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One Nation on the Screen: Dresden, Filmic Commemoration and German-German Memory Politics

Introduction

When the two-piece TV-mini-series "Dresden" (Roland Suso Richter, D, 2006) aired for the first time in March 2006 at primetime, the until then most expensive German TV production ever made was remarkably successful. Yet the melodrama about the bombing of the city in February 1945 set new standards regarding memory politics not just quantitatively. Advertised as "event-movie", it is representative for hegemonic tendencies of the last ten years regarding the nexus of memory politics, commemorative culture and competition between nation-states as well qualitatively, on the level of *diegesis*.¹ With "Dresden", victimization of 'ordinary Germans', de-contextualization and de-politicization of German victimhood, and the associated consequences for the significance of commemorating the Shoah have been ready-made for consumption by the culture industry and mass media disseminated – while being universalized so skillfully that the film has been sold into more than 20 countries. At the same time, "Dresden" is only part of an all-German discourse promoted politically by the GDR's annexation to the FRG 1990, a discourse that has been explicitly tangible for approximately a decade and is consolidating at the time.²

This discourse, I want to argue here, is first and foremost nationalistic, and German memory politics use filmic commemoration for purposes very current. One nation on the screen means: Unified symbolically as a community of victims, the German nation provides an identification offer for each and every one, no matter if their Grandparents

acknowledged the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* or not. Beside the exculpatory effect of the films at issue here, they offer a cultural benefit directed very much towards the present, that is, to provide a history shared by East and West: The Berlin Republic, created by the so-called reunion, is presented as a gen-

1 The world constructed by a narration is called *diegesis*.

2 Some of the developments that come with the tendencies only named very generally here, like the so-called Historikerstreit or historian's debate that took place in 1984, started before the political union of the two German states. A generalizing summary of societal processes always runs danger of excluding those corresponding moments that defy the pattern. For the sake of readability this can only be noted here.

uinely democratic German community as opposed to “both German dictatorships”, the latter being the phrase used to pool together National Socialism and the GDR. However, a past suitable for correspondent national founding myths is available only before 1945. Those more than forty German-financed films that have been produced since the turn of the millennium can be seen as culturally catching up with the structural changes that were set in motion in 1990.

The transformations associated with the annexation of the GDR affect visual culture as well, with a cultural lag of approximately ten years. This is politically intended and actively produced. Film’s special role for the representation of national collectives is founded on properties of the medium itself. Siegfried Kracauer highlights that 1947 in his introduction to his seminal study *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psychological History of the German Film*:

“The films of a nation reflect its mentality in a more direct way than other artistic media (. . .)”³ Which of these properties work in favor of a nationalist communitarization will be explained in the first section. In the course of this, this processes’ economical sides, the according film funding model and its benefit for Germany as production site, cannot be separated from its ideological aspects: The German film of the noughties and thereafter turns National Socialism from a ‘blot on the nation’s vest’ into an advantage of location. Thereby, affirmative reference to the national community is not only prerequisite for correspondent political measures, but also their intended effect. How this is enabled by specific production conditions in Germany is the subject of the following section. It highlights those political strategies implemented to produce this communitarization. Thereafter, by way of examples I will show which discursive strategies the films use to pull this off, while at the same time reproducing the same ideas they pretend to overcome: All these variants of collectivism, ultimately having to be counted as nationalist, are staged as antithesis of the Nazi ethnic-racist concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* (folk community). Yet precisely by attempting to depict the historical national community as different from National Socialism and restage it as a positively connoted collective, National Socialism’s concepts of ‘the enemy’ and its anti-liberal, anti-individualist, antisemitic and heterophobic ideology is handed down. This nationalist impetus “Dresden” and its follow-ups incorporate in various forms shall be focused here, by means of which an insight into the development of film production since 2006 will be ventured.

