify or idealize the thoughts and/or acts of German leaders whose opinions, notions, or political philosophy was imperialistic; are based upon a book or script of a known Nazi Party member or supporter, or

> which originate through the creative efforts of known Nazi Party members or proven active supporters.[12]

The other Western Allies seem to have followed the American lead in writing strict censorship rules regarding the flow of information. Either the Americans were by far the least active censors or the German distributors practiced effective self-censorship: The Americans approved every one of the 845 films presented to them for review. Given the thousands that would have been available, selection had to have taken place somewhere. Most engaged in the activity were the British, who pursued a thorough review and censor policy.[13] The British reviewed over half again as many films as the Americans, approving even more, but also refusing more than three hundred. The French followed a pattern similar to the Americans, although they did refuse thirty-nine films. There is no published record of similar Soviet censorship activity.

Soviet Film Policy and the Founding of the First Postwar Film Company

Unlike the other Allies, the Soviets were less interested in establishing their own economic system in Germany than they were in establishing ideological control. Their colonial gestures were directed mostly toward winning over their former foes to a Soviet-style political culture. Those efforts were sometimes contradictory. To be sure they included many of the brutal tactics that Cold War rhetoric has come to associate with the Soviet Union. And yet, many of their policies toward Germany and Germans were, at the close of the war, much more conciliatory and humane than those of their Western counterparts. Thomas Heimann claims that many of the Soviet cultural officers sought to improve upon the models they had seen in their own country.[14] For example, Soviet film policies tended to allow Germans ways to discuss and understand their own history, rather than having their history lessons imposed upon them. By early 1946, a committee of Soviet officers, returning German expatriates, and resident German filmmakers came together to start the first active postwar German film company, DEFA (for Deutsche Film AG). It would become the sole film company of the German Democratic Republic.

Christiane Mückenberger, the *doyen* of DEFA history, notes that there existed an atmosphere of political tolerance in the studio's early

days. "Both parties—artists and politicians—were united by one overriding concern, namely that of overcoming fascism. . . . This was important since it created a special climate in which artists could develop their ideas without fear of censorship and in which they could feel confident that they were both wanted and needed."[15] Most studies of the founding years of DEFA confirm that the atmosphere and work conditions were certainly as open as in any of the Western sectors and perhaps even more liberated than in some of the Allied countries themselves.[16] Although most of the directors of DEFA films in the early years actually lived in the Western sectors of Berlin and were active filmmakers in the Nazi years, DEFA itself made a greater effort to produce films that confronted the Nazi past directly. The heads of DEFA showed from the start openness toward what they coined "antifascist" film projects and therefore attracted many such projects.

By late 1945 the Americans began to realize that they were lagging behind in the struggle for cultural hegemony in Germany. The Russians were more engaged in encouraging and promoting a German cultural life. The British were most active in reorganizing the broadcast industry in their zone and licensed the first film in the Western sectors. Even the French were beginning to license filmmakers. The Americans did not want to be seen as being drawn into a race to restart German filmmaking. The film officer for the Office of Military Government Berlin Sector (OMGBS), Robert Joseph, stipulated that the licensees in the American sector would not just produce films to make the audience laugh. This is most likely a reference to Heinz Rühmann, an actor who became popular in the Nazi era and was among the first to attempt to get a license to produce a film. His initial efforts failed, perhaps because he eschewed the attitude toward filmmaking the Americans demanded. A director was, according to Joseph, meant to awaken contemplation in audience members.[17]

The audiences the Allies were faced with, however, were made up of a defeated, displaced, and unsettled German population. There were few employment opportunities, though plenty of work to be done. A large percentage of the population was homeless either because they had been driven by the Soviets from the eastern provinces or because of the heavy wartime damage to German cities. Germany in 1945 faced the largest migration and displacement problem in European history. Thus, not only did the Allies need to find ways to occupy an idle urban population, they also had to fill the days of the millions living in Displaced Persons (DPs)

camps. This was the role film would play much more so than the idealistic democratic reeducation plans of the occupational governments.