Film and national collective: Why filmic commemoration is not an individual matter The filmic medium, especially the narratively closed fiction film, is for once a “mirror of society”, as Kracauer has already argued in 1927. He referred to its status as a commodity: “Films are the mirror of the prevailing society. They are financed by corporations, which must pinpoint the tastes of the audience at all costs in

3 Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psychological History of the German Film*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966 [1947], p. 5.

order to make a profit."⁴ In short, being a means to generate profit results in the production of mainly those films that are mass compatible. Exceptions to this general rule might be Author movies with rather small audiences, or Youtube-miniclips shot with shaky hand-held cameras that don't aim to create illusion effects like the big-scale productions in question, or can't due to a lack of resources. Apart from these rather marginal cases,

it can be assumed that films reflect hegemonic images of Self and Other. Another reason why film makes readable the ways a society wants to see itself is that, compared to other cultural artifacts, it is "never the product of an individual", but a product of a highly differentiated division of labor.⁵

Yet film not only reflects common attitudes, it also (re-)produces and shapes them. Its proximity to human perception and memory makes it a discursive agent with particular power: Humans also dream and remember in sequences of moving images. Because of this, with regard to topics of collective interest, film is an especially mighty instrument in comparison to other media. The significance of cinematic storytelling thus can be emphasized even without bringing into play the question of propaganda. Likewise, Eric Rentschler stresses that especially the seemingly harmless entertainment films of National Socialism, still broadcast successfully up to date, must be seen as highly influential carriers of ideology. This is due to their illusionary character, which is created by following the conventions of Classical Hollywood Cinema: "entertainment can be far more than innocent pleasure."⁶ In democratic states as well, the TV-apparatus⁷ as a societal context mediates the individual and the community, visually and, above all, emotionally: Filmic storytelling works by making the audience identify with certain characters and react affectively to what is shown, that is, to associate emotions to what's happening on the screen. These affects are very easy to control with cinematic means. For example, any film manual checked for reference will say that faces shown from bottom view seem threatening and those filmed from above will look smaller, because the eye of the camera will be taken as the audience's perspective. Hence, those heroes and heroines will be cheered for that are represented as such, while those characters will appear unlikeable that are staged that way. If, on top of this, nationally relevant topics form the agenda, these emotions are no longer a purely individual matter. Rather, the watching audience, identifying

4 Siegfried Kracauer, *The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies*, in: *The Mass Ornament. Weimar Essays*. Ed. by Translated, Edited, and with an Introduction by Thomas Y. Levin. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, [1995], pp. 291-304, p. 291.

5 Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psychological History of the German Film*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966 [1947], p. 5.

6 Eric Rentschler, *The Testament of Dr. Goebbels*, in: *Film and Nationalism*. Ed. by Alan Williams. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2002, pp. 137-151, p. 147.

7 This term does not refer to the TV as a device here, but as a social and societal relationship.

with the protagonists, empathizes with representatives of Germany. It thereby starts standing for the nation itself.⁸

German Landscapes

Regarding their level of distribution and their budget, the films in question here are mass media. They have to be, in order to finance the according equipment needed to realize their claim for authenticity. Because film exists as a commodity in society, only those projects are realized that are either promising in terms of profit rates or can use public funding. Mixed forms of funding are quite common in Germany. With respect to the success "Dresden" and its follow-ups have had – "Die Flucht" (Kai Wessel, D 2007) about the Wight from East Prussia and Silesia and "Die Gustloff" (Joseph Vilsmaier, D 2008) about the sinking of the ship in the course of this Wight, all of them produced by the company TeamworX and advertised as "event-movies" –, Sonja M. Schultz points out that in contrast to the USA, Germany doesn't have a self-sufficient production environment that's autonomous from the state, with independent film producers able to come up with the necessary capital. Instead, the funding depends on a system of federal subsidies in which the TV channels are involved as well.⁹ "Too much TV in the cinema", summarizes Katja Nicodemus, complaining about this entanglement in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* by calling it a "fluffed-up subsidy business".¹⁰ In addition, there's a specifically German, mixed form of cross-funding, comprised of resources from both federal film funds and public service broadcasting. These so-called amphibian films are produced for television as well as cinema and the world market from the very start. They have to attract audiences for both media and are supposed to sell internationally, too, as objects of prestige for the producing channels.

Regarding the millions of Euros or other currencies at issue, it is justified to assume, following Krauer, that primarily those stories will be put to treatment that promise to match the taste of a general audience, that is, that appeal to the biggest audience possible. This range is also controlled politically: With the new German film funding model *Deutscher Filmförderfonds des Bundes* (DFFF, Federal German Film Fund), founded in 2007, only those feature films are promoted that reach minimum production costs of one million Euro. But German film production is also selectively controlled in terms of topics: The DFFF, set up specifically in order to do so and by now having been extended for the second

8 Of course, alternative and opposing readings of films are always possible. However, it can be presumed that the bigger the targeted audience of a film, the sooner it will adopt those filmic structures that conduct its dominant way of reception as frames for interpretation, simply because in so-called blockbuster films, closed forms of narration usually prevail.

9 Sonja M. Schultz, *Der Nationalsozialismus im Film. Von Triumph des Willens bis Inglorious Basterds*. Berlin: Bertz + Fischer Verlag, 2012, p. 435

10 Katja Nicodemus, *Zuviel Fernsehen im Kino. Die öffentlich-rechtlichen Sender haben den deutschen Film erobert. Sie geben das Geld – aber nur für Ware, die ins Schema passt*, in: *Die Zeit* 51 (2008).

time for another three years, grants producers a partly refund of their costs only if their piece is produced in Germany itself or if it contains sufficient German content. This content is determined using a "cultural properties test": to be promoted, a film has to reach a minimum quota of "German" qualities. What counts as German is regulated by a directive published by the *Beauftragter der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien* (Federal Government's commissioner for culture and media). According to this directive, part of the German *Kulturkreis*, or cultural range are, for example, "German-speaking areas, as well as formerly German-speaking areas, or areas in which a German minority lives".¹¹ Thus, the National Socialist past can be converted directly into capital by filmmakers of today. This past, often felt as a "shame" (see below), has become an economical advantage of location not only nationally, but also for private profits, since the thematic reference to National Socialism enables producers to draw on special film funds. However, a recourse to German history before 1945 generates a problem: A positive reference to the historical national collective, the contemporary *Volksgemeinschaft*, is normatively impossible to undertake from a democratic perspective. Yet this paradox has been solved surprisingly well by the culture industry. The basic discursive strategy at work is an externalization of National Socialism and a simultaneous collective victimization of 'ordinary Germans', combined with the affirmation of a community that is positively marked as an alternative to the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Community Instead of *Volksgemeinschaft*?

The term collectivism shall summarize forms of communitarian ideology some of which could also be named nationalism. On the level of discourse, it appears as a normative primacy of the common good over particular interests.¹² The connection between National Socialism's split-off from the national community and the concomitant transmission of its ideology is determined by the affirmative reference to one's own collective and the innate intention to represent it positively, even in the moment of its historical delegitimization. Namely, each version of collectivism introduced in the following implies the community's priority over the individual. This is also implemented dramaturgically: The 'good guys' or girls, the heroes and heroines, sacrifice themselves for their community, while the 'bad guys' – in these films, these are mainly¹³ Nazis, but also Russians, Allies and Jew_esses – only think of themselves and

11 Richtlinie des BKM "Anreiz zur Stärkung der Filmproduktion in Deutschland" (Deutscher Filmförderfonds). Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien, 2009.

12 On the level of the subject, collectivism would be conceived as an affirmative equation of individual and collective interests, an identification that's objectively false. Yet since in this article, manifestations of collectivism in the form of cultural artifacts are at issue, this can only be pointed out here.