By the autumn of 1945, one of the oddities of the film market in all sectors was the increasing presence of the second-run German films the Allies were gradually allowing back into the cinemas. DEFA had a stock of films Goebbels had censored, which it used alongside Russian imports to fill its cinemas in the early days. In fact, the money gained from the release of a filmed version of *Die Fledermaus*, a Nazi-era production shot toward the end of the war and put together in 1946, was used as start-up capital for DEFA. "Thus, Goebbels' film apparatus indirectly financed the first postwar film company, one that inscribed on its flag the working through of Germany's fascist past."[18] DEFA would continue to use these films as a part of its repertoire until at least 1950.

The unreleased films from the Nazi era and those that appeared in the cinemas before 1945 were occupying an increasing market share. The products of Ufa, Tobis, and other German studios, many of which had entertained the German troops at war, were playing next to the Hollywood, Soviet, British, and French films that served a similar function among the Allied troops. The spectator no longer had to choose sides. A visit to any of these films would have provided two hours of warmth and, in most cases, escapism. So, while German filmmaking was suspended for a year, German films only had to sit out a summer before enjoying a comeback. For the spectator this certainly provided the illusion that little had changed. The films of the Nazi "Dream Factory" that had occupied and transformed the German visual imagination for a decade and the films that had been conceived in order to help Germans escape the heavy realities of war were again available. The cycle of depressing postwar diagnostic realist films had yet to appear.

By the winter of 1945–46 other considerations contributed to the growing interest in film, the greatest of which was a severe energy and food shortage. Any two hours that a household spent in a movie theater were two hours during which their apartment would not have to be heated or lighted. And going to the cinema was a cheap alternative to the miseries of everyday life. Peter Pleyer notes that "the need to find this distraction in the cinema is shown by the fact that most movie theaters were filled to the last seat almost every evening." This was made even more feasible by the economic conditions. "A movie ticket neither required a ration card nor did one have to pay black market prices."[19] Thomas Brandlmeier offers a comparison that helps us understand the

economics of movie-going: "A visit to the cinema cost approximately 1 Reichsmark. A half-pound stick of butter on the black market cost 250 Reichsmarks."[20] Thus, demand for films to fill the theaters was high.

The *Filmpause:* Rethinking Cinema and the State

Despite the country's high demand for films and Hollywood's reluctance to release enough features to fill that demand, it took more than a year for Germans to start feature film production. The Allies had wiped out one of the Nazis' most effective weapons, and Hollywood had overseen the dismantling of its potentially most forceful competitor. This year-long cessation of production by the once mighty German film industry, which came to be known as the *Filmpause*, gave rise to a public reflection on the role of film that would continue well after German film production resumed.

Robert Joseph's demand for serious filmmaking was not far out of line with the Soviets' requirement that German films should, in the words of the Soviet Commander Tulpanov, "become a sharp weapon in the fight against war and militarism and for peace for the friendship of the peoples of the world."[21] The two Allied representatives demanded both artistic quality and moral guidance from filmic production. Film should be a serious, valuable, and, above all, moral undertaking. These intimidating stakes would serve as the discursive guide for the rubble film cycle.

Already having been refused a filmmaking license by the British and American authorities, Wolfgang Staudte, a minor actor and filmmaker during the Third Reich, wrote a letter to the Soviet cultural authorities on October 9, 1945. It was the second round of letters between Staudte and the Soviet military administration. In the first one he asked to make the film *Der Mann, den ich töten werde* (*The Man I Am Going to Kill*), which would become *The Murderers Are among Us.* The Soviets responded by asking him to propose his film as a part of founding a film studio, another plan of Staudte's. So, in his October 9 letter, Staudte was not trying to justify his film's narrative, but rather to legitimate restarting the German film industry. He gave exactly one reason for wanting permission to start a new film studio—namely, to prevent the dissolution of the energies and talents that comprised the German film industry.[22]

Ignoring the common knowledge among filmmakers that the Allies were intentionally breaking up the monopoly of German film, Staudte suggested creating a centralized studio under which numerous film-