13 Since the subject of this article is hegemonic tendencies of German film production in general, I can only indicate that there's counter-examples to this. However, I don't know of any film with a comparable budget that does not show the problematical features discussed here.

thereby jeopardize the community. This topos of dissociating or threatening a community historically was and still is ascribed to 'Jew_esses' in antisemitic discourse. In part, the motif's antisemitic content is structurally installed right by the plot, for example when, in "Dresden", the only character wishing for the bombing of the city is the 'Jew' Simon Goldberg, who, in addition, is thereby being associated with the antisemitic topos of 'vengefulness'. However, the 'primary' victims in these movies aren't the victims of the Holocaust, Jewish people, but 'ordinary Germans'. Their victimization provides the films' basic structure and is usually predetermined by the melodramatic genre.¹⁴ Hence, National Socialism's communitarian ideology is marked as very negative by various means, while, at the same time, a seemingly different model is being offered. On the one hand, this alternative community of victims is represented positively. Yet on the other hand, it is characterized positively, too, by a normative primacy of the collective over the individual. Of such collectivism, four different types can be identified that will be discussed exemplarily hereinafter.

Corporatism

Corporatism is a form of collectivism which establishes a company to function as community. In his study *The Salaried Masses. Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany*, Kracauer characterized this as "neo-paternalism".¹⁵ Textbook-like, this form can be observed in the TV-three-piece "The Krupps" (Carlo Rola, D 2010): The conflict of interests between workers and capital-owners is made invisible in and by the sham community of the corporate 'family', in "dreams"¹⁶ of unity and togetherness. National Socialism is re-staged as being absolutely external to this community, something in which patriarch Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach gets involved in indeed, but also atones for like a martyr by spending years as prisoner of war. The last heir, Alfried's gay son Arndt, renounces his inheritance so the company can continue to exist as a foundation – here, too, the 'common' good is prioritized over individual interest. Just as in "Dresden", the makers of "The Krupps" wanted to empathize with these collective ancestors: "From the Krupp family, we wanted to know how people make choices, not what their positions were (. . .). For us, it was about the protagonist's motives and feelings. And those can't be found

¹⁴ One filmic strategy of victimization is notably ubiquitous: A visual assimilation to the image of Jewish Holocaust victims that has been passed on communicatively over decades. I have called this technique "idolatric mimesis" elsewhere: Antonia Schmid, *Idolatrische Mimesis oder Wölfe im Schafspelz. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des Spielfilms für Repräsentationen des Nationalsozialismus*, in: *Vergessenes Erinnern. Medien von Erinnerungskultur und kollektivem Gedächtnis*. Ed. by Swen Steinberg, Stefan Meißner, and Daniel Trepsdorf. Vol. 1., Impulse. Studien zu Geschichte, Politik und Gesellschaft. 2009, pp. 83–103.

¹⁵ Siegfried Kracauer, *The Salaried Masses. Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany*. Translated by Quintin Hoare and with an Introduction by Inka Mülder-Bach. London and New York: Verso, 1998 [1929], p. 75.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

in the files”, said co-producer Georg Feil¹⁷ – similarly, Nico Hofmann, who produced “Dresden”, had put “the sentiments of the parent generation” in the center of interest.¹⁸ Only in the weekly newspaper Die Zeit, Evelyn Finger criticized the “conscientiousness, the sense of duty towards the staff, paired up with ruthlessness against themselves” as “reactionary message of this movie that offers us the type of a very brave, cowardly man to identify with” and lends “expression to our collective longing for a capitalism of virtue”. Yet the existence of a homogenous “We” in all this seemed uncontested to her as well.¹⁹

Euro-nationalism

Transnational collectivism, or Euro-nationalism, might be that kind of collectivism revealing most clearly the benefits that “history fiction”, as Tobias Ebbrecht calls those films, offers for present time in form of founding myths. Thus, the protagonists to identify with in many of these films represent a transnational, ‘European’ attitude: In “Anonyma – A Woman in Berlin” (Max Färberböck, D 2008) about the rape of German women by Russian soldiers after the surrender in 1945, the tough heroine propagates unifying Europe in spite of her suffering. The “event-movies” “Dresden” and “Die Flucht/The Escape” (Kai Wessel, D 2007) stage the turn away from the *Volksgemeinschaft* to the European community straightforwardly as a love triangle between the main characters: In “Dresden”, nurse Anna not only decides against her fiancé Alexander in favor of the British bomber pilot Robert, but in doing so, also for a critical perspective on the seemingly former, germanocentric attitude. In “Die Flucht”, East Prussian countess Lena falls in love with French forced laborer François, likewise including a critical perspective of the events, incorporating a contemporary, ‘modern’ and democratic view thereby.

These strong female characters are another typical feature of the Berlin Republic’s film. They seem to embody present values as early as during the last turmoil of war. However, not only are the values of today’s political culture thereby projected backwards onto this historical phase. Moreover, a gendered representational function is statable here that is typical for the depiction of nations. It relies on an extremely simplified structure of in- and outgroup, chargeable in a heterophobic way, as Albert Memmi has called it.²⁰ Precisely because the protagonist in question stands for Germany, her liaison with a member of a formerly hostile nation can symbolize reconciliation – but affiliation to a national

17 Cited after Steffen Grimberg, *Alles Schweine, sogar Mutti. Das ZDF hat die Geschichte des Weltkonzerns als düsteres Familienepos verfilmt. Doch der Dreiteiler bleibt Schablone - und zäh wie Kruppstahl*, in: die tageszeitung 21.03.2009 (<http://www.taz.de/ZDF-Dreiteiler-Krupp---eine-deutsche-Familie!/32116/>).

18 Michael Hanfeld, *Wir können nicht brennende Menschen zeigen, die im flüssigen Asphalt stecken: Nico Hofmann und Roland Suso Richter über ihren Film “Dresden”*, in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 43 (2006), p. 33.

19 Evelyn Finger, *Wie der Stahl gehärtet wird. In “Krupp” verherrlicht das ZDF den Typus des heldenhaften Firmenpatriarchen - und empfiehlt Autorität als Heilmittel für unsere Gegenwart*, in: Die Zeit 13 (22.3.2009).

20 Albert Memmi, *Rassismus*, Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1987.

collective as ingroup will always have been prerequisite.²¹ Concepts like national 'honor' or 'shame', communicated via women's bodies, distributed by mass media, are not overcome with these films. In spite of their superficiality, in comparison to National Socialism progressive and liberal-appearing message, these concepts are rather constitutive for the structuring that the ensemble of characters takes on.

Regionalism and 'alternative' nationalism

Regionalism appears as a kind of collectivism in which affiliation to a region experienced as concrete is set in contrast to a more abstract, bigger community. A good example is the movie "Unter Bauern" (Ludi Boeken, D/F 2009) which was funded with 590.000 Euro by the DFFF. The film recounts how the Jewish Spiegel family were rescued, taken in and hid by Westphalian farmers under false names. Mother Marga Spiegel – played by well-known actress Veronica Ferres – and her daughter Karin find accommodation separately from father Menne Spiegel. In the course of the events, they change: Formerly fragile urbanites, they transform themselves and adapt, becoming top-notch countrywomen. They abandon their urban habitus and assimilate.²² In the case of "Unter Bauern", this regionalism is combined with an alternative kind of nationalism that, vis-à-vis National Socialism, is marked as positive and superior to it because of its inclusiveness. The movie's prologue establishes this set-up audiovisually and sets the frame for the constitution of meaning by introducing three national symbols.

These three symbols denominate the film's basal affiliations and their conflicting relations: The Iron Cross, awarded to Menne in World War I, symbolizes an 'old', better Germany in which 'Jews' are integrated so well they fight for their fatherland side by side with their 'German' comrades. Upon this camaraderie of war, the shared will to sacrifice themselves for their collective, the farmer's solidarity with the Jewish family is based. The Iron Cross virtually incloses the second symbol, Menne's Yellow Star. Put in contrast to these two, the Swastika functions as opposition. Like in the other films, too, it represents the absolute Other. Here, that means an abstract community imposed upon its primary victims: the 'Germans', whose eldest son dies in combat. Accordingly, the only scene that openly shows emotional suffering is that in which the farmer's couple receives the news about their son's death.

The film starts with a disturbing sound that evokes associations of a train signal. With it, the white title fades in on a black background: "Unter Bauern – Retter in der Nacht" (Among farmers – saviors in the night). "Night" not only denotes the time of day when the farmers become 'saviors'. It is also a metaphor for Germany's 'dark time'. By naming the act of salvation, the subheading also forecloses the story's outcome: "Night" means National Socialism, which is characterized thereby as a 'German Night',

²¹ Not by accident, the respective film's heroine isn't British or French herself.

²² The underlying dichotomy of city versus countryside is a fundamental element of modern antisemitism as well.

a darkness that will pass, as the audience knows. The ingroup community, the "We" of the story, is made up by Germans, respectively by Westphalians, and Jew_esses, proven by their common combat duty in World War I. This shared experience of serving in the military in times of war, with which the film begins, is visually symbolized by the Iron Cross.

After the movie title, only a muddy ground can be seen at first. Then, to the sound of yelling ("Move! Move! (...) We need to get away! Gas attack! Gas attack!"), two soldiers with gas masks enter the scene, carrying a wounded comrade on a stretcher. One of the soldiers shouts orders: "Leave him lying! Bring him here! Get the horses ready! Go! Go!" – Apart from the high-pitched sound that's starting to fade, bomb explosions and the neighing of horses can be heard. The group of young soldiers in the mud haul the injured comrade onto a horse. The next shot shows the muddy clearance with the Red Crosses' Wag, visually anticipating the Iron Cross (Vg. 1). The camera pans to the right, from where the troop, leading three horses, are running towards the camera now.

The insert "Westfront 1918" (Western Front 1918) appears. The soldiers keep coming towards the camera, until the Iron Cross on the last soldier's lapel is in the center of the frame and the shot has become a close-up of the Iron Cross (Vg.s 2 and 3). Now Menne's voice-over starts narrating: "World War I. I was seventeen, when I – like tens of thousands of other German Jews, too – enlisted to serve my country. My name is Siegmund Spiegel, my friends call me Menne. I have been awarded the Iron Cross, first class, for heroic behavior while defending the fatherland." Panting can be heard over sounds of anti-aircraft guns, and the picture is cross-faded into a dark shot which only shows a Yellow Star on a lapel (Vg. 4). With it, Menne's voice says:

"Twenty-five years later, my fatherland wanted to kill me." The screen now shows a man with a mustache in his forties on a bike, Weeing from something. He's pedaling painfully, and keeps looking around frantically (Vg. 5). With the Insert "Heimatfront 1943/ Münsterland" (home front 1943/ Münsterland region), the prologue concludes.²³

From the *Volksgemeinschaft* to the Berlin Republic

Commemoration of the Shoah has long become a constituent of new, unified Germany's self-conception.²⁴ It is highly ritualized, and publicly either appears as part of a specialized sector of education and culture, or as a motif in culture industry, complying with popular forms. Germany's cardinal crime, including the atonement for it that has been perceived as having been collectively experienced as well,

²³ The ensemble of characters' structure, introduced in the prologue regarding their respective affiliation, is reinforced and consolidated throughout the whole film, which cannot be documented exhaustively in the limits of this article.

²⁴ Cf. Wolfgang Bergem, *Politische Kultur und Geschichte*, in: *Politische Kultur. Forschungsstand und Forschungsperspektiven*. Ed. by Samuel Salzborn. Frankfurt am Main/Berlin/Bern/Bruxelles/New York/Oxford/Wien: Peter Lang, 2009, pp. 201-227.

has in the meantime been outsourced so far that German film can “devote itself entirely to the search and the longing for German identity”, as Nico Hofmann has desired.²⁵ Such an unbroken “identity” makes necessary the discursive move to construct the national collective retroactively as a community that have always been the ‘good guys’. Thus, Menne’s belief that his Iron Cross has the power to protect him is proven and refuted at the same time in “Unter Bauern/ Among farmers”: Although Menne has demonstrated his readiness to make sacrifices for his “fatherland”, he is excluded by the ‘Others’, here meaning the Nazis as the ‘bad guys’. In contrast to them, the ‘good’, ‘real’ fatherland is personified by the peasant Westphalians: When his wife complains he hasn’t properly said goodbye to his son, accusing him to “rather save Jews!”, farmer Aschoff stands up indignantly: “Jews! Menne and his wife are Germans. Westphalians, like you and me!” – In this scene, the externalization of National Socialism via the communitarization as Germans (or Westphalians, ‘Krupprians’, victims of bombings. . .) is demonstrated in a nutshell: Whereas in National Socialism, Germans must not equal ‘Jews’,²⁶ the latter here form a subcategory of ‘Germans’, respectively Westphalians, whereby concurrently ‘Germans’ do not equal ‘Nazis’. This is entirely in accordance with the film’s tenor to enable a positive reference to the German nation in spite of the national collective’s Nazi past. Yet the problematic and dangerous factors of such identification don’t begin with the Nazis, but with any positive reference to an ingroup imagined as threatened somehow. Hajo Funke has already pointed this out with regard to Martin Walser’s infamous speech in Frankfurt’s St. Paul’s Church:²⁷

“Walser constructs a collective “We”, lining up against another collective, namely, the nation’s denigrators. In this very dichotomy, antisemitism that constructs the ‘other collective’ as opposite to and as hostile aggressor towards the We of the “accused” (here, real guilt latently becomes sheer “accusation”), is structurally set out. What is commemorated how and by whom determines the present and the future.

To this effect, filmic commemoration has an especially influential role, as I hope to have demonstrated. The majority of thematically relevant films hardly constitute a corrective in the face of the overall discourse of communitarization, to which German memory politics and the according cultural production keep contributing.

25 In: Hanfeld, *Wir können nicht brennende Menschen zeigen, die im flüssigen Asphalt stecken: Nico Hofmann und Roland Suso Richter über ihren Film “Dresden”*, op. cit.

26 This term does not refer to actual Jewish people here, but to the imago of ‘the Jew_ess’. The latter did indeed play a central role in Nazi ideology, but ought to distinguished sharply from real traits of real persons.

27 The writer was awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 1998. In his acceptance speech, Walser complained about the “exploitation” of “our” “never ending shame”, calling Auschwitz a “moral club” (Moralkeule). For many scholars of antisemitism, his speech marks the shifting of former limits of discourse about Germany’s Nazi past.

Antonia Schmid: One Nation on the Screen: Dresden, Filmic Commemoration and German-German Memory Politics, in: *Abolish Commemoration – A Critique of the Discourse relating to the Bombing of Dresden in 1945*, online at <http://www.abolishcommemoration.org/schmid.html>

- caption for Vg.1: "The Red Cross's symbol visually anticipates the Iron Cross." (Picture: screenshot from the film "Unter Bauern/ Among farmers" (Ludi Boeken, D/F 2009)
- caption for Vg.2: "Jewish protagonist Menne Spiegel running from a gas attack as a young soldier – the Iron Cross is introduced as a symbol for the 'good' German community." (Picture: screenshot from the film "Unter Bauern/ Among farmers" (Ludi Boeken, D/F 2009)
- caption for Vg. 3: "Cut from the Iron Cross. . ." (Picture: screenshot from the film "Unter Bauern/ Among farmers" (Ludi Boeken, D/F 2009)
- caption for Vg. 4: ". . . to the Yellow Star." (Picture: screenshot from the film "Unter Bauern/ Among farmers" (Ludi Boeken, D/F 2009)
- caption for Vg. 5: "In 1943, Menne is on the run again." (Picture: screenshot from the film "Unter Bauern/ Among farmers" (Ludi Boeken, D/F 2009)

Translated by Antonia Schmid